



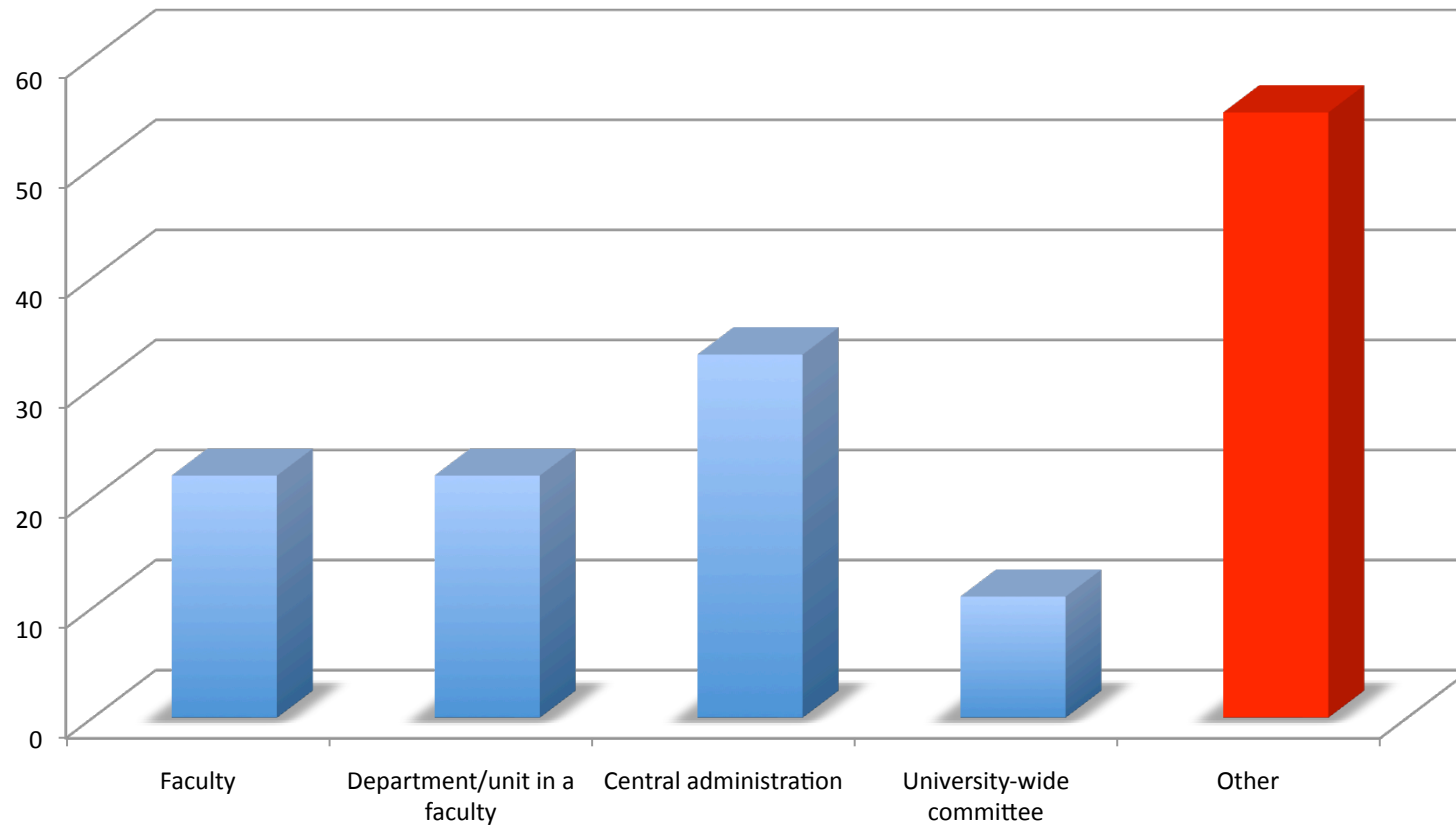
Supporting Doctoral Student Writing: Writing Centre Director Perspectives

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Who do WCs report to?

