

IMPERIAL

Early Career Researcher Institute

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2025

Institutional Level Action Plan

Imperial College London



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Introduction

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), conducted by AdvanceHE, allows institutions to analyse and benchmark the experience of postgraduate research students.

PRES questions cover a variety of themes that focus on student experience:

1. Supervision	6. Responsibilities
2. Resources	7. Support
3. Research Culture	8. Research Skills
4. Community	9. Professional Development
5. Progression	10. Overall Satisfaction

Imperial participates in PRES every two years and the [Early Career Researcher Institute \(ECRI\)](#) is responsible for leading the development of Imperial's institutional level action plan to address feedback submitted by students.

Task & Finish Group

To create the PRES 2025 action plan, ECRI established a Task & Finish Group to review the findings of the survey from a university perspective and agree actions that will help create a better experience for PGRs at Imperial.

The Group membership included various central student support services, academic and student representation, and met a total of three times.

In addition to the Task & Finish Group, feedback and suggestions from departmental Directors of Postgraduate Studies and Faculty Senior Tutors were incorporated into the PRES 2025 action plan.

Task & Finish Group Membership	
ECRI Director of Academic Affairs [Chair]	Vahid Shahrezaei
ECRI Project and Networks Manager [Secretary]	Jenna Collinson
ECRI Head of Pedagogy	Magdalena Jara
ECRI Director of Strategy & Operations	Chris Harris
ICU Deputy President (Education)	Emina Hogas
ICU Deputy President (Welfare)	Anson To
ICU Postgraduate Representation Coordinator	Jordan Millward
Assistant Registrar & Secretary to the PROOC	Emma Rabin
Academic Representative, FoM	Ilaria Dorigatti
Academic Representative, FoE	Pier Luigi Dragotti
Academic Representative, Business School	Alex Michaelides
Academic Representative, FoNS	Tony Southall
Head of Scholarly Communication (Library)	Ruth Harrison
Deputy Director Student Services	Nicola Morgan
Careers Service	Jason Yarrow
Centre for Academic English	Julie King

PRES 2025 Survey Results | Headline Findings

Response rate	1,199 students responded to the survey (down from 1,780 in 2023).
Overall satisfaction	Imperial has maintained a strong overall satisfaction rate, with 82% of respondents answering positively.
Themes with best results	Imperial's strongest performance were on Research Skills with 88% satisfaction, followed by Supervision (87%) and On-campus Resources (86%).
Areas to improve	Although the 'Supervision' score is high, it falls within the lowest quartile compared with the sector and Russell Group institutions. Other areas that show the need to improve were Community with only 65% satisfaction and Research Culture (67%).
How Imperial's results compare to the Sector, the Russell Group and London institutions	Compared with average scores of the Sector, Russell Group, and London institutions, Imperial's results are mostly above average, except for Progression and Supervision, where Imperial's scores fall below average and to the bottom 25% respectively.

PRES 2025 Action Plan

After comparing Imperial's PRES 2023 and 2025 results, the Task & Finish Group concluded that Imperial is making slow progress. To support more significant improvements to the PGR student experience, the PRES 2025 action plan has a narrower focus than previous years, with the aim of having institutional actions that will be more influential.

The two key themes for the PRES 2025 action plan are:

1. Empowering departments to tackle poor supervision

2. Empowering students to make the most of their PhD

1. Empowering departments to tackle poor supervision

The PRES 2025 results show that Imperial has many great supervisors, with a satisfaction rating of 87%.

However, this score is less favourable to the Sector, the Russell Group and London Institutions.

Analysis of free text comments also highlights that where supervisory issues arise, these significantly contribute to a poorer student experience. Due to this, the Task & Finish Group agreed that improving the quality of supervision will be a key focus of the institutional level PRES action plan.

The next slide outlines the actions that will be taken to address this feedback.

1. Empowering departments to tackle poor supervision

1.1 - Work with Employee Relations to build policy, advice and support to offer Heads of Department and Directors of Postgraduate Studies ways of identifying and addressing cases of poor-quality supervision. This will include exploring actions that can be initiated when there are early indicators or patterns of poor supervision, an accountability framework, monitoring that policies and ways of working are being followed, and incorporating lessons learnt from the Project Rescue Framework pilot.

1.2 - Work with Registry to build a new PGR exit survey to capture students' experience of supervision after completing their PhD.

1.3 - Create dashboards for supervisory completion of compulsory training.

1.4 - Work with Registry to create a new set of Power BI dashboards for departmental use to identify trends and patterns in late milestone completion.

1.5 - Develop a set of resources for the annual meeting between DPSs, HODs and their supervisors which revisits key information about supervisory expectations at Imperial.

1.6 - Work with Talent and Culture to incorporate prompts regarding PGR supervision into the ARC process of academic/research staff.

2. Empowering students to make the most of their PhD

Analysis of the survey's quantitative data, alongside the free-text comments added to the survey question -

'what one thing would most improve your experience of your research degree programme'

highlighted the following key issues:

Supervision	Improvements to addressing supervisory issues when they arise.
Induction	Improvements to information provided on support available to PGR students and expectations.
Progress	Improvements to guidance, advice and support on progressing research.
Community	More interaction and networking opportunities sought.
Finance	Seeking an increase to the stipend of students and improved financial support.

The next two slides outline the actions that will be taken to address this feedback.

2. Empowering students to make the most of their PhD

2.1 - Create a new introductory ECRI course for first year PGRs on effectively managing expectations in the supervisory relationship, aligned with training provided to supervisors. The course will also provide mechanisms and sources of support when there are challenges. The course could cover some essential skills such as time-management and financial planning. Consider making compulsory for new doctoral students, to be completed by ESA.

2.2 - Review and enhance the central doctoral inductions to signpost services available when support is needed and consider compulsory attendance.

2.3 - Working with the Research Office, conduct an options analysis related to the optimisation of the number of PhD students vs stipend rates. This will complement the work being carried out by ICU with UKRI on a national stage.

2.4 - Work with Registry and Student Union to implement a major refresh of the PGR Student Handbook, containing comprehensive information on policy, advice and support services.

2. Empowering students to make the most of their PhD

2.5 - Develop a case to expand and raise awareness of coaching and mentoring provision for PGR students, building on existing provision.

2.6 - Implement a recurrent communications campaign to raise awareness of the support available to PhD students.

2.7 - Deliver ECRI's strategic plan to have a physical hub at South Kensington as a community space for PGR students to meet informally, undertake training and interact with ECRI staff.

Action Plan Approval and Next Steps

- The PRES 2025 institutional level action plan was approved at an additional meeting of the [Postgraduate Research Quality Committee \(PRQC\)](#) in March 2026.
- Throughout 2026 and 2027, the institutional level action plan will be circulated across Imperial and action progress monitored and communicated by ECRI.

ECRI would like to thank students for providing their feedback in the PRES 2025 survey and colleagues from across Imperial for their input into the PRES 2025 institutional level action plan.

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For questions related to the institutional level action plan, please contact ecri@imperial.ac.uk

