

University of Bristol: Be More Empowered For Success Postgraduate Research Programme



2022 – 2023 Impact Report

Authors: Myles-Jay Linton and Mar Ruiz Molina

Further information: [Click here to visit our webpage](#)

Contact details: doctoral-college@bristol.ac.uk

Introduction



1. Background

[Bristol Doctoral College](#) has funded the [Be More Empowered For Success Postgraduate Programme](#) since 2021.

This work sits within a wider set of prioritised individual and system-level equity, diversity and inclusion interventions, focussed on institutional improvements to postdoctoral education and experience.

2. Goal

This programme seeks to influence positive change for home Black, Asian and minority ethnic postgraduate researchers (PGRs).

3. Timeline

This phase of the project took place between September 2022 and July 2023.



4. Report outline

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Programme overview

How did we work with existing PGRs?



1. We worked with five paid PGR Advocates (three from the first year of the programme in 2021, and two newly appointed Advocates).

2. Advocates combined their lived experience with practical experience of diversity, equity and inclusion work in university settings.

3. This work was undertaken part-time, alongside PGR programmes across faculties (Arts, Engineering, Life Science and Health Science).

4. Staff (Bristol Doctoral College) met regularly online/in-person with Advocates to plan new initiatives and reflect on the outcome of previous events.



In 2023 we worked to establish five core values for the programme:
Community, Empathy, Trust, Impact and Collaboration

Three core areas of focus:



Belonging

Community building activities that bring PGRs together to socialise or discover more about the city.



Empowerment

Skills development activities, and opportunities to develop academic connections.



Access

Support for prospective students, seeking entry into postgraduate research.

Example events



Movie screening (e.g. Hidden Figures) with free pizza and a facilitated discussion of film themes



Simran Creative Lab wellbeing workshop at The Arnolfini

Panel presentation and Q&A with existing PGRs on how to publish during your PhD



Group trip to Chance & Counter, with access to over 850 board games



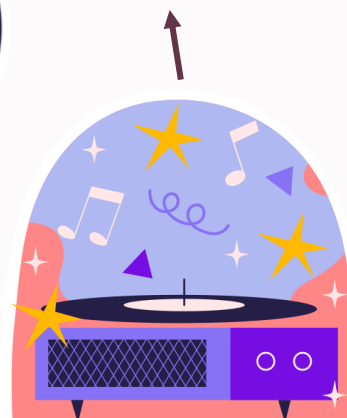
Evening of Social Badminton and networking in the Indoor Sports Centre

An introduction to postdoctoral research funding run by Bristol's Division of Research, Enterprise and Innovation



Group trip to Bristol Old Vic Theatre to watch 'YOU BURY ME'

Music and quiz night held in the BDC Hub



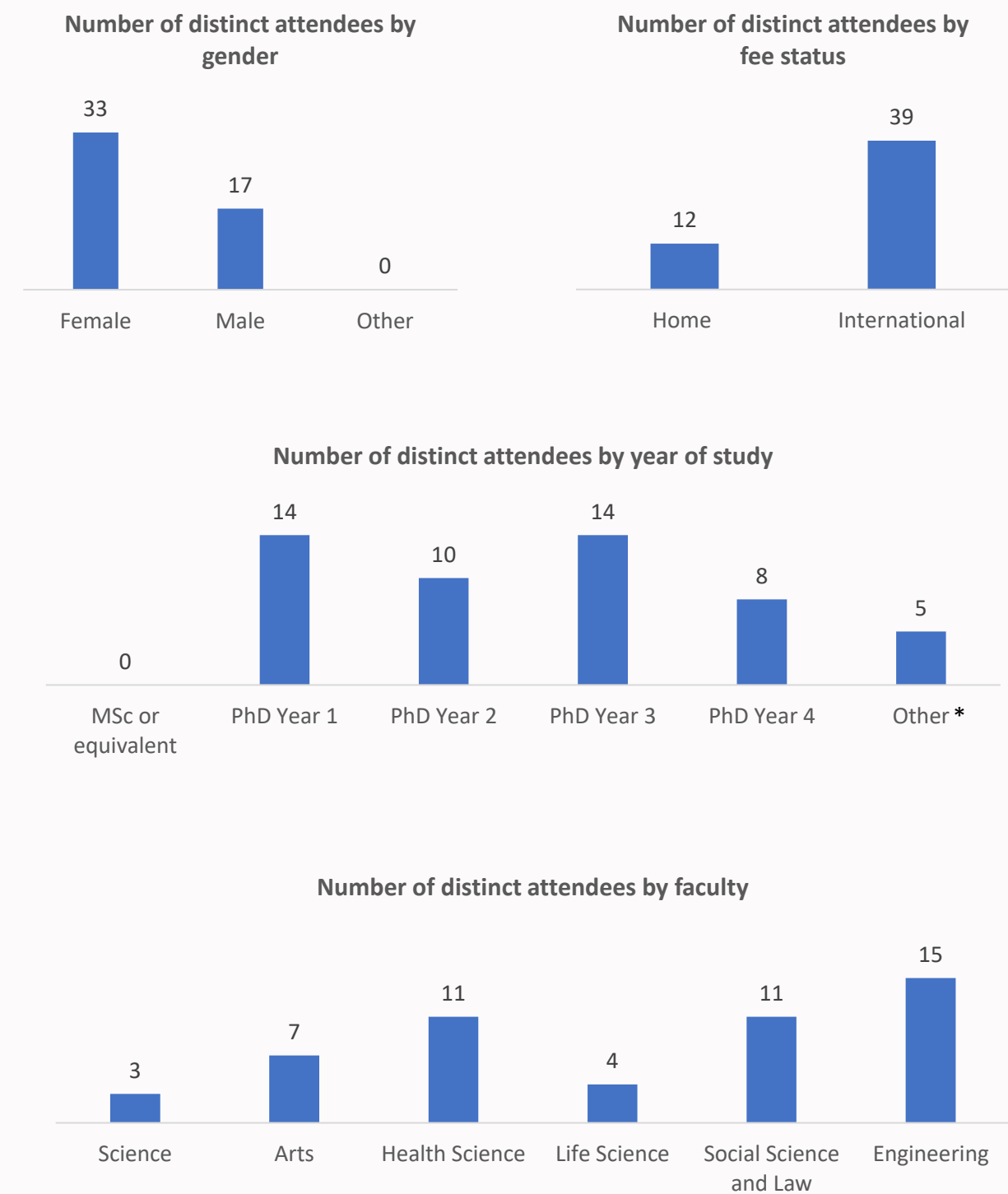
Evening of socialising and pottery painting



