

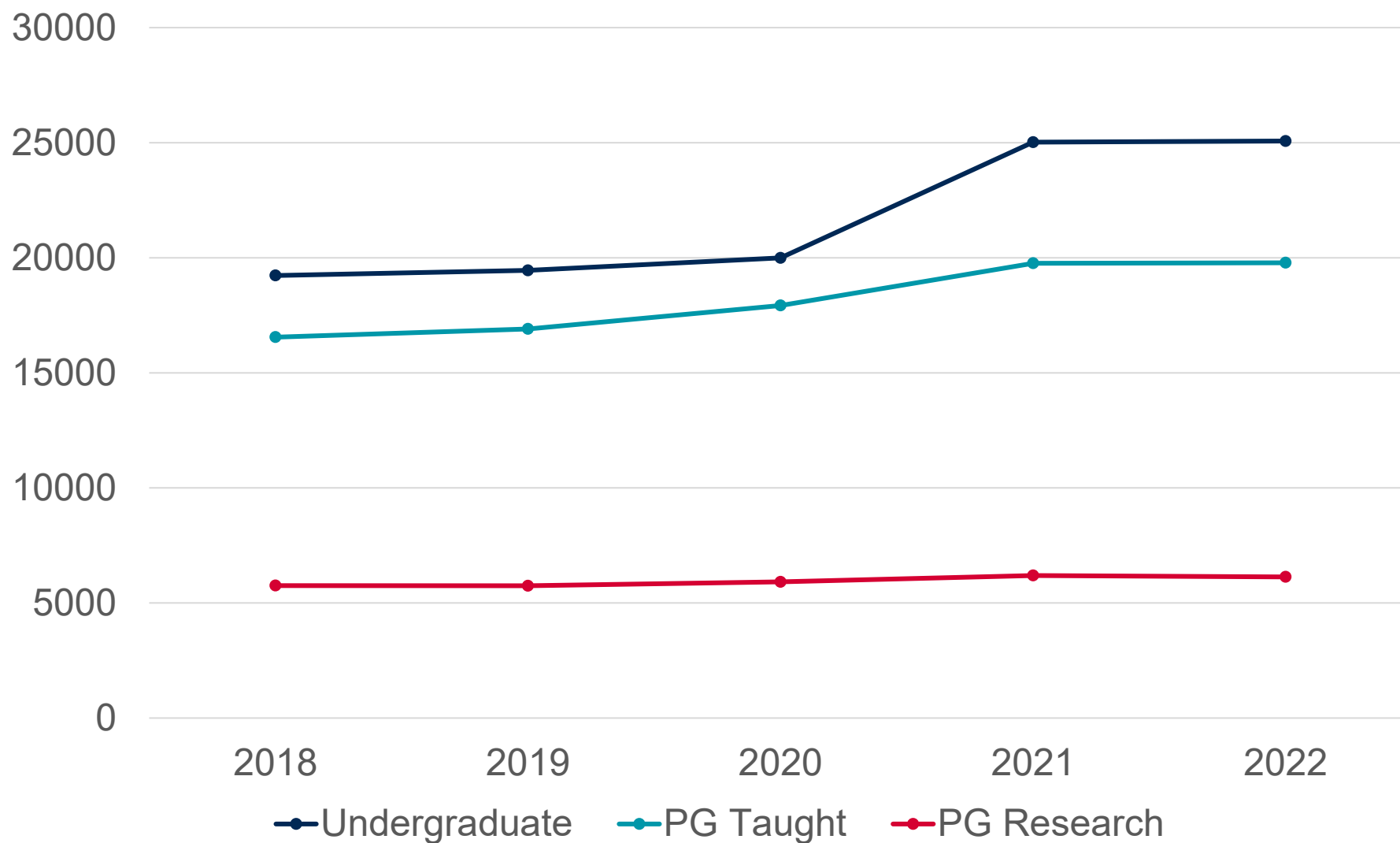


UCL

Postdoctoral researchers can supervise postgraduate students!

