
# Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

# 2011 results

Dr Laura Hodsdon

and

Dr Alex Buckley

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# Contents

# Foreword

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), along with the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), are part of the Higher Education Academy's distinctive services allowing higher education institutions (HEIs) to collect feedback from their postgraduate students in a comprehensive and user-friendly manner. The surveys have become an increasingly valued tool across the UK higher education sector and are unique data sources on the postgraduate experience, with the (2010) Smith report for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills noting that they are "the main source of information about students' motivations"[1].

This report on the 2011 survey, marks the fourth year that PRES has run, meaning that we now have valuable trend data to provide insights into the nature of the postgraduate experience over time as well as to situate individual years' results within a wider, more robust context. There has been a rise in participation over the four years both in the number of HEIs running the survey and the number of students responding, with PRES 2011 seeing a 20% increase in the number of HEIs and nearly 13,000 more respondents since 2009. Not only does this mean that the 2011 survey is built on a more comprehensive dataset than previous years, but also that more postgraduate research students than ever before have had the opportunity to give feedback on their experiences. This year PRES and PTES between them have collected the views of almost 70,000 students, meaning that the surveys are unparalleled within Europe in their scope and breadth.

PRES is now entering year two of its alternate-yearly cycle, meaning that, rather than the survey running again next Spring, 2011-12 will be an enhancement year allowing HEIs the space to analyse, interpret and act upon their results. The Higher Education Academy will continue to provide support to the sector in the form of events and resources, and will work with individual institutions to help them to use PRES for enhancement. The HEA remains committed to this important area and looks forward to continuing to work with HEIs to improve the postgraduate experience.

Thanks are due to all the HEA colleagues who have contributed to this report: in particular, to Gosia Turner for undertaking the analysis, and to Professor Chris Park and Dr Pam Wells for their input into and comments on earlier drafts. In addition, we are grateful to Dr Rachel Segal for her input on PRES, and the HEA's work on student surveys more generally.

Any colleagues wishing to know more about PRES can contact the team at surveys@heacademy.ac.uk or keep up to date via the HEA's website at http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/pres.

Craig Mahoney

Chief Executive
Higher Education Academy

[1] Smith *et al.* (2010), p.37.

# Executive summary

This report provides national results from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) for 2011. PRES is a UK-wide survey that collects the views of current postgraduate researchers in order to target, design and evaluate work to enhance the learning experiences of postgraduate students on research programmes.

This was the fourth time the survey was run (previous surveys ran in 2007, 2008 and 2009). One hundred and two UK institutions took part in PRES 2011. With 31,202 students completing the survey, there was a national response rate of 32%. These figures mark a substantial increase in engagement with the survey from 2009, when 82 institutions took part and 18,644 students responded: a national response rate of 28.6%. PRES will run again in 2013, giving HEIs the space in 2011-12 to analyse, interpret and act upon their results.

## Key findings

The trend of increasing positivity seen in PRES results each year continues with the 2011 results, with 86% of respondents stating that the overall experience of their research programme met or exceeded their expectations, compared with 81% in 2007, 83% in 2008 and 84% in 2009.

### Supervision

As with previous years, Supervision was the scale that was rated as most important by respondents, as well as the area about which they were most positive. Of all the items in this scale, respondents were least positive about guidance about literature searches, but even that showed a substantial improvement from 2009, increasing from 65% to 70%[2].

### Skills Development

The Skills Development scale was the third most positive area of PRES 2011. As with previous years, the lowest scoring item in this scale concerned opportunities to develop transferable skills, although that item did show the largest change from 2009, increasing from 65% to 72%. It was also rated by respondents as being markedly less important than other areas. Conversely, the development of research skills was rated as one of the most important issues. Despite these differences between transferable and research skills development, they were the two areas where respondents most felt that their expectations had been met or exceeded (87% for transferable skills, 88% for research skills).

### Infrastructure

This was one of the least positive scales. Within this scale respondents were least positive, by some margin, about the availability of financial support, at only 57%. They were most positive about library, IT facilities and other equipment, and the availability of a working space. Satisfaction with technical support increased notably from 2009, from 64% to 71%.

### Intellectual Climate

This was the second least positive scale for respondents. Ratings were particularly low for the extent to which respondents felt integrated into their department's community, at only 54%. The highest rated items, both at

[2] This, and the other results cited in this summary (unless otherwise stated), is the percentage of respondents who selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in response to a positive statement.

65%, concerned the opportunities for social contact with other research students, and the departmental seminar programme.

### Goals and Standards

This was a scale that had relatively little importance to respondents. They were most positive about understanding the standard of work expected (79%), while they expressed most concern about understanding the requirements of the thesis examination (67%).

### Thesis Examination

Only students who had sat their final viva voce examination responded to these items: less than one respondent in 20. Those that did respond were very positive about the fairness of the examination process, and this positivity was a clear improvement on 2009, an increase from 78% to 84%. They were least positive about support for preparation in advance of the viva voce, but again this was an increase from 2009, from 62% to 71%. The item in the survey that received the greatest increase in positivity compared with 2009 was in this area: positivity about the support received for post-viva voce thesis corrections increased from 67% to 77%.

### Professional Development and Career

Since it was introduced in 2008 this has been the least positive scale of the survey. Respondents were considerably more positive about encouragement to think about career opportunities than in 2009, an increase from 37% to 44%, but that was still the issue about which they expressed most concern.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Respondents felt clear about their responsibilities as postgraduate researchers (80%), but they were unconvinced that their institution values and responds to student feedback (57%).

### Teaching Opportunities

While not very many respondents felt they had adequate opportunities to gain teaching experience (although the proportion increased from 49% in 2009 to 58% in 2011), those that had had the opportunity generally felt it was worthwhile (71%). There was a marked lack of positivity, however, about the support and guidance they had received (51%).

### Personal Factors

Within this diverse group of items, most positivity was expressed about support from friends and family: this received the most agreement of all the items on the survey, at 89%.

### Motivations

As with previous years of PRES, the two most common motivations to pursue a research degree programme were an interest in the subject (37%), and improving academic or research career prospects (31%).

### Anticipated Career

Nearly half of respondents anticipated a career in higher education consisting of either teaching alone, or research and teaching (44%). 13% of respondents anticipated a research-only career in HE, and 43% anticipated a career outside HE.

### Disability

Respondents who identified themselves as having a disability were less positive across all areas of the survey, with a particularly large difference for the overall experience of their programme (78% felt that their overall experience had met or exceeded their expectations, compared with 87% for those respondents without a disability). For most areas of the survey, those with two or more impairments and/or disabling mental conditions, and those with a mental health condition, were least positive.

### Domicile

Students from Africa and Asia were in general most positive about their experience, while those from the UK, North America and the Middle East were less positive. Areas of notable difference included skills development, which students from Africa rated more positively, and provision of guidance on standards and expectations, for which Non EU students were much more likely to state that their expectations had been met or exceeded.

### Skills and Professional Development

More detailed analysis was carried out on the relevant items in this area, against selected demographic variables.

- By discipline

Respondents from Arts & Humanities were more motivated by an interest in the subject than respondents from other discipline groups, while Health respondents were most likely to be motivated by career prospects. Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences respondents were most interested in an academic career. Health and STEM respondents were most positive about skills development opportunities. Health students were also most convinced about the importance of skills development, and were most likely to feel they had been encouraged to reflect on their professional and career development needs.

- By gender

Female respondents were more convinced about the importance of transferable skills than men, although they were no more or less positive about the opportunities available to them. Women were in general less positive about the encouragement they had received to reflect on their professional and career development.

- By age

Younger and older students were most motivated by an interest in the subject, while those in the middle age ranges were most motivated by improving career prospects in HE. Younger respondents were more positive about their skills development, while those in the middle age ranges were most likely to feel that transferable skills development was important. Those in the middle range were most positive about professional and career development.

- Source of funding

Students funded by Research Councils UK – who have been required in recent years to undertake a certain amount of skills training – were, unsurprisingly, more positive about the provision of opportunities to develop research and transferable skills. However, what is striking is that RCUK-funded respondents seem to be markedly less positive than non-RCUK-funded students about the encouragement they had received to reflect on their professional and career development.

# Introduction

This report presents national aggregate results from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2011. It is divided into three sections. Section 1 presents demographic information about the PRES 2011 sample. Section 2 provides results and commentary for all the PRES items and scales. Section 3 includes detailed analysis focusing on two specific areas: a) disability and domicile effects; and b) items relevant to skills and professional development. Appendix A includes full tables for all items and a table of year-by-year comparisons; Appendix B includes tables relating to the detailed analyses in Section 3; and Appendix C contains the full PRES 2011 questionnaire.

The report provides data about the educational experiences of postgraduate researchers (PGRs). It will therefore be useful to anyone connected with supporting PGRs in their studies and development: particularly PRES officers running the surveys in institutions (whether or not they are engaged in analysing the survey data), postgraduate student managers, postgraduate students and higher education policy makers.

Gathering information about PGRs' views of their programmes is an essential part of understanding the nature and diversity of their experiences and informing activities to improve the provision of postgraduate research degrees. For this reason, the Smith review into postgraduate education in the UK recommended that PRES should be extended to more institutions and more students. The Government has endorsed this recommendation. The 2011 survey included many more institutions and students than in 2009, thus satisfying the need for greater coverage by the survey, and providing a useful picture of the postgraduate research landscape[3].

## Methodology

As in previous years, PRES 2011 ran to a fixed survey period, this year from 1 March until 31 May 2011. All higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United Kingdom that have PGRs were invited to take part, with 102 participating this year. PRES is a census survey and is sent to all eligible PGRs, which this year comprised 97,571, of whom 31,202 replied, equating to a 32% response rate: the highest in the history of PRES to date. These figures constitute an increase from 2009, when 82 institutions took part, there was a response rate of 28.6%, and in total 18,644 students responded.

PRES is an online survey run via Bristol Online Surveys (BOS). The BOS website allows PRES officers (the HEA's primary contact within an HEI, responsible for administering the survey) to monitor their own institutional results and the aggregate results in real time while the survey is open, and to explore their results in detail after it closes. Each participating institution was given an electronic template of the PRES questionnaire before the survey went live, which they could modify by adding institution-specific questions; each institution was then responsible for contacting its postgraduate research students to invite them to take part in PRES. Respondents' details are confidential, and institutional-level data are kept confidential to that institution. Participating institutions are able to benchmark their results against the national sector aggregate and those of similar institutions by joining benchmarking clubs. There are no institutional rankings or individual institutional results contained in this report.

## Changes in 2011

*'Not Applicable' ('N/A') option*

One key change in the PRES questionnaire this year has been the addition of the option 'N/A' to a greater range of items than in previous years. Adding 'N/A' as a response option to most of the items in PRES allows students who do not have firm opinions about those items to refrain from giving an answer on the five-point scale if they feel that the item does not apply to them.

[3] See Smith *et al*. (2010). The Government has published a response to the recommendations, see BIS (2011).

An analysis of responses suggests that students select this option only when relevant, as the profile of 'N/A' responses is highly variable throughout the survey (ranging from 0.4% to 51.9%). Extra analysis has been carried out comparing the national response profiles of PRES 2011 and PRES 2009, the results of which suggest that for most items the addition of this option has not had a significant impact on the response profile. The general increase in positivity that is apparent in the results for 2011 (see Section 2 below) appears not to be a direct product of the introduction of the N/A option: the increases in positivity occur regardless of the proportion of N/A responses for each item, and also occur for items where the option existed in 2009. More detailed analysis will be required to gain more information about the effect of the introduction of the N/A option, but there is no evidence thus far that it has any important effect on the key findings of the 2011 survey[4].

*Demographic response options*

The disability response options (Q23) were updated to those currently used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). A selection list of countries was also added for Q31, to enable more fine-grained demographic analyses where relevant. Finally, the 'paid employment' item (Q33) was added: this has always been asked in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Questionnaire (PTES), but was introduced to PRES this year for possible comparison between taught and research students in relation to working outside their degree programmes.

*Survey Access Control*

In order to further ensure the robustness of the survey, in 2011 a new security procedure was made mandatory to all institutions participating in PRES and PTES. Survey Access Control requires each respondent to enter a username and password to complete the survey in order to ensure that it is only completed by members of the target population, and that no student is able to complete the survey more than once. Some institutions additionally purchased the 'passing parameters' module from BOS, which allowed them to run the survey via an existing portal or an embedded hyperlink, thus removing the need for students to explicitly type in (or copy-and-paste from their invitation email) their username and password. This additional measure was intended to remove any potential barriers to student participation, and participating institutions will be encouraged to use this module in future administrations of the survey.

## Participation

Out of 97,571 students surveyed, 31,202 (32%) in total responded to PRES 2011. This covers roughly 30% of the total PGR population in the UK according to comparisons with HESA data for 2009-10[5].

*Table (i): Participation across the four years of PRES*

| | PRES 2007 | PRES 2008 | PRES 2009 | PRES 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of HEIs | 58 | 73 | 82 | 102 |
| No. of respondents | 10,544 | 16,524 | 18,644 | 31,202 |
| National response rate | 25.2% | 28.9% | 28.6% | 32.0% |

As noted above, participation in PRES, both in number of institutions and number of student respondents, has risen over the four years of its administration. 2011 has been particularly encouraging in relation to increased engagement, with a 20% rise in the number of institutions taking part and nearly 13,000 more postgraduate students responding to the survey. This should give good assurance to those wishing to use

[4] One item where the introduction of N/A may have had an effect is Q10, referring to teaching opportunities. See Section 2.2.9 for comment.

[5] It should be noted, however, that the true proportion of all UK PGRs included in PRES 2011 will depend on the HESA figures for 2010-11, which are not yet available.

the national level results for benchmarking their institutional performance, since the high response and participation rates mean that this year the survey is more robust than in any previous year.

### Enhancement year

PRES is currently running on a two-year cycle, with survey years alternating with enhancement years. 2011-12 will be an enhancement year, allowing HEIs the space to analyse, interpret and act upon their results, before running the survey again in Spring 2013. During this enhancement year, the HEA will provide support to the sector through events and resources, as well as to individual institutions. For more information about this support please visit our website: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/postgraduate-enhancement.

# Section 1
# Profile of respondents

## 1.1 Demographics

### 1.1.1 Gender

The 2011 survey saw an almost exactly equal split between male respondents (N=15,314) and female (N=15,336)[6]. This makes the sample more representative in relation to gender (compared with HESA data) than in previous years.

*Table 1.1: Respondents by gender*

| | PRES 2009 | PRES 2011 | HESA 09-10 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 47% | 50% | 54% |
| Female | 53% | 50% | 46% |

### 1.1.2 Age

Nearly 60% of respondents were aged 30 or under (59.4%, compared with 57.8% in 2009), and 16.5% were over 40 (compared to 18.5% in 2009) (Figure 1.1). Nearly a third of respondents were in their first year of study, with the proportion of those further along in their studies decreasing progressively (Figure 1.2).

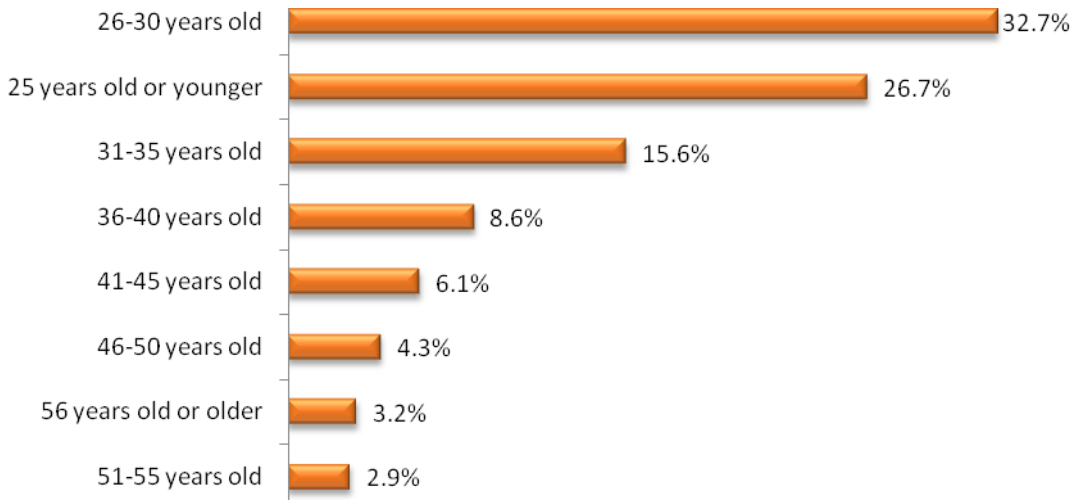


*Figure 1.1: Respondents by age*

[6] Throughout this report 'N' is used to indicate the number of respondents.

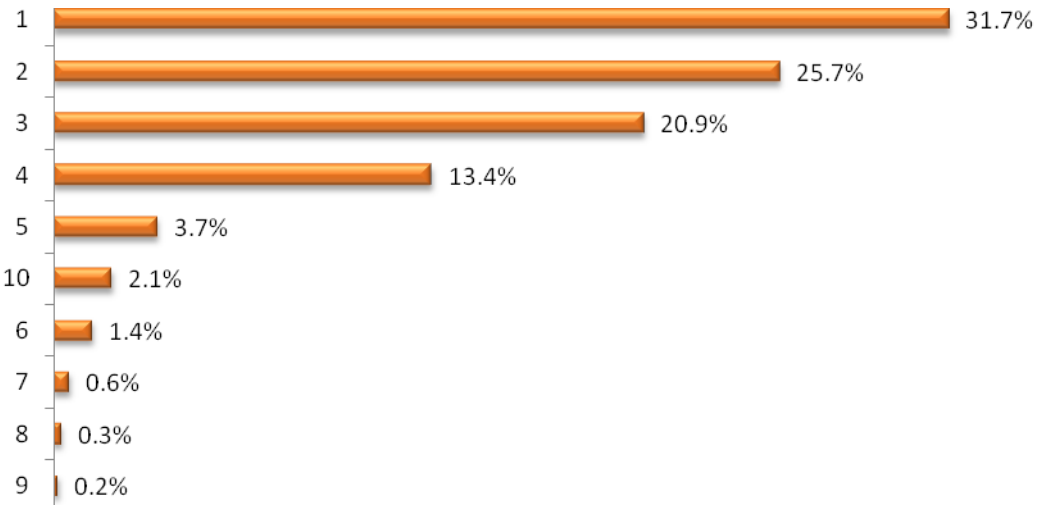


*Figure 1.2: Year on the programme*

### 1.1.3 Country of residence

Nearly 60% of respondents identified their country of residence for fees purposes as UK (Table 1.2), with nearly 30% being Non EU and the remainder EU, which is roughly in line with HESA statistics for 2009-10 (though it should be noted that this does not necessarily mean that they fall in the 'UK' category in relation to their normal place of residence)[7]. This is similar to 2009.

*Table 1.2: Country of residence*

| | PRES 2009 | PRES 2011 | HESA 09-10 |
|---|---|---|---|
| UK | 58.2% | 58.8% | 58.1% |
| Other EU | 13.9% | 12.3% | 13.1% |
| Non EU | 27.8% | 29.0% | 28.8% |

### 1.1.4 Disability

5.0% of respondents said that they considered themselves to have a disability (this is a decrease from 5.5% in 2009), 29.0% of whom identified this as a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

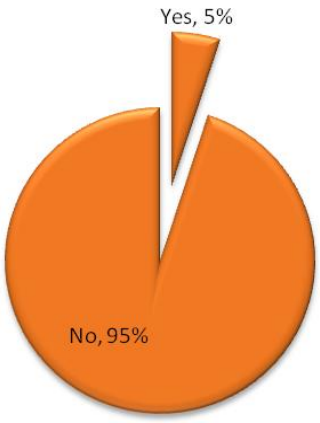


*Figure 1.3: Q23 Respondents by disability*

[7] Analysis of Q31 ('What is your normal place of residence?') is in Section 3.1.2.

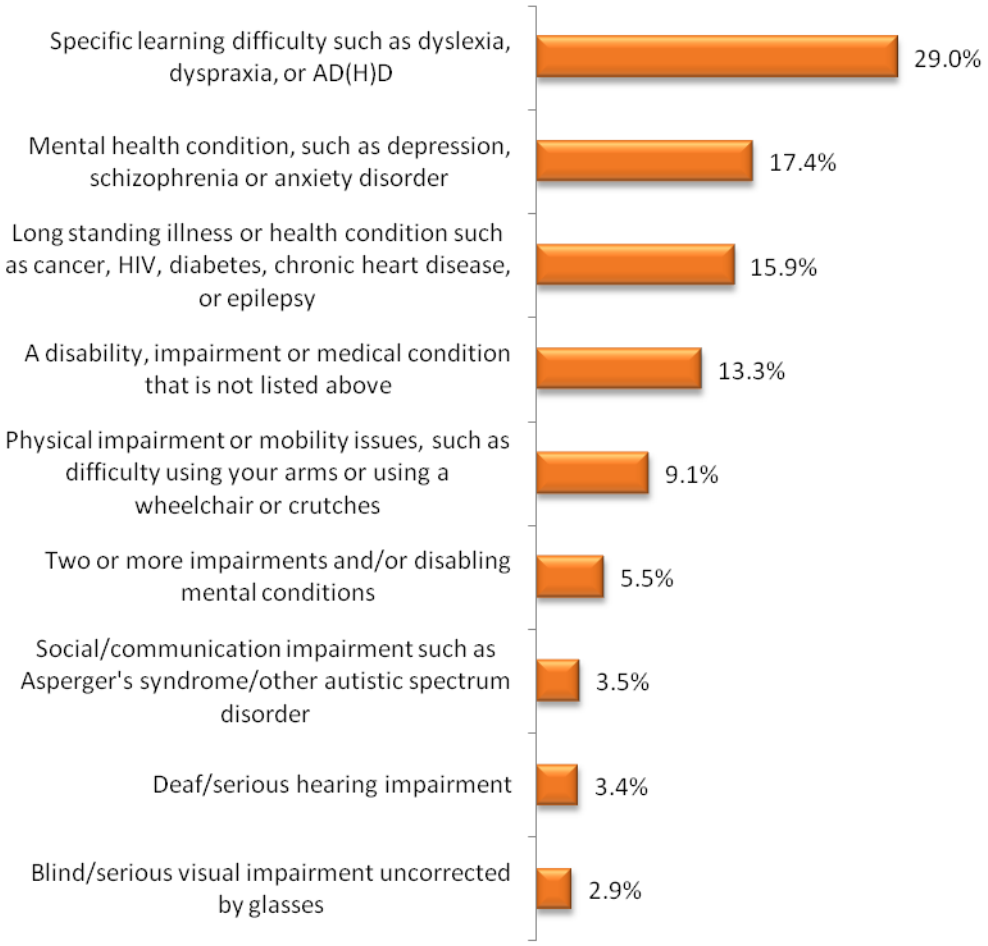


*Figure 1.4: Q23 Respondents by type of disability*

As shown in Figure 1.5, when broken down by discipline a higher proportion of Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences students reported having a disability than those in science subjects.

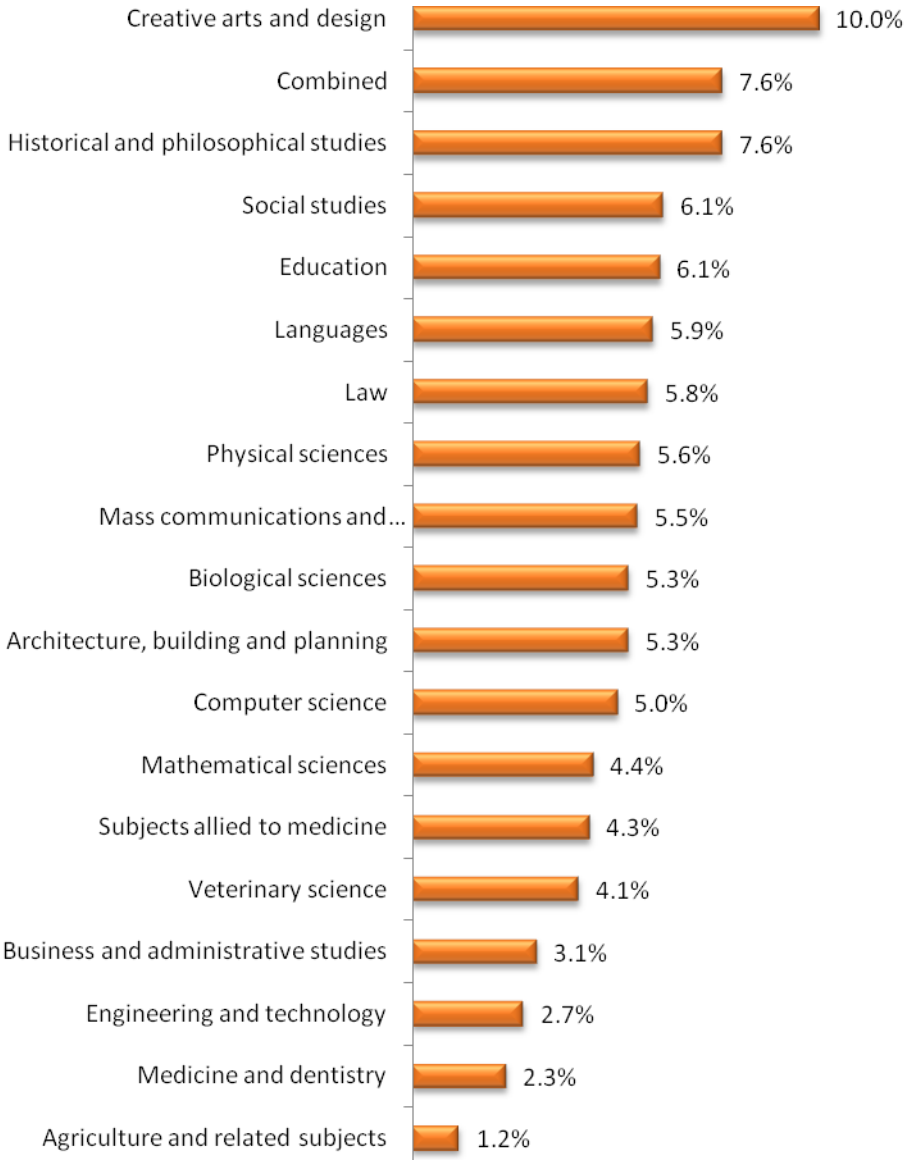


*Figure 1.5: Differences in disability profile between disciplines*

Further analysis of the scales by disability is presented in Section 3.1.1.

### 1.1.5 Ethnicity

68.1% of respondents identified themselves as being of white background. This was the group with the largest change from 2009, decreasing by 4%.

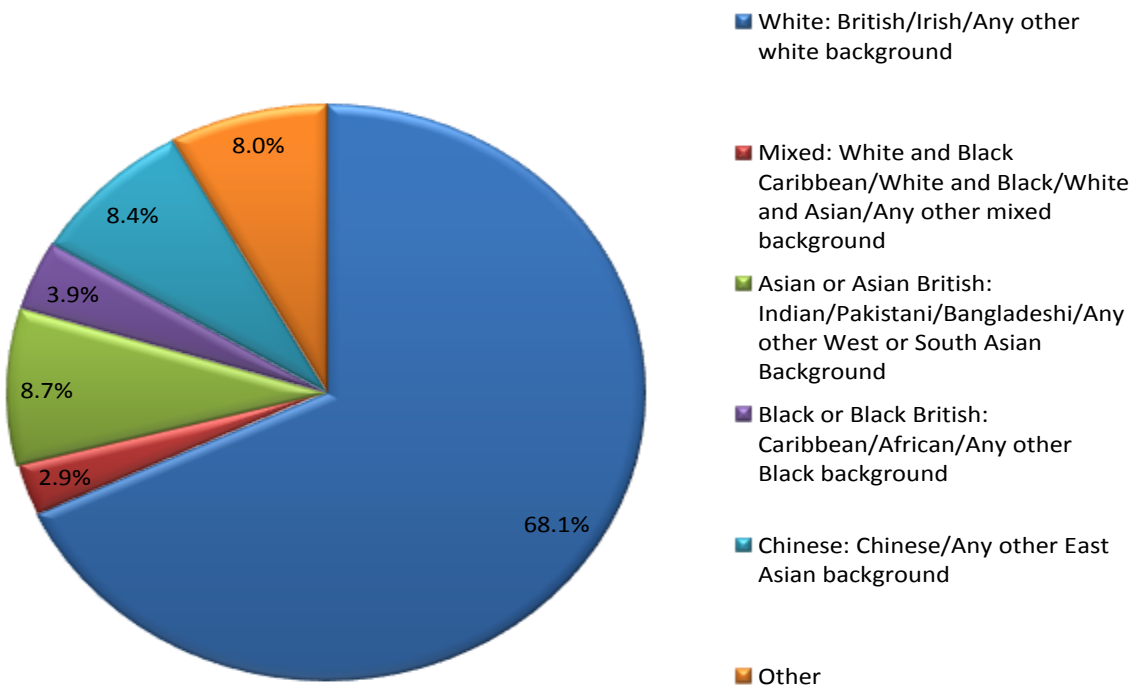


*Figure 1.6: Q32 Respondents by ethnicity*

## 1.2 Nature and type of programme

### 1.2.1 Registered programme of study

The majority of respondents were working towards a PhD: 73.3% were enrolled on a PhD already, and a further 14.0% were registered as MPhil with transfer to PhD. 7.0% were studying for an MPhil only (compared to 2.6% in 2009), and research Masters students comprised 2.4% of the total respondents.

