



University
of Glasgow

PGR One-Year On Survey Report: 2023 & 2024 Graduates

PGR Policy Team, Research Services Directorate
and Development & Alumni Team, External Relations

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Introduction & Key Findings

The PGR One-Year On Survey is conducted in collaboration with the University of Glasgow's PGR Policy Team and Development & Alumni Team. Following completion of their research degree, graduates are invited to complete the survey approximately one year after graduation, with survey links issued to June and December graduating cohorts in line with the University's graduation cycles, also capturing those who graduate in spring *in absentia*. The survey is designed to depict the early career outcomes and experiences of the postgraduate research (PGR) graduates, evaluate the effectiveness of their research degree, and provide evidence to support institutional research, planning, and reporting.

Data from 2023 and 2024 graduates have been combined for analysis in this report to increase robustness and provide a clearer overview of PGR outcomes one year after graduation. No substantive differences were observed between cohorts unless otherwise stated.

The survey explores satisfaction with their research degree programme, employment and further study destinations, the use of skills and knowledge in current roles or studies, and graduates' reflections and advice to current PGR students.

Key findings:

- In total 74 graduates responded, with a 6.6% completion rate, which is considered encouraging for alumni surveys.
- 80% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their research degree programme.
- One year after graduation, 81% were in employment and 8% in further study, indicating positive early career outcomes.
- Employed graduates were working across a wide range of sectors, including higher education, public and third sector research, and non-research roles in areas such as the civil service, healthcare, and industry.
- Postdoctoral and researcher roles were the most common job types, with the University of Glasgow the most frequently reported employer.
- 86% of employed graduates reported using the skills and knowledge gained during their research degree in their current role.
- Graduates were working across Scotland, the rest of the UK, and internationally, demonstrating both local retention and global mobility.
- Qualitative feedback highlighted the importance of career planning, skills development, networking, good supervision, and wellbeing.

College abbreviations used in this report are as follows: COAH (College of Arts & Humanities), MVLS (College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences), COSE (College of Science & Engineering), and COSS (College of Social Sciences).

Response Rates

Survey Distribution & Engagement

Table 1. Email engagement and survey completion rates

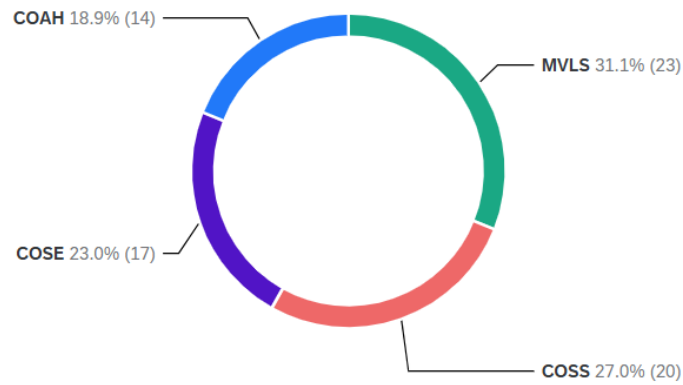
Graduate Year	Emails Sent	Emails Opened	Link Clicks	Surveys Completed	Completion Rate (Clicks → Completion)	Completion Rate (Emails Sent → Completion)
2023	619	357	46	40	87%	6.5%
2024	499	293	48	34	71%	6.8%
Total	1118	650	94	74	78%	6.6%

- Overall response rates for the survey were consistent with the 2023 & 2024 graduate cohorts, with similar levels of engagement observed at each stage of the survey distribution and completion.
- A total of 1118 emails were sent across both 2023 & 2024 cohorts, resulting in 650 emails opened, given an overall open rate of approximately 58%. However, the number of graduates who clicked the survey link drops significantly to 94.
- Nonetheless, 78% of those who clicked the survey link went on to complete the survey, yielding a total of 74 respondents.
- When considered against the total number of emails sent, this results in an overall survey completion rate of 6.6%, which the Alumni Team advise is an encouraging response rate for alumni and graduate surveys.

Response Rates by College & School

- At College level, MVLS had the largest number of respondents (31%) followed by COSS (27%).
- Adam Smith Business School, Molecular Biosciences, and Social & Political Sciences had the highest response rates (11%) at School level.
- One respondent selected 'Prefer not to answer'.
- It should be noted that there were no respondents from the following Schools: Infection & Immunity, Social & Environmental Sustainability, Mathematics & Statistics, and Medicine, Dentistry & Nursing.

