

PGR Wellbeing Update for MDCSG October 2020

VITAE and Universities UK (UUK) were commissioned by Research England, UK Research and Innovation and the Office for Students to evaluate the impact of the Catalyst funded projects on PGR wellbeing and mental health. The [evaluation report](#) outlines a set of recommendations for senior leaders, supervisors, PGRs and the sector and identifies [good practice](#). The recommendations are presented below alongside the [University's PGR wellbeing project recommendations](#) in order to identify areas for further work and development.

Recommendations for Senior Leaders

VITAE UUK Recommendation	UoM PGR Wellbeing Project Recommendation	Progress
Acknowledge PGRs as a distinct population in institutional mental health strategies.	<i>Recommendation 8</i> - Recognise the distinctiveness of the PGR journey in University wellbeing strategy and provision of support.	Presented in paper to HRSC Sept 2020 and under discussion within Student Experience Programme.
Drive an institutional culture that supports PGR wellbeing.	N/A	Recommendation 3 relating to recognition of supervision impacts on culture.
Provide sufficient resource to embed appropriate support and provision for PGRs.	<i>Recommendation 9</i> - Provide resource for a PGR focussed support role to coordinate activities, maintain resources and ensure wb and mh provision is appropriate for PGRs. <i>Recommendation 10</i> - Ensure that School and Faculty student support roles explicitly include and address the needs of PGRs and work in collaboration with PGR advisors.	Monthly update with resources sent to PGR support teams by wellbeing project assistant, the role ends December 2020. Further discussion needed with DSE and awaiting outcomes of the Student Experience Programme (SEP).
Collect robust ongoing data on PGRs' mental health and wellbeing.	<i>Recommendation 7</i> - Take a consistent approach to the collection of data on interruptions and extensions for reasons relating to wellbeing and mental health, review this data annually along with data on PGR use of support and advice services.	Paper on changing special permissions categories in CS discussed at TLG in October. Data from DASS and Counselling Service to be reported on at future MDCSG.
Ensure supervisors and others are given time, training and recognition for supporting PGRs.	<i>Recommendation 3</i> - Establish mechanisms for formal recognition of research supervision in workload allocation models and excellence of supervision in promotions criteria and P&DRs.	Agreed at HR Sub Committee, paper to be presented to Policy and Resources Committee (PRC) in November 2020.

Recommendations for Supervisors and Academics with Postgraduate Responsibilities

VITAE UUK Recommendation	UoM PGR Wellbeing Project Recommendation	Progress
Recognise link between good mental health and academic success.	<i>Recommendation 4</i> - Develop materials to support supervisors in their role and promotes these via the PGR supervisor toolkit. <i>Recommendation 6</i> - Develop the role of School/Department advisors to check on the wellbeing and mental health of PGRs; ensure that this role is valued and recognised in workload allocation models.	Supervision Masterclass (April 2020); Supporting Supervisors (July 2020); Wellbeing section in the supervisors toolkit including decision trees ; Developing online resource for supervisors (Dec 2020). Role of advisors to be discussed at MDCSG.
Be informed about PGR mental health issues, triggers and signposting.		
Take care of own mental health and wellbeing.	N/A	Increased University provision for staff wellbeing and mental health.

Recommendations for Professional Services Staff with Responsibilities for PGRs

VITAE UUK Recommendation	UoM PGR Wellbeing Project Recommendation	Progress
Recognise and understand distinctiveness of PGRs.	N/A	See resource for PS .
Consider how they can develop and sustain PGRs peer support networks.	<i>Recommendation 11</i> - Develop and implement a peer support model for PGRs. <i>Recommendation 12</i> - Provides PGR-dedicated resource to encourage the development of communities and networking.	Further work needed on peer support and creating communities. RD teams holding connecting/networking events.
Understand boundaries of their role and signposting.	N/A	See resource for PS .
Take care of own mental health and wellbeing.	N/A	Increased University provision for staff.
Embed importance for PGRs to pay attention to mental health and wellbeing within existing processes and RD.	<i>Recommendation 5</i> - Develop a statement of expectations on PGR professional and career training and development to support PGRs complete their degree and transition to the next stage.	Wellbeing embedded in induction and Code of Practice ; Transition Resource ; Statement of expectations
Be flexible in timing, duration & type of training.	N/A	Increased online resources and provision.

Recommendations for PGRs

VITAE UUK Recommendation	UoM PGR Wellbeing Project Recommendation and Progress
Pay attention to their wellbeing and mental health.	UoM PGR wellbeing project had no recommendations aimed at PGRs; resources curated in PGR Life support signposting; further work needed on developing peer support.
Develop good peer support networks.	
Find out where to get support.	
Respond to requests for feedback about wb and mental health.	

Sector recommendations for UUK, Funders and Stakeholders

VITAE UUK Recommendation	UoM PGR Wellbeing Project Recommendation Progress	Progress
Agree common UK measures for institutions to collect on wellbeing and mental health.	N/A	MDCSG to discuss use of PRES to include additional mh and wb questions.
Review duration of doctoral training programmes	<i>Recommendation 1</i> – Review the length of the PhD programmes funded by UoM.	Approved at HRSC, to be discussed at PRC Nov 2020.
Review how structures and process within doctoral education impact on mental health and wellbeing of PGRs.	<i>Recommendation 2</i> - Review the structure of PhD programmes with a view to enhancing the existing opportunity to study part time.	Under discussion at MDCSG.
Recognise and promote PGRs as a distinct community.	See Recommendation 8	
Additional sector recommendations include use of existing networks to support future work relating to PGR mental health and wellbeing; commissioning more research into the intersection of protected characteristics with mental health; integrating evaluation more specifically within funding calls and selection criteria.		