

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

Programme Self-Assessment Tool



UK Council for  
**Graduate  
Education**

## Introduction: How this Tool Relates to the Guidance

This self-assessment tool has been developed as a companion to the guidance document ***Mental Health & Wellbeing of Online PGT Students: Pinch Points & Good Practice***.

While the guidance identifies key pinch points across the online PGT student journey and sets out evidence-informed good practice, this tool is intended to support translation into action at programme level.

It provides a structured way for programme teams to reflect on current practice, identify strengths and gaps, and prioritise realistic, high-impact enhancements that align with their local context, resources, and institutional structures.

The tool mirrors the themes and stages of the guidance document (from pre-application through to alumni engagement), reinforcing the principle that mental health and wellbeing should be embedded proactively within programme design and delivery, rather than addressed only at points of difficulty.

Used alongside the guidance, this tool can support:

- Team-based reflection and discussion
- Planning and prioritisation of wellbeing-supportive practices
- Documentation of enhancement activity
- Ongoing review as part of continuous programme improvement

## Purpose of this Tool

This self-assessment tool is designed to help programme teams reflect on how effectively mental health and wellbeing are embedded within the design, delivery, and support structures of online postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes.

It is intended to be used as a developmental and reflective instrument, not an audit or compliance checklist. Programme teams are encouraged to adapt the tool to their local context, prioritise high-impact actions, and revisit it periodically as part of ongoing enhancement.

## How to Use the Tool

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

We suggest using a scoring system to facilitate the self-assessment, as well as for priority identification and action planning:

**Established** (Clearly embedded and working well)

**Developing** (In place but room for improvement)

**Emerging** (Planned or partially implemented)

**Not yet in place**

Programme teams are encouraged to develop their own scoring systems which will be more suited to their professional context.

## Project Tracking

Date of Start of Review:

Staff involved in self-assessment exercise:

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Lead(s) for Review Project:

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# Pre-Application & Application

Reflective Prompts:

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

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

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Visibility of support and wellbeing</i>					
<i>Inclusivity and accessibility of communication</i>					
<i>Support for applicant readiness (incl. digital readiness)</i>					

## Programme Start (Weeks 0-4)

Reflective Prompts:

- How effectively does induction support transition into online study?
- How clearly are expectations (academic, engagement, communication) established early on?
- What opportunities are provided for early connection with peers and staff?
- How and when do staff initiate early contact or check-ins with students?
- How is support introduced and normalised during the early weeks?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Effectiveness of induction</i>					
<i>Clarity of expectations</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<p><i>Opportunities for early connection (with peers and with staff)</i></p>					
<p><i>Early staff contact/check-ins (Administrators, Personal Tutors, Module Leads...)</i></p>					
<p><i>Introduction and normalisation of support</i></p>					

## During Term Time and Assessments

Reflective Prompts:

- How clear and consistent is the structure of modules and weekly learning activities?
- How is communication managed to avoid overload or confusion?
- How do we sustain engagement over time, particularly in asynchronous contexts?
- How do we support students in preparing for and completing assessments?
- How are expectations around participation and engagement communicated and reinforced?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Clarity and consistency of structure</i>					
<i>Volume, Timing, Relevance, and Effectiveness of Communications</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Sustaining engagement</i>					
<i>Assessment preparation support</i>					
<i>Clarity of participation expectations and maintenance of standards</i>					

# Workload and Assessment Design

Reflective Prompts:

- How coordinated are assessment deadlines across modules?
- How visible are peak workload periods across the programme as a whole?
- To what extent are expectations realistic in relation to students' wider commitments?
- How much flexibility is built into assessment design (where appropriate)?
- How much time is provided between formative and summative assessment?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Coordination of deadlines</i>					
<i>Visibility of peak workload</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<p><i>Anticipated workload and relative weighting of assignments clearly communicated</i></p>					
<p><i>Flexibility in assessment (e.g. deadlines, extensions, alternative formats...)</i></p>					
<p><i>Formative assignments are designed to support submission of summative assessments</i></p>					

# Dissertation and Supervision

Reflective Prompts:

- How clearly are supervision expectations and roles defined?
- What structures are in place to support independent study?
- What opportunities exist for peer interaction (e.g. writing groups, seminars)?
- How consistent is the supervision experience across students?
- How are students supported in maintaining momentum and managing longer-term work?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Clarity of supervision roles</i>					
<i>Support for independent study (both during and before dissertation start)</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Peer interaction opportunities</i>					
<i>Consistency of supervision and provision of avenues to raise issues</i>					
<i>Support for maintaining momentum</i>					

# Supporting Students in Difficulty

Reflective Prompts:

- How do we identify early signs of disengagement or difficulty?
- How clear are escalation pathways and responsibilities?
- How confident are staff in responding to student wellbeing concerns?
- How visible and accessible are support services to students?
- What guidance or boundaries are in place for informal or student-led spaces?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Identification of disengagement</i>					
<i>Clarity of escalation pathways</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Staff confidence</i>					
<i>Visibility of support services</i>					
<i>Boundaries in informal spaces</i>					

# Inclusivity and Accessibility

Reflective Prompts:

- How inclusive is the programme design for students with diverse needs (e.g. neurodiversity, accessibility, digital skills)?
- How flexible are learning materials and formats (e.g. recordings, transcripts, asynchronous access)?
- How are assumptions about prior knowledge or experience addressed?
- How do we support students who may be struggling but not actively seeking help?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Inclusive programme design</i>					
<i>Flexible formats</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Addressing prior knowledge assumptions</i>					
<i>Support for hidden struggles</i>					

# Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Reflective Prompts:

- How do we gather feedback on student experience and wellbeing?
- How is this feedback used to inform programme development?
- How are changes communicated back to students?
- What indicators (e.g. engagement, retention, support use) are monitored?
- How often is the programme reviewed with wellbeing in mind?

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Gathering feedback</i>					
<i>Use of feedback</i>					

Theme	Rating	What Works Well	What Could Work Better	Potential Actions	Priority
<i>Communication of changes</i>					
<i>Identification and monitoring of indicators</i>					
<i>Frequency of review of programme from a MH&amp;W perspective</i>					

# Final Reflections and Key Action Points

Based on your self-assessment, think about:

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

Fill in the table below to create a plan of action.

Action	Priority (H/M/L)	Assigned To	Timeline



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