

Welcome to the new NPC Newsletter

As the new communications officer of the National Postgraduate Committee, I would like to welcome you to the newly-relaunched NPC newsletter. This newsletter will be going out each term to affiliates, to let their officers know what the NPC has been doing for them, and what important developments there have been in postgraduate education.

This should be an important year for NPC to reach out to its members. NPC's affiliations are on the increase and NPC's affiliates are now representing close to 50% of the UK's 400,000 postgraduates. This year has also seen, in addition to the launch of this newsletter, the launch of the new NPC resource folder and the redesigned

website, which I hope will start giving affiliates much more information on NPC's work.

This newsletter is intended to work in conjunction with the website, and a web version of this newsletter will be available alongside this paper version. Where any articles are covered in more details on the web site the link will be given.

Please give me your praise, comments or rants – this is here for your benefit and I need to know what you want from this.

Thanks,
Chris Neville-Smith
Communications Officer

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Cranfield venue for next NPC meeting on 23/24 February

The Cranfield campus of Cranfield University (www.cranfield.ac.uk) will play host to the next Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) of the NPC on Saturday 23 February from 3:30pm to 6pm. The OGM forms part of a programme of NPC events in Cranfield that weekend, centred on a theme of *international postgraduate students*. All postgraduates, and those who represent postgraduates, are invited to come along, whether it's just for the Saturday afternoon or for the whole weekend. The venue for all events is the Cranfield Students' Association, CSA (building 114 on the campus) – a campus map is at:

<http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/visit/crancampusmap.pdf>

The full rundown of events is:

- **Sat 23rd, from 12 noon** – arrival in the CSA bar. A buffet lunch will be available at a cost of £3 per head; numbers need to be known in advance, so if you want to be fed, email npc@npc.org.uk as soon as possible.

- **Sat 23rd, 2pm to 3pm** – guest speaker Beatrice Merrick from UKCOSA, the Council for International Education (www.ukcosa.org.uk) will give a talk on institutional support services for international postgraduates. The session will consider what services institutions should provide in the way of academic induction, language support, accommodation and welfare provision.
- **Sat 23rd, 3pm to 3:15pm** – our second guest speaker is Benson Osawe, Chair of the Council for International Students (CIS, www.cisuk.org.uk) who will talk on international postgraduates in a globalised world.
- **Sat 23rd, 3:30pm to 6pm** – the formal NPC Ordinary General Meeting, where you'll be able to hear reports from NPC officers and help formulate NPC policy. If you have a suggested item for the agenda, email npc@npc.org.uk by Wednesday 13 February at the latest.
- **Sun 24th, 10am to 1pm** – NPC policy workshops.

- **Sun 24th, from 2pm** – for those still here, a chance to visit Cranfield's annual International Event, details of which are at:

<http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/admission/communitycentre/intevent.htm>

If you're interested in attending and would like campus accommodation, it's available in limited numbers for both Friday and Saturday nights, at a price of £25 per room per night – contact James Groves on npc@npc.org.uk for details.

Details of how to reach Cranfield University are at:

http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/visit/cr_rail.htm

You'll see Cranfield is easily accessible by both rail (the nearest stations are Milton Keynes Central and Bedford) and air (Luton Airport is extremely close by).

We hope to see as many as possible of you in Cranfield on the 23rd.

— James Groves

Launch of the Resource Folder

The long-awaited Resource Folder was finally launched at the NPC Conference in Warwick last August. All affiliates of NPC received one free copy over the summer, and a free copy will also go to new affiliates. Many thanks to CSU for providing the sponsorship for these folders.

The predecessor to the Resource Folder was an A5 booklet called "The Postgraduate Book", which was, at the time, described as "everything there is to know about postgraduates". The size of the Resource Folder now goes to show how much more NPC has become involved in postgraduate life since it began.

