

ANNUAL REPORT

2019-20



**DOCTORAL
COLLEGE**

PGR STATISTICS

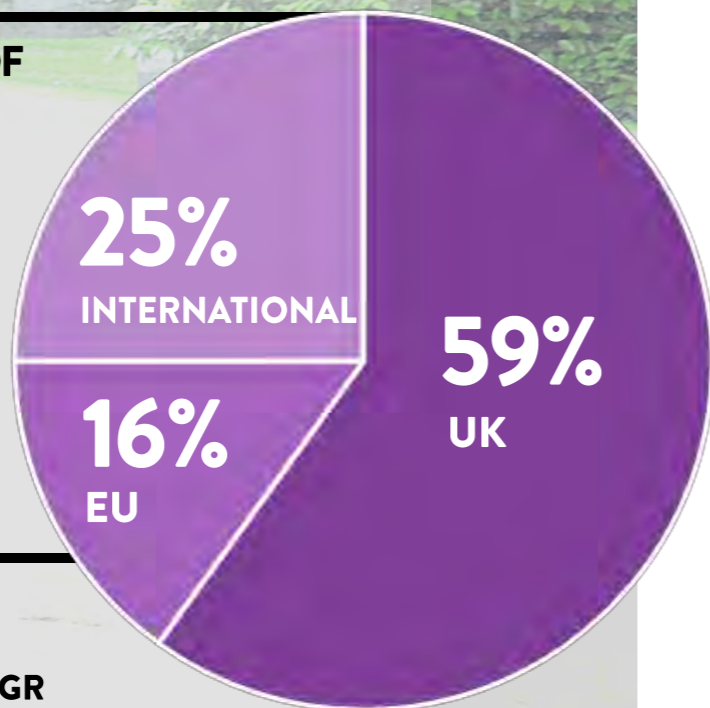
1552 CURRENT POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS ON 1 DECEMBER 2019

PGR STARTERS



2019-20 COMPOSITION OF STUDENT BODY

55% FEMALE | **30.5** YEARS AVERAGE AGE AT ENTRY



RESEARCH OUTPUTS

527 INVOLVING PGR STUDENTS IN 2019-20

238 GRADUATES IN 2019-20:

201 PHD (INCLUDING PHD BY PUBLICATION)	5 MASTER'S QUALIFICATIONS (MPHIL AND MASTER'S BY RESEARCH)	32 PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATES (CLINPSYD, EDD, MD)
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FOREWORD

This is the second Annual Report of our Doctoral College – What a year this has been

A report for the 2019-20 academic year is unavoidably marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected most aspects of our work and brought great challenges to the research and training of our doctoral community. At the same time, our research is more important than ever, and we are immensely proud of the work of UEA and partner institutions in addressing multiple issues relating to the pandemic, with impacts at the individual, local, national and global scale.

This report begins with a presentation of the PGR Service, our central department involved in the management and administration of postgraduate research activity. In collaboration with professional and academic colleagues, the PGR Service has swiftly adapted numerous policies and services to support our postgraduate researchers and their supervisors through the pandemic, within a context of rapidly changing regulations and guidelines. As the new Director of UK Research and Innovation, Professor Ottoline Leyser, [has said recently](#): “the whole research system critically depends not just on researchers, but on all the people around them who support the research endeavour”.

We celebrate the growth of training opportunities for doctoral research, with numerous successes this year. The NRPDTP was funded by the BBSRC for the third time, and will support five new student cohorts. We have also recruited our first cohort of researchers to the EDESIA programme in Plants, Food and Health, funded by Wellcome, and have offered new doctoral opportunities under the EPSRC remit. Despite travel complications and a rapidly evolving political landscape, international collaborations remain critical to research excellence, and we continue to support strong relations with key partners in doctoral education, including SUSTech in Shenzhen, and our AURORA network across Europe.

Finally, the increased profile of #BlackLivesMatter this year has brought issues of racial equality and anti-racism to the spotlight. UEA must continue to foster equality, diversity and inclusion in its research community. We look forward to working with the newly formed BAME PGR working group to address issues relevant to doctoral education.



