

npc  the national postgraduate committee

annual report 2005/06

National Postgraduate Committee

Annual Report 2005/06

By charity law, the National Postgraduate Committee of the United Kingdom is required to produce an annual report. This annual report has been composed of the sections of our annual conference guide to supply information to those who did not attend conference. Further to this policy passed over the year is also listed for reference.

All details about the activities of the National Postgraduate Committee can be found off the website, www.npc.org.uk. Further information is also available from the General Secretary on npc@npc.org.uk.

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The National Postgraduate Committee is a Registered Scottish Charity SC033368

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Summary of Activity

For the year 2005/06 the year has involved responding to a number of consultations and taking part in a number of working groups.

Major National Level Activity

NPC has continued to work closely with UK GRAD working in the Rugby Team Working Group looking at evaluating the success of the Roberts Training Agenda. The National Postgraduate Committee has also been involved with eThOS, the project to digitise and make available electronic copies of Theses.

Development of Student Bodies

A large amount of time is spent by the General Secretary visiting institutions and student representative bodies to encourage and support the representation of postgraduate students. The NPC continues to encourage stronger membership by encouraging new affiliations and supporting student bodies and institutions in best practice guidelines.

Plans for the Future

NPC plans to continue to build its reserves and infrastructure to run in a more solvent fashion and to enable expenditure on projects to support our aims. Development in devolved regions are continuing well in Scotland with plans to engage further in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Plans to develop further evidence in light of concerns over the future of postgraduate education as well as to continue lobbying to government and other organisations in light of the impact of undergraduate fees took place with sponsorship from Prospects. The results were presented at the Annual Conference in Aston University and are available online (<http://www.npc.org.uk/postgraduatefactsandissues/postgraduatepublications/marketfailureofpostgraduateeducationreport2006.pdf>). The NPC will continue to develop this evidence to lobby government and other organisations as the effect of undergraduate fees creates an evidence base.

The Chair's Address

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 5th 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 over a horizontal line.

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	Until 2004-09-30 Jim Ewing From 2004-10-01 Simon Felton	University of Glasgow University of Birmingham
Chairperson	Marilyn Shanks	University of Essex
Treasurer	Tim Roll-Pickering	Queen Mary, University of London
Conference Secretary	Stephen Abbots	Aston University
Minutes Secretary	<i>Until Jan 06</i> Andre Oboler <i>From Jan 06</i> Vacant	Lancaster University
Communications Officer	Duncan Connors	University of Glasgow
Equal Opportunities Officer	Lade Oduyemi	University of Strathclyde
Project Officers (4)	David Bean Dries Neirynek <i>Until Feb 06</i> Katie Harper Ismail Malik <i>From February 2006</i> Alex Higgins	St Andrew's University University of Bristol University of Southampton Birkbeck, University of London. University of Sussex
Ordinary Executive Officers (2)	Harpreet Singh <i>Until</i> Philip Carr. <i>From November 2005</i> Erich Kofmel	Aston University University of Nottingham University of Sussex,

Officers of NPC Scotland

Chair	<i>Until June 2006</i> Maggie Chapman <i>From 22-07-06</i> Jim Ewing	University of Edinburgh University of Glasgow
Depute Chair/Secretary	Lade Oduyemi	University of Strathclyde
Treasurer	<i>Vacant</i>	

Officers of NPC Wales

Chair	Vacant
Vice Chair/Secretary	Vacant
Treasurer	Vacant

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	Christabel Silva	Middlesex University
Elected Members (2)	Martin Gough Duncan Connors	University College London University of Glasgow

Constitutional Subcommittee

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

Past Chair	Tim Roll-Pickering	Queen Mary, University of London
Elected Members (3)	Peter Campbell James Groves Maggie Chapman	University of Sheffield Lancaster University University of Edinburgh

Guide to the Management Subcommittee

There are thirteen Management Subcommittee positions, which are elected at the annual general meeting.

