



PRES 2015

The research student journey

Dr Gosia Turner

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1. Quick facts about PRES 2015

The first biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) survey was launched by the HEA in 2007 and became the 'industry standard' for collecting information about the experience of the UK postgraduate research students. PRES 2015 took place in 123 higher education institutions (HEIs) across the UK. PRES is an online census-type survey and in 2015 contacted almost the entire population of postgraduate research students in the UK. The fieldwork took place between 2 March and 14 May 2015. There were 53,348 responses collected and the response rate was 41%. The PRES survey covers a wide range of postgraduate research students including 'traditional' doctorates, professional doctorates, MPhil (with and without a transfer to PhD) and Masters by research. All PRES data have been collected using the BOS online survey tool.¹

PRES is designed for enhancement, aiming to inform discussions and decisions about improvements to the experience of postgraduate researchers. Institutional-level results are confidential and cannot be used to inform any league tables. This gives institutions the freedom to treat survey results as useful but partial indicators of where things might be going well and not so well. Their effective use in enhancement requires interpretation in conjunction with other more detailed (often qualitative) information from students and staff. Nonetheless, comparing results can help institutions and subject areas understand where they might need to focus. PRES participants have access to a number of benchmarking groups, enabling comparisons with peer HEIs and aspirational HEIs, while keeping individual results confidential. In 2015, the benchmarking groups were: Russell Group, 1994 Group, Million+, Small and specialist, Pre-1992, post-1992, GuildHE, University Alliance, Scotland and Wales.

Key features of PRES:

- fully tested, standard online survey instrument;
- enhancement focus;
- institutions can add their own questions;
- implemented locally;
- minimum technical knowledge required;
- institutional results are confidential;
- benchmarking groups are available.

In 2013 the PRES questionnaire was redesigned. It became shorter, more focused and more in line with Vitae's Researcher Development Framework (RDF).² Details of the redesign can be found in the 2013 PRES report³ alongside the survey results for that year.

The current PRES questionnaire covers the following seven core areas of postgraduate research experience:

1. **Supervision:** questions relating to the supervisory relationship including supervisor's knowledge and skills.
2. **Responsibilities:** questions relating to student and supervisor responsibilities.
3. **Resources:** questions asking about working space, library provision etc.
4. **Research skills:** questions relating to tools, methodologies, creativity and research integrity.
5. **Research culture:** questions on issues around departmental community and research ambience.
6. **Professional development:** questions relating to project management and transferable skills.
7. **Progress and assessment:** questions about monitoring progress and procedures regarding the thesis.

¹ www.onlinesurveys.ac.uk

² www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

³ www.heacademy.ac.uk/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-pres-2013

2. Executive summary

- PRES 2015 was administered in 123 HEIs across the UK between 2 March and 14 May and it attracted 53,348 responses from research students. The sample is broadly representative of the UK research students' population (compared to HESA data). The response rate was 41%;
- the PRES 2015 report focuses on the student journey as a researcher;
- the vast majority of students (82%) agreed that they are satisfied with their experience of the research programme. As in previous years students rate their research skills development and supervision (86% agree with scales questions) the highest. Research culture is rated the lowest (66% agree with scale items);
- one student in five (20%) said their programme is delivered as a part of a doctoral training centre (DTC). Over one-third of students did not know if their course was part of a DTC;
- just over a half of research students come to do a PhD straight after finishing their previous studies. Almost 40% come to do a PhD from a working environment in a non-research role. Three-quarters of PhD students receive some type of funding, most likely directly from a HEI or research council;
- the main motivation to commence a PhD programme is interest in the subject. This is the most important motivation for younger and older students. Middle-aged students are frequently motivated by the improvement of their career prospects;
- just over 60% of respondents envisage a career in academia. This tends to decrease slightly through their studies, offset by an increase in 'any other professional career'. However, the motivations and future career plans are very closely aligned and they are stable over time. This suggests that students undertaking postgraduate research degree have clear career goals;
- there are some differences between disciplines and future career plans. In the broad terms Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Health students are more focused on a research career (in and outside of academia) while Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences students are more focused on teaching or research and teaching career in academia;
- students experience a range of opportunities during the course of their studies. The most popular are: training to develop research skills (77%), attending a conference (72%) and presenting at a conference (59%). Just over 3% of all students (1,600) stated they have not experienced any of the suggested opportunities. They are more likely to be part-time, self-funded and from outside the UK suggesting these are the more vulnerable groups when it comes to making the most of their studies;
- access to opportunities seems to be broadly the same for various demographics groups. Nevertheless, being a funded student increases chances of attending and presenting at the conference. Funded students also tend to receive more training to develop their research and transferable skills than their self-funded colleagues;
- moreover, female students are less likely to submit a paper into a research journal compared to male students. Factors measured by the PRES questionnaire (including discipline studied) failed to explain this difference and that means it may be linked to something else such as confidence levels;
- those who were not proficient in English at the beginning of their course were less likely to attend and present at conferences or submit to a journal. At the same time they received more training to develop their skillset;
- survey results show a reassuring pattern that students experience various opportunities when they should experience them. That is, they tend to receive various training towards the beginning of their course, while

they attend conferences, submit to a journal or receive career advice later in their studies. The pattern is the same for full-time and part-time students;

- > the experience of teaching and demonstrating seems to be an important factor affecting the professional development of research students. It especially improves communication skills;
- > development of research skills, research culture, presenting at a conference and submitting into a journal are the most important factors affecting the professional development of a research student;
- > eight in ten students are confident they will finish their programme in time. This figure is the same for full-time and part-time students. However, part-time students seem to lose their confidence as they progress in their studies to a greater extent than full-time students, especially after year four of their programme;
- > the most important factors affecting the confidence to submit on time are the development of research skills and supervision.

3. Introduction

This report presents the results from the most recent Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). The PRES survey was administered in 123 HEIs across the UK. In total 53,348 responses were received. There was good representation from different institutions. According to the most recent Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data,⁴ there are 111,495 research students in the UK. PRES contacted the vast majority of them and collected responses from two fifths of all research students in the UK. That makes PRES data set the largest survey of this kind available, and the results paint a fairly comprehensive picture of the postgraduate research student population in the UK.⁵

The survey results remain very stable over time and this report is a slight change to the previous PRES reports. Instead of focusing on the general PRES results, it looks at the research student journey. It looks at the survey results through the lens of the Research Development Framework (RDF) and follows the students from their first days on the programme. It investigates their activity prior to commencing their studies and looks at their motivations and career plans. It investigates what opportunities they experience during the course of their studies and what impact these have on their development as researchers. The analysis involves looking at what factors affect the professional development of research students and, finally, what factors increase students' confidence that they can finish their programme within the agreed timescale.

The main focus is on questions asking about which typical opportunities (see adjacent box) research students experienced during the course of their programme and how these opportunities impacted their development as a researcher. The report also investigates the English language skills of research students and how they can impair/improve access to various opportunities presented to students during their programme.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Section 4 contains the top line results from the survey and compares those with PRES 2013. Section 5 provides information on the PRES population, the representativeness of the sample and its demographic profile. This is followed by the main section of this report presenting the overall research student's journey. PRES 2015 questionnaire and the statistical note are included in the appendices. In addition to this written report, 'the data appendix' with full PRES results broken down by various demographic groups in an excel format is available to download online.⁶

Which opportunities research students experienced:

- > agreeing a personal training or development plan;
- > receiving training to develop research skills;
- > receiving training to develop 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 a conference;
- > submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal;
- > communication research to a non-academic audience.

3.1 Acknowledgments

The HEA would like to thank all participating HEIs for their involvement in the survey. Special thanks go to PRES officers and their colleagues who worked on the implementation of the survey in their institutions and to all postgraduate researchers who took time to complete PRES questionnaire this year.

⁴ Postgraduate research population 2013–14.

⁵ Please note that HESA excludes from their 'postgraduate research' category Masters by research, MPhil and professional doctorates that are covered by the PRES survey.

⁶ www.heacademy.ac.uk/resource/postgraduate-research-experience-survey-2015

Gosia Turner would like to thank to Alex Buckley and Jason Leman for their insightful comments on drafts of this report. She would also like to thank Darren Colquhoun from BOS for his help with raw PRES data.

3.2 About the author

Dr Gosia Turner is a Senior Statistical Analyst working for the Student Data Management and Analysis team at the University of Oxford. Previously she worked as the Survey Co-ordinator at the Higher Education Academy where she participated in creating PTES, PRES and other student surveys. In her Oxford capacity she was also involved in the pilot phase of the UKES survey and conducted pilots for NSEE and SERU surveys. She holds a PhD in Social Statistics from the University of Southampton, an MA in Panel Data Analysis from the University of Essex and BA (Hons) in Sociology from Collegium Civitas, Poland.

4. Headline results

This section presents broad, top line results from the PRES 2015 survey and compares some of them with PRES 2013 survey. A direct comparison with previous years is not advisable due to the survey redesign in 2013.

As in previous years the general satisfaction with the programme is very high. The vast majority of research students (82%) agreed with the statement that they are satisfied with their experience of their research degree. This result remained unchanged from the PRES 2013 survey and is in line with other student experience surveys such as PTES and NSS. Figure 1 shows the percentage that agree with the 'Overall satisfaction' item by discipline studied. Those studying Communication and Media Studies, Creative Arts and Design and Social studies tend to be relatively the least satisfied with their research programme experience. Those studying Mathematical Sciences, Sport, Leisure and Tourism and Physical Science tend to be relatively the most satisfied with their experience.

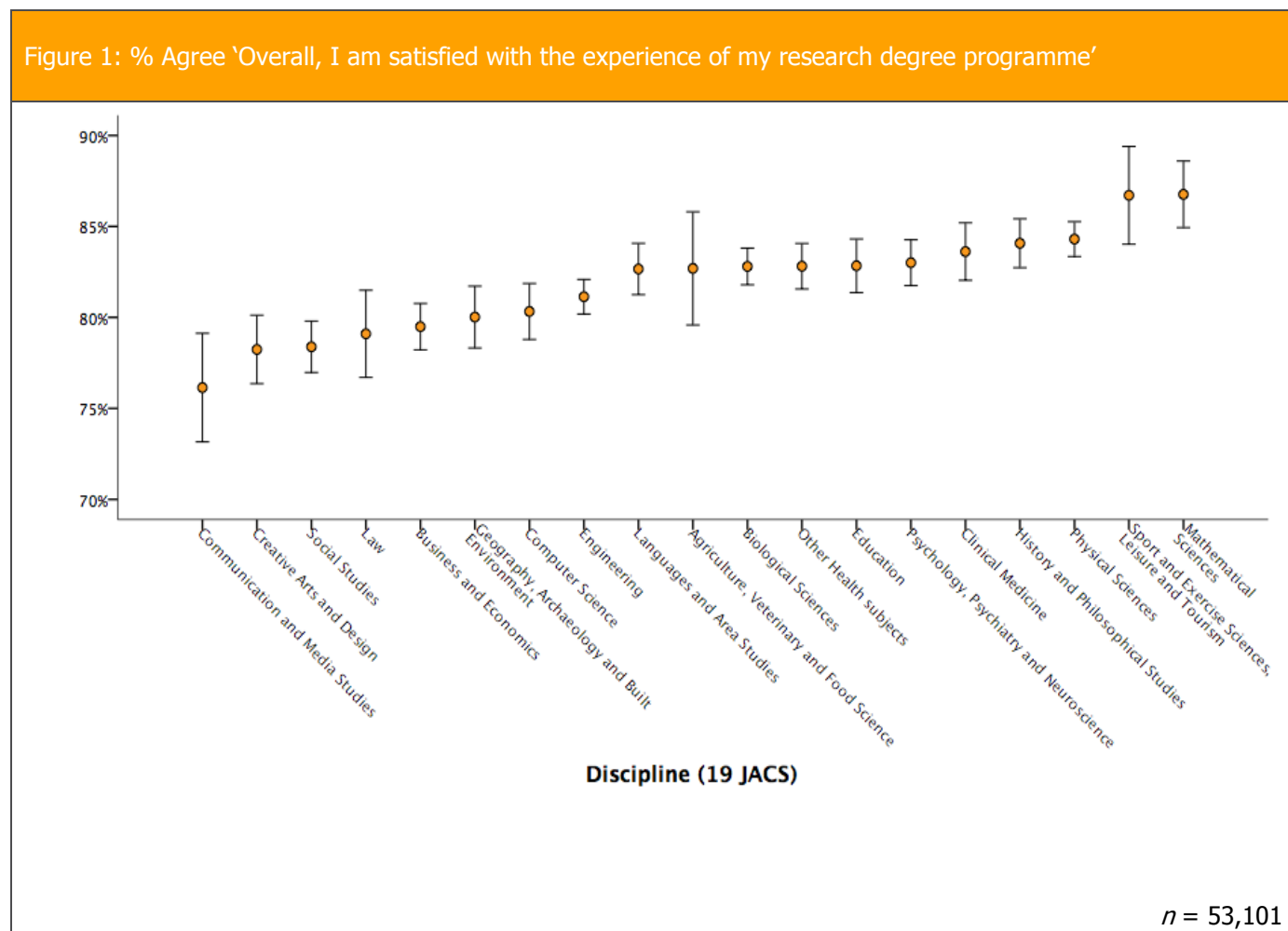


Table 1 shows the results for PRES 2015 scales and compares them with PRES 2013 results. All scale mean scores improved slightly from 2013. The relatively biggest improvement can be noticed for supervision, resources and professional development scales.

