

# Upgrading Doctoral Training and PGR Careers: Lessons from Social Sciences, University of Sheffield

Dr Elisabeth Garratt  
Dr Michael Martin

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# Faculty of Social Sciences PGR structure



**Professor Stef Pukallus**

Faculty Postgraduate Research Director



**Dr Elisabeth Garratt**

Faculty Deputy PGRD:  
**Training**



**Dr Michael Martin**

Faculty Deputy PGRD:  
**Careers**



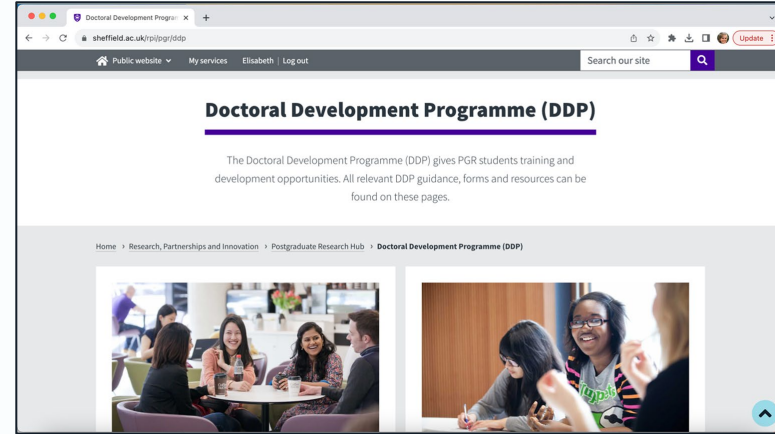
**Professor Ryan Powell**

Faculty Deputy PGRD:  
**Progression**

Professional  
services  
colleagues

# The Doctoral Development Programme (DDP)

- A programme of personalised training and development for all PGR students
- Flexible and tailored to students' diverse development needs
- Seeks to foster a reflective approach to PGR studies and beyond
- Enhances employability within academia and beyond



PGRs must complete a written reflection on their training & development activities ('Evidencing Development Summary') **for their PGR degree to be awarded**

# Upgrading Doctoral Training and PGR Careers: The challenge



# The PGR Voice survey: Selected results

	No but I would like to	No but I'm not interested	Yes	Yes and I'd like more
Research skills	16%	12%	44%	28%
Career development	41%	22%	20%	17%
Preparation for assessments, e.g. annual reviews or viva	42%	8%	34%	16%
Project & time management	29%	22%	36%	13%

# Institutional priorities

Institutional priorities arising from PGR Voice:

- **Training and development:** Gaps in provision, training & development was often fragmented and hard to navigate
- **Careers support:** Area of particular weakness
- **Submission in the tuition fee paying period:** Key performance indicator for the Faculty and University

## Also:

Emphasis on PGR students in the [University of Sheffield vision and strategic plan 2020-2025](#)

# Gap analysis of training provision

Existing research methods training has good coverage

Core academic skills were less well-provisioned:

- **Gaps** in provision
- **Inequity** of provision

# Changes for 2023-4



# Enhanced research methods training

Added some new sessions to established methods training options:

- Basic statistical principles
- Understanding quantitative literature
- Experimental methods in the Social Sciences
- Elite interviewing
- Doing research sensitively
- Doing creative research
- Working with and managing data in Excel
- Analysing bivariate data in Excel

# NEW: Core skills training

Core skills sessions are grouped within the following seven areas:

1. General Academic Skills
2. Engaging Non-academic Sector
3. Feedback & Support
4. Publication-Related
5. Progressing Through Your PhD
6. Project-Specific
7. Careers & Employability

# Further changes for 2023/24

Mandatory module for new PGRs: [Doctoral Project Scope, Design & Management](#)

Must be completed in the first 6 months

Three components:

1. Asynchronous lecture
2. Single in-person workshop
3. 300-500 word written reflection

# Careers & Employability

- In 2019, **only 31% of UK PGR students reported receiving advice on career options** (Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, 2019)
- Likewise, **over 70% of PGRs leave academia (PRES, 2019)** – a targeted approach to PGR career preparation (across academic and non-academic careers) is an important endeavour
- Our goal in the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Sheffield was to respond to these challenges through a dedicated Vision & Strategy for PGR Careers

# Summary of Vision / Strategy: Pillars and Priorities

## Faculty of Social Science PGR Careers Vision & Strategy 2024-2027

– ‘to offer unique career preparation for Doctoral Students, that delivers bespoke, transformative, and applied careers guidance for PGR students in the Faculty’



Table 3. Pillars and Priority Areas

\*Input for FoSS PGRs, PGRDs and Supervisors helped determine and finalise the strategy.