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 2002, 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
- Liaising with a public body such as the QAA, the ILT or Parliament; or
- Liaising with institutions in your area or with a national student organisation such as NUS, CIS or MSU.

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 and ensure the NPC is operating fairly and honestly, working for the benefit of postgraduate education in the UK.

Financial Report

See audited accounts (attached).

Reports from Officers

General Secretary — Simon Felton

Diary for the year.

Week commencing 10th October 2005.

After settling in relatively well, albeit it lots of admin and emails and telephone calls I have had a busy week. I have contacted many organisations and all affiliates to which I have found Kent will be disaffiliating. Sheffield has 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 before 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 17th October 2005

After a very hectic first week, I have been undertaking lots of administration and contacting affiliates and non-affiliates. On Tuesday 11th 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 14th 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 24th October.

Another week and ongoing projects. Monday 17th 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 31st October

An interesting week and good opportunity to network. On 1st 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 3rd - 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. King's 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 4th - 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 seen 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 7th 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 9th I visited Warwick University and met with Quad Research to discuss the project. Subsequently this has been authorised using the prospects funding.

Friday 11th 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 15th — 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 16th — 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 17th — 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 18th — 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 22nd — 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 23rd — 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 24th — 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, Baron 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 25th — 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 26th/Sunday 27th — 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 30th — BUGS. Had regular meeting with President to discuss postgraduate issue and support.

Thursday 1st — 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 to 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, 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'm 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.

I have attended NEC meetings which was a good opportunity to meet with executive members and network with other observers.

I attended the Open Education Taskforce that provided an insight into short term (two year) planning on education and the link between FE and HE and postgraduate study.

MEDIA

We have been successful in being sourced in both the Independent and Times Higher regarding issues on supervisors, and research funding. We have also responded to a question submitted to 'Ask the Panel' in the THES.

CASEFILES

I continue to set aside times to work on casefiles with a number in different stages and different progressions. I have also undertaken to assist in a number of new cases, one involving supervisor-student relations.

One case that has been in existence for over two years is in the process of being successfully resolved and the NPC has been able to highlight its practicality and arbitration skills to the parties involved.

Consultations

I have responded to two consultations, the HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 Consultation and the EPSCRC Postgraduate Training Strategy Consultation. We have received an interim comment on the EPSRC consultation:

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.

Associate Bodies

I have been approached by the Psychology Postgraduate Affairs Group who wish to become affiliate members. Following their attendance at the November OGM they have through unanimous agreement from the committee at the weekend of 28th and 29th January agreed to go ahead with proposing to become an associate body.

Week Commencing 30th January 2006

Monday 30th January- NEC meeting. Attended NEC meeting at Birkbeck college London. This was a long meeting which I had to leave shortly before it was due to finish as headed to Manchester for following day. I enclose an amended WMANUS Observer report

NEC members present. Gemma Tumelty, Joe Rukin, Jess Kosmin, Daniel Randall, Dan Chilcott, Pav Akhtar, Derfel Owen, Peter Leary, Kat Fletcher, Jamal El-Shayyal, Dylan Williams, Stephen Brown, Veronica King, James-J Walsh, Mel Ward, Wes Streeting, Jo Salmon, Judith Niven, Julian Nicholds, and Benson Osawe.

The first item of business was the minutes from the last two meetings. The only real matter of any interest was Kat Fletcher's comments about removing Sam Rozati (the former Chair of NUS' Finance Committee, who got in touch with the Guardian to gain publicity of an apparently non-existent financial crisis in NUS)'s right to membership of the National Union. Big thanks to Wes Streeting for plugging the WMANUS PGCE campaign (89 MPs and counting!) in his update on the Education campaign; similarly, Julian Nicholds mentioned that the notes from the 2020 Vision planning meeting.

After the minutes were accepted, the observers were asked to leave so that the minutes of a closed session of the NEC could be discussed. We had to wait outside the meeting for over an hour before being allowed back in.

