

PGR StudentSurvey.ie
(Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students)
Institution name: University of Limerick
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 provost@ul.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	6.6	0.0	6.9
	Mostly disagree	9.3	0.0	9.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.9	27.3	11.3
	Mostly agree	35.8	36.4	35.7
	Definitely agree	36.4	36.4	36.4
There is adequate provision of computing resources/ facilities	Definitely disagree	4.7	N/A	4.9
	Mostly disagree	6.7	N/A	6.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.2	N/A	16.0
	Mostly agree	35.7	N/A	36.8
	Definitely agree	36.7	N/A	35.8
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical/ online resources)	Definitely disagree	3.1	N/A	2.8
	Mostly disagree	8.8	N/A	9.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.9	N/A	14.0
	Mostly agree	40.5	N/A	40.2
	Definitely agree	33.7	N/A	33.9
I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research	Definitely disagree	5.1	N/A	5.3
	Mostly disagree	10.2	N/A	10.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	15.7	N/A	15.1
	Mostly agree	41.6	N/A	41.9
	Definitely agree	27.3	N/A	27.5

	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My research is funded by (Please select all that apply)	Scholarship	56.8	38.5	57.6
	Scholarship (fees only)	12.6	7.7	12.8
	Self-funded	16.8	38.5	15.8
	Grant	17.1	7.7	17.5
	Employer-funded	10.6	15.4	10.4

* 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	95.5	70.0	96.4
	Stipend	68.9	40.0	69.9
	Research materials	49.3	40.0	49.6
	Travel to conferences	50.0	30.0	50.7
	Other travel (labs / other institutions)	30.8	20.0	31.2
	Specialist training	28.0	10.0	28.6

* 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	32.8	15.4	33.6
	Two supervisors	54.5	61.5	54.2
	Three or more supervisors	12.7	23.1	12.2
My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research	Definitely disagree	1.7	0.0	1.7
	Mostly disagree	3.3	0.0	3.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	7.0	0.0	7.3
	Mostly agree	22.7	25.0	22.6
	Definitely agree	65.3	75.0	64.9
I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs	Definitely disagree	2.3	0.0	2.4
	Mostly disagree	4.4	0.0	4.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	6.0	0.0	6.3
	Mostly agree	25.8	25.0	25.9
	Definitely agree	61.4	75.0	60.8
My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities	Definitely disagree	0.7	0.0	0.7
	Mostly disagree	5.0	0.0	5.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.4	0.0	5.6
	Mostly agree	22.8	25.0	22.7
	Definitely agree	66.1	75.0	65.7
My supervisor(s) helps me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	Definitely disagree	3.7	0.0	3.9
	Mostly disagree	9.4	8.3	9.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	9.4	8.3	9.5
	Mostly agree	28.3	16.7	28.8
	Definitely agree	49.2	66.7	48.4

Research Culture	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme	Definitely disagree	3.8	N/A	3.5
	Mostly disagree	7.5	N/A	7.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	16.0	N/A	16.2
	Mostly agree	38.9	N/A	39.8
	Definitely agree	33.8	N/A	33.1
The research ambience in my department stimulates my work	Definitely disagree	5.9	N/A	6.1
	Mostly disagree	10.8	N/A	10.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	20.3	N/A	19.5
	Mostly agree	37.8	N/A	38.6
	Definitely agree	25.2	N/A	24.9
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	Definitely disagree	8.7	18.2	8.3
	Mostly disagree	20.7	27.3	20.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	20.1	27.3	19.8
	Mostly agree	31.1	18.2	31.6
	Definitely agree	19.4	9.1	19.8
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	Definitely disagree	8.7	0.0	9.0
	Mostly disagree	15.4	36.4	14.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	24.1	27.3	24.0
	Mostly agree	33.8	9.1	34.7
	Definitely agree	18.1	27.3	17.7

