

Postgraduate
Research
Experience
(PREQ)
Summary
Report

2014

Prepared January 2015

James Cook University

Office of
Corporate
Planning &
Performance
and
Graduate
Research
School

Executive Summary

- In accordance with the Student Experience of Research Education (SERE) Policy for Research Higher Degree Candidates, JCU has several methods of systematically capturing the experiences of research higher degree candidates of their research education.
 - Every year recent graduates (graduands) are invited to complete Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) which is part of the nation-wide Australian Graduate Survey owned by Graduate Careers Australia
 - In even numbered years, all research higher degree candidates are invited to undertake an on-line survey based on the PREQ. Individual research higher degree candidates, their schools or advisors are not identified through this process.
 - In odd numbered years, research higher degree candidates are invited to participate in focus groups conducted by an expert consultant independent of the Graduate Research School. Individual research higher degree candidates or their advisors will not be identified through this process.
- The administration of SERE surveys is undertaken by Graduate Research. The analysis of the surveys is a joint effort by the Office of Reporting and Analytics and Graduate Research.
- This report summarises the results of surveys of: (1) surveys of JCU graduands (generally 2012-2014 to increase sample sizes) compared with the national PREQ survey of graduands for 2013; and (2) the results of the 2014 internal PREQ survey of continuing HDR candidates.
- **JCU graduands:**
 - Statistical comparisons between the 2012 – 2014 JCU PREQ data and the 2013 sector averages reveal that JCU graduands mostly had satisfaction levels that were similar to or better than the 2013 sector average, although the results were less positive than in 2011-2013.
 - Significant exceptions to the overall positive result for 2014 were: satisfaction of HDR candidates in the Society and Culture FoR with: (1) intellectual climate and (2) overall satisfaction. And candidates who are undertaking a Masters course with: (1) Supervision and (2) overall satisfaction. Both FoR results were significantly less than the corresponding JCU means. In addition, there were marginal concerns about: (1) the goals and expectation of Society and Culture HDR candidates as well as the satisfaction with the intellectual climate of: (1) candidates from the Health FoR.
- **2014 JCU HDR candidates: Internal PREQ**
 - Statistical comparisons between the 2014 JCU internal PREQ data and the 2013 sector averages reveal that: HDR candidate satisfaction levels were significantly below the 2013 sector averages for: (1) goals and expectations and marginally below for: (1) Intellectual climate and (2) overall satisfaction, and (2) that there were many (mostly negative) differences between the internal results for 2012 and 2014.
 - **2014 JCU HDR candidates: Additional questions.**
 - **Research takes advantage of tropical location**
 - (a) The proportion of HDR candidates whose research takes advantage of JCU's tropical location was 58% overall. There was no significant difference between the results for 2010 and 2012
 - (b) The levels of satisfaction of HDR candidates, whose research takes advantage of JCU's tropical location, is significantly higher than those for candidates whose research does not, on all scales surveyed.

Access to library resources

- (a) Overall 75% of JCU HDR candidates are satisfied with their access to library resources. Satisfaction was relatively even across faculties and disciplines and the patterns changed little between 2012 and 2014.
- (b) Satisfaction with access to library resources was positively associated with the levels of all the dimensions of the satisfaction of HDR candidates. The

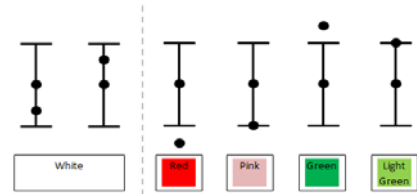
differences were most marked with respect to intellectual climate and overall satisfaction.

