



The
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The LRT Project

Integrating Learning, Research and Teaching at The University of Sheffield



Helping Research and Teaching to Help Each other: The LRT Project

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LRT Project Student Survey Team:

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- Suzanne Bushnell-Watson, Head of Commercial Section, RIS
- Louise Edwards-Holland, Asst. Director of HR management
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- Natalie Whelan, Student co-ordinator, CILASS Student Ambassador Network
- Louise Woodcock, Head of Strategy and Enhancement, LeTS



What you're about to learn:

1. What *is* the LRT project?
 - What are we trying to find out?
 - How are we collecting our information?
2. What have we found out from our survey?
 - Who has responded?
 - What did they say?
3. Where do we go from here?



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What *is* the LRT Project?



Source: www.nextgenerationlaw.com/

Investigating the
links between
learning, research,
and teaching



We aim to find out...

- How are students in the Faculties of Science and Social Sciences engaging with the University's research culture?
- Do students think they benefit
 - from being taught by researchers?
 - from conducting their own research?
- What do students value about studying at a research institution?



We are developing...

- A web resource that provides concrete examples of existing and evolving practice
- Recommendations for strategies that:
 - enable students to participate more fully in the research culture of the University
 - enable discipline-based research and knowledge transfer to benefit more from learning and teaching



We are conducting...

- A survey of undergraduates in the Faculties of Science and Social Sciences
 - Follow-up interviews and focus groups
- Interviews with Academic Staff
- A Survey of Academic Staff



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The Survey



Source: www.make-noise.com/trendspottings/?m=200901



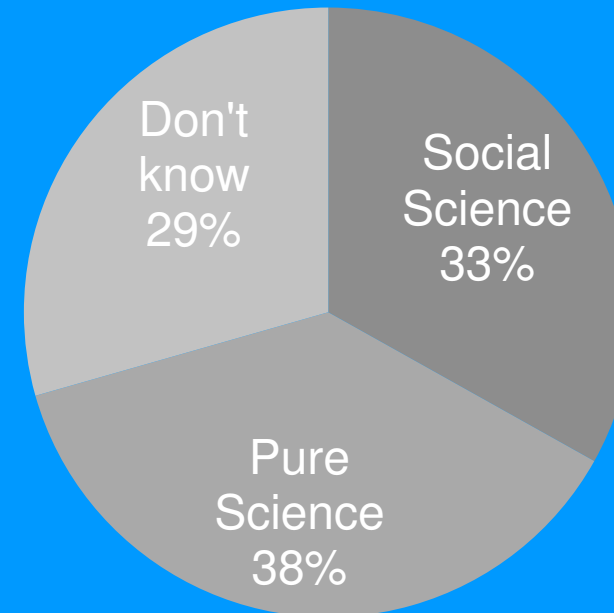
Who took the survey:

- Undergraduates in the Faculties of Science and Social Science (8139 people)
- 655 people responded to the survey (8% response rate)
- 216 from the Faculty of Social Sciences, 247 from the Faculty of Pure Science and 192 did not indicate a faculty
- 176 from first year, 151 from second, 128 from third, 30 from fourth and 170 did not indicate a year
- Previous studies:
 - Turner et al (2008) 515 respondents (from three universities)
 - Healey et al (2008) 196 respondents
 - Zamorski (2002) 108 respondents
 - Breen and Lindsay (1999) 100 respondents



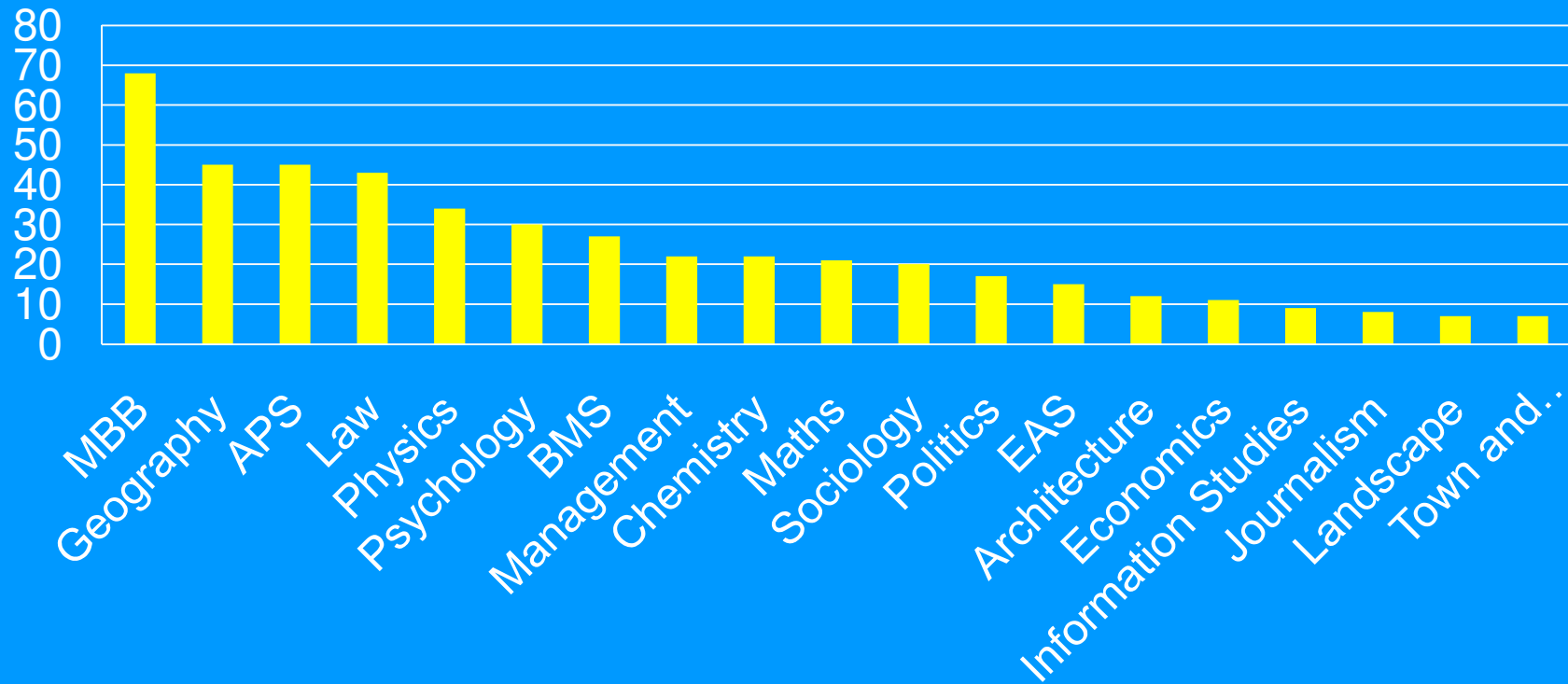
Response by faculty:

- 463 out of 655 respondents answered
- 216 from the faculty of Social Sciences
- 247 from the faculty of Pure Science
- 192 unknowns





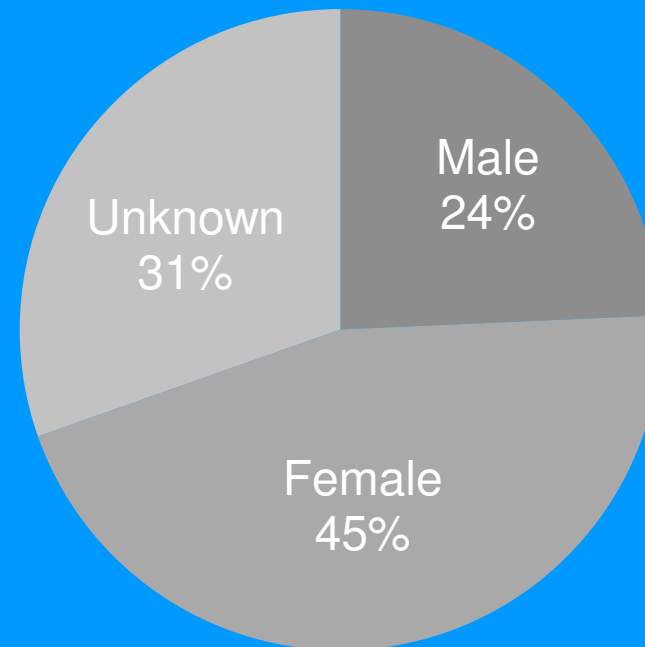
Response by department:





Response by gender:

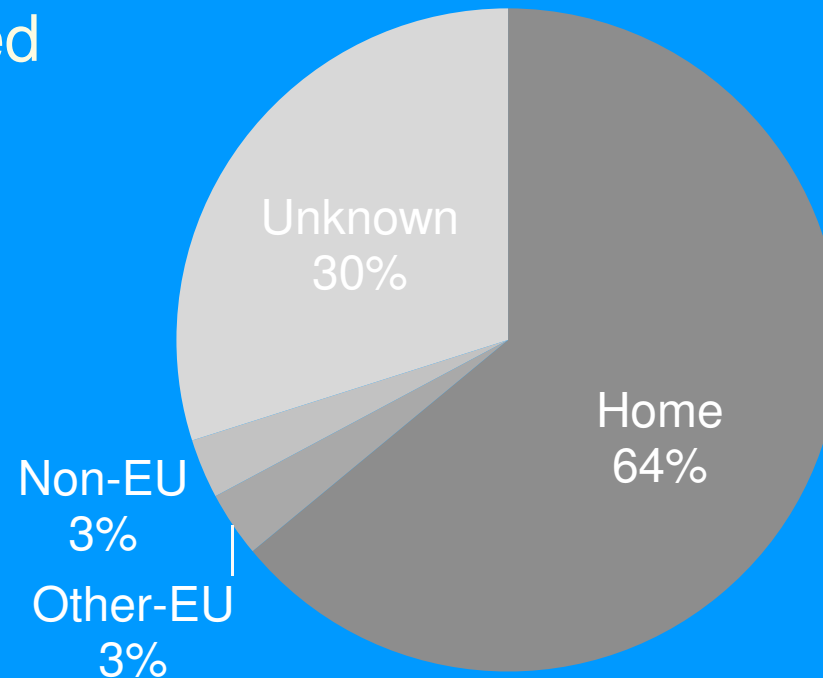
- 456 out of 655 respondents answered the question
- 156 male respondents
- 297 female respondents
- 199 unknowns





Response by student status:

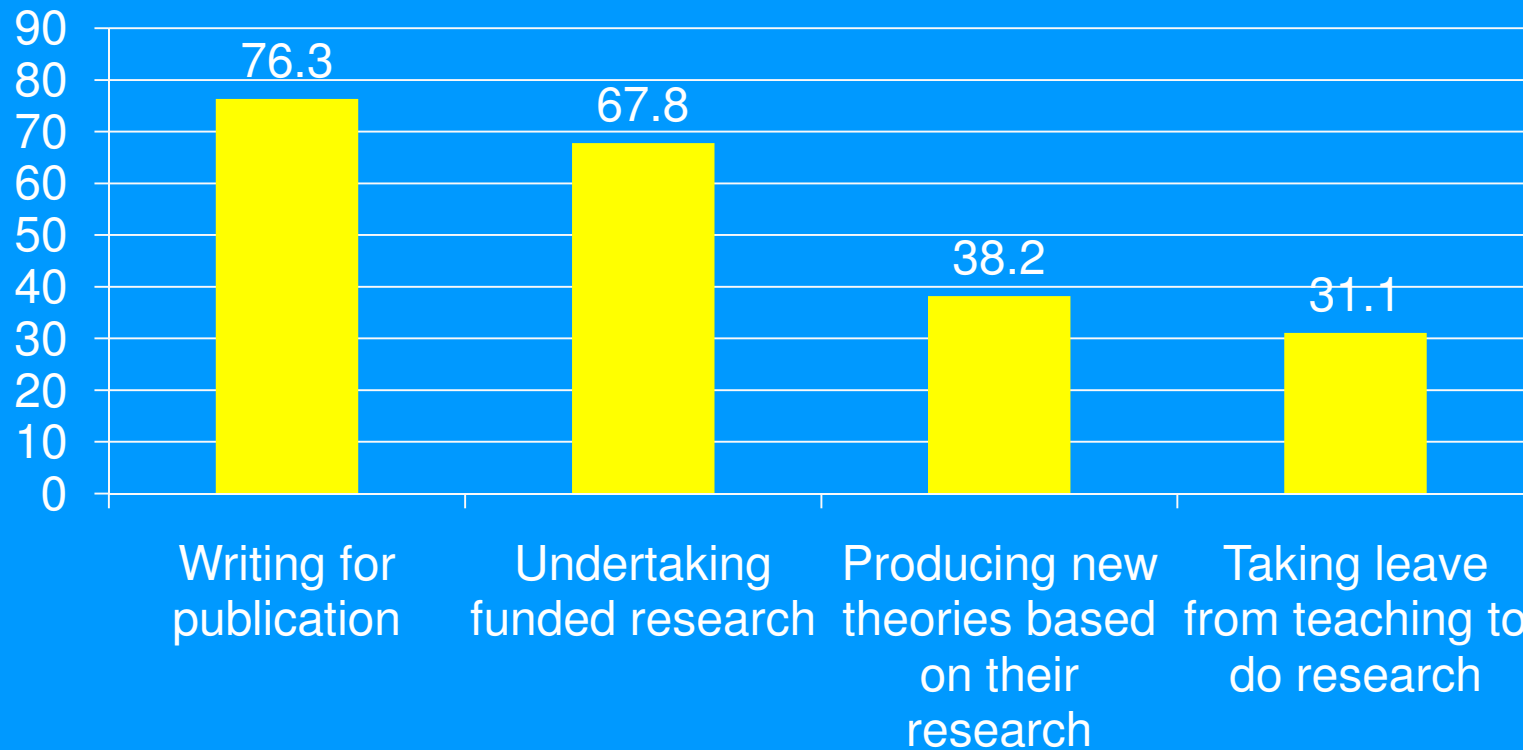
- 459 out of 655 respondents answered the question
- 419 'Home' students responded
- 40 EU or non-EU international students responded
- 199 unknowns





Students' Awareness of Research

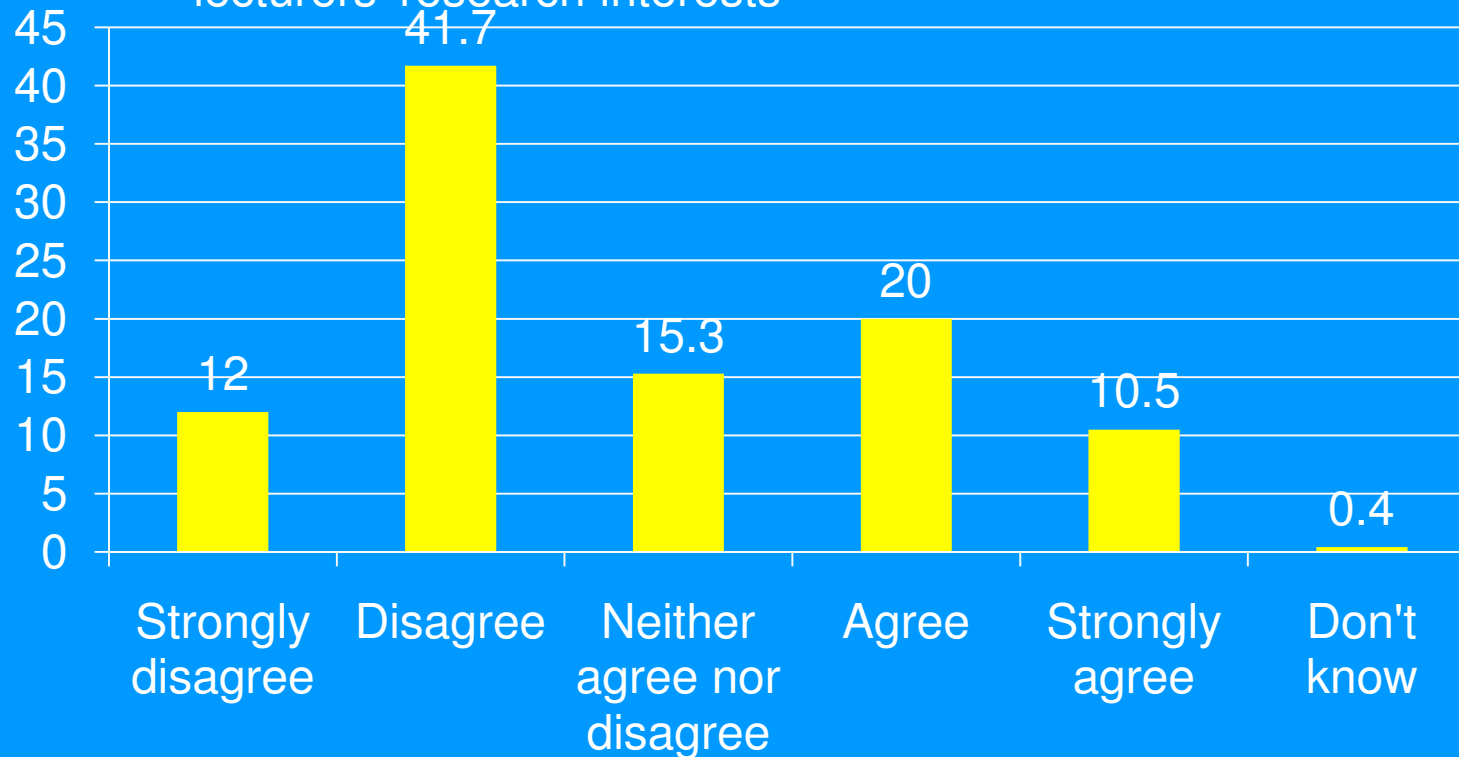
■ Percentage of all respondents aware of certain staff research activities





