

Irish Survey of Student Engagement for Postgraduate Research Students 2025

The national survey for postgraduate research (PGR) 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 2027.

The 2025 PGR survey opened in University of Galway on the 11th February 2025 and closed on the 4th March, 2025. The University of Galway response rate for the PGR StudentSurvey.ie in 2025 was 59%, compared to a national response rate of 37%.

Table 1: Breakdown of response rates by College

	Population	Responses	RR
College of Arts, Social Sciences, & Celtic Studies	242	112	46.3%
College of Business, Public Policy, & Law	97	62	63.9%
College of Medicine, Nursing, & Health Sciences	200	115	57.5%
College of Science & Engineering	482	316	65.6%
Grand Total	1021	605	59.3%

Table 2: Breakdown of response rates by School

School	Population	Responses	RR
Biological & Chemical Sciences	122	88	72.1%
Business & Economics	59	39	66.1%
Computer Science	48	23	47.9%
Education	29	12	41.4%
Engineering	168	109	64.9%
English, Media & Creative Arts	40	19	47.5%
Geography, Archaeology & Irish Studies	40	23	57.5%
Health Sciences	15	8	53.3%
History & Philosophy	8	5	62.5%
Languages, Literatures & Cultures	22	11	50.0%
Law	39	23	59.0%
Mathematical & Statistical Sciences	48	30	62.5%
Medicine	170	97	57.1%
Natural Sciences	95	65	68.4%
Nursing & Midwifery	16	11	68.8%
Political Science & Sociology	27	16	59.3%
Psychology	75	26	34.7%
Grand Total	1021	605	59.3%

Table 3: Demographic profile of respondents

	University of Galway 2025			University of Galway 2023			All PGR StudentSurvey.ie		
	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10	All Students	NFQ 9	NFQ 10
Population									
Survey Population	1,021	32	989	1,054	37	1,017	11,511	1,233	10,278
Respondents	605	16	589	446	15	431	4,225	372	3,853
Response Rate	59.3	50.0	59.6	42.3	40.5	42.4	36.7	30.2	37.5
Gender (Number)									
Male	252	7	245	177	9	168	1,747	159	1,588
Female	348	9	339	268	6	262	2,450	210	2,240
Gender (%)									
Male	42.0	43.8	42.0	39.8	60.0	39.1	41.6	43.1	41.5
Female	58.0	56.3	58.0	60.2	40.0	60.9	58.4	56.9	58.5
Domicile (Number)									
Irish domiciled	253	13	240	206	13	193	2,323	261	2,062
Internationally domiciled	352	3	349	240	2	238	1,902	111	1,791
Domicile (%)									
Irish domiciled	41.8	81.3	40.7	46.2	86.7	44.8	55.0	70.2	53.5
Internationally domiciled	58.2	18.8	59.3	53.8	13.3	55.2	45.0	29.8	46.5

Table 4 – Breakdown of respondents by gender, programme and year of study

	Population		Responses		Response Rate
	N	%	N	%	%
Total	1021		605		59.3%
Gender	N	%	N	%	%
Male	451	44.2%	252	41.65	55.9%
Female	560	54.8%	348	57.52	62.1%
Other	10	1.0%	5	0.83	50.0%
Programme Type					
Masters	32	3.1%	16	2.64	50.0%
PhD	989	96.9%	589	97.36	59.6%
Year of Study					
1	205	20.1%	134	22.15	65.4%
2	272	26.6%	177	29.26	65.1%
3	215	21.1%	126	20.83	58.6%
4	166	16.3%	96	15.87	57.8%
5	10	1.0%	2	0.33	20.0%
6	4	0.4%	2	0.33	50.0%
Master's 3+	3	0.3%	1	0.17	33.3%
FT PhD 5+	146	14.3%	67	11.07	45.9%

42% of those who responded were Irish students and 58% were internationally domiciled. 95% of those who responded were full-time students, the remaining 5% were part-time. 97% of respondents were postgraduate PhD students, whilst 3% of respondents were pursuing Masters by Research degrees.

