This week

Mond	Democratic models and democracy reviews
Tue	Righting the wrongs for Disabled students
Wed	Student on student conduct, complaints, discipline
Thu	Parliament and government advocacy
Fri	Won't somebody think about the Postgraduates?
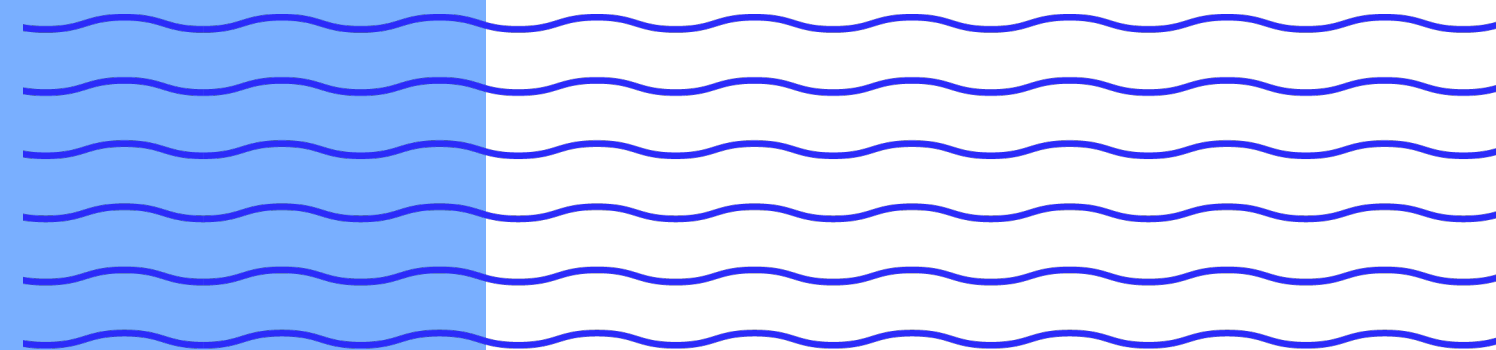
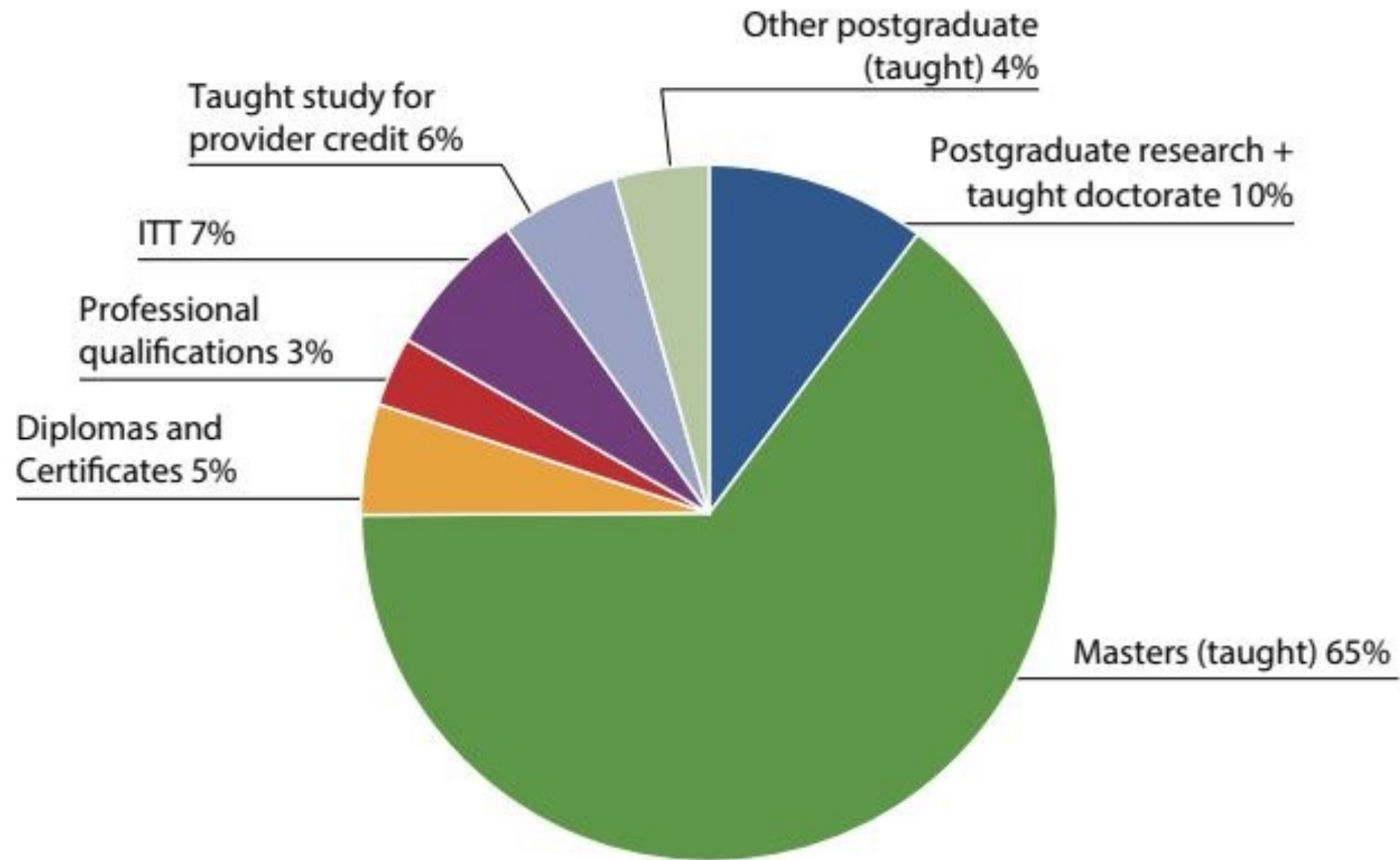WONKHE
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Won't somebody think of the postgraduates?

