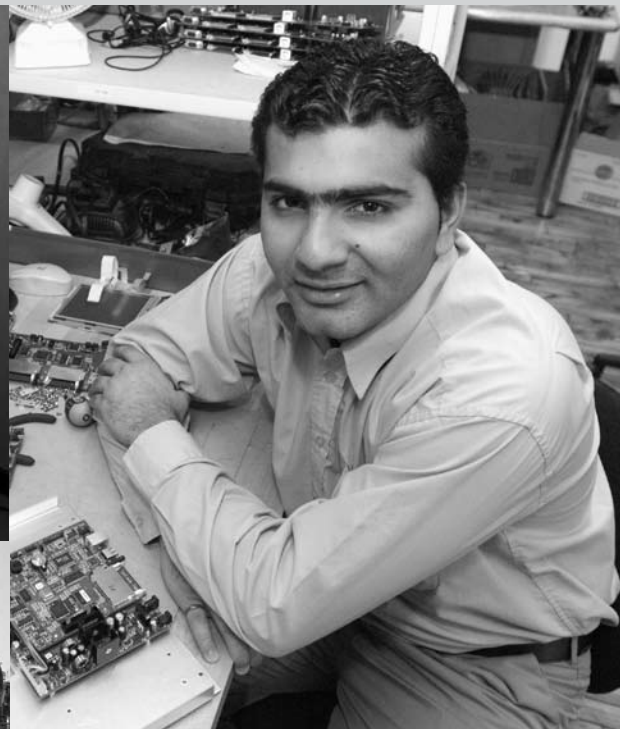


**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2007

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



Introduction

The Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) was conducted for the first time at Ryerson in February 2007. Initially developed for use in the United States, the survey has been adapted for Canadian use. All Ontario universities that offer graduate programs participated in the survey in 2007. Results allow one to assess Ryerson's progress in the provision of a high quality graduate experience.

All graduate students at Ryerson were invited by email to participate in the online survey. A total of 1,084 students were contacted, and 601 responded, yielding a response rate of 55 percent, the highest in Canada. Among Ryerson's respondents, 530 students (88 percent) were enrolled in master's programs, and 71 students (12 percent) were enrolled in doctoral programs.¹

General Satisfaction with the Ryerson Graduate Experience

A number of survey items ask students to provide a general assessment of their experience at Ryerson. Generally, these results are similar to those found at other Ontario universities. Results are summarized in Figures 1 and 2.

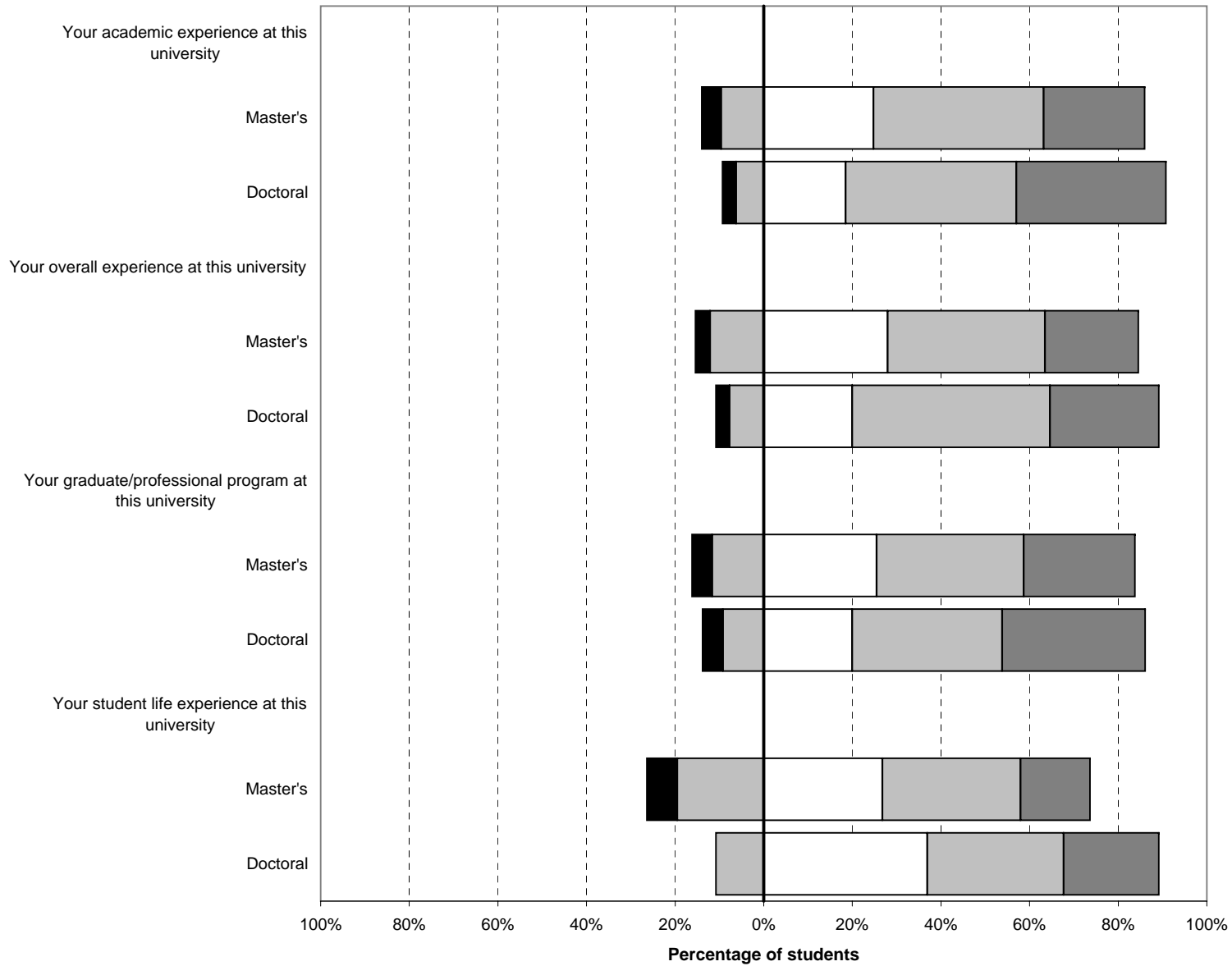
Overall, 87 percent of students report that their academic experience at Ryerson is "good," "very good" or "excellent." Similarly, 85 percent are satisfied with their overall experience and 76 percent with their student life experience at Ryerson. Master's and doctoral students respond similarly with the exception of student life: 89 percent of doctoral students express satisfaction in this area, while fewer than three quarters of master's respondents do so.

Eighty percent of students report that if they were to start their graduate/professional career again, they would "probably" or "definitely" select the same field of study.

Sixty-five percent of Ryerson students would "probably" or "definitely" select the same university if they were to start their graduate/professional career again, compared to 71 percent of Ontario students.

