



*NPC Policy Responses  
2005/2006*

## Contents

NPC/06/01/A Part-time HE provision in Wales.....	3
NPC/06/01/B HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006 - 11 Consultation .....	5
NPC/06/01/C EPSRC Postgraduate Training Strategy Consultation.....	7
NPC/06/01/D OSCR Consultation .....	9
NPC/06/03/A Eurodoc 2006 Questionnaire .....	15
NPC/06/04/A National Postgraduate Committee Consultation Submission for Draft Handbook for the revised institutional audit process for higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland. ....	19
NPC/06/06/A National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom Consultation Response to Proposals to outlaw Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the provision of Goods and Services. ....	20
NPC/06/07/A National Postgraduate Committee Response to the Lyons Inquiry.....	24

### *Preamble:*

*This document represents the NPC's formal submissions to various important enquiries through which we seek to influence decision makers. Consultations and enquires allow the NPC to represent Postgraduate Students Opinions in issues such as Higher Education Provision in Wales and changes to the Council Tax system.*

## **NPC/06/01/A Part-time HE provision in Wales**

### ***Q1. For the purpose of this review, what defines a "part time" student?***

There is no clear definition of part time students with the Universities Scotland Report of the Part-time Students Ad Hoc Group (<http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/Publications/PTSR.pdf>) reflecting the diversity in views. The NPC believes that part time students encompass a wide spectrum covering structured and unstructured courses and covering students studying evenings, distance learning, virtual learning and block release intensive study.

### ***Q2. Should all levels and volumes of part time study be considered by the review?***

The NPC believes that while the forms of learning may be different the principles of part time study remain the same and that like full time study need to be attractive in encouraging lifelong learning and widening participation in education.

### ***Q3. Should a distinction be made between Welsh domiciled part time student and those living elsewhere as will be the case for full time students from 2007?***

The NPC believes that a trust fund to provide studentships to Welsh domiciled students from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds would increase the numbers of domiciled students undertaking postgraduate study and would encourage Welsh-domiciled prospective postgraduates to remain in (or return to) Wales for postgraduate study. Encouraging domiciled students to study would help to regenerate communities and help to encourage widening participation.

### ***Q4. Should the level of fees be set at the same level as for full time study? If so; should the level apply to all part time study;***

Part time fees are often calculated on a pro-rata of full time study. Fees are payable by, or on behalf of, most postgraduate students regardless of the mode of study. Institutions are able to charge market prices for degrees though most institutions charge at a similar level. The National Assembly and the HEFCW should endeavor to limit postgraduate tuition fee inflation across Wales. The NPC does not wish to see a market for fees that would discourage students from entering postgraduate education and would encourage that postgraduates are able to access the Student Loans Scheme.

### ***Q5. Would a deferment of fees be appropriate for part time study? If so; Should the method of re-payment be identical to that of full time students?***

Postgraduates not in receipt of research council studentships should have access to the Student Loans scheme and a trust fund should be established to provide postgraduate studentships to Welsh domiciled students from the poorest socioeconomic backgrounds. Deferment of fees would support widening participation and encourage students who felt it necessary to undertake part time study through other commitments or pressures.

### ***Q6. How should institutions be funded for part time study?***

There is not a presumption of 'right of access' to publicly funded courses without a fees element for postgraduates. Fees are payable by most postgraduate students regardless of mode of study. In many institutions the part-time postgraduate fee is simply charged pro rata

to the full-time provision. Institutions should encourage domicile students and increase widening participation by extending the Student Loans Scheme and providing studentships to students from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds.

***Q7: Are there any issues relating to student support which you would wish to draw to our attention regarding particular groups of part time students in higher education in Wales? Such groups could be disabled students, those with dependants, mature age students and those students wishing to study through the medium of Welsh.***

There are varying reasons for undertaking part time study and support and funding needs to consider these. For students with dependants there should be free crèche facilities. Students should also be protected from hidden costs such as printing charges, photocopying and computing facilities. Extending the Student Loans Scheme will reduce the upfront burden of debt and provide a more competitive loan repayment than commercial loans.

Encouraging Welsh-domiciled applicants to remain in Wales and for specific support for Welsh-medium courses in areas such as education and nursing may challenge the risk of a lack of skills.

The example of the Postgraduate Students' Allowance Scheme operated by the Student Award Agency for Scotland (see <https://www.saas.gov.uk>) is useful as the Scottish Parliament introduced this scheme because it recognised the same lack of skills which Wales faces now. NPC has also recommended a similar scheme to the English RDAs (see <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1076699904>)

***Q8: How can we enable part time study to support and enhance the widening participation agenda?***

To encourage under-represented groups and domicile students there needs to be financial support to enable family and financial difficulties to be reduced. Encouraging Welsh people to study at postgraduate level would encourage them with local domicile grants to pursue academic careers in their home area and enrich the local economy upon graduation.

### **Response Summary**

The NPC believes that part time study covers a wide area of levels and volumes. All of these levels and volumes must be considered in funding and supporting part time students.

