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## **Post graduate research students: national picture**

Widening Participation for Post-Graduates conference

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## Outline of presentation

- About UUK
- Key UUK messages on post graduate researchers
- Recent developments and implications inc:
  - Browne Review & Spending Review
  - Adrian Smith Review
  - Research Council/Roberts developments
  - Bologna process



## About UUK

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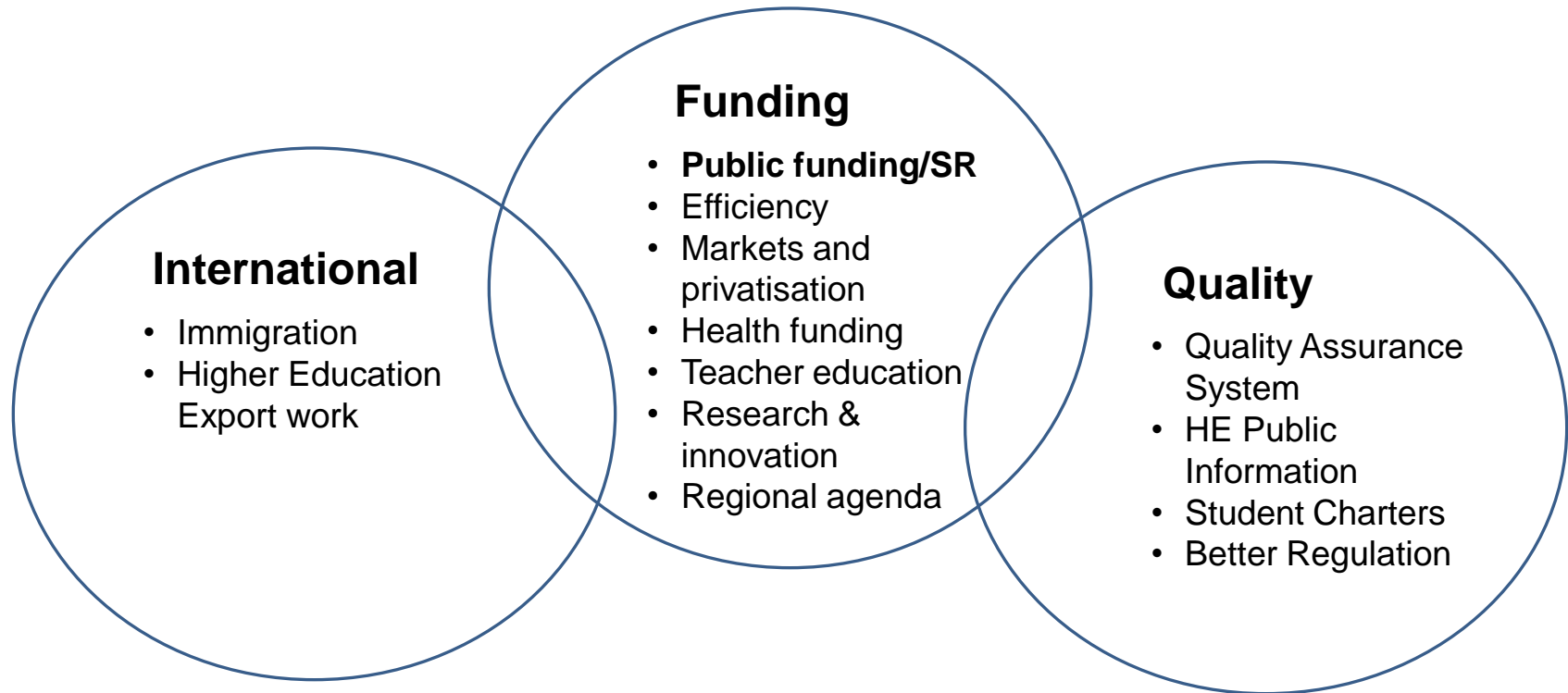
- 132 members- Principals and Vice- Chancellors.
- ‘Essential voice of universities’
- Raise awareness and seek to influence across a number of key areas (UK and EU).
- Research policy- issues relating to the funding and management of research.
- Led by the Research Policy Network (RPC) chaired by Professor Eric Thomas, Vice Chancellor, University of Bristol.



## About UUK

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### Policy, communications, and campaigning



#### Cross-cutting work

- Social Mobility
- HE in FE
- Scenario Planning



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## Key UUK messages on post-graduate researchers

### Post-grad an important issue for UUK

- Seek to inform and lead debate:
  - *Promoting the UK doctorate: opportunities and challenges* (Summer 2009)
  - *Taught postgraduates: market trends and opportunities* (Spring 2009)
  - *The UK's competitive advantage: the market for international research students* (Summer 2008) (International Unit)



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## Key UUK messages on post-graduate researchers

### International position

- Key challenge for the UK in maintaining success in recruiting international researchers is the effective promotion of the UK doctorate. Others teaching in English, but also a perception issue.
- National policy on the funding for international doctoral researchers is a key concern (e.g. demise of ORSAS); cost is probably the largest single factor likely to undermine the UK's market share.
- Related issues of immigration requirements and employment opportunities for international researchers within the UK.



