

npc  the national postgraduate committee

annual report 2004/05

National Postgraduate Committee

Annual Report 2004/05

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 2004/05 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.

Publications

The NPC has published a further Guideline as part of the NPC Guideline series on **Including Postgraduates in the Institutional Audit Process**. Releasing the publications has already proved useful to our affiliates and others in encouraging the involvement of postgraduates in the Auditing Process and Student Submission.

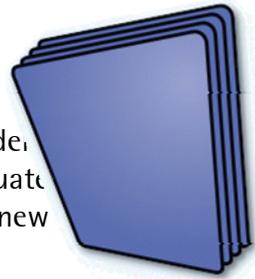
Development of Student Bodies

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.

There are plans to develop further evidence gathering in light of concerns over the future of postgraduate education as well as continue lobbying to government and other organisations in light of the impact of undergraduate fees.



The Chair's Address

The National Postgraduate Committee has come a long way. Way back in the 1980s there was a loose network of officers sharing tips. Then in 1990 a group of dedicated people put together the very first Conference at the University of Cambridge. It proved a success and another group of volunteers from St. George's Hospital Medical School, University of London, boldly offered to organise a sequel for 1991. One rash individual later recalled that:

I offered the view that they would not get their act together sufficiently, and momentum on campaigning nationally on postgraduate issues would not pick up significantly. I am so pleased that I have had to eat my words (as long ago as 1991, at least).

The NPC has easily disproving the doubters of those early days. It is now no less than fifteen years since that first conference and in that time it has grown immensely both in involvement and in impact. The output is too vast to list, as are the many points that the NPC has successfully lobbied for over the years. One major change in recent times has however been particularly satisfying. I refer to the transferring of jurisdiction over student complaints from the Visitor to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator — a matter which the NPC had lobbied for strongly. The recent formation of the Higher Education Academy to begin the monitoring and accreditation of teaching standards in higher education institutions realises another goal that NPC has sought. It has been my pleasure to serve as the NPC's representative on the HEA Council in this its first year. Internally the NPC has grown strongly and we owe a great deal of gratitude to the extremely dedicated individuals who over the years have given so much of their time (often at the expense of many other activities, particularly sleep!) to the NPC, allowing it to reach the point where it is today.

The challenge for NPC in the coming years is to facilitate and increase postgraduate representation on local campuses. This can take the form of new postgraduate associations where none have previously existed, or helping unions take the step from purely non-sabbatical postgraduate officers to the introduction of a postgraduate sabbatical. Whatever stage you are at locally, the NPC is here to advise you and help you learn from and share best practice.

The NPC provides the voice of postgraduate students to stakeholders in the sector. These stakeholders include Government, Parliament, the Quality Assurance Agency, the National Union of Students, the Higher Education Academy, the UK Council of Graduate Education, Universities UK, and the Standing Conference of Principals and the Press. Most importantly though, we provide the view of postgraduate students to our members, students' unions and postgraduate associations around the UK. We consult with our members, form policy and campaign to advance in the public interest postgraduate education in the UK.

Three years ago the NPC was granted charitable status. This recognised that our actions are always aimed at the best interests of society at large, not simply what is in our own interest or that of individual postgraduates. In the time since we gained charitable status, one of the main tasks for successive Chairpersons and the Constitutional Sub-Committee members has been the process of revising and updating our rules and by-laws to ensure that we have clear procedures for handling the complex operational issues that can arise for any organisation. The process is now nearly complete and I would like to thank all those who have worked so hard to produce and revise them, especially the Constitutional Sub-Committee.

Otherwise the year has been extraordinarily diverse. The NPC has continued to make a strong input into the direction of postgraduate education at multiple levels, whether through responses to consultations, direct contacts or through various officers taking up positions with other organisations. I would like to particularly praise current NPC Officers Andre Oboler, who was selected as the Student Observer on the Board of Directors of the Quality Assurance Agency, and Harpeet Singh, who was elected Treasurer of Eurodoc, the European wide federation of national postgraduate representative bodies. No less important has been the development of regular training sessions at our Ordinary General Meetings, helping attendees to share and develop practices, and I would like to single out Dries Neiryneck for both introducing these sessions as a regular feature of NPC meetings and running them so well.

The year has seen a good number of new NPC officers who have all given so much of their time and effort to helping the organisation grow. It has been a learning curve both for NPC and many of our officers individually. While moving positions, NPC officers do tend to stay involved over a number of years. I hope the current generation of officers will continue to support NPC, on our committees or outside of it in coming years. There have been many contributions by many people over the year but I would particularly like to thank Jim Ewing for putting up with the many trials and tribulations that are a part and parcel of the General Secretary's job, Tim Brown for continuing to expand the NPC's publications even though he now works in Denmark, James Groves for continuing to provide much help and support even though he has repeatedly found it impossible to retire from the NPC, Christabel Silva, my successor as Treasurer, for doing the best in the difficult circumstances brought on by external factors, and Chris Neville-Smith, my predecessor as Chairperson who has continued to provide much useful support and advice throughout this year.

NPC Officers 2004/2005

The Management Subcommittee

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

General Secretary	<i>Until 2004-09-30</i> Tim Brown	University of Surrey
	<i>From 2004-10-01</i> Jim Ewing	University of Glasgow
Chairperson	Tim Roll-Pickering	University of London
Treasurer	Christabel Silva	Middlesex University
Conference Secretary	<i>From 2005-05-13</i> Duncan Connors	University of Glasgow
Minutes Secretary	James Groves	University of Lancaster
Communications Officer	<i>From 2004-11-13</i> John Grainger	University of Edinburgh
Equal Opportunities Officer	<i>Until 2004-10-28</i> Chris Stuart	Napier University
	<i>From 2004-11-13</i> Paulet Brown	Institute of Education, University of London

Project Officers (4)	Tim Brown	University of Surrey
	Dries Neiryneck	University of Bristol
	Andre Oboler	University of Lancaster
	<i>Until 2005-06-11</i> Berrihan Abbas	Cardiff University
	<i>From 2005-06-11</i> Ismail Malik	Birkbeck, University of London
Ordinary Executive Officers (2)	Marilyn Shanks	University of Essex
	Harpreet Singh	Aston University

Officers of NPC Scotland

Chair	<i>Until 2004-10-28</i> Chris Stuart	Napier University
	<i>From 2004-11-06</i> Maggie Chapman	University of Edinburgh
Vice Chair/Secretary	<i>From 2004-11-06</i> John Anderson	University of Glasgow
Treasurer	From 2004-11-06 <i>John Grainger</i>	University of Edinburgh

Officers of NPC Wales

Chair	<i>Vacant</i>	
Vice Chair/Secretary	Vacant	
Treasurer	Natasha Hirst	Cardiff University

Financial Subcommittee

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

Past Treasurer	Tim Roll-Pickering	University of London
Elected Members (2)	Martin Gough	University College London
	Robert Park	University of London

Constitutional Subcommittee

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

Past Chair	Chris Neville-Smith	University of Durham
Elected Members (3)	Peter Campbell	University of Sheffield
	James Groves	University of Lancaster
	Andre Oboler	University of Lancaster

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'd 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.