We recommend that the National Assembly for Wales take advantage of the present opportunity to introduce a funding scheme for those resident in Wales which allows the able, who may otherwise fail to achieve their full potential, to pursue higher education to postgraduate level in Welsh HEIs.

Part time study and its financial support offers the opportunity to build up a better trained and informed citizenship and to facilitate the expansion of research in Welsh academia and industry. Postgraduate education is challenged by the market nature of fees and the Welsh Assembly should seek to control the variation in fees and encourage the extension of the Student Loans Scheme to all students not in receipt of research council funding.

# NPC/06/01/B HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006 - 11 Consultation

The Hefce Strategic plan sets out Hefce's broad vision for the development of higher education in England and their strategy for moving towards it with our partners and stakeholders.

The Hefce plan is based around six strategic aims, covering:

- learning and teaching
- widening participation and fair access
- research
- the contribution of HE to the economy and society
- sustaining a high quality HE sector and
- how we perform as an organisation.

The National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom welcomes the opportunity to respond to the HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11: Consultation. The National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom is the principal representative body of postgraduate students in the UK. As a registered charity (no. SC033368), our aim is to promote, in the public interest, postgraduate education in the UK. We share best practice through publications and meetings, respond to consultations, address conferences and take on casework. In the furtherance of our aims, we co-operate with other like-minded democratic student bodies, professional associations and trades unions.

The NPC agrees with the theme of the paper of encouraging wider participation, the contribution of higher education to the economy and society and of a sustainable high quality sector. We also agree with the emphasis on maintaining a dynamic world class research sector which will underpin the economy and society.

On specific sections we would like to make comments.

## **Section 65, page 19, Flexible and lifelong learning.**

The National Postgraduate Committee welcome HEFCE continuing to support initiatives to strengthen the quality of supervision and of research and wider skills training for these students. The NPC would like to see a strengthening of the QAA Code of Practice on Postgraduate research programmes precept 11 by encouraging HEFCE to strengthen the need for supervisors to receive training.

## **Section 66, p.19, Employer engagement.**

The NPC welcomes the initiatives to strengthen the links between employers and HE. We would encourage HEFCE to further increase the link in skills development between research students and industry and the evaluation of skills to develop further training.

## **Widening Participation and fair access, Key strategic risks, p. 21.**

The NPC would suggest that there could be a further strategic risk to increasing representation from under-represented groups. The increase of student debt could affect postgraduate numbers, particularly for self-financing students, and act as disincentive to further study. The NPC believes that the continuation of widening participation and fair access principles into the postgraduate arena and the concurrent development of realistic

objectives for widening participation at this level of study is important to provide a balanced approach.

# NPC/06/01/C EPSRC Postgraduate Training Strategy Consultation

The NPC is the primary representative body of postgraduate researchers and students in the United Kingdom. Our affiliate membership comprises of democratically-elected student representative bodies at Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) throughout the UK. As a registered charity (SC033368), our aim is the promotion of postgraduate education in the United Kingdom. In order to achieve this aim, we host and address conferences, share best practice through publications and meetings, respond to consultations and campaign on issues of concern to postgraduates. We also co-operate with other democratic student bodies and trades unions who share our aims.

The National Postgraduate Committee welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation and welcome the continued discussion on Training Strategy in light of the Roberts Agenda. We would like to make comments on specific sections.

## *Developing attractors 1 - Stimulating student demand:*

P.17 While the NPC recognises that talented students with first class honours degrees would be a natural choice for undertaking a PhD, being most able, this degree class has little relation to a student's ability to complete their doctorate successfully or on time. Other factors affecting success are background experience, and the desire to conduct research. If however they are not immediate graduates, who may possess actual work experience, the real assessment should be on skill and enthusiasm to undertake research.

P.18. The NPC welcome the focus on promoting professional training and research experience at undergraduate level. This would be helpful in encouraging undergraduates in engineering and physical sciences to determine their interest and aptitude for a research career and would be valuable experience.

## *Developing attractors 2 - Achieving a demand-led system:*

P.19 The NPC would welcome collaboration with employers as discussed and noted by Hefce 2006-11 Strategy. This would be useful in supporting those who will work outside academia and in ensuring training reflects employer's skill demands. We feel that the importance of the research councils joint skills statement needs to be emphasised as this is vital in giving the student the confidence in receiving the supervision they will require.

## *Overall paper comments:*

The NPC would draw attention to the absence of reference to UK GRAD. We feel that this should be referred to with regard to the facilitation of training from a centre of excellence. The strategy has a stated objective of influence and partnership and we believe greater partnership with UK GRAD would enhance the training agenda. Transparency in structured training allows a PhD student to see what training they will have, and what they will be able to achieve through their doctoral research.

We would welcome a greater discussion of international mobility such as overseas placements for training. The promotion of mobility, particularly with the Bologna Process, and the opportunities available to research elsewhere are of importance. There is however no comprehensive support available to enable the PhD student to contribute to their pensions. To further increase the attractiveness of PhD study, support should be available which would ensure PhD students are compensated for the loss of national insurance contributions.

