Postgraduate Research Students, NUI Galway

National Student Survey

School of Political Science and Sociology

2025 Action Plan

		Actions	Responsible	Status
		General Statement on the School's Action Plan: The School, its executive and leadership, heads of discipline, and the director of postgraduate research studies (PGR) recognize that the development of a research environment for PGR student is a continuous challenge and task. We are committed to sustaining existing efforts to enhance and continue the development of innovative responses to the PGR community's needs in a continuing context of scarce resources. At the same time, we recognised a significant opportunity, as universities across the world re-opened after COVID19, to planning forward with the support of the College and university in finding "new and better pathways for our PGR community". As a key element in our effort, we consider the School, the supervisors, the current, future, and past (alumni) generations of PGR students together as one PGR community. *In the past period, since the last update of the action plan more steps to realize have been taken. We have also received the Athena Swan Bronze Award though efforts that were inclusively cognizant of the needs of the PGRs. We take the opportunity of the results of the new PGR student survey to review our past efforts and develop new approaches.*	Head of School and School Executive, Head of Discipline(s), Director of PGR, TLC, Research Committee, Supervisors, Graduate Research Committees, Student Representative(s), PGR community	*Not Started *In Progress (continuous) *Complete STATUS CHANGE by October 2025
1	**Research Infrastructure and Facilities**	**Actions:** 1.1. The representative of the PGR students is provided a seat at the School Board meetings. This allows them to be informed about School business	Head of School and School Executive, Head of Discipline(s), Teaching& Learning	**1.1.** **STATUS CHANGE March 2024 and ongoing:**

		regarding infrastructure and facilities and to also bring to the attention of the School Board any issues or concerns they wish to raise via their SB PGR rep. *1.2. Inquiry: We are asking College to provide a small fund (in addition to the fund for PGR matters under the direction of the PGR direction), to be made available to the PGR representative to organize events under the budget oversight of the PGR director*	Research Committee, Student Representatives	**Since 2023, the current PGR representative has actively participated in School Board Meetings** **STATUS CHANGE October 2025:** **The current PGR representative has taken an increasingly active role and new lines of communication, e.g. through Whatsapp groups, installing a new PGR blackboard in Aras Moyola, and communication through the School newsletter have been opened.** *1.2. This was discussed with the School Manager and the. PGR Director as a new budget item going forward.*
2	**Supervision**	**Actions:** 2.1. PGR Processing 2.1.1 A review of PGR processes is being undertaken by the DPGR with the goal to improve, standardize and implement more efficient processes relating to PGR recruitment, from expression of interest through (successful) PhD candidacy and scholarship application to successful PhD completion.	Director of PGR, School Executive, Supervisors, PGR community	***Not Started, 2.3** ***In Progress (continuous)** **March 2024, Update Notes:** **2.1./ 2.2. the new onboarding process and associated forms, recruitment reporting from**

		2.1.2. Consult with the PGR community on how to the improve the on-boarding experience for incoming PGR students 2.2. Keep under review information and communication flow between the School and the supervisor and the supervisor and the PGR students to ensure that all concerned are familiar with the University and School Guidelines. 2.3. Institute an annual meeting of PGR director and supervisors to review the Guidebook and address open questions 2.4. Institute regular meetings of the PGR director and PGR reps including organization of communal events to facilitate ongoing dialog within the School PGR community. 2.5. With our annual PGR week (see also below across several points), which has been run since 2015-16 , continue to ensure that supervision directly ties into the GRC process and allows a concentrated feedback on the supervisor-PGR relation. 2.6. Ensure that PGR students and supervisors are both made aware of and encouraged to use any professional, career, and research development opportunities in the School, the College, and the University (such as the Research Development Centre), as well as external opportunities. The PGR director collects and disseminates information on such opportunities and encourages the PGR community to participate. *2.7 New: Mini-viva/Viva Workshop*		supervisors, and standardization of research proposals from potential candidates have been developed between the PGR Director, School Manager, and the new communications officer.. Consultation and review with the School Executive and, as planned, end of2025 roll-out appear currently on tac, pending SEC and other relevant approvals. 2.3. The PGR director continues conducted the first annual Q&A/FAQ sessions in 2023, 2024, and 2025, a new session is planned for April 2026. 2.4 Since 2023, continuous, average of bi-monthly meetings between PGR rep and PGR director in 2025 2.6. ongoing, career development workshops were organized by PGR Director and information disseminated to PGRs and supervisor.

