



PGR StudentSurvey.ie
Etio - HEI Deliverables (Excel Files and Online Dashboard)
Methodological Note

Introduction

As part of the PGR StudentSurvey.ie outputs, the survey contractor (Etio) has provided institutions with high level data on the results of the survey.

- An excel spreadsheet with a number of tabs, relating to the response population, and responses to individual questions is provided.
- An online dashboard which facilitates more detailed analysis of the data is also provided.

This note sets out some considerations that HEIs should bear in mind when analysing the findings from this data.

Cohort size and response rate considerations

The PGR StudentSurvey.ie cohort includes masters research (level 9) and doctoral students (level 10). Nationally, according to HEA data, there were approximately 12,000 such students in higher education institutions in 2023/24. Appendix 1 to this document provides a breakdown, by HEI, of the number of masters research/doctoral enrolments for 2021/22 up to 2023/24.

PGR StudentSurvey.ie achieved a national response rate of 37% in 2025 and the total national dataset on which PGR StudentSurvey.ie analysis is based is 4,225. Response rates vary from HEI to HEI, with a range of 25% to 59%.

Therefore, HEIs should have regard to the overall size of the dataset provided, particularly for their own institution, and conclusions reached should take into account the response rate and size of the cohort being considered.

In the Etio data results, the sheet titled “1-Respondent Characteristics” provides the number of students in various groupings. These groupings include gender, domicile, field of study, mode of study and programme type.

Calculation of results

Statements and 5-point Likert scales

The majority of the questions in PGR StudentSurvey.ie are statements to which the student has to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement.

The response options are on a 5-point Likert scale of “definitely disagree”, “mostly disagree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “mostly agree” and “definitely agree”. An example of this is given below in relation to the statement “I have a suitable working space.”

Question	Responses	All PGR StudentSurvey.ie		
		All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I have a suitable working space	1 Definitely disagree	10.1	11.8	9.9
	2 Mostly disagree	8.8	8.7	8.8
	3 Neither agree nor disagree	7.8	9.0	7.7
	4 Mostly agree	30.4	32.4	30.2
	5 Definitely agree	42.9	38.2	43.4

Additionally, for these Likert scale questions, students can select the option of “Not applicable” and the student has the option to skip the question entirely (a null response).

Reporting from Etio excludes the last two of these options (“Not applicable” and null response) from the calculation of results i.e. “not applicable” and null response are excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students providing a response in each of the 5-points.

Research Infrastructure

Four questions in the *Research Infrastructure* section of the survey follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- I have a suitable working space
- There is adequate provision of computing resources / facilities
- There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical / online resources)
- I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research

Two further questions in the section relate to how the students research is funded, and what the student’s funding covers.

- My research is funded by...
- My funding covers...

For each of these questions, a variable is created which counts the number of times each student has provided *any* response to the question. Then the number of students identifying each particular response option is divided by this total number. So, for example, if 1,000 students provided any answer to the “My research is funded by...” question, this gives a total count of 1,000. If then 231 students identified “Scholarship”

within that, then 23.1% is the figure provided for Scholarship. Therefore, the total for all the response options can exceed 100%.

Supervision

Four questions in the Supervision section of the survey follow the format above.

- My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research
- I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs
- My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities
- My supervisor(s) help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher

A further question in the section relates to the number of supervisors.

- I am being supervised by...

This has three options “one supervisor”, “two supervisors” or “three or more supervisors”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question.

Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students with different numbers of supervisors.

Research Culture

All four questions in the *Research Culture* section of the survey follow the format above.

- My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme
- The research ambience in my department stimulates my work
- I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students
- I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department

Progress and Assessment

All four questions in the *Progress and Assessment* section of the survey follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- I received an appropriate induction / orientation to my research degree programme
- I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress
- I understand the required standard for my thesis
- The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me

Development Opportunities

This section includes 15 questions with the stem question, “Have you available of the following opportunities during your research programme...?” as follows:

- Agreeing a personal training or development plan
- Receiving training to develop my research skills
- Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills
- Receiving advice on career options

- Taking part in a placement or internship
- Attending an academic research conference
- Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference
- Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book
- Communicating your research to a non-academic audience
- Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation
- Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice e.g., submitting an invention disclosure or filing a patent application
- Working as part of a team
- Working collaboratively with industry
- Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation
- Spending time abroad (outside of the Republic of Ireland) as part of your research degree

There are three response options for each of these questions: “Yes”, “No” and “Not available”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question. Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students with different numbers of supervisors.

The following question:

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

Includes two response options, “Yes” and “No”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question.

Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students with different numbers of supervisors.

Two questions follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above:

- Do you agree or disagree that the teaching / demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?
- Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching / demonstration?

Reporting on these questions follows the format set out above for these types of questions.

