Increasing awareness and representation of postgraduate students
(Note: this motion has not been sent to NUS Conference due to NUS word limits on submitted policy)

Date passed: 21\textsuperscript{st} February 2013
Speaker for: Tom Renhard
Seconder: Pete Daw

This Union notes:

1. Postgraduate students account for over 20% (approximately 500,000+) of all students in Higher Education (\textit{Engaging postgraduate students in the Students’ Union}, p. 9).
2. There are both Post-Graduate Taught (PGT) and Post-Graduate Research (PGR) students across the varying faculties of the university on a full-time or part-time basis.
3. There is the existence of Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDL’s) that charge interest rates of 9.9% within two months of the completion of the course and usually cover only 80% of the course fee, unless the applicant has been unemployed for a period of three months (\url{http://www.independent.co.uk/student/postgraduate/professional-and-career-development-loans--whats-the-deal-7745995.html}).
4. That UWE provides untaught but supervised research degrees to research students which create complex relationships involving the research student (as a student/staff member), university and often a separate research council or other collaborative partners.
5. PCDL’s are currently available from Barclays and the Co-operative.
6. There is currently no specific space for postgraduate students to find useful information for themselves on the union website.
7. There is both postgraduate and undergraduate representation on academic board.
8. There is currently no established postgraduate network.

This Union believes:

1. Currently, not enough is being done to engage with post-graduate students at this university and implement changes based on concerns raised.
2. There have been issues for a number of years relating to the registration of postgraduate students in a timely manner and ahead of the start of their course.
3. Post-Graduate students can often have very complex needs to deal with, including work and childcare commitments, of which issues with registration can become an added burden, affecting their wellbeing.
4. The university do not provide information early enough on timetables which makes childcare/work arrangements difficult to resolve.
5. That by working ahead of the new academic year a number of these issues can be resolved to improve and enhance the experience of Post-Graduate students at UWE.
6. More needs to be done to cater for the financial needs of Post-Graduate students, including improving bursary provisions and the creation of a fairer loans system that does not impose extortionate interest rates through private loans from banks.

7. That the relationship created by the funding complexities between research councils, university and research student brings benefit by providing a stipend exempt of tax and national insurance obligations.

8. That this relationship created by the funding complexities disadvantages research students by failing to provide employers national insurance or pension contributions which can cause research students to be ineligible for state support should they become ill and unable to continue with their research.

9. No-one should be stopped from, or feel they can’t continue their studies beyond undergraduate level because of cost.

10. The Union can do more to be relevant to postgraduate students and increase their participation in union activities.

11. That the representation of postgraduate and undergraduate students on academic board should be increased.

12. That it needs to support the formation of a postgraduate network and help get it off the ground by effectively advertising it to postgraduate students and the benefits that getting involved can bring.

This Union resolves:

1. To support the NUS campaign and lobby the government on the introduction of a fair Post-Graduate loans system that encourages more students to continue in education and research for the benefit of themselves and the country as a whole.

2. To lobby the Vice-Chancellor to support the creation of a better system of financing postgraduate study.

3. To lobby local MP’s to support the creation of a better system of financing postgraduate study.

4. To redress the imbalance created by research students’ less favourable employment status by asking the University to extend its Employee Assistance Programme to research students.

5. To work with the university ahead of the new academic year to resolve issues surrounding registration, timetabling, access to resources and beyond for the wellbeing of postgraduate students and to improve academic performance.

6. To work with the university to reach out to postgraduate students by creating a survey asking what would make the union more relevant to them.

7. To create a ‘postgraduate portal’ on the union website with information that is relevant to postgraduate students/those thinking of postgraduate study. This must include information on (but not limited to): talks taking place at the university, employability and specialist careers advice, financial advice on funding options, information for mature students/student parents, information on those considering further study and the different routes a student can take (postgraduate taught/postgraduate research).

8. To encourage undergraduates to use the postgraduate portal as a way of learning more about the world of postgraduate study.
9. To lobby for an increase of both postgraduate and undergraduate representation on academic board, with an aim to increase postgraduate representation on it by two students and to do the same for undergraduates.
10. To fully support the creation of a postgraduate network.
11. To send the motion to NUS National Conference.