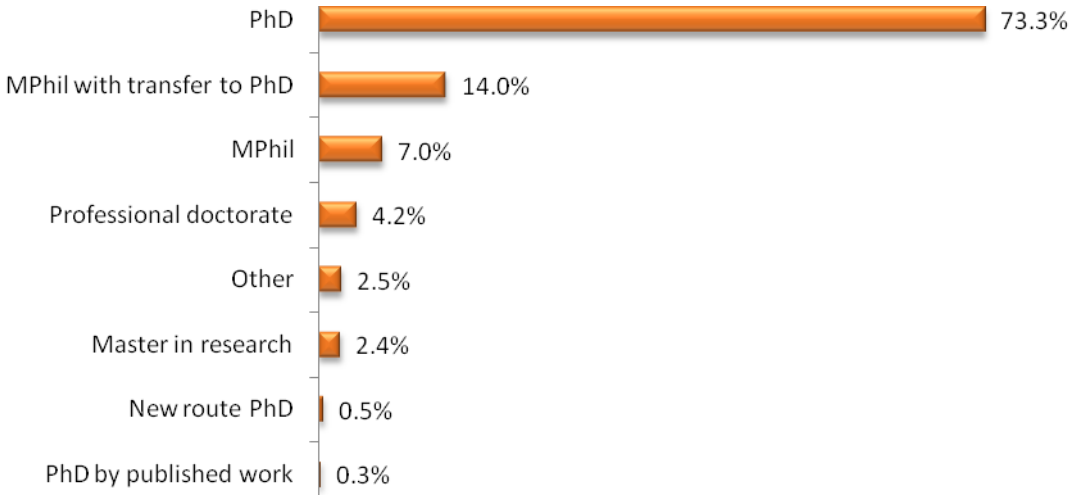


*Figure 1.7: Q18 Respondents by type of course*

### 1.2.2 Mode of study and delivery

The proportion of part-time students within the sample was smaller than in 2009 (see Table 1.3 below), with 81.1% of respondents this year being full-time and 18.9% part-time. There were similar proportions of face-to-face versus distance learners (82.5% and 17.5% respectively).

*Table 1.3: Q26 Respondents by mode of study*

| | PRES 2009 | PRES 2011 | HESA 09-10 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Full-time | 78% | 81% | 71% |
| Part-time | 22% | 19% | 29% |

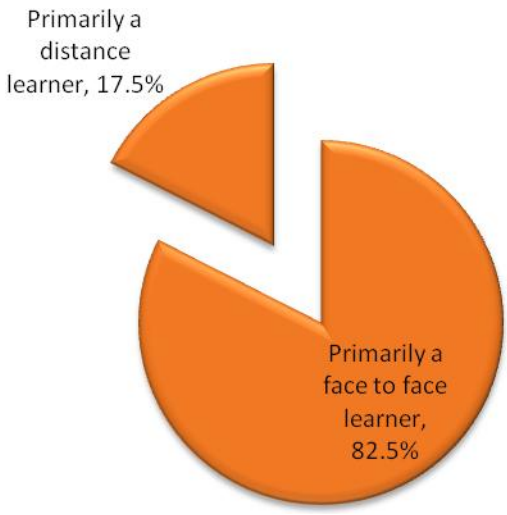


*Figure 1.8: Q29 Respondents by mode of delivery*

### 1.2.3 Source of funding

The percentage of students funding their PhDs themselves has fallen slightly from 2009, from 29.3% to 28.5%. The proportion funded by their institution has risen slightly (25.4% as opposed to 23.9% in 2009), as has the proportion of those funded overseas (11.6% as opposed to 10.4% in 2009). The other categories have remained approximately the same.

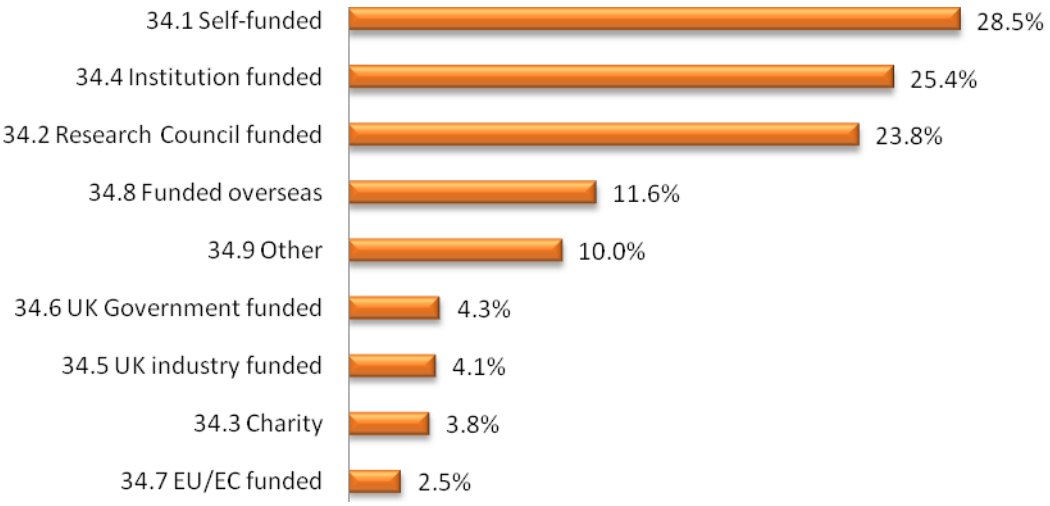


*Figure 1.9: Q34 Source of funding*

Note: Respondents could choose more than one category hence percentages do not add up to 100%.

### 1.2.4 Employment

In this newly added item, 36.4% of respondents said that they were currently in paid employment, of whom 43.5% reported working more than 30 hours per week (Figure 1.11).

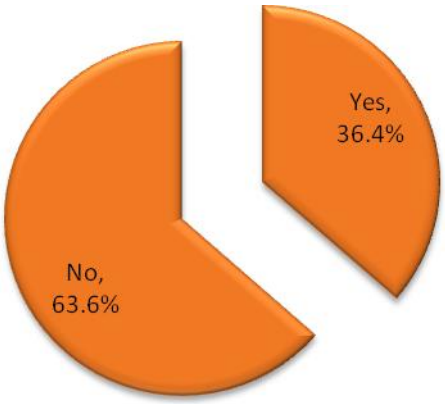


*Figure 1.10: Currently in paid employment*

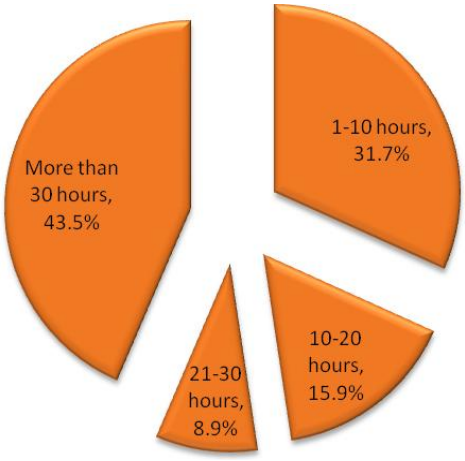


*Figure 1.11: Hours worked*

### 1.2.5 Activity in previous year

35.1% of respondents had just completed a postgraduate course of study, and 18.1% an undergraduate degree – this is roughly similar to 2009.

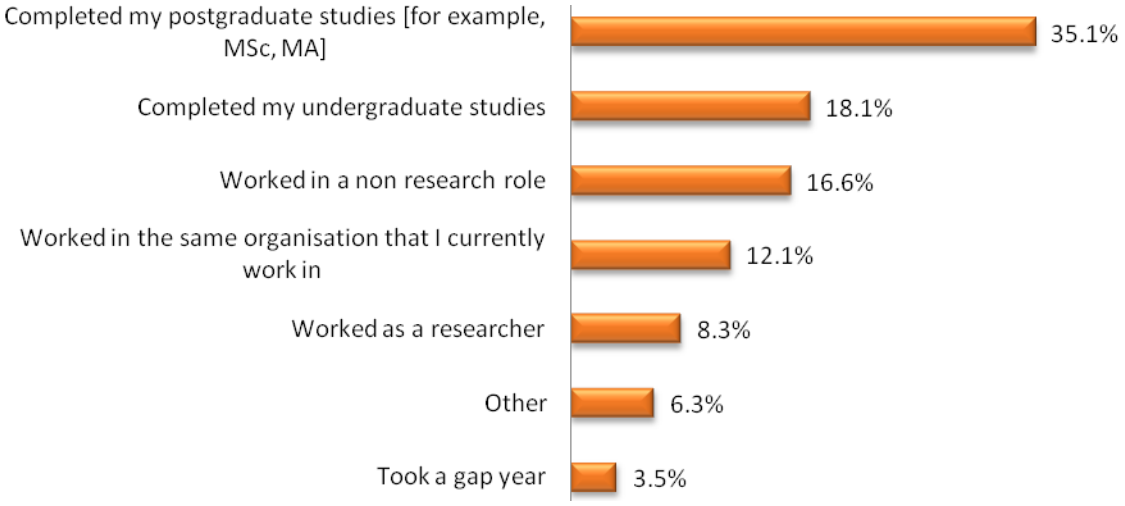


*Figure 1.12: Q35 Activity in previous year*

### 1.2.6 Discipline

The largest proportion of respondents by discipline was accounted for by Biology and related sciences (12.7%), followed by Physical sciences (8.2%) and Psychology (5%)[8]. The table below shows those disciplines for which there were more than 4.0% of respondents in the total sample.

[8] Analysis of the skills, professional development and motivations and careers items by discipline is in Section 3.2.

*Table 1.4: Q24 Discipline*

| Discipline | N | % of respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Biology and related sciences | 3791 | 12.7% |
| Physical sciences | 2447 | 8.2% |
| Psychology | 1497 | 5.0% |
| Civil, chemical and other engineering | 1332 | 4.5% |
| Computer science | 1316 | 4.4% |
| History and archaeology | 1289 | 4.3% |
| Electronic and electrical engineering | 1280 | 4.3% |

# Section 2
# PRES scales and items

## 2.1 PRES scales

### 2.1.1 Scale scores 2011

Many of the individual items on specific themes within PRES can be grouped together to form scales, which provide a useful way of comparing the different elements of the survey[9]. Mean scale scores are presented in Table 2.1 for the 2011 PRES results. As with PRES 2009, the highest scoring scales were Supervision, Thesis Examination and Skills Development, while the scales with the lowest mean scores were Intellectual Climate and Professional Development and Career.

The items within these scales utilise "Likert" scales; individuals are asked to select an option on a 5-point scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', in response to positive statements about various aspects of their experience. Likert scales employ emotive terms ("agree" and "disagree") and the options on the scale can thus not straightforwardly be treated as equally spaced. For instance, the difference in experience prompting responses of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' may not be as large as the difference in experience prompting responses of 'neutral' and agree'. As a Likert scale cannot be taken as a scale of equally-spaced options, it is not usually appropriate to average responses on a Likert scale into a mean response. This report uses mean responses solely for scales (see Table 2.1), and for the multiple regression analysis (see Section 2.1.3). For these purposes the report makes the assumption that the items on the Likert scale are equally-spaced (a common practice in reporting survey data). For all other purposes, the report uses the proportion of respondents who selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree'; and whilst this does entail a loss of detail about those who selected other options, it is more appropriate given the non-equal nature of the options on the Likert scale.[10]. The practice of averaging scale scores into mean responses will be reviewed in advance of the publication of the next PRES report.

*Table 2.1: Mean scale scores*

| Scale | Items | N | Mean | Rank | Std. Deviation* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Supervision | 1a;1b;1c;1d;1e;1f | 30896 | 4.18 | 1 | .880 |
| Skills development | 2a;2b;2c;2d | 30689 | 4.08 | 3 | .760 |
| Infrastructure | 3a;3b;3c;3d;3e;3f | 29857 | 3.91 | 5 | .867 |
| Intellectual climate | 4a;4b;4c;4d;4e | 29847 | 3.65 | 6 | .978 |
| Goals and standards | 5a;5b;5c | 30410 | 3.95 | 4 | .912 |
| Thesis examination | 6a;6b;6c;6d | 1390 | 4.12 | 2 | .988 |
| Professional development and career | 7a;7b;7c | 27874 | 3.31 | 7 | 1.094 |

* Standard deviation is a measurement indicating amount of variation from the mean. A low number indicates that the scores tend to be closer to the mean; a high number indicates that the scores are more spread out.

### 2.1.2 Scale scores over time

PRES has been running since 2007, which allows us to observe trends in the data over the different years it has run (2007, 2008, 2009 and 2011). As can be seen from Table 2.2 and Figure 2.1, there has

[9] The appropriateness of grouping these PRES items into scales has been validated by factor analysis, see Park (2009). These results are supported by factor analysis carried out for the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire in Australia, upon which PRES is based, see Marsh *et al*. (2002).

[10] For background about this common issue in statistical reporting, see Knapp (1990). Data regarding disagreement and neutrality are included in the full tables in Appendix A.

been a general upward trend in scale scores over the four years, with the most notable increase being between 2009 and 2011.

*Table 2.2: Mean scale scores 2007-2011*

| Scale | PRES 2007 | PRES 2008 | PRES 2009 | PRES 2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Supervision | 3.93 | 4.02 | 4.03 | 4.18 |
| Skills development | 3.86 | 3.96 | 3.97 | 4.08 |
| Infrastructure | 3.62 | 3.70 | 3.75 | 3.91 |
| Intellectual climate | 3.40 | 3.45 | 3.50 | 3.65 |
| Goals and standards | 3.80 | 3.79 | 3.81 | 3.95 |
| Thesis examination | 3.96 | 4.01 | 3.92 | 4.12 |
| Professional development and career | N/A* | 3.00 | 3.14 | 3.31 |

* This scale was not used in PRES 2007.

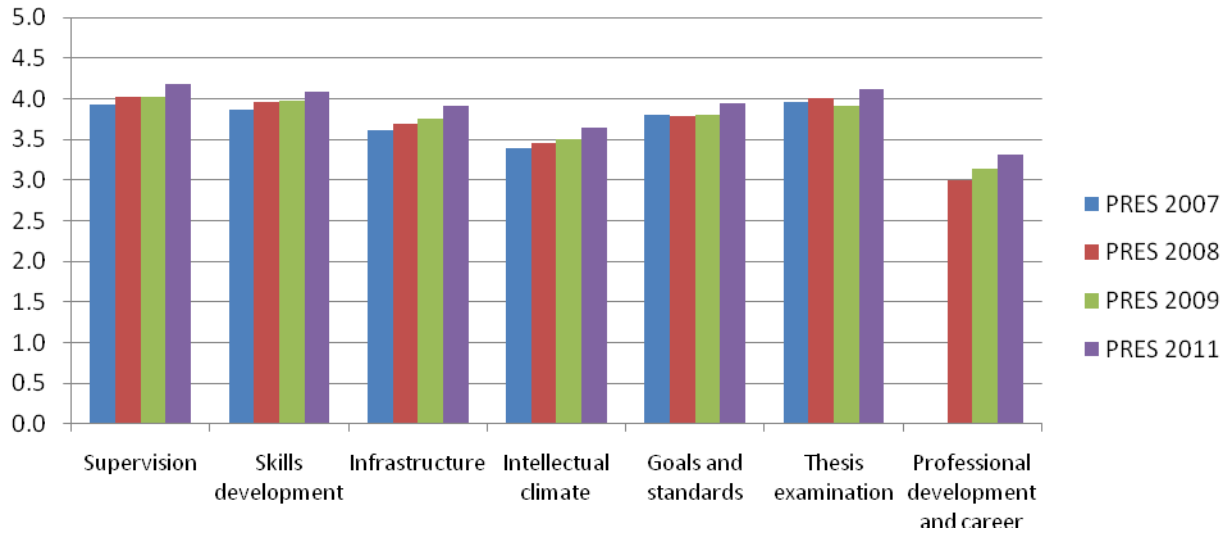


*Figure 2.1: Mean scale scores 2007-2011*

### 2.1.3 Multiple regression

Multiple regression analysis has been used to determine which of the scales included in PRES have the strongest impact on overall experience (Q15g). The seven scales combined accounted for just under half of the variance (49.4%) in overall experience. This is considered to be a medium effect: the individual scales capture about half of what impacts on PGRs' responses to the overall experience item.

*Table 2.3: Effect of scales on overall experience, Q15g*

| Scale | Beta coefficient |
|---|---|
| Supervision | 0.290 |
| Intellectual climate | 0.209 |
| Professional development and career | 0.185 |
| Thesis examination | 0.110 |
| Skills development | 0.096 |

Table 2.3 shows the results of the multiple regression analysis for individual scales, with respect to overall experience. Only five scales are included, as neither the Infrastructure nor the Goals and Standards scales were found to have a statistically significant relationship with overall experience. The strength of each scale in explaining the variance in the students' overall experience evaluations is expressed by the beta

coefficient: the higher the beta value, the more important the scale. The analysis shows that – as in previous years of PRES – the Supervision scale had the strongest impact on how research students rated their overall experience, followed by the Intellectual Climate scale, and the Professional Development and Career scale. The only other two statistically significant factors were the Thesis Examination and Skills Development scales. These results are consistent with similar analysis carried out for PRES 2007 and 2008, which also showed that Supervision and Intellectual Climate were the strongest predictors of overall experience[11].

## 2.2 Responses to PRES by item

The figures below present responses to the individual items, both those included in the scales described above and other items that do not comprise scales (such as the items relating to teaching opportunities (Q10-Q12), importance of various factors (Q9), and experience against expectations (Q15)). Full tables containing percentage responses to each item and numbers of respondents are contained in Appendix A.

The PRES questionnaire uses a five-point scale for most items (with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'), which has been converted for this report into a three-point scale comprising 'disagree' (responses 1 and 2), 'neutral' (response 3) and 'agree' (responses 4 and 5). The locution '% agree' has been used in the charts and tables below to indicate the aggregation of responses 4 and 5 on the five-point scale.

### 2.2.1 Supervision (Q1)

The supervision items comprise the highest scoring scale in PRES: in particular, 87.5% of respondents said that their supervisor had the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support their research (Q1a). This is especially encouraging given that, as described above, the Supervision scale is the strongest predictor of overall experience. Respondents were less positive in response to Q1d regarding guidance given for the literature search (although it could be argued that this is not necessarily overly problematic given the nature of doctoral study); nevertheless, this item showed the largest change from 2009 of all the items in the scale, the % agree increasing by 5.6%. The ranking of items within this scale by % agree is consistent over all years of the survey.

[11] Preliminary multi-level modelling also indicates that the institutional effect on overall experience (Q15g) is remarkably small: only 0.9% of the variance for that item. In comparison, when experience of supervision is added to the model 27% of the total variance is accounted for. Further analysis would be required to confirm the suggestion that institution has only a minimal effect on a PGR's experience of their research programme, but this would be consistent with findings from the National Student Survey (see Surridge 2009).

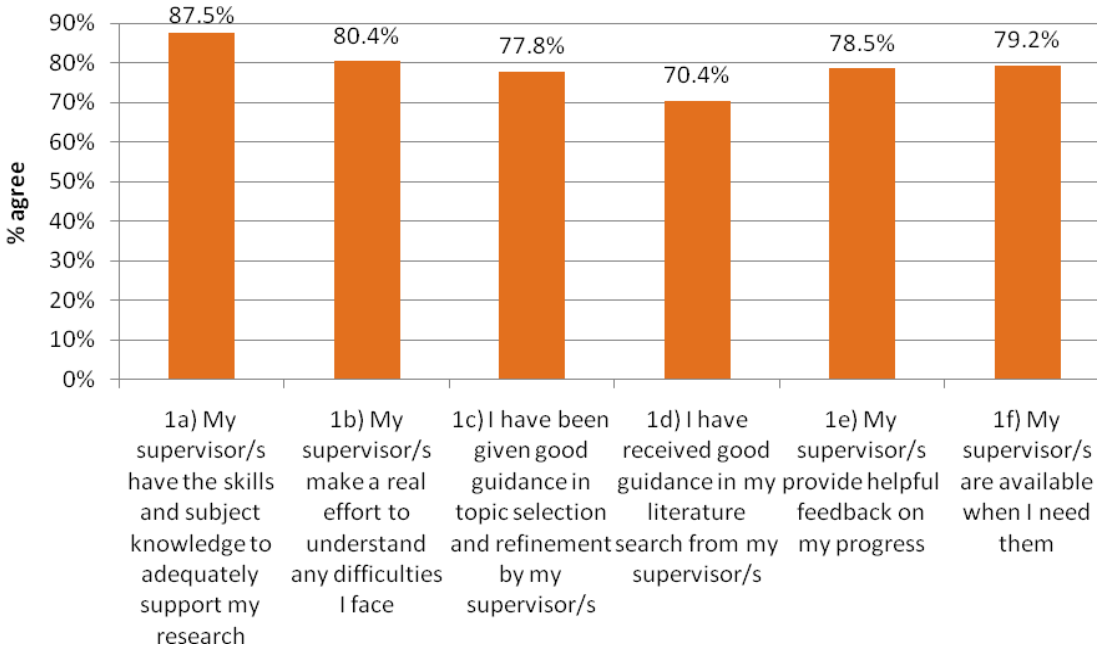


*Figure 2.2: Supervision items, % agree, Q1*

### 2.2.2 Skills Development (Q2)

Skills Development is also a high scoring scale, with respondents being particularly positive that their experience so far has improved their ability to learn independently (Q2d) and their analytical skills (Q2b), these items ranking first and second highest respectively by % agree, as was the case in all previous years. Not only has Q2d been the highest ranked item for every year, it also has the most consistent result: the average change in score between years of the survey for that item is only 1.43%. The only important change in ranking is for Q2e, which was fifth (second to last) in % agree (by some distance) in 2007 and 2008, but is ranked third in 2011. This change is largely due to an abrupt 9.2% change between 2008 and 2009. The change for that item between 2009 and 2011 was 5.3%. The largest change in % agree between 2009 and 2011 was for Q2f, the lowest scoring item, which nevertheless increased by 6.7%. There is more clustering in the 2011 results for the different items in Q2 than in previous years, evident in the fact that the gap between the highest and lowest scoring item (Q2d and Q2f respectively) has narrowed markedly over the years of the survey, decreasing from 22.2% in 2007 to 12.8% in 2011.

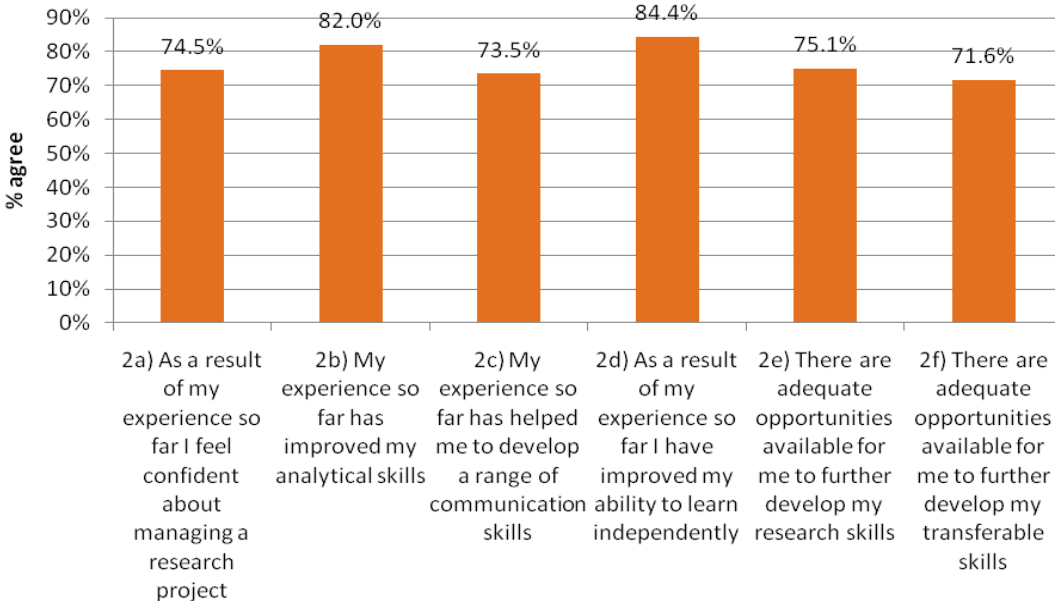


*Figure 2.3: Skills Development items, % agree, Q2*

### 2.2.3 Infrastructure (Q3)

Respondents were relatively positive in response to the Infrastructure items; markedly less so for Q3c about appropriate financial support for research activities, although this is perhaps unsurprising given the inevitable competition for funding. The ranking of these items by % agree is consistent for the years 2008, 2009 and 2011. The biggest increase from 2009 is for Q3f, for which % agree has increased by 7.1%.

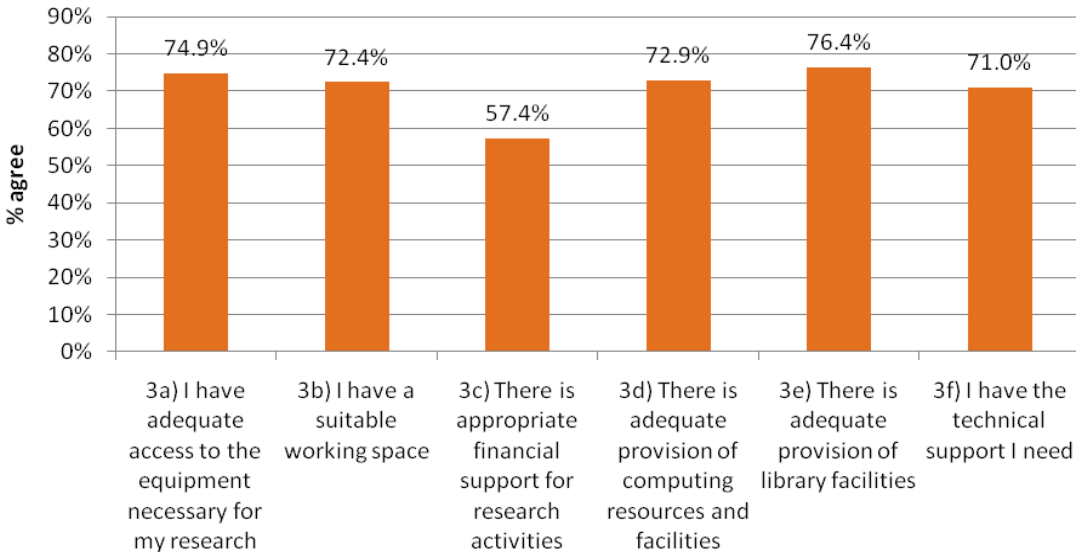


*Figure 2.4: Infrastructure items, % agree, Q3*

### 2.2.4 Intellectual Climate (Q4)

Intellectual Climate scored the second lowest of all the scales in PRES. Just under a third of respondents agreed that their department provided opportunities for social contact with other research students (Q4a), to become involved in the broader research culture (Q4b), or a good seminar programme for research students (Q4e), while only just over half agreed that they felt integrated into their department's community, and nearly a quarter disagreed (Q4d). As with the other scales, there is a high level of consistency between the years in ranking by positivity; the ranking of the intellectual climate items, by % agree, is consistent over all years of the survey. The biggest change between 2009 and 2011 is for Q4a, for which % agree increased by 6%.

