

Strategic Plan 2021-2025

UK Council for Graduate Education



UK Council for
Graduate Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Who we are

Established in 1994, the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) is the national representative body for postgraduate education and research. The UKCGE is the third largest representative body of its kind in the world, representing 92% of all UK postgraduate research provision and 85% of all UK postgraduate taught provision.

What we do

We champion and enhance postgraduate education and research by enabling collective leadership on the development of postgraduate affairs across UK HEIs, research agencies and funding bodies. We do this by providing learning and professional development events, commissioning research, sharing best-practice developments, and by gathering information and evidence to support policies which promote a strong and sustainable postgraduate sector.

Why we do it

The institutional autonomy of UK Higher Education providers creates a vibrant and diverse higher education sector which meets the needs of a wide range of students and researchers. In that context, we enable collective leadership and foster inter-institutional exchange, to ensure that the postgraduate sector *as a whole* can learn and benefit from the actions and innovations of individual institutions.

Understanding the importance of postgraduate education and research for individuals, for the economy and for society more broadly, we use our collective voice to ensure that postgraduate education and research is properly resourced, structured and recognised within institutional and national policies. Among our charitable objectives, we have specific remits to promote the status, education and training of postgraduates and to advocate for equity and inclusiveness in postgraduate education and research.

Who we work with

We work with, and represent, everyone involved with postgraduate education and research: Pro-Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors with responsibility for postgraduate education and research; Research Supervisors and Doctoral Candidates; Deans and Directors of Graduate Schools, Doctoral Training Partnerships, and Centres for Doctoral Training; Graduate School and Doctoral College Managers; PGT Course Directors and Masters students; and Academic Developers. We also work with research centres; regulators; funding bodies and other interest groups. By serving and representing the postgraduate sector across all levels, we are a trusted voice on all aspects of postgraduate affairs.

How we do it

The Council is an independent educational charity which relies on voluntary contributions from individuals and institutions in the postgraduate sector. We are governed by elected representatives of the postgraduate sector, who serve for a 3-year term. We raise funds through membership subscriptions, event registration fees, research grants, and commercial sponsorship.

What we are doing next: 2021-2025

Strengthening our representation of the sector

- We will give more opportunities for individuals to contribute to the strategic direction of the Council (e.g. by conducting systematic surveys at our annual conference).

Building on our trust and credibility

- We will develop our communications through a new website and an annual review to ensure that our stakeholders retain their confidence in our effectiveness.

Setting standards and expectations

- Building on the success of the *Good Supervisory Practice Framework*, we will seek opportunities to develop that framework, and to build consensus on other areas of postgraduate education and research.

Sustaining the impact of our events

- We will take a more thematic approach to our events programme to create a sustained momentum on key issues (e.g. an annual series on 'recruitment of doctoral researchers')

Developing our role as a knowledge exchange facilitator

- We will stimulate and disseminate the latest research and thinking on postgraduate education and research (e.g. by commissioning literature reviews and data collection and analysis)

What we need in order to deliver our strategic plan

Our board of trustees have taken the decision to invest up to £50k of our charitable reserves in capital projects such as a new website, and – in principle – to use existing charitable reserves to fund fixed-term additional staff costs for specific projects, such as freelance research associates.

To meet our goals over the next 4 years, we will develop strategic partnerships to help build our own capacity. At a national level, this will involve collaborating with UKRI and other sector-wide agencies. It will also include working as a 'third sector' partner to HE institutions and agencies in pursuance of their *Knowledge Exchange Framework* objectives.

Our objectives are underpinned by our plans to grow our income by an average of 6% over the next 4 years. We will achieve this by enhancing participation rates at our events, by growing the number of *Associate Members*, and by diversifying our income by bidding for a broader range of grants and sponsorship opportunities.

UKCGE STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

VISION, MISSION, VALUES

VISION

An equitable and inclusive postgraduate sector which delivers academic excellence and offers high quality supervision, effective leadership and outstanding professional services

MISSION

To enable collective leadership on the development of postgraduate education and research and to provide an evidence-led and trusted voice for the postgraduate sector

VALUES

We believe that our mission is best served by adopting a 'community of practice' ethos, which is captured in our motto 'by the sector, for the sector'. Our values are: mutuality, openness, collegiality, and joint enterprise.

CORE OBJECTIVES

Our remit as a charity is enshrined in our formal articles of association which were drawn up in 1994 (see *Appendix*). Our core objectives are:

Enabling collective leadership for the postgraduate sector

The UKCGE enables collective leadership which provides an evidence-led and trusted voice for the postgraduate sector

Providing advocacy and support

The UKCGE:

- advocates for equity and inclusiveness in postgraduate education and research
- promotes continuing professional development and recognition for staff supporting and supervising postgraduate students and doctoral researchers
- encourages the effective management of postgraduate education and research by sharing innovations and effective practices

THE UKCGE AND THE UK POSTGRADUATE SECTOR

Size of the UK postgraduate population

In 1994-5, when the UKCGE was established, there were 315,400 postgraduates in UK Higher Education. This represented 21% of the total student population at the time.

