

The British Academy

**Review of Graduate Studies
in the
Humanities and Social Sciences**

MAIN REPORT

September 2001

The British Academy

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Preparation of this report

This report has been commissioned by the Council of the British Academy. It has been prepared by the British Academy's Graduate Studies Review Committee. The members of the Committee were:

Chairman

Professor Robert Bennett	University of Cambridge	Geography
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Humanities

Professor John Davies	University of Liverpool	Ancient History and Classics
Professor Paul Slack	University of Oxford	History
Professor Marian Hobson	University of London	Languages
Baroness Onora O'Neill	University of Cambridge	Philosophy

Social Sciences

Professor John Bell	University of Leeds	Law
Professor Harvey Goldstein	University of London	Statistical Methods/Education
Professor Tim Ingold	University of Aberdeen	Anthropology
Professor Kenneth Wallis	University of Warwick	Econometrics

Secretariat

Mr Peter Brown	Secretary of the Academy
Ms Vivienne Hurley	Secretary of the Committee

Terms of Reference

The Committee was working to the following terms of reference.

- to examine and report on the current state of postgraduate studies in the humanities and social sciences in the UK;
- to gather statistical data, covering a ten-year period, on the composition of the postgraduate student population, analysing in particular the proportion of home-based students and the sources of their funding;
- to consider the present financial arrangements and any particular factors that act as a disincentive to postgraduate study;
- to make relevant international comparisons;
- to consider the implications for the health of the various academic disciplines and the recruitment of the next generation of staff in UK universities.

Executive Summary and Recommendations

The British Academy is the national academy for the humanities and social sciences. As an independent voice for both the humanities and social sciences, the Academy is in a unique position to undertake a Review of how changes in postgraduate studies are influencing the intellectual health of the nation. The Academy has mounted a Review of Graduate Studies to examine the current state of postgraduate research studies in the humanities and social sciences in the UK. The Review's work has been carried out by a committee of eight members (under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Bennett), who represent a broad range of subjects within the humanities and social sciences. The Committee consulted widely, including all those with an interest in the funding and support of postgraduate research. It concentrated on seven questions which are the main focus of this report. The Committee gathered statistical evidence specifically designed to address these questions and undertook a large-scale survey of all heads of department in the humanities and social sciences to ensure that they were well informed about the concerns felt by those well placed to make informed comments.

The arts, humanities and social sciences have not been given as high priority in many studies or initiatives as have science and technology. However, the contribution of arts, humanities and social sciences to the knowledge economy is arguably as high or higher than science and technology, and its support costs within HE are often much lower. The recent announcement by HEFCE of a review of investment needs for teaching and research in arts and humanities is therefore most welcome, as is the postgraduate review by the AHRB, and the likely move to grant research council status to the AHRB. However, more needs to be done not only for arts and humanities, but also for social sciences, and for financial support to HE postgraduate research as a whole, not just in small scale initiatives. Our report below assesses the scale of the task, first for postgraduates and then for academic staff.

The Questions we addressed

Q1 Is there currently a problem in attracting good quality PhD students?

Main findings: The evidence indicates that whilst graduate studies in the arts, humanities and social sciences appear to be relatively healthy, this conceals some important underlying problems. There are several subjects where there has been a decline in both the output of PhD students and the numbers recently recruited to PhD study (particularly Economics, Financial Management, Linguistics, Chinese, Communications and European Languages).

Q2 Is there any evidence that the quality of the postgraduate research students recruited in the future may change?

Main findings: The data suggest that there is a growing concern generally about both the number and the quality of postgraduate research students, and there are more urgent concerns in Business and Management Studies, Financial Management and Communications.

Q3 Are the numbers of PhD students sufficient for the replenishment of the academic profession and the needs of the economy and intellectual health of the nation?

Main findings: There is evidence of a shortfall in the number of PhD students, needed either to replenish the academic profession or to provide a sufficient supply of highly trained researchers to meet the needs of other areas of British economy and society. The areas of particular concern are Education, where the number of retirements is due to rise rapidly in the next few years as a result of the age profile of staff in this area, Accountancy, Business and Management Studies, Media and Communications, French, German and Spanish, and Creative and Performing Arts.

Q4 What factors are acting as incentives/disincentives to potential PhD students?

Main findings: Debt (both accumulated from undergraduate study and prospective for postgraduate study) is a major deterrent to potential PhD students. It also has a major impact on the recruitment of PhD students because a high proportion of postgraduates are self-funded as a result of the number of studentship awards being insufficient. There are indications that a self-selection of students is occurring at the PhD recruitment stage of those willing or able to bear continuing high levels of debt. We fear that this will cause further decline in the quality of doctoral students and hinder efforts to increase social inclusiveness.

Q5 Is there currently a problem in attracting or retaining good quality academic staff?

Main findings: For most subjects falling within the remit of the Review, the recruitment of new academic staff in the future is of greater concern than the retention of existing staff. There are signs that some subjects are experiencing major difficulties in the recruitment of academic staff. These include Business Studies, Economics, Psychology, Law and Education.

Q6 Is there any evidence that the quality of the academic staff recruited in the future may change?

Main findings: The academic profession is perceived as being no longer attractive to potential PhD students. The difficulties in obtaining a career-track academic post after completion of PhDs, together with low starting salaries and low rates of progression in comparison with those obtained in professions outside academia, are deterrents to potential high-flying PhD students.

Q7 Are there any specific fields that are endangered by recruitment and retention problems, and are there any emerging fields that have specific recruitment and retention problems?

Main findings: Our analyses have identified many areas of the arts, humanities and social sciences that give grounds for concerns. There is good reason to fear that expertise in these areas will soon be lost, with serious implications for teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as for research. We are also concerned that the demonstrable difficulties faced by specific subjects areas are an early indicator of the problems that will affect all subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences unless urgent action is taken.

Recommendations

Our recommendations seek to specify the special initiatives and policy changes that are required. The most important of these are financial requirements: to provide to postgraduate research sufficient priority and resources to allow it to compete for the highest quality minds in order to maintain and develop Britain's knowledge based economy. These requirements should be of urgent concern to the DfES, HEFCE, OST and the Research Councils in the Spending Reviews in this and subsequent years. Our recommendations are grouped below according to priority.

PRIORITY 1

R1 Allow phased waiving of student debt

One of the arguments in support of the introduction of student loans and the changes in the funding arrangements for undergraduate study was that graduates benefited financially from higher education, and so should contribute towards the costs of their education. These financial arguments do not apply to those who decide to stay on to undertake postgraduate studies with a view either to entering the academic profession or the wider research support community to industry and other sectors. In these areas, academic and other research salaries will rarely recoup the income foregone over the PhD training period. As a result, young researchers and lecturers will find it difficult to start paying off their loans when they first obtain a position. In view of the recent announcement by the Government that it is considering whether postgraduate trainee teachers in shortage subjects should have their student loans written off over a ten-year period, provided that they stay in the state teaching sector, we would argue that similar measures should be considered in order to boost academic recruitment, particularly in shortage areas. We believe that this would act as a significant incentive for those considering whether to take up an academic career.

PRIORITY 2

R2 Increase the level of stipend for PhD students and keep under review

We welcome the increase in stipend for postgraduate research students in the humanities and social sciences, which will be increased in stages from £6,800 in 2000 to £9,000 by 2003. However, we believe this is still wholly inadequate and will not solve the difficulties that many subjects within the humanities and social sciences are experiencing in attracting and recruiting good quality PhD students. The stipend level needs to be increased to £12,000 at current prices (outside London), more or less in line with that already paid by the Wellcome Trust. This level recognises the PhD as a stage in the training and recruitment process for researchers to academia and research roles in the civil service, industry and other organisations. We recommend the use of the concept of a "training" stipend as a modernisation of the research student

concept in line with that in other professions, such as Accountancy or Law. The level then needs to be reviewed annually in line with comparable recruitment salaries. There should also be regular reviews to assess the impact of this new funding regime on students' intentions to undertake postgraduate study.

R3 Allow postgraduates to apply for student loans

In view of the significance of postgraduate study for the knowledge economy, we believe that postgraduates should be able to obtain loans through the Student Loan Scheme. Postgraduates not in receipt of a studentship (either from the AHRB, ESRC or the host institution) should be granted eligibility to the Student Loans Scheme. We believe that this would significantly promote access to postgraduate education.

R4 Introduce greater flexibility and special initiatives targeted at important 'endangered' and 'emerging' subjects

We consider that a number of initiatives should be established in order to redress shortages in specific subject areas where there are extreme difficulties of recruitment, or where key areas of expertise that are central to that subject are in danger of being lost. Since subjects evolve and develop, these have to be treated flexibly and regularly reviewed after wide consultation. In addition to the initiatives already announced by the HEFCE, we also urge that Government and other funding bodies should give careful consideration to the following proposals:

- Encouraging greater flexibility in grants and stipends to encourage recruitment in some areas
- Earmarking funds for areas of national need
- Support for collaborative training programmes in shortage subject areas, particularly with small total numbers. These collaborations might take the form of regional and interdisciplinary groupings. In this way, academic staff in shortage areas that are based at different universities or different departments would be able to pool their expertise.

R5 Improve academic pay and conditions

The evidence gathered by the Bett Report demonstrated that academic salaries were considerably less than those in comparable parts of the public and private sectors. The Report found that there were particular problems at the bottom and top ends of the salary ranges. We urge that action is taken urgently to redress this deficiency. The evidence of our Review suggests that the starting salary and subsequent progression act as a particularly strong disincentive to entry to graduate training. We believe that the starting salary needs to be increased to £22,000 to be sufficiently attractive: i.e. the Bett levels. This figure needs to be kept under regular annual review in order to retain attractiveness compared to recruitment salaries in other sectors.

R6 Develop greater flexibility in the support of research students (new schemes to support part-time students and schemes in partnership with HE institutions and external collaborators)

More flexible funding should be made available for studentships in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The additional flexibility in the funding arrangements for postgraduates should reflect changes in the profile of students

undertaking study. This might also allow the number of awards to be increased. We welcome some of the developments associated with ‘New Route’ PhDs and propose that further consideration should be given to (i) establishing other new schemes to support part-time students, and (ii) introducing schemes in partnership with HE institutions and external collaborators.

Part-time student numbers have risen steadily in the last ten years, yet the funding available has remained fairly static. There is anecdotal evidence that such students may become increasingly important to certain subjects, as younger candidates become increasingly deterred by low salaries and the growing level of student debt. There is already a number of subjects within the humanities and social sciences, such as Law and Education, where efforts are being made to attract professionals in the field who wish to move from a commercial environment. Many of the respondents to our Heads of Department Survey believe that universities should do more to recognise the special needs of part-time students. We also understand that some universities do not permit students to undertake PhDs on a part-time basis, and we would encourage them to do so.

There are, however, concerns about the quality of the applications for part-time postgraduate research awards. Some have argued that the most able students will seek an award to study full-time, and that many of those seeking part-time awards have been unsuccessful in the competition for full-time awards.

For these reasons, development of part-time awards is not straightforward. We believe that the ESRC and the AHRB should establish a pilot scheme targeted at some subjects, in collaboration with universities, in order to attract and fund part-time research students with relevant professional skills. Institutions could be required to bid competitively for a quota of awards. As part of the bidding process, these institutions would have to show that they recognise the special needs of part-time students and can provide the necessary support for them.

Many institutions already part-fund graduate studies by a variety of part-time teaching posts and scholarships. The EPSRC has recognised this flexibility by introducing a new structure of “doctoral training grants”. We consider that the AHRB and the ESRC should also give urgent consideration to ways in which they can offer part-awards in partnership with institutions, especially in areas of identified shortage and need. This would be one way in which a national strategy could be developed in order to address areas under threat.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

R7 Increase the number of postdoctoral fellowships

We consider that the number of postdoctoral fellowships is currently far too low to meet the need for trained researchers. The total number of postdoctoral awards should be increased. Because many social science and humanities research students are self-financing compared with other disciplines, they need particular subsequent assistance.

R8 Improve the marketing of postgraduate opportunities and research careers by the OST/Research Councils/AHRB/British Academy/Universities

We consider that more should be done to raise the profile of postgraduate research and also the academic profession. We should like to encourage the OST,

the ESRC, the AHRB, the British Academy and universities to work together in order to promote more effectively the opportunities that are available.

R9 Ensure that there is comparability between the grant levels for masters and PhD awards in the humanities

We believe that careful consideration should be given to the balance of masters and PhD awards. It is important that there should be a sufficiently large pool of potential candidates for PhD study. A larger number of masters awards would help to ensure this. We are concerned that there has been a proposal in the humanities for different levels of grant for masters and PhD students. This is not an issue, however, in the social sciences since the funding for such students will be derived from the first year of the 1+3 award to undertake a masters programme leading directly onto PhD study. We understand that the AHRB is still considering this proposal and we urge them to maintain parity in value of awards.

R10 Increase the number of awards available in the arts, humanities and social sciences

We believe that the skills gained during a PhD in the arts, humanities and social sciences are crucial to ensuring the supply of trained researchers for a wide variety of careers, not solely for academic careers. In addition, the UK should be striving to maintain the HE sector's standards of excellence by encouraging more of the most talented undergraduates to stay on to undertake postgraduate study in preparation for an academic career. The widespread perception amongst undergraduates of the lack of postgraduate awards in the arts, humanities and social sciences has deterred many high quality candidates from undertaking postgraduate study. In view of the increases in undergraduate debt, we fear that even more will be deterred in the future. In the past, a high proportion of research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences have supported their studies themselves. Whether, in general, they will be able or willing to do so in the future is doubtful, as their level of accumulated debt is likely to increase. We are also concerned that those who do choose to continue are increasingly those able or willing to take on high levels of debt, thus undermining the objective of graduate training being more socially inclusive.

In order to address this, we consider that there should be a greater number of awards available to research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Our view is also shared by the majority of the heads of department in the arts, humanities and social sciences who responded to our Survey. This was the most frequent answer provided in response to a question on how a greater number of high calibre students could be encouraged to undertake PhD study.

R11 Protect institutional support arrangements for research students

Universities themselves are the single most important source of funding for full-time UK research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences. It is therefore important that any changes in the way in which universities are funded should take account of their role in funding postgraduate research students in these subject areas. We are concerned about the implications of the HEFCE's proposal to modify its funding formula by changing the volume measures. This will reduce incentives to recruit research staff and students. We are concerned that this will reduce an important, indirect source of support for research students. We urge the HEFCE to reconsider this proposal.

R12 Review the subject classifications for national data on HE

National data on staff and student numbers are collected in rather broad subject categories. As a result, it is currently difficult to identify subject areas which may be experiencing difficulties in the recruitment and retention of students and staff. We hope that the proposed expansion of the subject classifications used by UCAS and HESA will help to alleviate such difficulties in the future.

R13 Monitor the impact of changes in prior preparation for undergraduate studies

There is some evidence that the traditional initial preparation for some subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences at secondary schools has in recent years become rather limited in its breadth and depth. Given the competitive qualifications framework of UK HE, universities' attempts to redress these deficiencies at undergraduate level are often hampered by the lack of time available. We urge that further work should be undertaken in this area to assess the extent of the problem and possible remedies.

