

Being a PhD student



Satisfaction, Integration and Working
Conditions among PhD students 2016



Content

Introduction.....	3
Overall Satisfaction.....	6
Stress.....	10
Gender Differences.....	12
PhD Courses.....	16

Introduction

IN order to assure that the quality of the PhD programs is high and is managed effectively the PhD School under the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at the University of Southern Denmark (SDU) continuously evaluates its PhD programmes.

CONSEQUENTLY an electronic survey was sent out to all active PhD students at the faculty in March, 2016. 60 PhD students had answered the questionnaire by April leading to a response rate of 66 percent.

THE survey is a follow-up to a similar survey conducted in 2012. Throughout this booklet and in the underlying report noteworthy differences since the 2012 report are highlighted.

IN this year's survey the PhD School wanted to focus on three particular areas: assessment of the supervision, PhD courses, and the working environment. These and other questions concerning the general satisfaction with the PhD programme are addressed in the report.

”Most PhDs are satisfied with their PhD programme”

THIS booklet presents the most important points and conclusions from the report.

COHERE Analysis

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Main Findings

- Most students are satisfied with their PhD programme and the supervision received
- 40% report that they lack relevant PhD courses
- 75% of the PhD students report feeling stressed
- 32% state that the work on the thesis is progressing with a range of problems
- 24% are not satisfied with the study and working environment at the departments
- Female PhD students are relatively less satisfied with their supervisors
- PhD students with children are less satisfied with their department and the relationship to other PhD students

The Survey

Conducted in March
2016

Focus areas:
Supervision,
PhD courses,
work environment

Follow-up on similar
survey from 2012

60 respondents
Response rate: 66%

84% of the students
are either satisfied or
very satisfied with their
PhD studies

75 % feel stressed
frequently or now and
then

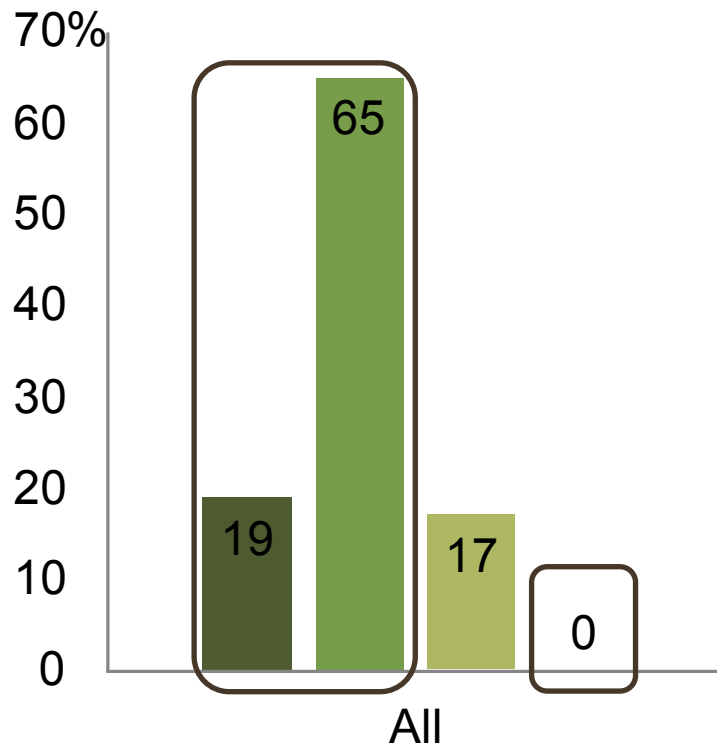
Overall Satisfaction

THE figure to the right shows frequencies of students who are, respectively, highly satisfied, satisfied, less satisfied and dissatisfied with their PhD studies.

MOST students are either satisfied or highly satisfied, while no students are dissatisfied. There are no significant differences across gender or provider status. However, the overall satisfaction is slightly worse than in 2012, although this is not statistically significant.