¹ Results are estimated to be accurate within 2.7 percentage points 19 times out of 20 for all respondents combined. For the group of master's program respondents, results are estimated to be accurate within 2.9 percentage points and for the doctoral group, 6.4 percentage points. (Sample size and response rate are taken into account when estimating the magnitude of error.)

Figure 1: Overall Assessment of Graduate Experience



At least 86% of respondents reported on these items.

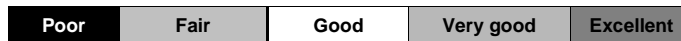
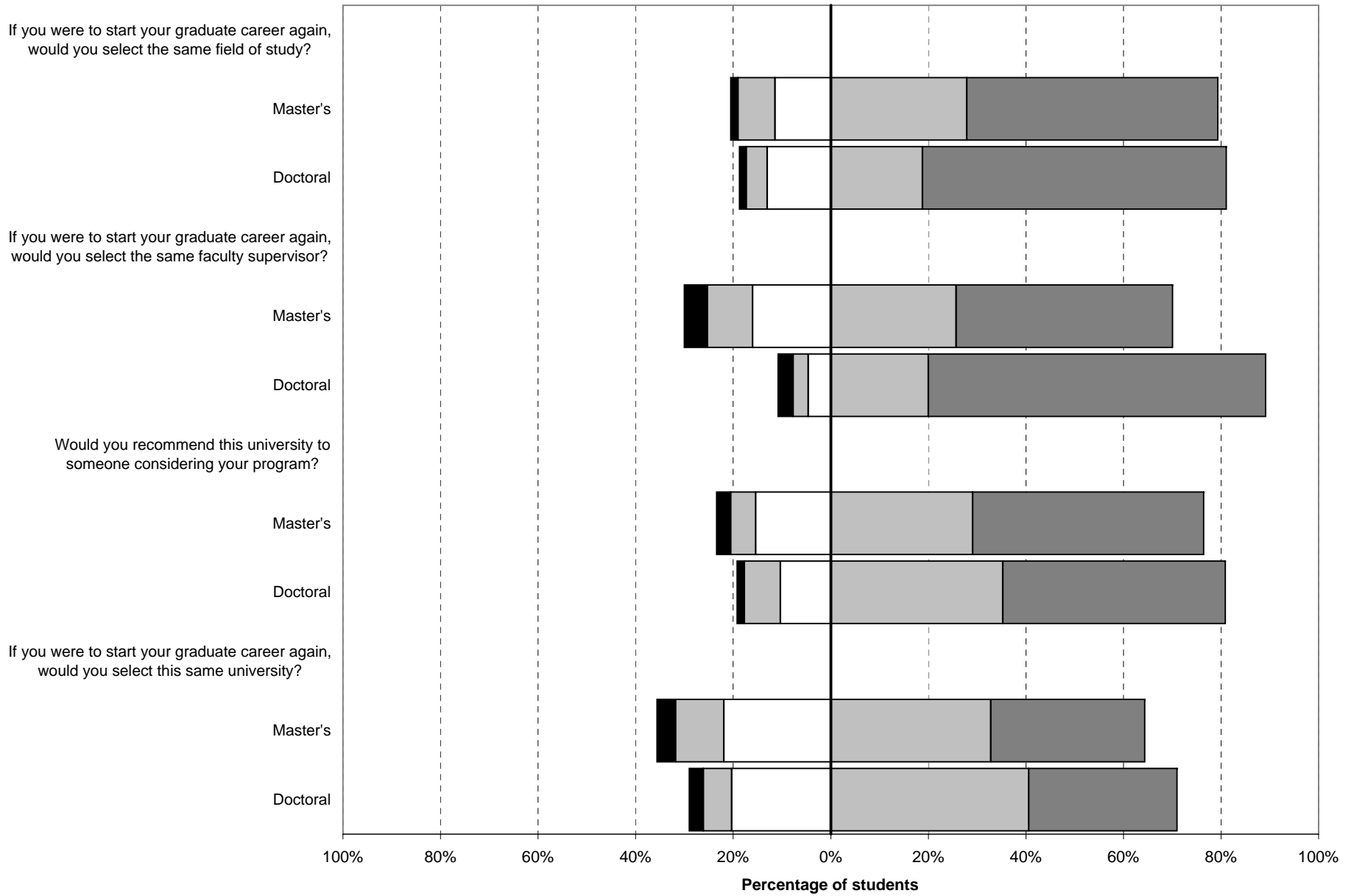
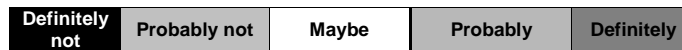


Figure 2: General Satisfaction with Program



At least 96% of respondents reported on these items.



Assessment of Faculty

Respondents' assessments of the faculty members in their program are very favourable. On all items in this area, the majority of students provided responses of "very good" or "excellent." Almost all respondents (93 percent) rate the intellectual quality of faculty as "good," "very good" or "excellent." Between 82 and 88 percent express satisfaction with faculty teaching and the relationship between faculty and graduate students. Master's and doctoral students respond similarly to these items. Results, which are similar to other Ontario universities, are summarized in Figure 3.

Assessment of Academic Program

Students were asked to rate specific aspects of their program of study, including the amount of coursework, opportunities for student collaboration and the relationship of program content to their research/professional goals. Results are summarized in Figure 4.

About 90 percent of both master's and doctoral respondents indicate that the intellectual quality of their fellow students is "good," "very good" or "excellent." Eight-three percent of master's students and 74 percent of those at the doctoral level report that the relationship of program content to their research or professional goals is "good" or better.

