



Andre Oboler & Simon Felton

The UK Postgraduate experience

Who I am

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- International Student (Australia)
- Student Observer, QAA Board of Directors
- Research and Teaching Forum, Higher Education Academy



QAA



NPC

International Postgrads & the Economy

Some facts...

- 532,630 Postgraduate students in Higher Education
- 32% are from outside the UK (EU 9%, rest 23%)
- Postgraduate fees account for over £2.4 billion
- International students account for about 55% of postgraduate fees (EU 6% and other 49%)
- 58% of postgraduates are part time

Calculated based on 2004-2005 Data from

Assumptions: Home & EU fees 3k other 10k

How it works

UK System

- 1 year masters
- 3 to 4 year PhD
expected by university
- Funded PhDs usually
allow a grant for 3
years

European Model

(What some want form the Bologna Process)

- 2 year masters
- PhD candidates are
often staff, get PhD
“when you’re ready”

Note: most postgraduates are masters students

Getting information

Support & Information

- Prospects.ac.uk (the graduate jobs site)
 - Postgraduate study and International Postgrad students resources
- Higher Education & Research Opportunities (HERO)
 - Gateway to UK HE, information for international students.
- Prospects resources looks at:
 - Why do postgraduate study?
 - University and Department profiles
 - Maintains a list of all courses (see book as well)
 - Has information on funding for international postgrads



Higher Education & Research
Opportunities in the UK



The UK's **Official graduate careers** website

Getting and keeping a place

The usual way for postgraduate students to get a place is:

- Speak to admissions
- Speak to the department you want a place in

Then we hit the problem of PAYING for that place:

- Research students should ask about “Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme”
(Managed by the university for HEFCE)
- Commonwealth students (T&R) can ask about CSFP
- All students should ask about university / department scholarships



Experience: The Good



Highlights of the UK system

- World class education & research
- Quality independently guaranteed
- Publicly accountable
- Best practice is reported on and shared

What would you add?

Audit report



International Student Arrangements

- 2006 independent report from the QAA
- Based on data from the audits of 70 universities
- Universities take international students very seriously with nearly 80% voluntarily focussing on this in their audit
- Less than 10% of universities received recommendations for improvement, and 50% received positive or very positive feedback on their arrangements

Good Practice



Items noted at some universities

- Pre-session courses
- English Language Support
- Partnership between student services and academic services
- Induction for overseas students
- Strong joint approach between guild, international office and academic departments
- Academic and pastoral support with additional language support for international students

Emerging themes



The report highlights the following themes

- Organisational Support
- Information
- Orientation & induction
- English Language Support
- Academic & personal support
- Representation & feedback

Experience: The ‘Bad’

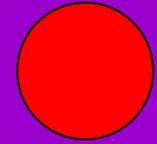


Room for improvement:

- English language support could be better
- Bar culture a problem for many, alternatives are required and at times convenient for postgrads
- System can often have far too much red tape!

What would you add?

Experience: The “Ugly”



Current problems with the system:

- Visa extension charges – many PhD students get Visas for LESS than required and must then pay twice.
- Teaching – Fixed contract for international students may require more from students but pay less.
- Banking – One bank asks for a minimum of £2,000 or charges fees. Other banks and universities have sent debtor notices home to parents (rather than to UK address) causing distress.
- Accommodation – often provided by outside bodies, over priced and sometimes substandard. Other options are not easily available to international students.

Can you add more?

Over all



- Over all the UK provides one of the best postgraduate experiences in the world
- UK degrees are recognised around the world as being of high academic standard
- The UK provides a huge amount of independent information to help students (Use it!)
- Students still face some problems, but student representation is strong and organisations like NPC, NUS, and CIS are work to solve the problems students face

Improving the System

npc  the national postgraduate committee

**POLICY
Approved**

- Opposed to letting international students pay for home students (23% paying 49% of the cost)
- Support the creation of a part time international students officer in NUS
- Opposes moves in the HE bill to allow international students fees to rise dramatically
- Opposes visa right of appeal withdrawal
- Opposes visa charges

Improving the System

npc  the national postgraduate committee

NEW POLICY

- What additional issues should we be addressing?
- If you give ideas during conference we can take them to the next OGM (probably around October) and put international postgrads on the agenda.

More info

National Postgraduate Committee

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

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

www.qaa.ac.uk

HERO – Gateway to UK Higher Education

<http://www.hero.ac.uk/>

Prospects (information on courses etc)

<http://www.prospects.ac.uk>

Commonwealth Scholarships (Masters & Doctoral)

<http://www.csfp-online.org/hostcountries/uk/>

Help from NPC

- Resource folder: www.npc.org.uk/essentials
- Guidelines, codes of practice, policy responses, etc.
- Advice and support from NPC:
npc@npc.org.uk
- Mailing lists: www.npc.org.uk/jiscmail



What does NPC want from you?

If you are a union officer:

- Sign up to the mailing lists:
 - www.npc.org.uk/jiscmail
- Participate in the meetings
- Consider standing for some of the positions

