

Evidence note on funding sources used by part-time postgraduate research students

March 2014



Requests for financial assistance for part-time PGR students arose from a survey and report by UCLU¹. The Scholarships & Student Funding Committee requested evidence about the relative proportions and students studying part-time with support from an employer, compared to those students studying part-time due to a lack of specific funding and supporting themselves through part-time work, savings and other sources. The former group were considered less in need of financial assistance, or at least there was an expectation that a greater degree of responsibility for support lies with the employer in these cases.

Qualitative case studies were originally proposed, but UCLU and the Graduate School later agreed that it would be more useful to re-analyse quantitative data that we had collected as part of another survey conducted across London institutions by UCLU and London Higher in Spring 2013².

Part-time PGR students at UCL

- There were 48 respondents in this group.
- Only 13% reported receiving support from their employers to help fund their studies
 - Of these, all had a net annual income of at least £15,000 and the majority at least £20,000
- 50% were **wholly** reliant on personal sources (earnings, family, loans etc)
- 63% were **partially or wholly** reliant on personal sources
 - Of these, nearly half (43%) were on net incomes less than £15,000 and approximately a quarter (23%) less than £10,000.

Only a small proportion of students receive employer support to undertake part-time PGR study. Half the students are entirely reliant on their own wealth, with concerning implications for breadth of access to study. Students using personal wealth tend to have low incomes – many worryingly low, raising concerns about student welfare which may impact on attainment and retention.

Part-time PGR students across London

Since the sample from UCL was relatively small, we examined the same questions using the data from across the 35 London institutions surveyed. The results were very similar, corroborating the evidence from UCL.

- There were 427 respondents.
- 11% reported receiving support from their employers to help fund their studies
 - Of these, 79% had a net annual income of at least £20,000.
 - Note that 13% were on less than £15,000, including 6% on less than £10,000.
- 56% were **wholly** reliant on personal sources
- 68% were **partially or wholly** reliant on personal sources
 - Of these, nearly half (49%) were on net incomes less than £15,000 and approximately a third (33%) less than £10,000.

For further information, please contact the UCLU Postgraduate Students' Officer, Ben Towse, via psu@uclu.org.

¹ "Part-Time PhD Students" May 2012 <http://goo.gl/lvBTmK>

² "Extending Discounts to Part-Time Students" 2013. Contact psu@uclu.org for a copy of this report.