



Research Culture Survey 2019

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Issued to:

Heads of School, Directors of Institute, College Research Committees, College Management Group

Background

Research organisations are under growing sector pressure to demonstrate that they promote a positive research culture. UK and Scottish government, and research funders, are increasingly issuing policies and Concordats to promote activity in priority areas, with compliance assessed through various formal means. The University of Glasgow has a strong reputation in the area of research culture; this research culture survey was approved by the University's Senior Management Group in order to support efforts to strengthen our culture further.

The Research Culture Survey was developed internally with the aim of monitoring awareness of different dimensions of research culture and tracking progress with these, as well as seeking out good practice and suggestions for action. Survey themes included research integrity and good practice, open research, and career development.

The survey was developed in collaboration with Human Resources (including each College Head of HR and the University-level HR teams for Recruitment; Equality & Diversity; Policy; Performance, Pay and Reward and the Director of HR), the Library, the Athena Swan Self-Assessment Teams, the University Engagement Leads (including both Academic and Professional Services staff), and the Technician Commitment Steering Group.

The survey complements other activities to support research culture such as the revised academic promotion criteria, the research culture awards, our responsible metrics statement, and the intensive effort applied to supporting research integrity and open research.

The survey ran 17 June to 27 August 2019, and will run again in summer 2020.

How will we use the data?

Survey data will be made available in aggregate on Qlikview, to the nominated contact from each School/Research Institute (RI).

The data can be used for reporting at institutional and local level, for example in REF2021 institutional and UoA environment statements, Athena Swan, Technician Commitment, and other equalities charters, as well as in our annual reporting on research integrity.

Starting in 2019, an annual statement on research culture will be published online in November each year, to describe our institutional activities, policies and resources to support various dimensions of culture: open research (i.e. the idea that research should be made available as early as possible in the process, such as through preprints), open access publication, responsible use of metrics in research assessment, research integrity, equality, diversity and inclusion, bullying and harassment, and researcher development. This annual statement, underpinned by robust data from both the survey and other measures (such as training attendance, ORCID uptake figures) will provide the opportunity to highlight that Glasgow is leading the way in many of these high-profile and challenging agendas.

The data will also be used develop actions designed to advance our culture. Actions will be developed at Unit and institutional level, in consultation with College Research Committees, members of College Management Group, and relevant members of professional staff in College and central services.

Participants

The survey was intended to be short and focused, and designed to maximise the usability of results.

The intended population included research active staff:academic (R&T) staff, research staff (Research-only; mainly postdoctoral researchers), and Research Technicians. This first iteration of the survey was not intended for research administrators or Teaching-track R&T staff; this is because some of the questions were felt not to be directly relevant or answerable and because of differences in career structures and roles.

The biennial Postgraduate Research (PGR) Experience survey (PRES), which ran in 2019, included questions relating to research integrity and data management. It was therefore felt that there would be no benefit in also including PGRs in this survey.

2019 Survey Results

Response rates

The 2019 survey had a response rate of ~38% (1,205 respondents).

Respondents break down as follows:

- 63% from R&T staff (n=756; 59% of target population)
- 29% from R-only staff (n=354; 27% of target population)
- 6% from Technical staff (n=74; see below*)
- 2% of survey respondents did not specify their staff group.

*It is difficult to ascertain the expected population of 'research' technicians as the overall population of technical staff (based on data from HR CORE) also includes staff in teaching-related roles who would be unlikely to respond to the survey. Therefore, the response rate for Technical staff is likely to be higher than 13%.

The lower response rate from R-only compared to R&T staff is perhaps indicative of lower sense of belonging to the institution as a whole from researchers who are predominantly on fixed-term contracts and moving from institution to institution. R-only response rates were particularly low from units with higher numbers of R-only staff (Physics & Astronomy, Engineering, Infection, Immunity and Inflammation).

Responses were received from across the Institution, with response rates for most Schools and Institutes being >25%. A full breakdown of responses by School / RI and staff group is available separately.

How do staff view the research culture in their School / Research Institute?

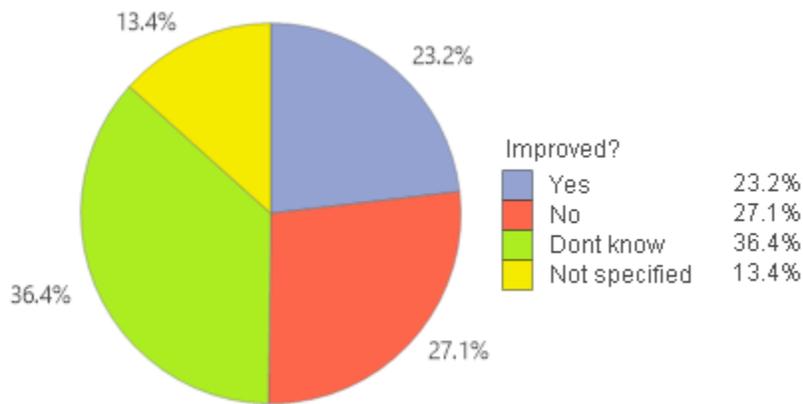


Figure 1 Do you feel that the research culture has improved over the past five years?

Respondents were most likely to agree that, over the past 5 years, the research culture had improved in the Colleges of MVLS or in Arts (these Colleges also had more positive scores in Q2.1–2.7) or if they were Technical staff. Research-only staff were most likely to say they did not know, presumably due to having been here for a shorter time period. Male respondents were more likely to agree that the culture had improved; females are more likely to say that they don't know, for both Research-only and R&T.