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Levelling up

Typical higher education qualifications awarded by degree-awarding bodies within each level	FHEQ	FQHEIS
Doctoral degrees (e.g. PhD/DPhil, EdD, DBA, DClinPsy)	8	12
Master's degrees (e.g. MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	7	11
Integrated Master's degrees (e.g. MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)	7	11
Primary qualifications (or first degrees) in Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science (e.g. MB ChB, MB BS, BM BSe; BDS; BVSc, BVMS)	7	11
Postgraduate diplomas	7	11
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)/Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE)	7	11
Postgraduate certificates	7	11
Bachelor's degrees with honours (e.g. BA/BSc Hons)	6	10
Bachelor's degrees	6	9
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland	6	9
Graduate diplomas	6	9
Graduate certificates	6	9
Foundation degrees (e.g. FdA, FdSc)	5	N/A
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)	5	8
Higher National Diplomas (HND) awarded by degree-awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland	5	N/A
Higher National Certificates (HNC) awarded by degree-awarding bodies in England, Wales and Northern Ireland	4	N/A
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)	4	7

Source: QAA, *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications*, p.17

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There's a lot of them
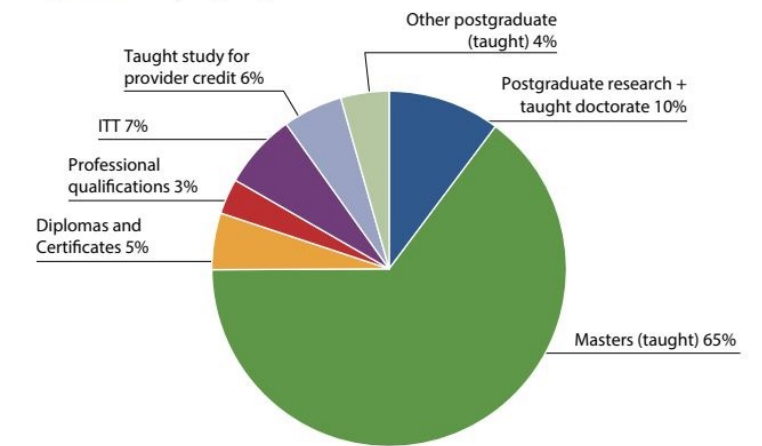
Figure 2.1 First-year postgraduates in 2017/18

- Other postgraduate (taught) 4%
- Postgraduate research + taught doctorate 10%
- Masters (taught) 65%
- Diplomas and Certificates 5%
- Professional qualifications 3%
- ITT 7%
- Taught study for provider credit 6%

Source: HESA bespoke dataset[11]

Totals

Figure 2.1 First-year postgraduates in 2017/18

- Total students 2,383,970
- Doctorate research students 101,885
- Other PG research students 10,930
- Numbers vary hugely by subject and institutions
- Funding varies hugely too...

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Institutional cultures

- Most (not all) UK HE's have decision making cultures which have two "strands" under Senate/Academic Board
  - Taught programmes (with a heavy PG focus)
  - Research (includes PGR students)

- General institutional decision making dominated by UG and deficit models

- England – OfS v UKRI

Nuts and bolts

- Doctoral degree is awarded for the creation of new knowledge through original research or other advanced scholarship

- It has to "extend the boundary of knowledge or practice" within a particular discipline and must merit publication.

- Typically requires the equivalent of at least three years' full-time study.

- Globally recognised qualification, and considered to represent the highest level of academic qualification in most countries.

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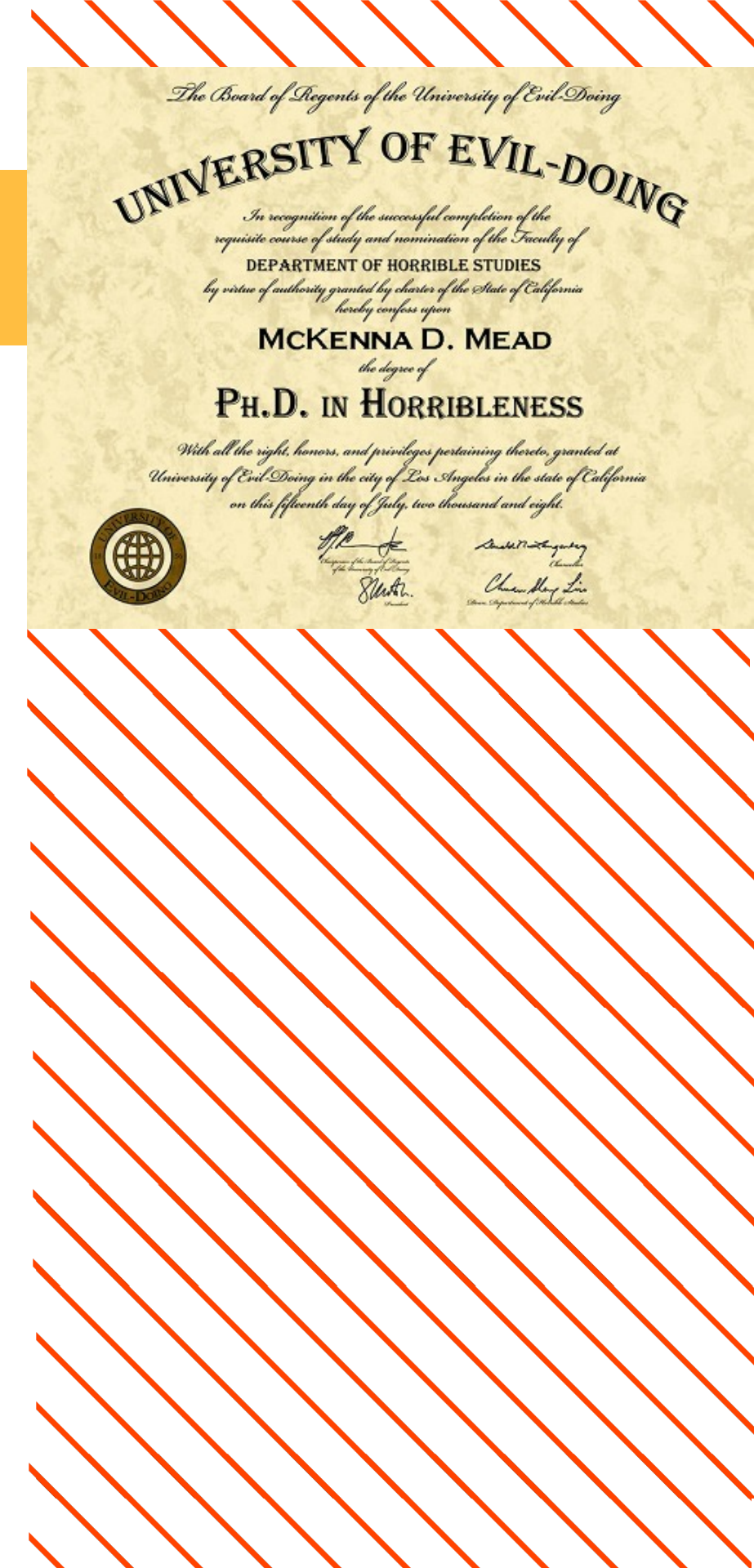
Nuts and bolts