- **Fortnightly meetings with principal supervisor**
 - Overall 75% of JCU HDR candidates have fortnightly meetings with their principal supervisor. Such frequent meetings were positively associated with the levels of all the dimensions of the satisfaction of HDR candidates. For example, 88% of candidates who had frequent meetings with their principal supervisors were satisfied overall compared with 42% who did not.
- **Timely feedback on work**
 - Overall 80% of JCU HDR candidates considered that they received timely feedback on their work. The difference in this proportion between 2012 and 2014 was significant in the intellectual climate scale.
- **Qualitative responses**
 - Qualitative responses from both the PREQ and internal surveys highlighted similar issues.
 - The best aspects of their candidature were : the research, the opportunity to develop as a person and as a researcher, the research community, the support they receive from various sources and the relationship they have with their supervisor (s).
 - The worst aspects of their candidature were: lack of contact with fellow students and the feeling of isolation, the processes and administrative tasks required of them. Candidates participating in the internal survey also expressed difficulty in juggling personal work commitments and seeking funding for research related activities.

Summary results from JCU graduands who participated in national PREQ surveys

	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Thesis Examination	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
University 2014							
University 2012-14				Light Green		Light Green	
Natural and Physical Sciences 2012-14		Light Green		Light Green			
Ag Envir & Res 2012-14	Light Green	Light Green		Green	Green	Green	Light Green
Health 2012-14	Green	Pink		White	White	White	White
Management & Commerce 2012-14	White	White	Green	Green	Green	White	White
Society & Culture 2012-14		Red	White	White	Pink	White	Red
Doctorate 2012-14	Green	White		Green	Light Green	Green	White
Masters 2012-14	Red	Pink		White	White	White	Red
Full-time 2012-14	White		Green	Green		Green	
Part-time 2012-14	Green		White	White		White	
Internal 2012-14	White		Light Green	Green		Green	
External 2012-14	Green		White	White	Green	White	
Males 2012-14	Green			Green	Green	Green	
Females 2012-14	White			Light Green		Light Green	
≤40 years 2012-14			Green	Green		Green	
>40 years 2012-14			White	White		Light Green	
Australian 2012-14	Light Green			Green	Light Green	Green	
Overseas 2012-14	White		Green	White	White	White	Red
ESB 2012-14				Green		Light Green	
NESB 2012-14			Green	White	Green	Green	
Summary of the comparison of the JCU 2012-14 scores with the 2013 national standard							
Total JCU significantly better	5		5	11	5	8	
Total JCU marginally better	2	2	1	3	2	4	2
Total JCU significantly worse	1	1					3
Total JCU marginally worse		2			1		

Table 2: Summary of statistical comparisons between the 2011 – 2013 JCU PREQ data of JCU graduands and the corresponding 2013 sector averages, which have been taken as the standard. Green indicates a result significantly better than the sector average (JCU mean \pm s.e. does not include the standard); red significantly worse. Borderline differences are indicated by lighter shades (see code). Note this approach accounts for sample size.

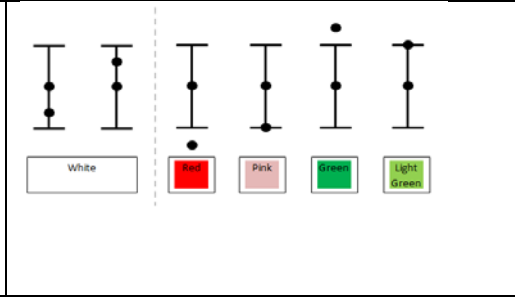


	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Thesis Examination	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
University 2013 only							
University 2011-13			Green			Light Green	
DTH&M 2011-13 ¹ DTE&S 2011-13 ¹		Pink		Light Green		Green	Pink
Natural and Physical Sciences 2011-13 Ag Envir & Res 2011-13 Health 2011-13 Management & Commerce 2011-13 Society & Culture 2011-13						Green	
	Red	Red					Red
		Red		Red			Red
Doctorate 2011-13 Masters 2011-13			Green			Green	
						Light Green	
Full-time 2011-13 Part-time 2011-13		Red		Green		Green	
				Pink		Light Green	
Internal 2011-13 External 2011-13				Green		Green	
		Pink					
Males 2011-13 Females 2011-13				Green		Green	
						Light Green	
<40 years 2011-13 >40 years 2011-13				Green	Light Green	Green	
		Red					
Australian 2011-13 Overseas 2011-13		Pink	Pink	Light Green		Green	
			Green				Pink
ESB 2011-13 NESB 2011-13		Pink		Green		Light Green	
Summary of the comparison of the JCU 2011-13 scores with the 2013 national standard							
Total JCU significantly better			3	5		9	
Total JCU marginally better				2	1	4	
Total JCU significantly worse	1	4		1			2
Total JCU marginally worse		4	1	1			2

