



Escape room

ESCAPE YOUR PHD

Overview

Age group	No age limit - contains no inappropriate content
No. of participants	min. 3 max. 6
Subject matter	Introducing new Researchers to undertaking a PhD at Durham
Keywords	PhD, Research
Playing time	1 hour + Briefing / debriefing time
Authors	Robin Watson, Henna Bains, Mariam Sarhan, Jow Twemlow, Patricia Manzano-Rodriguez, Aofie Marie, Julie Mulvey, Simon Rees

In a few words

The successful researcher escape room project challenged a group of postgraduate students to develop an escape room exploring the characteristics of being a successful researcher. To test the system - the escape rooms were undertaken by a group of academics participating in a leadership development programme. The students developed a wide range of skills such as creative and logical thinking and team work and collaborative skills. The academics found it a useful activity to reflect on the skills required by a research team. Following the successful trial the escape room was undertaken by cohorts of postgraduate research students.

Learning outcomes

1. To develop awareness of a range of PhD support services;
2. To develop problem solving and team work skills;
3. To develop awareness of a range skills required to undertake a PhD.





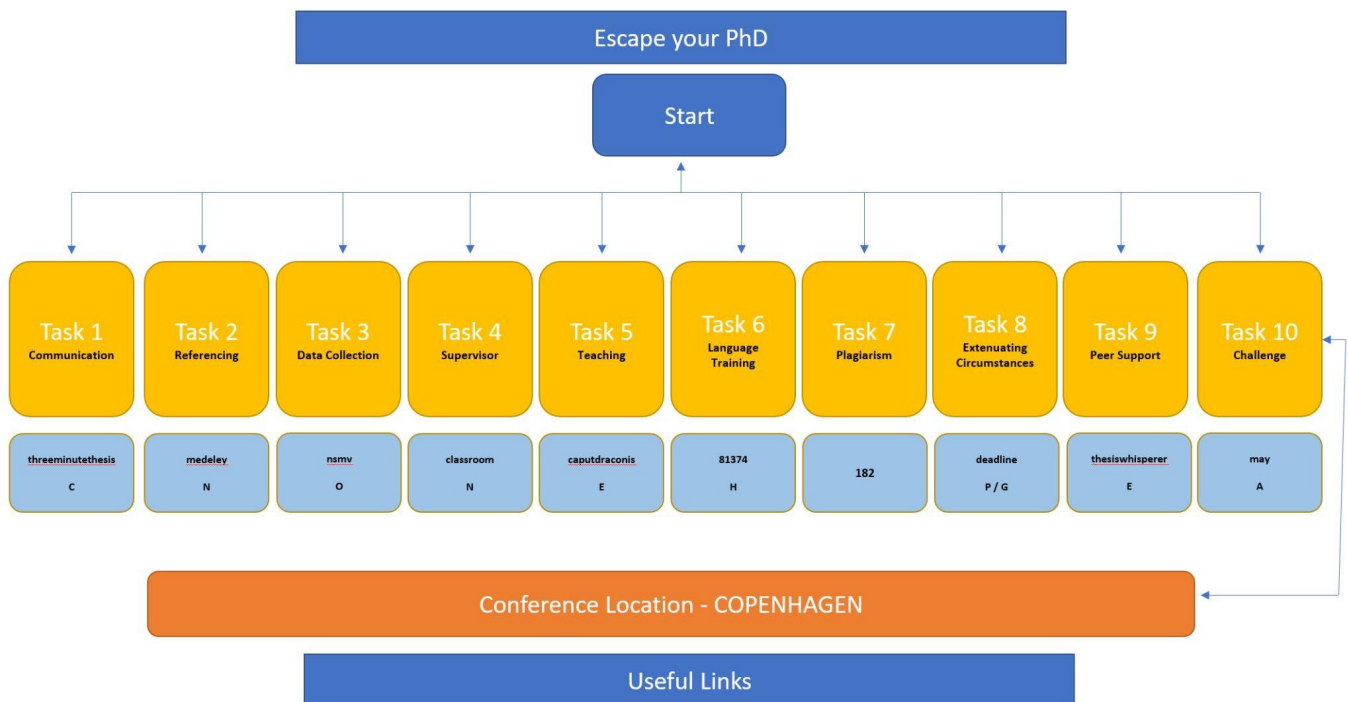
Use scenario

The escape room is set up in Google Forms and the students work through a series of activities providing the correct answers to puzzles and moving through a sequence. The form can be copied and reused for new groups.