PROFESSOR FIONA LETTICE
PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR,
RESEARCH & INNOVATION,
UEA



PROFESSOR ALASTAIR GRANT
ACADEMIC DIRECTOR,
UEA DOCTORAL
COLLEGE

When we were preparing our last annual report, none of us could have anticipated how things would unfold during the year, with a scale of disruption to normal life by the COVID-19 pandemic on a scale that is well beyond what almost all of us have experienced, with all but essential activities put on hold for some time, with considerable restrictions still continuing. Many postgraduate researchers have seen considerable disruption to their work, and continue to work from home for most or all of the time. Several were asked by the NHS to interrupt their studies and work full time in clinical roles. The library, external museums and archives, and most of our research laboratories were closed for some time. Some of these restrictions are reducing, but others continue. Some fieldwork can again take place, but international travel and work with human subjects continue to be severely constrained, and conferences, seminars and other face to face academic interactions are likely to be limited for some time to come.

So these are challenging times, but the University is determined to do all that we can to support our PGRs and enable them to complete their research. Much of my time has been spent seeking to mitigate these impacts, and I am very grateful to all of those at UEA who have helped with this and supported our postgraduate researchers through this period. Faculty Associate Deans, Training Coordinators, School PGR Directors and supervisors have done an amazing job supporting individuals and keeping academic life functioning. They have also found a range of creative ways to build community amongst our PGRs. Vivien Easson and her staff in the PGR service have worked incredibly hard to keep normal PGR business running while working remotely while also dealing with a whole set of additional challenges. University Safety Services, Estates, School and Senior Faculty managers and School technical and local support staff have helped with a whole range of issues to restart activities back on campus and ensure that this is done safely. With their help, UEA was one of the first Universities in the country to reopen its library and get students back working in laboratories. I would also like to thank John Turnpenny, who came to the end of his time as Associate Dean for PGR in HUM earlier in the summer, for all that he has done, particularly his leadership of the Courage project which has done so much to help us find ways to support the wellbeing of our postgraduate researchers.



NEW WAYS OF WORKING

As for most UEA Departments, PGR Service have been working remotely since March 2020 (left: staff from PGR Service meeting on Microsoft Teams). Colleagues were able to celebrate Phil Hearsey (right) completing 40 years of working at UEA before lockdown.



SUPPORTING POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The academic year 2019-20 has been challenging, particularly following the COVID-19 lockdown. The Service has adapted PGR processes and operations at speed with the move to remote working and as UK Government guidance and wider University policies changed, particularly around immigration or health and safety. As with postgraduate researchers and supervisors, many Service staff have been juggling work alongside home-schooling of their children or other caring responsibilities.

Throughout this period, the Service has sought to be kind, helpful, and responsive, and to keep in mind the six guiding principles of quality assurance for research degrees:

1. **Information:** Provision is clear and accessible to all research students and staff.
2. **Inclusivity:** The research environment is supportive and inclusive for all research students.
3. **Supervisors:** Supervisors are appropriately skilled and supported.
4. **Training:** Research students are afforded opportunities for professional development.
5. **Progression:** Progression monitoring is clearly defined and operated.
6. **Assessment:** Guidance and processes on assessment for research degrees are clearly communicated.

THE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH SERVICE

WHAT DOES THE PGR SERVICE DO?

The PGR Service supports all postgraduate research students registered at UEA and their supervisors, and the administration of research degrees. Its responsibilities span the full researcher lifecycle, including the admission, registration and induction of all new postgraduate research students, administration of doctoral training, and assessment including thesis submission and appointment of examiners. The Service has over 35 staff members, and sits in the Research and Innovation Division.

The Service currently supports five Graduate Schools, four Doctoral Training Partnerships, two Centres for Doctoral Training, two PhD rotation programmes and five professional doctorates, as well as bids for further funding. Managers work with senior academic colleagues on strategy and policy development and on quality assurance, and with many other teams including the Careers Service, Research and Innovation Services, Faculty Professional Services and Finance teams.