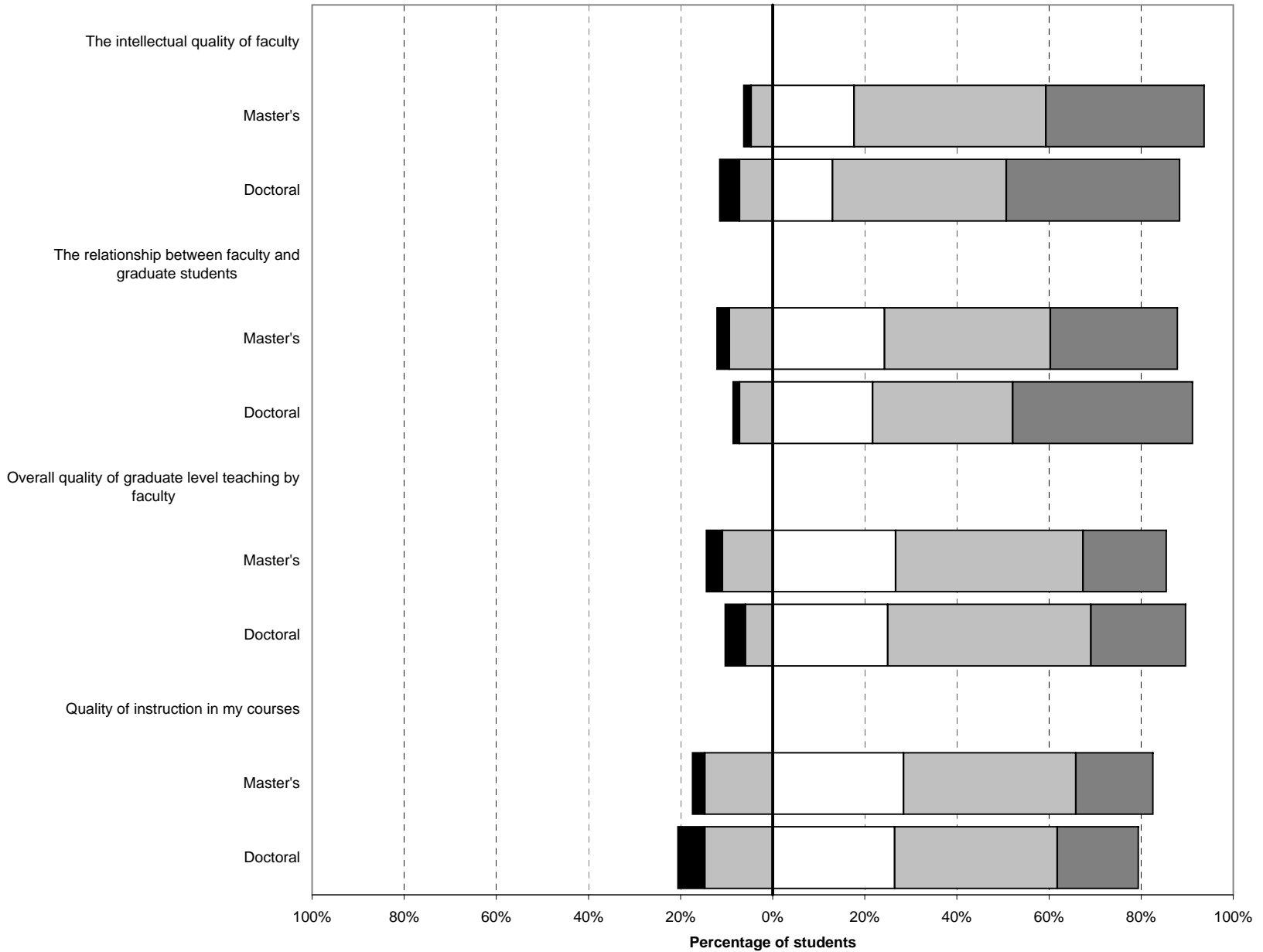
At the doctoral level, Ryerson students report that opportunities for student collaboration and teamwork are "good," "very good" or "excellent" at a rate much higher than the Ontario average. While 81 percent of doctoral respondents at Ryerson express satisfaction in this regard, only two-thirds do so at the province-wide level.

About two-thirds of Ryerson students describe the availability of courses needed to complete one's program as "good," "very good" or "excellent," compared to the provincial average of 73 percent. The disparity between Ryerson and Ontario in this regard is greatest at the doctoral level.

Assessment of Academic and Other Support

Over 80 percent of respondents indicate that the level of help provided by staff members in their program is "good," "very good" or "excellent." Almost three-quarters report similarly on the quality of academic advising and guidance. Fewer students (62 percent at the master's level and 71 percent at the doctoral level) report satisfaction with advice on the availability of financial support. Results are comparable to the Ontario average.

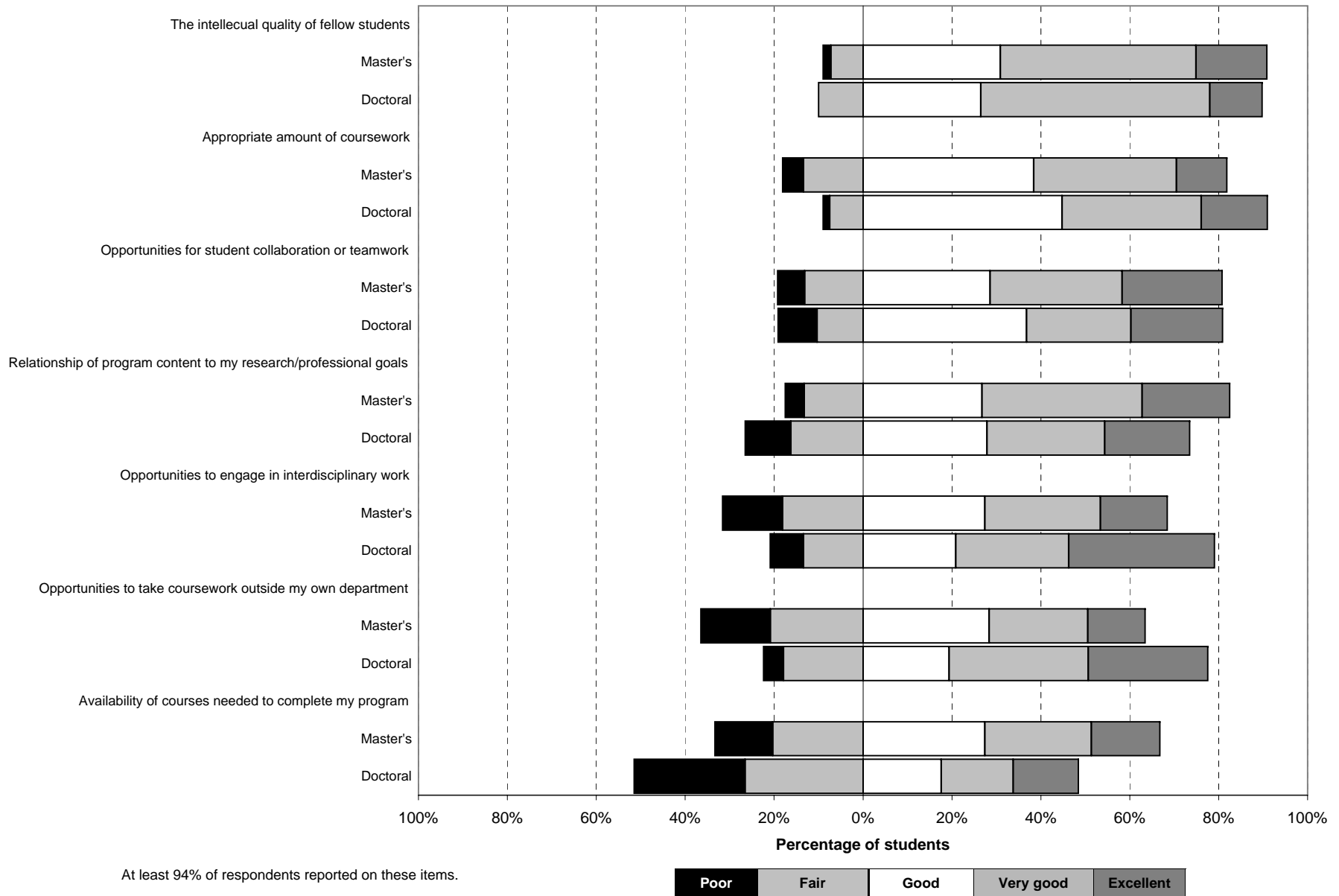
Figure 3: Assessment of Faculty



At least 96% of respondents reported on these items.



