

TO: Assembly

FROM: Sarah McAllister

RE: Postgraduate Access and Participation

DATE: 3 June 2021

Assembly Notes:

- In 2019 the University unveiled their undergraduate "Access and Participation Plan" on how they were doing at recruiting students from various backgrounds who are underrepresented in higher education. This was mandated by the Office for Students (OfS), the Higher Education regulator, who monitor how institutions progress and ensure that they meet their targets.
- Durham University's current Access and Participation plans states 'The following analysis looks at each of the key under-represented groups through the three undergraduate student lifecycle phases of access, student success and progression, and then looks at intersections between the groups.'¹ Therefore, this does not take into account Postgraduate students.
- Durham is not alone by not including Postgraduate Students in their Access and Participation plan as this is not a regulatory requirement set by the OfS.
- The Postgraduate Academic Officer has written a 'Postgraduate Access and Participation Plan',² which it is hoped will form the basis for the future University work in this area.

Assembly Believes:

- Many of the issues already outlined in the University's current Access and Participation Plan exist for Postgraduates, and it is necessary to consider this separately as well as expand on the current plan for more Postgraduate specific matters.
- Further to this, many of the issues that exist at the Undergraduate level are heightened at the Postgraduate level as people have already faced barriers prior to this point. Likewise, this also continues with those who are able to pursue an academic career.
- Whilst increasing representation is a key goal of Access and Participation, equally, if not more important are the changes needed to ensure that the experience of students at Durham is a positive one. Often in Access and Participation, there is too much of a reliance on increasing diversity rather than improving the experience of students from underrepresented groups while they are at University.
- Durham University should create and adopt a Postgraduate Access and Participation Plan, building on the work done by the Postgraduate Academic Officer, with the interests of under-represented students at its core.

¹ Durham University's Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25, p. 1

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/about/access/UniversityOfDurham_APP_2020-21_V1_10007143.pdf>

² Appendix 1

Assembly Resolves:

- To mandate the Postgraduate Academic Officer to lobby the University to create and adopt a Postgraduate Access and Participation Policy, and update Assembly appropriately on this work.

Appendix 1: Postgraduate Access and Participation Plan

1. Background

1. Durham University's current Access and Participation Plan outlines some of the barriers that currently exist in accessing higher education, ways of achieving change and measures of success for underrepresented groups. However, due to the OfS requirement that this focuses on the Undergraduates, the Postgraduate experience is not included in the current plan. Many of the issues already outlined in the current Access and Participation Plan exist for Postgraduates, but it is also necessary to consider this separately and expand on the current plan.
2. A crucial factor in the difference between the experience of under-represented groups at the Postgraduate level in comparison to Undergraduates is that Postgraduate students themselves are in the minority. The student culture in Durham is undergraduate centric and thus a cohesive Postgraduate community does not currently exist. This is not to say that there isn't excellent work being done across the University for Postgraduates, but in comparison to the undergraduate experience there is a notable difference.
3. Further to this, many of the issues that exist at the Undergraduate level are heightened at the Postgraduate level as people have already faced barriers prior to this point. Likewise, this also continues with those who are able to pursue an academic career.
4. It is important to note that when analysing access and participation at the Postgraduate level, that the same data and indicators are not always appropriate. A notable example is the use of POLAR to highlight Low Participation Neighbourhoods and household income to indicate socio-economic status. Postgraduate students may have been out of higher education for a significant amount of time and are more likely than undergraduates to support themselves rather than rely on their parents' income, this is not always an accurate indicator for Postgraduates.³ This is evidenced by the ratio of young to mature students at the postgraduate level.⁴ Of course, it still can be useful, as it can indicate how background impacts students' access to Postgraduate education.
5. The following paper looks at the under-represented groups, as well as how they intersect, and highlights the problems to access and the experience of these students once they are at Durham. Whilst increasing representation is a key goal of the plan,

³ This of course is a generalisation. There are many undergraduates who support themselves and also Postgraduates who have come straight from their undergrad degree who are still supported by their parents.

