

**Post Grad Policy**

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| **Contact details** | |
| Your name (Proposer of the policy) | Millie Green |
| Your email | [millie.green@su.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:millie.green@su.plymouth.ac.uk) |
| The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy) | Chukwudi Kosi Ezenyi |
| Seconder’s email | [chukwudi.ezenyi@su.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:chukwudi.ezenyi@su.plymouth.ac.uk) |

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| **Student Impact** | |
| Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how. | * KCs Postgrad talk session * Discussion with current Postgraduate Officer * Survey sent out to 49 PG students (PGR, PGT, PhD) |
| How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students? | The impact will be to improve representation of all of our postgraduate students including taught and research students. |

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| **Policy Proposal** |
| **The Union Notes** (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible. |
| The University of Plymouth are aiming to increase the number of postgraduate students in their 2030 strategy with 20% of students being postgraduate taught (PGT) (University of Plymouth, 2019).  Increases in Masters-level loans could also mean an increase in PGT students (Wonkhe, 2019)  The Union currently has a Postgraduate Part Time Officer position, which often goes unfilled (UPSU, 2019) and only 63% of PGT students were encouraged to be involved in decisions about how their course was run (Wonkhe. 2019)  Compared to the general population, postgraduate students are six times more likely to experience depression and anxiety (Wonkhe, 2019 a). |
| **The Union Believes** (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in ‘The Union Notes’ |
| Many Postgraduate students feel the Union is not for them and is designed for undergraduates leading to less involvement. Eg. Postgraduate students are exempt from the ‘Keep Wednesday Afternoon Free’ Policy campaigned for by the Union.  Postgraduate students often have not had a strong enough voice within the Student’s Union.  Whilst Postgraduate issues are gaining prominence on the national agenda, more needs to be done to reflect this within the University and the Union. |
| **The Union Resolves** (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific. |
| To mandate all sabbatical officers to work with departments within the Union to ensure services are relevant and accessible to postgraduate students.  To lobby the university to ensure their services are also accessible for postgraduate students.  To ensure a sabbatical is the lead officer for Postgraduate Students  To create a Postgraduate Research Officer position within our Union Council to represent PHD and MRes students.  To ensure all roles, particularly postgraduate officer roles, are communicated with relevant university staff members for more promotion eg. Associate heads of school teaching and learning and Director of the Doctoral College Board  To mandate VP Education and President to ensure a postgraduate officer is included on University TLQC and other relevant committees eg. Doctoral College Board.  To mandate relevant sabbatical officer to lobby the university to create an Access and Participation Plan for Postgraduate students. |
| **Appendices/supporting information** Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in ‘The Union Resolves’, links to news articles or online publications |
| (University of Plymouth, 2019). <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/15/15835/UoP_Strategy_2030_web.pdf>  (UPSU, 2019). <https://www.upsu.com/pageassets/elections/UPSU-Student-Leadership-Role-Part-time-Officer.pdf>  (Wonkhe, 2019) <https://wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/why-postgraduate-taught-students-are-about-to-move-up-sus-priority-list/>  (Wonkhe,2019a) <https://wonkhe.com/blogs-sus/what-about-postgrad-student-mental-health/> |

**Excerpt of Union Council Minutes 25th February 2020**

Postgrad Policy

Millie Green, VP Education gave an overview of the motion and explained that Postgraduate students do not necessarily feel engaged in the students’ union unless they did their undergrad at Plymouth. The university plan to increase the number of postgrads and the union needs to adapt to meet the needs of this changing demographic. The Sabbatical Officers need to ensure that postgrads are included in future democratic processes and activities. The union has been guilty of excluding postgrad students in the past. The proposal is to have a Postgrad Research Officer on Union Council.

Millie noted that a survey of postgrads has recently been undertaken and she will circulate the responses after the meeting. Of 49 respondents only 50% knew that there were Part-time Officer positions. When asked if they thought there should be a specific representation role for Postgrad Research students, 32 said yes, 5 said no and 8 didn’t know. Millie concluded by pointing out that other students’ unions invest in Postgrads by having Full-time Officer representation and this was suggested by a respondent in the survey.

Tilda Fraser, President added that academic representation is the core purpose of students’ union representation, in future more and more of the student body will be postgrads. Millie clarified that this motion seeks to have a specific Postgrad Research post, separate from a Postgrad taught position.

Will Styles, School of Art, Design and Architecture Rep asked if this would include MRes and. Millie clarified that she has thought that MRes was part of research but it’s not.

Tej Morjaria, Dental School Rep thought that a Full-time Postgrad role sounds beneficial and questioned what the barriers were to such a role.