LINK TO TAKE THE ESCAPE ROOM:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdWR6kKhWRgsKMcBbcK7-nM202SWx2_wqLUm1GtwZOr2w0sxQ/viewform

Gameflow





Escape room set-up

Escape room materials:

Link to Escape Room:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdWR6kKhWRgsKMcBbcK7-nM202SWx2_wqLUm1GtwZOr2w0sxQ/viewform

A google form was created to set up the online escape room. A series of tasks were part of the form that needed passwords/codes to allow progression to further tasks.

The aim of the escape room is to introduce new early career researchers to Durham University to opportunity to explore activities that are required as part of their PhD research studies during their time at Durham.



Room reboot

The Escape Room Google Form can be copied and reused for different cohorts of students. Students can work on these activities either individually or in groups. During our trial runs of these we found that the activities worked better in groups as they introduced students to each other. During Covid - all researcher activities were carried out independently and providing an online mechanism for them to work with other early career researchers was an added bonus.



Escape room in action

Escape your PhD

 julie.mulvey@gmail.com (not shared) [Switch accounts](#) 

*Required

*

☐ Begin

[Next](#) [Clear form](#)

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google. [Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Privacy Policy](#).

Google Forms

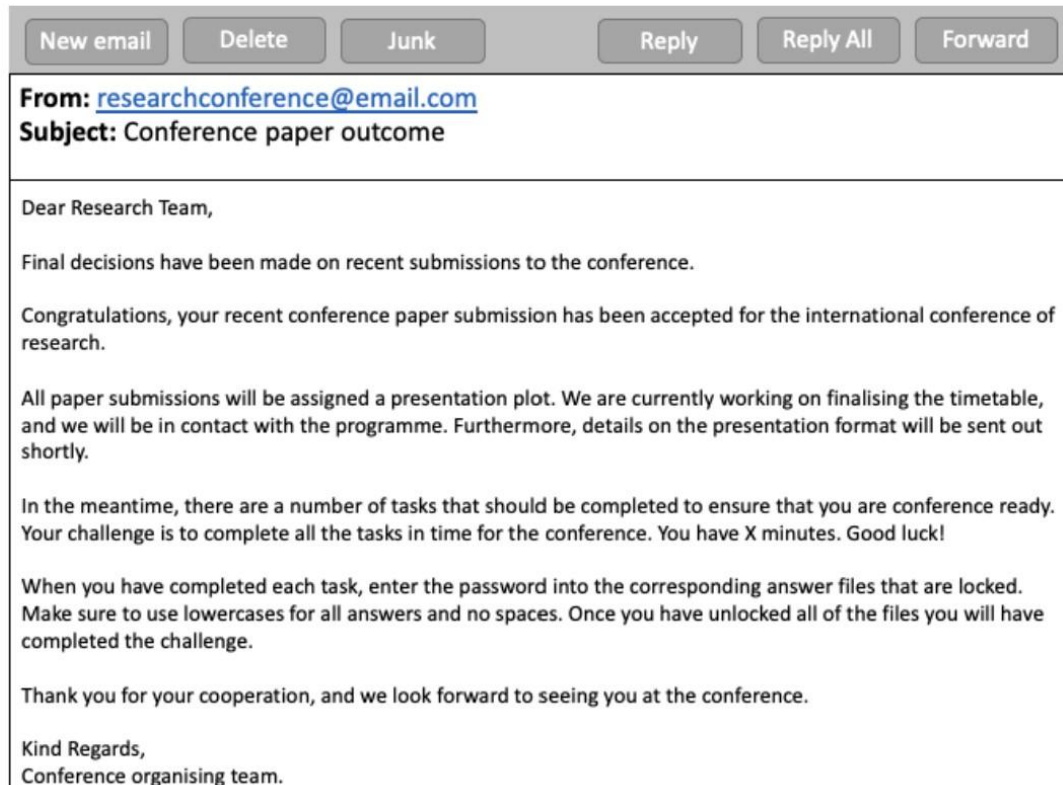
Starting the escape room

The escape room has its own introduction and own instructions requiring very little interaction from the escape room master.



