

# **QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY**

## **Evaluation of PhD Day 2022 and experience with doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science MU**

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## Executive summary

In connection with PhD Day, which took place on 14 September 2022 at the Bohunice University Campus, we contacted PhD students of the Faculty of Science with a request to fill in an [online questionnaire](#), to get feedback on PhD Day 2022, but also to know more about students' experiences with doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science.

**A total of 64 respondents** (17 participated in PhD Day 2022 while 47 did not) **responded**; the **return rate was 8%** (calculated based on the number of all PhD students as of 10/2022).

1. **The students who participated in PhD Day 2022** gave very positive feedback. Students rated the following parts of the programme as the most useful and beneficial: ***Mobility Programmes and Grants, Kick off Muni Mendel Doctorandus a Brno PhD Talent Contest.***
2. **The other part of the questionnaire included assessment of doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science:**
  - **Social climate at the faculty regarding equality of culture, friendly or discriminatory environment** – 83% of respondents rate it „satisfactory“ or „rather satisfactory“, 11% rate it „rather unsatisfactory“ or „unsatisfactory“; 6% were not able to assess the social climate.
  - **Encountering unethical behaviour** - 31% of respondents encountered behaviour that could be considered unethical, 63% did not and, 6% were not sure.  
**When asked about specific unethical behaviour** 43% of respondents mentioned „*discrimination and unequal treatment based on gender, age, ethnic origin, religious belief etc.*“, 35% reported „*unfair competitive practices among students/colleagues/teachers*“, 9% mentioned „*abusing the position of a supervisor for own profit*“.
  - **Encountering different treatment because of one's gender** - 67% of respondents did not encounter different treatment, 20% did, while 13% could not say.
  - **Quality of different areas of support for PhD students at the Faculty of Science** – there is a noticeable *increase in negative answers* in the area of “*financial conditions for PhD students*“, on the contrary, there is an overwhelming satisfaction with „*international mobility options*“.
  - **Areas within doctoral studies that the Faculty should focus on** - *Financial conditions for PhD students; better accessibility and communication of information about PhD studies and their organisation; expanding the offer of workshops and events for PhD students; care for students' mental health; changing requirements from the faculty; collaboration between students and supervisors to improve the*

*quality of studies; motivating students to meet deadlines and length of study; difficulty of studying; doctoral state exam.*

- **Desired topics of further training** - *Academic skills – writing, presentation skills, grant applications; training in psychology, well-being and stress management; time management; PC literacy, data analysis, programming; soft skills training; career planning; subject specific courses and English language courses.*

## 1. Introduction and methodology

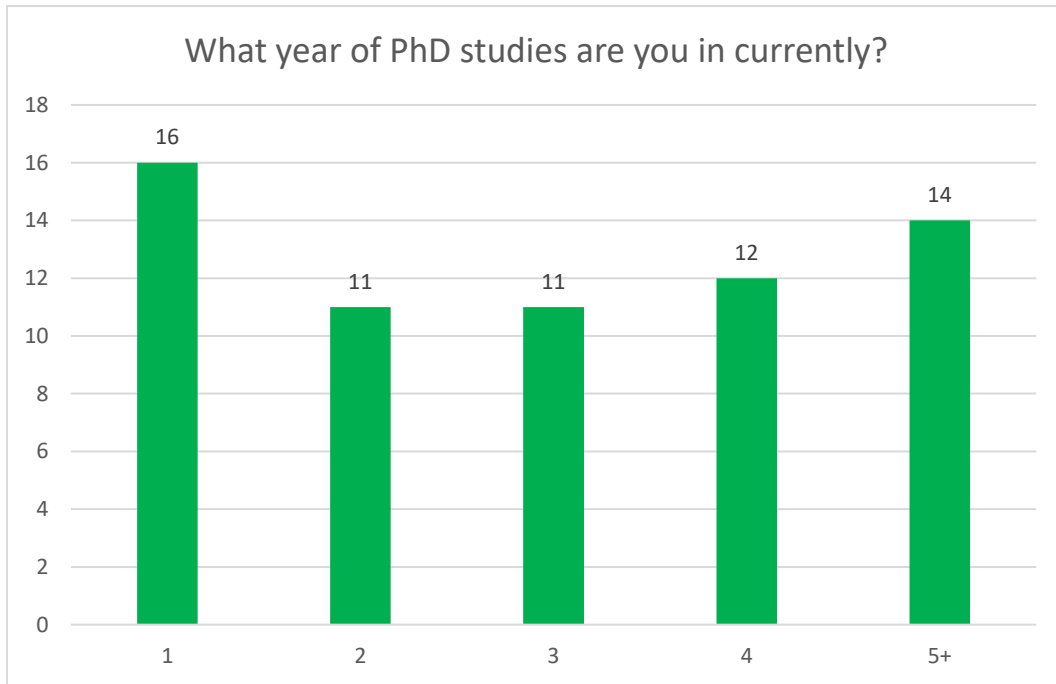
On the occasion of interfaculty PhD Day 2022, we contacted PhD students after the event with a request to fill in an online questionnaire to get feedback on PhD Day 2022 and also to know more about students’ experiences with doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science MU. The questionnaire was sent out in September 2022 to all doctoral students. The data were collected via an online Microsoft Forms questionnaire: <https://forms.office.com/r/FgkKxkpzth>.

