

## **PRES 2009 – Summary of University of Stirling results**

### **Introduction**

We participated in the PRES 2009 survey (postgraduate research students experience survey). PRES is a service made available to all HE institutions across the UK which have postgraduate research students and is designed to help institutions enhance the quality of postgraduate research degree provision by collecting feedback from current research students in a systematic and user-friendly way. PRES uses a ‘by institutions for institutions’ approach, it is managed centrally by the HE Academy and it does not contribute to league tables. The findings are anonymous so that neither individual students nor institutions can be identified. We are not permitted to use the findings for publicity or marketing purposes.

The survey ran from 2/3/09 to 30/4/09. We circulated details of the survey to all of our currently registered Doctoral students and asked them to participate. Supervisors were also asked to encourage their students to take part. In total, 82 institutions took part in the PRES 2009 survey. Full survey results are available on request from the Graduate Development Officer (Katharine Reibig) in the Research and Enterprise Office. In response to feedback from HEIs, PRES steering group and the Academy have recently decided to run PRES every two years, with the next survey therefore being 2011. Further information (including the questionnaire itself) can be found at -

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/research/surveys/pres>

### **Summary of University of Stirling results (see Charts 1-6 and Table 1)**

We had 86 responses (out of a total PGR population of approx 420).

Which students took part?

- 67% of respondents were full-time
- 67% of respondents were based at Stirling campus
- 34% were in 1<sup>st</sup> year
- 67% were UK students; 11.8% were EU students; 21.2% were OS students
- Responses were received from students in 18 departments

The results show that, for the topics represented in Table 1, University of Stirling has a score which is above the survey average (with the exception of thesis examination where none of our respondents had undertaken their viva, so those questions were not completed). The charts for the topics in Table 1 are given below and Stirling’s UK position is indicated by the arrow-head; note that the numbers along the horizontal (x) axis are randomised.

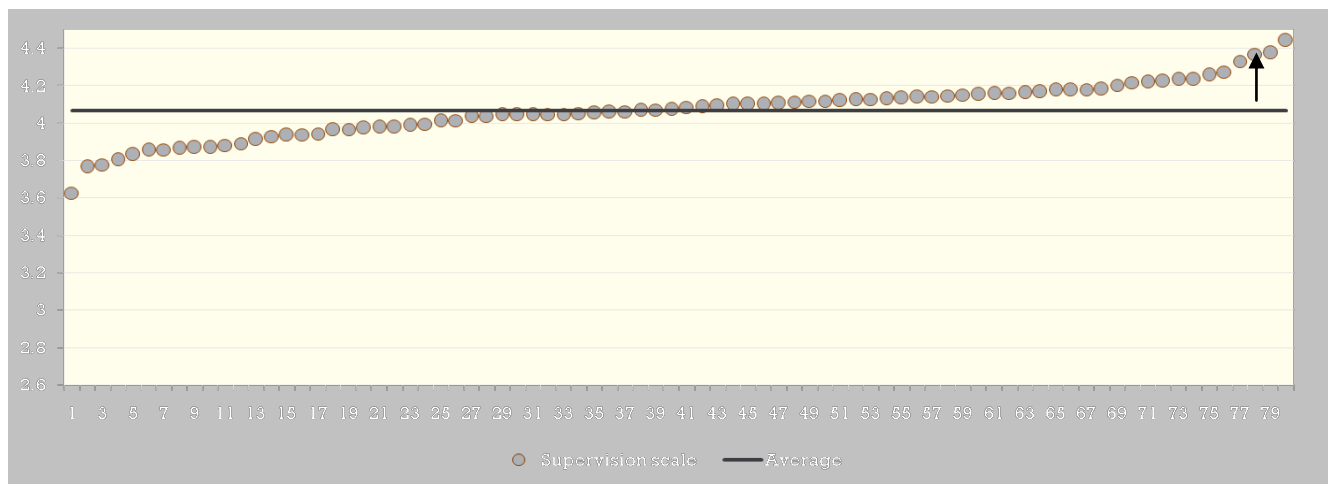
**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation results for 7 sections of the PRES**

	University of Stirling results 2009		PRES 2009**		PRES 2008	PRES 2007
	Mean*	SD	Mean	SD	Difference (mean)	Difference (mean)
Supervision	<b>4.38</b>	0.867	4.03	0.965	0.001	0.1
Skills development	<b>4.02</b>	0.767	3.97	0.804	0.001	0.11
Infrastructure	<b>3.85</b>	1.1	3.75	0.923	0.05	0.13
Intellectual climate	<b>3.76</b>	1.12	3.5	1.024	0.05	0.1
Goals and standards	<b>3.925</b>	1.05	3.81	0.966	0.02	0.01
Thesis examination	<b>NA</b>	NA	3.86	1.149	-0.15	-0.1
Professional development and career	<b>3.33</b>	1.2	3.14	1.117	0.14	---

\*The mean scores given in the table are based on the scoring scheme 1-5 used in the PRES, where 1 is low, and 5 is high.

