

npc  the national postgraduate committee

*national survey
on user perceptions of personal
development planning
for postgraduate research students*

final report

*carried out jointly by the UK GRAD programme,
centre for recording achievement and the national
postgraduate committee*

tim brown

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The Centre for
Recording
Achievement

National Survey on User Perceptions of Personal Development Planning for Postgraduate Research Students

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Executive Summary

This section is covering the results of a survey conducted jointly by UK GRAD, the Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA) and the National Postgraduate Committee (NPC) to gather some views from individual postgraduates by means of an online survey. The survey was placed on NPC's own website through which it could promote the survey to individual postgraduates via its well used email list resources. Further to this individuals on the email list were able to distribute the survey further to email lists they had access to. UK GRAD assisted the process also by distributing the survey to alumni members. In this section a summary is given of the demography of respondents, the statistics generated from appropriate questions and also commentary on the written responses given in the survey.

Demography of respondents:

- Mainly UK (74%), full time (86%), under 35 (82%) responding. Therefore it is largely those seeking to pursue a career while training in research at an earlier stage of life.
- 39% of respondents were male and 61% were female.
- 50% were research council or Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) funded.

Statistical results:

- More students indicated that a progress review system is regarded as a research progress log (1152 responses) rather than something to assess training needs (only 425 responses).
- Over 80% claimed to use a paper based system rather than an electronic or other system.
- Less than half had their progress log shared widely as part of a review process (39%).
- An overwhelming majority, 1207, indicated that their progress review system is carried out on a compulsory basis.
- A vast majority, 991, indicated that support was received from the supervisory team.
- Over half of the respondents, 540, completed a yearly review with a number of others undertaking a six monthly review.
- 66% of students claimed to be supported in how to use their progress review system.
- Mixed responses were given by students on a scale of 0 to 9 as to how supportive their supervisor was, with 19% indicating no support with 0 while 17% felt strong support from their supervisor with 9 as the score.

Negative comments from the written results:

- Strong responses indicated that there were bureaucratic processes involved creating excessive paperwork and unnecessary use of time. Further to that it created obstacles for supervisors to get around.
- Lack of supervisor interest and support was reducing popularity in a number of circumstances.

- Badly tailored progress review forms also made the process tedious and lacking benefit.
- Some expressed a need to have feedback mechanisms to deal with supervisory difficulties on a confidential and impartial level.

Positive comments from the written results:

- The strongest response indicated that the review system was a helpful means of reviewing progress and planning mileposts for the future.
- Career planning and training was praised by some and it was a helpful tool for their personal development.
- It provides an opportunity to meet with and interact with supervisor to monitor work, especially where supervisors need to be urged to meet with their students and regularly monitor progress.
- It facilitates work sharing with others since it is a default part of the whole process.

Other comments received:

- A vast majority claimed support was mainly from their supervisors, although some did indicate support came from other students, graduate schools and research student forums.

The structure of this report outlines the statistical results where only numerical or multiple choice answers were requested in the survey as indicated in the questionnaire in the Annex. Following this, a summary is given of the written responses that were received and condensed due to the large volume of respondents to deal with.

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Demography of Results

There was no obligation for the students who responded to answer any of the questions relating to demography. However due to the ease of answering the questions less than 0.5% did not answer any one question in this section. It can therefore be assumed that the demography of the results when stated as percentages or numbers where appropriate are an accurate account of the students who responded to the survey when rounded to the nearest whole number. It is assumed each student was honest about their profile. The total sample size was a significant value of 1387 to give meaningful results on a number of matters. Out of the institutions that responded, there were ten institutions contributing to 50% of the results. More responses were given from institutions who had distributed the survey to postgraduate research students within their institution via appropriate email lists, which are more accessible to use in some institutions than others. UK GRAD also distributed the survey to its alumni email list so those who responded in that instance would have stated the institution where they were a research student. 92% claimed they did use a progress file of some description while 6% claimed the vast majority of respondents had some existing system to comment on. It should be noted, however, that when answering this question, the student could be claiming that they have a progress file that consists of anything from a simple A4 paper to log progress through to a formal progress log book that will monitor their training as well as progress.

Mode of Study, Gender and Origin

Out of the students that responded to the survey, 86% claimed to be full time and 14% were part time. Further to this 74% claimed to be UK students, while only 10% were EU and 16% were overseas. Gender was reasonably balanced with 39% of respondents claiming to be male and 61% female. This will have a significant impact on the perception of personal development planning where the majority of respondents are UK students.

Age Range

Out of the age range, the results are presented in Table 1 and also in the accompanying pie chart in Figure 1. As can be seen the vast majority are between the ages of 25 and 35 who may be reaching completion or also be from a background of having previous experience outside academia since graduation. Another significant proportion are under 25 so that the vast majority of 82% are below age 35 with future careers to pursue.

| Age Bracket | 20-25 | 25-35 | 35-45 | 45+ |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Number | 533 | 608 | 138 | 104 |
| Percentage | 38% | 44% | 10% | 8% |

