



The Aldwych Group



Aldwych Group Handover: The Postgraduate Experience.

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The Postgraduate Experience.

- What is a postgraduate?
- What is a postgraduate course?
- How many postgraduates do you have?
- How are they funded?
- What issues affect them?
- How can you support and represent postgraduates?



Session Objectives.

By the end of this session, you will be able to

- List key characteristics of the postgraduate student body;
- Describe different methods of providing representation and support to postgraduates;
- Describe how the National Postgraduate Committee can help.



What is a Postgraduate degree and Who is a postgraduate Student?

- Students taking courses who already have a first degree or equivalent.
- Taught degrees (e.g. MA, MSc) and Research degrees (e.g. PhD, Dphil).
- Postgraduate student body diverse:
Taught Masters, Masters by Research, Doctoral students, Part-time postgraduates, Distance learning, Vocational courses such as PGCEs, Conversion courses assuming no prior knowledge, Top-up courses to broaden 3rd year UG course, Specific professional courses ...



Research Degrees

- Assessed mostly by research conducted by the student.
- Training in research methods or theoretical frameworks.
- Research written up as a thesis or presented in another form for examination in an oral examination or viva.
- Allocated a supervisor (or supervisors) who are generally experts.

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD or DPhil).



- A student is generally required to conduct research that offers an original and substantial contribution to knowledge. The expected time to complete this degree is three years full time, although it can often take four years.
- The length of a doctoral thesis can vary between 30,000 to 100,000 words.

Master of Philosophy (MPhil).



- An MPhil thesis varies between 20,000 and 60,000 words and is expected to contribute to knowledge. This requires a student to undertake a comprehensive piece of research.
- It is common for this to take two years, though it can take longer.
- It is often a requirement or part of the transition to undertaking a PhD



Masters (MA, MSc).

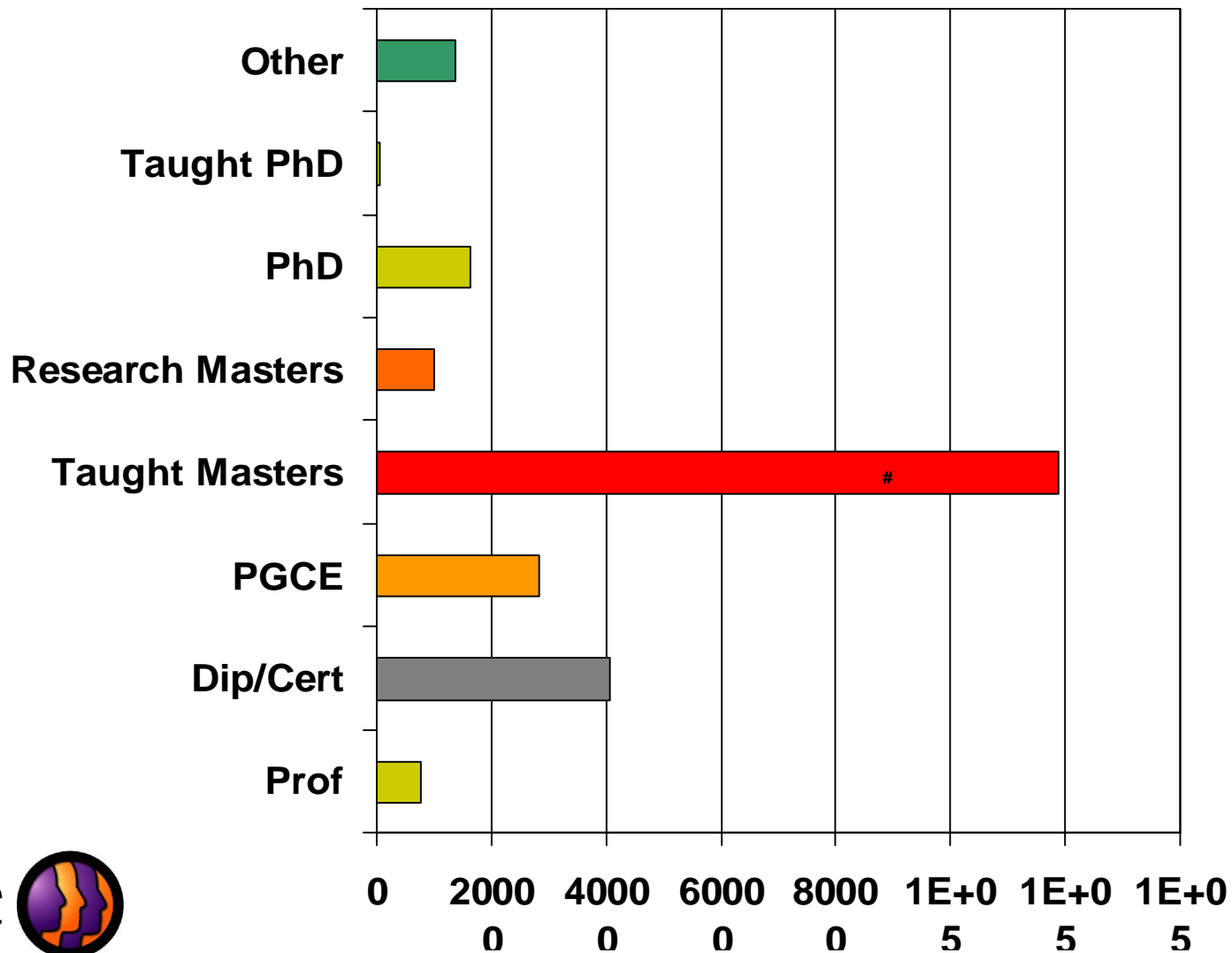
- Although MAs and MSc.s are usually taught courses, it is possible to gain this degree by research.
- There is generally no expectation for the student to offer an original contribution to knowledge.
- One year MSc by research with short thesis (20,000 words) generally known as an Mres.



Taught Degrees.

- Four main types of qualification:
 - Taught Doctorate (e.g. Doctor of Education, D.Ed.)
 - Masters Degree (e.g. Master of Science, MSc. Or Masters of Arts, MA).
 - Postgraduate Diploma (e.g. PG Diploma in Counselling, PgDip).
 - Postgraduate Certificate (e.g. PG Certificate in Education, PGCE).
- Taught Doctorate and Masters - taught courses which are assessed plus piece of research presented as a thesis.
- Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate more advanced taught work than at undergraduate level.

Postgraduates 2002/03 by Aim (HEPI, 2004).





Question!

What are the key differences between postgraduates and undergraduates with regards to the provision of representation and support?

Key differences between undergraduate and postgraduate.



