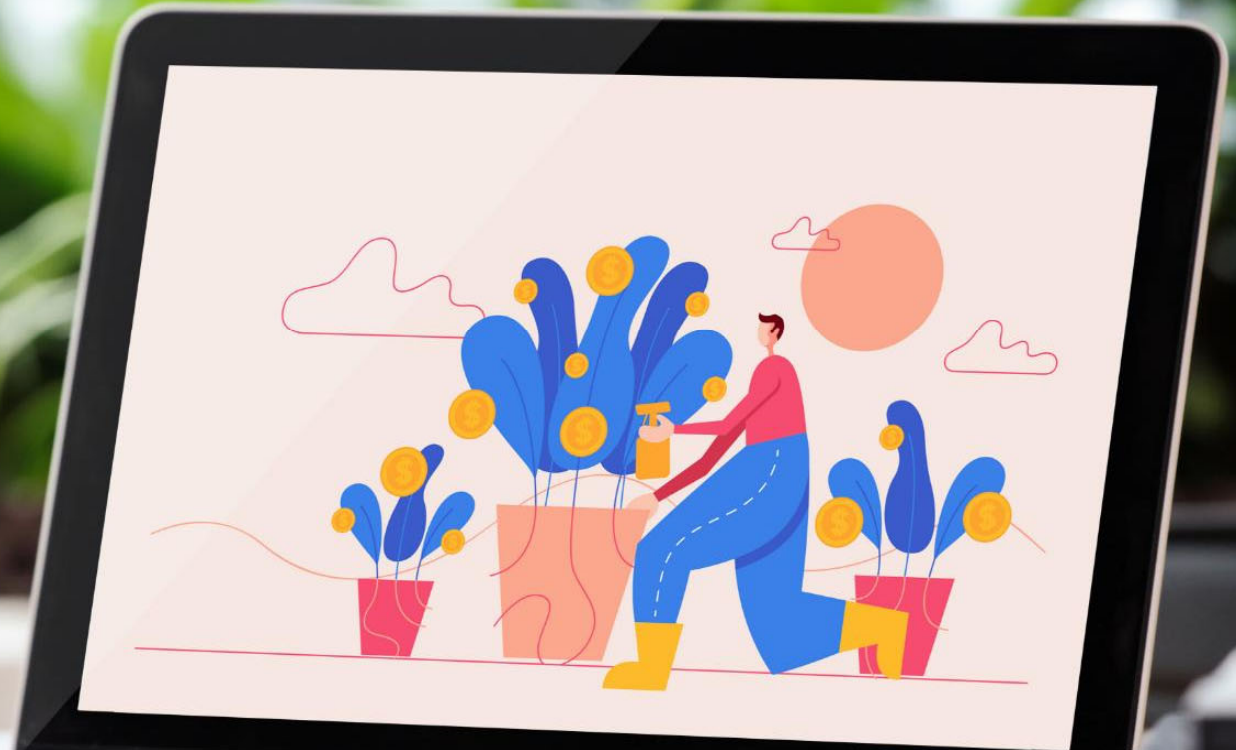




UK Council for
**Graduate
Education**



MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING IN ONLINE PGT STUDENTS

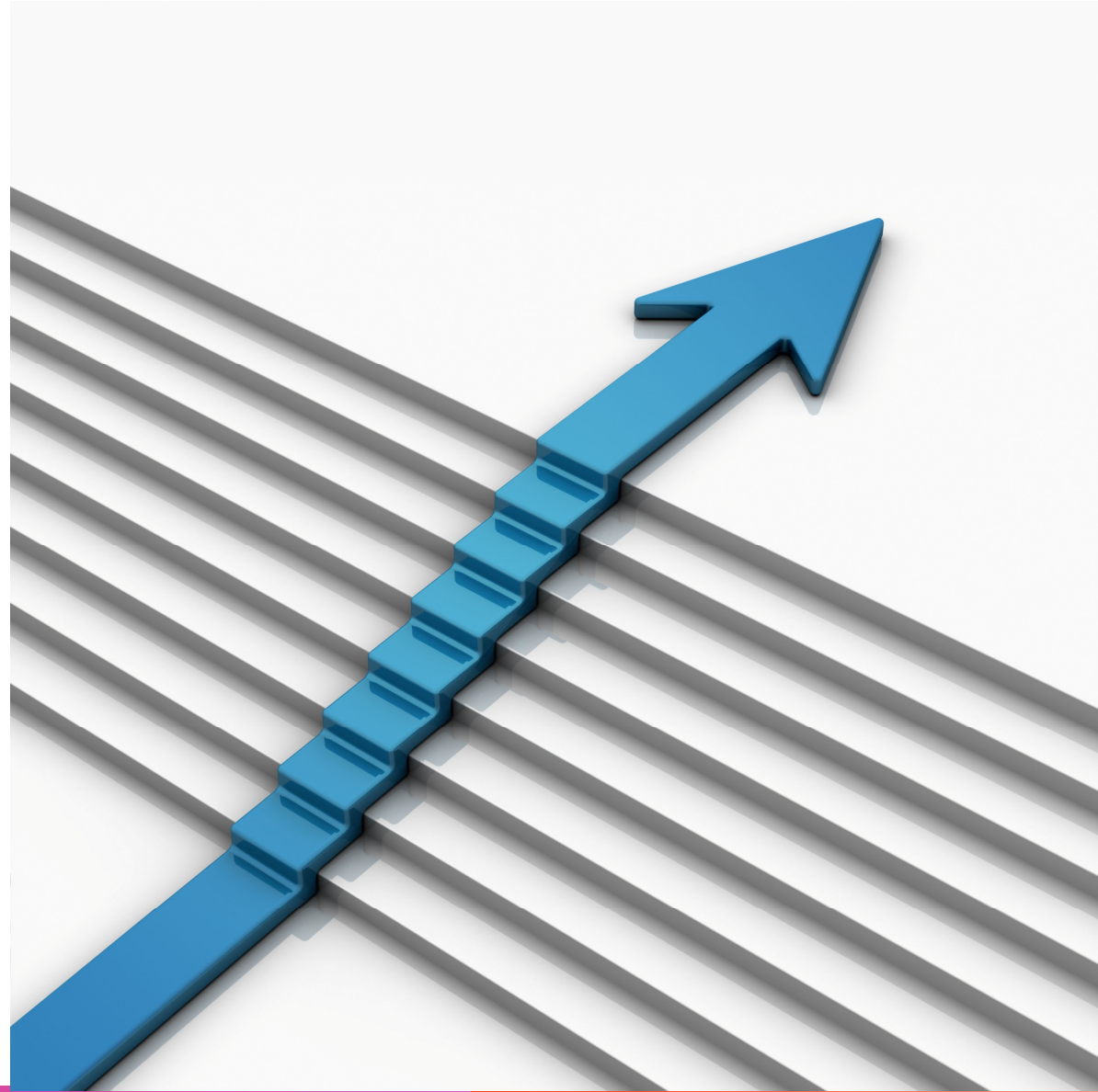
WHY IT MATTERS AND HOW TO SUPPORT IT



WHO WE ARE

CROPSNet – Background & the Story to Date

- ❑ Founded in September 2024 to connect colleagues in online PGT, improve evidence-base, and increase the visibility of online PGT education
- ❑ Over 150 members from 40+ institutions, mainly UK-based, but also from Africa, the Middle-East, & Australia
- ❑ Host quarterly online PGT-focused seminars, produce a quarterly newsletter, & organise a yearly conference
- ❑ Support and promote research & other projects in the online PGT space, focusing on collaboration



About the Author

- ❑ Founder & Director of CROPSNet
- ❑ Teaching Fellow, Institute of Global Health Innovation & the Fleming Initiative, Imperial College