Table 1 - Table Showing the age range that responded to the survey

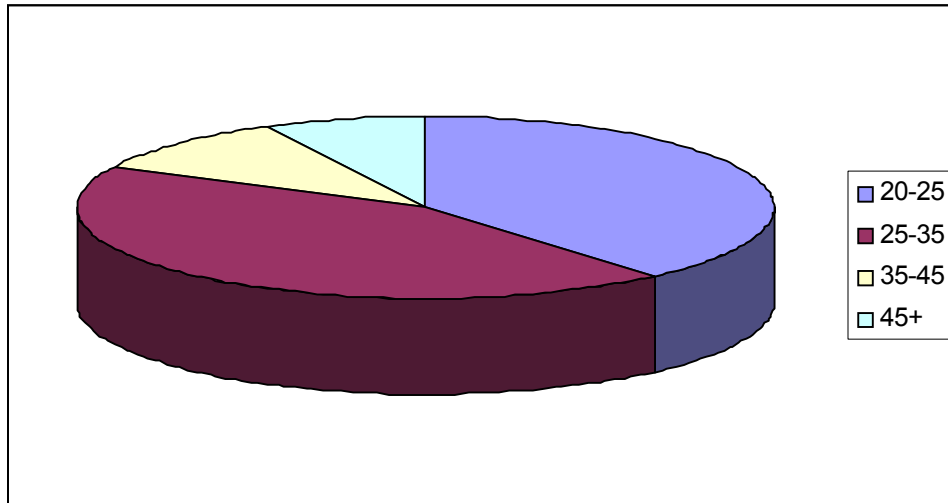


Figure 1 - Pie Chart showing the age distribution of student survey respondents

Funding Source

As with the age range, the finding sources of the students who responded are illustrated in Table 2 and Figure 2 respectively. Half of the respondents were research council funded, while many of the others were only a small percentage. The 13% who claimed to receive funding under the category of “other” did not indicate what their sources of funding were. The focus of this survey will now very much be from UK students, who are largely funded by research councils or via a scholarship.

| Source | Research Council/AHRB | Charity | HEI | Other Scholar | Industry | Self | Other |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----|---------------|----------|------|-------|
| Number | 683 | 41 | 39 | 199 | 49 | 183 | 175 |
| Percentage | 50% | 3% | 3% | 14% | 4% | 13% | 13% |

Table 2 - Table showing the distribution of funding sources of students responding to the survey

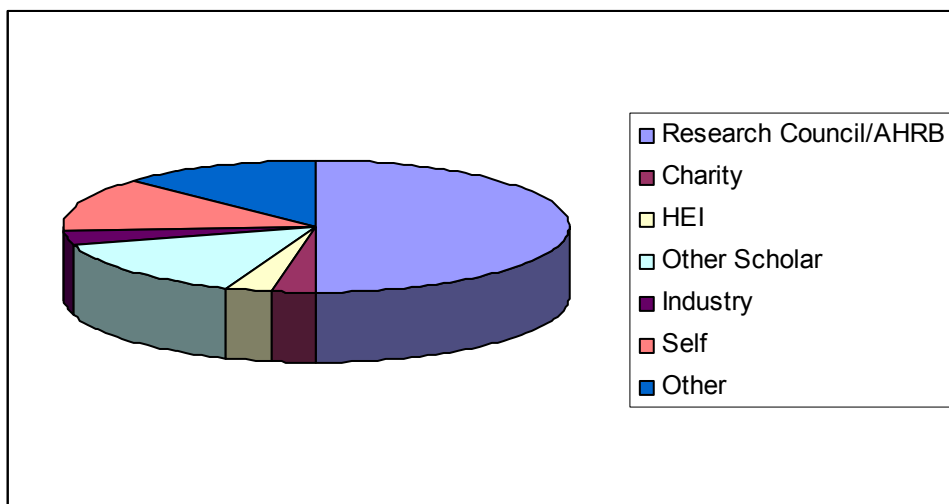


Figure 2 - Pie chart showing the sources of funding received by students in the survey

Year of research

The year of research is also presented in the same way in Table 3 and Figure 3. The vast majority are in their second or third year, constituting over 60% with a further 20% in their first year. Only a small remainder are at a stage where they have already taken 4 years or longer. These results put together with the 86% of respondents who were full time will indicate a large proportion of students who are halfway through or completing their research.

| Year | Year1 | Year2 | Year3 | Year4 | Year5 | Year6 | Year7+ |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Number | 276 | 440 | 436 | 162 | 37 | 10 | 14 |
| Percentage | 20% | 32% | 31% | 12% | 3% | 1% | 1% |

Table 3 - Table showing the distribution of students in their year of research

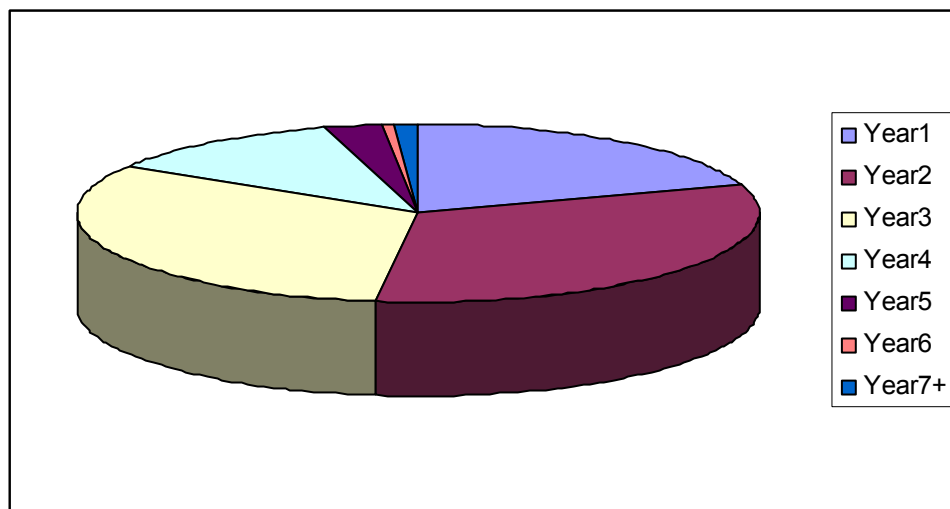


Figure 3 - Pie chart showing the distribution of year of research

Statistical Results from the Survey

There were a number of questions that required only tick boxes or other short answers to be entered and this section will cover the statistics generated from them. Unlike the results from the demography, not all respondents gave answers to the questions, so where percentages are indicated, those who did not respond are also indicated as a percentage. Where numerical results are appropriate, they have been given as a score, without considering how many respondents answered.

