

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) is a national survey run through Jisc Online Surveys which collects information about the experience of any student on a postgraduate research course. PRES focuses on student experience in the areas of: *Supervision; Resources; Research Culture; Progress and Attainment; Responsibilities; Research Skills; Professional Development; Teaching and Overall Experience.*

Questions within these broad categories are in the familiar “NSS” format of agreement with a statement. For example, for the question: “Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course”, the possible responses are: “Definitely agree”; “Mostly agree”; “Neither agree nor disagree”; “Mostly disagree”; “Definitely disagree” and “Not applicable”. In this analysis, responses are presented as percentage agreeing with the statement, calculated as answers in the first two categories, above, as a percentage of total responses (excluding “Not applicable”), in line with the NSS.

The BU survey ran from 17th April to 17th May 2019. 242 responses were received from a BU survey population of 579, giving a response rate of 42%.

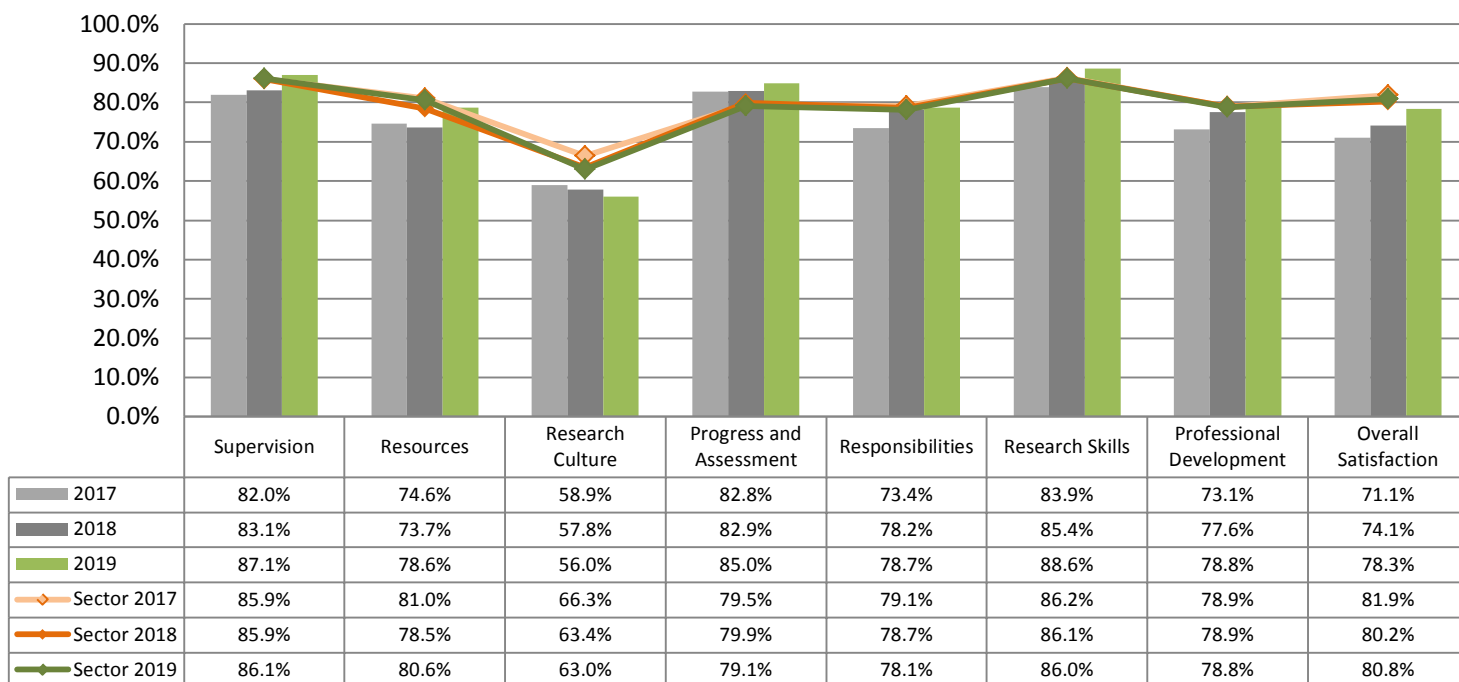
Sector comparison data is from Jisc Online Surveys for all institutions’ PRES surveys in 2018 and 2019. 109 institutions, including BU, ran PRES in 2019.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BU’s Overall Satisfaction score has risen to **78.3%** in 2019. This is 4.2% higher than the 2018 score of 74.1% and 7.2% higher than the 2017 score of 71.1%. The sector average rose 0.6% from 80.2% in 2018 to 80.8% in 2019; BU is therefore now within 2.5% of the sector average, compared with 6.1% below in 2018 and 10.8% below in 2017.

The graph below summarises BU and sector responses to the main question areas over the last three years:

BU % Agree by Year vs Sector



Δ BU 2019- BU2018	3.9%	4.9%	-1.8%	2.1%	0.5%	3.3%	1.2%	4.2%
Δ BU 2019- Sector 2019	1.0%	-2.0%	-7.0%	5.8%	0.6%	2.6%	0.0%	-2.5%

BU 2019 scores are improved in all but one question area. Scores rose for *Supervision* (up 3.9% to 87.1%; *Resources* (up 4.9% to 78.6%); *Progress and Assessment* (up 2.1% to 85.0%); *Responsibilities* (up 0.5% to 78.7%); *Research Skills* (up 3.3% to 88.6%) *Professional Development* (up 1.2% to 78.8%) and, as mentioned above, *Overall Satisfaction* (up 4.2% to 78.3%).

For *Overall Satisfaction*, just the question “Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme” is considered: it is not combined with the other question in this section (“I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale”) to give a composite section score. Scores for individual questions are given in Appendix A, below.

In five out of eight question areas BU scores are now at or above the sector average. These are: *Supervision* (87.1%, +1.0% vs sector); *Progress and Assessment* (85.0%, + 5.8%); *Responsibilities* (78.7%, +0.6%); *Research Skills* (88.6%, +2.6%) and *Professional Development* (78.8%, +0.01%).

In two of the three areas in which BU remains below the sector average, the gap between BU and the sector has narrowed since 2018 (*Resources* and *Overall Satisfaction*). Only one question area, *Research Culture*, experienced a year-on-year fall in score (to 56.0%, -1.8% vs BU 2018 and -7.0% vs sector 2019).

At a Faculty level, two Faculties improved their *Overall Satisfaction* score relative to PRES 2018. The score for Faculty of Management (FM) increased by 19.4% from 65.2% in 2018 to 84.6% in 2019, while the Faculty of Science and Technology (FST) score rose from 73.5% in 2018 to 75.3% in 2019.

The score for Faculty of Media and Communication (FMC) fell slightly from 84.5% in 2018 to 82.6% in 2019, while satisfaction in the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences (FHSS) remained effectively unchanged at 71.8% (compared with 71.9% in 2018).

Two Faculties had an *Overall Satisfaction* score above the 2019 sector average: FM (84.6%, +3.8% vs sector) and FMC (82.6%, +1.8%).

FM scored above the sector average in 7 out of 8 main question areas. These were: *Supervision* (93.6%, +7.5% vs sector); *Resources* (83.0%, +2.4%); *Progress and Assessment* (88.4%, +9.3%); *Responsibilities* (86.5%, +8.4%); *Research Skills* (91.0%, +4.9%); *Professional Development* (79.1%, +0.3%) and *Overall Satisfaction* (84.6%, +3.8%). In addition, all question areas for FM improved year-on-year.

FMC had scores above the sector average for 6 areas: *Supervision* (89.6%, +3.5% vs sector); *Progress and Assessment* (85.2%, +6.1%); *Responsibilities* (80.1%, +1.9%); *Research Skills* (88.0%, +2.0%); *Professional Development* (79.6%, +0.7%) and *Overall Satisfaction* (82.6%, +1.8%).

