

Taught postgraduate students: market trends and opportunities



This series of Research reports published by Universities UK will present the results of research we have commissioned or undertaken in support of our policy development function. The series aims to disseminate project results in an accessible form and there will normally be a discussion of policy options arising from the work.

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In 2008 Universities UK published two reports arising from a major project analysing how the size and shape of the higher education sector might change over the next 20 years in response to demographic changes. The project considered the demographic data on the age groups most relevant to the future demand for higher education and developed a set of demand-based projections for the four countries of the UK. It examined the impact of these developments on the different student markets that universities currently operate in.

The size and shape project has generated considerable interest in the sector and as a result Universities UK has decided to commission a number of specific studies of the different student markets, combining an analysis of data about enrolment trends with a discussion of current issues and the opportunities for future growth. The purpose of these studies is to alert member institutions and policy makers to the main issues affecting the future development of these markets. This report on the taught postgraduate market is the first in this series; studies of research postgraduates and part-time students together with an analysis of the future market impact of private providers will follow later in 2009.

This report underlines the importance of the taught postgraduate market in the UK: this group now constitutes almost a fifth of all higher education students in the UK and has grown very rapidly over the past decade. Most of our international students are enrolled on taught postgraduate programmes. Despite this rapid growth this provision is not regarded as a distinctive higher education market in its own right. The overall focus is still on the traditional undergraduate market or on research postgraduate students. As a result there are important gaps in our knowledge of the taught market and the report recommends how they might be filled.

The report concludes that it may be difficult to maintain the rate of growth that the taught postgraduate sector has achieved in the recent past. It suggests that in the short- and medium-term the sector will face the significant challenges of economic recession and demographic decline. The authors argue that individual student contributions and employer support may not be sufficient to sustain this market over the next few years without increased public support. They suggest that, if this is the case, the private and public benefits of a postgraduate study programme need scrutiny in order to consider how far this provision (and exactly what kinds of provision) might be said to have a claim for additional support from the public purse.

This report provides input to universities' planning process as well to national policy development and we hope that its conclusions will stimulate a wider debate about the future of this important market.

Professor Rick Trainor

President, Universities UK

Introduction

- 1 Taught postgraduate students constitute almost a fifth of all students in UK higher education institutions and just over three-quarters of all postgraduate students. Their numbers have increased by more than 70 per cent in the past 11 years. Most of our international students are enrolled on these programmes. Yet within institutions and across the sector as a whole we do not consider this provision as a distinctive higher education market in its own right. The overall focus is still on the traditional undergraduate market or on research postgraduate students.
- 2 This report brings together information and analysis about taught postgraduate students from data provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and from a search of relevant published information. Our contention is that these students are distinctively different from undergraduates and from research postgraduate students. Their numbers are now large enough to make them a distinct and important higher education market. Taught postgraduate provision already has distinctive funding arrangements although the UK model for assuring quality and standards in universities applies to it.

Literature review

- 3 The literature review concentrated on a 10-year period looking at material published from 1998 to the present. We also identified older publications, as well as references to work proposed or underway, where this is indicated in the literature.
- 4 Despite the very large increase in students on taught postgraduate programmes in recent years, very few reports specifically about postgraduate students have been published. Only two major UK studies have been produced recently on this theme. Both consider all types of postgraduates against a background of significantly rising postgraduate student numbers.

Enrolment trends

- 5 We present statistical trends in the enrolment of taught postgraduate students based on three years (2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07) in order to provide detailed comparisons for a six-year period, including the most recent two years for which data is available.

- 6 Between 2001/02 and 2006/07, the number of taught postgraduate students increased from 363,000 to more than 440,000, a growth of 21 per cent. Most of these were studying part-time. However, over the past five years, there has been a significant increase (36 per cent) in the numbers of these students who are studying full-time. This major shift reflects the very large increase in students from outside the EU, whose numbers have nearly doubled in the last five years. In 2006/07, 41 per cent of all enrolments on full-time taught postgraduate courses in the UK were from non-EU students, of whom the largest single group (more than 50 per cent) came from Asia. Students from other EU member states constituted about a quarter of all non-UK full-time taught postgraduate students.
- 7 Enrolments of students by qualification aim show that Masters' degree students constitute significantly more than half of the taught postgraduate sector (65 per cent), with postgraduate diplomas and certificates accounting for almost a fifth (19 per cent). Among the most popular subjects of study, for both full-time and part-time students, education and business and administrative studies far exceed numbers in any other subject area.
- 8 In contrast to UK-domiciled students, those domiciled outside the UK are very heavily weighted towards taught Masters' degrees. Students on this type of course constitute 94 per cent of those recruited from outside the EU and 88 per cent of those from other EU member states. Particularly notable is the very high level of enrolments of non-UK students in business and administrative studies (on MBA programmes) and in engineering and technology, both exceeding 80 per cent of the total.
- 9 Female students predominate among taught postgraduate students, and especially among those studying part-time; the proportion of female students has increased consistently over the past five years. Very different patterns are evident in age at the point of entry between full-time and part-time students. Entrants to full-time programmes are concentrated in the younger age groups, especially the 21–25 age range, whereas among part-time students there is a fairly even spread across all age ranges to 50, with a modest peak in the late 20s.

- 10 There are significant differences in enrolments between the four countries of the UK and between the institutions within them. In Scotland and England there are markedly higher proportions of higher education students within the taught postgraduate category than there are in Wales and Northern Ireland. At the level of individual institutions, there is a very wide range of enrolments of these students: while the median figure is just over 18 per cent, several institutions report less than 1 per cent of students following taught postgraduate courses, while several others (including some specialist providers) show figures of over 70 per cent. Overall the older universities recruit slightly more of these students than the others, especially among full-time students, and they enrol significantly more non-UK students than other institutions. However, the post-1992 institutions recruit a greater proportion of part-time taught postgraduate students.
- 14 The only mandatory funding available to these students across the UK is for approved professional training in teaching, social work and health education, including nursing. For these students, bursary support is available (providing help with both tuition fees and maintenance costs), usually for both full-time and part-time students. Both Scotland and Northern Ireland offer national schemes providing discretionary awards to limited numbers of full-time students. No equivalent national scheme exists in either England or Wales.
- 15 Tuition fees are mainly met by the students themselves, but in certain circumstances they may be wholly or partially paid by employers, including public sector employers. We do not know the overall contribution that employers make towards the cost of the tuition fees of their employees or indeed the total taught postgraduate fee income that institutions receive.

Financial framework

- 11 In contrast to the detailed information available about these student enrolments, it is not possible to give a financial overview of the taught postgraduate sector. This is both because the HESA financial record collects much less information than does the student record and because it is not possible to disaggregate appropriately the information that is collected. For example, income related to these postgraduate students is not separated from other teaching and learning activity.
- 12 Compared with undergraduate provision (and especially full-time undergraduate provision) or with postgraduate research provision, the total public funding offered to institutions and students for postgraduate taught provision is extremely limited.
- 13 Under the different teaching funding methodologies employed by the funding councils, and depending on assumptions that are made about tuition fee income (for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland) and about the unit of funding for particular subject groups (in Wales), the grant attributed to full-time taught postgraduate provision is less in cash terms than its undergraduate equivalent. Indeed, for certain subjects in England and Northern Ireland the grant calculations assume that such provision will operate on a 'fees only' basis.

Issues for the future

Student demand

- 16 The number of taught postgraduate students in the UK has increased by 77 per cent over the past 11 years. A key question must be whether this level of recruitment can be sustained during the more difficult climate anticipated for the next few years. Estimates produced before the credit crunch based on demographic projections suggest that overall postgraduate numbers (taught and research combined) will show an increase of some 2.6 per cent for full-time students and of 1.7 per cent for part-time students between 2005/06 and 2026/27¹. This would mean an increase of some 6,100 full-time and 4,400 part-time postgraduate students.
- 17 We anticipate a number of challenges facing the three key segments that make up the taught postgraduate market in the UK. Demand for these programmes from UK-domiciled students will be affected by the:
- impact of demographic projections indicating a significant reduction in the numbers of young people aged 18–21 across the UK over the next 20 years;
 - level of demand in the economy for the highest level skills;
 - availability of financial support from employers or from elsewhere;

- need for many prospective students without employer support to borrow commercially to meet the cost of tuition fees, especially for Masters' degree programmes; and
 - availability of credit for both full-time and part-time taught postgraduate applicants who are willing to take on additional student debt.
- 18 We do not know how long the current economic downturn will last, but employers may be more reluctant to support staff taking longer, accredited external training in the current climate. If so, the demand for taught postgraduate study, and especially for part-time provision – a major component of the UK student market – is likely to decrease.
- 19 Another uncertainty affecting demand for part-time provision arises from the decision of the Westminster government to withdraw financial support from students studying in England for qualifications at equivalent or lower level than a qualification they already hold. These students hitherto represented a significant proportion of home and EU part-time postgraduate enrolments. A recent estimate, made before the current downturn, of the overall impact of this loss of public support concluded that the central demographic projection was likely to be reduced by some 10,000 part-time postgraduate students². Although this figure includes both taught and research postgraduate students, the relative size of the former sector suggests that the major impact will be felt here.
- 20 In terms of demand from students domiciled in other EU member states and from international students, the UK taught postgraduate market will face related challenges in the coming years. Uncertainties include the:
- continued reputation of UK higher education;
 - development of domestic higher education provision in those countries from which we currently recruit taught postgraduate students (principally China and India);
 - attractiveness of the UK as a place to study, including UK fee levels and maintenance costs, coupled with the availability of funding for applicants hoping to study abroad; and
 - the UK's ability to compete in an increasingly tight global student market.
- 21 The UK faces additional challenges in attracting large numbers of students domiciled elsewhere in the EU. The population of all EU countries aged 18–20 is projected to fall by 14 per cent between 2006 and 2027. In the 12 countries admitted to the EU since 2004, which supply a substantial number of the UK's EU-domiciled students, a 37 per cent decline is expected, that is a reduction of more than half a million 18-year-olds³.
- 22 It is necessary to consider what impact the EU's political processes (arising from the Bologna process, the Lisbon Treaty and the Schengen area) will have on the attractiveness of the EU countries as a destination for international students. There is a question about how strongly the UK will continue to perform in the face of increased competition for students from taught postgraduate provision in the English language offered by universities in other member states.

Financial stability

- 23 We highlight the difference between the generous public funding contribution made for undergraduate provision and for research and the very limited amount of public funding for individuals or institutions for taught postgraduates.
- 24 The public policy assumption appears to be that the financial returns from taught postgraduate qualifications are such that employers and individuals (and their families) will be willing to meet the cost of their course. This seems an overly optimistic basis for sustaining such provision across a range of disciplines, perhaps even in the short term. Institutions will need to consider whether their provision can become financially sustainable in the light of falling birth rates and increasing competition for young taught postgraduate students.

Improved data reporting

- 25 In any consideration of the financial sustainability of taught postgraduate provision, for both national policy making and for individual institutional decision making, the need for comprehensive and reliable data becomes critical.

- 26 We note several instances where data about the taught postgraduate sector is not available. For example, we do not know what income institutions receive from taught postgraduate tuition fees, nor the source of that income, whether from individuals, from the public purse or from employers. Minor modifications to the HESA financial record would permit the disaggregation of these figures, enabling the calculation of sector-wide income figures for this provision.
- 27 HESA does not publish data on the destinations of taught postgraduate students but uses the broader categories of postgraduate or higher degrees. However, the underlying data are available (with the exception of destinations data on non-EU leavers).
- 28 Our recommendations include actions to improve national datasets for the taught postgraduate sector and provide a starting point for estimating the value of taught postgraduate study to the UK and analysing the financial sustainability of this provision within institutions.

- 29 Taught postgraduate students constitute almost a fifth of all students in UK higher education institutions and just over three-quarters of all postgraduate students. Their numbers have increased by more than 70 per cent in the past 11 years. Most of our international students are enrolled on these programmes.
- 30 Yet we do not consider such provision as a distinctive higher education market in its own right. The focus is still on undergraduates (who make up 76 per cent of all higher education students across the UK) or on postgraduate research students (who comprise just 5 per cent of higher education students).
- 31 This report brings together information about taught postgraduate students from data published by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and from a literature search. We identify a number of issues that will be important for the development of this provision in the next decade and make recommendations that highlight the need for more work on this important segment of UK higher education.
- 32 Our contention is that these students are distinctively different from undergraduates and from research postgraduate students. This is reflected in the fact that taught postgraduate provision has distinctive funding arrangements although the UK model for assuring quality and standards applies to it. There are enough of these students now to make this an important higher education market. As well as providing information about the taught postgraduate market and identifying the gaps where more information is required, this report signals the need to raise the profile of this provision in policy terms and recognise it as a distinct and important market in its own right.

- 33 This literature review has been undertaken on the basis of:
- web- and library-based desk research; and
 - a follow-up of key sources to see what is in the pipeline.
- 34 We have focused on a 10-year period, looking at material published between 1998 and 2008, though we have also identified some older publications as well as references to work that is proposed or underway.
- 35 A limited amount of material has been published on taught postgraduate provision. More is included as a minor part of studies concerned with all students, or as part of a study mainly considering postgraduate students as a whole, often with the focus on research students. A substantial number of items about postgraduate issues is available on the Higher Education Academy website⁴. In this review we focus on material that concentrates on taught postgraduate students, especially in relation to the nature and scope of this provision from a policy perspective.
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- Taught postgraduate provision in the UK**
- 36 Despite the very large increase in student numbers on taught postgraduate programmes in recent years across the UK and internationally, very few reports specifically about postgraduate students have been published. Only two major studies have appeared recently on this theme in the UK. Both consider all types of postgraduate students against a background of significantly rising postgraduate numbers. Most recent is the study undertaken by the Higher Education Careers Services Unit (HECSU) for the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)⁵ in 2008, which provides information on the characteristics of postgraduate students in the UK, including their destinations, as well as the agencies (individuals and organisations) that are funding this level of study. DIUS expects to commission a further study of postgraduate students (especially Masters' and PhD students) at a later date⁶. In 2004, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) published a report by Tom Sastry which considered the growth of postgraduate provision, including trends across the sector, and its financial impact on universities, postgraduates and the job market⁷. Sastry compared HESA data on postgraduate student enrolments for 1995/96 with those for 2002/03. This latter study provides more differentiation between the research and taught postgraduate markets and so is more relevant in the context of our report.
- 37 Before these two reports, the only major study of postgraduate education to have appeared was the review conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and others in the mid-1990s⁸.
- 38 A study focusing on the taught postgraduate student experience was published by the Higher Education Academy in January 2008⁹. A total of 6,736 students from 30 higher education institutions took part in an online survey.
- 39 The study explored student satisfaction according to eight themes:
- teaching and learning;
 - assessment and feedback;
 - organisation and management;
 - student support, advice and resources;
 - information, advice and guidance;
 - motivation and choice of institution;
 - views of non-UK students; and
 - support for particular groups of students.
- 40 Six years earlier, in 2002, the National Postgraduate Committee (NPC) had commissioned the University of Warwick students' union to carry out a national survey of UK postgraduate students¹⁰ with the aim of exploring the following questions:
- What factors do students consider in deciding to pursue postgraduate study?
 - How are postgraduate students funded through their courses, and what are the implications for these funding mechanisms?
 - How many postgraduate students undertake paid work, what sort of work do they do and why, and what impact does this have on their study (if any)?
 - What are the future career plans of postgraduate students, and what factors do they take into account in making these plans? Does debt accrued as a student have any effect on these plans¹¹?