- Crucial gateway qualification to becoming an academic (but not all PGRs do or want to and not all university teachers have one)

- Traditional focused on research, but some alternatives which incorporate substantial taught element (fundamental requirement for substantial body of original research remains).

- Professional doctorates – develop an individual's professional practice and support them in producing an original contribution to professional knowledge. (eg EdD for Doctor of Education or DClinPsy for Doctor of Clinical Psychology).

- In some instances, doctorates may be awarded in recognition of a substantial body of original research conducted over many years.

Government
Gateway

XXXX XXXX XXXX

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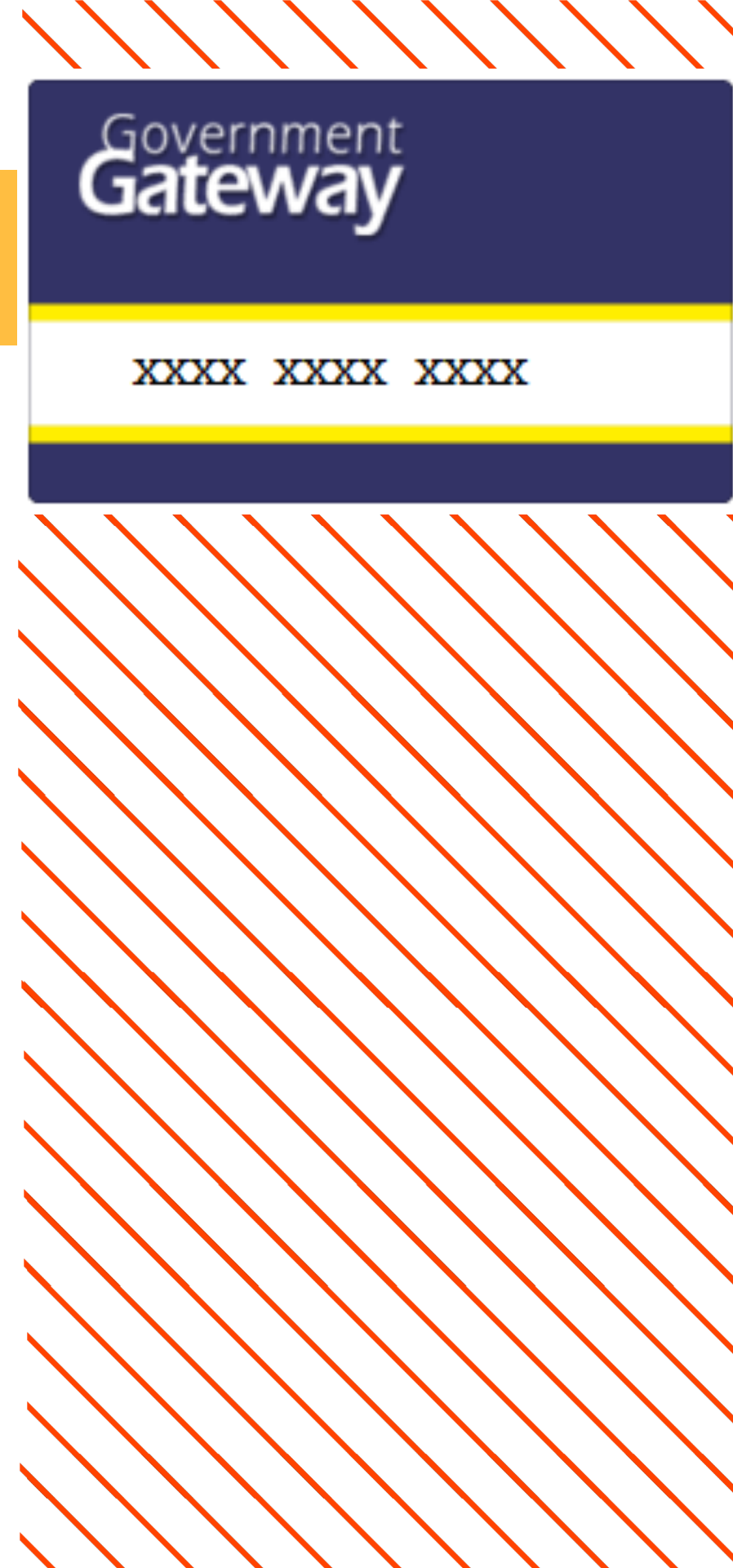
Bodies...

