The Higher Education Academy
Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey

PTES 2010 report

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Foreword

The Higher Education Academy's mission is to enhance the quality of the student learning experience. A key aspect of this mission is our survey work with institutions on postgraduates' learning experiences – until relatively recently a somewhat neglected feature of UK higher education in terms of analysis.

The Higher Education Academy's Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) has, after only two years of administration, already begun to make a huge difference to the way in which the sector thinks about its provision and supporting taught postgraduates' learning.

The Academy's survey provides the UK higher education sector with invaluable information about those aspects of taught postgraduate provision highly valued by students, as well as key data showing where scope exists for further changes and development. After its launch last year, PTES has, in 2010, more than doubled both the number of institutions (up from 30 to 76) that have engaged in the survey as well as the number of students who have participated by providing feedback (up from 14,400 to more than 32,000 students).

Comments from participating institutions make clear that PTES is proving it has excellent value as an information source and, importantly, excellent value for money during a period of considerable resource constraint.

It is significant that, as the recent Smith review of postgraduate education report *One step beyond: making the most of postgraduate education* (2010) makes explicit, the PTES survey (alongside the Higher Education Academy's Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)) is the principal data source on students' motivations for undertaking postgraduate study (Smith et al, 2010: http://www.bis.gov.uk/postgraduate-review). PTES also provides institutions in general and other interested parties in the sector with clear information about the extent to which taught postgraduate students' experiences meet expectations and what their motivations for study are.

Our report shows that there is much to celebrate. This year's survey is invaluable in demonstrating how and where the Academy can work most effectively with higher education institutions and with students to achieve the best possible learning experiences.

The Academy remains committed, firstly, to its role as a provider of robust and accessible evidence and information about the student learning experience, as well as, secondly, to its role of working closely in partnership with institutions: we remain keen to ensure that PTES data are genuinely useful as enhancement tools for institutions, departments and academics within their disciplinary settings. To this end, we continue to utilise PTES results in our work with students and their representatives, as well as with staff in a variety of roles in higher education. For example, the 'benchmarking clubs', made available to all participating institutions, have been invaluable to colleagues in the sector by helping them share knowledge and ideas, and develop policies and practices which will, in fundamental ways, enhance taught postgraduates' learning and achievements within their own institutions.

It is also important to recognise here the work of many dedicated colleagues, including those in institutions across the sector, who are extremely enthusiastic and keen to support developments in this important area. I should therefore like to take this opportunity to thank

the PTES Advisory Group, whose membership (drawn from across the sector) provides feedback and ideas which are invaluable in taking forward our work in this area.

In addition, significant thanks are due to the authors of this report, Professor Chris Park and Dr Pam Wells, as well as the Academy's PG surveys team led by Rachel Segal (and including Gosia Kulej, who undertook additional data analysis on the survey results) for all the hard work they have undertaken to ensure that this year's survey builds efficiently and effectively on the first iteration in 2009. I look forward to further impressive developments in 2011.

The PTES survey is now at a crucial stage in its development. Whilst we have achieved much in two years, there is scope to achieve considerably more.

For example, we are currently working with various stakeholders, particularly postgraduate students and the National Union of Students (NUS), to further increase the number of students sharing their taught PG experiences through the survey. We shall also run PTES alongside PRES during the coming year which will enable us to gain an even richer, in depth picture of the experiences of postgraduate students within and across the sector.

We very much look forward to working with colleagues across the sector to ensure that PTES' significant potential as an enhancement tool is fully realised during the coming years.

Professor Sue Law
Director: Academic Practice
The Higher Education Academy

Executive summary

The Higher Education Academy's Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) collects feedback on the experiences of current taught postgraduate students in a systematic, user-friendly and comparative way. This is a key component of the Academy's work in the postgraduate arena alongside the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). Both surveys will next run during the coming academic year, 2010-11.

2010 saw the second full administration of PTES with responses from a total of 32,638 students from 76 UK higher education institutions (HEIs) (compared with 14,421 students from 30 HEIs in 2009). The demographic profile of 2010 respondents is broadly similar to that of 2009 respondents and of the taught postgraduate population overall, evidenced by HESA statistics.

The questionnaire was largely the same as in 2009, except that, in response to user feedback, a few questions were removed and some were relocated within the core questionnaire. In terms of outcome, the survey results for 2010 are remarkably similar to those for 2009, despite the larger number and greater diversity of participating institutions and students. The numbers in square brackets below show 2009 figures, for comparison.

On the whole, taught postgraduate students were very positive about their experiences: for example, 85% [84%] agreed that their overall experience had met or exceeded their expectations. This is a similar proportion to final-year undergraduates and postgraduate research students, evidenced by the 2009 NSS and PRES results respectively.

Taught postgraduates said that their experiences met or exceeded their expectations most strongly in terms of skills and personal development (90% [89%] agreed), career and professional development (88% [86%]), learning resources (87% [86%]) and quality of learning and teaching (83% [82%]), and least strongly in terms of organisation and management of the programme (76% [76%]) and assessment and feedback (75% [74%]). Responses to these questions were generally around 1% higher in 2010 than in 2009.

The top two motivational factors for taking a taught postgraduate programme were considered to be: to improve employment prospects and to progress in their current career path.

The most common reasons for studying on a taught postgraduate programme at their particular institution were the location and the reputation of the institution (each 39%), closely followed by the institution's reputation in the chosen subject area. Location of institution has risen by 3% and from second ranking in 2009 to joint first.

Taught postgraduate students rated the quality of their teaching and learning and staff very highly, being most positive (more than 80% agreement) about the intellectual stimulation gained on the course; about staff enthusiasm about what they were teaching, and about staff being good at explaining things. Five of the seven teaching and learning items were rated between 1% and 3% lower in results for 2010 than in the previous year.

Students rated assessment and feedback less highly, but nearly three-quarters still agreed that assessment arrangements and marking had been fair (72%), and that the criteria used in marking had been made clear in advance (71%). They were least positive about the timing of feedback and the extent to which feedback helped clarify things they did not understand.

Three-quarters (75%) of the students who took part in the survey had to write a dissertation as part of their programme, so this scale was not of relevance to all respondents, and the timing of the survey in relation to their dissertation experience may have proved a limiting factor. However, all items within this scale for 2010 fell between 2% and 4% compared to the 2009 results.

Regarding organisation and management of the programme, half (52%) of the students thought that workload was more or less what they expected (the same as in 2009), and most (77%, down 3% from 2009) agreed that the timetable fitted well with their other commitments. Students were positive about effective communication of changes in the programme or teaching (72%), about the balance of core modules and options (70%), and the balance between scheduled contact time and private study (70%).

Students rated learning resources highly. Three out of four agreed that they had been able to access general IT resources when they needed to (78%), and that library resources were easily accessible (77%) and were good enough for their needs (72%). Three questions were moved into this part of the core questionnaire in 2010; three-quarters of the students were satisfied with the quality of learning materials (74%), and two-thirds agreed they had access to social learning spaces (69%) and specialised equipment, facilities or rooms (66%) when they needed them. In 2009 these questions had been asked of different demographic groups, according to whether they were primarily campus-based or distance learners.

Students had quite mixed views about skills and personal development. They rated most highly the ways in which their programme had developed their research (78%) and transferable (78%) skills, and helped them to become more confident about independent learning (75%). Just over two-thirds agreed that they felt more confident in tackling unfamiliar problems (67%), and slightly fewer agreed that the programme had helped them to present themselves with confidence (66%), and that their communication skills had improved (64%). Ratings on most items on skills and personal development were 1-2% higher in 2010 than in 2009.

Regarding career and professional development, students were most positive about having better employment prospects as a result of the programme (78%), but still also very positive about feeling better prepared for future employment (72%) and having been encouraged to reflect on their professional development needs (69%). Ratings in 2009 and 2010 were almost identical.

Responses to individual questions on particular themes can be grouped into scales, eight of which can be calculated for the PTES questions. Each scale has good reliability, judged by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Mean scale scores (out of 5), in descending order, are: staff (4.05 [3.98]), career and professional development (3.93 [3.93]), skills and personal development (3.92 [3.90]), teaching (3.92 [3.88]), learning resources (3.89 [3.95]), dissertation (3.84 [3.63]), organisation and management (3.82 [3.84]) and assessment and feedback (3.63 [3.65]). The staff, learning resources and dissertation scales include different questions in 2010 than in 2009, so direct comparison of scores must be approached cautiously. There are significant correlations between all of the scales.

Multiple regression analysis shows that the two most important factors (scales) that affect the overall experience are teaching, and skills and personal development. Seven scales together (the staff scale was excluded because it is not normally distributed) account for just under half of the variance (48% [52%]) in overall experience.

Additional analysis was undertaken on items relating to employer engagement, which revealed some interesting patterns with demographic factors. For example, students aged between 30 and 40 gave more positive scores on the skills and career scales, as did part-

time students and distance learners. International (non-EU) students gave more positive scores than UK (home) students on the skills scale, and the pattern was reversed on the career scale. Taking both skills and personal development, and career and professional development scales together, scores were highest in four vocational disciplines: subjects allied to medicine; medicine and dentistry; agriculture and related subjects; and business and administrative studies. Disciplinary patterns are also apparent in students' responses on experience against expectation for both skills and career, and in their rating of items on the skills and career questions.

Further information about both PTES and PRES is available at: www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduatework or contact surveys@heacademy.ac.uk.

Section 1: The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)

Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the second national survey in the UK of what taught postgraduate students think about their experiences, which was carried out in 2010. The results, viewed alongside those from the 2009 survey, provide a useful snapshot of the taught postgraduate student experience, highlighting areas where students rated their experiences very positively and other areas where they rated them less positively. They have implications for policy and practice, both within individual higher education institutions (HEIs) and across the sector.

The report is structured into five sections:

- Section 1 describes the objective and operation of the survey
- Section 2 outlines the profile of respondents
- Section 3 summarises the main findings of the 2010 survey
- Section 4 has a focus on employer engagement
- Section 5 considers the future development of PTES.

Objective

PTES is an online survey tool designed to collect feedback from current postgraduate taught students in a systematic, user-friendly and comparative way. The main objective is to help HEIs to enhance the quality of their postgraduate taught degree provision, informed by evidence-based decision-making. It offers HEIs an opportunity to find out what taught students think about their experiences, and the ability to benchmark their students' views against both the national aggregate and the views of students in particular mission groups through 'benchmarking clubs'.

