



Welcome!

Increasing Progression to, and Success in, Taught Postgraduate Study

17th July 2019
10:30 – 15:00

Sli.do code: #E074



Background and Introduction to Widening Participation at Postgraduate Taught level

Paul Wakeling
Department of Education, University of York
17 July 2019

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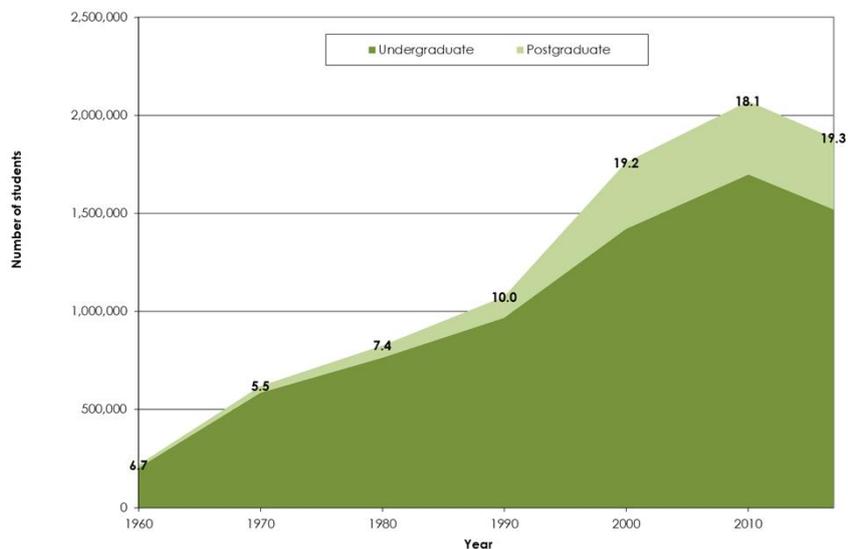


A brief overview of:

- ~~Why we should care~~
- Context: postgraduate growth and its connection to social mobility
- Inequalities in postgraduate access
- Recent policy

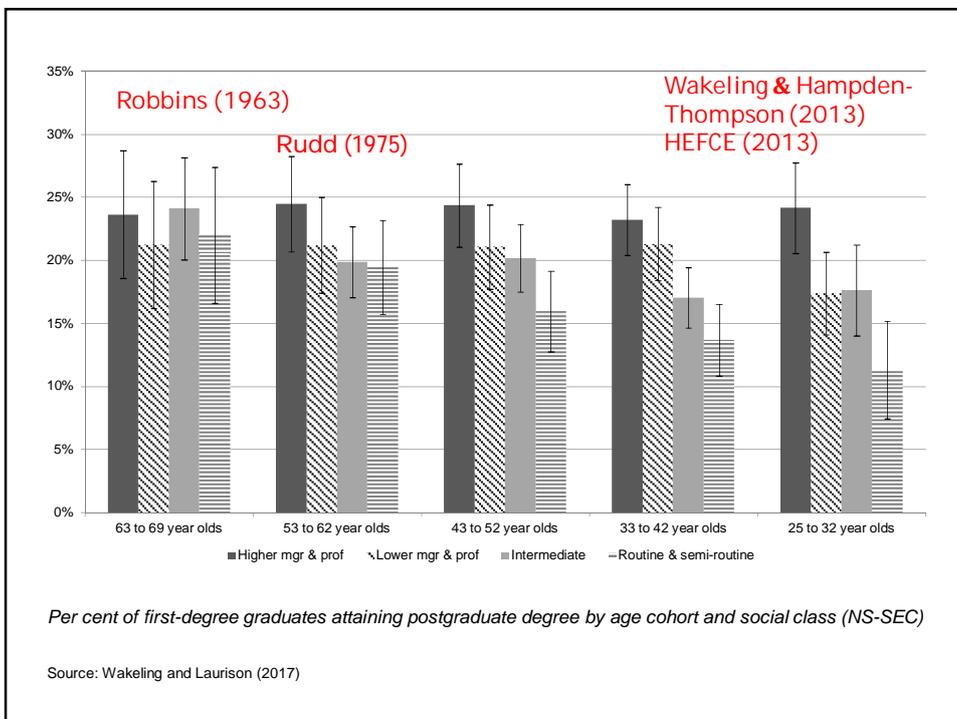
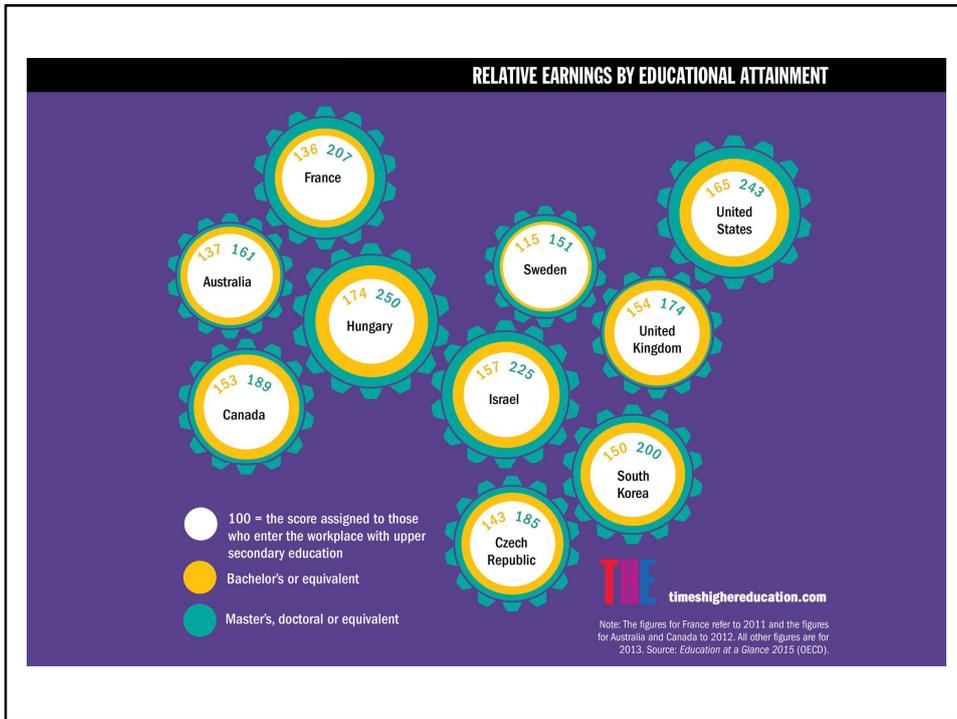
Some pointers on:

