UCD Research Culture Survey and Focus Group Outcomes

Colleen Thomas

Research Culture Project Manager

University College Dublin

@reculture_ucd

@colleenmthomas

Shaping the Future 2020 - 2024

Shaping the Future 2020 - 2024

"We want every member of our research community to experience a positive culture that clearly values research and an environment that supports them to reach their full potential and deliver on their ambitions."
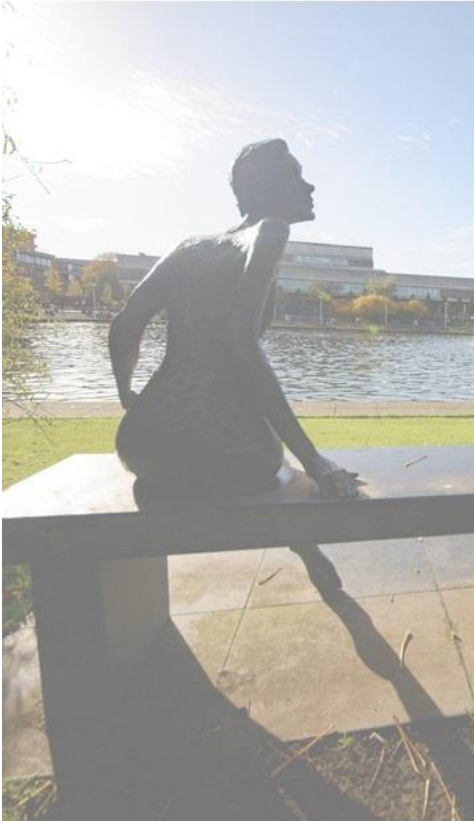
RESEARCH
CULTURE
SURVEY
2021

Quantitative Report

Overall responses
Responses by college
Responses by role

Report number 1

RESEARCH CULTURE INITIATIVE TEAM

June 2022

CULTURE.EXCELLENCE.INTEGRITY
RESEARCH CULTURE UCD

18 October – 30 November 2021

Modeled on survey conducted at University of Glasgow

Invited Graduate Research Students, PDRAs, Research Fellows, Faculty, Technical Research Staff, and Professional Research Support Staff
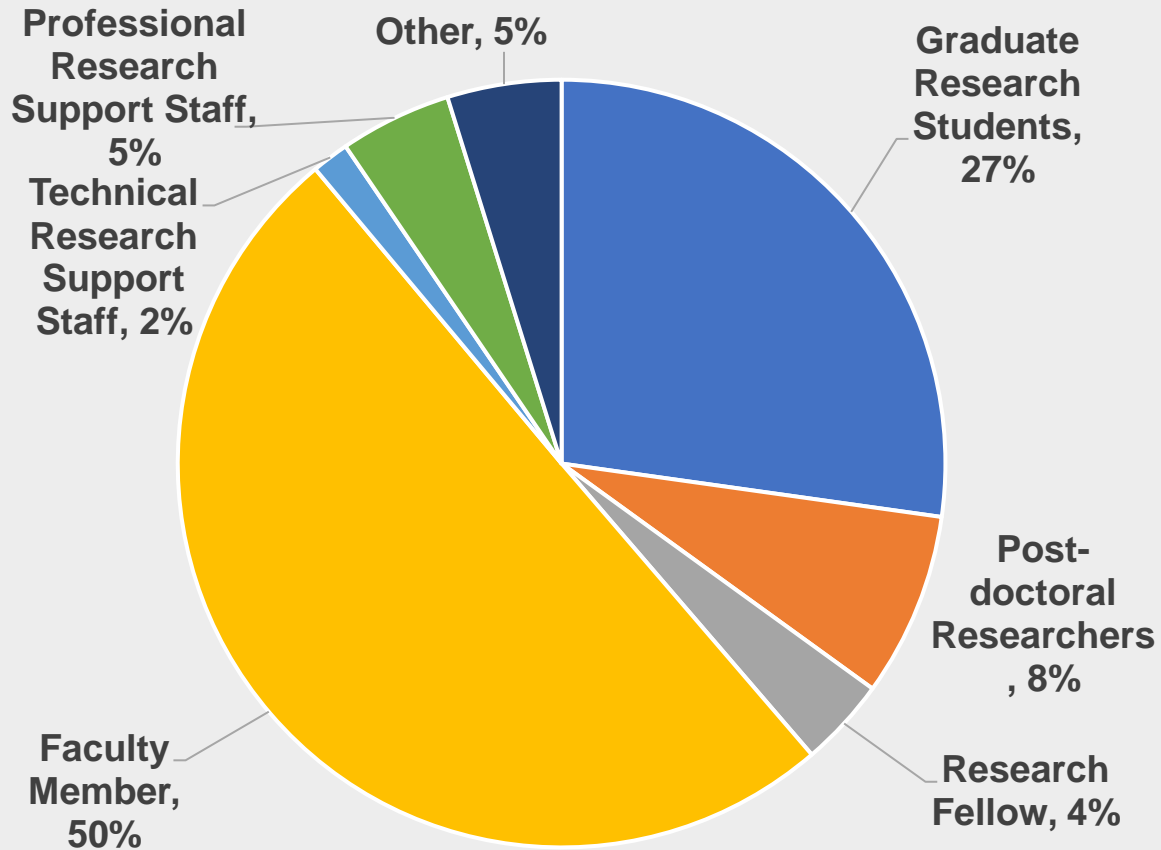
4 sections: 15 questions

