

Welcome to the new edition of *pn*, keeping you informed of the latest developments from the NPC. Included in this issue is a look at the new charity status of the NPC and its implications, and an introduction to the NPC's new General Secretary. We will also be covering the main issues to be discussed at the Cardiff OGM including a look at the results from the survey of postgraduate funding and priorities.

Over the next few months I will be contacting postgraduate officers to ask for help in getting news of national importance directly to postgraduates through student newspapers and newsletters, if you can help please let me know, and don't forget to check out the website at www.npc.org.uk.

Paul Williams
Communications Officer

A Charity at Last

After nine years of planning the NPC was finally granted recognition by the Inland Revenue as a Scottish Charity on the 5th September 2002. To achieve charitable status, the NPC had to significantly revise its Constitution; these changes were successfully made at the AGM in St Andrews. James Groves who saw this as a priority of his two years as General Secretary told the delegates at the AGM that "this is a significant development in our history".

Amongst other things the NPC will benefit from its charity status by being exempt from corporation or capital gains tax. It also means that people may donate to the NPC under the Gift Aid scheme in such a way that both they and the NPC can reclaim tax on the donation. This new status obliges the NPC to be open about its finances — any member of the public may ask to inspect NPC accounts in future.

Most importantly, by being a charity the NPC is now legally committed to spending its funds exclusively on charitable issues as James Groves told us "this means on matters that affect students as students". Students' unions and associations thinking of affiliating to the NPC now have a guarantee that their money would be not be spent on concerns which, were they to pursue them themselves, would be beyond their legal powers.

— James Groves

NPC OGM at Cardiff University Graduate Centre, 2nd to 3rd November

The NPC invites all postgraduate representatives, education officers, and any others interested in postgraduate education to the next Ordinary General Meeting to be held at the Graduate Centre at Cardiff University.

Saturday 2nd November

2pm: A talk by Professor Teresa Rees, author of the Rees Report for future funding in Wales.

3pm: The NPC OGM will begin, which will include the following main topic discussions:

- A Motion from NUS on the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS) (see *The Gats Affair*). James Cemmell of ESIB's (the European Union of Students) Commodification Committee will be giving an introductory talk on the subject; Chris Weavers of NUS will then propose a motion to the meeting, for adoption (if passed) as NPC policy.
- Elections of the next NPC Conference Secretary. Many of you will be aware the position is the only remaining vacant post for this year. A contest is possible so delegates are encouraged to come and vote.
- Elections for delegates to represent the

NPC at the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT), Eurodoc, UKCGE Winter Conference and others.

- New NPC publications will be presented for the first time including the Postgraduate Funding Survey.

The meeting is scheduled to end at around 6.30pm.

Sunday 3rd November

10am to 1pm: Policy workshops, topics for discussion include:

- The Joint Funding Council's review of Postgraduate Research Training. Following the talk given by Dr Janet Metcalfe at the conference a consultation paper has been released this will give the NPC the opportunity to discuss what response to give to this document.
- Possible discussion the guidelines to be produced in response to the postgraduate provision survey undertaken by Tim Brown.
- Discussion on equal opportunity policy within NPC.

The floor is open for further contributions. If anyone has anything of interest to their institution that they would like to discuss please contact the General Secretary. Details are on the back page.

St Andrews Welcomes the NPC Annual Conference

This year the NPC welcomed attendees from all corners of Great Britain to St Andrews for the 13th annual conference and AGM. The delegates were welcomed by Professor Colin Vincent (Deputy Principal of the University) followed by the first talk of the conference given by David Eastwood (Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Board). This highly thoughtful contribution set the tone for the conference which included presentations by distinguished individuals such as Andrew Cubie (Chair of Court at Napier University), Diana Woodward (Director of Research at Napier University), Ewan Gillon (Open University of Scotland and former NPC General Secretary) and John Beaumont (Chief Executive of the eUniversity).

On Saturday afternoon we had chance to discuss current issues with student politicians Rami Okasha (NUS Scotland President), Natasha Hirst (PG portfolio for UCMC/NUS Wales), Benson Osawe (Council for International Students) and Marco Biagi (CHESS, the Coalition of Higher Education Students in Scotland). Marco inspired us with CHESS'S belief in "Free Education, failing that education free at point of entry, failing that tinkering with the current system. Too often the societal value of Education is ignored and just the economic considerations are looked at."

The conference was informed of the headline findings of the NPC postgraduate funding survey and of Tim Brown's findings on campus facilities for postgraduates (see later). The well-tuned workshops were accompanied by an equally well-tuned social programme. Special commendation goes to Stuart Purdie (Conference Secretary) who showed us Scottish hospitality and humour at its best.

— Paul Williams

Postgraduate/Undergraduate, A Great Divide?