Figure 4: Assessment of Program



Professional Skills Development

The survey includes a series of questions relating to support or opportunities for the development of professional skills, including teaching, publishing and writing grant proposals. For the purposes of this report, questions are divided into two categories – those that pertain to both master's and doctoral students, and those that are relevant mainly to doctoral students.

Professional skills for master's and doctoral programs:

Students are most satisfied with courses, workshops, and orientation on teaching, which 81 percent characterize as “good,” “very good” or “excellent.” Seventy-eight percent of respondents report favourably with regard to feedback on their research. Results are summarized in Figure 5a.

Students are least satisfied with career-related advice or workshops: 48 percent describe advice/workshops on career options *within* academia as “good,” “very good” or “excellent,” while 50 percent express this opinion about advice/workshops on career options *outside* academia.

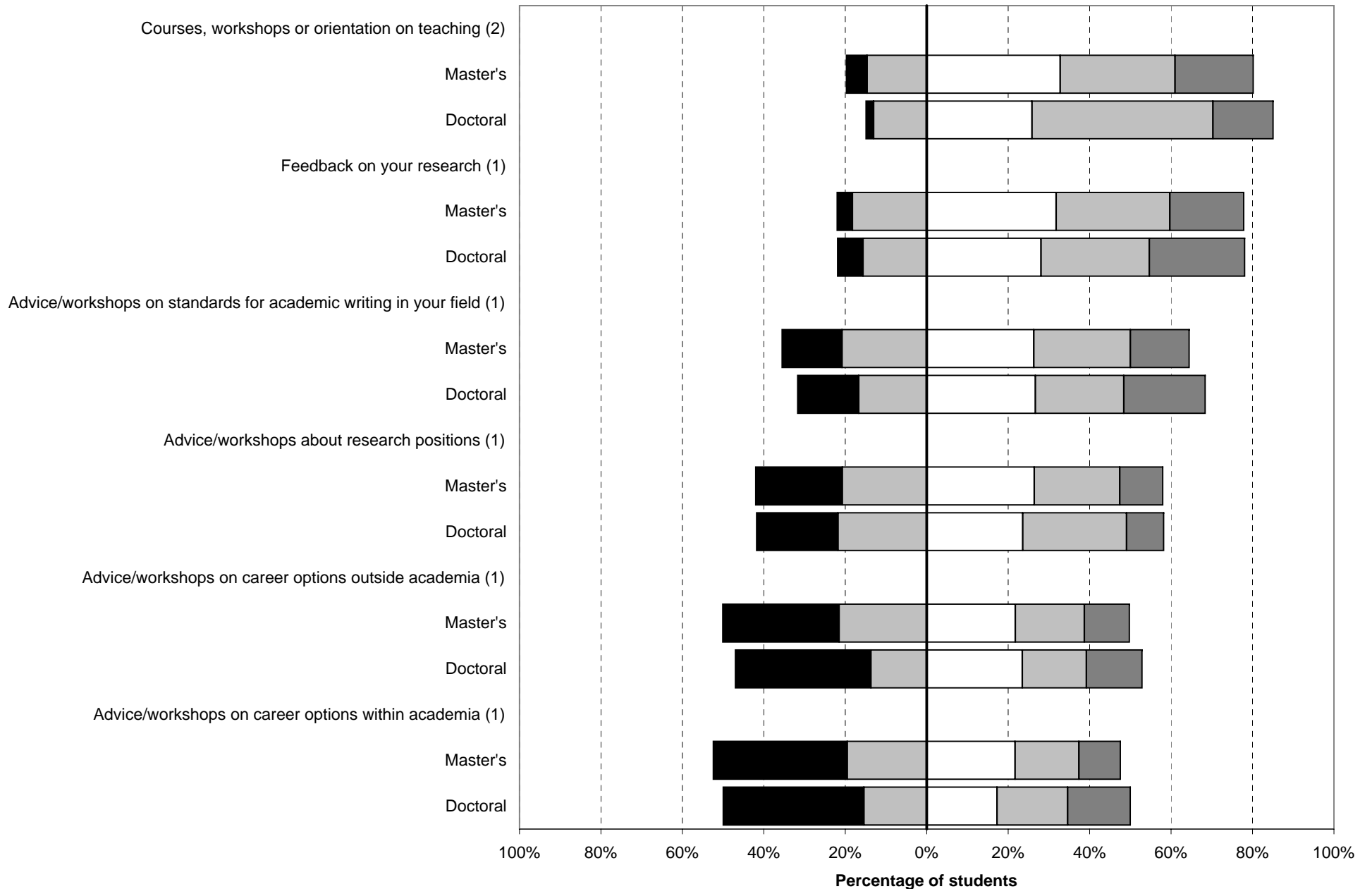
For most items, Ryerson's results are comparable to other Ontario universities. The exception is advice or workshops about research positions, which is rated positively by 58 percent of Ryerson respondents, but only 48 percent of respondents Ontario-wide.

Professional skills in doctoral programs:

Support or opportunities for conducting independent research, as well as the provision of faculty guidance on formulating a research topic, receive very positive assessments from doctoral students at Ryerson. These are described as “good,” “very good” or “excellent” by about 85 percent of respondents. Less positive is the rating of advice/workshops on preparing for candidacy exams: 57 percent of respondents express satisfaction in this area. Results are summarized in Figure 5b.

Ryerson's results exceed the Ontario average for all nine items pertaining to the development of professional skills for doctoral students. Despite the relatively small number of doctoral respondents at Ryerson (71), differences are statistically significant on three items: At Ryerson, about three quarters of doctoral students rate support or opportunities in collaborating with faculty in writing a grant proposal, and in training in research methods before beginning their own research as “good,” “very good” or “excellent.” At the provincial level, fewer than 60 percent report similarly. Advice on intellectual property issues is described positively by 65 percent of Ryerson doctoral students and 52 percent of Ontario doctoral students.