Likert scale

Multiple choice

Text comments

Voluntary demographic information

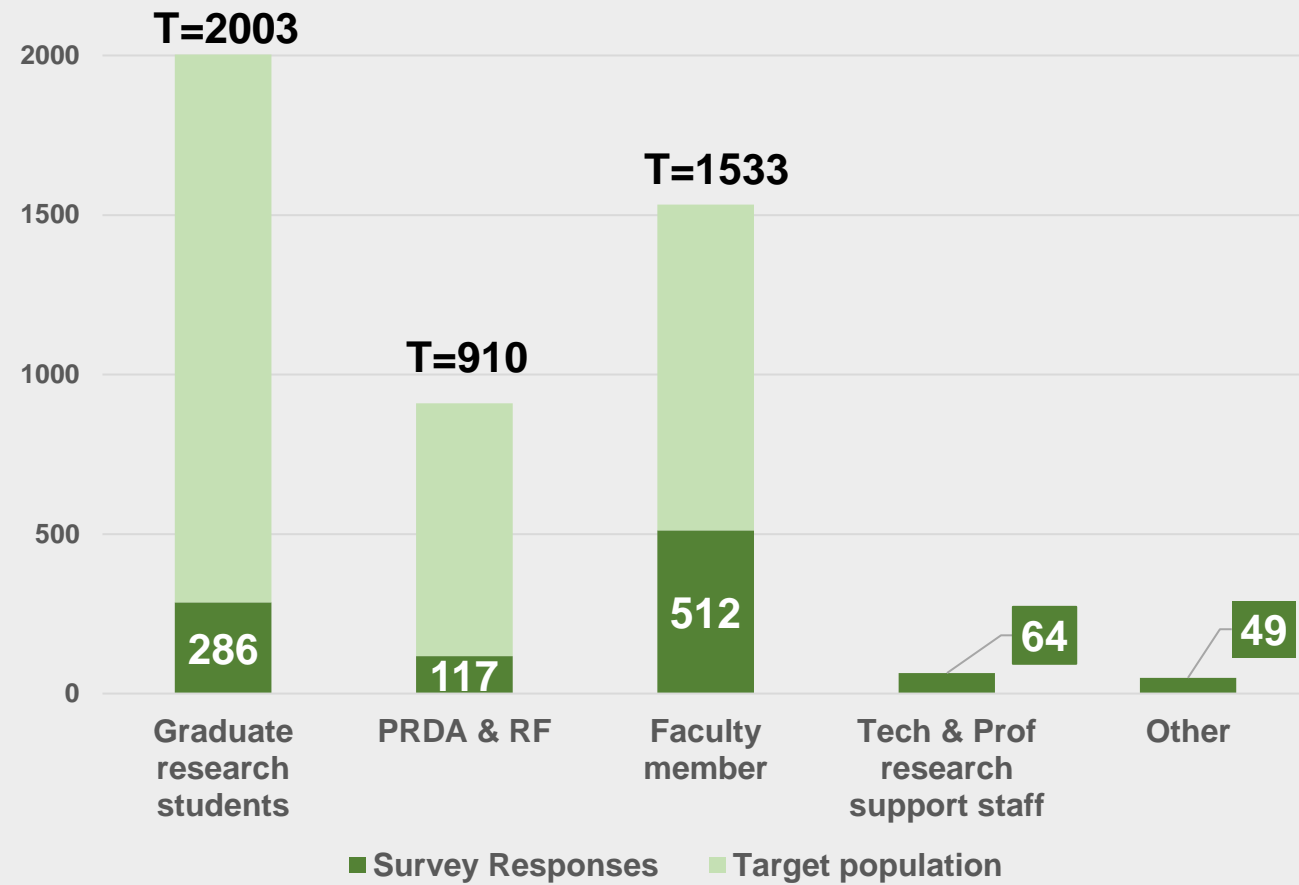Research Culture at UCD Survey 2021 Questions