PGR SERVICE RECEPTION: NEW LOCATION IN 2019-20

In January 2020, the PGR Service offices moved to a more central location on the UEA campus, with the main Reception moving to Room 0.65 of the Science Building. When the UK entered lockdown as a result of COVID-19, the PGR Reception closed on 20 March 2020. Support for students and supervisors is still provided remotely, with one-to-one appointments available when necessary.

KEY NEW ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE PGR SERVICE DURING 2019-20:

- Adapting to a new admissions system and taking interviews online at speed from March
- Streamlining the process for online vivas and probationary reviews and updating guidance
- Moving thesis submission online and liaising with examiners to ensure fair assessment continued
- Processing a much higher volume of extension, interruption and other change requests
- Maintaining COVID-19 FAQs for PGR applicants and students, and answering queries
- Ensuring the University made prompt decisions on fee flexibility and extension funding
- Responding to UK Research Council surveys with detailed extension and funding information
- Keeping records of impact to support the PGR community and comply with immigration rules
- Moving teaching, training events, summer schools and Boards of Examiners online
- Arranging desk space on campus over summer 2020 for around 30 researchers in need of it

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN PGR: BAME PGR EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP

UEA works tirelessly to foster Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in its research community.

The increased profile of #BlackLivesMatter this year has brought issues of racial equality and anti-racism to the spotlight. At national level, our Vice-Chancellor, Professor David Richardson, chairs the Universities UK advisory group on tackling racial harassment in higher education. At UEA, Professor Alastair Grant, Academic Director of the Doctoral College, chairs the newly created BAME PGR Experience Working Group, exploring interventions to improve access and participation rates and the experience of Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) researchers at UEA.



BAME PGR EXPERIENCE WORKING GROUP AT UEA

The BAME PGR Experience Working Group was created to enhance the access and experience of postgraduate research for BAME students. Actions relevant to the Doctoral College will include a consideration of:

- Improving the experience of the research culture and community for BAME PGR students
- PGR admissions processes and impacts related to ethnicity
- Access to studentships and funding
- Training for postgraduate researchers and supervisors
- Promotion and celebration of diversity in research

UEA became a signatory to the [Advance HE Race Equality Charter in 2018](#). In collaboration with the UEA BAME Staff Network, the BAME PGR Experience Working Group will play an important role in informing our work on the upcoming application to Bronze Award in 2022.

RECENT ANALYSES: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF BAME STUDENTS TO POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH

A recent [policy briefing from the UK Council for Graduate Education](#) reports important differences in ethnic groups in relation to postgraduate research in the UK:

- The proportion of BAME students enrolled in UK higher education in 2018/19 drops from 24.81% at undergraduate level to 18.07% at postgraduate research level (excluding enrolments where ethnicity is unknown). Between 2016/17 and 2018/19, there was a growth of 1.3% in the proportion of BAME PGRs.
- In 2018/19, 48.19% of BAME postgraduate research students received no award or financial backing for their tuition fee, as compared with 32.66% of White postgraduate research students.

Furthermore, the report published by Leading Routes "[The Broken Pipeline: Barriers to Black PhD Students Accessing Research Council Funding](#)" highlighted that "over three "academic years (2016/17 – 2018/19), of the total 19,868 PhD funded studentships awarded by UKRI research councils collectively, 245 (1.2%) were awarded to Black or Black Mixed students".





OUR EXTERNALLY FUNDED PHD PROGRAMMES

UKRI BBSRC – NRPDTP

The Norwich Research Park Biosciences Doctoral Training Partnership (NRPDTP) is led by the John Innes Centre, in partnership with the Earlham Institute, Quadram Institute Bioscience, The Sainsbury Laboratory and UEA. Following a competitive application process, UKRI-BBSRC awarded £13M to the NRPDTP to fund a new doctoral training programme with five intakes from October 2020. It is expected that at least 160 doctoral candidates will be recruited. Research projects address a broad spectrum of the biosciences including artificial intelligence and computational studies, through biology, chemistry and microbiology, to plant sciences, health and medicine. The training, learning and development programme has been reviewed and revised to meet the requirements and expectations of the NRPDTP cohort.

