

Consideration of the outcomes of PRES 2015, comparisons and recommendations

Summary

The following paper sets out the initial findings from the 2015 PRES, including commentary on headline data, School data and student comments. A number of recommendations have additionally been proposed. A fuller report will be provided to Senate later this academic year. In the meantime, the Graduate School Committee is asked to:

1. **consider** the report and the draft recommendations

Publication: restricted

Date/event on/following which the paper may be released: never

Freedom of Information Act 2000 Exemption: 40

Reason for closed classification: personal information relating to third party

Consideration of the outcomes of PRES 2015, comparisons and recommendations

Overview of the summary table of the results (2015 v 2013, the date of the last PRES survey). Table 1 below shows the results summarized and averaged across the University.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2015						
University Total	2015		2013		Difference	
	Mean	% Agree	Mean	% Agree	Mean	% Agree
Section A: Supervision						
To what extent do you agree with the following statements about supervision?						
My supervisors have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research	4.6	92%	4.57	91.7%	0.01	0.8%
I have regular contact with my supervisors, appropriate for my needs	4.5	89%	4.51	89.1%	-0.02	-0.2%
My supervisors provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities	4.5	88%	4.49	91.1%	0.04	-3.2%
My supervisors help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	4.3	82%	4.15	77.5%	0.12	4.8%
Section B: Resources						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about						
I have a suitable working space	4.0	73%	3.97	75.3%	0.00	-2.2%
There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities	4.1	80%	3.91	71.8%	0.16	8.4%
There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and online resources)	4.2	84%	3.76	68.8%	0.44	15.4%
I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research	3.8	71%	3.58	60.0%	0.27	10.7%
Section C: Research Culture						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the						
My department provides a good seminar programme	4.0	76%	3.97	74.9%	0.01	1.4%
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students	3.8	68%	3.75	67.4%	0.06	0.3%
The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work	3.7	64%	3.76	64.1%	-0.08	-0.5%
I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	3.6	61%	3.63	58.8%	-0.01	2.5%
Section D: Progress and Assessment						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about induction, progression arrangements and assessment?						
I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme	4.0	77%	3.98	77.0%	0.03	-0.5%
I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	4.3	87%	4.24	89.6%	0.02	-2.8%
I understand the required standard for my thesis	4.1	79%	4.17	82.2%	-0.08	-3.1%
The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me	4.0	77%	4.04	78.3%	-0.05	-1.0%
Section E: Responsibilities						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about						
My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	3.8	68%	3.82	67.6%	0.01	0.7%
I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	4.4	90%	4.40	94.7%	0.02	-4.2%
I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	4.4	87%	4.36	88.9%	0.02	-2.0%
Other than my supervisors, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme	4.0	78%	4.06	78.2%	-0.08	-0.5%
Section F: Research Skills						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about research skills development?						
My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	4.3	88%	4.35	89.5%	0.00	-1.1%
My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my	4.4	89%	4.39	88.6%	-0.02	0.7%
My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	4.1	78%	4.15	76.3%	-0.09	1.3%
My understanding of 'research integrity' (e.g. rigour, ethics, transparency, attributing the contribution of others) has developed during my programme	4.3	83%	4.28	83.1%	-0.02	-0.1%
Section G: Professional Development						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about						
My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	4.1	78%	4.14	76.8%	-0.04	1.2%
My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my	4.1	80%	4.18	80.4%	-0.06	-0.6%
I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	3.9	69%	3.98	75.3%	-0.11	-6.2%
I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	4.2	82%	4.15	81.1%	0.06	0.5%
Section H: Opportunities						
I received formal training for my teaching.	3.5	61%		Not included in 2013 Q		
Section I: Overview						
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your						
Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme	4.1	81%	4.08	83.8%	0.03	-2.5%
I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected	4.1	81%	4.07	79.4%	0.06	1.2%

Table 1: Summary of responses to the questions across the University

The data per School are shown in Figure 2, with the average per section shown here.

The data also compare 2013 with 2015.