- Policy
- Practice



UK Student numbers, 1960 – 2017 by level, with per cent postgraduate

Notes: Statistics provide at ten-year intervals 1960 – 2010, then for 2017. Sources: 1960 – 1990 – Wakeling (2009) *Social Class and Access to Postgraduate Study in the UK: a Sociological Analysis*. PhD thesis, University of Manchester. 2000 – 2017 – Higher Education Statistics Agency (www.hesa.ac.uk); 1960 to 1990 includes non-UK students; 2000 onwards UK-domiciled students only





Complexities:

- Level of study patterns (master's, PGCE etc)
- Institutional patterns
- Student intentions and motivations
- PG study in the lifecourse
- Field of study patterns



Longitudinal Education Outcomes

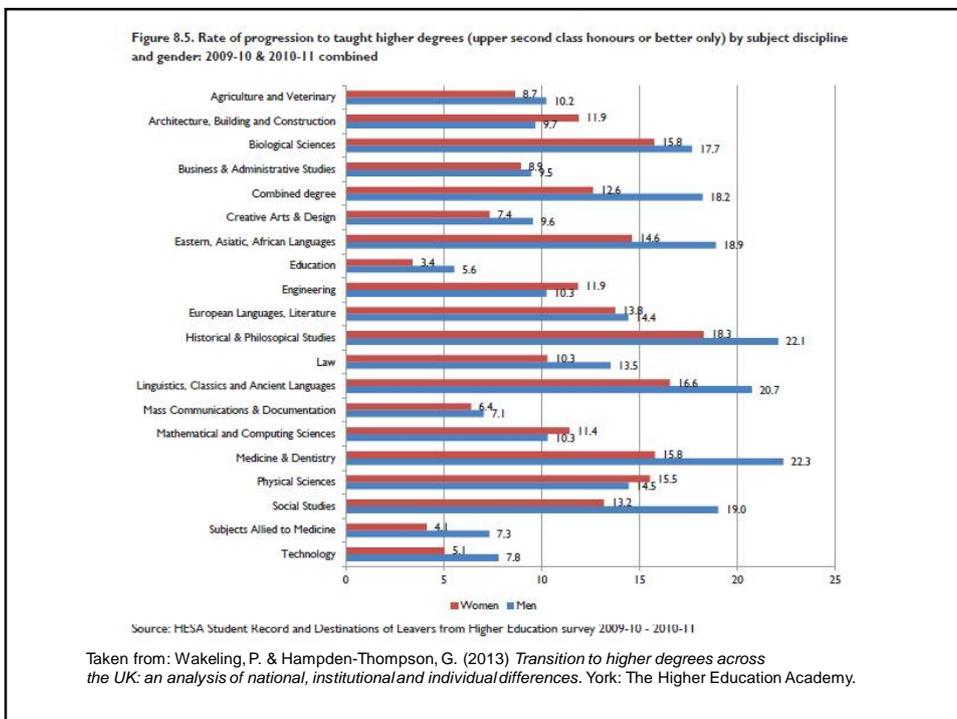
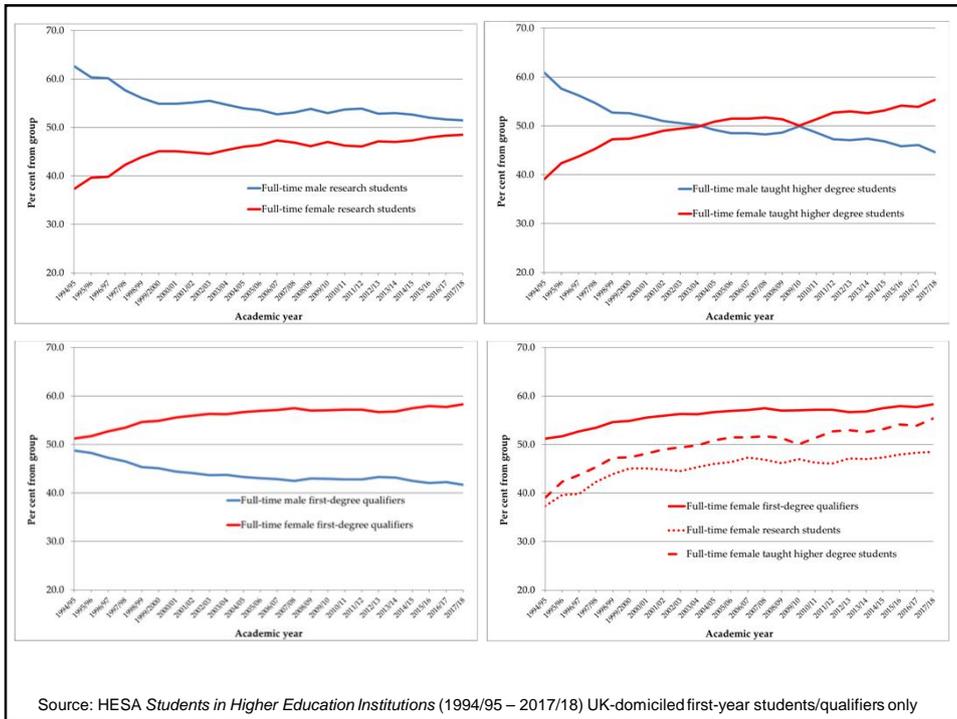
Table 6: Comparison of earnings for UK first degree and Level 7 graduates five years after graduation
 Coverage: UK first degree and Level 7 graduates from English HEIs
 Cohorts: 2009/10 (5 years after graduation)
 Tax year: 2015/16

Subject	First degree earnings – median (£)	Level 7 earnings – median (£)
Business & Administrative Studies	26,800	38,900
Education	23,700	34,100
Computer Science	27,800	36,000
Creative Arts & Design	20,200	20,400
Languages (excluding English Studies)	27,400	27,600
Historical & Philosophical Studies	25,400	24,900

Source: Department for Education (2018) *Graduate Outcomes (LEO): Postgraduate Outcomes in 2015 to 2016*. London: DfE.