Table 3: Summary of comparisons of scores for JCU 2012-14 PREQ data from JCU graduands with the 2013 PREQ national standard and the JCU PREQ scores for 2011-13 with the 2013 PREQ national standard. Green indicates that the number of JCU scores in the relevant band has increased by ≥ 3 ; Red indicates that the number of JCU scores in the relevant band has been reduced by ≥ 3 ; a lighter shade indicates that the numbers have changed by 1 or 2.

	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Thesis Examination	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
Total significantly better	Green	White	Light Green	Green	Green	Light Red	White
Total marginally better	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	White	Light Green
Total significantly worse	White	Red	White	Light Green	White	White	Light Red
Total marginally worse	White	Light Red	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	White	Light Green

Table 4: Statistical comparisons between the 2014 JCU internal PREQ data for current HDR candidates and the 2013 external PREQ sector averages, which have been taken as the standard. Green indicates a result significantly better than the sector average (JCU mean \pm s.e. does not include the standard); red significantly worse. Borderline differences are indicated by lighter shades (see code). Note this approach accounts for sample size.



	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
University						
Doctorate						
Masters						
Full-time						
Part-time						
Internal						
External						
Males						
Females						
≤40 years						
>40 years						
Australian						
Overseas						
Total JCU significantly better	1		1		1	
Total JCU marginally better		1	1			
Total JCU significantly worse		4	1	5		
Total JCU marginally worse	1	3		4		5

	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
University						
Natural and Physical Sciences						
Ag Environ and Resources						
Health						
Management & Commerce						
Society & Culture						
Doctorate						
Masters						
Full-time						
Part-time						
Internal						
External						
Mixed Mode						
Males						
Females						
≤40 years						
>40 years						
Australian						
Overseas						
Total JCU significantly better	9	2	7	1	9	1
Total JCU marginally better	1		2	1	4	
Total JCU significantly worse						
Total JCU marginally worse		2		1		

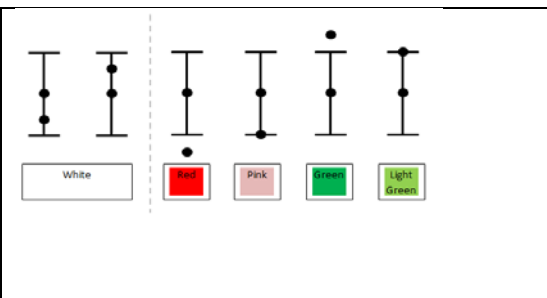


Table 6: Summary of comparisons of scores for JCU 2012-14 PREQ data from JCU graduands with the 2013 PREQ national standard and the JCU PREQ scores for 2011-13 with the 2013 PREQ national standard. Green indicates that the number of JCU scores in the relevant band has increased by ≥ 3 ; Red indicates that the number of JCU scores in the relevant band has been reduced by ≥ 3 ; a lighter shade indicates that the numbers have changed by 1 or 2.

	Supervision	Intellectual climate	Infra-structure	Goals & Expectations	Skill Develop.	Overall
Total significantly better						
Total marginally better						
Total significantly worse						
Total marginally worse						

Questions added to JCU internal PREQ survey of current students. The questions are not included in the external survey.