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

Two watchdog positions - Ordinary Executive Officers

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

Financial Report

In 2004/2005 the NPC's income came almost wholly from affiliation fees paid by student representative bodies (£24,102.00) and income from its annual conference (£9,139.25), supplemented by small amounts of money from individual donations to the NPC (including Gift Aid reclaim) (£80.00), publication sales (£16.75), speaking at conferences (£200.00) writing an article for the Times Higher, a payment by Queen Margaret University College Research Office on behalf of a defunct student representative body that could not be deemed an affiliation fee payment (£44.00) and a 'keep the change payment' (£3.25). The bulk of the NPC's expenditure was on staff salary and National Insurance contributions (£13,619.88), the annual conference (£7,273.62), staff travel and subsistence expenses (£1,368.78), expenses incurred by volunteer office bearers (£1,183.27), publications expenditure (£114.28) and insurance (£1,510.99).

At the end of the financial year the NPC had made a cash surplus of £5,391.46. After taking into account outstanding debtors (£3,790.03) and short term liabilities (£1,169.54), however, the NPC showed a net surplus of £8,011.95 on the year.

Accounts 2004-2005

Income and Expenditure

	£ 2005	£ 2004
Income		
Affiliations	24,102.00	23,016.00
Individual Subscriptions	80.00	359.48
Publication Sales	16.75	143.95
Journal of Graduate Education	-	156.00
Conference Income	9,139.00	12,840.25
Other	397.25	194.00
Interest	409.43	190.19
JGE Interest	4.66	91.79
Total Income	34,149.09	36,991.66
Expenditure		
Staff		
Salary, Income Tax and NI	13,619.88	13,652.16
Travel and Subsidence	1,368.76	1,647.57
Executive		
Expenses	1,183.27	1,526.61
Office		
Telephone and Fax	20.41	58.92
Stationary	4.90	42.87
Copy/Print	8.70	128.98
Postage	100.64	158.72
Other	-	-
Publications		
Expenditure	114.28	823.08
Journal of Graduate Education	-	479.29
Meetings		
NPC Conference	7,273.62	8,864.07
Committee Meetings	-	-
Other day seminars & meetings	-	-
Scottish sub-committee		
Officer Expenses	83.20	530.24
Welsh sub-committee		
Officer Expenses	-	-
Publications	49.50	-
General		
Attendance at external conferences	88.12	484.09
Audit	616.87	587.50
Affiliations	66.00	80.00
Insurance	1,510.99	1,360.67
Other	-	-
Bank Charges	28.00	-
Total Expenditure	26,137.14	30,424.77
Surplus/(deficit) on year	8,011.95	6,566.89
Balance carried forward on 31.07.04	12,854.34	6,207.45
Exceptional Income	-	80.00
Balance carried forward on 31.07.05	20,866.29	

Balance Sheet on 31/07/05

	2005	2004
	£	£
FIXED ASSETS	-	-
CURRENT ASSETS — Unrestricted funds		
Current Account Working Balance	9,726.00	5,278.72
NPC Conference account working balance	3,985.65	3,378.46
90-day notice account balance	4,073.66	4,006.28
Outstanding debtors	3,790.03	1,253.20
TOTAL	21,575.34	13,916.66
CURRENT ASSETS — Restricted funds		
Journal of Graduate Education account balance	460.49	455.83
Debtors	-	-
TOTAL	460.49	455.83
TOTAL ASSETS	22,035.83	14,372.49
Liabilities — Due within one year		
From unrestricted funds	(1,169.54)	(1,158.15)
Journal of Graduate Education	-	-
TOTAL	(1,169.54)	(1,158.15)
Liabilities — Due after one year		
TOTAL LIABILITIES	(1,169.54)	(1,158.15)
TOTAL ASSETS LESS TOTAL LIABILITIES	20,866.29	12,854.34

	Unrestricted	Restricted	2005 Total	2004 Total
Opening Reserves	12,398.51	455.83	12,854.34	6,207.45
Surplus/(deficit)	8,007.29	4.66	8,011.95	6,646.89
Net transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
CLOSING RESERVES	20,405.80	460.49	20,866.29	12,854.34

Accounts 2005-2006

The following budget is proposed for the financial year 2005-2006 which was passed at the annual general meeting. Such a budget is subject to amendment throughout the financial year.

Income	Actual £	Budget £
Affiliations	£22,348.00	£22,100.00
Individual Donations	£359.48	£150.00
Publications Sales	£143.95	£150.00
JGE Income	£156.00	£150.00
Other	£194.00	£44.00
Total Income	£23,201.43	£22,594.00
Expenditure	Actual £	Budget £
Salary and NI	£13,526.61	£14,200.00
Travel and Subsidence	£1,647.57	£1,400.00
Executive		
Expenses	£1,526.61	£1,400.00
Office		
Phone/Fax	£53.39	£300.00
Stationary	£42.87	£100.00
Copy/Print	£128.98	£150.00
Postage	£158.72	£200.00
Other	£0.00	£100.00
Publications		
Expenditure	£823.08	£500.00
JGE expenditure	£479.29	£800.00
Meetings		
Conference	£3,976.18	£0.00
Committee Meetings	£0.00	£0.00
Scottish Subcommittee	£530.24	£750.00
Welsh Subcommittee	£0.00	£250.00
Other day seminars & meetings	£0.00	£0.00
General		
Attendance at Conferences	£484.09	£300.00
Audit	£587.50	£600.00
Affiliations	£80.00	£80.00
Insurance	£1,360.67	£1,400.00
Bank Charges/Interest	£190.19	£175.00
JGE Interest	£91.79	£1.00
Other	£0.00	£0.00
Contingency	£0.00	£240.00
Redundant Head	£80.00	NOT USED
Total Expenditure	£17,217.01	£22,594.00
Surplus/ Deficit	£5,984.42	£0.00

Reports from Officers

General Secretary — Jim Ewing

Although my term of office did not begin officially till 1 October, they got me started early. Here's my diary for the year:

Monday, 23 August 2004

My first meeting as General Secretary-elect of the National Postgraduate Committee: with John Andrew Murray, President and John Anderson, VP-Education of our host for this year, Glasgow University Students' Representative Council.

Issues raised:- concern re overseas students on MBA courses.

Tuesday, 24 August 2004

Trip to the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, to see Southampton University's Rattlesnake Theatre Company perform Shakespeare's *Richard III*, with NPC Southampton delegate John David Marsters on special effects. Except it was the other play they were doing, *Popcorn* by Ben Elton, so I had to go back on...

Friday, 27 August 2004

to see the one I wanted to.

Met Chris Stuart, Chair of NPC Scotland, who told me he was leaving next day for Canada on a week's holiday (he didn't go and subsequently resigned).

Friday, 10 September 2004

To Edinburgh, to meet Peter McColl, former Postgraduate Officer at Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA), his successor Maggie Chapman and VP-Academic Affairs Sabrina Russo, former NPC General Secretary Ewan Gillon and NPC Scotland Chair Chris Stuart (a meeting forever imprinted on my mind).

Issues raised:- EUSA concerned re how to respond to governments' proposed increases in visa charges for overseas students.

Saturday, 18 to Sunday, 19 September 2004

To Bristol for Management Sub-Committee meeting.

Wednesday, 29 September 2004

Sent introductory letter to affiliates.

Friday, 1 October 2004

First official day on job! Visited John Andrew Murray and John Anderson of GUSRC; received congratulatory e-mail welcoming me to the job from Chairman Tim Roll-Pickering (sent immediately after midnight, just like my granny used to call at New Year).

Monday, 4 October 2004

Telephone interview with Fran Abrams of Guardian.

Tuesday, 5 October 2004

Meet Hazel Ruxton and Carol Clugston of Glasgow University Postgraduate Research Office.

Outcome:- to meet postgraduate. Class reps when convenient.

Attended reception for postgraduate students of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Glasgow.

Wednesday, 6 October 2004

Puppy-walking begins: to Manchester to meet up with predecessor Tim Brown for first introductory tour. Meet Jo O'Connor and Colin of Prospects.

Outcome:- Agree to write 800 words on the NPC for Prospects Postgraduate.

On to Liverpool: meet Paulo Lisboa of Liverpool John Moores.

Outcome:- Will contact NPC re future meeting with PG students.

Attend welcoming PG fair/induction session at University of Liverpool. Meet Jane Leslie of Liverpool Guild.

Report:- Liverpool to join once they have the money. [*note:- They never got it.*]

Thursday, 7 October 2004

To London: visit ULU but nobody is in.

To Goldsmith's College to meet student reps. discussing best form of postgraduate representation.

To University of London School of Advanced Study (as Liverpool). Much interest from staff taking handfuls of leaflets for their students.

Friday, 8 October 2004

To Greenwich to meet Andrew Green of Article7 to have the website explained to me. Understood little and absorbed nothing.

Note:- Training has to be much more hands-on with lots of practice.

Wednesday, 13 October 2004

Attended Clubs and Societies Fair at Glasgow University Research Club.

Thursday, 14 October 2004

E-mail from Jo O'Connor of Prospects, requesting 300 words on the benefits of PG study.

Friday, 15 October 2004

Attend launch of new arts and humanities e-journal *e-sharp*, Glasgow University Library.

Tuesday, 19 October 2004

Tim Brown arrives for second leg of puppy-walking tour.

Wednesday, 20 October 2004

To Strathclyde University, to meet President Jamie Davidson.

Agreed: to attend first Council meeting to argue for Strathclyde affiliation to the NPC.

To Glasgow Caledonian, to meet Jill Collins, Student Development Co-ordinator and Ben Rogers, Deputy President of GCal Students' Association.

Agreed: to address PG reps. when suitable.

Thursday, 21 October 2004

Marathon trip to Belfast. Leave house at 7am - the road to Stranraer is a lot slower than Tim imagines.

Meet Damien Kavanah, Convenor of NUS-USI, then Peter Quinn, Education Officer, of Queen's University, Belfast, to discuss potential of NPC Northern Ireland.

Agreed: a return trip is necessary soon to meet all potential affiliates.

Jump into someone else's taxi to make it to the ferry in time. Arrive in Stranraer to find Tim has left the lights on and flattened the battery. So much for a fish supper in Girvan.

Friday, 22 October 2004

Access office! Tim helps transfer all material before leaving.

Wednesday, 27 October 2004

First time allowed out alone.

Have been invited to discuss forthcoming year with UUK; as I intend responding positively to the suggestion made by the President of Cambridge University Graduates Union that I address Council (due to meet on Thursday 28 inst.) and as I have no other appointments till Saturday lunchtime, it seems a good idea to take advantage of an opportunity to spend a few days based in London to visit local HEIs. Then, on Tuesday 26, after booking the tickets, word comes from Student Union President Wes Streeting that there is a motion of no confidence against the CUGU president, so it is not the best time to go beating the drum for affiliation. Sigh. Anyway,...

Meet Paulet Brown of IoE, University of London and Postgraduate officer of University of London Union, for a getting-to-know-you lunch.

Meet Davina Blake and Chris Hale of Universities UK to discuss plans for the forthcoming year.
Agreed: they are to send me lots of reading material.

E-mail around London non-affiliates to try to arrange meetings for Thursday and Friday.

Thursday, 28 October 2004

No takers by 12 noon, so off to Southampton to visit our newest affiliate. Jonathan Walsh, VP-Education, appreciates someone visiting this far south; apparently, no-one else bothers.

Catch John David Marsters losing his head in *A Tomb with a View*.

Friday, 29 October 2004

Back to London in time to meet Hannah Essex of NUS to discuss matters of common interest, like proposing student observer to QAA and updating the NUS guide to postgraduate representation (they'll do the pictures if we do the text).

Check e-mail to find one response to e-mails, from King's College London Students' Union - too late. Mail apologies.

Saturday, 30 October 2004

Back to Glasgow, to speak on NPC at Glasgow University Students' Representative Council training day.

Monday, 1 November 2004

Address Strathclyde University Students' Representative Council on affiliation. They vote yes. (and here we are!)

Tuesday, 2 November 2004

To Edinburgh, to attend the Arts and Humanities Research Board Workshop on the UK Doctorate in the Arts and Humanities. Met two old friends of NPC: Prof. Diana Woodward of Napier University and Linda Welsh of Queen Margaret University College. Also met potential new friends in Anne Bacon of Northumbria University and Dr. Darrell Cosden of the International Bible College, Glasgow, who responded positively to my offer to meet their student representative body. We're short of non-universities.

Discussion centred around what forms a PhD thesis can take in the performing arts: if a mathematical PhD can be a single page, why can a PhD in the performing arts not be a body of original creative work, or even a single interpretative performance of another's work? But, as Diana Woodward reminded us, where is the objective written critique? I suggested that reward for professional achievement was the role of the honorary doctorate, but that seems to have lost respect among academics.

Also discussed was funding and the duration of the PhD course. The intention is to fund fewer Masters courses and more PhD courses on a 1+3.5 model. This would comprise of an MRes., which would cover research techniques and any extra background knowledge needed (for example, researchers in the field of Systematic Theology often find they need German) and a funded writing-up period. I spoke supportingly of this, citing the evidence of my project on writing-up students last year for the need of an adequate bursary during this period.

I look forward to the consultation document.

Met Lorna Davidson of Edinburgh University Students' Association to finalise details of NPC Scotland reconvened AGM on Saturday.

Saturday, 6 November 2004

Attended NPC Scotland reconvened AGM at University of Edinburgh. All vacancies filled for full new sub-committee. Joy!

Wednesday, 10 November 2004

Met Rebecca Wright of NATFHE on flying visit to Glasgow to discuss matters of common interest, chiefly student/employee status of postgraduate researchers.

Thursday, 11 November 2004

Attended CHESS reception at Holyrood.
Also visited Heriot-Watt and Napier Universities.

Friday, 12 November 2004

Attended Aldwych meeting, University of Glasgow. Would have attended more Aldwych meetings through the year (a very good way to meet officers from non-affiliates) but poor communication meant I was not informed of meetings.

Saturday, 13 November 2004

Attended first NPC OGM of 2004-5, University of Glasgow.

Monday, 15 — Tuesday 16 November 2004

Attended NUS National Council training, Birmingham — before the national Council was abolished.

Contact with non-affiliates: Central Lancashire, Oxford Brookes, Plymouth

Tuesday, 23 November, 2004

Attended Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations AGM, Edinburgh (NPC is a member).

Friday, 26 — Sunday 28 November, 2004

Attended Mature Students' Union annual conference/AGM in Birmingham as delegate (Srikant Jakilinki, NPC Glasgow delegate, as observer).

Friday, 3 December, 2004

Attended postgraduate committee meeting at Glasgow University.

Saturday, 11 December 2004

Attended NPC Scotland OGM, Glasgow

Monday, 13 December, 2004

Visited Glasgow School of Art to press case for affiliation.

Tuesday, 14 December 2004

Attended UK GRAD Scottish Hub Good Practice Workshop launch of "What do PhDs Do?", University of Edinburgh.

Monday, 20 December 2004

Visited auditor in Penicuik, Midlothian with Christabel Silva, Treasurer and Tim Roll-Pickering, Chair.

Also bank in Edinburgh.

Monday, 10 January 2005

Attended NUS NEC

Friday, 21 January 2005

Visited University of Bath Graduates' Association

Saturday, 22 — Sunday 23 January, 2005

Attended NPC management sub-committee, Bristol.

Monday, 24 January

Visited Beri Abbas, Project Officer, at Cardiff University en route from OGM at Bristol to *chez* Harpreet in Birmingham.

Tuesday, 25 January

Spoke at NUS/QAA event at Novotel, Birmingham on QAA guidelines.

Made contact with several affiliates and non-affiliates.

Visited Simon Felton at Birmingham Guild.

Failed to rendezvous with Miles Weaver of Aston Guild (his girlfriend took the car while he was having a kip).

Monday, 7 February

Attended Quality Assurance Agency/Universities Scotland workshop "The Effective Learning Framework. The Concept and the Links with Employability" at the University of Strathclyde.

Strong criticism voiced of the in places unreadable Effective Learning Framework (ELF) Consultation document issued in December and concerns raised that, while potentially very positive, the ELF might turn into an extra, unexpected, unwelcome module.

Wednesday, 9 February

Attended UKCGE Winter Conference in York with Andre Oboler.

Programme not as advertised; attended:-

1st keynote speech: Christine Humfrey, Director of International Office, University of Nottingham. Raised point of punctuation vis a vis plagiarism.

1st session: Prof. Clive Mulholland, University of Ulster: Distance learning MSc in Biomedical Sciences.

Example of e-learning used to cater for students in full-time employment seeking professional development.

NB:- Student representation has adapted to accommodate e-learners; worth checking out.

2nd session: Masters course in university administration (not on original schedule, looked worth keeping abreast of, but wasn't).

Got into conversation with Tony Fell re Eurodoc, so missed 3rd session.

2nd keynote speech: Prof. Paul Ramsden, Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy.

Raised point of post-doctoral tutors being neither students nor necessarily regarded as full employees.

Monday, 14 February

Attended University of St Andrews to address arts, humanities and social sciences postgraduate research students on funding sources. Well-received.

In the morning, visited the University of Abertay, Dundee, met SU President Joe Weir; visited the University of Dundee, met SU President Fraser Millar.

Both very keen to raise question of affiliation with respective SU.

{ Note: Abertay has since applied }

In the afternoon, met St Andrews Student Union Executive.

Thursday, 17 February 2005

Spoke at University of Cardiff on Engaging with Postgraduate Students — "An examination of the expectations, motivations and aspirations of postgraduate students"

Visited Cardiff University executive.

Wednesday, 23 February

Chaired panel discussion: the impact of Roberts and beyond at south-west/Wales hub of UK GRAD.

9 March

Meeting with the Glasgow University Postgraduate Students' Committee.

This is an academic committee, not a representative body. They wanted to learn about us and how their students can get involved with us.

Representation is a particular problem for PGs at Glasgow (I should know) but I'm afraid there's nothing I can suggest except that the Students' Representative Council address PGs during their matriculation (registration) week, rather than direct all their attention to the UGs, who matriculate later.

10 March

Visit to Strathclyde University with James Groves to discuss Strathclyde's hosting conference and to examine facilities.

11-13 March

Attended Eurodoc annual conference in Strasbourg.

Elected Co-ordinator of Supervision & Training Work group.

A very positive experience which opened my eyes to the work of Eurodoc and filled me with enthusiasm. Unfortunately, the working arrangement agreed with Francis Vella, President of Eurodoc, was not acceptable to the working group and consequently I resigned.

16 March

Spoke at annual conference of the Association of University Administrators, University of Warwick.

My first-ever 90-minute session, divided into mini-discussions on Research Student Satisfaction: Ideas from the PG Perspective. Went smoothly enough - facilities, career structure, etc. until we got to PDPs.

I appreciate that NPC did a lot of early work on PDPs with the QAA but my initiation into the subject was the QAA/Universities Scotland presentation at Strathclyde in February, which involved the densest document I have had to read since my undergraduate theology days. Those present - the same sort of audience which in England regards the matter as done and dusted - were very hostile to what seemed like an unexpected, unwelcome and wholly unnecessary extra degree module designed to make HEIs look good. The institution in my group which seemed to have the best current practice (Strathclyde) stressed that they do *not* make PDPs compulsory, to general approval. So I boldly proposed to the AUA that PDPs were an excellent idea but should not be compulsory.

They let me out alive.

It should be noted, however, that complaints are being raised in the educational press re the same sort of thing at postdoc level. Like all good ideas, it will not run completely smoothly; we should be prepared for complaints.

17 March - Spoke at conference *The Future of PG Education* at the Barbican, organised by Neil Stewart Associates. Spoke on *Meeting the needs of both students and employees*. Essentially, we have to make sure students/researchers have the opportunity to fulfil their ambitions and make their original contributions to academia and civilisation while making sure that they also acquire the sort of transferable skills which are applicable in the marketplace. Also chaired session *Where are our graduates going?*

19 March - Attended USI annual conference in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Spoke generally on the current PG scene in the UK; attendees were very interested to hear of students successfully suing institutions which do not deliver what their prospectuses say they will...

31 March - 2 April - Attended the 3rd European University Association Convention at the University of Glasgow on behalf of Eurodoc, along with Francis Vella and Renzo Rubelle.

The conference sessions took place in the University of Glasgow but the event was hosted by the city's three universities and the inaugural event took place in Strathclyde's Barony Hall, which gave me the opportunity to suss it out for our own conference dinner - not quite in the Coventry Guildhall league, but just what we're looking for.

The purpose of the Convention was to draft the Glasgow Declaration to take to the Bergen Ministerial Summit (19-20 *inst.*). We managed to corner the high heid yins and make our case for specific PhD representation at Bergen i.e. Eurodoc along with ESIB (National Union of Students in Europe) but apparently there are too many other interested parties trying to get into too small a venue. A great pity, bearing in mind the total lack of enthusiasm for the whole affair that has been demonstrated in some circles by student representatives who are attending.

5-7 April - My very first NUS annual conference!

Not as fruitful, I am given to understand, than previous conferences, bearing in mind that it was a day shorter, with fewer breaks and no separate further/higher education session to give people an opportunity to mill around and look at the stalls but we still drew interest from several officers, some from ex-affiliates, some from places which had never heard of us and some from annex campuses who didn't realise they were affiliated already.

Also, several delegates whom I had met previously on my travels approached just to say hello, which made all the trudging worthwhile.

Thursday, 5 May

Attended Society for Research into Higher Education in London, speaking on postgraduate perspectives.

Saturday, 14 May

Attended Scottish Sub-Committee and management Sub-Committee, University of Edinburgh.

Here I was pleased to introduce Duncan Connors, our new Conference Secretary.

Wednesday, 18 May

To Edinburgh, to discuss Matters arising with Maggie Chapman, Scottish Chair and ongoing business with John Grainger, Communications Officer.

One had to go home due to a domestic crisis and the other forgot.

2 June

Attended launch of Rees Report on student fees in Wales, University of Cardiff.

The Report recommends deferred flexible (the word preferred by the Review Group) fees, repayable once graduates start earning £15,000. It also recommends a National Bursary Scheme, administered by the Universities; this would cut out the competitiveness prevalent in England, which the Group sees as wasteful. It also suggests the Welsh Assembly consider lower fees for Welsh-domiciled students, although there may be legal implications for this.

Although some members of the Group started from a perspective very much opposed to top-up fees or even fees of any kind on principle, the Welsh situation contains many what Prof. Rees describes as "givens", which limit choice. As the Welsh Assembly works with a block grant from Westminster, determined by the Barnett formula, funding is strictly limited; the ideal of free higher education could not be achieved without diverting funds from other sectors. Any change in the Barnett formula or the Welsh Assembly's fiscal powers would require lengthy legislation and the current Welsh higher education deficit is such that it needs immediate attention. Under the circumstances, the report's recommendations are the most equitable that the Group saw fit to suggest. Even so, it Prof. Rees stressed that the deficit is such that this can only be regarded as a stop-gap; more drastic action is going to be needed if Wales is to be able to compete internationally as a centre of higher education and research as all interested parties desire.

In conversation before the meeting started officially, I remarked to Prof. Rees that the problem in Wales was that the responsibility and the means are in different hands. She asked if I would raise that point in the open session and I was glad to oblige. The decision is one for the people of Wales to make but if our object of advancing postgraduate education in the public interest is to be achieved in Wales, we may find ourselves involved in a political debate and we should not shirk from that if the achievement of our object requires a political solution.

I also stated NPC's continuing opposition to top-up fees on principle, although conceding that the Group had made the best of the limited circumstances they had to work in - which made us the only remotely critical national student voice at the meeting.

I also visited Cardiff University Student Union, where I received the usual warm welcome. I discussed with Peter Goodman the situation of NPC Wales, which requires drastic attention; he suggested a special session at the AGM if an OGM in Wales proves impractical.

I also had the unpleasant duty of informing Berrihan Abbas that, as she had not submitted a progress report or apologies to two consecutive meetings, she was deemed to have resigned. She accepted the situation with good grace; the confounding thing is that she was so busy getting on with the project that she had not time to talk to us about it. However, she is continuing with it and will leave it in the folder for her successor to continue; hopefully Cardiff will share the results with NPC when it is completed.

As my rail connection from Cardiff to Birmingham was cancelled, I missed the overnight coach to Glasgow; to cut a long story short, I had to spend the night in the coach station and travel up on Friday, which wasted a day. I spent the weekend recovering. Booking the last possible train out of town may give the maximum time there for work but it's a false economy if public transport is so unreliable and I shan't be doing that again.

Wed. 8 June

Attended official council executive handover at Strathclyde University.

Thursday, 9 June

Met Scott Hanley of ETHOS Project to discuss NPC involvement.

Saturday, 11 June

Attended OGM at Birkbeck College London

Tuesday, 14 June

Attended meeting of UK GRAD Rugby Team (discussing Roberts funding), London

Tuesday, 21 June

Attended Glasgow University SRC Executive handover.

Tuesday, 5 July

Spoke at Aldwych handover, University of Nottingham

Thursday, 21 July

Meeting with new sabbatical officers at Glasgow University on postgraduate. needs.

In addition, I've also written submissions (see elsewhere), dealt with individual cases (highly confidential) and, on the instruction of the management sub-committee, compiled the NPC election survey of the political parties' opinions on higher/postgraduate education, which was published on the website under the by-line of John Grainger, our Communications Officer. This proved to be one of the most enjoyable tasks of the year and produced some interesting results. We have also become (slightly) more proactive with the press and I hope that will develop even further in the immediate future.

However, I find it difficult to be positive about my achievements over the past year. NPC spreads the workload as much as it can - Andre Oboler stands out this year for his work with the QAA - but a lot of balls get thrown at the General Secretary and I have learned that I am not much of a juggler. The slow start can be partially blamed on inadequate office facilities at the start of the year and my lack of active experience on the management sub-committee meant that it took me a long time to realise its modus operandi and I found the day-to-day issues took up all my attention to the detriment of the big ideas, although this is not an atypical experience, according to conversations with sabbatical officers.

I also have to be uncomfortably honest and admit that I found there was a lot more to the job than I expected. Some tasks for which I considered myself unsuited I found fell to the General Secretary, rather than the officer to whom I expected they would, and it's taken me a long time to address my inadequacies and begin to overcome them.

The lateness in securing a conference venue and even more so a conference secretary meant that effectively I was planning conference to the detriment of everything else, including some important administrative work - although I've learned plenty from this experience and, no matter how long I have in office, I intend next year's Conference Secretary to begin with a clear set of published guidelines.

All I can say is that I've learned a lot over the past year, without bringing NPC to its knees, and hope that, in whatever sphere I find myself in hereafter, I apply what I've learned to good effect.

NPC Scotland Chairperson— Maggie Chapman

The last year represents some increase in real (as opposed to fictional) activity in NPC Scotland. The recent affiliation of Strathclyde University Students' Union represents a positive move towards strengthening and broadening the institutional base in NPC Scotland. I have been able to combine some of my work as Scottish Chair and Postgraduate Convenor at Edinburgh University Students' Association, both in linking with external bodies, and helping them with specific research, as outlined below.

It is somewhat worrying that, within the working partnership behind SPARQS (NUS, Universities Scotland, SHEFC, QAA Scotland and the Scottish Executive), there is no specific postgraduate voice informing the decisions and policies that affect institutional governance and review, and dedicated funding to the development of student representation. QAA Scotland and SHEFC are keen to develop some processes for dealing with postgraduate representation as distinct from those which exist for undergraduate education.

I met with QAA Scotland to discuss our and their concerns about the lack of postgraduate focus within an enhancement led approach to quality assurance. Our discussion included much talk about how best to implement PDPs, focussing on how to improve the different approaches that already exist within Scottish Universities. We also discussed Masters level quality assurance and representation, and how best to combine good practice from UG and PG experience. Other issues raised included the disparity of training for and by PG tutors/demonstrators across Scotland, compensation for such teaching, and the problems of linking this to research funding.

QAA Scotland are keen to have a workshop day, perhaps in late September, to further explore these issues and themes with a wider group of students. I am hoping to help facilitate this, perhaps at EUSA.

I have also had discussions with SHEFC about the lack of clear pathways for postgraduate funding, the dynamics of tutoring and demonstrating, and how best to approach the non-research aspects of postgraduate study. I hope to be involved in some of their advisory groups on these issues.

Other small projects have included campaigns about international visa fees and how best to deal with the home office changes, duration of research degrees, credit for taught degrees, skills training, and increasing awareness of the requirements of PG education within the Scottish Parliament. Over the next year, I hope that we can make more of our existing links with QAA Scotland, SHEFC, and other relevant HE policy and representational quangos and the Executive.

Communications Officer — John Grainger

Since the November OGM when I was elected as communications officer, working with other members of committee, I have managed to produce a number of different NPC publications. These have included:

- pN 4.1/4.2
- NPC email bulletins
- Election bulletin

Additionally some work has been done to the website with the addition of an affiliates page.

Project Officer — Tim Brown

Over the past year, my role has completed a variety of jobs, some of which have fallen into my remit as past general secretary and others have made up the various new publications that I have produced as a project officer. My aim has been to maximise the output of NPC's work through what I can do and I am pleased to say that several useful internal and external publications are

included in this final report. The separate work items undertaken can be best summarised in bullet point form, of which the following tasks were undertaken as past general secretary:

- Updating the website for individual donors, and making a fresh plea to donors to support our work by helping increase funds for travel and other expenses that the executive need to operate. Details at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/996757558>
- Completing letters to the Department for Education and Skills and the Research Councils as a fulfilment of our policy on Research Student Disabled Students' Allowance.
- Drafted criteria and policy on access to the members are of the website.
- Planning what action NPC needs to take to be in a position to host a Eurodoc conference, some internal information is available for this.
- Sent off the response to the response from the Regional Development Agencies on funding taught postgraduate programmes.
- Written the 2003/04 Annual Report, now published online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1108207725.pdf>
- Proposal has been completed and sponsorship is being sought, £4,500 has currently been secured from Graduate Prospects Ltd. Proposal is online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1108678875.pdf> General Secretary has been actioned to mail out letters that have been drafted.
- Visited PhD-Nettet, the Danish counterpart of NPC in Lyngby, Copenhagen to present in both an NPC and Eurodoc capacity on supervision and training.
- Completed material for Keep Wednesday Afternoons Free campaign and published online. Support has been given by NUS, BUSA, CHESS, NATFHE and AUT. Now is online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1112823505>
- Completed a report writing up the full details of a survey carried out last year jointly by UK GRAD and the Centre for Recording Achievement. The report was published in May and is now freely available online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1116239142.pdf> with title, "National Survey on User Perceptions of Personal Development Planning for Postgraduate Research Students".

The following completed jobs fall into my remit as a project officer this year, where some internal and external publications have been produced as well as some new updates to the website:

- Updates to the website including an archive of past consultations onto the website that were not previously published in the resource folder. These are now almost complete awaiting policy responses written by Martin Gough, General Secretary 1997/98.
- Completed and submitted the UK response to the Eurodoc 2005 Questionnaire available online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1113648321>
- Have produced some articles for my old students' union at Surrey on news from NPC in their postgraduate news section of the student newspaper.
- A "postgraduate graduate" careers guide for the website akin to the current funding and accommodation guides many visit. This is now available online at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1122578698>
- A long needed MSC training manual, which is now available for future officers and it is hoped it will help them get to a much better start. This is an internal document, should you wish to see it, please email tim@brown76.name
- Several online features all viewable at <http://www.npc.org.uk/features>
- To try and seek sponsorship funding for the research proposal on the market failure of postgraduate education.

- Completed a new publication, Guidelines on QAA auditing for postgraduate degrees, which is now available at <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1123186316>

It is sadly the case at this point that I will be declaring my "retirement" after 5 years of service to NPC. It has been a truly enjoyable and widely opening experience. It is now, however, time to move on and I will still assist in the background with administrative work, the Journal of Graduate Education and also within Eurodoc, which is now even more of an interest for myself as a European researcher. There are as ever, some unfinished work items, that I will urge the next executive to take on board, which require some careful planning. They have been started during my lifetime in NPC and will do my utmost to see they continue. They are:

- To bring to life initiated plans to run a day conference on the future of postgraduate representation. It would be the first conference of its kind where institutions, graduate schools and student representative bodies will be brought together to see where the problems are behind the severe lack of postgraduate representation in institutions and to debate as to how this can change.
- To bring together an organising team to host the Eurodoc 2007 conference in the UK. There is strong pressure to do this, not only because it is high time we took our turn to host but also that the next Bologna Process summit will be taking place in London, so it is a pertinent time to bring Eurodoc to the UK. I am keen to assist all in ensuring we have the people and funding to make it possible.
- To see completion of the project to survey evidence on the market failure of postgraduate education. This is only now seeking sponsors, where an extra £5,000 is needed.
- To produce some guidelines on provisions for writing up students and also a campaign with regards to benefits that they are currently entitled to.
- To extend NPC's work further towards teacher training students on PGCEs.
- To strengthen work in devolved areas, especially Wales and Northern Ireland.
- To build NPC's infrastructure by securing vitally needed affiliations, primarily from the Russell Group and 94 Group institutions who hold the vast majority of postgraduates and have established student representative bodies that have the appropriate funds and need to properly support their postgraduates by joining NPC and developing their own representative structures. Failure to do this by several institutions is severely affecting their postgraduates by weakening NPC's infrastructure.

It is with great sadness that I cannot attend conference this year due to other pressures here in Denmark. I send my greetings to all those I knew before and wish you all a wonderful time together at conference.

Tim Brown, August 2005

Project Officer — Ismail Malik

I undertook this position at the June OGM as Project Officer with a remit to investigate the reforms to current irregularities between Higher Education Institutions about Right of Ownership to the intellectual property of completed theses. This will be in conjunction with an analysis of the proposed Electronic THesis Online Service (ETHOS) that is currently being set up with the aim of providing a thorough investigation of existing rights and permission procedures for IP rights with a view to making all theses available via the internet. Having arranged a dialogue to begin working on the NPC's position on the matter and not want to pre-empt the report will be submitting a consultative questionnaire to HEIs over the next several months.

In addition I hosted the meeting of the Financial Sub-Committee on July 23rd at Birkbeck, University of London, and would be willing to host further NPC meetings.

Project Officer — Dries Neiryck

After quite a surprising election as project officer last year, I proposed to the Management Sub-Committee Meeting at the University of Bristol in September to provide training session before every Ordinary General Meeting. Although it is questionable whether these sessions helped to attract more people to the OGMs, the feedback was encouraging and positive. As a spin-off of the project, I have prepared the training session for the annual conference.

Throughout the year, I have actively participated in discussions at MSC Meetings and on the executive mailing list. I hope that I managed to bring across the concerns and opinions of an elected officer with a focus on the local level.

On the whole, I am pleased with the achievements of the MSC this year. I think I made a useful contribution as project officer and hope that the principle of training sessions along OGMs will be continued in future years. In the long run, I believe the need for training justifies the position of a dedicated training officer on the Committee.

Project Officer — Andre Oboler

My project involved a survey of postgraduates who teach to determine conditions, this was to be carried out in consultation with the unions though that clause was later altered by an OGM after the AUT passed their (now repealed) boycott motion against Israeli academics. While a final survey was not carried out, a pilot survey was carried out locally at Lancaster University and a final set of questions for a national survey was compiled and presented to our last OGM. The survey is ready to go ahead as soon as it is put online.

Outside of my specific project, I have been very active within NPC and on its behalf. I attended the Winter Conference of UKCGE (in York) along with the General Secretary. I promoted NPC's role within Eurodoc — our involvement and the success of Eurodoc's lobbying was praised. I was nominated by NPC for the post of Student Observer to the QAA Board. The Board selected me and I have since attended a number of Board meetings (in London), an orientation day at their offices (Gloucester), and a subscribers meetings (Cardiff). Assisted in staffing the NPC stall at NUS conference (Blackpool) as well as releasing our previously approved press release to the media when the story of the AUT boycott broke (this occurred during NUS conference). I attended (off memory) all the NPC OGMs (London, Edinburgh, and Southampton) and almost all the MSC meetings. As a member of the Constitutional Sub-Committee, I hosted a CSC meeting (in Lancaster). I was also elected to represent NPC at the Higher Education Academy's Research and Teaching Forum. I attended one meeting (London) and unfortunately could not make the second, though I have been kept in the loop via e-mail. In short, I have travelled the UK and seen many interesting meeting rooms from the inside and consumed far too many Virgin Rail meals.

I have also contributed to debate both via e-mail and at meetings as well as introducing a number of motions to OGMs. I hope this contribution has been judged productive and worthwhile by my peers.

Journal of Graduate Education — Martin Gough

Volume 3 issue no.4 is in print and so will be available to affiliates in due course. This is intended to be the final issue in the current format, being the completion of the third volume. Over the last few years those within the NPC taking a particular interest had decided to take the Journal off in a new direction from volume 4 onwards and discussed a range of options. One which presented

itself to us last year became the favoured option, and we continue to favour that. Prof. Alistair McCulloch of Edge Hill College was elected to the UKCGE executive and given a strong steer to develop a journal. This time last year we agreed that it would not be sensible to compete, since his idea was aiming higher than where the Journal of Graduate Education is now, namely operating at an international level. A way for us to aim higher, as we have been working towards, would be to combine strengths and boost the plans for the new journal idea. Alistair agreed that it would be appropriate for the new journal to incorporate the Journal of Graduate Education, so the NPC's legacy would continue to receive recognition for its seminal efforts, arising originally from James Irvine's creativity and flair. We proposed, and continue to advise Alistair, that he could use the existing name and ISSN number, so re-launch the current journal in the new format to be. His most recent statement is that he continues to prefer his original plan to launch it under a new name, and that is his prerogative.

We have been courting the UKCGE for some years to invest jointly in the publication and we were fully expecting Alistair, through his new elected role, to bring them on board, increasing the basic subscriber base through automatic subscription. That has not happened, for reasons better known to the UKCGE, but he is still negotiating with a publisher and would aim to launch it next year. The provisional arrangements mean that I cannot supply further details. I have agreed to be one of the editorial board with a named role and there is a place for an appointee of the NPC too. So we should be optimistic for an interesting and fruitful collaboration. In the event that the plans for the new journal never get off the ground, we would still retain the option to continue publishing issues of the Journal of Graduate Education again.

Whether there would be a new journal or we wish to continue the existing one, there is ever space for contributions, and I urge anyone keen to write up something they are working on

Report of the Journal of Graduate Education, 2005

for this purpose, e.g. key issues around a campaign topic or project, the experience of being a high profile (!!) postgraduate rep this last 12 months, etc. There will be space in the new journal for non-blind-refereed pieces, those requiring less academic rigour, just as there has been in the Journal of Graduate Education. It would be good to have an integrated practice in the NPC on encouraging postgraduates to write in different ways and having options for outlets for their writing, including the journal - that is, it would be important to co-ordinate the way forward with the wider communications strategy for the NPC.

Alistair is one of the co-ordinators of the revived Society for Research into Higher Education Postgraduate Issues Network and they are re-launching the "Purple Perils", the Guides to Postgraduate Study which as a series Pat Cryer used to edit between 1997 and 2001 - details (including why they are called the "Purple Perils"!) viewable at:

<http://www.srhe.ac.uk/publications/GuidesonPostgraduateIssues.htm>

I now sit on the series editors board and have suggested generally that NPC activists and colleagues would be a useful source of material, so there is the opportunity for the NPC to be directly involved in some writing there too.

Martin Gough (subscriptions manager)

m.gough@ucl.ac.uk

Email List Administrator — Dries Neiryneck

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 2004/05

Motion on interest rates on loans, February 2005

The NPC notes:

- 1) NPC is opposed to both tuition fees and commercial rates of student loans for undergraduates, on the grounds that these debts, when carried over into postgraduate study, act as a deterrent.
- 2) The Conservative Party recently announced that it intends to replace tuition fees for undergraduates with a rate of interest between 6.5% and 8%.
- 3) The possibility of commercial rates of interest on student loans has also been discussed in Select Committees.
- 4) This could cause debt from student loans to increase significantly for postgraduates during their time of postgraduate study.

The NPC believes:

- 1) NPC should continue to oppose both tuition fees and interest above the rate of inflation for student loans for undergraduates.
- 2) It would not be helpful for NPC to express a preference between the policies of the Conservative or Labour Parties at this time
- 3) In the case of real-terms interest on student loans, postgraduates could be hit harder than most students as interest will continue to accrue during postgraduate study.
- 4) It is important for NPC to act quickly on this proposal before the details of such a proposal are finalised.

The NPC resolves:

- 1) To continue to oppose both tuition fees and interest above the rate of inflation for student loans for undergraduates.
- 2) To write to the Conservative Party informing them:
 - a) of our opposition to these means of passing costs on to students;
 - and
 - b) of our particular concerns for how this would disproportionately penalise graduates who go into postgraduate study.
- 3) To urge the Conservative Party to, at the very least, freeze interest above the rate of inflation on student loans for those in postgraduate study, and to make this concession in their manifesto.
- 4). To write to other parties expressing NPC's position on student funding.

The status of researchers – staff or students?, February 2005

The National Postgraduate Committee Notes:

1. Full time PhD candidates hold the same status as other full time taught students.
2. Part time PhD candidates hold the same status as other part time taught students with less financial benefits.
3. The UK gives PhD candidates a status of students different to the status of employees implemented or favoured in other European countries.¹

¹ T. Gabaldon, "Roles and Conditions of PhD candidates in Europe", *Workshop Presentation from Eurodoc in the Bologna process Salzburg conference*,
http://www.eurodoc.net/docs/Toni_Salzburg.ppt

4. The need to mobilise researchers around Europe and into the UK requires similar status to be adopted in each country.

The National Postgraduate Committee Believes:

1. Financial benefits, academic freedom, opportunities and other benefits as a student outweigh the benefits of employee status.²
2. The status of an employee has implications on international students entering the UK both in terms of cost and immigration.
3. Retaining the status of student for PhD candidates is desirable for the UK.
4. Employee benefits can be compensated for by other means.
5. Higher education institutions and student representative bodies must recognise the need to extend suitably dedicated support and representation to PhD students comparable with that of other European countries.

The National Postgraduate Committee Resolves:

1. To campaign to research councils and funding bodies on the above issues.
2. To issue a press release of the above policy.
3. To represent the above policy to Eurodoc and other European organisations of interest.
4. To further research labour conditions across Europe with a view to extending employee status benefits to students where appropriate.
5. To review the policy and reconsider it at the 2005 AGM.

Promoting diversity and a positive and respectful environment, February 2005

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

1. The policies of the British National Party (BNP) as listed on their website under "what we stand for" which includes a total stop to immigration and "return to their lands of ethnic origin" for all non white people.³
2. A 1990 confession by their deputy leader: "We are 100 per cent racist"⁴
3. The convictions of both the founder (John Tyndall) and current leader (Nick Griffin) for inciting racial hatred⁵ and the finding of the European Parliament's committee on racism and xenophobia that the BNP are an "openly Nazi party"⁶.
4. The NPC equal opportunities policy, specifically our commitment to "Preventing direct or indirect discrimination, intimidation and harassment"
5. The NPC equal opportunities policy, specifically our commitment to "promoting a positive and respectful environment where members and guests are treated with respect and dignity"

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

1. The BNP are correct in calling themselves racist.
2. Promotion of the BNP is against the public interest

² T. Brown, "PhD students or employees, which way should the UK Go?", *NPC Feature*, <http://www.npc.org.uk/page/1101153773>

³ <http://www.bnp.org.uk/policies/policies.htm>

⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/programmes/2001/bnp_special/roots/1984.stm

⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1507680.stm>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_National_Party

3. The beliefs held by the BNP would have a high chance of causing a breach in our equal opportunities policy should they be put forward in our communications.
4. The visible presence of BNP members at an NPC event would (if condoned by NPC) in and of itself cause a breach of our equal opportunities policy in so much as it would show a lack of commitment to providing a suitable environment as per notes 5, given the facts of notes 1, 2 and 3.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1. In light of our equal opportunities policy, to ensure the BNP is not promoted in a positive way through any NPC communications, including but not limited to papers and reports, the NPC website, NPC e-mail lists or pN.
2. To highlight, if the Communications Officer wishes, and if this would be in the public interest, places where the BNP position would be unacceptable to NPC due to our values as expressed in our equal opportunities policy.
3. That overt BNP activity or BNP promotion at an NPC event is considered a breach of the equal opportunities policy that the chair is mandated to resolve. The definition of overt activity and appropriate steps to resolve this shall be determined by the meeting chair on the advice of the equal opportunities officer.
4. That a record of ongoing public activity for the BNP by a person requesting membership shall be considered reasonable and sufficient grounds for the chair not to grant membership should they judge that granting membership would, on the balance of probabilities lead to a breach of the equal opportunity policy.

The AUT academic boycott, February 2005

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

The NPC opposes the academic boycott of Israel as contrary to its object, which is to advance, in the public interest, the education of postgraduate students within the United Kingdom. The NPC will continue to invite contributions from Israeli academics to its publications. The NPC supports academic freedom.

Passed at the Ordinary General Meeting on 2005-06-11

Intellectual Property Rights

The National Postgraduate Committee notes:

1. The growing emphasis placed on the commercial exploitation of research by institutions.
2. That Postgraduate students studying for both 'research' degrees and those defined as mainly 'taught' produce significant amounts of intellectual property.
3. That many institutions have regulations defining the ownership and control over intellectual property produced by students.
4. These vary from regimes allowing the student to retain all rights, to those whereby rights are assigned to the institution at the time of the students' registration.
5. That NPC appears not to have updated its policy in this area since 1995.⁷

⁷ Policy passed in 1995

6. There is no guidance in this area on the NPC website.

The National Postgraduate Committee believes:

1. That whilst the majority of postgraduates will produce no intellectual property of commercial value, their legal rights as creators of original knowledge must be respected.
2. That for the minority who do produce commercially exploitable work, a flawed system of rights ownership may cause significant losses, both financial and in terms of future employment.
3. That NPC guidelines are a useful tool in sharing best-practise and winning arguments locally.

The National Postgraduate Committee resolves:

1. After sufficient research and discussion, to draw up guidelines on the handling of intellectual property created by postgraduates, with special reference to its commercial exploitation.

PGCE Top Up Fees, August 2005

1. All rights to any intellectual property generated by a student in the course of their studies will rest with the student, unless:
2. The student is employed by an institution to do specific tasks (such as teaching or research). In this case the intellectual property generated in pursuit of these tasks will belong to the institution. However, the institution must make clear to the student what specific work the student is employed to carry out, and in which areas it claims rights to intellectual property. Intellectual property generated from any other work carried out by the student (such as work relating to their course of study) shall belong to the student. If the institution charges fees for the use of equipment or does not allow paid time to conduct certain work, such work will be deemed to be for the benefit of the student and not in pursuit of the employment, and any intellectual property generated will rest with the student.
3. Institutions must take action to ensure any intellectual property owned by the student is not exploited illegally by other members of the institution both during and after the student's program. Because students are usually not in a position to defend against exploitation, that responsibility should rest with the institution.
4. Institutions must have policy to attribute authorship of academic papers. Such policy should include:
 - The supervisor should ensure that the student receives due recognition for their contribution to any publication, according to the usual conventions in the field;
 - Authorship credits should be assigned to only those who made significant intellectual contributions to the paper;
 - Editorial work and financial support are not sufficient in themselves to warrant authorship;
 - The student should be the primary author on publications arising from their dissertation material;
 - All publications should properly reference previous student work.
5. Institutions must have fair guidelines to attribute rights to intellectual property to the inventors of that property. These must recognise that a single piece of intellectual property may involve the work of many different people. The institution must have an effective mechanism in place to resolve disputes over the assigning of these rights, and should also ensure that these rights are protected in negotiations with other bodies. This mechanism must allow for fair and impartial appeals should one party feel aggrieved.
6. In many cases, students contribute to larger projects that span timeframes longer than their degree. In these cases, institutions should have policies in place to ensure that the student's contributions are recognised when the project is eventually commercialised and that their share of ownership in the final product is protected.
7. Institutions should make students aware of their rights to intellectual property, and assist students and staff to exploit intellectual property effectively.

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.

Funding, August 2005**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 £15,000⁸
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.

⁸ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/uploads/Debt%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

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 2005⁹ and other relevant bodies.

⁹ 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>

List of Policy Responses Submitted by the National Postgraduate Committee 2004/2005

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

- NPC/04/10/A: Office of the Independent Adjudicator, Rules and Procedures Consultation
- NPC/04/11/A: Response to the Home Office Consultation on the Review of Charges for Immigration Applications
- NPC/04/12/A: Independent Study into the Devolution of Student Support and Tuition Fees Regime in Wales
- NPC/05/01/A: Response to a Call for Evidence from the Select Committee on the European Union
- NPC/05/01/B: Draft Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005
- NPC/05/01/C: Higher Education Academy Strategic Planning Consultation Document
- NPC/05/02/A: Institute of Education and Arts and Humanities Research Board Online Survey Concerning the UK Doctorate in the Arts and Humanities
- Response to Eurodoc 2005 Questionnaire (February 2005)

List of Publications produced in 2004/2005

The following publications are all viewable/downloadable at:

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

- NPC Guidelines on **Including Postgraduates in the Institutional Audit Process** (2005)
- A national review of emerging practice on the use of Personal Development Planning for postgraduate researchers (2004)
- National Survey on User Perceptions of Personal Development Planning for Postgraduate Research Students (2005)