In the first part of the questionnaire, respondents who participated in the interfaculty PhD Day 2022 evaluated the organisation and benefits of the components of the programme. In the next part, the respondents evaluated their experience with doctoral studies at the Faculty of Science MU.

A total of **64 respondents** submitted their answers: 17 respondents participated in PhD Day 2022, 47 did not participate. Return rate (calculated based on the number of all doctoral students as of 10/2022): 8%

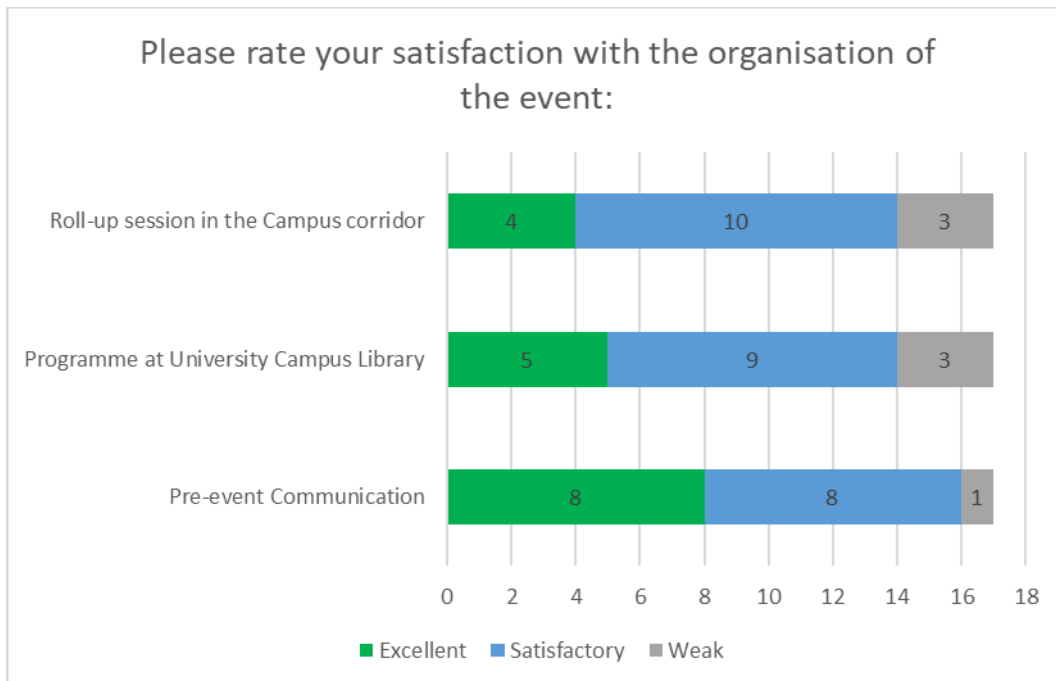
## 2. Characteristics of respondents



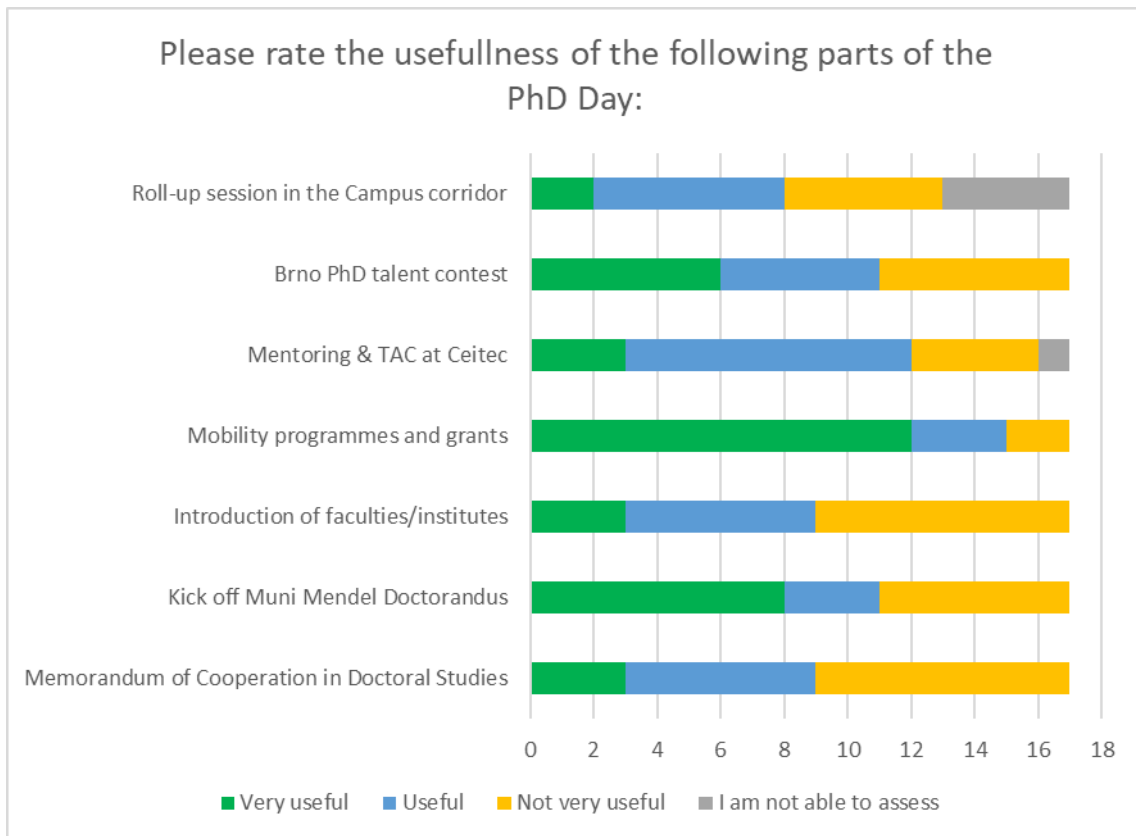


### 3. Evaluation of the Faculty PhD Day 2022

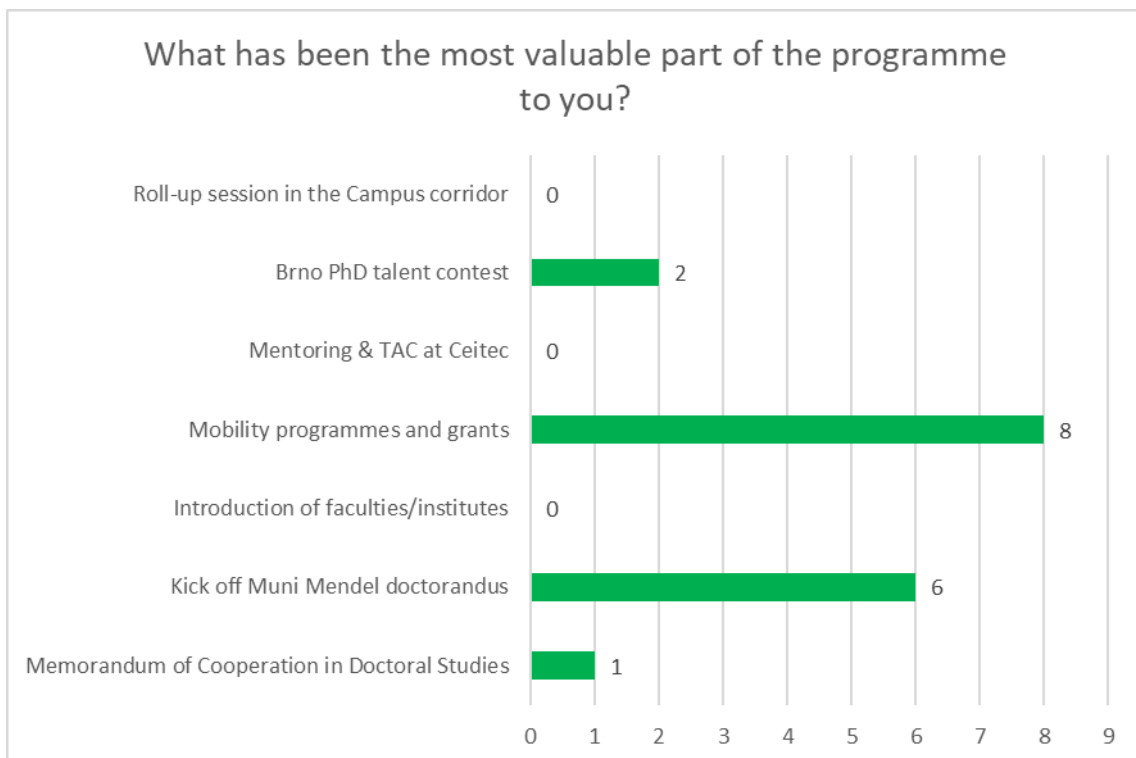
**Question: Please rate your satisfaction with the organisation of the event.**



