

# Supporting PGR Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

For supervisors and staff who support PGR students

# This resource is comprised of three sections, each with an accompanying recording

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## Supporting PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing;

### Part 1:

- Centrally provided resources for PGR students
- Support for supervisors and staff

Recording [here](#).

### Part 2:

- Setting the context – wellbeing challenges for PGR students
- Student Services and Wellbeing Team
- Emergencies, serious concern, the Student of Concern process
- Confidentiality
- Supporting PGR wellbeing; current Covid-19 pandemic

Recording [here](#). Access password: 6p#9oT\$5

### Part 3:

- Disclosed mental health conditions, King's Inclusion Plans\*
- Dealing with undisclosed mental health issues; case study\*

Recording [here](#). Access password: 9f!o.971

# Supporting PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing

## Part 1

Centrally provided resources for PGR students

Support for supervisors and staff

May 2020

# Wellbeing support for PhDs

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## Centre for Doctoral Studies

- PGR Wellbeing Toolkit (online blended support)
- Stress Management course
- Workshops – [Coping with the Stress of a PhD](#) (Prof Geoffrey Cantor)

# The Wellbeing Thesis - [thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/](http://thewellbeingthesis.org.uk/)



Search  Menu 

An online resource for postgraduate research students to support your wellbeing, learning and research.



Get started 

Find out more about us

I'm looking for

Enter keywords to start

Search

# PGR Wellbeing Event Fund

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Up to £850 towards student or staff-led events to address PGR wellbeing, mental health and community.

Call currently open – deadline end of May.

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/student/doctoral-studies/pgr/support/pgr-student-led-events>

# Centre for Doctoral Studies and careers teams



The image shows a screenshot of the King's College London website. At the top left is the King's College London logo. To its right is a navigation menu with the following items: Prospective students, Student services, Research & Innovation, Our faculties, and About King's. Further right are links for Students, Staff, and Alumni, followed by a search icon. Below the navigation is the heading "Study at King's". Underneath this heading is a horizontal list of links: Undergraduate, Postgraduate, More courses, International, Why King's?, Accommodation, Student life, and Visit King's. The main visual element is a hero banner featuring four black and white portraits of diverse young adults. Overlaid on the center of these portraits is the text "Training for Postgraduate Research Students" in a large, white, sans-serif font.

**KING'S**  
*College*  
**LONDON**

Prospective students ▾ Student services ▾ Research & Innovation ▾ Our faculties ▾ About King's ▾