There is a need to show confidence to a prospective PhD student that they will receive successful completion. The fear of being unable to complete their thesis on time and not have sufficient funding to continue can reduce confidence to any prospective PhD student. We

would welcome the policies proposed to increase access and participation from under-represented groups but note that perception and genuine funding concerns will affect access and participation. It is noted on page six that education system has been likened to a 'leaky pipe' and we would reiterate the need to tackle funding; highlighted benefits of postgraduate study would still be measured against financial cost in undertaking postgraduate research.

# NPC/06/01/D OSCR Consultation

## Consents and Notifications

### Objectionable names

#### Your views (1)

**Are there other circumstances (than those described in paragraph 3.4.9) in which OSCR should consider a charity name to be offensive?**

If the name is misleading or gives the impression that the charity is connected to someone it is not or a national body. Names that are also geographically misleading.

#### Your views (2)

**Should more detailed guidance (than that given in section 3.4) be developed at this stage on what may be considered objectionable names, or is the general guidance sufficient?**

We believe that general guidance is useful but that there should be a record of rejection as this would help to detail why charities are refused on name grounds for those wishing to establish a charity.

### Section 16 consents - general

#### Your views (3)

**Do you agree that OSCR should be assured that the proposed action for which consent is sought under section 16 is in the interest of the charity? Do you agree with a general approach to section 16 consents based around the 'reorganisation conditions' of section 42(2), but recognising there may be other acceptable reasons for change?**

We agree that OSCR should be assured and should also base consents around 'reorganisation conditions' to protect the charity.

#### Your views (4)

**Do you agree that the remaining assets of a charity that is winding up should be transferred to a charity with similar purposes, but that in the cases of very small charities this requirement should be relaxed? What do you think should be considered 'very small' in this context?**

We agree that the remaining assets of a charity that is winding up should be transferred to a charity with similar purposes but we believe that the assets should also be transferred to organisations with charitable aims similar to the charity being wound up. The restriction on the use of assets of a charity winding up should be that they match the stated aims of the said charity.

#### Your views (5)

**We would welcome views on whether OSCR should require charities that wish to amalgamate or wind up to publicise this intention, either generally or to a particular group of individuals or organisations.**

We agree that OSCR should require charities that wish to amalgamate or wind up to publicise this intention. We believe that this should be general publicity and to particular organisations with interests or aims similar to the charity. If the OSCR requires general publicity this should be published by the OSCR.

## **Section 16 consent – change in relation to purposes in the constitution**

### **Your views (6)**

**Are there any other matters (apart from those described in 5.3) OSCR should consider when giving or refusing consent (under section 16) to a change in a charity's constitution in relation to its purposes?**

We believe that all changes to a charity constitution should be considered by the OSCR due to the impact that changes can make on a charity's charitable nature.

## **Section 16 consent – amalgamation or winding up**

### **Your views (7)**

**Are there any other matters (apart from those described in 6.3) OSCR should consider when giving or refusing consent (under section 16) to an amalgamation or winding up?**

The OSCR should consider why the Charity wishes to wind up; what the purposes of the charity they are amalgamating with or transferring assets to; How the decision has been reached and if the decision has been reached properly with publicity, rulings on voting; and Notification through the OSCR.

### **You views (8)**

**What are your views on the proposed operation of the power to issue a direction under section 16(6) (see 6.4) in the context of allowing OSCR sufficient time to make complex decisions on amalgamation and winding up?**

We agree with the allowance of sufficient time for OSCR to make a decision. We believe that if the decision would take longer than 28 days an injunction would be necessary to prevent the charity making changes without consent.

## **Establishing an accurate Register of Charities in Scotland**

### **Further enquiries**

#### **Your views (1)**

**Are the steps listed in paragraph 9.1 above, the appropriate steps for OSCR to take in order to establish whether a charity is active and establish the necessary details to include in the Register?**

We feel that the list is appropriate but we are concerned over the use of a search agent. We feel that if a charity uses a home address as a registered address and no person is available during a visit there may be a question over the existence of the charity.

## Your views (2)

**Are there any other steps (than those listed in paragraph 9.1) which it would be appropriate to take in order to establish whether a charity is active and establish the necessary details to include in the Register?**

We feel that the OSCR should pursue the details of trustees that they have recorded or can be obtained through research if the listed methods of enquiry do not gain results.

## Publishing details

### Your views (3)

**Should OSCR publish a statement of those charities removed from the Register? If so, how often? Should it include reasons for removal?**

The OSCR should record a statement of charities removed from the register annually alongside a monthly update, making use of the internet, alongside a more formal record of charities. We believe there should be a standing register and an annual list with monthly updates.

### Your views (4)

**Alternatively should OSCR publish a more formal record of charities removed from the Register and if so what information should this contain?**

We feel that a formal record would be of public benefit in being a register of charities that have broken charity guidelines. We also feel that a more formal record would act as case law in establishing why charities are removed or banned and the practice of banning.

