

Chair of 1994 Group sets out recommendations to deliver world-class postgraduate education

In a keynote speech today (Thursday 25th February) Professor Paul Wellings, Chair of the 1994 Group and Vice-Chancellor of Lancaster University said:

“High quality postgraduate education is a major reason why UK higher education is world class. It is time for Government and universities to place a spotlight on enhancing the postgraduate student experience.”

“A new quality threshold on PhD provision must be introduced to ensure that public funding delivers the very highest quality postgraduate education for our students. Funding should be more concentrated than it currently is, in order for Government investment to be channelled as effectively as possible. This would still allow all institutions to provide PhDs if they wish, but provision below the quality threshold would be reliant on fee income rather than Government funds. Postgraduate teaching (masters) provision is a mass market activity and should be supported at all universities.”

“Postgraduates deserve better support. The development of more graduate schools at universities with a high number of postgraduate research students is needed. The ring-fenced ‘Roberts Funding’ must be retained to support advanced skills, training and career development.”

“Postgraduate level skills are increasingly needed for a high-skilled workforce that is driving forward the modern fast-growing industries on which much of the UK’s economic growth depends. A 1994 Group innovative practice report that I am launching today shows how world-leading academics and senior business executives have come together to design, develop and deliver industry sponsored masters’ degree programmes that enhance employability and meet employers skills needs.”

Professor Paul Wellings delivered the keynote speech at the 8th Annual Postgraduates national policy conference at the Bloomsbury Hotel, London. The event was organised by Neil Stewart Associates and supported by Universities UK, the National Union of Students and the 1994 Group.

Notes to Editors

1. The 1994 Group’s innovative practice report examining *Industry Sponsored Master’s Degrees* is available at <http://www.1994group.ac.uk/documents/public/IPR%20Masters.pdf>
2. The 1994 Group’s policy report ‘*An analysis of postgraduate provision at UK Universities*’ showed that research-intensive institutions deliver both the greatest volume and productivity of PhDs, in terms of their completion rates and the relationship between completions and number of academic staff. A ranked order of productivity rates shows that there is a large drop in productivity between research-intensive universities and the rest of the sector. It is the quality of infrastructure around research teams that seems to be the important factor in producing PhDs, and if a critical mass is to be recommended in postgraduate research provision then it clearly lies within research-intensive institutions. Postgraduate Teaching provision is a mass market activity and should be supported at all universities. The report is available at www.1994group.ac.uk/publications
3. The 1994 Group represents 19 of UK’s leading student-focused research-intensive universities. It was established in 1994 to promote excellence in University research and teaching.

4. In 17 major subject areas 1994 Group universities are the UK leaders achieving 1st place in their field (THE RAE subject rankings 2008). 57% of the 1994 Group's research is rated 4* 'world-leading' or 3* 'internationally excellent' (RAE 2008, HEFCE). 7 of the top 10 universities for student experience are 1994 Group Universities (2009 National Student Survey) 1994 Group members include 10 of the top 18 universities in the UK in The Guardian University Guide League Table published on the 12th May 2009.
5. The 1994 Group represents: University of Bath, Birkbeck University of London, Durham University, University of East Anglia, University of Essex, University of Exeter, Goldsmiths University of London, Institute of Education University of London, Royal Holloway University of London, Lancaster University, University of Leicester, Loughborough University, Queen Mary University of London, University of Reading, University of St Andrews, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of Surrey, University of Sussex, University of York.
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