

PGR StudentSurvey.ie
(Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students)
Institution name: Technological University of the Shannon - Midlands
Results of PGR StudentSurvey.ie 2021

A: Context

PGR StudentSurvey.ie (Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students; Suirbhé na hÉireann ar Rannpháirtíocht na Mac Léinn do Mhic Léinn Taighde Iarchéime) invites responses from postgraduate research (PGR) students on a biennial survey cycle. PGR StudentSurvey.ie asks students directly about their experiences of higher education in Ireland, including their academic, personal, and social development. The survey takes place biennially in February – March and is open to Masters by Research (NFQ 9) and PhD students (NFQ 10). Twenty one higher education institutions participated in 2021.

Postgraduate research students are a vital group in the context of national research and innovation in Ireland and any strategy must include supporting and empowering these early career researchers. PGR students are a key cohort of researchers currently undertaking valuable research and are also the future talent who will lead research in the coming decades.

In 2021, in response to the COVID pandemic an additional seven questions were asked. The questions specifically addressed the impact of COVID-19 on students' experience of higher education. These results (published [here](#)) are separate to the established survey questions, but experiences of students during the pandemic may have affected the response of students to some of the standard individual questions which make up the results presented here.

The StudentSurvey.ie Steering Group regards the comprehensive nature of data gathered through PGR StudentSurvey.ie as a key strength. Interpretation of detailed results requires appreciation of the local context. This means that staff and students within individual institutions are best placed to own and to interrogate institution-level data. Accordingly, any queries about these data should be directed to the individual institution in question. Institutions are committed to interpreting and utilising PGR StudentSurvey.ie data to enhance the experiences of their research students and do not support the use of results for any overly simplistic purpose that could be perceived as ranking institutions.

No single aspect of the postgraduate researcher experience reflects the complex dimensions of student behaviour and institutional performance. Comparison of individual scores across institutions is inappropriate given that the differences with respect to mission, resources, profile and response rates. Comparison of scores for various disciplines in the national report illustrates the notable variation that exists between fields of study at national level. The proportion of students studying particular disciplines also influences the overall results for each institution.

Please note: Where the number of respondents is fewer than 10, the result is not provided, and N/A is used to indicate this.

Any queries relating to data for individual institutions should be referred to the institution in question. If there are any queries about these results, please contact Terry.twomey@tus.ie.

B: Responses to individual questions

Research Infrastructure and Facilities	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I have a suitable working space	Definitely disagree	9.7	10.3	9.4
	Mostly disagree	7.5	6.9	7.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.0	3.4	18.8
	Mostly agree	36.6	44.8	32.8
	Definitely agree	32.3	34.5	31.3
There is adequate provision of computing resources/ facilities	Definitely disagree	5.6	3.6	6.5
	Mostly disagree	10.0	3.6	12.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	10.0	10.7	9.7
	Mostly agree	37.8	50.0	32.3
	Definitely agree	36.7	32.1	38.7
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical/ online resources)	Definitely disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Mostly disagree	5.6	3.6	6.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.8	25.0	14.5
	Mostly agree	42.2	42.9	41.9
	Definitely agree	34.4	28.6	37.1
I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research	Definitely disagree	4.4	3.4	4.9
	Mostly disagree	8.9	3.4	11.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.8	20.7	16.4
	Mostly agree	43.3	41.4	44.3
	Definitely agree	25.6	31.0	23.0

	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My research is funded by (Please select all that apply)	Scholarship	71.1	64.5	74.2
	Scholarship (fees only)	3.1	3.2	3.0
	Self-funded	2.1	3.2	1.5
	Grant	23.7	25.8	22.7
	Employer-funded	11.3	9.7	12.1

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

	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My funding covers (Please select all that apply)	Fees	89.6	93.3	87.9
	Stipend	75.0	60.0	81.8
	Research materials	74.0	73.3	74.2
	Travel to conferences	68.8	70.0	68.2
	Other travel (labs / other institutions)	38.5	40.0	37.9
	Specialist training	40.6	36.7	42.4

