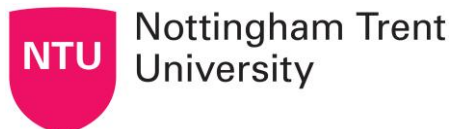


Introducing the EDEPI Competency Framework: facilitating inclusive doctoral admission in the UK

Equity in Doctoral Education through Partnership and Innovation (EDEPI)

Durham workshop, April 2026

Dr Bing Lu, Nottingham Trent University

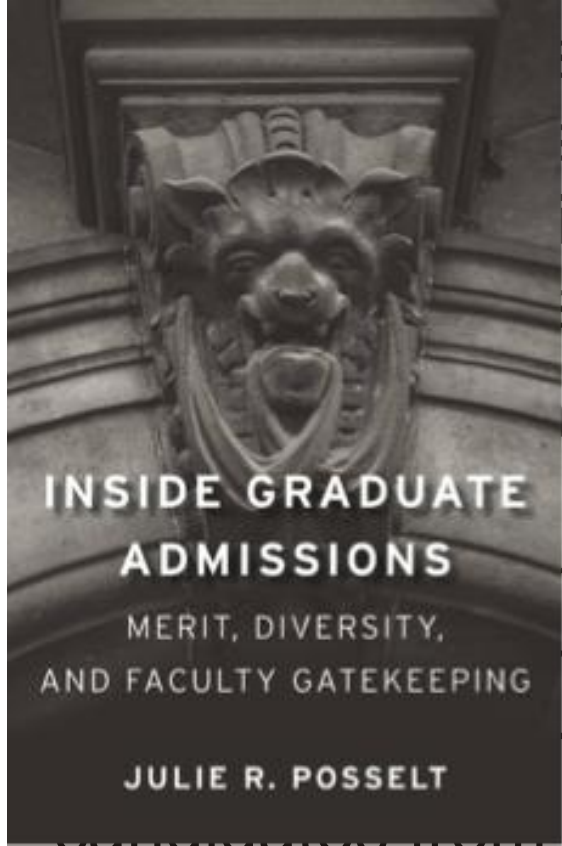


Outline

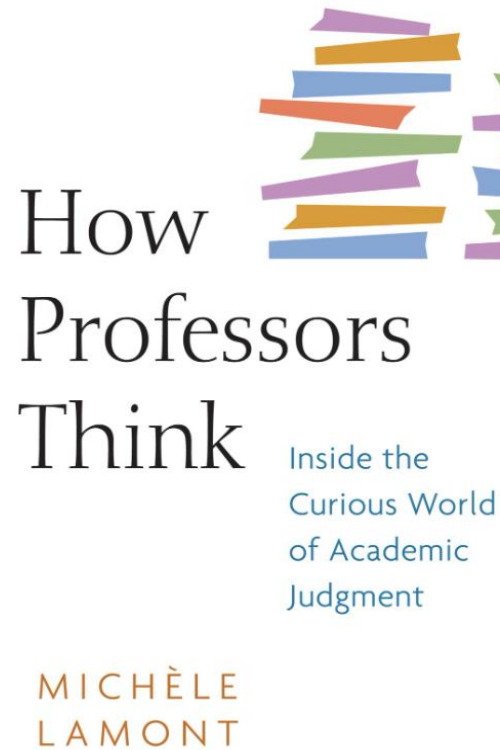
- Equity work in doctoral recruitment
- EDEPI project: Competency-based admissions framework
- EDEPI WP2 data overview
- Merit, competence, capability
- Community of Practice
- EDEPI PGR voices



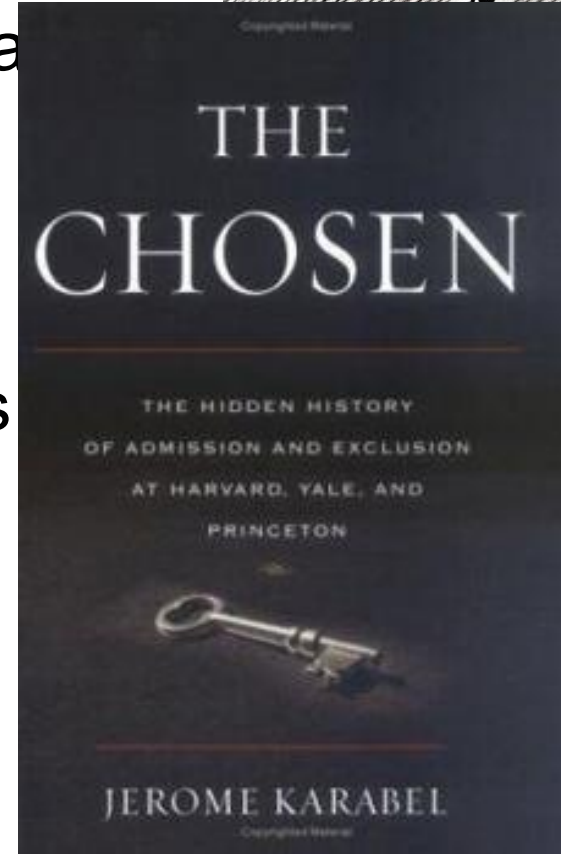
Equity work in doctoral recruitment



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(Posselt, 2023; Tan, 2024).