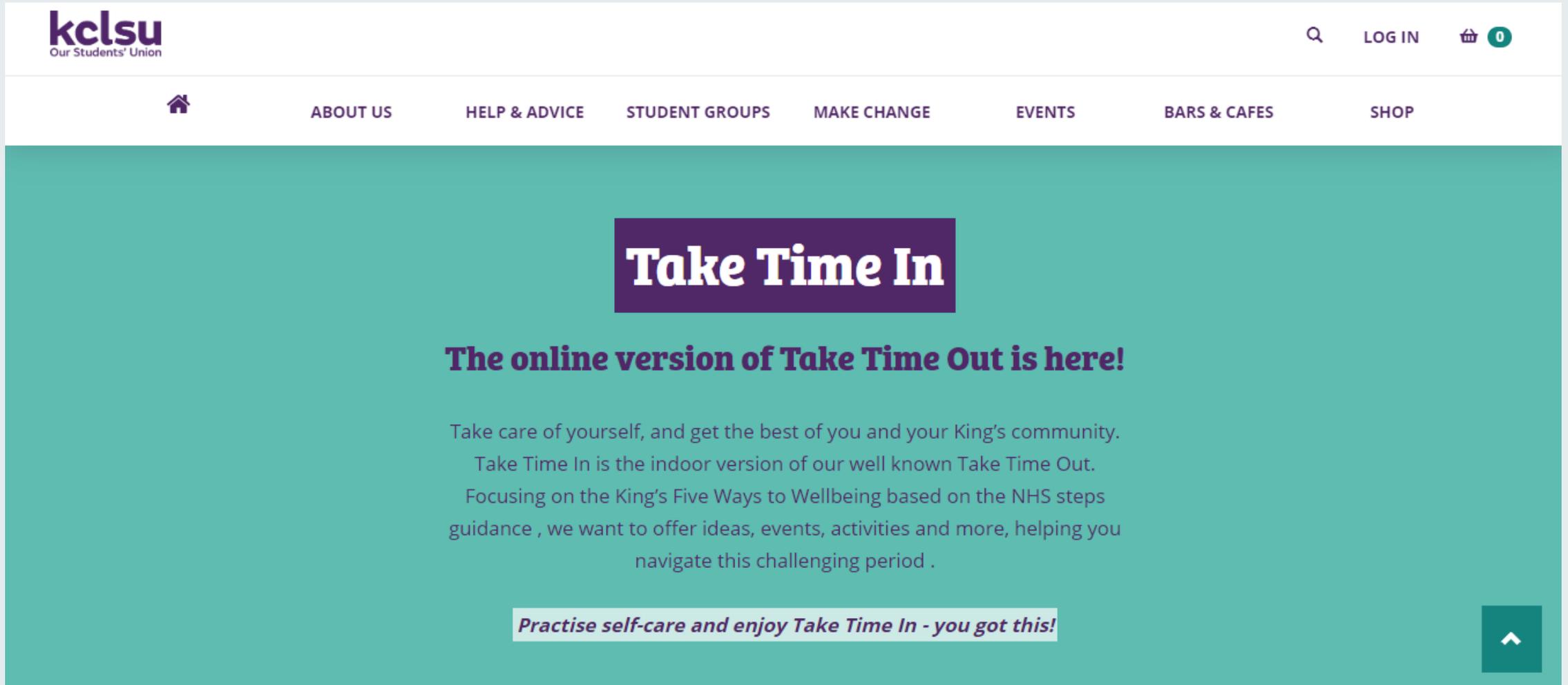
Students Staff Alumni 🔍

## Study at King's

[Undergraduate](#) | [Postgraduate](#) | [More courses](#) | [International](#) | [Why King's?](#) | [Accommodation](#) | [Student life](#) | [Visit King's](#)

# Training for Postgraduate Research Students

# KCLSU Take Time In campaign - [kclsu.org/taketimein/](https://kclsu.org/taketimein/)



The image shows a screenshot of the KCLSU website. At the top left is the KCLSU logo with the tagline 'Our Students' Union'. To the right of the logo are search, login, and a shopping cart icon with a '0' notification. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links for Home, About Us, Help & Advice, Student Groups, Make Change, Events, Bars & Cafes, and Shop. The main content area has a teal background. In the center, the text 'Take Time In' is displayed in white on a dark purple rectangular background. Below this, a bold heading reads 'The online version of Take Time Out is here!'. The text continues: 'Take care of yourself, and get the best of you and your King's community. Take Time In is the indoor version of our well known Take Time Out. Focusing on the King's Five Ways to Wellbeing based on the NHS steps guidance, we want to offer ideas, events, activities and more, helping you navigate this challenging period.' At the bottom, a white box contains the text 'Practise self-care and enjoy Take Time In - you got this!'. A small teal square with a white upward-pointing arrow is in the bottom right corner.

**kclsu**  
Our Students' Union

LOG IN

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ABOUT US HELP & ADVICE STUDENT GROUPS MAKE CHANGE EVENTS BARS & CAFES SHOP

## Take Time In

### The online version of Take Time Out is here!

Take care of yourself, and get the best of you and your King's community. Take Time In is the indoor version of our well known Take Time Out. Focusing on the King's Five Ways to Wellbeing based on the NHS steps guidance, we want to offer ideas, events, activities and more, helping you navigate this challenging period.

*Practise self-care and enjoy Take Time In - you got this!*

# Pastoral Care and Wellbeing

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/student/doctoral-studies/s-visor/resource/index>

Advice on common wellbeing issues on our web pages

Personal Tutor Portal

Financial support including the Hardship Fund.