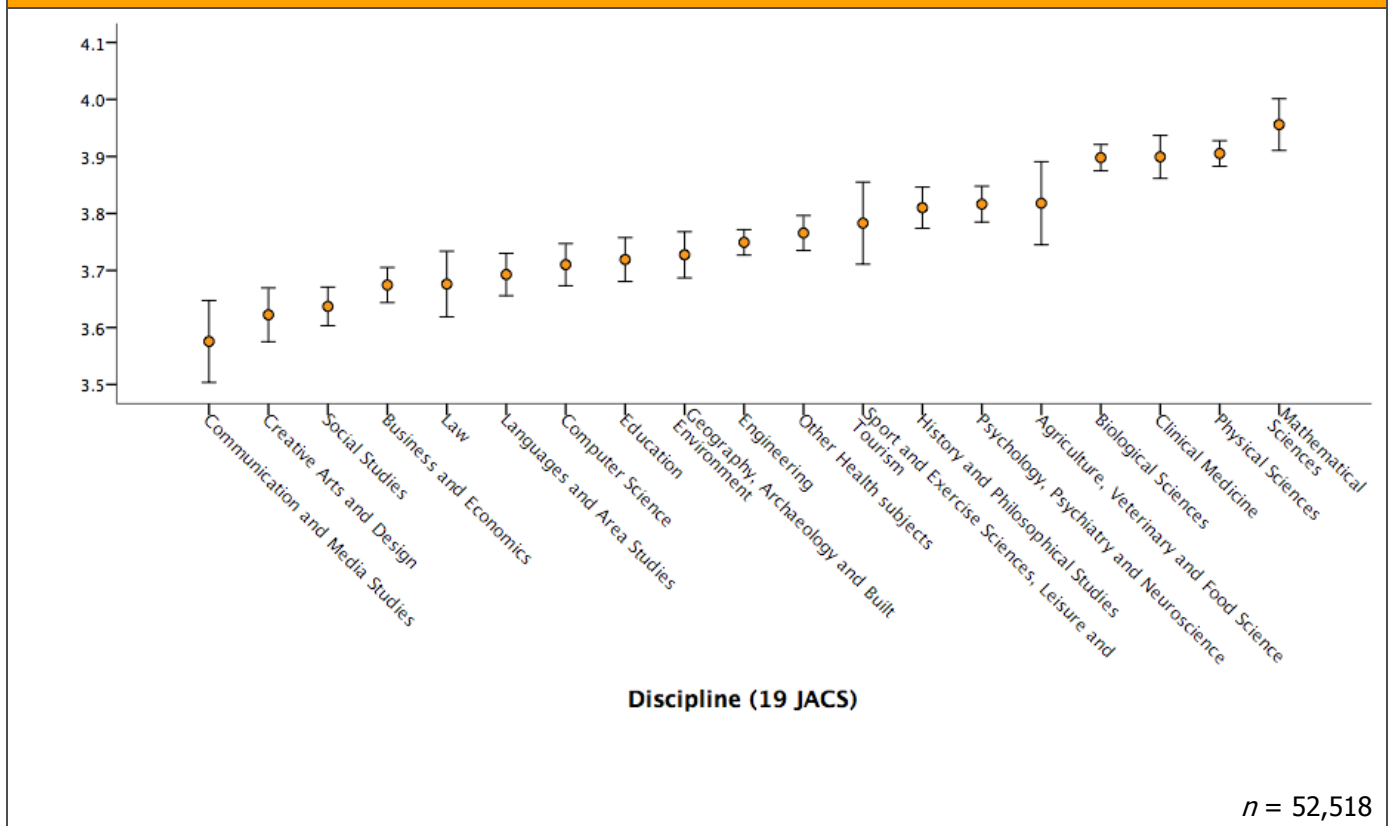
As in previous years, supervision is rated the highest, while the research culture is rated the lowest. The highest rated supervision item concerns supervisor's expertise. Over 91% of respondents agreed that their supervisor had the skills and subject knowledge to support their research. The item rated the lowest within the research culture scale is about the integration. Only 60% of respondents agreed that they had opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond their department.

Table 1: Experience scales

	PRES 2015				PRES 2013			
	Mean score	Standard deviation (SD)	<i>n</i>	Mean % Agree	Mean score	Standard deviation (SD)	<i>n</i>	Mean % Agree
Supervision	4.37	0.86	53,161	86%	4.32	0.89	47,631	84%
Resources	4.11	0.86	52,972	79%	4.06	0.88	47,352	78%
Research culture	3.77	0.94	52,878	66%	3.73	0.92	47,264	64%
Progress and assessment	4.07	0.84	53,254	79%	4.03	0.83	47,630	78%
Responsibilities	4.09	0.77	53,260	79%	4.05	0.76	47,541	78%
Research skills	4.29	0.76	52,983	86%	4.25	0.76	47,512	85%
Professional development	4.09	0.78	52,842	78%	4.04	0.77	47,406	76%

Figure 2 shows the difference in mean scores for the research culture scale by disciplines. The disciplines with the lowest and highest research culture scores are broadly similar to those in Figure 1. Again, those studying Communication and Media, Creative Arts and Design and Social studies rate the research culture the lowest. Potentially, some good practice could be transferred to these disciplines from Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences and Clinical Medicine where the research culture is rated the highest.

Figure 2: Mean score of the research culture scale by discipline



5. Data and methods

The PRES survey adopts a census approach, hence it is not based on a random sample. All the differences presented in the results are deemed to be statistically significant, however, simply due to the sheer volume of the responses to the survey. For that reason, statistical significance is not the main focus of this report. Instead, the statistical analyses focus on the effect size, that is, how strong and how important the observed relationship is. More explanation of the effect size can be found in the Statistical Note in Appendix 1.

5.1 Representativeness of the PRES sample

While historically PRES has a reasonably high response rate,⁷ the question remains if the PRES census sample is actually representative of wider UK research student population. One way to confirm that is to compare the demographic profile of PRES respondents with available administrative records, such as those published by HESA.

Table 2 below shows the representativeness of PRES sample of demographic variables: gender, mode of study, domicile and ethnicity. It can be noticed that PRES sample is broadly representative. There are a fewer males in PRES sample, which is to be expected. Males are traditionally less likely to respond to web based surveys.⁸ Also, part-time students are underrepresented in PRES, which is also traditionally the case with student surveys.

Please note that the PRES postgraduate research population is defined more broadly than the HESA population. Masters by research and MPhil programmes are excluded from HESA population but included in the PRES survey.

⁷ 2007 – 25.2%; 2008 – 28.9%; 2009 – 28.6%; 2011 – 32%; 2013 – 41.9%; 2015 – 40%.

⁸ Couper, M. P., A. Kapteyn, M. Schonlau and J. Winter (2007). Noncoverage and Nonresponse in an Internet Survey. *Social Science Research* 36 (1), 131–48.

Table 2: Demographic profile of PRES respondents

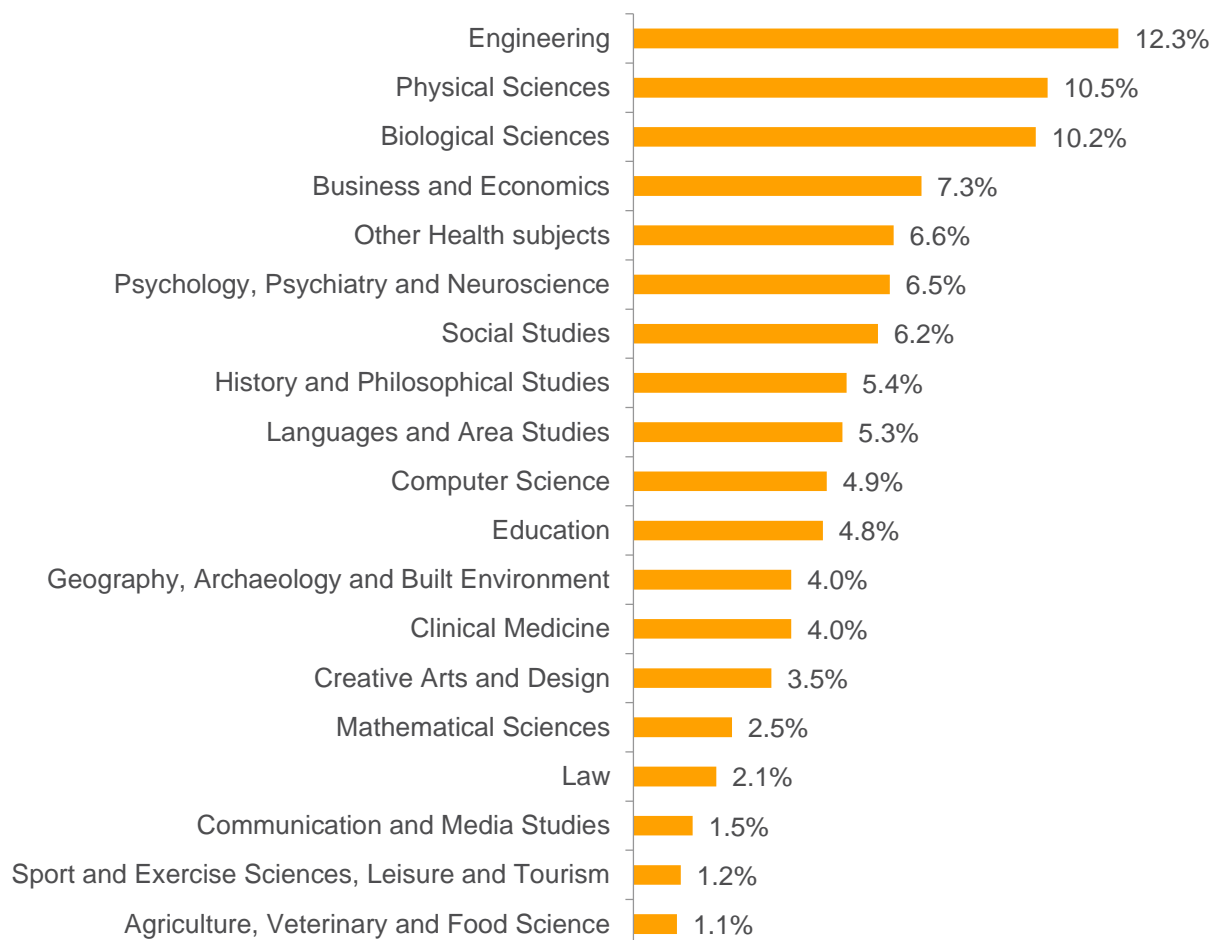
	HESA 2013-14	PRES 2015
Domicile		
UK	57.5%	62.6%
Other EU	13.0%	9.9%
Overseas	29.5%	27.5%
Total	111,475	52,361
Mode of study		
Full-time	73.5%	80.5%
Part-time	26.5%	19.5%
Total	111,495	53,135
Gender		
Female	46.9%	49.3%
Male	53.0%	50.6%
Total	111,495	52,356
Ethnicity (UK domiciled only)		
White	80.6%	81.9%
Black	3.3%	2.8%
Asian	7.6%	6.5%
Other	4.8%	5.1%
Not known	3.7%	3.8%
Total	64,030	29,514

5.2 Profile of PRES respondents

In the previous section, the basic demographic characteristics of PRES sample are presented (Table 2). Looking at more detailed demographics, the largest group of students are aged between 26 and 31 years old (32%), followed by around 24% of students who are 25 years old or younger, then followed by more mature students, aged between 31 and 35 (16.7%). Around 7% of all respondents stated they consider themselves to have a disability. Relatively, disability types most frequently mentioned were specific learning difficulties (SpLD) (2.5%), mental health condition (2.4%), and a long-standing illness (1.4%). The majority of students come from the UK (63%). These are followed by Asian and EU students (11% and 10% respectively).

