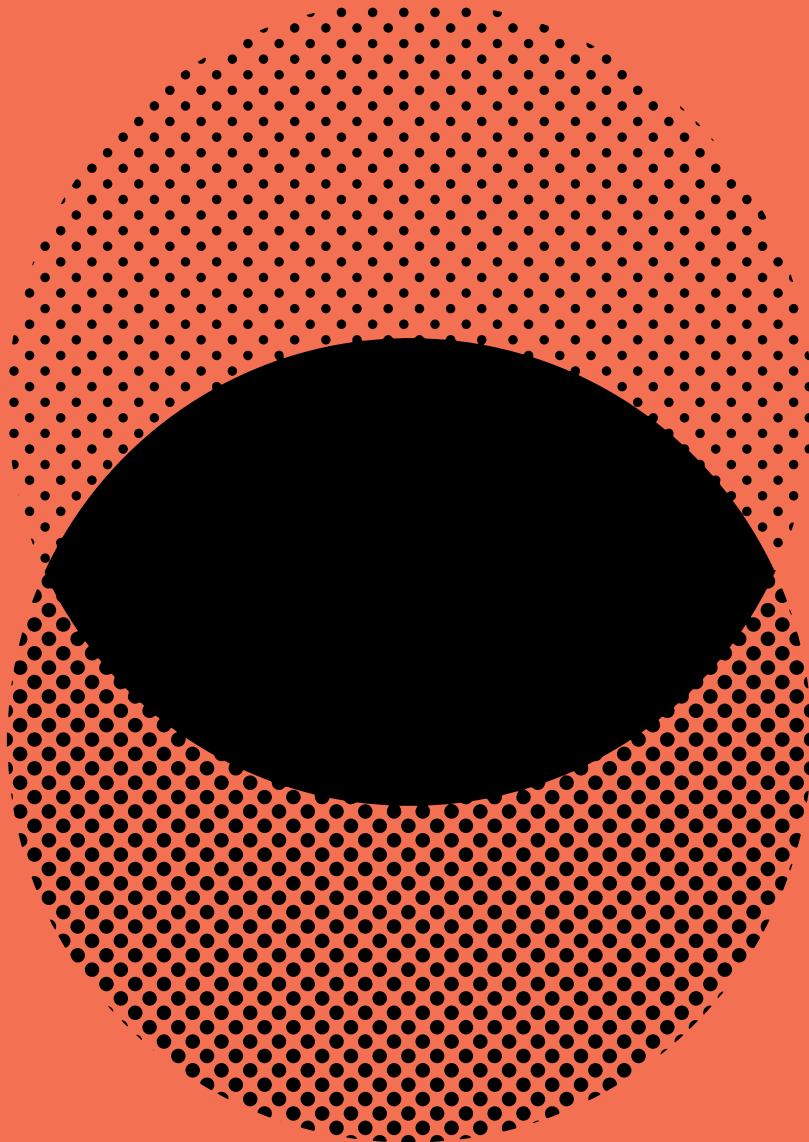




**The Irish Survey of
Student Engagement
for Postgraduate
Research Students
National Report
2019**





The Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students National Report 2019

Acknowledgements

The PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group wishes to acknowledge the national collaborative partnership of the Higher Education Authority (HEA), Irish Universities Association (IUA), Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI), and the members of staff in each of these organisations who contribute their time and efforts to PGR StudentSurvey.ie. In addition to the USI, the group thanks the Students' Unions in each of the participating higher education institutions and all of the students and student representatives who worked so closely with us on the 2019 fieldwork and on this report. The group wishes to acknowledge the members of the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group, and also the PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group and StudentSurvey.ie Communications Group. We note the effort and support of the staff, faculty and senior executive in the participating higher education institutions, who continue to be instrumental to the success of StudentSurvey.ie and its positive impact on the higher education landscape in Ireland. Most importantly, the PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group would like to thank the 2,721 postgraduate research students who gave their valuable time and insights in their participation in the 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie, and whose views form the results of this report.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

StudentSurvey.ie 2019/02
October 2019

Glossary

Respondent = any student who began the survey.

PGR student = postgraduate research student (including Masters by research and Doctoral degree students).

PGR cohort size = respondents categorised by enrolment in a higher education institution with a PGR student population of a particular size, i.e. PGR students enrolled in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students, or students enrolled in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students.

Research degree programme type = respondents categorised by research degree programme type, i.e. NFQ Level 9 (i.e. Masters by research) degrees, or NFQ Level 10 (i.e. Doctoral) degrees.

Institution type = respondents categorised by type of higher education institution, i.e. University, Technological Higher Education Institution (Institutes of Technology and Technological University Dublin), or Other Institution.

Mode of study = respondents categorised by nature of enrolment, i.e. full-time or part-time.

Field of study = respondents categorised by broad ISCED field of study, i.e. Generic programmes and qualifications; Education; Arts and humanities; Social sciences, journalism and information; Business, administration and law; Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics; Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); Engineering, manufacturing and construction; Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary; Health and welfare; or Services.



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74.8% of respondents would evaluate their entire research experience at their institution as excellent or good.

Executive Summary

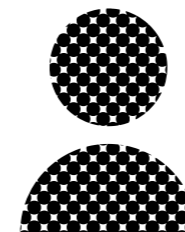
Introduction

PGR StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students) 2019 invited responses from postgraduate research (PGR) students in 22 higher education institutions in Ireland. There is a second survey, StudentSurvey.ie, which is designed for first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and runs annually.

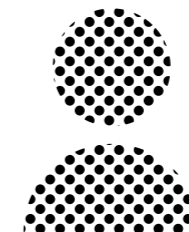
Innovation 2020, Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology, positions Ireland to be a Global Innovation Leader, driving a strong sustainable economy and a better society. The higher education research system is core to this strategy, both through fundamental research as well as through dynamic partnerships and interactions with enterprise, state agencies and civil society. As research plays such a crucial role in developing a knowledge society, it is vital that we have a vibrant research community.

It is essential for Ireland's national research system that those who carry out research here, from the very beginnings of their career, receive an educational experience that equips them with the capability and confidence to conduct their research to the highest possible standards. Underpinning the quality of postgraduate research degree provision is Ireland's *National Framework for Doctoral Education*. A complementary *Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes* was launched by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and is organised around the key principles in the *National Framework for Doctoral Education*. The information gathered in PGR StudentSurvey.ie will greatly advance the objectives of these policies, in providing key evidence for both HEIs themselves but also the broader higher education and research and innovation system to enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree provision in Ireland.

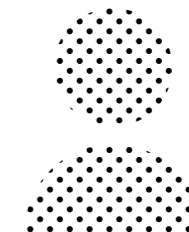
Irish Survey of Student Engagement



First Year Undergraduate

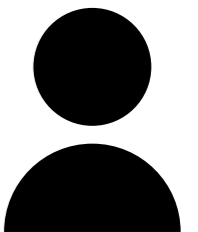


Final Year Undergraduate



Taught Postgraduate

Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students



Research Postgraduate



29.9%

Overall national response rate to the first full implementation of the survey.

Structure of the survey

PGR StudentSurvey.ie addresses each of the following engagement aspects:

- *Research Infrastructure and Facilities*
- *Supervision*
- *Research Culture*
- *Progress and Assessment*
- *Development Opportunities*
- *Research Skills*
- *Other Transferable Skills*
- *Responsibilities and Supports*
- *Personal Outlook*
- *Motivations*
- *Career Aspirations*
- *Overall Experience*

Those interested in consulting the full set of questions are directed to www.studentsurvey.ie.

The survey responses are collected for each individual institution. The data are aggregated to national results and it is these national-level results that are presented in this report. Responses for each individual institution are returned to that institution for local analysis at the level of the institution/ faculty/ school/ college/ department, etc.

Response rates and demographics

A total of 2,721 postgraduate research students responded to the 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie. This represents an overall national response rate of 29.9%. This is regarded as a very positive response to the first full implementation of the survey.

Results of the survey

Chapter 2 presents responses to question items grouped according to different engagement aspects of postgraduate research experience. Results are presented for all respondents nationally, followed by responses from students on research degree programmes leading to National Framework of Qualification (NFQ) Level 9 degrees compared to NFQ Level 10 degrees. Results are also provided for PGR students based in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students and those with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students.

The results presented in Chapter 3 represent a curated exploration of variance between groups that the PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group deemed to be noteworthy for a multitude of reasons. These include the importance of the result for national policy, the magnitude and nature of the statistically significant differences between groups, or the consistency with which groups varied (or, indeed, did not vary).

PGR cohort size

Where significant differences emerged, it was more frequent for respondents in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students to agree with the engagement statements than respondents in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250.

Mode of study

Where they differed, full-time students tended to indicate more engagement than part-time students.

Research degree programme type

This did not emerge as the most influential variable in accounting for differences in experience and engagement of PGR students. For many questions, the groups did not differ significantly.

Field of study

Overall, significant differences emerged for each of the engagement aspects of PGR StudentSurvey.ie by field of study. *Research Infrastructure and Facilities* and *Funding* were chosen for further analysis.

Gender

The variable that generated the fewest differences between groups was gender.

Country of domicile

The variable that revealed the most differences between groups was country of domicile, hence the more granular examination of differences included in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 examines career development and preparation for life after the PGR degree. This goal is achieved by focusing on the questions that can be mapped to the following aspect of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students):

- *Motivations*
- *Career Aspirations*
- *Development Opportunities*

Experience of developing *Research Skills* and *Other Transferable Skills* during the PGR degree was also examined within the context of investigating differences between Irish domiciled students, internationally domiciled students whose country of permanent domicile is within the EU/EEA/Switzerland, and internationally domiciled students whose country of permanent domicile is outside EU/EEA/Switzerland.

Next steps

PGR StudentSurvey.ie is a valuable addition to the Irish higher education sector and has the power to improve the lived experience of current and future postgraduate research students. Such improvements would then contribute to an improved research environment and benefits for all members of the research community in higher education institutions.

There are more avenues and possibilities for further analysis of the data than can be pursued by individual institutions, the central StudentSurvey.ie project management function. Third-party researchers/ organisations and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Project Manager at info@studentsurvey.ie to discuss these possibilities or to propose ideas for future research. Additionally, the StudentSurvey.ie datasets are archived with the Irish Social Sciences Data Archive annually and may be accessed by request.

This year, 2019, was the first year of full implementation of PGR StudentSurvey.ie following the pilot in 2018. Considerable efforts have been made by those who implement the survey in the institutions, including staff and students, to make the survey an operational success. The next period of PGR StudentSurvey.ie fieldwork will take place in spring 2021. In the meantime, the next steps for the survey are necessarily focused on efforts to interrogate and draw meaning from the results.



Engagement with college life is seen as important to facilitate in students the ability to develop key capabilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, writing skills, teamwork and communication skills.

Chapter 1

Context for the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students

1.1 StudentSurvey.ie

PGR StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students) 2019 invited responses from postgraduate research (PGR) students (including Masters by research and doctoral degree students) in 22 higher education institutions in Ireland. There is a second survey, StudentSurvey.ie, which runs annually and is designed for first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

1.2 Policy context

The world is experiencing rapid global change, driven by a range of political, social, and economic phenomena, all of which are accelerated by the ongoing technological revolution. As a result, we are facing a number of major societal challenges in the broad areas of demographics and health, climate and the environment, energy, transport and security. Political and economic leaders are asking researchers for help in addressing these challenges.

Likewise, the future of work will also be different. According to Dell Technologies, it is possible that “up to 85% of the jobs that today’s learners will be doing in 2030 have not been invented yet”¹. The importance of building resilience in the Irish economy is highlighted in *Future Jobs Ireland (2019)*² as key to maintaining our national competitiveness and ability to adapt in this changing global context.

Central to growing our productivity and building resilience is “cultivating a collaborative and dynamic national innovation system facilitated by world-class research institutions and public investment in research, development and innovation”³. *Innovation 2020*⁴, Ireland’s strategy for research and development, science and technology, positions Ireland to be a Global Innovation Leader, driving a strong sustainable economy and a better society. The higher education research system is core to this strategy, both through fundamental research as well as through dynamic partnerships and interactions with enterprise, state agencies and civil society, in order to facilitate knowledge transfer and the development of new business

products and services and solutions to societal challenges. Research intensive industries in turn are recognised as being more resilient and more productive, as well as generating greater employment, than non-innovative enterprises.⁵

As research plays such a crucial role in developing a knowledge society, it is vital that we have a vibrant research community. Investing in our people is essential to delivering the solutions to the many challenges that we face as an economy and society. When *Innovation 2020* was being developed, enterprise agencies forecasted that the number of research and development personnel needed in the enterprise sector alone would increase from 25,000 in 2013 to 40,000 in 2020⁶.

Ensuring the quality of Irish higher education is paramount in addressing these needs.

The importance of nurturing transferable skills among postgraduate research students is likewise emphasised, to enable graduates to advance their careers across a broad range of employment sectors⁷. Researcher competences are continually evolving: research integrity and open research, for example, are currently to the fore. It is thus essential for Ireland’s national research system that those who carry out research here, from the very beginnings of their career, receive an educational experience that equips them with the capability and confidence to conduct their research to the highest possible standards.

1. Dell Technologies/ Institute for the Future (2018) *The next era of human-machine partnerships. Emerging technologies impact on society and work in 2030*, p. 14 www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/th/SR1940_IFTFforDellTechnologies_Human-Machine_070717_readerhigh-res.pdf

2. Government of Ireland (2019) *Future Jobs Ireland* <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Future-Jobs-Ireland-2019.pdf>

3. Government of Ireland (2019) *Future Jobs Ireland*, p. 13.

4. DBEI (2015) *Innovation 2020* <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Innovation-2020.pdf>

5. Government of Ireland (2019) *Future Jobs Ireland*.

6. DBEI (2015) *Innovation 2020*, p. 38.

7. DBEI (2015) *Innovation 2020*, p. 37.

Goal 4.4 of the Department of Education and Skills *Statement of Skills and Strategy 2019–2021*⁸ aims to:

“Maintain and improve standards of research and innovation in our higher education institutions, develop individual and collaborative talent and ensure there is tangible and positive impact upon society and the economy”.

Underpinning the quality of postgraduate research degree provision in Ireland is the *National Framework for Doctoral Education*⁹, which aims to:

- Facilitate consistent excellence in the quality of postgraduate education and training, including research undertaken at Masters and doctoral levels;
- Enable and encourage higher education institutions to work more closely in the delivery of an improved learner experience and outcome;
- Maximise the employability of doctoral graduates across a broad range of employment sectors by ensuring that the acquisition of discipline-specific knowledge is complemented by the development of transferable skills; and
- Underpin the international standing of the Irish doctoral award.

This Framework has been endorsed by all of the higher education institutions and main research funders in Ireland. A complementary *Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes* was launched by Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) and is organised around the key principles in the *National Framework for Doctoral Education*. Its purpose is to “provide benchmark statements, against which those involved in delivering Research Degree Programmes can consider their own practice and identify areas where enhancement effort and/or resources might be focused”¹⁰. Within this *Framework of Good Practice*, point 4.14 expects

that “the higher education institution formally considers the outcomes of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students” as part of their ongoing practice”¹¹.

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* also acknowledges the importance and value of feedback on the student experience:

“Higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students and use this feedback to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy.”¹²

The information gathered in PGR StudentSurvey.ie will greatly advance these objectives, in providing key evidence for higher education institutions themselves, but also for the broader higher education research and innovation system to enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree provision in Ireland. The introduction of PGR StudentSurvey.ie recognises the need and importance of capturing the experiences that students undertaking research degree programmes may have, which will be different from those completing predominantly taught programmes.

The 2018 PGR StudentSurvey.ie pilot was completed by 2,983 postgraduate research students and yielded rich insights into various aspects of the student experience. The 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie will build on this learning and will broaden our awareness and understanding of additional topics, such as student well-being. As well as enabling the continued improvement of our postgraduate research degree provision in Ireland, this will also help to attract talented researchers to our shores and build Ireland’s reputation internationally for excellent research and postgraduate education.

8. DES (2019) *Cumasú: empowering through learning. Statement of Skills and Strategy, 2019–2021* www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/statement-of-strategy-2019-2021.pdf

9. *National Framework for Doctoral Education* (2015) https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf

10. QQI (2019) *Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes* www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Ireland%E2%80%99s%20Framework%20of%20Good%20Practice%20Research%20Degree%20Programmes.pdf#search=Framework%20of%20Good%20Practice%20for%20Research%20Degree%20Programmes%2A11

11. QQI (2019) *Framework of Good Practice for Research Degree Programmes*, p. 22.

12. DES (2011) *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*, p. 17 <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf15>

1.3 What is student engagement?

The term ‘student engagement’ is used in educational contexts to refer to a range of related, but distinct, understandings of the interaction between students and the higher education institutions they attend. Most, if not all, interpretations of student engagement are based on the extent to which students actively avail of opportunities to involve themselves in ‘educationally beneficial’ activities and the extent to which institutions enable, facilitate and encourage such involvement. PGR StudentSurvey.ie focuses on students’ engagement with their learning and their learning environments. It does not directly explore, for example, students’ involvement in quality assurance or in institutional decision-making.

Accordingly, for the purposes of PGR StudentSurvey.ie, student engagement reflects two key elements. The first is the amount of time and effort that students put into their studies and other educationally beneficial activities. The second is how higher education institutions deploy resources and organise curriculum and other learning opportunities to encourage students to participate in meaningful activities that are linked to learning.

1.4 PGR StudentSurvey.ie objectives

The objectives of PGR StudentSurvey.ie match those defined for StudentSurvey.ie for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, but as related to the experiences of postgraduate research students, i.e.:

- To increase transparency in relation to the student experience in higher education institutions;
- To enable direct student input on levels of engagement with their higher education institution;
- To identify good practice that enhances the student experience;
- To assist institutions to identify issues and challenges affecting the student experience;
- To serve as a guide for continual enhancement of institutions’ teaching and learning and student engagement;
- To document the experiences of the PGR student population, thus enabling year-on-year comparisons of key performance indicators; and
- To facilitate benchmarking with higher education institutions and systems internationally.

The survey is comprehensive and seeks to explore many different aspects of the PGR student experience of higher education. There is greater variation in results within institutions than between institutions. The greatest benefit is realised when those exploring the data, both students and staff, have a deep understanding of the local context. Prioritisation of specific uses of the data is a decision for individual institutions to make.

While not published in this report, results of reliability and validity testing of the 2018 question set have been published on www.studentsurvey.ie.



56.1% of PGR students definitely or strongly agreed that there is someone in their institution they can talk to about their day-to-day problems

Chapter 2

Results of the 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents quantitative results from the first year of full implementation of **PGR StudentSurvey.ie** (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students). The first section presents an overview of the demographic profile of respondents alongside the overall postgraduate research (PGR) student population. This is followed by national-level responses to the survey, grouped according to particular engagement “aspects” of the PGR student experience. Overall results for respondents are presented alongside aggregated results along two dimensions. The first is research degree programme type, whereby results for PGR students undertaking NFQ¹³ Level 9 (i.e. Masters by research) degrees are differentiated from those of students undertaking NFQ Level 10 (i.e. Doctoral) degrees. In keeping with the reporting for 2018, the results are also broken down by the size of the PGR student population in the institution. The results are presented for students in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students, alongside results for those in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students. The corresponding 22 participating institutions are listed in Appendix 4.

13. <https://nfq.qqi.ie/>

2.2 Methodology

Rationale and design

The procedures for PGR StudentSurvey.ie fieldwork in 2019 were heavily influenced by the experience of and learning from fieldwork for the pilot in 2018, which was overseen by the PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group. A key characteristic of PGR StudentSurvey.ie pilot and full implementation was the aversion to reducing PGR StudentSurvey.ie to a survey of student satisfaction, and the endeavour to maintain the focus on student experience and engagement.

The PGR StudentSurvey.ie questions are largely based on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey¹⁴ (PRES) in the United Kingdom. PRES is a UK-wide survey of research degree students, organised by the Higher Education Academy, now part of the UK's Advance HE Agency. The PGR StudentSurvey.ie question set shares many common items with the UK PRES whilst also including items specific to the national context, such as elements of the *National Framework for Doctoral Education*.

Procedure

Students enrolled on research degree programmes leading to NFQ Level 9 or NFQ Level 10 degrees were invited to take part in the survey. This included both full-time and part-time¹⁵ PGR students. The survey was delivered online at the same time as StudentSurvey.ie for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. A third-party survey company issued the invitation to students to take part, delivered the survey to the students who chose to respond, and collected responses for each participating

PGR StudentSurvey.ie addresses each of the following engagement aspects:

- *Research Infrastructure and Facilities*
- *Supervision*
- *Research Culture*
- *Progress and Assessment*
- *Development Opportunities*
- *Research Skills*
- *Other Transferable Skills*
- *Responsibilities and Supports*
- *Personal Outlook*
- *Motivations*
- *Career Aspirations*
- *Overall Experience*

higher education institution. Responses for each individual institution are returned to that institution for local analysis at the level of the institution/ faculty/ school/ college/ department, etc.

In line with existing practice for StudentSurvey.ie for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, specific non-sensitive demographic data are extracted from institutions' student record systems and sent to the survey company (institutions also submit these data to the HEA Student Record

14. www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/surveys/postgraduate-research-experience-survey

15. Part-time encompasses all respondents who are not full-time, and includes groups of students who may otherwise be labelled as part-time, remote, engaged in e-learning, or some other description of their enrolment.

System). This step facilitates the aggregation of data to national-level results, which are presented in this report. It also saves time for the respondent, who would otherwise be required to duplicate the information.

Students are guaranteed confidentiality when invited to respond to the survey. Data protection and respect for the data are at the heart of PGR StudentSurvey.ie. To this end, individual institutions initially only receive collated percentage responses for those questions with defined response options, and a separate file containing

anonymised free text responses to questions seeking additional comments. Two additional safeguards of confidentiality should be noted here: tables of results are populated only where the number of respondents is 10 or greater; and qualitative data (open text comments) have been cleaned to remove any names or identifiers of individuals, and are provided to institutions without any associated demographic data. If an individual institution wishes to carry out additional analysis of their institution's data, they may receive the cleaned pseudonymised data only where they agree to a more detailed data protection protocol.

2.3 Response rates and demographics

A total of 2,721 postgraduate research students responded to the 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie. This represents a national response rate of 29.9%. This is regarded as a very positive response to the first full implementation of the survey, especially given that a considerable proportion of the PGR student population invited to take the 2019 survey had also been invited to respond to the pilot in 2018.

Examination of response rates for groups of the PGR survey respondents indicates that the demographic profile of respondents closely matches the profile of the national PGR student population. This is particularly the case in relation to programme characteristics, such as field of study and research degree programme type.

Female and male PGR students had response rates of 34.2% and 25.2% respectively. In institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250, 28.7% of students responded, compared to 37.0% of PGR students in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students. Full-time students and part-time students had response rates of 32.0% and 19.8% respectively. Response rates for fields of study ranged from 27.4% to 30.8% when fields of study with particularly small numbers of students were excluded, i.e. 41.5% of students in Generic programmes and qualifications (n=22)

responded, 37.6% of Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary students responded (n=65) and 35.0% of Services students responded (n=21).

A key consideration is that the response rates for any one year should not be taken as a direct indication of the effort expended to promote participation within individual higher education institutions in that given year. Factors such as timing of the survey, timing of other major events in the institutional calendar, and even weather can influence the response rate achieved. Nevertheless, any institution that notes a pattern of consistent decrease in response rate should reflect on the nature, tone, and visibility of feedback activities.

Students will respond to the survey when it is clear to them that their higher education institution as a whole and the staff they encounter on a regular basis value the resulting data and do something or intend to do something with it. This is the primary factor that will have greatest impact on the number of responses and, accordingly, enable reliable analysis of increasingly disaggregated data. Communication of analysis undertaken, results considered, and actions taken are essential for the continued participation and support of the survey by students.

Table 2.1 Demographic profile

Characteristic	National PGR student population		All respondents		Response rate
	9,114		2,721		29.9%
PGR Cohort size					
PGR cohort of greater than 250	7,853	86.2%	2,254	82.8%	28.7%
PGR cohort of fewer than 250	1,261	13.8%	467	17.2%	37.0%
Mode of study					
Full-time	7,508	82.4%	2,403	88.3%	32.0%
Part-time	1,606	17.6%	318	11.7%	19.8%
Research degree programme type					
NFQ Level 9 (i.e. Masters by research)	1,258	13.8%	420	15.4%	33.4%
NFQ Level 10 (i.e. Doctoral degree)	7,856	86.2%	2,301	84.6%	29.3%
Field of study*					
Generic programmes and qualifications	53	0.6%	22	0.8%	41.5%
Education	555	6.1%	152	5.6%	27.4%
Arts and humanities	1,201	13.2%	357	13.1%	29.7%
Social sciences, journalism and information	932	10.2%	287	10.5%	30.8%
Business, administration and law	695	7.6%	208	7.6%	29.9%
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	2,245	24.6%	677	24.9%	30.2%
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	487	5.3%	142	5.2%	29.2%
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	1,330	14.6%	380	14.0%	28.6%
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	173	1.9%	65	2.4%	37.6%
Health and welfare	1,383	15.2%	410	15.1%	29.6%
Services	60	0.7%	21	0.8%	35.0%
Gender					
Female	4,746	52.1%	1,621	59.6%	34.2%
Male	4,368	47.9%	1,100	40.4%	25.2%
Country of domicile					
Irish domiciled	6,483	70%	1,863	68%	29%
Internationally domiciled	2,784	30%	858	32%	31%

2.4 Responses to individual questions

The following sections present percentage responses to questions grouped according to different engagement aspects of the postgraduate research student experience. Results are presented for all respondents nationally, as well as by research degree programme type and PGR cohort size. The results do not distinguish between respondents at different stages of progress towards completion of their research degrees.

2.4.1 Questions relating to *Research Infrastructure and Facilities*

Across research degree programme type and PGR cohort size, approximately 80% of respondents definitely or mostly agreed that they had a suitable working space and access to library facilities, though a smaller percentage (approx. 70%) agreed they had access to computing resources/ facilities. Agreement with the statement relating to access to specialist resources and facilities varied the most.

Table 2.2 *Research Infrastructure and Facilities*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I have a suitable working space	Definitely disagree	5.7%	5.8%	5.7%	5.8%	5.6%	5.8%	5.1%	6.1%	4.3%
	Mostly disagree	9.3%	10.2%	9.1%	9.2%	10.1%	9.2%	9.4%	10.3%	8.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.9%	4.9%	6.1%	6.2%	3.0%	6.5%	4.7%	6.5%	3.0%
	Mostly agree	33.5%	29.6%	34.2%	33.1%	25.8%	33.9%	35.1%	33.2%	36.9%
	Definitely agree	45.7%	49.5%	44.9%	45.7%	55.6%	44.7%	45.6%	43.9%	47.2%
There is adequate provision of computing resources/ facilities	Definitely disagree	5.9%	5.2%	6.0%	6.1%	6.1%	6.1%	4.7%	4.3%	5.0%
	Mostly disagree	11.9%	10.9%	12.0%	12.2%	13.3%	12.1%	10.3%	8.7%	11.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	10.8%	12.2%	10.5%	11.2%	11.2%	11.2%	8.5%	13.0%	4.6%
	Mostly agree	36.1%	30.8%	37.1%	35.9%	26.5%	36.8%	37.1%	34.8%	39.1%
	Definitely agree	35.4%	40.9%	34.4%	34.6%	42.9%	33.7%	39.3%	39.1%	39.5%
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical/ online resources)	Definitely disagree	3.8%	3.0%	3.9%	3.8%	3.0%	3.9%	3.8%	2.9%	4.5%
	Mostly disagree	7.9%	10.4%	7.5%	7.6%	9.1%	7.5%	9.6%	11.6%	7.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9.0%	10.4%	8.7%	8.6%	6.6%	8.8%	11.1%	14.0%	8.6%
	Mostly agree	39.5%	34.7%	40.3%	39.7%	31.5%	40.5%	38.2%	37.7%	38.7%
	Definitely agree	39.8%	41.6%	39.5%	40.3%	49.7%	39.4%	37.3%	33.8%	40.3%
I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research	Definitely disagree	4.8%	4.8%	4.7%	4.7%	3.2%	4.9%	4.9%	6.3%	3.7%
	Mostly disagree	10.4%	11.6%	10.1%	9.9%	9.0%	10.0%	12.3%	14.1%	10.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.8%	15.7%	14.6%	14.8%	14.8%	14.8%	14.8%	16.5%	13.3%
	Mostly agree	41.5%	36.7%	42.3%	41.8%	38.6%	42.1%	39.8%	35.0%	44.0%
	Definitely agree	28.6%	31.1%	28.2%	28.7%	34.4%	28.2%	28.2%	28.2%	28.2%

Across all respondents, 58.9% responded that they are in receipt of a scholarship. This percentage is quite similar across institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 and with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250.

