Task-and-finish group: supporting postgraduate research and researchers

Terms of reference
The issue of how and where best to locate the services and initiatives that support postgraduate researchers and supervisors is important and pressing. Many universities are developing or have developed graduate schools, some physical, some virtual and some a combination of both, but all universities must think about what excellent support looks like and the structures, processes and commitments that will deliver such support. In light of increasing competition for postgraduate researchers, and as we participate in a growing number of doctoral training centres, networks and partnerships, it is an opportune time to ensure that our university has a successful approach to the induction, training and support of postgraduate researchers and an effective way of joining together the postgraduate research student journey within departments, colleges and the institution.

This task-and-finish group will address these questions. As well as assessing the needs and views of our own students and supervisors, the group will also examine the provision of postgraduate research student support at other institutions, both national and international, with a view to identifying ways in which the University of Leicester could develop a leading approach.

Aims and key questions
The group’s task is to inform the University Leadership Team about the development and implementation of the most effective approach to supporting postgraduate researchers and supervisors.

More specifically, the group should review the following questions and issues:

- What have been the strengths and weaknesses of our current approach to supporting postgraduate research and researchers, at university, college and department level?
- What can we learn from how other universities—national and international—have supported postgraduate research and researchers?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of alternative models and locations for postgraduate researcher and supervisor support?
- What are the implications (including resources, staffing and processes) of these different models?

The group should also make a recommendation to the University Leadership Team about the best future model for supporting postgraduate researchers and supervisors at Leicester.

Membership
The group will be chaired by Professor David Mattingly (Archaeology and Ancient History) who has a strong record of successful postgraduate supervision and played a major role in securing one of our doctoral training centres. The professional services lead is Sharon North. As well as the Graduate Dean, the group should include two representatives from each of the colleges (one of whom should be the PGR director or nominee), the Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) or delegate, representatives from the Quality Office, the International Office, the Graduate School and the Leicester Learning Institute (focused on postgraduate researcher and supervisor support), and a representative nominated by the Students Union’s postgraduate student group.

Timing
The group should meet as soon as possible and provide a plan and timeline to the University Leadership Team by the end of October 2015. It would be helpful if an initial report and recommendations could be ready during January to inform the planning process within colleges and at university level, with a full report by the end of March 2016.