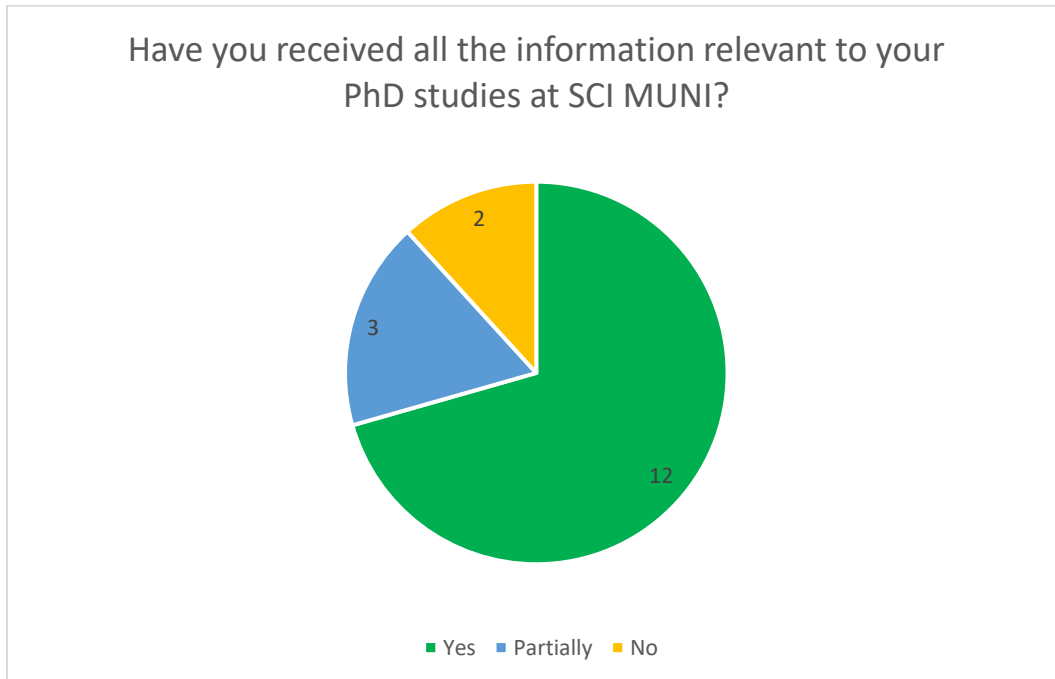
**Question: Please rate the usefulness of the following parts of the PhD Day.**



**Question: What has been the most valuable part of the programme to you?**



**Question: Have you received all the information relevant to your PhD studies at SCI MUNI?**



Some students used the supplementary response field to indicate that they would welcome information to help them complete their doctoral studies in a more timely manner, specifically information about course requirements and obligations.

**Question: What topic/programme would you suggest adding to the next PhD Day?** (open-ended question)

**Individual suggestions** (specific respondent statements):

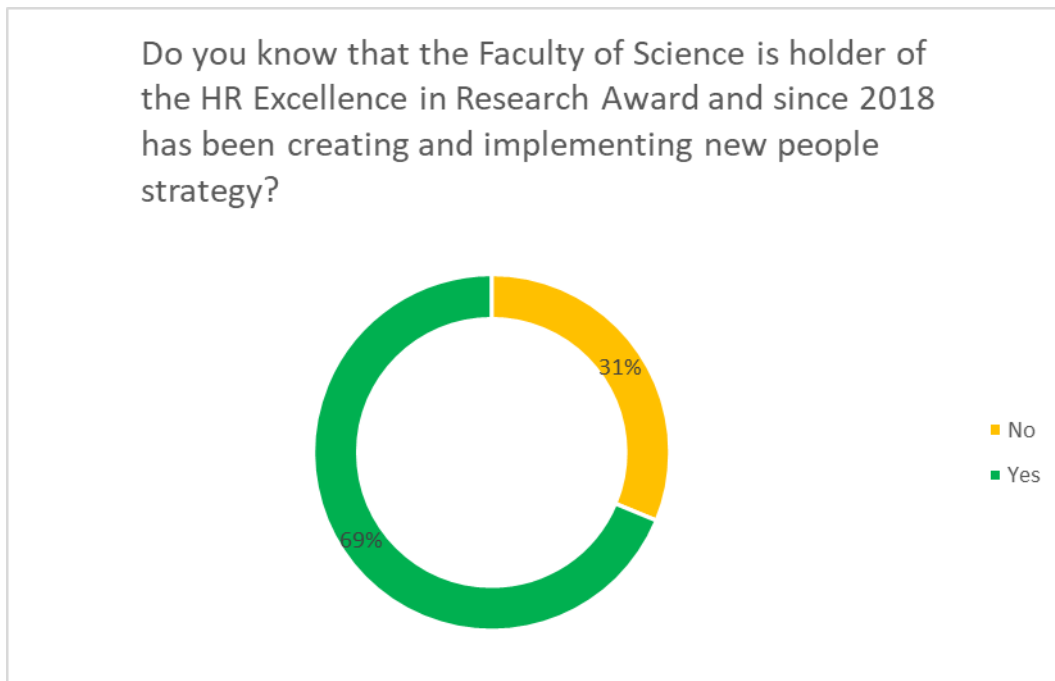
- „Stories of graduates of PhD studies and psychology tips since PhD is mostly about stress and psychic behaviour. Successful PhD students who talk about what were the hardships they encountered during their PhD and how they overcame them.“
- „I would suggest going more in-depth in important topics such as mobility opportunities and adding a section about study responsibilities.“
- „More details about international collaboration opportunities.“
- „Career paths after PhD (beyond academic) which should be a really interactive session.“
- „To have specific topics related to the field of study as every institute has its expectations from students i.e. participation in teaching activities, and bachelor students thesis defenses. I think every director should arrange some introductory sessions for new students to show how the institute operates, what is required from students, how students can apply for scholarships, etc. I guess that this can be

*solved by having a general program together for all fields and the blocks which are intended for a specific study program".*

These results need to be interpreted in light of the fact that only 17 of the 64 students who completed the questionnaire participated in the PhD day (and, therefore, were able to evaluate its course). Nevertheless, the feedback received from these respondents was **positive**. Students rated **the following parts of the programme as the most useful and beneficial: *Mobility Programmes and Grants, Kick off Muni Mendel Doctorandus a Brno PhD Talent Contest.***

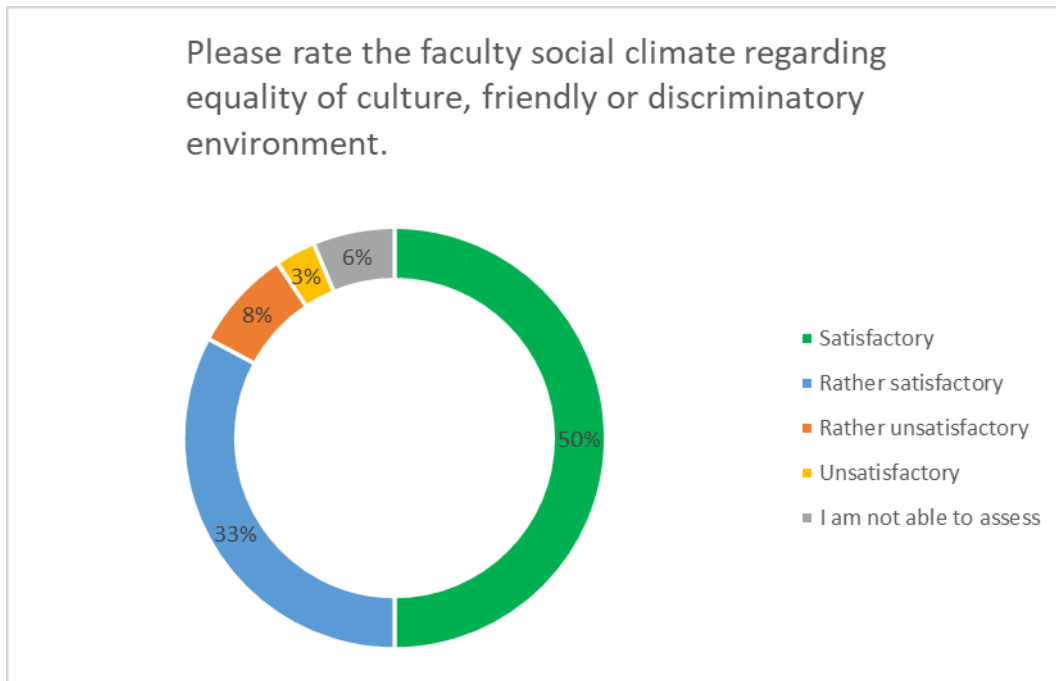
#### 4. Evaluation of experience with doctoral studies

**Question: Do you know that the Faculty of Science is holder of the HR Excellence in Research Award and since 2018 has been creating and implementing new people strategy?**

