Session Title:	From blocked to booked
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Overview/Aim of session:	**Authentic, human centred postgraduate experiences** 1. **Current PG landscape** 2. **2. Consistent blockers to authentic engagement** 3. **Solutions, not problems: extending the PG playbook** 4. **Guerilla-style PG recruiting** 5. **Summary and conclusion**
Workshop Content	Inspired by on-the-ground challenges Top words to describe PG recruitment: frustrating, challenging, difficult **Wide range of opportunities and challenges** ● Funding ● Competition ● Application timescales and deadlines **Sector scan: the current PG landscape** ● Affordability is the #1 driver and concern - remains the biggest influencing factor ● PG audiences are shifting - 30+ age group is dominating PG recruitment and younger audiences declining ● UG → PG progression is not automatic. HESA and JISC data shows most institutions sit below 10-15% ● International PG recruitment is volatile - domestic pipelines and engagement matter more than ever ● Competition between universities is intensifying -

recruitment pressures are directly linked to financial deficits
- PG is no longer secondary - more PGT degrees were awarded than UG degrees in 23-24 cycle
- Cost of living is impacting choices but not satisfaction - over 60% of students say cost of living affects them but course satisfaction is at a record high (86%)
- Window of opportunity - students value quality and experience. Communicating value clearly and humanly are best placed to convert

Access and structural barriers
- Limited access due to exclusivity/ sponsorship agreements with other universities
- Closed departments and academic gatekeepers that restrict access
- Capacity constraints: PG recruitment is often under resourced
- Digital overload: students disengage from generic emails and scatter-gun campaigns - authenticity is key
- Timing confusion: students underestimate when to explore PG options
- Challenge isn't demand, it's access
- Funding anxiety: top-cited barrier to PG study
- Confidence gaps: many don't feel PG ready
- Information gaps: unclear routes, modes and deadlines
- Many barriers are systematic, predictable and solvable
- Stereotypes: certain universities perceived as more prestigious, research-led or employability focussed
- Presence seen as a 'hard sell' or transaction
- Assumed loyalty: UG students don't automatically progress to PG
- Hidden perceptions can block engagement - authentic, proactive, human-centred outreach is key

Solutions: extending the PG playbook
- Human-centred tactics
  - Authentic conversion over scripts
  - micro-engagements : corridor chats, coffee tables, conversations, pop-ups
  - Highly-present recruiters during high-pressure windows (Jan-April peak)
  - Data-led targeting: focussing on segments with proven signals of interest and competitor presence
  - Campus representatives and student ambassador led engagement

HEL○A

	- Structural solutions - Multi-touchpoint pathways - events → conversations → follow ups - Early pipeline work - Build across years, not months - Early segmentation - Alumni reactivation - PG literacy for UG students - Use alumni cases - High-value UG touchpoints - Masterclasses and career-focussed workshops - Subject specific PG tasters - Quick human-centred wins - offer coffee in return for conversation - You build progression,m you don't assume it The hidden influencers: parents and guardians - What the data says 71% of students say parents/ guardians influence study decisions 66% of PG responders cite parental guidance - Students whos parents/ guardians have studied POG are almost twice as likely to pursue PG study (26.2% vs 15.5%) - Why this matters - Support financially and emotionally - Want clarity on ROI - Often don't understand timescales/ funding - Engagement opportunities - Guides - Explainer content - Parent-led forums and dedicated PG pages - Parents are hidden influencers - need to engage directly Progression opportunities - Early pipeline work - Build across years, not months - Early segmentation - Alumni - use these - PG literacy for UG students - High-value PG touchpoints
Case Studies/Examples:	**Guerilla-style recruiting: ULaw case study** - Other universities began offering courses that had previously been specific to ULaw - Important to meet students where they were

	○ Meeting students in hotspots - coffee shops near campus/ near halls of residence ● Engaged with a range of graduates ● Reaching out to societies ● Neutral, personalised and focussed approaches rather than a hard sell Top tips ● Be where the students are ● Respond to restricted access with presence, not avoidance ● Low-resource, high impact setups ● QR code micro-resources ● Working with societies, course leaders, informal leaders ● Be relational
Scenarios/Roundtable discussions:	What can be done to improve engagement at your institution?
Questions and Answers:	Pop-up stands have low engagement - what can be done? ● Coffee trucks in high footfall areas - in return for conversation ● Some form of offering works really well ● Have conversations with students in locations where you're already at - additional time can offer valuable opportunity for conversation As the audience moves to 30+, how can this audience be engaged given they are often off campus? ● Important to understand at what point these students enter the comms ● Tailor a comms strategy - important to understand what the audience interacts with ● Create resource value - webinars about returning to education/ topping up professional standing
SummaryKey takeaways:	● Requires intentional, human-centred engagement ● Blockers are real but solvable ● Understand your audience ● Non-traditional tactics work ● Quick wins matter ● Communicate value clearly: quality, outcomes and experiences ● Engage creatively and consistently ● Be present, human, flexible, bold and where the students are