ON the following pages two noteworthy findings are presented. First, it turns out that every fourth PhD student are not satisfied with the study and working environment at the department, and secondly, a sizable minority indicate that the work on the thesis is progressing with a range of problems.

“In general, how do you consider your PhD Study?”



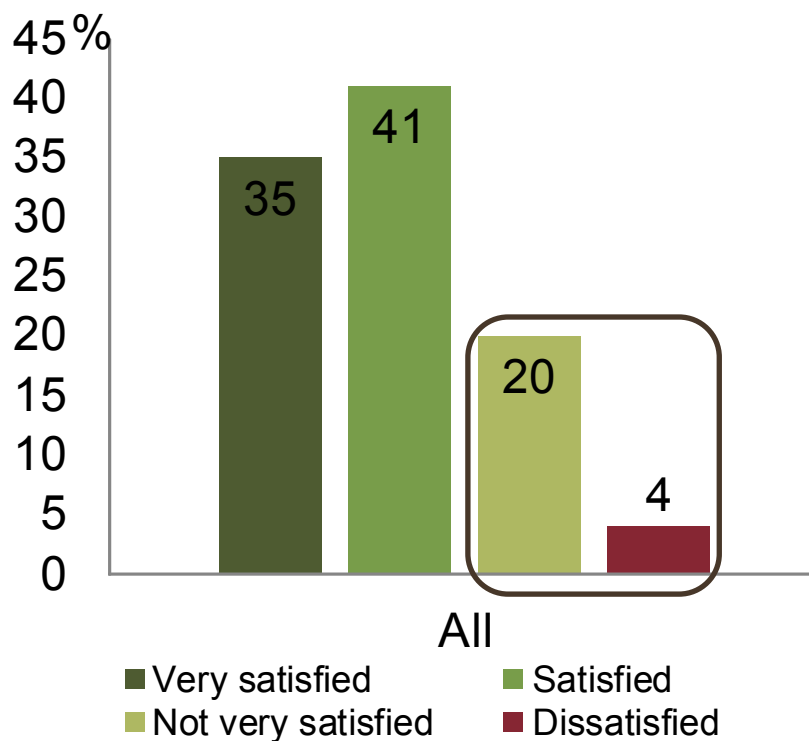
“The vast majority are either satisfied or highly satisfied”

“No one is unsatisfied”

- Highly satisfactory
- Satisfactory
- Less satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

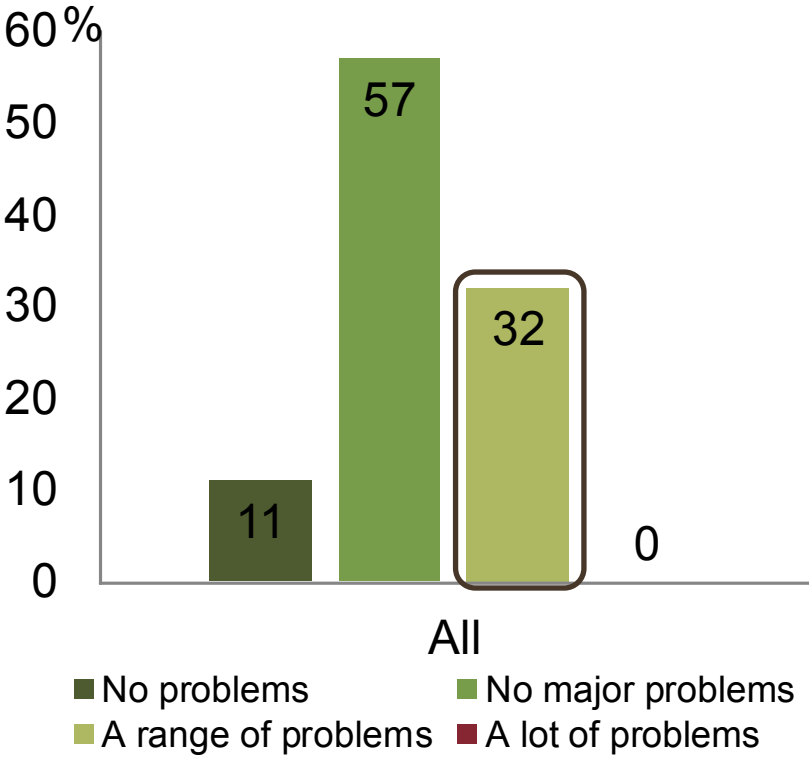
“How satisfied with the study and work environment ?”

