

Courage Wellbeing Project Strand A – Developing Research Culture and Community



University of Suffolk Report

Jennifer Coe

1.0. Executive Summary

Since establishing in early 2011 PGR students' numbers have grown and continue to grow within University of Suffolk. Large numbers of the students at UoS are part time and have a high number of other commitments and on top of that there were no PGR reps in place until September 2018, as a result there has been little to no development of a research culture or community within PGR students at UoS and PGR wellbeing was not individual thought about. This project allowed the development of a research culture and community within UoS PGR students by using several activities, workshops and support sessions as well as allowed for there to be a recognition and increase in support for PGR wellbeing. Many activities were put on for the students throughout the time the placement was in post, and various feedback on these activities ensured that improvements were made throughout and can be made in the future to ensure that it is best facilitating a research culture and community for PGR students with the various demographics that UoS students possess. Based on the feedback there were 6 key recommendations made for the University of Suffolk to consider for the future to try and develop further what has already been put in place. Based on the various situations I encountered, my experience and knowledge as well as the student feedback I believe that there will continue to be a growing research culture and community within UoS as well as a designated and highlighted support system for PGR wellbeing.

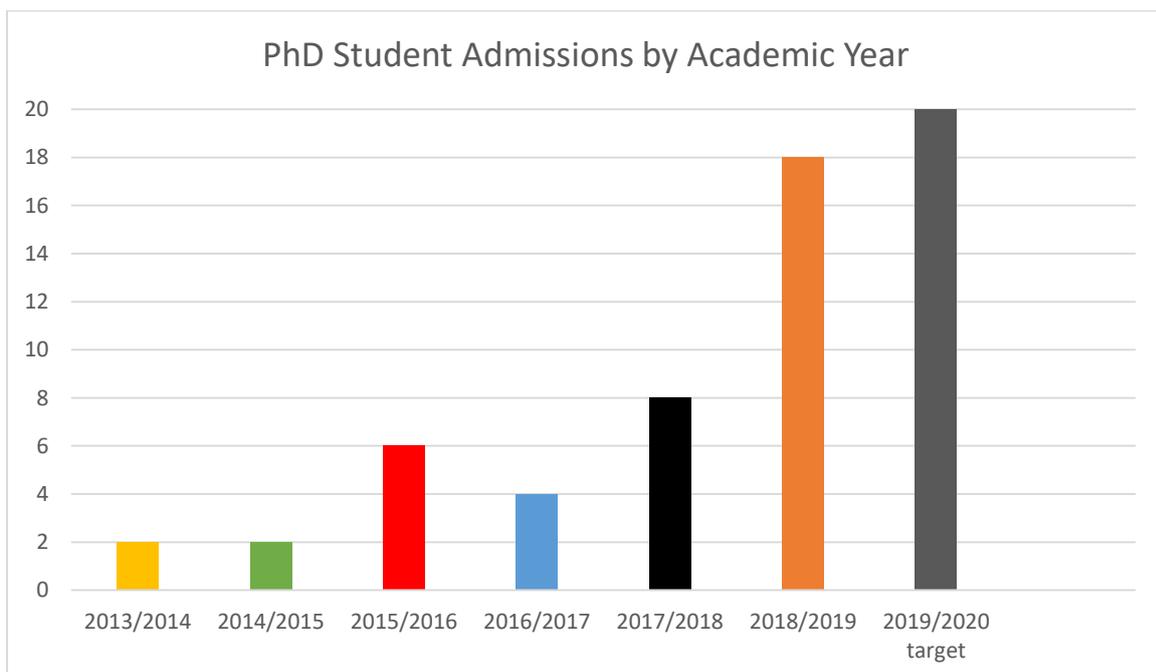
2.0. Project Background and Rationale

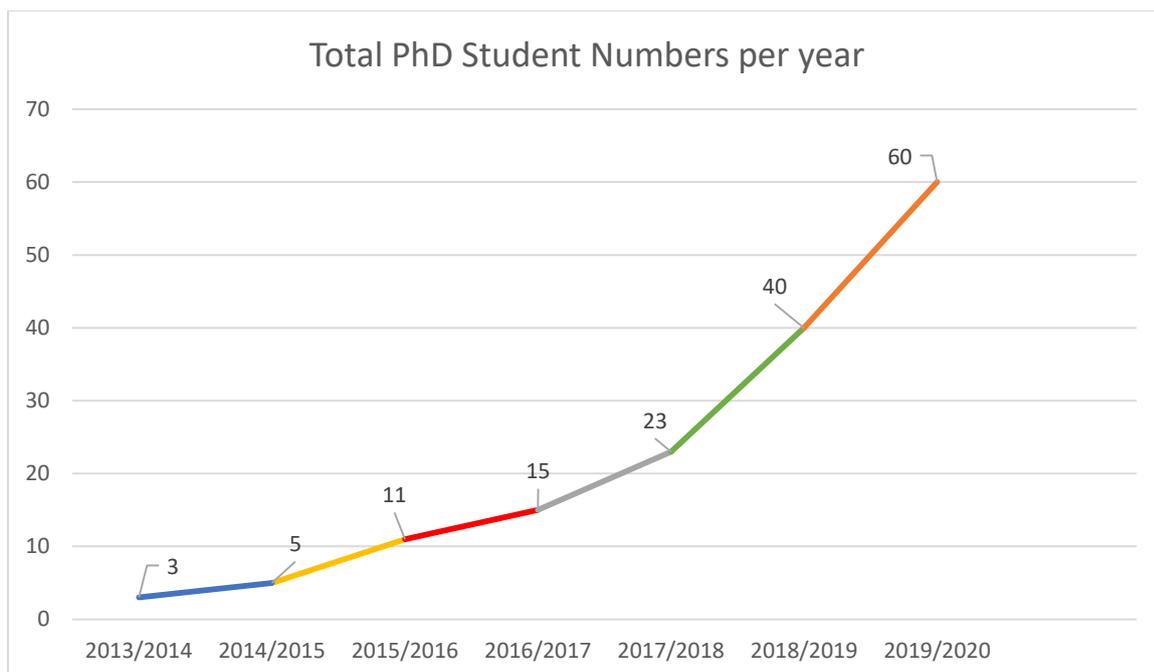
The university institution was established in 2007 and was named University Campus Suffolk. At this time the institution was partnered and governed by both the University of Essex and University of East Anglia. During this time both University of Essex and University of East Anglia were the awarding bodies for all degrees both taught and research within the institution. In 2016 the University gained their teaching independence (Teaching Degree Awarding Powers, TDAP) and become the University of Suffolk, being able to award their own teaching degrees. At this time the research division, and the graduate school within the University of Suffolk, remained partnered with University of East Anglia as the awarding body for PhD's. The university is committed to gaining their research independence (Research Degree Awarding Powers, RDAP) over the coming years and plans are already in place for this. The research team within the institution is committed to ensuring that the provisions provided for Postgraduate Research Students is in line with what is needed for RDAP but also for what is needed to ensure the best research and study experience for the students for the duration of their studies.

