AdvanceHE

POSTGRADUATE
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
SURVEY

University College London and the Global upper quarter boundary

Overall

The research postgraduate experience at UCL

University College London
Global upper quarter boundary

The overall satisfaction of research postgraduates with their studies was 78%, based on 2326 responses. Aspects of best practice (with most agreement relative to the benchmark), were research community influence and the research seminars. The understanding of standards and the understanding of deadlines were areas for improvement.
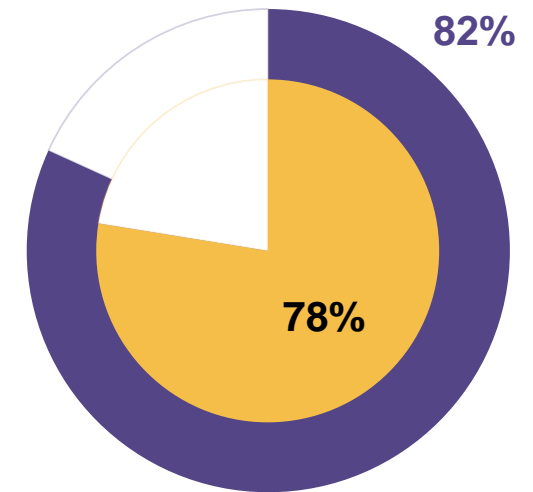
82%

78%

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

Best practice

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of PGRs who agreed that **their work was influenced by the research community** was 61% at UCL, which was 5 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (56%).
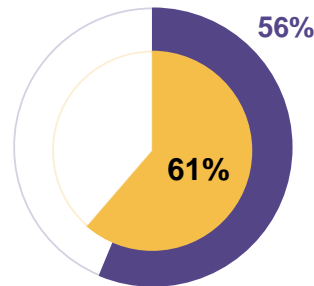
56%

61%

Figure 2: Research community influence

Figure 3 shows that 72% of PGRs at UCL agreed that **there was a good range of seminars** . This was 5 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (67%).
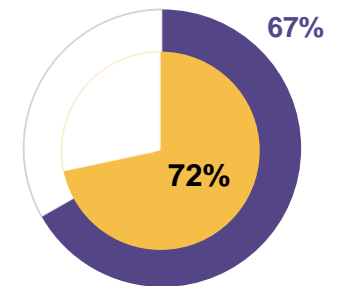
67%

72%

Figure 3: The research seminars

Areas for improvement

As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of PGRs who agreed that **they understood the required standard for their thesis** was 74% at UCL, which was 9 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (83%).
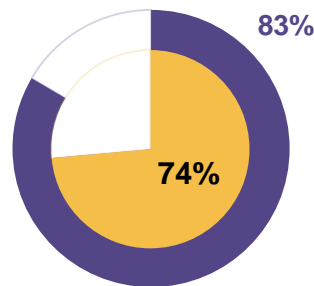
83%

74%

Figure 4: The understanding of standards

Figure 5 shows that 80% of PGRs at UCL agreed that **they understood how their progress was monitored**. This was 9 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (89%).
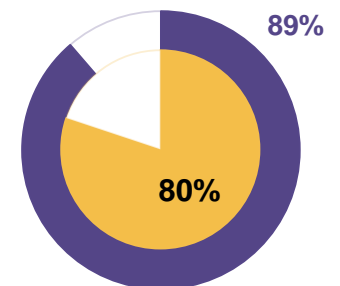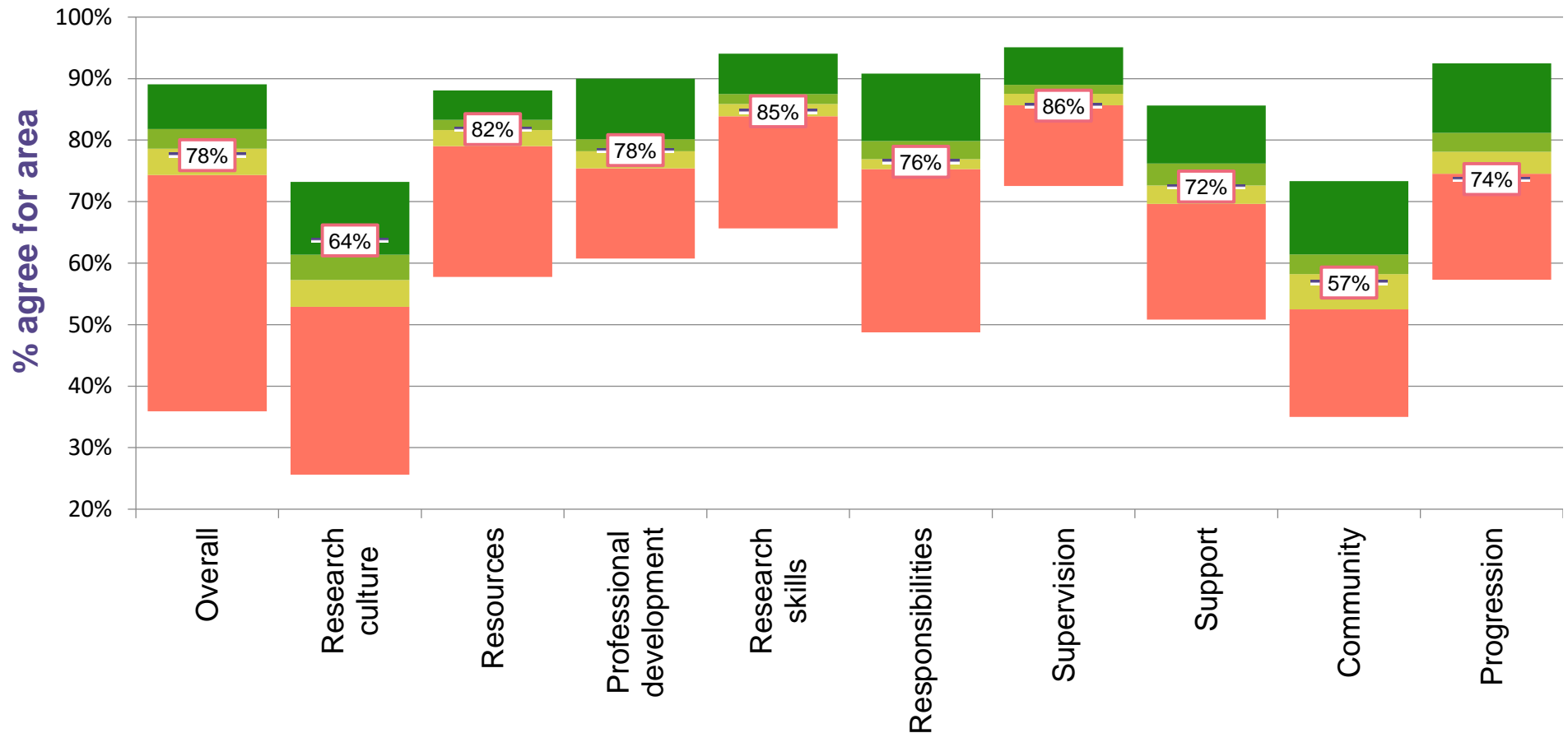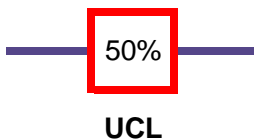
89%

80%

Figure 5: The understanding of deadlines

UCL and the PGR experience benchmarked

The graph below shows the position of UCL in relation to institutions in the Global benchmark. With a score of 78%, overall satisfaction for UCL was in the second quarter. Across the different aspects measured by PRES, UCL was mostly in the third quarter.