⁴ [1.5 - Mature.xlsx \(dur.ac.uk\)](#)

equally, if not more important is the changes needed to ensure that the experience of students here is a positive one. Often there is too much of a reliance when looking at Access and Participation at increasing diversity rather than improving the experience of students from underrepresented groups while they are at University. This is a particularly poignant for the Postgraduate level, as if undergraduates have had a good experience at Durham, they are more likely to want to stay to do a Postgraduate degree.⁵

6. This means that the measures of success used will not all be quantitative and a qualitative understanding of the experience of Postgraduate students from under-represented backgrounds will be crucial as Durham University commits to challenging its current culture.

2. Disabled Students

Access

1. Across Durham University, there is a large problem with accessible spaces. This includes certain department buildings being completely inaccessible and thus preventing some students from being able to study that subject at Durham.
2. Where these spaces are deemed accessible, some are only accessible to a certain extent, e.g. someone in a standard wheelchair may be able to access the room, but not move further than the entrance, or the door is wide enough for a standard wheelchair but not for a powerchair. Some teaching spaces are not fitted with an induction loop, and some lack basic lecture capture technology, so lectures/seminars cannot be watched back at a later date.⁶
3. According to disability charity Scope, being disabled costs on average an extra £583 per month.⁷ Whilst some disabled students will meet the criteria for disabled students' allowance, some will not, and will be left to pay for any additional needs out of pocket. Choosing a postgraduate degree is already a difficult financial decision for many; accounting for this extra expense can make PG study prohibitively expensive.
4. Finding accessible accommodation, as well as any support services, can be difficult and there can be a reticence to leave an already established care network as it can be difficult to re-establish this in a new place with a different NHS trust, who may advocate for different care strategies. Whilst this is not something the University is

⁵ This will be addressed in more detail later in the document. There are a number of reasons why students may stay at Durham to a Postgraduate, one notable example is of course the alumni discount which is a significant financial help to students.

⁶ All information is correct as of 2019; a thorough investigation as to whether these issues have been rectified by 2021 is imperative.

⁷ [Disability Price Tag](#) | [Disability charity Scope UK](#)

able to have direct involvement over, it is pertinent to remember that a reason why some disabled PGs choose Durham may have very little to do with the University itself; leading to higher rates of dissatisfaction if Durham was not their first choice.

5. Some students with more complex medical needs cannot be seen by specialists in clinics in County Durham and are referred to specialist services in the surrounding area, often Newcastle. This adds on an extra burden of spending money on travel to and from clinics all over Newcastle, as well as finding accessible transport and losing time trying to navigate seeking medical care in a different county.
6. Some students who are undiagnosed, especially those who have a specific learning difficulty,⁸ are prevented from getting support because the cost of diagnosis is prohibitive, and/or they do not present symptoms clearly enough or articulately enough to medical staff that allows them a differential diagnosis that can then be accepted by disability services as a recognised condition.⁹
7. Certain conditions are defined as disabilities within the UK¹⁰ which may not be the case internationally, and culturally there may be differing understandings of what constitutes a disability.

Success

1. The University should support diagnosis cost for students who cannot afford it. This can be included through a fast-tracking mechanism to the hardship fund/or specific fund for testing. This budget would be set on a yearly basis and if it is not all used it can go back into the hardship fund.
2. LearnUltra will be increasing the accessibility of Durham's VLE. The roll out of Learn Ultra needs to be supported by staff and have universal buy-in from all staff to make the platform and files accessible.
3. During the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years many students appreciated the flexibility of the exams and the learning experience. While the University is recovering from the pandemic, there needs to be a commitment to continuing these flexible options for students. This means a commitment to installing adequate lecture capture facilities in all teaching spaces.
4. The inaccessibility of Durham's buildings cannot be fixed without a huge financial investment. As this is unlikely to happen, there needs to be recognition from the

⁸ Commonly used to refer to conditions such as ADHD, ADD, dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia among others

⁹ Report written by University of Liverpool on the cost of diagnosing specific learning difficulties by Educational Psychologists.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/definition-of-disability-under-equality-act-2010#:~:text=You're%20disabled%20under%20the,to%20do%20normal%20daily%20activities.>

University that campus is inaccessible, and a working group established to see what can be done for the accessibility of campus.

