

*Annual General Meeting  
Papers*

## ***Annual General Meeting Agenda***

***There will be an Annual General Meeting of the National Postgraduate Committee on  
Saturday 5th August 2006 at Aston University Business School  
9:00am to 1:30pm***

- 1. Chairperson's Address (5)**
- 2. Sederunt (Marilyn Shanks) (2)** *This is where we check who is present and in what capacity.*
  - 2.1 New affiliates
  - 2.2 New delegate members
  - 2.3 Proxies
  - 2.4 New associate bodies
  - 2.5 New associate members from associate bodies
- 3. Minutes and decisions of previous meetings (5)**
  - 3.1 Management Sub-Committee on the 11th June at the University of Birmingham.
  - 3.2 OGM on the 11th June at the University of Birmingham.
  - 3.3 Management Sub-Committee on the 15th July at Birkbeck College London.
  - 3.4 Financial Sub-Committee on the 16th July at University College London.
  - 3.5 NPC Scotland meeting on the 22nd July at Strathclyde University.
- 4. Motions**
  - 4.1 Master's degree awards
  - 4.2 NPC Constitution and Democracy
  - 4.3 Promoting access for disabled postgraduates
  - 4.4 Responding to the RAE
- 5. Finances (Tim Roll-Pickering) (30)**
  - 5.1 Financial report**
  - 5.2 Appointment of Auditor
  - 5.3 Accounts 2005-2006
  - 5.4 Budget 2006-2007
- 6. Reports (15)** *This is your opportunity to see the activities of the committee.*
  - 6.1 General Secretary (Simon Felton)
  - 6.2 Chairperson of NPC Scotland (Jim Ewing)
  - 6.3 Conference Secretary (Stephen Abbots)
  - 6.4 Communications Officer (Duncan Connors)
  - 6.5 Equal Opportunities Officer (Lade Robinson)
  - 6.6 Project Officer (Alex Higgins)
  - 6.7 Project Officer (Ismail Malik)
  - 6.8 Project Officer (Dries Neiryneck)
  - 6.10 Publications Assistant (Andrew Green)

- 6.11 Journal of Graduate Education
- 6.12 Email List Administrator (Dries Neiryneck)
- 6.13 Any other reports

**7. Elections (60)**

- 7.1 General Secretary
- 7.2 Chairperson
- 7.3 Treasurer
- 7.4 Conference Secretary
- 7.5 Communications Officer
- 7.6 Equal Opportunities Officer
- 7.7 Minutes Secretary
- 7.8 4 Project Officers
- 7.9 2 Ordinary Executive Officers.
- 7.10 2 to Finance Subcommittee
- 7.11 3 to Constitutional Subcommittee

**8. Policy responses (5)** *This is where we agree with responses that have been sent on behalf of the National Postgraduate Committee over the past year (Please see separate NPC Policy Responses 2005/06 Document).*

**9. Appointment of new Honorary Life Members (10)** *This is where we thank those who have supported the National Postgraduate Committee or its aims of supporting the postgraduate student experience.*

**10. Date and venue of future meetings (2)**

**11. Any other business (2)**

## *The Chairperson's Address*

Dear Attendee,

On Behalf of the Management Sub-Committee, Welcome to the Sixteenth annual Conference of the National Postgraduate Committee.

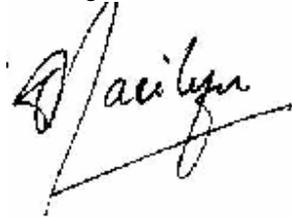
This conference is an insight into the world of postgraduate education and the need for effective representation. Postgraduate are a diverse population of students and the issues they face are often unique and complex; We hope that the issues raised by speakers and through the workshops will enable you to return to your institutions determined to make the necessary changes that will benefit postgraduate students.

This conference aims to provide a forum for postgraduate students, Association and Union representatives, administrators and other stakeholders to listen and understand each other's points of view as well as the UK's agenda for postgraduate education.

Our annual general meeting takes place on the Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August and provides the perfect opportunity to shape the future of the NPC in the coming year and ultimately contribute to better representation of postgraduates within your institutions and the UK. The AGM provides the forum for you to democratically elect the next Management Sub-Committee, other office bearers and influence our policies.

On Behalf of The Management Sub-Committee, have a wonderful conference.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marilyn Shanks', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the text 'Best regards,'.

Marilyn Shanks  
Chairperson 2005/2006

## ***NPC Officers 2005/2006***

### ***The Management Subcommittee***

This committee consists of the Chairs of NPC Scotland and NPC Wales as ex-officio plus:

|                                 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| General Secretary               | <i>Until 2004-09-30</i> Jim Ewing<br><i>From 2004-10-01</i> Simon Felton   | University of Glasgow<br>University of Birmingham  |
| Chairperson                     | Marilyn Shanks   | University of Essex  |
| Treasurer                       | Tim Roll-Pickering   | University of Essex  |
| Conference Secretary            | Stephen Abbots   | Aston University   |
| Minutes Secretary               | Andre Oboler ( <i>01/06</i> )<br>Vacant  | University of Lancaster  |
| Communications Officer          | Duncan Connors   | University of Glasgow  |
| Equal Opportunities Officer     | Lade Robinson  | Strathclyde University   |
| Project Officers (4)            | David Bean<br>Katie Harper ( <i>until 01/02/06</i> )<br>Dries Neiryneck<br>Ismail Malik<br>Alex Higgins ( <i>from 04/02/06</i> ) | St Andrews University<br>University of Bristol<br>Southampton University<br>Birkbeck, University of London.<br>University of Sussex, |
| Ordinary Executive Officers (2) | Harpreet Singh<br>Philip Carr ( <i>until 23/09/05</i> )<br>Erich Kofmel ( <i>from 12/10/05</i> )                                 | Aston University<br>University of Nottingham<br>University of Sussex,  |

### ***Officers of NPC Scotland***

|                        |  |  |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Chair                  | <i>Until 11-06-06</i> Maggie Chapman<br>Jim Ewing ( <i>From 22-07-06</i> ) | University of Edinburgh<br>University of Glasgow |
| Depute Chair/Secretary | Lade Robinson  | Strathclyde University.                          |
| Treasurer              | <i>Vacant</i>  |  |

### ***Officers of NPC Wales***

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Chair                | <i>Vacant</i> |
| Vice Chair/Secretary | <i>Vacant</i> |
| Treasurer            | <i>Vacant</i> |

### ***Financial Subcommittee***

This consists of the Treasurer, Chair, General Secretary, Conference Secretary and Treasurers of NPC Scotland and NPC Wales ex-officio plus:

|                     |                                |  |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Past Treasurer      | Tim Roll-Pickering             | University of London                               |
| Elected Members (2) | Martin Gough<br>Duncan Connors | University College London<br>University of Glasgow |

### ***Constitutional Subcommittee***

This consists of the Chair and General Secretary as *ex-officio* plus:

|                     |  |   |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Past Chair          | Tim Roll-Pickering                               | University of Durham  |
| Elected Members (3) | Peter Campbell<br>James Groves<br>Maggie Chapman | University of Sheffield<br>University of Lancaster<br>University of Edinburgh |

## *Your guide to the Management Subcommittee*

There are thirteen Management Subcommittee positions up for election at the AGM.

### ***One sabbatical position - General Secretary***

The General Secretary is the main representational and administrative officer. A full-time post, the term of office is from 1 October to 30 September.

### ***Six functional positions - Chair, Treasurer, Minutes Secretary, Conference Secretary, Communications Officer and Equal Opportunities Officer***

These non-sabbatical positions involve assisting in the smooth running of the NPC:

- The Chair is responsible for chairing meetings, drawing up agendas, ruling on procedural matters and acting as line manager to the General Secretary;
- The Treasurer keeps financial records, draws up accounts and budgets, deals with expenses claims and employs and pays the General Secretary;
- The Minutes Secretary takes minutes at meetings;
- The Conference Secretary organises Annual Conference, usually at his/her institution;
- The Communications Officer liaises with our part-time Publications Assistant on matters regarding the NPC website and NPC publications, and is responsible with the General Secretary for the NPC's overall communications and IT strategy;
- The Equal Opportunities Officer ensures the NPC's compliance with the principles of equal opportunities and drafts guidelines and policy statements on such matters.

Most functional officers combine their remit with some form of campaigning role also.

### ***Four campaigning positions - Project Officers***

Our Project Officers are elected as a block of four. There is no set remit - when you stand, you set out in broad terms what you would like to do for NPC. This could be:

- Assisting in drafting some new *Guidelines* on an issue affecting postgraduates (for example, campus facilities for postgraduates, research degree examinations and intellectual property are issues that have come up a great deal in the past year); or
- Assisting with a campaign on a specific issue, such as funding; or
- Liasing with a public body such as the QAA, the ILT or Parliament; or
- Liasing with institutions in your area or with a national student organisation such as NUS, CIS or MSU.

The General Secretary will of course assist you in your work.

### ***Two watchdog positions - Ordinary Executive Officers***

Our Ordinary Executive Officers are elected as a block of two. They have no remit, and are not expected to take one on. Their role is to try to ensure the NPC is operating fairly and honestly, working for the benefit of postgraduate education in the UK.

Please think about it. If elected, you would be strongly encouraged (though not required) to come along to Management Subcommittee meetings (3 times a year), Ordinary General Meetings (3 times a year) and, of course, the AGM. The NPC will only be a success in 2005/2006 if some of you take the plunge and get involved. Why not give it a go?

**James Groves.** *Former General Secretary*

## *Guide to the Annual General Meeting*

- The Annual General Meeting of the National Postgraduate Committee will be the business for the third day of NPC's Annual Conference in Aston. This is the most important day in the year for NPC because it is where you get to decide who should be running the Committee, what the Committee should be doing, and how it should be spending your money.
- If you have never been to an NPC General Meeting before, please do not be deterred from taking part in the AGM. I will do my best to make sure that everybody who wants to have their say on the matters discussed at the AGM has the chance to do so without fear of belittling or intimidation. The more people have their say at the AGM, the better.
- Also, you do not need to be a postgraduate to take part in the AGM. Whilst we encourage all delegate members to vote in the interests of the postgraduates they represent, we welcome comments from everyone interested in postgraduate education.
- Although the AGM forms part of the Conference, the AGM itself is free for any postgraduate or officer responsible for representation of postgraduates to attend. You do not need to pay any Conference fees to speak or vote, although you will need to pay if you wish to participate in the rest of the days activities and catering.
- If you intend to vote at this meeting, you need to be a registered delegate member. If you are on the list of current Delegate Members, you may vote unless we hear otherwise from your union. Otherwise, **you will need to bring written confirmation from the affiliate you are representing that you are the Delegate Member for that organisation.**
- In addition, if you are representing a new affiliate to NPC (i.e. you did not pay an affiliation fee for the 2005-2006 financial year), your union will need to have either paid the affiliation fee for this year, or sent us written notice to affiliate with a purchase order. Old affiliates have a grace period up to the end of September.
- Although all of the morning and half of the afternoon have been allocated to the AGM, it is still going to be tight. Therefore, the AGM will be starting prompt at nine. Allowances will *not* be made for anyone who drinks too much at the Annual Dinner and oversleeps.
- The deadlines to amendments to the budget and motions is **Friday evening**, and, as I will be reminding you frequently, late amendments will not be accepted — I think anyone who was at last year's AGM will know why. If you will not be at Conference until the Saturday morning, I might just bend the rules a bit, provided you let me know that you intend to submit an amendment by Wednesday evening at the latest.
- The figures in brackets are time limits of agenda items in minutes. These are limits and not targets.
- The Chair does not necessarily get everything right. If you do not agree with the way the discretion the Chair is exercising when running the meeting, you can overrule the Chair with a 2/3 majority. This does not apply to the Chair's rulings on the Constitution, which can only be appealed to the Constitutional Sub-Committee.
- A reminder to NPC Officers: if you have a conflict of interest on any item in the agenda, you must declare it, either during the AGM, or, if you want this to remain confidential, to me before the meeting starts.

The procedure for standing for elections, including manifestos, hustings and publicity, will be announced in further detail during the conference. Please think about standing for the positions up for election at the AGM. Every year, a good deal of the officers elected to the Management Sub-Committee had no experience of NPC before the Conference. The NPC Officers present at Conference will be happy to discuss with anyone who is interested in standing for these positions what the job involves and any ideas you may have.

### ***3. Minutes of Previous Meetings***

#### **Minutes of the NPC Management Subcommittee meeting held at Birmingham University on 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2006**

The meeting started at 10:15am on Saturday the 10<sup>th</sup> of June with Duncan Connors in the chair by consensus of the meeting. Andre Oboler was appointed acting minutes secretary for the meeting, by consensus of the meeting.

#### **2) Sederunt**

Present: Duncan Connors (Communications officer, in the chair), Andre (Observer, Acting Minutes Secretary), Tim Roll-Pickering (Treasurer), Simon Felton (General Secretary), David Bean (Project Officer), Alex Higgins (Project Officer), Erich Kofmel (Ordinary Executive Officer), Dries Neirynek (Project Officer) (from 10:40), Harpreet Singh (Ordinary Executive Officer) (from 10:40), Ben Soffa (Observer for Lancaster University) (from 10:45), Marilyn Shanks (NPC Chair) (from 10:54).

The meeting unanimously agreed for Duncan to chair and Andre to act as minutes secretary for this MSC meeting.

#### **3) NPC meetings and management**

The chair introduced this item noting that MSC members had been asking questions about both NPC and EuroDoc and had not been receiving any answers. This was now becoming a critical problem. Additionally spurious accusations made using equal opps against those asking questions. Meetings have had an element of chaos about them and some affiliates including Glasgow, Bristol and others are concerned.

The General Secretary added that NPC's outwards appearance is not currently a selling point. Due to some personalities, NPC has a certain amount of risk.

The meeting paused temporarily as the Gen Sec received a telephone call from the NPC chair.

An officer restarted the conversation saying that they have had reservations since the MSC meeting late last summer. There have been many personality clashes. The NPC chair has a tendency to assume a certain moral high ground that the facts do not bear out. A number of members agreed with this. One added that when people have tried to raise issues they have been too confrontational or it has come across as the questioner look like the problem. This does not help to resolve the real issues. It was also stated that while problems may be obvious to MSC members, they are not so obvious to the affiliates. This needs to be kept in mind in the context of the OGM. An officer from Sussex stated that Sussex gave the chair the benefit of the doubt when she clashed with the minutes secretary, but now she has cast them as the enemy. It was suggested that the chair may not be suited to the job, part of an e-mail she had written was read to make this point.

A member asked if the chair could be asked to step aside voluntary from chairing today's meeting. This was put to a vote and unanimously agreed.

**Action: Dries, Tim and Simon to speak to the chair the MSC's concerns and ask her to vacate the chair for this meeting — passed unanimously.**

#### **4) EuroDoc**

The chair introduced this item asking where is it going to be and how much is it going to cost.

Andre suggests getting structure in place but not deciding location until various options had been properly examined.

The chair proposed a road map approach: (1) location (2) Cost (3) speakers, and suggested that today we get questions together and that an EGM be called for July. Tim suggested that An EGM in July would not work due to low turn out. The Gen Sec said the MSC needed to know what in the bid is changeable what is fixed, he suggest Harpreet might have the answers.

The question of past information on EuroDoc from Harpreet not being forth coming was raised. Erich stated that this applied equally to the treasurer. Tim replied that he had not received information from Harpreet to produce the report so had not been able to make any progress. Duncan stated that **the MSC as a whole does not have enough information on EuroDoc and as such cannot take a decision to confirm the remote vote.** It was asked if this was a shared view, **a vote was taken and there was unanimous decision to support this position.**

David reminded the meeting at Essex he had asked why NPC is bidding if the Czechs are happy running EuroDoc? The answer at the time seemed to be that there was a moral obligation.

10:40 Harpreet and Dries Enter

The chair brought Harpreet and Dries up to speed stating that the MSC felt it could not be for or against hosting EuroDoc, as there was not enough information. Harpreet replied that this is why he was here. He added that the old budget he had provided was an indication of budget heads. He said it was important to remember that Strasbourg and Begonia are closer, so travel will cost more this time. Duncan asked Harpreet if he had an idea of how much it will cost. Harpreet replied that it had cost about 16000 Euros for Strasbourg, and he's suggest would cost about 20,000 for the UK. He said NPC should either say it would subsidise it all or maybe limit it to 205 Euros.

Duncan said he would not be happy with the UK subsidising the 3rd richest economy in the world. Harpreet replied that it was not Duncan subsidising and even from rich countries some of the organisations are not rich. He added that NPC will decide how much the accommodation will cost.

The chair asked who would actually run EuroDoc conference, put another way, who is Mr EuroDoc? Harpreet replied that the NPC will decide where will it be. Where the accommodation will be. EuroDoc will be happy in a youth hostel. Together with EuroDoc, NPC will also decide what the program is. Dries said he was happy for EuroDoc to do more as this additional conference would take too much of the Gen Sec's time. Andre suggested that NPC could set itself up to have a second sabbatical for the year. Tim replied that it is hard to change the constitution and better to have staff. Harpreet suggested setting up a limited company. Duncan suggested that a 2 day a week temporary staff member could do the job. The company would get money as investment, and then make a loss. David was asked for his thoughts, he replied that a part time staff running in a company structure might work but he has no experience of that. Ben noted that as NPC would be writing the memorandum of understanding, it can make it say whatever is needed to make it work.

Harpreet pointed out that the Bologna EuroDoc managed to generate all of the income in 3 months. NPC would have from June until December to see how much money can be generated from sponsorship. At that point, if it is short, EuroDoc members can be told that NPC can only reimburse 60% or 70% of their flight cost. Duncan asked when we draw the lines in the sand. We cannot raise 50 thousand pounds without knowing how we are going to spend it.

Marilyn enters: 10: 54

Harpreet stated that EuroDoc cannot get involved in the day to day running, like the accommodation. Dries pointed out that NPC has been having hypothetical discussions for years. The MSC agreed that Harpreet would submit a decent proposal and so far the NPC hasn't seen it.

Harpreet replied that we cannot do that. It cannot be him responsible because he is based in Birmingham and does not know. The chair prompted that a deadline on receiving information and taking a decision is needed. EuroDoc Conference has a huge potential to be good for the NPC or to be a disaster.

Marilyn told the MSC that they had forgotten that sponsors are needed, and these should be secured and other decisions taken from there. She added that most of our sponsors already know we are interested in EuroDoc. Harpreet said it cannot be done this way around. Marilyn replied that sponsors may want to have impact on the decision. Erich suggested talking to at least key sponsors first. Marilyn replied that sponsors have been to EuroDoc and they know what it is. She noted that UKGRAD had expressed interest.

David summed up by stating that first NPC should then meet with sponsors.

Marilyn suggested that if it is left to her and Simon they can organise a meeting with the sponsors. Simon suggested that it was best that the Gen Sec approach the sponsors, as it looks more professional.

Marilyn said she thought it was a decision for the affiliates to decide if NPC itself sponsors EuroDoc conference. Ben said that he did not think anyone was actually against EuroDoc, especially if it takes on it's own staff and has funding for this. It is perfectly OK to explore with these bodies and see what we can get, e.g. free accommodation. Duncan stated that the University of London give free accommodation to similar things. Marilyn pointed out that EuroDoc would be in March. There was some debate over this timing as either earlier or later would be easier and allow better integration with other events. The MSC was informed that the EuroDoc conference must occur in the first 3 months of the year.

The Chair stated that unless someone makes a decision it is going to snow ball. Marilyn replied that the Gen Sec and NPC Chair have discussed this. The chair repeated that NPC needs to make decisions.

Harpreet replied that from the EuroDoc perspective, if NPC decides it is not viable, let them know ASAP so the Czechs can start working on it.

The chair stated that lines in the sand were needed, people need to report back to the NPC so decisions can be taken.

A motion mandating the Chair and Gen Sec to investigate and report back was proposed, but not voted on. The NPC chair stated that only the signatories can decide and deal with financial matters so there was no room for discussion.

**A motion was proposed to have an MSC meet in a months time. This was not voted on as the NPC chair agreed to call this meeting.**

Marilyn stated that the NPC Chair is to set up a EuroDoc conference list, and she is setting up the list with 4 members of the MSC on it as well as one affiliate. Concerns were expressed that the MSC as a whole should be making decisions on this.

**Motion: Chair and Gen Sec are to go away and talk to sponsors and come back in a 5 weeks — agreed unanimous (same time as subcommittees meet)**

Meeting closed at 11:15am

## Minutes of the NPC Ordinary General Meeting held in Lecture Room 5 of the Arts Building of The University of Birmingham on Saturday 10 June 2006

Prior to the formal meeting, three presentations were given. Richard Angell gave a presentation on Women in Governing Bodies, Simon Felton presented his work as General Secretary and Erich Kofmel gave a presentation on the Sussex Centre for the Individual and Society. The OGM started at 2:30pm with Marilyn Shanks in the Chair. Dries Neiryck volunteered to take minutes in the absence of a Minutes Secretary.

### **Sederunt**

#### *Delegate Members:*

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Duncan-Philip Connors | Glasgow University SRC                   |
| Margaret Davine       | Mature Students' Union                   |
| Dries Neiryck         | University of Bristol Union              |
| Chris Norris          | University of Nottingham Students' Union |
| Hassan Hamada         | University of Essex Students' Union      |
| David Bean            | University of St Andrews                 |
| Anish Sahu            | University of Lancaster                  |
| Erich Kofmel          | University of Sussex                     |
| Tim Roll-Pickering    | University of London Union               |
| Harpreet Singh        | Aston University                         |
| Richard Angell        | Birmingham University Guild of Students  |

#### *Associate Members:*

|                |                       |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Simon Felton   | NPC General Secretary |
| Marilyn Shanks | NPC Chair             |
| Jim Ewing      | Co-opted MSC member   |

#### *Honorary Life Members:*

|                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| Peter Campbell | NPC Constitutional Subcommittee |
| James Groves   | NPC Constitutional Subcommittee |

#### *In attendance:*

|              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| Ben Sofa     | University of Lancaster |
| Andre Oboler | University of Lancaster |

#### *Apologies:*

|                  |                            |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Brian Duggan     | University of Warwick      |
| David Thurkettle | University of Keele — PGA  |
| Ian Long         | University of London Union |
| Anna Morgan      | London School of Economics |
| Luke Yahapath    | University College London  |

Richard Angell and Harpreet Singh had left before the start of the formal meeting. The Chair issued voting cards to the delegate members present.

#### *New affiliates*

There had been no new affiliates since the last OGM.

#### *New delegate members*

Richard Angel was approved as BUGS delegate member.

#### *New associate members*

There were no new associate members.

Following an enquiry by James, it was noted that PsyPAG had not yet nominated a delegate member.

#### *Proxies*

The meeting approved the following proxies:

Erich Kofmel (Alex Higgins, Sussex)

Tim Roll-Pickering (Ian Long, ULU)

Hassan Hamada (Philip Pearson, Essex)

David Bean (Ben Riley, St. Andrews)

#### **Chairperson's address**

Marilyn briefly welcomed people to the meeting.

#### **Minutes of previous meetings**

##### *NPC OGM Cranfield*

The minutes of the NPC Ordinary General Meeting held in the Meeting Room of Cranfield Students' Association on Saturday 4 February 2006 were presented to the meeting for ratification.

Marilyn enquired whether there were any matters arising.

Dries asked whether Ismail had submitted a written report as he was mandated at the last meeting. It was noted that he had failed to submit a report, despite being contacted several times. It was further noted that Ismail did not attend the UKCGE meeting for which he had been elected, although he had attended the HEA research & teaching forum. However, he did not submit a report to NPC. The committee expressed its disappointment and Tim Roll-Pickering volunteered to pass this message on to Ismail.

There were no further matters arising. The meeting approved the minutes.

##### *Minutes from the Scottish sub-committee*

There were no minutes for ratification.

#### **Reports from officers**

##### *General Secretary*

Simon had submitted a written report and referred to the presentation he had given before the meeting. He apologised for not posting weekly progress updates to the exec-list.

##### *Conference Secretary*

In the absence of Stephen, Simon presented the meeting with an update. Speakers, timing and cost had been sorted out. A title was still needed. It was decided to discuss this later in the meeting.

##### *Communications*

Duncan had submitted a written report. He repeated that much attention had been paid to increasing our presence in the press via numerous press releases. He had been able to attend a media training course and requested procedures for more rapid responses to current affairs issues. PN articles were ready and Duncan intended to have a PN available for conference.

Dries raised his regret of the lack of communication towards postgraduates and affiliates. Duncan apologised for this and stressed the importance of working with the press in order to raise awareness of the NPC in general. Due to private problems, he had been unable to invest as much time in his tasks as Communications Officer as he would have liked.

James stated that mailings to affiliates were key but that it is the responsibility of the whole committee, who should take over when the Communication Officer is unable to fulfil his role.

Marilyn asked for PN to be published as soon as possible. Duncan promised to send it out within a week.

### *Equal Opportunities*

Lade had not submitted a written report and was not present at the meeting. It was noted that he had not send apologies.

### *Project Officers — Alex Higgins*

(At this point, Marilyn had to leave the room and handed the Chair to James.)

Alex had submitted a written report. He was not present at the meeting but Erich had a paper with his aims that he read out.

- Currently writing the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace conference paper "Education in the UK: Purpose and Performance" (a critique of higher education in the UK, in comparison to South Africa; globalisation and capitalism discourse; Postgraduate Association and NPC experience will be included in the paper; link to the Aldwych Group's approach and other critical debates concerning funding in universities) (2-3 weeks)
- Presenting the paper (3-5th July; see [www.transform.edu](http://www.transform.edu) for a list of papers)
- Attending the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace launch of a new MA in Education (Person-Centred Education) programme, run jointly with Sussex University (22nd June)
- After the Morocco conference, complete role as Project Officer through a summary paper preferably complete (or near) by Saturday 15th July MSC meeting.

### *Project Officers — David Bean*

David gave an oral report. He explained his project's remit and informed the meeting he had circulated a draft report on the exec-list for feedback. He expressed thanks to the whole committee and Tim Brown for the help with the project.

(At this point, Marilyn returned and resumed the Chair)

He summarised his conclusions and stated that variety is the key to success.

Dries asked David to discuss the recommendations relating to NPC. This led to a discussion regarding data protection issues and mailing the entire postgraduate student body. Chris noted that there are data protection issues, which they overcome by asking the university to send out e-mails on their behalf.

Simon would pass on the report to NUS. David would present his results at conference and they would be published later. The meeting congratulated David with his successful project.

### *Project Officers — Dries Neiryck*

Dries apologised for not submitting a written report. He regretted he had not been able to prepare a training session for this OGM but would lead a session at conference.

Dries also informed the meeting that he would be leaving UK academia and that he would have to resign as e-mail administrator.

### **Financial Report**

Tim referred to the financial report that had been tabled. As always, he was interested in suggestions for improving the presentation of the report.

James suggested investigating scaling up the actual figures to provide an estimate over the whole year. Time raised the issue of many one-off headings.

James asked for an update on disaffiliations. Simon informed the meeting that Durham and Leicester had disaffiliated. Jim noted that Durham had informed him of their plans last year.

Simon added that he was trying to bring Kent and Manchester back on board. Duncan suggested contacting the graduate group in Manchester.

Simon asked for information regarding Liverpool. Jim said that postgraduates there had in the past voted to affiliate but that they had not received the funds to do so.

Jim enquired about Oxford. Both Simon and Duncan replied that they remained very hostile towards NPC.

Simon was hoping for the following re-affiliations: Reading, Bournemouth and Middlesex.

Peter enquired about Edinburgh. Simon replied that they had not paid yet.

David asked about the projection of affiliations to date. Tim replied that the actual amount was not expected to rise significantly.

James asked which affiliations were still expected. The Open University still had to pay. Aston had used the accommodation for the MSC meeting as deposit but were still due to pay the remainder. Duncan pointed out that this needed to be formalised using a credit note.

Since they hadn't been contacted yet, David offered to visit the new Scottish affiliates.

Tim was asked about the status of Birkbeck's affiliation. He did not know either but noted difficulties with the way expenses had to be cleared. Andre suggested using an MSU contact whose details were passed on.

James asked about the progress with wrapping up conference 2005. Duncan answered that he should arrange a meeting with Tim but that the file with his paper work had been completed. James further asked whether big differences with the estimates were expected. Duncan did not think so, although Tim had doubts related to a VAT issue with Strathclyde.

Tim and Duncan agreed to meet up the coming week to wrap up conference 2005 and would be reporting back to the exec mailing list.

### **Journal of Graduate Education**

Martin Gough had submitted a written report. James clarified that Martin plans to incorporate the journal in a bigger new journal. Although the journal is editorially independent, it is owned by NPC and NPC should formally approve these plans.

The editor of the new journal intends to call it International Journal of Graduate Education. James expressed his unease about this, explaining that there had been a journal with such a name in the past, which now seems defunct. Since NPC owns the copyrights to Journal of Graduate Education, he would prefer the new journal to keep this name.

From the ensuing discussion, it became clear that a clarification of NPC's role in the new journal is necessary. Simon will contact the new editor.

NPC will also have to formally wind up the old Journal of Graduate Education.

### **Confirmation of remote votes**

#### *Pro-test motion*

Erich proposes to defer the decision until the meeting discusses actual motions. However, James points out that the meeting could vote on whether it accepts that this was not an urgent issue. This is put to a vote and carries with 4 in favour, 0 against and 3 abstentions.

#### *Eurodoc bid*

At the moment, NPC is the preferred bidder, but can still decline to organise the Eurodoc conference 2007. The meeting was informed that an informal MSC meeting before the OGM had agreed that there was too little information available to take a decision.

Andre added that the committee could empower the MSC to take a decision on its behalf. However, James felt that the decision should be left to the affiliates at the AGM and noted the implications for the NPC budget. Tim said the FSC would provide to budgets. Simon was worried about delaying our response to Eurodoc and would contact them to find out how much time was available.

Andre noted that approval of the bid by NPC would require a budget and that the MSC would be liable in case of a shortfall. On top of this, organising the Eurodoc conference would mean extra work for the General Secretary and the Treasurer. James informed us that Eurodoc is in effect a seven people board and that NPC would have to decide how much time it could invest to set up a legal framework to protect itself.

At this point, the opinion of the affiliates that were not also MSC members was sought. Chris did not feel that Eurodoc should be a priority for NPC and that there were plenty of other issues to work on. Hassan was concerned about the financial implications. Jim added to this that it was important to get sponsors to commit in writing.

The meeting was informed that the Bank of Sweden had funded the first Eurodoc conference. Subsequent conferences had received funding from Socrates' one-off projects fund. However, last year, a bid for Socrates funding had been rejected.

James wondered whether NPC was able to put in the required time and effort given that Simon should concentrate on the upcoming NPC conference. Andre replied that a second person would be required and that he feels he could be able to find sponsorship to fund such a post. He mentioned UKGRAD, HEFCE and QAA as possible sponsors. James suggested contracting an independent project manager to run the conference.

Duncan felt we had to decide on a set of milestones and proposed 15 July to finish the budget plan and the AGM to get the affiliates' decision. It was decided that the remote vote would not be ratified now. Instead, an MSC meeting would propose a definite plan to the AGM for approval.

### **NPC reform**

Two small groups had a discussion on NPC reform issues. The aim was to generate ideas that could be taken to an MSC meeting and presented to the AGM. Chris suggests circulating the suggestions amongst affiliates for feedback.

#### *Remarks/ideas from group 1:*

- Better induction for General Secretary and Chair
- Training for new delegates
- Improve idea sharing between officers at affiliated institutions
- Improve the balance between experienced members and new blood
- Improve discipline and respect within the MSC
- Explore the possibility of remote votes for affiliates

#### *Remarks/ideas from group 2:*

- Responding to events
- Better communication with officers
- Jargon and accessibility
- Stricter and less indulgent with officers
- Social activities
- Too high expectations of officers with burdens
- Directly elected president
- Management and responsibility
- Review of constitution and by-laws to facilitate decision-making
- Increased funding

Simon will provide a write-up and circulate it amongst affiliates to feed into the coming MSC meeting. At this point, Chris had to leave the meeting.

### **Motions**

#### *AUT/NATFHE/UCU motion*

Taking into account that the action short-of-a-strike had been called off, this motion was withdrawn.

#### *Pro-Test Motion*

James points out an apparent contradiction in the motion. On the one hand, the motion states that NPC should not take stand on animal testing, while on the other hand it supports Pro-Test, which clearly supports animal testing. Ben supports this feeling.

Others suggest the motion aims to support academic freedom and supports Pro-Test in objecting to violence against researchers that test on animals.

The motion is put to a vote and carries with 4 in favour, 0 against and 4 abstentions.

#### *RAE motion*

Simon explains the current situation. Despite the cancellation of the consultation, he feels the motion is still valid since a debate on the replacement mechanisms of the RAE is still necessary.

After establishing that the motion is still quorate, the motion is put to a vote and carries with 7 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

At this point, Duncan leaves the meeting.

#### *LGBT motion*

Simon presents the motion on behalf of BUGS. Although the consultation period has just ended, it is felt that we can still submit.

Jim questions whether this consultation falls within NPC's remit. Since there are religiously inspired institutions and postgraduates could act as academic staff, the meeting feels that this is the case.

David proposed to amend the notes 3 to read

Religious groups are seeking exemption from the forthcoming goods and services regulations by not legally prohibiting services ~~and~~ run by Christians ~~to be legally entitled~~ to turn away gay customers, including care homes and schools.

Simon accepted the amendment.

Jim felt uncomfortable that the motion prevents faith groups from operating within the limits of their faith, in particular with relation to practising homosexuals. However, the meeting felt that this argument did not apply to an academic context.

Tim proposed to amend resolves 3 to read

*To work with UCU in ensuring that universities and colleges have procedures that allow academics to complain without prejudice and that hidden homophobia and biphobia are ~~is~~-challenged*

Simon accepted the amendment. The amended motion was put to a vote and carried with 5 in favour, none against and 1 abstention.

#### **Consultations for ratification**

The following consultation responses were passed round for ratification by the meeting:

- Part-time HE provision in Wales
- HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006 — 11 Consultation
- EPSRC Postgraduate Training Strategy Consultation
- Eurodoc 2006 Questionnaire
- Draft Handbook for the revised institutional audit process for higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland
- OSCR Consultation

The meeting unanimously ratified the consultation responses.

#### Conference title and fees

The meeting unanimously agreed on the following title for conference:

*Postgraduates under threat:*

*under-represented, under-funded, under-valued*

A proposal for the conference fees was passed around. Andre was upset about the cost of the conference and reminded the meeting that at the elections it was promised that Aston would be cheap. The meeting voted to approve the proposed fees, with 6 in favour, none against and 1 abstention.

#### **Any other business**

##### *Document folders*

Marilyn suggested that document folders were ordered. These could be used for publicity purposes.

##### *Conference guide preparation*

James enquired about the logistic of the conference guide. It was suggested to have a glossy section with the conference programme, a section with AGM papers and a section with consultation responses. These could all be grouped in the document folders.

### *NPC Scotland*

Jim is willing to take the lead in reviving NPC Scotland. It was noted that he could not be Chair because he had not been elected. Maggie was deemed resigned. David enquired about quorum, which at 1/3 of the affiliates was assumed to be 3 delegates.

### *Marking bands for Master courses*

Tim requested information about marking bands for Master courses in other institutions. It was suggested that he uses the postgrad mailing list to collect information.

**The formal meeting was closed at 6:30pm.**

## **Minutes of the NPC Management Subcommittee meeting held at Birkbeck College on 15th of July 2006**

The meeting started at 10:35am on Saturday the 15th July with Marilyn Shanks in the chair. It was agreed that Simon Felton would take minutes, by consensus of the meeting.

### **1. Sederunt**

Present: Marilyn Shanks (Chairperson), Simon Felton (General Secretary), Tim Roll-Pickering (Treasurer), Duncan Connors (Communications Officer), Alex Higgins (Project Officer), Erich Kofmel (Ordinary Executive Officer), Lade Robinson (Equal Opportunities Officer) (from 11.10am), Ismail Malik (Project Officer) (from 3.00pm).

Apologies: Jim Ewing (co-opted MSC Member), Dries Neirynek (Project Officer), David Bean (Project Officer), Harpreet Singh (Ordinary Executive Officer).

### **2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the NPC MSC meeting were presented for checking. These were agreed as an accurate record.

The minutes of the NPC OGM meeting held at the University of Birmingham were presented for checking. Simon noted that the motion on LGBT equality was not correct. Tim replied that he had sent Dries the updated text of the motions.

The minutes were agreed subject to corrections as an accurate record of the meeting.

### **3. Matters Arising**

None arising.

### **4. Officers Reports — Verbal Update**

Simon updated the MSC on the tabled report and that most of his work now is on conference planning. Simon asked for MSC members attending to send in their registration forms. Erich questioned who was paying for MSC members to attend. This was agreed to be discussed at FSC and in later discussion on the conference. Simon outlined that Duncan had completed most of the PN and is just waiting for Simon to send his article.

Duncan reported that the PN is of an excellent standard and well designed. Duncan also noted that he had responded to a *Times Higher Education Supplement* enquiry on funding on behalf of Simon. Marilyn queried the nature of the THES enquiry on funding and whether it mentioned Prospects. Marilyn was

concerned that an article written by THES last year citing the National Postgraduate Committee had not referred to Prospects as a source of information on funding despite their strong support of the NPC.

Alex has not presented a written report but would give oral report. He discussed the conference, which has attracted 50 nationalities and was multi religious. The conference delegates explored their ethos and experiences. Working groups with discussions on reorienting education to better support students. This event took place at University of Morocco, as this was a dynamic place with change taking place. Alex will write up outcomes of conference and other discussions such as evidence from Erich about higher education in South Africa to present to the Annual Conference.

Tim Roll-Pickering noted that the audit was ongoing. Report is same as FSC meeting report. Aiming to get the 2004-2005 accounts finished and submitted 31<sup>st</sup> July.

Leeds and York have been re invoiced regarding Conference 2005. Duncan stated that regarding York, the contract said that they are obliged to pay. There was a discussion on at what point to waive costs.

Peter Campbell's costs from conference 2005 had also been in dispute. Tim will recalculate and dock costs to be annulled.

Tim has not done comparison with previous year on costs compared to last year, as the financial position at moment is not clear.

Tim suggested producing sponsorship leaflet for getting donations.

Duncan questioned the £500 for International Students Festival and how it was spent. Simon said he would investigate whether there were a set of accounts for the International Students Festival.

## **5. Reserved Business**

It was agreed that this should be minuted but Simon would take a balanced approach to what is recorded. Marilyn outlined her concerns about the perceptions of her and her experience chairing. Duncan raised that there was misbelief that he was part of groups using power against the chair. Duncan also raised concerns over the chairing style and misuse of the constitution and concerns of the use of the term discrimination.

Erich raised concern about the handling of business by the chair. He said that MSC members asked questions but did not feel that they were being responded to. Alex agreed with the remote vote concern.

Tim raised concern that emails were leading to arguments on email lists. Tim also raised concern over responding to emails and misinterpretation of the constitution. Simon felt concerned that outward perception and internal arguments in email were hurting affiliations and perception of value of MSC and involvement.

Marilyn responded that she wanted to be able to have an opinion.

The discussion was suspended by a procedural motion from Duncan to discuss Eurodoc as the next item on the agenda.

## **6. Eurodoc**

Simon noted that he had approached approximately 15 sponsors and had not received any response on funding. The QAA while keen had not given a figure of any sponsorship.

Duncan noted that using hotel facilities would work out at approximately £500 per delegate.

Simon noted that ESIB were planning a conference with NUS in London on implications of Bologna Process on students' unions prior to the intergovernmental conference.

There followed a discussion where the question of whether we are tied to London as host was discussed. Harpreet responded by text to say we are able to move but need to consider cost. Marilyn noted that as with previous Eurodoc conferences, the delegates would need to book their own flights and we would pay these costs if we received sufficient sponsorship.

Tim confirmed that there would be £15k in the reserves, which could provide protection.

It was agreed that.

- 1) Preference outside London (major city with airport).
- 2) We will not budget more than we can afford until other circumstances allow otherwise.
- 3) Set up limited company.
- 4) Consider Project officer to run conference.
- 5) We make a decision based on sponsorship that is known by conference date at the AGM.

## **7. Merit Frame Work**

Tim presented the paper he had written on Marking schemes for taught postgraduate degrees. Tim noted the great disparity in merit awarding. With more and more people taking masters degrees there is a greater need for people to clarify masters grading. There could be a student with a Merit who has 60 and another without who has 69. The argument that most people know these things is foolish, as there is no consistent pattern in groups such as Russell, CMU, 94 etc.

Alex raised that plurality is not a bad thing. Tim suggested that there needs to be a discussion especially concerning mobility. There was also issue of a postgraduate diploma as consolation for failing Masters.

Marilyn noted that at Essex it can vary from department to department. Tim said that in some cases with using websites to find grading, the website variability made it difficult to see if universities had consistent level.

Tim said the situation at moment is bad, as there are some institutions with and without merit. Marilyn said that there is a need to consider international students in this consideration. Many international students felt that the merit covered the large scale between 50 and 70.

Tim said that it in effect was an equivalent situation to the creation of the second. With increasing number of students with masters, there will be a greater need to consider who got what result.

Tim noted that this affects QAA and referred to Simon's meeting with QAA and that they had not considered this before.

Scotland was a specific case where the merit does not appear to exist at any institution.

UK level 90% universities awarding distinction at 70% whereas in Scotland it was 64% awarding distinction at this level.

Tim noted that an officer from St Andrews had responded to the discussion by saying do not think need to be a coherent system. He also noted that the scheme at St Andrews is one of the most divergent from the trend.

Tim would like to take a motion to the AGM on this. Another option is lobbying and also working with QAA. It would be good to publish a charter or an ideal to aim for.

Marilyn will distribute the paper to affiliates.

## **8. Motions for the AGM**

Marilyn asked for what motions need to be raised at AGM. Simon raised RAE and using motion to respond to consultation. Tim will be proposing a Taught Postgraduate Awards. Marilyn suggested a motion on disability and mental health.

Simon asked for motion submission date. It was agreed that motions must be submitted by 10 days and if you need to send motion after this please contact Marilyn.

Duncan raised issue of remote votes for affiliates. Duncan has friend who is a top barrister and would be willing to go through constitution. Duncan proposed a constitutional convention. Duncan suggested a motion to be submitted at the AGM proposing a constitutional convention for next year.

## **9. Conference and its future.**

Simon explained that conference was fully planned. He was waiting for registration forms. Main speaker is arranged as Graduate School Director from London Met.

Simon explained that we have a student with disabilities who has requirements that will be attending. There will be a requirement that people with written documents send these in advance at least a week before conference.

Marilyn raised issue of future conferences:

The issue of when the conference takes place was raised with postgraduate officers taking office and in similar timings to NUS. There was an issue of potential speakers going on holiday in August that limits choice of speakers.

Simon raised concern of who stands for conference and choosing venue. Tim explained the circumstances of previous conferences and difficulty of finding hosts in some conferences. Also issue of questions raised of potential hosts, some are unable to answer.

Choice of conference officer and venue method has been used since 1992. These discussions were best continued after the conference in preparation for the 2007 conference.

## **10. Media Strategy**

Marilyn outlined it is standard Students' Union or Association practice to have a media strategy. She said she wanted to gain thoughts on how to move along with a media strategy.

Tim outlined that General Secretary and Comms Secretary issue press releases in a standard form. Throughout the year, you would get enquiries where you need to make a statement without having time to discuss it with the MSC. You would need to agree that only two or three officers could speak to media on NPC matters and the remainder speaking in personal capacity.

Marilyn discussed how media strategy would enable guidelines on how communications or press releases are released. Marilyn outlined concerns previously with articles and the need for media strategy to seek to prevent problems. The NPC does not have the same structure as unions so this would affect the creation of a strategy.

There was a discussion on the process and need for reactive and proactive response. It was considered that the Communications Officer was valuable in supporting the media strategy such as press release or web media depending on their skills. There was a discussion of the recording of the media release with a record of what was said in interviews or original press releases.

Action: People to look at their own union or association strategies and use ideas towards developing an NPC media strategy.

### **11. Office Assistant**

This was a perennial decision and would need, with regard to Eurodoc, need to be deferred. There was possibility of supporting General Secretary with admin assistants used for specific purposes such as mailings etc.

There was a question concerning the income. Income has been flatlining and there would be no money for a permanent office assistant. There was a discussion on more output but lower reserves. This had previously failed and there was a need to protect reserves.

### **12. NPC's Strategic Plan**

Marilyn outlined that during her experience she had not known a strategic plan. This was about the development of the NPC and the development of roles of officers.

Erich suggested that all officers would need to look at their roles and the NPC and develop a strategic plan as an MSC.

### **13. NPC Reform**

Marilyn circulated the outcomes from the discussion at the Birmingham OGM on ways to reform the NPC.

