

# **NEON Widening Participation in Postgraduate Study Network**

**Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021, 14:00-16:00**

**Present:** Louise Banahene (University of Leeds, Chair); Felicity Wicks, University of Manchester; Jenn Coates, University of Leeds; Iwi Ugiagbe-Green, University of Leeds; Janice Simpson, University of Leeds; Adele Ruston, University of Sheffield; Anna Toyne; Ann-Marie Houghton; Becky Bloodworth, Manchester Metropolitan University; Ben Rutter, SLC; Claire Pendegrast, University of Cambridge; Diane Gill, University of Edinburgh; Gabriella Cagliesi, University of Sussex; Helen Claxton, University of York; Ismene Gizelis, SeNSS DTP; Kirsty Janes, University of Exeter; Julien Boast, SOAS, University of London; Katrina Roberts, The Brilliant Club; Martin Thompson, University of Cambridge; Nadia Pollini, University of Oxford Natalie Wint, Swansea University; Rachel Van Krimpen, University of Nottingham, Rebecca Boulton, University of Sussex; Rebecca McKelvey, In2Science UK; Sam Dyer, University of Exeter; Stacey Mottershaw, University of Leeds; Alex Ferguson, University of Leeds; Stephen Jones, Student Loans Company; Sue Edwards, University of Lancaster

## **1. Welcome (LB, Chair)**

LB welcomed members to the network.

## **2. Updates from workstreams**

### **i. On course success (Rachel Van Krimpen)**

A workshop is being planned with UKCGE for early spring/summer 2022 that will have both a PGT and PGR focus. This will feed into the workstream and help bring in new voices to the success conversation.

RVK invited more people to join the workstream.

**Action 2.1: Anyone interested in joining the On Course Success workstream to contact RVK**

### **ii. Approaches to strategy and implementation (Louise Banahene)**

The last meeting looked at areas that stakeholders might find useful to consider when looking at approaches to strategy and implantation. A plan of action was agreed and the next step is to flesh out these initial ideas in the next meeting.

LB invited more people to join the workstream.

**Action 2.2: Anyone interested in joining the Approaches to strategy and implementation workstream to contact LB**

### **iii. Research and academic studies (Louise Banahene)**

[Please click here to see report](#) "Widening Participation in Post-Graduate Teaching and Research" (P Sucharatikul and L Windsor) which provides an international review of the current barriers facing widening participation in postgraduate education and an evaluation of global solutions

The above report was created by a student intern from the University of Leeds, which features as a focus in the report, but the report is an international literature review.

The workstream will meet again to discuss how to take the literature review forward.

#### **iv. Careers and Employability (Stacey Mottershaw)**

Case studies have been gathered and work is underway to work out how best to take them forward.

A student journey relating to employability has been mapped out, focusing on the decisions that need to be made and when they need to be made.

Further discussions with students and employers are going to be had to help inform future work of the project.

### **3. SLC update on access to Postgraduate Loans (Stephen Jones)**

All data from the SLC update was from 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021, so should be viewed as a snapshot in time.

- Applications to the PG SLC Funding are increasing year on year
- Most students are choosing to study over 12 months full time (approx. 75%)
- Approximately 57% of PG students are female
- 92% of students are requesting the full amount of funding for their PG loan
- The vast majority of student nationalities (excluding UK) are from the EU

### **4. [Inequality in the Highest Degree](#) – report overview and key findings (Paul Wakeling)**

PW ran through his [slides summarising the report](#) (links to group Teams channel)

Broadly speaking, the introduction of PG loans seems to have improved access to PG study for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, although inequalities still exist in areas such as occupational social class, POLAR4, parental education, type of secondary school and ethnicity.

Four key issues remain:

- Loans are being given to people who could have afforded it themselves before the loans existed
- Debt is still increasing for students who have a lot of debt in the first place

- Credential inflation (the more students with Masters degrees, the more roles will require them)
- Fee inflation from HEIs, especially high-status Universities like Russell Group/Golden Triangle

The report recommends:

- Reform the funding system to cover full costs
- Extend WP work to PG level
- Collect and publish data
- Add PG WP to regulatory requirements (e.g. APPs)
- Monitor fee levels
- Improve the application process

## **5. Identifying admissions criteria to improve diversity at PGT and PGR – update (Felicity Wicks)**

The group will next meet in early November to sign off the 14 criteria agreed upon.

By the end of November, a draft privacy agreement will have been drafted by FW for all members to use at their institutions. All opt-in institutions will also need to confirm their own internal governance routes and confirm whether relevant questions can be added to application forms by this date.

By the end of January, user testing of this criteria will get underway and all opt-in institutions will agree coordination and funding of data evaluation.

By May, all opt-in institutions will confirm which data their institution will be collecting.

By July, data sharing agreements will be shared ready for September.

## **6. AOB**

N/A

### **Summary of Actions**

**Action 2.1: Anyone interested in joining the On Course Success workstream to contact RVK**

**Action 2.2: Anyone interested in joining the Approaches to strategy and implementation workstream to contact LB**