Table 2: Summary of responses to the questions across the various Schools of the University, averaged per section in Table 1

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2015	University			Law			SASS			SHS			SMCSE		
	2015		Difference	2013		Difference	2015		Difference	2013		Difference	2015		Difference
	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree	% Agree
Section A: Supervision	88%	87.4%	0.6%	95%	83.4%	11.7%	83%	81.1%	2.0%	96%	86.7%	9.3%	87%	85.4%	2.4%
Section B: Resources	77%	69.0%	8.1%	92%	35.4%	56.6%	72%	60.6%	11.4%	80%	80.7%	-0.6%	75%	84.5%	-9.1%
Section C: Research Culture	67%	66.3%	0.9%	91%	70.9%	20.2%	61%	63.2%	-2.2%	71%	72.2%	-1.2%	66%	72.4%	-6.4%
Section D: Progress and Assessment	80%	81.8%	-1.8%	95%	77.1%	18.0%	71%	86.1%	-15.1%	78%	65.0%	13.0%	82%	87.1%	-5.1%
Section E: Responsibilities	81%	82.4%	-1.5%	97%	86.9%	10.1%	77%	82.0%	-5.0%	87%	76.7%	10.3%	79%	86.6%	-7.7%
Section F: Research Skills	85%	84.4%	0.2%	100%	81.8%	18.2%	75%	81.3%	-6.3%	82%	81.9%	0.1%	87%	81.5%	5.5%
Section G: Professional Development	77%	78.4%	-1.3%	87%	75.0%	12.0%	75%	79.2%	-4.1%	86%	74.0%	12.0%	74%	79.2%	-5.2%
Section H: Opportunities	61%			80%			43%			74%			61%		
Section I: Overview	81%	81.6%	-0.6%	97%	87.5%	9.5%	82%	73.2%	8.8%	79%	76.7%	2.3%	78%	84.5%	-6.7%
Max			8.1%			56.6%			11.4%						13.0%
Min			-1.8%			9.5%			-15.1%						-7.5%

Specific Comments from students from the key areas of the survey

The most informative data from the PRES 2015 survey comes from the ‘literal comments’ – the students completing the survey are free to write short comments on the topic of that section that reflect the issues they wish to raise. Thus it should be noted that what is reported below is from those individual students who were motivated to provide such comments – a caveat is that in some cases several students repeat a comment or theme, in others it is a comment from a single student. Thus the recommendations below are made in light of that caveat.

These have been collated below as follows:

- Under each of the major sections of the survey
- In terms of ‘positive’ or negative’ comments, grouping areas that are on similar themes

Section A: Supervision

Comment on the Headline Data: The headline figure in this section is the highest, at 88%, and marginally up on 2013, with the highest score of the survey given for the first question ‘my supervisor(s) have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research’ at 92% - this is a very clear support for the skills base of the supervisors at City. However, the weakest score (82%) is for ‘helping me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher’ – borne out by some of the literal comments in the response.

At School level the variation in the headline figure is from 96% (SHS) and 95% (Law), both showing large increases to 83% (SASS) with a small drop in SMCSE (to 87%).

Comments through the ‘literals’ were received from ~ 40 students, one of the largest responses. Comments were fairly evenly divided between positive and negative and may be summarized as follows.

‘Positive comments’	‘Negative comments’
<p>Several students commented on an ‘excellent’ supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my supervisor is the best • I have benefitted immensely from their guidance and support • My supervisors do a really good job of combining effective guidance due to their expertise (process and subject knowledge) and allowing me to own and steer the work myself • My supervisor encourages me to write papers for journals and conference which will add a great value to my career 	<p>A number of comments around the role and indeed appointment of the second supervisor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of second supervisor • The issue of second and review supervisors needs to be mainstreamed across the university, or at the very least across schools. Some people seem to have them, and some don't. It also needs to be made clear what is the role of this person • One of my supervisors definitely does do all of these things but the other definitely does not • Only saw my second supervisor twice or maybe three times in the whole of my PhD • Lack of 2nd supervisor contact is a real issue

Recommendations

- These positive comments above reflect that in general there is a good and positive relationship between the students and the supervisors: this should be fostered and built on to support improvements in other areas
- The appointment of a second supervisor (including where one supervisor leaves the University) must be consistent and clear to the students
- The role of second supervisor must be clear to both staff and students and communicated clearly (to both staff and students)
- The support for a student when one or both supervisors leave the University should be strengthened and the processes for replacing such a supervisor should be more transparent and acted upon quickly

Section B: Resources

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure in this section were relatively low, at 77% (but up 8% from last year), with the weakest figure for resources for 'specialist research' (at 71% - but up by 10% on 2013) and 'suitable working space' (73% - down 2% from 2013). Encouraging was the large increase in the response on 'adequate provision of library facilities' (84% - and up by 15% from 2013) and 'computing resources and facilities' (80% - up 8% from 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 92% (Law) to 72% (SASS).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~ 60 students, the area with the greatest response. Comments were less evenly divided between positive and negative, with about 70% negative and may be summarized as follows.