Time for Change: Equity in Doctoral Admission

‘For too long, PGR recruitment has been looking in the rear-view mirror - focusing on what’s easy to measure - educational track record, degree classification and degree-awarding institution. We shifted a long time ago towards using a balance of past experience and future potential in job recruitment and to a wider focus on the **whole person; their competencies and aptitude to learn and grow and collaborate.** We need to update our recruitment practices into doctoral education in the same way. Only by doing this can we open up research careers to historically ‘locked-out’ groups and ensure we really are bringing the most able future researchers into the system.’

-Rebekah Smith McGloin, EDEPI PI, Chair of the UK Council for Graduate Education



by Bing Lu, Rebekah Smith McGloin and Scott Foster



Richard Freeman

Richard Freeman is Head of the Centre for Doctoral Education at UCL Institute of Education and Deputy Director of the UCL, Bloomsbury and East London (UBEL) ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership.

Tags

ACCESS & WP
PHD

To most undergraduate and postgraduate students, deciding to undertake a doctoral degree is not common.

What is involved can be rather opaque – if not completely mysterious – with potential applicants unaware of how to navigate the PhD journey.

Unfortunately, there is evidence of underrepresentation for some groups at doctoral level. For example, 59 per cent of the undergraduate population identify as White, rising to 68 per cent of taught postgraduates and 74 per cent for research degrees [as of 2022-23](#).

This [broken pipeline](#) is demonstrated by just 1.2 per cent of the 19,868 studentships awarded by all UKRI research councils from 2016-17 – 2018-19 to Black or Black Mixed students, with just 30 of those being from a Black Caribbean background.

In addition, those from underrepresented groups have fewer role models in their study and in academia. For academic staff, [HESA data](#) for 2023-24 shows that 3.4 per cent of all academic staff are Black, with data from [2022-23](#) showing that 1 per cent of all professors are Black (and just 31 per cent of professors are female).

The value of personal contact

One of the most effective ways to help potential applicants understand what



This blog post reflects on ongoing collaborative efforts to advance more equitable doctoral admissions between a group of UK institutions. It argues that transforming graduate admissions is not simply driven by competitive logic, nor by a search for a single, universal framework that can be applied across the sector. Instead, sector-level change emerges through collective, interactional, and often emotional work.

Inclusive postgraduate research (PGR) admission and recruitment have become an increasing global concern ([Posselt, 2016](#); [Bastedo, 2026](#); [Boghdady, 2025](#)). Drawing on ongoing collaborative work between a group of UK institutions, this blog post reflects on collective efforts to advance more equitable doctoral admissions. We argue that inclusive doctoral admission is not a competition to produce an exhaustive, finished framework, but an ongoing process of collective problem solving, one that requires humility, openness, and sustained commitment across institutional boundaries.

PGR students are strategically vital to the UK's research capacity, innovation and future academic workforce. PhD programmes increasingly function as the primary entry route into academic careers and shape who is able to imagine themselves, and be recognised, as future researchers. Within the doctoral lifecycle, admission is a particularly critical intervention point. Yet, compared with undergraduate or taught postgraduate recruitment, the mechanisms shaping PGR admissions have historically received less sustained scrutiny.

A report commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) in 2014 highlighted that UK institutions primarily value academic attainment, the quality of research proposals, and evidence of prior research skills when selecting candidates ([Mellors-Bourne et al, 2014](#)). Since 2020, a growing body of UK-based scholarship has

The EDEPI Programme – launched in 2022

- RE and OfS funded, one of 13 projects created to tackle inequalities that create barriers to access and participation in postgraduate research

WP1- Recruitment

Collaboration between Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University and Liverpool John Moores University