## General

### Your views (5)

**Do you have any comments on any other aspect of the proposals set out in this consultation paper?**

We feel that the record of charities that have been removed from the register should be publicised by the OSCR in national media alongside applications to charity status.

## Meeting the Charity test

### Your views (1)

**What are your views on the proposed approach to considering tangible and intangible benefit (paragraph 6.1.2), and to giving greater weight to direct benefit over any indirect or ancillary benefit (paragraph 6.1.3) that may be provided?**

We believe that the discussion on tangible and intangible benefits are quite philosophical and argue that intangible benefit should not be rated as invaluable as tangible benefit. If a charity is able to support other charities while not producing directly tangible benefits, it should still be regarded as valuable.

### Your views (2)

The concept of 'disbenefit' (see paragraphs 6.3.9 to 6.3.11) reflects social circumstances and values and at present is primarily a philosophical and ethical concept rather than a conventional legal concept. It is likely that there are parallels to be drawn from areas such as medical ethics and this is an area where we are particularly interested to have comments on what should be included in OSCR guidance on what may constitute 'disbenefit'.

We feel that the discussion on disbenefit is largely philosophical. We share the difficulty in considering a comparison on benefits to disbenefits and valuing one in relation to another.

#### **Your views (3)**

We are aware that it may not always be the beneficiary who pays for the services provided by a (prospective) charity. For example where a local authority may pay for the cost of accommodation or for care costs on behalf of an individual, or a close relative may pay on behalf of the beneficiary.

**We would welcome your views on whether, in deciding whether charges or fees are unduly restrictive (see 6.4), we should take into account who would usually pay the fees, or whether we should only relate these to the circumstances of the actual beneficiary?**

We welcome the discussion on deciding whether charges or fees are unduly restrictive. We feel that it is difficult to tell whether those paying the fees have the financial capital to pay the fees.

#### **Your views (4)**

**We would also welcome your views on how relevant is the particular route of access to sources of alternative funding (see 6.4) for the fees in determining whether charges are unduly restrictive.**

We feel that it is difficult to establish how to access funding.

#### **Your views (5)**

**We would welcome views on how OSCR should consider the equal opportunities requirements of the various anti-discrimination legislation (or any other legislation) in relation to any restrictive conditions that may exist on obtaining benefit from a specific charity (see paragraphs 6.4.8 to 6.4.12).**

We believe that all anti-discrimination laws should be fully met in regard to charity guidelines.

### **How to demonstrate public benefit**

#### **Your views (6)**

**Do you agree that OSCR should request a statement of activity (see 7.1) and any supporting documentation in order to assess the (intended) activities of a (prospective) charity? If not, on what other basis do you suggest OSCR should assess whether public benefit is provided or intended to be provided (in the case of an applicant)?**

We believe that all charities and prospective charities should provide a statement of activities and that this should be updated upon changes to the charity.

#### **Your views (7)**

**Do you agree with the proposed approach of OSCR requesting a statement in relation to possible restrictions or conditions on obtaining the benefit from the charity (paragraph 7.1.3)? If not, what alternative approach do you suggest? `**

We agree with the OSCR requesting a statement in relation to obtaining benefit from the charity.

## **New applications for entry on the Scottish Charity Register**

### **Your views (8)**

**We would welcome your views on whether asking for identity information, charity trustee declaration and spot-checks are reasonable and adequate requirements and measures on first registration. (see 9.2)**

We believe that these are welcome moves and ensure the necessary responsibility of trusteeship.

### **Your views (9)**

**We would welcome views on how OSCR may best be assured of the identity of prospective charity trustees. (paragraphs 9.2.3 and 9.2.4)**

We recognise that photo identification through passport and driving licence would be secure but we feel that these would unduly exclude people without such identification. We believe that a similar move to accepting several utility bills with an address could be a viable route but recognise that there are difficulties in avoiding fraud and avoiding excluding prospective trustees.

### **Your views (10)**

**We would welcome views on whether OSCR should require a Disclosure Scotland certificate from every prospective charity trustee, whether this should only be required in relation to specific types of charities, or whether OSCR should not require this at all. (paragraph 9.2.6)**

We feel that while the intention is worthwhile this action would be intimidating and that restrictions such as this should apply when the charity is above a certain size or turnover only.

## **Rolling Review**

### **Your views (11)**

**We would welcome views on how OSCR should approach the rolling review programme and in particular on how we should prioritise the selection. (see 12.1)**

We recognise the large number of charities for the OSCR to undertake checks on and we feel that the OSCR should undertake its reviews in order of priority. We feel that the order of priority should be size, followed by the risk involved with the charity, followed by the funds and finally the time since the last review. We feel the OSCR should prioritise those charities that have not filled in their returns or are not complying with charitable status.

