



## Supporting international research students Challenges and opportunities!

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Chair -UKCGE Postgraduate Experience Working Group

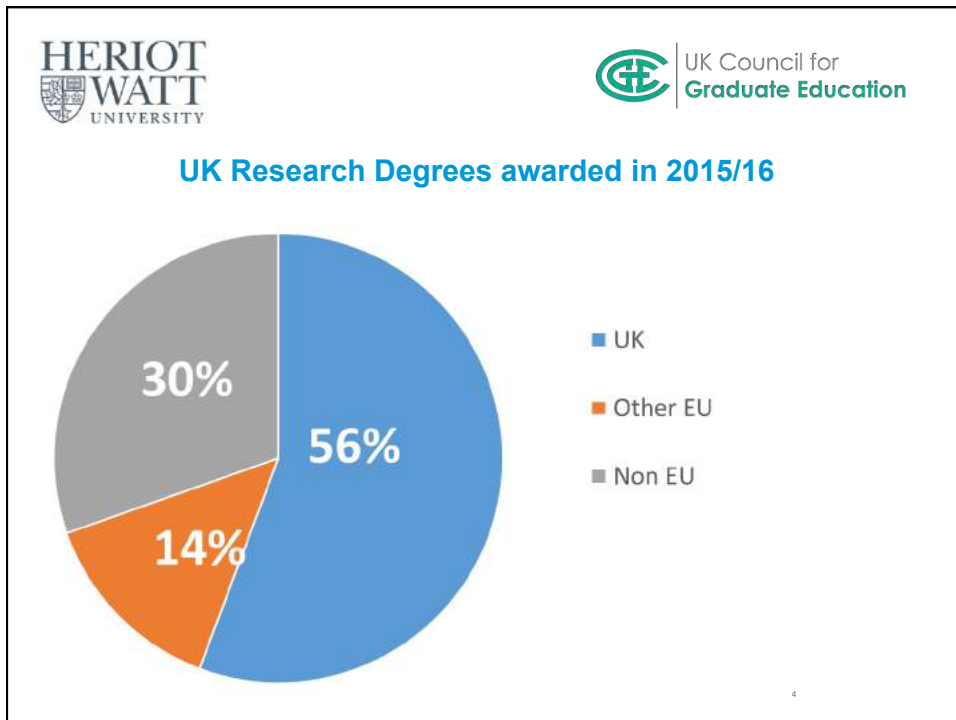
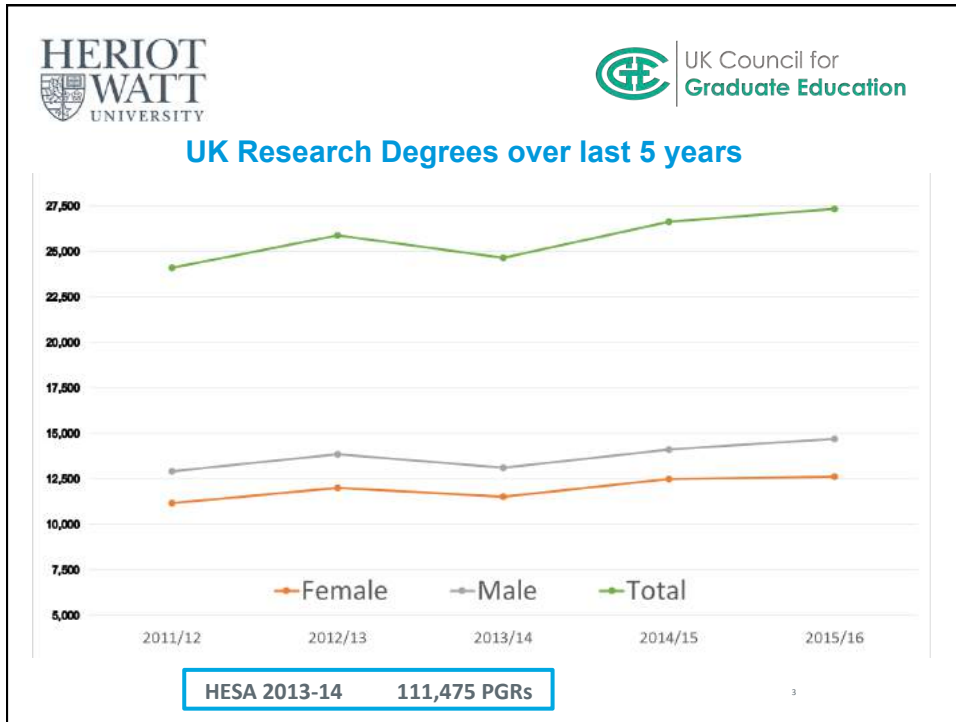
