

# Completed the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)?

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?

This report outlines the findings for the 2013 PRES and the changes we are making in response to your feedback.

The 2013 PRES ran from March to May 2013 and was completed by 896 postgraduate researchers, a response rate of 29%. This is our highest ever response rate and allows us to make some solid conclusions from the data, so thank you to all of you who took the time to complete the survey.

We are very pleased that supervision emerged as a strength at the University of Birmingham. 91% of you agreed that your supervisors had the necessary skills and knowledge to support your research. Satisfaction with supervision has improved from the 2011 PRES and is significantly higher than at comparable Russell Group universities. 90% of you said that you had regular meetings with your supervisor and 89% said that your supervisors gave useful feedback to direct your research. This is testimony to the skills and hard work of the many excellent supervisors at UoB.

As with any feedback process there were areas which you identified for further improvement. These areas included: induction support; support for part time researchers; access to resources including study space; and access to advice on careers and professional networks.



Professor Gavin Schaffer,  
Director of Graduate Studies

As the 'you said we did' section below and opposite hopefully demonstrates, the results of this survey will help shape action across the University and ensure improvements are delivered in these flagged areas over the forthcoming year. We will produce an update report on these actions in February 2014. If you would like to comment further please email [graduateschool@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:graduateschool@contacts.bham.ac.uk) or tweet [@uobgradschool](https://twitter.com/uobgradschool).

## College of Medical and Dental Sciences perspective

The importance of feedback from postgraduate researchers (PGRs) in helping to improve what the College of Medical and Dental Sciences (MDS) does cannot be underestimated. The PRES 2013 saw excellent results across the supervision, resources, research culture, progress and assessment and responsibilities areas of the survey. In MDS, we will concentrate over the next 12 months on the following areas:

### Training on transferable skills

The development of transferable skills throughout a postgraduate researcher's registration is extremely important and we will engage the cohort (through the College PGR representatives group) to ascertain what areas require development and support over and above the training courses provided by the University Graduate School.

### Support and guidance to PGRs who teach

It is important that those PGRs who are interested in teaching are given the opportunity to develop their teaching skills and confidence. We will ensure that PGRs are made aware of the CLAD range of training courses available and ensure that the full range of opportunities are offered to interested PGRs and everyone who wants to teach has been appropriately trained.

College of Medical and Dental  
Sciences perspective continued  
on next page...

# Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2013

## Your response, our commitments.

### What were the highest and lowest scores?

Highest scores	Lowest scores
<b>Supervision:</b> My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research	<b>Professional Development:</b> I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme
<b>Supervision:</b> I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs	<b>Research culture:</b> I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other research students
<b>Research Skills:</b> My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	<b>Research culture:</b> The research ambience in my department or faculty stimulates my work
<b>Supervision:</b> My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities	<b>Research culture :</b> I have opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department
<b>Research Skills:</b> My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	<b>Opportunities to teach:</b> You have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching
<b>Responsibilities:</b> I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	<b>Responsibilities:</b> My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students
<b>Responsibilities:</b> I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	<b>Part time:</b> I feel enough is being done to support part time researchers

### College of Medical and Dental Sciences perspective continued...

#### Career Development Opportunities

There is the recognition that many MDS PGRs do not necessarily follow the standard academic career and we need to do more in MDS to provide information and advice to our PGR cohort to encourage them to consider the range of opportunities a PGR can follow and MDS will work with Careers Network in this regard. For the 2013-14 session, MDS will be holding a series of career development evenings with talks from people in relevant positions.

#### Listening to feedback

From the 2013-14 session, MDS will hold a series of informal focus groups to discuss issues pertaining to MDS's Graduate School.

**Professor Steve Watson,**  
PGR Lead College of Medical and Dental Sciences

### You said... we did

#### Welcome and induction support throughout the year

New for 2013-14, the University Graduate School (UGS) will send a Welcome email to any new PGR starting after October with invitations to activities taking place in that month to help new PGRs get to know the University and the wider researcher community and signpost them to helpful online resources such as the induction package Doctoral Researcher Essentials.

#### Enhanced part time researcher support

The UGS will be increasing our programme of workshops for part time researchers and piloting a new 'finishing' workshop for part time researchers near the end of their PhD. We will post resources online for access off campus. We are also working closely with the Colleges to enhance support for part time researchers.

#### Learning resources and study space

Library Services and the UGS will pilot co-hosting events which enhance interdisciplinary networking across the research community and highlight existing researcher spaces in the Main Library. Building on positive feedback from part time researchers, Library Services will further develop web information and guidance for PGRs, review the timing of some induction events and offer support to PGRs via phone, Skype and Canvas.

#### Professional networks and careers support

We will host events to enable postgraduate researchers to develop professional networks and highlight careers support and advice, both through Careers Network and through more informal channels such as supervisor discussions or mentoring.

March-May	PRES survey takes place	June	PRES results compiled	July	PRES results discussed at the Graduate School Management Board (GSMB). Findings sent to Colleges, the Guild and Corporate Service teams that support PGRs.	Jul-Oct	Action planning	Nov	PGR PRES report circulated	Nov-Jan 2014	Actions implemented	Jan 2014	Colleges and Corporate Services report back to GSMB regarding PRES actions
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