Students' Awareness of Research

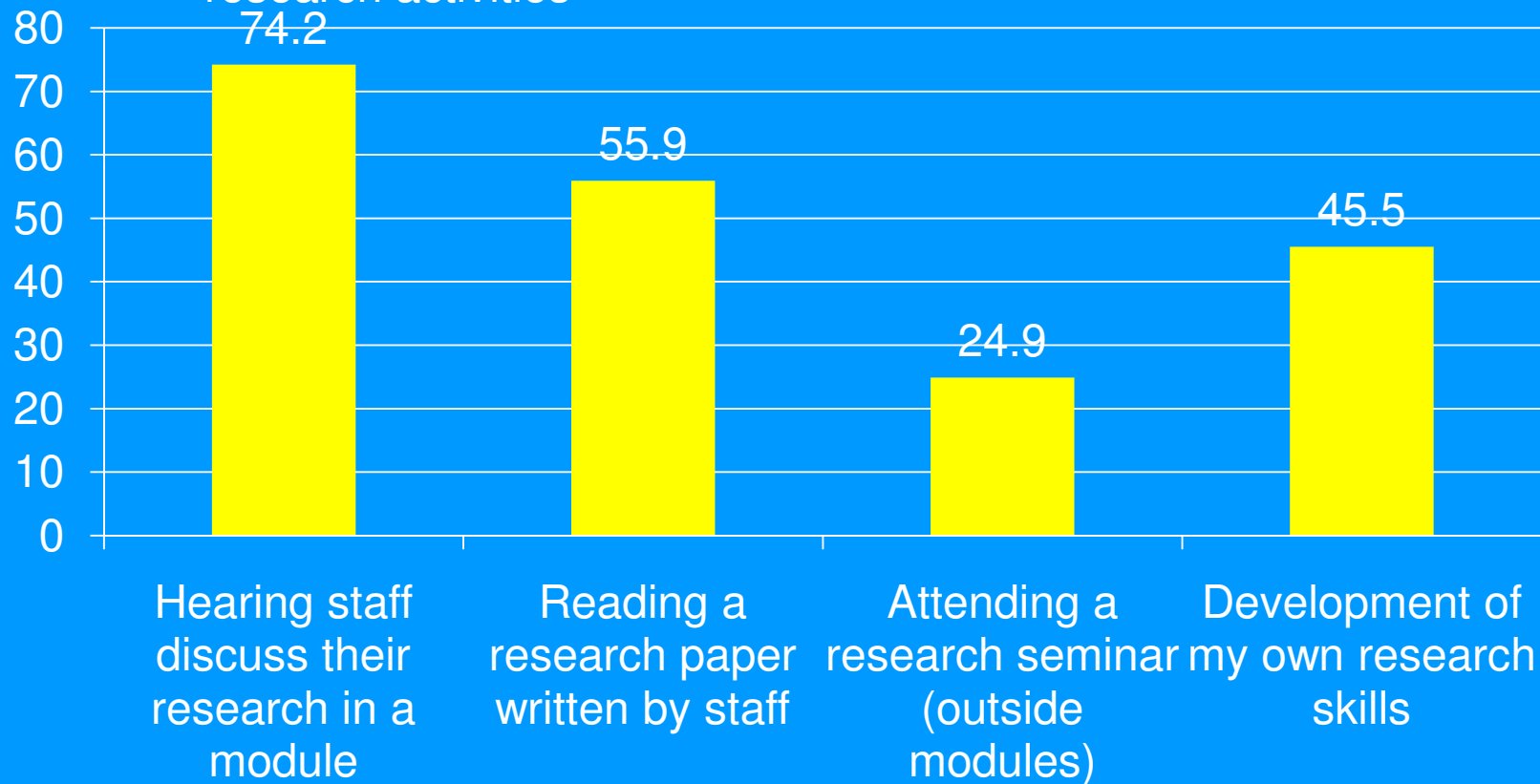
■ All responses to the statement: "I have little awareness of my lecturers' research interests"





