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South Australia

Ecosystem & Candidate Well-being: An Australian Perspective

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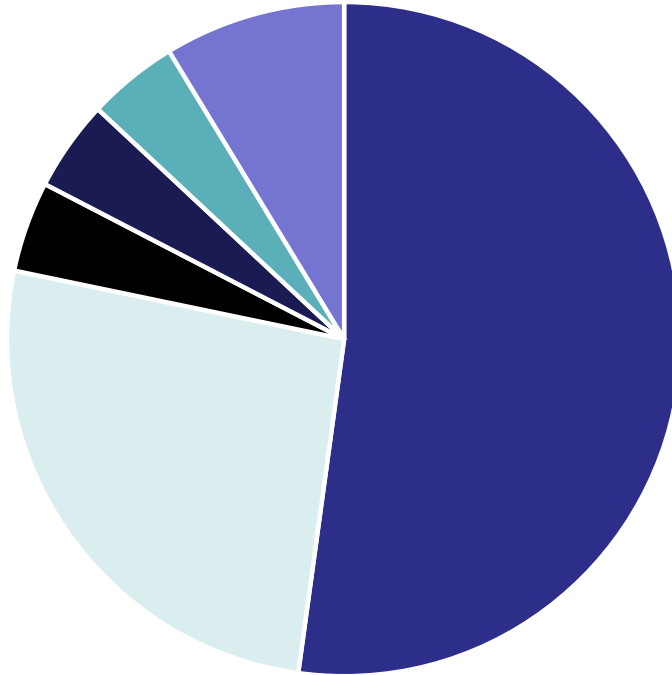