Perceptions of Progress Review

The perceptions of the progress review system allowed the respondent to tick as many options as they wished. Table 4 and Figure 4 indicate where the highest scores were. Clearly an overwhelming majority is given towards the purpose being perceived as a point where research progress is logged and also time is given to reflecting upon progress and planning future work. This contrasts to the little support given to it being helpful to assess skills, identify training needs or give them something to add to their CV. This indicative result is beginning to reveal the less concentration that there is on training and personal development within the review process and that the focus is more towards successful research. Where students indicated “Other”, the main responses here were to monitor supervision and also to record evidence in case a complaint or appeal occurred.

| Purpose | Score |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| To Assess Skills | 425 |
| Identify Training Needs | 403 |
| Plan Training | 270 |
| Progress Research Log | 1152 |
| Personal Reflection | 689 |
| Research Planning | 847 |
| Compulsory Log | 799 |
| Record for CV | 66 |
| Other | 87 |

Table 4 - Table showing the score given by respondents on their perceptions of progress review

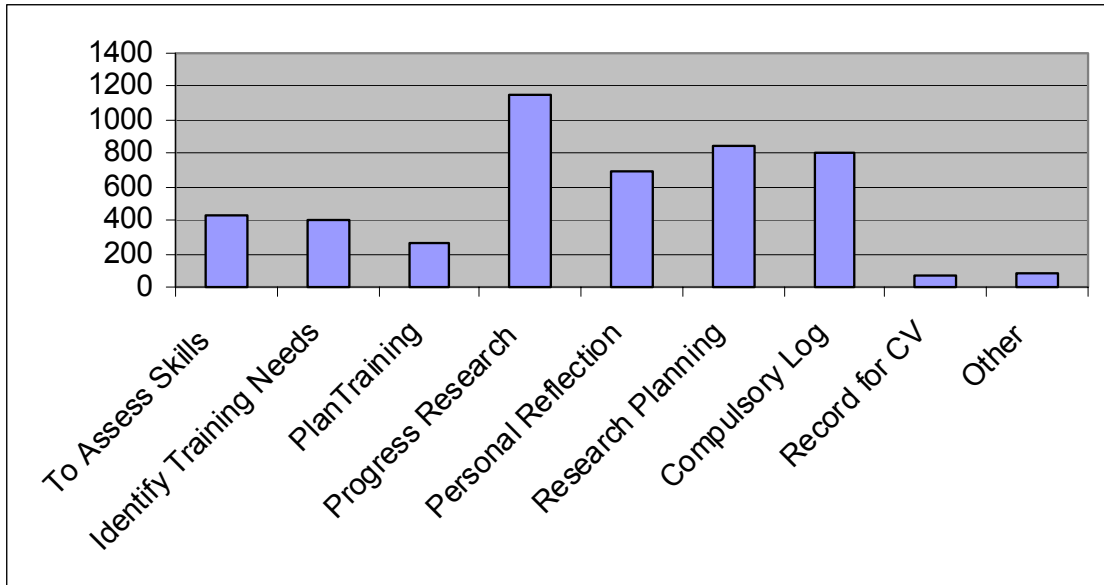


Figure 4 - Figure showing the score given to students perceptions of progress review

Mechanism of the Progress Review

Table 5 and Figure 5 indicate that the vast majority, over 80%, use a paper based system although a further 9% did not answer this question. Electronic and internet based systems currently appear to be used significantly less.

| Mechanism | Number | Percentage |
|--------------|--------|------------|
| Paper Based | 1131 | 82% |
| Electronic | 95 | 7% |
| Intranet | 1 | 0% |
| Internet | 23 | 2% |
| Other | 0 | 0% |
| Not Answered | 137 | 9% |

Table 5 - Table showing the mechanism by which respondents carried out their progress review

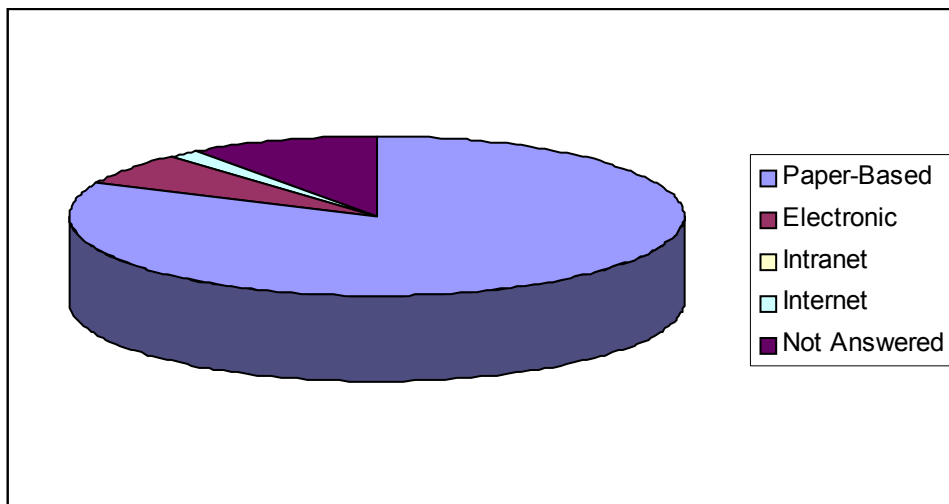


Figure 5 - Pie chart showing the mechanism by which respondents carried out their progress review