College Level Response Rates 74



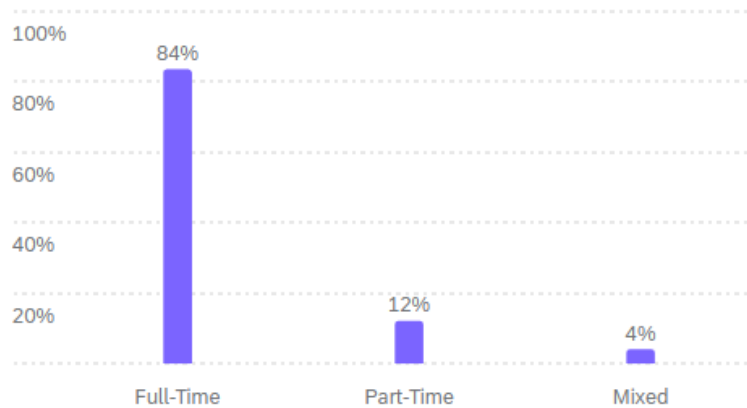
School Level Response Rates 74

School	↓ Count	Count
Adam Smith Business School	8	11%
Molecular Biosciences	8	11%
Social & Political Sciences	8	11%
Biodiversity, One Health & Veterinary Medicine	5	7%
Chemistry	5	7%
Education	5	7%
Humanities	5	7%
James Watt School of Engineering	5	7%
Critical Studies	4	5%
Cancer Sciences	3	4%
Health & Wellbeing	3	4%
Culture & Creative Arts	2	3%
Geographical & Earth Sciences	2	3%
Physics & Astronomy	2	3%
Psychology & Neuroscience	2	3%
Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre	2	3%
Cardiovascular & Metabolic Health	1	1%
Computing Science	1	1%
Law	1	1%
Modern Languages & Culture	1	1%
Prefer not to answer	1	1%

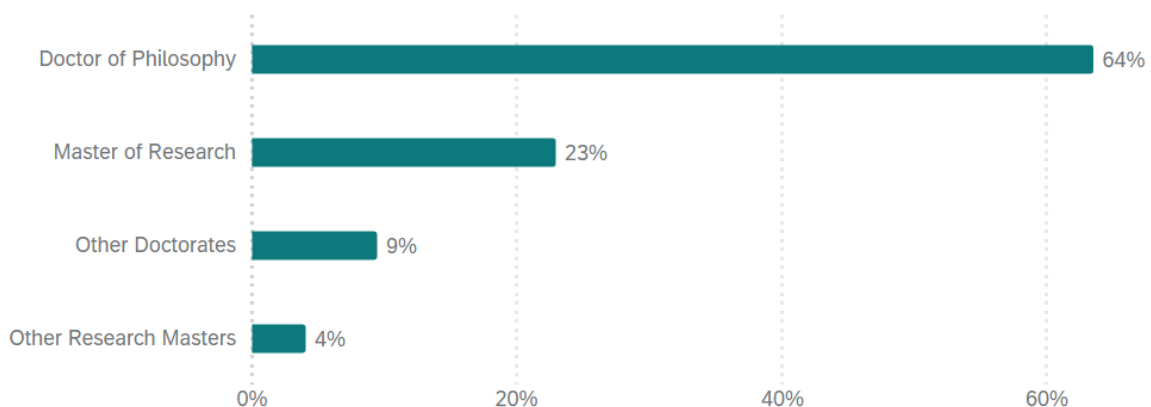
Response Rates by Study Characteristics

- The majority of respondents were full-time students, accounting for 84% (n = 62) of responses, where part-time student represented 12% (n = 9) of respondents.
- A small proportion (4%) reported a mixed academic load of both full-time and part-time.
- This distribution generally reflects the typical patterns of PGR study loads, with full-time study being the most common.
- Regarding research degree types, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) graduates comprised the largest group of respondents, representing 64% (n = 47) of responses, followed by Master of Research (MRes) graduates (23%, n = 17).

