



# Meeting the Needs of Part-Time Research Students – The Student's Perspective

Henry Onderi and Jameson Wooders

UKCGE Workshop , University of Reading, June 2009

## Overview

- Who are part-time research students?
- Why study part time?
- What challenges face part-time research students?
- How do universities respond to part-time students' needs?
- Conclusion
- Questions

# Postgraduate research student statistics – recent trends

(Source: HESA)



	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Percentage change 2006/07 to 2007/08
<b>All UK HEIs</b>						
<b>Postgraduate</b>						
<b>Full-time</b>						
UK	113635	112845	117520	117845	115335	-2%
Other EU	24775	27610	28590	28850	29355	2%
Non-EU	81985	85605	88110	96375	103695	8%
Total	220395	226060	234220	243070	248380	2%
<b>Part-time</b>						
UK	225745	224840	226375	225980	218320	-3%
Other EU	11350	12230	12305	12395	12930	4%
Non-EU	20005	19210	19735	21300	21505	1%
Total	257100	256280	258415	259675	252755	-3%
<b>All modes</b>						
UK	339380	337685	343900	343825	333655	-3%
Other EU	36125	39840	40895	41245	42285	3%
Non-EU	101990	104815	107845	117675	125200	6%
Total	477495	482335	492640	502745	501135	0%

# Why study part-time?

- Employment

- want to study and maintain job
- financial commitments (mortgages, family support, having school-going children in higher institutions of learning)
- continue with employment to enable them to meet financial commitments

- Family engagement

- need to create time to be with their children for guidance and good upbringing
- need to create time to be with children

# Why study part-time?

- **Economic reasons**
  - full-time studies are more costly compared with part-time
  - dependants and incomes cannot sustain their needs
  - cannot afford paying all fees at once and need to spread the payment across the years
  - forced to take more than one job to be able to raise enough fees
  
- **Proximity to universities**
  - can access study and learning resources
  - convenient to arrange for supervisory services after work
  - training courses, seminars/lecturers
  - access to welfare facilities: Health Centre and counselling services, postgraduate society events, Students Union

# The “typical” part-time research student

- Older
- Improve career prospects
- Mid-life crisis
- Interest (highly motivated / disciplined)
- Work and employment
- Support
- Time commitments (job / family / social)
- Paying own fees

**Value for money**

# Challenges facing part-time research students

- Time management
  - balancing job pressures and study time (struggle to cope with simultaneous academic and professional workloads)
  - experience a lack of support and understanding from their supervisors
  - limited study time resulting to low quality research projects and assignments

# Challenges facing part-time research students

- Consultation
  - lack of contact and communication
- Isolation
  - not able to consult with other students doing similar research (no time for meetings/sharing with other fellow researchers)
- Research time
  - not enough to access library resources
  - attend university at odd times after work, which means they are likely to miss the use of facilities such as Information Technology services that are only offered during official working times (9-5)

# Challenges facing part-time research students

- Supervisory time
  - hard to find time to meet supervisors
  - supervisory times are considerably less compared with their counterpart full-time research students
  - this results in low study pace as students are forced to extend their course times which may lead to frustrations and eventual health problems
- Funding
  - finance own studies
  - unreliable sources of income
  - other financial commitments, such as fees for their children, bank loans, bills or mortgages and over work thus affecting their enthusiasm to study and consequently, low quality of research