Cross Institutional or Faculty Based Research

53% of the respondents indicated that it was a cross institutional based review they used while 36% claimed it was faculty based. 11% therefore did not answer this question. There was also a request to indicate other faculties that used the system if they did although no responses were given there.

Level of sharing across the institution

The results indicated in Table 6 and Figure 6, where there are a greater proportion of respondents, show that information is shared more widely within an institution to be kept on record if necessary. A significant proportion of 20% still indicated that sharing information is restricted to the student and the supervisor. Those who responded with category “other” indicated largely that they were not sure whether their information was sent and also there was the indication from some that information could be shared beyond their supervisor at their discretion.

| Level of sharing | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| Confidential information | 21 | 2% |
| Shared Information with supervisor only | 272 | 20% |
| Widely shared information as part of a wider review | 543 | 39% |
| Part of a larger system with which institutional records are kept | 330 | 24% |
| Other | 124 | 9% |
| Not answered | 97 | 6% |

Table 6 - Table showing surveyed level of sharing across the institution from progress files

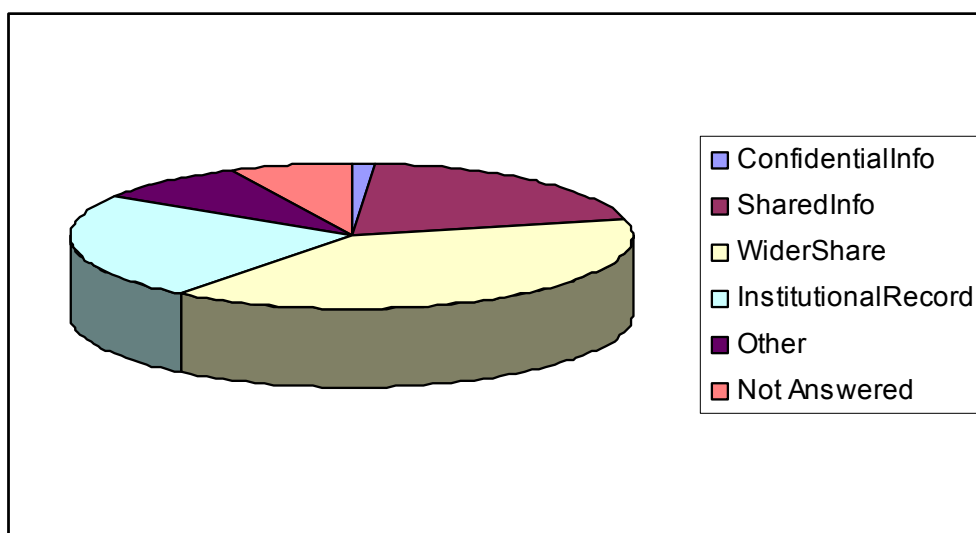


Figure 6 - Pie chart showing distribution of how widely spread information is produced

Basis on which the review is carried out

It is clearly shown in Table 7 and Figure 7 that there is an overwhelming majority undertaking progress review by compulsory requirement of the institution. This strongly

contrasts with the few who indicated it had any contribution to gaining accredited training.

| Basis | Frequency |
|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Voluntary, no obligation | 76 |
| Required by an external body | 123 |
| Compulsory from the institution | 1207 |
| To gain accredited training | 31 |

Table 7 - Table indicating the frequency of respondents who indicated the reasons why they undertook progress review

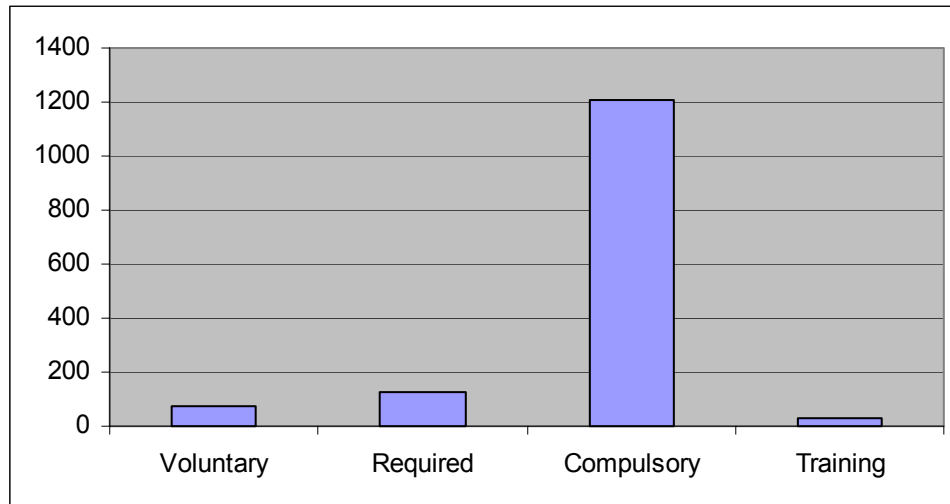


Figure 7 - Chart indicating the frequency of respondents who indicated the basis under which they undertook progress review

