General guidance

Section one: goals of postgraduate research training

1 What should be the goals for contemporary postgraduate research training?

Please provide details on what you think goals for contemporary postgraduate research training should be:

To continue to support the obtainment of a doctoral qualification, which allows individuals to conduct independent, original and significant research in a specific field or subject, which makes an original contribution to knowledge, and can be utilised for the benefits of societal gain and subject interest.

The sector should do this within a supportive, cohesive environment to develop the next generation of researchers across all disciplines. PGR candidates should be given all opportunities to advance and prepare themselves for a wide range of career paths, not just within academia. The PGR qualification, wherever obtained and via whatever model and format, should be seen as a societal marker of excellence, which 'singles-out' highly employable individuals who are sought after to lead teams and projects across all sectors. As a sector, we need to consider how barriers can be removed to enable more fluid career paths for doctoral graduates within and across organisations. Working with organisations outside of academia will be key to achieving this.

University Alliance welcomes the opportunity to respond to the New Deal for PGR consultation. Our response draws on perspectives of our current members (noted below) as well as gathered experiences of students and members of staff who are part of the UA coordinated Doctoral Training Alliance (DTA) structured training programme (more details under question 3).

University Alliance (UA) is the voice of professional and technical universities. Our members are Anglia Ruskin University; Birmingham City University; University of Brighton; Coventry University; University of Derby; University of Greenwich; University of Hertfordshire; Kingston University; Leeds Beckett University; Middlesex University, Oxford Brookes University; Robert Gordon University; University of South Wales; Teesside University; and University of the West of England, Bristol.

Alliance universities are well placed to contribute towards these aims goals and those of the New Deal due to their:
- applied research focus
- diverse cohorts of candidates
- diversity of qualifications offered
- business-facing nature of institutions
- community-based nature of institutions
- collaborative structured doctoral training programme (DTA) as an example of best practice

Section two: Areas of focus

Models and access

2 Are there any additional areas that we should explore under models and access? Please state why.

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

We are supportive of the main areas outlined under models and access, and have outlined the main challenges and priorities for these areas under question 3 below.

3 What challenges should we prioritise under models and access?

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

The importance of developing cohorts of PGRs, which support individual experiences especially mental health during PhDs, must not be underestimated as ways of increasing access to PGR study and maintaining student numbers. Bringing individuals together within cohort formats provides individuals with an inclusive environment to learn and grow as researchers.

Different types of cohorts require and provide different kinds of support, and therefore different funding models. The most common cohorts tend to focus around disciplines and year of entry and progression stage. However, in more recent years, perhaps due to the pooling of UKRI doctoral training funding through consortia DTPs, cohort models also include cross- institutional and cross-disciplinary models and those that collaborate with sectors outside of academia. For Alliance universities and similar institutions, being able to have access to cross-institutional cohort models is essential to developing critical mass. As UKRI has demonstrated through its DTP/CDT structures, funding is essential to the development and successful delivery of cohort-based training programmes, but there are other models that are working effectively which UKRI may benefit from reviewing in more detail.

UA Doctoral Training Alliance https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/dta/ – is an example of a model which supports PGRs outside UKRI funded routes and demonstrates a way to support the expansion of cohort diversity, the consolidation of institutional funding and sector resource sharing.

The DTA is a structured PhD training programme that has been running since 2015 and has included 23 different UK Alliance members and partner universities (majority of which are post-92 universities) and supported 253 PGRs, across the years, making it one of the largest nationwide doctoral training consortia of university entities. Established in 2015 in response to the over-concentration of (mainly UKRI) postgraduate funding, it builds on members' applied research strengths, industry focus, and collaborative ethos, and was a means to show that Alliance universities and similar institutions are capable of successfully leading consortia and developing research talent. Something that the European Commission has recognised through its successful allocation of €6.5 million from the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie PhD Fellowship programme in 2018 to our DTA3 programme https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/dta/cofund/

The DTA sits outside of the standard UKRI-funded DTPs and is funded through a mix of participating universities internal funds and collaborations, as well as the H2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND grant. It provides a simple structure that partners can opt-into to enhance the training and development support for their doctoral researchers. Drawing on best practice from across the network and tailoring provision where appropriate to meet the needs of its partners and researchers.