- UKRI "works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish"

Other bodies

- HEFCW, SFC, UCU, NUS
- Office for Students
- The UK Council for Graduate Education is the "independent voice of the UK postgraduate community".
- Vitae is the "global leader in supporting the professional development of researchers, experienced in working with institutions as they strive for research excellence, innovation and impact".

Funding

- Some are entirely funded by external bodies, such as UK research funders or international government schemes.

- Some are entirely self-funded.

- Some supported by partnership arrangements involving some combination of a funding agency, a business or charity, and/or a university.

- These arrangements, encouraged by UKRI over the past couple of decades, mean that a UKRI-funded Centre for Doctoral Training or Doctoral Training Partnership might well involve commitments from several universities and a dozen or so external bodies.

- Covid-19 might upset these arrangements in all sorts of ways – ie we probably have students co-funded by companies that will not exist by the time this crisis has passed.

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PRES

- No other national looks at PGR experience

- "No plans" to include PGRs in NSS

- Institutions can take part (most do) and you should be able to interrogate the figures

- Does PRES lead to action?

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1. Aberystwyth University	37. The Open University	73. University of Greenwich
2. Aston University	38. Oxford Brookes University	74. University of Hertfordshire
3. Bath Spa University	39. Bangor University	75. University of Huddersfield
4. Birkbeck, University of London	40. Queen Mary University London	76. University of Hull
5. Birmingham City University	41. Queen's University Belfast	77. University of Kent
6. Bournemouth University	42. University of Roehampton	78. University of Leeds
7. Brunel University London	43. Royal College of Art	79. University of Leicester
8. Bucks New University	44. Royal Holloway, University of London	80. University of Lincoln
9. Canterbury Christ Church University	45. Royal Northern College of Music	81. University of Liverpool
10. Cardiff Metropolitan University	46. Royal Veterinary College	82. The University of Manchester
11. Cardiff University	47. School of Advanced Study	83. University of Nottingham
12. City, University of London	48. SOAS University of London	84. University of Portsmouth
13. Cranfield University	49. Sheffield Hallam University	85. University of Queensland
14. Durham University	50. Solent University	86. University of Reading
15. Falmouth University	51. Scotland's Rural University College	87. University of Sheffield
16. Goldsmiths, University of London	52. St Mary's University, Twickenham	88. University of Southampton
17. Harper Adams University	53. Staffordshire University	89. University of St Mark & St John
18. Heriot-Watt University	54. Teesside University	90. University of Stirling
19. Imperial College London	55. Institute of Cancer Research	91. University of Strathclyde
20. Keele University	56. The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama	92. University of Sunderland
21. King's College London	57. University of Northampton	93. University of Surrey
22. Kingston University	58. University College London	94. University of Sussex
23. Lancaster University	59. University of Bath	95. University of the Arts London
24. Leeds Beckett University	60. University of Birmingham	96. University of the Highlands and Islands
25. Leeds Trinity University	61. University of Bolton	97. University of the West of England
26. Liverpool John Moores University	62. University of Bradford	98. Ulster University
27. Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine	63. University of Bristol	99. University of Wales Trinity Saint David
28. London School of Economics	64. University of Buckingham	100. University of Warwick
29. London South Bank University	65. University of Central Lancashire	101. University of West London
30. Loughborough University	66. University of Chester	102. University of Westminster
31. Manchester Metropolitan University	67. University of Cumbria	103. University of Winchester
32. Middlesex University	68. University of East Anglia	104. University of Wolverhampton
33. Edinburgh Napier University	69. University of Edinburgh	105. University of Worcester
34. Newcastle University	70. University of Exeter	106. University of York
35. Northumbria University	71. University of Glasgow	107. York St John University
36. Nottingham Trent University	72. University of Gloucestershire	

Wellbeing

- Only 14% report that they have low anxiety compared to 41% of the general population.

- In other measures of wellbeing:
  - Life satisfaction – PGRs 23%, UK population 31%
  - Life happiness – PGRs 23%, UK population 35%
  - Life worthwhile – PGRs 35%, UK population 36%

Wellbeing

- PGR anxiety levels may be explained by the marked decrease in confidence they report with regards to completing within timescales:

- In Year One, 86% are confident they will complete

- By Year Five, 74% are still confident they will complete; and of those with the most extended periods, only 62% are confident of completion.

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Improvement

FIRST-LEVEL THEMES % of comments received	SECOND-LEVEL THEMES % of first-level theme	THIRD-LEVEL THEMES % of second-level theme
Learning and Support (38%)	Supervision (46%)	General supervision (27%); Engagement of supervisor (24%); Time/frequency with supervisor (10%); Progress review and ongoing guidance/examination (10%); Supervisor's experience/knowledge of area (8%); Supervisor relationship (4%); Consistency/continuity of supervisor (2%)
	Course administration processes (16%)	General course admin (20%); Admin support (11%); Ethics approval (4%)
Working Culture/ Environment (24%)	Connecting to others/networking (43%)	PGR community – greater contact/interact with others (48%); General (35%); Cross-discipline/-school/-institution working (17%) -
	Working atmosphere/culture (18%)	
Programme Design (23%)	Suggestions for specific content (54%)	Methods training (40%); Specific suggestions/general (23%); Writing (16%); Transferable skills – including presenting and communicating (14%); Programming (5%); Practical/lab work (2%) -
	Content not relevant/not specific (15%)	
Programme Delivery (21%)	Clarity of guidance/expectations/ deliverables (34%)	-
	Support for part-time/distance/full-time working students (21%)	Part-time/Working full-time (52%); Distance learners (36%); Caring responsibilities (7%); Disabled (4%)
Physical Infrastructure/ Facilities (15%)	Facilities and resources: availability, access and support in using (59%)	Labs and equipment (26%); Computers/IT (25%); General facilities and resources (24%); Library and books (15%); Technical support (10%)
	Physical working environment, e.g. desk space (41%)	-