41 A questionnaire was sent to 8,000 UK-domiciled postgraduate students at 17 higher education institutions in 2002. A total of 982 responses were received (a 12 per cent response rate). Unfortunately the report does not generally distinguish taught postgraduates from research postgraduate respondents but the following findings are relevant for our report:

- Of the sample base, 35 per cent were studying for a doctorate, 4 per cent for an MPhil, 47 per cent for a Masters' degree, 4 per cent for an MBA, 3 per cent for a postgraduate diploma and 6 per cent for another qualification.
- 65 per cent of full-time taught students were paying their fees, but only 17 per cent of full-time research students were doing so. In the case of part-time students, 56 per cent of taught students and 65 per cent of research students were paying their own fees.
- Tuition fees ranged from £250 to £20,000 a year. Most part-time students had fees of £2,000 a year or less. Most full-time students paid annual fees of between £2,000 and £4,000. Fees for taught courses were higher than those for research degrees.
- Young full-time students on taught courses were most likely to have a higher expenditure than their income.
- Just over half of respondents described their funding as 'not sufficient'. The main factor affecting this perception was whether students paid tuition fees or not. Of those who paid their own tuition fees, 74 per cent described their funding as insufficient, compared with only 28 per cent of those who did not pay their own fees.

42 A few major studies considering the role of postgraduate education have been published over the past ten or so years. Still relevant is the collection of essays on graduate education, lifelong learning and careers which was edited by Professor Bob Burgess for the Society of Research into Higher Education (SRHE)¹². Burgess' own article¹³ considers the scope of postgraduate education and training (both taught and research) within the UK, which through a very substantial rise in student numbers since 1979 'has shifted from being a fringe activity in higher education institutions to commanding a role that takes centre stage'¹⁴.

Student numbers and recruitment

- 43 The rise in postgraduate student numbers across the UK in recent years has been reported since 1999/2000. This has been a UK-wide trend, sometimes running alongside a reduction in the number of research postgraduate students (as in Wales over the period 1992/93 to 2001/02)¹⁵.
- 44 Growth in taught postgraduate provision overall has been very significant. Generally the universities that relied most on international postgraduate student income in 2004 were those that had a strong position in this market, but just over 40 per cent of all postgraduate students enrolled in 2002/03 were in the post-92 universities, where the number of international postgraduate student numbers had increased by 245 per cent between 1996/97 and 2002/03¹⁶.
- 45 The enormous popularity of taught Masters' degrees, especially among international students, fuelled the expansion of the postgraduate population as a whole over this period. By 2002/03 there were nearly 500,000 postgraduate students in the UK who made up almost 20 per cent of all UK higher education students¹⁷.
- 46 Recruitment to taught postgraduate programmes by international students has been buoyant across all subject fields, even those where home student numbers have been declining. For example, in one institution international recruitment to science and engineering postgraduate courses was 70 per cent higher in 2007/08 than it was in 2006/07¹⁸.
- 47 Financial incentives have been introduced by some universities to encourage progression by their own graduates to postgraduate study programmes. For example, in 2004 one institution developed a scheme to offer between 100 and 150 of their own graduates free places or subsidised tuition for Masters' degrees each year from 2009¹⁹.
- 48 However, concern has been expressed in recent years about a concentration on those business-focused subjects that are cheaper to develop, are seen as leading to well-paid employment and where the international student market appears buoyant compared with science subjects which are expensive to provide and are said to be less obviously attractive to international students²⁰.

- 49 It is not yet possible to identify precisely what impact the demographic changes to the number of 18–20-year-olds in the UK between 2009 and 2019²¹ will have on recruitment patterns for postgraduate study. Similarly, we cannot yet know what the impact of the increasing level of (undergraduate) student loan debt will be on demand for postgraduate study. Recent scenario planning for higher education in the UK by 2020²² suggests that this could discourage people from going on to postgraduate study immediately following graduation, but also suggests that this effect is likely to be small, perhaps representing a reduction in demand for all types of postgraduate study of around 5,000 home students a year.

Postgraduate study and employment

- 50 In this review we have considered publications that focus on undergraduate student destinations, since graduates progressing to postgraduate study represent a significant element of the overall taught postgraduate student body.
- 51 The role of postgraduate study in career paths after graduation has been the subject of several pieces of research. The study *Moving on*, published in 1999, interviewed graduates three years after they had completed their undergraduate course in 1995²³. It considered the role played by additional qualifications (including the range of taught postgraduate programmes), participation in further training and the development of relevant work experience in accessing graduate employment and facilitating career development. More recently, a survey of former students – both graduates and those who had withdrawn from their initial studies at university – considered whether respondents engaged in further study and, for those who did (48 per cent of the sample), the type and nature of and reasons for that study²⁴.
- 52 A longitudinal study of graduate destinations three and a half years after graduation published by HESA in 2007, which was based on almost 25,000 responses, found that almost a third of graduates had achieved a further qualification and that 9 per cent of graduates with a first degree in 2002/03 had since obtained a higher degree through a mainly taught course²⁵. Some years earlier, a survey-based study of part-time students and employment was undertaken by the Open University for the then DfEE²⁶.
- 53 Other studies that consider the relationship between graduates and employment, including the contribution of those with postgraduate qualifications (both taught and research), and the need for a highly qualified workforce include a report on working in the 21st century²⁷ and a recent study of international competitiveness²⁸.
- 54 The decision-making of students entering full-time UK taught Masters' degree courses was explored recently by Helen Bowman²⁹. The relationship between social class and progression to postgraduate study was the subject of an investigation of UK-domiciled students graduating from first degree courses at English higher education institutions during 1999/2000³⁰. This enquiry defined 'postgraduate study' as 'any course of study undertaken following completion of a first degree' and so it captures a wider range of options than we have included in this study of taught postgraduate provision³¹. The investigation found that further study was the first destination of 18.2 per cent of the population.

Rate of return

- 55 Although a salary premium for postgraduate qualifications is still the norm in the United States³², this is not necessarily the case elsewhere. Although the numbers of taught postgraduate programmes and student enrolments in Finland have been rising in recent years³³, research by the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development suggests that a Masters' degree does not guarantee a pay advantage over those with lower level qualifications³⁴. In a report tracking the destinations and labour market experiences of over 200 UK-domiciled postgraduates graduating in 1999 and 2001, drawn from the alumni database of the University of Sussex, respondents said that taking a postgraduate course had had a positive impact on their lives. It had given them a sense of great personal achievement, and was considered to have had a positive impact on future career and salary prospects, with financial benefits more apparent in the medium to long term³⁵.

Tuition fee income

56 Although taught fee income forms an important part of overall fee income for many institutions and may be an important driver for the introduction of new programmes³⁶, it seems that little specific analysis of this topic has been undertaken. Sastry attempted to define the scope and scale of the activity³⁷, but the main difficulty is the lack of specific data on taught postgraduate activity collected by HESA. We consider this to be a major stumbling block to understanding the nature and scale of this provision and we have made recommendations about how this shortfall might be addressed³⁸.

Student debt

57 Most research about student debt has concentrated on undergraduates. However, a small number of publications has considered the impact of undergraduate debt on postgraduate study. For instance, this was the subject of a study by Catherine Millet published in 2003³⁹. An earlier analysis of the impact of undergraduate student debt on enrolment for postgraduate study has been published in the United States⁴⁰.

58 In the United States, graduate student financial support was the top issue facing graduate deans for the fourth year in a row according to the Council of Graduate Schools' 2008 pressing issues survey⁴¹.

Subject range

59 A number of specific studies has been published on the subject range of Masters' courses. We have not listed these here as they are all on the Higher Education Academy website. However, five studies are potentially of interest within the broader context of taught postgraduate provision. There has been a marked rise in creative writing courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level across universities and colleges⁴². The former Arts and Humanities Research Board received a 16 per cent rise in the number of applications for English language and literature in Masters' degrees and doctoral research in 2003 compared with 2002⁴³. Studies have been published on business⁴⁴ and geography⁴⁵ Masters' degrees. A recent review of the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills supply chain by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE) highlighted the need for specific postgraduate training routes, achieved through relevant research as well as taught provision⁴⁶.

Learning and teaching issues

60 Several studies about learning and teaching have been published. Most are limited to specific studies within individual institutions and sometimes individual programmes within an institution. A small number is listed here to give a flavour of what is available, but the Higher Education Academy website lists a wide range of studies.

61 Findings of a survey about differences in motivation which might be attributed to the mode of delivery of the course indicate that postgraduate students on conventionally taught programmes and on distance learning programmes have different expectations and needs⁴⁷. Aspects of quality assurance, curriculum and independent learning available on individually negotiated Masters' degrees at Anglia Ruskin University were considered in a university publication intended to share developing good practice with the higher education community⁴⁸. In 2001, action research carried out at Anglia Ruskin to enable international MBA students to develop better learning and research strategies and research methods led to a 'radical overhaul of elements of the course', with wider implications for the support and development of international postgraduate students at the university⁴⁹.

62 Two small-scale studies of the teaching and learning experience of Chinese students on taught postgraduate programmes in the business school of the University of Newcastle have been published. The first considers the development of students' approaches to learning and how these changed over the course of a year's study in the UK⁵⁰. The second follows a small group of students from mainland China and concludes that they may 'under-perform' because of a lack of initiation into UK cultural practices rather than an inability to engage with critical thinking⁵¹. A case study based at Newcastle to support the experience of international postgraduate students in the faculty of humanities and social sciences has been supported by the Higher Education Academy⁵².

63 A recent Higher Education Academy survey found that eight out of 10 students on taught postgraduate courses rate the experience as having met or exceeded their expectations. Positive responses were recorded for all but two areas of the survey. Just 33 per cent of the almost 7,000 polled said that 'academic advice on their next career step had been appropriate' and only 30 per cent said they 'had been able to access good financial advice'⁵³.

International collaborative provision

64 International collaboration is a feature of many developing Masters' programmes in UK institutions. Links are often forged by individual institutions⁵⁴. They may be supported by scholarships for students to boost stronger links between the countries (and institutions) concerned, for instance between Scotland and the United States (with the Scotland-USA Graduate Scholarships programme launched in 2008 and offering 51 one-year scholarships for United States graduates to study in Scotland⁵⁵).

65 Opportunities for taught postgraduates may exist alongside research scholarships, as in the Centre for Russian, Central and Eastern European Studies, a collaborative centre involving eight UK universities and six international partners supported by the UK Research Councils and the funding councils in England and Scotland⁵⁶.

66 In some cases UK universities and colleges have established a branch or campus abroad⁵⁷. Institutions may be using existing international networks to develop collaborative taught postgraduate provision and possibly involving private providers, such as the joint venture company established by Universitas 21 and Thomson Learning in 2000 to offer taught postgraduate courses (such as an MBA or a postgraduate diploma) alongside undergraduate level credit-based units⁵⁸.

The EU perspective

67 A questionnaire survey of Masters' degrees and joint degrees across EU member states with responses from 31 higher education systems was published by the European University Association (EUA) in 2002⁵⁹. This surveyed the duration and structure of Masters' degrees and the development of joint degrees offered in partnership by institutions in different European countries.

68 More recently, the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) has published a paper drawing together several studies in order to consider the implications of the Bologna Process and the resulting reforms in other European higher education systems for the future of the UK as a destination for international students⁶⁰. This reports a widespread misconception that the one-year UK Masters' is same as two-year Masters' offered elsewhere in Europe. In fact the latter are seen as a preparation for a PhD whereas in the UK Masters' programmes serve a different purpose⁶¹.

International developments

69 An increase in taught postgraduate student numbers has also been experienced by other countries where, as in the UK, this increase is made up of both home and international students. It has long been an important feature of provision in the United States (where it is known as graduate education) and is increasingly widely seen as providing training for the professions as well as for science, technology and teaching. Graduate education offers opportunities for international links and cooperation, enabling countries to take advantage of graduate training capacities elsewhere with new technologies providing the key links between institutions and countries⁶². More information about graduate education in the United States is set out in a policy statement from the Council of Graduate Schools⁶³.

70 Especially in the developing world, graduate education is coming into its own as the need for advanced skills and for continuing education becomes increasingly clear⁶⁴. For example, until recently facilities in India for graduate education and research – even in fields such as medicine and law – were practically unavailable, even though they were considered essential, and those who aspired to graduate qualifications were expected to go to the UK. Now universities in India have been equipped with facilities for undergraduate and postgraduate education across the full range of disciplines in order to advance knowledge and produce the skilled workforce that the country requires⁶⁵.

71 Findings from a survey of university students in Xi'an, China, identifying the types of students who aspire to postgraduate education, confirm the importance of three sets of factors in ensuring their successful progression: parents' education and financial capacity; university attended; and academic performance⁶⁶.

