

**FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE**  
**STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)**  
**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS**  
**ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience 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 research 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 research students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	30%	11%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	19%	22%
Research climate: supportive work environment	14%	11%
Generic skills: expanding knowledge base	11%	3%
Quality of infrastructure: Research resources: library	8%	22%
Generic skills: working independently	8%	14%

### **Degree experience: opportunities for improvement**

The areas of degree experience which postgraduate research students considered most in need of improvement in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (study related)	26%	6%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	23%	18%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	14%	24%
Generic skills: research skills	14%	3%
Research climate: supportive work environment	11%	6%
Administration and organisation	9%	12%

*Rachel Symons  
Special Projects Officer and Executive Assistant  
Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)*

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## **1 Introduction**

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire postgraduate research students are asked to provide comments on the following:

- What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?
- What aspects are most in need of improvement?

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 research students in the Faculty of Architecture in 2005.

In 2005 70% of students who responded to the SREQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, and on those that were considered to be in need of improvement.

## **2 Arrangement**

1. Analysis of comments referring to best aspects of the degree course
2. Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved

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 analysis (2002 – 2004) 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 SREQ quantitative analysis reports. Within the taxonomy, categories used for the SREQ are identical to the SREQ factor scales, with the addition of Administration and organisation, Ethics Administration, Academic Board policies, International Office, and other administrative areas and support services. This taxonomy is under constant revision as the need to sub-divide categories and create new ones becomes apparent.

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

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.

#### **4 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects<sup>1</sup>**

*NB: Only two aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

**Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research** **(2005: 30%)**  
(2004: 11%; 2003: 16%; 2002: 20%)

- Gaining a deeper understanding and developing broader knowledge when discovering new areas of research which relate and connect to my thesis, changing the way I perceived my own work. These are great moments because it is at this point that I have moved beyond how I perceived the way I thought things were and discovered new territories of thought, which indicates to me that I am making progress towards contributing to my field of research.
- doing a topic relevant to my field of academic and professional work expertise
- The best aspect of my research experience is that there are diverse nature of topics being worked upon at the same time, which provides a good over overview of the developments in the field.
- My topic is interesting and Sydney University presents a good opportunity to support this.

**Quality of supervision: supervisor** **(2005: 19%)**  
(2004: 22%; 2003: 30%; 2002: 27%)

- Very supportive supervisor and associate supervisor from whom I receive excellent guidance and valuable feedback on my research project.
- The best aspects are the respect and support accorded to me by my supervisor who, over the years has developed into a brilliant support through listening and giving appropriate feedback. My supervisor has been absolutely marvellous and still offers me respect as a researcher and as a human being.
- I really appreciate the quality of the supervision and the support I have received throughout my first year here.
- Excellent supervision - high level knowledge, very good advice on a range of issues.

#### **Other aspects mentioned included:**

*NB: all the aspects mentioned below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
Research climate: supportive work environment	14%	11%	11%	10%
Generic skills: expanding knowledge base	11%	3%	2%	3%
Quality of infrastructure: Research resources: library	8%	22%	16%	17%
Generic skills: working independently	8%	14%	16%	13%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	8%	3%	7%	7%

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<sup>1</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 37; 2004: 37; 2003: 44; 2002: 30

## 5 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements<sup>2</sup>

NB: *Only two aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

### **Research climate: interaction with other research students (study related) (2005: 26%)** (2004: 6%; 2003: 3%; 2002: 30%)

- I feel that there needs to be more support for developing a common research community for helping research students to share their approaches, experiences and ideas on conducting research. There is plenty of conferences for academic papers, but I still feel that research students are often struggling to come to grips with their approaches on how they conduct their research such as research methods and methodologies, writing and presentation skills. I think a PHD mentoring program which goes beyond just the supervisor would help research students a lot in embarking on a research career. May be this will reduce drop out rates and reduce the time frame for research completion. Especially as these time frames are slowly become less and less over time.
- Need more opportunities or platform for postgraduate students (within this faculty) to interact and share research experiences.
- More interaction with other research students.
- Research students are isolated in small groups with little opportunity to interact informally. Everyone has to learn the simplest tasks from scratch rather than systems/guidelines being in place for routine chores faced by research students such as designing and printing posters for conference presentations. Standards of senior faculty management are inconsistent with those expected of a first rate university.

### **Quality of supervision: supervisor (2005: 23%)** (2004: 18%; 2003: 19%; 2002: 19%)

- Supervisors need to be more responsive to critical concerns eg uni proxy server doesn't give access to Avery, supervisor said they would act to fix problem and have yet to. Uni must realise difficulties that remote students face with isolation etc, better communication more often.
- Supervisor interaction, supervisor doesn't share enthusiasm for subject.
- more involvement and support from supervisor- because he/she is the sole source of guidance in your particular subject and the only one to tell you whether you are going right or not; more frequent assessment of the research to help keep it on track and get a wide range of comments/feedback- otherwise there is no reference point, nothing to tell you your deficiencies/strengths, areas to be improved upon, and it seems one long solitary journey; a unit or classes on writing a research, covering- formatting, expression, qualities of a good research, structure, tools for search, etc. -because these are important aspects of the research which can take up a lot of time learning yourself; if calculated for all the fresh researchers, such a course would save a lot of collective research time.
- In my case, my supervisor is very ineffective and the associate supervisor left the university without telling me. They are the only two people in the department that are involved in my topic, so I have to work with them. My supervisor has no commitment to my research topic and is often incompetent. Both supervisor and associate supervisor are very ineffective. In my faculty, the same problems that were there 10 years ago are still there now. I think it is because all the same people are there. However, the dean of the department has been very good this year and very involved with postgraduates.

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<sup>2</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 31; 2004: 37; 2003: 46; 2002: 29

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

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**Other aspects mentioned included:**

*NB: all the aspects mentioned below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	14%	24%	19%	
Generic skills: research skills	14%	3%		
Research climate: supportive work environment	11%	6%	14%	22%
Administration and organisation	9%	12%	11%	19%
Research climate: part of research community: faculty/ department	9%			
Research climate: integration into faculty/ department	6%	6%		
Quality of supervision: feedback on work	6%		3%	7%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: scholarships / PRSS	6%			
Quality of infrastructure: Physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	6%			
Research climate: interaction with industry: support	6%			