5. The University needs to be more proactive in supporting students who may not have a confirmed diagnosis, but exhibit certain support needs, especially when this be because of differing cultural understandings.

3. Ethnicity

Access

1. Durham University has been cited as an institution that has a reputation for racism and is unwelcoming to people of colour. This has been stated to be pervasive, coming from both students and faculty alike.¹¹ Due to the experiences of students of colour when they come to Durham at the undergraduate level many do not wish to stay on to a Postgraduate degree.
2. Durham University has very few staff of colour across academic, college and professional support staff, meaning that key anti-racist research is often not done at the University, because there is no established home for it in the University structure or the current workforce to create a research group to adequately tackle anti-racist work.
3. There is an overreliance on certain members of staff to do anti-racist work, which can lead to burnout and subsequently this work being left undone. This work is often done in addition to the person's other duties, and they are therefore not compensated adequately for the work they do. This means the work is often tokenised as a bonus and is not properly budgeted for to continue the work when a particular member of staff stops doing this work/leaves the institution.
4. There is a lack of resources in the University collections that describes PoC's experience, and what is there is often very colonial in narrative. This means that students wishing to look at decolonial narratives are often unable to or forced to ask for access from other institutions and/or buy their own resources. This has further consequences, in that prospective PG students often find other institutions where the resources are better suited to their research and there are adequate amounts of academic staff engaged in this work to be potential supervisors for research and study.
5. This is an issue that starts with undergraduates. The current aims of the University are to recruit more students of colour, without any thought to how to improve the

¹¹ [Students play drinking games with the N word': Black students on racism at Durham \(thetab.com\)](https://thetab.com/news/2019/05/20/black-students-on-racism-at-durham/)

support given and their experience so that they become active ambassadors of the Durham experience as alumni. This recruitment is often done in patronising ways, based on the false assumption that potential students of colour do not apply to Durham because their aspirations are not high enough.¹² This is in itself a racist response. Without breaking down these barriers for undergraduates the work for Postgraduate students will be superfluous due to the pipeline of students going through the higher education system.

Success

1. The current Access and Participation Plan focuses too much on quantitative data as a measure of how diverse the student population is. There needs to be a recognition that 'diversity' is not the answer to fixing the accessibility of Durham's community. Instead, there should be a shift of focus to changing and tackling Durham's culture so that students of colour are not only surviving, they are thriving whilst gaining a top-class degree from a leading institution.
2. The University should take the outcomes of the Durham SU Culture Commission report seriously and commit to making the recommended changes as quickly as possible.¹³ They should further engage in work with students to make sure the actions they take in the future are appropriate and commit to anti-racist action, for the benefit of all students.
3. Decentring REC as the method of creating racial equality. REC in itself is based in the neoliberal concept of the modern University, which puts profit at the heart of the educational structure. In order to further decentre white supremacy from the institution, there needs to be active engagement in supporting students and staff to do this work.

4. Part-Time

Access

1. The option to undertake Part-Time study at the Postgraduate level is not heavily advertised, to the point that it is often discouraged and seen as a last resort by some academics.
2. The financial commitment of a Part-Time degree, while the same as a Full-Time degree, is spread out over a longer amount of time and can place financial strain

¹² AAC/20/74 p6 – raising aspirations is mentioned here in regards to widening participations students, and the phrase is found in most papers for Access & Admissions Committee

¹³ The full culture commission report will be available in October 2021. Interim report: [Microsoft Word - CC InterimReport.docx \(nusdigital.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

on students. This is amplified when students are also supporting families and are having to pay for living expenses on a tight budget.

3. For Postgraduate Taught students, there are not a lot of students who undertake their degrees part-time and for those that do, many face difficulties finding a community as the rest or most of their cohort will change after their first year.
4. For Postgraduate Research students, the drop-out rates for students who are Part-Time is much higher than full-time students.¹⁴ There is a danger that the high drop-out rates will lead to tougher admissions which may then detrimentally impact the ability of underrepresented groups to undertake PGR study.

Success

1. Durham University should reassess the level of support that is currently available and set up dedicated support services specifically for Part-Time students. This can be set up in a similar fashion to the support groups that have been set up for PhD students. This is particularly important not only for peer support and the creation of a community but understanding the reasons for why people opt to complete their degrees part-time. As well as the financial reasons, previously mentioned, there are often other responsibilities such as caring or working which may mean they do not have the extra-time to focus. Understanding these issues in more depth will allow us to develop policies which can help Part-Time students, for example more leniency with deadline extensions and additional or tailored support.
2. The University should facilitate networking between Part-Time students from different courses to create a community and peer support for Postgraduate Taught Students here for more than a year.
3. There should be greater advertisement of Part-Time study as a valid option for students, especially as the cost of Postgraduate education means that for many, working alongside the degree is the only viable option. In addition to this, the University should develop guidance and signpost support for Part-Time students on managing the financial commitment.
4. Durham needs to provide support for students to ensure that students are adequately supported to manage studying part time alongside peers who are full time.
5. We, as a community, need to tackle the stigmatisation of dropping out. Dropping out of a course is not necessarily a bad thing; it is an acknowledgement that the course or the timing isn't right for the person. Shaming them for recognising and prioritising their own needs is counterproductive and decreases faith in the

¹⁴ RDSC/20/02 pp12-14

institution if they are looking to reapply/restart and may give other students who hear about this a negative impression of the institution and may make them more likely to come forward as someone who is struggling for fear of being stigmatised. Challenging the stigma should include changing the way it is used as a metric for success. Instead, we need a more nuanced approach to understand the factors involved in non-continuation and whether additional support could help someone complete.

5. Local Students

Access

1. The make-up of Durham students does not reflect the community that the University is situated within. Durham, as an institution, also has a reputation in the local area of not reflecting the socioeconomics of the region and not being a place where students from the North East go to University.
2. Anecdotally, it is understood that Durham has less students who come from the local area than other regional Universities.
3. In the 2020/21 academic year, attitudes from some students towards students from the region and the region more generally has attracted national press interest as students have highlighted their overwhelmingly negative experiences of being local students at Durham. It is evident that there needs to be a serious commitment to change.
4. The current Access and Participation Plan acknowledges 'the institutional context and commits to distinct regional and national interventions to improve access.'¹⁵

Success

1. Durham needs to commit to extending its current work with local schools from both Durham and the wider North East, alongside creating outreach projects with both University members of staff and its students. This is vital to help combat the perception that the local community have of Durham University and the types of people who come here, which is often an off-putting factor.
2. To improve the access and participation of local postgraduate students at Durham University, this work first needs to begin with attracting more local undergraduate students to Durham. As has previously been mentioned the student culture at Durham is dominated by the undergraduates as they are in the majority, however this is not the main reason. There are many barriers for local students which prevent them coming to Durham when they enter higher education. Without breaking down these barriers

¹⁵ Durham University Access and Participation Plan, p. 12.

for undergraduates the work for Postgraduate students will be superfluous due to the pipeline of students going through the higher education system.

3. There also needs to be a commitment to educating current students on local history and the context of Durham which can become part of the induction programmes to the University. Durham is proud to be a University that attracts people from around the world, and we believe that in conjunction with our Global Strategy we should be championing the history of the North-East and the people who live here.
4. As a community, we should empower people to challenge others' behaviour; there have been far too many examples of people treated unfairly for a multitude of reasons. Often local students are mocked due to local regional accents. Through education and working with the local community we want to create a Durham community where we can continue to attract people from around the world while supporting the local area.