Academic Load Response Rates 74

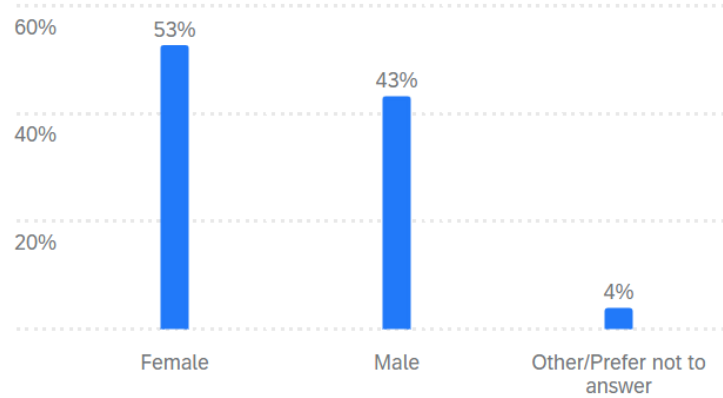


Research Degree Type 74



Response Rates by Demographic Characteristics

Gender Response Rates 74

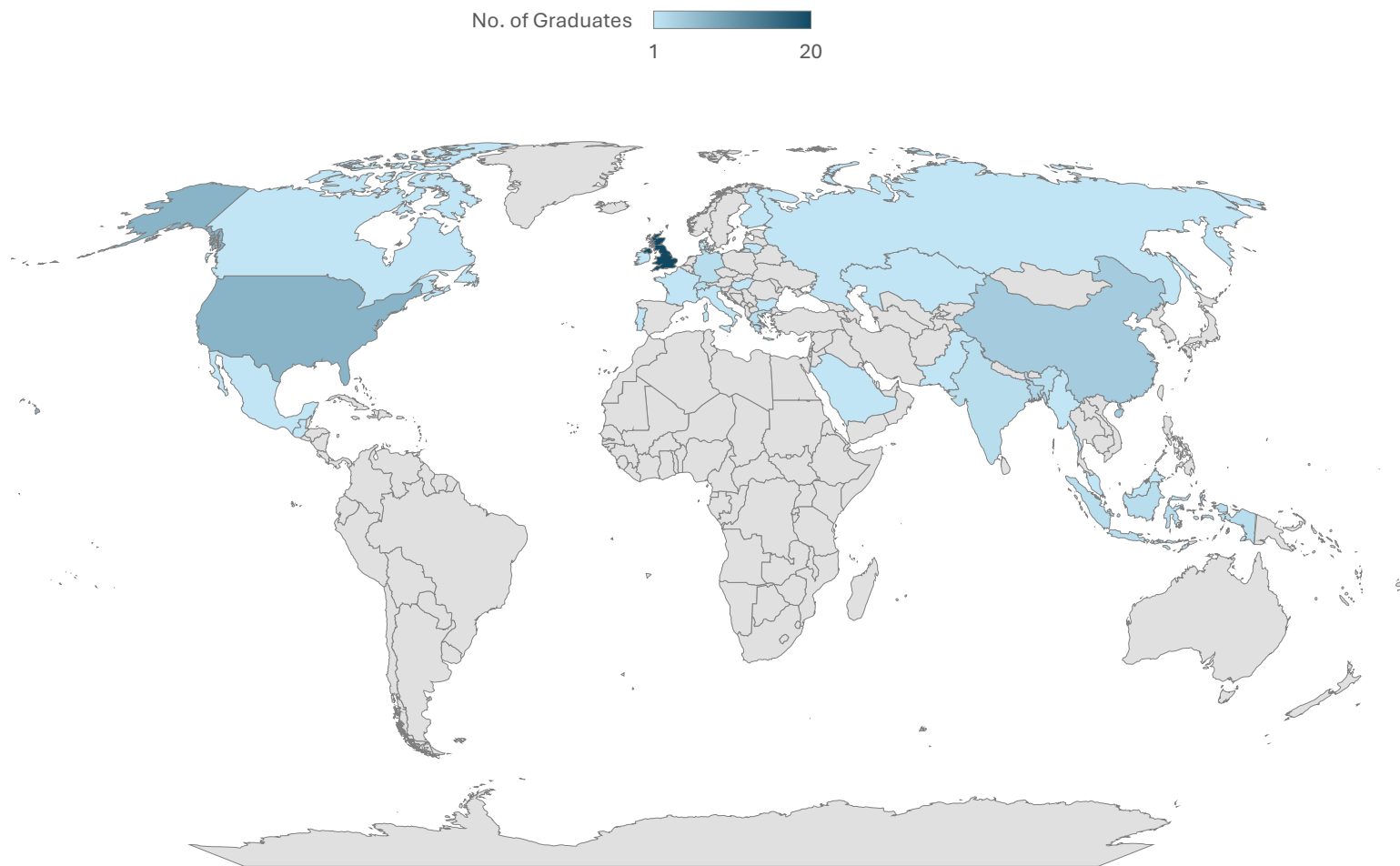


- 53% (n = 39) of respondents were female and 43% (n = 32) were male. A small number of respondents identified as other or selected 'Prefer not to answer'.
- Respondents represented a wide range of nationalities, reflecting the international nature of the PGR cohort.
- The map illustrates the nationalities of graduates; however, to protect respondent anonymity, nationality data has been aggregated to the continent level, as shown in Table 2.
- The largest proportion of respondents were from Europe (64%, n = 47) and Asia was the second most represented continent, with 22% (n = 16) of respondents.
- One respondent selected 'Prefer not to answer' and no respondents were recorded from Africa, South America, Oceania, or Antarctica.

Table 2. No. of respondents per continent

Continent	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Africa	0	0
Antarctica	0	0
Asia	16	22%
Europe	47	64%
North America	10	13%
Oceania	0	0
South America	0	0
Prefer not to answer	1	1%
Total	74	

Distribution of respondents by nationality

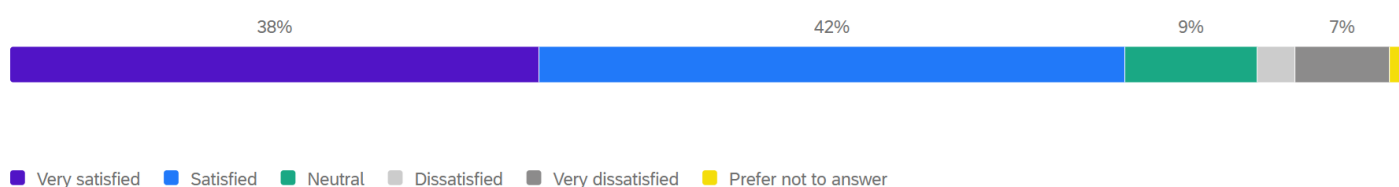


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Satisfaction with their Research Degree Programme