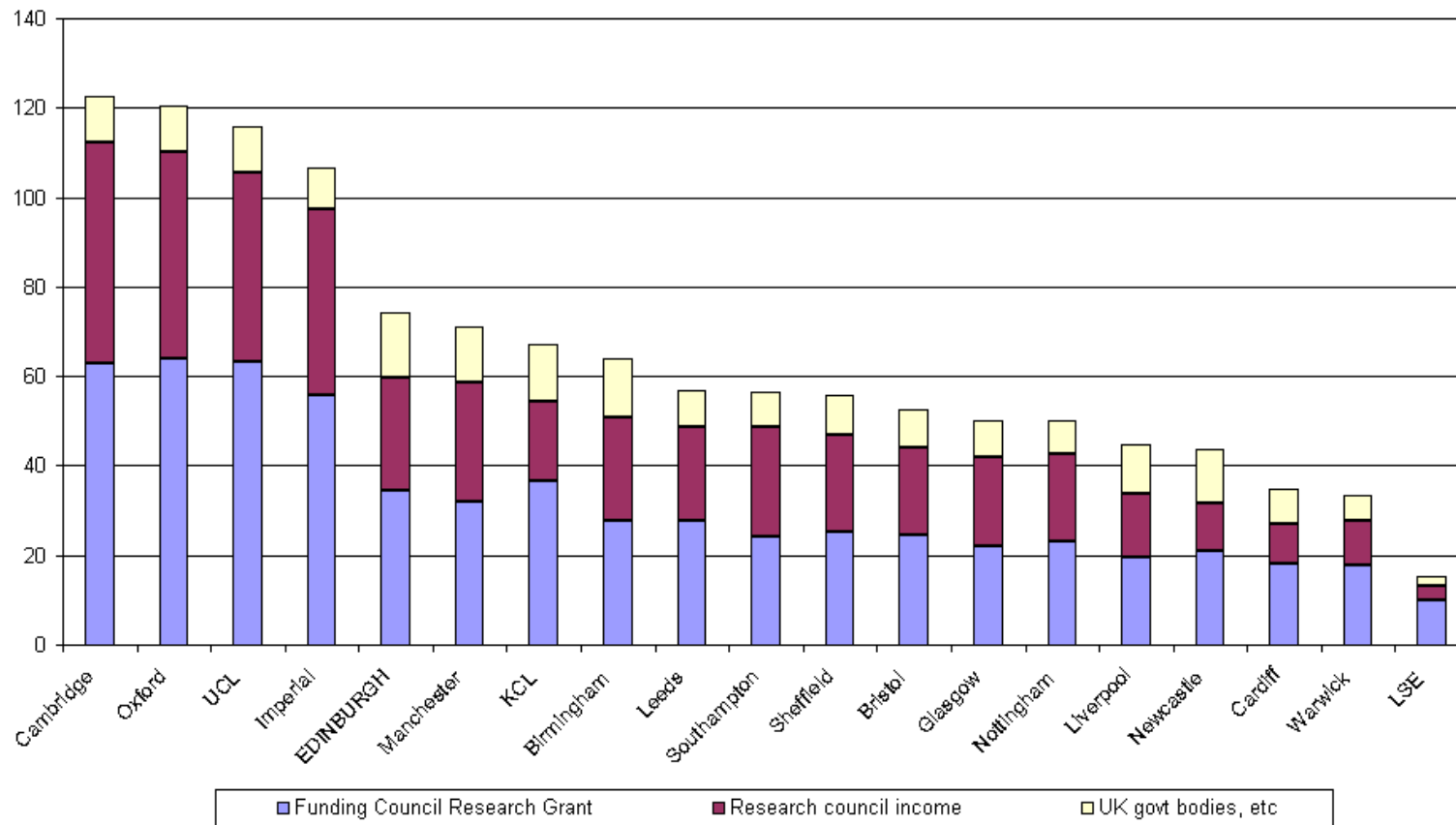
- Nature of their studies,
- Semi-staff status,
- Funding and fees issues,
- More likely to be international,
- Mature, distant or part-time,
- More isolated,
- Different social needs,
- Don't feel part of the Union



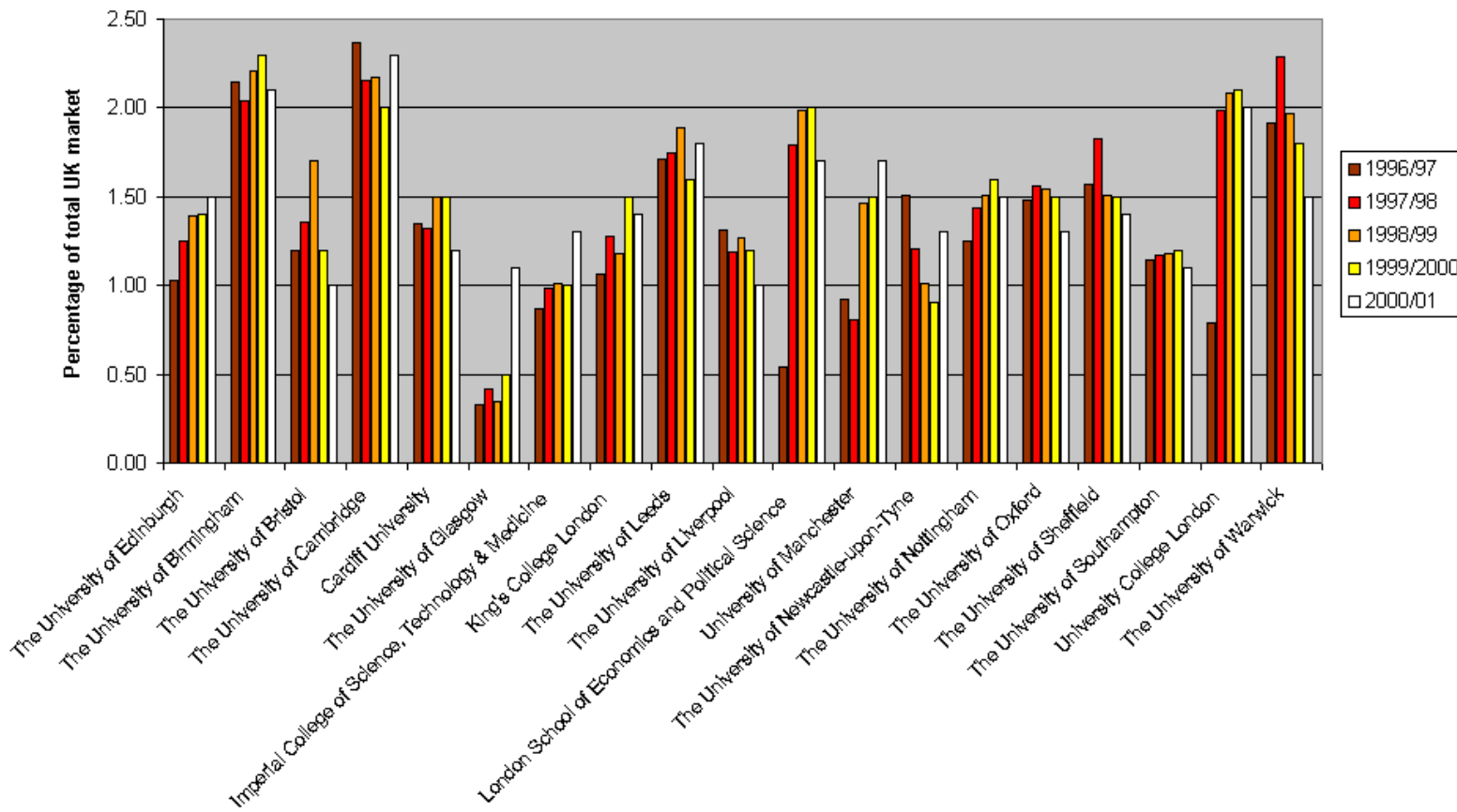
Why is the Russell Group so important for Postgraduates?

- Research intensive universities.
- Account for 27% of Postgraduate Students in UK.
- In 2000, 14 universities accounted for half the doctorates awarded. Just five universities: Cambridge, Oxford, Birmingham, University College London and Manchester, awarded half of those.

Russell Group Institutions State Research Funding Income (2000/01 £M).



Market Share of Postgraduate Degrees awarded by Russell Group.



How many Postgraduates do you have? (HESA 2004/2005 Data).



	Total PG	Full Time	Part Time	Female	Male	PG % of Students
Bristol	7890	2620	5270	3995	3895	34
Birmingham	11735	5500	6235	6485	5250	38
Cardiff	7070	3410	3660	3585	3485	25
Imperial	4335	3320	1015	1620	2715	36
LSE	4795	3690	1105	2420	2375	54
KCL	6970	3490	3480	3665	3305	32
UCL	7505	4770	2735	3870	3635	38
Cambridge	9435	5605	3825	4625	4810	37
Oxford	7145	5730	1415	3070	4075	32
Glasgow	5480	2800	2675	3165	2315	22
Leeds	9695	6125	3570	5015	4680	27
Liverpool	4305	1860	2440	2160	2140	20
Manchester	11025	6155	4870	5085	5940	28
Newcastle	5330	3355	1975	2545	2785	29
Sheffield	7170	4665	2500	3680	3485	28
Southampton	7320	3420	3900	4010	3305	31
Warwick	9885	3340	6545	3985	5900	33
Edinburgh	6340	4060	2280	3320	3020	28
Nottingham	7755	4055	3700	3900	3855	24

Postgraduates as percentage of student body and PGR PGT split.(HESA 2003/ 2004 Data).