Students' Experience of Research

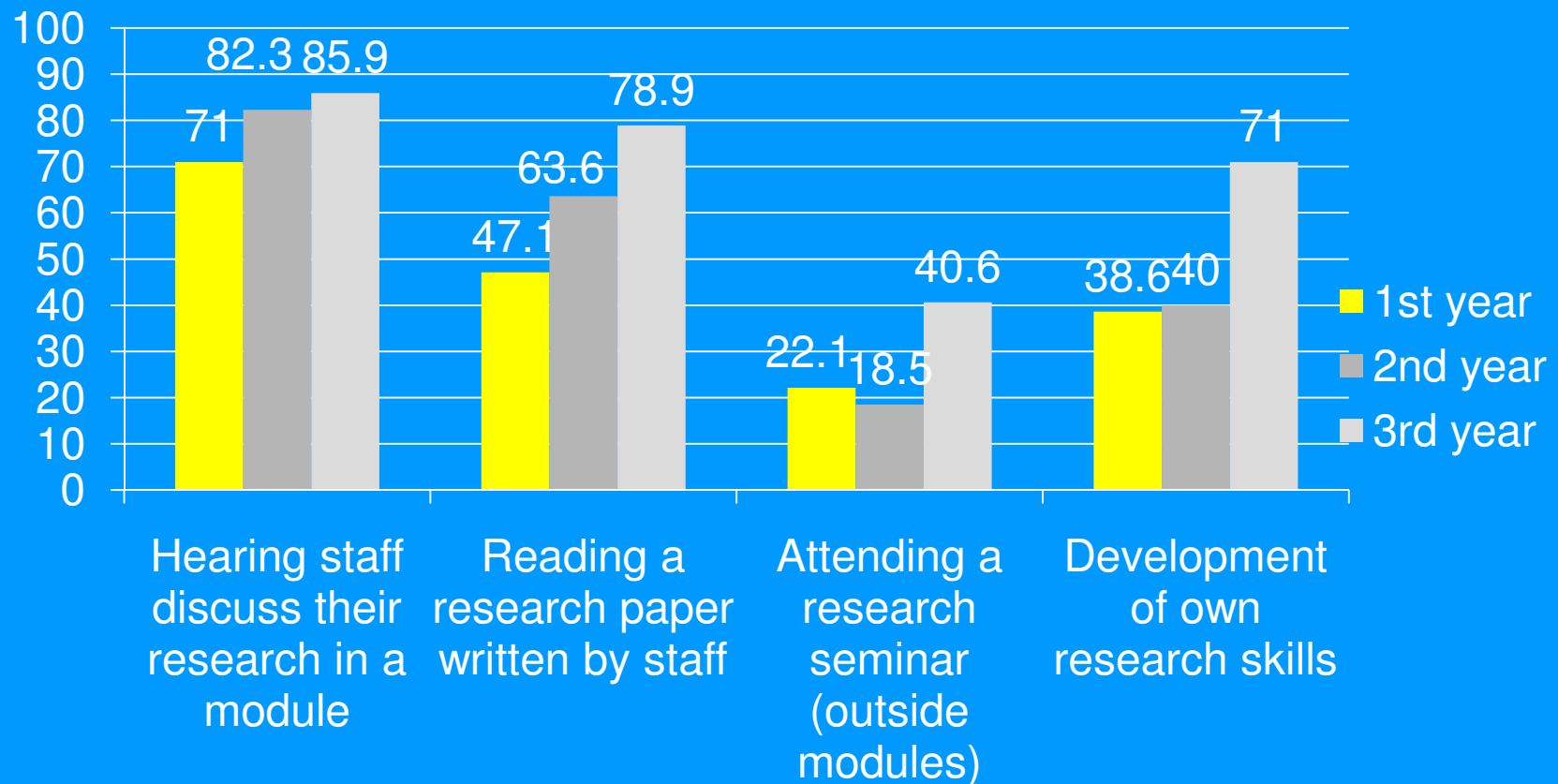
■ Percentage of all respondents who have experienced certain research activities





Students' Experience of Research

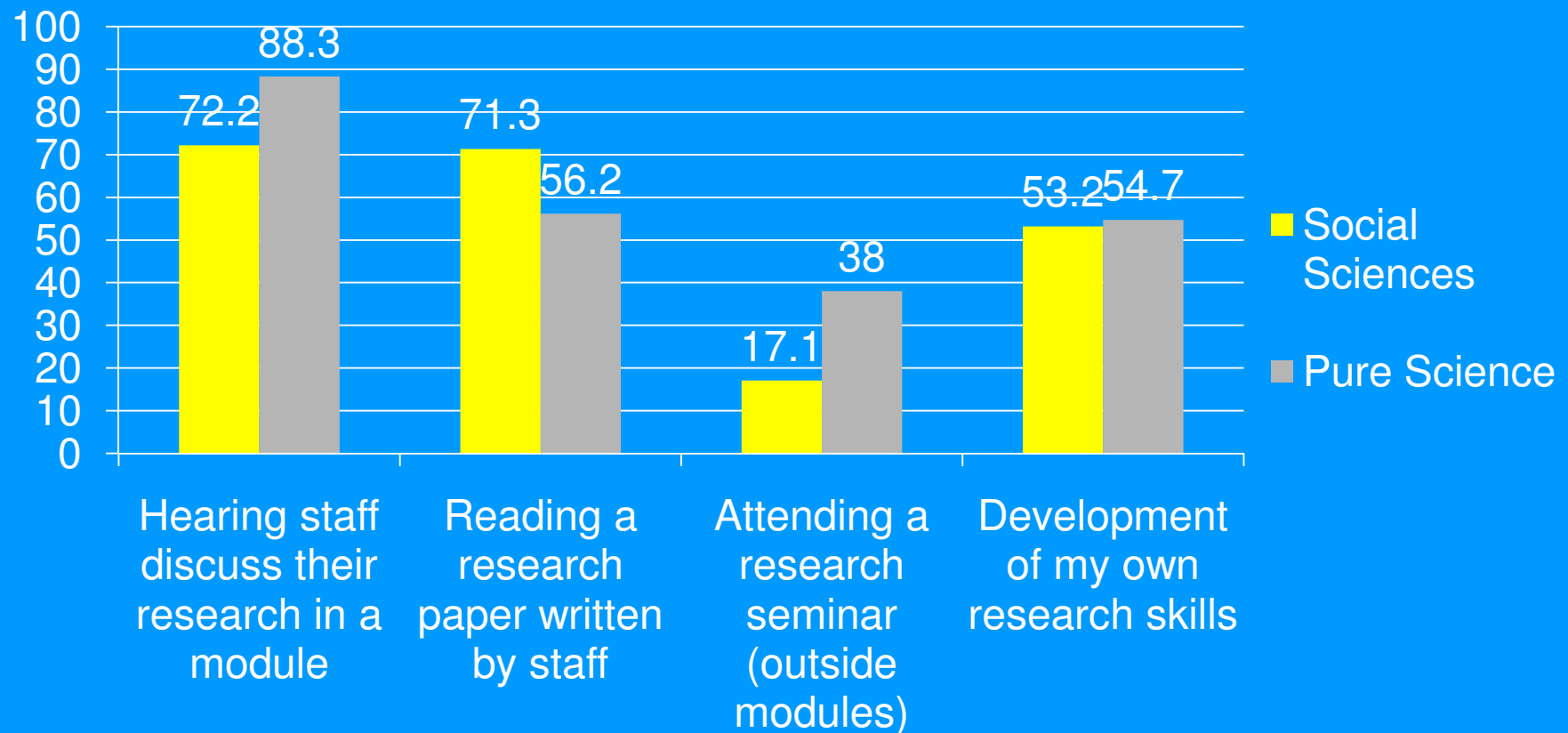
Percentage of students who have experienced certain activities, by year group