The graduate school was established in 2011 with the first student being registered in 2012 and was the first student to gain a PhD in 2017. Although growing every year (2018/2019 = 40 PGR students), compared with other institutions the number of PGR students is significantly smaller (please see graphs below). Throughout all years since the number of part time students is higher than that of full-time students and over the recent and current

years it is around a 60% part time and 40% full time split. Many of the part time students at the university are also staff members within the institution or are completing a PhD as part of their work progression.

As a result of being a new institution, having smaller student numbers, high numbers of part time students, and high numbers of students who have many other commitments, there had not yet been the opportunity to develop and foster a research culture and community developed within UoS. The first PGR course reps were only recruited and in post from September 2018, before then, there were no designated PGR student representatives. These factors highlight the importance for the creation and development of a research culture and community within UoS. The engagement in this project would allow for there to be a designated person to focus on PGR culture and community as well as PGR wellbeing. As the numbers of PGR's are so small currently, the post could focus on the overall university PGR research culture and community as opposed to just within a school or schools. Approaching the development in this manner allowed there to be a whole PGR approach across the institution which, in time can be taken into each school.





3.0. Placement Holder Background

I am the Psychology Technician for the Psychology team at the University of Suffolk as well as a part time PhD student under the Psychology team also. I started my employment in late 2014 and subsequently started my PhD in October 2015. I have been affiliated with University of Suffolk since 2010 when I started my undergraduate degree in Psychology and Criminology, graduating in 2013 with a BSc (Hons) 2:1. In 2014 I gained an MSc in Psychology at the University of Essex (Distinction). In 2016 I completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) at the University of Suffolk and became a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. As can be evident from the above, I have a long-standing link with the University of Suffolk as a student, therefore understanding the experiences of being a student within the institution as well as being a staff member which allows me to understand various teams within the institution as well as already having various links to staffing teams within the institution. Upon placement appointment I was also the University of Suffolk PGR Representative. This allowed me to have that link between PGR students and the staffing members and committees within the institution.