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

Supervision	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am being supervised by...	One supervisor	11.3	12.9	10.6
	Two supervisors	51.5	54.8	50.0
	Three or more supervisors	37.1	32.3	39.4
My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research	Definitely disagree	3.1	3.2	3.1
	Mostly disagree	3.1	0.0	4.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	7.3	6.5	7.7
	Mostly agree	13.5	0.0	20.0
	Definitely agree	72.9	90.3	64.6
I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs	Definitely disagree	3.2	3.2	3.2
	Mostly disagree	2.1	0.0	3.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	3.2	6.5	1.6
	Mostly agree	20.2	9.7	25.4
	Definitely agree	71.3	80.6	66.7
My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities	Definitely disagree	3.2	3.3	3.1
	Mostly disagree	4.3	0.0	6.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.3	6.7	4.7
	Mostly agree	18.1	6.7	23.4
	Definitely agree	69.1	83.3	62.5
My supervisor(s) helps me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	Definitely disagree	4.2	6.5	3.1
	Mostly disagree	4.2	0.0	6.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	6.3	6.5	6.2
	Mostly agree	21.9	16.1	24.6
	Definitely agree	63.5	71.0	60.0

Research Culture	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme	Definitely disagree	5.3	3.3	6.2
	Mostly disagree	7.4	3.3	9.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.7	6.7	16.9
	Mostly agree	40.0	43.3	38.5
	Definitely agree	33.7	43.3	29.2
The research ambience in my department stimulates my work	Definitely disagree	7.5	6.5	8.1
	Mostly disagree	8.6	3.2	11.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.4	16.1	21.0
	Mostly agree	32.3	32.3	32.3
	Definitely agree	32.3	41.9	27.4
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	Definitely disagree	8.4	9.7	7.8
	Mostly disagree	17.9	9.7	21.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.9	19.4	17.2
	Mostly agree	28.4	16.1	34.4
	Definitely agree	27.4	45.2	18.8
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	Definitely disagree	5.3	3.2	6.3
	Mostly disagree	14.9	9.7	17.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	26.6	32.3	23.8
	Mostly agree	27.7	22.6	30.2
	Definitely agree	25.5	32.3	22.2

Progress and Assessment	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I received an appropriate induction/ orientation to my research degree programme	Definitely disagree	4.2	0.0	6.3
	Mostly disagree	11.6	12.9	10.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.7	9.7	17.2
	Mostly agree	40.0	41.9	39.1
	Definitely agree	29.5	35.5	26.6
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	Definitely disagree	1.0	0.0	1.5
	Mostly disagree	11.5	12.9	10.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.2	3.2	6.2
	Mostly agree	39.6	29.0	44.6
	Definitely agree	42.7	54.8	36.9
I understand the required standard for my thesis	Definitely disagree	3.1	3.2	3.1
	Mostly disagree	10.4	0.0	15.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	7.3	9.7	6.2
	Mostly agree	41.7	51.6	36.9
	Definitely agree	37.5	35.5	38.5
The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me	Definitely disagree	2.1	3.2	1.5
	Mostly disagree	12.4	0.0	18.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.3	12.9	10.6
	Mostly agree	38.1	41.9	36.4
	Definitely agree	36.1	41.9	33.3

Development Opportunities	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	Yes	58.3	58.1	58.5
	No	30.2	38.7	26.2
	Not available	11.5	3.2	15.4
Receiving training to develop my research skills	Yes	74.2	67.7	77.3
	No	22.7	29.0	19.7
	Not available	3.1	3.2	3.0
Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills	Yes	53.1	48.4	55.4
	No	40.6	48.4	36.9
	Not available	6.3	3.2	7.7
Receiving advice on career options	Yes	33.7	35.5	32.8
	No	55.8	54.8	56.3
	Not available	10.5	9.7	10.9
Taking part in a placement or internship	Yes	12.6	3.2	17.2
	No	66.3	77.4	60.9
	Not available	21.1	19.4	21.9
Attending an academic research conference	Yes	57.3	58.1	56.9
	No	36.5	32.3	38.5
	Not available	6.3	9.7	4.6
Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	Yes	53.6	38.7	60.6
	No	42.3	54.8	36.4
	Not available	4.1	6.5	3.0
Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	Yes	44.8	25.8	53.8
	No	51.0	64.5	44.6
	Not available	4.2	9.7	1.5
Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	Yes	50.0	48.4	50.8
	No	49.0	48.4	49.2
	Not available	1.0	3.2	0.0
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	Yes	17.7	6.5	23.1
	No	75.0	83.9	70.8
	Not available	7.3	9.7	6.2

Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice, e.g. submitting an invention disclosure or filing a patent	Yes	10.4	6.5	12.3
	No	79.2	80.6	78.5
	Not available	10.4	12.9	9.2
Working as part of a team	Yes	69.8	64.5	72.3
	No	30.2	35.5	27.7
	Not available	0.0	0.0	0.0
Working collaboratively with industry	Yes	31.3	19.4	36.9
	No	63.5	74.2	58.5
	Not available	5.2	6.5	4.6
Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation	Yes	18.9	23.3	16.9
	No	72.6	73.3	72.3
	Not available	8.4	3.3	10.8
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	Yes	16.7	6.5	21.5
	No	72.9	83.9	67.7
	Not available	10.4	9.7	10.8