WP2- Admission

DEPI

Delivery partners: UKCGE, AdvanceHE, GRIT Breakthrough Programmes, NHS

WP3- Transition

Table 1. EDEPI WP2 dataset overview

Phase	Short name	Dataset	Timing	Participants / scope	Materials / format	Role in lifecycle
1	APS-22	Admissions Practices Survey	Jun–Jul 2022	253 responses, 46 HEIs	National survey	Baseline mapping of sector practice
	AFG1-22 / AFG2-22 / AFG3-22	Admissions Focus Groups	Late 2022	Approx. 28 participants across 3 groups	Focus group transcripts	Deepened interpretation of survey findings
2	RFG-22	Report and Framework Generation	2022	EDEPI team synthesis	Analytical synthesis; report drafting	Produced admissions report and competency-based framework/guidance
3	SFR-23	Stakeholder Feedback Review	2023	Staff n=20; PGR students n=15	Cross-institutional feedback survey	Structured feedback on report/framework
	IPF-23	Informal Practitioner Feedback	2023	Staff n=7	Informal consultation / survey	Practical usability feedback
	PPS-24	PGR Pulse Survey	2024	PGRs n=2	Pulse survey	Small supplementary user perspective
4	SII-25	Staff Implementation Interviews	2025	Staff n=6	1:1 interviews	In-depth implementation insight
	PILOT-25	Institutional Piloting Dataset	2025	3 pilot institutions	Meeting notes, reflections, general pilot activity	Live institutional adaptation evidence
	TRN-25	Staff Training Workshop Dataset	2025	1 institution	Training materials, written feedback, reflections	Capacity-building and framework translation
	COP-25	Community of Practice Dataset	2025	23 UK and international institutions	Webinar recordings, Padlet materials, meeting notes	Upscaling, cross-institutional learning, sector mobilisation

EDEPI WP2 data overview

2022-2025

PHASE 1: SECTOR MAPPING & PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

APS-22: Admissions Practices Survey ($n = 253$ staff | 46 HEIs)
AFG-22: Admissions Focus Groups ($n \approx 28$ participants | 3 groups)
Identified tensions in culture, transparency, support, and decision-making

PHASE 2: FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

RFG-22: Report and Framework Generation (Synthesis of survey + focus groups)
Produced: EDEPI PGR Admissions Report & Competency-Based Framework

PHASE 3: FRAMEWORK REVIEW & REFINEMENT

SFR-23: Stakeholder Feedback Review | **IPF-23:** Informal Practitioner Feedback
PPS-24: PGR Pulse Survey
Tested clarity, relevance, usability, and stakeholder response

PHASE 4: PILOTING, IMPLEMENTATION & UPSCALING

SII-25: Staff Interviews | **PILOT-25:** Institutional Piloting (3 HEIs)
TRN-25: Training Materials | **COP-25:** Community of Practice (23 HEIs)
Examined institutional translation, collective learning, and sector upscaling

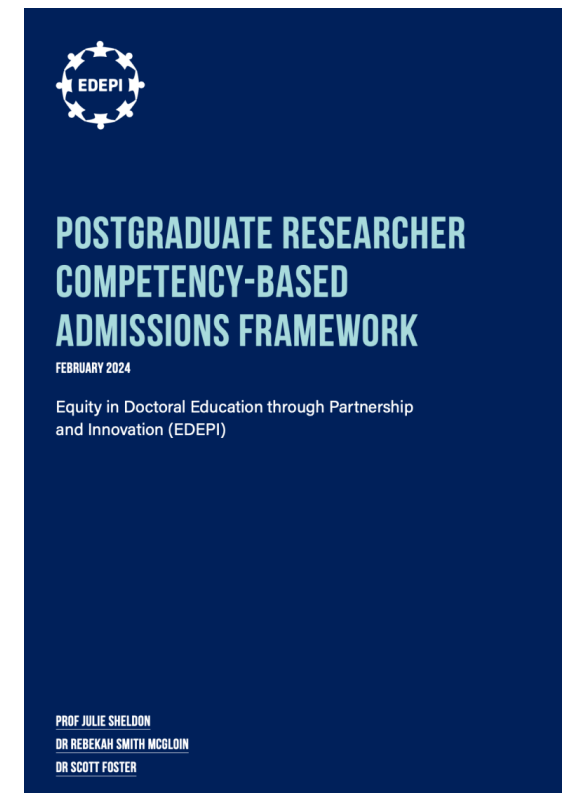


About the Competency-based Framework

1. Postgraduate Researcher Admissions Report



2. Postgraduate Researcher Competency-based Admissions Framework



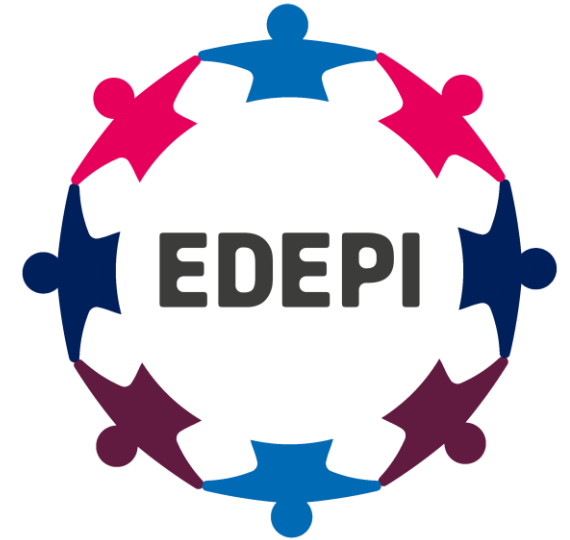


POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHER COMPETENCY-BASED ADMISSIONS FRAMEWORK

FEBRUARY 2024

Equity in Doctoral Education through Partnership
and Innovation (EDEPI)