Table 2.3 Research funding source

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My research is funded by (Please select all that apply)	Scholarship	58.9%	49.8%	60.5%	59.2%	36.3%	61.5%	57.1%	62.1%	52.6%
	Scholarship (fees only)	6.9%	10.7%	6.2%	6.4%	8.5%	6.2%	9.4%	12.8%	6.5%
	Self-funded	18.7%	21.7%	18.1%	19.3%	30.8%	18.1%	15.7%	13.2%	17.8%
	Grant	17.8%	18.1%	17.7%	17.1%	21.4%	16.7%	21.0%	15.1%	26.3%
	Employer-funded	8.4%	10.0%	8.2%	8.5%	12.4%	8.1%	8.2%	7.8%	8.5%

* Multiple responses allowed. Table shows averages of non-blank responses.

Almost all respondents report that their fees are covered by their funding (96.0%).

Table 2.4 Research funding uses

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My funding covers (Please select all that apply)	Fees	96.0%	93.9%	96.4%	96.4%	95.0%	96.5%	94.4%	92.9%	95.7%
	Stipend	76.7%	66.5%	78.5%	77.1%	61.1%	78.6%	74.5%	71.1%	77.7%
	Research materials	57.8%	54.5%	58.4%	57.0%	53.9%	57.3%	61.5%	55.0%	67.4%
	Travel to conferences	57.6%	54.5%	58.1%	56.9%	47.8%	57.7%	60.8%	60.2%	61.4%
	Other travel*	25.6%	21.2%	26.4%	25.5%	21.7%	25.9%	25.7%	20.9%	30.0%
	Specialist training	22.9%	23.0%	22.8%	22.4%	20.0%	22.6%	25.0%	25.6%	24.5%

*(labs / other institutions)

2.4.2 Questions relating to Supervision

Looking to *Supervision*, the results are some of the most consistent from across the whole survey. Across all respondents, 83% definitely or mostly agreed that their supervisor or supervisors provided appropriate levels of support, and reported a similar level of agreement in relation to having regular contact with their supervisor and receiving useful feedback. The only difference was for responses to the statement that their supervisors helped them to identify training and development needs, where 71.7% definitely or mostly agreed with this statement.

Table 2.5 Supervision

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am being supervised by...	One supervisor	47.9%	38.7%	49.5%	52.6%	50.5%	52.8%	25.2%	27.9%	22.8%
	Two supervisors	42.0%	48.2%	40.8%	39.6%	42.4%	39.4%	53.1%	53.5%	52.8%
	Three or more supervisors	10.2%	13.1%	9.6%	7.7%	7.1%	7.8%	21.7%	18.6%	24.4%
My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research	Definitely disagree	3.9%	3.1%	4.0%	3.9%	4.5%	3.9%	3.5%	1.9%	4.9%
	Mostly disagree	6.7%	6.0%	6.9%	7.1%	7.5%	7.1%	5.0%	4.6%	5.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	6.0%	7.2%	5.8%	5.3%	4.0%	5.5%	9.1%	10.2%	8.2%
	Mostly agree	27.8%	23.1%	28.6%	29.2%	30.2%	29.1%	21.0%	16.7%	24.9%
	Definitely agree	55.6%	60.5%	54.7%	54.4%	53.8%	54.5%	61.4%	66.7%	56.7%
I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs	Definitely disagree	3.0%	3.4%	2.9%	3.1%	5.1%	2.9%	2.2%	1.9%	2.5%
	Mostly disagree	5.6%	5.3%	5.7%	5.6%	4.0%	5.7%	5.9%	6.5%	5.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.9%	5.8%	5.9%	5.6%	4.5%	5.7%	7.4%	6.9%	7.8%
	Mostly agree	24.7%	21.7%	25.2%	25.8%	31.3%	25.3%	19.2%	13.0%	24.7%
	Definitely agree	60.8%	63.8%	60.3%	59.9%	55.1%	60.4%	65.4%	71.8%	59.7%
My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities	Definitely disagree	3.4%	2.9%	3.5%	3.7%	5.1%	3.5%	2.2%	0.9%	3.3%
	Mostly disagree	5.9%	6.1%	5.9%	5.8%	4.0%	5.9%	6.7%	7.9%	5.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7.1%	5.8%	7.4%	7.1%	5.1%	7.3%	7.4%	6.5%	8.1%
	Mostly agree	24.6%	21.4%	25.2%	24.8%	24.7%	24.8%	23.9%	18.2%	28.9%
	Definitely agree	58.9%	63.8%	58.0%	58.7%	61.1%	58.5%	59.8%	66.4%	54.1%
My supervisor(s) helps me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	Definitely disagree	5.3%	4.1%	5.5%	5.6%	5.1%	5.6%	4.1%	3.3%	4.9%
	Mostly disagree	9.5%	9.2%	9.6%	9.6%	11.1%	9.5%	9.2%	7.5%	10.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	12.8%	11.2%	13.1%	12.7%	10.6%	12.9%	13.3%	11.7%	14.8%
	Mostly agree	27.7%	26.0%	28.0%	28.1%	26.8%	28.2%	26.0%	25.2%	26.6%
	Definitely agree	44.6%	49.5%	43.7%	44.1%	46.5%	43.8%	47.4%	52.3%	43.0%

2.4.3 Questions relating to *Research Culture*

The results across the questions relating to *Research Culture* were much more varied than for other areas in the survey. The percentage of PGR students definitely or mostly agreeing that they have access to a relevant seminar programme was higher than for PGR students definitely or mostly agreeing that they have a stimulating research ambience or opportunities to discuss their research with other research students. The lowest rate of agreement was in relation to accessing opportunities to engage with the wider research community.

Table 2.6 *Research Culture*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme	Definitely disagree	5.2%	5.6%	5.1%	4.9%	4.2%	5.0%	6.4%	6.9%	6.0%
	Mostly disagree	12.1%	12.0%	12.2%	11.8%	11.1%	11.9%	13.7%	12.8%	14.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.3%	20.4%	15.6%	15.0%	14.8%	15.0%	22.7%	25.6%	20.1%
	Mostly agree	36.1%	36.0%	36.2%	37.3%	40.7%	37.0%	30.2%	31.5%	29.1%
	Definitely agree	30.3%	26.0%	31.0%	30.9%	29.1%	31.1%	27.0%	23.2%	30.3%
The research ambience in my department stimulates my work	Definitely disagree	6.1%	5.8%	6.1%	6.2%	4.2%	6.4%	5.7%	7.2%	4.3%
	Mostly disagree	12.7%	11.6%	12.9%	12.9%	13.2%	12.9%	11.8%	10.1%	13.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	21.9%	19.7%	22.3%	21.6%	16.9%	22.1%	23.4%	22.2%	24.5%
	Mostly agree	33.4%	32.8%	33.5%	33.8%	32.8%	33.9%	31.1%	32.9%	29.6%
	Definitely agree	25.9%	30.1%	25.1%	25.5%	32.8%	24.8%	28.0%	27.5%	28.3%
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	Definitely disagree	7.0%	6.7%	7.0%	7.2%	7.2%	7.2%	5.9%	6.2%	5.6%
	Mostly disagree	15.1%	12.7%	15.5%	15.7%	14.4%	15.8%	12.2%	11.0%	13.2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.0%	13.4%	16.5%	16.4%	11.3%	16.9%	14.2%	15.3%	13.2%
	Mostly agree	32.8%	29.8%	33.4%	32.3%	27.8%	32.8%	35.2%	31.6%	38.5%
	Definitely agree	29.1%	37.5%	27.5%	28.4%	39.2%	27.3%	32.5%	35.9%	29.5%
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	Definitely disagree	7.9%	6.9%	8.1%	8.4%	9.9%	8.3%	5.4%	4.3%	6.3%
	Mostly disagree	17.8%	17.4%	17.9%	18.0%	18.2%	18.0%	16.7%	16.6%	16.9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	22.0%	18.9%	22.6%	21.5%	14.6%	22.2%	24.3%	22.7%	25.7%
	Mostly agree	31.3%	30.0%	31.5%	32.0%	31.3%	32.0%	27.9%	28.9%	27.0%
	Definitely agree	21.0%	26.8%	20.0%	20.0%	26.0%	19.5%	25.7%	27.5%	24.1%

2.4.4 Questions relating to *Progress and Assessment*

PGR students in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students agreed more readily than students in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students that they receive an appropriate induction. The results were most varied regarding understanding of the required standard for their thesis (ranging from 62.8% to 80.5%) and the final assessment procedures (ranging from 56% to 79.8%). These results are likely impacted by year of study and further analysis by individual institutions is encouraged to investigate if this increased understanding correlated with proximity to thesis submission deadline.

Table 2.7 *Progress and Assessment*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I received an appropriate induction/ orientation to my research degree programme	Definitely disagree	10.0%	10.7%	9.9%	10.4%	13.1%	10.1%	8.2%	8.5%	8.0%
	Mostly disagree	16.1%	11.7%	16.9%	17.3%	14.7%	17.6%	10.4%	9.0%	11.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.4%	11.7%	13.7%	13.8%	11.5%	14.0%	11.3%	11.8%	10.9%
	Mostly agree	34.8%	34.0%	35.0%	34.0%	31.9%	34.3%	38.4%	35.8%	40.8%
	Definitely agree	25.7%	32.0%	24.6%	24.5%	28.8%	24.1%	31.6%	34.9%	28.6%
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	Definitely disagree	3.3%	5.0%	3.0%	3.5%	6.5%	3.2%	2.7%	3.8%	1.7%
	Mostly disagree	9.6%	10.1%	9.6%	10.1%	12.9%	9.8%	7.6%	7.6%	7.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9.0%	8.8%	9.0%	9.1%	9.7%	9.0%	8.7%	8.1%	9.2%
	Mostly agree	42.1%	36.0%	43.2%	42.8%	34.9%	43.6%	38.4%	37.0%	39.7%
	Definitely agree	36.0%	40.1%	35.2%	34.6%	36.0%	34.4%	42.7%	43.6%	41.8%
I understand the required standard for my thesis	Definitely disagree	3.6%	4.2%	3.5%	3.8%	6.3%	3.6%	2.4%	2.3%	2.5%
	Mostly disagree	10.5%	10.1%	10.6%	11.1%	12.6%	11.0%	7.8%	8.0%	7.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.5%	14.1%	11.1%	11.9%	18.3%	11.3%	9.8%	10.3%	9.3%
	Mostly agree	41.5%	35.9%	42.6%	42.1%	35.6%	42.8%	38.8%	36.2%	41.1%
	Definitely agree	32.8%	35.6%	32.2%	31.0%	27.2%	31.4%	41.2%	43.2%	39.4%
The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me	Definitely disagree	4.5%	5.7%	4.3%	4.7%	7.9%	4.4%	3.6%	3.8%	3.4%
	Mostly disagree	12.0%	15.4%	11.3%	12.6%	18.8%	11.9%	9.1%	12.3%	6.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.5%	16.4%	12.9%	13.6%	17.3%	13.2%	12.9%	15.6%	10.5%
	Mostly agree	39.7%	32.0%	41.1%	40.0%	28.8%	41.1%	38.0%	34.9%	40.8%
	Definitely agree	30.4%	30.5%	30.4%	29.1%	27.2%	29.3%	36.4%	33.5%	39.1%

2.4.5 Questions relating to *Development Opportunities*

As may be expected, particularly varied results emerged in relation to PGR students' engagement with *Development Opportunities*. This is a key part of the survey, which requires consideration by individual institutions as to their capacity to offer such *Development Opportunities*. Where these opportunities are being offered and PGR students are reporting lower than expected rates of uptake of the opportunities, institutions could investigate the reasons for this.

Table 2.8 *Development Opportunities*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	Yes	42.9%	38.3%	43.8%	42.9%	31.8%	43.9%	43.2%	43.9%	42.7%
	No	40.2%	40.6%	40.1%	40.6%	44.7%	40.3%	38.0%	37.1%	38.8%
	Not avail.	16.9%	21.1%	16.1%	16.5%	23.5%	15.9%	18.8%	19.0%	18.5%
Receiving training to develop my research skills	Yes	75.5%	78.4%	75.0%	74.2%	71.3%	74.5%	81.6%	84.6%	78.9%
	No	19.3%	16.5%	19.8%	20.6%	21.5%	20.5%	13.4%	12.0%	14.7%
	Not avail.	5.2%	5.1%	5.2%	5.2%	7.2%	5.0%	5.0%	3.4%	6.5%
Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills	Yes	59.4%	56.7%	59.9%	60.2%	55.9%	60.6%	55.8%	57.5%	54.3%
	No	33.0%	32.9%	33.0%	32.7%	32.4%	32.8%	34.4%	33.3%	35.3%
	Not avail.	7.6%	10.4%	7.0%	7.1%	11.7%	6.6%	9.8%	9.2%	10.3%
Receiving advice on career options	Yes	33.2%	30.6%	33.7%	33.0%	29.4%	33.3%	34.4%	31.6%	37.0%
	No	56.5%	55.4%	56.7%	57.5%	55.6%	57.6%	52.1%	55.3%	49.1%
	Not avail.	10.3%	14.0%	9.6%	9.6%	15.0%	9.1%	13.5%	13.1%	13.9%
Taking part in a placement or internship	Yes	18.0%	16.0%	18.4%	17.5%	16.2%	17.7%	20.3%	15.8%	24.2%
	No	61.2%	59.2%	61.6%	62.5%	60.3%	62.7%	55.1%	58.1%	52.4%
	Not avail.	20.8%	24.9%	20.1%	20.0%	23.5%	19.7%	24.7%	26.1%	23.4%
Attending an academic research conference	Yes	80.8%	68.2%	83.1%	81.8%	67.6%	83.1%	76.2%	68.8%	82.9%
	No	16.2%	27.7%	14.1%	15.4%	28.6%	14.2%	19.9%	26.9%	13.7%
	Not avail.	3.0%	4.1%	2.8%	2.8%	3.8%	2.7%	3.8%	4.3%	3.4%
Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	Yes	71.8%	57.1%	74.5%	72.2%	51.4%	74.2%	70.1%	62.0%	77.3%
	No	24.2%	36.2%	22.0%	24.0%	41.4%	22.3%	25.4%	31.7%	19.7%
	Not avail.	4.0%	6.7%	3.5%	3.8%	7.2%	3.5%	4.5%	6.3%	3.0%

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	Yes	49.8%	35.3%	52.4%	50.6%	35.4%	52.1%	46.0%	35.3%	55.6%
	No	45.6%	56.4%	43.6%	45.2%	55.2%	44.2%	47.6%	57.5%	38.8%
	Not avail.	4.6%	8.2%	3.9%	4.2%	9.4%	3.7%	6.4%	7.2%	5.6%
Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	Yes	46.6%	41.0%	47.6%	46.3%	33.7%	47.5%	48.1%	47.3%	48.7%
	No	46.9%	48.5%	46.6%	47.5%	53.6%	46.9%	44.0%	44.0%	44.0%
	Not avail.	6.5%	10.6%	5.8%	6.2%	12.7%	5.6%	7.9%	8.7%	7.3%
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	Yes	16.2%	12.3%	16.9%	16.9%	12.4%	17.3%	12.8%	12.1%	13.5%
	No	68.4%	66.6%	68.7%	69.4%	70.1%	69.4%	63.3%	63.6%	63.0%
	Not avail.	15.5%	21.1%	14.5%	13.7%	17.5%	13.4%	23.9%	24.3%	23.5%
Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice, e.g. submitting an invention disclosure or filing a patent	Yes	7.9%	9.9%	7.5%	7.6%	9.0%	7.4%	9.4%	10.7%	8.3%
	No	74.9%	69.8%	75.8%	76.1%	70.8%	76.6%	68.7%	68.9%	68.6%
	Not avail.	17.3%	20.3%	16.7%	16.3%	20.2%	15.9%	21.8%	20.4%	23.1%
Working as part of a team	Yes	65.3%	63.8%	65.6%	65.3%	65.4%	65.3%	65.3%	62.5%	67.8%
	No	28.3%	26.2%	28.7%	29.0%	25.8%	29.3%	25.4%	26.4%	24.5%
	Not avail.	6.4%	10.0%	5.7%	5.7%	8.8%	5.4%	9.3%	11.1%	7.7%
Working collaboratively with industry	Yes	25.8%	34.1%	24.3%	24.1%	31.3%	23.5%	33.9%	36.6%	31.6%
	No	60.1%	52.3%	61.5%	61.8%	54.2%	62.6%	51.6%	50.7%	52.4%
	Not avail.	14.1%	13.5%	14.2%	14.0%	14.5%	14.0%	14.4%	12.7%	16.0%
Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation	Yes	23.3%	23.4%	23.3%	23.1%	19.9%	23.4%	24.3%	26.3%	22.5%
	No	62.8%	61.2%	63.1%	63.6%	63.1%	63.6%	59.2%	59.5%	58.9%
	Not avail.	13.8%	15.5%	13.5%	13.3%	17.0%	12.9%	16.5%	14.1%	18.6%
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	Yes	25.4%	14.1%	27.4%	26.1%	10.7%	27.5%	22.1%	17.1%	26.6%
	No	62.0%	69.2%	60.7%	61.5%	66.9%	61.0%	64.4%	71.2%	58.4%
	Not avail.	12.6%	16.7%	11.9%	12.4%	22.5%	11.5%	13.5%	11.7%	15.0%

Approximately 70% of respondents have taught/ demonstrated, with 67.5% of respondents agreeing that this enhanced their postgraduate research degree experience. Slightly more than half of students agreed that they were given appropriate support and guidance to carry out this role.

Table 2.9 *Development Opportunities – teaching/ demonstrating*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme:	No	29.3%	36.4%	28.0%	27.8%	38.3%	26.8%	36.8%	34.8%	38.5%
	Yes	70.7%	63.6%	72.0%	72.2%	61.7%	73.2%	63.2%	65.2%	61.5%
Do you agree or disagree that the teaching/ demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?	Definitely disagree	7.8%	6.8%	8.0%	8.2%	9.5%	8.1%	5.6%	4.7%	6.3%
	Mostly disagree	11.6%	8.7%	12.0%	12.2%	12.9%	12.2%	8.2%	5.4%	10.8%
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.1%	12.9%	13.2%	13.9%	15.5%	13.8%	9.2%	10.8%	7.6%
	Mostly agree	30.1%	28.0%	30.4%	30.4%	26.7%	30.7%	28.1%	29.1%	27.2%
	Definitely agree	37.4%	43.6%	36.5%	35.2%	35.3%	35.2%	49.0%	50.0%	48.1%
Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching/ demonstration?	Definitely disagree	11.9%	9.9%	12.2%	12.7%	14.7%	12.6%	7.3%	6.1%	8.4%
	Mostly disagree	19.5%	16.3%	20.0%	20.4%	19.0%	20.5%	14.9%	14.3%	15.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.3%	17.1%	17.3%	17.2%	17.2%	17.2%	17.9%	17.0%	18.7%
	Mostly agree	31.2%	27.0%	31.9%	31.0%	24.1%	31.5%	32.5%	29.3%	35.5%
	Definitely agree	20.1%	29.7%	18.6%	18.7%	25.0%	18.2%	27.5%	33.3%	21.9%

2.4.6 Questions relating to Research Skills

The vast majority of students definitely or mostly agreed that their skills in conducting research and their critical analysis and evaluation skills had developed during their research degree programme. Slightly fewer agreed that their understanding of research integrity had developed. The outstanding difference is in relation to respondents agreeing that their confidence to innovate and be creative had developed during the course of their PGR studies to date, which showed a lower level of agreement.

Table 2.10 *Research Skills*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	0.9%	0.8%	0.9%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
	Mostly disagree	3.2%	3.4%	3.2%	3.4%	4.6%	3.3%	2.3%	2.5%	2.2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	6.9%	6.9%	7.0%	7.1%	8.0%	7.0%	6.0%	5.9%	6.2%
	Mostly agree	39.9%	35.1%	40.8%	41.2%	39.4%	41.3%	34.0%	31.4%	36.3%
	Definitely agree	49.0%	53.8%	48.2%	47.3%	46.9%	47.4%	57.2%	59.8%	54.9%
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	0.7%	0.5%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
	Mostly disagree	3.3%	4.2%	3.1%	3.4%	7.5%	3.1%	2.3%	1.5%	3.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	7.9%	7.7%	7.9%	8.1%	8.6%	8.1%	6.5%	6.9%	6.2%
	Mostly agree	40.2%	37.0%	40.8%	40.7%	40.2%	40.8%	37.8%	34.3%	40.9%
	Definitely agree	48.0%	50.5%	47.5%	46.9%	43.1%	47.3%	52.9%	56.9%	49.3%
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	2.7%	1.6%	2.9%	3.0%	1.7%	3.1%	1.6%	1.5%	1.8%
	Mostly disagree	8.3%	6.6%	8.6%	8.8%	8.6%	8.8%	5.8%	4.9%	6.6%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.5%	16.4%	16.5%	16.6%	17.1%	16.5%	16.1%	15.8%	16.4%
	Mostly agree	39.8%	39.2%	39.9%	40.0%	43.4%	39.7%	38.9%	35.5%	42.0%
	Definitely agree	32.7%	36.2%	32.1%	31.7%	29.1%	32.0%	37.5%	42.4%	33.2%
My understanding of research integrity (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.4%	1.1%	1.4%	1.3%	0.6%	1.4%	1.6%	1.5%	1.8%
	Mostly disagree	3.1%	2.9%	3.1%	3.2%	5.7%	3.0%	2.3%	0.5%	4.0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8.9%	7.9%	9.1%	9.4%	9.1%	9.4%	6.5%	6.8%	6.2%
	Mostly agree	37.6%	36.6%	37.8%	38.4%	40.6%	38.2%	33.9%	33.2%	34.5%
	Definitely agree	49.1%	51.6%	48.6%	47.7%	44.0%	48.0%	55.7%	58.0%	53.5%

2.4.7 Questions relating to *Other Transferable Skills*

The results for *Other Transferable Skills* are quite consistent. Around 77% of respondents definitely or mostly agreed that their ability to manage projects, to communicate effectively to diverse audiences, and to manage their own professional development had all developed. The level of agreement for the question pertaining to developing professional networks was lower.

Table 2.11 *Other Transferable Skills*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.2%	1.5%	0.9%	1.5%	0.4%
	Mostly disagree	4.5%	3.0%	4.8%	4.9%	3.5%	5.0%	2.8%	2.5%	3.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.4%	13.0%	14.7%	14.7%	13.5%	14.8%	13.2%	12.6%	13.8%
	Mostly agree	42.7%	42.5%	42.8%	43.8%	49.4%	43.3%	37.5%	36.7%	38.2%
	Definitely agree	36.9%	40.1%	36.3%	35.1%	32.4%	35.3%	45.5%	46.7%	44.4%
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.1%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%	1.2%	1.2%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
	Mostly disagree	5.3%	5.7%	5.2%	5.6%	8.2%	5.3%	3.8%	3.6%	4.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.6%	15.8%	16.7%	17.0%	17.1%	17.0%	14.8%	14.7%	14.9%
	Mostly agree	41.1%	40.3%	41.2%	41.6%	43.5%	41.4%	38.7%	37.6%	39.6%
	Definitely agree	36.0%	37.3%	35.7%	34.6%	30.0%	35.1%	42.2%	43.7%	41.0%
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	Definitely disagree	2.7%	3.3%	2.6%	2.9%	3.6%	2.8%	1.9%	3.0%	0.9%
	Mostly disagree	8.6%	9.8%	8.4%	9.0%	12.5%	8.6%	6.8%	7.5%	6.2%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.1%	16.6%	16.0%	15.8%	15.5%	15.9%	17.5%	17.6%	17.3%
	Mostly agree	39.6%	40.6%	39.4%	40.2%	43.5%	39.9%	36.6%	38.2%	35.1%
	Definitely agree	33.0%	29.7%	33.6%	32.1%	25.0%	32.8%	37.3%	33.7%	40.4%
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.0%	1.4%	0.9%	1.0%	2.4%	0.9%	0.9%	0.5%	1.3%
	Mostly disagree	3.6%	1.6%	4.0%	4.0%	2.4%	4.1%	1.9%	1.0%	2.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	15.0%	13.0%	15.3%	15.4%	14.1%	15.5%	13.0%	12.0%	13.8%
	Mostly agree	40.4%	40.5%	40.3%	41.0%	42.9%	40.8%	37.3%	38.5%	36.2%
	Definitely agree	40.0%	43.5%	39.4%	38.6%	38.2%	38.6%	46.9%	48.0%	46.0%

2.4.8 Questions relating to *Responsibilities and Supports*

Responses to questions about *Responsibilities and Supports* varied. Approximately 90% of respondents definitely or mostly agreed that they understood their responsibilities as a research student, though fewer (83.4%) understood their supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards them. However, the percentage of respondents exhibiting knowledge of sources of support was notably lower. For instance, just over 40% of respondents said they were very much or quite a bit aware of the various student supports available to them.

Table 2.12 *Responsibilities and Supports*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	1.1%	1.3%	1.0%	1.2%	1.7%	1.1%	0.7%	1.0%	0.4%
	Mostly disagree	3.5%	4.5%	3.4%	3.8%	5.8%	3.6%	2.3%	3.4%	1.3%
	Neither agree nor disagree	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%	5.0%	4.7%	5.0%	3.2%	4.8%	1.8%
	Mostly agree	42.9%	38.5%	43.6%	44.2%	40.7%	44.5%	36.7%	36.7%	36.7%
	Definitely agree	47.8%	50.9%	47.3%	45.9%	47.1%	45.8%	57.0%	54.1%	59.7%
I am aware of my supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	1.9%	2.6%	1.7%	2.0%	4.1%	1.9%	0.9%	1.4%	0.4%
	Mostly disagree	6.6%	6.6%	6.6%	7.0%	7.6%	6.9%	5.1%	5.8%	4.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	8.1%	5.8%	8.5%	8.3%	7.0%	8.4%	7.2%	4.8%	9.3%
	Mostly agree	40.4%	38.3%	40.8%	40.7%	35.5%	41.2%	38.9%	40.6%	37.3%
	Definitely agree	43.0%	46.7%	42.3%	41.9%	45.9%	41.6%	47.9%	47.3%	48.4%
Other than my supervisor(s), I know who to approach if I am concerned about any academic aspect of my research degree programme	Definitely disagree	7.1%	8.0%	6.9%	7.4%	10.7%	7.1%	5.6%	5.8%	5.4%
	Mostly disagree	14.2%	13.6%	14.3%	14.8%	16.6%	14.6%	11.4%	11.2%	11.7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	12.1%	13.1%	12.0%	12.0%	12.4%	11.9%	13.1%	13.6%	12.6%
	Mostly agree	33.1%	26.1%	34.3%	33.8%	21.3%	34.9%	29.7%	30.1%	29.3%
	Definitely agree	33.5%	39.2%	32.5%	32.1%	39.1%	31.5%	40.2%	39.3%	41.0%
How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.)	Very little	17.5%	19.2%	17.2%	17.3%	18.4%	17.2%	18.3%	19.8%	17.0%
	Some	41.0%	37.5%	41.7%	41.3%	40.2%	41.4%	39.7%	35.3%	43.8%
	Quite a bit	28.3%	26.8%	28.6%	29.0%	27.6%	29.1%	25.3%	26.1%	24.6%
	Very much	13.2%	16.5%	12.6%	12.4%	13.8%	12.3%	16.7%	18.8%	14.7%
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	Definitely disagree	9.2%	7.8%	9.5%	9.5%	10.2%	9.4%	7.9%	5.9%	9.7%
	Mostly disagree	14.1%	11.1%	14.7%	14.3%	9.6%	14.7%	13.4%	12.3%	14.4%
	Neither agree nor disagree	34.0%	30.8%	34.6%	34.6%	30.5%	35.0%	31.0%	31.0%	31.0%
	Mostly agree	28.8%	31.4%	28.3%	29.1%	34.7%	28.5%	27.4%	28.6%	26.4%
	Definitely agree	13.9%	18.9%	13.0%	12.6%	15.0%	12.4%	20.3%	22.2%	18.5%

2.4.9 Questions relating to *Personal Outlook*

Questions relating to *Personal Outlook* were introduced for the first time in 2019, following calls for their inclusion from PGR students who responded to the pilot survey in 2018. These questions are modelled on the questions included in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) in the UK in 2018. They were pre-tested with PGR students in five participating higher education institutions before being included in the survey. The limitations of including only a small number of closed questions relating to well-being on a survey like PGR StudentSurvey.ie, such as the narrow scope of the questions included and the possibility of respondents experiencing discomfort or upset in responding to the questions, were acknowledged. Individual institutions would be well served by conducting qualitative analysis on the free text responses of students to this section of the survey to complement and possibly contextualise the quantitative responses.

