



Graduate Education at Oxford – major challenges

Emma Potts

May 2014

Oxford - context

- Oxford **student body** – 22,000 students
 - 9,850 postgraduates
 - 62% are non-UK
- Countries: USA/China/Germany/Canada/India
- Large continuing education department – mixture of ug and pg Oxford qualifications, alongside online and distance learning
- Oxford's **annual income** in 2012/13 - £1086.9m
 - Income from external research contracts - 40% of total
 - More than 80 spin-off companies have been created.

Oxford – organisational structure

- 50 academic departments, divided into four divisions
 - Mathematical, Physical and Life Sciences (MPLS) – 2443 PG
 - Medical Sciences (MSD) – 1381 PG
 - Humanities – 1720 PG
 - Social Sciences – 3558 PG
- **Decision-making** is devolved to divisions and departments - have their own administrative structures.

Oxford – the Colleges

- Academics generally employed by one of the 38 colleges of the University as well as by the central University itself.
- Students are members of both College and university – benefit of a large internationally-renowned institution and a **small interdisciplinary academic community** in college.
- College services and central services (DAS, Counselling, Careers)

Graduate experience

- Graduate students - split into PGT and PGR - 54% are PGR
- Annual survey of all UG and PG students using the student barometer – since 2010
- Identified concerns that have been addressed – more practical:
 - Setting up a bank account
 - Welcome service (airport etc)
 - Disability Advisory Service

Key areas of concern – study-related

- Explanation of assessment/marking criteria
 - Working with departments to make this more transparent
- Opportunities for work experience as part of studies
 - Talk about Careers in a moment
- Feedback on coursework (has improved slightly in recent years, but still low)
 - Working with departments
 - Development of online systems – Graduate Supervision System
- PGR - Opportunities to teach
 - Remains low, not a structured approach

Key areas of concern – welfare

- Funding - 1000 fully-funded scholarships in 2014/15
 - Donor funding, matched by the University and Colleges – includes prestigious Rhodes scholarships
 - Research studentships funded by research councils and industry – four-year doctoral training programmes – just under 200 per year
 - But still insufficient – 61% satisfaction for PGR, 41% for PGT
- Cost of accommodation
- Cost of living
- College sports facilities – lots of grass, lacking elsewhere...
- Good satisfaction with DAS, Counselling

Careers

- 30% of Oxford undergraduates continue their studies after graduation; 19% of PG students go on to further study
 - Internships
 - Employer presentations
 - 15 Recruitment fairs
 - 250 Employer presentations
 - Innovative and unique learning programmes – Springboard for Women, Insight into teaching
 - Specific career development for PG

What do we need to know to improve?

- Understand any differences between UG and PG in the way they engage
- Differences between students who progress from UG to PG within institution or come from outside?
- Differences between international and domestic students
- Impact of funding on progress
- Impact of wider engagement – volunteering, social impact activities