

Learning from HEFCE's Postgraduate Support Scheme

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Engineering Professors' Council
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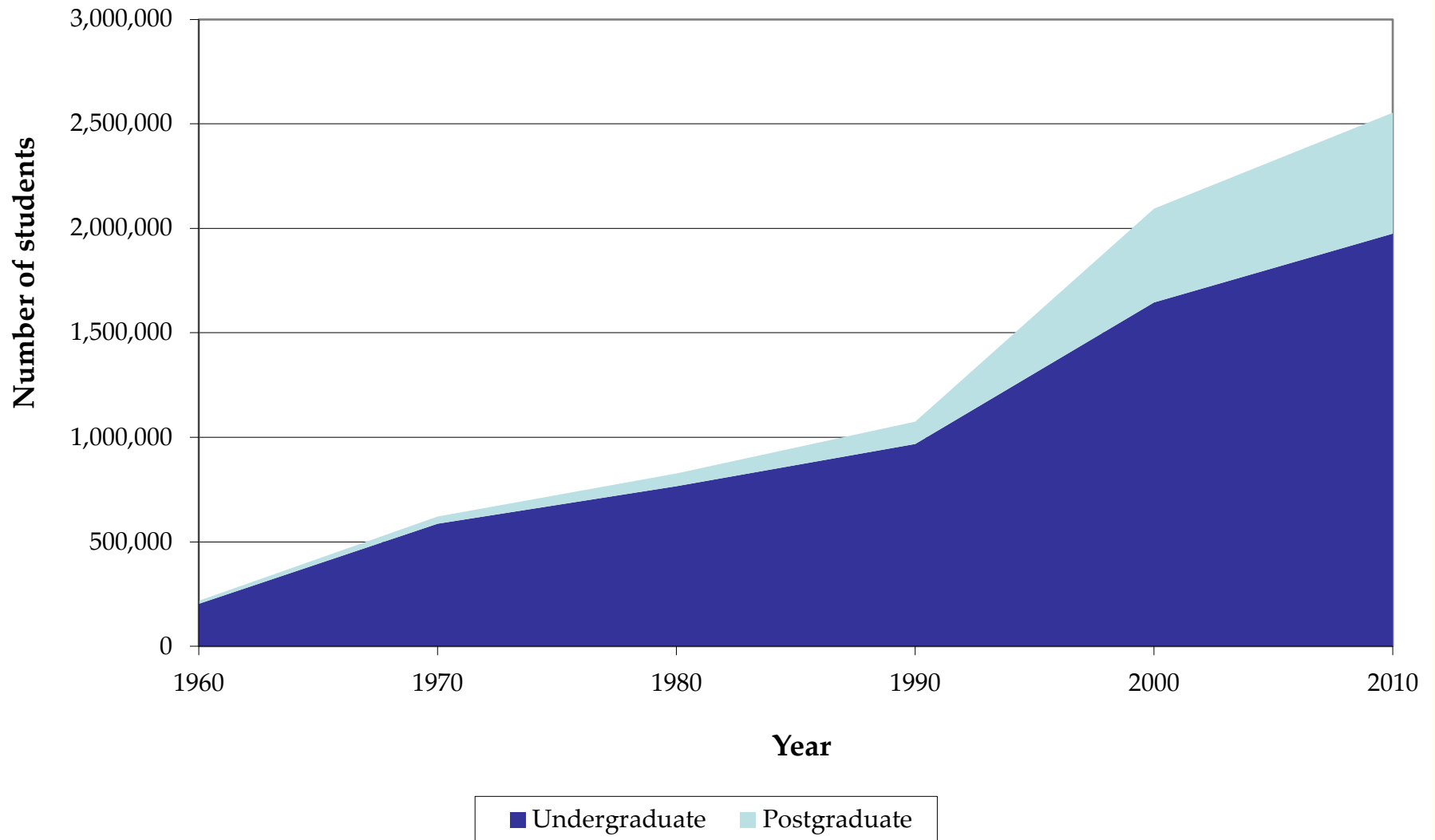
Outline

