

# Introduction to PGR

Postgraduate Education Practitioners' (PEP) Network

20 May 2026

Kerri Gardiner and Susanna Broom

# Overview

- Welcome and house-keeping
- Ice-breaker
- UKCGE and the PGR landscape
- The PEP Network and PGR Careers
- Navigating PGR in an UG world (inc. breakout discussion)
- Roundup

# Welcome

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- Who we are
- Session aims
- More on PEP later...

Susanna Broom  
Head of the Researcher School  
University of Sussex



Kerri Gardiner  
Head of the Postgraduate  
Research Office  
University of Cambridge



# Chatham House Rule

“When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.”



## Icebreaker: 10 min

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1. Introduce yourselves
2. What makes PGRs different?
  - From taught students
  - From staff

# PGRs are different because...

- Age and career stage
- Independent study (contributors not receivers)
- Long-term registration; all-or-nothing examination
- Highly individualised projects = individualised experiences
- Importance of supervisory relationship
- Significant disciplinary variations in contact time
- Often staff as well as student registration

# UKCGE and the PGR landscape

Dr Owen Gower, Director, UKCGE

# What is UKCGE?

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Established in 1994, the UK Council for Graduate Education is the **national representative body for postgraduate education and research**.

The UKCGE is the third-largest representative body of its kind in the world, representing 92% of all UK postgraduate research provision and 85% of all UK postgraduate taught provision.

We are a registered charity (No. 1061495).

## What We Do

We champion and enhance postgraduate education and research by enabling collective leadership on the development of postgraduate affairs across UK HEIs, research agencies and funding bodies.



**The UKCGE enables collective leadership by providing an evidence-led and trusted voice for the postgraduate sector**

### **The UK Council for Graduate Education:**

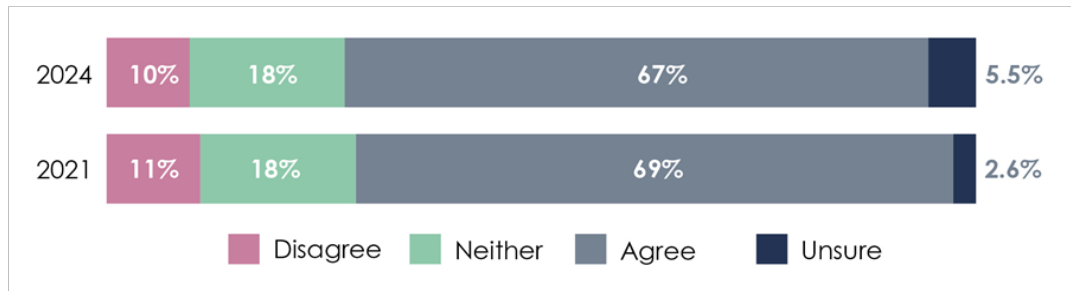
- advocates for equity and inclusiveness in postgraduate education and research
- promotes continuing professional development and recognition for staff supporting and supervising postgraduate students and doctoral researchers
- encourages the effective management of postgraduate education and research by sharing innovations and effective practices

# Who is studying a doctorate?

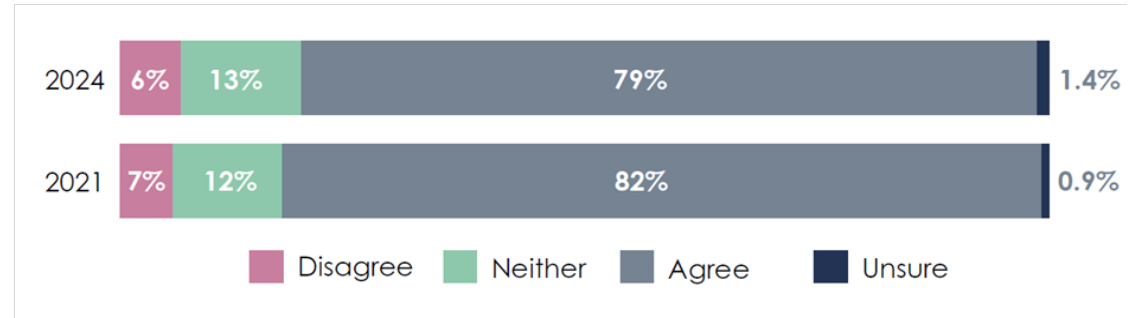
- ~120,000 registered PGRs in the UK (all stages)
- ~40% of PGRs are international
- ~35% of PGRs have no financial support for tuition fee (varies by discipline)
- Highest proportion of PGRs are in Engineering (13%), Physical sciences (8%) and Biological sciences (8%)
- Females beginning to outnumber males overall (varies by discipline)
- Diversity - UK domiciled ethnicity: PGR ~74% are “White” but ~68% of PGT are “White”, ~46% are “30 or older”, ~16% have a “known disability”

