

School Of Geography, Archaeology And Irish Studies

Postgraduate Research Student Action Plan 2026

In response to the 2025 PGR student survey of 23 students, (noting that the views represent less than half of the PhD cohort in SoGAIS at present).

Overall, the School should be pleased with the survey responses as most areas where scores are lower could be improved with minimal effort.

Section	Summary of responses	Actions to be taken	Responsible
Research Infrastructure and Facilities	Approximately three-quarters of students expressed satisfaction with their workspace, library facilities, computing resources, and specialist facilities. Meanwhile, around 90% of students reported regular supervisor contact, receiving relevant feedback, having their training needs identified, and getting suitable support for their research endeavours.	To maintain a supportive research environment, the School will provide facilities at discipline level where possible. It will also continue to seek dedicated desk space in the Hardiman Research Building.	HoD and PPD
Supervision	The results showed a high level of satisfaction amongst students with their level of supervision in the School overall. Students have a high level of contact with supervisors with many students receiving additional training and support via their supervisor.	To continue enhancing student experience, ensure that information about additional services and training opportunities is widely communicated across the School.	PPD and supervisors
Research Culture	Approx 82% of students advised that they have access to a relevant seminar programme and that the research ambience in the school stimulates their work, however 1/3 felt they didn't have frequent opportunities to discuss their research with other research students and 40% felt they didn't have the opportunity to become involved in the wider research community beyond the school.	To foster a more collaborative research environment, the School will promote increased networking opportunities between its constituent departments. Postgraduate Research students will be informed about and encouraged to participate in research events across the university. The successful School student presentation day initiative launched in 2024 to be continued and potentially expanded to further enhance student engagement and showcase their research.	PPD, Supervisors and School Research Committee. (HoS won't be able to take on this task)
Progress and Assessment	Although 83% of students felt they received adequate induction/orientation, significant uncertainty remained regarding key programme requirements. Over a quarter were unclear about formal progress monitoring requirements and deadlines, rising to nearly a third unsure about thesis standards, and about 40% found the final research assessment procedure unclear.	Run an annual information session and provide detailed up to date Postgraduate Research Handbook referring to the abundance of guidelines on the Graduate Studies website as well as the local CASSCS Postgraduate Research guidelines.	PPD.

Development Opportunities	Of the 15 listed opportunities, most students participated in core PhD activities such as developing a personal training plan, receiving research and transferable skills training, presenting or attending conferences, submitting papers for publication, and working as part of a team. However, exposure was notably lower in areas such as communicating research to non-academic audiences (55%), receiving career advice (43%), collaborating with industry, civil society, or public organizations (19%), participating in placements or internships (10%), and receiving or applying training in entrepreneurship and innovation (10% and 0%, respectively). Additionally, 57% of students held a GTA contract, with nearly 70% reporting that it enhanced their overall research experience and 65% confirming they received appropriate support and guidance in this role.	Remind supervisors to provide advice on career options to their Postgraduate Research students and/or direct them to relevant resources within the university, e.g. the Research Development Centre. Incorporate into the annual information session/Postgraduate Research Handbook.	PPD, Supervisors.
Research Skills	Over 90% of students reported the development of the following research skills during the programme - applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques, critically analysing and evaluating findings and results and their understanding of research integrity. 77% advised that their confidence to be creative or innovative had developed.	Supervisors to continue building on this success.	Supervisors
Other Transferable Skills	Between 77-90% of students improved on other transferable skills including managing projects, communicating information effectively to diverse audiences, developing contacts or professional networks and managing their own professional development during the programme.	Continue to strengthen these skills by actively integrating students into the wider research community within the School.	PPD, Supervisors, School Research Committee
Responsibilities and supports	Most students understood their responsibilities as a research degree student (83%), were aware of their supervisors' responsibilities towards them (82%), and knew who to approach if they were concerned about any academic aspect of their research degree (86%). However, only 57% of the students felt aware of the various student supports available to them and this fell to 44% for the number of students that felt the institution valued and responded to their feedback.	Provide information/updates on student supports and respond to feedback at the annual information session/in the Postgraduate Research Handbook mentioned above.	PPD, and Supervisors
Personal outlook	An overwhelming majority of students (82%) felt their research degree programme was worthwhile. However, the positive	Provide information/updates on student supports and wellbeing activities at the annual	PPD and Supervisors

	<p>responses fell somewhat when it came to their satisfaction with life (61%), the institution (57%), if there was someone in the institution they could talk to about their day-to-day problems (55%) and their work-life balance (50%).</p>	<p>information session/in the Postgraduate Research handbook mentioned above.</p> <p>Foster a buddy system and enhance networking opportunities amongst research students.</p>	
<p>Motivations and Career Funding</p>	<p>The main motivation for these students pursuing a research degree appears to be their interest in the subject and improving their career prospects. Of those that indicated their career type it would appear they wish to work in higher education. 87% of the students surveyed are on scholarships.</p>	<p>Continue to inspire interest in the School subject matters via supervisor profiles online and presence outside of the university.</p>	<p>PPD, HoS and Supervisors</p>
<p>Overall Experience</p>	<p>Almost 83% of students rated their overall research experience as good or excellent, with 74% of students confident that they will complete the programme within the expected timeframe. However almost half of the students have considered withdrawing from the programme, with the order of the reasons being personal, financial, employment and then health.</p>	<p>Continue to support students by providing them with up-to-date information on all student support services available to them in the Postgraduate Research Handbook.</p>	<p>PPD, and Supervisors</p>