Student numbers

- 72 Ten years ago, a paper on the expansion of Chinese graduate education commented on the 'remarkable development achieved since the resumption of graduate education in China in 1978'⁶⁷. Demand for graduate education by Chinese students has continued to grow, both at home and abroad, into the new century. But this is a volatile market and there has been evidence of a decline in home postgraduate students in China in 2008 as reported in the press⁶⁸.
- 73 There has also been a reduction in the number of international students enrolled at Australian universities, as for example in 2006⁶⁹. The growth in international graduate student applications at American universities and colleges slowed considerably in 2008, with total applications up only 3 per cent against increases of 9 and 12 per cent in the preceding two years⁷⁰.
- 74 Despite this volatility in international recruitment patterns, some countries are still aiming to grow their international student numbers in advance of the declining demographics that we might expect in the 18–20-year-old population across the countries of the UK and EU up to 2020⁷¹. For example, government targets for the recruitment of all international students in Japan will rise to 300,000 by 2020 and would more than double current numbers (some 120,000 in 2008)⁷².
- 75 Do students who study abroad return to their home country? About a third of the 400,000 Chinese students who have undertaken postgraduate study abroad since the late 1970s have returned with doctoral or Masters' degrees, according to official figures published in 2002⁷³.
- 76 The differences between the traditional UK and American models of taught postgraduate programmes are perhaps not widely appreciated. In the United States disciplinary Masters' programmes have focused on preparing graduates for doctoral study or professional areas such as law or medicine. Current developments supported by the Council of Graduate Schools under the professional Masters' initiatives are designed to help member institutions respond to local and regional workforce needs and student demand for Masters' programmes. A range of pathways has been developed that offer students either the opportunity to take a Masters' programme instead of pursuing a doctoral research programme or to continue to a Masters' degree from academic subject areas where traditionally very few students have progressed to graduate education. They prepare graduates for the business, government and non-profit employment sectors as an alternative to doctoral education for those preparing for these careers⁷⁴. It might appear that work in the United States on the importance of graduate education in improving job opportunities and earning power and the contribution of graduate education to the public good⁷⁵ is actually comparable to work done in the UK on the value of a first degree⁷⁶.
- 77 Many of the graduate schools in the United States have established collaborative graduate degree programmes with one or more international higher education institutions⁷⁷. The importance of graduate education in enhancing economic competitiveness and innovation is the focus of the Council of Graduate School's advisory committee on graduate education and American competitiveness and the subject of a report which contains findings and action items for three targeted sectors: universities, business leaders and policy makers⁷⁸.
- 78 Analysis of the home market in the United States has noted a significant rise in the number of graduate students aged 40 or over between 1995 and 2005⁷⁹. At the same time as the Council of Graduate Schools reported that the proportion of students in American graduate schools who were members of an ethnic minority group rose to 28 per cent in 2006 (and that the proportion of female graduate students at Masters' level institutions reached 65 per cent of all enrolments)⁸⁰, the US Census Bureau reported that only 10 per cent of American residents currently hold Masters' or doctoral degrees and that fewer than 5 per cent of African-Americans and 3 per cent of Latinos hold Masters' or doctoral degrees⁸¹.

79 In certain professional sectors, there are fewer students progressing to taught postgraduate study as professional employment opportunities are good and well paid. This is the case in the IT sector in India where starting salaries for IT graduates were reported in 2006 as being significantly above those for staff with PhDs who had worked as teachers in science universities for some ten years⁸². In contrast, some home markets for postgraduate students are expanding across the globe, for instance in Latin America⁸³.

80 The example of the University of Melbourne is apparently being watched with interest by universities in other countries. The university has decided to shift its emphasis to postgraduate study. Only six broadly-based undergraduate degree programmes are offered and by 2011 most of the university's professional degrees will have migrated to graduate-level entry and half of all students will be postgraduates. The University of Melbourne's model is based on the American structure, offering a general undergraduate degree followed by postgraduate professional training. It should be attractive to international students and those planning to take their skills abroad after graduation. In Ireland, University College Dublin has overhauled its curriculum in a similar way⁸⁴.

81 This radical reshaping at Melbourne follows the first reported fall (in 2006) in the number of foreign postgraduate enrolments across Australia, where international students comprise more than a third of all postgraduate enrolments. They are concentrated on taught Masters' programmes, where they make up 70 per cent of total enrolments in IT, 68 per cent in engineering, 55 per cent in management and commerce and nearly half of those in the natural and physical sciences⁸⁵. At the same time, the number of local and foreign students taking MBAs in Australia dropped by more than 20 per cent between 2003 and 2006. This fall in the numbers of on-campus students, said to be common to business schools throughout the West, had not affected online learning where demand for MBAs remained strong⁸⁶.

82 Recruitment to MBA courses around the world for 2002/03 did not show evidence of reduced demand in the face of slowing economies or the aftermath of 9/11, according a report in February 2002⁸⁷. Indeed the Australian Graduate School of Management in Sydney, Leeds University, Henley Management College and the London Business School all reported that applications were significantly up on the previous year's recruitment figures.

Longitudinal trends

83 A study of graduate education in the United States, based on data collected from the *Baccalaureate and beyond longitudinal study 1993/2003*, considered characteristics related to graduate degree enrolment and completion ten years after receiving a Bachelor's degree in 1992/93⁸⁸. This found that ten years after graduating, about 40 per cent of Bachelor's degree recipients had enrolled in a graduate or first professional degree programme and, of those who continued studying, the highest level of graduate enrolment was for a Masters' degree programme (76 per cent).

Tuition fees

84 A 1998 survey for the Australian government on the source of funds for postgraduate fees found that about 66 per cent of the funds accessed by Australian students were sourced from personal savings, with employers and family members providing 16.8 per cent and 5.9 per cent respectively⁸⁹.

3 Enrolment trends

85 In this chapter, we examine statistical trends for the enrolment of taught postgraduate students⁹⁰. We have conducted our analysis in relation to three years: 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, in order to provide detailed comparisons over a six-year period, including the most recent two years for which data is available. Detailed comparisons over a longer period are difficult because of changing definitions. However, before addressing the detailed comparisons, it is worth looking at some of the longer-term trends that can be derived from the data.

Long-term trends

86 The first comprehensive statistics for the UK higher education sector were collected by HESA for the academic year 1994/95. In that year, there were 248,000 taught postgraduate students: by 2006/07, that number had risen to 440,000, an increase of 77 per cent. In 1994/95, the proportion studying full-time was 34 per cent: in 2006/07, it was 44 per cent. In 1994/05, overseas students (ie those domiciled outside the UK) made up 30 per cent of full-time enrolments: in 2006/07, they were 52 per cent.

87 In 1994/95, female students constituted 48 per cent of taught postgraduate students, both full-time and part-time. By 2006/07, female students constituted 53 per cent of full-time taught students, and 59 per cent of part-time students.

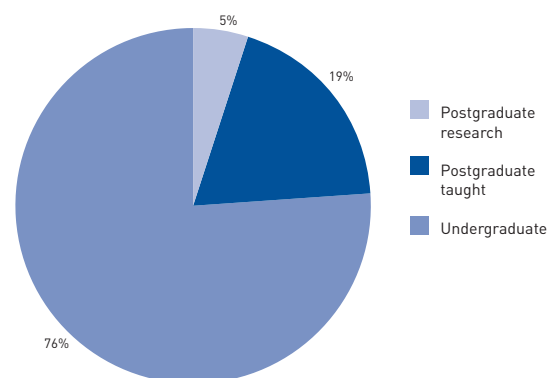
88 We turn now to more detailed comparisons over the past six years.

Student enrolments

89 We begin by looking at the overall level of enrolments⁹¹ among postgraduate taught students and their relationship with the student body as a whole.

90 In the most recent year for which data is available (2006/07) these students constituted almost 20 per cent of all students in UK higher education institutions.

Chart 1
All students by level, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Market share

91 Taught postgraduate students constituted 18.6 per cent of all higher education students, and 78.7 per cent of postgraduate students: detailed figures for each of the three reference years are shown in the following table, which also differentiates students by mode of study.

Table 1
Taught postgraduate students – market share of higher education

Academic year	Mode of study	Taught postgraduates as a percentage of all students	Taught postgraduates as a percentage of all postgraduates
2001/02	Full-time and sandwich	10.5%	71.0%
	Part-time	26.6%	87.0%
	Writing up	47.7%	48.8%
2001/02 Total		17.4%	77.2%
2005/06	Full-time and sandwich	12.1%	73.9%
	Part-time	27.2%	89.4%
	Writing up	50.0%	51.8%
2005/06 Total		18.5%	79.1%
2006/07	Full-time and sandwich	12.4%	73.9%
	Part-time	27.3%	89.6%
	Writing up	48.3%	49.4%
2006/07 Total		18.6%	78.7%

Source: HESA

92 The table shows that taught postgraduates have increased as a proportion of both the total student body and also the postgraduate student body over a six-year period, although the proportion of the postgraduate body has declined slightly in the most recent year. Table 2 shows the numbers of students by level in each of the three reference years.

Table 2
Student enrolments by level and mode, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07

Academic year	Mode of study	Level of study			Total
		Postgraduate taught	Postgraduate research	Undergraduate	
2001/02	Full-time and sandwich	132,385	53,960	1,069,210	1,255,555
	Part-time	209,715	31,395	545,920	787,030
	Writing up	20,675	21,710	975	43,360
2001/02 Total		362,775	107,065	1,616,105	2,086,075
2005/06	Full-time and sandwich	173,075	61,145	1,198,815	1,433,040
	Part-time	231,015	27,400	589,780	848,200
	Writing up	27,300	25,375	1,980	54,650
2005/06 Total		431,390	113,920	1,790,575	2,335,890
2006/07	Full-time and sandwich	179,730	63,340	1,208,645	1,451,715
	Part-time	232,630	27,045	593,310	852,985
	Writing up	27,980	28,610	1,285	57,875
2006/07 Total		440,340	118,995	1,803,240	2,362,575

Source: HESA

93 In the most recent year, there were over 440,000 students studying as taught postgraduates, compared with 363,000 five years ago – an increase of 21 per cent. Most taught postgraduate students (56 per cent) are studying part-time in the most recent year. The percentage changes over time are shown in more detail in the following table.

Table 3
Percentage changes in enrolments by level and mode

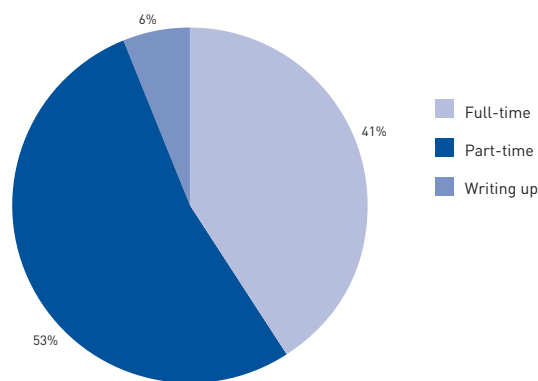
Percentage changes	Mode of study	Postgraduate taught	Postgraduate research	Undergraduate	Total
From 2001/02 to 2006/07	Full-time and sandwich	36%	17%	13%	16%
	Part-time	11%	-14%	9%	8%
	Writing up	35%	32%	32%	33%
	Total	21%	11%	12%	13%
From 2005/06 to 2006/07	Full-time and sandwich	4%	4%	1%	1%
	Part-time	1%	-1%	1%	1%
	Writing up	2%	13%	-35%	6%
	Total	2%	4%	1%	1%

Source: HESA

Study by mode

- 94 Most taught postgraduate students are studying part-time and some are in the process of writing up their dissertations. In most of the subsequent analyses in this chapter, students who are writing up their dissertations will not be separately disaggregated.
- 95 The distinction in the most recent year is shown in chart 2.

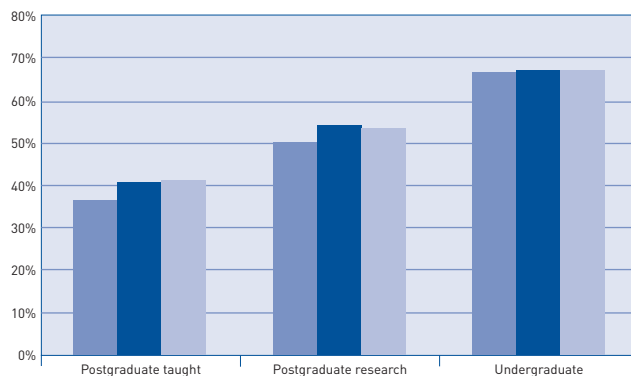
Chart 2
Taught postgraduate students by mode, 2006/07



Source: HESA

- 96 Over the past five years, there has been an increase in the proportion of students at taught postgraduate level who are studying full-time, as is shown in the following chart which compares the change over time among full-time taught students with those on research postgraduate and undergraduate programmes.

Chart 3
Percentage of students studying full time by level, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07



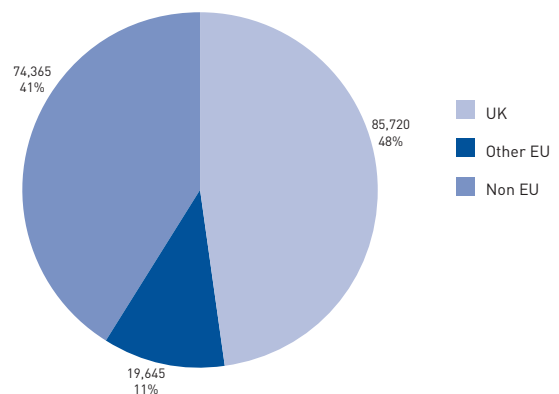
Source: HESA

- 97 The greatest percentage change recorded here, and in the table above, is a 36 per cent increase in full-time taught postgraduate students, over the last five years. The source of this increase is shown in the following paragraphs.

Domicile

- 98 UK-domiciled students are a minority among full-time taught postgraduate students. The split of full-time taught students by domicile in the most recent year is shown in the following chart.

Chart 4
Enrolments on full-time taught postgraduate courses by domicile, 2006/07



Source: HESA

- 99 However, this is a comparatively recent phenomenon: five years ago, UK-domiciled students comprised 57 per cent of all full-time taught postgraduate students. The following table shows the change over time.

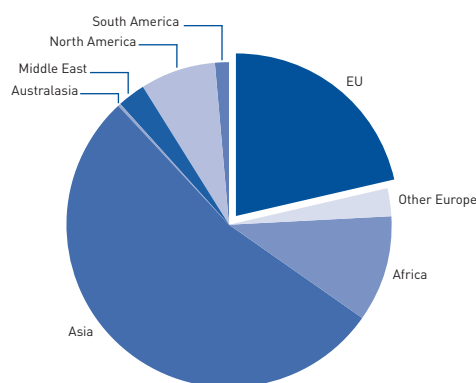
Table 4
Full-time enrolments by domicile, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07

Domicile	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change, 2001/02 to 2006/07
UK	75,915	85,950	85,720	13%
Other EU	17,605	19,895	19,645	12%
Non EU	38,865	67,230	74,365	91%
Total	132,385	173,075	179,730	36%
<i>Percentage UK-domiciled</i>	<i>57%</i>	<i>50%</i>	<i>48%</i>	

Source: HESA

100 The major change in enrolments on taught postgraduate courses is the very large increase in students from countries outside the EU, whose numbers have nearly doubled in the last five years. The distribution by region of the world in the most recent year is shown in the following chart.

Chart 5
Non-UK taught postgraduate students by region of domicile, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Within the Asia region, China and India overshadow other countries in terms of the number of enrolments at taught postgraduate level.

Qualification aims

101 We now analyse taught postgraduate students' qualification aims. There are essentially eight different qualification aims which make up this sector. They are:

- doctorate degree not mainly by research – such as professional doctorates, for example. Doctor of Education;
- Masters' degree not mainly by research – including MBA;
- postgraduate Bachelor's degree not mainly by research – a small but growing group;
- postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) not mainly by research – this group perhaps overlaps with the following one;
- professional qualification at postgraduate level (not PGCE) with or without academic qualification;
- postgraduate certificate of education (PGCE)⁹² – the professional qualification for teachers;
- institutional postgraduate credit which may be counted towards other qualifications;
- no formal postgraduate qualification – this is a declining subset which is a hangover from earlier data definitions.