Response Rate by Role

Pie chart — Response Rate by Role:
- Graduate Research Students, 27%
- Post-doctoral Researchers, 8%
- Research Fellow, 4%
- Faculty Member, 50%
- Technical Research Support Staff, 2%
- Professional Research Support Staff, 5%
- Other, 5%

Bar chart — Response rate by target population - Role:
- Graduate research students: Survey Responses 286, Target population T=2003
- PRDA & RF: Survey Responses 117, Target population T=910
- Faculty member: Survey Responses 512, Target population T=1533
- Tech & Prof research support staff: Survey Responses 64
- Other: Survey Responses 49

Legend: Survey Responses, Target population

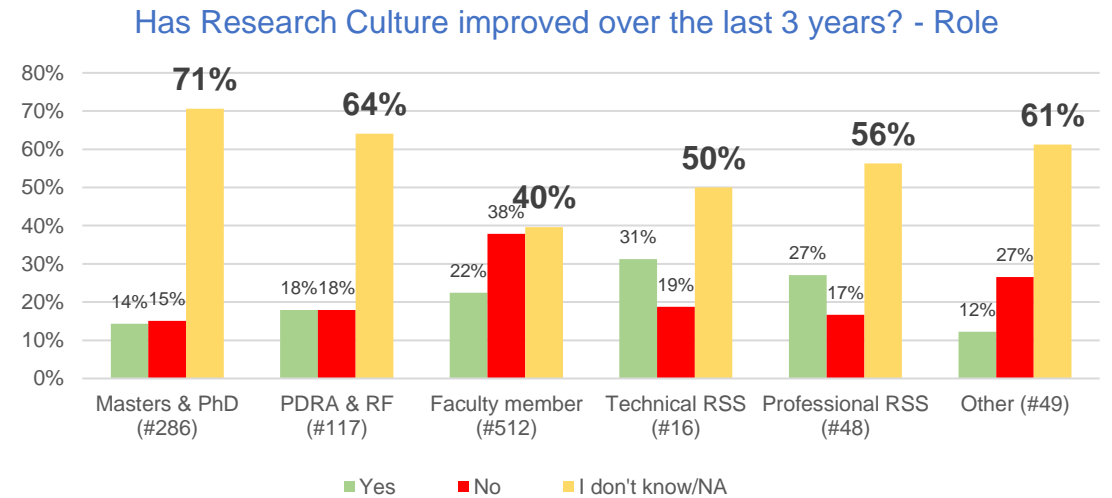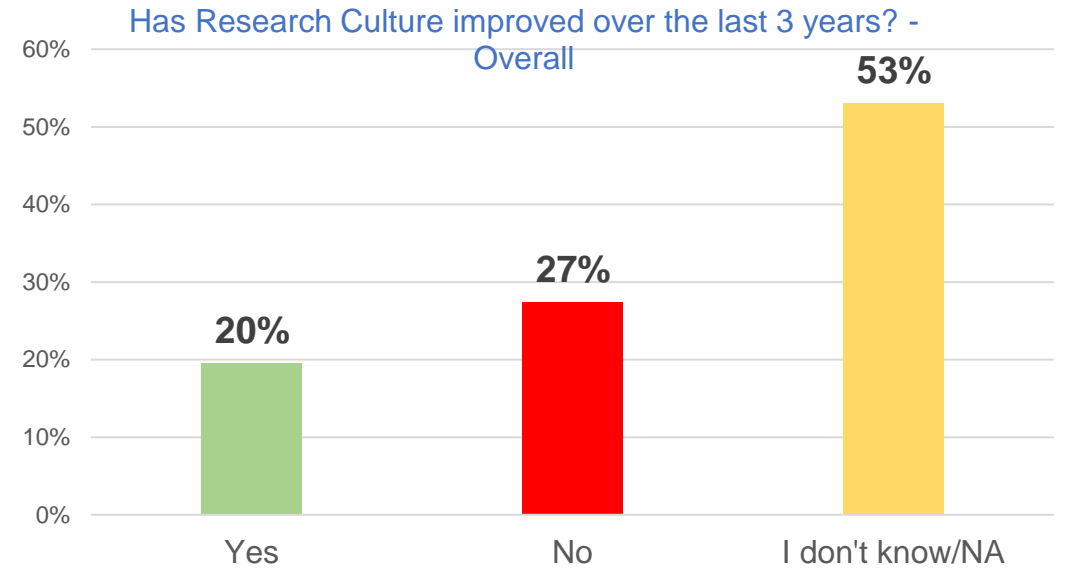# Has Research Culture improved over the last 3 years?

