

Session Title:	Postgraduate study in 2024 What can we really expect?
Speaker(s):	Mark Bennett – Director (Audience and Insight), FindAUniversity Oliver Brown – Key Account Manager, FindAUniversity
Chair:	Jen Barton
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Speaker/Institution Bio/Information:	<p>FindAUniversity publish the FindAMasters and FindAPhD websites which provide extensive information for the more than a million monthly prospective applicants visiting the site.</p> <p>They also publish the monthly Pulse newsletter which provides an update on data trends after surveying more than 5000 prospective applicants.</p>
Overview/Aim of session:	<p>We know there are some big obstacles ahead for PG and the pathway is unclear.</p> <p>So let's try to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand where we are and what's coming next. • Pick out some audience trends. • Explore what else matters to those audiences.
Workshop Content	<p><u>Recent Postgraduate trends</u></p> <p>Things were looking fairly good... ..for PGT ...two years ago.</p> <p>Acceleration in PG domestic enrolments during pandemic and have been trending down since.</p> <p>PG international increased following introduction of the graduate route in 2020, levelled out during the pandemic and then increased afterwards.</p> <p><u>PGT Challenges for 2024</u></p> <p>Domestic students: affordability and value International students: visa changes (which also impact affordability and value)</p> <p><u>UK Visa Changes for 23/24</u></p>

17 July: No in-study switching
4 October: +£127 Student Route fee / +£107 Graduate Route fee
1 January: dependents banned from taught Masters
16 January: +£306 Student Route IHS / +£411 Graduate Route / Skilled Worker IHS
TBC: review of the Graduate Route

Visa change impact (PGT)

Since October 2023 there's a clear trend downwards on searches for the FindAUniversity website for UK institutions compared with October 2022.

Some of the biggest international PGT audiences are down substantially e.g., Nigeria, others aren't e.g., China, and some are growing in the EU.

The economics of domestic PGT are now very difficult

In 2016-17 the SFE PG loan left c.£3.5k for living costs after paying average tuition fees. In 21-22 it left c.£2k. Meanwhile, the cost of living has also increased.

What about PGR?

PGR hasn't really grown at all. Doctoral loan take up hasn't increased domestic enrolments. UKRI funding has become more generous but more competitive.

On the plus side . . . international PGR interest is robust

PGR search is more obviously cyclical. There may have been some policy impact in summer, but interest is back up in line with funding deadlines.

What do we know?

- **International PGT is becoming more expensive, less attractive, and less trustworthy.**
- **Domestic PGT is becoming harder to afford (and justify)**
- **PGR has steady demand but constrained supply.**

What can we do?

We can't remove economic or policy obstacles to study but we can understand **how** audiences are approaching those obstacles, **where** they're trying to get to, and **why**.

Domestic study preferences are shifting slightly towards blended

Domestic audiences are typically an even split for study preferences. But we're seeing a shift towards blended.

International study preferences are shifting too

International PGT audiences are 10pp more interested in flexible study. The swing is smaller at PGR and is mostly towards blended.

What does study flexibility actually mean to PGT?

- There's an obvious correlation between study mode and timetable.
- But c. 1/2 of On Campus students prefer flexibility.
- And c. 1/3 of Blended students would prefer a 'traditional' study schedule.

Motivations for PGT study

Subject interest is up year-on-year. Career qualification, skills and earnings are also up.

Motivations for PGR study

Subject interest is the main motivation for PhD study, but it's actually down on last year. More tangible outcomes are increasing in importance.

Top PGT disciplines (Q3 2023)

Home

1. Psychology
2. Nursing & Health
3. Biological Sciences
4. Medicine
5. Creative Arts & Design

India

1. Nursing & Health
2. Engineering
3. Psychology
4. Biological Sciences
5. Medicine

Nigeria

1. Biological Sciences
2. Nursing & Health
3. Engineering
4. Business & Management
5. Medicine

USA

1. Psychology
2. Creative Arts and Design
3. Business & Management
4. Nursing & Health
5. Biological Sciences

EU

1. Psychology
2. Creative Arts and Design
3. Business & Management
4. Medicine
5. Biological Sciences

Most popular continues to be Psychology. Interest in AI is driving the increase in Computer Science. Nursing very popular in India.

Top PGR disciplines (Q3 2023)

Home

1. Biological Sciences
2. Engineering
3. Psychology
4. Medicine
5. Chemistry

India

1. Biological Sciences
2. Engineering
3. Chemistry
4. Medicine
5. Business & Management

China

1. Biological Sciences
2. Engineering
3. Business Management
4. Computer Science
5. Medicine

USA

1. Biological Sciences

	<p>2. Engineering 3. Medicine 4. Computer Science 5. Psychology</p> <p>EU</p> <p>1. Biological Sciences 2. Engineering 3. Medicine 4. Computer Science 5. Chemistry</p> <p>Again, note that AI is driving the growth in Computer Science.</p> <p><u>Summing up these trends</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A shift towards PG flexibility may be linked to affordability and practicality. ● Motivations for PG are becoming more outcomes-focussed. ● Professional subjects are popular, but interest is moving from Business & Management towards subjects like Engineering and Computer Science. <p><u>Preview – What else matters most?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Asking prospective students to rank non-economic factors as first, second and third significance. ● Aim to understand what else helps select and distinguish universities. ● As well as what we should be supporting / communicating.
<p>Case Studies/Examples:</p>	<p>Mark very happy to speak to delegates at the Business Expo and can check data/insights on particular subjects/markets.</p>
<p>Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:</p>	<p>What do you think matters most to Domestic PGT applicants?</p> <p>Delegates asked to select the most important factor on Slido:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employability and professional development ● Staff reputation ● Ranking ● Campus and facilities ● Ethics and values

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation <p>Mark then revealed the results as obtained by the Pulse.</p> <p>Employability is the most important 'other' factor for UK students choosing a postgraduate course.</p> <p>Staff reputation is the most popular T1 choice (and beats rankings at T1 and T2).</p> <p>Ethics and values aren't first-choice factors, but they do matter within a consideration set.</p> <p>Accommodation doesn't matter as much as we might think it should...</p> <p><u>What do you think matters most to International PGT applicants?</u></p> <p>Employability still matters most but Rankings beat Staff Reputation at Tier 1.</p> <p>Campus and Facilities are slightly more important at Tier 1 & Tier 2 (vs UK).</p> <p>Accommodation still isn't a T1 factor, but it's twice as important at T2 and T3 (vs UK).</p> <p>Ethics & Values are twice as important at T1 (vs UK).</p>
<p>Questions and Answers:</p>	<p>Q: Are there any subject areas where supply is not keeping up with demand? Oliver responded that he'd be happy to check FindAuniversity Compass for shifts over time.</p> <p>Q: Have you noticed if HEIs are trying to be more flexible and offer e.g. evening classes? Mark responded that this isn't data which FAU have. The session chair then asked the audience if many of their HEIs offer evening classes. None of the delegates in the room did and many noted that it would be challenging to seek academic support to do so.</p>
<p>SummaryKey takeaways:</p>	<p>Conclusions – What else matters most?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability is the most important overall factor. • Domestic audiences value Staff Reputation over rankings; it's the inverse for international • Ethics & Values matter most at T2/3, but are

	<p>more important at T1 for internationals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodation doesn't matter as much as it probably should for domestic, but is T2/3 for international.• Campus & Facilities matter more for international.
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