- ❑ Previously taught at the University of Glasgow
- ❑ Taught on: MSc Global Mental Health (ODL), MSc Digital Health Interventions (ODL due to COVID) at the University of Glasgow, MSc Patient Safety, MSc Health Policy, and MSc in Digital Health Leadership at Imperial College
- ❑ + Impact of Trauma (Microcredential) and PTSD in the Global Context (MOOC)



Julien le Jeune d'Allegeershecque

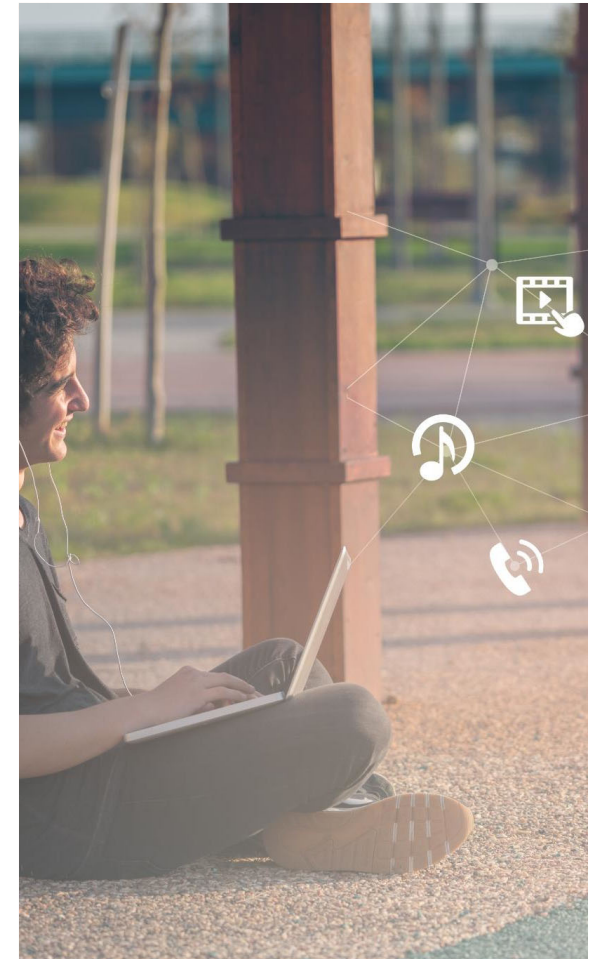
Director



CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Mental Health & Wellbeing in Online PGT Students

- ❑ Focus on Online PGT Wellbeing
- ❑ Challenges Across Student Journey
- ❑ Programme Design and Practice
- ❑ Wellbeing as Educational Quality





Why This Matters

- ❑ Challenges of Online PGT Students
- ❑ Consequences of Mental Health Issues
- ❑ Gap in Support for Online PGT
- ❑ Importance of Holistic Wellbeing