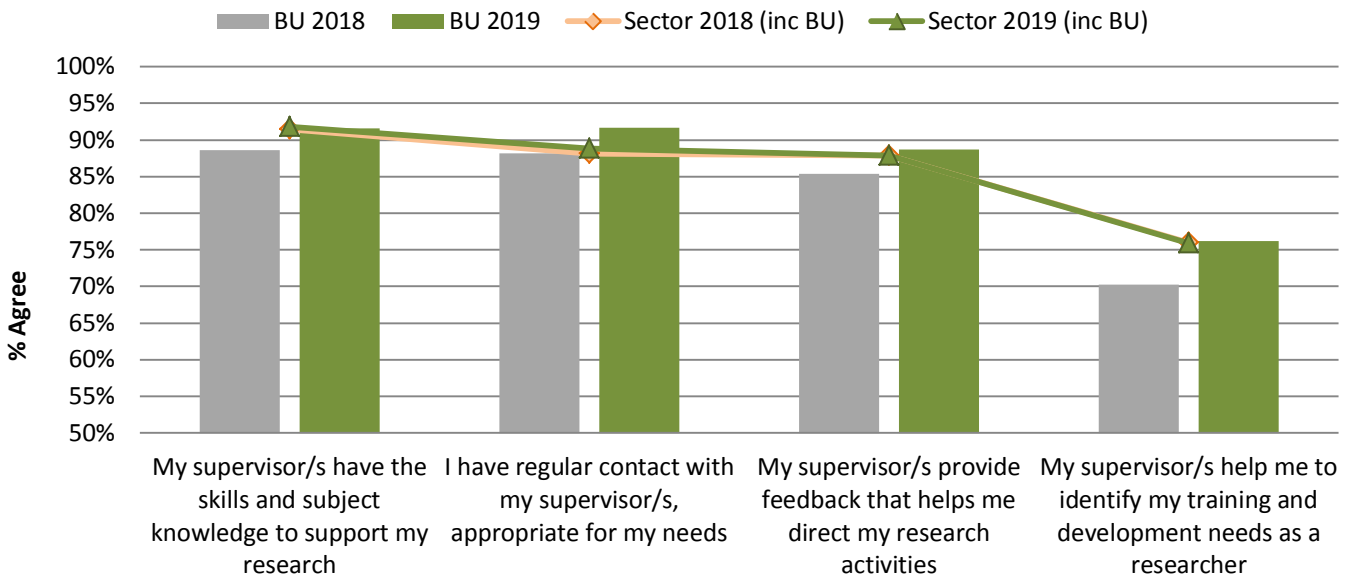
FST is above the sector average in 3 question areas: *Progress and Assessment* (86.6%, +7.5% vs sector); *Research Skills* (89.6%, +3.6%) and *Professional Development* (80.6%, +1.8%).

FHSS had no question areas above the sector average in 2019, but was above sector average for 8 individual questions within the survey.

Analysis of individual questions and question areas at BU and Faculty level is given below and in tabular form in Appendix A.

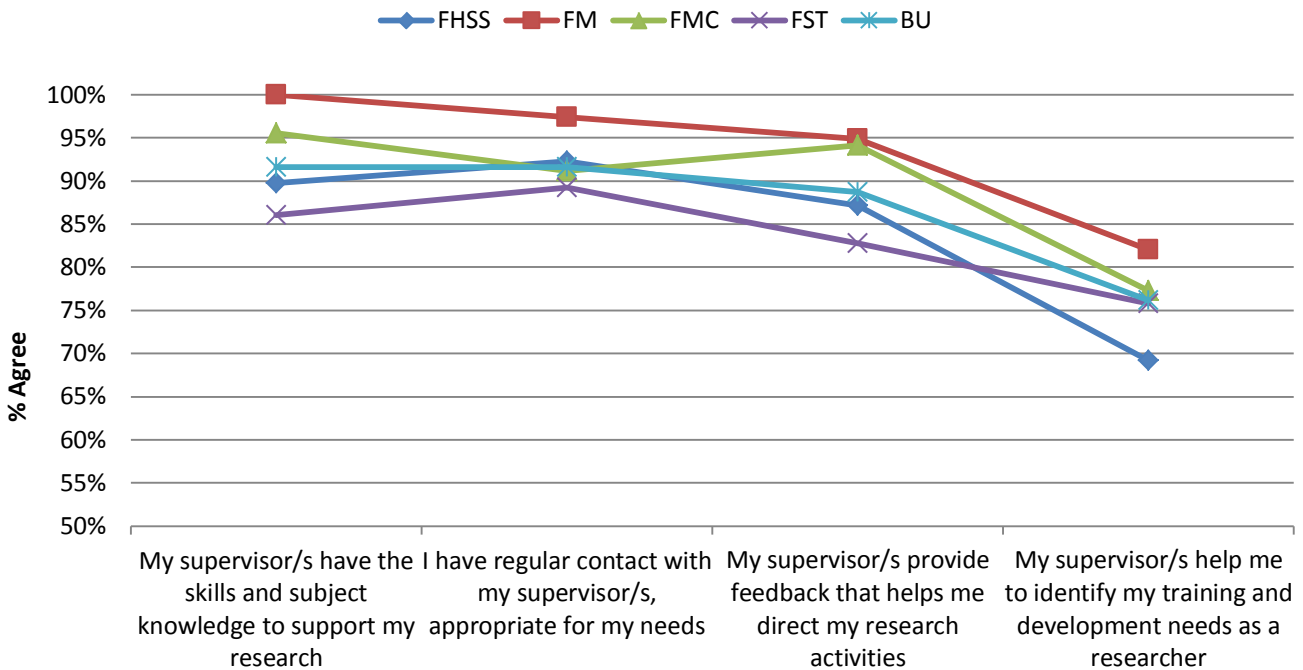
3. BU SATISFACTION – MAIN QUESTION AREAS

SUPERVISION



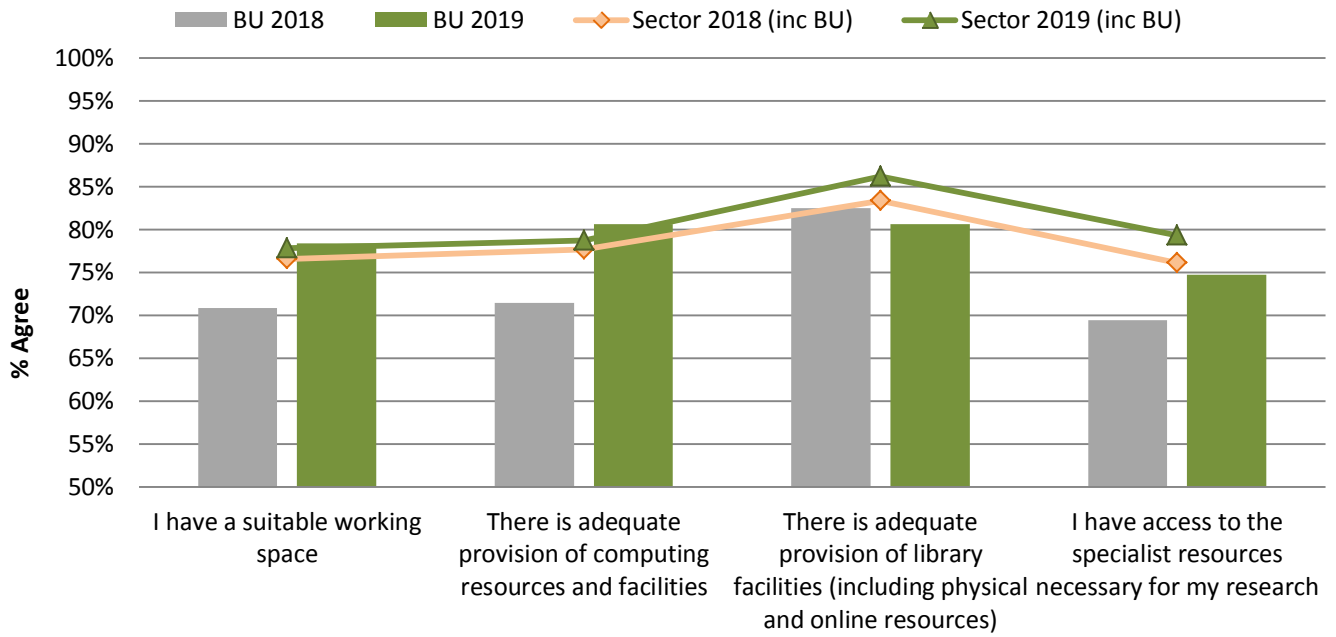
Scores have risen in every question in this area since 2018. The largest rise is in the final question (*My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher*), which rose by 5.9% from 70.3% in 2018 to 76.2% in 2019.

BU scores were higher than the sector average for all questions in this section except *Supervisor skills and subject knowledge* which, at 91.6%, is effectively equivalent to the sector score of 91.8%.

