

Taught and research postgraduate mental health and wellbeing: from research to best practice

Keynote: Annual Meeting for Directors of Postgraduate Education & Postgraduate Tutors 2023-24

Presented by:

- Dr Paula Miles: Senior Lecturer, School of Psychology & Neuroscience, University of St Andrew's
- Dr Adam Welstead: Head of Student Wellbeing, University of Cambridge; Fellow of Wolfson College

This presentation highlights notable trajectories of recent research on taught and research postgraduate wellbeing and reflects on best practice approaches in light of these research findings.

Dr Paula Miles will present recent research on taught postgraduate (PGT) student wellbeing. PGT students have been identified as an especially vulnerable group and have been referred to as the 'forgotten cohort' in the higher education literature (Coneyworth *et al.*, 2019). Reasons for poor PGT student wellbeing include high academic expectations, transitioning to a new learning environment, changes in living environments, developing new support systems, and juggling academic personal responsibilities, all within a short period of time. Dr Miles' research employs a longitudinal mixed-methods design, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods, to:

1. Monitor PGT student wellbeing across the academic year in order to identify any patterns or trends;
2. Identify factors that help and hinder the wellbeing of PGT students;
3. Influence university policy and practice by developing the tools necessary to support PGT wellbeing.

Dr Adam Welstead will highlight key research on interventions, practices and institutional arrangements for supporting postgraduate research (PGR) students' mental health and wellbeing, including themes such as:

1. The relationship between PGR students and their supervisors;
2. Psychological and emotional resources;
3. Personal and professional skills;
4. Community.

Dr Welstead will also offer an overview of the collegiate University's strategic approach to student mental health and wellbeing in recent years, including new services and pilot initiatives designed to support postgraduate students' wellbeing and to better support student-facing staff.

Our hope is that the presentation will provide useful context and research-based reflections for our colleagues, which may prompt further discussions and developments to enrich the education, research experience and wellbeing of postgraduate students at Cambridge.