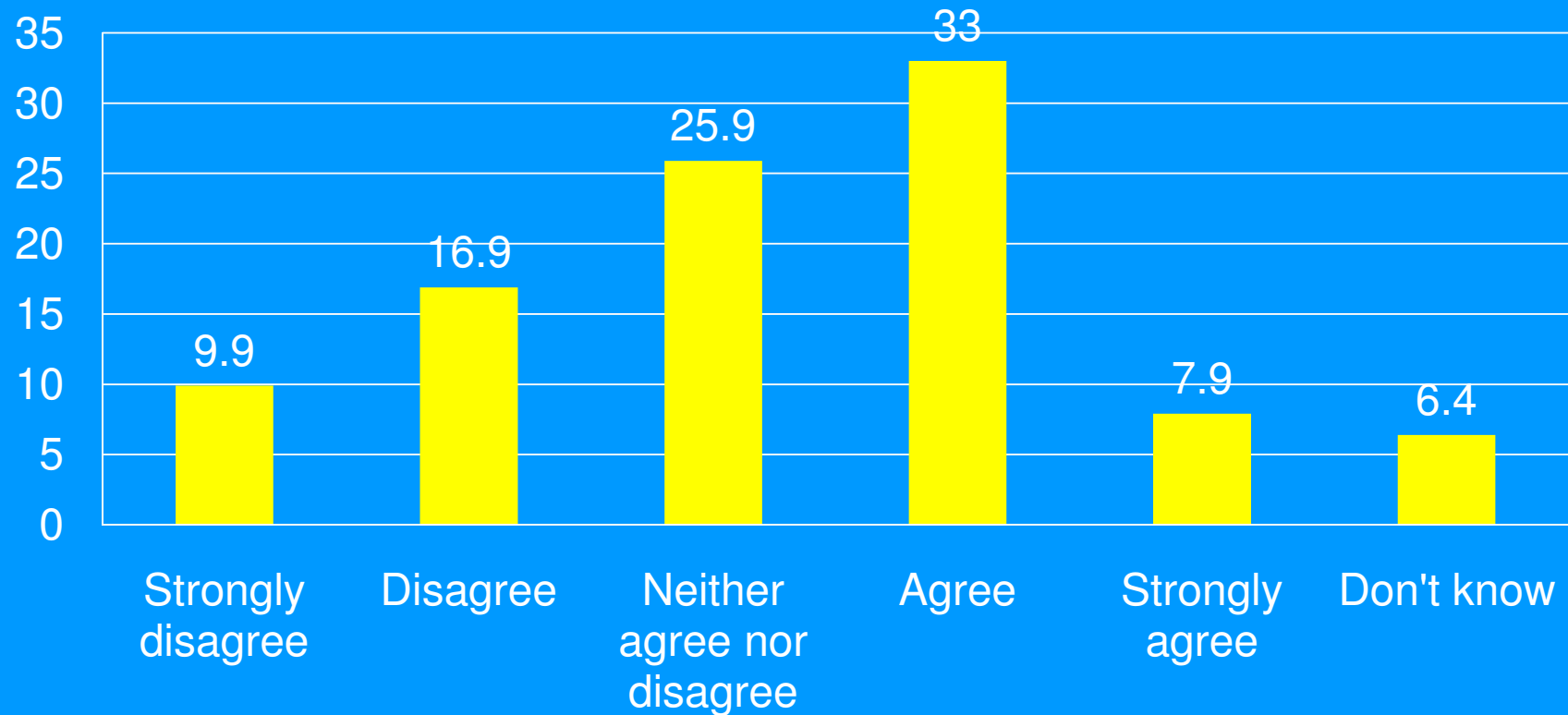
Students' Experience of Research

Percentage of students who have experienced certain activities, by faculty





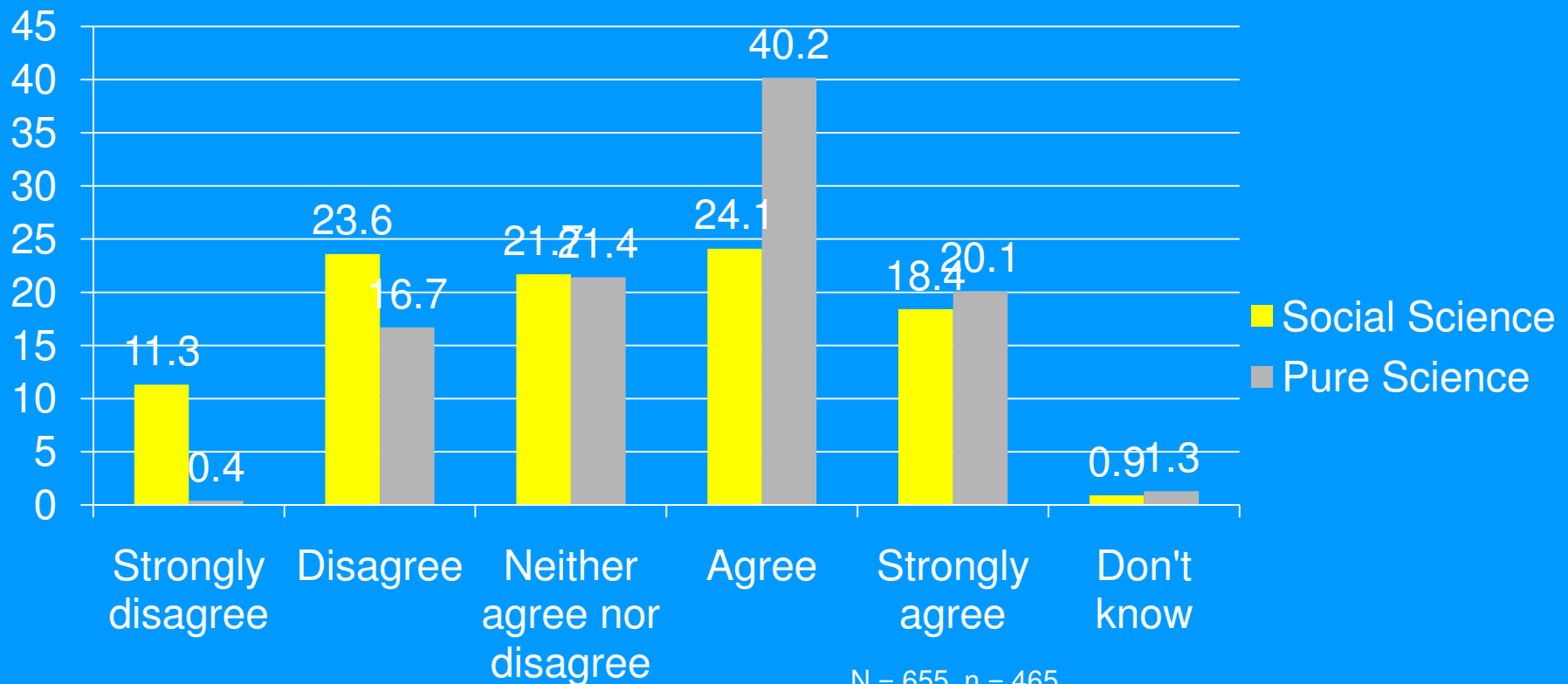
“My course involves me doing research that allows me to contribute to creating knowledge”