I was one of the first PGR students to start a PhD at the University of Suffolk, and I noticed from the start that there was little research culture or community. Even before this project I was trying to develop some student-based activities to try to promote good mental wellbeing as well as promote the importance of culture and community for PGR's. I therefore believe that I was more than suited to taking on the placement within this project to ensure the most was gained out of the project process for UoS as well as for UEA and the project stakeholders.

4.0. Project ‘Methods’

Strand A at UoS focused on developing PGR culture, community and wellbeing by engaging PGR students in several events and activities both located within and away from the institution. All events and activities which have been run at UoS since January 2019 are listed below in detail with numbers of attendance at each session. Alongside these events I also created better student support links within UoS and several teams such as student support, HR, Health, Safety and Wellbeing and SU. I also developed better links between UoS and UEA student support, SU and the PGR office.

A Wellbeing and Support Services leaflet was also created and distributed via email to students as well as printed and distributed within the PGR room at UoS. It was hoped that this leaflet would allow students to know who to contact should they need to - as it appeared upon talking to the students that they had no knowledge on who to contact if they had any wellbeing issues – a copy of this can be found in Appendix 1.

4.1. PhD Mentor Scheme

This is a drop in session for PGR students to be able to talk to a mentor about their PhD Studies. A mentor was located the PGR room during these times and students were encouraged to drop in at any time to be able to talk through any issues needed with someone who is not their supervisor or directly part of the UoS PGR Staffing Team.

Date	Time	Location	Numb Attended
Wednesday 20 th March 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	3
Wednesday 3 rd April 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	3
Tuesday 7 th May 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	2
Wednesday 22 nd May 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	1
Tuesday 4 th June 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	2
Wednesday 26 th June 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	2
Friday 12 th July 2019	11AM – 1PM	L1.05	0
Friday 31 st July 2019	9AM – 11AM	L1.05	0
Monday 12 th August	9AM-11AM	L1.05	0

4.2. PhD Breakfast Club (PBC)

This is a drop in session for PGR students and supervisors to be able to talk to each other in a relaxed environment. It was designed to appeal to students who are busy during the working day or are unable to do times after working/school hours. There was a range of pastries and fruit supplied for students. This was a relaxed drop in style group where students did not have to be there for the whole time or arrive and leave at the specific times this is an open time slot.

Date	Time	Location	Numb Attended
Friday 22 nd Feb 2019	8.30AM – 10.30AM	L1.05	3

Friday 7 th June 2019	8.30AM – 10.30AM	L1.05	8
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4.3. 'Week to Write'

This is a designated week where students can come in to the UoS PGR Room and write or even to do some other work on their PhD in a space where we are all working towards the same goal. Some students even used the designated week for writing but would do it a home or on their holiday. There are not set times for anything, however students were respectful of each other's working needs and would often take breaks and lunches together.

Date	Time	Location	Numb Attended
15 th April – 19 th April 2019	9AM – 5PM	L1.05	4
10 th June – 14 th June 2019	9AM – 5PM	L1.05	7
15 th July – 19 th July 2019	9AM – 5PM	L1.05	3
5 th August – 9 th August 2019	9AM – 5PM	L1.05	1
2 nd September – 6 th September 2019	9AM – 5PM	L1.05	0

4.4. 'Time to Write'

This was a designated 4-hour block on a Friday afternoon for students to attend the PGR room and get some writing done. It aimed to allow students blocks of time to write and have breaks. It followed a rough timing schedule of having a break every 30 minutes to allow a great writing productivity. After a month or so of hosting there was no attendance to this session and after a consultation with the PGR students about the usefulness of the activity, it appeared not useful and was cancelled. Students felt the timing was inappropriate and that they needed larger blocks of time to write rather than a short afternoon and that it was not possible a certain day of the week every week.

4.5. Walk and Talk

These were walks around some areas within Ipswich for PGR's to be able to get out, get some green fresh air as well as talk about PhD study, or general life. Locations for walks were also open to PGR students should they have any ideas. There were no more walk and talks set up beyond July as there was no attendance for previous dates.

Date	Time	Location	Numb Attended
Monday 22 nd April 2019	10AM-11AM	Holywells Park	0
Monday 27 th May 2019	10AM-11AM	Waterfront	0
Monday 17 th June 2019	10AM-11AM	Alexandra Park	0

4.6. Mindfulness Training Session

Tuesday 23rd April 10AM-12PM @ University of Suffolk (Run by Ben Marshall - UEA)

Number Attended: 6

4.7. PGR Wellbeing and PGR Experience Event

Included a number of Focus Groups looking at the PGR provision at UoS Generally as well as the Courage Project Placement Provision and Opinions on Culture and Community at the university. It also included a session with HR where students were encouraged to give their opinion on the current PGR HR training and workshop provision as well as what they would like to see in the future.