Level 7 = postgraduate masters

NB: Cause and effect!





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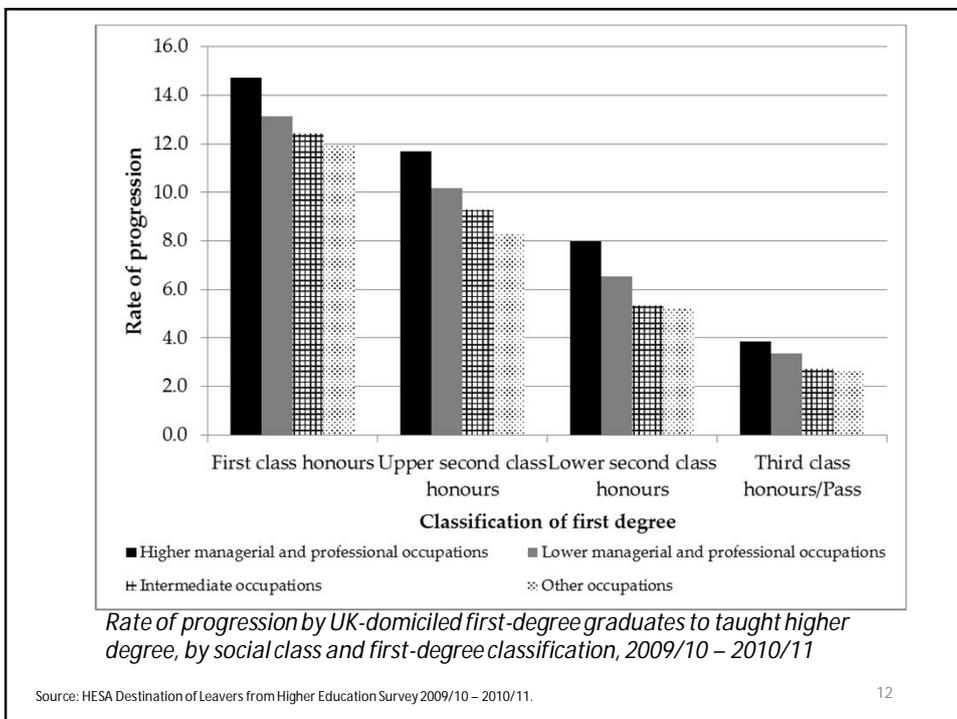


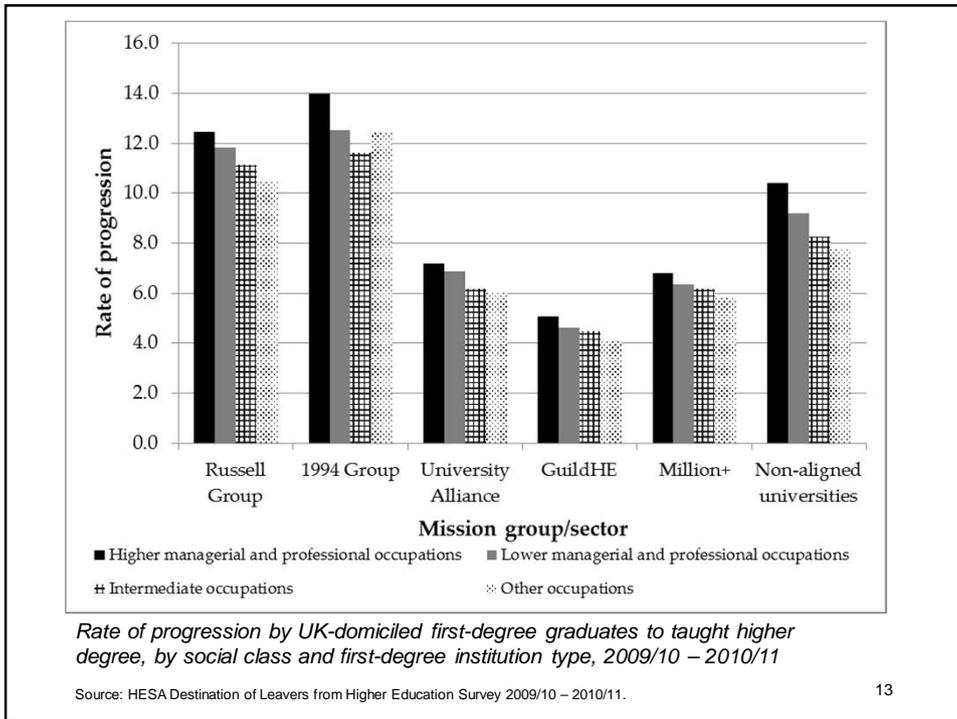
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Percentage of first degree qualifiers by progression to taught higher and research degree by selected background characteristics

Ethnicity	Progressed to PGT
White	8.5
Black Caribbean	5.2
Black African	13.5
Black Other	9.1
Indian	8.8
Pakistani	8.9
Bangladeshi	7.3
Chinese	15.0
Asian Other	13.5
Other, inc. mixed	11.1
Unknown	11.0

Taken from: Wakeling, P. & Hampden-Thompson, G. (2013) *Transition to higher degrees across the UK: an analysis of national, institutional and individual differences*. York: The Higher Education Academy. (Source: HESA Student Record and DLHE 2011-12)