# Implementing the Strategy: Showcasing Students

## Employability & Transferable Skills:

- Ensure doctoral students are able to take control of their career planning, participate in the careers opportunities available and be career-ready on completion of their doctoral programme.
- Exemplify our PGRs / career successes across the Faculty with profiles of FoSS PGR graduates and their next career steps
- Demonstrating clearly where/what a Doctoral degree can do for future careers both within and beyond academia


### Department of Urban Studies and Planning

Undergraduate ▾ Masters ▾ PhD study ▾ Research ▾ Department ▾

Home ▸ Department of Urban Studies and Planning ▸ PhD study ▸ Current PhD candidates

## Current PhD candidates

Funded PhD students and their research areas and supervisors.



Our PhD candidates receive financial support to undertake their studies from a variety of sources. These include UK Research Councils (particularly ESRC and EPSRC), University funding (both fee waivers and scholarships offering maintenance funding), and overseas governments and funding organisations (for example, CONACYT for students from Mexico).

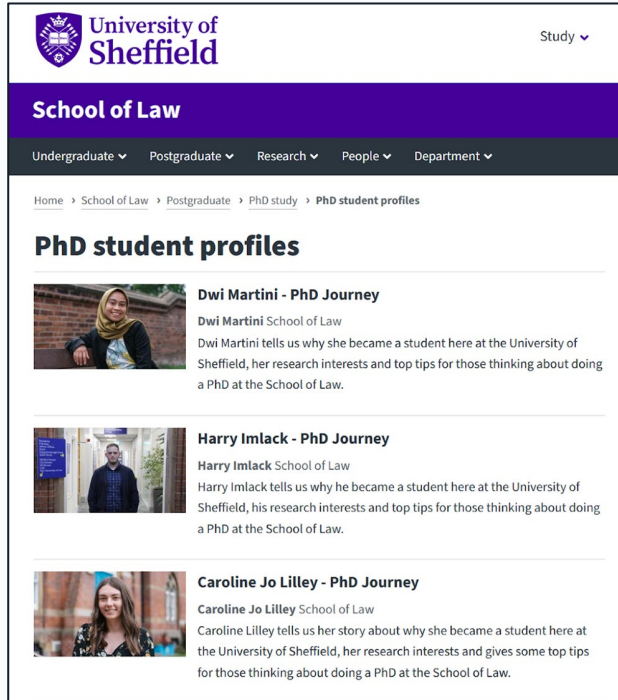
Name	Email	Research area	Primary supervisor
<a href="#">Enes Aydin</a>	<a href="mailto:eadyin1@sheffield.ac.uk">eadyin1@sheffield.ac.uk</a>	Redefining Socio-Spatial Inequalities through Comparative Urban Policy Analysis in London and Berlin	<a href="#">Stephen Hinks</a>
<a href="#">Helen Brown</a>	<a href="mailto:hbrown2@sheffield.ac.uk">hbrown2@sheffield.ac.uk</a>	Understanding attitudes and perceptions amongst older people of housing and housing processes in an era of rising demand	<a href="#">Malcolm Tait</a>
<a href="#">James Beaumont</a>	<a href="mailto:jeaumont4@sheffield.ac.uk">jeaumont4@sheffield.ac.uk</a>	Out-of-area displacement: Exploring how England's housing system is shaping new forms of urban marginalisation	<a href="#">Jenny Preece</a>

Moving from this...

# Implementing the Strategy: Showcasing Students

- Showcasing PGRs - Promoting Good / Better Practice

To these...



The screenshot shows the University of Sheffield School of Law website. The header includes the university logo and navigation menus for 'Study', 'Undergraduate', 'Postgraduate', 'Research', 'People', and 'Department'. The main content area is titled 'PhD student profiles' and features three individual profiles, each with a photo, name, and a brief description of their research interests.


**University of Sheffield** Study ▾


**School of Law**


Undergraduate ▾ Postgraduate ▾ Research ▾ People ▾ Department ▾


Home > School of Law > Postgraduate > PhD study > PhD student profiles

## PhD student profiles

 **Dwi Martini - PhD Journey**  
Dwi Martini School of Law  
Dwi Martini tells us why she became a student here at the University of Sheffield, her research interests and top tips for those thinking about doing a PhD at the School of Law.

