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UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Data from, about and by, Postgraduate Research students

Horizons of “data” in the future of PGR
education.

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University
ofGalway.ie

Data at the moment...



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Data from and about PGRs shapes training design and management.

Data (information which tells us about the social world) is processed and shaped. The way in which the data is gathered, analyzed and presented 'blackboxes' assumptions. Methodological errors can occur (categorical data presented as discrete data).

Digital transformation(s) change who we are as sociological beings (data subjects, data citizens, data users) and connects to the shift from 'research on' to 'research with' (rise of patient&public involvement, expert researchers and emergence of different types of legitimacy).

This is against the backdrop of crises in the universities system.

What is on the horizon?



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“We all live under the same sky, but we don't all have the same horizon.”

Konrad Adenauer

The Telegraph

[Taxpayer funding PhDs on 'Growing Up Queer' and 'Podcasting and Pedagogy for the Planet'](#)

The successful candidate will be paid a living cost stipend of £19237 a year - a rate set by UK Research Innovation.

13 Apr 2024

Chemistry World

[Irish PhD researchers left disappointed as stipend raise is just half of what was hoped for](#)

The increase applies only to PhDs funded by Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) and the Irish Research Council, around 30% of all PhDs, bringing...

19 Oct 2023

Research Professional News

[Italy's PhD students face mental health crisis](#)

Half the country's doctoral candidates show “clinically relevant” scores for depression, anxiety and stress.

18 Jan 2024

Nature

[UK PhD students' call to action amid the cost-of-living crisis](#)

International students are restricted to limited work hours and PhD students with caring responsibilities or disabilities face additional...

17 May 2023

Sources of data (from and about PhDs)



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Pre-application: emails, CV/marks/grades, IP address

Application: narrative description of self, economic capacity for fees, nationality,

Acceptance: bank details, physical address, visa details, next of kin, health status,

1st year: emails with staff, supervisor meeting minutes, coursework material, exams scripts, module marks, timestamped log-ins to systems, engagement with online learning systems, course feedback surveys, PhD surveys, commutation from course reps.

2nd year: as year 1 + conference presentations, journal publications, progress reports (GCRs)

3rd year: as year 2 + teaching evaluations

4th year: as year 3 + job applications, job references, public engagement-

Graduation: viva (thesis, pre-viva reports, oral defence, post-viva comments, edits)

Work: level of appointment, field/discipline, salary range, job references.

Irish Survey of Student Engagement (ISSE), the National Employers survey and data from the annual HEA First Destinations Survey.

Student Feedback data

Researcher Development Centre(RDC) run a number of courses: Academic Conferences, CV Writing, Feedback, Peer Review, and Editing, Intro to the RDC and Personal Development Planning for PhD Researchers ONLINE, Introduction to Academic Writing Skills and Supports, Introduction to Teaching and Learning, Ne[x]tworking, On Writing, Planning your Publication Strategy, Preparing to meet your GRC