	PGR	PGR % of PG	PGR % of Total Students	PGT	PGT % of PG	PGT % of Total Students
Bristol	2555	33	11	5295	67	23
Birmingham	4025	33	13	7915	67	25
Cardiff	1945	35	8	3605	65	16
Imperial	2535	55	21	2080	45	17
LSE	1285	27	15	3475	73	40
KCL	2445	38	11	3990	62	19
UCL	3120	38	15	5185	62	26
Cambridge	6295	68	25	2905	32	11
Oxford	4140	60	19	2725	40	12
Glasgow	1915	36	8	3450	64	14
Leeds	2555	27	7	7085	73	20
Liverpool	2090	45	10	2595	55	12
Manchester	3900	36	10	6800	64	17
Newcastle	2525	47	14	2870	53	16
Sheffield	2810	38	11	4550	62	17
Southampton	2445	34	11	4780	66	21
Warwick	1630	18	6	7560	82	26
Edinburgh	2895	47	13	3330	53	14
Nottingham	3405	40	10	5210	60	16

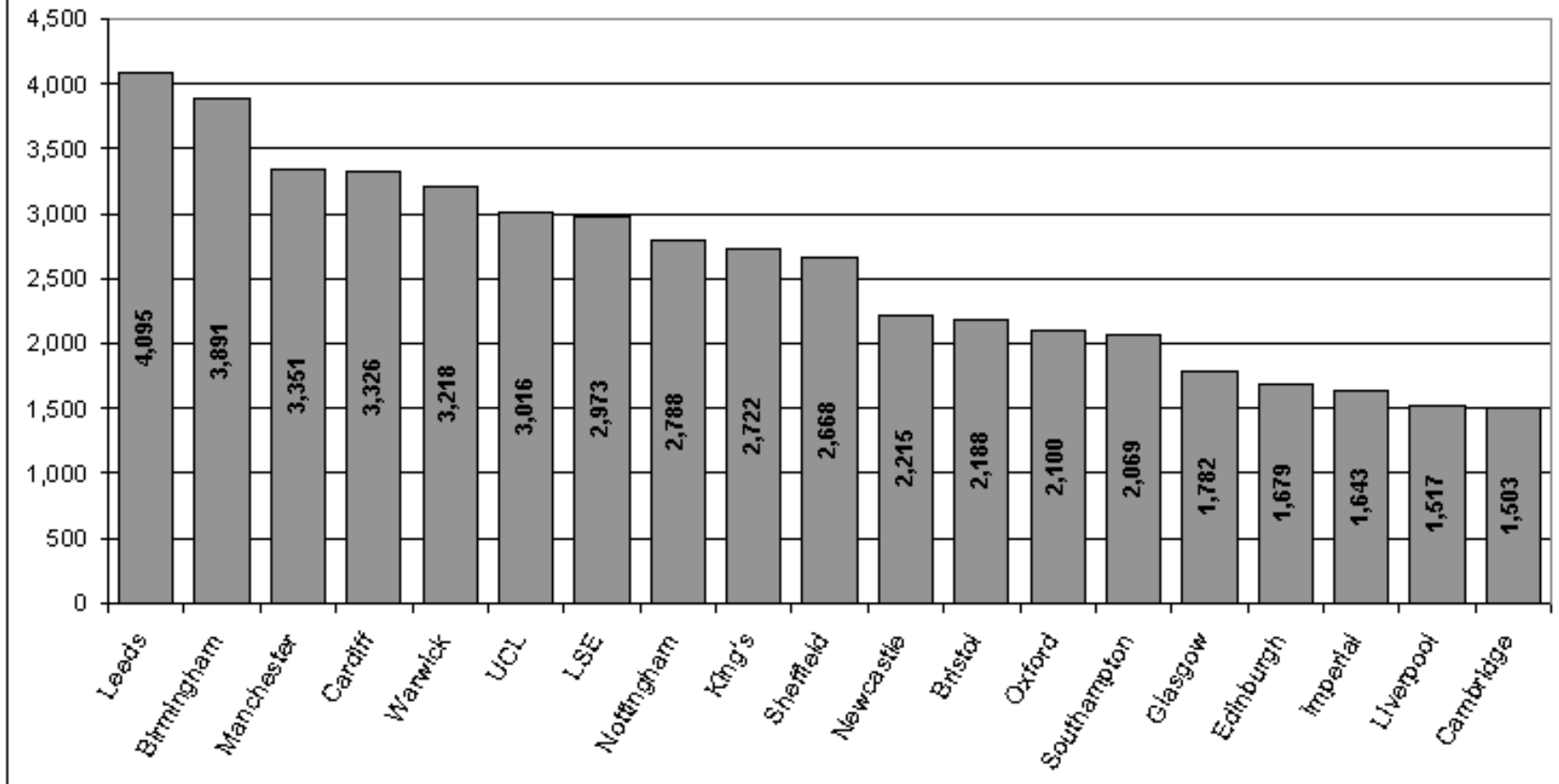


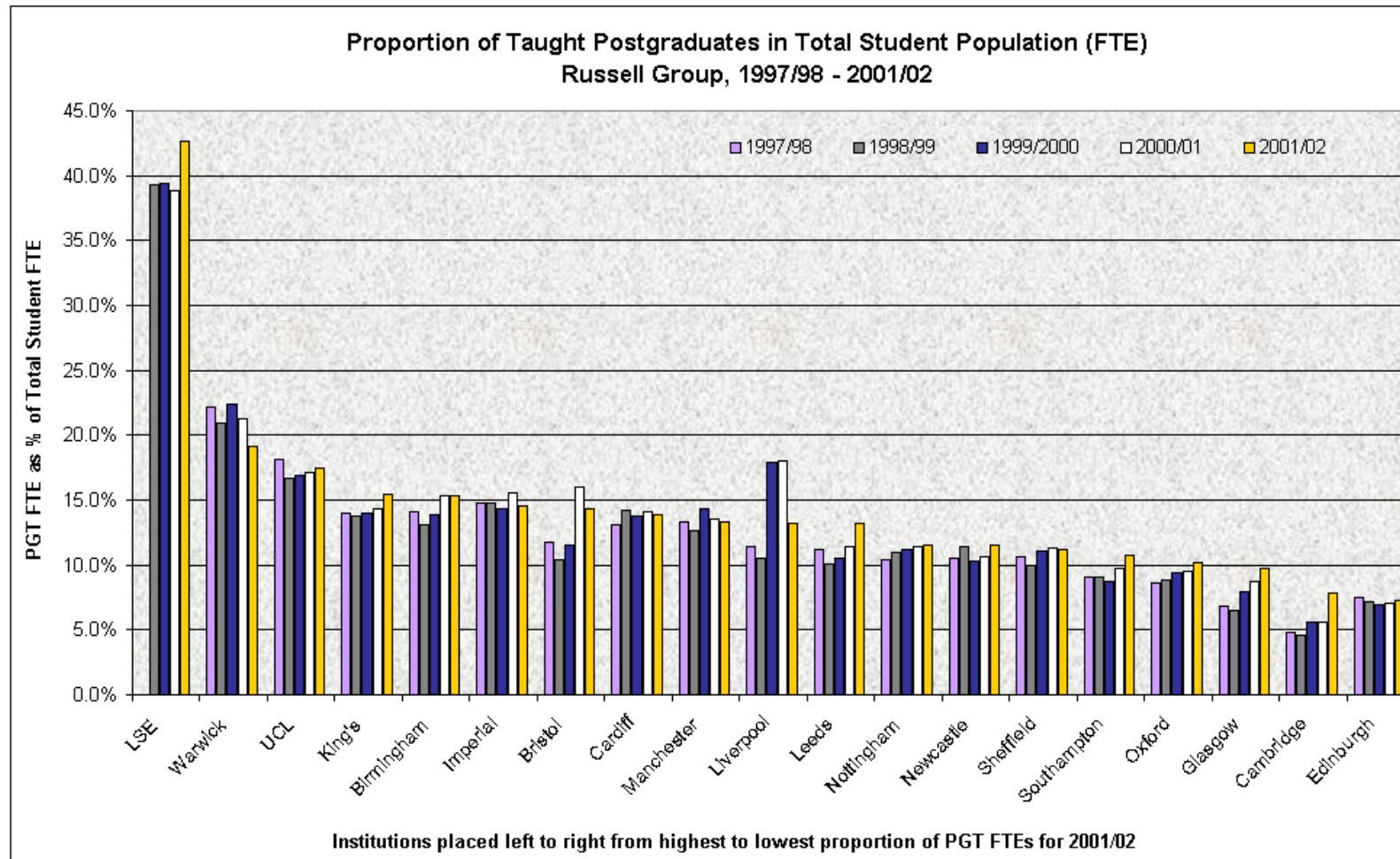
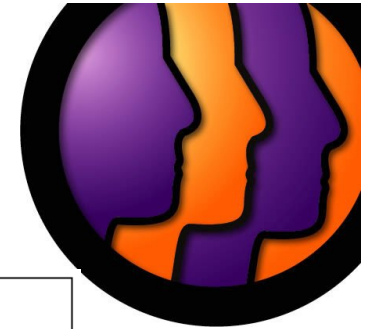
How many Postgraduates?