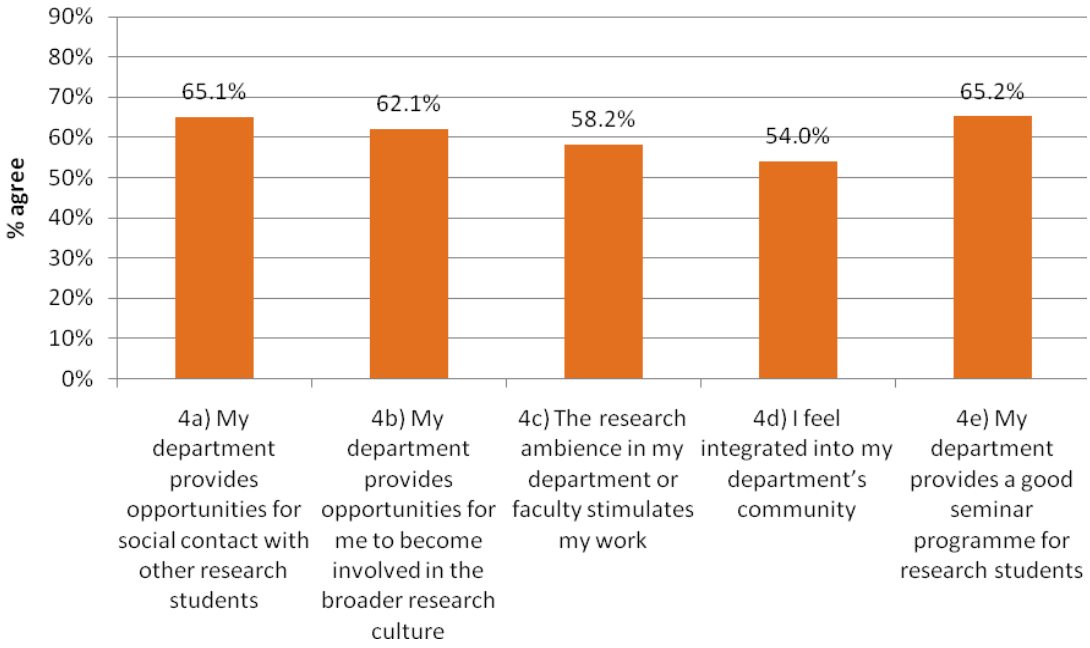


*Figure 2.5: Intellectual Climate items, % agree, Q4*

### 2.2.5 Goals and Standards (Q5)

This was the fourth highest scale in PRES: responses were generally positive, with between 75% and 78% agreeing on all items except for understanding the requirements of thesis examination (Q5c), for which below 70% agreed. The ranking of these items by % agree is consistent across all years of the survey. The biggest change from 2009 is for Q5c, for which % agree increased by 5.5%.

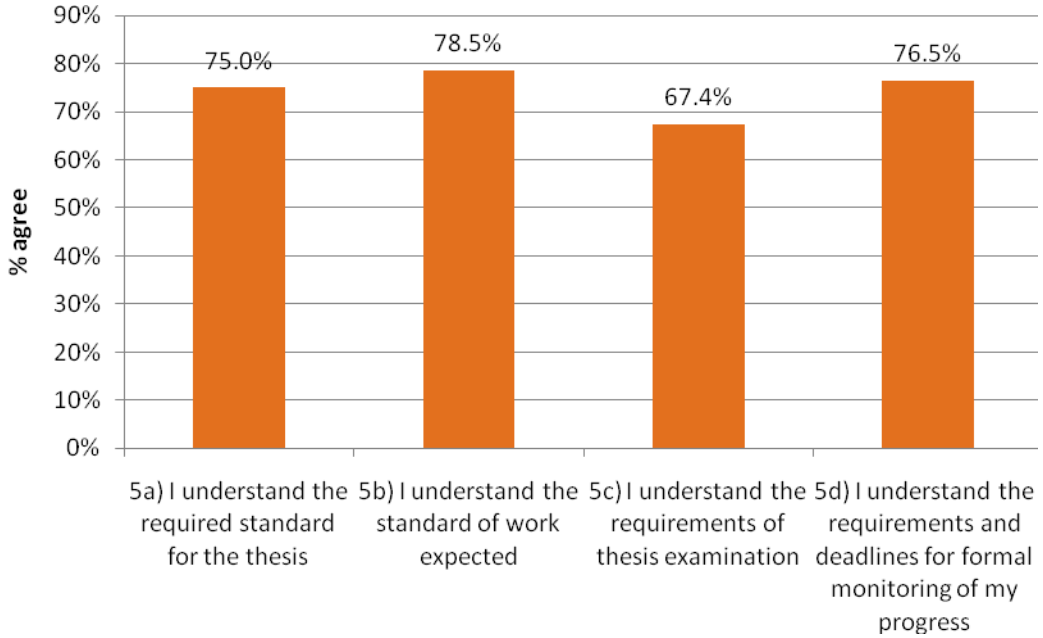


*Figure 2.6: Goals and standards items, % agree, Q5*

### 2.2.6 Thesis Examination (Q6)

This scale yields a much smaller set of data, due to the small numbers of respondents who had completed their final examination: only 4.6% (N=1,401) of the total respondents responded to these items. The most positive results were for Q6a(i), and the least positive were for Q6a(iii). The ranking of these items by % agree is consistent over all years of the survey. The largest change from 2009 is for Q6a(iv), for which % agree increased by 10.5%. % agree for Q6a(ii) only increased by 1.8%.

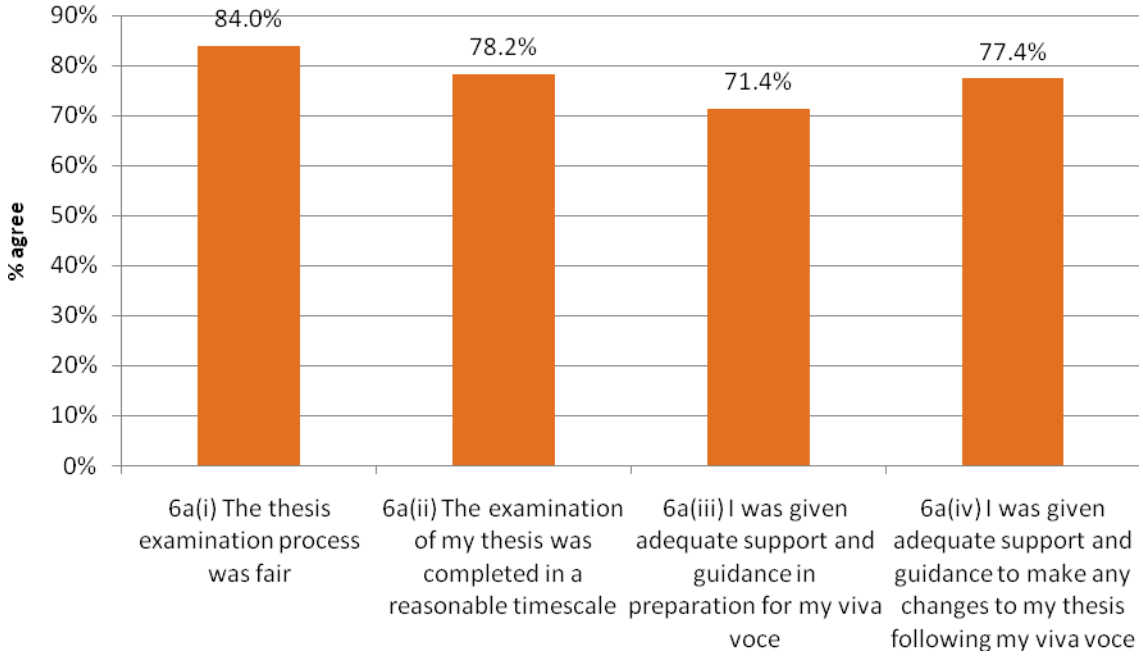


*Figure 2.7: Thesis Examination items, % agree, Q6*

### 2.2.7 Professional Development and Career (Q7)

This has been the least positive scale since it was introduced in 2008, and that trend continues with the 2011 results. Despite being the least positive scale, however, it has the third largest effect on overall experience. Within the scale, Q7a is the least positive, and in fact is the least positive of all items in the survey, whether rated by % agree (as it has the lowest level) or % disagree (as it has the highest level)[12]. It has been the most negative item in the scale for all years of the survey, and the ranking of all these items by % agree is consistent over all years. % agree for Q7a has increased by 6.8% from 2009. The largest increase in % agree from 2009 for the scale, however, is for Q7c, which increased by 7.3%.

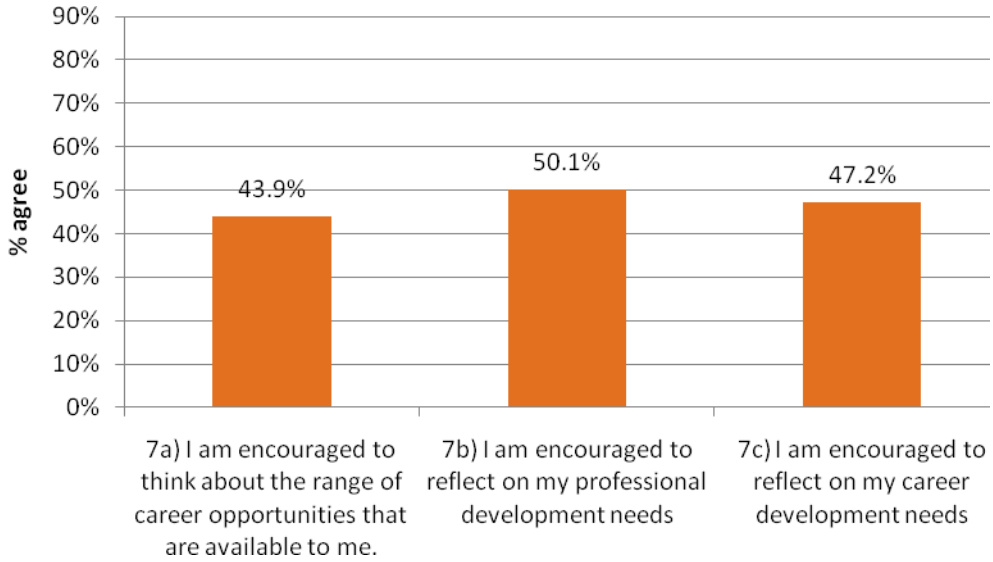


*Figure 2.8: Professional Development and Career items, % agree, Q7*

[12] While Q14c does technically have both a higher result for % disagree and a lower result for % agree, this does not express greater 'negativity' than Q7a as Q14c is phrased negatively in the first place.

### 2.2.8 Roles and responsibilities (Q8)

While respondents were generally less positive about these items, Q8c is markedly more positive than the other items in this group, with a % agree that is 15.6% higher than the next most positive item (Q8a). The fact that the difference between Q8c and Q8d is 16.3% is interesting given that they address two sides of the same issue: the responsibilities of the students themselves, and the responsibilities of institutions. The largest change from 2009 is for Q8b, for which % agree has increased by 6%. The ranking of % agree is reasonably consistent over the years of the survey.

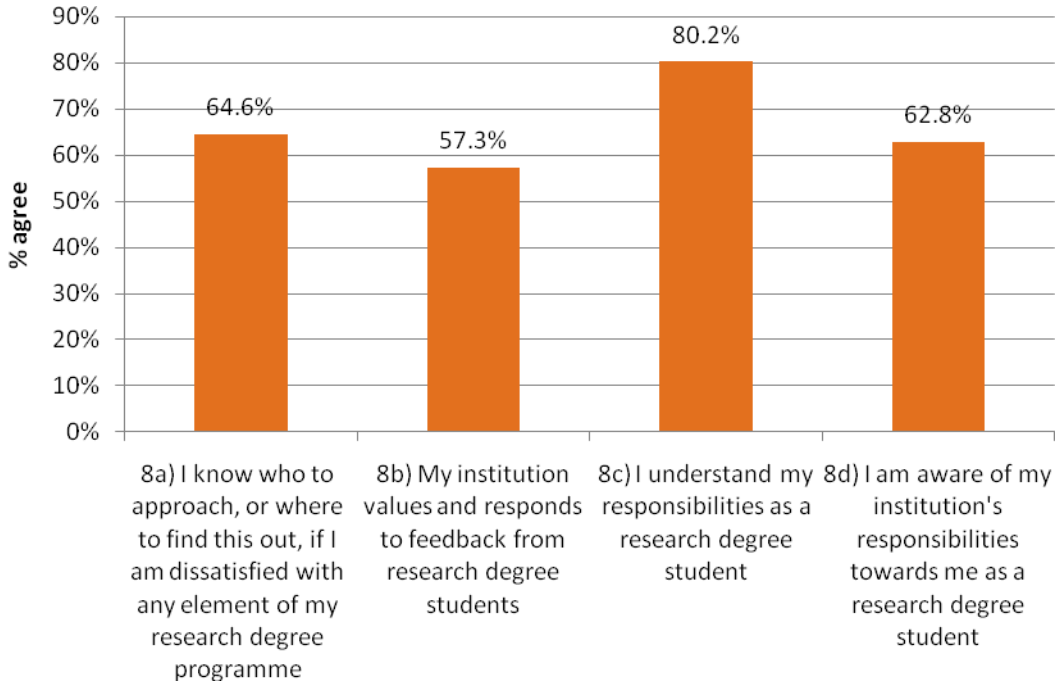


*Figure 2.9: Roles and responsibilities items, % agree, Q8*

### 2.2.9 Teaching opportunities (Q10, Q11, Q12)

As with the items on roles and responsibilities, there is a divergence of scores for these items, with Q12 having a % agree that is 13.4% higher than the next most positive item (Q10). That difference has been roughly consistent since these items were included in the survey in 2008, and the ranking of the three items by % agree has been consistent in that time. It is interesting to note the greater positivity that respondents expressed about the experience of teaching, compared to the opportunities and support for that teaching. The largest change from 2009 has been for Q10, for which the % agree has increased by 8.2%. The N/A option was introduced for Q10 in 2011, and the number selecting that option was high (22.5%): caution is thus required when drawing conclusions about the increase from 2009 for that item.

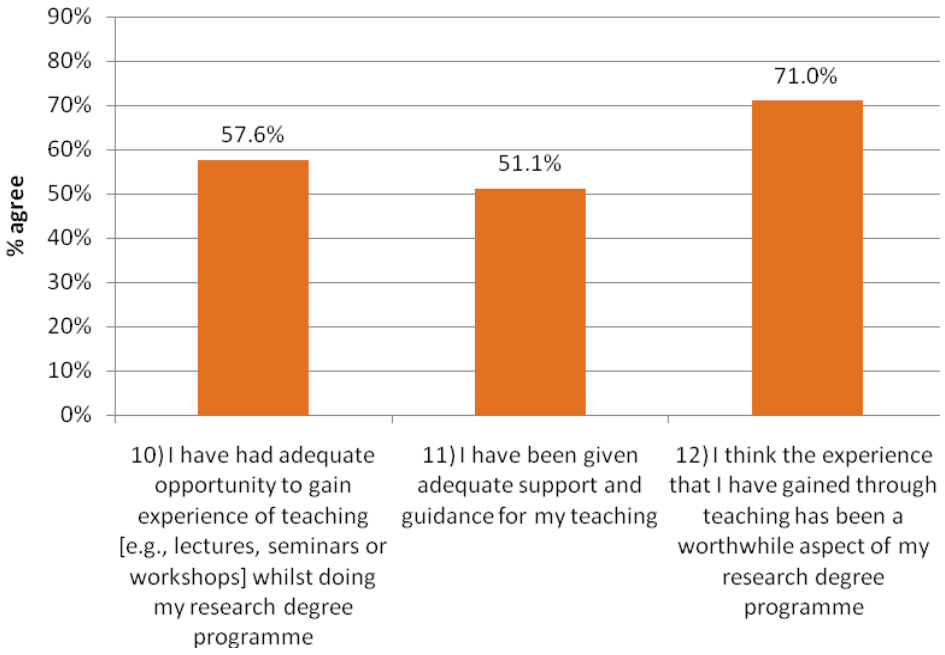


*Figure 2.10: Teaching opportunities items, % agree, Q10, Q11, Q12*

### 2.2.10 Personal factors (Q14)

The scores for these items vary greatly, which is perhaps unsurprising given that they cover very different issues. With a % agree of 88.9%, Q14a receives the most positivity out of all the items on the survey. It is inappropriate to compare Q14c with scores for other items, as the item is the only one in the survey where the phrasing is negative, thus reversing the normal implication of greater positivity where there is a higher % agree. While the % agree for Q14c has decreased by 2% since 2009, given the negative phrasing of the statement this is consistent with the general trend of increased positivity apparent in the 2011 results. The ranking of the items in this group by % agree is consistent over all years (Q14c was introduced in 2008). The largest change from 2009 is for Q14b, for which % agree increased by 3.3%. The change for Q14a is only 0.3%, and this is the smallest change in % agree for any of the items in the survey.

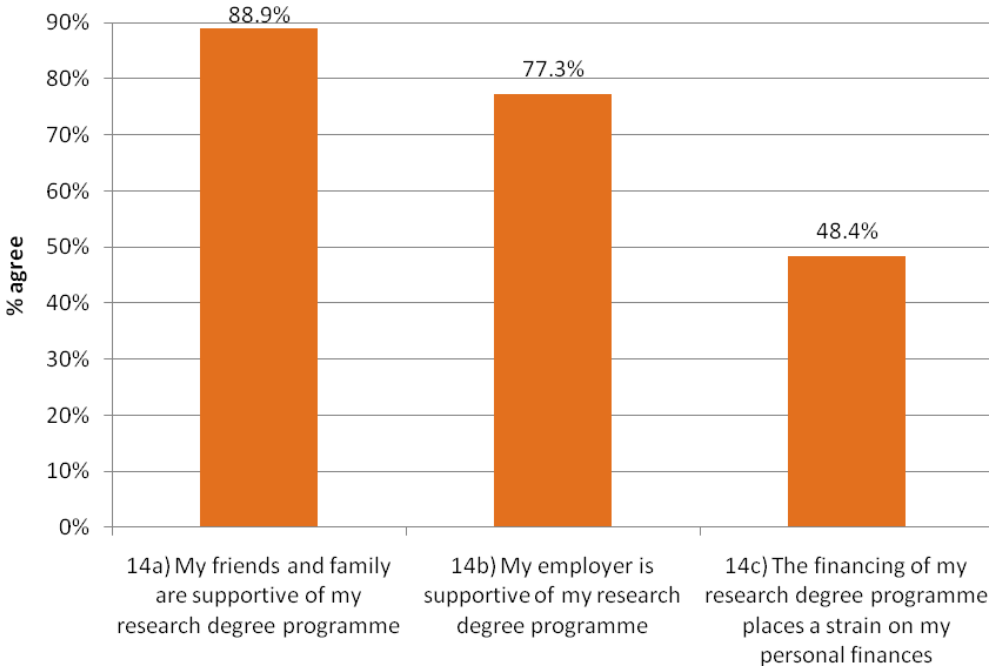


*Figure 2.11: Personal factors items, % agree, Q14*

### 2.2.11 Importance of aspects of degree programme (Q9)

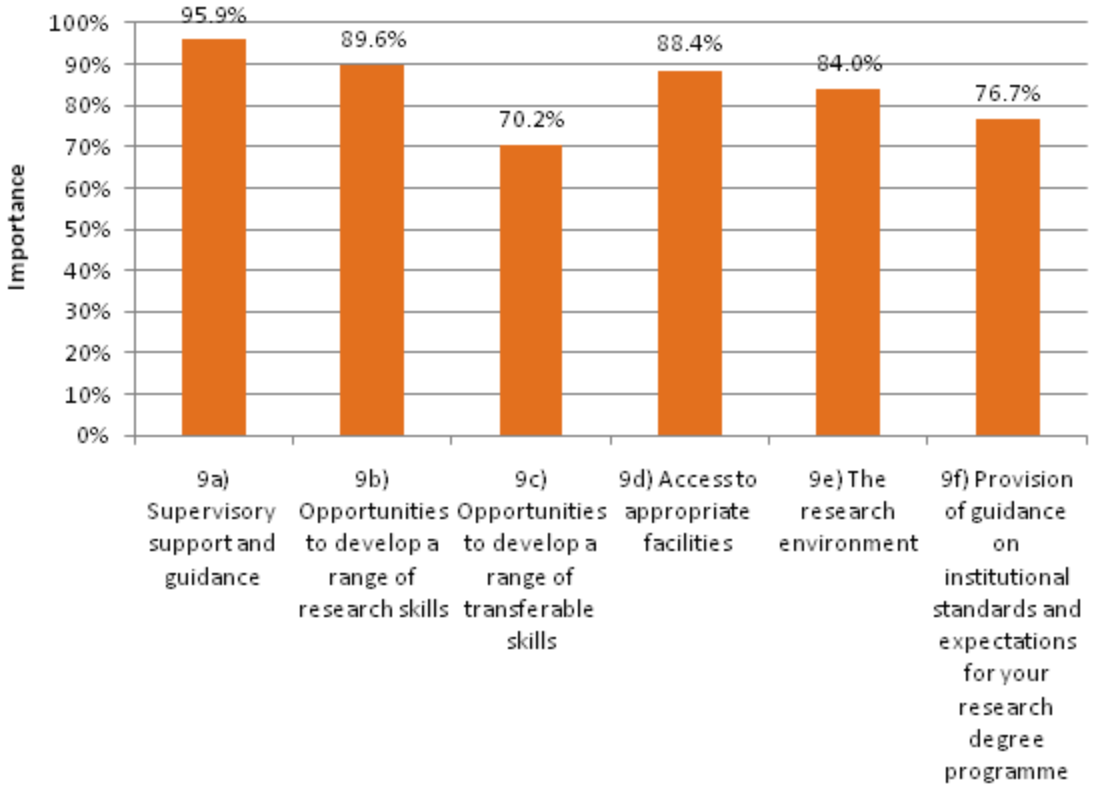


*Figure 2.12: Ratings of importance, Q9*

Note: This item uses a five-point scale where 1 = not important and 5 = very important. Figure 2.12 uses an 'importance' rating, which is an aggregation of options 4 and 5.

The results for these items show very clearly the importance of supervision to respondents. The lowest importance score was for the development of transferable skills. It is interesting to compare the results for this section with the multiple regression data discussed above, which looks at the effect of the scales on the overall experience of respondents (see Section 2.1.3). While the options Q9a-Q9f do not map directly on to the scales of the survey, there are enough similarities to make comparisons.

Experience of supervision (Q9a) is both the highest scoring of the options in Q9 and also the scale that has the largest effect on overall experience, which is encouraging. The second highest scoring option was on research skills (Q9b), to which there are two scales most relevant: Skills Development (Q2) and Professional Development and Career (Q7). Despite the importance of research skills to respondents, the Skills Development scale was found to have the least effect on overall experience, although the Professional Development and Career scale did have the third largest effect. The Intellectual Climate scale (Q4) had the second largest effect on overall experience according to the multiple regression analysis, but as Figure 2.12 shows the research environment option (Q9e) only received the fourth highest score for importance.

The ranking of these aspects by importance is consistent over all the years of the survey, apart from 2007 when access to facilities was rated as more important than developing research skills. There has been little change in rating of importance since 2009: none of the importance ratings changed by more than 0.6%.

### 2.2.12 Expectations versus experience (Q15a-Q15f)

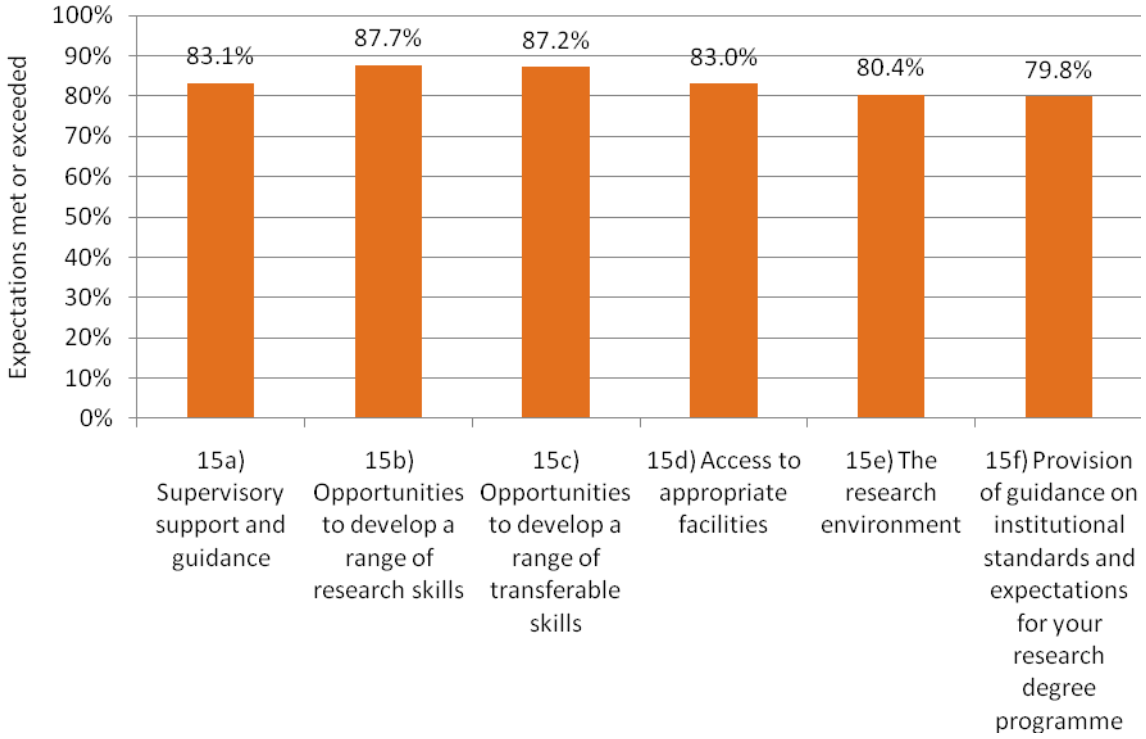


*Figure 2.13: Expectations versus experience, Q15a-Q15f*

Note: This item uses a seven-point scale from -3 to +3, where: -3 = 'it is much more negative', 0 = 'it has met my expectations', and +3 = 'it is much more positive'. Figure 2.13 uses an 'expectations met or exceeded' rating, which is an aggregation of options 0, +1, +2 and +3.

The results for meeting or exceeding expectations are less diverse than for ratings of importance. The highest rated area is developing research skills (Q15b), with 87.7%, and the lowest is guidance on standards and expectations (Q15f), with 79.8%. This difference of 7.9% contrasts with a gap of 25.7% between the highest and lowest rated items for importance (Q9). The ranking of the different areas over all the years of the survey shows some consistency: developing research skills (Q15b) has been the top rated area for every year, and research environment (Q15e) and the provision of guidance on standards have been the two lowest rated areas for every year (Q15f). The biggest change from 2009 is for research environment (Q15e), for which expectations met or exceeded has increased by 3.3%.

Comparing the ratings for importance with those for experience against expectations, the two areas where there is a marked discrepancy are for supervision and the development of transferable skills. For supervision, respondents felt that the area was particularly important to the completion of their studies, but did not especially feel that their expectations had been met or exceeded, possibly raising an area of concern (especially given the fact that supervision has the most powerful impact of all the scales on overall experience), although the Supervision scale was the most positive scale of the survey. With regard to developing transferable skills, respondents felt to a reasonably high degree that their expectations had been met or exceeded (it was the second most positive area), but this was an area that they felt was markedly less important to their studies than other areas.

### 2.2.13 Importance versus positivity

We can draw together some of the data already presented in this report to give a useful overview of the different scales. Given the broad similarity in focus between the scales and the options in Q9 and Q15, we can compare the following properties of the scales: i) effect on overall experience; ii) rating of importance by respondents; iii) positivity; and iv) extent to which it has met or exceeded expectations. While (i) and (ii) address the importance that is attached to the particular elements of respondents' experiences, (iii) and (iv) address the level of favourability they express towards those elements.

*Table 2.4: Importance versus positivity*

| Scale | Most similar option from Q9 | Ranking | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Scales by effect on overall experience[a] | Q9 by importance | Scales by positivity[b] | Q15 by expectations met or exceeded |
| Supervision | Supervisory support and guidance (Q9a) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Intellectual climate | The research environment (Q9e) | 2 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| Professional development and career | N/A[c] | 3 | N/A | 7 | N/A |
| Thesis examination[d] | N/A[c] | 4 | N/A | 2 | N/A |
| Skills development[e] | Opportunities to develop a range of research skills (Q9b) | 5 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills (Q9c) | 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Infrastructure | Access to appropriate facilities (Q9d) | 6[f] | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Goals and standards | Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme (Q9f) | 6[f] | 5 | 4 | 6 |

[a] According to multiple regression analysis on Q15g (see Section 2.1.3).
[b] According to mean scores for scales (see Section 2.1.2).
[c] There are no suitably similar options in Q9.
[d] Only a small proportion of respondents submitted responses for this scale (4.6%).
[e] There are two options in Q9 that are similar to the skills scale, relating to research skills (Q9b) and transferable skills (Q9c).
[f] These two scales were shown by the multiple regression analysis to have no effect on overall experience (see Section 2.1.3.).