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Evidence Base

Systematic review of 24 studies
Peer-reviewed journal articles

10 qualitative
14 quantitative
5 mixed methods

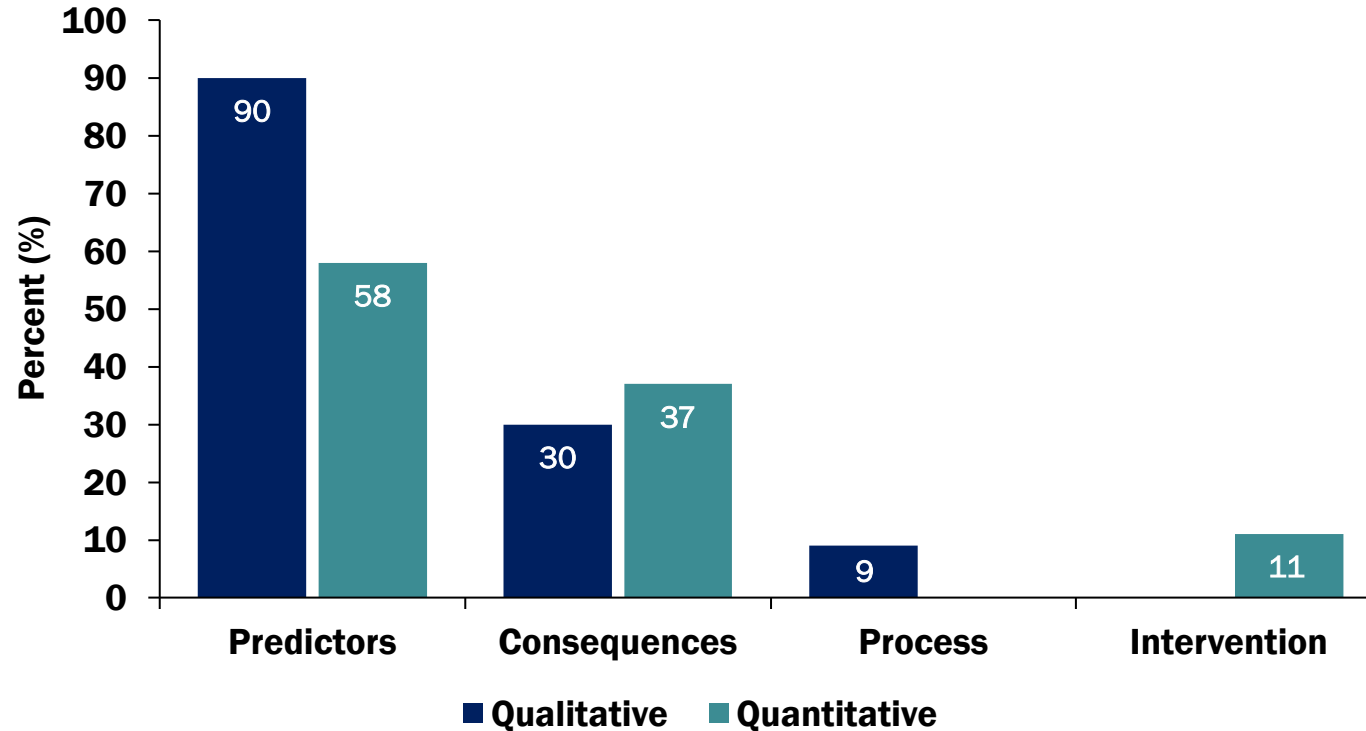


■ North America ■ Europe ■ Australia ■ Asia ■ Africa ■ Multiple



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Evidence Base

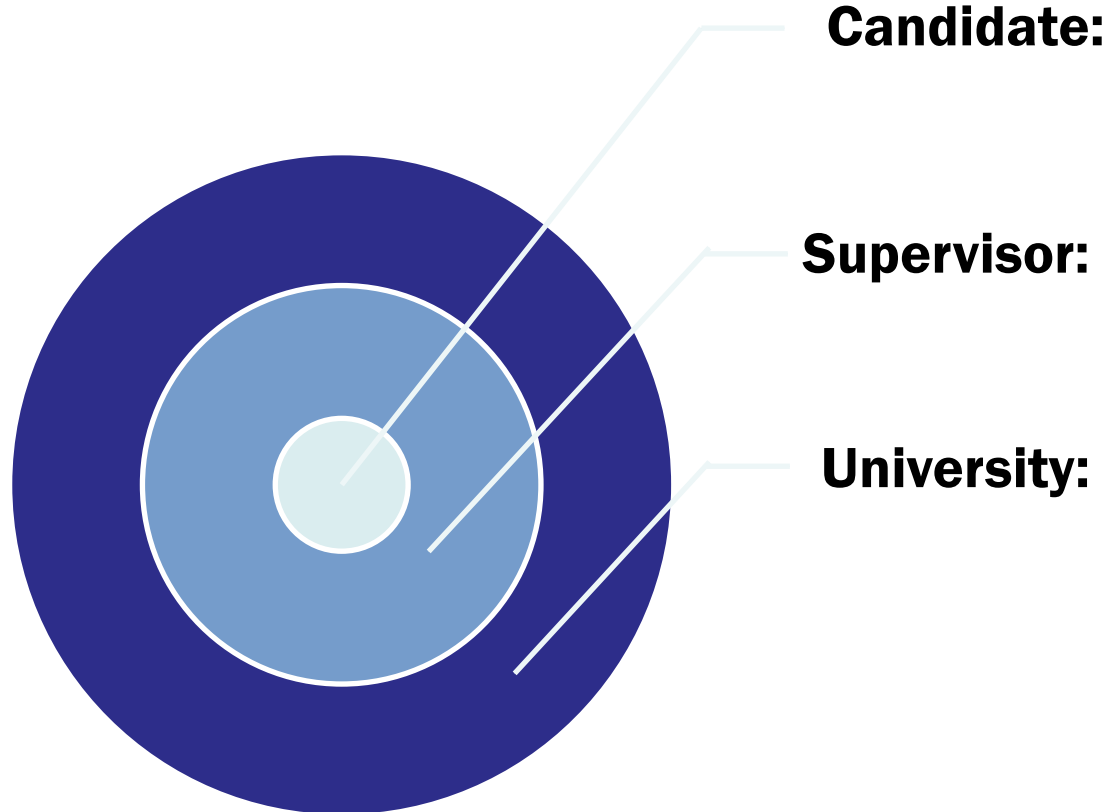


Evidence Base

Ecosystem Layer	n	%
Candidate	22	92
Supervisor	12	50
University	9	38

Number of Layers	n	%
One	10	42
Two	6	25
Three	7	29

Evidence Base



Individual: age, gender, financial issues, self-esteem, life attitudes, introspection
Project: study mode, discipline, statistics anxiety, workload, research readiness, fear of failure, demands, skills/abilities, role conflict, time management, time pressure
Relationships: isolation, fit, belonging, inclusion, social support from cohort

Supervisory role: expertise, support, quality supervision, feedback, guidance, communication
Relationships: quality, working alliance

Culture: poor culture, support for learning, overloaded faculty, facilities opportunities, resources
Processes: inadequate communications
Relationships: support from department



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Characteristics of the Evidence Base

Focus on isolated predictors (quantitative studies) or a few emergent predictors (qualitative)

Lack of attention to the combined impacts of relevant factors

Grounded in theories from other fields

Outside of the Australian context

An Important Next Step...

