

FACULTY OF BIOLOGY, MEDICINE AND HEALTH

PGR COHORT ADVISORS TOOLKIT



ADVISORS TOOLKIT

This information has been produced by the Doctoral Academy to support PGR Cohort Advisors in their role.

What is expected of you?

All Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) are assigned a Cohort Advisor for the duration of their Programme.

The Cohort Advisors are independent of the supervisory team and are based in a different School/Division.

They play an important role in supporting PGRs throughout their research journey, helping to promote a positive research culture and ensuring appropriate pastoral support and guidance is available when needed.

Cohort Advisors are expected to hold at least one individual meeting with each Advisee per year and to be available throughout the programme via email, Teams, or other appropriate communication methods.

While there is no mandatory training for this role, the following support is available to Cohort Advisors:

- Online information sessions delivered throughout the year by the Academic Lead for PGR Research Culture and the PGR Wellbeing and Support Coordinator.
- [Training courses offered by the Mental Health Support Team](#)

USEFUL CONTACTS

- [Full list of Doctoral Academy contacts](#)
- [PGR Coordinator \(Wellbeing and Support\)](#)
- [DA Academic Lead for PGR Research Culture](#)
- [DA General Enquiries](#)
- [Mental Health Support Team](#)
- [Report and Support](#)
- [Disability Advisory and Support Service \(DASS\)](#)
- [Occupational Health](#)



OFFERING SUPPORT

You can use the [Stepped Care Model](#) to help identify the appropriate level of support.

Use the [Support Wheel](#) to guide conversations and explore support options.

CRISIS SUPPORT

If a PGR appears to be in crisis, follow the [Crisis Pathway](#).

[Safeguarding](#)

For concerns about safety, wellbeing and risk, refer to the [Safeguarding Guidance](#).

[Confidentiality](#)

It is important to be transparent with PGRs about any steps you are taking to support them. However, if you have concerns about their safety or the safety of others, you may contact support services without their consent. If you are unsure, consider seeking advice from support services first without sharing any personal or identifiable information.

URGENT HELP

Immediate risk to life or serious harm

- Call 999
- Attend A&E (Mental Health Liaison Teams are available)

On Campus

- Security: 0161 306 9966 or use the SafeZone app
- Mental Health Support Team: available (Mon-Fri, 9am to 4.30pm). Call 0161 2752864 or email MHSTDutyPractitioner@manchester.ac.uk.

OUT OF HOURS SUPPORT

- Call 111 and select the mental health option
- The Samaritans: 116 123
- CALM: 0800 58 58 58

SUPPORTING DISABLED POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS

As Cohort Advisors, you will receive a copy of any Disability Support Plans provided to your PGRs. This is for information, not action but please read support plans regularly to ensure the correct support is being offered.

Any questions/concerns can be directed to the DA's [Disability Support Coordinators](#).

- If you have a disabled PGR in your cohort, please ask them if their needs are being met according to the plan. If there are any issues, please contact the DA's [Disability Support Coordinators](#).
- We encourage all advisors to engage with the [Disability Equity Training](#) to gain understanding and awareness of the barriers that disabled people can face.
- Inclusive Alliance Network- This Network is open to all staff who support disabled staff/PGRs. The aim is to provide a safe space where people can chat peer to peer, share advice, and get guidance. We encourage any advisors supporting disabled PGRs to sign up to the network. You can join the Network [here](#).
- Challenging Research Disabled PGR Group - This is a peer support group for disabled PGRs. For more information, please email FBMH.doctoralacademy@manchester.ac.uk



REFERRAL PROCESSES FOR THE UNIVERSITY'S CENTRAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Mental Health Support Team

- To access a one-to-one appointment, PGRs must self-refer. Further information, including how to request an appointment, can be found [here](#)

Disability Advisory and Support Service (DASS)

- To refer a PGR to DASS, you will need their consent.
- [Link to the DASS referral form.](#)
- Disabled PGRs are not required to engage with DASS, but choosing not to do so may limit the support available to them.
- To access disability support, PGRs must register with DASS and provide appropriate evidence.

Occupational Health

- If you are unsure whether a referral is appropriate, please contact [Occupational Health Services](#) for advice.
- The Occupational Health Referral form can be found on their [website](#).
- Following an assessment, a report will be sent to the referrer with the PGR's consent.
- While PGRs may decline a referral or not give consent to share the report, any subsequent decisions may need to be made without the benefit of an Occupational Health assessment.



GROUP MEETINGS

From September 2026, group meetings are only mandatory for first year PGRs. This meeting should take place by the end of the third month of programme and is linked to the eProg milestone "Cohort Advisor group meeting Yr 1 - FBMHM1113".

For advisors starting in the role before September 2026, a yearly group meeting milestone may still appear in eProg. This can be ignored, as annual group meetings are no longer required.

The introductory group meeting is an opportunity to:

- Introduce yourself and explain the Cohort Advisor role.
- Clarify how your role differs from that of supervisors and PGR Tutors.
- Signpost key sources of support and guidance.
- Encourage advisees to contact you if they need pastoral support during their programme.
- Outline the one-to-one meeting that will take place later in the year and explain that students can contact you at any time if they would benefit from additional support.

Following this meeting, please complete the eProg form "Cohort Advisor group meeting Yr 1 - FBMHM1113".

ONE-TO-ONE MEETINGS

Individual meetings

- Individual meetings are an opportunity to get to know your advisees, discuss how they are progressing with their studies, and explore whether they feel well, supported, and able to manage the demands of their programme.
- Guidance, including suggested discussion questions, is available within the eProg meeting form.
- Encourage PGRs to share any concerns they may have. These conversations should provide a supportive space to discuss common challenges associated with doctoral study and identify any additional support that may be helpful.
- If a PGR raises concerns, listen carefully and, where appropriate, offer guidance, discuss possible next steps, and signpost them to relevant University services. You are not expected to resolve every issue yourself, and effective signposting is often the most important aspect of the role.
- As noted on page 4, you will be notified if any of your advisees have a DASS Support Plan. Where relevant, use the meeting as an opportunity to review the plan.
- It is important to consider whether any concerns require escalation or referral to a specialist service. If you are unsure, please contact the Doctoral Academy for advice.
- Where serious concerns arise, follow the guidance on page 3 and notify the Doctoral Academy once the appropriate steps have been taken.
- Following each meeting, complete the relevant eProg advisor meeting form.



.....ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PGRS.....

Resources

- [Wellbeing and Self Care Resources](#)
- [Financial support](#)
- [Student Immigration Team](#)
- [Report and Support](#)
- [Chaplaincy Service](#)
- [PGR Societies and Groups](#)
- [Students' Union Advice Service](#)