Topic 1: *My research takes advantage of the University's tropical location.*

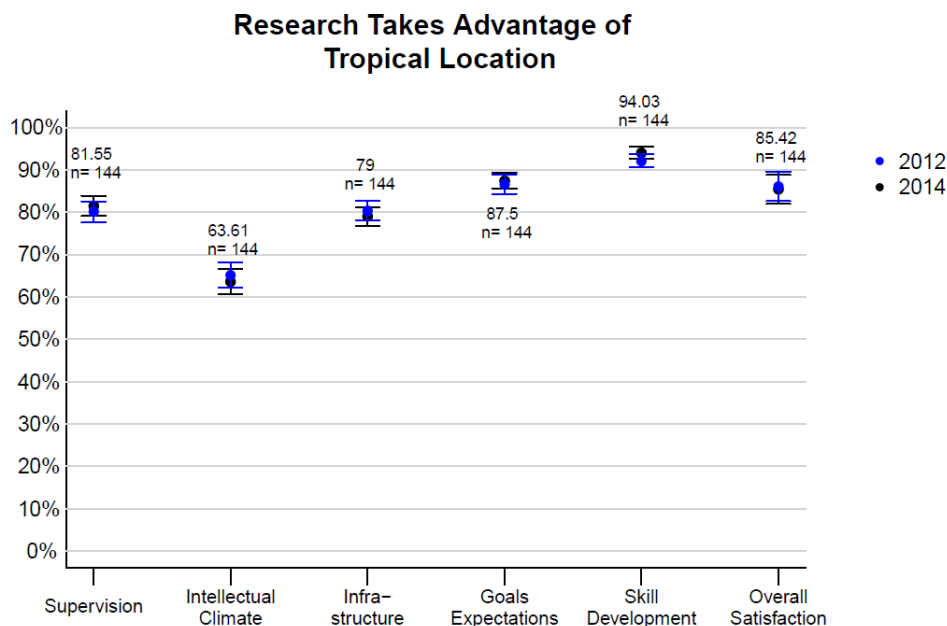
Comparisons of proportions who agreed for current HDR candidates in 2012 (blue) and 2014 (black):

(a) by the various PREQ scales;

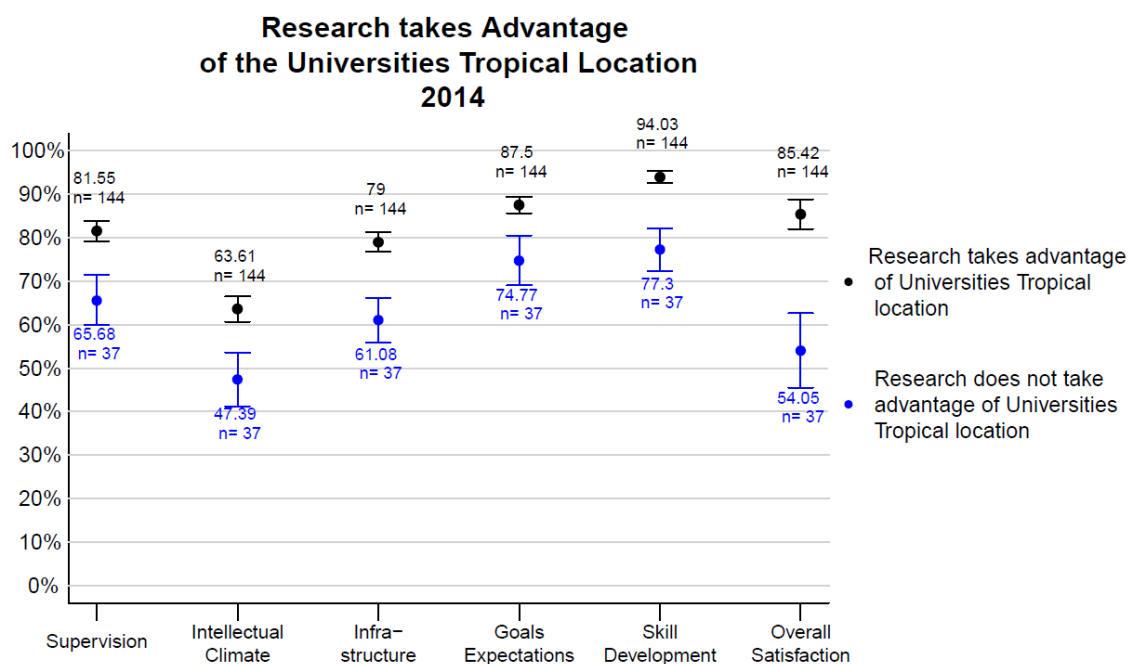
(d) comparison of satisfaction levels for the various PREQ scales of 2012 current HDR candidates who agreed with those who did not.