102 The analysis of enrolments in each of these categories is shown in the following table, together with the percentage changes over one and five years.

Table 5

Enrolments of taught postgraduate students by qualification aim, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, and percentage changes

Qualification aim	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change 2001/02 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2005/06 to 2006/07
Doctorate degree not mainly by research	1,650	2,360	2,480	50%	5%
Masters' degree not mainly by research	212,335	276,960	287,245	35%	4%
Postgraduate Bachelor's degree not mainly by research	525	1,270	1,355	157%	7%
Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) not mainly by research	78,370	83,305	83,170	6%	0%
Professional qualification at postgraduate level (not PGCE) with or without academic qualification	13,135	12,565	11,260	-14%	-10%
PGCE	29,795	38,435	37,140	25%	-3%
Institutional postgraduate credit which may be counted towards other qualifications	24,295	13,385	15,370	-37%	15%
No formal postgraduate qualification (advanced or higher education)	2,675	3,155	2,005	-25%	-36%
Total	362,780	431,435	440,030	21%	2%

Source: HESA

103 Masters' degrees constitute significantly more than half of the taught postgraduate sector, and postgraduate diplomas and certificates also constitute a significant proportion. Table 5 will be disaggregated by mode in the following two tables.

Table 6

Enrolments of full-time taught postgraduate students by qualification aim, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, and percentage changes

Qualification aim	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change 2001/02 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2005/06 to 2006/07
Doctorate degree not mainly by research	625	1,010	1,125	80%	11%
Masters' degree not mainly by research	87,990	123,555	131,735	50%	7%
Postgraduate Bachelor's degree not mainly by research	230	570	680	197%	19%
Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) not mainly by research	15,720	13,585	13,285	-15%	-2%
Professional qualification at postgraduate level (not PGCE) with or without academic qualification	2,105	1,990	1,995	-5%	0%
Ordinary PGCE	24,565	30,240	29,530	20%	-2%
Institutional postgraduate credit which may be counted towards other qualifications	345	580	595	74%	3%
No formal postgraduate qualification (advanced or higher education)	800	1,555	635	-21%	-59%
Total	132,385	173,075	179,580	36%	4%

Source: HESA

Table 7

Enrolments of part-time taught postgraduate students by qualification aim, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, and percentage changes

Qualification aim	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change 2001/02 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2005/06 to 2006/07
Doctorate degree not mainly by research	995	1,325	1,275	28%	-4%
Masters' degree not mainly by research	106,175	129,210	131,110	23%	1%
Postgraduate Bachelor's degree not mainly by research	280	700	670	138%	-4%
Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) not mainly by research	60,335	67,385	66,970	11%	-1%
Professional qualification at postgraduate level (not PGCE) with or without academic qualification	10,970	10,410	9,135	-17%	-12%
Ordinary PGCE	5,225	8,000	7,545	44%	-6%
Institutional postgraduate credit which may be counted towards other qualifications	23,910	12,435	14,420	-40%	16%
No formal postgraduate qualification (advanced or higher education)	1,820	1,555	1,315	-28%	-15%
Total	209,715	231,015	232,440	11%	1%

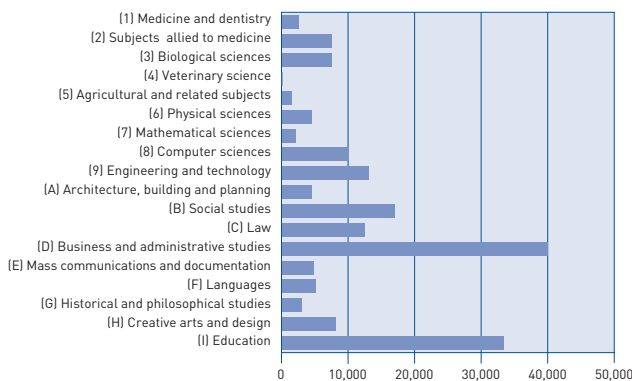
Source: HESA

Subjects of study

104 The following charts show, separately for full-time and part-time students, the numbers enrolled in each of the major subject areas.

Chart 6

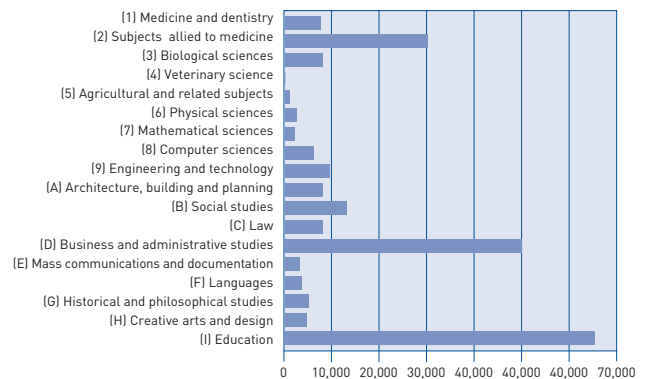
Enrolments of full-time taught postgraduate students by subject area, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Chart 7

Enrolments of part-time taught postgraduate students by subject area, 2006/07



Source: HESA

105 Among both full-time and part-time students, enrolments in two subject areas (education and business and administrative studies) dominate the chart and far exceed those in any other subject area.

106 Among full-time students, the enrolments in education are primarily students following Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) courses, as an initial teaching qualification. Among the part-time students, the enrolments in education are largely at Masters' degree level, as professional updating. This is also the case with both full-time and part-time enrolments in business and administrative studies, ie courses leading either directly or indirectly to an MBA qualification.

107 Comparisons over time are complicated both by changes in the definitions used in national data collection and also by a change in reporting practice by one large institution⁹³. Among the effects of these changes, the biological sciences subject area has been increased by the inclusion of psychology courses which were previously included within social studies.

108 Subject to these caveats, a time series analysis of the enrolments by subject area on full-time and part-time taught postgraduate programmes is shown in the following two tables.

Table 8

Enrolments of full-time taught postgraduate students by subject areas, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, and percentage changes

	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change 2001/02 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2005/06 to 2006/07
(1) Medicine and dentistry	2,070	2,345	2,355	14%	0%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	3,225	6,320	7,540	134%	19%
(3) Biological sciences	3,765	6,605	7,085	88%	7%
(4) Veterinary science	175	200	255	47%	28%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	935	1,035	1,005	7%	-3%
(6) Physical sciences	3,180	4,560	4,690	47%	3%
(7) Mathematical sciences	875	1,385	1,490	70%	7%
(8) Computer science	11,895	9,725	9,915	-17%	2%
(9) Engineering and technology	9,160	12,310	13,345	46%	8%
(A) Architecture, building and planning	3,950	4,685	4,585	16%	-2%
(B) Social studies	13,140	17,170	17,300	32%	1%
(C) Law	10,425	12,245	12,200	17%	0%
(D) Business and administrative studies	24,565	37,355	40,660	66%	9%
(E) Mass communications and documentation	3,755	5,000	5,125	36%	3%
(F) Languages	4,455	5,950	5,980	34%	0%
(G) Historical and philosophical studies	2,885	3,680	3,840	33%	4%
(H) Creative arts and design	5,980	7,800	8,690	45%	11%
(I) Education	27,350	34,690	33,635	23%	-3%

Source: HESA

Table 9

Enrolments of part-time taught postgraduate students by subject areas, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07, and percentage changes

	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	Percentage change 2001/02 to 2006/07	Percentage change 2005/06 to 2006/07
(1) Medicine and dentistry	4,650	6,170	7,230	55%	17%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	20,635	31,885	30,930	50%	-3%
(3) Biological sciences	4,275	8,035	8,250	93%	3%
(4) Veterinary science	70	140	180	156%	30%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	925	830	845	-8%	2%
(6) Physical sciences	1,970	2,650	2,780	41%	5%
(7) Mathematical sciences	1,260	1,505	1,495	18%	-1%
(8) Computer science	6,900	6,450	6,045	-12%	-6%
(9) Engineering and technology	9,360	9,665	9,760	4%	1%
(A) Architecture, building and planning	6,270	7,945	8,220	31%	3%
(B) Social studies	13,560	14,330	13,675	1%	-5%
(C) Law	6,765	8,150	8,140	20%	0%
(D) Business and administrative studies	48,070	52,325	50,345	5%	-4%
(E) Mass communications and documentation	3,160	3,250	3,290	4%	1%
(F) Languages	3,270	3,520	3,635	11%	3%
(G) Historical and philosophical studies	4,350	5,295	5,350	23%	1%
(H) Creative arts and design	3,450	4,570	4,785	39%	5%
(I) Education	51,735	62,580	65,380	26%	4%

Source: HESA

109 The figures show that enrolments in the two major subject areas of education and business and administrative studies amount to more than 40 per cent of full-time enrolments and more than 50 per cent of part-time enrolments. Proportionately, these two areas are increasing their dominance among full-time students, but dropping slightly among part-time students as enrolments in subjects allied to medicine increase – again, as in-service updating courses. Major changes over time are seen also in full-time language courses, part-time courses in creative arts and design and in architecture, building and planning and (perhaps counter-intuitively) in physical sciences.

Domiciles, qualification aims and subjects

- 110 Having noted the trends in relation to enrolments by domicile, qualification aims and subjects, we now consider the relationship between these.
- 111 The following table shows the enrolments of full-time students in 2006/07 by qualification aim and broad domicile.

Table 10

Enrolments of full-time taught postgraduate students by qualification aim and broad domicile, 2006/07

Qualification aim	UK	%	Other EU	%	Non-EU	%	Total
Doctorate degree not mainly by research	1,065	1%	30	0%	30	0%	1,125
Masters' degree not mainly by research	44,135	51%	17,345	88%	70,255	94%	131,735
Postgraduate Bachelor's degree not mainly by research	285	0%	40	0%	355	0%	680
Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE) not mainly by research	9,705	11%	840	4%	2,740	4%	13,285
Professional qualification at postgraduate level (not PGCE) with or without academic qualification	1,705	2%	110	1%	185	0%	1,995
Ordinary PGCE	28,235	33%	1,005	5%	290	0%	29,530
Institutional postgraduate credit	205	0%	120	1%	270	0%	595
No formal postgraduate qualification (advanced or higher education)	235	0%	160	1%	240	0%	635
Total	85,570	100%	19,645	100%	74,365	100%	179,580

Source: HESA

112 It can be seen that, in contrast to UK-domiciled students, those domiciled outside the UK are very heavily weighted towards taught Masters' degrees: these constitute 94 per cent of students from outside the EU, and 88 per cent of those domiciled in other EU countries (and note that domicile is not, of course, an indicator of nationality – those domiciled in other EU countries include significant numbers of UK nationals).

113 We now look at the differences in subject areas within which students are enrolled at Masters' degree level. The following table shows these figures in the most recent year.

Table 11

Enrolments among full-time students of taught Masters' courses, by domicile, 2006/07

Subject area	UK	Other EU	Non-EU	Total	% other EU	% non EU	% non UK
(1) Medicine and dentistry	865	290	830	1,985	14.5%	41.9%	56.4%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	2,645	390	1,980	5,020	7.8%	39.5%	47.3%
(3) Biological sciences	3,300	725	1,760	5,790	12.6%	30.4%	43.0%
(4) Veterinary science	65	15	25	110	13.0%	25.0%	38.0%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	390	195	350	935	20.9%	37.2%	58.1%
(6) Physical sciences	2,465	550	1,460	4,480	12.3%	32.6%	44.9%
(7) Mathematical sciences	480	230	710	1,425	16.3%	50.0%	66.3%
(8) Computer science	2,430	970	6,095	9,495	10.2%	64.2%	74.4%
(9) Engineering and technology	2,470	2,160	7,895	12,525	17.3%	63.0%	80.3%
(A) Architecture, building and planning	1,540	375	1,405	3,320	11.2%	42.4%	53.6%
(B) Social studies	7,660	2,175	6,540	16,375	13.3%	39.9%	53.2%
(C) Law	1,855	1,280	3,230	6,370	20.1%	50.7%	70.8%
(D) Business and administrative studies	6,405	4,225	28,525	39,160	10.8%	72.8%	83.6%
(E) Mass communications and documentation	2,145	560	1,905	4,610	12.1%	41.4%	53.5%
(F) Languages	2,480	955	2,120	5,560	17.2%	38.2%	55.4%
(G) Historical and philosophical studies	2,205	375	1,095	3,675	10.2%	29.8%	40.0%
(H) Creative arts and design	3,880	1,225	2,675	7,780	15.7%	34.4%	50.1%
(I) Education	840	640	1,640	3,115	20.5%	52.6%	73.1%
Total	44,135	17,345	70,255	131,735	13.2%	53.3%	66.5%

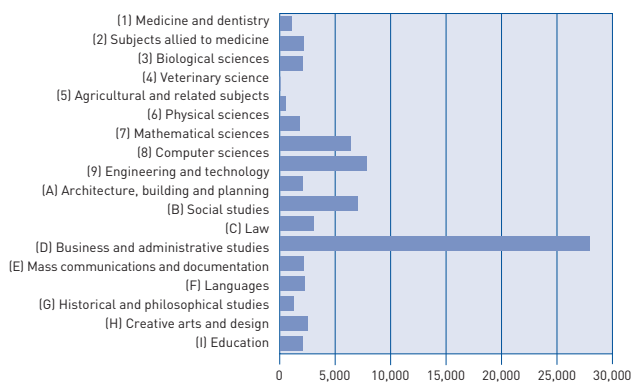
Source: HESA

114 Particularly notable here is the very high level of enrolments of non-UK students in business and administrative studies (including MBAs) and in engineering and technology, both exceeding 80 per cent of the total.

115 In the light of this table it is instructive to replicate the earlier charts, showing the enrolments of students from outside the EU who constitute most of all students at Masters' level.

Chart 8

International students enrolled on taught Masters' degrees, by subject area, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Previous qualifications

116 By definition, one would expect that entrants to taught postgraduate courses would hold graduate qualifications at the point of entry. The relevant data is set out in the following paragraphs. Because of the diversity of qualifications at taught postgraduate level, the analysis is limited to the three major qualification aims, Masters' degrees, PGCEs and other postgraduate diplomas and certificates.

117 The previous qualifications of all entrants to taught postgraduate courses in 2006/07 are summarised in the following table.

