

Want to know what your fellow PGRs said and what the University is doing in response to your feedback?

Starting a postgraduate research degree and want to know more about the PGR experience at the University of Birmingham?



Professor Gavin Schaffer,
Director of Graduate Studies

This report outlines the initial findings and responses to PRES 2015 and the changes we are making in response to your feedback. The 2015 PRES ran from March to May 2015 and was completed by 1,148 Postgraduate Researchers, a response rate of 28%. Thank you to all of you who took time to complete the survey.

You told us that you rate your experience of supervision highly – 93% of you agreed that your supervisor has the skills and subject knowledge to support your research and the numbers of you saying your supervisor helps you identify training and development needs have risen since 2013. 80% of you reported you had received support from your supervisor in this area. University of Birmingham supervision scores are some of the highest

in the Russell Group and this is testimony to the skills and hard work of the many excellent supervisors at the University of Birmingham.

You reported that your experience in research skills has developed and improved over your programme, with 91% of you stating that *'my skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme'*. This shows that we are working hard to ensure that you have the skills needed to successfully complete your research.

As with any feedback process, there were areas which you identified for further improvement. These areas included: Access to library resources and physical and access to research cultures, as only 62% of you noted

that you had had opportunity to be involved in wider research cultures outside of your discipline. Lastly, you told us that you are not satisfied that the University listens to and responds to your feedback. We will continue to work hard to improve in this area, and this report forms part of our attempts to show how we are dealing with your feedback.

We hope that this report will go some way to address these concerns. Over the next two pages you will find a 'You said...We did...'
section highlighting some of the actions central University departments, including the UGS and the Library, will take. If you would like to comment further please email graduateschool@contacts.bham.ac.uk or tweet [@uobgradschool](https://twitter.com/uobgradschool).

What were the highest and lowest scores?

Highest scores	Lowest scores
Supervision: My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research	Professional Development: I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme
Research skills: My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	Research culture: I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students
Supervision: I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs	Research culture: The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work
Responsibilities: I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	Responsibilities: My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students
Research skills: My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	Research culture: I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2015

Your response, our commitments.

You said... we did

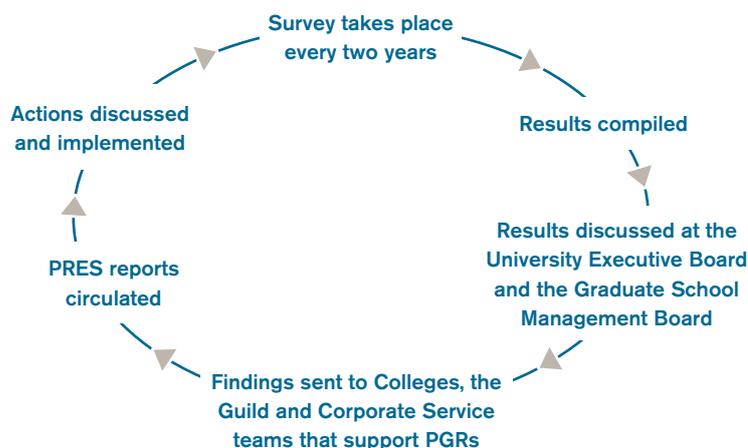
Access to Research Cultures: The new Westmere Scholars and the University Graduate School (UGS) will be delivering a series of interdisciplinary events and seminars in the Westmere PGR Hub to give you the opportunity to become involved in the wider research community and meet other PGRs from different disciplines. We will also continue to support the creation of PG research events in colleges through the PGR development fund, including seminars, masterclasses, and postgraduate journals.

Access to resources and study space: The new Westmere PGR hub has a common room, social learning space and a seminar room on the ground floor where PGRs can organise their own events and use the space to collaborate with other postgraduate researchers. The New Library will provide improved researcher space in addition to the facilities provided at Westmere and both

developments will provide opportunities for new forms of support, training and guidance targeted at PGRs.

Responding to Feedback: We will schedule visits to schools and colleges to talk to postgraduate researchers about our actions

and receive further feedback regarding your personal and professional development and we will look at other ways you can feedback about your experiences outside of PRES including Graduate School drop-in sessions and focus groups in order to continue improving our support services.



Biannual Survey Diagram

College of Arts and Law Perspective

The College of Arts and Law welcomes the PGR input provided by the PRES report. We are delighted to see positive feedback from our PGRs in particular the excellent scores we achieved again this year on the quality of supervision in the College. We are also grateful for your suggestions for improvement, and have taken a number of steps to address the issues you have raised in the PRES survey:

Work space

In response to your feedback about work spaces and desk availability, we are pleased to inform you that the University's newly refurbished period building Westmere PGR Hub, includes a substantial number of dedicated study spaces for CAL postgraduate researchers on the top two floors of Westmere House (G15 on the campus map). The ground floor of the building is a centre for training, workshops, conferences and social activities for PGRs from across the University.

We also know that developing your employability, public engagement and communication skills are important to you. CAL Graduate School captured a series of originally campus based workshops to support CAL PGRs wherever they are based, and we are gathering a growing portfolio of online resources on Canvas. We continue to extend online resources for the benefit of all our PGRs.

Responding to feedback

Listening and acting in response to your feedback is crucial, and we have reviewed our consultative systems and invited a PG representative to sit on the College Graduate School Board to ensure timely two-way dialogue on what matters to you. We are also delighted to inform you that this year we have a Westmere Scholar from CAL, Stephanie Appleton (westmerecal@contacts.bham.ac.uk), who will be working closely with us on promoting both research and other networking, social and support events for CAL PGRs. Feel free to approach Stephanie with your suggestions. Our re-launched Twitter account (@CAL_Postgrads) offers an additional platform for us all to communicate and engage with you in addition to the traditional channels such as the College PG Newsletter.

Research culture

You noted that you would like to have more opportunities to strengthen interdisciplinary conversations with other PGRs. In addition to offering work space for CAL PGRs, the Westmere PGR Hub is designed to be the centre for postgraduate researcher workshops, interdisciplinary conferences, social and networking events. We are working closely with the CAL Westmere Scholar on organising networking, social and support events for our PGRs, and there will be a number of interdisciplinary events taking place in the Westmere PGR Hub to give you the opportunity to engage in conversations and become part of an interdisciplinary research community. We encourage all of you, whether you are based mainly on campus or off campus to get involved in activities at Westmere via the Westmere twitter feed @UoBWestmere.

Dr Charlotte Hempel, PGR Lead College of Arts and Law