UKRI EPSRC – DTP ALLOCATION

UEA has been awarded a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) grant from EPSRC for recruitment in both 2020 and 2021, based on our grant income from this research council. In addition, a studentship allocation in Mathematical Sciences has been provided by EPSRC as a result of the additional funding for mathematical sciences announced by the Prime Minister on the 27th January 2020.

WELLCOME – EDESIA

In October 2020, we will welcome the first cohort of five students, including two international students, into the Wellcome Trust-funded EDESIA: Plants, Food and Health PhD programme. EDESIA will advance major aspects of plant-based nutrition and health, from crop to clinic, drawing on the world-class research expertise of the Norwich Research Park (NRP). Students will spend their first year undertaking three research rotations across the NRP before deciding their substantive PhD project. This will widen the skills of each student and engender the interdisciplinarity that underlies the programme.

UKRI ESRC – SENSS

The South East Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS) DTP, funded by the ESRC and composed of 10 universities, welcomed its third cohort in 2019-20. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, all SeNSS activities were moved online, including the Third SeNSS Summer Conference (July 16-17). In line with SeNSS vision of inclusivity and capacity building, the conference offered a session on ‘Decolonizing your research’ as well as a well-attended webinar on ‘Media skills’ led by Fran Abrams, Chief Executive of the Education Media Centre.

UKRI MRC – DART ICASE

In 2019-20, UEA welcomed the second cohort of students on the MRC funded DART (Doctoral Antimicrobial Resistance Training) iCASE programme. These fully-funded 3.5 year studentships focus on antimicrobial resistance (AMR), an area of research excellence across the NRP. Under the iCASE model, PhD projects are in collaboration with industrial partners, and students spend a minimum of 3 months at the partner institution. MRC has confirmed funding for two further intake years in 2020 and 2021.

UKRI NERC – ARIES

The inaugural year of the NERC-funded ARIES (Advanced Research and Innovation in the Environmental Sciences) DTP saw a first cohort of 30 postgraduate researchers begin their studies, with residential induction and training events at field centres in Norfolk and Suffolk. A Joint Symposium with the Cambridge C-CLEAR DTP, due to be held at the Natural History Museum in London, sadly had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, but was replaced by a well-received online event. The new cohort’s first Summer School also moved successfully online, while a remote ‘Collaboration Event’ attracted over 80 participants from Universities, businesses, research centres and third-sector organisations, with the aim of co-developing future collaborative PhD Studentships.

UKRI AHRC – CHASE

The extension of CHASE placement opportunities to all students in HUM has facilitated some excellent placements—for example Charlotte Hallahan (LDC) spent several months on a paid placement with Bloomsbury Academic. The CHASE feminist network has been very active, hosting monthly Flow n Flux feminist consciousness events and an annual Sharing Research and Practice event at the Foundling Museum, as well as starting a Small Projects Fund and providing supportive group conversations via zoom during the lockdown. And UEA now hosts numerous CHASE Collaborative Doctoral Awards, enabling students to work on PhD projects in collaboration with external partners ranging from the BBC to the Norfolk County Council Community and Environmental Services.



INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

UEA-SUSTECH SPLIT-SITE PHD PROGRAMME

In 2016, UEA has established its first split-site PhD programme with the Southern University of Science and Technology (SUSTech). As part of this programme, doctoral researchers carry out collaborative PhD research project between both institutions, in Norwich (UK), and Shenzhen (China; photo of SUSTech campus above). So far, we have admitted 10 students on this programme over three recruitment years; their research has advanced collaborations in multiple disciplines, including environmental sciences, biology and engineering, and has already led to multiple joint publications.

