

Understanding the Mental health of Doctoral Researchers

Researcher-Led Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiatives - Application Form

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Researcher-Led Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiatives funding scheme.

The deadline for applications is Friday 8th November 2019.

Please ensure that you have read the application guidance before completing your application.

1. Name

[REDACTED]

2. Sussex e-mail address

[REDACTED]@sussex.ac.uk

4. School and department of lead applicant

International Development, School of Global Studies

About the proposed initiative

Title of initiative

Global Studies Wellbeing Workshops

When is the proposed initiative running?

On multiple dates

End date
17/06/2019

Start date
15/07/2019

Which theme(s) does your proposed initiative best align with?

Theme 1: Creating and maintaining community belonging

Theme 2: Cultivating time to breathe

Theme 3: Celebrating self and successes

Theme 4: Constructing "other groups, other routes, other ways to be free"

Theme 5: Curating experiences of research process

Please describe your proposed initiative (including how it aligns with the theme(s) you have selected above):

This series of workshops will provide a safe space for researchers from Global Studies to explore personal and collective challenges, support mechanisms and self-care techniques. It draws on a range of expertise and experiences, including opportunities for students and researchers themselves to share ideas and perspectives on mental health and wellbeing. The initiative aims to be as inclusive as possible, by taking a holistic and intersectional approach to mental health. This implies a number of principles:

- That mental health cannot be seen in isolation from physical, emotional and spiritual health and how these are experienced by the individual
- That political and economic realities, the environment and socio-cultural factors all shape the degree to which mental health problems are acknowledged and addressed
- That mental health and wellbeing is both an individual and a collective responsibility for the functioning of communities which care about its members

The Initiative will run over the course of 5 weeks, with each session valuable as a standalone and therefore no obligation to attend all sessions. They are designed to provide a range of services and ideas that researchers will familiarise themselves with and participate in during the sessions but can then use afterwards in their own time as well. The sessions will run for one hour and a half each week (timings TBC) with tea, coffee and snacks included.

The sessions will include:

1. What do we mean by mental health and what are the particular problems for researchers? In a story-telling rather than academic presentation format, academic staff and doctoral students will share experiences of struggles specific to research and fieldwork. The session will include information-sharing by staff from the School of Psychology and Student Life Centre about the key problems affecting doctoral students and means of support that are available.
2. Intersectional responses to mental health. A session to raise awareness of the particularities of mental health and possible responses within the academy. With external guest speakers specialised in topics of intersectional mental health, including [REDACTED] from Diversity and Ability (<https://diversityandability.com/about/>), a social enterprise that supports neurodiverse and disabled learners in education. The workshop will address a range of considerations regarding social aspects of mental health and wellbeing in education.
3. Wellbeing practice: Body and Breath. A gentle physical practice to be held at the Meeting House, which will encourage participants to get out of their minds and into their bodies. Includes discussion on the importance of embodied awareness in understanding mental health across different communities and cultures. [REDACTED]
4. Wellbeing practice: Journaling. Participants will be led through a writing exercise that supports them in processing emotions, unblocking creativity and realising their full potential. [REDACTED]
5. Wellbeing practice: Nature, presence and belonging. A guided walking practice through Stanmer Park, where participants will have opportunities to connect with nature and with each other using methods that encourage mindful awareness. [REDACTED]

These sessions address all of the main themes proposed in the Researcher-Led Mental Health and Wellbeing Initiative guidelines. Each session encourages sharing among participants about their experiences, to cultivate a sense that no one is alone in their struggles, whilst also recognising that there is diversity in those struggles; therefore supporting community belonging (Theme 1). The opening session will focus on challenges that are unique to the doctoral research process, and will include the sharing of lived experiences from academic staff, thereby contributing to Curating Experiences of the Research Process (Theme 5). The discussions in session 2 on intersectional responses to mental health and wellbeing, and the practices presented in sessions 3, 4 and 5 will include sharing and advice on groups and communities that can offer support to doctoral researchers and thus recognises other groups, other routes, other ways to be free (Theme 4). The journaling practice in session 4 will be an excellent opportunity to celebrate self and successes (Theme 3) by recording personal journeys and triumphs in the academy and recognising creative talents that transcend thesis writing! And there'll be tools and practices that help cultivate time to breath (Theme 2) – particularly sessions 3 and 5 - and which participants can take away and use again on their own or with others.

