

Graduate Student Experiences



Introduction

The University of Windsor offers more than 70 Master's and Doctoral programs in various disciplines, with new programs being developed every year. Graduate student enrolment has increased by 146% over the past ten years. Students are attracted from across Canada and from more than 40 countries around the globe. The largest enrolment increases are occurring in international course-based programs.

Every three years, graduate students participate in the Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) to share their perspectives about the quality of their educational experiences, satisfaction with research and professional skills development, and experiences with support services and resources. The CGPSS provides information to the university to determine programmatic changes and policies for graduate education¹. The most recent [survey results](#) are from 2019² whereby two-thirds of the sample are enrolled in professional programs and of which most are international students.

Facts and Figures

- In 2019, almost 4 in 5 of all respondents rated their overall UWindsor experience positively. Despite positive ratings, UWindsor respondents' satisfaction ratings are comparably lower than those from students in similar streams in Ontario, and UWindsor respondents are less likely to select the same university or recommend the university to others.

Table 1. Comparisons of University Satisfaction

	UWindsor			Ontario		
	Professional Master's	Research Master's	Doctoral	Professional Master's	Research Masters	Doctoral
Overall Experience (% Good, Very good or Excellent)	75%	81%	79%	87%	85%	84%
Academic Experience (% Good, Very good or Excellent)	76%	85%	84%	88%	88%	88%
Same University Selection (% Probably Yes or Definitely)	55%	56%	60%	71%	69%	69%
Recommend University (% Probably Yes or Definitely)	64%	65%	66%	76%	76%	71%

¹ The data points provided by CGPSS indicate statistical comparisons between UWindsor and selected Ontario and Canadian comparator groups.

² The sample consisted of 62% of students in professional master's, 25.6% in research master's (25.6%) and 12.5% doctoral students (12.5%). About two thirds of professional master's respondents are international. Almost all (97%) respondents lived off campus. Five percent self-identified as having a disability.

- Three quarters of all respondents rated the quality of their program good or better, while 4 in 5 rated the quality of teaching (79%) and relationships with faculty (80%) positively. Shown in Table 2., UWindsor respondents tend to be less satisfied with aspects of their program than Ontario students, and most notably, UWindsor Professional Master’s students have indicated the lowest ratings.

Table 2. Comparison of Program Satisfaction (% Good, Very good or Excellent)

	UWindsor			Ontario		
	Professional Master’s	Research Master’s	Doctoral	Professional Master’s	Research Master’s	Doctoral
Quality of Program	73%	79%	80%	84%	85%	84%
Quality of Teaching	73%	85%	79%	87%	88%	85%
Relationship with Faculty	81%	80%	77%	88%	87%	82%

- The percentage of Doctoral respondents who were satisfied with academic advising and guidance has increased to 76% from 69% in the 2016 CGPSS. Like other Ontario Universities, UWindsor Professional Master’s students were the least satisfied with academic advising and guidance.
- Satisfaction with research supervisors has remained very high as more than 90% of Doctoral and Research Master’s respondents said their advisor was available for regular meetings, gave constructive feedback and was knowledgeable about degree requirements.
- About two-thirds reported positive experiences with internships, practicum and experiential learning opportunities. Both Research Master’s and Doctoral respondents notably reported more opportunities for [high-impact practices](#) than students in other Ontario Universities (Figure 1).

