MINUTES OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH FORUM
Held at 12pm on Tuesday 31 January 2017

1.   Welcome from the Postgraduate Research Representative (Chair) and Lunch

2.   Introduction
- Chair introduced herself to the forum attendees and explained her role as Postgraduate Research Representative.
- Chair explained Postgraduate Research Forum has been convened to create an opportunity for postgraduate students to meet and share any current issues or problems. Chair will then be taking topics of discussion forward to her meetings with Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dave Richards (PVC).
- Jacob Zobkiw (Education Co-Ordinator) clarified the forum had a differing purpose to the Forum currently organised by the Graduate School, with the idea for this forum to be student led and an opportunity for students to air their views.

3.   Topics for Discussion
   i)   *Teaching Opportunities*
- Chair asked for forum attendees' feedback on the teaching opportunities available across the differing faculties.
- History – no formal opportunities, only shadowing professor (3hours) which is not enough.
- Business School – not available to participate until after first year when have passed formal assessment, however opportunities are available for first years at other universities.
- Forum discussed the reasons given by faculties for not offering teaching opportunities, e.g. distraction from study/learning, financial constraints.
- Discrepancies between faculties was highlighted and Chair agreed to raise this at her next meeting with PVC. Action: Chair
- Forum expressed a view that lack of teaching opportunities was affecting their employability as experience always required for academic positions. Lack of opportunities leading to view that they are getting left behind by candidates from other Universities.
- Forum in agreement that teaching opportunities are an essential part of their study and more should be done to provide these opportunities in all Faculties. Chair agreed to highlight these views with PVC. Action: Chair

   ii)   *Developing the PGR Community*
- Forum discussed the benefits of meeting fellow students, however felt the PHD rooms in faculties were often restrictive or not fit for social purposes.
- Suggestion given to organising Social events and creating opportunities for informal sessions to allow Postgraduates to mix.

- The creation of a Facebook group/Society was also felt to be a good suggestion to create a community.
- Forum discussed booking rooms in the library to showcase work to fellow students and to potentially use the PG Room on the 2nd floor as a social space for an informal chat once a month. Action: Matt Thorneycroft (MT) to discuss in monthly meeting with Librarian.

iii) *Support within Departments*
- Forum attendees unaware of their Postgraduate Course Reps & PHD Reps.
- It was raised that there seems to be little consideration for PG Students who are returning to education and who are not familiar with University life and systems.

iv) *PGTS Modules*
- Modern Researcher Course felt by attendees to be too basic with general study techniques. More practical and PHD related skills would be of more benefit to students, i.e. touch typing course.
- First Year Students would benefit from clearer signposting on where information is available.
- Discussion held regarding the lack of a workshop available at Business School to learn how to use a crucial piece of software and as a result students required to attend workshop at University of Huddersfield.
- Forum discussed the Graduate School Survey and the inconclusive results. Action: Chair to query results and if a further survey is required.

v) *Opportunities for publishing articles*
- Attendees discussed the expectation to publish articles, however there is often uncertainty over where to publish. Suggestion made to include this as part of skills module or for publishing opportunities to be clearly stated at beginning of course.
- Consensus between attendees that there is a balance to be found between the responsibility of student and responsibility of University with regards to publishing.
- MT questioned whether members had received an adequate induction on starting their course, Forum declared unanimously they had not.

vi) *Financial issues*
- Forum discussed issues with regards to printing credits and the disparity in credit allowances between Faculties.
- MT asked if £10 at beginning of each year was enough to cover purely academic costs. Many students said this would be fine if they did not have to print their thesis three times or print supervisor meeting forms.
- Differences over printing requirements in faculties were highlighted during discussion. Forum in agreement there is often a requirement to print large amounts for non-learning purposes.
- Proposal suggested that official papers/marked assignments could be sent electronically and then printed by department if numerous copies required. Action: Chair/MT to raise.
- Forum in agreement all administrative procedures should be paperless.

4. Open Discussion

- Reading room inside library – experiencing difficulties with noise from printer inside room & telephones on reception. Action: MT to feedback at next Library Meeting.

- One silent study space is problematic, ideal if there was a second space. MT suggested to change another floor in library to a silent study space which was well received. Action: MT to speak to the Library team.
- Returning to education issue – expectation all students know how to study, however if have had a break from education more support would be beneficial. Currently more time spent completing skills modules not on research.
- Lack of proper induction on commencement of course – signposting/expectations/publishing opportunities
- Keyboards in Business School – noise off-putting when working there.

5.   Next Meeting
        Tuesday 7th March 2017 – 12pm   Location: TBC

Key Discussion Points (Chair's View):

1. There are large discrepancies in teaching opportunities between faculties.
2. Teaching opportunities are not an expectation, they are a requirement for employability and experience.
3. There needs to be a policy which addresses teaching opportunities regardless of payment
4. The Postgraduate Lounge in the Library is not being fully utilised. A suggested solution is informal social events held in the lounge to build the community.
5. HUU's presence in the PGR Community is seemingly poor.
6. Signposting to support services could be much more effective.
7. There appears to be little consideration for students returning to education in regards to helping them become familiar with new systems and style of university life.
8. The Induction process (which many students didn't receive) should be massively improved. It sets the precedent for how PG Students feel about being part of the university.
9. Printing costs can be huge for PG students. The suggestion is that all course related documents, such as thesis and supervisor forms should be submitted electronically. It is then the faculty's responsibility to print if they deem necessary.
10. Administrative duties should be paperless.