PROF JULIE SHELDON
DR REBEKAH SMITH MCGLOIN
DR SCOTT FOSTER



Postgraduate Researcher Competency-based Admissions Framework

EDEPI COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

COLLECT, ORDER, EVALUATE AND REVIEW RESULTS OBJECTIVELY, AND COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

COMPREHENSION & EVALUATION

ANALYTICAL & PROBLEM SOLVING

Recognise connections and patterns in information/data, text or artefacts

Evaluate information/data, text or artefacts for credibility and accuracy

Make evidence-based judgement based on analysis of information/data, text or artefact

Explain the value/potential contribution of the research to knowledge and those who will benefit

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in writing with clarity and precision using evidence to support your assertions

Tailor communications appropriately to different audiences

Present information and ideas and information verbally, using active listening

Consider impact of research and how it might reach widest audiences

PLANNING & ORGANISATION

Grasp and order information coming from multiple sources

Set, maintain and ensure a clear direction for a project or activity

Anticipate, think ahead and identify next steps in a project or activity

Adjust objectives and deadlines appropriately as new ideas or issues emerge

ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERFORMANCE AND SEEK HELP WHEN NECESSARY

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

MOTIVATION

Show how you plan to actively engage with policy, practice, publications in your proposed area of research to keep up to date

Understand your own personal motivations and demonstrate how these will drive your research

Recognise and take up opportunities for improvement

Willingness to engage fully in the chosen area and contribute to conversations and debates in that field

CURIOSITY

Show that you want to ask challenging 'why' questions about your topic

Be prepared to deepen your investigation to shed new light on information/data, text or artefact

Be willing to think deeply about complex ideas and theories in the context of the topic

Value but be prepared to question the knowledge of others

RESILIENCE

Take positive steps to maintain a positive work/life balance and seek help when challenges occur

Willingness to admit to errors and challenges and seek appropriate support

Adjust approaches and responses when faced with change or setbacks

Demonstrate the courage to engage with complex ideas and viewpoints

GENERATION AND DELIVERY OF OUTCOMES TO A HIGH STANDARD AND COLLABORATION

DELIVERING RESULTS

INTEGRITY

Be prepared to carry out your project with rigour and integrity, being committed to a compliance with ethics policy

Understand the importance of treating data or information confidentially and responsibly

Be alert to and challenge your own biases and assumptions

Show that you respect diverse points of view and can treat others, and their views, with fairness

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Work effectively with collaborators and supervisors, treating each with respect and keeping them informed of progress

Actively listen to others, share information, and propose suggestions and solutions

Respond appropriately to guidance and feedback from supervisors and collaborators and take action to improve

Seek out and make use of opportunities to collaborate, support others and/or make a positive contribution to your discipline or community in the context of your proposed research project

INDEPENDENCE

Autonomously meet deadlines and objectives for your own research project

Take responsibility for identifying the technical, personal or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop those skills appropriately

Take initiative to suggest ideas for improvements, sharing ideas in a constructive manner

Reflect on challenges and successes, and make and implement an action plan to maintain or improve your performance

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

► COMPREHENSION & EVALUATION

COLLECT, ORDER, EVALUATE AND REVIEW RESULTS OBJECTIVELY, AND COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

ANALYTICAL & PROBLEM SOLVING

What do you think are the main challenges involved in doing this research project, and how would you overcome them?

What relevant skills and experience do you have which you feel would help you undertake this research project?

Do you have an example of a time when you were able to identify errors or spot missing information?

Can you tell us about an experience when you solved a problem or proposed a solution? Describe the project or situation which best demonstrates your analytical abilities.

Tell us about a job or setting where great attention to detail was required to complete a task. How did you handle that situation?

Have you ever had a situation where you had a number of alternatives to choose from? How did you go about choosing one?

Give me an example of when you were responsible for an error or mistake. What was the outcome?

COMMUNICATION

How do you think this research project will benefit people outside of academia?

How would you summarise your research project for someone who is not familiar with it?

Tell us about a time when your communication skills improved a situation.

How do you like to discuss ideas?

Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?

What is the most challenging written task you have done? Describe the most significant written document, report or presentation which you had to complete.

How do you go about explaining a complex technical problem to a person who does not understand technical jargon?

Tell us about a recent successful experience in making a speech or presentation. How did you prepare?

Tell us about a time when you disagreed with someone and you still found a way to get your point across.

Tell us about the most effective presentation you have made. What was the topic? What made it difficult? How did you handle it?

What kinds of oral presentations have you made? How did you prepare for them? What challenges did you have?

PLANNING & ORGANISATION

What do you need in order to start a doctorate?

What timescale have you set for your project and how do you propose to keep to it?

What are your skills gaps? How can we make sure you build the skills you need to do the doctorate?

Tell us how you keep your interest in your topic up to date.

When you have a lot of work to do, how do you get it all done? Give an example.

Have you ever been overloaded with work? How do you keep track of work so that it gets done on time?