Progress and Assessment	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I received an appropriate induction/ orientation to my research degree programme	Definitely disagree	7.4	0.0	7.7
	Mostly disagree	11.8	25.0	11.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	12.1	8.3	12.3
	Mostly agree	38.4	33.3	38.6
	Definitely agree	30.3	33.3	30.2
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	Definitely disagree	2.0	0.0	2.1
	Mostly disagree	7.0	8.3	7.0
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.0	0.0	5.2
	Mostly agree	43.1	33.3	43.6
	Definitely agree	42.8	58.3	42.2
I understand the required standard for my thesis	Definitely disagree	2.0	8.3	1.7
	Mostly disagree	6.4	0.0	6.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	10.7	25.0	10.1
	Mostly agree	45.5	8.3	47.0
	Definitely agree	35.5	58.3	34.5
The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me	Definitely disagree	3.0	8.3	2.8
	Mostly disagree	10.4	16.7	10.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	12.8	0.0	13.3
	Mostly agree	43.0	33.3	43.4
	Definitely agree	30.9	41.7	30.4

Development Opportunities	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	Yes	42.2	25.0	42.9
	No	42.5	58.3	41.8
	Not available	15.3	16.7	15.2
Receiving training to develop my research skills	Yes	79.0	41.7	80.6
	No	18.3	41.7	17.3
	Not available	2.7	16.7	2.1
Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills	Yes	68.7	50.0	69.5
	No	27.6	41.7	27.0
	Not available	3.7	8.3	3.5
Receiving advice on career options	Yes	42.5	25.0	43.3
	No	51.0	58.3	50.7
	Not available	6.5	16.7	6.0
Taking part in a placement or internship	Yes	15.6	0.0	16.3
	No	62.7	75.0	62.2
	Not available	21.7	25.0	21.6
Attending an academic research conference	Yes	67.5	50.0	68.2
	No	28.5	33.3	28.3
	Not available	4.1	16.7	3.5
Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	Yes	59.5	41.7	60.3
	No	35.7	50.0	35.1
	Not available	4.8	8.3	4.6
Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	Yes	52.7	25.0	53.9
	No	43.2	66.7	42.2
	Not available	4.1	8.3	3.9
Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	Yes	43.5	33.3	43.9
	No	51.4	58.3	51.1
	Not available	5.1	8.3	5.0
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	Yes	13.7	16.7	13.5
	No	71.7	75.0	71.5
	Not available	14.7	8.3	14.9

Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice, e.g. submitting an invention disclosure or filing a patent	Yes	11.3	8.3	11.4
	No	73.4	83.3	73.0
	Not available	15.4	8.3	15.7
Working as part of a team	Yes	68.4	58.3	68.8
	No	25.9	25.0	25.9
	Not available	5.8	16.7	5.3
Working collaboratively with industry	Yes	29.5	33.3	29.3
	No	56.2	58.3	56.1
	Not available	14.4	8.3	14.6
Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation	Yes	21.7	8.3	22.3
	No	67.2	66.7	67.3
	Not available	11.0	25.0	10.4
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	Yes	20.9	8.3	21.4
	No	67.5	75.0	67.1
	Not available	11.6	16.7	11.4

	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme:	No	66.1	30.0	67.4
	Yes	33.9	70.0	32.6
Do you agree or disagree that the teaching/ demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?	Definitely disagree	9.6	N/A	9.9
	Mostly disagree	8.3	N/A	8.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.8	N/A	13.1
	Mostly agree	29.8	N/A	30.0
	Definitely agree	38.5	N/A	38.5
Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching/ demonstration?	Definitely disagree	7.2	N/A	7.4
	Mostly disagree	13.6	N/A	13.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	23.1	N/A	22.7
	Mostly agree	36.7	N/A	37.5
	Definitely agree	19.5	N/A	19.0

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	1.0	0.0	1.1
	Mostly disagree	2.8	0.0	2.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	9.1	8.3	9.1
	Mostly agree	35.0	41.7	34.7
	Definitely agree	52.1	50.0	52.2
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.0	0.0	1.1
	Mostly disagree	3.5	8.3	3.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.2	8.3	11.3
	Mostly agree	33.2	41.7	32.8
	Definitely agree	51.0	41.7	51.5
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	3.5	0.0	3.6
	Mostly disagree	5.9	8.3	5.8
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.2	25.0	10.6
	Mostly agree	37.8	25.0	38.3
	Definitely agree	41.6	41.7	41.6
My understanding of research integrity (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	0.7	0.0	0.7
	Mostly disagree	3.5	0.0	3.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.3	0.0	5.5
	Mostly agree	34.4	41.7	34.1
	Definitely agree	56.1	58.3	56.0