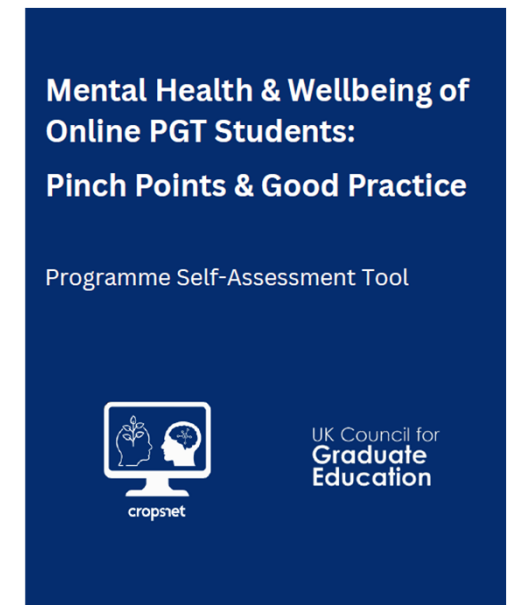
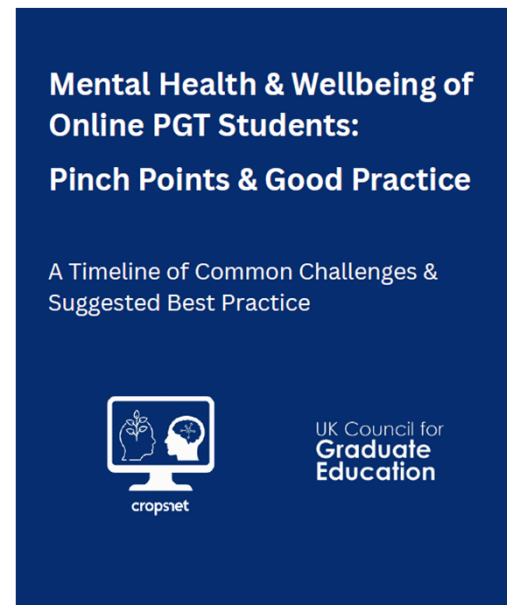


Core Challenges

- ☐ Role Conflict and Time Pressure
- ☐ Isolation and Reduced Interaction
- ☐ Stress Around Assessments
- ☐ Additional International Student Pressures

The Guidance Document

- Commissioned by UKCGE in early 2025
– builds on previous ‘Pinch Points’ guidance developed at Imperial but targeted at PGR Students
- Development involved staff and student workshops, literature review, and an internal review process by CROPSNet members
- Guidance document published in late May, alongside a parallel self-assessment tool



Key Insights

Role of Programme Design

Programme design and teaching practice shape student wellbeing daily beyond central support services.

Limitations of Support Services

Counselling and wellbeing services are reactive, unevenly accessed, and constrained for some students.

Impact on Student Experience

Clarity, predictability, and human presence influence cognitive load, belonging, and coping capacity.

Shift to Systemic Design

Focus on systemic design empowers programme teams to improve wellbeing within existing roles.

Mental Health & Wellbeing of Online PGT Students: Pinch Points & Good Practice

A Timeline of Common Challenges &
Suggested Best Practice



UK Council for
**Graduate
Education**



THE ONLINE PGT STUDENT JOURNEY





Student Journey and Pinch Points

Stages in Student Journey

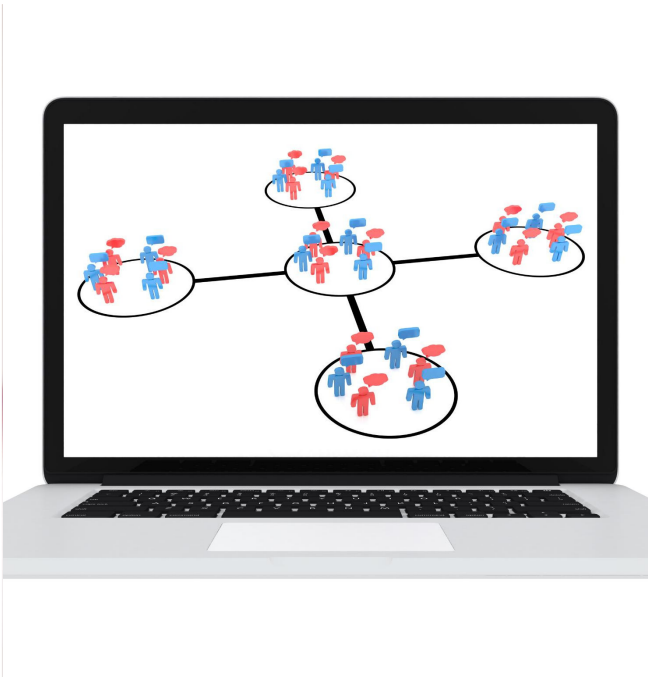
The student journey includes pre-application, programme start, term time, assessments, dissertation, and difficulty periods.

Wellbeing Pinch Points

Wellbeing challenges intensify at specific pinch points like workload peaks and personal difficulties.

Proactive Intervention Opportunities

Recognizing patterns in wellbeing allows preventive interventions rather than reactive one-off efforts.