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

► SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERFORMANCE AND SEEK HELP WHEN NECESSARY

MOTIVATION

What do you think would make you a good doctoral researcher?

What is exciting about the prospect of doing a doctorate?

When do you work the hardest and feel the greatest sense of achievement?

What opportunities do you think the doctorate will give you?

What do you need to support your career plans?

Why is your research necessary?

What would you say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

Have you conducted a research project as part of your undergraduate or postgraduate education?

What goal have you set for yourself that you have successfully achieved?

CURIOSITY

What do you think makes an effective doctorate?

How do you think your previous experience and skills will help you to deliver this project?

What excites you about your project?

Tell us about a time when you identified a new approach to a problem.

How do you troubleshoot?

Why is this project important to you?

Is there something you've been meaning to try, but haven't yet?

What do you do when you don't know something?

If there were one area you've always wanted to improve upon, what would that be?

RESILIENCE

How do you work best? What environment is most likely to see you thrive?

What is the academic discipline in which you see your project sitting? How will you go about becoming part of that academic discipline community?

What do you do to cope with uncertainty?

Describe a situation where you demonstrated that you can constructively handle setbacks.

Give us an example of a challenge you faced and say how you overcame it.

Tell us about a time that you made a decision and then changed your mind.

Tell us about a time when you achieved success even when the odds were stacked against you.

What do you do when priorities change? Give one example of when this happened.

What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted? Give an example.

Tell us about a time when someone criticised your work. How did you respond?

COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

► DELIVERING RESULTS

TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR GENERATING AND DELIVERING OUTCOMES ON TIME AND TO STANDARD

INTEGRITY

What are the risks to your project and how will you mitigate them?

Will your project make a difference to your field?

How did you come up with your project proposal?

How do you propose to process and store your findings so that you are compliant with policy?

What ethical issues would you expect to encounter during this project?

Have you ever worked in a situation where the rules and guidelines were not clear? Tell me about it. How did you feel about it? How did you react?

Describe a time when you were asked to keep information confidential.

Tell us about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem which challenged fairness or raised ethical issues.

Describe how you have handled sensitive information in a past experience. What strategies would you utilise to maintain confidentiality?

What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity?

WORKING WITH OTHERS

What experience, if any, do you have of working with members of the communities that are the focus of this project?

Tell us how you advise or keep others updated on the status or progress of your project.

What do you do when you find it difficult to work with someone on the same team?

Can you give an example to explain how you have looked at an issue from different sides?

What do you think are the benefits of teamwork?

Tell us about a time when you built rapport quickly with someone under difficult conditions.

What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in maintaining successful working relationships? Give examples of how you made these work for you.

What do you do to show people that you are listening to them?

Tell us about the most effective contribution you have made as part of a group or project team.

Tell us about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspective.

INDEPENDENCE

Tell us about a time you had a difficult target to achieve. What happened and how did you work towards this?

How are you planning to become more autonomous/independent in your learning?

Describe a situation where you were asked to do something that you'd never attempted previously.

What is one thing that is most important for you to successfully complete your doctoral programme?

How can you further build your skills to deliver this project?

Conceptual Framework

- Degree classification
- Publication record
- Institutional prestige

How do we elevate the opportunities to undertake a PhD and our search for a wider group of doctoral researcher via the competency-based approach?

- Ability to undertake doctoral work
- Motivation
- Resilience
- Communication
- Analytical/critical thinking



Abimbola

PhD in Psy

A doctoral researcher at Nottingham Trent University and a proud EDEPI Doctoral Community member.

Her academic background and lived experience as a Nigerian woman lens to understand the barriers to clinical trials.



Focus on the East Midlands
The research utilizes interviews and focus groups with Nigerians living in the East Midlands to gather lived perspectives.

EDEPI PGRs



Chrispen Moyo
Doctoral Researcher |
Mental Health Nurse |
FTSU Guardian

THE SAFE VOICE RESEARCH PROJECT



An Intersectional Lens on Safety
Examining how role, ethnicity, gender, and disability shape the confidence of healthcare professionals.

A Dual-Method Approach



Integrating qualitative interviews with systematic policy analysis to map organizational barriers and facilitators.

Evidence-Based Culture Change



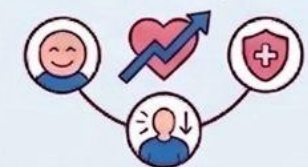
Generating practical recommendations for leaders to strengthen a culture free from retaliation.

MOTIVATION & SYSTEMIC IMPACT



Represented by the safety pin, symbolizing the protection owed to those who speak up.

Better Care Through Safety



Psychological safety is linked to higher quality care, lower burnout, and fewer harms.

WHO IT BENEFITS

- Program resource development
- Mental health professionals
- Psychosocial healthcare
- Mental health nurses
- Pre-terrorsity change
- Policymaker and colleague
- Policymaker and apprentice

EDEPI Doctoral Community | NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

personal loss.



Research Equity as Excellence

Inclusive trials lead to fairer medical evidence and better healthcare outcomes for everyone.