- Range from Birmingham with 11,735 Postgraduates to Imperial with 4335.
- Split however between PGT and PGR – Cambridge 68% PGR to Warwick 82% PGT.
- Percentage of all students who are postgraduates range from LSE with 54% to Liverpool 20%.



Taught Postgraduate FTEs (full time equivalents), Russell Group, 2002/03







PG Issues for Representation

In groups, discuss these statements.

- Postgraduates have greater workloads and are less willing to get involved in activities, clubs and societies.
- Postgraduates aren't as interested in student issues as undergraduates, in terms of getting actively involved in making representation to the University
- Postgraduates are much more sober and sensible. They have left their wild, party-animal undergraduate lifestyles behind.



Answers.

- Increased workloads and time pressure, reservation to join UG dominated groups but need to socialise, UG timetable of most clubs and societies.
- Need for PG representation, Union is perceived as UG, more individual needs and problems.

Implications: How to support the large number of Postgraduate Students.



- Different reasons for doing a postgraduate degree.
- Often self funding.
- Welfare issues – supervision, assessment, the Viva, isolation.
- Large numbers of Taught Postgraduates.



Why do a Postgraduate Degree?

- Usually driven by personal needs and desires.
- Expanding knowledge in subject.
- Improve career progression.
- Increase chance of graduate job.
- Love of subject.
- Lifestyle changes by raising salary.



Postgraduate Funding.

- Most are self-financing – only about 1/3 of research students research council funded.
- High fees, particularly International Students.
- Funding routes: Career Development loan, PSAS, Research Council Funding, Other Postgraduate Bursaries, Employment.

Different funding options.



- Postgraduate students not eligible for student loans.
- **Career Development Loans** are available from high street banks covering up to £8000. Available only for directly vocational postgraduate courses lasting not more than 2 years.
Repayment at commercial interest rates.
- **Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS)**. From the Student Awards Agency for Scotland, Students may receive support for certain full-time vocational courses, mostly at diploma level.
- **Research Council Funding**. Research Councils are organisations given task by government to fund research in disciplines. Seven research councils. Typically Research Councils allocate funding to individual departments and institutions, and students apply directly to the department in which they want to study
- **Other Postgraduate Bursaries**. Many of these tend to offer one year funding or one-off payments that can be made as a way of helping self-financing student undertake course.
- **Employment**. Often students are undertaking paid work, often as teaching assistants and also with companies and other employers.



Funding Issues.

- Living expenses while writing up
- Travel funds
 - Limited departmental provision
- Hardship funds
 - Some limited funds available from University
 - Can earn some money from tutoring and demonstrating
 - Supervisors and departments sometimes help out
- Training costs
 - Roberts review funds from research councils
 - Only funded for RC-funded students, provision required for all students

Source: FIMS Supervisor Training - University of Glasgow 14th March 2005.



Supervision.

- Postgraduate research education predicated on good supervision.
- *The most important influence on supervisors' supervision approach is how they themselves were supervised (see Kandlbinder & Peseta, 2001).*
- Student-Supervisor agreement – an initial meeting with agreed obligations, responsibilities and expectations on student and supervisor.



Supervisor-Student Agreement.

- Completed by Students and their Supervisors and returned to the Research Degrees Administrator within 1 month of enrolment or as soon as possible thereafter.
- Copies to be authorised and re-issued to both supervisor and the student.
- Outlines expectations, obligations, responsibilities, routes for complaint and appeal, meeting frequency - can be changed and amended by seeking all party approval.



Breakdown with Supervisor.

- One of the most serious cases that can be experienced by a research student. If caught early can be addressed easier.
- Relationship with supervisor often takes place behind closed doors and its important that student keeps records.
- There will be a complaints procedure which should be noted and made accessible for students.



Engaging students

- Commit to the principle of postgraduate involvement in student activities.
- Provide bodies with adequate resources and appropriate sabbatical and/or staff support.
- Establish and maintain links with the university's graduate school.
- Seek out postgraduate representation on union committees.
- Encourage undergraduate-led societies to promote relevant events to postgraduates specifically.
- Run joint events with undergraduate-led societies.
- Source: Left Behind: Student Activities for Postgraduates (David Bean: NPC).



Including Postgraduates.

- Respect their time constraints:
give them all the practical support you can,
- If they don't look interested:
find out what their interests and needs are,
find the right way to address them,
- Try to find an open platform where everyone can express their view.

Postgraduate Support Structures



How does your institution cater for postgraduates in the following areas:

- Representation
 - Welfare Issues
 - Social and Activities
 - Communication with Postgraduates.
- In groups, compare what your university does.



Effective Communication.

- Dedicated web-site
- Mailing lists
- Postgraduate Newsletter
- Postgraduate Forums (on-line, real meetings).
- Distribute correspondence via departmental contacts.
- Use existing structures: e.g. Graduate Schools, course representatives.



Welfare Support.

- Issues with funding and finances.
- New environment and work pressure leading to feelings of isolation.
- Language and cultural difficulties for international students.
- Particular needs of distant, mature and part-time students.
- Child care facilities.



Tackling Isolation.

- Organising postgraduate specific events
- Include postgraduates in existing clubs and societies
 - Make society officers aware of postgraduate needs
- Provide social activities outside undergraduate term time.
- Glasgow successful - Hetherington Research Club, also Cardiff Graduate Centre.



Complaints and Appeals.

- Complaints - students are dissatisfied with the academic support or services made available.
- Appeals - students who wish to challenge the outcome of an assessment or an examination that they feel was conducted unfairly.
- Should internal complaints mechanism be exhausted and the student be not satisfied with the outcome the student can take the complaint to an external students complaints arbiter. In England this is the OIA (<http://www.oiahe.co.uk>), in Scotland the external organisation is the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, (<http://www.scottishombudsman.org>).



The Viva.

- Often one of the biggest areas for complaint.
- Lack of clarity by examiners, supervisors and students about purpose.
- Mock or practice useful but not well used.
- Mismatches between paradigms of student and examiner can lead to disagreement about validity of thesis.
- Independent chairs and / or recordings should be used in Viva.

External Quality Assurance.



- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) carries out **external** quality assurance.
- QAA alongside universities, colleges and other higher education organisations produced reference points that help to describe academic standards. These include guidelines on good practice in universities and colleges such as the Code of Practice.
- QAA Scotland has an enhancement led review system in contrast to England and Wales and this focuses on the institution's policies and practices to enhance the quality of the students' learning experience .

QAA Code of Practice Section 1: Postgraduate Research Programmes.



- QAA PGR Precepts and Code of Practice
 - “This section of the code is written in a firmer style than some other sections, especially the precepts. [...] to give institutions clear guidance on the funding councils’, research councils’ and Agency’s expectations in respect of the management, quality and academic standards of research programmes. [...] designed to guide institutions on the development of institutional codes of practice, so that they take account of national expectations.”
- 30 precepts (and explanations) relating to PGR matters
- Very prescriptive about key aspects of PGR experience



Code of Practice Precepts

- Precepts 12—16 cover Supervision
 - Access to regular and appropriate supervisory support
 - Encouragement to interact with other researchers
 - Advice from one or more independent sources
 - Protect the student in the event of unplanned loss of a supervisor
- Supervisors will have appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support encourage and monitor PG students effectively
 - “They will wish, and institutions will require them, to engage in development activities of various kinds that equip them to supervise students”
 - “Institutions will expect existing supervisors to demonstrate their continuing professional competence through participation in a range of activities designed to support their work as supervisors. They will be expected to take the initiative in updating their knowledge and skills underpinned by institutional arrangements that define and enable sharing of good practice, on for example mentoring relationships, and providing advice on effective support for different types of student.”