### **Your views (12)**

In Section 9.4 'Information in relation to prospective charity trustees', we propose that OSCR requests certain information in relation to the identity and possible disqualifications of prospective charity trustees. We do not propose OSCR keep such information or carry out checks on new charity trustees after the point of registration. However, the rolling review process could provide an opportunity for checking the status of current charity trustees, in particular in relation to any disqualifications.

**We would welcome your views on whether the rolling review process should include a check on current charity trustees, similar to that suggested for new charity trustees.**

We feel that there should be a rolling review to check existing trustees and this should be the same level of information as new charities.

### **Your views (13)**

We would welcome views on what you consider to be a reasonable cycle for the rolling review process, that strikes a balance between the burden on charities, the protection of the public and the charitable sector and the most appropriate use of OSCR resources (see 12.4). For example, should it be every 5 years, 10 years, 15 years? And should there be any differentiation in the frequency of review according to the size or type of charity?

We feel that there should be a differentiation in the size of the charity and its risk. We would suggest a figure of 5 years for large charities and 10 years for smaller charities. We believe that smaller charities should not be reviewed too frequently. We also feel that having two categories of review would be less confusing than having three.

## NPC/06/03/A Eurodoc 2006 Questionnaire

*1. What are the hottest topics in Higher Education and Research in your country for young researchers in 2006?*

*Specify a maximum of 3.*

*Are there any connections to the European reforms of the Bologna process and the Lisbon agenda? Are there significant changes in the situation of young researchers in your country as compared to last year? Specify whether your organisation considers those changes an improvement or deterioration.*

YOUR ANSWER A continuing issue from last year has been whether too much funding of research is being concentrated into more research intensive institutions and whether the concentration in certain regions of the UK would be a bad move. Developments in this area have followed discussions by the UK Council of Graduate Education which are concerned that funding by being limited to 5 or 5 rated departments will lead to funding difficulties for research institutions that are not research heavy or new universities.

The biggest issue here is what funding implications there will be to institutions who do not comply with the requirements laid out by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes. There has been a survey of practice undertaken within England, Wales and Northern Ireland but there are still no plans as to what action will be taken within Scotland.

*2. Which actions or activities has your national organisation been involved in this year? What are your organisation's future planned activities? What main improvement would your organisation like to see in the situation of young researchers? Which are the ideas your organisation would like to put forward as objectives for EURODOC in 2006?*

YOUR ANSWER The most significant involvements our organisation has had for the development of early stage researchers is as follows:

We have sat on the Roberts Rugby Team working group evaluating the effectiveness of skills development in research degree programmes. This is a sector driven group with participation from HEI Stakeholders such as research councils, the Quality Assurance Agency and universities formed as a result of Roberts Policy Forum in Rugby in January 2005. It was formed as a suggestion for a working party to find ways in which the sector can evaluate the effectiveness of skills development in research degree programmes as it was noted that a sector driven review was far better than the government reviewing as part of a baseline review. This was launched at a roundtable event for the sector with support by the sector with minor changes to Key Performance Indicators and greater student involvement.

The National Postgraduate Committee still notes the undue influence supervision and particularly bad supervision can have on successful completion of a PhD. We would welcome europe wide collaboration to pursue guidance on supervision standards and supervisor requirements. The UK has already implemented the Eurodoc Supervision and Training Charter through the UK Code of Practice for Research Degrees. We however have not seen the expected move to develop internal codes which suitably implement effective supervision alongside effective complaints mechanisms.

The National Postgraduate Committee is concerned at the market failure of postgraduate education and the wider discussions on regional provision of postgraduate provision. We have commissioned research into this failure which we hope to lobby regional development agencies to support postgraduate provision regionally in the UK.

A European Code and Charter for researchers stakeholder meeting working group has been set up in the UK with regards to implementation of the European Researchers Charter. This group is made up of key stakeholder organisations in this area and will feed into an exercise to map the Code and Charter against existing legislation, guidelines and good practice in the UK, which will be co-ordinated by RCUK and Universities UK on behalf of the UK HE sector.

*Part Two: facts  
Labour Conditions*

*The aim of these questions is not to provide a definitive answer but to begin addressing them in 2006 and refining the calculations every year.*

*5.To the best of your knowledge, provide figures to estimate the proportion of non-funded PhD candidates in your country in 2006.*

YOUR ANSWER There are approximately 18,000 full time research students in the UK of which approx 14,000 are funded and 4,000 non-funded by research councils. Some are funded by charities such as the wellcome trust, others on scholarships and self funding. We are unable to find any HESA data about percentages.

*6.To the best of your knowledge, provide figures to estimate the proportion of young researchers who do not benefit from all Social Benefits. Please, distinguish between Health Care and Pension rights.*

YOUR ANSWER Registered students in the UK are able to benefit from the UK Social Security healthcare and tax exemption system. The only benefit not available to PhD students in the UK are pension contributions both state and private.