Introduction

"DING" you hear as your phone lights up, indicating a new email. Delighted, you see a long awaited reply from the conference organisers. Your paper has been accepted!



However, as you read the email, reality begins to dawn on you. The paper isn't finished and you don't even remember where the conference is being held. The email certainly doesn't tell you.

Never mind, you think. Hopefully finishing the paper will refresh your memory. Reassured, you begin working through the tasks. Best get them done quick though, the conference is fast approaching!

Playing the escape room

The Escape Room is entirely online. You need to login to Google and follow the instructions in the tasks lists. There are 10 tasks to complete and you can either do them in order to keep returning to the main page and choose which tasks you want to take. All the answers are marked as either correct with some success criteria - which is worth reading fully - and if not you are invited to retake the tasks.



See list of sections below. The escape room participant selects an option from the list and clicks on the Next button to view that particular section. They can return to this section if they wish to jump to questions not in sequence.

Question *

- ☐ Task 1 - Communication
- ☐ Task 2 - Referencing
- ☐ Task 3 - Data Collection
- ☐ Task 4 - Supervisor
- ☐ Task 5 - Teaching
- ☐ Task 6 - Language Training
- ☐ Task 7 - Plagiarism
- ☐ Task 8 - Extenuating Circumstance
- ☐ Task 9 - Peer Support
- ☐ Task 10 - Challenge
- ☐ I think that is everything completed



Before heading to the conference, you really want to brush up on your presentation skills. Communicating your research effectively is a really good way to showcase your research, network and find others who are in the same field.

Unfortunately, you lost your confirmation email which says which event you are attending. You know that all the events are taking place in the Teaching and Learning centre (TLC). You think you should head over there and see if you can find out which event you signed up to. Here's a map in case you get lost.



Workshop Timetable

Day	Event	Description
Monday	three minute thesis	On Monday the first round of the 3 minute thesis competition is taking place (3MT). The 3MT is a competition where student pitch their research in three minutes with the aid of just one slide. It's a great way to practice talking about your research to a wide audience.
Tuesday	bright club	On Tuesday, an introductory session to Bright Club is scheduled. The attendees can explore presentation techniques and opening up discussions on using stand-up techniques in communication. For those brave enough to take part the session leads to Bright Club Newcastle training sessions that culminates with a night at The Stand Comedy Club Newcastle, blending comedy, research and performance.
Wednesday	dcad training	On Wednesday there's a DCAD training course for developing your presentation skills. This session gives you a chance to practice your presentation and receive some feedback. DCAD stands for the Durham Centre for Academic Development.
Thursday	departmental seminar	On Thursday, your department are running a lunchtime seminar where postgraduates can practice their presentations for upcoming conferences. It's always great to practice in front of your peers. Look out for opportunities like this.
Friday	postgraduate conference	On Friday your college is running a postgraduate mini conference. This is a great chance for you to practice your presentation in front of familiar and friendly faces.

Which event did you attend? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



Which event did you attend?

Short answer

Short-answer text

Text

Contains

threeminutethesis

Sorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - threeminutethesis

Remember that the email indicated that all responses should be in lower case and no spaces

Section 4 of 23

C

That's right, you remember now, you booked to attend the three minute thesis event.

This is a great way to improve your presentation skills and practice conveying your research in a concise way.

Enjoy the event.

Question *

☐ Back to the start

After section 4 Continue to next section



TASK TWO - REFERENCING

Task 2 - Referencing

Whilst writing your conference paper, you've been slightly disorganised with your reference handling.

Luckily, you made some notes on four papers.

You always organise your papers into four categories: key, important, marginal and peripheral.

Use the clues below to help you organise the references. Make sure to make a note of the organised papers, they may be useful later.

Clues:

Paper 1 is not the key paper.

The marginal paper has three or more authors.

