

UK Council for Graduate Education

Annual Conference 2026

2nd & 3rd July 2026

University of Liverpool

PROGRAMME & ABSTRACTS

Thursday 2nd July 2026

09:30	Registration with refreshments
10:00	Conference Briefing
10:10	<u>Welcome</u> <u>Title TBC</u> TBC Job Title University of Liverpool
10:25	<u>Introduction</u> <u>Postgraduate Cultures in Challenging Times - Why connection and collaboration matter now</u> Dr Rebekah Smith McGloin Director of Research Culture and Environment Nottingham Trent University Chair UK Council for Graduate Education
10:45	<u>Keynote Presentation</u> <u>Connecting to Society and Doctoral Education for Public Good</u> Professor Louise Sharpe Pro-Vice Chancellor (Researcher Training) The University of Sydney President Australian Council Graduate Research (ACGR)
11:20	Refreshment Break

11:40	<p>Oral Presentation Supporting Supervisory Practice: Reflections on Developing PhD Supervisor Training Across a Doctoral Training Programme Jemina Napier Scottish Graduate School of Social Science</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation GW4 Connect – Evidencing the impact of inclusive support for UK Postgraduate Research Sabrina Fairchild GW4 Alliance The SGSSS Team</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p>Workshop Building community, connection and career development opportunities for PGR: considering practical solutions Rachel Handforth, Sherran Clarence & Lauren Nixon Nottingham Trent University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p>Round Table Discussions Session RTD1</p> <p>See p14 for list of discussions</p>	<p>Symposium PGR Led Initiatives</p> <p>See p15 for list of presentations</p>
12:10	Changeover				
12:20	<p>Oral Presentation Inter-institutional supervisor CPD: piloting a joint peer mentoring circle to support 'replacement supervisors' Nicola Palmer & Laura Herriman Sheffield Hallam University Heather Sears & Victoria Rios Castano Coventry University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation Beyond the Degree: Constructing Wellbeing Among Women Doctoral Students Caterina Contreras Matté Universidad Católica del Maule</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>			

Thursday 2nd July 2026 (continued) – [Click here for coloured theme key](#)

12:50	Lunch			
13:45	<p>Oral Presentation <u>From Induction to Onboarding: A structured, community-building framework for developing confident, collaborative new supervisors</u> Julia Rayner & Roisin Astell University of York</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Enhancing the wellbeing of online doctoral researchers</u> Kathy Chandler Lancaster University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Supporting the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience using a Pre-arrival Academic Questionnaire</u> Michelle Morgan University of East London Paul Wakeling University of York</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Meddling with Purpose: Empowering Postgraduates to Co-Create and Deliver Researcher Development</u> Michele Underwood University of Warwick</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>
14:15	Changeover			

14:25	<p>Oral Presentation Values-Based Mentoring and Research Supervision: A Collaborative Intergenerational Autoethnography Hannah Grist University of Bristol Ros Jennings University of Gloucestershire</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation Preliminary Findings from an Instrument Examining Postgraduate Students' Mental Health Experiences: A Data-Driven Path to Take Postgraduate Students from Surviving to Thriving Sarah Jane Bork University of Georgia Joeseeph Mirabelli University of Michigan</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i></p>	<p>Round Table Discussions Session RTD2</p> <p>See p16 for list of discussions</p>	<p>Network Meeting Postgraduate Education Practitioners - Sustaining communities and wellbeing in times of turmoil Led by: Susanna Broom University of Sussex Kerri Gardiner University of Cambridge Co-chairs of the UKCGE Postgraduate Education Practitioners Network</p>
14:55	Changeover			

15:00	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Utilising the hidden Break Out Room as a 3rd space for pedagogical reflection in Supervisor Development</u> Ruth Currie University Of The West Of Scotland Gabriele Anderson Heriott Watt University Claire Bradley University of Stirling Lindsay Randall University of Edinburgh Joanna Royle University of Glasgow Masha Shaw University of Aberdeen Paula Sledzinska Robert Gordon University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i> <i>Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Supporting the Wellbeing and Belonging of International Postgraduate Students: A Staff-Student-Industry Collaborative Initiative</u> Uchenna Nweke & Janet Cash Buckinghamshire New University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i></p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p><u>Round Table Discussions</u> <u>RTD2</u></p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p><u>Network Meeting</u> <u>Postgraduate Education Practitioners</u></p>
15:30	Refreshment Break			

15:50	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Beyond emotional support: developing agency through PhD Support Groups</u> Fryni Panayidou The Francis Crick Institute</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i></p>	<p>Workshop <u>Enhancing Supervision for Racially Minoritised Postgraduate Researchers</u> Sally Hancock, Vanita Sundaram, Sahana Arun Kumar & Constantino Dumangane Jr University of York</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>Generative AI</u></p> <p>See p17 for list of presentations</p>	<p>20:20 Presentations Session <u>T20a</u></p> <p>See p18 for list of presentations</p>
16:20	<p><u>Changeover</u></p>			

Thursday 2nd July 2026 (continued) – [Click here for coloured theme key](#)

16:25	<p>Oral Presentation Beyond deficit models: trauma-informed supervision as everyday practice in postgraduate research Frane Vusio The University of Warwick</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p>Workshop Enhancing Supervision for Racially Minoritised Postgraduate Researchers</p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p>Symposium Generative AI</p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p>20:20 Presentations T20a</p>
16:55	Close Day 1			

Walking Tour – with a Blue Badge Guide from ExperienceLiverpool.com

18:00	Walking Tour
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Conference Dinner – at the Fab4Cafe, The Beatles Story Museum

19:15	Pre-dinner drinks
19:45	Conference dinner

09:00	Day 2 Registration with refreshments			
09:15	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Reimagining Boundaries: Identity, Agency, and Collaboration Among Third Space Professionals in Higher Education</u> Amir Keshtiban, Louise Donaghy, Cassie Price & Zara Skelton York St John University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>From Bench to Business: Navigating Research Commercialisation as a Postgraduate Researcher in Pharmaceutical Sciences</u> Caroline Soliman Kingston University London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Inclusion and equality in internationally diverse postgraduate classrooms: perceptions of students and lecturers</u> Debra Jones University of Bristol</p> <p><i>Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>International perspectives on postgraduate education</u></p> <p>See p19 for list of presentations</p>
09:45	Changeover			

09:55	<p>Oral Presentation SGSSS Core: An Innovative Cross-Institutional Collaboration for Postgraduate Researcher Training Roxanne Connelly University of Edinburgh / Scottish Graduate School of Social Science</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p><u>Symposium</u> Inclusion</p> <p>See p20 for list of presentations</p>	<p><u>Network Meeting</u> Doctoral Deans & Directors</p> <p>Led by: Nigel Eady Kings College London Jane Wellens University of Staffordshire</p> <p>Co-chairs of the UKCGE Doctoral Deans & Directors Network</p>	<p>Session Continues</p> <p><u>Symposium</u> International perspectives on postgraduate education</p>
10:25	Changeover			
10:30	<p>Oral Presentation Liberating AI Literacy in PGR skills development at Sheffield Hallam University Marjory Da Costa, David Smith & Elizabeth Scanlon Sheffield Hallam University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good</i></p>			
11:00	Refreshment Break			

11:20	<p>Oral Presentation <u>Why pursue postgraduate taught study? Motivations and expectations of home and international students in health and life sciences.</u> Claire Hudson University of Bristol</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i></p>	<p>Workshop <u>Not just pizza and doughnuts: Embedding a sense of belonging in Postgraduate Research Cultures</u> Laura Etheridge & Emily Bartlett Doctoral College, University of Bristol</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i></p> <p><i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>Internationalisation</u> See p21 for list of presentations</p>	<p>Network Meeting <u>Research Supervisors</u> Led by: Craig Martin University of Edinburgh Nicola Palmer Sheffield Hallam University Co-chairs of the UKCGE Research Supervision Network</p>
11:50	Changeover			
11:55	<p>Oral Presentation <u>The PGT–PGR Transition: Challenges and Opportunities</u> Julie Roberts & Thelma Okey-Adibe Glasgow Caledonian University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i></p>			
12:25	Lunch			

13:15	<p>Oral Presentation Reimagining Postgraduate Cultures: Equity and Belonging through the ASPIRE Programme Ifedapo Francis Awolowo Sheffield Hallam University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation Best of both worlds?: PGR communities in and with non-HEI organisations Fiona Wilkie Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew Helen Robertson Natural History Museum</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p>Round Table Discussions Session RTD3</p> <p>See p22 for list of discussions</p>	<p>Symposium Doing More with Less</p> <p>See p23 for list of presentations</p>
13:45	<p>Changeover</p>			
13:50	<p>Oral Presentation Reconfiguring doctoral admissions through competency: a multi-institutional ethnography of equity-in-practice Bing Lu Nottingham Trent University Michelle Palmer & Craig Hinds University of Newcastle Anna Plassart, Clare Warren, Inma Alvarez & Kim Kullman The Open University Caroline Muellenbroich, Sandra Dopico Arddao, Ross Forgan, Caroline Gauchotte-Lindsay & Qammer Abbasi University of Glasgow</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i></p>	<p>Oral Presentation ‘Difference is not something to overcome but to build from’: the importance of intercultural sensitivity training for PGR supervisors. Malgorzata Drewniok University of Bristol</p> <p><i>Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i></p>		

14:20	Refreshment Break			
14:35	<p><u>Oral Presentation</u> <u>Towards an Inclusive Academy: Co-Creating Supervision Pedagogies and Practices with Postgraduate Researchers with Special Educational Needs and Neurodivergence</u> Tricia Shaw & Sarah Greer University of Hull</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p><u>Oral Presentation</u> <u>Empowered Postgraduate Research Students can lead substantial EDI enhancement initiatives</u> Katherine Yates, David J Gilbert, Tania Goddard, Lauren Holmes, Muhammad Khan, Hannah Helm, Adam King, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon & Keren Poliah University of Salford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p><u>Workshop</u> <u>Making Sense of Perspectives in Doctoral Progression: A Participatory Workshop using Conceptual Mapping</u> Ole Pahl & Julie Roberts Glasgow Caledonian University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p><u>20:20 Presentations</u> Session T20b</p> <p>See p24 for list of presentations</p>
15:05	Changeover			
15:10	<p><u>Oral Presentation</u> <u>Beyond the Project: An Approach To Co-creating Inclusive PGR Development Discussions for Supervisors and PGRs</u> Theadora Jean King's College London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i></p>	<p><u>Oral Presentation</u> <u>Embedding Empathy: PPIE Training for Postgraduate Cancer Students</u> Laura Richmond & Emma Parsons University of Glasgow</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>		

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15:40	Changeover
15:45	Closing Plenary Conference Summary UKCGE Board
16:00	Close & Departure

Thursday 2nd July 2026 – [Click here for coloured theme key](#)

Round Table Discussions – Session **RTD1**

Featuring the following discussions:

11:40	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>Enhancing Support for Part-Time Doctoral Researchers: Supervision, Challenges, and Inclusive Practice</u> Tania Goddard, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon, Lauren Holmes & Katherine Yates University of Salford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>Building PGR Participation in University Governance: Opportunities, Objectives and Student Perspectives</u> Charlie Burnell Oubridge SOAS, University of London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>The boring side of creating a positive PGR Experience</u> Shyeni Paul University of Bath</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>The primacy of virtue ethics in navigating issues of social justice for the public good through 'close-to-practice' doctoral research in Education</u> Paula Zwozdiak-Myers & Wayne Tennent Brunel University London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>
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Each discussion will last for 30 minutes and then be repeated, allowing delegates the opportunity to participate in two of the discussions during this session.

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Symposium - **PGR Led Initiatives**

Session will feature the following presentations:

11:40	<p>Symposium <u>PGR voices: Understanding the challenges of diverse doctoral scholars through EDI Networks</u> Dean Smith University of Stirling Ebenezer Ishola University of Dundee</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>Careers, Skills and Futures Shaped Through the PhD – Reporting from the Liverpool PGR Day</u> Janine Hatter University of Liverpool</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>PGRs co-shaping Responsible Research and Innovation teaching and learning in EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training</u> Vivienne Kuh, Ellie Hart, Moses Guran, Nathan Croll Dawes, Berenika Ewart-James, Rachael Laidlaw, Mireia Bes i Garcia, Edward Caffyn-Parsons & Sam Jacob University of Bristol Jack Dalton University of Oxford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>
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Round Table Discussions – Session **RTD2**

Featuring the following discussions:

14:25	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> Part-Time, Full Experience? Rethinking Inclusion in Part-Time Postgraduate Research Arianna Magyaricsova & Mikaila Jayaweera Bandara University of Glasgow</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> Beyond Academic Track Record: Redesigning Doctoral Admissions Criteria Laura Radcliffe, Hayley Meloy & Bethan Evans University of Liverpool</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> Neurodivergent Belonging: Sharing insights from a writing space created for neurodivergent PhD researchers Amanda Brunton University of Cambridge</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> Minimal supervisor, minimal student: in inquiry into the material basis of PGR research culture Jeffrey Vernon Imperial College London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> The Emergence of Younger Graduate Students: Demographic Shifts, Drivers, and Strategic Implications for Institutions of Higher Education Nico Hohman Georgetown University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>
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Each discussion will last for 30 minutes and then be repeated, allowing delegates the opportunity to participate in two of the discussions during this session.

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Symposium – **Generative AI**

Session will feature the following presentations:

15:50	<p>Symposium <u>Navigating AI Together: Creating a Collaborative Digital Space for Postgraduates</u> Emma Cripps, Vincent Adams & Darren Van Laar University of Portsmouth</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>What Happens When a PGR Community Gets Its Own AI Chatbot: Reflections of a Doctoral Researcher-Developer Using an Action Design Research/Design Science Research Methodology Combo!</u> Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon, Katherine Yates, Tania Goddard & Lauren Holmes University of Salford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>
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20:20 Presentations – Session **T20a**

Session will feature the following presentations:

<p>15:50</p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>What can peer review of supervision learn from peer review of teaching?</u> Nicholas Grindle University College London</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i> <i>Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice</i></p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>Global Cohorts, Local Realities: What Happens When Cultures Meet in Postgraduate Study?</u> Ellen Wang Leeds University Business School</p> <p><i>Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i></p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>Using program-level completion metrics to support inclusive postgraduate cultures</u> Nicholas Young & Christopher Overton University of Georgia Bill Bridges & James Laverty Kansas State University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i></p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>An online study exploring doctoral student mental health: Project burnout</u> Shelley O'Connor Liverpool John Moores University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i></p>
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Friday 3rd July 2026

Symposium – **International perspectives on postgraduate education**

Session will feature the following presentations.

09:15	<u>Symposium</u> TBC	<u>Symposium</u> TBC	<u>Symposium</u> TBC
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Symposium – **Inclusion**

Session will feature the following presentations:

09:55	<p><u>Symposium</u> <u>Rapid Evidence Review of Inclusion in PGR Students</u> Paige Monaghan & Laura Radcliffe Liverpool University Scott Foster Liverpool John Moores</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p><u>Symposium</u> <u>The Paper That Never Happened: Narrating the Structural Barriers to Producing EDI Scholarship in a STEM Research CDT</u> Chrissi McCarthy Centre of Behavioural Equality Alison Harvey & Maria McGloin University of Manchester Gwendolen Reilly University of Sheffield</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>
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Symposium – **Internationalisation**

Session will feature the following presentations:

11:20	<p>Symposium <u>Exploring researcher development for postgraduate researchers engaged in programmes with international partner institutions</u> Tom Webb Coventry University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>Tea, Conversation, and Belonging: Creating Informal Communities to Support Postgraduate and International Student Wellbeing</u> Ramitha Nittore Ramnath Chaplaincy, University Of Chester</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i> <i>Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>Internationalisation as a discursive regime: Language Hierarchy and Cultural Formation of Research in a Malaysian University</u> Nur Izham University of Glasgow</p> <p><i>Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>
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Round Table Discussions – Session **RTD3**

Featuring the following discussions:

13:15	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>Reframing Peer Supervision: A Relational Framework for Doctoral Development and Academic Wellbeing</u> Thelma Okey-Adibe & David Edgar Glasgow Caledonian University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>It Takes a "Village:" A Community-Based Approach to Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Parenting and Caring</u> Lauren Pearl Holmes, Tania Goddard, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon & Katherine Yates University of Salford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>From Sink-or-Swim to Scaffolded Success: Revitalising Staff Engagement and Student Independence in Rapidly Expanding MSc Cohorts</u> Joe Latimer, Sarah Withers, Zeljka Krpetic & Natalie Ferry University of Salford</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i> <i>Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>A Critical Pedagogy Reframing of Supervision for Racially Minoritised Postgraduate Researchers</u> Sally Hancock, Vanita Sundaram, Sahana Arun Kumar & Constantino Dumangane Jr University of York</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i></p>	<p><u>Round table discussion</u> <u>Engaging Doctoral Researchers Without Having Any: The Role of the Czech National Library of Technology in Doctoral Support Ecosystems under NCIS R&D&I</u> Eliška Skládalová National Library of Technology, Prague</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i> <i>Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice</i></p>
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Each discussion will last for 30 minutes and then be repeated, allowing delegates the opportunity to participate in two of the discussions during this session.