Erich suggested that all officers review their activities and write down what they do as a view to reforming the NPC. There was a discussion of circulating officer remits earlier and for supporting officers to understand their roles.

Welcoming New People — Tim noted the very intense meetings. Marilyn noted that for new people if you do not know people on the committee or other officers can be alienating. There was also issue of meetings starting on time. There were calls for one day meetings and a concern over venues. This was discussed with issues that for affiliates travelling from long distances a one-day meeting is impractical. One day meetings would need to be located near good transport links and come with caveats about what was taking place.

Explanation of Procedures — Marilyn explained that people find our procedures deviate from the 'norm' of students' union procedures. There was a discussion of overusing acronyms. The idea of using Constitutional Sub-Committee as Standing Orders Committee to support delegates in meetings. There was a discussion of the procedures being too formal and procedures not being explained.

Action: Marilyn will contact affiliates to find out who delegates are and to get list of delegates and encourage people to bring relevant forms.

Situations arise when there are several delegates from one university. Marilyn was insistent on sending out emails to confirm their delegation.

Eric: should this apply to existing delegates?

Tim: Delegates should remain as delegates until new delegates are introduced or they pass on their delegation to new delegates.

Marilyn: should delegates be renewed every time? Tim suggested that it would be a pain to renew yearly.

Training for new delegates: Marilyn suggested a delegate training weekend where all delegates get to know each other and also have an opportunity to discuss their universities issues discussed amongst each other.

Eric: A web based forum should be a better idea. And having video of the general secretary giving a presentation on the basics/introduction to the NPC.

Ismail: the forum needs encouragement and kicking off by sending delegates topics to discuss on could jumpstart the forum.

Tim raised need to reduce spam by having .ac.uk registered email address.

Simon asked for fees calculation PDF file to be put on website. This was agreed.

Discussions — past officers and new people. Marilyn raised issue that lists contain too many older members on list. Simon clarified that affiliates had raised concerns that list seems unprofessional. Marilyn considered whether we have old officers on the list and whether it should be considered as a discussion forum.

Simon noted that the new web forum has opportunity for exec forum discussions to engage with affiliates. Simon proposed Code of Practice for use of lists with rules on posting and engaging with list. This was supported by Tim who felt that it was more a few individuals than the list being misused and that past officers experience was invaluable.

The list Code of Practice was agreed as:

Gen Sec and Chair have power to instruct the administrator that people persistently causing problems on the list are switched to moderate in the first instance.

Those who have been switched to moderation may appeal to the Constitutional Sub Committee.

Problems may include abusive language, harassment, and offensive behaviour.

Internal Respect — Tim highlighted the issue of firing emails at one another and arguments in meetings but the issue is abstract and is more about finding ways to o-operate with each other.

Increased financing — Marilyn suggested we have a fundraising/development officer. Tim asked that the number of officers be ignored as the issue is more important to discuss and is regarding individual donors, affiliations, and sponsors for example. Tim also noted that this role could not be linked to the treasurer role.

Ismail asked whether this role would be filled and would it be voluntary or paid. Tim said that this would be a clearly defined role like equal opportunities officers and would therefore be more likely to be filled.

To create the position it would need to go through two ordinary meetings. Opportunity to use project officer role to test the position.

Marilyn also proposed a women's officer role. Tim highlighted the number of women that were in the committee over the past years.

2005/6 — 14 officer - 1

2004/5 — 14 officer - 4

2003/4 — 14 officer — 3

2002/3 — 14 officer - 6

2001/2 — 13 officer - 3

Marilyn also raised issue of welfare issues, mental health concerns and what can the NPC do to support postgraduate students.

Tim would raise the issue with his contacts with Mind for ideas.

Changes to constitution to favour decision making — Marilyn will refer back to constitutional meeting.

Remote voting for affiliates- Tim said that while he liked the principle there may be confusion with affiliates not knowing who the voting member is. There is also issue of controversial decisions and who votes so that some affiliates hold sway over another.

Action: Refer to constitutional committee.

Directly elected president — Tim explained that Duncan's plan was for affiliates to run election. Tim explained comparable elections in ULU and the difficulties in undertaking the election and the turnout.

Too high expectations of officers with burdens- Tim explained that some people expect the chair and treasurer to be doing the job full time.

Marilyn explained that Gen Sec has so much to do.

Tim explained that the treasurer has a lot to do dealing with Bank Account. A lot of the work comes in spurts. With regard to dealing with the accounts, Tim suggested that Gen Sec alongside chair and conference secretary would need access to accounts sometimes.

Simon suggested that there needs to be consideration of work-life balance and also need to consider handover and lessons learnt for officers and resources to hand over for newly elected officers.

Social Activities — Marilyn raised issue of away weekend and delegates wanting to meet each other. Ismail suggested consulting with delegates what social activities they would want to do.

Idea of weekend away for affiliates and non-affiliates.

Stricter and less indulgent — Tim raised issue that this may be due to meetings overrunning and not starting on time.

Issues that need to be considered were guillotine of time, starting of items, paper being sent in advance.

Jargon and Accessibility — The issue of acronyms was raised. There is a dictionary on website but it would need to be updated.

Suggestion of acronym document for postgraduates to highlight postgraduate environment.

Communications with affiliates — Issue raised that there has not been much communication, particularly pN with affiliates.

Marilyn questioned if there were a number that should be specified each year.

Ismail raised issue of blogs and making officers write a weekly blog of activities.

Action: Tim will set up Blog. Ask Andrew to permanently own blog.

Wider Involvement from affiliates — Marilyn highlighted that many affiliates want to know what the NPC is involved in and work with them in activities.

Simon suggested that there is a need to sell the achievements of the NPC. Tim agreed and suggested that we need to maintain records of affiliates and what activities they have been involved in and meetings held.

#### **14. AOB**

Ismail would like to create a scholarship subcommittee aimed at supporting postgraduate students seeking financial support. Tim responded that it would be better to create working group of volunteers.

The meeting finished at 6.00 p.m.

## Minutes of the National Postgraduate Committee Financial Sub- Committee meeting held at the University College London on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2006 (1.30pm)

Present:

Tim Roll-Pickering (Chairing the meeting)

Marilyn Shanks

Simon Felton

Martin Gough

In attendance:

Lade Robinson (Scottish Sub-committee vice chair and secretary)

Apologies for Absence:

Duncan Connors

### Treasurer's Report & Financial Statement for 2005-2006

Tim informed the committee that:

1. Audit: the fee for the financial audit had increase.
2. Outstanding Debtors: Aston — this relates to the outstanding balance of the affiliations fees.
3. Outstanding cheques:  
Tim noted that both Jim (£82.10) and Ismail (£36.20) have not banked outstanding cheques.  
*Action:* Tim will remind both Ismail and Jim
4. Affiliations: The committee was informed that we were ahead of our affiliations targets.
5. Individual donor scheme: needs to be relaunched.
6. Expenditure: we have an overspend due to accommodation at meetings and Eurodoc travel expenses
7. Vat the committee informed that we have had to pay vat on for the conference at Strathclyde, however Tim has enquired about reclaiming this sum however, he is yet to receive a response.
8. Other significant variances - the Scottish Sub-Committee had not claim any expenses so far.
9. Insurance: Our insurance fees had dropped mainly due to no claims bonuses

Tim noted that the audited final accounts for 2004/05 will be submitted to the Inland Revenue by the 31<sup>st</sup> of July.

### Matters remaining from Conference 2005

Tim informed the committee that Duncan was in the process of finalising the conference accounts. He also noted that Leeds had not paid their conference fees and that York had been invoiced but there were extenuating circumstances due to the delegate not attending because of an unavoidable family problem.

Tim has invoiced Leeds and York.

Tim stressed the need to consider how we choose the annual conference venue as this could affect our finances.

After a lengthy discussion, committee members proposed that the MSC discuss how conference venues are chosen because of high costs that are associated with some venues. The following recommendations were that the MSC ensure that future conference officers have the backing from their host institutions and an outline of prices and facilities is submitted in writing.

### Matters relating to Conference 2006, specifically officer support.

Tim reminded the committee that the committee members should seek assistance from their Unions in the first instance.

The FSC agreed that in addition to current NPC policy the following guidelines should also apply:

- Officers would receive a waiver for Friday evening to the AGM
- In General the General Secretary, Chairperson and Conference secretary will receive waiver to conference.
- The Treasurer in consultation with the General Secretary and the Chairperson will consider all application for support
- Priorities will be given to officers who are active and those who have applied first.
- Officers receiving any waiver are required to actively contribute to the conference, e.g. chair sessions, welcome visitors and affiliates, staff the registration desk, taking conference minutes (including break out sessions).

### **The General Secretary's salary for 2006-2007**

This was discussed in detail; the committee agreed that the General Secretary's salary would be set at 2/3 of (point 22) of current UCEA pay scale, which is equivalent to £15,104.76 (including employer NI contributions).

An officer left the room for the duration of this item.

### **Possible handover payment**

Simon left the room for the duration of the item.

Handover payment was discussed at length. Tim proposed that we have a one-week retrospective payment, however Martin would be concerned if we adopted a policy, which includes a handover pay. Martin explained that hand over could be completed during the GS time in office and that we should budget for a contingency which will could be used in extenuating circumstances, this was agreed by all.

### **Budget**

#### *Scottish Sub-Committee*

Tim explained that Jim has suggested freezing the budget for Scotland.

Martin asked why it was increased for 2005/6

Tim explained that because we had gained three new Scottish affiliates, that the FSC at the time felt that the Scottish budget should reflect this.

#### *NPC Wales*

This should remain at the current level Of £250

#### *Rest:*

Two budgets were drawn up, the second includes expenditure associated with hosting Eurodoc and would only apply if the AGM agrees to that The NPC should host Eurodoc. It was also agreed that we must create a limited liability company to protect the NPC from any loss Tim reminded FSC members that the MSC had agreed that venues outside of London would work out cheaper; such venues would include Glasgow and Manchester as they may have adequate airport connections

### **Journal of Graduate Education**

No expenditure so far, however Martin noted that subscription to the new Journal would increase.

### **Meeting ended at 5.45pm**

Minutes taken by Marilyn Shanks

**Minutes of the National Postgraduate Committee Scotland / CIN Alba Meeting held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2006 at Livingstone Tower, Strathclyde University, Glasgow.**

The meeting started at 1. 25 PM with an introduction to the work of the NPC and the NPC's organisation from Jim Ewing, acting chair. He outlined the work of the NPC, its charitable status, its liaison with other bodies and its action in sharing best practice and representing postgraduates in national bodies.

This introduction was followed by a training session on Postgrads and Student Activities led by David Bean starting at 1.35 PM. David outlined his election to Project Officer and his project to look at engaging postgraduates in students' union activities.

David listed the questions he asked institutions and invited discussion from participating affiliates on their responses to these questions.

| Question       | Glasgow  | Paisley  | Strathclyde  | St Andrews  |
|----------------|--|--|--|---|
| Activities Run | PG Research Club (Hetherington).   | Started postgraduate students society this year. Research is new to university. Seats on university committees. Social room for research students. Weekly lunches.   | Postgraduate Ball. Space in union for postgraduates — union bar. Encourage networking. Community runs itself, put idea forward and secure funding.   | PG Officer on Students Services committee in charge of Postgraduate Society. Work with Director of Student Activities. BBQs, Day Trips, Beach Parties. Organise day trip to Edinburgh Festival. Family day to encourage postgraduates with family to come along outdoors for children and dogs. |
| Summer         | Decreases in summer. Committee does less in summer, a dip in attendance. | Celebration for those who graduate in summer. Considered asking if could use Glasgow Research Club but not clear sharing policy. Tried creating Google Postgraduate online group — postings once a week or so. | Tried to run activities, but had difficulties sending information out to widespread body. Tried to put events in Students' Union but postgraduate feeling that students' union undergraduate focused. Research and development group for students to discuss their research. | Postgraduate society more active in summer. More integration between UG and PG as smaller numbers in total. Events organised by undergraduate societies attract more postgraduates. In officer remit — organise postgraduate activities during summer.  |

|                      |  |   |   |  |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Mature Students      | Hetherington club allows mature students to use.   | No.   | Yes but mature students not members of postgraduate society.  | Yes. Mature students welcome but not members of postgraduate society.  |
| PGs in UG activities | It is encouraged.  | Small university. Not many clubs and societies.   | Yes. PGs standing for Students' Union President and also PGs running elections. If let PGs run themselves then more successful.   | Good, especially summertime. PGs less time.  |
| Promotion            | Activities that tried over past years are those that not attract typical undergraduate. Postgraduate club already provides a lot already. But need to work on freshers' week to do events that better suit postgraduates — potentially kids day for parents. | Postgraduates more involved with activities where there is direct interest such as LGBT, and women's group. Also Hill walking group. Partner with groups. More personal interest that will get to integrate. Issue for those postgraduates that teach about social activities with students they teach. | Postgraduate students on social activity committees.  | Interest groups mainly — faith, LGBT. Depends on finding niche for postgraduates that can get involved with undergraduates. Orientation week, the alcohol impact is not just UG / PG. It is big impact with faith. |
| How spend time.      | Postgraduates isolated, hidden in departments. One of positions on executive has to be postgrad student.   |   | Lots of international students.   |  |
| Union Involvement    |  |   |   |  |
| Ideas to improve.    | Making sure postgrads included in publicity. Specific part of website for specific groups such as international students and postgraduates. Using departments to forward on email to postgraduates.  | Only got room because of smoking ban. Institution not aware of difference of students and not allowing email lists and distribution to students. Because focused on research students work with union 50 % and  | Not got time to set up things. Idea to enable students to set up projects themselves. When got room for postgraduates had support of president. Encourage postgraduates to register emails to access information. | Room would be useful.  |

|  |  |                               |  |  |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
|  |  | committees on university 50%. |  |  |
|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--|

David commented that each of institutions was doing well in supporting postgraduate students who face a number of issues.

The meeting was suspended at 2.30 PM for a break.  
The meeting recommenced at 2.40pm.

Paisley submitted a new delegate form.  
Shona was accepted as delegate for Glasgow.  
Lee Kane was accepted as delegate for St Andrews.

Jim noted voting members from Strathclyde, Glasgow, St Andrews, and Paisley that made the meeting quorate.

### 1. Sederunt

#### *Voting*

Shona Morrison— Glasgow  
Ashley Smith- Paisley  
Lade Robinson — Strathclyde  
Lee Kane — St Andrews

#### *Non-voting*

Mhairi Wilson — In attendance (Glasgow)  
John McAlaney — In attendance (Paisley)  
David Bean — In attendance (Project Officer)  
Jim Ewing — Acting Chair  
Simon Felton — In attendance  
Marilyn Shanks — In attendance  
Ciara Brewer — In attendance (St Andrews).

#### *Apologies:*

Edinburgh.  
NUS Scotland.

### 2. Minutes of last meeting

Jim explained that the previous chair who had served well in her first year had let her research overtake her and having not sent apologies was deemed to have resigned.

Jim explained that these minutes were put together subsequently by NPC members following the absence of Maggie's report.

Under officers reports, Maggie did submit a detailed report but this has not been sent in. The minutes were accepted subject to the missing chairs report from Maggie Chapman.

### 3. Matters Arising

None

### 4. Officers Reports

Marilyn as UK Chair asked Jim as past General secretary and as past NPC Scotland chair to co-ordinate the reforming of NPC Scotland and convene meeting.

Lade — Due to difficulties with contacting Maggie, Lade outlined he had been unable to be active with NPC Scotland.

## **5. Policy Discussion: grading of Masters Degrees**

Jim outlined that this was the result of a complaint by a postgraduate student to a UK NPC officer about the inconsistency of Masters grading. The tabled report was for Scotland as while compiling a UK list the officer had noticed a wide disparity in Masters grading in Scotland.

Jim noticed that some institutions would present graduates with a merit while others would present with a pass. This would create inconsistency in appearance to employers. There is no consistency in Scottish institutions.

Ashley asked about whether this was a QAA problem to which Simon responded that the QAA had not realised concern but were unsure whether to let the sector solve the problem or engage themselves in addressing the concern.

Marilyn highlighted that no institution uses merit in Scotland and confirmed that the reports author, Tim Roll-Pickering, questioned if there should be a merit.

David was concerned that there may be a disparity between institutions in subject areas if trying to create a consistency in merit grading. Ashley noted that the Distinction level was not consistent either and this raised issue about consistency anyway.

Jim raised issue of how good must the work be to get 70%, the criteria is not clear. While there are external examiners, these are there to ensure that institution is grading according to its aims rather than comparability between institution.

Marilyn raised concern that institutions are attracting a lot of international students and for international students it would be better for external comparison that they could show a merit if they were closer to a distinction rather than a pass.

Ashley raised the issue that employers need to know the range in variation of grading. Ashley suggested that if there needs to be push to change the grading it may be better raised by employers.

Marilyn raised the pass boundary in some institutions getting under 40 was a fail while in others it would give you a diploma.

Jim raised that the benefits of a masters were increased employability.

Ashley raised the impact of Europe and the Bologna process. Simon responded that there were developments with the European Credit Framework Agreement which may affect masters grading and consistency.

Jim asked if we were happy with the variety of merits awarded. It was noted that there was a differentiation between institution rather than grade. Simon noted that the QAA were conducting review of possible areas of intervention in the sector and he had raised this as a possible issue.

Ashley noted as an international student she felt that these grades meant nothing at all. Furthermore if students wanted to move onwards into research that there was an inconsistency in grades awarded which might pose problems for universities choosing suitable candidates.

It was proposed that this argument and concern over pass marks for masters is raised with QAA and also raised with own institutions.

a) Lack of consistency for candidates and employers.

Action Point: All to consult own institutions about variety in merit awarding.

## **6. Policy Discussion: Research Council Funding — time to check?**

Jim outlined that two years ago, funding for postgraduate research degrees for Scotland was moved from Holyrood to the research councils. There was concern that if funding was not allocated from within Scotland, the Scottish Perspective might be lost.

Nothing had been done about this for a number of years but Jim asked this was noted.

Jim asked if there were concerns at institutions about the impact of the changing in funding. Effectively there was Scottish money that has been put into the UK pool of money.

Lade outlined that in Strathclyde there was funding for language studies.

Action: To research what is happening with regard to research council funding ringfencing for Scotland.

## **7. Policy Implementation — use of Gaelic**

Jim noted the use of materials and website in Gaelic and to what extent we use it.

Mhairi noted that in Welsh more people speak Welsh than those in Scotland use Gaelic.

Jim noted that there are institutions in Scotland that do use Gaelic. An affiliate in Scotland, UHI, does use Gaelic.

David raised the question about the cost of translation.

Marilyn explained that these issues had been raised at UK level with the development of the new website and whether people are able to use Gaelic for presenting documents and reports. Jim suggested that at moment minutes be translated and posted in Gaelic and the rest is left to demand.

Action Point: Minutes will be translated into Gaelic.

Ask UHI if they would be interested in translating.

## **8. Future Development — special conference; suggested topic: gaps in Scottish academic provision.**

Jim outlined that this was mentioned at UK level that each region be able to organise a one-day conference.

Jim had noted that there was missing provision in Scotland. There were other languages spoken in Scotland such as Asian languages. Should provision exist in Scotland for studying such languages.

Shona asked if there were other gaps that we may need to provide for. She said there may be other topics that may be important to discuss in a one day conference such as representation and involvement.

Jim outlined that there were issues such as the Baltic and the incoming trade relations between Scotland and the Baltic.

Ashley suggested that it may be useful to discuss the impact of devolution, now five years old, on postgraduates rather than gaps on what is available in Scotland. It would be useful to discuss the impact of devolution, particularly with funding issues.

Ciara suggested that a particularly useful issue to discuss would be postgraduates that teach.

It was agreed by all that it would be of benefit to organise a one-day conference on postgraduate issues. This would be a wide topic covering sessions for officers, postgraduate students and those involved in supporting students.

Action: To discuss on email and forum and organise separate meeting on what we would want to do.

#### **9. Election of office bearers: Chair, Depute Chair/Secretary, and Treasurer.**

Jim read the roles of the three officers up for election from the constitution.

Marilyn asked if people would be happy for there to be an open election. There were no objections.

Chair — Jim Ewing (elected unopposed).

Depute Chair / Secretary — Lade Robinson (elected unopposed).

Treasurer — No one stood. It was decided to open nominations at the next meeting.

#### **10. AOB**

*Publicity* — Jim led the discussion how to publicise within ourselves, to postgraduates and how to attract affiliates.

Current affiliates:

UHI

Paisley

Glasgow

Strathclyde

Edinburgh

St Andrews

Abertay Dundee

(Queen Margaret)

Lade asked about how the General Secretary is leading affiliation increases and what the NPC does for affiliates.

Simon explained the representation and empowerment opportunities that NPC can highlight alongside welfare support, lobbying and networking building.

Lade questioned how we attract the average postgraduate.

Lee highlighted that it is important that affiliates use their affiliation to highlight the NPC in their institution.

Shona highlighted that we ought to contact institutions more and highlight why you are a member and what we have done.

Jim outlined his experience with affiliates and potential affiliates.

*Manifesto* — With the forthcoming Scottish elections it would be important to highlight the parties views on issues related to postgraduate education. This would be best discussed on the npc-Scotland list.

*Online Forum* — Lade and Simon highlighted the new forum and the opportunity to discuss things online. Marilyn introduced that there might be an officer specific section.

**The meeting ended at 05.00 PM**

Minutes taken by Simon Felton.

## *4. Motions*

### **Master's degree awards**

#### **The National Postgraduate Committee notes:**

1. Taught postgraduate Master's degrees are offered by most UK higher education institutions.
2. "Until recently, postgraduate Master's degrees were awarded without grade or class (like the class of an honours degree). Nowadays however, Master's degrees are usually classified, either into three categories (Pass, Merit or Distinction), or simply two (Pass or Distinction)."
3. A perusal of Master's programmes across the United Kingdom shows that 50% is a very common rate for a Pass and 70% is a very common rate for Distinction.
4. The same perusal shows that the award of Merit is not consistent across higher education, with some institutions not offering it at all, others offering it at 60% rate and others at 65%.
5. There are few discernible patterns to the pattern of Merit awards, other than most institutions awarding at 65% being located in London (along with many awarding at 60% or not at all) and it not appearing to be awarded by any Scottish or University of Wales institutions. The pattern of awards cuts across ancient, red brick, plate glass and post 92 universities and also across universities in the Russell Group, the 1994 Group and the Campaign for Modern Universities.
6. Consequently a Master's graduate who achieves, say, a consistent result of 64% could be awarded, depending upon the institution:
  - a) Pass with Merit
  - b) Pass but fall short of Merit
  - c) Pass on a scheme with no Merit at all
7. The PostGraduate Diploma is also offered in many UK higher education institutions.
8. Some award it at the same pass rate as Master's degrees (usually 50%); others award it at a lower pass rate (usually 40%) and sometimes award it to a candidate who has narrowly failed a Master's degree.