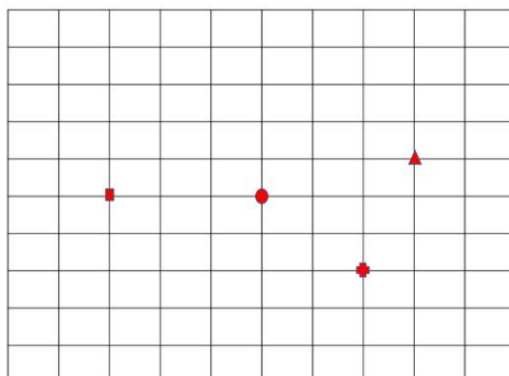
The important paper was published in the 1990s.

The important paper must be used for the literature review

Category	Paper number
Key	
Important	
Marginal	
Peripheral	

An office mate has recommended using some referencing software by leaving you a puzzle. Next time, it may be useful to use a referencing software, such as:

●	Start
■	Endnote
▲	BibTeX
◆	Mendeley





Journal paper notes

Paper one

Title: Assessing the impact of exercise on postgraduate performance

Author: J.Fraser, K. Müller

Year: 1998

Main message: Shows that students that do some levels of exercise see positive effects in many areas of postgraduate performance.

How is this useful to me: Contains useful data sets.

Paper two

Title: A survey of postgraduate working habits

Author: A.Wilson

Year: 2019

Main message: The study suggests that routine and a healthy diet have positive impacts on postgraduates.

How is this useful to me: Contains ideas that are relevant and must be used in my literature review.

Paper three

Title: A study into factors that support a good supervisor- supervisee relationship

Author: Z. Peeters, M. Jensen, H.Martin

Year: 1999

Main message: Factors such as regular, scheduled meetings, setting expectations and good communication can have positive impacts on supervisor- supervisee relationship.

How is this useful to me: Contains ideas that are relevant and must be used in my literature review.

Paper four

Title: The effect of working from home on postgraduate education

Author: T.Murphy, K. Smits, A. Silva, D. Ramos, E.Brown

Year: 2017

Main message: The effects are not yet conclusive; more data is required.

How is this useful to me: The results motivate my research question.

Which software did they recommend? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



Which software did they recommend?

Short answer

Short-answer text

TextContainsmendeleySorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - mendeley

SUCCESS PANEL

N

That's correct!

Your office mate recommends using a referencing software to keep organised. Be sure to ask your peers questions, and pick their brains for tips.



TASK 3 - DATA COLLECTION

Task 3 - Data collection

You race through the university grounds, you're late for your data collection. You were due to meet your participants at quarter past 1. Hopefully everyone is still there.

Thankfully, when you arrive at 13:24, everyone is stood waiting outside the door. Unfortunately, the door is locked with a 4 letter code.

You sigh and knock on the office door up the hallway to ask for the password. They laugh and just hand you a note scrawled on an old piece of paper.

"Whenever I am trying to get into that room, I always find the information on Durham's website a good place to start!" shouted one of secretaries. "Never be afraid to look things up if you aren't sure".

On the paper are 4 clues. The top of the paper reads:

"Once you have your answer, take the first of it"

Paper

1. Never keep your participants waiting. Exactly how many minutes late were you?
2. What is the site called that hosts the online system where ethics may be submitted?
3. When you were designing your data management plan, who wrote the paper you were advised to read for further advice?
4. For the international part of your PhD, what was the form called that you filled out for your travel?

What is the password for the door? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



What is the password for the door?

Short-answer text

Text Contains nsmv Sorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - nsmv

n = nine
s = sharepoint
m = michener *
v = viator

*Since writing this escape room the link to the recommended reading for writing a data management plan is behind a password -

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/internal/research.innovation/outputs/data.management/planning/dmp/> .

Here is a direct link to the article:

<https://wiki.lib.sun.ac.za/images/a/aa/Plos-michener.pdf>

SUCCESS PANEL

Great! The password works. You open the door, set up your experiment and go back to the office to return the piece of paper.

"Is this sort of security not just really inconvenient?" You ask them. They laugh again and explain that they do this to all the PhD students who come in late to collect their data. You roll your eyes and head back to the room.

At least you brushed up on your knowledge of data collection in the process.