Oncology Research & Healthcare

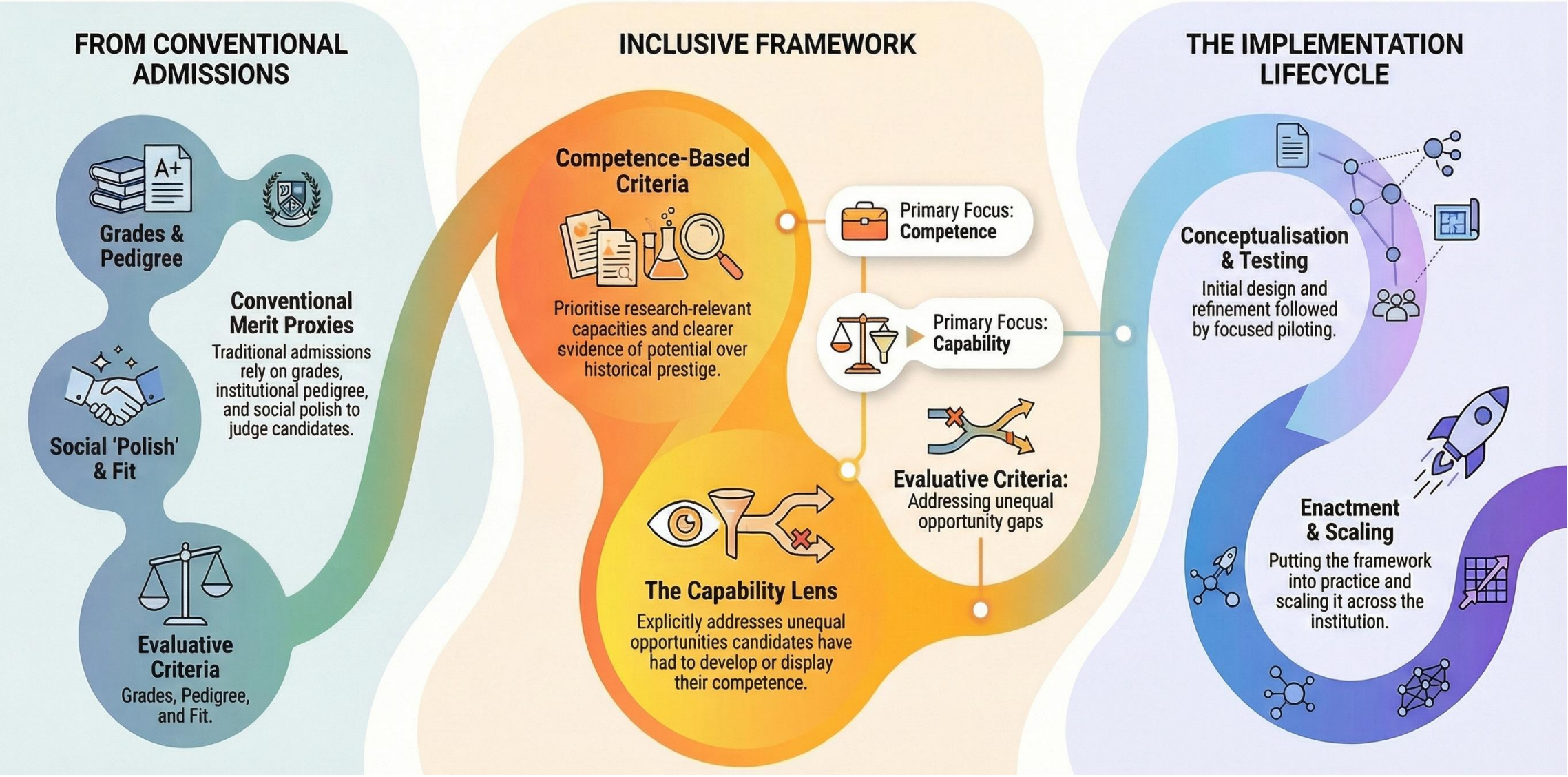
Personal Drive & Global Impact

Abimbola's commitment is fueled by her career as an oncology nurse and personal loss.

Supporting Stakeholders

Assists Nigerian communities, healthcare providers, and organizations like the NIHR.

Reimagining doctoral admissions: competency, merit, capability



EDEPI Community of Practice

The EDEPI team disseminate the framework at different knowledge exchange events and organized a community of 22 institutions

Fostering sector-wide knowledge sharing/action

Two webinars were organized with the engaged institutions, focusing on institutional practice of inclusive admission

Engaging the community with focused practice

Three case study institutions were recruited showcasing how they piloted the EDEPI framework in their own systems

Showcasing institution case studies



Nottingham Trent University



EDEPI Community of Practice

- EDEPI Webinar Series establishes a **sector-wide platform** to support institutions in implementing inclusive admissions;
- The community has now engaged 24 institutions, with 6 international institutions;
- **The first webinar** (Nov, 2024) engaged 10 institutions, featuring case studies from early adopters. Three UK institutions have volunteered to act as case study sites to apply the CBF in mapping their own PGR admission process;
- **The next webinar** (May 2025) showcased the stories of the three case studies and discuss how this CoP approach could turn into a long-term, self-sustaining organisation to facilitate inclusive PGR admission sustainably;
- We have established a [Padlet](#) for Community of Practice institution reps to interact and exchange ideas about include PGR admission.