The survey received over 1,600 text comments, which have been provided separately. Many of these included good practice examples of how informal social structures, networking or mentoring opportunities provide opportunities for peer support and sharing of ideas.



Figure 2 To what extent do you feel your School / RI supports a culture of...

Research-only staff and Technical staff were generally more positive than R&T staff on Q2.1 to 2.7. Open research and open access publication were felt to be less supported in the Colleges of Arts and Social Sciences (although ~30% of respondents in these Colleges noted interest in finding out more about these areas). Responses to Q2.3 to 2.7 were generally less positive in the Colleges of Science and Engineering and Social Sciences and also less positive from male respondents than female (even within Science and Engineering). Across the College of MVLS, responses were more positive from Research Institutes than from Schools.

Research-only staff and Technical staff were less likely to understand what 4* quality outputs look like or what good authorship practice is in their discipline than R&T staff but were more likely to feel able to spend time on continuing professional development.

Data management

Although slightly over half of the respondents agreed that they had data management plans, around 20% of respondents did not know, thought they might but had not seen it, or did not specify.

The percentage of respondents agreeing that they had data management plans was variable across Schools and Institutes. Although low numbers agreeing might be anticipated in some disciplines (e.g. Modern Languages), the number was also lower than expected in Schools/Institutes in MVLS and COSE. A few of the text comments mentioned the increased PGR training in this area and support from the data management service, with one respondent suggesting this should in fact be assessed as part of the PhD award (drafting note: a data management plan is now a mandatory part of PGR annual progress review and around 36% of PGRs in the 2019 UofG PRES survey agreed that they had a data management plan). 38% of Technical staff expressed a strong interest in knowing more about data management.

Do staff know where to get support and advice? What additional support is needed?

Figure 3 takes the difference in those who understand where to get information on a variety of themes (Q5) from those who would like to know more about each of these themes (Q6). Where the difference was negative, this implies that more people want this information than those who already know where to find it. All staff groups would like to know more about how research quality is assessed in their discipline.

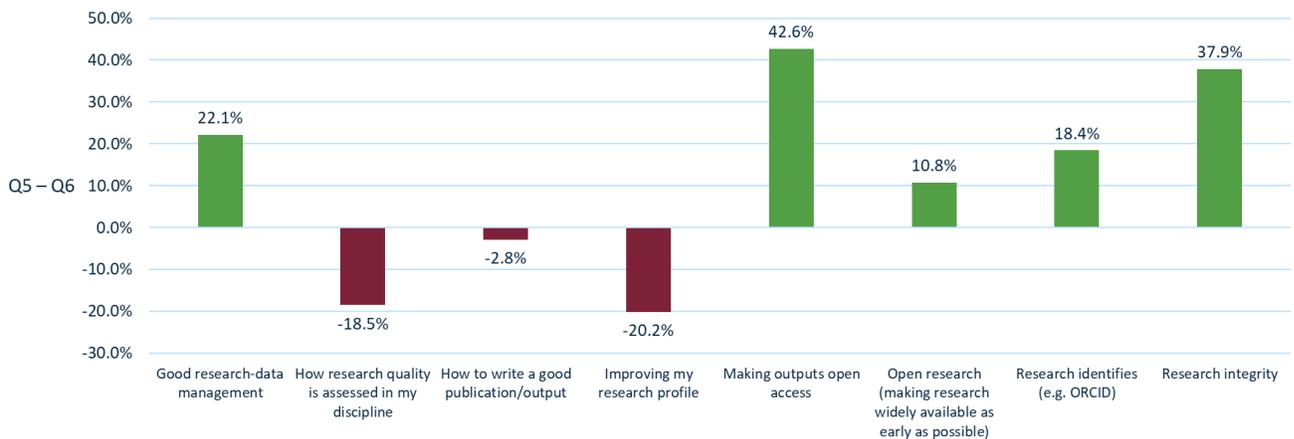


Figure 3 The difference between Q5 and Q6

The area where staff would most like to get additional support or knowledge is in how to write a good grant application (45% of Research-only staff would like this and 32% of R&T staff). This was strongly reflected in the responses from the Colleges of MVLS, Social Sciences, and Science and Engineering, but it was ranked as less important in the College of Arts. Understanding more about open research was also of interest to nearly one third of Research-only / R&T staff and 36% of Research-only staff would like to know more about writing high-quality outputs.

Figure 3 is interesting since the relative height of the green bars corresponds approximately to the scale and duration of University investment in each domain.

Next steps

Schools / Research Institutes are requested to:

1. Consider the survey data in parallel with existing data (e.g. PRES or Athena Swan) or other culture change initiatives in their area
2. Agree a small number of key actions and success measures which can be tracked between now and the next time the survey will run (summer 2020)
3. Share the actions and any examples of good practice with Elizabeth.Adams@Glasgow.ac.uk to feed into the report being prepared for SMG in December 2019

Useful resources

[Survey question set](#) for 2019 Research Culture Survey

[Research Culture webpages](#), providing an overview of work being undertaken at the University of Glasgow in this area

[Postgraduate Research Experience Survey](#) results (2019 and previous years, by School / RI)

[Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion into researcher development and into conferences](#) (good practice guidance from UofG)

[Research Integrity webpages](#) including a list of local research integrity advisers and an annual statement on what the University is doing to promote research integrity and good research practice

Responsible metrics: [UofG Statement on the Use of Quantitative Indicators in the Assessment of Research Quality](#)

[UofG Revised Academic Promotions Criteria](#)