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>Several positive comments about the Library and the improvements there:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been great improvement in the library resources over the past two years. We were also given few inter-library loans • The library's read for research campaign has really helped to source the books that I need • The Library staff should especially be thanked for their prompt help and ordering of books that I need • The book purchasing service by the library is great • 'read for research' is a great scheme to improve the library • the library has been very helpful to order most of the books I've requested. • I did appreciate initiatives like "Library Loves Research". There should be more of these • I felt the library resource provision was poor during the literature review stage of my research. The resources have now improved 	<p>Negative comments in several areas of the Library provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unfortunately, access to relevant journals are still limited and more interlibrary loans are needed. • City library use occasionally has needed to be supplemented with trips to the British Library • The library is extremely limited and once books are ordered it takes well over a month for them to arrive. I need e-books to utilize disability software and there a very (limited supply) of these, once new ones are ordered there is very restricted access • Annoying that for certain journals I have to pay to get them printed in the library. No facilities to scan and email • The library's subscription to journals and similar online content could be much better • a little more access of specialized journal databases of Science and Engineering

	<p>Other negative areas of comment across several Schools include a poor working environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open office for some is good, for me is battle to concentrate due to noise, people talking on the phone• There were times when the printing machines for the PhD students were out of order for weeks and this obviously created stumbling blocks <p>There was considerable criticism from SASS students for the Pool area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working space at the Pool. The desktops there are of lower quality than in the University library, some desktops have larger screens than others and very often there are mice running around the room. All the above things make the Pool not a space suitable for working <p>Other comments on the workspace include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The creation of the PG room near to the library has been useful, but there are still a lack of suitable spaces for research students to work in. It is often extremely difficult to access computers, particularly during term time• The computers in the office for the PhD students of School of Social Sciences are very slow and lack some important software• I am not given any workspace at all to carry out my doctorate. Most of my work is carried out offsite and I barely go to the university because there is a lack of workspace• The working space has been reduced since January. This has caused me to spend less time at University <p>Negative comments about the new working space in SMCSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regarding working space, there was a large quality downgrade with the recent move (SMCSE) to a space with noise, lack of natural light, few toilets nearby and other inappropriate conditions• Printing, scanning, copier, etc. facilities have to be improved. Some machines are not at all working and go wrong often• More resources would be useful. More
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	integrated working environments. Breakout rooms for group discussions etc. Or quiet rooms to book for concentrated work. The open office environment is fine most of the time but an area to go to when you need quiet space - such as phone interviews, transcribing text, even just trying to concentrate as many people are talking was definitely missing
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Recommendations

- Library: improvements seen since the last survey and this has been appreciated; however improvement still needed in several areas
- Working environment: almost all comments were negative about the working environment. Larger open spaces are subject to noise and lack useful facilities such as printing, scanning etc. More integrated working environments would be appreciated. Breakout rooms for group discussions are requested. There is the need for some 'quiet space' to be bookable, especially for activities such as such as phone interviews or transcribing text. Some students find it hard to concentrate as many people are talking in these large rooms, which are unpopular
- Computer facilities in the working environment in some areas: for students in some areas not seen as good enough – slow computers, small screens etc.

Section C: Culture

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure in this section was 67%, one of the lowest in the survey and largely unchanged from last year. The highest score is for departmental seminar programmes (at 76% overall) with the weakest 'becoming involved in the wider research community (61% - but up 2% from 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 91% (Law) to 61% (SASS).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~ 35 students. Comments were less evenly divided between positive and negative, with about 80% negative and may be summarized as follows.

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>Support for establishing the culture from the supervisors seen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My supervisor regularly forwards information which may be of interest • Good support from supervisors for networking and joining the wider research community in my area • There are ongoing opportunities within the school to talk to other students and present work • Our department, and the particular research centre I fall within, has a programme of regular seminars covering a diverse range of 	<p>A number of comments around the broad culture and 'research ambience' overall within the University:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a problem in general at City where the culture of 'research' does not include prioritizing research students or their needs. I feel a connection with my department on this front but none whatsoever to the wider City community included my School • What is "research ambience"?! Questions don't allow for differences within Department; e.g. one specific seminar series in my Department is very good, others not so