What Works Across All Stages

- ☐ Clear Realistic Communication
- ☐ Predictable Structures
- ☐ Visible Staff Presence
- ☐ Opportunities for Connection

Pre-Application Risks

- ☐ Underestimating Workload
- ☐ Fragmented Information
- ☐ Decision Pressure and Anxiety
- ☐ Misaligned Expectations



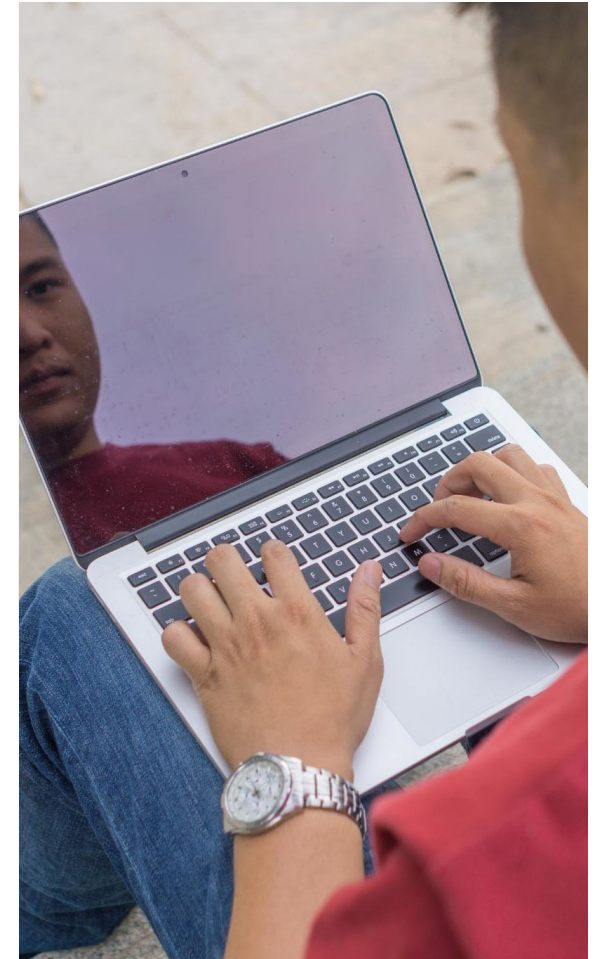


Pre-Application Good Practice

- ☐ Transparent Information Sharing
- ☐ Realistic Student Narratives
- ☐ Wellbeing Support Visibility
- ☐ Building Applicant Trust

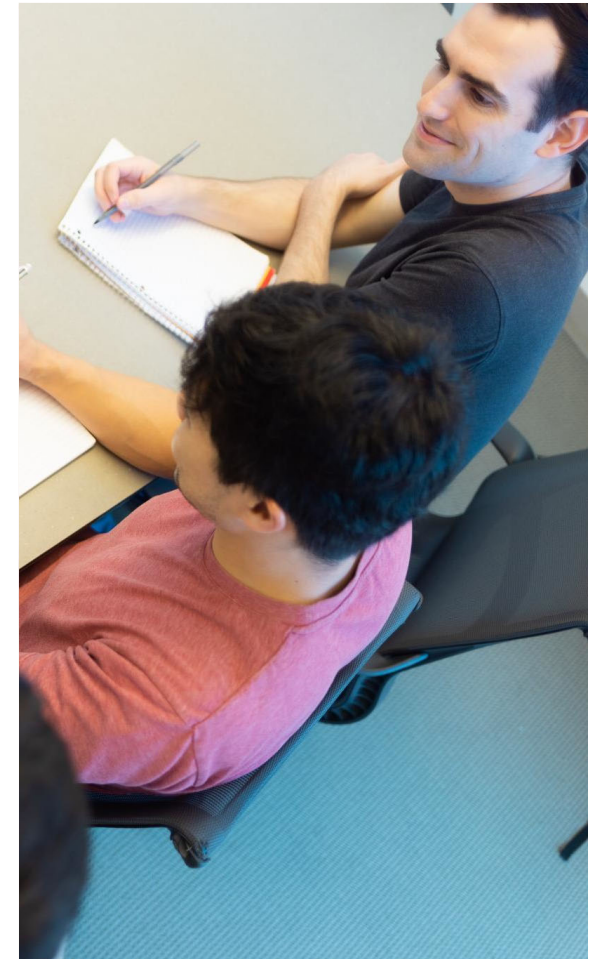
Programme Start Challenges

- ☐ Critical Transition Period
- ☐ Participation Anxiety
- ☐ Information Overload
- ☐ Limited Peer Interaction



Programme Start Good Practice

- ❑ Reducing Uncertainty and Building Confidence
- ❑ Strong Induction and Guidance
- ❑ Visible Support and Peer Interaction
- ❑ Wellbeing and Help-Seeking Culture



0 T P :C 8 #S 9 2 #

M P E 8 P % B B 2 # % C 0 #

0 :Q Q 2 P S % S :E C

Snfi~ Sv~ n#Mfinfl·finfl

E ;tεv t#Mfinfl·fin#;l#εfil}εal

M8 S#l·ln; f#ajna#jj·~ ·}a#t#εfil}εal#;l#}jfna#t#εat·n#
l·fin t#nfi~ #v~ n#ua#jua}}n;tn#l·flavnl#;tatn~ n;ε

7}·j#·a#t#Bε#v#a#ε;