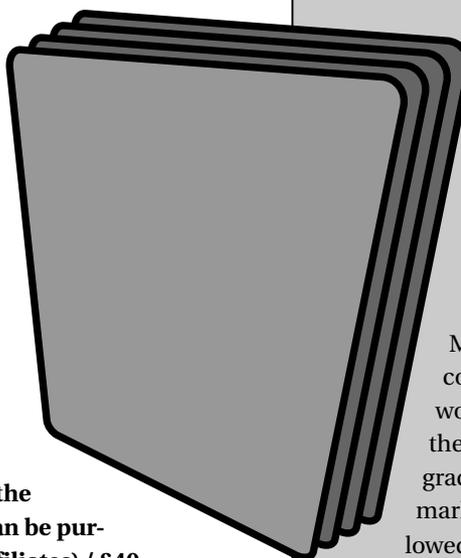
There are four sections to the folder. After the first section, that outlines the situation postgraduates are in, there is a second section providing guidelines for those supporting postgraduates, such as postgraduate officers and sabbatical education officers. The third section has the responses NPC has made to organisations on behalf of postgraduates since its launch. Finally, there is a fourth section that contains NPC guidelines in many

areas, including what facilities postgraduates ought to expect for academic work and a guide for open and fair terms of employment in Universities.

The resource folder is not a static document and new sections will be added to the folder as time goes by. Please give us your feedback on what you make of the folder so that we know what we can add to it in the future.

The editors of the Resource Folder are Ewan Gillon and Jeremy Hoad.

Further copies of the Resource folder can be purchased for £20 (affiliates) / £40 (non-affiliates) from the General Secretary.



— Chris Neville-Smith

NPC appoints Martin Harris as Honorary President

Prof Sir Martin Harris, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Manchester since 1992, has been appointed Honorary President of the National Postgraduate Committee. The NPC's Ordinary General Meeting in Worcester on 3 November 2001 unanimously approved his appointment. Professor Harris will serve until the NPC's 2004 AGM.

Professor Harris said:

"I'm delighted to be honoured in this way. Graduate students are central to the very purpose of our universities and I will do all I can to further their cause."



Martin Harris is perhaps best known for chairing the group which produced the groundbreaking *Review of Postgraduate Education* for HEFCE in 1996 (the Harris Report). He chaired the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (now Universities UK) between 1997 and 1999, and in 2000 led a review into higher education careers services for the DfEE (now DfES), the report of which is available here.

Martin Harris is only the second Honorary President of the NPC; his predecessor was Baroness Nancy Seear, who served from the NPC's inception until she passed away in 1997.

— James Groves

Research, demanding your information

So how do you feel as a postgraduate in your institution? It may have a good range of facilities specifically for

postgraduates like a graduate school/college, postgraduate centre etc. It could be that your institution has very few PG facilities so you will not feel so privileged.

Many institutions are recognising this and are working rapidly to meet the needs of their postgraduates in a competitive market. As this trend is followed, there is a fear experienced by many that a great segregation could be created between postgraduates and undergraduates that would not be desired. Bearing this in mind my project seeks to investigate this within different institutions across the UK.

This research demands information, however and you could help in the following ways:

- Fill in an online questionnaire which will soon be launched on the NPC website.
- Make contact with me to tell me about your institution, answer some longer questionnaires and provide some information about postgraduates in your institution (not a lot of work required).

Please do email me at t.brown@eim.surrey.ac.uk, for more information.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you will be able to help.

— Tim Brown
NPC Project Officer

The new NPC web site

It's been a long time coming, but finally the NPC's new web presence is live and operational. The new site was conceived to offer members of the committee the maximum flexibility in maintenance, and to offer individual postgraduates a useful Internet-based community service in addition to the core information about postgraduate issues and the Committee itself.

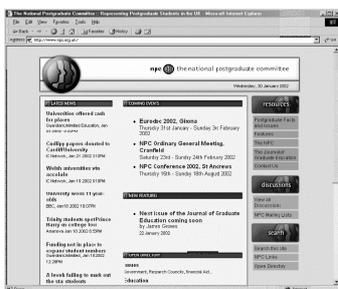
Launched on October 23, at www.npc.org.uk, the site is operated and maintained by members of the NPC through a special administration system allowing the site to reflect events and issues as they happen, with a distinct and genuine postgraduate voice.

