

Building a Research Community: Student and Staff Views

Focus On:
The Postgraduate Research Student

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Introduction

This work is part of QAA Scotland's [Focus On](#)¹ activity, which covers topics that occur frequently in Enhancement-led Institutional Review outcomes.

The [Focus On: The Postgraduate Research Student \(PGR\) Student Experience](#)² project identified four main strands for examination:

- training and support for postgraduate students who teach
- support for staff who supervise research students
- building a research community for postgraduate research students
- student representation for postgraduate research students.

This document considers the research community strand.

The project team

University of Glasgow:

Jennifer Boyle, PGR Writing Adviser
Elizabeth Adams, Researcher Development Manager
Mary-Beth Kneafsey, PGR Strategy Manager

QAA Scotland:

Dr Alison Eales, Quality Enhancement Specialist
Debra Macfarlane, Quality Enhancement Manager

The work undertaken

We conducted telephone interviews and focus groups with staff and postgraduate researchers from across a range of institutions in order to address the following questions.

- Is there a *consensus* around what constitutes a 'research community'? Do students and staff from different countries have different views?
- What does a *successful* research community look like? Does it have 'core' characteristics that postgraduate researchers are likely to expect?
- What is the *purpose* of a research community? Is its primary function the promotion of student success, the enhancement of research quality, raising an institution's profile, some combination of these, or something else?
- Where do/should the *boundaries* of the research community lie? How does a successful research community integrate with the world outside of academe, and how does this affect the student experience?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of a more centralised research community (institutional), as opposed to a more localised one (school, faculty, college)?

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on

² [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/focus-on/the-postgraduate-research-\(pgr\)-student-experience](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/focus-on/the-postgraduate-research-(pgr)-student-experience)

- What are the benefits and drawbacks of using virtual, rather than physical, spaces to develop the research community?

Consultation process

All focus groups, and all telephone and in-person interviews, were carried out between February and April 2017. Interviews and focus groups were conducted by the Researcher Development Manager, PGR Strategy Manager and PGR Writing Adviser from the University of Glasgow.

We also interviewed 10 members of staff: six from Scottish institutions or organisations (such as research pools), one from rUK, one from the USA, one from Sweden and one from Chile.

The following institutions and organisations took part in the project:

- Abertay University
- Liverpool John Moores University
- Robert Gordon University (RGU)
- Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH)
- Scottish Universities Physics Alliance (SUPA)
- Columbia University, New York
- University of Warwick
- University of Lund (interview carried out over email)
- University of St Andrews, Doctoral Training Centre
- Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.

Our rationale for selection was to obtain as wide a range of views on building a research community as was possible within the parameters of the project. As such, we aimed for a diverse group in terms of age of institution, nationality and research focus. Those interviewed included staff from ancient universities (St Andrews) to new (post-1960 and post-1992: Abertay, Liverpool John Moores). UK institutions were selected from both Scotland and England. European and international institutions are also represented through the contributions of the University of Lund, the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and Colombia University.

Cross-institution organisations such as the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities and the Scottish University Physical Alliance offer an inter-university, subject-focused view on the topic.

Before staff interviews, we circulated the questions in the original project brief to give interviewees the opportunity to reflect on the research community in their own institution ahead of the interview taking place. In the interview itself, we used open-ended questions to draw out interviewee experiences and allow them to lead discussion, for example:

- What works for you?
- What hasn't worked?
- What would you do differently?
- What are your plans for the future?

This allowed the discussion to develop as guided by interviewee responses, but also to remain relevant to the central topic.

Input on the topic was also invited from postgraduate researchers at the University of Glasgow. A mass email was sent to PGR students, informing them of the opportunity to participate in focus groups or telephone interviews. There was an enthusiastic response to this email (over 100 replies), highlighting the relevance of the topic to research students, and their eagerness to have a participatory role in the creation of such a community, as opposed to acting as passive recipients. Our rationale for selection was to obtain a diverse group in terms of subject, background, situation and location.

Eighteen PGR students offered to participate in telephone interviews. Eleven of these interviews were carried out. Five focus groups were held, with approximately eight students per group. They were structured as follows.