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Improvement

- A new section in this year's survey gave PGRs the opportunity to provide free text comments on areas for improvement in their experience. Top three:
  - Learning support (38%)
  - Working culture and environment (24%)
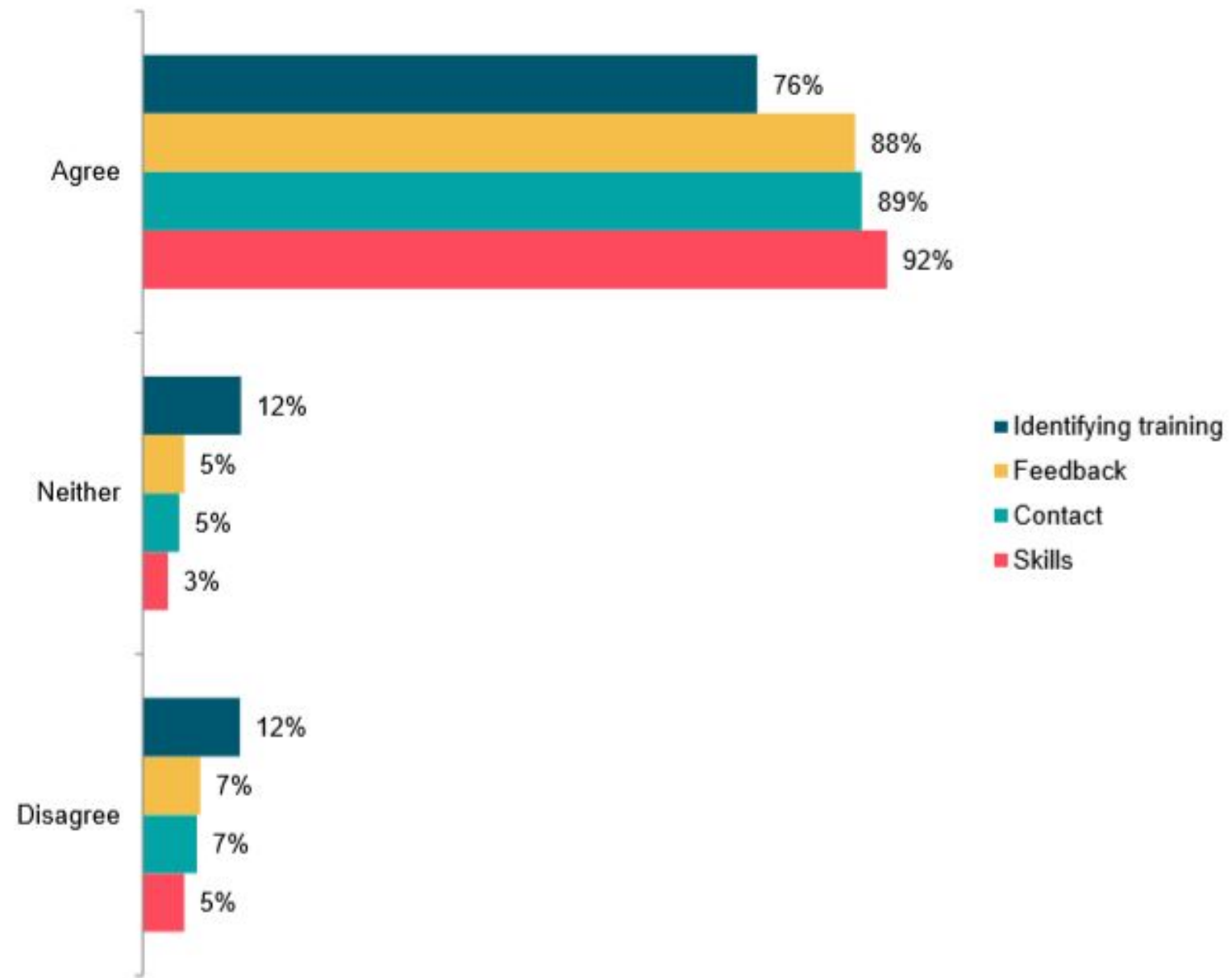 - Programme design (23%).

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Improvement

- The report also shows that 26% of PGRs had at some point considered giving up their studies.

- Main reasons they give are "not in always in direct control of institutions" such as "health, family or personal problems" (16%), "financial difficulties" (14%) and "difficulty balancing commitments" (13%).

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Supervision

Agree
- Identifying training: 76%
- Feedback: 88%
- Contact: 89%
- Skills: 92%

Neither
- Identifying training: 12%
- Feedback: 5%
- Contact: 5%
- Skills: 3%

Disagree
- Identifying training: 12%
- Feedback: 7%
- Contact: 7%
- Skills: 5%

Legend:
- Identifying training
- Feedback
- Contact
- Skills

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Supervision

Four factors:

- Skills and subject knowledge required to support research positively.

- Regular contact with supervisor/s

- Supervisor/s providing feedback that helps the PGRs direct their research activities

- Helps them identify training and development needs as a researcher

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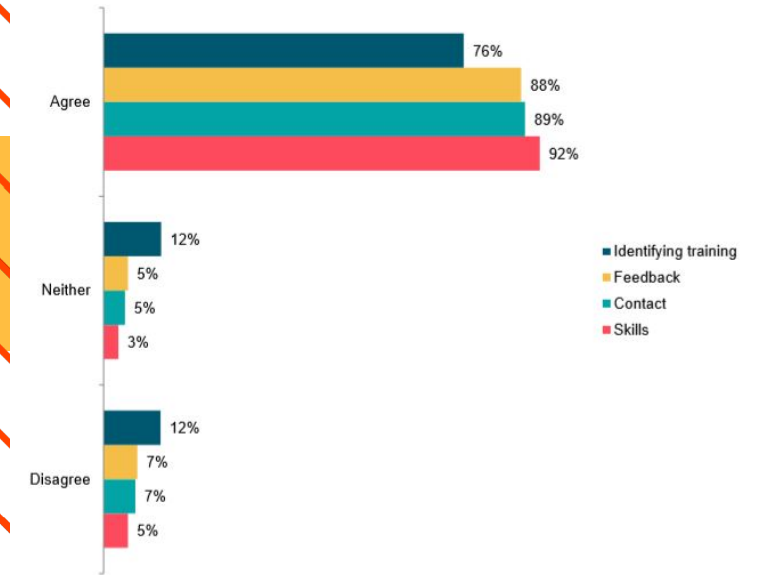
Culture

I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other researchers including research students
- All Respondents: 66%
- Russell Group: 68%

I have access to a good seminar programme in my research area
- All Respondents: 66%
- Russell Group: 62%

I am aware of opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department
- All Respondents: 61%
- Russell Group: 68%

The research community in my research stimulates my work
- All Respondents: 60%
- Russell Group: 62%

■ All Respondents ■ Russell Group

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Ethnicity and satisfaction

2017: White 83%, Black 81%, Asian 80%, Chinese 80%, Mixed 80%, Other 75%

2018: White 81%, Black 80%, Asian 76%, Chinese 81%, Mixed 76%, Other 71%

2019: White 82%, Black 81%, Asian 78%, Chinese 82%, Mixed 78%, Other 77%

Legend: ■ White ■ Black ■ Asian ■ Chinese ■ Mixed ■ Other

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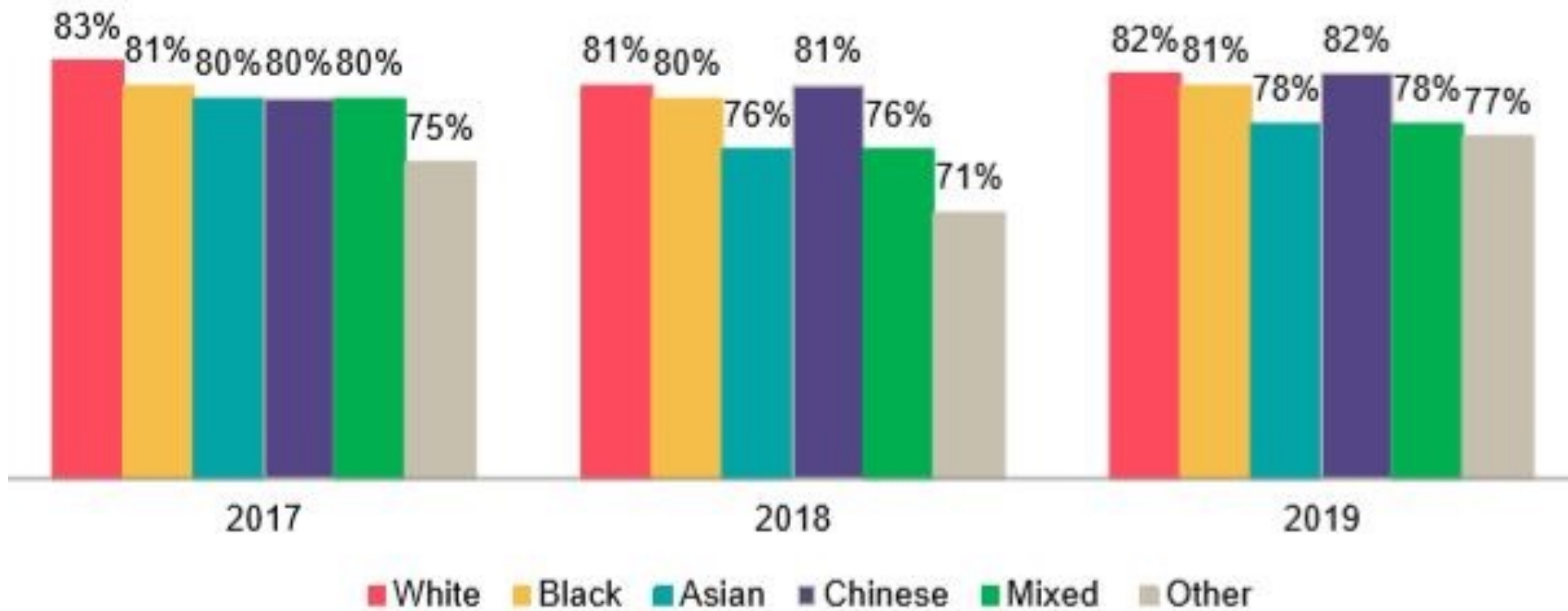
Feedback

- Majority of PGRs agree (59%) that institutions value and respond to feedback

- BUT a relatively high proportion (14%) disagree; that's more than 6,700 students.

- This suggests that PGRs do not always feel their feedback is listened to or acted upon – a situation which is by no means unique to the postgraduate research environment.

