Enhancing Postgraduate Provision & Increasing postgraduate student involvement in students' unions and NUS

Aaron Porter,

Vice President (Higher Education), NUS

Postgraduate student numbers

- Between 2000/01 and 2005/06, the number of postgraduates studying at HEIs in the UK rose by 21.5% from 448,696 in 2000/01 to 545,369 in 2005/06

- Largest growth was in the number of non-EU students, which rose by 51,862 (71.4%), compared with 36,453 of UK students (10.8%) and 8,358 (21.6%) of other EU students.

Postgraduate qualifications

- 82.9% of postgraduate study in the UK in 2005/06 was represented by three qualifications:
  - masters degree not mainly by research (50.8% of all qualifications)
  - doctorate degree mainly by research (16.8%)
  - postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) (15.3%)

- Growth rates have varied between different qualifications: Research Doctorates have increased by 10% over the period, while Taught Masters have increased by 39%.

Taught postgraduate students

- 81% of students on their taught postgraduate rated their experience as having met or exceeded their expectations.
- PGT students were concerned about the feedback that they received: 44% agreed and 33% disagreed that they had received continuous feedback on progress. Only 46% of respondents agreed and 33% disagreed that they had received prompt feedback.
- Only 30% of students agreed that they had been able to access good financial advice.

Postgraduate research students

- 81% indicated that the programme as a whole met or exceeded their expectations
- Supervision was rated as important and rated highly overall, a fifth of respondents thought supervision did not meet expectations.
- MPhil and masters students were less positive about skills development than PhD students. Only two-fifths of respondents thought that they had received adequate support and guidance in developing their teaching.

Research Assessment Exercise

- Is based on quality profile for each institution rather than a single-point rating
- Quality profiles help in identifying pockets of high-quality research wherever these may be located.
- 17% of submitted research activity was judged to be of world-leading quality, and 37% internationally excellent
- Key question will be the allocation of funding based on the results

NUS Postgrad Proposals

- Annual NUS Postgraduate Conference
- NUS National Postgraduate Committee, which elects a chair to sit on HE Zone Committee (or equivalent)
- Researcher into postgrad issues