Information on Postgraduate Research Scholarship - Ref: VCS-FEHHS-01-23

Faculty:	Education, Health and Human Sciences	Department:	Human Sciences
Lead Supervisor:	Dr Thomas Rhys Evans		
Project Title:	**Overcoming Inequalities in Feedback for Minoritized Early Career Researchers**		
Project Description:	**Project Summary** Minoritised early career researchers (MECRs) face a number of interpersonal and structural barriers within their research careers, not least in relation to receiving quality feedback on their research (Reddy & Amer, 2023). In the context of this study MECRs include both academic and practitioner researchers, and any specific focus in inequalities is to be co-agreed with the supervisory team, prioritising opportunities to identify intersectional discrimination (Kozlowski et al., 2022). Feedback is vital to all researcher development and research quality, however little is done to acknowledge these inequalities when supporting MECRs (Graves et al., 2022). This research proposal draws upon expertise from the Centres for Inequalities and Workforce Development to a) identify the scope of this inequality, b) to locate and promote equal opportunities and facilitate constructive feedback, and c) to develop recommendations for systems, infrastructures and organisations to better support MECRs. The proposed research addresses the following: RQ1: How, and to what extent, do minoritised early career researchers experience structural and interpersonal barriers to meaningful feedback on their research? RQ2: What could (or should) be done to support minoritized early career researchers to receive feedback that better supports their research and scholarship development and career aspirations? **Purpose and Impact** Inequalities are rife across research (Xie, 2015). Traditional peer-review processes are one of the most commonly adopted feedback mechanisms for researchers across disciplinary, geographical and career boundaries (Chong & Mason, 2021). Unfortunately, this process is highly inconsistent, tends to be led by individuals from privileged groups of senior academics, and provides feedback to researchers after the work has been conducted and resources have been depleted (Hamilton et al., 2020; Tennant & Ross-Hellauer, 2020). These issues of timeliness, privileged gatekeeping, and exclusion can be seen across most traditional feedback mechanisms e.g., conference presentations, lab meeting discussions, etc. (Hinsley et al., 2017; Nittrouer et al., 2018). Similar inequalities and structural inefficiencies have been reported for participation, communication and recognition of research by scientists within industry (Graves et al., 2022). Structurally embedded inequalities in feedback and support are a key contributing factor to the substantive deficits in the recruitment and retainment of diverse talent in Higher

Education and research institutions (Kaplan et al., 2017). For example, 27% of UK Professors are women and less than 1% of UK Professors are black (HESA, 2020).

Mechanisms and opportunities for feedback in research have rapidly diversified following the recent replication crisis, emergence of open scholarship communities, and wider developments in the prioritisation of research transparency and rigor. For example, Registered Reports (Chambers, 2013) now offer researchers the opportunity for feedback on research design, materials and analysis protocols pre-data collection. Such opportunities can be found across the research cycle and are currently informing wider scientific norms e.g., around data sharing (Evans, 2022). However, many strategies are less well-known to MECRs and still require the navigation of investment of others. As such, current scientific practices perpetuate the inequalities around who is deemed (un)worthy of feedback and who have the available resources to offer feedback to others. As such, most feedback mechanisms are largely inaccessible or ineffective for marginalised or minoritized ECRs. Examples of feedback strategies from across the research cycle can be found in Figure 1.
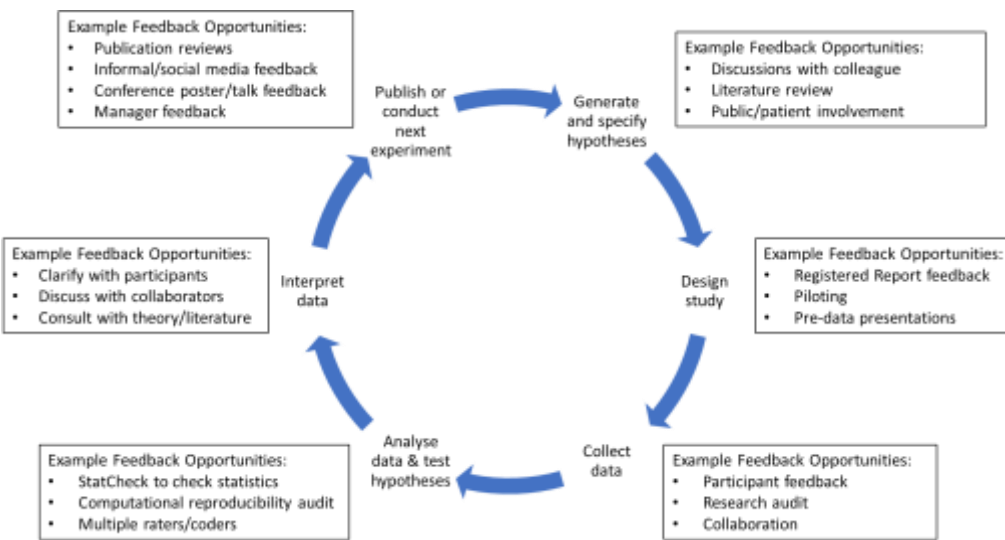

Figure 1: Visualisation of Feedback Opportunities across the Research Cycle

The proposed programme of work aims to better understand the barriers to quality research feedback experienced by minoritized ECRs and produce recommendations for systems, infrastructures and organisations to more effectively overcome such inequalities. Collecting longitudinal qualitative data on participants' experiences of feedback in research from each stage of the research cycle, the proposed work will make some of the 'hidden curriculum' and implicit biases explicit and provide the basis for evidence-informed guidance to support the inclusion, representation, and development of diverse talent in research.