				The PGR director has also actively supported and contributed to the College's GS535 Induction and Professional Development Module and SPA400 Theory Module. ***2.6 Update: For AY2025/26 HoS and PGR Director are planning an annual Coffee morning, which supervisors and GRC members are instructed to attend*** *2.7 In 2025, we began a with holding mini-viva/viva workshops to prepare 2nd year and finishsing candidates for their respective trials, including the organization mock-minivivas, which are conducted by viva candidates. A guest speaker was invited.*
3	**Research Culture**	**Actions:** 3.1 Sustain existing School research seminar	Director of PGR and School Research Committee	. ***In Progress (continuous) 3.1., 3.2, 3.3., 3.4, 3.5.** **March 2024, Update Notes**

		3.2. Additional opportunities from within the University community (e.g. Ryan, Whitaker, Moore and ILAS institutes are relayed to PGR community on a constant basis through the PGR director and the heads of discipline. 3.3. During the PGR Week, PGR students are given the opportunity to present to and discuss with the entire PGR community their research before the commencement of the GRC panels 3.4. The PGR week includes a Research and Career Development workshop 3.5. Encourage post-Covid "return to campus" of our PGR students in line with the University's evolving COVID19 policies. *3.6. Institution of a regular events for the PGRS.* *3.7. A space for PGR students was opened to communicate with our post board in Aras Moyola and in our online presences, moderated by our communications offices.* *3.8. The staff space in Aras Moyola was opened to all PGRs.* *3.9. At the start of AY25_26 a welcome event with FAQs and workshops, including catering, will be held annually.* *3.10. A hot desk space is in planning in Aras Moyola*		**3.5. completed in 2023/4** **3.4. Workshops were codincuted by the PGR director and with guest speakers, in particular two workshops on the role of the viva and on using AI for career development and branding.** **In Progress: 3.6. A change was made, at the 2024 PGR representative's suggestion, to move from a bi-weekly research colloquium to monthly social events. On a trial basis, the PGR representative in 2023/24 has organized regular social events, including reading groups. In 2025, *the new and current PGR representative has resumed events, including FAQ meetings, for which part of the School's PGR budget* was used to provide catering.** ***New initiatives start in 2025: 3.7.-3.10.***

| 4 | Progress and Assessment | **Actions:** 4.1. The central event is the annual PGR week, wherein, 4.1.1.PGR students congregate to publicly present their research to the PGR community and beyond, meet with their GRC panel to discuss their research and study progress, as well as attend research career development workshops that will enable additional self-assessment. 4.1.2. PGR students and supervisors are informed in advance (or reminded) by the PGR director about the requirements, standards, and deadlines. 4.1.3. The GRC panels uphold the standards for the dissertation and communicate with the PGR director. 4.2. The PGR director communicates across the School year with the students and supervisors on emerging developments in policy as well as on their questions and feedback regarding progress and assessment. 4.3. The PGR director regularly attends the College's board of PGR directors to stay abreast of ongoing developments. 4.4. PGR students take advantage of opportunities, such as at CELT to obtain teaching certificates through teaching and pedagogical instruction. The School disseminates knowledge about these opportunities and supports students who wish to take them up 4.5 Rollout of the new Mini-viva process 4.6. Offer of Mini-Viva and Viva training in the form of an annual Workshop | Director of PGR, GRC, supervisor, PGR students | *In Progress (continuous) 4.1.,4.2., 4.3. 4.4. Contn'd from 2022: 4.1.1 has been established with a regular event series, in which PGRs are provided with the opportunity to present their research (organized by PGR director) or discuss readings (organized by PGR rep and PGR director) March 2024, Update Note: 4.1.2. The PGR director has informed all staff in School Board Meetings, per email, and in individual consultations about changes to the PhD process, in particular around the GRCs. Similar actions were taken with incoming PGRs (regarding new College guidelines on PDPs, academic integrity, and mini-viva) 4.3. The PGR director has been active in PGR director board sub-committees, such as on travel funding |

				mechanism and College PGR officer role. *4.6 and 4.7: The New Miniviva and new workshop for miniviva and viva rollout was successfully conclude and will continue going forward with suggestions by PGR director for further streamlining the process within the School.*
5	**Research Skills**	This intersects with 3.: Research Skills and Research Culture enhance our already lively and productive research culture in our PGR community. **Actions:** 5.1. Regularly relay to the PGR community information on research skill relevant opportunities offered externally, as well as university-led initiatives (e.g. Research Development Centre). 5.2. The School encourages the PGR community to propose, develop, and organize activities and will support these where the School budget allows. 5.3. Encourage PGR student publishing activities. 5.4. Research Skills workshops	Director of PGR	***In Progress (continuous) 5.1., 5.2., 5.3. 5.4.** **2025, Update All efforts were continued and new research skills workshops offered by PGR director in the PGR/GRC week were well-received.**
6	**Other Transferable Skills**	**Actions:** 6.1. Above points 3. and 5. extend to this issue.	Director of PGR	***Not Started 6.3.** ***In Progress (continuous) 6.1., 6.2 6.4, 6.5., 6.6.,** **2025, Update**