- Approximately 5-10 minutes of paired discussion on when PGR students felt part of a community/the best experience they've had within a community.
- Feedback to the wider group.
- Approximately 10 minutes of small group activity, drawing a map or chart of the PhD, detailing at which points PGR students might want a community, what types of community they might want, and what that community would look like. Disciplinary? Based in a building? Online? Based on personal circumstance or hobby?
- Large group discussion around the following questions:
 - 1 What have you seen work well that institutions can do (here or at a previous institution) to create or support a community?
 - 2 What have you seen that hasn't worked? Are there things that didn't meet your expectations?
 - 3 What advice would you give to universities who are interested in supporting a PGR community?

Telephone interviews with PGR students took a similar approach to those conducted with staff, taking the form of an unstructured interview that utilised open-ended questions in order to allow the interviewee to lead discussion. The questions used were as follows.

- What is a research community?
- Do you feel part of one?
- What is 'your' community?
- What does your community mean to you?
- What does it do?
- What's great?
- What's missing?
- What would an ideal research community look like?
- How would an institution build this ideal research community?

The six themes in this document are those which appeared consistently and prominently in these interviews and focus groups as key in the creation of a research community:

- 1 Supervisors
- 2 Physical space

- 3 Building academic identity for PGR students
- 4 Centralised communities
- 5 Online communities
- 6 PGR student engagement and representation.

Institutions seeking to create a research community, or to improve their existing research community, can consider the themes in relation to their own situation, and reflect on opportunities for development.

In parallel to this work, we looked at the policies and practices that institutions have put in place to develop community for their researchers.³ This work is intended to help other institutions interested in developing or enhancing their own practice by providing examples and links to the practice of others seeking to do the same, by considering in detail how institutions have recognised and engaged with the seven themes in their own unique contexts.

In our consultation with staff and students, we found that there was no definitive image of the research community. Expectations are shaped by context and experience. Staff and students from different institutions, subject areas and backgrounds all had a different idea of the research community, and their thoughts on how successful it was, what it should do, and how included they felt were complex and nuanced.

This document draws out the main points that emerged from our consultation, and examines what these mean for staff, what they mean for PGR students, and to what extent there is a consensus. It will also make reference to wider literature and policy where appropriate.

For ease of use, similar headings have been adopted in both documents, in the same order where applicable, to enable the reader to refer easily to *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice* for examples of good practice in engaging with these issues.

We will conclude each section by offering a list of broad questions that institutions can consider when building/assessing their own research community. These are brought together in more detail in *Building a Research Community - Key Issues for Discussion*, intended to help institutions to facilitate discussion about their own practice in some of the key areas.

1 Supervisors

The vital role played by supervisors in the creation, functioning and maintenance of the research community was raised by both staff and students.

Mackinnon's work on conceptualising academic supervision comments that: 'good quality supervision creates the right conditions for the creation of good quality scholarship and scholars'.⁴ The importance of the supervisory role was raised repeatedly across all interviews. The need to get supervisors 'on board' with the rationale of creating an integrated community of PhD students, and to 'win hearts and minds' was repeatedly raised by staff across all institutions; one interviewee grouped supervisors into two categories: 'believers' and 'non-believers'. All interviewees talked about the importance of establishing common

³ See *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice*

⁴ www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0309877042000298876

standards (frequency of meetings, depth of feedback offered), of transparency in working practices and of establishing good practice. They also flagged the importance of ensuring that supervisors were aware of the changing landscape for PGR students, as opposed to simply offering advice based on their own experience.

Furthermore, our interviews with students suggest that supervisors play a crucial role in terms of whether they feel part of the research community. Students identified supervisors as the people who flagged up important opportunities, and essentially encouraged them to integrate with the research community (both departmental and further afield). They were described, in this context, as 'the first port of call', and 'how I peer out at the wider community'.

For students on fieldwork, supervisors act as a vital link to the community at their home institution. Two of the distance students interviewed stated that their supervisors *were* their research community. When another distance student's supervisor left the institution with no warning, she was completely panicked, and was left feeling isolated and 'out of the loop'. Breakdowns or problems in the student-supervisor relationship can leave students feeling vulnerable and uncertain, especially in terms of where to turn for support or how to replace that vital link. This issue is cited often as a key cause of stress and illness for students.