- Supervisory teams:
 - One main supervisor, or two with well-defined responsibilities
 - Second supervisor for additional support/supervision
 - Limited period of main supervisor absence
- Written guidance on responsibilities of supervisors
 - Not much surprising, but pastoral care is an issue as is reading turnaround times
- “Institutions will ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors”
 - Upper bounds on numbers of students
 - University currently says maximum of eight first supervisees
 - Departments can (and do) impose stricter limits
 - Overall workloads must be OK too
 - Performance management and appraisal issue



- Precepts 23-24 and 28-30 cover feedback, complaints and appeals:
 - Auditable requirement for feedback mechanisms and responses to them from all sources, including employers and alumni
 - Documented systems for complaint about general issues, and appeals about specific ones
 - Basically, work up through chain of “command”
 - Eventually can end up in court (see recent cases in THES)
 - Failure of supervision is a nightmare, the University **will** panic
- Increasing number of complaints and appeals
 - Increasing requirement to identify and handle problems early on
 - Large portion of Grad School work is dealing with “difficult” cases appropriately
- Problem cases will consume enormous amounts of time & energy
 - So problems are to be avoided wherever possible, hence all the processes
- Worst problems are those that arise late on, e.g. failed vivas



Models for Representation.

- Postgraduate Officer or Sabbatical
- Postgraduate Committee (staff support)
 - Postgraduate Society, Association
 - Autonomous Postgraduate Body
- Course Representatives
 - Departmental, faculty levels



Representation.

- Representation
- Ensure PG Input in Union and University Meetings:
 - Traditionally PG Officers, Representatives
 - Input of postgraduates that are unable to attend meetings
 - Awareness of Postgraduate specific issues – procedures for research degrees.

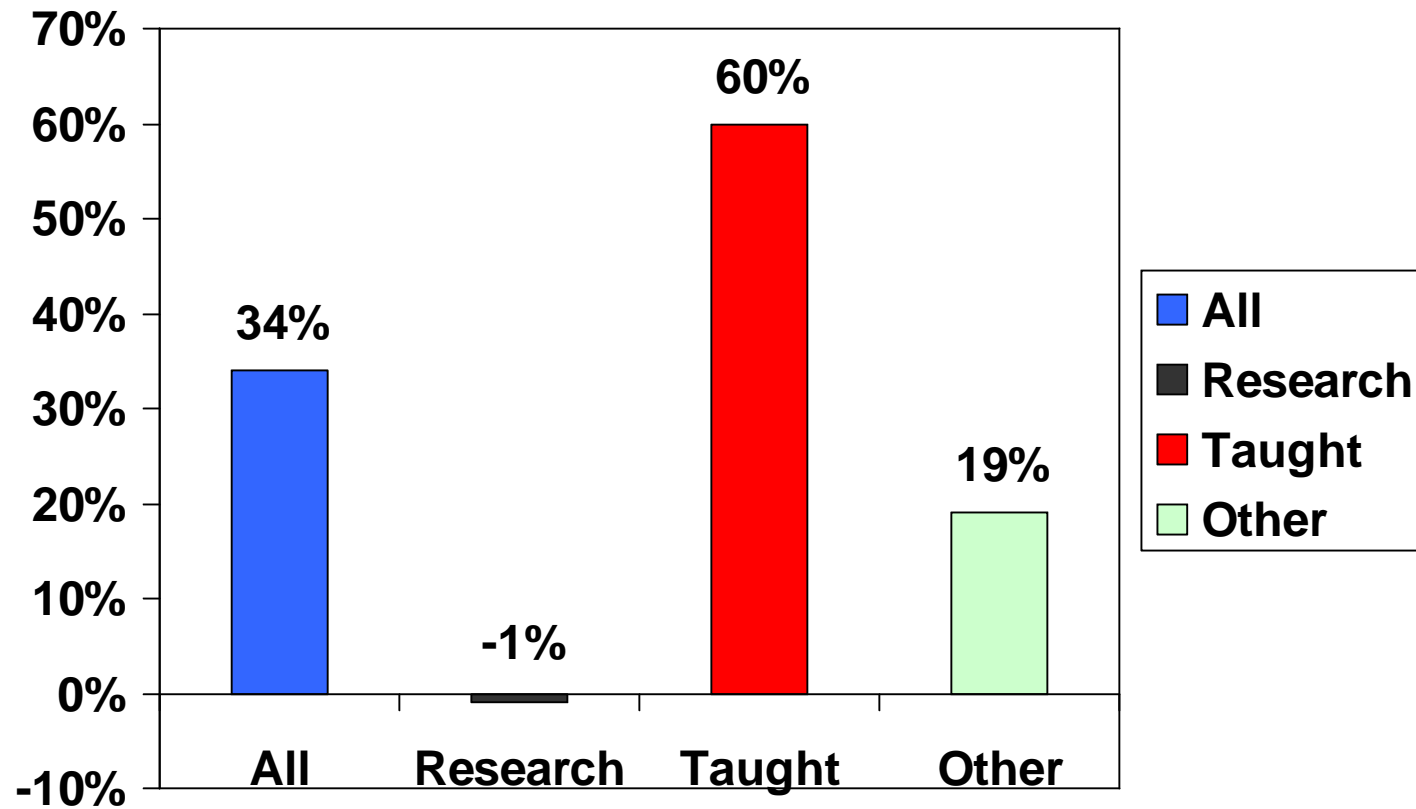
Developments in Postgraduate Education.



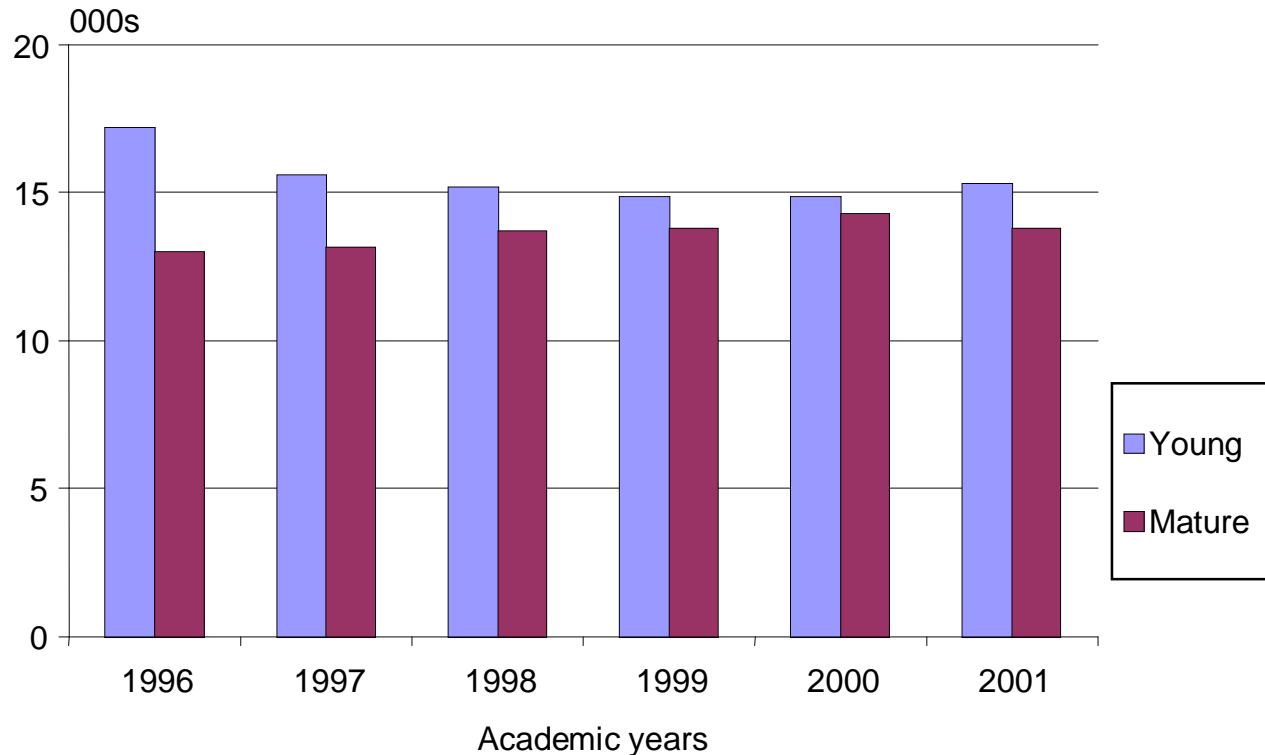
- Total taught postgraduates increased slightly – mostly young full-time.
- Research students declined slightly - decline in young postgraduate research students (HEPI).



