E4 DTP Management Team response to the Student Advisory Board Report

Circulated 02/05/2023

With reference to the Student Advisory Board report submitted 16 February 2023 (attached)

Revisit actions from last meeting: management response

1	**SAB Suggestion:** Videos made portraying student's lives are almost ready and will be used next application season. Students suggested having an event to display the videos and suggested April as an option for the event.
	We have the 6 finalised videos now. They have been posted on the E4 DTP website "A day in my PhD life" videos | The University of Edinburgh and will be showcased at our Summer Social on 15 June.

2	New Grant Writing course and Scientific Writing workshop for 2nd years 2023 **SAB Comments:** Overall, the comments are positive. People found both workshops generally helpful. For some they were more of a reminder of what they already knew. For others, the workshops were very helpful and delivered at a good time as they begin to get to the stage of paper publishing and grant writing. Some things that could be added to improve them: • Talk about ways to make the papers content understandable and accessible. • Differentiating between what makes papers/grants good vs great. • More practical elements: e.g., looking at grants or running through a grant process. ECCI had something like this (which was great!), but there was not enough time to go through it. • Add an additional section to the grant writing workshop with someone at a similar career stage (eg. Post doc) who can talk about their experience. • Discuss different grant writing approaches for small grants vs. Larger grants as it was felt like the workshop was directed at larger grants and people are currently applying for smaller grants
	Thank you for this helpful feedback, and we are glad to see that those new workshops were well received. We will pass on relevant feedback to Jo Young who did the Scientific Writing workshop and will look at incorporating the suggested additions in the next Grant Writing workshop: grant process (although these vary from one call to another); having a postdoc talking about their own grant experience (this is also approached in our Career Event in April); detailed grants requirements by types/sizes with a focus on smaller grants (Kyle gave general tips and advice which apply to all grant applications). Also, if Jo Young does not run the workshop in the future, the DTP-delivered part of the grant workshop will be sure to include practical elements. *See Action 1 in table below*

3	**SAB Suggestion:** Students suggested that 1st and 2nd year training calendars could be passed to all years to be able to attend seminars and workshops that are different from previous years and that could be of interest.
	The DTP training schedule is circulated to all DTP students in September for the whole year. It is printed and displayed in Grant and also published on the E4 DTP intranet pages and on the GeoSciences PGR Teams Channel (which all DTP students can join). The schedule includes a clear indication of which year the training is aimed at in priority and whether attendance from other cohorts is allowed (most of the time it is). We make every effort not to change dates of training in the year but sometimes we have to, due to annual leave or other clashes (such as strikes).

4	**SAB Comment:** The issue of compassionate leave was raised, so far it has been processed as sick leave but compassionate leave is still being discussed since it must be addressed and approved by NERC.
	In November 2022, UKRI updated its Research and Training Grants Terms and Conditions with a new special leave (see TGC 8.3.1 of the T&Cs: UKRI-021122-TrainingGrantTermsAndConditions.pdf and training grant guide UKRI-021122-TrainingGrantTermsAndConditionsGuidance.pdf). Details of this have been sent to all DTP students on the 16 February 2023. This new special leave is for short-term time off needed for emergencies (time for dependants) and/or compassionate leave. It will in most cases provide up to 5 days of paid leave, depending on circumstances. There is a DTP form that needs to be completed when applying for the special leave and which can be found on the intranet pages: e4_special_leave_request_form.docx (live.com)

Student/SAB feedback to management

Extended Frontiers (EF)

5	**SAB Comments:**
	• Discussion ensured over if EF should have a theme to it, there was not a clear consensus. It was agreed upon that second-year students can come up with a theme and find speakers at the beginning of the second year in a small gathering that could be organized by the DTP in September. • Timings of the EF could be pushed towards the second semester, where invites are sent out by October with EF commencing in the spring. • Students organizing the EF should aim to include more Master or Undergraduate students (although reaching out to these groups has to be done by the PhD students themselves, not the DTP organization board)
	Thank you for taking forward this suggestion and we are happy to give this a go. We will organise a get-together of the cohort in their year 2 in September/October 2023 so that plans are made towards a delivery of EF in Spring 2024. *See Action 2 in table below*

Recruitment

6	**SAB Comments:**
	By default, supervisors will no longer be invited to the interviews, but there is the possibility of extending an invitation.
	This was indeed discussed at SAB but the matter was again debated in the following E4 Core Management meeting and we felt that there are strong advantages to inviting supervisors if applicants agree. This year we stuck to the situation where students had to give approval for supervisors to attend and we did not notice any issue with this practice (about 50% of candidates did not have their supervisors attending their interview, but mostly because they were not free). We suggest keeping this practice, which empowers the candidate and prompts both supervisors and candidates to have an open conversation about this. We will monitor this in next years' recruitment as well.

7	**SAB Comments:**
	The wording of pre-approval should be clarified on the website.
	This is a difficult step in our recruitment process that we had to implement to keep the number of international applications under control and also to manage expectations from both supervisors and candidates. Ideally, we would omit this step and all international candidates would be able to apply, but at the moment this is not possible. We have plans to get an online application platform which will allow this, but this has not been completed yet. We hope this can be operational for next year's recruitment round. *See Action 3 in table below*

Frontiers

8	**SAB Suggestions:**
	• It was suggested that the Frontiers run for two hours, with the first hour including the talk and questions about the talk, and the second hour being used for a short talk on the career trajectory of the speaker and then discussion on careers. • Alternatively, speakers can be given the option of doing a workshop during this second half.
	Thanks for these suggestions. We will update our guidance to Frontiers speakers with these. Frontier lectures can be very variable in terms of delivery and content as each speaker is different and will have their own style, although we do give them general guidance on what is expected from them. *See Action 4 in table below*

Imposter Syndrome Workshop

9	**SAB Suggestions:**
	• There is interest on having this workshop among the DTP student population. • Possibly second year + PhD students can talk about their experience and how they deal with imposter syndrome.

	IAD has a workshop on the Imposter Syndrome. O-Z Course List | The University of Edinburgh We have been passed an external contact for a possible speaker and will explore organising a specific workshop for E4. *See Action 5 in table below*

Summary of Proposed Actions

Action n.	Description	Timeframe / when	How/Who
Action 1 (item 2 above)	Pass on Student feedback and suggestions regarding the new Scientific Writing and Grant Writing workshops delivered in January 2023 for January 2024	1st semester 2023/2024	E4 DD for Training/E4 Manager to those delivering the workshops
Action 2 (item 5 above)	Organise a get-together of cohort in their 2nd year in September/October 2023 to plan the Extended Frontiers series of Spring 2024.	September/ October 2023	E4 Manager and year 2 cohort
Action 3 (item 7 above)	Chase-up IT team re the E4 online application platform	ASAP	E4 DTP Manager
Action 4 (item 8 above)	Update guidance given to the Frontiers Series speakers	1st semester 2023/2024	E4 DD for Training/E4 Manager to those delivering the lectures
Action 5 (item 9 above)	Explore organising a workshop on the Imposter Syndrome	1st semester 2023/2024	E4 DD for Training/E4 Manager

If you have any questions on this document, please email the E4 DTP Manager stephanie.robin@ed.ac.uk or the E4 DTP Director: richard.essery@ed.ac.uk.