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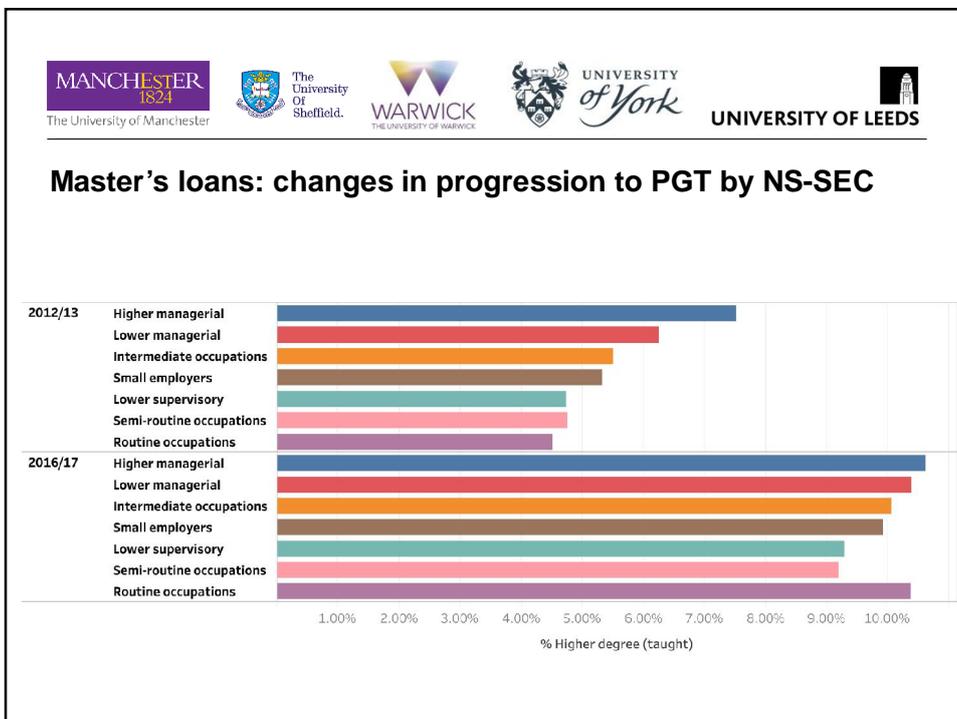
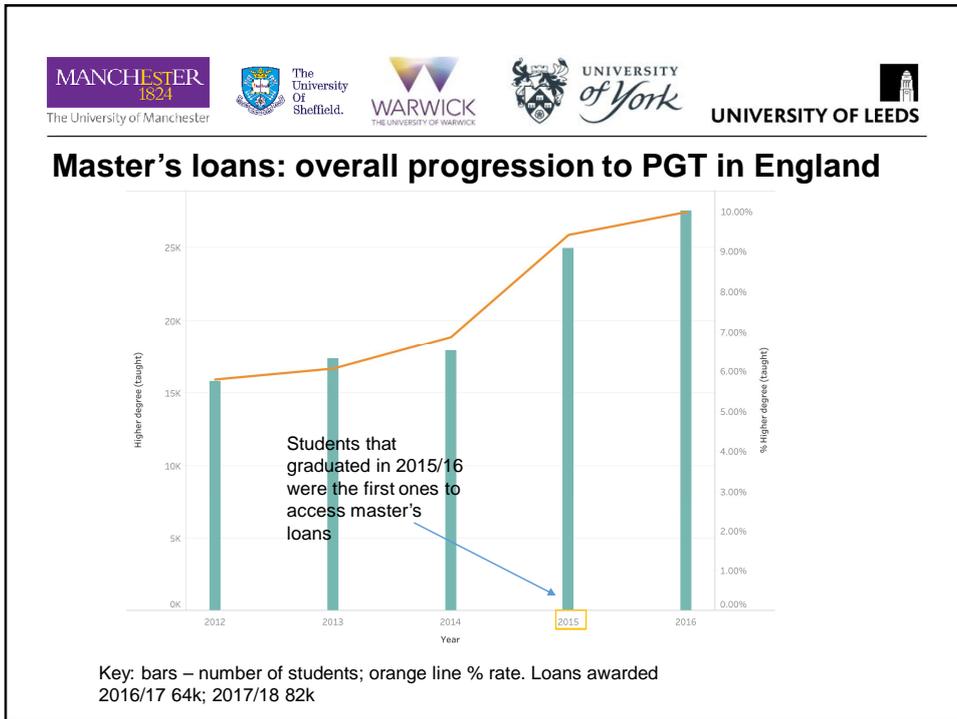
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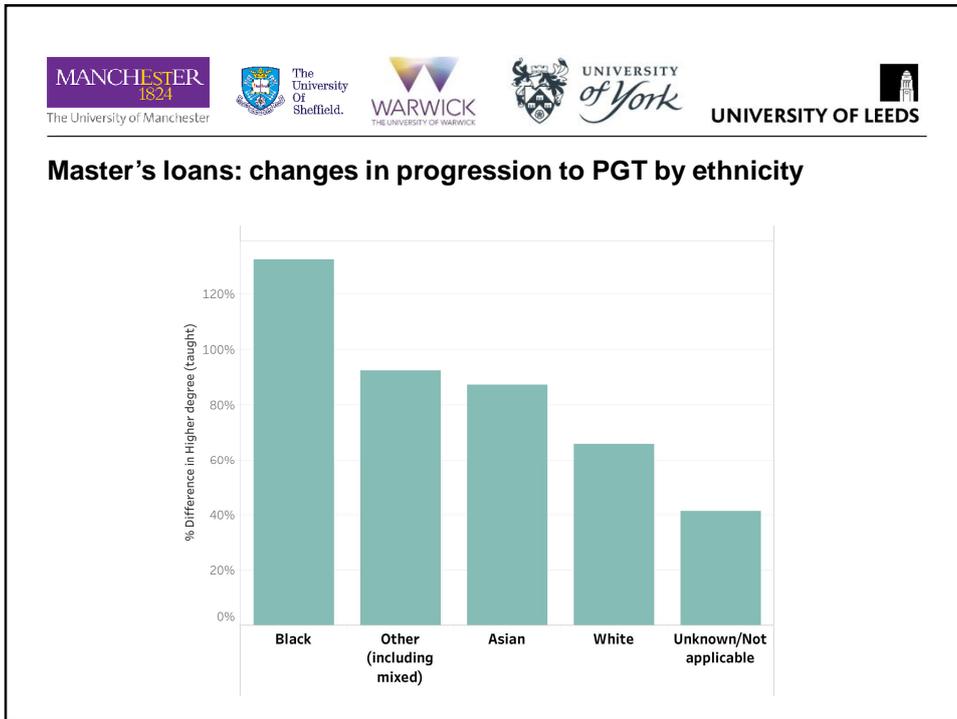
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UK interest in postgraduate level

£9,000





Potential students: where are they?

