The following topics were raised and discussed:

1. Teaching contracts and discrepancies in payment across departments
   a. Discussions involving HR and Professional Services are ongoing to ensure we put a consistent policy in place.

2. University studentship vs UKRI studentship – discrepancy in stipend
   a. Royal Holloway has aligned University-funded studentships to UKRI. These are covered by School budgets, so in some instances Schools will reduce stipends to maximise funds by supporting more students.
   b. The Doctoral School will increase transparency when the stipend is not offered at full UKRI rate so that students are aware of this from the offset.

3. PGR space within the Department of Politics and International Relations
   a. There is a meeting with Estates on 5 December to investigate refurbishing the space.
   b. Due to space constraints in the wider University, it is difficult to find an alternative.
   c. PGR students will be consulted before proceeding with any changes.

4. Council Tax exemption
   a. The Council Tax rules are set by the Government and Royal Holloway has no flexibility.

5. Bullying and Harassment
   a. The University takes bullying and harassment very seriously.
   b. Staff have to attend compulsory training to tackle this issues.

6. Can a Masters by Research continue studies as a PhD student?
   a. Yes, but you need to re-apply to start a new programme.

7. Lessons learnt from the Covid 19 pandemic

Doctoral School Open Meeting
16 November 2023
a. We put in place strategies that were not there before (such as online thesis submission and vivas) that have remained as standard processes.

8. **Health Surcharge for visa holders**
   a. There is a pushback from Higher Education institutions to get instalment payments plans to support international students.
   b. Royal Holloway is looking at this at University level.