The aim was, and still is, to develop critical mass and share resources across a network of similar institutions to support doctoral researchers, who may be working in smaller research groups, via a cohort-based training programme. DTA participating partners have equal status within the consortia – there is no single lead institution, however, each programme does have an academic leadership team which is drawn from across the network; giving opportunities for members of staff to take on leadership roles outside of their institutions. Coordination is provided by a dedicated team (2.8 FTE) of professional staff based within the central UA Team, which works across all partners, providing an independent overview for the structure.

This initiative has helped the institutions involved secure resources for studentship funding and activity support for PGRs, however, there is an issue of sustainability and whether these types of internally funded structures can continue in light of reduced budgets, funding allocations and higher demands on other areas of higher education. As noted above, the creation of the DTA was, in part, to prove to the UK funders that investing in universities outside of the more traditional research intensive institutions was a risk worth taking, that excellence could be found outside of the 'usual suspects' and the support provided was innovative and effective. Although there have been positive developments in recent years, in terms of expanding the number of universities participating in UKRI DTPs and encouraging research intensive institutions to work with their regional counterparts, in reality, Alliance universities and similar institutions are not accessing the funds available on an equal footing, as highlighted by UKCGE Structures and Strategy in Doctoral Education in the UK and Ireland report. Further work on creating a more equal distribution of funding to support UKRI's statement/aim to 'fund excellence wherever found' needs to be undertaken. Alliance members are keen to contribute towards ways in which this can be achieved, and feel that the DTA model can be used as an example of best practice in terms of equality and inclusivity.

The DTA model is a good example of how cohort based training can work across large numbers of institutions across the country. Currently the DTA covers similar types of institutions, however, it is a model that could work equally well across institutional types enabling two-way learning and collaborations for the benefits of all types of institutions.

In addition to financial support, DTA researchers benefit from an inclusive and collaborative support community, enhanced training programmes co-designed with employers and access to expertise and facilities from across the network; all of which helps equip students with the skills they need to navigate the evolving landscape of PhD employability. This kinds of structure also contributes to supporting positive mental health and wellbeing of the researchers. Funding through the Office for Students and Research England catalyst fund: supporting mental health and wellbeing for postgraduate research students has helped the sector develop key interventions to support the wellbeing of the PGR community. One funded project led by the University of Derby, https://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/ working in collaboration with King's College London and Student Minds shows once again how important cross-institutional collaborations are and how the funders need to encourage this type of work further.

Supervisory teams can provide a more inclusive research environment for PGRs and supervisors. By sharing the responsibility of supervision within a collaborative team, which is often made up of experts across disciplines, PGRs can be supported by a group of individuals covering all roles expected of a supervisor. As workloads and responsibilities increase, working in teams provides a means of resource sharing and peer support for staff that may not be so readily available with the more traditional model of the individual supervisor.

When developing the support structures for the DTA3/COFUND model, partners collectively agreed to assign supervisory teams, of at least two research-active members of staff, to each of the advertised research projects. Each supervisory team was also required to include an Early Career Researcher (ECR), defined as having obtained their PhD within 5 years of the start of the research project, which has provided a training and development opportunity for newer academic staff across the network. This in turn has increased the diversity of the supervision pool, providing PGRs with role models that are more diverse in terms of backgrounds, experience and disciplines. This structure continues to be adopted as part of the fourth DTA programme (Future Societies) established in 2021. A number of Alliance universities also use the team supervision model as standard practice across all their PGRs.

Being part of a structured doctoral training programme, also provides supervisors with wider networks and support to draw on. The national DTA programme, gives academics access to c600 active supervisors across the country, which opens up opportunities for external supervision, external examination roles, critical friends and collaborative partners.

We feel that it is important to acknowledge the benefits, for supervisors, supervisees and institutions, of establishing networked supervisory teams that generate collaborative 'learning alliances', which demonstrate a shift away from the traditional one-to-one student-supervisor relationship.

