

Briefing on Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2020

May 2021

Introduction

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is an annual survey of British universities which seeks feedback on the experience of postgraduate study. UCL takes part in the survey each year.

The survey is organised by [Advance HE](#), and the results of the survey do not inform league tables. UCL's Student Engagement team invite students to complete the survey via email.

Who takes the PTES, and when?

The PTES is taken by postgraduate students on taught programmes. This includes Master's, PGDip, PGCert and PGCE students. It usually runs in the spring into early summer, with the 2021 edition taking place from 17 May - 17 June.

Research students are not eligible to complete the PTES but can take part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) instead, which ran earlier this year.

Why does UCL take part in the survey?

The PTES is a rich source of insights on what UCL postgraduates feel is working well, and what could be improved. The survey combines multiple-choice questions for quantitative data with open comments for postgraduates to give their views more freely.

What does the PTES cover?

The PTES questionnaire measures satisfaction in the following seven categories:

- » Teaching & Learning
- » Student Engagement
- » Assessment & Feedback
- » Dissertation / Major Project
- » Organisation & Management
- » Learning Resources & Support Services
- » Skills Development

There are also a couple of sections for open comments: 'Please comment on one thing that has been most enjoyable or interesting on your course', and 'Please comment on one thing that would most improve your experience of your course'.

UCL has also chosen to add some questions on the quality of library and careers services, along with disability support, wellbeing and mental health services.

Where can I find PTES results?

You can find results for PTES 2019 and 2020 at UCL-wide, departmental, faculty and programme levels on the [results webpage](#). You will need to log in with your usual UCL credentials to access the page.

How did UCL perform in this year's PTES?

UCL's 2020 PTES scores showed a modest improvement year-on-year. Overall satisfaction stayed the same as last year at 79.3%.

The most noticeable rises were in Assessment and Feedback, which saw an increase of 3.9%, as well as Dissertation and Organisation and Management which both saw improvements of 1.6 and 1.7%, respectively. Teaching and Learning had a 1.5% increase compare to last year.

The two areas that showed a decline were Resources and Services and Skills Development, which both had a small decline of 0.3%, although in both areas UCL's score remained the same as those seen in 2018.

	UCL 2020 %	UCL 2019 %	UCL 2018 %
Overall satisfaction	79.7%	79.7%	79.3%
Propensity to recommend*	91.7%	91.3%	90.7%
Teaching and Learning	82.7%	81.2%	80.6%
Student Engagement	79.0%	77.0%	77.8%
Assessment and feedback	72.7%	68.8%	68.7%
Dissertation	81.3%	79.6%	79.0%
Organisation and Management	73.0%	71.4%	70.9%
Resources and Services	83.2%	83.5%	83.2%
Skills development	74.8%	75.0%	74.8%
Response rate	32.5%	41.9%	40.0%

The sample size for UCL's 2019 results was robust, with UCL's 32.5% response rate exceeding the sector average of 19.6%. It is also worth noting that 91.7% of postgraduates would recommend UCL to prospective students.

Main areas for consideration

The results suggest that **Assessment and Feedback** remains a key area of priority for postgraduates at UCL, which similarly echoes the feedback from last year's PTES. Although we have seen an improvement in this area in this year's survey, UCL (72.7%) still lag behind the sector average of 75.1% satisfied in this area. The question: 'Feedback on my work has been prompt', dropped this year with 64.2% of respondents agreeing. This is 6.2 percentage points behind the Russell Group average.

As the score for Organisation and Management rose to 73%, most notably the feedback for the question ‘I was given appropriate guidance and support when I started my course’ also rose by 3.4%. this is a good increase from last year’s score showing a year-on-year improvement.

Note that these are blended averages across UCL, with a good deal variance in scores between departments and faculties.

The areas where UCL postgraduates were most satisfied were:

Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	92.5%
Staff are good at explaining things	89.5%
I am encouraged to ask questions or make contributions in taught sessions	89.5%

Is the PTES related to the National Student Survey (NSS)?

While both the NSS and PTES are nationwide surveys, there are a number of differences between the surveys.

As well as the difference in student cohorts (NSS is for final-year undergraduates only), the PTES is organised by Advance HE, whereas the NSS is organised by the Office for Students (OfS).

Another major difference is how the results are used. NSS results are published on Discover Uni, to help students decide where to study, and are also factored into league tables. PTES results are only shared with participating universities, so they are not incorporated into league tables.

Responses to some NSS questions also contribute to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), along with institutional commentaries and additional data. The TEF only considers the undergraduate experience at universities, so PTES results are not considered.

Further Information

If you have any questions, please contact us at reps@ucl.ac.uk.