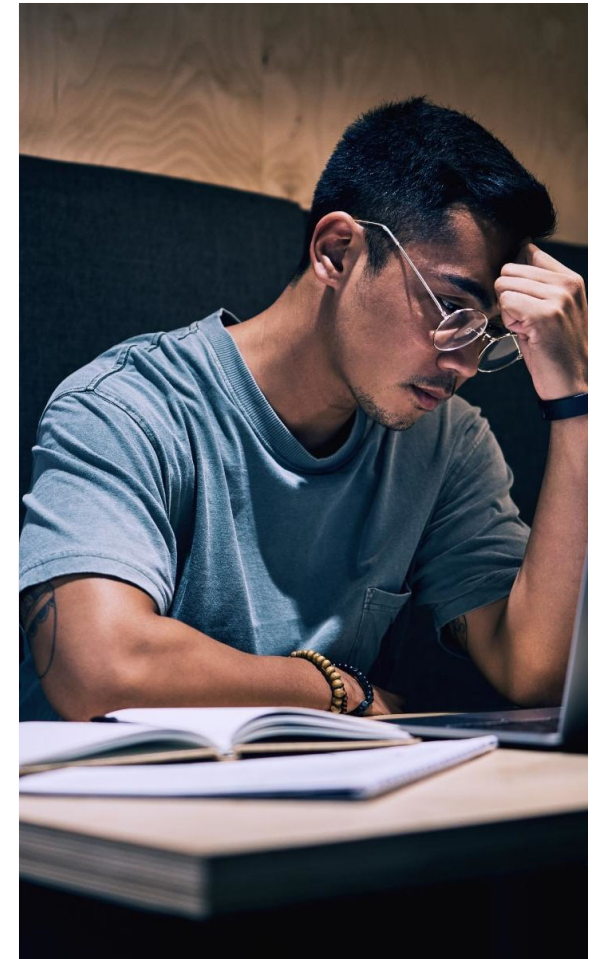
Bε#v#a#ε;#n"n}#aj#af#v~ «aj#t#ajaln~ vj#fεtfinfl#;l#
»n}}inv t#}#vsnfi;#a#l#ε"nf#v~ n1

Z n}}inv t#f#D%ia~ vj#;l# ·~ ·}a#v~n

Z n}}inv t#}·j#·a#nfl#;l#ajj·~ ·}a#nfl#h>·v t#hafi#l·«εf#ε#
«fn"n; #n#j}n#nfl«vnaajaln~ vj#fεtfinfl

Q·fajna#Maf#vj#a#ε;#ε«v t

Q#·ln; f#~ a#alε«#l·fajna#af#vj#a#ε;#l#fantvfl#ε#ε«n#
fhl·jv t#n«u#ε#ajaln~ vj#;tatn~ n;ε





Assessment Pressure

Sources of Student Stress

Clustering of deadlines and unclear expectations during assessment periods increase anxiety for online students.

Impact of Feedback Delays

Delays in feedback cause uncertainty and exacerbate stress about performance and grading criteria.

Role of Assessment Design

Well-coordinated assessments reduce pressure and enhance students' control over their learning experience.

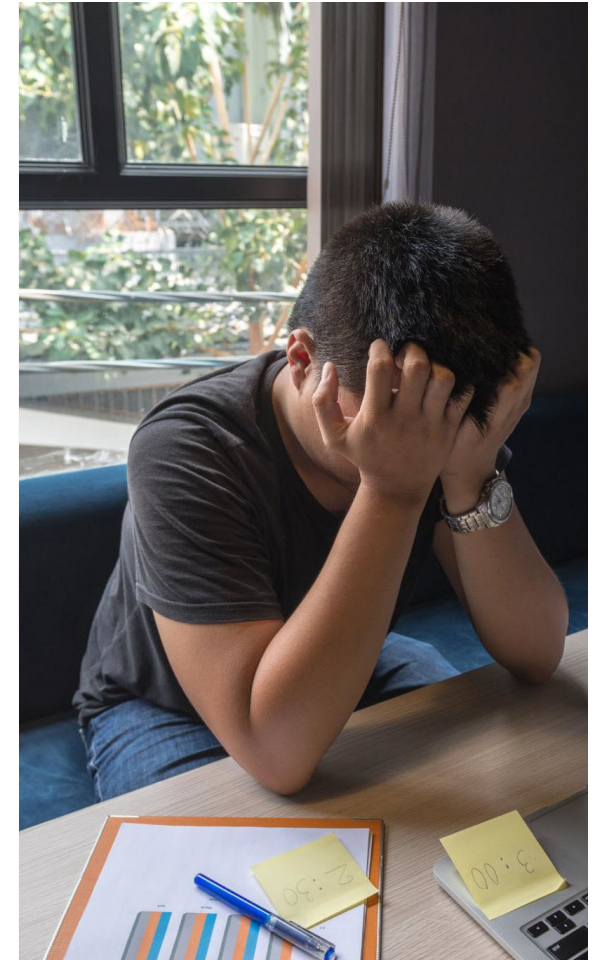


Sustaining Engagement

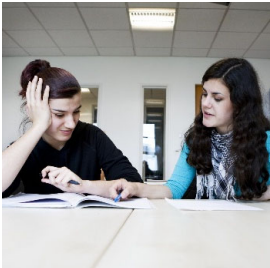
- ☐ Teaching Presence Importance
- ☐ Meaningful Learning Activities
- ☐ Reducing Workload where Appropriate
- ☐ Engagement and Wellbeing Link