Friday 7th June 8:30AM – 5PM @ University of Suffolk

Number Attended: 13

4.8. UEA 'Away Day'

Included several sessions at UEA as well as a talking lunch. Sessions included Developing your writing, developing as a writer and Courageous conversations: How to have a conversation about mental health.

Monday 10th June 8:30AM – 5:30PM @ UEA

Number Attended: 8

4.9. Pier & Paddle

Drink on the pier at Felixstowe and then a paddle in the water.

Friday 16th August 12PM

Number Attended: 0

4.10. Walk & Drink

Walk along the waterfront area to the park and then for a drink in the local student bar CULT.

Friday 30th August 11AM

Number Attended: 0

4.11. COURAGE Festival

Courage festival event run at UEA to promote the good work of the project.

Wednesday 11th September 9AM-5PM

Overall Number Attended: 75

Number Attended from UoS: 3

4.12. PGR Pre-semester Food and Drink

Food and drink for PGR students only at Issacs – along the waterfront

Friday 6th September 5:00PM

Number Attended: 5

4.13. PGR Seminar Series

This is an interdisciplinary postgraduate researcher seminar series and is an opportunity for new and continuing postgraduate research students to present their ongoing or finished work and to get helpful feedback from a supportive audience of fellow research students. This is also an opportunity for students to practice creating materials for a presenting purpose as well as practicing their presenting. The seminars are student-led and offer a chance to network and get involved in the research community. This is a friendly peer-peer-supportive environment aimed at providing a space for research collaboration and encouraging feedback.

The seminars are aimed at and only open to PhD researchers in any school or field at the University of Suffolk. These are monthly seminars held on the last Friday of the month (excluding December and August) at 13:00-14:00 in the PhD Room, L1.05 (Full schedule can be found in Appendix 2). The September and the October sessions have run and had an attendance of 7 and 6 respectively.

5.0. PGR Feedback

Below I have provided some feedback which I have received over the course of the project. I have gathered this feedback from several data collection methods including an online survey and a focus group. The 'General Project Feedback' has been gathered via an online survey using google form which explores both the Courage project (culture community and wellbeing) as well as PGR provision more generally at UoS as well as a PGR focus group which explored the Courage Project provisions. The individual event feedback is again from the PGR focus group but also via emails, social media posts and posts in the PGR whatsapp group.

5.1.0. General Project Feedback

5.1.1. What is going well

- Encouraging PGRs to connect and support each other
- Giving support when communication between the university and students is not as good as it should be.
- Supervision has been fantastic to date. Community is developing very well. Although not sure have met all PGR's yet. Wellbeing has a high profile but method doesn't suit all characters.
- promoting the idea of wellbeing, particularly among PGRs
- Giving us an opportunity to discuss issues. Organising events (even though they don't always happen, it's important they continue to be scheduled).

5.1.2. What could be improved on

- Communication is scattered and inconsistent. PGRs are not being actively involved in planning events and activities. Things are cancelled at short notice
- Keep developing the community/culture sessions. As more students join the uptake will be better and it will seem more wanted and needed.
- Ethics process. Exemplars required. Review documents. Exemplars required.
- Suffolk Pathway - some sessions geared to social sciences and need to accommodate other disciplines. An observation more than not doing well.
- Making a difference to organisational processes and practices to address the sources, rather than symptoms, of problems
- The answer to issues often seems to be along the lines of "university policy doesn't allow this" which needs to be challenged. This often means that issues are left unresolved - poor communication, p numbers, access to the PhD room, and are covered up with mindfulness sessions, or seminars about how to manage our time/learning etc.

5.1.3. What events do you like/ are useful at UoS currently?

- Meals and social events, walks, week to write, mentoring sessions, connections with UEA.
- Away days, event days, gatherings for special events like Christmas/summer etc.
- Week to write. PHDiggers (yet to establish) PGR get togethers.
- mentoring, social events, week to write, trips to connect with UEA
- mentor sessions - but could be made more accessible by happening at different times to accommodate different people's work/needs. Meals out, gatherings that are social.