 **Harry Imlack - PhD Journey**  
Harry Imlack School of Law  
Harry Imlack tells us why he became a student here at the University of Sheffield, his research interests and top tips for those thinking about doing a PhD at the School of Law.

 **Caroline Jo Lilley - PhD Journey**  
Caroline Jo Lilley School of Law  
Caroline Lilley tells us her story about why she became a student here at the University of Sheffield, her research interests and gives some top tips for those thinking about doing a PhD at the School of Law.



The screenshot shows the University of Sheffield Department of Politics and International Relations website. The header includes the university logo and navigation menus for 'Study', 'Research', 'Collaborate', and 'About'. The main content area is titled 'PhD case studies' and features three individual case study cards, each with a photo, name, and a brief description of their research.

**University of Sheffield** Study ▾ Research ▾ Collaborate ▾ About ▾

**Department of Politics and International Relations**

Undergraduate ▾ Postgraduate ▾ PhD study ▾ Research ▾ People ▾ Department ▾


## PhD case studies

Find out more about the ground-breaking research our PhD students are currently undertaking.

Home > Department of Politics and International Relations > PhD study > PhD case studies

 **Diego Exposito**  
Positive duties towards liminal animals: ethics, politics, and practices  
[Read the case study →](#)

 **Frank Maracchione**  
Uzbekistan's agency in its relations with the People's Republic of China  
[Read the case study →](#)

 **Frances Payne**  
Understanding animal protection in food systems: A victim-based approach  
[Read the Case Study →](#)

# Implementing the Strategy: Secondments

## Placements / Secondments:

- Placements in Higher Education traditionally relate to periods of learning activity away from the usual education environment available from the institution during a programme of study (PGR COP, 2023).
- Ongoing development of a FoSS PGR Secondment Framework:
  - To ensure consistent and transparent uptake of PGR work-based learning opportunities
  - Guidance follows best-practice principles defined by the UoS Placements and Employability team (working with FoSS PGRD and University Careers Service)



## PGR Secondment Framework

DRAFT

Faculty of Social Sciences  
February 2024

# Placements / Secondments

- **University of Sheffield PGR Code of Practice:**

*“believes that doctoral researchers should have the opportunities to undertake a placement and work-based learning if it will benefit their development or career opportunities [...] away from the usual education environment available from the institution during a programme of study” (PGR Code of Practice, 2023-24)*

- However, **a lack of transparent and detailed guidance at PGR level for work-based learning opportunities represents a critical barrier to promote “opportunities to undertake a placement” for PGRs across UoS**

- Our hope - is a formal framework will increase work-based learning opportunities at PGR Level in FoSS (despite 7 vocational Depts. - 9 formal placements since Jan 2021)

# Learning Points, Challenges & Recommendations



# Learning Points and Challenges: Training

- Delivery level
- Capacity
- Non-attendance
- EDI considerations
- Scope of training offer
- Advertising and booking

# Learning Points and Challenges: Careers

- Significant **gaps in emphasis for PGR-level** (all UGT/PGT)
- **Issues for Equality Diversity and Inclusion e.g. Placements / Secondments:**
  - **Home doctoral students** may apply to undertake a placement
  - **EU doctoral students** *w. pre-settled/settled status* are also eligible to apply. EU students on a Student Visa route not able to undertake a non-compulsory work placement (can apply for *Leave of Absence*)
  - **International doctoral students** a Tier 4 student visa or Student Visa route are not eligible to apply for a placement due to immigration regulations (but can apply LoA)
- Equal access to opportunities of the same calibre cannot (currently) be achieved!

# Responses and recommendations

## 1. No point reinventing the wheel

- provisions in some shape/form will exist but OFTEN without a PGR emphasis – adding *PGR Flavour*
- map services, key role holders, specific initiatives – and begin by targeting those blind spots

## 2. Added value for whom/for what?

- Critical role of equity (funded/difference in funding/self-funded) and EDI - how to ensure we add value for all and recognise where we don't / can't (Training profile open to all for example)

## 3. These endeavours **need time and staffing**

- e.g. PGR Deputy Director roles (training / careers) = 0.2 FTE each

# Any questions?

[elisabeth.garratt@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:elisabeth.garratt@sheffield.ac.uk)  
[michael.martin@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:michael.martin@sheffield.ac.uk)