Finding undergraduates
'Easy'. Here they are!
About half of them will enter HE by age 30



Finding postgraduates
Much harder.
Some are here.
About 1 in 8 will go directly to PGT



Most are here (but most of those here are not part of our market)



<p>1a</p> <p>Qualified (e.g. has a first degree)</p> <p>Background characteristics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthuse • Inform • Monitor
<p>1b</p> <p>Offer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demystify • Support • Monitor
<p>2</p> <p>Financial means</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance
<p>3</p> <p>Successful outcome</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentor • Advise

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Looking forward

- Inequalities continue at postgraduate level, but they are different: recognise the complex context
- Loans have helped, but inequalities remain and lots we don't know
- PGT WP largely outside OFFA OfS remit, and consequently institution WP functions
- In contrast to UG level, very little *practice* to draw on (in England or elsewhere)



Thank you

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***Supporting progression to
taught postgraduate study***

Felicity Wicks, University of Manchester

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Strand 1: basis

- *'Progression to, and success in postgraduate study, by students from BAME and POLAR 1 & 2 backgrounds'.*
- Aim was to test activities (besides financial aid) that could support under-represented groups to **make an informed decision about** progression to taught master's study.
- Target groups: home (UK) students who are BAME and / or whose home postcodes during UG study were in POLAR quintiles 1 or 2.
- Basis: University of Leeds **Plus Programme**
 - Targeted programme of on-course interventions for UG WP students
 - Includes IAG sessions, access to networks, mentoring
 - Evaluation of the Plus Programme shows higher retention and higher degree classification for participants compared to the wider cohort.



Strand 1: content

- Home UG students in three subject areas.
- Open to all [home] students, but designed with the needs of WP students in mind.
- Ran twice: first time using control groups, second time without.
- Trial sample size for first run of Strand 1: **1,215**
 - Three intervention and three control per institution
 - 3rd years only
 - Those who responded to survey only
- Trial sample size for second run of Strand 1: **3,845**
 - No control groups
 - Three subjects per institution
 - Includes 2nd and 3rd years





- On-course interventions** included:
 - eBulletin
 - academic-led information session
 - admissions and funding information session
 - mentoring scheme
 - alumni panel session.



- Participants sent **pre-intervention online survey** with three aims:
 - To gauge level of interest / knowledge in PG study
 - To give permission to share data with evaluation team
 - To give permission for post-graduation follow-up survey.



Strand 1: content

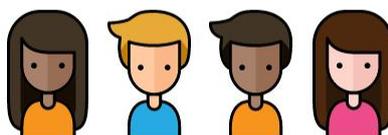







Strand 1: engaging WP students in PGT study

- Importance of **role models** / visible diversity
- **Student voice** – hearing from current / recent students
- **Communications** – more effective when from a known, named individual
- Events best received when related to **subject area** rather than generic



Strand 1: engaging WP students Case study: University of Leeds

- **Mentoring:** BAME students twice as likely to participate compared to the rest of the cohort (in terms of both expressions of interest and actual pairings)
- **Admissions and funding session:** PQ 1&2 students twice as likely to sign up / attend compared to the rest of the cohort (in terms of both registrations and actual attendance)
- **E-bulletins:** Click through rates are higher for students from BAME and PQ 1&2 backgrounds than for students from the rest of the cohort
- **Academic session:** Both BAME and PQ 1&2 students twice as likely to attend compared to the rest of the cohort

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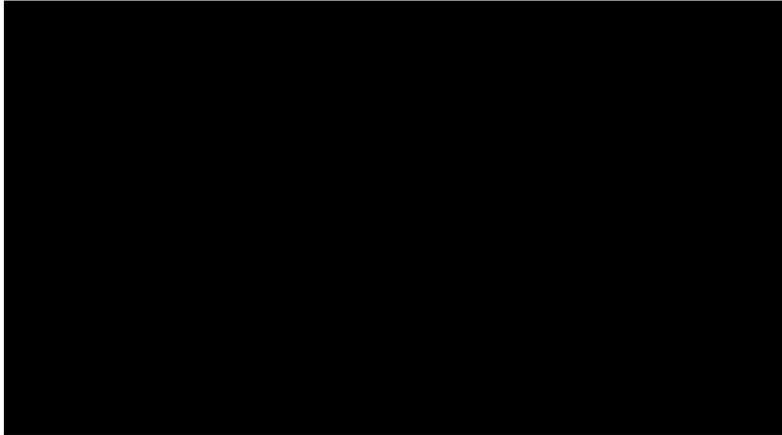
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Strand 1: engaging WP students in PGT study



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Strand 1: challenges

1st iteration:

- Response rate to original survey – some institutions very low
- Timeframe – only a few weeks to scope and plan interventions.
- USS strikes – communicating with academic staff; reduced student presence on campus
- Snow! (Beast from the East)

So we re-ran Strand 1...