All results are presented as means \pm standard errors.

a.



b.



Topic 2: *I have access to all the library resources I need.*

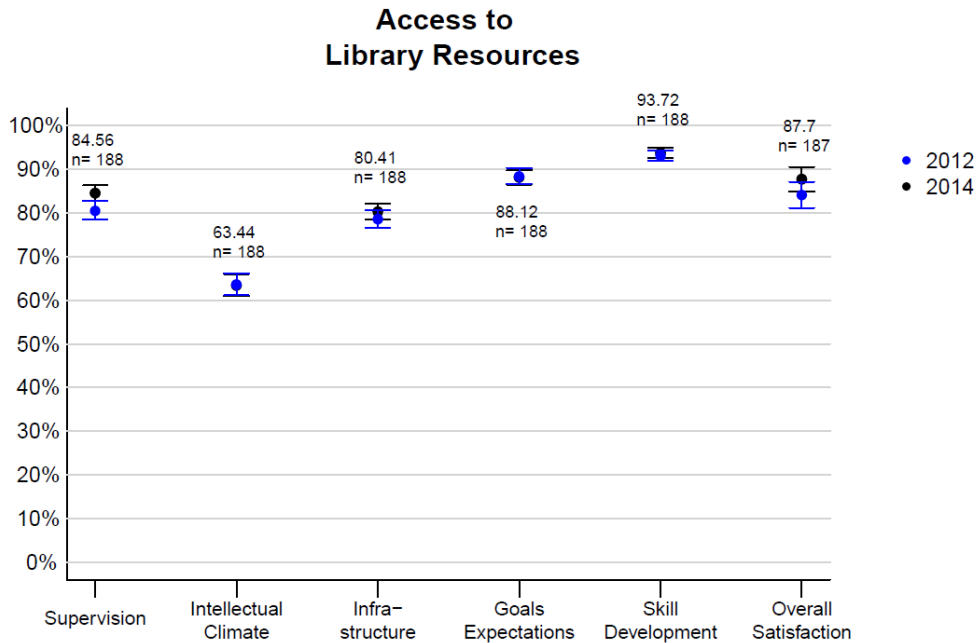
Comparisons of proportions who agreed for current HDR candidates in 2012 (blue) and 2014 (black):

(a) by the various PREQ scales;