PGR Coordinators/Leads and Associate Deans for Doctoral Studies

The screenshot shows the King's College London website. At the top left is the King's College London logo. To its right is a search bar with a 'GO' button and radio buttons for 'INTRANET' and 'PEOPLE'. Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: ABOUT KING'S, UNIVERSITY LIFE, HOW TO..., RESEARCH & INNOVATION, FACULTIES & DEPARTMENTS, STAFF EXPERIENCE, and STUDENT SERVICES. A breadcrumb trail reads: Home | Student Services | Centre for Doctoral Studies | Supervisors & Staff | Services & resources. The main heading is 'PASTORAL CARE & WELLBEING'. On the left is a sidebar menu with sections: ABOUT US, UKRI STUDENTSHIPS GENERAL GUIDANCE, PGR PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE, POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHERS, PRES 2019, SUPERVISORS & STAFF (with sub-links: Supervisor Documents & Regulations, Supervisors & Staff, About Us, Supervisory best practice & CPD, Services & resources (highlighted with a blue arrow), Joint PhDs, Submission & examination), and CONTACT US. The main content area has a paragraph: 'As well as providing Postgraduate Research Students with support and guidance on their intellectual output and professional development, pastoral care is an important element of PGR supervision. This page provides information and resources to help you with the pastoral element of your supervisory practice.' Below this is a light blue box titled 'Emergencies or Serious Concern: How to get help' containing a bullet point: 'Please click here to go to the Students at Risk Procedure page for guidance and to report critical or emergency risk situations'. At the bottom of the main content area are several expandable sections: 'Pastoral Care: What are your responsibilities?', 'Common Wellbeing Issues for PGR Students', 'Key Contacts', and 'Financial Support'. On the right side of the page are three vertical banners: 'VITAE SUPERVISOR SUPPORT EXTERNAL WEBSITE', 'DOCS & REGULATIONS PGR STUDENTS & STAFF', and 'STUDENT WELFARE SUPPORT PERSONAL TUTOR PORTAL'.

# Student Services

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Disability Service including Mental Health Advisers  
Counselling Service

Access via Student Services Online: [\*\*https://self-service.kcl.ac.uk/\*\*](https://self-service.kcl.ac.uk/)

# What can supervisors/colleagues do? (1)

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Ask “How are you feeling?” (not “how is it going?”)

Talk to them seriously and listen

Ask about their support networks – family/friends

Help them see the broader context – they may not be seeing reality

Encourage time for training and development opportunities

Careers team can help – get in touch

Keep an eye on the student

**Recognise your own limitations**

# What can supervisors/colleagues do? (2)

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Role model good work/life balance (emails etc)

Know emergency procedures

Make sure students know how to access GPs, counselling, student services

Take a coaching approach; listen actively, ask open questions, summarise back, validate their concerns

Ask them what would help them – this won't make it worse.

# Support for supervisors and other staff

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Line manager

Employee Assistance Programme

Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies and PGR Coordinators

Centre for Doctoral Studies

King's Organisational Development

# Further training and reading

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## Supporting students in distress – online training

The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust offers free e-learning modules for anyone in HE in a student-facing role. Topics include setting boundaries, signs to look out for when students are experiencing mental health difficulties

<http://learning.cwmt.org.uk/e-learning/higher-education/>

## King's Organisational Development

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/hr/od/learn/health-and-wellbeing>

Mental Health Awareness and First Aid Courses

Specific courses on LinkedIn Learning e.g. mindfulness, managing stress

## Further reading/watching

[The Loneliness of the Long-Distance PhD Researcher- Cantor, G; Psychodynamic Practice](#)

[Vitae Twitter Chat – Mental Health and Wellbeing of Researchers](#) – Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> May 12-1pm

# Supporting PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing

## Part 2

Centrally provided resources for PGR students

Support for supervisors and staff

May 2020

# What we'll cover

1. Setting the context – wellbeing challenges for PGR students
2. Student Services and Wellbeing Team
3. Emergencies, serious concern, the Student of Concern process
4. Confidentiality
5. Supporting PGR wellbeing; current Covid-19 pandemic

\* Webinar next week: 19 May 12.30

1. Disclosed mental health conditions, King's Inclusion Plans\*
2. Dealing with undisclosed mental health issues; case study\*

Excellent webinar on supervision during Coronavirus pandemic from UKCGE: [https://youtu.be/2p\\_qikImgno](https://youtu.be/2p_qikImgno)