Key:

50% — UCL

■ Highest quarter: In the top 25% of institutions for this area
■ Second quarter: Above average, but below the top 25%
■ Third quarter: Below average, but above the bottom 25%
■ Lowest quarter: In the bottom 25% of institutions for this area

(only institutions receiving 23 responses or over were included in the calculation of quarters)

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UCL and the PGR experience benchmarked

The area research postgraduates at UCL were most positive about was Researchculture, with their agreement 2.3 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary, a significant difference. The area research postgraduates were least positive about was Progression, which was 7.5 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary, a significant difference.
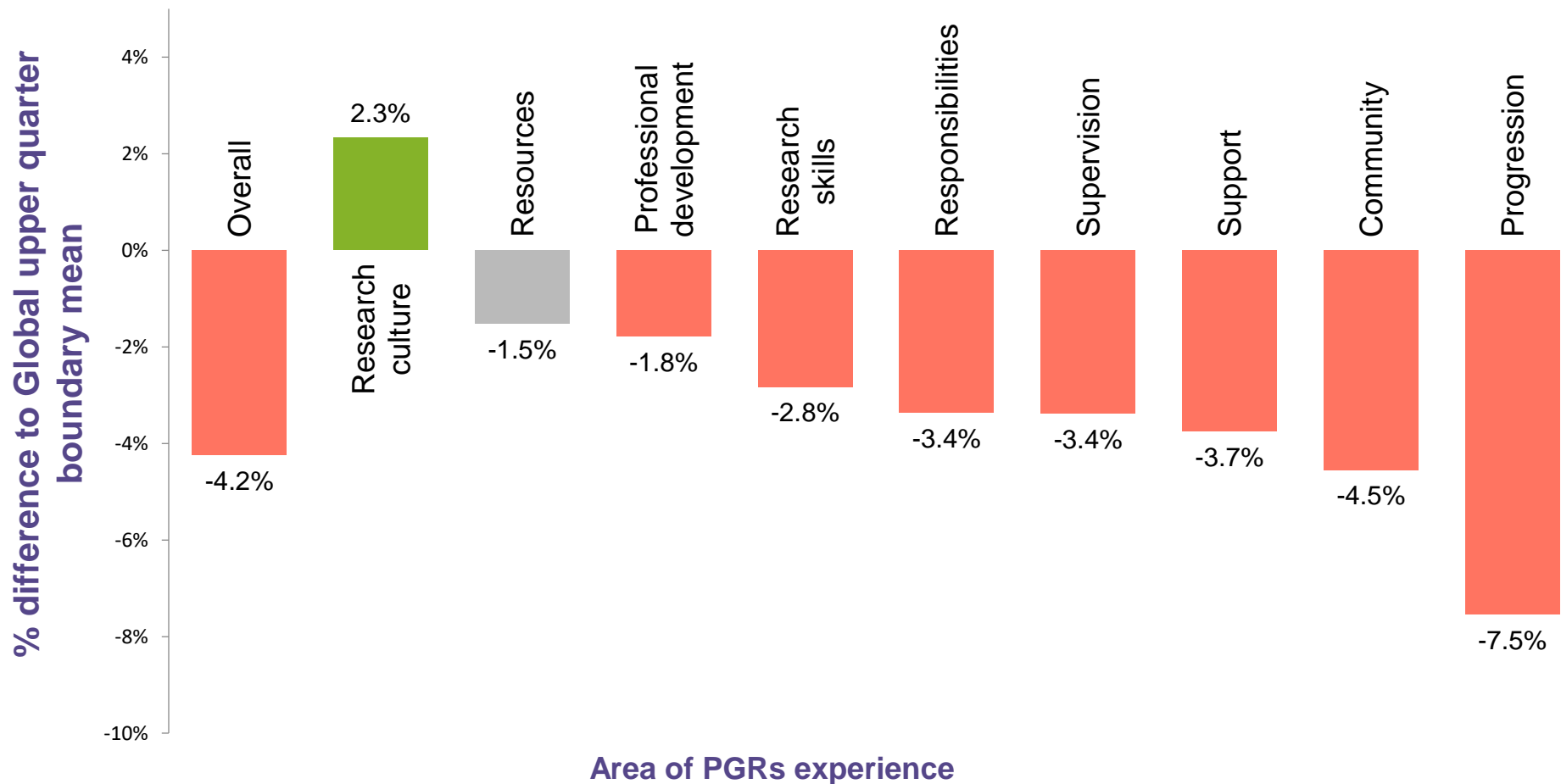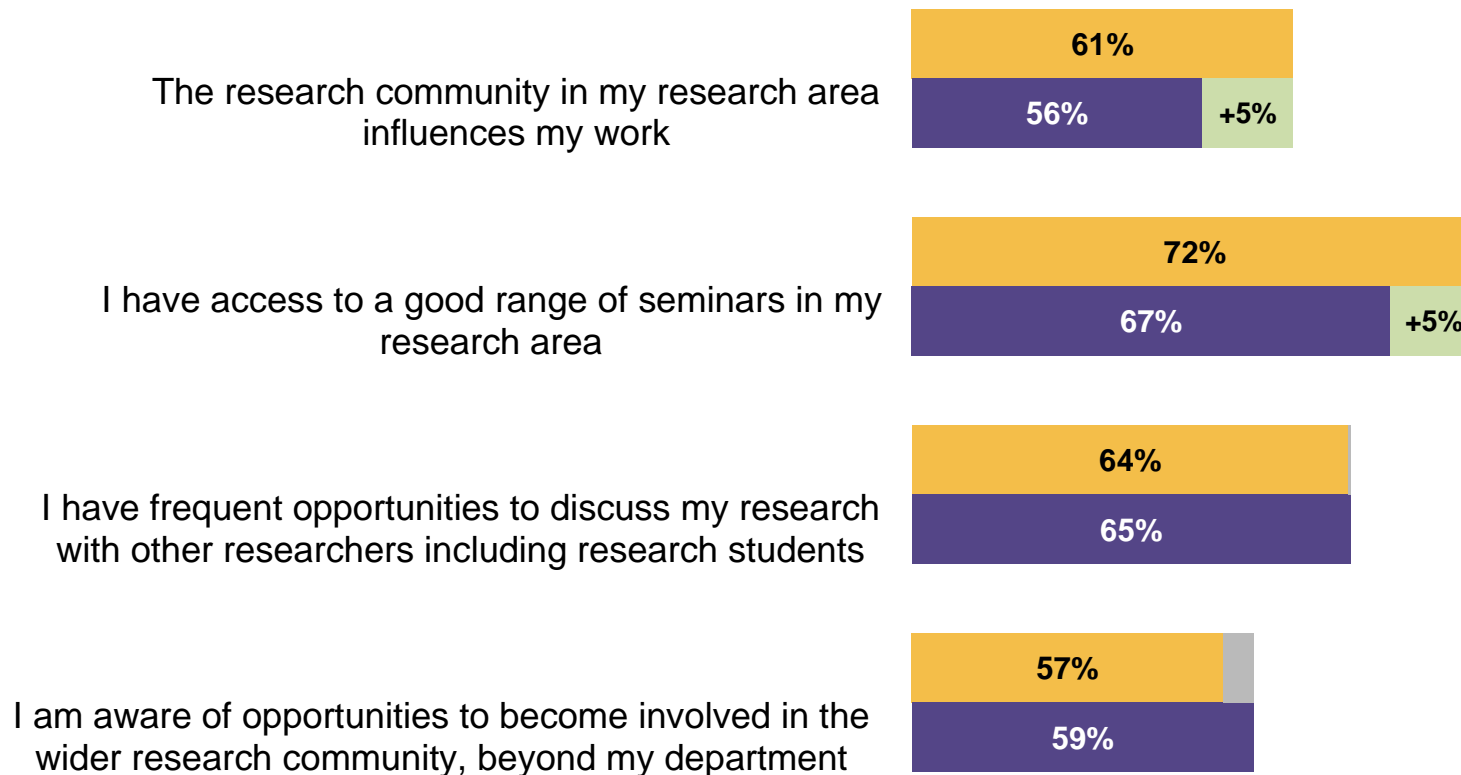