Table 2.4 shows that not only is supervision the most important element of their experience (rated either by effect on overall experience or reported importance) it is also an area where respondents are broadly happy, although there is some room for improvement in relation to meeting or exceeding their expectations. The development of research skills, about which respondents are positive, is rated as relatively important by them, but multiple regression analysis shows that their views on that scale have a relatively small effect on their ratings of their overall experience. This phenomenon – a difference between reported importance and the results of multiple regression analysis – is also seen with regard to infrastructure. The table suggests that the provision of clear goals and standards is an area that may require attention if it is to have impact, as it is not important to respondents (either by rating or by impact on overall experience), nor are they particularly positive about that element of their experience.

### 2.2.14 Overall experience of research programme (Q15g)

The results for this overall item have increased over every year of PRES. The change from 2009 (in expectations met or exceeded) is 2.2%. This comprised an increase in 'met expectations' of 1.2% and an increase in 'exceeded expectations' of 1%. The increase for Q15g from 2009 is in line with the other elements Q15a-Q15f, which increased (for 'expectations met or exceeded') from between 1.8% to 3.3%. The increase from 2009 to 2011 is the largest of any of the increases between years of PRES; again, this is in line with the general trend for the survey[13].

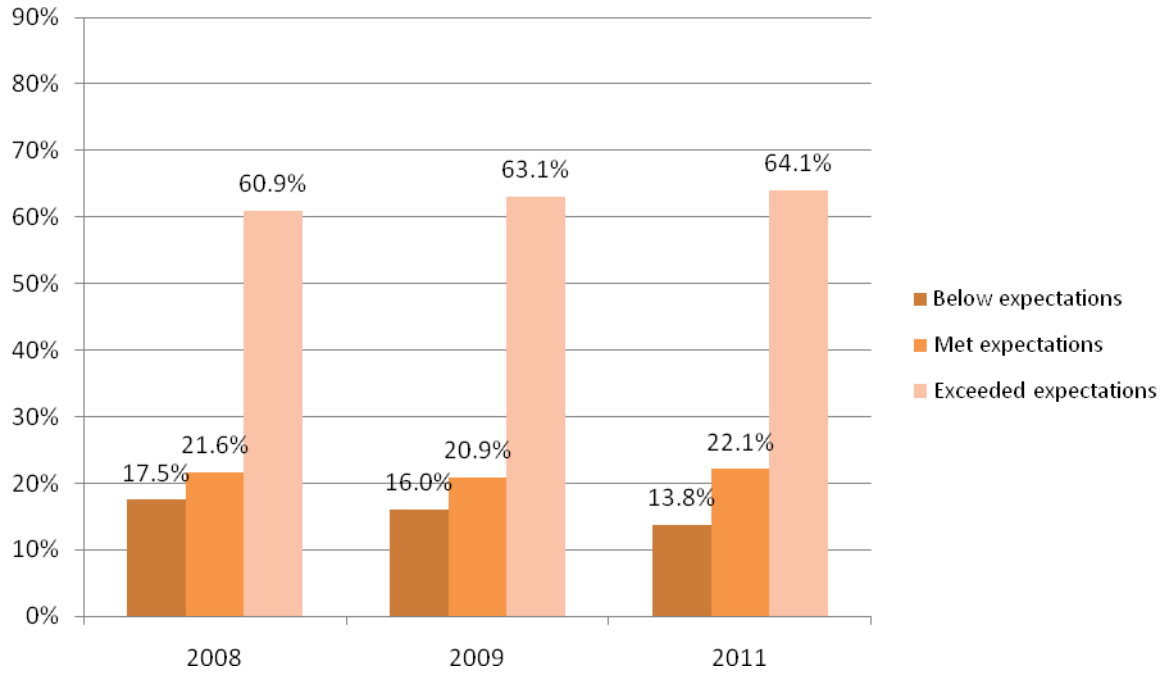


*Figure 2.14: Overall experience versus expectations, Q15g*

[13] The average increase for items Q15a-Q15g for 2009 to 2011 is 2.53%, as compared with 1.03% for 2007 to 2008, and 1.93% for 2008 to 2009.

### 2.2.15 Completion within timescale (Q16)

The results for this item have increased every year since 2007. The change from last year is 4.7%.

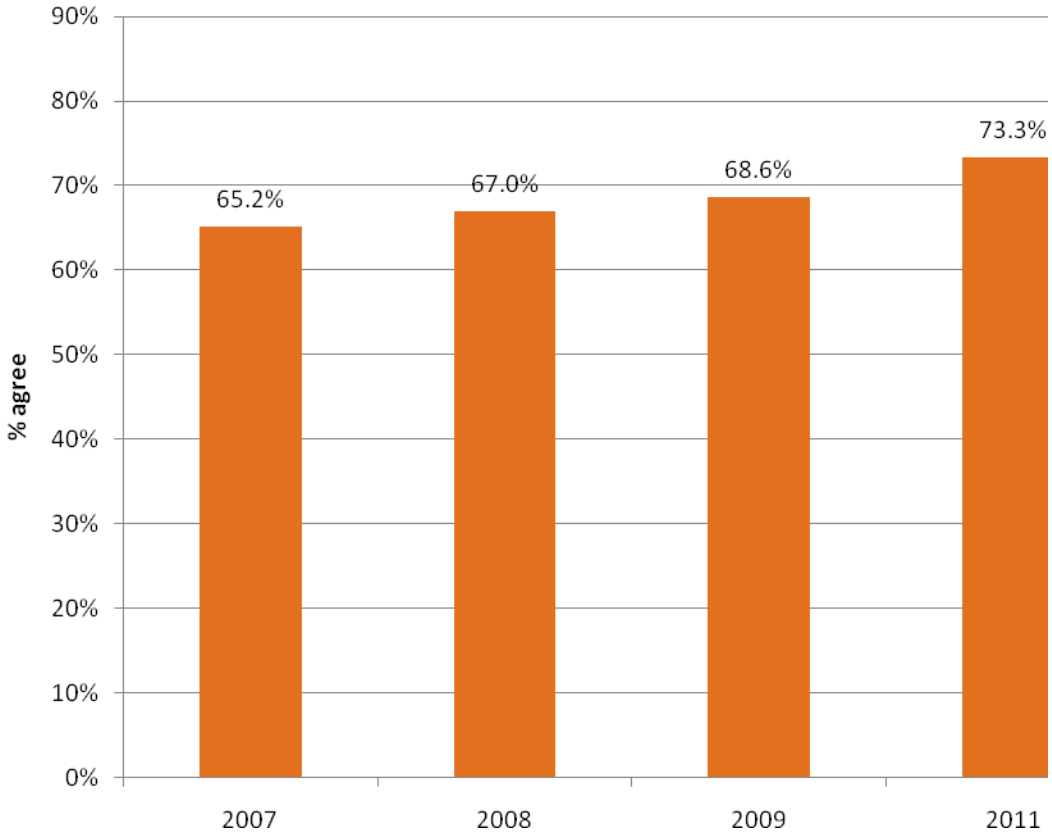


*Figure 2.15: Confidence about completion within timescale, % agree, Q16*

# Section 3
# Detailed analysis

This section contains detailed analysis of aspects of the national-level PRES results using two different and complementary approaches. The first approach focuses on two demographic variables – domicile and disability – and considers responses to scales in relation to those variables. The second approach focuses on a particular set of items, those that relate to skills and professional development, and considers what the responses to those items show, particularly when broken down by age, gender and discipline.

Tables of selected results for Section 3 are included in Appendix B[14].

This section looks at associations between responses to items (and scales) in PRES 2011 and particular demographic characteristics of the respondents (e.g. age, gender etc.). All the associations investigated are statistically significant unless otherwise stated, meaning that, for example, there is a genuine association between discipline group and response to Q19 (main motivation for pursuing a research degree programme, see Figure 3.9), an association that is not just due to random fluctuations in the data[15].

While all such associations are statistically significant, that does not mean that all displayed differences between all sub-groups are statistically significant. Where such differences are small, caution should be exercised when drawing conclusions.

## 3.1 Focus on domicile and disability

By analysing the results through the lens of demographic variables, a rich picture of the experiences of students in particular groups can be drawn. By, for example, exploring the responses of students from different domicile backgrounds across all of the items, it is possible to identify potential areas of interest to institutions in supporting their students. Disability and domicile have been selected as they are key areas of interest for institutions. Both the identification of oneself as having a disability – as well as the type of that disability – and the domicile background can have a powerful effect on students' experiences, their expectations, and their needs.

### 3.1.1 Disability

5% of students in the PRES dataset considered themselves to have a disability. This is in line with national HESA figures as well as the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). As can be seen from Table 3.1 below, mean scale scores for those who identified themselves as having a disability are uniformly lower than those with no disability, although the rank order of the scales remains the same, with Supervision top and Professional Development and Career at the bottom (the Thesis Examination scale is not statistically significant when filtered by disability so is not included in the rank order).

*Table 3.1: Average scale scores by disability/no disability*

| | Disability | No disability | Overall average |
|---|---|---|---|
| Supervision scale | 4.04 | 4.19 | 4.18 |
| Skills development scale | 3.94 | 4.09 | 4.08 |

[14] Tables have been included in Appendix B where the corresponding charts in Section 3 do not include data labels.
[15] Statistical significance of associations between variables was tested using Pearson's chi-square or ANOVA, and all attained a significance level of 0.01 or lower (indicating that the probability of the association being a chance effect is 1 in 100 or less). For more information about statistical significance and other statistical concepts used in this report, see Statsoft (2011).

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Infrastructure scale | 3.71 | 3.92 | 3.91 |
| Intellectual climate scale | 3.51 | 3.66 | 3.66 |
| Goals and standards scale | 3.83 | 3.96 | 3.95 |
| Thesis examination scale* | 4.09 | 4.12 | 4.12 |
| Professional development and career scale | 3.06 | 3.33 | 3.31 |

*Differences for this scale are not statistically significant.

The differences are much more pronounced than for the scales listed above, however, when the two groups are compared on the experience versus expectations items (Q15), which do not comprise a scale. On all items in Q15, the expectations of those who did not consider themselves to have a disability were met or exceeded 4.7% to 8.4% more than those who did, with the largest difference for Q15g, which asks about overall experience.

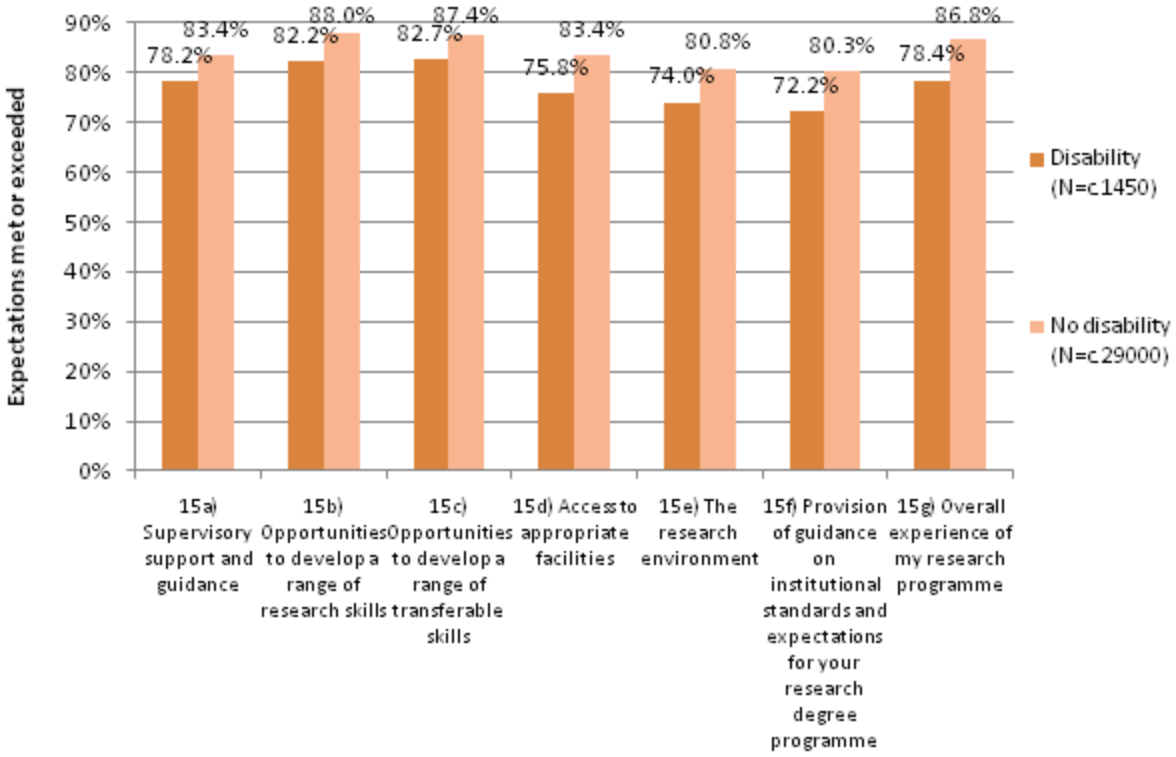


*Figure 3.1: Experience against expectations items by disability/no disability, % expectations met or exceeded, Q15*

Note: The 'N' is the total number of respondents to the item. Where more than one item is grouped within a chart, the N is approximate as there are small differences in the number of respondents for each of the items.

Figure 3.2 shows the difference on scale scores between different types of disability (though while they have been included for the sake of completeness, it should be noted that differences for the Supervision and Infrastructure scales are not statistically significant[16]).

[16] The thesis examination scale was removed due to a very small number of respondents to those items.

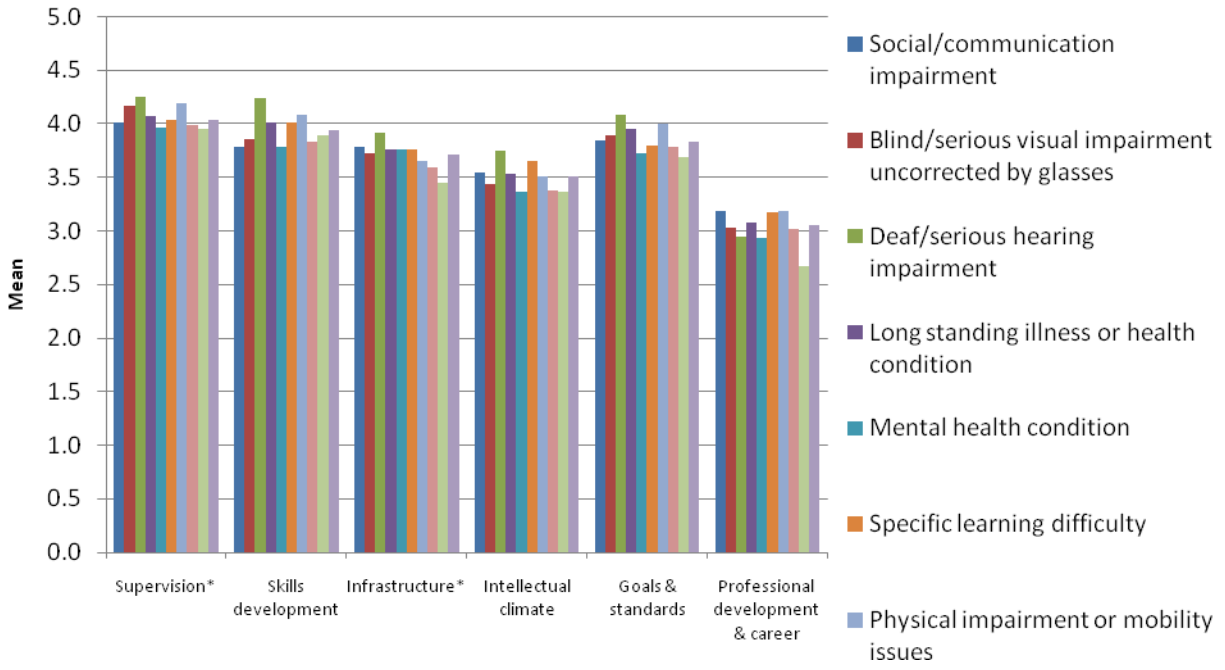


*Figure 3.2: Differences on scale scores between types of disability, mean scale score*

*Differences for these two scales are not statistically significant. For the full wording of each category, please refer to Figure 1.4.

### 3.1.2 Domicile

Nearly half (47.2%) of respondents to PRES identified their normal place of residence as England, with the next most common country being Scotland (6.8%), followed by China (4.2%) and Wales (3.3%). Having indicated the country of their normal place of residence, respondents were organised into 'country groups' following HESA's classification:

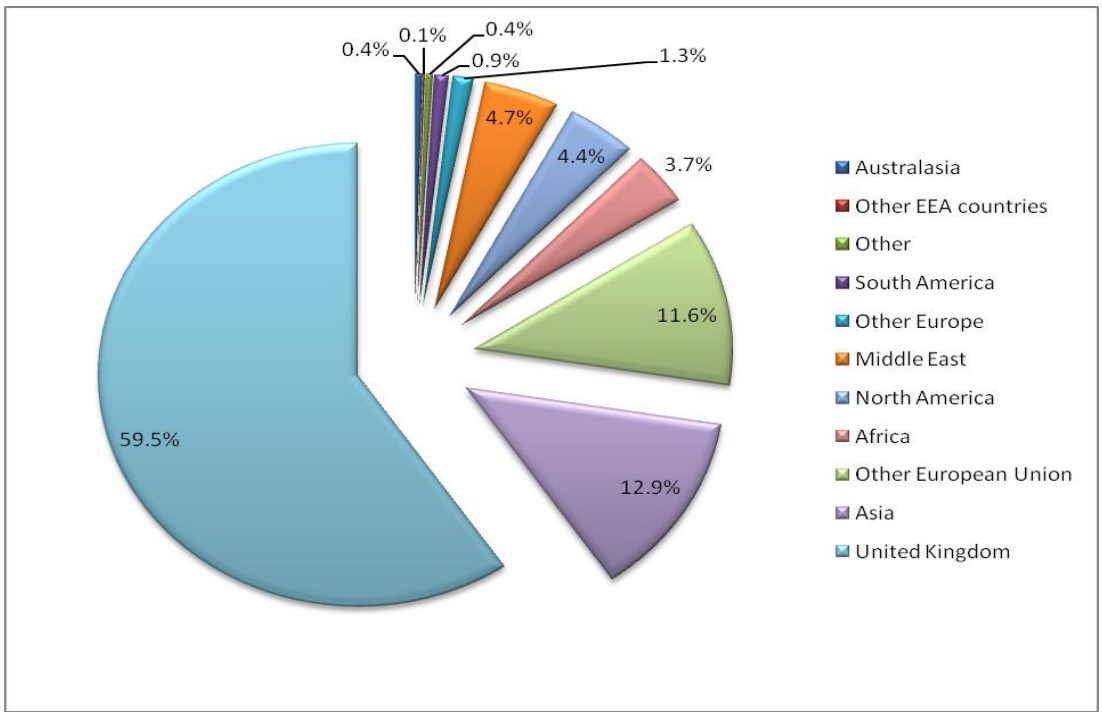


*Figure 3.3: Students across country groups (by normal place of residence)*

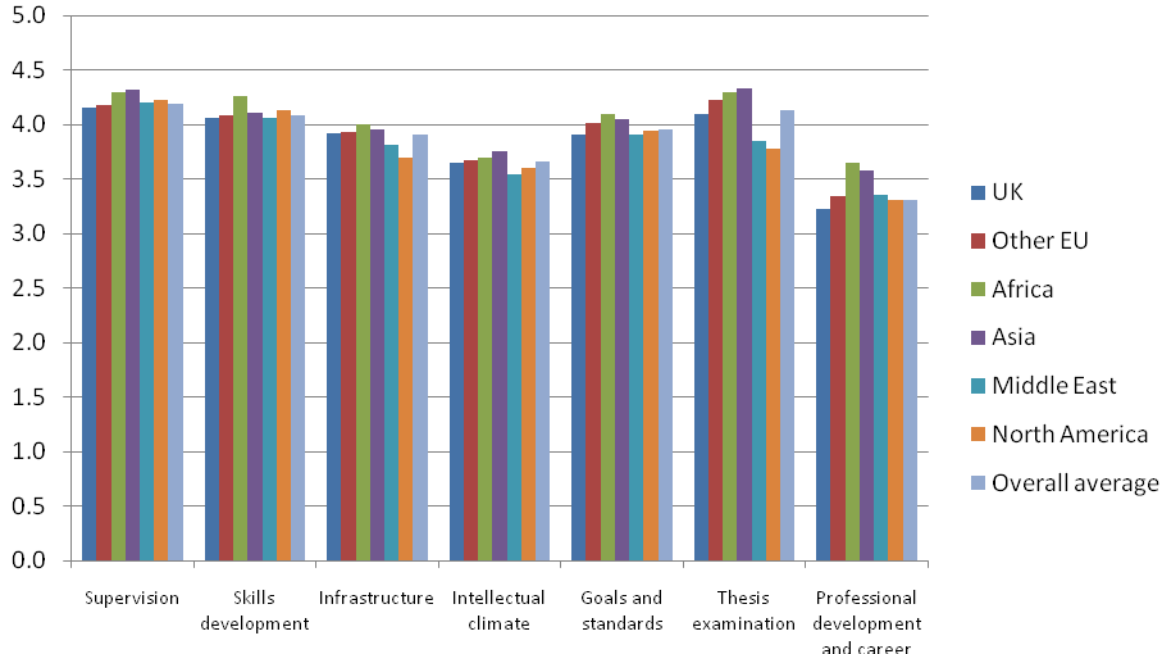


*Figure 3.4: Differences in mean scale scores between major country groups (by normal place of residence)*[17]

There are no particularly large differences between country groups on the mean scale scores, although students from Africa were in general most positive about their experience, followed by those from Asia. Students from North America, UK and the Middle East were generally less positive. This is also borne out quite strikingly in Q15g 'overall experience of my research programme', in response to which the expectations of students from Africa and Asia exceeded by about 13% those from the UK[18]:

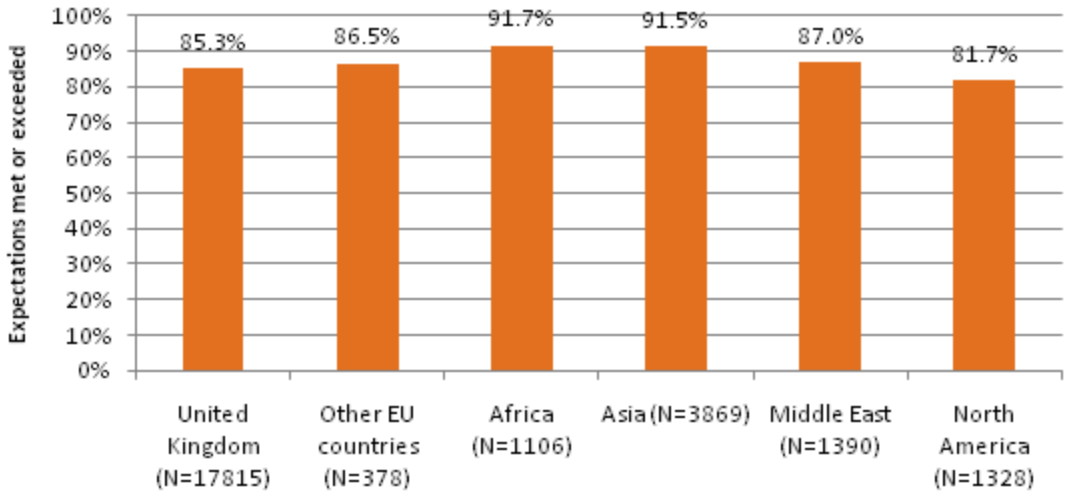


*Figure 3.5: Overall experience of my research programme by country group (by normal place of residence), Q15g*

[17] Major country groups are those with 3.7% share or more.
[18] There are no statistically significant differences for Q15g between UK countries.

Separating responses to Q15 by country of residence for fees purposes[19] shows that 'Other EU' was the least positive group for all items except Q15f (relating to guidance on institutional standards and expectations), and 'Non EU' was the most positive group for all items except those relating to skills (Q15b and Q15c)[20].

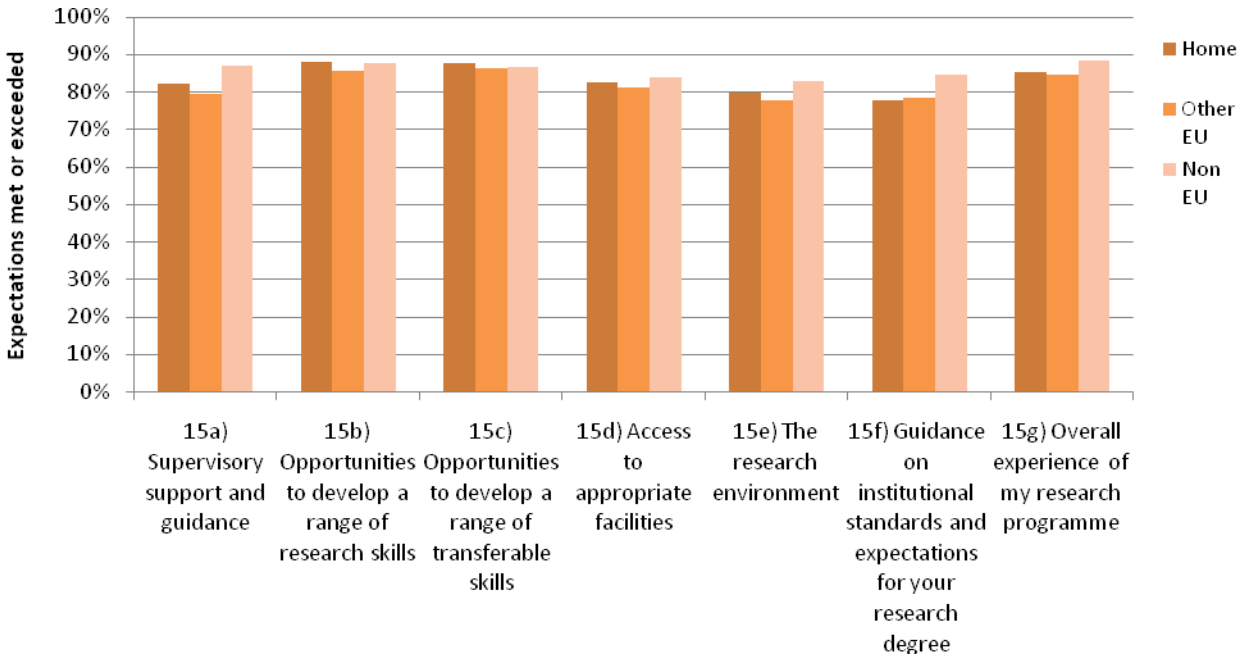


*Figure 3.6: Experience against expectations items by country of residence for fee status, Q15*

## 3.2 Focus on skills and professional development

This section adopts a different approach to Section 3.1 (which took particular demographic variables as the primary focus) by exploring the skills and professional development scales (Q2 and Q7), and the items focused on motivations and anticipated career (Q19 and Q20). The issue of skills and professional development is particularly relevant to HEIs at the current time, when dedicated 'Roberts' funding has ceased, yet the Research Councils still expect institutions to continue to take forward the Roberts agenda[21].

Given the continued importance of the Roberts agenda in the face of increased funding constraints, more information regarding research students' perceptions of the training and support they receive could be of use to institutions in ensuring that their provision is targeted, well attended, and has the greatest impact possible. In that context, it is worrying that the Professional Development and Career scale consistently yields the least positive responses of all the scales in PRES. This section focuses on this

[19] As noted in Section 1, this is different to normal place of residence.

[20] When aggregated into 'below my expectations', 'met my expectations' and 'exceeded my expectations', Home students' expectations were exceeded less than those of the other groups, and Other EU students' experiences were below expectations more than any other group.

[21] The 'Roberts' funding derived from the Roberts Review of 2002, which made recommendations relating to the employability and career planning of PhD students and research staff and funding for their career development and transferable skills training; see Roberts (2002). For the expectations of the Research Councils around researcher development see RCUK (2010).

area aiming to contribute to an understanding of students' motivations, aspirations, what they consider important and unimportant, and what they think of their current provision.

In the following sections, 3.2.1 to 3.2.3, the items in PRES relating to motivations, career aspirations, skills and professional development are broken down by particular variables: discipline, gender, age, and source of funding[22]. The analyses are of necessity only snapshots of particular groups of postgraduate researchers' perceptions of their skills and professional development, but they suggest that there are differences between demographic groups that it may be useful for institutions to explore further, using their own results and through other methods (such as focus groups) in order to establish effective ways of engaging researchers in skills and professional development training and to continue to promote the Roberts agenda.