The discipline profile of PRES 2015 respondents is shown in Figure 3. The majority of students are registered as doing a PhD (79.2%) a further 9.6% were on a MPhil programme with transfer to PhD, and 5.3% of respondents were doing a professional doctorate. Around 20% of students stated that their programme is provided through a doctoral training centre (DTC). However, a further 34% stated they did not know if they were part of a DTC or similar. The majority of PRES respondents were planning or doing their research (67.2%) and a further 23.5% were writing up. Almost three quarters of research students in the UK (74%) receive some sort of funding. The most popular sources of funding were their own higher education institution (26%) and a research council (21%). Around 40% of respondents are currently in paid employment. Out of those, 40% work more than 30 hours a week and 32% work up to ten hours per week.

Figure 3: Discipline



n = 52,963

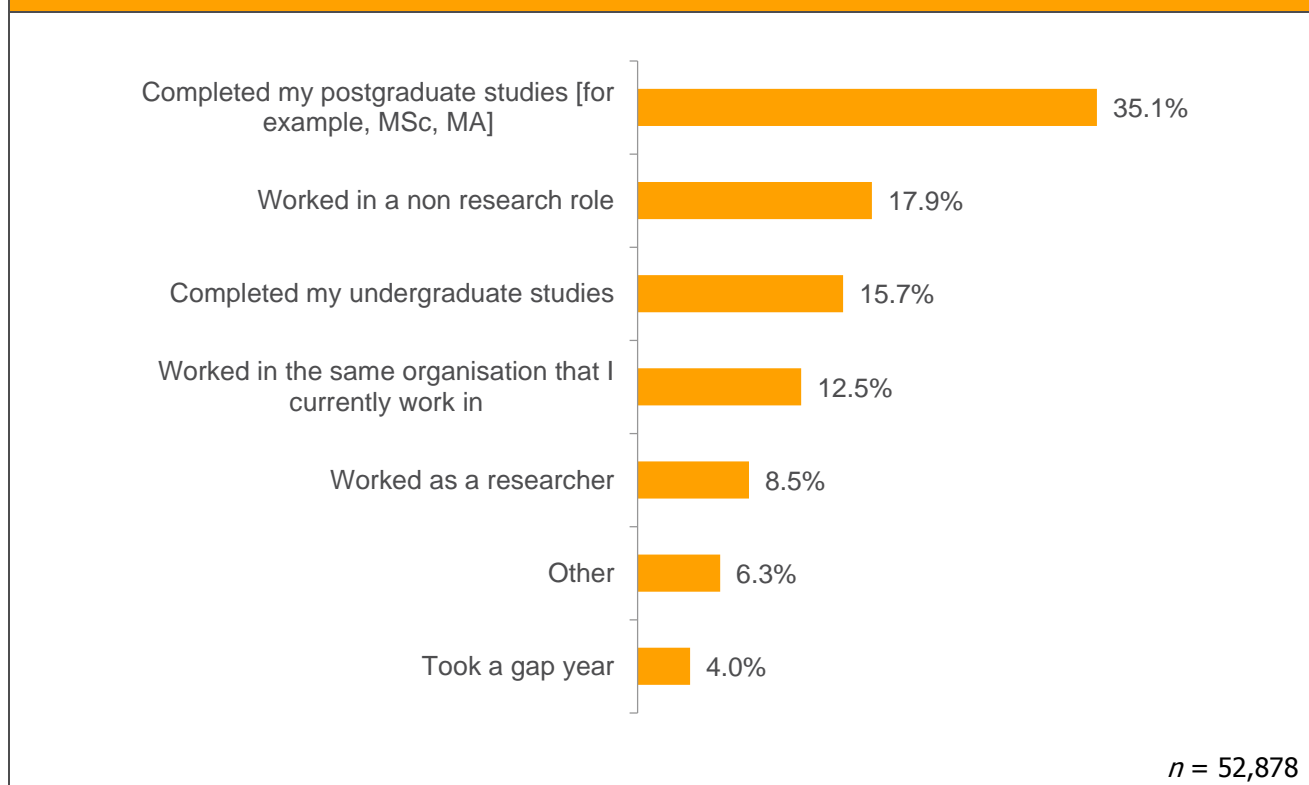
6. The research student journey

This is the main section of the report. It focuses on a student journey that starts with what they have been doing before pursuing a research degree programme and finishes with asking about their confidence to submit their PhD thesis on time. Their motivations to do a PhD are analysed and how they possibly change over the course of the programme. How these motivations relate to their future career plans and any change in that relationship over the years is also investigated.

The research student journey is about their development as researchers. This section looks at the opportunities they are presented with during the course of their studies and how many students take advantage of those. It also investigates any potential factors that prevent students from experiencing some of those opportunities, such as language barriers or the fact that they are in employment at the same time. Finally, the factors affecting their professional development are analysed as well as factors affecting their confidence to finish on time.

In total, half of the respondents came to do a PhD directly from their undergraduate or other postgraduate degree, such as Masters, and further 38.9% came from, or remain in, employment (see Figure 4). The latter group of research students tends to be slightly older than average, they are also more likely to be employed full-time and are more likely to return to their current employer at the end of the programme.

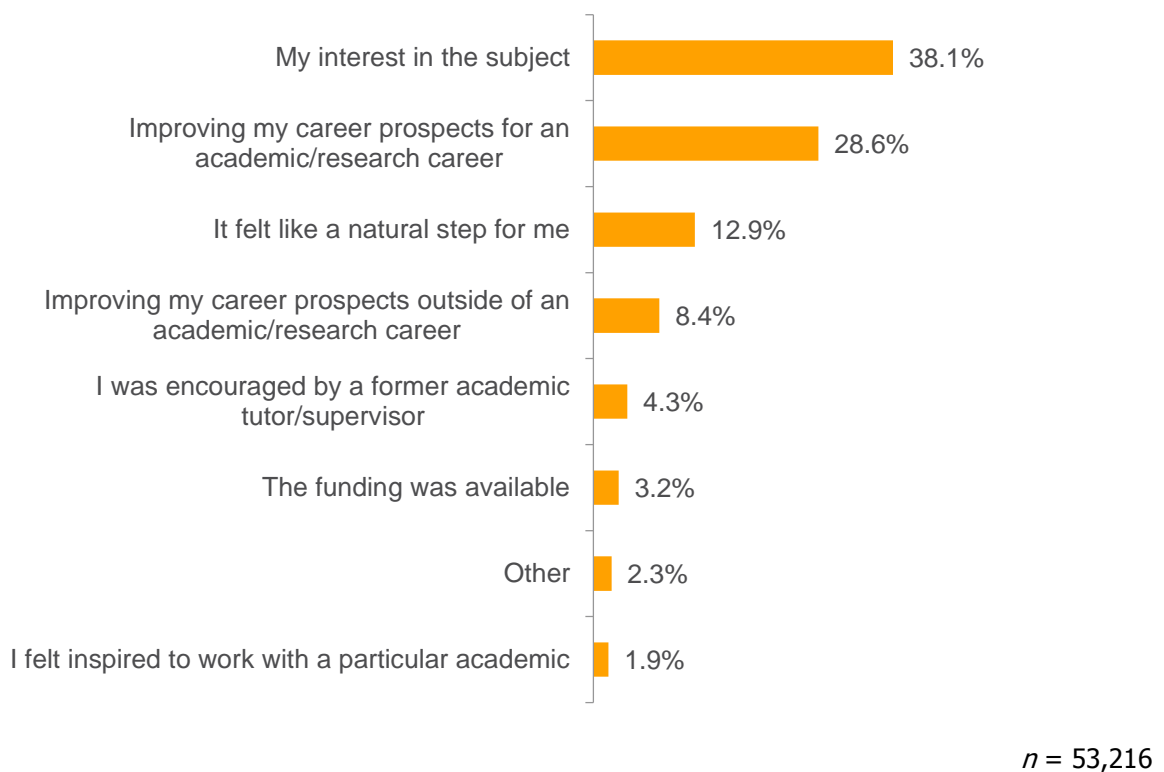
Figure 4: 'In the year before starting my research I ...'



6.1 Motivation pursuing a research degree programme

Figure 5 shows the main motivations to pursue a research career. The most popular is simply the interest in the subject (38%) followed by a desire to improve career prospects in academia/research (29%). Those who chose to respond 'Other' to this question reported they were motivated by a combination of the listed factors. The youngest students are those who reported more frequently that it felt like a natural step for them, being most likely to progress to a PhD straight from their previous studies.

Figure 5: The main motivation to pursue a research degree



Logistic regression models were fitted to see what factors affect the two main motivations to pursue a research degree. Factors such as discipline, age, gender, mode of study, English language proficiency and year of study were tested.

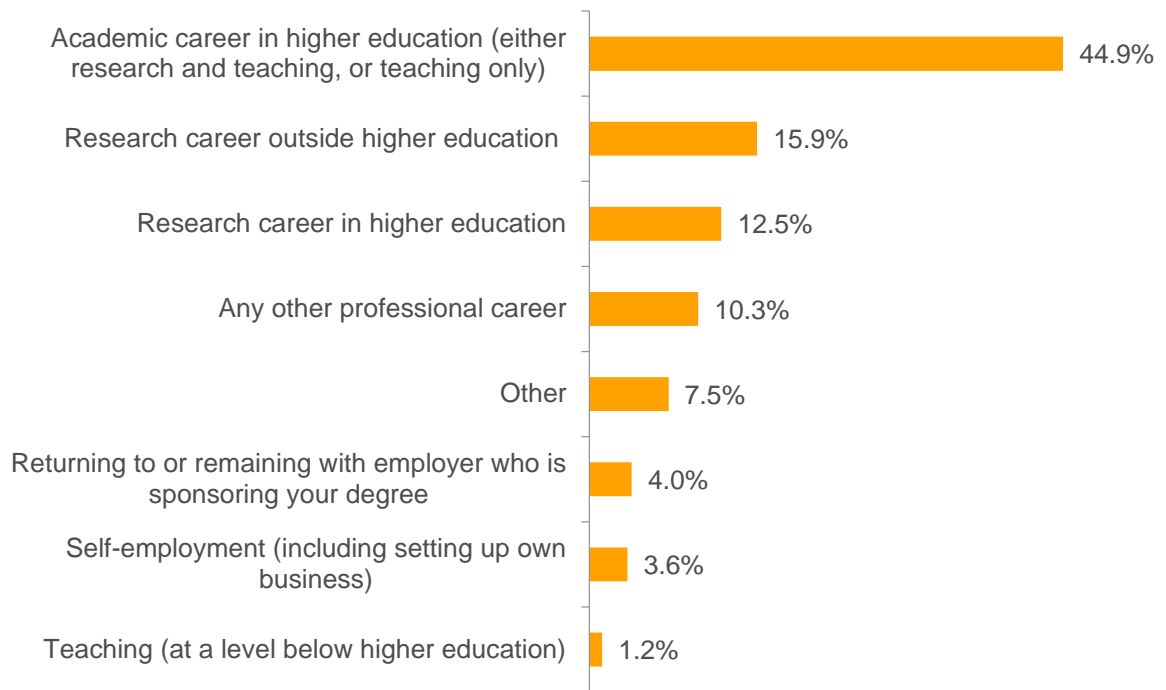
The results have shown that all the factors tested in the models have a relatively low influence on the motivations. Combined, they only explain between 2.2% and 3.1% of the total variability of the 'interest in the subject' motivation and between 4.9% and 7% of the total variability of the 'career prospects improvement' motivation. As for the former, relatively the most important factor is the age of respondents. The age groups in the middle are less likely to pursue a PhD out of interest comparing to young (25 or younger) and mature students (age 46 and older). STEM, Social Sciences and Arts and Humanities students are all more likely to pursue a PhD out of interest than Health and Social Care students. Males are more likely to pursue a PhD out of interest than females, and so are UK students compared to Other EU and Overseas students. Full-time students and those who are not funded are also more likely to pursue a PhD out of interest than their part-time and funded counterparts.