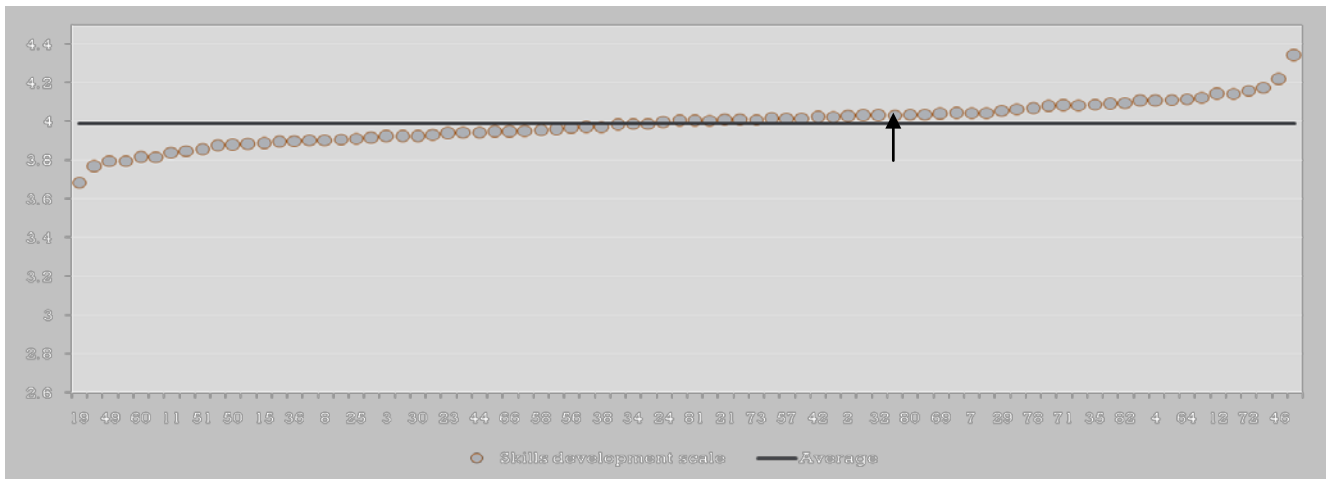
\*\* the PRES 2009, PRES 2008 and PRES 2007 data are the results from the entire PRES cohort on each year (ie of all institutions which participated)

**Chart 1: Supervision scale**



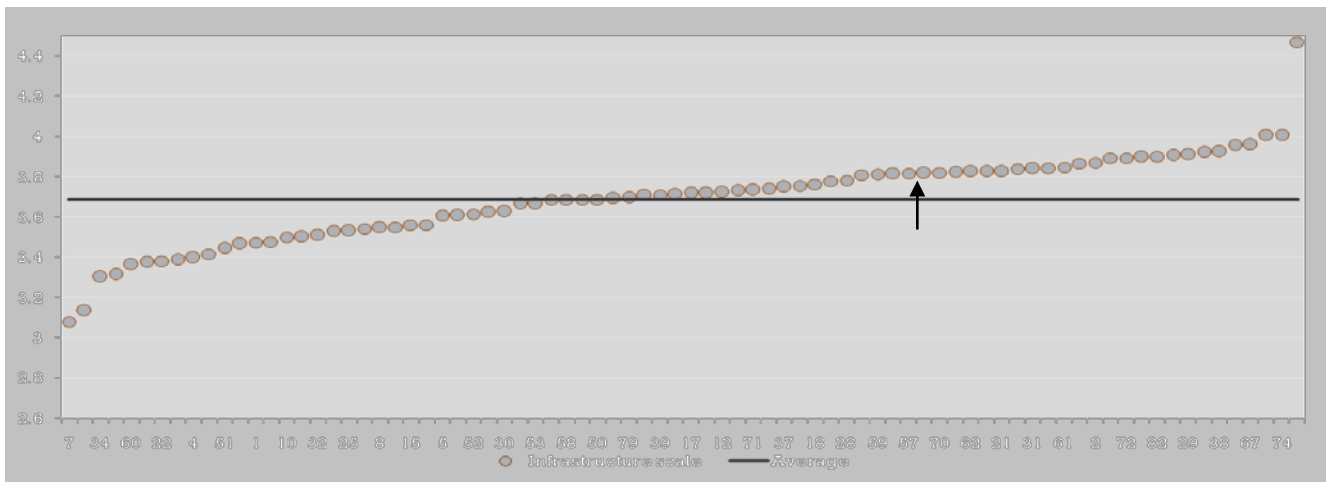
**Supervision:** In this section, there was strong positive feedback from the respondents on the quality of supervisory support: Stirling was in the top four of participating institutions. Clearly academic colleagues are amongst the best supervisors, helped by the supervisor training sessions that have run for a number of years.