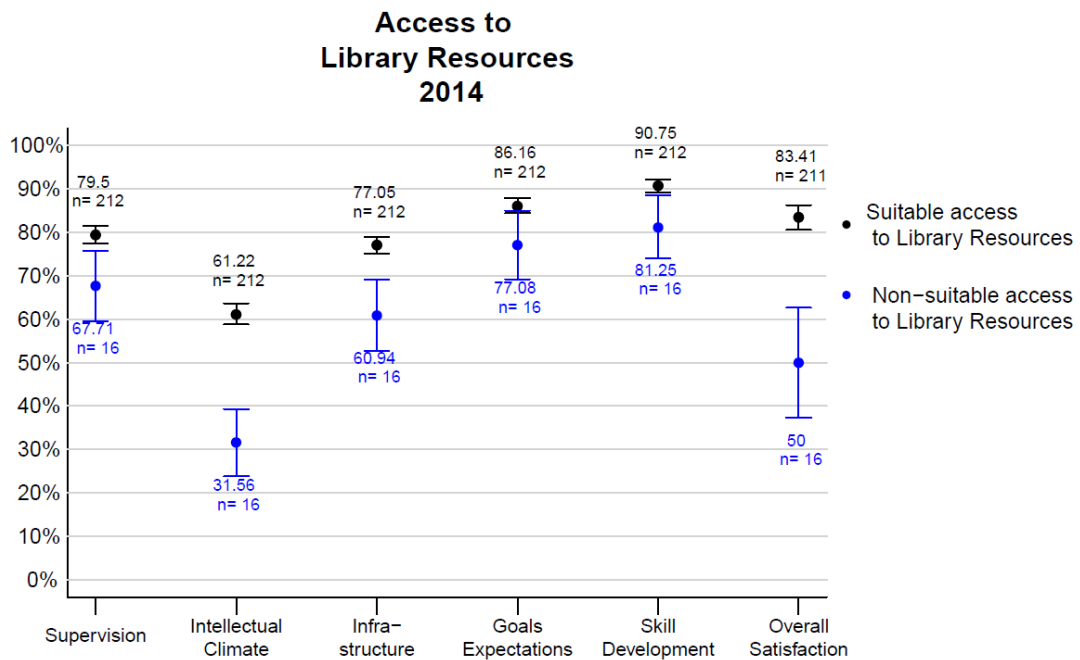
(d) comparison of satisfaction levels for the various PREQ scales of 2012 current HDR candidates who agreed with those who did not.

All results are presented as means \pm standard errors.

a.



b.



Topic 3: *I generally meet with my principal supervisor at least once a fortnight.*

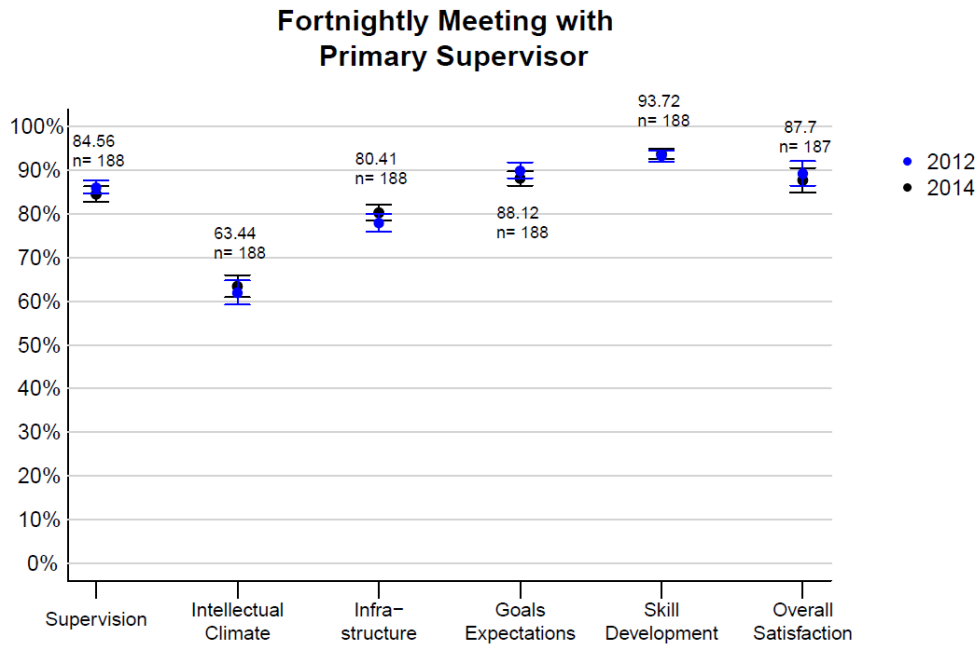
Comparisons of proportions who were agreed for current HDR candidates in 2012 (blue) and 2014 (black):

