Picturing the Postgraduate Experience and Preparing for TEF 4

Professor Clare Milsom and Dr Elena Zaitseva

Teaching and Learning Academy

Liverpool John Moores University

PGT sector context

. Taught postgraduate student experience is becoming increasingly prominent in national policy discussion.

- *Postgraduate and undergraduate student numbers at record highs Introduction of the Postgraduate Support Scheme and the raising of the loan age cap to 60 – reversed decline: 22% increase (HEFCE March 2017)*

. Four UK HE funding bodies: sector opinion on a national feedback survey for taught postgraduate students.

- *Formal consultation early 2018*

PGT is a uniquely challenging level of study

'we can no longer adopt a 'one size fits all approach' in the effective delivery of academic and non-academic support to our postgraduate students throughout the student lifecycle. And neither can we merely transfer support processes used at undergraduate level to postgraduate as support requirements are different.

(Morgan, 2015)

Understanding your post-graduate students' experience

Couple of general questions….

1. What information is available to you understand the postgraduate experience?

2. Which sources of information are institutionally/formally recognised?

   Also: *How is information used to improve/enhance the postgraduate student experience?*

PGT sector context : TEF

The Government is committed to build on this success by enhancing its support for lifelong learning including postgraduate and part time study.
Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice

Teaching Excellence Framework

Year Three: Subject-level pilots

Year Five: Subject-level assessment

                    PGT(earliest)

Challenges

1. Highly heterogeneous
2. No mandatory survey
3. Small cohorts
4. No 'typical' academic calendar
5. Variable duration

PGT TEF

Incentives

1. Informed choice
2. Institutional reputation

…but no fee uplift for PGT

Issues

1. What information do prospective PGT students need?
2. What information do institutions need to enhance provision?
3. What is the relationship with employability?

What does quality look like for PGT?

Quick question?

What are the **similarities** and what are the **differences** between a quality undergraduate and a quality postgraduate student learning experience

What does quality look like for PGT? (perspectives from literature)

- Level of challenge
  - *This is might be an opportunity to consider the level of stretch at Masters level and the step-up from the final year of a degree (WONKE, Nov 2016)*

- Transition

- Workload

- Delivery: peers

National analysis

Semantic analysis	
Survey 'domain'	**Words**
Teaching quality	61 7981
Engagement with study	40 6733
Most enjoyable	67 2218
Improvement needed	97 2094

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In their own words

Analysing students' comments from the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

Elena Zaitseva
Clare Milsom

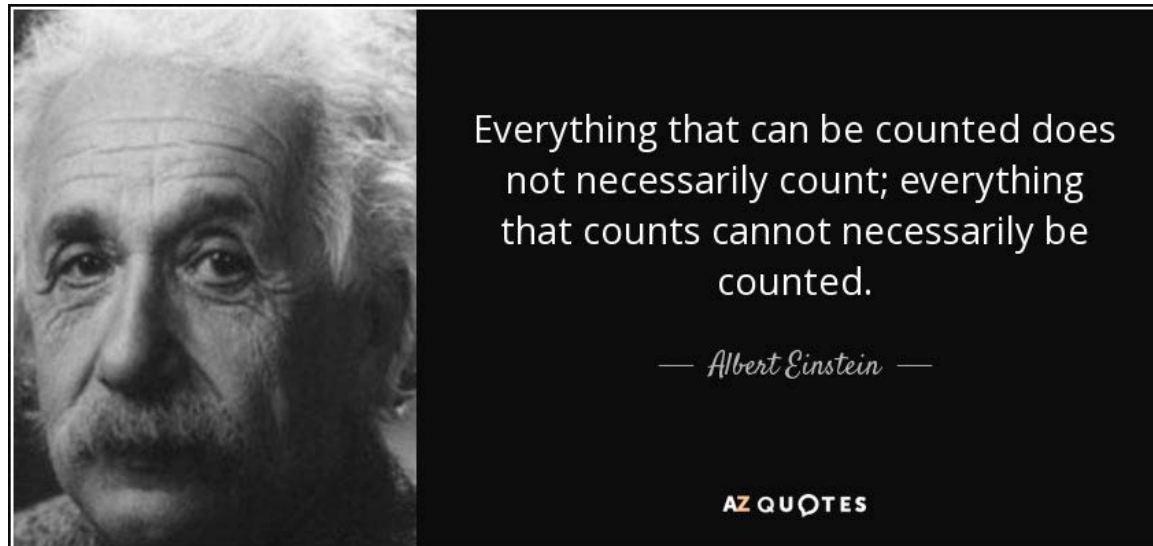In partnership with: Liverpool John Moores University