*Supervision and Training*

*7.What awareness do you have of the European Researchers Charter being promoted and implemented at the national and institutional level in your country? Has your association had involvement in that implementation? Please summarise here with comments.*

YOUR ANSWER The National Postgraduate Committee has been invited to participate in the European Code and Charter for researchers stakeholder working group with other key stakeholder organisations in this area. We will work with partners to feed into an exercise to map the Code and Charter against existing legislation, guidelines and good practice in the UK, which will be co-ordinated by RCUK and Universities UK on behalf of the UK HE. This will look at what we have now and how that fits in in order to fill in the missing gaps etc.

*8.Please give a brief grading as to how your organisation rates provisions for the following aspects of the European Researchers Charter regarding ESRs (1 = bad, to 5 = good). ESRs (Early Stage Researchers ) are PhD candidates with less than 4 years experience of research.*

- a. Provision to ensure established and active relations with supervisors. 2.Under average
- b.Encouragement of publication of ESRs' work. 3. Average
- c.Training of supervisors to meet the needs of their ESRs. 2.Under average
- d.Provision of continuing professional development via training etc. 3.Average
- e.Access to appropriate research environment with other peers in their research. 3.Average
- f.Structured review mechanisms to monitor ESRs progress. 3.Average

g. Easy access to a complaints procedure should an ESR experience difficulty with their supervisor. 2. Under average

### *Mobility*

*9. How many centres does the Mobility Network ERA-MORE provide in your country? What services do they offer? Do they interact with your organisation?*

YOUR ANSWER The ERA-MORE Mobility Network has 12 centres in the UK located in Belfast,, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester. Newcastle, Nottingham, and Oxford.

UK ERA-MORE centres offer assistance with matters relating to professional and daily life, information on legal issues, social security, health and taxes, everyday life as well as family support.

Currently ERA-MORE centres do not interact with the National Postgraduate Committee.

*10. Regarding the possible preparation of a "Charter for the International Mobility of Early Stage and Experienced Researchers" by the EURODOC mobility working group - a document gathering recommendations to higher education and research institutions, funding bodies and researchers, aimed at facilitating mobility of PhD candidates and post-docs:*

*a. Would your organisation support such an initiative by Eurodoc?*

YOUR ANSWER The National Postgraduate Committee would actively support such an initiative as offering opportunities for the development of postgraduate and early stage researchers in developing academic and personal development.

*b. Does your organisation have a similar document that could be used?*

YOUR ANSWER The National Postgraduate Committee does not currently have any policy on international mobility.

*c. Can you list a maximum of 10 items that should be tackled by such a document and that would be relevant to avoid mobility problems of foreign researchers in your country and of national researchers abroad?*

YOUR ANSWER NONE SUBMITTED

### *Professional Future*

*11. In which way has the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers been promoted and implemented at the national and institutional level in your country? Are you able to monitor that implementation (explain why or how)?*

YOUR ANSWER The UK hosted a conference on The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for their recruitment in September 2005 as part of the UK presidency of the EU. This conference involved participants from 35 countries with the aim of turning policy into practice. The UK supported the Charter and Code and is planning an implementation plan. The NPC should be able to monitor implementation against planned recommendations made at the conference and will be able to monitor implementation through participation in the European Code and Charter for researchers stakeholder working group. This group will map the Code and Charter against existing legislation, guidelines and good practice in the UK.

*12. Does your organisation support a tenure track model to be applied in public research institutions? At what level of experience does your organisation think that a researcher should be promoted to a stable position such as a tenureship (use the approved Eurodoc career path in academia document to define the level of research experience )? How does your organisation think the positions should be funded: by the research institute/university, by external funding such as governmental research councils, charities, etc.? Are both systems compatible?*

YOUR ANSWER We do not have much policy on this area though we have recognised initiatives such as the Academic Fellowships brought through by Roberts such that they allow 5 years training through to a permanent position. More information can be found at - [www.rcuk.ac.uk/acfellow](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/acfellow).

*13. What is the level of private funding in your country (industry, funding bodies, etc)? Is this private funding only applied in the industry or is there any private funded research performed in academic/public institutions? Could you specify what sort of programmes/private organisations support research in public institutions in your country? Does your organisation envisage the collaboration between the public and the private sector as something positive? Could you provide examples of what you consider good and/or bad practice in this respect?*

YOUR ANSWER\* The most prominent are those for CASE awards used by the EPSRC, BBSRC which top up any funding received. Some private funding does award scholarships to internationals but this is largely concentrated to few places in science/technology.

## **NPC/06/04/A National Postgraduate Committee Consultation Submission for Draft Handbook for the revised institutional audit process for higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland.**

The National Postgraduate Committee welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation and welcomes the handbook. We wish to make specific comments regarding Student submissions and Annex E on Postgraduate Research Programmes.

### **Paragraphs 62 — 65 Students' Written Submission**

The National Postgraduate Committee would encourage the QAA to acknowledge the support of NUS and the National Postgraduate Committee here and that we already have publications and support available. These publications should allow PG reps and students writing submissions to engage with the aims of the Code of Practice and to see if it is transparent to them also.

