



University of Glasgow

in association with UK Council for
Graduate Education

UKCGE Annual Conference: The Hidden Lives of PGRs

A day for and by PGRs

Time	Session	Location	Speakers
10:00-10:15	Reg & Coffee	ARC Atrium	
10:15-10:30	Welcome	237ABC	10
10:30-11:45	Session 1: Practicalities	237ABC	Session Chair: Silvia Renon <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Alexander Vaniev, 'Navigating international PGR parenting'2. Zein Al Maha Oweis, 'How to navigate academia with a disability?'3. Yousef Aljohani, 'Life Lessons from the Hidden Curriculum of a PhD'4. Michael Ogoms, 'Navigating a PhD as a neurodivergent individual and researching a topic in which you have lived experience'
11:45-12:00	Comfort Break		
12:00-13:15	Session 2: Journeys	237ABC	Session Chair: Sumayya Usmani

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haley Sneed, 'Between Care and Critique: Navigating the Hidden Curriculum Through Community and Relational Practice' 2. Lauren Bouvier, 'Discussing the Abnormally Normal: Self-Reflections of Grief' 3. Anna Greenslade, 'The Hidden Curriculum as a PhD Exile: How I played a game I never knew I was playing' 4. Kwadjo Konadu, "'Invincible Labour, Unspoken Lessons": Navigating Identity, Leadership, and Equity in doctoral research' 5. Michelah Brown, 'The Secret Life of a Lonely Black Girl'
13:15-14:00	Lunch: ARC Atrium		
14:00-15:00	Keynote: "Harnessing the Hidden Curriculum: Reflecting on, Searching for & Co-creating Pedagogical Spaces in Doctoral Education"	237 ABC	Dr Dely Elliot, Senior Lecturer, University of Glasgow
15:00-15:15	Comfort break		
15:15-16:15	Workshop: Mapping our influences: Understanding how our educational cultures shape our writing	237ABC	Dr Rachel Lyon, Researcher Development Specialist in English as an Additional Language
16:15-16:30	Closing Remarks	237ABC	Dr Mary Beth Kneafsey, Head of Research Governance, Policy & Integrity
16:30-18:00	Drinks reception ARC Atrium		

Presenter	Title of Presentation	Abstract & Speaker Bio
<p>Haley Sneed</p>	<p>Between Care and Critique: Navigating the Hidden Curriculum Through Community and Relational Practice</p>	<p>This talk explores the often-unspoken tensions of doctoral life through the lens of relationality, care, and community. Drawing on my lived experience as a practitioner-researcher embedded in youth work and community development, I reflect on how the values I brought into the PhD — collaboration, reciprocity, collective care — often jarred with the individualism, competition, and performativity embedded in academic culture. I discuss how I navigated the hidden curriculum of “knowing how things work” — from unwritten supervision dynamics and imposter syndrome to the emotional labour of boundary-setting, self-advocacy, and managing expectations — all while facing personal health challenges, reduced income, and recovering from a serious injury.</p> <p>Rather than offering a polished path, I’ll share how building informal peer communities, reframing “failure” as learning, and seeking out moments of solidarity and mutual support sustained me through times of uncertainty and transition. I’ll reflect on how community-based practice shaped the way I made sense of the PhD experience and how I’ve learned to reclaim my own pace and values within a culture that often prizes productivity over care.</p> <p>I hope these reflections will resonate with others navigating messy, relationally complex research journeys, offering a space to collectively rethink what it means to thrive in academia.</p> <p>Biography Hayley (she/her) is a final-year PhD candidate in Education at the University of Glasgow, researching youth wellbeing through participatory and community-based methods. My work sits at the intersection of relational practice, critical pedagogy, and social justice. Alongside my research, I’m an experienced youth worker and community educator, passionate about values-driven practice, care-based leadership, and making academia more accessible and humane. I’ve facilitated drop-ins, workshops, and policy engagement with and for young people, and I carry this ethos into my research. I’m especially interested in how we can create more supportive spaces in academia.</p>

<p>Lauren Bouvier</p>	<p>Discussing the Abnormally Normal: Self-Reflections of Grief</p>	<p><i>[CW regarding grief]</i></p> <p>My academic journey in Scotland started with grief. A decision to leave the states after my grandmother passed away, telling me to leave my hometown and explore. Little did I know that first interaction with a pleasant grief served as the first of the trilogy of grief episodes in my academic route in Scotland. The second episode occurred while my Visa status held in limbo, transitioning from the MA to PhD and lost my grandfather unexpectedly during the first year of my PhD. I made the decision to stay in the UK, to maintain my international student status and lose the opportunity to visit home for the funeral and support. Then, upon the beginning of my second year of the PhD, my partner passed of a brain tumor. After existing in the periphery of my cohort, when I returned, I became the grief girl. The position held various roles to my peers. Either as a risk assessment in process, or as a peer that could now "understand" an aspect of their livelihood entangled with their PhD, just like me. Navigating grief is something that almost* everyone will experience in their life. But the experience is incredibly different between each. I grew in confidence and comfortability in discussing my grief journey due to its immense impact on my academic journey and personal growth. My intentions behind this discussion to make daunting abnormality of grief feel a bit more normal. It is one of the few experiences that we may all relate to.</p> <p>Biography</p> <p>Lauren (she/her) is a student ambassador for UKCISA and a PhD bursary candidate at Queen Margaret University (QMU), Edinburgh. Her main areas of research are critical event studies, memory studies, and sociocultural sustainability of events. Lauren completed her undergraduate degree in Massachusetts, USA, and moved to Scotland in 2021. Since arriving in Scotland, Lauren has completed her Master’s degree in Arts, Cultural, and Festival Management at QMU, refining her interests in festival management and its correlated cultural impact. Outside of the PhD, Lauren recreationally dances and owns a loving cat named Mabel, topics she'll happily chat.</p>
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<p>Anna Greenslade</p>	<p>The Hidden Curriculum as a PhD Exile: How I played a game I never knew I was playing</p>	<p>I didn't know what a 3-star journal was until the start of my third year as a PhD student. I heard terms like REF, 3-star journal, academic rigour, and I had no idea what any of those things were. Up until this point, my PhD success was measured in how many words I had written and passing my APRs. It meant following the plan myself and my supervisors made for me and not falling behind. I knew what I needed to get into Academia, but I didn't know it meant being fluent in hidden academic codes.</p> <p>As a Black, working-class, first-generation scholar from The Bahamas, I entered doctoral study with drive and fire to write my passion project. But I was unprepared. It's the unspoken expectations when your supervisors ask for more academic "rigour", and in the subtle codes of not being "good" enough when your peers are at seminars you've never heard of and networking rooms you'll never be invited to. My PhD journey has felt like an exile. Forced into this unfamiliar system, navigating a world that was never meant for me.</p> <p>In this talk, I reflect on how colonial legacies shaped my early education and how those same legacies echo in my journey in academia today. I'll share how I've learned, and how I'm still learning to decode the hidden curriculum, and how small shifts, such as finding your people, accepting and reframing failure, and embracing my voice have helped me not just survive, but thrive in my own untypical way. I hope to offer other PGRs practical insights for navigating transitions, especially those who, like me, are forging paths where none were laid.</p> <p>Biography Anna (she/her) is a PhD candidate in Education at the University of Glasgow. Her research explores the colonial legacies in Bahamian education. A former chef turned educator, Anna has taught in The Bahamas, Japan, France, and the UK. She is passionate about decolonising education and amplifying the voices of underrepresented communities in academia.</p>
<p>Sasha Vaniev</p>	<p>Navigating international PGR parenting</p>	<p>Combining doctoral studies with parental duties is not an easy task, especially for international PGR parents or parents-to-be who arrive with their families in the UK for the first time. During the first weeks, these PGRs need not only to navigate the institutional norms and get acquainted with graduate school expectations but also quickly orient themselves within the UK schooling system, the NHS, or both.</p>

		<p>When transitioning to doctoral studies, international PGRs have to balance both their academic and parenting journeys. This way, access to the “hidden curriculum” (Elliot et al., 2020) for them can take alternative forms and routes. However, it is vital to understand the everyday challenges of international PGRs in their first months to provide equitable and inclusive doctoral journeys that will allow students to thrive (Dickson et al., 2024).</p> <p>In this talk, I will share my personal experiences of early paternity (of a UK-born child) and the lessons learned after almost three years of doctoral studentship. I will also suggest how universities and graduate schools can more holistically support international PGR parents and parents-to-be. Finally, I will present a personally curated resource for UofG PGR parents that attendees and UKCGE colleagues may hopefully find helpful.</p> <p>Biography Sasha (he/him) is an international 3rd-year PGR parent, educator, teaching and learning enthusiast, and higher education researcher in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. He is interested in how early career academics, including PhD students, learn to teach in higher education and what helps them (or not) thrive in their teaching development. In his PhD study, he uses sociomaterial approaches that highlight the role of the materials and tangible “non-humans” in both mediating and enacting educational reality.</p>
Zein Al Maha Oweis	How to navigate academia with a disability?	<p>As an academic with a disability, I have learnt that academia is not for the faint of heart. From dealing with access refusals, to people trying to distract my guide dog while working, to technological systems not being accessible. It has been a struggle to get to the finish line to complete my PhD.</p> <p>While being a researcher, I have found ways to make my journey at UofG more accessible. My talk focuses on sharing my lived experience as an academic with a disability, how I was able to challenge these inaccessible barriers and how I paved the way allowing me to feel more secure as a researcher with a disability. While there are many types of visible and invisible disabilities, my talk gives a glimpse into what it is like having a severe sight impairment and a guide dog user while navigating the complex academic world.</p>

		<p>My talk ends with a few lessons learnt while being a researcher at UofG. My goal with this talk is to raise awareness and to make others aware that academia needs to become more accessible for researchers with disabilities.</p> <p>Biography Zee (she/her) is a final year PhD researcher in Media and Cultural Policy at the University of Glasgow. Her research focuses on disability representation in Jordanian media. She has prior degrees in Media Communications and Broadcast Journalism. She is originally from Jordan, is visually impaired and a guide dog user. When not working on her PhD research you can find her adventuring around the beautiful highlands and islands of Scotland with her trusty guide dog Mitch.</p>
<p>Yousef Aljohani</p>	<p>Life Lessons from the Hidden Curriculum of a PhD</p>	<p>When I started my PhD, I was excited to begin—but outside my research topic, I didn't know what to expect. There wasn't a refresher week in October, and I found myself unsure who to ask about things like how to build a routine, balance my time, or find a sense of community. I was curious, but I also felt a bit lost.</p> <p>In this talk, I'll share my own experience as an international student figuring out how to settle into the PhD. I'll talk about the small things that helped—like building daily habits, finding my best hours to work, and getting involved in activities that helped me feel connected.</p> <p>This talk is especially for people who are just starting or going through big transitions—maybe between cultures, systems, or ways of working. I want to highlight the hidden parts of the PhD that no one really explains at the start, and how you can turn them into something that actually supports you.</p> <p>A PhD isn't just about getting to the finish line—it's about finding a way to grow and live through the process. I hope this session gives others something useful to take away.</p> <p>Biography Yousef (he/him) is a PhD student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Glasgow. His research looks at how to adapt third-wave and digital mental health</p>

		<p>therapies for young people in Saudi Arabia. He has a background in clinical work, teaching, and leadership in digital health. Yousef is passionate about wellbeing in academia and supporting international students. He's been involved in Student listeners -peer support- student committees, and leadership programmes, and enjoys helping others find balance and meaning in their PhD journey.</p>
<p>Michael Ogoms</p>	<p>Navigating a PhD as a neurodivergent individual and researching a topic in which you have lived experience</p>	<p>Neurodiversity has gained increased research attention in the past decade. However, there is little discussion of neurodiversity-led research and navigating a PhD. This presentation aims to discuss neurodiversity through my lived experience of navigating a PhD. First, there will be a discussion of transitioning into a PhD and navigating the supervisory relationship with being neurodivergent, including aspects such as balancing thesis and independent work, and informal accommodations. Therefore, providing insights into developing a professional identity and managing interpersonal relationships. Second, it will discuss my lived experience of being a neurodivergent black man researching neurodiversity in the workplace. Specifically, the negotiation of the relationship to a personal topic and the doctoral mindset will be discussed. Highlighting the challenges and positives that come with lived experience research through reflections from interviews conducted. Thereby, offering my lived experience in data collection and navigating the emotional connection inherent to my research. The hidden curriculum is something that needs to be more apparent in higher education, and the intersection of neurodivergent PhD researchers needs increased awareness. This presentation will highlight my lived experience and offer practical advice to other PGRS from diverse backgrounds who are passionate about their research.</p> <p>Biography Michael (he/him) is a Ph.D. Student at the University of Glasgow, he is originally from Winnipeg but has lived in Kingston, Montreal and Toronto. His Ph.D. research focuses on investigating how to support neurodivergent individuals in the workplace. This research will clarify the impact the organizational environment can have on neurodivergent individuals, resulting in better adjustments and continued progress in positive inclusion, disability management, awareness and advocacy.</p>

<p>Kwadjo Konadu</p>	<p>"Invincible Labour, Unspoken Lessons": Navigating Identity, Leadership, and Equity in doctoral research</p>	<p>This talk reflects on the hidden curriculum that shapes the doctoral journey, especially for international, racialised, and LGBTQ+ researchers. It explores how structural inequities, unspoken expectations of invincibility, and unacknowledged leadership labour intersect with personhood and institutional culture. Drawing on lived experience, I will reflect on the pressure to appear unbreakable while navigating systemic challenges; the emotional toll of advocacy and representation, the silencing of vulnerability within academic spaces. By naming these tensions, the talk invites honest dialogue on what it takes to survive and thrive in academia. It will resonate with other PGRs experiencing similar pressures, and other reflections on care belonging, and the value of participatory support networks. The presentation also touches on emerging methodological contributions from my community-led PhD, with forthcoming publications in qualitative and health research journals.</p> <p>Biography Kwadjo (he/him) is a Ghanaian pharmacist and public health researcher passionate about equity, person-centred care, and participatory health research. His doctoral work explores ART access and stigma among MSM in Ghana, combining community-led methods with interdisciplinary collaboration. A cancer survivor and LGBTQ+ scholar, Kwadjo draws on lived experience to advance inclusive, ethical research. He has held leadership roles at Robert Gordon University and supports the next generation through teaching and mentoring. His work contributes to methodological innovation, health equity, and the co-production of culturally sensitive care models</p>
<p>Michelah Brown</p>	<p>The Secret Life of a Lonely Black Girl</p>	<p>What would you do if you looked around and there was no one like you? Some seem similar, but there is always something that doesn't match. In 2026, I am set to become the first African American to receive a Phd from the Film and Theatre department at the University of Glasgow. I will do that without recognition from the school as they do not keep track of that data, due to the fact that the school does not differentiate between countries when speaking about race. When moving to Glasgow I moved without a community and without there being anyone that was like me. I was excluded from the James McCune Scholarship because I was not British, though James McCune was African American himself. This not only</p>

		<p>excluded me from funding, but also excluded me from a community. I would not be included in events with majority of students that had similarities that looked like me? But again I would be excluded and left to my own devices. So where does a lonely black girl go? Well, she gets a ferret for a best friend, gains 10k followers on tiktok, and travels the world.</p> <p>My talk will be about surviving in spaces where you have literally been rejected at every turn. What that is like; and how does one overcome that? How can one finish a PhD in such loneliness and what activities does one go after when you are completely alone. What resources should you have? How do you deal with extreme loneliness and how do you turn that into motivation for completion?</p> <p>Biography</p> <p>Michelah (she/her) is a fourth year PhD Candidate researching the metaphysical Dilemma of the Black Body in performance. She has received RSA Funding to go to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C as well as to go to Ghana to visit the slave castles. Her thesis focuses on systematic practices that stem from the slave trade that can be seen in modern day performance practices. Michelah focuses on the belief that the black body was introduced to the western world of performance through the auction block. She uses the auction block as a jumping off point to compare and contrast modern day performance practices.</p>
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