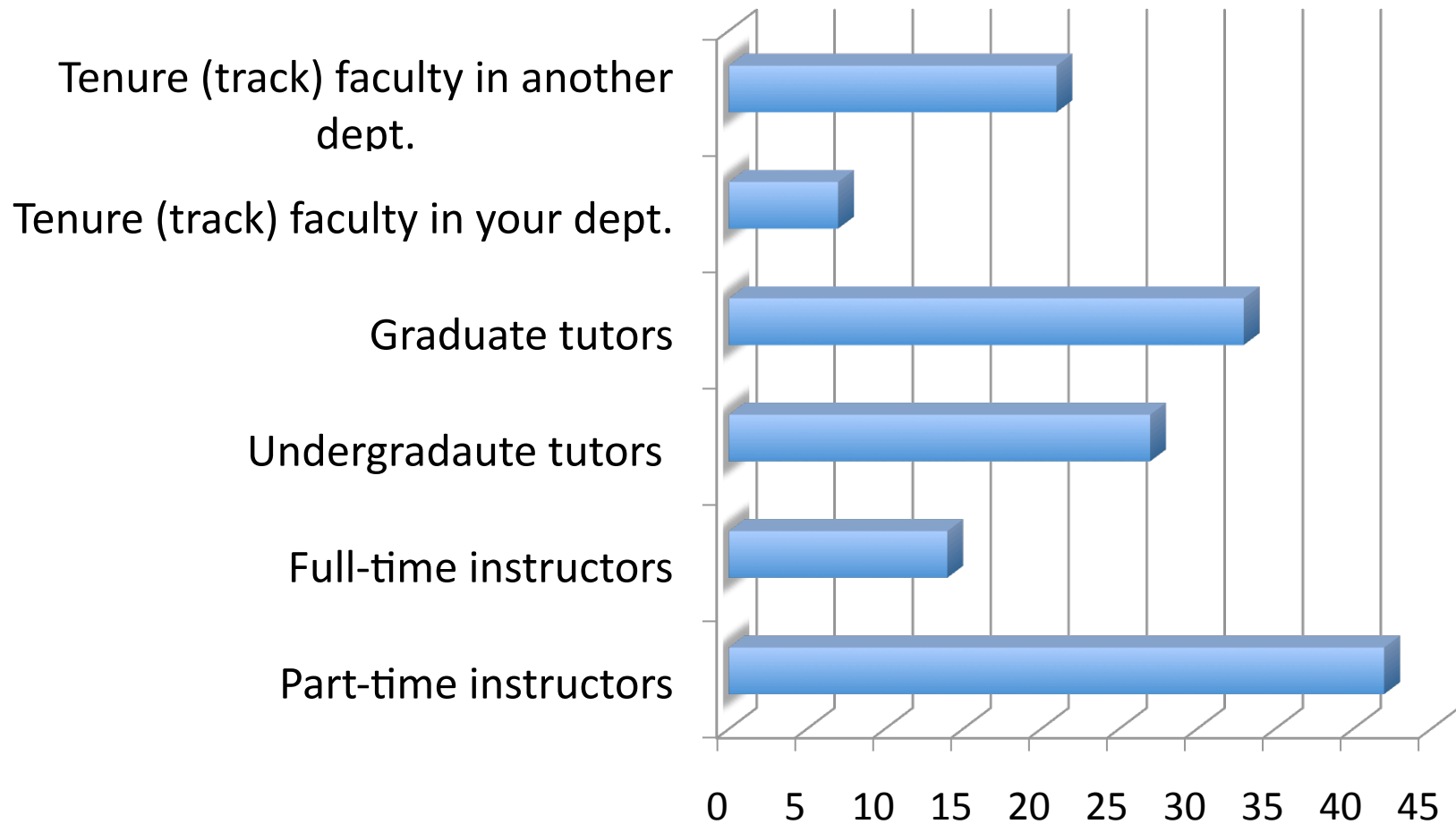


Other

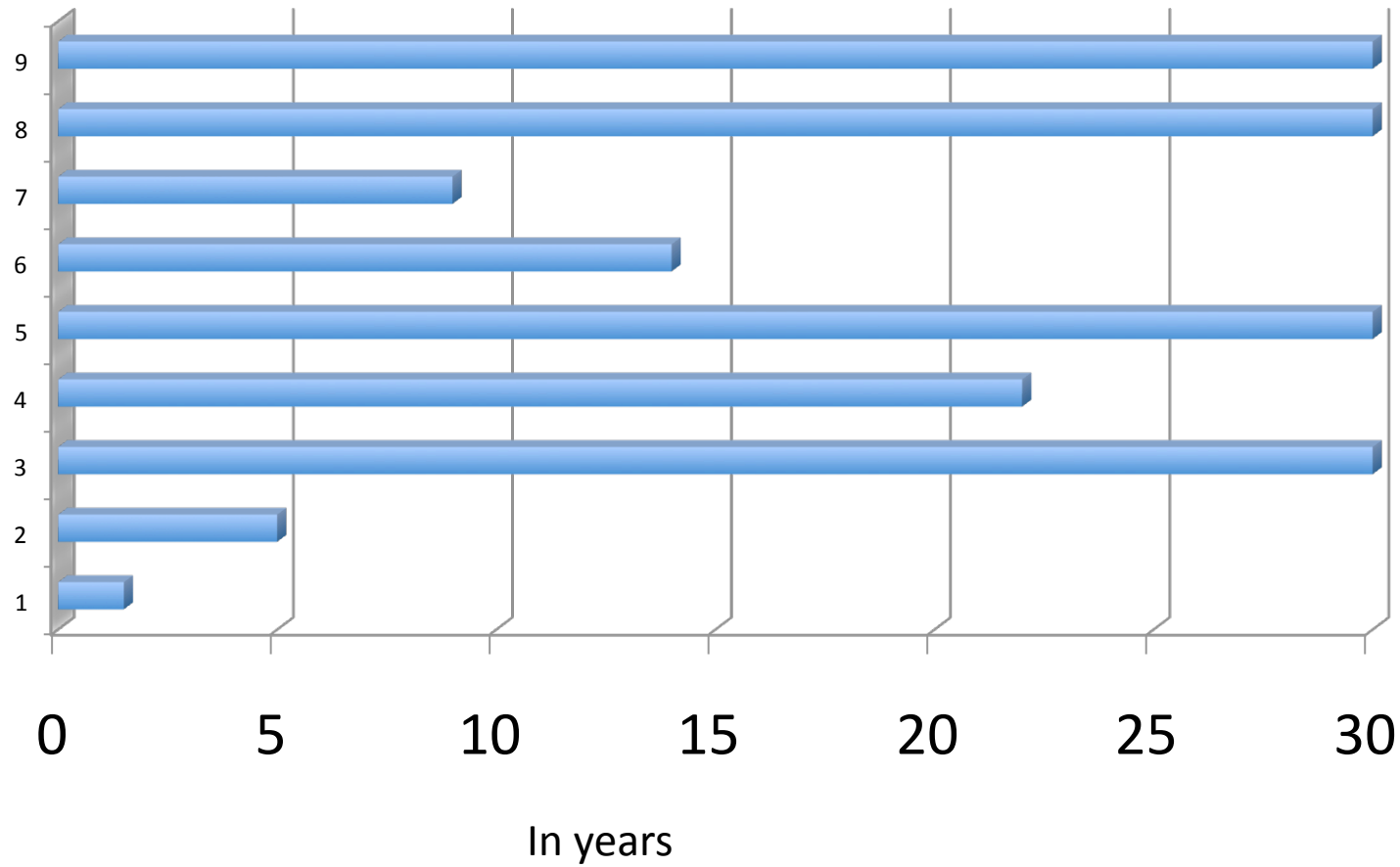


- Student Services
- Will likely be moving to Student Services September 1, 2009.
- Council of Health Sciences and Social Work Dean