Figure 5a: Professional Skills, rating of support/training received



Item was reported on by:

(1) 60.0 to 69.9% of respondents

(2) 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents

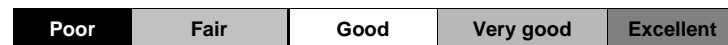
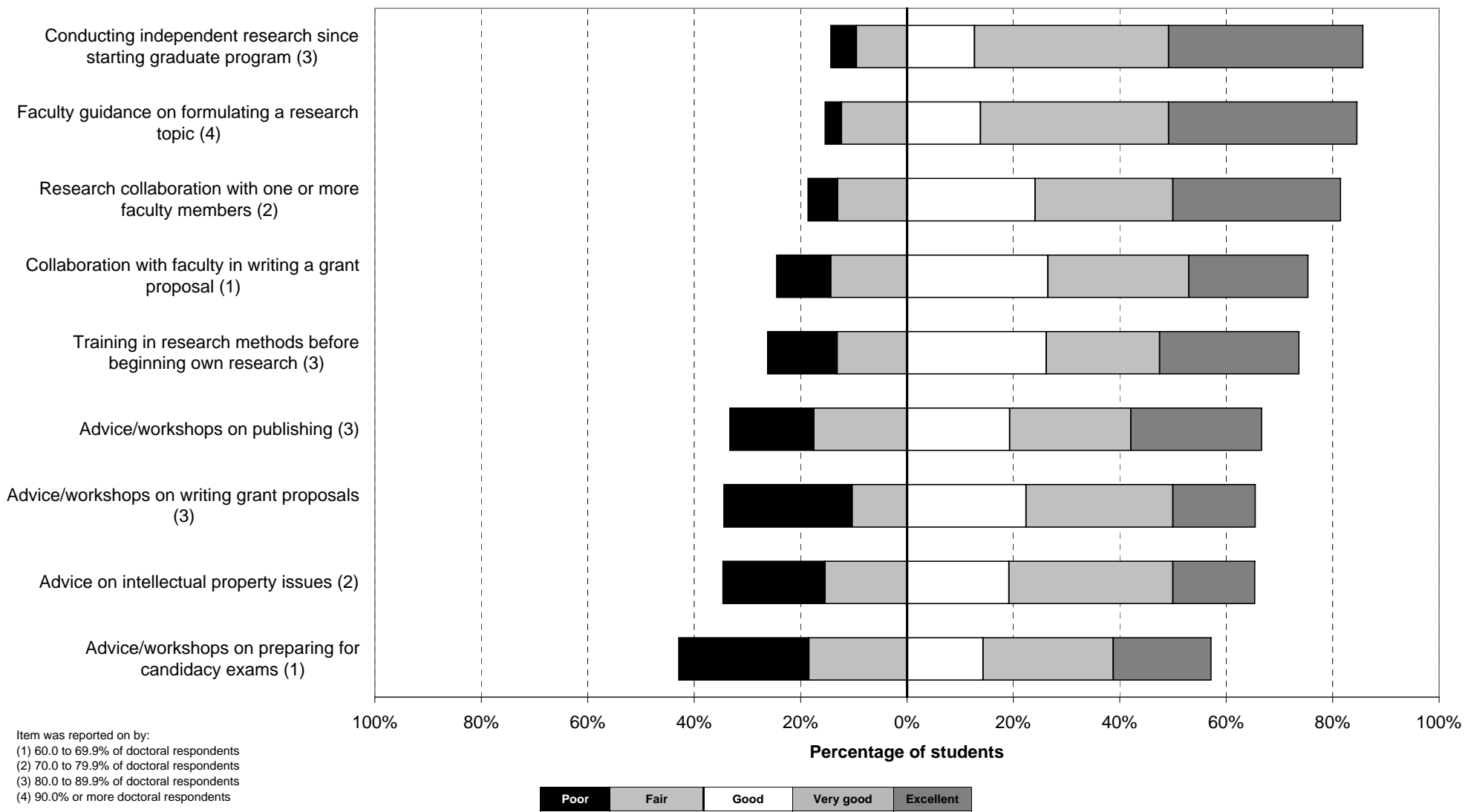


Figure 5b: Professional and research skills for doctoral students, rating of support received or opportunities provided



Dissertation Advisors for Doctoral Students

Thirteen questions regarding students' dissertation advisors were posed. Students were asked whether advisors were helpful in the preparation of the dissertation; questions focused on selecting a dissertation topic, developing the proposal and writing the dissertation. Other items asked doctoral students about their advisors' role in preparing for oral and written exams, providing feedback on their work, and serving as an advocate. Reported satisfaction is very high for all items. The percentage of doctoral students providing a favourable assessment of a given item ranges from 93 to 100 percent. Results for doctoral students are summarized in Figure 6.

Student satisfaction at Ryerson is comparable to that among Ontario peers for all but two questions, where Ryerson doctoral students provide significantly better assessments. Almost all doctoral respondents (97 percent) at Ryerson indicate that their advisors are helpful to them in preparing for written qualifying exams, while 80 percent across Ontario agree. Similarly, 95 percent of doctoral respondents at Ryerson report that their advisors are helpful in preparing for the oral qualifying exam, compared to a provincial average of 81 percent.

University Resources and Student Life

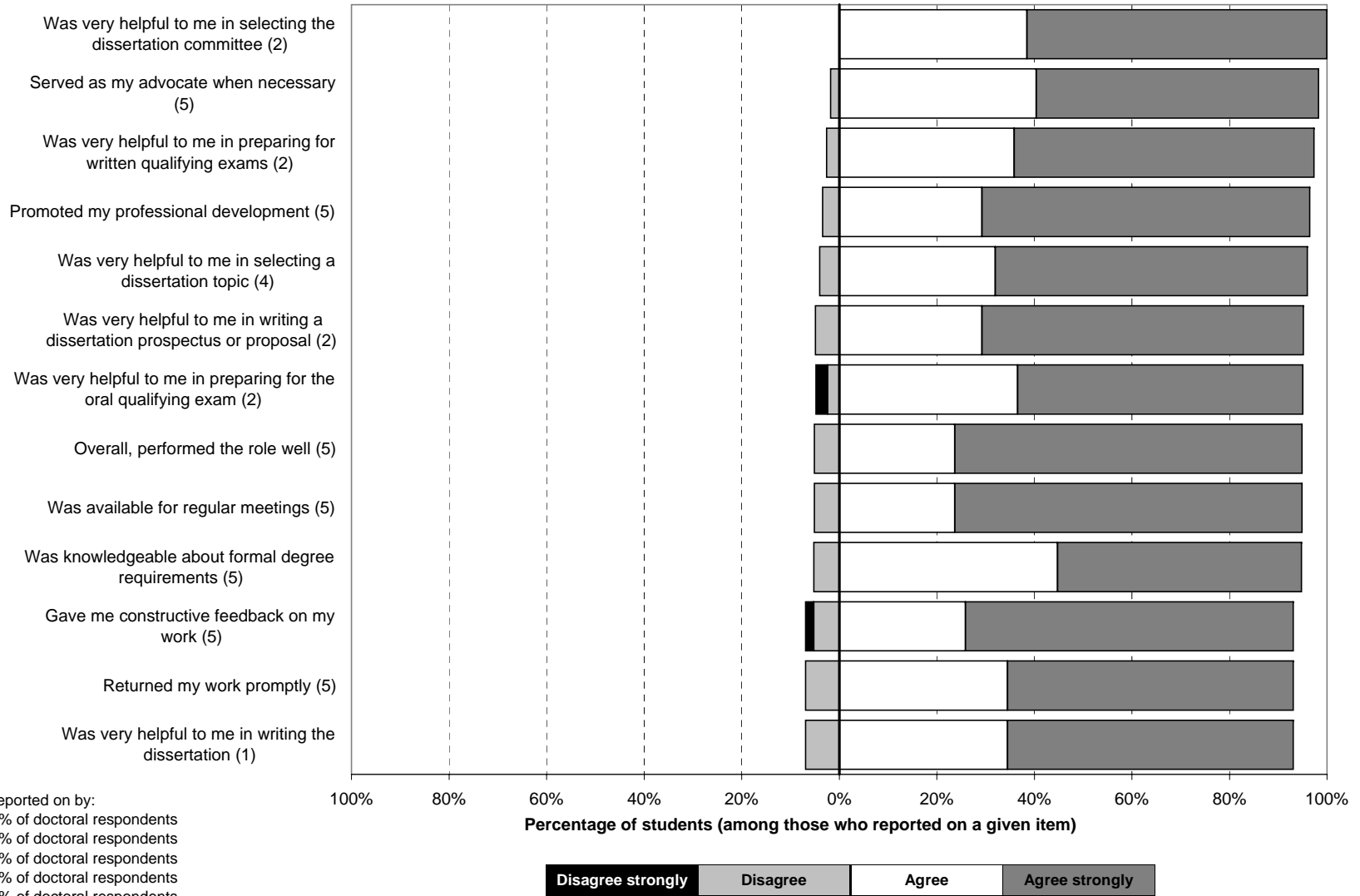
Respondents were asked to rate their experience over the past year with a variety of university services and resources. Results are summarized in Figure 7.

The most positive response is for library facilities, which 81 percent of students characterize as "good," "very good" or "excellent." The international office is rated positively by 80 percent of students, and information technology services are rated positively by 79 percent. The weakest results are in the areas of housing assistance and the University bookstore, where positive ratings are provided by 52 percent and 56 percent of students, respectively.

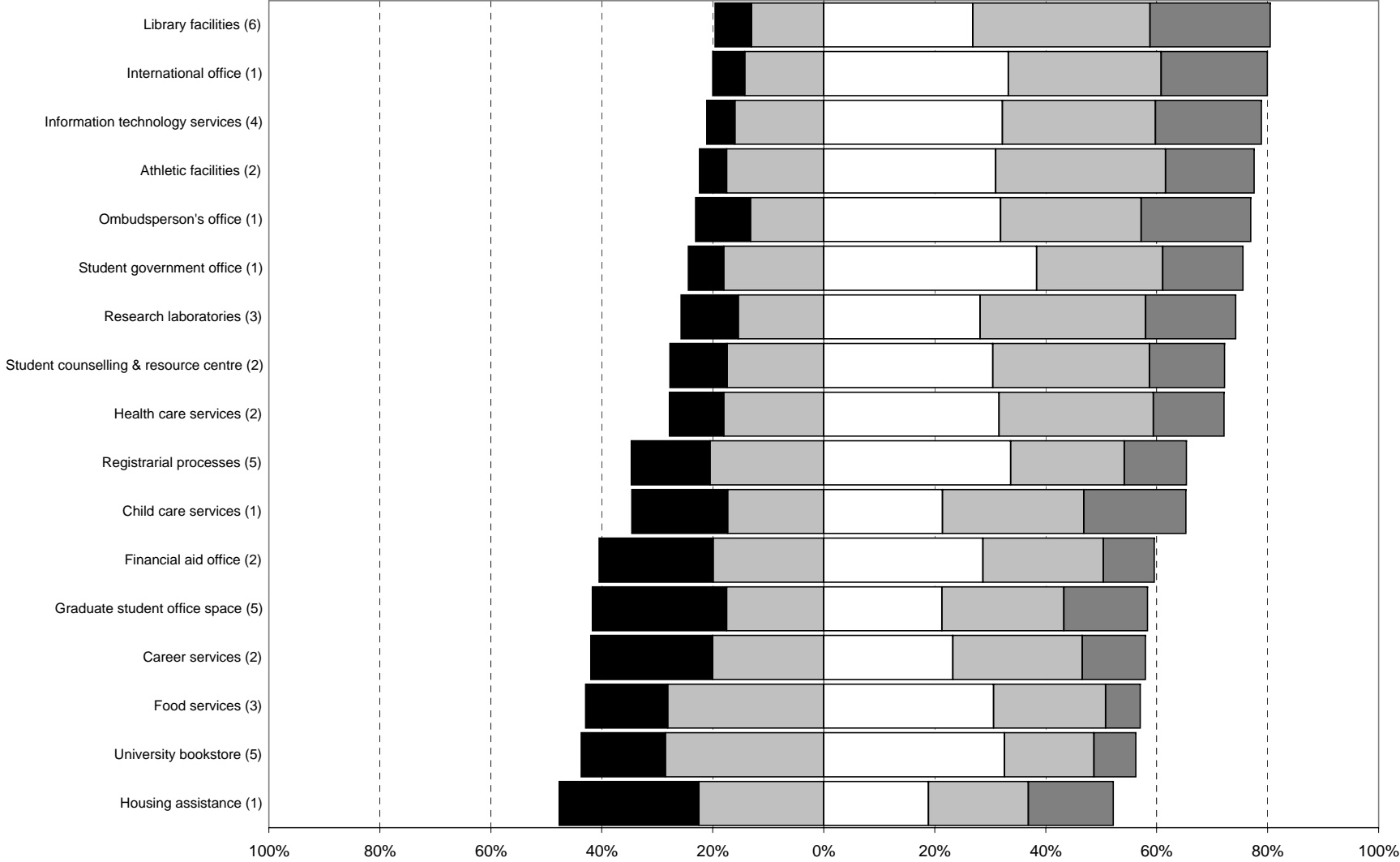
A number of statistically significant differences are observed between satisfaction at Ryerson and Ontario-wide ratings. Ryerson graduate students rate the ombudsperson's office more positively than the Ontario average (77 percent compared to 72 percent). Child care services and food services also receive more favourable assessments at Ryerson than they do at the Ontario level: 65 percent of Ryerson students rate child care as "good," "very good" or "excellent" while 58 percent do so across the province. Fifty-seven percent at Ryerson rate food services favourably, compared to 48 percent province-wide.

On the other hand, satisfaction at Ryerson is below the Ontario average with respect to housing assistance, the university bookstore, career services and registrarial processes.