”24% are not satisfied with the study and working environment at the department”



“How do you feel the work on your thesis is progressing ?”

”32% state that the work on the thesis is progressing with a range of problems”



Focus Area

Stress

ONE of the focus areas in the 2016 report is the working environment. PhD students were asked whether on a daily basis they feel stressed as PhD students.

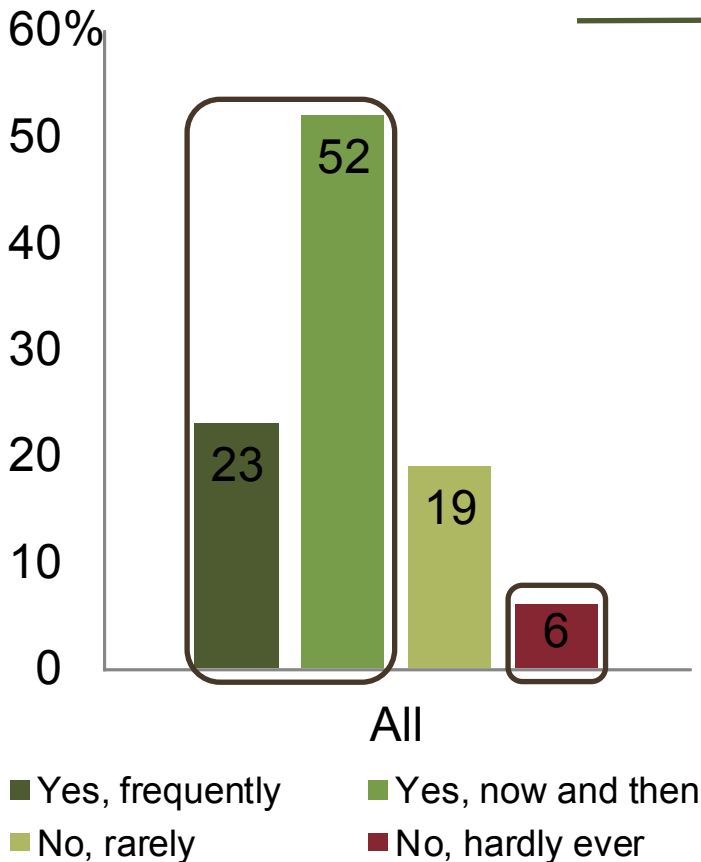
UNFORTUNATELY, the vast majority of PhD students feel stressed at least now and then. Also, few PhD students hardly ever feel stressed. PhD students who frequently feel stressed are widely distributed among all departments.

THOSE who feel stressed also tend to work more hours and feel less satisfied overall.

”75% of the PhD students report feeling stressed. In 2012 this was 66%”

“On a daily basis as a PhD student, do you feel stressed?”

”PhDs feeling stressed also work more hours and feel less satisfied with their PhD studies in general”



