

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2018

The University participated in the now annual PRES for the eighth time this year, allowing the institution to track progress over a number of years. PRES is primarily a benchmarking tool and national results obtained from the 68 participating Higher Education institutions, incorporating over 15,500 individual responses, provide robust benchmarking data for individual institutions.

Aside from the benchmarking data and the statistical analysis, PRES also provides a high level of qualitative information via the open ended questions at the end of each section. As in previous years, a full list of all comments has been included in the appendices of this report as the comments will provide useful feedback on PhD Researcher perceptions of their research degree programmes at Ulster. These comments have been coded by thematic area and are provided by Faculty as small numbers in some Units could lead to identification of individuals.

Participation:

All registered PhD Researchers were invited to complete the online survey, which was open from 12 March to 18 May 2018. Following on from the success in achieving high participation rates in the last survey, an incentive scheme was again implemented whereby four £100 All4One vouchers were offered as part of a prize draw for participation. The Doctoral College sent out a number of targeted emails inviting participation and spikes in participation were noted following distribution of such emails. At the local level, faculties also encouraged participation in the survey and this helped to increase the participation rate. The survey platform provided by BOS (Bristol Online Surveys) required participants to access the survey by a unique PhD Researchers were assured of the anonymity of the survey.

The participation rate dropped from 58% in 2017 to 52% this year, although this rate remains well above the national average response rate of 39.5%. Individual Faculty participation rates, as shown in the table below, varied considerably.

	% Faculty Participation Rate
Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences:	46%
Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment	44%
Faculty of Life and Health Sciences:	61%
Ulster University Business School:	63%
Overall Institutional Rate:	52%

Findings – Scaled Questions:

As with previous surveys, scaled questions have been used to provide more robust data on each particular area of interest. Groups of questions relating to similar subject areas have been combined to form seven scaled questions and the questions making up each scale have been reproduced in Annex 1. The table below shows the mean scores for each scale over the years, along with a comparison against the national averages. It is pleasing to note that Ulster ranks above the national average for every indicator.

Scale	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 18	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 17	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 15	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 13	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 11	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 09	Ulster Mean Rating PRES 08	UK Mean Rating PRES 18
Supervision	4.40	4.26	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.8	4.38
Research Skills	4.42	4.38	4.4	4.3	4.0	3.9	3.8	4.33
Resources	4.19	4.22	4.2	4.2	4.0	3.7	3.6	4.09
Research Culture	3.79	3.63	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.3	3.1	3.71
Progress and Assessment	4.21	4.23	4.2	4.1	4.0	3.8	3.8	4.10
Professional Development	4.31	4.25	4.3	4.2	3.5	3.1	n/a	4.13
Responsibilities	4.23	4.18	4.1	4.1	3.8	3.6	n/a	4.09

Faculty Mean Scores by Scaled Question:

The table below provides further detail on the mean scores for each scale by Faculty, along with overall % satisfaction rates.

Scale	Faculty Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment	Life and Health Sciences	Ulster University Business School
Supervision	4.12	4.38	4.55	4.42
Research Skills	4.32	4.39	4.46	4.64
Resources	4.00	4.16	4.30	4.16
Research Culture	3.74	3.66	3.89	3.80
Progress and Assessment	4.14	4.12	4.26	4.53
Professional Development	4.29	4.23	4.35	4.48
Responsibilities	4.20	4.14	4.26	4.50
OVERALL MEAN:	4.12	4.15	4.30	4.36
OVERALL % SATISFACTION:	82.4%	83%	86%	87.2%

Unit level results:

Unit	Supervision	Physical Resources	Research Culture	Assessment and Progress	Roles and responsibilities	Research Skills	Professional Development	Total
Celtic Studies/Linguistics	4.40	3.57	3.93	4.35	4.40	4.53	4.60	4.25
English language and literature	3.67	3.90	2.82	3.29	3.28	3.63	4.08	3.52
History	4.65	4.13	3.81	4.20	4.40	4.57	4.25	4.29
Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies	4.25	4.01	4.07	4.43	4.33	4.45	4.26	4.25
Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management	4.45	3.98	3.93	4.50	4.65	4.35	4.10	4.28
Art and Design	3.66	3.98	3.57	3.94	4.10	4.27	4.21	3.96
Education	4.29	4.02	3.58	4.14	4.18	4.14	4.29	4.09
Law	4.45	4.28	4.20	4.43	4.73	4.53	4.63	4.46
Social Work and Social Policy	4.16	3.96	3.79	3.88	4.07	4.09	3.88	3.97
Computer Science and Informatics	4.56	4.35	3.93	4.33	4.37	4.51	4.30	4.34
Engineering	4.38	4.24	3.76	4.01	4.07	4.39	4.23	4.15
Architecture, Built Environment and Planning	4.24	3.88	3.30	4.07	3.93	4.30	4.22	3.99
Biomedical Sciences	4.76	4.27	3.99	4.41	4.32	4.54	4.48	4.40
Geography, Environmental Sciences and Archaeology	4.45	4.56	3.56	4.37	4.23	4.46	4.17	4.26
Nursing and Health	4.26	4.41	4.00	4.04	4.17	4.35	4.31	4.22
Psychology	4.55	4.33	4.10	4.30	4.39	4.41	4.36	4.35
Sport	4.21	3.82	2.89	3.77	3.86	4.36	4.05	3.85
Business and Management Studies	4.39	4.20	3.79	4.51	4.49	4.62	4.46	4.35

Scaled Questions:

Supervision:

My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research
I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs
My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities
My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher

Research Skills:

My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme
My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme

Resources:

I have a suitable working space
There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and online resources)
I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research

Research Culture:

My department provides a good seminar programme
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students
The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department

Progress and Assessment:

I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress
I understand the required standard for my thesis
The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me

Professional Development:

My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme

My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme

I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme

I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme

Responsibilities:

My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students

I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student

I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student

Other than my supervisor/s, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme
