STFC ANNUAL STUDENT SURVEY 2022

In February 2022, the Office contacted all current students and their supervisors to request them to complete the survey. The deadline for completion of the survey was 1 April 2022. A total of 989 students responded out of the 1141 students who were contacted (87% response).

Percentages are based on the numbers of students that responded to the questions. Answers don't always add up to 100% due to rounding.

The main points are as follows:

87% of students met with their supervisor at least once a week.

92% of students rated their supervision that they received as 4 or 5 (i.e. good/excellent).
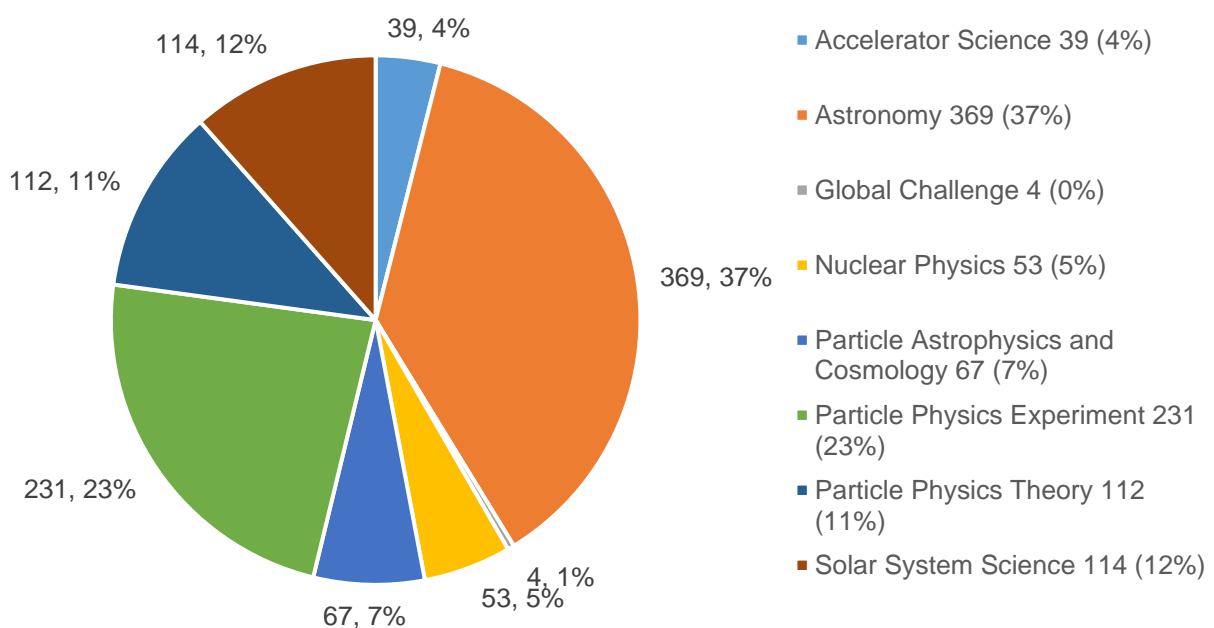
92% of students had received formal training in the first year.

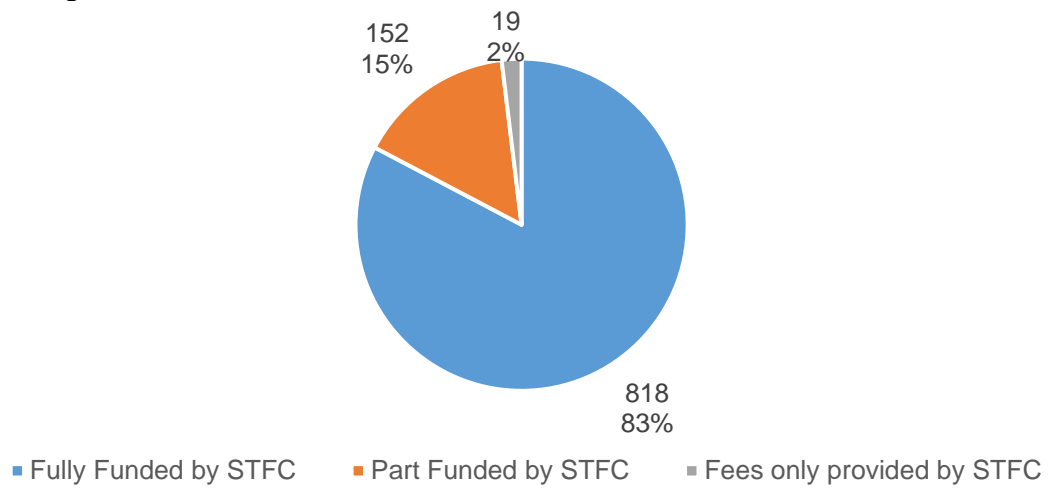57% of students wished to pursue a career in academia.

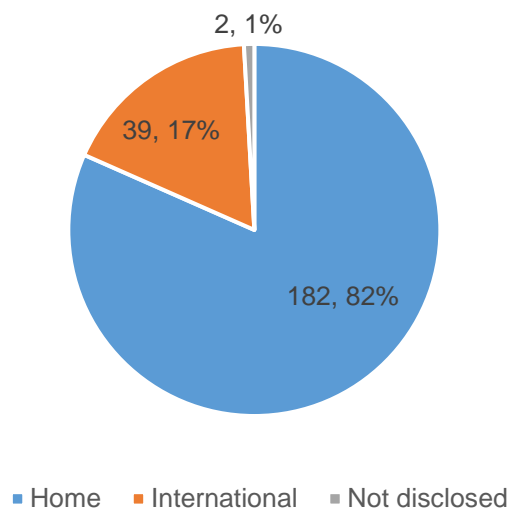98% of students rated their overall training as good/adequate.
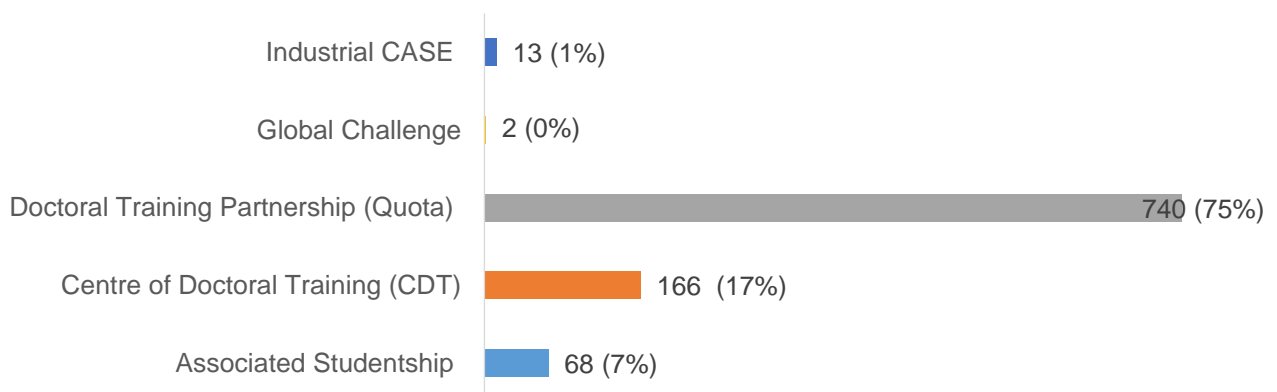
PERSONAL INFORMATION

General Field of Research

Legend:
- Accelerator Science 39 (4%)
- Astronomy 369 (37%)
- Global Challenge 4 (0%)
- Nuclear Physics 53 (5%)
- Particle Astrophysics and Cosmology 67 (7%)
- Particle Physics Experiment 231 (23%)
- Particle Physics Theory 112 (11%)
- Solar System Science 114 (12%)

Form of funding received

152
15%

19
2%

818
83%

■ Fully Funded by STFC ■ Part Funded by STFC ■ Fees only provided by STFC

Home / International Studentships (1st year students only 223 responses)

2, 1%

39, 17%

182, 82%

■ Home ■ International ■ Not disclosed

Type of studentship

Industrial CASE	13 (1%)
Global Challenge	2 (0%)
Doctoral Training Partnership (Quota)	740 (75%)
Centre of Doctoral Training (CDT)	166 (17%)
Associated Studentship	68 (7%)

Year of PhD

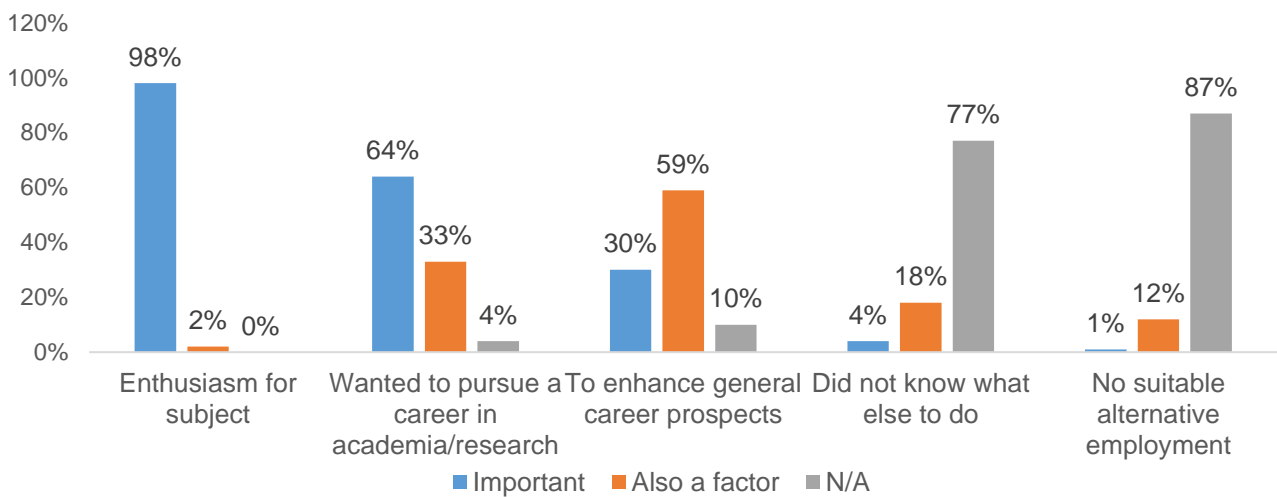|			
First Year	Second Year	Third Year	Fourth Year
223 (23%)	237 (24%)	272 (28%)	257 (26%)
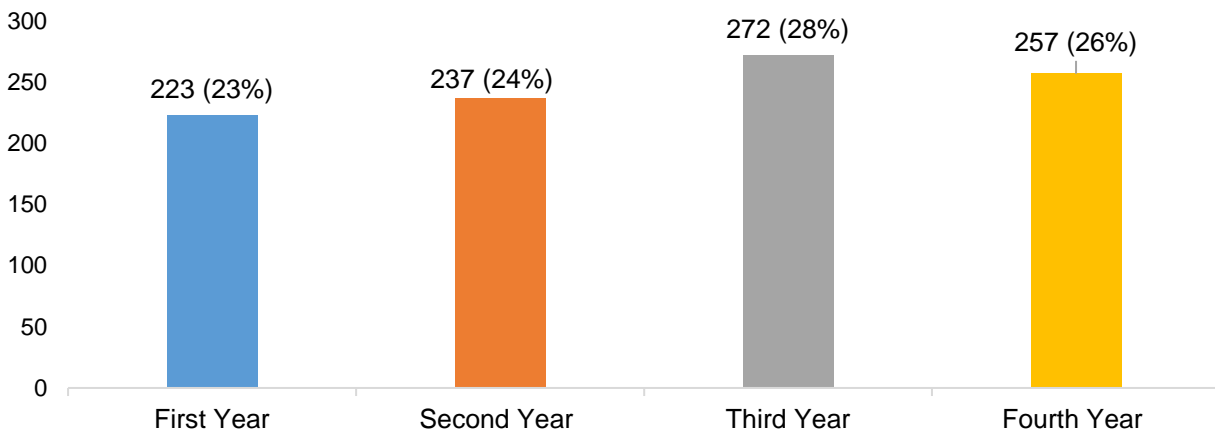
977 students were full time and **12** part time.
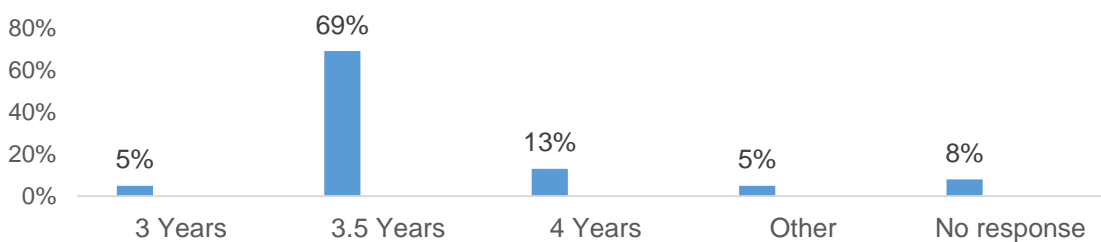
Reasons for undertaking a PhD (1st year students only – 223 responses)

FUNDING PERIOD

95% of students confirmed their funding period was discussed and agreed with their supervisor at the beginning of their PhD.
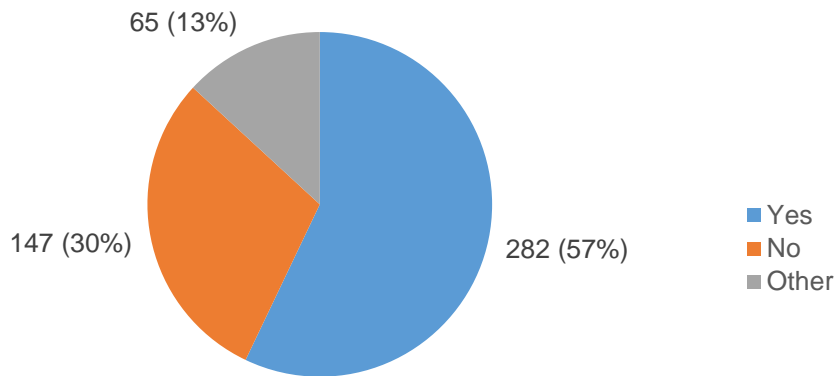
How long is funded period?

3 Years	3.5 Years	4 Years	Other	No response
5%	69%	13%	5%	8%

PHD SUBMISSION - Questions asked of 3rd and 4th year students only

There were **494** third and fourth-year students who completed the questionnaire.
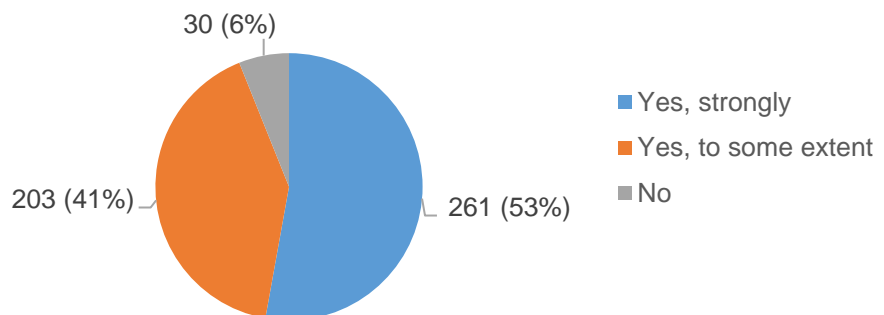
Do you think have sufficient time within the funded duration of your studentship to complete your PhD, including writing up?


Breakdown of third- and fourth-year submission question *"Do you think have sufficient time within the funded duration of your studentship to complete your PhD, including writing up?"* by research area:-
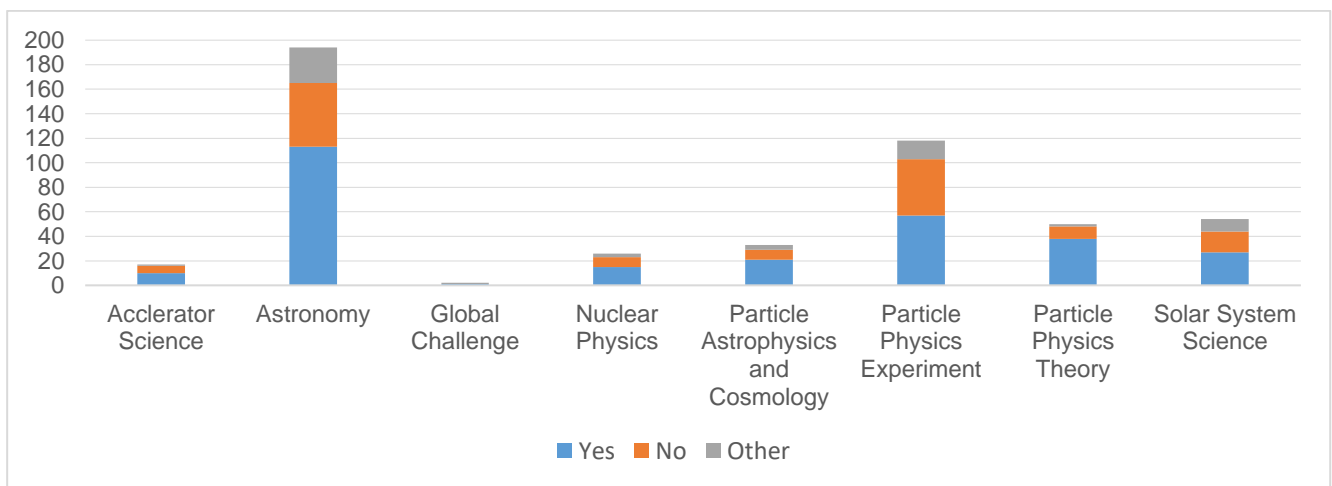
STFC expects student projects to be planned and supported such that they may be completed within the funded duration of the studentship. Do you consider your institution actively encourages students to complete their PhD, including writing up, within the funded duration of the studentship?


Breakdown of third and fourth-year submission question *"STFC expects student projects to be planned and supported such that they may be completed within the funded duration of the studentship. Do you consider your institution actively encourages students to complete their PhD, including writing up, within the funded duration of the studentship?"* by research area:-
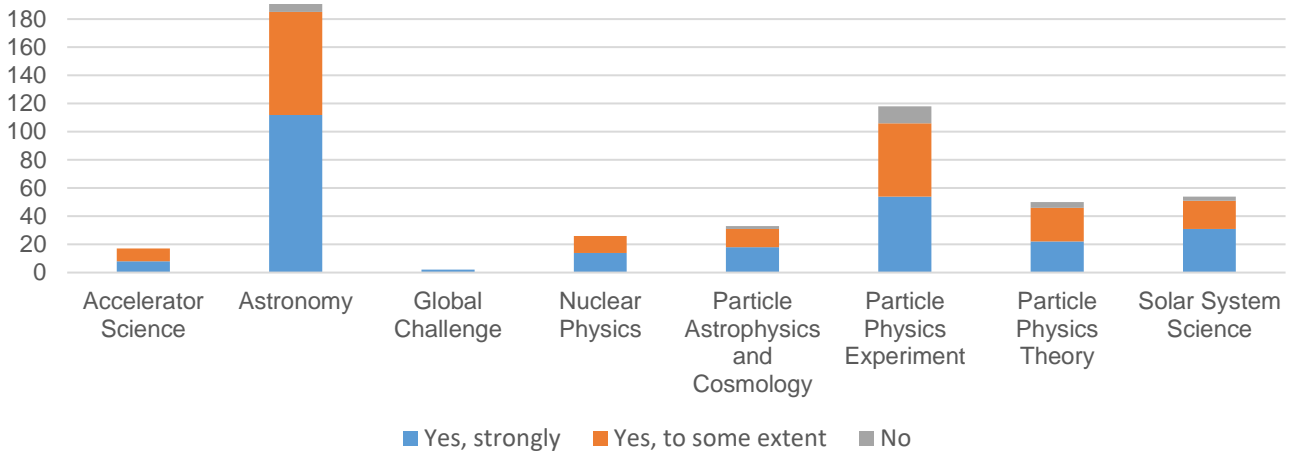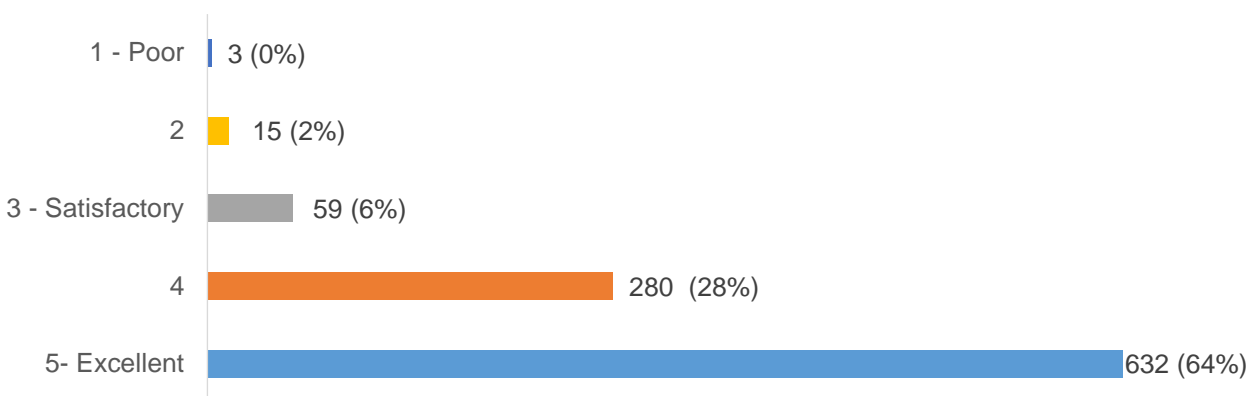
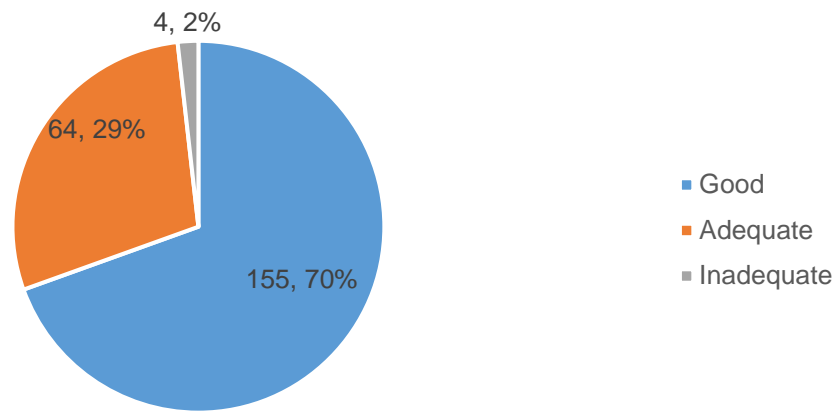## SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