Dissertation Risks

- ❑ Increased Independence Challenges
- ❑ Isolation and Reduced Interaction
- ❑ Uncertainty and Stress
- ❑ Need for Targeted Support

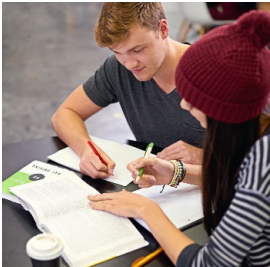


Dissertation Good Practice



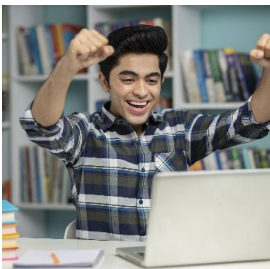
Structured Supervision

Clear supervision agreements and defined milestones help students plan and track their dissertation progress effectively.



Peer Interaction

Writing groups and peer support reduce isolation and normalize challenges faced during the dissertation process.



Motivation and Wellbeing

Focusing on process over perfection and recognizing incremental progress supports motivation and emotional wellbeing.



**SUPPORTING
STUDENTS AND
MOVING FORWARD**



Support Strategies

B ε ; v ε f i v t # a ; l # 7 ε } } ε » E T «

S f a j | v i t # i t a t n ~ n i # m l v j a ε f f l # a ; l # a f i v j w a # ε ; # j u a ; t n f #
u n } « f l # l n i # ε # l # l n i # f l # n n l v i t # l • « « ε f i # k f ε ~ « # j a l

Q a s s f i a v v i t # a ; l # ε • ; l a f i n f l

S f a v v i t # l a s s # ε f l # # j ε ; s l n i j n # m # u a ; l j v i t # v l j } ε f l • f n f # a ; l #
~ a v i t a v v i t # k f i s n f f l # ε ; a } # ε • ; l a f i n f l

. ε } } a i ε f a # ε ; # v u # M a f i # n f l

Z ε f i | v i t # v u # m f l # v • # ε ; a } # a ; l # ... n f i ; a } # a f i # n f l # v } } # l • « « ε f i #
t a « f l # n f l « n j a } } # ε f i # n f i ; a # ε ; a } # l # l n i # l

. ε ~ « a f l # ε ; a n # Q # l n i # Q • « « ε f i #

. ε ; f l # l n i # j ε ~ « a f l # ε ; a n # i n f l « ε ; f l n f l # i j ε • f a t n # l # l n i # i n D
n i t a t n ~ n i # a ; l # a j a l n ~ v j # k f i t f i n f l # ε ; l

:i j}·flv'v%#a;l # j jnfflvi vjv%

7 h...vi h#Anafi; v; t #fif~ a#l

E snfi; t #afif·fl#hafi; v; t #fif~ a#l#ajjε~ ~ εlanf#l vnf; #hafi; v; t #l%}nf#
a;l #ljunl·}nflh;ua;jv; t #ajjnfflvi v%#fif#}#l·ln; #l

:i j}·flv'n# nft; #fif jv~ nfl

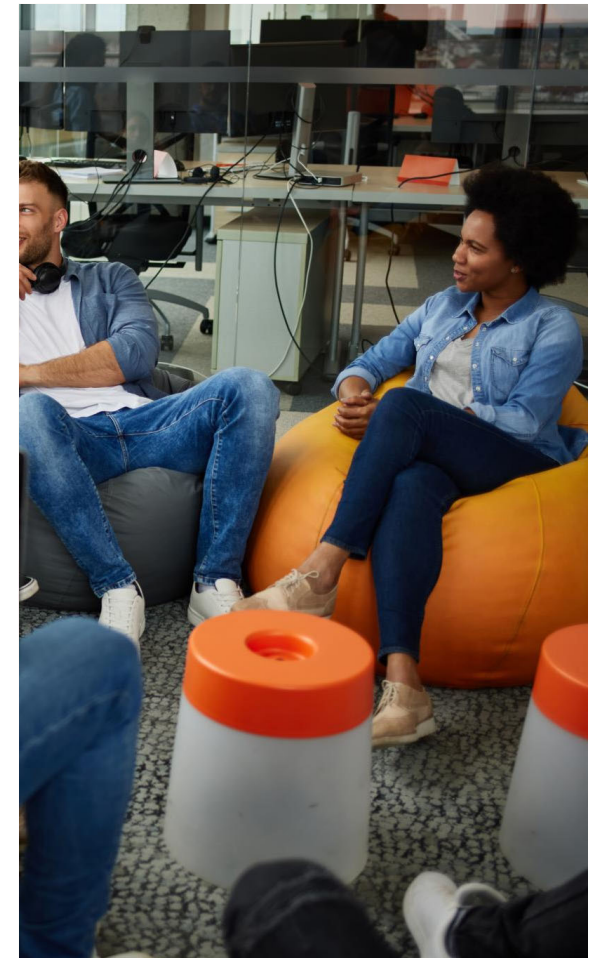
0 nft; v; t #l·ja#ε;a}ε; #; # vuf·#fifl·~ «#ε;fifai ε·#fifif#
|; ε> }nlt n#l·«εfif#l v'nf#hafi; nff#snj v'n }a

Q·«εfif; t #v lln; #fif·tt }nfl

%; vjw aεfif#aj}·flv'n# nft; #un}#fifl·ln; #l#ajv; t #v lln; #ua}n; tnf#
»uf# a%# ε #l n| #un}#aj v'n }a

