Plan Overview

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Title: The Challenges of Part-Time PGRs: Exploring PGR Community Integration and Balancing Study, Work, and Other Commitments

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Project abstract:

Background: Part-time postgraduate researchers (PGRs) face unique challenges that can impede their academic progress and integration into the academic community. Despite constituting a substantial proportion of the doctoral student population, part-time PGRs may encounter barriers that affect their ability to balance study, work, and personal commitments effectively. These challenges may contribute to lower completion rates compared to full-time PGRs. Moreover, part-time PGRs' limited physical presence on campus and constrained access to resources and support networks pose difficulties in integrating into the academic and social community, impacting their sense of belonging and well-being.

Objectives: This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by part-time PGRs, focusing on their integration into the academic community and the balance between their academic studies, professional commitments, and other non-academic commitments. It seeks to explore the impact of these challenges on their academic experience and identify strategies that part-time PGRs employ to navigate these barriers successfully.

Methods: This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining a questionnaire and interviews to understand the experiences of part-time PGRs. The questionnaires will use several validated scales that measure wellbeing, loneliness, and academic commitment, alongside participants' interest in follow-up interviews. This will be complemented by semi-structured interviews aimed at understanding the experiences of part-time PGR, the challenges they face, the strategies they employ, and the support they would like to receive. The study anticipates recruiting participants across various faculties to ensure a diverse representation of experiences. Analytical methods will include statistical analysis of survey data (e.g., correlations) to identify patterns and thematic analysis of interview data to identify themes and subthemes.

Anticipated Outcomes: Through this research, we aim to highlight the specific needs and

experiences of part-time PGRs, to form a better understanding of the challenges they face in balancing their academic and non-academic lives. By identifying effective strategies for managing these challenges, the study expects to contribute valuable insights towards enhancing support systems within the University and the Students’ Union.

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The Challenges of Part-Time PGRs: Exploring PGR Community Integration and Balancing Study, Work, and Other Commitments

Defining your data

- What digital data (and physical data if applicable) will you collect or create during the project?
- How will the data be collected or created, and over what time period?
- What formats will your digital data be in? (E.g. .doc, .txt, .jpeg)
- Approximately how much digital data (in GB, MB, etc) will be generated during the project?
- Are you using pre-existing datasets? Give details if possible, including conditions of use.

We will collect digital data from participants in the forms of responses to questions in a questionnaire and answers to questions in interviews. The question responses will be demographic information and multiple-choice responses to questions about part-time PGR life (e.g., wellbeing, academic engagement). The interviews will be discussions about part-time PGR issues, coping strategies, and support expected from the University and the Students' Union.

The data will be collected via a Qualtrics survey, and the interviews will be conducted on Google Meet, as the University-provided platform. The use of this software helps with assuring the quality of data collection as these services are reliable and can also be used for storing the data. We will also ensure the quality of data collection by targeting emails to part-time PGR students only and choosing suitable interview participants by ensuring that we select part-time students from a variety of departments.

The responses to the questionnaire will be downloaded from Qualtrics and stored initially in .csv format, and for processing, may be stored in .xlsx, .docx, or .spss formats as appropriate and will have a size of 100KB or less. The interviews will be recorded in .mp3 or .wav format and transcribed in .txt or .docx format. We anticipate needing around 100MB of audio data per hour of recorded interview, and we estimate that we will conduct 10-15 interviews with an average length of 40 minutes. 15 interviews of 40 minutes each will require an estimated 1GB of audio data. We will use a transcription service approved by the University.

We are not using any pre-existing datasets.

Looking after data during your research

- Where will you store digital data during the project to ensure it is secure and backed up regularly? (E.g.University research storage, or University Google drive)
- How will you name and organise your data files? (An example filename can help to illustrate this)
- If you collect or create physical data, where will you store these securely?
- How will you make data easier to understand and use? (E.g. include file structure and methodology in a README file)
- Will you use extra security precautions for any of your digital or physical data? (E.g. for sensitive and/or personal data)

We will store anonymised data on the University Google drive and any identifiable data on the X: drive. Files will be named according to what data they are storing, e.g., one of “questionnaire_data”, “recorded_interviews”, “interview_transcriptions” or similar, with a suitable name to describe processed statistical data. The data will be organised into folders separated by each kind, as in questionnaire data, interviews and so on. We will not collect physical data.

We will create a file that explains what all the variables used for statistical analysis are. The names will contain abbreviations so these will be explained in detail in a README file (e.g., acad_engag might be used for academic engagement).

The transcripts will be anonymised, with no way to link them ot the participants. The recordings will be deleted as soon as the transcriptions are completed and checked.

Storing data after your research

- Which parts of your data will be stored on a long-term basis after the end of the project?
- Where will the data be stored after the project? (E.g. University of Sheffield repositoryORDA, or a subject-specific repository)
- How long will the data be stored for? (E.g. standard TUoS retention period of minimum 10 years after the project)
- Who will place the data in a repository or other long-term storage? (E.g. you, or your supervisor)

- If you plan to use long-term data storage other than a repository, who will be responsible for the data?

We will upload all the data collected (e.g., questionnaire results, interview transcriptions, codes, and themes generated after thematic analysis) on the Open Science Framework (OSF), an open-source project management tool, where it will be stored indefinitely. Identifying information will be unnecessary for understanding the results and so will be destroyed after the project is completed. This means that no personal data will be uploaded as all the uploaded data will be anonymous on OSF. The data will be deleted from the University storage as soon as it is uploaded on OSF.

The participants will be notified about this and will have the right to withdraw their data, as specified in the information sheet and consent form of the study.

Sharing data after your research

- How will you make data available outside of the research group after the project? (E.g. openly available through a repository, or on request through your department)
- Will you make all of your data available, or are there reasons you can't do this? (E.g. personal data, commercial or legal restrictions, very large datasets)
- If there are reasons you can't share all of your data, how might you make as much of it available as possible? (E.g. anonymisation, participant consent, sharing analysed data only)
- How will you make your data as widely accessible as possible? (E.g. include a data availability statement in publications, ensure published data has a DOI)
- What licence will you apply to your data to say how it can be reused and shared? (E.g. one of the Creative Commons licences)

The anonymised dataset will be available through the Open Science Framework.

We will collect email addresses to be able to contact the participants who take part in the questionnaire and express interest in taking part in the interview, but these will be collected separately from the study data and destroyed after interviews are completed and payments in the form of vouchers are provided.

As we also offer a voucher draw to survey participants, those who wish to enter the draw need to provide their email address through a separate link, with this data being destroyed after the draws are completed.

If any personal information is revealed during the interviews that may constitute a direct or indirect identifier, this will be removed from the transcript. The DOI for data available in OSF will be included in a data availability statement in publications.

Putting your plan into practice

- Who is responsible for making sure your data management plan is followed? (E.g. you with the support of your supervisor)
- How often will your data management plan be reviewed and updated? (E.g. yearly and if the project changes)
- Are there any actions you need to take in order to put your data management plan into practice? (E.g. requesting University research storage via your supervisor.)

All the members of the research team will have a responsibility to name and organise files correctly, and to only access the identifiable data on the University X: drive – as such everyone on the team will be responsible for data management. We will not require any additional resources beyond the university Google drive accounts provided.