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# A ‘new deal’: Where next for postgraduate education?

**Postgraduate Taught Conference**
**27 November 2012**

*Dr Graham Spittle CBE*

*HE Commission Inquiry Chair*

# The Commission

- Parliamentarians (cross-party and cross-House)
- Higher education sector leaders
- Business community

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# The Postgraduate Inquiry

8 months

6 evidence sessions

4 visits

2 conference workshops

54 written submissions

200+ contributors

11 Vice Chancellors

36 students & researchers

**5** key messages

**9** recommendations

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# Timeframes we looked at:

Today – the here and now

Tomorrow – 2015

The future – how we want the sector to look in 10, 15, 20 years

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# Starting Points – key trends from the last decade

Increasing number of PGT students

Home Students – **UP 15.8%**

International Students – **UP 105.8%**

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# What’s next?

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# The perfect storm

- Higher PGT tuition fees
- A “credit crisis”
- Debt adversity
- Uncertainty on through-flow international numbers
  - Immigration reform
  - Maturity of overseas HE systems
- Consequences…?

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# Vision for the future

- Attitudinal shift - postgraduate education as an integrated part of a holistic HE system
- More responsive to the new global economic reality
  - more home-domiciled students
- Secure fair access to postgraduate education
- Sustainable funding system

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# Holistic part of the HE system

- More data and evidence on postgraduates
- Cross-departmental strategy for supporting postgraduate provision

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# Fair access - *“the new frontier of widening participation”?*

- Postgraduate skills are becoming increasingly important for entry into the labour market and for progression within employment
- Postgraduates benefit from a substantial wage premium
- Without fair access *“already existing inequalities are transmitted more strongly across generations and social mobility falls”* (Machin and Lindley)

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# What can institutions do?

**Access**

- Systematically investigate cold spots in participation
- Review how well your part-time offer meets need of prospective students
- Explicitly address postgraduate access in your Widening Participation strategies

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# International aspects

- We need an immigration system which is sensitive to the needs of the economy (including the higher education sector)
- We need to be conscious of potential international trends

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# Funding

- The status quo is not sufficient
- PCDL Loans
  - 2011/12 – only 44% of applicants successful
  - Uncompetitive repayment terms
  - Risk adversity
- Rising tuition fees likely to aggravate the situation

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# Growing consensus for reform

*A "new deal for postgrads" needed within 18 months*

Alan Langlands, CEO, HEFCE

*"The Government should commission an independent report… to come up with proposals for a loan system for all postgraduate study."*

Alan Milburn

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# HEC Recommendation

The government should immediately establish a senior level taskforce to examine the feasibility of a postgraduate student loan scheme, and develop policy options.

The taskforce should report by December 2013, in order to allow time for implementation of recommendations by September 2015.

A well-designed loan system can be put in place at low cost to the taxpayer.

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# What can institutions do?

- **Engage in the debate**
- There is agreement that a better system is required. The sector and policy-makers need to work together to develop a model that works.
- Broad question of role of institutions in postgraduate student finance going forward?

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# Employability

- Greater focus on employment outcomes as student contributions increase
- Better data available on outcomes to inform prospective students

*"Some masters degrees at some institutions are failing to provide evidence of value in the labour market"* *Oral evidence from Vice Chancellor*

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# Summary

Lots to celebrate in the sector

But some strategic challenges that need to be addressed

***"When we come to discuss postgraduate education a decade from now, no one will be able to say that we were not warned about the severe challenges facing the sector"***

Don Nutbeam, Vice Chancellor of Southampton University

Sam Ling, President, Southampton University Students' Union

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