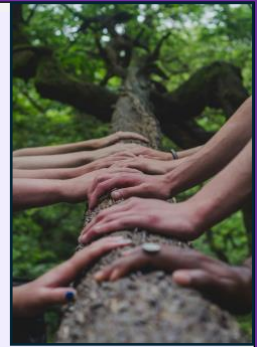


# ON BUILDING EFFECTIVE EDI DOCTORAL NETWORKS

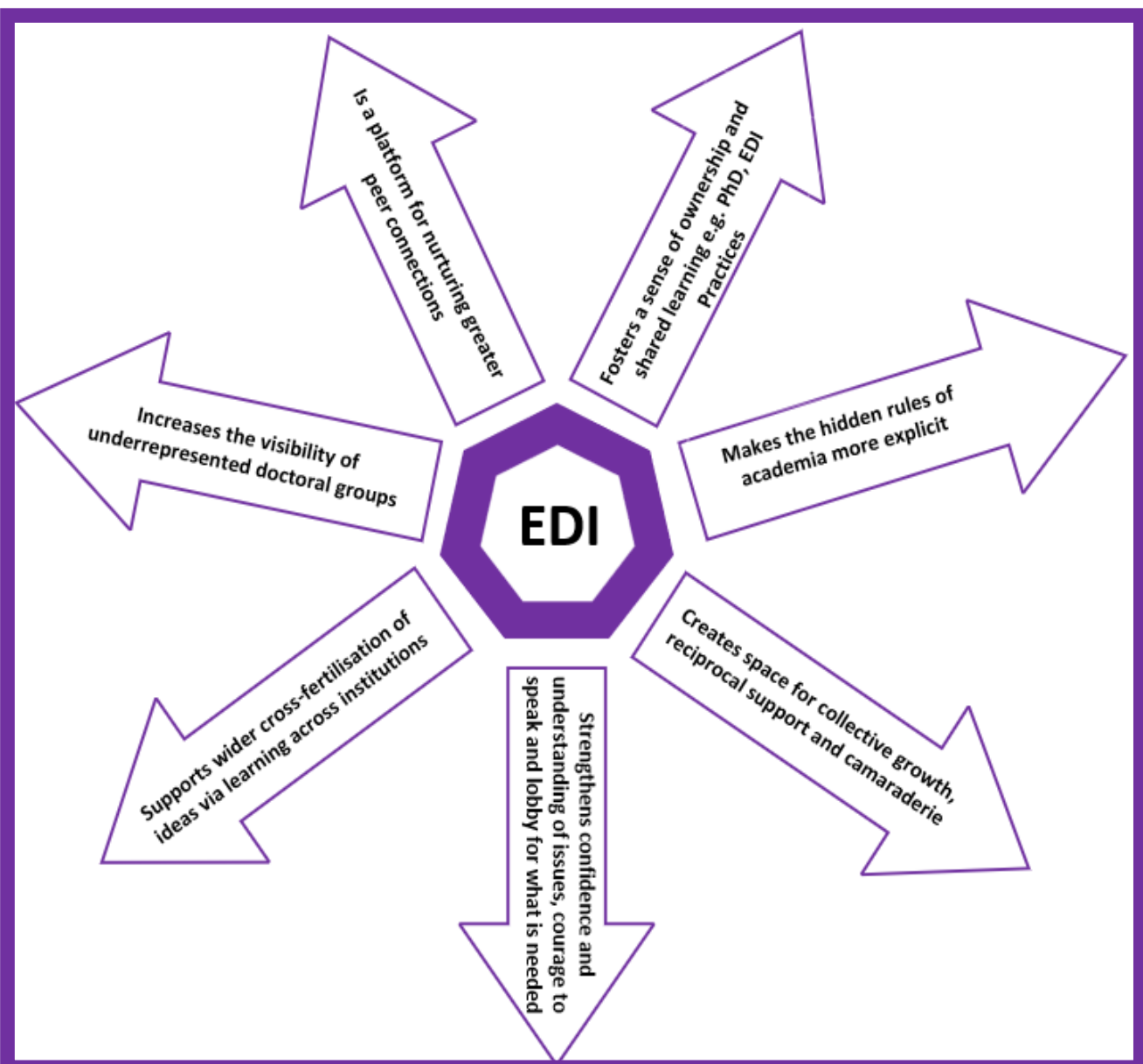
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## PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

- This brief for EDI Leads and doctoral scholars (postgraduate researchers or PGRs) applies research-based Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles to highlight how Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) or Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs) can effectively build and cultivate EDI doctoral networks.
- The *On Building Effective EDI Doctoral Networks* brief and the *Enhancing Cross-Institutional Doctoral Networks Through a Co-Partnership Model* briefs are complementary. While the former raises general considerations, the latter focuses on an EDI-aligned model of working.
- PGRs recognise and value the unique opportunity and enormous benefits (e.g. broadened peer support, much enriched scholarly discussions) offered by membership to cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional sector-wide networks. With greater intersectionality among members, PGRs then tend to benefit further from network membership.