The NPC would also encourage that whatever is given to students says clearly what QAAs scope is and that students realise what not to comment on regarding student submissions. Guidance on student submissions should pay particular attention to the introduction of auditing postgraduate research degree programmes where student submissions would need to pay attention to new points in the audit.

### **Annex E**

The National Postgraduate Committee notes that much if the text in each section is similar and that there is a danger that it is too ambiguous. We would recommend that auditors carefully analyse where see the institution has met the minimum requirements set out in the code of practice and where it has met standards of good practice suggested in the code.

In addition the institution should be able to put forward added extras they claim to have implemented or use that would exceed the code.

# **NPC/06/06/A National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom Consultation Response to Proposals to outlaw Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the provision of Goods and Services.**

The National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DTI Consultation on the Proposals to outlaw Sexual Orientation Discrimination in the provision of Goods and Services. The National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom is the principal representative body of postgraduate students in the UK. As a registered charity (no. SC033368), our aim is to promote, in the public interest, postgraduate education in the UK. We share best practice through publications and meetings, respond to consultations, address conferences and take on casework. In the furtherance of our aims, we co-operate with other like-minded democratic student bodies, professional associations and trades unions.

## **Question 1: Do you agree that the new SO regulations should apply to goods, facilities and services?**

The National Postgraduate Committee feels that the new regulations should apply to goods, facilities and services. We believe that LGB citizens should have the right to equal treatment and protection as other anti-discrimination laws and that this regulation should help to challenge prejudices against LGB people.

## **Question 2: Should the concept of goods, facilities and services have the same scope as in other equality enactments, in particular Part 2 of the Equality Act 2006?**

The National Postgraduate Committee believes, as with the answer to the first question, that it is essential that protection is similar in scope to other equality legislation. A failure to ensure LGB equality legislation is on the same level as other equality legislation will undermine the moves of the legislation and suggest that LGB are not entitled to the same equality as other groups..

## **Question 3: Do you agree that we should provide an exemption from the prohibition on sexual orientation discrimination so that services to meet a specific and justified need can be provided separately to different groups on the basis of their sexual orientation? What specific activities would such an exemption need to apply to?**

The National Postgraduate Committee agrees in principle that services established for a particular need, such as gay men or lesbians, should be able to function effectively. The NPC believes that such exemptions reflect the creation of services as a means to counter prejudice that is found in mainstream services, often through lack of understanding or being unwelcome.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes that such considerations would most likely apply to some health service provision specific according to sexual orientation and advice and counselling services. We welcome such exemptions but note that some exemptions may need to highlight their operations are designed to suit the interests of LGB customers but not seek to turn away non-LGB clients.

## **Question 4: Do you agree that premises should be covered by the SO regulations?**

The NPC agrees that premises should be covered for the reasons already noted.

***Question 5: Do you agree that an exemption should be provided for selling or letting of private dwellings as described?***

The NPC believes that an exemption should be provided subject to being in common to all anti-discrimination laws. The regulations should also seek to prevent owners from making alterations to the arrangement or functioning of dwellings which avoid the obligation not to discriminate.

***Question 6: Do you agree that private members' clubs should be included in the SO regulations?***

***Question 7: What is your view on our proposal that both private members clubs and associations should be permitted to include having a particular sexual orientation as a membership criterion, but only where that criterion is explicitly connected to the purpose for which the club has been established?***

Private members clubs and associations have arisen due to LGB people feeling unwelcome in existing and mainly heterosexual establishments, who have used such spaces as safe spaces to avoid prejudice or to meet other LGB people. The regulations would need to consider the objective in paragraphs 3.20 and 3.21 of the consultation paper.

**Question 8: Do you agree that the new SO regulations should apply to public functions as well as to goods, facilities and services? Do you think that any specific additional exceptions might be needed from a prohibition on SO discrimination in the exercise of public functions?**

The NPC believe discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation must be treated in the same way as discrimination on other grounds as currently covered by legislation.

## **Education**

**Question 9: Do you agree that schools should be covered by the SO regulations?**

***Question 10: Are there any circumstances in which you consider that schools, or a part of the schools sector, should be exempted from the regulations?***

***Question 11: Are there any areas of activity for schools for which you consider special provision needs to be made?***

The NPC welcomes the proposal to extend protection against sexual orientation discrimination to cover access to, and the provision of education, in schools in both the maintained and independent sector. While the National Postgraduate Committee is concerned with the advancement of postgraduate education we note that a prevailing attitude of non-tolerance of discrimination will be embedded and lead to the advancement of equality for LGB people as members of society.

The NPC notes the consequences of homophobia (and transphobia) for LGBT pupils and students are recognised in the research literature as including truancy and school refusal, under-performance at school, increased risk of mental impairment which would prevent students from fulfilling their potential and for opportunities to continue into higher education and postgraduate study.

The NPC notes that some religious organisations are likely to press for exemptions to continue to teach that homosexuality is inferior or sinful. The NPC believes that the law should not allow exceptions for bigotry in respecting LGB people as full citizens.