Frequency of contact with supervisor

84 8%	
32 3%	
18 2%	
66 7%	
789 80%	

- Daily
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Other
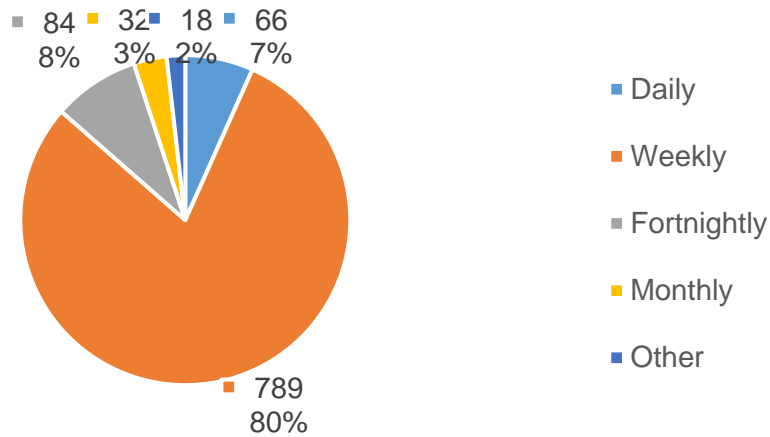
82% of students stated that they received help/advice from a second supervisor or other people in their department.
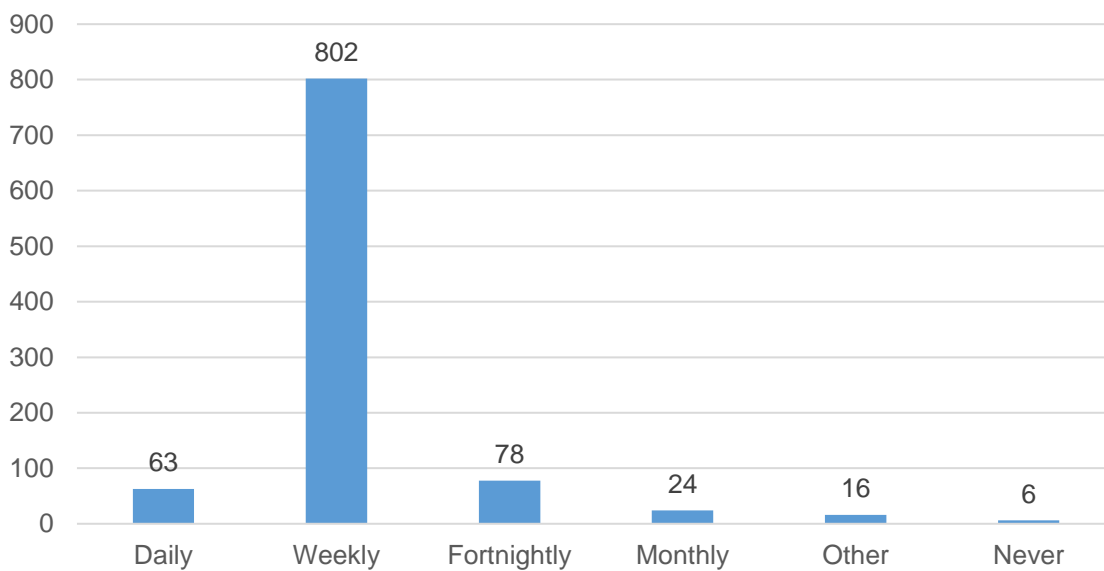
Usefulness of Supervision

1 - Poor	3 (0%)
2	15 (2%)
3 - Satisfactory	59 (6%)
4	280 (28%)
5- Excellent	632 (64%)

Rating of Induction Programme (1st year students only – 223 responses)

- Good
- Adequate
- Inadequate

4, 2%
64, 29%
155, 70%

Attendance at group/departmental seminars

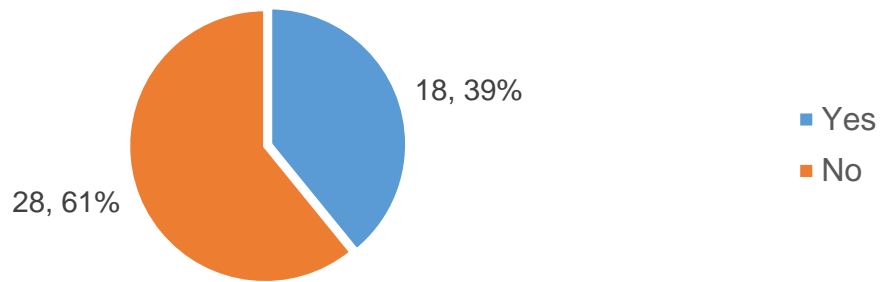|	
Daily	63
Weekly	802
Fortnightly	78
Monthly	24
Other	16
Never	6

87% of students attended group/departmental seminars once a week or more.

WELLBEING

Have you encountered problems or difficulties with your **supervisory team**, whether professional or personal?


- Yes
- No

46, 5%
943, 95%

Did you report this to your institution?
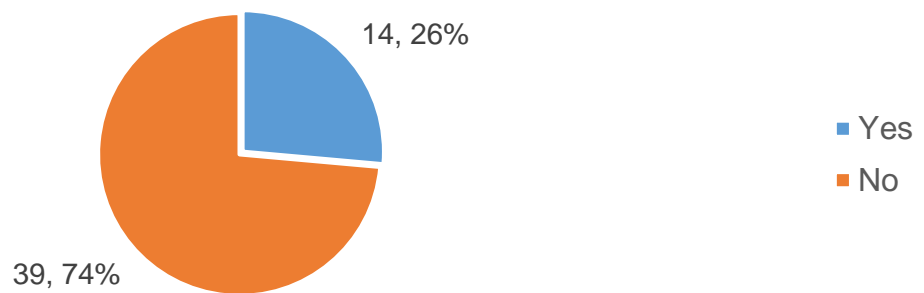

18, 39%
28, 61%

- Yes
- No
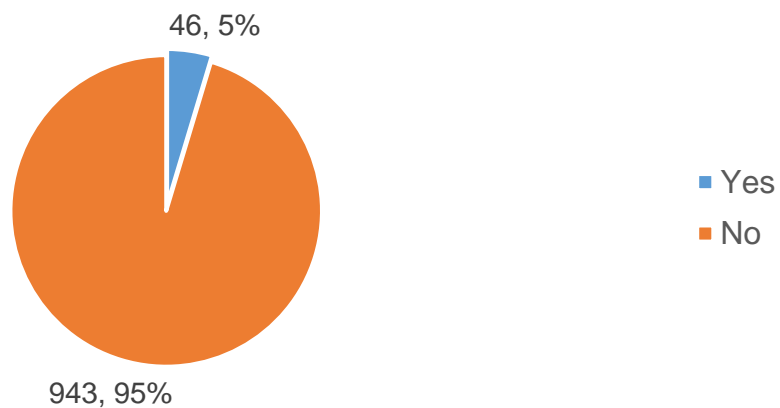
Of the **18** students that reported difficulties **11** students were satisfied with the way their problems were handled and **7** were not.

Have you encountered any problems or difficulties with other members of your **department**, whether professional or personal?