People involved in supporting and advising

As far as support was concerned, an overwhelming response indicated that support was provided by the supervisor or supervisory team as indicated in Table 8 and Figure 8. The frequency of responses for others was minimal in comparison. Those who specified “other” did not indicate what other sources of support they received.

| People involved | Frequency |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Supervisor | 991 |
| Supervisory team | 498 |
| Personal tutor | 116 |
| Careers advisor | 6 |
| Peer mentors | 43 |
| Independent Review Panel | 209 |
| Other | 180 |

Table 8 - Table indicating the frequency of respondents against the people responsible for supporting their progress review

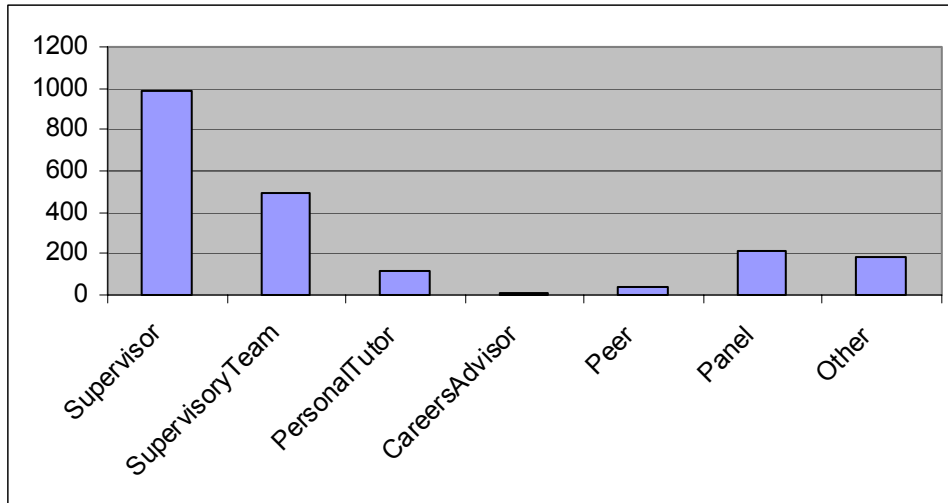


Figure 8 - Chart indicating the frequency of respondents against the people responsible for supporting progress review

Frequency of Keeping Logs

As seen from Table 9 and Figure 9, the vast majority of respondents complete a 6 monthly or yearly progress review, although a number of respondents also indicated they did so when required. Since there are a number of choices available to this question, a number of respondents could indicate more than one option depending on different reviews they undertake. For those who indicated “other”, an important one to note were part time students who would normally complete a review every 10 to 18 months.

| Frequency of keeping log | Frequency |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Weekly | 49 |
| Monthly | 129 |
| Every 3 Months | 95 |
| Every 6 Months | 341 |
| Yearly | 540 |
| When needed | 195 |
| Other | 156 |

Table 9 - Table indicating the frequency of respondents who indicated how frequently they undertake progress review

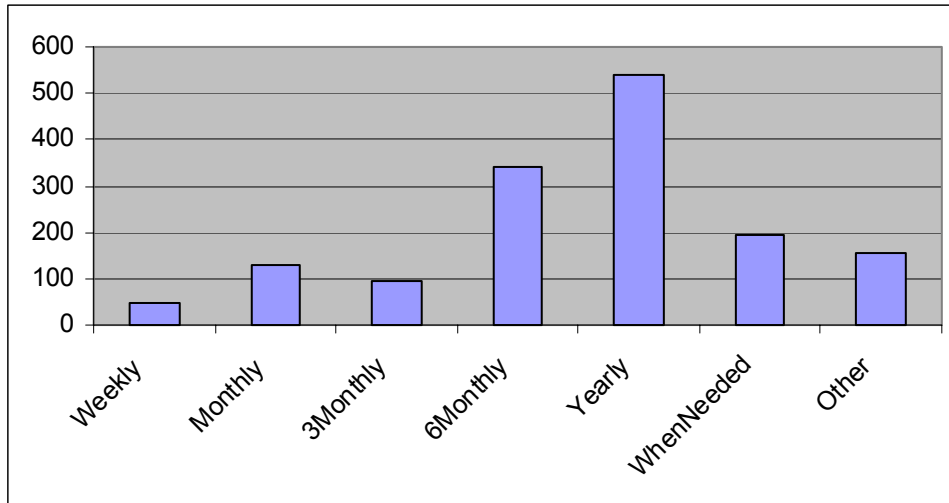


Figure 9 - Chart indicating the frequency of respondents who indicated how frequently they undertake progress review

How students felt supported

Out of the comments received, 918 or 66% felt they were supported in their progress review while 350 or 25% felt they were not. This leaves a further 119 or 9% who did not answer this question.