		6.2. The planned career and research development workshops during the PGR week, organized by the PGR director, include transferable skills. 6.3. The PGR director develops and conducts an annual academic leadership seminar the PGR community will be able to access. 6.4. The PGR students are encouraged to attend international conferences and meetings, as well as career fairs, to develop their skill set and establish networks 6.5. The PGR students are given access to professional networks through members of the School. 6.6. Institute an annual career building workshop.		**Note:** **Efforts were continued. A new Welcome event for all PhD candidates with particular focus on the incoming candidates was held AY25_26 start, including a workshops on AI use in career development and branding. (see point 3.)**
7	**Responsibilities and Supports**	**Actions:** 7.1. The PGR student representative, elected by PGR students, may address issues with the Head of School and the PGR director at any time, and during the School Board meetings to which they are invited to attend. 7.2. The PGR studies director is in regular contact with the PGR student reps 7.3. PGR reps are aware of the Graduate Studies Offices and their services. 7.4. Existing and new support offers for students are communicated by the PGR director to the PGR community.	Director of PGR, School Executive, supervisors, PGR community, PGR student Reps	***In Progress (continuous) 7.2., 7.3, 7.2** ***Complete 7.1.**
8	**Personal Outlook**	**Actions:** 8.1. We communicate with PGR students, supervisors, the GRCs the on the issue of well-being. 8.1.1. During PGR Week 2021, it was established that a well-being workshop should be part of the proceedings on a bi-annual basis. This will be offered by the PGR director.	Director of PGR, School Executive, supervisors, PGR community	***In Progress (continuous) 8.1. - 8.4.** **March 2024, Update** Notes: 8.1.1. The PGR director has included structured discussions of well-being into the PGR Week.

		8.1.3. Holidays and self-care time are encouraged to be observed in our PGR community, with emphasis made towards the supervisors to be aware of the students' needs. 8.2. The School, through PGR representatives and the PGR director will reach out to any students that appear to be struggling and encourage students to communicate their concerns in confidence in a secure and safe atmosphere at the School, and/or to avail of University counselling services where these are appropriate 8.3. We are particularly aware of the struggles our community faces at this time, which includes not only the public perception of a pandemic, but also the possibility of loss experienced during the pandemic or suffering caused by Long Covid. (Addendum: Political events at this time, i.e. the Russian war against the Ukraine, may cause grave anxiety among the community; we will address this, where it is brought to our attention) 8.4. PGR students are aware of the Graduate Studies Office, and the PGR director updates the PGR community on any offerings as soon as they are made aware of these. 8.5. The School is aware that issues relating to Galway and Hardiman Scholarships are affecting some students and require review at College and University levels.		8.5. The PGR director has raised the issue in 2023 and 2024 with the Vice Dean of Graduate Studies. 8.4. Adding also to 5 and 6, the PGR director has begun networking more concretely with the Researcher Development Center.
9	**COVID-19 Questions**	**Actions:** 9.1. Ensure that PGR students are informed of Covid-19 and related Health & Safety requirements	HOS, Health and Safety Officer. PGR director	***In Progress (continuous)** **March 2024, Update:** The responsible staff continue to follow disseminated advise on this still changing situation.
10	**Development Opportunities**	**Actions:** 10. This was addressed in points 3., 5., 6.,	Director of PGR, School Executive and School Research Committee	***In Progress (continuous)**

11	Motivations	**Actions:** 11.1. Foster motivation by generating an identity of the discipline and/or the research field 11.2. Develop an understanding that PhD research contributes to careers inside and outside academia and the university. 11.3. Address motivation problems and career sustainability during PGR Week *11.4. Further Measures Improve Integration of PGRs into the life of the School (see 3.7.-3.10)*	PGR community	**In Progress (Continuous) 11.1, 11.2** **March 2024: , Update Notes: 11.3 The PGR director will raise the issue of further increasing the response rate to the PGR National Survey with the School Board in summer and with the next PGR representative (selection in May)** **11.4 see above 3.7.ff.**
12	Career	**Actions:** 12.1. Develop PGR students' understanding for different PGR outcomes, i.e. some students will continue a career in academia, others return better qualified to an existing career (even a previous employer) or embark, newly qualified, onto a new non-academic professional (ad)venture.	PGR community	**N/A**
13	Overall Experience	**Actions:** 13.1. Maintaining the PGR community as community 13.2. Develop a discussion in the PGR community to enhance and extend alumni culture 13.3. Promote discussion in the university on follow-up assessments that allow to track the successes of our postgraduates	PGR community	**In Progress 13.1. *Not Started 13.2., 13.3. in 2022** **13.1. continuous effort. The current PGR representative, in dialog with PGR Director, has increased activities by organizing social events from among the PGRs** **March 2025: Update Notes**

				13.2. and 13.3. With the recent hiring of a communications officer for the School, this effort can now be streamlined and planned.