- Pandemic
- At UCD for less than 3 years
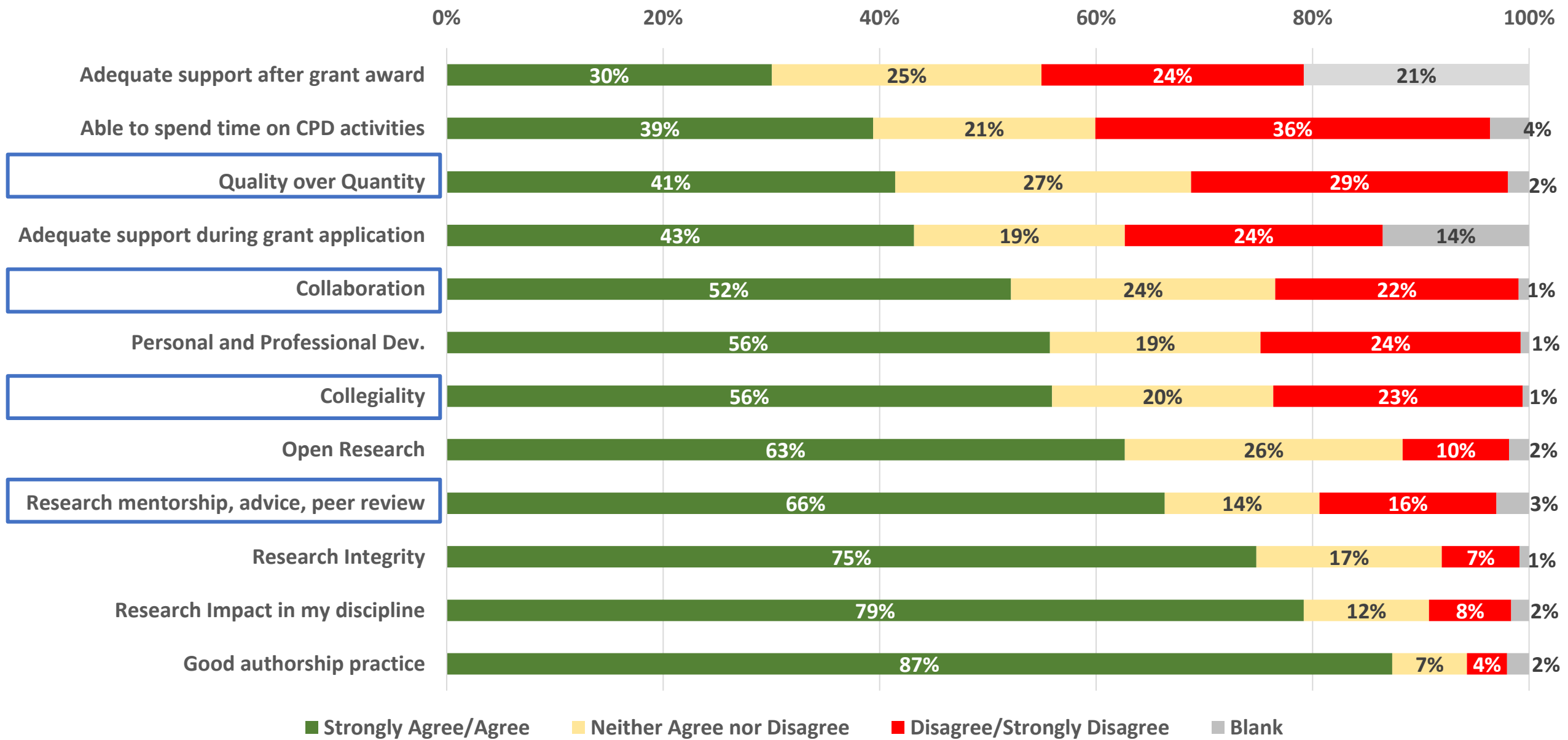- Don't know what the term research culture means
- Graduate research students = highest proportion of 'don't know' responses
- Faculty – Lowest 'don't know'
- Technical & Professional RSS - Higher Yes than No