AURORA

The Aurora Universities Network, co-founded by UEA, is a group of research-intensive universities deeply committed to the social impact of our activities. An Aurora working group on doctoral education was created at the end of 2018 to share best practices and to identify opportunities to enhance the internationalisation of our research programmes.

We look forward to working with our partners as part of the newly funded Aurora Alliance, one of the 41 European University initiatives supported through the Erasmus+ programme. This initiative aims to collaborate in developing social, entrepreneurial and innovative competencies for our graduates. The Aurora Alliance puts sustainability and commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the heart of its vision and strategy; our doctoral researchers will play a key role as sustainability pioneers in our network.

PROFESSIONAL INTERNSHIPS FOR PHD STUDENTS (PIPS) WITH PWANI UNIVERSITY (KENYA)

Jacob Scadden and Ariadna Miquel-Clopes

Postgraduate researchers at Quadram Institute Bioscience, funded by the NRP Biosciences DTP

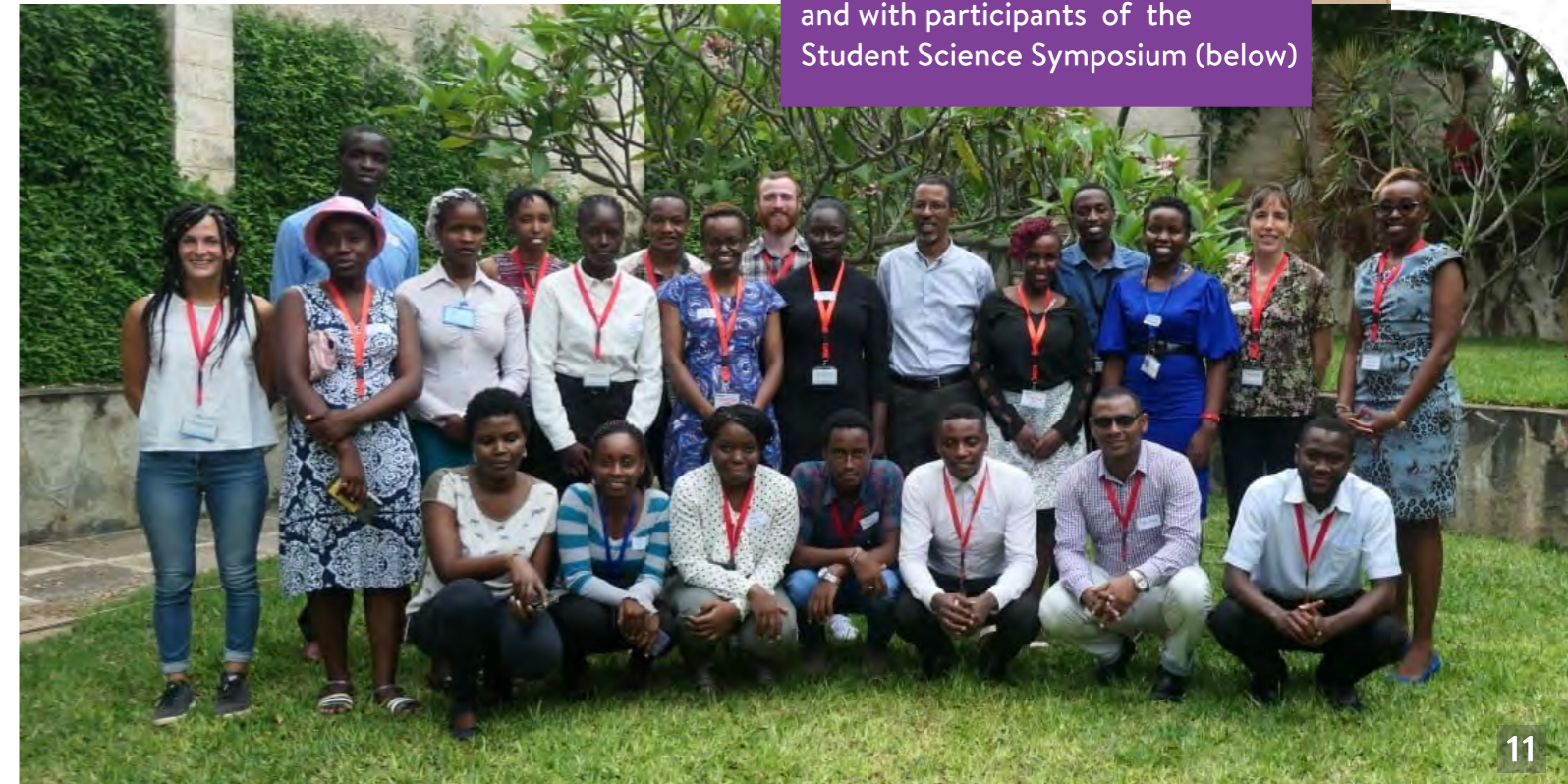
As part of the NRPDTP opportunity for Professional Internships for PhD Students (PIPS), Jacob and Ariadna selected a placement based at Pwani University in Kilifi, Kenya, with the Science Students' Development Network in Africa (ssDNAfrica). This institution has developed strong links with the NRPDTP, with 8 students having completed a placement at Pwani University so far.

The main focus of these placements was to prepare and deliver workshops on Good Research Practice for around 80 undergraduate students, covering critical literature reviews, developing scientific research ideas, and effective academic presentations. Jacob also ran a "Scientific Leadership" workshop for Master's students, and Ariadna organised a Health Communication Workshop. The delivery of a one-day Student Science Symposium was a high point of their placement.

Both researchers developed many skills as a result of their internship. As described by Jacob: "I improved my public speaking and communication skills and was able to create networks within the university faculties to help me organise the workshops and symposium". Problem-solving skills were also tested, as the University had to close halfway through the placement; Jacob and Ariadna had to adapt their teaching methods by offering lectures online and creating discussion forums for students. This placement experience is likely to have a lasting impact, as described by Ariadna: "seeing how professors in Kenya are making a huge difference has impacted me; understanding different problems faced by other countries has also helped me to gain a bigger picture of how science works internationally. I think my aspirations have grown as a result, by realising the breadth of opportunities I have and in increasing my confidence".



Jacob Scadden and Ariadna Miquel-Clopes at Pwani University (above) and with participants of the Student Science Symposium (below)



OUR GRADUATE SCHOOLS: 2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

ARTS AND HUMANITIES

Associate Dean:
Dr Matthew Taunton, LDC
humgrad.school@uea.ac.uk

- It has been another excellent year for student publications. From a very strong field, the HUM student article prize was awarded to Jake Barrett Mills (AMA) for a paper in the *Journal of Foreign Languages and Cultures* and to Kodili Henry Chukwuma (PPL) for an article in *African Security*. Honourable mentions go to Joanna Walsh (LDC), Anais Auge (PPL), Ryan Hale (HIS), Andrea Smith (LDC), Jasmin Kirkbride (LDC), Dean Bowman (AMA).
- Amélie Roussillon (SRU) has been working with Cindy Wilhelm (DEV) to create a new Fieldwork Support Network. The group held its inaugural event in February 2020, establishing several key recommendations for the Doctoral College to develop training for students, supervisors, as well as peer mentoring. The group also considered ways forward for researchers when travel restrictions are imposed.
- The Graduate School Student Forum (GSSF) has implemented a Visiting Fellowship process for students who are completing their research degrees, to extend access to the Library, e-mail and digital resources for up to a year. PGRs have wanted this for some time, and it is a great testament to the value of diligent committee work by PGR representatives.

MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Associate Dean:
Dr Penny Powell, MED
fmh.gradschool@uea.ac.uk

- We held our first FMH Virtual Online PGR conference in June. Students presented their research using Blackboard Collaborate and the event featured an inspiring podcast from an early-career track researcher. During lockdown, Research Student Forum students have led virtual Friday morning coffee clubs and continued with their award-winning “Bitesize” lunchtime seminar club.
- Our FMH PGR team worked hard to ensure the successful induction of remote starters in April and July. During lockdown, the FMH training officer, Gill Price, ensured PPD modules and workshops were available online.
- A new online PGR supervisor training package has been developed on Blackboard to help supervisors with PGR processes in order to create the best environment for our PGRs.
- Our programme continues to expand, with competitive faculty funding for PhDs, increased numbers of MDs and PhDs by publication, and with two professional doctorate programmes in Clinical Psychology and Health and Social Care.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

Associate Dean:
Prof Corrado Di Maria, ECO
ssfgrad.school@uea.ac.uk

- In 2019, we welcomed the results of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. The Social Sciences Graduate School did extremely well, confirming to be home to over 250 very satisfied PGRs and cementing its place well ahead of the vast majority of the sector and the Russell Group.
- As the UK has gone through COVID-19 lockdown from March 2020, in SSF, we have actively supported our PGRs. Our Schools have risen to the challenge deploying a wide array of activities that made the best possible use of the available technology, from virtual research seminars and research clinics, to podcasts, online writing groups, and virtual career workshops.
- Professional doctorate teaching in Education and Educational Psychology has also been adapted to remote working.
- In the months since lockdown, we have further expanded and improved upon our online training programme, adding 80 sessions to an already rich programme since March. Overall, over 500 PGRs from across the University attended our sessions during lockdown, and were able to mingle with an audience of over 5000 across the country.

SCIENCE

Associate Dean:
Dr Samuel Fountain, BIO
scigrad.school@uea.ac.uk

- This year, we have formalised the SCI-PGR Committee, which is formed of PGR students from across all SCI schools. Members sit on SCI Graduate School Executive and support the SCI PGR community.
- A revamped SCI PhD studentship competition saw 18 projects awarded across SCI, including support for early career scientists and partnership awards with CEFAS and Norfolk County Council.

NORWICH BIOSCIENCE INSTITUTES

Chair:
Prof David Evans, JIC
graduates.nrp@nbi.ac.uk

- Regular online meetings with student representatives of the Graduate School Executive were held throughout the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown to ensure PGR students' needs were considered and met.
- Virtual meetings open to all PGR students across NBI were held to allow them to voice concerns relating to the pandemic and to share their experiences.
- A briefing session was introduced for members of supervisory teams that are not recognised supervisors, such as postdoctoral researchers, research assistants and senior support scientists.

UNIVERSITY OF SUFFOLK

Chair:
Prof Emma Bond, UoS
graduateschool@uos.ac.uk

- The Brightspace Graduate School space offers a responsive and personalised learning experience with powerful learning analytics capabilities.
- 17 online Research Development Workshops were organised between April 2020-July 2020.
- 5 new postgraduate researchers will commence their PhD studies in October 2020.

KEY UPDATES FOR 2020-21

- PGR COVID-19 FAQs can be found at <https://my.uea.ac.uk/divisions/research-and-innovation/postgraduate-research/covid-19-pgr-faqs>.
- Theses can only be submitted electronically, and vivas/supervision are expected to be online by default until at least 31 December 2020.
- Activities on site need risk assessment; see the PGR COVID-19 FAQs for a summary of which ones apply to PGR activities.
- Some adapted professional doctorate assessment timelines have been agreed to allow for impacts of COVID-19.
- EU, EEA and Swiss students arriving before 31 December 2020 can apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.
- Applicants can apply under new immigration rules from 5 October 2020, for start dates from 2021.
- Standard PGR intake dates will be 1 Feb, 1 June and 1 October from 2021 onwards.
- UKRI eligibility rules are changing for 2021 entry, up to 30% of each grant can fund non-UK students.

FIND OUT MORE

<https://www.uea.ac.uk/research/research-with-us/postgraduate-research>

<https://my.uea.ac.uk/divisions/research-and-innovation/postgraduate-research>

CONTACT US

pgr.enquiries.admiss@uea.ac.uk



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