Those who are motivated by a desire to improve their current career are demographically very different to those who pursue it out of interest. Again, age is relatively the most important factor but this time the 'middle age group' students (between 26 and 45 years old) are more likely to pursue the PhD for career purposes compared to young and more mature students. Other EU and Overseas students are more likely to be motivated by the future career prospects than UK students and so are the Health and Social Care students (compared to any other discipline). Finally, females are more likely to be motivated by improved career prospects than males. The funding status does not seem to be a statistically significant predictor in this model.

6.2 Career plans

Almost half (45%) of respondents envisage a research and teaching or teaching only career in academia. A further 13% would like to pursue a research career in academia while slightly more (16%) would like to pursue a research career outside of academia. Finally, one in ten students have another professional career in mind (Figure 6).

Figure 6: The type of career you have in mind when you complete a research degree

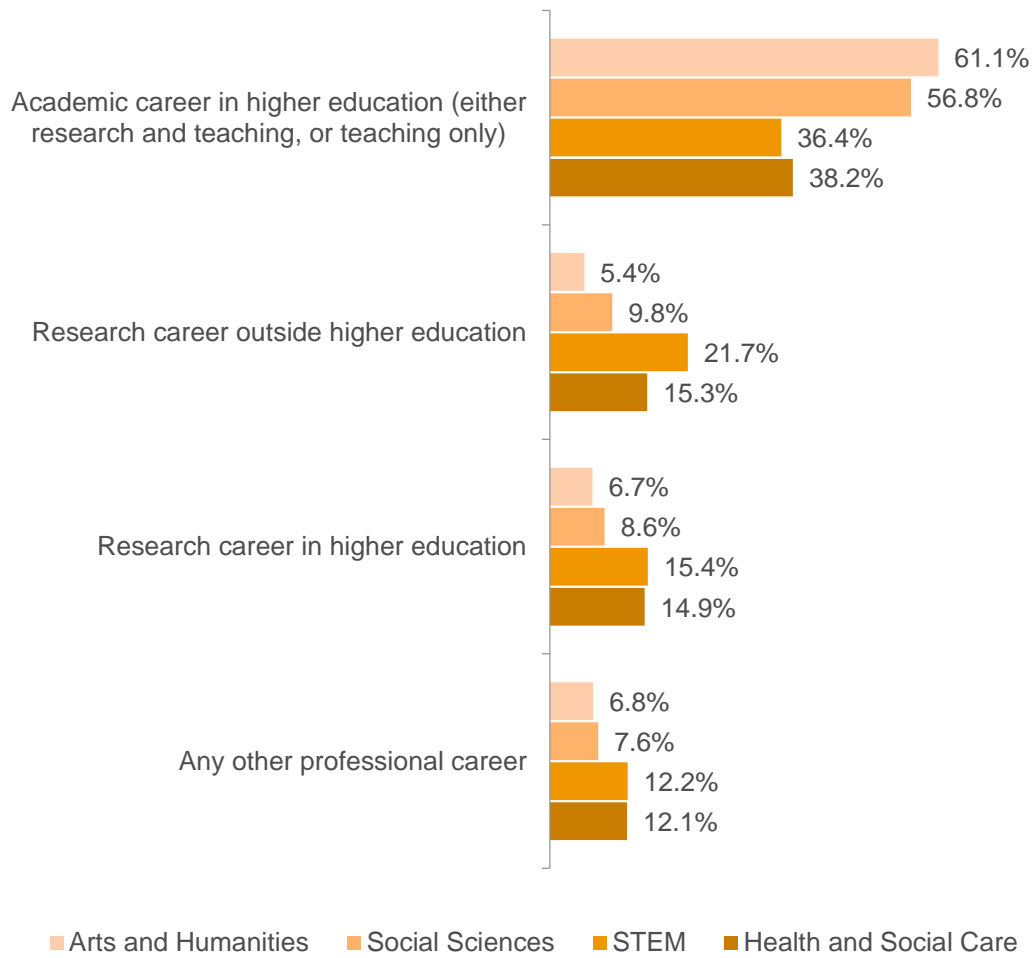


n = 52,898

When it comes to a planned career, there are substantial differences between disciplines. Those studying Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences are more likely to pursue an academic career than STEM and Health Care students. The latter two groups, and STEM students in particular, are more likely to pursue a research career outside of academia (Figure 7). Discipline explains around 8%⁹ of the variability of the career choice variable, which is considered to be a substantial effect. There are no differences between males and females when it comes to a chosen career. Those who were funded are more likely to seek career opportunities outside of academia or seek a research career in academia (rather than teaching career in higher education) than self-funded students.

⁹ Eta squared = 0.08

Figure 7: The type of career you have in mind when you complete a research degree, by discipline (top four categories only)

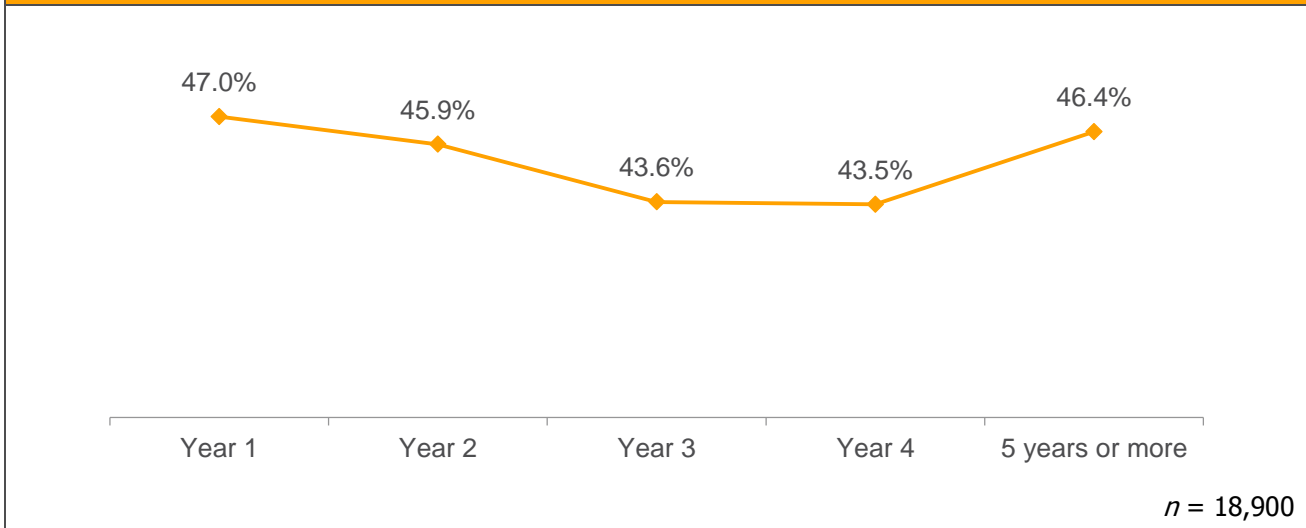


n = 52,566

A slight downward trend can be noticed among full-time students when it comes to a desire to pursue an academic career and a year of study. Students later in their programme are slightly less likely to state they wish to pursue an academic career (see Figure 8). This trend seems to be offset by slightly growing numbers for 'other professional career'. Nevertheless, it needs to be noted that the year of study explains only 2.4% of the total variability of the career choice variable, which is a weak effect.

These results look somewhat different for part-time students. While around 45% of part-time students wish to pursue a career in academia in year one, only 36% are interested in that career path by year seven, and even fewer after that. Moreover, this relationship is much stronger, as the year of study explains around 8% of the variability of the career choice variable – a substantial effect.

Figure 8: Desire to pursue a career in academia by year of study (full-time only)



The motivations to pursue a research degree and future career plans are closely aligned and this relationship is stable over time. It means that those who were motivated by improving their career prospects in academia plan to pursue an academic career after graduation. Similarly, those who were mainly motivated by improving their career prospects outside of academia plan their career outside academia. Those who started their PhD because 'the funding was available' demonstrate the most diverse profile of potential career paths after finishing their degree. While, as presented above, there is a slight decrease over time of a desire to pursue an academic career, the initial motivations and career plans are as closely aligned in the first year of PhD study as later in the studies. Motivation explains around 14% of the variability of the future career variable,¹⁰ which suggests a strong relationship (see Table 3).

¹⁰ Eta squared = 0.14

Table 3: Relationship between motivations and career plans

	Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)	Research career in higher education	Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environ	Teaching (at a level below higher education)	Any other professional career	Self-employment (including setting up own business)	Returning to or remaining with employer who is sponsoring your degree	Other
My interest in the subject	42.8%	14.0%	14.6%	1.3%	9.2%	4.5%	3.9%	9.7%
Improving my career prospects for an academic/research career	66.3%	14.1%	9.8%	0.6%	2.9%	0.9%	2.9%	2.4%
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career	6.9%	2.2%	38.8%	1.1%	31.4%	6.8%	7.2%	5.5%
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor	36.9%	10.7%	17.6%	2.6%	16.3%	3.9%	3.3%	8.6%
The funding was available	33.1%	10.1%	16.3%	2.4%	17.5%	5.4%	7.1%	7.9%
It felt like a natural step for me	38.4%	13.2%	19.1%	1.3%	12.0%	4.2%	3.4%	8.4%
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	42.8%	14.9%	11.7%	1.9%	9.7%	4.8%	5.0%	9.1%
Other	21.6%	6.0%	9.6%	0.8%	14.3%	5.2%	7.2%	35.2%

6.3 Opportunities taken during the research degree programme

PRES 2015 questionnaire asks students what 'typical' opportunities they have experienced during their research programme. General results are presented in Figure 9. Most commonly (77%) students received training to develop their research skills, closely followed by those who attended an academic research conference (72%) and those who presented a paper at the conference (59%). At the other end of a spectrum only one in three students reported they received careers advice (29%) and only one student in ten stated they took part in a placement or internship (10%).

Worryingly though, 3% of respondents (which equates to over 1,600 students) did not experience any of the 'typical' research programme opportunities. Those students are more likely to be in their first year, which is partially understandable and should not cause any concern. However, these students are also more likely to be studying part-time, to be self-funded, to be older and from outside the UK. This result suggests these are potentially vulnerable groups and should be targeted more specifically when it comes to providing them with opportunities. Further in this section the results show how crucial these are in the development of research students.

