# **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2021 Report**

## **Response rate**

Low Institutional response rate of 20.4% (694 responses out of a possible 3,402). Due to integrated masters in the faculties of Engineering & Design and Science, PGT numbers are very low and response is correspondingly low. Some departments in these faculties had response too low to meet the University’s publication threshold, a measure to protect the anonymity of respondents. In the cases of the Departments of Chemistry and Physics, there were no students eligible to complete PTES.

## **PGT qualifications**

Most (96.7%, n=671) PTES 2021 respondents were studying a taught masters (MBA, MSc, LLM, MEng) but a small minority were registered on Postgraduate Certificate (1.9%, n=13) or Postgraduate Diploma (1.4%, n=10).

## **Issues for consideration**

* **Contact time and discussing work:** only 58.4% felt they had enough contact time (in-person or virtual/online) with staff and students to support effective learning. Even fewer (57.7%) agreed that their course created enough opportunities to discuss work with students (in-person or virtual/online).
* **Workload:** only 58.7% felt their workload was manageable. This compares to 68.3% in PRES 2020, with the sector as a whole in 2020 score of 73% and a Russell Group average in 2020 of 75%.
* **Considering leaving:** a high proportion (22.7%) of PTES 2021 respondents had considered leaving, comparable to the score for PRES 2021 (29.8%). As with PRES 2021, mental/emotional health was the highest scoring reason but the proportion was far lower (15.3% in PTES 2021 compared to 38.1% in PRES 2021). Balancing study and other commitments also scored highly (13.4%) as a reason, reflecting the intensity of PGT study.
* **IT resources and facilities:** this was the University’s strongest area, with an average of 80% agreement with Resources questions.The University of Bath scored 9th in the sector and significantly ahead of benchmarking groups other than the Wesley Group. The lower scoring questions related to on-campus access (There is appropriate access to physical library resources and facilities, 74%; I have been able to access subject specific resources necessary for my studies when I am on-campus, 75%; There is appropriate access to IT resources and facilities when I am on-campus, 76%).
* **Dissertation:** 8% below KPI HEIs benchmark, and below all benchmarking groups on all dissertation questions. In addition, PTES 2021 results for dissertation questions were almost all below PTES 2020 results.

## **Benchmarking**

As well benchmarking with as the sector as a whole, PTES 2021 with the Russell Group, 32 research-intensive universities who tend to score highly in university performance rankings, KPI HEIs, a group of comparator universities that the University chooses to benchmark with, and the Wesley Group, made up of the Universities of Lancaster, Loughborough, Dundee, East Anglia, Leicester, Kent and Aberdeen.

The University of Bath was 78th of 88 universities for assessment questions, and also scored comparatively low on dissertation questions although no sector ranking was available for this area.

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|  |  | +/- compared to average for |
|  | Sector ranking | Sector  | KPI HEIs | Russell Group | Wesley Group |
| Teaching  | 54th of 88 | -2% | -2% | -1%  | -3% |
| Engagement | 65th of 88 | -3% | -3% | +/- 0% | -4% |
| Assessment | 78th of 88 | -7% | -6% | -2% | -6% |
| Dissertation |  | -5% | -7% | -5% | -6% |
| Organisation | 35th of 88 | +1% | +/- 0% | +2% | -1% |
| Resources | 9th of 88 | +8% | +2% | +10% | -1% |
| Support | 25th of 88 | +3% | +/- 0% | +4% | +/- 0% |
| Skills development | 54th of 88 | -1% | -2% | +1% | -3% |
| Overall | 33rd of 88 | +2% | -1% | +4% | -1% |

Comparisons highlighted in blue show low relative scores (less than -5%), those highlighted in green show higher relative scores (more than +5%). The overall (all area) comparisons are highlighted in orange.

## **Contact time and discussing work**

Contact time has been a long-running concern of PGT students, but agreement that this was sufficient to support effective learning has significantly since PTES 2020, significantly in some departments. Most notably, Coronavirus and remote teaching might be seen as a likely factor, and may play a part but notably in PTES 2020 post-lockdown agreement was actually higher (63%, n=294) than pre-lockdown (60%, n=161). Against the overall trend of declining agreement in PTES 2021, the Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies has high levels of agreement (88%) and the Department of Economics continued to perform relatively well (70%).

