Meeting the needs of part-time research students

Dr Lowry McComb
Durham University
t.j.l.mccomb@durham.ac.uk

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Plan

- Context
- Issues
- Solutions

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Sources

Limited literature on part-time PGRs

- Farrer *Supporting part time doctoral candidates,* Durham University, 2008 (unpublished)

- Taylor *Supervising part-time research students*, presentation at UKCGE meeting, June 2009

- Hooley et al *Understanding the part-time researcher experience*, Vitae, 2009

- Statistics from HESA and PRES

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Types of doctorate

- Conventional PhD

- Professional doctorates

- New-route PhD

- Joint/split-site doctorates

Increasing number of distance students

# Completion rates

Doctoral completions by year
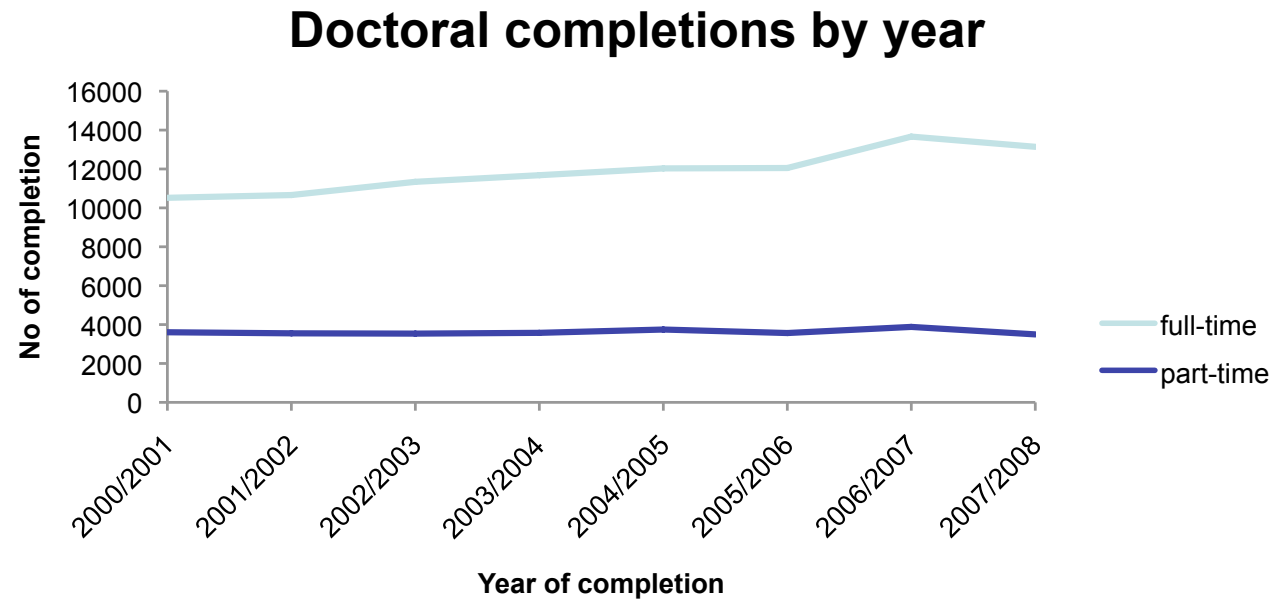
Source – HESA data

Completion rates

- Part time students nationally less likely to complete or continue whatever their source of funding

- External sources of funding more likely to be available for full-time students

- Majority of part-time doctoral students receive no external funding

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Age profile

Age by full-time/part-time
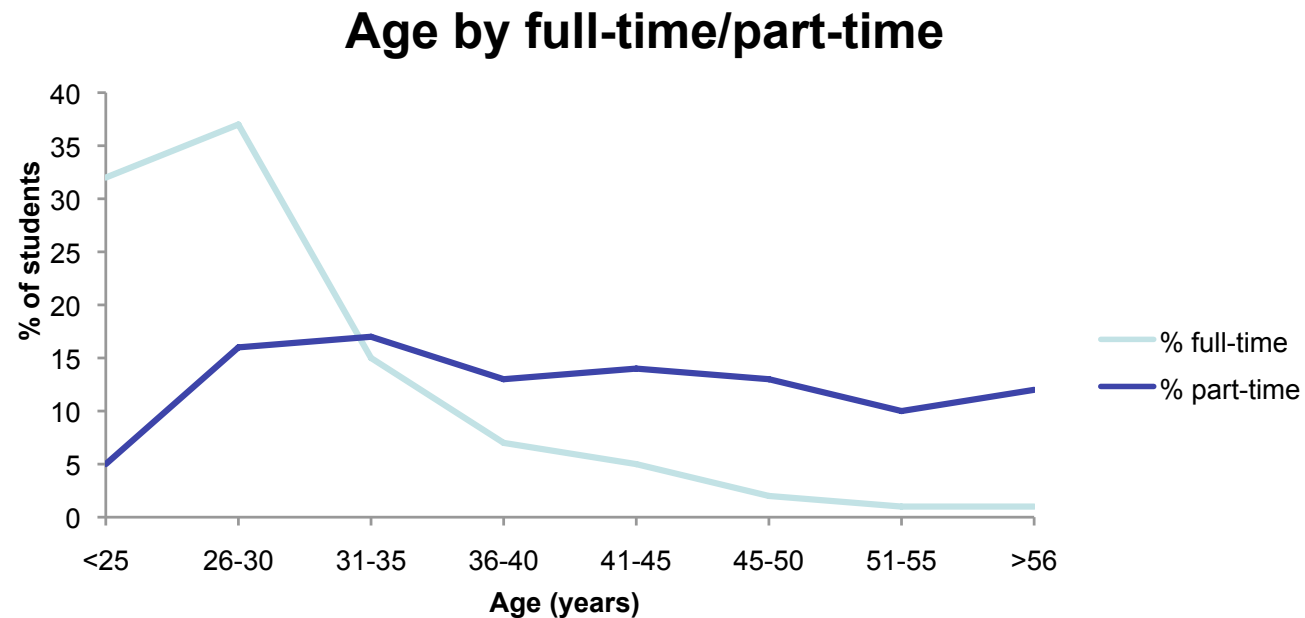
Source – Hooley et al based on PRES 2008 respondents

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Demographic profile

- Very small correlation between gender and disability and mode of study

- Significantly greater proportion of part-time UK domiciled students (80%) than full-time (56%)

- Full-time cohort has higher proportion of non-white students (30% vs 14%)

Source – Hooley et al, based on PRES 2008

Supervision

- Obvious issues with limited face-to-face contact with supervisory team (typically once per 3 months)
- But generally students happy with supervisors
- E-mail most frequent means of contact; limited use of new technologies (web, video conferencing)

Solutions

- More use of new technologies
- Training in new technologies for supervisors

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Communication with peers

- Significant numbers of part-time researchers have no or little contact with peers at their own or other institutions
- Reinforces feelings of isolation

Solutions

- Creative use of social networking etc (e.g. Graduate Junction)
- Schedule part-time researchers' weeks - combine supervision, training, social events
- Contact at other HEIs

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Communication with University

- Induction – often geared towards full-time students
- Interaction with service providers e.g. Library, IT services – often assume all students are full-time campus-based

Solutions

- Separate induction programme for p/t students – use webcasts, on-line support
- More promotion of inter-institution library arrangements
- Training of support staff – dedicated staff for part-time PGRs?

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Research environment

- Less satisfaction with research environment (e.g. seminar programme, research ambiance)
- Part-time students feel less integrated into department

Solutions

- Open up research seminars at other HEIs to local students
- Creative use of new technology
- Part-time researcher weeks
- Timing and notice of events

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Skills training

- Much skills training (Roberts) geared to face-to-face provision via workshops

- Some dissatisfaction amongst part-time students that they cannot access this provision

- But – some evidence that part-time students feel less in need of this sort of training

Skills training

Solutions

- Develop range of on-line skills training – e.g. Epigeum modules
- Develop blended learning approaches – active on-line provision
- Part-time researcher weeks
- Open up training at HEIs local to part-time researchers

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