### 3.2.1 Motivations and career aspirations

As with previous years of PRES, across the whole sample interest in the subject was the most commonly selected main motivation for pursuing a research degree (36.9%) followed by improving career prospects for an academic/research career (30.5%).


*Figure 3.7: The main motivation for me pursuing a research degree programme was..., Q19*

Regarding anticipated career, 57.7% of respondents said that they anticipated a career in higher education (44.3% teaching only and/or teaching and research, and 13.4% research only). It is notable that 42.3% did not have a career in HE in mind given the presumption commonly made that PhD students overwhelmingly intend to enter academic careers. It is also interesting to compare the 44.3% of PRES respondents who were intending to have a career as lecturers with research from Vitae that suggested only 14% of doctoral graduates from the period 2003-2007 have actually gone on to hold that post[23].

[22] A general rule of thumb has been adopted in which a difference of 5% between respondents of different types who agree (agree + strongly agree) with each item is considered to be of potential practical significance and has been explored. Where the word 'significant' is used in the following text this is to indicate practical significance in that sense, unless otherwise indicated, rather than statistical significance.

[23] See Vitae (2009).

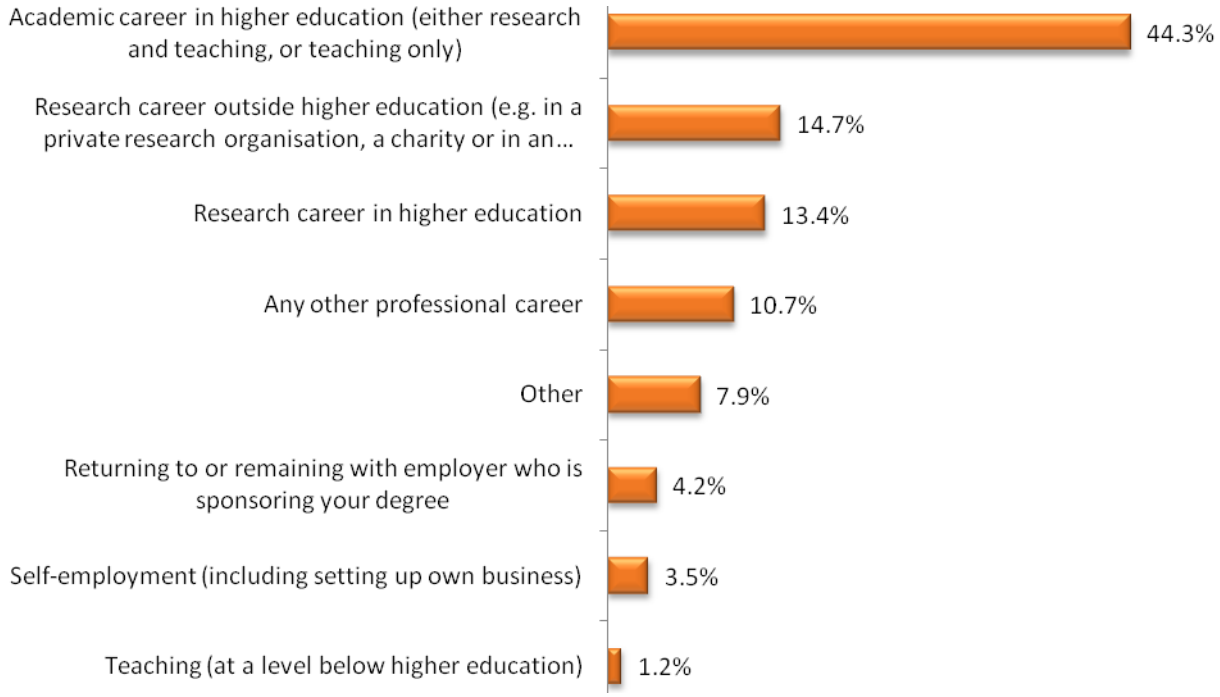


*Figure 3.8: What type of career do you have in mind for when you complete your research degree? Q20*

This item also allows respondents to enter a free-text comment. Frequent response types included: a combination of all the factors (with the combination of interest and career being common); a long-held ambition; a desire to help people; to exercise the brain and expand knowledge; and the lack of other options[24].

#### 3.2.1.1 *Discipline*

Research on the National Student Survey has found that, for that survey, subject of study has a large effect on overall experience[25]. Similar effects are suggested by analyses performed on data from the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire in Australia, upon which PRES is based[26]. These findings from other surveys provide a rationale for splitting PRES data into separate discipline clusters.

There are indeed some interesting differences when responses to Q19 (motivations for undertaking postgraduate research) are broken down by discipline area (see Figure 3.9). A larger proportion of Arts & Humanities students were motivated by an interest in the subject (43.5% of Arts & Humanities respondents chose this option, as opposed to 36.4% STEM, 34.8% Social Sciences and 28.2% Health). The largest proportion of students motivated by improving academic career prospects was in Health disciplines (37.4%) closely followed by Social Sciences (35.7%), with Arts & Humanities (30.2%) and STEM (27.7%) much lower.

[24] Analysis has not at this time been performed on the free-text data; this is an initial assessment of responses only. It is hoped that participating institutions will obtain valuable information at local level from the free-text data.
[25] See Surridge (2009).
[26] See Marsh *et al*. (2002).

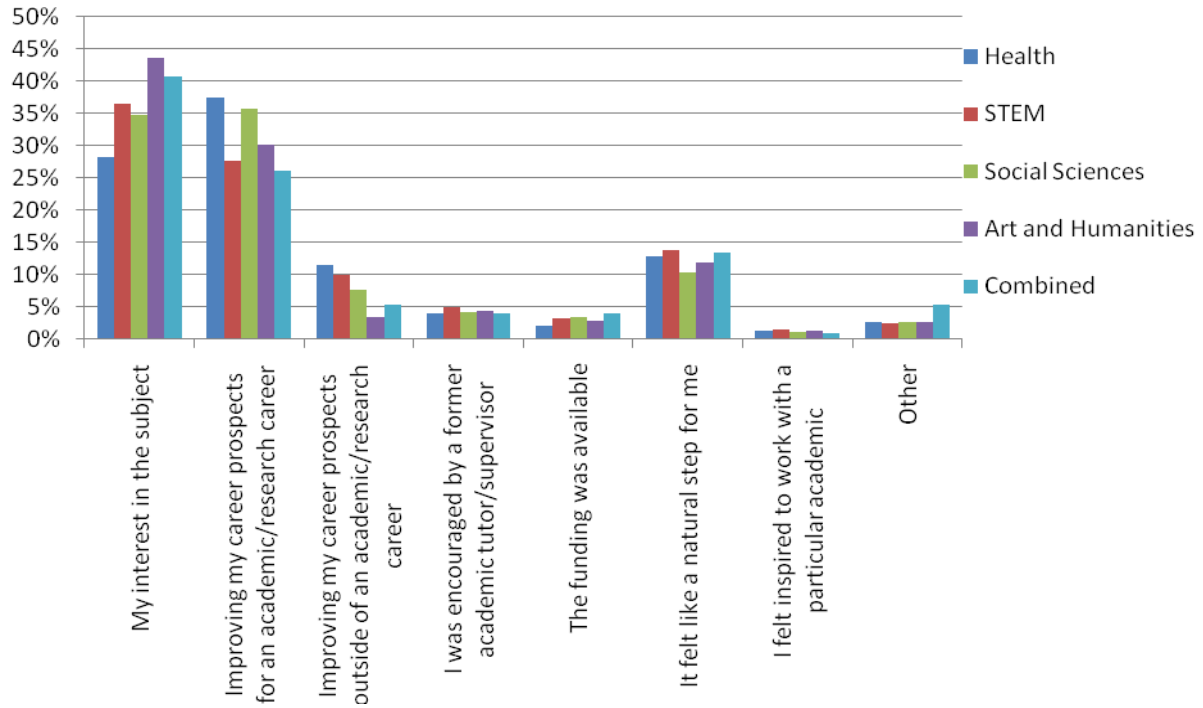


*Figure 3.9: Main motivation by discipline group, Q19*

Regarding anticipated career (Q20), larger proportions of Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences students than those from STEM and Health anticipated a career in higher education teaching or research and teaching (59.6% and 55.6% for Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences respectively, and 37.1% and 36.4% for Health and STEM). Perhaps unsurprisingly given the greater range of career options in these areas, STEM and Health students were more likely than Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities students to anticipate purely research careers, whether inside or outside of higher education.

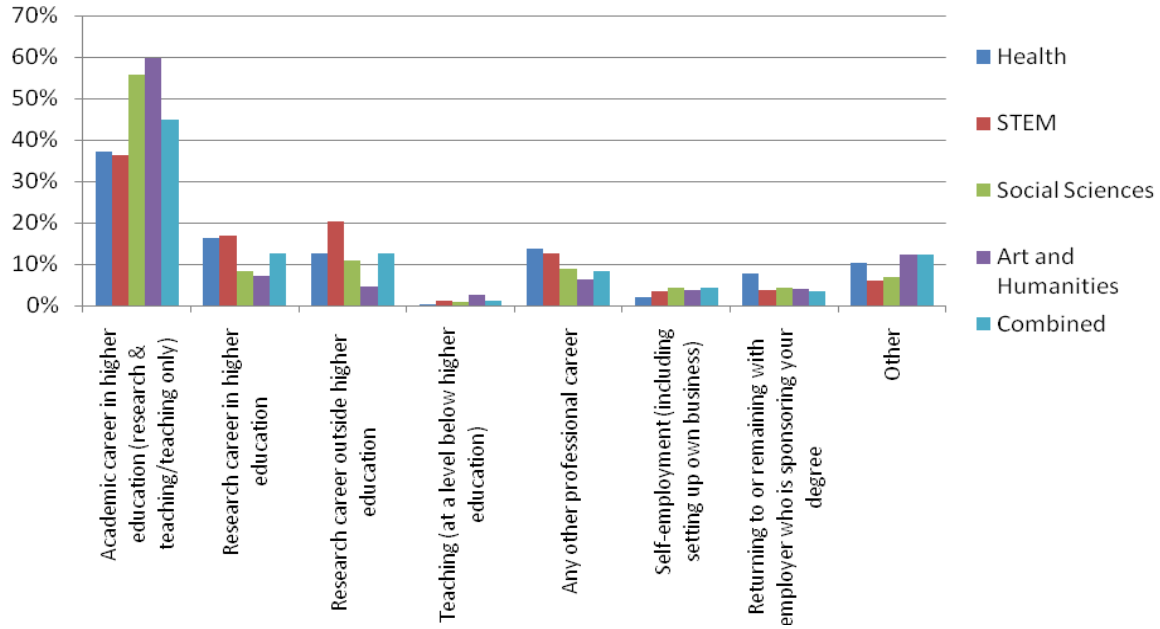


*Figure 3.10: Anticipated career by discipline group, Q20*

#### 3.2.1.2 *Gender*

When disaggregated by gender, there are some pronounced differences in the motivations expressed by men and women. As Figure 3.11 below shows, a larger proportion of men were motivated by their interest in the subject than women (38.9% male versus 34.6% female), while women were more motivated than men by improving their prospects for a career in academia (52% female versus 48% male). However, this is likely to be a feature of the proportions of men and women within each discipline group. There are no large differences for Q19 for different genders within each discipline (though male students are marginally more motivated by an interest in the subject). The overall gender difference for Q19 is therefore likely to be due to discipline differences for Q19 (see Figure 3.9) combined with differing gender proportions within those discipline groups[27].

Figure 3.12 shows that a roughly equal proportion of men and women anticipated a career in higher education teaching and/or teaching and research, while a slightly greater proportion of women than men said that they anticipated a career in higher education research only (14.1% female versus 12.6% male).

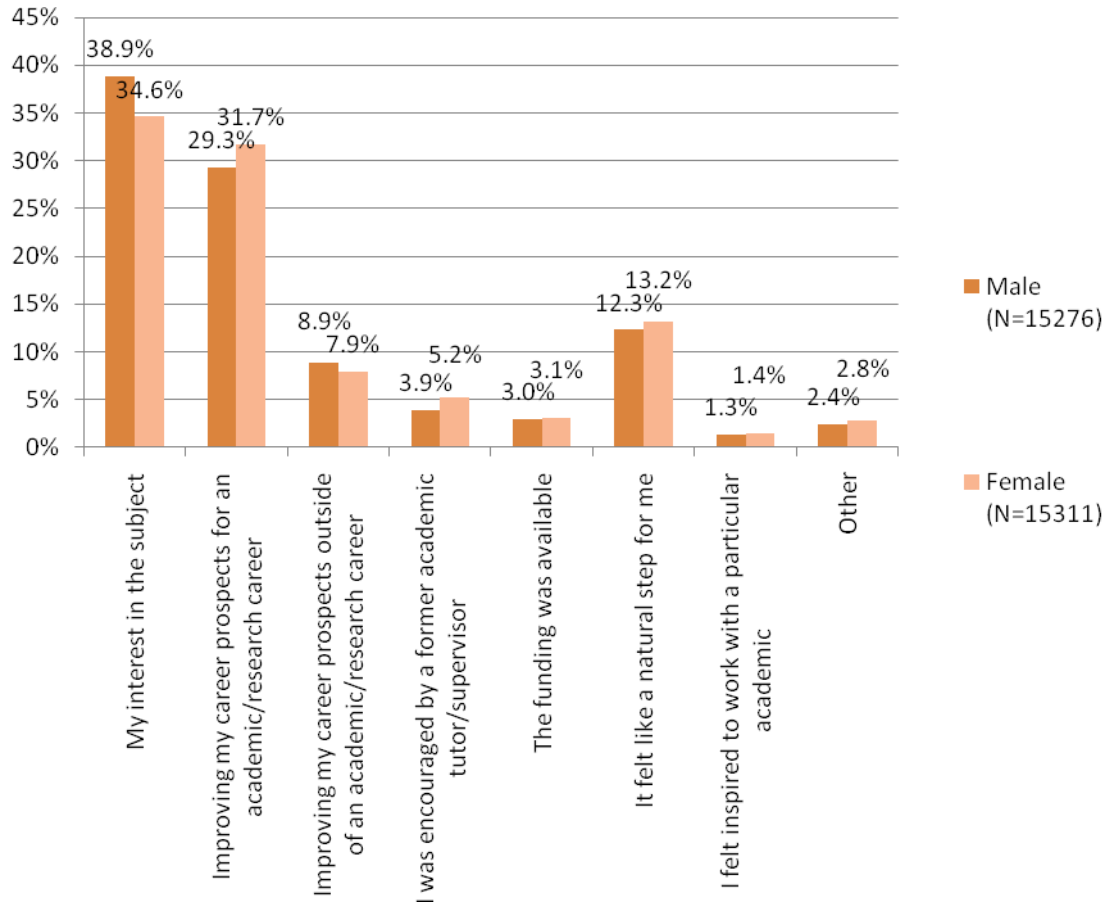


*Figure 3.11: Main motivation by gender, Q19*

[27] In particular, Health students are more motivated by improving academic career prospects than other students, and Health has a disproportionately large number of female students (63%).

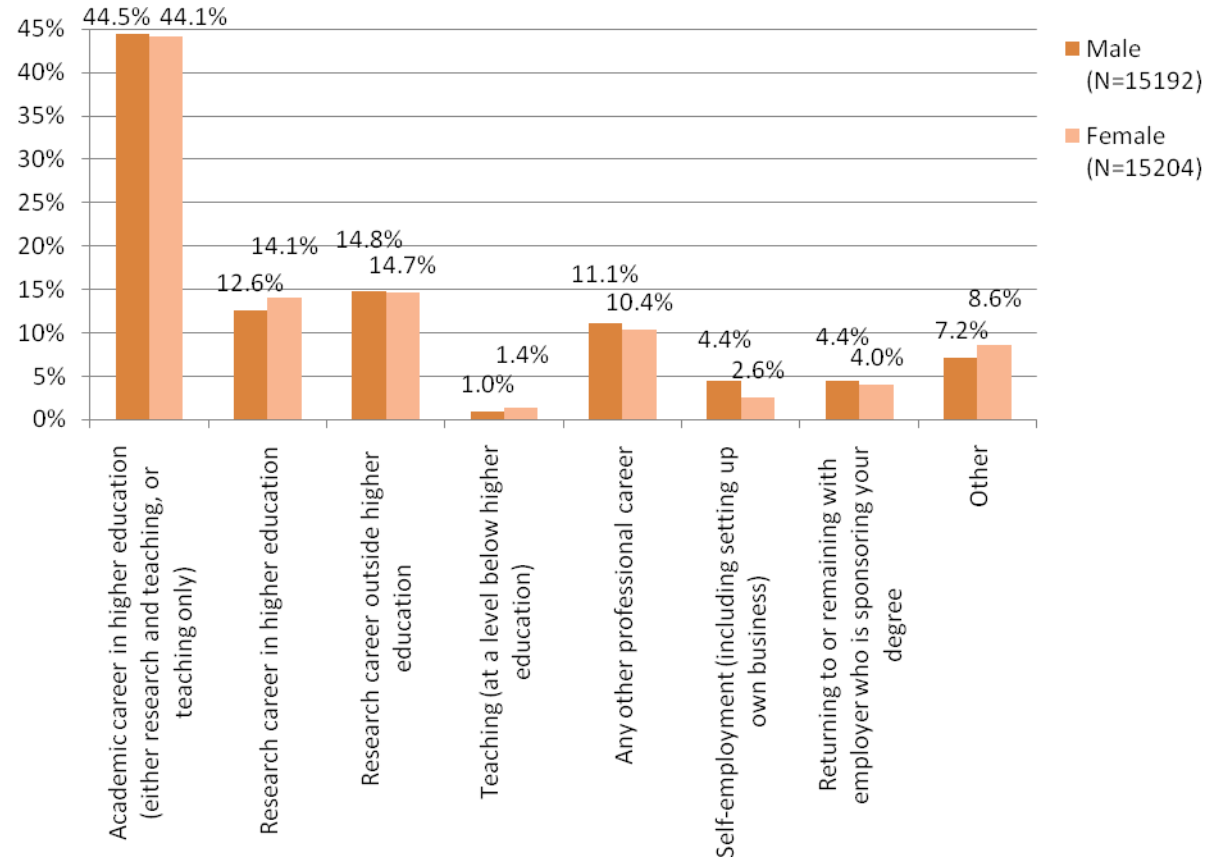


*Figure 3.12: Anticipated career by gender, Q20*

Comparison between the PRES results and the HESA data for academic staff 2009-10 is shown in Figure 3.13. In this figure the percentages shown for the PRES results are not (as has been the case with the other figures) the proportions *within each gender* who selected the option, but the proportions for each gender *within the group that selected the option*. This provides a better comparison with the HESA data, by showing the proportions of total PRES respondents by gender who anticipated particular careers, compared to the proportions of individuals with those careers. As Figure 3.13 shows, for both types of career there are more men than women in that role in HE. This contrasts with the PRES results, which show that for an academic career (teaching, or teaching and research) the proportions anticipating that career are equal, whereas for an HE research career only the difference is even more stark[28].

[28] The HESA data is available here: http://www.hesa.ac.uk/dox/dataTables/staff/download/staff0910.xls?v=1.0 .

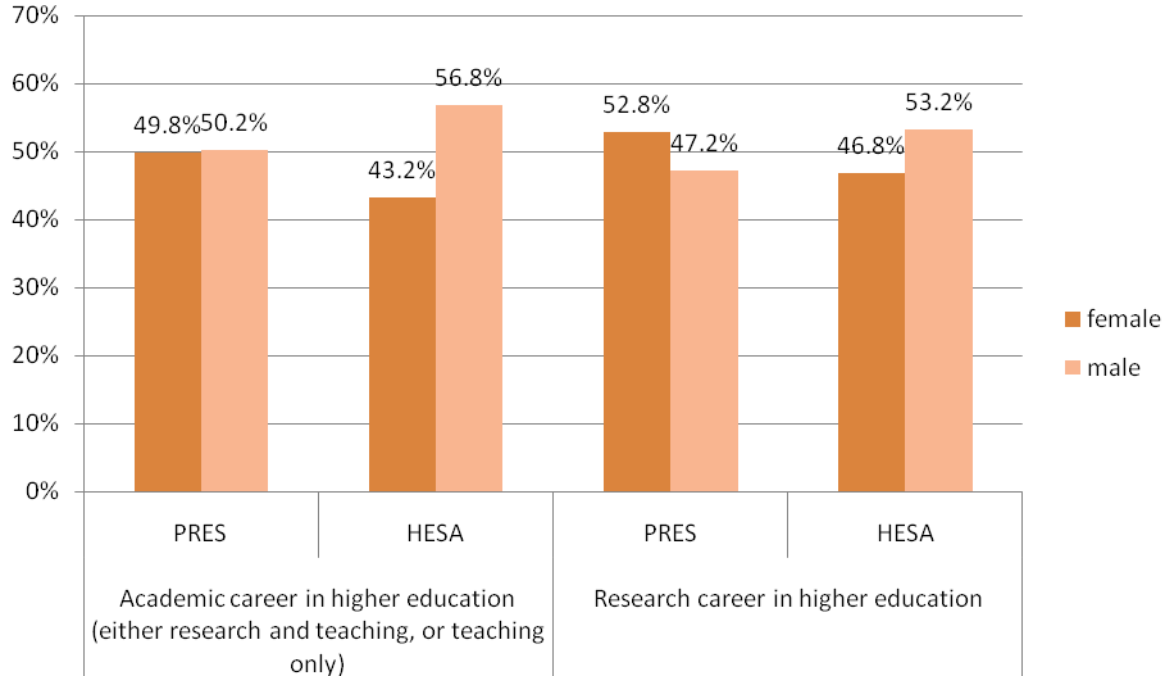


*Figure 3.13: Comparison of anticipated career (Q20) versus actual employment, by gender*

Figure 3.14 below shows the percentages which chose each option for motivation to undertake a research degree, for male and female students, broken down by place of residence for fees purposes (Q30) (e.g. 41.7% of Home male students were motivated by their interest in the subject).

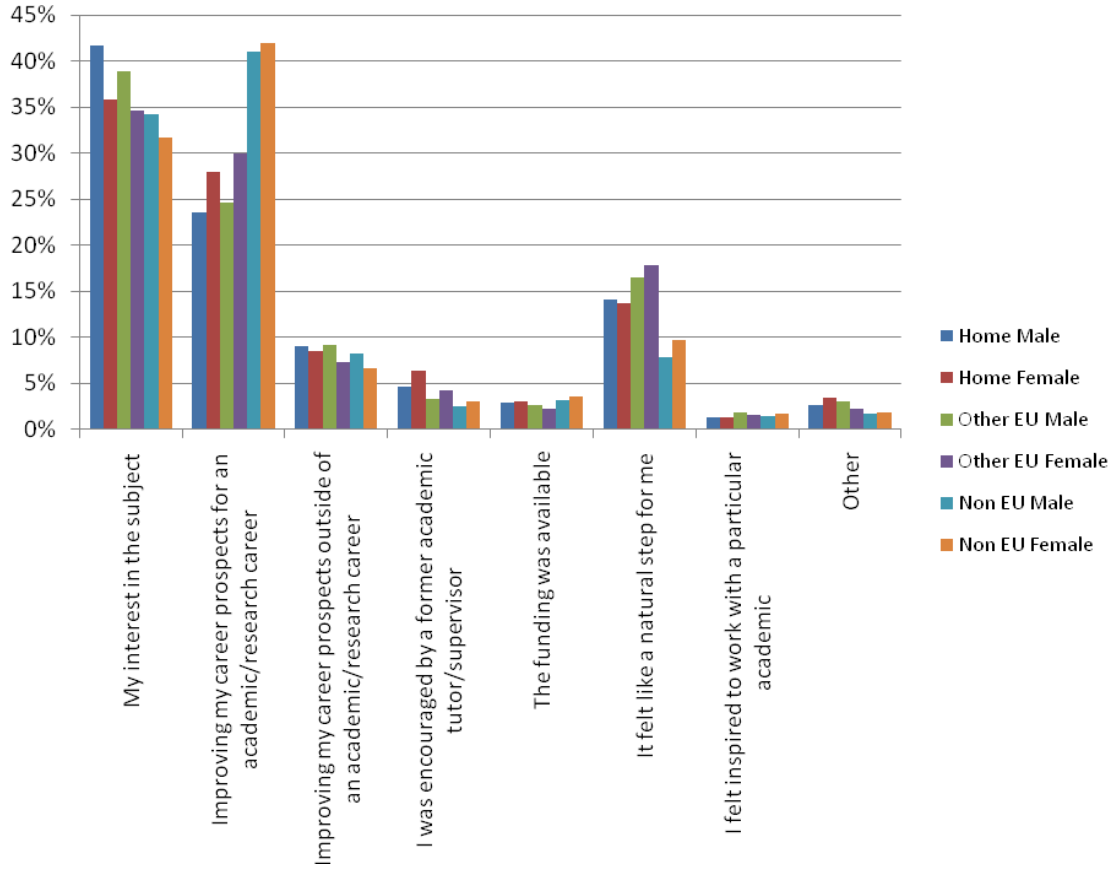


*Figure 3.14: Main motivation by country of residence for fee status and gender, Q19*

Figure 3.14 shows that larger proportions of Home and Other EU male students than any other group were motivated by their interest in the subject, while Non EU students both male and female were far more motivated by improving their prospects for an academic/research career than Home or Other EU of either gender (over 40% of Non EU respondents chose this option compared to under 30% for all other categories).

#### 3.2.1.3 *Age*

Younger and older students were most motivated by an interest in the subject, while those in the middle age ranges (especially aged 30-40) were most motivated by improving academic/research career prospects; although for a career *outside* higher education the likelihood of selecting this option decreased with age. This pattern (the middle groups being most motivated by an academic career and younger being more motivated than older for a career outside HE) is also borne out by the anticipated career item (see Figure 3.16 below). In particular, those aged below 30 anticipated a research career outside higher education to a greater extent than those over 30 (20.7% and 17.7% for 25 years old or younger and 26-30, with 11.9% for 31-35 decreasing as the age range increases).

