Enhancing Student Support
Benchmarking Event
19 February 2013

Postgraduate Support
Panel Discussion

Panel:

- **Professor Philippa Saunders** (Convenor), Dean of Postgraduate Research, College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine
- **Professor Ian Pirie**, Assistant Principal Learning and Development
- **Louisa Lawes**, Head of Researcher Development, Institute for Academic Development
- **Charlotte Snelling**, Postgraduate Convenor, EUSA

Notes:

- **PGR Support Consultation**: PGR students can sometimes feel isolated and fostering a shared sense of community, purpose and understanding of others is an important aspect of their university experience. A process must be in place which will ensure that students know that they are supported. It is not the intention to assume that a Personal Tutor system will be implemented for PGR students. There is a strong desire that the role of the supervisor should not be "diluted". Existing structures and processes (e.g. annual review of progress, PG Directors/Advisers and thesis committees/meetings) could be strengthened in order to ensure that existing procedures are adhered to.

- **Supervisor Issues**: Students can feel very isolated if they experience problems with their supervisor. It is important that they have clearly defined and readily available support in such situations.

- **Academic Support**: Students may have expectations that that a supervisor is the main point of contact with regard to academic training and skills. Is the supervisor the appropriate main point of contact for training? It was noted that the Institute for Academic Development works with PGR students to identify training needs.

- **Pastoral Support**: Students may have expectations of pastoral guidance and support from a supervisor. Is the supervisor the appropriate first point of contact for pastoral problems and concerns? It was noted that the Counselling Service is currently facing greatly increased usage but that PGR students are not over or underrepresented and present with similar issues to taught students.

- **Careers Advice**: Student survey responses regarding careers advice have been poor. Is the supervisor the appropriate first point of contact for careers advice (especially regarding non-academic careers)? It was noted that the Careers Service provide support for PGR students (including web resources, workshops, individual guidance and a blog).

- **Peer Support**: There is a need to enhance peer support for PGR students (i.e. more social events).

- **Online Support**: It is important that the support structure is clarified and developed prior to the development of online systems and technology (the former dictating the latter).