#### **The National Postgraduate Committee believes:**

1. The current system of Merit awards is highly confusing and would require an expert to know at a glance the difference between awards from different institutions.
2. The current system results in individual Master's graduates appearing to have a different ranking of results to that which the numerical outcome indicates.
3. The pattern of award of PostGraduate Diplomas can also lead to much similar confusion.
4. Transparency and consistency of awards are essential to enable academic mobility.
5. Individual institutions should be free to set their own marking schemes, but the overall awards should offer a consistent pattern

#### **The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:**

1. To campaign for a consistent pattern of awards for taught degree awards that is transparent, easy to understand and generates consistent comparable outcomes.
2. To work with the Quality Assurance Agency and other relevant bodies in determining and implementing a standard scheme across the sector.
3. To encourage greater consistency in the use and award of PostGraduate Certificates & Diplomas.

**Submitted by:** Tim Roll-Pickering (University of London Union)

## **NPC Constitution and Democracy**

### **The National Postgraduate Committee notes:**

1. The NPC constitution has evolved to its current state over a period of years.
2. Although providing a framework for the running of the NPC, the constitution is ambiguous in many areas.
3. Additionally, the complex language used in the constitution does not allow for an easy understanding or comprehension of its provisions.
4. The complex language may exclude non-native English speakers (e.g. many international students) from participating in NPC.
5. The complex language and ambiguities have led to uncertainty over the correct procedure to be followed in certain circumstances.
6. The complex language and ambiguities have led to uncertainty over officer's roles.
7. The situation explained above has led to arbitrary decision-making by NPC officers based upon their own personal interpretation of the constitution and bye-laws without reference to other officers.
8. Consequently, this limits the democracy within the organisation and has led to a poor image being portrayed to our affiliates.
9. Indeed, our affiliates are uncertain of much within the NPC and find that gaining an understanding of the constitution is quite hard.
10. Attempts to rectify this situation through the creation of bylaws and regulations have failed and indeed on occasion have led to an even more complicated set of circumstances and contradictions.

### **The National Postgraduate Committee believes:**

1. The constitution has served its purpose in the past but is no longer appropriate for the current situation.
2. That within a modern organisation such as the NPC the emphasis should be on providing an easy to access and democratic framework for its affiliates and membership to follow.
3. That widening democracy should be the goal of any representative organisation.
4. That rights and responsibilities go hand in hand and therefore accountability should be transparent and available to all.

### **The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:**

1. That an event entitled the 'NPC Constitutional Convention' will be called for a date (two days) in the second half of 2006 - and be continued if necessary by electronic communication, mailing lists, web fora, etc. and at general meetings in 2007 - inviting all affiliates and interested parties to discuss and propose a new constitution and that the event will consider the following:
  - Simplifying the NPC constitution to make it easy to understand.
  - Writing the constitution in 'Plain English' and easy to comprehend forms of other languages understood in the UK.
  - Removing any ambiguities and creating a 'presumption towards decision making' within its provisions.
  - Increasing democracy amongst bodies such as the Management Sub Committee.
  - Increasing democracy for affiliates by widening their participation.
  - Making all officers and post holders within the NPC accountable to the membership and bodies elected by the membership.
  - Making the interpretative role of the Chair (or any other officer or Sub

Committee) fully accountable to the membership and bodies elected by the membership.

- Discussing the desirability of the direct election of certain office holders by postgraduates.
2. That once the convention has agreed a new constitution it shall be put forward for adoption following the current rules for amending the NPC constitution as soon as is practicable.
  3. However, any constitution must be compatible to a wider set of laws in England, Wales and Scotland that as an organisation we are subordinate to, for example Scottish Charity Law with which the NPC is constituted as a charity.

**Proposer:** Duncan Philip Connors, The University of Glasgow

**Seconder:** Erich Kofmel, The University of Sussex

## **Promoting access for disabled postgraduates**

### **The National Postgraduate Committee notes:**

- 1) NPC gave support in August 2002 to the HEFCE funded project Access to research — Institutional issues for disabled postgraduates (Premia — making research education accessible)  
(Management Sub- Committee remote vote passed 21/8/02)
- 2) Premia web site has now been launched and is the UK's first resource aimed at supporting disabled Research students <http://www.premia.ac.uk/>
- 3) The maximum Disability Students' Allowance (DSA) available to undergraduate students for the academic year 2005/6 is: £4460 for equipment; £11,280, for non-medical helper; £ 1490 for general DSA and can claim reasonable travel allowance.
- 4) There is a single DSA allowance for postgraduates: £5245 for the academic year 2005/6 [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/students/stu\\_students\\_with\\_d\\_1.shtml](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport/students/stu_students_with_d_1.shtml)
- 5) That Disabled students comprise of approximately 5% of the research population

### **The National Postgraduate Committee believes:**

- 1) That Union disability campaigns do not raise issues relating to postgraduate research students.
- 2) The transition between Undergraduate and postgraduate can be extreme and requires reasonable adjustments by Supervisors, Administrators and Institutions.
- 3) The cost of support for DPGR students is very high and may exceed the maximum DSA award.
- 4) Disabled postgraduates encounter extra barriers at postgraduate level.
- 5) There is a growing need for an awareness campaign by representative bodies on DPGR students issues

### **The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:**

- 1) That the next PN high lights the Premia research project
- 2) That the Equal Opportunities officer investigate ways to campaign for equivalent DSA for DPGR students to those of undergraduate disabled students
- 3) That the General secretary and Equal opportunities officer approach the NUS, UCU and other representative bodies to highlight the importance of the issues and outcomes of this project maximise research opportunities for disabled students
- 4) That NPC encourage Unions and association to promote the E-mentoring tool kit to their institutions
- 5) That the NPC website includes links to relevant organisation which can benefit disabled postgraduates

**Proposed:** Marilyn Shanks (NPC Chairperson)

## **Responding to the RAE.**

### **The National Postgraduate Committee notes:**

1. The Research Assessment Exercise which aims to set a benchmark of UK research quality.
2. The Reform of Higher Education Research Assessment and Funding consultation ending the 13th October 2006.
3. The RAE works by giving institutions conducting the best research a larger proportion of the research available grant so that the infrastructure for the top level of research in the UK is protected and developed.
4. The RAE provides quality ratings for research across all disciplines. Panels use a standard scale to award a rating for each submission ranging from 1 to 5\*, according to how much of the work is judged to reach national or international levels of excellence.

### **The National Postgraduate Committee believes:**

1. The net effect of successive RAEs on research practices and on the overall quality of UK research has been beneficial.
2. At certain levels of aggregation, the distribution of Quality-Related (QR) funding is well correlated with research income from other sources.
3. That there are implications for conducting the RAE in scale and cost.
4. That science and technology subjects should adopt a greater or wholly metrics-based approach.
5. That arts and humanities subjects should remain largely peer reviewed and adopt a minimum of metrics-based assessment.
6. That changes to the RAE should focus on the training and development of researchers alongside QAA auditing to develop and ensure quality research is taking place.
7. That there should be a strong focus on the transfer of knowledge. Knowledge transfer through informing society should be incentivised.
8. That alongside refereed journal publications there should be an encouragement of the dissemination of knowledge through textbooks and other publications.
9. That there should be an encouragement to equality of opportunity in recruiting and training researchers.
10. That there may be implications for new PhD students as departments may seek more experienced researchers than training researchers to build up their metric output.
11. That a focus on metrics may disadvantage teaching based institutions who will focus less on publications.

### **The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:**

1. To respond to the consultation outlining our beliefs.

**Proposed by** Simon Felton (NPC General Secretary).

# *FINANCIAL REPORT*

## **Treasurer's report to the AGM**

### **1. Overview of the year**

2005-2006 has been an intense year. There has been a lot of activity as shown by the expenditure.

Overall, we have made a very small loss, which can be attributed to any of a number of individual payment areas:

- The 2005 Conference made a higher than expected loss, due to a late in the day change of venue and our being invoiced for VAT.
- We made larger than normal expenditure on publications in order to cover a single order for headed paper. The previous order lasted several years.
- Due to delays there has been additional expenditure on the 2004-2005 audit which has come out of this financial year. As the 2004-2005 financial year made a surplus of £8011.95
- A payment of £500 was made to the International Students' Festival following the vote of the November Ordinary General Meeting.

Any single one of these payments alone accounts for the small deficit we made on the year. Overall the NPC is in good financial health — our reserves are now ten times what they were the first time I saw an NPC balance sheet. With only £717.00 of outstanding debtors our current "cash to hand" is at the highest level in the organisation's history. The stories of General Secretaries working on deferred salaries, of panicking Treasurers and all round praying for miracles are truly distant things.

### **2. The 2004-2005 audit**

This year the audit took place rather later than normal. This was due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances as at the start of the year there were a significant amount of outstanding debtors and prudence meant that resolving as many as possible was a priority. Subsequently personal health problems delayed the submission.

I have the accounts back from the auditor now for signing off. We met the Inland Revenue deadline for submitting one copy. I can provide these on request.

### **3. Affiliations by the NPC to external bodies**

The NPC is currently affiliated to three external bodies for the furtherance of its objectives and I would recommend that we continue to do so with both.

i). Eurodoc. This unites national postgraduate representative bodies across the full continent of Europe and does much to share practices and influence policy. There is no fee.

ii). The second body is the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) which is the national representative body for voluntary organisations in Scotland. The NPC is constituted under the Law of Scotland and has its legal seat of administration in Scotland. Membership of

SCVO gives us the right to shape future developments in the Scottish voluntary sector; adds to our legitimacy as a properly constituted body and offers training programmes; guidance on financial, legal and constitutional matters; bulk purchase deals on office supplies; IT consultancy services; and a parliamentary research and information service. We have benefited heavily since we first joined SCVO back in 2000 and I would urge you to support our continued membership. The current fee is £66.00

(Our fee for membership for April 2006-April 2007 has not yet gone out of the bank account; however as whilst writing this SCVO have informed me it is due to go out of the account on August 14<sup>th</sup>.)

iii). The third body is the Scottish Youth Hostels Association. Often we use Youth Hostels for overnight accommodation when holding meetings and this affiliation allows us to do so easily and cheaply. Again I would urge you to support our remaining a member of them. The current fee is £6.00

#### **4. The General Secretary's pay for 2006-2007**

It is long standing policy to review the salary for the General Secretary each year and consider whether to increase the percentage of the lowest point on the current pay scheme for academics in pre 92 universities.

At its meeting on 2005-07-16 the Financial Sub-Committee discussed the salary and agreed to maintain it at 2/3 of the lowest recognised salary for pre-92 research staff in light of the fact that this salary is due to rise anyway due to recent (rather high profile) negotiations between the University and College Union and the Universities & Colleges Employers' Association. The point on the current pay spine is point 22, which is the proposed starting salary for research staff. Thus, for both August & September and from October the outgoing and incoming General Secretaries will be paid 2/3 of the new point 22 from 1/8/06, which is £1158 per month.

There is currently a bit of ambiguity in our standing policy in regards which point it refers to, as our policy is currently using old terminology. The Financial Sub-Committee have proposed a motion (later in this section) to clarify this.

#### **5. A Handover payment**

The FSC meeting also discussed a handover payment and agreed to create a contingency head in the budget to cover it. It was agreed to budget for a payment of a week to cover transfer arrangements and the like at the same rate.

#### **6. The future**

In the absolute nightmare case scenario of receiving no further income whatsoever, the NPC would be able to meet all its current outstanding liabilities and pay the current General Secretary for the remainder of his term of office. There would be a significant amount left over. Using the alternative method of calculating on the basis of projected daily expenditure (£61.38 per day) the NPC could last 337.36 days

However the nightmare scenario does not seem to be looming at all.

## **7. And finally...**

I would like to thank all officers and delegates who have given much useful advice and support over the year. I would particularly like to thank everyone for being so understanding when I fell ill for a sustained period earlier this year.

## 2: Appointment of an auditor

It is a legal and constitutional requirement that our accounts be audited and so we must secure an auditor. Since the NPC restarted auditing its accounts in 2001 we have utilised the services of Andrew I. Fearn BSc CA of AIF Accountants, Penicuik. The Financial Sub-Committee believes he has done a good job to date and wish to continue with his services.

**Motion:** The NPC resolves to reappoint Andrew I. Fearn BSc CA to serve as auditor to the NPC until the 2007 AGM.

**Proposed by:** The Financial Sub-Committee.

## 3: Tidy-up of salary policy

### The National Postgraduate Committee notes

1. Currently our policy states:

- *Each year, the NPC AGM shall set the incoming General Secretary's salary at a fixed percentage of the lowest point recognised by the AUT for grade 1A academic-related research staff in the pre-1992 universities (currently point 4).*

2. The terminology is out of date.

### The National Postgraduate Committee resolves

1. To modify the policy to read as follows

- *Each year, the NPC AGM shall set the incoming General Secretary's salary at a fixed percentage of point 22 on the UCEA payscale for staff in the pre-1992 universities.*

**Proposed by:** The Financial Sub-Committee.

## 4: Tidy-up of affiliation protocol

### The National Postgraduate Committee notes

1. Currently the affiliation protocol refers to "the British Institute in Paris".

2. The institution is now "the University of London Institute in Paris".

### The National Postgraduate Committee resolves

1. To change all references in the affiliation protocol to "the British Institute in Paris" to "the University of London Institute in Paris".

**Proposed by:** The Financial Sub-Committee.

## 5: Provisional accounts for the year 2005-2006

### Balance Sheet for July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006

|  | £               |
|--|-----------------|
| Current a/c balance on 2006-07-31                        | 13304.61        |
| 90 Day Notice account balance on 2006-07-31              | 4189.02         |
| Conference account balance on 2006-07-31                 | 4200.97         |
| Journal of Graduate Education balance on 2006-07-31      | 667.15          |
| <i>Liability — Audit (2004-2005)</i>                     | <i>(616.87)</i> |
| Liability — Audit 2004-2005 additional                   | (264.38)        |
| Liability — Audit 2005-2006                              | (900.00)        |
| Liability — SCVO (affiliation fee)                       | (66.00)         |
| Liability — Tax & NI (July)                              | (287.61)        |
| Liability — VISA (July expenses)                         | (236.58)        |
| Debtor — Aston Students' Guild (aff fee less MSC accom)  | 210.00          |
| Debtor — Leeds University Union (Conf 2005)              | 225.00          |
| Debtor — York Graduate Students' Association (Conf 2005) | 160.00          |
| Debtor — Peter Campbell (Conf 2005)                      | 90.00           |
| <b>Net assets on 2006-07-31</b>                          | <b>20707.31</b> |

### Reconciliation against Bank Statements

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Current account balance on 2006-07-31                | 14544.29  |
| <u>Outstanding cheque</u>                            |           |
| 652 Jim Ewing (Expenses)                             | (82.10)   |
| 726 Ismail Malik (Expenses)                          | (36.20)   |
| 741 Alex Higgins (Expenses)                          | (34.25)   |
| 743 Katerina Tsoukala (Expenses)                     | (38.93)   |
| 754 Alex Higgins (Expenses)                          | (28.70)   |
| 756 News International (repay mispayments)           | (1019.50) |
| Current account working balance                      | 13304.61  |
| 90 Day Notice account balance on 2006-07-31          | 4189.02   |
| Conference account balance on 2006-07-31             | 4535.97   |
| <u>Adjustment (to be accounted for in 2006/2007)</u> |           |
| Advance Conference 2006 payins                       | (335.00)  |
| Conference account working balance                   | 4200.97   |

Journal of Graduate Education balance on 2006-07-31

667.15

### *Income & Expenditure*

| <b>Income</b>                 | <b>Budget £</b>   | <b>Actual £</b>   | <b>Over / -Under</b> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Affiliations                  | £21,000.00        | £23,528.00        | £2,528.00            |
| Individual Donations          | £300.00           | £85.00            | -£215.00             |
| Publications Sales            | £300.00           | £0.00             | -£300.00             |
| JGE income                    | £150.00           | £0.00             | -£150.00             |
| Other                         | £129.00           | £73.22            | -£55.78              |
| <b>Total Income</b>           | <b>£21,879.00</b> | <b>£23,686.22</b> | <b>£1,807.22</b>     |
| <b>Expenditure</b>            | <b>Budget £</b>   | <b>Actual £</b>   | <b>Over / -Under</b> |
| <b>Staff</b>                  |                   |                   |                      |
| Salary & NI                   | £14,500.00        | £14,434.24        | -£65.76              |
| Travel & Subsistence          | £1,400.00         | £2,453.46         | £1,053.46            |
| <b>Executive</b>              |                   |                   |                      |
| Executive Expenses            | £1,300.00         | £2,164.79         | £864.79              |
| <b>Office</b>                 |                   |                   |                      |
| Phone/Fax                     | £150.00           | £0.00             | -£150.00             |
| Stationery                    | £100.00           | £2.50             | -£97.50              |
| Copy/Print                    | £100.00           | £0.00             | -£100.00             |
| Postage                       | £150.00           | £0.00             | -£150.00             |
| Other Office                  | £0.00             | £0.00             | £0.00                |
| <b>Publications</b>           |                   |                   |                      |
| Publications Expenditure      | £250.00           | £748.81           | £498.81              |
| JGE expenditure               | £800.00           | £0.00             | -£800.00             |
| <b>Meetings</b>               |                   |                   |                      |
| Conference 2005               | £0.00             | £1,330.09         | £1,330.09            |
| Committee Meetings            | £0.00             | £0.00             | £0.00                |
| Scottish Subcommittee         | £400.00           | £0.00             | -£400.00             |
| Welsh Subcommittee            | £250.00           | £0.00             | -£250.00             |
| Other day seminars & meetings | £0.00             | £0.00             | £0.00                |
| <b>General</b>                |                   |                   |                      |
| Attendance at Conferences     | £200.00           | £192.25           | -£7.75               |
| Audit                         | £600.00           | £1,164.38         | £564.38              |
| Affiliations                  | £80.00            | £72.00            | -£8.00               |
| Insurance                     | £1,500.00         | £1,331.24         | -£168.76             |
| Bank Charges/Interest         | -£300.00          | -£571.90          | -£271.90             |
| JGE Interest                  | -£1.00            | -£6.66            | -£5.66               |
| Other                         | £0.00             | £0.00             | £0.00                |
| Contingency                   | £400.00           | £500.00           | £100.00              |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>      | <b>£21,879.00</b> | <b>£23,815.20</b> | <b>£3,368.20</b>     |
| <b>Surplus / -Deficit</b>     | <b>£0.00</b>      | <b>-£128.98</b>   | <b>-£1,560.98</b>    |

|                                    |  |                   |  |
|------------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Balance brought forward 2005-07-31 |  | £20,866.29        |  |
| Abnormal Income                    |  | £30.00            |  |
| Abnormal Expenditure               |  | <del>£60.00</del> |  |
| Balance + Abnormal                 |  | £20,836.29        |  |
| Current balance                    |  | £20,707.31        |  |

## *Notes and Context*

You will note that there is some "Abnormal Income" and "Abnormal Expenditure" listed at the bottom of the Income and Expenditure summary. Both items are exceptional arising from previous years:

Income — The £30 is the writing off of our liability to the National Union of Students for a stand fee at the NUS Convention 2004. We had not received an invoice for this. This year I formally wrote to the NUS Treasurer requesting an invoice by June 30<sup>th</sup> or else the debt would be written off. No invoice was received and on July 31<sup>st</sup> the NUS Finance Office informed me that our balance with them is currently zero.

Expenditure — The £60 constitutes an adjustment to remove a debtor listed in the previous audited accounts relating to the 2004 NPC Conference. It has proved impossible to pursue the debtor. As a consequence internal procedures have been tightened.

### **Presentation**

I have included a column for comparison with the budget. Due to both space and accounting issues it is difficult include a direct comparison with the accounts for previous years; however the accounts for 2004–2005 are available with me on request.

### **Income**

### **Affiliations**

So far we have received:

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Staffordshire (new this year)               | Lancaster                  |
| King's College London                       | West of England            |
| Abertay Dundee (new)                        | Sheffield                  |
| Swansea                                     | Strathclyde                |
| Edge Hill                                   | Paisley                    |
| Glasgow                                     | Sussex                     |
| Anglia Ruskin (formerly Anglia Polytechnic) | Leeds                      |
| University College London                   | Worcester                  |
| University of the Arts, London              | University of London Union |
| York  | UHI Millennium Institute   |
| Nottingham                                  | Keele (new)                |
| Warwick                                     | Surrey                     |
| Institute of Education                      | Southampton                |
| Salford                                     | Cardiff                    |
| Birmingham                                  | Bristol                    |
| Bath  | Brunel                     |
| St Andrews                                  | Edinburgh                  |
| Essex                                       | Bournemouth                |
| Hull  | Open                       |
| Cranfield — Cranfield site                  |                            |

It was agreed with Aston to cross cancel the £180 for the MSC training weekend accommodation with part of their affiliation fee and treat this as a deposit. Due to some delays we have still to sort out the remaining £210 with them but can get this finished very soon.

### **Individual Donations**

So far we have had:

1 subscriber at £30

1 monthly standing order payment of £3 per month (so far £36)

1 private donation of £25

We will need to do more to increase the number of individual donors. I feel that standing orders may be a good way to maintain continuity. Currently Simon and I have been looking into the way other organisations do donor/sponsorship schemes.

**Publications Sales** None yet.

**Journal of Graduate Education income** None yet. The latest issue of the Journal is in production.

**Other** This comprises several matters:

A credit of £73.20 from the Bank of Scotland which was accrued on a now cancelled credit card.

A 2p overpayment by an outstanding debtor from previous years on a keep the change basis.

We also received several payments totalling £1019.50 from *News International* that were made by BACS. Following several phone enquiries it was established that this was an error on their part due to identical names and the payments were in fact meant for a photographer working for the *News of the World*. I have sent a cheque to *News International* to reimburse the amount and they inform me that they have amended their records.

**Income total** We are £1807.22 ahead of the target.

### **Expenditure**

**Salaries** Almost on rounded target.

**Travel & Subsistence** There is a significant overspend here. The main cause of this is the need to pay travel expenses for the EuroDoc conference when their regular source of funding fell through late in the day, resulting in member organisations being asked to aid travel expenses. In addition there have been a number of long trips this year.