- Background to the Postgraduate Support Scheme (PSS)
- Outline of PSS: organisation and themes
- Engineering in PSS
- PG recruitment and admissions
- Looking ahead

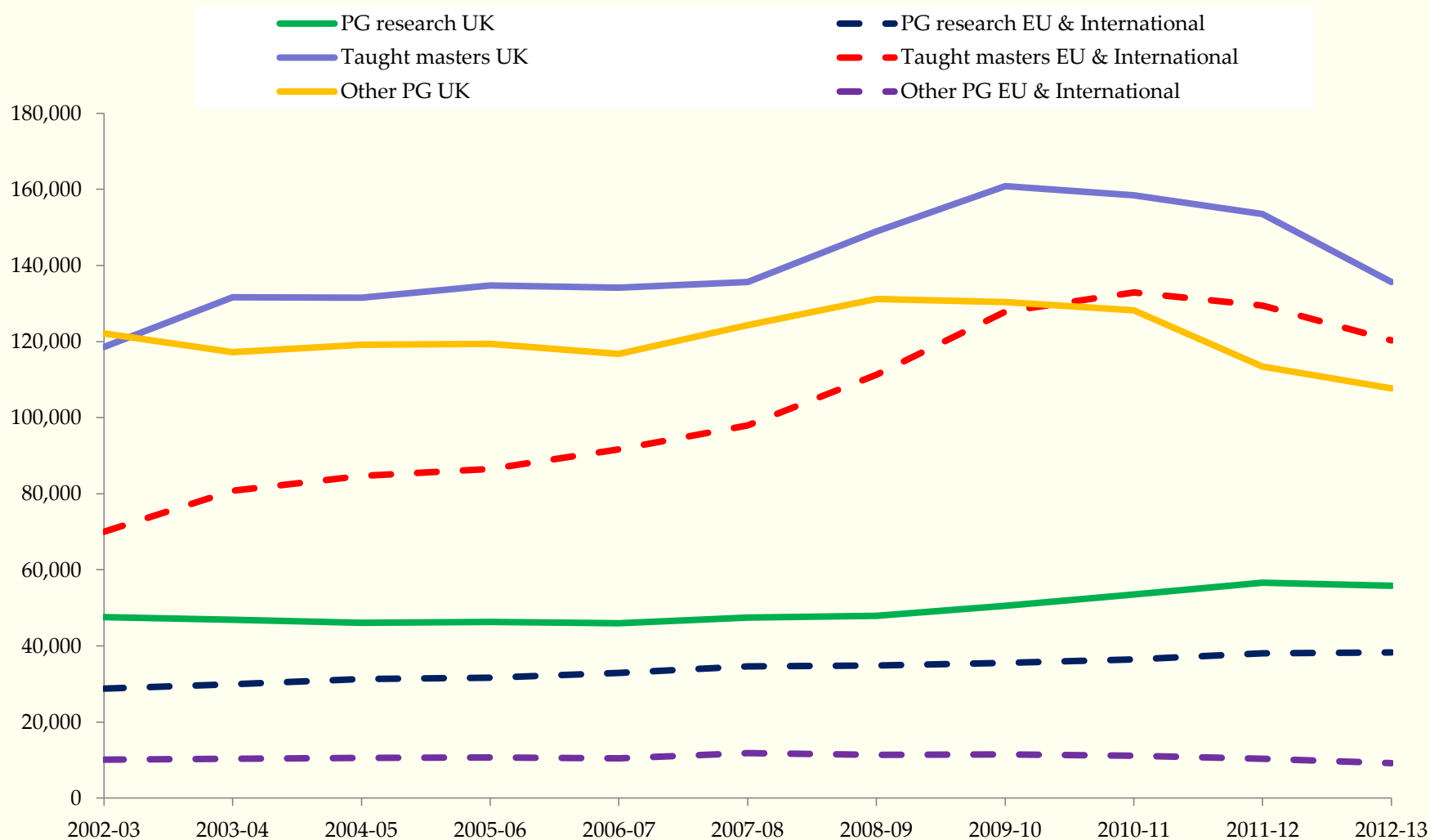
Background to PSS

- Longstanding issue, but attention only recently – *many* research gaps
- Concern over Browne Review neglect and £9k fees
- Set of think-tank and sector representative body reports