Table 12

Highest qualification on entry of first-year taught postgraduate students, 2006/07

Highest qualification on entry	Qualification aim		
	Masters' degree	PGCE	Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE)
Postgraduate qualification	13%	9%	24%
First degree or equivalent	72%	85%	49%
Other qualification above level 3	5%	1%	9%
Other	6%	2%	8%
Not known	5%	3%	10%

Source: HESA

118 In summary, 85 per cent of entrants to taught Masters' courses are known to hold a graduate qualification, compared with 94 per cent of entrants to PGCE courses. Only 73 per cent of entrants to other postgraduate certificates and diplomas are known to hold a graduate qualification, although there is a high level of unknowns.

119 Again it is useful to disaggregate the figures by mode of study, as in the following two tables.

Table 13

Highest qualification on entry of first-year full-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07

Highest qualification on entry	Qualification aim		
	Masters' degree	PGCE	Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE)
Postgraduate qualification	7%	8%	14%
First degree or equivalent	80%	87%	70%
Other qualification above level 3	2%	1%	3%
Other	6%	2%	9%
Not known	4%	3%	4%

Source: HESA

Table 14

Highest qualification on entry of first-year part-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07

Highest qualification on entry	Masters' degree	PGCE	Postgraduate diploma or certificate (not PGCE)
Postgraduate qualification	23%	17%	27%
First degree or equivalent	55%	74%	43%
Other qualification above level 3	9%	3%	11%
Other	6%	3%	7%
Not known	7%	2%	12%

Source: HESA

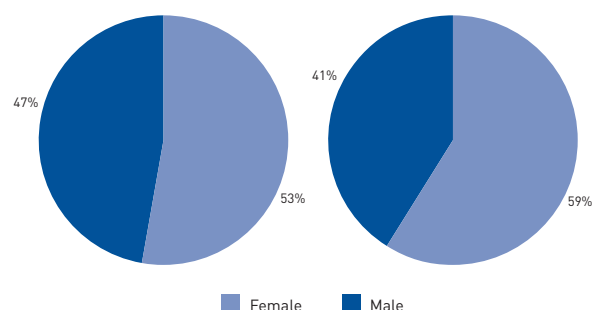
120 Here we see that although PGCE graduate entrants are above 90 per cent in both modes, the graduate entrants to part-time Masters' courses are below 80 per cent, and in the case of postgraduate diplomas and certificates are approximately 70 per cent. The figures show the use of discretion by institutions in admitting students to postgraduate courses on the basis of experience rather than defined qualifications.

Gender and age

121 We now look at some of the personal characteristics of taught postgraduate students, beginning with gender. Female students predominate among these students, and especially among part-time students, as the following figures show.

Chart 9

Breakdown by gender of full-time and part-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



Source: HESA

122 As table 15 shows, the proportion of female students has increased consistently over the last five years.

Table 15

Gender of taught postgraduate students, by mode, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07

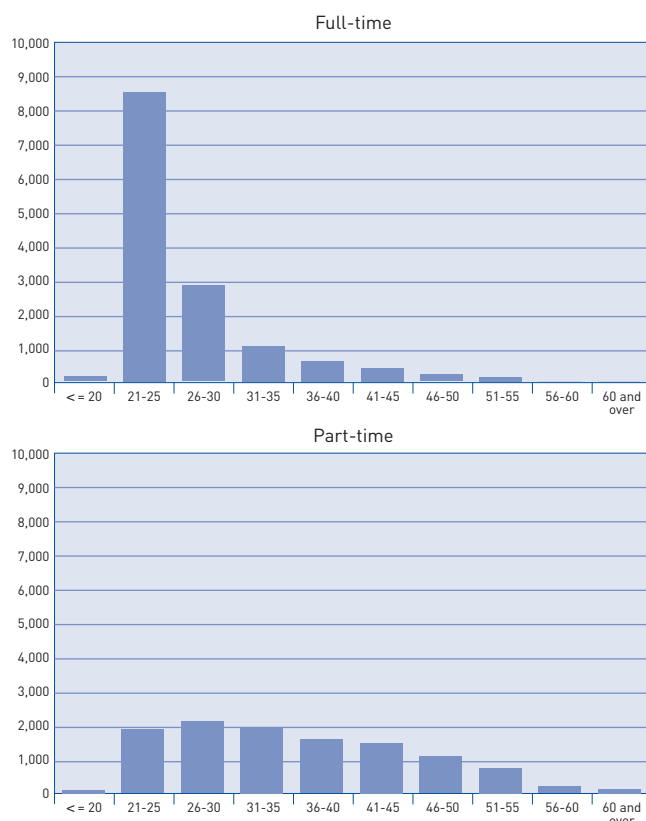
Academic year	Mode of study	Female	Male	Total	Percentage female
2001/02	Full-time and sandwich	69,720	62,665	132,385	52.7%
	Part-time	118,305	91,405	209,715	56.4%
2001/02 Total		188,030	154,070	342,100	55.0%
2005/06	Full-time and sandwich	92,090	80,990	173,075	53.2%
	Part-time	134,765	96,250	231,015	58.3%
2005/06 Total		226,850	177,240	404,090	56.1%
2006/07	Full-time and sandwich	95,105	84,625	179,730	52.9%
	Part-time	136,330	96,295	232,630	58.6%
2006/07 Total		231,440	180,920	412,360	56.1%

Source: HESA

123 Turning now to the age of students (at the point of entry) we see in the following figures the distribution of new taught postgraduate students in the most recent year, set out in five-year age bands.

Chart 10

Breakdown by age of full-time and part-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



Source: HESA

124 Very different patterns are evident here, with entrants to full-time taught postgraduate programmes plainly concentrated in the younger age ranges, and especially the 21–25 age range, ie entry is immediately after the completion of an undergraduate degree. Among part-time entrants, on the other hand, there is a fairly even spread across all age ranges up to the age of 50, with a modest peak in the late 20s, demonstrating the role of part-time postgraduate courses in lifelong learning and the updating of professional skills.

125 The trend over time is shown in the following table, from which it can be seen that there has been a noticeable shift towards younger entrants to taught postgraduate courses over the last five years.

Table 16

Percentage distribution of taught postgraduate students, by mode and age, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07

Age	Full-time students			Part-time students		
	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07	2001/02	2005/06	2006/07
←=20	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
21-25	58%	62%	62%	14%	16%	16%
26-30	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	21%
31-35	9%	8%	8%	18%	17%	16%
36-40	5%	4%	4%	16%	15%	15%
41-45	3%	3%	3%	14%	13%	13%
46-50	1%	1%	1%	10%	10%	10%
51-55	1%	1%	1%	5%	6%	5%
56-60	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
60 and over	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: HESA

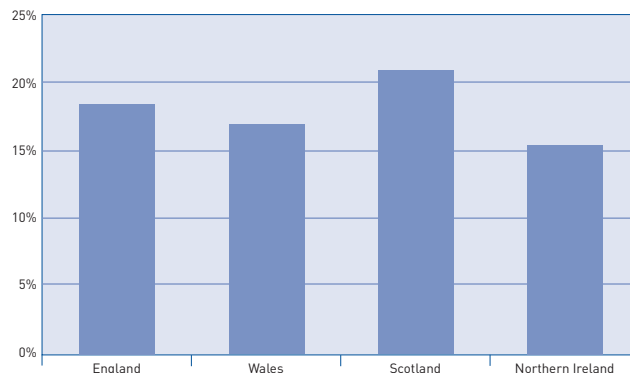
Enrolments by institution and UK country

126 Overall in the most recent year, taught postgraduate enrolments constituted 18.6 per cent of all higher education students. There are of course significant differences both between the four countries of the UK, and also between the institutions within them.

127 The following chart illustrates the differences by country, from which it can be seen that Scotland and England show markedly higher proportions of higher education students within the postgraduate taught category than Wales and Northern Ireland.

Chart 11

Taught postgraduate students – market share of higher education students by UK country of institution, 2006/07

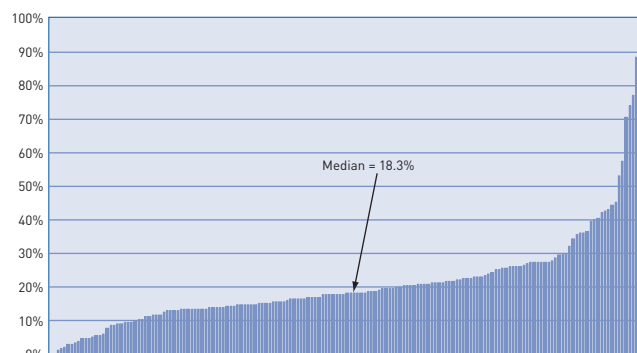


Source: HESA

128 At the level of individual institutions, there is a very wide range of enrolments of taught postgraduate students: while the median figure is again a little over 18 per cent there are several which report less than 1 per cent of their students following taught courses while several others show figures over 70 per cent. The latter include specialist education providers, and also a number of specialist providers in science and in the creative arts. The diversity of the sector in this respect is illustrated in chart 12.

Chart 12

Institutional differentiation – spread of taught postgraduate students



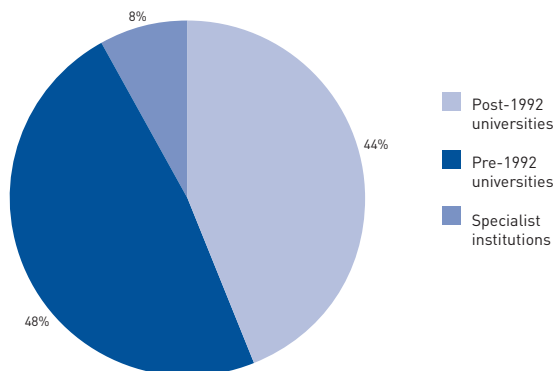
Source: HESA

129 A more detailed analysis by type of institution is given in the following charts. These differentiate the sector's institutions into three groups:

- the pre-1992 universities;
- the post-1992 universities, also including general higher education colleges and institutes of higher education; and
- the specialist institutions, including those that specialise in particular subject areas (for example, medicine, creative and performing arts) and also those that specialise in particular modes or levels of study.

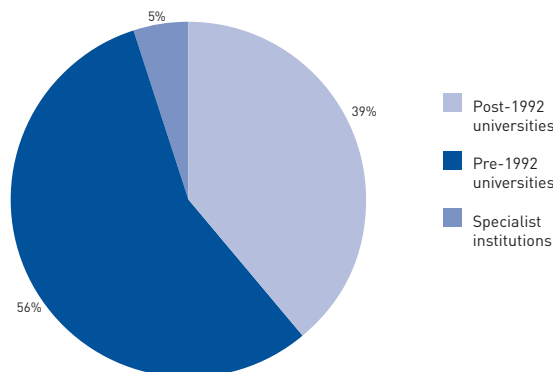
130 The charts show first the differences in relation to all taught postgraduate students, and then show the differences in relation to full-time and part-time students.

Chart 13
Institutional differentiation – all taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



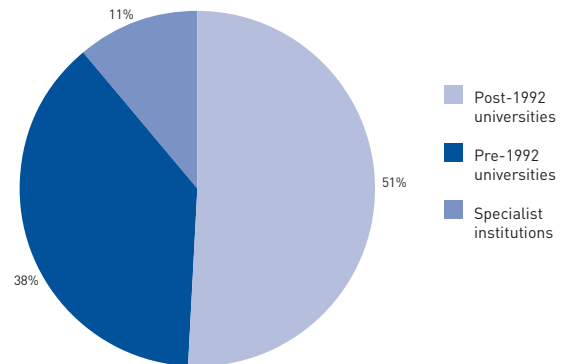
Source: HESA

Chart 14
Institutional differentiation – full-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Chart 15
Institutional differentiation – part-time taught postgraduate students, 2006/07

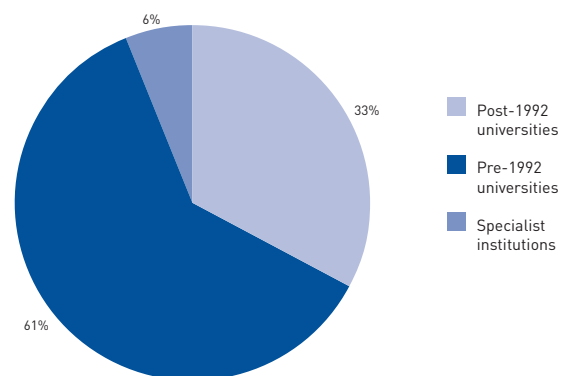


Source: HESA

131 These charts show that the older universities generally recruit slightly more taught postgraduate students than the newer ones, and that is especially true among full-time students. However, the post-1992 universities recruit a greater proportion of part-time taught students.

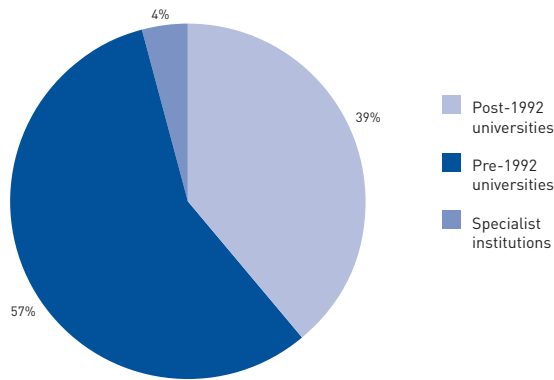
132 A further analysis of the data shows the extent to which institutions are recruiting students from outside the UK, as illustrated in the following two charts.

Chart 16
Institutional differentiation – other EU taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



Source: HESA

Chart 17
Institutional differentiation – non-EU taught postgraduate students, 2006/07



Source: HESA

133 In both of these analyses, we see that the pre-1992 universities enrol significantly more non-UK taught postgraduate students than other institutions.

Integrated Masters' degrees

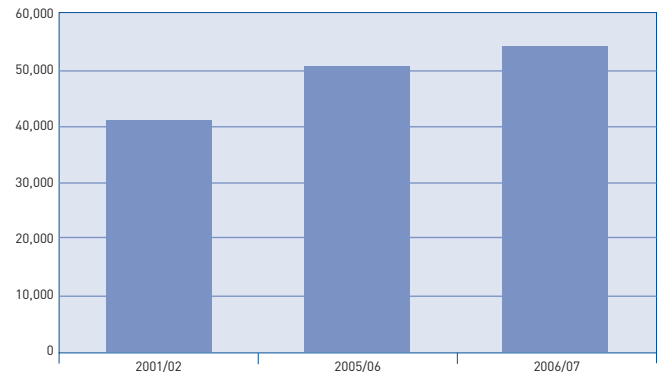
134 In addition to taught postgraduate degrees, there are some 'enhanced first degrees' or integrated Masters' degrees which require one year's study in addition to a normal undergraduate Bachelor's degree⁹⁴.

135 While the entry to these courses is through the undergraduate process, and the fees regime is the undergraduate one, they are expected to be at a level demonstrably above that of a Bachelors degree with honours⁹⁵.