Nicholas Grindle, UCL Arena
Centre for Research-based
Education

UCL student numbers 2018-23

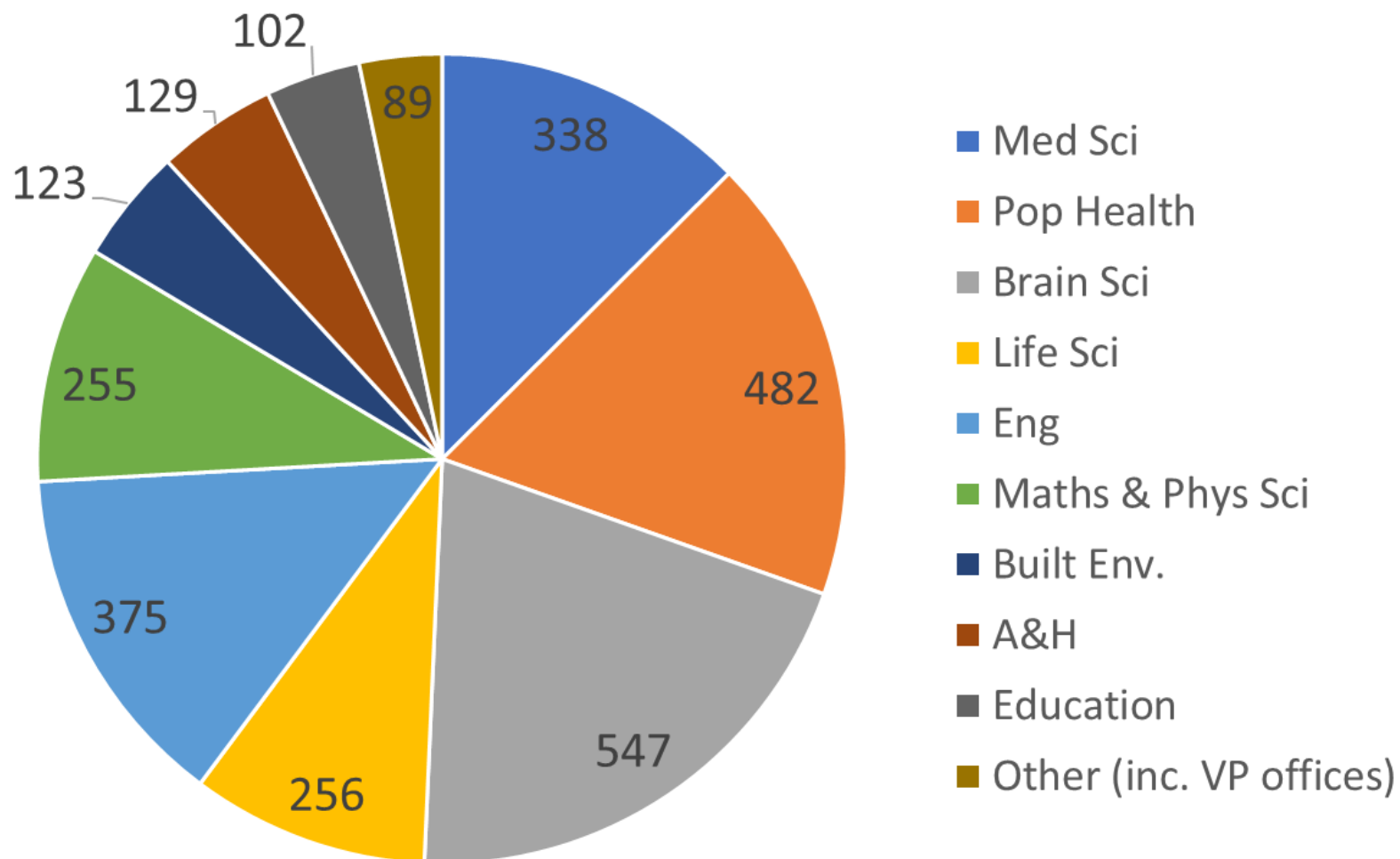




'What will growth mean for those responsible for the training and development of postgraduates?'

UCL Postdoc numbers

UCL G7 and G8 Researchers by Faculty



‘Perhaps we can acknowledge that we need postdocs as valued colleagues in the supervision of all the new students we want to recruit?’

Guccione, 2019





Teaching and supervision are viewed as 'central to academic practice' and career prospects (McAlpine, 2014).