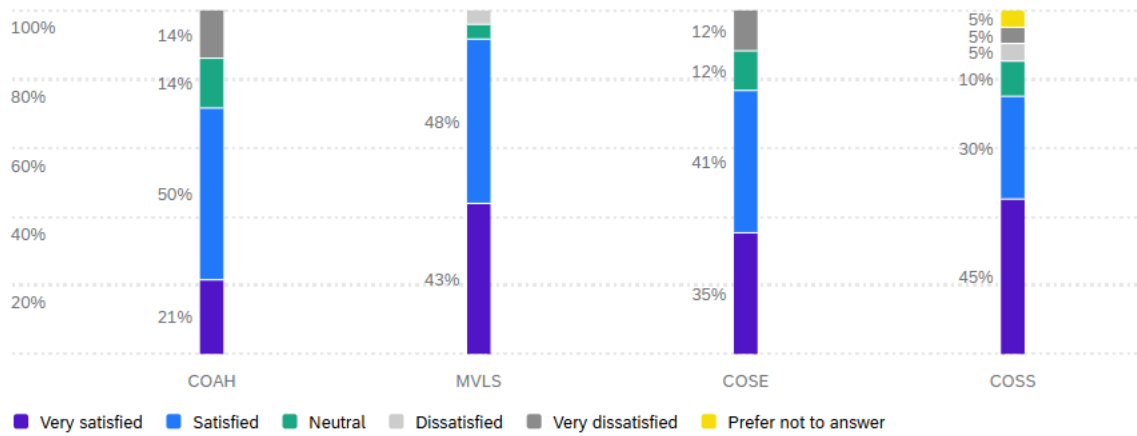
Q1. Looking back, how satisfied are you with your research degree programme and the training & development you received?

Overall Satisfaction with their Research Degree 74

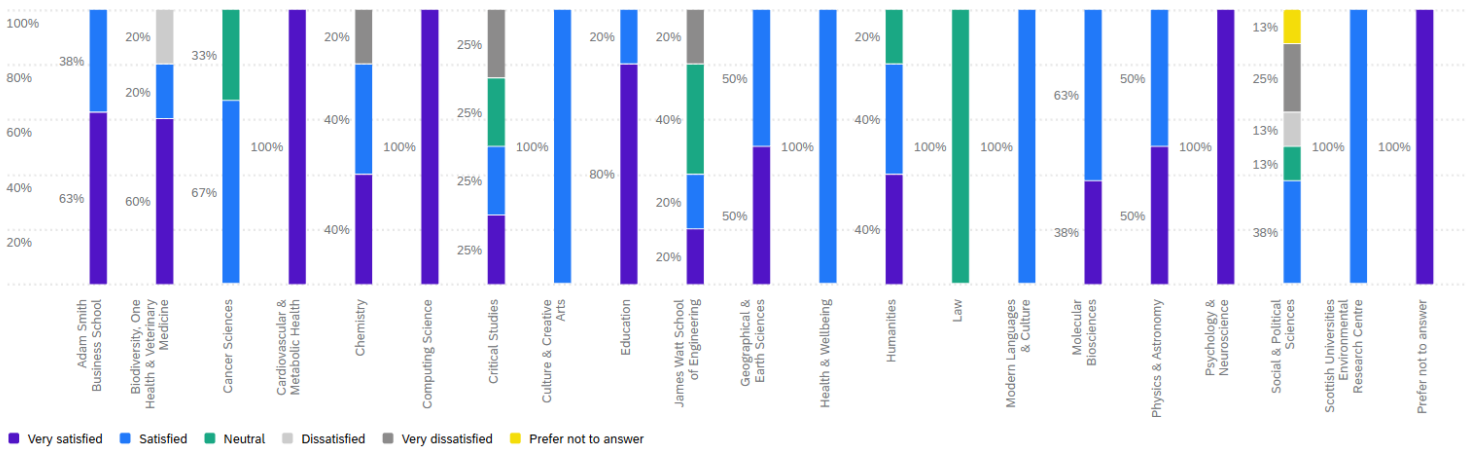


- Overall, 80% of respondents were either very satisfied (38%) or satisfied (42%) with their research degree programme. Levels of dissatisfaction were low, with 3% dissatisfied and 7% very dissatisfied.
- At College level, MVLS had the highest satisfaction rate of 91% compared to COAH, COSE & COSS, which were 71%, 76%, and 75%, respectively.
- Satisfaction levels varied at School level, largely reflecting small numbers of respondents per School. While several Schools had 100% satisfaction, these results were typically based on very small numbers of respondents (often fewer than five).
- Respondents who completed their research degree with a full-time academic load were slightly more satisfied (79%) compared to part-time respondents (77%). All respondents with a mixed study load (n = 3) reported being satisfied with their degree.
- Satisfaction levels were higher among PhD graduates (83%) than MRes graduates (70%) when considering the two largest respondent groups.
- Female graduates were marginally more satisfied (82%) with their research degree compared to male graduates (81%).
- Respondents with Asian nationality had the highest satisfaction rate of 94% compared to those with North American (80%) and European (75%) nationality.