Slightly fewer than three quarters of PGR students definitely or mostly agreed that they were satisfied with their lives at the moment, though this percentage was lower for those agreeing that they were satisfied with their life in their institution. The percentage for satisfaction with work-life balance and knowledge of where to seek support averaged only slightly above 50%. Finally, a higher percentage of PGR students definitely or mostly agreed that they felt their research degree was worthwhile.

Table 2.13 *Personal Outlook*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am satisfied with my life nowadays	Definitely disagree	3.6%	2.9%	3.7%	3.6%	4.6%	3.5%	3.5%	1.5%	5.4%
	Mostly disagree	9.2%	7.7%	9.4%	9.6%	9.8%	9.6%	7.0%	5.8%	8.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.0%	13.2%	14.1%	13.9%	12.7%	14.0%	14.2%	13.6%	14.8%
	Mostly agree	47.3%	45.4%	47.7%	48.2%	45.7%	48.4%	43.1%	45.1%	41.3%
	Definitely agree	26.0%	30.9%	25.1%	24.7%	27.2%	24.5%	32.2%	34.0%	30.5%
I am satisfied with my life within my institution nowadays	Definitely disagree	4.6%	4.5%	4.7%	4.8%	5.8%	4.7%	3.8%	3.4%	4.0%
	Mostly disagree	10.7%	8.0%	11.2%	11.4%	11.0%	11.5%	7.3%	5.4%	9.0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.2%	13.3%	16.7%	16.3%	12.1%	16.7%	15.7%	14.3%	17.0%
	Mostly agree	46.2%	46.3%	46.2%	46.1%	45.1%	46.2%	46.7%	47.3%	46.2%
	Definitely agree	22.3%	27.9%	21.3%	21.4%	26.0%	21.0%	26.5%	29.6%	23.8%

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Definitely disagree	8.4%	4.8%	9.0%	8.7%	5.2%	9.0%	6.8%	4.4%	9.0%
	Mostly disagree	19.0%	14.3%	19.9%	19.3%	9.8%	20.1%	18.0%	18.0%	17.9%
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.9%	17.2%	16.8%	16.9%	15.6%	17.0%	16.6%	18.5%	14.8%
	Mostly agree	39.0%	39.4%	38.9%	39.2%	45.7%	38.6%	38.1%	34.1%	41.7%
	Definitely agree	16.7%	24.3%	15.4%	15.9%	23.7%	15.2%	20.6%	24.9%	16.6%
There is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems	Definitely disagree	8.0%	7.6%	8.1%	8.7%	8.3%	8.7%	5.0%	7.0%	3.2%
	Mostly disagree	16.0%	12.2%	16.7%	16.3%	11.2%	16.8%	14.6%	13.0%	16.0%
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.9%	21.4%	19.6%	19.6%	23.7%	19.3%	21.2%	19.5%	22.8%
	Mostly agree	34.0%	30.9%	34.5%	34.5%	33.1%	34.6%	31.3%	29.0%	33.3%
	Definitely agree	22.1%	27.9%	21.0%	20.8%	23.7%	20.6%	27.9%	31.5%	24.7%
I feel that my research degree programme is worthwhile	Definitely disagree	2.9%	2.6%	3.0%	3.1%	2.9%	3.1%	2.1%	2.4%	1.8%
	Mostly disagree	4.3%	3.9%	4.4%	4.7%	6.3%	4.5%	2.6%	1.9%	3.1%
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.8%	10.2%	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%	12.1%	10.4%	8.7%	12.1%
	Mostly agree	36.6%	35.2%	36.9%	37.1%	36.8%	37.1%	34.3%	33.8%	34.8%
	Definitely agree	44.3%	48.0%	43.6%	43.0%	42.0%	43.1%	50.6%	53.1%	48.2%

2.4.10 Questions relating to *Motivations*

Respondents were required to consider a range of *Motivations* for undertaking postgraduate research. They selected their top three *Motivations* from the list of options, and prioritised these by designating them priority 1, 2 or 3. Interest in the research subject was the highest priority for the largest percentage of respondents (44%). Large percentages of respondents also rated improving their career prospects for an academic/ research career or for a career outside of academia as being their highest priority.

Table 2.14 *Motivations*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My interest in my subject	1st priority	44.0%	37.4%	45.1%	44.8%	38.4%	45.4%	39.9%	36.6%	42.9%
	2nd priority	19.4%	19.1%	19.4%	20.2%	23.8%	19.9%	15.4%	15.1%	15.6%
	3rd priority	10.5%	10.6%	10.5%	10.2%	7.6%	10.4%	11.9%	13.2%	10.7%
Improving my career prospects for an academic/ research career	1st priority	22.4%	23.6%	22.2%	22.1%	16.9%	22.6%	24.0%	29.3%	19.2%
	2nd priority	22.2%	23.1%	22.1%	20.9%	18.6%	21.1%	28.7%	26.8%	30.4%
	3rd priority	12.6%	10.9%	12.9%	12.9%	11.0%	13.1%	11.0%	10.7%	11.2%
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/ research career	1st priority	12.3%	16.4%	11.5%	12.1%	20.9%	11.3%	13.1%	12.7%	13.4%
	2nd priority	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%	12.3%	13.4%	12.2%	11.9%	11.2%	12.5%
	3rd priority	10.6%	15.4%	9.7%	10.2%	15.1%	9.8%	12.4%	15.6%	9.4%
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/ supervisor	1st priority	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	3.6%	2.9%	3.7%	5.6%	4.9%	6.3%
	2nd priority	8.9%	10.1%	8.7%	8.5%	7.0%	8.6%	11.0%	12.7%	9.4%
	3rd priority	9.6%	10.3%	9.4%	9.5%	11.0%	9.4%	9.8%	9.8%	9.8%
The funding was available	1st priority	3.7%	4.8%	3.5%	3.6%	5.8%	3.4%	4.2%	3.9%	4.5%
	2nd priority	9.4%	11.9%	9.0%	9.8%	14%	9.4%	7.7%	10.2%	5.4%
	3rd priority	15.9%	15.9%	15.9%	16.2%	15.1%	16.3%	14.7%	16.6%	12.9%
It felt like a natural step for me	1st priority	7.8%	6.1%	8.0%	8.1%	6.4%	8.3%	6.1%	5.9%	6.3%
	2nd priority	13.9%	10.9%	14.4%	14.1%	8.7%	14.6%	12.8%	12.7%	12.9%
	3rd priority	16.8%	15.4%	17.0%	16.8%	15.7%	17.0%	16.6%	15.1%	17.9%

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	1st priority	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.7%	1.0%	0.7%	0.5%	0.9%
	2nd priority	4.6%	2.1%	5.0%	4.8%	3.5%	5.0%	3.3%	1.0%	5.4%
	3rd priority	6.3%	5.0%	6.6%	6.5%	7.6%	6.4%	5.4%	2.9%	7.6%
Professional development or training	1st priority	3.4%	4.5%	3.2%	3.3%	4.1%	3.2%	4%	4.9%	3.1%
	2nd priority	8.7%	9.8%	8.5%	8.6%	9.3%	8.5%	9.1%	10.2%	8.0%
	3rd priority	15.1%	14.6%	15.2%	14.7%	14%	14.8%	16.8%	15.1%	18.3%
Other	1st priority	1.5%	2.1%	1.4%	1.3%	2.9%	1.2%	2.6%	1.5%	3.6%
	2nd priority	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	1.2%	0.5%	0.2%	1.0%	0.4%
	3rd priority	1.9%	1.6%	2.0%	2.0%	2.3%	2.0%	1.6%	2.4%	2.2%

2.4.11 Questions relating to Career Aspirations

Respondents were required to consider a wide range of *Career Aspirations*. They selected their top three *Career Aspirations* from the list of options, and prioritised these by designating them priority 1, 2 or 3. An academic career in higher education was the highest priority for the largest percentage of respondents (39%). A research career outside higher education was the career aspiration with the next highest percentage of respondents selecting this as their top priority, although the percentage (22%) was substantially lower than for an academic career in higher education.

Table 2.15 Career Aspirations

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)	1st priority	39.5%	34.4%	40.5%	39.8%	24.9%	41.1%	38.4%	42.4%	34.7%
	2nd priority	15.8%	15.9%	15.8%	14.6%	11.2%	14.9%	21.3%	19.7%	22.8%
	3rd priority	10.9%	11.0%	10.9%	10.8%	11.2%	10.7%	11.4%	10.8%	11.9%
Research career in higher education	1st priority	11.9%	9.4%	12.3%	12.0%	8.3%	12.3%	11.4%	10.3%	12.3%
	2nd priority	26.5%	21.8%	27.3%	26.9%	17.8%	27.7%	24.4%	25.1%	23.7%
	3rd priority	10.3%	9.9%	10.4%	10.2%	8.3%	10.4%	10.9%	11.3%	10.5%
Other career in higher education	1st priority	1.2%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.8%	1.2%	0.9%	1.0%	0.9%
	2nd priority	4.4%	6.2%	4.1%	3.9%	4.1%	3.9%	6.6%	7.9%	5.5%
	3rd priority	6.7%	7.0%	6.7%	6.7%	7.1%	6.7%	6.6%	6.9%	6.4%
Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)	1st priority	22%	20.2%	22.3%	22.6%	26%	22.2%	19.4%	15.3%	23.3%
	2nd priority	20.7%	18%	21.1%	21.6%	21.9%	21.5%	16.4%	14.8%	17.8%
	3rd priority	15.6%	1.7%	16%	15.7%	11.2%	16.1%	15.2%	15.8%	14.6%
Teaching (at a level below higher education)	1st priority	1.0%	2.7%	0.7%	0.8%	3.0%	0.6%	2.1%	2.5%	1.8%
	2nd priority	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%	4.1%	3.0%	4.2%	4.7%	5.4%	4.1%
	3rd priority	5.1%	6.7%	4.8%	4.9%	6.5%	4.7%	5.9%	6.9%	5.0%
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree	1st priority	3.8%	4.8%	3.7%	3.7%	5.9%	3.5%	4.3%	3.9%	4.6%
	2nd priority	3.3%	4.0%	3.2%	3.3%	6.5%	3.0%	3.6%	2.0%	5.0%
	3rd priority	2.8%	3.8%	2.6%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	4.5%	4.9%	4.1%
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree	1st priority	2.3%	4.0%	2.0%	2.2%	4.7%	1.9%	2.8%	3.4%	2.3%
	2nd priority	2.6%	2.7%	2.6%	2.7%	3.0%	2.6%	2.6%	2.5%	2.7%
	3rd priority	2.6%	3.5%	2.5%	2.4%	2.4%	2.4%	4.0%	4.4%	3.7%

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Self-employment (including setting up your own business)	1st priority	3.0%	3.0%	3.0%	2.8%	3.6%	2.7%	3.8%	2.5%	5.0%
	2nd priority	7.2%	11.3%	6.4%	7.0%	12.4%	6.6%	7.8%	10.3%	5.5%
	3rd priority	9.8%	10.5%	9.7%	9.6%	11.2%	9.5%	10.9%	9.9%	11.9%
Any other professional career	1st priority	5.2%	8.6%	4.6%	4.6%	6.5%	4.5%	7.8%	10.3%	5.5%
	2nd priority	7.3%	7.3%	7.4%	7.7%	10.1%	7.5%	5.7%	4.9%	6.4%
	3rd priority	14.6%	14%	14.8%	14.8%	17.2%	14.6%	14.0%	11.3%	16.4%
Not sure or not decided yet	1st priority	8.1%	10.2%	7.7%	8.1%	13%	7.7%	8.1%	7.9%	8.2%
	2nd priority	2.4%	3.0%	2.3%	2.3%	3.6%	2.1%	3.1%	2.5%	3.7%
	3rd priority	11.8%	12.1%	11.7%	12.3%	16.0%	12.0%	9.2%	8.9%	9.6%
Other	1st priority	2.0%	1.3%	2.1%	2.2%	2.4%	2.2%	0.9%	0.5%	1.4%
	2nd priority	1.3%	2.2%	1.2%	1.4%	3.0%	1.3%	0.9%	1.5%	0.5%
	3rd priority	2.0%	1.1%	2.1%	2.1%	0.6%	2.3%	1.2%	1.5%	0.9%

2.4.12 Questions relating to *Overall Experience*

The percentage of respondents who rated their *Overall Experience* in their institution as good or excellent was approximately 75% for all respondents, across PGR cohort size and research programme degree type. In relation to respondents' confidence in the likelihood of meeting their thesis submission deadline, approximately 75% responded in the affirmative, though there was some variation across PGR cohort size and research programme degree type. Further exploration by individual institutions could consider whether the response rates differed between those in the early stages of their research and those approaching their thesis submission deadline.

Table 2.16 *Overall Experience*

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution?	Poor	5.1%	5.4%	5.1%	5.5%	6.5%	5.4%	3.3%	4.4%	2.2%
	Fair	20.1%	19.0%	20.3%	19.7%	18.8%	19.8%	22.1%	19.2%	24.7%
	Good	50.0%	45.8%	50.7%	50.6%	45.3%	51.1%	46.9%	46.3%	47.5%
	Excellent	24.8%	29.8%	23.9%	24.2%	29.4%	23.7%	27.7%	30.0%	25.6%
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	Definitely disagree	5.9%	5.3%	6.0%	5.7%	4.7%	5.8%	7.1%	5.9%	8.1%
	Mostly disagree	10.0%	8.3%	10.3%	9.7%	7.0%	9.9%	11.5%	9.4%	13.5%
	Neither agree nor disagree	9.9%	9.1%	10.1%	9.9%	7.6%	10.1%	9.9%	10.3%	9.5%
	Mostly agree	40.1%	36.9%	40.7%	40.8%	37.4%	41.1%	36.9%	36.5%	37.4%
	Definitely agree	34.1%	40.4%	32.9%	34.0%	43.3%	33.1%	34.6%	37.9%	31.5%

Almost 60% of respondents have not seriously considered withdrawing from their research degree programme. Where students have, it has been mainly for financial or personal/ family reasons.

Table 2.17 Withdrawal

		All responses			Cohort > 250			Cohort < 250		
		Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	Total	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme? (Select all that apply)	No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing	60.3%	59.9%	60.3%	61.5%	69.0%	60.9%	54.2%	52.2%	56.1%
	Yes, for financial reasons	17.6%	16.8%	17.8%	16.4%	10.5%	17.0%	23.5%	22.2%	24.7%
	Yes, for personal or family reasons	17.8%	19.3%	17.5%	17.1%	12.9%	17.4%	21.1%	24.6%	17.9%
	Yes, for health reasons	10.0%	8.6%	10.3%	10.0%	6.4%	10.4%	9.9%	10.3%	9.4%
	Yes, for employment reasons	6.2%	5.6%	6.3%	6.6%	8.2%	6.5%	4.0%	3.4%	4.5%
	Yes, to transfer to another institution	4.8%	3.2%	5.1%	5.0%	1.8%	5.3%	3.8%	4.4%	3.1%
	Other (please state)	7.2%	6.4%	7.3%	7.1%	7.0%	7.1%	7.5%	5.9%	9.0%



Gender was the variable that least frequently generated statistically significant differences between groups. Country of domicile generated the most.

Chapter 3

A curated exploration of variance between groups

3.1 Introduction

The results presented in Chapter 3 emerged from what was only the second year of **PGR StudentSurvey.ie** (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students), and the first year of full implementation of the survey following a national pilot in 2018.

Consequently, the survey is still in an early stage of development and we are still learning about how best to operate the fieldwork, analyse the data and close the feedback loop for postgraduate research (PGR) students.

For instance, the statistical methodology used to analyse the data this year has been re-considered and the data are now analysed using non-parametric methodologies to examine differences between specific groups and to delve deeper into the data. This due to the ordinal nature of the survey data, and this is recommended practice for survey data.

On a related but separate point, the number of postgraduate research students studying in Ireland in 2019 is approximately 10,000. While this number is set to rise in the coming years, it is still quite small for the purposes of a national survey of all students in the PGR student population where participation is voluntary. Several more years of fieldwork will be needed before we can begin to see meaningful trends in the data, and to see the impact of national policy for postgraduate research.

The PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group, which authored this report, recognises these factors and is cautious in interpreting the results and in drawing inferences from this valuable but nascent source of information.

Hence, a curated exploration of variance between groups. The following are some of the results the PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group deemed to be noteworthy for a multitude of reasons. These include the importance of the result for national policy, the magnitude and nature of the statistically significant differences between groups, or the consistency with which groups varied (or indeed, did not vary).

This chapter is supplemented by a reference document of all of the national results, which will accompany this report in digital format. Readers will be able to freely access the full set of results for all statistical testing carried out on the national dataset by going to the *Results and Reports* section of www.studentsurvey.ie. It is also hoped that this resource will inform and/ or guide institutions' analysis of their own datasets, which in turn will inform how the national dataset is analysed in future.

There are many more possibilities for further analysis of the data than can be carried out by participating institutions and/or the central StudentSurvey.ie project management function. Third-party researchers/ organisations and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Project Manager at info@studentsurvey.ie to discuss these possibilities or to propose ideas for future research. Additionally, the StudentSurvey.ie datasets are archived with the Irish Social Sciences Data Archive¹⁶ annually and may be accessed by request.

16. www.ucd.ie/issda/

3.2 PGR cohort size

This section examines differences between the respondents based on their enrolment at an institution with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students (>250) or at an institution with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students (<250).

No statistically significant differences emerged by PGR cohort size in relation to *Motivations, Career Aspirations, or Overall Experience*. For all other engagement aspects, statistically significant differences emerged.

Where these significant differences emerged, there was some consistency in the results. It was more frequent for respondents in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students to definitely or mostly agree with statements than respondents in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students, which usually indicated a positive response to the question or statement. For instance, PGR students in institutions a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students definitely or mostly agreed more strongly that their ability to manage projects (<250 83.0%, >250 78.9%) and to communicate

information effectively to diverse audiences (<250 80.9%, >250 76.3%) had developed during their research degree programme, and also that they had increasingly managed their own professional development during their programme (<250 84.2%, >250 79.6%). PGR students in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students definitely or mostly agreed more strongly that they felt satisfied with their life nowadays (<250 75.3%, >250 72.9%), that they felt satisfied with their life within their institution nowadays (<250 73.2%, >250 67.5%), and that their research degree programme is worthwhile (<250 84.9%, >250 80.1%).

PGR cohort size was the only variable of those examined that did not affect the likelihood of a PGR student being in receipt of a scholarship. It did affect the likelihood of being in receipt of a scholarship (fees only) and a grant, both of which PGR students in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students were more likely to be in receipt of than respondents in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students.

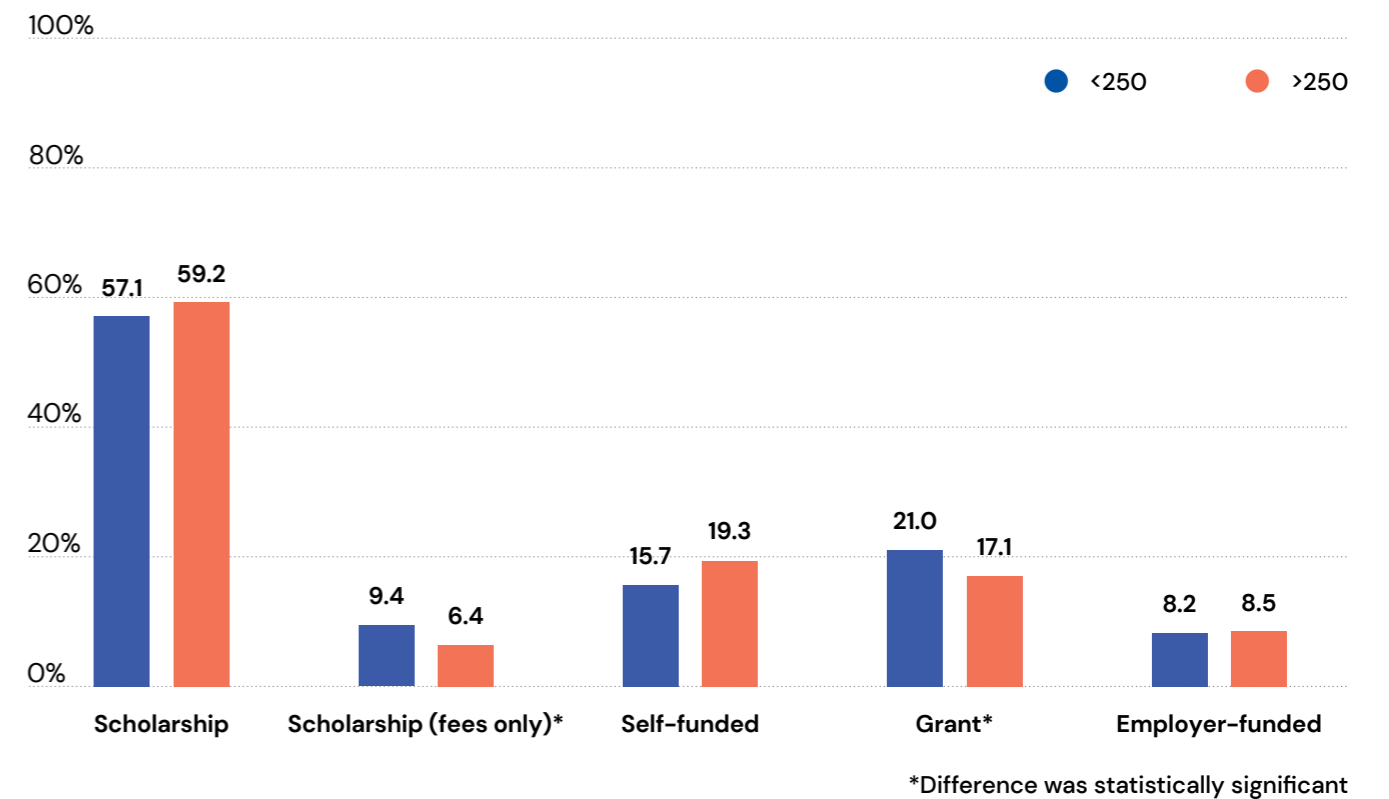


Fig. 3.1 Funding source by PGR cohort size

A higher percentage of PGR students in institutions with a PGR cohort of greater than 250 students reported having taught/ demonstrated. However, the students in institutions with a PGR cohort of fewer than 250 students reported higher levels of agreement that the teaching/ demonstration they delivered enhanced their overall research experience, and that they had been given appropriate support and guidance for their teaching/ demonstrating.

Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme

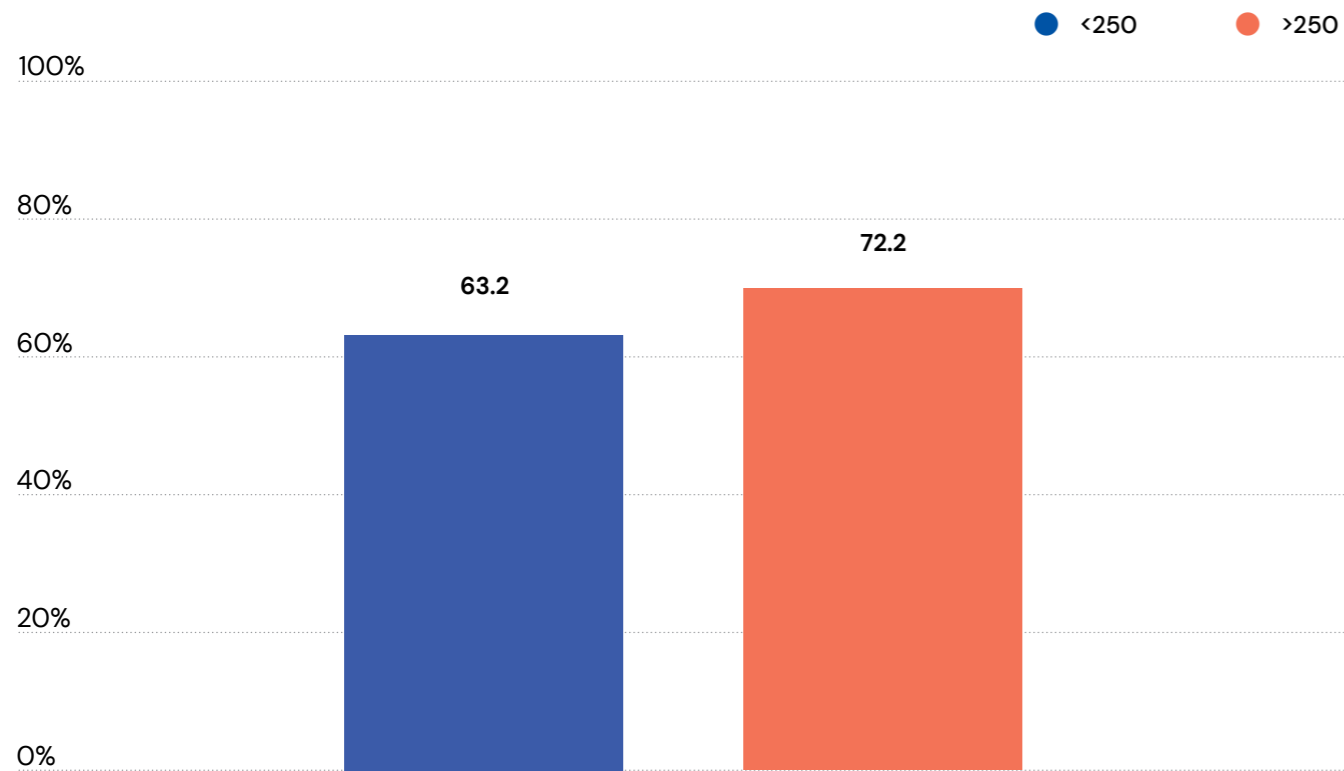


Fig. 3.2 Teaching/ demonstrating by PGR cohort size

Definitely/ mostly agree that the teaching / demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience

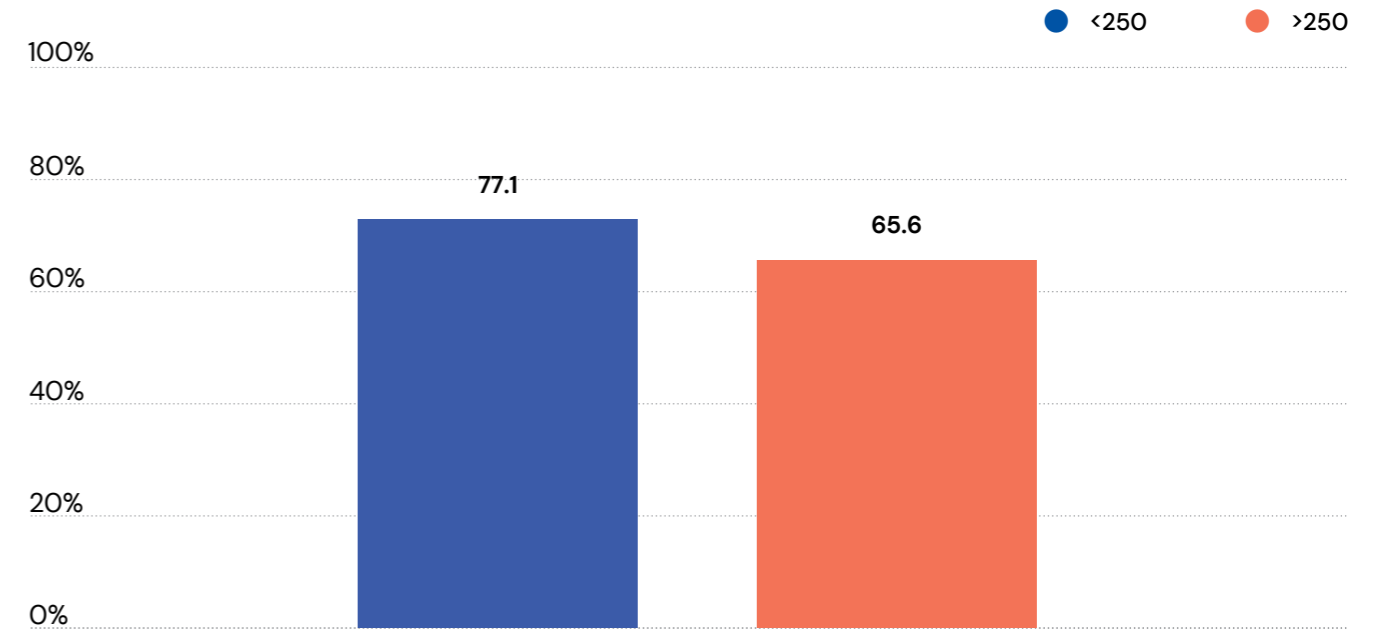


Fig. 3.3 Teaching/ demonstrating enhanced overall experience by PGR cohort size

Definitely/ mostly agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching/ demonstration

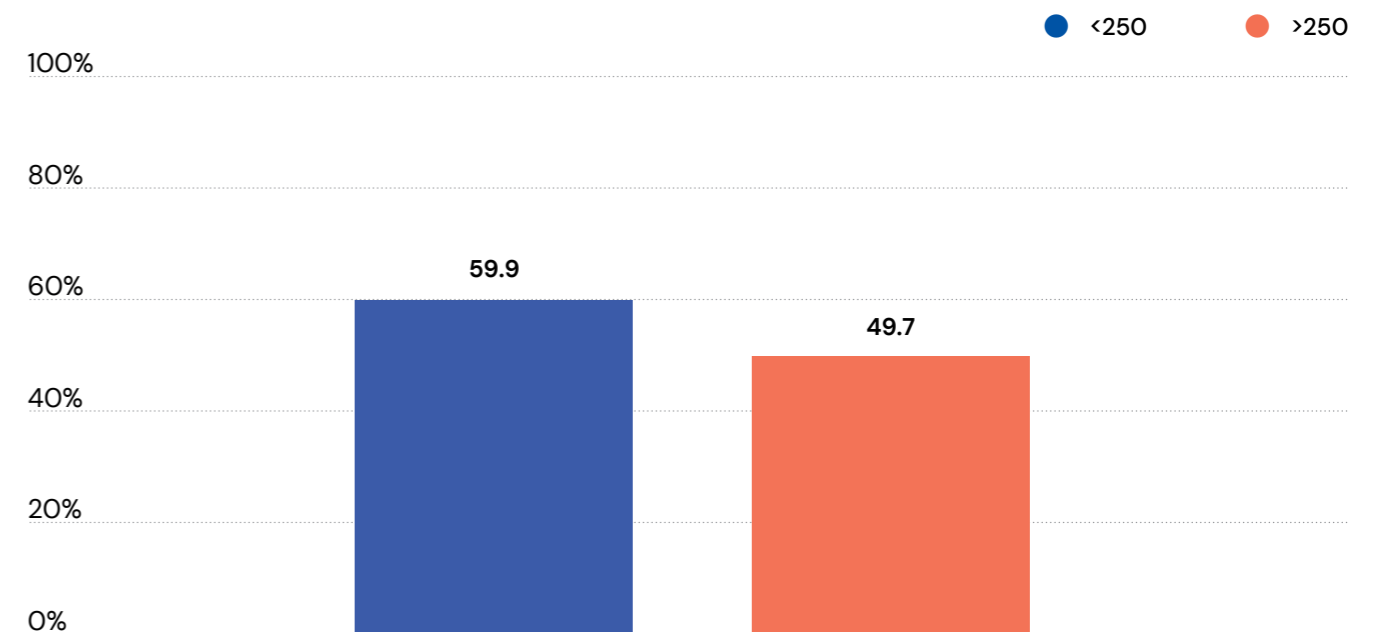


Fig. 3.4 Support for teaching/ demonstrating by PGR cohort size

3.3 Mode of study

Currently, there are varied definitions of what constitutes part-time study across the Irish higher education sector. For the purpose of PGR StudentSurvey.ie, students were not required to indicate their mode of study, and higher education institutions provided this information as part of the non-sensitive demographic data taken from institutions' student record systems.

For clarity in the following sections, the term part-time encompasses all respondents who are not full-time, and therefore includes groups of students who may otherwise be labelled as part-time, remote, engaged in e-learning, or some other description of their enrolment.

Comparison of the results by mode of study did not result in significant differences in the case of all engagement aspects. No statistically significant differences emerged between groups in relation to *Research Skills, Progress and Assessment, or Overall Experience*.

Where significant differences did emerge, some spoke to full-time students indicating more engagement than part-time students. Full-time

students agreed more strongly than part-time students that they have regular contact with their supervisor(s), appropriate for their needs (full-time 86.0%, part-time 81.9%), and that their supervisor(s) helped them to identify training and development needs as a researcher (full-time 73.1%, part-time 66.4%). Full-time students agreed more strongly than part-time students that they have frequent opportunities to discuss their research with other research students (full-time 63.9%, part-time 46.2%), and that they have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond their department (full-time 53.2%, part-time 44.5%). A higher percentage of full-time students reported having taught/demonstrated (full-time 73.6%, part-time 48.3%).

The difference between full-time and part-time students was significant for uptake of nearly all *Development Opportunities*, and in every case of statistically significant difference the full-time students were more likely to have availed of that development opportunity.

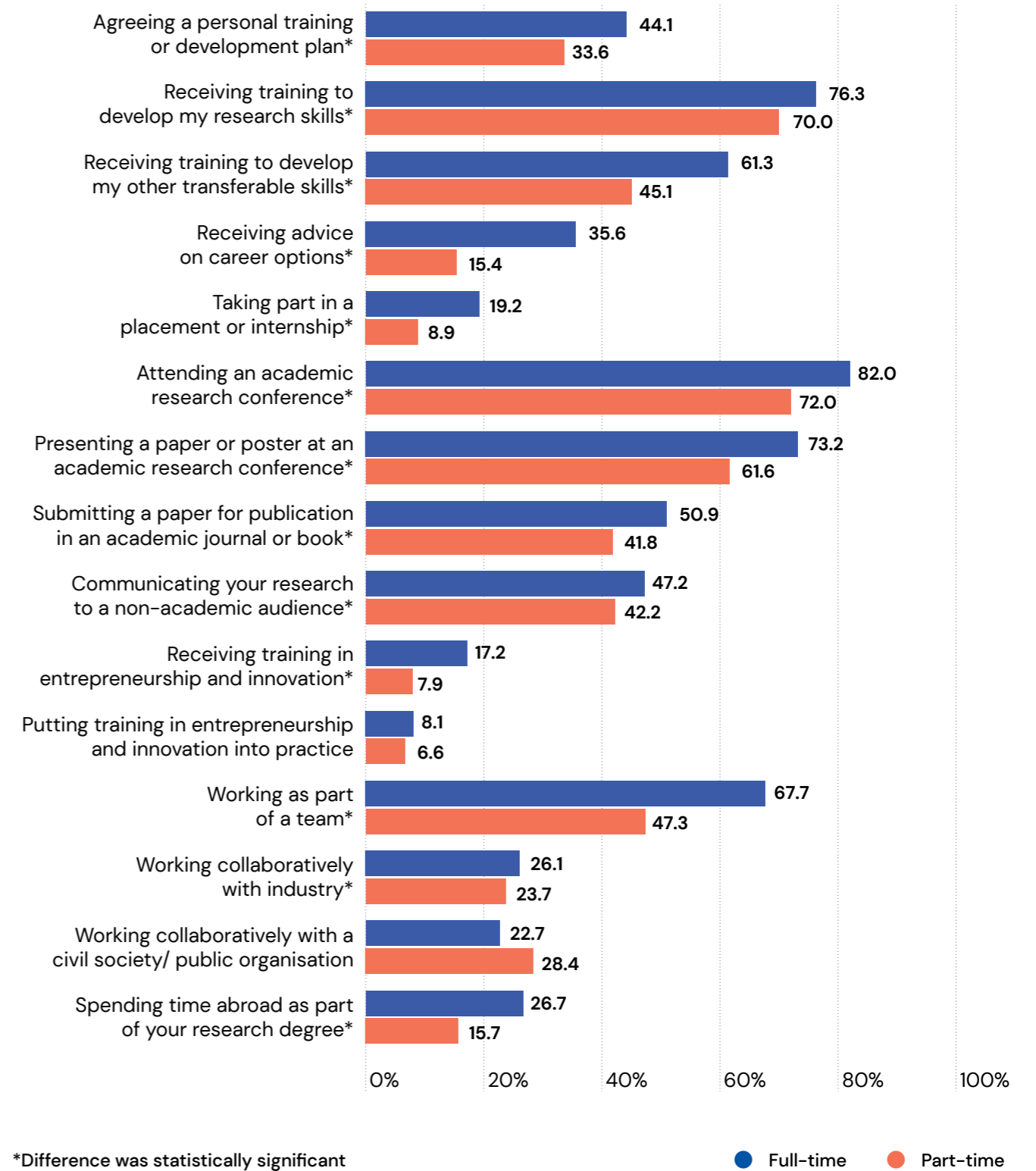


Fig. 3.5 Development Opportunities by mode of study

The statistically significant differences highlighted more varied and inconsistent results in four areas in particular.

Other Transferable Skills and Research Skills

Full-time students definitely or mostly agreed more strongly than part-time students that their ability to manage projects, as well as their ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences, had both developed during their research degree programme. However, it was the part-time students who definitely or mostly agreed more strongly that they had increasingly managed their own professional development during their research degree programme.

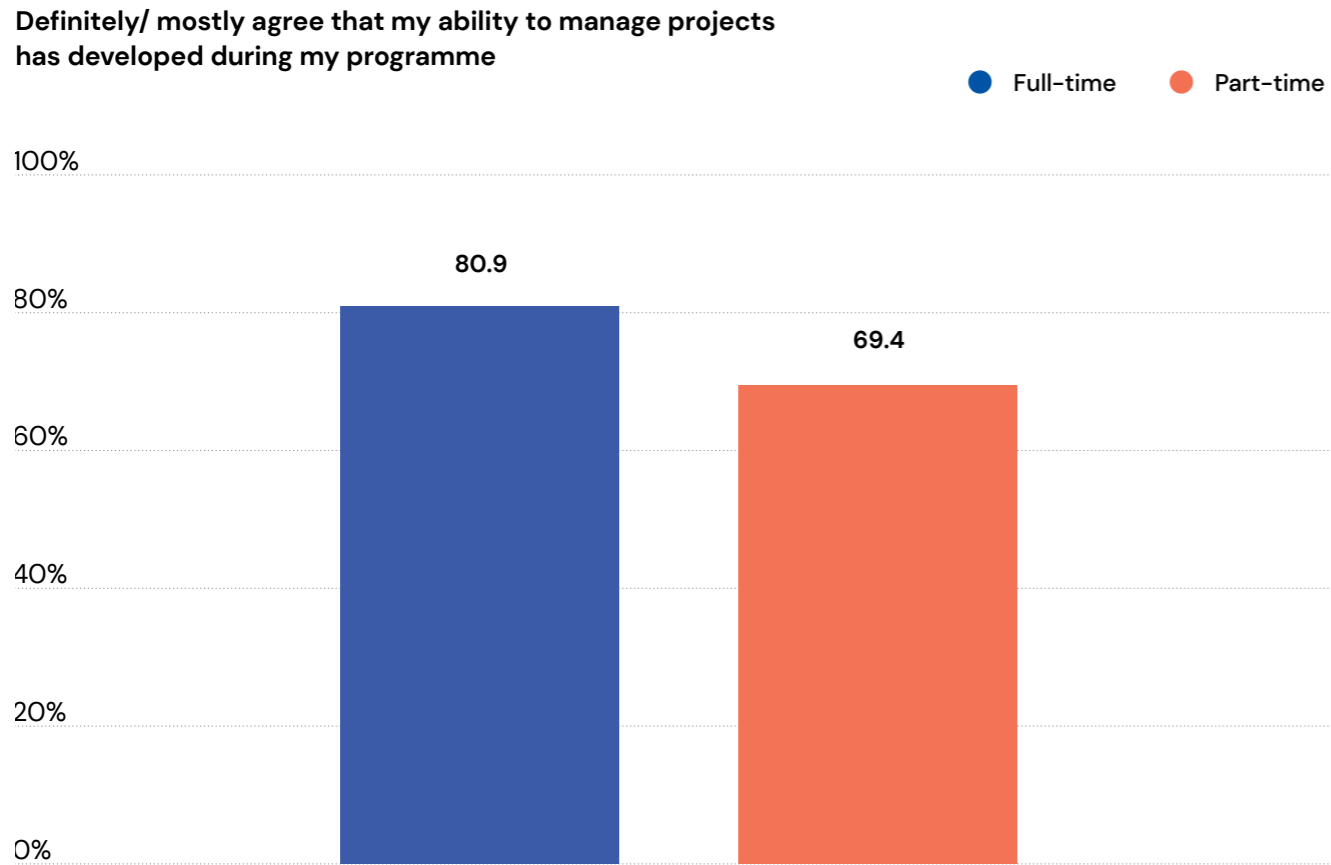


Fig. 3.6 Ability to manage projects by mode of study

Definitely/ mostly agree that my ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme

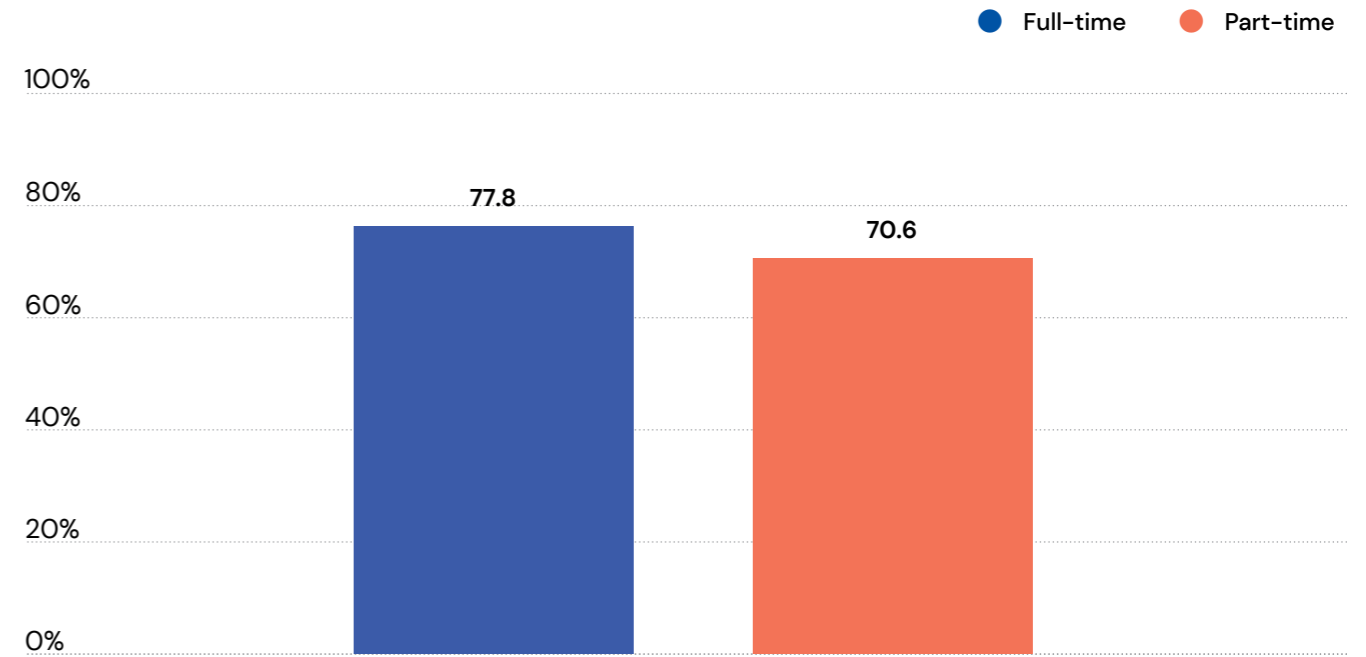


Fig. 3.7 Ability to communicate effectively by mode of study

Definitely/ mostly agree that I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme

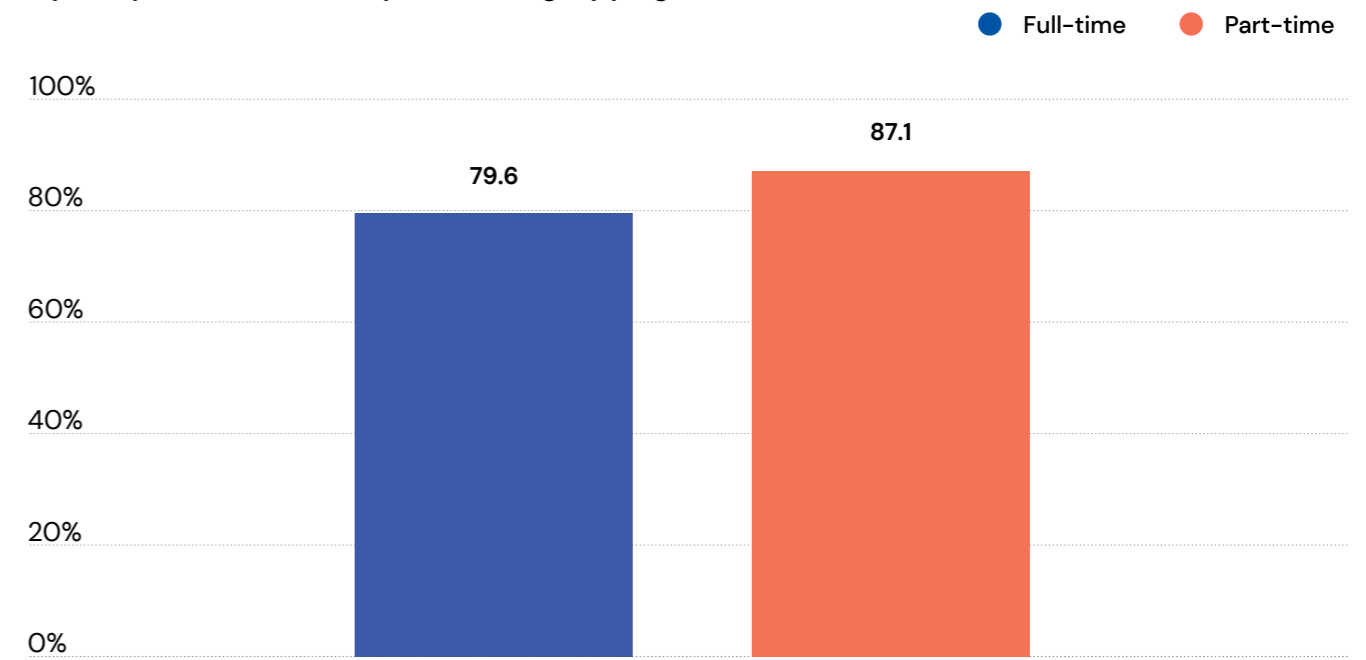


Fig. 3.8 Managing professional development by mode of study

Personal Outlook and Responsibilities and Supports

Looking next to *Personal Outlook*, part-time students definitely or mostly agreed more strongly than full-time students that they are satisfied with their life nowadays. However, they indicated that they were less satisfied than full-time students with their work-life balance. Finally, they also agreed less strongly than full-time students that there is someone in their institution they can talk to about their day-to-day problems. This tallies with a result from *Responsibilities and Supports*, which indicated that full-time students reported being aware of the various student supports available (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.) more than part-time students did.

Definitely/ mostly agree that I am satisfied with my life nowadays

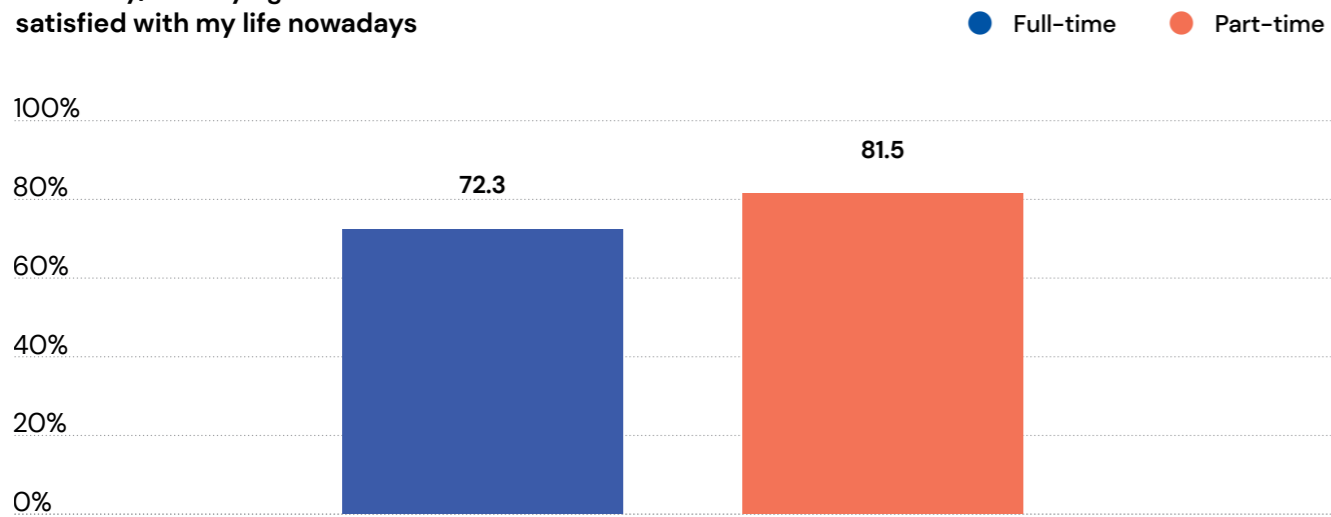


Fig. 3.9 Satisfied with life by mode of study

Definitely/ mostly agree that I am satisfied with my work-life balance

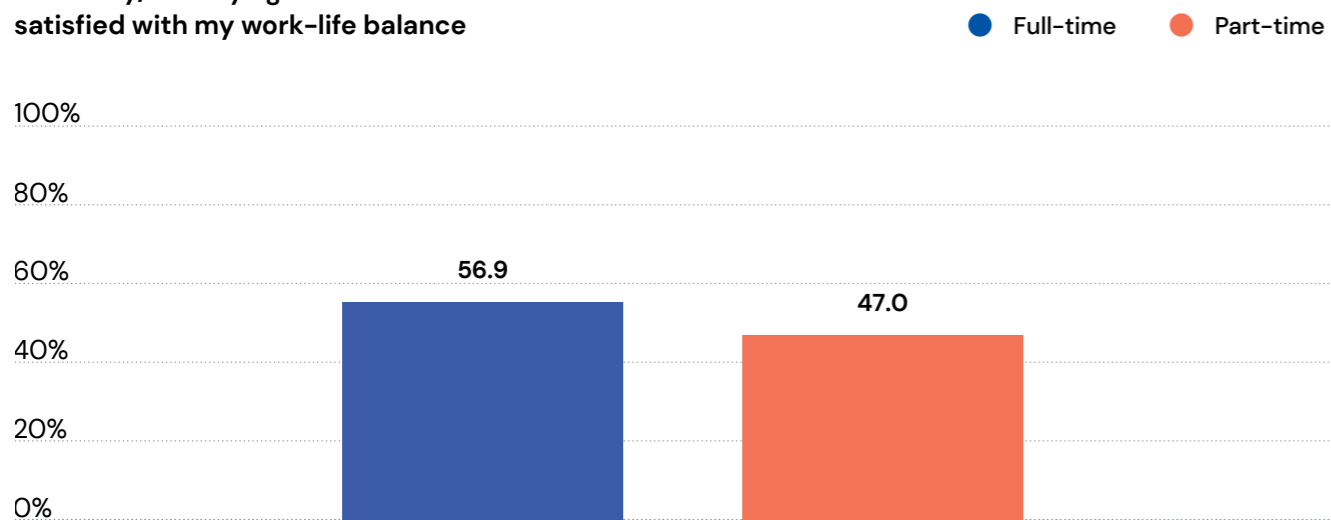


Fig. 3.10 Satisfaction with work-life balance by mode of study

Definitely/ mostly agree that there is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems

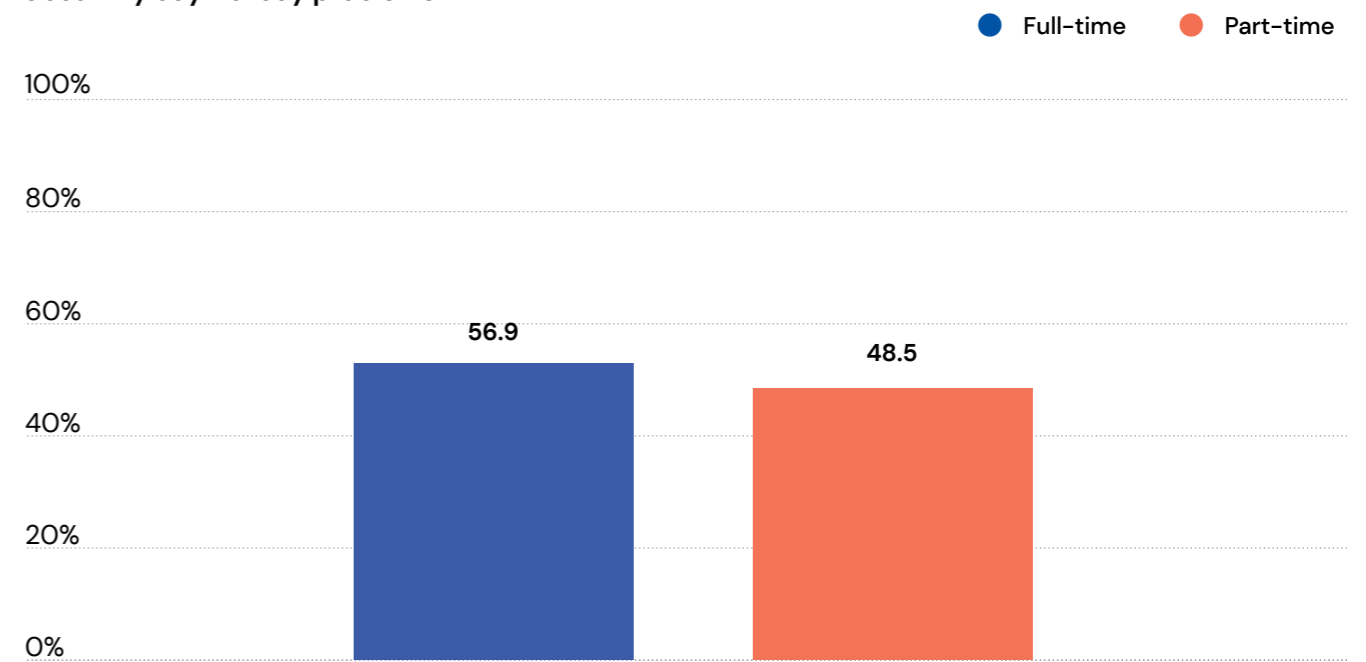


Fig. 3.11 Someone to talk to about problems by mode of study

"Very little" awareness of the various student supports available (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc)