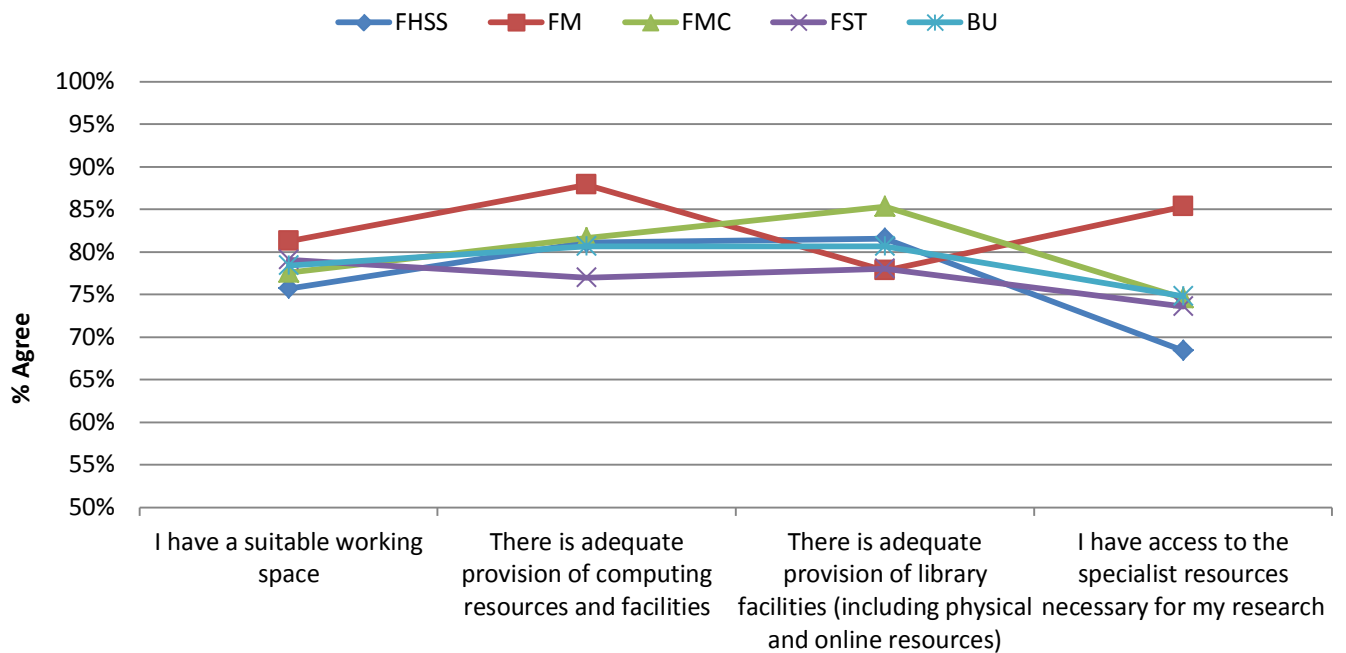


The trend for individual Faculties is similar to the overall BU pattern, with *Training and development needs* the lowest scoring question across all Faculties. Two Faculties (FM and FMC) scored above the sector average on every question in this section, with FM scoring 100% for *Supervisor skills/subject knowledge*.

RESOURCES

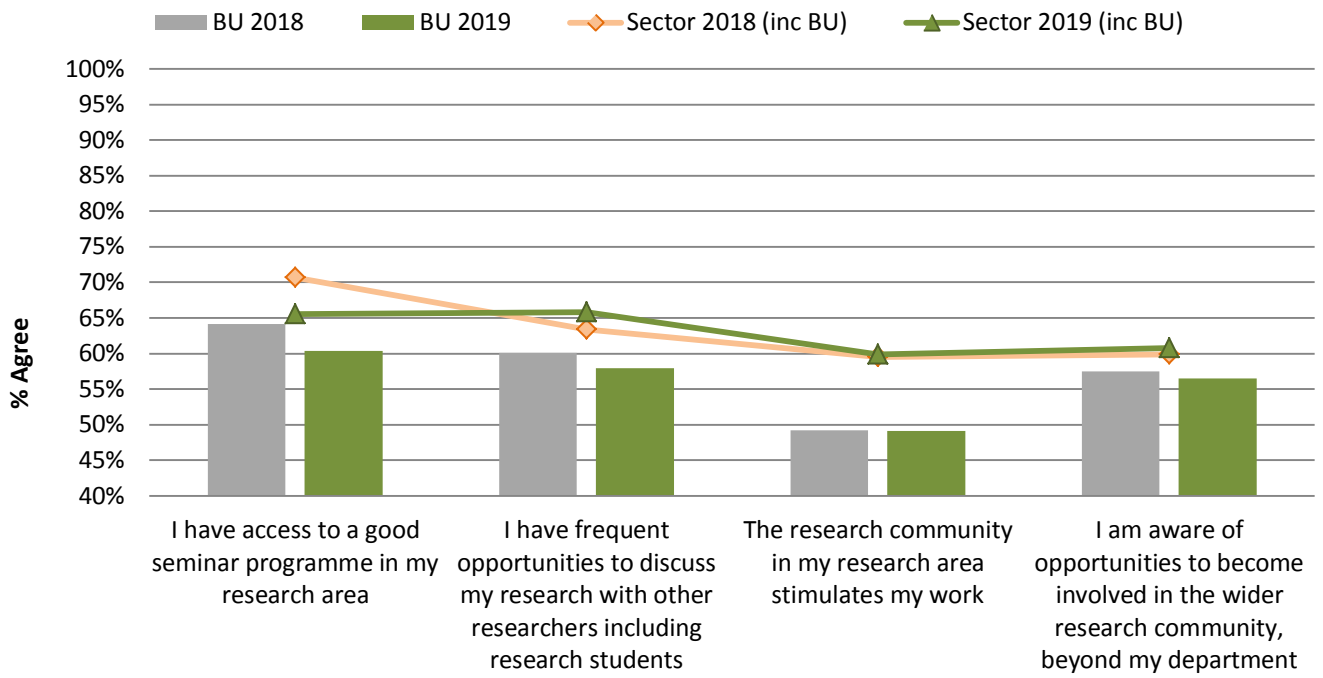


Scores in three out of four questions in this area have risen since PRES 2018. In two questions (*Working space* and *Computing facilities*), BU is above the sector average. Although the score for *Library facilities* has fallen slightly, this is still the highest scoring question in the *Resources* section, at 80.7% agree, but below the sector average of 86.2%, which has risen 2.8% since 2018.



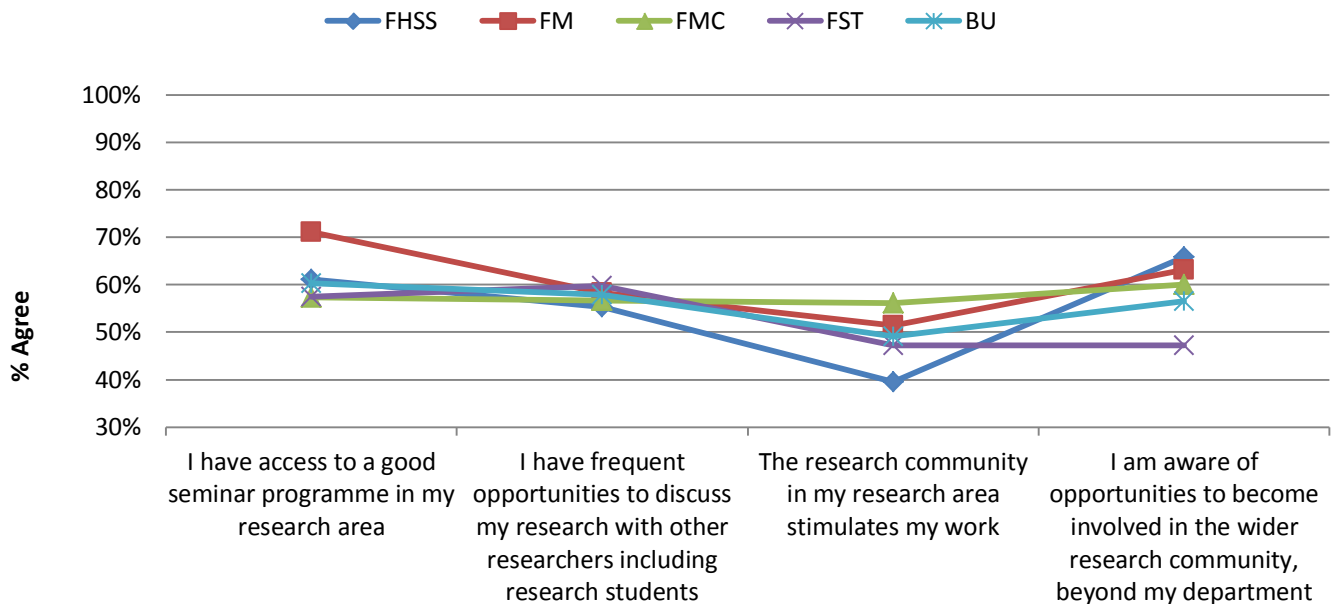
As with *Supervision*, the pattern of responses is relatively similar across Faculties for most questions in this section. However, FM scores for *Computing facilities* and *Specialist resources* are considerably higher than the BU average at 87.9% and 85.3% respectively. This is also higher than the sector average for these questions, and FM is the only Faculty with an above average score across the *Resources* section overall, with 83.0% compared with 80.6% for the sector.

