

FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE
STUDENT COURSE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SCEQ)
POSTGRADUATE COURSEWORK STUDENTS
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ), is designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data about postgraduate coursework students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning in their degree courses, as well as their perceptions of student administration and support services. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience (degree and administration) and those that could be improved. Based on the responses to these questions, this document seeks to provide an analysis of the areas of best practice, and opportunities for improvement, in the experiences of postgraduate coursework students in the Faculty of Architecture in 2005.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

The aspects of degree experience which attracted most positive comments from postgraduate coursework students were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Curriculum: content and structure	31%	29%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	24%	14%
Curriculum: relevance to work/career	11%	10%
Appropriate assessment	10%	3%
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	8%	14%
Skills development: graduate generic attributes	8%	8%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

The areas of degree experience which postgraduate coursework students considered most in need of improvement were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Curriculum: content and structure	26%	19%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	20%	16%
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	13%	11%
Appropriate workload	8%	7%
Curriculum: practical aspects of course	8%	1%
Clear goals and standards	7%	

Student administration and student support services: areas of best practice

The aspects of student administration and student support services which attracted most positive comments from postgraduate coursework students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Customer service: quality	51%	66%
Administration and organisation: general (incl Faculty administration)	17%	
Web communications: online access to services	10%	2%
Library services	9%	7%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	6%	12%
<i>No other aspects or services received more than 6% of comments</i>		

Student administration and student support services: opportunities for improvement

**Faculty of Architecture: Analysis of student experience:
Postgraduate coursework students: 2005**

The aspects of student administration and student support services which postgraduate coursework students considered most in need of improvement in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Customer service: quality	23%	30%
Customer service: opening hours	15%	24%
Administration and organisation: general (incl Faculty administration)	15%	
Library services	12%	6%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	11%	10%
International Office	6%	5%

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1 Introduction

The Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ), is designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data about students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning in their degree courses, as well as their perceptions of student administration and support services. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience (degree and administration) and those that could be improved. Based on the responses to these questions, this document seeks to provide an analysis of the areas of best practice, and opportunities for improvement, in the experiences of postgraduate coursework students in the Faculty of Architecture in 2005.

In 2005 71% of students who responded to the SCEQ provided comments on their degree experience; whilst 51% of respondents provided comments on the best aspects of their experiences of student administration and student support services, and 44% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement.

2 Arrangement

1. Degree experience
 - o Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
 - o Analysis of comments suggesting improvements
2. Experience of student administration and student support services
 - o Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
 - o Analysis of comments suggesting improvements

Within each section, responses are ranked according to the percentage of comments received for each aspect. Sample comments are provided for the six aspects that received the highest percentage of comments. For comparison, results for the previous years qualitative analysis¹ are provided in brackets after the 2005 results.

Only aspects that received more than 5% of comments in 2005 are included in this report. To preserve student confidentiality, sample comments are only provided if there are six or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments that may possibly identify the student are not been included in the sample comments. Comments are transcribed exactly as they appear in the original documents.

3 Analysis of the comments: taxonomy and process

The manual analysis and evaluation method used by the University is based on an in-house taxonomy which allows for standardisation of reporting across the university and ease of comparison with the SCEQ quantitative analysis reports. Within the taxonomy, the main categories are based on the SCEQ items, and sub-categories based on their characteristics. Additional categories, based on the frequency of occurrence in students' comments over the past four years, are also included. Categories for the analysis of comments relating to administration and support services are defined using the most commonly mentioned aspects e.g. quality of customer service, opening hours, staffing levels, online access to services; and names of individual services e.g. Counselling, Library, Student Centre.²

This taxonomy is under constant revision as the need to sub-divide categories becomes apparent. For example, until 2005 the category *Online learning and resources* was used to record all comments mentioning students' experiences of elearning. In 2005, the increase of elearning across the university, and the review of its use, has necessitated the sub-division of this category into the following elements: *Online resources; Elearning: uptake by students/ staff; Learning management systems; Support provided; and Face to face vs. online learning.* NB: The

¹ i.e. 2000 – 2003. The SCEQ was not administered in 2004.

² A copy of the SCEQ Taxonomy is provided as a separate attachment.

