



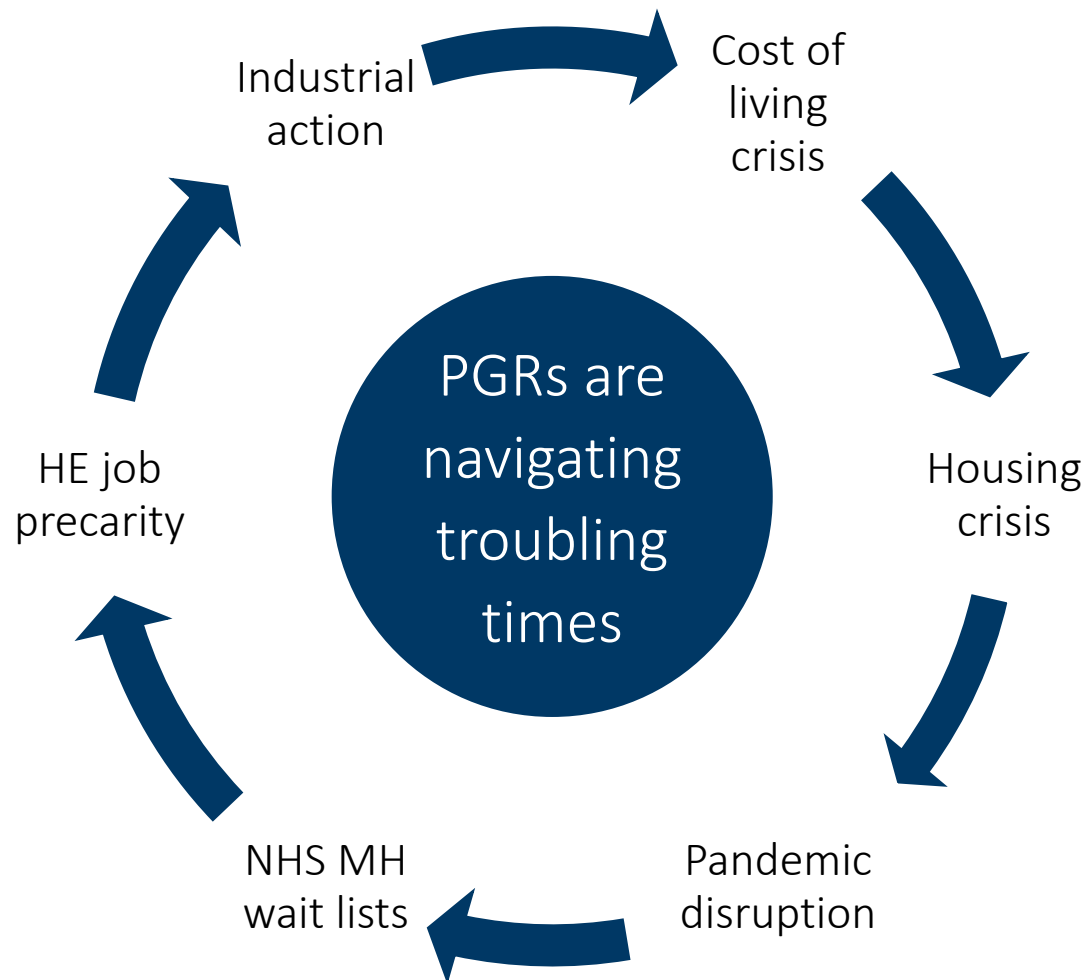
University
of Glasgow

Crisis, care and empathy in PGR Education

Research Culture and Researcher Development
Research Services Directorate, University of Glasgow
UKCGE Annual Conference, 04 July 2023



Postgraduate researcher in a time of crisis



UKRI New Deal for PGRs (2023)

Issues Raised in Key Findings:

1. Funding and cost of living
2. Flexibility of PGR models
5. Boosting wellbeing support
7. Preparing for the future

ALSO:

4. Consistency in supervision
“one in five respondents relating to the perceived need for training and support for supervisors to ensure students are protected and treated consistently”

Postgraduate research as a setting for crisis: [Guccione, 2022](#)

*“Students who attend workshops, coaching sessions, or reach out for help from a mentor will commonly talk about **feeling ‘lost’, ‘off track’, or ‘overwhelmed with confusion’** – they can often feel quite angry about this lack of security. When we look at what underlies those feelings, we start to understand that the doctoral experience is a **confusingly different one to prior modes of study** and it requires conscious attention to develop new strategies for success. The isolated working, and burden of sole responsibility for success can feel very different from many prior (or concurrent) workplace experiences too. PGRs can feel insecure without the modular structures and assessment rhythms they are used to, with numerical grades to guide them, and **they find it difficult to track both how well they are doing, and how far into the process they have come.**”*