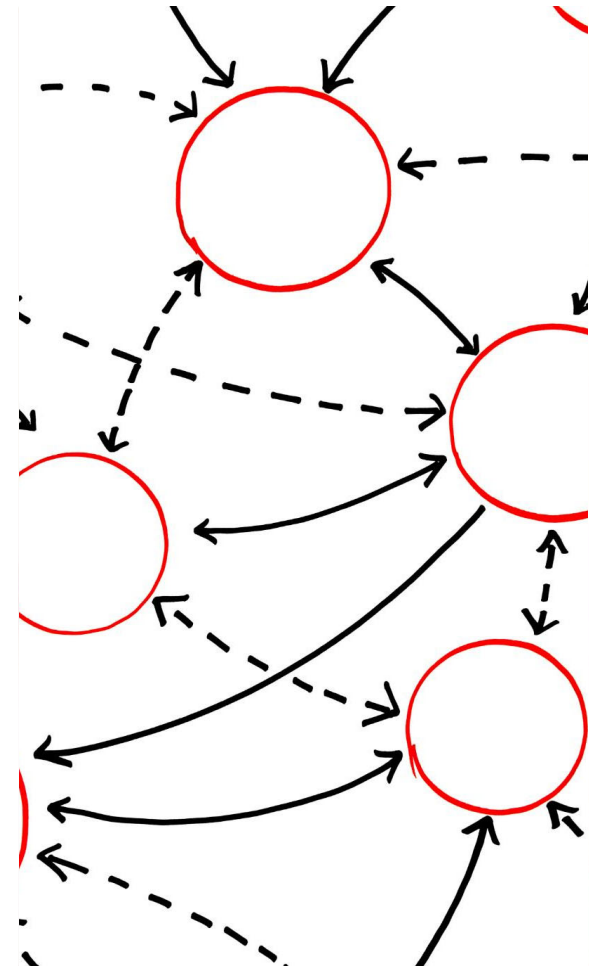
-n; ns#fif#; v'n# εufif#

0 nft; v; t #fif#l v'nf#v~ «fif"nflhafi; v; t #l...«nf; jnf#a;l # n}}i nv; t #fif#
a}}#l·ln; #l# #un}#fif tfa~ 1



Continuous Improvement

- ❑ Embedding Wellbeing Support
- ❑ Feedback and Monitoring
- ❑ Communication and Responsiveness
- ❑ Regular Review for Visibility



- n ; n s v f l # s # } . ~ ; v # Q . « « £ f i t

Z u % # } . ~ ; v # B a # n f i

- M f i " v l n # n a } f l v j # f l t u # # f e # f e t f a ~ ~ n l n ~ a ; l f # a ; l # j u a } n ; t n f l
- E s n f # n a f f l . f a ; j n # a ; l # £ f i ~ a } f l a # £ ; E % £ . Ø n # £ # a } £ ; n G ½
- Q # h ; t # u n ; # n } £ ; t v t # a ; l # j £ ; s l n ; j n # ~ £ ; t # . f f h ; # f l # . l n ; # l

Z u a # # } . ~ ; v # l l

- M f a j v j a } a l " v j n # ; # a ; a t v t # £ f i | º f l # . l % } n # a } a ; j n
- 9 £ ; n f l # # n f l « n j v " n f # £ ; # a f f h n f l ~ n ; # l # a ; l # l v f f n f a # £ ;
- P £ h # £ l n } # £ s f l . j j n f l s } # f e t f n f l # £ ; # a ; l # j £ ~ « h # £ ;

9 £ » # £ # ; n t f a n # } . ~ ; v

- 8 . n f l # a } | f l # a ; l # Ø å % # n f l # £ ; f l # a # n % # l a t n f l
- M n n f # n ; # £ f i v t # £ f # v s f i ~ a } f l . « « £ f i # n # £ f i | f l
- % } . ~ ; v # j £ ; # i i . # £ ; f l # £ # n a j u v t # a ; l # v l j . f l # £ ; # « a j n f l

% } . ~ ; v # l . « « £ f i # f i l t n f l # u n # a « #
i n # » n n ; # ... « n j a # £ ; f l # a ; l # n a } # a #
u n } « v t # l # . l n ; # l # a " v a n #
j u a } n ; t n f l # v u # f n a n f # j £ ; s l n ; j n #
a ; l # n f l v n ; j n



THE PROGRAMME SELF- ASSESSMENT TOOL



Mental Health & Wellbeing of Online PGT Students: Pinch Points & Good Practice

Programme Self-Assessment Tool



cropsnet

UK Council for
**Graduate
Education**

S 9 2 #Q 2 A 7 D

% Q Q 2 Q Q B 2 C S #

S E E A

% v fl##£ #un }« #£ tfa~ ~ n#
na~ flh"a}· a n#a;l #
fl#n;t tun; #u£» # n}}i nv; t #f#
n~ inl lnl # vuv; #un#
lnflt ; #a;l # n }"nf%#£ s#
£ i }M n#£ fltfa; l · a n#
«f£ tfa~ ~ nfl

How to Use the Tool

1. **Work** through each section as a programme team (academic, teaching, and relevant professional services colleagues where possible).
2. **Discuss** the prompts and record your current approach for each theme.
3. **Identify** priority actions, responsibility, and indicative timelines.
4. **Decide** what evidence or indicators could be used to review progress.