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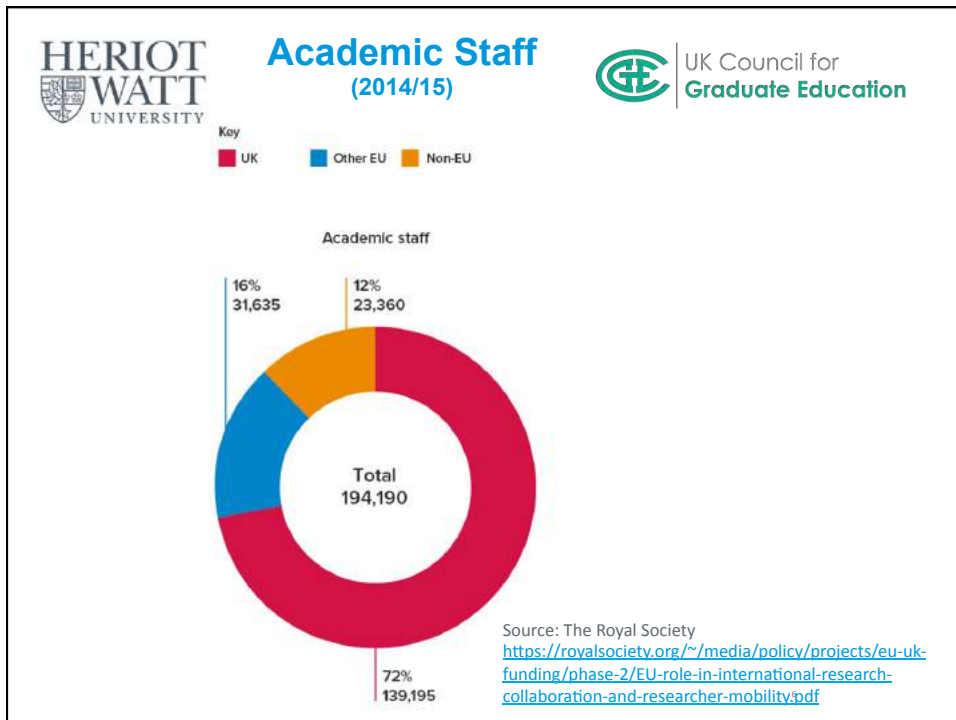
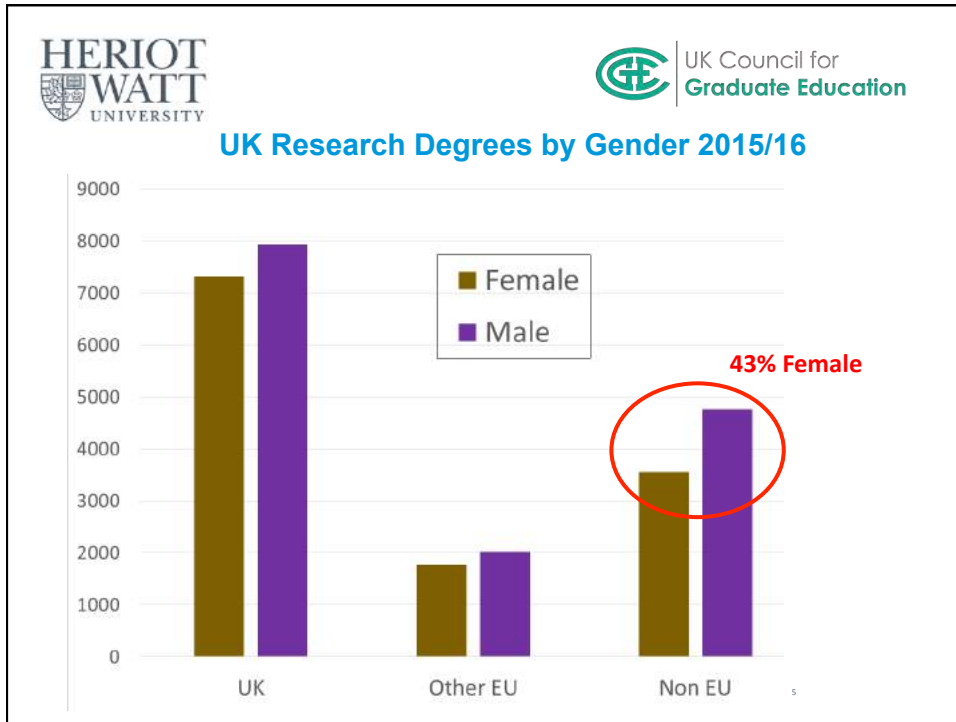
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University of Glasgow ESRC IAA Impact Workshop –  
Towards maximising international PhD students' experience  
March 29<sup>th</sup> 2017



