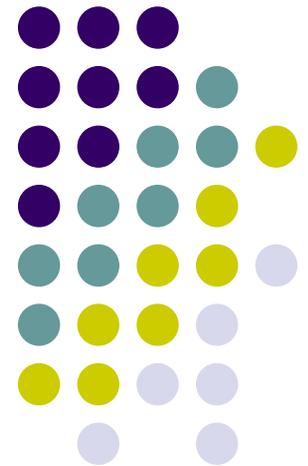


Issues for Postgraduate Researchers

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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.

Issues for Postgraduate Researchers



- Pensions and contributions.
- Identity – students or staff?
- Mobility and recognition of PhD between academia and industry and between countries.
- Funding concentration.
- Supervision and assessment.
- What is a PhD?

Pensions and contributions



- Full-time research students face deferred National Insurance contributions and not qualifying for contribution-based benefits for a number of years.
- Researchers moving into postdoctoral study may face short-term contracts and lack of job security.
- Voluntary NI contributions can be made but these add to financial burden.
- NPC proposes Research Councils explore ways in which RC funded students could have National Insurance contributions paid by their sponsor on their behalf.



Identity – students or staff?

- NPC strongly feels that the benefits as a student including finance, academic freedom and a number of opportunities as a student outweigh that of being an employee.
- NPC is keen to ensure that changes are made within the UK to provide appropriate labour conditions that are available to PhD candidates elsewhere so that researchers coming into the UK are given appropriate privileges.
- Employee status would challenge intellectual property rights and relationship with supervisor.

Mobility between Industry and Academia.



- Businesses often do not recognise the higher levels of experience and skill postgraduate students have. Many completing postgraduates find their skills are not rewarded by higher positions in companies or an increased salary.
- Problems due to the lack of formalisation of skills .



Funding Concentration

- Over concentration of research funding preventing opportunities for PhD research and blue skies research.
- Fear that funding being limited to 5 or 5* rated departments will lead to funding difficulties for research institutions that are not research heavy or new universities.
- Research concentration in regions preventing opportunities for research.

Supervision and assessment.



- Undue influence supervision and particularly bad supervision can have on successful completion of a PhD .
- Lack of clarity about purpose of Viva.
- Mismatches between research paradigm of student and examiner can lead to disagreement of validity of thesis.



What is a PhD?

- Original research extending the frontier of knowledge.
- Communicate with their peers, scholars and society and defend contribution to knowledge.
- The Thesis must be a publicly accessible resource.
- That the doctoral candidate will have had experience and opportunities to continually develop their transferable skills including ability to independently take on and complete a task, increased leadership roles, publications, experience in original thought, competence in research methodologies, transfer of knowledge, economy and job market.