The development of PTES – which is described in the 2009 PTES report[1] – must be seen in the context of the growing interest in the UK in the quality of the student experience, and a commitment to listen and respond to the student voice. The National Student Survey (NSS)[2] operates at undergraduate level, and the Academy's Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)[3] and PTES cover postgraduate students.

Survey dates

To give participating institutions some flexibility in when they ran their survey, PTES was open from 15 February to 28 May. Institutions were able to choose a survey period of at least six weeks that best suited them. The last permitted launch date was 16 April[4].

[1] www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/postgraduate/PTES2009Report.pdf
[2] www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/nss/ and www.thestudentsurvey.com
[3] www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduatework
[4] In 2009 PTES ran from 20 April to 30 July. An earlier, flexible survey period was chosen in 2010 to allow institutions sufficient time to analyse and report on their PTES results in time for the findings to have an impact on the following year's provision, and before being required to analyse and report on their NSS results. Feedback from some previous participating institutions also suggested that it would be easier to engage their students with the survey during the taught component of their degrees. However, one limitation of moving the survey to an earlier time of year is that fewer students in the 2010 sample would be in the dissertation phase of their degree.

Methodology

PTES uses the same method as the Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS)[5], which has been used successfully by HEIs across the UK in recent years for collecting feedback from research staff, and PRES. Both surveys are based on online questionnaires that are delivered via the Bristol Online Surveys (BOS)[6] website.

All HEIs in the United Kingdom were invited to take part in PTES 2010 and institutions from Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England participated.

Each participating institution was given an electronic template of the PTES questionnaire before the survey went live, which they could modify by adding institution-specific questions (see below). The institution was responsible for contacting its taught postgraduate students by email to invite them to take part in PTES. No student details were shared with the Academy or any third party. Furthermore, the Academy is unable to identify any participating institution from the survey results.

The BOS website allows the PTES officers to monitor their own institutional results and the aggregate results in real time, both while the survey was open and after it closed.

The questionnaire

PTES was based on a core set of questions seeking students' views on a range of aspects of their student experience. The questionnaire also included free-text boxes, and participating institutions were able to add as many of their own specific questions as they wished (for example, to collect feedback on particular services, initiatives, policies or practices, and to ask to which school or department the student belongs). Appropriate questions from NSS and PRES were also included in PTES, to allow comparisons of students' views of their experiences through the ladder of higher education qualifications.

The core PTES questionnaire is included in the Appendix, and a copy can be downloaded in PDF format from the PTES website[7]. A Welsh language version of the questionnaire is also available for any Welsh institutions that wish to use it.

The questions were structured in ten main sections:

Section A. Motivations
Section B. Quality of teaching and learning
Section C. Assessment and feedback
Section D. Dissertation
Section E. Organisation and management
Section F. Learning resources
Section G. Skills and personal development
Section H. Career and professional development
Section I. Overall satisfaction
Section J. Further comments

Informed by user feedback, and designed to make the results more useful to institutions, the questionnaire used in 2010 was revised slightly from that used in the 2009 survey. It contained most of the same questions, but was slightly shorter and more focused. PTES

[5] www.cros.ac.uk
[6] www.survey.bris.ac.uk
[7] www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/postgraduate/PTES2010QuestionnairevFINAL.pdf

2009 contained questions specifically for campus-based learners, distance learners and international students, and questions relating to student support services. Three of the questions for campus-based and distance learners were added to the learning resources section of the core questionnaire for PTES 2010, which meant that all students responded to them in 2010 (see Table 17).

The 2009 questionnaire also included questions about advice and help (Q20), support services (Q21 and Q22) and language support for students for whom English was not their first language (Q23), which did not yield useful information for participating institutions and so they were not included in the 2010 questionnaire. Institutions were advised to incorporate these types of questions into the institutional questions section of their survey, tailored to their individual situation.

This report deals only with aggregate-level results from the core survey, and it covers only the responses to the quantitative questions. No content analysis of the text-box responses has been undertaken; indeed, it is not possible to do so because only participating institutions can view their text-box responses.

In the tables and text throughout this report, question numbers are those in the 2010 questionnaire, as shown in the Appendix. A few questions have been renumbered from the 2009 survey, to create a more coherent flow.

A series of demographic questions were included to allow analysis of patterns of responses for different types of student. Students were asked about the degree they were registered for, their age and gender, their discipline (using 41 JACS codes), the date they started their course, mode of study, mode of delivery, domicile, employment situation, their main source of funding for the course, and their highest qualification on entry (see pp. 45-48 of this report).

Benchmarking

Like PRES, PTES was designed to allow participating institutions to benchmark their results against the aggregate results of all participating HEIs, and against aggregate results for particular mission groups (Russell Group, 1994 group, Post-92, Pre-92, and Small and specialist institutions). An institution is allowed to see all mission group aggregate results if it volunteers to join one of the mission-group-based benchmarking clubs. They can see aggregate results only, not those for individual HEIs, and it is not possible to download aggregate datasets for independent analysis.

Ownership and anonymity

Students who took part in the survey were informed that

"*All data collected in this survey will be held securely. Individual results are strictly confidential to your institution only and individuals will not be identified. Aggregated institutional results will feed into a national aggregate available to all institutions taking part in PTES for benchmarking purposes only. Some institutions may wish to share their results to create smaller aggregates – benchmarking clubs – with similar institutions (e.g. Russell Group, Post-92). The anonymised full PTES dataset will be available to the Higher Education Academy in order to conduct national-level analysis. All results will be presented only in an aggregated and anonymised form. Demographic data collected at the end of the*

survey will only be used for the purposes of this survey and these data will not be used to identify any individuals."[8]

Institutional results remain confidential to the institution. The list of institutions participating in PTES remains confidential to these institutions and the Academy.

Each institution remains the owner of its own institutional data and it can publish its own PTES results internally and externally. Institutions wishing to publish the aggregated PTES data for their institution should not do so until after the Academy has published the national data in this report.

The Academy has access to the aggregate dataset with individual institution-level data. Institution names and free-text replies have been removed from this dataset, to make it impossible for the Academy to identify particular institutions (and thus protect the anonymity of institutions and students).

Academy support

The Academy offered a range of types of support to participating institutions during and after the survey, including documentation (*Tailoring the PTES questionnaire*; *Welcome to PTES*; *How to boost engagement with PTES*; *PTES common mistakes*; *How to launch PTES 2010 survey*; and *Analysing data in BOS*), a regular PTES email bulletin, a JISCmail list for PTES Officers to communicate with the Academy and each other, a specific area of the Academy's website dedicated to postgraduate surveys, and *ad hoc* support by telephone and email whenever necessary.

The Academy also arranged technical support from the BOS team, and ran a PTES officers' meeting in Wolverhampton in May 2010 to share good practice and collect feedback from institutions[9]. In addition, the Academy held a PTES session at both the Academy's annual Higher Education Surveys for Enhancement Conference[10] and the Academy's Annual Conference in July 2010. Institutions participating in PTES are also represented on the PTES Advisory Group, which provides advice, guidance and feedback on the PTES survey and processes.

[8] This data protection statement was included as part of the electronic survey template and was fully editable by participating institutions.

[9] Presentations at the PTES officers' event included *Analysing PTES data*, *Using PTES for enhancement* and *PTES 2010 interim results.*

[10] www.heacademy.ac.uk/events/detail/2010/jointevents/18_May_Surveys_For_Enhancement_Conference

Section 2: Profile of respondents

Institutions

All HEIs in the UK were invited to take part on a voluntary basis, so the sample of participating institutions was self-selecting. A total of 77 institutions took part in the survey, compared to 30 in 2009 (Table 1), and the data from 76 institutions are included in the report[11]. Universities UK has 133 members[12], so more than half of the UK universities took part in PTES 2010. The institution with the largest number of responses had 1,821, accounting for 5.6% of the total dataset.

Table 1: Profile of participating institutions, by country

Country	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
England	26	60
Scotland	3	10
Wales	0	5
N. Ireland	1	1
Total	30	76

The profile of institutions, by benchmarking group, is summarised in Table 2. Note that the percentages add up to more than 100 because some institutions chose to be in more than one benchmarking group. Not all participating institutions chose to take part in a benchmarking group.

Table 2: Profile of participating institutions, by benchmarking group

Benchmarking group	No. of institutions	No. of respondents	% of total respondents
Russell Group	14	11,471	35.1%
1994 group	12	4,857	14.9%
Pre-92	16	8,461	25.9%
Post-92	31	10,420	31.9%
Small and specialist	8	1,660	5.1%

Response rate

A total of 32,638 students responded to the survey in 2010, more than double the number who took part in 2009, representing a substantial sample size. However, with the large rise in the number of participating institutions in the 2010 survey came a drop in the overall response rate to 14.8%. While this is a feature of a voluntary survey and the large sample more than achieved critical mass this year, the Academy is keen to increase institutional response rates and is taking steps to do so.

[11] Unfortunately, due to a clerical error at one institution, the previous year's template was used and so it has not been possible to include their results in the 2010 dataset. Steps have been taken to minimise the possibility of a recurrence of this in future years.
[12] www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/aboutus/whoweare/pages/members.aspx

Table 3: Response rate

	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
Respondents	14,421	32,638
Potential respondents	81,686	220,894
Response rate	17.7%	14.8%

Despite the low response rate, the scale of responses in terms of participating institutions and students is large enough to allow useful conclusions to be drawn, especially given that the sample includes students from a wide variety of institutions and the profile of survey respondents is broadly similar to the most recent HESA profiling information (see below). The aggregate responses from the 2010 survey are very similar to those from the 2009 survey, which included far fewer institutions and students.