At the site's heart is a discussions system, allowing for free flowing debate on any topic, or tied in with specific documents on the site. In this spirit, the site continues to allow visitors to subscribe directly to the various NPC-run mailing lists.

Other central services include a new database of coming events; NPC officer details; a comprehensive, categorised links system (to which visitors can quickly and simply make recommendations); a site-wide search engine and a live feed from the Open Directory Project, providing gateway to the wider Internet.

The site's homepage is constantly updated to reflect activity on the site, in-

cluding new feature articles, coming events and hot topics in the discussions area. The homepage also prominently features a news feed of postgraduate and higher education stories from the international press, updated live every ten minutes of every day.



Each document on the site is connected to all the others through an extensive keywords system, allowing for older documents on a specific topic to automatically link to newer documents on the same topic the moment they're added. Equally,

most documents feature a printer-friendly version, with the site's navigation and visual characteristics pared down. Even the fully-graphical version of the pages, however, has been tested on a range of browsers and should present few difficulties for the visually impaired, or visitors using plain text or audio browsers.

The old NPC site was subtitled "The Postgraduate Hub". The new, although without the tagline, seems set to fulfil that challenge, presenting committee and general postgraduate information to both the community and the wider world. The hope is for npc.org.uk to become the primary resource to which people turn for information and opinion about issues and topics relating to postgraduates and higher education in the UK. Watch this space.

So you've heard studentships are taxable?

There has been concern expressed by postgraduates at a few institutions that students earning in excess of £7,000 per year from a Research Council studentship will have income tax deducted from their pay.

To set the record straight, this is not the case. Studentships are expressly exempt from income tax, and anyone who wants to read official confirmation can check out:

<http://www.manuals.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/semanual1/se06200.htm>

However, as new EPSRC grants are now paid through University payroll departments, they may not have realised this and deducted tax from pay anyway. If you find that your University has done this, make sure you inform them of it straight away, and let the NPC know too.

pn is edited by Chris Neville-Smith, NPC Communications Officer, and co-edited by James Groves and produced by Article Seven. It is sent to affiliates' institutions each term, and is also made available on the NPC web site. Contributions from everyone are welcome, from NPC Officers to postgrads with no involvement with NPC but who have something to say. If you are interested in contributing to future issues, please contact the editor at c.j.neville-smith@durham.ac.uk.

NPC Notices

At the Worcester OGM, as well as the election of Martin Harris as Honorary NPC President, Sam Hardy was elected as Project Officer, and Chris Stuart was elected to the Constitutional Subcommittee.

The deadline for submission of motions to the Cranfield OGM is the 13th February. Motions may be sent by post or email to the General Secretary.

The next meeting of NPC Scotland will be held on the 9th March in the University of Stirling.

All postgraduate representatives from Scottish Universities are welcome to attend, and all Scottish affiliates have one vote.

There is one position remaining on the executive for the last of four project officer positions. This position will be elected at the next OGM. Candidates for this position should have a proposed remit for their position ready for hustings.

The next OGM will also hopefully contain the final decision on NPC's policy on postgraduate

funding, including support for living costs and tuition fees, hidden course costs, and top-up fees.

In the last term, NPC has submitted responses to the HM Treasury review on the supply of scientists and engineers, UUK/SCOP consultation on the independent review of student complaints, and the HEFCE/QAA/UUK/SCOP review of quality assurance in higher education, approved at the last OGM. A response to the NUS Commission on Democracy has since been written following discussion after the last OGM, pending approval at Cranfield.

NPC Annual Conference 2002

University of St Andrews, Thursday 15 to Sunday 18 August

This year's NPC Conference will take place in the historic setting of Scotland's oldest university. It's a four-day residential conference with:

- speakers invited from government, the QAA, the ILT, the research councils and other bodies involved in UK postgraduate education;
- receptions, social events and the NPC's Annual Dinner;
- the NPC Annual General Meeting.

We start at 3pm on the Thursday and end at 11am on the Sunday.