<p>interesting topics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel I can discuss my research with any of the academics within our centre, although they are all extremely busy • I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community in other local Universities <p>The role of the City Graduate School and the Conference Attendance Fund has met with positive comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel I can discuss my research with any of the academics within our centre, although they are all extremely busy. City's Graduate School holds a number of events - research symposia, competitions etc - which provide opportunities to be exposed to research in other departments and meet other research students. They also provide a conference attendance fund that research students can apply for, and training in research-related software applications (NVivo, SPSS). The Graduate School plays a key role in my experience of research at City and that team should be commended for their efforts 	<p>much</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research ambience does not always stimulate, as supervisors are usually not very keen on external activities (though that depends on a supervisor). Opportunities to become involved in the wider research community - why it is true that my department invites external speakers, there doesn't seem to be much interaction between the departments <p>Establishing the broad community of researchers at City remains a problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No inter-department work whatsoever • My department (Music) often feels isolated from the rest of the university, and there is a notable lack of cross-departmental, interdisciplinary research activities at the university • We don't have lab meetings or research group meetings which I feel would engender a better research environment • There is not enough of a community feel in my department, although there are some of us students working to change this through organising events and department catch-ups • Research students hardly get chance to know about the other research projects undertaken by other faculty in the department. There is no access to the research students to know all the current projects • This was fine in our small group but more difficult cross department. You need to make an effort to do it which some people struggle to do. I think City can do more to encourage students to get more involved, integrate departments and encourage discussion with others
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Recommendations

- A Research culture at all levels, especially at Departmental level, seems to be missing. Many students feel 'siloed' and somewhat isolated and would benefit more from contact more broadly across the Institution
- More effort to establish a better research culture would be welcomed by students: there is a need to do more to establish a broader community of researchers who can interact and support each other
- The role of the City Graduate School and the Conference Attendance Fund is seen positively

Section D: Induction Programme

Comment on the Headline Data: The ‘headline’ figure in this section was 80 %, down 2% from last year. The highest score is for ‘understanding deadlines for formal assessment (at 87%) with the weakest being ‘appropriate induction’ and ‘understanding the assessment procedures’ (77% - slightly down on 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 95% (Law) to 71% (SASS).

Comments through the ‘literals’ were received from ~ 25 students. Comments were less evenly divided between positive and negative, with about 80% negative and may be summarized as follows.

‘Positive comments’	‘Negative comments’
<p>Some positive comments about the induction programme;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both my supervisor and administrative staff within my department have provided information about progression and assessment when necessary. • There is an excellent guide to being a research student produced by the graduate school. I do not understand the required standard for me thesis, and my supervisor has not been very helpful in clarifying this, despite requests • The induction to my research degree programme was very good. My supervisors do an excellent job of making sure I understand progress monitoring requirements and assessment procedures, and our Senior Research Tutor is approachable and helpful 	<p>A number of comments that show the deficiencies of the induction programme and areas where it can be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The university-wide induction day was of absolutely no use • The induction was run by the Graduate School, as far as I remember, and wasn't really fit for purpose. I've had to seek out most of the information I needed on my own afterwards • We had induction program at the university and at the school level. We need to have an induction program at the department/ division level to help the student to get integrated into the divisional activities • There was a small reception for new research students when I started but beyond that, I received little or no induction into the department or university. I felt quite overwhelmed at the beginning of my PhD and I think that this would have helped • NO induction to building <p>There is clearly also a gap for ‘late starters’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I started late so I didn't receive the formal induction <p>Criticism of RaP comes from some students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RaP online system is an absolute disaster. There are numerous technological glitches and it has become more of a box ticking exercise rather than a spot for meaningful reflection on the research journey • I find it a bit confusing that the deadlines for the formal monitoring of my progress (in RAP) don't tie up with the factual course of events (e.g. the Annual Review presentations

	<p>take place in May, but the RAP Annual review entry/form is dated August and the same applies to the Upgrade)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comments in RAP do not appear to be read by anyone apart from student and one supervisor <p>Lack of confidence in going into the thesis is reflected in comments such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I do not understand the required standard for me thesis, and my supervisor has not been very helpful in clarifying this, despite requests.• The details of my PhD progression were not covered in the induction. We were given a handbook that touches upon some key points but this is not exhaustive at all. I (and my colleagues often feel lost in this respect as we do not know what exactly is expected of us)• Guidelines for thesis submission and viva examinations are not necessarily clear or gathered together in the same place. Finding correct up to date information can be a little difficult. Also guidelines rarely seem written from a student's point of view but rather reflect the role and requirements of administrators• Assessment has been briefly discussed. What I know form assessment It's what I've heard from some of my fellows• I have been waiting over 3 months for approval to the final amendments to my thesis, after passing my viva. I have no idea whether there is a deadline for the examiners to approve my final amendments• I have done my thesis and viva nowthe info for example for the transfer to write up was confusing and not 100% clear
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Recommendations

