

Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students 2023

The national survey for postgraduate research students opens every second year during February to March for a three-week period, and runs on a biennial cycle, with the next survey happening in Spring 2025.

The survey was piloted in 2018 and implemented in full in Spring 2019. The 2023 PGR survey opened in University of Galway on the 7th February 2023 and closed on the 27th February 2023.

The University of Galway response rate for the PGR StudentSurvey.ie in 2023 was 42.3%, compared to a national response rate of 38%.

The focus of the survey is on student engagement with learning, rather than student satisfaction.

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

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

Demographic data is provided in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 3 presents

- response for all University of Galway students compared to response for other respondents in 2023. Significant differences (i.e. $\geq 5\%$) are highlighted. The University of Galway response in 2021 is also provided for comparison.
- response for University of Galway students by College compared to response for all University of Galway students. Significant differences (i.e. $\geq 5\%$) are highlighted.

University of Galway students indicated a significantly more positive response for 15 questions, and a significantly more negative response for 3 questions compared to other respondents.

Overall, compared to all respondents, our PGR students report having received an appropriate induction / orientation, knowing who to approach if they are concerned about academic aspects or to talk to about day-to-day problems, participate more in development opportunities, and are more likely to be funded through a scholarship and stipend. They, however, report lower agreement than other respondents with the statement that the institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students.

It is generally recognised that there are more significant differences within institutions than there are between institutions.

University of Galway responses are therefore also presented at College level in Table 3.

School level data is available to vice-Deans of Graduate Studies.

School level actions plans are required to be developed and submitted to Graduate Studies Board, in response to the survey findings.

Graduate Studies wishes to acknowledge the expert assistance of Dr Aksana Chyzheuskaya in the Institutional Research Office in the preparation of the data presented in this report.

Table 1: Demographic profile of University of Galway Respondents

	Population	Responses	Response Rate
Total	1054	446	42.3%
Gender			
Male	464	177	38.1%
Female	587	268	45.7%
Other	3	1	33.3%
Programme Type			
Masters	37	15	40.5%
PhD	1017	431	42.4%
Year of Study			
1	256	128	50.0%
2	230	121	52.6%
3	177	72	40.7%
4	169	76	45.0%
5	9	3	33.3%
6	9	2	22.2%
Master's 3+	6	2	33.3%
FT PhD 5+	178	42	23.6%

	University of Galway 2023			University of Galway 2021			All PGR StudentSurvey.ie
	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	All Students
Population							
Survey Population	1,054	37	1,017	1,060	57	1,003	11,406
Respondents	446	15	431	426	27	399	4,350
Response Rate	42.3	40.5	42.4	40.2	47.4	39.8	38.1
Gender (Number)							
Male	177	9	168	180	9	171	1,769
Female	268	6	262	246	18	228	2,566
Gender (%)							
Male	39.8	60.0	39.1	42.3	33.3	42.9	40.8
Female	60.2	40.0	60.9	57.7	66.7	57.1	59.2
Domicile (Number)							
Irish domiciled	206	13	193	253	20	233	2,313
Internationally domiciled	240	2	238	173	7	166	2,037
Domicile (%)							
Irish domiciled	46.2	86.7	44.8	59.4	74.1	58.4	53.2
Internationally domiciled	53.8	13.3	55.2	40.6	25.9	41.6	46.8

Table 2: Response for Colleges and Schools

College	Population	Responses	Response Rate
ASSCS	253	106	41.9%
BPPL	86	34	39.5%
MNHS	178	75	42.1%
SE	537	231	43.0%
Inter College	0	0	
Total	1054	446	42.3%

Schools with responses<10 are redacted

Schools	Population	Responses	Response Rate
Business & Economics	50	19	38.0%
Biological & Chemical Sciences	147	61	41.5%
Computer Science	74	28	37.8%
Education	22	14	63.6%
Engineering	167	76	45.5%
English & Creative Arts	33	14	42.4%
Geography, Archaeology & Irish Studies	57	24	42.1%
Health Sciences	27	14	51.9%
History & Philosophy	13	<10	N/A
Languages, Literatures & Cultures	22	10	45.5%
Law	36	15	41.7%
Mathematical & Statistical Sciences	74	24	32.4%
Medicine	145	56	38.6%
Natural Sciences	75	42	56.0%
Nursing & Midwifery	6	<10	N/A
Political Science & Sociology	26	10	38.5%
Psychology	78	31	39.7%
Other	2	0	0.0%

Table 3: Responses for University of Galway in 2023 and 2021, with deviation of equal to or greater than 5% between University of Galway in 2023 and responses for all Universities (including University of Galway) highlighted. Responses also for the Colleges with deviation of equal to or greater than 5% between response and the University of Galway 2023 response highlighted.