RESEARCH CULTURE



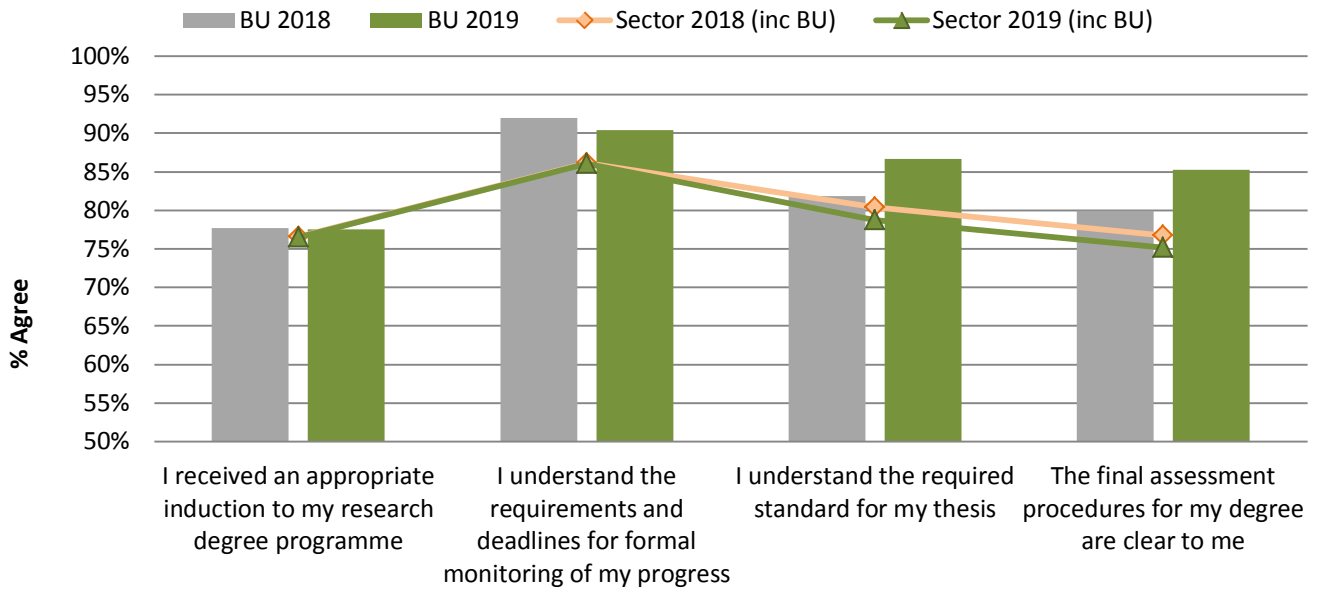
Research Culture is the lowest scoring area in both the BU survey and the sector survey. It is also the only area in which BU has seen a slight decline since 2018 and (excluding Overall Experience) for which there are no questions in which BU scores above the sector average.

The BU average score across this section is 56.0%, -7.0% against a sector average of 63.0%. The lowest scoring question, *The research community in my research area stimulates my work*, is the second lowest scoring question for the sector survey, with BU scoring 49.1% against a sector score of 59.8%.

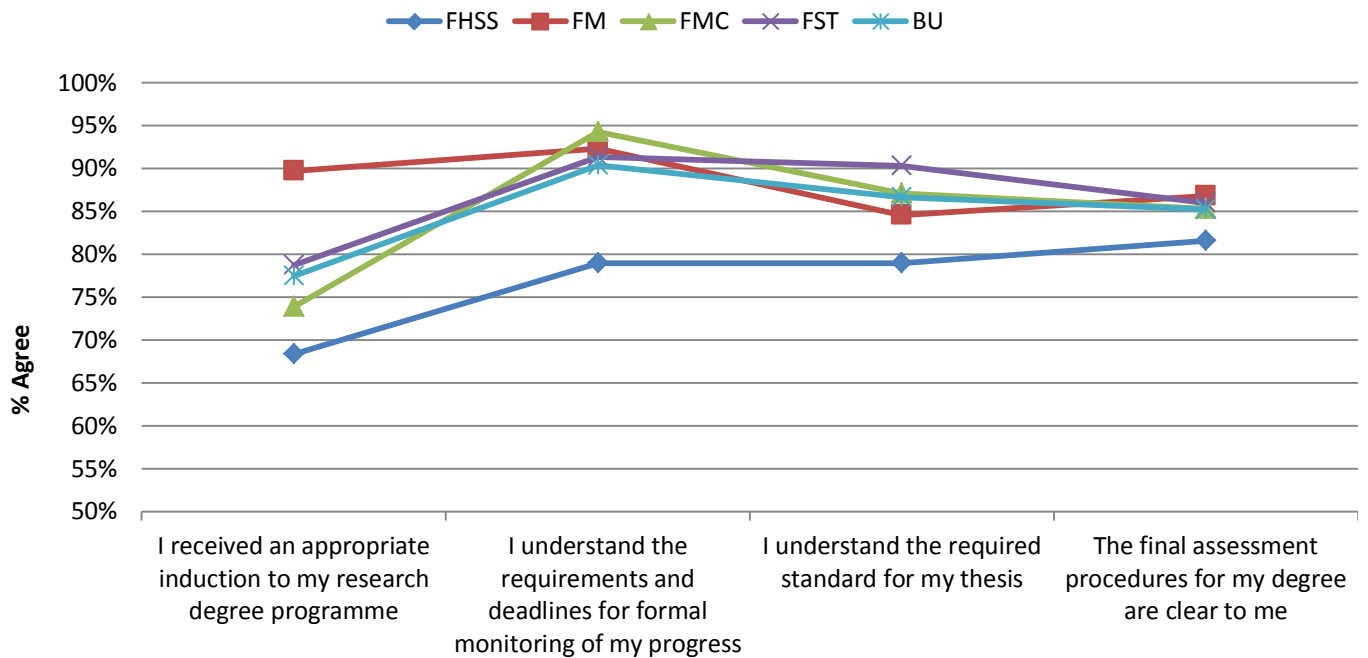


BU Scores by Faculty are similar with the exception of the high FM score for *Seminar programme* (71.1%), and the relatively low score for *Research community* in FHSS (39.5%). FM scored above the sector average for *Seminar programme* (71.1% vs 65.6% for the sector) while both FM and FHSS scored above the sector average for *Awareness of research opportunities*, with 63.2% and 65.8%, respectively against a sector average of 60.7%.

PROGRESS AND ATTAINMENT

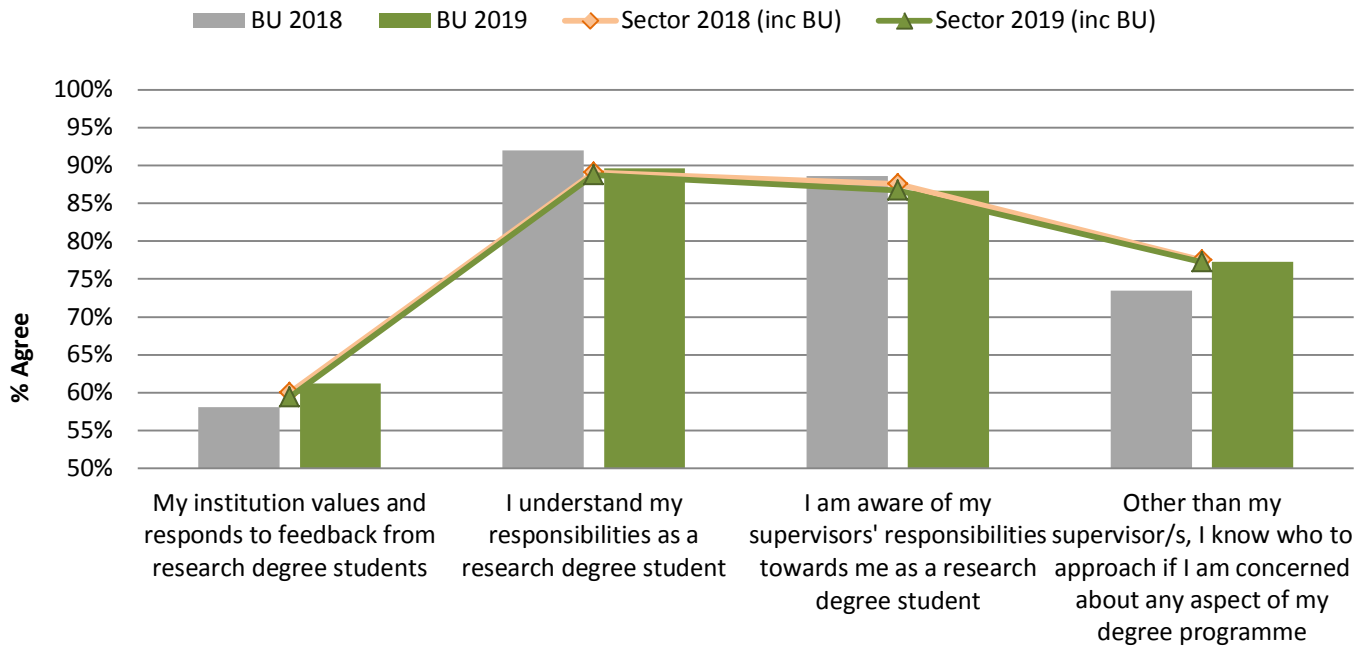


BU scored above the sector average in all questions in this section. The BU average across all four questions was 85.0%, +5.8% against a sector average of 79.1%. Two individual questions are improved since last year: *I understand the required standard for my thesis* (up 4.8% to 86.7%) and *The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me* (up 5.3% to 85.2%). These last two questions were higher than the sector score by 7.9% and 10.1% respectively.