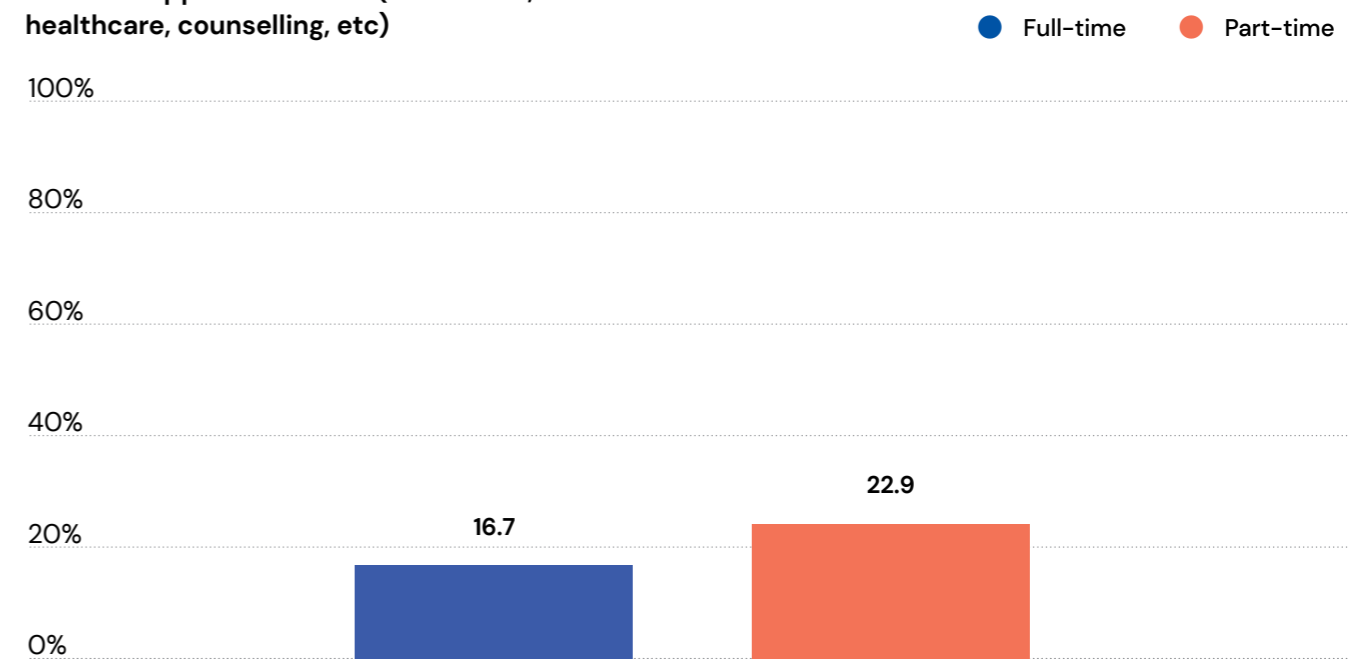


Fig. 3.12 Awareness of student supports by mode of study

3.4. Research degree programme type

A further dimension examined for Chapter 3 was a comparison of the experience of students undertaking NFQ Level 9 (i.e. Masters by research) and NFQ Level 10 (Doctoral) degrees. Overall, this did not emerge as the most influential variable in accounting for differences in experience and engagement of PGR students. For many questions, NFQ Level 9 and NFQ Level 10 students did not differ significantly in their response.

Comparison of the results by research degree programme type did not result in significant differences in the case of all engagement aspects. No statistically significant differences emerged between groups in relation to *Research Infrastructure and Facilities* (excluding Funding, see below), *Research Skills, Motivations*, and consideration of *Withdrawal* as part of *Overall Experience*.

Where significant differences did emerge, many were relating to structural issues. For instance, NFQ Level 10 students were more likely than NFQ Level 9 students to report being in receipt of a scholarship (NFQ9 49.8%, NFQ10 60.5%), but NFQ Level 9 students were more likely than NFQ Level 10 students to be in receipt of a scholarship that covered fees only (NFQ9 10.7%, NFQ10 6.2%). This funding was more likely for NFQ Level 10 students than NFQ Level 9 students to cover a stipend (NFQ9 66.5%, NFQ10 78.5%) and other travel to labs/ other institutions (NFQ9 21.2%,

NFQ10 26.4%). NFQ Level 10 students were more likely than NFQ Level 9 students to have one supervisor (NFQ9 38.7%, NFQ10 49.5%). NFQ Level 9 students definitely or mostly agreed more strongly than NFQ Level 10 students that they received an appropriate induction/ orientation to their research degree programme (NFQ9 66.0%, NFQ10 59.5%). A higher percentage of NFQ Level 10 students reported having taught/ demonstrated (NFQ9 63.6%, NFQ10 72.0%). However, the NFQ Level 9 students reported higher levels of agreement that they had been given appropriate support and guidance for their teaching/ demonstrating (NFQ9 56.7%, NFQ10 50.5%).

The difference between the groups was significant for the majority of *Development Opportunities*, and in all but one case the NFQ Level 10 students indicated more frequently than the NFQ Level 9 students that they had availed of a given *Development Opportunity*.

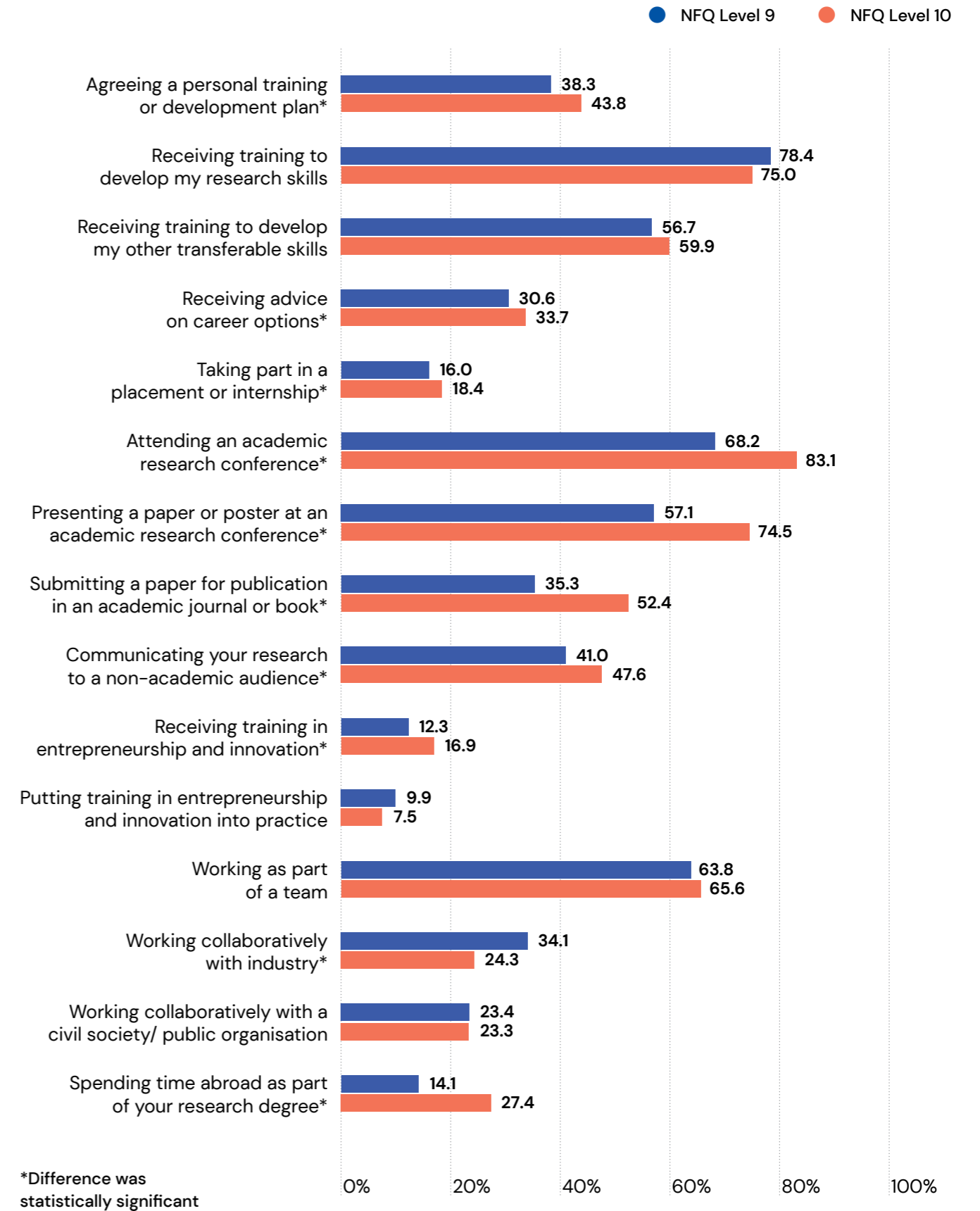


Fig. 3.13 Development Opportunities by research degree programme type

3.5. Field of study

The following commentary explores the data using broad fields of study as defined by the International Standard Classification of Education¹⁷. These are listed in Table 2.1. Where the number of respondents in a field of study represented less than 1% of respondents, this group was excluded from the analysis. This resulted in the exclusion of respondents in Generic programmes and qualifications (n = 22) and Services (n = 21).

3.5.1. Summary of results by field of study

Overall, significant differences emerged for each of the aspects of PGR StudentSurvey.ie by field of study. This in itself is not unexpected given the range of engagement experiences encountered by those in the wide range of fields of study available in most of the participating higher education institutions. The two aspects chosen for further analysis were *Research Infrastructure and Facilities* and, as part of this aspect, *Funding*.



Note for the interpretation of the results of the statistical analyses

Due to the nature of the data and the methods used to analyse them¹⁸, the level at which two groups needed to differ in order to be deemed statistically significantly different was very conservative. However, given the number of respondents, it warrants being conservative in drawing interpretations from any differences.

17. [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_\(ISCED\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED))

18. Kruskal Wallance test followed by multiple Mann Whitney U tests using a Bonferroni correction ($\alpha = .00138$)

Definitely/ mostly agree that I have a suitable working space

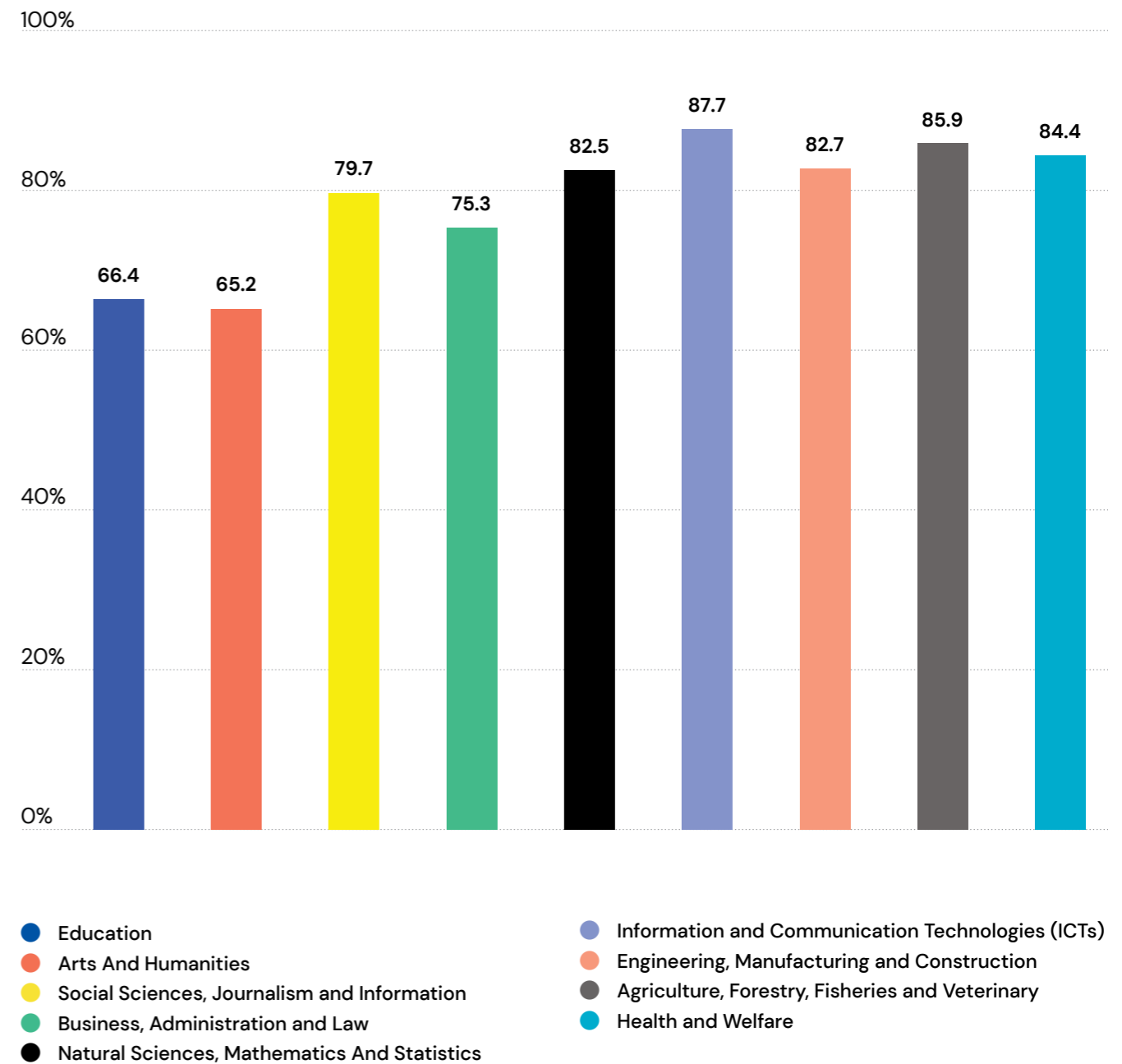


Fig. 3.14 Availability of suitable working space by field of study

In relation to availability of a suitable working space, those studying Education and Arts and humanities did not differ significantly from each other. The cluster of Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs), Engineering, manufacturing

and construction, and Health and welfare did not differ significantly from each other. These two clusters did differ significantly from each other. The latter agreed less strongly than the former that they had access to a suitable working space.

Definitely/ mostly agree that there is adequate provision of computing resources / facilities

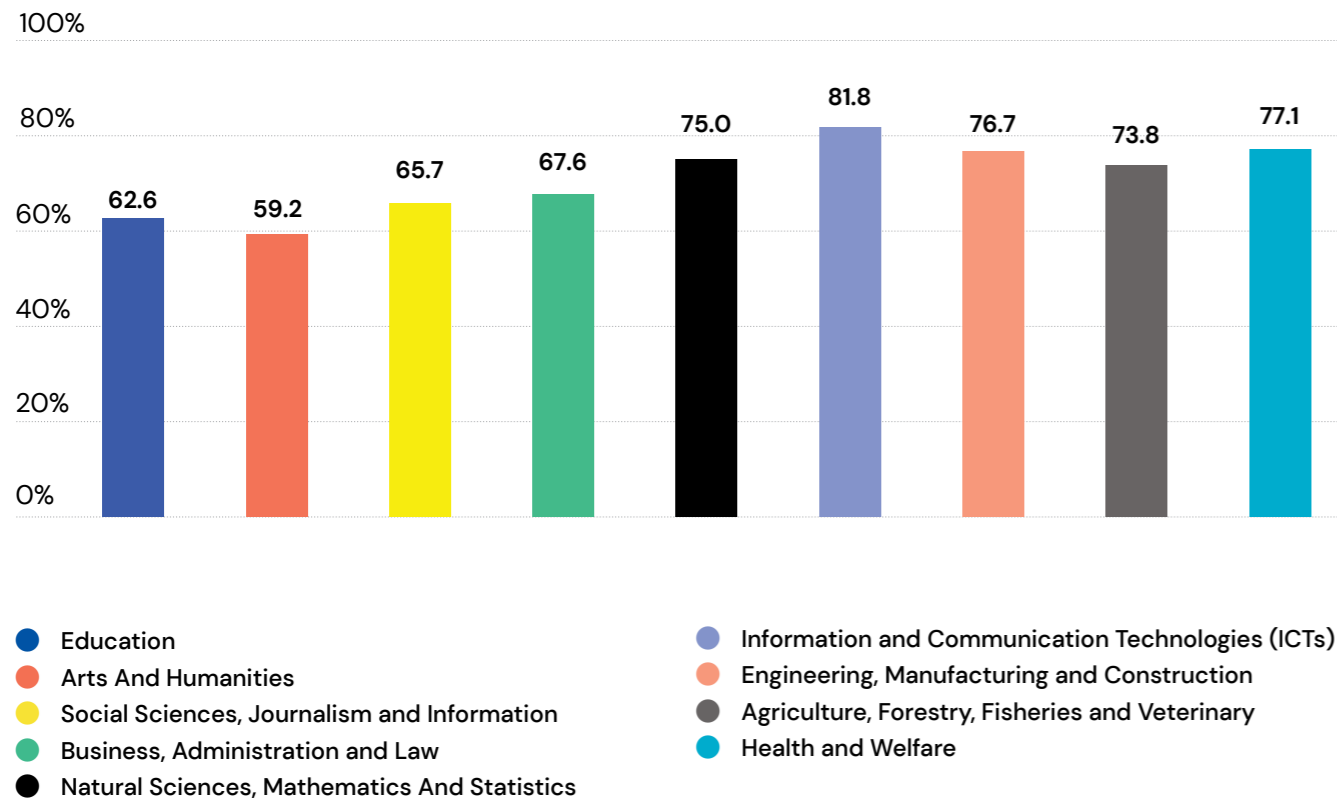


Fig. 3.15 Provision of computing resources/ facilities by field of study

A similar difference emerged for provision of computing resources/ facilities. Those studying Education, Arts and humanities, Social science, journalism and information, and Business, administration and law formed a cluster and did not differ significantly from each other. Those studying Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs), Engineering, manufacturing and construction and Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary, and Health and welfare again formed a cluster and did not differ significantly from each other.

Social science, journalism and information (who had a range of 59.2%–65.7% for definitely/ mostly agreed with statement) all differed significantly from those in Information and Communication Technology (ICTs). Additionally, those in Arts and humanities differed significantly from those in Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Engineering, manufacturing and construction, and Health and welfare.

Some of the differences between groups across these clusters were significant. For instance, students in Education, Arts and humanities,

Definitely/ mostly agree that there is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical/ online resources)

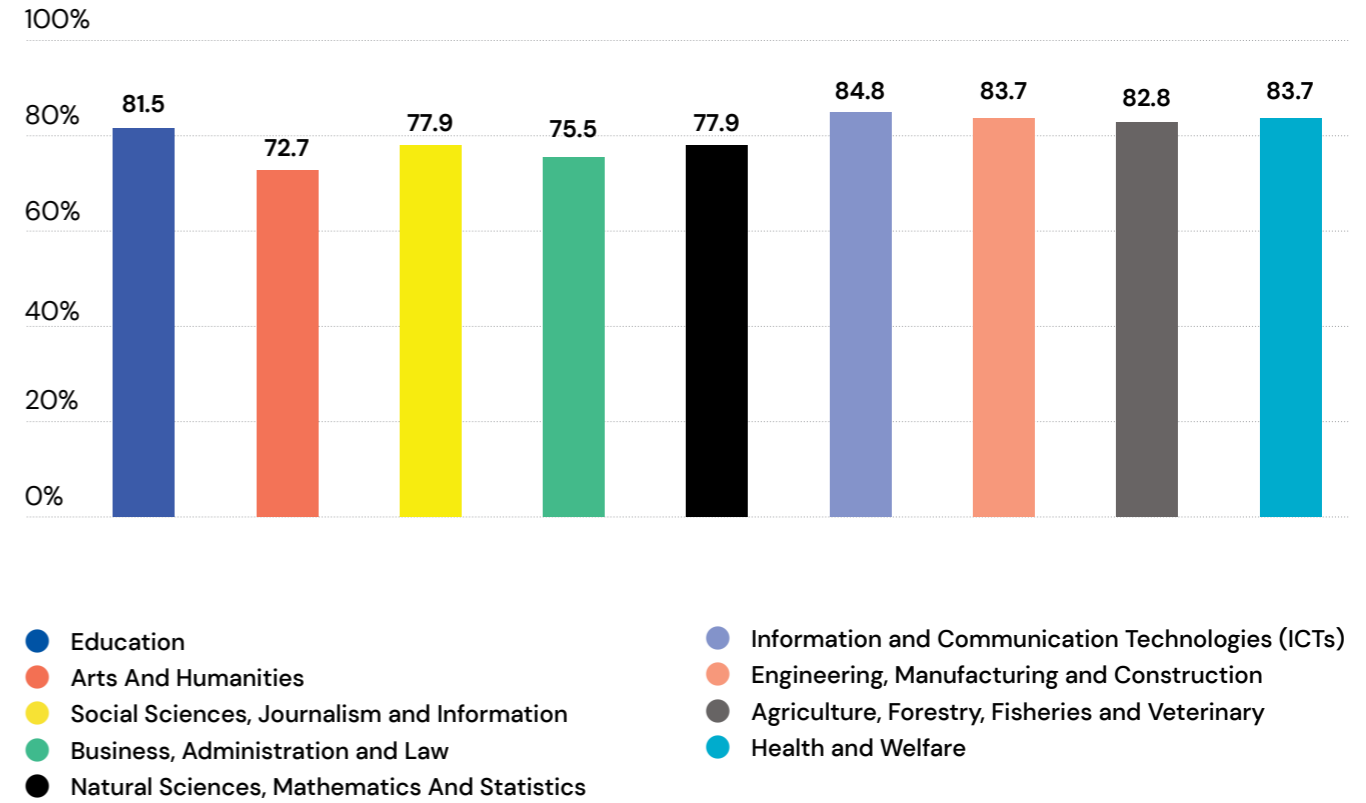


Fig. 3.16 Provision of library facilities by field of study

Fewer significant differences emerged in relation to provision of library services compared with the previous two statements. Those studying Arts and humanities agreed with the statement least strongly. The difference between them and students in Engineering, manufacturing and construction and in Health and welfare was statistically significant.

Definitely/ mostly agree that I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research

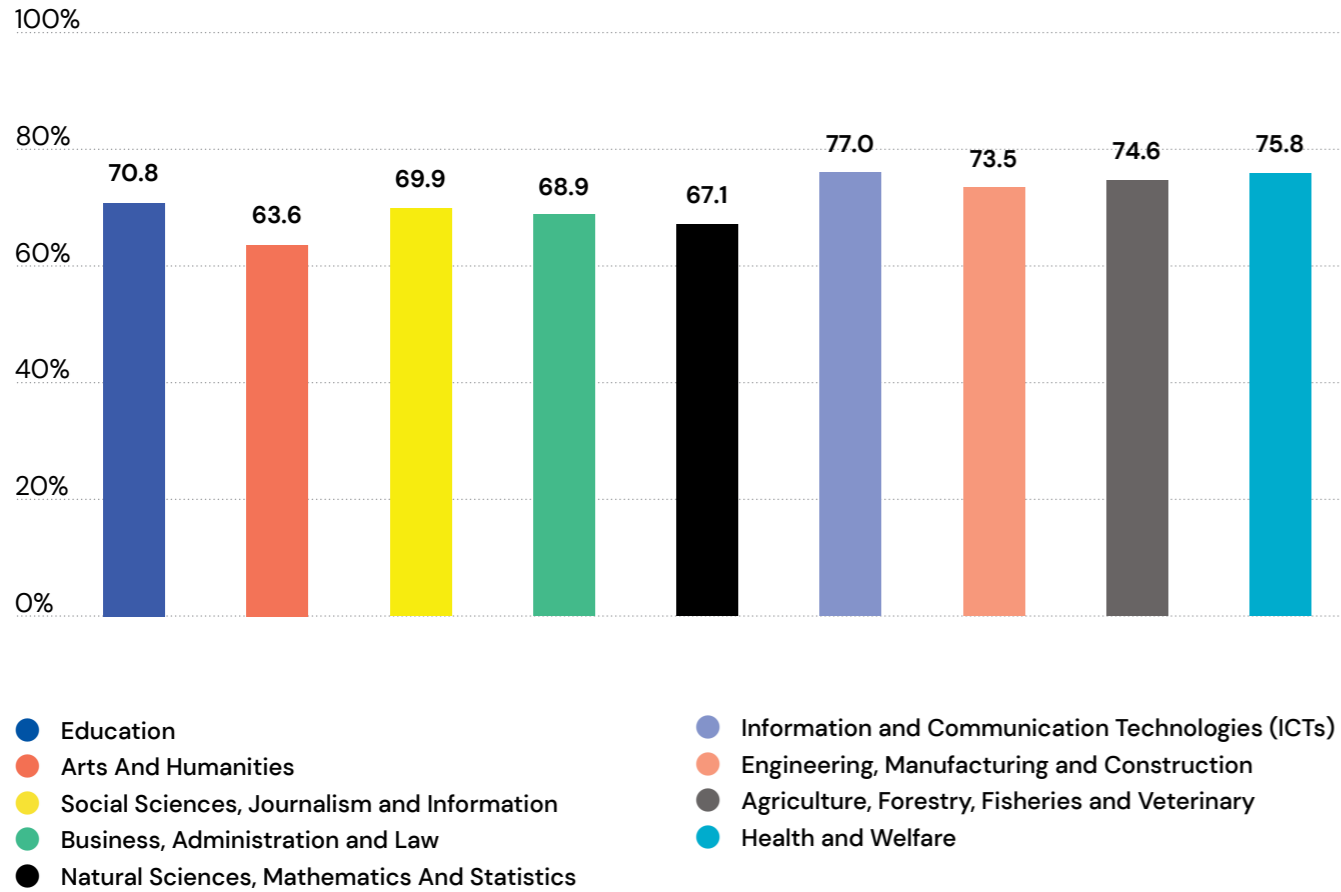
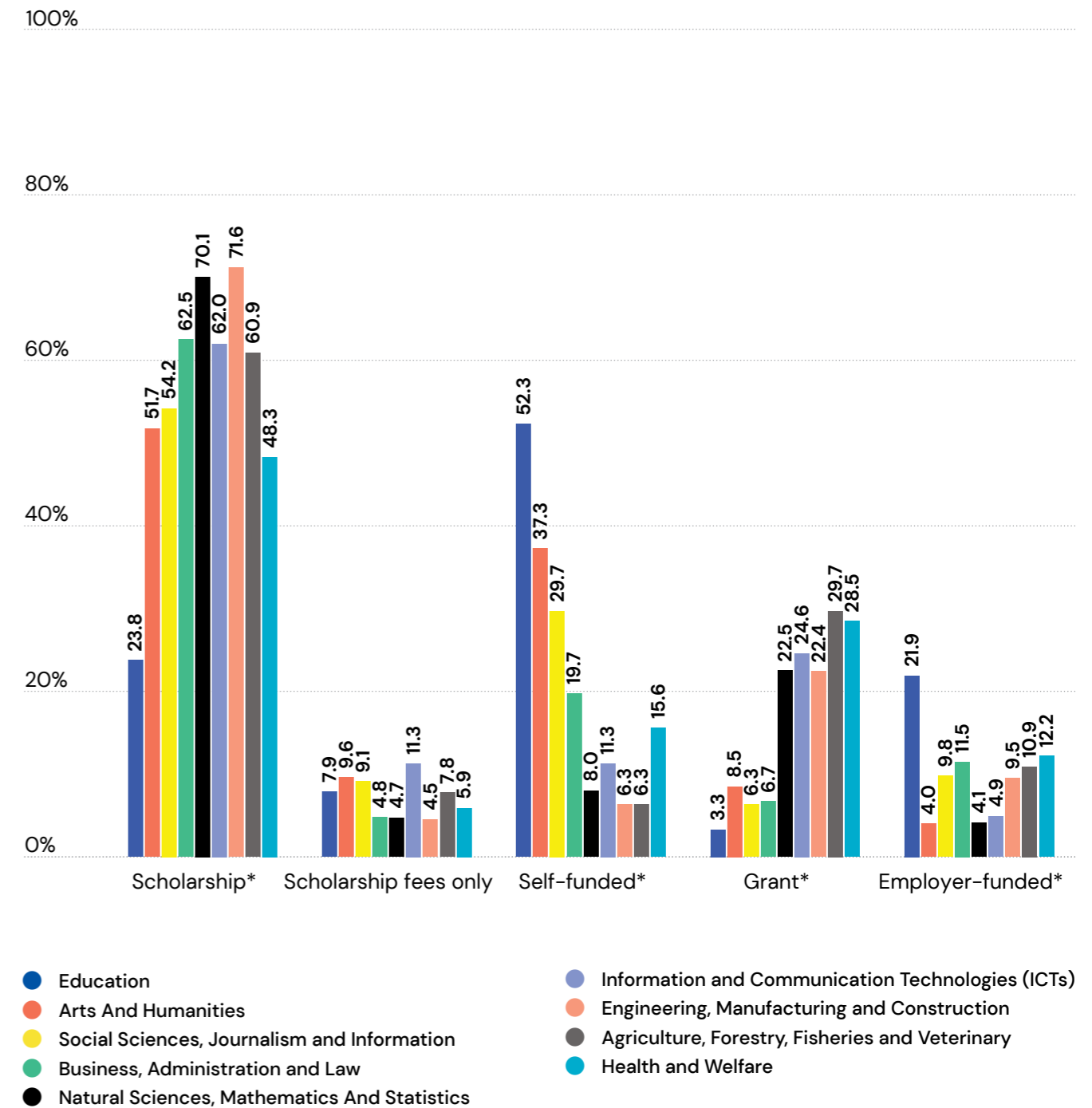


Fig. 3.17 Provision of specialist resources and facilities by field of study

The least differences emerged in relation to provision of specialist resources and facilities. The only two groups to differ significantly in their response to this question were students in Arts and humanities, who definitely or mostly agreed with this statement significantly less frequently than those in Health and welfare.