Millie Green, VP Education noted that she will bring this up during future discussions to review roles, even if this role is temporary and does get replaced by something else at a later date, we need to reach out to postgrads now more than ever.

Tilda Fraser, President added that it’s not been highlighted as an issue previously as the university has not been seen as a hugely Postgrad university but the new university strategy seeks to change that to increase Postgrad numbers by 30% in the next ten years. So Plymouth would then have comparative numbers to those universities that do have a full-time Postgrad Officer.

Millie Green, VP Education explained that the students’ union doesn’t really reach out to Postgrads, for example regarding clubs and societies. They do not know they can get involved, do not know how to get involved or do not see these opportunities as relevant to them. Lots of the feedback necessitates an improvement in communication to Postgrads.

Martins Akhemigbeze, Part-time Postgrad Officer said that he finds it difficult to contact a diverse range of Postgrads, they are spread out across all faculties in all areas of interest. Martins explained that within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities there are PGCert students that are not classed as either Undergrad or Postgrad. It’s almost impossible for one person to cover the wide range of Postgrad options.

Sander Ikeh, Part-time Academic Officer, commented that the timings of interactions needed to be considered, Sandra suggested a newsletter to Postgrads could cover all information and it would be best to come from the Faculty.

Tilda Fraser, President commented that a Part-time Research Officer could help map all this out, when to contact people and how they would like to received information.

Paige O’ Williams, School of Humanities and Performing Arts Rep liked the idea of the additional role and agreed that the Postgraduate experience is varied. Paige also suggested that the current representative could be promoted further as some students are unaware that there is currently a Post grad role on Union Council.

Millie Green, VP Education noted that in conjunction with improving communication, links with key staff members also needed to be developed to help promote the roles and to ensure that the representatives get the opportunity to attend all the relevant meetings such as; University Teaching and Learning Quality Committee and Doctoral College Board meetings and discussions.

Jannike Smye, Part-time Environment and Sustainability Officer commented that postgrads are included in the current Sabbatical Officer role descriptions.

Millie Green, VP Education acknowledged that the role descriptors do include it and each year a Postgrad Lead is agreed within the team, KC does have it as part of his role but it’s not always a top priority and is not always included as a manifesto point. This makes it harder to hold the Sabbatical Officers to account for not progressing Postgrad representation. The VP Education can support the Part-time Officers which should mean they can progress more effectively within the academic representative framework.

Tilda Fraser, President added that although the team do choose a Postgrad Lead each year, they may not necessarily be anyone with that experience. Millie Green, VP Education clarified that all Sabbatical Officers will still be involved but should have more direction from the Part-time Officers.

Jannike Smye, Part-time Environment and Sustainability Officer also commented that many students undertaking Postgrad study do not have the time or possibly the inclination to get involved with the Students’ Union. What is the role expected to achieve if this is the case with a majority of Postgrads?

Will Styles, School of Art, Design and Architecture Rep replied that as a Postgrad, he would argue that there is a need for a Full-time Postgrad role to focus on this more and have a section of the SU dedicated to Postgrad support.

Verity Lemm, VP Sport pointed out that the SU have just cut one of the Sabbatical Officer roles and combined full-time two roles which represent a combined number of students greater than the current number of Postgrads. Consideration would need to be given to other areas, as well as Postgrads, should another full-time role be added back in future.

Tilda Fraser, President replied that the Sports, Societies and Volunteering departments have full-time dedicated staff members to support these areas where as many Postgrads do not have a university lead and lack any support. The university strategy is to increase Postgrad numbers, they pay more fees and get less representation than many Undergrads.

Martins Akhemigbeze, Part-time Postgrad Officer has been asking Postgrads what they want from the SU and their main complaint was that they want to feel involved but that it doesn’t feel welcoming to them.

Millie Green, VP Education expressed hope that the role could help stop people being isolated in their own areas and at least the option of having a representative is open to these students for them to improve their student experience in the same way as is open to Undergrads.

Martins Akhemigbeze, Part-time Postgrad Officer agreed and added that as well as the wider student experience this role would also include academic representation, something which is hugely important to Postgrads.

Emma Collins, School of Nursing and Midwifery Rep noted that Plymatures Society has a proportion of Undergrads but is also open to Postgrad Taught and Postgrad Research students. Not all mature students feel able to interact with the SU.

Millie Green, VP Education concluded by saying that this is an opportunity to give a space and representation to Postgrad students and to let Postgrads have a voice on issue affecting them.

The Chair asked Union Council to vote on the Post Grad Policy Proposal

**For: 18**

**Against: 1**

**Abstentions:1**

**As the outcome of the vote will not differ even if all members not present vote against, the proposal relating to Postgrad Policy passed.**