Questions	Responses	Galway 2023	Galway 2021	Other Unis 2023	ASSCS	BPPL	SE	MNHS
Research Infrastructure & Facilities								
I have a suitable working space	Definitely/Mostly Agree	83.2%	62.0%	77.4%	80.4%	82.4%	81.7%	91.9%
There is adequate provision of computing resources / facilities	Definitely/Mostly Agree	66.0%	55.0%	70.4%	49.5%	66.7%	69.7%	76.0%
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical / online resources)	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.1%	55.0%	82.6%	82.5%	73.5%	81.3%	81.9%
I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research	Definitely/Mostly Agree	74.5%	55.0%	72.6%	74.8%	62.5%	75.3%	76.7%
Supervision								
Supervision I am being supervised by...	1 Supervisors	47.9%	57.0%	39.7%	51.9%	58.8%	47.4%	38.7%
Supervision I am being supervised by...	2 Supervisors	39.3%	36.0%	45.3%	34.9%	38.2%	39.1%	46.7%
Supervision I am being supervised by...	3 or more Supervisors	12.8%	7.0%	15.0%	13.2%	2.9%	13.5%	14.7%
My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.7%	84.0%	85.0%	85.1%	90.9%	78.1%	84.0%
I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs	Definitely/Mostly Agree	84.3%	87.0%	87.5%	85.1%	87.9%	82.7%	86.7%
My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities	Definitely/Mostly Agree	83.4%	88.0%	86.4%	88.1%	87.5%	80.5%	83.8%
My supervisor(s) help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	Definitely/Mostly Agree	72.8%	76.0%	76.0%	76.0%	78.8%	71.8%	68.9%
Research Culture								
My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	71.2%	71.0%	68.8%	70.1%	84.8%	68.3%	75.3%
The research ambience in my department stimulates my work	Definitely/Mostly Agree	63.2%	61.0%	61.7%	66.3%	64.7%	58.4%	73.2%
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	Definitely/Mostly Agree	62.6%	47.0%	62.4%	63.3%	50.0%	61.5%	71.2%
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	Definitely/Mostly Agree	54.8%	47.0%	52.7%	56.7%	50.0%	56.2%	50.0%
Progress and Assessment								
I received an appropriate induction / orientation to my research degree programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	69.1%	68.0%	62.4%	75.0%	67.6%	64.9%	74.3%
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	Definitely/Mostly Agree	82.4%	83.0%	79.9%	83.0%	85.3%	82.7%	79.5%
I understand the required standard for my thesis	Definitely/Mostly Agree	73.1%	75.0%	73.2%	71.0%	82.4%	73.7%	69.9%