Research Skills

All four questions in the *Research Skills* section of the survey follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme
- My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme
- My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme

- My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g., rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme

Other Transferable Skills

All four questions in the *Other Transferable Skills* section of the survey follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme
- My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme
- I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme
- I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme

Responsibilities and Supports

Four questions in the *Responsibilities and Supports* section of the survey follow the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student
- I am aware of my supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student
- Other than my supervisor(s), I know who to approach if I am concerned about any academic aspect of my research degree programme
- My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students

The following question:

- How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc)

Provides response options of “very little”, “some”, “quite a bit” and “very much”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question. Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students with different numbers of supervisors.

Motivations and Career

This section includes 9 questions with the stem question, “Please select your top three motivations for pursuing a research degree from the following list, and prioritise these by writing 1, 2 or 3 (1=highest, 3=lowest priority)” as follows:

- My interest in my subject
- Improving my career prospects for an academic / research career
- Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career
- I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor
- The funding was available
- It felt like a natural step for me
- I felt inspired to work with a particular academic
- Professional development or training
- Other (Please specify):

There are three response options for each of these questions: “Priority 1”, “Priority 2” and “Priority 3”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question. Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students identifying these options as priorities.

This section also includes 11 questions with the stem question, “Please select the top three types of career you have in mind for when you finish your research degree, and prioritise these by writing 1, 2 or 3 (1=highest, 3=lowest priority)” as follows:

- Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)
- Research career in higher education
- Other career in higher education
- Research career outside higher education (e.g., in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)
- Teaching (at a level below higher education)
- Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree
- Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree
- Self-employment (including setting up your own business)
- Any other professional career
- Not sure or not decided yet
- Other (Please specify):

For each of these questions, a variable is created which counts the number of times each student has provided *any* response to the question. Then the number of students identifying each particular response option (divided into 1st priority, 2nd priority and 3rd priority) is divided by this total number.

So, for example, if 1,000 students provided any answer to the “Please select the top three types of career you have in mind for when you finish your research degree” question, this gives a total count of 1,000.

If 150 students identified “The funding was available” as a 1st priority within that, then 15.0% is provided for “The funding was available – 1st priority”. Therefore, the total for all the response options do not necessarily sum to 100%.

Overall Experience

The following question:

- How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution? Provides response options of “poor”, “fair”, “good” and “excellent”. It is possible for a student to provide a null response to this question. Reporting from Etio excludes null response from the calculation of results i.e. null response is excluded from the denominator when calculating the percentage of students rating their experience.

One question in the *Overall Experience* section of the survey follows the format of *Statements and 5-point Likert scales* as given above.

- I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale

This section also includes 7 questions with the stem question, “Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme? [select all that apply]” as follows:

- No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing
- Yes, for financial reasons
- Yes, for personal or family reasons
- Yes, for health reasons
- Yes, for employment reasons
- Other (Please state)

For this question, a variable is created which counts the number of times each student has provided *any* NON NULL response to the question. Then the number of students identifying each particular response option is divided by this total number. So, for example, if 1,000 students provided any NON NULL answer to the “Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme?” question, this gives a total count of 1,000. If then 231 students identified “Yes, for financial reasons” within that, then 23.1% is the figure provided for “Yes, for financial reasons”. Therefore, the total for all the response options can exceed 100%. If 521 identified “No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing” within that, then 52.1% is the figure provided for “No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing.”

More detailed institutional data

Particularly for institutions with larger cohorts, the inherent value of PGR StudentSurvey.ie may be realised only by further disaggregation of the data. The project leaders wish to facilitate such additional disaggregation to the greatest extent possible whilst maintaining the integrity of the instrument and resulting data as experiences continue to build.

The StudentSurvey.ie Team will support bespoke presentation of institutional data confidentially and on request only. There is a short process to approve further access to institutional data by formally nominated contacts within the relevant institution(s). Institutional data is made available to Registrars who determine whatever further dissemination is appropriate within their own institutions.

Requests for further data should be sent to info@studentsurvey.ie.

Appendix 1
Masters Research and Doctoral Enrolments in HEIs

Institute	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
ATU Donegal	75	85	80
ATU Galway-Mayo	170	195	235
ATU Sligo	250	240	240
Dublin City University	855	880	900
Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology	10	5	0
Dundalk IT	75	110	85
MTU Cork	225	220	220
MTU Kerry	60	35	20
Mary Immaculate College, Limerick	190	185	185
Maynooth University	585	590	620
National College of Art and Design	15	15	20
Royal College of Surgeons	315	355	405
SETU Carlow	280	230	190
SETU Waterford	345	350	350
St. Angela's College of Home Economics, Sligo	5	10	10
TU Dublin Blanchardstown	25	10	0
TU Dublin City	560	650	660
TU Dublin Tallaght	60	10	0
TUS Athlone	180	190	185
TUS Limerick	180	165	170
Trinity College Dublin	1860	1835	1820
University College Cork	1405	1435	1440
University College Dublin	2005	2130	2190
University of Galway	1120	1160	1185
University of Limerick	1015	1065	1035
Total	11860	12160	12260

Source: <https://hea.ie/statistics/data-for-download-and-visualisations/access-our-data/Access%20our%20Data%20-%20Students/>