Feedback: 108 students events

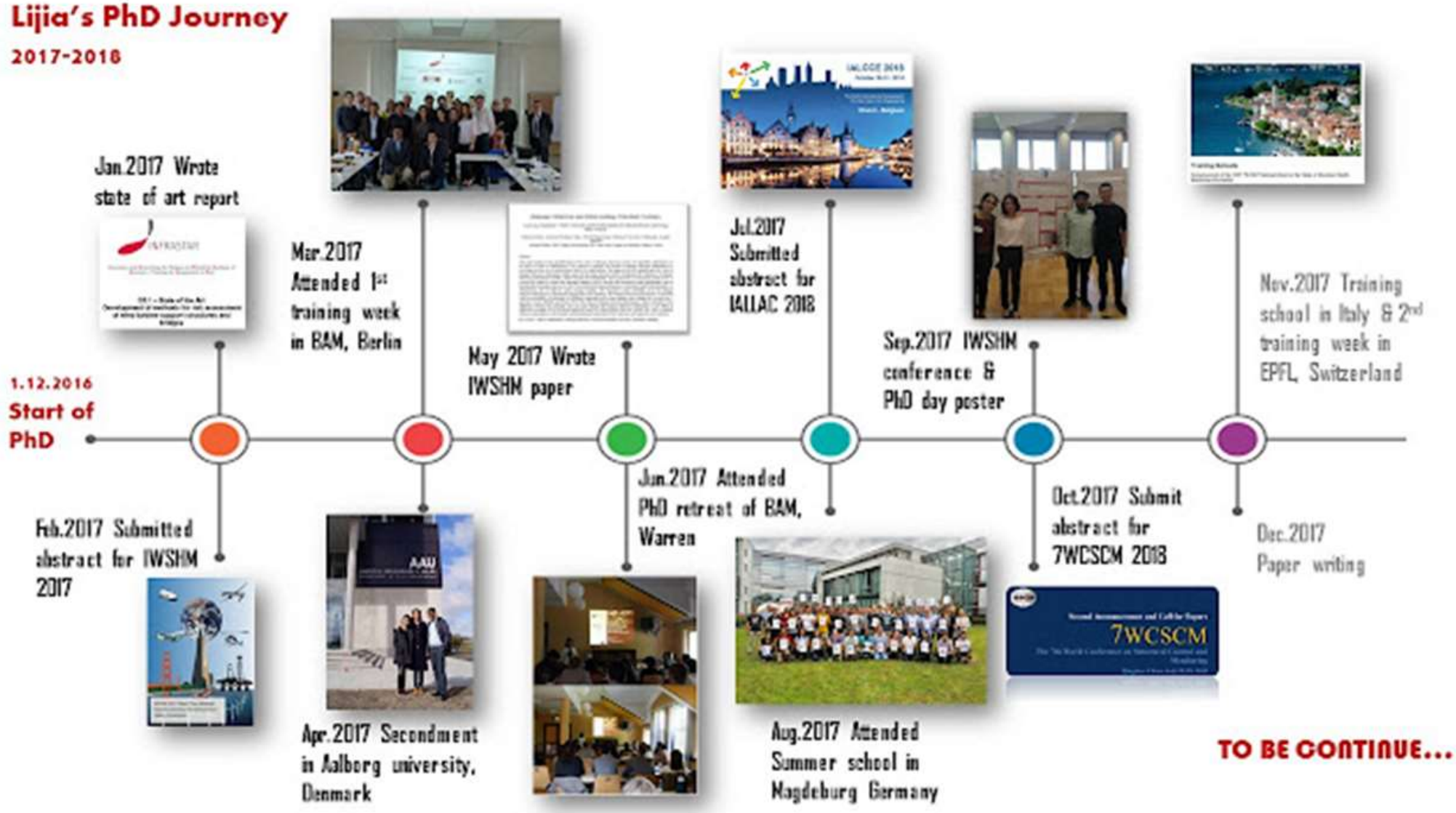
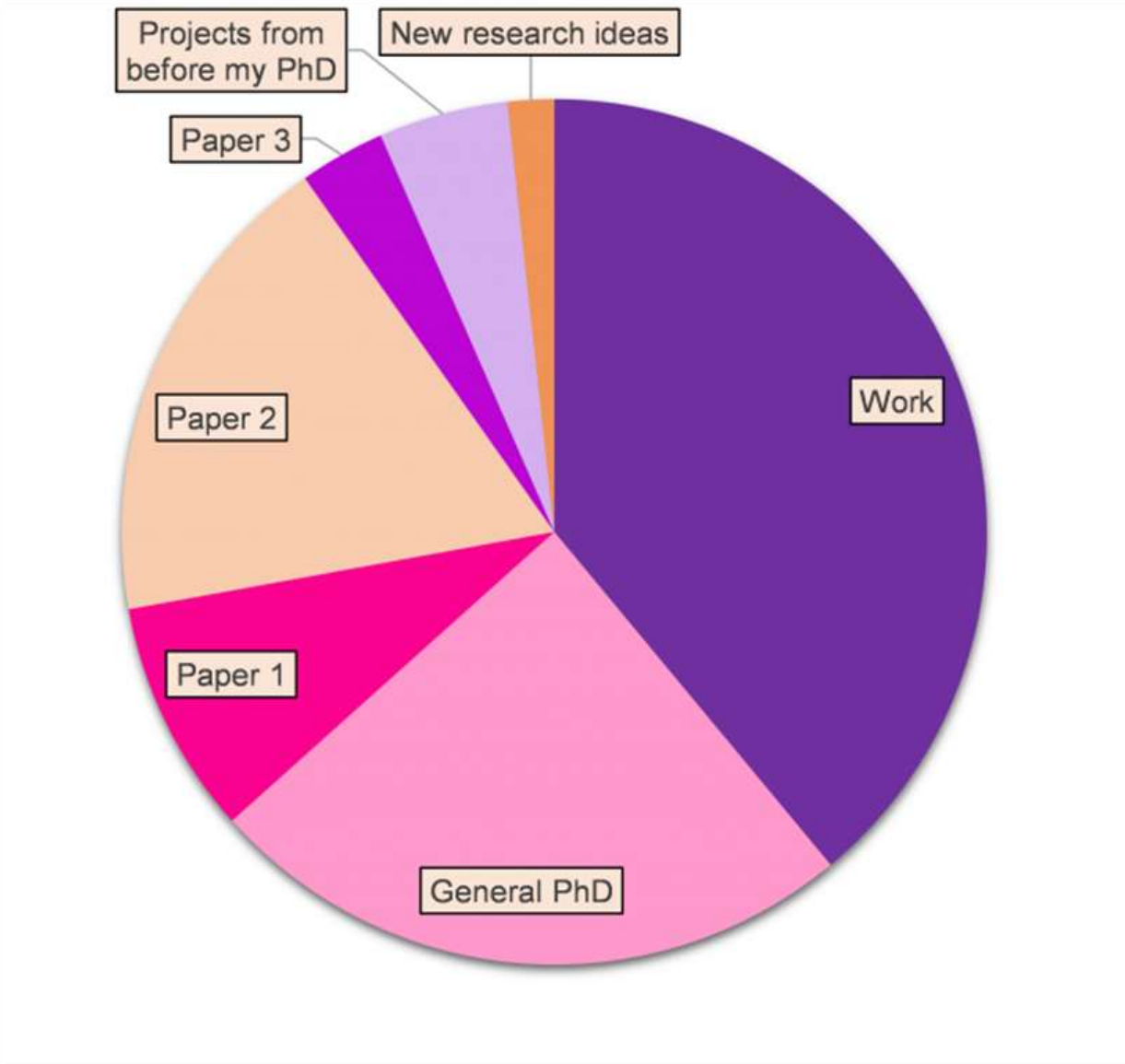
- Shared in full with the trainer of each specific workshop
- Used by RDC to assess how to improve workshops
- + Reporting purposes, typically to the Graduate Studies Board