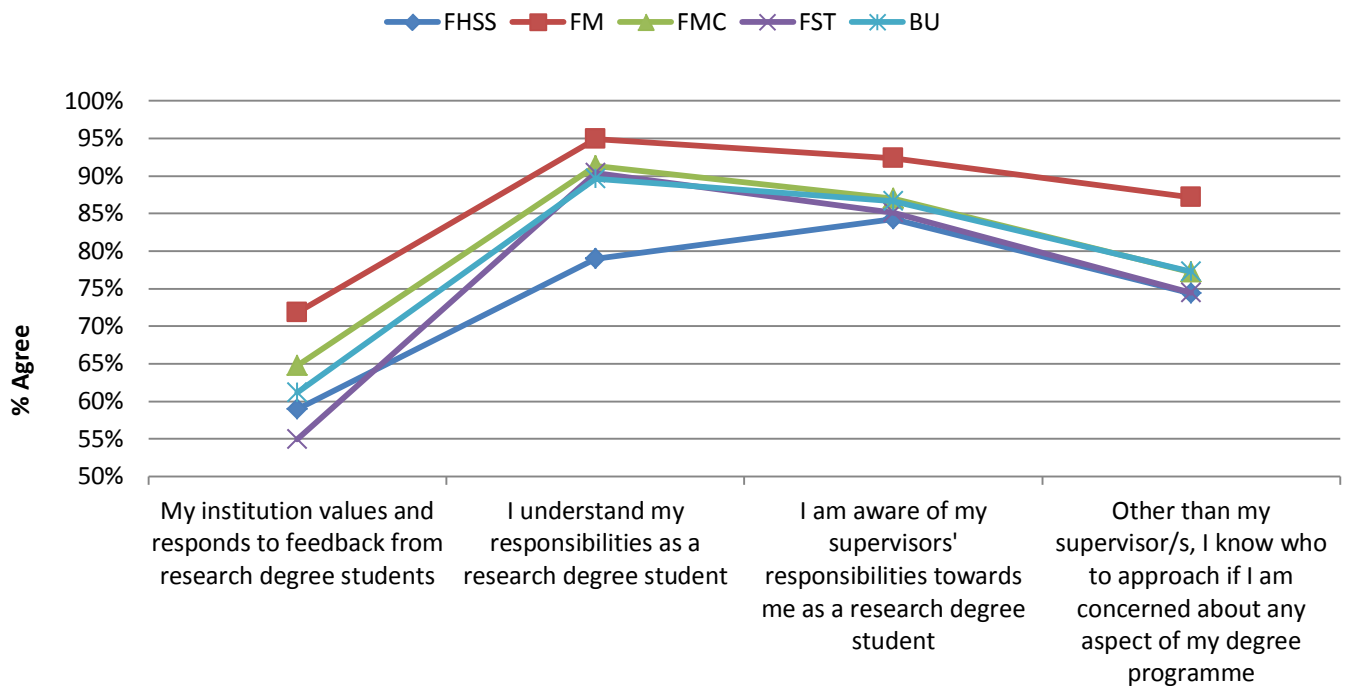


Individual Faculty scores are close to the BU average in most cases, with the exception of FHSS, where scores are slightly lower, and the FM score for *Research induction* which is, at 89.7%, 12.2% higher than the BU average. Although FHSS scores are lower than the BU average, its scores for *Understanding the required standard for my theses* and *Final assessment procedures* are above the sector average.

RESPONSIBILITIES

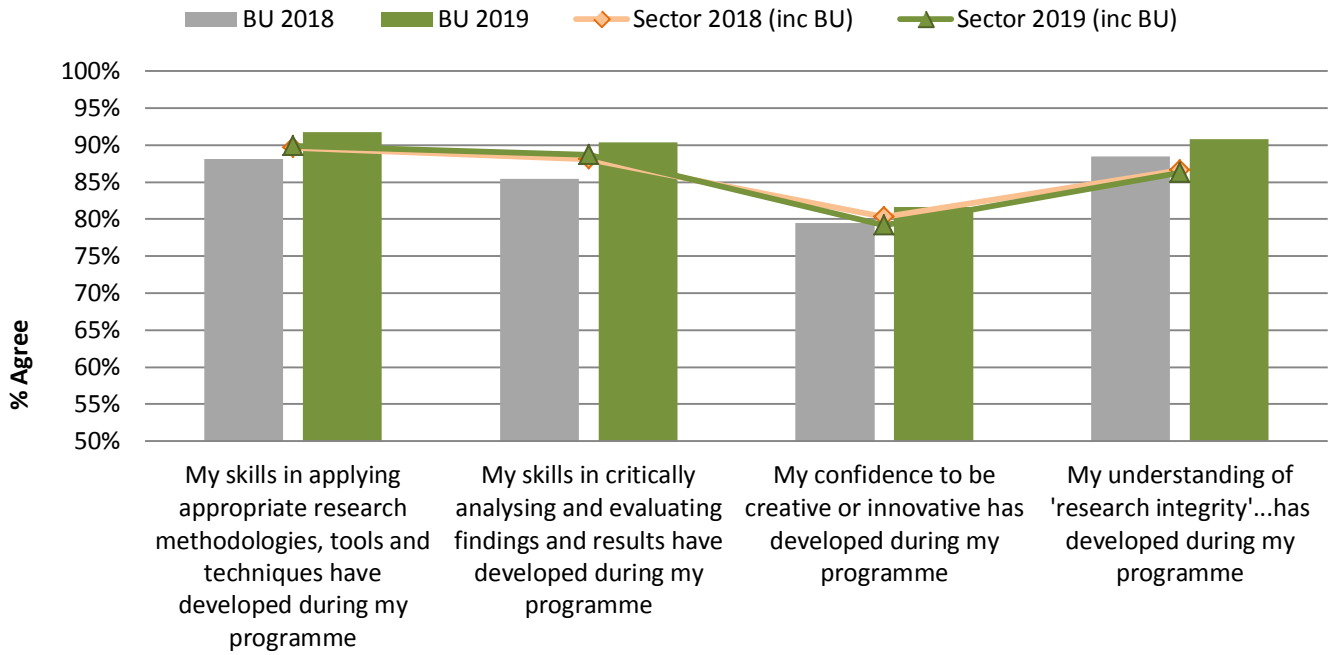


Responses to questions in the *Responsibilities* section are remarkably similar between the BU survey and the wider sector survey. The largest difference (although still small in absolute terms) is for *My institution values and responds to feedback*, with a BU score of 61.2%, +1.8% compared with a sector average of 59.4% (the lowest scoring question for the sector survey). All other questions are within a 1.0% difference between BU and the sector.