Pre-Application & Application

Reflective Prompts:

- How clearly do we communicate workload, time commitment, and peak pressure points?
- How transparent are we about the realities of online study (e.g. balancing study with other responsibilities)?
- How visible is information about support and wellbeing at this stage?
- How accessible and inclusive is our communication (e.g. clarity, format, assumptions about prior experience)?
- How do we support applicants in assessing their readiness for online study, including digital readiness?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Clarity of workload and time commitment</i>					
<i>Transparency about online study expectations</i>					

Z n#l·t t n f l # f l v t # a # l j ε f i v t # f l n ~ # ε # a j v a n # u n # n } a f f n f l ~ n ; # a f l # n } # a f l #
 ε f i # k f i ε f i v t # n ; # v j a t ε ; # a i l # a j t ε ; # a i ; v i t ø



2 f l a i } u n l Ë } n a f i # n ~ i n l l n l # a i l # ε f i | v i t # n } #



0 n " n } ε « v i t Ë ; # a j n # · # ε ε ~ # ε f i # « f i " n ~ n ; #



2 ~ n f i v i t Ë M } a i ; n l # ε f i # a f i a } # ~ « } n ~ n ; n l 1 #



C ε # a n # v i # a j n

M f i t f a ~ ~ n # a ~ f l a f n # ; j ε · f a t n l # ε # l n " n } ε « # u n v i # » ; # l j ε f i v t # f l n ~ f l #
 » u v j u # v } # n # ε f n # l · v n l # ε # u n v i # k f i s n f l v ; a } j ε ; n ... #





CONCLUSION



S£ « #7v' n# j t£ ; fl

1

Qn #Pna }ltvj#
2...«nj ta t£ ; fl
2fltai }lu#j naf#
a;l #aju n"ai }n#
t£a }nafik#£#
t·vln#l·lni#
n; tatn~ ni; #a;l#
fnl·jn#a;...v#

2

0 nft ; #£fi#
. }afiv%
. fna n#lfi·j·fnl#
a;l #j£; fln#
«f£tfa~ ~ n
lnft ; fl#£#
niua;jn#
·; lnfflta;l vt#
a;l #afn#
; a"ta t£ ; l

3

- ·v}l #
. £ ; ; nj t£ ; #
: i tni t£ i a }%
7£flnf#·fk£fns· }#
j£ ; ; nj t£ ; fl#£#
fl·««£fi#l·lni#
»n}}i nv t#a;l#
n; tatn~ ni; #
nsnj v'n }a

4

B a | n # · « « £ fi ##
Yv }n
Mf£ "vln#f£aj v'n#
a;l #ajjnf }n#
»n}}i nv t#
fnf£·fijnf#£#
fl·lni; fl#
tuf£·tu£·##unv#
«f£tfa~ ~ nfl

5

. ££fil v a n#
Z £fi }£al #a;l#
%fflnfl~ ni; t
B a ; atn#fnfl·fn#
i%#}t ; vt#
»£fi }£al #a;l#
afflnfl~ ni; fl#£#
«f£~ £ t n#
ia }ajnl #l·lni#
n...«nf ; jnfl

7v a }#Pns}nj tve ; fl#a #@n%# j tve ; #M£v; fl

- **What are the three most important actions you can take in the next 6–12 months?**
- **What is realistic given current capacity and resources?**
- **Where would small changes have the greatest impact?**

:Ö #a }» a%fl#ua« «%#£ #un }« ¹

- Available to talk about the guidance and related topics to Programme Teams, Teaching Networks, Departments, etc...
- Happy to support programme teams in applying the guidance and undertaking the self-assessment (e.g. through workshops)
- Currently offered pro bono, although future arrangements may include cost-recovery mechanisms to support CROPSNet's continued work.

Av_i | fl#å #2"n_i #fl

Sun# ·v_ai:jn#0 £j·~ n_i #a;l #Mf£tfa~ ~ n#Qn }S%fflnffl~ n_i #S££ }#ja;#n#£·;l#unfnø

Ð B n_i ta)Ð na)u#å #Z n}}inv t#£SE ;}m n#M8 S#Q†·ln_i #l#Mv ju#M£v #l#å #B ££l #Mfa jtvjn#
8 ·v_ai:jn 0 £j·~ n_i ‡

Ð B n_i ta)Ð na)u#å #Z n}}inv t#£SE ;}m n#M8 S#Q†·ln_i #l#Mf£tfa~ ~ n#Qn }S%fflnffl~ n_i #S££ }

Q·i~ v#a;#aifl#aj#£fintvlnfi#£#n;l#un#ⁱ¹ . PE MQCn†. £;snfn;jn#E7fm a%#['] #u £s#
Qn«n~ infn#Æø~D'~ø~ø~Qv#B vjuan)Hfn;#Ð·i#Z uvn# v%# a~ «·fl#å #E ;}m n#[®] v#Q#inn¹

Ð . PE MQ. £; " ~ " . #D%fl i #fa j+Q·i~ vfl#£;fl

Ð . PE MQ. £; " ~ " . #D% #n;l nn#Pnt vlf#a#£; #7£fi~

-nj£~ n#a# PE MQCn†B n~ infn#Q#å #l£ #innø

Ð . PE MQCn†[®] Q†;E† <#7£fi~