All Alliance universities offer Professional Doctorate programmes. Collectively 63 individual programmes covering 24 different professional doctoral qualifications are offered. The disciplines range from health to business, to education and the creative arts and social sciences. All programmes, with the exception of two, are offered as part-time, with c30% offered as either full or part-time. Across the membership, enrolments on professional doctorates range between 15-30% of an institutions' PGR student body. By offering and marketing these to the professional market, they attract a diverse cohort of PGR candidates to their institutions, giving access to those who may not have considered a doctorate as an option for them, therefore contributing to the diversity of the student body. They provide access into parts of society through the professional occupations that may not usually consider doctorates e.g. business and creative leaders; raising the age range of candidates which in turn provides other PGRs with peer-to-peer access to those with professional

and more life-experience. All of which contributes to the wellbeing of the student body. As the HESA data does not distinguish the different type of doctorate degree programmes within the PGR data collected it is hard to benchmark and identify the exact number of candidates engaged through these programmes to establish their impact on widening access. Having a better understanding of the number of people registered on Professional Doctorates and their protected characteristics would provide valuable insight into their impact on access.

As noted in the consultation documentation, the New Deal will be reviewing responses to the UKRI EDI Strategy consultation, to which University Alliance submitted a response highlighting key areas for consideration and specific reference to PGR. A copy of this summary response can be provided if it is not readily available, and a few additional points are noted below.

There has recently been a focus on the access gap for ethnic minorities across the sector with Research England/Office for Students allocating funding to projects to test out interventions that may be applied across the sector. A number of Alliance universities are involved in these projects working across institutional-types to support regional and national interventions.

Alliance universities have a higher percentage of UG candidates from ethnic backgrounds and are often the main pipeline into PGR programmes at the universities. Looking at national data, Alliance universities, as an aggregate, perform well in this area (PGR UA registrations from ethnic minorities – UA c15% vs National average c10%). As a large number of the RE/OfS funded projects involve Alliance universities and similar institutions this is seen as a positive move for the sector to share a wide breadth of best practice, which will hopefully work towards reducing the access gap for ethnic minorities. As the majority of UKRI doctoral funding currently goes to Russell Group Universities, yet the highest concentration of PGR candidates from ethnic minority groups are based within post-92 institutions, these interventions are essential to ensure that these issues are addressed across the sector as a whole.

Following discussions with the DTA Management group in autumn 2021, Coventry University undertook a piece of research into the doctoral access gap, looking at influencing factors and potential interventions, with a focus on widening access for protected characteristics beyond ethnicity. A working group from across the network will be considering a range of interventions including pre-doctoral programmes (see question 4), recruitment, entry requirements and admissions processes and quota allocations, and would be happy to share findings and potential models with UKRI where appropriate. It was noted that 'there are a number of dominant academic traditions, including how a doctorate journey should go, what a thesis should look like and what methodologies are favoured, which can make doctoral study unnecessarily challenging. Exploring more creative and flexible models of the doctorate could help attend to the needs of disabled candidates, parents, care-givers and those who are part-time. Rethinking what a thesis looks like, how assessment is carried out and how modules are delivered would go some way to making doctoral study more accessible.' (Kathryn Stamp, Carolyn Wynne, Elena Gaura, Coventry University March 2022 – The Doctoral Access Gap). The New Deal is also an opportunity to review the examination requirements of PhDs to greater support models and access. For examples, breaking down the barriers for projects where non-traditional outputs are more relevant for examination e.g. within the creative and cultural arts disciplines.

Acknowledgment from funders of the different costs involved in undertaking research across the disciplines and how this influences the motivation to continue. For example, the high costs involved in creative, practice-based projects and limited funding opportunities for these areas may stop potential candidates from applying, therefore reducing the number of PhD-qualified people working in these sectors. This then leads to a lack of role models from those sectors.

We would support a review of the time required to complete a PhD. There is a need to consider submission and completion rates set by UKRI/HESA as part of this, making sure consistency is applied. There is also a need to consider all the extra requirements PGRs are expected to undertake whilst completing a PhD, mainly driven by funders, e.g. skills training, placements, outreach, teaching, and publication. More directed guidance on the ideal time for some aspects might help with managing workloads towards completion, increase submission and completion rates and allow universities to allocate internal resource appropriately to ensure required support is provided. This may also help with how these 'extras' are viewed i.e. highlighting the importance and the benefits to the individual, supervisors, research groups and future career pathways rather than seeing them as 'getting in the way' of the research.
See question 9 for related points on the different duration of funding models used and the implications these have on registration, progression and completion.

In terms of skills training and development, provision needs to be high quality, focussed and clearly demonstrate benefits to those involved. The sector has made huge advances in this area following the Roberts Report 2002, with a dedicated and high skilled community of researcher developers across the sector. However, we should ensure and continue to involve organisations outside of academia to support the development and review of these so the activities universities offer for the varied types of PGR qualifications remains relevant across sectors. There is an argument that a follow up to the Roberts 'Set for Success" report to review what skills are actually needed beyond academia may be timely.

Routes in, through and out

4 Are there any additional areas that we should explore under routes in, through and out of postgraduate research? Please state why.

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

When considering motivations and reasons whether or not to undertake PGR training, we feel that the sector needs to have a better awareness of the reasons why not everyone thinks that doctoral study is for them. This is often due to a lack of understanding of what it entails or a feeling of intimidation or that it is only aimed at those wishing to follow a career path within academia. Two areas that can support this are pre-doctoral programmes and more effective careers support (which has been identified already and will be commented on under question 5 below).

Therefore, it would be useful for the New Deal to take a more detailed look at pre-doctoral programme models such as MRes qualifications, internships and credit and non-credit bearing summer schools or research projects. UKCGE recently held a workshop https://ukcge.ac.uk/events/pre-doctoral-programmes on this subject, looking at what already exists globally and what models would be suitable for the UK sector to implement on a wider basis. Representatives from all types of universities and sector organisations were present and valuable discussions were held on the real benefits, for both candidates and institutions, of universities delivering pre-doctoral programmes; how they can support access to

PGR study, connect students from different types of universities and sectors, and create meaningful pathways into research. An example of how Alliance members are supporting this area is from Coventry University, which is running an internship scheme for final year undergraduate students to undertake an 8-week research project over the summer. Each project will be attached to a research centre, interns will gain an insight into the centres, research culture, and skills needed, complete a mini-project and give a presentation. They will be provided with a small bursary and accommodation if required. This scheme is to be funded through the university's QR allocation with an aim to widening access and diversity into the PGR student body. Coventry wishes to harness the diversity it has at the UG level to support wider diversity at PGR level, however, it should be noted that there is no obligation for interns who subsequently wish to follow a PGR qualification to do so at Coventry. There is a general feeling that universities have a social responsibility to facilitate these kind of opportunities for the benefit of the sector as a whole and UA is supportive of this kind of initiative, and will be sharing this as an example of good practice across the membership. As part of the work outlined above on the doctoral access gap that UA and DTA partners are embarking on, we will be looking in more depth at pre-doctoral models, and will have a particular focus on models for Professional Doctorates due to the large numbers of programmes offered by Alliance members. A different recruitment strategy is required to identify and attract professionals to consider undertaking a professional doctorate, so working across universities that have a proven track-record of supporting such programmes should provide an in-depth investigation into what may work across the sector.

5 What challenges should we prioritise under routes in, through and out?

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

We would strongly support the consideration of how part-time modes of working support PGRs. Alliance universities register a significantly larger proportion of part-time PGR candidates to the national average, in some cases up to 60% compared to 5% nationally (according to HESA 2020/21 data), who tend to be self-funded due to reduced access to funding opportunities. The sector needs to carefully consider how the structures and support in place specifically for part-time students can contribute towards access to and routes in, through and out. A proportion of part-time students at Alliance universities are staff members (c15%) wishing to enhance their own skills and qualifications at the same time as contributing to the learning environment of the universities themselves and the disciplines they are researching within. This not only contributes towards the skills of an institution's staff body but also diversifies the age range of the PGR body. In Alliance universities, it has been noted that many of their staff undertaking part-time PhDs will enrol on professional doctorates, PhD by Publication, and other types of PGR qualifications, further supporting the importance of these types of qualifications. The length of time to complete a part-time PhD can mean that project design and data collection is exposed to the risks of changing external factors (such as policy changes, major changes in aspects being studied) and internal factors (such as personal life of student, finances). Therefore, it may also be worth looking into the benefits and impacts of introducing a range of flexible part-time models, with different FTE percentage structures such as 60%, 70% or 80% models rather than just the standard 50% FTE for part-time students.

We feel that earlier and more targeted careers advice for those at UG/PGT levels (if not before) on opportunities and career routes and pathways for those holding a PhD would support routes in, through and out of doctoral study. Ways to achieve this include ensuring specific training workshops are embedded within careers programmes and PGR training programmes about the options open to them and the routes to enter into different sectors; and working more closely with external organisations to identify the skills required for research roles beyond academia would help promote the benefits of holding a higher qualification. Universities need to be mindful when discussing careers options with UG students about the options a PGR qualification can provide them. We need to dispel the myth that a PhD only leads to a role within academia and start talking about the options, benefits and skills a PhD can give for all types of job opportunities. This work would benefit from being supported by better national and institutional destination tracking of PGR candidates and university's PGR alumni engagement. In relation to this, it has been noted that UKRI DTPs are still seen as more traditional in their discipline distribution, with too much focus on a traditional employability route through academia. Therefore, DTPs should be encouraged to promote wider career paths and opportunities, opening up routes within and beyond academia. The DTA could be used as an example of how it does this through its cross-disciplinary training programme and access to external organisations.

Another area UA and DTA partners will be working on as part of the doctoral access gap work is a review of how PGR programmes are recruited to, the terminology and marketing channels used and the differences and benefits between taught and research programmes. We feel that there is an expert gap across the sector in PGR recruitment and that this research would greatly benefit institutions aiming to increase and diversify their cohorts.

As noted in question one, working with organisations outside of academia will be key to achieving the goals for contemporary PGR training. A core focus that unites Alliance universities is their partnership with industry and the professions and as a group can valuable contribute towards these discussions. Example case studies of wider research impact from Alliance members can be found here: https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/our-work-2/applied-research/ and within the 'Research and Innovation Impact of Alliance Universities' report: https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/our-work-2/applied-research/researchimpact/. However, for this response we wanted to specifically highlight a couple of examples from Coventry University directly related to doctoral studies – a) Peace and Security theme is working closely with UK Government in joint doctoral level research to support the development of evidence based policy in the UK; b) Clean Growth and Future Mobility works closely with Horiba Mira forging links with industry for their PGR who gain industrial experience, networks and contacts.

Rights and conditions

6 Are there any additional areas that we should consider in our work on rights and conditions? Please state why.

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

One additional area that would be important to consider alongside rights and conditions for PGRs, is PGR student representation and advocacy. Where there are specific PGR representation roles within university Student Union (SU) structures, it ensures that the needs and support for PGRs are considered at university level and not just at the Graduate School levels which can often be situated outside of the core students and education support roles and services within a university. The University of Brighton's Student Union has a PGR Officer as one of its core four officer roles, who works directly with the PVC-Research and Graduate School entity, provides training and advice to the PGR community on how to make the most of their PGR representative, which in turn raises the profile of the Student Union across the PGR community as a service that is for them and not just for undergraduate students. This is just one example of where PGR representation is embedded within an Alliance university.