Research Plan, Method, and Recruitment
The proposed research programme has been designed to maximise the skill development and career prospects of the candidate, and features one core project.

	The PhD will focus upon building a qualitative understanding of the experiences of minoritized ECRs obtaining feedback for their research. A longitudinal qualitative design is planned, exploring the attempts of minoritized ECRs to secure feedback, with each participant focusing on a single research project (where possible) as a narrative framework to guide the exploration (although this will not limit bringing in other examples that are deemed appropriate by participants). As the existing literature, and indeed the structural incentives within research, typically focus upon inequalities and outcomes at the end of the research cycle, the proposed work uses a combination of diary entries and repeat interviews to capture a more diverse range of feedback strategies and identify a more holistic view of the barriers and opportunities across the research cycle (see Figure 1 for research cycle framework). To capture a diverse range of research fields, geographical regions, and experience levels, the proposed work leverages the leadership positions, networks, and expertise of the supervisory team. For example, TRE supports the Framework for Open and Reproducible Research Training (FORRT; Azevedo, 2019) which is an influential ECR-based open scholarship community. This use of networks to support participant recruitment increases the credibility and reach of the work whilst also providing targeted access to a diverse range of communities passionate about education and/or scientific reform. This recruitment strategy will also increase the likelihood of engaging with future research leaders and capturing the full range of barriers and opportunities for feedback. This project will produce recommendations for more inclusive and effective feedback practices, supporting minoritized ECRs to navigate the interpersonal and structural barriers to meaningful feedback. The work will also generate a curated range of open-access resources for MECRs, and produce a policy report for those employing researchers to best support their professional development and research quality.
Duration:	3 years, Full-Time Study or 6 years, Part-Time Study

Bursary available (subject to satisfactory performance):
From 01 October for the 2022-23 academic year this amount will be Year 1: £17,668 (FT) or pro-rata (PT) Year 2: In line with UKRI rate Year 3: In line with UKRI rate

In addition, the successful candidate will receive a contribution to tuition fees equivalent to the university's Home rate, currently £4,596 (FT) or pro-rata (PT), for the duration of their scholarship. International applicants will need to pay the remainder tuition fee for the duration of their scholarship.

This fee is subject to an annual increase.

Person Specification of Essential (E) or Desirable (D) requirements:

Criteria:	E or D
Education and Training:	
• 1st Class or 2nd class, First Division (Upper Second Class) honours degree or a taught master's degree with a minimum average of 60% in all areas of assessment (UK or UK equivalent) in a relevant area to the proposed research project	E

• For those whose first language is not English and/or if from a country where English is not the majority spoken language (as recognised by the UKBA), a language proficiency score of at least IELTS 6.5 (in all elements of the test) or an equivalent UK VISA and Immigration secure English Language Test is required, if your programme falls within the faculty of Engineering and Science a language proficiency score of at least IELTS 6.5 overall with a minimum of 6.0 in all elements of the test or an equivalent UK VISA and Immigration secure English Language Test is required. Unless the degree above was taught in English **and** obtained in a majority English speaking country, e.g. UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc, as recognised by the UKBA.	E

Experience & Skills:

• Previous experience of undertaking research (e.g., through an undergraduate or taught Master's dissertation	E
• A fair grounding of research methods and research design with experience of using both quantitative and qualitative research methods	E
• Strong communication skills (e.g., written, verbal, data visualisation, etc.	E
• An interest in, or evidenced commitment to, transparency and rigor in research (i.e., open scholarship, open data/materials, preregistration, etc.)	E

Personal Attributes:

• Understands the fundamental differences between a taught degree and a research degree in terms of approach and personal discipline/motivation	E
• Able to, under guidance, complete independent work successfully	E
• An interest in, or commitment to, challenging inequalities and promoting JEDI (justice, equality, diversity and inclusion) developments, with experience negotiating these sensitively and compassionately	E

Other Requirements:

• This scholarship may require Academic Technology Approval Scheme approval for the successful candidate if from outside of the EU/EEA	E
• The scholarship must commence before **30 September 2023**.	E

Closing date for applications:	*Midnight 11 June 2023*
For further information contact:	Thomas.Evans@greenwich.ac.uk

Making an application:
Please read this information before making an application. Information on the application process is available at: https://www.gre.ac.uk/research/study/apply/application-process. Applications need to be made online via this link. **No other form of application will be considered**. Please ensure that you select 'MPhil/PhD Human Sciences' from the list to ensure prompt processing of applications.

All applications **must include** the following information. **Applications not containing these documents will not be considered:**

- **VC Scholarship Reference Number (Ref)**– included in the personal statement section
- **Personal Statement*** - outlining your motivation for applying for this PhD, and your previous research experience (e.g., as a research assistant or completing a dissertation).

- **Academic qualification certificates/transcripts***
- **IELTS/English Language certificate if you are an international applicant or if English is not your first language or you are from a country where English is not the majority spoken language as defined by the UK Border Agency** *
- **Your complete CV***
- **Two reference letters (one ideally from a dissertation supervisor)***
- **Research Proposal*** Please provide a citation of an empirical piece of existing research you could replicate in your first year (to assess the extent of inequalities in research), and a 500-word proposal explaining why this study specifically.
- Please ensure that you submit to the **MPhil/PhD Human Sciences** programme.

upload to the qualification section of the application form. Attachments must be in PDF format. **You will need to submit this as 1 single PDF, to be uploaded as attachment.**

Before submitting your application, you are encouraged to liaise with the Lead Supervisor on the details above.

September 2021