- "A way for HEIs to demonstrate their commitment to acting on feedback is to point towards where and how results from surveys like PRES have driven lasting change – thereby closing the feedback loop"

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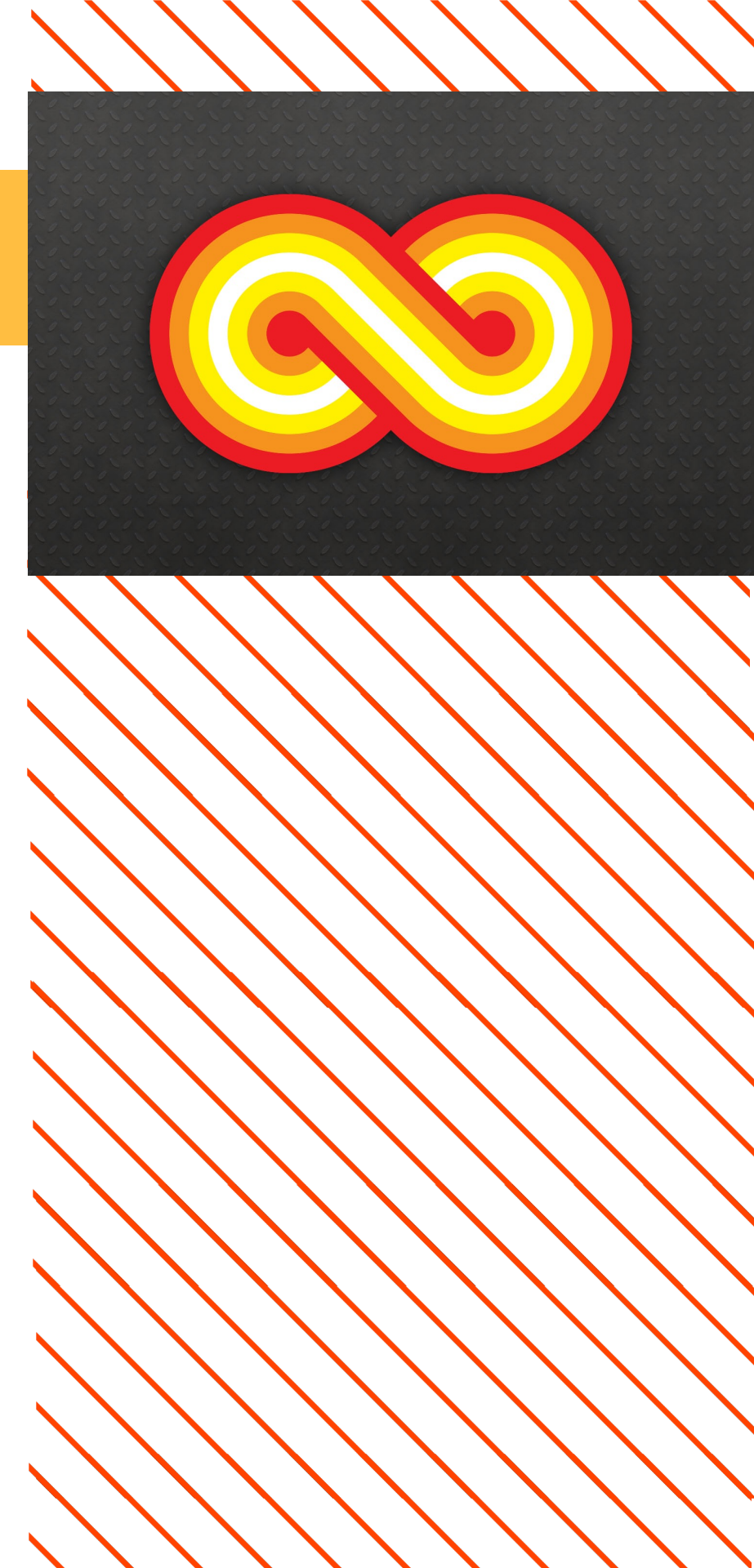
Who gets funding?

Why is my lecturer white?

- A freedom of information request to UKRI revealed that over the last three academic years (2016/2017 – 2018/2019), of the total 19,868 PhD funded studentships awarded by UKRI research councils collectively:

- 245 (1.2%) were awarded to Black or Black Mixed students

- Just 30 of those being from Black Caribbean background.

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Who gets funding?

- **Structural:** The autonomous nature of higher education means that every institution has unique internal structures which often dictate how inequality is prioritised and played out.

- **Organisational:** The nature of job titles and roles within higher education, particularly in leadership positions has always been problematic with regards to identifying the locus for change or 'ownership' of the BME attainment agenda.

- **Cultural:** Resistance to acknowledging that problems exist regarding BME attainment, constitute a significant barrier towards effecting positive change.

LEADING ROUTES

THE BROKEN PIPELINE

Barriers to Black PhD Students Accessing Research Council Funding

Paulette Williams, Sukhi Bath, Dr. Jason Arday and Chantelle Lewis

September 2019

WWW.LEADINGROUTES.ORG

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Barriers

- Emphasis on prior attainment
- Preference for graduates from research intensive institutions
- Limited data and low conversion rates of applicants
- Scholarship eligibility and recruitment practice (ie "resilience in the face of adversity")
- Bias or micro-aggressions in the recruitment model
- Bias or micro-aggressions in the supervisory model

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Mental health

- The relationship between student and supervisor, supported by regular contact, is central to PGR student happiness.

- PGR students care greatly about the opportunity to work with, and learn from, people with cutting-edge skills and relevant subject knowledge.

- Students who have extended their PhD study period beyond the norm, which is associated with a lack of confidence in finishing their studies, are very unhappy with their experience.

- Non-traditional modes of study, such as part-time and distance learning, do nothing to diminish the student experience, and in the latter case may enhance it.

- Black ethnic students are relatively unhappy with their experience. There is also a strong interaction between gender and ethnicity, with female BME students far less likely to be happy.

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Mental health

- HEIs need to place more emphasis on the fact that students are human beings who want good individual relationships with their supervisors and other students.

