

NEON Widening Participation in Postgraduate Study Network

Wednesday 21st April 2021, 10:00-12:00

Present:

Megan Alexander; University of Salford; Louise Banahene, University of Leeds (Chair); Lucy Bentley, University of York; Becca Boulton, University of Sussex; Alice Brereton, University of Bristol; Louise Carr, York St John University; Jenn Coates, University of Leeds; Helen Claxton, University of York; Alex Ferguson, University of Leeds; Yvette Fofah, University of Greenwich; Diane Gill, Scottish Graduate School for Social Science; Stephanie Lee, University of Manchester; Louise MacRae, Edge Hill University; Maria Anna Petrou, NEON; Rosa Marvell, Oxford Brookes University; Stacey Mottershaw, University of Leeds; Nadia Pollini, University of Oxford; Katrina Roberts, The Brilliant Club; Ben Rutter, SLC; Janice Simpson, University of York; Martin Thompson, St Edmunds College Cambridge; Jo Tyssen, University Centre Leeds; Nina Vallard, University of Brighton; Rachel Van Krimpen, University of Nottingham; Felicity Wicks, University of Manchester; John Wilson, Solent University;

1. Previous minutes and actions (LB, Chair)

LB welcomed members to the network. The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

JC had emailed the group regarding the surveys to investigate the student experience of Masters Funding in collaboration with SLC, but has not yet had any interest from other institutions about participating in the exercise.

Action 1.1 – All interested members of the group can email JC on j.coates1@leeds.ac.uk for more information on how to get involved with the survey (current deadline 30th April)

2. Introduction to workstream leads and brief updates (Chairs of workstreams)

A number of workstreams were set up at the last meeting with different Chairs, with all members of the group able to join those which interested them. The Chairs summarised recent discussions and objectives within their respective workstreams

Action 2.1 – If anyone wishes to join any of the workstreams or has relevant case studies to their work, please contact the relevant Chair using the details below:

- **Careers and Employability:** s.mottershaw@leeds.ac.uk
- **On-course Student Success:** rachel.vankrimpen@nottingham.ac.uk
- **Defining WP Criteria at PG Level:** j.coates1@leeds.ac.uk / felicity.wicks@manchester.ac.uk
- **Research and Academic Studies:** l.banehene@adm.leeds.ac.uk
- **Approaches to Strategy & Implementation:** l.banehene@adm.leeds.ac.uk

Careers and Employability (Stacey Mottershaw)

- Creating case studies around activities that benefit WP at PGT/PGR level. These could be activities that are targeted to WP or those which have had a byproduct positive impact on WP.
- Conducting a research project into PGT WP experience, collecting student voice directly and articulating the benefits of their masters study.

- Analysing the PGT/PGR journey and career decisions that are made during this journey; mapping that journey, creating a clear visualization of what that might look like and including barriers that appear along the way.

On-course Student Success (Rachel Van Krimpen)

- Creating case studies of best practice at UG, PGT and PGR level.
- The workstream is looking at what on-course success means at PG level and what common barriers are appearing.
- The workstream is also looking for more members.

WP PG Criteria (Jenn Coates/Felicity Wicks)

- This group hasn't met since the last meeting, but the topic will be discussed later on the agenda.

Research and Academic Studies (Louise Banahene)

- The group has had discussions about contextual admissions at PGT and PGR level, assessing what works at UG level and what could be replicated.
- The group will start with a literature review on this topic.

Approaches to Strategy & Implementation (Louise Banahene)

- The group discussed the value of creating a PG diversity strategy or guide. The group is confident of the expertise to populate such a guide initially but will likely come to the wider group to review and to look for more case studies

3. Presentation with Q&A: - Exploring postgraduate taught (PGT) trajectories through the narratives of first-generation students enrolled on Master's Programmes in England (Rosa Marvell)

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- RM ran through her presentation summarising her PhD: How first generation students navigate their trajectories into PGT study and how different aspects of their identities and life experiences shape these journeys.
 - o **Action 3.1 MAP will share RM's slides with the group**
- Key conclusions and implications:
 - o Many familiar social inequalities extend to PGT but can take on new forms and become more hidden
 - o PGT needs to be decisively integrated into HE equity agendas, but recognising the particularities of M-level study and not just replicating UG strategy.
 - o Many of the dynamics which make PGT possible are 'hygiene factors' - things that make a huge difference when they're not present like location and cost
 - o IAG is needed but this is unlikely to solve all the problems alone – findings point towards a need for bigger structural and cultural changes across the sector.
 - o A further issue is around PGR – there are questions around how we approach PGR IAG given the difficulty around obtaining doctoral funding.

4. Update on Postgraduate data collection and data sharing exercise (Jenn Coates and Felicity Wicks)

- JC summarized the discussions so far around what criteria should designate WP at PG level, looking at three baskets of WP criteria (Pre-HE, Entry route to PG, Additional Personal Context).
- The work will look at these criteria and whether gaps exist between those who do and do not meet them
- This work will be done via a data monitoring and sharing exercise between the group.
- Eight HEIs have opted into contributing to this work, but more are welcome to join.
 - **Action 4.1: If any HEIs would like to contribute to this work, contact JC or FW on j.coates1@leeds.ac.uk / felicity.wicks@manchester.ac.uk**
- At the moment, the objective is to gather as much data as possible both from application and registration stage. Much of this data isn't currently collected at PG level as it is for UG, so getting this collected is a priority.
- FW is working on understanding how to move towards creating a data sharing agreement to enable this work to take place
- Creation of standard wording to include in registration forms would be useful to take this activity forward consistently – this includes specific questions to include and information on why we are collecting the data
 - **Action 4.2: JC and FW to pick up points raised in the next data sub group meeting**

5. Discussion around PGT and PGR non-continuation dates and disruption to study (Louise Banahene)

- At the University of Leeds, continuation is measured at PGT level, defining it as whether students are still registered a year after beginning their course. Questions are still ongoing to see whether this is the right timing for this measure.
- Data is suggesting that there are some gaps in non-continuation when using this as a measure.
- Research so far suggests there are some patterns in students who have disruption to study and don't return.
- At PGT it was suggested that progression to dissertation may be a useful measure in relation to continuation.
- RVK – For PGR at Nottingham, a 4 year submission rate is used, although COVID has disrupted this as a measure. Discussion around whether completion should always be the measure of success e.g. an industry placement that leads to a job and withdrawal could be measured as a success.
 - **Action 5.1 If anyone is trialing or using a measure of non-continuation at PG level or wishes to be involved in work to establish common measures, contact RVK at rachel.vankrimpen@nottingham.ac.uk as part of the sub group work in this area**

6. AOB and close

- RVK will discuss the outcomes of the first year of Nottingham's Applicant Mentoring Scheme at the next meeting (approximately 10 minutes)

Actions

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