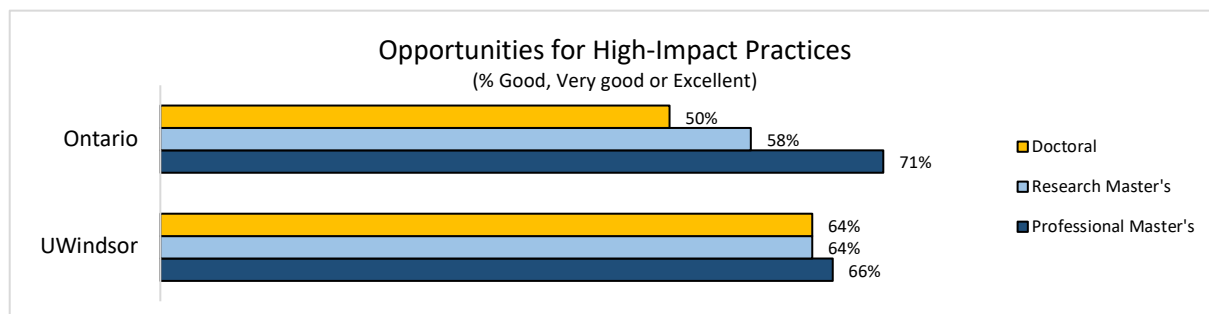


Figure 1

- Almost 3 in 5 (58%) Doctoral respondents are very satisfied with the opportunities in their program to collaborate on research with faculty members compared to 51% of Doctoral students in Ontario. UWindsor Research Master's students are less satisfied with these opportunities than their Ontario peers (46% and 52%, respectively).
- Most graduate students report financial pressures as obstacles to academic progress. Four in ten Master's respondents described work commitments as a major obstacle. Most Master's respondents work more than 10 hours per week in positions that have little or no connection to their studies (Figure 2).

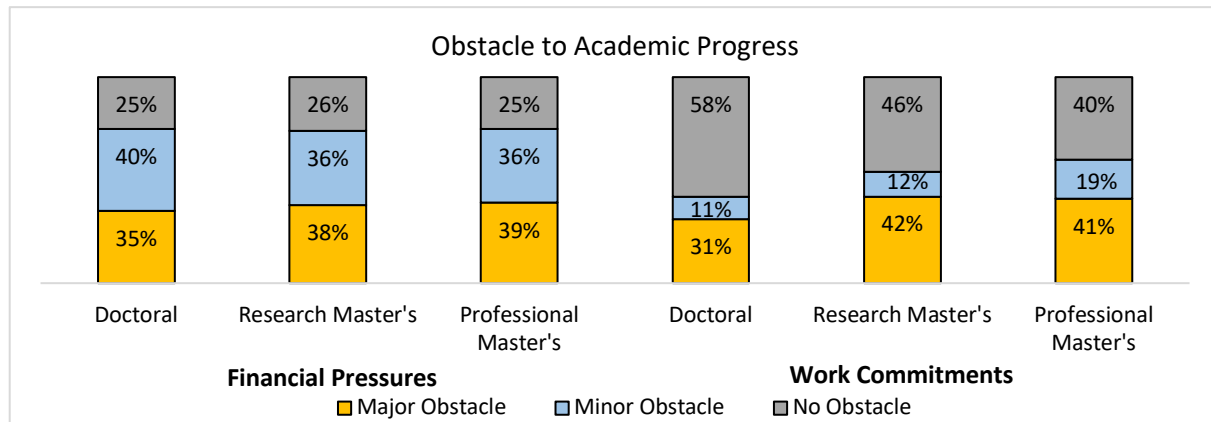


Figure 2

- Professional Master's respondents rely on loans, savings and family while Research Master's and Doctoral students rely more heavily on graduate assistantships. Reliance on employment for Professional Master's respondents has increased steadily since the 2013 CGPS while the percentage of research and teaching assistantships have decreased for Doctoral respondents.
- UWindsor graduate respondents are generally satisfied with campus resources (Table 3). Respondents were most satisfied with library facilities and academic support services. Notably, respondents rated the quality of registration processes lower than in the 2016 CGPSS, possibly due to the implementation of the new student information system in the 2018-2019 academic year.

Table 3. Satisfaction with University Resources by Stream (% Good, Very good or Excellent)

	UWindsor		
	Professional Master's	Research Master's	Doctoral
Research Labs	77%	76%	74%
Office Space	79%	77%	71%
Library Facilities	89%	88%	85%
Information Technology Services	74%	69%	72%
Registrar Services	67%	51%	59%
Academic Student Services	85%	82%	83%

Best Practices

Since 2007, universities in Ontario as well as many major universities across Canada participate in the CGPSS. Currently, the CGPSS has gathered 200,000+ responses from more than 50 universities. The information gathered is useful to programs and the university for determining programmatic changes and policies for graduate education. The CGPSS allows the institution to mark progress over time and against comparator institutions, with the goal of creating the highest possible quality graduate experience.

The University's [Office of Student Experience](#) offers programs and services to help students transition through university life, support mental health, encourage leadership development, and enhance student support and engagement. Services and initiatives aimed to improve the UWindsor student experience are available through the [Aboriginal Education Centre](#), [Wellness Outreach Office](#), [International Student Centre](#), [Student Accessibility Services](#), and [Student Success and Leadership Centre](#).

Thinking Questions

1. What are the most critical aspects of graduate school that impact the graduate student experience?
2. What are some ways the University of Windsor can improve the graduate student experience?