**Exploring the experiences of postgraduate students**

The panel consisted of three students studying the following subjects:

*Student 1 – MSc Clinical & Molecular Microbiology at the University of Nottingham*

*Student 2 – PhD Intercultural Communications at the University of Warwick*

*Student 3 – MA International Business at the University of Warwick*

Questions and answers as follows:

1. **How knowledgeable are current 3rd year students about PG study options?**

All students stated that they did not have much knowledge until they started to do their own research. They also relied on friends, family and google for information. They did not realise that going straight on to a PhD was an option.

1. **Were PG courses well-promoted whilst you were studying at undergraduate level?**

A couple saw PhDs advertised in their own department but generally there was much more information about applying for jobs rather than for PG study.

1. **What was your main motivation for studying a PG course?**

More insight into subject to further career

Better paid job

Needed to do it in order to go into research. Wasn’t ready to go straight to PhD

1. **How did you find the transition from undergraduate to postgraduate level study?**

Hard! Difficult to find the correct work-life balance

Felt like a case of sink or swim and that it was expected they would know what to do/what the expectations were from the start

Maybe universities could offer a ‘start-up’ module as a refresher of academic skills, dealing with assessments etc

1. **What has been the hardest thing about PG study?**

Workload! Preparation, reading, time spent on research, etc. Getting to grips with level of commitment required. This needs to be emphasised more at recruitment level!

Preparing for life beyond PG study

Lack of support/information for PG students if struggling, not knowing where to go or who to speak to. Feel like you have to fight for every bit of information

Everything is very UG focussed

Don’t expect to be spoon fed, but would appreciate more tailored information – don’t just direct us to links containing UG information

1. **Did you go to any PG open days?**

None of the students had attended a PG open day. All used online information to make their decision

Most events just a few hours and not worth attending. If the event was running alongside a UG open day then it might be better as there would be more going on

1. **What information did you use to make your decision?**

Mostly course/module information

Used departmental REF scores

Looked at staff profiles online for those teaching on course

Travel/distance – did not want to be too far from home

Living costs

Funding/scholarships available

Did not use hard copy prospectuses at all!

Find A PhD/Masters very useful online

Would like to see clearer information available on how many hours a week the course demands

1. **What was your experience of PG fairs?**

Find A University/Masters can be useful as lots of universities there but often staff attending do not have detailed subject knowledge

1. **What communications would you like to receive and when?**

There is a gap between getting an offer and starting the course. Would be useful to receive information on what to expect as a PG student.

Opportunities to speak to current PG students, preferably studying same course

1. **How important is funding when making decisions?**

Very!

Cost of course was major factor in choosing institution.

Alumni discounts interesting but not a dealbreaker. One student decided she wanted to move to a bigger, more research-intensive institution in a bigger city.