Focus Area

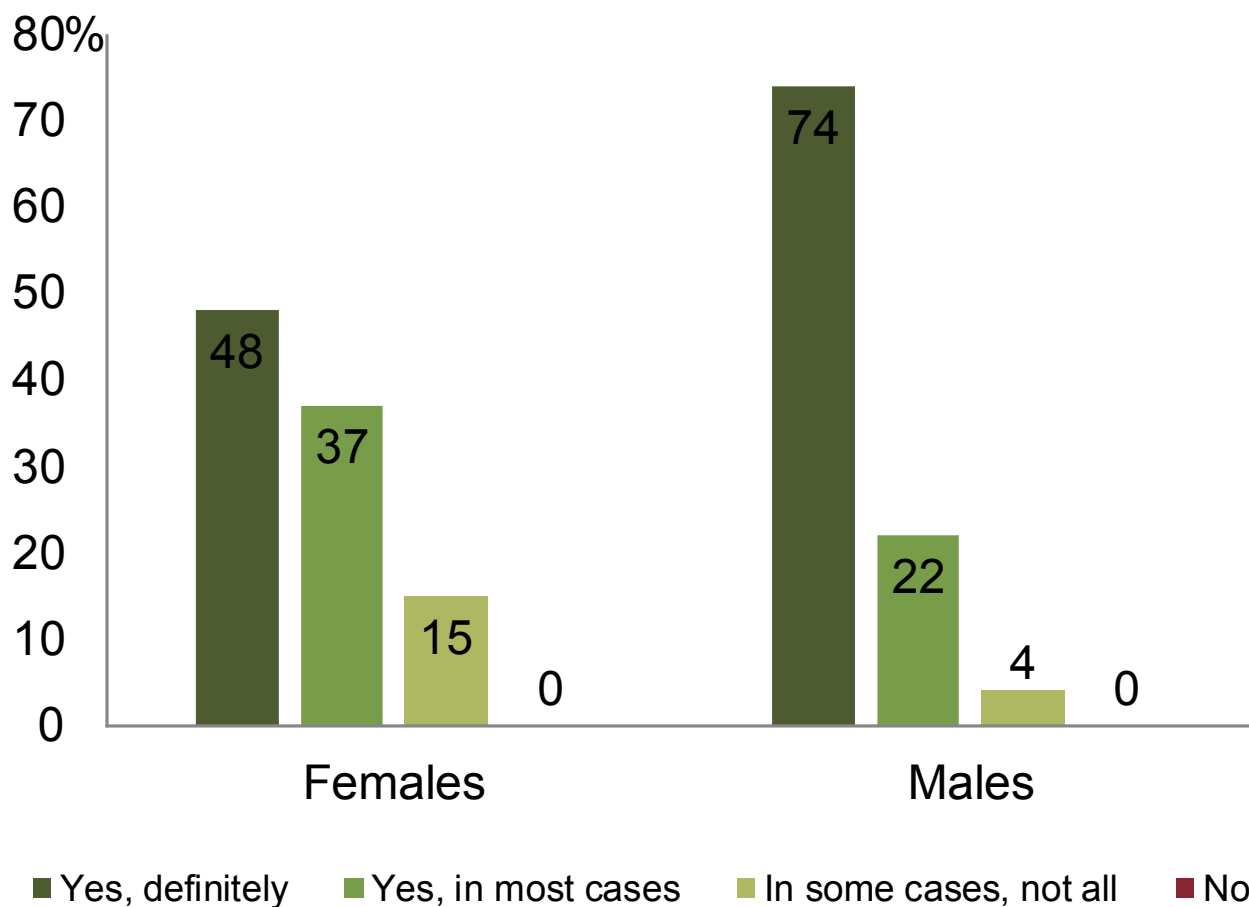
Gender Differences

”Female PhD students are significantly less satisfied with their supervisors’ academic competences”