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Symposium – **Doing More With Less**

Session will feature the following presentations:

13:15	<p>Symposium <u>The impact of Scottish universities' financial crisis on research, scholarship and institutional reputation: The case of international postgraduate students</u> Dely Elliot & Sajjad Hussain University of Glasgow</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i></p>	<p>Symposium <u>From Brand Promise to Doctoral Belonging: Aligning Recruitment Messaging with Lived PGR Research Culture</u> Graham McLaren University of Bath</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i> <i>Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i></p>
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20:20 Presentations – Session **T20b**

Session will feature the following presentations

14:35	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>Growing Our Research Ecosystem</u> Enrica Conrotto & Julia Taylor Bournemouth University</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i> <i>Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i></p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>Designing Sustainable Multi-Year Training Pathways for doctoral cohorts: A Skills-Based Model for Research Culture & Collaboration</u> Danielle Miles & Alison Gray Skillfluence</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces</i> <i>Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice</i></p>	<p>20:20 Presentation <u>Professional Doctorates: A Tool for Sustainability and Inclusive Postgraduate Culture?</u> Victoria Ade-Genschow University of Bath</p> <p><i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i> <i>Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i></p>
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Key

Colours – Based on Primary Theme

<i>Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies</i>	<i>Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education</i>	<i>Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities</i>	<i>Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE</i>
<i>Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues</i>	<i>Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures</i>	<i>Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions</i>	<i>Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good</i>
<i>Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures</i>	<i>Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research</i>	<i>Primary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice</i>	

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Thursday 2nd July

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Thursday 2nd July - 10:10 – 10:25

Welcome

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Thursday 2nd July - 10:25 – 10:45

Introduction

Postgraduate Cultures in Challenging Times - Why connection and collaboration matter now

Dr Rebekah Smith McGloin

Director of Research Culture and Environment | Nottingham Trent University
Chair | UK Council for Graduate Education

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Thursday 2nd July - 10:45 – 11:20

Keynote Presentation

Connecting to Society and Doctoral Education for Public Good

Professor Louise Sharpe

Pro-Vice Chancellor (Researcher Training) | The University of Sydney

President | Australian Council Graduate Research (ACGR)

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:10

Oral Presentation

Supporting Supervisory Practice: Reflections on Developing PhD Supervisor Training Across a Doctoral Training Programme

Jemina Napier | Scottish Graduate School of Social Science

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Abstract:

In response to evolving expectations of doctoral supervision in the wider research culture landscape and the need to foster inclusive, reflective, and future-facing supervisory cultures, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) engaged with social science doctoral students and supervisors in the development of a multi-layered strategy to innovate supervisor development across its doctoral training programme, which is a 16 university consortium of members across Scotland funded by the ESRC.

This presentation showcases a suite of initiatives designed to support supervisors at all career stages, including:

- Mapping and alignment of existing training across HEIs to identify gaps and opportunities;
- A reflective practice training series co-developed with partners;
- Integration of RSVP modules tailored to SGSSS priorities;
- Joint supervisor–student sessions on emerging topics such as generative AI;
- Development of “pockets of excellence” to support peer coaching and community-building.

These innovations are grounded in a collaborative ethos and informed by feedback from supervisors and students. The approach emphasises flexibility, relevance, and sustainability, with resources delivered through online and in-person formats and embedded within broader research culture and EDI agendas.

This session will offer practical insights and strategic reflections for those seeking to implement support for PhD supervisors in innovative ways, and will invite discussion on how to embed supervisor development as a core component of doctoral education.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:10

Oral Presentation

GW4 Connect – Evidencing the impact of inclusive support for UK Postgraduate Research

Sabrina Fairchild | GW4 Alliance

The SGSSS Team

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

In the evolving and diversifying landscape of UK Higher Education, the need to support marginalised postgraduate researchers (PGRs) to succeed has become increasingly urgent. Timely access interventions, often badged as 'inclusive recruitment', have proliferated to address the persistent underrepresentation of female, disabled, or Global Majority PGRs compared to similar undergraduate populations. What has been less discussed is the associated challenges of retention and how to support marginalised postgraduate researchers beyond recruitment. The GW4 Connect programme, launched by the GW4 Alliance in 2023, responds to this challenge by delivering targeted, 'inclusive support' initiatives that foster community, skills development, and institutional change. This presentation will explore the design, delivery and impact of GW4 Connect, a suite of collaborative cross-institutional programmes tailored to the lived experience of underrepresented PGRs at the universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff and Exeter. To date, the programmes have supported PGRs from the Global Majority, neurodivergent PGRs, PGRs with parental responsibilities, and PGRs with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Drawing on lessons learned from the design process, participant feedback, and post-programme evaluation data, the session will highlight both the individual and institutional benefits of these programmes alongside practical recommendations for replicating and scaling the model. Attendees will gain insights into how sustained, responsive programme can begin to address structural barriers and contribute to meaningful culture change in postgraduate research environments.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Workshop

Building community, connection and career development opportunities for PGR: considering practical solutions

Rachel Handforth, Sherran Clarence & Lauren Nixon | Nottingham Trent University

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

In the context of increasingly challenging times for UK universities, the rising costs of delivering doctoral education (OfS, 2019) mean that postgraduate research communities can be seen as precarious within the wider higher education landscape. For individuals working and studying within these communities, there are a range of challenges beyond delivering a doctoral thesis, including navigating new academic cultures and negotiating power dynamics within supervisory relationships (Manathunga, 2007), as well as considering post-PhD career transitions (Handforth, 2022), all while maintaining their mental health and wellbeing (Morris, 2021). These challenges are often felt more keenly by individuals from marginalised backgrounds (Arday, 2017; Mattocks and Briscoe-Palmer, 2016).

Within our own institution, we have taken steps to address some of the challenges in constructive and pragmatic ways, aiming to create a sense of belonging, community and connection for PGRs, taking the diversities within our community into account. In this workshop we will share the initiatives we have undertaken to foster and develop a postgraduate researcher community and support PGRs' development in the process, including induction workshops, interdisciplinary PGR-led events, and group-based research consultancy opportunities. We will reflect with participants on challenges and lessons learned through our practice and consider together possibilities for further developing these activities in our own and others' contexts.

Using group-based discussion around key prompts related to a short input on each initiative, we invite participants working in any role within in doctoral education to critique these initiatives and consider what may enable and constrain the development of inclusive PGR communities within their own institutional contexts.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Round table discussion

Enhancing Support for Part-Time Doctoral Researchers: Supervision, Challenges, and Inclusive Practice

Tania Goddard, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon, Lauren Holmes & Katherine Yates | University of Salford

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Learning environments for postgraduate researchers play a crucial role in shaping access to research culture, academic identity, and a sense of belonging within pedagogical spaces. However, part-time doctoral researchers often experience these environments differently, with reduced visibility, fewer opportunities for informal engagement, and limited integration into academic communities. These differences can affect progression, identity development, and overall access to the research culture that full-time students typically encounter more readily.

This small-group discussion session will begin with a brief 10-minute introduction outlining emerging insights into part-time doctoral experiences and supervisory relationships, followed by a facilitated conversation in which participants are invited to share their own perspectives. Rather than adopting a formal research presentation format, the session will use a series of reflective prompts to open dialogue on key issues, including access to learning environments, supervisory communication, expectations and boundaries, the emotional labour of balancing multiple roles, and the barriers part-time students face in navigating institutional structures. By bringing together part-time students, full-time students, and those familiar with supervision, the discussion aims to surface shared challenges, highlight divergent experiences, and create space for collaborative sense-making.

The overarching aim of the session is to develop a richer, conversation-driven understanding of how part-time researchers access, experience, and contribute to postgraduate research culture. Participants will be encouraged to consider how institutional practices, supervisory relationships, and pedagogical spaces can be shaped to better support part-time students. The discussion will also explore what meaningful inclusion looks like in practice and how both students and supervisors can contribute to more equitable learning environments. By centring the experiences of part-time doctoral researchers, this session contributes to wider conversations around equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) within the PGR community. It seeks not only to raise awareness but also to stimulate collective thinking about practical changes that could enhance belonging, development, and support for part-time researchers.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Round table discussion

Building PGR Participation in University Governance: Opportunities, Objectives and Student Perspectives

Charlie Burnell Oubridge | SOAS, University of London

Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

While student representation is a much-discussed topic in Higher Education, this is usually with a focus on undergraduate students. This discussion draws focus to PGR student representation, while also exploring the benefits for individuals and their institutions of including PGRs on university-level committees. Encouraging PGR participation in governance spaces presents potential rewards for both the institution and individual researchers. Genuinely inclusive committees become opportunities for staff and students to engage in substantive dialogues about student experience and needs, providing a much-needed counterbalance to quantitative surveys. Developing PGR-inclusion also ensures governance structures are transparent and represent a greater diversity of perspective, vital for building trust and a sense of community between colleagues at different career stages. Participation also enables PGR reps to develop skills that will benefit them in the long-term, ensuring graduates are already familiar with the mechanisms through which their institutions are governed and can be confident engaging with them early in their careers.

However, the inclusion of PGR reps in committees' Terms of Reference does not immediately translate into active participation and sustained, constructive engagement requires investment of time and resources by both staff and students. Resources must be dedicated to building relationships between PGR reps and their colleagues, supporting PGR reps to develop their knowledge base and ensuring information about governance structures and roles is accessible. Discussants will explore the potential benefits of PGR participation, considering their own institutional contexts and personal experiences of engaging with governance structures. Discussants are also invited to engage with recommendations for supporting PGR student engagement, considering whether potential interventions could be enacted within their own institutional contexts and what barriers and enabling factors may exist there.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Round table discussion

The boring side of creating a positive PGR Experience

Shyeni Paul | University of Bath

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

No matter how many fun events you put on, you can't create a positive PGR experience without supportive, inclusive policies and functional policies that allow the PGRs to carry out their research and progress through their doctorate no matter what life throws at them.

At the university of Bath, for the last 24 months we've been on a mission to bring our policies up to date and smooth out our processes to make them more functional. Find out how our co-creation approach with both PGRs and Supervisors allowed us to investigate issues, create culture changes and convinced leadership to provide funding.

Because while updating the universities regulations, code of practice and policies isn't as fun as delivering a development programme, it can provide much needed clarity and support to the whole doctoral population.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Round table discussion

The primacy of virtue ethics in navigating issues of social justice for the public good through 'close-to-practice' doctoral research in Education

Paula Zwozdiak-Myers & Wayne Tennent | Brunel University London

Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

What is meant by 'social justice' and what constitutes 'the public good' are open to interpretation. This is evident in research completed by doctorate in education students. These students are mostly teachers in schools and other educational settings undertaking close-to-practice research. The difficulty arises in having to navigate policy discourses which many find to be at odds with their professional values. What they consider to be the public good and the promotion of social justice does not readily align with policy demands but rather is more aligned to a virtue ethics perspective.

This case study explored how virtue ethics was central to these doctoral researchers negotiating the perceived disconnection between policy and practice. We examined what kind of knowledge was being pursued; how it was being generated; and the intended audience/s of their close-to-practice research. Data were gathered from Colloquium abstracts over a five-year period and a series of in-depth interviews with a range of diverse participants.

Findings reveal these doctoral researchers take an approach informed by virtue ethics to solve problems in localised contexts through a process of action and reflection (Freire, 1971), which aims to create 'change from below'. The societal value of their research was broad and far-reaching, informed by their own cultural background, experiences and professional values. Agency and critical consciousness surfaced as important dispositions for these doctoral researchers.

Virtue ethics offers a compelling, context sensitive framework for examining social justice for the public good in 'close-to-practice' doctoral research and ensures a 'research with' rather than a 'research on' approach with participants. This was reflected in their methodological choices. Virtue ethics was also central in supporting discussions within this doctoral research in Education community.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Symposium PGR Led Initiatives

PGR voices: Understanding the challenges of diverse doctoral scholars through EDI Networks

Dean Smith | University of Stirling

Ebenezer Ishola | University of Dundee

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Abstract:

For many postgraduate researchers (doctoral students/candidates), the doctoral journey may be defined by instances of isolation, high expectations by supervisors, stress, anxiety, and other peculiar challenges. On a broader scale, traditional 'student voice' practices in higher education often rely on individualistic, rights-based models that fail to address systemic inequities. These individual and systemic pressures faced by doctoral students/candidates are being addressed in several ways. One potential solution is the formation of doctoral networks based on the shared experience of its members. The creation of postgraduate researcher equality diversity and inclusion networks provides an opportunity for marginalised students to deconstruct the power dynamics and institutional barriers that silence their experiences. By moving beyond liberal frameworks and viewing voice as a collective, relational practice, deeply embedded in social and affective contexts, universities can better address the differences that matter to Students. The In-frame Project – PGR Network Doctoral Student Co-leads for SGSSS and SGSAH for Scottish students, presents insights from four EDI networks (Disabled, Global Majority, International, and Part Time). These networks and our approach to student engagement fosters a more inclusive PhD set of communities that challenge exclusion with the sharing of knowledge, tips and support to create more equitable and enjoyable academic environments. This presentation provides examples of lived experiences from members of the four PGR EDI networks, highlighting universities have a long way to go before they can be truly called places of learning for all.

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Symposium PGR Led Initiatives

Careers, Skills and Futures Shaped Through the PhD – Reporting from the Liverpool PGR Day

Janine Hatter | University of Liverpool

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research

Abstract:

This presentation will provide feedback from the pre-Conference PGR Day, led by colleagues from the University of Liverpool, which had a focus on Careers, Skills and Futures Shaped Through the PhD, and ties into the broader theme of Postgraduate Cultures: Community, Collaboration and Connection.

"Background

During your postgraduate research degree you develop personally and professionally. Alongside advanced research expertise, postgraduate researchers (PGRs) develop a rich mix of skills, perspectives, and professional strengths that open doors to a wide range of career possibilities — within academia, industry and the third sector. In this conference we will shine a light on these sometimes-overlooked skills, how to identify, grow and articulate them. This conference provides a dedicated, peer-led forum for you as PGRs to share experiences, strategies, and critical reflections on doctoral life, career development, and professional transitions, as well offering some training and development sessions from relevant careers-related experts.

Whether you are studying a 'traditional' PhD, an MPhil, DocMed, professional doctorate or Research Masters, are at the beginning of your PhD, nearing completion, or simply curious about what comes next, this conference offers an open, welcoming, future-focused space in which PGRs can lead sessions, or contribute practical insights, opportunities and challenges, reflective accounts, work-in-progress, and evidence-informed approaches to career planning, the career journey and professional development.

Aims

1. Celebrate and share the strengths, skills, and expertise developed through (and alongside) doctoral study
2. Support confident career exploration across academic, industry and third sector pathways
3. Build community, peer support, networks, and collaboration
4. Encourage reflective, empowered thinking about the postgraduate research degree as both research and professional development

Themes & Topics

- The Postgraduate Researcher Career Experience
- Career Pathways and Professional Futures
- Job Searching and Applications
- CVs, Cover Letters and Interviews
- Funding, Grants and Bid Writing
- Skills, Growth and Professional Development
- Wider Perspectives

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Thursday 2nd July - 11:40 - 12:50

Symposium PGR Led Initiatives

PGRs co-shaping Responsible Research and Innovation teaching and learning in EPSRC Centres for Doctoral Training

Vivienne Kuh, Ellie Hart, Moses Guran, Nathan Croll Dawes, Berenika Ewart-James, Rachael Laidlaw, Mireia Bes i Garcia, Edward Caffyn-Parsons & Sam Jacob | University of Bristol
Jack Dalton | University of Oxford

Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

This presentation shares learning from the Responsible Research and Innovation Facilitators (RRIF) programme, in which PGRs from Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) funded Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) co-facilitate teaching and learning in RRI. The RRIF programme has been running since 2023 and has trained 20 facilitators from a diverse range of STEM disciplines.

RRI aims to create better, more inclusive and sustainable futures with science and engineering research and EPSRC has mandated RRI training in CDTs since 2019.

Traditionally exploring the ethical and social implications of research has been the work of social scientists and humanities scholars. RRI aims to end this ethical outsourcing and bring these discussions into the practices of scientific research. However, to date, there are no indications that this has happened. The RRIF programme aims to enable this shift by equipping science and engineering PGRs with the skills they need to facilitate this work with their peers, and is the first of its kind in the RRI training landscape.