King's PGR Student Coronavirus FAQ page: <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/coronavirus/students/pgr-students>

# 1. Wellbeing challenges for PGR students

- Transition from taught to research degree
- Working in teams
- Isolation – part-time, international, AHSS, mature
- Imposter syndrome
- Cultural differences
- Student-supervisor relationship
  
- Job prospects
- Financial strain
- Balancing other commitments e.g. family, jobs
- Time pressure
- Feeling a lack of progress
- ‘Publish or perish’
- Uncertainty

**nature** [Subscribe](#)

EDITORIAL · 29 MARCH 2018

## Time to talk about why so many postgrads have poor mental health

An outpouring on Twitter highlights the acute pressures on young scientists.

[Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [Email](#)

[PDF version](#)



### Lecturers

## 'It's cut-throat': half of UK academics stressed and 40% thinking of leaving

Frequent rejection and a loss of control are making university staff isolated and ill, new research shows

Anna Fazackerley

Tue 21 May 2019 07:15 BST

[f](#) [Twitter](#) [Email](#) 6,283 329



## 2. Student Services and Wellbeing Team

### **Brief overview of Student Services and Wellbeing**

- **Student Services** - Frontline staff in person/online and via phone
  - quick queries and signposting
- **Student/International Advice Team** -Housing advice, funding advice and benefits advice, international student advice visas and orientation
- **Counselling and Mental health** - Short-term counselling including CBT, Psychotherapy and group counselling
- **Disability Support Team** - academic support for students with SpLDs, long-term medical, physical and mental health conditions.

# Disability Support Team (DST)

- Head of Student Disability: Barry Hayward
- Senior Disability Adviser: Marianne Pyer
- Disability Advisers: Marie Bahr, Jackie Nash, Philippa Goldsmith
- Mental Health Disability Advisers: Hannah Bell, Daniel Winstanley, Marie Bahr
- Assistant Disability Advisers: Robert Tanczos, Steffi Baum and Tulsi Taylor
- Learning Support Coordinator: Grazia Bevere
- Learning Support Tutors: Peter Lia and Linda Kelland
- Assistive Technology Support Coordinator: Errol Thomas
- Administrator: Eniola Jaiyeoba
- <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/disability>   [disability@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:disability@kcl.ac.uk)   020 7848 1234

# Disability Support Team (DST)

- The Disability Support Team is here to provide applicants, students and staff with information, advice and guidance on disability support issues.
- Support across the university
- Sources of funding
- Accessibility
- Liaising with departments about support – King's Inclusion Plan (KIP)
- Diagnostic assessments
- Referrals to external agencies
- Assistive technology
- Learning support

# 3. Emergencies, serious concern, the Student of Concern process

- Crisis support
- What is Student of Concern (SOC)?
- When to raise a SOC?
- How will I know the student is being supported?

Crisis support

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/counselling/crisis-support>

Student of concern process:

<https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/student/student-of-concern/index>

# 4. Confidentiality

- Consent Form – signed by all students who register with the service
- DST is a confidential service and will not be able to share information without the student's consent or knowledge.
- Students may restrict how much information is shared.
- DST cannot share information with academics without the Student's consent.
- Extending confidentiality – When and Why

# . Supporting PGR wellbeing

## What can supervisors/colleagues do? (1)

- Ask “How are you feeling?” (not “how is it going?”)
- Talk to them seriously and listen
- Help them see the broader context – they may not be seeing reality
- Encourage time for training and development opportunities
- Careers team can help – get in touch
- Keep an eye on the student
- **Recognise your own limitations**

# What can supervisors/colleagues do? (2)

- Role model good work/life balance (emails etc)
- Ask about their support networks – family/friends
- Know [emergency procedures](#)
- Make sure students know how to access GPs, counselling, student services
- Take a coaching approach; listen actively, ask open questions, summarise back, validate their concerns
- Ask them what would help them – this won't make it worse.