- Students value an induction programme: indeed there seems to be a need for both a University-level (City Graduate School) induction as well as a 'local' (School or Departmental/Research Centre) level induction. The content of the induction needs examining and broadened, e.g. to include introduction to wider facilities. Students are not satisfied with what is provided
- Research and Progress (RaP) – problems still exists and a number of technical issues need attention

- There is a need for a formal preparation programme as the student goes into the writing up and submission phase: students seem not to know what to expect and how to prepare for this part of the PhD.

Section E: Feedback and response

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure in this section was 81 %, down 2% from last year. The highest score is for 'understanding my responsibilities as a research student (at 90%) with the weakest being 'my institution values and responds to feedback' (68% - same as 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 97% (Law) to 77% (SASS).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~ 20 students. Comments were less evenly divided between positive and negative, with about 90% negative and may be summarized as follows.

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>Several students commented positively on staff support at all levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both my departmental Director of Research and PG Administrator have always been able to provide support and information about my studies, in addition to my supervisor • The staff - research and administrative - have been splendid and wonderful. Very accessible and willing to help 	<p>A number of negative comments around the way feedback is seen and how it is used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would say that the institution uses feedback from students as a tickbox process. I wouldn't say they value our feedback but they respond to it • (on feedback) I am not entirely certain of either of these things • There is a Research Degrees Committee I don't think this is because the staff involved aren't interested in getting feedback from research students, I think it may be because their workloads are too heavy • I feel that there are just two people to talk to about stuff going on with the research. My supervisor and our director. That's all • There is no adequate system in place if there are issues with 1st supervisor <p>Some students clearly did not know where to go in the case of problems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing who to turn to for help (other than supervisors) is a big problem • "Who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme." - Generally they are within the same Department or School as Supervisors, which reduces the likelihood of actually approaching them • We had someone as a person to approach to. However after he left, I am not sure who to contact • Departmental politics have made me wary of contacting some department representatives

	<p>with concerns and questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re 'other than supervisor' - it appears that the STR for my centre has been changed, but with no notification to the students, and no knowledge from the STR about the groups of students they have become responsible for. Very poor communication • Usually I know who to approach. Sometimes it is not clear as people change positions, responsibilities over the PhD period so you become unaware who to approach
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Recommendations

- Several instances of good practice where students seemed supported well by either/both academic and administrative staff: build on this for the future
- Many students are unclear who to turn to in the case of problems – where the supervisor(s) cannot be approached (as they may be part of the problem). Students should be clearly advised that they can approach the Associate Dean for Research Students or the Senior Tutor for Research in such cases
- Feedback – students should be told what is being done with feedback received and how it is acted on. At the moment students are confused about what happens to feedback – and the weakest score is on the institution valuing feedback and response from research students

Section F: Research Skills

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure in this section was 85%, similar to the last survey. The highest score is for improved skills for critical analysis (at 89%) with the weakest being 'my confidence in being creative or innovative' (% - same as 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 100% (Law) to 75% (SASS).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~ 25 students. Comments were mostly negative and may be summarized as follows.

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>One student commented on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop students on these issues, the School is putting particular efforts 	<p>A number of comments around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On skills development, City could do more to provide methods training to PhD students • While my skills have improved, this is mostly down to learning by doing (with some Supervisor assistance) rather than having been given adequate research methodology training • almost no research training offered to research students • no methodological training offered in my department, and the Graduate School's workshops are too broad to be very useful

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We haven't yet received any further methodological training • I don't think that City University helped me to develop new skills • I would like the university to provide more opportunities for the development of research skills • More training in research methods - hand on - is recommended • However, no skill transfer or lecture about those skills have been taught during my research, everything comes from previous studies and reading • I think there is still room for improvement
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Recommendations

- It is clear that (with one key School exception) students feel that that they are not being given the skills they need on a range of topics. This is disappointing as the Framework for Doctoral Studies was developed by the City Graduate School with the support of the Schools but still students are requesting training that they are not receiving. In some cases they seem able to obtain this for themselves, but this wastes time and effort.