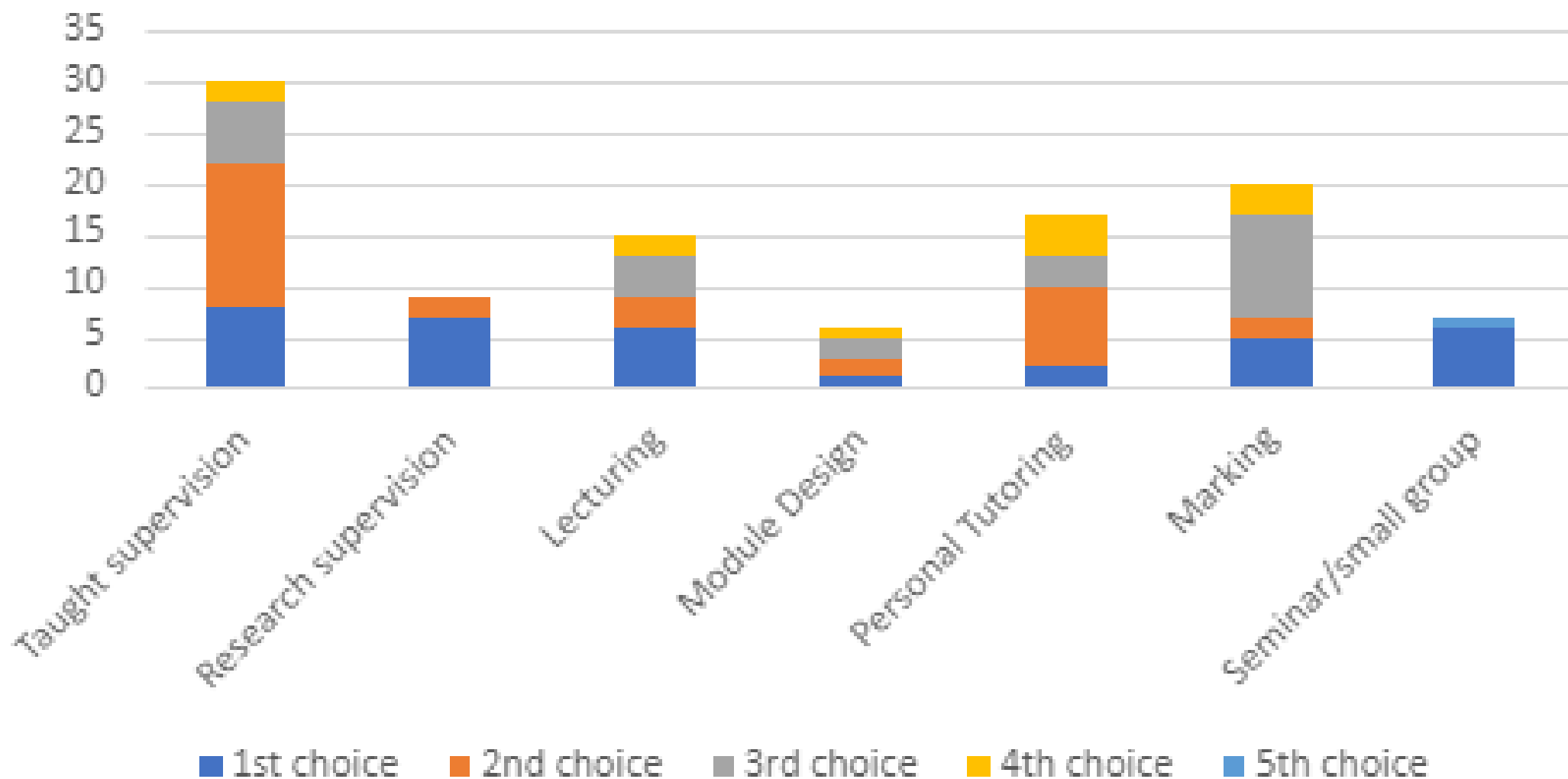
We created a short course for postdocs by expanding a one-off session (plus microteaching) to a six-session course.