53, 5%
936, 95%

- Yes
- No

Did you report this to your institution?
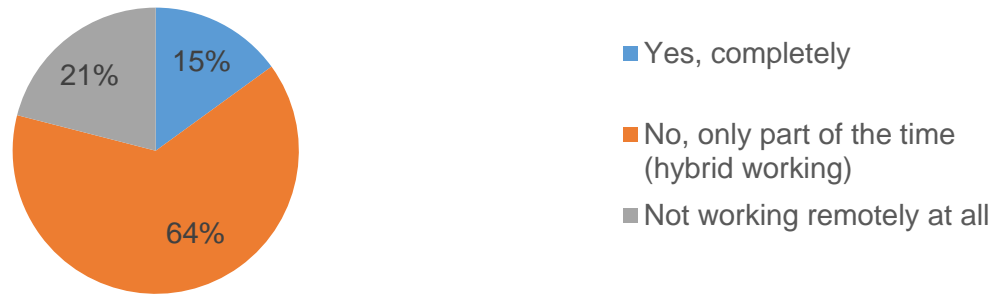

14, 26%
39, 74%

- Yes
- No
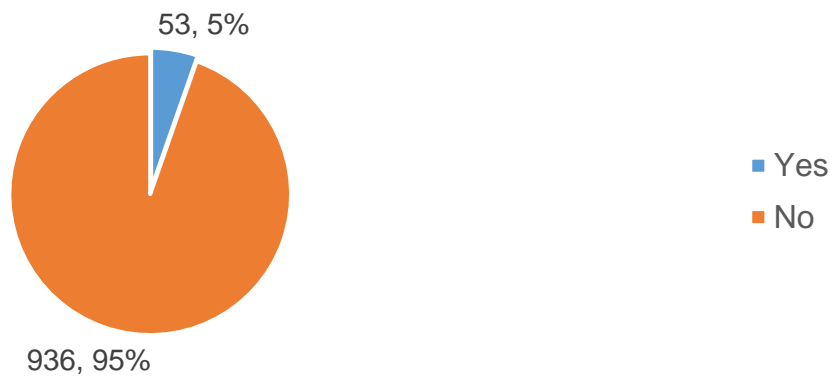
Of the **14** students that reported the problems to their institution **5** were satisfied with the way their problems were handled and **9** were not.
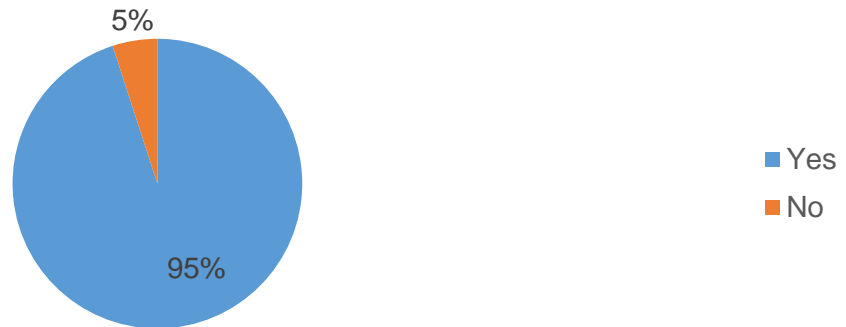
EFFECTS OF COVID

Students were asked questions to find out how they may still be impacted by the effects of COVID.

Are you working remotely?

Legend:
- Yes, completely (15%)
- No, only part of the time (hybrid working) (64%)
- Not working remotely at all (21%)

Were you able to access training in an online format when required?


Legend:
- Yes (95%)
- No (5%)

The main impacts identified from those not receiving training in an online format were as follows:-

- Online training does not help students working on experiments, in labs and observatories.
- Lack of programming and practical skills training.
- Online training did not give sufficient networking opportunities.
- Some conferences and lecture courses have not been available online.
- Missed out on opportunities to attend summer schools, so feel like behind on experience and training.
- Lack of research environment with large portion of research activities not being transferred to online format.

Some students also commented on the quality of the training in this section:-

- Skills sessions were rushed and uninformative
- Internet connection issues
- Quality of training via online format reduced from in person attended previously
- No subtitles on the recorded lectures which reduced accessibility

Overall, how effective was the online training received?

Legend:
- Good (408, 41%)
- Adequate (500, 51%)
- Inadequate (22, 2%)
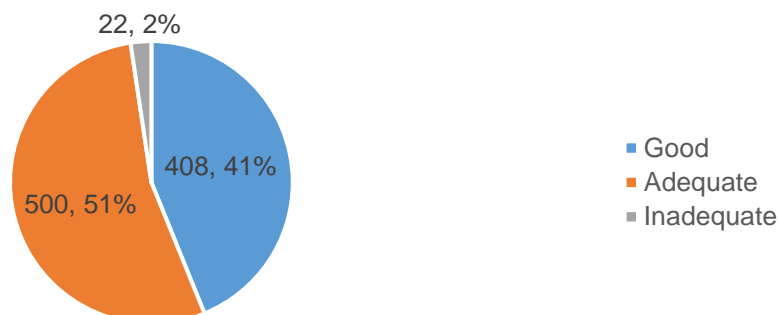
The main comments made from those that indicated the online was inadequate were as follows:-

- Accessibility of training – IT, computing resources, books, research skills training and lecture courses.
- Not made aware of available resources online and how to use them.
- Poor quality videos and lecture content.
- Unable to network at summer schools.
- Summer school days too long online and too many lectures with enough time to work.
- Harder to interact with training over the internet.
- Online training doesn't translate well for high level training.
- Poor and narrowly focussed equality and diversity training.

Was your ability to continue research affected in 2021 due to the pandemic?
Only 45 students responded to this question
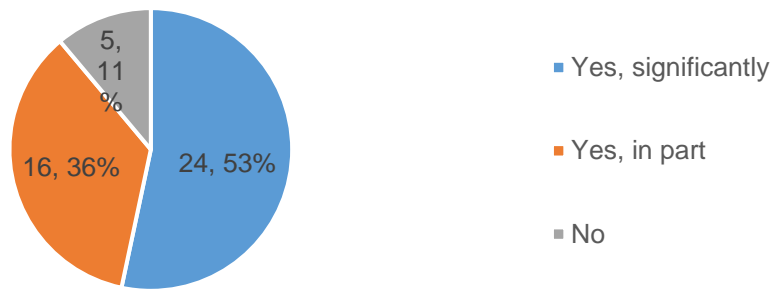

The main factors cited for research being affected in 2021 were:-

- Health issues - mental health and COVID – isolation
- Unable to access data, equipment or to work on experiments or in labs required for PhD
- Home working – Unproductive and slow progress working from home; inadequate working environment at home
- Project re-direction due to staff shortages and project delays
- LTAs – issues arising from restrictions on travel both on starting and returning to UK

Please tell us about the departmental support/advice you received for periods of homeworking.
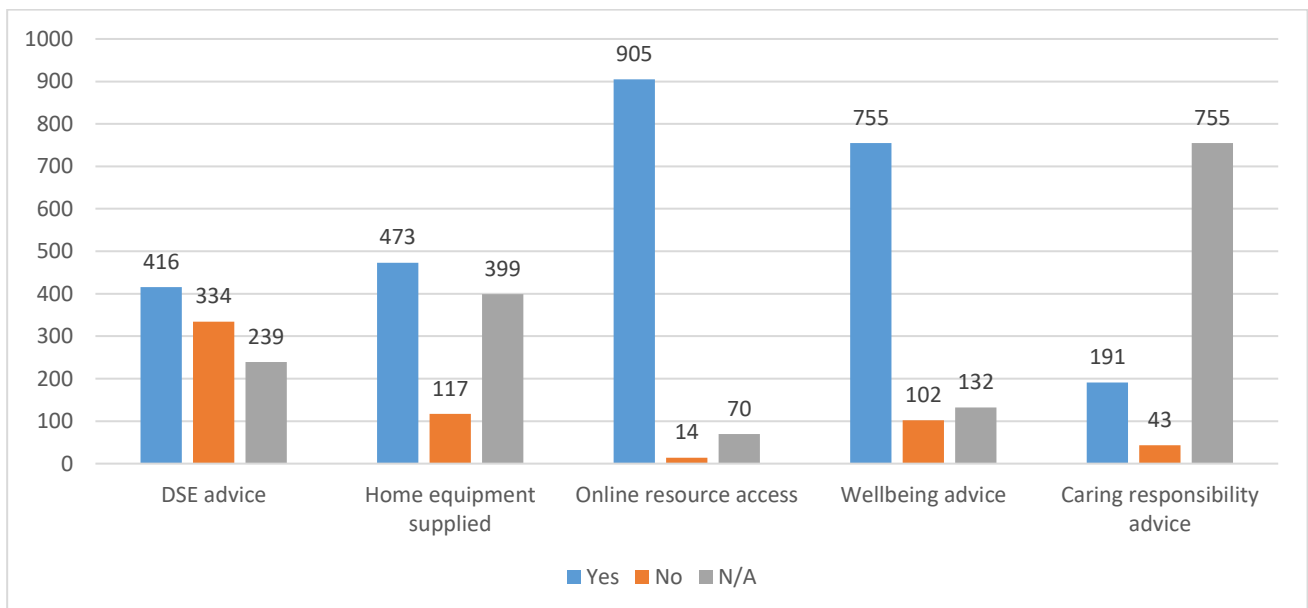
Overall, how would you rate your university advice and support during the pandemic?
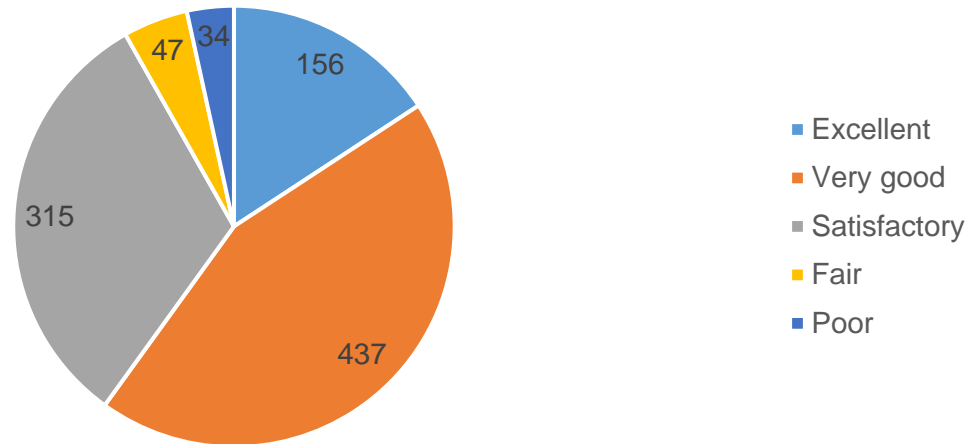
If you answered fair or poor please indicate what could have been improved.

- Undergraduate students were prioritised for returning to campus over postgraduates. Postgrads should have been invited to return to site earlier.
- Communications could have been better for postgrads for example to be included in staff meetings.
- Communications around post pandemic arrangements could have been better.
- There should have been more and better information on what was available in terms of support for wellbeing and advice for those with disabilities.
- More direct contact checks should have been made on wellbeing. Many mentioned issues with isolation and mental health.
- More could have been done to welcome people to the research group.
- Lecture rooms should have had easier video recording so available for online viewing after or for those unable to attend.
- Home working equipment and advice should have been provided earlier and not at the cost of the student.
- More help should have been provided for students with inappropriate working environments.
- Greater recognition would have been appreciated of the impact COVID had on working from the student perspective.
- Extension advice and how to apply could have been made easier and awarded with funding.

Have your career plans now changed as a result of the global pandemic?
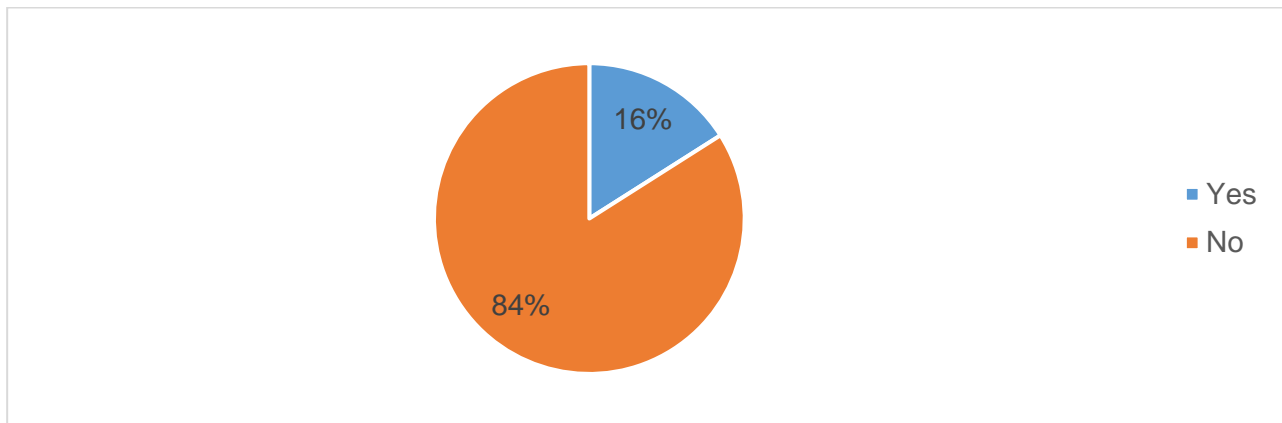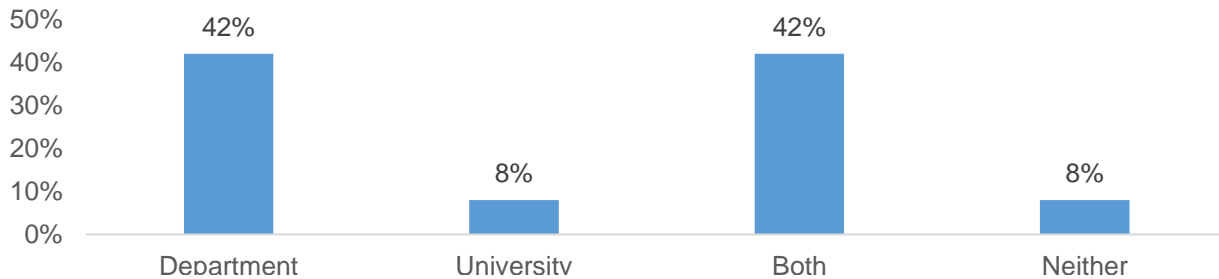

Main reasons provided for change to career plans:-

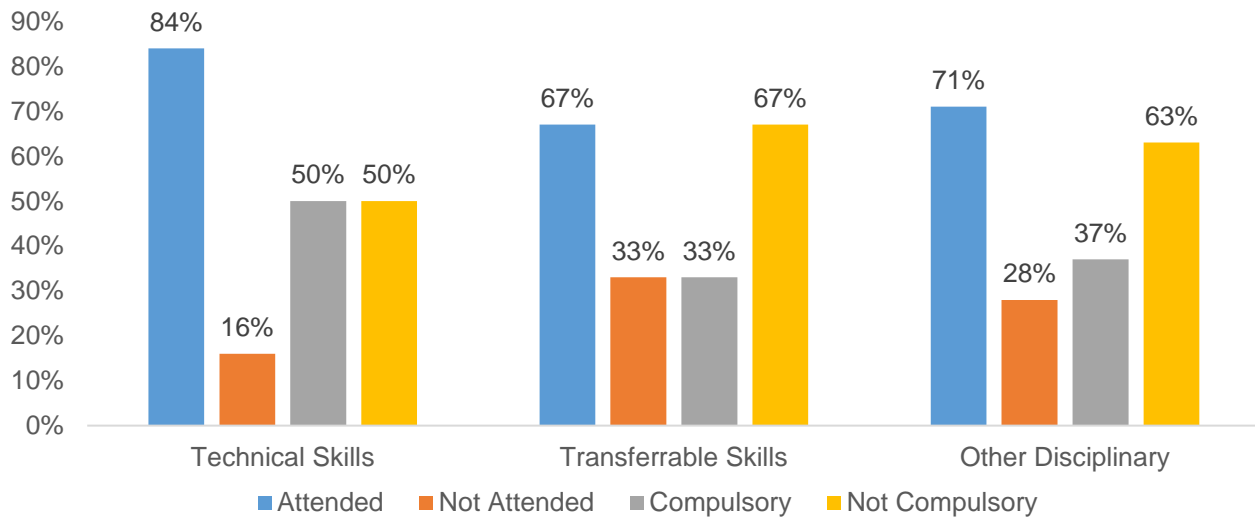- Planning to go into industry rather than academia.

- Health considerations.
- Academia less appealing with uncertain career path. Seeking more job security.
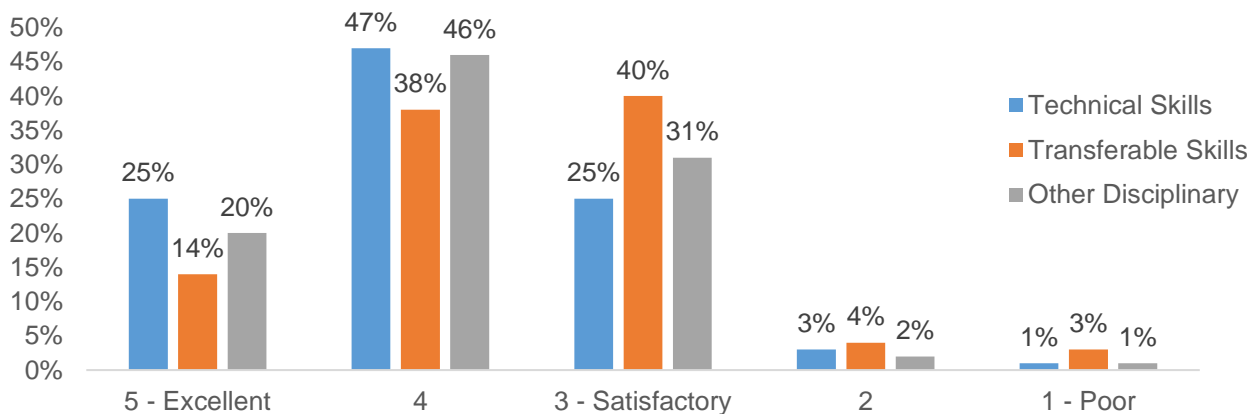
TRAINING PROGRAMME

Formal training (e.g. lectures) provided during first year

Take up of technical, transferable and other disciplinary skills

Usefulness of technical, transferable and other disciplinary skills training –

79% of students cited that their department had a nominated Postgraduate tutor with overall responsibility for co-ordinating their research training.

Astronomy students' attendance at the Introductory to Astronomy Summer School
369 Astronomy students responded to questionnaire
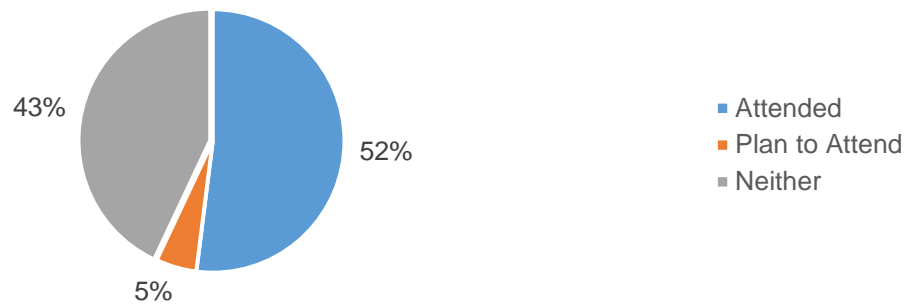
Solar students' attendance at Introductory to Solar System Science Summer School
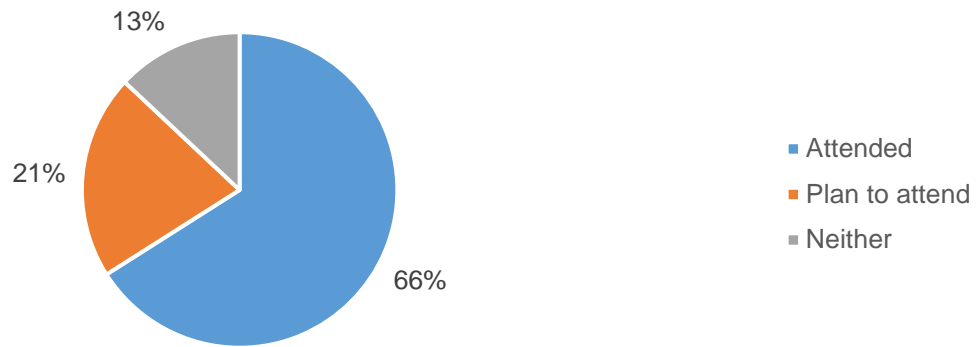**114** Solar System students responded to questionnaire
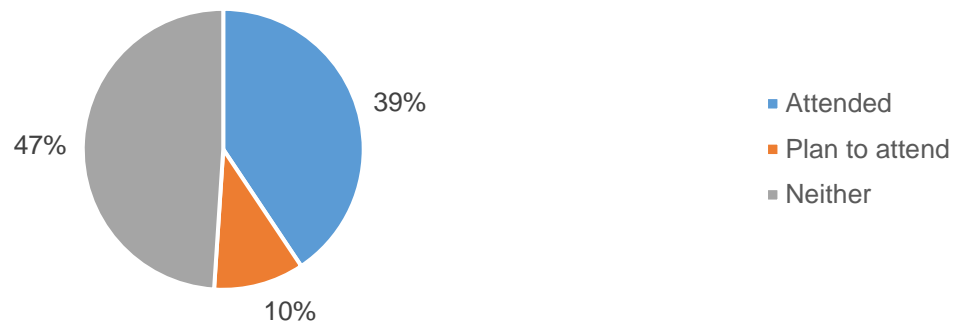
Particle Physics students' attendance at BUSSTEPP – British Universities Summer School in Theoretical Elementary Particle Physics
112 Particle Physics Theory students responded to questionnaire
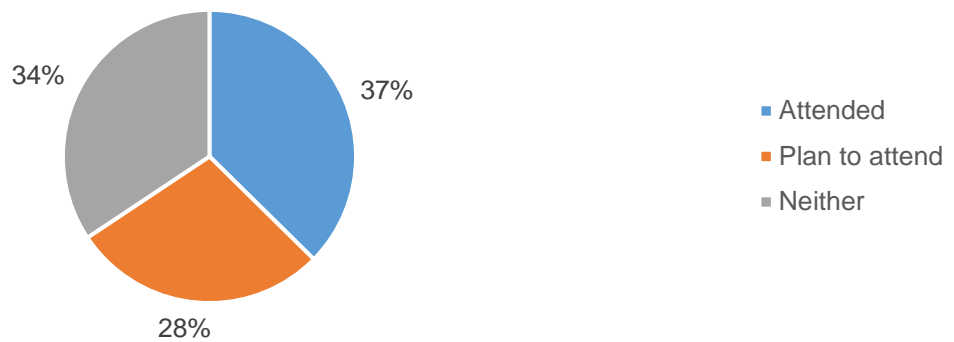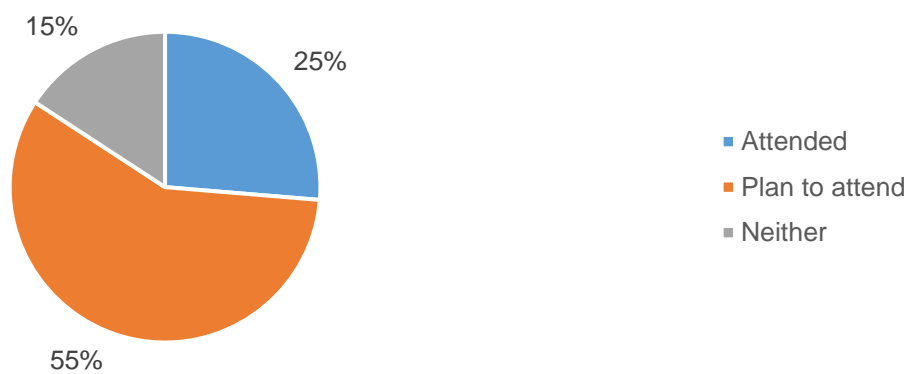

