

E4 DTP Management Team response to the Student Advisory Board Report

Circulated 27/05/2024

With reference to the Student Advisory Board report submitted 6 May 2024 (attached)

Revisit pending actions from last year's SAB management response

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| 1 | <p>WORKSHOP ON THE IMPOSTER SYNDROME</p> <p>SAB Comments: Emma Cunningham suggested one that is student-led. There are resources available already in place. Staff and students can be invited to talk about their own experiences and share similar views on how they handle it. Hannah Ravenswater and Anna Hewett would be good people to contact for this.</p> |
| | <p>Massimo Bollasina will get in touch with the suggested students and organise the workshop for Autumn 2024.</p> <p><i>See Action 1 in table below</i></p> |

Communications from the E4 Management team to SAB/Students

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| 2 | <p>FEES PAYMENT AFTER 4TH YEAR</p> <p>SAB Comments and suggestions: Different schools have different ways to deal with matriculation. So far physics and math will cover matriculation fees for the 4th year and probably Geosciences too. There are talks over in Biological Sciences to also fund these fees. Continuation fees will not be covered in any school, and these are paid monthly. The terms from the offer letter are going to be clearer in regard to the additional fees after fourth year. Consider including in the Furbush presentation and in the handbook from the beginning of the year.</p> |
| | <p>The E4 DTP funding offer letter has been updated to clearly reflect the fact that the studentship covers fees for 4 years maximum.</p> <p>Matriculation fees (to cover corrections after submission) and continuation fees (fees due when the PhD submission deadline is extended beyond 4 years) will be discontinued from August 2024 so these won't be a problem after then.</p> <p>Continuing study beyond annual tuition fees 2024-2025 The University of Edinburgh</p> <p>There will be further changes to fees for year 2025/26 so watch this space. It is likely that the 4th year matriculation fees will also be scrapped but some programmes will become 4 years of</p> |

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| | <p>study by then and so 4 years of full tuition fees will be due (likely to be covered by funding sources when possible).</p> <p>Any further changes on fee policy and payment will be communicated by Schools PGR office.</p> |
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| 3 | <p>E5 DLA</p> |
| | <p>The E5 DLA proposal was submitted at the end of April 2024. Results are expected by October 2024. If funded, the first E5 cohort will start in September 2025.</p> <p>Thanks to those who participated in our online survey and feedback sessions to feed into the E4 DLA proposal. One of the biggest changes for E5 and based on your feedback is that the funding will cover the full 4 years. This will however include a compulsory PIP (this is a condition of the funding). Other EDI and wellbeing suggestions have been taken on board as well.</p> |

Student/SAB feedback to management

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| 4 | <p>FRONTIERS LECTURE SERIES</p> <p>SAB Comments:</p> <p>Students felt that in some of the talks of the Frontiers series, the second half of the talks where speakers talk about their personal experience in academia and their career was not too detailed. This might be due to people willing to share their personal lives and different personalities. Prompt questions prior to talks to give the speakers.</p> |
| | <p>Speakers in this series come from a wide range of areas and career paths (academia or non-academia and are at various career-stages). People in general can be more or less comfortable sharing personal experiences and styles will differ from a person to another. That is also what this series aims to illustrate: the variety of profiles and therefore the variety of career pathways. While we acknowledge this comment, we would like to keep the format as it is now.</p> |

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| 5 | <p>ECCI TRAINING</p> <p>SAB Comments:</p> <p>Project management workshop was really helpful and more workshops like these might be useful in the future.</p> |
| | <p>Thanks for your feedback which we will pass on to the ECCI team. The ECCI training workshops will be organised for another 2-3 years on E4 so that everyone can attend sessions they have missed and complete their compulsory training.</p> |

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| 6 | <p>NMDM</p> <p>SAB Comments:</p> <p>Include more applicable examples on the Numeracy and Data Management sessions so that it can be more insightful to everyone independently of their knowledge on the session. Consider having different levels for the workshops.</p> |
| | <p>We have a pre-course survey that students complete to indicate their level of expertise in each of the taught methods. This is passed to the academics providing the training so that they can address the diversity of levels amongst the students and adjust the class content. The Python and R classes already include exercises for different levels.</p> <p>The existing NMDM will only run for one more year (2nd semester 2024/25) for the last cohort of E4. A new training programme on environmental data science will be developed to meet students needs in E5.</p> |

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| 7 | <p>PIP</p> <p>SAB Suggestions:</p> <p>A way to learn from other students' PIP experiences might be useful. Previous student reports might be nice to have access to.</p> |
| | <p>Thanks for this suggestion. We will need to ask students if they are happy for their report to be shared as this is not currently the purpose of the report but this is a good idea indeed.</p> <p>We also encourage students to give relaxed talks as part of our social events twice a year and in the past we have had students talking about their PIP adventures. This is a great way of sharing the PIP experience.</p> <p>As part of the 1st year induction, we also have upper year students talking about their PIP; this could be repeated on other occasions throughout the PhD.</p> <p><i>See Action 2 in table below</i></p> |

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| 8 | <p>COMMUNICATING WITH EACH OTHER</p> <p>SAB Suggestions:</p> <p>Students should be encouraged to use email lists and Teams channels to build a community.</p> |
| | <p>We entirely agree. Teams is a good way to ask questions to peers when looking for advice or to find someone who has had the same experience (e.g. going on a PIP abroad).</p> <p>The GeoSciences PGR Teams (which all E4 students can join, even from other Schools) is available for this and anyone can post a message there. There is also the generic E4 mailing list which include all current students and students are welcome to use it also to communicate with E4 students: e4dtp@mlist.is.ed.ac.uk</p> <p>Generally, students should feel confident in using these channels as a mean to reach out to their peers and find support and advice in the PGR community.</p> <p>We will continue to signpost these but please use them!</p> |