Strand 1: challenges

For both iterations:

- Level of buy-in / engagement varied across different departments
- Most crucially... low level of student engagement (numbers coming later)



Strand 1: evaluation

- **Primary evaluation:** Randomised Control Trial (RCT)
 - 'Gold standard' for measuring interventions
 - Increasingly used in education - but typically compulsory education
 - Participants randomly assigned to the intervention or control group
 - Groups assumed to be identical at baseline measure; therefore any change in outcome is attributed to the intervention
- However...
 - The need for 'control' groups constrained comms
 - The low response rate to the baseline survey limited the amount of data that each institution could return to the evaluation team



Strand 1: evaluation

- First iteration of S1: very low levels of engagement
 - Opened an eBulletin: 127 (19.8%)
 - Attended basics webinar: 13 (2%)
 - Mentor interaction: 12 (1.9%)
 - Attended alumni webinar: 5 (0.8%)
 - Attended skills session: 10 (1.6%)

- Improved numbers of engagement in S1 re-run, but generally lower percentage
 - Opened an eBulletin: 1049 (27.3%)
 - Attended academic seminar: 123 (0.9%)
 - Attended alumni seminar: 57 (0.4%)
 - Attended basics webinar: 24 (0.2%)
 - Mentor interaction: Negligible (0.9% of those eligible at one institution)



Strand 1: evaluation

- So....

- We introduced some **secondary qualitative evaluation**
 - Immediate activity feedback from event attendees
 - Engagement tracked within institutions – number attending overall and by WP cohort / other demographic indicators
 - Focus groups with both engagers and non-engagers
 - Stakeholder surveys (those involved in delivery within each institution)





Strand 1: wider learning

Willingness of PG students to be involved:

"I wanted to get involved, because representation matters. If I had gone to an event when I was an undergraduate and seen someone from my background doing a master's and having a positive experience, that would have made me more confident to pursue master's study."

- PG student, Manchester

"Meet a Postgrad mentoring helped me to understand that at postgraduate level, students are more readily accepted when considered different"

- Mature undergraduate student, Leeds



Strand 1: wider learning

Embedding PG IAG within Careers Guidance:

"I've heard students say that no-one has ever raised the idea of masters with them... a lot of time is spent on employability and some of this could include masters potential"

"PGT is essential to make rapid progress in my field, but often the diversity of students on those programmes is low"

- Academic colleagues, University of Leeds

"I think one of the biggest issues is that people just drift into master's courses because they can't think what else to do... anything that makes them think more about what they are doing and why is a good thing"

- Employability colleague, University of Leeds





Strand 1: next steps (so far)

- NEON WP in PG Network
- UoM: WP in PG Working Group
- Embedding WP in PG as 'business as usual'
 - Working with Careers Staff
 - Working with academics
(key influencers / facilitating conversations)
 - Also: diversifying incoming PGT cohort
(financial / on-course support)



Maximising Success in Taught Postgraduate Study through engagement pre-arrival

Jenn Coates, University of Leeds

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Background

- Limited research available on transition to PGT for students
- What do we know?
 - PG students are a diverse group
 - Tendency to assume PGT students know more than they do
 - Transition to PGT is not merely an extension of UG
- Transition rates vary for students from different ethnic backgrounds
- There are commonalities in concerns and challenges experienced....

Concept

- Create a pre-arrival online support model aiming to ease the transition to PGT
- Trial and evaluate this with a cohort of BAME TPG offer holders



Pre course focus group

- BAME PG students representing a range of backgrounds
- Key findings:
 - Improving diversity at PGT is important to students
 - Sense of community can be lacking for BAME TPGs
 - Relatable role models remains key
 - Concept of a pre arrival online course well received
 - Open and honest comms needed



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Prepare for Postgrad Course

- Online pre-entry course for taught Masters offer holders
- Based on a pre-existing undergraduate model
- Aims to build confidence, skills and sense of community
- Trialled with UK BAME offer holders
- Evaluated across the consortium - mixed methodology including RCT
- Ran from June 2018 – October 2018

PREPARE FOR POSTGRAD

BECOMING A POSTGRAD
University of Sheffield

MANAGE YOUR TIME EFFECTIVELY
University of York

LIVING WELL AND POSTGRAD LIFE
University of Warwick

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR LEARNING
University of Leeds

READING FOR MASTER'S
University of Leeds

WRITING WITH CONFIDENCE
University of Manchester





Comms

- Very important
- Be clear about the “why?”
- Role models / visible diversity within the course
- Postgrad Ambassador role
- Padlet as a community building tool






We collaborated. Why?

- Sharing data and evaluation
- Efficiency in course build
- Sharing skills/knowledge/ camaraderie

	November/ December <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outline developed
	January <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module outlines drafted
	February / March <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building of modules
	April <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course added to master template
	May <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course transferred to institutions • User testing



Evaluation – mixed methodology

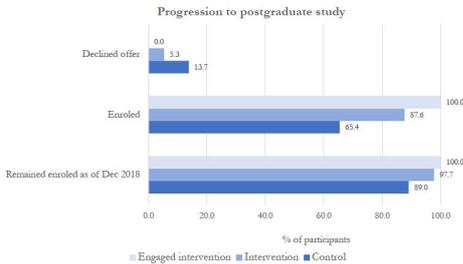
- RCT with 1,250 eligible offer holders
- Institutional data – enrolment and retention
- Quizzes
- Padlet participation
- Post course feedback and focus groups - engagers and non engagers






What we found out – quantitative

- 2/3 of the intervention group accessed the course
- 1/10 of the intervention group completed at least one module
- Considerably higher proportions of intervention group enrol and remain enrolled on a PGT programme
- Self selection bias to be considered
- Using qualitative alongside the RCT - essential (more on this later.....)



Stage	Engaged intervention (%)	Intervention (%)	Control (%)
Declined offer	0.0	5.3	13.7
Enrolled	100.0	87.6	65.4
Remained enrolled as of Dec 2018	100.0	97.7	89.0



What we found out – qualitative

- From those who engaged:
 - ✓ Predominantly positive feedback and met the learning outcomes
 - ✓ PG Ambassadors and journal space well received
 - ✓ Time management and independent learning modules most useful
- From those who didn't engage:
 - Why?
 - ✓ Lack of incentive / not compulsory
 - ✓ Lack of time
 - ✓ Felt sufficiently confident already
 - However....
 - ✓ Felt it have been useful in hindsight
 - ✓ Transition remains a challenge, with students "underestimating Masters study" and citing workloads as "intensive"



Challenges and areas to think about....