Profile of respondents

The profile of respondents is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Profile of respondents who took part in PTES 2010

Age	Just over a third (39%) were 25 years old or younger, nearly two-thirds (61%) were 30 or younger, and 5% were aged over 50. A breakdown by age is shown in Table 5. There is a 5% increase this year of students aged 25 or younger.
Gender	Just over half (57%) were female, and just under half (43%) were male, exactly the same as in 2009 (Table 6).
Mode of study	Nearly two-thirds (61%, compared with 53% in 2009) were registered as studying on a full-time basis, and just over a third (37%, compared with 43% in 2009) were part-time (Table 7). The remaining 2% (1% full-time and 1% part-time) had just completed their programme and were not currently registered.
Mode of delivery	Three-quarters (76%, compared with 72% in 2009) were primarily face-to-face learners, and a quarter (24%, compared with 28% in 2009) were primarily distance learners.
Domicile	Just under two-thirds (63%, compared with 67% in 2009) were registered for fees purposes as home students, a tenth (11% in 2009 and 2010) as EU and a quarter (25%, compared with 23% in 2009) as international (non-EU) (Table 8).
Year of study	Three-quarters of the students (74%, compared with 70% in 2009) had started their taught postgraduate programme within the current academic year, and 17% (compared with 18% in 2009) had started in the previous year.
Degree registered for	Three-quarters (78%) were registered for a taught Masters, a tenth (10%) for a Postgraduate Certificate (including PGCE) and just under a tenth (8%) for a Postgraduate Diploma – a very similar profile to 2009.
Discipline	The three most common disciplines of respondents were business and administrative studies (23.3%), education (11.3%) and social studies (10.3%). These hardly vary from the 2009 results, with differences ranging from 0.1% to 0.7%. The rest were widely distributed between many other disciplines (Table 9).
Source of funding	Just under two-thirds (63%, compared with 59% in 2009) of the students were self-funded, less than a fifth (16%, compared with 20% for 2009) were funded by their employer, and one in twelve (8% in

	both 2009 and 2010) were funded by their institution, for example through a bursary or scholarship.
Employment	Just under half (49%, compared with 55% in 2009) were in paid employment at the time of the survey. Of those who were in paid employment, two-thirds (63%, compared with 69% in 2009) worked more than 30 hours in a typical week during term time, and one in eight (12%, compared with 9% in 2009) worked up to ten hours a week.
Highest qualification on entry	Three-quarters (75%, compared with 71% in 2009) had an undergraduate degree or equivalent, and nearly a fifth (17%, compared with 18% in 2009) already had a postgraduate degree, such as an MA.

Table 5: Breakdown of respondents, by age

Age	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
25 years or younger	34%	39%
26-30 years	21%	22%
31-35 years	13%	12%
36-40 years	10%	9%
41-45 years	9%	8%
46-50 years	7%	6%
51-55 years	4%	3%
56 years or older	2%	2%

Over half of the students aged 25 or younger, and more than four out of five (81%) of those aged 30 or younger, were studying part-time (Figure 1). Older students, aged over 30, were more likely to be studying part-time.

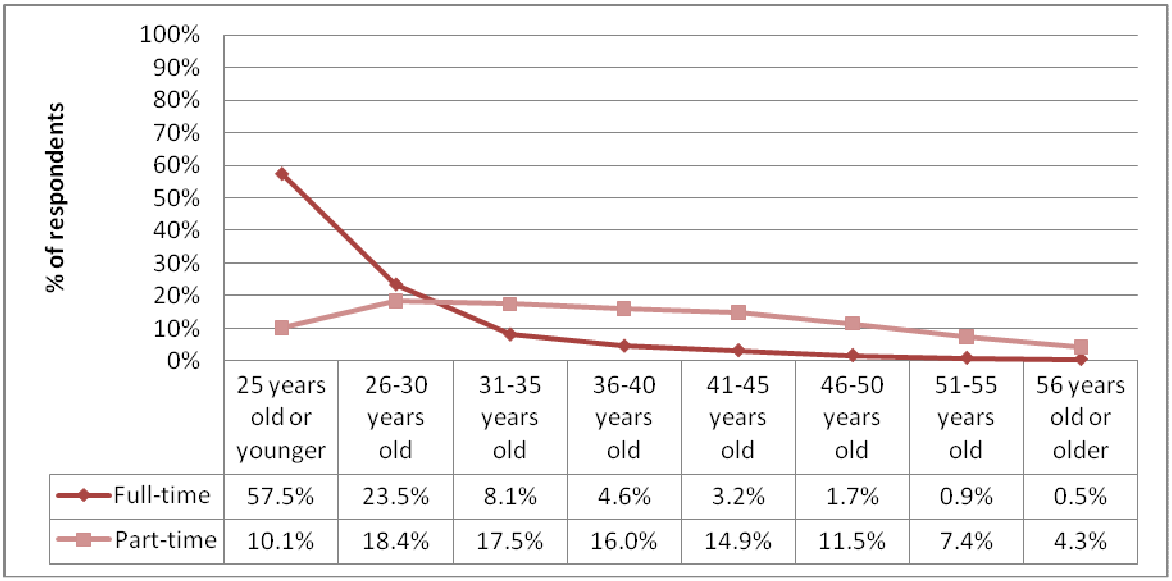

Figure 1: Variation in full-time and part-time study, by age

Representativeness of the respondents

How representative the PTES respondents are of the UK taught population can be judged by comparing their profile with that of the sector overall, using the most recent HESA data (2008-09).

By gender (Table 6) the PTES profiles for 2009 and 2010 are identical, and they are broadly similar to the HESA profile except that males are slightly under-represented, which is quite typical for these sorts of surveys (males are often more reluctant to reply to online surveys).

Table 6: Profile of respondents, by gender

Gender	HESA 2008-09	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
Male	49%	43%	43%
Female	51%	57%	57%

By mode of study (Table 7) a greater proportion of the 2010 respondents were studying full-time than in the 2009 survey, which had a profile similar to the HESA profile.

Table 7: Profile of respondents, by mode of study

Mode	HESA 2008-09	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
Full-time	53%	55%	62%
Part-time	47%	45%	38%

Regarding domicile (for fees purposes) (Table 8), home students are slightly over-represented in the 2010 PTES sample and overseas (non-EU) students are under-represented compared with the HESA profile overall. The breakdown is very similar in 2010 and 2009.

Table 8: Profile of respondents, by domicile

Domicile	HESA 2008-09	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
Home	57%	67%	63%
Other EU	9%	11%	11%
Non-EU	34%	22%	25%

Regarding discipline (Table 9), the 2010 PTES sample overall is closely representative of the HESA profile, although business and administrative studies and computer science are under-represented and education and biological sciences are over-represented, all by a small proportion.

Table 9: Profile of respondents, by discipline

Discipline	HESA 2008-09	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
Business and administrative studies	28.2%	23.2%	23.3%
Social studies	9.2%	10.7%	10.3%
Education	8.9%	12.0%	11.3%
Subjects allied to medicine	8.2%	6.0%	7.7%
Engineering and technology	8.0%	7.7%	6.9%
Computer science	5.4%	3.0%	3.0%
Biological sciences	4.9%	6.8%	7.3%
Creative arts and design	4.7%	4.0%	4.7%
Law	4.1%	5.4%	4.4%
Architecture, building and planning	3.5%	2.7%	2.1%
Languages	3.1%	4.2%	3.4%
Historical and philosophical studies	3.0%	3.8%	3.3%
Mass communications and documentation	2.6%	2.4%	3.3%
Medicine and dentistry	2.3%	3.0%	3.2%
Physical sciences	2.2%	2.0%	2.6%
Mathematical sciences	0.8%	1.0%	0.8%
Agriculture and related subjects	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%
Combined	0.2%	1.6%	1.8%
Veterinary science	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%

Overall, the 2010 PTES sample of respondents is broadly representative of the postgraduate taught student population across the UK. This means that the PTES findings paint a picture that broadly reflects the views of taught postgraduate students across the UK.

Section 3: Summary of main findings

In the tables and text that follow, '% agree' refers to the combined percentage of respondents who chose the 'mostly agree' and 'definitely agree' options within individual questions, and those who chose the 'not applicable' option are excluded (i.e. only replies from options 1 to 5 are included), unless stated otherwise. All percentages quoted have been rounded up or down to give integer (whole number) values.

Motivation for taking a postgraduate programme

Students were asked what their main motivations were for taking their postgraduate programme (Q1 in the PTES questionnaire, see Appendix). They could select any number from a list of eight possible motivations. The percentage values quoted are the percentage of students who selected that particular reason, so the total adds up to more than 100%.The results are summarised in Table 10, which shows similar profiles of responses between the 2009 and 2010 surveys, except that the top two have switched positions this year.

Table 10: Students' main motivations for taking their postgraduate programme

Motivation	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
To improve my employment prospects	50%	53%
To progress in my current career path (i.e. a professional qualification)	53%	52%
For personal interest	45%	44%
To enable me to progress to a higher level qualification (e.g. PhD)	32%	33%
To change my current career	18%	18%
As a requirement to enter a particular profession	16%	17%
To meet the requirements of my current job	9%	8%
Other	3%	4%

Vocational reasons for taking a postgraduate taught programme were clearly dominant – the two most important motivation factors were 'to improve my employment prospects' (53%) and 'to progress in my current career path (i.e. professional qualification)' (52%). A third of the students were taking the taught postgraduate programme as a stepping stone to a higher level qualification, typically a doctorate.

Improving their future career prospects is a particularly strong motivation for the younger taught postgraduate students, aged below about 30 (Figure 2), and progressing in their current career path is a stronger motivation for the older students (aged above about 30). Both motivations decline in importance for students aged over about 50.

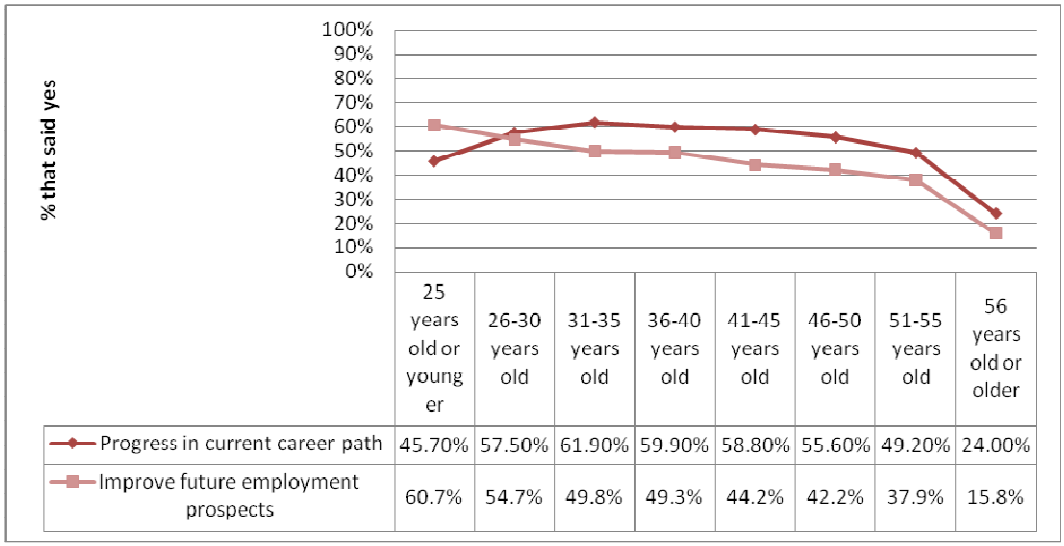

Figure 2: Variations by age in the top two motivations

Reason for studying at that institution

Students were asked (Q2) why they had chosen to study for their postgraduate taught qualification at that particular institution. They could select any number from a list of 14 possible reasons. The percentage values quoted are the percentage of students who selected that particular reason, so the total adds up to more than 100%. The results are summarised in Table 11, which again shows little change between 2009 and 2010 despite the much large number of institutions and participants in 2010.

