



Research degree qualification rates: Why do we have them and what are they used for?

Suzanne Wilson

s.wilson@hefce.ac.uk, 0117 931 7458

UKCGE

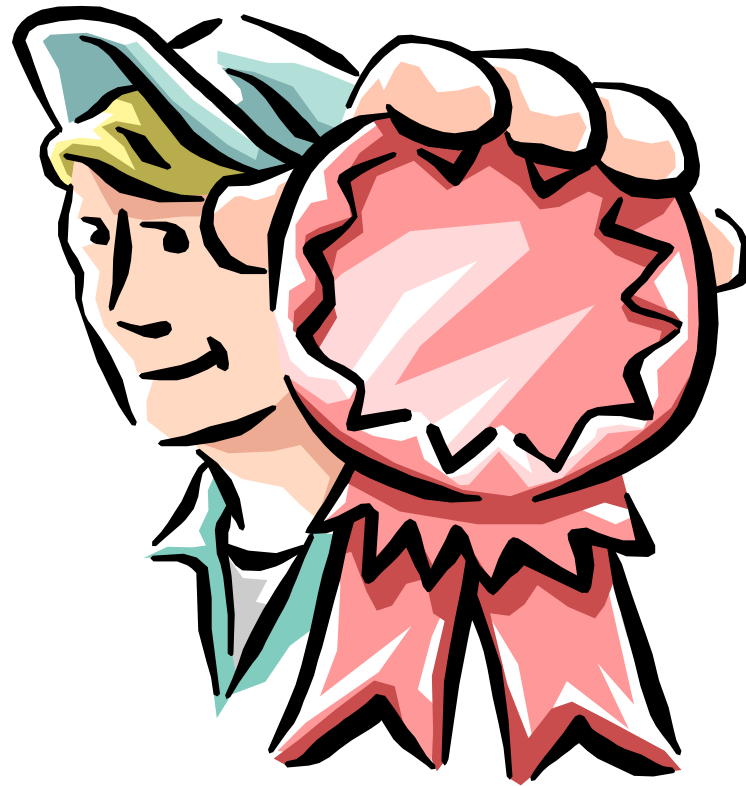
Presentation outline

- Why do we have them?
- What are they used for?
- The future
- Discussions and questions
- For information
 - Definitions
 - Methodology

The background of the slide is a dense, repeating pattern of numbers from 0 to 9. The numbers are rendered in various colors, including dark brown, light brown, and white, and are scattered across the entire page. Some numbers are larger and more prominent than others, creating a complex, textured visual field.

Why do we have them?

Improving standards



hefce

What are they used for?



hefce

PGR funding linked to quality for the first time



hefce

Quality assurance

- No targets and no simple direct link from data to funding
- One indicator amongst many
- No power of veto
- QAA teams will only have access to data in the public domain
- Commentaries on qualification rates also likely to appear in institutional submissions

THE TIMES
HIGHER

EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

PhD 'failure' rates revealed

3 English universities have
 are named for failing to properly
 support their PhD students in a
 of all

Hefce ranks timely completion rates
 for hundreds of research subjects

managers. He said of those well
 before benchmarks: "We expect

profiles of full-time home and
 European Union students start-

"It should not be hard to pass a
 PhD, but certain academics are
 very, very poor supervisors."

Another table on incoming stu-
 dent qualifications rates, shows the
 London School of Hygiene and
 Tropical Medicine, Aston Univer-
 sity and the London School of

PHD LIFE IN THE FAST (OR SLOW) LANE: RESEARCH DEGREE COMPLETION RATES BY INSTITUTION

Percent completion rates and 80 students starting PhD programmes at English institutions in 1999-2000 and qualifying by 2006-07