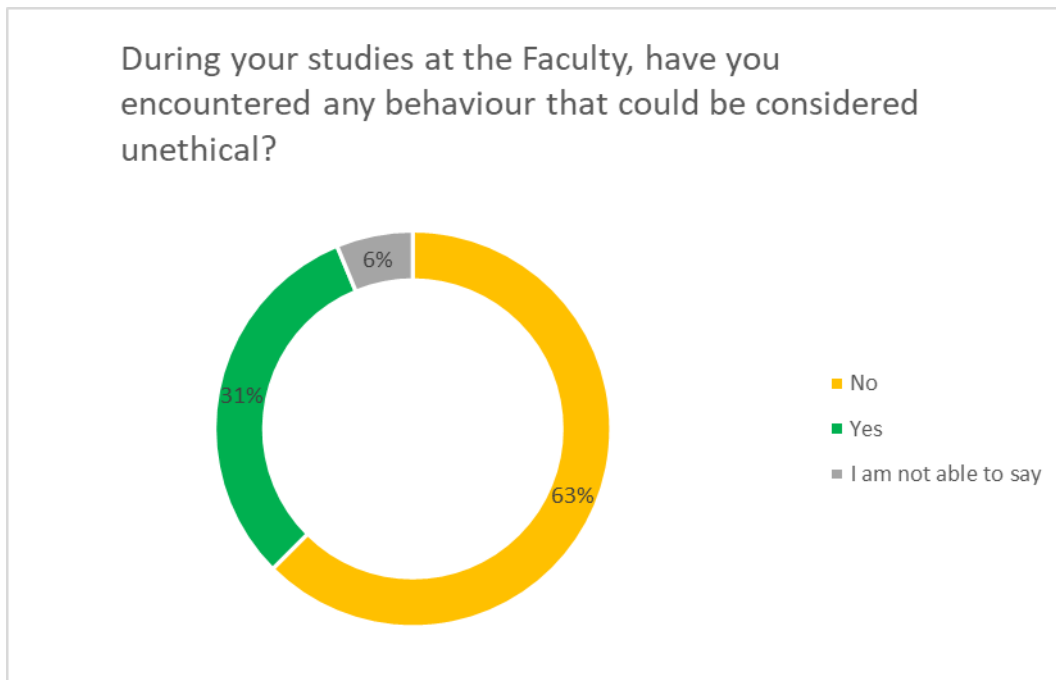




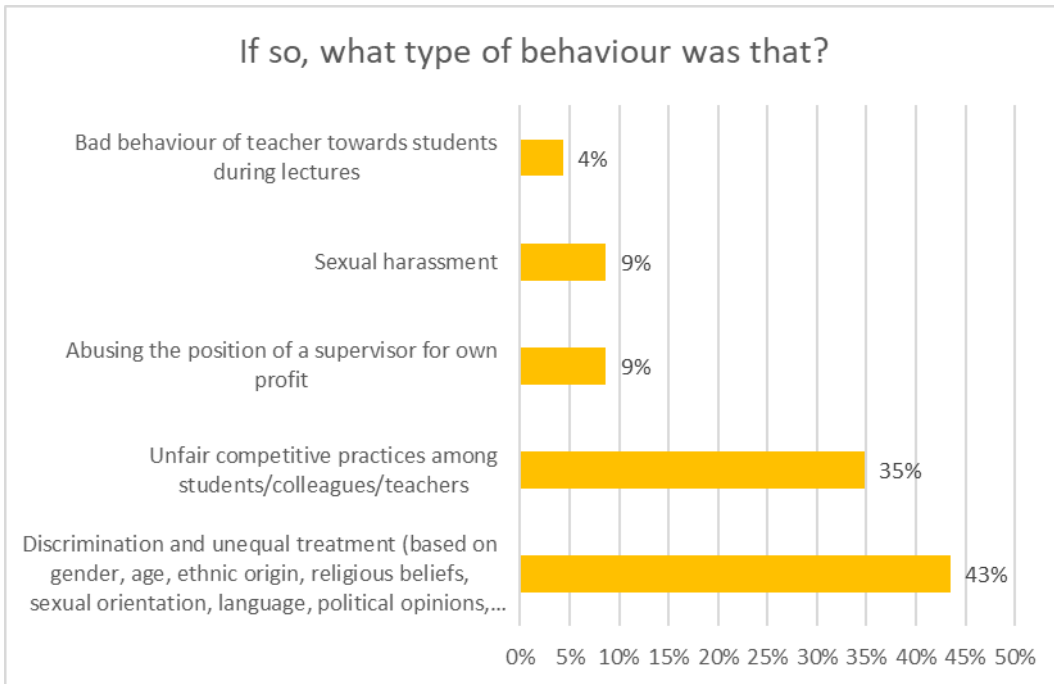
**Question: Please rate the faculty social climate regarding equality of culture, friendly or discriminatory environment.**