Growth 1996-2005 (HESA).

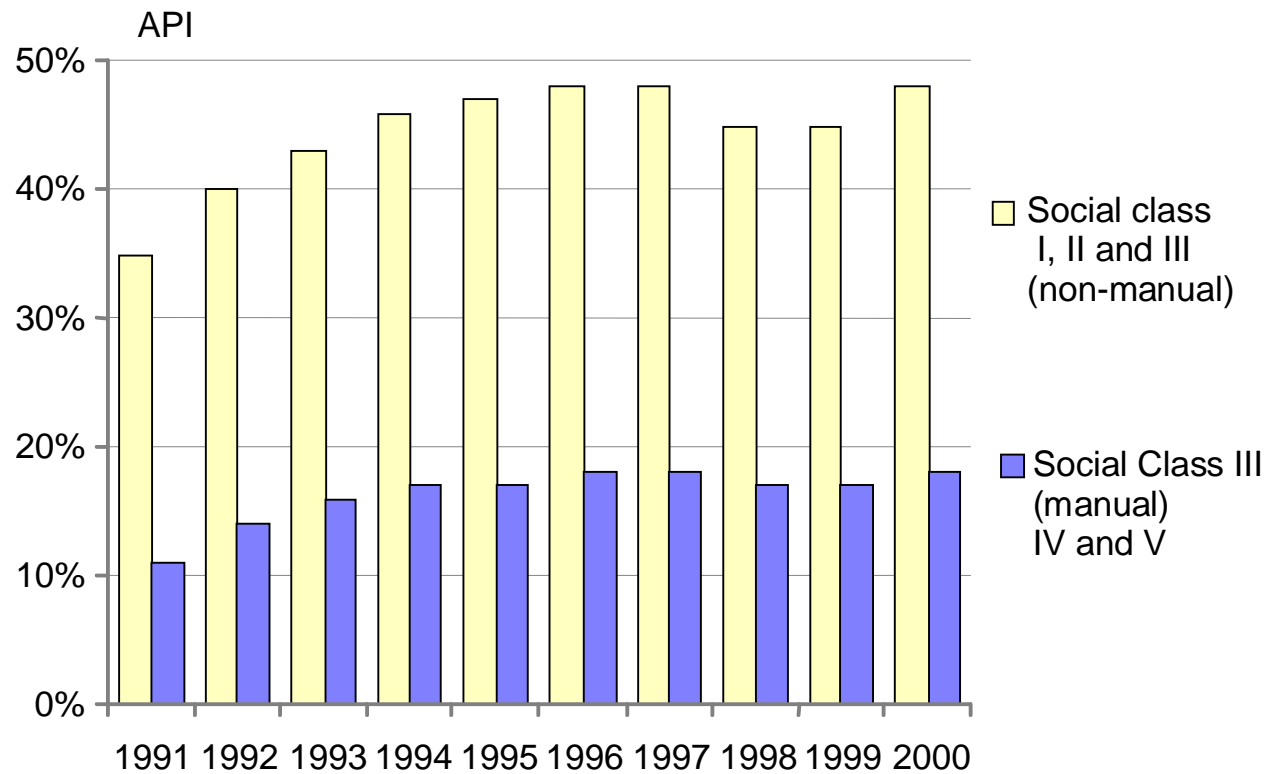


The number of young full time researchers has declined



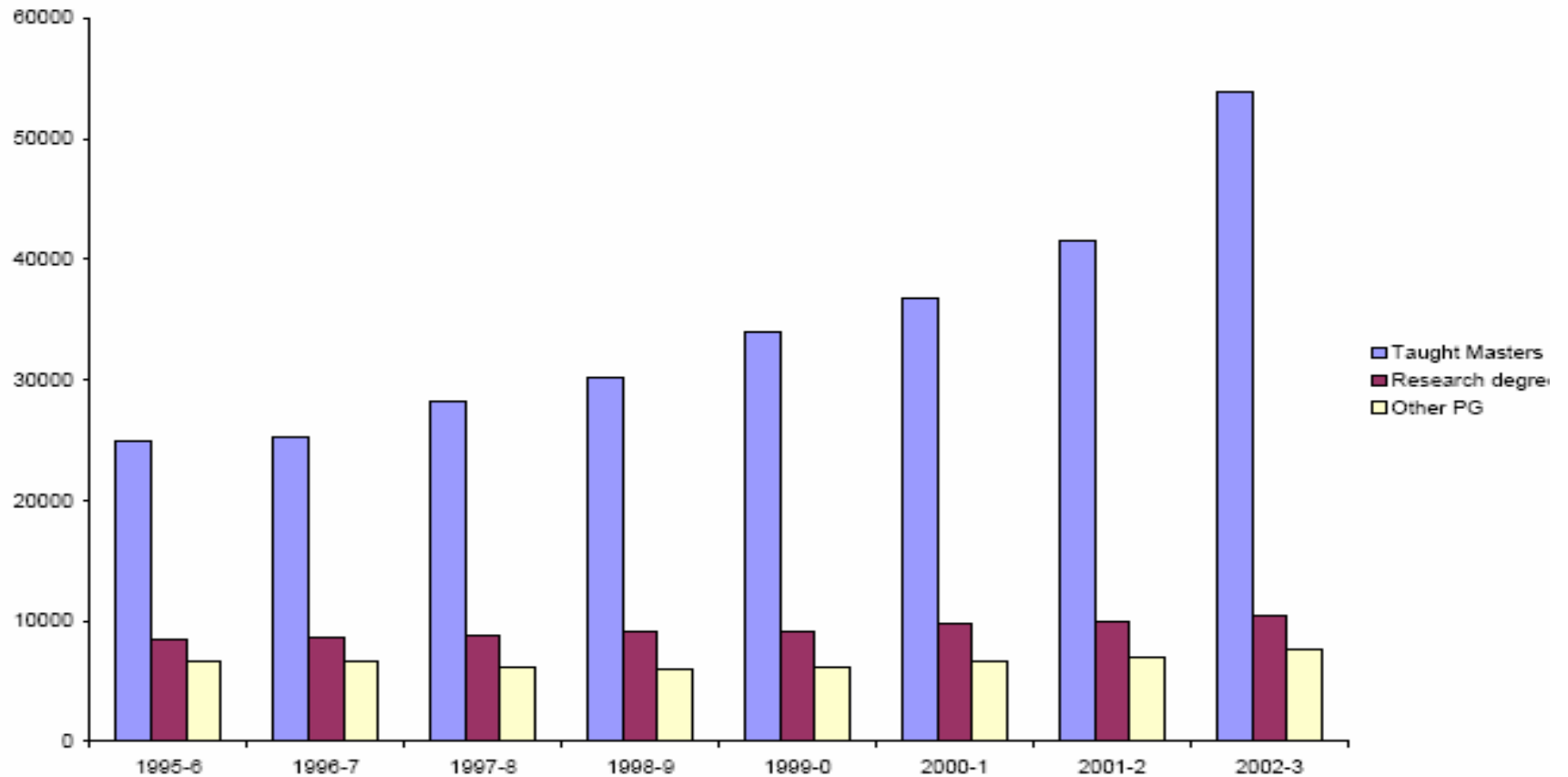
Source: HESES and HESA data for all HEIs in England. Full-time students only. Numbers are HESES columns 1+2, all home (UK) and EC students (including fundable and non-fundable). HESES numbers include FEC mergers (using HEIFES [1998 HEIFES numbers backdated for years before 1998]). HESA data have been used to estimate proportions. Mature postgraduates are 25 or over on entry

The highest three social classes participate in HE at a much higher rate than the lowest three social classes.



Source: DfES, Trends in Education and Skills, post-16 learning, participation in HE, chart B. Participation rates (API) are for GB. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/trends/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.showChart&cid=4&iid=23&chid=90>

No. of First Year Postgraduates from Outside UK.





Increasing Debt.