Particle Physics students' attendance at High Energy Physics Summer School (HEP)

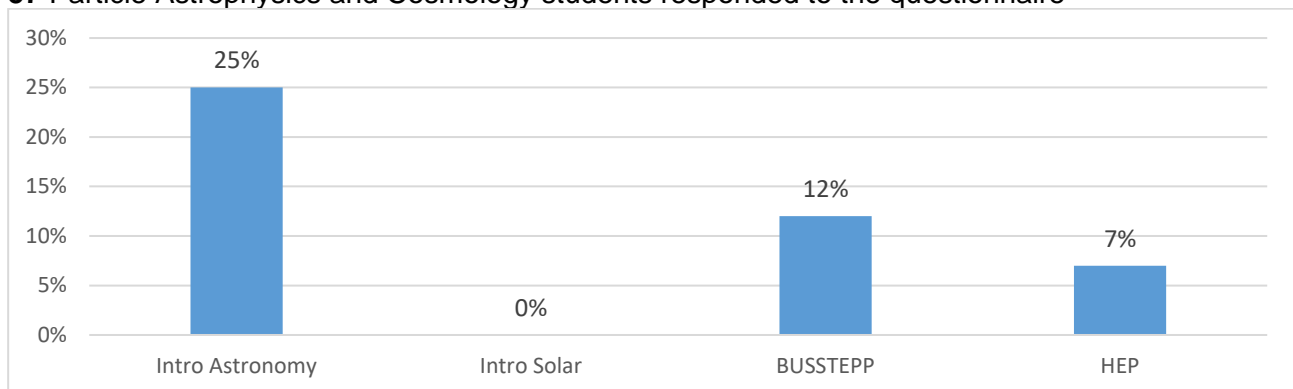**231** Particle Physics Experimental students responded to questionnaire

Nuclear Physics students' attendance at Nuclear Summer School
53 Nuclear Physics students responded to questionnaire


Particle Astrophysics and Cosmology students' attendance at summer schools
57 Particle Astrophysics and Cosmology students responded to the questionnaire
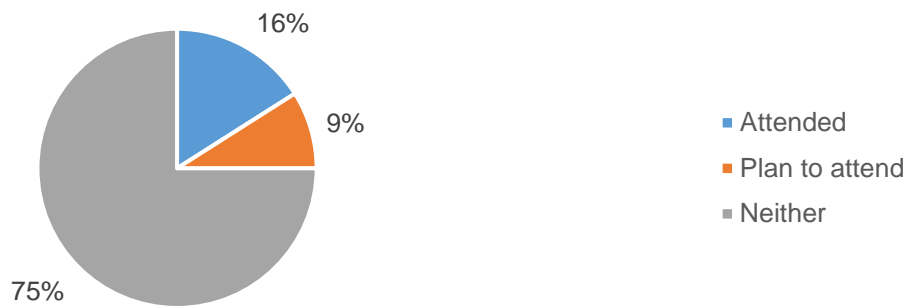

There were **39** Accelerator Science students that completed the questionnaire, but none had attended any of the fundamental summer schools.
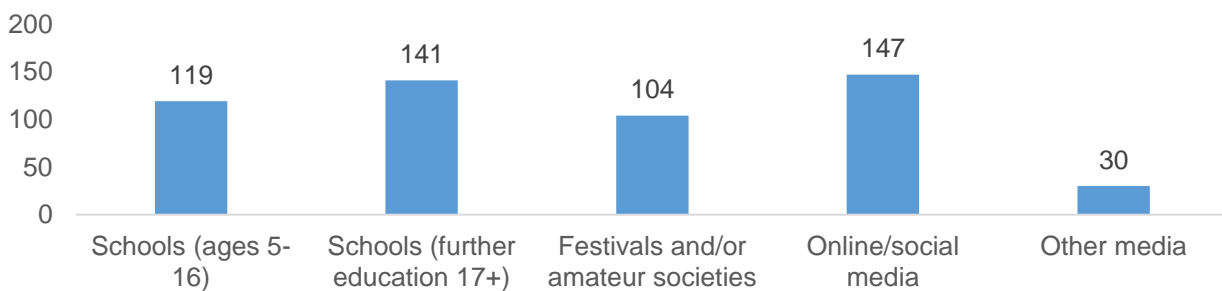
Research Councils' Graduate Schools Programme

1% 5%
94%

- Attended
- Plan to attend
- Neither
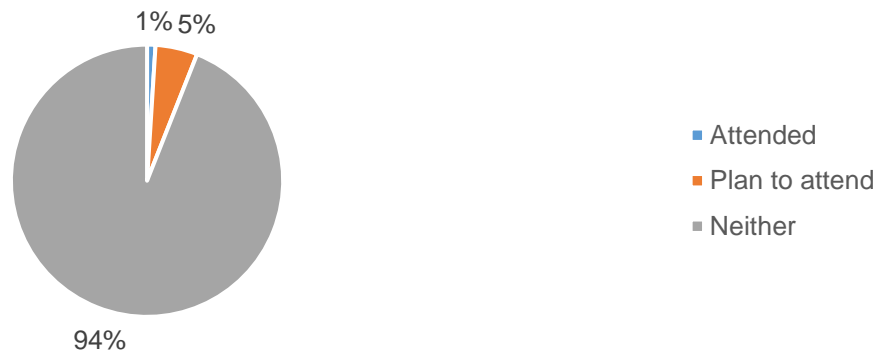
Other STFC Funded Summer Schools or Short Courses

16%
9%
75%

- Attended
- Plan to attend
- Neither

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Communicated research to wider public audience

28% of students had communicated research to a wider public audience and many communicated to more than one audience.


	Value
Schools (ages 5-16)	119
Schools (further education 17+)	141
Festivals and/or amateur societies	104
Online/social media	147
Other media	30