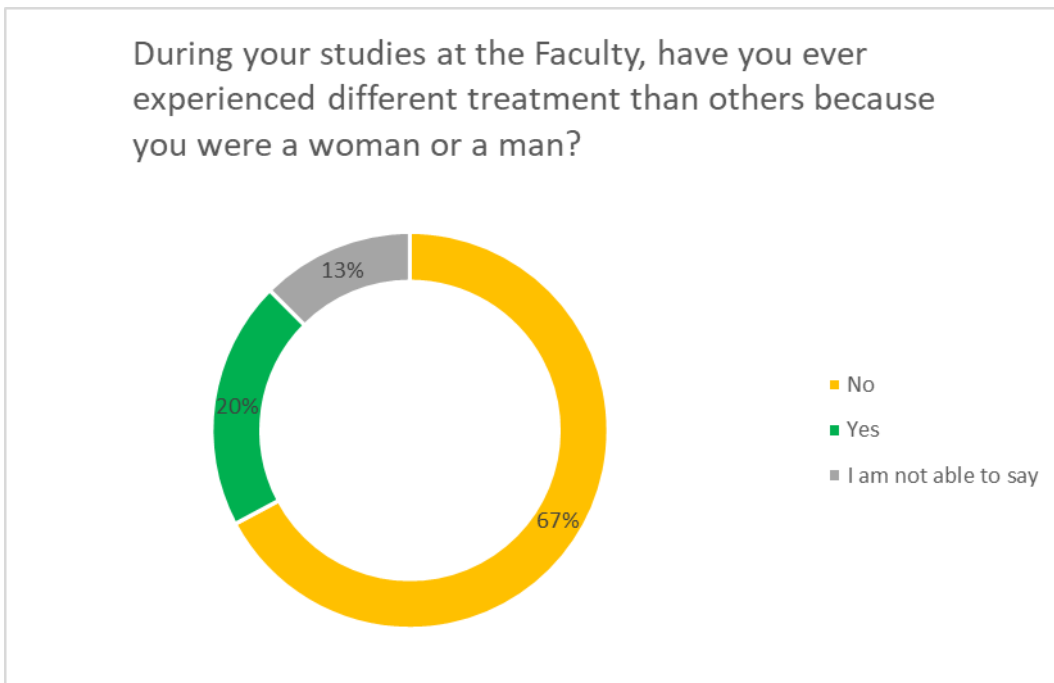
**Question: During your studies at the Faculty, have you encountered any behaviour that could be considered unethical?**



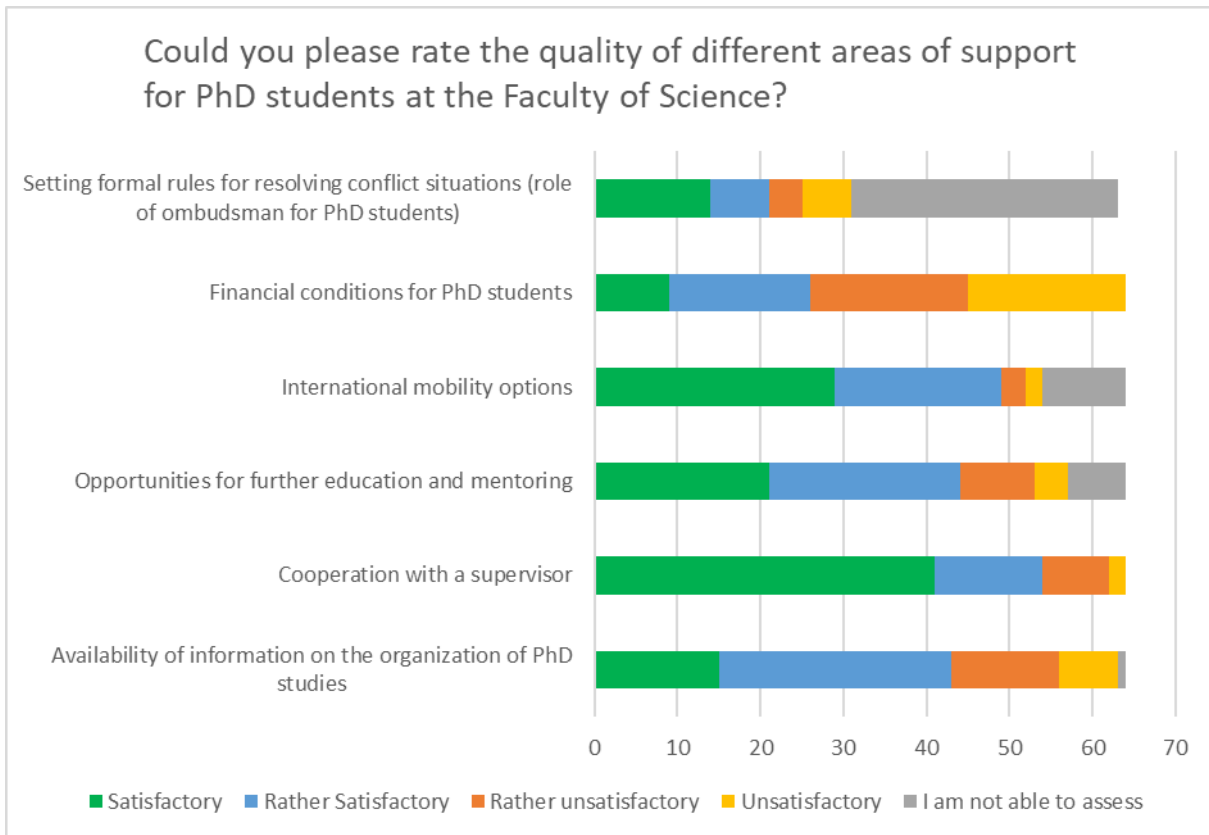
**Question: If so, what type of behaviour was that?**



**Question: During your studies at the Faculty, have you ever experienced different treatment than others because you were a woman or a man?**



**Question: Could you please rate the quality of different areas of support for PhD students at the Faculty of Science?**