Table 11: Reasons why students chose to study at that institution

Reason	PTES 2009	PTES 2010
The location of the institution	36%	39%
The overall reputation of the institution	39%	39%
The institution's reputation in my chosen subject area	33%	36%
The reputation of the department	26%	23%
Delivery of the programme is flexible enough to fit around my life	23%	23%
It was recommended to me	20%	20%
Funding was available to me to study this particular programme	17%	16%
I have studied at this institution before	15%	16%
Graduates from this institution have good career and employment prospects	13%	14%
It is the only institution offering this programme	13%	13%
The cost of the programme compared to other institutions	11%	12%
My employer advised or encouraged me to do it	9%	8%
Other	7%	7%
The way the programme is assessed	7%	6%

The three reasons mentioned most frequently were location (39%), reputation, and flexibility of programme delivery (23%). Regarding reputation, institutional reputation was rated highest (39%), closely followed by the institution's reputation in their chosen subject area

(36%); reputation of department came much lower (23%). Respondents' preference for the location of the institution has increased by 3% from PTES 2009 and moved up from second to first place this year.

Perhaps surprisingly, particularly given that nearly two-thirds of the respondents were self-funded (Table 4), financial factors were rated relatively low. The availability of funding was ranked only seventh, with only one in six (16%) students rating it as a reason for their choice of institution, and the cost of the programme compared to other institutions was ranked 11th (12%). Fees for taught postgraduate programmes vary a great deal from programme to programme and institution to institution, because institutions set their own fees, and the cost of living can vary greatly between institutions, but the PTES results suggest that choice of where to study is not particularly price sensitive. The fact that half of the respondents were in paid employment (Table 2) might have a bearing on their responses.

Overall satisfaction – experience against expectation

Students were asked to rate their experience of their postgraduate taught programme compared with their expectations (Q14g), and 85% (compared with 84% in 2009) agreed that their overall experience had met or exceeded their expectations. This level of satisfaction is very similar to that for final-year undergraduates (81%, based on the 2009 NSS results[13]) and for research degree students (84% based on the 2009 PRES results[14]).

Students rated three areas higher than overall experience, in terms of experience against expectation (Table 12) – skills and personal development (90%, up 1% from 2009), career and professional development (88%, up 2%) and learning resources (87%, up 1%). The quality of teaching and learning was rated slightly lower than the overall experience (83%, up 1%). Respondents rated experience versus expectations lowest in two areas – organisation and management (76%, the same as in 2009) and assessment and feedback (75%, up 1%) – although in each case at least three-quarters of students rated their experience as having at least met their expectations.

Table 12: Students' views on their experience against expectation

Question		% agree met or exceeded expectation 2009	% agree met or exceeded expectation 2010
14e	Skills and personal development	89%	90%
14f	Career and professional development	86%	88%
14d	Learning resources	86%	87%
14a	Quality of teaching and learning	82%	83%
14c	Organisation and management	76%	76%
14b	Assessment and feedback	74%	75%

[13] www.hefce.ac.uk/news/hefce/2009/nss.htm
[14] www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/ourwork/postgraduate/PRES2009.pdf

It is interesting to note that ratings of experience against expectation rose marginally between 2009 and 2010 in all areas except organisation and management.

The results of a multiple regression analysis to show the relative importance of different dimensions of the taught postgraduate student experience to students' ratings of experience against expectation are summarised towards the end of this section (see p. 24).

Quality of teaching and learning

Students were asked how they would rate the quality of the teaching on their taught postgraduate programme (Q5). The results for 2010 were identical to those for 2009 – 38% rated it as consistently good, 53% rated it as variable but generally good, and 2% rated it as consistently poor.

Students were also asked to what extent they agreed with a series of questions relating to the teaching and learning on their programme (Q3) and the staff on their programme (Q4). The results are summarised in Table 13, ranked in descending order. Responses for 2010 are virtually identical to those for 2009.

Table 13: Students' views on teaching and learning, and staff[15]

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
3d	The course is intellectually stimulating	84%	83%
4c	Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	83%	83%
4a	Staff are good at explaining things	83%	80%
3a	The teaching and learning methods are effective for this type of programme	81%	79%
4b	Staff made the subject interesting	77%	76%
3c	I am happy with the teaching support I received from staff on my course	71%	71%
3b	There is sufficient contact time (face to face and/or virtual/online) between staff and students to support effective learning	67%	68%

Students generally had very positive views about teaching and learning and about staff on their programme. More than four out of five agreed that their course is intellectually satisfying, staff are enthusiastic and good at explaining things, and effective teaching methods are used; nearly as many agreed that staff made the subject interesting. Slightly fewer, but still approaching three-quarters, agreed that they were happy with the teaching support they receive from staff on the course. The lowest score in this section, but still with two-thirds of students agreeing, related to sufficiency of contact time to support effective learning.

The greatest change in level of agreement between 2009 and 2010 was on Question 4a (staff are good at explaining things), where it fell from 83% to 80%. The difference may be a

[15] One question from the 2009 survey (Q4d: Staff are available/accessible when I need them) was not repeated in 2010 because feedback from users suggested it was too broadly worded and did not yield useful evidence.

product of the larger number and greater variety of institutions taking part in 2010 rather than reflecting any underlying change in taught postgraduate student attitudes.

Assessment and feedback

Students were asked to what extent they agree with a series of statements regarding assessment and feedback on their programme (Q6). The results are summarised in Table 14, ranked in descending order.

Table 14: Students' views on assessment and feedback

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
6b	Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	74%	72%
6a	The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance	74%	71%
6e	I have received detailed comments (written or oral) on my work	68%	66%
6f	Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand	58%	58%
6c	Feedback on my work has been prompt	57%	57%
6d	I received feedback in time to allow me to improve my next assignment	57%	56%

Students were generally very positive about assessment but much less so about feedback. Just under three-quarters agreed that assessment arrangements and marking had been fair (72%) and that marking criteria had been made clear in advance (71%).

Levels of agreement about feedback were lower than for any of the other questions in the survey. Just over half agreed that feedback had helped them clarify things they did not understand (58%), had been prompt (57%) or had been received in time to allow them to improve their next assignment (56%).

The profile of responses in 2010 largely mirrors those in 2009, with responses to only three questions (Q6a, Q6b and Q6e) differing by more than 1%. Each shows a very small decline in level of agreement, with only Q6b and Q6a changing slightly in ranked position.

Dissertation

Three-quarters of the students (75%, compared to 72% in the 2009 survey) had to write a dissertation as part of their programme (Q7), but many of them had either not started or were in the early stages of their dissertation when they took part in the survey.

Those who had to write a dissertation were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to the dissertation and supervision (Q8). The results are summarised in Table 15, ranked in descending order.

Table 15: Students' views on the dissertation and supervision[16]

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
8b	My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my dissertation	80%	77%
8a	I understand the required standards for the dissertation	77%	73%
8c	My supervisor makes a real effort to understand any difficulties I face	70%	67%
8f	My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress	66%	63%
8d	I have been given good guidance in topic selection and refinement by my supervisor	65%	63%
8e	I have received good guidance in my literature search from my supervisor	60%	58%

Students had mixed views about the dissertation and supervision, perhaps because of the timing of the questionnaire relative to their experience of working on the dissertation. Just over three-quarters agreed that their supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support their dissertation (77%), and just under three-quarters agreed that they understood the required standards for the dissertation (73%).

Two-thirds agreed that their supervisor made a real effort to understand any difficulties they face (67%), and slightly fewer agreed that they provided helpful feedback on progress (63%) or gave them good guidance in topic selection and refinement (63%). Nearly six out of ten (58%) agreed that their supervisor gave good guidance in their literature search. This was the next-lowest level of agreement after the feedback-related items from Table 14.

Levels of agreement on most questions were generally 2-3% lower in 2010 than in 2009, though the rank order remains the same. It is possible that the slight fall reflects the increasing number and diversity of participating institutions and the timing of the survey, rather than any underlying decline in the quality of the taught postgraduate experience.

Organisation and management

Students were asked how they found the workload on their programme relative to what they had expected (Q10). Responses for 2010 were identical to those for 2009 – just over half (52%) agreed it was more or less what they expected, just under a third (31%) that it was higher than expected, and a tenth (10%) that it was much higher than expected.

Students were also asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to the organisation and management of their programme (Q9). The results are summarised in Table 16, ranked in descending order.

[16] One question from the 2009 survey (Q8g: My supervisor is available when I need him/her) was not included in 2010 as feedback from users suggested it did not yield useful evidence, because of the timing issue.

Table 16: Students' views on organisation and management

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
9a	The timetable fits well with my other commitments	80%	77%
9b	Any changes in the programme or teaching have been communicated effectively	74%	72%
9d	The balance between scheduled contact time and private study is appropriate	69%	70%
9e	The balance of core modules and options is appropriate	70%	70%
9c	The programme is well organised and is running smoothly	70%	69%

Overall, students were positive about the organisation and management of their programme. Three-quarters (77%) agreed that the timetable fitted well with their other commitments, and almost as many (72%) agreed that any changes in the programme or teaching had been communicated effectively. More than two-thirds agreed that there was an appropriate balance between scheduled contact time and private study (70%), the balance of core modules and options was appropriate (70%), and the programme was well organised and ran smoothly (69%).