Supportiveness of the supervisor

A question was asked for respondents to give a score between 0 and 9 as to how engaged they found their supervisor with their work, with 0 being the worst and 9 the best. Only 0.22% of respondents did not answer this question and the results are indicated in Table 10 and Figure 10. The views are certainly mixed, where there are strong views that do not value the helpfulness of the supervisor, where as others very strongly value the help of their supervisor. It is clearly indicated that there is a mix as to whether a supervisor is supportive or not.

| Score | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|------------|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Percentage | 19% | 4% | 4% | 5% | 6% | 8% | 7% | 15% | 16% | 17% |

Table 10 - Table indicating the score given by students as to how engaged they felt their supervisor was in their progress review

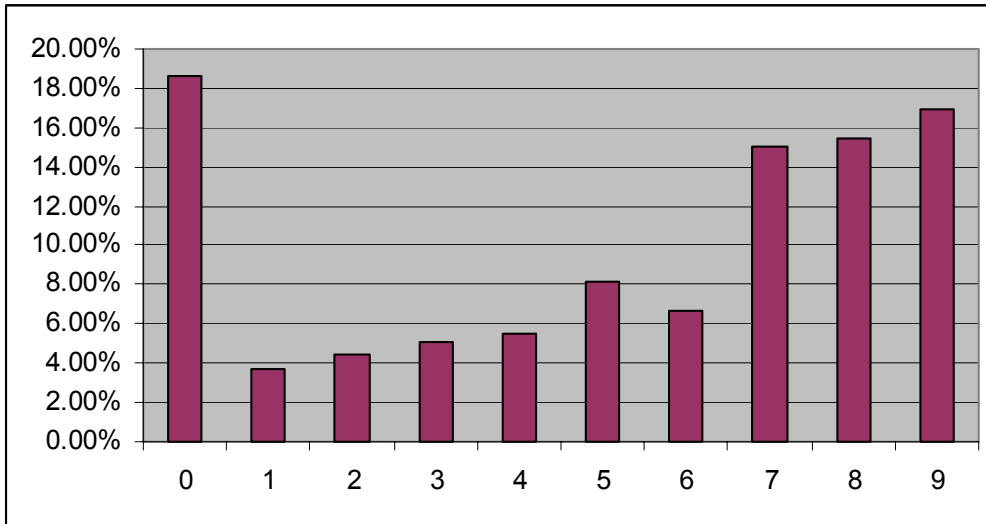


Figure 10 - Chart showing the score given by students as to how engaged they felt their supervisor was in their progress review

Analysis of Written Responses

With the volume of responses, analysis of every single written comment would be laborious and would also have ambiguity in how to arrange the results to draw out any further information. The approach has been here to analyse a selection of responses to each question in different random parts of the survey to ensure a mix of views from different institutions have been included. The comments received were then collated into groups such that further comments could be summarised here as to what kind of responses were received and which ones came across more strongly than others. Each question requiring written answers as indicated in the Annex has been commented on here.

Does this progress review system help you to improve competence in research skills, understanding research, managing your research, building personal skills, communication skills, networking/team work or career planning? If so how?

This particular question received the most responses by a significant margin. There were mixed reactions, some strongly negative while others were extremely positive. The most negative response was concerning formality. Many had the feeling that it was simply a means of record keeping for the department or registry to have a log of the work completed by the student and supervisor should it ever need to be referred to. Keeping such a record certainly has importance in the case of complaints or appeals where any evidence may need to be sought. Monitoring academic progress when it comes to annual review will also be a benefit of such records. However, there are many added benefits in this situation that could really avoid some of the negative comments as these:

Not really - it is mainly a means of record keeping. It is also supposed to be an opportunity for the student and supervisor to assess the supervisory relationship. But this rarely works as students are reluctant to be critical and indeed when they are supervisors have been known to refuse to sign the review.

Not really. We have semi annual review on paper which just feels like bureaucracy. We have a viva like annual review which does feel useful as a practice for the real viva.

No, it is merely a way of documenting the interaction between student/supervisor, so unless your supervisor meetings are helpful/productive, then they are of no benefit whatsoever in research skills. The only benefit they may be is documentary evidence if you plan to take legal action against your supervisor for lack of supervision.

It could be argued in the above cases that the progress log is set out in a way that could be beneficial but it does need to be used appropriately by the student and supervisor. On the other hand, it may be that the recording system is not so well tailored to encourage the student and supervisor to analyse their training needs and consider how they are progressing on a critical level.

Others saw the exercise as an obstacle, a classic example of this comes from the following comment:

In my opinion I treat filling in my monthly record sheet as a hoop jumping exercise, most of the time my supervisor pre signs the sheet and I fill in the blanks writing appropriate comments.

The fact that the review is compulsory, and so pressure is put on students and the supervisor, the process is seen as another obstacle in their path, therefore not an opportunity.

A small group did come across with the idea that annual review is not the way to monitor training needs or experience, an example of this is:

The skills mentioned are generally learned from experience / advice of other postgrads. Annual review is not helpful in this sense.

Finally, a significant proportion were drawing their attention to supervision problems. A number of them were very much of the opinion that it would work well with a supervisor who had the interest and determination. A typical comment was much to the effect of this example:

Not particularly - it depends very much on your supervisor and their attitude towards it.

As for positive results that were received, the strongest was that there was a good research record/review process involved. It was a helpful means for them to oversee periodically what research they had achieved. Typical comments included:

Yes, helps consolidate your work-to-date and also give you an idea of what writing up will involve.

I find it useful in to assess what I have done, what I need to do, and any areas that may need improvement

Helps to summarise the results and ideas to the date of the report

It helps me keep a tab on where I have got to with regards to my research

Further to this, management came up in a number of cases, where it was useful to help with the planning and directing of the research. Responses were of the following kind:

It helps the time management and understanding research.

It helps me see the wider picture and to keep on track with my research.

It helps manage my research by allowing me to discuss with my supervisor what I have managed to do since the last meeting, and what is worth doing in the future. It also enables me to get feedback on any reports I have written.