Key findings (sector research)

1. Importance of formalised scheduled contact time with academics **and peers.**

2. Critical role that **workload** plays in the overall experience and quality of student outcomes.

3. Necessity for the curriculum to be **challenging** and appropriate (**level**) to a higher degree.

4. Requirement for a more **consistent** experience in relation to teaching, learning and assessment.

5. Importance of structured and timely opportunities for providing module and course level **feedback.**

Institutional (LJMU research)

- Institutional qualitative data are rarely looked at as a combined data set

- LJMU satisfaction is consistently higher than sector average for Post 92 HEIs, how does qualitative data compare with national dataset?

- Need to understand not only 'observable' feedback but 'hidden' messages as well

- Using the same methodology explored institutional comments and compared with national findings

Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.

— Albert Einstein —

Comparison of national and institutional comments

Main themes or concepts	National	Institutional
Workload - Management - Uneven balance between semesters - Quality of work impacted by high workload	yes	yes
Contact hours	**Yes (more)**	**No**
Level of delivery	**Yes (too high/low)**	**Yes (too high)**
Inconsistency of delivery (module level)	Yes	Yes
Feedback to students	Yes	Yes
Feedback from students	Yes	No
Class (classroom activities/interaction)	Yes	Yes

Workload/ Contact hours

LJMU Commitments

..as a student with family and other commitments it has been extremely challenging to complete work on time. The standard of work has been poor due to this

..sometimes the timetable commitments can be a little too much as it is difficult to work and pursue the course ...I know others on the course are struggling financially due to the timetable commitments.

National: Peer group

'I had expected more opportunities for networking...'

'..discussions with other students in the taught sessions and online were the most stimulating aspect of the course.'

'I didn't get the discursive atmosphere I had hoped for..'

National: Academics

*'..I often felt **disconnected** from the academic community surrounding the subject..'*

*'virtually no contact time at all, and this can affect motivation and **confidence**'*

Levelness

LJMU

Some of the classes have been too far ahead for me a lot of the lessons were based around phd preparation and I feel as though we didn't spend enough time focusing on our masters work

.....other members of staff ... have no level of talking to students and can only talk at their high level of understanding...

National

Tasks are often time consuming but do not offer any intellectual challenge.

..aimed for undergraduate level students and not for postgraduates.'

It is really frustrating at a master level not being able to discuss opinions with the others.'

Some [modules] are too simplistic and some are horrendously over-complicated'

LJMU: classroom interaction

...Large class: Most people don't feel confident speaking in a large class

..Small class: I like that participation is encouraged and I have gained in confidence; before starting here I would never have participated in lectures (mostly due to the class size).

Using data to engage academic staff in effective dialogue to build a stronger postgraduate provision

- Raise awareness of national and institutional landscape

- Pay attention to different demographic groups and their needs

- Emphasise transition, levelness and workload: strong institutional and programme level priority

'It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken' *- Shakespeare*

Any questions....?

HEFCE (2013) Postgraduate Support Scheme: Invitation to Submit Funding Proposals for Pilot Projects to Stimulate Taught Postgraduate Education [Internet]. Available from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/cl,182013/

HEPI (2015) What Do Home Students Think of Studying with International Students? HEPI Report 76. [Internet]. Available from: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/HEApaper7.pdf

Morgan, M. (2015) Supporting Postgraduate Taught Student Transitions Into and Out of Study [Internet]. Blog Post. Available from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/supporting-postgraduate-taught-student-transitions-and-out-study-0 [Accessed 10 September 2015].

Text analytics software to try out

- Leximancer (one week free trial)

- KH Coder (open source)

- Voyant-tools

- RapidMiner (open-source platform for data science, including data mining, text mining, predictive analytics)

- 7.tm text mining infrastructure in R (for more 'techie' users) and many more

- Google Docs apps