Section G: Professional Development

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure in this section was 77%, down 1% from last year. The highest score is for 'communicating effectively to a diverse audience' (at 80%) with the weakest being on 'developing contacts or networks' (69% - down 6% on 2013).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 87% (Law) to 74% (SMCSE).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~<20 students. Comments were mostly negative in nature.

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>One student commented positively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending conferences to deliver papers relating to my topic and findings has considerably increased my networks and view of where this research could help to inform future roles 	<p>A number of comments around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am clicking 'agree' to these things, I do not attribute them to City but rather to a combination of support from my supervisor as well as my involvement with research activities outside • Improvements have been made by myself, not because I was provided training on anything to do with managing projects..... • most of these skills and development have been achieved because I was stubborn enough to work on them despite discouragement (direct or indirect) from the supervisors

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I've managed my own development all along. But I wouldn't say the university has helped me much• the project management skill has been one of the most valuable skills acquired. But this also comes from personal skills not something taught during my course• I was more successful as a professional prior to commencing my PhD research• I do not think my project skills have improved• It is increasingly unclear to me what benefits there are in being part of my degree "programme"
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Recommendations

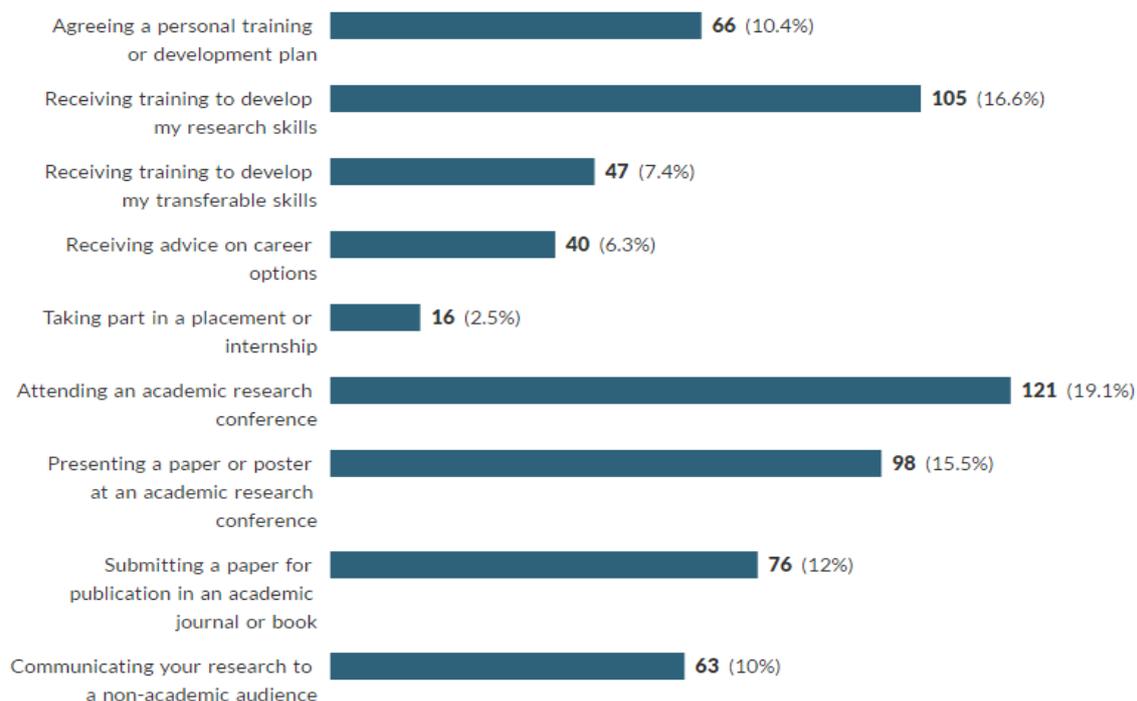
- It is clear that students are dissatisfied with the level of professional development offered by the Schools. Several students have taken a 'do it yourself' attitude to Professional Development and others see clear gaps in the training that is offered.
- The only positive is students being encouraged and able to attend conferences – a key part of their Professional Development – but typically happening in the later stages of their study.

Section H: Experience Opportunities

Comment on the Headline Data: The 'headline' figure the one question in this section was 61% to the new question (for 2015) on whether 'I received formal training for my teaching' – this is a disappointing score given the focus on training students in teaching skills (to meet the QAA requirements as well).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 80% (Law) to 43% (SASS).