- School of Graduate Studies
- The Writing Centre is part of the Centre for Teaching and Learning, which reports directly to the Dean

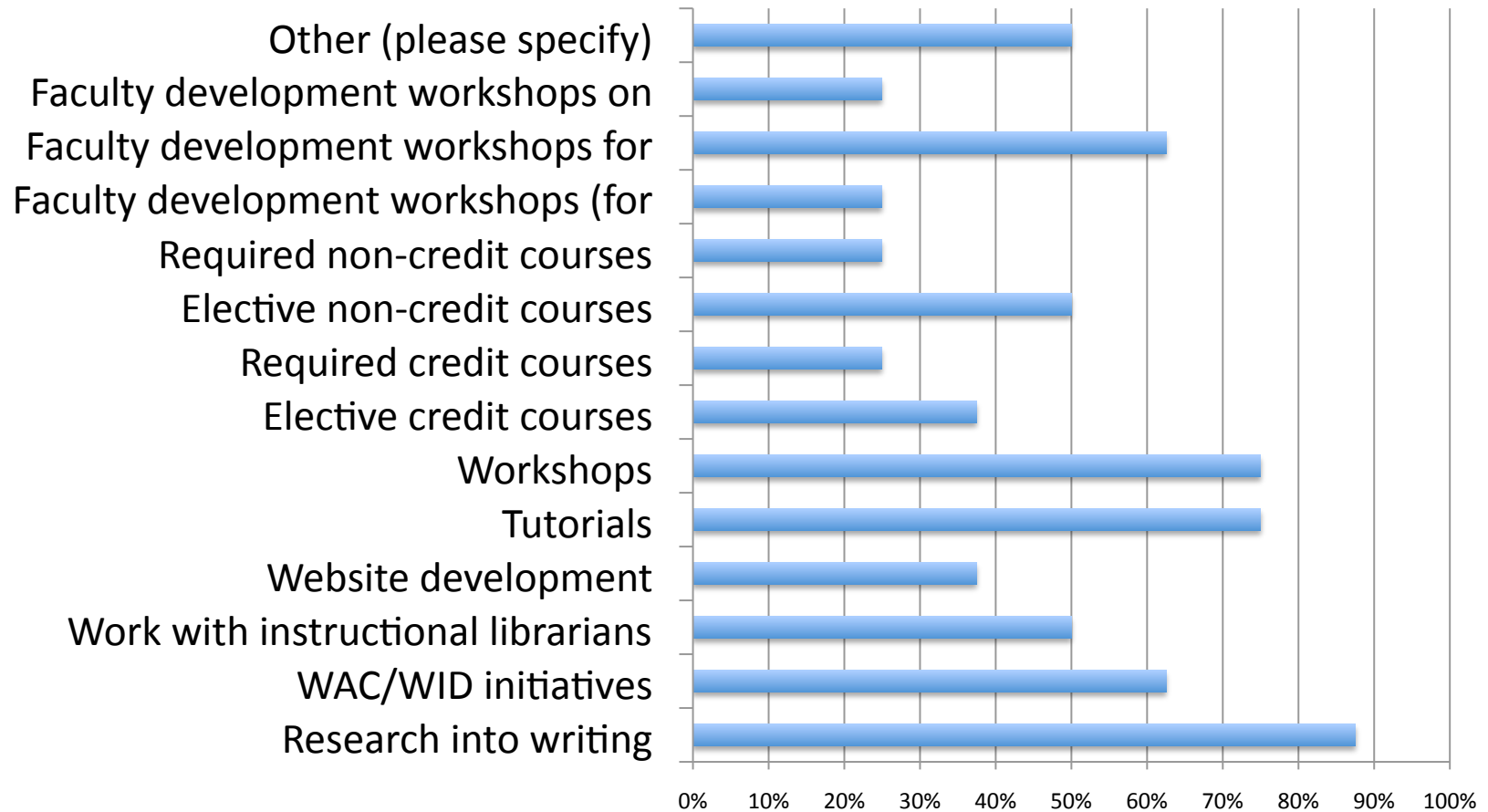
Who provides instruction?