The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me	Definitely/Mostly Agree	66.4%	71.0%	67.8%	63.0%	79.4%	67.6%	61.6%
Research Skills								
My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	88.2%	89.0%	86.0%	87.6%	85.3%	88.0%	91.4%
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	84.9%	87.0%	85.3%	82.7%	81.8%	84.3%	91.4%
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	74.5%	76.0%	72.0%	71.4%	76.5%	74.2%	78.6%
My understanding of research integrity (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	86.3%	87.0%	86.6%	84.5%	88.2%	84.8%	92.6%
Other Transferable Skills								
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.0%	77.0%	77.8%	78.4%	78.8%	81.0%	85.7%
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	77.3%	75.0%	76.1%	76.0%	72.7%	77.8%	79.7%
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	67.7%	65.0%	69.8%	66.0%	70.6%	69.0%	64.7%
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	79.2%	76.0%	79.6%	76.3%	82.4%	80.2%	78.6%
Responsibilities and Support								
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Definitely/Mostly Agree	88.1%	90.0%	89.0%	87.6%	85.3%	88.1%	90.0%
I am aware of my supervisor	Definitely/Mostly Agree	83.0%	84.0%	83.6%	83.5%	85.3%	82.0%	84.3%
Other than my supervisor(s), I know who to approach if I am concerned about any academic aspect of my research degree programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	73.7%	77.0%	66.1%	75.0%	82.4%	72.0%	72.9%
How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc.)	Definitely/Mostly Agree	31.8%	43.0%	32.3%	32.3%	38.2%	28.6%	37.9%
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	Definitely/Mostly Agree	38.9%	37.0%	44.6%	42.7%	36.4%	37.6%	39.1%
Personal Outlook								
I am satisfied with my life nowadays	Definitely/Mostly Agree	63.2%	56.0%	64.7%	73.2%	64.7%	59.2%	61.4%
I am satisfied with my life within my institution nowadays	Definitely/Mostly Agree	60.0%	47.0%	62.0%	66.7%	64.7%	55.3%	62.9%
I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Definitely/Mostly Agree	51.8%	45.0%	53.2%	54.6%	47.1%	49.5%	57.1%

There is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems	Definitely/Mostly Agree	59.6%	43.0%	53.6%	61.3%	50.0%	57.9%	67.1%
I feel that my research degree programme is worthwhile	Definitely/Mostly Agree	79.6%	77.3%	79.4%	82.3%	76.5%	80.6%	74.3%
My research is funded by								
Scholarship	YES	74.4%	72.9%	61.8%	50.9%	85.3%	83.9%	73.3%
Scholarship (fees only)	YES	2.9%	19.2%	5.6%	7.5%	N<5	2.2%	N<5
Self-funded	YES	13.7%	14.6%	16.8%	34.9%	14.7%	5.2%	9.3%
Grant	YES	13.9%	12.2%	19.3%	8.5%	N<5	16.1%	20.0%
Employer-funded	YES	7.2%	7.4%	8.0%	13.2%	N<5	5.2%	N<5
My funding covers								
Fees	YES	94.1%	97.5%	94.1%	94.5%	100.0%	93.0%	94.5%
Stipend	YES	84.7%	82.7%	79.5%	68.1%	81.8%	92.5%	82.2%
Research materials	YES	56.1%	55.7%	56.6%	38.5%	33.3%	62.6%	68.5%
Travel to conferences	YES	58.0%	50.9%	58.0%	41.8%	42.4%	68.3%	53.4%
Other travel (labs / other institutions)	YES	35.1%	28.1%	30.3%	19.8%	18.2%	44.5%	32.9%
Specialist training	YES	32.3%	24.8%	27.2%	17.6%	15.2%	38.8%	38.4%
Development Opportunities								
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	YES	58.3%	44.0%	48.3%	60.2%	50.0%	59.6%	55.6%
Receiving training to develop my research skills	YES	81.3%	79.0%	77.4%	82.7%	79.4%	78.5%	88.9%
Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills	YES	66.3%	62.0%	61.3%	75.8%	64.7%	62.3%	66.2%
Receiving advice on career options	YES	42.3%	38.0%	37.9%	45.4%	38.2%	41.3%	43.1%
Taking part in a placement or internship	YES	27.0%	20.0%	19.3%	22.7%	17.6%	30.9%	25.0%
Attending an academic research conference	YES	80.8%	72.0%	76.6%	78.8%	82.4%	78.0%	91.7%
Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	YES	69.3%	64.0%	68.2%	72.4%	76.5%	65.9%	72.2%
Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	YES	53.4%	54.0%	52.0%	47.4%	54.5%	54.3%	58.3%
Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	YES	52.1%	45.0%	47.3%	49.5%	41.2%	56.5%	47.2%
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	YES	21.8%	21.0%	18.1%	21.6%	N<5	24.2%	19.4%
Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice e.g. submittin	YES	10.4%	9.0%	9.2%	6.2%	N<5	13.0%	8.3%
Working as part of a team	YES	71.6%	67.0%	65.6%	60.8%	55.9%	73.1%	88.9%
Working collaboratively with industry	YES	25.2%	24.0%	24.8%	15.6%	20.6%	29.3%	27.8%
Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation	YES	25.1%	26.0%	23.2%	31.6%	41.2%	20.6%	22.2%
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	YES	30.6%	20.0%	25.0%	28.9%	32.4%	32.4%	26.4%
Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research degree programme	YES	75.5%	70.0%	66.4%	61.6%	75.0%	82.5%	72.7%
Do you agree or disagree that the teaching / demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?	Definitely/Mostly Agree	65.4%	57.0%	67.0%	74.6%	70.4%	63.3%	59.0%

Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching / demonstration	Definitely/Mostly Agree	56.5%	48.0%	55.5%	54.1%	57.1%	55.8%	61.7%
Motivations								
My interest in my subject	Priority 1	47.0%	47.0%	44.7%	49.0%	52.9%	47.9%	38.6%
Improving my career prospects for an academic / research career	Priority 1	21.5%	18.0%	21.6%	24.0%	14.7%	19.2%	28.6%
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic / research career	Priority 1	12.8%	12.0%	12.2%	7.3%	N<5	13.6%	20.0%
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor / supervisor	Priority 1	3.1%	4.0%	2.7%	N<5	N<5	3.8%	N<5
The funding was available	Priority 1	3.1%	4.0%	4.2%	N<5	N<5	3.3%	N<5
It felt like a natural step for me	Priority 1	5.6%	9.0%	7.1%	6.3%	N<5	5.2%	N<5
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	Priority 1	0.7%	1.0%	1.3%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Professional development or training	Priority 1	4.4%	5.0%	4.5%	N<5	N<5	5.2%	N<5
Other (Please specify)	Priority 1	1.7%	1.0%	1.7%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Career								
Academic career in higher education	Priority 1	35.4%	39.0%	37.9%	47.4%	48.5%	27.6%	37.1%
Research career in higher education	Priority 1	15.5%	13.0%	12.6%	14.7%	N<5	17.8%	11.4%
Other career in higher education	Priority 1	1.0%	1.0%	1.3%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Research career outside higher education	Priority 1	28.9%	26.0%	23.9%	12.6%	15.2%	35.5%	37.1%
Teaching (at a level below higher education)	Priority 1	0.2%	0.3%	1.2%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree	Priority 1	3.4%	3.0%	3.6%	N<5	N<5	2.8%	N<5
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree	Priority 1	1.5%	2.0%	1.9%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Self-employment (including setting up your own business)	Priority 1	2.4%	3.0%	3.3%	N<5	N<5	3.3%	N<5
Any other professional career	Priority 1	3.9%	5.0%	5.6%	5.3%	N<5	4.2%	N<5
Not sure or not decided yet	Priority 1	5.6%	8.0%	6.4%	5.3%	N<5	5.6%	N<5
Other (Please specify):	Priority 1	2.2%	2.0%	2.3%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Overall Experience								
Overall Experience How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution?	Good/Excellent	70.4%	71.0%	72.8%	73.7%	78.8%	66.4%	74.3%
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale:	Definitely/Mostly Agree	71.2%	69.0%	74.5%	81.9%	78.8%	66.7%	67.1%
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme?								
No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing	YES	57.0%	68.0%	57.9%	55.8%	54.5%	58.8%	54.3%
Yes, for financial reasons	YES	21.7%	12.0%	23.7%	25.3%	15.2%	19.9%	25.7%
Yes, for personal or family reasons	YES	17.1%	15.0%	16.5%	18.9%	21.2%	13.9%	22.9%
Yes, for health reasons	YES	11.4%	10.0%	9.9%	13.7%	N<5	10.2%	14.3%
Yes, for employment reasons	YES	8.0%	5.0%	6.6%	9.5%	N<5	6.9%	8.6%
Yes, to transfer to another institution	YES	3.4%	4.0%	3.8%	N<5	N<5	3.7%	N<5
Other (please state)	YES	9.7%	6.0%	6.8%	6.3%	15.2%	11.6%	N<5