Nottingham Trent University



DiveIn recruitment process

- Adoption of EDEPI competency-based admissions framework
 - Eliminating reliance on degree classification and institutional prestige
- DiveIn recruitment is a three-stage process:
 1. Triage
 - Pseudo-anonymous review based on eligibility criteria and degree in relevant discipline
 2. Application
 - Structured narrative questions and a technical exercise that are assessed independently from each other
 - Application statement assesses baseline PhD readiness using EDEPI criteria
 3. Online interviews
 - Structured narrative questions, presentations on favourite scientific subject and PhD ambitions
 - Assessment of fit to DiveIn mission, interdisciplinarity, cohort dynamics



Application stage questions

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCHER COMPETENCY-BASED ADMISSIONS FRAMEWORK

FEBRUARY 2024

Equity in Doctoral Education through Partnership
and Innovation (EDEPI)

- The 5 questions probe the EDEPI dimensions of:
 - Q1: Motivation** (What is exciting about the prospect of doing a doctorate?)
 - Q2: Resilience** (Describe a challenge you faced and say how you overcame it)
 - Q3: Curiosity** (Discuss your favourite scientific topic, your own engagement and experience with it and what you think are the next big questions to investigate.)
 - Q4&Q5: Fit for CDT & DiveIn** (What inspirations do you draw from our Catalogue of Possibilities, particularly in terms of working within a team to carry out mission-driven, interdisciplinary and collaborative research? How do you see your participation in a Centre for Doctoral Training such as DiveIn helping to fill your skills gaps?)
 - Planning & organization, communication, independence** (integral to the application process)

COMPREHENSION & EVALUATION	ANALYTICAL & PROBLEM SOLVING	COMMUNICATION	PLANNING & ORGANISATION
	Recognise connections and patterns in information/data, text or artefacts Evaluate information/data, text or artefacts for credibility and accuracy Make evidence-based judgements based on analysis of information/data, text or artefact Explain the value/potential contribution of the research to knowledge and those who will benefit	Communicate in writing with clarity and precision using evidence to support your assertions Tailor communications appropriately to different audiences Present information and ideas verbally, using active listening Consider impact of research and how it might reach the widest audiences	Grasp and order information coming from multiple sources Set, maintain and ensure a clear direction for a project or activity Anticipate, think ahead and identify next steps in a project or activity Adjust objectives and deadlines appropriately as new ideas or issues emerge
ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PERFORMANCE AND SEEK HELP WHEN NECESSARY			
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES	MOTIVATION	CURIOSITY	RESILIENCE
	Show how you plan to actively engage with policy, practice, publications in your proposed area of research to keep up to date Understand your own personal motivations and demonstrate how these will drive your research Recognise and take up opportunities for improvement Willingness to engage fully in the chosen area and contribute to conversations and debates in that field	Show that you want to ask challenging 'why' questions about your topic Be prepared to deepen your investigation to shed new light on information/data, text or artefact Be willing to think deeply about complex ideas and theories in the context of the topic Value but be prepared to question the knowledge of others	Take positive steps to maintain a positive work/life balance and seek help when challenges occur Willingness to admit to errors and challenges and seek appropriate support Adjust approaches and responses when faced with change or setbacks Demonstrate the courage to engage with complex ideas and viewpoints
GENERATION AND DELIVERY OF OUTCOMES TO A HIGH STANDARD AND COLLABORATION			
DELIVERING RESULTS	INTEGRITY	WORKING WITH OTHERS	INDEPENDENCE
	Be prepared to carry out your project with rigour and integrity, being committed to a compliance with ethics policy Understand the importance of treating data or information confidentially and responsibly Be alert to and challenge your own biases and assumptions Show that you respect diverse points of view and can treat others, and their views, with fairness	Work effectively with collaborators and supervisors, treating each with respect and keeping them informed of progress Actively listen to others, share information, and propose suggestions and solutions Respond appropriately to guidance and feedback from supervisors and collaborators and take action to improve Seek out and make use of opportunities to collaborate, support others and/or make a positive contribution to your discipline or community in the context of your proposed research project	Autonomously meet deadlines and objectives for your own research project Take responsibility for identifying the technical, personal or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop those skills appropriately Take initiative to suggest ideas for improvements, sharing ideas in a constructive manner Reflect on challenges and successes, and make and implement an action plan to maintain or improve your performance



Potential for PhD?

- Evaluate readiness and potential for doctoral research.
- Screening for foundational socio-emotional and comprehension competencies.
- EDEPI framework provides systematic assurance of competency coverage and equity of assessment
- It can help find gaps in your assessment.

