

Postgraduate Research Students, University of Galway

National Student Survey

School of Education

2025 Action Plan

Overall, the School of Education is very pleased with the Postgraduate Research scores received. They suggest high to very high levels of satisfaction amongst Education PhD students.

		Actions	Responsible	Status* October 2025
1	Research Infrastructure and Facilities	Scores here are generally very good (70-80%). For example, 75% of respondents agreeing 'I have access to the specialist resources and facilities necessary for my research'. We had previously planned to make available a PhD 'hotdesk' in Nuns' Island. Due to the expansion of our School and the incorporation of Children's Studies, without the provision of any office space for staff, we are unable to provide this hot desk space at the moment. We continue to keep this 'on the table'.	HoS	*In progress (Delayed due to inadequate office space for staff)
2	Supervision	No actions are planned here as very high satisfaction rates were reported; 100% of Education PhDs responded that a) their supervisor provides feedback that helps them to direct their research activities, b) their supervisor provides the appropriate level of support for their research, c) they have regular and appropriate contact with their supervisor, and d) they are helped by their supervisor to identify training and development needs.	N/A	N/A
3	Research Culture	<p>We are generally pleased with the scores here (58-83%) which suggest overall satisfaction with the research culture in the School, e.g. students having opportunities to discuss their research, including with other research students. This suggests that the initiatives developed in the last 2-3 years by the Director of Doctoral Studies (DDS), including the monthly Research in Progress meetings, and the social gatherings, are working very well.</p> <p>However, the item relating to research ambience was at 58% satisfaction. It would be good to see this improve. In the context of the regular meetings with students (including in the modules ED6167 and ED6182), the DDS will undertake an anonymous Vevox to gather ideas for how we can enhance the research ambience in the School.</p> <p>There are 'continued' actions planned here; the DDS will continue to host monthly Research in Progress meetings and to organise social gatherings. The annual Postgraduate Research Symposium, now in its 13th year, also plays a key role here. The School is also hosting the 50th Educational Studies Association of Ireland Conference this year and this will provide a further context for students to present their work</p>	<p>DDS</p> <p>DDS</p> <p>DDS</p>	<p>(marked as 'complete' as repeated /continued) Complete</p> <p>*In progress</p> <p>Complete</p>

		and network at an important national and international research event.		
4	Progress and Assessment	<p>Satisfaction scores in this area were 83-100% and, based on these results, we do not see a need for any actions in this domain.</p> <p>However, given the new requirement of a mini-viva for 2023/2024 entrants and beyond, DDS engaged with staff to develop School guidelines (in conjunction with University and College requirements) and an information session for all relevant students was held, to ensure they were all clear on requirements and guidelines. We held 5 mini-vivas in the School this year, and all students performed very well. Considering the success of last year's support of students doing a mini-viva, we will provide a similar information session this year to discuss the guidelines and provide any updates on the mini-viva process as necessary.</p>	<p>DSS</p> <p>DSS</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
5	Research Skills	Satisfaction scores in this area were 72-100% and, based on these results, we do not see a need for any actions in this domain	N/A	N/A
6	Other Transferable Skills	<p>Satisfaction scores in this area were 81-100% and, based on these results, we do not see a need for many actions in this domain.</p> <p>However, the item relating to developing contacts and professional networks was at 72% satisfaction. It would be good to see this improve further. The DDS will liaise with supervisors about this item and encourage them to more directly facilitate the development of professional networks amongst their PhD students.</p>	<p>DDS & Supervisors</p>	*In Progress
7	Responsibilities and Supports	<p>Scores here were at 100% for the first three items, so no actions are planned in relation to these.</p> <p>Awareness of student supports at university level has improved this year so it would appear that the action taken to address this is proving effective. Information was made available on all these supports to students via Blackboard and has now also been transferred to Canvas for the two first year Structured PhD modules (ED6167 and ED6182). This information has also been emailed to all PhD students to ensure those not currently enrolled in Structured PhD modules also receive the information.</p> <p>For the item relating to perceptions of the extent to which the institution values and responds to feedback from research students (64%), the DDS will share a list of actions with PhD students via email.</p>	<p>DDS</p> <p>DDS</p> <p>DDS</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>*In progress</p>
8	Personal Outlook	Two key items relate to satisfaction with my life nowadays (64% satisfied) and satisfaction within my institution nowadays (54% satisfied). The DDS will discuss this with the Dean of Graduate Studies and supervisors and supervisors will be asked to discuss the issue with their students to ascertain what key factor(s) is and to explore some strategies to try to address it. However, this may be challenging; we are aware, for example, that unfunded PhDs are under pressure to work long hours, as well as completing their research, which results in work-life balance stress. Additionally, many School PhDs are working FT and doing a PhD PT which makes engagement challenging.	<p>DDS</p> <p>All SoE PhD supervisors</p>	<p>*In Progress</p> <p>*In Progress</p>

9	Funding	Funding questions are information-based (e.g. how funded) and not satisfaction or issues-related. Many Education PhDs are PT as they work full-time as teachers, for example, so are not funded in any way.	N/A	N/A
10	Development Opportunities	<p>We note that several items are not relevant for our School (for example, taking part in a placement or internship, receiving training in entrepreneurship and innovation and working with industry, spending time abroad etc.).</p> <p>Some items do require our attention, including receiving advice on careers, and submitting a paper for publication. However, Education PhDs do actually receive training on these topics through the Structured PhD module ED6167 but these particular sessions take place each year in March and April, so the students had not yet had them when completing the questionnaire. School supports have again been highlighted to students by the DDS, and supervisors have been reminded to direct their students to the Careers Advisory Service as appropriate, and also to discuss publication possibilities with their students at appropriate junctures.</p>	DDS All SoE PhD supervisors	*Complete *In Progress
11	Motivations	We are not identifying actions here as we do not see we have a role in evaluating (or changing) our students' initial motivations to do a PhD.	N/A	N/A
12	Career	As with the 'Motivations' section, we are not identifying actions here as we do not see we have a role in evaluating (or changing) our students' future career aspirations in terms of the specific areas into which they plan to progress. Given that 55% report considering an academic career post-PhD, this will be reflected upon (as it usually is each year) during the relevant ED6167 session entitled 'Working in Academia and Beyond' which takes place in April.	N/A	N/A
13	Overall Experience	We are very pleased with the score here, which shows that 100% and 73% of Education PhDs a) report a good-excellent research experiences, and b) report that they are confident about completion. We also note that 64% report not having considered withdrawing, among the highest across Schools in the College.	N/A	N/A

***Not Started**
***In Progress**
***Complete**