Introduction

Why the Review was established

1. The British Academy is the national academy for the humanities and social sciences. Its primary purpose is to promote research and scholarship. The Academy aims to represent the interests of scholarship nationally and internationally; to give recognition to excellence; to promote and support advanced research; to further international collaboration and exchange; to promote public understanding of research and scholarship; and to publish the results of research. As an independent voice for both the humanities and social sciences, the Academy is in a unique position to undertake a Review of how changes in postgraduate studies are influencing the intellectual health of the nation.
2. The Council of the Academy has been concerned that there are worrying signs of a decline of postgraduate research in Britain. Anecdotal evidence has emerged that in certain subjects the overall numbers of British applicants are diminishing, that in others many of the most able undergraduates are reluctant to continue into postgraduate research work, and that the implications for the recruitment of the next generation of academic staff in British universities are serious.
3. In view of the concerns expressed to the Academy, the Review focuses heavily on issues relating to the recruitment of postgraduate research students and the replenishment of academic staff in the humanities and social sciences. However, postgraduate research does not act solely as a preparation for an academic career. Hence, the Review is concerned also to highlight where dangers are emerging for the wider contributions to the UK's knowledge economy and to the nation's culture and society as a whole.

Terms of reference

4. The Academy has mounted a Review of Graduate Studies, in order to examine the current state of postgraduate research studies in the humanities and social sciences in the UK, and to consider the implications for the health of the various academic disciplines and the recruitment of the next generation of staff in UK universities, as well as the wider implications for the economy. (The Committee's full terms of reference are shown on page iv).

Membership of the Review Committee

5. The Review's work has been carried out by a committee of eight members, appointed by the Academy and drawn in equal numbers from the humanities and social sciences. Profiles of the members are included on page iv. Under the chairmanship of Professor Robert Bennett, the Committee met on a regular basis between June 2000 and April 2001 to oversee the direction of the Review and to consider the evidence.

The Committee's approach

6. The Committee aimed to conduct a targeted review, and it took a two-pronged approach to the way in which it should tackle the issues relating to the recruitment of postgraduate research students and the recruitment and retention of academic staff. First, it consulted widely in order to identify the areas where there were specific concerns, and to shape the direction that the Review should take. Second, it used the findings from its consultation exercises to determine the questions that it should address, and the qualitative and quantitative evidence that it would require.
7. *The consultation process* The Committee consulted those with an interest in the funding and support of postgraduate research. The bodies consulted included:
- the Research and Funding Councils
 - the AHRB
 - other funding bodies for postgraduate research
 - the subject associations
 - specific universities representing different aspects of the issues that would be explored in relation to graduate recruitment, such as high proportions of overseas students, specialist subject areas, and high proportions of part-time students.
 - the National Postgraduate Committee which represents the interests of postgraduates in the UK

A list of all those consulted is shown in Appendix 1.

8. *The questions addressed* The Committee focused its attention on seven questions which are the main focus of this report.
- (1) Is there currently a problem in attracting good quality PhD students?
 - (2) Is there any evidence that the quality of postgraduate research students recruited in the future may change?
 - (3) Are the numbers of PhD students sufficient: for the replenishment of the academic profession and for the wider contribution they make to other areas of the nation's economy and cultural life?
 - (4) What factors are acting as incentives/disincentives to potential PhD students?
 - (5) Is there currently a problem in attracting or retaining good quality academic staff?
 - (6) Is there any evidence that the quality of the academic staff recruited in the future may change?
 - (7) Are there any specific fields that are endangered by recruitment and retention problems, and are there any emerging fields that have specific recruitment and retention problems?

The findings from our analysis of these questions lead us to conclusions and recommendations for reform, including whether special initiatives are required in order to address the problems identified.

9. *The evidence* To supplement the consultation process and the evidence already available from other bodies, this review undertook further survey analysis specifically designed to address the questions listed above.
- A large-scale survey was undertaken of all the Heads of Department in the humanities and social sciences and Deans of Graduate School seeking their perceptions of the issues covered by the review. Comparisons of our responses against the UK pattern of graduate studies show our sample to be a representative one.
 - Statistical data from HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) was analysed on the composition of the postgraduate student population, the sources of their funding, the numbers staying on to undertake postgraduate study, age profiles of staff, and staff inflow and outflow rates.
 - Statistics from UCAS on undergraduate admissions.
 - Information on postgraduate grant levels and trends over time, levels of student debt, graduate salaries and the salaries of academic staff.
 - The findings of the 1999/2000 Survey of Postgraduate Study Intentions on the factors influencing undergraduates' decisions on whether or not to undertake postgraduate study.

Other reports

10. The Committee's Report is in four parts:
- An executive summary of the Review's main findings and recommendations (*Review of Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences: Executive Summary and Recommendations*);
 - The main report on the findings from the evidence collected, and the Review's recommendations (*Review of Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences: Main Report*). This Report is being circulated widely, including to all those who responded to the Review's consultation exercises and to the respondents of our Survey;
 - A first supplementary report, which provides more detail on the results of the Survey of Heads of Department (*First Supplementary Report on the Survey of Heads of Department*);
 - A second supplementary report, which provides more detail on the data drawn from HESA (*Second Supplementary Report on the HESA data*).

All these reports will be available from the British Academy's web site (<http://www.britac.ac.uk>) in html and pdf formats.

Request for comments

11. We welcome any comments that you may have on the Review's findings. Please send your comments to Ms V Hurley, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH (email: v.hurley@britac.ac.uk). Preferably these comments should reach the Academy by 30 November 2001.

Background

The purpose of PhD study

12. The Academy's Review Committee believes that the PhD should be viewed both as a preparation for a research or academic career, and as a preparation for a wide range of advanced research support posts in industry, civil service, culture, media and the heritage sector. Research training makes a crucial contribution to the high-level skills required to sustain a high value added knowledge-based economy. These skills are likely to be of even greater value in the future than they have been in the past. As the higher education system continues to develop to provide an increased supply of first degree students, it is important that the postgraduate research supply keeps up in order to meet both the needs of the higher education sector and the economy as a whole in the 21st century.
13. The policy of successive governments has been to increase participation in higher education as a way of increasing the skills base of the UK workforce and contributing to the development of the knowledge-based economy. The emphasis to date has been on undergraduate education. But similar arguments are also relevant to planning for postgraduate numbers, including research students. We need to ensure that the qualities of original and sustained thinking exhibited in postgraduate research are available within the rapidly changing workplaces of our economy and public sector. There also need to be more well trained staff to teach the increasing number of students.

Breadth of subject coverage of the Review

14. This Review covers all subjects in the arts, humanities and social sciences. Given the breadth of the subject coverage of this Review, it is not surprising that these subjects demonstrate a diversity of routes into PhD studies and academic careers. For some, such as Law, Education and Information Science, a significant proportion of the PhD students tend to be professionals in the field who are studying part-time whilst continuing to develop their careers. It is not uncommon for such subjects to make academic appointments of experienced professionals in the field, who do not have a PhD on entry, but will work towards it once in post. For other subjects, whilst the PhD is not the only route into university teaching and research, it is the major route into an academic career.

Changes in higher education over the past decade

15. The last decade has been a period of considerable change and growth for higher education in the UK, with the numbers of those entering higher education almost doubling. Other changes include the creation of the 'new universities', the development of systems to monitor standards and measure performance, and the introduction of means-tested fees for undergraduate students and the abolition of the maintenance grant.

16. *The potential pool of candidates for higher education* At the end of the 1980s, there were fears that the numbers entering higher education in the 1990s would decline to reflect the 'demographic downturn', the falling number of 18 year olds. This fall reached its low point in 1996 when there were some 30 per cent fewer 18 year olds than a decade earlier¹. The effect of the demographic downturn for PhD recruitment did not reach its low point for 22 year olds until 2000. However, the participation rates of 18 years olds in higher education has continued to rise². Also the majority of entrants to higher education come from the middle income groups, where the birth rate has hardly fallen, but the rise is also in part due to the major efforts made by HE institutions to increase their student intakes by widening access and encouraging mature students to enter HE. A focus for the Review is, therefore, whether these differing forces are leading to changes in numbers and quality of entrants to PhD research and academic careers.
17. *Increase in student numbers since 1989* As a result of the increase in participation, the numbers graduating in the UK have grown steadily since the early 1980s and accelerated further in the following decade, more than doubling between 1989 and 1998.
18. Similarly, the number of postgraduate (doctorates and other higher degree) qualifications obtained has also more than doubled in this period: rising from c.31,300 in 1989 to 67,175 in 1998/99. The proportion of those obtaining postgraduate higher qualifications as a percentage of all HE qualifications has fluctuated in this period: in 1989 it was 15 per cent, falling slightly to 12 per cent in 1994 before returning to 15 per cent in 1998.

Table 1 *The number of Postgraduate Qualifications awarded from 1989 to 1998*

	1989	1994	% change from 1989 to 1994	1998	% change from 1994 to 1998	% change from 1989 to 1998
Postgraduate Qualifications (Higher degrees only)	31,500*	46,968	49%	67,175	43%	113%
% total HE	15%	12%		15%		
All HE qualifications	207,500*	387,294	87%	446,942	15%	115%

Source: USR/IES/HESA

19. Between 1989 and 1993 the number of all postgraduate (higher degree) qualifications obtained at 'old' universities rose from 29,300 to 42,400 (an increase of 45 per cent). By 1998, this figure had risen to 52,816, representing an increase of 80 per cent. However, the rise in the number of doctorates obtained at 'old' universities in this period was less dramatic, at only 25 per cent. The ratio of doctorates to first degree qualifications obtained at 'old' universities fell from 1:10 in 1989 to 1:12 in 1998.

1 Source IES Annual Graduate Review 1998–99

2 Figures provided by the Labour Force Survey show that the percentage of adults in England defined as economically active (men aged 18 to 64 and women aged 18–59) with a level 4 qualification (any degree, higher degree, NVQ level 4) has risen from 23.9 in 1996 to 27.5 in 2000. The "post-16 achievement" National Learning Target is that 28 per cent of economically active adults of working age (and 18 or over) should have achieved a qualification at level 4 or above by 2002

20. ***Changes in the student population*** The profile of the student population has also changed significantly in the last ten years, with increases in the numbers of women and mature students, and an increase in the numbers studying part-time.
21. ***Future increases in student numbers*** The Government target is that 50 per cent of those under 30 will have entered higher education by 2010. It aims to achieve this target partly through the establishment of e-universities and partly through foundation degrees. The Government announced in the last Comprehensive Spending Review that it would set aside £30 million for these and other related initiatives. Given that participation rates in Scotland and Northern Ireland for those aged between 18 and 30 are already close to 50 per cent, it is anticipated that the major areas of growth will occur in England and Wales.
22. ***Changes in student finance in the last ten years*** In 1990/91, non-income assessed student loans were introduced to replace partially maintenance grants and to provide students with extra resources towards living expenses. The maintenance grant rates were frozen at their 1990/91 values until 1994/95 when the shift from grant to loan was accelerated by reducing the level of grant rates and increasing loan rates. Students were funded under this system until the beginning of the 1998/99 academic year. In response to the Dearing Report³, the Government decided that from 1998/99 onwards new entrants to full-time higher education should (with a few specified exceptions) contribute up to £1,000⁴ a year towards the cost of their tuition (income assessed). New entrants to higher education in 1999/00, together with those who had started in 1998/99, received support for living costs solely through loans which were partly income assessed. Repayment of these loans will be linked to income after leaving university so that leavers only repay as and when they can afford to (whilst the loans of those who started before 1998/99 are repayable on a mortgage style basis). Students now expect to finish their undergraduate studies with debts of £7,026⁵ (see paragraph 73). This will have a serious impact on their willingness to undertake further study and to enter relatively low paid academic careers.
23. ***Scotland*** Following the publication of the Cubie Report in 1999, it was decided that Scottish domiciled and EU students studying at an institution in Scotland should be entitled to free tuition. At the end of their degree, these students are expected to pay £2,000 to the Graduate Endowment for Scotland. The Graduate Endowment for Scotland has been established to assist access for those from lower income families.
24. ***The impact of changes in funding on higher education*** A 2001 report published by Universities UK entitled 'New Directions for Higher Education' calculated that since 1989 resources per student had fallen by 38 per cent, following a previous decrease of 20 per cent between 1976 and 1989. It found that staff-student ratios had risen to an average of 1 to 17, and that university libraries and other facilities were under-resourced. Although a Government

3 In July 1997, the National Committee of Inquiry into HE (The Dearing Report) published its recommendations regarding the structure and funding of HE

4 Tuition fee contributions will have risen to £1,075 in 2001/02

5 The 2000 UNITE/MORI survey into the student experience found that students anticipated that they would owe on average £7,026 by the time that they had completed their undergraduate studies

commitment to fully fund further expansion for the two years from 2002–03 is welcome, the previous reductions in resources have had an impact on all subjects within the HE sector, and have had an inevitable impact on the UK's research capacity.

The Bologna Declaration

25. Higher education in the UK is highly competitive, with relatively short periods allowed for undergraduate, masters and doctoral studies in comparison with other countries. The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 aimed to promote the international competitiveness of the European system of education. It is anticipated that reform within other EU countries will improve the competitiveness with the UK by promoting a shorter period for the completion of undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. Indeed, a recent study found that Germany and Italy were already moving in that direction⁶. This suggests that postgraduate study and research in the UK will be under even higher pressure for recruitment and retention in the future.

Government Initiatives related to the knowledge economy and social inclusion

26. Widening access to higher education has been restated as a key commitment by Education and Skills Minister Margaret Hodge. Recent initiatives continue the Government's concern, outlined in a speech at the University of Greenwich in February 2000 by David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, that universities should adapt and change in order to meet successfully the demands of the global market and the knowledge economy. Policies being followed include: the creation of new routes into HE and new forms of provision; the establishment of a new partnership between universities and the private sector in order to exploit information and communication technologies and develop distance learning; and the development of alliances with businesses in initiatives that stimulate economic and intellectual growth. The Government's commitment to expanding access and participation in higher education has been pursued by the introduction of a number of initiatives to increase the participation of those from poorer economic backgrounds (at present only 28 per cent of entrants to HE are from disadvantaged backgrounds). These initiatives include the introduction of Opportunities Bursaries of £2,000 each over three years, an increase in grants for childcare (up to 85 per cent of costs), and the provision of funds to HEIs and FEIs to help them attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds (£18 million will be provided by the Government to HEFCE for distribution to HEIs in 2001–02). The 'New Route' PhD, announced by the DfEE in April 2001, will also encourage greater flexibility of PhD training and will appeal to a more diverse type of student, including career changers and part-timers.
27. The Government has also recognised the importance of higher education academic and support staff pay, increasing allocations for 2001–02 to encourage recruitment and retention of high quality staff in strategically

⁶ A finding of London Economics who were commissioned by Universities UK to investigate future funding options for UK HE

important disciplines. The importance of higher education to the knowledge economy has been reiterated in the February 2001 DTI/DfEE White Paper Cm 5052 *Opportunity for all in a world of change*, although it is noticeable in this paper that the specific contribution that can be made by the arts, humanities and social science is not fully acknowledged. The commitment of government support to science is welcome, e.g. in the July 2000 White Paper Cm 4814 *Excellence and Opportunity: A Science and Innovation Policy for the 21st Century*, and also in the June 2001 Treasury Paper on *Productivity in the UK: Enterprise and Productivity Challenge*. However, insufficient recognition, we feel, has been given to the development of management services, the service industries, and the heritage and cultural industries to which the arts, humanities and social sciences mainly contribute. We hope in this report to enhance the priority accorded by Government to postgraduate research training in general, and to recognition of the contribution to the economy of the arts, humanities and social sciences, in particular.

