

Session Title:	5.1 PG Matters – Obstacles and Opportunities for UK Postgraduate Recruitment
Speaker(s):	Sarah Linington – Director (Marketing) Mark Benett – Director (Audience & Editorial) Find a University
Chair:	Calum Fraser
Reporter:	Kat Knight

Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	<p>Intro to FindAUniversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Find a PhD - Find a Masters - Leading in the UK, used internationally too - 1 million + visitors a month - 5000 + Pulse responses a month. Pulse is a longitudinal survey <p>Mbenett@findauniversity.com Slinington@findauniversity.com</p> <p>Feel free to contact them if you would like to carry on the conversation</p>
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>A PG primer – sector details, recent recruitment trends and key events</p> <p>Workshop and Discussion – what audiences are important to you, how you are trying to reach them and what are your biggest challenges?</p> <p>Notes from the frontline of PG search – what are audiences thinking, feeling and doing?</p>
Workshop Content	<p>A history lesson – key PG events in the past 5 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2016/18 - PG loans. Transformational impact on PG. Boost UK enrolments, but have limitations - The loan is different to UG (not tuition fees and maintenance loans – its just about £12,000 which has no relation to any set costs and is aimed at both). Students who were a UG have a big difference to get their head round here – they are responsible for paying fees - 2016 – Brexit. EU students cannot access loans. It's not initially catastrophic because there are guarantees in place for now - 2019/21 - graduate route post study work visa. Lots more people enrolled. Had a big impact. It's

- quite expensive so not a perfect solution. This changes the route of international students – typically PG students were from China but they wanted to go back home after studying. Indian and Nigerian students are more likely to want to work
- 2020 – Covid. Had a very big impact on domestic PG. The UK did quite well with Covid because we allowed students to study virtually and still be allowed to get the graduate route so it was good for international students.
 - 2021 – UKRI changes (PhD specific). Universities can only allocate 30% of their funding to international students. Lots of pressure on universities, and this is not understood well by students

HESA data

- £9K fees are introduced, UG students dipped but did recover and are rising
- The Masters loan picks up much more in Covid for PGT. Being furloughed, more courses online, and also more disposable income. Online study is attractive to mature students who want to re-train
- Doctoral loan – when introduced the number of students actually reduced as the offering was not good enough
- PGT EU is mostly flat from 2016 – 2021
- PGT international went up in the UK during the pandemic due to the graduate route agreements
- Prospective PGR EU students were more worried about Brexit due to the length of study

Why PG Matters

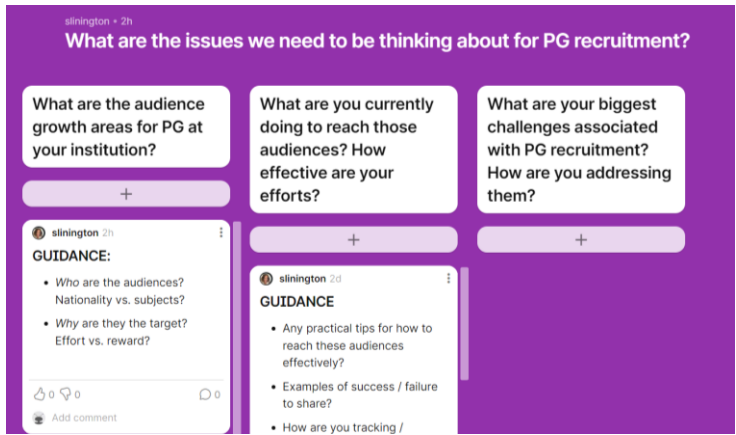
- PG is important. During Covid there was a big uptick in students who want to do subjects that will make a difference e.g. healthcare
- PG is growing and changing
- Both of these things need good marketing, outreach and recruitment

The people who go on to PG aren't always representative of those who want to

- A fifth of current PhD students are BAME, but a third are prospectives so we are losing them in conversion
- Women are more interested in several subjects (including male dominated fields) than enrolments suggests

Poll in the room around where people are trying to recruit from – a lot of people are trying to recruit UK students because they naturally get students from international markets

Case Studies/Examples:	<p>PG Audiences – notes from the frontlines of search</p> <p>Continuing students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less than 50% of students using Find a Masters are considering studying at their own university for PG - Biggest reason to leave – they want a change. Tell them that PG at university is not the same as UG - Biggest reason to stay – they don't want a change - You talk at UG students but need to talk with PG students at recruitment events <p>How do audiences feel about PGT study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confidence in PGT study has shifted during and following the pandemic. They are getting more positive about it now, big dip was November 2021 (Omicron) - It remains fairly strong, despite the cost of living crisis - International students are more positive than domestic - Confidence in PGR is quite similar, but they are less worried about the cost of living crisis. It doesn't have a huge impact on their funding in the same way <p>Why do people want to do a masters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For all audiences, careers and subjects are the most important thing - Money, skills, materials for a CV is also useful - A masters is good for what it helps you do (careers etc) its less about the more you will earn - UK are very interested in courses and to challenge themselves. We need to frame that – don't intimidate but invite them to the challenge - EU are more interested in career progression - India and Nigeria are very different markets. - Nigerian students are not doing a masters for the course. They're older and more interested in adding to their skills - Indian students more interested in earning potential - For PGR its very subject focused. Nigeria care more about subject, India care more about skills

	<p>What concerns do people have about doing a Masters?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost - UK students worried about practicality. Do they have time to do this? Are they good enough? Make the timetable really easy to see so they can understand how they can fit it in around their job, caring responsibilities - India and Nigeria much less worried about these things - EU students are worried about eligibility and cost linked to Brexit. They think everything is worse than it is. They're the least likely to know they can get full PhD studentships. <p>How UK PGT has grown?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mature students are now much more interested in PG since the pandemic – they are still out there. But they are interested in flexible and online study - Interest in online peaks for 35-44 working adults - Funding is an obstacle
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>Table Topic Discussion</p>  <p>What are the issues we need to be thinking about for PG recruitment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the audience growth areas for PG at your institution? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GUIDANCE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who are the audiences? Nationality vs. subjects? Why are they the target? Effort vs. reward? What are you currently doing to reach those audiences? How effective are your efforts? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GUIDANCE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any practical tips for how to reach these audiences effectively? Examples of success / failure to share? How are you tracking / What are your biggest challenges associated with PG recruitment? How are you addressing them? <p>What are the issues we need to be thinking about for PG recruitment?</p> <p>What are the audience growth areas for PG at your institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UK Focus Not becoming complacent on China though as they are driving internal HE growth - We have big UG UK growth targets that we hope will also then lead to additional uptake in PGT...eventually - Progression of own students and other UK

What are you currently doing to reach those audiences? How effective are your efforts?

- Make sure you do the basics, such as speaking to your own final years more. This helps you understand what “normal” is to build from here
- International – focus on quality of application
- Are we really assessing project/campaigns to understand how we can approve?
- Face to Face and online - Plenty of in person visits now. Looking at expansion via in country offices
FAU fairs are the key for UK recruitment
- Saturday Open Day did not go well
- Pulse reports
- PG focused roles
- In-person events (find a masters etc)
- Careers fairs at other Universities
- Marketing to specific countries for specific courses
- Combined UG and PG Open Day. This is complicated from a finance point of view.
- Mini open days – welcome talk, info fair (no subject sessions) were the ones that had a scaled back PG offering. Academics – they may ask you about PG, be prepared
- Subject taster events - Short, sharp online subject workshops run as a series

What are your biggest challenges associated with PG recruitment? How are you addressing them?

- It's so hard to find opportunities to find PG students
- FindAUniversity events have a lot of PGR students even at PGT events. 60/70% of student queries are PhD enquiries
- PG is always a secondary thing after UG recruitment for teams that cover both areas. Is it easier for universities who have a specific PG UK officer?
- The turnover of staff is high so defining PG targets/strategy is difficult
- Try and fail may be the best approach
- Course design to account for PT student who can only study in eve or weekends
- Reaching the right people and funding PhDs
- Getting the right event and balance for open days etc
- Academics not having time or no buy in to help on the subject specific content/convos with students
- Not knowing what they want to know. What details should you put on content
- Cost of living
- Not enough resource. No dedicated PG recruitment officers.
- Historically not enough focus on Home PG

recruitment, UG-focused team aren't confident in this area

- Events not that effective for audience

Follow up discussion

Targeting specific courses to specific countries. Decided on historic applications. UK is more volatile to understand who the target market are.

Turn brilliant CPD courses into proper full masters courses. The issue is then getting the courses advertised out there

Many universities share the issues with UG students progressing to PG at their own university.

- Leicester ran PG taster sessions online. Some were really popular, some were not. You then have to manage conversations with academics. It's not "why do" this subject, its "try it out". It has become more positive over the last few years as they have a more coherent plan in place – the events are part of a wider event/strategic plan. Remind them the value is about keeping these students in our institution and not losing them.
- Follow up idea – 10 credit module as a try before you buy, that could be taken off the cost of the course of the degree if they progress. Summer session, do this for courses you really want to push. Not so much of a commitment. MIT in America do this
- To be flexible in PG you have to be trendy and adaptable. You need a champion in your executive who understands what you need in PG UK. The needs are so different from UK and international. Do not group them
- PGT cohorts are very international, and UK students feel put off. Both audiences don't feel they are being catered too. How are we inclusive and diverse? Should courses be closed to a particular country, and how do you word this in a way where you won't get called out for it
- Some universities who have seen growth in apps have introduced deadlines for just international students. Is this discriminatory? But it is linked to visas

Progression campaigns for UK students

- Leicester go into 2nd year start of year lectures to big up PG. It varied by subject. They did it for 2nd year and 3rd years and did some polls and there is a big difference between what 2nd years know and what 3rd years know. Get the terminology out even

	<p>earlier than 2nd year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UG strategy starts very early – should PG concepts be raised much earlier? • Did 2 sessions. 1st week was intro lecture. What is PG, the different forms. The 2nd session was on personal statements, they got a lot out of it even if they were not progressing to PG, as the session was on thinking about transferable skills from university and how you talk about these • Students are going to FindAUniversity to get advice on progressing, but they could be asking their own university <p>Working with other universities – would this work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to set up a PG HELOA group for collaboration • Leicester have a collaboration with De Montfort – De Montfort students can get the alumni discount at Leicester. Could this evolve into Midlands/Northern connections?
Questions and Answers:	N/A
Summary/Key takeaways:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Don't assume they understand the PG Loan – they probably don't know about it – Anticipate the questions they will ask – Put the average living costs, fees, accommodation etc in context of overall funding and costs. Its going to be more than the loan but at least they are hearing it from you – Make sure your website makes sense – all fee information should sit together, payment info should sit with fees – Make it relatable – use student stories to sell how possible it is