**PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods**
**Periodic Review**

Monday 13th May 2024
On Microsoft Teams

**PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

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| Dr Mark Bodman-Smith (Chair) | Deputy Head of the Graduate School (Research Degrees), St George's, University of London |
| Dr Vanessa Muirhead | Clinical Reader/Honorary Consultant in Dental Public Health, Queen Mary, University of London |
| Dr Gwyn Owen | Deputy Course Director MSc Physiotherapy, St George's, University of London |
| Dr Scott Roberts | Reader in Translational Skeletal Research, Royal Veterinary College |
| Ratna Romy | Student Panel Member, St George's, University of London |

**In attendance**

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| Glen Delahaye | Senior Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager, St George's, University of London |

**Introduction and Context**

1) PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods was approved by a validation panel in May 2019, with the course opening for 2019/20. The PgCert offers accessible research training and qualification suitable for postgraduate pre-doctoral level medics, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists and allied health professionals.

2) In May 2021, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) decided to extend the approval period of all courses by one year, due to the impact of the pandemic. The PgCert was therefore due for review in 2022/23. A joint revalidation of the PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods together with MSc/MRes Translational Medicine was considered in 2022/23. It was eventually decided that the courses would instead be reviewed or revalidated separately, resulting in a further delay and so the Periodic Review of PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods took place in 2023/24.

**Conduct of the meeting**

3) Prior to the meeting, the Panel received the documents listed in Annex A. The Panel held a private meeting at which it confirmed the range of issues that it wished to explore through the event. The Panel then held a meeting with students who had completed or were completing the course, followed by a meeting with the course team (see Annex B for the list of staff attendees).

**Decision**

4) The Panel recommended reapproval of the PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods to Senate for a further period of five years. The PgCert Healthcare Research Skills and Methods would next be reviewed or revalidated in 2028/29. A number of Advisable Actions were agreed by the Panel and are listed in paragraph 6. There was no requirement for the course team to submit a response to the actions.

**Good Practice**

5) The following areas of Good Practice were noted by the Panel:

a. The academic, pastoral and emotional support from the course team, which the Panel recognised was particularly valuable since the students had busy careers outside of the course (paragraphs 13-15).

b. The presence of the course co-director on-site and in lectures, even when not delivering them (paragraph 14).

c. The way in which the course supported career development and the confidence that it gave students. Students had been able to take learning from the course back into their day jobs and apply it to open up new opportunities (paragraphs 16-17).

d. The way in which the course was tailored to the different professions of the student body (paragraph 18).

e. The course team's responsiveness to student feedback and the way in which they factored the student's workloads into the course.

**Actions**

6) The following advisable actions were suggested by the Panel:

Advisable Action 1
Continue to engage with Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity, exploring ways of opening the course up to a more diverse student body (paragraphs 20-21).

Advisable Action 2
Consider reaching out to other institutions to increase awareness of the course beyond SGUL and City.

Advisable Action 3
Continue to keep AI on the agenda, exploring ways of incorporating it into the course to show students how it can be used helpfully, and keep assessment types diverse to combat inappropriate use of AI (paragraphs 23-24).

Advisable Action 4
The Panel supported the embedding of the *Understanding Clinical Research* textbook into the course (paragraph 25).

Advisable Action 5
Celebrate the success of the students, by using examples of their achievements to promote the course to prospective employers and students (paragraph 17).

Advisable Action 6
While noting that technical problems could occur beyond the course team's control, the Panel encouraged the course team to ensure that lecturers were well trained on how to record lectures (paragraphs 19 and 27).

**Meeting with students**

7) The Panel met privately with three students who had either completed the PgCert or were currently on it.

Assessment

8) The course included formative assessments, which the students found helpful in preparing for the summative assessments. For example, for the Research Methods module, there was a formative presentation of a research proposal to a group of students and staff. The students had been able to take on board the comments received for the presentation when writing the summative assessment, which was a completed research proposal.

9) The students appreciated the variety of assessments on the PgCert. One student suggested that they would like there to be a summative presentation, but noted that it might be difficult to implement due to the work commitments of the students.

10) The assessments were well spread out, with the exception of a pinch point in April when two papers were due around the same time.

<u>Library and Canvas</u>

11) SGUL's library resources had been very helpful for the students. They could be accessed after work and on weekends. There were sessions available for the students to teach them how to access and search literature.