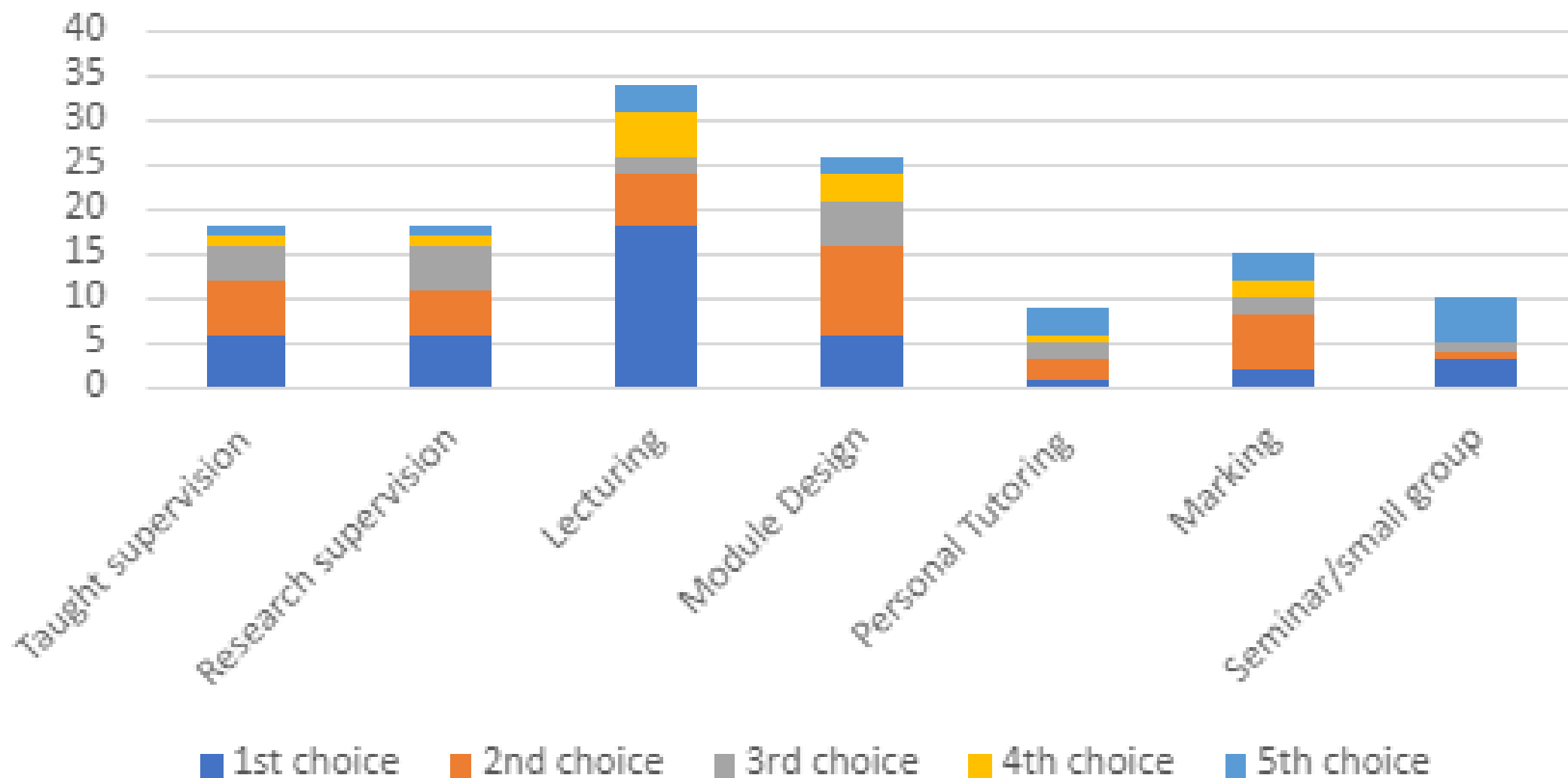


We retained a focus on planning and engaging students, and we introduced sessions on feedback, supervision, and personal development.

Previous experience



Where do you most need support?



Although the main thing that postdocs do is supervise, they don't see it as a priority for their development.