RRIFs are equipped with the skills and experience to stimulate RRI conversations within their CDTs, bringing discipline specific perspectives to teaching and learning in RRI and helping to shape the programme to the needs and interests of their peers. RRIFs act as drivers for embedding RRI in the daily life of CDTs and are supported to develop their own activities in response to societal and ethical issues in their fields.

In this presentation we share how collaborating with RRIFs has enhanced our practice and changed RRI teaching and learning. Through reflections from RRIFs, we share how this evolution of the teaching assistant role has impacted on PGR experiences, giving them more creative autonomy and purpose, interaction with PGR colleagues from diverse disciplines and a supportive environment in which to develop their pedagogical skills.

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Thursday 2nd July - 12:20 - 12:50

Oral Presentation

Inter-institutional supervisor CPD: piloting a joint peer mentoring circle to support 'replacement supervisors'

Nicola Palmer & Laura Herriman | Sheffield Hallam University

Heather Sears & Victoria Rios Castano | Coventry University

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

This presentation shares our practice and reflects on lessons learnt in piloting cross-institutional supervisor CPD as part of the Next Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP). It specifically focuses on the implementation of a joint peer mentoring circle with 'replacement supervisors' at two UK post-1992 universities, Coventry and Sheffield Hallam. Our two universities share similar supervisory context in that we have relatively small but diverse PGR populations and offer a comparable range of doctoral awards. We have also, over recent years, experienced similar notable shrinkage in our established research supervisor bases as a result of university restructurings and cost saving exercises. Consequently, for us, the replacement of supervisory team members has become increasingly commonplace.

The loss or replacement of a research supervisor mid-candidature remains an under-examined phenomenon in the doctoral education literature (Ives & Rowley, 2005; Wisker & Robinson, 2012). However, it is a cross-sector issue with emotional, ethical, and institutional dimensions and replacement supervision is a distinct supervision practice, often under-recognised and supported as a specialised form of academic work. For incoming supervisors, stepping into a supervisory team partway through doctoral candidature is complex, ambiguous, and is rarely supported by institutional structures (Palmer & Tresidder, 2023). In this presentation, we will consider how a supervisor CPD intervention in the format of an inter-institutional peer mentoring circle can provide 'safe' space to support replacement supervisors and contribute to the development of a community of practice across institutions, with potential implications for supporting supervisor mental health and wellbeing. We will outline the process and outcomes of implementing cross-institutional supervisor CPD in this specific context and consider challenges, benefits and opportunities to build on our approach. Our presentation will align with the conference focus on collaboration. It will align to the theme of 'Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies'.

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Thursday 2nd July - 12:20 - 12:50

Oral Presentation

Beyond the Degree: Constructing Wellbeing Among Women Doctoral Students

Caterina Contreras Matté | Universidad Católica del Maule

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

Doctoral education involves a highly heterogeneous population, where multiple factors interact, including individual characteristics, the features of doctoral programmes, and interpersonal relationships, all of which may affect students' wellbeing. In recent years, increasing pressures to publish, secure research funding, and participate in academic conferences have intensified demands on doctoral students, raising concerns about their mental health. Within this context, adequate levels of wellbeing may function as a protective factor, supporting the development of adaptive strategies to cope with the challenges inherent to doctoral training. This study presents a literature review on the current state of research regarding the wellbeing of female doctoral students. The findings reveal a limited number of studies that explicitly address wellbeing as a central construct among women in doctoral education. The results highlight three main lines of research: studies focusing on mental health, those incorporating a gender perspective, and those examining wellbeing in doctoral education. Together, these perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of the dimensions shaping doctoral students' experiences. Low levels of wellbeing may negatively affect academic performance and institutional productivity while increasing the risk of doctoral attrition. Women appear to be particularly vulnerable to these challenges, often experiencing role conflict, mental overload, social pressures, and the persistent influence of gender stereotypes. In this context, it is essential to create supportive environments that foster the development of women scientists and protect their academic trajectories, which may otherwise be hindered by factors associated with wellbeing.

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Oral Presentation

From Induction to Onboarding: A structured, community-building framework for developing confident, collaborative new supervisors

Julia Rayner & Roisin Astell | University of York

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

High-quality postgraduate research supervision is fundamental to cultivating inclusive and thriving research cultures. Yet, as data collected by the Next Generational SuperVision Project (RSVP) and S. Taylor (2025) reveal, many institutions still rely on one-off induction sessions that focus primarily on policies and procedural compliance. These induction sessions offer little developmental support for the relational, dialogic, and collaborative dimensions of supervisory practice. This presentation introduces a new, evidence-informed, phased programme for onboarding new supervisors. This new programme reconceptualises supervisor preparation as an extended developmental journey rather than a single moment of orientation.

The programme is structured around facilitated workshops delivered over 1-6 months, depending on institutional context and culture. These sessions scaffold supervisors through three interlinked stages: (1) exploring supervisory identity, assumptions, and the contemporary realities of PGR supervision; (2) developing collaborative, team-based approaches to supervision; (3) and building effective, relationship-centred supervisory practices that support PGR autonomy, confidence, and progression. The application of reflective tools, structured peer-learning, and practice-oriented activities ensures that participants develop a shared language and encourage cross-disciplinary connections. A distinctive feature of the RSVP Onboarding programme is its emphasis on community, continuity, and collaboration, as well as supporting research culture change. Designed to maximise opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning, the programme includes peer mentoring and innovative ways of capturing learning. It also provides new supervisors with the tools, knowledge, and skills to deliver high-quality supervision.

By reframing supervision preparation as onboarding, rather than a one-off induction, this model offers a coherent and scalable approach for institutions. This presentation will outline the design principles underpinning the programme, considerations for institutional implementation, and the emerging insights from research.

References:

Taylor, S. (2025) Research Supervisor Support, Reward and Recognition: A Survey of UK Institutions. RSVP/UKCGE Publication Forthcoming

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Oral Presentation

Enhancing the wellbeing of online doctoral researchers

Kathy Chandler | Lancaster University

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

This presentation shares research that examines the issue of wellbeing among doctoral researchers who complete their studies via online programmes, a group whose health risks and support needs are underexplored. They form a substantial but unknown proportion of those completing doctorates within UK institutions. The wellbeing of doctoral researchers generally, especially their mental wellbeing, is a growing concern. Around forty percent of doctoral researchers in the UK experience depression and anxiety and doctoral researchers are more at risk of suicide than the general population. Poor health has come to be seen as a normal part of doctoral study. This is concerning in itself but also has far-reaching implications for the quality of UK-based research and its contribution. One underexplored factor is the mode of study itself, with the research undertaken at UK universities to date not differentiating between campus-based researchers and those studying online. Funded by the Joy Welch Foundation, this study explores the impacts of online doctoral study on wellbeing, both positive and negative. It does this through a UK wide survey, which has received 190 responses to date and will conclude at the end of March 2026, and a participatory narrative study involving a team of five co-researchers, currently in the data generation phase.

The initial results of the survey reveal how online programmes make doctoral study possible when it would not be otherwise, particularly for people who are working, self-financing, or completing their doctorate alongside their responsibilities as parents or carers and the challenges posed by disabilities and health issues. Embracing this opportunity has consequences for wellbeing, however. Online doctoral researchers frequently feel stressed, anxious, isolated and invisible within UK institutions. These feelings can be alleviated or exacerbated by the nature of the support available, including the quality of the supervisory relationship, but also by the ways in which online study is mediated by university systems and online environments, which are not necessarily designed with distance postgraduate study in mind. The study identifies potential enhancements for wellbeing by universities, supervisors, and online doctoral researchers themselves.

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Thursday 2nd July - 13:45 - 14:15

Oral Presentation

Supporting the Postgraduate Taught Student Experience using a Pre-arrival Academic Questionnaire

Michelle Morgan | University of East London

Paul Wakeling | University of York

Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Compared to undergraduate education, there has been very little attention paid to the taught postgraduate experience by policy makers. While the AdvanceHE Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey provides some information about students' experience towards the end of their course, far less is understood about their expectations and needs on beginning their studies.

The Postgraduate Taught Pre-arrival Academic Questionnaire (PAQ) has evolved over many years. In the development of the original PAQ (formerly called Entry to Study Survey), student representatives have been involved in refining and enhancing the content, structure and order of questions. The PAQ was formalised via the 11 University HEFCE funded £2.7m Postgraduate Experience Project (PEP) which was part of the Postgraduate Support Scheme Phase one designed to reenergise the UK postgraduate market. The Project contributed knowledge and evidence that helped bring in the PG Loan scheme and changed institutional processes.

In January 2025, AdvanceHE, JISC and the University of East London were awarded an Office for Students grant to run a national pilot at both undergraduate and postgraduate taught level. The PAQ has been designed to create a roadmap of information on entry on the prior learning experiences, expectations, concerns and expected outcomes of incoming students by a range of student characteristics across all levels of study. This provides invaluable insights enabling institutions to develop targeted student support, strategies and policies accordingly for their dataset, and for UKCGE who are represented on both the Steering and Working Groups to help shape national Postgraduate policy and provide practical advice and support for institutions.

This presentation will:

- Explain the purpose for the national pilot
- Explain the benefits for institutions participating
- Provide a rationale for the structure of the PAQ
- Report the headline findings from Phase 1
- Explore the support institutions require as a result of the sector level findings.

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Thursday 2nd July - 13:45 - 14:15

Oral Presentation

Meddling with Purpose: Empowering Postgraduates to Co-Create and Deliver Researcher Development

Michele Underwood | University of Warwick

Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

This session explores an innovative, collaborative approach to researcher development that positions postgraduate researchers (PGRs) not only as participants but as active facilitators and co-creators of training programmes. Traditional models often frame researcher development as a top-down process led by professional services or academic staff. In contrast, our initiative empowers PGRs to design, deliver, and evaluate development activities for their peers, fostering inclusivity, co-creation, relevance, confidence, and a deeper sense of community. Drawing on principles of peer learning, Students as Partners, and distributed leadership, we examine how structured training and mentorship enable PGRs to transition from learners to facilitators of learning, creating inclusive spaces for dialogue and skill-building. We share insights from implementation, including challenges, successes, and the transformative impact on both facilitators and participants. This session reflects on the eight years of the research project, and its continuing practice and learning. By “meddling with purpose,” this model reimagines researcher development as a collaborative, empowering practice that strengthens postgraduate cultures and builds sustainable networks of support.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 14:55

Oral Presentation

Values-Based Mentoring and Research Supervision: A Collaborative Intergenerational Autoethnography

Hannah Grist | University of Bristol

Ros Jennings | University of Gloucestershire

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Abstract:

This paper uses collaborative intergenerational autoethnography to explore the under-researched area of supervisor-supervisor relationships within UK research supervision teams. In light of the increasingly competitive higher education landscape and the framing of doctoral supervision as a specialised pedagogy, we investigate how co-supervisory relationships enhance practice and support supervisor development. As co-supervisors with shared working-class backgrounds, feminist identities, and experiences as first-generation academics, we reflect on how shared values shape our collaborative supervisory practice. Through autoethnographic reflection on our journeys from doctoral candidates to supervisors, we trace the development of a reciprocal mentoring relationship that informs our supervisory approaches. We extend Lee's (2008, 2012) framework - particularly the 'building relationships' dimension - to include supervisor-supervisor dynamics. Using the psychological concept of value similarity (Illies and Reiter-Palmon, 2018), we argue that shared values like empathy, reflection, and non-hierarchical collaboration foster reciprocal learning and enrich supervisory practices. This paper contributes methodologically by highlighting the value of collaborative autoethnography for studying supervisory relationships; theoretically by broadening supervision frameworks to account for co-supervisory dynamics; and practically by offering recommendations for values-based team formation, institutional support for reflection, and recognition of reciprocal mentoring in contemporary academic contexts.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 14:55

Oral Presentation

Preliminary Findings from an Instrument Examining Postgraduate Students' Mental Health Experiences: A Data-Driven Path to Take Postgraduate Students from Surviving to Thriving

Sarah Jane Bork | University of Georgia

Joeseph Mirabelli | University of Michigan

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Abstract:

Increasing attention has been given to research investigating postgraduate student mental health concerns. Some research has developed survey instruments for postgraduate students (that is both masters and doctoral students) within the United States; however, these instruments have generally not been tested at national scales. U.S. wide surveys sample from postgraduate student populations but lack instruments specific to postgraduate students and to students by academic disciplines. To address these gaps, the Graduate Student Module (GSM) was developed. This 35-item instrument was developed as a module specific to postgraduate student mental health experiences as part of the Healthy Minds Network, Healthy Minds Study. This talk will focus on answering the questions: What are the significant findings from the pilot administration of the Graduate Student Module, a novel instrument in the Healthy Minds Network, Healthy Minds Study?

This presentation will first highlight the design process, validation, and preliminary analysis for this instrument. Items include co-variates known to impact mental health experiences, including funding sources, program culture, academic stressors, advisor relationships, and research group relationships. Then, preliminary findings from the Spring 2025 pilot implementation (N = 665 graduate masters and doctoral students) will be discussed. Finally, we will detail practical implications for this instrument. This will include how the GSM can be used to assess postgraduate students' mental health experiences, inform direction for programmatic intervention on behalf of postgraduate students, and assess the impact and efficacy of mental health interventions supporting postgraduate student mental health. These efforts can provide systemic support to improve postgraduate students' satisfaction, retention, and achievement, allowing them to shift from simply surviving to thriving.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Round table discussion

Part-Time, Full Experience? Rethinking Inclusion in Part-Time Postgraduate Research

Arianna Magyaricsova & Mikaila Jayaweera Bandara | University of Glasgow

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

Part-time postgraduate research (PGR) degrees play an increasingly important role in the UK higher education landscape, supporting career-embedded research, widening participation, and flexible research pathways across qualifications. Despite this, institutional systems, cultures, and practices continue to be shaped by assumptions of full-time, continuous presence. This paper presents findings from the peer-led Part-Time, Full Experience? - PGR Lived Experience Project at the University of Glasgow, which explored the lived experiences of part-time PGRs.

The project employed a qualitative, participatory methodology, using five peer-facilitated focus groups with twenty participants drawn from across all Colleges and research degree types. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to examine experiences of time, access, communication, belonging, identity, and institutional support. Participants described strong motivation and sustained commitment to their research, often undertaken alongside full-time employment, caring responsibilities, or established professional careers. However, their accounts consistently highlighted structural barriers embedded within full-time-oriented systems, including short-notice scheduling, fragmented communication infrastructures, unclear or inconsistent progression processes, limited access to funding, and weak institutional recognition of part-time research trajectories.

The findings challenge deficit-based assumptions that frame part-time study as reduced, peripheral, or less rigorous. Instead, participants characterised part-time research as an intensive and integrative mode of scholarship, marked by endurance, professional insight, and reflective depth over extended timelines. The central issue identified was not individual capacity or engagement, but systemic misalignment: postgraduate research infrastructures calibrated to full-time norms and applied unevenly across part-time research degrees.

Rather than positioning part-time provision as a matter of accommodation, this paper opens a conversation about inclusion by design in postgraduate research. By foregrounding peer-generated evidence, it invites critical reflection on how research environments might be more creatively and intentionally designed to recognise diverse modes of participation, visibility, and belonging across the PGR community.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Round table discussion

Beyond Academic Track Record: Redesigning Doctoral Admissions Criteria

Laura Radcliffe, Hayley Meloy & Bethan Evans | University of Liverpool

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Abstract:

Research consistently identifies narrow definitions of academic 'merit' as a significant barrier to equitable doctoral admissions (Posselt, 2016; Williams et al., 2019). Over-reliance on prior degree classification and awarding institution systematically disadvantages applicants from underrepresented backgrounds. The UKRI Review of PhDs in Social Sciences (2022) highlighted these structural barriers, calling for admissions reform across the sector. The ESRC North West Social Science Doctoral Training Partnership's (NWSSDTP) Preparedness for Postgraduate Research (PPR) criteria sit within a growing sector movement toward holistic assessment. Sector initiatives such as EDEPI and YCEDE have advanced holistic doctoral assessment through large-scale funded programmes. This session discusses how one DTP achieved comparable reform by starting from the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and co-developing criteria directly with assessors, offering a practical, replicable approach. PPR criteria were shaped through collaborative workshops, alongside practice sessions trialling the criteria, and refined through assessor and applicant feedback. The resulting framework shifts assessment from academic track record alone, adding five dimensions: motivation for research, problem solving and perseverance, project and time management, personal development, and working with others, foregrounding what applicants can bring to doctoral study from their broad life experiences as relevant to future research careers. This approach has since been adopted across the NWSSDTP and the AHRC 'Crafting Care' Doctoral Focal College. Embedded within a broader strategy including ring-fenced studentships, application development workshops, inclusive supervisor training, and a student-led podcast, the PPR approach has contributed to a measurable increase in the diversity of funded students. Qualitative feedback from assessors and applicants highlights the value of this whole-person approach. This session will: (1) share the process of developing and embedding PPR criteria with limited resources; (2) present emerging evidence on impact and discuss areas for further development; and (3) facilitate discussion about how participants might implement similar reforms in their own contexts.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Round table discussion

Neurodivergent Belonging: Sharing insights from a writing space created for neurodivergent PhD researchers

Amanda Brunton | University of Cambridge

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

This workshop focuses on the growing awareness of the needs of postgraduate neurodivergent students in HE, and what strategies can be put in place to guide and support these students through their PhD journey. Guidance for inclusive support often focuses on undergraduate provision, and while many of the same principles for educational support apply to undergraduate and postgraduate students alike, research qualifications often present a differing set of challenges that require more targeted support. For example, the transition from a highly structured taught programme to the more 'freeform' nature of a research degree can be challenging for neurodivergent students in ways that differ from their neurotypical peers. As such, students with autism and ADHD may suddenly be required to develop new coping strategies to manage a new type of workload and to maintain focus on their research.