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 & Facilities
- Supervision
- Research Culture
- Progress & Assessment
- Development Opportunities
- Research Skills
- Personal Outlook
- Transferable Skills
- Responsibilities & Supports
- Motivations
- Career
- Overall Experience

Table 5 presents:

- response for all University of Galway students 2025 compared to respondents for all Universities in 2025. Significant differences (i.e. $\geq 5\%$) are highlighted. The University of Galway response in 2023 is also provided for comparative analysis.
- 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 14 questions, and a significantly more negative response for 3 questions compared to all University responses.

Overall, compared nationally, a higher percentage of University of Galway respondents report access to research infrastructure (suitable working spaces, provision of computing resources/facilities, provision of library facilities & specialist resources and facilities and resources to support research) and an appropriate student orientation compared to the average reported for all Universities.

The average across all Universities shows that a significantly higher percentage of students have three supervisors whereas a higher percentage of University of Galway students have only one supervisor. Co-supervision may be implemented in other Universities where alternate mechanisms of supervisory support and oversight, such as Graduate Research Committees, are absent. Given that context, it is notable that a higher percentage of University of Galway students report that they know who to approach, other than their supervisor, for academic support and that they have someone to talk to about day-to-day problems.

Overall, compared to all respondents to this survey, University of Galway students participate more in training and development opportunities with a significantly higher response for 6 of the

18 survey questions (agreeing a personal development plan, receiving research skills training and career advice, taking part in a placement or internship, working as part of a team, contributing to teaching at the University) compared to all respondents, on this aspect of student engagement.

A lower proportion of respondents from the University of Galway compared to other Universities report that they are self-funded. Also, a lower proportion report interest in their subject as the primary motivation to undertake studies.

It is generally recognised that there are more significant differences within institutions than there are between institutions. Significant differences across Colleges to University of Galway responses are therefore also highlighted in Table 5.

School level data, that contribute to these differences, 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.

Table 5: Responses for University of Galway in 2025 and 2023, with deviation of equal to or greater than 5% between University of Galway in 2025 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 2025 responses highlighted.

Questions	Responses	UniOGalway2025	UniOGalway 2023	All Unis 2025	ASSCS	BPPL	ENGIN+Sci	MNHS
Research Infrastructure & Facilities								
I have a suitable working space	Definitely/Mostly Agree	85.20%	83.20%	73.30%	81.10%	85.20%	85.60%	87.60%
There is adequate provision of computing resources / facilities	Definitely/Mostly Agree	73.00%	66.00%	66.60%	68.20%	66.70%	74.80%	75.90%
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical / online resources)	Definitely/Mostly Agree	82.80%	81.10%	79.30%	82.70%	87.10%	82.50%	81.40%
I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research	Definitely/Mostly Agree	74.50%	74.50%	70.00%	72.90%	85.20%	72.80%	74.60%
Supervision								
I am being supervised by...	1 Supervisor	48.40%	47.90%	36.50%	55.40%	41.90%	52.90%	33.00%
I am being supervised by...	2 Supervisors	40.80%	39.30%	45.30%	33.90%	50.00%	37.60%	51.30%
I am being supervised by...	3 Supervisors	10.80%	12.80%	18.20%	10.70%	8.10%	9.60%	15.70%
My supervisor(s) provides the appropriate level of support for my research	Definitely/Mostly Agree	84.40%	81.70%	85.60%	87.40%	90.30%	82.00%	85.10%
I have regular contact with my supervisor(s), appropriate for my needs	Definitely/Mostly Agree	88.60%	84.30%	88.40%	88.30%	93.40%	88.00%	87.70%
My supervisor(s) provides feedback that helps me to direct my research activities	Definitely/Mostly Agree	86.00%	83.40%	87.60%	88.20%	88.70%	83.80%	88.50%
My supervisor(s) help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	Definitely/Mostly Agree	76.60%	72.80%	77.70%	80.70%	80.30%	74.20%	77.00%
Research Culture								
My department provides access to a relevant seminar programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	73.30%	71.20%	69.90%	73.60%	86.90%	71.80%	69.90%
The research ambience in my department stimulates my work	Definitely/Mostly Agree	66.90%	63.20%	62.90%	58.70%	76.30%	65.10%	74.80%
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	Definitely/Mostly Agree	64.50%	62.60%	62.70%	54.20%	54.80%	68.10%	69.90%
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	Definitely/Mostly Agree	58.90%	54.80%	56.50%	55.00%	59.70%	58.40%	63.40%
Progress and Assessment								
I received an appropriate induction / orientation to my research degree programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	75.60%	69.10%	66.20%	74.80%	80.30%	78.00%	67.60%
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	Definitely/Mostly Agree	85.10%	82.40%	81%	80.20%	86.90%	86.40%	85.60%
I understand the required standard for my thesis	Definitely/Mostly Agree	77.10%	73.10%	76.40%	76.40%	83.60%	77.90%	72.10%
The final assessment procedures for my research degree are clear to me	Definitely/Mostly Agree	74.30%	66.40%	72.20%	67.30%	83.60%	75.50%	73.00%