The NPC opposes that there should be any exemption for schools to teach anything other than that LGB people are equal and are entitled to equal treatment in all areas of life.

### **Religious Organisations**

**Question 12: Do you consider that an exemption should be provided from the regulations for some of the activities of religious organisations?**

*Question 13: Do you agree that these exemptions should be restricted to activities that are primarily doctrinal? Are there any other activities that you consider should be covered by an exemption, what are they and why do you consider they need to be exempted?*

The NPC notes paragraphs 3.36-3.38 which we believe ensure services provided for the public on behalf of a public body must clearly fall within the scope of the regulations.

Paragraphs 3.36-3.38 approach this issue correctly that social and welfare services provided for a community must likewise comply with the non-discrimination provisions. Nor should activities provided by religious organisations for primarily commercial purposes be excluded, any more than any other commercial service.

The NPC also notes that some organisations may be in receipt of public funds and it would be appalling that they might be able to teach a view that undermines the approach of Government, parliament and the law.

**Question 14: Do you agree that an exception should be provided for charities that provide services specifically to people because of/according to their sexual orientation?**

The NPC notes paragraphs 3.39-41 which enables charities established to provide services specifically for LGB people to continue to function.

### *Types of discrimination*

**Question 15: Do you agree that the SO regulations should include direct and indirect discrimination as well as victimisation? Are there any particular considerations or situations that should be taken into account in how such provisions are drafted?**

The NPC believes that regulations protecting LGB people should be the same as under other anti-discrimination provisions. It is important that the legislation covers association or assumed sexual orientation. Often people are attributed a particular sexual orientation on the basis of images and stereotypes, which may well not be accurate, and any subsequent discrimination must also be caught, regardless of whether the alleged sexual orientation turns out to be accurate

*Question 16: Do you agree that discriminatory practice should be included in the scope of the SO regulations?*

Yes. This would challenge unwritten discriminatory practices.

*Question 17: Do you agree that discriminatory advertising should be included in the scope of the SO regulations?*

*Question 18: Do you agree that instructions to discriminate should be covered by the SO regulations?*

The NPC agrees that to be consistent with proposed protection it will be necessary to include both advertisements and instructions to discriminate, as proposed.

***Question 19: Do you agree that the validity of contracts should be covered by the SO regulations?***

Yes,

***Enforcement***

***Question 20: Do you agree that the enforcement provisions for the SO regulations should match those for the other equality enactments?***

Yes, the enforcement must apply as in other cases of discrimination law.

***Question 21: Do you have any comments on the Government's plans for how the SO regulations will be enforced and supported by the CEHR?***

The NPC notes that the creation of the CEHR offers an opportunity to highlight that discrimination on sexual orientation grounds is as seriously considered as other discrimination. Prior to the establishment of the CEHR the government should highlight the enactment to individuals and businesses.

*Ends.*

# NPC/06/07/A National Postgraduate Committee Response to the Lyons Inquiry

The National Postgraduate Committee is very pleased to be able to take this opportunity to respond to The Lyons Inquiry on the reform of Council Tax. Postgraduate students and researchers are both receiving training and contributing to the knowledge base and are actively involved in the promotion of learning and the development of the knowledge economy. Supporting students who are on low incomes and ineligible for social security benefits is just and would encourage their successful completion of their study and engagement into the knowledge economy.

The National Postgraduate Committee is formed from the representative of postgraduates from Students Associations at universities and other institutions. It represents postgraduates' interests both through these Associations and through the other educational and professional bodies with which it has links.

The National Postgraduate Committee feels strongly that any change to Council Tax must retain Full-Time students exemption from Council Tax as students are, overwhelmingly, ineligible for social security benefits. We also feel that if students were liable for Council Tax and subsequently able to access Council Tax Benefit there would be significant administrative burdens on local authorities processing each claim and that there would most likely be a large number of successful claimants as most students do not have substantial earnings.

We also note the changes to Council tax, guaranteeing students exemption while living with non-students. This is very important for Postgraduate Students who are likely to share accommodation with other older or professional people and should remain.

We are however concerned by the continuation period where individuals may be deemed to no longer qualify for exemptions as students despite the fact they are working on their research leading up to submission. This is particularly unfair as a small proportion of students ever complete their research and submit within three years (full time). Again the status of students in their writing up period needs to be clarified. This is a very difficult and pressured time for doctoral students. If funding has ceased and they are engaged in seeking employment and writing up their research then the last thing needed is further financial disbenefit. Clearly this will have a knock-on effect on completion rates as students struggle to manage. Miranda Irving notes that HEFCE data shows a third of full time doctoral students and two thirds of part time doctoral students do not complete their degree in seven years (July 18 2006). It is important that these students do not suffer from financial hardship in attempting to complete their studies as they will be of value to the economy through training and advancement in the knowledge economy.

## References:

Irving, Miranda. "Unfinished Business." Guardian Unlimited 18 Jul. 2006, Online. Available: <http://education.guardian.co.uk/egweekly/story/0,,1822428,00.html>. 18 July. 2006.

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