There was a presentation from the National Director of NUS on the MORI research, similar in format to that which members of NUS Services, Ltd., had received last week. Apparently NUS is approximately £600k better off now than it was this time last year, which is a definite bonus, and has invested £300k in the NUS Extra project to date.

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's talk of drafting in a PVC from Warwick Uni so that NUS isn't 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-level ness.

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 SU's 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 SU's 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 QM UL 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 Annunziato 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 academia 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 Currie 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
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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, 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 Extra 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, 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 don't 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.

Deian 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 student 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.

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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 don't 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 Extra 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 student 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 (Cams) undated 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.

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, pls 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 — 16th 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 on 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 other's 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 was 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 much 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 attended 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 I 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 Oduyemi 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.

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 nor 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.

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 have 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 — Dries Neiryneck

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.

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 student 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-envision 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.¹

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.²

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.

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.

I am unclear at present if I can attend the OGM on Saturday, so I would offer apologies if I am not there.

I conducted a workshop session at the February OGM with Duncan Connors, where we explained the variety of outlets for writing on postgraduate issues, such as for pN and for the Journal (with recommendation for both! - i.e. you could write in one style for one and in another style for the other on the same topic).

We are now in a position to complete the final stage of production of vol.3 issue 4 of the Journal, with details of the NPC conference now available to advertise (if there are any other events you would like to see advertised, send me details).

Professor Alistair McCulloch (Head of Research at Edge Hill University and co-convenor with me for the Postgraduate Issues Network of the Society for Research into Higher Education) circulated at the time of the SRHE PIN on 23 May a re-drafted proposal for launch of the new journal in this field. This enables us to complete the Foreword of the pending issue, to herald the transition.

The new journal incorporates the existing Journal of Graduate Education, to provide continuity in publication in this field and to acknowledge the invaluable contribution from the innovation by the NPC. So postgraduate students, especially NPC members, and others, are equally encouraged to submit writing to this, for a Reflections and Reports section, if not research based articles. I provide some extracts from Alistair's draft:

Proposed Title: International Journal of Graduate Education

Editor: Professor Alistair McCulloch (Edge Hill University)

Associate Editors:

Professor Pam Denicolo, University of Reading Dr Martin Gough, University College London Paul Reynolds, Edge Hill University Dr Peter Stokes, University of Central Lancashire (Book Reviews Editor)

Aims and Scope:

The proposed journal would:

- provide a forum for the publication of high quality articles on graduate education across the world
- set the agenda for research on graduate education
- provide a forum for debate about the nature and delivery of graduate education
- provide a forum for the dissemination of best practice in the provision, quality enhancement and delivery of graduate education.

In each of these respects, the journal would encourage a comparative perspective and would publish material drawn from a wide range of national contexts.

Expected Contents:

Research Articles

5-7
5,000-9,000 words

Reflections and Reports
2-3
1,000-4,000 words

Reviews
5-10
200-1,000 words

Proposed Editorial Board:

The journal will have an Editorial Board, based within the UK, which will be responsible for the general oversight of the quality of the journal.

There will also be an 'International Advisory Board' whose members will all be based outside the UK. The role of the International Advisory Board will be to assure that the journal operates at international levels of excellence and also to provide papers on recent developments in graduate education within their areas. This dual system of Boards will ensure both that the journal operates at the highest levels of scholarship and also that it reports the latest developments from around the world.

The membership of the boards has been consciously designed so that:

- a) the full range of graduate issues is covered;
- b) a wide range of disciplines is represented;
- c) the full range of institutional types is represented; and,
- d) a range of important stakeholders is represented.

Editorial Assistance

Simone Kruger
Research Office, Edge Hill University

Katherine Straker
Research Projects Office, Edge Hill University

Editorial Operations:

The journal will have an Editor with overall responsibility for each issue, and four associate editors, one of whom will act as Reviews Editor. One or more of the Associate Editors will be responsible for commissioning papers for the 'Reflections and Reports' section.