Figure 9: Opportunities you have experienced during your research programme

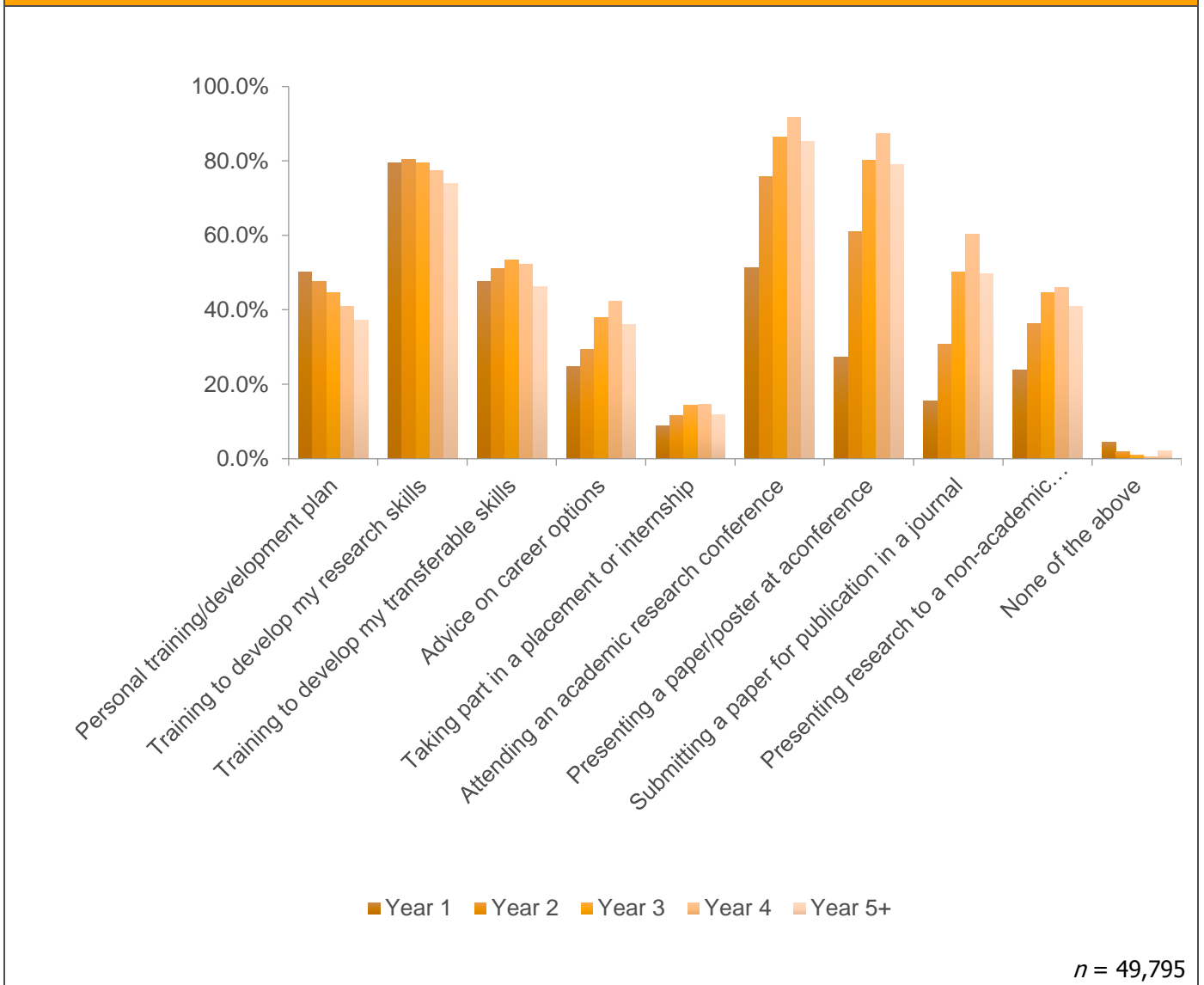


n = 53,348

As might be expected, students have experienced different opportunities depending on their year of study. While the pattern is not surprising, it is reassuring that the majority of research students progress in a way they are expected to. As can be seen from Figure 10, students are more likely to experience writing a personal training/development plan and receive training to develop their research and transferable skills earlier in their studies. Conversely, they get advice on career options, attend/present at research conferences and write a journal submission later in their studies.

The same reassuring pattern can be observed for part-time students. However, a relatively large proportion, 12%, of the first year part-time students, stated they had not experienced any of the listed opportunities.

Figure 10: Opportunities you have experienced during your research programme, by year of study (full-time)

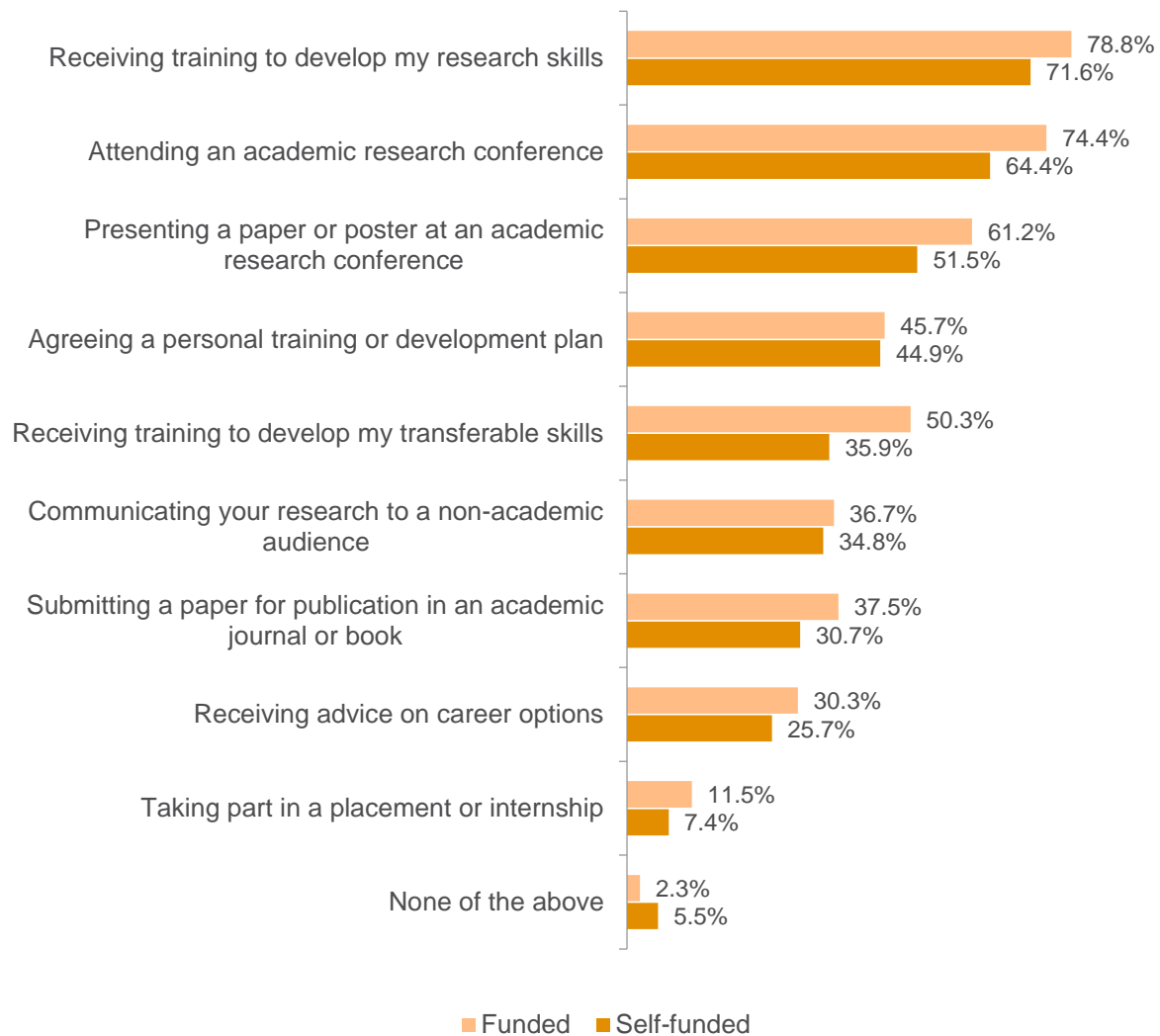


There are some substantial and statistically significant differences in terms of experiencing various opportunities between different groups of research students. Those who are funded are more likely to attend and present at conferences, submit an article to a journal and receive training to develop their research and transferable skills than their self-funded counterparts (Figure 11).

A logistic regression model was fitted to see what other factors, besides funding status, can effect the probability of attending/presenting at the conference. While discipline is a statistically significant factor affecting the probability of conference attendance/presenting, it does not explain the difference between funded and non-funded students. However, age appears to explain a little bit of that difference (8% of the total variability, which is a substantial effect). Self-funded students tend to be older which seems to affect their probability of attending/presenting at the conferences.

Another logistic regression model was fitted to assess what factors besides funding can explain the experience of training to develop transferable skills. Age also seems to help explain some of the difference in probability of developing transferable skills. Self-funded students are older, hence need less development in this area (age explains around 30% of the total variability). Also, they are more likely to be in employment, which also seems to play an important part (employment status explains further 4%).

Figure 11: Opportunities you have experienced during your research programme, by funding status



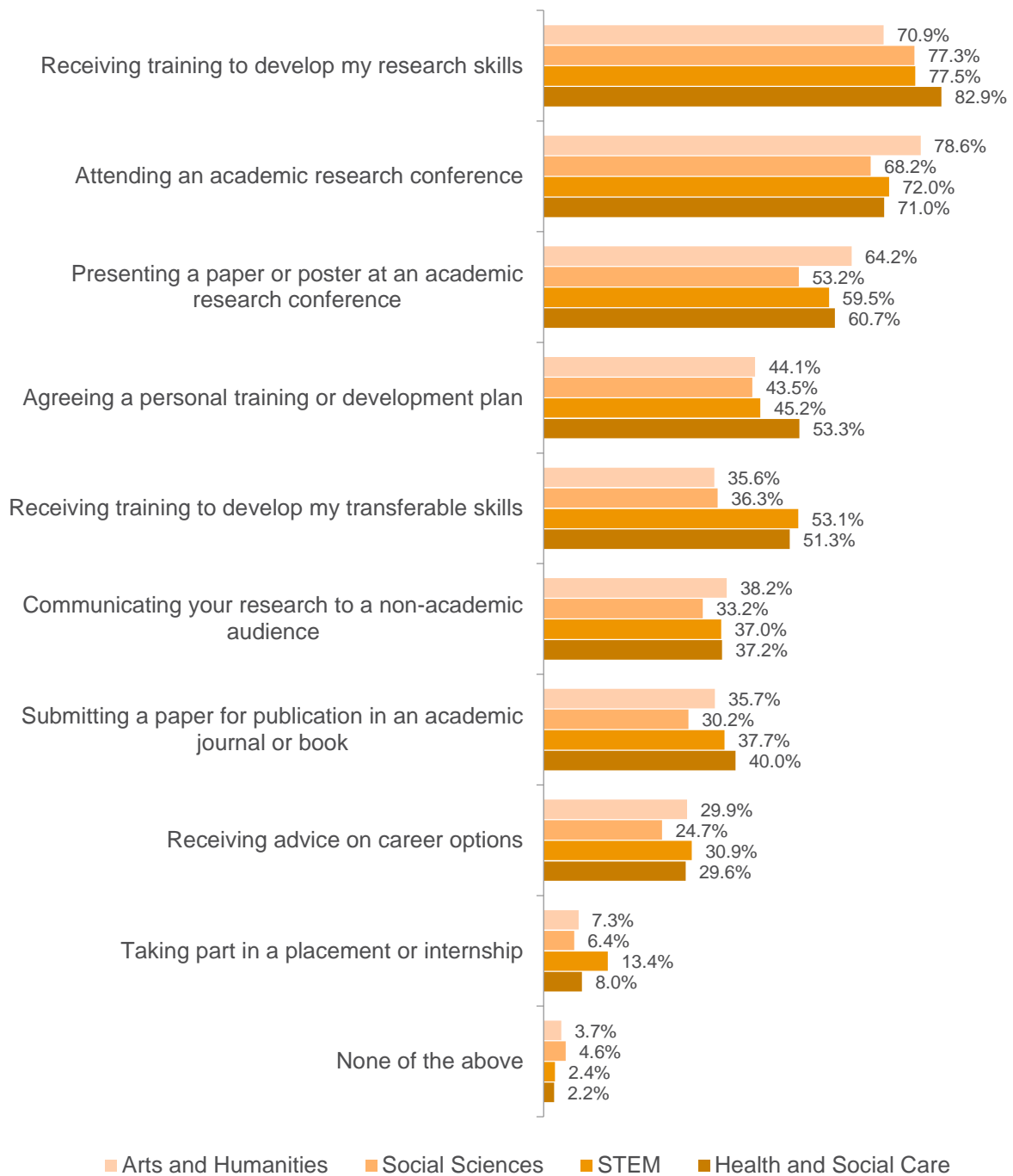
n = 53,348

Males and females experience various opportunities during their programme to the same extent with one exception. Males are more likely than females to submit a paper for publication in an academic journal or book (39% and 33% respectively). A logistic regression model was fitted to establish if this difference can be explained by some other factors. However, all tested factors failed to explain the difference between males and females to any meaningful degree.¹¹ This suggests that other factors, not captured by the PRES survey (e.g. confidence) are potentially causing this difference.

As already mentioned, there are some substantial differences between disciplines and opportunities taken by students during their research programme. Arts and Humanities students are the most likely to attend/present at a conference. However, they are the least likely to receive training to develop their research and, to a greater extent, their transferable skills. STEM and Health students are the most likely to have received training to develop their transferable skills and especially STEM students are the most likely to take part in a placement/internship. Social Sciences students are the least likely to present at a conference, submit to a journal or take part in a placement/internship (Figure 12).

