

Hello everyone and welcome to the first pn for this academic year. It's been over two months since Conference and we are moving along with plans for the coming year. In this edition we hear from the new General Secretary Simon Felton and introduce the new committee. We also look at some of the issues in the news affecting postgraduates.

## NPC's New General Secretary

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ON THE 1st October, the newly elected General Secretary, Simon Felton, took office replacing Jim Ewing who has served the post for the past year. The NPC's office has therefore been moved to the University of Birmingham Guild of Students in Birmingham where Simon is based and has been a student for the past 4 years. His first degree was in Political Science and he has just completed his MSc in Urban Regeneration Research and Policy.

Simon has been involved with BUGS for four years and was most recently the Postgraduate and Mature Students Officer helping to reform the PG Research Student Reps scheme. "I hope that my experience can help shape postgraduate support in the UK to enhance the student experience and that I can further postgraduate education". You can hear more from Simon in his plans for the year ahead on page 4.

## Colchester venue for next NPC meeting on 12/13 November

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THE NEXT Ordinary General Meeting of the National Postgraduate Committee will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 12 November at The University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester, Essex, CO4 3SQ.

A location map of how to find the campus is at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/find.html> – with a more detailed map of the campus at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/guide.htm>

The meeting will start at 1pm with a training session on common problems affecting our postgraduates with the aim of finishing at 6.30 p.m.

The OGM will form part of a programme of events including policy workshops on implementing priority campaigns on the

Sunday morning and a social event on Saturday night. You're welcome to join us, whether it's just for the OGM or for the whole weekend. In particular, we welcome reps from institutions not presently affiliated to the NPC; this meeting is a great way for you to see what we're like and what we do!

Items on the agenda include:

- A discussion of Eurodoc with Dr Francis Vella, President of Eurodoc.
- Planning for NPC Conference 2006
- Elections for the position of NPC Ordinary Officer and to UKCGE Winter Conference, Eurodoc Conference 2006, and Mature Students Conference.

- Launch of Priority Campaigns on PG Funding and PGCE Top-up Fees.
- How to measure successful postgraduate support – tables and surveys.
- The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator Consultation on a Charity Register, Charity Test, and Consents and Notifications to the OSCR.

Accommodation is available Saturday night but numbers are limited. Email the General Secretary at [npc@npc.org.uk](mailto:npc@npc.org.uk) or alternatively try <http://www.wivenhoe.gov.uk/Business/accommodation.htm>.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Colchester on the weekend 12/13 November.

# The NPC Committee

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The NPC is run through the work of the General Secretary and volunteers managing non-sabbatical posts. Here is a brief introduction to the new committee.

## Chair

The chair is important in being the second person to the General Secretary speaking for the organisation and understanding and operating the constitution and chairing meetings and managing time. **Marilyn Shanks** has been involved over a number of years being a project officer and Ordinary Exec Officer. She is ending her term as Postgraduate Officer with executive elections forthcoming.

## Treasurer

The treasurer has to ensure we keep accurate financial and that as a charity we are run transparently. **Tim Roll-Pickering** is reading for a PhD in History at Queen Mary, University of London where he is Postgraduate Officer. He has served as treasurer from May 2002 to 2004, becoming chairperson for a year and now returning to the position of treasurer.

## Project Officers

These officer initially have no remit and decide on their own projects at the annual meeting.

**Dries Neiryck** has been representing postgraduates at the University of Bristol since 2000 and will continue to provide training before OGMs as NPC project officer. He is also thinking of providing specific training to union and postgraduate officers at affiliated institutions. If you might be interested, please send an e-mail to [dries.neiryck@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:dries.neiryck@bristol.ac.uk)

**David Bean** is the first Director of Student Development and Activities at St Andrews University, a role that involves working with student groups, societies and other bodies to co-ordinate the provision of student-led services in the town. His project will involve networking with Scottish institutions.

**Ismael Malik** is the President of Birkbeck and is intending to look at Intellectual Property rights for his project.

**Katie Harper** is the Vice President Education for Southampton Union and is keen to develop links between universities in the South East.

## Conference Secretary

This role is the demanding one of helping to organise the Annual Conference alongside the General Secretary and committee.

**Stephen Abbots** is from Aston University where he graduated in maths and computer science and is currently the V.P.Ed&Welfare having previously been the Chairperson and School Liaison Officer.

was an observer to the QAA. He is from Australia and is studying at Lancaster University.

## Communications Officer

This role is integral to highlighting what the NPC does to our affiliates, non affiliates and other organisations with similar aims.

**Duncan Connors** is a student at the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow and organised the Conference in 2005.

## Ordinary Officers

These officers ensure the committee is run properly and that officers are accountable.

**Harpreet Singh** has been involved with the NPC for a number of years. He is completing his PhD at Aston University where he was the VP Education and Welfare. He is Eurodoc Treasurer and ensures the committee is aware of Europe wide developments.