Institution	Total students	% qualifying	Index benchmark	Institution	Total students	% qualifying	Index benchmark	Institution	Total students	% qualifying	Index benchmark
King's College London	190	82	76+	Cardiff University	227	60	55	Nottingham	64	62	55
Southampton University	224	68	63+	Queen's University	139	75	70	Sheffield Hallam University	71	61	55
Institute of Cancer Research	35	90	81	Newcastle University	128	75	69	School of Oriental and African Studies	60	58	55
Strath University	438	90	83+	Manchester University	411	75	70	Manchester Metropolitan University	30	55	51
Liverpool University	150	68	63	Oxford University	288	78	73	Royal Holloway, University of London	53	53	48+
York University	180	68	63	Leeds University	41	75	74	Sunderland University	39	50	45+
Nottingham University	259	65	60	Lancaster University	40	75	68	Nottingham Trent University	60	50	45
Imperial College London	306	68	63	Sheffield University	52	73	74	City University, London	25	50	45
University of East Anglia	152	65	60	Kent University	177	61	57	Westminster University	38	48	44+
Bath University	77	68	63	London School of Economics	90	60	54	De Montfort University	38	45	40
Surrey University	170	65	60	Lancaster University	128	60	55	Brighton University	38	40	35+
Sheffield University	257	65	60	Leeds University	58	50	47	Liverpool John Moores University	37	28	25+
Queen Mary, University of London	194	65	60	Sheffield Hallam University	67	68	63				
University College London	419	62	57	Greenwich University	25	50	45				
Loughborough University	181	62	57	Goldsmiths, University of London	28	68	63				
Exeter University	144	62	57	Nottingham, University of London	45	60	55				
Reading University	148	61	56	Aston University	46	68	63				
Oxford University	291	61	56	Open University	78	60	54				
Birmingham University	291	61	56								
Coventry University	156	60	55								

Notes:
 + Above benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.
 - Below benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.
 * Below benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.
 † Below benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.
 ‡ Below benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.
 § Below benchmark and below completion rate in category for a national average of 63 per cent.

King's College takes the
 crown for PhD completions

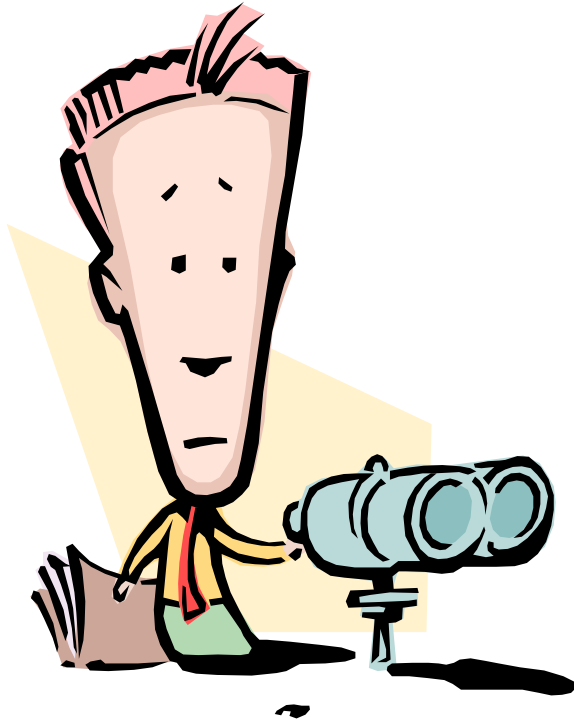


Table P1: 2005-06 Research Degree Qualification Rates (RDQRs)

Full-time home and EC students starting their programme in 1999-2000

Institution	Total doctorates	Total qualifiers	Percent qualify	Benchmark	Std dev	Significance indicator	Total Research-Council-funded	Total science-based subject	Total a in 200
			%	%	%				
All English Institutions	8,011	6,211	78				3,590	5,666	
Anglia Ruskin University	0								
Aston University ¹	40	30	65	77	7			30	
University of Bath	77	66	86	81	4		40	65	
University of Bedfordshire	15								
Birkbeck College	45	30	65	75	7		25		
University of Birmingham	291	236	81	79	2		127	237	
University of Bolton	10								
Bournemouth University	10								
University of Bradford	40	30	75	80	7			35	
University of Brighton	30		40	78	9	-		25	
University of Bristol	455	409	90	80	2	+	257	371	
Brunel University	67	45	69	76	5		25	45	
University of Cambridge	727	584	80	78	1		441	450	
Canterbury Christ Church University	10								
University of Central England in Birmingham	5								
University of Central Lancashire	5								
University of Chester	0								
City University, London	25		50	70	10				
Coventry University	20								
University of Cumbria	0								
De Montfort University	30		45	68	9				
University of Derby	20								
University of Durham	148	120	81	79	3				102
University of East Anglia	152	131	86	79	3				119

The future?