136 In 2006/07 there were in total some 53,000 students following these programmes, virtually all on a full-time basis. They constituted 3 per cent of the undergraduate population and 4.4 per cent of the full-time undergraduate population.

137 Enrolments on these courses have increased by 30 per cent since 2001/02: chart 18 illustrates the growth.

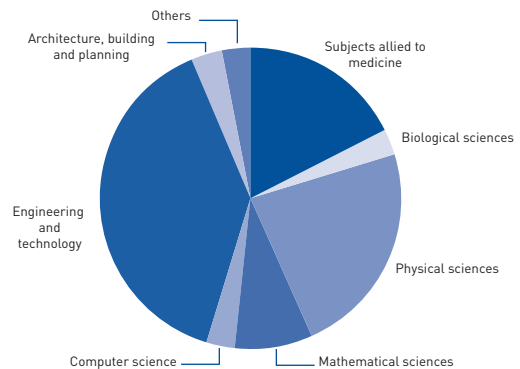
Chart 18
Enrolments on integrated Masters' degrees, 2001/02, 2005/06 and 2006/07



Source: HESA

138 The subject orientation of these courses – as was intended at their inception – is predominantly scientific and technological. The following chart shows the distribution of students by subject area in the most recent year.

Chart 19
Integrated Masters' degree students by subject area, 2006/07



Source: HESA

139 Some 64 per cent of all student enrolments on these courses were in physical sciences and engineering and technology, and virtually all the rest were in other aspects of science and technology.

- 140 Unlike postgraduate degrees, these integrated Masters' degrees are very largely taken by UK residents: 84 per cent of the students were UK-domiciled in 2006/07. They are also limited to a comparatively small number of institutions: more than half the students in 2006/07 were enrolled in just 11 institutions, all but one of which is in England.
- 141 Given the subject areas which predominate here, it is not surprising that the gender balance differs from that of taught postgraduate courses. In 2006/07 only 31 per cent of students on these programmes were female, up from 30 per cent in 2001/02.

- 142 In contrast to the detailed information about student enrolments reported in the previous chapter, it is not possible to give a financial overview of the taught postgraduate sector. This is both because the HESA financial record collects much less information than does the student record and because it is not possible to disaggregate appropriately the information that is collected. So, for example, income related to taught postgraduate students is not separated from other teaching and learning activity.
- 143 The main sources of income for institutions to support this provision are from funding council grants (including those from central government bodies that support health education and teacher education where these activities are not funded by the national higher education funding council), and from tuition fees. In the case of qualifying training for public sector employment in health, social work and teacher education, tuition fees are met from public funds. Under certain circumstances tuition fees may be wholly or partly met from bursary or scholarship schemes. National schemes operate in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Otherwise students are dependent on any schemes that may be offered by individual institutions, and these may be restricted to certain students or certain subject disciplines or specific programmes.

Funding council allocations

- 144 The main support for taught postgraduate provision from public funds is through the funding council grant to higher education institutions. By its very nature the idea of a 'block grant' allocation means that funding covers not only undergraduate but also taught postgraduate provision. We therefore cannot calculate the total grant funding that is provided by the funding councils in support of taught postgraduate provision. Similarly, because institutions are given flexibility in how they use their 'block grant', we cannot know what part of the allocation received by an institution is spent on taught postgraduates rather than undergraduate provision.
- 145 Under the different teaching funding methodologies employed by the funding councils⁹⁶, the grant attributed to full-time taught postgraduate provision is less in cash terms than its undergraduate equivalent. Indeed, for certain subjects in England and Northern Ireland the grant calculations assume that this provision will operate on a 'fees only' basis.

Scholarships and bursaries

- 146 The only mandatory funding available to taught postgraduate students across the UK is for approved professional training in teaching, social work and nursing. For these students bursary support is available (providing help with fees and maintenance costs), usually for both full-time and part-time students.
- 147 Both Scotland and Northern Ireland provide discretionary awards to limited numbers of full-time students either domiciled or wishing to study in the respective country. Each scheme has specific conditions about the range of eligible subjects and qualifications and/or the length of time for which support is provided⁹⁷. No equivalent scheme exists in either England or Wales.
- 148 Other awards open to taught postgraduate students may be offered by individual institutions. These may be awarded to particular students according to their previous study achievements or to encourage them to follow certain subjects or programmes. Some may be sponsored by companies or charities but the coverage and value of awards offered by institutions vary so much that it is not easy to quantify the scope and value of these awards for the sector as a whole. There is no comprehensive listing of taught postgraduate institutional awards as there is for undergraduate awards, which are listed on the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) website⁹⁸. Many institutions combine the scholarship and bursary awards they offer for taught and research postgraduates, so that the exact offering in support of taught programmes is not always defined and may change from year to year.
- 149 It appears that most taught postgraduate students support themselves or draw on a combination of personal savings, earnings, small grants and bursaries, and loans⁹⁹. In this context, part-time study may appear to be more financially attractive to applicants, as they are able to spread the cost of their study over a longer period.

Tuition fees

- 150 There is a wide variation in the level of full-time and part-time taught postgraduate tuition fees charged by institutions, and within institutions between subjects, since these fees are not regulated by government. Individual institutions publish information about fee levels (usually lower for home and EU students than for international students) and this is normally available on their websites.
- 151 There is no official listing of taught postgraduate fees but some information is published on the *Guardian* website¹⁰⁰. This reports figures from Mike Reddin's database of tuition fees, which is based on an annual survey of UK institutions¹⁰¹. It covers fees for home/EU students and international students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (for one-year taught MA/MSc courses including full-time MBA courses). Sometimes a range of prices is listed but usually there is one price for all home/EU students and three for international students on Masters' programmes. The latter distinguish between science or laboratory-based subjects, full-time MBAs, and all other subjects¹⁰².
- 152 Tuition fees are principally met by the students themselves but in certain circumstances they may be paid by employers, including public sector employers. We do not know the overall contribution that employers make to the cost of tuition fees for their employees or indeed the total taught postgraduate fee income that institutions receive.
- 153 In the absence of comprehensive data, a snapshot of the position across the UK in a single year would help in the assessment of the longer-term financial sustainability of this provision. This should identify the total income institutions receive from these fees and the source of that income, whether from individual students, from the public purse or from employers. Distinguishing between the total income received from home and EU students and from international students would also be important.
- 154 Although this information is not currently available from the HESA financial record, minor modifications to the return should make this possible. Such modifications to the financial record should make it possible to calculate sector-wide taught postgraduate income figures.

Public funding vs private contributions

- 155 The impact of devolution means that public funding support for taught postgraduate provision across the four countries of the UK varies significantly. This affects both the funding provided within institutions' block grant payments from the funding councils and the funding made available for student support¹⁰³.
- 156 Compared with undergraduate provision (and especially full-time undergraduate provision) or with research postgraduate provision, the total public funding support offered to taught postgraduates is extremely limited. We have noted above the more limited public funding support offered to institutions under the various teaching funding methodologies operated by the funding councils. The distinction is also especially marked in terms of the limited support offered to taught postgraduate students (both full-time and part-time). Not only do they have limited access to state-funded scholarships, but their entitlement to other forms of statutory or discretionary support in the form of hardship funding is also extremely limited¹⁰⁴.
- 157 The support provided to taught postgraduate students in the form of scholarships is similarly difficult to disentangle, because funds for postgraduate study tend to be considered together. The most significant source of such funding for postgraduate students from the public purse, that provided by the research councils, is by definition available for few students on taught postgraduate programmes¹⁰⁵.
- 158 Additional complications are caused by the variety of bursary schemes provided by higher education institutions for their postgraduate students. Many may be open to both research and taught postgraduates, so precise allocations between these two groups are not known and may not remain constant from year to year¹⁰⁶. The funding for these schemes comes from a variety of sources too, including the research councils, industry, charities and individual bequests as well as institutions' own funds.

- 159 Unlike undergraduates, taught postgraduate students do not have access to subsidised student loans, although they can take out career development loans through certain high street banks. These loans include a small element of public subsidy through the repayment holiday that the loan offers during the period of study. They are mortgage-style loans and there is no equivalent to the income contingent repayment loans available to full-time undergraduate students. Only in Scotland are there income contingent loans for taught postgraduate students.
- 160 We have noted above that it is not possible to disaggregate information about institutions' tuition fee income from taught postgraduate students. It is therefore not possible from published data to identify what tuition fee income is received from public sector employers (specifically to support students who will be seeking employment as teachers, social workers or health professionals).

161 Among the uncertainties facing taught postgraduate provision over the next few years, we have identified here those we anticipate will be most important.

Student demand

162 As reported above in the chapter on UK recruitment trends¹⁰⁷, the number of taught postgraduate students in the UK has increased by 77 per cent in the past 11 years. A key question for the sector must be whether this level of recruitment can be sustained during the more difficult climate that is anticipated over the next 10 years.

163 Demand-based projections for postgraduate provision (both full-time and part-time) were considered among the demographic projections for the sector published recently by Universities UK¹⁰⁸. Based on research conducted before the onset of the credit crunch, the report suggests that overall postgraduate numbers will show an increase of some 2.6 per cent for full-time students and of 1.7 per cent for part-time students between 2005/06 and 2026/27. These figures suggest an increase of some 6,100 full-time and 4,400 part-time postgraduate students¹⁰⁹. The authors note that there are a number of key uncertainties about demand from UK students for taught postgraduate programmes. Their principal concerns include the level of demand in the economy for the highest level skills and the availability of financial support from employers or from elsewhere, especially as graduates emerge with increased amounts of student debt¹¹⁰.

164 We have noted above the very wide variation in the enrolments of taught postgraduate students between institutions in the UK¹¹¹. Although the median figure is a little over 18 per cent (and at some institutions these students are less than 1 per cent of all students), several have more than 70 per cent of their students on such programmes.

165 Even maintaining current market share will be a challenge at a time when full-time undergraduate numbers are expected to fall across the UK. Although a number of universities apparently hope to maintain total student numbers through increasing the proportion of taught postgraduate students they recruit, this cannot be a solution open to many institutions. We anticipate a number of challenges facing the three key segments that comprise the taught postgraduate market in the UK.

UK student demand

166 As we have noted, the number of UK-domiciled students on full-time taught postgraduate programmes has increased by 13 per cent (or 9,800 students) over the past five years¹¹². However, the very significant rise in numbers of international students means that UK-domiciled students now represent only 48 per cent of all full-time taught postgraduate students¹¹³. We have looked in some detail at the relationship between domicile, subject of study and qualification aim and identified different patterns of demand between the full-time and part-time markets¹¹⁴. While most international students and students from other EU countries taking taught postgraduate courses in the UK predominantly study on a full-time basis, the part-time taught market is of special significance for UK-domiciled students as most taught postgraduates (56 per cent) are studying part time¹¹⁵.

167 A report on demographic projections noted in 2008 that demand from UK-domiciled students for taught postgraduate provision 'is likely to be driven primarily by the requirements of the employment market', including the willingness of employers to meet the study costs of their employees. It also commented that the fees for taught Masters' programmes 'tend to be so high ... that individuals without employer support will probably need to borrow commercially (on top of their existing student loans) to meet the cost of the fees'¹¹⁶.

168 Tentative baseline demographic projections of full-time home and EU postgraduate enrolments in UK institutions between 2005/06 and 2026/27 suggest that there will be a rise of some 2.5 per cent (or some 4,000 students). However, reflecting the potential impact of the three scenarios modelled in the second volume of the future size and shape report, there could be either an increase or a decrease from the full-time baseline of some 10 per cent (or 11,000 students)¹¹⁷. On the baseline demographic projection, home and EU part-time postgraduate numbers are estimated to rise by 3 per cent to 218,900 between 2005/06 and 2026/27.¹¹⁸

169 The report notes that the biggest uncertainty for part-time postgraduate demand arises from the decision of the Westminster government to cease supporting students in England studying an equivalent or lower qualification to one that they already hold. (These hitherto represented a significant proportion of home/EU part-time postgraduate students.) The report concludes that the overall impact of this loss of public support is likely to reduce the central demographic projection by some 10,000 part-time postgraduate students¹¹⁹.

170 It is important to note that much of the analysis underpinning this report was completed in 2007. In the current economic climate, with rising unemployment and banks restricting credit facilities for small businesses, we expect that employers will become more reluctant to support staff taking longer, accredited external training. Similarly employees without access to personal loan facilities in a less secure job market may not find the prospect of self-supported study appealing. Consequently demand for part-time taught postgraduate study is likely to fall at least in the short term.

International student demand

171 Most critical to the picture of overall demand for UK postgraduate education is that from international students, who currently make up 41 per cent of all full-time students on taught programmes¹²⁰. This has become a major market for many UK institutions and the number of international taught postgraduate students studying in the UK has nearly doubled in the last five years¹²¹. The extent to which institutions are able to maintain their current international taught postgraduate student numbers will depend on a number of uncertain factors including: the continued high reputation of UK higher education; the development of domestic higher education in the countries mainly concerned (especially China and India); and the UK's ability to compete in 'an increasingly tight global student market'¹²².

172 Other circumstances will also affect the international attractiveness of the UK as a place to study. Global trends such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions or fear of international terrorism may encourage more graduates to study in their home countries. The current economic crisis is likely to have a significant impact worldwide on the availability of funding for postgraduate students hoping to study abroad. UK fee levels and maintenance costs may appear to be less attractive relative to other countries. The availability of web-based distance learning is already changing delivery patterns for taught postgraduate provision; we might expect reductions in the element of face-to-face teaching that institutions offer on taught programmes which presently enrol full-time international students and command premium fees.

EU student demand

173 Demand for taught postgraduate programmes from students in other countries of the EU is another significant market for UK institutions. Currently almost 20,000 students, or 11 per cent of all enrolments, are domiciled in member states of the EU other than the UK¹²³. Demographic projections for the numbers of young people across the EU member states are at least as challenging as those for the UK.

174 Over the next 20 years the population of all EU countries aged 18–20 is projected to fall by 14 per cent¹²⁴. In only four member states is the projected change in the population aged 18 expected to be positive. For all other EU countries the population change will be negative, and in some cases seriously so. The twelve countries admitted to the EU since 2004 together show a 37 per cent reduction in the number of 18-year-olds from over 1.5 million in 2006 to under 1 million by 2027¹²⁵. It is precisely from these new EU member states that much of the recent rise in non-UK enrolments on taught postgraduate programmes can be attributed.

175 It has been predicted that the number of full-time EU students on taught postgraduate programmes in the UK may decline by 4.1 per cent between 2005/06 and 2026/27¹²⁶. These projections, however, were made before the so-called credit crunch began to have a worldwide impact. Nor did the projections include any potential effects (positive or negative) on the UK recruitment of EU-domiciled students arising from the Bologna process.