Levels of agreement on two questions (Q9a and Q9b) were 2-3% lower in 2010 than in 2009, but otherwise the ratings are very similar, despite changes in rank ordering.

Learning resources

Students were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to the learning resources on their programme (Q11). This section has changed from the 2009 survey. The first three questions (Q11a to Q11c) are the same, and three other questions (Q11d to Q11f in the table below) have been moved from another section of the 2009 questionnaire and included in this scale in response to user feedback and because they are more appropriately located here.

The results are summarised in Table 17, ranked in descending order. Only the top three questions include 2009 comparators; in the 2009 questionnaire, the bottom three questions were only available to either campus-based or distance learners (not all students as in 2010).

Table 17: Students' views on learning resources

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
11c	I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to	78%	78%
11b	The library resources and services are easily accessible	77%	77%
11a	The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	75%	72%
11f	I am satisfied with the quality of learning materials available to me (print, online material, DVDs etc.)	n/a	74%
11d	I have been able to access social learning spaces (e.g. for group working) on campus when I needed to	n/a	69%
11e	I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed them	n/a	66%

Overall the students were positive about the learning resources on their programme. Three-quarters agreed that they had been able to access general IT facilities when they needed to (78%) and that library resources and services were easily accessible (77%), and slightly fewer agreed that library resources and services were good enough for their needs (72%). The latter was 3% lower than in the 2009 survey.

Three-quarters of the respondents (74%) were also satisfied with the quality of learning materials available to them, and two-thirds agreed they had been able to access social learning spaces on campus (69%) and specialised equipment, facilities or rooms (66%) when they needed to.

To allow for direct comparisons with the views of campus-based learners and distance learners as reported in the 2009 report, Table 18 shows the 2010 results for those subgroups only. For the campus-based students, levels of agreement in 2010 were 4-5% lower on the two questions they were asked last year. For the distance learners, three-quarters (76%) agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of the learning materials available to them; a reduction of only 2% from last year[17].

Table 18: Campus-based and distance learners' views on learning resources

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
Campus-based learners only	I have been able to access social learning spaces (e.g. for group working) on campus when I needed to	75%	70%
Campus-based learners only	I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed them	72%	68%
Distance learners only	I am satisfied with the quality of learning materials available to me (Print, online material, DVDs etc.)	78%	76%

[17] The 2009 question on the proportion of e-learning elements (Q18b) was not included in the 2010 questionnaire, in response to user feedback.

Skills and personal development

Students were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to skills and personal development gained on their programme (Q12). The results are summarised in Table 19, ranked in descending order.

Table 19: Students' views on skills and personal development

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
12a	The programme has developed my research skills	79%	78%
12b	The programme has developed my transferable skills	77%	78%
12c	As a result of the programme I am more confident about independent learning	75%	75%
12f	As a result of the programme, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems	66%	67%
12d	The programme has helped me to present myself with confidence	65%	66%
12e	As a result of the programme my communication skills have improved	61%	64%

Students rated most highly the impact of the programme on their development of research skills (78%, down 1% from 2009) and transferable skills (78%, up 1%), and on developing their confidence about independent learning (75%, unchanged from 2009).

Levels of agreement were lower in relation to feeling confident about tackling unfamiliar problems (67%, up 1% from 2009), presenting themselves with confidence (66%, up 1%), and improving their communication skills (64%, up 3%).

Slight increases in the percentage agreement are apparent in four of the six questions on this scale between 2009 and 2010, although the rank order remains unchanged. Quite how much this reflects a genuine improvement in students' view, caused by enhancements in provision and programmes, as opposed to being a more reliable indicator of students' views because of the larger number of institutions and students taking part, is difficult to establish.

Career and professional development

Students were asked to what extent they agreed with a series of statements relating to career and professional development as a result of their programme (Q13). The results are summarised in Table 20, ranked in descending order.

Table 20: Students' views on career and professional development

Question		% agree 2009	% agree 2010
13c	As a result of this programme, I believe my future employment prospects are better	78%	78%
13b	I feel better prepared for my future employment	72%	72%
13a	I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs	69%	68%

Views on career and professional development were generally high, with no change between the 2009 and 2010 surveys. More than three-quarters of the students agreed that their future employment prospects had improved by taking the programme (78%), nearly as many felt better prepared for future employment (72%), and two-thirds agreed that they had been encouraged to reflect on their professional development needs (68%). These results are encouraging given that improving employment prospects was one of the main motivations for students to undertake the postgraduate taught programme (Table 10).

Scales

The individual questions on specific themes can be grouped together to form scales, which provide a useful way of comparing themes. The approach taken in constructing the scales in PTES is the same as that in PRES, based on testing the internal reliability of a group of questions on a given theme, using Cronbach's alpha coefficient[18]. The higher the alpha score, the more internally reliable (robust) the group of questions when taken together. As a rule of thumb, a scale with an alpha coefficient of 0.8 and higher is considered to be robust (i.e. the scale measures what it is supposed to be measuring).

Eight scales can be calculated for the PTES questions, one for each major theme. Mean scores and alpha coefficients for these scales are listed in Table 21, ranked in descending order by mean 2010 score.

Note that three of the scales – staff, dissertation and learning resources – are different from those used in 2009, because of changes to the questionnaire. The differences are explained in the notes below the table. This means that for those three scales the 2010 values should not be compared directly with the 2009 values, because differences could be caused by the different questions included in the analysis, as well as by underlying changes in students' ratings of that aspect of their experience.

Table 21: PTES scales – mean scores and alpha coefficients

Scale	Question Nos.	PTES 2009		PTES 2010	
		Mean	Alpha	Mean	Alpha
Staff [a]	4a, 4b, 4c	3.98	0.865	4.05	0.896
Career and professional development	12a, 12b, 12c	3.93	0.834	3.93	0.857
Skills and personal development	11a, 11b, 11c, 11d, 11e, 11f	3.90	0.912	3.92	0.928
Teaching and learning	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d	3.88	0.841	3.92	0.861
Learning resources [b]	10a, 10b, 10c, 10d, 10e, 10f	3.95	0.829	3.89	0.900
Dissertation [c]	7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7e, 7f	3.63	0.932	3.84	0.933
Organisation and management	8a, 8b, 8c, 8d, 8e	3.84	0.840	3.82	0.857
Assessment and feedback	6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e, 6f	3.65	0.880	3.63	0.890

Notes on Table 21:
[a] this scale has one item less in 2010 than in 2009: Question 4d was not included in 2010.
[b] this scale has three items more in 2010 than in 2009, Questions 10d, 10e and 10f (see Table 17 and accompanying text). The mean scale score for 2010, recalculated using only the three questions used in 2009, is 3.92 (alpha = 0.831).

[18] www.statsoft.com/textbook/reliability-and-item-analysis/

[c] this scale has one item less in 2010 than in 2009: Question 8g was not included in 2010.

All of the scales have relatively high average scores – the minimum (assessment and feedback) is 3.63 out of a maximum of 5, and the top four scales (staff; career and professional development; skills and personal development; teaching and learning) have mean scores in excess of 3.9. Mean scores rose between 2009 and 2010 on four scales (staff; skills and personal development; teaching; dissertation), two of which were based on different questions so the change must be treated with caution. Each of the scales is robust, judged by the alpha coefficients, and in general the 2010 scales have slightly higher alpha values than the 2009 scales. The learning resources scale is much more robust in 2010, based now on six items rather than the three items used in 2009, and the staff scale is also more robust with one item removed.

There are statistically significant (at the 99.9% significance level) correlations between each of the scales (except staff) (Table 22), the strongest being between skills and career and the weakest between assessment and learning resources[19].

Table 22: Correlations between the PTES scales

	Teaching	Organisation	Skills	Career	Assessment	Dissertation	Learning resources
Teaching	1	0.668	0.624	0.596	0.611	0.574	0.403
Organisation	0.668	1	0.575	0.543	0.588	0.498	0.456
Skills	0.624	0.575	1	0.695	0.511	0.525	0.439
Career	0.596	0.543	0.695	1	0.497	0.479	0.396
Assessment	0.611	0.588	0.511	0.497	1	0.530	0.371
Dissertation	0.574	0.498	0.525	0.479	0.530	1	0.373
Learning resources	0.403	0.456	0.439	0.396	0.371	0.373	1

Relationship between scale scores and experience against expectation

Multiple regression analysis[20] was used to determine which factors (of those included) affect overall experience the most (Table 23). The seven scales, excluding staff (Table 21), combined account for 48% (r^2x100) of the variance in students' evaluations of the whole programme (compared with 52% for 2009). This is considered to be a medium effect. It means that factors that were included in the survey explain or account for just under half of the variation in the postgraduate taught student experience; the rest is explained by other factors (such as personal circumstances, campus facilities, etc.) that were not included in the PTES questionnaire. Possible reasons for the level of explanation being slightly lower in 2010 include the greater number of institutions that took part, the greater number of

[19] The staff scale has high skewness and kurtosis values, and is therefore not included in any further analysis.
[20] www.statsoft.com/textbook/multiple-regression/

respondents, a greater diversity in both institutions and respondents, and a larger overall sample.

Table 23: Summary of multiple regression analysis

Scales	Beta	Significant?	Rank 2010	Rank 2009
Teaching and learning	0.330	Yes (.000)	1	1
Skills and personal development	0.176	Yes (.000)	2	2
Career and professional development	0.133	Yes (.000)	3	4
Organisation and management	0.132	Yes (.000)	4	3
Assessment and feedback	0.078	Yes (.000)	5	5
Learning resources	-0.061	Yes (.000)	6	7
Dissertation	0.000	No (.957)	7	6

The importance of each scale – its strength in explaining variance in the students' evaluations – is expressed by the beta coefficient; the higher the beta value, the more important the scale. The multiple regression analysis shows that the most important scales (excluding staff) that affect the overall experience (Q14g) are teaching and learning, and skills and personal development. Career and professional development, and organisation and management are also important determinants of the overall experience. Learning resources and dissertation are the least important scales in this multiple regression model.

Although the dissertation scale has no statistical relationship with overall satisfaction, the learning resources scale has a statistically significant negative relationship. In other words, a higher score on learning resources tends to suggest a lower score on overall satisfaction, and vice versa. In PTES 2009, neither of these scales had a statistically significant relationship with overall satisfaction, although it should be borne in mind that the learning resources scale in 2009 contained only the first three items of the PTES 2010 learning resources scale, so the two scales are not directly comparable.