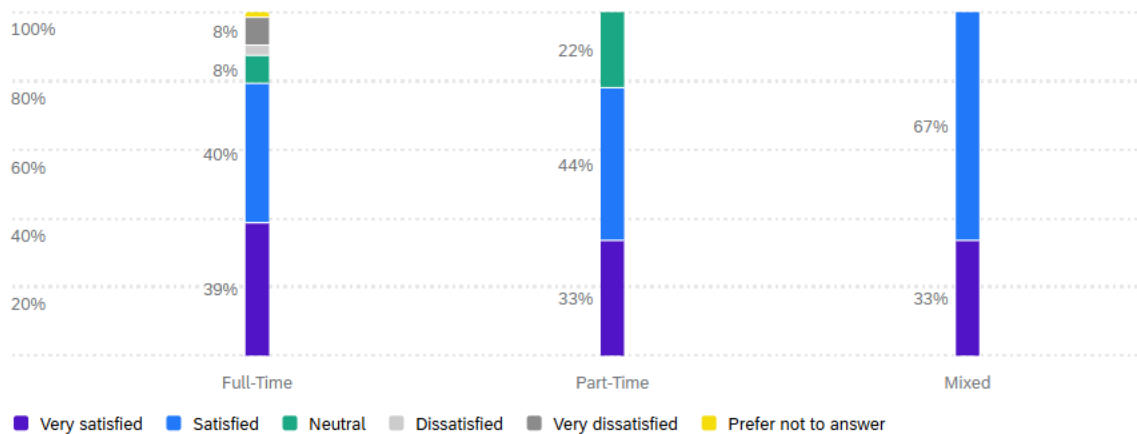
Satisfaction (College Level) 74



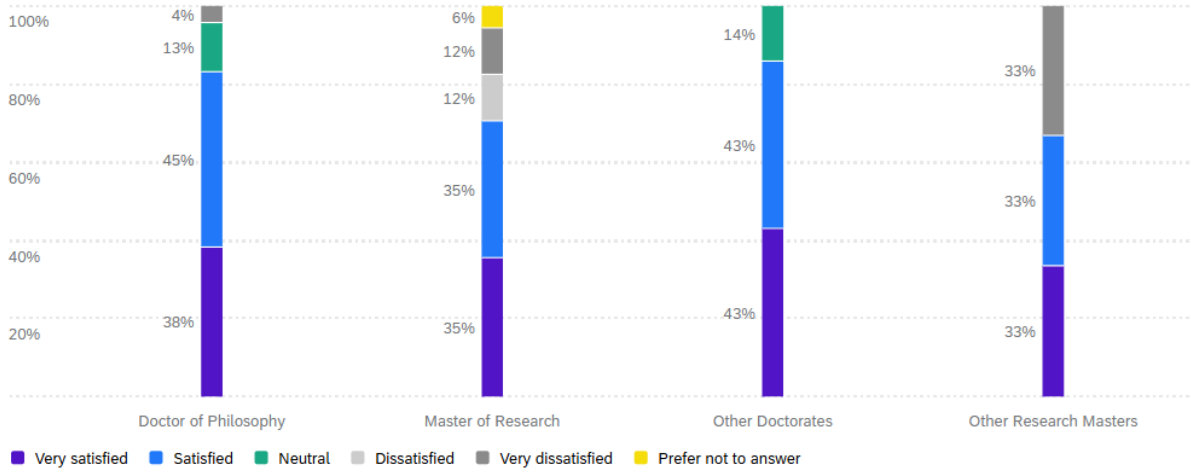
Satisfaction (School Level) 74



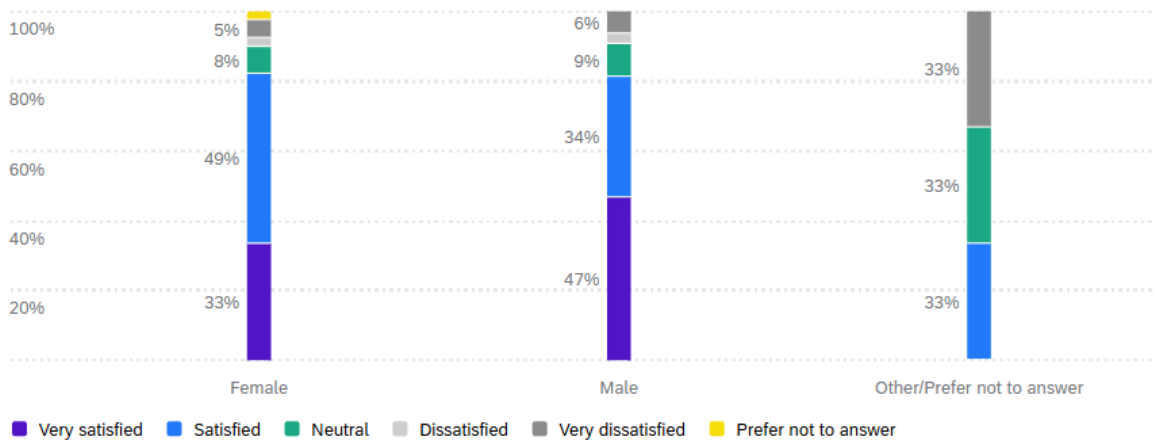
Satisfaction (Academic Load) 74



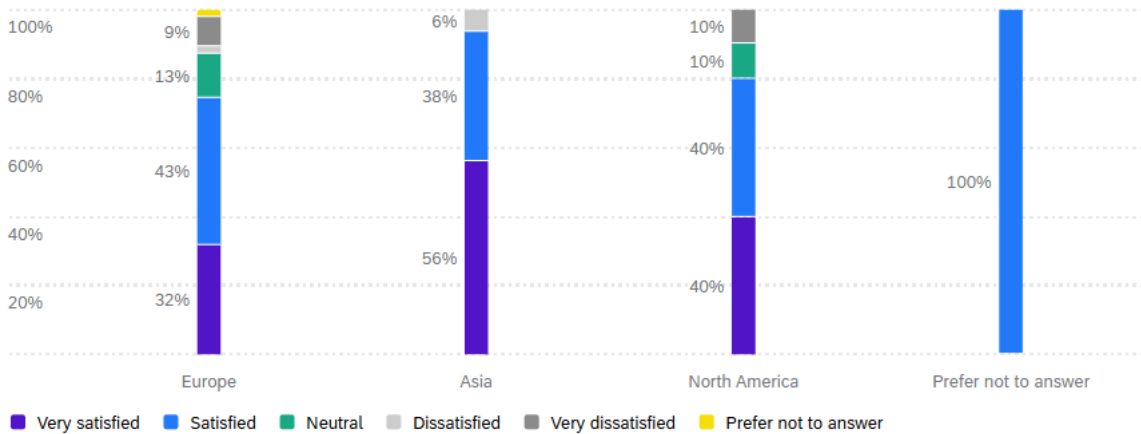
Satisfaction (Degree Type) 74



Satisfaction (Gender) 74



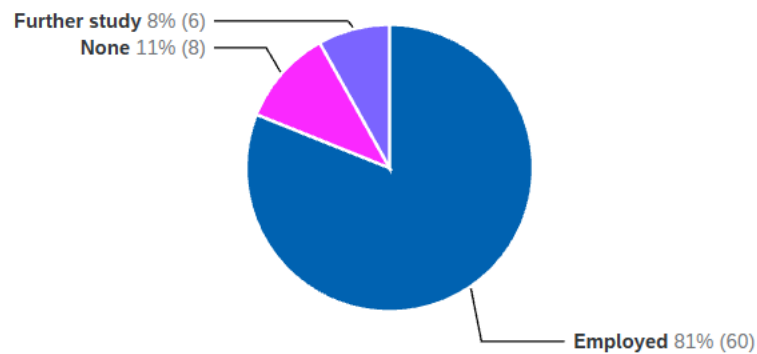
Satisfaction (Continent of Nationality) 74



Overall Employment & Career Status

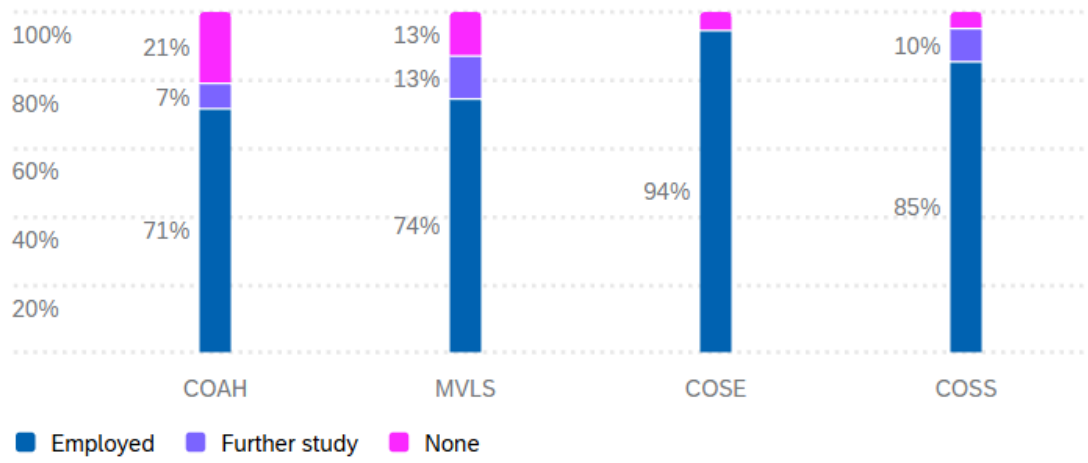
Q2. What is your current employment status one year after completing your research degree programme?

Employment & Career Status 74

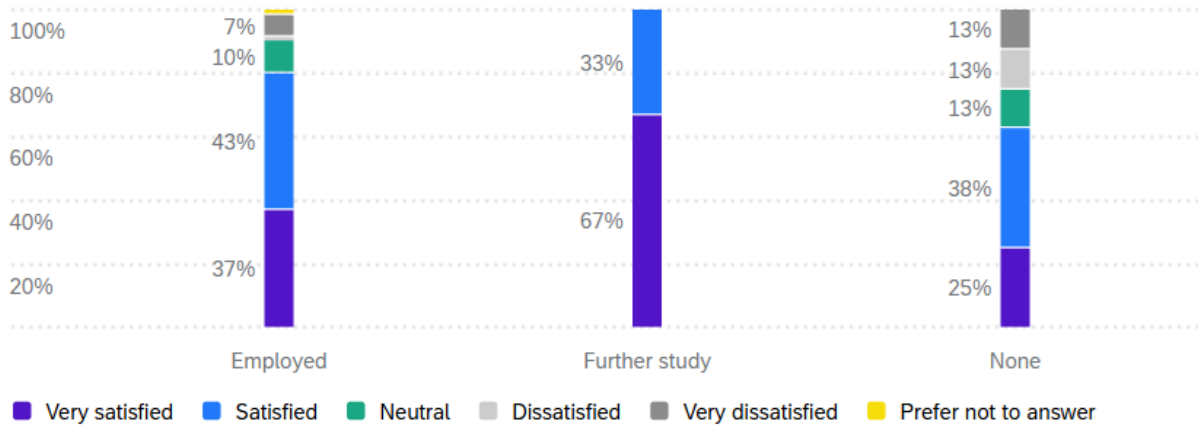


- One year after graduation, the majority of respondents were in employment (81%), while 8% were in further study, and 11% selected 'none,' indicating they were neither employed nor in further study.
- These findings show strong early career outcomes for PGR graduates, with most respondents collectively either in work or continuing their academic progression. The relatively small proportion that are not currently in employment or further study reflects a range of individual circumstances which is discussed later in the report.
- At College level, most respondents across all Colleges were in employment one year after graduation, ranging from 71% in COAH and 94% in COSE. Smaller proportions were in further study or neither in employment nor further study, with COAH showing the highest proportion selecting 'none' (21%) and MVLS the highest proportion in further study (13%).
- Satisfaction with their research degree programme was highest among respondents in further study (100%), followed by those in employment (80%), while respondents who were neither employed nor in further study exhibited lower overall satisfaction (63%).