SCEQ included specific questions on elearning for the first time in the 2005 survey. These additional qualitative analysis topics reflect these changes.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluation and feedback• Academic Board policies• Curriculum• Skills development• Learning community• Learning resources• Overall satisfaction• Good teaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear goals and standards• Appropriate assessment• Appropriate workload• Elearning• Research-led teaching• Student progression and retention• Cultural diversity• Equity |
|--|---|

Categories used in the analysis of SCEQ Open Response comments

Each comment received is analysed according to the SCEQ Taxonomy, with those including more than one aspect being counted in each aspect mentioned.

Students undertaking double degrees were asked to identify which degree/s they were commenting on in their answer. Where this has occurred the comment is counted in the results for the applicable faculty; where this has not occurred, the comment is counted in the results for both faculties.

It should be noted, however, that the absence of favourable comments on a particular aspect of learning and teaching does not reflect that this is not an area of best practice. Rather that the students are happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting on areas in need of improvement. Since 2000, more comments have been received from postgraduate coursework students in reply to questions asking students to list areas in need of improvement than those asking for areas of best practice.

4 Degree experience

4.1 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects³

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 31%)
(2003: 29%; 2002: 25%; 2001: 21%; 2000: 42%)

- The system of the course are the best aspects of my course. Because everything is methodical and systematic.
- Sustainable design: Relevant topics for today's market. Intensive format is easy to schedule.
- the program itself really have lots of interesting units to take up, the lecturer are pretty good and friendly to keep you interested in the class.
- The course provides good training in conservation management planning and theories of assessing significance of historic sites, buildings and landscapes.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 24%)
(2003: 14%; 2002: 7%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 3%)

- Some academic members are extremely good, and put a lot of effort in the class material, using current examples and situations. But other members just re-used notes written by past members, and don't update the class notes. Some classes are behind what the current trend is.
- Sustainable Design The Course co-ordinator is excellent in teaching. It has always been very clear of what he was teaching us. All news and controversies were raised to illustrate lessons. This makes student being more aware of how important of the subject..
- Some courses were taught by very committed staff who have placed a lot of effort into the preparation for lectures/tutorials. It is full of information and I could actually learn and gain useful skills in those courses. Even though all information was available online, the staff has taken the time and effort to find this information for us.
- AA is a committed and inspirational lecturer. He is clearly interested in teaching his course content in a manner that is easily understood and promotes group discussion. His close industry contacts and experience enrich the students with information useful in their search for career development opportunities and ideas. His teaching style stands out above every other lecturer I've experienced at Sydney Uni

Curriculum: relevance to work/ career (2005: 11%)
(2003: 10%; 2002: 9%; 2001: 19%)

- Audio Design is helping me in my profession of audio engineer, through research and recommended texts my practical and theoretical knowledge is growing..
- Gaining an understanding of my chosen (current) career as a town planner. gaining an understanding of the bigger picture of planning and not just the day to day administrative roles of a development assessment officer
- Practical subjects - the material from which is applicable to my work e.g., Planning Law, Planning Methods and Economic Applications in Planning (other subjects such as Foundations and Augmentations add little value to the degree)
- The degree is practical to the work I currently undertake, It has expanded my thought process - XX is great smart and funny, makes the subject enjoyable

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 160; 2003: 154; 2002: 135; 2001: 104; 2000: 36

Appropriate assessment **(2005: 10%)**
(2003: 3%; 2002: 4%; 2001: 6%)

- The course is most stimulating when assignments and tasks are tied to real world planning activities - i.e., assignments are not just academic exercises but results may be used by organisations which are involved in tasks.
- It is based on analysis and research papers not focused on exams, so learning process is more effective
- Relevant assignments and tasks which prepare the students for their professional careers.
- Most of our learning experiences are tested through projects rather than through examinations, therefore allowing me to fully demonstrate how much I have learned in each class.

Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff⁴ **(2005: 8%)**
(2003: 14%; 2002: 17%; 2001: 26%; 2000: 28%)

- The way lectures are conducted and the breadth of knowledge of the lecturers and industry professionals.
- The lecturers, high knowledge base and very informed about international and national programs in the field of study which is very important.
- All aspects - exploring an area of knowledge that interests everyone in our classes; learning from some of the foremost, acknowledged experts in Australia (and probably on par with the best around the world). When I studied civil engineering at Sydney Uni., I was privileged to have a number of relevant Australian Standards explained by people who were on the committees responsible for writing them. I have found the same in this course.
- The lecturers are very experienced and often have related research interests outside the university. Good to set different perspectives.