Section 4: Focus on employer engagement

This section has a focus on employer engagement because of its obvious relevance both to students and to employers. The survey results show that employment and career management are dominant motivators for students taking taught postgraduate programmes (Table 10), the skills and personal development scale and the career and professional development scale were the second and third highest-scoring scales (Table 21), and the multiple regression analysis (Table 23) showed that both scales had significant impacts on students' overall ratings of their experiences against expectations.

Wanting to understand more fully how students' attitudes towards employer engagement are related to other aspects of their experience on taught postgraduate programmes is not just a matter of curiosity, there is also a strong political imperative. The 2010 Smith Review of postgraduate provision, *One step beyond: making the most of postgraduate education*[21], emphasises that "making postgraduate provision more responsive to employer needs and encouraging more people to train to postgraduate level will ensure that the UK has the higher level skills needed to succeed in a global knowledge economy. This will be critical to securing the location of high-value business in the UK and to the creation of new employment opportunities in growth sectors."

To throw light on these matters, further analysis of the 2010 PTES aggregate dataset was designed to identify the importance of different aspects of the taught postgraduate student experience to students' attitudes towards employer engagement. This section summarises the results and implications of this detailed analysis.

Scale scores for skills and career

It is useful to consider the relationships between demographic factors and the scale scores for skills and personal development, and career and professional development. Differences in mean scale scores between males and females are very minor.

There are interesting differences by age (Table 24 and Figure 3). The students aged between 30 and 40 gave the highest scores on both scales, which suggests that they are the most career-focused group among the students who took part in the survey. The lowest-scoring age groups on both scales were those below 30 and older than 55.

Table 24: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by age

Age	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
25 years or younger	3.90	3.85
26-30 years	3.88	3.92
31-35 years	3.92	4.00
36-40 years	3.98	4.05
41-45 years	3.97	4.03
46-50 years	3.97	4.00
51-55 years	3.98	3.98
56 years or older	3.91	3.79

[21] www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/docs/p/10-704-one-step-beyond-postgraduate-education.pdf

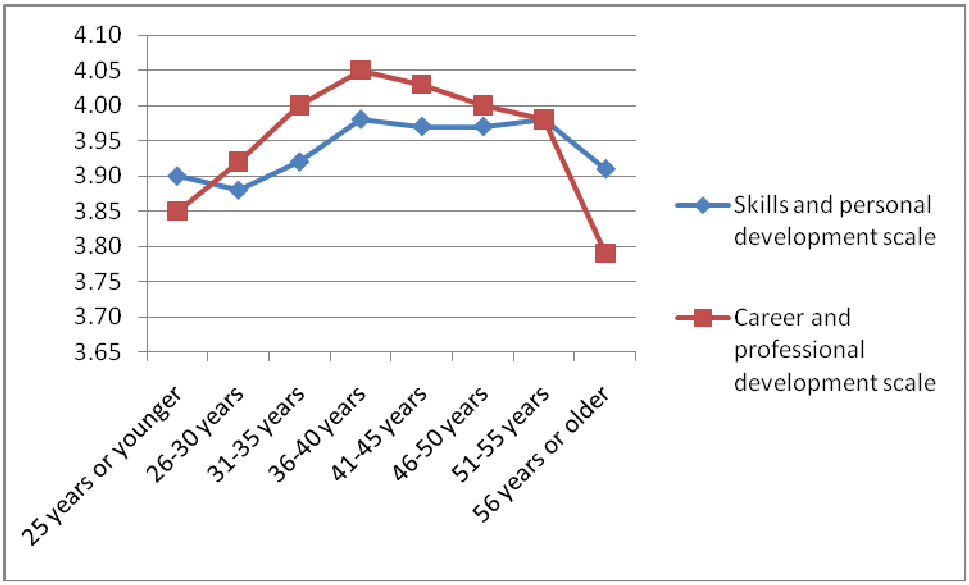

Figure 3: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by age

Part-time students rated both scales higher than full-time students (Table 25), but the difference is much larger for the career scale. The part-time students on the whole rated the career and professional development aspects of their programme much more highly than their full-time peers, perhaps reflecting a stronger career orientation in this group, many of whom are probably already engaged in the world of work.

Table 25: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by mode of study

Mode of study	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
Full-time	3.90	3.88
Part-time	3.95	4.01

Students whose programmes were delivered mainly by distance learning rated both scales higher than those whose programmes were delivered primarily face to face (Table 26). The largest difference is again in the career scale. This suggests that the distance-delivery students are more career-focused than their face-to-face peers, again probably because many of them have chosen to study by distance learning while at the same time holding down jobs and careers.

Table 26: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by mode of delivery

Mode of delivery	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
Primarily a face-to-face learner	3.89	3.87
Primarily a distance learner	4.00	4.11

Interesting patterns are also apparent in how the three groups by domicile rated the skills and career scales (Table 27). The international (non-EU) students rated items on the skills scale higher than their UK peers, who in turn rated them more highly than other EU students. The relative position of the three groups changes in the career scale, where the UK students gave much higher scores than the others. The results show that international students value the skills aspects of their taught postgraduate programmes more highly than they do the career aspects, whereas the reverse is true of UK students.

Table 27: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by domicile

Domicile	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
Home	3.92	3.97
Other EU	3.88	3.86
Non-EU	3.95	3.86

When the mean scale scores are calculated for students studying different disciplines, some quite striking patterns emerge (Table 28). It is notable that four disciplines appear in the top five on each scale – subjects allied to medicine; medicine and dentistry; agriculture and related subjects; business and administrative studies. Each of these disciplines is highly vocational. Education is also a very vocational discipline to study at taught postgraduate level, and while education students did not score items on the skills scale as highly as students in some other disciplines, they did score the career scale highly – it was the highest-scoring discipline on the career scale.

Conversely, three disciplines – languages; creative arts and design; combined studies – scored among the lowest five on both scales. The relatively low scoring on skills by students of creative arts and design is perhaps surprising, given the wide range of skills they are expected to display and use; perhaps they think of the term ‘skill’ in a different way to students in less explicitly creative disciplines. Alternatively, it is possible that those students feel that they have already acquired those skills and they either don’t expect or don’t experience a change in that area.

Table 28: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by discipline

Discipline (JACS codes)	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
(1) Medicine and dentistry	3.97	3.98
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	4.01	4.08
(3) Biological sciences	3.94	3.92
(4) Veterinary science	4.16	3.91
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	3.99	3.93
(6) Physical sciences	3.89	3.85
(7) Mathematical sciences	3.76	3.86
(8) Computer science	3.89	3.81
(9) Engineering and technology	3.93	3.92
(10) Architecture, building and planning	3.87	3.91
(11) Social studies	3.86	3.79
(12) Law	3.85	3.83
(13) Business and administrative studies	3.96	3.94
(14) Mass communications and documentation	3.84	3.82
(15) Languages	3.84	3.71
(16) Historical and philosophical studies	3.93	3.56
(17) Creative arts and design	3.84	3.78
(18) Education	3.92	4.28
(19) Combined	3.81	3.74

Motivation for taking a taught postgraduate programme also appears to influence students' views on skills and career (Table 29). Perhaps not surprisingly, the students with the most explicitly career-focused motivations – to progress in their current career path, meet the requirements of their current job, or enter a particular profession – rated the career scale more highly than the skills scale, and they are the top three on the career scale. Those who were motivated more by personal interest or to progress to a higher level qualification gave higher scores on the skills scale. Only one motivation item ('to progress in my current career path') came in the top three on both scales.

Table 29: Mean scores on the skills and career scales, by motivation

Motivation	Skills and personal development scale	Career and professional development scale
To progress to higher level qualifications	4.00	3.92
To progress in my current career path	3.97	4.03
To change current career	3.93	3.96
To improve employment prospects	3.94	3.91
Requirement to enter a particular profession	3.94	4.12
To meet requirement of current job	3.89	4.05
For personal interest	3.96	3.89
Other	3.80	3.76

Experience against expectations – skills and career (Questions 14e and 14f)

A different way of exploring the factors that affect students' views of skills and career is to look at relationships between demographic variables and the experience against expectation questions relating to skills and personal development (Q14e) and career and professional development (Q14f).

Taking the skills and personal development question first, analysis reveals no marked differences between males and females, students studying full-time and part-time, face-to-face and distance learners, or those who are in employment and those who are not. There is a weak relationship with age, which mirrors the trend shown in Figure 3 for the skills scale (i.e. the middle age groups tend to score the skills question slightly higher than younger or older students). A more marked difference is apparent in relation to domicile: 72% of the international (non-EU) students agreed that skills and personal development had definitely exceeded their expectations, compared to 68% of the other EU students and 66% of the home (UK) students. The 6% difference between international and UK students is striking, and it demonstrates a much higher level of satisfaction. It is not possible to say whether the international students had lower expectations than UK students, better experiences, or a mixture of the two.

There are interesting differences between disciplines (Table 30). The five highest scores on skills and personal development (all of which are essentially vocational disciplines) came from

- veterinary science (72%),
- education (72%),
- business and administrative studies (70%),
- subjects allied to medicine (70%) and
- engineering and technology (70%)

The five lowest score came from:

- historical and philosophical studies (60%),
- languages (61%),
- physical sciences (62%),
- mass communications and documentation (63%), and
- mathematical sciences (63%).

Table 30: High scores on experience against expectations on skills and career, by discipline[22]

Discipline	Skills and personal development	Career and professional development
(1) Medicine and dentistry	69%	68%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	70%	70%
(3) Biological sciences	67%	64%
(4) Veterinary science	72%	68%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	66%	65%
(6) Physical sciences	62%	60%
(7) Mathematical sciences	63%	65%
(8) Computer science	66%	64%
(9) Engineering and technology	70%	68%
(10) Architecture, building and planning	66%	64%
(11) Social studies	65%	61%
(12) Law	65%	64%
(13) Business and administrative studies	70%	66%
(14) Mass communications and documentation	63%	60%
(15) Languages	61%	52%
(16) Historical and philosophical studies	60%	48%
(17) Creative arts and design	67%	60%
(18) Education	72%	72%
(19) Combined	64%	60%

There are no marked differences on the skills question between the different motivation items, except that the rating was much lower for the 'Other' category (61%, compared to 67-71% for the other groups).