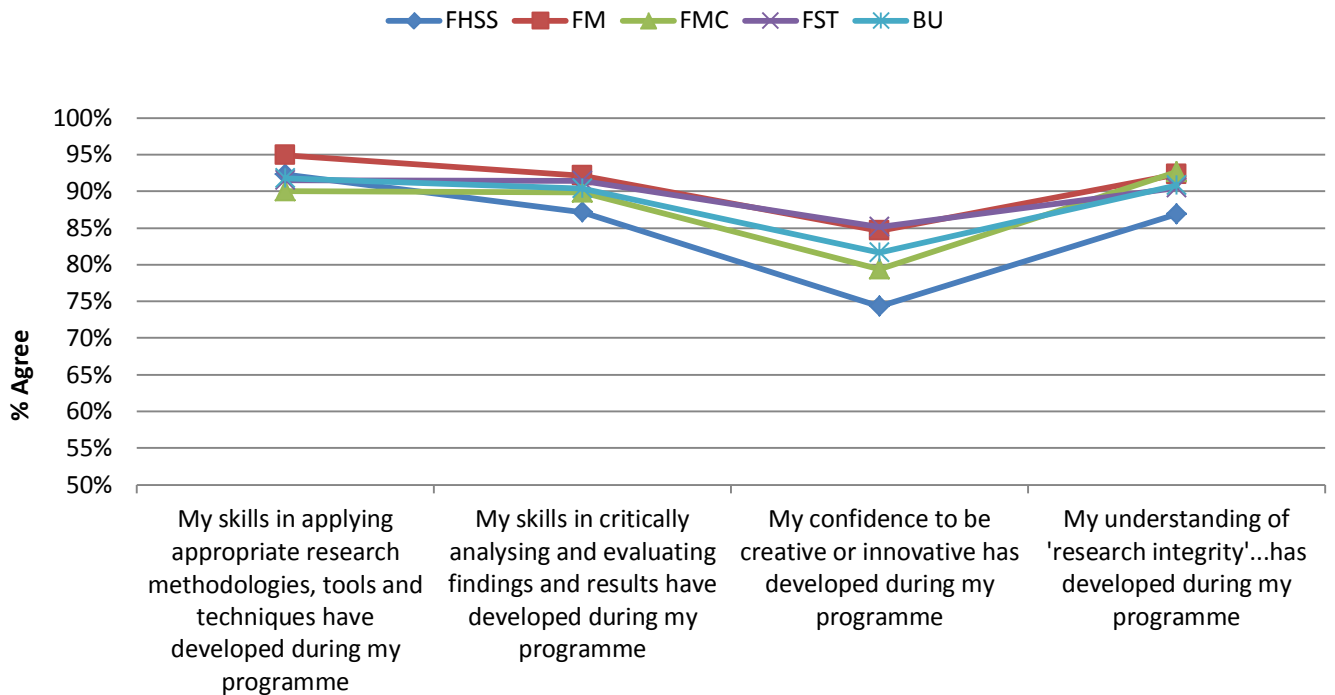


Across Faculties, question scores relative to each other in this section are similar, although the score for *Understanding my responsibilities* in FHSS is, at 78.9%, significantly lower than the BU average of 89.6%. FM scores were above sector average for all questions in this section.

RESEARCH SKILLS

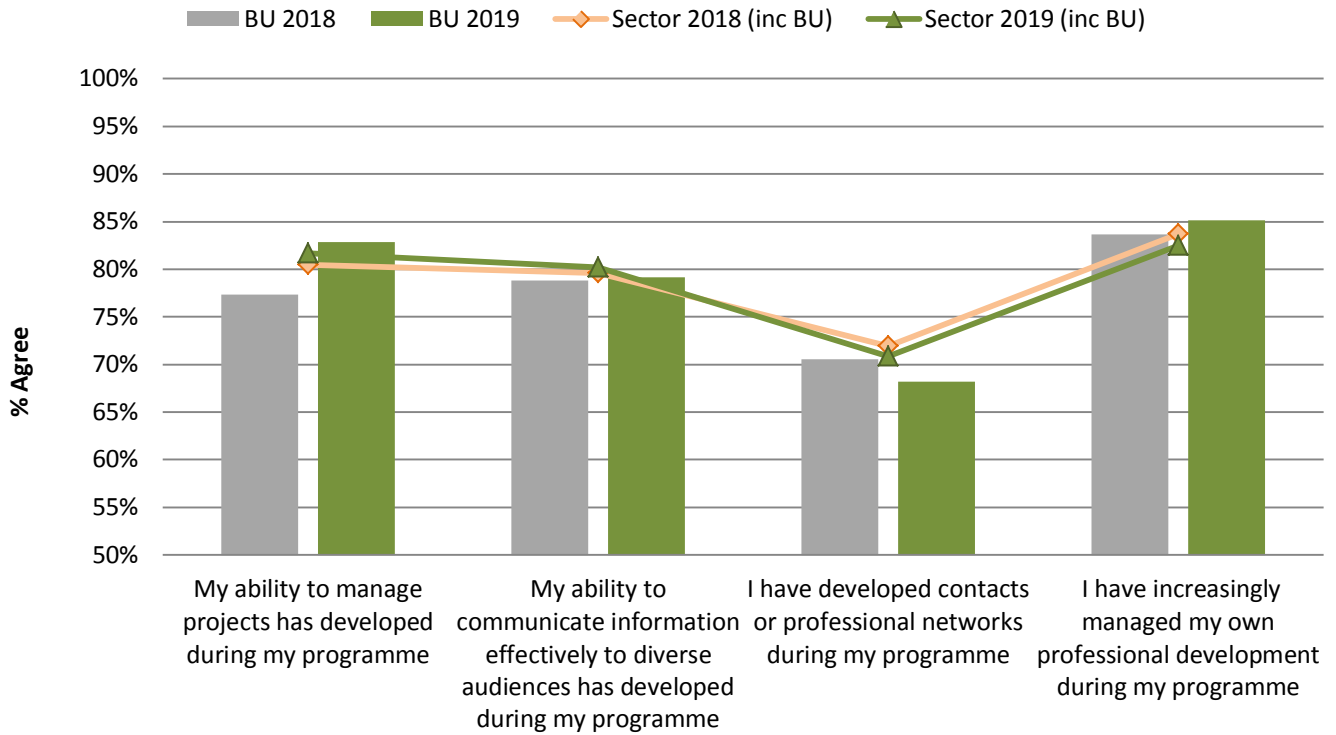


Research Skills is the only area in which the BU score for every question both increased year-on-year and scored higher than the sector average. The average BU score across this section was 88.6%, +2.6% against a sector score of 86.0%, while the average year-on-year increase was +3.3%. With a % agree value of 91.7%, *My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies* was the highest scoring question in the BU survey.

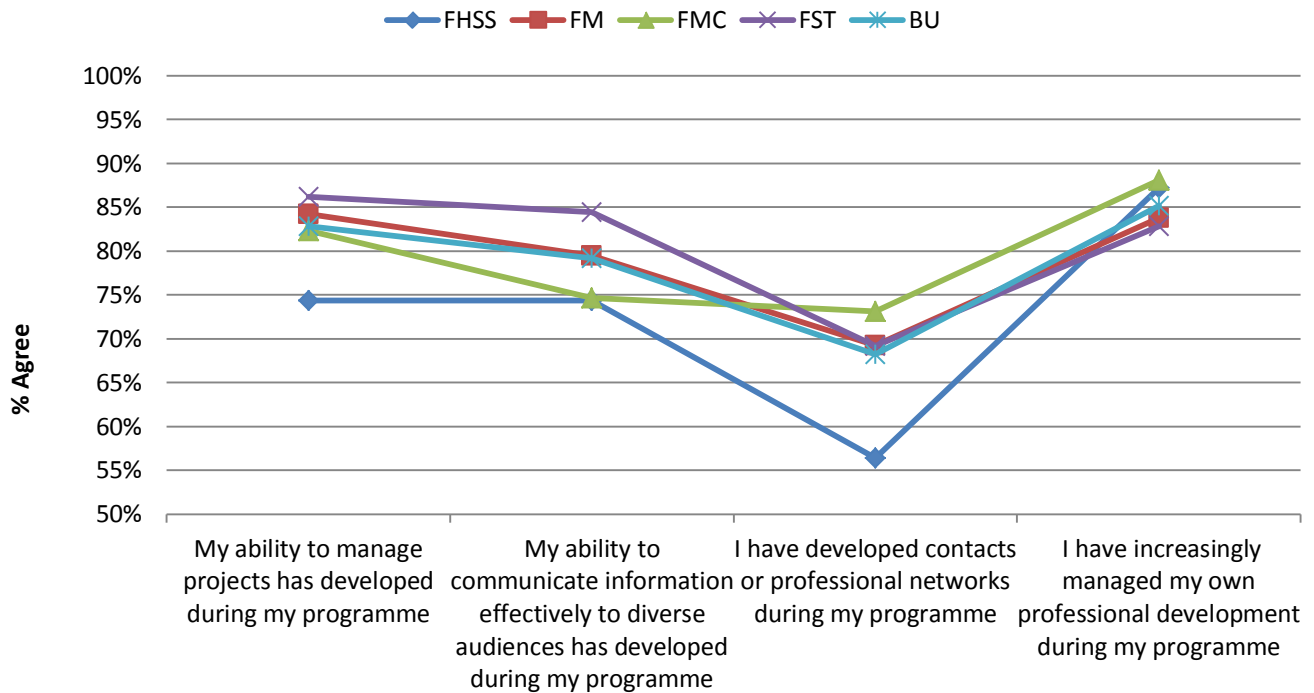


The pattern across Faculties is very similar, with the exception of the question: *My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme*, which shows a variation of 10.7% between FST (85.1%) and FHSS (74.4%).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