N = 655, n = 467

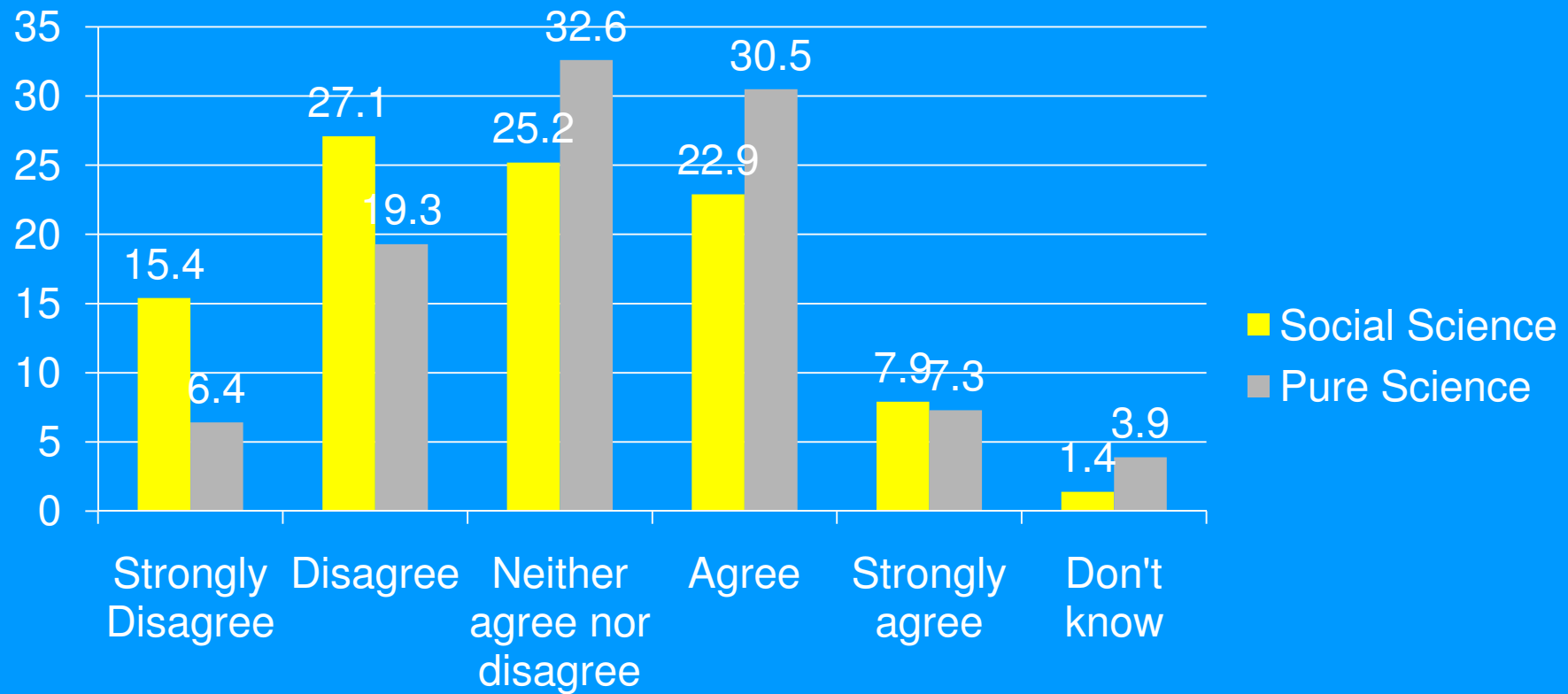


“The majority of my course is organised around the learning of facts and the memorising of pre-existing knowledge”