- Data quality and audit
- Part-time rates
- What's the whole picture?
- Are we doing enough to maintain the UK PhD brand?

Questions and discussion

hefce



Slides for information

History

Consultation on Improving standards (May 2003)

- Quantitative measures largely scrapped as too variable between disciplines
- Concern about two sets of standards (QAA code of practice)
- Submission rates substituted for qualification rates as already collected through HESA

Working group on embedding standards into QAA code of practice (Feb 2004)



Definitions

- Research Degree Programme (RDP) is an academic programme leading to the award of a higher degree wholly or mainly on the basis that the student has completed an original piece of research.
- Most common RDPs are PhDs and Master's degrees by thesis.
- A postgraduate research (PGR) student is a student enrolled on an RDP.
- Qualification rate = number of qualifiers / total population
- RDQR = Research Degree Qualification rates

(RDP qualifiers – not including masters)



The PGR population (1)

- Population = all students returning for 2nd year
- Home and EC students only (rates for overseas students available but not for consideration within special review)

The PGR population (2)

- No adjustment for:
 - Institutional transfers
 - Individual reasons for non-qualification (apart from death)
 - Taking time out/periods of suspension

The PGR population (3)

- Changing cohort approach – MPhil students (or equivalents) who subsequently show evidence of studying for a PhD added to population in the year in which they commenced the MPhil
- So population may increase retrospectively

Context

PSA target metrics for the UK Research Base

Crucial role of PGRs in sustaining excellent research base and developing a knowledge economy

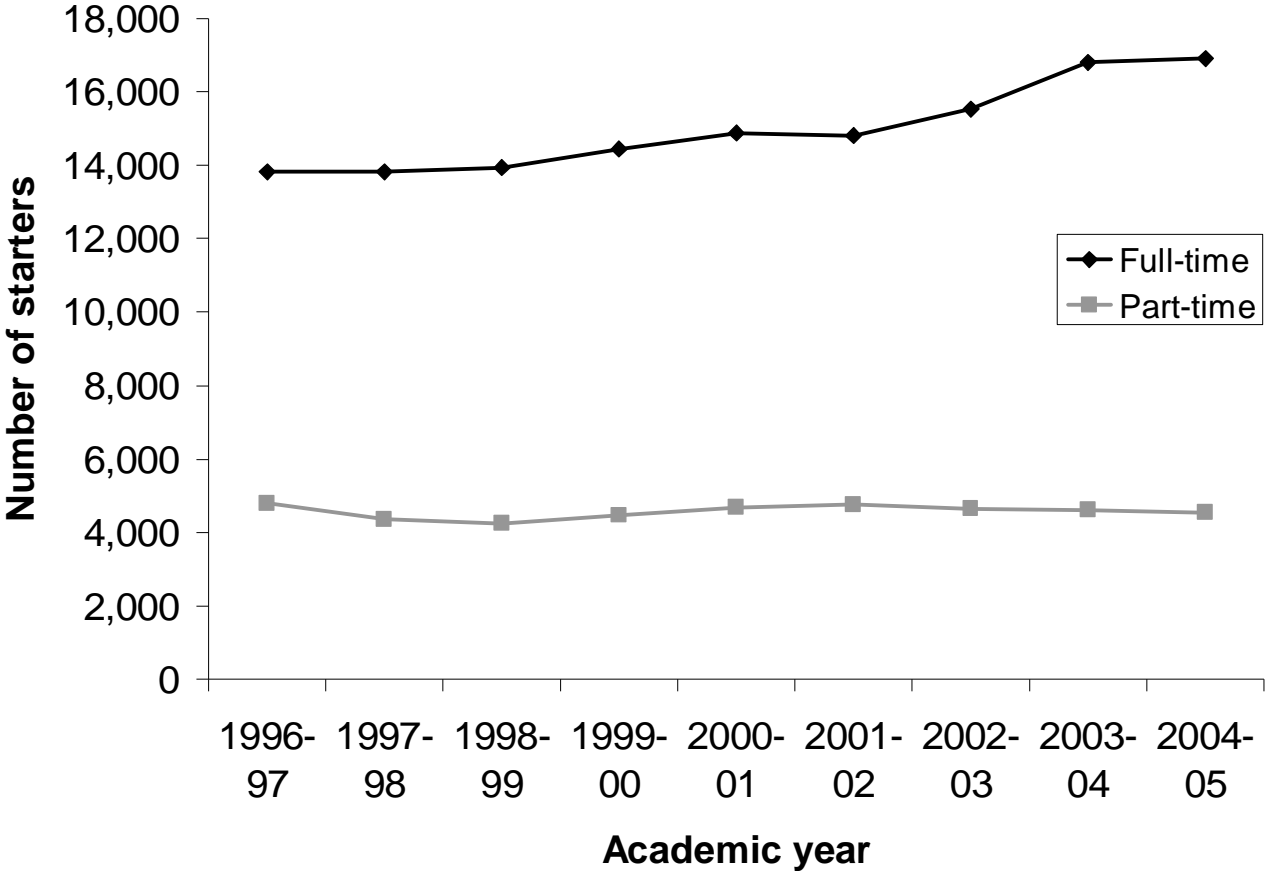
- The UK has only 1% of the world's population, but carries out 5% of world research, and produces 12% of all cited papers
- UK ranks second overall in citation and high impact shares (USA 1st)