An example of best practice was offered by one PGR student via telephone interview. English Language at the University of Glasgow encourages a shared staff/student culture from postgraduate taught level and beyond, offering multiple opportunities (visiting speakers, conferences, seminars) for staff and PGR students to work together, share information and socialise. Enthusiastic staff involvement in student-led activities was noted by an interviewee - 'they're really good about coming along' - as something that makes PGR students feel that they are seen as fellow researchers and a genuine part of the community. One interviewee also mentioned how talking to senior staff (not just her supervisor) helped to give her an idea of where she could go with her career, encouraging her to see herself as having a future in the research community beyond her current role of PGR student.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions:

- What training is available to supervisors?
- Does this training emphasise the importance of their role to the PGR student's understanding/experience of the academic community?
- Are supervisors aware of the diversity and varying needs of the PGR student population?
- How do supervisors perceive the academic community and their role within it?
- Do supervisors have the space and time to be as engaged in this role as institutions would want?
- Are there networks in place for supervisors to receive support and developmental advice from peers on how to manage their role?⁵

⁵ For a discussion on supervisor wellbeing and identity, see Gina Wisker, Gillian Robinson (2016) 'Supervisor wellbeing and identity: challenges and strategies', *International Journal for Researcher Development*, Vol. 7 Issue: 2, pp.123-140 www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/IJRD-03-2016-0006

2 Physical space

Space is highly important as a means of forming networks and validating identity. It can also act as a mechanism for normalising behaviour and working practices - for example, sharing expectations of the supervisory relationship, talking about work/life balance, discussing publication aims and career plans. Dedicated PGR student space, often shared with staff, seemed to be the ideal from the perspective of both PGR students and staff interviewed. Those who are not on campus (for a variety of reasons, such as long-term, distance PGR students, or conducting field research) can feel the lack of a sense of community, and often seek it in online spaces, such as Twitter, which has a large and very active community of academics, or on Facebook groups.

Space on campus is hugely beneficial for PGR students. Shared office space, social spaces, interdisciplinary spaces and library spaces - all have their advantages. Shared office space with subject areas often gives PGR students the opportunity to take part in informal peer review activities, reading over drafts of work, or listening to practice runs of conference presentations. One interviewee expressed disappointment that his working hours rarely coincided with those of his office mates, stating that it was a 'missed opportunity' to create links, which is an indication of its perceived importance.

PGR student interviewees expressed frustration when attempts to form research and/or social groups were stymied due to difficulties in obtaining space on campus. This also led to them feeling less valued by the institution. One staff interviewee highlighted the importance of this practical issue in terms of building community by commenting that it's 'not about creating the community, but about creating the space for communities'.

Staff and PGR student interviewees from the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities (SGSAH) observed that early engagement for students (for example, induction events) and face-to-face meetings at other events and training courses 'sow the seeds' for the later interactions and collaborations that can take place virtually. The importance of initial face-to-face interaction was also echoed by Warwick.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions:

- Is there variation in the spaces available to PGR students on campus? An office per PGR student might not be plausible, but are there hot desks available? Is there library space specifically set aside for PGR students? Bookable study spaces?
- Could shared space be used to do more than simply provide space? Could it also act as a means of sharing information and forming networks?
- Are other practical matters taken into consideration? For example, 24/7 access to buildings, and access to kitchen facilities?
- Even when a 'successful' space has been created (one which fosters integration into the community), consideration needs to be given to PGR students who may not be able to be in that space (if they have not been offered a desk, if they are part-time, if there are accessibility or health issues which mean they are not on campus regularly). How can the advantages offered by such a physical space be expanded?

3 Building academic identity for PGR students

We asked interviewees and focus groups what the phrase 'research community' meant to them, what a research community did, and who was included. Interestingly, staff and PGR students offered somewhat contrasting views on this.

Who makes up the research community?

The members of staff we interviewed tended to refer to their entire PGR student population and staff as 'the research community', making particular mention of smaller subject or project-focused groups within this community. A key aim for institutions is ensuring that PGR students feel part of a community *with* staff. To this end, shared staff/PGR space is seen as an ideal, when practical. However, this is dependent on the size of the institution. Physical graduate schools that bring PGR students together can also offer their own advantages. More generally, inter and multidisciplinary teams were cited as a demonstration of the research community 'in practice'.