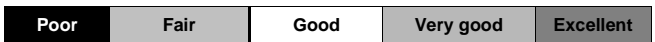
Figure 6: Dissertation Advisors, Doctoral Students' Assessment



**Figure 7: Resources and Student Life,
Master's and Doctoral Students Combined**



Question was reported on by:
 (1) 15.0 to 29.9% of respondents
 (2) 30.0 to 49.9% of respondents
 (3) 50.0 to 59.9% of respondents
 (4) 60.0 to 69.9% of respondents
 (5) 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents
 (6) 80.0 to 89.9% of respondents



Publications and Presentations

Respondents were asked about the prevalence of various activities relating to publications and presentations. Types of activities include attendance at scholarly meetings, publishing, and presentation of research. Six specific activities were listed, and respondents indicated whether each of these occur in their academic department. Results are presented separately for master's and doctoral students in Figure 8.

The most frequent activity among both master's and doctoral students is seminars and colloquia at which students present their research. Fifty-six percent of master's students and 78 percent of doctoral students indicate that this occurs in their department. The least common activity is publishing as a sole or first author in a refereed journal: 18 percent of master's respondents and 47 percent of doctoral respondents indicate that this occurs in their department.

At both Ryerson and across Ontario, slightly more than a third of master's students indicate that there is departmental funding for students to attend national or regional meetings. For all other activities, the reported prevalence is lower at Ryerson than the provincial average.

At the doctoral level at both Ryerson and province wide, 53 percent of students report that co-authoring in refereed journals with program faculty occurs in their respective departments. However, for all other activities, the reported prevalence is lower at Ryerson than the provincial average.

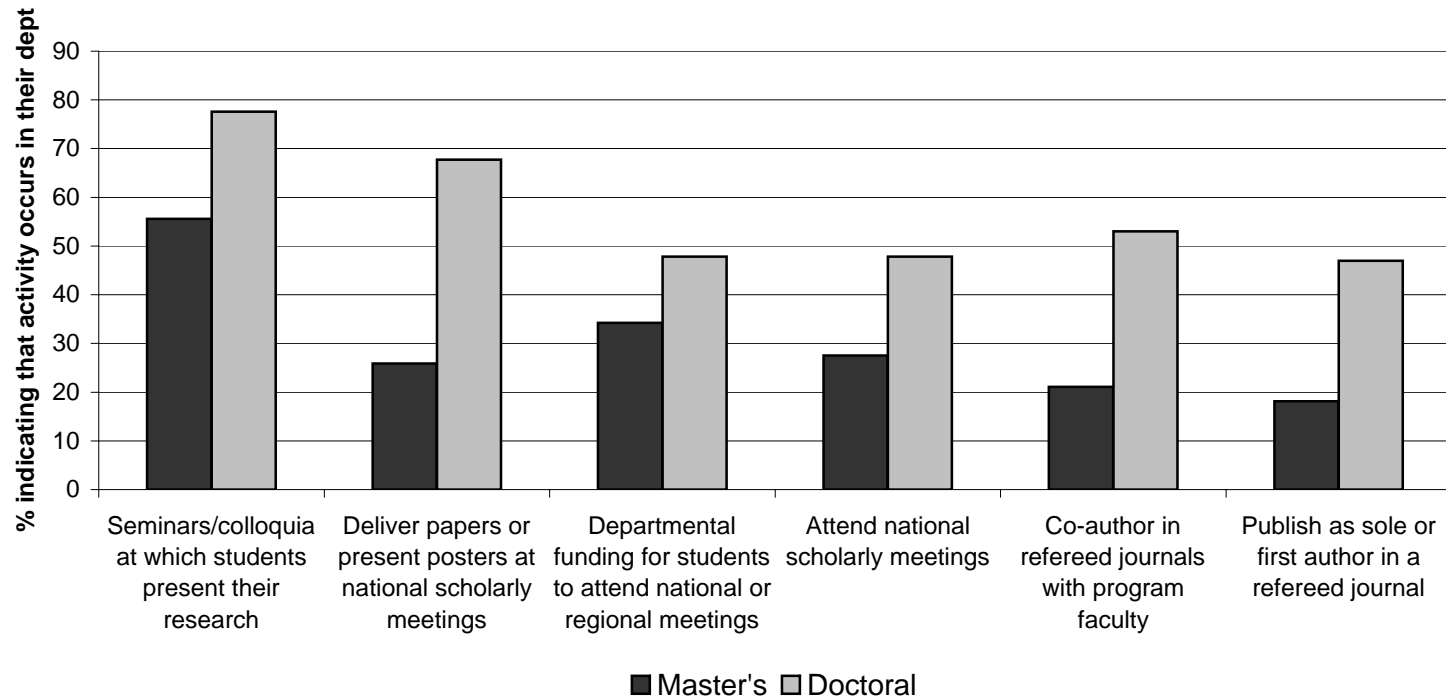
Obstacles to Academic Progress

Students were asked to identify the extent to which various items pose obstacles to their academic progress. The obstacle identified most commonly by both Ryerson and Ontario students is work and financial commitments. Forty-one percent of Ryerson respondents report that this is a "major" obstacle and a further 38 percent indicate that it is a "minor" obstacle.

Approximately 46 percent of Ryerson students indicate that course scheduling and program structure or requirements, respectively, pose obstacles to their progress. Over half (53 percent) claim that family obligations are an obstacle.

The least common obstacles noted by Ryerson students are immigration laws and regulations (described as "not an obstacle" by 89 percent) and the availability of faculty (described as "not an obstacle" by 68 percent). Results are similar to those at other Ontario universities.

Figure 8: Publications and Presentations among Students in their Academic Departments



At least 88% of respondents provided answers to these questions.

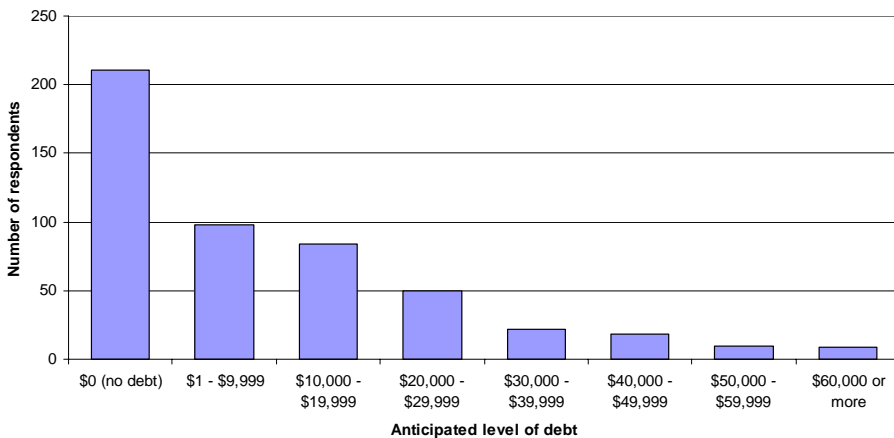
Education Financing

Respondents were asked to indicate what forms of financial support they receive while enrolled in their program of study. Among master’s students, the most common source of financial support is loans, savings, or family assistance, identified by 44 percent of respondents, followed by teaching assistantships, cited by 37 percent of master’s students. The most commonly cited sources of financial support among doctoral students are teaching assistantships, cited by 70 percent of respondents, followed by research assistantships and university-funded fellowships (each cited by 55 percent of doctoral respondents).