6. Mature Students

Access

1. For Mature student attending Durham, there is not a cohesive community for older students due to the undergraduate centric student lifestyle which often focuses on those who are aged 18-22.
2. The current access and participation plan acknowledges that this is also an issue at the undergraduate level as 'Durham's undergraduate curriculum and student experience is largely designed for young entrants, who have recently been in formal education. Durham has always had a small yet significant mature student population, but these students have been dispersed throughout Durham's collegiate system creating very small populations in otherwise predominantly "young" communities. Durham intends to give further consideration to how we can adapt a student experience that is designed overwhelmingly for young entrants to better suit mature students.'¹⁶
3. Many mature students are coming back to study after a long period of absence and may not be familiar with learning technologies that have progressed during their time away from education. This puts them at a disadvantage to the young students in their cohort, who are used to using such services as part of an educational package to help them with their studies.

Success

1. As a University, more can be done to help create a community through providing networks for mature students.

¹⁶ Durham University Access and Participation Plan, p. 10.

2. There also needs to be a recognition that some students are here to just get a degree, for example for those who are on career-specific degrees, and therefore we need to not fall into the trap of forcing people into the “student” life if it is not for them.
3. Furthermore, the University should develop a programme which will help students transition from working life to studying if students want that support. In this case, it is imperative that everyone knows the support available to them if and when they need it.
4. Similarly, to Part-Time students, there are often higher drop-out rates for mature students who may have competing priorities, such as caring and families.
5. To help support students, there should be a bursary scheme for nursery places at the Durham University Day Nursery to help alleviate caring responsibility and the financial pressure that this can put students under. This will also incentivise those for whom childcare expenses would prohibit them starting University to gain the relevant qualifications and excel.
6. To create a specific collegiate setting for local and mature students to come together. There have been discussions of creating an additional Postgraduate College, this would be welcomed to help foster more of a Postgraduate community at Durham. However, in addition to being for Postgraduates, we believe it could be beneficial to have a college specifically for students aged 21 and over. This is something that already exists at other Collegiate Universities as Cambridge has three colleges exclusively for mature students (Hughes Hall, St Edmund’s College and Wolfson College)¹⁷ and Oxford has Harris Manchester College.¹⁸

7. International

Access

1. The first barrier international students face are the unregulated fees, which although being benchmarked with competitor institutions, are only affordable to a select number of socioeconomically advantaged students. This leads to a lack of diversity in the international student community, where the majority enjoy a lifestyle that a certain amount who are attending Durham supported by scholarships or bursaries cannot partake in. This can impede community building with all international students, as community events and activities are often targeted towards those with the financial means to contribute to them.
2. Many international students arrive and successfully integrate themselves in life in Durham, however there are barriers to this, including an overreliance on UK and

¹⁷ <https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/why-cambridge/support/mature-students>

¹⁸ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/colleges/college-listing/harris-manchester-college>

Durham specific vocabulary in induction, as well as students reporting that staff and UK domiciled students having negative or stereotypical attitudes towards them. The onus is then on the individual student to ask for clarification and challenge negative attitudes, which is an extra burden on top of an academically rigorous course in what may be a student's third or even fourth language.

3. There still exist significant gaps in the attainment for international students, and the continuation rates for PG international students are below those of home domiciled students.
4. The agreed IELTS scores can sometimes vary to admit a student lower than the agreed IELTS threshold; although this is now uncommon through tightening of IELTS scrutiny through the admissions process, a thorough check of this in all PG courses prevents any student being invited and unable to complete due to insufficient English.
5. Due to delays in PGT admissions, Durham is not seen as competitive, and some students choose to accept offers at other competitor universities in order to have enough time to apply for the correct study visa and book an acceptably priced flight to start their course.