At CCTL (the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning) we have run an 'Autism and ADHD-Friendly Writing Retreat' for several years now. This two-day event provides a welcoming and comfortable environment for neurodivergent students to focus on their writing, with a half-day of training and support embedded in the first day. This training offers concrete advice for handling some of the challenges of being a neurodivergent PhD student, while emphasising neurodivergence as a strength and a resource in the wider research community. Over time, this has become a self-sustaining community in which students benefit from peer-led support alongside structured training.

The workshop aims to share best practice when it comes to offering inclusive and equitable research communities that accommodate neurodivergence by design. This includes both a discussion of the need for specific tailored support as well as how to build learning environments that promote neuroinclusion and comfort in wider pre-existing programmes.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Round table discussion

Minimal supervisor, minimal student: in inquiry into the material basis of PGR research culture

Jeffrey Vernon | Imperial College London

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

Does it make sense to talk of a minimal student, or a minimal supervisor? This workshop invites you to identify the material basis of a sustained PGR research culture. Funding bodies now ask for details of the research culture in making decisions to award or withhold support for PGR programmes, and this requirement has prompted university departments to explain their arrangements to the external assessors. Many UK universities in recent years have set up committees, initiatives and action plans concerned with their research culture, and the place of PGR students within it. For all these efforts, however, the 2025 PG research student experience survey (PRES), revealed only luke-warm PGR student sentiment towards research culture, with a score of 65%.

How is this discrepancy between effort and appreciation to be explained? At least four non-exclusive possibilities can be proposed. First, the students, staff and administration attach different meanings to the term research culture. Second, when all three interest groups agree what the term means, there is no organisational lever to effect change. Third, the research culture might be considered to be flourishing by normal standards, and yet students do not feel able or motivated to participate in it. Fourth, all the actors are willing to sustain a research culture in their locale, but countervailing processes undermine it in ways that appear rational and adaptive to the organisation.

In this exploratory workshop, participants will try to define the minimal PGR student/supervisor experience that is required for a lively research culture to prevail. The facilitator will bring to the table a set of challenges that focus on the agency of students, the responsibilities of supervisors, and the resilience of institutions.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Round table discussion

The Emergence of Younger Graduate Students: Demographic Shifts, Drivers, and Strategic Implications for Institutions of Higher Education

Nico Hohman | Georgetown University

Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Across the last two decades, the age profile of postgraduate learners has shifted. Using the Graduate Youth Index, this presentation shows a clear decline in the mean age of postgraduate learners across many university systems and the rapid rise of students younger than 25 years old.

These younger learners enter postgraduate study directly after completing undergraduate degrees with little time between stages of education and life development. They bring different expectations, needs, and behaviours into PGT programmes.

The presentation introduces the idea of the "Emerging Youth Graduate Student." The U.S. may provide an early signal of broader structural changes as we've seen graduate students behave more like an advanced undergraduate than a mid-career professional. They spend more time on campus, rely on structured guidance, and expect strong academic, social, and wellbeing support. Many move through accelerated and integrated programmes, and stackable credentials that make postgraduate study feel like a continuation of the undergraduate experience rather than a separate phase of life.

As universities internationally expand postgraduate participation and create faster transitions between undergraduate and postgraduate study, questions around belonging, wellbeing, and institutional readiness become increasingly important. The evidence suggests that many institutions still design their PGT policies, spaces, and support systems around an older student population. This creates a gap between student expectations and institutional structures.

The session shares data, examples, and recommendations that help universities improve the transition into postgraduate study for younger learners. It also highlights how institutions can strengthen belonging, reduce anxiety, and create healthier postgraduate cultures. The goal is to help universities build programmes that support earlier life-stage students while preserving the academic rigor of postgraduate education.

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Thursday 2nd July - 14:25 - 15:30

Network Meeting

Postgraduate Education Practitioners - Sustaining communities and wellbeing in times of turmoil

Led by:

Susanna Broom | University of Sussex

Kerri Gardiner | University of Cambridge

Co-chairs of the UKCGE Postgraduate Education Practitioners Network

Description:

[The Postgraduate Education Practitioners' Network](#) (or PEP Network) brings together and supports higher education professionals involved in all aspects of the administration and management of postgraduate researcher matters, providing a supportive environment for colleagues to share their experiences and work through current challenges.

In-keeping with the conference's core themes of community, collaboration and connection, this year's conference workshop will focus on how we can sustain and build communities and foster wellbeing during times of financial and structural turmoil. Split into two broad segments – the first focussing on postgraduate researchers, and the second on the professional services staff that work with and for them – the session will provide opportunities for colleagues to connect, to reflect together on the ramifications of widespread personnel cuts across the sector, and share creative solutions for these cash-strapped times.

The session will also provide an opportunity for those who are not already members of the PEP Network to find out more about Network's offer and how to get involved.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:00 - 15:30

Oral Presentation

Utilising the hidden Break Out Room as a 3rd space for pedagogical reflection in Supervisor Development

Ruth Currie | University Of The West Of Scotland

Gabriele Anderson | Heriott Watt University

Claire Bradley | University of Stirling

Lindsay Randall | University of Edinburgh

Joanna Royle | University of Glasgow

Masha Shaw | University of Aberdeen

Paula Sledzinska | Robert Gordon University

Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Abstract:

We are a team of 7 Researcher Developers in Scotland, with diverse professional backgrounds, facilitating a cross-institutional programme for Supervisors in Scotland: the UKCGE Scotland Writing Group* (SWG). Now in its third iteration, the SWG is a bi-weekly online workshop series for Supervisors from Scottish Universities to reflect on practice and prepare applications for the UKCGE Supervisor Recognition Programme. The programme is open to all Supervisors at Scottish Universities and represents a broad range of experiences: from very early career supervisors working towards the Associate Award, to longstanding supervisors working towards the Full Award. Alongside this career stage diversity, it is also an interdisciplinary space that hosts differing disciplinary perspectives on research and research supervision.

As facilitators, managing expectations across differing disciplinary perspectives and experiences is rich in experiential peer learning and provides opportunities to enhance and reflect on our pedagogical approach. It can also be challenging to navigate. As an interdisciplinary facilitation team, we can pre-empt some of the challenging conversations arising. We can also find ourselves wondering how best to respond when faced with unanticipated challenges that require careful navigation. Through utilising the 20-minute slot in the workshops where supervisors are in break-out room discussions, we have space to reflect on and discuss how we approach our practice and, through co-facilitation, we learn from each other and work collectively to maintain a safe reflective environment, for Supervisors and for ourselves. Through reflections as a project team, taking an autoethnographic approach, we have identified 4 positionalities within our Developer role, which we navigate and support, through collective peer learning in the UKCGE Scotland Writing Group: The Isolated Developer; The Developing Developer; The Cross-Disciplinary Developer; The Uneasy Developer.

Having previously explored the importance of holding this reflective space for supervisors in the SWG*; the role of the Researcher Developer in community building*; and the hidden potential of understanding their previous experiences*, we build on explorations of Researcher Development as a third space* in this presentation to consider the hidden potential of the 'main room' during online breakouts for pedagogical and professional learning.

*<https://sway.cloud.microsoft/xDzWntjTt4kzfvyY?ref=Link>

*<https://redskonference.co.uk/2025/02/24/holding-space-for-reflective-supervisory-praxis/>

*<https://drhiddencurriculum.wordpress.com/2025/09/08/mobilising-communal-researcher-identities-researcher-development-and-the-hidden-curriculum/>

*<https://drhiddencurriculum.wordpress.com/2025/06/26/researcher-developers-as-careful-gatekeepers-in-research-culture/>

*<https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/lre/article/pubid/LRE-22-25/>

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:00 - 15:30

Oral Presentation

**Supporting the Wellbeing and Belonging of International Postgraduate Students:
A Staff-Student-Industry Collaborative Initiative**

Uchenna Nweke & Janet Cash | Buckinghamshire New University

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Abstract:

Recent data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency indicate that international students constitute more than half of all postgraduate enrolments in UK universities. These students often face distinct academic and socio-cultural adjustment challenges, highlighting a need for research on how best to support their wellbeing, sense of belonging and mental health. This paper presents findings from a study conducted within a PGT programme where international students comprise over 95% of the cohort.

The project adopted a multifaceted approach that integrated staff–student partnerships, targeted engagement activities, and collaborations with business leaders and community-based organisations. Two contemporary frameworks, the Integrative Framework for Belonging and the Flourish HE programme, were embedded within the project design. Focus group discussions with 42 international students provided insights that informed the creation of activities aimed at enhancing personal growth, social connection and community integration.

Furthermore, to strengthen authenticity and student engagement, assessment for an entrepreneurship module on the programme has been aligned with a business management conference. Students will participate in coaching sessions with industry leaders, and those who produce outstanding submissions will be invited to pitch their business ideas at the conference. A concluding survey will gather feedback on the project’s perceived impact and effectiveness.

Planned project outputs include an activity based training programme and a wellbeing and belonging workbook tailored for international postgraduate students. The project seeks to amplify international student voices and highlight the value of their involvement in shaping postgraduate support strategies. Emerging recommendations are expected to inform future initiatives and contribute to evidence based policymaking that fosters more inclusive and supportive university environments. Additionally, aligning assessment with an annual conference offers a distinctive model that other postgraduate programmes may adopt, while the innovative start up ideas generated through this process hold potential to develop into scalable ventures capable of creating meaningful community impact.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:20

Oral Presentation

Beyond emotional support: developing agency through PhD Support Groups

Fryni Panayidou | The Francis Crick Institute

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Abstract:

This session will present findings from 19 PhD support groups I have (co-)facilitated over the past eight years across two institutions. These confidential support groups are structured as weekly, 75-minute sessions over eight weeks, bringing together PGRs from different stages to discuss and support each other with emotionally challenging aspects of doctoral study, including supervisory relationships, motivation, work-life balance, and impacts on personal life.

Participants complete a survey at the start and end of an 8-week support group. As first reported in Panayidou & Priest (2021), and consistently observed since, results show increased subjective wellbeing, reduced anxiety, and greater confidence in completing the PhD. With the benefit of a longer-term perspective, it has become clear that one of the most transformative elements of these groups is not simply emotional support, but doctoral students developing a sense of agency. Qualitative feedback and observations point to a clear shift over time: participants move from feeling overwhelmed and as though they lack control, to feeling more empowered to take action.

This shift manifests in different ways, including addressing challenges in supervisory relationships, setting boundaries, prioritising wellbeing, and making intentional decisions about their work. In the most recent five groups, a follow-up session four months after the intervention was introduced. Observations from these follow-up sessions combined with repeat survey data, suggest that these changes in participants' perspective are strengthened over time.

This interpretation aligns with research linking agency and self-efficacy to wellbeing in doctoral education (eg Schmidt & Hansson, 2018). The support groups provide a safe space for reflection, honest sharing, and peer support, enabling participants to reposition themselves as active agents in their doctoral journey.

By sharing these findings, this session contributes to the limited literature on effective, evidence-based, practical interventions for doctoral wellbeing and offers a transferable model that can be adapted across institutional contexts.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:55

Workshop

Enhancing Supervision for Racially Minoritised Postgraduate Researchers

Sally Hancock, Vanita Sundaram, Sahana Arun Kumar & Constantino Dumangane Jr |
University of York

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) often face challenges of isolation, financial precarity, and uncertainty regarding career progression (Polkinghorne et al., 2023). For racially minoritised PGRs, these challenges are compounded by experiences of gender and racial stereotyping, microaggressions, and, in some cases, sexualised harassment and bullying (Arday, 2021; Jones et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). Such experiences have profound implications for wellbeing, belonging, and engagement with research culture.

This workshop arises from a multi-method study exploring racially minoritised PGRs' understandings of and engagement with research culture at a UK university. Interviews with racially minoritised PGRs (n=9) highlighted the supervisory relationship as the most significant factor shaping a successful doctoral experience and sense of belonging. A positive supervisory relationship was associated with engagement in the wider research culture and openness to research careers. In this workshop, we present guidance from a novel toolkit to enhance PGR supervisory practice, grounded in the interview data and co-developed with a wider group of racially minoritised PGRs. The toolkit is contextualised within a renewed model of doctoral supervision, informed by the critical pedagogy principles of collaboration, co-creation, and care. We draw on five principles: consistency, inclusivity, partnership, transparency, and lifecourse support, and provide specific tools for supervisors to bring about change within their supervisory practices.

By the end of the workshop, participants will: have an understanding of the principles of intersectional, reflexive and inclusive doctoral supervision; be developing skills to work with racially minoritised PGRs in an empathetic and supportive manner; and gain practical knowledge to refer PGRs to further support. This will be achieved through reflective exercises, active listening exercises, and guidance on self-care and boundaries. While this workshop will be most beneficial to supervisors, those supporting supervisors (e.g. deans and directors, researcher developers) and PGRs (technicians, postdoctoral researchers) will find value in participating.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:55

Symposium Generative AI

Navigating AI Together: Creating a Collaborative Digital Space for Postgraduates

Emma Cripps, Vincent Adams & Darren Van Laar | University of Portsmouth

Primary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

The speed at which artificial intelligence (AI) is changing, combined with the wide variety of uses and differing levels of confidence amongst postgraduate researchers (PGR), means that traditional development workshops may struggle to provide responsive and diverse support. At the University of Portsmouth, we have created a new type of development session that blends institutional guidance with the benefits of the PGR hive brain: the online AI Forum. Acknowledging that AI can be integral to the method of many research projects, the AI Forum goes beyond this to build understanding and confidence in the ethical use of AI across all areas of postgraduate education and research practice.

The Forum invites PGRs to share how they've been using AI, acknowledge their uncertainties, ask awkward questions, or simply to listen to the discussion. Initially offered as separate in-person and online sessions, we chose to move the Forum completely online to create a more accessible and safe space. Online, attendees can engage as much or as little as they feel comfortable, with the option to post questions and reflections anonymously. Facilitated by the Doctoral College, each Forum incorporates updates on the latest institutional guidance, allowing us to adapt to the fast-changing nature of AI and diverse needs of our PGRs. It also offers the opportunity to collaborate with PGRs; in our most recent Forum, PGRs were invited to give feedback and suggestions on guidance around the inclusion of an AI acknowledgement within doctoral thesis submissions.

During this presentation we will share some of the topics that have surfaced during our Forums, along with our reflections on how we approached them. Delegates will gain practical insights into the benefits, and challenges, of establishing development opportunities that embrace the power of collaboration in online spaces, and are responsive to and inclusive of the needs of PGRs.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:55

Symposium Generative AI

What Happens When a PGR Community Gets Its Own AI Chatbot: Reflections of a Doctoral Researcher-Developer Using an Action Design Research/Design Science Research Methodology Combo!

Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon, Katherine Yates, Tania Goddard & Lauren Holmes | University of Salford

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

Postgraduate researcher (PGR) communities are information-rich yet navigation-poor environments. Doctoral schools accumulate vast repositories of guidance, policy, and support resources, yet PGRs - particularly international students unfamiliar with UK higher education systems - frequently struggle to locate and synthesise the information they need. This paper presents a practitioner-researcher reflection on the design, development, and deployment of an AI-powered chatbot built specifically for a PGR community, emerging from focus group data and Q&As from a dedicated WhatsApp group gathered as part of a year-long Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) project.

Rather than positioning the project as a study of problems, this work foregrounds the development of an actionable, community-responsive solution. Adopting a hybrid Action Design Research (ADR) and Design Science Research (DSR) methodology, the researcher-developer engaged iteratively with the PGR community throughout the build process, ensuring the tool was shaped by, and remained accountable to, its intended users. This methodological combination proved particularly effective for bridging the gap between design artefact and lived institutional context.