*Layer on to this **uncertainty about how academia works**, as a workplace and as a career, the hidden curriculum of doctoral learning is extensive and the **landscape for supervision is complicated and has changed dramatically** over the last 10 years. Further uncertainties can arise if the role of the supervisor(s) is not explicitly made clear, which can lead to all parties operating on slightly different assumptions about the expected levels and types of support that supervisors provide. **The number of players offering subtly different types of support can also muddy the waters** – supervisors, convenors, PGR administrators, Grad School managers, researcher developers, support officers, the Students’ Union, wellbeing, counselling, and careers advisors to name a few.”*

HE: from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft (Tönnies, 1887):

Gemeinschaft (COMMUNITY)

- Groups of individuals with shared identity. Close personal relationships (Doktorvater). Tradition and sentimental ties
- Status and emotion matters
- Implicit rules
- Equilibrium through moral obligation and togetherness

Gesellschaft (SOCIETY)

- Formal organisations (modern HE infrastructure), without close personal relationships and sentimental ties
- Rationality matters
- Explicit rules
- Equilibrium through policy and regulation

The Growing the Ecosystem of Doctoral Support



The Good

- Expert professional services, specialist division of labour
- Mitigation against poor 'behind closed doors' behaviour
- REF 2028 to weight [25% on People and Culture](#).



The Bad:

- Difficult to navigate ecosystem
- PGR loneliness, isolation, and lack of belonging and validation
- Toxic impersonalised research culture (HEPI 2020)

Nandi and Gurslin (1973) Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft in HE, *International Review of Modern Sociology* 3:1

McCulloch (2022) In Defence of History – the changing context for supervision,

<https://supervisingphds.wordpress.com/2022/01/11/in-defence-of-history-the-changing-context-for-supervision/>

The story of this workshop

<https://theauditorium.blog/>

The cover features a large, stylized graphic of a mountain peak or a large letter 'A' shape. The top half is a solid yellow triangle pointing downwards, and the bottom half is a solid blue triangle pointing upwards. The text is centered over this graphic.

the Auditorium

from the Research Culture and Researcher Development
Team at the University of Glasgow

The story of this workshop

I Live Here (For Now): ...
International Staff and
Students
By Dr Rachel Chin

Advice for supporting PGRs
who are carers
By Calum Cameron-White

Crisis and care in PGR
education
By Karen Gordon

The power of empathy
By Dr Rachel Lyon

On Failure
By Dr Robyne Calvert

Supervising disabled and
chronically ill PGRs
By Dr Jennifer Leigh

Neurodiversity in research:
Rethinking rules and
expectations
By Dr Elliott Spaeth

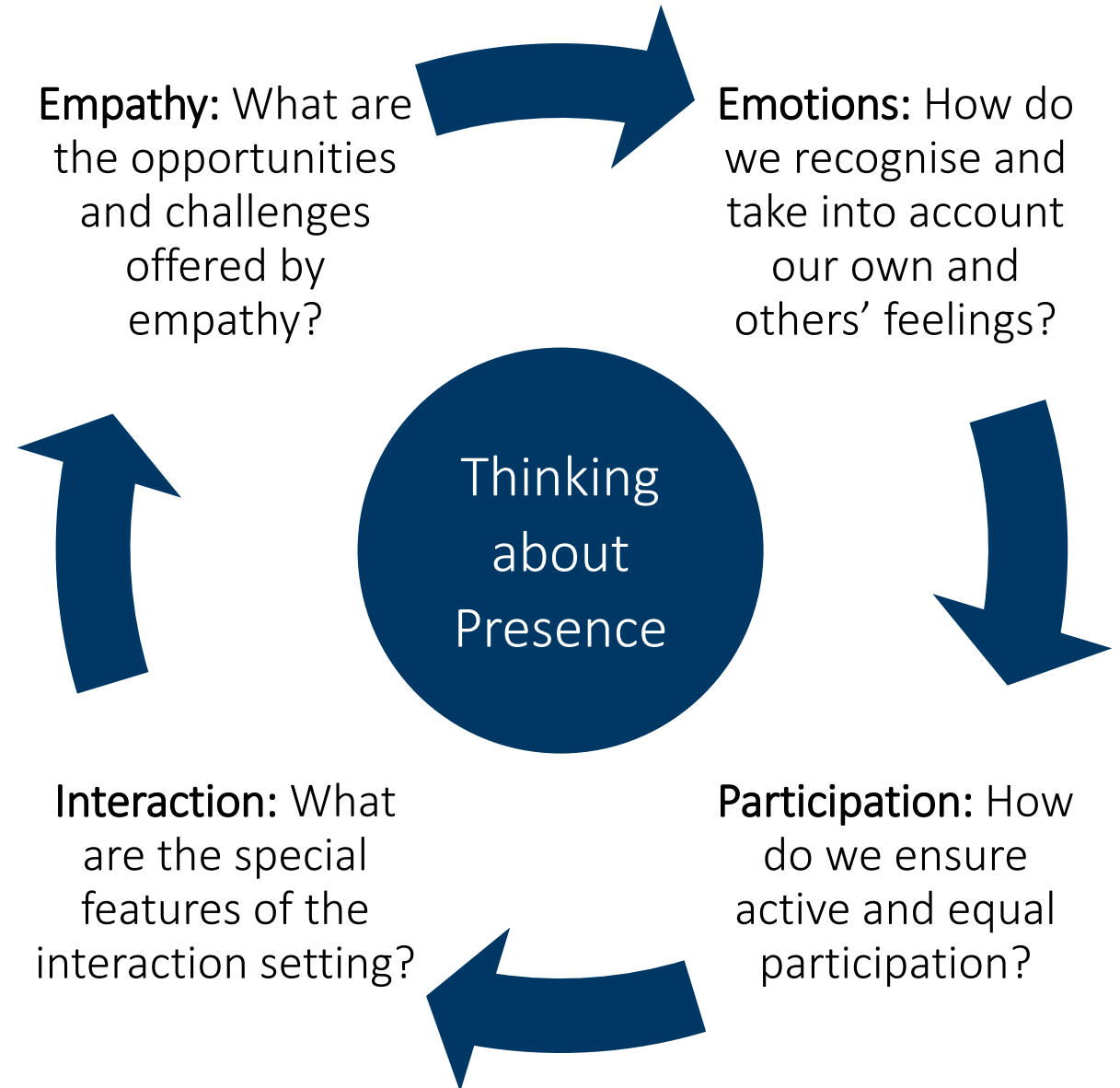
More JEDI needed in PhD
supervision
By Dr Jessica Gagnon