Literal Comments were received from ~ 180 students. The responses to a number of key questions are shown in terms of the percentages that supported the statements



The largest group (nearly 20%) had ‘attended an academic research conference’ with a smaller group (15%) having presented ‘a paper or poster at an academic research conference’. 12% had ‘submitted a paper to a journal or book’ and 10% had communicated ‘to a non-academic audience’. Given that these are activities most likely to be engaged in by students in the last stages of their work, these numbers are reasonable.

Disappointing results include:

- The headline figure of 61% in response to ‘I have received formal training for my teaching’
- Only 10% have ‘agreed a personal training or development plan’
- Training is patchy – only 16% have received training ‘to develop my research skills’ and a smaller number (about ½ at 7%) have received training to ‘develop my transferable skills’
- ‘Receiving advice on career options’ is weak at only 6%
- External links, at least of a formal type, seem patchy: only 2% have ‘taken part in a placement or internship’

Recommendations

- Continue support for academic presentations at conferences and in journals: these are successful and commented upon favourably elsewhere
- Training – in areas of research and transferable skills is weak
- Careers advice is very weak

Sections H and I: General Comments and Overview

Comment on the Headline Data: The ‘headline’ figure in this section was 81%: broken down into two questions, this was down slightly on the last survey on the key question ‘overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme’ (81% - down 2%) but up by 1% on the question ‘I

am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institutions expected time' (again at 81%).

At School level the variation in the headline figure is 97% (Law) to 78% (SMCSE).

Comments through the 'literals' were received from ~<20 students. Comments were

'Positive comments'	'Negative comments'
<p>Several students commented on issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think the support for teaching has improved for the better over the three years (When I first did teaching support I had no training but have received some since). I think students should be encouraged as much as possible to take part in relevant events and especially to do student volunteering at conferences – this was by far one of the most useful things I did to gain contacts, get experience of conferences and get to many of them! • I am a full-time member of academic staff, running another programme. The greatest support to my research degree would be to be allocated time to complete it, in addition to the fee waiver I enjoy 	<p>A number of negative comments have been recorded around the following different topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be good if research students would be communicating better with each other from the scientific point of view • Teaching assistants should be provided with more guidance (and possibly training) before the begin. Prior to leading my first seminar, I had never taught before and was completely out of my depth. I have since learned 'on the job' and have been given advice along the way but a more formal approach would be useful • More financial support for conference attendance within our school, including for part-time students, would improve my experience of the programme. • I would love have had a clear project and equipment from the beginning. It was clear about the technology but the application wasn't completely defined after the Mphil transfer. Until we had the new lab we get the equipment required to further the knowledge. • I'm a bit concerned about a delay due to the time required for a supervisor to review the final thesis. I'm not sure this timelines are well-established • One of the reasons I entered into a research programme was to get advanced education (Theory of Computational Fluid Dynamics) in my field, but due to absence of any course work and teaching/learning sessions, there was little gain in this respect • More respect for my background from my PhD supervisor would have improved my experience. Political problems in my department also undermined my experience • Academic seminars, opportunities to discuss research, more regular meetings with supervisor, a system in place if problems with 2nd supervisor, better treatment of part-time students (e.g. not wasting energy trying

	to get the same opportunities, for instance in teaching, as full-time students)
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Thus negatives from the above are seen in areas such as:

- Poor communications amongst research students
- Better training for Teaching Assistants
- Better School support for Conference attendance
- Better project plan equipment to undertake the work at an early stage
- Delay in the final thesis being reviewed by the supervisor
- Poor PhD training in subject-specific material (in this case computational fluid dynamics)
- 'Respect' from the PhD supervisor
- More of the following:
 - Academic seminars
 - opportunities to discuss research
 - regular meetings with supervisor
 - a system in place if problems with 2nd supervisor
 - better treatment of part-time students

Recommendations

- Address the above and provide better support for students

School Level overview

It is clear from Table 2 that the summary response by School differs and can be summarized as follows:

School	Comment	Average %age score over all nine questions
University overall	Averaged over all the Schools	77% (9 questions) 79% v 79% (in 2013, but averaged over only 8 questions) (excluding Opportunities question)
Cass	Too small a sample to be meaningful	-
Law	Overall very high scores and consistently the 'most satisfied' School of the University – only one score below 87%. Many significant, double figure, increases in scores over the 2013 survey	93
SASS	The School with the most 'lowest scores' and with the lowest score overall – 43% for 'Opportunities'. Some scores dropped from 2013, some have risen	71
SHS	Many strong scores and in general an improvement on the last survey	81
SMCSE	Combined the SEMS and Sol areas of the 2013 survey. In general, in most categories, several percent below the 2013 score.	77