**Executive Expenses** A £864.79 overspend, mainly due to both accommodation at the general meetings and the EuroDoc travel expenses. There was quite a bit of confusion this year about who was covering accommodation — in future this will be done on a "clear and pay then claim back" basis.

**Office Expenditure in general** Still very little — Simon can update on how generous BUGS are/what has still to be claimed for.

**Publications expenditure** There has been a noticeable overspend here, covering a large order of headed paper (5000 sheets) which will last for some time yet. This was authorised as it works out cheaper in the long run.

**Journal of Graduate Education Expenditure** Nothing spent yet.

**NPC Conference 2005** This breaks down as follows:

**Income**

|                      |          |
|----------------------|----------|
| Conference attendees | £6510.00 |
|----------------------|----------|

**Expenditure**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| University of Strathclyde Students' Association — facilities | £4316.75 |
| University of Strathclyde Students' Association — printing   | £1496.07 |
| Glasgow University Union — annual dinner                     | £1200.00 |
| Speaker expenses   | £246.78  |
| Publicity  | £368.00  |
| Conference Secretary expenses                                | 167.60   |
| Badges   | £44.89   |

**Committee Meetings** i.e. Ordinary General Meetings. These are expected to break even.

**Scottish Subcommittee** i.e. NPC Scotland. Nothing spent.

**Welsh Subcommittee** i.e. NPC Wales/PCÔ-R Cymru. Nothing spent.

**Other day seminars and meetings** Nothing spent.

**Attendance at Conferences** This comprises of a fee for a stand at the NUS Conference plus a £16.00 fee for Edinburgh Students' Association for Simon's attendance at the Aldwych Group handover.

**Audit** The 2005-2006 audit is paid after the end of the year. There has been an additional payment for the 2004-2005 audit which has come out of this financial year.

**Affiliations** Paid £6.00 to the Scottish Youth Hostels Association. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations membership has in the past been paid directly out of the account at the start of April, but this year some problems at the SCVO's end has meant that it has not yet been taken but I have been informed it will go out of the account on August 14th

**Insurance** £168.76 under. Our monthly insurance payments dropped by about £40.00 mid year due to the no claims bonuses.

**Bank Charges/Interest & JGE Interest** We have had one charge of £20 for taking out the credit cards and £10 for withdrawing cash for the EuroDoc trip (when Simon and I went to the Bureau De Change in Russell Square we were told it would be cheaper to buy Euros with cash than credit card) and paying expenses upfront when the card could not be used.

Otherwise we are significantly ahead of target here. In part this is because the interest reflects the amounts in the accounts at any point and these have increased a bit in successive years, but also this is the first full year in which the main account has had a much more favourable rate of interest.

**Other** None

**Contingency** The £500 payment is for the International Students Festival, as voted for by the November Ordinary General Meeting.

## **6: Proposed budget for 2006-2007**

The budgets were drafted by the Financial Sub-Committee at the AGM held at University College London on July 16<sup>th</sup> 2006.

As noted elsewhere, the AGM has to take the final decision on whether or not to host the 2007 EuroDoc Conference. Accordingly the Financial Sub-Committee have drawn up two alternative budgets, one for if we host EuroDoc and the other if we do not.

### **Notes to the Budget**

This is a highly cautious budget, based on the minimum levels of income we can reasonably expect to receive. The NPC has had problems in the past with setting budgets that are wildly optimistic and so we have steered on the side of prudence.

In the event of hosting EuroDoc we have budgeted for a £500 deficit to cover cashflow. EuroDoc conferences are funded by sponsorship and external grants. The other £500 has been raised by cuts to other

If the AGM decides to host EuroDoc:

| <b>Income</b>                 | <b>Bdg 05-06 £</b> | <b>05-06 £</b>    | <b>Bdg 06-07 £</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Affiliations                  | £21,000.00         | £23,528.00        | £21,500.00         |
| Individual Donations          | £300.00            | £85.00            | £150.00            |
| Publications Sales            | £300.00            | £0.00             | £150.00            |
| JGE income                    | £150.00            | £0.00             | £150.00            |
| Other                         | £129.00            | £73.22            | £100.00            |
| <b>Total Income</b>           | <b>£21,879.00</b>  | <b>£23,686.22</b> | <b>£22,050.00</b>  |
| <b>Expenditure</b>            | <b>Bdg 05-06 £</b> | <b>Actual £</b>   | <b>Bdg 06-07 £</b> |
| <b>Staff</b>                  |                    |                   |                    |
| Salary & NI                   | £14,500.00         | £14,434.24        | £15,100.00         |
| Travel & Subsistence          | £1,400.00          | £2,453.46         | £1,400.00          |
| <b>Executive</b>              |                    |                   |                    |
| Executive Expenses            | £1,300.00          | £2,164.79         | £1,250.00          |
| <b>Office</b>                 |                    |                   |                    |
| Phone/Fax                     | £150.00            | £0.00             | £75.00             |
| Stationery                    | £100.00            | £2.50             | £50.00             |
| Copy/Print                    | £100.00            | £0.00             | £100.00            |
| Postage                       | £150.00            | £0.00             | £100.00            |
| Other Office                  | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| <b>Publications</b>           |                    |                   |                    |
| Publications Expenditure      | £250.00            | £748.81           | £200.00            |
| JGE expenditure               | £800.00            | £0.00             | £450.00            |
| <b>Meetings</b>               |                    |                   |                    |
| Conference 2005               | £0.00              | £1,330.09         | £0.00              |
| Committee Meetings            | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| Scottish Subcommittee         | £400.00            | £0.00             | £450.00            |
| Welsh Subcommittee            | £250.00            | £0.00             | £200.00            |
| Other day seminars & meetings | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| <b>General</b>                |                    |                   |                    |
| Attendance at Conferences     | £200.00            | £192.25           | £200.00            |
| Audit                         | £600.00            | £1,164.38         | £900.00            |
| Affiliations                  | £80.00             | £72.00            | £80.00             |
| Eurodoc                       | New item           | New item          | £1,000.00          |
| Insurance                     | £1,500.00          | £1,331.24         | £1,100.00          |
| Bank Charges/Interest         | -£300.00           | -£571.90          | -£500.00           |
| JGE Interest                  | -£1.00             | -£6.66            | -£5.00             |
| Other                         | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| Contingency                   | £400.00            | £500.00           | £400.00            |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>      | <b>£21,879.00</b>  | <b>£23,815.20</b> | <b>£22,550.00</b>  |
| <b>Surplus / -Deficit</b>     | <b>£0.00</b>       | <b>-£128.98</b>   | <b>-£500.00</b>    |

If the AGM decides not to host EuroDoc:

| <b>Income</b>                 | <b>Bdg 05-06 £</b> | <b>05-06 £</b>    | <b>Bdg 06-07 £</b> |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Affiliations                  | £21,000.00         | £23,528.00        | £21,500.00         |
| Individual Donations          | £300.00            | £85.00            | £150.00            |
| Publications Sales            | £300.00            | £0.00             | £150.00            |
| JGE income                    | £150.00            | £0.00             | £150.00            |
| Other                         | £129.00            | £73.22            | £100.00            |
| <b>Total Income</b>           | <b>£21,879.00</b>  | <b>£23,686.22</b> | <b>£22,050.00</b>  |
| <b>Expenditure</b>            | <b>Bdg 05-06 £</b> | <b>Actual £</b>   | <b>Bdg 06-07 £</b> |
| <b>Staff</b>                  |                    |                   |                    |
| Salary & NI                   | £14,500.00         | £14,434.24        | £15,100.00         |
| Travel & Subsistence          | £1,400.00          | £2,453.46         | £1,600.00          |
| <b>Executive</b>              |                    |                   |                    |
| Executive Expenses            | £1,300.00          | £2,164.79         | £1,400.00          |
| <b>Office</b>                 |                    |                   |                    |
| Phone/Fax                     | £150.00            | £0.00             | £75.00             |
| Stationery                    | £100.00            | £2.50             | £50.00             |
| Copy/Print                    | £100.00            | £0.00             | £100.00            |
| Postage                       | £150.00            | £0.00             | £150.00            |
| Other Office                  | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| <b>Publications</b>           |                    |                   |                    |
| Publications Expenditure      | £250.00            | £748.81           | £200.00            |
| JGE expenditure               | £800.00            | £0.00             | £450.00            |
| <b>Meetings</b>               |                    |                   |                    |
| Conference 2005               | £0.00              | £1,330.09         | £0.00              |
| Committee Meetings            | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| Scottish Subcommittee         | £400.00            | £0.00             | £450.00            |
| Welsh Subcommittee            | £250.00            | £0.00             | £200.00            |
| Other day seminars & meetings | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| <b>General</b>                |                    |                   |                    |
| Attendance at Conferences     | £200.00            | £192.25           | £200.00            |
| Audit                         | £600.00            | £1,164.38         | £900.00            |
| Affiliations                  | £80.00             | £72.00            | £80.00             |
| Insurance                     | £1,500.00          | £1,331.24         | £1,100.00          |
| Bank Charges/Interest         | -£300.00           | -£571.90          | -£500.00           |
| JGE Interest                  | -£1.00             | -£6.66            | -£5.00             |
| Other                         | £0.00              | £0.00             | £0.00              |
| Contingency                   | £400.00            | £500.00           | £500.00            |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>      | <b>£21,879.00</b>  | <b>£23,815.20</b> | <b>£22,050.00</b>  |
| <b>Surplus / -Deficit</b>     | <b>£0.00</b>       | <b>-£128.98</b>   | <b>£0.00</b>       |

## *6. Reports*

### **6.1 General Secretary — Simon Felton**

Here is my diary for the year.

#### **Week commencing 10th October 2005.**

After settling in relatively well, albeit it lots of admin and emails and phone calls I have had a busy week. I have contacted lots of organisations and all affiliates to which I have found Kent will be disaffiliating. Sheffield have invited us to a question and answer session with their Graduate Body. Wednesday I went to Glasgow to collect the presentation stand and collect promotional literature and casefiles from Jim. Thursday I went to the University of London School of Advanced Study Open Evening where I met several postgraduates and met the ULU President. Friday I went to Article 7 in Greenwich with Lade and Tim to discuss the website. Issues that need to be discussed are prior to the new website being created do we continue to have a members only restricted section. The website will hopefully be transferred to a new format in the first quarter of 2006 which should make it easier to update. This week I will be visiting Jamie Darwen in Warwick.

#### **Week Commencing 17<sup>th</sup> October 2005**

After a very hectic first week I have been undertaking lots of administration and contacting affiliates and non-affiliates. On Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> I went to Warwick where I met up with previous General Secretary Jamie Darwin and discussed the role and things to consider. I also met up with Brian Duggan (Education Officer) to discuss the NPC and Warwick's postgraduate system - I hope to collate different postgraduate representation systems throughout the year to reveal best practice. Friday 14<sup>th</sup> I met with the President of BUGS to discuss mutual issues and the NPC in Birmingham and oversaw some of the election of the new Postgraduate Officer at BUGS.

This coming week I will be attending QAA Code of Practice Round Table and the QAA Special Review Launch and James Groves will be coming down to look at things with me.

#### **Weekly Report for 24<sup>th</sup> October.**

Another week and ongoing projects. Monday 17<sup>th</sup> I attended the QAA Round Table discussion on Code of Practice for Assessment of Students. The day was divided into two sessions with all of those present split into four groups, firstly to look at the codes and to make comments about interpretation and whether we agreed and the second session on specific sections of the codes. I was in the group with Gill Clarke and Wendy Stubbs which was a good opportunity for me to introduce myself.

Tuesday I was involved locally in attending a discussion between the AUT and BUGS and one of the University of Birmingham's campuses on course closures and the use of postgraduates to teach where staff had left. This was useful in meeting the local Birmingham AUT and for providing more links with the AUT.

On Friday, James Groves came down to work through what I should be doing and who I should be speaking to which was invaluable assistance in preparing for the coming months.

This week I will be visiting Bristol on Wednesday and attending the UKCGE Workshop on Supervisors with Maggie on Friday.

#### **Week Commencing 31<sup>st</sup> October**

An interesting week and good opportunity to network. On 1<sup>st</sup> November went across to the School of Education in Birmingham re: one of the casefiles external examiners. This was productive though a little too close to comfort.

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> - Aldwych at Kings College London, which was a great way to meet lots of presidents and officers that I have been speaking with. Spoke to Katie from Southampton and Katy from Nottingham. Chatted with Rishi from LSE who will be sending their PG rep to the OGM. I discussed collaboration with Aldwych with Chair Kat Stark so hopefully we can support some of their plans. Cambridge distributed copies of their PDP guides which provided an interesting comparison with other universities.

NSS - There was a presentation on the new NSS for the coming year. Institutions would be able to add specific questions related to their institution at the end of the survey. The presenter also explained that this

would most likely continue in the future but would need to be considered as Annual/Biannual. There were also concerns on the 'opting out' of the scheme and the use of student data to conduct the survey.

Visa Charges - It was noted that Bill Rammell is particularly honest in saying the reality of the situation. He had stated to presidents in discussions that Britain was in a unique position in its 'right of appeal'. It was also discussed that lobbying would be useful as MPs were not particularly aware of all the issues. The Aldwych group would lobby their local Lords and seek joint letters between institutions and unions to lobby against.

Employability - There was a discussion on careers services and rates of employment from Russell Group institutions. Kings had a really good careers service, as did Oxbridge who produced a 359 page careers guide. There was also discussion in the AUT and its relationship with NUS and the musings of another lecturers strike.

AOB - There was a discussion on the role of grade boundaries and the use of transcripts with Nottingham having reservations on the competition for the top 5%. They also argued that extra-curricular activities should be included in transcripts.

Friday 4<sup>th</sup> - HEFCE Annual Meeting. This meeting was titled 'A strategic plan for the future of higher education'. This was a great introduction into HEFCE and a chance to see their current thinking. I discussed the NPC and regeneration through education with David Young (Chairman of HEFCE) before the meeting. This was particularly interesting as I had studied urban regeneration and one of the subsequent presentations was on 'Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society'. I also spoke with Chris Hall who works on secondment from HEFCE for the Universities Colleges Employers Association. He was aware of the NPC and had friends who had previously been involved in NPC.

A strategic plan for the future of higher education 2006-2011 — This was the first presentation reflecting the evolution of the plan from 2003-2008 plan and would involve stakeholders in producing a new strategic plan in April 2006. There was a consideration of the context with an inclusive society with government issues of tolerance and freedom coupled with the responsibility to protect civil society. In enhancing excellence in learning and teaching there was a need to consider international standards and an increasing need to focus on the University's clients, students and the local community. A key theme of this presentation was knowledge transfer and enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society.

Enhancing the contribution of HE to the economy and society - this was perhaps the most interesting presentation and leads to a wider set of considerations, not least in our approach for RDAs to support postgraduate education. Increasingly with economic competition from China and India it was argued that we need to re-define sources of comparative advantage with innovation and added value. The government had set itself target of 2.5% Research and Development of GDP by 2014 (although the EU has set itself 3% target in same period). It was noted in some sectors such as pharmaceuticals we were on a similar level to the US if not ahead and that we may need to define how we measure R&D if we are not to fail meeting this target. In considering RDAs it was interesting to note that 'In countries such as the US there is convergence of prosperity across regions. In the UK there is divergence' (Michael Porter).

There were questions raised on who should pay for what can be seen as commercial benefits. Furthermore there was a supply side push but what was this doing on demand. 80% companies had no link with the HE system. In Holland for instance vouchers were provided to purchase training and research. There were also concerns on the tension between the benefit to UK plc or to institutions. Protecting IP would give short term gains to institution but long term difficulty for UK plc. There was also a consideration of the tension with the ethics of engagement with business over knowledge transfer.

The final session was a question and discussion session in which the panel including the HEFCE chairperson and chief executive were asked what the big issues for the sector were in the next ten years. They responded that these were: Clients - external stakeholders, students, employers, and community. The focus on lifelong learning would mean we look to students over a long period as dipping in and out of education. Institutional positioning - Universities have to identify strengths and focus on their strengths. There would be an increasing need for specific branding and marketing.

Globalisation - Have to maintain as sector and institution members of international community. UK sees as and maintained as one where lots of people want to participate. Have to look to worldwide trends and how to follow them.

Collaboration - How to collaborate with competitors. Attending the HEFCE meeting and from my regeneration perspective we are in a position through the NPC to support the increasing involvement of postgraduates in society and the value of research and education to communities.

### **Week Commencing 7<sup>th</sup> November**

Started the week on my birthday but most of the weeks activities were in preparation for the OGM and in administrative matters. On Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> I visited Warwick University and met with Quad Research to discuss the project. Subsequently this has been authorised using the prospects funding. Friday 11<sup>th</sup> Tom Bell from Warwick University visited me to discuss postgraduate support and facilities. He is conducting research visiting institutions around the UK as part of a project for Warwick but was keen to add postgraduate support explicitly to his research. This was a good chance to discuss ideas and he found this very useful and I am hoping to share his results with npc when he presents them. Saturday and Sunday was the OGM. This was a great opportunity for affiliates and non-affiliates to discuss postgraduate issues and we were pleased to welcome Keele and the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group together with Warwick, UWE, Lancaster, Sussex, Nottingham, LSE and ULU and Dr Francis Vella from Eurodoc.

### **Week Commencing 14th November 2005**

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> — Rugby Team Meeting evaluating research skills development of Early Career Researchers. Issue of establishing key performance indicators was seen with suspicion, especially difference in measurement for students and institutions. The use of CROS (Careers in Research Online Survey) which is not a student satisfaction survey would allow data to be gathered on skills and training.

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> — Birmingham University Graduate School Student Council (GSSC). Attended first one. Noted NPC to representatives. Similar concerns as at national level and particularly what the GSSC would do for student. There was a feeling that highlighting skills development from doing other activities such as representation to develop communication, presentation, speaking and writing skills needed emphasis to encourage involvement.

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> — QAA Code of Practice Working Group on Assessment. This was a small session of eight people discussing final wording before public consultation. We all agreed that the consideration of research student assessment fits best with the code of practice for research students.

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> — UUK. Met with UUK to present plan of activities for year ahead and discuss collaboration. Also met with Catherine Marston (UUK International Policy Advisor) to discuss Visa appeals and how best to influence MPs and Lords.

### **Week Commencing 21st November 2005**

Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> — ISF. Went to Manchester to attend meeting of the International Students Festival Group. The NPC will be supporting the ISF and will have a workshop session.

Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> — PG London Network. Attended the PG officers network with officers from Imperial, Queens, LSE and ULU present. There was a brief discussion on OGM ULU rep had attended and a workshop on how each university supports their postgraduates.

Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> — NUS. Met with Kat Fletcher to discuss NUS and NPC. Met with NUS staff and discussed working together.

HEPI Annual Lecture — Attended the HEPI Annual Lecture by Alec Broers. Lord Broers discussed Broadening the base of undergraduate degrees with specialism in postgraduate study and the need for further funding through implicit call for removal of the 3k fee cap.

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> — Aldwych. This took place at Birmingham. There were discussions on postgraduates with reps from several unions concerned over their support for postgraduates. Nottingham noted the 4th year writing up and council tax issue which NPC will be working on. A discussion on the impact of fees on postgraduates commissioned BUGS rep and myself to look at providing evidence.

The right of appeal for Visas would have its 2nd reading on 6th December and I wrote to 20 Lords to highlight the impact it would have on students.

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup>/Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> — MSU Conference. Attended this with Andre Oboler. Margaret (President) launched a Mature Students Information Service which had funding for a pilot. NPC would work with MSU on information leaflets of mutual use such as funding, housing, council tax.

### **Week Commencing 28th November 2005**

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> — BUGS. Had regular meeting with President to discuss postgraduate issue and support.

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> — Staffordshire University. Visited the Education Officer, discussed course reps, council tax exemption for writing up students. Staffs have elected a new PG officer.

THES — Spoke with the News Editor regarding joint survey. We had 117 responses and these were favourable towards supervisors and their relationships with students, though 30% supervisors was not good at communicating with students and 25% not taking students concerns seriously

#### **Week Commencing 5th December 2005**

Thursday 8th — NPC/THES survey results and information published.

Friday 9th — BUGS/NPC Aldwych project. Continued work on research and contacted local MP to ask Bill Rammell question and see references in Hansard.

Also work on council tax and writing up students for Nottingham.

#### **Week Commencing 12 December 2005**

Tuesday 13th — Keele. Visited Keele Postgraduate Association with Marilyn. Saw clubhouse and social space. Attended the Postgraduate Executive Liaison Committee, chaired by Dean of Graduate School. The dean was very enthusiastic and welcomed the NPC.

Following meeting attended the KPA AGM. The KPA presented their plan for a sabbatical chair which prompted a debate between the representatives of the union and the KPA. Wednesday 14th/ Thursday 15th — NEC. Attended the NUS NEC meeting at ULU. NUS presented the findings of the MORI research into the perception of NUS. There was support for engaging in legal cases with universities to represent the student movements interests. There was a discussion on creating transparency in financial affairs. Affiliations were considered best way if there was accountability.

Friday 16th — Aldwych. This took place at Cardiff. I was able to discuss postgraduate support with the College President of Humanities & Science and President and able to look at the Graduate Centre. There were presentations on the Bologna Process and also NUS Extra and the MORI report.

#### **Week Commencing 3rd January 2006**

Thursday 5th — THES. A letter I wrote responding the article 'The Postgrad Cashpot' was published.

There are responsibilities not just riches in seeing postgraduates as the best source for future income ('The postgrad cashpot'). Postgraduate students are vital for the research development of our universities and carry increased responsibilities and needs. An increase in postgraduate numbers demands greater responsibility in supervision standards, welfare support and representation. The marketisation of higher education and the spillover of increasing undergraduate fees into postgraduate education will decrease the attractiveness of further study, particularly for domicile students, and will increase the burden of debt for those continuing to study. At a time when the European Commission notes that Europe is 700,000 scientists short of reaching the Lisbon goal of a competitive and dynamic set of knowledge driven economies we should be increasing our financial, representational and welfare support and encouraging the development and support of research rather than considering postgraduates as a short term 'cashpot'.

#### **Week Commencing 9th January 2006.**

Wednesday 11th/ Thursday 12th — Rugby Team Workshop. Attended this workshop at Aston University where the Rugby Team presented their report and seek sector approval. I was able to meet up with people I had met previously from Keele, Cardiff and meet new people from Exeter and Northumbria. I am hoping to further this relationship with Exeter and encourage them to reaffiliate.