Success

1. The induction period needs to be better structured to provide actual help and orientation to PG students, and accessible to people who don't know UK-specific terminology.
2. A smoother applicant journey for PGT admissions so that students feel in control of their application and that they receive timely updates about the status of their application.
3. To provide impetus to students and staff respecting others' cultures and experiences prior to their life and Durham, and to work together to foster an inclusive community open to others' experiences.

8. Gender

Access

1. Whilst there is a generally positive gender balance at PG level, this is skewed towards women statistically taking more PGT courses and men taking more PGR courses, as well as an obvious gender imbalance in the subjects studied.
2. It is unclear how students report a gender outside of the binary, and the fact that this is labelled as "other" could be perceived as derogatory.

3. Certain aspects of Durham's culture have been called out as sexist and transphobic.¹⁹ Although there has been a marked improvement in the handling of sexual violence cases, especially with the report & support tool, there have so far been no real attempts to rectify the more cultural aspects of sexism and transphobia by the University.

Success

1. Create more interest for women in traditionally underrepresented disciplines, starting with challenging stereotypes around research in certain disciplines.
2. To work with the Students' Union to uphold the findings of the Culture Commission and to work to end sexism and transphobia in University spaces.

9. Intersections of disadvantage

It needs to be acknowledged that some will fall into two or more of the identities listed here. This means tackling these issues comprehensively and proactively is imperative if the University wants to recruit these students.

10. Funding

PGR Funding

1. Postgraduate research funding has been severely affected by both the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK's exit from the European Union. The financial aftereffects of these events look likely to continue for the next few years, as the Government works to bring the country out of an unpredicted and unprecedentedly large recession. This lack of funding for projects that may be categorised as more experimental, or do not directly serve niches that funders are looking for is likely to directly impact all of the groups listed above. This means there will need to be a concerted effort from the University to uphold innovation from students and work to make study attractive to those who will excel and help them find funding, rather than falling back on a traditional applicant to prop up a funding gap in a University department.
2. Although financial implications are not the most often cited reason for withdrawal from a PGR programme, the category "other personal" hides a multitude of competing issues, which finance can reasonably be expected to fall into.²⁰ For self-funded students, the pressure of funding themselves through a PGR degree whilst also earning enough to meet living costs can become increasingly difficult and lead to burnout, eventually leading to withdrawal.

¹⁹ Culture commission p9

²⁰ RDSC/20/02 pp5

PGT Funding

3. There is likely to be a dramatic drop in the number of PGT students due to a shrinking economy and funding shortfalls. The current PGT loan from the Student Loan Company does not cover tuition fees for most PGT courses at Durham, so studying is still seen as a massive financial investment for students. This could be helped by incentivising recent Durham graduates with a blanket 25% tuition fee discount, as was arranged last academic year.²¹
4. Durham University also offers the 'Postgraduate Student Support Scholarships' which offer 100 Postgraduate Taught students a scholarship of £3000 if they were in receipt of the full maintenance loan.²² This is often a crucial factor in students being able to continue to the Postgraduate level at Durham. If more funding can be made available for this scholarship, or others targeted at under-represented groups, it would make a huge difference in students being able to access a Postgraduate Taught degree.
5. Furthermore, the information about this scholarship, and the others that are available at Durham,²³ are not often communicated clearly to students. In comparison to at the undergraduate level, funding options are more complicated and confusing. The University can therefore do more to provide guidance on how funding works at the Postgraduate level as well as what opportunities they provide.

11. Communicating to Undergraduates about opportunities to undertake Postgraduate courses

1. Many students who are from under-represented groups, for a variety reasons, feel like undertaking a Postgraduate degree is not something for them.
2. In the 2020/2021 academic year, the Postgraduate Academic officer ran a 'To PG or not To PG' aimed at current undergraduates. The aim of the campaign was not to convince students to go into Postgraduate education, but to inform students so they could make an educated decision. To do this, we used the experience of current Postgrads and drop-in sessions so students could ask any questions they had.
3. Similarly, to information about funding options, Durham University can do more to communicate to students about what options they have when undertaking a Postgraduate degree (ie. Part-Time study) which can expand on the work of the 'To PG or not To PG' campaign.