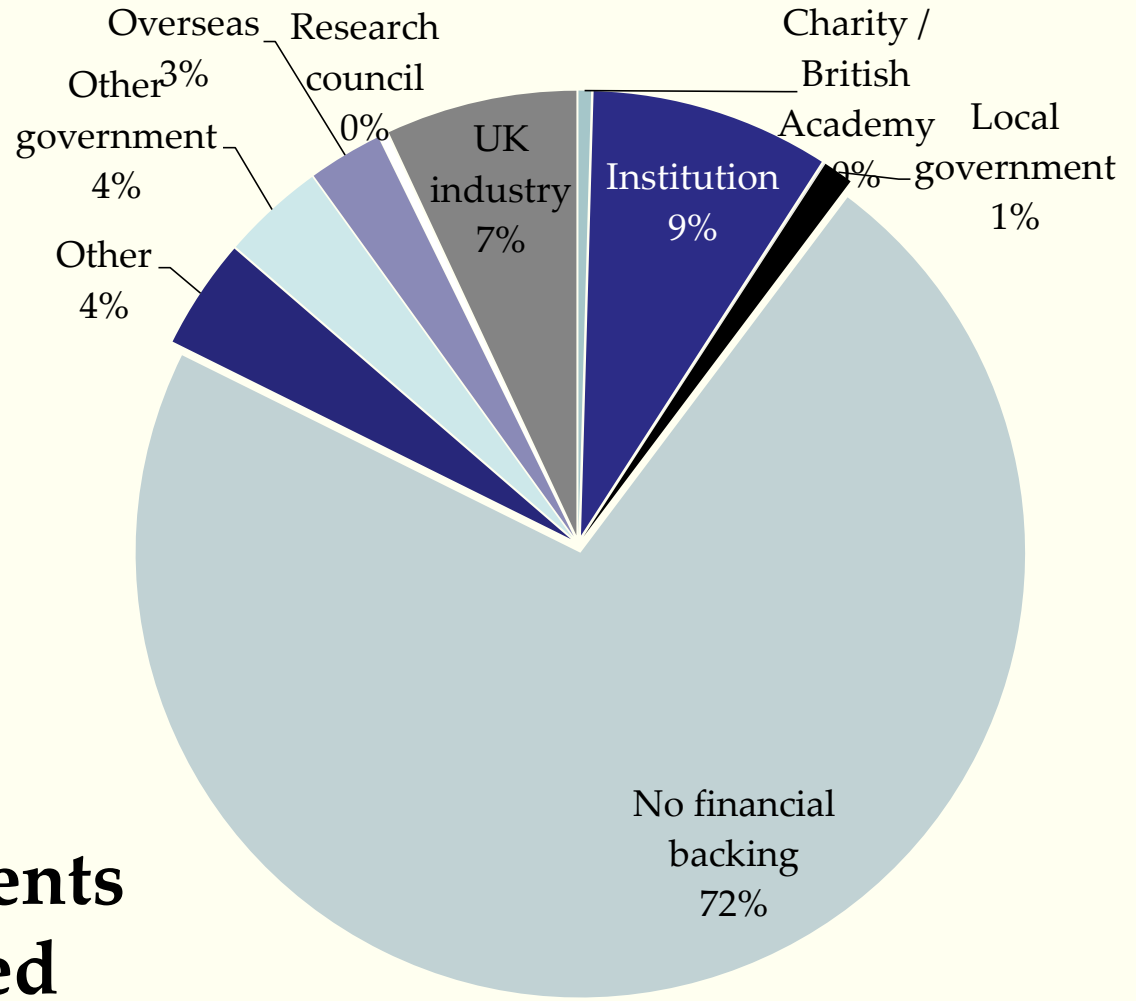
UK Student Numbers by Level, 1960 - 2010



UK PG numbers tailing off?