Skills development: graduate generic attributes **(2005: 8%)**
(2003: 8%; 2002: 7%; 2001: 11%; 2000: 9%)

- It develops my ideas and improve my analytical and research skills.
- Improved my research and analytical skills
- Development of communication and research skills useful.
- Mine is actually a postgrad course. It has raised my confidence in my ability to problem solve in areas that I thought I was no good at, i.e.. mathematics problems. It has stimulated the activity of my brain and is increasing my capacity to memorise and to think laterally.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Learning environment: learning community	8%	7%	7%	11%	25%
Industry and professions: visiting staff/ lecturers etc	8%	3%	2%	1%	6%
Learning resources: physical facilities	6%	3%	12%	13%	6%
Research led teaching	6%	1%	1%		

⁴ Includes: Qualifications (as tertiary teacher); experience (in subject area); English language proficiency

4.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁵

Curriculum: content and structure

(2005: 26%)

(2003: 19%; 2002: 31%; 2001: 29%; 2000: 28%)

- It would be great to have a less theoretical approach to some of the subjects and gain a more hands on approach for career related study including day-to-day skills that will be encountered regularly in the course of my career.
- The course content could be better suited and directed to our topic. I think there needs to be an overhaul of the whole course to provide a better variety of topics and look at some new avenues of resources.
- I feel strongly that the overall structure and progression of the degree was not intuitive. The sense of building on a solid foundation (i.e. first year) was not clear. I feel I would have benefited from a clearer structure, and sense of progression. At times I was doing a course later on, that would have been of greater use done earlier, and would have helped the quality of my studies immensely. Other courses looked appealing to me and had up to 5 pre-requisites!! Extremes in course requirements are hard to understand, either a lot or no pre-requisites, is very limiting especially when completing the last year of your degree. I have compromised on about 3-4 out of 12 courses - in order to complete my degree. Structure: Clearer progression, and understanding of how the combination of certain courses can work together to build knowledge, instead of being disparate elements, with limited commonality..
- 1. Intensives - I hate them. Being expected to learn a whole subject after 2 or 3 days with a huge break in between means losing interest in between days. In my experience I don't feel like I get value for money from these. 2. Offering subjects which are core subjects over the summer break.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received

(2005: 20%)

(2003: 16%; 2002: 15%; 2001: 11%; 2000: 8%)

- I'm afraid to say I find other teaching staff members at Sydney Uni quite disappointing. I think that arrogance often distracts them from any desire to ensure the students receive the high level education the fees would warrant. XX's outdated PowerPoint presentations are little inspiration when someone like YY presents clearly informed lectures with current information that inspires students to embrace their own learning.
- The teaching styles too were outdated with no use of the internet or other facilities that could help part time students.
- XX is dedicated and knowledgeable, he just has a problem putting things simply and clearly. He tries but I think overseas students must be completely lost at times.
- The lecturer of the course DESC9123, in the lecture, she reads through the slides. It's so boring to attend her class and she always came late to the class.

⁵ Number of comment received: 2005: 156; 2003: 152; 2002: 139; 2001: 113; 2000: 36

Good teaching: useful and timely feedback

(2005: 13%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 12%; 2001: 13%)

- No staff feedback, it has to be sought out by students after assessments. Everyone should get detailed comments without asking
- Despite having contacted the head of the faculty numerous times to get feedback on assignments and whether or not they have been marked or not, I have had no response. Depending on whether I pass a subject or not, I can get a reimbursement from my employer to pay for a subject (currently this is coming out of my own pocket - a not inconsiderable expense). I am still waiting a couple of months after completing a subject to find out if any of my assignments have even been looked at, let alone marked.
- The course co-coordinator/main lecturer has provided little encouragement, nor has he assisted in our learning by providing feedback. In the three years that I have been studying for the award of my masters degree, I have never received critical feedback from the main course coordinator. We have received grades and nothing else, nor has he bothered to return our work.
- All subjects require greater feedback!!! Over the duration of the session I submitted 10 assignments, to date I've only received 3 back, however only two were returned during session. The lack of feedback throughout the session has been a major concern as I've had no idea as to my progress throughout the 4 subjects I studied. The faculty needs to adopt a policy similar to that at UNSW, where you are guaranteed at least one assessment mark for each subject by week 8. In order to improve over the course of the semester we need to receive lots more feedback!!!!