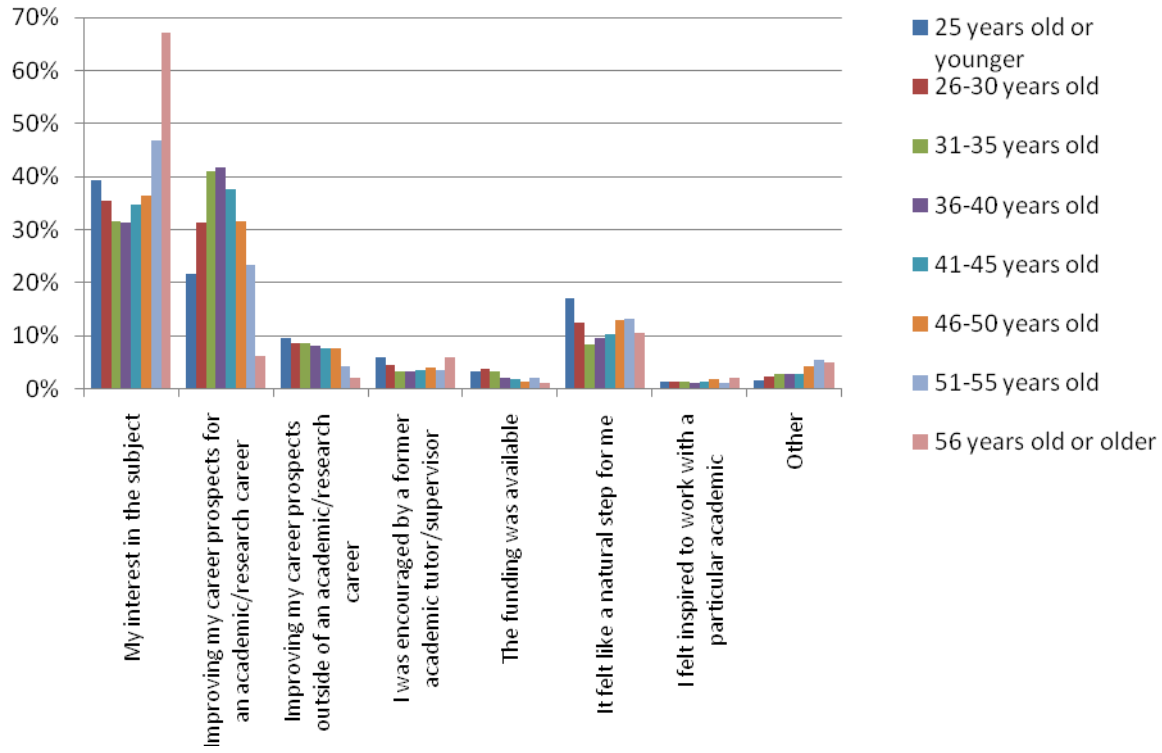


*Figure 3.15: Main motivation by age, Q19*

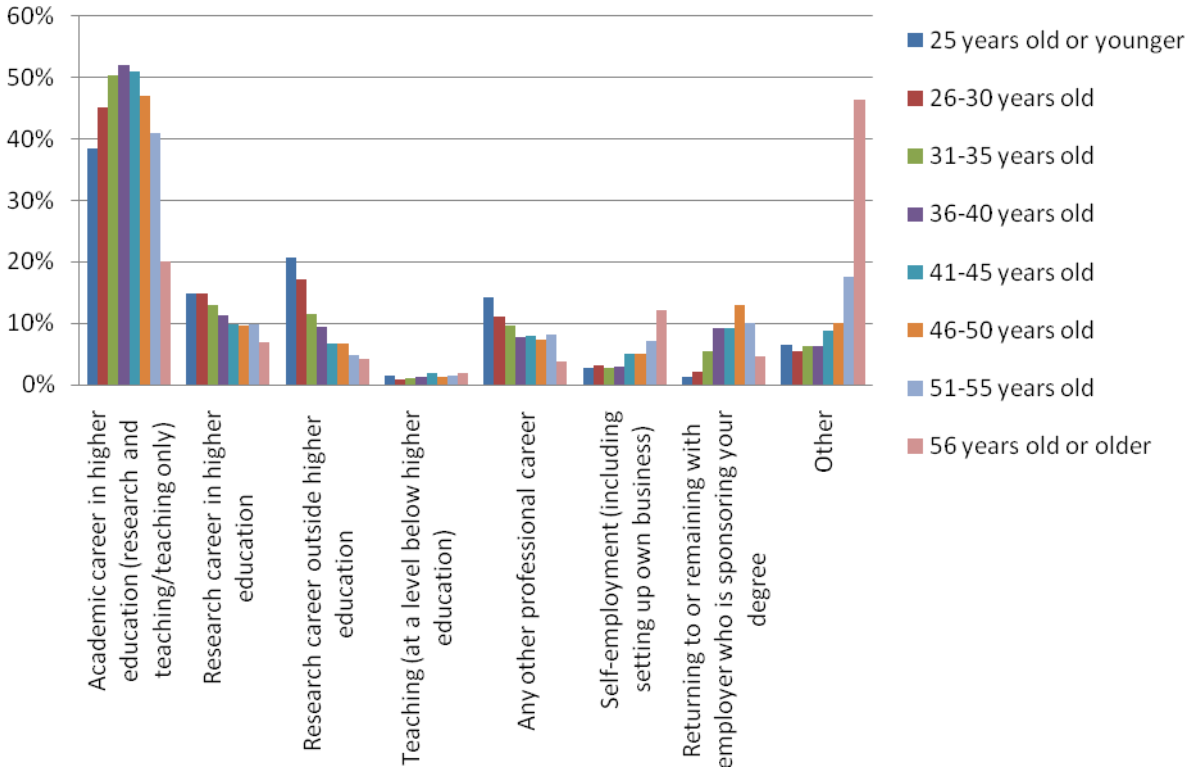


*Figure 3.16: Anticipated career by age, Q20*

### 3.2.2 Skills items

Q2 of PRES contains six items about skills development. As noted in Section 2.2.2, respondents are relatively positive about these items and it is the second highest scoring scale in PRES (as it has been in previous years). It is also a predictor of overall experience, although the lowest of the five scales that are predictors (see multiple regression analysis in Section 2.1.3).

As well as Q2, there are additional items in PRES that can be used to build up a picture of researchers' perceptions of their skills training. Items 9b and 9c ask about the importance that respondents attach to research and transferable skills respectively, while Q15b and Q15c ask about experience of research and transferable skills development relative to prior expectations. This section draws together these different items and provides demographic breakdowns by discipline, gender, age and source of funding.

### 3.2.2.1 *Discipline*

Figure 3.17 shows the scores for each item in the skills scale broken down by discipline.

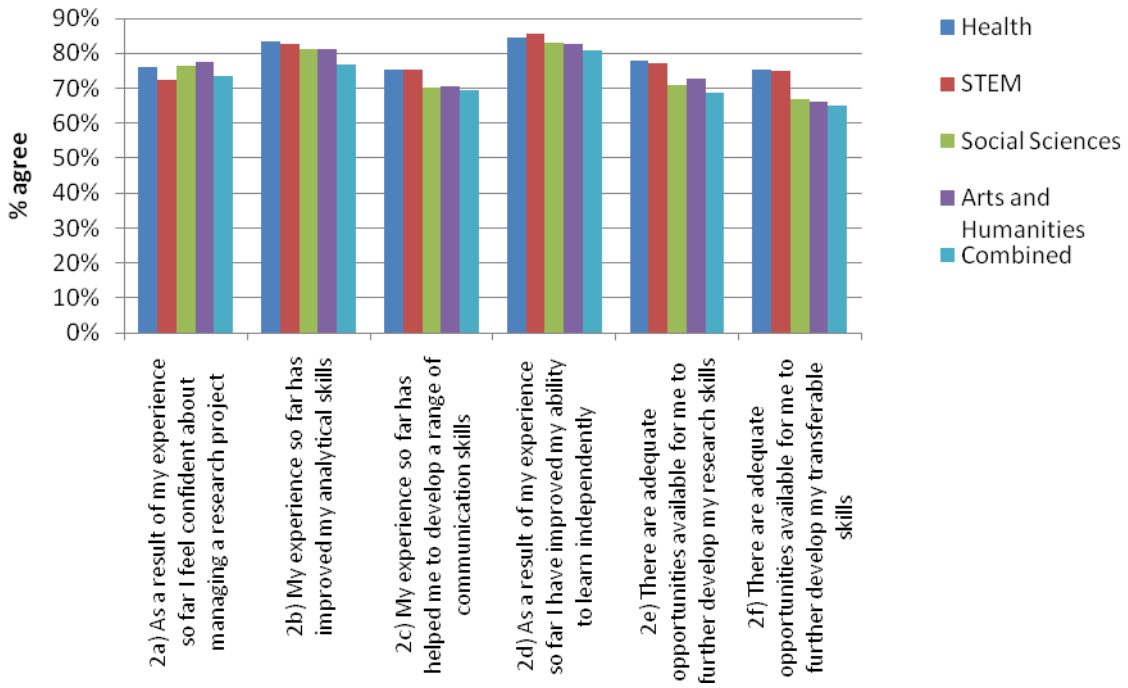


*Figure 3.17: Skills Development items by % agree by discipline area, Q2*

As can be seen, respondents from Health and STEM disciplines were more positive about skills development than those in Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities, or Combined disciplines. The least positive discipline, for all items, was Combined. For all discipline areas, the least positive item was Q2f ('there are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills'), although the proportion of respondents who agreed for that low-scoring item was still at least 5% higher for Health and STEM respondents than for Social Sciences, Arts & Humanities and Combined respondents. Those differences may reflect a greater emphasis on the vocational aspects of a research degree among Health and STEM students.

Figure 3.18 below shows the greater positivity of Health and STEM respondents towards research and transferable skills training in relation to experience versus expectations, although the difference is less marked than for Q2. Comparison between responses to Q15b and Q15c reveals that while the general level of positivity for the two items, measured by expectations met or exceeded, is roughly similar, this masks a clear difference in the distribution: a greater proportion of respondents had their expectations met by the transferable skills development than for research skills development. This is most striking in the case of Arts & Humanities: for that discipline, while the general level of positivity is similar for Q15b and Q15c (87% and 85% respectively for expectations met or exceeded), this masks a *difference* in expectations met of 9.1% (with Q15c being higher) and expectations exceeded of 11.1% (with Q15b being higher); in contrast, the difference in expectations not met was only 1.8% (with Q15c being higher).

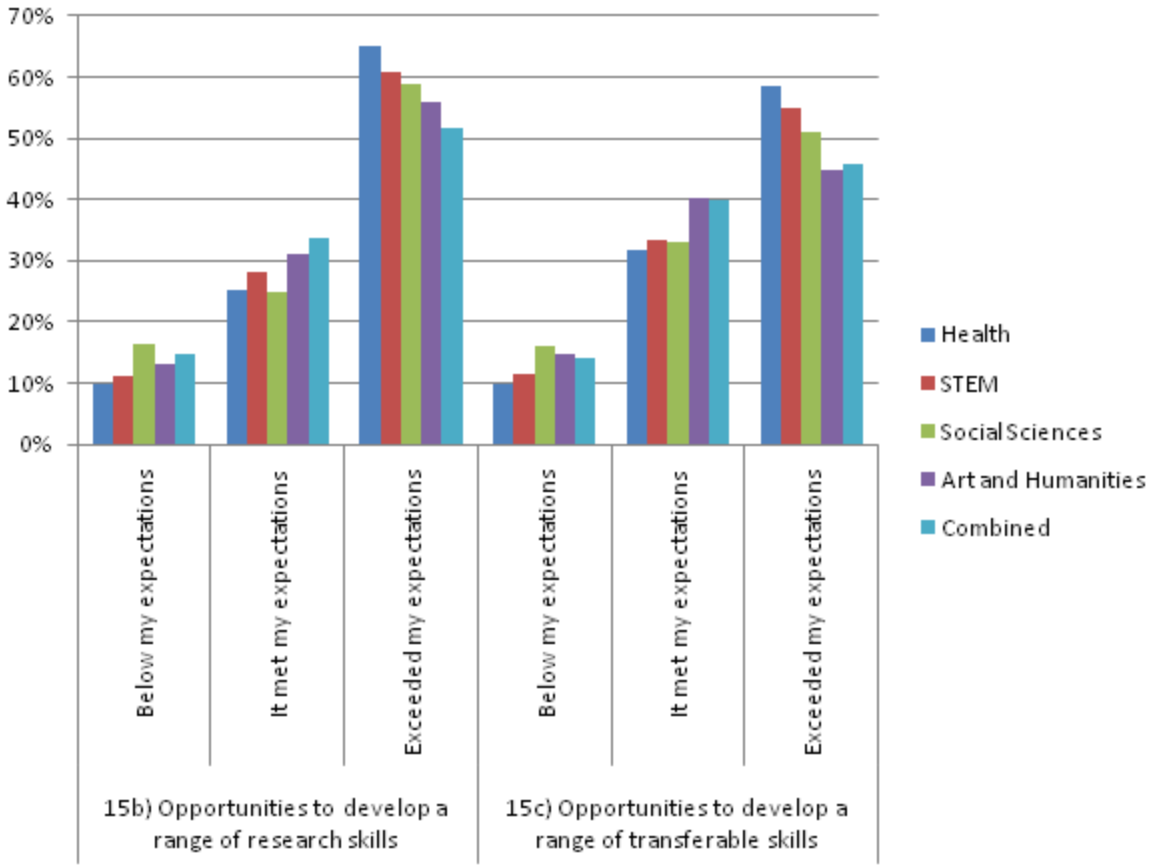


*Figure 3.18: Opportunities to develop a range of research and transferable skills by discipline, Q15b and Q15c*

It is interesting to disaggregate by discipline, and compare respondents' positivity about skills training with their perceptions of the importance of that training (Figure 3.19). Arts & Humanities students were the least convinced about the importance of skills development (both research and transferable). Mirroring their greater positivity, respondents from both Health and STEM subjects yielded the largest proportions deeming research skills development to be important (Q9b). For perceptions of the importance of *transferable* skills development (Q9c) the results are somewhat different. There is a general perception across all disciplines that the development of transferable skills is less important than the development of research skills; the proportion deeming them important was 19.4% lower for transferable than for research skills. As with research skills, students in Health disciplines felt most strongly that transferable skills development was important. Again, this is perhaps unsurprising given a greater emphasis on vocational issues for Health students. However, STEM students did not display the greater sense of importance of transferable skills that they displayed for research skills; their results were very similar to those of Social Sciences and Combined.

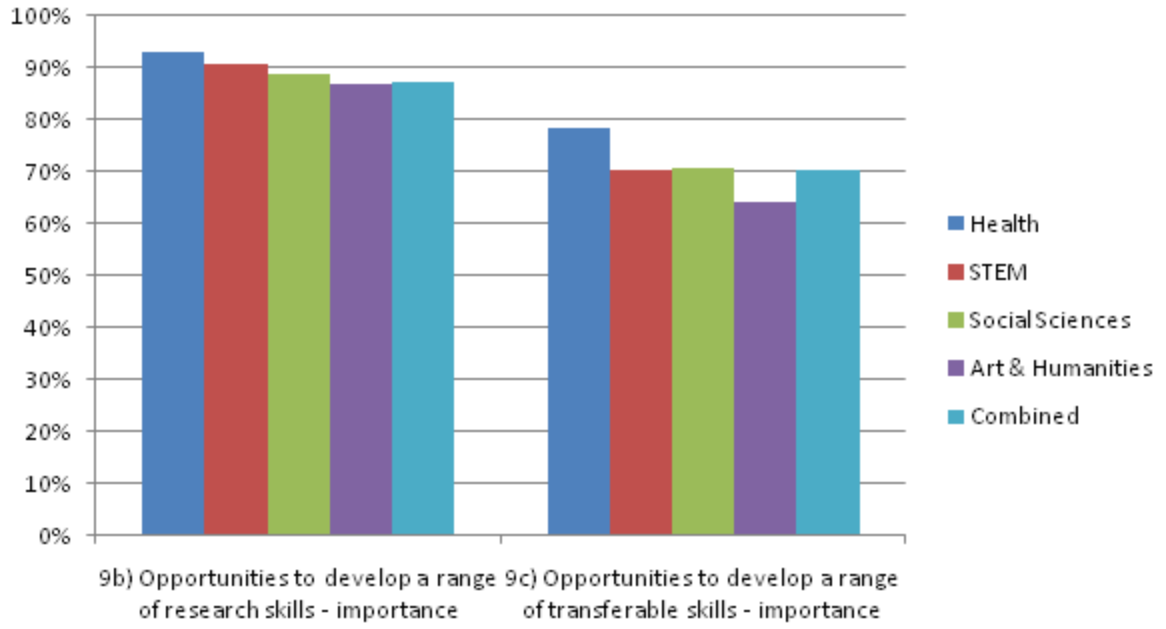


*Figure 3.19: Importance of developing a range of research and transferable skills by discipline, Q9b and Q9c*

#### 3.2.2.2 *Gender*

When looking at the Skills Development scale by gender, for most items there is no significant difference. There are, however, a number of areas where the perceptions of men and women differ in notable ways.

In response to Q2a, male respondents expressed greater confidence about managing a research project, with a % agree score 5.3% higher (72.0% for female versus 77.3% for male).

Female respondents attached a greater sense of importance to the development of transferable skills (Q9c) with an importance score 10.1% higher (65.1% for male versus 75.2% for female)[29]. However, there was no significant gender difference in positivity about available opportunities to develop transferable skills (Q2f), or in expectations met or exceeded (Q15c). This suggests that, despite the apparently greater importance placed on transferable skills by women, by and large they are equally as positive as male respondents about the training on offer.

[29] This difference is fairly consistent within each of the discipline groups, suggesting that the gender difference for Q9c is not a direct feature of discipline differences combined with disproportionate numbers of men and women within disciplines, as was the case with Q19, see Section 3.2.1.2.

#### 3.2.2.3 *Age*

Figure 3.20 below shows a breakdown of the percentages agreeing with the skills items by age group.

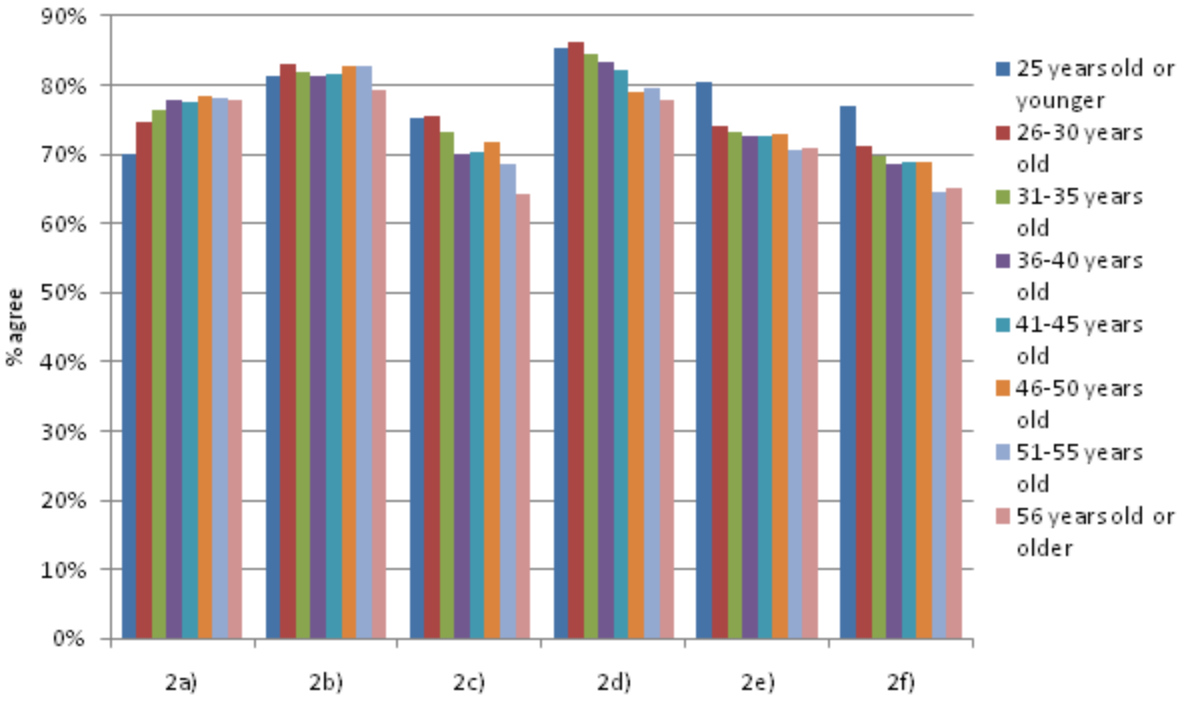


*Figure 3.20: Skills Development items by % agree by age, Q2*

In general, younger students were more likely to be positive about their skills development, except in response to Q2a ('as a result of my experience so far I feel confident about managing a research project'), for which those 25 years old or younger were markedly less positive than other groups (the difference ranging from 3% to 7%).

As Figure 3.21 below shows, the perceived importance of research skills training (Q9b) was roughly similar across all ages. However, there were clear age differences for transferable skills training (Q9c), with those in the middle age ranges feeling more strongly that such training is important. This is consistent with the motivation item (Q19, see Section 3.2.1.3), in which the middle age ranges were more motivated by improving academic/research career prospects (although no more motivated by improving non-academic/research career prospects).

The relatively low results for the younger age groups for Q9c perhaps help to explain the positive responses from younger students to Q2f. As the wording of Q2f ('there are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills') most directly addresses frequency rather than perceived quality of the opportunities, perhaps those for whom the development of transferable skills is less important are more likely to be satisfied with a lower number of opportunities available to them.

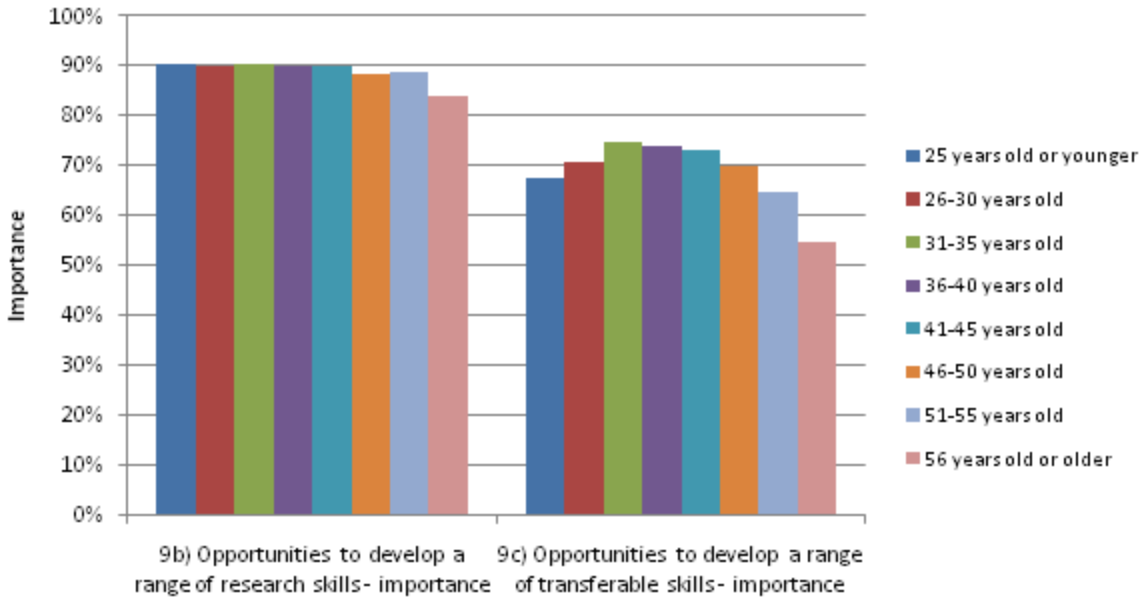


*Figure 3.21: Importance of opportunities to develop a range of research and transferable skills by age, Q9b and Q9c*

#### 3.2.2.4 *Source of funding*

Figure 3.22 below shows % agree on the skills development scale broken down into those with Research Councils UK funding and those without[30]. While the differences here do not qualify for the 5% cut-off for practical significance used elsewhere in Section 3, the findings have been included here because of the current interest in the impact of Roberts funding. Unlike students funded from most other sources, all RCUK-funded postgraduates have been required to undertake a certain amount of skills training[31] and so it is particularly interesting to see whether those students are more or less positive in response to the items about skills development. As anticipated, the % agree for RCUK-funded students is marginally higher for all of the items on the skills development scale except Q2a, which refers to running research projects. As might be expected given the emphasis on training provision for RCUK-funded students, the largest differences are for the items relating to the adequacy of opportunities, Q2e and Q2f.

[30] Comparisons for all funding types are not included as differences were statistically significant for only some of the items.

[31] See the RCUK Joint Skills Statement (2001). It has now been replaced by the *Researcher Development Framework*, see Vitae (2010).

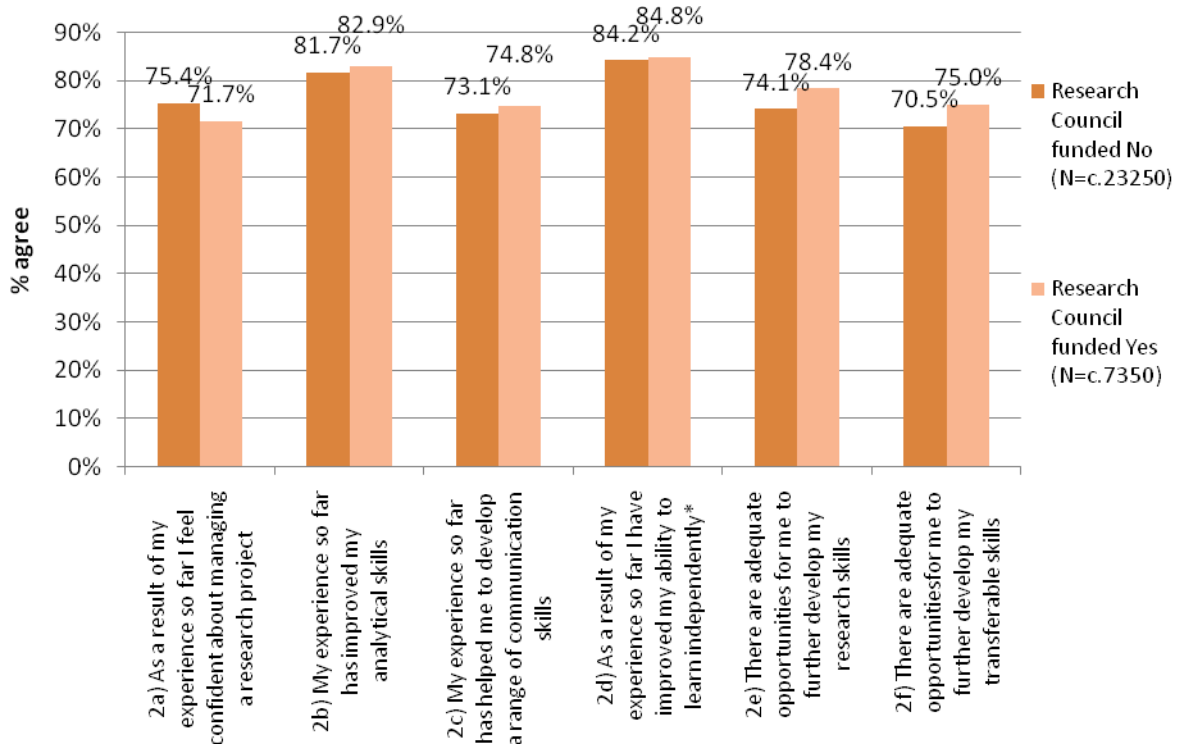


*Figure 3.22: Skills Development by % agree by source of funding, Q2*
*Difference not statistically significant.

In response to Q15b (experience versus expectations of research skills development) RCUK-funded students were less likely to say their expectations about research skills had been exceeded (3.9% difference); however, they were also less likely to say they were below expected (1.4%), and much more likely to say that their expectations had been met (5.3%). The pattern of higher levels of neutrality for RCUK-funded students is the same for the transferable skills item (Q15c).

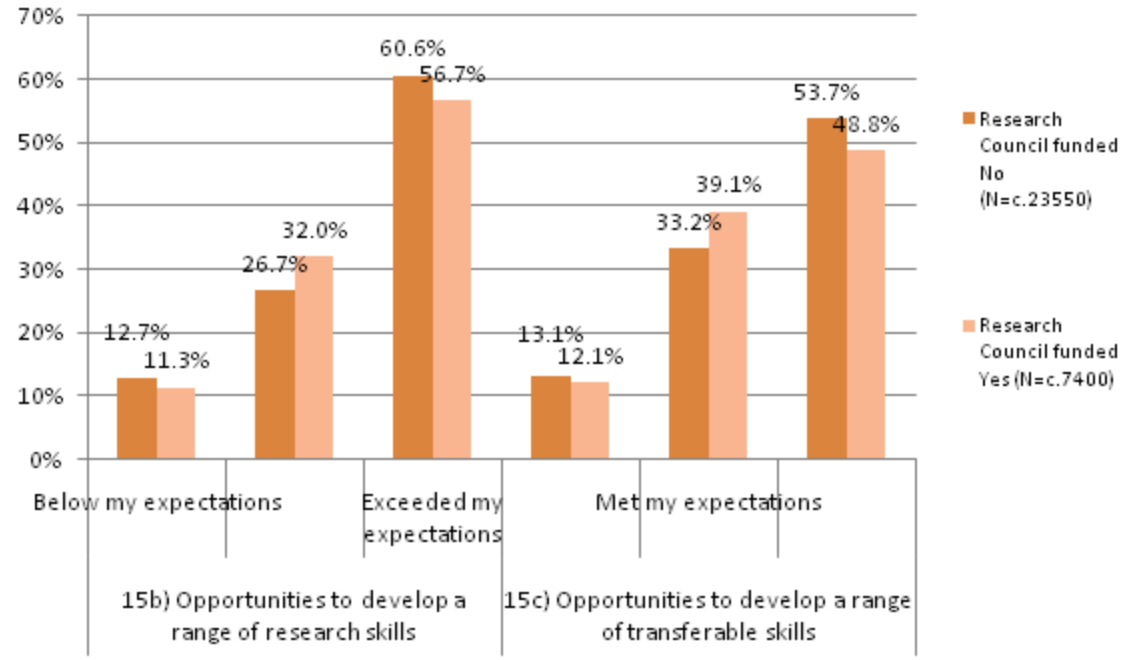


*Figure 3.23: Opportunities to develop a range of research and transferable skills by source of funding, Q15b and Q15c*

Attitudes towards the importance of opportunities to develop research skills did not differ for RCUK-funded students and other students. However, there was a marked difference in their attitudes towards the importance of opportunities to develop *transferable* skills, with the proportion of RCUK-funded students feeling that it is important being over 10% lower than for other students.

