# Formal Onboarding of Doctoral Candidates – Lessons Learned from Non-Academic Partners

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# Imagine yourself being a new employee in a company ...

- You wouldn't know:

  - Any procedures... *(Adaptation)*

  - Any colleagues... *(Feeling of belonging into the team)*

  - How to handle your tasks... *(Increased productivity)*

- You would feel:

  - Lost... *(Well-being)*

  - Anxious...*(Mental health)*

  - Without any guidance... *(Supervision)*

# What is onboarding?

- A process of **integrating** new employees into the organisation (enhancing professional, social, cultural and organisational integration)

- Onboarding procedures:

  - **common** in the **private sector**

  - often **absent** in **academic institutions**

**PRIDE Network**

ASSOCIATION FOR
PROFESSIONALS IN
DOCTORAL EDUCATION

# Our working group

PRIDE Network
ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONALS IN DOCTORAL EDUCATION



**GROUP A**

- Focusing on doctoral candidate's onboarding in academia

**GROUP B**

- Focusing on onboarding outside of academia → private sector

# What is our aim?

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**In our group**

- **A handbook**

- **Piloting** onboarding at some universities

   (UCT Prague as a pioneer)

# Research in many work environments



Onboarding at Universities for new library employees, faculty members, staff

a) Harvard Onboarding Law School Managers

b) Harvard Onboarding Staff Faculty of Arts & Sciences

# Onboarding in university libraries

- State of the art on onboarding in general

  (not only on academic libraries)

- Analysis of all the papers and studies

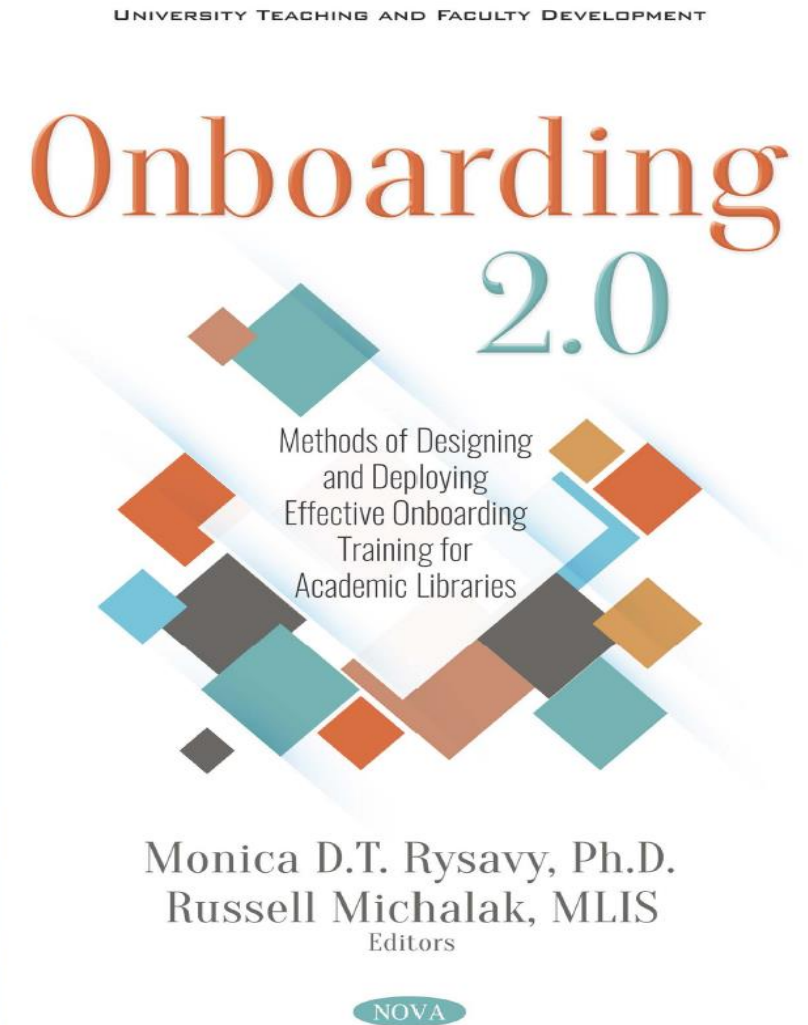- Comparison of different industries

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

# Onboarding
## 2.0

Methods of Designing
and Deploying
Effective Onboarding
Training for
Academic Libraries

