



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**Coláiste
Dochtúireachta**
Doctoral
College

Postgraduate Researcher needs & supports

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Six aligned research studies

Universal Design for doctoral education



Doctoral supervisory capacity



Doctoral experiences



Doctoral needs & gaps



Doctoral teaching responsibilities



Sharing EU doctoral practices



Wellbeing



Training & career development



Communication, exchange & dissemination



Effective research supervision



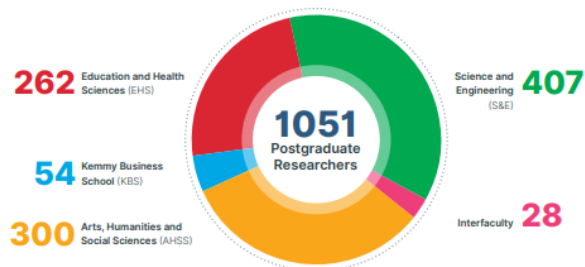
Equitable allocation of opportunities

PGR Demographics

February 2023

October 2023

Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Metrics



66 Research Masters / **861** PhD / **124** Professional Doctorates

632 EU / **419** Non-EU

583 Female / **468** Male

134 Part-time / **865** Full-time / **52** Distance PGRs

950 PhD students

446 National

504 International:

- **85 EU**
- **419 Non-EU**

Methodology and sample

- **Semi-structured Interviews regarding experiences & supports.**
- **lasting 40-50 minutes.**
- **Choice of interviewer and formats.**
- **Solo or in Focus Groups.**
- **Online and in person.**

- **25 participants**
- **8 men 17 women**
- **14 International 11 National**

Literary framework



Hopwood et al (2011) Chapter on hidden realities of life as a doctoral student.

Identified variation in experiences of 'full time' doctoral students – particularly regarding the impact of external factors have on their research schedules and well being.

Jancey & Burns (2013) Institutional factors and the postgraduate student experience.

Enrolment advice was a high priority for 90.2% of respondents, with only 41% satisfied with supports provided.

Paulson et al (2010) Research into challenges of doctoral study.

Identified six, often interrelated, challenges and barriers faced by doctoral students. Classified as Emotional difficulties, Geographic difficulties, Personal difficulties, Relational difficulties, Situational difficulties and Structural/Cultural difficulties.



Results focus areas

- **Geographic difficulties:** Onboarding supports – Access to up to date and relevant information.
- **Situational Difficulties:** Finance & Visas.
- **Structural/Cultural Difficulties:** Uncertainty around which departments are responsible for resolving issues.

Visa & employment issues

Participant Z: *“My husband is a journalist at the peak of his career, he decided to accompany me during my PhD, when we came here we found out that he's not allowed to work being a spouse of a of a PGR, that really put a full stop to his thriving career and not just for one year, not just for six months, but for the next four years.”*

“This is a huge challenge where the onus is on the PhD student to financially afford themselves as well as their families. So I think that is a very, very big challenge and there was no information, no resources made available to us that could help us make that informed decision.”

Visa solution suggestions

Participant Z: *“I think that there should be a dedicated information page on the University website for International PGRs who are coming here with their families. These information pieces should be provided in advance so that they can put together sufficient funds or they can have realistic expectations before they come.”*

Participant S: *“All of that financial information could be on one page, it just has to be clear and updated. This is how much money you'll get if you're funded & by the way, for your visa, your spouse isn't going to be able to work. I think that alone would go such a long way to stopping all of these issues.”*

Conference attendance issues

Participant AZ: *“Let's forget the funding and all those things that I was aware of that when I decided to do a PhD in Ireland. I feel like I still had an expectation that I would be able to attend conferences and travel for professional development purposes or workshops related to my PhD.”*

“Let's say I'm notified that I've been accepted a month or two in advance, at this stage in the Irish context, I know that it is an unrealistic expectation. I won't be able to apply and get a visa on time because everything takes at least three months.”

Onboarding issues

Participant SZ: *“There's so many things that I need to navigate as part of an international student experience that the home students have already figured out. Finding accommodation, setting up a bank account, getting a PPS number, getting the visas, all those struggles, they come along with the experience of being an international student.”*

Participant S: *“Everything has been twice as hard as it should be. I try to get answers from this person, but they're not the right person. They can't tell me who to go to. This has been from the beginning, from my application process, it's been no clear path.”*

Participant I: *“When I was trying to look for something on the University website a lot of times I found that the information is outdated or the link doesn't work.”*

Onboarding solutions

Participant SG: *“I think it would be nice to have an onboarding process like masters students do.” via the International office.*

Participant I: *“I was doing Masters in the Netherlands. I think they did a great job in organising their website and communicating with students, they sent us a very detailed manual and also if you need something then you can go to their website and they will most definitely have an article about, for example onboarding, what you need to do to find housing and things like that.”*

Participant S: *“I think it should be the job of the University itself. I know I've seen websites (in other countries) that actually have very good cost of living pages, so when you're considering applying it spells out these are your costs. This is what it costs for transportation, this is what it costs for housing, this is what food costs, and it's updated every year based on inflation.”*

Conclusion

Next steps:

- Complete analysis - (Inter)national self-ID
- Feedback to PGR community
- Recommendations to relevant University services e.g. International office, Postgraduate union.