## How many International PGRs do we have?







## Literature indications



Non EU students tend to have:

- have higher completion rates
- shorter times to submission than UK or EU students.

see (Park 2005), (Spronken-Smith et al 2017)



## Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)

PRES 2015 Respondents	
UK	62.6%
Other EU	9.9%
Overseas	27.5%
Total	52, 361

Organised by the HEA!

National Report [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pres\\_2015.pdf](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pres_2015.pdf)  
 National Data Set [https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pres2015\\_data\\_annexe.xlsx](https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/pres2015_data_annexe.xlsx)

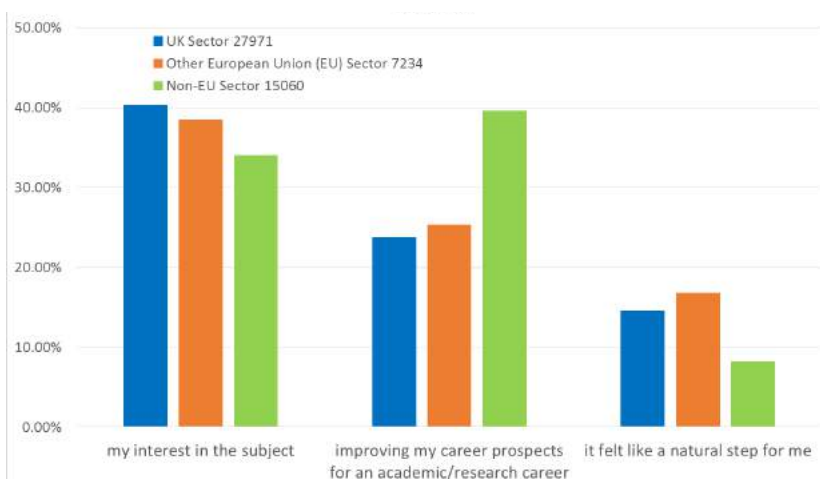


## What motivates international students to undertake research degrees?

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### Motivations of PGRs



Data from PRES 2015

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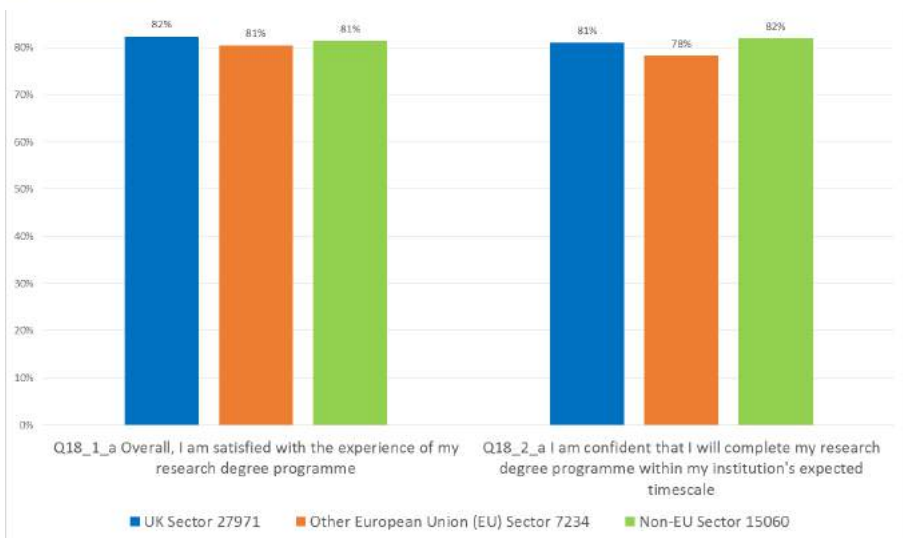