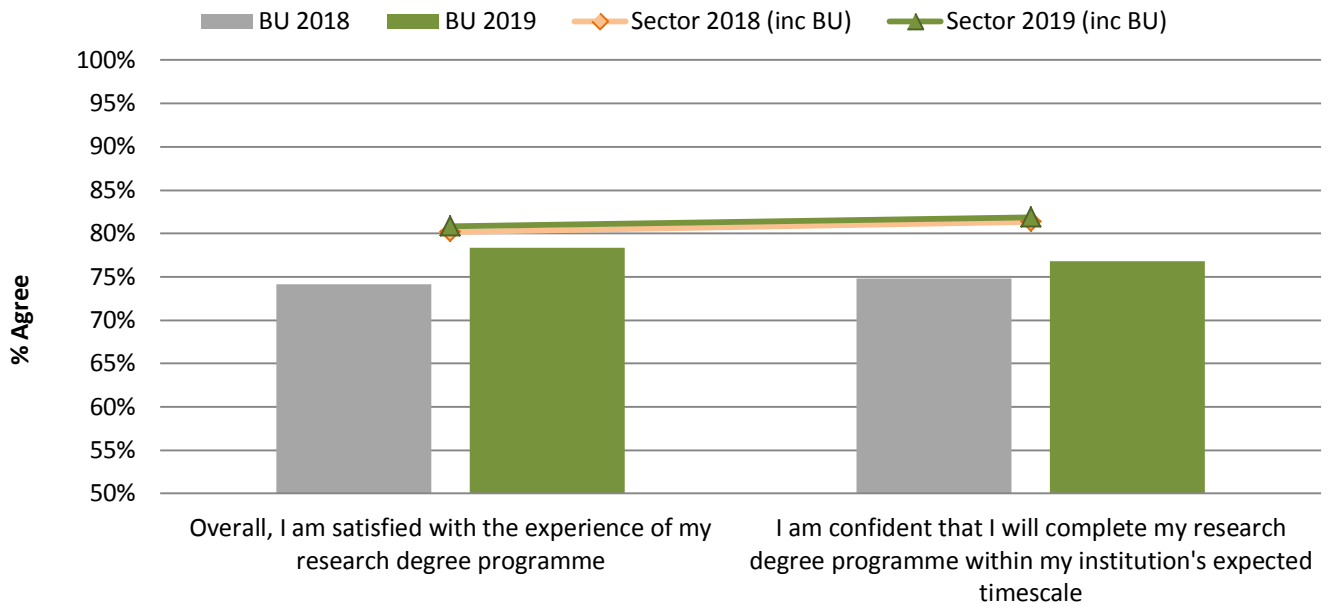


As with *Research Skills*, the *Professional Development* section of the survey shows close agreement between the BU scores and sector averages. The largest differences were for *I have developed contacts or professional networks*, with a BU score of 68.2% (-2.6% against a sector average of 70.9%) and *I have increasingly managed my own professional development* which was 85.2% in the BU survey, +2.7% against a sector average of 82.5%.

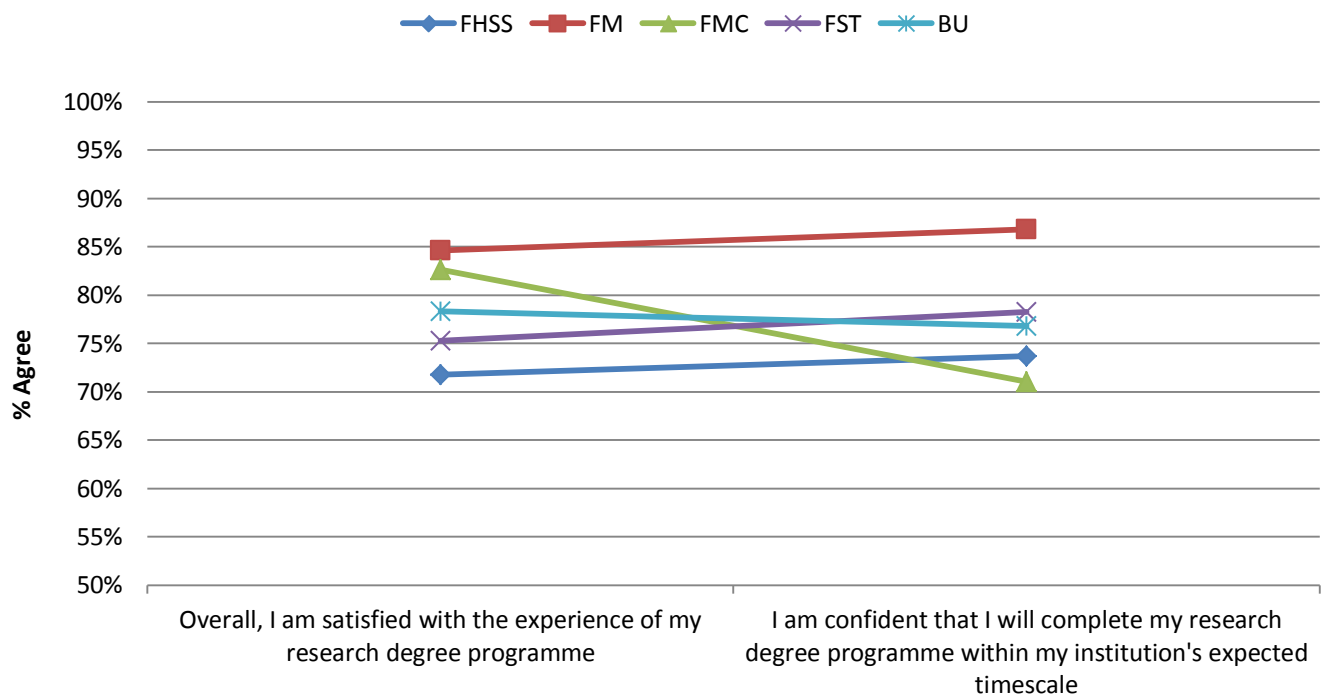


For most questions, Faculty scores are close to the BU average. The exceptions are *My ability to manage projects has developed* and *I have developed contacts or professional networks* where scores are lower in FHSS, with scores of 74.4% and 56.4%, -8.5% and -11.8% respectively against the BU average.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE



Overall Satisfaction scores at summary level are taken from the question “Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme”, rather than from the average across the Overall Experience section. Both questions in this section have improved since PRES 2018, with Overall Satisfaction rising 4.2% from 74.1% in 2018 to 78.3% in 2019, 2.5% less than the sector average of 80.8%.



There is considerable variation in Overall Experience between Faculties: FM has the highest Overall Satisfaction of 84.6%, 12.8% higher than the FHSS score of 71.8%; FM also has the highest score for Confidence in completing within expected timescales at 86.8%, 15.8% higher than the FMC score of 71.0%.

APPENDIX A: BU PRES 2019 RESULTS BY FACULTY

2019 and 2018 results are highlighted in green where above sector average; Δ is highlighted in green where year-on-year change is positive.

