

# Supporting the next generation of psychologists



**This month, we launch a new collection of pieces that highlight ways to improve doctoral education and support graduate student trainees to their fullest potential.**

Graduate school can be a time of high stress and high stakes. However, students vary in their experience – some have a supportive and collaborative research environment, whereas others find themselves in relentless competition with other students. Regardless of the specifics of the environment, all doctoral students face immense pressure to prove themselves and establish their research identity, while also taking classes and in many cases working as a teaching assistant to earn their stipend. The challenges of a PhD program can be compounded for students from under-represented groups and students studying outside their home country.

In recognition of these challenges, we're launching a [new collection of articles](#) that highlights opportunities to improve this status quo. These articles emphasize solutions to lessen the burden on students and bring more equity to doctoral research.

This collection includes three Comments we published over the past year that address issues relevant to doctoral training, including a healthy PhD approach that places student wellbeing ahead of productivity<sup>1</sup>, inclusive mentorship<sup>2</sup>, and using lab onboarding materials to promote an inclusive lab<sup>3</sup>. These pieces are joined by three new Comments published in this issue.

Mariam Aly and colleagues discuss how graduate advisors can help trainees to navigate peer review and suggest ways to [shift the culture of peer review](#) to create a system that is fair and unbiased. Doctoral students are the peer reviewers of the future, so intervening at this stage can drive change that will be carried forward.

Evie Vergauwe discusses [challenging situations that doctoral students face](#) during their training that might lead them to drop out of their program or prematurely decide that academia is not a place for them. But the likelihood of these situations occurring and the extent of their negative impacts can be managed through careful work from both the student and their supervisor. In particular, Vergauwe highlights the importance of making expectations and workflows explicit so that miscommunications and surprises are less likely.

Finally, Adrelys Mateo Santana and colleagues describe [three 'taxes,' or additional demands and expectations, faced by minoritized students](#) during their graduate careers on the basis of their racial and/or ethnic background. They discuss how these taxes lead to unnecessary

and inequitable barriers to success and how faculty members, departments and institutions can begin to dismantle them.

Towards the end of their doctoral training, students must make a choice about their future career. The traditional pathway leading to a professorship is not desirable or realistic for all students, and some will choose to transition out of academia after they finish their PhD or after a post-doctoral fellowship. Finding information about non-academic careers can be difficult while one is embedded in an academic environment, so trainees are often unsure of where to start or what opportunities exist.

To address this gap, we are launching an ongoing series of interviews with people who have PhDs in psychology but are not professors. The first three interviews are published in this issue. Each interview highlights a different possible career path that students might want to consider, with a personal perspective and plenty of tips for success. These careers vary in their direct connections to research and academia, and each is suited to different interests and aptitudes. We hope that these short interviews will support students in learning about job possibilities outside the traditional pathway.

This collection of articles and interviews adds to our existing support for early career researchers. Our Journal Club articles<sup>4</sup> provide a venue for doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows to write about an article that has influenced their personal or research life. Like all our articles, these pieces are edited for clarity and accessibility, which gives the author an opportunity to get feedback on their writing from an editor. For our Review and Perspective articles, we encourage peer reviewers<sup>5</sup> to include a graduate student or other early-career researcher as a co-reviewer. This process enables students to experience the peer reviewer role firsthand – from collaboratively preparing the report to reading our decision letter and the author's rebuttal – and receive recognition for their contributions in our manuscript system.

Supporting the success of doctoral students will pay dividends in the future. We hope that students and faculty members alike find some inspiration in our new collection. We will be continually adding content on this topic, so check back periodically to see what's new!

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## References

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3. Hernandez, I. A. et al. Creating an inclusive research lab with student onboarding materials. *Nat. Rev. Psychol.* **2**, 197–198 (2023).
4. A platform for early-career voices. *Nat. Rev. Psychol.* **1**, 65 (2022).
5. Reviewing a review. *Nat. Rev. Psychol.* **2**, 715 (2023).

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