*‘I feel completely disconnect[ed] from university which is making it harder to understand content and work with others’*

**Department of Computer Science PTES 2021 respondent**

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| **There is sufficient contact time (in-person or virtual/online) between staff and students to support effective learning *– definitely or mostly agree*** |
|  | 2021 response | 2020 response |
| Architecture & Civil Engineering | 57% (of 28) | 54% (of 67) |
| Chemical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* | 100% (of 6) |
| Electronic & Electrical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* | 78% (of 9) |
| Mechanical Engineering | 54% (of 13) | 92% (of 25) |
| Biology & Biochemistry | 47% (of 17) | 60% (of 15) |
| Chemistry | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| Computer Science | 38% (of 60)  | 66% (of 27) |
| Maths | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold | 67% (of 6) |
| Pharmacy & Pharmacology | 43% (of 21) | 77% (of 61) |
| Physics | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| School of Management | 64% (of 255) | 68% (of 219) |
| Economics | 70% (of 36) | 74% (of 38) |
| Education | 54% (of 98) | 64% (of 89) |
| Health | 47% (of 17) | 46% (of 11) |
| POLIS | 88% (of 32) | 67% (of 39) |
| Psychology | 55% (of 71) | 36% (of 107) |
| Social & Policy Sciences | 49% (of 37) | 56% (of 25) |
| University of Bath AVERAGE | 58% (of 694) | 62% (of 739) |

Departments highlighted in red reported the most significant decline since PTES 2020. Those highlighted in blue also reported low agreement (below 65%) but without the steepest declines, and in some cases reported rises. The University of Bath average is highlighted in orange.

## **Mental health**

‘*As my course is distant learning, not much individualised support were [sic] available (also it is time consuming seeking for support due to unorganised communication network between the department). Please consider having more tutors (perhaps less tutees per tutor to allow more support for each student) for distant learning students’*

**Department of Pharmacy & Pharmacology PTES 2021 respondent**

There was no question in PTES 2021 on whether students felt concern about their mental health or wellbeing, but PTES 2021 did introduce a question on whether they agreed their health and wellbeing needs were met by University pastoral and counselling support. The University average was relatively low (65%) compared to satisfaction with other support such as academic skills or IT support, and perhaps surprisingly it varied by department, possibly because of the role of personal tutors.

*‘Have to wait a long time to book for a wellbeing session’*

**Department of Social & Policy Sciences PTES 2021 respondent**

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| **The support for my health and wellbeing meets my needs (for example, personal tutor, student support and counselling services) -** ***definitely or mostly agree*** |
|  | 2021 response (question not asked in PTES 2020) |
| Architecture & Civil Engineering | 68% (of 28) |
| Chemical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* |
| Electronic & Electrical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* |
| Mechanical Engineering | 77% (of 13) |
| Biology & Biochemistry | 59% (of 17) |
| Chemistry | *no eligible students this year* |
| Computer Science | 40% (of 60) |
| Maths | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold |
| Pharmacy & Pharmacology | 33% (of 21) |
| Physics | *no eligible students this year* |
| School of Management | 75% (of 255) |
| Economics | 78% (of 36) |
| Education | 49% (of 98) |
| Health | 53% (of 17) |
| POLIS | 66% (of 32) |
| Psychology | 72% (of 71) |
| Social & Policy Sciences | 46% (of 37) |
| University of Bath AVERAGE | 65% (of 694) |

Departments highlighted in blue reported low agreement (below 65%). The University of Bath average is highlighted in orange.

## **Dissertation**

The University of Bath was disappointingly low to all comparator groups, placed in the 4th quartile for both the sector and Russell Group. Agreement with dissertation statements were almost consistently down on the University’s PTES 2020 results.

Notably, the proportion of Bath respondents who are at the stage of dissertation (18%) is far lower than for comparator groups: the sector average was 51%, KPI HEIs was 54% Russell Group was 58% and Wesley Group was 50% for respondents at dissertation stage. Respondents who answered ‘not applicable or too soon to say’ are removed for the percentage agreeing or not agreeing with the statement.