	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme:	No	52.7	32.1	61.9
	Yes	47.3	67.9	38.1
Do you agree or disagree that the teaching/ demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?	Definitely disagree	6.9	5.0	7.7
	Mostly disagree	4.2	5.0	3.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.1	15.0	9.6
	Mostly agree	16.7	10.0	19.2
	Definitely agree	61.1	65.0	59.6
Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching/ demonstration?	Definitely disagree	7.7	5.9	8.3
	Mostly disagree	12.3	0.0	16.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	15.4	11.8	16.7
	Mostly agree	32.3	47.1	27.1
	Definitely agree	32.3	35.3	31.3

Research Skills	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	2.2	3.6	1.5
	Mostly disagree	5.4	0.0	7.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	4.3	3.6	4.6
	Mostly agree	37.6	35.7	38.5
	Definitely agree	50.5	57.1	47.7
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	2.2	3.6	1.6
	Mostly disagree	3.3	0.0	4.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	8.7	10.7	7.8
	Mostly agree	38.0	32.1	40.6
	Definitely agree	47.8	53.6	45.3
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	3.2	3.6	3.1
	Mostly disagree	6.5	7.1	6.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.0	10.7	15.4
	Mostly agree	40.9	39.3	41.5
	Definitely agree	35.5	39.3	33.8
My understanding of research integrity (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Mostly disagree	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Neither agree nor disagree	3.3	7.1	1.6
	Mostly agree	41.3	32.1	45.3
	Definitely agree	54.3	60.7	51.6

Transferable skills	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	7.8	3.8	9.4
	Mostly disagree	8.9	0.0	12.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.1	7.7	12.5
	Mostly agree	40.0	46.2	37.5
	Definitely agree	32.2	42.3	28.1
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	10.1	8.0	10.9
	Mostly disagree	11.2	4.0	14.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	10.1	4.0	12.5
	Mostly agree	36.0	36.0	35.9
	Definitely agree	32.6	48.0	26.6
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	Definitely disagree	11.0	3.7	14.1
	Mostly disagree	8.8	18.5	4.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.8	11.1	23.4
	Mostly agree	30.8	22.2	34.4
	Definitely agree	29.7	44.4	23.4
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	Definitely disagree	9.0	3.8	11.1
	Mostly disagree	7.9	11.5	6.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	10.1	11.5	9.5
	Mostly agree	34.8	23.1	39.7
	Definitely agree	38.2	50.0	33.3

Responsibilities and Supports	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	1.1	3.4	0.0
	Mostly disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.4	0.0	7.8
	Mostly agree	35.5	37.9	34.4
	Definitely agree	57.0	58.6	56.3
I am aware of my supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	2.2	3.4	1.6
	Mostly disagree	4.3	0.0	6.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Mostly agree	40.9	44.8	39.1
	Definitely agree	51.6	51.7	51.6
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	3.2	0.0	4.6
	Mostly disagree	10.6	10.3	10.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.7	3.4	15.4
	Mostly agree	27.7	27.6	27.7
	Definitely agree	46.8	58.6	41.5
How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.)	Very little	13.5	7.7	15.9
	Some	52.8	65.4	47.6
	Quite a bit	21.3	11.5	25.4
	Very much	12.4	15.4	11.1
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	Definitely disagree	2.2	3.6	1.6
	Mostly disagree	14.4	21.4	11.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	21.1	14.3	24.2
	Mostly agree	33.3	32.1	33.9
	Definitely agree	28.9	28.6	29.0

Personal Outlook	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am satisfied with my life nowadays	Definitely disagree	7.4	6.9	7.7
	Mostly disagree	11.7	10.3	12.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	22.3	24.1	21.5
	Mostly agree	36.2	37.9	35.4
	Definitely agree	22.3	20.7	23.1
I am satisfied with my life within my institution nowadays	Definitely disagree	4.3	0.0	6.3
	Mostly disagree	9.7	6.9	10.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.4	13.8	21.9
	Mostly agree	44.1	44.8	43.8
	Definitely agree	22.6	34.5	17.2
I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Definitely disagree	12.9	3.4	17.2
	Mostly disagree	19.4	27.6	15.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	18.3	17.2	18.8
	Mostly agree	30.1	24.1	32.8
	Definitely agree	19.4	27.6	15.6
There is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems	Definitely disagree	5.6	3.6	6.6
	Mostly disagree	18.0	10.7	21.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	20.2	17.9	21.3
	Mostly agree	33.7	32.1	34.4
	Definitely agree	22.5	35.7	16.4
I feel that my research degree programme is worthwhile	Definitely disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Mostly disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	4.3	6.9	3.1
	Mostly agree	37.6	20.7	45.3
	Definitely agree	55.9	72.4	48.4