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| 9 | FEES SAB Comments: Students are concerned about additional fees. |
| | See item 2 for changes announced on fees which should reassure students. For those finishing before August 2024, the current policy about fees is as described in the email sent 15 November 2023, basically saying that E4 will cover 4 th year matriculation and continuation fees until the stipend ends but cannot cover fees beyond stipend or submission as per the UKRI Training Grant Terms and conditions. Students can get in touch with e4dtp.support@ed.ac.uk if they have questions on their particular case. |

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| 10 | EXTENSIONS SAB Comments: An email regarding extensions might be useful |
| | E4 stipend extensions are through our two stipend extension schemes: the PIP and the PDS. Information about both schemes is sent regularly to relevant years and repeated during training when relevant. These are not stipend extensions per se but correspond to specific activities (placement or publication). In the past, E4 has also had Covid extensions allocated to students on a case-by-case basis. The Covid fund is now closed but we are still considering requests for additional RTSG or funding extensions based on Covid impact. |

Summary of Proposed Actions

| Action n. | Description | Timeframe / when | How/Who |
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| Action 1 (item 1) | Workshop on the Imposter Syndrome | 1st semester 2024/2025 | E4 DD for Training/E4 Manager |
| Action 2 (item 7) | Ask students about sharing PIP reports with the E4 community and put them on the intranet pages. | Summer 2024 | E4 Assistant Administrator |

If you have any questions on this document, please email the E4 DTP admin team e4dtp.support@ed.ac.uk or the E4 DTP Director: richard.essery@ed.ac.uk.

E4 DTP Student Advisory Board Report

Thursday 7 December 2023 – 12:00-14:00 - Grant 304b

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| In attendance | Richard Essery, Emma Cunningham, Massimo Bollasina, Stephanie Robin, Lee Fox, Josie McPherson, Dana Druka, Aideliz Montiel Alvarez, Georgia Lambert, Katia Trevino-Cuellar, Joe Everest, Lokesh Jain, Frederik Madsen, Aninda Bhattacharya, Clara Nyqvist, Rachael Eggleston, Nadia Jogee |
| Apologies | Chris Holdsworth, Christine Gaebel, Lizzie Telford, Helen Hughes, Julie Grosse-Sommer, Ludwig Baldazsti, Corinne Baulcomb |
| Papers for reference (attached) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SAB report 2022• DTP Management response to SAB report 2022 |

1. E4 Management Actions in response to the SAB 2022 report (response circulated May 2023)

Action 1. Pass on Student feedback and suggestions regarding the new Scientific Writing and Grant Writing workshops delivered in January 2023 for January 2024

- Students discussed the suggestions for the writing workshops. They all agreed on the overall good experience they had in the January workshop and agreed that they would take it again.

Action 2. Organise a get-together of cohort in their 2nd year in September/October 2023 to plan the Extended Frontiers series of Spring 2024.

- Second year students should have a quick meeting to finish setting up the speakers for the Extended Frontiers series. Ideally a schedule of the whole series should be done by the end of January.

Action 3. Chase-up IT team re the E4 online application platform

- The new online application platform has come with over 600 applicants. Students talked about the application process with the E4 team.

Action 4. Update guidance given to the Frontiers Series speakers

- Speakers were advised to change the format of the talks, they were encouraged to include more of their personal experience although it was agreed that not everyone would be willing to share everything about their personal experience throughout their careers.

Action 5. Explore organising a workshop on the Imposter Syndrome

- This workshop is still not fully organised. Emma suggested one that is student-led. There are resources available already in place. Staff and students can be invited to talk about their own experiences and share similar views on how they handle it. Hannah and Anna would be good people to contact for this.

2. Communications from the E4 Management team to SAB/Students

Communication on fees after 4th year:

Different schools have different ways to deal with matriculation. So far physics and math will cover matriculation fees for the 4th year and probably Geosciences too. There are talks over in Biological Sciences to also fund these fees. Continuation fees will not be covered in any school, and these are paid monthly. The terms from the offer letter are going to be clearer in regard to the additional fees after fourth year. Consider including in the Firbush presentation and in the handbook from the beginning of the year.

DTP3 call timing:

Calls might be expected for January for submission in May, results might be in by October. The recruitment process might have to start before getting the results. Partners are in place. Meeting will take place with partners and E4 students will take place after January. New cohorts might be smaller. Recruitment might aim for more diverse students. Might require more interdisciplinary projects. More training on data management, ethics, data science, etc.

A feedback form might be useful to have in place for past cohorts and current ones can provide insight into the DTP experience.

3. E4 students' feedback to the E4 management team

1st Year

- Students felt that in some of the talks of the Frontiers series, the second half of the talks where speakers talk about their personal experience in academia and their career was not too detailed. This might be due to people willing to share their personal lives and different personalities. Prompt questions prior to talks to give the speakers.
- Project management workshop was really helpful and more workshops like these might be useful in the future.

2nd Year

- Include more applicable examples on the Numeracy and Data Management sessions so that it can be more insightful to everyone independently of their knowledge on the session. Consider having different levels for the workshops.

3rd Year

- A way to learn from other students' PIP experiences might be useful. Previous student reports might be nice to have access to.
- Students should be encouraged to use email lists and Teams channels to build a community.

4th Year

- Students are concerned about additional fees.
- An email regarding extensions might be useful.