

## Briefing Note

# Postgraduate Education

*Postgraduate (PG) education is divided into two broad categories: Taught PG (e.g. one or two year Masters); and Research PG (e.g. four-year Doctorates). In reality the situation is more complex with many interdependencies.*

### **And it's important because?**

The PG system is a critical element for UK success and growth.

Taught PG provides the critical higher level skills that are essential in the modern employment market, from professional qualifications to certificates of practice.

### **PG Fact File**

- ✓ **131,000 PGs carry out their studies in London (23% of all PGs in the UK)**
- ✓ **43% of all PGs in London are part-time**
- ✓ **London HEIs train 40% of all UK medical, dental, creative arts & design PGs; 30% of all architecture, social studies, law & computing PGs and over 20% of STEM, languages & business studies PGs**

Research PG provides the link between general critical analysis and profound and world-changing thinking of the future generation of our researchers.

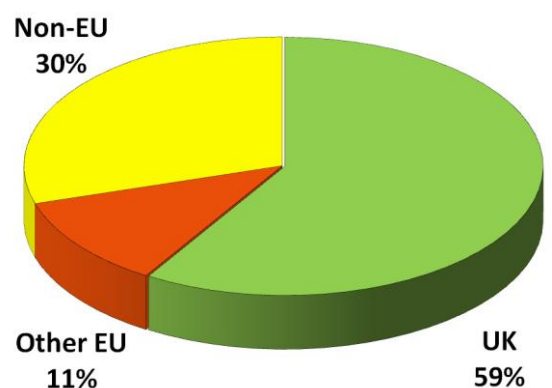
London plays a pre-eminent role in PG education: 21 per cent of all UK domiciled PG students, and 26 per cent of all overseas PG students, study at London HEIs.

### **So what's new?**

The Government's new funding arrangements will mean that undergraduate (UG) students will graduate with a substantial level of debt.

At the same time, it is anticipated that the introduction of higher fees for UG courses is likely to result in (often severe) uplifts for PG fees, and possibly feed further uplifts for international PG students as well.

**Where do London's postgraduates come from?**



There are also concerns that employers are reducing, or scaling back, Career Development Loans which have been a common funding source for PG studies.

***And the problem is?***

Students may respond to perceptions of debt by either not opting to continue their education to PG level or deciding to select PG programmes that are considered to offer them job market advantages.

The effects of these decisions, over time, will be to lower the UK's highest level of educational attainment and shrink the pool of lower-paid professional qualifications that underpin vital public services.

There also appears to be a policy assumption that the majority of students flow seamlessly from a full-time UG programme into a full time Masters course. This should not be seen as the standard progression.

There is potential for PG education in future to be pursued primarily by those from privileged backgrounds, and/or those able to access employer support, thus

raising concerns about student diversity and accessibility at this level.

The Government seems content to monitor the situation prompting fears that, by the time the need for action is agreed, it could be too late in the day to introduce considered changes.

***POLICY POINT***

In Scotland, the Postgraduate Student Allowances scheme is being replaced with a repayable student support model ([www.saas.gov.uk/student\\_support/funding\\_update.htm](http://www.saas.gov.uk/student_support/funding_update.htm)).

***Over the next three years the Government should put in place PG support arrangements (financial and other, and for students studying part-time as well as full-time) that ensure that the UK pipeline of postgraduate students is not compromised or reduced.***



Senate House  
Malet Street  
London WC1E 7HU  
[www.londonhigher.ac.uk](http://www.londonhigher.ac.uk)

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