Papers should be sent to the Editor at Edge Hill, who will oversee the review process. Papers will be reviewed for appropriateness and length prior to being sent to reviewers. The review process will be 'double-blind'. Assistance will be available to the Editor through the Editorial Assistants, who are based at Edge Hill.

It is anticipated that there are likely to be occasional special themed issues which could be guest-edited. Articles published in such special issues would be required to go through the same double-blind review process as articles in regular issues.

Occasional 'expert' pieces will be commissioned, and it may not necessarily be appropriate to put these out for review.

Papers submitted for the 'Reflections and Reports' section of the journal will not be subject to the full review process. These will be reviewed by the editors who will be able to accept a paper forthwith to ensure speedy publication. Alternatively, they will be free to seek a referee's opinion should they believe that to be necessary. The editors will also seek to commission pieces on topics of current interest for the Reflections and Reports section.

The journal will be published independently in the first instance with a view to its being adopted by a publisher once it has demonstrated the market.

Inaugural One Day Seminar, Friday 29th September (provisional date)

Research Ethics and Postgraduate Training: Issues and Challenges

Production:

It is proposed that in the first instance, 2 issues per year would be produced with a view to increasing the frequency. It is proposed that each issue should contain approximately 150 pages. The proposed date of publication of the first issue is February 2007.

The proposed subscription rates are as follows:

Institutional	£90 per annum (UK)
Personal	£36 per annum (UK)
Institutional	£100 per annum (Outside Europe)
Personal	£ 45 per annum (Outside Europe)

NPC will be sold copies at £7.50 each to pass on to their student subscriber base.

[Martin Gough notes: at two issues p.a. and continuing to supply at no net charge one copy to each affiliate, with roughly the same number of affiliates, the NPC may maintain the same sort of budget level as at present].

Email List Administrator — Dries Neiryck

Although there were a few problems with individual subscriptions and the NPC-Scotland list, this was a pretty uneventful year. A brief update on the lists and their user statistics:

- Postgraduate: general discussion list open to everyone: 533 subscribers (up 3 compared to last year)
- NPC: restricted to postgraduates and their representatives: 310 (up 22)
- NPC-Wales: 37 subscribers (up 2)
- NPC-Scotland: 85 subscribers (up 5)
- Postgraduate-NI: 18 subscribers (up 7)

- NPC-Executive: 31 subscribers

Generally, the NPC and postgraduate lists are well-known and used. From the regional lists, only NPC Scotland is being used. Not a single message has been sent to the NPC-Wales list this year, only two to Postgraduate-NI.

Policy Passed in the year 2005/06

Passed at the Annual General Meeting on 2005-08-13

PGCE Top Up Fees

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

1. That students on one year PGCE course are currently exempt from the £1,150 tuition fee, which is met by the Government through general taxation;
2. That the Government plans to remove fee concessions on PGCE courses from 2006, meaning the PGCE students will face tuition fees of up to £3,000;
3. That this proposed change in fee arrangements for PGCE students has taken place without proper consultation with NUS and the teaching unions;
4. That every English HEI will charge top-up fees, all but 7 (one being Wolverhampton University) will be charging the full £3,000 fees.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

1. That the introductions of top-up fees on PGCE courses will deter graduates from entering the teaching professions and will be detrimental to attracting the most suitable and qualified applicants;
2. That whilst the governments has so far been successful in attracting the highest number of teacher training entrants since 1975, there remains a shortage of teachers in the UK; this shortage is particularly acute in certain subject areas and is likely to worsen under the new fee arrangements;
3. That teachers are valuable public sector workers of enormous societal value; graduates should not have to pay fees on PGCE courses that equip them to educate and inspire future generations of young people;
4. That if we assume the same implementation of top-up fees for PGCEs, everywhere will bring in the charge.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1. To support the West Midlands Area NUS (WMANUS) to run a priority campaign 2005/6 calling for the Government to restore the exemptions from fees that has previously been granted to all PGCE students;
2. To support any campaigning work by any relevant body on this issue and lobby to ensure it is complimentary to any WMANUS campaigns.