Key:
- Positive significant difference
- No significant difference
- Negative significant difference

Focus on Research culture

Exploring further within the research postgraduate experience of Research culture, the statement that was most positive relative to the Global upper quarter boundary, was 'the research community in my research area influences my work'. Of the 2278 PGRs from UCL who answered this statement, 61% agreed; this was significantly above the Global upper quarter boundary by 5 percentage points.

Research culture

The research community in my research area influences my work	61% / 56%	+5%
I have access to a good range of seminars in my research area	72% / 67%	+5%
I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other researchers including research students	64% / 65%	
I am aware of opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	57% / 59%	

Key:

- University College London
- Global upper quarter boundary
- Significant positive difference
- No significant difference
- Significant negative difference

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Focus on Progression

Exploring within Progression, the least positive statement relative to the Global upper quarter boundary, was 'I understand the required standard for my thesis'. Of the 2305 PGRs from UCL who answered this statement, 74% agreed. This was significantly below the Global upper quarter boundary by 10 percentage points.
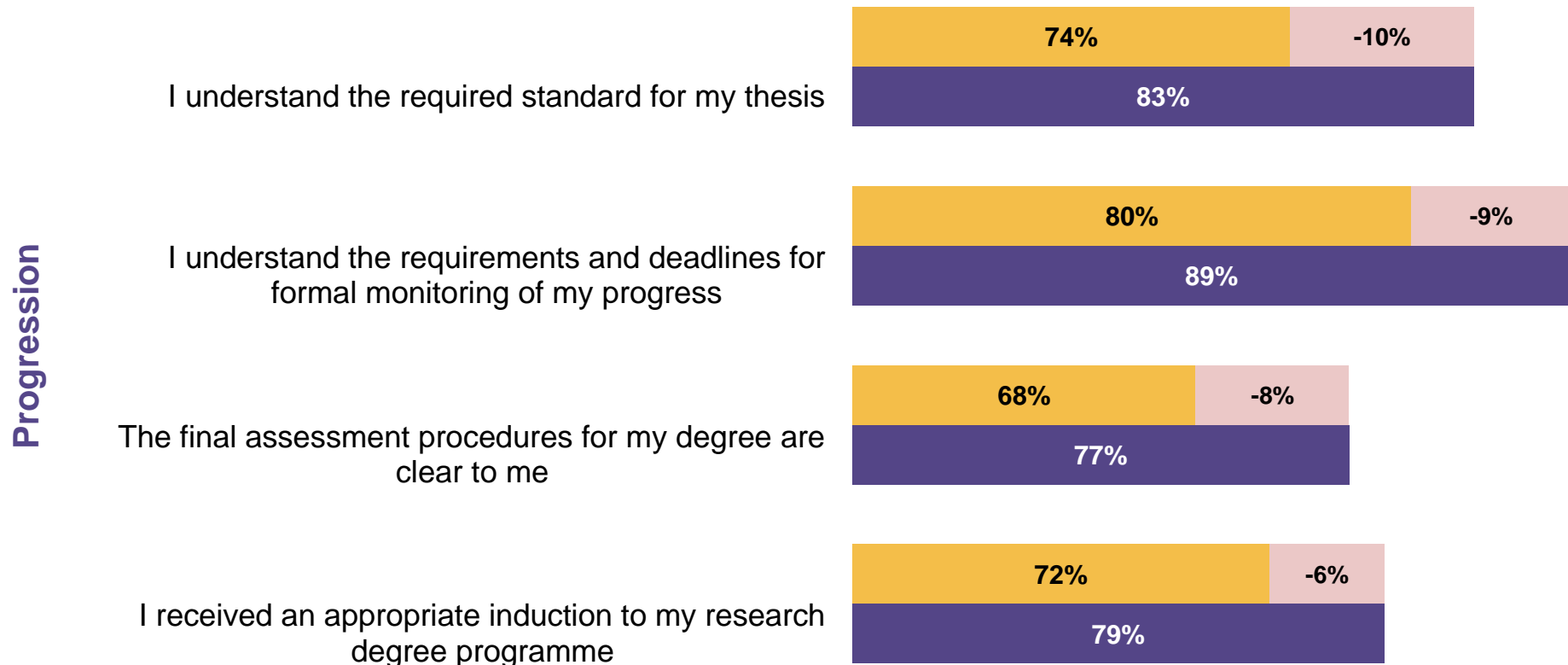
Progression

I understand the required standard for my thesis
- University College London: 74%
- Significant negative difference: -10%
- Global upper quarter boundary: 83%

I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress
- University College London: 80%
- Significant negative difference: -9%
- Global upper quarter boundary: 89%

The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me
- University College London: 68%
- Significant negative difference: -8%
- Global upper quarter boundary: 77%

I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme
- University College London: 72%
- Significant negative difference: -6%
- Global upper quarter boundary: 79%