Build a conceptual framework that:

- Can guide research into candidate mental health & well-being and inform research training policy & practice in Australia**
- Captures the candidate experience embedded within the ecosystem**
- Recognises that mental health & well-being is a construction of how candidates experience the ecosystem**



Ecosystem

A complex network or interconnected system

- A community**
- A space and relationships within that space**
- Interactions of people with each other and with their environment**

Focus on understanding the system as a whole



Research Training Ecosystem

Actors

Candidates
Supervisors
Leaders
Support staff

Policies, procedures, processes

Academic structures

Research concentrations
Academic units
Disciplines

Relationships

Forces & constraints

ACGH

UA

Government



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Our Research at UniSA

HDR Candidates n = 21

Recruitment

Interview 1

Interview 2

Interview 3

Journal Entries

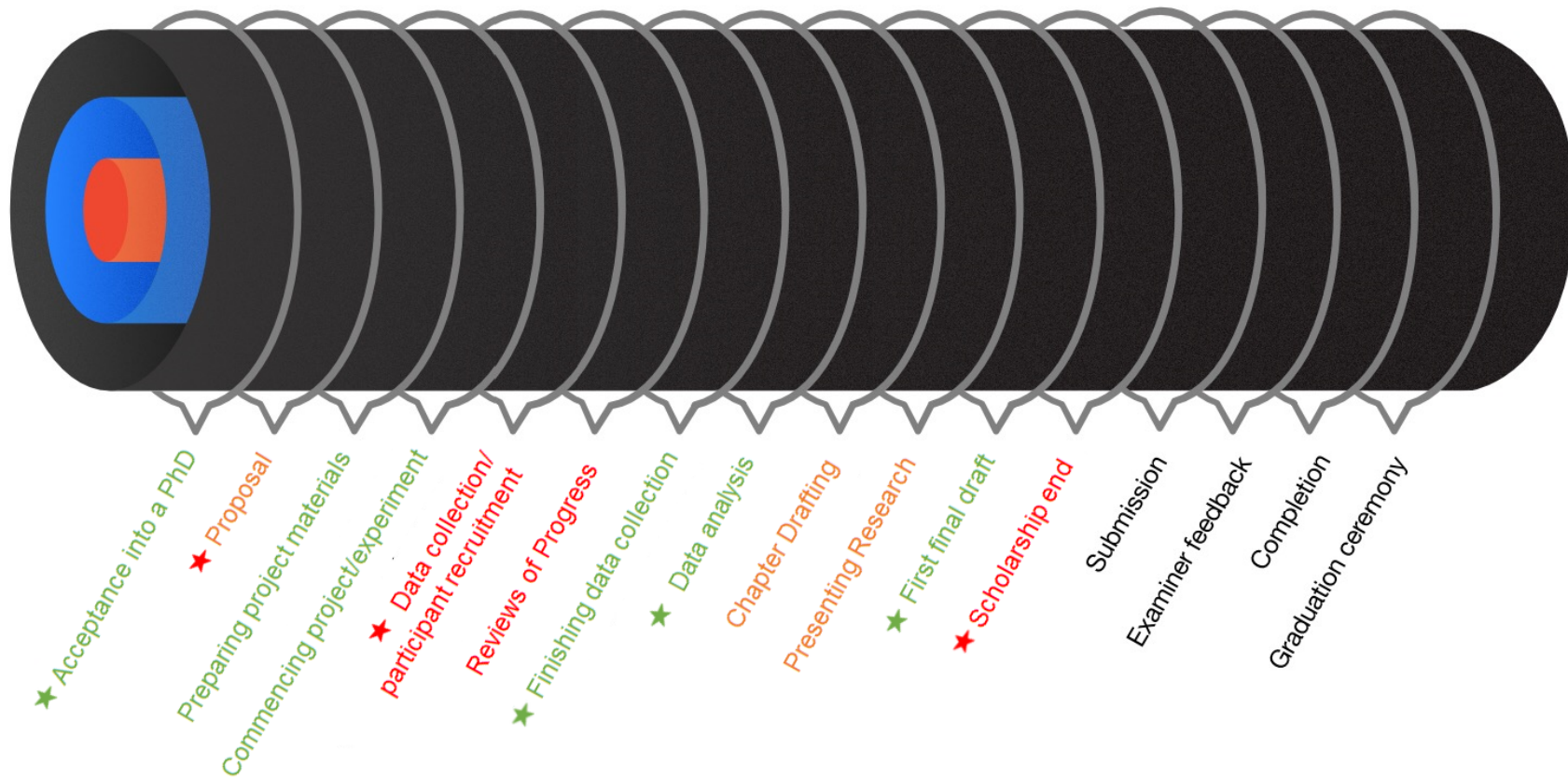
HDR Supervisors n = 17

Recruitment

Interview

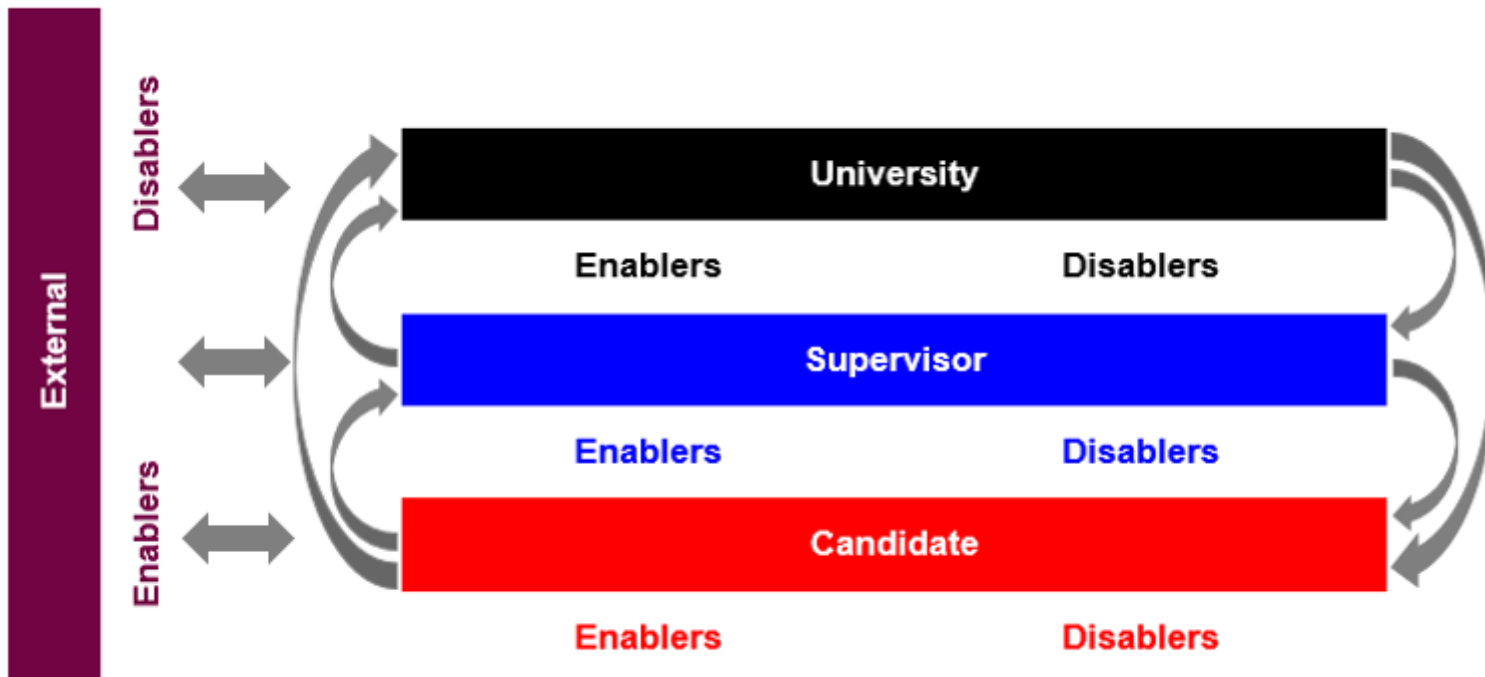
Cascade Effect

NESTING INSULATION



Cascade Effect

**SPILLOVER
FEEDBACK**



Implications of the Cascade Effect

- **Optimise the work environment**
 - Ensure that the **structures & resources** are in place to enable key actors in the research training ecosystem to perform their roles effectively & efficiently
- **Connect candidates to the ecosystem**
 - Support **candidates to build relationships & seek support beyond their supervisory panel** (e.g., cohorts, concentrations, HDR coordinators)