The session will present the chatbot in a live prompt-and-response environment, demonstrating how PGRs have used it to find and synthesise information significantly more efficiently than navigating the doctoral school hub. Early user feedback has been strikingly positive, with international students reporting marked improvements in their ability to access relevant guidance without prior familiarity with UK academic structures and conventions. This points to the chatbot's potential as an equity-enhancing mechanism within postgraduate cultures.

The paper concludes by situating this micro-intervention within broader questions of inclusion, digital innovation, and the role of PGRs as co-creators of their own research environments, as the project moves toward developing a more sophisticated digital platform for institutional deployment. The project is approved by the University of Salford Ethics Committee (Project ID: 12495).

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20:20 Presentation

What can peer review of supervision learn from peer review of teaching?

Nicholas Grindle | University College London

Primary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice

Abstract:

This short presentation summarises what peer review of supervision (PRS) can learn from peer review of teaching (PRT).

In the UK it isn't common for supervisors to do peer review of each other's practice. A thorough literature search found only three examples, and stories of colleagues engaging in PRS are rare. Peer review of teaching (PRT), on the other hand, is a well established practice in the UK and other anglophone countries. A large majority of higher education institutions have a PRT scheme of some kind, and a significant body of research developed over the past 25 years consistently shows that PRT supports teacher development and better student outcomes.

There are significant parallels between PRS and PRT, and many supervisors have teaching responsibilities and will routinely do PRT, meaning the concept and practice is familiar.

There are therefore strong reasons to ask what PRS can learn from PRT.

The presentation will focus on what makes PRT effective in its mission to support development. Broadly speaking these break down into organisational, programme, and individual factors. These factors are significant if we are to work effectively with, rather than against, the different grains of institutional and disciplinary cultures, to ensure PRS promotes supervisor development and leads to better outcomes.

Literature and first-hand observation also reveals that PRT 'functions both as a mechanism for enhancing teaching quality and a measure to indicate quality of teaching' (Johnson et al, 2022) and this is echoed in anecdotal evidence from supervisors. Supervisor development is supported by both functions but evidence from research into PRT highlights the need to clarify how they work together to avoid the purposes being misunderstood.

Throughout the presentation I will identify the points where the supervision literature, especially on place-based development, concurs with findings of research into PRT.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:55

20:20 Presentation

Global Cohorts, Local Realities: What Happens When Cultures Meet in Postgraduate Study?

Ellen Wang | Leeds University Business School

Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Abstract:

Postgraduate education is increasingly shaped by cross-border mobility, shifting demographics and evolving learner expectations. Yet international postgraduate students often navigate complex cultural, academic and social transitions that materially shape their learning experience and sense of belonging. This presentation draws on focus groups conducted at my own institution to explore how diverse postgraduate cohorts conceptualise community, collaboration and connection within a UK research-intensive environment. The study engaged taught and research postgraduates from multiple nationalities, capturing perspectives on academic culture, peer relationships, supervision expectations, classroom dynamics, and wider institutional support. Findings reveal both shared aspirations – such as the desire for belonging, meaningful peer interaction, and clearer pathways for collaboration – and culturally inflected differences in how students interpret independence, participation, hierarchy, and academic identity. The data also highlight the pressures of short-cycle PGT programmes, the impact of shifting cohort compositions, and the challenge of fostering community at scale and pace.

This presentation argues that understanding postgraduate cultures through an international and cross-cultural lens is essential for developing inclusive, resilient and sustainable environments. Using student narratives, it illustrates how institutions can better support transition, cultivate belonging, and design interventions that acknowledge diverse cultural frames of reference. It concludes with practical recommendations for universities seeking to strengthen their postgraduate cultures in an increasingly global and volatile higher education landscape.

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Thursday 2nd July - 15:50 - 16:55

20:20 Presentation

Using program-level completion metrics to support inclusive postgraduate cultures

Nicholas Young & Christopher Overton | University of Georgia
Bill Bridges & James Laverty | Kansas State University

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Abstract:

Postgraduate education plays an essential role in developing future scholars, educators, and leaders. Despite its importance, assessing postgraduate success remains challenging. Even seemingly simple questions, such as the proportion of students who complete their program, can be difficult to answer due to limited large-scale data. As program completion can serve as a proxy for institutional culture, support, and inclusion, it is difficult to identify effective practices and improve postgraduate outcomes.

In this presentation, we describe the development of new measures that can be applied to existing data to assess postgraduate retention and completion. Using public data from both the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering as a starting point, we developed measures to estimate the fraction of postgraduate students who are retained in their programs and complete their degree. These measures can work at both the level of an individual program and on a national scale and can be applied to students of various demographic groups, surfacing inequities hidden by aggregated results. Further, as these measures rely on easy-to-collect data, our approach is transferable across diverse international higher education systems.

Focusing initially on physics, our home discipline, we demonstrate the insights these measures can provide and their relevance for scholars and practitioners seeking to foster thriving, inclusive, and sustainable postgraduate environments. By making patterns of retention and completion visible at the program level, this work enables academic staff, colleagues, and postgraduates to reflect collectively on how supervision practices, program structures, and support environments shape postgraduate experiences and ultimately, program completion. Future work will extend these measures to other disciplines, with the aim of identifying practices from particularly successful program that may inform wider institutional change across diverse international higher education systems to best serve a diverse student body.

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20:20 Presentation

An online study exploring doctoral student mental health: Project burnout

Shelley O'Connor | Liverpool John Moores University

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Abstract:

Using a social media platform - Reddit, six months of qualitative data was collected. Three months of live data and three months of retrospective data. The data was analysed using qualitative content analysis.

Using the sub-reddits r/PhD, r/PhDStress and r/PhDProductivity, data was collected from redditors engaged in conversation about their doctoral journey, using a mental health lens. Redditors were active doctoral students across the globe, and engaged in conversations with fellow doctoral students, sharing their stories of their journeys.

Examples of comment titles include: 'Preexisting MH issues: is it a bad idea to start a PhD?'. 'My MH might get me kicked out of my programme', 'A PhD can ruin your MH', 'Feeling like I'm failing my PhD (and life)...is this normal?'

This talk will deliver insights into the observations and inferences made from the data, difficulties around gaining ethics when conducting online studies, and researcher positionality.

Additional Notes: I will present the findings from both the scoping review and internet study that explores the mental health experiences of doctoral students. The SR and the internet study findings will provide a basis for discussion for the final part of the project which will be longitudinal focus groups (these are due to commence in July 2026). The entire project is using a Generic Qualitative Approach and is driven by an inductive and iterative process, combining reflexive thematic analysis (SR) and qualitative and relational content analysis (internet study). Due to the qualitative nature of the project and studies, there is no hypothesis or theory-driven analysis, this project is exploring the current mental health of doctoral students using raw, natural data. The intended purpose is to discuss the current health of our doctoral students, by providing a direct insight into their views and experience. The SR will provide an up-to-date evaluation of current studies (completed SR includes up to December 2025 published studies) and the internet study (captured live data between September and December 2025, and retrospective data between June and September 2025) will provide the audience with real-time time stamp of what challenges doctoral students are currently experiencing. Both capturing a global perspective. As a mental health nurse by registration, I am interested in creating a training course for supervisors to spot the signs and symptoms of mental illness, and hope to roll this out to institutions, on an annual basis. And, create a training course for doctoral students to spot the signs any symptoms of mental ill-health in themselves and their respective colleagues.

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Oral Presentation

Beyond deficit models: trauma-informed supervision as everyday practice in postgraduate research

Frane Vusio | The University of Warwick

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

Postgraduate researchers frequently navigate sustained uncertainty, high-stakes evaluation, and unspoken expectations. These conditions quietly shape how they engage with their work, receive feedback, and experience belonging within their research communities. The supervisory relationship sits at the centre of these experiences, yet supervisors are rarely given structured guidance on how to hold both the academic and relational dimensions of that role well. This presentation argues that trauma-informed supervision offers a practical and psychologically coherent way of doing exactly that, without requiring supervisors to move beyond their professional remit.

A key reframe running through this session is a practical one. When a postgraduate researcher withdraws, misses deadlines, or disengages, this is often better understood as a response to pressure and uncertainty than as a personal failing. Power asymmetries, hidden curricula, and the prolonged ambiguity of doctoral study are structural features of research environments that shape behaviour in ways supervisors encounter regularly, even if they are rarely named as such. Supervision that accounts for these features does not lower academic standards. It creates the conditions under which those standards can genuinely be met. The session translates these ideas into concrete supervisory practice, drawing on supervision research, relational frameworks, and applied experience across higher education. It explores three areas supervisors can develop straight away: meta-communication, including how to make implicit expectations explicit around feedback, availability, and the doctoral lifecycle; feedback structure, focusing on how to maintain intellectual rigour while reducing evaluative threat that can inhibit learning; and responding to disengagement, particularly how to approach withdrawal in ways that invite re-engagement rather than compound disconnection. Running through all three is a compassionate, clear, and consistent approach to supervision, which positions clarity and relational attunement as complementary rather than competing qualities. This is not a therapeutic approach. It is a relational orientation that sits squarely within the academic supervisory role. Participants will leave with specific, usable strategies for clarifying expectations, structuring difficult conversations, and responding constructively when the supervisory relationship comes under strain.

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Oral Presentation

Reimagining Boundaries: Identity, Agency, and Collaboration Among Third Space Professionals in Higher Education

Amir Keshtiban, Louise Donaghy, Cassie Price & Zara Skelton | York St John University

Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

As global discussions around research culture and postgraduate education increasingly foreground the importance of people, culture, and environment, attention is turning to those who work at the intersections of academic and professional domains—the so-called Third Space professionals. These individuals, encompassing practitioner-researchers, research-enabling staff, and professional services colleagues, play a pivotal role in shaping inclusive and resilient institutional cultures. Yet, their hybrid positions are often marked by ambiguity, contested legitimacy, and evolving expectations.

This study explores how Third Space professionals construct and negotiate their professional identities within the complex and shifting terrain of higher education. Drawing on qualitative inquiry, it examines how these identities are formed and re-formed through ongoing interactions with institutional structures, power dynamics, and cultural norms. The research highlights how hybrid professionals exercise agency amid ambiguity, redefining boundaries between academic and administrative spheres while navigating issues of recognition, authority, and belonging.

Rather than viewing structural tensions as obstacles, the paper reframes them as potential catalysts for innovation in governance, collaboration, and organisational learning. By illuminating how cross-boundary identities can foster adaptability, interdisciplinarity, and shared purpose, the study argues for a more integrated understanding of professional cultures in universities. In doing so, it contributes to current debates on research culture and postgraduate education by positioning Third Space professionals as key actors in building equitable, supportive, and forward-looking academic communities.

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Friday 3rd July - 09:15 - 09:45

Oral Presentation

From Bench to Business: Navigating Research Commercialisation as a Postgraduate Researcher in Pharmaceutical Sciences

Caroline Soliman | Kingston University London

Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good

Abstract:

The transition from academic research to commercial application represents one of the most challenging yet rewarding pathways available to postgraduate researchers (PGRs). Despite the growing emphasis on knowledge exchange and innovation within UK higher education, many PGRs remain unaware of the practical steps, frameworks, and support structures available to translate their research into viable commercial ventures.

This presentation draws on firsthand experience as a PhD researcher in pharmaceutical sciences at Kingston University London, where doctoral work focuses on the development of glucose-sensitive drug delivery platforms for diabetes management. Using this research as a case study, this paper explores the journey from laboratory-based scientific discovery to the identification of commercial opportunities, including intellectual property considerations, market analysis, and the role of university technology transfer offices in supporting PGR-led innovation.

The presentation further discusses the key challenges faced by PGRs in pursuing commercialisation pathways, including limited entrepreneurial training, funding barriers, and the tension between academic publishing and protecting intellectual property. Practical strategies for overcoming these barriers are proposed, alongside a discussion of available funding mechanisms such as Innovate UK and UKRI entrepreneurship programmes.

This paper aims to stimulate meaningful dialogue among PGRs across disciplines about the value of entrepreneurial thinking, and to encourage institutions to better embed commercialisation training within doctoral programmes. Ultimately, it argues that empowering PGRs with the knowledge and confidence to pursue commercial pathways not only benefits individual researchers but contributes to the broader innovation ecosystem within the UK.

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Oral Presentation

Inclusion and equality in internationally diverse postgraduate classrooms: perceptions of students and lecturers

Debra Jones | University of Bristol

Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Abstract:

While the internationalisation of Higher Education has seen a substantial increase in international students on UK campuses, this has not necessarily led to a more internationalised curriculum or pedagogy (Jin & Cortazzi, 2017). It has been argued that internationalisation, in its current form, has failed to realise the potential benefits of diversity (Moosavi, 2020), instead perpetuating the dominance of Anglocentric/Eurocentric knowledge and perceiving difference as deficit (Diaz, 2018).

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is often seen as a 'bridge' between international students and the host university and the role of EAP practitioners, like myself, involves preparing students to meet the expectations of UK academia (Benesch, 2001). This can lead to an assimilationist model where students are required to 'unlearn' their previous knowledge, skills and experience and adapt to the "assumed, inherently superior" UK model of teaching and learning (Lomer & Mittemeier, 2021, p.1258). The result is a "one-way" monocultural approach to internationalisation (Singh, 2009) which can leave international students feeling excluded (Hayes, 2019) and negatively impact their sense of belonging. My doctoral research investigates perceptions and experiences of university lecturers and international postgraduate students in relation to their experiences of teaching and learning in internationally diverse classrooms. It aims to develop a more inclusive, transcultural pedagogy based on epistemic equality which values the knowledge and prior experiences international students bring, enables them to fulfil their potential and facilitates more reciprocal "two-way" exchanges of knowledge necessary for the development of an internationally diverse research culture.

This paper will present initial findings of this qualitative study which adopts a reflexive thematic analysis approach to interviews with students and lecturers at a UK university. It will be of interest to anyone teaching or learning in international classrooms looking for a more inclusive and equitable approach which both values and benefits from international diversity.

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Friday 3rd July – 09:15 – 11:00

Symposium

International perspectives on postgraduate education

TBC

Session Description:

TBC

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Friday 3rd July - 09:55 - 10:25

Oral Presentation

SGSSS Core: An Innovative Cross-Institutional Collaboration for Postgraduate Researcher Training

Roxanne Connelly | University of Edinburgh / Scottish Graduate School of Social Science

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

Authors: The Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) Team

The Scottish Graduate School for Social Science, Scotland's ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership, approached our second funding phase with a radical new ambition for our approach to postgraduate researcher training. A key element of our training provision is a shared credit-bearing course undertaken by postgraduate students from universities throughout Scotland. This course is nearing the completion of its first run, and we have received an extremely positive response from students and course contributors.

'SGSSS Core: Becoming a Confident Social Science Researcher' is a unique course which brings together a diverse group of students from across Scotland and across social science disciplines. This course aims to provide students with the skills to become globally competitive social science researchers; able to operate in interdisciplinary, collaborative, and challenge-led environments. This course provides a springboard for ESRC-funded students to develop the skills to embrace new developments in social science research, and to work in teams to develop research plans to address grand social science challenges. The course is delivered in a condensed format including a residential week, online small-group follow-up sessions, and a range of interactive activities to allow students to develop their professional research skills.

Developing and delivering this course has not been without its challenges, both pedagogical and logistical. This presentation will share our experiences and the approaches we have employed to maximise the success of this training innovation including: approaches to effective collaboration between academic and professional services colleagues across multiple universities; designing a course to meet the credit-bearing requirements of multiple universities, and ensuring equality and diversity considerations are paramount. We will also share our plans for developing shared reusable materials from this course, which will contribute to the development of research methods training for wider groups of postgraduate research students throughout Scotland.

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Symposium Inclusion

Rapid Evidence Review of Inclusion in PGR Students

Paige Monaghan & Laura Radcliffe | Liverpool University
Scott Foster | Liverpool John Moores

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Doctoral researchers consistently report experiences of exclusion, isolation, and limited belonging, yet inclusion in postgraduate education remains poorly understood and inconsistently defined. While many institutions and research funders now prioritise equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), there is limited understanding of how inclusion is experienced by doctoral students, what factors foster inclusive environments, and what barriers persist. This rapid evidence review synthesises existing research to examine how inclusion is conceptualised and experienced within doctoral training and to identify opportunities for strengthening it.

Three key findings emerged. First, inclusion in doctoral education is rarely defined explicitly in the literature and is instead often explored through related constructs such as belonging, wellbeing, and researcher identity. Second, inclusion is shaped by both structural and relational factors, including unclear programme expectations, time pressures, career uncertainty, inconsistent supervision, and compounded barriers experienced by minoritised groups. Third, supportive supervision, strong peer networks, and doctoral community-building initiatives show promise in fostering inclusion, although robust evaluation of these approaches remains limited.