A small group of results indicated that it was a helpful for career planning, to see how they are preparing for their future and how their research degree will have a role in that. In the response below, the reaction is generally negative although the need for review is seen and it can assist with such an aspect as career planning.

In theory yes, but there is a great deal of variability in how the system is used. In my case, it is a formality that is frequently ignored; as such, I don't feel it contributes to the above aspects of my research

very much. I have an internal assessor, not my supervisor, who is responsible for ensuring the process takes place, and with whom I have a formal meeting once a year - this isn't often enough but it does help with career planning and getting another opinion on the direction of your work. Similar informal meetings are important.

How do you receive any help, assistance or input informally (e.g. tutors, careers advisers, seminars)? Please give details.

The vast majority of responses here indicated that help, if any, was received from the supervisor. Second down from this some indicated that there was a wealth of assistance from research group meetings or seminars, where progress would be discussed and reviewed. Other minor responses indicated that other students would help or tutors and graduate schools. Very few indicated any assistance from careers advisers.

On the negative side of things, some said all they received was administration support from the secretary, or that they could seek for help if they needed it, or that they got no help at all. Such provisions do not encourage the student to get involved and take the opportunity to benefit from the system.

What benefits do you think your progress review system offers? What works well and why?

Again, there were a number of responses to this question that indicated it was simply extra paperwork to take more time or create bureaucracy. Examples of the negative responses that came were:

Just adds on more tasks!

Monthly reports are just extra paperwork. Yearly reports have helped me start writing and see where I have been and what needs to be done next.

Just as a method of reporting

The problem in our Institution is that there is little monitoring of whether its procedures are being implemented. It's all very well having a progress review system on paper but unless Schools use it it's no use whatsoever. I am a research student representative at my institution and I know that the lack of adherence to the procedures is not unique to my school. If schools, or indeed individual supervisors, were penalised for not adhering to the review procedure then they would be far more likely to take it seriously. I would regard forbidding new research student enrolment until Schools followed procedure as a good incentive to make them take it seriously, but I think this unlikely to ever happen!.

Some other responses indicated that more help and support from supervisors was necessary to improve the situation. While there were negative responses, at the same time positive responses came back in terms of the opportunity for planning, to monitor progress and identify any problems.

It helps us to be more realistic about the progress of the work

Identifies failing students, as a yearly report on your research must be produced and discussed with other members of the department.

I think that the Annual Review is a very good chance to account, summarise and plan my research.

Forces the student to review progress. Provides help for writing thesis.

It weeds out at a relatively early stage the people who are not taking the PhD seriously or not capable of completing.

Every six month the panel review system allows us to see how we have progressed, giving ourselves a psychological boost

Another positive note was that it was helpful in encouraging meetings and providing the opportunity for the student and supervisor to discuss progress and make constructive plans. Examples of how this was seen positively are:

Ensures that the supervisor knows what the student is up to as some supervisors have less of an input in the students project than others.

It is useful to get feedback from supervisors about personal abilities and weaknesses. It is also good that there is focussed attention on progress at least once a year.

For those who don't see their supervisors very often, it ensures that supervisor and student know what is going on to some capacity. Early on, it is a chance for the supervisor to review whether both parties are in agreement on research aims and objectives and are both 'moving in the same direction'.

Please give some further comment about how the progress review system WORKS FOR YOU (e.g. encourages planning with supervisor, helps identify mileposts, recording progress, etc.)

The strongest response was that mileposts and deadlines they have to meet were given direction on such that a systematic review and planning system was then in place. A further point was that it was a useful motivator to identify what work needed to be done so that it could be set into a timetable of activity and not cause endless days wondering what to do next. A significant majority also gave praise for the point that it was an opportunity to share their research and progress with others and seek further advice. Therefore on the whole the review system provides opportunity for reflection, identifying mileposts and opportunity for feedback. Examples of comments received are below:

Helps identify mileposts and gives a deadline by which I have agreed to complete specific tasks.

Encourages me to work so I have something to say each month.

Discussion of yearly report with other staff members is useful practice for thesis defence.

Helps me feel that the project is progressing

It helps me identify what I need to do next and discuss any problems I may have encountered, with my supervisor, who may be able to suggest something else to try.

Makes you "take stock" of what you've achieved over the past year, and assess what needs to be done in the future. In that sense encourages planning of future research needs with supervisor

The reflexive nature of the whole process is good and I think that it is not intended to catch the student out but to encourage a critical reflection and his/her progress. It is also useful to discuss issues and the development of the research with other outside the supervisory team.

The review system is useful as it provides deadlines, as there are no other deadlines to meet during my research. It is also useful to formally review my progress myself and with my supervisor.

Please give information where you feel the progress review system is failing to work for you (e.g. time consuming, bureaucratic, inflexible, etc.). What doesn't work and why?

Extremely strong comments came back on this question with response to the formality and bureaucratic nature of the process as well as its time consuming nature. The value of such a process was not winning a vast number of hearts from postgraduates. Examples of reactions are:

It is tedious, time-consuming and unnecessary. Supervisors can identify unsatisfactory progress by students - they meet every week.

it is compulsory and sometimes the formality means that objectives are set just so that something is recorded. I also feel that the mechanism is in place to protect the institution against any repercussions of students failing to meet their final deadline...rather than to assist the student in meeting research objectives.

Doesn't work because its only a log of the supervisory meetings, so if your supervisory meetings are of no help, writing a report of them isn't going to improve matters, and if no-one else views them no-one else is aware that there may be a problem.

Forms not very flexible. You end up writing the same old stuff on each one.

