

# Doctoral Education: Improving Quality while Increasing Quantity, a case study of a UK University

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University of  
**Kent**

The Graduate  
School

# Higher Education in the UK

- 132,470 Full-time postgraduates (UK and other EU)
- 113,190 Full-time postgraduates (International)
- 179,605 Part-time postgraduates
  
- 10% of postgraduate students are doctoral students

# Fees and Funding

- PhD fees generally held down by RCUK funding rates (£4,121 home, £12-20K overseas )
  - Funding from UK Research Councils, Universities, employers (£14,296) for 3 to 4 years
  - Many students funded by university scholarships and graduate teaching assistantships
  - £25k government loans from 2018-19
- UK Government has created new £10k loan scheme for Master's degree study

# University Management in the UK

- Chancellor and Council
- Vice Chancellor – team of DVCs, PVCs, Deans
- Academic Head of Department
- Administrative structures both centrally and embedded within academic departments, often with separate reporting structures
- Line management and appraisal
- Stronger managerial structure than in past and different from much of Europe in this regard.

# UK PhD

- 3-4 year programme of study increasingly delivered through a range of models and modes to meet different needs.
- Main supervisor + supervisory team
- Thesis, examined by external and internal examiners
- Viva (pass, minor corrections, revisions, referral)
- Entrants generally have a Master's degree
- VITAE Researcher Development Framework
- RCUK Expectations for Doctoral Training
- Research Council Funded Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTPs)

# Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

- Universities in the UK are independent, self-governing institutions that are responsible for the awards they offer.
- QAA has been the body who on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) checks whether universities are meeting their UK expectations about standards and quality
- [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#)
- [Chapter B11 \(Research Degrees\)](#) of the UK Quality Code for HE

*Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.*

## Kent in 2008

- Low postgraduate student numbers (Master's and Doctoral Degrees)
- Postgraduate students handled differently by academic schools
- No Graduate School
- No Graduate Strategy
- No dedicated governance structure for postgraduate study
- No central space for postgraduate study
- No centralised skills development programme for doctoral researchers
- Lack of a postgraduate community with students
- Doctoral progression and supervision monitoring system in need of review
- Low engagement with HEA Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (21% participant rate)

# The Graduate School

Mission: to lead and champion the strategic development of provision for graduate education and research at the University of Kent.



# Kent Graduate School

- To increase numbers of taught and research postgraduates across all campuses and centres
- To enhance the academic experience and research environment for postgraduate students
- To support a strong postgraduate community within the University
- To support the personal and career development of postgraduate students
- To maintain as strong system of governance for the management of postgraduate studies
- To strengthen Kent's external reputation as a research-led institution through national and international collaboration

# Vision and Approach

- Creation of a central service and institutional framework which would support academic schools and faculties in enabling Kent's postgraduate education to thrive so that it was:
  - High quality
  - Consistent
  - Innovative (e.g. removal of internal barriers to development)
- Key Aspects of Approach:
  - Institutional Governance Structure – critical!
  - Research – What works elsewhere? What does not work? What would work for Kent?
  - Consultation – achieving 'buy-in' was critical
  - Incremental changes
  - Identify internal champions!