Sources of PGT student finance



**approx. 5% students
publicly funded**

What else we know

- Strong (post)graduate outcomes:
 - Wages (Lindley and Machin, 2013)
 - Futuretrack (but few 'postgraduate' jobs)
- PGT motivated by employment prospects
 - PG Information Needs study (Mellors-Bourne et al, 2014)
 - Intentions After Graduation Survey
 - Earlier work (e.g. Barber et al, 2004)
 - But cf sector skills shortages vs. UK PGT demand!
- Inequalities: gender, social class, ethnicity etc

The Postgraduate Support Scheme

- £25M for 2014/15 for PGT
 - Preparation for £50M in 2015/16 (re-purposed NSP funds)
- Purpose is to:
 - Stimulate demand
 - Facilitate fair access & widening participation
 - Innovate
 - Support strategic and vulnerable areas
 - Encourage fostering employability and employer engagement

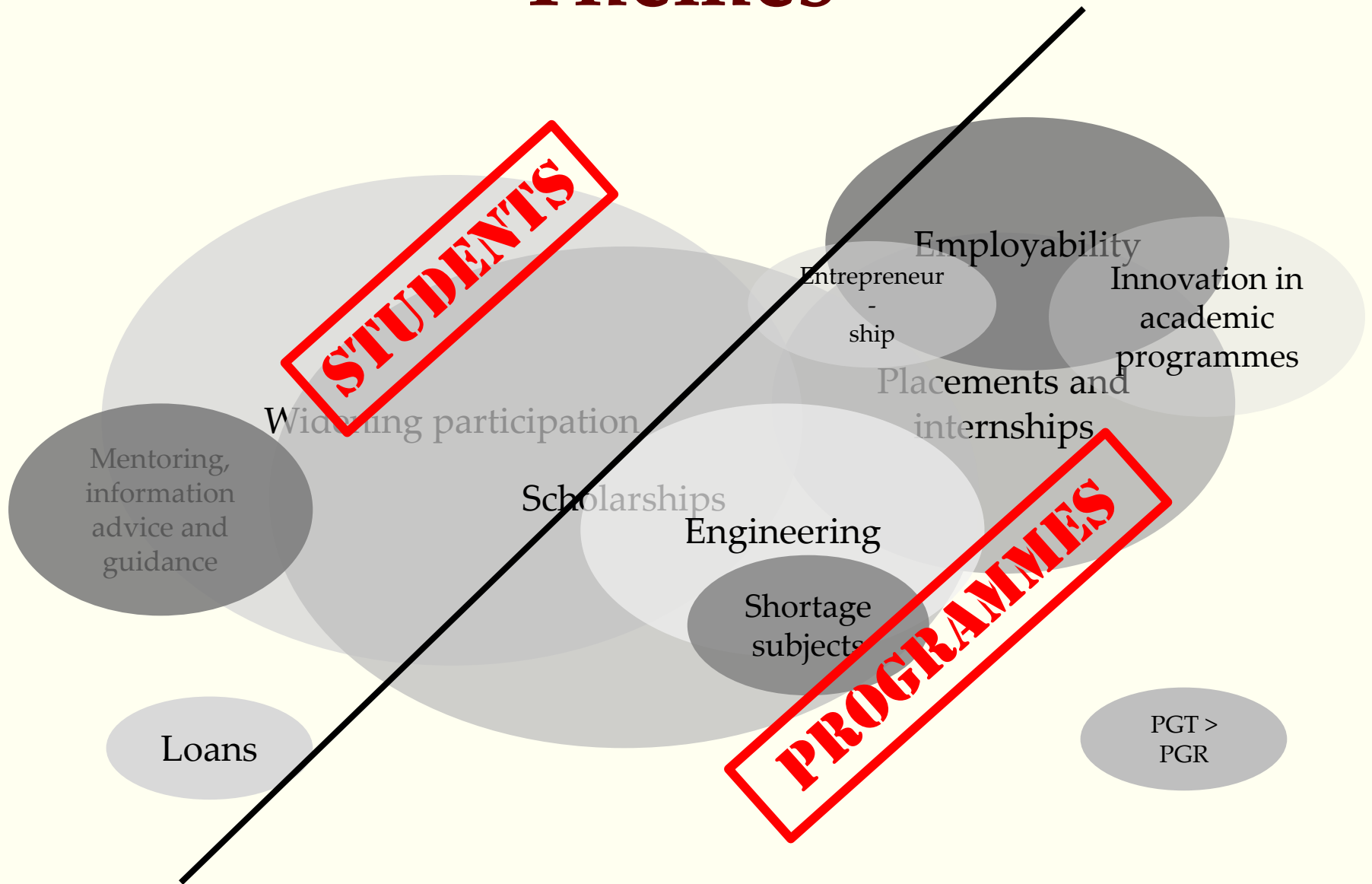
PSS Projects

- 20 projects supported
 - at least one in each English region
 - 9 in London
 - 1 project involves Edinburgh (Kingston)
- Varying sizes (some consortia, some small single institution projects); £3M max
- Spread of foci, including WP, employability, SIVs, PG funding

My role and activities

- PSS Programme Analyst
 - Evaluate range and characteristics of project
 - Identify issues, linkages, omissions...solutions?
- Liaise with projects
- National workshops
- Reports

Themes



Engineering in PSS

- Projects which focus directly on engineering:
 - Bath, Brunel, Derby...Lancaster (?)
- Projects with STEM focus:
 - Kingston consortium ($n=11$)
- Projects based in institutions with substantial engineering provision:
 - Aston, Cranfield, Imperial

Engineering in PSS

- **University of Bath:** MSc Modern Building Design
- **Brunel University:** MSc Structural Engineering and Women in Engineering
- **University of Derby:** innovation engineering
- **Lancaster University:** MSc Data Science

Some details

Embedded work placements with salary (some matched)

- Bath – 15 month, 240 credit programme (Building Design)
- Derby – 24 week placement (innovation engineering)
- Lancaster – big data
- University College London