Appendix 1: Summary of Recommendations from the student comments

Area	Recommendations for considerations across Schools
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive comments on supervision reflect that in general there is a good and positive relationship between the students and the supervisors: this should be fostered and built on to support improvements in other areas • The appointment of a second supervisor (including where one supervisor leaves the University) must be consistent and clear to the students • The role of second supervisor must be clear to both staff and students and communicated clearly (to both staff and students) • The support for a student when one or both supervisors leave(s) the University should be strengthened and the processes for replacing such a supervisor should be more transparent and acted upon quickly
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library: improvements seen since the last survey and this has been appreciated; however improvement still needed in several areas • Working environment: almost all comments were negative about the working environment. Larger open spaces are subject to noise and lack useful facilities such as printing, scanning etc. More integrated working environments would be appreciated. Breakout rooms for group discussions are requested. There is the need for some 'quiet space' to be bookable, especially for activities such as such as phone interviews or transcribing text. Some students find it hard to concentrate as many people are talking in these large rooms, which are unpopular • Computer facilities in the working environment in some areas: for students in some areas not seen as good enough – slow computers, small screens etc.
Research Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A true research culture at all levels, especially at Departmental level, seems to be missing. Many students feel 'siloes' and somewhat isolated and would benefit more from contact more broadly across the Institution • More effort to establish a better research culture would be welcomed by students: there is a need to do more to establish a broader community of researchers who can interact and support each other • The role of the City Graduate School and the Conference Attendance Fund is seen positively and should be strengthened
Progress and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students value an induction programme: indeed there seems to be a need for both a University-level (City Graduate School) induction as well as a 'local' (School or Departmental/Research Centre) level induction. The content of the induction needs examining and broadened, e.g. to include introduction to wider facilities. Students are not satisfied with what is provided • Research and Progress (RaP) – problems still exists and a number of technical issues need attention • There is a need for a formal preparation programme as the student goes into the writing up and submission phase: students seem not to know what to expect and how to prepare for this part of the PhD.
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several instances of good practice identified where students seemed supported well by either/both academic and administrative staff: build on this for the future • Many students are unclear who to turn to in the case of problems – where the supervisor(s) cannot be approached (as they may be part of the problem). Students should be clearly advised that they can approach the Associate Dean for Research Students or the Senior Tutor for Research in such cases • Feedback – students should be told what is being done with feedback

	<p>received and how it is acted on. At the moment students are confused about what happens to feedback – and the weakest score is on the institution valuing feedback and response from research students</p>
Research skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is clear that (with one key School exception) students feel that they are not being given the skills they need on a range of topics. This is disappointing as the Framework for Doctoral Studies was developed by the City Graduate School with the support of the Schools but still students are requesting training that they are not receiving. In some cases they seem able to obtain this for themselves, but this wastes time and effort. Improve on this.
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is clear that students are dissatisfied with the level of professional development offered by the Schools. Several students have taken a ‘do it yourself’ attitude to Professional Development and others see clear gaps in the training that is offered. • The only positive is students being encouraged and able to attend conferences – a key part of their Professional Development – but typically happening in the later stages of their study.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve on disappointing results which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The headline figure of 61% in response to ‘I have received formal training for my teaching’ ○ Only 10% have ‘agreed a personal training or development plan’ ○ Training is patchy – only 16% have received training ‘to develop my research skills’ and a smaller number (about ½ at 7%) have received training to ‘develop my transferable skills’ ○ ‘Receiving advice on career options’ is weak at only 6% ○ External links, at least of a formal type, seem patchy: only 2% have ‘taken part in a placement or internship’ • Continue support for academic presentations at conferences and in journals: these are successful and commented upon favourably elsewhere • Training – in areas of research and transferable skills is weak • Improve weak careers advice
General Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address negatives from the above are seen in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor communications amongst research students ○ Better training for Teaching Assistants ○ Better School support for Conference attendance ○ Better project plan equipment to undertake the work at an early stage ○ Delay in the final thesis being reviewed by the supervisor ○ Poor PhD training in subject-specific material (in this case computational fluid dynamics) ○ ‘Respect’ from the PhD supervisor • More of the following requested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic seminars ○ opportunities to discuss research ○ regular meetings with supervisor ○ a system in place if problems with 2nd supervisor • ‘Better treatment’ of part-time students