Supervision, the most
radical space of possibility
By Dr Udeni Salmon

What does this mean
for the gesellschaft
doctoral ecology?

Learning from the good
parts of gemeinschaft

Diagram from: Ilona Laakkonen; Sirpa Laitinen-Väänänen,; Piia Naykki, Tapio Toivanen; Tuula Nousiainen, Riikka Michelsson (2022) Approaches to presence, emotion and interaction in digital learning contexts, EAPRIL Conference Presentation





University
of Glasgow

Now You:



The Scenario:

A PhD Researcher [PGR] and their Supervisor are getting together for their first supervision meeting in quite some time. For the PGR, communication seems to have become an issue over the past 6-8 months: the Supervisor's emails go unanswered, and a number of soft deadlines have not been met. The Supervisor is becoming increasingly concerned for the PGR's wellbeing, and having managed to set up a meeting, is hoping to understand what has gone wrong, and what kind of help might be needed to get the PGR back on track.





Get into small groups.
Choose your roles:

- One PGR
- One Supervisor
- Some professional services colleagues.

A Pedagogy of Kindness and Rigorous Research

Empathy: the ability to recognize, understand and share the feelings of another person.

Yes:

Cultivating compassionate spaces
Approachability and building connections
Radical curiosity and full body listening
Syllabus and policy for people not process

No:

Kind \neq nice. Not a plaster for institutional failing
Doesn't override justice (Galligan & Miller 2022)



A Pedagogy of Kindness

CATHERINE DENIAL · 15 AUGUST 2019 · CRITICAL DIGITAL PEDAGOGY



In the past two years, when I've been asked to sum up my approach to pedagogy, I've said "kindness."

I didn't always think this way. My graduate education encouraged me to think of students as antagonists, always trying to get one over on their instructors. I was urged to be on the lookout for plagiarism, to be vigilant for cheaters, to assume that the students wouldn't do the reading, and to expect to be treated as a cog in a consumerist machine by students who would challenge their grades on a whim. I was once advised by a senior graduate student to "be a bitch" on the first day of class so that my students never wanted that version of myself to show up again, advice that I dutifully repeated to several of the graduate students who came after me. I was a stickler for deadlines, and memorably once refused to excuse the absence of a student who was battling a burst pipe in his house when class was in session. I look back on that now and wince.

I gradually learned, through a great deal of trial and error, that this combative way of approaching teaching was counterproductive at best, destructive at worst. Students didn't communicate with me easily, since many

Key pandemic response scholarship: Catherine Denial, Mary Lou Santovec, Alison Gilmour



University
of Glasgow

Contact Details

Karen Gordon, Researcher Development PGR Intern, Karen.Gordon@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Elaine Gourlay, Research Culture Specialist (Communities and Collegiality), Elaine.Gorlay@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Rachel Lyon, Researcher Development Administrator, Rachel.Lyon@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Joanna Royle, Researcher Development Manager, Joanna.Royle@glasgow.ac.uk, @RoyleJoanna