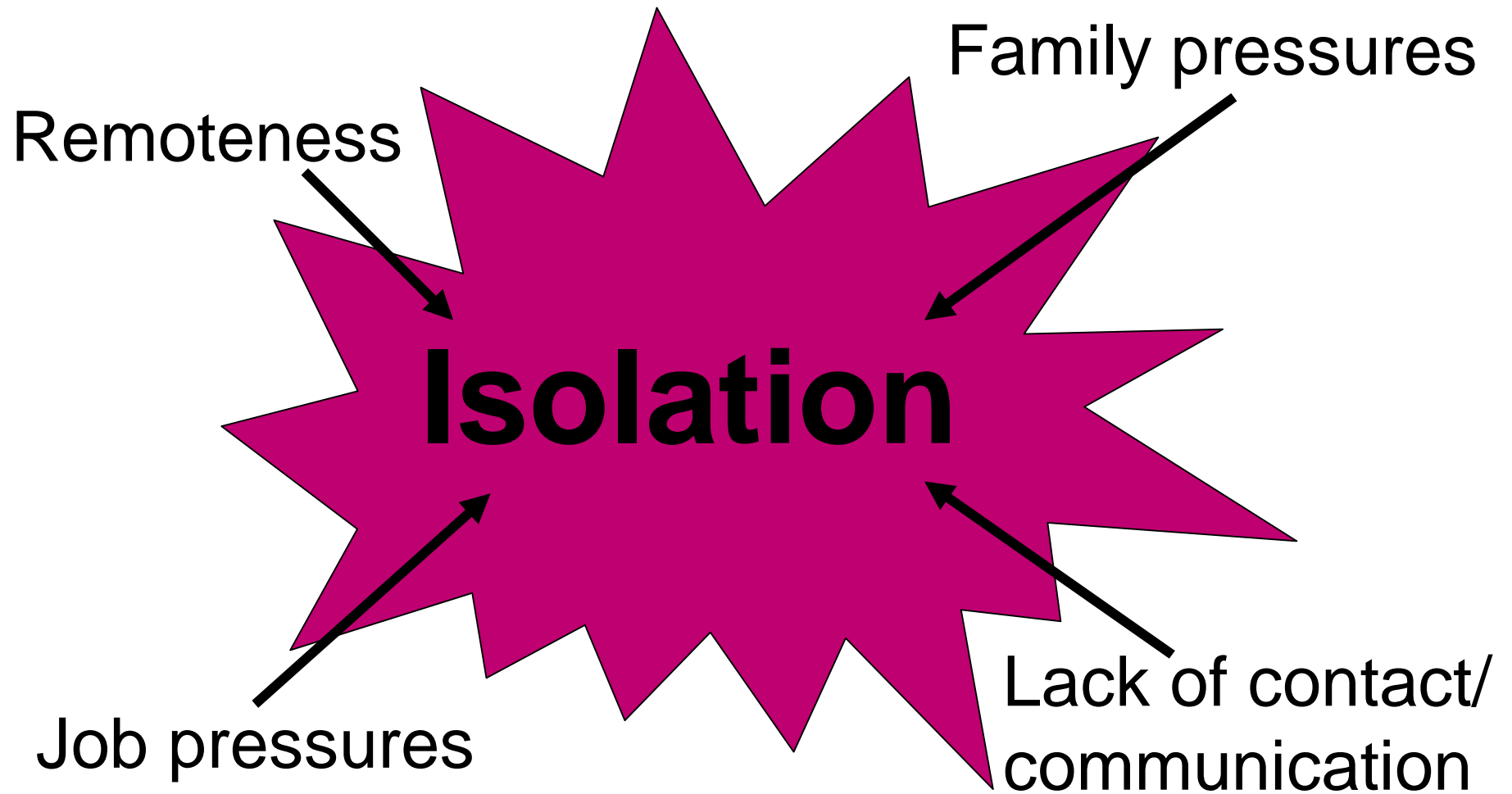
# Challenges facing part-time research students

- Family commitments
  - family pressures, such as sickness of family member; need for family treats, children assistance with school work: prepare them to go to school, attend parents' evenings, attend school assemblies and/or other school issues
  - these may result to cancellation of appointments with supervisors, attending conferences or seminars or fail to go to library for research, fail to do research projects/assignments in time, sleep late
  - this may also lead to lack of concentration on the research projects and consequently, low quality research

# University services

- Supervision ü
- Library ?
- Training courses û
- Seminars / lectures û
- Postgraduate society events û
- Students Union û
- Campus restaurants, cafes, bars û
- Health Centre and Counselling Service û

# Problems of part-time research students



## Suggested solutions

- Extended library opening hours at weekends and vacations
- Access to Health Centre, Counselling Service, etc
- “Summer School” format for training
- Better communication and advance notification
- Online resources
- Temporary parking permits
- Greater flexibility in paying fees
- Greater flexibility in submission

## Conclusions

- Challenges and pressures of part-time students
  - Work
  - Family
  - Friends
  - And research!
- Isolation of part-time students

But also ...

- Resourcefulness of part-time students
- Determination of part-time students

**Any questions?**