An Update from the Postgraduate Facilities Survey

Following the research undertaken by Tim Brown last year into the independent postgraduate facilities provided by different institutions and the advantages and disadvantages of such a postgraduate/undergraduate divide. The presentation of results at the annual conference was followed by discussions on the stance that the NPC should take on the issue. Valid reasons were recognised as to why separate facilities should be provided when the distinctive needs and interests of postgraduates are taken into account. In many cases, these significantly differ from those of undergraduates however the conference believed in the value that postgraduates can get from involvement in activities with undergraduates such as sports clubs and societies.

The Cardiff OGM will see a discussion of the NPC guidelines to be produced taking into account the many examples of good practise that were identified and considering part time students and the importance of the size of the institution involved.

You can still contribute to this research by downloading a questionnaire from www.npc.org.uk/features

— Tim Brown

NPC Survey Exposes the Hows and Whys of Postgraduate Funding and Priorities

The NPC announced the results of its survey of postgraduate funding and priorities at the annual conference in St Andrews. The University of Warwick Students' Union who were commissioned to carry out the work focussed specifically on a few key issues; postgraduate finance, reasons for pursuing postgraduate study and the future plans of postgraduate students. 982 responses from home students at 17 different institutions were collected from a postal questionnaire in May/June 2002. The project was made possible thanks to the sponsorship of CSU (publishers of Prospects).

An institutions location and reputation were cited as being of major influence when choosing a course, while 75% of respondents claimed financial obstacles as the biggest barrier. The financial situation doesn't get much easier during study with over 50% of respondents

claiming "insufficient" funding during their course - most of these students were aged between 20 and 25 and full-time students on taught courses in the arts and humanities - and most respondents anticipate an increase in debt of £2500 on graduation. 39% said financial considerations strongly influenced their choice of part-time or full-time study, but the increased debt was believed to be worth it as 48% expected their course to lead to higher earnings of £22,000 plus.

As reported on educationet.org by Joe Rukin "the moral of the survey is to get a job and get your employer to pay for your postgrad, and if you can or can't do that, study it part time."

Copies of the survey will be presented at the Cardiff OGM. For further information visit www.npc.org.uk/features

— Paul Williams

This Year's NPC Projects

ISSUES AFFECTING POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND MEDICAL ILLNESSES

OFFICER: Marilyn Shanks
INSTITUTION: University of Essex

Marilyn will be looking into the issues surrounding postgraduates with disabilities and medical illnesses including how postgraduate applications are monitored to prevent discrimination, the approaches taken by LEA's and National funding councils and most important the support and career development provided by institutions.

INSTIGATION AND PROMOTION OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

OFFICER: Rainy Mears & Gemma Cansell, supported by Norman Jackson of the LTSN
INSTITUTION: University of Leeds and Imperial College, London

Rainy and Gemma are investigating into the way universities promote Personal Development Planning (PDP). PDP is 'a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development'. Recently, PDP has been a focus of many UK universities as a result of a recommendation by the National Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing Report 1997). 14 case study universities are being contacted in an effort to establish the plans of the institutions in Postgraduate involvement and the methods by which they im-

plement progress files and gain feedback of their successfulness. An on-line survey will be carried out to determine student's views on PDP, how they record their personal development e.g. progress files, log books etc, their usefulness and drawbacks.

The outcome from this study will hopefully highlight areas of PDP for postgraduates that need improving and may result in guidelines being recommended to UK universities for implementing PDP for postgraduates especially research students.

UPDATE OF THE 1993 NPC GUIDELINES ON CODES OF PRACTICE FOR INSTRUCTIONAL POSTGRADUATE COURSES

OFFICER: Emily Orme
INSTITUTION: Nottingham Trent University

Emily will be working on an updated version of the 1993 "NPC Guidelines on Codes of Practice for Instructional Postgraduate Courses" with further consultation expanding the scope of this useful document.

Emily is also planning an advice leaflet on funding for postgraduate courses that offer a professional qualification at the end. These courses are often harder to fund publicly than other instructional courses such as Masters, but there are often a number of private funding opportunities available that are not advertised widely and so they gain little competition.

The NPC's New General Secretary

On the 1st October, the newly elected General Secretary, Tim Brown, took office replacing James Groves who has served the post for two years. The NPC's office has therefore been moved to the University of Surrey Students' Union in Guildford where Tim is based and has been a student for the past 7 years. His first degree was in Electrical and Electronic Engineering, which he pursued into his postgraduate studies. He is currently putting the finishing touches to his PhD in Mobile Communications research, where he will sit his viva examination in December.



As well as Tim's involvement in the Postgraduate Association at Surrey he has also spent a year as an NPC Project Officer investigating into postgraduate facilities in further and higher education institutions (see later). On taking up the post, Tim said: "This will be a well spent sabbatical year, it is good to know that I will not be leaving my life as a postgraduate without investing in the extensive work that is still to be done for postgraduates."