The National Postgraduate Committee mandates:

1. The General Secretary to be at the forefront of this campaigning work in the NPC, and to work with WMANUS on their campaign on this issue.

Passed at the Annual General Meeting on 2005-08-13

Funding

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

1. The DfES calculate the average debt of a student entering HE in 2006 under the new English funding system will be £15,000¹
2. Many students throughout the UK take out commercial-rate loans, overdrafts and accrue credit card bills during undergraduate study and so feel additional pressure to leave education for employment.
3. Only a minority of PG students are funded through the Research Councils and other national award-giving bodies, leaving the majority to seek private funding often involving employment and/or loans.
4. Those without funding often have to pay substantial fees in addition to living costs.
5. Members of NPC have previously lobbied Education ministers around issues of funding and have been told that whilst the issues are appreciated, funds do not exist to create any comprehensive system for PG funding.
6. Our pre-existing policy calling for, at the very least, the deferral of tuition fees until the completion of a course, and for the creation of a system of index-linked, income contingent loans to cover both tuition fees and living costs.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

1. That with English undergraduate fees being increased to £3,000 a year, many Universities may expect the market to tolerate increases in postgraduate fees.
2. The need for a comprehensive and fair system of postgraduate financial support is becoming more and more acute.
3. That it is a disgrace that whilst accepting the case for deferred undergraduate fees, the Government has taken no action to address the greater burden of up-front postgraduate fees.
4. That at the very least, postgraduate fees should be deferred using the same formula as that for undergraduate fees, for those not in receipt of Research Council or similar funding.
5. Living expenses form the majority of the financial burden of most postgraduates, and as with undergraduates, low-interest loans should be made available to meet these costs for those without Research Council or similar funding.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1. To call a national co-ordinated week of lobbying of elected representatives, regulators, funding organisations and HE institutions, in favour of our existing policy as added to above, to take place ideally by February 2006.
2. For NPC to provide a briefing to its members outlining key figures and arguments that can be used during lobbying.
3. That NPC will co-ordinate media work in the run-up, during and after the week of lobbying.
4. To explore the possibilities of working with the NUS on this issue in light of the mandate of NUS Annual Conference 2005² and other relevant bodies.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2005-11-12

International Student Festival

¹ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/uploads/Debt%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

² NUS Resolved to "produce a briefing on Postgraduate issues: such as supervision and funding", <http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/CD18%20Resolutions%20to%20Annual%20Conference%2020051.doc>

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

- 1) In the UK over 50% of all postgraduate research students in science and technology are international students but generally international students do not have adequate representation when they come to study.
- 2) International Postgraduate students often face "social seclusion" and do not easily integrate into the community.
- 3) The Council for International Students (CIS) continuously campaigned for representation for international students through the creation of NUS part-time international students' officer.
- 4) Currently the CIS is organising the first ever International Students' Festival in the UK.
- 5) Most institutions of higher education already organise events in their respective campuses celebrating the diverse culture on campus.
- 6) International Postgraduate students often do not participate in such events.
- 7) The aim of the International Students' Festival is to:
 - Promote the rich diverse culture that international students bring to the UK.
 - Facilitate greater integration of international students with Home students and the local community.
 - Enhance international students experience whilst studying in the UK, leading to increased future recruitment.
 - Generally support international students.
- 8) There are regional events taking place across the country, as a build-up to the national event taking place in Manchester April 8th -9th 2006.
- 9) The Festival is currently supported by the Department for Skills and Education, National Union of Students, UKCOSA, Association of Colleges, Universities UK, British Council and a host of Further and Higher educational institutions.
- 10) That the CIS (a non-charitable organisation) is an affiliate to the NPC.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

- 1) To support the CIS in its campaign for better representation through the organisation of the International Students' Festival.
- 2) To publicise the event to its affiliates through emails and the website.
- 3) To contribute a paltry sum of £500 towards the organisation and publicity of the Festival.
- 4) Subject to the agreement of the CIS to allow the NPC's involvement in the planning stages of the festival.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2006-02-04

Emergency motion on student contracts at Oxford

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

- 1) The THES report of the 3rd February on students' opposition to 'one sided' contracts of duties.
- 2) The increasing litigious nature of students in appealing against breaking of students' contracts through failure to follow terms and conditions.
- 3) That Universities seek to protect the quality of their teaching, reputation of their institution and interests of their staff.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

- 1) That students have certain rights such as access to facilities, resources, academic support and teaching.

