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**COLLEGE BOARD OF EXAMINERS  
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**Equal Opportunities; an analysis of taught postgraduate student performance for cohorts entering the College between 2007 and 2011**

**Introduction and methodology**

1. This paper draws together information on student population and achievement, gathered from data used for the annual review of taught postgraduate programmes. It seeks to examine trends relating to ethnicity, gender, age and disability; factors which are, or will be, implicated in equal opportunities legislation. Data are also examined relating to students' domicile (or, more accurately, their fee-region- UK, Other EU and Overseas).
2. As with previous years data was used covering five entry cohorts, 2007 to 2011. Comparison with national data is almost impossible since there are no freely available data relating gender, ethnicity and disability to student progression and achievement. Admissions are beyond the scope of this paper since data on applicants' ethnicity, disability *etc* are not available - however, the College's PGT population year on year can be examined for possible trends in admissions, although if there is a consistent bias against one particular sort of applicant, this would not be picked up by such an analysis.
3. Generally speaking, this reports draws on headcount data at College level. As such there are no Faculty or Departmental data available but it also avoids double counting students.
4. For clarity, note that this report analyses postgraduate students studying at Masters level only. Thus, students on Graduate Diploma programmes are omitted since these programmes are at final year undergraduate level, even though the students themselves may be postgraduates. Similarly, students on undergraduate MSci programmes are omitted even though the final year of these degrees are at Masters level. Students on MA/MMus/MBA/MSc programmes are all included, as are those studying for Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate degrees. Students studying on CAPITAL or inSTIL, or at the University of London Institute in Paris have been omitted for convenience. Lastly note that, as with the undergraduate student analysis, students are grouped by *entry cohort*.
5. Since PGT programmes are, virtually without exception, single-stage, analysis of performance focuses on the outcome achieved by students at the end of their study. No attempt has been made to identify Part-Time students in the data set, although this is a possible area where the study might be expanded in future should resource be made available to improve the data warehouse currently in use. Also note that, in the current data set, there is no record of number of attempts made by students to pass their programme.

### **Postgraduate taught student population by ethnic origin, gender, age on entry and declared disability**

6. Figures have previously shown a noticeable year on year decrease in the percentage of non-white PGT entrants within in each cohort, reducing from 50% in 2007 to 38% in 2010. In contrast to this the 2011 cohort has seen a significant increase in the percentage of non-white students to just below 60% (see Appendix, Fig. 1). This is largely due to the over recruitment of Overseas students in the School of Management and the reduction in the number of students failing to declare their ethnic origin (approximately 18% in 2009 and 2010, 5% in 2011). Students who fail to declare their ethnic origin are, disproportionately, from outside the EU (up to 60% of the non-declarers are from this region) and therefore likely to be mainly non-white. As has been alluded to, over 75% of entrants from outside the EU declare themselves as non-white (contrasting with UK students who are over  $\frac{2}{3}$  of white origin and other EU entrants where as few as 1 in 20 declare themselves non-white).
7. The gender balance of PGT entrants has tended to hover around 50:50 for the last few years with females in a small majority however, there has been a slight increase in the proportion of females in the most recent cohort altering the balance to 55:45. (See Appendix, Fig 2).
8. The percentage of 'mature' entrants (here defined according to the HESA criterion of being 25 or over) has fluctuated over recent years but they typically make up 38-44% of the population (this is a much larger proportion than that found at UG level, *ca* 7% of entrants 22 and over). The 2011 cohort has seen a reduction in the proportion of mature students (to just under 32%) but this in part could be due to the increase in proportion of non-white students in 2011 as approximately 70% of non-white students are aged 24 and under (55% of white students are aged 24 and under). (See Appendix, Fig 3).
9. Whilst the percentage of entrants that declared themselves disabled in the 2011 cohort is the lowest seen in the past 5 years it is still in line with previous years and has remained very stable (*ca* 4-6%), (see Appendix, Fig 4). Again this could be a reflection of the proportion of non-white entrants in 2011 as a considerably lower percentage of non-white students declare themselves as disabled (2.43%) compared to white students (8.80%).

### **Analysis of achievement related to ethnic origin, gender, age on entry & declared disability**

10. Examination of achievement profiles for the most recent cohort (2011) is rather distorted by the large number of students (nearly 1 in 4) who are still Incomplete. This number comprises not only students who failed to gain an award at their first attempt but also those studying part-time, those who interrupted or deferred and those whose programme of study spans more than one academic year (*e.g.* MSc Social Work, PGDip Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, MA Screenwriting (Retreat)). Fairer profiles are typically obtained by excluding Incomplete students, implicitly assuming they will perform to a similar level to those who have already completed.
11. Previous trends have shown that non-white students have been more likely to obtain a Pass compared to white students and much less likely be awarded a Merit or Distinction. Whilst this trend has continued in 2011, figures also show that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of both white and non-white students achieving a Merit (21 percentage points increase for white students and 19 percentage points increase for non-white students)

(see Appendix, Fig. 5). This increase is the result of a change to the regulations in the last academic year where the Merit band was changed from 65-69% to 60-69%. When looking at data for the College overall it can be seen that the proportion of students achieving a Merit has increased from 24% in 2010 to 40% in 2011 and the proportion of students achieving a Pass has decreased from 54% to 40%.

12. The proportion of both white and non-white students withdrawing over the past 5 years has remained fairly consistent with non-white students only slightly more likely to withdraw than white students (*ca* 2-3%). The same trend can be seen in the 2011 cohort however the gap has narrowed to just below 1%. (See Appendix, Fig. 5).
13. Again, when looking at gender the most noticeable difference compared to previous years is the increase in the proportion of both male and female PGT students achieving a Merit. The increase is more significant for female students (19 percentage points increase compared to a 12 percentage points increase for male students) and whilst this mainly appears to be balanced out by a drop in the proportion of students achieving a Pass (both for male and female students), both have also seen a drop of approximately 2% in the number of Distinctions being achieved in 2011. The greater increase of female students achieving a Merit has also meant they have achieved more 'good' passes than male students, a shift from the trend seen in the previous 4 years. Withdrawals appear to fluctuate each year, alternating between very small differences to a significantly larger proportion of male students withdrawing every other year. There is no significant difference in the level of withdrawals seen by gender in 2011. (See Appendix, Fig. 6).
14. The achievement of mature PGT students continues to be higher than that of 'normal' aged PGT students and figures for the 2011 cohort show that the difference between the proportion of mature and 'normal' aged students achieving a Distinction is the highest seen for the past 5 years (8%). In addition, the gap between the proportions of mature students withdrawing compared to younger entrants has also reduced over the past 5 years (from *ca* 4.5-6.5% to *ca* 0.5-1.5%). Finally, the same trend can be seen as above with regards to the proportion of students achieving a Merit in the 2011 cohort with the increase being noticeably greater for 'normal' aged students (19 percentage points increase for younger students, 14 percentage points increase for mature students). (See Appendix, Fig.7).
15. There are so few declared disabled PGT students that year-on-year comparison is pointless. A consolidated summary over 5 cohorts once again shows a higher level of withdrawals among disabled students but also a greater level of achievement at the top end of the scale. There is no real matter for concern, although year by year fluctuations cannot be detected because of the tiny sample size. (See Appendix, Fig. 8).

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