



**QAA
Scotland**



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education



Postgraduate Research Degree Student Experience Integrated working statement

Introduction

1. QAA Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Vitae and the Higher Education Academy are undertaking an integrated programme of work in the area of the Postgraduate Research Degree Experience.

Areas of work and expertise

2. **QAA Scotland**, with the **Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) International Benchmarking Working Group** is undertaking an exercise to benchmark student experiences of research degrees in Scotland with reference to learning from practice internationally, including the rest of the UK. The purpose is to support the higher education sector in enhancing the postgraduate research degree student experience. A Working Group will be established to include members whose expertise and experience reflect a range of research degrees and programme models, and work in the sector on research issues. The Group will undertake a number of activities related to Research Degrees, especially to discuss and disseminate good and innovative practice in this area.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) aims to identify the issues affecting the postgraduate researcher experience in Scottish HEIs with the aim of sharing good practice among institutions to enhance the experience for postgraduate researchers. This is in line with the challenge to increase postgraduate student numbers set out in New Horizons and the Science Framework.

Vitae is a national organisation championing the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes. It plays a major role in the drive for high-level skills and innovation and in the UK's goal to produce world class researchers. Its vision is for the UK to be world-class in supporting the personal, professional and career development of researchers.

The Higher Education Academy works with individual academics to give them access to professional recognition, advice and support, as well as networking and development opportunities to enhance their teaching. Its network of 24 discipline-based subject centres provides a range of services to subject departments including resources, events and workshops and it also liaises directly with UK institutions, providing national leadership in developing and disseminating evidence-informed practice about enhancing the student learning experience. The Academy is responsible for providing institutions with a

postgraduate survey service in the form of Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and related support work.

3. It was agreed that these organisations would coordinate their various areas of work to maximise the overall impact and to avoid any duplication of work. There will also be close collaboration with NUS Scotland.

Programme of Events

4. It is envisaged that sufficient topics exist to allow a series of four or more workshops, which would identify and explore the issues affecting the postgraduate researcher (PGR) experience in Scottish HEIs, with leadership of the events being shared amongst our organisations and possibly others. The workshops will provide an opportunity for colleagues from the sector to discuss the needs of PGRs and to explore the challenges, opportunities and good practice in responding to these.

5. The first scoping workshop held on September 11 2009 aimed to identify and agree the main themes of importance to the sector regarding the postgraduate research student experience. It was agreed that these themes would form the basis of subsequent workshops and will help inform the scope and focus of the International Benchmarking.

6. Future events are likely to be:

April 30 2010:	QAA Scotland International Benchmarking Postgraduate Research Degree Student Experience Workshop - Venue TBC
Summer 2010	Vitae workshop on Graduate Schools - Venue TBC
July 6 2010:	HEA PRES workshop on skills, careers and employability – Heriot-Watt University
Autumn 2010	HEA workshop on Postgraduates who Teach - Venue TBC

7. Advance notification of events will be circulated to the sector.

8. Further information

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