2) That universities have the right to expect students to conduct their studies responsibly and conscientiously.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1) The General Secretary to write on behalf of the NPC to Oxford University and the THES highlighting our opinion that contracts that exact responsibilities and rights should do so fairly on both partners.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2006-02-04

Emergency motion on the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace and Al-Akhawayn University International Conference on "Rethinking Educational Change", Al-Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco, 2-5 July 2006

We move that the NPC investigate involvement with the international conference in Morocco (July 2-5, 2006), partly organised by the Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace, with a view to encouraging institutional change and personal development. That the Management Subcommittee make a decision on this before the next OGM, preferably by the end of March.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2006-06-10

RAE Motion

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

- 1) The announcement of Gordon Brown in the Budget of 22nd March that the RAE would be abandoned after 2008.
- 2) The treasury statement that "the government's firm presumption is that after the 2008 RAE the system for assessing research quality and allocating 'quality-related' (QR) funding from the DfES [Department for Education and Skills] will be mainly metrics based" (Research exercise to be scrapped, Guardian, 22 March 2006).

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

- 1) The RAE has made funding very selective, as it was intended to do and concentrates research money on a university elite.
- 2) Peer review is one of a number of methods of assessing academic quality which has benefits and problems.
- 3) Metrics would allow grants to be allocated according to an academics citations or volume of research papers but ideally an academic's papers should be read and their citations counted rather than being judged on the title of a journal.
- 4) That scrapping the RAE would reduce the administrative burden on institutions.
- 5) Concentration of funding towards higher rated departments is destructive to other valued aspects of a department including teaching and emerging research.
- 6) That it is crucial that future public funding research policy sustains research across the higher education sector and supports not only 'blue skies' research, but also user-focused research and innovation, which the chancellor has identified as being of vital importance to the international competitiveness of the UK (Michael Driscoll cited in Research exercise to be scrapped, *Guardian*, 22 March 2006).

7) That if the RAE is cancelled, its planned assessing of the development of researchers and promoting greater equal opportunities in the research environment would be challenged

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

- 1) To work with affiliates in its response to the consultation on a replacement for RAE to ensure students get opportunities for user-focussed research and blue-skies research.
- 2) To ensure that any replacement to RAE and changes to research funding do not advantage science subjects to the detriment of arts and humanities subjects.
- 3) To ensure any replacement ensures promoting equal opportunities in the research environment is not threatened.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2006-06-10

Pro-Test Motion

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

1. That Pro-Test is "a UK based group with the aim of promoting and supporting scientific research and debate including animal based research".³
2. That Pro-Test staged a 700-strong demonstration in Oxford on Saturday, 25 February 2006, "with complete non-violence and bearing a message of solidarity and support for scientific advancement".⁴
3. That Pro-Test is being supported by eminent scientists at the University of Oxford, the Research Defence Society⁵ as well as MPs.⁶
4. That Pro-Test is made up largely of students⁷.
5. That Pro-Test is being democratically "led by a committee of nine individuals".⁸
6. That Pro-Test plans to stage a 5,000-strong demonstration in London in the near future..⁹
7. That Pro-Test activists and biomedical researchers conducting tests on animals as well as their institutions have for many years been the target of sometimes violent opposition and intimidation from animal-rights groups.¹⁰
8. That it is standing policy of the NPC to support academic freedom as last expressed in the motion opposing the academic boycott of Israel passed at the OGM on 26 February 2005.¹¹

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

1. That there are strong arguments both in favour of and opposing animal testing.
2. That it is not for the NPC to take a stance pro or against animal testing.
3. That there is no justification for the use of violence and intimidation in opposing animal tests and the researchers and institutions conducting them.

³ <http://www.pro-test.org.uk>

⁴ <http://www.pro-test.org.uk/past.htm>

⁵ <http://www.rds-online.org.uk>

⁶ <http://www.pro-test.org.uk/past.htm>

⁷ <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-2019256,00.html> and <http://www.guardian.co.uk/animalrights/story/0,,1722508,00.html>

⁸ <http://www.pro-test.org.uk/>

⁹ http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1718512,00.html

¹⁰ http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1718512,00.html

¹¹ NPC policy file and <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1112805370>

4. That the Pro-Test movement is about more than the new biomedical research laboratory in Oxford or animal testing in general.
5. That the Pro-Test movement is about opposing violence and intimidation that threaten academic freedom and the freedom of scientific inquiry.
6. That it is in the interest of postgraduate students in the United Kingdom to defend academic freedom and the freedom of scientific inquiry within the frame of the current law.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1. That it is in line with the NPC's objective — to advance, in the public interest, the education of postgraduate students in the United Kingdom — to articulate support of the Pro-Test movement.
2. Not to support the Oxford lab or animal testing per se, but to support Pro-Test in its fight for academic freedom and the freedom of scientific inquiry within the frame of the current law.
3. That there shall be no financial contribution to Pro-Test.

The National Postgraduate Committee mandates:

1. The General Secretary, the Communications Officer and other officers concerned to communicate the NPC's support in an appropriate manner to the media and NPC's stakeholders.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2006-06-10

Equality for LGBT Academic Staff

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

- 1) The THES article of 26 May 2006 that a 'glass ceiling in higher education is depriving homosexual academics of the promotions enjoyed by their heterosexual colleagues'.¹²
- 2) That 36% of gay and lesbian academics and administrators surveyed by the AUT who were out had been bullied or harassed by colleagues in past five years.¹³
- 3) Religious groups are seeking exemption from the forthcoming goods and services regulations by not legally prohibiting services run by Christians turn away gay customers, including care homes and schools.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

- 1) Academics should be rewarded by talent and should not be prejudiced by sexuality, gender, race, disability, age or ethnicity.
- 2) That exemptions in access to goods and services are discriminatory and could be used by religious colleges to exclude students and prevent academic research.
- 3) Discrimination can be subtle or overt, ranging from contracts not being renewed or posts and promotions not being offered, to more openly abusive behaviour.
- 4) LGBT issues should be included in all equality training, internal attitudinal surveys, and monitoring of complaints of harassment. The results of monitoring should be published.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

- 1) To submit a response to the consultation for good and services provision opposing exemptions for religious groups.

¹² Tysome, 2006, p.56

¹³ Tysome, 2006, p.56

2) To work with Stonewall where practicable in opposing exemptions to the goods and services regulations and to highlight discrimination in the academic environment.

3) To work with UCU in ensuring Universities and Colleges have procedures that allow academics to complain without prejudice and that hidden homophobia and biphobia is challenged.

List of Policy Responses Submitted by the National Postgraduate Committee 2005/2006

The following policy responses are all viewable at <http://www.npc.org.uk/essentials/policy>.

- NPC/06/01/A: Part time HE provision in Wales
- NPC/06/01/B: HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 Consultation
- NPC/06/01/C: EPSRC Postgraduate Training Strategy Consultation
- NPC/06/01/D: OSCR Consultation
- NPC/06/03/A: Eurodoc 2006 Questionnaire
- 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.
- 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.
- NPC/06/07/A National Postgraduate Committee Response to the Lyons Inquiry

List of Publications produced in 2005/2006

The following publications are all viewable/downloadable at:

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

- [Market Failure of Postgraduate Education Survey Report \(2006\)](#)