¹¹ discipline, year of study and English proficiency were tested.

Figure 12: Opportunities you have experienced during your research programme, by discipline



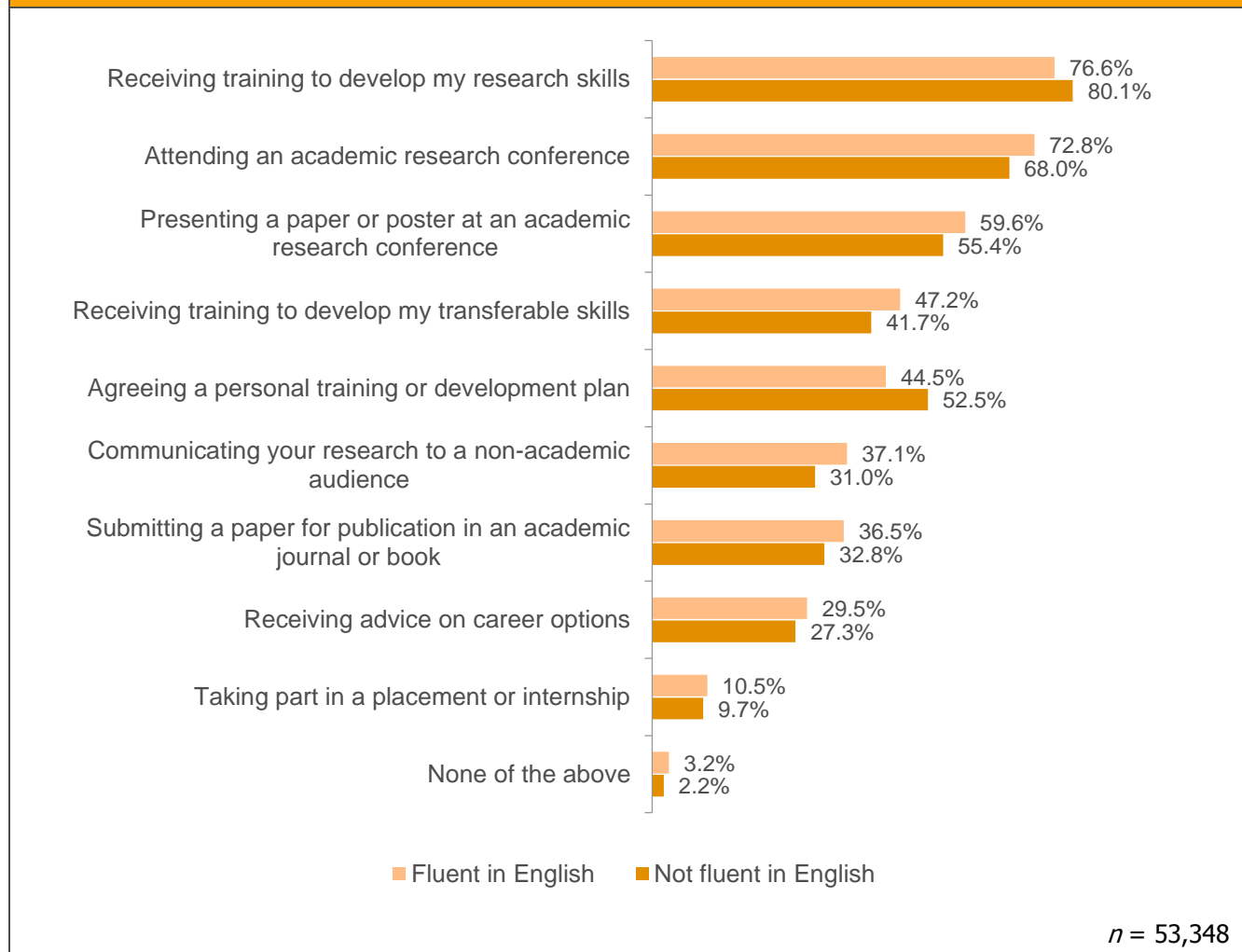
n = 53,348

Almost 10% of PRES respondents stated that they were not fluent in English when they started their programme and a further 2.5% preferred not to say. Just over half of those (51%) agreed they received appropriate support for their English language needs and further 29% remained neutral on that matter.

It seems that English proficiency plays an important role in whether or not students experience various opportunities. Attending/presenting at a conference, submitting to a journal and communicating research to a non-academic audience all seem to be affected by language skills (Figure 13). Students who admitted they were not fluent in English when started their programme are less likely to take up those opportunities. They do, however,

seem to receive more training in terms of research and transferable skills as well as their personal development plan. It is also worth mentioning that those students who agree more that they received appropriate support and training with their English are more likely to experience development opportunities.

Figure 13: Opportunities you have experienced during your research programme, by English proficiency



One would expect that students who are in employment would be more likely to miss out on various opportunities presented by their research programme simply due to work commitments. In fact, there are not many differences between those in employment and those not in employment. Moreover, those in employment are more likely to communicate their research to a non-academic audience (40% vs. 34%) and they are more likely to submit a paper for publication than those not in employment (39% and 34% respectively). One explanation may be that potentially a large number of research students in employment are in fact employed by their university and take their research programme as part of their job.

6.4 Factors affecting professional development

Developing PhD students as researchers is probably one of the main aims of a research programme. This section looks at what factors contribute to the professional development of a research student.

Teaching opportunities are an important part of any research programme. However, only 51% of students stated that they have taught during their research programme. It needs to be noted though that there are major differences by year of study, with just 33% of first year students having taught compared to almost 70% of year four students. Of those who have taught during the programme, 60% agree that they have been given appropriate support and guidance for their teaching and 63% said that have received formal training.

Opportunity to teach seems to be an excellent way of developing various skills. Those who had teaching experience tend to agree more with all skills development related items in the PRES questionnaire. Teaching specifically helps to develop communication skills as 84% of those who had teaching experience agreed they have developed those during their programme (compared to 74% of those who did not have teaching experience). Also developing professional networks and ability to manage research projects were both particularly positively affected by the teaching experience.

A regression linear model has been fitted to establish what factors, when combined, affect the professional development scale score. The results are presented in Table 4. The most important factors affecting the professional development are the core PRES scales of postgraduate research experience. Combined, they explain up to 52% of the total variability of the professional development. This is a very high score and suggests a strong relationship. Not surprisingly the research skills scale is the most important factor affecting professional development. It means that the more students agree with the research skills items, the more they agree with professional skills items. However, the research culture and responsibilities are also important in the professional development of a research student (Model 2). As already stated above, the lack of teaching experience is negatively correlated with professional development (Model 3). However, once scales are considered, the teaching does not add to the model (it does not improve the model fit as the amount of explained variance changed only slightly from 52.3% to 52.8%).

Table 4: Factors affecting the professional development, linear regression results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Professional development scale	4.098 (0.003)	0.682 (0.016)	0.749 (0.017)	0.666 (0.016)	0.684 (0.017)
PRES scales					
Supervision		-0.015 (0.003)	-0.011 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.003)
Resources		0.004 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.011 (0.003)	0.013 (0.003)
Research culture		0.130 (0.003)	0.128 (0.003)	0.112 (0.003)	0.112 (0.003)
Progress and assessment		0.039 (0.004)	0.040 (0.004)	0.032 (0.004)	0.033 (0.004)
Responsibilities		0.117 (0.005)	0.124 (0.005)	0.127 (0.005)	0.125 (0.005)
Research skills		0.543 (0.004)	0.532 (0.004)	0.489 (0.004)	0.488 (0.004)
Teaching (Yes)					
No			-0.121 (0.005)	-0.052 (0.005)	-0.053 (0.005)
Opportunities					
Personal training or development plan				0.032 (0.005)	0.033 (0.005)
Training to develop my research skills				-0.017 (0.006)	-0.018 (0.006)
Training to develop my transferable skills				0.066 (0.005)	0.067 (0.005)
Receiving advice on career options				0.058 (0.005)	0.058 (0.005)
Taking part in a placement or internship				0.082 (0.008)	0.079 (0.008)
Attending an academic research conference				0.063 (0.006)	0.063 (0.006)
Presenting at an academic research conference				0.095 (0.006)	0.095 (0.006)
Submitting a paper for publication in a journal				0.072 (0.005)	0.073 (0.005)
Communicating research to a non-academic audience				0.136 (0.005)	0.134 (0.005)
Gender (Male)					
Female					0.027 (0.005)
Mode (Full-time)					
Part-time					-0.027 (0.007)
Employment (Yes)					
No					-0.047 (0.005)
R ²		52.3%	52.8%	56%	56.2%

Experiencing opportunities for development and training is also an important factor affecting professional development. All opportunities are statistically significantly and positively correlated with the dependent variable except for, quite surprisingly, receiving training to develop research skills. Model 4 suggests that the more training they receive the less likely they are to agree with the professional development items. However, as the coefficient associated with that item is very small it may be considered a statistical artefact. Communicating research to a non-academic audience, presenting at the conference and taking part in an internship seem to be the most important factors affecting professional development. All opportunities combined add a further 4% to the total explained variance of the professional development variable (56% in total).

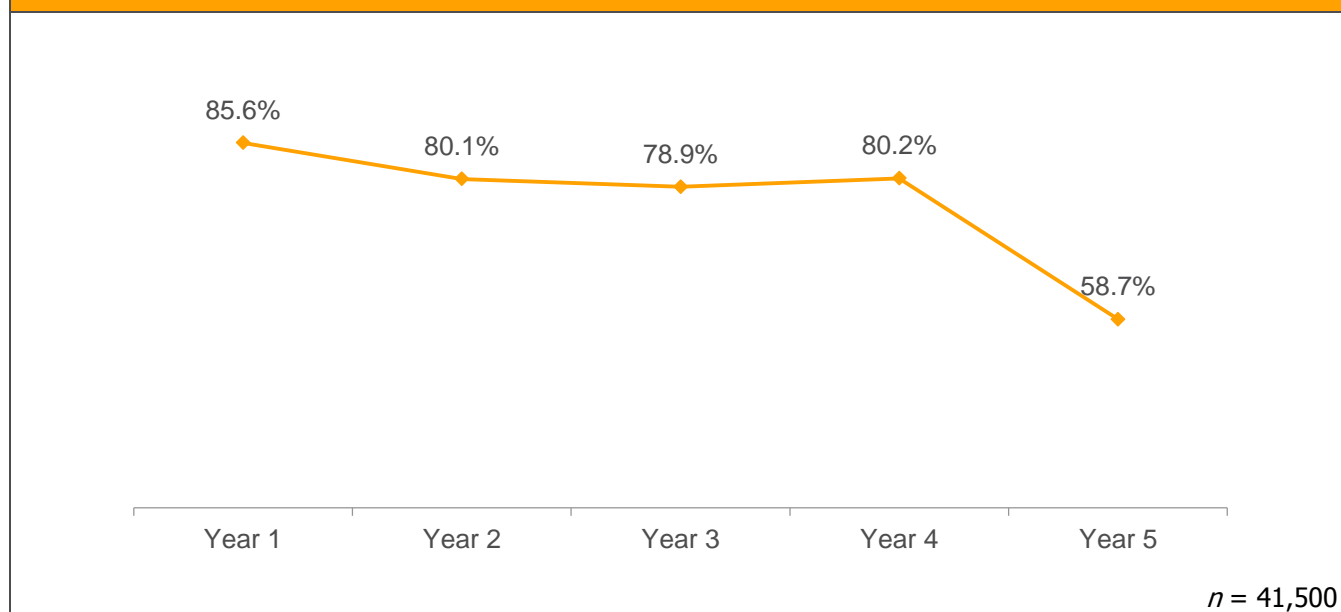
Finally, Model 5 looks at some demographic variables of students. While all remain statistically significant, their effect on the professional development is negligible as all combined explain a further 0.2% of the total variability. In other words, students seem to have the same professional development experience regardless of their gender, mode of study, or employment status.

6.5 Confidence to submit on time

When HE institutions look at the performance measures of their postgraduate research students they are usually concerned with the submission rates and, to a lesser extent, with the other milestones during the research programme such as transfer. Hence, whether or not a research student submitted on time (full-time students are usually expected to submit their thesis within 48 months) is an important indicator. The PRES questionnaire asks students how confident they are that they will complete their research degree programme within their institution's expected timescale.