Crucially, this review advances the field by proposing a future research agenda for inclusion in doctoral education, highlighting the need for clearer conceptual definitions, greater attention to intersectional experiences, and more rigorous evaluation of inclusive practices. It also outlines practical, multi-level recommendations to support inclusion across the doctoral experience, including guidance for supervisors, doctoral programme leaders, and institutional stakeholders. Overall, improving doctoral inclusion requires sustained attention not only to targeted initiatives but also to the broader structures shaping doctoral training, including supervision practices, programme design, and institutional culture.

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Friday 3rd July - 09:55 - 11:00

Symposium Inclusion

The Paper That Never Happened: Narrating the Structural Barriers to Producing EDI Scholarship in a STEM Research CDT

Chrissi McCarthy | Centre of Behavioural Equality
Alison Harvey & Maria McGloin | University of Manchester
Gwendolen Reilly | University of Sheffield

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

In a STEM doctoral training centre, postgraduate researchers (PGRs) designed and delivered a portfolio of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) projects intended to strengthen fairness, belonging and equity within the research culture. These projects varied in their effectiveness, with some generating considerable enthusiasm and others encountering challenges. The variation of PGR outputs demonstrated an opportunity to understand how PGR-led inclusion work operates within STEM environments. However, despite clear intentions, the planned evaluation paper was never completed.

This study uses non-production as an analytical lens to examine the labour of EDI evaluation and the structural conditions that shape its feasibility in postgraduate research ecosystems.

Using experience-centred critical narrative inquiry, we convened three online writing workshops with former PGRs, academic leads, professional services staff and an external consultant. Participants produced reflective accounts of their attempts to evaluate the projects, describing stalled momentum, workload pressures, shifting priorities and the positioning of evaluative EDI writing as peripheral to dominant scientific outputs.

Through thematic narrative analysis informed by scholarship on EDI labour and epistemic injustice, we show how institutional norms, time scarcity and the undervaluing of reflective and relational work inhibit the documentation and interpretation of PGR-led EDI activity. The findings reveal a persistent tension in doctoral training: PGRs are encouraged to lead initiatives that enhance inclusion and collegiality, yet the systems around them limit their capacity to record, evaluate and share this labour.

We argue that the failure to produce the evaluation, rather than the variable success of the projects themselves, exposes the hidden structural constraints shaping EDI labour in STEM training environments. The study offers a conceptual model of these barriers and outlines implications for governance, workload design and the sustainable embedding of inclusive research culture practices in PGR programmes.

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Friday 3rd July - 09:55 - 11:00

Network Meeting

Doctoral Deans & Directors

Led by:

Nigel Eady | Kings College London

Jane Wellens | University of Staffordshire

Co-chairs of the UKCGE Doctoral Deans & Directors Network

Abstract:

The Doctoral Deans & Directors Network is a forum for senior leaders in postgraduate education to make collective recommendations for the management of postgraduate provision in the UK.

The network is open to all Deans and Directors of Graduate Schools (and those with associated roles such as Directors of Doctoral Training Partnerships) operating within the national and international postgraduate community. It is chaired by nominated representatives of the postgraduate sector.

Find out more about the network at <https://ukcge.ac.uk/networks/doctoral-deans-and-directors>

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Friday 3rd July - 10:30 - 11:00

Oral Presentation

Liberating AI Literacy in PGR skills development at Sheffield Hallam University

Marjory Da Costa, David Smith & Elizabeth Scanlon | Sheffield Hallam University

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good

Abstract:

This paper examines how Freirean critical pedagogy can transform postgraduate research cultures by employing the critical, ethical and dialogical application of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) for the PGR student emancipation. Building on the Liberating AI Literacy Pedagogy, this proposal presents a participatory framework for integrating AI tools into doctoral education, promoting inclusivity, and public engagement. AI is positioned not merely as a technical aid but as a catalyst for collegiality, enabling postgraduates and supervisors to engage as co-researchers in meaning-making and ethical inquiry.

The study examines three practical applications: (1) GenAI as a thesis proofreading collaborator, addressing late-stage doctoral needs and reframing proofing as a dialogical process of reflection and agency but with a critical lense; (2) GenAI-assisted literature reviewing as an early-stage co-creation tool, supporting new PGRs in developing critical consciousness of the AI tool and self-governance of its use; and (3) GenAI for supervisory feedback, where time-poor supervisors use tools to enhance clarity and inclusivity in feedback, particularly for cross-cultural (language translation, for example) and neurodiverse researchers.

These interventions support our premise of, given the correct ethical perspective, how GenAI can be leveraged to strengthen PGR communities by scaffolding equitable participation, reflexivity, and shared responsibility. They embody a shift from hierarchical supervision toward collaborative knowledge production, aligning doctoral education with the public good through transparent, ethical, and inclusive research practices. In doing so, the paper argues for a PGR culture that views GenAI not as a replacement for human intellect but as a tool in the construction of knowledge and the cultivation of connected, socially responsible research communities.

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 11:50

Oral Presentation

Why pursue postgraduate taught study? Motivations and expectations of home and international students in health and life sciences.

Claire Hudson | University of Bristol

Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Abstract:

Postgraduate taught (PGT) education is increasingly important for professional development and career prospects in the health and life sciences sector. Understanding students' motivations and expectations is particularly important in the current climate, with the PGT sector facing increasing volatility due to fluctuating international recruitment, financial pressures, and the small cohort sizes typical of specialist programmes. Existing research highlights employability, professional development and personal interest as key motivators of PGT study, however, there is limited discipline-specific research comparing the motivations and expectations of home and international students in a UK health and life sciences context, which this study aims to address.

A survey was developed from existing empirical research on PGT motivations and expectations, incorporating items from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire, grounded in social-cognitive theory, including intrinsic/extrinsic goals and task value.

Additional items were informed by complementary theoretical perspectives, including the Expectancy–Value Theory and the Expectation–Reality framework, enabling the survey to capture professional, personal and practical influences on programme choice and expectations. Research aims were explored further in a series of student focus groups.

Preliminary analysis suggest that students are most motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic goals, including improving subject knowledge, developing relevant professional skills, and enhancing future career prospects. Differences by domicile were observed, with international students motivated more strongly by research careers, professional goals and future value of their qualification, while home students value flexible learning and modes of study.

This presentation will explore our findings in more detail, and discuss implications for how we support the transition and expectations of diverse PGT cohorts. Recognising differences in motivations and expectations may help programmes design learning environments and support structures that better foster engagement and a sense of belonging within the PGT community.

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 12:25

Workshop

Not just pizza and doughnuts: Embedding a sense of belonging in Postgraduate Research Cultures

Laura Etheridge & Emily Bartlett | Doctoral College, University of Bristol

Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) frequently navigate environments shaped by social isolation, financial precarity, and sustained academic pressure. At Bristol Doctoral College (BDC), we position belonging and wellbeing not as peripheral enhancements but as foundational to healthy research cultures. Building on sector evidence linking community connection to PGR satisfaction and retention, this workshop explores how institutions can move beyond reactive support to embed belonging into the everyday experiences of PGRs. Drawing on PRES data and three years of community-focused initiatives at Bristol — including peer-led networks, co-designed development opportunities, and dedicated PGR spaces — we present low-cost, scalable approaches that strengthen connection and reduce engagement barriers. Delegates will gain both conceptual frameworks and actionable tools for generating cultural change within their contexts.

Workshop Structure (60 minutes):

- *Evidence and Practice from Bristol (15 minutes) - Presentation of PRES findings, community-building interventions, and demonstrated impact through quantitative and qualitative evaluation.
- *Interactive Mapping Exercise (10 minutes) - Delegates identify strengths and challenges within their own institutional contexts using a structured template.
- *Visionary–Designer–Evaluator Activity (20 minutes) - Small-group facilitated discussion exploring how belonging can be embedded structurally, imaginatively, and sustainably. Groups rotate through three lenses: envisioning ideal practice, designing practical interventions, and evaluating feasibility and impact.
- *Institutional Adaptation Toolkit (10 minutes) - Attendees will reflect and synthesise insights into actionable, low-resource strategies applicable across diverse institutional settings.
- *Reflective Commitment Cards (5 minutes) - Delegates identify one actionable commitment to implement at their institution, creating both individual accountability and a collective resource.

This interactive workshop suits professional services staff, academics, and postgraduate representatives committed to cultivating research environments where community, collaboration, and wellbeing are intentional, systemic practices rather than supplementary provision.

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 12:25

Symposium Internationalisation

Exploring researcher development for postgraduate researchers engaged in programmes with international partner institutions

Tom Webb | Coventry University

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Abstract:

At Coventry University we have a growing number of international collaborative PhD programmes with over half of our new full-time PGRs who enrolled in January 2026 starting on one of these programmes. Many of these PGRs are initially based at one of our partner institutions in Australia, India, Indonesia and South Africa, and will undertake their 'mobility' at Coventry University in Years 2 or 3. This is becoming our new norm as the institution engages globally in more urgent and diverse ways.

Considering this evolving landscape, there is a need to rethink how researcher development initiatives are adapted to be inclusive of these PGRs to make their experience, where possible, equitable with those starting on non-collaborative in-place programmes. In this presentation, I will explore ways of forging more effective researcher development initiatives with a focus on how PGRs at international partner institutions can access and engage with asynchronous pedagogical spaces. This will be situated within a consideration of the challenges faced by researcher developers when supporting these PGRs, such as competing cross-cultural and institutional expectations of what researcher development entails, as well as practical challenges such as time differences.

This will add to existing knowledge on the benefits and challenges of these programmes relating to factors such as cross-institutional research activity and funding, supervisory support, and navigating stakeholder expectations and regional variations. It will also directly contribute to the following conference themes:

- Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces
- International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 12:25

Symposium Internationalisation

Tea, Conversation, and Belonging: Creating Informal Communities to Support Postgraduate and International Student Wellbeing

Ramitha Nittore Ramnath | Chaplaincy, University Of Chester

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Secondary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Abstract:

Universities increasingly recognise that student wellbeing, belonging, and community are central to successful postgraduate cultures. However, many students particularly international students and those navigating cultural or personal challenges find it difficult to engage in formal institutional spaces where sensitive topics such as identity, mental health, homesickness, and academic confidence are discussed. This paper presents a National award winning practice-informed case study of the Themed Tea Parties initiative developed within the Chaplaincy at the University of Chester.

Since October 2024, more than 15 themed tea party events have been delivered, bringing together small groups of students (typically 12–15 participants) in informal, creative environments designed to encourage open conversation and peer connection. Themes have included LGBTQ+ inclusion, women's empowerment, mental health, careers anxiety, academic skills, sustainability, and international student belonging. Approximately 90% of participants have been international postgraduate students, highlighting the initiative's effectiveness in engaging groups who may otherwise experience isolation or barriers to participation.

The model intentionally centres relational engagement rather than formal programming. Through themed environments, creative prompts, and peer-led discussion, the tea parties create psychologically safe spaces where students feel comfortable sharing experiences that might otherwise remain hidden within institutional structures.

Evaluation data demonstrates strong outcomes: 90% of participants reported reduced stress following the session, while 95% reported making a new connection, learning a new skill, or experiencing improved wellbeing. Importantly, conversations have also generated actionable feedback for university services, and in one case led directly to the formation of a student-led transgender peer support group.

This paper argues that small-scale, low-cost, community-led initiatives can play a significant role in strengthening postgraduate cultures by fostering belonging, amplifying student voice, and building informal communities of care within higher education.

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 12:25

Symposium Internationalisation

Internationalisation as a discursive regime: Language Hierarchy and Cultural Formation of Research in a Malaysian University

Nur Izham | University of Glasgow

Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

Internationalisation is often framed as a neutral agenda that aims to increase international visibility and improve academic quality. However, in the context of the Global South, the process operates based on a discursive regime forming and normalising specific forms of knowledge. This research is viewed from Foucauldian framework on power, discourse and knowledge production (Foucault, 1980). The research argues that the domination of English language in internationalisation is merely a linguistic issue but is a mechanism of power forming legitimisation of academics and access to the global research community. Literature has focused on the domination of academic publications in English (Phillipson, 1992; Blommaert, 2010), but there are less empirical research relating the internationalisation with the formation of research culture, specifically its impact on postgraduates in the context of a Malaysian institution. The research analyses the role of language ideology, international publication pressures, and institutional policies in shaping academic behaviour. Using qualitative methods through interviews with academics, preliminary findings indicate that English serves as a linguistic capital that sets research standards and facilitates global networking, while local languages are relegated, reinforcing an epistemic hierarchy within academia. This dynamic affects the formation of academic identities and influences the research culture among researchers and postgraduate students, leading to an uneven normalization of global standards. This research investigates the role of academics as actors in shaping the research culture of postgraduates within the framework of internationalisation and language hierarchy. It highlights internationalisation as a discursive control mechanism that generates epistemic inequality in higher education. This research elaborates on the intricate relationship between language and power, examines how postgraduate culture is structured in the context of internationalisation, and discusses the implications for the formation of an inclusive research culture.

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Friday 3rd July - 11:20 - 12:25

Network Meeting

Research Supervisors

Led by:

Craig Martin | University of Edinburgh

Nicola Palmer | Sheffield Hallam University

Co-chairs of the UKCGE Research Supervision Network

Description:

The Research Supervisors' Network is a forum for all those involved in research supervision to share resources, expertise and experiences

The network provides a forum for discussion & learning, enabling supervisors to support each other in enhancing their own practice.

Regular workshops, seminars and webinars, delivered by world leading experts in the development of research supervisory practice, provide further opportunities for research supervision professional to evaluate and enhance their own practice.

Find out more about the network at <https://ukcge.ac.uk/networks/research-supervisors>

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Oral Presentation

The PGT–PGR Transition: Challenges and Opportunities

Julie Roberts & Thelma Okey-Adibe | Glasgow Caledonian University

Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Abstract:

Professional Practice Doctorate students e.g. Doctorate of Business Administration (DBA) often begin with formal Postgraduate Taught (PGT) modules. DBA students are typically industry practitioners, working at a senior level in pursuit of solving a work-based problem (Costley and Lester, 2012). Given this practice-based context, the PGT modules support a deeper understanding of core academic concepts and the honing in on their often-broad research proposal. The taught stage curriculum is designed to provide formal knowledge, developing doctoral skills, including academic writing and reflective practice, enhancing critical thinking (Marvell, and Livesey, 2025).

Our paper presents the findings of an Exploratory Sequential study, firstly qualitative, open-ended questions to explore the experiences and perceptions of 10 of our DBA students through semi-structured interviews. Data analysis involving identification of themes and building of hypotheses, subsequently testing them through a quantitative online questionnaire. This discussion can offer evidence-based approaches to designing mentoring initiatives, and curriculum enhancements that support smoother transitions, aid student progression and stronger postgraduate research cultures.

We have observed that the transition from their PGT to Postgraduate Research (PGR) stage, is fraught with challenges, often leading to slower progression, as students put into action their learning. The safety net of structure experienced in the taught stage is pulled from under them as they begin their research, resulting in a slow pace of progression. Strategies for improving doctoral completion rates have been proposed but the effectiveness of such strategies has been less studied (Breitenbach, 2024). The subject of this paper is the often-overlooked transition that doctoral students make from their PGT to PGR study, is under explored. It raises questions on targeting improvement for this transition, which could be achieved through review of the pedagogical design, mentoring, and early exposure to research culture, which can support student confidence, identity, and readiness for doctoral study.

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Oral Presentation

Reimagining Postgraduate Cultures: Equity and Belonging through the ASPIRE Programme

Ifedapo Francis Awolowo | Sheffield Hallam University

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

Postgraduate cultures flourish when students are not only supported academically supported but also welcomed within inclusive communities that value collaboration and connection. Yet for many Black students in the UK, structural inequalities and deficit-based assumptions have historically restricted access to doctoral pathways. The Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence (ASPIRE), funded by the Office for Students and UKRI, was established to challenge these inequities and reimagine postgraduate cultures through a values-driven, community-focused approach.

This case study shares insights from ASPIRE, which has mentored fifty-nine Black students across three cohorts, with 15 successfully progressing to fully funded doctoral studies.

Central to the programme are five interlocking pillars—Personal and Professional Development, Academic Writing, Employability, Research Skills, and Project Management—delivered through a personalised mentorship model underpinned by the ethical philosophies of Compassionate Pedagogy, Ubuntu, and Omoluabi.

Evaluation evidence, listening room data, and participant testimonies reveal how ASPIRE has created new forms of postgraduate community. Students have developed critical consciousness, strengthened academic identity, and built collaborative networks that extend beyond single institutions. Partnerships with academics, industry leaders, and sector organisations have further embedded a culture of meaningful connection, translating into tangible outcomes such as enhanced confidence, career opportunities, and research progression.