PGR students also felt that the research community comprised both staff and PGR students (or ought to) but tended to have a much more departmental focus in their view of this. Even when they expressed an interest in other PGR students' research, and other seminars that they might be able to attend, they talked about this in terms of interdepartmental communication, which suggests that departmental identity is foremost in their mind when they define themselves.

As such, if they did not feel part of a research community within their department, then they tended not to feel part of a research community overall. For example, one researcher who was not given office space within her department felt that she was unable to form ties with peers and staff, and that she missed out on news and opportunities. Not having working space within her department has led to working at home, which makes her feel 'cut off' from any kind of community. This leads some to seek alternatives (online communities, generic training workshops), but leaves others isolated. It is important to note here that this is an example of how a research community might well exist, but an individual researcher still might themselves be excluded from it.

Multiple academic identities

Another group that can experience difficulties in this respect is those working across different subject areas, or who have perhaps moved from one subject into another. For example, biomedical researchers might not feel that they 'fit' into the biology community, or alongside other engineers. This underlines the centrality of individual perception to the research community. Both of these individual subject areas could have vibrant research communities, but if the researcher does not perceive themselves as belonging to either, they might still feel that they are not part of the community.⁶

⁶ To see an example of how a community might be created to address this issue, bringing together researchers with a common experience, if not a common topic, see *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice*, p.8.

Teaching as a means of building an academic identity

(This theme has also been examined at length in the 'Postgraduates Who Teach' strand of this project).

PGR students specifically mentioned teaching responsibilities as something that made them feel that they 'had moved up the ladder', blurring the line between themselves and staff - 'working shoulder to shoulder' - moving them out of the role of 'student' and embedding them in the research community. One distance PGR student also commented that teaching meetings with other PGR students were specific instances where he felt like part of a PGR community (this was not the case for him generally speaking). Furthermore, teaching responsibilities were raised repeatedly as an important career development opportunity, and a valuable source of financial support.

As such, the opportunity to teach should be viewed as an essential rite of passage in terms of making an effective transition into the role of PGR student and fully occupying a place in the research community.⁷

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions:

- Even if a space has been created for multidisciplinary work, do PGR students *identify* with it? Is it fulfilling its purpose?

The University of Warwick found that its attempt to forge this type of community revealed larger shared issues to do with researcher wellbeing and resulted in the creation of a broader pastoral community that is more meaningful to shared researcher identity and support. As discussed, this type of research community is especially important for researchers who do not, for any number of reasons, feel embedded within their departments.⁸

- Are teaching opportunities made available to all PGR students evenly and fairly? How are teaching opportunities advertised? Is the process transparent?

One focus group attendee commented that she had needed teaching as a means of financial support, but that these opportunities were not widely advertised, and very difficult to find out about. This left her feeling uncomfortable. Furthermore, there was a perception that being offered these teaching opportunities signalled approval from, and acceptance into, the research community within the department. As such, those researchers who are not offered the opportunity to teach feel excluded.

- Are there opportunities for staff and PGR students to interact outside supervisory meetings? Is there a regular seminar series? Are staff open to involvement in student-led activities?

One interviewee specifically stated that staff willingness to give talks at student-led seminar series, attend reading groups, and participate in internal conferences reinforced both the

⁷ For an example of how institutions can embed this ideal in their community via their code of practice, see *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice*, p.9.

⁸ To see how different institutions have attempted to tackle this issue at a policy level, refer to *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice*, p.5.

feeling of a shared community and her identity as a researcher within it. Staff response to student initiatives, whether in terms of practical matters like booking a room, or in validating ideas and providing feedback, seems to have a great impact on researcher self-perception.

4 Centralised communities

When research community was discussed in staff interviews, responses often focused heavily on the merits of interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary teams, stating that bringing PGR students together through shared interest groups and focused events was an effective means of building a community across subject/discipline boundaries.

However, it was also noted that bringing PGR students together to foster collaboration can reveal common shared issues, and the subsequent need for a focus on researcher wellbeing. This was the experience at the University of Warwick where, although the initial aim was to promote interdisciplinary research, this has since created a community for researchers with a strong focus on wellbeing, with contact 'outside the research group', to enable the creation of a wider network which itself acts as a source of pastoral support.

While staff focus tended to be on formalised, interdisciplinary collaboration, PGR students more frequently expressed an interest in the opportunity to attend seminars and training sessions outside their own subject area on an informal basis. They also noted that they can often experience difficulties in finding out about these, and sometimes were unsure whether they were 'allowed' to attend talks and events outside their own subject area.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions:

- Do PGR students have the means to find out about training and seminars outside their own subject areas?
- Would it be possible to encourage and enable the creation of cross-subject PGR student-led reading groups, weekly seminars, conferences, etc?
- Is there visible, easily accessed support for practical matters, such as how to set up a researcher-led group, obtain funding, or locate suitable meeting places?

5 Online communities

The online community can be understood in two slightly different contexts. One is the wider international online research community, which may - but does not necessarily - include the home institution itself. The other is online resources specifically created by the home institution.

Online resources were raised repeatedly in interviews and focus groups, perhaps most frequently by those PGR students who were off-campus for a variety of reasons: distance PGR, part-time, fieldwork. These PGR students either stated that they had found community online, most often via Twitter - which has a very active community of academics - or that they felt a lack of community due to being off-campus, and would like online resources to act as a link to the institution or a substitute. Students working away from their home institution, for example on fieldwork, missed a link back to their home community, a way to ask questions or to find or share experiences with other researchers in similar locations.

The online PGR community, whether its role is to augment (or act as) the research community, can play a vital role in making PGR students feel integrated and included.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions.

- 1 Are departments and services active on Twitter, which has a large and active community of researchers, and dedicated hashtags for PhD discussion? This could be encouraged by explaining the benefits in terms of improved communication with PGR students, better publicised events, and a more visible profile.
- 2 Are PGR students using Twitter? New PGR students could be encouraged to obtain a Twitter account and follow relevant internal departments and services. They should also be offered advice on how to use Twitter for academic networking, how to create a professional online presence, and how Twitter can be used to enhance their research profile. Examples could also be offered of immediate practical benefits. For example, one interviewee commented on how her first conference was much less stressful, and therefore much more beneficial, because she was already familiar with many of the audience members via Twitter. This made the conference seem more accessible and facilitated discussion.
- 3 Are PGR students engaging with the wider research community via social media?

New PGR students could be advised to follow a small number of Twitter accounts that:

- are related to their subject/project, as a way of creating external connections and building a research profile
- are related to the PhD process in general (writing advice, stress management, general discussion about higher education in the UK). These might also relate more specifically to the PGR student's own situation, for example, part-time PGR students, PGR students looking for career paths outside academia, PGR students with families or caring responsibilities, or PGR students dealing with chronic physical and/or mental illness.

In terms of online resources created by the home institution, distance PGR students expressed confusion and frustration as to why some training opportunities, which would seem to be well suited to online provision, were only available on-campus. This frustration can be exacerbated if the timing of training sessions requires repeated visits to campus (which can be expensive and difficult to schedule) when it could instead feasibly be delivered over one or two days.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions.

- Is an online alternative to on-campus training opportunities possible? Is it feasible to make it available?

International and EU PGR students at Glasgow also expressed a desire for pre-entry online resources provided by the institution. Difficulties in matters such as opening a bank account or locating a GP, or simply getting used to the area, can act as a stumbling block to integration. For example, PGR students might miss induction because they're still finding somewhere to live, and this could ultimately take up time that could be spent settling into project teams/departments. As such, this can have a knock-on effect in how 'at home' they

feel within the research community. A resource created in close consultation with current PGR students would address this issue.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions.

- Could a specific online resource geared towards international and EU PGR students be created and made available before arrival?

This could include material such as: video tours of key buildings on campus; the campus as a whole and the surrounding area; a student-created FAQs or an 'Ask a Student' facility. The University of Glasgow's Researcher Development blog⁹ covers a wide variety of topics which, as well as being of use to current PGR students, also help to prepare prospective and recently started PGR students for their new studies and environment: useful training opportunities; advice on how to complete the Annual Progress Review; and places to visit around the city.

In terms of ensuring the success of online communities, both staff and PGR students flagged initial face-to-face contact as a good way of ensuring that online networks flourished. Induction events would seem to be an effective way to make initial connections which could then be further developed online.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions.

- Could information sessions about online communities (either external, such as Twitter, or internal) be made part of induction events in order for participants to initially meet face to face?