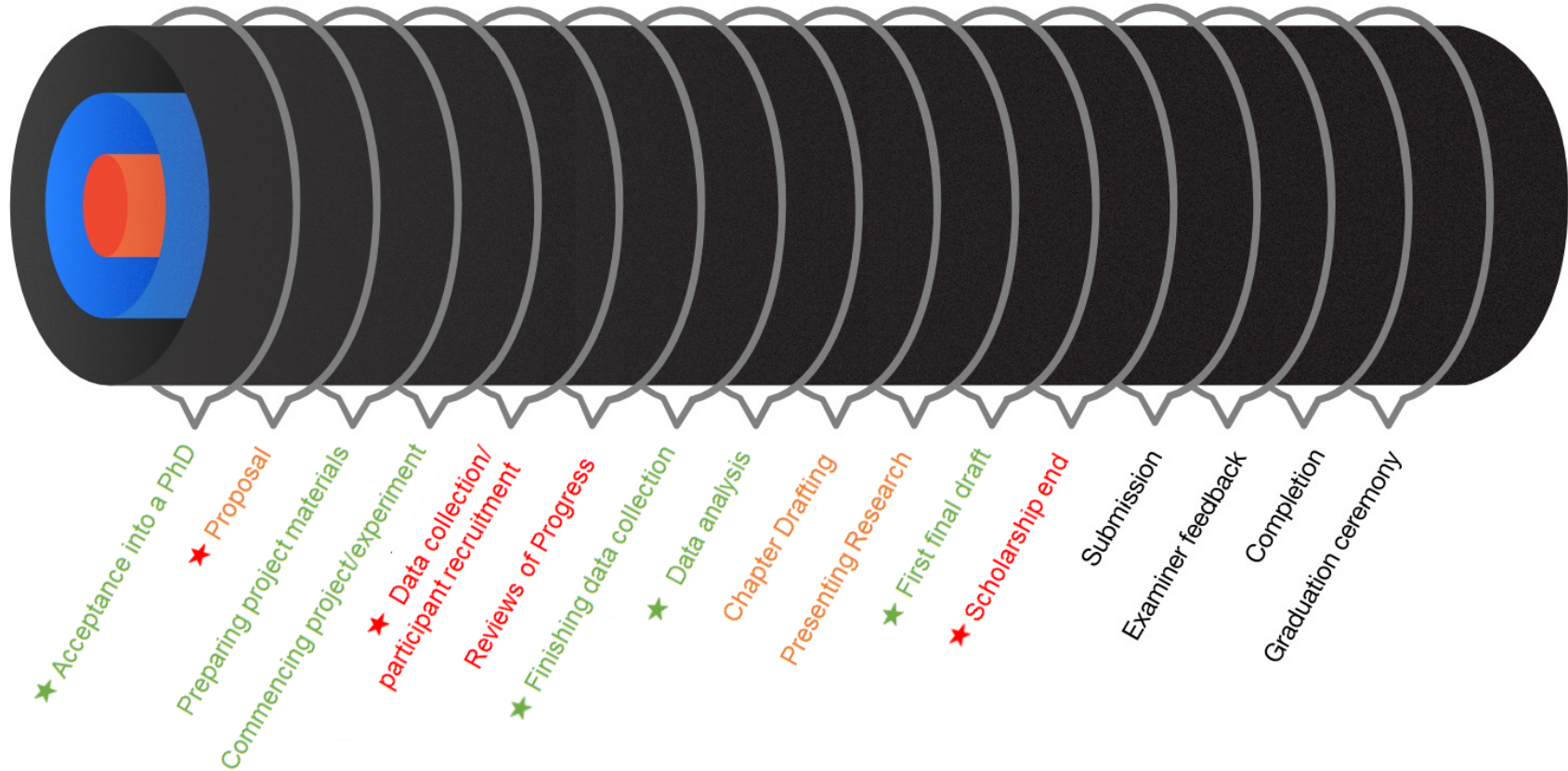
Implications of the Cascade Effect

- **Optimise the supervisory relationship**
 - Ensure **supervisors are well trained & supported** (e.g., skills training for *all* aspects of the supervisory role, appropriate workload for HDR supervision)
 - Implement **effective supervisory panels** and other ways of sharing out supervisory responsibilities
- **Build the value of research training**
 - **Embed the value** into daily operations (e.g., budget models, measures of success, marketing)



Concertina Effect

→ COMPRESSION
RECOVERY



What Makes a Hot Spot?