Monica D.T. Rysavy, Ph.D.
Russell Michalak, MLIS
Editors

NOVA
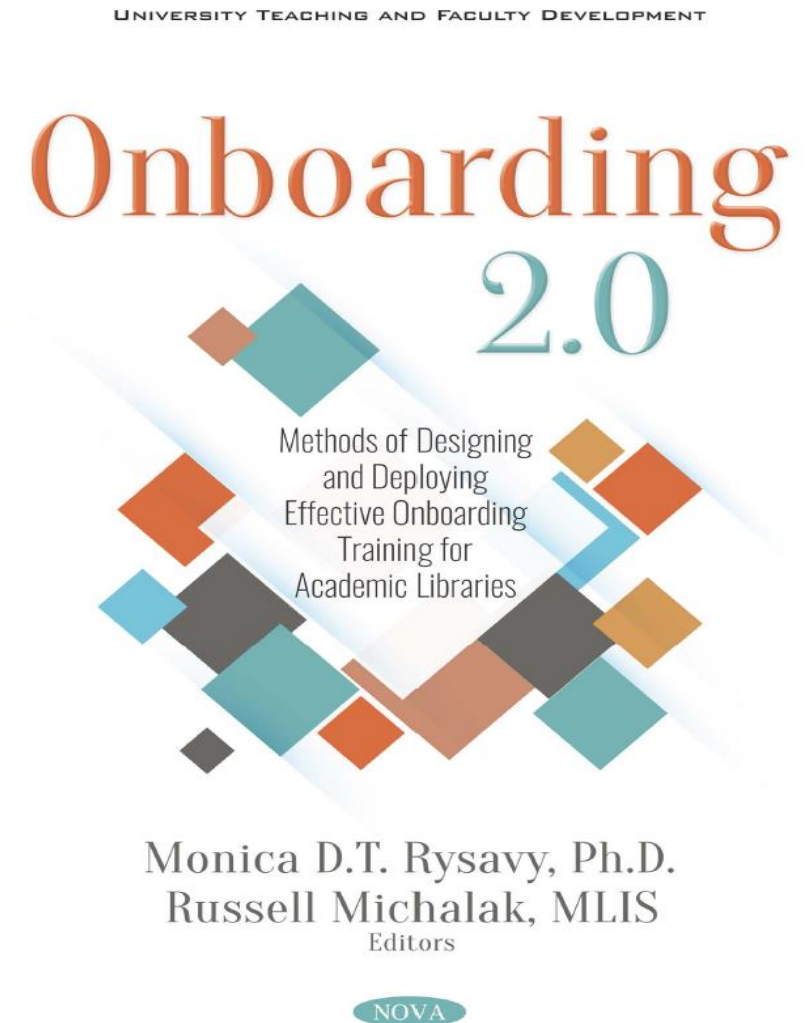
# Onboarding in university libraries

**Types of onboarding:**

- Extreme Onboarding

- Holistic Onboarding

**Summary**

- At some universities: onboarding for new employees, but not not for PhD candidates

- Comparable to the private sector



UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Onboarding 2.0

Methods of Designing and Deploying Effective Onboarding Training for Academic Libraries

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# Lessons learnt from private sector

Industry Example of

Onboarding

(IT private sector company)

**Job Description to set out Expectations** e.g. personal attributes, required knowledge/qualifications, language, where employee will be in e.g. 6 months

**Adaptation Plan** using Company template that is completed at 4 meetings between employee and line manager i.e. upon arrival and after 1, 2 and 3 months. Then a meeting once in a a year.

If either are not meeting expectations both can explore **training opportunities**

**Agreement to continue contract: Yes/No**

# Adaptation plan of a company

- Values of the company and what to follow

- Detailed plan for the first day (keys, codes, systems etc.)

- The main objectives (probation period: monthly meeting with a boss to exchange opinions; suggestions for improvement from each side)

- Assessment of probation period (1st, 2nd and 3rd month)

- "The Interview" (3rd month)

- Agreement to continue contract (yes/no)

# Interview

**Goal:** Evaluation of the new employee's adaptation process after 3 months

**1. How would you rate the progress of your adaptation program?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**2. The level of cooperation with colleagues in my department is?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**3. Teamwork with other department is?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**4. The utilization of my professional knowledge and skills in the company is applied in a way that is?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**5. Information about the main tasks, current situation, and results of the company are?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**6. The atmosphere and current work environment are?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**7. The supervisor provides feedback on my performance so far in a way that is :**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

**8. Comminication, information, sharing and feedback with the assigned guarantor is?**

☐ unsatisfactory   ☐ below average   ☐ average   ☐ above average   ☐ excellent

Specify specific reasons for your (dis)satisfaction:

Suggestions for improving the adaptation program:

Training activities requested by the supervisor with the date of implementation:

I agree to continue the permanent employment of the employee after the trial period:

☐ **YES**

☐ **NO**

Date:

………………………………   ……………………..   …………………………….