Partnership with employers

- Co-design of curricula: Bath, Derby, Lancaster
- Researching employer requirements: Kingston, Lancaster
- Loan scheme (Cranfield – potentially)

Some more details

Addressing skills shortages

- Bath (Building Design – but not automotive)
- Brunel (structural engineering – ‘big things’)
- Lancaster (big data science)
- UCL (informatics and engineering)

Mainly supply side changes, but also demand?

- Bursaries for fees and/or maintenance
- Mentoring schemes

Complexity & PGT engineering

- Appears to be absolute demand issue (salary effects?)
- Enhanced UG degrees (MEng) complicate the PGT model
- Returners vs. continuers. And PT PGT?
- Compare engineering with 'pure' academic subjects
- Route to PGR?

Emerging themes

- Placement and the work experience/ internship conundrum
 - Plus: are PGT recruits the 'brightest and best'?
- Level 7 apprenticeships and masters
 - Co-curriculum design/embedding research
 - Try before you buy (both ways round)?
- Potential for co-funding, paid placement etc.
 - Generally positive experience in engineering (but early days)

Simplicity and visibility

- Conversely...simplicity
 - Programme type (the masters 'brand')
 - Straightforward scholarships
- Visibility of PGT within HEIs
 - Policy/systems underdeveloped; not 'normal'
- Application systems; website presence

Factors affecting demand in PSS

- Field of study
 - Harder for STEM and engineering
 - BUT: Brunel!
- Only weak correlation between size of scholarships and demand
- Targeted vs general awards
 - \approx STEM vs others?
- Marketing

PGT information

- HEFCE work on PG information needs
 - ‘Hygiene’ factors
 - Common sense? Well, yes *but...*
- BIS study on PGT applications
 - About 4 applications per entrant
 - Only about 14% UK PGT
 - Mainly FT
 - Substantial remaining knowledge gaps
- A national application system?

Some take home messages

- Shining a light on PGT
- Proof of concept for employer-engaged MSc programmes
- Funding very important – but not everything (esp. for engineering)

Thank you

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