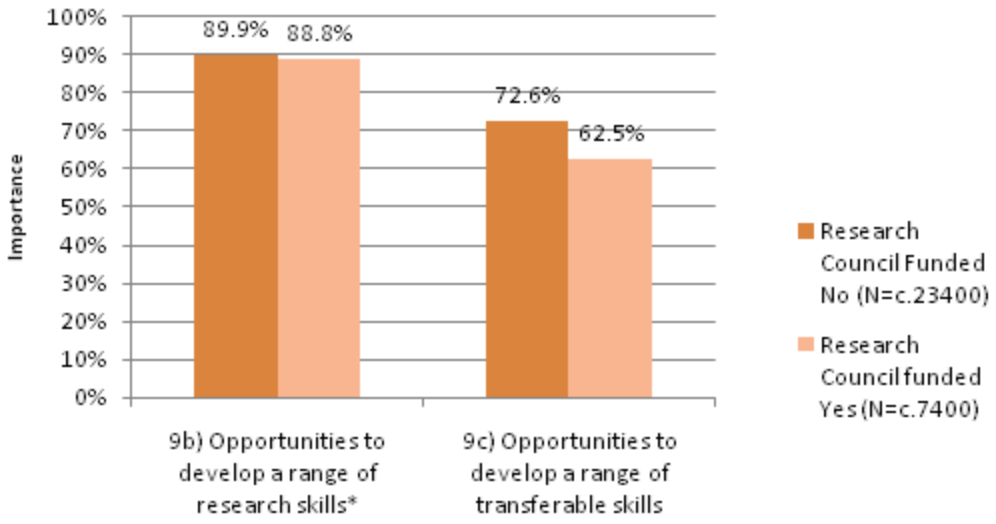


*Figure 3.24: Importance of opportunities to develop a range of research and transferable skills by source of funding, Q9b and Q9c*
*Difference not statistically significant.

### 3.2.3 Professional Development scale

#### 3.2.3.1 *Discipline*

As with the skills items (see Section 3.2.2.1), Health students are more positive than those in other disciplines about professional development opportunities, although all areas scored low across this scale (it is the least positive of all the scales in PRES (see Section 2.1.1)). There were particularly marked disciplinary differences for Q7b and Q7c, with Health scoring 5-7% and 5-8% respectively more than other areas. Again, this is perhaps to be expected given the more vocational nature of Health disciplines, although it is interesting that there is no significant difference between the responses from STEM, Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities students given the varied nature of career options in those disciplines.

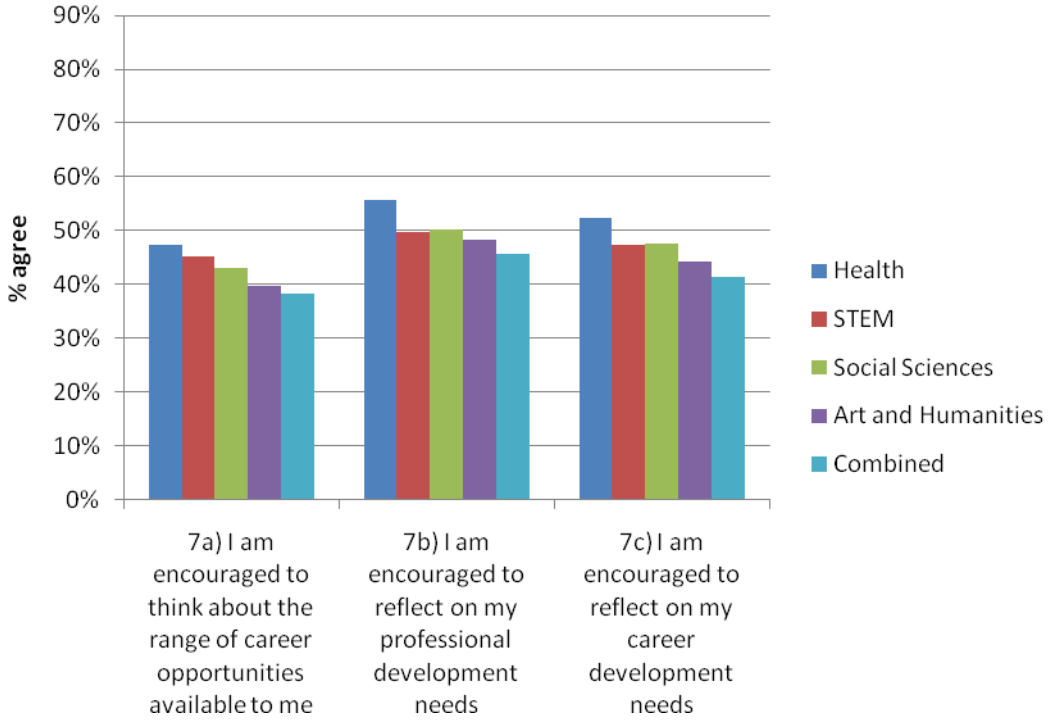


*Figure 3.25: Professional development items by % agree by discipline, Q7*

### 3.2.3.2 *Gender*

As can be seen in Figure 3.26, women were generally less positive than men about professional and career development. Most notably, their % agree score for Q7a, regarding encouragement to think about the range of available career opportunities, was 5.2% lower than the equivalent score for men[32].

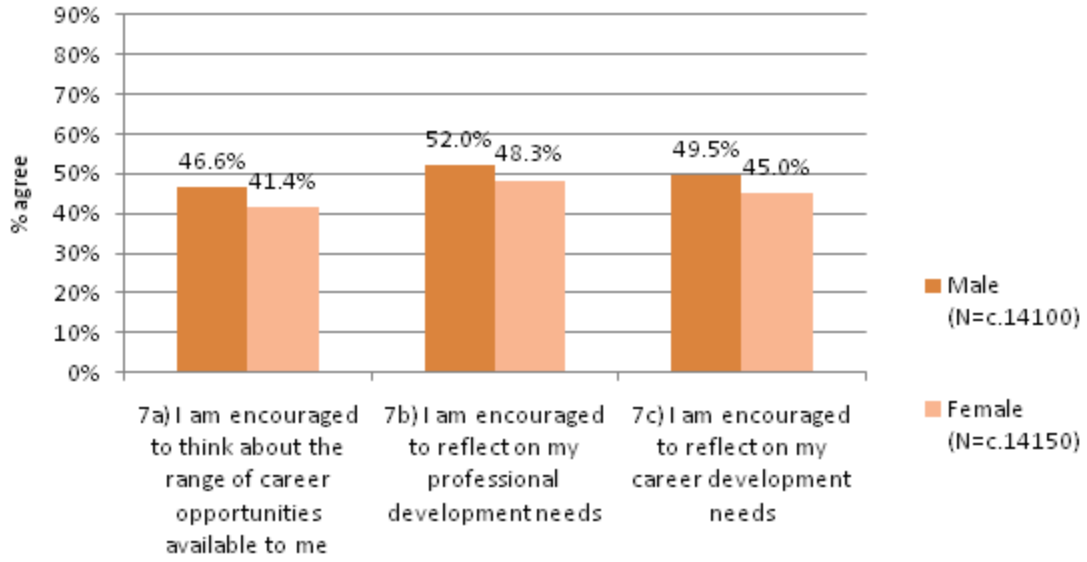


*Figure 3.26: Professional development items by % agree by gender, Q7*

[32] This gender difference was fairly consistent within discipline groups.

### 3.2.3.3 *Age*

As with the skills items (see Section 3.2.2.2) those in the middle age groups were more likely to agree with the professional development and career items than those under 30 or over 46. It could be hypothesised that given the higher importance that the middle age groups give to skills training, they are more proactive in seeking out advice and encouragement and thus more likely to be positive about the opportunities.

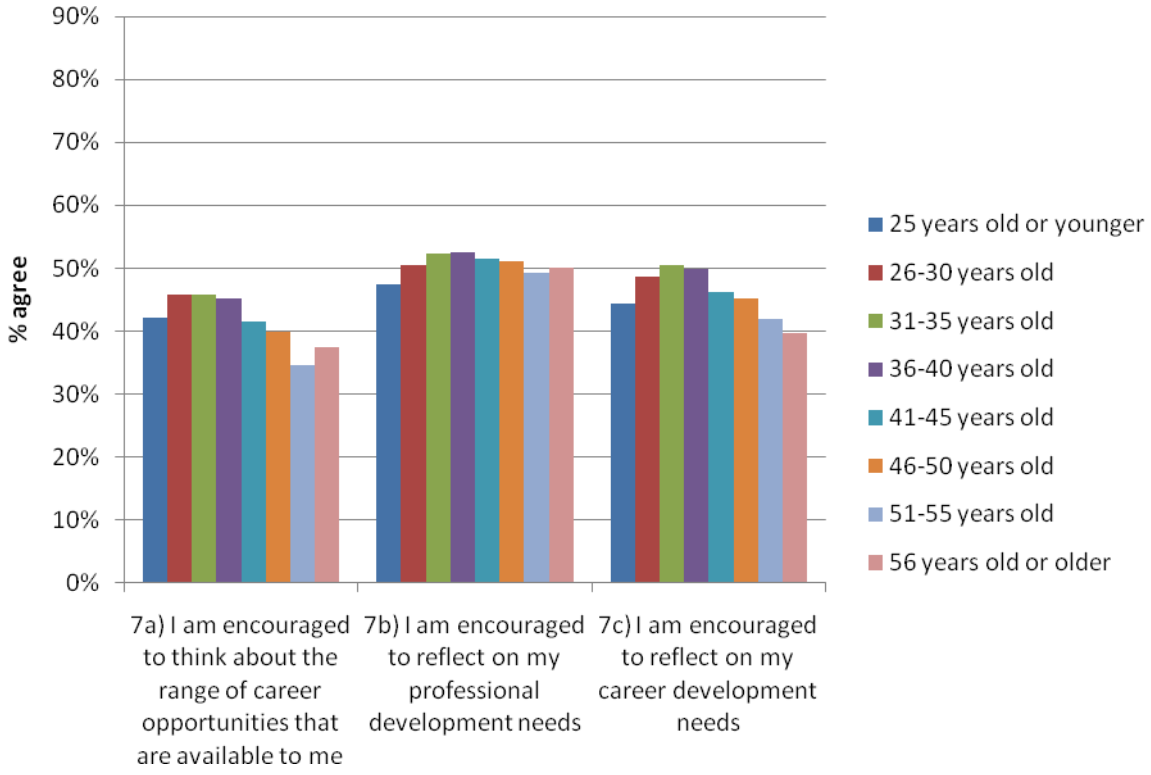


*Figure 3.27: Professional development items by % agree by age, Q7*

### 3.2.3.4 *Source of funding*

Responses for the Professional Development and Career scale when split into RCUK-funded and non-RCUK-funded yield interesting results. There are clear differences in % agree between the two groups, with RCUK-funded students significantly *less* in agreement with all three items than those who were not RCUK-funded. Given the targeted provision aimed at RCUK-funded students, it is striking that the proportions of respondents agreeing that they were encouraged to reflect on their career and professional development was 4.4% (Q7a), 7.6% (Q7b) and 6.5% (Q7c) *lower* for the group funded by RCUK than for the group that was not. This runs counter to the natural expectation, and is somewhat in tension with the results for the skills development items, where RCUK-funded students were generally more positive.

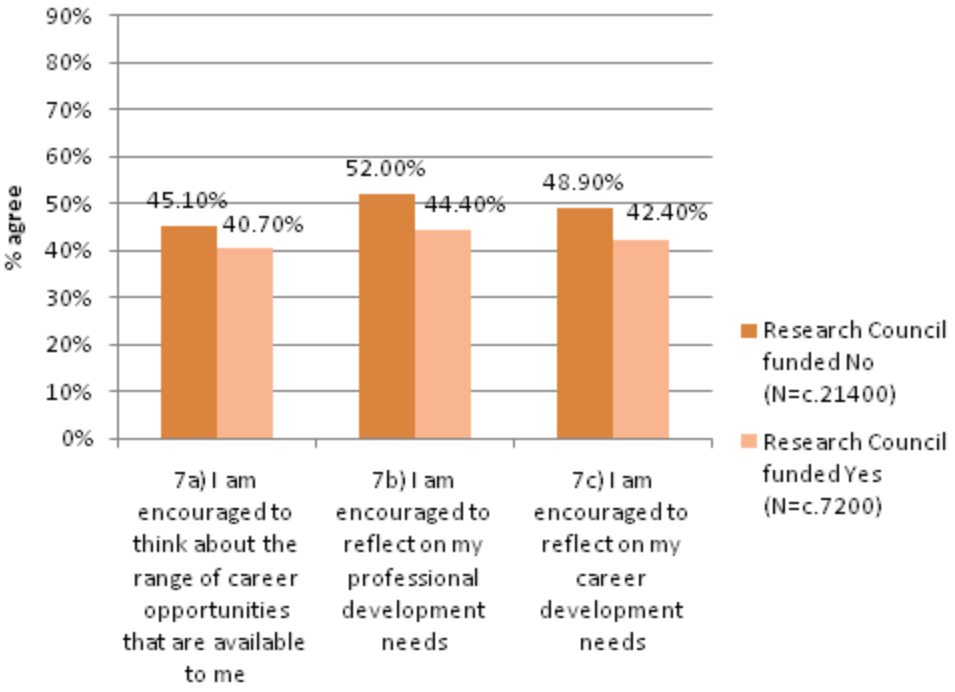


*Figure 3.28: Professional development items by % agree by source of funding, Q7*

# Conclusion

As the Smith report noted in March 2010, the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey is the primary source of data on postgraduate researchers' experiences in the UK[33]. This report has presented headline results from the 2011 survey, along with more detailed analysis in specific areas, in order to both provide an overall picture and to complement the institutional level data held by individual HEIs. These findings from PRES 2011 demonstrate that research students largely consider their experience to be a positive one: nearly nine out of ten (86%) of the students who took part in the 2011 survey rated their experience as having met or exceeded their expectations[34].

Perhaps more important than the simple level of positivity is the fact that PRES results are continuing to improve year-on-year. There are various possible explanations for this, most obviously an underlying improvement in the postgraduate research student experience as HEIs continue to develop facilities, policies and practices. It might also reflect rising awareness among research students in the value of providing feedback on their experiences[35].

This national report is a useful tool to help institutions to benchmark their own PRES results, and it is recommended that they use these top-level numbers, along with their own PRES data, as a starting point to explore the experiences of their own postgraduate researchers. Are they generally as positive as the national picture suggests about supervision? Are they as positive overall – and, even if they are, what of the 14% whose experiences were *below* their expectations? Are their motivations and career aspirations different, and what effect does that have on their perceptions of other aspects of their experience? Tailored internal surveys, focus groups, and general engagement with students and their representatives can all help to build a detailed picture of the experiences of postgraduate researchers within an institution, using these PRES results as a basis.

The Higher Education Academy will continue to run PRES on an alternate-yearly basis – so it will run again in 2012-13. 2011-12 will be an 'enhancement year', and the HEA will provide extensive support to institutions in analysing, interpreting and using their results to enhance their postgraduate research provision. Information about this activity will be available on the HEA's website throughout the coming months: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/postgraduate-enhancement.

[33] Smith *et al*. (2010), p. 37

[34] This is roughly in line with results from the National Student Survey (82% in 2010) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (88% in 2011).

[35] The apparent improvement in the 2011 results may also in part be a product of introducing the 'Not Applicable' option to a wider range of items, though analysis indicates that this is unlikely. See 'Introduction'.

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## Higher Education Academy resources

Copies of annual reports for PRES 2007, 2008, and 2009 are available for download from the HEA website: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/pres. The website also contains other useful resources, and details of upcoming enhancement events.

## Glossary of acronyms

BOS – Bristol Online Surveys

HEA – Higher Education Academy

HEI – higher education institution

HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency

PGR – postgraduate researcher

PRES – Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

PTES – Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

RCUK – Research Councils UK

# Appendix A

This appendix includes results for all non-demographic items in PRES 2011, and a table containing year-on-year comparisons.

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.a My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my research | 5.4% | 7.0% | 87.5% | 30923 |
| 1.b My supervisor/s make a real effort to understand any difficulties I face | 8.2% | 11.3% | 80.4% | 30830 |
| 1.c I have been given good guidance in topic selection and refinement by my supervisor/s | 9.3% | 12.9% | 77.8% | 30569 |
| 1.d I have received good guidance in my literature search from my supervisor/s | 11.5% | 18.0% | 70.4% | 30551 |
| 1.e My supervisor/s provide helpful feedback on my progress | 8.7% | 12.8% | 78.5% | 30679 |
| 1.f My supervisor/s are available when I need them | 8.7% | 12.1% | 79.2% | 30833 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2.a As a result of my experience so far I feel confident about managing a research project | 7.3% | 18.2% | 74.5% | 30795 |
| 2.b My experience so far has improved my analytical skills | 5.1% | 12.9% | 82.0% | 30724 |
| 2.c My experience so far has helped me to develop a range of communication skills | 7.0% | 19.5% | 73.5% | 30489 |
| 2.d As a result of my experience so far I have improved my ability to learn independently | 4.6% | 11.0% | 84.4% | 30563 |
| 2.e There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my research skills | 7.9% | 17.0% | 75.1% | 30630 |
| 2.f There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills | 8.0% | 20.3% | 71.6% | 30206 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.a I have adequate access to the equipment necessary for my research | 9.7% | 15.4% | 74.9% | 29578 |
| 3.b I have a suitable working space | 14.1% | 13.6% | 72.4% | 29373 |
| 3.c There is appropriate financial support for research activities | 22.9% | 19.7% | 57.4% | 28890 |
| 3.d There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities | 12.0% | 15.1% | 72.9% | 29779 |
| 3.e There is adequate provision of library facilities | 9.9% | 13.7% | 76.4% | 30261 |
| 3.f I have the technical support I need | 10.3% | 18.7% | 71.0% | 29404 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4.a My department provides opportunities for social contact with other research students | 14.8% | 20.0% | 65.1% | 30151 |
| 4.b My department provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture | 15.3% | 22.6% | 62.1% | 30162 |
| 4.c The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work | 17.9% | 23.9% | 58.2% | 29746 |
| 4.d I feel integrated into my department's community | 22.0% | 23.9% | 54.0% | 29933 |
| 4.e My department provides a good seminar programme for research students | 14.4% | 20.3% | 65.2% | 30013 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5.a I understand the required standard for the thesis | 8.2% | 16.8% | 75.0% | 30736 |
| 5.b I understand the standard of work expected | 7.1% | 14.4% | 78.5% | 30778 |
| 5.c I understand the requirements of thesis examination | 11.2% | 21.5% | 67.4% | 30496 |
| 5.d I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress | 8.6% | 14.9% | 76.5% | 30685 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6.a.i The thesis examination process was fair | 9.5% | 6.5% | 84.0% | 1392 |
| 6.a.ii The examination of my thesis was completed in a reasonable timescale | 13.0% | 8.8% | 78.2% | 1398 |
| 6.a.iii I was given adequate support and guidance in preparation for my viva voce | 16.1% | 12.4% | 71.4% | 1378 |
| 6.a.iv I was given adequate support and guidance to make any changes to my thesis following my viva voce | 11.7% | 10.9% | 77.4% | 1301 |

Note: There were 1,401 students (4.6%) who had sat their final viva.

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7.a I am encouraged to think about the range of career opportunities that are available to me | 25.5% | 30.5% | 43.9% | 28113 |
| 7.b I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs | 21.5% | 28.4% | 50.1% | 29046 |
| 7.c I am encouraged to reflect on my career development needs | 23.3% | 29.4% | 47.2% | 28660 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8.a I know who to approach, or where to find this out, if I am dissatisfied with any element of my research degree programme | 14.9% | 20.5% | 64.6% | 30677 |
| 8.b My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students | 14.6% | 28.2% | 57.3% | 29267 |
| 8.c I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student | 5.8% | 14.1% | 80.2% | 30742 |
| 8.d I am aware of my institution's responsibilities towards me as a research degree student | 13.1% | 24.1% | 62.8% | 30625 |

| | Not important | Neutral | Important | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9.a Supervisory support and guidance | 1.7% | 2.3% | 95.9% | 31009 |
| 9.b Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | 2.4% | 7.9% | 89.6% | 30958 |
| 9.c Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | 8.4% | 21.4% | 70.2% | 30913 |
| 9.d Access to appropriate facilities | 2.8% | 8.8% | 88.4% | 30928 |
| 9.e The research environment | 3.5% | 12.5% | 84.0% | 30847 |
| 9.f Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme | 4.9% | 18.5% | 76.7% | 30852 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10. I have had adequate opportunity to gain experience of teaching [e.g., lectures, seminars or workshops] whilst doing my research degree programme | 25.3% | 17.0% | 57.6% | 23959 |
| 11. I have been given adequate support and guidance for my teaching | 23.9% | 25.0% | 51.1% | 19786 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **12. I think the experience that I have gained through teaching has been a worthwhile aspect of my research degree programme** | 13.9% | 15.1% | 71.0% | 18619 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **14.a My friends and family are supportive of my research degree programme** | 3.7% | 7.4% | 88.9% | 30528 |
| **14.b My employer is supportive of my research degree programme** | 9.6% | 13.1% | 77.3% | 14838 |
| **14.c The financing of my research degree programme places a strain on my personal finances** | 34.1% | 17.4% | 48.4% | 27093 |

| | Below my expectations | Met my expectations | Exceeded my expectations | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **15.a Supervisory support and guidance** | 16.8% | 17.3% | 65.8% | 30966 |
| **15.b Opportunities to develop a range of research skills** | 12.3% | 28.0% | 59.7% | 30937 |
| **15.c Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills** | 12.9% | 34.6% | 52.6% | 30898 |
| **15.d Access to appropriate facilities** | 17.1% | 31.9% | 51.1% | 30899 |
| **15.e The research environment** | 19.6% | 28.2% | 52.2% | 30669 |
| **15.f Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme** | 20.2% | 40.2% | 39.6% | 30661 |
| **15.g Overall experience of my research programme** | 13.8% | 22.1% | 64.1% | 30814 |

| | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **16. I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme more or less within the planned timescale** | 10.1% | 16.7% | 73.3% | 29665 |

The following table shows score comparisons for all years of the survey. All scores are % agree except Q9 (importance) and Q15 (met or exceeded expectations).

| Item[a] | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2011 | Change 2007-2011 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1a** | 82.2% | 83.8% | 84.4% | 87.5% | 5.3% |
| **1b** | 73.0% | 75.1% | 76.0% | 80.4% | 7.4% |
| **1c** | 68.4% | 72.3% | 73.0% | 77.8% | 9.4% |
| **1d** | 62.1% | 64.0% | 64.8% | 70.4% | 8.3% |
| **1e** | 70.8% | 72.8% | 73.7% | 78.5% | 7.7% |
| **1f** | 71.7% | 74.0% | 74.7% | 79.2% | 7.5% |
| **2a** | 66.5% | 69.3% | 70.6% | 74.5% | 8.0% |
| **2b** | 74.2% | 78.0% | 78.3% | 82.0% | 7.8% |
| **2c** | 63.8% | 68.9% | 69.3% | 73.5% | 9.7% |
| **2d** | 80.1% | 80.5% | 80.8% | 84.4% | 4.3% |
| **2e** | 60.8% | 60.6% | 69.8% | 75.1% | 14.3% |
| **2f** | 57.9% | 58.0% | 64.9% | 71.6% | 13.7% |
| **3a** | 67.8% | 67.8% | 69.4% | 74.9% | 7.1% |
| **3b** | 64.1% | 64.8% | 66.0% | 72.4% | 8.3% |
| **3c** | 44.6% | 51.2% | 51.8% | 57.4% | 12.8% |
| **3d** | 66.0% | 65.7% | 67.8% | 72.9% | 6.9% |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3e** | 66.3% | 70.1% | 71.1% | 76.4% | 10.1% |
| **3f** | 59.1% | 61.8% | 63.9% | 71.0% | 11.9% |
| **4a** | 53.4% | 57.2% | 59.1% | 65.1% | 11.7% |
| **4b** | 52.0% | 55.2% | 56.7% | 62.1% | 10.1% |
| **4c** | 49.3% | 49.9% | 52.6% | 58.2% | 8.9% |
| **4d** | 49.0% | 46.4% | 49.1% | 54.0% | 5.0% |
| **4e** | 57.2% | 58.5% | 59.9% | 65.2% | 8.0% |
| **5a** | 69.2% | 69.4% | 70.2% | 75.0% | 5.8% |
| **5b** | 75.8% | 72.6% | 73.6% | 78.5% | 2.7% |
| **5c** | 61.4% | 60.7% | 61.9% | 67.4% | 6.0% |
| **5d** | 73.9% | 71.0% | 71.6% | 76.5% | 2.6% |
| **6a(i)** | 82.2% | 80.4% | 77.9% | 84.0% | 1.8% |
| **6a(ii)** | 77.1% | 75.2% | 76.4% | 78.2% | 1.1% |
| **6a(iii)** | 61.8% | 63.5% | 61.6% | 71.4% | 9.6% |
| **6a(iv)** | 70.7% | 73.8% | 66.9% | 77.4% | 6.7% |
| **7a** | 37.6% | 34.8% | 37.1% | 43.9% | 6.3% |
| **7b** | 47.5% | 44.3% | 43.3% | 50.1% | 2.6% |
| **7c** | 38.3% | 39.6% | 39.9% | 47.2% | 8.9% |
| **8a** | 58.9% | 54.2% | 61.8% | 64.6% | 5.7% |
| **8b** | 47.8% | 45.5% | 51.3% | 57.3% | 9.5% |
| **8c** | 77.6% | 76.9% | 75.5% | 80.2% | 2.6% |
| **8d** | 47.3% | 56.2% | 59.2% | 62.8% | 15.5% |
| **9a** | 95.3% | 95.7% | 95.6% | 95.9% | 0.6% |
| **9b** | 88.1% | 91.3% | 89.2% | 89.6% | 1.5% |
| **9c** | 67.6% | 74.3% | 69.6% | 70.2% | 2.6% |
| **9d** | 89.1% | 90.1% | 88.1% | 88.4% | -0.7% |
| **9e** | 83.7% | 87.3% | 83.8% | 84.0% | 0.3% |
| **9f** | 74.2% | 78.1% | 76.3% | 76.7% | 2.5% |
| **10**[b] | | 47.5% | 49.4% | 57.6% | 10.1% |
| **11** | 40.4% | 42.7% | 45.9% | 51.1% | 10.7% |
| **12** | 61.1% | 62.0% | 64.6% | 71.0% | 9.9% |
| **14a** | 87.5% | 87.0% | 88.6% | 88.9% | 1.4% |
| **14b** | 71.9% | 74.0% | 74.0% | 77.3% | 5.4% |
| **14c**[b] | | 50.0% | 50.4% | 48.4% | -1.6% |
| **15a** | 77.3% | 79.0% | 79.7% | 83.1% | 5.8% |
| **15b** | 83.6% | 82.9% | 85.9% | 87.7% | 4.1% |
| **15c** | 81.9% | 82.4% | 84.8% | 87.2% | 5.3% |
| **15d** | 78.2% | 78.2% | 80.5% | 83.0% | 4.8% |
| **15e** | 74.2% | 75.4% | 77.1% | 80.4% | 6.2% |
| **15f** | 73.1% | 75.8% | 77.1% | 79.8% | 6.7% |
| **15g** | 80.7% | 82.5% | 83.9% | 86.2% | 5.5% |
| **16** | 65.2% | 67.0% | 68.6% | 73.3% | 8.1% |

[a] The item number refer to the PRES 2011 questionnaire. In some cases the number of the item in previous years may be different.

[b] This item was not introduced until PRES 2008. For this item, the number in the 'Change 2007-2011' column is the change from 2008.

# APPENDIX B

This appendix contains tables that supplement the detailed analysis in Section 3 of the report. Tables have been included where the charts in Section 3 do not include data labels.

*Table B1: Scales by disability type, by mean response*

| | Supervision* | Skills development | Infrastructure* | Intellectual climate | Goals & standards | Professional development & career |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Social/communication impairment e.g. Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder | 4.01 | 3.78 | 3.78 | 3.54 | 3.84 | 3.18 |
| Blind/serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses | 4.17 | 3.86 | 3.72 | 3.44 | 3.89 | 3.03 |
| Deaf/serious hearing impairment | 4.25 | 4.23 | 3.92 | 3.74 | 4.09 | 2.95 |
| Long-standing illness or health condition e.g. cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy | 4.07 | 4.02 | 3.76 | 3.53 | 3.95 | 3.08 |
| Mental health condition, e.g. depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder | 3.96 | 3.78 | 3.75 | 3.37 | 3.73 | 2.94 |
| Specific learning difficulty e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, or AD(H)D | 4.03 | 4.01 | 3.76 | 3.65 | 3.79 | 3.18 |
| Physical impairment or mobility issues, e.g. difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches | 4.19 | 4.09 | 3.65 | 3.51 | 4.00 | 3.19 |
| A disability, impairment or medical condition not listed above | 3.98 | 3.83 | 3.59 | 3.38 | 3.78 | 3.01 |
| Two or more impairments and/or disabling mental conditions | 3.96 | 3.89 | 3.45 | 3.37 | 3.68 | 2.67 |
| Overall average | 4.04 | 3.94 | 3.71 | 3.51 | 3.83 | 3.06 |

* Differences for these scales are not statistically significant.