**Chart 2: Skills Development**



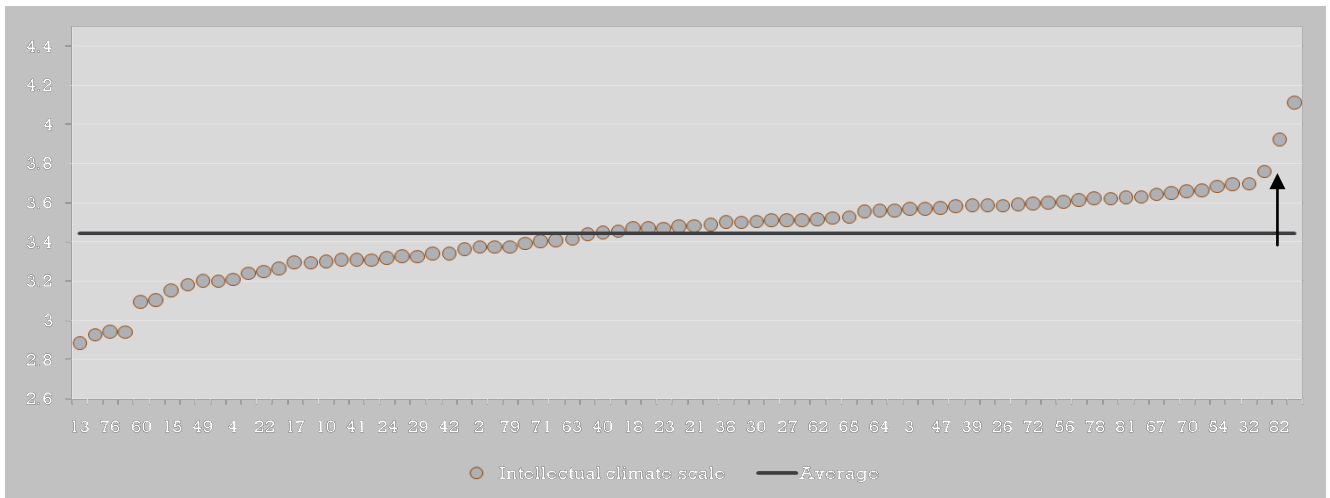
**Skills Development:** In this section, there were more neutral responses, but still generally positive. Based on these findings we will have to give further attention to these aspects of current provision. Whilst Stirling already provides a wide range of generic skills training via SGRS for doctoral students, this is constantly under review. The survey highlighted that students felt they were lacking in communication skills and project management.

**Chart 3: Infrastructure**



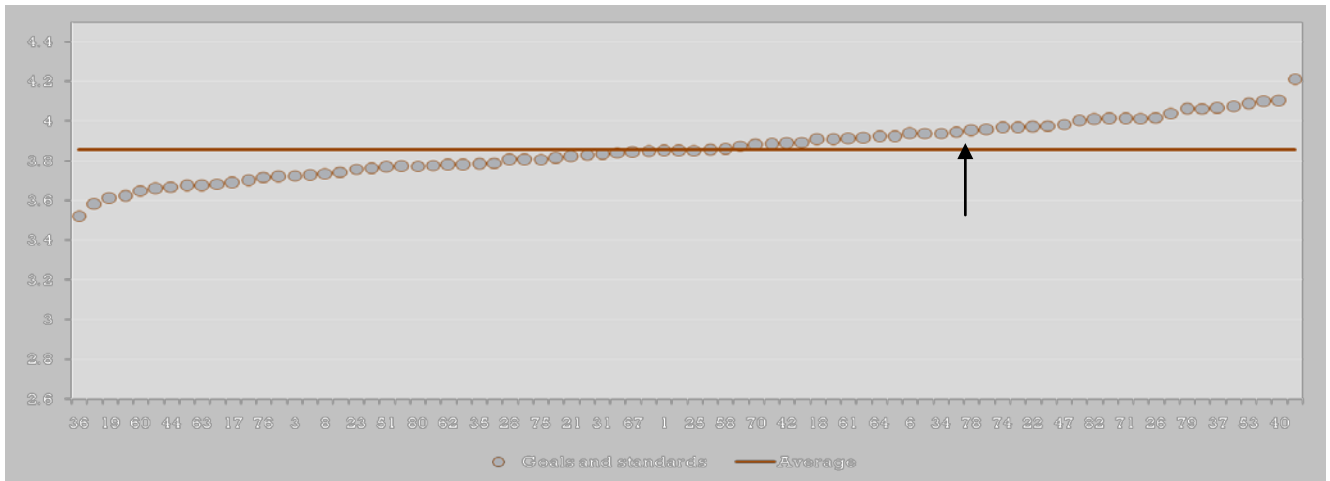
**Infrastructure:** Although we compared well across the UK, there were a higher number of neutral/negative responses in this section, in particular regarding the provision of library facilities, computing resources and financial support for research activities.