Funding source



*Overall difference for the aspect was statistically significant, see interpretation for results of post-hoc analyses
 **Respondents may choose more than one source of funding

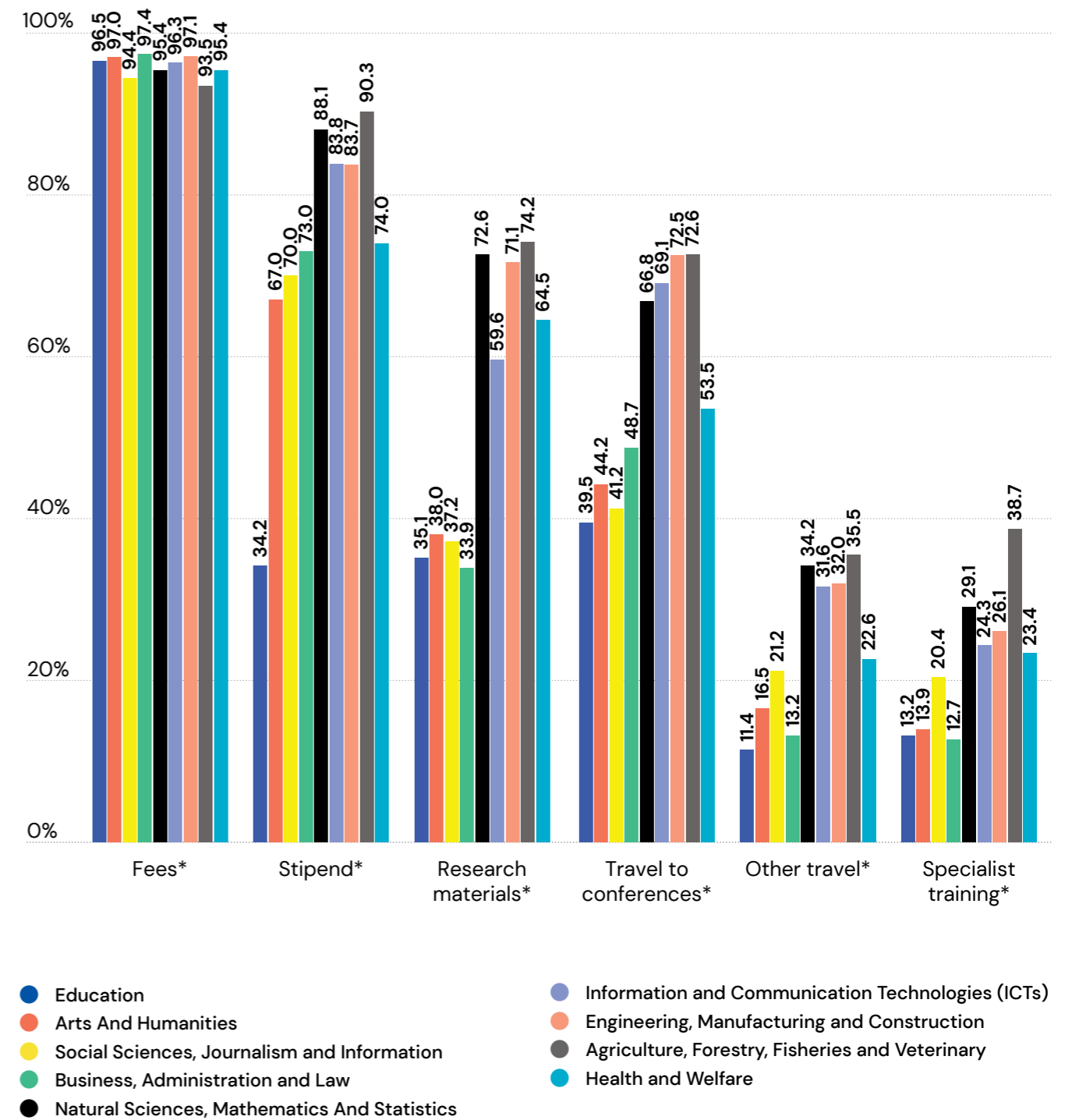
Fig. 3.18 Funding source by field of study

This commentary considers the statistically significant differences as a whole and attempts to draw interpretations from across four funding sources¹⁹. The group that differs most from all other fields of study is the group of students studying Education. This difference is driven by their lower rate of reporting funding from a scholarship (23.8%) and higher rate of reporting funding from being self-funded (52.3%) or employer-funded (21.9%). Overall, approximately 50% of those in Education reported being self-funded, while the other half were divided between those who were being funded by a scholarship or by an employer.

Approximately 50% of those studying Arts and humanities, Social sciences, journalism and information, and Health and welfare reported being in receipt of a scholarship. However, differences emerged in how the remaining 50% are funded. In the case of Arts and humanities, 37.3% are self-funded. This is higher than all other groups except for Education (as noted above), and Social sciences, journalism and information (29.7%). In Health and welfare, 15.6% of students are self-funded, which is lower than those in Arts and humanities and Social sciences, journalism and information. This is offset by their significantly higher²⁰ rate of funding from a grant (28.5%).

Those studying Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs), Engineering, manufacturing and construction, and Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary rarely differed significantly in relation to sources of funding. All had a high rate of being in receipt of a scholarship (range: 60.9%–71.6%) and a grant (22.4%–29.7%). These students reported very low rates of being self-funded (6.3%–11.3%). The only difference to emerge between these groups was for rate of employer-funded, which was cited as a source of funding for students in Engineering, manufacturing and construction (9.5%) over twice as often as those in Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (4.1%).

My funding covers



*Overall difference for the aspect was statistically significant, see interpretation for results of post-hoc analyses
 **Respondents may choose more than one item covered by their funding

19. As no statistically significant differences emerged for Scholarship (fees only), this source of funding will not be discussed.

20. Difference is significant in the case of Education, Arts and humanities, Social sciences, journalism and information, and Business, administration and law

Fig. 3.19 Items covered by funding by field of study

There were relatively few differences in the percentage of students for whom their funding pays for their fees across all fields of study.

One striking difference is the difference between students in Education and all other fields of study in relation to the percentage for whom their funding covers a stipend. This is only the case for 34.2% of students in Education, who differ significantly from all other fields of study. Students in Arts and humanities (67.0%), and Social science, journalism and information (70.0%) also differed significantly from several other groups, and they had lower scores than the cluster formed by Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs), Engineering, manufacturing and construction, and Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary (range: 83.8%–90.3%). Students in Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary programmes were the most frequent to report that their funding covered a stipend (90.3%).

The pattern for the remaining four items (Research materials, travel to conferences, other travel, and specialist training) is consistent. The cluster formed by students in Education, Arts and humanities, Social sciences, journalism and information, and Business, administration and law only had a single significant difference between them across these four items²¹.

The frequency with which they reported that their funding covered those particular items was always lower than the frequency reported by the cluster formed by Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics, Information and Communication Technology (ICTs), Engineering, manufacturing and construction, and Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary. There were very few significant differences within this cluster also²². As above in relation to stipend, students in Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary programmes were the most frequent to report that their funding covered specialist training (38.7%).

Overall, students in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes were significantly more likely to be in receipt of funding that covered items such as research materials, travel to conferences, other travel, and specialist training than students in fields of study such as Education and Arts and humanities.

21. The exception was that students in Social sciences, journalism and information (20.4%) reported that their funding covered specialist training significantly more than students in Arts and humanities (13.9%).

22. The exception here was Health and welfare, as they were significantly less likely to have funding that covered travel to conferences (53.5%) and other travel (22.6%) than students in Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (66.8% and 34.2% respectively), and Engineering, manufacturing and construction (72.5% and 32% respectively).

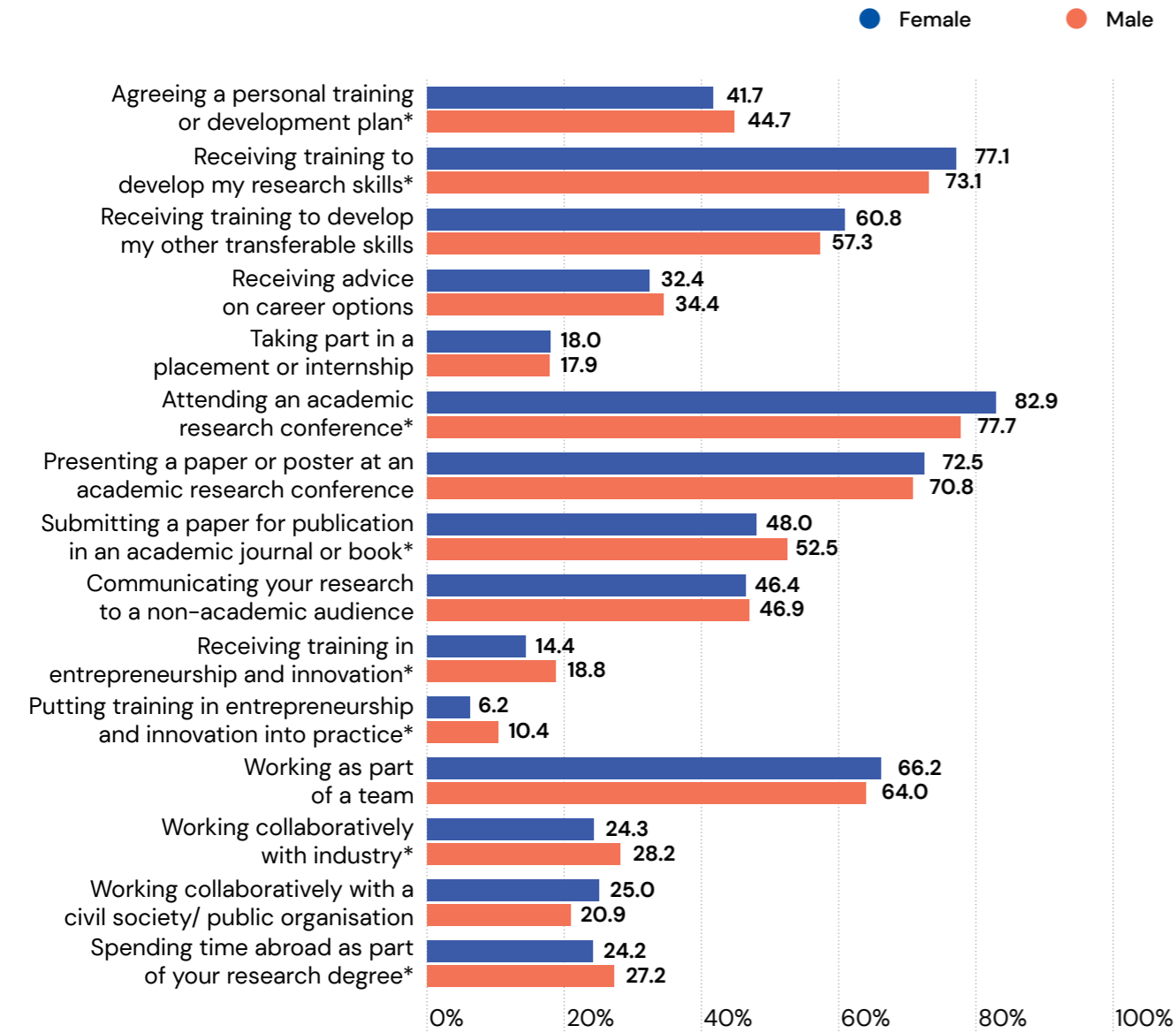
3.6. Gender

As part of the non-sensitive demographic information securely transferred by the participating higher education institutions to the survey company prior to fieldwork as part of the normal procedure of PGR StudentSurvey.ie, institutions indicate the gender of each student as it appears on their student record systems. As per institutions' HEA return, the four options are female, male, prefer not to say and gender non-binary. Due to the relatively low numbers in the latter two categories compared to the large number in the former two categories, the survey company collapsed the latter two categories into one category named 'Undeclared'. As the number of respondents in this category in 2019 was less than 10, it was deemed inadvisable to include them in the statistical analysis.

Gender was the variable that least frequently generated statistically significant differences between groups. This in itself is interesting when considered alongside national discussions about gender equality in higher education. No statistically significant differences emerged between female and male students in relation to *Research Infrastructure and Facilities* (excluding Funding, see below), *Supervision, Progress and Assessment, Research Culture, Career Aspirations*, and *Overall Experience*. Female and male students also responded similarly to questions about *Personal Outlook*²³.

23. The difference between female students (57.8% definitely or mostly agreed) and male students (53.4% definitely or mostly agreed) in their response to the statement that there is someone in their higher education institution they can talk to about their day-to-day problems was significant

Development Opportunities



*Difference was statistically significant

Fig. 3.20 Development Opportunities by gender

Overall, while half of the *Development Opportunities* listed were availed of by females and males at the same rate, where differences did emerge, male students tended to avail of more specific *Development Opportunities* than females. Male respondents agreed more frequently than females that they had availed of the *Development Opportunities* of agreeing a personal training or development plan, submitting a paper for

publication in an academic journal or book, receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation, putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice, working collaboratively with industry and spending time abroad as part of their research degree. Female respondents agreed more frequently that they had received training to develop their research skills, and attended an academic conference.

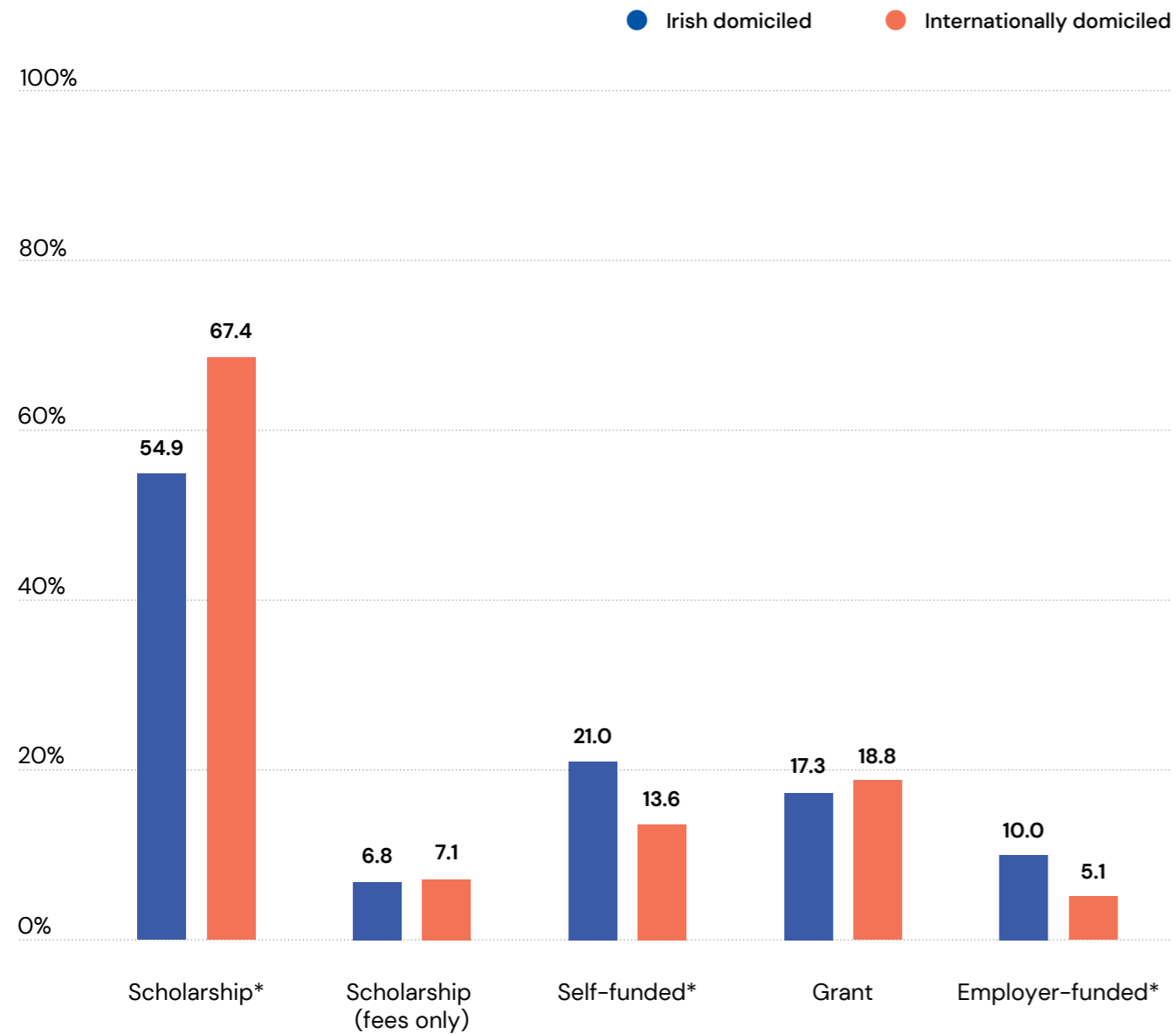
3.7. Country of domicile

Country of domicile refers to a student's country of permanent address prior to entry to their programme of study. A dichotomous variable that makes a split between Irish (including Northern Irish) students and all other internationally domiciled students is used. If the student has been residing in Ireland (including Northern Ireland) for three of the five years previous to registering for their current programme of study, their country of domicile is recorded as Ireland. Although it is not an exact match, this can be used to some extent as a proxy to distinguish between Irish students and international students. However, it is important to note that it is not the same as a student's nationality and that it does not change as they progress through their academic career. Respondents for whom Ireland is their country of permanent address prior to entry to their programme of study are referred to as Irish domiciled students. Those for whom another country is their country of permanent address are referred to as internationally domiciled students.

The variable that revealed the most differences between groups was country of domicile. This led to the decision to examine the questions raised in Chapter 4 relating to *Development Opportunities, Research Skills, Other Transferable Skills, Motivations and Career Aspirations* through the lens of country of domicile.

Of the remaining aspects of the PGR student experience and engagement, a reasonably consistent pattern emerged. The internationally domiciled students tended to agree (often significantly) more strongly with statements than Irish domiciled students, which suggests a higher level of engagement with the higher education institution and the opportunities offered by the institution. There were some aspects that did not generate many significant differences, such as *Personal Outlook*, while others generated some significant differences across several questions. Some of these have been selected and are examined below.

Funding



*Difference was statistically significant

Fig. 3.21 Funding source by country of domicile

Internationally domiciled students were more likely to report being in receipt of a scholarship, while Irish domiciled students were more likely to report being self-funded and employer-funded.

I am being supervised by one supervisor

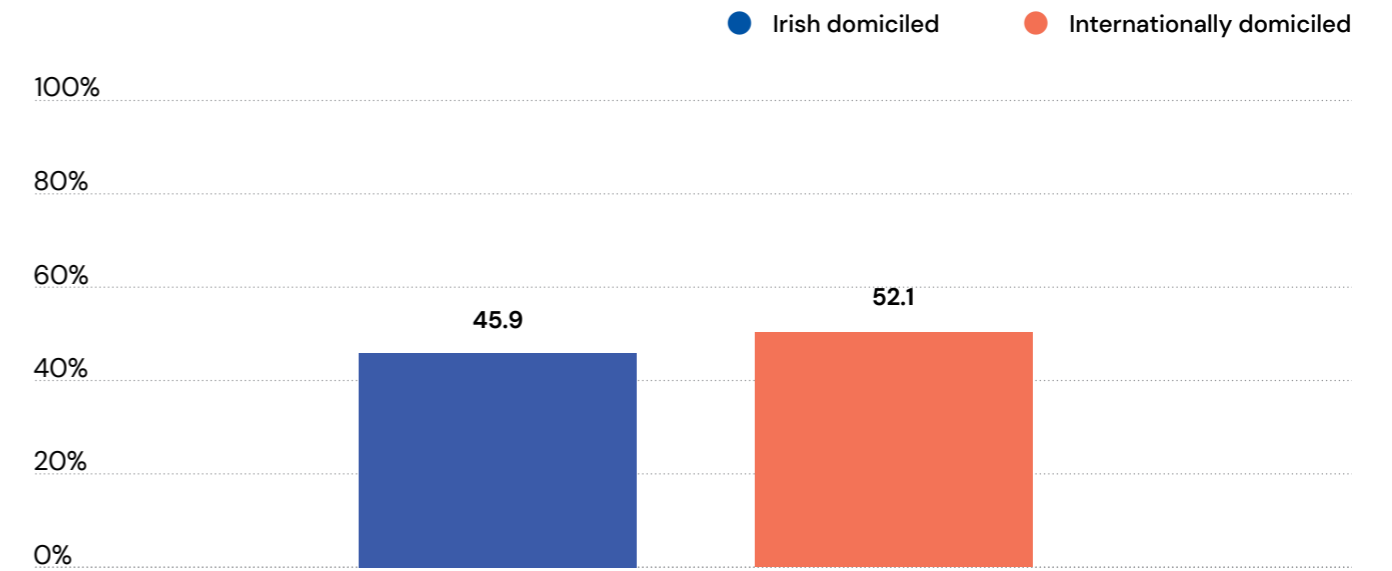


Fig. 3.22 Single supervisor by country of domicile

Definitely/ mostly agree that I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs

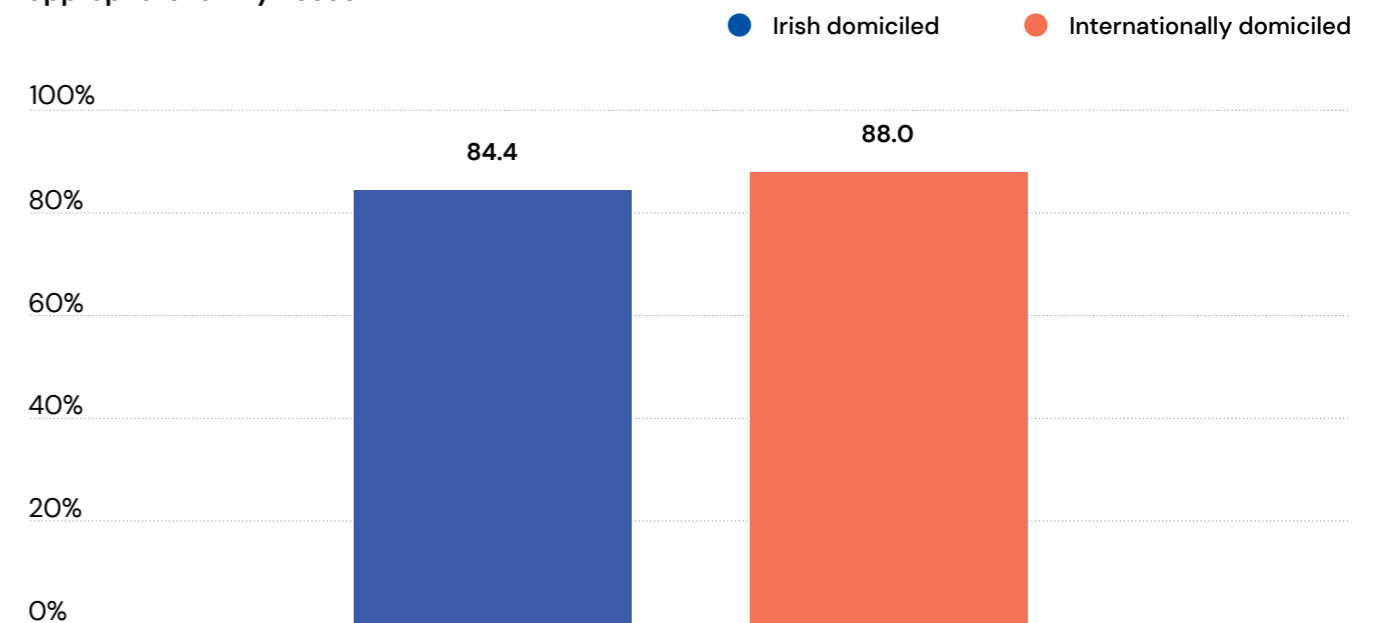


Fig. 3.23 Contact with supervisor by country of domicile

Definitely/ mostly agree that my supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research