Tour of the SS Great Britain, and roundtable discussion on community-led research into migration

Attendance demographics

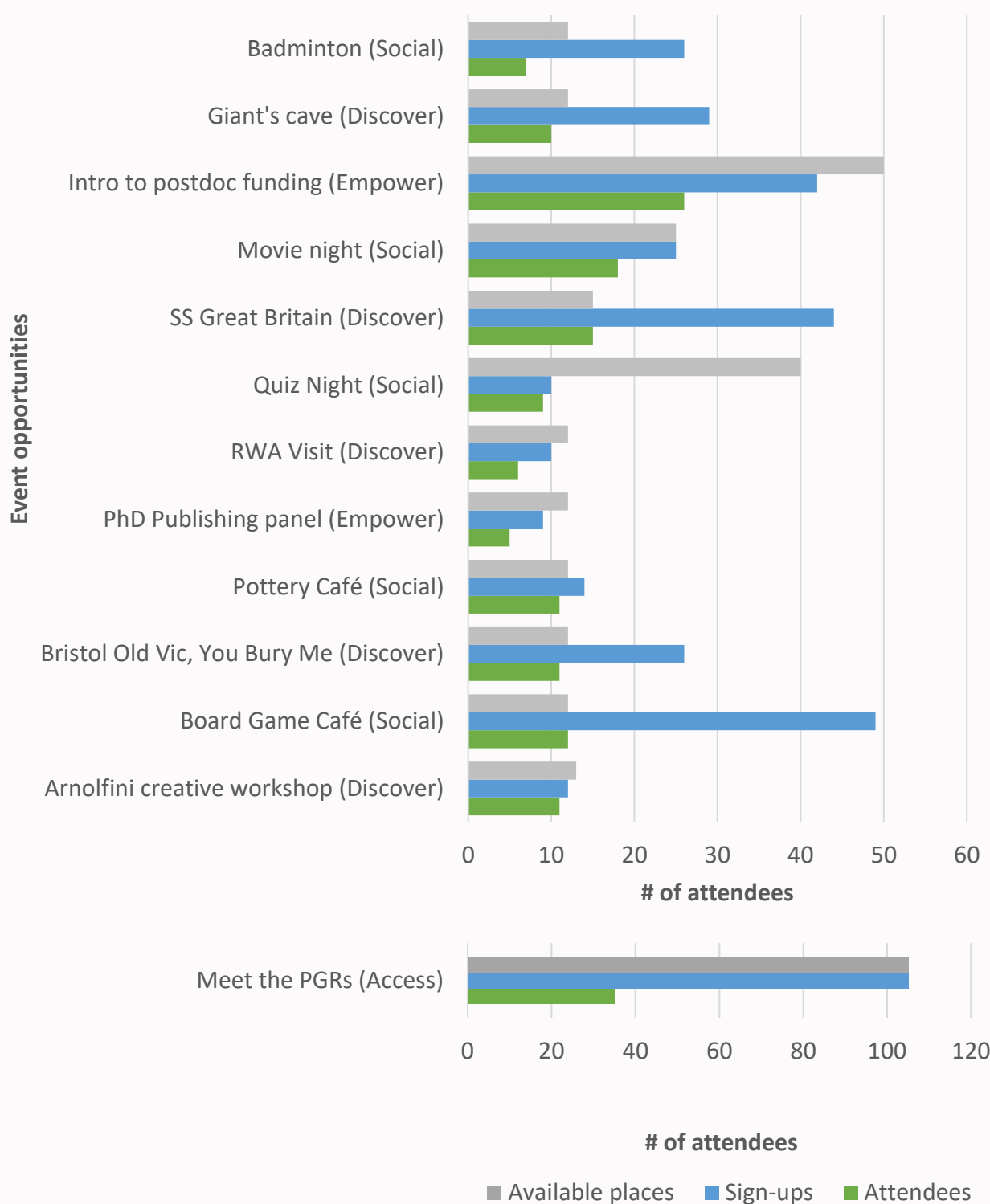
Total attendance across the programme was 176, however, this includes PGRs who attended multiple events. To avoid double-counting, here we focus on the distinct attendees.



