Small Group Activity:
‘Solutions, Actions and Changes in Practice to Support PGRs (35 minutes)

Please shape your discussion on your interests and the ideas you have generated across the sessions of the day. You might want to consider:

- What are the most important ideas covered today? Why?
- Returning to your earlier discussions about ‘perceived and real barriers’, have you considered any responses, answers or mitigations to these issues? Or new ways to frame or explore these barriers?
- What practical actions could you take in your roles or institutions?
- What advice might be useful to disseminate to PGRs and to supervisors?

**TASK:** From your discussion draw 3-5 key actions or suggestions to take forward that you would like to share with the plenary. Please lay these out on your blank slide – you will use this to present (max. 5 mins) and then it will be circulated to everyone after the session.
Group 1
‘Solutions, Actions and Changes in Practice to Support PGRs’

Embedding entrepreneurial opportunities within researcher development programmes - irrespective of future career trajectory! Skills are relevant for all career paths (including academic) BUT ALSO showing that doing a PhD is an entrepreneurial activity in itself!

Professional development & doing a PhD are integrated

Differential advice for PGRs at different points in the doctoral journey

Educating supervisors about what PGR career pathways are like

Pulling out job adverts and highlighting what is required - not just about having a PhD!

Having a dedicated professional service role to support PGRs specifically = stronger engagement with PGRs

Enterprise = a multitude of skills / attributes

Need for subtlety: Researcher development isn’t one size fits all!
Group 1 -
Actions as PGR leader for a subject (Education)

For me:
- Find out what ‘destination’ data we have on Education PGR students (consult graduate school and Careers) and consider what it tells us.

For supervisors:
- Hold discussion with all supervisors to broaden our thinking: What is a PhD for? Where might a PhD in Education lead? (Can we identify recent varied examples?)

For PGR students:
- Extend student views on possible future trajectories by inviting recent PhD graduates to talk with current PhD students.
- Focus for a group discussion with current PGR students - What does a PhD make you good at? (Could use Vitae wheel to support this)
- Build in annual event for PGR students on post-doc career paths in education

(Kendra McMahon Bath Spa University)
Group 2
‘Solutions, Actions and Changes in Practice to Support PGRs’

- Challenge of PGRs engaging with careers and enterprise: using RDF to articulate skills that careers and enterprise can support with gives credibility and demonstrates. Doing this in inductions also embeds this message early on in the psyche of PGRs
- Importance of communicating value of enterprise skills to supervisors
- Assumption PGRs will naturally reflect and recognise skills & their relation to employability just because they’re working at a higher level - using job ads to demonstrate and prompt learning
- Requirement of accessibility of training opportunities
- Learning Gain - 1:1 + event
We understand the financial, structural and situational ‘barriers’ to setting up large schemes, so we focused on what ‘can we do’, small wins..

- Focusing on ‘sense checking’ of Coms to ensure language is accessible for PGRs (only relevant messaging, opportunities that are ‘open’ or ‘focused’ on PGR rather than undergraduate)
- Changes to the ways we talk to employers - checking whether (and why) they are interested in PGRs and ensure that is clear on all communications
- Thinking about new forms of PhD (by publication etc) so what can we support PGRs differently, and consider how might this open up our understanding of employability
- Bringing in PGRs to ‘supervise’ UGs in leadership roles (ex. In relation to entrepreneurship projects., etc)
- Mentorship scheme focused on PhD-alumni mentoring current PhD researchers (mostly online)
- Online careers events, networking, community building, digital internships (online forum offers new opportunities)

Lastly, attempt to understand more clearly about PhD values as well as career aspirations (as these are deeply linked) and comprehending values can broaden interests in different roles
Group 4
‘Solutions, Actions and Changes in Practice to Support PGRs’

- Enterprise skills & mindset being essential for academic progression as well as ‘other’ careers - challenges the idea that ‘employability’ is for those who ‘won’t make it’ and could be a good way of ‘selling’ enterprise to all stakeholders & breaking dichotomy of ‘academic’ and ‘other’ careers
- Is ‘coming to see careers’ seen as a ‘failure’ (i.e. see your supervisor to talk about academia, you go to careers to talk about ‘plan b’): engage with faculty in advance to change this messaging? Current climate supports this, e.g. changes in academic job market
- Reframing of challenges (e.g. grand challenges, current climate) as opportunities and who better to address these address these challenges than researchers
- DTP PGRs may be siloed; involving them in wider initiatives (e.g consultancy challenges etc.) can bring them back to the bigger picture
- How can we ‘use’ the rich experiences that many of our PGRs already have of the world of work? E.g. mentoring perhaps?