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Continuing to Postgraduate Study Decision Making, Deterrents and Creating Success

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Research Project

- Funded by the Higher Education Academy
- Concerns based on experience as a senior manager in HE
- Considerable increase in PG Taught programmes – who why and what

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Aims of the Project

Who is under represented in HE at UG level?

- Lower socio-economic groups
- Some minority ethnic groups
- People who have no experience of HE in their family background

I wanted to know if these factors affected the decision to go on to PG study

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Aims of the Project

- The student experience is known to be important at UG level to the success of different student groups, such as making friends is crucial, feeling at home is important, good relations with academic staff is important

  I wanted to know how important these were at PG level

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The Project

- Successful bid to the HEA research and evaluation projects scheme 2006/7
- Employed a team to undertake the work
- Cathy Lido, Shell Morgan, Karen Akroyd and Lucy Solomon
- Developed the Website
- Developed the Blog site: http://kuoss/sites/heapprblog/default.aspx
- Final project available online: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/WPtoPG_Stuart.pdf

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Finding Out…

- Used both Quantitative and Qualitative Data collection
- Large scale questionnaire (over 1000)
- Small scale email survey (60 in total)
- Small scale in-depth interviews (20 in total)

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Collection of Quantitative data

- Just after Easter vacation – final year undergraduate students on their intentions after completing degree
- Subject-wide
- In class
- Completely Voluntary
- Request for volunteers for Qualitative phase

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Quantitative sample

Subject	South Coast	Capital City	Total
Health	23% (116)	14% (77)	18% (193)
Natural and physical sciences	12% (62)	8% (46)	10% (108)
Engineering and Technology	17% (87)	17% (91)	17% (178)
Social studies/science	12% (63)	13% (75)	13% (138)
Computer science	5% (23)	14% (78)	9% (101)
Business and administrative studies	28% (145)	27% (152)	28% (297)
Humanities	3% (11)	7% (40)	5% (51)
Total	**100% (507)**	**100% (559)**	**100% (1066)**

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Type of student

Domiciled status	South Coast	Capital City	Total
UK	83% (423)	82% (457)	82% (880)
European Union (EU)	10% (49)	7% (40)	8% (89)
Overseas	7% (41)	11% (63)	10% (104)
Total	**100% (513)**	**100% (560)**	**100% (1073)**

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Other Demographics

South Coast n= 513

- male n= 43% (216) female n= 57% (289)
- age 18-58

Capital City n= 560

- male n= 51% (279) female n= 49% (269)
- age 18-62

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Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	South Coast	Capital City	Total
White British	68% (353)	27% (149)	48% (502)
White Irish	2% (10)	1% (8)	1.7% (18)
White other	10% (51)	9% (49)	10% (100)
Black African	4% (19)	11% (62)	8% (81)
Black Caribbean	1% (6)	3% (15)	2% (21)
Black other	0.3% (1)	0.2% (1)	0.2% (2)
Bangladeshi	0.4% (2)	1% (7)	0.9% (9)
Chinese	2% (10)	6% (30)	4% (40)
Indian	1% (8)	14% (83)	8.5% (91)
Pakistani	0.3% (1)	6% (35)	3.7% (36)
Mixed ethnic group	3% (11)	4% (20)	3% (31)
Other ethnic group	5% (28)	15% (81)	10% (109)
Total	**100% (500)**	**100% (540)**	**100% (1040)**

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Those more likely to aspire to undertake PG study

- EU and OS students
- Theoretical course students
- Having older children
- Those lower in debt worry
- Afro-Caribbean students (& East Asian at Brighton)
- Male students (and mature male perhaps?)
- Those with Family HE experience (Father at both Unis, Mother at Kingston, Spouses at Brighton

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Those less likely to aspire to undertake PG study

- Home students
- Applied course students
- Having younger children
- Those higher in debt worry
- White students (& East Asian at Kingston)
- Female students (& traditional males?)
- Those with less Family HE experience (Especially no Father Uni)

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Personal and Social Aspirations and Barriers

- More motivation from EU and International students
- If students think they will get a job immediately they will delay
- Anxiety about study
- Sick of Studying
- Fear of debt – not necessarily actual debt
- Age of Children
- Family HE experience

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Qualitative Sample

- 60 students said they would be happy to be interviewed
- Contacted all 60 and found that their intentions (whether to go on or not to go on to Postgraduate study) had remained constant
- Conducted 20 in-depth telephone interviews – January/February
- A mix of those continuing and those not continuing

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Qualitative Data Collection

Demographics of interviewees

- Of the twenty 8 had gone on to PG study
- 10 women and 10 men
- 13 were White British
- 4 ethnic minority British
- 2 EU students
- 1 International student
- 10 mature students (entry at UG level)

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Some comments from interviewees

- …because we are all at PG level, they do have something to say. They are not there just to get the attendance marks. They are there because they want to be there. I feel it is different.
- I've been very lucky I have some great people on the course with me.

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- Just maybe a break from education, that was quite important I think because you can just learn and learn and learn but sometimes you need to take a break at the weekend…so that plays a part and that is probably something that would stop me going on to further study.

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Comments

- I was quite content in the fact that I could get a job and earn money and not be so stressed…I wont ever go back to Uni because I find it quite hard work.
- I can’t see that it [a PG qualification] would help my career at this stage. Employers want work experience.

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What did the interviews tell us?

- Students ‘loved’ subject – tutor who enthused them
- Study to gain employment also very important for those carrying on
- Students who were carrying on told us that work was much more taxing than at UG level – the one who dropped out did so because of level of work
- Those who did not carry on wanted ‘a break’

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What did the research overall tell us?

- Peer support was equally important at postgraduate level as at undergraduate level
- Students felt that decision making was difficult and those whose families did not have experience of HE found it more difficult than those that did
- The implication is therefore that students need support in making choices about their future lives
- Vocational outcomes matter to most students whether they continue to PG study or not

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What did the research tell us overall?

- Anxiety is a real issue for students whenever they need to decide on futures
- Employment is uppermost in most students' minds – some earlier than others but an issue for all of them
- More support at crucial moments of decision vital – whether further study or employment – key lesson for institutions – for UG finalists AND PG students.

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