Moving next to the career and professional development question (Q14f), no marked differences were found between males and females, full-time and part-time study, domicile, or employed and not employed. There is a marked difference related to mode of delivery – 69% of the distance learners agreed that skills and personal development had definitely exceeded their expectations, compared with 63% of the face-to-face learners. Perhaps more of the face-to-face learners had greater expectations and found that the experience did not live up to them.

Interesting patterns also emerge in the profile by discipline of responses to the career and professional development question (Table 30). Four of the top five disciplines for career are also in the top five for skills – education (72%), subjects allied to medicine (70%), veterinary science (68%) and engineering and technology (68%). The students taking the most vocational programmes tended to agree that their experience of career and professional development definitely exceeded their expectations. Three of the bottom five disciplines for

[22] These percentages refer to expectations that have been exceeded.

career are also in the bottom five for skills – historical and philosophical studies (48%), languages (52%) and mass communications and documentation (60%).

Analysis of single items on skills and personal development

A third approach is to look for patterns between demographic factors and responses to particular questions relating to skills and personal development (Questions 12a to 12f) and career and professional development (Questions 13a to 13c).

Taking first the skills items in Question 12, Table 31 shows the profile of responses by discipline. What is particularly striking is that a small number of disciplines – subjects allied to medicine; veterinary science; agriculture and related subjects; business and administrative studies – come in the top five (by percentage agreement) on nearly all of the items. Two – veterinary science and agriculture and related subjects – are in the top five on all six items.

Equally striking, a small number of disciplines – mathematical sciences; mass communications and documentation; languages; creative arts and design; combined – come in the bottom five on many items, with combined coming in the bottom five on all six items.

Some disciplines are in the top five for some items and the bottom five for others. For example, education is in the top five for transferable skills but the bottom five for research skills and confidence about independent learning. Historical studies is in the top five for research skills but the bottom five for transferable skills, confident self-presentation, and improved communication skills.

For all disciplines, percentage agreement is higher on the questions relating to research skills (Q12a) and transferable skills (Q12b) than on confident self-presentation (Q12d), improving communication skills (Q12e) and confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems (Q12f).

Table 31: Profile of responses to items about skills and personal development, by discipline

Discipline	Q12a Research skills	Q12b Transferable skills	Q12c Confident about independent learning	Q12d Present myself with confidence	Q12e Improved communication skills	Q12f Confident in tackling unfamiliar problems
(1) Medicine and dentistry	78%	81%	78%	69%	62%	68%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	81%	83%	77%	68%	65%	69%
(3) Biological sciences	80%	80%	74%	67%	65%	67%
(4) Veterinary science	83%	83%	81%	79%	69%	76%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	88%	85%	79%	71%	71%	79%
(6) Physical sciences	80%	77%	74%	65%	61%	68%

(7) Mathematical sciences	69%	70%	74%	61%	56%	68%
(8) Computer science	77%	75%	74%	66%	62%	69%
(9) Engineering and technology	79%	77%	76%	68%	64%	71%
(10) Architecture, building and planning	78%	76%	74%	64%	63%	66%
(11) Social studies	79%	76%	75%	62%	61%	65%
(12) Law	74%	75%	68%	63%	63%	64%
(13) Business and administrative studies	79%	80%	78%	70%	68%	71%
(14) Mass communications and documentation	77%	76%	70%	60%	61%	61%
(15) Languages	78%	71%	74%	60%	58%	59%
(16) Historical and philosophical studies	84%	73%	75%	61%	61%	65%
(17) Creative arts and design	74%	71%	70%	64%	63%	64%
(18) Education	72%	80%	70%	68%	64%	65%
(19) Combined	75%	74%	72%	58%	59%	62%

Few of the skills items (Q12) show any marked variations by age, except for improving communication skills (Q12e), where percentage agreement declines steadily with age. 68% of the students aged 25 or less agreed that their communication skills had improved as a result of the programme; by 36-40 years this had declined to 61%, and for students aged 56 or more it had fallen further to 53%. The biggest decline (5%) was between students aged 25 or less and students aged between 26 and 30.

Similarly, few of the skills items showed marked variations by gender, except for feeling confident about tackling unfamiliar problems, with which 70% of male students but only 65% of female students agreed.

The only skills item where there was a marked difference by mode of study was improving communication skills (Q12e), where 67% of full-time students agreed compared with 60% of part-time students.

None of the skills items showed marked variations by mode of delivery (i.e. campus-based compared with distance learners).

Variations by domicile emerged in several of the skills items. In terms of confidence about independent learning (Q12c), a much greater proportion of international (non-EU) students

agreed than UK (home) students – 80% compared with 73%[23]. International students (71%) also agreed more than UK students (65%) that the programme had helped them to present themselves with confidence[24]. They also agreed more (69% compared with 62%) that their communication skills had improved as a result of the programme[25].

The only skills item that varies by paid employment is improvement in communication skills (Q12e): those who were currently in paid employment agreed much less (61%) than those who were not (66%).

Analysis of single items on career and professional development

As with skills and personal development, some interesting patterns of variation by demographic group are evident in the items on career and professional development (Q13).

Table 32: Profile of responses to items about career and professional development, by discipline

Discipline	Q13a I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs	Q13b I feel better prepared for my future employment	Q13c Future employment prospects are better
(1) Medicine and dentistry	75%	77%	78%
(2) Subjects allied to medicine	76%	76%	81%
(3) Biological sciences	66%	73%	79%
(4) Veterinary science	61%	71%	76%
(5) Agriculture and related subjects	68%	75%	77%
(6) Physical sciences	56%	73%	81%
(7) Mathematical sciences	62%	77%	85%
(8) Computer science	61%	71%	78%
(9) Engineering and technology	64%	76%	81%
(10) Architecture, building and planning	67%	73%	81%
(11) Social studies	60%	67%	78%
(12) Law	59%	72%	79%
(13) Business and administrative studies	70%	74%	80%
(14) Mass communications and documentation	64%	69%	76%
(15) Languages	59%	61%	70%
(16) Historical and philosophical studies	50%	54%	67%
(17) Creative arts and design	70%	63%	69%
(18) Education	88%	82%	83%
(19) Combined	63%	63%	70%

The pattern for career items is more varied than that for skills items (Table 31), but there are still some interesting clusters. Five disciplines – medicine and dentistry; subjects allied to medicine; mathematical sciences; engineering and technology; education – score in the top

[23] The proportion of EU students was also 73%, the same as for UK students.
[24] The proportion of EU students was 61%, lower than for UK students.
[25] The proportion of EU students was 66%, about midway between UK and non-EU students.

five on at least two of the three items, with education scoring in the top five on all three. Five disciplines – social studies; languages; historical and philosophical studies; creative arts and design; combined – score in the bottom five on at least two items, with languages and historical and philosophical studies scoring in the bottom five on all three. Creative arts and design appears in the top five for reflecting on professional needs and in the bottom five for the other two items on this scale.

All three items vary slightly with age. Levels of agreement about being encouraged to reflect on professional development needs (Q13a) rise from 64% among students aged 25 or younger to a peak of 73% for students aged between 36 and 45, and then dip slightly with increasing age. A similar pattern occurs with feeling better prepared for future employment (Q13b), with percentage agreement rising from 70% among students aged 25 and younger, to a peak of 77% in the age range 36-40 years, then declining slightly to 72% by 51-55. Levels of agreement are higher overall on believing that future employment prospects are better (Q13c), but the age pattern is repeated; 79% agreement among students in the youngest group rises to 81% among students aged 36-40, then falls again to 74% for the 51-55 years old group. Perhaps not surprisingly, scores on all three items drop quite sharply in the 56 years and older group, who are not as explicitly career-oriented as their younger peers.

In only one of the items – being encouraged to reflect on professional development needs (Q13a) – is there a marked difference by mode of study. 72% of part-time students agreed that they were, compared with only 66% of full-time students. A similar picture emerges with mode of delivery: 76% of distance learners agreed that they were, whereas only 66% of face-to-face learners agreed.

Mode of delivery also produced marked difference in response to the items on feeling better prepared for future employment (Q13b) and believing that future employment prospects are better (Q13c). Distance learners had much higher levels of agreement with the former (79%) than face-to-face learners (70%) had, and also much higher levels of agreement with the latter (82% compared with 77%).

Section 5. Developing PTES

The PTES 2010 results, which are summarised in the Executive Summary and described in Sections 3 and 4, are very positive and they show that students on taught postgraduate programmes rate their overall experience highly, at least as highly as final-year undergraduate students (evidenced by NSS) and postgraduate research students (evidenced by PRES).

This final section of the report summarises the issues arising from the 2010 PTES survey and outlines how they will be addressed as PTES is further developed.

User feedback

Valuable user feedback on PTES 2010 was collected both formally and informally. Formal feedback was collected at a PTES officers' meeting (which included more than 30 institutional representatives) held in Wolverhampton in May 2010, and a meeting of the PTES Advisory (formerly Steering) Group held in York on in May 2010. Informal feedback was collected by the Academy survey team, in the form of email contacts and discussions with PTES officers, and questions received from them, during the course of the survey. The feedback was very helpful and constructive, and it has helped to identify areas where improvements can be made. In order to capture as much feedback as possible from participating institutions, a post-survey questionnaire is being distributed to all PTES officers involved in PTES 2010.

Revisions to the questionnaire

While some user feedback has suggested that some of the PTES questions may be worded rather loosely, thereby enabling students to interpret them in slightly different ways, the general consensus is that no changes to the questionnaire are necessary. It is recognised that stability and continuity from year to year should, wherever feasible, be preserved in order to allow the meaningful tracking of changes in student feedback and perceptions over time.

Participation rates – institutions and students

2010 saw a 150% increase in the number of participating institutions, from 30 in 2009 to 76. They are well spread by mission group (Table 2) and country (Table 1). For a national survey in which participation is optional – unlike the National Student Survey, which is compulsory – this is very heartening. However, it would be even better if all higher education institutions with taught postgraduate programmes – which probably means all of them – took part in PTES. This would help to sharpen the national picture, and would doubtless benefit the institutions themselves, particularly through the ability to benchmark themselves against the sector and against particular benchmarking groups.