Motivations	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My interest in my subject	1 st priority	28.0	31.0	26.6
	2 nd priority	20.4	24.1	18.8
	3 rd priority	10.8	3.4	14.1
Improving my career prospects for an academic/ research career	1 st priority	32.3	20.7	37.5
	2 nd priority	23.7	24.1	23.4
	3 rd priority	15.1	17.2	14.1
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/ research career	1 st priority	9.7	10.3	9.4
	2 nd priority	15.1	10.3	17.2
	3 rd priority	9.7	10.3	9.4
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/ supervisor	1 st priority	6.5	17.2	1.6
	2 nd priority	1.1	0.0	1.6
	3 rd priority	11.8	13.8	10.9
The funding was available	1 st priority	4.3	6.9	3.1
	2 nd priority	15.1	17.2	14.1
	3 rd priority	16.1	13.8	17.2
It felt like a natural step for me	1 st priority	8.6	6.9	9.4
	2 nd priority	7.5	13.8	4.7
	3 rd priority	10.8	6.9	12.5
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	1 st priority	2.2	0.0	3.1
	2 nd priority	2.2	3.4	1.6
	3 rd priority	7.5	10.3	6.3
Professional development or training	1 st priority	5.4	3.4	6.3
	2 nd priority	11.8	3.4	15.6
	3 rd priority	12.9	17.2	10.9
Other	1 st priority	3.2	3.4	3.1
	2 nd priority	2.2	3.4	1.6
	3 rd priority	3.2	6.9	1.6

Career Aspirations	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)	1 st priority	38.7	55.2	31.3
	2 nd priority	23.7	20.7	25.0
	3 rd priority	15.1	13.8	15.6
Research career in higher education	1 st priority	19.4	3.4	26.6
	2 nd priority	22.6	27.6	20.3
	3 rd priority	12.9	20.7	9.4
Other career in higher education	1 st priority	3.2	3.4	3.1
	2 nd priority	8.6	20.7	3.1
	3 rd priority	10.8	10.3	10.9
Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)	1 st priority	12.9	3.4	17.2
	2 nd priority	18.3	13.8	20.3
	3 rd priority	15.1	10.3	17.2
Teaching (at a level below higher education)	1 st priority	2.2	6.9	0.0
	2 nd priority	3.2	3.4	3.1
	3 rd priority	6.5	6.9	6.3
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree	1 st priority	5.4	10.3	3.1
	2 nd priority	4.3	0.0	6.3
	3 rd priority	1.1	3.4	0.0
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree	1 st priority	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2 nd priority	1.1	0.0	1.6
	3 rd priority	4.3	6.9	3.1
Self-employment (including setting up your own business)	1 st priority	4.3	6.9	3.1
	2 nd priority	4.3	3.4	4.7
	3 rd priority	9.7	13.8	7.8
Any other professional career	1 st priority	3.2	3.4	3.1
	2 nd priority	6.5	3.4	7.8
	3 rd priority	10.8	3.4	14.1
Not sure or not decided yet	1 st priority	10.8	6.9	12.5
	2 nd priority	1.1	3.4	0.0
	3 rd priority	5.4	3.4	6.3
Other	1 st priority	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2 nd priority	1.1	0.0	1.6
	3 rd priority	2.2	3.4	1.6

Overall Experience	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution?	Poor	3.2	3.4	3.1
	Fair	10.6	3.4	13.8
	Good	54.3	55.2	53.8
	Excellent	31.9	37.9	29.2
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	Definitely disagree	1.1	0.0	1.6
	Mostly disagree	12.9	17.2	10.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	15.1	10.3	17.2
	Mostly agree	44.1	41.4	45.3
	Definitely agree	26.9	31.0	25.0
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme? (Select all that apply)	No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing	64.9	58.6	67.7
	Yes, for financial reasons	3.2	0.0	4.6
	Yes, for personal or family reasons	20.2	34.5	13.8
	Yes, for health reasons	5.3	6.9	4.6
	Yes, for employment reasons	3.2	0.0	4.6
	Yes, to transfer to another institution	4.3	3.4	4.6
	Other (please state)	5.3	0.0	7.7