In general, the majority (81%) of full-time research students agree that they are confident they will submit on time. This confidence seems to decrease very slightly with time (Figure 14). Those in year five are by far the least confident; this is presumably because it is clear by this stage that there are problems with submission. However, only a tiny proportion (2.3%) of full-time research students are in year five. Interestingly, part-time students exhibit the same levels of confidence to submit on time (81% 'Agree') as their full-time counterparts and the same pattern of decreasing confidence over time. It can also be noticed among part-time students that their confidence plummets in year five. Possibly, this is when full-time students reach their major milestone, which may shake the confidence of their part-time colleagues.

Figure 14: 'I am confident that I will submit on time' - %Agree (full-time only).



While it is not difficult to imagine that in certain disciplines it may take longer to submit, in the PRES survey there are no substantial differences between students from different disciplines. They all seem to exhibit similar level of confidence to submit on time ranging from 80.3% for STEM to 82.5% for Health and Social care.

A linear regression model was fitted to see what factors affect the confidence to submit on time. The year of study explains only 1.9% of the total variability of the dependent variable (Model 2). However, scales seem to have a substantial impact. Combined, they explain over 30% of the variability of the confidence to submit on time. This is considered to be a medium effect (Model 3). The most influential scales are research skills, progress and assessment and professional development. Funding and gender do not seem to bear any effect on the confidence to submit on time and nor does discipline (Model 4 and Model 5). The linear regression results reiterate the initial results that year of study and discipline do not greatly affect the confidence to submit on time (Table 5).

Table 5: Factors affecting the confidence to submit on time, linear regression results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
I am confident I will submit on time	4.152 (0.004)	4.274 (0.008)	0.563 (0.027)	0.633 (0.028)	0.601 (0.029)
Year of study (Year 1)					
Year 2		-0.146 (0.012)	-0.150 (0.010)	-0.147 (0.010)	-0.148 (0.010)
Year 3		-0.178 (0.012)	-0.203 (0.011)	-0.200 (0.011)	-0.201 (0.011)
Year 4		-0.109 (0.014)	-0.147 (0.012)	-0.142 (0.012)	-0.143 (0.012)
Year 5+		-0.402 (0.019)	-0.393 (0.017)	-0.393 (0.017)	-0.400 (0.017)
PRES scales					
Supervision			0.193 (0.006)	0.191 (0.006)	0.189 (0.006)
Resources			0.013 (0.005)	0.018 (0.005)	0.025 (0.005)
Research culture			0.003 (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)	0.006 (0.005)
Progress and assessment			0.162 (0.006)	0.160 (0.007)	0.160 (0.007)
Responsibilities			0.144 (0.008)	0.140 (0.008)	0.138 (0.008)
Research skills			0.209 (0.008)	0.209 (0.008)	0.211 (0.008)
Professional development			0.161 (0.007)	0.161 (0.007)	0.161 (0.007)
Gender (Male)					
Female				-0.011 (0.008)	-0.015 (0.008)
Funding (No)					
Yes				-0.089 (0.009)	-0.076 (0.009)
Discipline (STEM)					
Health and Social Care					0.019 (0.013)
Social Sciences					0.0260 (0.01)
Arts and Humanities					0.072 (0.012)
R ²		1.9%	32.4%	33.0%	33.2%

6.6 Summary

The PRES 2015 results have shown that UK research students are a fairly heterogeneous population. There are young PhD students for whom doing a research degree programme felt like a natural next step and is mainly driven by their interest in the subject. There are also older PhD students who came to their research programme from a working environment and they are motivated by improving their career prospects. Slightly less than 60% of all research students plan to remain in academia after graduation. This result suggests that the academic route is not the only one considered by students. The important alternatives are a research career outside academia, or another professional career.

It is reassuring to see that the vast majority of students experience varied opportunities during their studies in a timely manner (i.e. in appropriate time to their advancement on the programme). Not surprisingly, proficiency in English helps to take advantage of certain opportunities, especially those requiring good oral and written communication skills, such as attending and presenting at the research conferences or submitting a paper into a journal. Funding also helps to take advantage of certain opportunities and funded students specifically seem to receive more training to develop their various skills comparing to non-funded students. There are no differences in access to opportunities between various demographics groups, which is comforting news. One exception is that males are more likely than females to submit a paper to a journal. This difference cannot be explained by the discipline studied and potentially may be linked to other, not measured factors, such as confidence.

The development of research skills seems to be one of the most important factors contributing to the professional development of research students but the research culture and teaching opportunities are also very important. Especially, the latter seem to impact to a great extent on communication skills and development of professional networks.

Just over 80% of students are confident they will submit their thesis on time and finish their programme within the agreed timescale. This is the case for both full-time and part-time students, and is a welcome result. Factors that are related to students' confidence in that area are good supervision, good research skills and items linked to their progress and assessment (e.g. good understanding of a standard for their thesis).

All in all, the picture painted by the PRES shows confident research students who make the most of their research programme and, as a result, become potential academic and research leaders for the future.

7. Appendix 1: Statistical note

In certain sections of this report, the differences between various student groups are evaluated statistically. The chi-square test provides information whether two categorical variables, for example, part-time/full-time and agree/neutral/disagree, are independent (there is no relationship between the two) or not (there is a relationship between the two).

In addition, a regression modelling approach is used. Depending on the type of the dependent variable it is either a logistic regression (e.g. whether or not student is motivated by their interest in the subject when pursuing a PhD) or a linear regression (e.g. supervision scale score). This approach is used to test how various factors affect the variable of interest at the same time and what is their combined effect.

Because of the large sample size for PRES, many of the results are statistically significant even where observed differences are very small. Where possible, effect sizes have been calculated. An Eta-squared value of between 0.01 and 0.06 is generally taken to indicate the effect size is small. A value of less than 0.01 (which would indicate the variable explains less than 1% of variance in experience) is regarded as a negligible effect, even where it is statistically significant. For the regression models, the R^2 (linear regression) and equivalent of R^2 (logistic regression) are reported. These, similarly to Eta-squared, suggest the strength of the relationship between variables of interest. It is important to assess the general statistical significance alongside the effect size as quite often, and especially in surveys such as PRES, a relationship may be statistically significant but very small at the same time. The final conclusion in such a case should be that the effect of a given independent variable on the dependent variable is not important.

Note that estimates of statistical significance should be treated with caution because PRES does not use a random sample but adopts a census approach, which attempts to survey every student in the relevant population. Like many surveys (even those which attempt a random sample) it is vulnerable to non-response bias, which is not accounted for in statistical significance testing. Further, the derivation of continuous variables from categorical Likert scales is not without controversy given that the 'distance' between categories (such as 'definitely agree', 'mostly agree' and 'neither agree nor disagree') cannot be assumed to be the same. These are used in the regression analysis in this report. The statistics reported should therefore be regarded as indicative.

8. Appendix 2: PRES 2015 questionnaire

Postgraduate research experience survey (PRES) 2015

Welcome

This survey asks about your experiences of your postgraduate research programme. Your responses will be combined with those of others to help inform your institution about the experience of postgraduate researchers, helping to improve future support. The results are also used nationally to help advise policy and improve the postgraduate research experience across the sector.

Many thanks for your participation.

Data Protection

All data collected in this survey will be held securely. Results are confidential to your institution, though your institution may choose to share or publish aggregated, anonymous results. All participating institutions have agreed not to identify any individuals when reporting their results internally or externally, and to use their best efforts to ensure that no individuals can be identified by implication. The full PRES data set will be available to the Higher Education Academy and selected third parties in order to conduct national level research and analysis, and for legal/audit purposes. All results will be reported in an aggregated and anonymised form.

Some information held by your institution, for example age, is attached to your response so that you do not have to provide it again. This data helps your institution and the sector better meet the needs of postgraduates like you. [DELETE if not applicable] An identifier is attached to your response that will allow the Higher Education Academy to combine with other data and carry out further research into the postgraduate experience. [DELETE if not applicable]

Please confirm below that you have read the data protection statement and consent to the data being used in the way described (if you do not consent then please close this browser window to exit the survey).

- I have read and understand the data protection statement
- I consent to my responses being used as described in the data protection statement

Notes for completion

If a question does not apply to you, or you cannot offer any opinion on it, then please leave blank or mark "Not applicable". The questionnaire should take **around fifteen minutes** to complete. When you arrive at the **final 'thank you'** page, you will know that your responses have been recorded on our database.

Where "programme" is used in the questionnaire, this refers to your whole programme of study at your institution, for example MRes in Sociology, PhD in Physics, etc.

After each section you will be asked for any further comments on the issues covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not identify yourself or other individuals (including staff) in your comments.**

Once you click 'continue' you will be directed to the first section of the survey.

Supervision

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about supervision?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. If you have any additional comments about supervision, please write them in here:

Resources

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about resources?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. I have a suitable working space	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and online resources)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4. If you have any additional comments about resources, please write them in here:

Research culture

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the research culture? (**Note:** Where we have used the term 'department' please answer with respect to your centre, school, institute or other unit where you are primarily based or attached for your research.)

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My department provides a good seminar programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. If you have any additional comments about research culture, please write them in here:

Progress and assessment

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about induction, progression arrangements and assessment?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I understand the required standard for my thesis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. If you have any additional comments about induction, progression arrangements and assessment, please write them in here:

Responsibilities

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about responsibilities?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Other than my supervisor/s, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. If you have any additional comments about feedback mechanisms and student/staff responsibilities, please write them in here:

Research skills

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about research skills development?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. If you have any additional comments about research skills development please write them in here:

Professional development

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about professional development?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. If you have any additional comments about professional development, please write them in here:

Opportunities

15. Please indicate which of the following opportunities you have experienced during your research degree programme (select all that apply):

- Agreeing a personal training or development plan
- Receiving training to develop my research skills
- Receiving training to develop my 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

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

- Yes
- No (go to question 17)

16 a. **If yes**, to what extent do you agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?

- Definitely disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly agree
- Definitely agree
- N/A

Did you receive formal training for your teaching?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

Overall experience

17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your experience?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	N/A
a. Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. If you have any additional comments about your experience of your research degree programme, please write them in here. For example, what would further improve your experience?

[Institutional questions]

You and your programme

19: I am currently registered as doing

- PhD
- Professional doctorate
- PhD by published work
- New route PhD
- MPhil with transfer to PhD
- MPhil
- Master by research
- Other (please specify)

Note: PhD include DPhil programmes

19 a. **(Doctoral students only)** Is your doctoral training programme provided through a **Doctoral Training Centre**, a **Doctoral Training Partnership** or a **Centre for Doctoral Training**?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

20. The main motivation for me pursuing a research degree programme was:

- My interest in the 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
- Other (please specify)

21. What type of career do you have in mind for when you complete your research degree?

- Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)
- Research 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)
- Any other professional career
- Self-employment (including setting up own business)
- Returning to or remaining with employer who is sponsoring your degree
- Other (please specify)

22. I am:

- 25 years old or younger
- 26-30 years old
- 31-35 years old
- 36-40 years old
- 41-45 years old
- 46-50 years old
- 51-55 years old
- 56 years old or older
- Prefer not to say

23. I am:

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

24. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

24 a. **If yes**, please indicate which of the following apply (select all that apply):

- Social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder
- Blind/serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
- Deaf/serious hearing impairment
- Long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
- Mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder
- Specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or ADHD
- Physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
- A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above
- Prefer not to say

25. Please select which of the following most closely matches your primary discipline:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Clinical Medicine<input type="radio"/> Public Health, Health Services and Primary Care<input type="radio"/> Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy<input type="radio"/> Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience<input type="radio"/> Biological Sciences<input type="radio"/> Agriculture, Veterinary and Food Science<input type="radio"/> Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences<input type="radio"/> Chemistry<input type="radio"/> Physics<input type="radio"/> Mathematical Sciences<input type="radio"/> Computer Science and Informatics<input type="radio"/> Aeronautical, Mechanical, Chemical and Manufacturing Engineering<input type="radio"/> Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Metallurgy and Materials<input type="radio"/> Civil and Construction Engineering<input type="radio"/> General Engineering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="radio"/> Architecture, Built Environment and Planning<input type="radio"/> Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology<input type="radio"/> Economics and Econometrics<input type="radio"/> Business and Management Studies<input type="radio"/> Law<input type="radio"/> Politics and International Studies<input type="radio"/> Social Work and Social Policy<input type="radio"/> Sociology<input type="radio"/> Anthropology and Development Studies<input type="radio"/> Education<input type="radio"/> Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism<input type="radio"/> Area Studies<input type="radio"/> Modern Languages and Linguistics<input type="radio"/> English Language and Literature<input type="radio"/> History<input type="radio"/> Classics<input type="radio"/> Philosophy<input type="radio"/> Theology and Religious Studies<input type="radio"/> Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory<input type="radio"/> Music, Drama, Dance and Performing Arts<input type="radio"/> Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management |
|---|---|

26. *** Which Department do you belong to? *** This is a question for each institution to map their departmental structure. The format of this question is a drop down list and question wording can be changed or deleted. If you wish to compare your results with previous years in BOS, please test your question wording carefully to make sure that you can access the information you need.