Appropriate workload

(2005: 8%)

(2003: 7%; 2002: 4%; 2001: 4%; 2000: 11%)

- One subject (PLAN9051) involved weekly tasks/assignments. This was an unrealistic workload for me and I had great difficulty in completing all of these tasks due to the time involved and the sheer volume of work. Overall all courses have been enjoyable - however I think the workload and structure of the workload should be mindful of part time students who may be working full time.
- The amount of work involved in Conservation Methods and Practices to be done in one semester for a P/T student was a tall order. There was a disproportionate amount of assignment work to be done for Planning Law considering its 4 credit point status..
- Web site design - way too much work for one subject, wasn't made interesting, tutorials are wasted catching up on homework (which was never properly explained).
- Also, I believe we do not have enough time to work on final projects in this course. Classes usually end in week 12 or 13 and then final projects are due the following week... We don't finish learning many techniques and/or software capabilities until the last few weeks, yet we are expected to be more than 70% done with our projects at that time in order to complete them by their due date. I feel that students need at least a week (in between classes ending and final submissions) to work on their projects in order to fully implement the skills we learn throughout the entire length of the course.

Curriculum: practical aspects of course

(2005: 8%)

(2003: 1%; 2002: 2%; 2001: 3%)

- more practical needed/design-oriented
- I understand that theory is very important, but practicality in postgraduate courses is very important. More practical skills would be beneficial.
- Design unit can be improved. I feel we should do more on site job. I mean the practical project, not only metaphysical imagination
- Practical and laboratory assignment should be improved. I do not really like intensive course

Clear goals and standards

(2005: 7%)

(2002: 7%; 2001: 5%)

- Grading. I knew nothing of what was expected of me from my instructors or what work would receive which level of a grade.
- Be clearer up front what is expected in relation to assignments. Have experienced several 'loose' briefs and then have results reflect this. Also often don't know when and how results will be shared
- Teaching staff could make it clear at the start of a subject what the expectations are rather than in dribs and drabs
- Provision of appropriate information regarding submission expectation and assessment criteria

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Appropriate assessment	6%	7%	4%	4%	3%
Overall satisfaction: quality of degree	6%	5%	5%	4%	8%

5 Experience of student administration and student support services

5.1 Analysis of comments referring to best aspects⁶

Customer service: quality

(2005: 51%)

(2003: 66%; 2002: 73%; 2001: 69%; 2000: 75%)

- Friendliness. The staff in these services are friendly and likely to help students.
- Friendly, helpful, everyone I encountered seems to know what they were doing and were well informed.
- Prompt response from enquiries. Ask and you shall receive.
- Staff are well prepared, kind and ready to help students. Very efficient overall

Administration and organisation: general

(2005⁷: 17%)

(no comments on this aspect in previous years)

- What I came across with the Faculty of Architecture administrators is good impressions, several times and that not because I'm always lucky when I face problems. Administrators are helpful and do understand that international students need help and good advices. (XX and YY helped me out of my enrolment problem and applying for double degree.
- The assistance of the Faculty of Architecture's administration is fantastic. People like XX and surrounding staff are absolutely brilliant.
- I have always been provided with practical, friendly and efficient service and could not complain about the treatment received from any of the student admin services I have used. The Architecture Faculty admin services should be commended.
- The student admin. in my faculty is very helpful - when they are there.

⁶ Number of comment received: 2005: 114; 2003: 96; 2002: 81; 2001: 51; 2000: 20

⁷ In 2005, this includes Faculty of Architecture Administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

Web communications: online access to services (2005: 10%)
(2003: 2%; 2002: 2%; 2001: 4%)

- Online services generally easy to negotiate
- The best aspect of student administration is that you can access it online, this makes things very easy and convenient.
- The website (MyUni) really helped me avoid long queues and could do everything "online"
- Now most things can be done on line so students do not have to wait in huge, long lines to adjust enrolment etc. This saves heaps of time and grief.