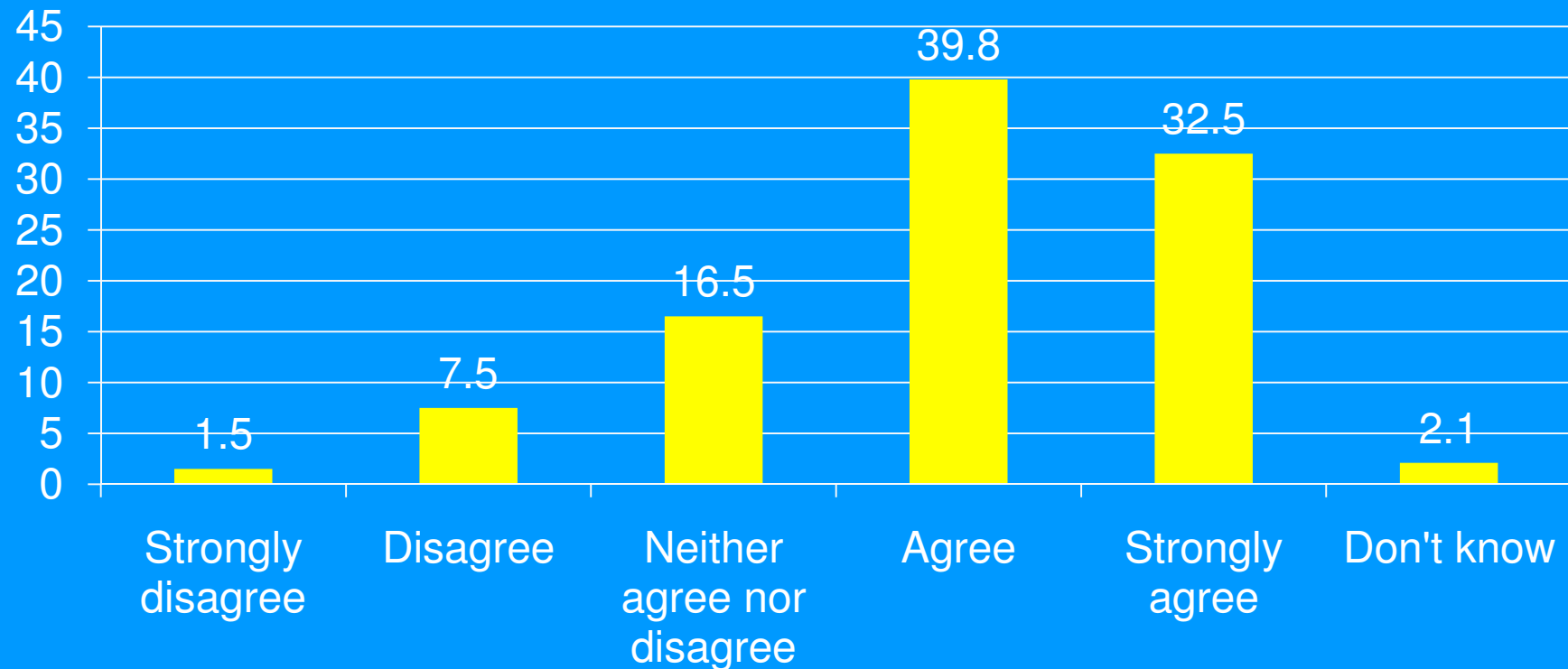
“In my department I feel a part of a community of staff and student researchers”



N = 655, n = 467



“It is important for me that my course provides me with the guidance and skills to pursue my own research”



N = 655, n = 467



How students think they benefit:

- Methodology
- Research skills
- Inspiration



Methodology and Skills:

‘Research method modules in both levels 1 and 2 have involved projects using online journals, data analysis programmes and research poster design - through these my own involvement in research has contributed to my learning.’



Methodology and Skills:

‘It has provided me with an insight into what a career in research would involve: the collaborations that must be made with certain companies, and the network of researchers from various fields that are integrated in order to pursue a particular research area.’



Methodology and Skills:

‘Research into the funding of areas during group work allowed me to understand that some theories can not be proven empirically [...] However I also learnt that it is very possible to lie with maps to prove evidence, which makes me look twice at research data I read.’



How students think they benefit:

'Before coming to university, I wasn't aware of the research that goes on here. Just listening to lecturers talk about their research and seeing the research labs has stimulated my interest and I would like to find out more.'



Inspiration:

‘Seeing how a “real” researcher plans, executes and publishes his work and how enthusiastic he is about his subject made me understand science so much better than a simple lecture could have ever done and stimulated me to build my own research career.’



How students think they benefit:

‘It has provided me with an insight into what a career in research would involve.’

‘Their passion for it has driven mine. It is nice to see people who are just as interested in the subject as you are, and I thrive off this.’

‘[I feel] as though I am in a high-achieving environment.’



What students complained about:

1. Absence due to research leave, conferences, field work
2. Research prioritised over teaching
3. Lecturers pushing their own research agendas



Absence and prioritised research:

‘My personal tutor left to undertake research meaning I had to have a different tutor. When my original tutor returned I had to transfer back to her. A lot of moving about. It would have also been nice if she explained the research she was doing to her students!’

‘They left mid semester to do what was deemed as "more important work than teaching us" we had no cover so were just left to figure out what to do.’



Pushing Research Agenda:

‘I had one experience with a teacher who was very keen on philosophical/theoretical issues with regards to Korean literature. The teacher was a bit younger than most of the staff there and, to be fair, I suppose this teacher wanted us to think for ourselves a bit more but it put me off the subject quite a bit and I still could not tell you what Foucault is all about.’



Do students care?

- Responding on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means of very little importance and 5 very important:
- Regards 'conducting my own research as part of a module' 61% of respondents answered 4 or 5 (based on 446 responses)
- Regards 'conducting my own extracurricular research' 33.2% of respondents answered 4 or 5 (based on 446 responses)
- Regards 'attend research seminars, lectures, exhibitions or conferences' 56.4% answered 4 or 5 (based on 443 responses)
- Regards "undertake interdisciplinary research' 32% answered 4 or 5 (based on 444 responses)



Where does this sit in broader context?

- Confirms data
- Mention science/social science difference (has it been addressed before?)
- Third-year leap?
- **ALEC DOES THIS**



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Where do we go from here?



Diana Ross and Michael Jackson in *The Wiz* (1978)



Initial suggestions...

- Students should begin doing research in their first year
- Disciplines can learn a great deal from each other
- Research and teaching can both benefit from being integrated with each other



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Find us on the web

- Website: www.sheffield.ac.uk/lrt
- Blog: <http://thelrtproject.blogspot.com/>
- Email: a.patton@shef.ac.uk