(a) by the various PREQ scales;

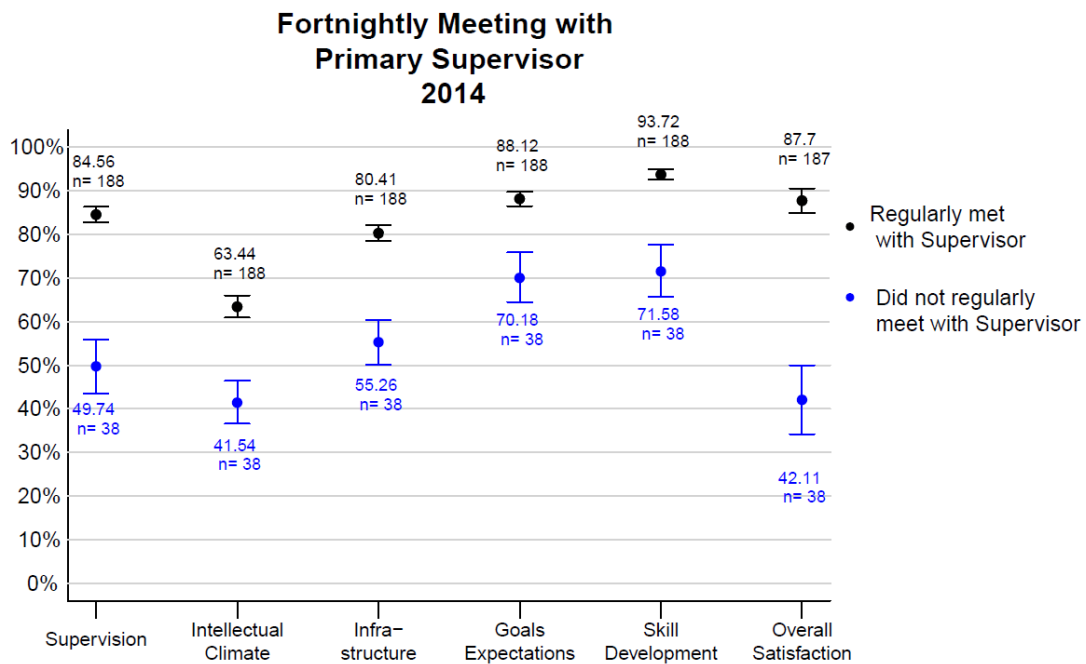
(d) comparison of satisfaction levels for the various PREQ scales of 2012 current HDR candidates who agreed with those who did not.

All results are presented as means \pm standard errors.

a.



b.



Topic 4: **My Supervisor provided timely feedback on my written work.**

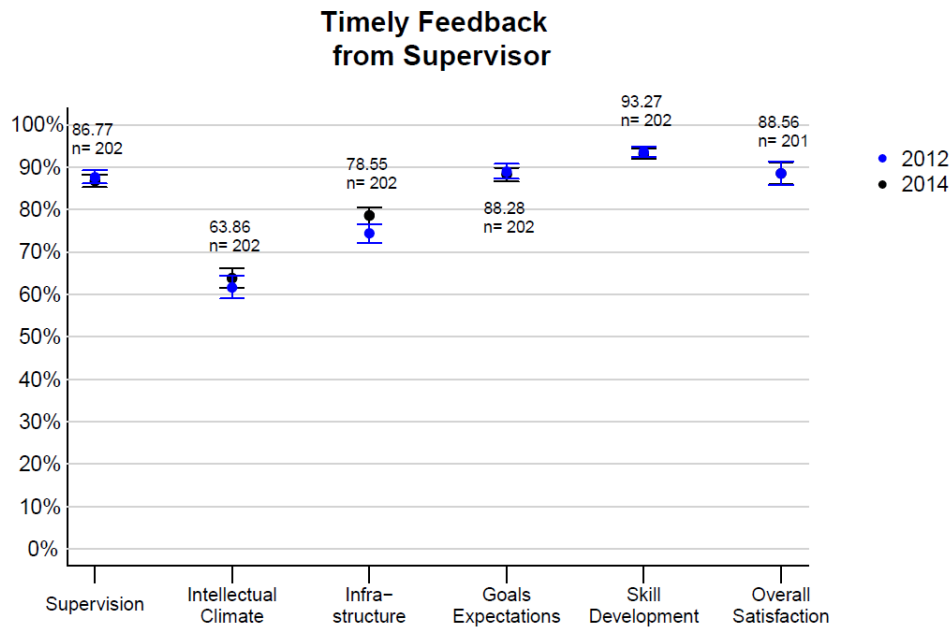
Comparisons of proportions who were agreed for current HDR candidates in 2012 (blue) and 2014 (black):