'Other' forms of public engagement students mentioned were alumni events, ministerial visit, astronomical society, talks, writing a book, interviews, magazine articles, podcasts, newspapers, online seminars, outreach film, poster event, radio, space school programme and website.
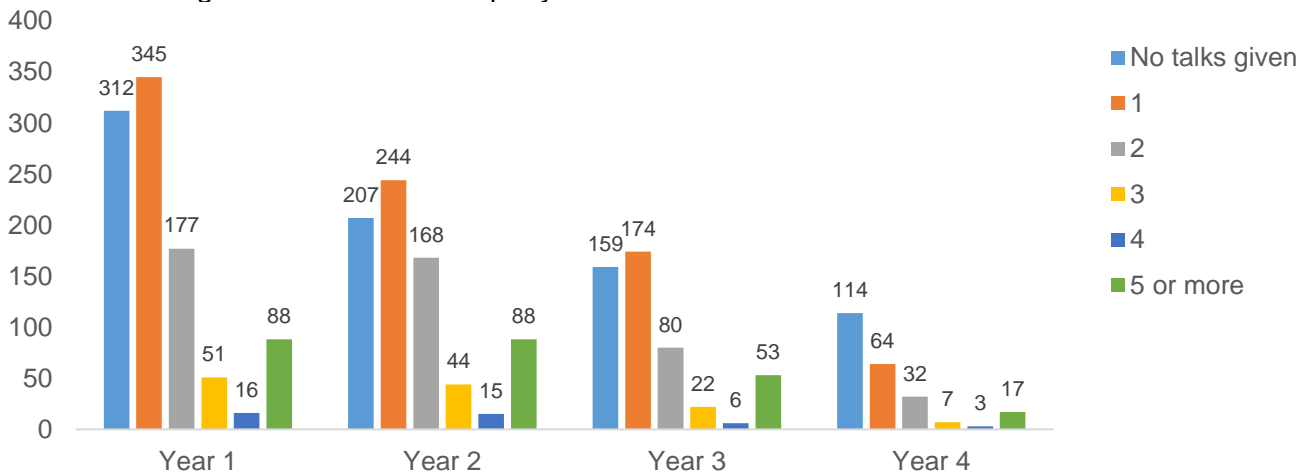
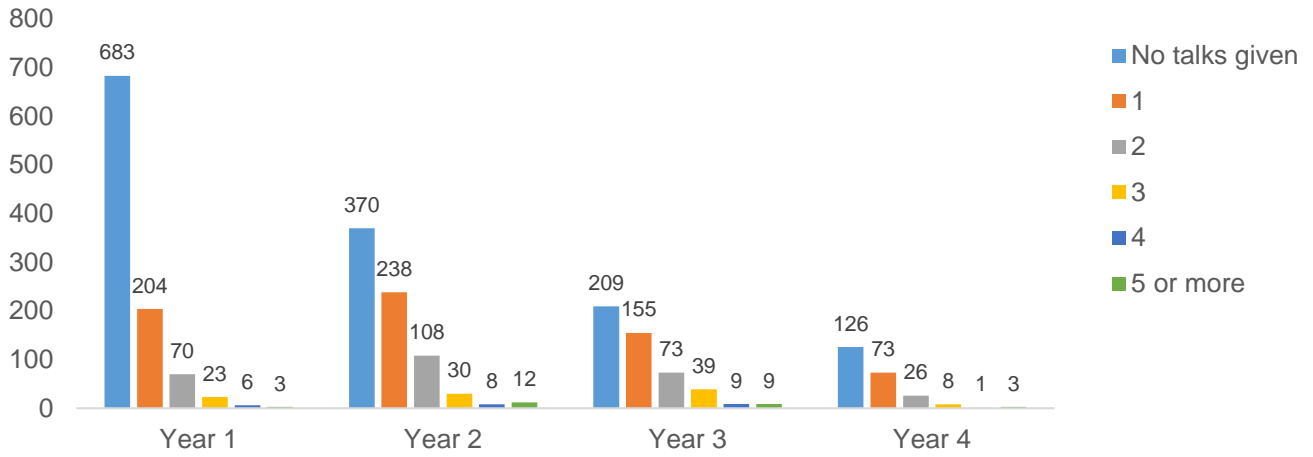Attendance at UK workshops or conferences by year
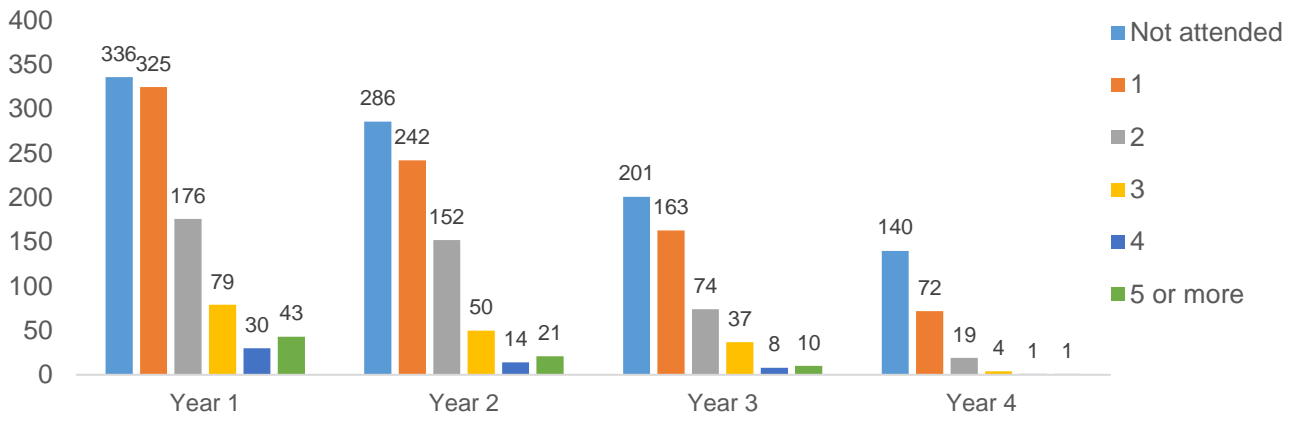
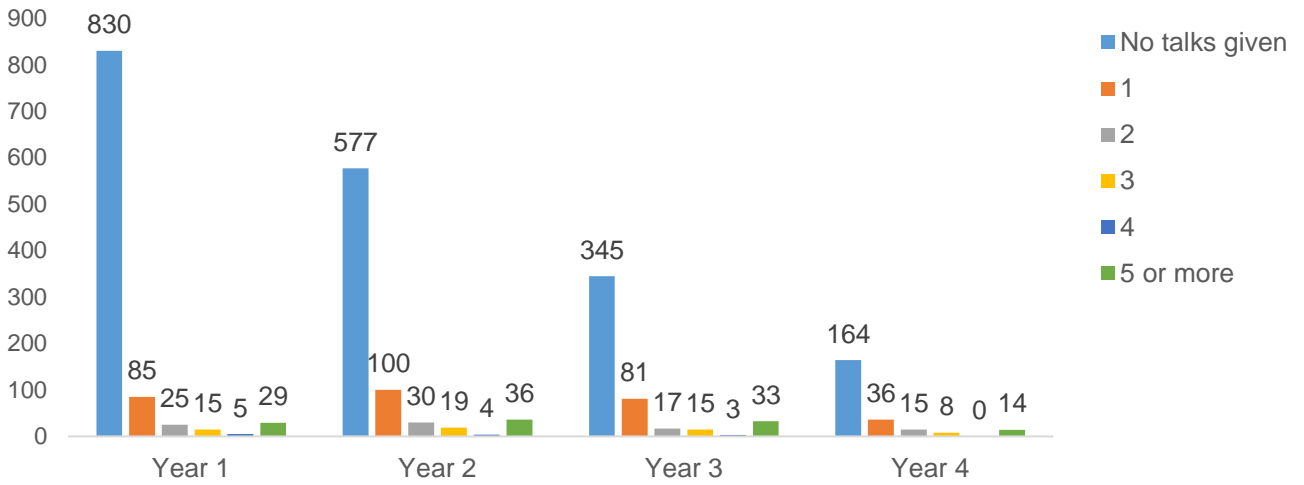Attendance at overseas workshops or conferences by year
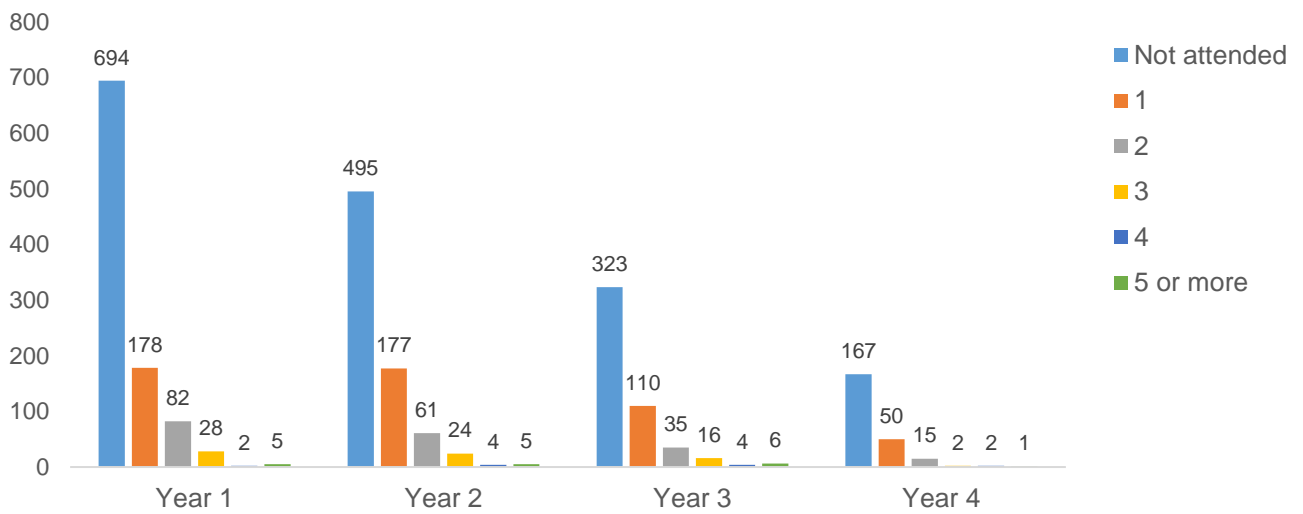
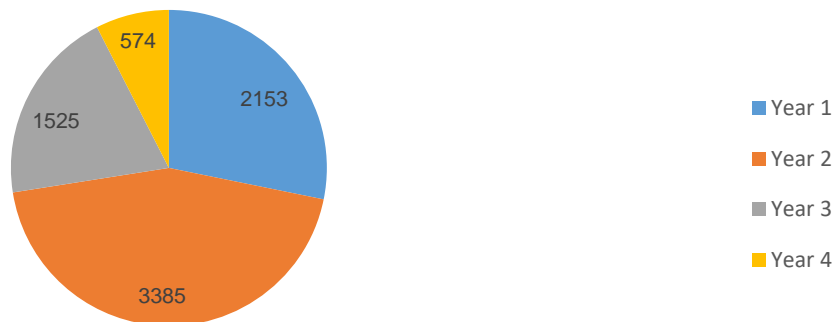Research talks given within institution per year

Research talks given at conferences and or workshops per year

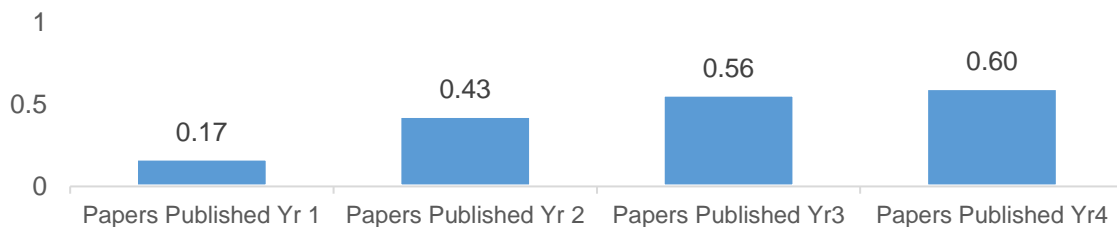|	No talks given	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Year 1	683	204	70	23	6	3
Year 2	370	238	108	30	8	12
Year 3	209	155	73	39	9	9
Year 4	126	73	26	8	1	3

Research talks given at other external events

	No talks given	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Year 1	830	85	25	15	5	29
Year 2	577	100	30	19	4	36
Year 3	345	81	17	15	3	33
Year 4	164	36	15	8	0	14

Total number of Research talks given

	Total
Year 1	2153
Year 2	3385
Year 3	1525
Year 4	574

Average number of papers published per student in each year

Year	No of Students	No of Papers Published in year	Average per student per year
1	989	169	0.17
2	766	336	0.43
3	494	279	0.56
4	237	143	0.60

In total the current 4th year students have published **490** papers during their awards. This equates to an average of **2.06** papers each during their studentship.