27. I am currently registered as studying:

- Full-time
- Part-time

28. What year of your research degree programme are you in?

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5

- Year 6
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Other (please specify)

29. I currently:

- Am planning or doing my research
- Am writing up my thesis
- Have submitted my thesis and I am awaiting my viva
- Am making amendments to my thesis following my viva
- Am awaiting to graduate
- Other (please specify).....

30. I am

- Primarily a face-to-face learner (for example: based at my institution)
- Primarily a distance learner

31. When you started your programme, did you consider yourself to be fluent in English?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

31 a. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you have received appropriate support for your English language needs

- Definitely agree
- Mostly agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Mostly disagree
- Definitely disagree
- Not applicable

31 b. If you have any further comments on the support for your English language needs provided by your institution, please provide them here:

32. For fees purposes, is your normal place of residence registered as:

- UK
- Other European Union (EU)
- Non-EU

33. Where is your normal place of residence?

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom – England | <input type="radio"/> Channel Islands | <input type="radio"/> Guernsey |
| <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom – Northern Ireland | <input type="radio"/> Chile | <input type="radio"/> Guinea |
| <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom – Scotland | <input type="radio"/> China | <input type="radio"/> Guinea-Bissau |
| <input type="radio"/> United Kingdom – Wales | <input type="radio"/> China, Hong Kong | <input type="radio"/> Guyana |
| <input type="radio"/> Afghanistan | <input type="radio"/> China, Macao | <input type="radio"/> Haiti |
| <input type="radio"/> Åland Islands | <input type="radio"/> Colombia | <input type="radio"/> Holy See |
| <input type="radio"/> Albania | <input type="radio"/> Comoros | <input type="radio"/> Honduras |
| <input type="radio"/> Algeria | <input type="radio"/> Congo | <input type="radio"/> Hungary |
| <input type="radio"/> American Samoa | <input type="radio"/> Cook Islands | <input type="radio"/> Iceland |
| <input type="radio"/> Andorra | <input type="radio"/> Costa Rica | <input type="radio"/> India |
| <input type="radio"/> Angola | <input type="radio"/> Côte d'Ivoire | <input type="radio"/> Indonesia |
| <input type="radio"/> Anguilla | <input type="radio"/> Croatia | <input type="radio"/> Iran (Islamic Republic of) |
| <input type="radio"/> Antigua and Barbuda | <input type="radio"/> Cuba | <input type="radio"/> Iraq |
| <input type="radio"/> Argentina | <input type="radio"/> Cyprus | <input type="radio"/> Ireland |
| <input type="radio"/> Armenia | <input type="radio"/> Czech Republic | <input type="radio"/> Isle of Man |
| <input type="radio"/> Aruba | <input type="radio"/> Democratic People's Republic of Korea | <input type="radio"/> Israel |
| <input type="radio"/> Australia | <input type="radio"/> Democratic Republic of the Congo | <input type="radio"/> Italy |
| <input type="radio"/> Austria | <input type="radio"/> Denmark | <input type="radio"/> Jamaica |
| <input type="radio"/> Azerbaijan | <input type="radio"/> Djibouti | <input type="radio"/> Japan |
| <input type="radio"/> Bahamas | <input type="radio"/> Dominica | <input type="radio"/> Jersey |
| <input type="radio"/> Bahrain | <input type="radio"/> Dominican Republic | <input type="radio"/> Jordan |
| <input type="radio"/> Bangladesh | <input type="radio"/> Ecuador | <input type="radio"/> Kazakhstan |
| <input type="radio"/> Barbados | <input type="radio"/> Ecuador | <input type="radio"/> Kenya |
| <input type="radio"/> Belarus | <input type="radio"/> Egypt | <input type="radio"/> Kiribati |
| <input type="radio"/> Belgium | <input type="radio"/> El Salvador | <input type="radio"/> Kosovo |
| <input type="radio"/> Belize | <input type="radio"/> Equatorial Guinea | <input type="radio"/> Kuwait |
| <input type="radio"/> Benin | <input type="radio"/> Eritrea | <input type="radio"/> Kyrgyzstan |
| <input type="radio"/> Bermuda | <input type="radio"/> Estonia | <input type="radio"/> Lao People's Democratic Republic |
| <input type="radio"/> Bhutan | <input type="radio"/> Ethiopia | <input type="radio"/> Latvia |
| <input type="radio"/> Bolivia (Plurinational state of) | <input type="radio"/> Faeroe Islands | <input type="radio"/> Lebanon |
| <input type="radio"/> Bosnia and Herzegovina | <input type="radio"/> Falkland Islands (Malvinas) | <input type="radio"/> Lesotho |
| <input type="radio"/> Botswana | <input type="radio"/> Fiji | <input type="radio"/> Liberia |
| <input type="radio"/> Brazil | <input type="radio"/> Finland | <input type="radio"/> Libyan Arab Jamahiriya |
| <input type="radio"/> British Virgin Islands | <input type="radio"/> France | <input type="radio"/> Liechtenstein |
| <input type="radio"/> Brunei Darussalam | <input type="radio"/> French Guiana | <input type="radio"/> Lithuania |
| <input type="radio"/> Bulgaria | <input type="radio"/> French Polynesia | <input type="radio"/> Luxembourg |
| <input type="radio"/> Burkina Faso | <input type="radio"/> Gabon | <input type="radio"/> Macedonia, the former Yugoslav Republic of |
| <input type="radio"/> Burundi | <input type="radio"/> Gambia | <input type="radio"/> Madagascar |
| <input type="radio"/> Cambodia | <input type="radio"/> Georgia | <input type="radio"/> Malawi |
| <input type="radio"/> Cameroon | <input type="radio"/> Germany | <input type="radio"/> Malaysia |
| <input type="radio"/> Canada | <input type="radio"/> Ghana | <input type="radio"/> Maldives |
| <input type="radio"/> Cape Verde | <input type="radio"/> Gibraltar | <input type="radio"/> Mali |
| <input type="radio"/> Cayman Islands | <input type="radio"/> Greece | <input type="radio"/> Malta |
| <input type="radio"/> Central African Republic | <input type="radio"/> Greenland | <input type="radio"/> Marshall Islands |
| <input type="radio"/> Chad | <input type="radio"/> Grenada | <input type="radio"/> Martinique |
| <input type="radio"/> Channel Islands | <input type="radio"/> Guadeloupe | <input type="radio"/> Mauritania |
| <input type="radio"/> Chile | <input type="radio"/> Guam | <input type="radio"/> Mauritius |
| <input type="radio"/> China | <input type="radio"/> Guatemala | |

<input type="radio"/> Mayotte	<input type="radio"/> Puerto Rico	<input type="radio"/> Swaziland
<input type="radio"/> Mexico	<input type="radio"/> Qatar	<input type="radio"/> Sweden
<input type="radio"/> Micronesia (Federated States of)	<input type="radio"/> Republic of Korea	<input type="radio"/> Switzerland
<input type="radio"/> Monaco	<input type="radio"/> Republic of Moldova	<input type="radio"/> Syrian Arab Republic
<input type="radio"/> Mongolia	<input type="radio"/> Réunion	<input type="radio"/> Taiwan
<input type="radio"/> Montenegro	<input type="radio"/> Romania	<input type="radio"/> Tajikistan
<input type="radio"/> Montserrat	<input type="radio"/> Russian Federation	<input type="radio"/> Thailand
<input type="radio"/> Morocco	<input type="radio"/> Rwanda	<input type="radio"/> Timor-Leste
<input type="radio"/> Mozambique	<input type="radio"/> Saint-Barthélemy	<input type="radio"/> Togo
<input type="radio"/> Myanmar	<input type="radio"/> Saint Helena	<input type="radio"/> Tokelau
<input type="radio"/> Namibia	<input type="radio"/> Saint Kitts and Nevis	<input type="radio"/> Tonga
<input type="radio"/> Nauru	<input type="radio"/> Saint Lucia	<input type="radio"/> Trinidad and Tobago
<input type="radio"/> Nepal	<input type="radio"/> Saint-Martin (French part)	<input type="radio"/> Tunisia
<input type="radio"/> Netherlands	<input type="radio"/> Saint Pierre and Miquelon	<input type="radio"/> Turkey
<input type="radio"/> Netherlands Antilles	<input type="radio"/> Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	<input type="radio"/> Turkmenistan
<input type="radio"/> New Caledonia	<input type="radio"/> Samoa	<input type="radio"/> Turks and Caicos Islands
<input type="radio"/> New Zealand	<input type="radio"/> San Marino	<input type="radio"/> Tuvalu
<input type="radio"/> Nicaragua	<input type="radio"/> Sao Tome and Principe	<input type="radio"/> Uganda
<input type="radio"/> Niger	<input type="radio"/> Saudi Arabia	<input type="radio"/> Ukraine
<input type="radio"/> Nigeria	<input type="radio"/> Senegal	<input type="radio"/> United Arab Emirates
<input type="radio"/> Niue	<input type="radio"/> Serbia	<input type="radio"/> United Republic of Tanzania
<input type="radio"/> Norfolk Island	<input type="radio"/> Seychelles	<input type="radio"/> United States of America
<input type="radio"/> Northern Mariana Islands	<input type="radio"/> Sierra Leone	<input type="radio"/> United States Virgin Islands
<input type="radio"/> Norway	<input type="radio"/> Singapore	<input type="radio"/> Uruguay
<input type="radio"/> Occupied Palestinian Territory	<input type="radio"/> Slovakia	<input type="radio"/> Uzbekistan
<input type="radio"/> Oman	<input type="radio"/> Slovenia	<input type="radio"/> Vanuatu
<input type="radio"/> Pakistan	<input type="radio"/> Solomon Islands	<input type="radio"/> Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
<input type="radio"/> Palau	<input type="radio"/> Somalia	<input type="radio"/> Viet Nam
<input type="radio"/> Panama	<input type="radio"/> South Africa	<input type="radio"/> Wallis and Futuna Islands
<input type="radio"/> Papua New Guinea	<input type="radio"/> South Sudan	<input type="radio"/> Western Sahara
<input type="radio"/> Paraguay	<input type="radio"/> Spain	<input type="radio"/> Yemen
<input type="radio"/> Peru	<input type="radio"/> Sri Lanka	<input type="radio"/> Zambia
<input type="radio"/> Philippines	<input type="radio"/> Sudan	<input type="radio"/> Zimbabwe
<input type="radio"/> Pitcairn	<input type="radio"/> Suriname	<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)
<input type="radio"/> Poland	<input type="radio"/> Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands	
<input type="radio"/> Portugal		

34. I am

- White or White British
- White or White British: Gypsy or Traveller
- Black or Black British: Caribbean
- Black or Black British: African
- Any other Black background
- Asian or Asian British: Indian
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed: White and Black African
- Mixed: White and Asian
- Mixed: Any other Mixed background
- Arab
- Any other ethnic background
- Prefer not to say

35. Are you currently in paid employment?

- Yes
- No

35 a: **If yes**, how many hours of paid employment do you undertake in a typical week (term time)?

- 1-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- More than 30 hours

36. I am (select all that apply)

- Self-funded
- Research Council funded
- Funded by a charity
- Funded by a higher education institution
- UK industry funded
- UK Government funded
- EU/EC funded
- Funded by an overseas organisation
- Other (please specify).....

37. In the year before starting my research degree programme I:

- Completed my undergraduate studies
- Completed my postgraduate studies [for example, MSc, MA]
- Took a gap year
- Worked in the same organisation that I currently work in
- Worked as a researcher
- Worked in a non-research role
- Other (please specify).....

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