There were a series of facilitated workshops. I helped lead one on KPIs for Roberts Funding to RCUK with Jon Turner from Edinburgh University

The following day there was an exploration of the themes from the first day and sharing experience. These workshops followed a discussion on early stage researchers and 'postdocs'. One session focussed on early stage researchers and then people applied that session to 'postdocs' and vice versa to a number of different questions

The conclusion of the two days was the need to go back to the Rugby Team report and to consider a concern over some KPIs and some of the issues and student engagement in the process but the mood of those present was it should be adopted sectorally.

Thursday 12th — UCL. Due to my commitment with the Rugby Team Dries and Duncan were able to deliver a discussion on the NPC to UCL.

Weeklong — I was able to respond to the HEFCE 2006-11 Consultation and the EPSRC Training Consultation. EPSRC briefly responded to the NPC response below:

*Thank you for taking the time to provide input to our draft strategy, which will be reviewed alongside all the other responses received. In response to your point on the UK GRAD Programme, I agree that this is a very important activity and EPSRC continues to work very closely with CRAC (the current provider of the UK GRAD programme) on both postgraduate and post doctoral training issues.*

I have also referred the PREQ HEA researcher experience to the NPC and passed on comments to UK GRAD for collation.

#### **Week Commencing 16th January 2006.**

Tuesday 17th — NUS. I attended the NUS Annual Reception at the House of Commons. I was able to discuss postgraduates briefly with Kat and Julian together with Ian Gibson MP. This was the launch of Coalition 2010.

Wednesday 18th — NUS Open Education Taskforce. This is a group seeking to develop a strategy for 2005/2006 but aiming for a two year strategy to work out education campaigning outside of the Education Priority Campaign. Strategy has five activities: Student Feedback and Quality, Admissions and Fair Access, Equality and Fairness for Students, Partnerships, and Europe. The discussion of the meeting which covered NUS officers, staff, and FE representatives and myself moved to establishing firmer ideas and differentiating between a set of ideas and to more focused aims

Saturday 21st/Sunday 22nd — MSC/CSC. These took place at BUGS in Birmingham. The MSC saw the reports of officers and a discussion on the forthcoming OGM together with a discussion on the conference. We are working on themes of Funding Representation.

The CSC discussed issues including a Chairs ruling, minutes and the OSCR Consultation on changes to recognising Charities in Scotland.

#### **Week Commencing 23rd January 2006.**

Tuesday 24th — EthOS. Meeting with one of Birmingham University Library staff involved in the EthOS project. Ran through and discussed set of questions to evaluate the project for students which the NPC would help to distribute and highlight.

Thursday 26th — Aldwych. This took place in Leeds. There were discussions on NSS meetings. Unite was discussed with the use of Unite a problem for several unions and students, there was a question over whether comparatively they are not as bad as private housing.

PGCE Fees. The lobby day would be the same as the FE lobby with the national lobby on 1st March. Unions were asked to ask their students to make appointments with their MPs for the 1st March and get them to sign up to the EDM.

Saturday 28th — ISF. Currently 26 institutions are taking part. Institutions participating would have 50 tickets to sell at £10 with non-participating and the public paying £20 plus booking fee. There are approx. 2000 places overall with 1000 coming from the participating ticket allocation.

There will be seminars during the Saturday with the NPC allocated an hour slot to discuss The UK Postgraduate Experience — A world Experience.

#### **Activities**

ALDWYCH GROUP — I have attended four meetings so far. These have been good to ensure postgraduate representation and to meet officers from unions.

Ongoing research related to the cap on undergraduate fees will also consider the impact of fees on students continuing to study research. Early parliamentary question responses indicate year on year fall in Science and Technology subjects.

Other issues discussed have included the NSS, graduate employment and debt and wider reforms regarding the Russell Group and UUK.

- KCL 3rd November 2005
- BUGS 25th November 2005
- Cardiff 16th December 2005
- Leeds 26th January 2006

LETTERS — I have been able to write letters in a campaigning and support capacity.

- I have written to 20 Lords regarding the second reading of the Immigration Bill. The letter is currently online under the campaigns section.

- Letter to Boris Johnson highlighting the NPC views on postgraduate issues as part of his engagement with students. Boris is currently seeking student feedback and has responded that he would welcome
- Letter in support of Keele Postgraduate Association's plan for a full time sabbatical chair. I received a letter in reply thanking for our helpful views on this matter.

### **AFFILIATES**

We are currently on target to exceed last years affiliates. We have had successful meetings with UCL to highlight our ongoing development and a rapprochement with Imperial is aiming to gain their reaffiliation. We have had a number of new affiliates

- Paisley
- UHI
- Keele
- Brunel

I am in discussions with Manchester and have presented information for their executive committee to consider affiliation. Exeter have been in discussions and I have liaised with a member of their university staff with the hope of encouraging reaffiliation.

### **PROJECTS**

- International Students Festival. This will be taking place later this year on the 8th/9th April in Manchester. I have attended meetings with Benson and we have agreed to a stall and presentation from the NPC to international students under the working title "The UK Postgraduate Experience — The World Experience"
- Updating the website. This has been an ongoing project and I have been attempting to tweak areas until we are able to relaunch in the coming year. I have tidied up the consultations to sub-divide them into years to avoid a long list of responses. I have also introduced a Database of Practice and What is, Where can I find, How do I.... Sections. Within the reforms I am making the minutes of meetings more available and intend to also provide affiliation figures to make a more discernible link between what affiliates spend and what they get.
- Market Failure of Postgraduate Education. This work has been commissioned and I will be meeting with Quad Research to discuss the emphasis of the project. Failing to secure the remaining funding the projects depth will be limited but not width.
- Little Postgraduate Handbook, and Information Leaflets. These are part of a wider move to explain items on the website under the Where can I find, How do I....section. I have examined a series of such leaflets and intend to work on establishing the series.
- League Tables/Best Practice Awards. I have initially started off the Database of Practice on the website to encourage dialogue and ideas sharing in a similar idea to the UKGRAD database. This should act as a precursor to highlighting good practice.
- Writing Up Guidelines. I am hoping to produce with Tim RP some guidelines we can launch on writing up students. I would also like to produce and launch some specific guidelines on Complaints and Appeals, and Supervision alongside. Supervision is a topic that is becoming increasingly significant.

### **International**

- CAPA. I have been in contact with the Australian Council of Postgraduate Association. They are facing difficult times as their Federal government passed legislation in Dec 2005 that will prevent universities from charging a compulsory student fee which funded student organisations.
- Eurodoc unfortunately has been hit by funding difficulties to the 2006 event alongside an early bid date that has prevented the NPC from making representations for the 2007 event. The delegates attending the Eurodoc 2006 Conference in Bologna will be Katerina Tsoukala from Sussex and Simon Felton, General Secretary.

### **NUS**

I have met with Kat Fletcher and discussed ongoing collaboration. This is to be followed by a meeting between the NUS and NPC on greater partnership in March.



Discussion then turned to the "big move," now delayed until at least 2009/10 (suggestions that we might be better served by investing in property in each Region, rather than one big centre).

Education Campaign. NUS plus five teaching Unions are the core membership of Coalition 2010, there is talk of drafting in a PVC from Warwick Uni so that NUS is not chairing the Coalition. The British Youth Council have joined up as well, by all accounts.

Next was setting the provisional date for next (academic) year's National Education Demo! The basic decision came down to it being late October/early November and hopefully on a Sunday to facilitate involvement by FE students limited by the EMA.

Estimates for 2006/07. According to Gemma Tumelty, the Estimates are the "most political document" NUS produces, because they "say where the money's going." However, while they were three weeks ahead of the position last year (i.e. they exist!), the Estimates are still by no means complete. This is to be discussed via email and in two separate groups at Regional Conferences, and then emailed out to everyone.

Schools White Paper and Daniel Randall's motion, entitled Defend State Education. It was decided that the reference to religion would have to be removed from Resolves 1 due to Conference policy in favour of faith schools. Wes Streeting then proposed parts to remove Believes 2 (about New Labour going further than the Tories) from the motion in a recorded vote. In favour were Jess Kosmin, Derfel Owen, Pav Akhtar, Stephen Brown, Ellie Russell, Julian Nicholds, Mel Ward, Wes Streeting, Jo Salmon and Judith Niven. Against were Joe Rukin, Daniel Randall, Peter Leary and Veronica King, with Benson Osawe, Dan Chilcott, Jamal El-Shayyal, Dylan Williams and Sian Davies all abstaining (Gemma Tumelty was in the Chair and thus unable to vote). Thus, the part was removed.

Next, Jamal El-Shayyal proposed the removal of Notes 1, as it was not the precise text of the Government's proposals. The four Labour Students present voted alongside Jamal on this one, with everyone else against it. However, Wes Streeting then proposed removing "break...by", "...ing," and "free" from Resolves 1, thus noting "The government's announcement that it intends to hand control of schools to private, religious and 'voluntary' organisations in a market." The Labour Students, alongside Benson Osawe, Jamal El-Shayyal, Derfel Owen, Dan Chilcott, Ellie Russell and Jess Kosmin carried this over everyone else's opposition. Next, Jamal El-Shayyal proposed removing "religious" from Notes 1, but only he voted in favour of that change and so it fell, albeit with Veronica King abstaining.

Julian Nicholds then took parts to remove "'On Course' Priority" from Resolves 4, with the four Labour Students, the proposer, Stephen Brown, Veronica King, Sian Davies, Ellie Russell, Derfel Owen, Pav Akhtar and Peter Leary in support, only Dan Chilcott and Daniel Randall against, and Joe Rukin, Jess Kosmin and Benson Osawe in abstention. Thus, the proposals now fall under the education campaign more generally.

Finally, Mel Ward proposed the removal of "of privatisation" from Believes 1. After a rather sarcastic and impassioned rebuttal from Daniel Randall, the Labour Students, Derfel Owen and Dan Chilcott voted in favour, with Daniel Randall, Joe Rukin, Julian Nicholds, Peter Leary, Pav Akhtar, Dylan Williams and others successfully voting to keep the text where it was. In the end, the vote in favour of the (somewhat shorter!) motion was unanimous.

The next item was from Benson Osawe on the International Students' Campaign budget, requesting funding to travel to Joint Education Taskforce meetings and also an extra £1000 for the campaign, as the bulk of the budget has already been spent and the budget code frozen by order of Finance Committee. Mr. Osawe had been supposed to communicate the nature and purpose of JET so a London-based officer could fill in for him, rather than the NUS having to pay for his car journeys to and from Manchester. Pav Akhtar was supportive of the necessity of Benson, as International Students' Officer, attending the JET meetings, and so the compromise was reached for Messrs. Osawe and Rukin to discuss ways around the current situation.

Next was an extremely brief item from Jamal El-Shayyal on statements & accuracy, relating to the way something he said about other people passing comment on matters religious had been reported, after which he had to leave, meaning that Wes Streeting took over his item on NEC seating about whether the NEC sat at ground level or on the stage at Conference. As the decision being made now would not affect Conference 06, no real conclusion was reached. The final item was a formality brought by Pav Akhtar, approving £2000 for the Islamophobia campaign.

Tuesday 31st January. I was due to present an NPC presentation to Manchester. Unfortunately was unable to deliver presentation but was able to leave David the Academic officer with the slides and handout to which he promised to pass on to the rest of the exec.

Friday 3rd February. Met with Quad Research at Birmingham regarding the Market Failure survey. This was planned for end of February. The draft is an early version showing questions for an online survey.

Saturday 4th/Sunday 5th February. OGM at Cranfield University. This was opened with an interactive discussion on problems and solutions led by Dries, Project officer. The formal meeting then followed with delegates from Nottingham, York, Sussex, ULU, MSU, Glasgow, Strathclyde, Cranfield, Bristol and Essex. We also welcomed Peter Norrington from Luton University. The Gen Sec proposed the Psychological Postgraduate Public Affairs Group become an associate member which was unanimously agreed. The motions section led to a response to the Oxford Contract issue being proposed by General Sec. A motion was also proposed to investigate collaboration with the Guerrand-Hermes foundation for peace. These were both passed. Ismail Malik was elected as UKCGE Winter Conference delegate and HEA Research and Teaching forum representative.

Alex Higgins was elected to the vacant position of Project Officer.

Following the OGM there was a session led by Martin Gough and Duncan on plans for the new pN and Journal of Graduate Education and a 'Cranfield Experience' on how Cranfield supports its students in a PG only institution.

The following day saw a discussion on the planned PG handbook and how to complement existing information but aim for information to act as a guide to a students rights as a postgrad. Tim Roll-Pickering led a session on department closures and how to move forward before a session on the Market Failure draft survey. This gathered information and ideas for the survey and a discussion on explicit outcomes.

#### **Week Commencing 6th February 2006**

Thursday morning met with Steve at Aston University to discuss issues regarding the conference. Thursday afternoon met with Richard Angell, BUGS president for regular meeting. A personal situation occurred on Thursday which limited my activities for following two weeks.

#### **Week Commencing 13th February 2006**

Tuesday 14th — Attended UKCGE Winter Conference. Following the conference introduction the keynote speech was "The Case for Centralised Postgraduate Admissions Services" from Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive of UCAS. In this he highlighted project and the request for such provision from several universities. In the ensuing debate he noted and clarified that this would be for PG Taught but with option of those requesting it of research level. I was able to chat with Anthony briefly and have discussed NPC involvement in the project.

There were then three workshops: Herding Cats: Recruitment Marketing in the Postgraduate Arena; Ethics and Governance in Organisations; and Implications of concentration trends of Postgraduate Research? I attended the Implications of concentration trends of postgraduate research which discussed the threat to institutions of funding being channelled into 4 and subsequently 5 and above departments. It was considered the need to respond with national and regional initiatives such as in Finland with universities working in collaboration in areas where a critical mass is difficult for one university.

Following the AGM and Lunch there were three workshops: Admission procedures for PGR and PGT — the case for review; Linking Governance and Ethics in Health and Social Care Research; and a continuation of the Implication of Concentration trends of Postgraduate Research. I attended the First workshop on Admission procedures which noted legal protection for universities in how students can sue against published facts such as 'research environment'.

The plenary session allowed people to reflect on the day but most of the comments were concerned with the UCAS presentation on postgraduate admissions.

I was able to discuss the NPC with David Watson, Senior Research Degrees Administrator for Northampton University who has suggested if the NPC's worth can be proven the Graduate School will pay for the students union to affiliate.

The evening of Tuesday 14th February I went to Sheffield University to meet with the Education Officer and was planning to explain the NPC to postgraduate students. Unfortunately I was only able to discuss the NPC with George and a member of the Postgraduate Committee. We were able to discuss mutual concerns, specific Sheffield problems and involvement in national projects. Among the problems highlighted was the lack of a 'student supervisor contract' and the benefit that this would bring.

Thursday 16th February I attended the Student Retention and Progression in Higher Education: Creating a Supportive Learning Environment Conference at the Barbican in London. This was well attended by VCs and registrars. I ran a workshop in the afternoon on Supporting PhD students which was well attended and chaired a useful discussion on external examiners, the student-supervisor contract and chairing o recording the viva.

Friday 17th February was the QAA Roundtable on Securing and Maintaining Academic Standards: Benchmarking M level Awards. This was well attended with VCs and Pro-VCs. Following a presentation by David Eastwood (new head of HEFCE) on benchmarking people divided into groups to discuss four questions. The conclusion reached in the group and the workshops overall was that subject benchmarking should be voluntary but that the benchmarking should be to establishing 'm-levelness'. This was felt to be an appropriate response to Bologna and protecting our M level in comparison to other European countries. There was also a discussion regarding the learning outcome rather than credit outcome and the value of M-levelness in PG Diploma, PG Certificate etc and ensuring that although they are considered differently they all reflect M-levelness.

#### **Week commencing 20th Feb 2006**

I have however been in discussion with Liverpool over reaffiliating and am currently this week negotiating our value and for affiliation.

I have also been in discussion with UCAS over the Taught Postgraduate Admissions and am arranging a meeting to discuss student involvement in the project planning.

The Market Failure survey is progressing with a launch planned in the coming weeks.

#### **Week Commencing 27th February**

27th Feb — With three other members of Aldwych group, had dinner with Bill Rammell. We discussed a number of issues, HE funding, bursaries, anonymous marking, charities bill and postgraduates.

#### **HE Funding**

- Labour are not coming forward with any position on the cap on fees until after the 2008 review.
- Bill disputed debt figures and we corrected him. He estimated that student debt (with £3000 fees) will be £15,000. We told him that our debt had reached around £15,000! We made clear the real debt situation.
- Labour's tax policy; Bill said that Labour had increased tax and that HE will NOT be the priority for public funding in the foreseeable future. Labour will continue to seek to alleviate financial burden for the poorest students.

#### **Bursaries**

- Richard explained in detail the situation with bursaries, OFFA agreements, and that government shifting home income threshold boundaries. Bill seemed to be extremely interested in how the bursary scheme was working on the ground and pledged to look into it further; with Richard providing him with more information.
- We all expressed our desire for OFFA to have more power; it was suggested that OFA make universities consult with SUs on changes to OFFA agreements.
- We expressed our difficulty in getting involved with the process of deciding on bursary levels. We described how bursary and scholarship arrangements were often pushed through on the nod at University Council (and bodies like that), with little discussion or scrutiny.

#### **Anonymous Marking**

- Katie brought up the issue of anonymous marking and asked if the DfES were getting involved in HE at all? Bill said 'no'; we remain sceptical.
- We let Bill know about the situation at Essex where lecturers are lobbying students to keep marking non-anonymous.

#### **Charities Bill**

- Generally positive. We welcomed being regulated by the Charities Commission; Universities are using it as an opportunity to incorporate SUs into their institutions. We expressed that we are fighting to keep our autonomy.
- Bill asked us about our own student governing bodies and we expressed that:
  1. students have literally built their Unions from the ground
  2. student exec members are more responsible the more responsibility they are given
  3. Bill recognised the expertise that students have in running services for students

### Post Graduates

- We highlighted some of the more concerning financial troubles facing PG's. Most notably we pointed out the problems of the 'writing up' period of the PhD, where often funding has dried up, and students are suddenly expected to pay council tax etc.
- We talked about the possibility of deferring PG fees.
- Bill hinted that he thought that the financial burden on students studying things like Law, PGCEs, Medicine needed looking at. But he didn't budge on giving away what he thought about PGCE fees

1st March — attended the QAA Annual Reception launching the annual report. Met members of the board and discussed issues with Peter Williams (meeting arranged to discuss issues subsequently) and discussed briefly union relationship with Paul Mackney (NATFHE General Sec).

2nd March — Some handover training and postgraduate issues work with Postgraduate officer at BUGS.

### **Week Commencing 6th March 2006**

6th March — Completing the Eurodoc Questionnaire.

7th March — Regular meeting NUS at NUS HQ. Marilyn in attendance. Discussed various issues including Quad Survey and AUT/NATFHE issues.

Discussed Council Tax exemption and establishing precedent from QMUL tribunal. Subsequently another tribunal has ruled against a student so the exemption is still subject to university and local authority.

NPC is able to put mailings into the NUS fortnightly mailing which is extremely useful. Likewise we can send information via 'The Brief' email list.

Discussed a joint NUS / NPC document on Complaints and Appeals.

9th — 12th March — Eurodoc Annual Conference: Bologna, Italy. The Conference was organised by the Italian member of Eurodoc, ADI (Associazione Dottorandi e Dottori di Ricerca Italiani). The theme of the conference was "From research training to innovation in Europe".

The welcome was given by Prof Luigi Busetto, VC of Bologna University, Sergio Cofferati, Mayor of Bologna, Dr Francis Vella, President of Eurodoc and Francesco Maurillo, President of ADI-Bologna.

The keynote address was by D O Quintin (Directorate Education and Culture, EU) and was titled "Education as the Asset to Knowledge Based Economy". In this he talked about the state of education in Europe in comparison to the USA. He noted that only 2 universities in Europe fall in top 20 in the world and that 2/3 of Professors will retire in next 2-6 years. This was coupled with a brain drain to the USA due to better research opportunities which overall was a worrying situation for Europe. Other issues raised were leadership universities, high unemployment levels amongst PhD graduates and the large number of doctorates employed on contract basis.

The Bologna and Lisbon process was a good road map for improvement. Key aims and importance was breaking down barriers by 2010 to allow students to spend one term or semester in another university abroad and spending a minimum of 2% of national GDP in education and research. Universities should be encouraged to provide more marketable skills but should be careful not to become a market place. There should be a fair access regardless of social and economic background and an effort to integrate doctoral research into the work environment.

Questions posed by the speech were about obstacles posed to mobility and exchange by UK fee paying system with the response that there should be a way of combining both systems.

Round tables and workshops:

1) The demand of industries, the offer of universities and the key role of Young researchers in transferring knowledge.

The session was chaired by Prof. F. Trifiro, Dean of the Faculty of Industrial Chemistry, Bologna. Paulo Annunciato of Confindustria, Italy, stated that funding from industry to university research was related to number of patents and publications produced by a university and the utility of these to industry. The need for unconstrained research by universities is responsible for low funding by industry. He criticised universities for not caring about the applicability of their research and for not marketing themselves. Paulo proposed a 50% tax rebate for products that are outcomes of university and industry collaborated research. Dr. Raffaele Liberali (Director of human factor, mobility and Marie Curie activities, EC, DG Research) stated that although there is a high level and number of research in Europe, there is an inability to transfer these to growth compared to other emerging economies and the USA. Intersectoral mobility is limited by industrial researchers being considered second best to academic researchers. Most PhDs too trained for academia and division between industry and academic no meaning. PhDs should be able to transfer

between industry and academia more easily like in Scandinavian countries.

Dr. Carlo Ottaviani (Corporate Vice President Communication STMicroelectronics) threw light on the activities of his company in the areas of research. The company spends 18% of its sales on R&D. According to him, it is common culture in most organisations to reduce R&D if there is a crisis and a need for job cuts but this is opposite in their company. He complained about "ivory tower" research in the universities which failed to meet demand.

Dr. Alberto Sarti (FINMECCANICA) stated that his company tends to co-operate more with US universities than European ones. One of the reasons cited for this was the absence of clear leadership and departmental autonomy which creates bureaucratic barriers for industries in an attempt to co-operate.

2) The Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. Good practices, monitoring implementation and the way forward.

This session was chaired by Sieglinde Gruber (EC, DG research and development). Prof. Jean-Patrick Connerade (chair of Euroscience) emphasised the need to treat scientists and researchers properly in order to create more wealth in Europe. He said the aim of the charter was to ensure that Europe can retain its scientists and attract more talents from different continents. Critical consideration was needed for minimum dignity and social security for people doing research. The wide acceptance of the charter and the upcoming conference on the charter in 2007, in London, is an encouraging news.