Key:
- University College London
- Global upper quarter boundary
- Significant positive difference
- No significant difference
- Significant negative difference

Difference in PGR experience by subject

The graph below shows the position of UCL in relation to institutions in the Global benchmark, by CAH1 subject. UCL was placed across a range of quarters.
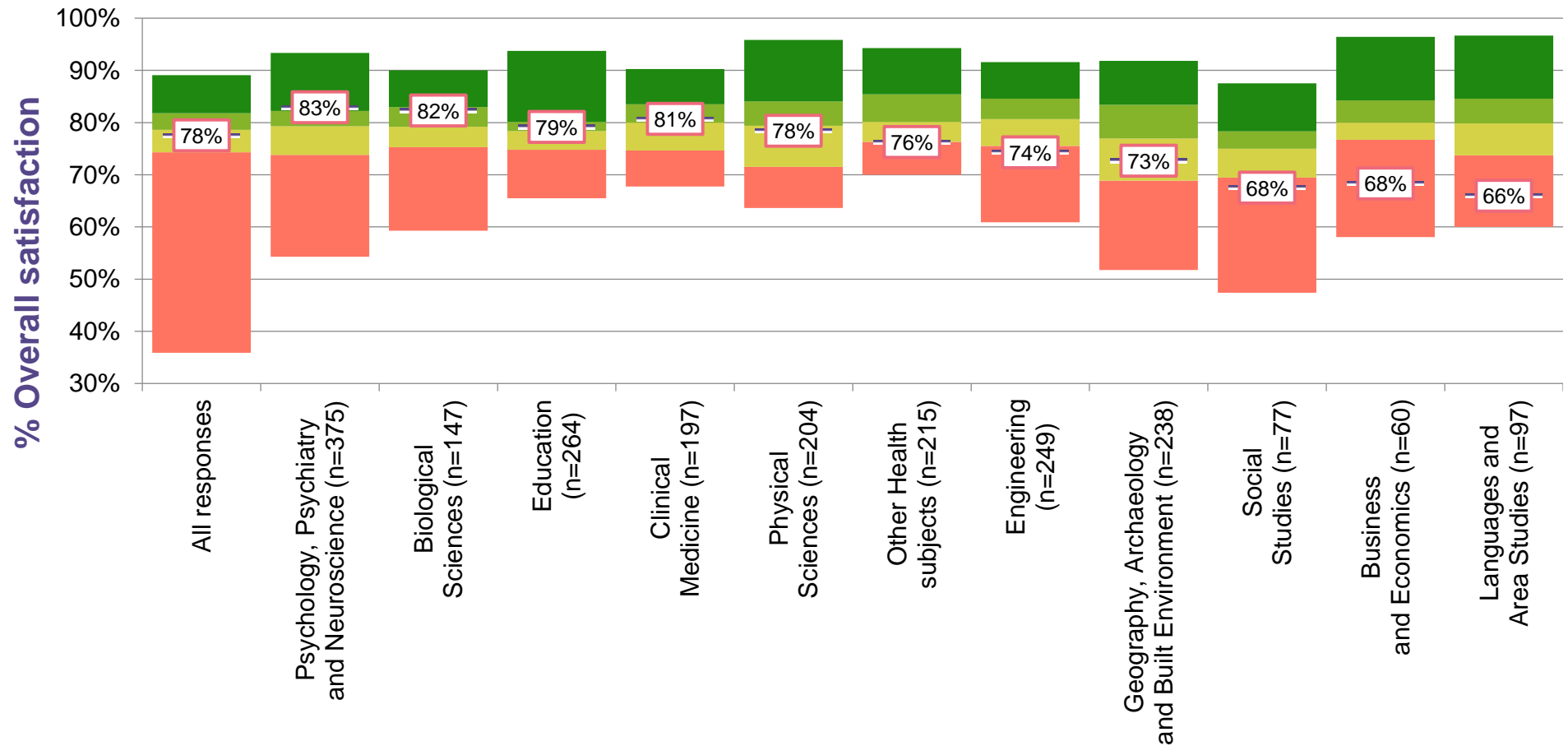

Key:
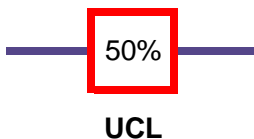
50% / **UCL**

- **Highest quarter:** In the top 25% of institutions for this area
- **Second quarter:** Above average, but below the top 25%
- **Third quarter:** Below average, but above the bottom 25%
- **Lowest quarter:** In the bottom 25% of institutions for this area

(only institutions receiving 23 responses or over were included in the calculation of quarters)

Difference in PGR experience by subject

Relative to the Global upper quarter boundary, overall satisfaction for UCL PGRs was highest in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience (n=375); being 0.7 percentage points above the benchmark. The subject within which respondents were least satisfied overall, to a significant extent, was Languages and Area Studies (n=97); which was 18.6 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary.
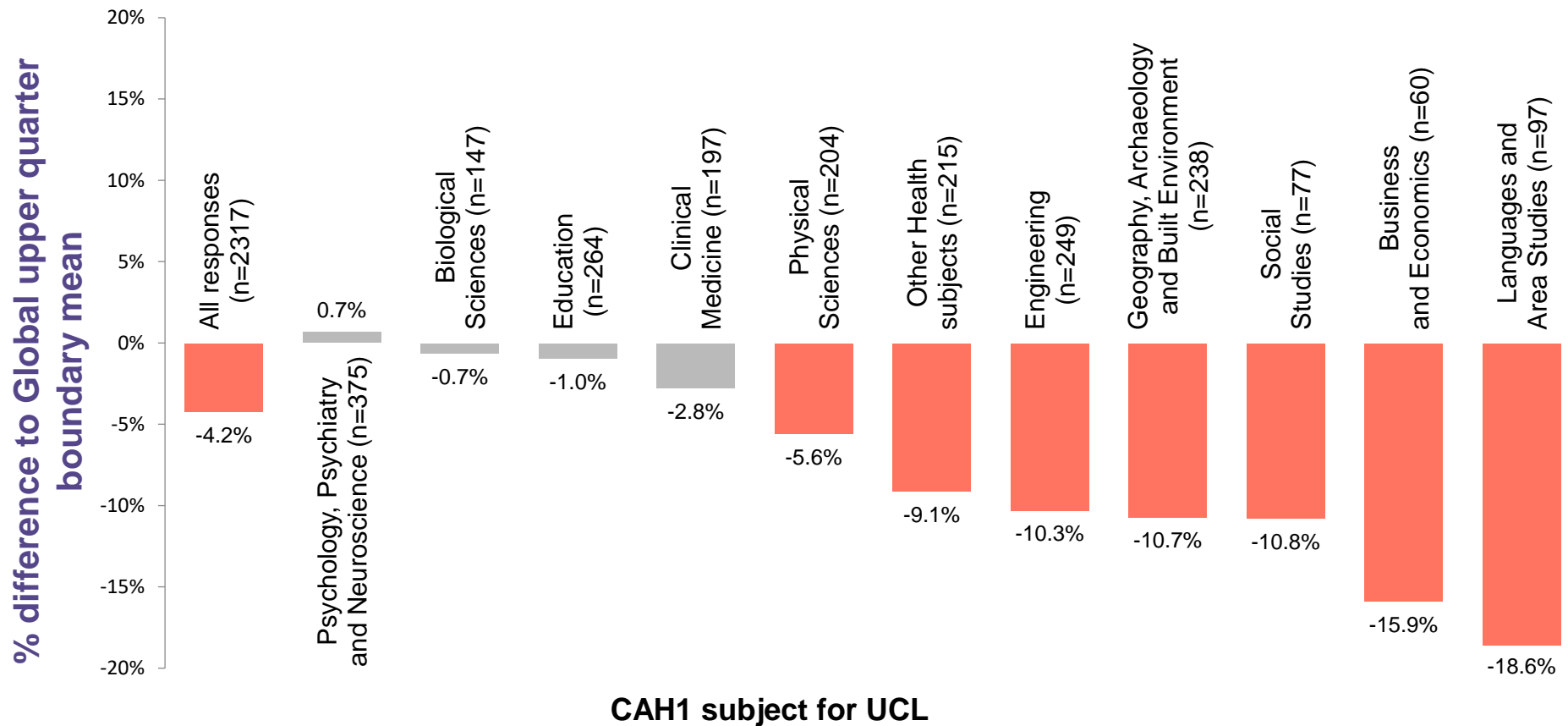
CAH1 subject for UCL