## Equal Opps

**Lade Robinson** is from Strathclyde University where he was the postgrad convenor. He is also the secretary for NPC Scotland. He has been in working closely with the student union and the postgrads and has plans for ensuring .



## Minutes Secretary

This role is much valued and is important in recording all decisions that are made at meetings.

**Andre Oboler** has been involved with the NPC as a project officer where he

## NPC Scotland Chair

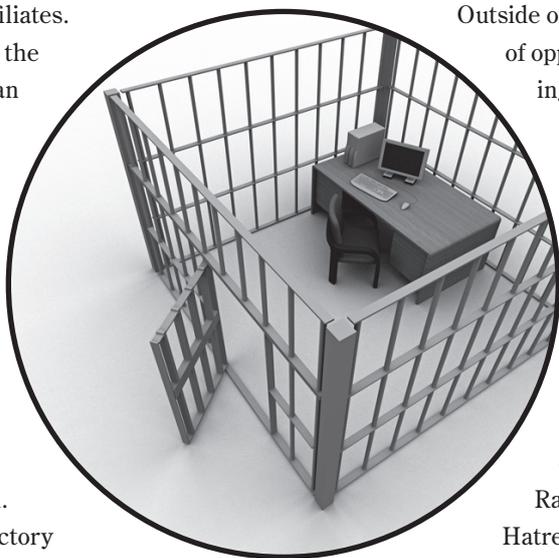
**Maggie Chapman** is the NPC Scotland Chair and acting Scottish Treasurer (until a treasurer is found). She is postgraduate convenor for Edinburgh's SRC and originally from Zimbabwe.

# Pushing back Frontiers – the 2005 Conference

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THE 2005 annual conference was a fantastic success with attendance from both affiliates and potential affiliates.

We also had the pleasure of an International Piping festival with many of the pipers practicing in the halls of residence we stayed in. The introductory speech came from Prof. Theresa Rees, our hon-



orary President, identifying upfront fees as offputting to postgraduate education.

Outside of that there was plenty of opportunity for networking and meeting other officers. There were presentations from Peter Hall from the QAA, an interactive workshop session on postgraduates with John Wakeford and a series of workshops covering the NUS, Racial and Religious Hatred and Freedom of Expression, the EthOS project of online Theses and eSharp the Glasgow

Peer reviewed online journal. The big debate arose on Academic Freedom with Prof. Gerald Steinberg discussing where the boundaries lie.

The Annual General Meeting saw the passing of motions on PCGE top up fees and Postgraduate Funding, both with a week of lobbying in 2006. Also the elections saw the election of Marilyn Shanks as Chair, Simon Felton as General Secretary and Tim Roll-Pickering as Treasurer. The rest of the Executive officers were also elected helping to make the full complement of the NPC team.

The end of the day saw a trip to Loch Lomand and for the less adventurous – shopping in Glasgow.

## In the News

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IT'S BEEN a busy couple of weeks for postgraduates with Part-time Students gaining more financial support and Cambridge going to the ballot over Intellectual Property rights.

Jessica Shepherd wrote in the Times Higher on the 21st October that Rammell ups cash support for part timers. Hardship funds allocated to institutions would be increased from £3 million to £12 million from September 2006. This has been welcomed by the OU and Universities UK although part time students continue to pay fees upfront. NPC policy argues that the AHRB should relax their rules against funding part-time postgraduates when there is a good reason why an individual would be better suited to part-time work. Mr Rammell added to the launch that the Higher Education Funding Council would consider proposals for increasing support to institutions for part-time students.

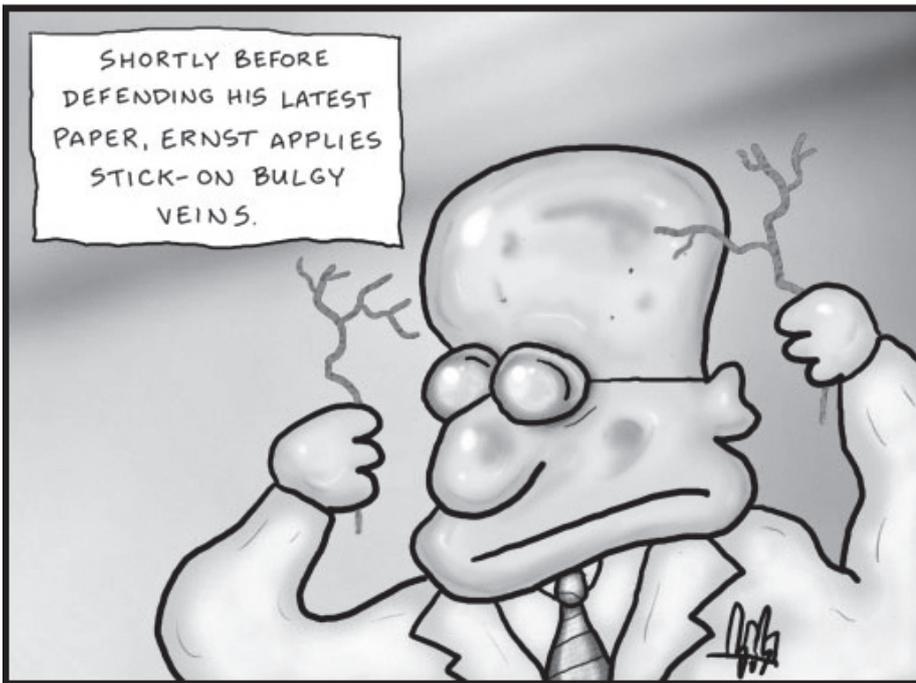
In Cambridge, meanwhile, Intellectual Property