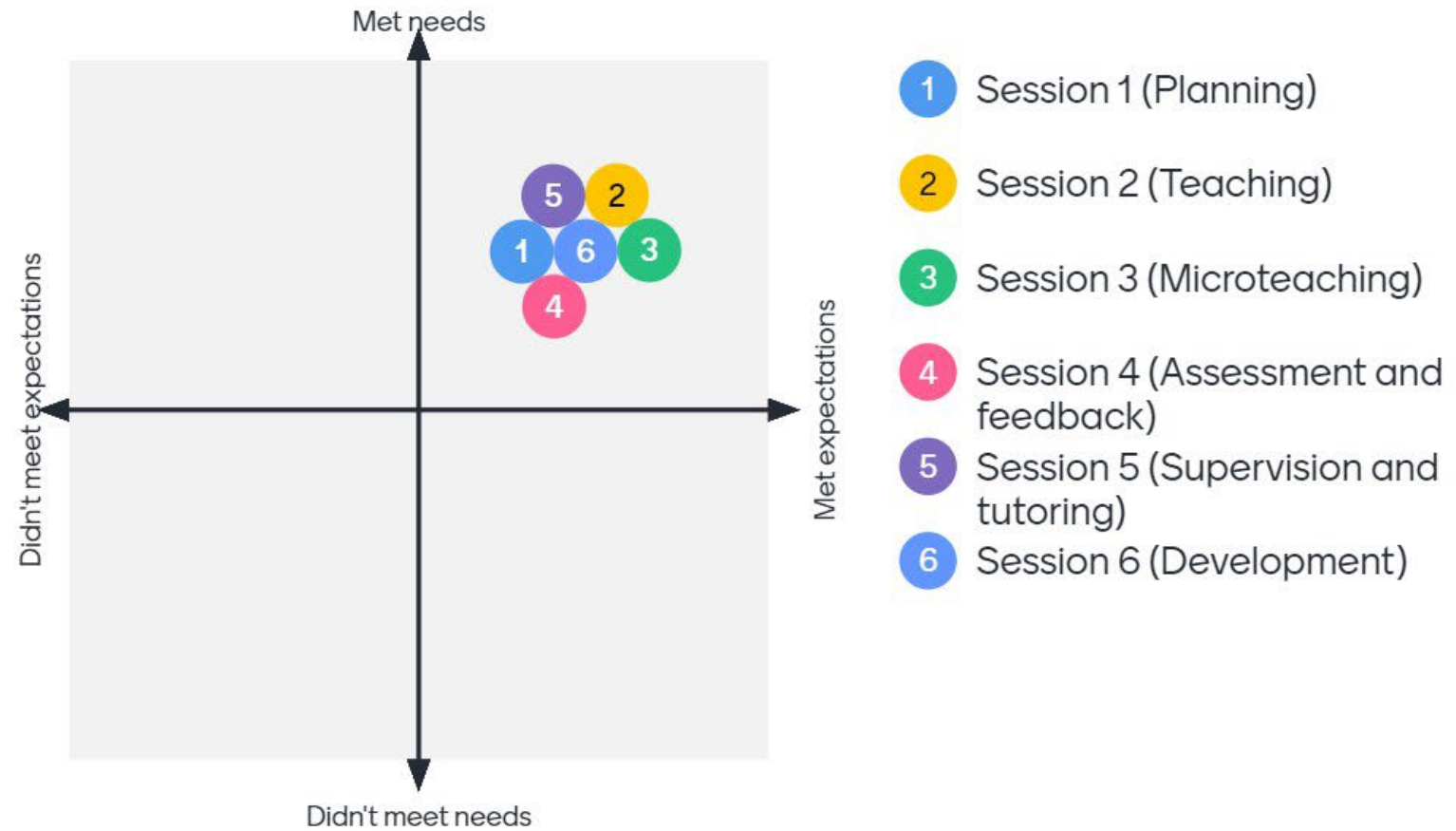




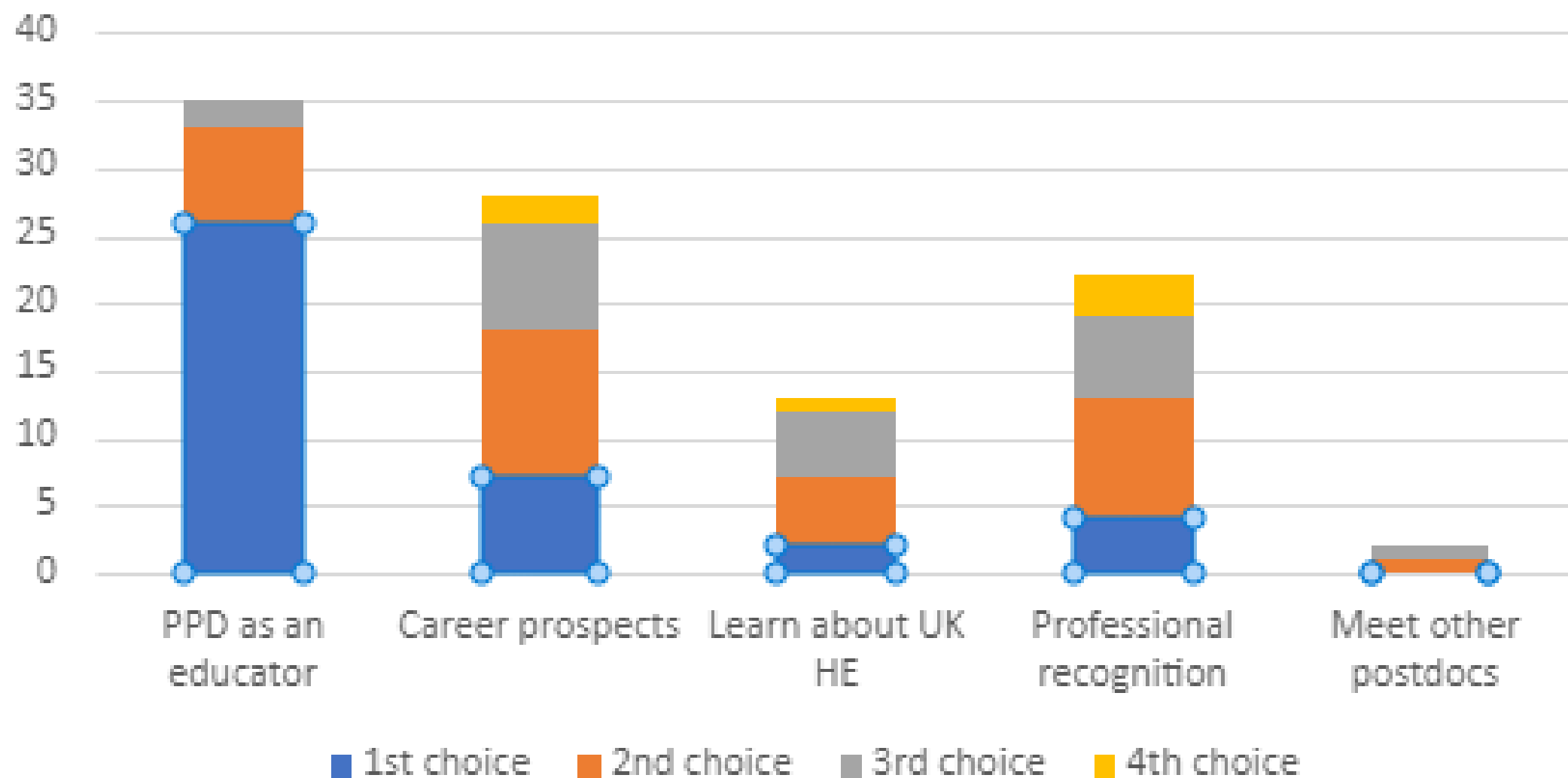
Unlike other staff groups, postdocs were able to pinpoint specific development needs – which was a challenge for us!

However ...