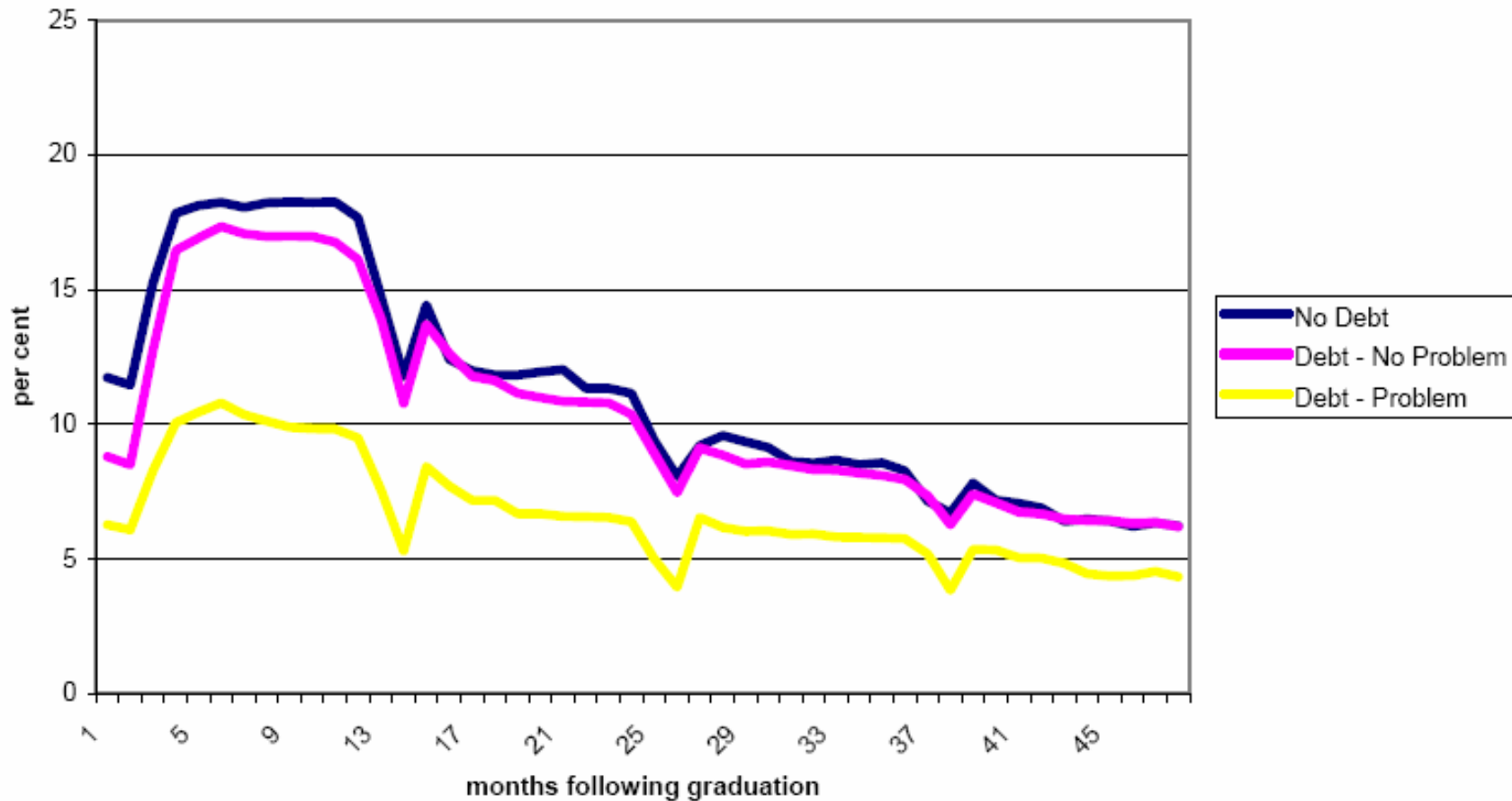
- $\frac{1}{4}$ with repayable debts indicated that their choices following graduation had been limited in some way by their debts. (Class of 99).
- Student Income and Expenditure Survey suggests that debt students may incur to other lenders (eg bank overdrafts, personal loans, or credit card debt) to cover their living costs range up to about £400 per student per year.

Hobsons & THES Survey



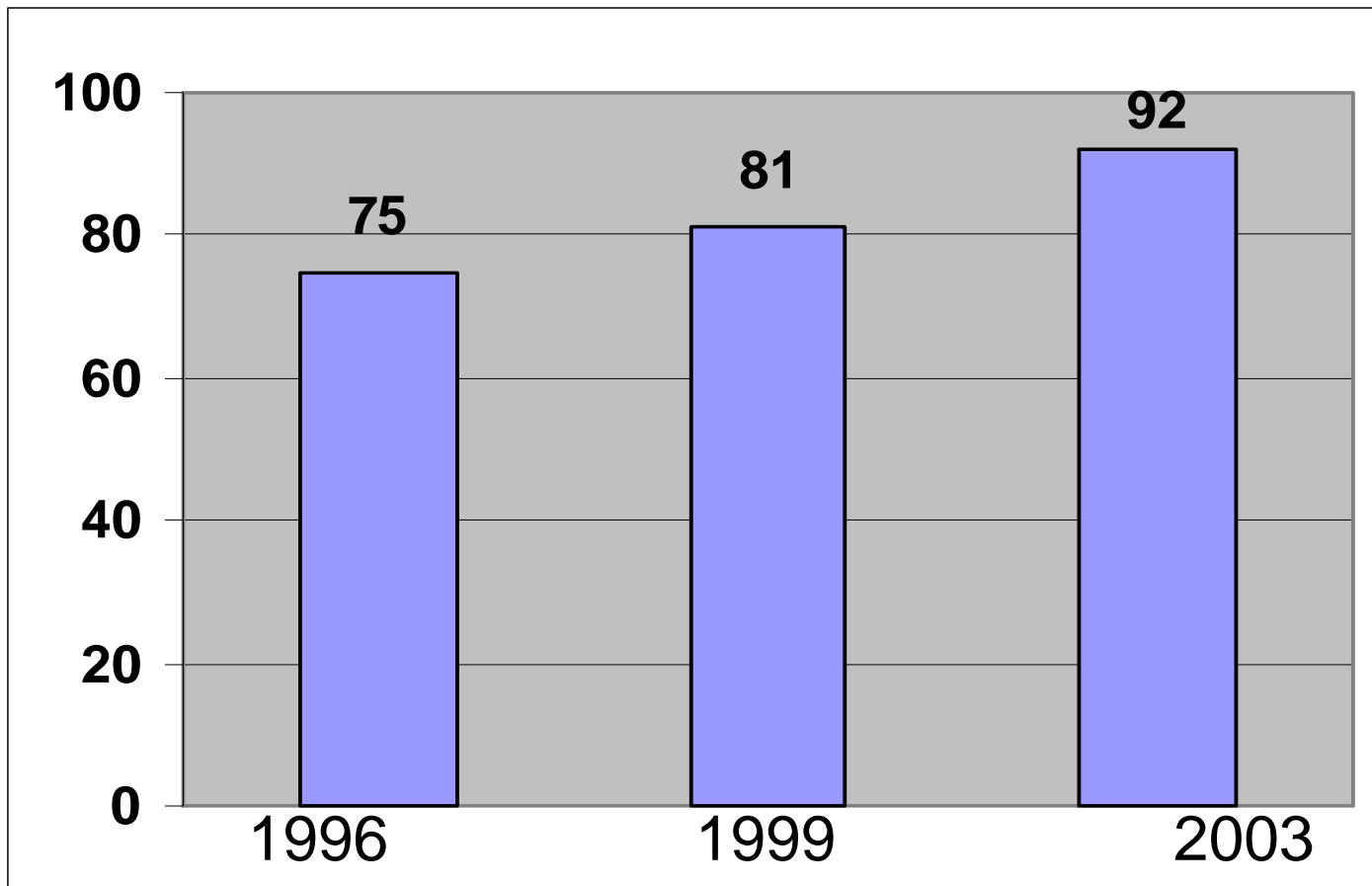
- *5600 Prospective PG students.*
- *27% would pay £3k to £5k.*
- *21% would pay £1k to £2k.*
- *14% would accept paying £5k to £10k.*
- *Overseas willing to pay £10k to £15k.*
- *Survey respondents say they are relatively concerned about postgraduate costs but want to do a postgraduate degree because they are passionate about their subject and because it will make them more employable.*

Debt and Participation in Further Study.