# Supervising remotely during the Coronavirus crisis

Advice for PhD Supervisors; adapted from the University of Glasgow Researcher Development team

## Be realistic about what you can do

*You don't have to pretend you're OK but you must communicate your limitations*



## Be realistic about what your student can do

*Assume your student is facing undisclosed difficulties & have realistic expectations*



## Make sure your student is accessing essential university information

*You don't need to mediate: remind them to check email & the university website*



## Establish your communications

*Agree a frequency and technology that works for you both: manage expectations & demonstrate support*



## Signpost support networks

*Ensure your student isn't isolated: make sure they are in contact with a wider team or peer group*



## Help your student make the most of their time

*Help them prioritize. Signpost career development and training opportunities*



## Reassure your student

*Everyone at the university wants them to succeed and will do all they can to help*



## You don't need to know all the answers

*Contact the services who can help e.g. your Faculty PGR Leads, I.T., International Support etc.*

# 5. Resources to support your PGR students

Resources specific to coronavirus pandemic:

<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/doctoral-studies/pgr-coronavirus-information>

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/coronavirus-covid-19-anxiety-tips/>

Counselling & Mental Health Support Service have created guides on [tackling procrastination](#), [looking after your wellbeing](#) and managing [anxious feeling, worry and insomnia](#).

Next dates: Webinars for PGR students and research staff (being recorded)

- 13 May: Navigating Change and Uncertainty
- 27 May: Stress, resilience and strengths

Careers one-to-one appointments, seminars, recordings on KEATS: [kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect](http://kcl.ac.uk/careerconnect)

- Rethink Student guide, written by students for students - <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/655999/>
- Mind - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/relaxation-tips/>
- BBC – advice on social media and limiting its use - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-51873799>

# Contacts

[kcl.ac.uk/disability](http://kcl.ac.uk/disability)  
[disability@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:disability@kcl.ac.uk)

[kcl.ac.uk/doctoral-studies](http://kcl.ac.uk/doctoral-studies)  
[doctoralstudies@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralstudies@kcl.ac.uk)

# **Supporting PGR Mental Health and Wellbeing**

## **Part 3**

Panel: Sarah Byford, Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies in IoPPN, Hannah Bell, Amy Moore

# What we'll cover

1. Disclosed mental health conditions, King's Inclusion Plans\*
2. Dealing with undisclosed mental health issues; case study\*

## Previous recordings covered:

1. Setting the context – wellbeing challenges for PGR students
2. Student Services and Wellbeing Team
3. Emergencies, serious concern, the Student of Concern process
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# Process when a mental health condition is disclosed

- Once a student is offered a place all students who have disclosed a disability on application are contacted by DST and sent information on what DST does.
- Legal responsibility
- Confidentiality
- Students are encouraged to contact DST for an appointment as soon as possible particularly if they have complex conditions eg personality disorders, schizophrenia etc.
- Initial assessment including – symptoms, medication, external support, GP/CMHT details, signs/symptoms when unwell, risk assessment, support had in previous degrees.
- Support we provide –KIP, Viva adjustments, Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)
- Follow up appointments - if required
- Support available within King's

# Example of a King's Inclusion Plan (KIP)

## King's Inclusion Plan 2019/20 to 2023/3

Name		Student Number	
Disability	Mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder	Faculty	
Programme	Master/Doctor of Philosophy	Year of Study	1st
<b>Disability Information:</b>			
<b>Depression</b>			
<p>Depression is a long lasting mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, loss, anger, or frustration interfere with everyday life for a long period of time. It affects people's ability to do everyday things, feel pleasure, or take interest in activities.</p> <p>There is no one cause for depression but it can be triggered by external factors such as family history, upbringing, stressful events and lifestyle which can all affect an individual's risk of developing depression. Depression is normally treated with medication, therapy or counselling.</p> <p>Students with depression report experiencing difficulties with maintaining focus and concentration when undertaking academic tasks, which can lead to an insecure grasp of theories, ideas and concepts, as well as impacting upon the length of time required to complete assignments and associated activities. A lack of motivation is often a key feature of depression and students frequently describe having difficulties engaging with academic tasks and activities, especially as these tasks and activities can appear unwieldy and overwhelming.</p> <p>Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop after the experience of a traumatic or frightening event. It can develop a short time after the event, or sometimes months or years later. PTSD causes feelings of intense fear, helplessness and horror. Symptoms of PTSD can be panic attacks, nightmares and flashbacks (seeing images or visions of the past event in your mind). PTSD can cause the individual to less able to be able to work, socialise or carry out every day activities.</p>			