NPC Notices

Nominations are invited for the post of Conference Secretary. The Conference Secretary hosts the next NPC Conference at his/her own institution so this election will decide the venue of the 2003 conference. Nominations will be accepted up to the start of the OGM, but any prospective candidates are invited to submit a manifesto in advance of the meeting. The manifesto should fit on an A3 sheet of paper and should include what support your union and your institution can offer, and how much it would cost to host the NPC Conference there. The deadline for manifestos is the 23rd October.

Up for election at the next OGM are NPC representatives to the ILT (Institute of Learning and Teaching), the UKCGE Winter Conference and Eurodoc. If you are interested in standing for these positions, contact the General Secretary or Chair for more details.

If you wish to vote at the next OGM, you will need to do two things: Firstly, your institution will need to have affiliated to NPC for the 2002-2003 academic year, either by paying the affiliation fee or bringing a written promise to pay the affiliation fee to the meeting. Secondly, your union will need to nominate you as its delegate member. (A letter from an authorised office bearer from the union will be sufficient.) If you are not sure whether you have been nominated, please contact the General Secretary before the OGM to check.

The OGM is likely to include motions on GATS, an NPC Mission Statement and an Equal Opportunities protocol. Amendments to any of these motions will be accepted up to the start of the OGM. If you would like to submit motions on any other matters, the deadline is the 23rd October. Please submit motions if you

think there is something NPC should be acting on, otherwise it will be the usual suspects setting the agenda.

The next meeting of NPC Wales will be on the 1st of November at Cardiff University.

The next meeting of NPC Scotland to be finalised, proposed 18th November.

Finally, the NPC executive has agreed that NPC officers should not endorse candidates in NUS elections as NPC Officers. The appearance of any NPC office holder on the supporters list of an NUS election candidate should not be interpreted as NPC's support for the candidate - NPC is neutral in all NUS election.

The GATS Affair

At the end of the Second World War the international community joined together to form organisations such as the United Nations, and eventually in 1995 The World Trade Organisation. These bodies were designed to help solve problems of an international nature.

The WTO with the mandate of facilitating cross border trade and reducing trade barriers developed an agenda in the form of the *General Agreement on Trade in Services* (GATS) which is slowly gathering opposition from institutes of higher and further education.

The GATS is broad ranging and covers all sectors of service trade and provision from financial services to health care services, domestic regulation and market access. A major area of concern is the

ambiguity of the position of universities within the GATS. The section on subsidies may impact on university and student funding while domestic regulation may affect the quality of the institutions and degrees.

There is also a possibility that under current arrangements, the DfES regulations could be limited in helping to start up initiatives such as the e-university as they would have to give equal treatment to any similar foreign provision.

National Unions of Students in many countries around the world have been campaigning against the GATS including The *National Unions of Students in Europe* (ESIB) who recently presented a declaration signed jointly with the European Universities Association, to the

French Minister for education, Jacques Lang. At the St Andrews conference Marco Biagi voiced the view of the Coalition of HE students in Scotland "we have to face and fight the nightmarish prospect of GATS. This is effectively the privatisation of the education system," he told us.

Chris Weavers (NUS VP Education) echoed these sentiments at a recent meeting with the NPC in which he stressed how NUS are standing together with the AUT, Unison and *People & Planet* to express their concerns. Chris will be talking in more detail about why the postgraduate community should be in opposition at the NPC OGM in Cardiff.

— Paul Williams

npc 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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Vice-chair/Secretary: Jim Ewing

Treasurer: Stuart Purdie

Welsh Subcommittee:

Chair: David Manning, manningdj@cardiff.ac.uk

Vice-chair/Secretary: Vacant

Treasurer: Natasha Hirst

Finance Subcommittee:

Tim Roll-Pickering, Stuart Purdie, Natasha Hirst,
Martin Gough, Josephine Fraser, Tim Brown, Chris
Neville-Smith, James Groves

Constitutional Subcommittee:

Chris Neville-Smith, Peter Campbell, Alex Lewis,
Tim Brown, James Groves, Chris Stuart

Affiliations for the year to date

All affiliation invoices are due by 31/10/02

Currently Affiliated:

Aberdeen*	Napier*
Anglia	Nottingham*
Aston*	Oxford*
Bath (standing order)	Plymouth*
Birkbeck*	Queen Mary*
Birmingham*	Robert Gordon*
Bristol	Roehampton*
Cardiff	Salford*
Coventry*	Sheffield (new)
Cranfield SA	St Andrews*
Durham*	Staffordshire*
Edge Hill*	Surrey
Essex	Sussex*
Glasgow	Swansea*
Gloucestershire	UCL*
Hull	ULU*
Imperial*	Warwick*
IoE*	Wolverhampton
Kent*	Worcester
Lancaster	York
Leeds	
London Institute	
LSE (new)	
Manchester	

*: Denotes institutions that are affiliated until 31/10/02 at time of going to print

Invoiced newly for this year:

Lampeter	Queen's Belfast
Leicester	UMIST

Affiliated recognised bodies:

The Mature Students' Union
The National Union of Students
The Council for International Students