Transferable skills	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.4	0.0	1.4
	Mostly disagree	4.5	0.0	4.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.9	16.7	13.8
	Mostly agree	41.7	58.3	40.9
	Definitely agree	38.5	25.0	39.1
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.1	0.0	1.1
	Mostly disagree	6.4	16.7	5.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	15.5	16.7	15.5
	Mostly agree	36.4	33.3	36.5
	Definitely agree	40.6	33.3	41.0
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	Definitely disagree	2.8	0.0	2.9
	Mostly disagree	7.7	8.3	7.7
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.9	33.3	17.2
	Mostly agree	33.3	16.7	34.1
	Definitely agree	38.2	41.7	38.1
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	Definitely disagree	1.7	0.0	1.8
	Mostly disagree	3.8	8.3	3.6
	Neither agree nor disagree	13.6	8.3	13.9
	Mostly agree	36.4	50.0	35.8
	Definitely agree	44.4	33.3	44.9

Responsibilities and Supports	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	0.7	0.0	0.7
	Mostly disagree	2.4	0.0	2.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	2.8	0.0	2.9
	Mostly agree	41.5	41.7	41.5
	Definitely agree	52.6	58.3	52.3
I am aware of my supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	Definitely disagree	0.7	0.0	0.7
	Mostly disagree	6.9	0.0	7.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	5.2	0.0	5.4
	Mostly agree	37.7	41.7	37.5
	Definitely agree	49.5	58.3	49.1
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	7.3	8.3	7.3
	Mostly disagree	14.0	8.3	14.2
	Neither agree nor disagree	14.3	25.0	13.9
	Mostly agree	32.9	25.0	33.2
	Definitely agree	31.5	33.3	31.4
How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.)	Very little	14.5	25.0	14.1
	Some	51.6	58.3	51.3
	Quite a bit	23.6	16.7	24.0
	Very much	10.2	0.0	10.6
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	Definitely disagree	7.8	16.7	7.4
	Mostly disagree	8.2	0.0	8.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	33.7	50.0	33.0
	Mostly agree	33.7	16.7	34.4
	Definitely agree	16.7	16.7	16.7

Personal Outlook	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
I am satisfied with my life nowadays	Definitely disagree	6.3	0.0	6.5
	Mostly disagree	13.5	0.0	14.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.4	18.2	17.3
	Mostly agree	47.2	36.4	47.7
	Definitely agree	15.6	45.5	14.4
I am satisfied with my life within my institution nowadays	Definitely disagree	3.8	0.0	4.0
	Mostly disagree	15.7	9.1	15.9
	Neither agree nor disagree	18.5	27.3	18.1
	Mostly agree	44.3	18.2	45.3
	Definitely agree	17.8	45.5	16.7
I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Definitely disagree	10.7	9.1	10.7
	Mostly disagree	24.6	27.3	24.4
	Neither agree nor disagree	17.8	18.2	17.8
	Mostly agree	36.3	36.4	36.3
	Definitely agree	10.7	9.1	10.7
There is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems	Definitely disagree	13.4	27.3	12.9
	Mostly disagree	19.1	9.1	19.5
	Neither agree nor disagree	20.8	27.3	20.6
	Mostly agree	32.5	9.1	33.5
	Definitely agree	14.1	27.3	13.6
I feel that my research degree programme is worthwhile	Definitely disagree	2.4	0.0	2.5
	Mostly disagree	3.1	0.0	3.3
	Neither agree nor disagree	8.3	16.7	8.0
	Mostly agree	35.8	41.7	35.5
	Definitely agree	50.3	41.7	50.7