# Research supervision in 2024

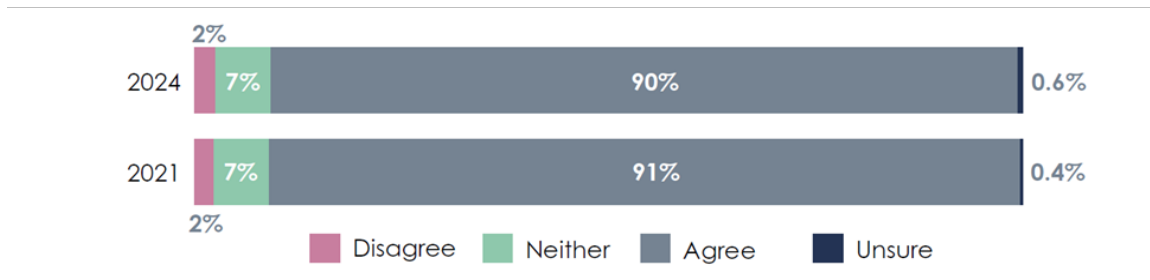
Doctoral supervision continues to be perceived as getting “more demanding” over the last 5 years



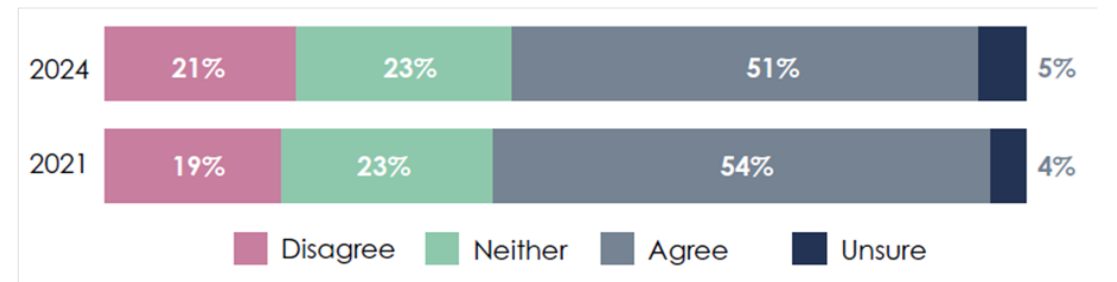
Agreement that doctoral supervision “*improves the quality of my own research*”



“I enjoy being a doctoral supervisor”



The complexity of doctoral study has increased over the past 5 years



UK Research Supervision Survey Report, 2024

# Graduate Schools or Doctoral Colleges

- Most HEIs have a Graduate School, Doctoral College, or equivalent structure
- Organisational position varies
- Levels of administrative and/or strategic responsibility vary:
  - 73% have high involvement in quality assurance
  - 68% have high involvement in progress monitoring
  - 55% have high involvement in student records

Smith McGloin and Wynne, 2022

# Top priorities for Graduate Schools

- PGR satisfaction (21% placed this first; 74% in 'top 5')
- Grow doctoral candidate numbers (12% first; 58% in 'top 5')
- Funding (12% first; 61% in the 'top 5')
- PGR career development (11% first; 72% in 'top 5')
- PGR health and wellbeing (10% first; 75% in 'top 5')

Smith McGloin and Wynne, 2022

# Top priorities for the sector

- Growing the number of doctoral researchers (?)
- Industry partnerships
- Postgraduate access and participation – in particular: racial equity
- Mental health and wellbeing of PGRs
- Cost of living for PGRs
- REF 2029 (?)
- Support for doctoral supervision
- AI in doctoral research
- Types of doctoral programmes (?)

## Further reading

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[Structures and Strategy in Doctoral Education in the UK and Ireland](#)

(UKCGE, 2022)

UK Council for  
Graduate Education

# Structures and Strategy in Doctoral Education in the UK and Ireland

Dr Rebekah Smith McGloin and  
Carolyn Wynne

# The UKCGE PEP Network

Kerri Gardiner and Susanna Broom

# Background

- Aims to:
  - Provide a supportive environment for colleagues to share their experiences, enabling peer-to-peer support
  - Keep colleagues informed of sector developments
  - Support colleagues' professional development
  - Champion the critical role played by postgraduate education practitioners and the specialist nature of their expertise

# PEP Network support

## Events

### Workshops (3 hours online)

- 2-3 topics for discussion
- Development focus
- Next workshop: Spring 2027

### Clinics (1 hour online)

- Quarterly (ish)
- Informal
- Issues raised by PEP network members
- Next clinics: Autumn 2026

Sign up via UKCGE website: [UKCGE](#)

## Buddies

- Informal support within the PEP network
- Support for specific issue or activity
- Find out more at: [UKCGE | UKCGE PEP Network Buddy Scheme](#)

- **Annual conference**

- 2-3 July 2026 Liverpool
- In-person network session
- [UKCGE | Annual Conference 2026](#)

# PGR = a career

## Susanna

Graduated university (Psychology)



FE College via temping (c. 4 years)



First HEI role (dept. PG admin)



Central faculty-aligned admin



Central institutional roles

## Kerri

Graduated university (Law/European Law)



Admin at Exam Board (temp to perm)



First HEI role (Sch. PG Admin)



Second HEI role (Sch. PG Admin )



Central institutional roles (PGR related)