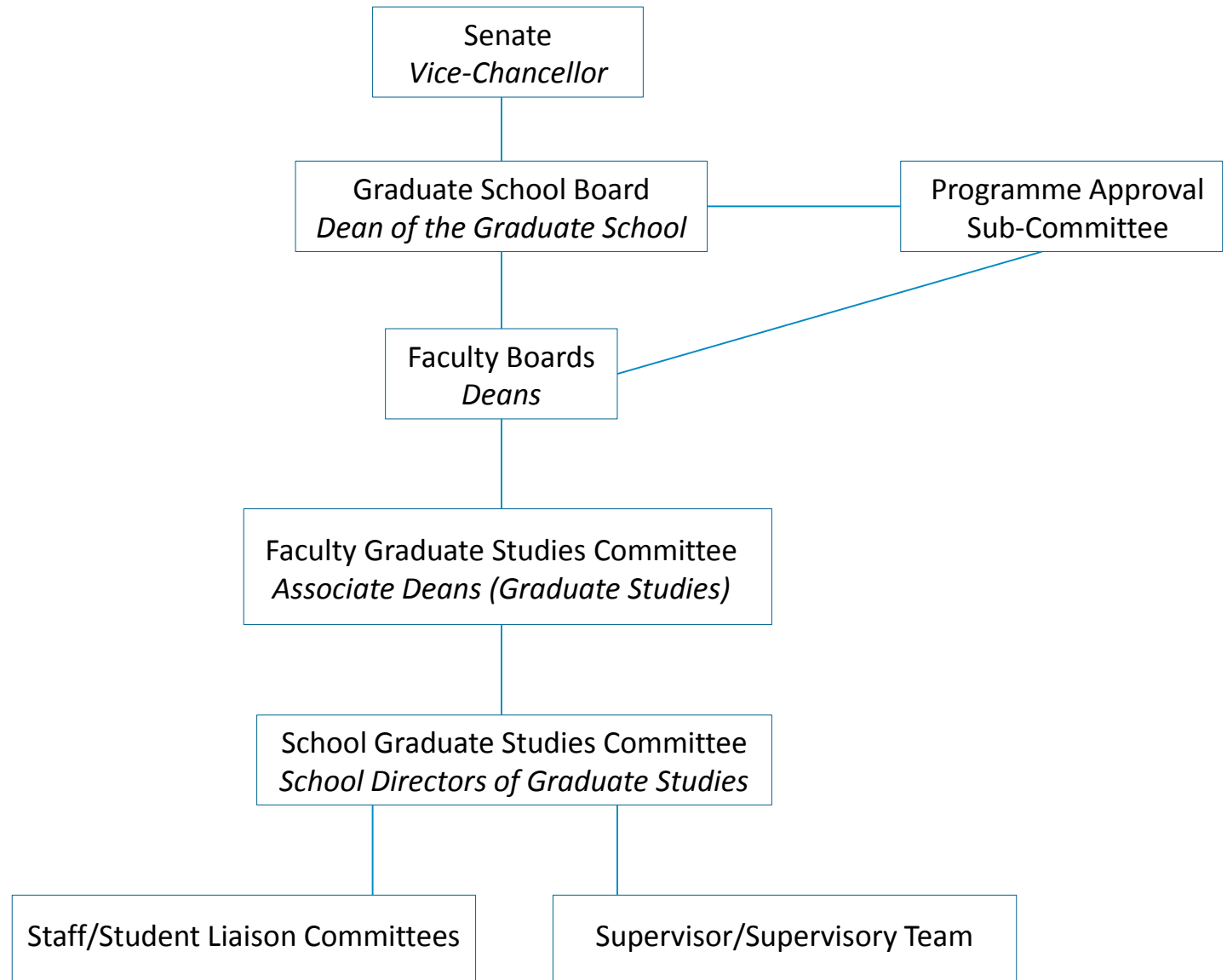
## Master's and Doctoral Students

All students on postgraduate programmes, whether primarily taught or research based, share much in common with each other, and with those in academic posts in the university. All are engaged in learning and scholarship, in the discovery of new knowledge, and in the development of the personal and professional skills necessary for research and its dissemination and exploitation.

The balance of these activities amongst Master's students, doctoral students and academic staff is a matter of degree. All pursue a core purpose of the university: the expansion of knowledge and its uses.