**Question: What areas within doctoral studies should the Faculty focus on in the upcoming period?** (open-ended question)

**Recurring suggestions** (grouped into main thematic areas, including the specific respondent statements):

- Financial conditions for PhD students („Increasing the scholarship; it may be hard to finish your studies in time, if you spend half of your working hours in completely unrelated part time job, that you need to keep so that you're able to pay the bills at all; all PhD students should be employed and have normal conditions for their work; almost everyone has to work while studying, which then makes the studies almost impossible to finish")
- Better accessibility and communication of information about PhD studies and their organisation („Making information regarding PhD studies more available and clearer, for example what subjects are compulsory and what the appropriate amount of credits is; more information for supervisors about updates in PhD studies")
- Expanding the offer of workshops and events for PhD students („Building a wider spectrum of workshosp and events for PhD students to attend, quality > quantity; bringing the Ph.D students more together")

- Care for students' mental health („Psychology tips since Ph.D is mostly about stress and psychic behaviour; mental health program")
- Changing requirements from the faculty („Many students won't be able to ever graduate trying to fulfill all the appearing requirements; requirements are changing all the time, feels like the students get more responsibilities, which are fulfilled just for the record, with no benefit for the student; time rules for graduation are quite complicate to follow")
- Collaboration between students and supervisors to improve the quality of studies („More regular evaluation meetings, with the possibility to also evaluate not only the performance of the student but also the supervisor; be more strict in the maximal number of PhD students per supervisor; this should eventually lead to fewer PhD students and higher quality of studies")
- Motivating students to meet deadlines and length of study („To reduce the average duration of study to 4 years in some fields of studies; pushing the student to keep the milestones, making obligatory deadlines, etc.")
- Difficulty of studying („Not overloading students, some supervisors are very successful in persuading their students that they should work at weekends and/or more than 40 hours a week; high demand, low input towards students")
- Doctoral state exam („Cancelling the state exam, the doctoral study would be accomplished by thorough PhD defense; remove state exam as obligation for graduation, it's just wasting of time of the students and committees").

**Individual suggestions** (specific respondent statements):

- „Children care system in the time for obligatory courses."
- „Popularization of science for public, science workshops for elementary schools etc. should be more appreciated, because science is not just publishing papers! We do the science for people, hence, it should be also delivered to them."
- „Opportunity to teach if your supervisor doesn't have need for you in his classes."
- „Informing the students about future carrier opportunities not only in academia"
- „Greater involvement of PhD students in formal discussions within the faculty. "

**Question: In case we organised trainings for PhD students. Which topic/s would you prefer?** (open-ended question)

**Recurring suggestions** (grouped into main thematic areas, including the specific respondent statements):

- Academic skills – writing, presentation skills, grant applications („Grant writing; organising workshops about information resources, what are systematic reviews, how to start, presenting; presentation of research to the public")
- Training in psychology, well-being and stress management („Effective communication, mental heath, psychohygien, how to deal with stress, how to deal with failure; work/life balance")
- Time management

- PC literacy, data analysis, programming („Statistics; digital literacy; programming - nowadays useful in all fields: python, R studio, etc.; R course in english" )
- Subject specific courses („I would appreciate more bioinformatical or statistical training; courses related to proteomics; Metabolomics, Lipidomics, Transcriptomics")
- Soft skills training („Soft skills, mindfulness, team psychology, leadership")
- Career planning („Employment in the labour market; what to do after PhD, how to obtain funding as a student")
- English language courses („Academic English for a scientific researcher; how to write in academic english").

**Individual suggestions** (specific respondent statements):

- „Ethical issues in science."
- „Mentoring of younger students."

**Question: Do you have any other suggestions or comments you would like to mention to us?** (open-ended question)

**Individual suggestions** (specific respondent statements):

- „Try to be more detailed and choose themes that are either for those who are thinking about PhD or just for those who are already at PhD."
- „I am not aware of how many future potential Ph.D. students attend Ph.D. Day but maybe it could be more targeted to Master's students from other universities than MU."
- „You could also give more support to the parents who are also PhD students - to offer some day care or at least a possibility of a babysitter that would not cost them a kidney. Like collaboration with the teaching fakulty, because now if you want to return before your child is 3y, you have to pay a private place which costs 5000+ czk and returning to the research after 3 years is pain."
- „There is a lack of cohort feel across the faculty, it would be great if there were more events for students in a joint capacity to allow for integration across departments. Also there is a lack of continuity across the departments with different requirements for PhD students for example when you take the state exam and how long you are required to be abroad etc."
- „It´s nice that you try and improve the life of PhD students, a lot of them are 24/7 in the lab, have no social life and still do not finish after 7 years because of their supervisor."
- „I think that every institute should make sure that students get information on what is expected from them and how they should complete the required tasks. Meet key people

*in the department and provide details about their responsibility and relation to Phd student."*