By situating ASPIRE as a case study in designing inclusive postgraduate cultures, this paper contributes to the conference theme of Community, Collaboration and Connection. It argues that building sustainable cultures requires deliberate equity-centred interventions that dismantle exclusionary practices while affirming belonging. The ASPIRE model offers a replicable framework for universities seeking to embed community-driven practices into postgraduate education, ensuring that doctoral pathways are more compassionate, connected, and inclusive.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 13:45

Oral Presentation

Best of both worlds?: PGR communities in and with non-HEI organisations

Fiona Wilkie | Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
Helen Robertson | Natural History Museum

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

A substantial PhD community now exists in the non-HEI research sector, and yet surprisingly little attention has been paid to this group in frameworks, reports and discussions of PGR provision. Funders such as UKRI increasingly emphasise the importance of non-HEI engagement within their doctoral schemes: collaboration between universities and a range of partner organisations is positioned as vital for providing real-world relevance, knowledge exchange, multidisciplinary training, preparation for diverse career paths, access to outstanding collections, facilities and wider networks, and a wealth of other added benefits. The model of industry collaboration and CASE studentships is now fairly well understood, but Independent Research Organisations (IROs) occupy a different space, somewhere between academia and the 'real-world' environment so often referenced in funding calls. UKRI currently recognises 87 IROs: organisations with in-house research capacity, eligible to apply for research funding in their own right, and not affiliated with any higher-education provider. Between them, these 87 institutions support a significant doctoral community: for example, the Natural History Museum and Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew each co-supervise more than 130 current PhD students.

These students gain a deep understanding of a research environment outside the HEI context, as well as benefitting from opportunities to participate in other aspects of the IRO's work, including public programmes, advocacy and schools' education. But the experience of participating in two or more simultaneous cohorts (non-HEI/university/DTP) can bring challenges, including juggling supervisory teams across organisations and navigating multiple institutional requirements.

This session aims to introduce the size and nature of this hidden student body, and to engage with participants to understand their experience of collaborating in this space. Together we'll explore what might be needed to reach a better shared understanding of the PhD students in non-HEI spaces. How can universities and non-HEIs work together to nurture this substantial PGR community?

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Round table discussion

Reframing Peer Supervision: A Relational Framework for Doctoral Development and Academic Wellbeing

Thelma Okey-Adibe & David Edgar | Glasgow Caledonian University

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Secondary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Abstract:

Despite its growing prominence in doctoral education, peer supervision remains conceptually underdeveloped and frequently treated as an informal or supplementary practice. While there is growing recognition of the importance of psychological safety and trust in building effective supervisory relationships, the scholarship and practice follows traditional hierarchical supervision models. Such framings risk obscuring the relational processes through which peer supervision shapes doctoral learning and academic identity. As such, this lack of clarity limits the perceived value of, and required support for, ensuring the success and well-being of peer supervised candidates. This paper advances debate by proposing a framework that reconceptualises peer supervision not as a structural function, but as a relational, developmental, and adaptive learning system.

Drawing on sociocultural, relational, motivational, and organisational perspectives on learning, the framework positions reciprocal relational dynamics as central. Institutional contexts and peer practices shape shared influence, trust, and negotiated power within supervisory relationships. These dynamics foster psychological safety, which operates as a mediating condition enabling scholarly identity formation while supporting autonomy, and engagement. Outcomes such as wellbeing, persistence, research quality, and sustainable scholarly networks are conceptualised as feedback processes that reshape relational patterns over time and strengthen both supervision practices and academic welfare.

In reframing peer supervision as a developmental process grounded in reciprocal academic relationships, laissez-faire assumptions are challenged. The framework contributes to Higher Education theory by clarifying how peer relations, under appropriate structural conditions, can generate sustainable academic development. A relational framework is proposed which reconceptualises the practice of peer supervision, to shape doctoral identity and wellbeing, rather than a supplementary support mechanism.

The discussion session invites participants to explore the framework's applicability and to identify adaptations, tensions, and opportunities for supporting peer Doctoral supervision.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Round table discussion

It Takes a “Village:” A Community-Based Approach to Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Parenting and Caring

Lauren Pearl Holmes, Tania Goddard, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon & Katherine Yates |
University of Salford

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

From an epistemological perspective, there is much that remains unknown about the specific challenges and everyday realities that postgraduate researcher (PGR) parents and carers encounter. Similarly, there is a gap in the existing literature on the particular barriers to participation experienced by PGR communities who are both parents and carers and identify with intersecting protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010. It remains well established that problems such as the motherhood penalty are not isolated to employment spaces. Yet, we know little about how such problems affect spaces where the production of knowledge happens. Parents and carers of global majority heritage, international study status, or those who are of menopausal age or identify as disabled also face additional challenges; these challenges have not been fully reckoned with in practical terms as barriers to good wellbeing or feelings of belonging in PGR research spaces.

The University of Salford offers PGR Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) lead roles on an annual basis. The EDI lead role supports research by PGRs into targeted aspects of EDI within the university’s PGR communities and cultures, empowering PGRs to drive structural change from within. This roundtable discussion presents the emergent case study of the “Village,” an EDI lead project developed as a community support network designed by and for PGR parents and carers. The “Village” established a secure, dialogic space within which PGR parents and carers could share their experiences. In so doing, the “Village” surfaced previously unknown pan-institutional and systemic barriers to participation encountered by a hidden PGR community – parents and carers. Moving beyond localised insights, this roundtable will discuss the scalable power of community-based research. Attendees will leave with a deepened understanding of actionable strategies and a transferable framework to advocate for and empower under-described PGR demographics across the wider higher education sector.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Round table discussion

From Sink-or-Swim to Scaffolded Success: Revitalising Staff Engagement and Student Independence in Rapidly Expanding MSc Cohorts

Joe Latimer, Sarah Withers, Zeljka Krpetic & Natalie Ferry | University of Salford

Primary theme: Improving the PGT transition into HE

Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Abstract:

The landscape of Postgraduate Taught (PGT) education has shifted dramatically. Since 2016, our institution has witnessed a doubling of MSc cohorts and a six-fold increase in international enrolment. This rapid expansion created a critical disparity between diverse student needs—specifically regarding UK assessment norms and critical autonomy—and an increasingly overwhelmed staff. The traditional "sink-or-swim" expectation of postgraduate study proved unsustainable, resulting in student underperformance and staff disengagement.

This paper outlines a strategic intervention designed to scaffold the PGT transition and rebuild the academic community. We implemented a four-part holistic approach:

Postgraduate Scholarship Skills (PSS): We introduced small-group tutorials to create a "home base" for students. To combat staff burnout, we developed methods to keep staff engaged, reducing cognitive load and ensuring consistent pastoral care.

Research Design and Delivery: This lab-based research skills module builds independence by combining experimental techniques with problem-solving tasks. Students must design follow-up studies, easing the transition to autonomous experimental planning.

Professional Practice: We adapted this module, which originally focused on client-led briefs, to utilise real-world scenarios for teaching foundational data handling, directly addressing gaps often faced by international students.

We restructured the Research Project module, replacing sole supervision with a paired, multidisciplinary, collaborative model. This improves the student experience while acting as a mentorship mechanism for new staff and empowering technical staff to lead skills training, enriching students' CVs with technical skills, improving their employability prospects.

These interventions have transformed our MSc culture. By clarifying expectations and fostering collaborative teaching, we have shifted interactions from remedial explanation to high-level critical engagement. This approach empowers students to take ownership of their research and allows staff to take pride in their supervision, successfully bridging the gap into higher education for diverse learners.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Round table discussion

A Critical Pedagogy Reframing of Supervision for Racially Minoritised Postgraduate Researchers

Sally Hancock, Vanita Sundaram, Sahana Arun Kumar & Constantino Dumangane Jr |
University of York

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) often face challenges of isolation, financial precarity, and career uncertainty (Polkinghorne et al., 2023). For racially minoritised PGRs, these pressures are compounded by experiences of gendered and racial stereotyping, microaggressions, and, in some cases, sexualised harassment and bullying (Arday, 2021; Jones et al., 2024; Yu et al., 2024). Such experiences have profound implications for wellbeing, belonging, and engagement with research culture - yet remain underexplored within higher education research.

We present findings from a study exploring racially minoritised PGRs' understandings of and engagement with research culture at a UK university. We focus specifically on PGRs' experiences of sexualised harassment and bullying, and how these experiences shape engagement with institutional research culture and career aspirations. Adopting a two-phase, multi-method design, we conducted in-depth interviews with nine racially minoritised PGRs who had experienced sexualised harassment or bullying.

Participants revealed that disclosures of sexualised harassment and bullying were hindered by fear of repercussions, emotional exhaustion, the normalisation of sexual harassment and the complexities of institutional reporting. Supportive relations with supervisors, peers, and trusted personal networks could facilitate disclosures and mitigate some of these challenges. Participants were unanimous in identifying the supervisory relationship as the most significant factor shaping a successful doctoral experience, sense of belonging to the wider research culture and openness to research careers.

Drawing on these empirical insights, we theorise doctoral supervision through the lens of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy emphasises collaboration, co-creation, and care (Seal & Smith, 2021). By reframing supervision as a relational and reflexive practice, we highlight how supervisors can either enhance community, collaboration and inclusive research cultures for racially minoritised PGRs, or inadvertently reproduce inequalities and hierarchies. Repositioning doctoral supervision as a critical pedagogical practice offers an important way forward for fostering more equitable and supportive research environments.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Round table discussion

Engaging Doctoral Researchers Without Having Any: The Role of the Czech National Library of Technology in Doctoral Support Ecosystems under NCIS R&D&I

Eliška Skládalová | National Library of Technology, Prague

Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice

Abstract:

Doctoral development is most often situated within the remit of universities, where it is closely connected to disciplinary supervision, institutional training frameworks, and access to academic infrastructures – including the services of libraries and liaison librarians who provide information literacy, data management, and publishing support. Within this environment, doctoral researchers typically engage in information literacy education, research data management, and other dimensions of scholarly communication that support their progression as independent researchers. The Czech National Library of Technology (NTK) occupies a distinctive position among academic libraries: it is a public library located in the heart of a university campus, with loose affiliations to several higher-education institutions, yet it is not a university library. Nonetheless, NTK has taken an active role in supporting doctoral development by offering programmes that address the needs of doctoral researchers across institutions.

NTK's initiatives are open to all doctoral researchers regardless of their institutional affiliation or research field. They aim to complement existing university provision, encourage collaboration, and share expertise across institutional boundaries.

This discussion will begin with an introduction outlining NTK's approach and experience in engaging doctoral researchers without having a formal academic community of its own.

Participants will then be invited to reflect on broader questions:

- How can non-university institutions contribute to doctoral development?
- What makes such initiatives relevant and credible to doctoral researchers?
- How can partnerships between libraries, universities, and research institutions enhance researcher support?

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Symposium Doing More with Less

The impact of Scottish universities' financial crisis on research, scholarship and institutional reputation: The case of international postgraduate students

Dely Elliot & Sajjad Hussain | University of Glasgow

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Abstract:

In recent times, media coverage of the Higher Education (HE) sector in Scotland, and in the wider UK, has been dominated by reports of financial concerns, including voluntary redundancies, major restructuring and institutional bankruptcy. For example, over 300 redundancies were announced in one Scottish university alone. Staff and student discussions were characterised by feelings of fear, job insecurity, uncertainty, precarity and decreased morale, and equally, how the crisis has a bearing on academia's core missions (research and teaching) and its third mission (academia's external engagement with society). By employing the concept of academia's missions, we will elucidate the distinctive impact of the crisis on a specific group of students. Drawing upon an extensive review of the literature plus in-depth interviews with a wide spectrum of HE stakeholders, from postgraduate students through to Vice-Chancellors, we investigated the implications of the widespread job cuts in Scotland. Our findings highlighted: a) the notion of 'anchor institutions'; b) numerous indicators and contributory factors to the arrival of the 'perfect storm' in academia; and c) the intertwined impact of the crisis at the personal, academic, economic and wellbeing levels. By turning the spotlight on international postgraduate students' inadvertent role in this crisis and its consequential impact on their educational experience, we aim to understand the repercussions of the crisis more broadly and deeply. While this study focused on the Scottish context due to its values and practices differing from other parts of the UK, our research arguably has broader significance beyond Scotland.

*This presentation is based upon the authors' research fellowship for the Scottish Parliament entitled 'The Impact of Tightening Finances on Scotland's Universities' and is funded by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), University of Glasgow's ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) and EPSRC IAA.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:15 - 14:20

Symposium Doing More with Less

From Brand Promise to Doctoral Belonging: Aligning Recruitment Messaging with Lived PGR Research Culture

Graham McLaren | University of Bath

Primary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

University reputations are increasingly built on the strength of their research identities, yet the narrative of a 'world-class environment' often creates a tension between the marketed brand and the delivered day-to-day postgraduate experience. This paper explores the gap between institutional brand positioning and the reality of doctoral 'belonging'. It suggests this isn't just a communication hurdle, but a structural one that creates fragmented student journeys and resource inefficiencies. One that can only be fully understood through genuine cross-functional analysis.

Using a comprehensive institutional case study, this research introduces a methodology to explore and address the impact of these siloed domains. By triangulating recruitment strategy and reputation data with student feedback and international benchmarking, we found misalignments that are typically invisible within single departments. The resulting "doctoral value proposition" explores the PGR journey from pre-recruitment onwards in a way that no individual team could have charted alone. It allows institutions to 'do more with less' by supporting a consistent and authentic representation of the doctoral experience, identifying the key facilitators of it, and barriers to it; thereby reducing the hidden costs of student dissatisfaction and attrition.

The paper positions "third-space" professionals as the vital architects of this unified approach. By bridging the space between administration and academia, these staff members act as essential brokers in ensuring that a university's aspirational identity is reflected in its doctoral reality.

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Oral Presentation

Reconfiguring doctoral admissions through competency: a multi-institutional ethnography of equity-in-practice: a multi-institutional ethnography of equity-in-practice

Bing Lu | Nottingham Trent University

Michelle Palmer & Craig Hinds | University of Newcastle

Anna Plassart, Clare Warren, Inma Alvarez & Kim Kullman | The Open University

Caroline Muellenbroich, Sandra Dopico Arddao, Ross Forgan, Caroline Gauchotte-Lindsay &

Qammer Abbasi | University of Glasgow

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Third space professionals – interconnectedness across roles, remits and functions

Abstract:

Background: Postgraduate researcher (PGR) admissions play a crucial role in shaping research communities, yet traditional selection processes often reinforce systemic barriers to access (Posselt, 2016). Although equity concerns in doctoral education are increasingly recognised, there remains limited empirical evidence on how equity frameworks are enacted in practice. This paper provides grounded, practice-based insights from three UK institutions piloting a competency-based PGR admissions framework, examining how they collectively seek to enhance inclusion and widen participation.

Methodology: Adopting institutional ethnography (IE) (Smith, 2005) as an equity-oriented mode of inquiry, the study investigates how the competency framework is interpreted, translated, and embedded across diverse institutional contexts. As practitioner-researchers, the authors kept regular short reflective fieldnotes over a 12-month period, documenting meetings, decision-making processes, and community-of-practice activities associated with the pilot. The study also draws on key institutional texts shaping PGR recruitment (e.g., guidance documents, assessment criteria) and informal conversations with admissions staff and PGR leads across the three institutions.

Findings: The comparative IE reveals shared tensions in adopting the framework, including perceived trade-offs between equity and excellence. The analysis highlights the differing institutional affordances that shape implementation, such as the reframing of language, targeted staff training, and the integration of competency-based criteria into admissions procedures. Institutions followed varied pathways of adaptation, negotiating the framework within local structures, routines, and cultures, including forms of resistance, reinterpretation, and incremental change.

Conclusion/Implication: This paper contributes methodological innovation by demonstrating the value of a multi-institutional IE for tracing how equity initiatives travel across contexts and become operationalised within doctoral admissions. Drawing on Lamont's (2009; 2012) work on academic judgement, we argue that institutions act as key mediators in delegitimising selection preferences that advantage already privileged groups. The findings also show how practitioner-researchers can serve as institutional agents, reshaping admissions cultures and practices from within. The study offers scalable insights for the sector on embedding equity as a core principle of postgraduate recruitment.

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Friday 3rd July - 13:50 - 14:20

Oral Presentation

'Difference is not something to overcome but to build from': the importance of intercultural sensitivity training for PGR supervisors.

Malgorzata Drewniok | University of Bristol

Primary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Abstract:

As UK HE is becoming more and more international, there are also more and more postgraduate research students on our campuses (48,010 in 23-24 according to HESA). Some of the challenges they face might be shared with undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, but some will be specific to their research degree journey. The needs of international PhD students are sometimes overlooked due to the student numbers (often much lower than other international cohorts) and the assumption that at this level students do not need much support.