Key:
- Positive significant difference
- No significant difference
- Negative significant difference

Focus on Subject

Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience

The overall satisfaction PGRs in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience had with their studies was 83%, based on 375 responses. Aspects of best practice were the research seminars and research community influence. Feeling part of a community and the opportunities to interact were areas for improvement.
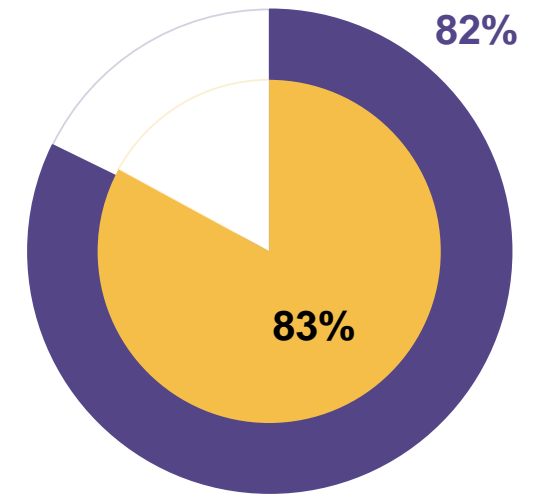
University College London
Global upper quarter boundary

82%

83%

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

Best practice

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of PGRs in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience who agreed that **there was a good range of seminars** was 80% at UCL, which was 11 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (69%).
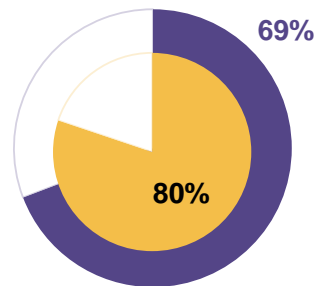
69%

80%

Figure 2: The research seminars

Figure 3 shows that 69% of PGRs in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience at UCL agreed that **their work was influenced by the research community**. This was 9 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (60%).
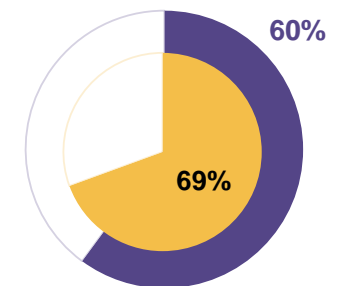
60%

69%

Figure 3: Research community influence

Areas for improvement

As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of PGRs in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience who agreed that **they felt part of a community of postgraduate research students** was 48% at UCL, which was 10 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (58%).
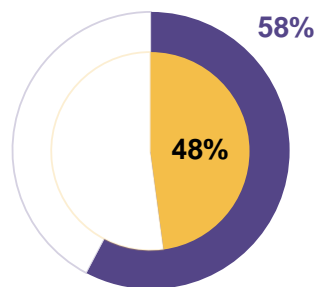
58%

48%

Figure 4: Feeling part of a community

Figure 5 shows that 54% of PGRs in Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience at UCL agreed that **there were sufficient opportunities to interact with other PGRs**. This was 9 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (63%).
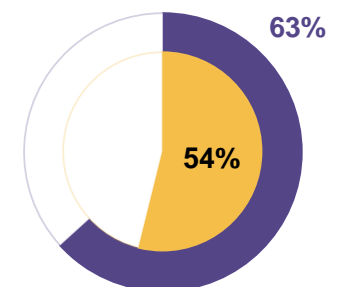
63%

54%

Figure 5: The opportunities to interact

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Focus on Subject

University College London
Global upper quarter boundary

66%

66%

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

Languages and Area Studies

The overall satisfaction PGRs in Languages and Area Studies had with their studies was 66%, based on 97 responses. Aspects of best practice were communication skills development and online library access. On campus working space and support for academic skills were areas for improvement.
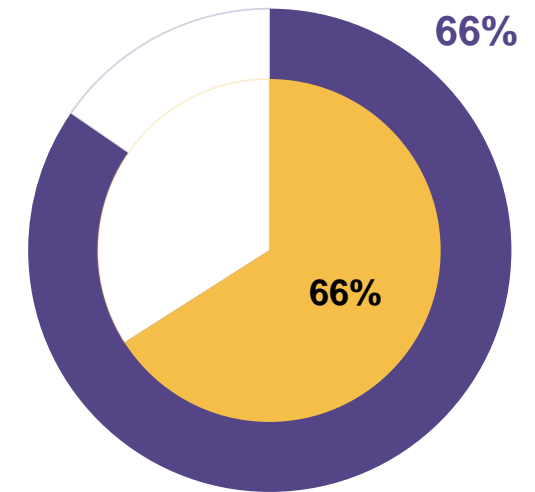
Best practice

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of PGRs in Languages and Area Studies who agreed that **their ability to communicate information has developed** was 75% at UCL, which was 3 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (78%).
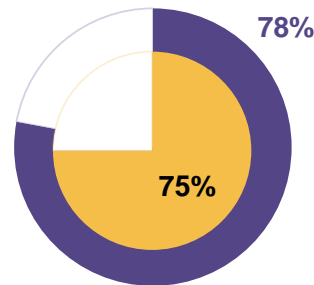
78%