Employment & Career Status (College Level) 74



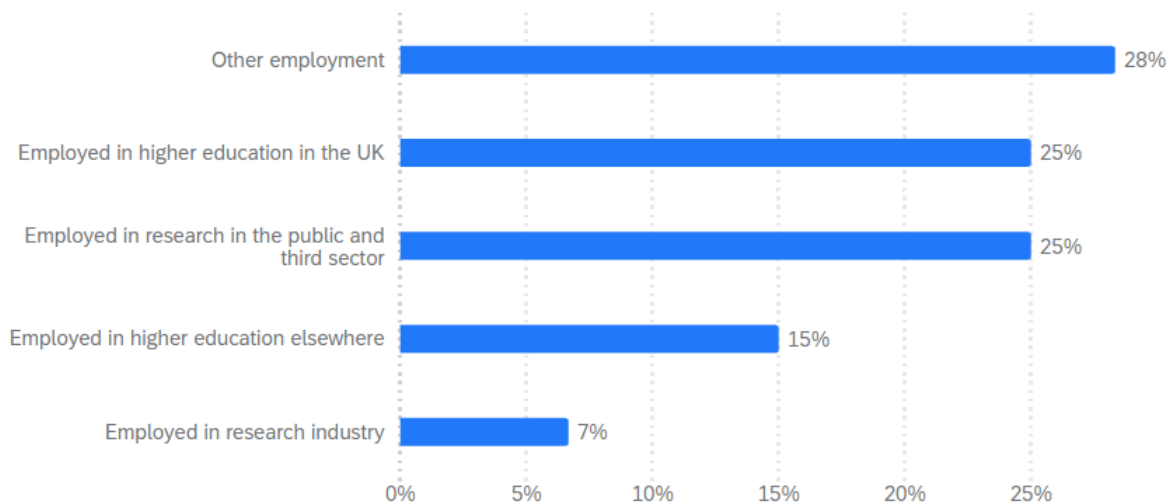
Employment Status (Satisfaction with Research Degree) 74



Graduates in Employment

Q3a: Employment Sector

Employment Sector 60



- Graduates in employment (n = 60), were working across a diverse range of sectors, reflecting the broad applicability of their research degrees.
- The largest population of employed respondents selected 'other employment' (28%), indicating roles outside the predefined categories, particularly in non-research settings such as the civil service, healthcare, and commercial industries.
- Higher education in the UK accounted for 25% of employed graduates, highlighting continued engagement in the UK academic sector.
- A further 25% were employed in research roles within the public and third sector, demonstrating strong representation in research related employment beyond higher education.
- Employment in higher education outside the UK represented 15% of employed respondents, while a smaller proportion (7%) were working in research roles within industry.

Q3b: *Please share the following information: current job title, organisation name, location of employment*

Current Job Title

- As shown in Table 3, the most frequently stated job titles among employed graduates were postdoctoral and researcher roles, indicating that many respondents remain engaged in research-intensive academic careers one year after graduation.
- However, the wide range of additional job titles conveyed, demonstrates substantial diversity in employment outcomes, with graduates securing positions across teaching, industry, public sector, clinical practice, policy, management, and professional services, depicting the breadth of employment outcomes for PGR graduates.

Organisation Name

- Graduates cited employment across a wide range of organisations spanning higher education, research institutes, public sector bodies, industry, healthcare, and community organisations.
- UK universities represent the largest organisational category, with the University of Glasgow being the most frequently mentioned employer (n = 10). Please note that detailed employer information is not displayed to protect respondent anonymity.

Location of Employment

- Graduates reported employment across a wide range of UK and international locations, demonstrating both strong local retention and significant global mobility (Table 4).
- Graduates in employment are predominantly based in Scotland, with Glasgow representing the single most common location of employment one year after graduation.
- However, graduates are also employed across the rest of the UK and internationally, with destinations spanning Europe, North America, Asia & Middle East.

Table 3. Role categories and examples of job titles

Role Category	Example Job Titles	Count
Postdoctoral & Researcher Roles	<i>Postdoctoral Research Associate, Research Fellow, Research Assistant, Mid-career Researcher, Senior Research Assistant</i>	23
Industry, Science & Engineering Roles	<i>Scientific Engineer, R&D Engineer, Scientist, Senior Scientist, Production Chemist, Carbon Ratings Scientist</i>	8
Academic Teaching Roles	<i>Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Adjunct Instructor</i>	7
Management, Leadership & Entrepreneurship	<i>CTO, Co-Founder, Project Manager, Software Problem Manager</i>	5
Education Support & Administration	<i>Education Officer, Course Administrator, Academic Mentor, Supply Teacher</i>	5
Professional, Policy & Analyst Roles	<i>Business Intelligence Analyst, Lead Policy Analyst, Banking Advisor</i>	4
Clinical & Health Roles	<i>Clinical Psychologist, Principal Clinical Psychologist</i>	3
Technical & Specialist Support Roles	<i>Laboratory Technician, Woodland Development Officer</i>	2
Unspecified/Blank		3
Total		60