Signature of direct supervisor          Signature of guarantor          Signature of employee

The meeting will cover  the essential tasks within the role, how the employee is meeting expectations and equally how the role is meeting employee expectations.

# Next steps at UCT Prague

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✓ Interviews with PhD

candidates

✓ Survey

✓ Piloting

# Feedback on Industry induction

**UNIVERSITY OF CHEMISTRY AND TECHNOLOGY PRAGUE**

Too much information to process when induction is limited to 1 day

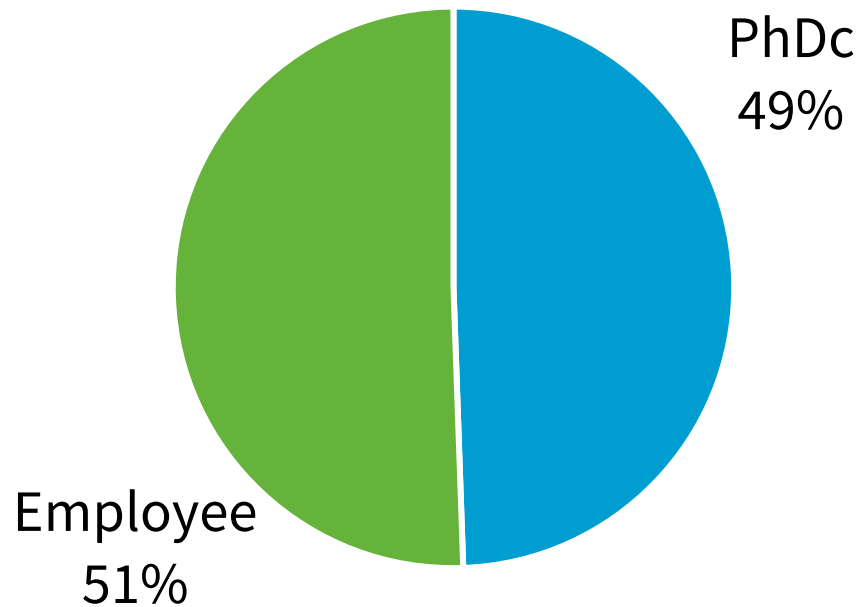Ongoing systems training needs to be (supported by manuals, videos etc)