Evaluation	RCT reduces the size of eligible cohort
	Opt in methodology can reduce this further (it halved ours!)
	Reliance on uniformity and common approach
	Ethical challenges
Course	Building sense of community
	How to encourage sustained engagement?
	Time as a barrier – particularly for WP cohorts



Next steps

- Proven need for this type of intervention for incoming Masters students
- Amendments following evaluation to e.g. comms practices
- Re-runs of course at Manchester and Leeds with ongoing evaluation to contribute to future directions
- Opportunity to engage larger student pool – relevance for other cohorts of Masters offer holders?

Any questions?

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Over to you...



World café session:

25 minute table discussions
20 minute feedback to plenary

1. Widening Participation into Postgraduate study
2. Embedding Widening Participation activity
3. Approaches to evaluation
4. Postgraduate and Careers
5. Collaborative Working
6. Taught Postgraduate finance and funding



Lunch

12:45 – 13:30



Evaluating impact: Benefits, Challenges, and Alternatives of a Randomised Control Trial as an Evaluation Methodology

Sally Hancock and Paul Wakeling

Department of Education, University of York
17th July 2019

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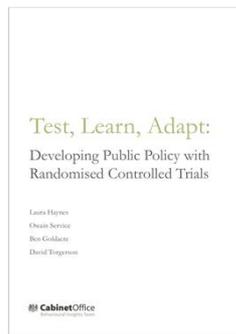
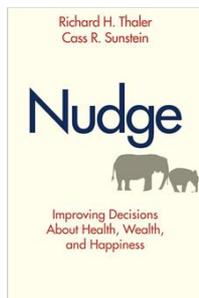


Overview

- Context: the rise of evidence-based policy
- What are RCTs?
- Developing RCTs: our rationale and approach
- Implementation: challenges and lessons learnt
- Future evaluation: reconsidering the place of RCTs



The evidence-based policy movement



However, RCTs are not routinely used to test the effectiveness of public policy interventions in the UK. We think that they should be.

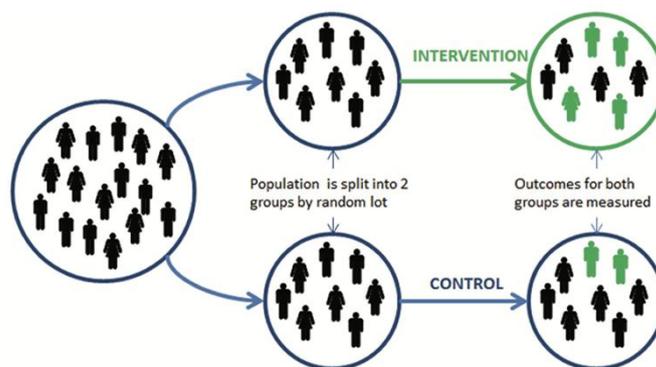
Sometimes interventions which were believed to be effective turned out to be ineffective or even actively harmful

Test policies in 'randomised controlled trials', nudge unit urges

What are RCTs?

- Participants selected at random to receive intervention (*bias*)
- Pre and post (and sometimes midpoint) measurements taken
- Participants in the 'intervention' group compared to 'control' group
- No difference – 'null or negative findings' suggest ineffectiveness of intervention; differences suggest intervention success or harm
- Null or negative findings should be 'embraced enthusiastically' (Styles & Torgerson 2018)

What are RCTs?



Haynes et al. (2012: 4)



Adoption of RCTs in educational research

- Increase in RCTs over the last 60 years - most conducted in the US, and typically focused at the level of compulsory education
- 'The best method' of demonstrating and quantifying the effect of an educational intervention (Torgerson & Torgerson 2008)
- The EEF has led this work in the UK, with strong political support
- Almost 200 RCTs completed by EEF; practice and measurement of outcomes evolving – 'padlock rating' for robustness



The effectiveness of widening participation

- 'High profile, high cost' social policy (Harrison & Waller 2016)
- OFFA prioritised evidence-based WP: reviewing evaluation practices and publishing 'standards of evidence' (2015) – RCTs 'Level 3'
- Evolved further under OfS, with a new 'what works' centre - the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) will 'use evidence and evaluation to understand how higher education contributes to social justice and mobility'





Developing RCTs: our rationale

- Two new interventions to be tested out
- Controlled delivery across five universities
- Access to a large pool of participants
- Institutions worked together previously through HEFCE's *Postgraduate Support Scheme*
- Success not defined in typical WP terms - trial can be a success even if intervention group do not have higher rate of progression to postgraduate study



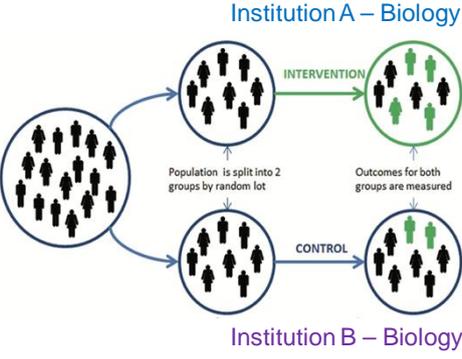
Strand 1 – Discover Postgrad

- Structured programme of information, advice and guidance
- Targeted at final year UK domiciled undergraduates from POLAR 1 & 2 and BAME backgrounds
- Several points of data collection:
 - Baseline survey Consent; academic and background characteristics; postgraduate intentions
 - End of degree survey Postgraduate knowledge and intentions
 - Destinations survey Primary activities: postgrad/ employment



Strand 1 – Discover Postgrad

- Randomisation across ‘pairs’ of institutions, e.g.:

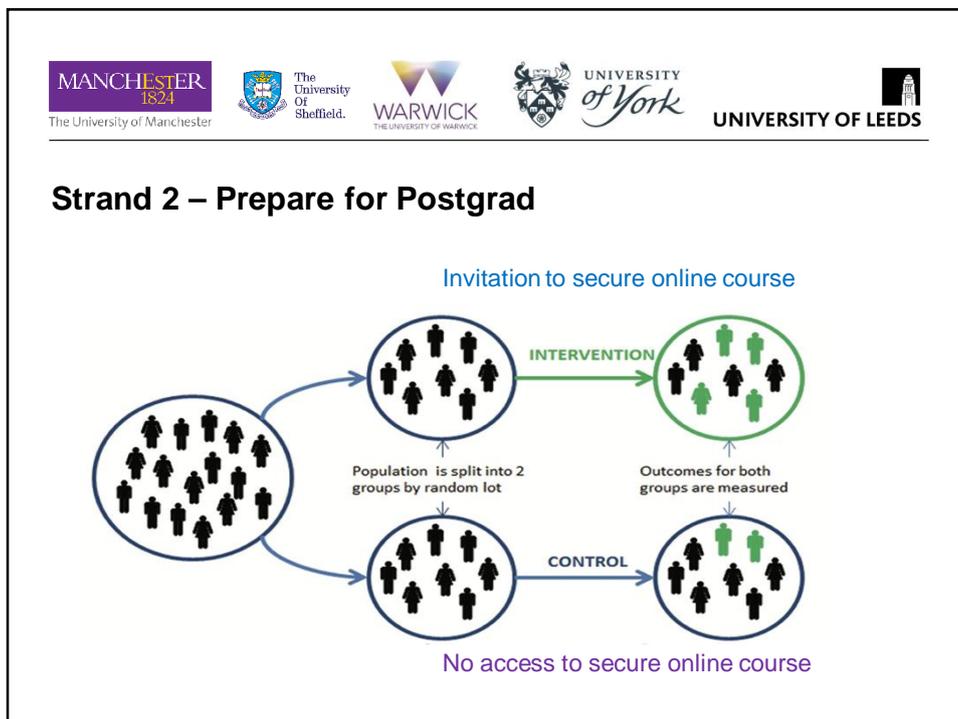


	Institution				
	A	B	C	D	E
Biology	I	C	C	I	I
Economics	I	I	C	C	I
English	I	I	I	C	C
European Languages	C	C	C	I	I
Law	C	C	I	I	C
Mathematics	C	I	I	C	C



Strand 2 – Prepare for postgrad

- Secure online course for UK domiciled BAME offer holders
- All eligible offer holders randomised to control or intervention group
- Course invitation sent to eligible offer-holders in the intervention group; only those who consented to data sharing were included in the trial
- Several points of analysis:
 - Engagement with the course (course metadata)
 - Experiences of the course (survey data)
 - Enrolment rates (progression to postgraduate study)



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Implementation: challenges and lessons learnt

- A combination of **project-specific** and more **general** challenges...
- Across three phases of:
 1. Administration (setting up the trial)
 2. Treatment (running the trial)
 3. Analysis (learning from the trial)



Administration (setting up the trial)

- Multi-institutional working
- Significant resource implications
- Coordination and channels of communication
- Institutional differences (fidelity)
- Legal framework/ ethical approval/ GDPR (timing of this in particular)
- Industrial action



Treatment (running the trial)

- Industrial action
- Disappointing levels of engagement throughout – ‘enforcing the voluntary’ – particularly in target groups
- Self-selection bias
- Master’s loans







Self-selection bias

<i>Strand 1 baseline</i>	<i>Strand 1 end of degree</i>
<p>I have already applied for PG study</p> <p>Control (7.8%)</p> <p>Intervention (11.0%)</p> <p>Engaged intervention (11.9%)</p>	<p>I have already applied for PG study</p> <p>Control (31.9%)</p> <p>Intervention (19.6%)</p> <p>Engaged intervention (35.0%)</p>
<p>I am not considering PG study</p> <p>Control (29.1%)</p> <p>Intervention (25.1%)</p> <p>Engaged intervention (18.4%)</p>	<p>I am not considering PG study</p> <p>Control (30.2%)</p> <p>Intervention (31.2%)</p> <p>Engaged intervention (24.8%)</p>







Analysis (learning from the trial)

- Distinction between those who engaged with intervention and those who consented to be included in trial analysis
- Attrition across stages of data collection, e.g. Strand 1:
 - From an initial sample size of ~5,500 students*
 - Baseline survey $n=1215$ (22.2%)
 - End of degree survey $n=501$ (9.2%)
 - Destinations survey $n=107$ (1.9%)
- Low numbers prevented meaningful conclusions, particularly of target groups



Future evaluation: reconsidering the place of RCTs

- Many of the challenges we faced were not unique - particularly in the HE context, where null results are commonplace
- There is renewed debate in the academic community about the place of RCTs – most EEF trials are uninformative (i.e. don't allow a clear conclusion either way) (Lortie-Forgues & Inglis 2019)
- (Ironically) the cost-effectiveness of RCTs is now being questioned
- Achieving sufficient control is particularly complex in the context of higher education and widening participation work
- BUT difficulties with RCTs do not remove need for counterfactual



Future evaluation: reconsidering the place of RCTs

- RCTs suit certain evaluations and contexts better than others
 - Sufficient scale
 - A simple intervention ('fully developed')
 - Strong control over the intervention (replicable)
- Diverse and 'optimal mix' of evaluation methods is needed (Harrison & Waller 2016; Thomas 2016)
 - In our study, qualitative elements were a particular strength – however, using only small-scale subjective approaches to evaluation is equally problematic



Thank you

Q & A

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Panel Session, 14:15 – 15:00

- Amerjit Basi
Head of Policy and Projects, University of Sheffield
- Fungai Karigambe –
Postgraduate Engagement Coordinator, Leeds University Union
- Louise Banahene
Head of Educational Engagement, University of Leeds
- Paul Blagburn
Head of Widening Participation, University of Warwick
- Paul Wakeling
Head, Department of Education, University of York
- Stephanie Lee
Head of Widening Participation, University of Manchester



Thank you for coming!

Our project toolkit will be available online shortly to share resources and reports – watch this space!

Please complete a feedback form before you leave ☺

Keep in touch:

- Jenn Coates, Project Manager, j.coates1@leeds.ac.uk
- Felicity Wicks, Project Manager, felicity.wicks@leeds.ac.uk