

CHASE

Supporting our Doctoral Researchers

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Recognising the pressures of doctoral research

[Research](#) confirms that every doctoral researcher feels under pressure at some point during the PhD – whether that's to do with the high expectations, the workload, the challenges of balancing competing demands, feeling alone or, like so many academics, battling [imposter syndrome](#). There are certainly specific challenges that face doctoral students. These challenges might be exacerbated for those with caring responsibilities (see dedicated policy), or for part-time or distance-learning students.

Pastoral care is best provided by your institutions, but CHASE can offer another channel of support via dedicated training sessions and spaces for sharing experiences with fellow researchers. It is also a site where we can facilitate the sharing of best practice among our institutions. Supervisors can find an [online training module](#) on the CHASE training hub that is designed to promote awareness and understanding of mental health issues and knowledge about how to provide and signpost appropriate support.

CHASE institutions have been active in putting PGR mental health onto the university agenda:

The Students Union and faculty at UEA have led the multi-faceted [COURAGE Wellbeing project](#), a research project which includes various training and support events for PGR students, including the PhDiggers gardening group.

Sussex's [U-DOC research project](#), which ran until January 2020, undertook vital research into supporting the mental health of doctoral researchers. Here is their [suggested self-care strategies poster](#). CHASE is also in a good position to support peer-led initiatives to address PGR mental health issues.

For information about the kinds of support that institutions offer under the [Mental Health Charter](#), and for the latest news about student wellbeing issues, see the [Student Minds](#) website.

You can also find out more about Universities' responsibilities in protecting students' mental health and wellbeing in the [University Mental Health Charter](#).

Confronting isolation

One of the challenges doctoral students in the Arts and Humanities often face is the feeling of isolation. Independent research does not have to be lonely. In addition to the support offered by the member institutions, CHASE also offers spaces for connection and collaboration through its training events and research networks. If you want to set up a new

network, or need advice about how to connect with other researchers in your field, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Covid-19

It is clear that the pandemic has both highlighted and heightened the pressures on doctoral researchers. ([cf. summary of research by SMaRteN and Vitae](#)).

Colleagues within CHASE continue to respond to the unfolding situation in various ways to support our students, alongside supervisors and institutional support networks. Your first port of call will be your supervisors and the support services at your institution, but where CHASE can offer specific advice or support, we will do so sympathetically.

You can also find advice from the Mental Health Foundation about [working during the covid-19 pandemic](#)