## What do international students think of their experience?

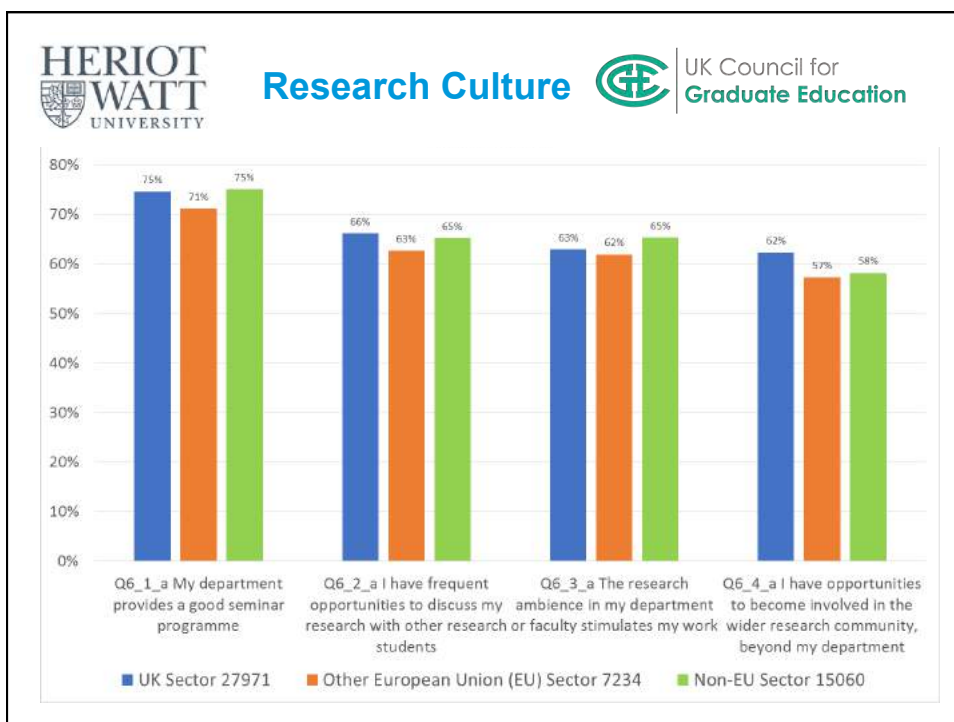