EDEPI COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

COLLECT, ORDER, EVALUATE AND REVIEW RESULTS OBJECTIVELY, AND COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY

COMPREHENSION & EVALUATION

ANALYTICAL & PROBLEM SOLVING

Recognise connections and patterns in information/data, text or artefacts

Evaluate information/data, text or artefacts for credibility and accuracy

Make evidence-based judgements based on analysis of information/data, text or artefacts

Explain the value/potential contribution of the research to knowledge and those who will benefit

COMMUNICATION

Communicate in writing with clarity and precision using evidence to support your assertions

Tailor communications appropriately to different audiences

Present information and ideas verbally, using appropriate listening

Consider impact of research and how it might reach the widest audiences

PLANNING & ORGANISATION

Grasp and order information coming from multiple sources

Set, maintain and ensure a clear direction for a project or activity

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SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

MOTIVATION

Show how you plan to actively engage with policy, practice, publications in your proposed area of research to keep up to date

Understand your own personal motivations and demonstrate how these will drive your research

Recognise and take up opportunities for improvement

Willingness to engage fully in the chosen area and contribute to conversations and debates in that field

CURIOSITY

Show that you want to ask challenging 'why' questions about your topic

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Be willing to ask deeply about complex ideas and theories in the context of the topic

Value but be prepared to question the knowledge of others

RESILIENCE

Take positive steps to maintain a positive work/life balance and seek help when challenges occur

Willingness to admit to errors and challenges and seek appropriate support

Adjust approaches and responses when faced with change or setbacks

Demonstrate the courage to engage with complex ideas and viewpoints

GENERATION AND DELIVERY OF OUTCOMES TO A HIGH STANDARD AND COLLABORATION

DELIVERING RESULTS

INTEGRITY

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Show that you respect diverse points of view and can treat others, and their views, with fairness

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Work effectively with collaborators and supervisors, treating each with respect and keeping them informed of progress

Actively listen to others, share information, and propose suggestions and solutions

Respond appropriately to guidance and feedback from supervisors and collaborators and take action to improve

Seek out and make use of opportunities to collaborate, support others and/or make a positive contribution to your discipline or community in the context of your proposed research project

INDEPENDENCE

Autonomously meet deadlines and objectives for your own research project

Take responsibility for identifying the technical, personal or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop those skills appropriately

Take initiative to suggest ideas for improvement and propose ideas in a constructive manner

Reflect on challenges and successes, and make and implement an action plan to maintain or improve your performance

Competency-based models reshapes institutional admissions

01

Redefining merit through structured frameworks

02

Reconfiguring recruitment as institutional practice

03

Cross-institutional adaptation and mutual reinforcement

1. Redefining merit through structured frameworks

Both the EDEPI and DiveIn models introduced **structured criteria** (curiosity, collaboration, and resilience) that challenged traditional proxies for merit.

Both models were purposefully piloted across the partnership institutions at different stages of PGR admission. Feedback from PGRs and staff with responsibilities related to admissions were collected.

2. Reconfiguring recruitment as institutional practice

Operationalising these models required deliberate interventions into admissions processes:

- redesigning selection criteria,
- training panels
- structuring question
- problem-based assessments.

Evolverment of institutional cultures

These practices shifted emphasis from past achievement to future potential.

While concerns were raised about compromising 'excellence', the negotiation of new values (e.g. interdisciplinarity, cohort learning) illustrated how institutional cultures can evolve toward inclusion.

3. Cross-institutional adaptation and mutual reinforcement

This retrospective mapping practice not only validated existing practices but also extended the framework through context-specific additions.

The mutual recognition between the two initiatives demonstrates the potential of practitioner-led, cross-institutional collaboration to drive sector-wide change. Such bottom-up practice-sharing offers a scalable route to embedding equity as a normative principle in doctoral admissions.

Next step: UK national consortium for inclusive PGR admissions

- Exploring the establishment of a UK Consortium for Inclusive Doctoral Admissions,
- Bringing together approximately 8–12 universities to collaboratively develop, pilot, and evaluate inclusive approaches to PGR admissions.
- Contribution: ~£10k–£15k per institution (via Research Culture or EDI funding streams)
- Central coordination: hosted by NTU Research Culture Environment
- Research Fellow: coordination, research, and sector engagement
- Please email bing.lu@ntu.ac.uk or rebekah.smithmcgloin@ntu.ac.uk for an initial conversation



Guiding Questions for discussion:

- Map your institution/school/department's PGR admission process (key timeline, scale, decision making stakeholders). How do you value equitable PGR admission?
- Where do you see EDEPI's competency-based framework fit in your institutions' PGR admission process? How could you apply the framework in your own institution to assist PGR recruitment?
- Do you have any feedback on the framework regarding its scope and strength?



Use this interactive [Padlet](#) for (a)synchronous discussion

Thank you! Connect with us...



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