75%

Figure 2: Communication skills development

Figure 3 shows that 90% of PGRs in Languages and Area Studies at UCL agreed that **there was appropriate access to online library resources**. This was 3 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (93%).
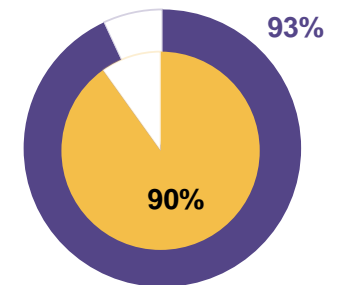
93%

90%

Figure 3: Online library access

Areas for improvement

As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of PGRs in Languages and Area Studies who agreed that **they had suitable working space when on campus** was 49% at UCL, which was 29 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (78%).
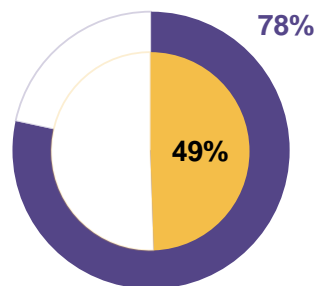
78%

49%

Figure 4: On campus working space

Figure 5 shows that 61% of PGRs in Languages and Area Studies at UCL agreed that **the support for academic skills met their needs**. This was 20 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (81%).
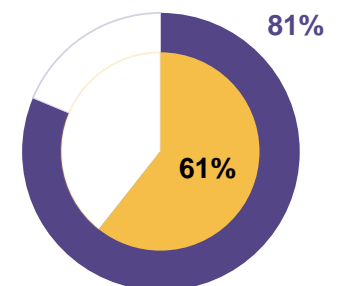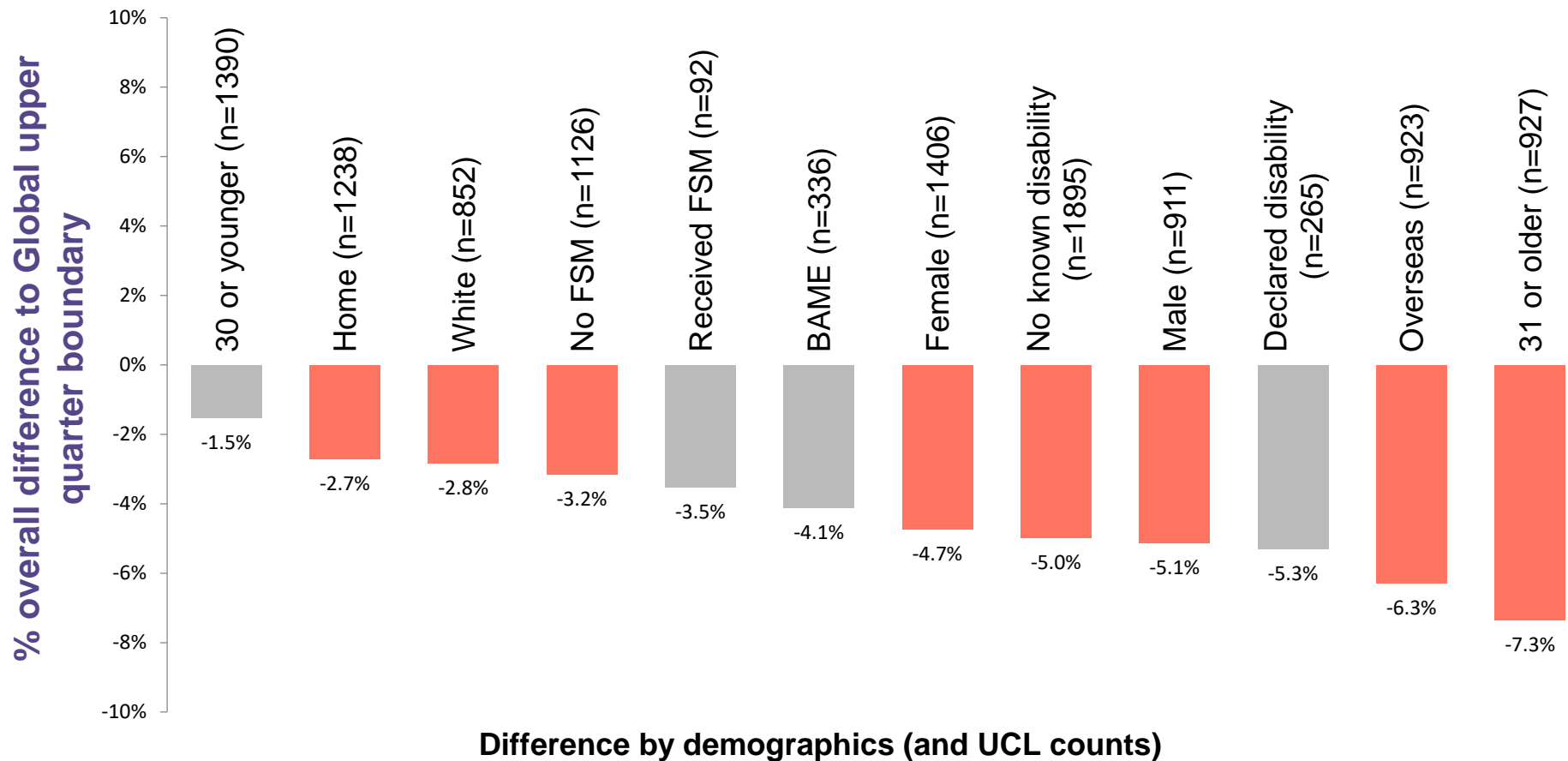
81%

61%

Figure 5: Support for academic skills

Differences in student experience

The graph below shows the difference in overall satisfaction between UCL and the Global upper quarter boundary, by background characteristics. Of research postgraduates who were 30 years old or younger, those at UCL were less satisfied overall than the Global upper quarter boundary, by 1.5 percentage points. Of PGRs who were 31 years old or older, those at UCL were significantly less satisfied overall than the Global upper quarter boundary, by 7.3 percentage points.

% overall difference to Global upper quarter boundary (y-axis)

Difference by demographics (and UCL counts) (x-axis)

- 30 or younger (n=1390): -1.5%
- Home (n=1238): -2.7%
- White (n=852): -2.8%
- No FSM (n=1126): -3.2%
- Received FSM (n=92): -3.5%
- BAME (n=336): -4.1%
- Female (n=1406): -4.7%
- No known disability (n=1895): -5.0%
- Male (n=911): -5.1%
- Declared disability (n=265): -5.3%
- Overseas (n=923): -6.3%
- 31 or older (n=927): -7.3%

Key:
- Positive significant difference
- No significant difference
- Negative significant difference

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Focus on Students

University College London
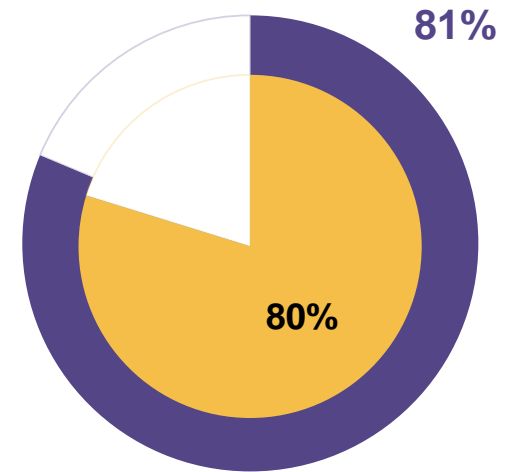**Global upper quarter boundary**

81%

80%

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

Age - 30 years old or younger

For research postgraduates who were 30 years old or younger, the overall satisfaction they had with their studies was 80%, based on 1390 responses. Aspects of best practice were the research seminars and research community influence. The understanding of deadlines and the understanding of standards were areas for improvement.

Best practice

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of students who were 30 years old or younger who agreed that **there was a good range of seminars** was 76% at UCL, which was 7 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (69%).
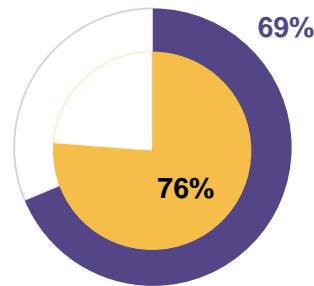
69%

76%

Figure 2: The research seminars

Figure 3 shows that 66% of students who were 30 years old or younger at UCL agreed that **their work was influenced by the research community**. This was 5 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (61%).
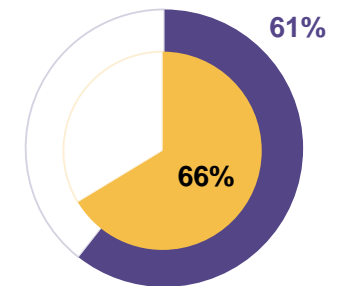
61%

66%

Figure 3: Research community influence

Areas for improvement

As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of students who were 30 years old or younger who agreed that **they understood how their progress was monitored** was 79% at UCL, which was 9 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (88%).
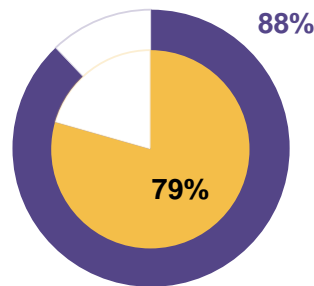
88%

79%

Figure 4: The understanding of deadlines

Figure 5 shows that 71% of students who were 30 years old or younger at UCL agreed that **they understood the required standard for their thesis**. This was 8 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (79%).
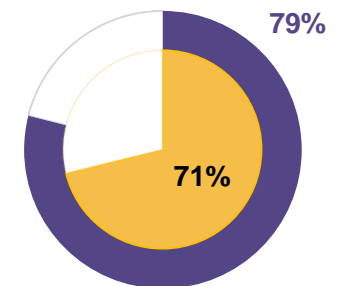
79%

71%

Figure 5: The understanding of standards

Focus on Students

University College London
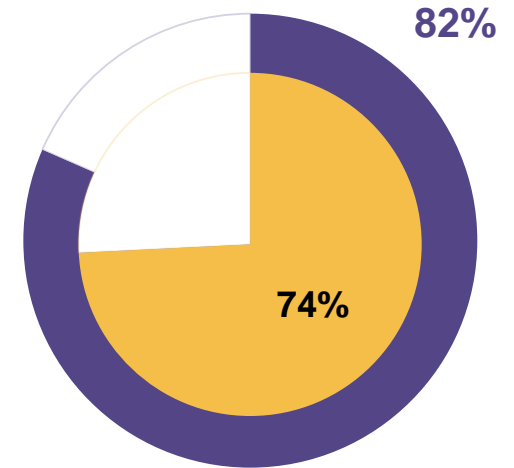**Global upper quarter boundary**

82%

74%

Figure 1: Overall satisfaction

Age - 31 years old or older

The overall satisfaction research postgraduates who were 31 years old or older had with their studies was 74%, based on 927 responses. Aspects of best practice were online library access and research community influence. Institutional valuing of feedback and the programme induction were areas for improvement.

Best practice

As Figure 2 shows, the proportion of students who were 31 years old or older who agreed that **there was appropriate access to online library resources** was 94% at UCL, which was 1 percentage points above the Global upper quarter boundary (93%).
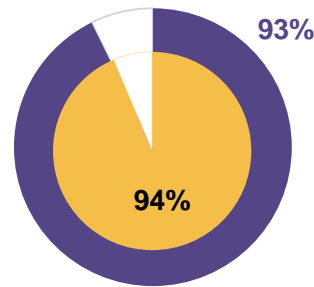
93%

94%

Figure 2: Online library access

Figure 3 shows that 54% of students who were 31 years old or older at UCL agreed that **their work was influenced by the research community**. This was around the same as the Global upper quarter boundary (54%).
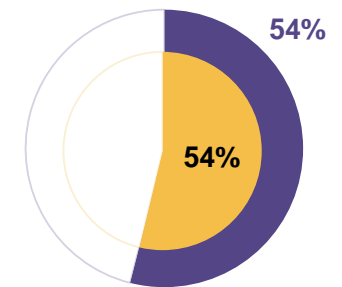
54%

54%

Figure 3: Research community influence

Areas for improvement

As Figure 4 shows, the proportion of students who were 31 years old or older who agreed that **the institution valued their feedback** was 54% at UCL, which was 12 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (66%).