Language support for foreign PhDs – ideally before starting

15 PhD candidates with private sector experience were interviewed
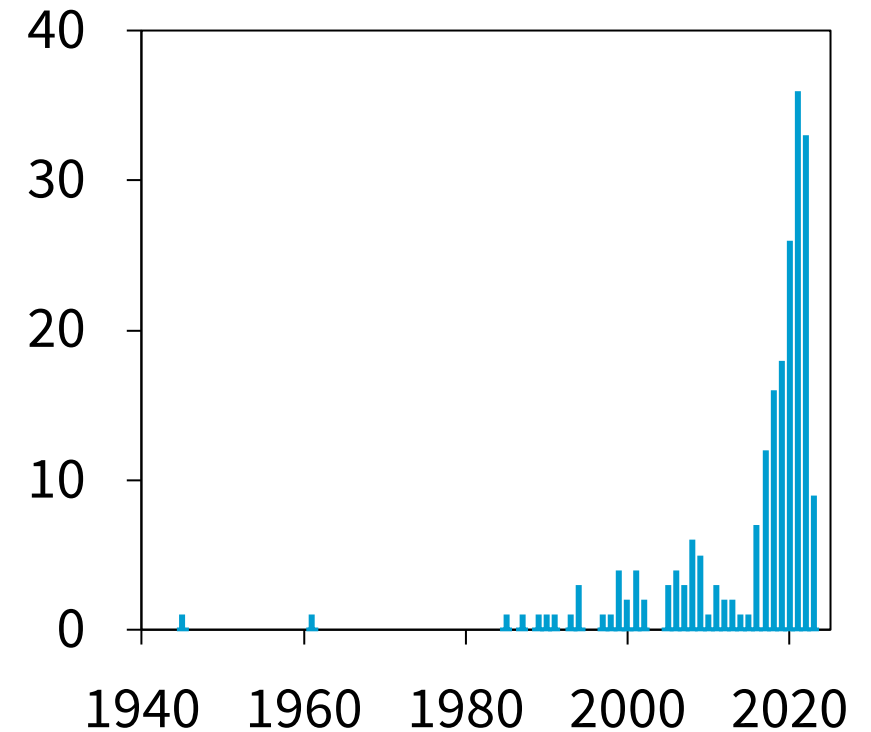
# Results from the survey at UCT Prague
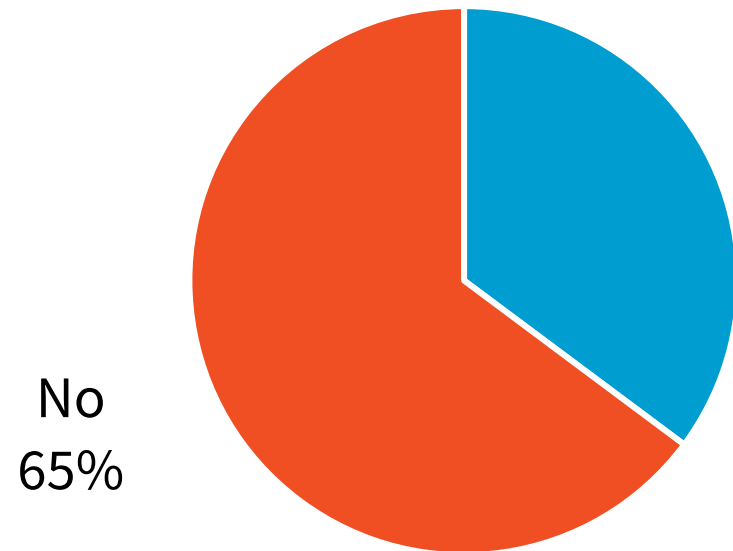
## What is your current position at UCT?



PhDc
49%

Employee
51%

## Year of start at UCT



**268 responses, May 2023**
Median: 2018
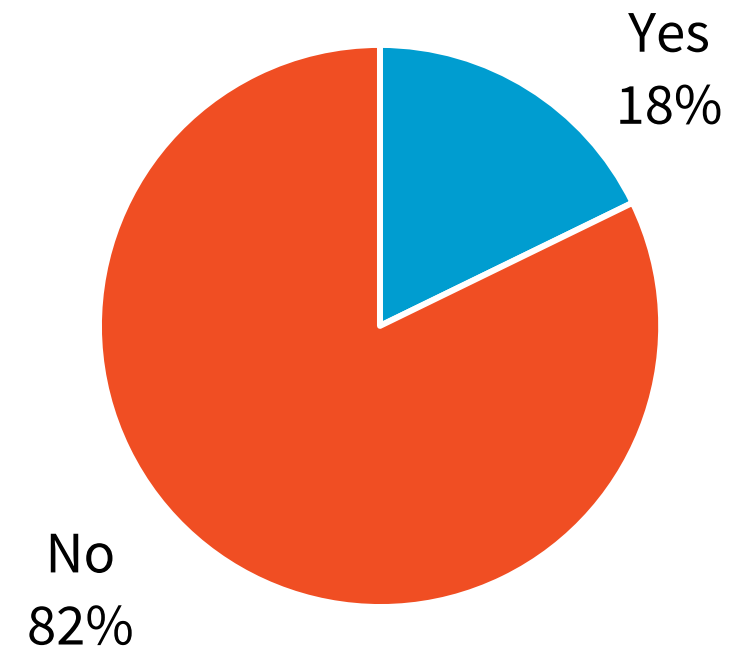Interquartile range: 1997–2021

# Results from the survey at UCT Prague

### Did you know what onboarding means?



Yes
35%

No
65%

### Experience with OB from private sector



Yes
15%

No
85%
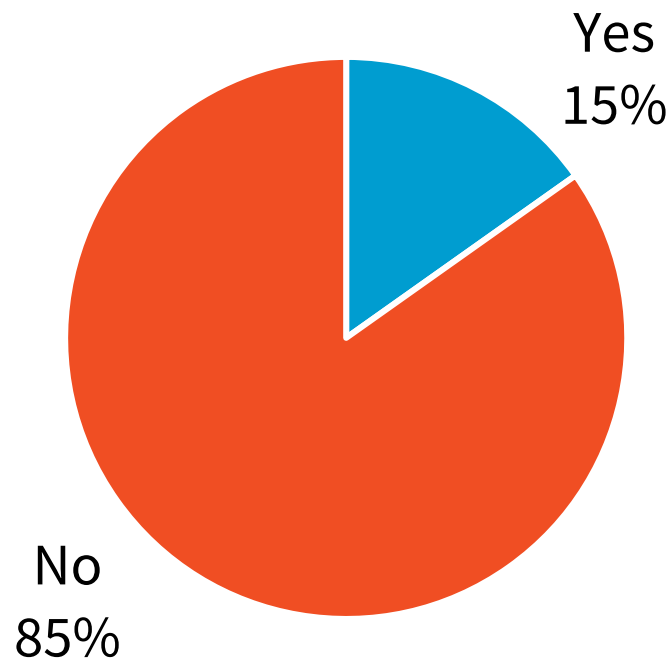
### Experience with OB from academia



Yes
18%

No
82%

**268 responses, May 2023**

My superior/advisor and I discussed their and my ideas about my work.
- PhDc: 74%
- Employees: 72%

My start went (more than less) according to the plan.
- PhDc: 58%
- Employees: 54%

I recieved job description.
- PhDc: 36%
- Employees: 70%

I recieved information regarding technical matters at UCT.
- PhDc: 50%
- Employees: 54%

I was introduced to colleagues in my department.
- PhDc: 44%
- Employees: 59%

My superior/advisor discussed with me about the plan for my start at UCT.
- PhDc: 55%
- Employees: 40%

I recieved information regarding administrative matters at UCT.
- PhDc: 48%
- Employees: 29%

I am evaluated according to the plan.
- PhDc: 35%
- Employees: 19%

My superior/advisor and I discussed my ideas about my career advancement.
- PhDc: 14%
- Employees: 25%

My superior/advisor discussed with me about the plan for my evaluation.
- PhDc: 23%
- Employees: 14%