Impact of EU developments

176 Key to the UK's attractiveness as a place to study will be the impact of the EU's political processes (arising from the Bologna process, the Lisbon Treaty and the Schengen Area) on taught postgraduate provision in the UK and elsewhere in Europe. Will the UK's one-year Masters' programmes provide students with enough knowledge and expertise to be successful in the European jobs market where they will be in competition with graduates with the two-year degrees that predominate (in the sciences) in mainland Europe? Will the proliferation of equivalent taught postgraduate provision (delivered in English) by other member states be more attractive to international students as well as fellow Europeans than their UK equivalents? A study on international student recruitment in other European countries now underway for Universities UK's Europe Unit and International Unit will make an important contribution to understanding these issues¹²⁷.

Financial sustainability

177 It is important to highlight the difference in the total public funding for undergraduates (and especially full-time undergraduates) and for taught postgraduates. The public policy assumption appears to be that the returns from postgraduate qualifications are such that employers, individuals and students' families will be willing to pay. The main exception to this is in health, teaching and social work where the state is the main employer. This seems to be an overly optimistic basis for sustaining taught postgraduate provision across a range of disciplines in the future.

178 We draw two conclusions from this. First, there is actually very little public support for the development of scholarship across the UK. This is because study at taught postgraduate level is the first point where an element of scholarship is assumed to be part of the learning process. Our second conclusion is that decisions about the range and nature of taught postgraduate provision may become more driven by financial factors than by academic considerations. This will impact on how teaching is delivered (whether face-to-face or remotely, whether as traditional cohorts of full-time or part-time students or individually-driven 'roll-on, roll-off' enrolments throughout the year). It also suggests that the modularisation of taught postgraduate programmes will be determined by what level of disaggregation is necessary for tuition fees to become affordable.

179 Institutions will need to consider whether their taught postgraduate provision can become financially sustainable in the light of changing demography and increasing competition – both from home and EU countries and from international markets. Our charts showing the institutional differentiation in taught postgraduate enrolments identify two distinct patterns across the UK. We have shown that the older universities are recruiting more taught postgraduate students overall than other institutions and that they are especially dominant in recruiting full-time students and those domiciled outside the UK¹²⁸. It is also clear that 90 per cent of all taught postgraduate students domiciled outside the UK are enrolled on Masters' degree programmes¹²⁹ and indeed they constitute the majority of all full-time students at Masters' level¹³⁰.

180 In contrast, the post-1992 institutions recruit a greater proportion of part-time taught postgraduate students. While there are more part-time taught postgraduates than full-time and their numbers have been increasing over the past five years, their rise is much less dramatic (11 per cent, compared with 36 per cent for full-time numbers)¹³¹. The most common qualification aim for part-time taught postgraduates (as for full-time students) is the Masters' degree, accounting in the most recent year for 56 per cent of all part-time enrolments. However, part-time students have a wide range of qualification objectives, with 29 per cent of all part-time enrolments aiming for postgraduate diplomas and certificates and 6 per cent looking for institutional postgraduate credit.

Improved data reporting

181 In any consideration of the financial sustainability of UK taught postgraduate provision, the need for comprehensive and reliable data becomes critical.

182 What is important is not the individual fee rates so much as the total income institutions receive from taught postgraduate fees and the source of that income, whether from students, the public purse or from employers. Distinguishing between the total income received from home and EU students and that from international students would also be important. This information is not currently available from the HESA financial record. However, with minor modifications, it should be possible to identify these figures and thus calculate sector-wide taught postgraduate income figures.

183 Similarly, the 2007 longitudinal survey of graduate destinations does not distinguish between research and taught postgraduate students in its analysis of findings¹³². The contrast between students with undergraduate qualifications and those holding postgraduate qualifications is reported. However, differences between those holding research and taught postgraduate qualifications are so significant that much of the potential value of the survey is lost because the data is not disaggregated.

184 More work on the rate of return for taught postgraduate awards is also required. Specifically a comparison of these awards with undergraduate and research degrees is needed to help potential students and their employers decide on the costs and benefits of taught postgraduate qualifications.

- 185 We noted at the beginning of this report that there is insufficient differentiation generally in the sector between taught and research postgraduate provision in terms of data collection and policy. This is evident from the literature, including the DIUS research report on postgraduate study¹³³, and also the HESA data. The sector needs to introduce a clear distinction between them in all aspects of data collection and policy development.
- 186 This report is an attempt to consider the taught postgraduate sector in its own right, as far as this is currently possible. Our recommendations are principally concerned with overcoming the limitations of the data available to us as it is essential to understand more about taught postgraduate provision and how sustainable it will be over time.
- 187 We have suggested that in the short- and medium-term the taught postgraduate sector will face the significant challenges of economic recession and demographic decline. This challenge will be relevant to each of the three separate markets we have identified: UK-domiciled students, students domiciled in other EU member states, and international students.
- 188 Until now the home and EU taught postgraduate markets have received little attention but we do not think they can continue on the assumption that individual contributions or employer support will be sufficient to sustain them. If this is the case, the private and public benefits of a postgraduate study programme need scrutiny in order to consider how far this provision might have a claim for additional support from the public purse.
- 189 As part of the forthcoming review of the HESA financial record, we **recommend** that the modifications needed to include data on the amount and source of fees that institutions receive for taught postgraduate provision should be made¹³⁴. The minimum data requirement for this provision that we consider necessary would permit disaggregation according to:
- who is paying the tuition fees, distinguishing whether this is the student, the employer or the state; and
 - whether the student is UK- or EU-domiciled or classed as an international student.
- 190 The process of reviewing the HESA record and then collecting data according to the revised requirements would necessarily take some years to feed into the published volumes. We therefore **recommend** that Universities UK discusses whether a one-off report on taught postgraduate provision might provide a snapshot of the situation across the UK, providing a valuable contribution to the overall information base and helping assess the longer-term financial sustainability of this provision. However, if a credible case is to be made subsequently for additional support from public funds, it is necessary that the data underpinning the argument is based on independent national data, which is why we consider that an adjustment to the HESA financial record is essential in the longer term.
- 191 As well as initiating new data collection and disaggregation of ongoing survey data, some additional work could usefully be done with existing one-off datasets, including the HESA dataset we have used for this overview.
- 192 Additionally, although the HESA longitudinal survey of leavers did not differentiate between research and taught students in the published report, we understand that the base data would so distinguish, allowing further work focused on the taught postgraduate respondents to be undertaken. We therefore **recommend** that Universities UK commissions a short exploratory study on the employability of postgraduates on taught Masters' degrees, drawing on the base data from this study.
- 193 Such analysis would also provide a useful contribution to the debate on the rate of return that taught postgraduates obtain from their qualifications. This is another area where longitudinal work is underway on the graduate labour market. We **recommend** that Universities UK considers producing a short summary of findings pertinent to taught postgraduates from this ongoing research.

194 Work on student debt has generally focused on the position of full-time undergraduates. This is another area where existing data might yield more fruitful information about the impact of debt on taught postgraduates, both in terms of the level of debt arising from their undergraduate studies and the effect such debt has on the propensity of recent graduates to embark on taught postgraduate study. We would therefore **recommend** that Universities UK considers what opportunities exist to derive pertinent information from recent studies on student debt. We also **recommend** that Universities UK discusses with DIUS and the devolved administrations how any further research on student debt might encompass taught postgraduates (both full- and part-time) as well as undergraduate students across the four countries of the UK.

Annexe 1 Funding councils' support for taught postgraduate provision

There is significant variation in the way in which the countries of the UK support taught postgraduate provision within institutions' 'block grant' payments from their respective funding council. This annexe gives a general introduction to the teaching funding formula operated in each country and notes the assumptions about taught postgraduate provision used in calculating 'block grant' allocations.

England

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) is the largest single source of income for the sector as a whole. Funding for students in health-related subjects such as nursing and midwifery generally come from the NHS. The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) funds – at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels – initial teacher training courses leading to qualified teacher status (QTS) and in-service education and training (INSET) courses for teachers who hold QTS.

HEFCE uses formulas to determine how most of its funds are allocated between institutions, taking into account certain factors for each institution including, for taught provision, the number and type of students and the subjects taught. Funding is provided in the form of a 'block grant', which institutions are free to spend according to their own priorities within the council's broad guidelines. The funding method aims to ensure that institutions receive an appropriate amount of money for teaching – for an institution as a whole – including all levels of taught provision (ie at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels).

In calculating recurrent teaching grants, HEFCE takes account of income it assumes institutions will receive from tuition fees. The combined total of grant and fees is referred to as 'teaching resource'. Student numbers are counted in full-time equivalent (FTE) terms. A part-time student is measured by comparing their learning activity with that of a full-time student, so that each will count as a variable proportion of one full-time equivalent.

For 2008/09 the assumed fee income per full-time equivalent student is as follows¹³⁵:

Full-time undergraduates	£1,255
Sandwich year-out undergraduates	£1,250
Part-time undergraduates on courses with regulated fees	£1,250
Other part-time undergraduates	£1,255
Full-time taught postgraduates on courses with regulated fees (these are courses such as PGCEs and some architecture courses)	£1,255
Part-time taught postgraduates and sandwich year-out postgraduates on courses with regulated fees	£1,250
Other full-time, part-time and sandwich taught postgraduates	£3,964

In calculating the standard resource for each institution, HEFCE applies weightings to student numbers to take account of factors that call for different levels of resource. These relate to the nature of the subject and whether the institution is in London. HEFCE has defined four broad groups of subjects (price groups) for funding and has set relative cost weights for each based on expenditure and student full-time equivalent data by cost centre. These are detailed below¹³⁶:

Price group	Description	Cost weight
A	The clinical stages of medicine and dentistry courses and veterinary science	4
B	Laboratory-based subjects (science, pre-clinical stages of medicine and dentistry, engineering and technology)	1.7
C	Subjects with a studio, laboratory or fieldwork element	1.3
D	All other subjects	1

A further weighting is applied, where applicable, to recognise the higher costs of operating in London. Institutions in inner London receive a weighting of 8 per cent, those in outer London 5 per cent.

HEFCE calculates a base amount of resource for a full-time equivalent student by dividing the money available to fund teaching (HEFCE grant plus assumed tuition fees) by the total number of weighted full-time equivalent students in the sector. This base rate of resource (grant plus fee) is called the base price and is the rate for a standard FTE student in price group D (before the application of London weighting).

For 2008/09, the base price is £3,964. This therefore implies resource rates for each price group as follows¹³⁷:

- £15,856 for price group A;
- £6,739 for price group B;
- £5,153 for price group C;
- £3,964 for price group D.

The table below presents the different fee types that are possible for different categories of students together with the notional rates of HEFCE teaching grant per full-time equivalent student for 2008/09; figures are based on the mainstream teaching funding method¹³⁸. Note that because of the level of the assumed tuition fee for taught postgraduate students, subjects within price group D attract no HEFCE funding and therefore are operated by institutions on a 'fees only' basis.

Price group	Mode	Level	Fee type	Standard resource (£)	Assumed fee income (£)	Notional HEFCE grant rate (£)
A	FT and PT	UG	Regulated and non-regulated	15,856	1,255	14,601
A	FT and PT	PGT	Non-regulated	15,856	3,964	11,892
B	FT and PT	UG	Regulated and non-regulated	6,739	1,255	5,484
B	FT and PT	PGT	Non-regulated	6,739	3,964	2,775
C	FT	UG and PGT	Regulated	5,153	1,255	3,898
C	FT and PT	PGT	Non-regulated	5,153	3,964	1,189
C	SWOUT	UG	Regulated	5,153	1,250	3,903
C	PT	UG	Non-regulated	5,153	1,255	3,898
C	PT	UG and PGT	Regulated	5,153	1,250	3,903
D	FT and PT	UG	Regulated and non-regulated	3,964	1,255	2,709
D	FT and PT	PGT	Non-regulated	3,964	3,964	0

Key: FT – Full-time, PT – Part-time, PGT – Postgraduate taught, SWOUT – Sandwich year-out, UG – Undergraduate

In addition to the main teaching funding method, HEFCE makes seven targeted allocations¹³⁹. One of these, for accelerated and intensive provision (that is, courses taught over longer periods), is significant for many long taught postgraduate programmes. Under this provision, students studying on courses that last for 45 weeks or more within one academic year attract a targeted allocation. This does not apply to courses within price group A, where the course length has already been taken into account within the cost weight.

Northern Ireland

Funding provided to Northern Ireland universities for taught postgraduate programmes is based on the funding methodology as used in England. The four price groups and the cost weightings are the same as used in England. However, the standard resource and assumed fee income figures are higher. For 2008/09 the Northern Ireland base price is £4,664 (rather than £3,964 as in England), which means that the resource rates for the various price groups become:

- £18,656 for price group A;
- £7,929 for price group B;
- £6,063 for price group C;
- £4,664 for price group D.

The assumed fee income per full-time equivalent student for 2008/09 is the same in Northern Ireland as in England¹⁴⁰, except for the category of other full-time, part-time and sandwich taught postgraduate students, which is £4,664 per full-time equivalent (compared with £3,964 in England). However, set against these higher tuition fees is the additional support for taught postgraduate students in Northern Ireland compared with England, provided under the national postgraduate studentships award scheme¹⁴¹.

Scotland

The funding methodology used by the Scottish Funding Council is based upon two modes of study (full-time/sandwich and part-time); three levels of study (research postgraduate, taught postgraduate and undergraduate) and 13 funding subject groups (including education and now pre-registration nursing and midwifery provision).

The teaching funding method distinguishes between controlled and non-controlled funding subject groups. Within the non-controlled funding subject groups, the Scottish Funding Council distinguishes between priority and non-priority funding subject groups, as shown in the table below¹⁴².

Funding subject group	Funding subject group status
1 Clinical and veterinary practice	Controlled
2 Conservatoire music	Controlled
3 Engineering and technology	Non-controlled, priority
4 Science	Non-controlled, priority
5 Computing and information Science	Non-controlled, priority
6 Pre-clinical	Controlled
7 Creative arts and hospitality	Non-controlled, non-priority
8 Education	Controlled
9a Other health and welfare	
9b Other health and welfare (nursing and midwifery pre-registration education)	Non-controlled, non-priority controlled
10 Built environment	Non-controlled, non-priority
11 Mathematics, statistics and operational research	Non-controlled, priority
12 Humanities, languages and business	Non-controlled, non-priority
13 Social sciences	Non-controlled, non-priority

Funding grant calculations to support undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision at institutions are calculated in the same way but, as in England and Northern Ireland, different tuition fee assumptions are made. Each year the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) advises the Scottish Funding Council what the assumed tuition fee level should be for all taught postgraduate students.

Within most funding subject groups, teaching provision is divided into two different funding cells: taught postgraduate and undergraduate. Each funding cell has an associated unit of teaching resource, reflecting the broad relative costs of teaching that subject. These units of resource are listed below in gross terms, ie inclusive of fee income.

Units of teaching resource, 2008/09¹⁴³

Funding subject group	Undergraduate £	Postgraduate £
1 Clinical and veterinary practice	15,840	15,360
2 Conservatoire music	13,730	13,620
3 Engineering and technology	8,425	8,515
4 Science	8,050	8,090
5 Computing and information science	7,340	7,750
6 Pre-clinical	8,000	
7 Creative arts and hospitality	7,225	7,345
8 Education	7,420	7,085
9 Other health and welfare	6,830	7,100
10 Built environment	6,415	6,435
11 Mathematics, statistics and operational research	5,425	5,485
12 Humanities, languages and business	4,920	4,980
13 Social sciences	4,070	4,105

The main teaching resource for individual cells is calculated by multiplying the funding cell's gross unit of resource by the number of full-time equivalent student places the council intends to fund in that cell. After calculating the gross main teaching grant for each institution, the assumed tuition fee income (shown in the following table) is subtracted in order to determine institutions' allocations through the main teaching grant.

Tuition fee levels for 2008/09¹⁴⁴

Full-time undergraduate higher education fee levels are:	
■ Medical students who entered full-time higher education from 2006/07	£2,825
■ Other degree students who entered full-time higher education from 2006/07 (including students on taught postgraduate courses that attract an undergraduate fee)	£1,775
■ Students who entered full-time higher education before 2006/07 on all undergraduate (including medical) courses	£1,255
■ All other undergraduate students	£1,225
Part-time undergraduate fees are not regulated, but it is assumed that this attracts a fee pro rata to a full-time fee	£1,255 pro rata
Assumed full-time postgraduate tuition fee	£3,315

Wales

In Wales the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCW) has operated a teaching funding method based on credit values since 2002/03. It operates for funding student numbers in three dimensions: level, mode and subject. Taught postgraduate provision is one of three levels (the others being undergraduate degree and undergraduate non-degree). There are three modes: full-time/sandwich, part-time and part-time franchised out; and 11 academic subject categories (ASCs), some of which are sub-divided.

A unit of funding, expressed as £ per credit value, is set for each ASC or discrete element of the ASC separately for undergraduate and for taught postgraduate levels. The credit value is always set at a lower cash value for taught postgraduate provision than for undergraduate provision, except for programmes of initial teacher training leading to qualified teacher status, where the cash values are the same. This is the only quota-controlled subject at taught postgraduate level and student numbers in these subjects are set by the Welsh Assembly¹⁴⁵.

Details of the cash values for each unit of funding in the 11 ASCs and the credit value conversion rate for Masters' and postgraduate diploma programmes are provided below¹⁴⁶.

Formula funding data for Wales, 2008/09

Standard units of funding for teaching

Academic subject category	Title	Unit of funding £ per credit value	
		Undergraduate	Postgraduate taught
1	Medicine and dentistry : pre-clinical quota : clinical quota : non-quota	52.61 113.19	44.29
2	Subjects and professions allied to medicine	36.46	28.59
3	Science	41.43	33.55
4	Engineering and technology	46.65	38.78
5	Built environment	36.95	29.08
6	Mathematical sciences, IT and computing	32.72	24.84
7	Business and management	20.44	12.56
8	Social sciences	18.13	10.25
9	Humanities	25.71	17.84
10	Art, design and performing arts	32.14	24.26
11(a)	Education: : initial teacher training qualified teacher status (QTS) : initial teacher training non-QTS – BEd primary Year 4	37.03 13.27	37.03
11(b)	Education: non-QTS	31.38	23.50

Note: For ASC 1, medicine and dentistry clinical quota, a weight of 1.96 is included

Credit value conversion

One full-time 12-month Masters' place = 180 credit values

One full-time postgraduate diploma place = 120 credit values

One full-time undergraduate place (per year) = 120 credit values

Unlike HEFCE's funding methodology, no assumption is made about tuition fee levels in HEFCW's teaching funding method, which means that institutions will receive some funding for all taught postgraduate subject areas although the funding levels are lower than for undergraduate provision.

This annexe outlines the support that is available to taught postgraduates in each of the four countries of the UK.

England

In England most local education authorities now provide funding only for PGCE students. Some training and enterprise councils award funding for postgraduate study. In each case, such awards would be considered as part of the total public funding that supports taught postgraduate provision¹⁴⁷.

Students following postgraduate courses of initial teacher training, such as a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), may be eligible for student loans and grants from the government and a bursary from the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). Postgraduate students can apply for a training bursary from the TDA, worth £4,000–£9,000 on top of the finance package available to students on postgraduate and undergraduate initial teacher training programmes¹⁴⁸.

Finance is available for postgraduates on qualifying NHS and social work programmes. NHS student bursaries are available for students studying in England on both full-time and part-time pre-registration health professional training courses. The bursary is an annual payment to assist with day-to-day living costs and tuition fee costs. Two types are available:

- an income-assessed bursary for degree level and postgraduate level courses provides a basic allowance to cover living costs and, subject to individual circumstances, additional allowances; and
- a non-income-assessed bursary is available for postgraduate pre-registration nursing diploma students; this provides a flat rate basic maintenance grant.

The bursaries are not intended for first-level nurses and midwives seeking a second registration in nursing or midwifery, or for currently registered health professionals undertaking post-registration training courses, or for NHS employees seconded to training courses¹⁴⁹.

Bursary rates 2008/09 ¹⁵⁰	Income-assessed bursary (based on 30-week year)	Non-income assessed bursary
<i>Basic living allowance</i>		
In London in student/rented accommodation or own home up to	£3,306	£7,629
Elsewhere in UK in student/rented accommodation or own home up to	£2,739	£6,531
Anywhere in UK living in parental home up to	£2,287	£6,531
<i>Extra weeks' attendance rates per week</i>		
London rate per week	£103	
Elsewhere rate per week	£80	
Parental home rate per week	£53	

The above rates are for full-time students. Part-time students will receive a proportion of the full-time rate.

It should be noted that additional amounts are payable, depending on circumstances, for Dependants Allowances, Childcare Allowance (CCA), Childcare Allowance and Working Tax Credit (WTC), Parents Learning Allowance (PLA) and Practice Placement Expenses (PPE).

Students with a disability may be eligible to apply for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). Rates for 2008/09 are:

Disabled Students Allowance element ¹⁵¹	Maximum allowance up to
Non-medical helper	£20,000
Specialist equipment	£5,031
Travel	actual reasonably and necessarily incurred
Other costs	£1,680

The social work bursary for students on postgraduate courses is administered by the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA). It is available to students ordinarily resident in England studying on an approved postgraduate course. The bursary consists of a non-income-assessed basic grant including a fixed contribution towards practice learning expenses and tuition fee support. It also includes a means-tested maintenance grant as well as means-tested allowances to assist with certain living costs¹⁵².

2008/09 assistance rates ¹⁵³ (based on 52-week period)	Full-time	Part-time
<i>Non-income-assessed</i>		
Basic grant (outside London) up to	£3,075	£1,537.50
Basic grant (in London) up to	£3,475	£1,737.50
Tuition fee payment to higher education institution	£3,300	£1,255
<i>Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) include</i>		
Non-medical Helpers Allowance up to	£20,000	£15,000
Specialist Equipment Allowance for whole course up to	£5,030	£5,030
General Allowance up to	£1,680	£1,260
<i>Income-assessed*</i>		
Maintenance grant (outside London) up to	£2,544	£1,272
Maintenance grant (in London) up to	£3,928	£1,964

* Allowances for dependants may be paid, subject to eligibility, in addition to the maintenance grant. These consist of: childcare allowance, adult dependant allowance and parents learning allowance (PLA).

Financial support for other taught postgraduates may be available in the form of a bursary or scholarship from the university offering the course; from charities and charitable trusts; or in certain circumstances, part-time students may receive support from their employers. Public sector employers are particularly supportive of students undertaking initial professional qualifications, but the only mandatory funding available is for accredited professional training in teaching, social work and nursing.

A career development loan provides financial help for vocational education and training in the form of deferred bank loans. Students can borrow between £300 and £8,000 to help fund up to two years of learning. Loans can be used to support many full-time, part-time and distance learning courses, including those at taught postgraduate level, and are open to those who are employed, self-employed or unemployed. Career development loans are available through an arrangement between the Learning and Skills Council and three high street banks (Barclays, the Co-operative Bank and the Royal Bank of Scotland). They can cover three areas: course fees, other course costs (such as books, childcare and travel costs), and living expenses. The loans allow students to borrow up to 80 per cent of course fees and other related costs, as long as the learning provider is on the career development loan register. For students taking MBA programmes, the Association of Masters in Business Administration can arrange loans¹⁵⁴.

The Access to Learning Fund can provide extra support for postgraduates studying in England (both full-time and part-time) with living costs not covered by other grants, emergency payments to cover unexpected or exceptional costs, and for those in financial difficulties. Money is usually paid as a non-repayable grant. Students apply through the student services department at their university/college. The priorities for support are:

- students with children, especially lone parents;
- mature students, especially those with existing financial commitments;
- students from low-income families;
- care leavers;
- students who are homeless or who are living in 'foyers';
- disabled students¹⁵⁵.

Northern Ireland

The Department for Employment and Learning funds 165 postgraduate studentship awards each year; these are available to students on approved courses of advanced study (Masters' programmes) at either Queen's University Belfast or the University of Ulster in the fields of humanities, science and technology and the social sciences but not in agriculture or medicine. Postgraduate studentships are not means-tested and run for six or 12 calendar months from 1 October each year. However, students receiving comparable support from industry or a university may not be eligible for an award.

The studentships provide a minimum maintenance grant of £6,470 for taught postgraduate students (expected to rise to £6,632 for 2008/09) together with payment of approved tuition fees. Students on research Masters' (MRes) programmes are eligible for taught studentships for the taught module and project components of the course.

To be eligible, students must have obtained at least an upper-second class honours degree from a university in the UK or Northern Ireland or a non-UK qualification considered equivalent. British citizens and EU nationals are eligible for postgraduate studentships. Residence requirements for non-EU nationals are specified.

In addition, the Education and Library Boards make means-tested awards for study leading to the Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE).

Scotland

The Postgraduate Students' Allowances Scheme (PSAS) offers discretionary awards to eligible students following one-year full-time vocational courses. Just over 1,800 awards are offered annually for full-time students on taught postgraduate diploma courses or for the taught component of a Masters' course (ie maximum of nine months excluding the three months spent on an individual research project/thesis). MRes programmes are not supported under the PSAS scheme and certain other professional programmes, including the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and the Postgraduate Diploma in Community Education (PGDipCE), have support arrangements that are the same as for an undergraduate course.

The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) gives institutions a block allocation of funded places which they allocate across an agreed list of eligible courses. The institutions select each year the students they wish to nominate for a PSAS-funded place. SAAS also support 120 students on courses outside Scotland each year.

Under the PSAS, students receive help with tuition fees, an income-assessed maintenance allowance and other supplementary grants (notably for lone parents, those with dependants, those claiming travel costs or those who incur extra costs because they have a disability). For 2008/09 a payment of £3,315 towards tuition fees is paid direct to the institution by SAAS, and students are required to pay anything above this standard rate. The standard maintenance grant (covering a course lasting between 25 and 30 weeks) provides:

- £2,780 for students living in their parents' home;
- £3,675 for students living in halls of residence or in lodgings and studying at institutions outside London;
- £4,660 for students living in a hall of residence or lodgings and studying at an institution in London.

Extra weekly payments are made for taught courses lasting over 30 weeks.

To be eligible to apply for support under the PSAS, students must meet residence conditions (as set out in the Students' Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007), be studying a course that the SAAS supports, and not have received support from public funds for a previous vocational postgraduate course.

The Higher Education and Learner Support Division of the Scottish Government is currently undertaking a review of student support for postgraduate study. Changes to the present arrangements are expected to be introduced with effect from the 2010/11 academic year.

Those students who are studying a postgraduate taught course that is not supported under the PSAS scheme, or are studying on a part-time or distance learning basis and have a disability or learning difficulty and need extra support while studying, may be eligible to apply for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). This provides a basic allowance of up to £1,680 a year for expenditure on specific items plus separate allowances for large items of equipment and non-medical personal help¹⁵⁶.

Awards for postgraduate social work courses in Scotland are the responsibility of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and details can be obtained from the SSSC website¹⁵⁷.

Wales

The student support system in Wales does not provide the same support for students on postgraduate courses as those on undergraduate courses except for initial teacher training. While grants may be available from educational trusts and charities, and scholarships or bursaries may be available from the higher education institution offering the course, there are no subsidised loans.

Those on postgraduate initial teacher training courses in Welsh institutions may receive the tuition fee grant of up to £1,890 (depending on the level of course fees). All students on the postgraduate initial teacher training course may also receive a minimum Assembly Learning Grant of £1,255 if studying for up to 10 weeks full-time equivalent or more (£625 if studying between six and 10 weeks). Those on postgraduate flexible initial teacher training courses may be entitled to a tuition fee grant of up to £1,890 if studying for 10 weeks full-time equivalent or more (£945 if studying between six and 10 weeks).

Students on postgraduate initial teacher training courses may apply for a means-tested maintenance loan and tuition fee loan (less any fee grant they receive) to be repaid in line with income after students have left their courses and are earning over £15,000 a year. Students may also be eligible for hardship awards, the Welsh medium incentive supplement (if taking secondary postgraduate initial teacher training courses through the medium of Welsh), and (for PGCE students) a package of incentives including both teaching and training grants. After completing the initial teacher training and induction, teachers may be eligible to receive a taxable teaching grant (similar to the 'golden hellos' available in England)¹⁵⁸.

Help for postgraduate healthcare students studying in Wales is available from the NHS Wales Student Awards Unit. Details are available in the booklet *Financial help for healthcare students in Wales*¹⁵⁹.

The Care Council for Wales manages the social work bursary scheme for students studying approved undergraduate degrees or Masters' degree courses in social work. An additional income-assessed bursary is available to students studying an approved Masters' degree course in social work (eligibility criteria apply)¹⁶⁰.

Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs) are available for taught postgraduate students. They may be eligible to apply for help from the financial contingency funds available through their higher education institution.

Students without student support funding through their local authority or any other funding to help pay for their course may be able to apply for a career development loan¹⁶¹.

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- 103 See Annexes 1 and 2 for a brief overview of the various national approaches for both types of public funding contribution.
- 104 See Annexe 2 for information about financial support provided for taught postgraduate students across the four countries of the UK.
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- 128 See Charts 13-17.
- 129 See Table 10.
- 130 See Table 11.
- 131 See Table 7.
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- 160 Details are available from the student funding team at the Care Council (www.ccwales.org.uk).
- 161 Further information is available from www.directgov.uk/cdl.



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