66%

54%

Figure 4: Institutional valuing of feedback

Figure 5 shows that 70% of students who were 31 years old or older at UCL agreed that **there was appropriate induction to the programme**. This was 11 percentage points below the Global upper quarter boundary (81%).
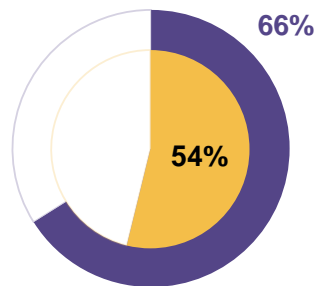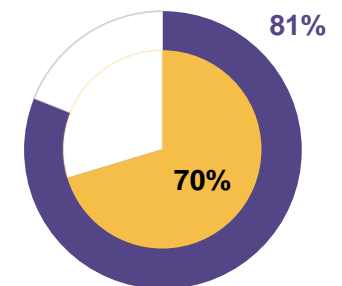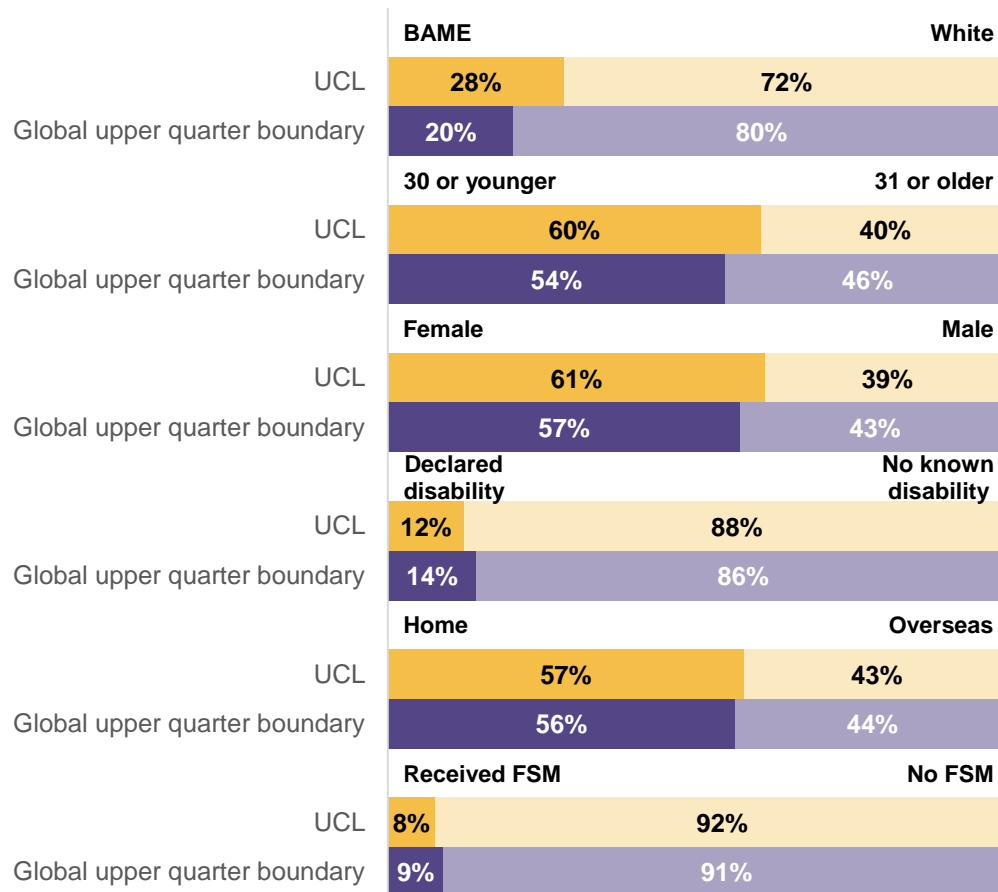
81%

70%

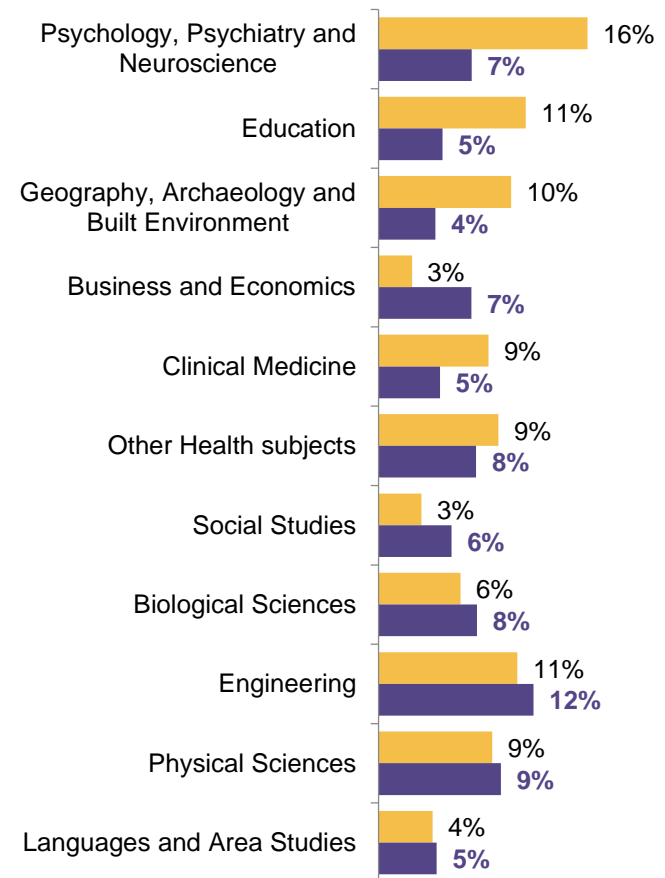**Figure 5: The programme induction**

Student profile

This page shows the profile of research postgraduates at UCL compared to the Global upper quarter boundary. In terms of demographic and delivery factors, the biggest difference was within ethnicity. There were 28% of UCL black and minority ethnic research postgraduates, as a whole,, 8 percentage points more than the Global upper quarter boundary (see Figure 1). By subject, the greatest difference was within Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience, UCL having 9 percentage points more PGRs studying within this subject than the Global upper quarter boundary (see Figure 2).

Figure 1: demographic and delivery profile

	BAME	White
UCL	28%	72%
Global upper quarter boundary	20%	80%

	30 or younger	31 or older
UCL	60%	40%
Global upper quarter boundary	54%	46%

	Female	Male
UCL	61%	39%
Global upper quarter boundary	57%	43%

	Declared disability	No known disability
UCL	12%	88%
Global upper quarter boundary	14%	86%

	Home	Overseas
UCL	57%	43%
Global upper quarter boundary	56%	44%

	Received FSM	No FSM
UCL	8%	92%
Global upper quarter boundary	9%	91%

Figure 2: Distribution of students across subject areas*

Subject	UCL	Global upper quarter boundary
Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience	16%	7%
Education	11%	5%
Geography, Archaeology and Built Environment	10%	4%
Business and Economics	3%	7%
Clinical Medicine	9%	5%
Other Health subjects	9%	8%
Social Studies	3%	6%
Biological Sciences	6%	8%
Engineering	11%	12%
Physical Sciences	9%	9%
Languages and Area Studies	4%	5%

*only UCL subjects benchmarked to the Global upper quarter boundary are shown.

AdvanceHE

For more information

surveys@advance-he.ac.uk

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey

PRES is the leading survey of Research Postgraduates in the UK and beyond, with 37,661 respondents in 2023 achieving a 30.2% response rate. 105 institutions were involved in the survey.

Any of your institutional results, including ranking position, may be communicated internally or published externally at any time. We ask you not to make external reference to any global or benchmarking group results until after the publication of the Advance HE sector reports in the Autumn.

Quarter methodology

The quarters are based on all institutions that have, on average, 23 valid responses or over to the questions making up the survey area. Quarters are only reported when there are a minimum of 8 institutions within an area.

For more on how the differences and quarters have been calculated, please refer to the statistics guide in the 'Guides' workbook supplied alongside this report.