Dr. Anna Maria Eleutri (Head of Charter for Researchers in Europe Office, University of Camerino) gave a snapshot of practical application of the charter in her university. A fair research environment is provided for all researchers and a copy of the charter is included in the welcome pack for new researchers. All researchers also have access to the UNICAM mobility scheme and efforts are made to encourage inter departmental co-operation. In line with treating researchers as professionals, starting grants are provided and funds are allocated for staff training. There is also an attractive salary condition, defined duties for all researchers, and involvement of new researchers in decisional organs. Gender balance is taken care of through a gender balanced composition of the selection panel during recruitment. UNICAM also promotes the charter through the association of Italian rectors and has developed a website to monitor the implementation of the charter.

3) Ensuring the quality and attractiveness of supervision and training.

This session was led by Gill Clarke from the QAA with a focus led on the experience of the UK. The contrasts with other countries was explored with Jean Chambaz of the European University Association also contributing.

4) Geographic Mobility: Can a researcher's career be built across Europe?

This was chaired by Magda Lola (Marie Curie Fellowship Association) had Marssimo Serpieri (EC, DG R&D) and Jan Taplik (EMBO) as guest speakers. It was noted that there are different forms of mobility in academia of which geographic mobility is one. Other problems such as funding, social security, visas and diploma recognition are still issues to be considered. Steps being taken at EU level to improve geographic mobility include the introduction of the scientific visa directive in 2005 which is linked to work permit. This is to enhance the movement of scientists in Europe and should take less than 30 days to grant from day of application. It is expected that the directive will be translated into member law by 2007. Other resources such as the Researchers mobility portal (<http://europa.eu.int/eracareers> and ERAMORE are aimed at increasing mobility.

Jan Taplik gave insight into the EMBO program which is aimed at increasing mobility of those involved in molecular biology research. He advised that researchers should seek feedback on unsuccessful applications as this can be very useful for improving subsequent applications.

Private Eurodoc Meetings

The Friday meeting was on the presentation of the yearly report by the board and new members/enlargement. The general assembly accepted the yearly report of the board as satisfactory. The second part of the meeting focused on enlargement and new members. In all 6 new countries (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Switzerland and Macedonia) applied to become members with Turkey asking to be an observer. All the countries except Macedonia were accepted. This brings to 26 the total number of countries that are members of EURODOC.

The Saturday meetings considered policy decisions and elections. The draft internal regulations were presented by the president for discussion and review. It was suggested and agreed that, different parts of the regulation will be discussed every 2 weeks online and suggestions incorporated into the final report. The final report will then be put to a vote and subsequent adoption by the general assembly. The assembly elected Raffaella Ockinger, current Chair of the Swedish doctoral students' association SDok, as new

President of EURODOC. Raffaella, who is Italian but married to a Swedish, is a doctoral candidate at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. The composition of the newly elected Board is as follows:

President: Raffaella Ockinger, Sweden

Vicepresident: Tine Ejdrup, Denmark

Treasurer: Harpreet Singh, UK

Secretary: Dunja Potocnik, Croatia

Member: Dejan Caglic, Slovenia

Member: Ingrid Chanefo, France

Member: Raquel Santos, Portugal

### **Week Commencing 13th March.**

Tuesday 4th — Meeting with BUGS Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) Welfare advisor on Birmingham issues and presentation to welfare tutors at Birmingham.

Preparation for 4th Annual Postgraduate Conference.

Launch of NPC — Prospects Survey on the Market Failure of Postgraduate Education.

### **Week Commencing 20th March.**

Monday 20th — Welfare Tutor Presentation Birmingham University. Helped deliver presentation on issues affecting postgraduate students with case study examples with Welfare Advisor from ARC. Was well received and discussed issues with Director of Student Life. Issues raised found useful and met up with academic Toni Wright who has academic papers on some issues such as student supervisor contract.

Wednesday 22nd — AUT / NATFHE meeting at AUT offices London. This was to discuss mutual relations and to raise issues such as action short of strike. AUT would draft with NATFHE a statement for postgraduate students. I expressed the feeling that idea behind action short of strike valid but major split in NPC and noted the opposition stance from Dries.

Also discussed the Postgraduates that Teach Charter and agreed that would be relaunched Sept/Oct time with new Union UCU. As it is standing policy from both unions this would be reworded and relaunched.

Also discussed working closer as issues similar, concern on RAE funding concentrated and issue of opportunity for research, pension contributions as part of stipends and Sussex. Agreed on regularish meetings.

There was also a need to highlight the new Union but also the introduction of a student fee.

Thursday 23rd — AUT/NATFHE Brain Drain Conference at NATFHE conference centre London. Attended and met up with AUT representatives from meeting on 22nd. Topic was discussion of whether there is brain drain, issue of brain drain and affect on opportunities, students, and employment. DfID and Commonwealth Secretariat had charter for UK institutions for recruiting overseas.

Friday 24th — Met with David Mills from CSAP ESRC project in Birmingham. He noted the NPC work previously with CSAP and the research bid for project looking at 1 + 3 funding. Would note our collaboration previously and if bid successful work with NPC on project.

Met with President of BUGS to look at NPC, developments, policies and postgraduate issues in Birmingham.

### **Week Commencing 27th March**

Monday 27th — Met with suspended supervisor from Cardiff University in Birmingham. She has asked for support as appeal relates to 'improper relations with student'. Has important implications for student-supervisor relationship. Excessive proscription at Cardiff. Subsequently will be appearing as witness for defence at employment tribunal in Cardiff in June.

Tuesday 28th — 30th — NUS Annual Conference. Stall holder meeting several NPC delegates and contacts and highlighting our issues. James Groves and Andre Oboler helped man stall and met up with Margaret Davine from MSU.

Noticeable comments were over time in getting Conference Floor Observer. Despite allowance in Constitution and possibility to address conference this took over a day to organise.

Controversial elements included the election of President, with Gemma Tumelty winning. Wes Streeting was elected to VP Education.

Motions included the approval of NUS Xtra for nationwide launch this September.

Sadly the one motion with postgraduates noted was missed due to limit on time for section. Coventry President Ama elected to NEC with mention of postgraduates and working with NPC. Also several friends of

BUGS and NPC elected with George Woods from Sheffield elected, Richard Angell (current president of BUGS), Joe Rooney (formerly of BUGS and current WMANUS co-convenor) and Joe Rukin as Treasurer again. A meeting with Ama from Coventry scheduled to discuss closer relationship and working.

Friday 31st — Academic Registrars Council — Postgraduate Committee — Was invited to present a discussion on best practice and issues for postgraduate students to ARC. This was well received and led onto discussions on assessment, writing up students, PGT and PGR division, and inductions. Other presenters were Janet Bohrer from QAA.

Some institutions considering or have considered a PGT Faculty.

On issue of supervisor contract, Manchester piloting a supervisor agreement. They do not state contract for reasons of litigation, appeals and it being non contractual. Newcastle have a learning agreement which is considered part of a checklist and about realising expectations.

Induction in Liverpool was compulsory. Another institution did not make induction compulsory but if you wanted to attend social event in evening you had to attend induction.

Swansea presented on a Research Student Progress Monitoring electronic system. They also noted that student contract would eventually become the norm as Europeans talk about early career stage researchers. They explained the reasoning for their postgraduate faculty which was to allow monitoring of students.

With regard to writing up students, Swansea considers them students with full access to facilities.

The Swansea electronic system allowed all departments to access records and student to access own record to see what supervisors have written about them. They are able to comment on supervisors interpretation and can challenge it if necessary. The online system can also monitor the Viva and ensure that it takes place within 3 —6 months.

The reporting route for students goes from student supervisor to school research committee where student staff consultative forum feeds in. Student involvement into the faculty, which feeds into senate, is through a student-staff assembly.

On issues such as continuation stage, university has tightened up to prevent student drifting. Swansea does not charge for that but has a sanction that it can. They divide completion into expectation date for submission and a maximum date which covers a writing up period.

Birmingham has a 'period of grace' for 6 months with a fee.

There was a feeling that the research councils should look at completion rates rather than submission.

Sheffield had a situation which had been agreed with students union for exponential fees where it was £5 for 3 months to £300 for 1 year later to encourage students to write up.

On issues of council tax, Reading the 4th year was council tax exempt, this was due to support of unitary authority. Swansea however was just 4th year international students.

There was also a discussion from Sheffield on how to support students with a central graduate room. The use of this was encouraged through delivering useful lectures and information from this room.

There was also a presentation from UCAS on the PG Applications service.

The system is optional to institutions. It would be white labelled so that applications look like institution applying to. It would be on-line only with course information supplied through prospects. It would have a maximum of 10 application choices with choices over extended period of time (e.g. in process 1 — 2 years). Decisions notified through service.

### **Week Commencing 3rd April 2006**

3rd April — BUGS Campus Life Committee preparation. Attended this to support guild submission with notice of issues to consider for postgraduates. Issues raised were surprising to some members of the meeting and postgraduate issues would be raised prominently in the submission.

4th April — 4th Annual Postgraduate Conference. Attended this conference to deliver presentation. I was first speaker and the presentation was well received sparking off discussion.

Dean Hopkin, VC of South Bank University, outlined the developments in PG education with a 3 fold rise in mitigations investigated by OIA.

There was also a quantum leap in indebtedness.

The postgraduate level may not be sustainable with changes in population. There needs to be proper pricing and costing.

Met up with Shell Morgan and Paul Wakeling regarding research being conducted in Manchester and also HEA project considering widening participation at postgraduate level and background of postgraduate students.

Offered NPC support to these research proposals and involvement where feasible.

In evening attended the official opening of the NUS HQ with Tony Benn and Bill Rammell in attendance. Discussed NPC rep from NEC with Joe Rukin.

5th April — HEA Literature Review on the Doctoral Experience advisory group meeting. Attended this at IoE to look at progress and discuss ideas. This review using EPPI centre.

Noted the research NPC done but cannot cite as not focussed purely on PhD students.

The EPPI software would allow crosstabs and interrogation of results.

Following discussion of findings it was agreed to focus report on Assessment of PhD.

6th April — UCAS Project Director Paul McClure came to BUGS to discuss UCAS PG Applications Service. Ran through presentation and discussed student involvement in project. Would subsequently speak to NPC Conference on project to get student feedback.

Noted concerns raised in discussion on Management Sub-Committee List.

7th April — Went to Aston University to discuss conference preparation. Speakers ongoing but looked like a wide diversity.

8th April — International Students Festival in Manchester. Attended with Marilyn. We ran a stall and attracted a number of interested students and students' union officers. Met with newly elected Middlesex President who was aware of NPC through previous treasurer Christabel and would raised affiliation with Middlesex. Also met with Brian Duggan from Warwick, newly elected President.

Helped assist Andre in afternoon workshop on International Postgraduates. Presentation was interesting and had been well received during preparation by QAA.

#### **Week Commencing 10th April 2006**

12th April — QAA Code of Practice on Assessment working group. Attended this with other members of group and discussed further amendments to document and wording.

16th April — Official deadline for NPC — Prospects Survey.

#### **Week Commencing 17th April**

University closed from 17th — 19th with remainder of week taken off for holiday days.

#### **Week Commencing 24th April**

26th April — European Code and Charter Researchers Working Group. This meeting started with a presentation by a doctoral student on her research into 'Searching for Synergy: Policies on Research Careers'.

The charter was a co-ordination to develop soft law. The discussion of an ombudsman was not clear as to a national or European wide.

The remainder of the meeting was taken with discussing the Code and Charter going through each section and discussing how the UK meets the obligations and where its interpretation can be made clearer.

On the position as PhD researchers as students or staff it was decided to make students as students and state explicitly that employees excluded students.

There was a heated discussion on the consideration of university studied in judging merit. Janet from UKGRAD, the NATFHE Union rep alongside myself argued that opportunity and potential should be prioritised over where studied. There were cases with specialist subjects where institution studied at would affect the potential further research opportunities but opportunities through potential should be considered above this.

RCUK would be considering a Funders Forum with a researchers concordat developed.

This would develop a code of practice for the management of researchers. This would be created with the European Code and a mapping exercise of funders expectations.

Janet Metcalfe had attended a European Workshop on implementing the European Code. The European implementation is currently divided into three approaches.

Mediterranean Approach — Sign charter and use as a lever for more funding.

Nordic Approach — Analyse each word and define how to fit in structure.

Governmental Approach — Currently East Europe where they do not have legislation.

There are problems:

No benefits been seen by senior researchers

Seen as a top down document

No interest from industry

Far too much emphasis on mobility.

EU have embedded Charter in FP 7. Impression that is not a condition of funding.

Issues for UK:

Transparency — feedback

Mobility — necessity

International presence of selection panels

Student Issues — pensions.

### **Week Commencing 1st May 2006**

No meetings but preparation and invitations for conference.

### **Week Commencing 8th May**

8th May — NUS NEC Meeting — Camden Town Hall. This meeting was the last of the current NEC with NEC elect in attendance.

Management update — 160k deficit by the end of June. Mainly due to cost of moving from Holloway Road.

Affiliations have increased.

NUS is strongly reliant on affiliation fees. If 5 to 10 big institutions said would not pay then there would be big problems.

Expect August to go into negative cashflow.

Prediction of 500,000 Xtra Cards generating £2m but factoring in costs would expect to generate £1m next year.

TU Partnership Update — Draft strategy. No joined up thinking between NEC and Tus.

1) Working students — joining Tus

2) Nurses, Teachers into Tus

3) Joint campaign work

4) Developing student community and TU development.

AUT/NATFHE — In response to 21 unions opposed to strike, 32 unions wrote to Sally Hunt in support of strike.

Both unions have compromised so UCEA has got the two unions round the discussions table.

I noted the NPC stance and there were a few questions on effects for postgraduate students.

Directory — Noted that NPC was not referred to last year, needs to be added alongside Office of Independent Adjudicator and Scottish Ombudsman.

Mature Students Campaign — From next year there would be standing orders in place.

Ran through what have achieved and projects.

Mature Students Charter

Survey of childcare and mature students officers in students' unions.

Trying to create a definition of Mature student.

National Demo — Would most likely occur end of October.

Motions:

PQA — Passed

Hunger Strikes — Passed

Campaigning for Free Education — Passed

2 Year Degrees — Passed

For Human Rights in China — Passed

Working with UKCOSA — Passed

NUS in Unity with NATFHE and AUT — Passed

Support AUT Pay claim and ongoing action — Passed.

11th May — Rugby Team 06.

This meeting discussed the outcomes of the Rugby Team meeting in Aston and the recommendation of attendees that the Rugby Team continue in some form. Each of the groups that received recommendations discussed their outcomes in implementing recommendations.

UKGRAD Database of Practice — Over 300 submissions. There was a need to consider how to monitor developments and structure.

HEA PREQ. Voluntary survey. Results would be confidential to institution.

Janet noted that the three surveys, CROS, PREQ and PI should be linked together.

HESA. The OECD and EU Commission would be shortly conducting a Careers of Doctoral Holders Survey. This would be similar to the USA Cradle to Grave survey on all doctoral holders.

The question of research students overall or subset of research council funded noted.  
HEA. Happy to set up a project to look at debate on the assessment of the PhD.  
The discussion on the Rugby Team considered what it was there for. Should it be thinktank, advice and guidance or co-ordinating. Following on from the outcomes of the Rugby Team, the Rugby Team 06 would push recommendations of the Strategy paper. The Rugby Team 06 would look at changing its name so people are aware of its title and would look at:  
What is a PhD  
Funding — Roberts  
Internationalisation  
UK Code of Practice for Researchers  
What is a Postdoc  
All of these through the lens of skills training.  
In summary  
Rugby Team 05 — Evaluating Skills Development  
Rugby Team 06 Moving the Skills Agenda Forward

### **Week Commencing 15th May**

18th May — Aldwych Meeting — Oxford University.  
Matters Arising  
Report - Kat (Chair) noted she had sent report of Aldwych activities to Russell Group.  
Mature Students - Drew (Cambs) updated that Russell Group Admissions Group are getting their own legal advice on the issue.

### Letter to Tony.

Campaign to get the PM to listen to students not just VCs, see [www.lettertotony.com](http://www.lettertotony.com).

### Handover Meeting

Kat updated, will be in Edinburgh, accommodation should be book, get in touch ASAP if not. Gemma Tumelty, National President is coming to dinner. Wes Streeting, VP (Education) is running a session of HE Funding. Other sessions and actions:  
- National Student Survey: *organised by Drew (Cambs)/Katy (Notts)*  
- Governance: *A.P. Kat Stark (Chair/Warwick) to ask Seb Ellis, Leeds*  
- Postgraduates: Simon Felton (NPC)  
- Whistle stop tours of govt paper: *organised by Richard (Bham)*  
- Handing university management: *organised by Mike (Notts) & Natalie (LSE)*  
- International students: *organised by Drew (Cambs) maybe ask Wes (NUS)*  
Make sure people know who the event is for, ask for other dealing with HE policy.

### P&G Proposal.

Offer to run management sessions.  
(August or September potentially)

### Aldwych Fund

Discussion on unions contributing money to allow staff member and greater lobbying.

### WP in PG

Papers distributed, please read. Contact Simon Felton (NPC) for copies.  
Part time PO Sabbs discussed  
- Oxford VPC (Graduates)  
-Cambridge- President of Graduate Union

### Women as Governing Bodies

Recommendations need clarifying. Deadline next meeting — 16<sup>th</sup> June

### AOB

Website -*Natalie to update website with successes and history page, including:*

- Pictures (WMANUS Demo, Letter to Tony & International Students Demo)

Open letter to editor Adam Johnson MP - *A.P. Richard (Bham) To write an open letter to the new Secretary of State for Education & Skills refuting his "learn to love" comments.* That students would learn to love top up fees.

In evening attended the HEPI Annual Lecture by HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan on Mono and Multi Culture: the role of universities in learning from each other in today's world.

This was a really interesting lecture and gave me the opportunity to network after. Lord Dearing was in attendance as well as Peter Williams of QAA and other prominent figures in HE.

#### **Week Commencing 22nd May 2006**

Tuesday 23rd attended the Postgraduate Researcher Experience Questionnaire steering group. The survey is aimed at producing results on the experience of students to enhance the institutions ability to support students. It is an online questionnaire survey based on student responses to a set of questions.

The scales are groups of questions which are grouped by theme. These four themes are intellectual climate, infrastructure, supervision and skills development. The survey will collect data on participating gender, ethnicity, age and social background. The big question is whether to use the HEFCE student number or ask questions to find out these details; a big concern with HEFCE numbers is that comments on departments could be traced back to individuals.

#### **Week Commencing 6th June 2006**

Tuesday 6th — Went to Coventry to meet President (Ama) who recently elected to NEC. She expressed interest in postgraduates at NUS Conference and I was keen to discuss how we could work together and ideas for NUS to use in supporting NPC and postgraduates.

Thursday 8th — Met with Donald MacLeod, Education Editor for the Guardian. We discussed developments in the higher education sector and how the Guardian and NPC could work together. Donald outlined on Guardian plans on supporting students to work out how to choose institutions.

In evening of 8th I attended the UCU launch at the British Library. This was a great chance to meet colleagues and to celebrate creation of UCU. Met the General Secretary of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and discussed mutual issues of postgraduates and the large volume of commonwealth students engaged in postgraduate education. We have agreed to meet again and discuss ways to engage.

Saturday 10th — OGM at University of Birmingham. This was the summer OGM which opened with a presentation from Richard Angell, President of BUGS on Women in Governing Bodies. This was followed by a short discussion about the implications and the link to postgraduates and encouraging women into professorships and research.

There were motions tabled on the AUT/NATFHE action short of a strike which was withdrawn due to the pay offer and a motion on Pro-test and the academic freedom to be able to conduct animal research and to be able to discuss this freely without fear of violence. The final motion was on LGBT equality which passed with amendments and was aimed at highlighting discrimination and preventing it in relation to pay for academics and institutional practices to support LGBT academics.

#### **Week Commencing 12th June 2006**

Tuesday 13th attended the Heist Postgraduate Conference on changing postgraduate marketplace. Ran a workshop on the implications of undergraduate fees on postgraduate courses. Was received well and discussed with Heist about possibility and need for longitudinal study on how debt affects prospective postgraduates.

Wednesday 14th attended Office of Science and Innovation (Previously Office of Science and Technology) forum on the research agenda for the next 20 years to help shape government policy. Delivered a presentation on issues affecting postgraduates alongside Iain Cameron on Research Councils and John Bothwell on the creation of a National Research Staff Association for postdoctoral researchers.

- There was a general perception that young researchers from university departments could not use the skills and knowledge they had acquired to greatest effect outside of academe.
- Current training for PhD students (through the GRAD programme) was highly rated.

- The drive to publish in peer-reviewed journals for the RAE was seen to be at the expense of good management of the workforce, links with industry and other sectors, interdisciplinary research and helping to improve the public understanding of science.
- Silo-based disciplinary research structures and educational courses were also limiting interdisciplinary research.
- There was a sense that postdocs feel undervalued, with few chances to move-on from the sort of 'bench work' undertaken during a PhD and increase their responsibility. The vision of researchers from the Roberts report was still a long way off.
- It was recognised that the UK must continue to deliver world-class, peer-reviewed, research. This should not be compromised.

The group work identified some key specific actions that could be taken which would improve the utilisation of young researchers and effectiveness of the research base:

- External placements during PhD, and internships for postdocs, working with industry, education, media etc to improve understanding of what people from other sectors can offer.
- The high quality skills training available for PhDs should be expanded, and offered to postdocs.
- Undergraduate courses should include components from other disciplines, and cross-disciplinary working should be encouraged at post-grad/doc level; should consider more issue-based research.
- A four-year PhD would allow for an external placement, give more time to acquire research skills across different fields, and deliver individuals better acquainted with the research environment and more able to make informed decisions about their careers.
- Postdocs should be given more occasions to take responsibility — allowed to act as co-Principal Investigators on research projects, or given greater opportunity to apply for grants themselves.
- Research should be valued when it results in outcomes other than publications in specific peer-reviewed journals, such as working with industry, articles aimed at wider audience, or feeding into development of government policy.

#### **Week Commencing 19th June 2006**

Thursday 22nd attended the Neil Stewart conference on Student Complaints. Spoke to Baroness Deech and she was supportive of NPC and would happily or if unable, someone else, attend an NPC event.