### **Kent Graduate Strategy 2008-2015**

# PG Governance at Kent



## Kent in 2016 - Structure

- Dean of the Graduate School – Member of Senior Management Team
- Institutional-level Graduate School
  - Manager, co-ordinator, postgraduate development team and support staff
  - Staff offices, dedicated training room and adjacent networking space
- Associate Deans for Graduate Study in each Faculty (Social Sciences, Sciences and Humanities)
- Clear governance structure for postgraduate study
  - Graduate School Board (reporting to University Senate)
  - Faculty Graduate Studies Committees
  - School Graduate Studies Committees

# Kent in 2016 – Support for Staff and Students

- Support for doctoral students:
  - Institutional-level doctoral induction
  - Graduate Teaching Assistant Network
  - Postgraduate Development Advisor
  - Clear information about doctoral level study - websites and handbooks
  - Strong doctoral student representation on Graduate School Board
  - 100 Vice-Chancellor's doctoral scholarships
- Support for staff members:
  - Briefings for new staff members with responsibility for postgraduate education
  - Directors of Graduate Studies Network
  - Postgraduate Administration Network
  - Supervisor Training Sessions

## Kent in 2016 – Postgraduate Community

- Postgraduate-only College (accommodation and social space)
- Postgraduate Festival
- Monthly Postgraduate Research Café
- Postgraduate Experience Awards
- Wide-range of research and subject-specific training at school level
- Improved space for doctoral students
- *The GradPost* (postgraduate newsletter)
- Improved opportunities and activities for doctoral students on all campuses and centres
- Greater communication (weekly Graduate School email bulletins, Twitter, Facebook)
- Separate Graduate Student Association

# Kent in 2016 – Researcher Development, Supervision and Monitoring

- ‘Kick-start your PhD’ obligatory workshop for doctoral students
- On-line Researcher Development Assessment (RDA)
- Self-directed, needs-based approach to training
- Dedicated Postgraduate Development Committee
- Robust doctoral supervision and progression monitoring system:
  - Monthly records
  - Induction, Probation, End of Year and Submission Reviews
  - Supported by on-line system



# Kent in 2016 – Doctoral Collaboration

- International
  - PhD Text and Event in Early Modern Europe (TEEME)
  - Doctorate in Cultural and Global Criminology (DCGC)
  - Developing co-tutelle (dual award) relationships
- International Postgraduate Collaboration Group (new proposals in development)
- Collaborative Doctoral Training Partnerships:
  - Consortium for the Humanities and the Arts South-east England (CHASE) funded by AHRC
  - EnvEast funded by NERC
  - South-East Doctoral Training Centre funded by ESRC
  - South-east Network for Social Sciences (SeNSS)
- Eastern Academic Research Consortium (with the Universities of Essex and East Anglia)

## Evidence of Quantity

Between 2008 – 2015, there has been a 67% increase in new PG recruitment (Master's and Doctoral Degrees) at Kent

# Evidence of Quality

- UK Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Surveys:
  - 88% overall satisfaction rate in taught experience survey (PTES) – top quartile across the UK based on a 66% response rate.
  - 85% overall satisfaction rate in research experience survey - top quartile across UK based on a 72% response rate.
- Good practice recognition in QAA Higher Education Review (March 2015) for:

*‘The range of informal and formal opportunities provided to postgraduate research students, which create a vibrant and interdisciplinary academic community.’*

## Staff View

You have in a very short time created something that no one wanted or understood that is now an integral and highly valued part of the university that most people would not imagine being without, using a model that is not common to all graduate schools. In change management speak that is a very successful project.

# Questions

- What are your barriers to obtaining the right governance structure for Master's and Doctoral Education and how can we overcome them?
- What are the challenges of engaging research degree supervisors in new doctoral initiatives? What are the solutions?
- What are the best mechanisms for establishing doctoral communities across schools, faculties and institutions both nationally and internationally?