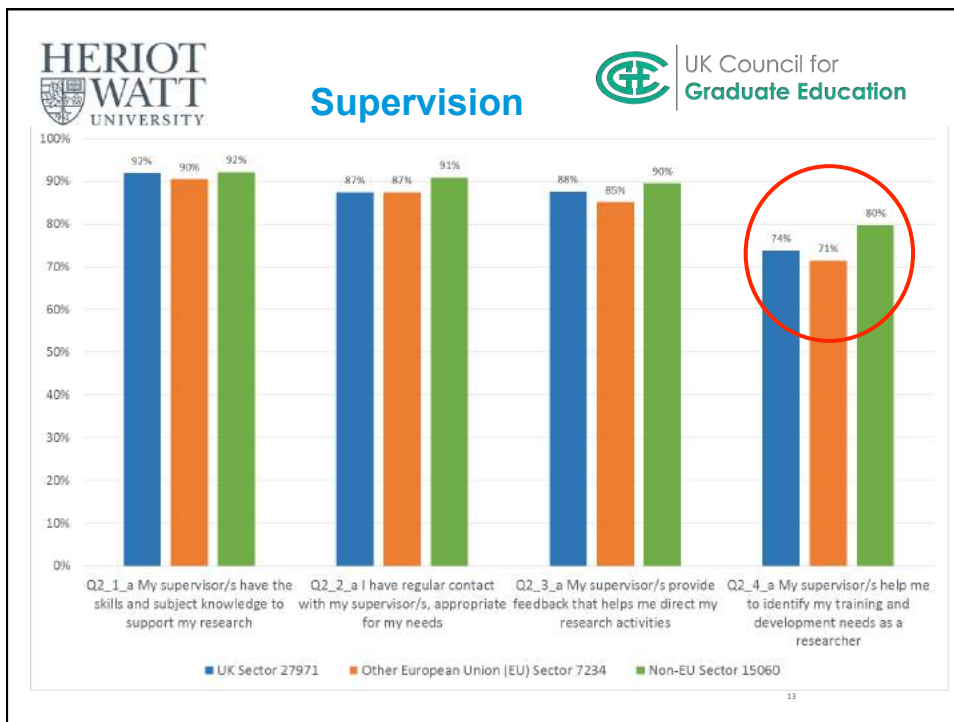
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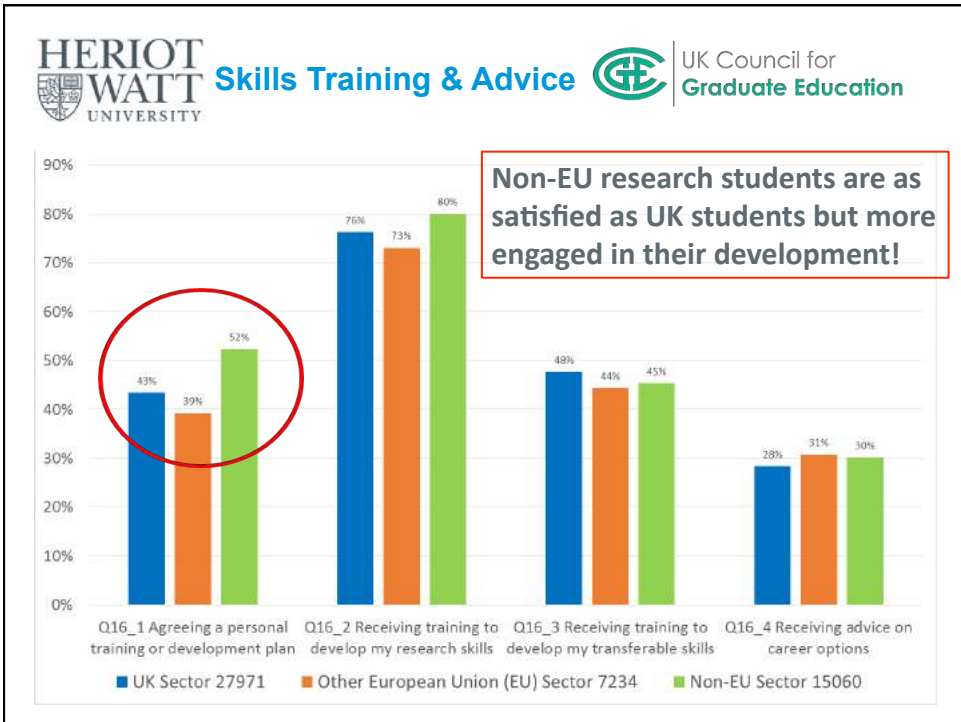


