

## **PRES 2026**

### **BRIEFING NOTE**

**What you said and what we did following the 2025 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.**

#### **WELCOME**

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2026, is an annual UK national survey of all Research Degree students, organised by AdvanceHE.

This Briefing Note provides details of some of the key outcomes from the previous (2025) PRES survey, and summarises the actions taken since then. In PRES 2025, 35,475 postgraduate research (PGR) students from 93 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) took part in the survey, (a response rate of 33%), compared with the 397 eligible University of Portsmouth PGR students who responded (a response rate of 51%). Most of the 40 questions asked in the PRES 2025 survey were rated on a 1–5 agreement scale, with 5 indicating strong agreement.

#### **SUMMARY OF PRES 2025**

For the fifth PRES survey in a row, Portsmouth PGR students reported they had higher overall satisfaction than the sector average, with 89% of our students responding that they either agreed or strongly agreed they were satisfied overall with their research degree programme, compared to 82% for the whole sector. This is the best ever Portsmouth PRES overall satisfaction score and ranks us as 5th highest in the Sector.

In addition, 86% of our PGR students agreed or strongly agreed they were confident they would complete their research degree on time, placing us in the top quartile of all universities. The average University of Portsmouth rating for the question ‘My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students’ was significantly higher than the sector mean. You may be interested to know that summary scores from the annual PRES are now used in the formal quality review procedures for all schools and faculties across the University, further confirming that your responses to the PRES really do matter!

#### **RESEARCH SKILLS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The PRES 2025 survey asked eight questions about skills development relating to research techniques, critical analysis, creativity, research integrity, project management, communication, networking and self-management. The Portsmouth ratings for all of these questions were above the sector average.

## UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025

- The highly rated [Doctoral Development Programme](#) (DDP) continues to underpin much of the research and professional skills training for PGRs across the University. New sessions this year include sessions such as Vocal Communication Techniques, Thematic Analysis and Engaging the Public with your Research.
- A new forum has been created for PGRs to share how they are using AI in their research. It's a space to exchange ideas, ask those awkward questions, or simply listen and learn from others.
- Our online evening provision aimed at part-time and distance learning students - the [Professional and Distance Learning Online Community \(PaDLOC\)](#) - continues to be popular, with new tutors volunteering to add their sessions to the programme and extra sessions planned for the summer of 2026.

## PROGRESSION

The 2025 PRES survey asked four questions about progression through your PGR degree, including inductions, annual reviews, thesis standards and assessment procedures. Responses from Portsmouth students placed the University significantly above the HEI sector average. Portsmouth also had one of the highest ratings in the UK for its research degree induction events.

## UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025

- New Artificial Intelligence guidance has been produced and added to the [Research Degrees Operational Handbook](#) including expectations for the AI Acknowledgement Statement that will now be required in all thesis submissions.
- The Annual and Major Review Decision forms have been updated to prompt the panel to discuss wellbeing and use of artificial intelligence with students.
- Inductions now include popular PGR-led sessions with information about how to [join the PGR Society](#) and an overview of the PGR Wellbeing and EDI Group. PGRs also discuss how to become a PGR Rep and ensure our students have a central role in enhancing the experience of all PGR students.

## RESOURCES

The PRES 2025 survey asked seven questions about campus and off-campus resources relating to working space, computing resources and facilities, the Library, and specialist resources. The overall resources rating for Portsmouth students was higher than the sector

average, with ratings of specialist resources needed for research when studying remotely being significantly higher than the sector average.

### UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025

- In response to your feedback we have worked with the Library to create a [dedicated space](#) for up to 20 PGRs with a number of computers, screens and docking stations. The space is accessed through a keypad locked door, with the number only available to PGRs.
- New monthly in-person [Thesis Café sessions](#) have been set up where PGRs can come to the Doctoral College training room, plug in, and focus on writing. The cafés offer a relaxed, supportive space to work alongside other researchers. Hot water, tea, coffee (and sometimes biscuits) are provided!

### SUPPORT

The PRES 2025 survey asked three questions about the general support and resources available to PGRs. The questions asked about academic skills and online support including library and IT systems, and about support for health and wellbeing.

### UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025

- To ensure our learning and support is available to everyone, a new set of guidelines applying a universal design approach to the PGR experience has been co-created by PGRs, the Disability Advice team, academics and the Doctoral College.
- Colleagues in Student Wellbeing have created a quarterly newsletter to update PGRs on the support available to them and to share tips for thriving both academically and personally.
- A new PGR Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (WEDI) Group has been established with representatives from each faculty. This group has made recommendations and design actions to improve accessibility at all stages of the PGR experience.
- We have supported the new International PGR Collective, a group that meets regularly in which international PGRs can connect with one another while also accessing tailored support and advice.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

The 2025 PRES survey asked four questions about responsibilities, relating to institutional feedback, understanding of responsibilities of students and supervisors and knowing who to approach if they had problems. The average University of Portsmouth rating about

responding to institutional feedback from research degree students was significantly higher than the sector mean. Scores for knowing who to contact other than your supervisor was also above the sector mean.

#### **UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025**

- The PGR student representation is very strong across the community and PGR Reps now sit on Faculty Research Degrees Committees, the Super Rep Group, the PGR Wellbeing and EDI Group, The Doctoral College Management Board and the University Research Degrees Committee.
- There are now two Doctoral College Management Board PGR Reps to reflect the different experiences of on-campus and online students.
- Specific actions taken in response to PGR student feedback include the consideration of researcher wellbeing in Ethical Review Forms, enhancements to the information sent to delegates for Induction, and working with Disability Advice to improve support for PGR students.

#### **RESEARCH CULTURE AND COMMUNITY**

The PRES 2025 survey asked four questions about research culture and three relating to a sense of community amongst research students. The University of Portsmouth research culture average was 4% higher than the sector average in this area, and the community average was 6% higher.

#### **UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025**

- In each of the last three years, the Doctoral College has invested £25,000 to fund PGR research culture initiatives at University, faculty and departmental levels. In the last year these have paid for writing retreats, specific research culture events.
- The 2025 [‘Festival of Doctoral Research’](#) was a great success with over 175 attendees celebrating our doctoral researchers through events such as our Five by Five, research image, elevator pitch and even a craft your thesis competition. The 2026 Doc Fest will take place on Thursday 9 July 2026 in the Portland building and online.
- The PGR Society continues to welcome new PGRs, with committee members attending Doctoral College inductions to meet new starters and share information on how to get involved. Through study sessions and social events, the PGR Society brings together PGRs from across the University.

## **SUPERVISION**

The 2025 PRES survey asked four questions about supervision relating to supervisory skills, regular contact, feedback and help with training needs.

### **UPDATE SINCE PRES 2025**

- Our PGR students were satisfied with the help that supervisors provided on training and development and these were higher than the average for the sector.
- New training sessions for supervisors include a new EDI session on 'Best practice for inclusive recruitment and supervision of research students'.
- The [UPR1 Postgraduate Research Student/Supervisor Arrangements form](#) for new PGRs has been updated with prompts to discuss artificial intelligence and allocation of hours to the supervisory team.

## **PLANS FOR THE NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES) 2026**

In 2026 the University will again take part in the national PRES survey, along with up to 100 other higher education institutions.

The PRES 2026 survey will be launched on 14 April 2026 and run until 12 May 2026. Eligible students (students with a live registration, in their research phase who started their studies before February 2026) will receive an email inviting them to complete the online survey.

Supervisors will also receive emails informing them about the survey and asking them to encourage their students to participate.

More information about PRES 2026, what it is and how the data will be used can be found on our [website](#).

If you have questions about the PRES or how it will be distributed, please contact [studentsurveys@port.ac.uk](mailto:studentsurveys@port.ac.uk).

### **TAKE PART IN PRES 2026 - HAVE YOUR SAY!**

All survey respondents will be entered into a prize draw and a randomly selected student will win £1,000 to be used to support their studies.

The PRES survey is extremely important to research students and their supervisors, as it allows the University to gauge how successful any changes have been and also helps us to identify areas that might require further attention. During the survey, students who have yet to respond will be sent reminders, and the data collected will be anonymised once the survey has closed. We are proud that the University of Portsmouth usually has one of the highest PRES response rates in the whole of the UK.

We asked the 2025 PRES Prize draw winner Calliope Wellbelove about her win. Cally said “It was a complete surprise to find out that I’d won, so I was not expecting it at all and I’m just feeling very grateful to have received it as a way to further my studies and do something I otherwise wouldn’t necessarily have had a chance to do.”

[Watch the full interview with Calliope.](#)

So, if you are a postgraduate research student, please take part in the survey so that the University is aware of your views. If you are a supervisor, please encourage your students to participate.