**Chart 4: Intellectual Climate**



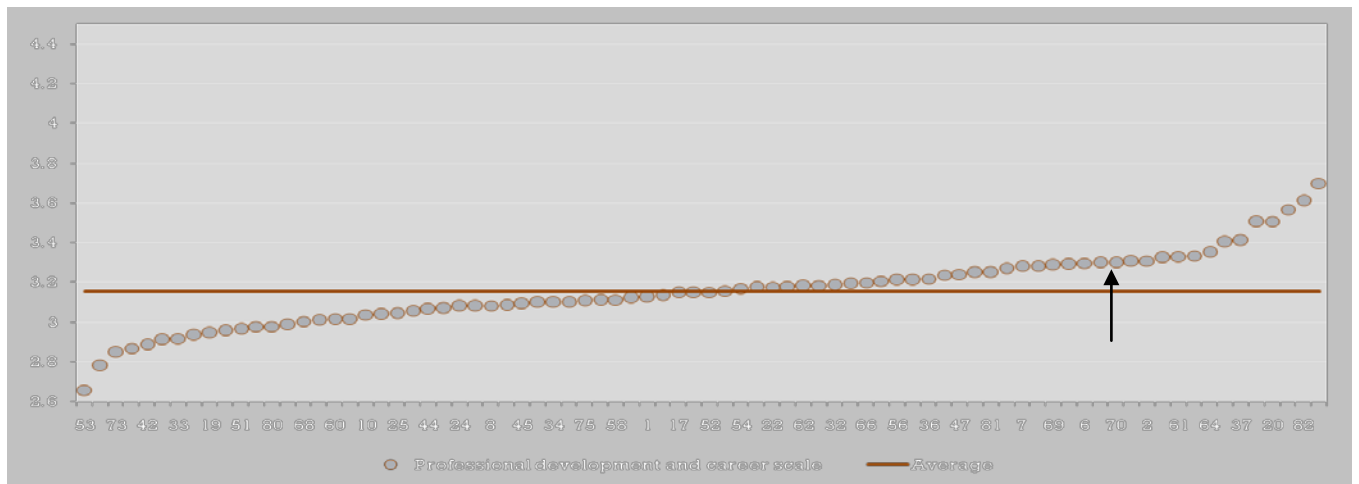
**Intellectual climate:** On this section we performed very well in comparison to the UK. However there are identified weaknesses in integrating students into departments, with a need to encourage research related events. Stirling holds an annual SGRS Conference for postgraduate research students, but we also need to work more at a departmental level.

**Chart 5: Goals and Standards**



**Goals and Standards:** Again we are above the national average, although results in this section indicated that not all students fully understand the thesis examination requirements or the formal monitoring processes. We need to ensure that students know where to find the relevant information, and know who to contact with any queries. Currently students are given this information at the SGRS induction day.

**Chart 6: Professional Development & Career**



**Professional development and career:** Well above national average for this section; we can improve on this by promoting the existing career development services and ‘life after doctorate’ seminars. Stirling is working to increase links between SGRS and the Careers Development Centre (CDC) and increasing the amount of CDC-based training available to all early career researchers (including Phd students). A new on-line PDP system is also in development and this will promote reflection on development needs of early career researchers.

**Other issues emerging:** The findings suggest that:

- we need to enhance our formal feedback processes
- we need to consider how best to provide high quality teaching opportunities
- SGRS: approx 60% of respondents had attended an SGRS induction day, and the overwhelming majority of those had found it useful. 60% had not participated in an SGRS conference, but of those that had, 80% had found it useful. 70% of respondents had attended SGRS seminars, and 81% had found them to be useful
- from various sections it appears that some respondents are not aware of our institutional standards and expectations for a research degree
- the vast majority of respondents have found their experience of a research degree to be positive (90.6%)

KMR 26.08.09