5.1.4. What would you like for PGR's at UoS in the future?

- Shorter, more regular collaborative writing sessions. More representation to the university about PGR needs.
- A variety of different types of coping with stress mechanisms. While mindfulness is very popular at the moment, it is impossible for someone with PTSD to use without more guidance. I found the sessions very distressing but would like other opportunities to manage stress - yoga?!
- Do we need a formal Social 'club'? Not sure?
- Days out socially? British library visit, but not a stuffy full on head in books all day. Beach day?
- Theatre?
- I guess social activities in general rather than just booze and food. Although these are good too!
- more of the same, connecting with more other universities, opportunities to practice the softer skills of a PhD such as networking and getting value from conferences
- Events that give PGR's more agency over how the structural elements are run. Well-being comes from feeling in control and that as an individual you are not irrelevant or a nuisance. Often made to feel like that by the university and it is the reps position to deal with it
- A variety of workshops including:
 1. Basics in Research methods – this may be a whole module for 6 months at the start of a PhD for all students to get the basics of Quantitative and Qualitative research method knowledge
 2. Beginners SPSS workshop (general NOT social science only)
 3. Beginners ATLAS.ti Workshop (general NOT social science only)
 4. Ethics application form support sessions
 5. Probation/confirmation board support sessions
 6. Access to all university run modules to attend any which may be of use to their project whether it is within their school or not
- Events at lunchtime when at work
- Vary the days different events are on to allow for greater attendance

5.1.5. What could be done to make your feel a greater part of the PGR community and culture at UoS

- Breaking the invisible assumption that all PGRs are in the social sciences and therefore that everything must be done the social science way. Things are different in other disciplines.
- We should be seen as 95% staff, as PhD students are at UEA. Therefore, we should be able to access our room 24 hours a day, be aware of research projects coming up and be made a part of the research community, have access to staff areas and have more than one room as our base. We need a suite of rooms, with a quiet study room, a common room and a kitchen. As our numbers grow this will become more

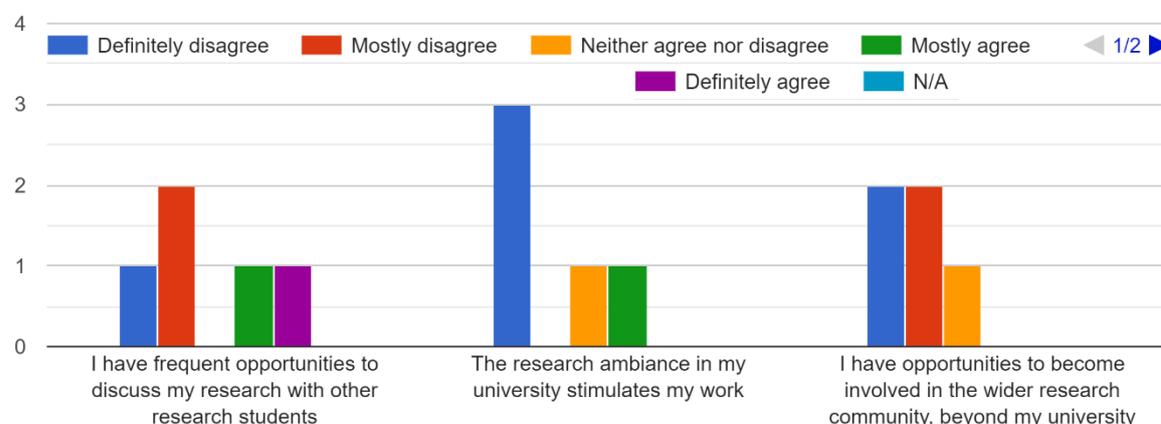
necessary. It needs to be in the Waterfront building or we need staff access to the library. Stop treating us like undergraduates and start treating us like colleagues.

- I am happy with this particular aspect of my experience to date.
- get the university to provide (or even allow) the facilities I need to do my research at the university rather than having to work from my own premises.
- We are invisible in the university. We are stuck away in a cold room at the back of the library with no contact from month to month with the rest of the community and culture at the UoS. Even as a fully time student who makes use of the facilities at least 4 times a week, I feel cut off from the rest of the uni. I don't know what you could do, it is not my responsibility to create these links - SU, chaplaincy, schools and so on need to get their acts together

5.1.6. What could be done to better support your well-being as a PGR student at UoS

- Right now I feel as if I have no actual support from the university. Everything is a fight and it is wearing me out. I only make progress when I ignore the university, but surely this is not how it is supposed to be?
- Improve communication between the university and us. Allow us access to our room 24 hours a day. Give us a tutor to oversee research, teaching and wellbeing issues and to act as our advocate.
- I cannot criticise this aspect. To date the support I have received has been first class.
- convince the university to actually do something about PGR wellbeing rather than just spouting platitudes and blaming victims
- Keep us in the loop about what is happening and why. Case in point - change to annual review. Dumped on us with no explanation, warning or consultation.

5.1.7. Opinions of PGR Research Culture at UoS



5.2.0. Activity Feedback

Below is some feedback gathered from PGR's about some of the specific events which have been run.

5.2.1. PhD Breakfast Club (PBC)

'Quite like the breakfast clubs as we get to socialise, and it is before work so fits in'

5.2.2. 'Week to Write'

'The week to write really helps me get focussed and have designated time to devote to writing – very beneficial'

5.2.3. Mindfulness Training Session

'Got to meet and know PGR students through events more now than ever'

5.2.4. UEA 'Away Day'

'Great to do things together, particularly exploring UEA campus and getting more of a feel for how things are done at a larger uni'

'Learnt lots of helpful tips'

'Refocusing thinking and approach to writing and approach to my mental health and wellbeing needs'

'Social time, time to see UEA, time to think through my mindset'

'Writing session helped me to get started'

5.2.5. PGR Seminar Series

"I just wanted to let you know how worthwhile I think these seminars are. They are interesting – covering ideas some of us had not thought about before, and useful because they introduce research methodologies from a wide range of disciplines. I guess presenters also find them useful and there has certainly been lively discussion, though I've not done my yet so can't tell from personal experience!"

5.3. Barriers to PGR Student Engagement

Some of the barrier's students have expressed as reasons for not attending activities or sessions provided are below:

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- Time. Working full time is a barrier
- Can write and work at home so when time is low it is easier for me rather than having to travel into UoS
- Don't feel as though workshops are relevant
- Distance from university
- Only available certain days of the week
- Late notice of events
- Having a family

6.0. Key Recommendations

Based on the work carried out since the start of the placement as well as the feedback gathered from PGR students over the course of the project, I have provided the key recommendations below. These recommendations are there to try ensuring that the University of Suffolk continues to support the PGR team as well as develop the research culture and community and for PGR students and support and improve PGR student wellbeing.

1. PGR Student Liaison Officer

It is a key recommendation that the University of Suffolk Graduate School continue to have a PGR student in a post which mimics the Courage Placement post. This post would be known as PGR Student Liaison Office. Over the last year, by having a student in place to focus on UoS research culture and community as well as PGR wellbeing, the PGR provision has improved, activities put on have improved the PGR experience, culture and community, and PGR wellbeing has become a key focus. It would be a severe loss to the PGR student community at UoS if they were to lose someone who is dedicated to developing the above and ensuring that student wellbeing is at the heart of and embedded in all the universities processes and plans. This post would work alongside the PGR Reps as well as the SU at the university of Suffolk as well as the University of East Anglia to ensure continuity and further development for PGR's. Appendix 3 shows the Job Role Outline for the Officer which may help to ensure the post is run appropriately.

2. PGR Activities

Activities will need to be continued throughout the year. These should be a combination of education-based activities such as the week to write, social activities such as drinks, walks and PhD Breakfast club and Wellbeing support activities such as workshops and mentor sessions. It is important to continue to develop activities to ensure that the research culture and community grows as well as supporting PGR student wellbeing. Activities which link with UEA, as well as trips to UEA are important to ensure students feel linked to other PGR's as well as their awarding university. It is imperative that the students are asked their view

on what they feel is useful, important, what they like currently and what they would like in the future to ensure that they are getting the most out of the PGR experience and so that they want to engage and can engage (working around their barriers) to ensure the culture and community grows in the most effective way. The activities put on should be additional to those provided by the University SU and should be PGR focused.

3. PGR Wellbeing Workshops

PGR wellbeing workshops should be provided throughout the year and should cover a range of student issues as well as wellbeing and mental health issues. It is again important that these are driven and developed based on the student needs and ideas. These workshops should be run within the Graduate School and the HR team at the University of Suffolk, as well as linked with the student services at the University of East Anglia. The University of Suffolk HR team need to ensure that they have PGR specific workshops to support wellbeing as the needs of this demographic are different to that of a staff or undergraduate student population. It may be useful to bring in outside support such as that from Mind to provide tailored sessions for PGR students specifically.