Negative

- Lack of control
- Extended duration

Influences coping options

Problem-focussed

Emotion-focussed

Positive

- Sense of achievement/success
- Impact

Fosters critical psychological states

Knowledge of performance

Responsibility

Meaning

Implications of the Concertina Effect

- **Introduce more thorough risk management planning for the project**
 - Enhance **problem-solving** options
 - Reduce the negative impact on mental health & well-being
- **Build-in more possibilities to enhance candidates' critical psychological states**
 - Experiences that signal how candidates are **performing** on tasks that are **meaningful** & for which they have **personal responsibility**

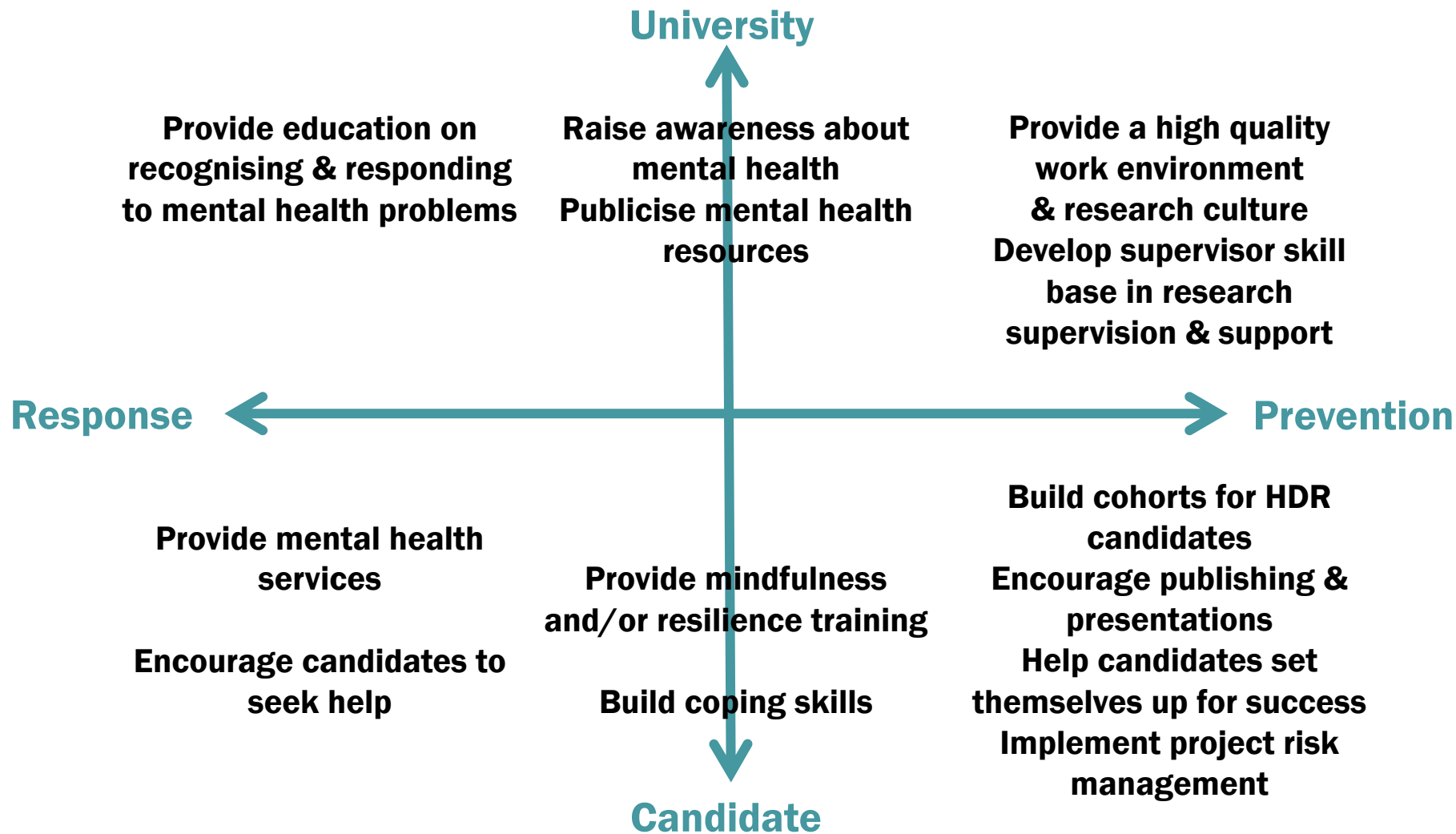


Intelligence-Led Responses

Frame approaches to HDR mental health & well-being in terms of the two processes

- How do existing & new HDR policies, procedures, processes, and practices attenuate or exacerbate the cascade (environment) and concertina (project) effects?**
- Are these effects considered together, to recognise their interplay?**







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