Supervisor training varies from institution to institution, but much of it centres around the regulations, with less focus on the pastoral aspect of supervision, let alone specific challenges of working with international research students. If any advice is given, it is usually about such issues as funding or visa compliance. What is also needed is building intercultural sensitivity and more understanding of our students' background and previous experience.

In this presentation, I will discuss the importance of the intercultural training for supervisors, illustrating my arguments with activities and content from a workshop I run at my institution, informed by current research on supervision, international PGR experience, and cultural intelligence (CQ), and drawing on my personal and professional experience. Research by Laufer and Gorup (2019) highlights that feeling othered contributes to international doctoral discontinuation, and cultural training for supervisors could help build students' sense of belonging and help them thrive (Wang and Li 2008). Seeber and Horta (2021) show that the relationship with the supervisor has a significant impact on the PhD student's satisfaction and their performance. I want to argue that honing intercultural sensitivity could make those relationships more positive and supportive.

Laufer, M. and Gorup, M. (2019). 'The invisible others: stories of international doctoral student dropout.' *Higher Education* (2019), 78: 165-181.

Seeber, M. and Horta, H. (2021). 'No road is long with good company. What factors affect PhD student's satisfaction with their supervisor?' *Higher Education Evaluation and Development*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2021, 2-18.

Wang, T. and Li, L.Y. (2008). 'Understanding International Postgraduate Students' Challenges and Pedagogical Needs in Thesis Writing.' *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* 4(3), 88-96.

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Oral Presentation

Towards an Inclusive Academy: Co-Creating Supervision Pedagogies and Practices with Postgraduate Researchers with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Neurodivergence

Tricia Shaw & Sarah Greer | University of Hull

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

There is a notable paucity of research exploring the experiences of postgraduate research students (PGRs) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and particularly those who identify as neurodivergent, within UK higher education (Ellis et al., 2021). While institutional frameworks for disability support are typically well established at undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) levels, far less attention has been paid to the distinctive context of doctoral research. This gap is especially significant given the independent, self-directed and supervisory-intensive nature of PGR study.

This participatory research project investigated the lived experiences of PGRs with SEND and/or neurodivergence, supervisors, and colleagues in Disability Services at the University of Hull. Working collaboratively with PGRs as co-creators of knowledge, the study sought to identify structural, pedagogical and relational factors that shape their doctoral journeys. Early discussions with PGRs and supervisors suggest several systemic challenges.

Supervisors frequently report limited knowledge and confidence in supporting neurodivergent doctoral researchers and highlight a lack of targeted training or institutional guidance. At the same time, disability services are often configured primarily around UG and PGT provision, leaving PGRs feeling that available support does not align with the specific demands of doctoral research.

Importantly, existing guidance for supporting neurodivergent PGRs tends to be adapted from UG/PGT contexts and may not represent a 'best fit' for the distinctive intellectual, emotional and professional dimensions of doctoral study. This project has generated evidence-informed, PGR-specific recommendations to enhance supervisory practice, institutional policy and inclusive research cultures.

The presentation will outline the participatory methodology, share emerging themes, and invite sector-wide dialogue on how doctoral education can better recognise and support neurodivergent researchers.

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Oral Presentation

Empowered Postgraduate Research Students can lead substantial EDI enhancement initiatives

Katherine Yates, David J Gilbert, Tania Goddard, Lauren Holmes, Muhammad Khan, Hannah Helm, Adam King, Ubongabasi Kingsley Omon & Keren Poliah | University of Salford

Primary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

In 2022, the Doctoral School at the University of Salford developed funded PGR student Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) roles. These one-year EDI lead roles subsequently became an annual call. Here we bring together the experiences of eight EDI leads and the Director of the Doctoral School. We will describe how these roles were developed and structured; explore the projects and outcomes that have resulted from them; and highlight the broader insight the work provides on working jointly with students to tackle inequality in academia.

We will demonstrate how these roles supported enhanced EDI on three levels: 1) improved EDI across the University of Salford community through the development of a widening participation summer school, improved doctoral school policies, and enhanced training of both supervisors and PGRs; 2) by providing a wealth of development opportunities and expanded networks for the leads themselves; 3) supporting wider discussions across the sector about EDI in PGR through multiple publications and other dissemination activities. We will also share recommendations for those hoping to do something similar, reviewing our experience of the enabling and limiting factors, and how empowerment was a key factor for success of the roles.

As members of the community with immediate lived experiences and peer networks, PGRs are uniquely positioned to identify and, if effectively empowered, address EDI issues. Indeed, maybe the most important thing we show is that by supporting PGRs to lead EDI initiatives, institutions not only benefit from their fresh perspectives and diverse backgrounds: they also can support the development of a more inclusive and diverse next generation of HE leaders. Ultimately, only when PGRs are empowered as epistemic agents, rather than positioned as mere recipients of authority, can doctoral spaces truly move toward equity and decolonial practice.

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Workshop

Making Sense of Perspectives in Doctoral Progression: A Participatory Workshop using Conceptual Mapping

Ole Pahl & Julie Roberts | Glasgow Caledonian University

Primary theme: Wellbeing, belonging and mental health in postgraduate education

Abstract:

Despite an increase in doctoral students successfully completing (HESA, 2026) *, the quality of the student experience and its impact on progression have been widely questioned in the literature (e.g. Breitenbach, 2024; Owens et al., 2020). Are current controversial moves by UK universities to address the Government's tightening of Basic Compliance Assessment by recruiting only 'excellent' candidates the answer?

Progression and subsequent completion are largely dependent not on any single factor but on the interaction of multiple factors (Mathews, 2021) that can be internal (e.g. motivation or self-regulation) and external (e.g. supervisor relationship or socialisation). Consequently, different approaches for improving completion address e.g. admissions processes, student preparedness, social integration, and supervisor support, but their effectiveness has been less studied (Breitenbach, 2024).

The doctoral journey has been described as "gruelling" (Owens et al., 2020); however, Brooks (2023, p.1410) notes that "how universities monitor their PGRs and the engagement with monitoring processes by individual academics is as diverse as the students they monitor". Whilst HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) records annual research doctorates awarded, there is little data on in-depth progression metrics and hence on the most promising intervention measures.

This interactive workshop will utilise a 'conceptual hemispheres' activity to elicit and share existing knowledge of our own doctoral ecosystems and reflect on the challenges and opportunities in implementation measures to improve student experience and, ultimately, progression. By utilising a hands-on, visual approach, as facilitators we can create an environment where ideas can be shared openly, organised collaboratively, and developed into actionable solutions to improve cohort experience and progression monitoring.

* 26,175 doctorate research qualifications were achieved in 2024/25 compared to 21,000 in 2020/21 (HESA, 2026)

At the workshop, participants will be asked to offer their observations and share experiences with respect to challenges and opportunities for student experience and progression. The workshop is envisaged to follow this outline programme, although timings can be modified to reflect dynamics on the day.

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Friday 3rd July - 14:35 - 15:40

20:20 Presentation

Growing Our Research Ecosystem

Enrica Conrotto & Julia Taylor | Bournemouth University

Primary theme: Hidden, under-described, and DIY postgraduate communities and cultures

Secondary theme: Co-creation – postgraduates as colleagues

Abstract:

At Bournemouth University we are committed to creating a cohesive and collaborative community of PGRs, and we have dedicated micro-grants aimed at supporting PGR-led social and/or academic events. This presentation will explore insights gained through the design, delivery, and evaluation of activities funded by the Research Culture and Community Grant.

Drawing on examples from funded projects, this presentation will show how small-scale, PGR-led initiatives nurture hidden or under-described communities that are often overlooked in institutional narratives. DIY initiatives can have profound impact on researcher culture, belonging, and identity formation, creating new spaces for connection, skills development and interdisciplinary exchange.

Funded activities have included skills focused sessions, peer led development workshops, creative and wellbeing events, social gatherings that strengthen researcher networks, and interdisciplinary activities that connect PGRs across different faculties. The success of these initiatives suggests that when granted limited autonomy and resources, researchers construct alternative spaces for connections, intellectual exchange, socio-cultural expression, and mutual support—spaces that often complement or exceed the scope of the usual development programme offered at institutional level. Additionally, the organisational experience gained through planning and delivering such initiatives offers PGRs meaningful opportunities for developing leadership, project management, and evaluation skills.

By showcasing the outcomes from the grant scheme and its impact on the latest PRES Survey (BU was ranked second for Research Community and fourth for Research Culture), the presentation argues for the value of supporting bottom-up, PGR-driven approaches to enhance research culture.

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20:20 Presentation

Designing Sustainable Multi-Year Training Pathways for doctoral cohorts: A Skills-Based Model for Research Culture & Collaboration

Danielle Miles & Alison Gray | Skillfluence

Primary theme: Learning environments for postgraduates and access to research culture in pedagogical spaces

Secondary theme: Power and value of collaboration beyond the obvious: digital, hybrid and place-based communities of practice

Abstract:

Doctoral schools and training programmes are increasingly seeking structured, scalable approaches to researcher development that build strong cohorts, enhance collaboration, and improve access to research culture in response to UKRI and Concordat expectations. While at least 80% of CDTs and DTPs we engaged with this year have outlined plans for development activities, these are often loosely sequenced rather than strategically designed as intentional, multi-year pathways. Many doctoral schools continue to organise development provision through standalone workshops, ad hoc annual calendars, or optional skills menus.

This workshop introduces a practical framework for designing multi-year doctoral development pathways that evolve with students' needs, supporting them from induction to completion and career transition.

In our work with 40+ CDTs/DTPs and delivering to 50,000+ researchers since 2015, we observe that although most programmes offer substantial development activity, comparatively few use explicitly scaffolded multi-year pathway models. We'll share insights into how a more intentional, approach can create cohesive learning environments and sustainable communities-of-practice.

Participants will explore a four-stage pathway model aligned to the doctoral journey:

- Year 1: Foundations and professional behaviours – building confidence, belonging and early researcher identity.
- Year 2: Collaboration, creativity and communication – strengthening teamwork, creative problem-solving and research resilience.
- Year 3: External engagement and innovation – preparing students to engage beyond academia and understand routes-to-impact.
- Year 4: Leadership and transition – supporting completion, viva-readiness and next stage career planning.

Through interactive mapping exercises, delegates will apply this model to their own institutional contexts, identifying priorities and stress-testing assumptions. The session is designed to share practical tools and approaches, and surface shared challenges, enabling participants to learn alongside peers and feel less isolated in shaping their provision. Participants will leave with a clear structure for implementing or enhancing a multi-year training pathway within their doctoral programmes, alongside practical tools for strengthening cohort cohesion and embedding skills development.

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20:20 Presentation

Professional Doctorates: A Tool for Sustainability and Inclusive Postgraduate Culture?

Victoria Ade-Genschow | University of Bath

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: International and cross-cultural perspectives on postgraduate cultures

Abstract:

Sustainability has become a priority across industries - and the world of academia is no different. In the struggle between "town and gown" universities face growing pressure to create inclusive, sustainable postgraduate environments in considering a different approach to postgraduate learning and teaching. Institutional transformation in teaching is a tool of academic sustainability hence the rise in doctorate programmes as another channel for higher institutions to bolster their ever-decreasing financial coffers.

Consequently, professional doctorates offer a practical solution that could combine professional expertise with academic rigour and recognition. This can be observed by fusing active on-the-job practical real-world need in business and industry, with theoretical background, intellectual knowledge and scholarly skills - to bridge academic research with real-world impact, foster collaboration, and strengthen institutional engagement with society and the local community.

This scholar suggests that if universities appear to be stuffy and out of touch, and a traditional doctorate no longer fully meets the needs of modern research and professional practice - to transform institutions in higher education - a new type of doctorate is required. As such, the challenge for funding has driven many institutions to seek non-governmental partnerships elsewhere. This shift has led to the rise in business schools and professional doctorates, as part of community engagement strategies. With budgets under pressure, attracting non-governmental funding through executive coaching, corporate seminars, and professional degrees has become essential - sparking debate about the relationship between traditional PhDs and professional ones.

In her methodology, this scholar applied conceptual frameworks in institutional transformation and eighteen observational insights. She also used autoethnography, personal narratives, anecdotal evidence, and reflections drawn from her own experience as a participant postgraduate researcher.

Her research concluded that to meet the needs of a society that values inclusion and diversity, universities and higher education institutions must transform and include postgraduate researchers who want to participate in important studies on questions and subject matters that can't only be solved in the classroom.

Thus, professional doctorates play a key role in achieving this goal.

This goal is essential for strengthening the role of academics in collaborating and connecting to society around us. As a result, institutional transformation in teaching and learning as a tool of academic sustainability, provides a key framework that is often highlighted.

In the struggle for competitive talent, limited resources, government impact and global economic instability, is the increase in professional doctoral or PhD programmes, a strategic way for universities to create sustainable teaching and learning business models? This writer says "yes."

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Oral Presentation

Beyond the Project: An Approach To Co-creating Inclusive PGR Development Discussions for Supervisors and PGRs

Theadora Jean | King's College London

Primary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Secondary theme: Innovations in supervision practices and pedagogies

Abstract:

Supervising postgraduate researchers (PGRs) increasingly requires supporting individuals not only in their academic projects but across the broader landscape of research culture, wellbeing, and professional development. This paper introduces a workshop designed to help supervisors navigate this wider remit by addressing the hidden curriculum of academia, fostering reflective practice, and enabling more inclusive and empowering supervisory relationships. This workshop was developed in response to the growing pressures on supervisors and the diverse needs of PGRs as part of the Next-Generation Research SuperVision Project (RSVP). RSVP aims to transform research supervision culture and practice in accordance with values such as collaboration and compassion, which this workshop seeks to cultivate with a focus on healthy boundaries, enhancing self-awareness, and promoting equitable supervision practices. While sector frameworks such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers provide essential structures for researcher development, this approach is distinct in being explicitly person centred, bringing supervisor and PGR into a shared discussion that maps the PGR development in relation to one another to maximise mutual fulfilment.

The workshop includes peer led reflection, facilitated discussion, and case studies drawn from real supervisory experiences to illuminate common challenges and practical strategies. Central to the workshop is an adaptable development planning template completed jointly by supervisors and PGRs. Both parties undertake structured self-reflection, identifying strengths, limits, and developmental priorities.

This paper outlines the purpose, design, and pedagogical foundations of the workshop and the template, illustrating how reflective models and co creative approaches can strengthen supervisory practice while supporting supervisor wellbeing and (hopefully) preventing burnout. Key takeaways include:

- The value of reflective models for enhancing supervisory decision making.
- How identifying strengths and boundaries can protect supervisor wellbeing while enabling effective support.
- The role of co created development plans in fostering shared responsibility and clearer pathways for empowering PGR growth.

By sharing the rationale, the paper highlights how structured, reflective, and inclusive approaches can contribute to healthier research cultures and more equitable postgraduate development.

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Friday 3rd July - 15:10 - 15:40

Oral Presentation

Embedding Empathy: PPIE Training for Postgraduate Cancer Students

Laura Richmond & Emma Parsons | University of Glasgow

Primary theme: Connecting to society and doctoral education for public good

Secondary theme: Building inclusive and equitable research communities

Abstract:

Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) is increasingly recognised as essential for conducting socially responsible, publicly engaged science. Yet evidence suggests that many researchers feel underprepared to engage with PPIE mechanisms. In our context, we observed that many postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes offer limited opportunities for students to develop the confidence, communication skills and conceptual understanding needed to work meaningfully with patients and the public. This study evaluates a newly introduced six-session PPIE training programme embedded within an MSc Cancer Research degree, designed to strengthen students' abilities to communicate complex concepts to non-specialist audiences and to understand the role of PPIE in shaping ethical, impactful research.

The training combined expert-led teaching, real-world case studies, interactive task-based learning, and—critically—sessions co-delivered by individuals with lived experience of cancer. To explore student experiences, a 60-minute focus group with seven participants was thematically analysed. Students described substantial gains in their ability to adapt scientific communication for diverse audiences, increased sensitivity to context and emotion in cancer communication, and clearer conceptual distinctions between public engagement, involvement, and co-production. Exposure to patient partners was consistently identified as the most powerful learning mechanism, reframing PPIE as integral to high-quality cancer research and influencing students' emerging professional identities.

Students also highlighted structural barriers, including timing clashes with assessments and the absence of formal incentives, which limited engagement for some. They recommended embedding PPIE training earlier in the programme and aligning activities with assessment to signal institutional valuing of engagement as a core competency.

This evaluation demonstrates that structured, authentic PPIE training can enhance communication, deepen empathy, and promote understanding of socially responsible research among postgraduate scientists. Embedding such training within pedagogical spaces supports access to research culture, prepares students for evolving funder expectations, and strengthens the connection between postgraduate education and wider society.

NB. This session will be presented remotely

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