Proportion of Students Graduating with Debt.



**Source: C. Callender and D. Wilkinson (2003)
2002/03 Student Income and Expenditure Survey, RR 487, DfES**



Widening Participation

- The social bias in the university system and even further back in the chain, in the school system, has the result that academically high achievers, as conventionally measured, tend to be concentrated in the white middle classes. Fewer than one in five young people from the lower socio-economic groups participate in higher education, well below the 45 percent who participate from the higher ones (General Council of the Bar of England and Wales, 2002).
- Does it matter?
- Women make up only 13.1% of the professoriat. Just 3.8% of professors state their ethnicity from a minority group.



The Bologna Process.

- Establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010.
- Focus on Three cycles : undergraduate, Masters and Doctoral Level.
- Impact on students with mobility in Europe, Diploma Supplement (similar to transcript), European Credit Transfer System.

Developments and Issues in Postgraduate Student Support.



- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
- European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers.
- UCU postgraduates that teach charter.
- Council Tax exemption – writing up students.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.



- PRES is an online questionnaire survey based on student responses to a set of questions, with a focus on the research student experience; it is *not* a student satisfaction survey.
- The scales are groups of questions grouped by theme, which are defined empirically (by factor analysis). The four scales, which all relate to the student experience, are intellectual climate, infrastructure, supervision, and skills development.
- It is based on the Australian model and the Oxford University Pilot Study.
- Will collect data to find participating gender, ethnicity, age, social background.
- Data confidential to university but UK average will be published in report.



PRES Example Questions.

- **Supervision:** My supervisor/s are available when I need them; My supervisor/s provide helpful feedback on my progress.
- **Skills Development:** My research degree programme has helped me to develop a range of communication skills; have developed an awareness of the wider research community in my field
- **Infrastructure:** I have been provided with a suitable working space; There is appropriate financial support for research activities.
- **Intellectual Climate:** The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work; I feel integrated into the department's community.
- **Student Representations, complaints and appeals:** I know who I should approach, or where to find out this information, if I am dissatisfied with any element of my experience as a research degree student.

European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers



- Addressed to researchers, employers and funders in both the public and private sectors.
- Aimed at making research an attractive career.
- Voluntary but give individual researchers the same rights and obligations wherever they may work throughout the European Union.
- UK has committed to implement the Charter and Code and this is being married to QAA Precepts.

Postgraduates that Teach Charter



npc the national postgraduate committee



- Joint charter between UCU and NPC supporting postgraduates that teach. Will be launched this September/October with new union.
- The charter affirms that Postgraduates who are employed at their place of study, even if for only a few hours per week, are undertaking a professional activity which is an important aspect of continuing professional development. Postgraduates are members of staff and must be integrated into the social and academic life of departments as valued colleagues and members of a professional community.

Council Tax Exemption for Writing-up Students.



- Typical PhD programme 3 – 4 years.
- Funding usually for 3 years.
- If student overruns funded study and is writing up [thesis] they are often not classed as student and are usually liable for council tax and may have to pay continuation fees.
- Sometimes not able to access facilities or support as not classed as student.

Supporting Postgraduate Students.



- Recognise diverse postgraduate student body: international, part time, full time.
- Different expectations – career, research, love of subject.
- Postgraduates – between 1/5 and half of your student population.



The National Postgraduate Committee.

- To advance in the public interest, the education of postgraduate students within the United Kingdom.
- Three Visions;
 - ability to learn not their ability to pay
 - environment which promotes and sustains equality of opportunity
 - financial, intellectual, pastoral and social support mechanisms.



How we work.

- The committee itself is made up of delegates from affiliated institutions and recognised bodies who will approve the decisions and policies of NPC that are implemented by the Management Sub Committee (MSC), which is otherwise known as the executive .
- We work closely with funding councils, research councils, QAA, UUK, UKGRAD, SCoP and work on consultations and representing the postgraduate view in decision making.



What the NPC does?

- Responds to consultations in interests of postgraduates.
- Represents postgraduates on national organisations and working groups:
 - QAA Student Board Member- appointed by NPC and NUS.
 - QAA Code of Practice Working Groups – revising the codes of practice.
 - ‘Rugby Team’ Evaluating effectiveness of skills development in research degree programmes.
- Influencing national policy in areas where postgraduates are concerned.
- Support individual students with welfare concerns and appeals and complaints.
- Support Student Unions and Associations with information on postgraduates, developments in postgraduate education and officer support for postgraduates.
- Work with unions and associations in national campaigns such as opposing top-up fees, council tax exemption for writing up students.
- Produces publications for supporting postgraduates and informing policy - www.npc.org.uk/essentials. Some only available to affiliates

What the NPC has been doing 2005/06.



- European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for Recruitment of Researchers Working Group.
- HEA Literature Review on the Doctoral Experience.
- QAA Code of Practice for Assessment Working Group.
- QAA Code of Practice for Complaints and Appeals Working Group.
- Rugby Team 06 – developments from the working group evaluating the effectiveness of skills development in research degree programmes.
- NPC/Prospects Market Failure of Postgraduate Education Survey.
- Meeting with Minister for Higher Education Bill Rammell.
- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey advisory board.
- HEA Investigation of the decision making process and deterrents for first generation students continuing on to postgraduate research.
- UCU postgraduate that teach charter.

NPC/Prospects Market Failure of Postgraduate Education Survey



- Objectives of the research concerned with prospective students were:
 1. To seek their current impressions of postgraduate study and whether they would consider it.
 2. Motives for applying to undertake postgraduate study.
 3. Concerns of undergraduates over financial implications.
 4. To consider whether current undergraduates would pursue postgraduate study with increased levels of debt.

Headline Results: Prospective postgraduate Students



- Degree to which financial considerations and concern about debt have influenced decision to study at postgraduate level (%):

Social Class Category	Very Strong Influence
Class A	33
Class B	44
Class C1	43
Class C2	35
Class D	77
Class E	62



- Obstacles to overcome in decision to conduct postgraduate study (%):

	Proportion %
Acquiring sufficient funding	52
Working while studying to get income	35

- Potential method by which postgraduate study will be funded (%):

	Proportion %
Employment	49.5
Savings	42.6
Parental Contribution	32.9
Postgraduate Award	32.4



- Level of influence of a range of factors in decision not to conduct postgraduate study (%):

	Strong / very strong influence %
Planned tuition fees	74.3
Lack of funding options	67.5
Debts accrued from previous studies	62.9

HEA Investigation of the decision making process and deterrents for first generation students continuing on to postgraduate research



- Recently approved HEA funded research by Kingston University.
- NPC invited to sit on working group.
- The research aims to look whether practice and theories explaining student entry into higher education, progression and completion rates at undergraduate level is applicable to all students undertaking some form of postgraduate research.





Welfare Support.

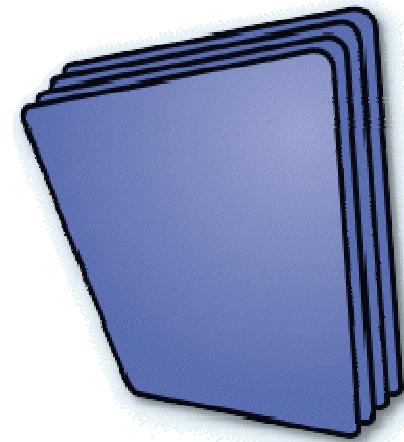
- We support student with appeals and complaints, referring onto lawyers if necessary.
- *We are making meaningful progress - examiners were nominated yesterday, and we have their attention at long last, ‘...’ the help from NPC has made this possible. I have already told our Union about the irreplaceable part in grad student welfare NPC plays.*

Student Welfare Case



Further Resources

- <http://www.npc.org.uk/essentials> or Resource Folder.
- <http://www.npc.org.uk>
- General Secretary, available through npc@npc.org.uk
- Mailing lists: <http://www.npc.org.uk/jiscmail>



Reviewing Learning Objectives.



By the end of this session, you will be able to

- List the key characteristics of the postgraduate student body;
- Describe different methods of providing representation and support to postgraduates
- Describe how the National Postgraduate Committee can help