Table 4. Location of employment (high level)

Region	No. of respondents
Scotland	27
Rest of UK	8
Europe	10
North America	6
Asia & Middle East	5
Various	1
Blank	3
Total	60

Q3c: *Are you utilising the skills and knowledge acquired during your research degree in your current role?*

Are you utilising the skills and knowledge acquired during your research degree in your current role? 60



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree

- The majority of employed graduates reported making active use of the skills and/or knowledge gained during their postgraduate research degree.
- 86% of respondents either strongly agreed (53%) or agreed (33%) that they were utilising their research degree skills in their current role.
- 8% (n = 5) of employed graduates felt neutral about this question.
- Only a small minority, 5% (n = 3), disagreed that they are using their research degree skills and knowledge in their current employment.
- Overall, these findings demonstrate that skills and knowledge gained during PGR study are being effectively applied in graduates' current roles.

Graduates in Further Study

Q3d: Please share the following information: qualification and awarding institution.

- A small proportion of respondents (n = 6) stated that they were in further study one year after completing their research degree.
- All six respondents had completed a Master's degree, 5 of which were Master of Research (MRes).
- Five respondents progressed to a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), while one respondent declared undertaking another Master's degree.
- The majority of awarding institutions for further study were based in Scotland.

Q3e: Are you utilising the skills and knowledge acquired during your research degree in your further study?

Are you utilising the skills and knowledge acquired during your research degree in your further study? 6



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree

- All respondents in further study indicated that they were utilising the skills and knowledge gained during their research degree, selecting either 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.

Graduates not Employed or in Further Study

Q3f: Please specify your current situation and any factors influencing your job search.

- There were eight respondents that were not currently in employment or undertaking further study one year after completing their research degree. Analysis of the qualitative responses indicates that their situations reflect a small number of distinct and clearly defined circumstances, rather than a single common experience.
- A number of respondents indicated that they were retired, including individuals who had completed their degree later in life or following previous professional careers. These respondents expressed contentment with retirement and did not identify active job seeking as a priority.
- Some respondents cited mental or physical health as a key factor influencing their employment status. One respondent described challenges related to project disruption, limited supervisory support, and the impact on academic progression and mental wellbeing, particularly as an international student.
- A few respondents reported being unemployed due to difficulties in the job market, describing it as highly competitive. One respondent felt that their degree did not adequately prepare them for employment outside academia, while another highlighted the limited value of a MRes degree for securing research roles.
- Furthermore, lack of funding was identified as a significant barrier for respondents seeking to pursue further study.

Graduate Feedback to Current PGRs

Q4. Based on your experiences post-graduation, what advice would you give to current PGR students?

Respondents were invited to share advice for current and prospective PGR students based on their experiences. A total of 68 qualitative comments were received and analysed thematically to identify recurring messages and areas of emphasis. The key themes were as follows:

1. Career planning and realistic expectations

Graduates consistently advised prospective and current PGRs to think carefully about why they are undertaking a PGR and what outcomes they expect, particularly given the competitiveness of academic careers.

“Know what you want to get out of your PhD before you do it.”

“Unless you intend to stay in academia, it probably is not worth studying for a PhD.”

“Be open minded about what you might do beyond academia.”

2. Employability, skills, and experience beyond the thesis

Graduates stressed that employability depends more on transferable skills, experience, and adaptability than on the PhD alone.

“Look at current industry job adverts and pick up frequently listed skill requirements.”

“Experience and skills are more important than publishing outside of academia.”

“Adopt a different language for applications when moving outside academia.”

3. Networking and building professional relationships

Graduates repeatedly highlighted networking as critical to both career progression and resilience during the PGR.

“Building networks is significant during the PhD journey.”

“Make good connections with academic staff, without these I would not have landed my current position.”

4. Supervision, project choice, and institutional navigation

Graduates emphasised the importance of choosing supervisors and projects carefully and being proactive in managing relationships and institutional processes.

“Research your prospective supervisor, talk to other researchers in the group.”

“Take it upon yourselves to reach out and chase up coordinators.”

“Make sure your supervisor is really supportive.”

5. Wellbeing and work–life balance

Graduates repeatedly warned against burnout and emphasised treating the PGR as a job, not an identity.

“Don’t burn yourself out, work smart and prioritise.”

“Don’t let your PhD define you or take over your life.”

“Priority mental and physical health over workloads.”

6. Resilience, perseverance, and managing uncertainty

Graduates acknowledged that the PGR journey and post-PhD job market are unpredictable and emotionally demanding.

“It’s going to be a bumpy road after your PhD.”

“Be flexible with your goals and open to unexpected paths.”

“Hang in there, it’s worth it.”

7. Making the most of training and opportunities

Graduates encouraged active engagement with training, placements, writing, and institutional opportunities.

“Make the most of the training opportunities offered.”

“Start writing up papers during your studies.”

8. Critical and cautionary reflections on the PGR Route

A minority of respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction or regret, particularly regarding institutional support, return on investment, and employment outcomes.

“Do not do it unless you have a planned end goal.”

“You may get more return on investment elsewhere.”



Word cloud of graduate advice to current PGRs