In 2018-19 there were 585,730 postgraduates in UK Higher Education: 59% female, 39% 30 years or over, 39% part-time, and representing **25% of the total 2018-19 student population**. This is a growth of 86% in enrolments since 1994-5.

Financing the postgraduate sector

In 2017- 18 **income from course fees for all PGT and PGR** courses in the UK amounted to **£2,955M** or 16.54% of the total HE income from course fees. Including income from Research Training Support Grants (from charities and Research Councils) the total income from PG education and research amounted to £3,344M or 17.72% of total HE income from tuition fees and education contracts.

The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) data required by the Office for Students for institutions in England and Northern Ireland shows that in 2017-18 **£2,235M was invested in the ‘Training and supervision of postgraduate research students’**. This figure rises to £2,600M across all UK higher education institutions. Costs associated with PGT delivery are not publicly available.

The scale of the investment involved in training PGRs is periodically a concern for some UKCGE stakeholders. However, as a whole the **UK HE sector remains strong**, and was in receipt of a surplus of £1,827M in 2017/18 (NB the surplus in 2017/18 represents a 21% decrease as compared to surplus generated in 2016/17).

Impact of the size of the postgraduate sector on the UKCGE:

Postgraduate provision is “overlooked in national and institutional strategies” for Higher Education

- The 2012 *Higher Education Commission* report on postgraduate education said: *“The postgraduate sector needs to be **brought in from the cold** and fully embraced as part of an integrated education system”*.
- The UKCGE receives regular anecdotal testimonies from its stakeholders which suggest that postgraduate provision is **often overlooked in strategic decision making** by the senior leadership within HEIs due to the dominance of undergraduate provision

Staffing the postgraduate sector

There are **149 UK Higher Education Institutions with Research Degree Awarding Powers** (of which 80% are institutional members of the UKCGE). There are 211,980 academic staff (49%), and 217,580 non-academic staff (51%) in HE. There are no agreed statistics on the number of HE staff involved in the provision of postgraduate education and research.

However, assuming that staff time matches the size of the postgraduate population would mean that 25% of all teaching time and professional service support is given over to postgraduate education and research. This equates to a FTE of 37,000 academic and 54,395 non-academic staff, and **equivalent staff costs of £1,891M (academic) and £2,316M (non-academic)**.

The UKCGE ensures that this investment in postgraduate provision is **effectively used** by fostering inter-institutional **benchmarking and practice sharing**.

Non-HEI bodies with an interest in postgraduate education and research

The UK postgraduate sector has a number of key stakeholders who do not themselves have research degree awarding powers. For example:

- UK Research and Innovation – comprised of 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England
- Devolved bodies – e.g. Office for Students; Scottish Funding Council; HEFCW; QAA; QAA Scotland
- Learned Societies – e.g. the British Academy; Royal Society; and the Society for Research into Higher Education
- Membership Organisations – e.g. Universities UK; VITAE; ARMA; UKCISA; ARC
- Research Centres – e.g. Francis Crick Institute; Alan Turing Institute; Research on Research Institute
- Mission Groups – e.g. University Alliance’s Doctoral Training Alliance; or Russell Group’s DDoGs network
- Funding bodies – e.g. Wellcome Trust; Leverhulme Trust; Commonwealth Scholarship Commission

The UKCGE may occasionally overlap with the interests or services of any of these bodies, and many of them are or should be Associate Members of the UKCGE. What remains distinctive about the UKCGE in relation to other non-HEI organisations is that it is the **national representative body** dedicated solely to postgraduate education and research.

International representative organisations for postgraduate education and research

The UKCGE has a number of counterparts globally with whom we actively collaborate. Ranked by institutional membership, the UKCGE is the **third largest representative body** for postgraduate education and research in the world:

- European Universities’ Association - Council for Doctoral Education, founded in 2008, now has 256 members
- Australian Council for Graduate Research has 46 members
- Council of Graduate Schools has nearly 500 members across the United States and Canada
- Canadian Association for Graduate Studies, founded in 1962, has 58 members.

HOW THE UKCGE WORKS

The UK Council for Graduate Education is an educational charity which champions and enhances the provision of postgraduate education through its programme of events, research, mentoring, and policy advocacy. It is a membership organisation comprised predominately of higher education institutions.

In 1993 Professor Sir Robert Burgess convened a steering group to discuss the formation of a UK representative body for postgraduate education and research, in response both to the growth UK postgraduate provision and with an increasing awareness that the UK was disadvantaged by its lack of a national representative body for postgraduate education and research in comparison to North American counterparts. The UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) was subsequently founded in 1994.

Governance

The UKCGE elects **12 trustees** to serve a 3-year term from its membership, and appoints up to **4 further trustees** on a 1 year co-option (extendable for one further year). A postgraduate researcher is periodically appointed to as an advisor to the board.

Staff and volunteers

There are **3.5 FTE** members of staff: Director (PT); Marketing and University Liaison Officer (FT); Events Officer (FT); and Administrative Officer (PT).

Staff costs over the next 4 years will be an average of **54% of total income**.

The Council enlists the support of between **20-30 volunteers** from across the sector per year to govern, facilitate and advise.

Turnover

The average annual turnover in the financial model over the next 4 years is **£295k**

UKCGE membership

In any given year there is an average membership rate of **144**, of which **82%** are Higher Education Institutions with Research Degree Awarding Powers.

UKCGE marketing and communications

- There are **1,582** active members of the UKCGE mailing list
- There are **6,298** 'returning visitors' to the UKCGE website in any one year
- The UKCGE Twitter profile has **2,219** followers

Assuming that 90% of our stakeholders offer us multi-channel support means that we have an engaged network of **6,685** individuals.

Event Participation

Each year for the next 4 years, there will be an average participation of **562** event participants

HOW WE DELIVER OUR VISION

1— Enabling collective leadership

The UK Council for Graduate Education is committed to:

- Providing an **evidence-led** and **trusted** voice for the postgraduate sector
- Enabling **collective leadership** across all levels to enhance the postgraduate sector

What we do to achieve our vision

Objective	Operational areas and projects	Outputs
Providing evidence on developments in postgraduate sector	Monitor annual HESA / Advance HE statistics on postgraduate participation	RESOURCE: Publish an annual summary of postgraduate participation
	Conduct periodic surveys of postgraduate providers to determine institutional trends	RESOURCE: Publish 5-yearly reports on institutional structures in postgraduate education
	Monitor the latest research on postgraduate education	RESOURCE: Publish a series of 6 annual <i>Research-in-Focus</i> interviews with authors of influential research
	Monitor the latest policies affecting postgraduate education and research	RESOURCE: Publish periodic policy briefings summarising policy developments
Being a trusted voice for the postgraduate sector	Monitor and assess challenges faced by postgraduate education providers	EVENTS: Maintain a series of 4 annual free-to-attend regional forum meetings
	Investigate effective practices in meeting challenges faced by postgraduate education providers	NETWORKS: Develop a series of 'task and finish' groups to investigate key challenges and disseminate findings
	Maintaining transparency about UKCGE governance and strategic priorities	RESOURCE: Produce an annual survey of members to review priorities & publication of UKCGE annual review
GOVERNANCE: Maintain well-publicised election to governing body		

Enabling collective leadership	Develop forums to share challenges for specific professional roles	NETWORKS / EVENTS: Support 'communities of practice' by serving specific professional roles with newsletters and 4 networking events per year
	Respond to national consultations on the development of postgraduate education and research	RESOURCE: Monitor and respond to consultations on developments in postgraduate education and research, and publicly publish Council responses

2— Providing advocacy and support

The UK Council for Graduate Education promotes:

- **Equity** and **inclusiveness** in postgraduate education and research
- Continuing **professional development** and **recognition** for staff supporting and supervising postgraduates
- **Effective management** of postgraduate education and research

What we do to achieve our vision

Objective	Operational areas and projects	Outputs
Advocating for equity and inclusiveness in postgraduate education and research	Monitor developments in inclusiveness & widening participation at postgraduate level	NETWORKS: Convene task and finish groups to assess developments and/or gaps in inclusiveness & widening participation
	Share effective practices for supporting inclusiveness in PG	EVENTS: Include equity & inclusiveness in calls for papers; develop free-of-charge 'roundtable' discussion model on inclusiveness
Supporting continuing professional development and recognition for staff and supervisors	Provide mentoring and networking opportunities	EVENTS: Include institutional case studies and peer-to-peer learning opportunities in professional networking events
	Build consensus on consistent practices on aspects of postgraduate provision	RESOURCES: Pilot and publish frameworks / guides / templates on e.g. research supervision; collaborative supervision
	Showcase and celebrate innovative practices	RESOURCES: publish blog series highlighting successful practices
Promoting effective management of postgraduate education and research	Share effective practices and innovations in the management of postgraduate education and research	EVENTS: Maintain an annual series of 8 thematic workshops focussed on the different issues in the provision of postgraduate education and research
	Identify gaps in consistent practices across the sector	RESOURCE: Publish periodic reports / case studies to promote effective practices & highlight potential shortcomings in provision

DELIVERING THE 4-YEAR PLAN

2021-2025: Building on our strengths

The UK Council for Graduate Education is a medium-sized charity which depends for its effectiveness and its credibility on the voluntary support it generates from members of the postgraduate sector. This 4 year plan remains true to our 'by the sector, for the sector' ethos, which is fundamental to our credibility as the representative body for postgraduate education and research.

Through this 4 year plan we will strengthen our representation of the sector by: finding new ways of engaging our stakeholders and beneficiaries; raising our external profile so as to leverage more influence on behalf of the postgraduate sector; delivering greater impact by taking a more systematic approach to our events programme and publications.

Strengthening our representation of the sector

We will strengthen our representation of the postgraduate sector by:

- conducting systematic surveys to gauge perceptions on our own performance against our strategic plan
- giving greater opportunities for individuals to share their own perspective on developments in the postgraduate sector through interviews, case studies and forums
- giving greater opportunities for postgraduate researchers and students to be involved in our activities
- enabling our governing body to use its voice to anticipate and lead on developments in the postgraduate sector, in addition to fulfilling its charitable obligations as a board of trustees

Building on our trust and credibility

We will strengthen our relationships with our stakeholders and raise our external profile by:

- developing our communications through a new website which gives greater opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions
- offering an annual review of our performance to ensure that our stakeholders retain their confidence in our effectiveness
- enhancing our support for special interest groups on issues affecting equity and inclusiveness in postgraduate education and research

Sustaining the impact of our events

We will deliver greater impact with our events programme by:

- taking a thematic approach to our events programme to create a sustained momentum on key issues (e.g. an annual series on ‘recruitment of doctoral researchers’)
- enhancing the ‘community of practice’ ethos of our professional networks by incentivising repeat engagement with our network meetings and communications

Developing our role as a knowledge exchange facilitator

We will stimulate and disseminate the latest research and thinking on postgraduate education and research by:

- monitoring annual HESA statistics on postgraduate participation and publishing summaries and comment
- commissioning research on key areas of concern in the development of postgraduate education and research
- creating opportunities for doctoral training partnerships to collaborate with us through PGR work placements and a collaborative doctoral award

Setting standards and expectations

We will benchmark standards and expectations in postgraduate education and research by:

- developing the UKCGE *Good Supervisory Practice Framework* to be recognised as the national standard for effective practice in research supervision
- influencing the development of national policies to improve the postgraduate student and researcher experiences

APPENDIX 1 – UKCGE CHARITABLE OBJECTIVES

Aims and Objectives of the UKCGE

The UK Council for Graduate Education is established for the public benefit to advance the education of graduates within the UK. In furtherance of this it may promote:

- (i) The interests of graduate education in all disciplines in Higher Education Institutions.
- (ii) A distinct identity for graduate education and research in Higher Education.
- (iii) The development of quality and quality measures for graduate education and research conducted in Higher Education Institutions.
- (iv) The effective leadership and management of graduate education.
- (v) The status, education and training of postgraduate students.
- (vi) Effective infrastructural provisions for graduate education including appropriate funding.
- (vii) Equal opportunities for students in graduate education.
- (viii) The professional development and status of staff and supervisors in Higher Education Institutions.

Powers the UKCGE is permitted to use in furtherance of its aims and objectives

- (i) Organise or assist in organising meetings, conferences, seminars and training courses and publish or assist in publishing reports, periodicals, books or other documents or information.
- (ii) Promote and carry out or assist in promoting and carrying out research surveys and investigations and publish the useful results thereof.
- (iii) Obtain, collect and receive money by way of grants, donations, bequests, legacies or other lawful method provided that the Council may not engage in any form of permanent trading.
- (iv) Receive money on deposit or loan and borrow or raise money in such a manner as the Council shall think fit subject to such consents as may be required by law.
- (v) Invest the monies of the Council not immediately required for the furtherance of the said objects in or upon such investments, securities or property as may be thought fit subject nevertheless to such conditions (if any) as may for the time being be imposed or required by law.

- (vi) Employ and pay any person or persons not being a member of the Executive Committee to supervise, organise and carry on the work of the Council and make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of remuneration to employees.
- (vii) Promote and organise co-operation in the achievements of the above objects and to that end to work in association with Universities, Research Councils and Foundations, Government Departments, Statutory Agencies and other bodies in Britain and abroad engaged in the furtherance of the above subjects.
- (viii) Do all such other lawful things as may be necessary for the attainment of the above subjects or any of them.