4. PGR Resources

Key recommendation 4 relates to PGR resources – both physical space and online/documentation support. It is recommended that, although the space within the library building for the PGR students is amazing and has come a very long way over the last year or so, as the graduate school and student numbers increase, it needs to be reviewed and a larger space needed. Numbers of students are increasing and the use of the room for both education and social events is becoming more month by month. To ensure that the PGR students can continue to build a culture and community by using the PGR space, it needs to be able to be large enough to cater and support a growing number of students. It is a recommendation that the students are regularly asked what they believe they need in terms of physical resources to ensure that their PGR student experience and study is fully supported.

Online and documentation resources include two elements of the PGR process which students have repeatedly expressed cause them anxiety and stress during their PGR studies, ethics applications and probation reviews. It is recommended that the UoS graduate school work with UEA to ensure that there are enough exemplars and supporting documentation to guide students through what is required in both their ethics applications as well as their probation reviews. It would be useful to have these resources both on the VLE as well as physically accessible within the graduate school space to have them at hand when needed. Again, it may be useful to regularly ask the PGR students whether there are other resources which would be useful and to work with UEA to ensure consistency and continuity of information.

5. Communication

The graduate school within the University of Suffolk, as well as PGR Student Liaison Officer need to ensure that they always keep communication open about all different aspects of the PGR process. This should be using the VLE, emails and regular meetings with students. It is important that communication is clear from the graduate school and Liaison officer with,

- a) PGR students
- b) Teams within the institution – such as HR, SU and Students Services
- c) Teams across institutions – with UEA, their SU, graduate school and Student Services

This is one of the key points which has been raised by the current PGR students in relation to processes such as ethics applications, progress and probation reviews and enrolment and as such a reason as to why it is a key recommendation.

6. Accessibility and Availability

The university should make sure that they recognise that there are differences between student needs for PGR's and undergraduates. Including barriers to engagement and yearly timetables, for example working all year round and not just during the 24-week academic year the undergraduates work to. Activities, support and access to PGR space should be available throughout various times – for example early morning and later at night, evenings, 'holidays' and weekends. It is important the whole university is aware of this and ensure that they work with the PGR students for the most appropriate approach.

Appendix 1 – Wellbeing and Support Services Leaflet



University
of Suffolk

PGR Wellbeing and Support Services

Wellbeing advisers

Chloe Sage – 01473 338604
c.sage@uos.ac.uk

Sarah Arch – 01473 338590
s.arch2@uos.ac.uk

The wellbeing advisers can help with a range of study and personal difficulties. The advisers will offer practical and pastoral support and can signpost to specialist services.

Mental health advisers

Danny Royce – 01473 338093
d.royce@uos.ac.uk

Cari Longhurst – 01473 338028
c.longhurst@uos.ac.uk

The mental health advisers are experienced mental health professionals who can provide brief interventions, including 1:1 sessions, groups and workshops.

UoS Counselling Services

Lindsay Markwell – 01473 338618 l.markwell@uos.ac.uk

To make an appointment to see the counsellor contact Lindsay or Student Services.

PGR one to one support

Professor Penny Cavenagh – p.cavenagh@uos.ac.uk

Penny (Chartered Psychologist, Executive Coach and experienced PhD Supervisor and Examiner) is offering additional one to one support for PGRs with a view to supporting your wellbeing during the PhD process. Penny will be available once a month in the Graduate School study space (L1.05) on a drop in basis, although should you wish to make an appointment you can email her. The sessions will be treated with complete confidentiality.

Student Services Email - studentservices@uos.ac.uk

Student Services Telephone - 01473 338833

IMPORTANT: If you have any PGR study or wellbeing concerns, and are unsure of what to do, the process to follow or feel unable to talk to student services in the first instance, please feel free to contact Jen Coe – Jennifer.coe@uos.ac.uk, 01473 338032

Appendix 2 – PGR Seminar Series 2019-2020 Schedule

Month	Date	Time	Location	Speaker	Topic
Sept	13 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Laura Messer	'The barrier to crafting a successful academic identity - other academics?'
Oct	25 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Alison Taylor	'Processes of Resilience in Mothers of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders'
Nov	29 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Jen Coe	'Impacts of Sexual Orientation and Hormones on Human Attraction Preferences'
Dec	<i>Christmas Break</i>				
Jan	31 st	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Maurice Brenner	'Obligation as an intellectual discourse in the eighteenth century'
Feb	28 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Emma Harvey	'The inclusion of technology in the early years curriculum in England'
Mar	27 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Anna Max	'Challenging development: a discussion about how the EYFS shapes practitioners conception of child development in early years education in England'
Apr	24 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Katie Tyrrell	'Why Students are not 'Digital Natives': Online Risk and Safeguarding in Higher Education'
May	29 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Jamie Parslow-Williams	<i>TBC</i>
June	26 th	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Andy Wright	<i>TBC</i>
Jul	31 st	13:00-14:00	L1.05	Frank Carver	<i>TBC</i>
Aug	<i>Summer Break</i>				