[REDACTED] has negotiated to be paid separately through the doctoral school and therefore her time will not be budgeted for.

Please provide a project timeline, outlining the steps you would take to organise the initiative, including promotion and evaluation of the activity

Workshops will run weekly over 5 consecutive weeks. They can be organised at any point in the academic year, and could be run more than once, dependent on facilitator availability. This first series is proposed for the week commencing 17 June, directly after the marking period closes. Although not all doctoral researchers teach, there are moments in the year which are more time-pressured than others, and scheduling this for the start of the summer would allow for a reflective space at the end of the year and a chance for those who were marking to refocus on their PhD goals. A second set of workshops could be scheduled in the middle/end of autumn term in order to start the year with mindfulness and community support.

Timeline:

1. May: Agree session structure with facilitators & timings. Issue contracts for external facilitators. Book facilities & catering. Design and print posters.
2. June: Email advertising to Global Studies researchers.
3. June-July: Run sessions, continue advertising.
4. July: Evaluation via feedback forms.

Please describe the target audience. For example, would your initiative be suitable for all doctoral researchers or only those at a particular stage and/or in a specific discipline?

All doctoral researchers in Global Studies – special emphasis made to include international students, part-time, parents, people with disabilities, BAME, LGBTQA+ and others.

If your target audience is within your department or School, please set out how the initiative could be scaled up (in future projects) to reach a broader range of doctoral researchers across Schools

The workshops can be easily replicated in other Schools and Departments. There is a strong case to keep a set of workshops at the School level, in order to foster a sense of community and communication with others in the same cohort. However, the same set of workshops can be rolled out across the University, provided speakers/facilitators are compensated for their time.

Please outline how your proposed initiative will promote awareness of, support, or improve doctoral researcher mental health and/or wellbeing at Sussex

Although Sussex provides good mental health support in the medical and counselling services, these are individually focused and require researchers to actively seek support. This initiative aims to reach out to those who would not usually seek 'medicalised' support, by grounding wellbeing within the School and as a core part of academic success. Whether or not someone attends a session, through the presence of the workshops we hope to raise awareness of the importance of wellbeing as a normal part of the PhD process, and to normalise the practice of self-care. The techniques provided by the session facilitators will improve attendees' awareness and self-care, while the group-oriented nature of the sessions will increase a sense of community and sharing, which will hopefully last beyond this specific initiative.

Describe how the success and impact of the initiative will be evaluated:

As we are encouraging people to attend any sessions, and not necessarily all, feedback will have to be collected from participants in each session, rather than aggregated at the end.

A brief paper feedback form will be provided at the end of each session. These will be collected by the facilitators and collated at the end of the project. The initiative organisers will review feedback after the project and provide a brief collated impact report to Global Studies and the Doctoral School, if required.

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget indicating what you would spend the funding on if you are successful in

your application.

Your budget should include a breakdown of costs and justification for each item (e.g. lunch for 30 people at £6 per head from Sussex Food; accommodation for external speaker at £80 per night at a University approved hotel or guest house). See the guidance notes for further advice on your proposed budget.

Budget details

Item details	£
Posters printing	£0.00
Room booking	£0.00
External speakers £200 each [REDACTED] + 1 other TBC)	£400.00
Facilitation fees for Sussex staff running workshops £75 each [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]	£150.00
Refreshments from Sussex catering (£2.40 per person x 15 x 5 weeks)	£180.00
Total: £730.00	

Total requested
£730.00

Do you have additional funding for the proposed initiative (e.g. from your School or Department?)

No

Please attach any additional documents here relevant to your application (e.g. to assist the panel in understanding the activity) (optional)

Researcher Wellbeing_Bios of the Organisers.docx