Other studies relevant to the Review

28. In the last two years, a number of studies have been undertaken whose findings have a bearing on the Review. These include reports made by the UK Life Sciences Committee and the EPSRC on postgraduate issues relating to their respective areas, work that is still in progress for the ESRC on skills shortages within the social sciences, the Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions, and a Review commissioned by the CVCP/SCOP/UCEA on the recruitment of academic staff.
29. The UK Life Sciences Committee considered issues relating to the attraction of the most talented into life science careers, and concluded that their training should reflect their individual needs. It believed that the level of stipend should be raised in order to attract the best candidates into research, even if this might lead to a significant reduction in the number of studentships awards. The Committee also gave consideration to ways in which postgraduate training could be broadened and lengthened and recommended the 3+1+3 model.
30. The EPSRC undertook a study which highlighted the problems of attracting and retaining staff and students in information technology and computer science. Some of the Survey findings of this report directly mirror the EPSRC study and demonstrate that there are similar problems in arts, humanities and social sciences to those to be found in physical sciences.
31. A new independent study for the Government, chaired by Gareth Roberts, is looking into skills supply, especially higher degrees in science and engineering. This is to report in the Spring of 2002. We expect it to find similar problems of attracting and retaining the highest quality researchers in science as we have found in the arts, humanities and social sciences.
32. The ESRC is concerned about the shortage of quantitatively skilled analytical researchers. A January 2001 speech by Gordon Marshall, ESRC Chief Executive, identified concerns in sociology, economics, political science, criminology, social policy studies, geography, education and management, and the ESRC is currently investigating ways in which this problem can be addressed.

33. One of the key recommendations of the Dearing Report was that an Independent Review Committee should be established to review and make recommendations on a new framework for determining pay and conditions for staff in the HE sector. The Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions was established in February 1998 under the chairmanship of Sir Michael Bett. Its final Report (the Bett Report) was published in June 1999. It found that academic salaries had fallen behind the market average in the past twenty years. It also identified pay disparities for work of equal value throughout higher education institutions. The Report recommended that all salary scales should be reviewed, and it estimated that it would cost 2.5 per cent of institutions' total costs to meet obligations for equal pay for all staff.
34. In October 1999, an independent report was commissioned jointly by the CVCP, SCOP, UCEA and the Funding Councils on recruitment and retention in employment in UK higher education. This project involved in-depth case studies in thirteen institutions selected to achieve a spread of institutions by region, by size and by type. It found that all thirteen institutions were experiencing problems in specific subjects, including the following which were most frequently named: engineering; computer science; law; business studies; health, nursing and paramedical studies; mathematics; biological sciences; education; chemistry and psychology.
35. The arts, humanities and social sciences have not been given as high priority in many studies or initiatives as have science and technology. For example, access to SRIF and similar funds has not always been widely available across the arts and humanities and social sciences, as a result of government, research council, HEFCE or HE institutional decisions. However, the contribution of arts, humanities and social sciences to the knowledge economy is arguably as high or higher than science and technology, and its support costs within HE are often much lower. The recent announcement by HEFCE of a review of investment needs for teaching and research in arts and humanities is therefore most welcome, as is the postgraduate review by the AHRB, and the likely move to grant research council status to the AHRB. However, more needs to be done not only for arts and humanities, but also for social sciences, and for financial support to HE postgraduate research as a whole, not just in small scale initiatives. Our report below assesses the scale of the task, first for postgraduates and then for academic staff.

Postgraduates: Attracting Students

Question 1: Is there currently a problem in attracting good quality PhD students?

Main findings: The evidence indicates that whilst graduate studies in the arts, humanities and social sciences appear to be relatively healthy, this conceals some important underlying problems. The majority of the heads of department indicated that there were currently problems attracting good quality UK PhD students. Similar concerns are evidenced in the longer-term trends of HESA data and the decline in applications received by the AHRB and ESRC. The number of overseas postgraduates in the humanities and social sciences is a very positive indicator of the strength of the UK's reputation in these areas. But, whilst the presence of overseas postgraduates on our programmes is welcomed, we are concerned, particularly in some subject areas, that this has tended to hide declines in the numbers from the UK. This has important implications for the vitality of the knowledge economy, the cultural life of the country and the recruitment of academic staff in the future. We note with regret that in the February 2001 DTI/DfEE White Paper Cm 5052 *Opportunities for all in a world of change*, the important contribution to the knowledge economy of arts, humanities and social sciences is not fully acknowledged. We have identified several subjects where there has been a decline in both the output of PhD students and the numbers recently recruited to PhD study (particularly Economics, Financial Management, Linguistics, Chinese, Communications and European Languages).

Changes in recruitment: 1994/95 to 1998/99

36. As reported in paragraphs 17–19, the total number of postgraduate students has been increasing rapidly. There has been also a sharp rise in the overall numbers of postgraduates⁷ in the arts, humanities and social sciences in this period. The increases have been particularly large for masters degrees⁸, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. Comparable findings for the sciences for this period shows that the increase in 1998/99 as compared to 1995/96 in the number of full-time postgraduates (higher degrees) was, at 10 per cent, far less dramatic than that for the arts, humanities and social sciences.

7 Higher degree taught and higher degree research students

8 Masters – higher degree taught, research – higher degree research

Figure 1 The number of first-year full-time masters students in the arts, humanities and social sciences

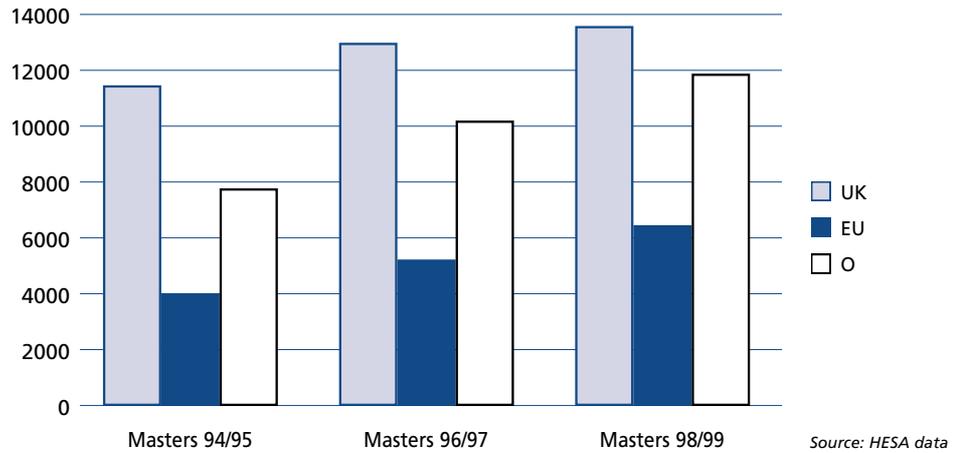
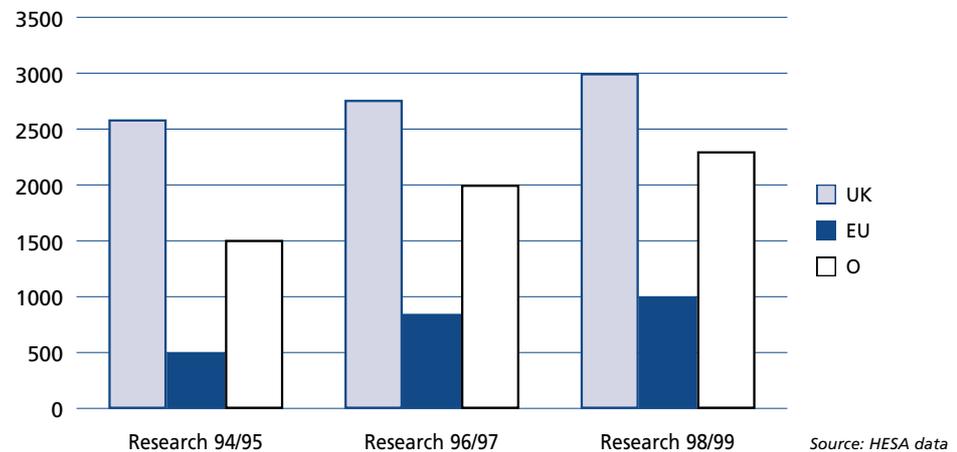


Figure 2 The number of first-year full-time research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences



37. It is noticeable, however, that a major factor in this expansion in numbers has been the rise in those from the EU and from overseas. As a result of the increases in the numbers from overseas, the proportion that UK domiciled students formed of the totals for first-year full-time postgraduates (higher degrees) fell in this period as is shown by Table 2. Subjects within the sciences also experienced in this same period an increase in the number of postgraduates from the EU and from overseas. Nevertheless, the proportion that EU and overseas students formed of the total cohort for the sciences was lower than that for the arts, humanities and social sciences. In 1998/99, 59 per cent of postgraduates (higher degrees) in the sciences were from the UK.

Table 2 *The domicile of full-time first-year postgraduates (higher degrees) in the arts, humanities and social sciences*

	1994/95	1996/97	1998/99
UK domiciled	50%	46%	43%
EU domiciled	16%	18%	20%
Overseas domiciled	33%	36%	37%

Source: HESA data

38. Whilst this increase in the numbers from other EU countries and from overseas is welcome, it is clearly a challenge for UK universities to maintain the numbers and quality of UK domiciled students in order to replenish the UK academic base in the arts, humanities and social sciences. We were concerned therefore to learn that there are subjects where the proportion formed by overseas students is far higher than that for UK domiciled students, or where the absolute numbers of UK students gives cause for concern.
39. Subjects where the proportion of first-year full-time UK domiciled research students was far lower than the average in 1998/99 include (the percentages in question are given in brackets):
- **Economics** (18%);
 - **Financial Management** (9%);
 - **Linguistics** (31%);
 - **Chinese** (20%);
 - **Communications** (28%);
 - **European Languages** (24%);
40. In some subjects, the absolute numbers of first-year full-time research students from the UK in 1998/99 has declined since 1994/95, even though the overall number of students in these subjects has risen. These include:
- **Economics** where the number of UK students had dropped by 23 per cent, but the total number of students had risen by 35 per cent. The absolute number of UK students fell from 98 to 75.
 - **Politics** where the number from the UK had fallen by 12 per cent compared to an overall rise in numbers of 9 per cent. The absolute numbers of UK students fell from 159 to 140.
 - **Business and Management Studies** – the number from the UK had dropped by 8 per cent compared to an overall rise of 23 per cent. The absolute numbers of UK students fell from 196 to 180.
 - Similarly, **French, German and Italian** all experienced falls in the number of UK students whilst the overall numbers remained fairly healthy. The absolute numbers of UK students fell from 95 to 73.
41. *The number of part-time postgraduates in the arts, humanities and social sciences* The number of part-time masters students from the UK was 19 per cent higher in 1998/99 compared to 1994/95⁹. However, there has not been a

⁹ The increase in the number of part-time masters students was, at 19 per cent, higher than the comparable figures for their full-time counterparts which had risen by 16 per cent

comparable rise in the numbers of part-time research students from the UK, which in 1998/9 were only 1 per cent higher than in 1994/95. This figure is much lower than both the overall increase in part-time research students for this period (11 per cent), or the comparable figure for their full-time equivalents (15 per cent higher in 1998/9 than in 1994/95).

42. Again, there are variations by subject. Subjects where the number of part-time first-year research students was higher in 1998/99 than 1994/95 include:

- **Law** increased by 38%
- **Anthropology** almost doubled
- **Business and Management Studies** rose by 29%
- **Theology** by 10%
- many subjects within **Education** have risen dramatically
- there have been increases in the **Creative Arts**

On the other hand, the following subjects have experienced declines in part-time numbers:

- **Economics** fell by 42%
- **Social Policy and Administration** by 21%
- **Geography** by 30%
- **English** by 10%

Changes in current levels of postgraduate recruitment

43. To gauge the current level of recruitment problems we surveyed heads of department in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The overwhelming majority said that it was difficult to recruit good quality PhD students, regardless of their domicile. This perception was common to all subjects covered by the Review and all types of institution.

Table 3 Responses to the Question on whether it was currently difficult to recruit good quality PhD students

	UK		EU		Overseas
Yes	75%	Yes	75%	Yes	70%
No	25%	No	25%	No	30%
BASE	704	BASE	688	BASE	687

Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department

44. However, the problem was most extreme in some areas. For example, 94 per cent of the respondents falling within the Business Super UoA (S9) said that there was a problem attracting UK students, compared to 64 per cent for the Humanities (S11) and 60 per cent for Visual and Performing Arts (S12). The number of staff in Business Studies that shared these concerns with regard to overseas students fell to 60 per cent, whereas this figure rose in the Humanities to 74 per cent. These responses are in line with earlier HESA data.

45. Within Super UoAs (with the one exception of Social Work) there are difficulties recruiting good quality PhD students from the UK. The most extreme difficulties are:
- **Accountancy** (100 per cent)
 - **Most modern languages** – French (88 per cent), German (93 per cent), Russian (100 per cent), Spanish (85 per cent), Middle Eastern Studies (100 per cent) and Asian Studies (100 per cent)
 - **Economics** (96 per cent)
 - **Business and Management Studies** (91 per cent)
 - **Town and Country Planning** (91 per cent)
 - **Social Policy and Administration** (86 per cent)
 - **Geography** (82 per cent)
 - **Classics** (80 per cent)
46. The problems appear to be very generally experienced. An analysis of the responses according to the type of institution at which the respondent was based shows only relatively minor variations.
47. We do not believe that these problems are restricted to the arts, humanities and social sciences. There is evidence that many subjects within the sciences are also experiencing similar difficulties. The EPSRC's Survey of academic staff in IT and Computer Science found that 95 per cent of academic staff reported a problem in attracting high quality British PhD students. Only 48 per cent of staff thought this applied to overseas students as well.

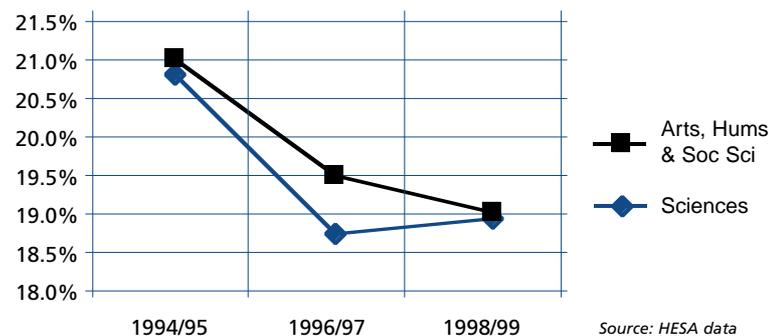
Demand for AHRB and ESRC postgraduate research awards

48. The problem of recruiting UK students found by heads of department is also reflected in the demand for AHRB and ESRC postgraduate awards. Both bodies have experienced a fall in recent years in the number of applications received for their postgraduate research awards, although the decline appears to be more dramatic in the social sciences than the humanities.
49. The ESRC's records go back to 1993. It reports that there has been a fall in the number of applications received for its postgraduate research awards in this period, which in the 2000 competition was 25 per cent lower than 1993. (Although the 2000 competition numbers are 11 per cent higher than those for 1999).
50. The AHRB's records go back to 1990. It reports that the number of applications for doctoral awards rose dramatically in the early 1990s, peaking in 1996. These numbers have fallen since 1996.

The proportion of undergraduates who stay on to undertake further study

51. Data from HESA on the number of first degree qualifiers¹⁰ who stay on to undertake further study, summarised in Figure 3, show that the proportion of those within the arts, humanities and social sciences who undertook further study in 1998/99 had declined substantially since 1994/95 and was comparable to that in the sciences.