(a) by the various PREQ scales;

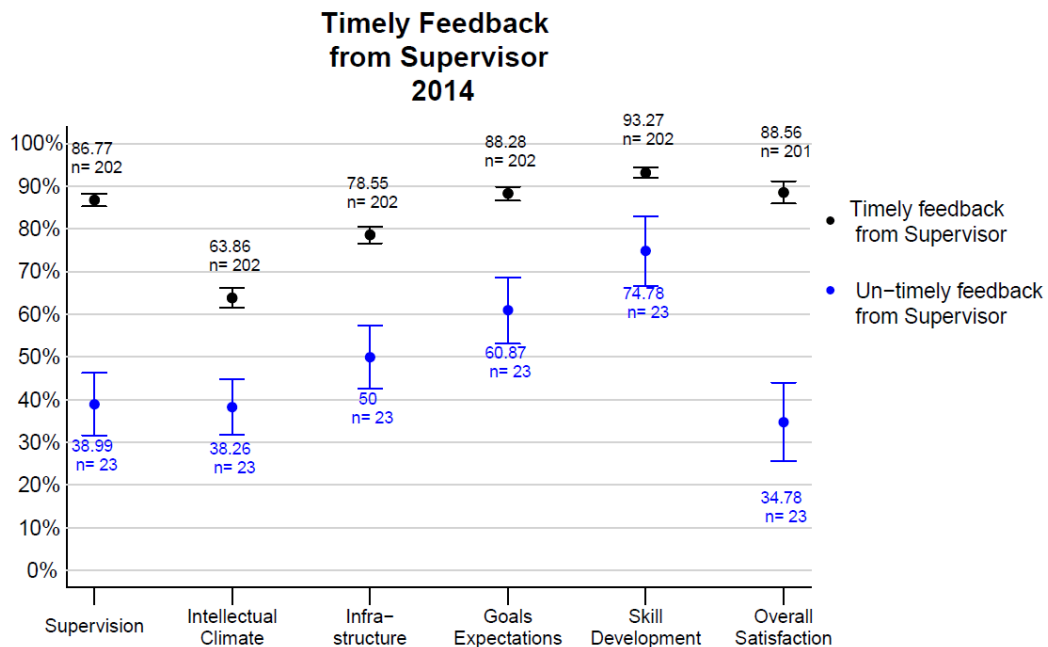
(d) comparison of satisfaction levels for the various PREQ scales of 2012 current HDR candidates who agreed with those who did not.

All results are presented as means \pm standard errors.

a.



b.



Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative analysis of the open ended questions was undertaken using word cloud technology. The size of the word is correlated with the word frequency in the respondent's answers to the open ended questions.

(a) Best aspects of course: 2014 graduands



(b) Best aspects of course: 2014 Current HDR candidates



(c) Worst aspects of course: 2014 graduands



(d) Worst aspects of course: 2014 Current HDR candidates

