

SNS PGR Action Plan 2024

Response to 2023 Post-Graduate Research (PGR) Student Survey Results

SNS was established in September 2022 and the School's PGR Action Plan is developing. This plan is based on discussion by the SNS Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) of the PGR Student Survey and on the plans of the previous School of Physics and old SNS and has been prepared by the SNS GSC Chair. A PGR Working Group has been recently established which will further consider and develop the Action Plan and lead in its implementation.

The PGR Student Survey responses for SNS are positive. The results are similar to other Schools in the College of Science and Engineering and to results of the University of Galway overall. A high percentage of SNS students reported that they felt their research degree was worthwhile. Noted areas of concern were the following:

- The need for improved seminar programmes.

The Chair of the SNS Research Committee organised a seminar series in 2023 following the establishment of the new SNS in September 2022. SNS will endeavour to continue to develop this seminar series.

- The low percentage of students reporting knowledge of student supports.

A Sharepoint site specifically for PGR has been introduced on the SNS Sharepoint Site and will be populated with documents and links to the information of most relevance to our students. This site will be helpful to increase knowledge of student supports for PGR students. Staff and students are reminded of the availability of the University and College Postgraduate Handbooks that include information on all aspects of the PGR process.

While the University has made great efforts to increase visibility and dissemination of information on student supports to UG students, it could be beneficial in these communications to explicitly state that PGR students also have access to these supports.

A welcome session for new PGR students was held in autumn 2023. Information on the SNS Sharepoint site and on student supports will be communicated during future induction sessions.

- Student responses regarding agreement with adequate access to computing and specialist resources and facilities was considered low, as were percentage of students reporting taking part in internships/placements or conferences, and shortages in research funding (especially for PhD scholarships/fellowships).

The recent increases in local and national student stipends are welcomed. However for some students funds for research resources and conference travel are limited. We encourage the Graduate Research Office to consider providing research resource and conference travel funding for recipients of PhD scholarships and fellowships. We encourage the Research Office to provide and run high quality state of the art centralised core research facilities.

Information on bursaries (like Ryan Institute travel support fund) for participation at international conferences and summer schools will also be disseminated to students to enhance their participation at international events.

- **Enhancing student engagement within the new School**

As a new School we are keen to integrate and engage our PGR students.

SNS will encourage social aspects of the postgrad experience through coffee mornings, workshops and other activities.

The Head of SNS, Heads of Units and GSC Chair held meetings with the graduate students to discuss their graduate experiences and to help identify areas for attention.

PGR student representatives are members of the SNS GSC and of the PGR Working Group to enable input of students into GSC discussion, decisions and actions.

Steps have been taken to standardise Graduate Research Committee (GRC) procedures across the School following the merger of previous School of Physics with parts of the old SNS, while at the same time allowing for flexibility due to the range of subject areas. These will continue to develop with time with feedback from the graduate students, supervisors and other staff.

Graduate students will receive information and be encouraged to participate at College/University wide events to present their research to peers and staff to increase opportunities to become involved in the wider research community.