One PGR student interviewee noted that SGSAAH made a particular effort to build community by making initial introductions, and cited the initial SGSAAH meeting in Edinburgh for all new PGR students (no matter their specific subject area) as a good way to '**sow the seeds**', which could be emulated by other institutions. Sometimes, groups are student-led, and form outside the control of the institution (although the institution might provide the initial space for contact).

For example, at the University of Glasgow, one group of PGR students formed their own WhatsApp group after participating in group activities in a training workshop.

6 PGR student engagement and representation

Flexibility in terms of levels of engagement is a key issue, which was raised by both staff and PGR students. Staff talked about how levels of engagement among PGR students are likely to vary, particularly when in terms of desire/willingness to participate in social events. They also noted that this can be dependent on need/stage. For example, a final-year PGR student who is largely focused on writing up is perhaps unlikely to want to engage in as many training sessions or social events as a new PGR student who is seeking to integrate and gain key skills.

PGR student interviews also underlined the importance of individual preferences in terms of engagement in the community. While some feel validated in their identity as researchers through heavy involvement in community activities, others do not use the community to meet

⁹ <http://researcherdevelopment.academicblogs.co.uk/>

this particular need and participate more on a practical basis. Still others prefer online community, or simply less contact. Expectations that all PGR students can/should engage can sometimes inadvertently create pressure, with the implication that non-involvement would be noticed.¹⁰ One interviewee mentioned that she worried that not attending events might make her look 'invisible', perhaps suggesting that PGR students feel that there is an 'ideal' PGR student they should strive to emulate.

Although some institutions mentioned working with a student body, there was a consensus that this remained a challenge, due to the perception from PGR students that these groups were 'for undergraduates'. Alternative models are still being explored. Some institutions, such as the University of Melbourne, have graduate student associations.

We would ask institutions to consider the following questions:

- Could giving researchers a voice via regular consultation (such as interviews and/or focus groups) be an effective way to get a sense of what PGR students need/want at specific points during the PhD?
- Are PGR students represented by the student council? Are there opportunities for involvement - for example, PGR representatives for specific subject areas or groups?
- Is the level of involvement that would make staff perceive a PGR student as 'engaged' possible and/or desirable for everyone? Does it take into consideration other commitments - family and/or financial? Are social events accessible to everyone? Do staff have an image of the 'ideal' PGR student? How attainable is this image?

¹⁰ See Boud and Lee, 'Peer Learning as a Pedagogic Discourse for Research Education' for a discussion of the tension between the individualised researcher vs the researcher as part of a larger community - *Studies in Higher Education* Vol. 30, No. 5, October 2005, pp. 501-516.

Concluding observations

There are no simple answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this document. As in *Building a Research Community - Examples of Policy and Practice*, the discussion of the research community is characterised by the diversity of views expressed, and the variety of different roles it can perform. Student interviewees and focus group participants often prefaced comments with 'for me' and stated that what worked for one person may not work for another, and that personal needs and stage of study were likely to play a significant role in what the researcher wanted from the community.

For example, part-time and distance researchers, as opposed to seeing themselves as somehow 'excluded' from some hypothetical 'ideal' research community experience of full-time, campus-based students, instead talked about their own unique experience of the research community, shaped by their circumstances. Their expectations were based on their own experience, as opposed to an imagined ideal.

Those researchers who *did* express unhappiness over their experience of the research community were those whose expectations were not met. Their department might have an active research community, but if they did not feel like full participants (lack of office space, no teaching responsibilities, poor supervisory relationship, problems attending seminars or social events) - then they felt excluded. Equally, if they could see that other departments had active research communities, but that their own was stagnant or unwelcoming in comparison, then they felt discontented.

While institutions can create a favourable environment for a research community, they cannot wholly control how a researcher experiences it. However, taking the diversity of the PGR community and its needs into consideration is crucial for institutions who seek to make that environment as open as possible. Encouraging activity at all levels (institution-wide, graduate school, subject area, student-led), of all types (training, pastoral support, special interests) will help to ensure the existence of multi-faceted research communities, with various sub-communities, to meet postgraduate researchers' varied and changing needs throughout their PhD experience.

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18 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6NU
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 0141 572 3420
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk