
POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION IS CHANGING, HOW CAN UNIVERSITIES & SU'S KEEP UP?: VIEWS FROM A POSTGRADUATE SABBATICAL OFFICER

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POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION IS CHANGING...

- Increasing Numbers of PG Students
 - Changing PG Finances – Government Postgraduate Loans, Industry Funded Research
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- These both lead to a change in expectations of PG students and what a PG qualification means.



	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Postgraduate					
Doctorate research	95,805	98,365	98,555	98,560	100,085
Other postgraduate research	12,665	13,130	14,355	14,615	12,435
Total postgraduate research	108,470	111,490	112,915	113,175	112,520
Masters taught	303,995	302,180	299,110	295,460	313,920
Postgraduate Certificate in Education	27,900	28,705	27,405	25,990	24,020
Other postgraduate taught	96,350	97,065	98,755	98,345	101,135
Total postgraduate taught	428,245	427,945	425,270	419,795	439,075

HESA (2018) <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/numbers>

- Of the 2.9 million students in HE, PG students make up 20% of them. Each institution will vary on what percentage of their students are PG.
- Unfortunately, HESA does not have numbers for this academic year however Keele has seen a 9% increase in PG numbers this year. Each institution will vary on their change in PG numbers.



WHAT CHANGES IN EXPECTATIONS HAVE OCCURRED?

- £9k students are here!
- Value of the qualification – not just academic development but a necessary step to stand out in the job market.
- The ‘student experience’ during their studies – PG students becoming evermore critical of the overall PG experience package - this is made even more complex by the broad types of students within PG (PGT vs PGR; FT vs PT vs Modular; Campus vs Distance).
- Institutional variety will impact on these expectations, so the solutions to managing this expectations are not one size fits all.
- Do we believe that the PG experience has undergone the same critical evaluation as the UG one?



ARE YOUR PROCESSES DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS OF PG STUDENTS?

- For the most part: **NO**
- But they can be.



How Are We Attempting to Respond to These Changes at Keele?

What have we learnt?



SETTING THE KEELE SCENE...

- **1st Issue: Low PG Awareness:** This meant there were no discussions of PG meaning issues were either overlooked or created.
- **2nd Issue: Lack of Coherent PG Communities & Representation:** Reduces the likelihood of a PG 'voice' that the University can listen to.
- **3rd Issue: Lack of Coherent Structures for PG:** A lack of depth and consistency for many PG structures when compared to UG and even staff (especially at PGR level).

- This led to issues such as: Poor PG Induction, Insufficient Summer Services, Incoherent Policies/Activities

- These issues can really inhibit the PG experience, yet when addressed and done right they can allow the PG experience to thrive.



WHAT HELP'S KEELE RESPOND TO THESE CHANGES AND ISSUES?



What does the KPA Provide?

- Community
- Knowledge Disbursement
 - Offers Opportunity

WHAT IS THE KPA?

- An independent Postgraduate Students' Union at Keele that represents specifically postgraduates and their interests to the University.
- Formally established in 1963, the KPA (and previous iterations) have been in the University regulations since 1949.
- The organisation has two full-time paid (President & Vice-President) and one part-time paid (Association Secretary) elected officers.
- The KPA's primary function is to represent PG interests to the University via its own seats on Council, Senate and other key University committees and work in partnership with the University to address PG issues and improve the PG experience.
- The secondary function is to enhance the PG experience and community through student-led activities, University partnership and its Clubhouse (bar).
- As of now, it is one of three known postgraduate students' unions in the country (Keele, York and Cambridge).



HOW DOES THE KPA HELP ADDRESS PG ISSUES AT KEELE?

- **Community:** The KPA helps develop, enhance and unite the different PG communities at Keele. By working with these communities, the KPA is able to effectively generate a PG voice the University can work with to address PG issues.
- **Knowledge Disbursement:** The KPA are PG specialists. They work in partnership with various parts of the University to raise the profile of PG needs & issues and to consult and impart knowledge on the appropriate action needed to support PG students and the PG experience. They also have communication networks with PG students and are able to assist in the dissemination of key PG information.
- **Offers Opportunity:** The is completely run by PG's for PG's, allowing an opportunity for PG's to develop their own community/experience and to have their voice raised with the University. Equally, it allows the University the opportunity to work in partnership with PG's directly to improve the PG experience.



WHAT CAN OTHER INSTITUTIONS LEARN?

- **Look at their PG Rep Structures:** What are they like and how do they work?
 - Students' Union – is there a Full-Time PG Officer? Who is the advocate for PGs?
 - Academic Reps – is there a PG rep structure? How well used is it?
 - PG student-staff – how are PG students that are also staff represented?
- **PG Inclusive Processes:** Are PG's represented at **all** key areas/meetings where they should be? Who is providing that PG voice, staff or PG students?
- **Institutional Awareness:** Are both academic & professional staff aware of PG's, the difference of their experience and their needs? (Inclusive processes can help address this)
- **PG Community:** Diverse PG communities, encapsulating all elements, help generate the PG voice that Universities can work with to support, address their needs and create a vibrant experience.



Thank you for listening.

Are there any questions?