TASK 4 - SUPERVISOR

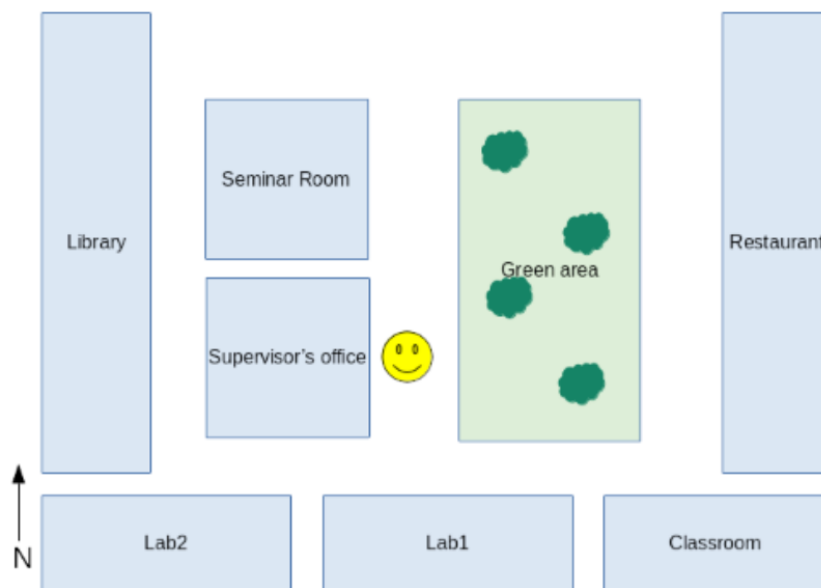
This task gives some information about the weekly supervisor meeting and asks that you work out where the supervisory meeting is going to take place.

Task 4 - Supervisor

You arrive at your supervisor's office for your weekly meeting. That's odd, your supervisor isn't there. Great. You notice a map and a piece of paper stuck to the office door. You also can't help noticing that the beginning of each sentence is written in bold ink.

"Sorry, I'm not in my office! When you want to come find me, this note will navigate you in the right direction. No need to panic, I'm just a few steps away. Eagerly anticipating our meeting. See you soon!"

Map on the door



Where is your supervisor? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



Where is your supervisor?

Short answer

Short-answer text

TextContainsclassroomSorry, try again

Required

N

Yes! Your supervisor is in the classroom.

While the puzzle is fun, this is the fifth time your supervisor has done something like this. You think you should probably say something about it. Have a look at the section on postgrad research in the Learning and teaching handbook (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/learningandteaching.handbook/8/>) if you have trouble with your supervisor:

"If a student has any worries about his or her supervision which it is not possible to discuss with the supervisor, he or she can approach the Director of Postgraduate Research/Chair of the Departmental Postgraduate or Research Committee, Head of Department, or the Chair of Faculty Education Committee (PG)."

Your supervisor also gives you a strange looking document and asks you to keep it safe, claiming it might come in handy. finding it hard to believe, you nonetheless politely pocket the document.



Strange looking document

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
≈	∴	♪	☾	☺	‡	◦	ℳ	×	\$
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
±	÷	≠	↘	↗	✓	⊥	”	----	▪
U	V	W	X	Y	Z				
** **	** **	♥	♠	☾	☺				



TASK 5 - TEACHING

This task asks you to login to a computer by figuring out the code from a line of gibberish.

Task 5 - Teaching

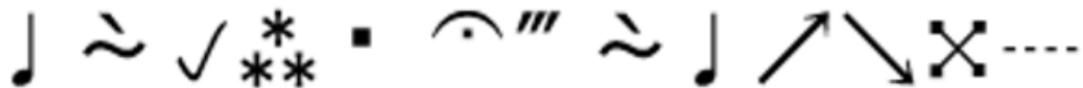
You arrive at the classroom for your demonstrating work and your supervisor is already there. You take off your bag and coat as other students begin to file in and take their seats.

Suddenly, your supervisor receives a phone call. They turn to you. "I'm going to need to step out for 10 minutes. I need you to log in and start the practical, I will be back as soon as I can. I hope you brought that sheet I gave you the other day?" Before you can protest, they have left the room.

You stare at the computer and see only lines of gibberish staring back at you. You had better figure out how to unlock the computer quickly, otherwise you may have to dredge up your primary school singing career.

Lines of Gibberish

THE CODE TO UNLOCK MY COMPUTER IS



What is the code to unlock the computer? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



What is the code to unlock the computer?

Short-answer text

Text Contains caputdraconis Sorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - caputdraconis

Look for the 'strange document' you were given in the previous task for the key to solve this puzzle

SUCCESS PANEL

E

Success! You put in the password and log into the computer. To your relief, the files you need are already open. You display them on the projector and the noise in the room slowly dies down as the students look towards you.

You are just about to start speaking when your supervisor comes back into the room. "Sorry about that, shall we get started then?". Slightly disappointed, you head back to your chair and sit down, you quite enjoyed your moment of authority.



TASK 6 - LANGUAGE TRAINING

For this task you need to work out a five digit code to unlock a door. This requires some investigatory work!

Task 6 - Language training

Because the conference is located in a different country, you think you should probably brush up on your language skills.

You head over to the Centre for Foreign Language Study, but in a cruel twist of fate, the door is locked and requires a 5 digit code. A note is stuck to the door.

Hmm, this doesn't look like English. Maybe you should check out the Centre for Foreign Language Study website (<https://www.dur.ac.uk/cfls/>) to see what languages classes are available for clues.

Note stuck to the door

oito tredici sju vier

What is the code? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form

What is the code?



Short answer

Short-answer text

Number

Equal to

81374

Sorry, try again



Required



ANSWER - 81374



Oito - 8 (Portugese)

Tredici - 13 (Italian)

Sju - 7 (Swedish)

Vier - 4 (German)

SUCCESS PANEL

H



Yes, you're in!

The Centre for Foreign Language Study offers language courses throughout the year. Two types of course are available, academic reading skills for researchers and general language learning.



TASK 7 - PLAGIARISM

Find a three digit code from a video and transcript that lets you know how much you can spend on travel costs for your conference.

Task 7 - Plagiarism

When you finally manage to get hold of your supervisor they're angry because they caught one of their students copying another student's essay. Unbelievable! You would never do that, but your supervisor insists on lecturing you about plagiarism anyway.

The meeting was supposed to be about travel costs for the conference. Maybe they left you a hidden message?

Listen to the recording of your supervisor and look for a 3-digit code to find out how much you will have to spend.

Message from your Supervisor - watch the following video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYvLNcg2yrc>

Transcript

"Plagiarism is one of the things the university will not tolerate. It is defined as the unacknowledged use, including quotation and close paraphrasing of other people's writings and ideas, amounting to the presentation of other person's writings or thought's as your own. Careful! Self-plagiarism is forbidden, too!"

How much do you need to spend on travel expenses? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



How much do you need to spend on travel expenses?

Short-answer text

Number

Equal to

182

Sorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - 182



TASK 8 - EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

Task 8 - Extenuating circumstances

Congratulations! You found out how much it will cost you to get to the conference. But wait... was that a sneeze?

What happens if you get really sick or need to take some time off work due to extenuating circumstances? A friend told you about the Serious Adverse Circumstances (SAC) Form, but the information on the webpage is all jumbled up: one page sends you to another but you click on a link that sends you back to your starting point...

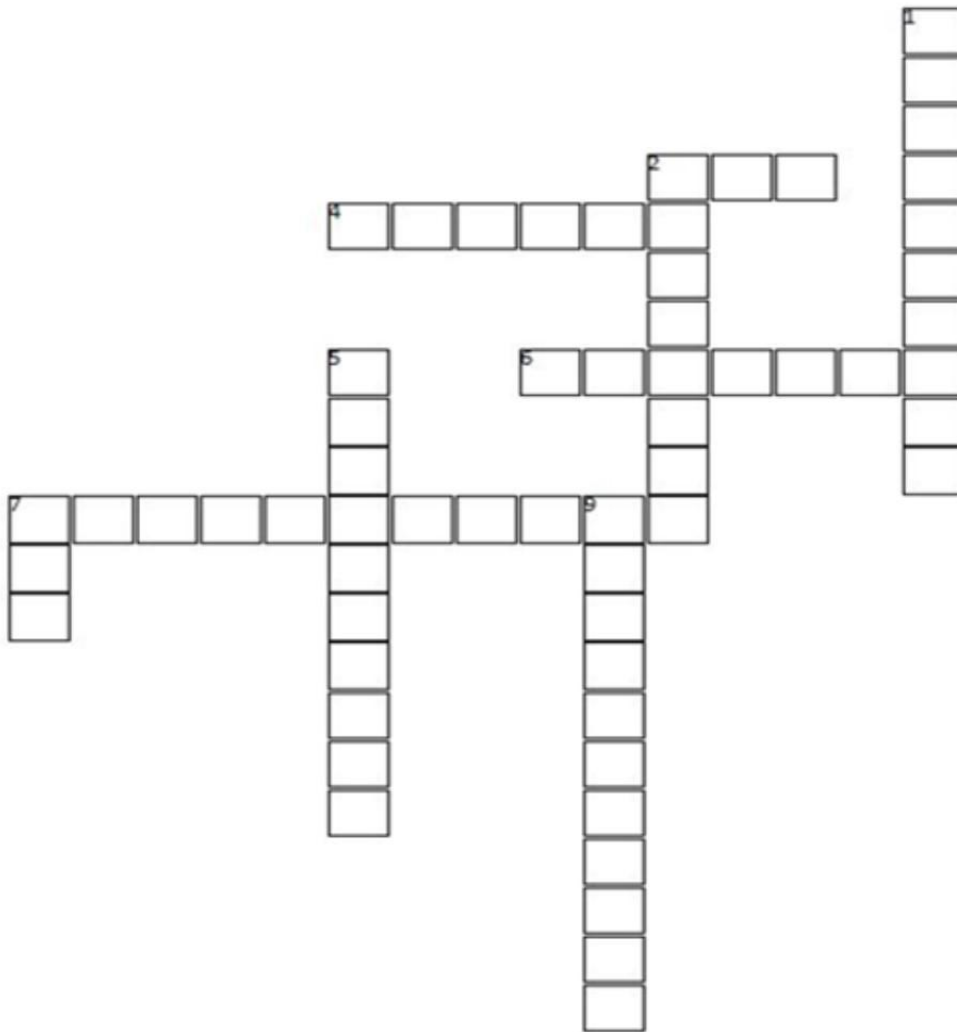
After browsing all day, you only have a series of vague ideas and random clues and your sniffles are only getting worse... Complete the crossword to learn more about the SAC Form and get the information you need!

ACROSS

- 2 - Durham University Online
- 4 - Where do you go to find the information?
- 6 - You will find help in your ... Student Support Office
- 7 - The SAC Form is on Duo under Banner...

DOWN

- 1 - After informing your supervisor you should speak with your School or ...
- 5 - The first person you need to tell about your Serious Adverse Circumstances
- 7 - Serious Adverse Circumstances
- 9 - The name of the virus that caused a pandemic



What is your biggest worry about? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form



What is your biggest worry about?

Short answer

Short-answer text

TextContainsdeadlineSorry, try again

Required

ANSWER - deadline

SUCCESS PANEL

P / G

Not to worry!

If you ever need to fill a SAC Form, you must do it online on DUO under Banner-Self Service



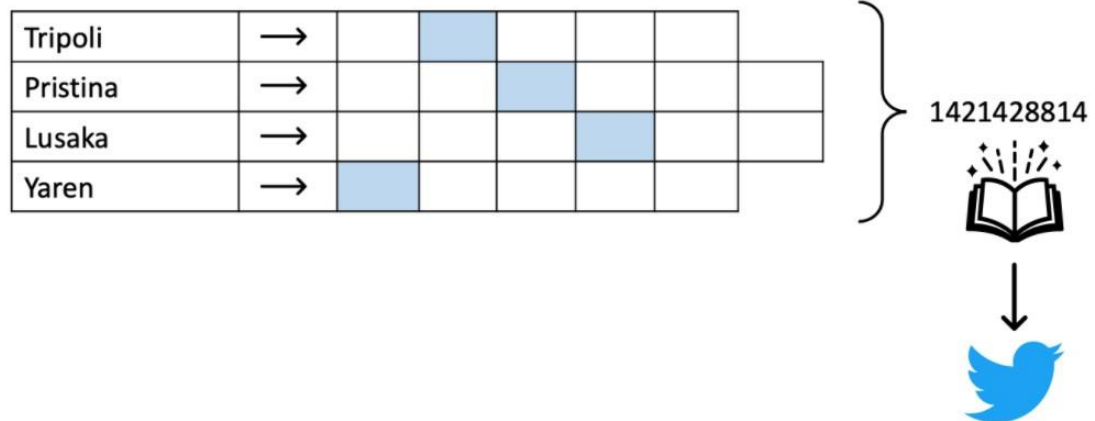
TASK 9 - PEER SUPPORT

Task 9 - Peer support

You're having a zoom catch-up with an old undergraduate friend who casually mentions their plans to take a month long holiday in July. You suddenly feel a wave of existential isolation as you pine for someone who understands the minutiae of PhD life.

When you mention this in passing to a fellow PhD student at the library, they nod silently and hand you a piece of paper. Before you have time to ask any questions, they have wandered away muttering "must write, no time.."

Staring at the odd note, you're left among the bookshelves pondering whether you should have chased after them...





Who did you end up following instead? *


Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form

Who did you end up following instead?



Short answer



Short-answer text

Text

Contains

thesiswhisperer

Sorry, try again



Required

ANSWER - thesiswhisperer

SUCCESS PANEL

E



TASK 10 - CHALLENGE

Task 10 - Challenge

Each line represents a charity or organisation. What important topic links these charities? Every year there is a week that raises awareness of this topic. Durham University usually takes part. What month does this take place?





What month does this take place? *

Your answer

Back

Next

Clear form

ANSWER - may

SUCCESS PANEL

A



Talking about mental health can be difficult, but it doesn't have to be. As well as these charities, Durham University has many different resources available to students provided by the counselling team including:

- 1) The mental health advice team
- 2) Psychological wellbeing service and counselling service
- 3) Places and resources to report concerns about others

There is also the national mental health awareness week which takes place in May and the PGR catalyst project based at Durham which might provide further help.

You can also always talk to your college or supervisors if you need further help or advice.



Everything is Completed

One final task to finish off the Escape Room ...

Conference location

You review the materials that you have been working on and wonder if you have covered everything you needed to. Once you are satisfied, you are sure you can figure out where this conference is being held.


You know that is a major city and it is somewhere in Europe, besides that you aren't sure.

I'm sure now, the conference is in... *

Your answer

[Back](#) [Next](#) [Clear form](#)

I'm sure now, the conference is in...



Short answer



Short-answer text

Text

Contains

copenhagen

Sorry, try again

  Required ☒

ANSWER - copenhagen

Working out the answers to all tasks - most of the success panels have a letter in the top left corner. Put them all together and assemble them in the correct order to get the country.



COMPLETION OF ESCAPE ROOM

Well done



Congratulations, you completed all of the tasks and finally figured out where the conference is taking place.

Looks like you're all set for the conference. Enjoy the experience!

We hope you find the following links useful for further information on any of the topics introduced.

Communication:

- DCAD training: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/training.course/graduate/>
- Bright Club: <https://www.life.org.uk/events/bright-club>
- 3 minute thesis (3MT): <https://www.dur.ac.uk/dialogue/signposts/staff/?id=40759&itemno=40759>

Data Collection:

- General ethics guidelines:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/process/online/>
- Ethics submission point:

<https://durhamuniversity.sharepoint.com/teams/researchoffice/ethics/SitePages/Select%20Department.aspx>

- Data management plan:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/outputs/data.management/>
- Pre-registration:
<https://www.enago.com/academy/pre-registration-of-your-research/>
- Durham Maths and stats lab:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/academic.skills/themes/mathsandstats/>

International travel:

- General guidance:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/international.office/stafftravel/generaladvice/>
- Safety and insurance: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research.innovation/governance/ethics/governance/safety/>

Extenuating circumstances:

- General information:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/student.registry/assessment/covid19/sacs/online/>
- COVID-19:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/coronavirus/password/researchers/>

Mental health:

- Counselling service:
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/counselling.service/>
- PGR catalyst project
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/counselling.service/catalystproject/>