How old is your WC?



WC Activities



Support for Doctoral Writers



1. Please indicate if the following types of courses and workshops on research writing are offered to doctoral students and by whom. (Please check all that apply.)

	Not offered.	Offered in our centre.	Offered by other units or departments on campus.
Required credit courses on research writing	71.4% (5)	0.0% (0)	28.6% (2)
Elective credit courses on research writing	50.0% (4)	12.5% (1)	50.0% (4)
Required non-credit courses/ workshops on research writing	85.7% (6)	14.3% (1)	0.0% (0)
Elective non-credit courses/ workshops on research writing	0.0% (0)	57.1% (4)	42.9% (3)
Workshops on how to work with a supervisor	57.1% (4)	14.3% (1)	28.6% (2)

Phase 2: Open-ended questions



- In the rest of this presentation, I'll describe how writing centre directors responded in the open-ended questions on the survey
- Text on the next slides are either direct quotations or paraphrases of comments made in the survey

PhD Students as writers



- Sometimes resistant to sharing writing
- Time-conscious: no time to read writing of peers
- Working with support that is untheorized: what Kamler and Thomson refer to as “tricks and tips” from the self-help genre of thesis writing
- Writing in a second language
- working through cultural and disciplinary differences
- Sorting through poor advice from supervis

Kamler, B. and P. Thomson. *Helping Doctoral Students Write: Pedagogies for Supervision*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

5 Challenges



1. Supervisors
2. Project management
3. L2 concerns
4. Time pressures
5. Publishing pressures

Supervisors



- Supervisors play an enormous role in the success of their graduate students' writing
- Supervisors may be un-prepared: they sometimes offer dubious writing advice and sometimes re-write student texts
- Supervisors suffer themselves from time pressures and so offer less one-to-one guidance

Project management



- “A significant number of doctoral students underestimate the thesis-writing task”
- Managing a large writing project requires a skill set and planning background that many of these students do not have

L2/3/4 Concerns



- Supervisors check out—they cannot invest the kind of time needed to work with the severity of the L2 language problems of their students
- Many supervisors are themselves L2 writers and do not feel they have sufficient knowledge to provide help
- L2 students need direct instruction in linear argument

Time is of the essence



- Time demands results in failure to attend writing groups
- Science faculty micromanage their students and demand that students spend their time in the lab

Publishing pressures



- Students must apply for federal and provincial grant funding programs
- “push-to-publish” results in “spiralling panic . . .[in] a fight for declining resources”
- Doctoral students are expected to publish more now than in the past

What to do?



- Demand is up: “enormous”
- “Faculty trained in fields related to the teaching of writing are able to provide training of a type that many department faculty are, by their own admission, unable to provide”

Current WC strategies



- Tutorials: 75% of WC offer them; more students are helped through them than by any other strategy
- Elective non-credit courses/workshops: over 50% offer them
- Workshops: 25% offer them
- Writing groups: 25% offer these