Research field	World ranking	Trend 94-03
Bioscience	2	↑
Environmental science	2	↑
Social sciences	2	↑
Business	2	↑
Clinical	2	↔
Pre-clinical	2	↔
Mathematics	2	↔
Physical sciences	3	↔
Engineering	4	↓

- The *HEFCE 1999 Fundamental Review of Research, SET for Success* – Sir Gareth Roberts (2002), *Investing in Innovation* - HMT (2002), The review of the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) postgraduate programme,



Number of PhD starters



Domicile of full-time starters

Domicile	1996-97	2004-05	% change
UK	8,313	8,501	2%
EU (excluding UK)	1,624	2,500	54%
Non-EU	3,904	5,918	52%
Total	13,841	16,919	22%

Domicile of part-time starters

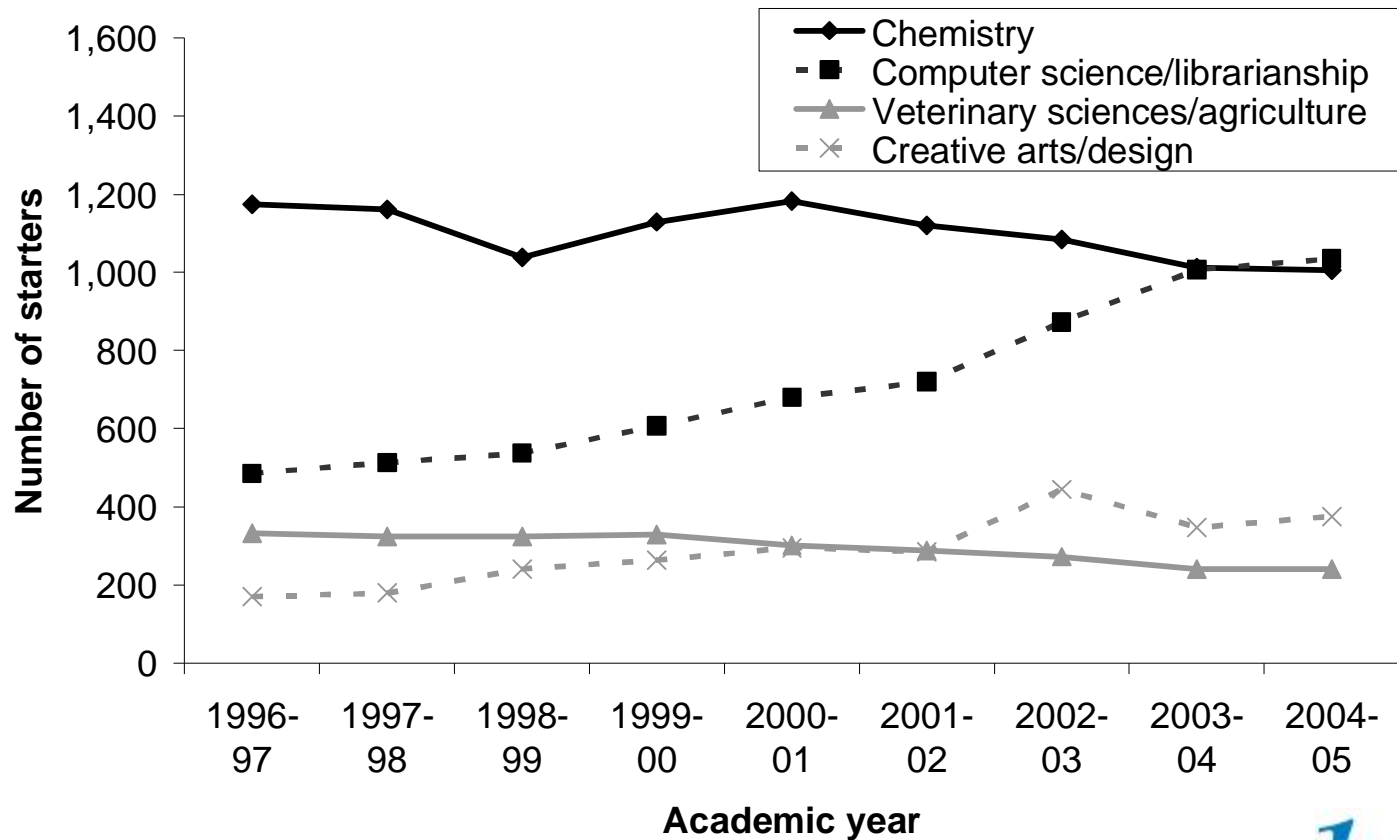
Domicile	1996-97	2004-05	% change
UK	3,903	3,348	-14%
EU (excluding UK)	313	464	48%
Non-EU	581	713	23%
Total	4,797	4,525	-6%

Age of starters

Age group	1996-97	2004-05	% change
21 and under	1,673	924	-45%
22 or 23	3,826	4,878	27%
24 or 25	2,293	3,343	46%
26 or 27	1,512	2,233	48%
28 and over	4,537	5,541	22%
Total	13,841	16,919	22%
Mean age	26.9	27.3	

Mean age also rising for part-time starters:
35.8 (1996-97) to 37.6 (2004-05)

Numbers of full-time starters (selected subjects)



Qualification on entry for full-time starters

Year prior to entry/UK HEI	Qualification	1996-97	2004-05	% change
Qualification in year prior to entry from UK HEI	Masters	480	817	70%
	First degree (1st class)	1,649	1,546	-6%
	First degree (other)	2,072	1,354	-35%
Qualification earlier		4,112	4,784	16%
Total		8,313	8,501	2%

Source of tuition fees for full-time starters (2004-05)

Major source of tuition fees	UK		EU		Non-EU	
		%		%		%
RC / charity	2,970	35%	374	15%	175	3%
Institution	1,973	23%	725	29%	1,389	23%
Other	1,858	22%	520	21%	2,099	35%
No financial backing	1,700	20%	881	35%	2,255	38%
Total	8,501	100%	2,500	100%	5,918	100%

Proportion of full-time starters with no financial backing for selected subjects

Subject	1996-97	2004-05
Chemistry	4%	6%
Physics	3%	6%
Mathematical sciences	8%	11%
Education	31%	41%
Law	29%	43%
Business/administrative studies	27%	43%
Total	15%	20%