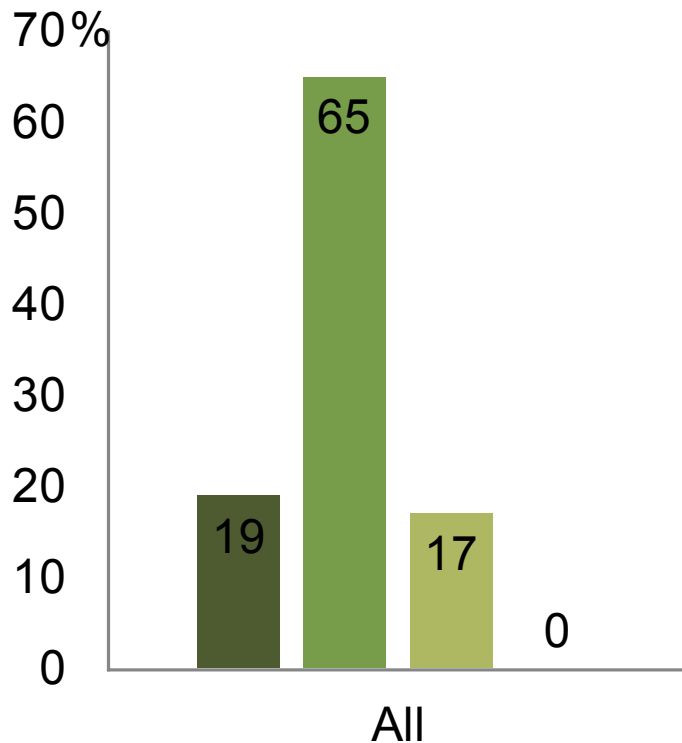
ANTOHER focus area is gender differences. Although male and female PhD students do not differ on overall satisfaction, differences exist in certain areas.

WOMEN are less satisfied with the supervisors’ academic competences and the commitment of their supervisors to their thesis.

“In your opinion, are your supervisors academically competent to advise you and your project?”



“How will you characterize the supervisor’s commitment to the work on the PhD thesis?”