86% would recommend the course.

53% of those who said no/maybe, did feel the course was helpful at filling in knowledge gaps. So how do we explain the lack of 'recommendation'?



What type of data is 'by' Phds?



<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/socialpolicy/2022/03/28/a-year-in-the-life-of-a-phd-student/>

<http://esr12infrastar.blogspot.com/2017/12/summary-of-my-first-year-phd-life.html>



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Shifting horizon

Platformisation of education

Assetization of data

Narrative CV (+ORCID code)

This kind of data is generated with the active participation of the doctoral/postgraduate researchers (sometimes for years after their PhD)

Do I have to record my outcomes on Researchfish?

If you are funded by a UK research council, you will have to use Researchfish at some point, depending on when you enrolled on your PhD.

If you are currently in the third or fourth year of your doctorate (your PhD studentship started on or before 1 February 2022), then you must register with Researchfish for the submission period outlined in the section below.

If you are currently in the first or second year of your doctorate (your PhD studentship began after 1 February 2022), you do not have to submit to Researchfish this year. However, you will have to submit in the future. You will not be able to register for Researchfish yet, but your awards will be added to the Researchfish system at a later date.

Students or employees?

Irish situation: Postgraduate Researchers

University has legal and educational obligations to students, which it does not have to staff.

Students have rights and obligations –to make mistakes/take leave/gain a return from fees, which are different to those for staff (professional representatives of their employer).

Staff can

Object to their personal data being processed for direct marketing, scientific or historical research
Data portability – this allows them to get data from their employer and reuse it.

Is open data possible for doctoral education?



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 Times Higher Education

UKRI promises action over 'threatening' Researchfish tweets

Platform responds to online criticism by telling researchers they would be reported to their funders.

18 Mar 2022



Is digital literacy the answer?

Data literacy and data ethics have become an urgent needs in doctoral education.

“individual's ability to find, evaluate, and communicate information using typing or digital media platforms” +power over one’s data?

This is coupled with the emergence of different types of legitimacy in academic knowledge production.

“Doing data together” changes the use of data.



<https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/our-priorities/digital-transformation/national-digital-skills-framework/>

Why the distinction between three kinds of data?

1. Importance for feedback loops and interfaces between PGRs and the university in terms of the idea of a shared data horizon.
2. The shared data horizon can become an integral part – in terms of data literacy and ethics – of designing and managing the PGR experience through integrating it as a reflexive aspect into doctoral education itself.
3. Changing the type of data collected (qual instead of quant) will not impact the underlying paradigm of the process. Creating the PhD student as a commodity (for promotion or other reward) is likely to feed existing negative systems. Recognizing the PGR community as more than just the doctoral students with a collective and communicative memory is important.
4. Open data poses interesting changes for the internal data systems of all three types of data.





Recommendations

1. Risk management and mass data collection is likely to lead to a) excessive burden on staff, b) decrease in trust from students & under analysed data.
2. Formal courses are only one small part of a PhD student's experience –the other areas also need to be considered (data linkage).
3. Design and management need to elaborate an integrative and reflexive approach to data (literacy and ethics) training in doctoral education that needs to begin with clarity about data about, by, and from our PGRs.
4. Regulation of PhD status will support these transformations, but it will require a culture change and sufficient resources.



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Thank *you*



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