- More research is needed to identify the specific issues around PGR inputs that are not meeting the expectations and needs of students of Black ethnicity.

- HEIs might need to take a more gendered perspective in terms of seeking to enhance the PGR student experience.

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Mental health

- Vitae 2008: difficulties with supervisor relationships, financial worries, harassment, and feeling isolated and inadequate.

- facilitate practice-sharing mechanisms around Catalyst Fund projects

- train, support and recognise supervisors' role in identifying wellbeing issues among postgraduate researchers

- dedicated support services and deeper understanding amongst others

- community as an essential component of wellbeing

PGRs that teach

- Fair, transparent and equitable employment procedures.

- A fair rate of pay for all hours worked.

- Supervision or mentoring by a staff member who is not your research supervisor.

- Access to facilities and resources necessary to teach.

- A reasonable balance between employment and research.

Postgraduate employment charter

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Access

- OfS Director for Fair Access and Participation is mandated to monitor undergraduate programmes, with doctoral study featuring only as an undergraduate *destination*.

- No information on who applies, who receives an offer, and who enrols.

- Those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are under-represented at doctoral study.

- Not possible to determine whether underrepresented groups aren't applying for doctoral study, or if they don't get places.

- HESA collects equivalent data on doctoral students through the Student Record – but most of its published analysis is on undergraduates.

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Supervision?

- "In what other job would you be left with that amount of power over someone's life without being required to formally demonstrate certain competences".

- "This pissed me off more than anything in academia – hiring experts, but not trusting them to do the job they're expert in".

- "Another set of measures/metrics, adding to already onerous workloads.

- "It is cultures that condone negligence, bullying, harassment and exploitation that must change"

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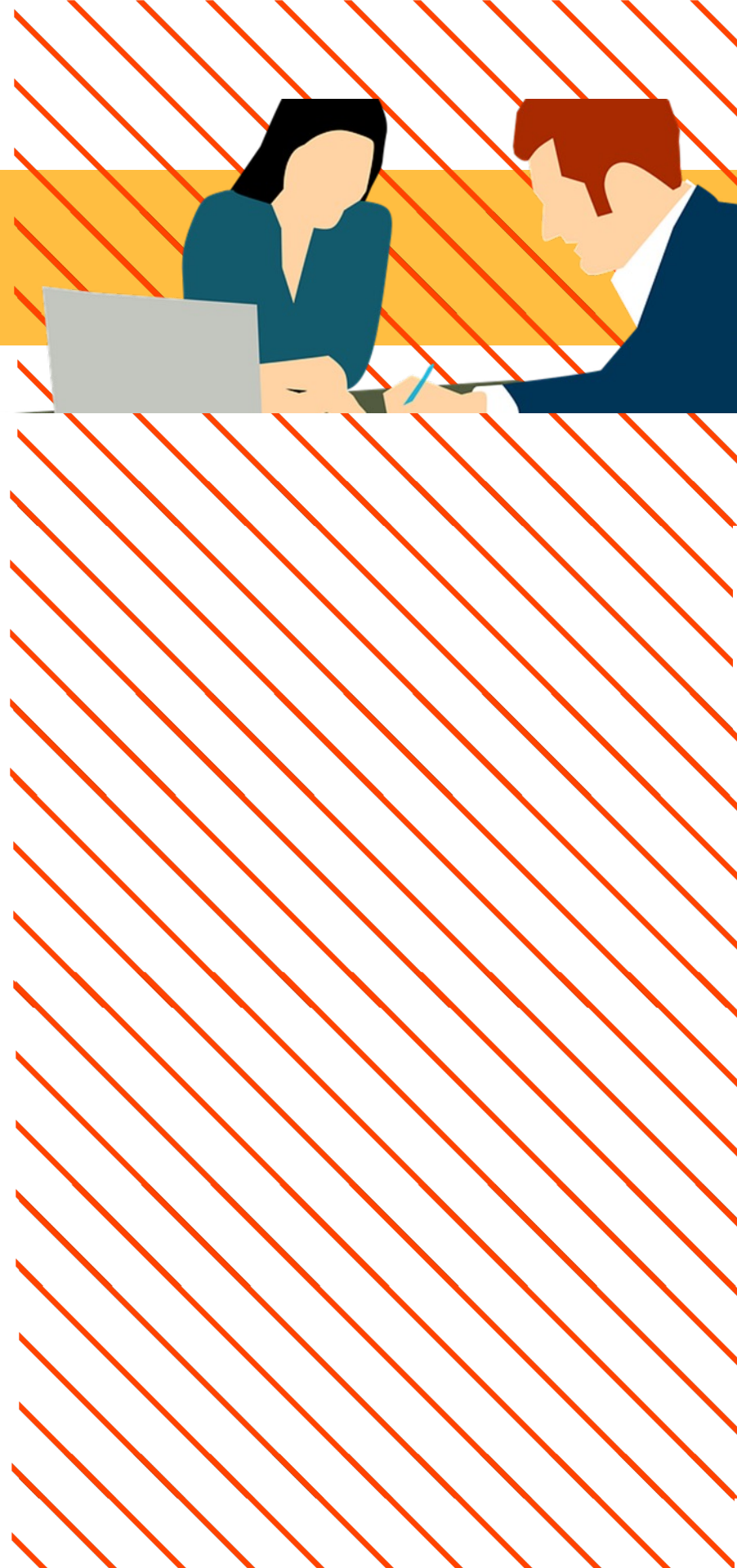
And finally

- Stipends
- Are PGR students students or staff?
- Training
- PGRs that teach
- PGRs and conduct/harassment/misconduct
- Bespoke or specific? (for example M/H)
- Bespoke or barrier removal?
- Structures
- Self rep v Lived XP/Lab rats
- Change the SU v Change the PGR student

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Won't somebody think of the postgraduates?

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