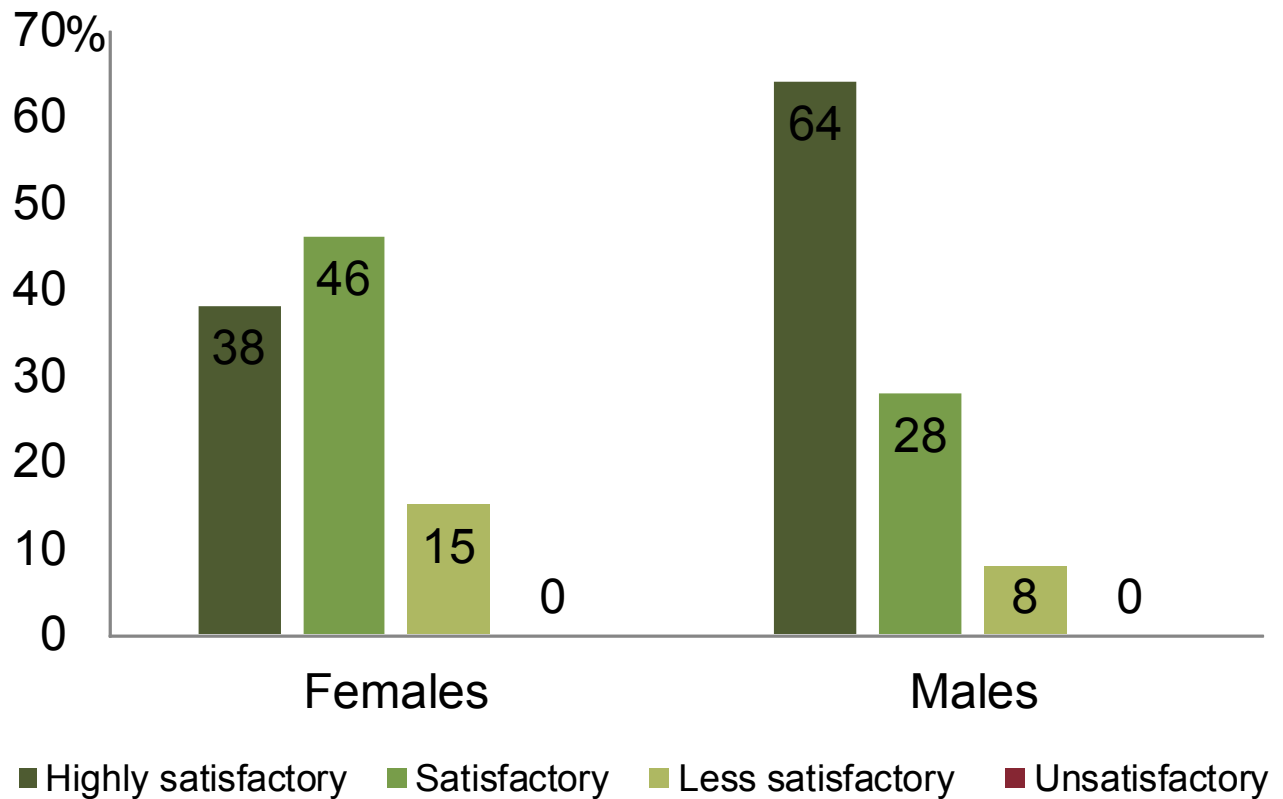


“Overall the PhD students find their supervisors’ commitment to the thesis satisfactory”

■ Highly satisfactory ■ Satisfactory
■ Less satisfactory ■ Unsatisfactory

But..

”Female PhD students
are significantly less
satisfied ”



Focus Area

PhD Courses

A third focus area in the 2016 report was PhD courses. Specifically, PhD students were asked whether they have had enough relevant courses to choose from.

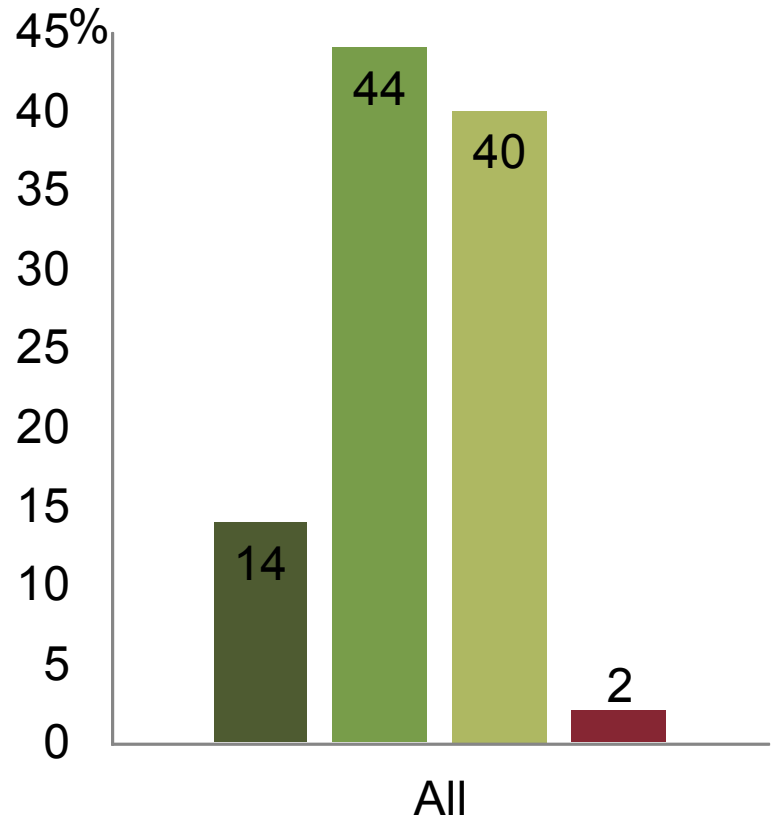
58% feel they have had enough PhD courses to choose from at least most of the time. This is a large improvement since 2012 where 37% felt the same.

STILL, 40% feel that they do not always have enough courses to choose from.

NO significant differences were found across gender and provider status.

”58% state they have had enough PhD courses to choose from”

“Did you have enough relevant courses to choose from?”



■ Yes, always

■ Yes, most of the time

■ No, not always

■ No, never



Read the report!



Read the report for further details:

- **More comparisons with the 2012 survey**
- **Further details at the departmental level**
- **Answers to open-ended questions**
- **The importance of type of employment**

COHERE Analysis