Questions	Responses	UniOGalway2025	UniOGalway 2023	All Unis 2025	ASSCS	BPPL	ENGIN+Sci	MNHS
Research Skills								
My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	88.20%	88.20%	87.80%	91.30%	85.00%	87.10%	89.90%
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	88.00%	84.90%	87.30%	88.30%	83.10%	87.50%	91.70%
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	73.00%	74.50%	74.70%	78.10%	63.20%	74.50%	69.20%
My understanding of research integrity (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	89.30%	86.30%	88.80%	93.40%	83.30%	89.20%	89.00%
Other Transferable Skills								
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.20%	81.00%	80.90%	77.90%	72.40%	81.60%	88.10%
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.00%	77.30%	78.90%	82.70%	73.70%	80.30%	85.20%
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	72.10%	67.70%	72.30%	73.30%	72.90%	71.50%	72.00%
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	Definitely/Mostly Agree	84.60%	79.20%	81.20%	90.40%	86.40%	83.30%	81.70%
Responsibilities and Support								
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Definitely/Mostly Agree	91.90%	88.10%	90.80%	92.40%	93.20%	91.90%	90.80%
I am aware of my supervisor(s)' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	Definitely/Mostly Agree	86.60%	83.00%	85.80%	88.50%	88.10%	86.40%	84.40%
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	76.40%	73.70%	70.30%	82.50%	77.60%	74.10%	76.10%
How aware are you of the various student supports available? (Recreation, healthcare, counselling, etc)	Definitely/Mostly Agree	37.10%	31.80%	36.10%	49.00%	46.60%	31.50%	35.20%
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	Definitely/Mostly Agree	45.60%	38.90%	47.30%	46.20%	46.60%	46.90%	41.10%
Personal Outlook								
I am satisfied with my life nowadays	Definitely/Mostly Agree	67.80%	63.20%	68.90%	66.70%	67.20%	67.00%	71.30%
I am satisfied with my life within my institution nowadays	Definitely/Mostly Agree	65.80%	60.00%	66.90%	61.30%	74.10%	64.60%	69.20%
I am satisfied with my work-life balance	Definitely/Mostly Agree	60.00%	51.80%	58.80%	57.30%	56.90%	63.90%	53.70%
There is someone in my institution I can talk to about my day-to-day problems	Definitely/Mostly Agree	59.60%	59.60%	54.30%	51.00%	50.00%	61.80%	67.30%
I feel that my research degree programme is worthwhile	Definitely/Mostly Agree	81.60%	79.60%	82.80%	83.70%	81.00%	82.00%	78.70%

Questions	Responses	UniOGalway2025	UniOGalway 2023	All Unis 2025	ASSCS	BPPL	ENGIN+Sci	MNHS
My research is funded by								
Scholarship	YES	75.90%	74.40%	61.30%	59.80%	77.40%	81.60%	74.80%
Scholarship (fees only)	YES	2.30%	2.90%	5.20%	N<5	N<5	1.60%	N<5
Self-funded	YES	12.40%	13.70%	17.50%	35.70%	17.70%	5.70%	5.20%
Grant	YES	18.00%	13.90%	20.80%	7.10%	N<5	20.60%	28.70%
Employer-funded	YES	5.00%	7.20%	7.50%	8.00%	N<5	2.80%	7.80%
My funding covers								
Fees	YES	94.80%	94.10%	95.50%	94.80%	93.20%	94.80%	95.50%
Stipend	YES	84.50%	84.70%	77.80%	75.00%	84.70%	89.60%	78.60%
Research materials	YES	55.30%	56.10%	56.70%	44.80%	30.50%	64.30%	52.70%
Travel to conferences	YES	58.30%	58.00%	59.60%	44.80%	37.30%	69.80%	49.10%
Other travel (labs / other institutions)	YES	33.00%	35.10%	31.80%	27.10%	16.90%	41.20%	24.10%
Specialist training	YES	27.30%	32.30%	27.80%	22.90%	23.70%	29.20%	27.70%
Development Opportunities								
Agreeing a personal training or development plan	YES	76.20%	58.30%	57.30%	70.80%	82.00%	72.90%	87.30%
Receiving training to develop my research skills	YES	85.10%	81.30%	79.70%	88.90%	95.10%	80.20%	89.10%
Receiving training to develop my other transferable skills	YES	68.40%	66.30%	63.70%	75.70%	70.00%	61.90%	78.20%
Receiving advice on career options	YES	45.90%	42.30%	40.20%	42.90%	55.70%	44.20%	48.20%
Taking part in a placement or internship	YES	27.00%	27.00%	20.60%	21.70%	16.40%	30.10%	29.40%
Attending an academic research conference	YES	83.00%	80.80%	80.10%	78.70%	86.90%	81.50%	89.00%
Presenting a paper or poster at an academic research conference	YES	76.90%	69.30%	73.40%	73.80%	75.40%	77.20%	80.00%
Submitting a paper for publication in an academic journal or book	YES	55.60%	53.40%	54.20%	54.20%	54.10%	52.50%	66.40%
Communicating your research to a non-academic audience	YES	49.40%	52.10%	50.40%	43.00%	37.70%	49.50%	61.80%
Receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation	YES	20.50%	21.80%	19.70%	10.40%	18.00%	22.30%	26.60%
Putting training in entrepreneurship and innovation into practice e.g. submitting an invention disclosure or filing a patent application	YES	13.30%	10.40%	11.70%	N<5	11.50%	15.60%	18.20%
Working as part of a team	YES	74.10%	71.60%	67.80%	60.40%	49.20%	79.20%	87.30%
Working collaboratively with industry	YES	23.30%	25.20%	26.40%	13.20%	16.40%	25.10%	31.80%
Working collaboratively with a civil society organisation or public organisation	YES	27.10%	25.10%	25.50%	24.50%	36.10%	23.40%	34.50%
Spending time abroad as part of your research degree	YES	34.30%	30.60%	29.90%	33.00%	37.70%	34.30%	33.60%
Please indicate whether you have taught (or demonstrated) at your institution during your research programme	YES	73.70%	75.50%	68.00%	68.00%	65.00%	77.10%	75.00%
Do you agree or disagree that the teaching / demonstration you delivered enhanced your overall research experience?	Definitely/Mostly Agree	71.30%	65.40%	70.40%	74.70%	76.20%	68.50%	73.60%
Do you agree or disagree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching / demonstration?	Definitely/Mostly Agree	62.50%	56.50%	59.70%	55.00%	60.50%	64.00%	65.60%