## Key UUK messages on post-graduate researchers

### Funding and sustaining provision

- Long-term sustainability of the current model and implications for the researcher experience due to shortfall between the costs and income (HEFCE/HEPI reports).
- Overall, there is a need to examine the appropriateness of stipends, fees and levels of institutional funding.
- In some areas critical mass is desirable or even essential when it comes to PGR training, though other possible arrangements than concentrating this in single large institutions.
- Collaborative ventures may help to meet challenges associated with sustaining leading research and managing the costs of research degree programmes. Key questions around how might these be supported?



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## Key UUK messages on post-graduate researchers

### Support for skills training

- Robert's funding has been hugely influential in changing practice and cultures.
- This needs to continue in identifiable form (challenges from removing the 'ring fence'), but evolve to meet economic concerns (e.g. more focus on business skills, and encouraging inter-sectoral mobility).

### Browne Review and Spending Review

- Spending review
  - There will be an overall resource cut for BIS of 25% but the annual higher education budget faces a cut of 40% over the period of the Spending Review.
  - BIS states that the HE budget (excluding research) will fall from £7.1 billion to £4.2 billion, a 40% reduction by 2014/15.
  - Research protected with ring-fence (£4.6bn), but decreases in real-terms by 8.9% and efficiency savings will need to be found across the dual support system. Significant implications for institutional (QR) funding and Research Council funding. Implication is that there is likely to be an increased targeting of funds.



## Recent developments

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### Browne Review and Spending Review

- Browne Review
  - The Browne Review report makes a number of wide-ranging proposals on reform to the current system of higher education funding and student finance in England.
  - More market based approach with no cap to fee (but with full state support in terms of loans for tuition should be available up to a maximum level of £6,000 and a 'levy' which would be used to meet some of the costs of the subsidy on the government loan system).
  - Associated regulatory reforms (e.g. creation of HEC).
  - Little to say on PG, although significantly concludes that there is no evidence that changes to funding or student finance are needed to support student demand or access.
  - Subject to political wrangling as we speak

## Recent developments

### Adrian Smith Review

- Commissioned by then Secretary of State and published in April 2010
- UUK broadly supportive. Key messages include:
  - clear benefits and value of PG (PGT & PGR). Fits with high levels skills and economic agenda (however, value of PG to the UK under evaluated and appreciated)
  - needs of postgraduates are very different from undergraduate students, and that some, including part-time and some may require additional information and support mechanisms to meet their specific needs.
  - accurate, transparent and easily accessible information, advice and guidance play a significant role in informing people about the benefits of postgraduate study
  - little in the way of robust evidence on whether the cost of postgraduate study and the lack of student support prevent those who would otherwise have pursued postgraduate study from doing so. More work to do in this area.



## Recent developments

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### **Adrian Smith Review cont...**

- More work needs to be done on assessing employers needs for post graduate skills, although significant development in professionally orientated doctorates and masters.
- The strength of the UK postgraduate sector will be central to developing the UK's position in the international market. Although financial sustainability not over reliant on overseas market.
- However... status of Smith Review proposals uncertain. No clear strategy or momentum for taking the recommendations forward.



## Recent developments

### Research Councils and Roberts funding

- Payments for the career development and transferable skills training of researchers were introduced following the recommendations in Sir Gareth Roberts' report *SET for success: the supply of people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills* (Report from the Roberts Review, 2002)
- This will move from being distributed as ring-fenced payments to being incorporated into the normal funding mechanisms of the Research Councils
- Supported by statement of expectations regarding researcher development



## Recent developments

### Bologna

- Aim- to create a European Higher Education Area by 2010.
- Series of ten 'action lines'.
- Intergovernmental process (beyond EU 27) with decisions made at key summits and implemented through follow up work.
- 2003 Berlin summit new action line introduced on doctoral level qualifications ('3<sup>rd</sup> cycle'); to 'dovetail' with European Research Area
- EUA mandated with developing basic principles and initiates doctoral project. Further discussions in Salzburg and Nice culminating in decisions at London summit.



## Recent developments

### Bologna

- Supervision monitoring and assessment... ‘transparent contractual framework of shared responsibilities between candidates, supervisors and the institution’
  - multiple supervision, the continuous professional skills development of academic staff and performance reviews of supervisors ; use of external examiners.
- Importance of transferable skills and career development.
- Status and conditions of doctoral researchers- ‘Doctoral candidates are early stage researchers who are vital to Europe’s development and... should have all commensurate rights’.
- Funding doctoral researchers. The need for stable funding and greater coordination



## Recent developments

### Bologna

- Structure and organisation- integration and transparency (recognition of importance of Graduate Schools); address 'fragmentation'.
- Improve conditions, support career development and inter-sectoral mobility (link to Charter and Code). Concentrate PhD funding (?).
- Flexibility and autonomy in admissions.
- Enhancing internationalisation.
- Recognition of diversifying doctoral programmes (e.g. professional doctorates)- though still based on original research and outcomes focused.

### *Where we are with Bologna and the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle*

- At UK level, in many instances already aligned with the framework outlined in Nice.
- Early days, though ERA and other discussions give research new focus in EU policy.
- Bologna activities ongoing through Bologna follow up group.
- New EUA Council for Doctoral Education (EUA-CDE) created, likely to become a key forum for future European discussions on doctoral education. Discussions underway.