There is no significant difference between Ryerson and other Ontario universities with respect to the proportion of students holding a teaching assistantship. At the master’s level, a lower percentage of Ryerson students report holding graduate research assistantships than the Ontario average. Ryerson and other Ontario universities are similar in terms of the proportion of students receiving provincial government scholarships; however, a lower percentage of Ryerson respondents report receiving federal granting council scholarships. This is the case at both the master’s and doctoral level.

Over half of respondents predict that by the end of their program, they will have accumulated debt. Forty-one percent of master’s students predict that they will have no debt, 48 percent predict debt amounts of under \$30,000 and 11 percent anticipate levels of \$30,000 or higher. Among doctoral students, 47 percent predict finishing their program without debt, 37 percent anticipate debt under \$30,000 while 16 percent indicate debt levels of at least \$30,000. The distribution of respondents by anticipated level of debt appears in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Graduate debt levels as predicted by students (n = 502)



A somewhat higher proportion of Ryerson respondents than those Ontario-wide predict that they will have some amount of debt upon completion of their graduate program (58 percent compared to 50 percent). However, Ryerson and its Ontario counterparts are similar

in terms of average levels of debt predicted by students. Among all Ryerson respondents, the average anticipated level of debt upon completion of one’s graduate program is \$11,484. Among only respondents reporting debt, the Ryerson average is \$19,811. Across Ontario, the comparable figures are \$10,731 and \$21,259 respectively. It is notable that a higher proportion of Ryerson respondents have children than do students at

other Ontario universities, and that Ryerson has a higher proportion of respondents over the age of 30 years – these factors are likely to affect levels of debt.

Social Life

The vast majority (92 percent) of respondents report attending organized social activities within their advisor/research group “occasionally” or “frequently.” Eighty-five percent report attending organized social activities within their department at least occasionally, while almost 60 percent report similarly with respect to university-wide social activities.

Generally, Ryerson respondents report attending social activities to an extent that is similar to graduate students province-wide.

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 compares the characteristics of survey respondents to the graduate student population at Ryerson. The sample is representative in terms of gender, age and course load. With the exception of Communication and Culture doctoral students, who appear to be slightly underrepresented, and Mechanical Engineering doctoral students, who are slightly overrepresented, the program mix of the survey sample mirrors the Ryerson graduate population.

The graduate student population at Ryerson is different from that of other Ontario universities in several respects. First, graduate students at Ryerson tend to be older than the Ontario average. While the CGPSS results do not include a mean age for Ontario universities, roughly 45 percent of Ryerson respondents are above the age of 30 at the time the survey was completed, compared to 36 percent of students system-wide. Second, whereas provincially 55 percent of survey respondents are female, just 44 percent of Ryerson respondents are female. This is representative of the actual graduate student population at Ryerson, and reflects a program mix that is weighted towards engineering disciplines at the time the survey was completed. Finally, the proportion of graduate students in doctoral programs is much lower at Ryerson than province-wide; this is consistent with Ryerson’s relatively early stage of graduate program development.

Table 1: Comparison of survey sample and population characteristics

	Sample		Population	
Gender				
Female	334	55.6%	609	56.2%
Male	267	44.4%	475	43.8%
<i>Total</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,084</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Master's Programs*				
Biomedical Physics (2006)	7	1.3%	9	0.9%
Business Administration (MBA) (2006)	17	3.2%	24	2.4%
Communication and Culture (2000)	35	6.6%	83	8.4%
Early Childhood Studies (2006)	17	3.2%	39	4.0%
Immigration and Settlement (2004)	29	5.5%	52	5.3%
International Economics (2005)	14	2.6%	34	3.5%
Photographic Preservation (2004)	24	4.5%	38	3.9%
Public Policy and Administration (2005)	33	6.2%	57	5.8%
Environmental Management (2000)	35	6.6%	59	6.0%
Chemical Engineering (2001)	23	4.3%	35	3.6%
Civil Engineering (2001)	44	8.3%	84	8.5%
Computer Networks (2001)	16	3.0%	45	4.6%
Electrical and Computer Engineering (2001)	70	13.2%	145	14.8%
Mechanical Engineering (2001)	57	10.8%	106	10.8%
Management of Technology and Innovation (2006)	25	4.7%	34	3.5%
Molecular Science (2006)	7	1.3%	14	1.4%
Nursing (2005)	61	11.5%	95	9.7%
Spatial Analysis (2000)	16	3.0%	30	3.1%
<i>Total</i>	<i>530</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>983</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Doctoral Programs*				
Chemical Engineering (2006)	2	2.8%	2	2.0%
Civil Engineering (2004)	13	18.3%	19	18.8%
Communication and Culture (2003)	14	19.7%	26	25.7%
Electrical and Computer Engineering (2004)	19	26.8%	27	26.7%
Mechanical Engineering (2004)	23	32.4%	27	26.7%
<i>Total</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>101</i>	<i>100.0%</i>
Mean Age**	31.8		31.6	
Course Load				
Full-time	442	73.5%	753	69.5%
Part-time	159	26.5%	331	30.5%
<i>Total</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>100.0%</i>	<i>1,084</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

* The year in which each graduate program was introduced is noted in brackets.

** Age (in years) as of February 1, 2007 based on reported date of birth.

Conclusions

The survey data indicate that the intellectual experience offered by graduate studies at Ryerson is strong. Given that graduate programs are a relatively recent addition at Ryerson, it is encouraging that assessments provided by our graduate students are very positive. The University scores particularly well in terms of:

- General satisfaction with the University and program of study
- The development of professional skills
- Assessments of faculty, particularly doctoral students' impressions of their dissertation advisors

Generally, Ryerson students are satisfied with their graduate programs. Along with these strengths, a few aspects are identified that may require further investigation and possible enhancement. These include course availability and enriching experiences such as activities relating to presentations and publications. Ensuring that obstacles to students' progress are understood and that students have ways of addressing these challenges are also important.

Comparisons of Ryerson's results with those at the Ontario level must be made with caution, as differences may be attributable to Ryerson's specialized program mix (relative to a broader mix of programs province-wide).

Ryerson's Academic Plan for 2008 to 2013, *Shaping Our Future*, emphasizes graduate programming as an integral component of the University's growth and development. The Canadian Graduate and Professional Student Survey (CGPSS) has come at a useful time for Ryerson. As the newest graduate school in the country, Ryerson is able to compare its progress with the norms of well established graduate schools that participated in the survey. The results provide guidance with respect to priorities, and as the survey is to be conducted on a regular basis, progress can be viewed over time. The CGPSS will continue to play a useful role in the development of graduate studies at Ryerson.

**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

GRADUATE AND PROFESSIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2007

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE