

# Supporting diverse PGR journeys through researcher communities

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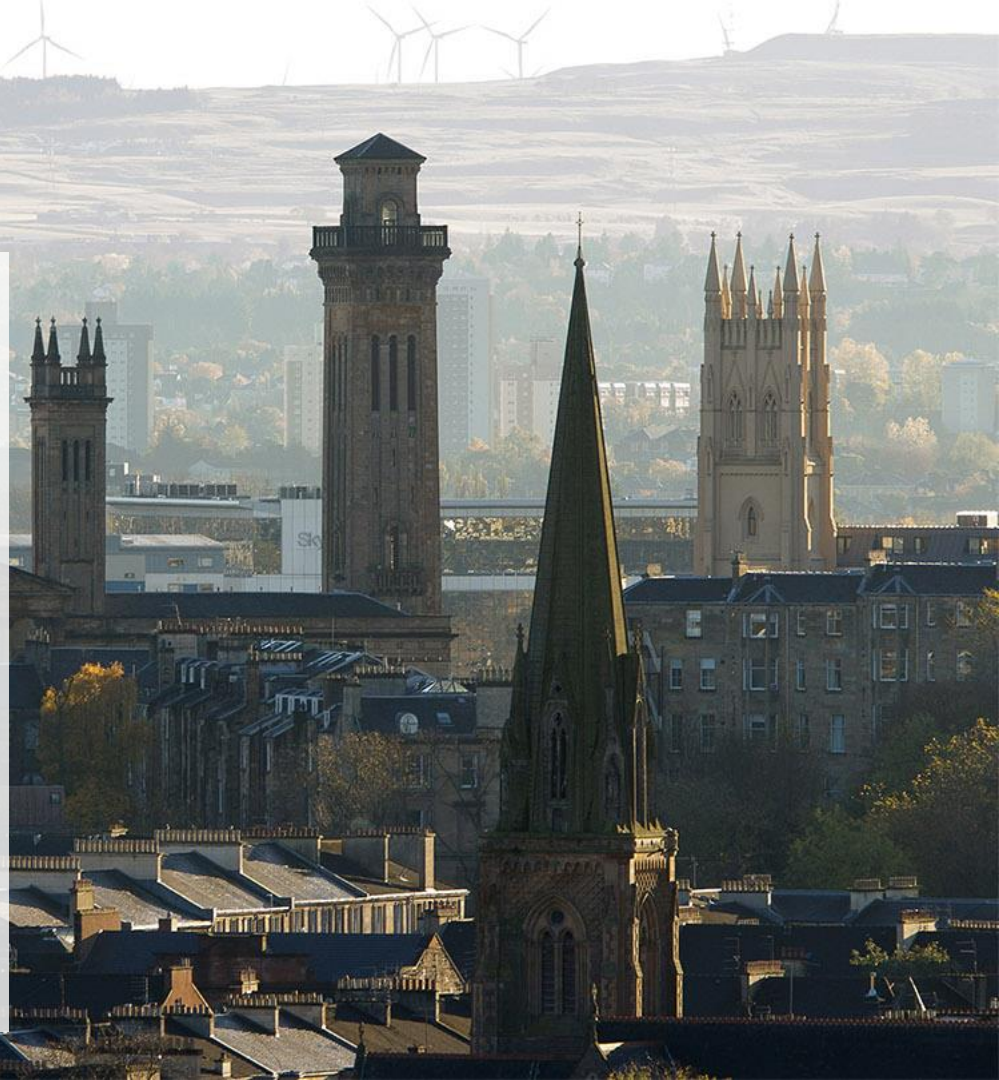


- Research Communities project and key themes
- Reflecting on the project
- Translating this to action



## Initial Questions

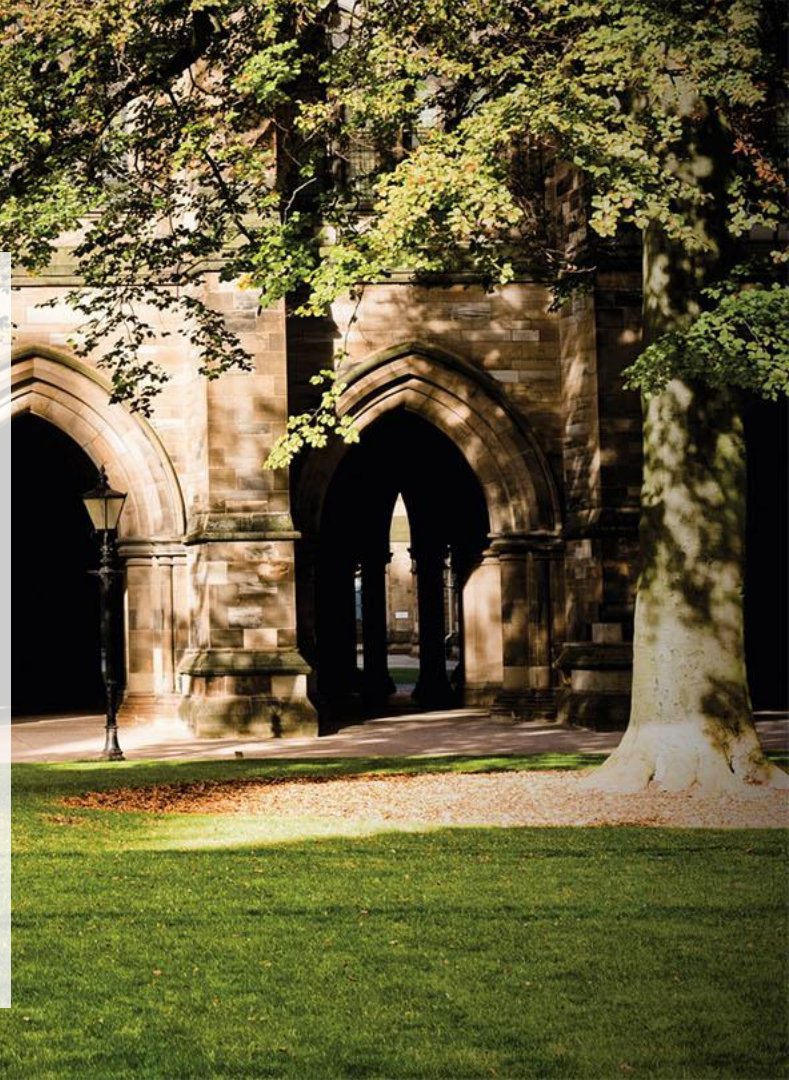
- Is there a *consensus* around what constitutes a ‘research community’?
- What does a *successful* research community look like?
- What is the *purpose* of a research community?
- Where do/should the *boundaries* of the research community lie?





## Key Elements of Research Community

- Supervisors
- Physical Space
- Online Communities
- Centralised Communities
- PGR Training
- PGR Representation
- Building Academic Identity





## Supervisors

- *'The first port of call' – and provides access to professional networks and connections*
- Identified by both staff and PGRs as playing a crucial role.
- Codes of practice can establish ethos and build a culture of involvement





## Physical Space

- *'It's not about creating the community – it's about creating the space for communities'*
- Is there variation in terms of the type of space offered?
- Multi-purpose spaces allow for a range of interactions: formal, informal, group working





## Online Communities

- *‘Joined Twitter for academic reasons and found a feeling of community’*
- Online communication can play a vital role in the research community
- An active online presence, and offering online space, can enable distance and p/t researchers to maintain links with the community





## Centralised Communities

- 'Outside the research group'
- Cross institutional organisations, or temporary groups created by a focused activity
- Is there scope for PGRs to create and lead their own centralised communities? *Can lessons be learned from how centralised communities unite members?*







## PGR Training

- ‘Get outside your own research bubble’
- *Opportunity to interact with other PGRs is as valuable as the content of the training itself*
- Training might cover the entirety of the PGR experience: issues such as managing mental health or work life balance as well as subject-specific and employability-related skills





## PGR Representation

- Concern that not participating in as much as possible *'might make me look invisible'*
- How can all PGRs make themselves seen and heard?
- Sub-communities could be created for underrepresented groups.
- Regular feedback could be sought from all PGRs.





## Building Academic Identity

- *‘Working shoulder-to-shoulder’*
- Staff and PGR interaction is vital as are peer interactions
- Policies and codes of practice as well as formal (e.g. GTA work) and informal interactions (e.g. work in progress workshops, reading groups)



## Drawing the themes together

- ‘It’s not about creating the community – it’s about creating the space for communities’ – this was a key observation by one our interviewees – students lead the way to what they need and when
- *‘The relationships and interactions that create the sociocultural context and developmental networks in which doctoral student learning is situated provide meaning, efficacy, and identity development. The interactions, and subsequent sense-making, that student engage in, help students determine if and how they can successfully make the transition through stage 2 and into their roles as independent scholars.’ Baker and Pifer (2011)*

## Drawing the themes together

- Can we think of communities themselves as opportunities for learning?
  - *‘learning and identity development go hand in hand – it is through participation in the intellectual community in the field and the home institution that doctoral students build the knowledge and skills required of scholarship in their field of study’* Baker and Lattuca (2010)
  - *Boud and Lee (2005) refer to ‘distributed learning’ in the sense of ‘networks of learning in which learners take up opportunities in a variety of ways without necessary involvement from teachers or supervisors’* and as a ‘horizontalisation’ of relationships where they gradually move into more peer-like relationships with supervisors and other researchers

## Drawing the themes together

- What can we do to encourage inclusivity and diversity in researcher communities, as well as promote a culture of support and academic kindness in our institutions?
  - Important to remember as well that students both negotiate and choose their communities – they may reject some and cultivate others
- Are we collecting any data to monitor participation in informal training or enhancing or understanding in other ways? Are some groups disadvantaged by this? How can we do this better?

## Some References

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