

Practical steps to support access to Postgraduate Taught study

Representation remains highly relevant when considering widening participation at postgraduate level. A perceived lack of diversity in the postgraduate student cohort and within academia can be a barrier to further study for students from non-traditional backgrounds. Offering access to diverse role models, within the student, alumni and academic community, can open up access to postgraduate study. We used our willing PG students as role models, acting as ambassadors, speakers and mentors.

It would be wrong to assume that because a student has applied for and been accepted onto an undergraduate course, they simply understand what further study is. **Some students may lack access to role models** within their immediate family or friendship network who are able to outline what further study is, and what it entails. Offering access to Academic staff and current Masters students, as well as information on topics such as academic skills development and how to develop personal statements for further study, is highly important.

To help students engage with further study, clear language should be used to articulate and **demystify the topic**. Practitioners should not assume knowledge and should ensure students are clear on their options to overcome any preconceptions they may have about entering into further study. Common questions include “What is further study?”, “What support is available to progress on?” and “What are the differences between different postgraduate courses?”

Students should be supported to make informed decisions about further study – widening participation at PGT is not simply a recruitment exercise. Bear this in mind throughout your activity, enable students to become well informed on all relevant topics, and to be confident in this knowledge. Enable them to consider Postgraduate study as one of the options for them after graduation, but not the only route.

Work across the institution as much as possible in order to maximise engagement with target group students. Specifically, working with Undergraduate Student Support colleagues, Personal Tutors and those in Employability/Careers roles, was essential to our student comms and the wider programme of delivery. Consider how your Careers colleagues can help to embed the Postgraduate offer into their Information, Advice and Guidance for students considering their next steps.

Offering a **range of ways for students to engage** is important when working with a diverse cohort. The project made use of webinar sessions, as well as face to face events, which were both popular with students. Focus groups and research highlighted that this approach supports students who have other commitments, such as working part-time or having caring responsibilities.

Support with transition into Masters Courses is also needed, given the often unforeseen step up into higher level study. Pre-arrival resources can provide a useful source of information for students and enable them to get a better understanding of what Masters study will *really* be like.