Rights are under discussion with Cambridge planning to follow similar guidelines to other universities to ensure that academic research is exploited more efficiently and the university can better share the spoils of academics innovations. Phil Batty at the Times Higher notes that this debate has been ongoing with drafts in their third form in three years of internal debates. The policy has been argued to give students



“extra obligations that mean they will always come off second best if they are pitted against staff over IPR”. The NPC believes that the responsibility should rest on the Institution who should seek to defend the student against exploitation as students are usually not in a position to defend themselves.

# DOCTOR FUN



## Things theoretical physicists do

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## npc the national postgraduate committee

*The National Postgraduate Committee is an independent charity that represents and promotes the needs of UK postgraduates on a national and international stage voicing your opinions to the funding councils, review boards, academic bodies, the media, the government and other relevant bodies. Comprising postgraduate representatives from over 40 institutions and managed by an elected full time general secretary and a team of elected part time officers the NPC forms a national support network issuing UK universities and colleges with up to date guidelines and advice on current affairs. These range from recommended provisions of facilities to the instigation of learning contracts. Through regular OGMs and mailing lists the NPC fulfils the role of a national postgraduate forum providing formal responses to government and non-government papers and proposals. 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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#### Honorary President: Prof. Teresa Rees CBE

**Chair:** Marilyn Shanks, [chair@npc.org.uk](mailto:chair@npc.org.uk)

**Treasurer:** Tim Roll-Pickering, [treasurer@npc.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@npc.org.uk)

**Minutes Secretary:** Andre Oboler, [minutes@npc.org.uk](mailto:minutes@npc.org.uk)

**Conference Secretary:** Stephen Abbots, [conference@npc.org.uk](mailto:conference@npc.org.uk)

**Communications Officer:** Duncan Connors, [comms@npc.org.uk](mailto:comms@npc.org.uk)

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#### Ordinary Executive Officers:

Harpreet Singh, [talktoharpreet@yahoo.com](mailto:talktoharpreet@yahoo.com)  
Philip Carr, [pcarr6383@hotmail.com](mailto:pcarr6383@hotmail.com)

#### Scottish Subcommittee:

CHAIR: Maggie Chapman, [maggie.chapman@ed.ac.uk](mailto:maggie.chapman@ed.ac.uk)  
SECRETARY: John Anderson, [vp-education@src.gla.ac.uk](mailto:vp-education@src.gla.ac.uk)

#### Welsh Subcommittee:

TREASURER: Natasha Hirst, [natashahirst@yahoo.com](mailto:natashahirst@yahoo.com)

#### Finance Subcommittee:

Martin Gough, Christabel Silva, Natasha Hirst, Tim Roll-Pickering, Stephen Abbots, Duncan Connors

#### Constitutional Subcommittee:

James Groves, Maggie Chapman, Peter Campbell, Marilyn Shanks, Tim Roll-Pickering

## Simon Felton – The Year Ahead

The NPC is a charity with the aim of advancing in the public interest the education of postgraduate students in the United Kingdom and I want to ensure that our voice continues to be heard over the coming year. The NPC has achieved notable success in helping to abolish the Visitor system for appeals and working with the QAA on research student guidelines and it is this success I want to build on working with our partners to fight visa appeals, PGCE fees and for fairer Postgraduate Funding.



I am looking forward to a busy and hopefully successful year continuing working on Regional Development Agencies supporting postgraduate funding, freedom of academic debate, and continuing to support research students with supervisor issues.

I have already been working with the QAA on Assessment guidelines and will be working with partners such as UUK and UKCGE to ensure that we enhance the student experience. The NPC is a valuable support for unions, associations and students but we need your support and your views.

I am most looking forward to meeting postgraduate students and ensuring the NPC can help with other bodies to enhance the student experience for them.

## NPC Updates

The NPC provides lots of information and ideas through its NPC-All list where you can receive updates on events and messages regarding postgraduates nationally. Its easy to join up, either visit:

<http://www.npc.org.uk/jiscmail> or email [npc@npc.org.uk](mailto:npc@npc.org.uk) and we can subscribe you to the list.