Another strong response from students was the lack of supervisor interest or support. Further to this no constructive feedback on how to improve things was provided. The typical responses were of the following nature:

There isn't much will from the supervisor to use it and take the opportunity to regularly see how review is going. Meetings should go along with it that will commit to seeing what training, effort and weak areas are as well as strong areas.

Lack of staff buy in and commitment

Can you think of anything useful your progress review system should offer that it does not offer?

A strong response here was for the need to have helpful feedback from supervisors to give the opportunity to discuss progress and find appropriate solutions:

Opportunity to discuss problems

More informal meetings, interaction with supervisor.

More importantly, there is a need for there to be a system for confidential feedback to deal with complaints and issues where supervision received is unsatisfactory. Comments were similar to this:

Department has no "mentor" system, the only contact is directly with your boss.

Further comments came on the way the forms were laid out and the ease of filling them in, for example:

Clearer simpler headings should be used on these forms. They should be shorter and more focussed on setting and achieving targets related to your PhD and future career.

The forms should be more flexible

Other minor responses did include the need for more guidance on training needs or career planning.

Please add any comments you may have on the helpfulness of your supervisor in the progress review process...

The responses here were definitely mixed. Some gave praise for their supervisor and found their guidance and assistance of great help, while others did not and had to make significant effort to seek any interest or support. It is clear in this instance that there is a balance of good and bad supervisors and so it is extremely random who will have better supervisors than others.

Conclusion

A summary has been presented of the results from surveying over 1300 postgraduate research students across the United Kingdom. The majority of results clearly indicate a variety of responses from research students in terms of how they see such a system as beneficial, whether supervisory support is available and how comprehensive the system is. Some responses are positive in monitoring progress and enabling career planning, which will provide a helpful base from which to derive good practice in personal development planning for postgraduate research students.

Annex – Online Questionnaire used in the survey

Please note, if you are not a postgraduate research student, please do not fill in this questionnaire.

About You

Are you registered as Part Time or Full Time?

Are you registered as a UK, EU or 'Overseas' student?

What age range are you in? 20-25, 25-35, 35-45, 45+?

Gender? Male, Female?

What discipline/subject area are you researching in?

At what institution are you researching?

What is your funding source? Research Council/AHRB, Charity, HEI Scholarship, Other Scholarship, Industry, Self funded, Other?

If 'other', please state

What stage are you at in your research? 1st Year, 2nd Year, 3rd Year, 4th Year, 5th Year, 6th Year, 7th Year +?

Questions requiring your opinion

Do you use a progress review system (e.g. annual progress report, 6 monthly review form, online progress checkup, compulsory forms for you and your supervisor to fill in?) as part of your research degree programme? Yes/No?

Please indicate which of the following you think this covers (please tick as many as appropriate)

- To assess your skills
- To identify training needs you have
- To plan training
- To log progress on research
- Personal reflection and review
- Research planning
- Compulsory log of information for institutional records or transcripts
- Recording information to put on your CV
- Other

If 'other', please state.....

What is the mechanism for recording progress?

- Paper-based
- Electronic (e.g. email, dedicated software)
- Intranet based (i.e. used internally)

- Internet based (i.e. used externally)
- Other
- If 'other', please state...
- Where is the progress review system used?
- Across the institution
- Only at faculty, school, department level

If 'only at faculty, school, department level', please state which subject areas you know of.....

How does this progress review system work in your research degree programme?

- Information is confidential to you only
- Information is shared with your supervisor(s) only
- Information is shared more widely as part of a formal review process
- Information is taken as part of a larger system by which information is kept on record by the institution
- Other

If 'other', please state.....

Does this progress review system help you to improve competence in research skills, understanding research, managing your research, building personal skills, communication skills, networking/team work or career planning? If so how?

.....

Why are you undertaking this progress review system? Is it...? (please tick as many as applicable)

- Voluntary, no obligation from anyone to do so
- Required by an external body
- Compulsory from the institution
- To gain accredited training
- Who gives their formal input/support for this progress review system? (please tick as many as applicable)
- Your supervisor
- All members of your supervisory team
- A tutor/personal tutor
- A careers adviser
- A peer mentor
- An independent review panel
- Other

If 'other', please give details.....

How often do you receive any formal input/support with the progress review system? (please tick all that are relevant)

- Every week
- Every month
- Every 3 months
- Every 6 months

- Once a year
- When requested
- Other

If 'other', please give details.....

How do you receive any help, assistance or input informally (e.g. tutors, careers advisers, seminars)? Please give details.

.....

Please add any further details you can here

Do you feel that you have been given enough information on how to use your progress review system? Yes/No?

If not, please state what information/support you need.....

What benefits do you think your progress review system offers? What works well and why?

.....

Please give some further comment about how the progress review system WORKS FOR YOU (e.g. encourages planning with supervisor, helps identify mileposts, recording progress, etc.)

.....

Please give information where you feel the progress review system is failing to work for you (e.g. time consuming, bureaucratic, inflexible, etc.). What doesn't work and why? Can you think of anything useful your progress review system should offer that it does not offer?

.....

Please indicate how engaged and helpful your supervisor is in the progress review process? "Not at all" (0) through to "Very engaged" (9), 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9?

Please add any comments you may have on the helpfulness of your supervisor in the progress review process

.....

Please add any further comments here. For example, do you know of any guidance/training given to those who help with your progress review system?

.....

Would you be willing to talk to us further about your experiences in using progress review systems? Yes/No?

If so, please provide your email address.....