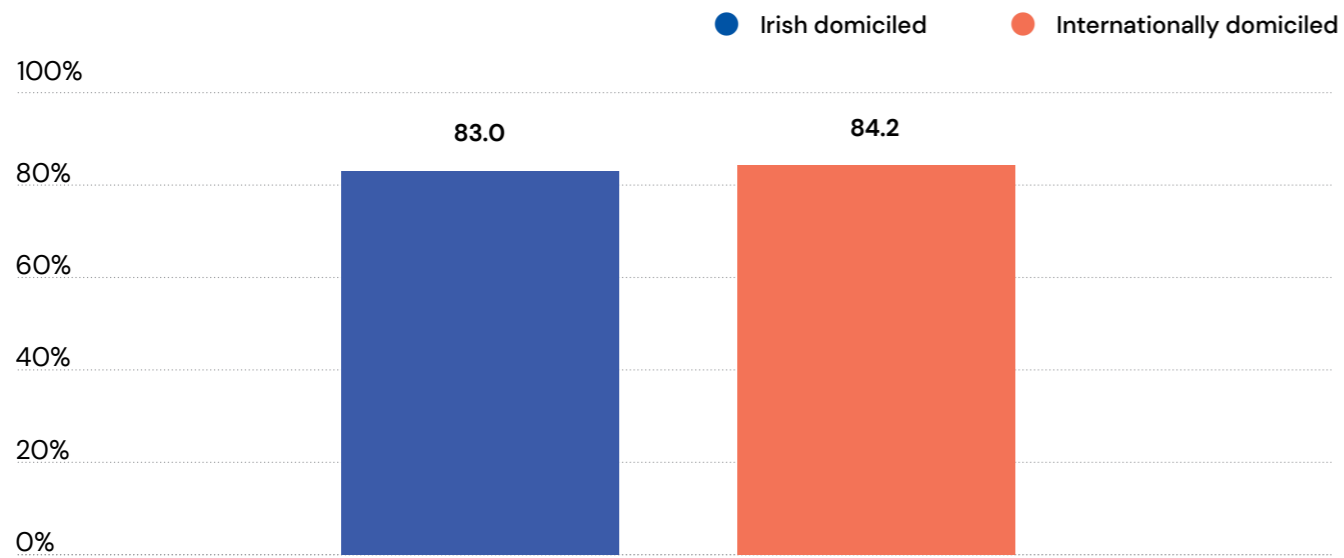


Fig. 3.25 Supervisor identification of training needs by country of domicile

Definitely/ mostly agree that my supervisor(s) helps me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher

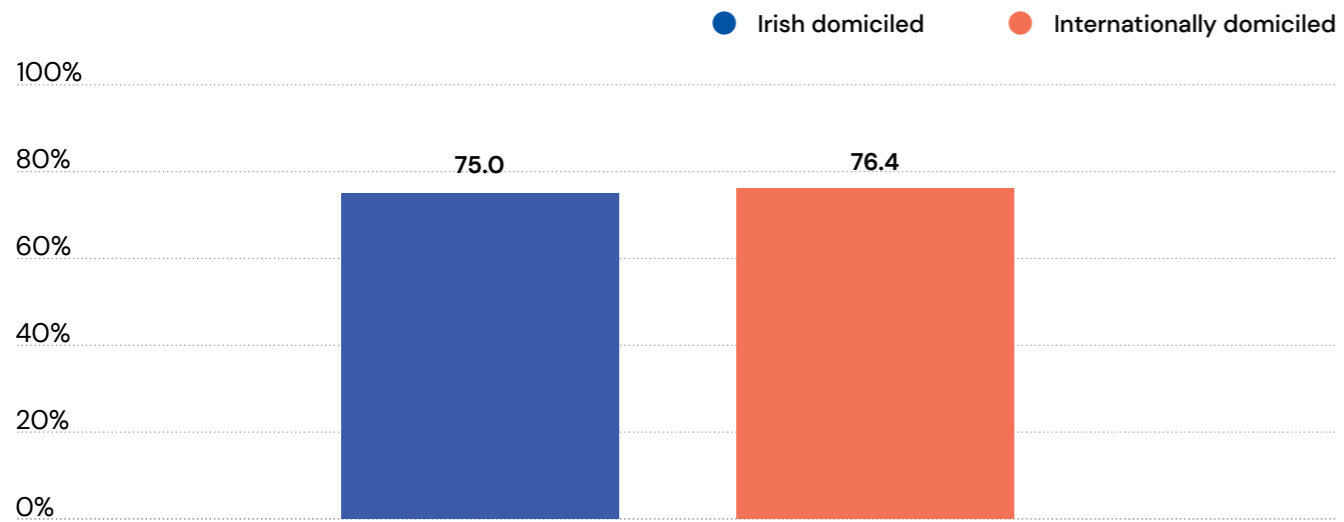
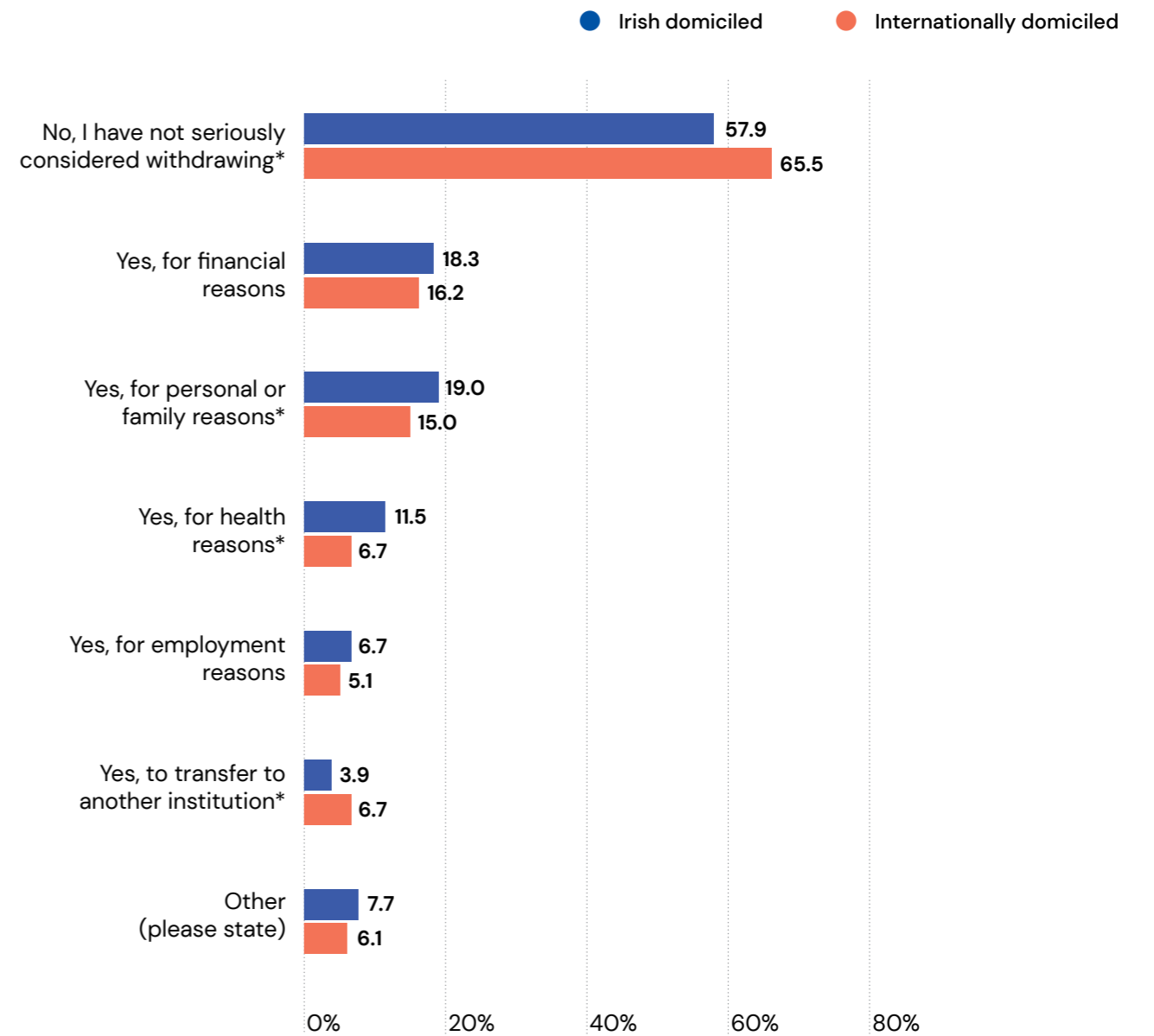


Fig. 3.24 Support from supervisor by country of domicile

Internationally domiciled students were significantly more likely to report having one supervisor. Internationally domiciled students agreed significantly more strongly that they have regular contact with their supervisor(s), appropriate for

their needs, that their supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for their research, and also that their supervisor(s) helped them to identify training and development needs as a researcher.

Reasons for considering withdrawal



*Difference was statistically significant

Fig. 3.26 Consideration of withdrawal by country of domicile

Despite all of the differences highlighted above, the groups did not differ significantly in relation to their rating of their *Overall Experience*. This part of the survey also includes a question that asks respondents to indicate if they had ever considered withdrawing from their research degree programme. Internationally domiciled students agreed significantly more frequently than Irish domiciled

students that they had considered withdrawal, and cited considering transferring to another institution as the reason for this significantly more often than Irish domiciled students. Conversely, where they had considered withdrawal, Irish domiciled students were more likely to cite personal/family reasons or health reasons as the cause.



62.2% of respondents identified an academic career in higher education as a prioritised career aspiration

Chapter 4
Looking Deeper:
Motivations, career aspirations and preparedness for life after the postgrad — spotlight on internationally domiciled PGR students

Ireland has built an innovation-driven culture and is now firmly on the global map in terms of excellence in our research. We are leaders in generating and using new knowledge for economic and social progress. A key aim of the *Innovation 2020* strategy is to build on the significant growth of the last decade in developing Ireland's research and innovation system, by continuing to support excellent research across all disciplines. Notwithstanding that, the recent reports published by government and associated agencies^{24 25 26 27} point to a new and emerging reality that, by 2025, workers and enterprises will be operating in a drastically changed environment. Higher education institutions are being encouraged to prepare resilient graduates who are well prepared for a shift to more dynamic undefined roles in the future. In this chapter, we a) take a deeper look at motivations to undertake postgraduate research and development of students, to determine whether students are building such resilience, and b) examine whether aspects of the PGR experience related to career development and preparation for life after the postgraduate degree differ between students domiciled in Ireland, within the EU/EEA/Switzerland, or outside EU/EEA/Switzerland.

24. <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Statement-of-Strategy-2016-2019.pdf>

25. <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Enterprise-2025-Summary-Report.pdf>

26. <https://dbei.gov.ie/en/Publications/Publication-files/Innovation-2020.pdf>

27. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/HEA-2018-2022-Strategic-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

The implementation of the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*²⁸ seeks to ensure the best quality outcomes for graduates of HEIs in Ireland. The Irish education system is producing a reservoir of strong talent from research degree programmes: graduates who have the capacity to transform the national economic and societal development into the future. A key consideration in this regard is whether the supports currently being provided and taken up by students are maximising this capacity to meet this demand.

The development of the postgraduate research experience and the development of PGR students themselves offers many possibilities. The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* recommends that PGR students are afforded a broader perspective of possible career opportunities. This could be facilitated through greater mobility of research students between higher education and enterprise and the public service, thus promoting knowledge flows and capitalising on the expertise within higher education for the benefit of society and the economy.

The strategy also makes other valuable recommendations, such as increasing career preparation for PGR students from an early stage in their programme, and achieving greater balance between single and large multi-disciplinary team projects.

This chapter examines career development, and preparation for life after the PGR degree. This goal is achieved by focusing on the questions that can be mapped to the following aspects of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie:

- *Motivations,*
- *Career Aspirations,* and
- *Development Opportunities.*

Experience of developing *Research Skills* and *Other Transferable Skills* during the PGR degree was also examined within the context of investigating differences between Irish domiciled students, internationally domiciled students whose country of permanent domicile is within the EU/EEA/Switzerland, and internationally domiciled students whose country of permanent domicile is outside the EU/EEA/Switzerland.

28. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf>



Notes on definitions

Country of domicile refers to a student's country of permanent address prior to entry to their programme of study. A dichotomous variable that makes a split between Irish (including Northern Irish) students and all other internationally domiciled students is used. If the student has been residing in Ireland (including Northern Ireland) for three of the five years previous to registering for their current programme of study, their country of domicile is recorded as Ireland.

Although it is not an exact match, this can be used to some extent as a proxy to distinguish between Irish students and international students. However, it is important to note that it is not the same as their nationality and does not change as they progress through their academic career.

Respondents for whom Ireland is their country of permanent address prior to entry to the programme of study are referred to as Irish domiciled students in this report. Those for whom another country is their country of permanent address are referred to as internationally domiciled students.

4.1. Career development and preparation

4.1.1. Motivations

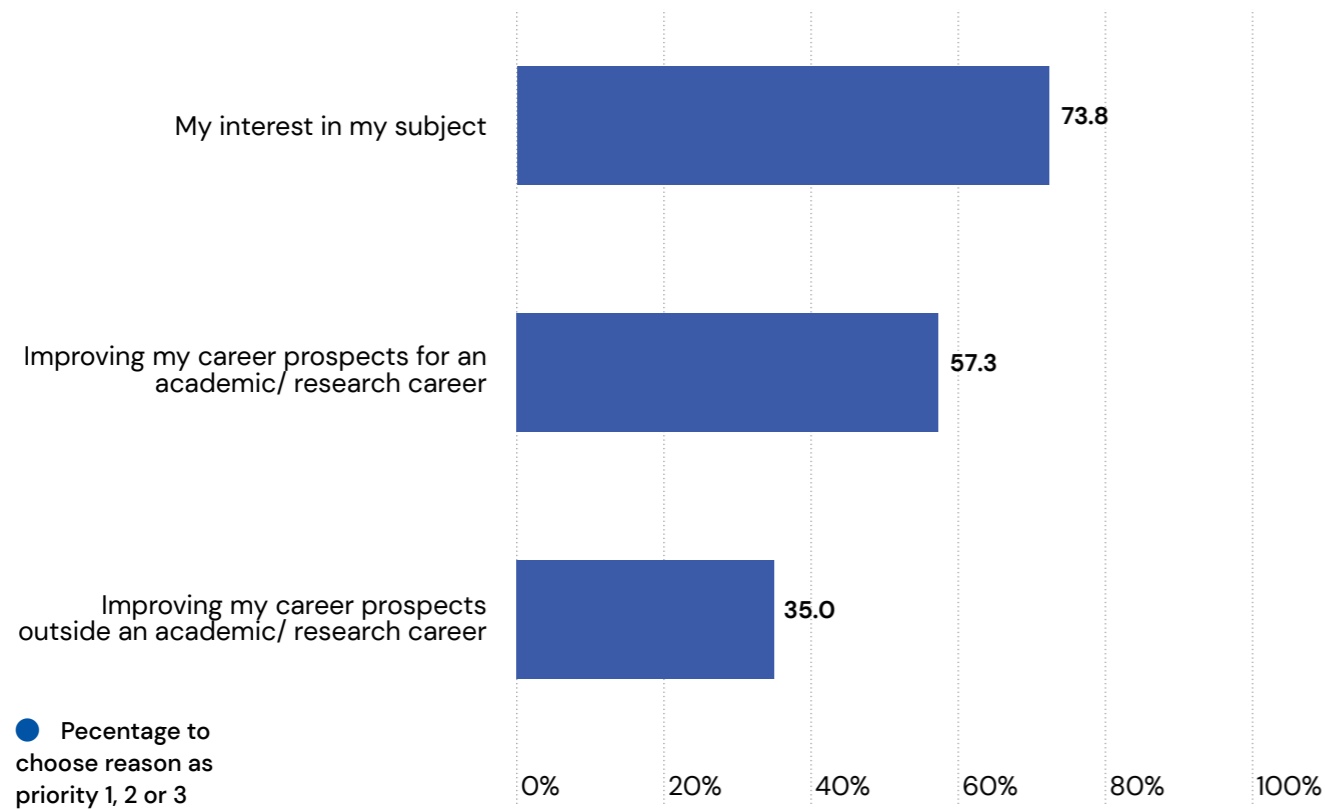


Fig. 4.1 Top three *Motivations* to undertake a PGR degree for PGR students

In responding to questions pertaining to *Motivations*, respondents were required to consider a range of *Motivations* for undertaking a PGR degree and to select their top three from the list of options, and prioritise these by designating them priority 1, 2 or 3. For the purposes of the following analysis, their responses were re-coded as:

1. a priority (where this reason had been selected as priority 1, 2 or 3), or
2. not a priority (where this reason had not been selected as priority of any number).

Only respondents who selected at least one of the listed *Motivations* as a priority for them were included. This resulted in a total of 2,477 respondents who chose at least one *Motivation*.

Fig 4.1 illustrates the three highest priorities for the largest proportion of respondents. Of the total number of respondents to select at least one of the listed motivations as a priority, 73.8% selected 'interest in my subject' as their first, second or third priority *Motivation*. 'Improve my career prospects for an academic/ research degree' was chosen by 57.3% of students as first, second or third priority *Motivation*. Thirdly, 35.0% reported that their first, second or third priority in undertaking a PGR degree was to "improve my career prospects outside academic/ research career". The other options listed on PGR StudentSurvey.ie yielded relatively lower scores.

4.1.2. Career Aspirations

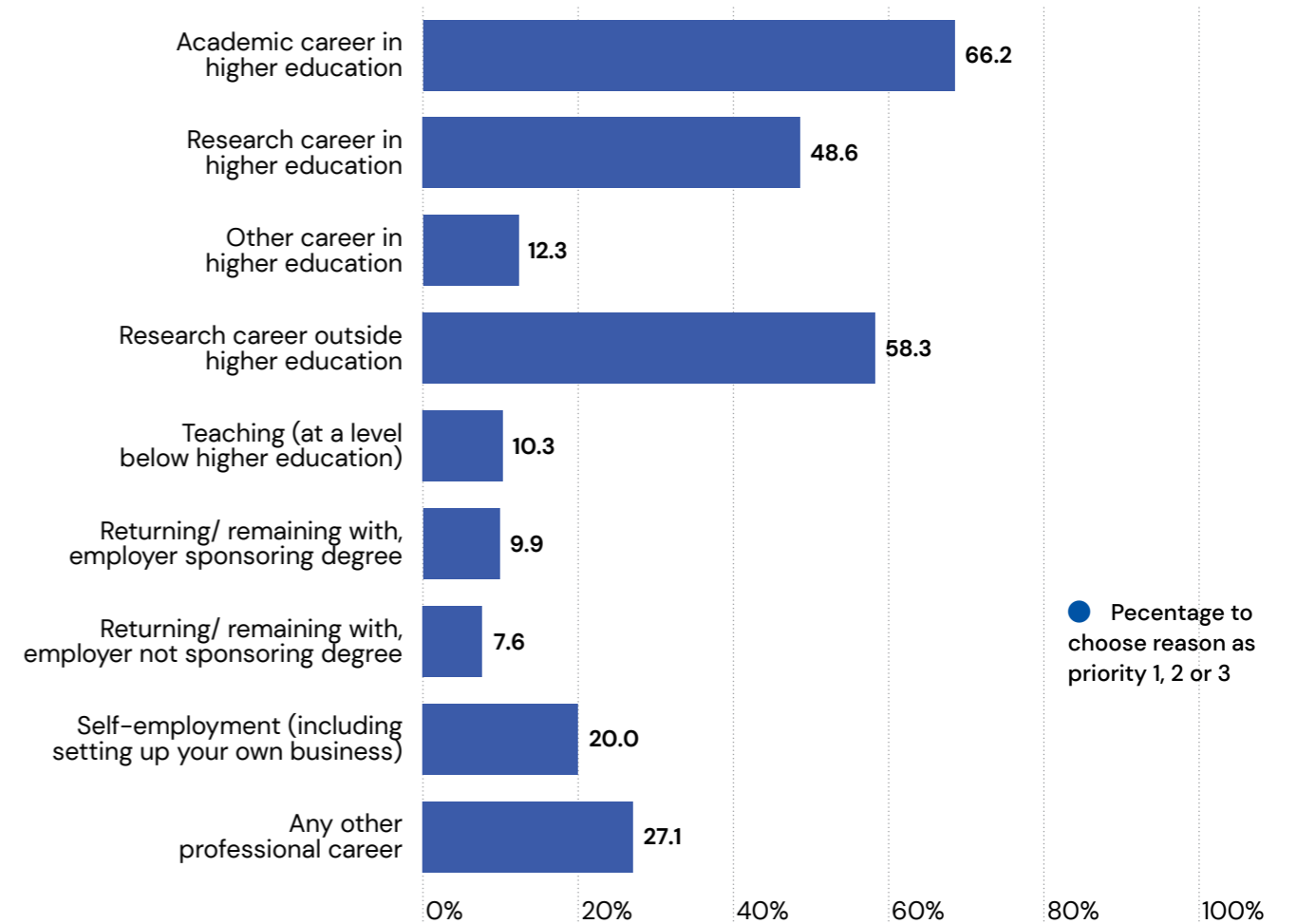


Fig. 4.2 Top three *Career Aspirations* to undertake a PGR degree for PGR students

As was the practice for *Motivations*, in responding to questions pertaining to *Career Aspirations*, respondents were required to consider a range of *Career Aspirations* and to select their top three from the list of options, and prioritise these by designating them priority 1, 2 or 3. Again, for the purposes of the following analysis, their responses were re-coded as:

1. a priority (where this reason had been selected as priority 1, 2 or 3), or
2. not a priority (where this reason had not been selected as priority of any number).

In keeping with the methodology used above, only respondents who selected at least one

of the listed *Career Aspirations* as a priority for them were included. This resulted in a total of 2,453 respondents who chose at least one *Career Aspiration* to pursue following completion of their research degree.

Fig. 4.2 shows that an academic career in higher education is identified as a career aspiration of the majority of respondents (66.2%). In addition to the percentage of students who chose this as their first, second or third priority for *Career Aspiration*, 58.3% chose 'research career outside higher education' as their first, second or third priority, 48.6% chose 'research career in higher education', and finally 27.1% chose 'any other professional career'.

4.1.3. Development Opportunities

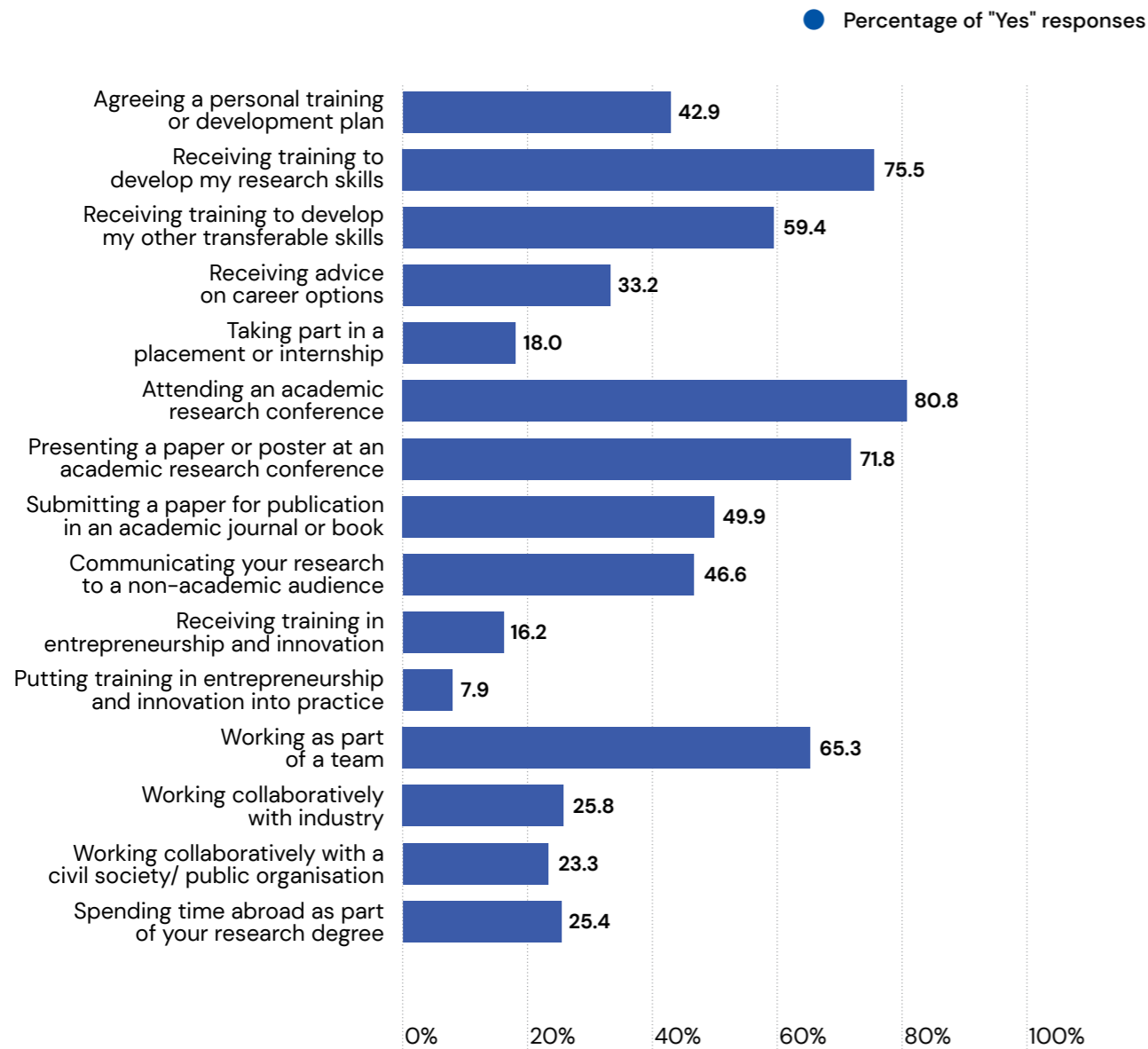


Fig. 4.3 Uptake of Development Opportunities for PGR students

The questions relating to *Development Opportunities* are a key part of the survey. Respondents are asked to consider each *Development Opportunity* and to indicate if they have availed of this opportunity, if they have not, or if this opportunity is not available to them.

Fig 4.3 illustrates data already presented in Chapter 2 Table 2.8. Respondents were asked to consider a list of *Development Opportunities* and indicate if they had availed of the opportunity

during their PGR degree. Respondents could choose multiple opportunities. The majority of respondents reported that they had received training to develop their research skills (75.5%), attended an academic research conference (80.8%) and presented a paper or poster at an academic research conference (71.8%), received training to develop other transferable skills (59.4%) and worked part of a team (65.3%). The take-up was less than 50% for remaining *Development Opportunities*.

4.1.4. Commentary

It is significant that Fig. 4.2 shows that an academic career in higher education is still identified as a career aspiration of the majority of respondents (66.2%). This is not necessarily the path these students will take when they graduate. A US study of Science and Engineering graduates showed that the number of awarded PhDs is significantly outpacing the available faculty positions²⁹. In 2015, analysis carried out by Trinity College Dublin and LinkedIn³⁰ found that, between 2000 and 2010, there had been a doubling of the number of PhD graduates from Irish universities working in industry. They also found that 58% of PhD graduates took up their first role in academia but, by their fifth job, 63% were working in industry. This trend is similar in the United Kingdom³¹.

Future Jobs Ireland 2019 – Preparing Now for Tomorrow's Economy recommends that links between HEIs and enterprise in research are strengthened. This report also discusses incentivising Small to Medium Enterprises to engage with research, development and innovation, with the goal of positioning HEIs in Ireland to be pioneers in new fields, and expand on an already well-respected reputation abroad. Therefore, it is important that HEIs communicate to PGR students the benefits of considering not only an academic career, but also a career in a currently undefined, high-tech workplace.

HEIs have made significant efforts in their drive to meet the *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* recommendations that PGR students are afforded wide focus of career opportunities and better mobility between sectors, an increase in career preparation, and greater balance between single and large multi-disciplinary teams through the introduction of more career-focused modules, training, advice, mentoring, internships, and placements.