Friday 23rd went to an Examining Research Degrees UKGRAD event at Lancaster University. I was invited to lead one of the breakout groups and also sit on the final panel to answer questions. This was extremely productive and I met up with Penny Tinkler and Carolyn Jackson, both national recognised for their work on the Viva. The event was extremely useful and was interesting in developing the assessment agenda.

#### **Week Commencing 26th June 2006**

Tuesday 27th I went to Gloucester to meet Peter Williams from QAA and have a meeting with QAA staff about working closely with QAA.

The possibility of NPC supporting, non-financially a Postgraduate and Early Researchers Conference on Quality and Enhancement was mentioned and I said we would be keen to work on that with QAA and SRHE. Also QAA undertaking sector discussion on topics and these include:

Is the definition in section 1 of the code appropriate? Rather than looking for proportions, should we be opting for an alternative definition to take account of different research degree structures such as those in some professional doctorates? What is the status of the MRes. Can / Should difference between subjects in research programmes be highlighted overtly.

#### **Week Commencing 3rd July 2006**

Monday 3rd July — Met with Louise Wringe from Hobsons to discuss mutual work and our NPC — Prospects survey. They would be keen to do the research and would be keen for us and them not to duplicate each others research. Noted the Bill Rammell meeting and they will prepare some data for us to support in meeting with Bill Rammell.

Also met with Jaswinder Gill to discuss legal issues and supporting students. Raised increasing numbers of cases but gagging orders to prevent details being released.

Developments look like moving towards legally challenging OIA in regards to delay in responding to complaints.

Friday 7th went to Glasgow to deliver Postgraduate training in an SRC Diversity Day looking at the other groups within Glasgow such as disability, postgraduates, international students and mature students. Was enjoyable and met with Shona, the incoming President, to discuss ideas and support.

#### **Week Commencing 10th July 2006**

Monday 10th / Tuesday 11th — Attended the Aldwych handover in Edinburgh. Networked with new incoming officers and raised postgraduate issues. LSE should be reaffiliating and Imperial are keen to affiliate with an ambition to also affiliate to NUS. Oxford were keen to discuss affiliation and other unions were supportive and interested in NPC together with attending annual conference.

Delivered training session on postgraduates and encouraged people to attend the annual conference.

Friday 14th — QAA Working Group on Code of Practice for Complaints and Appeals.

Attended group revising the code and noted the particular case of complaints for research students who are making complaints to a very closed community of academics.

Saturday 15th — MSC at Birkbeck College, University of London. This was the management meeting to discuss preparations for the conference and the Eurodoc 2007 Conference bid.

Sunday 16th — FSC at University College London. This was the budget preparation for 2006/07 with one budget as per normal year and one including deficit budget for Eurodoc 2007 Conference.

#### **Week Commencing 17th Jul 2006**

Tuesday 18th attended the NUS/NPC Bilateral meeting. This was first meeting with new President and VP Education. Veronica, VP Welfare was in attendance and was particularly useful for discussing welfare issues and council tax submission. We also discussed closer liaison in things such as the NPC/NUS/UCU Postgraduates that Teach Charter. Wes, VP Education and myself would send joint letter suggesting unions affiliate to the NPC.

Thursday 20th met with Steve, conference secretary to discuss issues and planning for conference.

Saturday 22nd attended NPC Scotland meeting at Strathclyde University. We had representatives from Glasgow, Strathclyde, St Andrews and Paisley. The meeting began with an introduction from acting chair, Jim Ewing, followed by a presentation of David Bean's report on engaging postgraduates into societies in unions.

We had a good discussion on Masters Merit grading with the paper Tim Roll-Pickering had written and a NPC Scotland one day conference on issues such as the impact of devolution on postgraduates in Scotland. There were elections for positions with Jim Ewing elected Scottish Chair and Lade Robinson as depute chair/secretary.

#### **Week Commencing 24th July 2006**

Wednesday 26th delivered a workshop on postgraduates at the Action Through Advocacy NUS Training at Hertfordshire University. This was enjoyable and met familiar faces and people keen to engage with postgraduates at their home unions.

Thursday 27th I was due to attend the Rugby Team forum but was ill. The outcomes of the meeting will be distributed and I will continue working with colleague on group looking at establishing event for sector to discuss what a PhD is.

### **Chairperson of NPC Scotland (Jim Ewing)**

*Report to come.*

### **Conference Secretary (Stephen Abbots)**

If you are reading this it means that the conference should have gone ahead and thus proving the core mandate of my role has been filled.

With the conference facilities being of such a high standard on Aston University campus in the heart of Birmingham planning has been fairly straight forward. We set up a group to look at we wanted in terms of facilities and a price we were willing to pay. I then took this to Conference Aston who were able to offer us

a package to meet are needs. They were also able to offer us everything all within one building (including accommodation) and I hope this will prove to be a popular feature to this years conference.

This year we decided to cut the conference by a day to allow delegates to have Sunday to recuperate.

I would like to thank Simon who has been a great help in the planning of this years conference, especially with sorting out the content.

I would also like to thank Marilyn and Tim who have been very helpful throughout the year and a credit to the NPC.

From Aston I would like to my former colleague Nathan Shane for being the shrewd businessman that he is and the team at Conference Aston who made my life simple.

Finally I would like to thank Harpreet who made me go for this role, which in the end extended my time as a student by one month and five days. Got to hate that real world.

### Communications Officer (Duncan Connors)

1. For the first three months of my term of office, I was unable for private reasons to fulfil all of my duties. However, thanks to the efforts of Tim Roll-Pickering, Simon Felton, Andre Oboler and many others I was able to take on a reduced workload and many of my tasks were deferred to others. I did not attend the first Management Sub Committee meeting or the subsequent OGM because of my family commitments.
2. Nonetheless, from a publicity point of view, this has been a very successful year and we have produced more than one press release on numerous subjects. That these have been received by the press and used within their copy is a sign of an expanded relationship between wider media and the NPC. I have acted as point of contact for the media and as such have provided a single source of information to them concerning the NPC.
3. At the beginning of 2006, I wrote a number of anonymous responses to questions placed by students that can be found on the second from last page of *THES*. Consulting widely amongst my NPC colleagues before answering, we have been able to provide knowledgeable and relevant advice to postgraduates using this system, a point noted by journalists working for the paper who feel that some of the advice given by more undergraduate orientated bodies does not apply to postgraduates. Indeed, without realising who wrote the responses, we have had the same articles forwarded to the email list by a member of the NPC making the same point!
4. A number of contacts have been made within the journalistic community for a variety of newspapers, added to their acceptance of our releases. Indeed, Simon has met with members of *The Guardian* and I have developed relationships with *THES*, *The Independent*, *The Spectator* and because of our policy concerning academic freedom, *The Jewish Tribune* and *Jewish Chronicle*, newspapers whose articles are usual picked up by a wider media around the world. Indeed, mention was made in *The Jerusalem Post* (One of the most widely read English language dailies) concerning our 2005 Conference in Glasgow because of these relationships.
5. The *Postgraduate Newsletter* (PN) has slipped this year and that is a shame. However, although a copy will be printed for presentation at the NPC Conference I personally feel that this might not be the best way to communicate with our affiliates, a feeling shared by many of us at the NPC. Affiliates sometimes want a personal touch when dealing with the NPC and this is something that Simon has been working on with some success this year. Indeed, 500 or so copies of the NPC would have a lower readership amongst union sabbaticals than most of the publications mentioned above so I feel that we have done better work focusing on the wider media this year.
6. Conference. I have worked closely with Simon in developing print media for the conference and it our intention to produce a special version of PN focusing on issues discussed during the conference to bring them to a wider audience.
7. Three gripes.
  - One, we have to be more media aware and realise that if we work our relationships with the press in the correct way we can achieve a much higher profile for the NPC with very little ease. This is a process of realising that not everyone will agree with what you say nor be interested in what you think, you have to tailor your information to the requirements of the organisation you are trying to impress. Certainly, you have to respect press freedom and understand that they will print

whatever they feel like, regardless of whether you approve of it or not, a fact of democratic life that perhaps some in the NPC do not comprehend fully.

- In the same vein, unless you are 'savvy' and understand about how the press works, you would be better off not speaking to them at all! We have had a couple of instances this year where a person's individual views could have been mistaken for official NPC policy, because those who articulated them did not fully comprehend how the system worked. Luckily, in both instances I managed to speak to the journal in question and set the record straight.
- Three, we have to realise that communication with our affiliates is not a one way street and that we have to listen as well as talk. We have gone a long way towards this way of thinking this year, but we still have a lot to do to remove ourselves from a mutually exclusive mindset and start to incorporate the views of affiliates into our wider message and media.

## **Equal Opportunities Officer (Lade Robinson)**

*Report to come.*

## **Project Officer (Alex Higgins)**

### Introduction:

The remit of my report has shifted quite substantially from what I originally intended. My early beginnings in the NPC coincided with my developing role in a think tank in Lewes, the Guerrand Hermes Foundation for Peace, focusing on the possibilities that education provides for changing people's lives and the world. It was from my involvement with the think tank that my attention was brought to a conference they were organising, the Third V.T. Vittachi International Conference "Rethinking Educational Change".

At the time I thought that this would be an exciting opportunity to involve the two organisations in each others work to develop education in the UK towards something other than competition for competitions sake or the generation of wealth and capital. I thought that it would provide the NPC with multiple perspectives on education and thus what our role might be. In other words I believed that by understanding the different contexts in which education occurs throughout the world I was hopeful we could better understand our own and the predicament of postgraduates in the UK. I thought that the NPC would be interested in such a conference and perhaps sending a delegate there, that at the very least it would be an important networking opportunity raising the NPC's international and national standing.

It turned out to be attended by over 130 people (students, administrators, presidents of students' unions, postgraduate groups, administrators, professors, and so on) from over around 50 different countries. The purpose of the event was to seek to understand education in the individual's country and then to share these experiences with others to find differences and commonalties. At the same time demographic alterations in the world and economic and technological change were applied to this focus on education and what it *is* and *does*. These perspectives and discussions on education and wider processes in the world were then applied in a development context by Ms Katherine Marshall of the World Bank and by the President of the University, Prof Rachid Benmokhtar Benabdellah, to the Moroccan context.

### NPC Reaction:

It was decided that the NPC for reasons of charity status and its agenda to stay away from any religious event would not get involved with the conference though at one point use of the email lists for publicity was suggested. That the conference had an "inter-faith" element seems to have been a problem, though it only meant all faiths or non-faiths were welcome. The mention of "subud" which appears to be a meditative technique for people of all faiths, and of no faith, seems to have caused a spurious number of concerns. My project officer role became somewhat dubious when everyone else on the NPC decided to do their own research on the conference and its organisers. This "research" is attached as an appendix, or rather an exhibit of the difficulty I have found in undertaking any research or idea development that attempts to re-visualise the NPC's role.

The end result was that my project was left somewhat limp and widened to the point of investigating general changes in education including my own perspective on this. In order for this project to be of value

to the NPC I wish to draw out some thoughts from my experiences and to present a depiction of the world at present that the NPC might have a role in illuminating.

The purpose of this report is thus not to provide data samples but rather to enable the NPC to continue to question and develop its role. The benefit of the conference I attended was to do precisely that with my own personal perspective on the world. I think that the NPC can raise more questions and daring answers concerning postgraduate education by connecting it with issues of globalisation, the State, and the world that we wish to exist. Indeed, the NPC remains an organisation that can have the faith and respect of postgraduate students across the country for its strong, coherent, measured position and action on matters concerning postgraduate education. But it must also develop its ability to place these issues in context and in doing so ensure a critical element lies at its core. The report might thus be construed as part of the continuing refinement and coherence of the NPC's role.

#### Questions Raised:

One reason why the NPC did not want to be involved with the event was that its relevance to the UK nation's postgraduates was unclear. An international conference in Morocco organised by a think tank looking at educational change, what relevance would that have? Well in answer to this I think that connecting with different cultures and different perspectives concerning education is an invaluable experience that alters and improves one's own understanding of the predicament of education in the UK.

For instance, by understanding the position of other countries a portrait of our own became clearer in my mind. The role of capital accumulation and the notion of the "Competition State" and the ability to attach these ideas to problems of postgraduate education became the fundamental theoretical lens that I now employ.

Cerney's notion of the Competition State is a congruence of the processes associated with Globalisation and the conception of the State. In order for the State to remain viable and competitive in a world construed as composed of similar States a more flexible workforce is required than that of the People under the State totally anchored to it. This connection of Globalisation and the State is construed by Cerney as one of political Globalisation whereby the Nation state transforms into the Competition State characterised by the drive for the expansion of intervention and regulation for competitiveness and marketisation (251). It might also be conjoined with the notion of post-Fordism as an era of flexible accumulation and complex processes of production.

The way in which the State alters into the Competition State (Cerney, 1997) and the financial requirements this entity requires to remain competitive might be interpenetrated with the relationship that postgraduate and university education has to debt structures and to maintaining a viable nation. Questions might then be raised as to the worthiness of construing the world as operating in this way and other possibilities be suggested.

Understanding through other people's eyes is a tool that could be useful for the operation of the NPC. The current drive for a change in its constitution and action on upcoming conferences is an opportunity for just this kind of a sea change in attitude. Critique in the name of re-orientating the structures in which postgraduates find themselves might then become possible. Research into postgraduate issues that comprehends the problems and opinions they have is useful and important but without an adequate answer to these problems the NPC risks being just a talking shop. Why don't we draw on the tremendous power of postgrads in the UK towards changing the operation of structures to suit them? They are surely capable of doing this; perhaps the NPC can be the identifier of the problems and the banner under which postgraduates WANT to act under to solve them.

#### How might we proceed?

The title of the conference that I attended, without NPC support, "Rethinking Educational Change" provides I think a useful point around which the NPC might reorganise itself. The content of the conference and recent developments in my own work provides useful headings under which further research might be carried out:

- *Education and potential*
- *Education and a meaningful life*
- *Changing education structures*
- *Frustration with the current educational and institutional culture*
- *The relationship between education and the world-society (the epistemological horizon of knowledge)*

- *Changes that may be necessary for institutional renewal*

At this time of debate on the constitution of the NPC I feel that these topic areas are as relevant internally as externally. *Education and potential* are areas in the UK that require exploration. For instance we can ask, as I believe we have, whether the current interpenetration of debt structures into the postgraduate population is a limit rather than an aide to their realisation of their potential. We could research different educational models and the responses of postgraduates to them. We could research how to alter teaching practices at the postgraduate level to ensure creativity and happiness is attained rather than simply the acquisition of a diploma and job.

These matters are of course linked with *education and a meaningful life*. We only have to look at the highly recognised work of the New Economics Foundation and their "well being" programme to understand the importance of the link between education, potential, and a meaningful life:

*nef's well-being programme was set up to find ways to promote policies and practical solutions that help people live more fulfilled lives. Our people in public services, timebanks and participation and democracy projects aim to put people back at the centre of their services and communities and decision-making over what affects their lives.<sup>1</sup>*

It seems that the NPC could have a similar set of goals orientated towards empowering postgraduate's to question both the world they live in, the decisions that affect their lives, and their own role in the generation of the world and its decisions. An interesting further goal that the NPC could relate to and alter is the nef's "leading aim":

*to create a new economy that serves people and the planet. We want to begin to redefine "wealth" and "progress": to judge our systems and economies on how much they create the world we actually want, rather than how much money they generate.<sup>2</sup>*

How much do our education structures and operations allow for the creation of a world we want rather than one that is satisfactory, or that feeds the Competition State? Furthermore what role does the NPC want in relationship to building this better world, to changing educational structures? Well thought out action and a coherent set of goals for this twenty first century world are what I feel the NPC desperately requires. Existing as a structure in education in the UK amongst many other structures is not enough, the NPC must be a force to be reckoned with and one not afraid to step outside normal discourse.

Identifying how these changes in educational structures alter our wider educational and institutional culture would be invaluable. Identifying *frustration with the current educational and institutional culture* and providing answers to it is essential. For surely it is the prevailing culture that both enables and limits postgraduate opportunities? Surely it is the world that people think they live in that defines the progress and fulfilment of their potential.

This is where I get to the fundamental thrust of my argument in this paper that the NPC can open up and engage with *the relationship between education and the world-society*. What this means is that education, perhaps in form and perhaps in content, must be understood as forming the limits as to what possible world people can conceive of while at the same time filtering into the actions and lives of postgraduates. By understanding this the NPC remit might be continually questioned while nonetheless being able to carry on the valuable work that we do here. This notion of *education and the world-society* is one that I am happy to develop further for the NPC.

Finally just as education structures outside us might require *institutional renewal* in order to meet the needs of postgraduates and fulfil the role of enabling potential to be realised while reconceiving the world, so the NPC might also need renewal. The motion from Duncan Connor and Erich Kofmel concerning the NPC's constitution is but one step in this process of making the NPC both more democratic while also being professional and a force to be reckoned with.

Alex Higgins  
NPC Project Officer

#### Bibliography:

Cerney, Philip G. — "Paradoxes of the Competition State: The Dynamics of Political Globalisation", *Government and Opposition* 32 (2), 251-274.

New Economics Foundation, "well being" programme [http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/hottopics\\_well-being.aspx](http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/hottopics_well-being.aspx)

Google mail discussions from alexanderwhiggins@gmail account

"Rethinking Educational Change" conference website <http://transformedu.org/>

### **Project Officer (David Bean)**

I was tremendously pleased to have been elected to the NPC's National Executive a year ago, the project I had proposed, looking into the provision of student activities for postgraduates, having been accepted. Since then I've worked hard to produce a report that should be of genuine value to the NPC's affiliates. Now complete, the report is in the process of publication, and advanced copies shall hopefully be made available to delegates during the conference.

In addition, I have been privileged to be able to offer training sessions to affiliates: one at this conference, and the other some weeks ago at the Scottish AGM. I hope that those who attended will have found them useful.

It has been my pleasure to serve the NPC and its affiliates over the past year, and I should like to thank my colleagues for their assistance, and those affiliates who have been actively involved in the organisation for their contributions, without which the task of the NPC in representing postgraduate students should be impossible. It is my hope that in future the NPC will be able to concentrate upon maintaining strong links with the affiliates it serves, strengthening those links where necessary.

In particular it should take every opportunity to engage with undergraduate sabbaticals who - like myself a year ago - assumed positions with responsibility for engaging with postgraduates, but may have previously lacked experience of doing so. Viewing them, in the absence of other evidence, as good-natured yet inexperienced and in need of assistance would appear to be the correct first step; not, as has sometimes been the case in the past, simply writing them off as ignorant and disengaged, a problem to be worked around. This cohort has been the primary audience of my project, and if it can assist ushering in a small cultural shift within the NPC, then aside from its intrinsic benefits my work will have been a success.

### **Project Officer (Ismail Malik)**

*Report to come.*

### **Project Officer (Dries Neiryck)**

At my election, I promised to work on sharing of good practice amongst affiliates by organising training and discussion sessions. Such sessions have taken place before the start of OGMs. I have also delivered two training sessions at affiliated institutions while an adapted version of the training has been used by the General Secretary throughout the year. I will also lead a session around supporting representation at this year's conference.

Besides the specific work on training, I have actively participated in discussions at MSC meetings and on the mailing lists. I regret that these discussions are still often focused on internal quibbles despite the guidelines that I proposed with Maggie and Marilyn at last year's conference. I apologise for my part in failing to adhere to them but hope that future MSCs will continue to strive to implement them. I still believe that a realistic set of goals, a focus on the problems of the actual postgraduates and a harmonious team spirit amongst the MSC are key to a successful future for NPC.

Since I am finishing my studies and will be leaving the UK, this will also be the end of my involvement in NPC. Throughout my years as delegate and MSC member, I have tried to complement NPC's expertise on the national and international level with a perspective from and a focus on the institutional level. I believe the training and discussion sessions throughout the year have been particularly useful and would encourage future MSCs to try to continue organising them.

### **Publications Assistant (Andrew Green)**

The role of the Publications Assistant is to help with the production of the NPC's printed materials and web site. It's non-editorial, non-voting and operates more like a member of support staff than a regular member of the committee itself. I've had this role, through my company Article Seven, since 1996.

There have been two issues of pN produced this year, one in November and the second for this Conference. A set of printed folders was also produced this month, and the NPC's stationery was reprinted at the start of the year. A design was produced for promotional materials for the Conference, but this was never finalised or printed.

Following a training and consultation day in October, it was agreed that the NPC's site should be rebuilt using the Article Seven Content Management System. The existing NPC site uses a very early version of this software, which has since been developed much further for use by Woking Borough Council, FISITA and others. The agreement was for Article Seven to supply the new CMS software for free, but to charge for the time involved in installation, customisation and site design. The CMS needs customisation to handle the pages on your site which are restricted to affiliates and subscribers, to handle the relationship between committee membership and publisher roles, and to handle Welsh and Gaelic versions of pages.

A design was agreed in May, and a target was set for this Conference to have the site completed and ready to go live. Unfortunately, I haven't quite been able to meet that target, but the CMS is installed, content has been successfully transferred from the old site to the new, the system to implement restricted pages is complete, and the design has been implemented. The new site should now be ready before the next academic year begins in earnest. In working through the specification for the new site, it was agreed that the discussions area should be spun off from the old site into a new Postgrad Forum site of its own, in order to use more developed and feature-rich forum software. At the time of writing, it looks likely that the new forum site will use the Ikonboard forum software, and will be hosted by Article Seven alongside the main site. It's hoped that the new forum will be ready to go live at the same time as the new site, if not before.

## **Journal of Graduate Education**

The Journal of Graduate Education submitted a full and lengthy summary of developments to the last OGM, to which delegates should be referred. The financial implications of the launch of the new journal are incorporated into the NPC Budget.

## **Email List Administrator (Dries Neiryck)**

NPC e-mail administrator is rarely a demanding job and this year was no exception. There have been no major problems or significant changes, although I have been assisting Andrew to prepare for a closer integration between the mailing lists and the new version of the web-site. As for the traditional annual overview of list statistics:

- Postgrad: general discussion list open to everyone: 536 subscribers (up 3 compared to last year)
- NPC: restricted to postgraduates and their representatives: 340 (up 30)
- NPC-Wales: 40 subscribers (up 3)
- NPC-Scotland: 97 subscribers (up 12)
- Postgraduate-NI: 27 subscribers (up 9)
- NPC-Executive: 32 subscribers

This seems also the appropriate moment to announce that I will have to resign as e-mail list administrator. I will be leaving the UK at the end of August and at some point I will no longer have access to an ".ac.uk" e-mail address which is required by JISCmail, which hosts the lists. Please contact me if you are interested in taking over. Although it is not clear when exactly my access will disappear, I am hoping to be able to hand over to a new person from early September

## **Any other reports**