# PGR = a career

Data and Systems  
Registry  
Administration  
Research Ethics Funding  
CDT Manager  
Graduate School Manager  
Central Training  
Academic Unit  
Strategy  
Casework  
PGR Administrator  
Research Finance

# Navigating PGR in an UG world

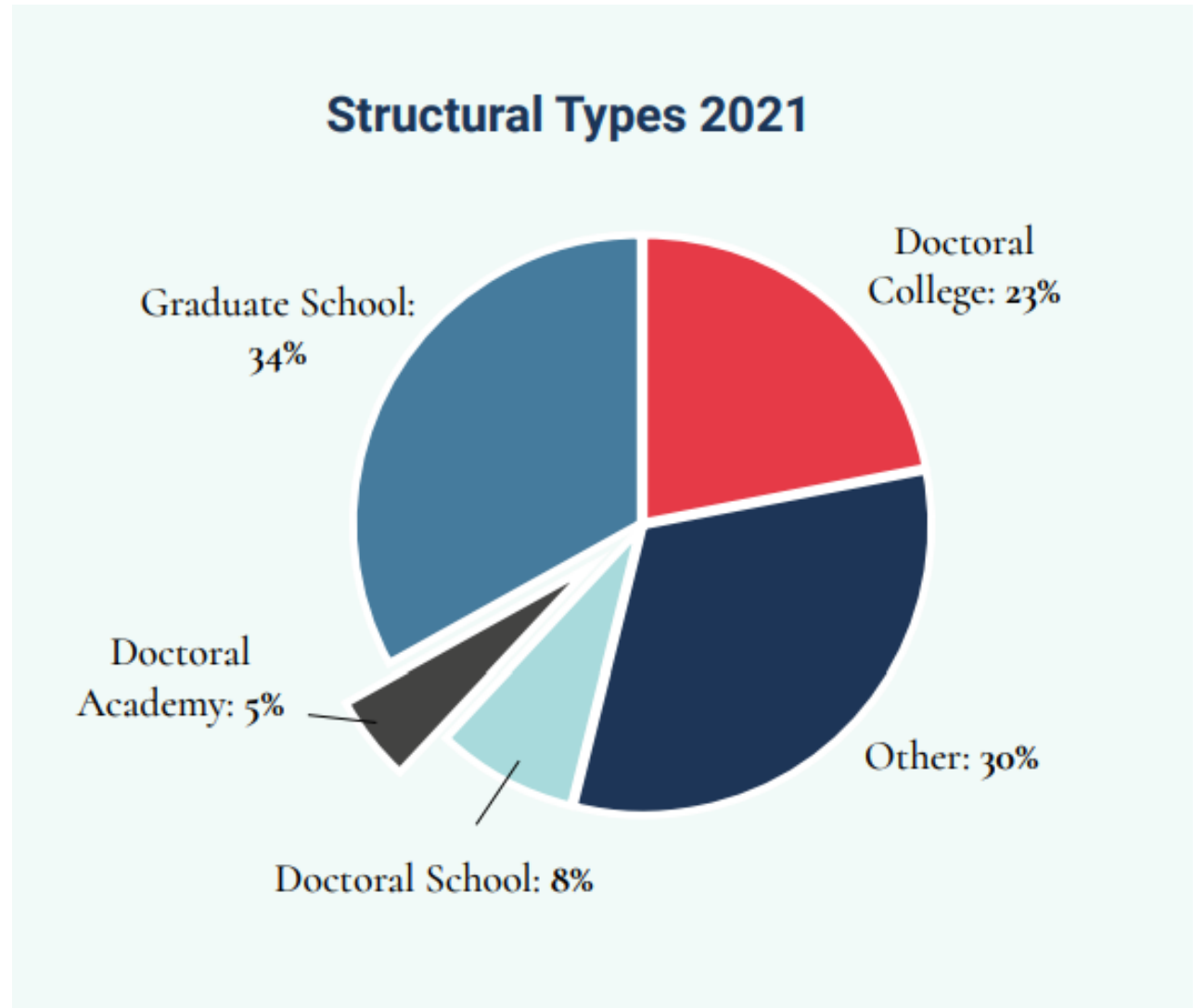
Kerri Gardiner and Susanna Broom

# Challenges

- Advocating for PGRs – needs/differences
- Minority group within wider institutional contexts
- Not income-generating for institutions
- Tensions over relationship with institutions (staff-student)
- Institutional restructures
- Structural tensions (e.g. degree of devolution)
- Challenges with availability of data (locally/nationally)
- Diversity decreases between PGT and PGR (and again at ECR)

## Breakout discussion: 15 min

- What is the structure at your institution?
- What is in/out of scope?
- Is there:
  - an academic lead?
  - a strategy?
- How does your role fit in?



# Round-up

- Questions for us?
- Future plans
  - What do you hope to get from the network?
- Feedback
  - Any initial thoughts?
  - Anything you'd like to hear more about?
  - Feedback form will be circulated

# Thank you

Get in touch:

[S.Broom@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:S.Broom@sussex.ac.uk)

[Kerri.Gardiner@cam.ac.uk](mailto:Kerri.Gardiner@cam.ac.uk)