Has Research Culture improved over the last 3 years? - Overall

- Yes: 20%
- No: 27%
- I don't know/NA: 53%

Has Research Culture improved over the last 3 years? - Role

Role	Yes	No	I don't know/NA
Masters & PhD (#286)	14%	15%	71%
PDRA & RF (#117)	18%	18%	64%
Faculty member (#512)	22%	38%	40%
Technical RSS (#16)	31%	19%	50%
Professional RSS (#48)	27%	17%	56%
Other (#49)	12%	27%	61%

To what extent do you agree that UCD supports a culture of:

Category	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Blank
Adequate support after grant award	30%	25%	24%	21%
Able to spend time on CPD activities	39%	21%	36%	4%
Quality over Quantity	41%	27%	29%	2%
Adequate support during grant application	43%	19%	24%	14%
Collaboration	52%	24%	22%	1%
Personal and Professional Dev.	56%	19%	24%	1%
Collegiality	56%	20%	23%	1%
Open Research	63%	26%	10%	2%
Research mentorship, advice, peer review	66%	14%	16%	3%
Research Integrity	75%	17%	7%	1%
Research Impact in my discipline	79%	12%	8%	2%
Good authorship practice	87%	7%	4%	2%

Qualitative Analysis

- 3318 open ended/textual answers were found

- Qualitative data analyzed by *computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS)*

- Preliminary analysis generally supports the quantitative data which suggest a generally (weakly) positive attitude on the growing awareness and importance of research culture at UCD

RESEARCH
CULTURE
WORLD
CAFÉ
REPORT

RESEARCH CULTURE INITIATIVE TEAM

August 2022

RESEARCH CULTURE UCD
CULTURE.EXCELLENCE.INTEGRITY

Focus Group Outcomes

- 13 World Café events
- Inclusive of range of colleges, research institutes, roles and career stages
- Discussion focused on points raised by the Survey

- Awareness
- Collegiality & Collaboration
- Recognition - Valuing Quality over Quantity

Top 4 World Café Themes

Raised in at least 50% of the Café events:

- Integrating new members of the community

- Better opportunities to connect for collaboration

- Mentorship

- Valuing Quality over Quantity

Integrating new members of the community

- Those who joined during the pandemic still need to be integrated. They feel left out. Re-orientation would benefit this cohort and perhaps create a support network for this group.

- Networks can feel insular and even closed making it difficult for new members to integrate and collaborate.

Better opportunities to connect for collaboration

'UCD is collegial but not so much collaborative'

Informal interactions with colleagues = 'social glue'

Social activities are basic elements of a collegial environment

- campus research clubs, coffee mornings
- Spaces for informal meetings

Better opportunities to connect for collaboration

'UCD is collegial but not so much collaborative'

Collaboration could be improved along three dimensions:

- Vertically, more collaboration **across the academic hierarchy** – junior to senior – could be encouraged.

- Horizontally, the University should enable more interdisciplinary research **collaboration across Colleges**.

  - consortium meetings, research round table, research days, speed dating, sandpits

- **Across institutions** Collaboration could be better facilitated

Mentorship

- Mentoring practice model is appreciated but availability of mentors is uneven across Schools and seems to depend on funding

- Heavy burden for mentoring on mid-career staff

- Preference for semi-formal and local models

- Mentoring is important at all career stages

- Different models of mentoring required for different stages of career profile

Valuing Quality over Quantity

- how research is recognized / celebrated = key indications for the research community of how their work is valued by the university.

- the topic of metrics was raised in the majority of Cafés.