*‘Supervisor allocation initially said to be anonymous, but many students were given a chance to secure a supervisor before even the allocation procedure, that affected many students' plans. I can confidently say that I am not getting any directions for my dissertation, I feel lost, and fear that I will fail.’*

**Department of Computer Science PTES 2021 respondent**

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| **Dissertation questions in PTES 2021: comparator groups and UoB PTES 2020** |
|  | **UoB 2021** | **UoB 2020** | **KPI HEI** | **Sector** | **Russell Group** | **Wesley Group** |
| Supervisor provides helpful feedback on progress | 73% | 73% | 80% | 79% | 80% | 80% |
| Supervisor has skills and subject knowledge to adequately support dissertation/major project | 78% | 85% | 85% | 84% | 85% | 84% |
| Happy with the support received for planning my dissertation/ major project | 70% | 72% | 77% | 73% | 71% | 76% |
| Understand the required standards for dissertation/major project | 75% | 79% | 81% | 80% | 78% | 82% |
| **Dissertation all-question average** | **74%** | **77%** | **81%** | **79%** | **79%** | **80%** |

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| **My supervisor provides helpful feedback on my progress -** ***definitely or mostly agree*** |
|  | 2021 response  | 2020 response |
| Architecture & Civil Engineering | 76%  | 64% |
| Chemical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* | 100%  |
| Electronic & Electrical Engineering | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold | 67%  |
| Mechanical Engineering | 75% | 93%  |
| Biology & Biochemistry | 100%  | 80%  |
| Chemistry | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| Computer Science | 64%  | 83% |
| Maths | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold |
| Pharmacy & Pharmacology | 83% | 89% |
| Physics | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| School of Management | 66% | 89%  |
| Economics | 48%  | 45%  |
| Education | 84%  | 78%  |
| Health | 100%  | 88%  |
| POLIS | 84%  | 51%  |
| Psychology | 86%  | 71% |
| Social & Policy Sciences | 83%  | 43%  |
| University of Bath AVERAGE | 73% | 73%  |

Departments highlighted in blue reported low agreement (below 70%). The University of Bath average is highlighted in orange.

## **Assessment:**

Bath was consistently below all of its comparators on assessment questions, with prompt feedback (59%) the statement with lowest agreement and the greatest differential with comparators. Agreement was lowest in the Departments of Pharmacy & Pharmacology (14%), Computer Science (41%) and Psychology (44%). Agreement that prompt feedback was received fell slightly from PTES 2020 (63%) and the reduction was particularly steep in the Departments of Mechanical Engineering (72% in PTES 2020 to 46% in PTES 2021) and Pharmacy & Pharmacology (50% in PTES 2020 to 14% in PTES 2021).

*‘a review of these [question setting] documents could be used to make the mark scheme clearer and perhaps in a consistent table format. Also, I think feedback on formatives could be a bit more specific, as it was sometimes hard to pick out exactly what to improve on next time.’*

**Department of Architecture & Civil Engineering PTES 2021 respondent**

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|  | **Bath** | **KPI HEI** | **Sector** | **Russell Group** | **Wesley Group** |
| Feedback on work has been useful | 70% | 76% | 77% | 71% | 75% |
| Feedback on work has been prompt | 59% | 69% | 71% | 64% | 70% |
| Assessments arrangements and marking have been fair | 70% | 76% | 76% | 74% | 76% |
| The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance | 75% | 81% | 81% | 77% | 80% |
| **Assessment all-question average** | 69% | 75% | 76% | 71% | 75% |

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| **Feedback on my work has been prompt -** ***definitely or mostly agree*** |
|  | 2021 response  | 2020 response |
| Architecture & Civil Engineering | 82% (of 28) | 63% (of 67) |
| Chemical Engineering | *insufficient responses to meet publication threshold* | 67% (of 6) |
| Electronic & Electrical Engineering | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold | 33% (of 9) |
| Mechanical Engineering | 46% (of 13) | 72% (of 25) |
| Biology & Biochemistry | 71% (of 17) | 47% (of 15) |
| Chemistry | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| Computer Science | 41% (of 60) | 44% (of 27) |
| Maths | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold | insufficient responses to meet publication threshold |
| Pharmacy & Pharmacology | 14% (of 21) | 50% (of 61) |
| Physics | *no eligible students this year* | *no eligible students this year* |
| School of Management | 66% (of 255) | 72% (of 219) |
| Economics | 56% (of 36) | 66% (of 38) |
| Education | 70% (of 98) | 73% (of 89) |
| Health | 59% (of 17) | 64% (of 11) |
| POLIS | 63% (of 32) | 63% (of 39) |
| Psychology | 44% (of 71) | 51% (of 107) |
| Social & Policy Sciences | 54% (of 37) | 64% (of 25) |
| University of Bath AVERAGE | 59% (of 694) | 63% (of 739) |

Departments highlighted in red reported the most significant decline since PTES 2020. Those highlighted in blue also reported low agreement (below 65%) but without the steepest declines, and in some cases reported rises. The University of Bath average is highlighted in orange.