29. www.nature.com/articles/nbt.2706

30. www.irishtimes.com/opinion/research-shows-a-doubling-of-phd-graduates-working-in-industry-between-2000-and-2010-1.2056833

31. www.vitae.ac.uk/doing-research/are-you-thinking-of-doing-a-phd/what-do-doctoral-graduates-do

Research and professional development planning is a core component of a PhD degree programme as articulated in Principle 3 of the *National Framework for Doctoral Education*. HEIs across the country are investing in the provision of developmental supports for students and the results presented in Fig. 4.3 are valuable in reflecting on the impact of this investment. There are many areas where individual institutions can interrogate their own data and compare it to the national results. For example, Fig. 4.3 shows that 56.5% of respondents reported not availing of the opportunity to 'Receive advice on career options', and that 10% say that the opportunity was not available to them. Looking more broadly than career preparedness, 23.3% of PGR students availed of the opportunity to "Work collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation", and 13.8% responded that this opportunity was not available to them. This still leaves a sizeable majority of 62.8% of respondents who did not avail of this opportunity. There is a key opportunity for HEIs to harness the expertise, energy and capacity of the PGR students towards solving major societal problems. Finally, in relation to the low numbers reporting submitting a paper for publication or communicating their research, this can be explained by the mix of early – and late – stage PGR students who complete the PGR StudentSurvey.ie, and individual institutions would be well served by exploring these results further in the context of their expectations for the PGR students at various stages of progress with their research.

4.2. Country of domicile

Internationalisation has transformed, and continues to transform, education and research in Ireland. Greater supports and incentives for collaboration and mobility of researchers, both students and staff, have contributed to the increase in the number of research papers featuring cross-border authorship in the last decade. In addition, from 2010 to 2015, the number of international postgraduate students studying in Ireland has increased by 31%, from 4,090 to 5,339³², and this number is projected to rise.

Ireland's reputation as a destination for international students is very strong. The higher education sector as a whole is witnessing an increase in the number of international applicants to degree programmes³³. We have developed a quality assurance regime to closely integrate international students with the wider student population and recognise that they may also require unique/ tailored support services to cater for specific needs.

In Chapter 3, numerous differences emerged between the internationally domiciled and Irish domiciled students. In order to delve further into some of differences, internationally domiciled students were re-coded into two groups; EU/EEA/Swiss³⁴ domiciled students (referred to as EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled hereafter) and Non-EU domiciled students (referred to as Non-EU domiciled hereafter). The following analysis will focus on aspects of the PGR experience related to career development and preparation for life after the PGR degree.

Chi-squared tests were used to test the statistical significance of any differences between the three country of domicile groups (Irish domiciled, EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled and Non-EU domiciled). There were two types of analysis used. They were frequencies and standardized residuals, where the standardised residual represents a ratio between the observed count (the number in each cell) and the expected count (which assumes the groups are not different or related). Only differences which are statistically significant different are reported. Furthermore, the cells contributing to the statistical difference are identified in each case.

Where it is stated that a particular group were more or less likely "than expected" to give a particular response, this relates to the expectation that there will be no difference between the actual responses and the statistically expected responses if there is no statistically significant difference between the groups.

32. *Irish Educated Globally Connected, An International Education Strategy for Ireland 2016–2020* (p. 52)

33. www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS88_0.pdf

34. Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the UK, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland

4.2.1. Development Opportunities

The following results are for differences in the number of respondents from each of the country of domicile categories to respond "Yes" to each of the *Development Opportunities*. Additional questions related to supports for teaching/ demonstrating were also considered here.

Table 4.1a Results from Chi square analysis of *Development Opportunities* by country of domicile where there is a significant difference

	Chi Square p value	Irish domiciled	EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled	Non-EU domiciled	Interpretation
Frequencies values for the answer 'Yes'					
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	0.00	658*	128	296*	Irish domiciled are less likely than expected to say Yes. Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.
Receiving advice on career options	0.00	541	85	212*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.
Taking part in a placement or internship	0.001	286	49	117*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	0.00	-212*	61*	133*	Irish domiciled are less likely than expected to say Yes. EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled and Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.
Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice	0.00	93*	19	85*	Irish domiciled are less likely than expected to say Yes. Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	0.00	370*	99*	168*	Irish domiciled are less likely than expected to say Yes. EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled and Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.

*Standard Residual value was 2 or greater, i.e. difference was statistically significant

Table 4.1b Results from Chi square analysis of *Development Opportunities* by country of domicile where there is a significant difference

	Chi Square p value	Irish domiciled	EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled	Non-EU domiciled	Interpretation
Frequencies for 'Mostly/ Definitely agree'					
Received support for teaching/ demonstrating	0.00	614	101	255*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.

*Standard Residual value was 2 or greater, i.e. difference was statistically significant

In the first instance, analysis of responses to nine of the sixteen *Development Opportunities* did not generate any statistically significant differences between the groups in the rate of take-up of that opportunity. Where the groups differed, the pattern was that the Non-EU domiciled student experience differed from the Irish domiciled and EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled experience. Differences between the Irish domiciled and EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled

were much less frequent. The Non-EU domiciled students indicated that they engage more with their institution in availing of opportunities, such as agreeing a personal training/ development plan, receiving advice on career options, taking part in a placement or internship, receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation, and receiving support for teaching/ demonstrating.

4.2.2. Research Skills

For the following analysis, PGR students who responded with definitely or mostly agree were pooled. Only one significant difference between the three country of domicile groups emerged, and that was for the question pertaining to development of confidence to be creative or innovative.

Table 4.2 Results from Chi square analysis of *Research Skills* by country of domicile where there is a significant difference

	Chi Square p value	Irish domiciled	EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled	Non-EU domiciled	Interpretation
Frequencies for 'Mostly/ Definitely agree'					
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	0.00	1,213	179	416*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to say Yes.

*Standard Residual value was 2 or greater, i.e. difference was statistically significant

The results for the three country of domicile groups in developing other *Research Skills*, such as applying research methodologies and critically analysing and evaluating research findings, suggest a similar experience of this aspect of the PGR

experience, regardless of country of domicile. The only significant difference to emerge was for Non-EU domiciled students, who were more likely than expected to agree that their confidence to be creative had developed during the programme.

4.2.3. Other Transferable Skills

No statistically significant differences emerged between the Irish domiciled students, EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled students and Non-EU domiciled students for *Other Transferable Skills*. The results point to similar experiences of developing the ability to manage projects, to communicate information effectively, and to manage their professional development across all of the groups.

4.2.4. Motivations

Table 4.3 *Motivations* reported by country of domicile where there is a significant difference

	Chi Square p value	Irish domiciled	EU/EEA/ Swiss domiciled	Non-EU domiciled	Interpretation
Frequencies for 'Mostly/ Definitely agree'					
Improving my career prospects for an academic/ research career	0.000	930	140	349*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to report this as a priority.

*Standard Residual value was 2 or greater, i.e. difference was statistically significant

The result presented in Table 4.3 above should be considered alongside the result of no significant difference between the country of domicile groups for eight of the nine *Motivations* offered in the PGR StudentSurvey.ie. The only motivation showing a difference was that the

Non-EU domiciled students were more likely than expected to report "Improving my career prospects for an academic/ research career" as a priority for undertaking a PGR degree.

4.2.5. Career Aspirations

Table 4.4 Results from Chi square analysis of *Career Aspirations* by country of domicile

	Chi Square p value	Irish domiciled	EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled	Non-EU domiciled	Interpretation
Frequencies reporting the Career aspiration as a priority					
Academic career in higher education	0.000	1,089	153	382*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to report this as a priority.
Research career in higher education	0.000	770	135	288*	Non-EU domiciled are more likely than expected to report this as a priority.
Research career outside higher education	0.000	943	176*	311	EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled are more likely than expected to report this as a priority.
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring degree	0.018	166	15*	63	EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled are more likely than expected to report this as a priority.
Any other professional career	0.015	484	69	113*	Non-EU domiciled are less likely than expected to report this as a priority.

*Standard Residual value was 2 or greater, i.e. difference was statistically significant

The result presented in Table 4.4 above should be considered alongside the result of no significant difference between the country of domicile groups for six of the eleven *Career Aspirations* offered in the PGR StudentSurvey.ie. Nevertheless, the results for *Career Aspirations* do exhibit some differences in type of career aspired to between the groups. The Non-EU domiciled students were more likely than expected to make an "Academic career in higher education" or a "Research career in higher education" a priority. This is somewhat offset by the lower-than-expected number of Non-EU domiciled students choosing "Any other professional career" as one of their top three priorities for career after the PGR degree. Further

differences were observed for "Research career outside higher education" and "Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring degree", where the EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled students were more likely than expected to choose one of these *Career Aspirations* as one of their top three priorities for career after the PGR degree.

4.2.6. Commentary

Looking first to *Development Opportunities*, the results presented point to broad similarities in the rate of take-up of the opportunities across the Irish domiciled, EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled and Non-EU domiciled students. Differences between the Irish domiciled students and EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled students were infrequent. The consistent result for each of the *Development Opportunities* where statistically significant differences did emerge was for the Non-EU domiciled students to report availing of this opportunity more than expected. An additional notable finding to emerge from this chapter is the lack of difference between the Irish domiciled, EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled and Non-EU domiciled students in relation to their development of *Research Skills* and *Other Transferable Skills*. The results of the analysis of *Development Opportunities*, *Research Skills* and *Other Transferable Skills* are quite positive with regard to equity of experience and the career preparedness of PGR students in HEIs in Ireland, regardless of country of permanent domicile.

While the results for *Motivations* were largely similar across the country of domicile categories, more varied results were evident for *Career Aspirations* for EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled students and Non-EU domiciled students. Pursuit of an academic career in higher education and research career in higher education were selected as a priority by Non-EU domiciled students more than expected and research career outside higher education was selected as a priority by EU/EEA/Swiss domiciled students more than expected. The last two internationalisation strategies for HEIs in Ireland and institutions' own strategies have emphasised attracting international student applicants from countries outside of the EU, such as Brazil, China, India and the USA³⁵. The marketing directed at these populations tends to centre on themes

such as employability, future career potential, close ties to industry, and world-class research opportunities³⁶. It is therefore possible that PGR students from these countries who have selected to come to Ireland to study and who completed the PGR StudentSurvey.ie are those primed to think ahead towards careers after making significant investment in their preferred educational route.

The results of PGR StudentSurvey.ie and the views elicited from Irish domiciled and internationally domiciled students in 2018 and 2019 are very relevant to the next iteration of the International Education Strategy post-2020.

The results are also relevant to HEIs in Ireland supporting an expanding number of international PGR students. For instance, the results of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie around the provision of skills development and preparation for a career after the PGR research programme will aid HEIs to strengthen their capabilities in providing targeted academic and non-academic supports to PGR students.

At the highest level, the results have value for HEIs as they engage with strategies for the internationalisation of higher education as it pertains to PGR students, and in their endeavour to prepare more resilient, career-ready graduates from research degree programmes to work in the workplace of the future.

35. https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2018/07/report_internationalisation_of_education_2018.pdf (p.33)

36. <https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/International-Education-Strategy-For-Ireland-2016-2020.pdf>



A proposal to run PGR StudentSurvey.ie every second year was approved. The next PGR StudentSurvey.ie fieldwork will take place in spring 2021.

Chapter 5

Next Steps

PGR StudentSurvey.ie is a valuable addition to the Irish higher education sector and has the power to improve the lived experience of current and future postgraduate research students. This would contribute to an improved research environment for all members of the higher education research community.

The growing dataset can and should be interrogated at national and local level by those working in the areas of policy, funding, communications, student support services, academia and by students themselves, to name only a few who could benefit from using this rich source of information and insight. As PGR StudentSurvey.ie moves to a bi-annual fieldwork cycle, the lifecycle of the survey now offers more time to analyse the data from a given year, to communicate the results of the survey back to students, staff and faculty, and to act on the opportunities for enhancement of the PGR student experience identified by PGR student themselves.

Considerable efforts have been made by those who implement the survey in the 22 participating higher education institutions, including staff and students, to make the 2019 survey an operational success. The next steps for the survey are necessarily focused on similar efforts to interrogate and draw meaning from the results.

Future iterations of PGR StudentSurvey.ie over the coming years will contribute to the expansion of a rich dataset. These data will be extremely

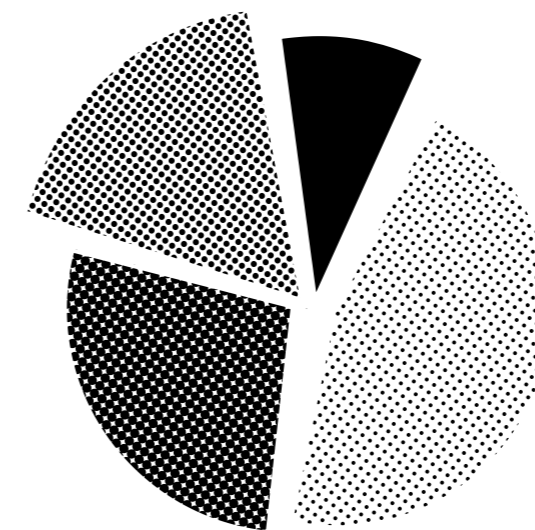
valuable when considering trends and patterns in PGR student engagement over time. An exploration of such trends could be undertaken once an appropriate number of iterations of the survey have taken place and the data are sufficiently robust to comment on longitudinal patterns of the PGR student experience.

5.1 Frequency of fieldwork

Following detailed discussions and consultation, the PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group proposed to run PGR StudentSurvey.ie once every two years for the following reasons:

- To reduce the risk of survey fatigue for postgraduate research students who, at present, are being asked to complete the same survey every year.
- Students disengaging from the survey would mean a decrease in the response rate and in the representativeness of the data year-on-year. This risk is deserving of consideration as the PGR StudentSurvey.ie datasets for some participating higher education institutions are already quite small.
- To give institutions more time to analyse the data they have and more time to implement meaningful changes based on the feedback from students.

This proposal was approved by the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group in May 2019, and the next fieldwork period for PGR StudentSurvey.ie will take place in spring 2021.



5.2 Branding

The rebranding of the Irish Survey of Student Engagement and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students to StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie (respectively) was completed and launched in October 2019. This rebranding was led by the StudentSurvey.ie Communications Group, in partnership with Piquant, a branding and marketing agency based in Limerick.

5.3 Enhancing analysis and using the data

The gradual growth in the dataset generated by PGR StudentSurvey.ie facilitates an invigorated consideration of the lived experience of postgraduate research students in higher education in Ireland. In the first instance, seven years of experience with the StudentSurvey.ie for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students has led to massive strides in how higher education institutions analyse the data and incorporate it into other institutional data and research. This learning can and should be applied in the context of PGR StudentSurvey.ie.

Secondly, higher education institutions in Ireland, regardless of their size, are centres of expertise in research and data analysis. Institutions are encouraged to channel this expertise towards interrogation of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie data, where possible and feasible, and to involve the whole research community in closing the feedback loop.

The inaugural Practitioners Forum took place in May 2019 and a topic of significant consideration was the analysis of StudentSurvey.ie data. Discussion of this topic highlighted, as expected, gaps in the lifecycle of both of the StudentSurvey.ie surveys related to data analysis and closing the feedback loop. Accordingly, the central StudentSurvey.ie function, including the Project Manager and the Steering Group, are intent on providing institutions with additional and innovative tools to support them in their analysis. This will include an improved online platform for hosting and analysing the data,

physical and virtual data analysis tutorials and further opportunities for sharing of good practice and innovations across institutions.

As noted earlier, there are many more possibilities for further analysis of the data than can be carried out by participating institutions and/ or the central StudentSurvey.ie project management function. Third-party researchers/ organisations and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the Project Manager at info@studentsurvey.ie to discuss these possibilities or to propose ideas for future research. Additionally, both of the StudentSurvey.ie datasets are archived with the Irish Social Sciences Data Archive³⁷ annually and may be accessed by request.

5.4 The students' view

It is imperative that participating institutions develop close partnerships with postgraduate research students and their representatives in interpreting and responding to the data generated by PGR StudentSurvey.ie. As previously mentioned, it is important that these data are interrogated by a cross-section of people involved in shaping the higher education experience of PGR students, and that this cross-section includes the students themselves.

Given the significance of the 2019 fieldwork as the first year of full implementation of PGR StudentSurvey.ie, it is important that institutions develop internal structures that support discussion and interpretation of the data, in order to be able to build upon this in future years. It is also significant that the newly-established bi-annual nature of PGR StudentSurvey.ie will give institutions a longer period of time to analyse and learn from the data generated by the survey responses. This should not lessen the necessity

for institutions to communicate openly and regularly with their PGR students on the action being taken on foot of the views, experiences and ideas shared by those students who respond to the survey.

PGR students occupy a unique place within the student body, often undergoing very different experiences to their taught peers. This leads to a varied range of experiences, as is evident from the results of this report when viewed alongside the results of the report of StudentSurvey.ie for first and final year undergraduate, and taught postgraduate students. As Students' Unions continue to adapt their own structures to cater for the needs of an increasingly diverse membership, which includes the StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie target populations, the findings of this survey will support them in developing meaningful representative structures to support the experience of their PGR student members.

This underpins the need for institutions and student representatives to work closely in reviewing, and acting upon, the findings of this survey. Much like StudentSurvey.ie, this means ensuring that student representatives play an active and participatory role when institutions review the data, strategise analysis, plan dissemination, and make enhancements to the PGR student experience happen. The continued focus on student partnership at a national level should be mirrored at a local level, and PGR StudentSurvey.ie offers the perfect opportunity for this to be put into practice.



37. www.ucd.ie/issda/

Appendices

Appendix 1

Project rationale and governance

The *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030*³⁸, published in 2011, recommended that higher education institutions should put in place systems to capture feedback from students to inform institutional and programme management, as well as national policy. It also recommended that every higher education institution put in place a comprehensive anonymous student feedback system, coupled with structures to ensure that action is taken promptly in relation to student concerns. When StudentSurvey.ie for first year undergraduate, final year undergraduate and taught postgraduate students was piloted in 2013, it was the intention that a separate survey for postgraduate research students would be established at a later date.

A specific Working Group was established in May 2017 to develop PGR StudentSurvey.ie and oversee its implementation. Members were nominated from the Steering Group, other relevant organisations, such as the Irish Research Council, and from participating institutions. The StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager supported the operation of the group and ensured appropriate consistency with existing StudentSurvey.ie activity. The collaborative partnership which had proven highly effective in establishing StudentSurvey.ie was equally valued in the establishment of PGR StudentSurvey.ie.

This representative PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group continues to oversee the bedding down of the survey.

The Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE) and the Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE-PGR) were rebranded in 2019 and are now known as StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie (respectively). Additionally, the website and the brand were updated.

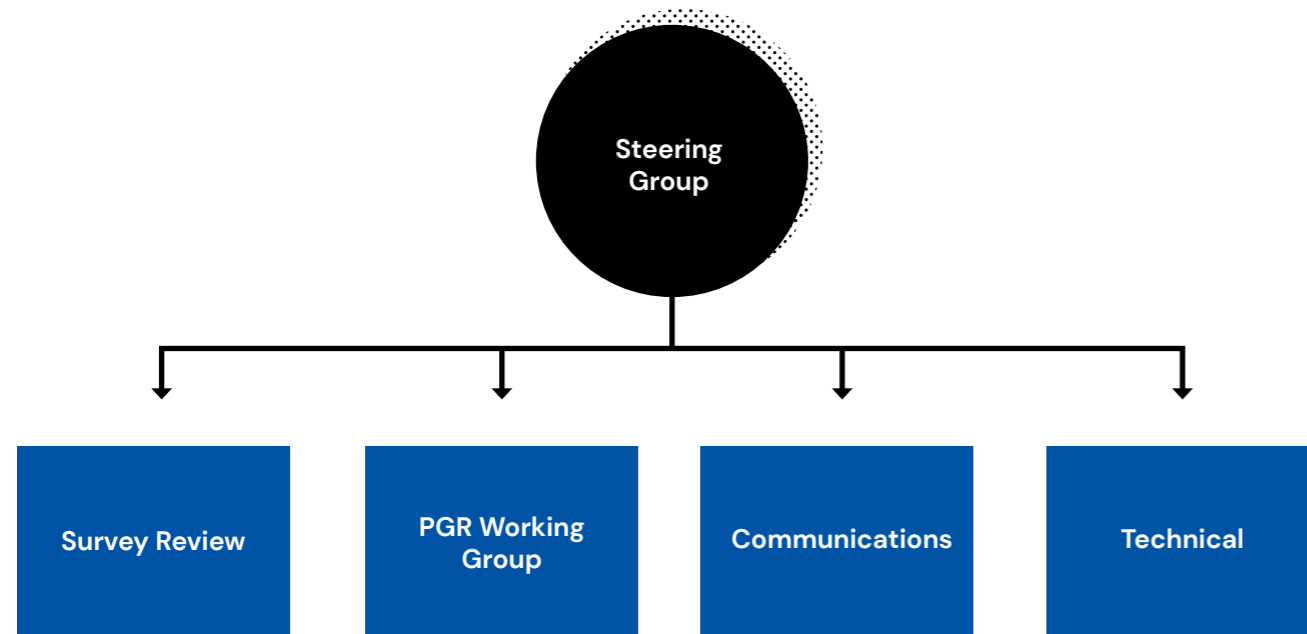
Implementation of StudentSurvey.ie and PGR StudentSurvey.ie are funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) as a shared service for participating institutions. The project is co-sponsored by the HEA, Irish Universities Association (IUA), Technological Higher Education Association (THEA), and Union of Students in Ireland (USI) (see Fig. 6.1).

The governance and management structures for StudentSurvey.ie, including PGR StudentSurvey.ie, are designed to ensure wide representation of higher education institutions and co-sponsoring organisations, including student bodies. A representative national Steering Group maintains strategic direction for the project. In 2019, this group was reduced in number and the primary focus on strategic direction re-affirmed. It now

38. National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (www.heai.ie/assets/uploads/2017/06/National-Strategy-for-Higher-Education-2030.pdf)

consists of a representative of each of the co-sponsoring organisations, two representatives from the university sector, two representatives from the technological higher education sector, one representative from Quality and Qualifications Ireland and the StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager. Following the re-branding, the group is now called the StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group.

In addition, there are a number of Working Groups addressing specific elements of the project (see Fig. 6.1). A full-time StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager leads developments and ensures coherence and consistency between the various elements of the project.



Co-sponsoring organisations



Fig. 6.1 Governance and management, including co-sponsoring organisations, of StudentSurvey.ie

Appendix 2

Membership of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group

- | | |
|---|---|
| Jennifer Brennan,
Technological Higher Education Association (THEA) | Mary McNamara,
Technological University Dublin |
| Lucy Byrnes,
National University of Ireland, Galway | Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha,
StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager |
| Emer Cunningham,
University College Dublin | Lewis Purser,
Irish Universities Association (IUA) &
StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group |
| Mary Deasy,
Technological University Dublin | Mariana Reis,
Irish Research Council |
| Sara Dowling,
Postgrad Officer 2019–2020, Union
of Students in Ireland (USI) | Siobhán Sleeman,
Higher Education Authority (HEA) |
| Michael Frain,
University of Limerick | Joseph Stokes,
Dublin City University |
| Suzanne Guerin,
University College Dublin &
StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group | Nora Trench Bowles,
Irish Universities Association (IUA) &
StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group |

Appendix 3

Membership of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie national report editorial group

- | | |
|---|---|
| Emer Cunningham,
UCD & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group | Siobhán Nic Fhlannchadha,
StudentSurvey.ie Project Manager |
| Mary Deasy,
TU Dublin & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group | Lewis Purser,
IUA & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group
& StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group |
| Sara Dowling,
USI Postgrad Officer 2019–2020 & PGR
StudentSurvey.ie Working Group | Siobhán Sleeman,
HEA & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group |
| Suzanne Guerin,
UCD & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group
& StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group | Nora Trench Bowles,
IUA & PGR StudentSurvey.ie Working Group
& StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group |

Appendix 4

Participation in 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie

The following higher education institutions participated in 2019 PGR StudentSurvey.ie.

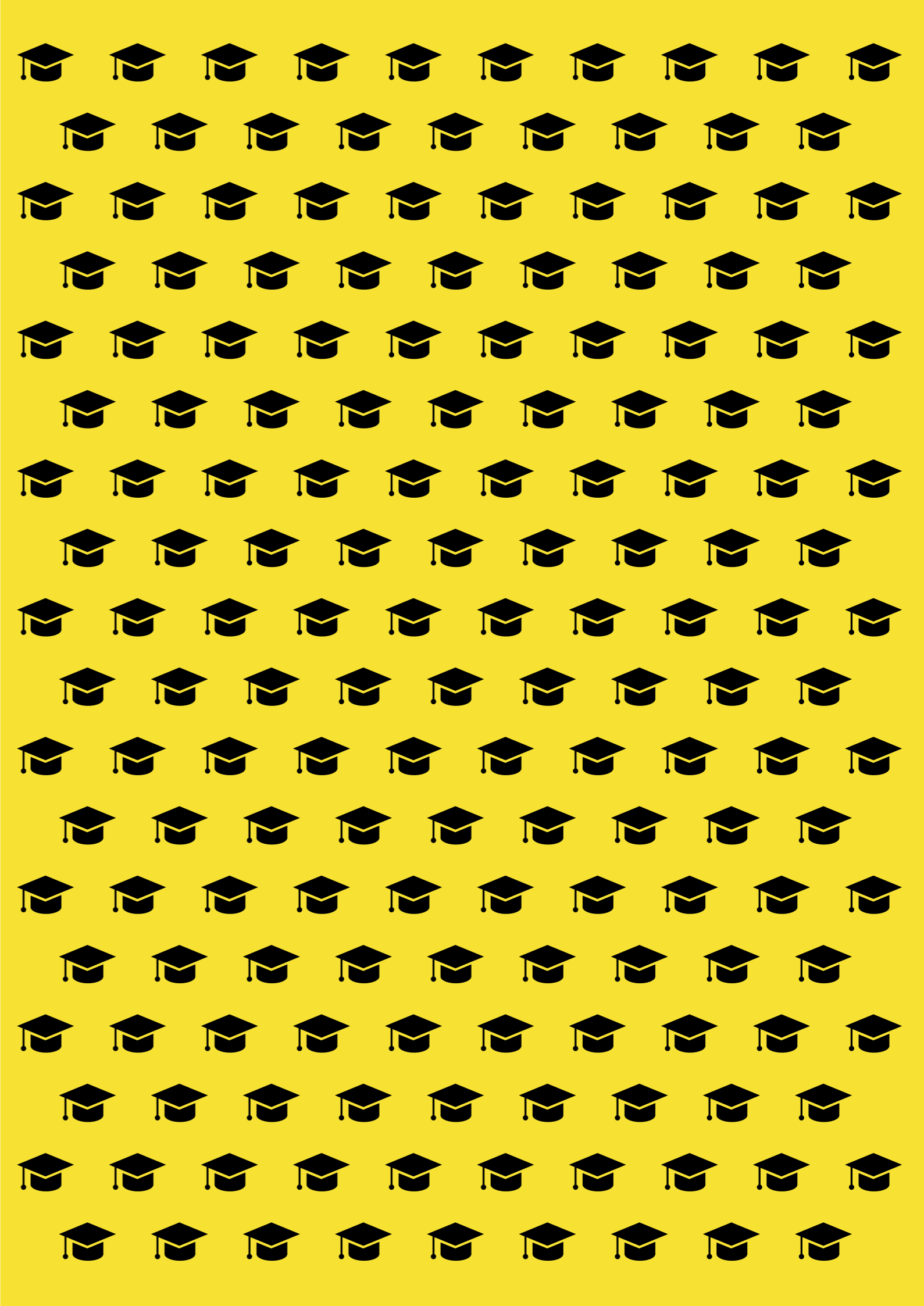
PGR cohort of greater than 250

- Dublin City University
- Maynooth University
- National University of Ireland Galway
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Limerick
- Technological University Dublin, Grangegorman & city*

PGR cohort of fewer than 250

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Cork Institute of Technology
- Dundalk Institute of Technology
- Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology
- Institute of Technology Carlow
- Institute of Technology Sligo
- Institute of Technology Tralee
- Letterkenny Institute of Technology
- Limerick Institute of Technology
- Technological University Dublin, Blanchardstown*
- Technological University Dublin, Tallaght*
- Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
- National College of Art and Design
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

*The three campuses of the Technological University Dublin were treated as three separate institutions for fieldwork in 2019. They will be treated as one institution hereafter.





studentsurvey.ie