Questions	Responses	UniOGalway2025	UniOGalway 2023	All Unis 2025	ASSCS	BPPL	ENGIN+Sci	MNHS
Motivations								
My interest in my subject	Priority 1	41.30%	47.00%	46.70%	47.60%	43.10%	41.40%	33.60%
Improving my career prospects for an academic / research career	Priority 1	25.20%	21.50%	21.90%	25.70%	20.70%	25.50%	26.20%
Improving my career prospects outside of an academic / research career	Priority 1	10.00%	12.80%	10.10%	N<5	N<5	11.40%	15.90%
I was encouraged by a former academic tutor / supervisor	Priority 1	3.60%	3.10%	2.70%	5.70%	N<5	2.10%	4.70%
The funding was available	Priority 1	5.40%	3.10%	4.30%	7.60%	N<5	3.40%	7.50%
It felt like a natural step for me	Priority 1	8.00%	5.60%	6.90%	N<5	10.30%	10.30%	5.60%
I felt inspired to work with a particular academic	Priority 1	1.30%	0.70%	1.40%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Professional development or training	Priority 1	3.80%	4.40%	4.20%	N<5	N<5	3.80%	N<5
Other (Please specify)	Priority 1	1.60%	1.70%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Career								
Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)	Priority 1	38.00%	35.40%	41.00%	49.50%	55.20%	32.60%	31.80%
Research career in higher education	Priority 1	13.90%	15.50%	12.90%	14.30%	N<5	16.80%	9.30%
Other career in higher education	Priority 1	1.80%	1.00%	1.50%	N<5	N<5	1.70%	N<5
Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)	Priority 1	23.50%	28.90%	20.90%	10.50%	13.80%	30.20%	23.40%
Teaching (at a level below higher education)	Priority 1	0.50%	0.20%	1.10%	N<5	N<5	N<5	N<5
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is sponsoring your degree	Priority 1	3.00%	3.40%	3.60%	N<5	N<5	N<5	9.30%
Returning to, or remaining with, employer who is not sponsoring your degree	Priority 1	2.90%	1.50%	2.30%	N<5	N<5	2.10%	6.50%
Self-employment (including setting up your own business)	Priority 1	3.20%	2.40%	3.50%	N<5	8.60%	3.40%	N<5
Any other professional career	Priority 1	4.30%	3.90%	3.90%	N<5	N<5	4.10%	6.50%
Not sure or not decided yet	Priority 1	6.60%	5.60%	7.10%	N<5	N<5	7.20%	7.50%
Other (Please specify):	Priority 1	2.30%	2.20%	2.20%	6.70%	N<5	N<5	N<5
Overall Experience								
Overall Experience: How would you evaluate your entire research experience at this institution?	Good/Excellent	74.90%	70.40%	75.40%	77.40%	82.80%	72.80%	73.80%
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale:	Good/Excellent	75.20%	71.20%	78.50%	76.90%	82.80%	74.70%	71.00%
Have you ever seriously considered withdrawing from your research degree programme?								
No, I have not seriously considered withdrawing		64.70%	57.00%	64.20%	61.90%	58.60%	68.30%	60.70%
Yes, for financial reasons	YES	15.80%	21.70%	15.80%	19.00%	24.10%	13.70%	14.00%
Yes, for personal or family reasons	YES	14.40%	17.10%	14.80%	17.10%	17.20%	10.60%	20.60%
Yes, for health reasons	YES	8.70%	11.40%	8.90%	18.10%	N<5	5.80%	9.30%
Yes, for employment reasons	YES	6.20%	8.00%	6.40%	4.80%	12.10%	6.10%	4.70%
Yes, to transfer to another institution	YES	4.30%	3.40%	4.20%	N<5	N<5	4.80%	N<5
Other (please state)	YES	7.60%	9.70%	N<5	4.80%	N<5	9.20%	6.50%

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