7 What challenges should we prioritise in our work on rights and conditions?

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

When striving for equity for all PGRs, universities tend of use UKRI terms and conditions, and financial structures as a guide to frame their own rights and conditions to try to avoid a two-tier structure between funded and self-funded PGRs. However, it has been difficult in the past when individual research councils have differing structures and T&Cs. It is therefore essential to produce clear and consistent guidance and communication to help universities set up fair and equitable structures that can be applied to the wider PGR student body, as well as clearly identifying where certain requirements are specific for those who have secured funding through a selective process. Alliance universities do not have the same flexibility in terms of levels of funding for doctoral researchers as the research-intensive universities which have access to more central research and UKRI funding. Therefore, trying to match rights and conditions applied to the minority of PGRs for the majority of their candidates can prove to be difficult and complex, as highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. UKRI were quick to issue guidance on extensions for funded students which was welcomed across the sector, but did also raise expectations for non-UKRI funded students as to what they could request. Therefore, when setting frameworks and communicating guidelines, UKRI need to be mindful of the impact of its own rights and conditions to those who are not directly funded by them, and be clear about the role it plays across the sector.

The issue of awarding PGRs with employer status has been raised in a number of recent forums. On the surface, there are evident benefits for the student having employer status but the complexities that come with this status, as demonstrated by EU funded doctoral researchers (where all researchers are required to be registered as members of staff), would increase the cost of a PhD for universities, and set certain restrictions on students which may not be evident from the outset. For Alliance universities and other similar types of institutions, the increase in costs would reduce the number of PGR students that can be supported, which is counter to desire to increase the number of PGR registrations. However, there are things the sector can do to better articulate why PGRs are not given employers status, the benefits of being a student, how they are protected, and the boundaries and support available to them. For example, highlight the tax-free aspect of a stipend, tax benefits such as council tax exemptions and established visa routes for international students; be clear about access to and payment for teaching responsibilities and requirements for training and development opportunities.

Funding and financial support

8 Are there any additional areas that we should explore in our work on funding and financial support?

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

Rebalancing the distribution of PGR funding across the sector: UKRI needs to acknowledge that the more diverse PGR populations exist in the institutions, which have access to the least amount of PGR funding. UA can provide a gateway into a group of institutions that supports development work on how this could be achieved. The matched funding requirement for UKRI DTPs obviously allows funding to go further but it restricts those institutions with smaller research budgets to act on a level playing field, as does the requirement to meet research grant/funding thresholds as part of a DTP application, so the cycle continues with those with more money being able to access more funding for doctoral studies.

There is still a focus on discipline specific funding through UKRI DTPs against a sector that is being continually encouraged to grow interdisciplinary research environments and cross-collaborations and consortia. Therefore, there is a need to carefully consider how interdisciplinary research is recruited to and funded to ensure the sector is positive responding to the access gap and meeting the strategic priorities of government.

PGR loans scheme, although it is important to have such a scheme available, the loans do not provide full funding therefore still require self-funded candidates to supplement their income through working or securing other loans. The New Deal is an ideal opportunity to encourage a review of the success of the scheme and the challenges to shape it into a scheme that suits a new deal for PGRs.

As part of its work around access to doctoral study, we would support UKRI to consider the benefits of ring-fencing funding for those from lower socioeconomic statuses, taking good examples of where this has increased access to UG programmes and apply to PGR programmes/funding. As well as considering expanding their eligibility to allow those undertaking Professional Doctorates to receive fully funded opportunities to support points made earlier in the response.

We would also like to see an acknowledgement that funding affects both the potential PhD candidate and the institution; both are facing challenging funding barriers or obstacles, and should be addressed separately.

9 What challenges should we prioritise in our work on funding and financial support?

If you have specific evidence to support your input, please provide a brief summary and – where available – any relevant links.:

As identified in the recent UKCGE 'Structures and Strategies in Doctoral Education' report, https://ukcge.ac.uk/news-and-blog/new-ukcge-report-on-structures-and-strategies-in-doctoral-education-published access to studentship funding was one of the top three issues for respondents to the accompanying survey and changes to funding was the top response to the question around 'what national development in doctoral education respondents would you like to see in the next 5-10 years'. We would agree with these points and would stress that the way doctoral education is funded and studentship funding is allocated needs to be at the heart of the New Deal for PGRs.

We would support a more detailed discussion around the duration of funding for PGR programmes to support i) the reduction of financial anxiety PGR candidates have at the crucial point of writing up and submission; ii) completion times; iii) risks of investments being withdrawn and/or reduced in future. Different funders and institutions approach this is different ways, which creates an inconsistency across programmes and disciplines which may affect motivations and access to doctoral study.

The current increase in the cost of living, and long-term impacts, which will affect all aspects of society, will be a key challenge that will need to be prioritised when considering aspects of funding and financial support. For example, the level of stipends set by funders/institutions may need to be

reviewed and potentially raised in order to attract new PGR candidates; more flexible payment plans for self-funded candidates to cover tuition fees may need to be considered.

Overall approach

10 Are there any areas that we could usefully focus on, or other questions that we should explore, not covered within our four focus areas?

Please state why and provide links to evidence where possible.:

Within England, the recent Office for Students "B3: Student Outcomes" consultation covered the retention, completion and graduate outcomes of PGRs. Implications of this should be carefully monitored as part of the New Deal, as the key to ensuring these thresholds are met is being mindful that PhD students face different challenges and have different experiences to UGs. University student support and governance structures tend to focus largely on the experience of UG students (a typical 18 year old); often 'retro-fitting' structures to support postgraduate students and those who do not quite fit the stereotypical student type. Therefore, the role of a centrally resourced Graduate School or equivalent is key to ensuring PGRs feel connected to and an integral part of their university.

Support for international students: if we want to attract international PGR candidates to the UK to support the research ecosystem and contribute to the UKs research environment there are a number of interventions that could be developed across the sector which makes the transition to the UK easier and more streamlined e.g. reviewing the heavy costs of entering the UK including visas, health surcharge, and allowing for flexible payment plans; including provision within visa allocations for students to undertake periods of research/fieldwork outside of the UK during their PhD where the registering university would remain the sponsor; increasing the time between issuing CAS numbers and start of the programme – often a short timescale between to two making it difficult to put arrangements in place to travel

It would be helpful for those across the sector and in government who are involved with setting frameworks, policy and funding structures to be mindful of the nomenclature used to relate to the different types of universities and PGR qualifications and used within recruitment and marketing material. The sector as a whole would greatly benefit from distancing ourselves from using terms such as 'non or less-traditional', 'non or less-research intensive', 'outside academia', 'alternative' and use terms such as 'options', 'opportunities', 'types', 'applied research', 'business-facing', 'beyond academia' etc This may well go some way towards making doctoral study more accessible.

11 Do you have any further comments on the New Deal?

Please provide any further comments:

University Alliance, and its members, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the UKRI New Deal for PGRs Strategy review; are pleased that this review covers all areas of PGR training and not just those funded by UKRI, and would be open to contributing further in whatever format would be most useful to UKRI. UA can facilitate direct discussions with a group of universities and students that UKRI may not usually engage with directly on PGR issues.

Section three: Future engagement

12 What factors should we consider as we develop our engagement plans for future New Deal work?

Please provide any further comments:

Establish channels of communication for PGR students who are not in receipt of UKRI funding but creating links with existing organisations that support PGR students across the sector which can facilitate discussions and share communications for further engagement, e.g. mission groups, UKCGE, Vitae.

Section four: About you or your organisation

13 Are you responding in a personal capacity or on behalf of an organisation or group?

I am responding on behalf of an organisation or group

About your organisation

31 Please state your organisation's or group's name:

Organisation or group name:
University Alliance

32 Which of the following best describes your organisation or group?

As a mission group, representative group, union, or other body representing the collective views of its members

If other, please state:

33 Are you responding:

On behalf of the whole of your organisation

If you are replying on behalf of only part of your organisation, please give details::

34 If your organisation or group is funded to provide postgraduate research, please name your main funder(s):

Main funders:

35 What is your name?

Name:
Jennie Eldridge

36 What is your email address?

Email:
jennie@unialliance.ac.uk

37 Would you like to receive email updates on the progress of the New Deal from UK Research and Innovation?

Yes

38 We may publish a list of the individuals, organisations or groups that have responded to this exercise as part of our summary of responses. Please state whether you would like us to:

Publish your organisation's or group's name in the list of respondents