

**Title: PGR Career Development and Employability Strategy**

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**1. Rationale**

Manchester 2020, The Strategic Plan for The University of Manchester identifies Goal 1 as World Class Research. One of our Key Strategies to realise this states that we will:

“Attract, develop and nurture the careers of excellent researchers and become the location of choice for staff at all career stages. The University will provide an integrated approach to career development, beginning at postgraduate level with outstanding research and training, and continuing with a programme of mentoring and support for early career researchers.”

The PGR Career Development and Employability Strategy provides a roadmap to enable us to achieve this for our postgraduate researchers.

**2. Goal – where we want to be**

The University of Manchester will have in place appropriate provision, processes and training, and provide the culture and environment to encourage all PGRs to graduate with a set of achievements, skills, knowledge and personal attributes that will enable them to make a successful transition to their chosen next step and build a firm foundation for their future careers.

**3. Objectives – measurable outcomes to help us achieve our goal**

- 3.1. All PGRs will have been prompted via eProg to complete an annual career discussion with their supervisor or an agreed alternative member of staff (eg. member of wider advisory team, Careers Service staff, mentor). This would normally include identifying career goals for the year but should be appropriate to the individual student’s circumstances.
- 3.2. In the PRES survey, responses from University of Manchester PGRs will be in the upper quartile in comparison to other Russell Group universities for questions on opportunities to develop professional networks, and opportunities to develop practical skills and experience within and beyond their research programmes (eg. through research collaborations, extracurricular activities, public engagement, volunteering, placements or internships). We will aim to achieve this by the 2019 PRES survey.

3.3. The University of Manchester PGR unemployment rate, where PGRs identify this as their primary destination in the annual DLHE survey, will be in the lower quartile of the Russell Group of universities. Note: this measure excludes those not available for work eg through retirement or family commitments. We will aim to achieve this by the DLHE results issued in 2022, although progress towards this result may be apparent earlier than this<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4. Scope of the strategy – areas to be considered**

The prime responsibility for influencing career outcomes for University of Manchester PGRs has to lie with the PGRs themselves.

However, the University can make a significant contribution to these outcomes not only through the formal elements of their research programme, but also through:

- 4.1. Supervisor(s) and advisory teams offering guidance, support or signposting to other more appropriate resources, as part of regular career discussions.
- 4.2. Opportunities offered to researchers to extend and practice their skills beyond their research programme, including formal training programmes, but also work experience (internships/placements), enterprise activities and participation in volunteering, cultural, sporting, outdoor and other activities.
- 4.3. Opportunities and encouragement to engage with career exploration, reflection, planning and timely action.
- 4.4. Providing access to information about career paths and labour markets appropriate for researchers.
- 4.5. Facilitating opportunities for researchers to expand their networks, including with other researchers, alumni, potential employers, research collaborators, funders and enterprise support.
- 4.6. Developing and implementing a Wellbeing strategy, supporting researchers in developing the personal qualities, skills, insight and sense of purpose necessary for building a successful career.

#### **5. Strategies – how we will achieve these objectives**

We will aim to achieve our goal by concerted action cutting across university boundaries in line with the following strategies:

- 5.1. Validate the My Future Framework (the six behaviours and associated actions which are key to undergraduate students achieving a quick and smooth transition into a fulfilling “next step” on graduation) to determine if it is appropriate for PGRs.

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<sup>1</sup> 2022 is the first time we will be able to collect destinations of PhDs who have felt the impact of this strategy from their 1<sup>st</sup> year onwards.

- 5.2. Raise awareness with PGRs of the actions they can take throughout their programmes to enhance their chances of a successful “next step”, drawing on a validated My Future Framework, if appropriate.
- 5.3. Recognise the key influential role of supervisors and develop support to enable them to feel equipped to handle career discussions with their PGRs or to signpost elsewhere. NB: supervisors are not expected to become careers advisers. A simple process and resources should be developed to help supervisors direct their PGRs towards alternative sources of careers support where more appropriate.
- 5.4. Create an expectation that PGRs should periodically reflect on their experiences and any career information they have acquired to adjust their career aspirations and plans. This should include an annual prompt to review career activities and goals.
- 5.5. Ensure PGRs have access to information on career options, pathways and labour market information appropriate to their aspirations. This should include equipping PGRs to use their research skills to investigate niche careers and where possible, drawing on opportunities and contacts presented by the PGRs’ research group/centre/partnership.
- 5.6. Enable and encourage PGRs to develop practical skills and experience within and beyond their research programmes, including raising awareness of opportunities and removing barriers wherever possible. This may include formal internships/work experience, but should also highlight opportunities which are accessible to the widest range of PGRs, including leadership roles in voluntary, sporting or social activities, and enhancing their research experience through public engagement, freelance/flexible work or collaborations.
- 5.7. Expand opportunities to develop PGRs’ networks, both professional (for enhancing career opportunities) and social (to develop supportive networks to encourage career confidence). This should include encouragement to engage with University of Manchester academics’ own research networks, plus access to academic and non-academic employers, alumni and other PGRs.
- 5.8. Enable and encourage PGRs to develop the confidence and knowledge to adopt enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation behaviours. This should include considering freelance and other independent forms of working, and, where appropriate, the ability to commercialise their research outputs and potentially start a business.
- 5.9. Provide support for PGRs to develop the practical job hunting and career communication skills they will need to meet their aspirations.
- 5.10. Engage key stakeholders across the university, including academics, PSS staff and PGRs themselves, to work in partnership on implementing these strategies, to take advantage of synergies and avoid duplication.

## **6. Monitoring**

MDC will monitor and review this strategy annually, including performance against the measurable outcomes in Section 2, and the progress of teams tasked with implementing the strategies identified in Section 5.