²¹ [Study : Alumni Fee Scholarship 2021-22 - Durham University](#)

²² <https://www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/finance/funding/bursaries/scholarships/psss/>

²³ <https://www.dur.ac.uk/study/pg/finance/funding/bursaries/scholarships/>

12. Students who did not complete their undergraduate degree at Durham University

1. Durham University attracts students who have previously studied at different universities from across the country and the world, as well as those who chose to stay at Durham after their undergraduate degree.
2. Some students who have come from other Universities have reported feeling isolated and losing confidence because there has been an assumed level of knowledge, especially if they are studying a different subject than they did at undergraduate level.
3. This is something that needs to be taken into account when designing modules to ensure that students are not disadvantaged due to the University that they completed their previous degree at.

13. Bolstering PG communities

1. As already identified within this paper, there is not a cohesive Postgraduate Community at Durham as the student community is dominated by undergraduates.
2. There is, however, existing Postgraduate communities that exist across within the University.
3. Notably, there are Postgraduate Common Rooms (or MCRs)²⁴ which exist within the colleges. The MCRs do a lot for Postgraduates in Durham however unlike the majority of JCRs are run by volunteers rather than Sabbatical Presidents. They also have a quicker turnaround of students, as full-time PGTs are only in Durham for one year, which means it is hard to establish a consistent community. More can be done to help bolster MCRs:
 1. During induction talks representatives from the MCRs should be invited to talk about what the MCRs are, what opportunities they provide students with and how students can get involved. This is something that is often overlooked, however, as there will be a lot of new Postgraduates who will not have previously attended a collegiate University this is important to highlight during induction.
 2. There can also be more done to highlight the work of MCRs across the University, so they are not always an afterthought. This work has already

²⁴ There are different names for the Postgraduate Common Rooms. The majority are referred to as Middle Common Rooms, however there is also the GCR (Graduate Common Room) at Ustinov, the Postgraduate President who leads the Postgraduate Community at Hild Bede's Student Representative Council and the Postgraduate and Mature Student's Committee Chair at Cuth's JCR. Some of the Postgraduate Common Rooms are separate entities to their respective JCRs whereas others form committees or societies within the JCR. This is mainly technical differences but useful to note when talking about MCRs.

begun in the Student Representation Working Group but will need buy-in from across the University to make sure that this is able to improve.

4. There are also several communities of Postgraduates that exist across the University which are more aligned with academic departments. However, there is no list of all these opportunities that exist so often rely on students stumbling upon them, especially if they cover an interdisciplinary subject but are not advertised in multiple departments. Collating this information will help these groups to grow and foster a Postgraduate Community.

14. Housing

1. In comparison to new undergraduate students, most new Postgraduates do not live in their college. This has two major impacts upon the Postgraduate experience: community and stress when trying to find a place to live.
2. Postgraduate Communities within the colleges often rely at those who live in to provide a central community of students. However, in the academic year 2020/21 the number of Postgraduate Rooms available was reduced due to the impact of the 'a-level fiasco'. This has a severe impact on the ability to have a cohesive community.
 1. Therefore, there should be a designated number of rooms in each college which are available for Postgraduates which cannot be reduced to get more undergraduates in college.
3. Furthermore, college accommodation is not guaranteed for Postgraduates. This can cause a lot of stress and anxiety for new students who miss out on college accommodation and therefore must search for accommodation in a city they may be unfamiliar with.
 1. The University should provide more guidance on the housing options and help to facilitate people finding housemates. The Students' Union has a 'Postgraduate Housing Guide',²⁵ however, more should be done by the University to signpost students to this resource and offer guidance.

²⁵ [Postgraduate Housing Guide.pdf \(nusdigital.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://nusdigital.s3.amazonaws.com/Postgraduate_Housing_Guide.pdf)