Although the number of students taking part in PTES in 2010 was more than double the number in 2009 – 32,638 compared with 14,421, representing a good sample size – the substantial rise in the number of participating institutions meant that the overall response rate fell from 17.7% (with 30 participating institutions) to 14.8% (with 76, see Table 3). While such a response is disappointingly low at the aggregate level, it nonetheless allows meaningful conclusions to be drawn about what taught postgraduates think about their experiences. This confidence is based on the fact that the overall sample is large, it includes students from a wide variety of institutions, and the results for 2009 and 2010 are remarkably similar. The relatively low response rate tends to be a feature of a voluntary survey, and

although the large sample more than achieved critical mass this year, the Academy is keen to increase institutional response rates and is taking steps to do so in future surveys.

Few institutions had response rates of over 20%, and in many the response rates were considerably lower. Low response rates in individual institutions present more of a problem than at the aggregate level, because senior managers are often reluctant to introduce changes to institutional policies, procedures or facilities informed by evidence based on such low response rates.

Feedback was sought from users, particularly at the PTES officers' meeting, on what participating institutions had done to try to maximise student response rates. Initiatives included:

a. Advertising
   - emails: students prefer to receive personalised emails (Dear John/Jane, etc.) rather than obviously generic ones. Emails sent in the name of key institutional people (head of postgraduate student association, Students' Union president, vice-chancellor, etc.) are more likely to be opened and read. Regular email reminders to those who have not yet taken part in the survey are useful, provided students don't feel hassled by them;
   - postgraduate e-bulletins: electronic bulletins targeted to the taught postgraduate students, which include details of the survey and emphasise the benefits of taking part. More interesting if it includes more than just text, such as podcast downloads by students for students;
   - campus electronic noticeboards and display screens: PowerPoint or similar graphic messages displayed at the entrance to campus buildings. Key messages, e.g. 'X days left to do the survey, Y students have already completed it, have you done it yet?';
   - messaging via new technologies: Twitter, Facebook, text messages, etc.;
   - bespoke screensavers on campus computers;
   - student websites;
   - Students' Union: building, officers, activities;
   - programme leaders;
   - student course representatives;
   - appoint student survey champions: to encourage their peers to take part.

b. Incentives
   - institutional donation to RAG: a donation made for each student that completes the survey;
   - student incentives: such as free gym pass or entry to competition to win travel vouchers or an iPod. This requires a way of ensuring a particular student has completed the survey, without breaching anonymity of the survey response, e.g. ask student to print out the final screen of PTES and submit it to the relevant office with their student ID;
   - incentivise school/faculty staff to encourage their students to complete the survey: e.g. through a resource incentive such as funding towards a particular student social event, won by the school/faculty with the highest response rate.

c. Dissemination of results
   Students are much more likely to take part in a survey where they believe that what they say will be taken seriously by the institution, and one way of evidencing this is to disseminate the results and follow-up action plan widely. Examples include:
   - story postcards: illustrate some recent improvement, caption along the lines of 'if you didn't tell us, this would not have happened';
   - 'you said, we did' campaign and material: a common approach;

- articles in the institution's in-house and student magazines, about PTES results and follow-up;
- posters around campus (e.g. library, postgraduate centre) about PTES results and follow-up;
- Students' Union and student representatives: make sure they know about PTES results and follow-up; ask them to help promote the survey among this year's students.

Timing of the survey

The decision to make PTES available online over a longer period – between 15 February and 28 May 2010 – within which participating institutions agreed to have a survey period of at least six weeks, was welcomed. Student response rates remained low (indeed, fell) despite the added flexibility this approach gave to institutions. We are taking further steps in 2010-11 to address this, including working with the National Union of Students and institutional colleagues.

It is recognised that no particular survey period will work best for all institutions, because of variations in how taught postgraduate programmes are structured. This applies particularly to the dissertation phase of the programme, and PTES needs to be run before Easter in order to give institutions time to analyse their results and decide on appropriate follow-up action before the next year's programme starts (usually in September or October).

Why should your institution take part in PTES?

- HEIs are able to benchmark their own results against sector and mission group results.
- Results will be useful in informing internal enhancement activities, and they do not feed into national league tables.
- Additional questions can be added by each HEI.
- PTES offers good value for money.
- PTES is user-friendly, both for the institutional staff administering and analysing the survey, and for students to complete.
- The Academy offers a range of support, including guidelines on how to set up the survey, how to analyse results, examples of good practice, and support meetings for institutional PTES officers.
- PTES is part of a wider Academy postgraduate survey programme, alongside PRES.

For further information about the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, please go to www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/supportingresearch/postgraduatework.

Appendix: The PTES 2010 questionnaire

SECTION A: MOTIVATIONS

1. My main motivations for taking this postgraduate programme were: *(select all that apply)*

   - ✔ To enable me to progress to a higher level qualification (e.g. PhD)
   - ✔ To progress in my current career path (i.e. a professional qualification)
   - ✔ To change my current career
   - ✔ To improve my employment prospects
   - ✔ As a requirement to enter a particular profession
   - ✔ To meet the requirements of my current job
   - ✔ For personal interest
   - ✔ Other *(Please specify…)*……..

2. I am studying for this qualification at this particular institution because of: *(select all that apply)*

   - ✔ The overall reputation of the institution
   - ✔ The institution's reputation in my chosen subject area
   - ✔ The reputation of the department
   - ✔ The location of the institution
   - ✔ I have studied at this institution before
   - ✔ It is the only institution offering this programme
   - ✔ It was recommended to me
   - ✔ My employer advised or encouraged me to do it
   - ✔ Delivery of the programme is flexible enough to fit around my life
   - ✔ The way the programme is assessed
   - ✔ Funding was available to me to study this particular programme
   - ✔ The cost of the programme compared to other institutions
   - ✔ Graduates from this institution have good career and employment prospects
   - ✔ Other *(Please specify…)*……..

SECTION B: QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

3. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding teaching and learning on your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. The teaching and learning methods are effective for this type of programme	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. There is sufficient contact time (face to face and/or virtual/online) between staff and students to support effective learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. I am happy with the teaching support I received from staff on my course	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. The course is intellectually stimulating	○	○	○	○	○	○

4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding staff on your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. Staff are good at explaining things	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Staff made the subject interesting	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	○	○	○	○	○	○

5. Overall, how would you rate the teaching quality on your programme?

- ✔ It is consistently good
- ✔ It is variable but generally good
- ✔ It is variable but generally poor
- ✔ It is consistently poor

SECTION C: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

6. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding assessment and feedback on your programme?

Feedback includes oral and written feedback given in both formal and informal contexts.

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Feedback on my work has been prompt	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. I received feedback in time to allow me to improve my next assignment	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. I have received detailed comments (written or oral) on my work	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION D: DISSERTATION

7. Do you need to write a dissertation as part of your programme?

   - ✔ Yes
   - ✔ No (If no, please go to the next section)

8. If yes, to what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your dissertation and supervisor?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. I understand the required standards for the dissertation	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. My supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to adequately support my dissertation	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. My supervisor makes a real effort to understand any difficulties I face	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. I have been given good guidance in topic selection and refinement by my supervisor	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. I have received good guidance in my literature search from my supervisor	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress.	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION E: ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding organisation and management of your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. The timetable fits well with my other commitments	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Any changes in the programme or teaching have been communicated effectively	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. The programme is well organised and is running smoothly	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. The balance of core modules and options is appropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. The balance between scheduled contact time and private study is appropriate	○	○	○	○	○	○

10. Overall, the workload on the programme is:

- ✔ Much higher than I expected
- ✔ Higher than I expected
- ✔ More or less as I expected
- ✔ Lower than I expected
- ✔ Much lower than I expected

SECTION F: LEARNING RESOURCES

11. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding learning resources on your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. The library resources and services are easily accessible	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. I have been able to access general IT resources when I needed to	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. I have been able to access social learning spaces (e.g. for group working) on campus when I needed to	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities, or rooms when I needed them	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. I am satisfied with the quality of learning materials available to me (Print, online material, DVDs, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION G: SKILLS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

12. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding skills gained on your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. The programme has developed my research skills	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. The programme has developed my transferable skills	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. As a result of the programme I am more confident about independent learning	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. The programme has helped me to present myself with confidence	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. As a results of the programme my communication skills have improved	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. As a result of the programme, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION H: CAREER AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

13. To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding professional development on your programme?

	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree	Not applicable
a. I am encouraged to reflect on my professional development needs	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. I feel better prepared for my future employment	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. As a result of this programme, I believe my future employment prospects are better	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION I: OVERALL SATISFACTION

14. Please rate the following broad aspects of your postgraduate taught programme in terms of how your experience of those aspects has met with your expectations *(-3 it has definitely not met my expectations , 0 it has met my expectations, +3 it has definitely exceeded my expectations)*

	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
a. Quality of teaching and learning	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
b. Assessment and feedback	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
c. Organisation and management	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
d. Learning resources	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
e. Skills and personal development	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
f. Career and professional development	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
g. Overall experience of my course	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION J: FURTHER COMMENTS

Looking back over your experience of your taught degree programme, are there any particularly positive or negative aspects you would like to highlight?

15. POSITIVE

……..

……

16. NEGATIVE

……..

……

Space for institutional questions

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

17. I am registered for the qualification of:

- Taught Master (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA, LLM)
- Postgraduate Certificate (including PGCE)
- Postgraduate Diploma
- Other *(Please specify…)*

18. What is your age?

- 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

19. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Which of the following most closely matches the course you are currently studying?

20. Please indicate, which of the following most closely matches your discipline:

- ✔ 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

21. *** 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.*

22. When did you start your course?

- After 1 January 2010
- 1 September 2009 – 31 December 2009
- 1 September 2008 – 31 August 2009
- Before 1 September 2008

23. What are you currently registered as?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Currently not registered (e.g. finished the course) was full-time
- Currently not registered (e.g. finished the course) was part-time

24. I am:

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

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

- Home
- Other EU
- Non EU

26. 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

27. What is your main source of funding for this course?

- Self-funded (e.g. loan, family)
- Charity
- Research council
- Institution (e.g. bursary, scholarship)
- Employer
- UK Government
- EU Government
- Overseas Government
- *Other (Please specify…)……*

28. Your highest qualification on entry:

- Qualifications below undergraduate degree
- Undergraduate degree or equivalent
- Postgraduate degree (e.g. MA)
- No academic qualifications but professional experience
- Other *(Please specify…)……..*