*Table B2: Scales by country group, by mean response*

| | UK | Other EU | Africa | Asia | Middle East | North America | Overall average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Supervision | 4.15 | 4.18 | 4.3 | 4.32 | 4.20 | 4.23 | 4.19 |
| Skills development | 4.06 | 4.08 | 4.26 | 4.11 | 4.06 | 4.13 | 4.08 |
| Infrastructure | 3.92 | 3.93 | 4.00 | 3.95 | 3.81 | 3.70 | 3.91 |
| Intellectual climate | 3.65 | 3.67 | 3.69 | 3.76 | 3.54 | 3.60 | 3.66 |
| Goals and standards | 3.91 | 4.01 | 4.10 | 4.05 | 3.91 | 3.94 | 3.95 |
| Thesis examination | 4.10 | 4.23 | 4.29 | 4.33 | 3.85 | 3.78 | 4.13 |
| Professional development & career | 3.22 | 3.34 | 3.65 | 3.58 | 3.36 | 3.31 | 3.31 |

*Table B3: Q15 by normal place of residence for fees purposes, by expectations met or exceeded*

| | Home | Other EU | Non EU |
|---|---|---|---|
| | N= c.18000* | N=c.3700 | N=c.8750 |
| 15a) Supervisory support and guidance | 82.1% | 79.5% | 87.0% |
| 15b) Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | 88.1% | 85.8% | 87.6% |
| 15c) Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | 87.6% | 86.2% | 86.7% |
| 15d) Access to appropriate facilities | 82.7% | 81.3% | 84.0% |
| 15e) The research environment | 79.7% | 77.9% | 82.8% |
| 15f) Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme | 77.7% | 78.6% | 84.7% |
| 15g) Overall experience of my research programme | 85.5% | 84.7% | 88.4% |

* The N is approximate as there are small differences in the number of respondents for each item within the group. The same is true below whenever items are grouped within tables.

*Table B4: Q19 by discipline area*

| | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Arts and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=3239 | N=15212 | N=5084 | N=5556 | N=731 | |
| My interest in the subject | 28.2% | 36.4% | 34.8% | 43.5% | 40.8% | 36.7% |
| Improving my career prospects for an academic/research career | 37.4% | 27.7% | 35.7% | 30.2% | 26.1% | 30.6% |
| Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career | 11.5% | 10.0% | 7.7% | 3.4% | 5.3% | 8.5% |
| I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor | 4.0% | 4.9% | 4.2% | 4.4% | 4.0% | 4.6% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The funding was available | 2.1% | 3.2% | 3.4% | 2.8% | 4.0% | 3.1% |
| It felt like a natural step for me | 12.8% | 13.8% | 10.4% | 11.8% | 13.5% | 12.8% |
| I felt inspired to work with a particular academic | 1.3% | 1.5% | 1.2% | 1.3% | 1.0% | 1.4% |
| Other | 2.6% | 2.4% | 2.7% | 2.6% | 5.3% | 2.6% |

*Table B5: Q20 by discipline area*

| | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Arts and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=3226 | N= 15139 | N=5065 | N=5505 | N=724 | |
| Academic career in higher education (research and teaching/teaching only) | 37.1% | 36.4% | 55.6% | 59.6% | 45.0% | 44.3% |
| Research career in higher education | 16.4% | 16.8% | 8.2% | 7.2% | 12.7% | 13.4% |
| Research career outside higher education | 12.5% | 20.3% | 10.9% | 4.5% | 12.7% | 14.8% |
| Teaching (at a level below higher education) | 0.3% | 1.1% | 0.8% | 2.5% | 1.1% | 1.2% |
| Any other professional career | 13.7% | 12.5% | 8.9% | 6.3% | 8.3% | 10.8% |
| Self-employment (including setting up own business) | 2.0% | 3.4% | 4.3% | 3.7% | 4.4% | 3.5% |
| Returning to or remaining with employer who is sponsoring your degree | 7.7% | 3.6% | 4.3% | 3.9% | 3.3% | 4.2% |
| Other | 10.2% | 5.9% | 6.9% | 12.2% | 12.4% | 7.9% |

*Table B6: Q19 by normal place of residence for fees purposes, and gender*

| | Home | | Other EU | | Non EU | | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female | |
| | N=8479 | N=9371 | N=1766 | N=1945 | N=4917 | N=3870 | |
| My interest in the subject | 41.7% | 35.8% | 38.9% | 34.6% | 34.2% | 31.7% | 36.8% |
| Improving my career prospects for an academic/research career | 23.6% | 27.9% | 24.6% | 30.0% | 41.0% | 41.9% | 30.5% |
| Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career | 9.1% | 8.5% | 9.2% | 7.3% | 8.2% | 6.7% | 8.4% |
| I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor | 4.7% | 6.4% | 3.3% | 4.2% | 2.5% | 3.0% | 4.5% |
| The funding was available | 2.9% | 3.0% | 2.7% | 2.2% | 3.2% | 3.6% | 3.0% |
| It felt like a natural step for me | 14.1% | 13.7% | 16.5% | 17.9% | 7.8% | 9.7% | 12.8% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I felt inspired to work with a particular academic | 1.3% | 1.3% | 1.8% | 1.6% | 1.4% | 1.7% | 1.4% |
| Other | 2.6% | 3.4% | 3.0% | 2.2% | 1.7% | 1.8% | 2.6% |

*Table B7: Q19 by age*

| | 25 years old or youn-ger | 26-30 years old | 31-35 years old | 36-40 years old | 41-45 years old | 46-50 years old | 51-55 years old | 56 years old or older | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= 8233 | N= 10068 | N= 4793 | N= 2656 | N= 1883 | N= 1337 | N= 888 | N=974 | |
| My interest in the subject | 39.3% | 35.5% | 31.5% | 31.3% | 34.7% | 36.4% | 46.8% | 67.1% | 36.9% |
| Improving my career prospects for an academic/research career | 21.6% | 31.3% | 41.1% | 41.8% | 37.7% | 31.6% | 23.3% | 6.1% | 30.5% |
| Improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career | 9.5% | 8.7% | 8.6% | 8.2% | 7.6% | 7.6% | 4.3% | 2.2% | 8.4% |
| I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor | 6.0% | 4.5% | 3.2% | 3.2% | 3.5% | 4.0% | 3.5% | 5.9% | 4.5% |
| The funding was available | 3.4% | 3.7% | 3.2% | 2.0% | 1.9% | 1.3% | 2.0% | 1.0% | 3.1% |
| It felt like a natural step for me | 17.1% | 12.6% | 8.3% | 9.5% | 10.2% | 12.9% | 13.3% | 10.6% | 12.7% |
| I felt inspired to work with a particular academic | 1.3% | 1.3% | 1.3% | 1.2% | 1.4% | 1.9% | 1.2% | 2.2% | 1.4% |
| Other | 1.7% | 2.3% | 2.9% | 2.9% | 2.9% | 4.2% | 5.5% | 5.0% | 2.6% |

*Table B8: Q20 by age*

| | 25 years old or youn-ger | 26-30 years old | 31-35 years old | 36-40 years old | 41-45 years old | 46-50 years old | 51-55 years old | 56 years old or older | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= 8176 | N= 10039 | N= 4772 | N= 2646 | N= 1871 | N= 1329 | N=878 | N=928 | |
| Academic career in HE (research and teaching/teaching only) | 38.4% | 45.2% | 50.3% | 52.1% | 50.9% | 46.9% | 40.9% | 20.0% | 44.3% |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research career in HE | 14.8% | 14.9% | 13.0% | 11.2% | 9.9% | 9.7% | 9.8% | 7.0% | 13.4% |
| Research career outside HE | 20.7% | 17.2% | 11.6% | 9.4% | 6.7% | 6.7% | 4.9% | 4.2% | 14.8% |
| Teaching (at a level below HE) | 1.4% | 0.9% | 1.0% | 1.2% | 1.8% | 1.3% | 1.5% | 1.9% | 1.2% |
| Any other professional career | 14.2% | 11.1% | 9.6% | 7.7% | 7.9% | 7.4% | 8.2% | 3.7% | 10.7% |
| Self-employment (including setting up own business) | 2.7% | 3.1% | 2.7% | 3.0% | 5.0% | 5.0% | 7.2% | 12.1% | 3.5% |
| Returning to or remaining with employer sponsoring your degree | 1.3% | 2.1% | 5.4% | 9.2% | 9.2% | 12.9% | 10.0% | 4.7% | 4.2% |
| Other | 6.5% | 5.4% | 6.3% | 6.2% | 8.7% | 10.1% | 17.5% | 46.3% | 7.9% |

*Table B9: Q2 by discipline area, by % agree*

| | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Arts and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=c.3200 | N=c.15100 | N=c.5000 | N=c.5400 | N=c.700 | |
| 2a) As a result of my experience so far I feel confident about managing a research project | 76.0% | 72.4% | 76.3% | 77.4% | 73.4% | 74.5% |
| 2b) My experience so far has improved my analytical skills | 83.4% | 82.7% | 81.1% | 81.4% | 76.9% | 82.1% |
| 2c) My experience so far has helped me to develop a range of communication skills | 75.4% | 75.5% | 70.2% | 70.5% | 69.6% | 73.5% |
| 2d) As a result of my experience so far I have improved my ability to learn independently | 84.7% | 85.6% | 83.2% | 82.6% | 80.8% | 84.4% |
| 2e) There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my research skills | 77.8% | 77.3% | 71.0% | 72.8% | 68.6% | 75.2% |
| 2f) There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills | 75.2% | 74.9% | 66.9% | 66.1% | 65.1% | 71.7% |

*Table B10: Q15b by discipline group*

| 15b) Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Art and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=3223 | N=15191 | N=5075 | N=5548 | N=729 | |
| Below my expectations | 9.9% | 11.1% | 16.3% | 13.1% | 14.7% | 12.3% |
| Met my expectations | 25.1% | 28.2% | 24.9% | 31.2% | 33.6% | 28.0% |
| Above my expectations | 65.1% | 60.7% | 58.9% | 55.8% | 51.8% | 59.7% |

*Table B11: Q15c by discipline group*

| 15c) Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Art and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=3226 | N=15182 | N=5062 | N=5528 | N=729 | |
| Below my expectations | 9.7% | 11.6% | 16.1% | 14.9% | 14.2% | 12.9% |
| Met my expectations | 31.6% | 33.5% | 32.9% | 40.3% | 39.8% | 34.6% |
| Above my expectations | 58.5% | 54.9% | 51.0% | 44.7% | 45.9% | 52.6% |

*Table B12: Q9b and Q9c by discipline group, by importance*

| | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Art and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= c.3200 | N= c.15200 | N=c.5050 | N=c.5550 | N=c.750 | |
| 9b) Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | 93.1% | 90.5% | 88.6% | 86.7% | 87.4% | 89.6% |
| 9c) Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | 78.2% | 70.4% | 70.6% | 64.2% | 70.1% | 70.2% |

*Table B13: Q2 by age, by % agree*

| | 25 years old or younger | 26-30 years old | 31-35 years old | 36-40 years old | 41-45 years old | 46-50 years old | 51-55 years old | 56 years old or older | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= c.8150 | N= c.10000 | N= c.4700 | N= c.2600 | N= c.1850 | N= c.1300 | N=c.850 | N=c.900 | |
| 2a) As a result of my experience so far I feel confident about managing a research project | 70.1% | 74.8% | 76.5% | 77.7% | 77.6% | 78.4% | 78.2% | 77.8% | 74.5% |
| 2b) My experience so far has improved my analytical skills | 81.3% | 83.1% | 81.9% | 81.2% | 81.5% | 82.9% | 82.9% | 79.2% | 82.0% |
| 2c) My experience so far has helped me to develop a range of communication skills | 75.2% | 75.4% | 73.2% | 70.1% | 70.3% | 71.8% | 68.5% | 64.2% | 73.5% |
| 2d) As a result of my experience so far I have improved my ability to learn independently | 85.4% | 86.1% | 84.4% | 83.3% | 82.1% | 79.0% | 79.7% | 77.7% | 84.4% |
| 2e) There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my research skills | 80.5% | 74.1% | 73.1% | 72.5% | 72.7% | 72.9% | 70.7% | 70.8% | 75.1% |
| 2f) There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills | 76.9% | 71.2% | 69.8% | 68.5% | 68.9% | 69.0% | 64.4% | 65.0% | 71.6% |

*Table B14: Q9b and Q9c by age, by importance*

| | 25 years old or younger | 26-30 years old | 31-35 years old | 36-40 years old | 41-45 years old | 46-50 years old | 51-55 years old | 56 years old or older | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= c.8200 | N= c.10050 | N= c.4800 | N= c.2650 | N= c.1850 | N= c.1350 | N=c.900 | N=c.950 | |
| 9b) Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | 90.2% | 89.7% | 90.4% | 89.8% | 89.9% | 88.3% | 88.8% | 83.7% | 89.6% |
| 9c) Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | 67.5% | 70.7% | 74.6% | 74.0% | 73.2% | 70.0% | 64.8% | 54.5% | 70.2% |

*Table B15: Q7 by discipline group, by % agree*

| | Health | STEM | Social Sciences | Art and Humanities | Combined | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N=c.2900 | N= c.14500 | N= c.4600 | N=c.4800 | N=650 | |
| 7a) I am encouraged to think about the range of career opportunities available to me | 47.4% | 45.1% | 43.1% | 39.7% | 38.3% | 43.9% |
| 7b) I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs | 55.7% | 49.8% | 50.2% | 48.2% | 45.6% | 50.1% |
| 7c) I am encouraged to reflect on my career development needs | 52.4% | 47.4% | 47.5% | 44.2% | 41.4% | 47.2% |

*Table B16: Q7 by age, by % agree*

| | 25 years old or younger | 26-30 years old | 31-35 years old | 36-40 years old | 41-45 years old | 46-50 years old | 51-55 years old | 56 years old or older | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N= c.8050 | N= c.9700 | N= c.4450 | N= c.2400 | N= c.1600 | N= c.1100 | N= c.650 | N= c.450 | |
| 7a) I am encouraged to think about the range of career opportunities that are available to me | 42.2% | 45.9% | 45.8% | 45.1% | 41.6% | 39.9% | 34.6% | 37.4% | 43.9% |
| 7b) I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs | 47.4% | 50.4% | 52.4% | 52.5% | 51.6% | 51.1% | 49.2% | 50.1% | 50.1% |
| 7c) I am encouraged to reflect on my career development needs | 44.4% | 48.6% | 50.4% | 49.8% | 46.3% | 45.1% | 42.0% | 39.7% | 47.2% |

# APPENDIX C

## Postgraduate Research Experience Survey – PRES 2011

**Welcome**

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is run by the Higher Education Academy together with your institution, to ask about your experiences of your research degree programme. Surveys of this nature provide universities with information that they can use to improve the experience of postgraduate research students. The overall aim of the survey is to identify, at both a local and national level, areas where improvements could be made and efforts targeted to further enhance research degree programmes.

This is the fourth nationwide administration of PRES, which ran for three successive years between 2007 and 2009. You can download a report that summarises the results for these three years from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduate/pres. This fourth administration of PRES is likely to include more than 90 participating institutions.

The survey is divided into several short sections:
The first eight sections ask about your experience of your research degree programme including supervision, infrastructure, professional development and career. Section nine asks you to make an overall evaluation of your experience on five broader aspects of your research degree programme. The tenth section asks you about your experience of any teaching opportunities you may have had, and the eleventh section asks about personal factors that may impact upon your experience of your research degree programme, such as support from friends and family. Section twelve asks about how well your expectations of the research programme were met, followed by a space for any additional comments. A demographic section is included at the end, which enables us to check the representativeness of the sample and to compare between different demographic groups in our analyses. It is important that you complete all sections of the survey for your views to be included. The data will not be used to identify any individuals.

The survey is on five pages and it is **not possible to return** to a page once it has been completed. Therefore, please think carefully before responding so that your views are accurately represented. When you arrive at the final 'thank you' page, you will know that your responses have been recorded on our database.

Once you click 'continue' you will be directed to the first section of the survey.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Pam Wells [Adviser, Evidence-Informed Practice]
Professor Chris Park [Chair of the PRES Advisory Group]

**Data Protection**

All data collected in this survey will be held securely.

Individual results are confidential to your institution.

All participating institutions have agreed not to identify any individuals when reporting their results, and to use their best efforts to ensure that no individuals can be identified by implication.

Aggregated institutional results will feed into an anonymised national aggregate which will be available to all institutions taking part in PRES for benchmarking purposes only. Some institutions may also wish to share their results to create smaller anonymised aggregates – benchmarking clubs – with similar institutions (e.g. Russell Group, Post-92).

The full PRES dataset will be available to the Higher Education Academy in order to conduct national level analysis, and all results will be reported in an aggregated and anonymised form.

## SECTION 1: SUPERVISION

1. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my research | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. My supervisor/s make a real effort to understand any difficulties I face | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. I have been given good guidance in topic selection and refinement by my supervisor/s | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. I have received good guidance in my literature search from my supervisor/s | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| e. My supervisor/s provide helpful feedback on my progress | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| f. My supervisor/s are available when I need them | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 2: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

2. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. As a result of my experience so far I feel confident about managing a research project | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. My experience so far has improved my analytical skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. My experience so far has helped me to develop a range of communication skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. As a result of my experience so far I have improved my ability to learn independently | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| e. There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my research skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| f. There are adequate opportunities available for me to further develop my transferable skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 3: INFRASTRUCTURE

3. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I have adequate access to the equipment necessary for my research | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. I have a suitable working space | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. There is appropriate financial support for research activities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| e. There is adequate provision of library facilities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| f. I have the technical support I need | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 4: INTELLECTUAL CLIMATE

4. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. My department provides opportunities for social contact with other research students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. My department provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. I feel integrated into my department's community | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| e. My department provides a good seminar programme for research students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 5: GOALS AND STANDARDS

5. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I understand the required standard for the thesis | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. I understand the standard of work expected | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. I understand the requirements of thesis examination | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress | | | | | | |

## SECTION 6: THESIS EXAMINATION

6. Have you sat your final viva examination?

- ✔ No (If No, please go to section 7)
- ✔ Yes (If Yes, please respond to the following statements:)

For each of the following, show the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The thesis examination process was fair | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| The examination of my thesis was completed in a reasonable time scale | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I was given adequate support and guidance in preparation for my *viva voce* | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I was given adequate support and guidance to make any changes to my thesis following my *viva voce* | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 7: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER

7. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I am encouraged to think about the range of career opportunities that are available to me. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. I am encouraged to reflect on my career development needs | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 8: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8. For each statement, please rate the extent of your agreement or disagreement. (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. I know who to approach, or where to find this out, if I am dissatisfied with any element of my research degree programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. I am aware of my institution's responsibilities towards me as a research degree student | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 9

9. For the following items, please rate how important, in terms of successfully completing your research degree programme, you consider them to be (1 = Not at all important and 5 = Very important)

| | Importance | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **Comment** |
| a. Supervisory support and guidance | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |
| b. Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |
| c. Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |
| d. Access to appropriate facilities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |
| e. The research environment | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |
| f. Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | …… |

## SECTION 10: TEACHING OPPORTUNITIES

10. I have had adequate opportunity to gain experience of teaching [e.g., lectures, seminars or workshops] whilst doing my research degree programme (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ NA

11. I have been given adequate support and guidance for my teaching (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ NA

12. I think the experience that I have gained through teaching has been a worthwhile aspect of my research degree programme (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ NA

13. Please provide further information regarding your teaching experience

……

……

……

## SECTION 11: PERSONAL FACTORS

14. Please state to what extent you agree with the following statements (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | NA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. My friends and family are supportive of my research degree programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. My employer is supportive of my research degree programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. The financing of my research degree programme places a strain on my personal finances. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## SECTION 12

15. Please rate the following broad aspects of your research degree programme in terms of how your experience of them has met with your expectations (-3 = it is much more negative, 0 = it has met my expectations, +3 = it is much more positive)

| | -3 | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Supervisory support and guidance | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| b. Opportunities to develop a range of research skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| c. Opportunities to develop a range of transferable skills | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| d. Access to appropriate facilities | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| e. The research environment | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| f. Provision of guidance on institutional standards and expectations for your research degree programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| g. Overall experience of my research programme | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

16. I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme more or less within the planned timescale (1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ NA

## SECTION 13

17. Please provide further information about your experience of your research degree programme. For example, what would further improve your experience?

……

……

……

**Space for institutional questions**

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

18. I am registered as doing a:

- PhD
- Professional doctorate
- PhD by published work
- New Route PhD
- MPhil with transfer to PhD
- MPhil
- Master in research
- Other *(Please specify)*…….

Note: PhD includes DPhil courses.

19. The main motivation for me pursuing a research degree programme was:

- my interest in the subject
- improving my career prospects for an academic/research career
- improving my career prospects outside of an academic/research career
- I was encouraged by a former academic tutor/supervisor
- the funding was available
- it felt like a natural step for me
- I felt inspired to work with a particular academic
- Other *(Please specify)*…….

20. What type of career do you have in mind for when you complete your research degree?

- Academic career in higher education (either research and teaching, or teaching only)
- Research career in higher education
- Research career outside higher education (e.g. in a private research organisation, a charity or in an industrial environment)
- Teaching (at a level below higher education)
- Any other professional career
- Self-employment (including setting up own business)
- Returning to or remaining with employer who is sponsoring your degree
- Other *(Please specify)*…….

21. I am:

- 25 years old or younger
- 26-30 years old
- 31-35 years old
- 36-40 years old
- 41-45 years old
- 46-50 years old
- 51-55 years old
- 56 years old or older

22. I am:

- Male
- Female

23. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please choose one from the following options: (as a drop down list)

- Social/communication impairment such as Asperger's syndrome/other autistic spectrum disorder
- Blind/serious visual impairment uncorrected by glasses
- Deaf/serious hearing impairment
- Long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy
- Mental health condition, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder
- Specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, or AD(H)D
- Physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches
- A disability, impairment or medical condition that is not listed above
- Two or more impairments and/or disabling medical conditions

24. My discipline is:

- Medicine and Dentistry
- Medical Science and Pharmacy
- Nursing
- Other subjects allied to Medicine
- Biology and related Sciences
- Sports Science
- Psychology
- Veterinary Sciences
- Agriculture and related subjects
- Physical Science
- Physical Geography and Environmental Science
- Mathematical Sciences
- Computer Science
- Mechanically-based Engineering
- Electronic and Electrical Engineering
- Civil, Chemical and other Engineering
- Technology
- Architecture, Building and Planning
- Economics
- Politics
- Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology
- Social Work
- Human and Social Geography
- Law
- Business
- Management
- Finance and Accounting
- Tourism, Transport, Travel and others in Business and Administrative studies
- Media studies
- Communications and Information studies
- English-based studies
- European Languages and Area studies
- Other Languages and Area studies
- History and Archaeology
- Philosophy, Theology and Religious studies
- Art and Design
- Performing Arts
- Other Creative Arts
- Teacher Training
- Education studies
- Combined

25. *** Which Department do you belong to? *** *This is a question for each institution to map their departmental structure. The format of this question is a drop down list and question wording can be changed or deleted. If you wish to compare your results with previous years in BOS, please test your question wording carefully to make sure that you can access the information you need.*

26. I am currently registered as studying:

- ✔ Full time
- ✔ Part time

27. What year of your research degree programme are you in?
Drop down list from 1 to 9 years
Other *(Please specify)*…….

28. I currently:

- ✔ am planning or doing my research
- ✔ am writing up my thesis
- ✔ have submitted my thesis and I am awaiting my viva
- ✔ am making amendments to my thesis following my viva
- ✔ am awaiting my doctoral award following my viva
- ✔ Other *(Please specify)*…….

29. I am:

- ✔ Primarily a face to face learner [e.g., based at my institution]
- ✔ Primarily a distance learner

30. For fees purposes, is your normal place of residence registered as:

- ✔ Home
- ✔ Other EU
- ✔ Non EU

31. Where is your normal place of residence?

- Afghanistan
- Åland Islands
- Albania
- Algeria
- American Samoa
- Andorra
- Angola
- Anguilla
- Antigua and Barbuda
- Argentina
- Armenia
- Aruba
- Australia
- Austria
- Azerbaijan
- Bahamas
- Bahrain
- Bangladesh
- Barbados
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Belize
- Benin
- Bermuda
- Bhutan
- Bolivia (Plurinational state of)
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Botswana
- Brazil
- British Virgin Islands
- Brunei Darussalam
- Bulgaria
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Cambodia
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Cape Verde
- Cayman Islands
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Channel Islands
- Chile
- China
- China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
- China, Macao Special Administrative Region
- Colombia
- Comoros
- Congo
- Cook Islands
- Costa Rica
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Croatia
- Cuba
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Denmark
- Djibouti
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Egypt
- El Salvador
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Estonia
- Ethiopia
- Faeroe Islands
- Falkland Islands (Malvinas)
- Fiji
- Finland
- France
- French Guiana
- French Polynesia
- Gabon
- Gambia
- Georgia
- Germany
- Ghana
- Gibraltar
- Greece
- Greenland
- Grenada
- Guadeloupe
- Guam
- Guatemala
- Guernsey
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Holy See
- Honduras
- Hungary
- Iceland
- India
- Indonesia
- Iran (Islamic Republic of)
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Isle of Man
- Israel
- Italy
- Jamaica
- Japan
- Jersey
- Jordan
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Kiribati
- Kuwait
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lao People's Democratic Republic
- Latvia
- Lebanon
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
- Liechtenstein
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Malaysia
- Maldives
- Mali

- Malta
- Marshall Islands
- Martinique
- Mauritania
- Mauritius
- Mayotte
- Mexico
- Micronesia (Federated States of)
- Monaco
- Mongolia
- Montenegro
- Montserrat
- Morocco
- Mozambique
- Myanmar
- Namibia
- Nauru
- Nepal
- Netherlands
- Netherlands Antilles
- New Caledonia
- New Zealand
- Nicaragua
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Niue
- Norfolk Island
- Northern Mariana Islands
- Norway
- Occupied Palestinian Territory
- Oman
- Pakistan
- Palau
- Panama
- Papua New Guinea
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Philippines
- Pitcairn
- Poland
- Portugal
- Puerto Rico
- Qatar
- Republic of Korea
- Republic of Moldova
- Réunion
- Romania
- Russian Federation
- Rwanda
- Saint-Barthélemy
- Saint Helena
- Saint Kitts and Nevis
- Saint Lucia
- Saint-Martin (French part)
- Saint Pierre and Miquelon
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Samoa
- San Marino
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Saudi Arabia
- Senegal
- Serbia
- Seychelles
- Sierra Leone
- Singapore
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Solomon Islands
- Somalia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Sri Lanka
- Sudan
- Suriname
- Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands
- Swaziland
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Syrian Arab Republic
- Tajikistan
- Thailand
- The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- Timor-Leste
- Togo
- Tokelau
- Tonga
- Trinidad and Tobago
- Tunisia
- Turkey
- Turkmenistan
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Tuvalu
- Uganda
- Ukraine
- United Arab Emirates
- United Kingdom – England
- United Kingdom – Northern Ireland
- United Kingdom – Scotland
- United Kingdom – Wales
- United Republic of Tanzania
- United States of America
- United States Virgin Islands
- Uruguay
- Uzbekistan
- Vanuatu
- Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)
- Viet Nam
- Wallis and Futuna Islands
- Western Sahara
- Yemen
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe
- Other (*Please specify)*……
  ……
  ……

32. I class myself as:

- White: British/Irish/Any other white background
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean/White and Black/White and Asian/Any other mixed background
- Asian or Asian British: Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Any other West or South Asian background
- Black or Black British: Caribbean/African/Any other Black background
- Chinese: Chinese/Any other East Asian background
- Other *(Please specify)*…….

33. Are you currently in paid employment?

- Yes
- No

If yes, how many hours of paid employment do you undertake in a typical week (term time)?

- 1-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- More than 30 hours

34. You are: *(select all that apply)*

- Self-funded
- Research Council funded
- Charity
- Institution funded
- UK industry funded
- UK Government funded
- EU/EC funded
- Funded overseas
- Other *(Please specify)*…….

Note: Institution funded = Higher Education Institution funded
Note: Funded overseas = funded by an overseas organisation

35. In the year before starting my research degree programme I:

- Completed my undergraduate studies
- Completed my postgraduate studies [for example, MSc, MA]
- Took a gap year
- Worked in the same organisation that I currently work in
- Worked as a researcher
- Worked in a non research role
- Other *(Please specify)*…….