Area of Action	would benefit from the following support and adjustments:
Responsibility of Academic Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular meetings with supervisor to be agreed in advance with x .</li> <li>- Work to be broken down into smaller manageable chunks with targets to set in agreement with x.</li> <li>- There are certain dates in the year that cause a flare up in X's conditions during which time it may be more difficult for them to work. It is therefore, recommended that x does not work over these dates to allow x manage any flare up of symptoms. Where possible this should be agreed in advance.</li> <li>-If x is experiencing a flare up of their symptoms x should be option to work from home.</li> <li>- Due to the fluctuating nature of x's condition flexible working hours to be agreed as needed.</li> <li>- Supervisor to offer a mock viva.</li> <li>- clear, unambiguous feedback on submitted work.</li> <li>- permission to attend medical appointments during term-time, impacting upon their attendance.</li> <li>- Permission for to record meeting with their supervisor.</li> </ul>
Facilitated by Disability Support Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Useful Links:</li> <li>Learning Support Group Sessions: <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/supportfordisabledstudents/groupsupportandworkshops.aspx">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/supportfordisabledstudents/groupsupportandworkshops.aspx</a></li> <li>Disability Support Team Study Guides: <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/onlineresources/studyguides.aspx">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/onlineresources/studyguides.aspx</a></li> <li>x</li> <li>Assistive Software Support and Information: <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/onlineresources/assistivesoftware">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/disability/onlineresources/assistivesoftware</a></li> <li>Counselling Service: <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/counselling/index.aspx">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/campuslife/services/counselling/index.aspx</a></li> <li>Library Services: <a href="https://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/disability/index.aspx">https://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/disability/index.aspx</a></li> </ul>
Responsibility of Library Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- extensions to library loans (1 week extended to 2 weeks).</li> </ul>
Personalised Assessment Arrangements (PAAs)	<p>This section refers to formal examinations taken as part of a degree qualification, and both formal and informal timed assessments taken as part of a course of study.</p> <p>No written examinations are expected to form part of this course of study, however if this changes is eligible to request Personalised Assessment Arrangements (PAA) from the Examinations and Awards Office.</p> <p>For the Viva: Should x require adjustments and/or examiners to be informed of his medical conditions. x will need to arrange an appointment with his disability adviser to discuss this further. A case can then be put forward to the Research Degrees Team within the Examinations and Awards Office</p>

Questions?

# Undisclosed mental health conditions; Case study

- You are supervisor to a student in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of their PhD who up until recently had been in regular contact, attending supervision meeting and was making good progress.
- In the last 6 months they have lost contact with you missing supervision meetings and only occasionally responding to emails, but over the last month you have heard nothing. You request a meeting encouraging them to attend, the student misses it again, but sends an email disclosing for the first time that they have depression and anxiety which has worsened in the last 6 months. They say their mood is very low and they are struggling with sleep which has been ongoing for some time. They say they rarely leave the house and when they do they experience panic attacks. They disclose they took an overdose a week ago, and since then they have had very little motivation to work and they are struggling with their concentration. The student asks you not to share this information with anyone else.
- **What approach would you take to this information?**

# Undisclosed mental health conditions; Case study - advice

- Explain to them that you would need to get some advice on how to support the student, but would be discussing it with line manager/colleague.
- Ask the student if they have any support in place. This could be both internal and/or external support.
- If the student is receiving support from Disability you may discuss with the student reaching out to ask for advice.
- Ask student if they have seen their GP/medical professional and advise them to seek support from them.
- Send website link to Crisis support that is available
- Sign post them to Counselling and Disability for support both emotionally and academically.
- Register the student as a Student of Concern.

# Questions?

- Supporting mental health issues remotely
- What to do if a student with existing MH condition is finding things so difficult they are not able to complete any PhD work.

# Contacts

[kcl.ac.uk/disability](http://kcl.ac.uk/disability)  
[disability@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:disability@kcl.ac.uk)

[kcl.ac.uk/doctoral-studies](http://kcl.ac.uk/doctoral-studies)  
[doctoralstudies@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralstudies@kcl.ac.uk)