Serial number	0216
Title	Addressing Doctoral Researchers' Well-being: Will our Solutions have Impact?
Submitter	Dr. Caroline Hargreaves, Dr. Janet De Wilde, Mrs Laura Lane

Addressing Doctoral Researchers' Well-being: Will our Solutions have Impact?

Higher Education Institutions face greater challenges each year. The drive for excellence, efficiency and effectiveness has a knock on effect on staff, researchers and student well-being. Serious incidents have led to increased support systems and national events to promote well-being in universities (UUK, 2016 and e.g. UKCGE, 2017). We must not only "balance expectations of students, society and stakeholders" but also create fora and strategies to do so and invest in the well-being of individuals.

This research intensive university carried out two well-being surveys in 2009 and 2014. Our research defined well-being as 'that part of a researcher's overall well-being that is primarily influenced by their PhD position and which can be influenced by university-based interventions' (Identifying Reference). The first paper focussed on methods to evaluate how the doctoral experience impacts researcher well-being and to learn more about the doctoral researcher experience. The second paper reported key findings of the comparison of 2009 and 2014 results (Identifying Reference). Both studies used the clinically approved methodology, Impact Analysis (IA) (Identifying Reference) which frames questions using participant input and allows for more targeted actions to be taken.

With 1248 respondents to the 2014 survey (~40% response rate ~42% in 2009), overall well-being scores remained satisfactory. However, all domains scored lower for well-being than in 2009. The impact of the top 10 most bothersome questions had also increased. Of particular concern were the increased levels of stress and frustration related to research and career uncertainty and the lower reported well-being levels of women and late stage researchers.

Results from this survey add depth of understanding to larger studies, such as PRES (Turner, 2015) and to recommendations to the research community (QAA, 2013a and b; Identifying References). It also adds insight to the *Worldclass Supervision research outcomes (*2 Identifying Reference2) and the *Doctoral Alumni* study (Identifying Reference) at this institution. This paper explores actions taken and how we can

progress in light of the many tensions faced by HEIs. Other institutions are invited to share their insights.

Support systems have grown in most institutions, and there is much existing high quality support for staff and students. Findings indicated the need for enhanced cross departmental and integrated training of all staff and supervisors who work with doctoral students, the recognition of stress and awareness of university support provision and services to facilitate signposting and improve researchers' well-being (Gardener, 2009; Jawitz, 2015). We are working to adopt a more integrated and networked approach. We also note that researchers who feel part of a community have greater awareness of expectations, opportunities and support structures (2 Identifying References; McCulloch and Loeser, 2016).

Stress and Frustration Related to Research,

Doctoral students tend to be overly self-critical (Kearns et al., 2008), they can also be reluctant to voice concerns to avoid possible damage to their future prospects; Cotterall (2013) refers to a 'culture of silence' which prevents change. In turn, supervisors may not be aware of researchers' well-being issues (Gardner, 2009), so despite being the first and most trusted point of call for the researcher (Identifying Reference) they may not be able to give support or know how to do so.

In response to this, we have:
- Devised a new CPD Framework for Supervisors (Ref released October)
- Designed specific PhD supervisor online training on Well-being.

To support doctoral researchers, we are:
- Building peer support via an enhanced Cohort Building programme, and Research Community Funding.
- Providing more 1-1 opportunities for individuals and a Coaching Programme.
- Extending provision to those who are less able to attend workshops including, webinars and online provision.
- Working with the Students' Union and Graduate Students' Union to deliver courses for PG Representatives

- Extending training to Graduate School staff in Coaching and Mental Health First Aid.

Career Uncertainty and the Late Stage

The effects of stress and frustration due to research and uncertainty regarding careers become greater with the progress of the doctorate. Support systems often change as people leave, and researchers can work more in isolation towards the end of the doctorate, factors known to increase stress (Ülkü-Steiner, Kurtz-Costes and Kinlaw 2000; Jairam and Kahl, 2012; Jawitz 2015). Later stage students may also face greater time and/or financial pressures, as funding ends or they take on employment. They often lack clarity regarding their futures, and have seldom decided on their next role (Mason et al., 2009; Hancock and Walsh, 2014). We have increased collaborative working, with staff and alumni to engender a supportive working climate and establish a less pressured culture for students to navigate their experience and ideas for the future, examples include:

- Increased links with Educational Development Unit, Careers Service, alumni and Research Office provision, including a new course for those considering postdocs and a webinar "ask the doctor"
- Additional Teaching courses for GTAs and HEA accreditation
- Advice and recommendations during departmental Cohort Activities
- Acknowledgement of stressors and discussion of support provision and reflective practice.
- Cross referencing in courses on managing uncertainty, motivation, resilience and stress
- Incorporation of data from research into training.
- Enhanced advertising and sharing of information, including verbal and visual signposting, online, at key events and during training.

The above provision is available to researchers in all stages and aims to balance the impact of issues to prevent the late stage build up. Specifically, for late stage researchers we also have the Writing Retreat; Writing Room and Finish Up Move On, with input from e.g. alumni, Registry and Library staff.

Conclusions and the Future

Recommendations from these studies and an institution review noted that the community and culture should be developed to support all stakeholders, e.g. support and academic staff, supervisors, post docs, as well as doctoral students. Ongoing research is needed to assess the impact of our measures on well-being, whether research communities and cultures have altered and whether flexible provision has improved well-being. In particular whether these changes have enhanced the well-being of female doctoral students and how else we may work to these goals.

Questions for Roundtables:
- What are other HEIs across the sector doing to address well-being?
- Considering this multifaceted approach, how can we assess impact?
- How best can we identify which part has worked?

References:

4 Identifying References Removed

Hancock, S. (2015) Access and Equality in Doctoral Education conference paper in UK Society for Research into Higher Education Annual Conference, Newport

Jairam, D. and Kahl, D.H. Jr. (2012) Navigating the doctoral experience: the role of social support in successful degree completion. International Journal of Doctoral Studies. Vol 7 http://ijds.org/Volume7/IJDSv7p311-329Jairam0369.pdf accessed 03/2016

Jawitz, J. (2015) Learning in the academic workplace: the harmonization of the collective and the individual habitus, Studies in Higher Education 34: 6, 601-614

Kearns, H., Forbes, A., Gardiner, M. L. & Marshall, K. M. (2008) When a high distinction isn't good enough: a review of perfectionism and self-handicapping. Australian Educational Researcher., 35, 21-36.

Mason, M.A., Goulden, M. and Frasch, K. (2009) Why graduate students reject the fast track. Academe Online, 95:1, 11-17 http://search.proquest.com/openview/83dfe313d8961831fc9ef0cb11d1c43c/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=41824 accessed 03/2016

QAA (2013a) UK Quality Code for Higher Education http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B11.pdf accessed 04/2013.

QAA (2013b) UK Quality Code for Higher Education http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality-Code-Chapter-B4.pdf accessed 04/2013.

Turner, G. (2015) PRES 2015: the research student Journey HEA https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-2015 accessed 02/2016.

UKCGE (2017) Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of PG Students http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/events/supporting-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-of-pg-students-17-108.aspx accessed 06/2017

Ülkü-Steiner, B., Kurtz-Costes, B. and Kinlaw, C.R. (2000) Doctoral student experiences in Gender-Balanced and Male-dominated graduate programs, Journal of Educational Psychology 92: 2, 296-307

UUK (2016) New programme to address mental health and wellbeing in universities http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/New-programme-to-address-mental-health-and-wellbeing-in-universities.aspx accessed 06/2017