Legend: ■ PhDc  ■ Employees

Axis: 0%  15%  30%  45%  60%  75%
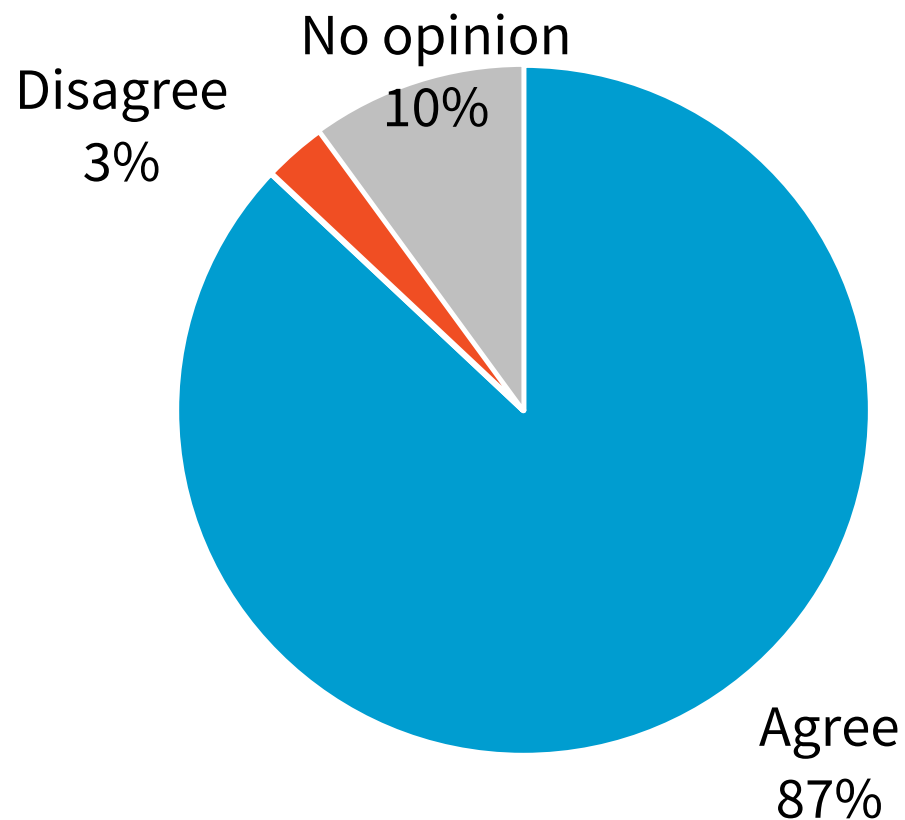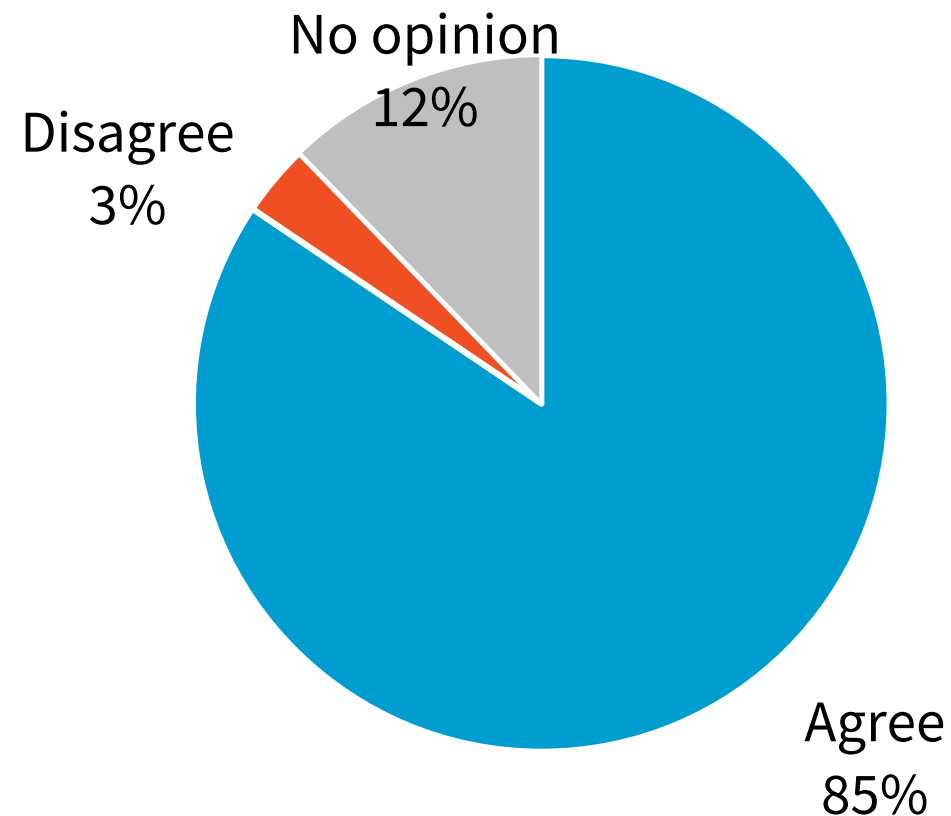
# Results from the survey at UCT Prague



Onboarding would be beneficial for PhDc

Onboarding would be beneficial for employees

# Recommendations from the survey
## Which information would you had welcomed when starting at UCT?

| Information about administration | Information about finances |
|---|---|

| Information about my department | Study duties | Information about the structure of the university (other departments) | Going abroad |
|---|---|---|---|

| Evaluation | Publishing | Grants | Further education | Career growth | Manuals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

# Recommendations from the survey

- 142 written comments
    - *"It is definitely important **to familiarize students with all their obligations** as well as rights/benefits, and especially with the grading system and how the amount of scholarship changes with fulfilled obligations."*
    - *"Information about the course on scientific writing and **publishing preparation**."*
    - *"**Introduction to other employees of the department**, rules regarding my evaluation and career options within UCT, list of employee benefits and how to sign up for them (what paperwork needs to be done, whom to bring it)."*
    - *"More detailed information about the **amount of scholarships, opportunities for additional earnings, job responsibilities, and what is expected from a doctoral student**. Not everything that is required of a doctoral student according to the study regulations is actually sufficient for completion - additional unwritten requirements are placed upon them."*

# Piloting at UCT Prague

This autumn at 2 departments

✓ **Survival guide** for PhD candidates

✓ **Webinar** "Freshman at PhD"

o **Adaptation plan strategy + Onboarding with supervisors**

   o An introductory first day

   o Assessments after $1^{st}$, $3^{rd}$ and $6^{th}$ month

   o Assessment after a year (wrap up)

# Recommendations

- Make onboarding a part of the Czech university system

- Focus on mental health and feeling of belonging of a PhD candidate

- Clarify the expectations of the PhD candidate and the Principal Supervisor

- Create and implement an agreed adaptation plan strategy

- Use milestones, such as 1 day, 30, 90, 180 days and a year to check the PhD's adaptation success

- Suggest improvements and to implement them