Figure 3 The proportion of undergraduate qualifiers undertaking further study



Subjects in the arts, humanities and social sciences where the rate is particularly low are:

- **Business and Management Studies, Financial Management, Accountancy, Marketing and Market Research**
- **Communication Studies, Media Studies**
- **Italian, Scandinavian, Japanese**
- **Design Studies**

¹⁰ UK domiciled undergraduate qualifiers

Postgraduates: Quality

Question 2: Is there any evidence that the quality of the postgraduate research students recruited in the future may change?

Main findings: There is limited evidence of a decline in the quality of those recruited to undertake postgraduate research. Figures drawn from both the ESRC and the AHRB show that there has been a fall in the demand for their awards in recent years. The quality of ESRC and AHRB applicants has also begun to decline. Our survey of heads of department also suggests some concern with deteriorating quality of skills and preparation. Data on the first destinations of those with first class degrees in the arts, humanities and social sciences shows that there has been a fall in the proportion of these students that stay on to undertake further study. In addition, the figures show that there were subjects in 1998/99 where the rate at which students stay on was far lower than average. These include Business and Management Studies, Financial Management and Communications. These subjects have also experienced problems recruiting post-graduates, especially those from the UK. The data suggest that there is a growing concern generally about both the number and the quality of postgraduate research students, and there are more urgent concerns in these subject areas.

The views of heads of department on the changing quality of the PhD students

52. The majority of the respondents to our Survey believed that the standard of PhD students recruited has remained unchanged over the last ten years. This is particularly true of the level of previous degree results (see Table 4). However, there are concerns about deterioration in skills and preparation, and motivation, although these are balanced by respondents who believe these attributes have improved.

Table 4 Responses to the Question on whether the Quality of the PhD students recruited over the last ten years had changed

	<i>By degree results %</i>	<i>By skills and preparation %</i>	<i>By motivation/initiative/originality %</i>
1 (deteriorated significantly)	6.4%	18.5%	12%
2 (stayed about the same)	81.3%	64.9%	69.8%
3 (improved significantly)	12.3%	16.6%	18.2%
Base	669	670	672

Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department

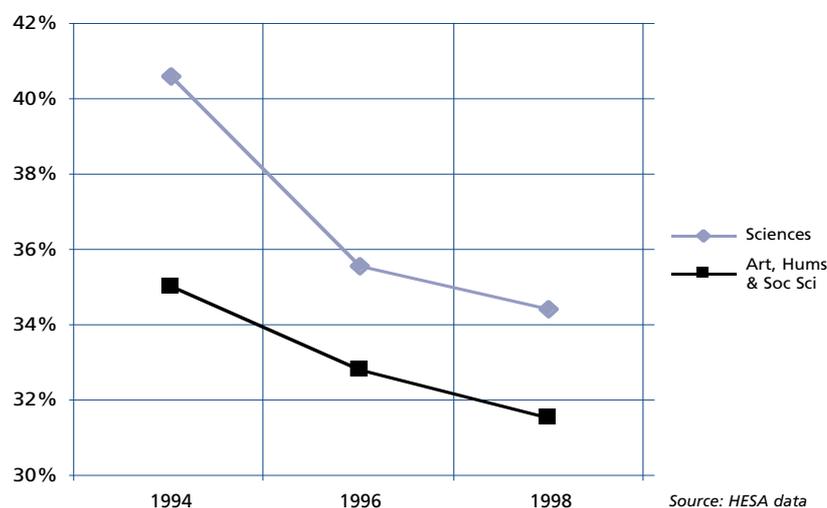
53. The main concern is that for some subjects the deterioration in the quality of skills and preparation was more striking. These included those subjects falling within the Business Super Uoa (S9), where 26 per cent of respondents indicated that the quality of PhD students recruited in the past ten years had deteriorated compared to 12 per cent who thought it had improved. In

Psychology, the proportions were 30 and 14 per cent respectively. Respondents in Psychology also drew attention to a decline in PhD students' motivation and initiative, with 34 per cent stating that it had deteriorated whilst only 8 per cent of the respondents believed that it had improved.

The first destinations of undergraduates by class of degree

54. We obtained data from HESA on the first destinations of UK domiciled first degree qualifiers by class of degree¹¹. Figure 4 summarises these results. Whilst the number of firsts awarded has risen in this period, the proportion undertaking further study has fallen. Similarly, the proportion of qualifiers with upper seconds who undertake further study has also fallen¹². The quality levels are in all years lower in the arts, humanities and social sciences than in the sciences.

Figure 4 Undergraduate qualifiers with firsts who undertake further study (%)



55. As in other comparisons in this report, the problems are more acute in some areas. In 1998/99, the main subjects where the quality of first degrees was declining included:

- **Business and Management Studies, Financial Management, Accountancy, Marketing and Market Research**
- **Information Science, Communication Studies, Media Studies**
- **German, Italian, Japanese, Other Asian Languages**
- **Design Studies**

The quality of the applicants to the ESRC's and the AHRB's postgraduate schemes of awards

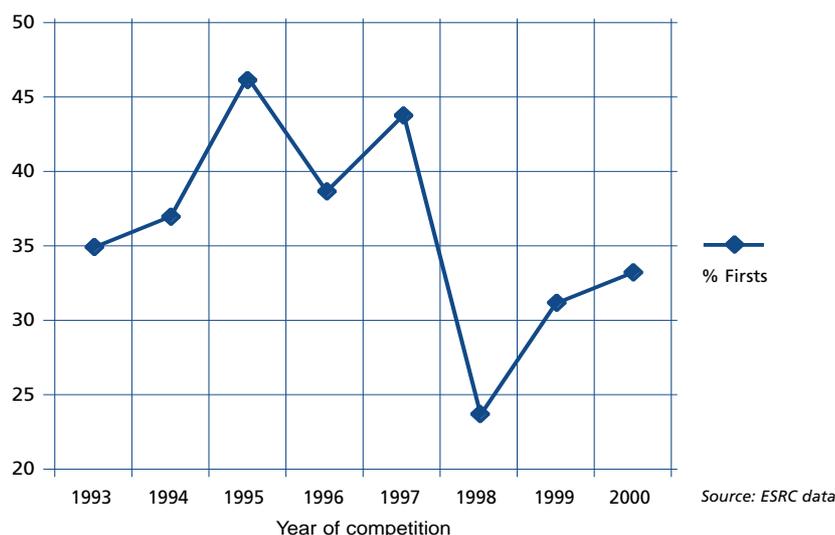
56. Whilst the quantity of applications does not appear to have kept pace with the national increases in postgraduate numbers, the quality of the applications for both schemes is less clear. The quality of the applications, as measured by

11 The definition 'undertaking further study' will include those undertaking professional/vocational courses as well as those undertaking higher degrees

12 In the sciences, the proportion of qualifiers with 2.1s undertaking further study has fallen from 24.8 in 1994/5 to 22.3 per cent in 1998/99, and the comparable figures for the arts, humanities and social sciences were 23.8 and 21.5 per cent respectively

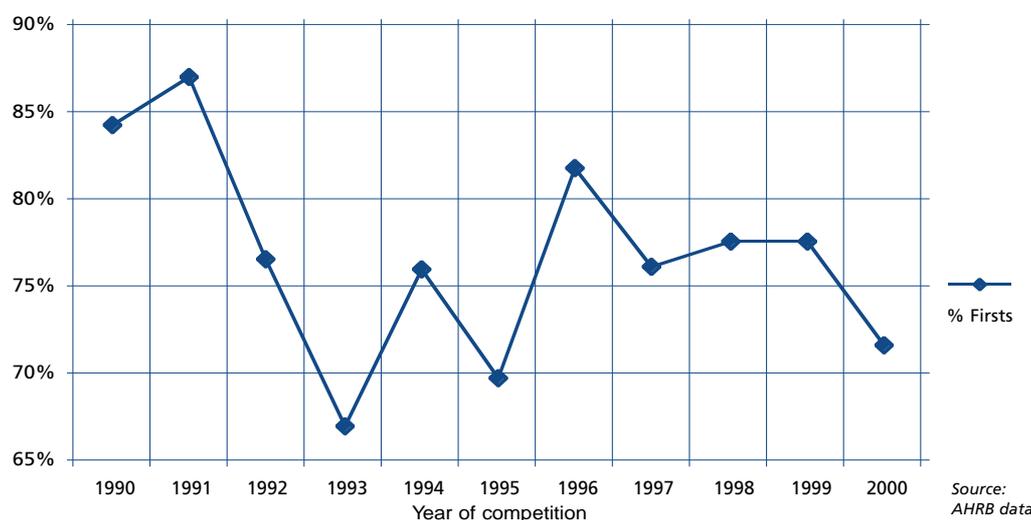
the number and proportion of A grades awarded to applications, has risen steadily. All the ESRC's subject categories, with the exception of Economics, have experienced a rise in the proportion of A graded applicants. However, the proportion of awards made to applicants who either had firsts or obtained masters qualifications has fluctuated from 1993 to 2000 (see Figure 5), but it is at lower levels than in the early or mid-1990s.

Figure 5 ESRC PhD awards offered to those with firsts (%)



- 57. Similarly, 79 per cent of ESRC awards in 1993 were made to applicants with a masters qualification, which rose to 97 per cent in 1996, but has fallen in subsequent years. Subjects where the proportions of awards made to applicants with a first and also to those with a masters was lower in 2000 compared to 1993 were as follows: Economic and Social History; Economics; Management and Business Studies; Socio-legal studies; and Statistics, Computing and Methodology.
- 58. The quality of the applications for AHRB awards, as measured by the proportion of awards accepted by applicants with firsts, has fluctuated in the period since 1990, but has declined since 1996 (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 AHRB PhD awards to those with firsts (%)



Postgraduates: Replenishment

Question 3: Are the numbers of PhD students sufficient for the replenishment of the academic profession and the needs of the economy and intellectual health of the nation?

Main findings: The figures on the ratio of doctorates to first degrees, as well as the ratio of doctorates to academic departure show that in many areas within the arts, humanities and social sciences there is a shortfall in the number of PhD students, needed both to replenish the academic profession and also to provide a sufficient supply of highly trained researchers to other areas of the British economy and society. The areas of particular concern are Education, where the number of retirements is due to rise rapidly in the next few years as a result of the age profile of staff, Accountancy, Business and Management Studies, Media and Communications, French, German and Spanish, and Creative and Performing Arts.

The ‘optimum’ number of PhD students for the academic profession

59. There has been a debate within the several areas of the academic community about the ‘optimum’ number of PhD students to meet the need to replenish the academic profession and to meet the needs of other careers, which are important for research support infrastructure and for the economy and economic vitality of the nation. The HEFCE have stated that in order to replenish the academic profession there should be a ratio of one PhD awarded for every 100 students graduating with a first degree. It has stated that this should be viewed as a minimum estimate, which makes a number of assumptions. These include the assumption that there is a steady state and that all PhD students become academics with a 30 year working life.
60. For the Academy’s Review Committee, the answer to the question of ‘optimum’ numbers depends upon how wide we see the aims and objectives of PhD training in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The Committee takes the view that there should be greater recognition of the diversity of the purposes for which a doctorate in the arts, humanities and social sciences is undertaken. We believe that it is too narrow to think that the PhD leads only to a career in academia, since the skills developed during the PhD are transferable to a wide range of careers. Thus there should be a supply of doctorates that is greater than the needs of the academic profession alone.
61. In addition, the composition of the undergraduate student population is very different from that for postgraduate (higher degrees) in the arts, humanities and social sciences. As reported earlier in paragraphs 37–38, students from the EU and from overseas form the majority (57 per cent) of the first-year full-time cohort of postgraduate (higher degree) students in the arts, humanities

and social sciences in 1998/99, whereas comparable figures for first degrees show that the overwhelming majority of students (89 per cent) are from the UK¹³. As a result, we believe that the HEFCE benchmark ratio of 1:100 PhD students to undergraduates is too low.

62. Data from HESA on the number of first degree and doctoral qualifications awarded show that the ratio was 1.6 to 100 in 1994 in the humanities and social science, which was lower than the average for all subjects of 3.2. This figure rose to 2.5 doctorates for every 100 first degrees in 1998, but this was still far lower than the ratio for all subjects of 4.3 doctorates for every 100 first degrees awarded.
63. Subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences where the ratio was well below even the threshold set by the HEFCE include Accountancy, Marketing and Market Research, Library and Information Studies, Communication Studies, Media Studies, and most of the subjects within the Creative and Performing Arts. In addition, the following subjects had ratios that were well below the average: Business and Management Studies, Latin, Greek, Portuguese, Scandinavian Studies and Chinese.

The number of doctorates awarded mapped against academic staff outflows

64. Figures on the number of doctorates awarded have been mapped against data on staff outflows for the years 1994/5, 1996/7 and 1998/9. For some subjects there have been years when the number of doctorates awarded has fallen short of the number of academic staff leaving UK HEIs. These cost centres include French, German and Spanish, Education, Business and Management Studies and Creative and Performing Arts. The results are striking for the Creative and Performing Arts and also, but to a lesser extent, for Education. It could be argued, however, that entry into the academic profession is rather different in Education and the Creative and Performing Arts compared to other subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences where it is the norm to make appointments to those who have completed a PhD. In Education, for example, it has not been unusual to recruit academics who were formerly senior school teachers and educational managers. Similarly, many recruits to academic law come from the legal professions. In the Creative and Performing Arts, academic staff are often practising artists with a body of work and experience that are seen as comparable to a research degree qualification.
65. The cost centre for French, German and Spanish was introduced with effect from the beginning of the 1998/99 academic year, and before that these subjects, together with other modern languages, were grouped in the cost centre – Language based studies which also includes subjects such as English and American Literature. It is not possible therefore to gauge whether this is a recent shortfall or not.
66. We recognise that it is inherently difficult to devise a formula on the most efficient way to replenish the academic profession. PhDs do not lead solely to careers in the academic profession. The dramatic changes witnessed over the

13 Numbers of full-time first degree qualifiers in 1998/99

last decade in terms of the expansion of student numbers and the new arrangements for the funding of undergraduates also make it difficult to assess the optimum number of PhD students, as does the rapid increase in the number of postgraduates from the EU and overseas. It should also be recognised that for some subjects the PhD is not the only route into the academic profession. However, the data produced here suggest that the current level of PhD students in many subjects is inadequate to replenish the academic profession, while at the same time maintaining a reasonable supply of highly qualified researchers to the economy as a whole.

Postgraduates: Incentives/Disincentives

Question 4: What factors are acting as incentives or disincentives to potential PhD students?

Main findings: Debt (both accumulated from undergraduate study and prospective for postgraduate study) is a major deterrent to potential PhD students, as evidenced by the findings of the OST's *Survey of Postgraduate Study Intentions*, the DfEE's *Student Income and Expenditure Survey* and our *Survey of Heads of Department*. The levels of student debt have increased rapidly since 1991, and are expected to escalate further when the abolition of maintenance grants takes effect. The impact of increasing levels of debt on the recruitment of PhD students in the humanities and social sciences is a cause for concern, since there are currently high proportions of postgraduates who are self-funded. It is important that steps are taken to ensure that the impact of student debt on the numbers undertaking postgraduate study is reduced and that the situation is kept under regular review.

The lack of sufficient numbers of studentship awards is another important deterrent. The recent increase in the stipend levels for PhD awards is most welcome, but it has not been accompanied by an increase in the number of awards that can be made.

Whilst the recent announcement by the Government of an increase in grant levels to £9000 by 2003 is welcome, this is insufficient. On present comparisons a grant level that is attractive in comparison with other career paths needs to be £12,000. The heads of department surveyed indicated that an average of £10,782 was required, but that the figure needed to be higher in subjects such as Business Studies, Economics and Accountancy, where good quality graduates can command significantly higher salaries in the commercial sector. The Wellcome Trust already pays £11,962 in grant in 2000/01. The present levels of grant and rises agreed up to 2003, therefore, appear wholly inadequate to maintain quality recruitment.

There are strong indications that a self-selection of students is occurring at the PhD recruitment stage of those willing or able to bear continuing high levels of debt. We fear that this will cause further decline in the quality of doctoral students and hinder efforts to increase social inclusiveness. We are particularly concerned about the problems of recruiting graduates in highly competitive sectors such as business, economics and accountancy.

Changes in the funding arrangements since 1990/91

67. The way in which students have supported their studies has changed over the last ten years (see paragraph 22). The Committee was concerned to

assess how far these changes are influencing postgraduate study. The Report below considers:

- changes in the funding arrangements for undergraduates, and the levels of student loans and debts
 - the views of heads of department on the impact of undergraduate debt on postgraduate recruitment
 - how postgraduate students have funded their studies
 - the level of funding necessary to attract and sustain doctorate students
 - the perception of undergraduates of the attractiveness of postgraduate study
 - graduate salary levels
68. The funding arrangements for undergraduate students have undergone a series of changes in this period, including the introduction of student loans (1990/91), the expectation that students should contribute up to £1,000 a year towards the cost of their tuition (1998/99), and the abolition of maintenance grants (1999/00).
69. The repayment of student loans of those who started from 1998/99 onwards is linked to income after leaving university, so that leavers repay as and when they can afford to. Gross income has to exceed £833.33 per month (£192.99 per week, or £10,000 per annum). Repayment is not over a fixed period, since repayments are calculated at 9 per cent of income above the £833.33 per month threshold, so levels will rise or fall to reflect changes in graduates' incomes. For those who started before 1998/99, loans are repayable on a mortgage style basis, where deferment is possible if gross income is £1,592 a month or less.
70. It is too early to assess the full impact of all these changes in the funding arrangements and their implications for the recruitment of postgraduate students, since the first cohort to have been affected by the abolition of the maintenance grant for the full duration of their undergraduate studies will not graduate until 2002. A number of studies have been undertaken, however, that have assessed the average level of debt accrued by those who started before 1999, and its implications. Even though these studies only explore the impact of the first two stages of the changes introduced since 1990, they show a rapid increase in the level of student debt over this period.
71. *DfEE Study into student debt* It appears that students were initially reluctant to take up student loans. Figures compiled by the DfEE show that when student loans were first introduced in 1990/91 only 28 per cent of the students that were eligible took a loan, but by 1999/2000 724,000 students (74 per cent of those eligible) had a loan. In 1999/2000, the average value of mortgage style loans and income contingent loans was £1,450 and £3,100 respectively compared with an average of £390 in 1990/1991 (or £512 at 2001 values), an increase of 183 per cent or 505 per cent, respectively, at constant prices.
72. In 1998/99, the DfEE commissioned the Student Income and Expenditure Survey¹⁴. Its timing meant that it included the first cohort of students who were affected by the introduction of tuition fees, but not those affected by

14 A total of 2,054 full-time and 747 part-time students were interviewed (a representative sample of students attending 87 institutions), and the fieldwork was undertaken between April and August 1999. A similar survey was undertaken in 1995/96

the abolition of maintenance grants. Full-time students had higher net debts in 1998/99 than those surveyed in 1995/96. By the end of 1998/99, these students anticipated owing three times as much as students had in 1995/96 (on average £2,528 in borrowings minus savings in 1998/99 compared with £840 in 1995/96).

73. The recent UNITE/MORI Survey¹⁵ into the student experience found that the students anticipated that they would owe £7,026¹⁶ on average by the time that they had completed their course. However, there are variations within this average, with first and second year undergraduates (the 1999 and 2000 cohorts affected by the abolition of maintenance grants) anticipating owing £7,524 and £8,356 respectively.
74. *The effect of working part-time on students' studies* Nearly 66 per cent of full-time students surveyed for the Study commissioned by the DfEE had worked during the academic year, and 82 per cent had worked over the summer vacation. Some believed that this had been beneficial since it had been relevant to their studies, but these students (nearly one in ten full-timers and just over a quarter of part-timers) were in the minority. Around 30 per cent of full-time students believed that working had had a negative impact on their academic performance. In addition, 60 per cent of full-time and 40 per cent of part-time students believed that financial difficulties had negatively affected their academic performance. The survey found that 10 per cent of both full and part-time students had thought about dropping out for financial reasons. Indeed, it is understood that there have been recent increases in the drop-out rates of undergraduates, and that this rate is particularly evident amongst those from poorer financial backgrounds. The DfES is currently exploring this issue further.
75. *The impact of debt on future plans* The full-time undergraduates surveyed in the DfEE Study were asked about the impact of the student financial support arrangements on their future plans. Around one in six of these students said that it had influenced their choice of career. They were asked whether they agreed with the statement that 'People are discouraged from doing postgraduate degrees because they do not wish to take on additional debt'. 78 per cent of them did.

The impact of debt upon potential postgraduate students in the arts, humanities and social sciences

76. *Postgraduate Study Intentions* In view of the changes in the funding arrangements for undergraduates, it is not surprising that financial factors play an important part when students decide whether to undertake postgraduate study. The OST commissioned a study on the postgraduate study intentions of 1999/2000 undergraduates. A total of 7,078 responses were received from students at 44 institutions, and the majority of the responses (88 per cent) were from students in the final year of undergraduate study. This study sought to gauge the factors that encouraged or discouraged final-year undergraduates when deciding whether to undertake postgraduate study.

15 The UNITE/MORI Survey was conducted between August and November 2000

16 Base 1,103 students

77. For those who had decided to undertake doctoral study, personal development was the single most important factor influencing their decision. This was followed by prospects of an academic career, with the notable exception of students in Economics and Business Studies, where the proportion encouraged by the prospect of an academic career was very low, at under 5 per cent. The majority of students took financial considerations into account and considered maintenance grant levels when deciding whether to undertake doctoral study (75 per cent of these respondents in the Humanities and Creative Arts and 66 per cent of those in the Social Sciences).
78. For those who were undecided about whether to undertake doctoral study, the single most discouraging factor was the lack of postgraduate maintenance awards (Economics and Business Studies at 25 per cent, Humanities at 27 per cent and Social Sciences at 36 per cent). In addition, 25 per cent of students in Economics and Business Studies believed that their employability would be enhanced by immediate entry into the job market.
79. The students who had decided against undertaking doctoral study were clearly influenced by financial factors, and cited the desire to enter employment immediately, followed by their current level of debt as the two most important factors that they took into account when making this decision. The perceived lack of postgraduate maintenance awards available in the arts, humanities and social sciences was the third most discouraging factor for these students. It is noticeable that the proportion of those in the arts, humanities and social sciences who were discouraged by this was far higher than the average for all subjects. Undergraduates seem to be aware of the intensity of the competition for awards in the arts, humanities and social sciences, and the fact that high proportions of postgraduates in the arts, humanities and the social sciences are self-funded.
80. The respondents were also asked for their views on how the funding resources should be allocated. A higher proportion of candidates in all subjects, who intended to pursue doctoral study, favoured maintaining the current number and level of grants rather than increasing the number of grants and reducing their level. There were variations by subject area especially in the Humanities and Creative and Performing Arts and Economics and Business Studies where 62 and 52 per cent of the respondents were in favour of increasing the number of grants at the expense of the stipend level.
81. However these expressions of opinion are judged, it is clear that there must be concern about the self-selective effects on students. Those that are staying on to undertake PhDs are predominantly those who can support high levels of debt.
82. *The views of heads of department* We sought the views of heads of department on whether they believed that significant numbers of students had been discouraged from starting a PhD by the level of their accumulated debt. The overwhelming majority (84 per cent) said that they believed that debt had prevented many students from starting a PhD. This is clearly worrying, especially since the most recent cohort of potential PhD students would have commenced their studies when debts were lower.
83. Whilst accumulated student debt appears to have an impact on the initial recruitment of postgraduate students in the arts, humanities and social sciences, it does not appear to cause problems of subsequent student

retention. We asked heads of department whether they believed that a significant number of students had been prevented from completing their PhD studies by their level of debt. 56 per cent of respondents believed that levels of debt did not prevent students from completing their research degrees. Hence, debt is considered more of a deterrent to starting a PhD than to its continuation, indicating that a self-selection of students is occurring at the PhD recruitment stage of those willing or able to bear continuing higher levels of debt. This finding has worrying implications for initiatives to widen social inclusion.

How postgraduates (higher degrees) fund their studies

84. We obtained figures from HESA on the way in which first-year postgraduates had financed their studies. The majority of first-year full-time UK domiciled postgraduate students¹⁷ in the arts, humanities and social sciences were self-funded (61 per cent), much higher than for the sciences (36 per cent).
85. For first-year full-time UK domiciled postgraduate research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences there has been an increase from 31 per cent in 1994/95 to 35 per cent by 1998/99. The comparable figure for the sciences was 11 per cent in 1994/95, which fell to 10 per cent in 1998/99.
86. Postgraduate research students in receipt of awards either from the AHRB, the ESRC, the other Research Councils or LEAs/the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) was around 28 per cent of all students in 1994/95, a proportion which fell to 17 per cent in 1998/99.
87. Already universities themselves are the single largest source of funding for first-year full-time UK research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences, funding 17 per cent of these students in 1998/99. Many universities offer schemes to support research students often in return for 6 hours of teaching (or usually less). These schemes are often either teaching and research assistantships, under which research students are employed by the university to carry out teaching or research duties and in return have their full-time fees paid and receive a stipend to support their studies. Our survey asked heads of department whether they provided such support for their students. 42 per cent of respondents said that they did. A higher proportion of the respondents in the Social Sciences (S1, S4, S8 and S9 Super Uoas) offered graduate teaching assistantships (50 per cent) than those from the humanities and the creative and performing arts (37 per cent).
88. These schemes clearly play an important part in funding postgraduate research students in the arts, humanities and social sciences. We are therefore concerned about the implications of the recommendation announced by the HEFCE in its Review of Research that it should modify its funding method to remove incentives to recruit research staff and students in favour of appropriate investment in research infrastructure. We believe that the current monies paid from the QR formula in respect of research students should be used flexibly to supplement institutional support for research students (e.g. in return for teaching). We would not wish this important, indirect source of support for research students to be reduced.

¹⁷ postgraduate higher degree taught and higher degree research

89. *How part-time students fund their studies* The proportion of part-time higher degree taught students who were self-financing in 1998/99 was 56 per cent. In comparison, the proportion of higher degree research students was 64 per cent. We asked the heads of department that we surveyed to suggest ways in which the number of part-time students could be increased, since the number of part-time research students from the UK had only risen by one per cent in the period from 1994/95 to 1998/99, even though this period had seen a substantial increase in the number of postgraduates overall. The most popular answer cited by respondents (267 times) was that the number of part-time awards, including assistance with fieldwork and other costs related to the research, should be increased.
90. The high level of self-funding makes research in the arts, humanities and social sciences particularly vulnerable to increasing levels of undergraduate student debt. Increasing pressures on university income is also reducing their capacity to fund postgraduate research study. Postgraduates¹⁸ are not eligible to apply for a student loan and most cannot obtain career development loans. The findings of the OST's Survey of Postgraduate Study Intentions showed that the overwhelming majority of those surveyed who were intending to pursue postgraduate study (85 per cent)¹⁹ believed that there should be a loan scheme for postgraduates along the lines of the Student Loans Company. In addition, the National Postgraduate Committee believes that it is unjust that postgraduates are not entitled access to the Student Loans Scheme, and it advocates that postgraduates not in receipt of research council or AHRB studentships should be granted eligibility to this Scheme.

Level of PhD stipend

91. The level of stipend for PhD students in the arts, humanities and social sciences in 2000/01 was £6,800 (outside London). The value of these awards increased only marginally in the past decade, rising in line with inflation. In view of this, we were delighted to learn that the Government had provided sufficient funds to enable both the AHRB and the ESRC to raise the level of stipend for their PhD awards to £9,000 by 2003 (which would be in line with the levels for PhD students in the sciences). Nevertheless, it should be recognised that this level is still lower than the PhD grants awarded by bodies such as the Wellcome Trust, whose awards in 2000/01 were worth £11,962 (outside London). The Wellcome Trust sets these awards at a level equivalent to the salary obtained by a research assistant minus tax and NI. In so doing, it recognises that the PhD can be an initial stage to an academic career.
92. The findings from our Survey of Heads of Department show that there is widespread agreement that PhD stipend levels should be raised in order to compete successfully with other professions. 86 per cent of respondents made proposals about the level of the annual PhD grant and the average recommended was £10,782. Some of the respondents in subjects which were experiencing difficulties recruiting sufficient PhD numbers from the UK, such as Business and Management Studies and Accountancy, quoted levels that were much higher.

¹⁸ With the exception of students undertaking PGCE courses

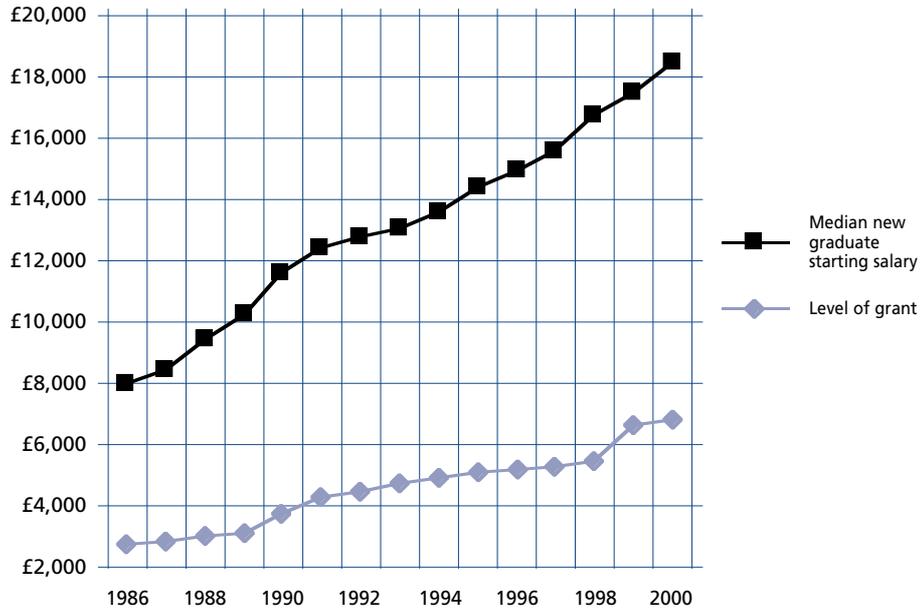
¹⁹ The proportions in favour of a loan scheme for postgraduates were higher in the arts, humanities and social sciences than the average – Creative and Performing Arts (95%), Economics and Business Studies (93%), Social Sciences (92%), Humanities (89%)

93. The implication of our Survey of Heads of Department and the comparable salary data suggest that the Government needs urgently to consider further increases in PhD grants to keep their levels attractive in comparison with other career paths. We believe that the PhD should be treated as an early stage in an academic career and should be funded accordingly. We repeat our concern that students continuing into PhD studies may be becoming more self-selective of those able to sustain higher levels of debt. We fear that this may have a negative impact both on the ability of the academic profession to attract intellectual leaders as well as the Government's efforts to broaden social inclusion.

Graduate starting salaries

94. Potential graduate students compare grants and the alternative starting salaries elsewhere. The comparison works strongly to discourage people from undertaking PhDs. We look in detail at academic salaries and salary progression in paragraphs 118 to 125. Here we focus on the disincentives to staying on to undertake a PhD.
95. Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR) statistics show that median graduate starting salaries increased by 4.8 per cent to £17,500 between 1998 and 1999, and rose again to £18,600 in 2000. Its Survey of leading UK employers found that one in ten expected to increase graduate starting salaries by at least 10 per cent in the coming year, with the legal sector showing the highest predicted increases. The legal sector also had the highest starting salaries, at £21,500, followed by the banking and finance sector, both at £20,000. The Incomes Data Services Ltd (IDS) undertakes regular reviews of salary levels and surveys more than one hundred major recruiters, in order to gauge the level of general pay awards to professional and managerial staff. Its findings show that it expected that for first degree graduates in 2000 the average starting salary would be expected to be £18,610, and that the median would be slightly lower at £18,000. Both organisations also found that postgraduate qualifications such as masters and PhDs could attract higher starting salaries. The AGR reported that 33 of the organisations that it surveyed (14 per cent of those in the sample) paid an additional amount to those with a doctorate, and similarly 31 organisations provided such benefits to those with a masters. The possession of a PhD attracted the highest premium, at a median of £2,000. Figure 7 shows how median starting salaries and grant levels are continuing to diverge.

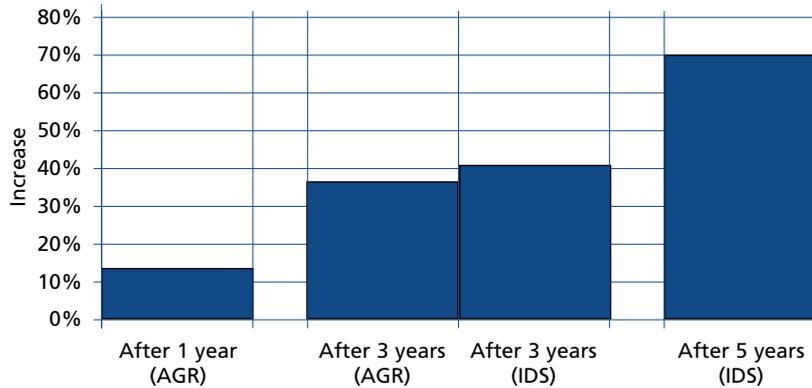
Figure 7 A comparison between the level of PhD studentship grant and the median new graduate starting salary



(Source: British Academy calculations based on information from IES/AGR/AHRB)

96. *Salary progression and other bonuses* In addition to starting salaries, potential PhD students also consider salary progression. Studies undertaken by the AGR and the IES show that the salaries of graduates rise rapidly in the years following their initial recruitment (as illustrated by Figure 8). This shows that whilst grant levels are a strong disincentive to start a PhD, over three years the disincentives become rapidly greater.

Figure 8 Relative salary progression* with the major recruiters



* compared with current median starting salary for a new graduate (Source: IES/AGR/IDS)

Waiving debt levels and other 'golden hellos'

97. In view of the increasing competition for good graduates, many companies have introduced recruitment bonuses for their newly recruited graduates. According to the AGR the level of such 'golden hellos' depends heavily on the sector. A bonus of £10,000 is now quite common. Since legal and accountancy firms appear to have the stiffest competition for staff, such bonuses are most common in these sectors.
98. Recognising the value of such incentives, the Government has recently undertaken a campaign to increase the number of school teachers by introducing training bursaries and golden hellos, as well as higher starting salaries and management allowances. Postgraduate trainee teachers in England who begin their course after September 2000 will receive a £6,000 training salary. An additional £4,000 is available as a golden hello for those teaching mathematics, science, English, modern foreign languages, design and technology or information and communications technology in England. Further training awards are made (based on financial need) to secondary trainees in specific subject areas (mathematics, science, foreign languages, design and technology, information and communications technology, religious education, music or geography). These steps appear to have been successful. The TTA (Teacher Training Agency) reports that there has been a surge of interest in teaching, with unprecedented levels of enquiries from graduates and career changers. Figures from the GTTR (Graduate Teacher Training Registry) show that the number of graduates applying to train as teachers in the UK was 22 per cent higher in the period from September 2000 to April 2001 than in the same period in 1999/2000.
99. In addition, the Government is currently considering whether it should waive the student loans for trainee teachers in shortage areas over a ten-year period, provided that they stay in the state teaching sector.
100. The recent initiatives undertaken by the Government to improve the recruitment of teachers recognise not only that action has to be taken to redress areas of national shortage, but also that it has to offer improved incentives if it wants to recruit the best and compete successfully with the commercial sector. We believe that similar initiatives should be implemented in order to redress the disincentives faced by students in undertaking PhDs.

Marketing of postgraduate opportunities and academic careers

101. Part of the success of the campaign to increase the numbers entering teaching is due to the focused marketing campaign that has been undertaken. We consider that there should also be improved marketing of postgraduate research opportunities and academic careers. The OST's Survey of Postgraduate Study Intentions shows that only 15 per cent of the final-year undergraduates surveyed had been influenced by the information provided by the research councils and other government agencies when determining whether to undertake further study. We believe that this is an area where more should be done to promote the value of postgraduate study and academic careers.

Monitoring the impact of student debt on postgraduate recruitment

102. It is clear from the OST's Survey of Postgraduate Study Intentions that financial factors play an important part when students determine whether to undertake postgraduate study. The levels of student debt have increased rapidly since 1991. These levels are expected to escalate further as the majority of the new entrants to undergraduate study are no longer eligible for maintenance grants and have to find the funds to contribute towards their tuition fees. Whilst it is hard to assess the impact of all these changes, it is clear that the financial pressures are increasing and are particularly severe for the arts, humanities and social sciences, where the proportion of self-financing postgraduates is far higher than that for other disciplines. It is important that steps are taken to ensure that the impact of student debt on the numbers undertaking postgraduate study is kept under regular review.

Maintaining standards for teaching and research

103. It is imperative that UK higher education should retain its standards of excellence for teaching and research by being able to recruit the most talented to the academic profession. A number of initiatives are required to make PhD study more attractive to high-flying graduates. One measure that we strongly urge should be taken is that student loans should be waived for those entering the academic profession, and that more should be done to market and promote the academic profession. We also believe that greater recognition should be given to the benefits of postgraduate research for UK HE and the nation as a whole by increasing the stipend level to £12,000 (outside London), in line with that already paid by the Wellcome Trust.

Academic Staff: Attraction and Retention

Question 5: Is there currently a problem attracting or retaining academic staff?

Main findings: There are signs that some subjects are experiencing major difficulties in the recruitment of academic staff. These include Business Studies, Economics, Psychology, Law and Education. In all these areas, the salary levels that graduates can obtain in the commercial or public sector are far higher than they are in academia. There is also some evidence that the number of staff leaving UK HE to go to the EU or overseas is rising. For most subjects falling within the remit of the Review, the recruitment of new academic staff in the future is of greater concern than the retention of existing staff.

The perception of heads of department on the recruitment of academic staff

104. The number of academic staff in the last decade has not kept pace with the rise in student numbers. As a result, the pressures on staff have increased as staff student ratios have risen steadily. The overall staff-student ratios rose from 12.9:1 in 1989/90 to 16.8:1 in 1996/97. We asked heads of department if there were problems attracting academic staff in their field. 45 per cent said that it was a problem, and 55 per cent said that it was not. These responses did not vary according to the type of institution at which the respondents were based. But there are strong differences between disciplines. All the Super UoAs within the social sciences (S1, S4, S8 and S9) have a majority of respondents who perceive recruitment to be a problem. The responses from respondents in Business (S9) are particularly striking, where 86 per cent of the respondents believed that the recruitment of academic staff in their subject was a problem. Similarly, the majority of respondents in Law (62 per cent) and Education (81 per cent) stated that this was also a problem in their area. The majority of the respondents in the humanities and the arts (69 per cent), on the other hand, said that recruitment was not a problem in their subject.

Table 5 *Is there a problem attracting academic staff in your field?*

<i>Super UoA</i>	<i>Yes – % responses</i>
S1 (Psychology)	64%
S4 (Geography)	49%
S8 – Social Sciences	57%
S9 – Business	86%
S10 – Language and Culture	39%
S11 – Humanities	22%
S12 – Visual and Performing Arts	30%
Base	69%

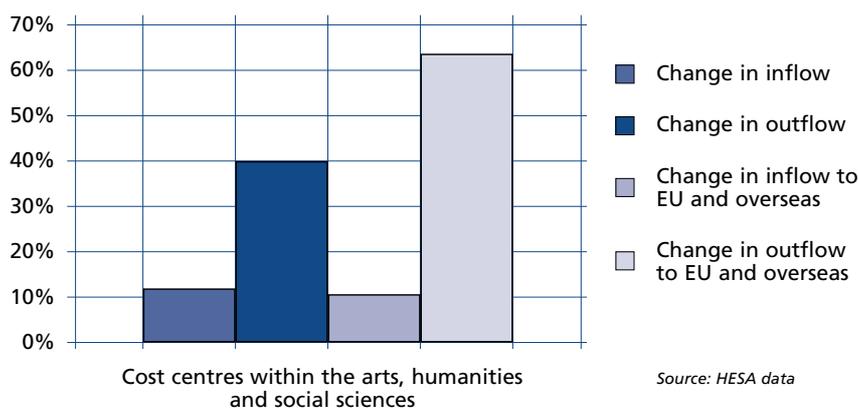
Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department

105. The concerns expressed by respondents in Business Studies, Psychology, Law and Education are supported by the findings of other studies. These include the findings of an independent report that was commissioned jointly in October 1999 by the CVCP, SCOP, UCEA and the Funding Councils to investigate recruitment and retention issues in UK higher education. This report involved in-depth case studies in thirteen institutions selected to achieve a spread of institutions by region, by size and by type. It found that all thirteen institutions were experiencing problems in specific subjects, including Law, Business Studies, Education and Psychology.

Data on inflows/outflows of academic staff

106. In order to explore these issues further, we looked at data on the inflow and outflow rates of academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences. These figures showed that the outflow of full and part-time academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences had increased since 1994/95. Retirement was the largest single known reason for departures in all of the three years under consideration and it appears that the arts, humanities and social sciences gained more staff and students from the EU and overseas than left either to work or study in these countries. Both the number and the proportion of staff leaving UK HE (including death and retirement) has risen, and was particularly high in 1996/97. The numbers leaving UK HE (excluding death and retirement) was higher in both 1996/97 and 1998/99 than in 1994/95. It also appears that the proportion of these staff going to the EU and overseas is rising (see Figure 9).

Figure 9 Percentage change of inflow and outflow rates of full-time staff from 1994/95 to 1998/99



107. The findings from HESA are also confirmed by the comments received from heads of department regarding the retention of staff in their subject. We asked heads of department whether there was a problem retaining staff in their subject area. The majority the respondents (57 per cent) said that they did not believe that retaining academic staff was a problem. This was true for six of the seven Super UoAs, with the exception of S9 (Business) where 80 per cent of the respondents said that it was a problem in their area. Similarly, a Study commissioned by the EPSRC into the attraction and retention of staff and students in IT and Computer Science found that most academics surveyed did not see a major problem in retaining permanent academic staff.

Academic Staff: Quality

Question 6: Is there any evidence that the quality of staff recruited in the future may change?

Main findings: The US experience shows that students are willing to defer immediate gratification if the long-term gain is attractive enough. Many students undertake PhDs in order to enter the academic profession. The evidence gathered from heads of department in the arts, humanities and social sciences show that they believe that the academic profession is no longer attractive to potential PhD students, especially since they are increasingly carrying heavy student debts. The difficulties in obtaining a career-track academic post after completion of PhDs, together with low starting salaries and low rates of progression in comparison with those obtained in professions outside academia, are deterrents to potential 'high-flying' PhD students. The competition for the best graduates is intense, and the traditional compensations for undertaking an academic career, such as academic freedom and the sense of vocation, are widely perceived to have diminished due to the expansion of the higher education sector without a commensurate increase in resource.

Academic salaries, particularly starting salaries, do not compete with those offered by the commercial sector or teaching, where 'golden hellos' are increasingly being offered to 'high-flying' graduates, in order to enable them to wipe out their undergraduate debt. The median starting salary in 2000 of a graduate with a first degree was £18,500. A level of salary required to be attractive in comparison with other career paths is £22,500 (cf Bett).

The heads of department surveyed reported that many candidates found after completing their PhDs that they had to hold a succession of fixed term contracts or undertake part-time hourly paid teaching, since there was a shortage of career-track posts. Indeed, the AUT's study of staff holding 'casual' posts has found that both the number and the proportion of staff holding such contracts is on the increase. It often takes several years before candidates obtain a career-track academic post. Once appointed, they have to start repaying their student loans. This seriously diminishes their initial starting salary.

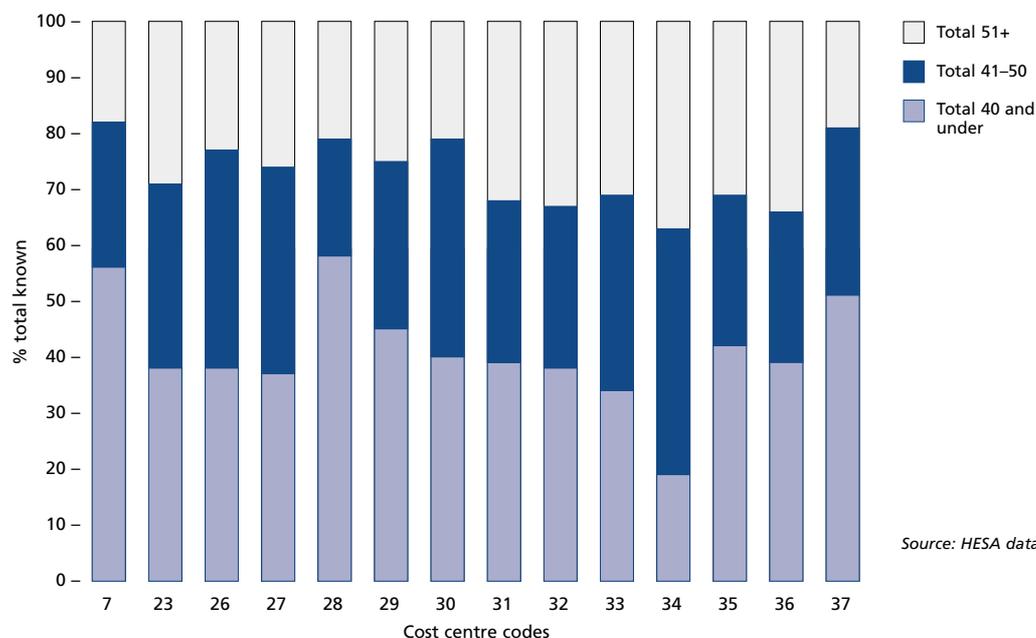
We fear that the current conditions within the HE sector are similar to those within the school sector a few years ago, where recruitment difficulties first emerged in specific subject areas but quickly escalated until they were perceived to be a more widespread problem. It would be deeply regrettable if this were also to occur in the HE sector. Urgent action on academic pay and conditions is clearly required.

108. The future quality of academic staff depends on the factors acting as incentives/disincentives to the recruitment of academic staff in the future, and the age structure of the profession which influences the point at which recruitment becomes a problem.

The age profile of full-time academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences

109. In general, the academic profession is weighted towards younger people, with 39 per cent aged 40 or younger. However, Figure 10 shows that some cost centres (notably (34) – Education, (31) – Language based studies, (32) – Humanities, (33) Design and Creative Arts, (35) – French, Spanish and German modern languages; and (36) – Other Modern Languages) have high proportions of staff aged 51 and over. These proportions were higher than the average for the arts, humanities and social sciences and were also above the average for all subjects. The figures for Education are particularly striking, where 37 per cent of full-time academic staff were aged 51 and over, and 44 per cent were aged between 41 and 50.

Figure 10 The age profile of full-time academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences – 1998/99



The Cost Centre Codes are as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 07 – Psychology and Behavioural Sciences | 31 – Language based studies |
| 23 – Architecture, built environment and planning | 32 – Humanities |
| 26 – Catering and hospitality management | 33 – Design and creative arts |
| 27 – Business and management studies | 34 – Education |
| 28 – Geography | 35 – French, Spanish and German modern languages |
| 29 – Social Studies | 36 – Other modern languages |
| 30 – Librarianship, communication and media studies | 37 – Archaeology |

110. The pattern for part-time staff was rather different. Here the proportion of those who were aged over 51 was 30 per cent; 29 per cent were aged between 41 and 50; and 41 per cent were aged 40 and under. In Education, in particular, only 20 per cent of part-time staff in 1998/99 were aged under 40, and 49 per cent of staff were aged 51 and over.

The characteristics that encourage departure from the HE sector

111. We asked heads of department to score the job characteristics that encouraged departure from the HE sector. Their responses showed that long-term career prospects, scope for research and scholarship, senior and starting pay levels all scored highly.
112. A similar study conducted by the EPSRC found that academics in IT and Computing put working environment at the top of the list, with long term career prospects placed fourth on the list out of eight different job characteristics. The EPSRC's Study also found that the 70 per cent of the academics surveyed in Computing and IT who had sought or been offered a post outside academia cited better pay and conditions as the main attraction for such a move.
113. A substantial number of respondents in the arts, humanities and social sciences believed that academic careers were no longer attractive, and that the traditional compensations for the low levels of pay, such as academic independence and a supportive peer group had been eroded in recent years. As a result, they believed that the academic profession was no longer such an attractive prospect to potential high-flying graduates compared with the attractive job offers many receive from the commercial sector.

Delays in obtaining a career-track post

114. We also received many comments from heads of department about the difficulties involved with obtaining a career-track academic post and the time lapse between PhD completion and a more stable appointment (it was suggested that candidates were often in their late 20s before they were appointed to a career-track post). Respondents were concerned that the lack of certainty in getting an academic position, combined with salaries far below external levels, discouraged many high quality candidates from undertaking a PhD.
115. Studies undertaken by the AUT have found that the proportion of academic staff on short-term fixed contracts had increased from 39 to 42 per cent between 1994/95 and 1998/99. The AUT recommended that there should be a reduction in the use of fixed-term contracts, and believed that it contributed to recruitment and retention problems.
116. These concerns are common to all subjects including the sciences, as is demonstrated by the findings of the EPSRC's Survey into the difficulties associated with the recruitment of academic staff in IT and Computer Science. It found that academics in these fields believed that the problem was with the retention of post-doctoral staff and research assistants rather than with the retention of permanent academic staff. Its report summarised the problem in terms of "increasing pressure and diminishing rewards".

Postdoctoral fellowships

117. Postdoctoral fellowships act as an important bridge into an academic career and are generally preferable to short-term academic contracts because they allow greater personal career development. The British Academy, ESRC and AHRB, Leverhulme Trust and others provide postdoctoral fellowship awards. The demand for such awards is high as is the quality of the applicants. (In the current round of the British Academy's post-doctoral fellowship scheme there are over 14 applicants for every one award.) An expansion of awards can therefore easily find suitable high quality candidates.

Academic starting salaries

118. We asked heads of department to suggest what they believed could be done to overcome the problems of recruiting and retaining academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences. The most frequently cited comment (65 per cent of the respondents) was that academic starting salaries should be raised in order to reflect market pressures. The salaries gained by graduates working outside the academic profession are considerably higher than academic salaries. There is a particular problem as a result of the low level of starting salaries. According to the Association of Graduate Recruiters, the median starting salary in 2000 of a graduate with a first degree was £18,500 and after three years of work experience the median graduate salary rose to £25,000. This compares with between £17,912²⁰ and £18,731²¹ starting salaries for lecturers²² in HE, and between £20,471 and £21,435 after 3 years. For some subjects falling within the remit of the Review, such as Business and Management, Economics, Accountancy and Law, the differences can obviously be considerably wider. For all the disciplines reviewed the differences between academic salaries and market rates are considerable, for some subjects the differences are extreme. The Committee believes this acts as a strong disincentive to academic recruitment.
119. An additional difficulty is that most academic appointments in the arts, humanities and social sciences are made to those with two or even three degrees (undergraduate, masters and doctorate qualifications). If there is also delay in obtaining a career-track post, this further undermines the attractiveness of academic posts. In view of the length of training required, academic salaries, particularly starting salaries, are too low. The AUT has also drawn attention to the higher levels of pay received by other professions within the public sector, including school teachers where the period of training is much shorter.

The findings of the Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions

120. An Independent Review Committee was established in February 1998 to review and make recommendations on a new framework for determining pay and conditions for staff in the HE sector. Its final Report (the Bett Report)

20 Point 6 of the lecturer scale in post-1992 universities on 1 September 2000

21 Point 6 of the lecturer A scale in pre-1992 universities on 1 April 2000

22 Lecturers are not normally appointed without a PhD and tend to be in their late twenties before they secure an appointment

was published in June 1999. The Report drew attention to the role of HE staff in the expansion of the HE sector in the last ten years. It believed that much of this growth had been achieved through the increased productivity of HE staff, and it estimated this increase as averaging 6 per cent a year between 1991 and 1995, which it compared against a comparable figure of 2 per cent a year in the UK service sector as a whole in this same period.

- 121.** The Bett Committee received evidence that academic salary rates in the pre-1992 universities had increased by 18 per cent less than the average for public sector salaries and by 30 per cent less than the average for non-manual employees in the UK economy since 1981. The general conclusions reached by the Committee were that HE salaries, for most grades in most staff groups, were below the wider market medians. They found that the biggest disparities in HE pay levels were at the top and bottom of the pay scales. The Report stated that the minimum starting salaries for young lecturers and for holders of research posts were not attractive to potential post-doctoral candidates, bearing in mind that such candidates would normally be in their late twenties before they gained a permanent academic appointment since they would have had to complete at least four years of postgraduate training after completing their first degree. It recommended that £20,000 should be the minimum level at which such appointments should be made, and £22,500 for lecturer posts.
- 122.** Similarly, the Committee found that Professors and equivalent senior academic staff were paid 30 per cent less than employees in similar categories of jobs across all other sectors. It recommended that these staff should be offered awards more commensurate with their responsibilities, and recommended that the minimum level should be set at £46,500. The minimum rates suggested for introduction by 2002 are shown in Table 6:

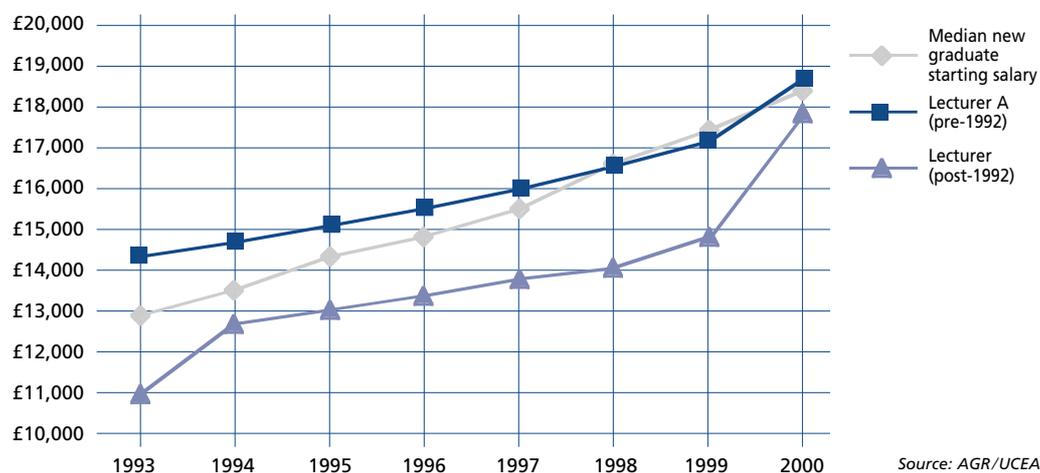
Table 6 *The findings of the Bett Report (data not updated; for 2000 salaries see Figure 11)*

<i>Academic Grades as grouped by the Bett Report</i>	<i>Levels recommended by the Bett Report – minimums</i>	<i>Salary scales for 1999/2000 – minimums (actuals)</i>
Researcher 1A and 1B posts (pre-1992)	£20,000	£16,286 (pre-1992)
Researcher B and A posts (post-1992)		£10,763 (post-1992)
Lecturer B, Lecturer A, and Researcher A1 posts (pre-1992)	£22,500	£17,238 (pre-1992)
Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and (large) Research B posts (post-1992)		£14,902 (post-1992)
(large) Lecturer B and Researcher II posts (pre-1992)	£28,000	£22,579 (pre-1992)
(large) Senior Lecturer posts (post-1992)		£23,184 (post-1992)
Senior Lecturers, Readers (pre-1992)	£35,000	£31,563 (pre-1992)
Principal Lecturers (post-1992)		£28,978 (post-1992)
Professors and Researcher IV posts (pre-1992)	£46,500	£36,401 (pre-1992)
Heads of Department and equivalent (post-1992)		£26,304 (post-1992)

Views of heads of department

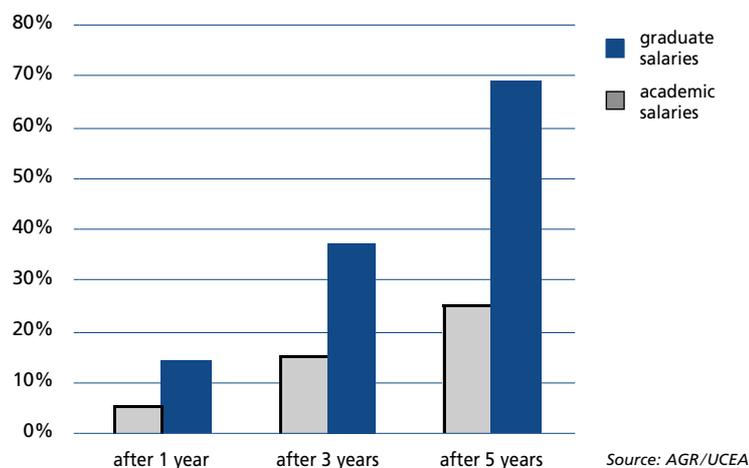
123. We asked heads of department to state the level at which they believed academic starting salaries should be set. The mean starting salary proposed was £21,854, which is higher than the current starting salaries for academics, and is similar to the level recommended by the Bett Report. Moreover, 27 per cent of respondents said that they believed that academic salary levels should start at £25,000. A further 5 per cent of respondents believed that the level should be set even higher.
124. Figure 11 shows the level of starting salaries for lecturers since 1993 compared to the increase in the median salaries obtained by new graduates. It assumes that academics have been appointed on the bottom point of the lecturer scales²³. As can be seen, the median starting salary for graduates has been consistently higher than that for lecturers in post-1992 institutions and has in recent years matched the starting salary for lecturers at pre-1992 institutions.

Figure 11 A comparison between the starting salaries for lecturers and the median new graduate starting salaries



125. Just as academic salaries and progression act as disincentives to undertake a PhD, they also act as disincentives to academic recruitment. Figure 12 compares the salary progression of an academic appointed on the lecturer A scale (pre-1992 institution) to the median progression of a graduate working outside the academic sector. As can be seen, the differential in the amount that a graduate can command after 3 and 5 years' employment increases rapidly. Whilst the general salary level of graduates increases by 37 and 69 per cent, respectively after three and 5 years' employment, the salary of an academic lecturer (Grade A – pre-1992 institutions) will increase by only 15 per cent after three years' employment and 25 per cent after five.

²³ Since 1993 there have been a number of changes in the salary points used in the lecturer scales at both pre- and post-1992 institutions. Points 1 and 2 (post-1992 institutions) were deleted from the bottom of the lecturer scale in 1994, and points 3, 4 and 5 were deleted in 2000. Similarly, point 5 was deleted from the bottom of the lecturer A scale (pre-1992 institutions) in 2000

Figure 12 Salary progression

Ways in which problems of attracting academic staff in the arts, humanities and social sciences can be overcome

126. The overwhelming majority of respondents to our Survey indicated that they believed that academic careers were no longer attractive. We asked those heads of department who believed there were problems of attracting and retaining humanities and social science academic staff, to suggest what could be done by government, other agencies or universities to overcome this. Nearly all the respondents to the Survey (98 per cent) indicated that they believed that this was an area where action should be taken in order to redress these problems.

Table 7 The responses from heads of department on ways in which problems of attracting and retaining academic staff can be overcome (% of respondents, multiple responses allowed)

Comment	% of respondents
Better pay (salaries reflecting market pressures)	65.2%
Reduce bureaucracy (QAA, RAE etc)	36.0 %
Allow more time for scholarship	17.1%
Better working environment	15.9%
Greater prestige	13.4%
Reduce staff/student ratios	13.0%
Government should increase funding for teaching and research	12.8%
More tenured posts	8.9%
Establish formal career path	7.6%
Agencies should play a major role in seeking to promote academia	1.8%
Greater flexibility in academic titles	0.3%
Total comments made	1361
No. respondents	709

Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department

The overwhelmingly most important response was that salary levels for all grades should be raised, and that career prospects should be improved. However, such steps should not be taken in isolation, and other factors such as improving working conditions, reducing bureaucracy and providing more time for research and scholarship, were also important.

127. These concerns are not restricted to the arts, humanities and social sciences, as evidenced by the findings of the EPSRC's study which highlighted the problems of attracting and retaining staff and students in information technology and computer science. It found that academics in these areas believed that academic salaries should be higher and should be comparable to industrial salaries. Pay for both staff and PhD students was seen as an important factor contributing to the problem of attracting staff in these fields. There were calls to improve academic conditions and to reduce the bureaucracy imposed by the RAE and the QAA.
128. *Recent Government Initiatives* In response to concerns that many of the most talented researchers were leaving the UK to take up posts overseas, the Government has allocated additional funding to the HEFCE, which has made £80 million available in 2001–02 in order to reward, retain and develop staff in strategically important disciplines in higher education, and institutions have been invited to submit human resource strategies in order to qualify for such funding. In 2002–03 it will set aside £120 million, and it anticipates that the figure for 2003–04 will be at least £170 million. Whilst key staff are clearly important and need special recruitment and retention incentives, it appears that there is also a systematic problem of low salaries and low attractiveness across the profession. Although the new funding from the Government and HEFCE is therefore most welcome, the Committee believes that more resources need to be made available to overcome recruitment problems.