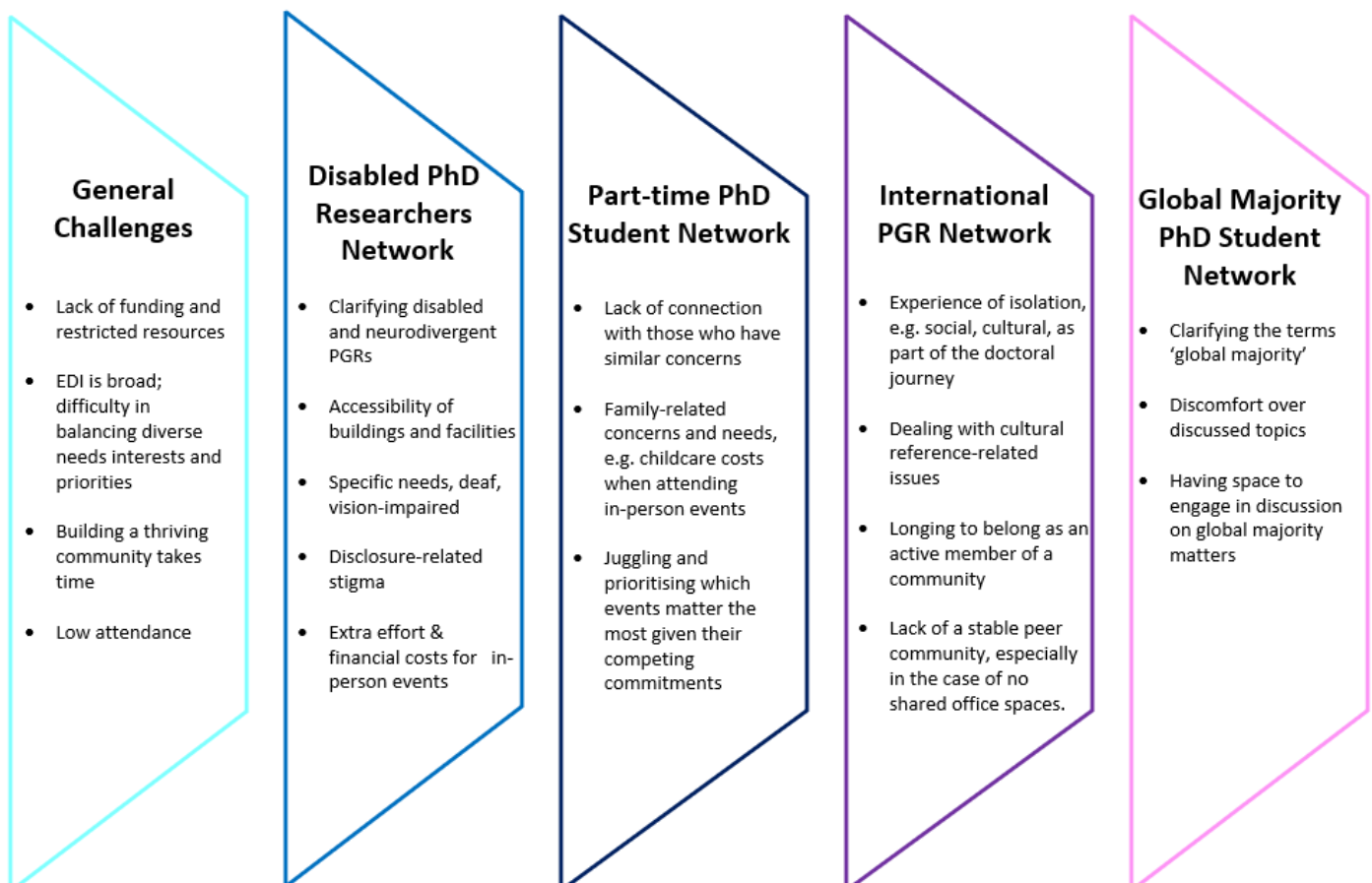
## WHY EDI DOCTORAL NETWORKS MATTER



## WAYS FORWARD – It is worth bearing in mind that...

- EDI doctoral networks complement, but do not replace the health, well-being & support services offered by the PGRs' respective institutions.
- Ongoing effectiveness and sustainability of these PGR networks will be greatly supported by measuring outcomes and impact – both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Equally, long-term sustainability would benefit from concrete provision from HEIs, CDTs or DTPs' ongoing commitment to support succession via overall planning and staff resources.
- While our project is supported by the award received from the Wellcome Trust InFrame Research Culture Catalyst Fund, this brief highlights various ways of building effective EDI doctoral networks even when no or very little funding is available.
- Due to resource constraints, this brief focuses on four networks only. Therefore, creating other EDI networks is a vital consideration. It is also worth recognising that the EDI Leads & PGR Co-Leads cannot represent all experiences within the EDI group. In turn, it necessitates wider EDI input.