- stop/start/continue: 50% of the Café events mentioned Output Based Research Support Scheme (OBRSS) on continue lists
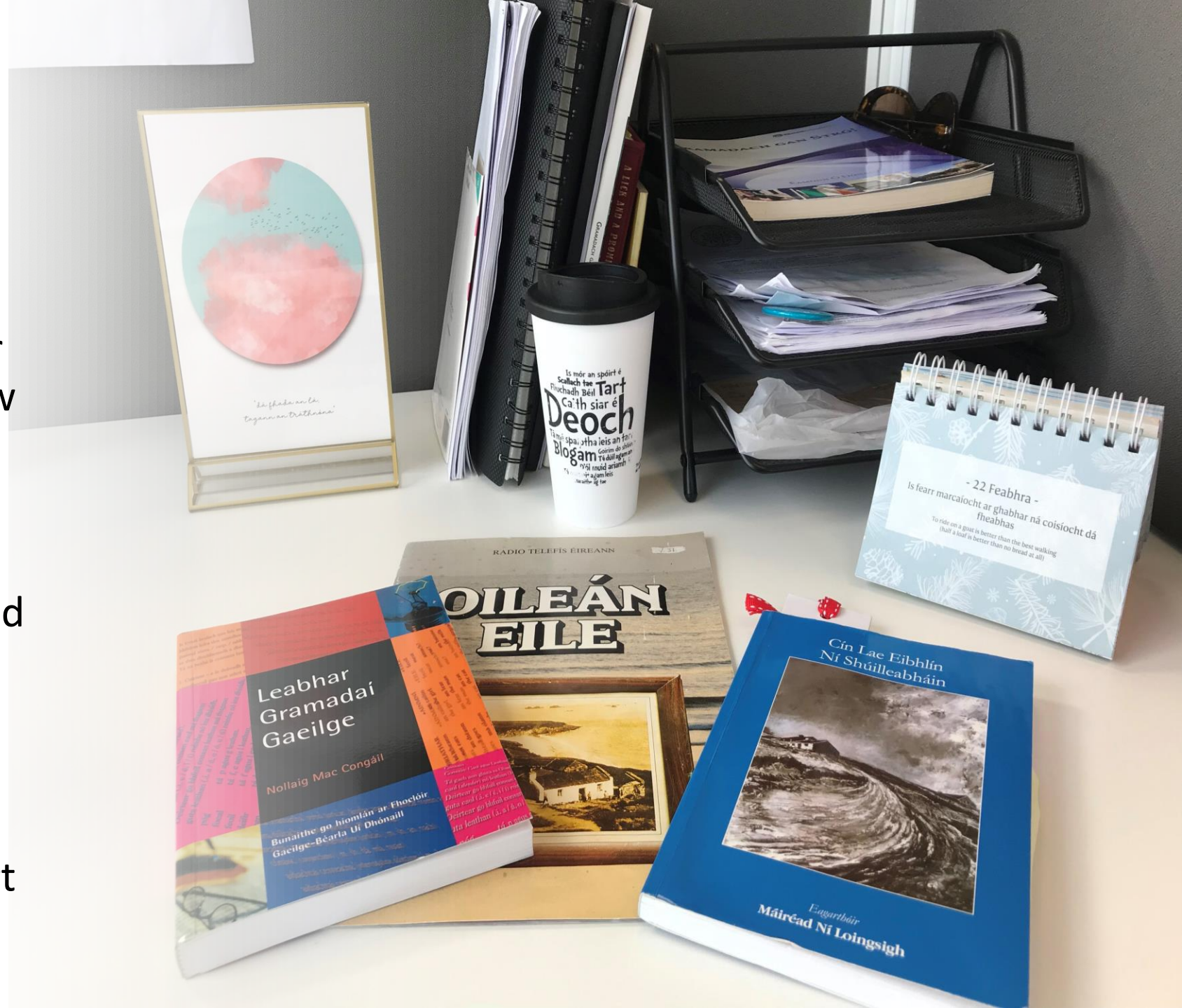
Plurality of Research Cultures

Graduate Research Students

The recent pandemic has affected integration into the research community and opportunities to build skills.

Postdoctoral Research Associates

Arguably most precarious role of the academic career trajectory, the group's outlook is overall positive. Perhaps attributable to the investment in the UCD Research Careers and Professional Development Centre for Postdocs.

It may also reflect that the majority of PDRAs at UCD are in STEM disciplines (241 as of July 2022) and have a higher expectation of career advancement than their AHSS colleagues (63 as of July 2022).

Ad Astra Fellows

While the Ad Astra brand is very positive, the experience of the Fellows in their first eighteen months is a microcosm of the challenges faced by newcomers in navigating the bureaucratic systems and collegial networks at UCD.

Professional Research Support Staff

Institutional hierarchy, real or perceived, prevents Professional RSS from doing their jobs as effectively as they could.

Technical Officers

Technical Officer roles are varied and the resulting lack of clarity for career development and progression is a significant concern for these staff. While many Technical Officers are credited with authorship on outputs, participants report that the practice is uneven.

Onward

- Collegiality and collaboration are key components for a positive research culture.

- Collegiality underpins collaboration.

- 'Change in culture requires buy-in from all career stages.'

- Mentoring is important at all career stages.