Library services (2005: 9%)
(2003: 7%; 2002: 14%; 2001: 8%; 2000: 10%)

- Online journals are very useful for part time students, especially since it is sometimes difficult to get physical access to the library.
- I am rarely at uni. but the library was good when I used it. especially the architecture library. it is well resourced in terms of journals, computers. books could be updated however.
- Librarians are friendly and helpful not only with students but also outsiders. I saw a librarian explain to a lady of how to research the info she wanted. I mean she patiently spend some time with that lady. It just impressed me.
- The library staff in my faculty library are very helpful

Web communications: intranet/ internet (incl WebCT) (2005: 6%)
(2003: 12%; 2002: 4%; 2001: 12%; 2000: 5%)

- the online materials. for examples webCT and lecturer's webpage that we can get lecture note and tutorial. these online materials are quite good!
- Feedback from webCT helpdesk has been quick and useful
- ICT Helpdesk. I took the course through WebCT helpdesks and it was really helpful
- The student website is very good - gives us all the options for changing subjects, looking up grades etc

No other aspects received more than 5% of comments

5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁸

Customer service: quality (2005: 23%)
(2003: 30%; 2002: 41%; 2001: 45%; 2000: 41%)

- they need to know how to help students with enquiries and issues from woe to go... a lot of the times (not that I had heap of problems, but) I was told to look else where and not even told who or where I could go for getting the help that I needed
- I haven't had enough experience of them to comment one way or the other. It is a matter of people, sometimes they have good days, sometimes bad. They should keep those to themselves.
- Customer service when providing service to existing students, the friendly helpful advise was not there as first noticed at open day at the University. It was like they wanted to get you in, but growled at you when you needed assistance. Overall adequate and not above the mark..
- For prospective student they can solve there matters before the students arrive at the University and sent the information at their homes so the students have a clear idea what's going on.

⁸ Number of comment received: 2005: 99; 2003: 104; 2002: 92; 2001: 69; 2000: 22

Customer service: opening hours (2005: 15%)
(2003: 24%; 2002: 28%; 2001: 22%; 2000: 23%)

- Longer opening hours - especially later in the evening for part time students
- As a part time student access to Student Admin support is often very difficult. The opening times coincide with lectures e.g. 4-6, why can't they be open 3-5 or even longer hours. The times that I have waited and gone to student admin, they have opened late and given me the wrong form and there has been 5 other people waiting so I am not impressed. My limited interactions with them have been negative ones. Perhaps I have just had bad luck with my interactions, who knows
- Open the office longer and more frequently. Staff need to understand what is going on rather than require detailed explanation of what I am asking.
- Longer hours to cater for part time students which is what most Post-Graduate students would be

Administration and organisation: general (2005⁹: 15%)
(no comments on this aspect in previous years)

- Please change the current ugly laminated student "card" with a new one looks like credit card. It looks cooler and longer lasting.
- The management of the University needs to listen to the needs of the admin staff and budget accordingly to give them the funding they require to support the students.
- In the student faculty administration some staff members need to be more customer-service oriented. One of the staff members is often quite rude.
- Architecture Faculty - are not interested in talking to you, don't give course advice and this semester's enrolment was a farce, half the courses cancelled but the SAC had no clue. Faculty staff generally rude and make it clear they have no interest in helping you.

Library services (2005: 12%)
(2003: 6%; 2002: 8%; 2001: 12%; 2000: 14%)

- The architecture library needs to be open later in the evening during the week and open on the weekend. There also needs to be more copies of prescribed texts available in the library
- some times we don't get good response from the staff. only some times. in the past, I used to be in the library and just browse through any kind of books. after coming to this university, I have never liked to be in between two rows of book shelves. there is no breathing space. and there is no identity of book. just call nos. the quantity of resources are so many but I have never enjoyed browsing through them.
- The Architecture Library should be open later - at least until 8pm weekdays and should be open on weekends. It is ridiculous to expect students to carry out research effectively only between 9 and 5 Monday to Friday.
- Library needs more new books. Books have to be updated periodically to watch students study needs.

⁹ In 2005, this includes Faculty of Architecture Administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

Web communications: intranet/ internet

(2005: 11%)

2003: 10%; 2002: 3%; 2001: 1%; 2000: 5%)

- web interface is poor and confusing
- My Uni email has far too much spam. The Uni website is too busy, not well laid out e.g. where do I book studio time??? Needs big improvement. Navigating timetables - nightmare!
- -the websites are not very easy to understand, a lot of the links are not underlined, you have to no that you can click on something, it does not announce itself as a link...
- A much simpler and more logical website. It is too complicated

International Office

(2005: 6%)

(2003: 5%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 1%)

- The student admin system needs to be overhauled because the sheer bureaucratic delays that are caused by the system, especially the international office
- international office should be more aware of events- fee structures etc
- Whenever I went to international office, I had to wait quite a long time. If they could have more staff so that they can help international students more efficiently, that'll be appreciated.
- International Office - always the answer phone and take days to return your call.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Administration and organisation: enrolment	6%	3%	2%	3%	