- 10/13 of the activities delivered were open to only Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority PGRs.
- We did not collect data from the 35 prospective PGRs who attended our ‘Meet the PGRs’ event, as many of them will have been external to the University of Bristol.

* Other = Visiting students or early career researchers

Attendance by event



- Most of the initiatives delivered focused on Belonging (Social events focused on leisurely activities, and Discover events involved PGRs visiting cultural locations across the city).
- 62% of our events had a higher demand (sign-ups) for places than were available.
- 69% of events were attended by 10+ PGRs.
- 62% of events had a drop-out rate of 5+ PGRs.

Feedback from attendees

Feedback forms were co-developed with PGR Advocates. Participants returned 44 feedback forms during the programme. 95% reported that they would like to attend another event in the future (42/44).



“I really enjoyed getting to know a lot more about the community work the RWA art gallery is involved in. Before the trip, I hadn't considered visiting the gallery, but I'll definitely go back after this if I need a break from work!” (RWA Gallery visit, April 2023)

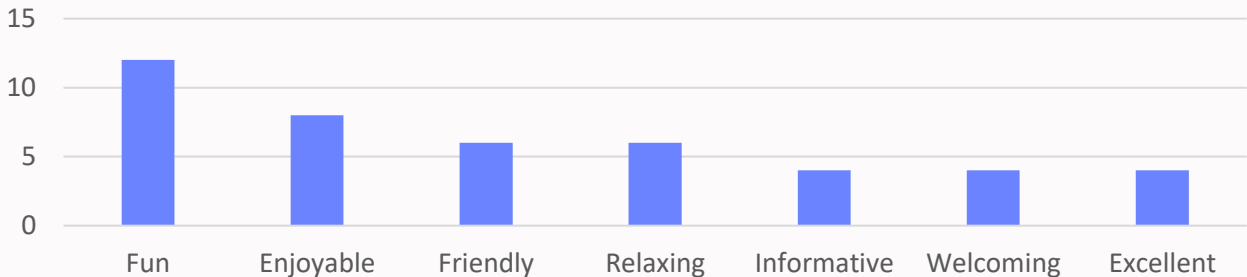
“I really enjoyed that it was a very laid back and relaxing chance to socialise”. (Wonders of Clifton, June 2023)

“I thought it was a very informative event. I feel like I now know a lot more about postdoctoral funding and it makes it seem like less of an 'unknown' career direction” (Introduction to postdoctoral funding, May 2023)

“Meeting other PhD students, from different backgrounds and cultures. Host Nathan was fantastic with the organisation of the event” (You Bury Me (Bristol Old Vic, February 2023)



Words most frequently used by participants to describe events attended



Feedback from Advocates

In July 2023 we held a creative evaluation workshop with five PGR Advocates. We built the programme out of LEGO and mapped out the impact involvement in the programme had on Advocates and the PGRs who attended various events throughout the year. Identified impacts are summarised below:

Impact on Advocates



Improved self-worth and self-awareness



Greater confidence expressing opinions and articulating needs



Transferable skills (including event planning and teamwork)



Better understanding of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion principles



Felt better embedded within a broader community of PGRs

Impact on attendees



Access to a safe space where PGRs can be themselves



Opportunity to meet new people, outside of their academic discipline



Opportunities to explore spaces that may have felt inaccessible



Opportunity to learn about research from diverse academics



Validating discussions that reflect marginalised experiences

Sector recommendations



1. Communication

New programmes take time to establish awareness. Despite progress made in organising regular routes of communication, we recognise more **advertising** work is needed to ensure PGRs know about the programme's activities. This also involves reaching more home PGRs, and closer working with academic schools.

2. Support for Advocates

Where those most impacted by systemic injustice are co-developing interventions, we highlight the importance of **adequate legitimate support**. In this programme we implemented group coaching sessions (focussed on communication, imposter syndrome and personal impact).



3. Event timing

There are important academic transition periods where opportunities for community connection would be beneficial. Next year, we will ensure there are activities at the **beginning of the academic year**, where many (but not all) PGRs will be joining the university.



4. Cross-sector collaboration

We are aware similar efforts are underway at universities across the UK. We want to develop **stronger links across the sector** to understand best practice and share learnings generated at the University of Bristol.