Motivations	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
My interest in my subject	1 st priority	40.5	33.3	40.8
	2 nd priority	23.5	33.3	23.1
	3 rd priority	12.1	0.0	12.6
Improving my career prospects for an academic/ research career	1 st priority	23.9	8.3	24.5
	2 nd priority	24.6	33.3	24.2
	3 rd priority	14.5	0.0	15.2
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/ research career	1 st priority	14.9	16.7	14.8
	2 nd priority	10.4	0.0	10.8
	3 rd priority	9.7	41.7	8.3
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/ supervisor	1 st priority	2.4	16.7	1.8
	2 nd priority	8.7	0.0	9.0
	3 rd priority	9.7	0.0	10.1
The funding was available	1 st priority	3.1	0.0	3.2
	2 nd priority	10.7	16.7	10.5
	3 rd priority	17.0	16.7	17.0
It felt like a natural step for me	1 st priority	7.6	0.0	7.9
	2 nd priority	6.2	0.0	6.5
	3 rd priority	17.0	8.3	17.3
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	1 st priority	1.7	0.0	1.8
	2 nd priority	4.8	0.0	5.1
	3 rd priority	5.5	16.7	5.1
Professional development or training	1 st priority	5.2	25.0	4.3
	2 nd priority	10.4	16.7	10.1
	3 rd priority	13.8	16.7	13.7
Other	1 st priority	0.7	0.0	0.7
	2 nd priority	0.3	0.0	0.4
	3 rd priority	0.3	0.0	0.4

Career Aspirations	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)	1 st priority	47.2	8.3	48.9
	2 nd priority	15.6	33.3	14.9
	3 rd priority	11.1	8.3	11.2
Research career in higher education	1 st priority	8.0	8.3	8.0
	2 nd priority	34.0	16.7	34.8
	3 rd priority	10.1	8.3	10.1
Other career in higher education	1 st priority	0.7	0.0	0.7
	2 nd priority	2.4	16.7	1.8
	3 rd priority	10.1	8.3	10.1
Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)	1 st priority	20.1	8.3	20.7
	2 nd priority	14.2	16.7	14.1
	3 rd priority	14.9	16.7	14.9
Teaching (at a level below higher education)	1 st priority	2.1	33.3	0.7
	2 nd priority	4.9	0.0	5.1
	3 rd priority	8.7	8.3	8.7
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree	1 st priority	3.8	8.3	3.6
	2 nd priority	6.3	0.0	6.5
	3 rd priority	2.8	0.0	2.9
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree	1 st priority	2.4	25.0	1.4
	2 nd priority	2.4	0.0	2.5
	3 rd priority	4.5	8.3	4.3
Self-employment (including setting up your own business)	1 st priority	4.2	0.0	4.3
	2 nd priority	7.6	8.3	7.6
	3 rd priority	9.0	8.3	9.1
Any other professional career	1 st priority	3.8	8.3	3.6
	2 nd priority	5.9	0.0	6.2
	3 rd priority	10.8	16.7	10.5
Not sure or not decided yet	1 st priority	5.9	0.0	6.2
	2 nd priority	1.7	0.0	1.8
	3 rd priority	9.4	8.3	9.4
Other	1 st priority	1.7	0.0	1.8
	2 nd priority	0.3	0.0	0.4
	3 rd priority	2.1	0.0	2.2

Overall Experience	Responses	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution?	Poor	5.5	8.3	5.4
	Fair	15.2	8.3	15.5
	Good	48.1	58.3	47.7
	Excellent	31.1	25.0	31.4
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	Definitely disagree	6.6	0.0	6.9
	Mostly disagree	13.9	8.3	14.1
	Neither agree nor disagree	8.3	16.7	8.0
	Mostly agree	41.7	66.7	40.6
	Definitely agree	29.5	8.3	30.4
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme? (Select all that apply)	No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing	65.7	58.3	66.1
	Yes, for financial reasons	14.9	16.7	14.8
	Yes, for personal or family reasons	12.5	25.0	11.9
	Yes, for health reasons	6.9	0.0	7.2
	Yes, for employment reasons	4.5	0.0	4.7
	Yes, to transfer to another institution	3.1	0.0	3.2
	Other (please state)	6.9	0.0	7.2