

2268 Investigating PGR Engagement with the Students' Union

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Union Notes:

1. The amount of postgraduate students at UEA is growing at both Masters and PhD level.
2. That the role of Postgraduate Education Officer has to represent both Postgraduate Research (PGR) and Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students.
3. That since the position of Postgraduate Education Officer was established, it has never been filled by a PGR student.
4. The average age of a PGR student at UEA is 30.
5. The average full-time PhD can take between 3 to 4 years to complete, and up to 6 years for a part-time PGR students or those who need to take a pause in study.
6. If a student is continuing from their undergraduate and master's degree they could be at UEA for between 7-11 years.
7. PGR students often work as Associate Tutors meaning they may identify and view themselves as both staff and students.
8. PGR students are also more likely to be carers or take maternity leave. UEA PGSU brought policy to the NUS on this in 2016/7.
9. Despite PGR students studying at UEA for a longer period of time, they remain largely unengaged with the Students' Union's democratic bodies.
10. That PGR students have expertise that would be beneficial to UEASU.
11. UEA and UEASU were recently successful in a HEFCE catalyst funding bid of £300,000 to research early interventions and projects for tackling PGR ill-mental health.

Union Believes:

1. It is difficult for PGT student to fully understand the experience of PGR students.
2. The experience of education for PGR students is unique in comparison to students on taught courses, both UG and PGT. They have no taught content on their course. They have to work closely with their supervisors, members of staff and their funder (if they have one). They will often have to present research at conferences as well as write publications. As Associate Tutors they might deliver taught content to UG and PGT students. PGRs have smaller cohort sizes and limited dedicated work or social space on campus.
3. Nationally there is little research into how Students' Unions can better represent PGR students.
4. As a union we have little understanding of how PGRs perceive the SU, or the extent to which they are engaged or disengaged.
5. Given that the Students' Union is partnering with the University to lead on the HEFCE funded PGR mental health project, it would be the perfect time for the Union to review its engagement with PGR students as a whole.

Union Resolves:

1. To mandate the Postgraduate Committee to investigate the lack of PGR representation and engagement with the Students' Union.
2. To provide the staff time and resources required to produce a robust piece of research.
3. That the Postgraduate Committee agree the methodology and aims of the research; receive a report containing the outcomes, and decide upon the report's recommendations. This will be led by a PGR representative sitting on the PGSU Committee.
4. That the recommendations by the Committee will form a policy which will be presented to Union Council. This will be led by a PGR representative sitting on the PGSU Committee.
5. For this research to specifically include:
 - a. The historic level of PGR engagement with the Graduate Student Association (GSA) before it was dissolved, including voter turnout in elections.
 - b. The historic level of PGR engagement after the dissolution of the GSA.
 - c. The current level of PGR engagement within the UEASU and PGSU.
 - d. The number of PGR students in 'leadership' positions across the Union's democratic structures.
 - e. PGR perception of the Students' Union and whether or not they feel it represents them.
 - f. What PGR students feel representation should look like within UEASU.