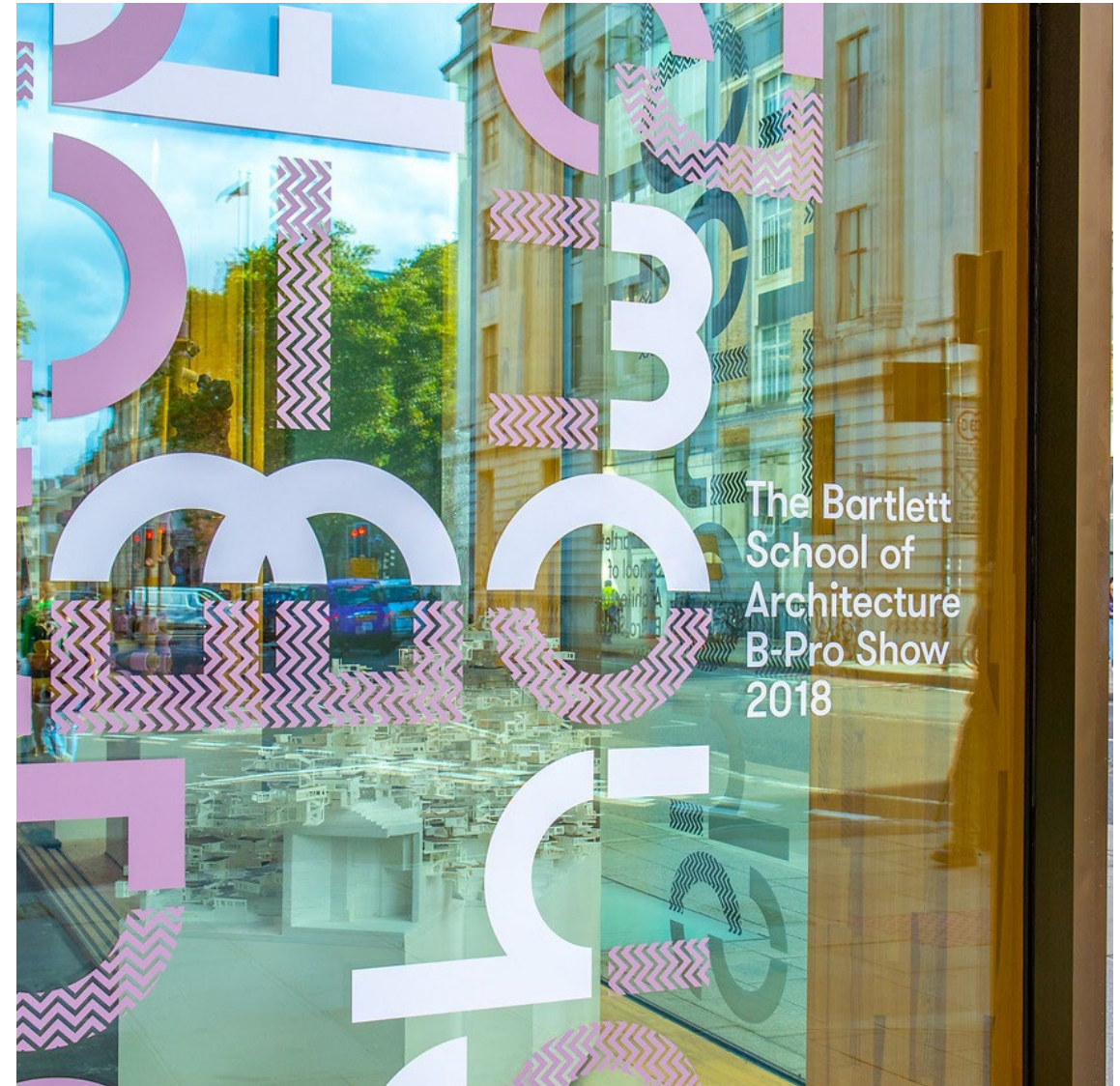
Please rank how far each session met your expectations and needs



What's your motivation for doing this course?



Some participants wanted more recognition of the fact that postdocs were working under constraints and called for more focus on activities with a smaller scope of control, e.g. lectures.





'It could be easier to participate if the courses were early in the morning than in the middle of the day due to the need commuting for the in-person meetings and need to synchronize the course with lab work'.

Conclusions

To better support our students and our researchers, the sector needs to establish 'education' and especially 'supervision' as staple items in a postdoc development diet.





Recent developments to support postdocs do not (yet) recognise their role as educators.

Limitations

We need to gather more data about where postdocs supervise, and at what level

It's also unclear how far these conclusions can be generalised across the sector

References

Guccione, K. (30 April 2019). Postdocs can't supervise! Supervising PhDs.

<https://supervisingphds.wordpress.com/2019/04/30/post-docs-cant-supervise/>

McAlpine, L. (2014). Over time, how do post-Ph.D. scientists locate teaching and supervision within their academic practice? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(8), 835-846.

Vekkaila, J., Virtanen, V., Taina, J., & Pyhältö, K. (2018). The function of social support in engaging and disengaging experiences among post PhD researchers in STEM disciplines. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(8), 1439-1453.

