Researcher Safety and Wellbeing: Checklist for Supervisors, PIs, & Institutions

- [ ] **Conduct collaborative and regular risk assessments.** Proactively discuss risks, triggers, and red lines, and the support necessary to minimise harm, support wellbeing, and enable project success. Ensure this is done early.
- [ ] Fund specialised **mental health support.** Supervisors and staff can cost wellbeing support into grant proposals. Include researcher wellbeing and safety in ethical approval processes.
- [ ] **Establish clear protocols for online and offline emergencies**, e.g., harassment or doxxing. Clarify key contacts and procedures.
- [ ] Provide research devices and funding for **burner phones, reputable VPNs**, and other software.
- [ ] **Provide training** on: how to conduct online research while maintaining safety protocols; balancing privacy on social media with a public research profile; risks and protective measures in sensitive or demanding research.
- [ ] Create and share **internal toolkits** detailing the resources relevant to your team/institution.
- [ ] **Check-in with researchers**. Consider weekly debriefs about distressing content, or regular agenda items in supervisions. Emphasise the value of taking breaks, giving oneself grace, and not rushing through research.
- [ ] **Facilitate groupwork.** Wherever possible, ensure staff and students work together on tasks relating to distressing content (in person or online), and avoid lone working.
- [ ] Allow researchers **ownership of their public profile, to protect physical safety**. Ensure online researcher profiles are opt-in or allow for pseudonyms or limited information. Remove office addresses and email addresses etc. from university directories/websites if requested.
- [ ] **Create institutional accounts where research can be shared,** enabling publicity of researchers' work without requiring a personal social media presence.
- [ ] Work with ECRs to negotiate a **suitable risk appetite for public engagement**. Ensure media teams are accessible to advise ahead of disseminating research or engaging with the media.
- [ ] **Consider operational security** for events (both online and in person).
- [ ] **Distribute workloads** and content so those more affected or less experienced are not immediately exposed to more severe content.
- [ ] Enable and encourage **peer support and engagement networks** for those working in emotionally demanding research areas.
- [ ] **Improve institutional policies** and procedures to ensure researchers are protected against bad faith activity against them. Ensure senior management take researchers' concerns seriously.

Supervisors, PIs, & Institutions should not...

- **Let crisis be the first point of support.** Recognise that threats can be scary and destabilising, making it hard to think clearly in the moment. It is important to have proactive measures in place and processes to follow should any event occur.
- **Provide only tokenistic support.** Don't expect or wait for researchers to ask for support or raise concerns. Be proactive in recognising your duty of care, and provide training and meaningful support.
- Just ask ECRs and researchers **what they need from you.** As established researchers, you will be more aware of the types of risks ECRs may face. For new researchers, the possibilities of harm may be unknown.
- **Leave individual researchers to educate institutions on harassment.** This can be unnecessary additional emotional labour and does not account for the varied experiences different individuals may face if harassed.
- **Pressure researchers to publish without understanding and mitigating the risks involved.**
- **Leave risk mitigations up to individual researchers at the individual level.**

Background

Researcher safety and wellbeing is an area receiving growing recognition in the extremism, security, and defence space. It is particularly salient for early career researchers (ECRs) due to comparative lack of experience, the pressure to be visible and 'successful' in academia, and emerging risks in digital landscapes. This document compiles expert advice from a NABS+ workshop held in February 2026, and researcher responses to a survey disseminated in Spring 2026.

Note: The advice in this document is subjective and based on individual experiences of researching difficult topics. Different people may find some suggestions more useful or relevant than others. This advice does not represent the opinions of NABS+ or CREST.

For more detailed advice and resources, **see the full guide** at the QR code below.

Compiled by the NABS+ ECR Steering Group