Question Group	Question	BU PRES			Sector PRES			FHSS			FoM			FMC			FST		
		2019	2018	Δ	2019	2018	Δ	2019	2018	Δ	2019	2018	Δ	2019	2018	Δ	2019	2018	Δ
Supervision	My supervisor/s have the skills and subject knowledge to support my research	91.6%	88.6%	3.0%	91.8%	91.5%	0.3%	89.7%	89.5%	0.3%	100.0%	95.7%	4.3%	95.5%	84.5%	11.0%	86.0%	87.3%	-1.2%
	I have regular contact with my supervisor/s, appropriate for my needs	91.6%	88.2%	3.5%	88.8%	88.1%	0.7%	92.3%	91.2%	1.1%	97.4%	87.0%	10.5%	91.2%	87.9%	3.2%	89.2%	87.1%	2.1%
	My supervisor/s provide feedback that helps me direct my research activities	88.7%	85.4%	3.3%	87.9%	87.8%	0.0%	87.2%	87.5%	-0.3%	94.9%	91.1%	3.8%	94.1%	86.2%	7.9%	82.8%	81.2%	1.6%
	My supervisor/s help me to identify my training and development needs as a researcher	76.2%	70.3%	5.9%	75.9%	76.0%	-0.1%	69.2%	75.4%	-6.2%	82.1%	63.0%	19.0%	77.3%	71.4%	5.8%	75.8%	70.0%	5.8%
Supervision Total		87.1%	83.1%	3.9%	86.1%	85.9%	0.2%	84.6%	85.9%	-1.3%	93.6%	84.2%	9.4%	89.6%	82.6%	7.0%	83.5%	81.4%	2.1%
Resources	I have a suitable working space	78.4%	70.9%	7.5%	77.9%	76.6%	1.3%	75.7%	75.0%	0.7%	81.3%	47.6%	33.6%	77.6%	74.0%	3.6%	79.1%	77.0%	2.1%
	There is adequate provision of computing resources and facilities	80.6%	71.5%	9.2%	78.7%	77.7%	1.0%	81.1%	80.8%	0.3%	87.9%	60.0%	27.9%	81.7%	72.5%	9.1%	77.0%	70.7%	6.3%
	There is adequate provision of library facilities (including physical and online resources)	80.7%	82.6%	-1.9%	86.2%	83.4%	2.8%	81.6%	85.7%	-4.1%	77.8%	75.6%	2.2%	85.3%	82.5%	2.8%	78.0%	84.0%	-6.0%
	I have access to the specialist resources necessary for my research	74.8%	69.4%	5.3%	79.4%	76.1%	3.2%	68.4%	80.4%	-11.9%	85.3%	62.2%	23.1%	74.6%	74.5%	0.1%	73.6%	63.5%	10.1%
Resources Total		78.6%	73.7%	4.9%	80.6%	78.5%	2.1%	76.7%	80.6%	-3.9%	83.0%	61.6%	21.3%	79.9%	76.1%	3.9%	76.9%	73.9%	3.0%
Research Culture	I have access to a good seminar programme in my research area	60.4%	64.1%	-3.8%	65.6%	70.7%	-5.1%	61.1%	76.8%	-15.7%	71.1%	43.2%	27.9%	57.4%	64.8%	-7.4%	57.5%	66.0%	-8.5%
	I have frequent opportunities to discuss my research with other researchers including research students	57.9%	60.1%	-2.1%	65.8%	63.4%	2.5%	55.3%	58.2%	-2.9%	58.3%	47.7%	10.6%	56.7%	62.3%	-5.5%	59.8%	65.3%	-5.6%
	The research community in my research area stimulates my work	49.1%	49.2%	-0.1%	59.8%	59.5%	0.3%	39.5%	45.3%	-5.8%	51.4%	40.9%	10.4%	56.1%	60.4%	-4.3%	47.3%	49.0%	-1.7%
	I am aware of opportunities to become involved in the wider research community, beyond my department	56.5%	57.5%	-0.9%	60.7%	59.9%	0.8%	65.8%	57.9%	7.9%	63.2%	48.9%	14.3%	60.0%	66.0%	-6.0%	47.3%	56.6%	-9.3%
Research Culture Total		56.0%	57.8%	-1.8%	63.0%	63.4%	-0.4%	55.3%	59.7%	-4.4%	61.1%	45.2%	15.9%	57.6%	63.4%	-5.8%	52.9%	59.2%	-6.3%
Progress and Assessment	I received an appropriate induction to my research degree programme	77.5%	77.7%	-0.2%	76.5%	76.5%	0.0%	68.4%	84.2%	-15.8%	89.7%	78.3%	11.5%	73.9%	82.5%	-8.5%	78.7%	71.0%	7.7%
	I understand the requirements and deadlines for formal monitoring of my progress	90.4%	92.0%	-1.6%	86.1%	86.1%	0.0%	78.9%	94.7%	-15.8%	92.3%	93.5%	-1.2%	94.3%	91.4%	2.9%	91.4%	90.2%	1.2%
	I understand the required standard for my thesis	86.7%	81.9%	4.8%	78.7%	80.4%	-1.6%	78.9%	87.5%	-8.6%	84.6%	77.8%	6.8%	87.1%	82.1%	5.0%	90.3%	80.4%	9.9%
	The final assessment procedures for my degree are clear to me	85.2%	79.9%	5.3%	75.1%	76.7%	-1.6%	81.6%	87.5%	-5.9%	86.8%	78.3%	8.6%	85.3%	76.4%	8.9%	86.0%	78.4%	7.6%
Progress and Assessment Total		85.0%	82.9%	2.1%	79.1%	79.9%	-0.8%	77.0%	88.5%	-11.5%	88.4%	82.0%	6.4%	85.2%	83.2%	2.0%	86.6%	80.0%	6.5%
Responsibilities	My institution values and responds to feedback from research degree students	61.2%	58.1%	3.1%	59.4%	60.0%	-0.5%	59.0%	65.5%	-6.5%	71.8%	47.8%	24.0%	64.7%	72.7%	-8.0%	54.9%	50.5%	4.4%
	I understand my responsibilities as a research degree student	89.6%	92.0%	-2.4%	88.7%	89.1%	-0.4%	78.9%	93.0%	-14.0%	94.9%	89.1%	5.7%	91.3%	91.4%	-0.1%	90.4%	93.1%	-2.7%
	I am aware of my supervisors' responsibilities towards me as a research degree student	86.7%	88.6%	-1.9%	86.7%	87.6%	-0.9%	84.2%	89.5%	-5.3%	92.3%	89.1%	3.2%	87.0%	89.7%	-2.7%	85.1%	87.3%	-2.1%
	Other than my supervisor/s, I know who to approach if I am concerned about any aspect of my degree programme	77.3%	73.5%	3.8%	77.2%	77.5%	-0.3%	74.4%	75.4%	-1.1%	87.2%	76.1%	11.1%	77.1%	68.4%	8.7%	74.5%	74.0%	0.5%
Responsibilities Total		78.7%	78.2%	0.5%	78.1%	78.7%	-0.5%	74.0%	81.0%	-6.9%	86.5%	75.5%	11.0%	80.1%	80.7%	-0.6%	76.4%	76.6%	-0.2%
Research Skills	My skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques have developed during my programme	91.7%	88.1%	3.6%	89.9%	89.6%	0.3%	92.3%	92.7%	-0.4%	94.9%	82.6%	12.3%	90.0%	89.7%	0.3%	91.5%	87.3%	4.2%
	My skills in critically analysing and evaluating findings and results have developed during my programme	90.4%	85.4%	4.9%	88.7%	88.1%	0.7%	87.2%	88.9%	-1.7%	92.1%	77.3%	14.8%	89.9%	85.7%	4.1%	91.4%	87.0%	4.4%
	My confidence to be creative or innovative has developed during my programme	81.7%	79.5%	2.2%	79.2%	80.3%	-1.1%	74.4%	79.6%	-5.3%	84.6%	67.4%	17.2%	79.4%	91.2%	-11.8%	85.1%	78.2%	6.9%
	My understanding of 'research integrity'...has developed during my programme	90.8%	88.5%	2.3%	86.3%	86.6%	-0.3%	86.8%	96.4%	-9.5%	92.3%	84.8%	7.5%	92.6%	91.4%	1.3%	90.4%	84.2%	6.3%
Research Skills Total		88.6%	85.4%	3.3%	86.0%	86.1%	-0.1%	85.2%	89.4%	-4.3%	91.0%	78.0%	12.9%	88.0%	89.5%	-1.5%	89.6%	84.2%	5.4%
Professional Development	My ability to manage projects has developed during my programme	82.8%	77.3%	5.5%	81.7%	80.5%	1.2%	74.4%	68.5%	5.8%	84.2%	68.2%	16.0%	82.4%	80.4%	2.0%	86.2%	84.3%	1.9%
	My ability to communicate information effectively to diverse audiences has developed during my programme	79.1%	78.8%	0.3%	80.2%	79.6%	0.6%	74.4%	77.8%	-3.4%	79.5%	75.0%	4.5%	74.6%	72.7%	1.9%	84.4%	84.3%	0.1%
	I have developed contacts or professional networks during my programme	68.2%	70.5%	-2.3%	70.9%	71.9%	-1.1%	56.4%	74.1%	-17.7%	69.2%	60.0%	9.2%	73.1%	73.7%	-0.5%	69.1%	71.6%	-2.4%
	I have increasingly managed my own professional development during my programme	85.2%	83.7%	1.5%	82.5%	83.7%	-1.2%	87.2%	77.8%	9.4%	83.8%	84.4%	-0.7%	88.1%	82.1%	5.9%	82.8%	87.3%	-4.5%
Professional Development Total		78.8%	77.6%	1.2%	78.8%	78.9%	-0.1%	73.1%	74.5%	-1.5%	79.1%	71.9%	7.2%	79.6%	77.2%	2.3%	80.6%	81.9%	-1.3%
Teaching	To what extent do you agree that you have been given appropriate support and guidance for your teaching?	65.3%	52.5%	12.8%	60.8%	59.0%	1.8%	53.8%	62.5%	-8.7%	61.5%	52.6%	8.9%	43.8%	41.7%	2.1%	81.8%	51.9%	29.9%
Overall Experience	Overall, I am satisfied with the experience of my research degree programme	78.3%	74.1%	4.2%	80.8%	80.2%	0.6%	71.8%	71.9%	-0.1%	84.6%	65.2%	19.4%	82.6%	84.5%	-1.9%	75.3%	73.5%	1.7%
	I am confident that I will complete my research degree programme within my institution's expected timescale	76.8%	74.8%	2.0%	81.9%	81.3%	0.6%	73.7%	75.0%	-1.3%	86.8%	71.7%	15.1%	71.0%	79.3%	-8.3%	78.3%	73.5%	4.7%