## GENERAL AND SPECIFIC CHALLENGES IN ORGANISING EDI DOCTORAL NETWORKS



## KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR COORDINATING EFFECTIVE EDI DOCTORAL NETWORKS

### Before

- Seek ideas from experts and network members re: EDI events at the start of the semester to offer various types of events and activities, e.g. scholarly, social, advocacy.
- Be clear with the focus, detail and information provided, e.g. suitability of the event's title, avoiding unnecessary jargon, and who will benefit the most from the event.
- Organise PGR-centred thematic events that offer personal, professional and career development opportunities that are highly relevant to all network members, e.g. imposter phenomenon; managing digital footprint, EDI issues.
- Consider offering alternative events: a) separate tailored events to meet each network's distinct needs; and b) cross-network activities and meetings.
- Offer online (or hybrid) events and make resources available via websites or email.
- Use multiple channels to advertise events and discussions.
- For in-person events, be mindful of the location, including venue access, accessible toilets. Also, cater for members' dietary and other requirements.
- Clarify division of responsibility for those who are involved in the event.

### During

- Foster shared goals and objectives with network members.
- Articulate the elusive and broad EDI concept by specifying why events are organised for EDI doctoral networks and the rationale for the events.
- Exercise ground rules at the beginning of the event or discussion, e.g. respect for differing views; adhere to the 'Chatham House Rules'.
- Balance the dynamics during the event, e.g. when to speak and when to listen, encouraging members to be open and respectful of opposing views.
- Create a space for sharing and interaction – conveying that participants' needs are valued; ensure that there is space for constructive and critical discussion.
- Encourage members to connect with peers openly, including fostering interdisciplinary conversations.
- Finish the conversation with one action that each person could take.

### After

- Encourage feedback following events or discussions to understand network members' range of interest affecting their engagement, e.g. intellectual stimulation, distinct needs of network members.
- Use members' feedback to stimulate other PGRs' interest, encourage them to engage and be involved.
- Employ an evaluation scheme, e.g. creative, longitudinal, to help ascertain the value of network activities, while bearing in mind that success can be measured differently, i.e. by quality, not quantity. Measures of success need to consider the impact on participants.
- Encourage other forms of communication among members via Teams, SGSSS Portal.
- Include low effort events for some activities to avoid it becoming burdensome.
- Consider facilitating members' social meetings, e.g. university visits, coffee and chat.
- Promote EDI and EDI events more widely, e.g. advertise via newsletters, SGSSS Friday Digest, reach out to the supervisor community, EDI networks across HEIs, CDTs and DTPs.
- Consider holding in-person events in different locations to increase participation.
- Remember that EDI networks often start small, but EDI activities contribute immensely to improving research culture and creating a flourishing university ecosystem.
- Think about long-term rather than short-term networks. Establish a healthy connection with network members. Consider sustainability and long-term provision for these EDI events, including capacity to expand by creating more networks, e.g. first-generation PGR network.
- Encourage a sense of ownership by contacting current and former members to play a part in supporting their network, e.g. giving a talk, PGR-led activities.

## All EDI PGR Networks

- Encourage commitment to support other network members and to share tips and hints.
- Consider asking network members to lead the discussion or organise an event.
- Encourage promotion and sustainability of the network via stronger ownership and by word of mouth.
- Signpost where appropriate support can be sought by network members.
- Be aware of intersecting identities and responsibilities, e.g. language challenges, mobility, parenting and carers' duties.

## Disabled PhD Researchers Network

- Ask members what their network is to be called.
- Make this group of PGRs seen and recognised for who they are.
- Consider disabled PGRs in the broadest sense, e.g. deaf, neurodiverse individuals.
- Endeavour to offer sufficient help and specific support for disabled PGRs, e.g. deaf people.
- Carving a safe space for everyone to share their experience.
- Keep attendees small in number for some network activities in order to give network members space to discuss shared concerns.
- Be accessibility focussed and support diverse needs, e.g. use of large print text.
- Tailor activities to support Disabled PhD Researchers Network, as much as possible.
- Invite speakers and organise events that match network members' characteristics and/or interest, e.g. someone with neurodivergence.

## Part-time PhD Student Network

- Tailor timings and activities to support Part-Time PhD Student Network members, as appropriate.
- Connect with other PGRs with similar concerns, e.g. childcare, part-time learning
- Invite speakers who share characteristics of part-time PGRs who have other commitments, e.g. family, work.

## International PGR Network

- Tailor activities to support International PGR Network members, sharing cultural activities.
- Invite speakers who share characteristics of international PGRs to tell their story of navigating their experience of doing a PhD abroad.

## Global Majority PhD Student Network

- Recognise that some EDI issues often bring discomfort.
- Tailor activities to support Global Majority PhD Network members, as appropriate.



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