The future

129. The vast majority of the respondents to the Review's Survey of heads of department indicated that they believed that academic working conditions had declined sharply, and that staff were heavily overburdened with teaching and administrative responsibilities. In spite of these developments, most academics appeared to be staying in academia because they saw it as their vocation. They were, however, concerned that the low levels of pay, together with the perceived unattractive working conditions, would deter many able candidates from undertaking PhDs and entering the academic profession. Many suggested that the opportunities available to PhD students after completion should be improved by increasing the number of post-doctoral fellowships and career-track opportunities, since many students undertook PhDs in order to enter the academic profession. Making academic careers more attractive by raising the profile of the profession as well as improving its pay, career structure and working conditions was seen as important long-term factors that would encourage more potential candidates to undertake postgraduate research.
130. It is clearly important that 'high-flying' students should see the academic profession as attractive to enable the UK HE sector to recruit the most talented and so maintain its standards of excellence. The international context should also not be ignored. Whilst it appears that in the past the numbers leaving to work in HE institutions overseas have been far lower than the

numbers from these countries coming to work in the UK, the major changes that have occurred to the UK HE sector in recent years may make movement abroad more attractive. Indeed, the figures provided by HESA on the numbers leaving UK HE to work or study in the EU or overseas are rising. Academic salaries are higher both in EU countries and elsewhere, especially in the USA, Singapore and Hong Kong²⁴.

131. In view of this, the recent Government initiatives to improve the recruitment, retention and development of academic staff are most welcome. However, it is clear that these steps, however encouraging, are not sufficient on their own to address the low levels of pay of all grades within the academic sector. The Bett Report estimated that it would cost around £680 million²⁵ to implement all its recommendations regarding the pay and working conditions within the HE sector.

24 The Independent Review of Higher Education Pay and Conditions found evidence that academic salaries were higher in the USA, Singapore and Hong Kong

25 The Independent Review Committee estimated that the cost of implementing its recommendations on reformed pay and conditions (including equal pay obligations) would add around 6 per cent of the HE sector's total costs

Academic Staff: Endangered and Emerging Fields

Question 7: Are there any specific fields that are endangered by recruitment and retention problems, and are there any emerging fields that have specific recruitment and retention problems?

Main findings: Our analyses have identified many areas of the arts, humanities and social sciences that give grounds for concerns. There is good reason to fear that expertise in these areas will soon be lost, with serious implications for teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as for research. There are also some systematic difficulties of inadequate quantitative skills in a number of the social sciences.

We are also concerned that the demonstrable difficulties faced by specific subjects areas are an early indicator of the problems that will affect all subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences unless urgent action is taken. We believe that a number of special initiatives and policy changes are required in order to address these problems.

Identifying specific subject areas

132. Widespread concerns have been expressed that specific subjects and sub-disciplines are endangered. We welcome the initiative recently announced by the HEFCE to ensure adequate PhD output in such subjects. The problem is that it may not always be easy to identify such subjects, especially since national data on staff and student numbers are collected in rather broad subject categories that often make such identification difficult. Hence, hard evidence on the subjects experiencing difficulties recruiting postgraduates and academic staff is not easy to come by. We hope that the proposed expansion of the subject classifications used by UCAS and HESA will help to alleviate such difficulties in the future.

Interdisciplinary subjects

133. Concerns were raised by several subject associations that interdisciplinary subjects often fell between two stools with regard to funding from the AHRB or the ESRC. In view of the way in which such subjects are classified at postgraduate level, it is difficult to assess if there are problems in these areas and their extent. We are aware that both the AHRB and the ESRC strive to ensure that they work jointly to ensure that such problems do not arise. They may wish to consider whether there is more that can be done in order to ensure a better integrated provision of appropriate training and financial support across the board in the arts, humanities and social sciences, especially in interdisciplinary areas that cover both the humanities and social sciences.

Subjects whose student numbers have fallen

134. The evidence that we were able to obtain from HESA, the subject associations and from heads of department in the arts, humanities and social sciences shows that there is a number of subjects where the low number of PhD students is a cause for concern. There are a number of subjects where we anticipate severe problems in recruiting academic staff in the near future because the PhD output will not be sufficient to replenish academic staff numbers. The problems experienced by some of these subjects are widely known, such as Economics, Business and Accountancy. They may be helped by the HEFCE's recent initiative to set aside funds in order to ensure adequate output of PhDs in specific subjects. There are other areas, however, which are experiencing difficulties that may be less well known, and we would urge the Government and other relevant funding bodies to consider their cases carefully. The subjects that appear to be currently experiencing difficulties recruiting sufficient postgraduate research students or academic staff include the following broad subject areas: Economics; Financial Management; Business and Management Studies; Accountancy; Modern Languages; Law; Psychology; and Education.

Problems in particular sub-fields

135. In addition, we have some evidence that there are subjects whose overall numbers appear to be quite healthy, which on closer examination are experiencing difficulties in recruiting PhD students or academic staff for specific sub-fields within their subject. We asked heads of departments which specific fields or sub-disciplines within their area that they believed were particularly endangered by recruitment and/or retention problems. Most concerns were expressed for Business and Management, Law and Accountancy. But concerns were also expressed in the humanities about pre-20th century studies in the following areas: American Studies, English Language and Literature, French, German, and Spanish and Portuguese. The following subjects were cited most frequently as 'endangered subjects' by a sufficiently large sample to be considered representative:

Table 8 *Endangered subjects most frequently identified by respondents to the survey (in rank order of percentage of respondents identifying the problem)*

Marketing
Finance
Economics
IT areas/information systems
Accountancy
Commercial Law
Quantitative methods in the social sciences
Geographical Information Systems
Economic Geography
Economic History
Extra- European History
Business Strategy
Clinical Psychology
Common Law

Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department (reported only for large sample sizes)

136. We also asked heads of department whether there were any ‘emerging’ fields within their subject that were experiencing recruitment or retention difficulties. 205 respondents cited a total of 305 sub-fields. There were variations by subject, with subjects such as Business and Management, Law, Geography and Music showing response rates that were far higher than the average. The main areas identified are listed in Table 9.

Table 9 Emerging subjects most frequently identified by respondents to the survey (in rank order of percentage of respondents identifying the problem)

<i>E-commerce</i>
<i>Geographical Information Systems</i>
<i>Quantitative/Statistical Methods in the social sciences</i>
<i>Accountancy</i>
<i>IT, Cyber Law, E-commerce Law</i>
<i>Intellectual Property Law</i>
<i>French linguistics</i>

Source: British Academy Survey of Heads of Department (reported only for large sample sizes)

137. A systematic problem, resulting from the shortage of quantitatively trained researchers, was raised several times by different subjects within the social sciences (including Geography, Social Policy and Administration, Social Work and Sociology). The ESRC is also concerned about this and has been exploring ways in which it can help to remedy the lack of social scientists with quantitative research skills.
138. We are aware of deficiencies in our Survey in identifying endangered and emerging areas, particularly in very small disciplines which have few potential respondents. We urge the funding and research councils, the Academy and the AHRB to undertake further work in this area. It should also be recognised that subjects evolve and sometimes for good reasons move on from areas where they once had heavy concentrations of staff and students. It would not be desirable therefore to pour resources into these areas at the expense of, say, ‘emerging’ areas or areas that are at these subjects’ core. It is clearly important that the identification of subjects or sub-fields with difficulties takes such factors into account, but only after wide consultation.

Prior preparation for research

139. Concerns were expressed to us that that the traditional initial preparation for some subjects within the arts, humanities and social sciences in secondary schools had in recent years become rather limited in its breadth and depth. It was argued that universities’ attempts to redress these deficiencies at undergraduate level were often hampered by the lack of time available and also the fragmented nature of largely modular degrees. In view of this, we asked heads of department whether they believed that the quality of student preparation was likely to decline in the future as a result of changes that had already taken place, such as the reform of the school curriculum. The majority of those who expressed an opinion (60 per cent) did not believe that it would. However, 40 per cent of respondents, mainly in the Geography, Humanities and Language and Literature Super UoAs, quoted falling standards of English and foreign language skills, followed by lack of general knowledge and less ability to work on own initiative.

140. Several subject associations shared these concerns, and said that these difficulties were compounded in specific subjects, where language or other skills had to be acquired, but it was difficult to find sufficient time within the masters or PhD programme to ensure that these skills were properly developed.
141. We are aware of difficulties in establishing taught masters programmes in subjects where the student population is relatively low because there is no guarantee of sufficient numbers to make the programmes financially viable. This will not only have an impact on the size of the pool of potential candidates for PhD study in these areas, but it may also make it difficult for such applicants to gain a postgraduate research studentship for lack of sufficient prior training. This suggests the need for greater numbers of collaborative training programmes.
142. We urge that the funding bodies and research councils should provide support for collaborative training programmes in shortage subject areas. These collaborations could take the form of regional or other groupings. In this way, academic staff in shortage areas that are based at different universities or within different disciplines would be able to pool their expertise.

More focused PhDs

143. Our Survey of Heads of Department showed that there was a widespread perception that the drive to ensure that PhD students complete within three or at most four years has led to more focused and manageable projects. A high proportion of the respondents believed, however, that this was sometimes at the expense of more innovative and ambitious work, and that students were deterred from undertaking projects in areas where specialised language skills or fieldwork had to be undertaken because it was feared that they would not be able to complete on time.
144. In addition, it was also argued that these time constraints might mean that some of the candidates who were successfully completing their PhDs now were far less well prepared for an academic career than their predecessors in previous years. We are concerned that this might lead to a shortage of suitably prepared academics in the future in these areas, and fear the implications that this may have for the standards of teaching and research in these areas.
145. We are concerned that the pressure to ensure that PhD students do not undertake projects that cannot be completed within three years will lead to gaps within certain subject areas. In order to ensure that specific fields are not lost to the academic profession, we believe that the AHRB and ESRC should establish a mechanism to identify and provide the necessary support for award-holders who have undertaken a 'difficult' research project because of the nature of the field concerned.

Main Recommendations

146. The Review has identified a number of areas of significant and urgent concern. Our main findings are summarised at the start of each Section and in the Executive Summary at the front of this document. Our recommendations are spelled out in full in the Executive Summary. Our recommendations seek to specify the special initiatives and policy changes that are required. These are grouped below according to priority.

Priority One

1. Allow phased waiving of student debt

Priority Two

2. Increase the stipend level for PhD awards and keep under review
3. Allow postgraduates to apply for student loans
4. Develop greater flexibility in the support of research students (new schemes to support part-time students and schemes in partnership with HE institutions and external collaborators)
5. Improve academic pay and conditions
6. Introduce greater flexibility or special initiatives targeted at important 'endangered' and 'emerging' subjects

Other Recommendations

7. Increase the number of postdoctoral fellowships
8. Improve the marketing of postgraduate opportunities and research careers by the OST/Research Councils/AHRB/British Academy/Universities
9. Ensure that there is comparability between the grant levels for masters and PhD awards in the humanities
10. Increase the number of awards available in the arts, humanities and social sciences
11. Protect institutional support arrangements for postgraduate research students
12. Review the subject classifications for national data on HE
13. Monitor the impact of changes in prior preparation for undergraduate studies

Request for Comments

147. We welcome any comments that you may have on the Review's findings. Please send your comments to Ms V Hurley, The British Academy, 10 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH (email: v.hurley@britac.ac.uk). Preferably these comments should reach the Academy by 30 November 2001.

List of Respondents

The Respondents to the Survey came from the following institutions

England

Anglia Polytechnic University	Harper Adams University College
Aston University	University of Hertfordshire
University of Bath	University of Huddersfield
Bath Spa University College	University of Hull
University of Birmingham	Imperial College of Science, Technology & Medicine
Birkbeck College	Keele University
Bolton Institute of HE	University of Kent at Canterbury
Bournemouth University	Kent Institute of Art & Design
University of Bradford	King Alfred's College, Winchester
Bretton Hall	King's College London
University of Brighton	Kingston University
University of Bristol	Lancaster University
Brunel University	University of Leeds
University of Cambridge	Leeds Metropolitan University
University of Central England in Birmingham	University of Leicester
University of Central Lancashire	University of Lincolnshire & Humberside
Central School of Speech and Drama	University of Liverpool
Canterbury Christ Church University College	Liverpool John Moores University
Cheltenham and Gloucester College of HE	London Business School
Chester College of HE	London School of Economics & Political Science
University College Chichester	London Guildhall University
City University	Loughborough University
Coventry University	University of Luton
Cranfield University	University of Manchester
Dartington College of Arts	University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology (UMIST)
De Montfort University	Manchester Metropolitan University
University of Derby	Middlesex University
University of Durham	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of East Anglia	University of North London
University of East London	University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Edge Hill College of HE	University of Nottingham
Institute of Education	The Nottingham Trent University
University of Essex	The Open University
University of Exeter	School of Oriental & African Studies
Falmouth College of Arts	University of Oxford
Goldsmiths College	Oxford Brookes University
University of Greenwich	University of Plymouth

University of Portsmouth
 Queen Mary and Westfield College
 University of Reading
 College of Ripon & York
 University of Surrey Roehampton
 Royal Academy of Music
 Royal Holloway, University of London
 St Mary's College
 University of Salford
 Salford College
 University of Sheffield
 Sheffield Hallam University
 University of Southampton
 Southampton Institute
 South Bank University
 Staffordshire University
 University of Sunderland
 The Surrey Institute of Art and Design,
 University College
 University of Surrey
 University of Sussex
 University of Teesside
 Thames Valley University
 University College London
 Warburg Institute
 University of Warwick
 University of Westminster
 University of the West of England, Bristol
 Wimbledon School of Art
 University of Wolverhampton

Subject Associations

Association of Business Schools
 Association for French Language Studies
 Association of Heads of Psychology Departments
 Association of South East Asian Studies in the UK
 Association of University Professors of French and Heads of Department of French
 British Association for American Studies
 British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies
 British Society for Middle Eastern Studies
 British Sociological Association
 Conference of University Teachers of German
 Council for College and University English
 Council of University Classical Departments

University College Worcester
 University of York

Scotland

University of Aberdeen
 University of Abertay Dundee
 University of Dundee
 University of Edinburgh
 University of Glasgow
 Glasgow Caledonian University
 Glasgow School of Art
 Heriot-Watt University
 University of Paisley
 Queen Margaret University College
 Robert Gordon University
 University of St Andrews
 University of Stirling
 University of Strathclyde

Wales

University of Glamorgan
 University of Wales, Bangor
 University of Wales Swansea
 University of Wales, Aberystwyth
 Cardiff University
 University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
 University of Wales, Lampeter

Northern Ireland

The Queen's University of Belfast
 University of Ulster

Economic History Society
 Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research
 Heads of Sociology Council
 Media, Communication & Cultural Studies Association
 Modern Humanities Research Association
 National Association for Music in Higher Education
 Political Studies Association
 Royal Geographical Society/IBG
 Royal Historical Society
 Social History Society
 Society for French Studies
 Society for Old Testament Study
 Society for South Asian Studies
 Society for the Study of Christian Ethics
 Society for the Study of Theology
 Society of Latin American Studies
 Standing Committee of University Professors and Heads of Archaeology
 Standing Conference of Arts and Social Sciences
 The English Association

Funding Bodies

Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)
 Biology and Biological Science Research Council (BBSRC)
 Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
 Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
 Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
 Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
 Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
 Medical Research Council (MRC)
 Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
 Royal Academy of Engineering
 Royal Society
 Scottish Higher Education Council (SHEFC)
 The Wellcome Trust

The institutions that contributed to the *Review*

De Montfort University
 The Queen's University of Belfast
 University of Cambridge
 University of Edinburgh

Representative bodies

The National Postgraduate Committee
 Association of University Teachers

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