All rooms, meals and social events are included in the registration fee, which is £225 for those from NPC affiliates and £335 for everyone else. Please note that the affiliate fee represents our estimated cost price – our conference is not run to

make a profit. Those unable to attend for the full four days may attend part of the event at a cost of £30 per day's attendance (£50 per day if not from an NPC affiliate) and £40 per night's accommodation. In addition, those wishing to come up on Wednesday 14 August (we recognise St Andrews will be a long journey for many of you!) may book bed and breakfast that night for an additional £40.

This year's conference theme is:

PG in the middle Perceptions of the postgraduate

We will be looking at the different ways postgraduates are viewed – by employers, government, students' unions and institutions – and how this affects postgraduates' (and prospective postgraduates') life choices.

Who should attend?

- Postgraduate officers and committee members;
- Sabbatical officers with responsibility for postgraduates;
- Students' union education research staff;
- Postgraduate administrators;
- Others interested in postgraduate education.

We believe our Conference is *the* summer training event for student officers with any responsibility for education or representation – make a note of it.

A full mailing with draft speaker programme will be going out to students' unions very soon. For all information, contact the General Secretary on npc@npc.org.uk.

the national postgraduate committee

The National Postgraduate Committee is an independent organisation that aims to enhance the quality of postgraduate education in the UK. It is governed by delegates for over 40 affiliated student unions across the country, and is managed by a Sabbatical General Secretary and volunteers managing non-sabbatical posts.

The Committee democratically represents its members through meetings and an Annual Conference, and also provides information to its affiliates through these meetings and its publications. By responding to papers and proposals of Governmental and non-Governmental organisations, and by keeping in close contact with the National Union of Students and the lecturer's unions, NPC campaigns for the interests of postgraduates on many issues. The needs of students in Scottish and Welsh institutions are also catered for by the NPC's Scottish and Welsh subcommittees.

General correspondence to:

General Secretary:

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npc@npc.org.uk
<http://www.npc.org.uk/>

Honorary President: Martin Harris

Chair: Alex Lewis, ajl987@bham.ac.uk

Treasurer: Adrian Furse, claatf@leeds.ac.uk

Conference Secretary: Stuart Purdie, sdjp@st-andrews.ac.uk

Minutes Secretary: Colin Beveridge, colin@beveridge.com

Communications Officer: Chris Neville-Smith, c.j.neville-smith@durham.ac.uk

Equal Opportunities Officer: Ian Hibble, hibblei@cardiff.ac.uk

Project Officers:

Tim Brown, t.brown@eim.surrey.ac.uk

Ibi Erekosima, ereks46@hotmail.com

Sam Hardy, shardy@bio.warwick.ac.uk
One position vacant

Ordinary Executive Officers:

Sue Barnes, s.barnes@uorc.ac.uk

Amanda Slinn, amanda_slinn@hotmail.com

Scottish Subcommittee:

Chair: Craig Buchanan, c.buchanan@abdn.ac.uk

Vice-chair/Secretary: Christopher Stuart, c.stuart@napier.ac.uk

Treasurer: Stuart Purdie

Welsh Subcommittee:

To be elected

Finance Subcommittee:

Martin Gough, George Moreton

Constitutional Subcommittee:

Peter Campbell, Ruth Chandler, Chris Stuart

NPC Affiliates:

Aberdeen*	Plymouth
Anglia	Queen Margaret
Aston*	University
Bath	College
Birkbeck	Queen Mary
Birmingham	Reading*
Bristol	Robert Gordon
Cardiff	Roehampton
Chichester	Salford
Coventry	St Andrews
Cranfield (Cranfield site)	Staffordshire*
Durham	Surrey
Essex	Sussex
Gloucestershire	Swansea*
Harper Adams*	UCL
Hull	Warwick
Institute of Education	Wolverhampton*
Kent	Worcester
Lancaster	York
Leeds	
University of London*	
London Institute	
Manchester	
Manchester	
Metropolitan*	
Napier	
Nottingham*	
Oxford	

*: Affiliation for 2001-2002 to be confirmed.

Affiliated recognised bodies:

The Mature Students' Union
The National Union of Students