MONITORING

Rating of overall training
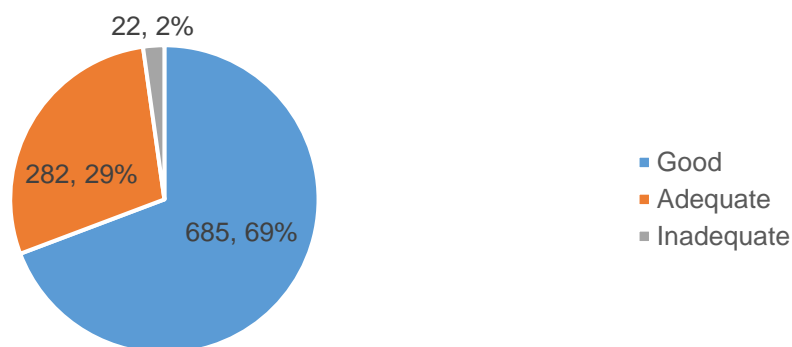
73% of students were required to submit a written progress report on their PhD in 2021/22. Of these students **9%** stated that their progress report was assessed by an interview with just their supervisor, **53%** stated that the assessment was by interview with other staff, **27%** were assessed by more than one person.   Other forms of assessments included research log, progression panel, poster presentation, presentation/seminar with Q&A, literature review, completion of thesis and viva.
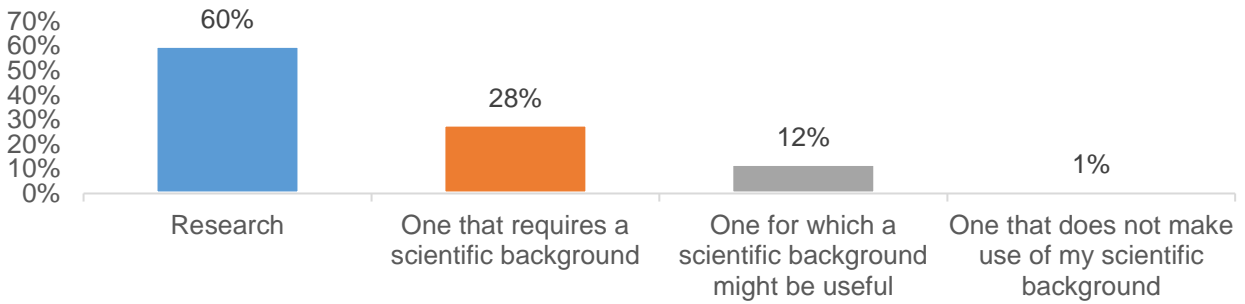

FUTURE CAREER

Rating of career guidance available during PhD
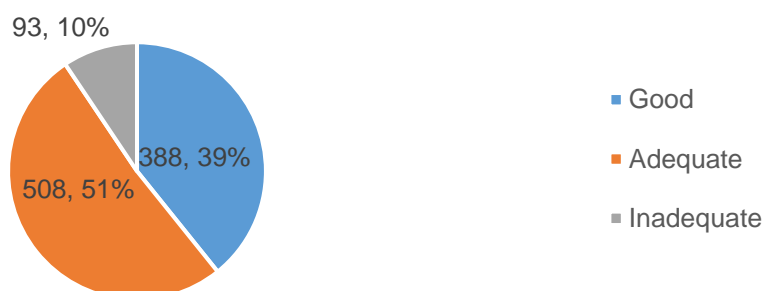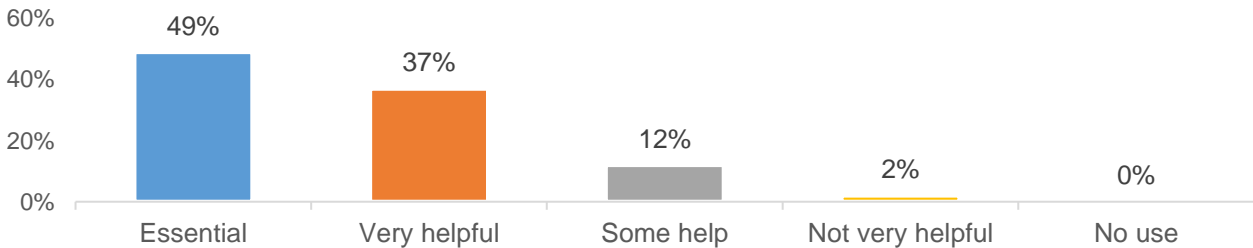

Type of organisation wish to work for upon completion of PhD
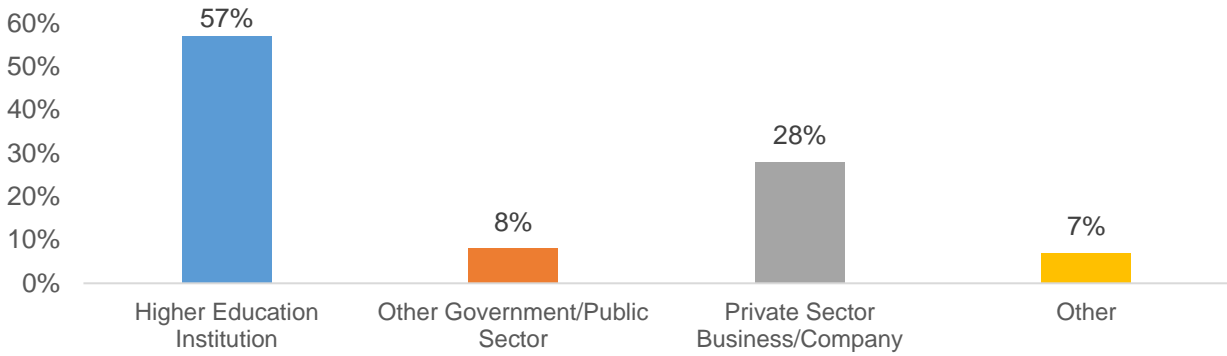
Sort of role intend to work in upon completion of PhD
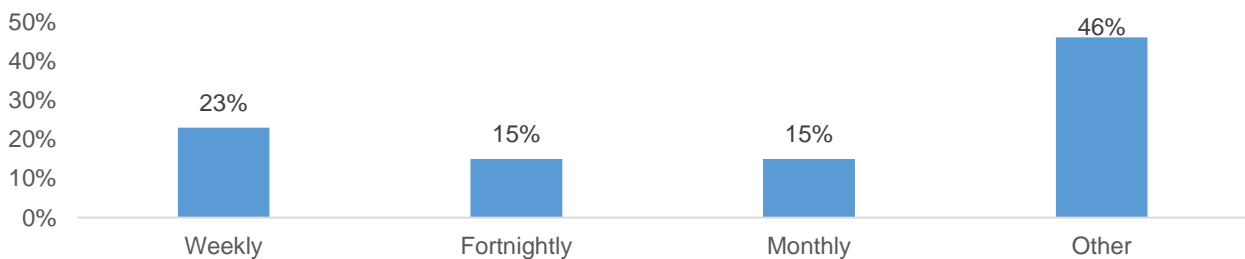

To what extent do you think your PhD will help you get a job?


INDUSTRIAL CASE STUDENTSHIPS

Frequency of contact with Industrial partner
13 Industrial CASE students responded to the survey

The CASE industrial students had varying amounts of contact with their CASE partner from a weekly contact to infrequent contact.

Time spent on premises of Industrial partner per year
13 Industrial CASE students responded to this question on the survey; 2 in their first year, 3 in their second year and 6 in their third year and 2 in their fourth year.
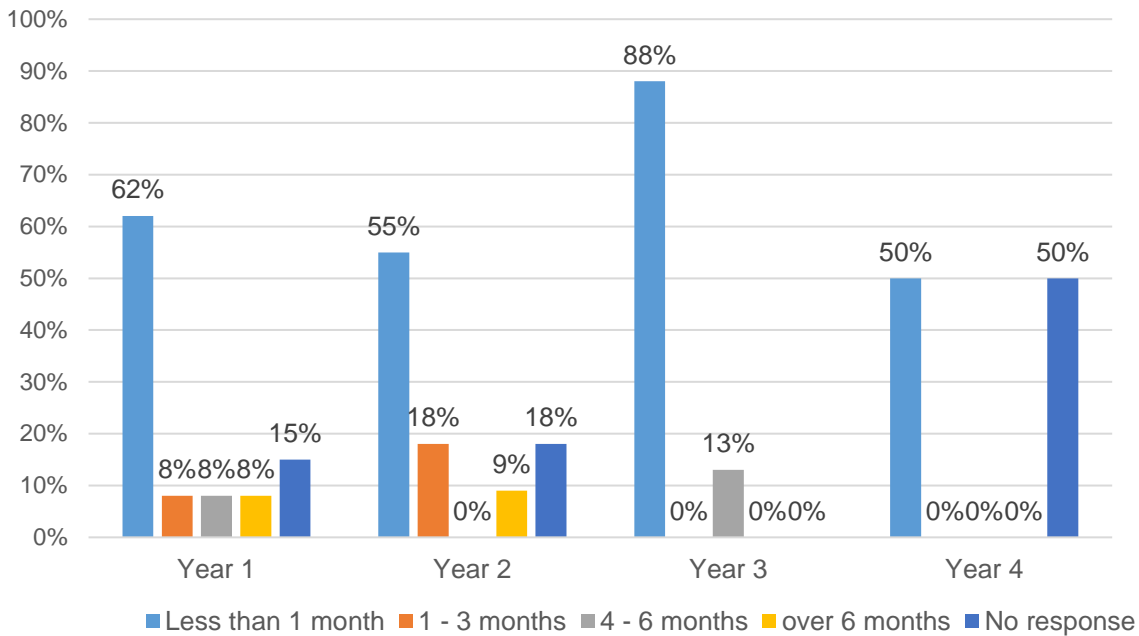
Students are expected to spend 3 months a year on average at their CASE Industrial Partner premises.