Appendix 2 – Job Role Outline

UNIVERSITY OF SUFFOLK JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE	PGR Student Liaison Officer
DEPARTMENT	Graduate School
LOCATION	Ipswich Campus
REPORTS TO	Research Development Manager

CONTEXT

In 2015/16, UEA (su) conducted research to assess the impact of poor mental health on PGR students at the UEA, dubbed The Honesty Project. 162 postgraduates responded to an anonymous survey distributed via email and social media. The research found that:

- 77% of respondents had suffered stress whilst studying
- Some 76% of respondents had suffered with anxiety whilst studying
- 58% stated that they had been depressed whilst studying
- 52% reported that they had sleeping problems whilst studying
- 45% experienced isolation and loneliness whilst studying
- Only 6% of respondents reported that they had no experience of mental health issues whilst studying

These results seem to correlate to findings on mental health in universities more generally, with many articles and studies in recent years working to draw attention to the negative effect that the current academic climate has on PhD students and academics. From this research and the need to increase wellbeing, culture and community amongst PGR's, the Courage project was born.

The Courage Project splits into eight 'strands', each headed up by different teams. Three key areas are what this role focuses on are:

- Building research community culture across UEA's four Faculties, Norwich Bioscience Institutes and the University of Suffolk.
- Resilience and wellbeing training for PGRs
- 'low commitment' sports and fitness activity, including exercise and walk groups to support health and build community among staff and PGRs as well as academic and social activities to foster community and wellbeing among PGRs.

From the Courage project, this role seemed to be most useful and effective in supporting wellbeing and fostering a PGR culture and community and is therefore something, which is being modelled and recruited for across schools for both UEA and UoS.

JOB PURPOSE

The role holder will be the main link between the PGR students and the Graduate School team at both UoS and UEA.

The role holder will create, develop and maintain a number of academic and social events throughout the year to foster a culture and community among PGRs as well as events, which support and improve wellbeing. They will also need to be the voice for the students when there is a need for additional resources to support study.

The role holder will be the first point of call for any issues the PGRs students are facing within their study and liaise with the relevant person (s) to support students with these issues within UoS and externally to UEA where appropriate.

The role holder will, where appropriate, apply for grants and bids to try to improve the facilities, space and resources for the PGRs.

The role holder will be part of the PGR course committees held three times a year to ensure that they stay in touch with the student and the academic side of the research process.

The role holder will be in charge of a small budget, which they can use for role related events, they must keep track of this and ensure that it is spent appropriately.

In addition to the above, undertake such duties as may reasonably be requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Key working relationships/networks	
Internal	External
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Head of Research• Graduate School Staff• Deans of Schools• PGR Supervisors• Technical and learning support staff• Students Union• Students Support• HR• PGR Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant UEA academic and professional groups• UEA SU• UEA Students Support• UEA PGR Students

**UNIVERSITY OF SUFFOLK
PERSON SPECIFICATION**

JOB TITLE	PGR Student Liaison Officer
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Selection Criteria	Essential (E) or Desirable (D)
Qualifications:	
Enrolled at UoS on either a FT or PT PhD	E
Passed the first probation review board	E
Not yet submitted the initial version of the thesis	E
Experience:	
Worked with a group of people	D
Involved in research projects	D
Worked with the UoS Graduate School already	D
Created, developed and maintained academic, social and wellbeing events or activities	D
Knowledge and appreciation of mental health and mental wellbeing among PGRs	E
Skills and Knowledge:	
Ability to collect and analyse qualitative OR/AND quantitative data	E
Appropriate IT skills	E
Good written & verbal communication skills	E
Budgeting skills	E
Understanding of UoS research processes	D
Competencies and Personal Attributes:	
Enthusiastic and flexible approach to work	E
Effective team worker	E
Able to work confidentially	E
Student orientated approach to work	E
Professional and courteous manner	E
Proactive and able to demonstrate initiative	E
Ability to listen to and respond to criticism	E
Ability to multi task and to be able to provide support on a number of personal and academic issues	E
Ability to work with and across both UoS and UEA	E

Essential Requirements are those, without which, a candidate would not be able to do the job. **Desirable Requirements** are those which would be useful for the post holder to possess and will be considered when more than one applicant meets the essential requirements.