12) Canvas also provided the students with helpful resources. One student noted that it could be difficult to navigate Canvas, but that this was the same for most providers and that help was available if needed.

<u>Student Support</u>

13) The students found all of the lecturers to be very supportive whether the support required was academic or pastoral. Supervisors were also available when needed. Responses to emails were quick. One student had needed to apply for mitigating circumstances and had received a Teams call from the course team, offering advice and guidance on how to apply.

14) The students mentioned that the course co-director, Dr Mathew Paul, was particularly receptive to feedback and was generally easy to find onsite, even when he was not delivering lectures that day.

15) Overall, the students found the communication from the course team to be frequent and very clear.

<u>Employability</u>

16) The students stated that the course had expanded their career opportunities. One of the students mentioned that it had helped them when writing grant proposals, as it had made them feel more confident in using the appropriate "lingo", which they had picked up from the course. Another student mentioned that the course had helped them to translate their theoretical skills into practical skills and that it looked good on their CV.

17) One of the students had been involved in a number of projects at St George's Hospital, including the development of a programme to provide junior nurses with an understanding of evidence-based practice. The student mentioned that they had also won an award since completing the PgCert.

<u>Additional points</u>

18) All of the students that met with the Panel felt that the course had been tailored to suit their personal needs and specific disciplines. There was a lot of variation across the course for them to choose from and they were able to select a project that suited their interests.

19) One of the students noted that there had been an occasion where a lecture was not captured for Panopto. They noted that some lecturers did not appear to be happy when students were not present in the room. The student suggested that there should be a more open attitude to Panopto, since students had other commitments and it could sometimes be difficult for them to attend in person.

**Meeting with course team**

<u>Diversity and Inclusion</u>

20) The team noted that there was underrepresentation within the teams that the PgCert students were being recruited from, which resulted in the same gaps on the PgCert course. They were ensuring that everyone within those teams was receiving the same equal opportunity to join the course.

21) The course team had been working with the Lecturer in Inclusive Education at SGUL, who had developed a Course Action Planner, which was intended to ensure that the curriculum was diverse and reflected the needs of the student body.

<u>Maintaining standards and consistency between lecturers</u>

22) Whenever a new lecturer was recruited, the course team worked closely with the new lecturer to support them in understanding the teaching materials. The Course Co-Director attended the majority of taught sessions and whenever there was a new lecturer, he attended and sought feedback from the students directly after the session.

<u>Artificial Intelligence (AI)</u>

23) SGUL had developed information and guidance on how students at St George's, University of London should approach the use of Generative AI technologies when undertaking all forms of assessment during their studies.

24) The course team did not believe that there was any form of assessment that was fully AI-proof, but they were confident that markers would still be able to reliable detect AI material in assessments and could invite students for a viva if they suspected assessment malpractice may have occurred. For example, they did not believe that AI could excel in a research proposal yet, as it would likely produce unfocused text, filling up the word count quickly, but without addressing the points needed to pass the work. They acknowledged that AI was constantly developing though and it remained a standing agenda item on the course committee agenda.

<u>Understanding Clinical Research textbook</u>

25) Prof Nidhi Sofat had recently co-authored 'Understanding Clinical Research: An Introduction', a textbook that the course team intended to integrate into the PgCert teaching. The chapters of the textbook had been designed to reflect the PgCert's modules and also included general information about planning a research career and ideas for different career trajectories.

<u>Additional points</u>

26) The course team signposted students to activities that aligned with the course aims, as well as events that might help them to network amongst research activity healthcare professionals.

27) The course team acknowledged that there had been an instance of a lecture not being recorded on Panopto, but that it did not happen often. When there had been difficulties recording sessions, the course team had made recordings from previous years available to students.

*GD/June2024*

**Annex A – course documents**

Self-evaluation Document
Programme Regulations
Programme Specification
Module Directory
Scheme of Assessment
Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (for the last three years)
External Examiner Reports (for the last three years)
Staff CVs
Student feedback from SOLTS and PTES

**Annex B – Programme Team**

Dr Mathew Paul, Course Co-Director
Prof Nidhi Sofat, Course Co-Director
Philip Sedgwick, Common Postgraduate Framework Lead
Julia Critchley, Research Methods Lead