### Overall Satisfaction



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## How should we approach supporting international research students?

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## Considerations for Support

1. A rising tide lifts all boats.
2. Each research student is an individual.
3. Culture, Culture, Culture.

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## Stage Considerations



What's important is clarity of expectation!

Use of expectation questionnaire

<https://www.griffith.edu.au/higher-degrees-research/current-research-students/supervision/expectations-in-supervision-questionnaire2>

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### Supervisory considerations...

- Supervisors interest in the project
- Time committed to other academic work
- Number of research students being supervised

### My advice to supervisors!

1. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring the student receives the support they need, and not for providing all of it themselves!
2. The developed student is as important (or more important) than the project!

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## UKCGE Working Group Project

Focus on end of life-cycle support for PGRs

- Survey of supervisors (74 responses)
- Survey of candidates pre and post viva (42 responses)

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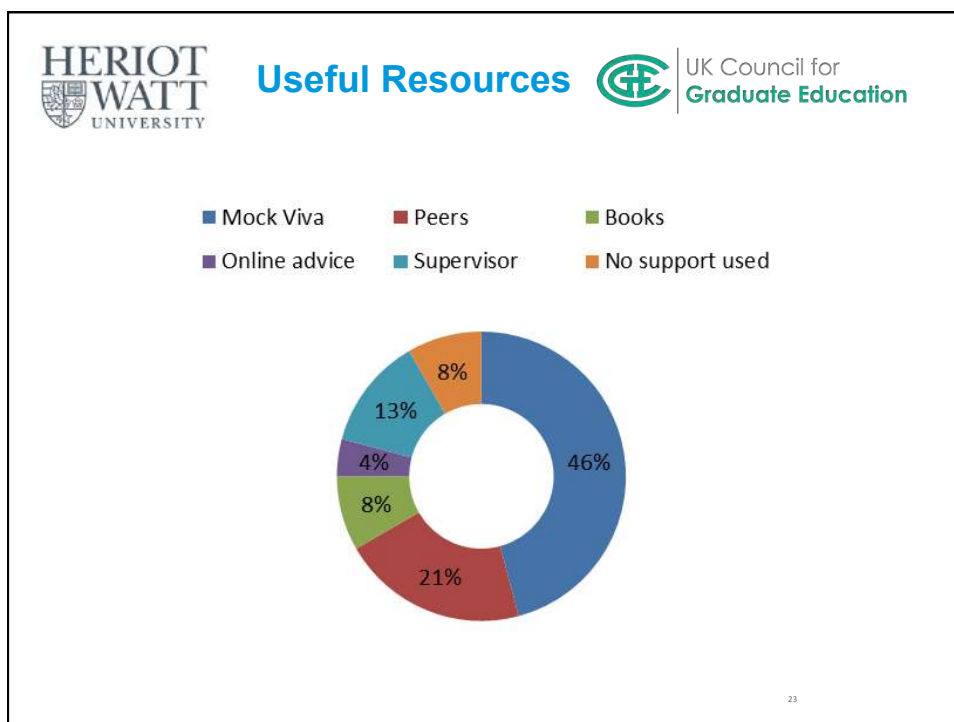
- Students were unaware of university support (web analysis provided evidence of such support existing)
- Small number reported having done a mock viva
- Students were accessing external support via social media (Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, Chat Rooms etc.)
  
- Students reported that they found online/social media support useful
- Students reported finding peer-support useful
  
- Students would like:
  - a) mock viva
  - b) concrete information on viva format, question types and what would cause failure

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### Challenging elements encountered

- General nerves/fear of the unknown
- Not knowing how far you can go in the Viva in disagreeing with the examiner(s)
- Difficulty with the personality/style of questioning of an examiner
- Realising information given by peers was not helpful
- Badly chaired viva
- Particular difficulties for university employees who are also PGR candidates in the viva

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- Advice for Institutions**
- UK Council for Graduate Education
- Raise awareness of the Viva from early stages
  - Signpost conference/ seminar participation as useful preparation for the viva
  - Training for Examiners (Esp. on putting candidate at ease)
  - Recommend candidates to view examiner report structure / template etc.
  - Training for the viva, examples of sort of questions and how to respond
  - Provide clear guidance on normal viva process etc.
  - Also, ensure that supervisors are clear on how the viva works!
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## Acknowledgements



UK Council for  
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- UKCGE Office staff and officers

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## Forthcoming Events



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### UKCGE

- April 3/4<sup>th</sup> 3rd International Conference on Developments in Doctoral Education & Training, Stratford-upon-Avon
- May 8<sup>th</sup> Collaborative Doctorates: Structures, challenges and possibilities, Edinburgh
- May 19<sup>th</sup> Supervisor Development, Glasgow Caledonian University
- July 6/7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference 2017 - Postgraduate Education in the European context: Successes, Challenges, Transitions and Futures, Portugal

More details available at <http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/Events/Default.aspx>

### QAA Scotland

- May 18<sup>th</sup> One-day conference presenting outcomes of QAA work around the PGR experience and issues pertaining to the PGR experience.

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## Further References



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Park, C. (2005) War of attrition: patterns of non-completion amongst postgraduate research students. *Higher Education Review* 38 (1); 48-53

Spronken-Smith, Rachel, Claire Cameron, and Robin Quigg. (2017) "Factors contributing to high PhD completion rates: a case study in a research-intensive university in New Zealand." *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 1-16.

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# THANK YOU!