## Contacts

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# End Slide

# Postgraduate Experience Awards

- Do you have a great idea for a Postgraduate event at Kent?
- Apply for funding through the postgraduate experience awards and your idea could become a reality.
- Applications for up to £1,500 are invited for the annual Graduate School postgraduate experience awards
- Applications will be considered for funding to run events or projects with an interdisciplinary and/or external focus which will enhance the postgraduate experience at Kent.
- Examples of recently funded projects funded :
- “Take the Floor!” - an innovative workshop on improving presentation skills led by PhD students from the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies.
  - “Home|Less” – an interdisciplinary conference organised by four PhD students on the meaning and implications of the concept of home
- Application forms and more details at [www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/](http://www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/)



# The GradPost

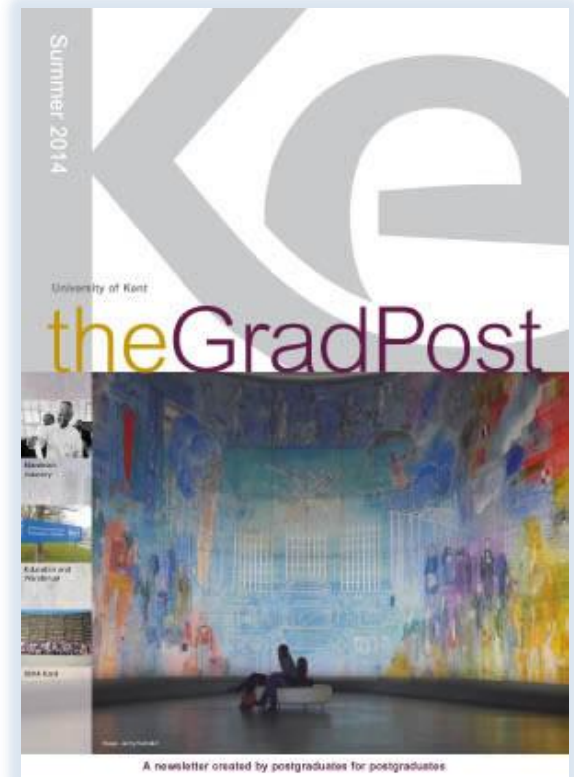
A newsletter created *by* Postgraduates  
*for* the Postgraduate community.

## The GradPost Editorial Team

Information on Gradpost opportunities that will look great on your CV and enhance your postgraduate experience at Kent can be found on our website:

[www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/news/gradpost/html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/graduateschool/news/gradpost/html)

Contact: [gradpost@kent.ac.uk](mailto:gradpost@kent.ac.uk)



# Postgraduate Research Festival

- Annual PG Research Festival takes place in June
- Open to all postgraduate students
- Students can present their work to a wider academic audience
- Opportunity to network with academic staff and peers
- Learn how to create and present an academic poster



# Global Skills Award Programme



- The GSA programme is designed to enhance global awareness and employability in a competitive job market.
- All Master's degree students are invited to apply for a place, which can be taken alongside their Master's degree programme.
- All postgraduates accepted onto the programme will complete an on-line career development and skills assessment.
- The programme will run from October 2016 until April 2017.
- Students will attend a lecture series on national and global issues and a selection of workshops from our workshop programme.
- All those who complete the programme are invited to a reward ceremony and receive a GSA Programme Certificate.
- The programme is free of charge.



# Researcher Development Programme

Transferable skills give graduates a clear edge in the job market and make researchers more effective and efficient in their work:

- Knowledge and intellectual abilities – *The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research.*
- Personal effectiveness – *The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher.*
- Research governance and organisation – *The knowledge, of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research.*
- Engagement influence and impact – *The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research.*



# Kickstart Your PhD Workshop

- Compulsory for all PhD students
- Half-day workshops held throughout the autumn and spring terms (look out for monthly emails advertising workshop dates)
- Will introduce the Researcher Development Programme and help you to reflect on and assess your current skills
- Once you have attended a Researcher Development Assessment Workshop you will be prompted by the system to complete your RDA online.
- Work with your supervisor to complete the assessment and use this as the basis of your research training
- Must be completed as part of the Probation process



# Researcher Development Framework (RDF)

