

FACULTY OF ARTS
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2003
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)

Introduction

The following document provides an analysis of the comments received in answer to the SREQ open response comments from postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Arts in 2003.

Students were asked to provide comments on the following:

- *What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience? Please explain why these aspects are good.*
- *What aspects are most in need of improvement? Please explain why.*

Each comment received was analysed for subject content and categorised into aspects which are closely aligned with the following SREQ Scales and their characteristics:

- *Quality of Supervision*
- *Quality of Infrastructure*
- *Research Climate*
- *Generic Skills*
- *Overall satisfaction*

Comments which included more than one aspect (e.g. quality of supervision and infrastructure) were counted in all aspects mentioned.

Arrangement

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

Responses are ranked according to the percentage of comments received for each aspect. Sample comments have been provided for the aspects that received the most number of comments. Results from the previous years qualitative analysis are provided as a percentage. Only aspects that received 5% or more comments in 2003 are included in this report. To preserve student confidentiality, sample comments are only provided if there are five or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments which may possibly identify the student are not included in sample comments.

SREQ 2003 OR Q 43¹

What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?

Students are happy with their supervision

(2003: 31%)

(2002: 37%)

- My supervisor is fantastic; he organises reading groups, always reads what I submit to him quickly and keeps me motivated
- Supervision session – ensures I produce the material, and it is discussed in great detail. My supervisor is very affirming while pushing me further
- Both my supervisors are very supportive and encouraging

Students are satisfied with their research projects

(2003: 19%)

(2002: 19%)

- Creating something that is uniquely mine
- The opportunity to intensively research a project that I am passionately interested in
- The chance to spend a long period of time on a large scale project

Students appreciate the ability to work independently

(2003: 16%)

(2002: 14%)

- Developing the ability to learn, plan and develop understanding independently – and the self confidence to do this – it is good because it is character building and because it is doing what I love
- The opportunity to conduct independent research and the support of my supervisor
- I enjoy working independently on a research project that I have chosen and designed. It is very satisfying to choose the focus and organise how to carry out this research by myself

Research resources / library are appreciated

(2003: 14%)

(2002: 15%)

- Research facilities: PGARC, library, access to online library facilities etc
- I think the library particularly inter library loans and electronic access is excellent
- Interlibrary loans staff have been extraordinary; could not have done without them, as many of my materials have not been available in Fisher

Research skills are being developed

(2003: 10%)

(2002: 9%)

- Improving my ability to conduct academic research. This helps me develop my own ideas
- I have learned some research skills during the process of research. These skills are very useful in my future research
- Development of research, analytical, writing skills

Students feel supported by the Faculty/ School/ Department

(2003: 10%)

(2002: 8%)

- The support of the department as a whole – including a very strong postgraduate ethos
- Being part of a small department where everyone knows each other and genuinely cares for one another. It is a friendly and supportive environment
- The strong sense of community and support in my department

¹ Number of comments received: 2003 – 317; 2002 – 239

SREQ 2003 OR Q 44²**What aspects are most in need of improvement?****Students are unhappy with physical facilities provided (2003: 28%)**
(2002: 28%)

- Personal space to work while at the University and extra computers and printing services available to postgraduate students in the department. I had noticed that these services were available in the past until 1 ½ years ago
- PGARC – very cold in winter – I dread summer temperatures – it's dirty – I bring my own cleaning equipment – a footrest would be great – short legs
- I believe it is fundamentally important that postgraduate students have a working space, however small, attached (physically) to their department. Hotdesking in a huge impersonal and disconnected postgraduate space is not good enough

Students are unhappy with their supervision (2003: 17%)
(2002: 18%)

- The absolute need to ensure that appointed supervisors are expert in the methodology of research in all its ramifications. There is an ABSOLUTE need to ensure the appointment of co/assist supervisors who are experts (recognised) in the necessary field of research being undertaken.
- Supervisors who are genuinely interested in the research with the commitment to follow it through
- Supervision – there needs to be emphasis on co-supervision which often falls on the wayside but is necessary. One supervisor is not enough given academics workload

More contact with other postgraduate research students would be appreciated (2003: 14%)
(2002: 12%)

- Regular postgraduate meetings etc across the Arts faculty would be beneficial
- Opportunities for contact between research students and with academics within the Department needs to be improved – it gets very lonely at times in my Department
- There needs to be a common room for our school to meet with fellow researchers. Organised seminars by postgraduates would be good. Needs to be more interaction within the school and department

Students are unhappy with financial aspects of the candidature (2003: 13%)
(2002: 15%)

- More funding is needed for scholarships and grants, especially for Arts postgraduates as it is near impossible to undertake a research degree full-time without some form of supplementary financial support
- More funding for research materials and conferences
- To be able to take a scholarship part-time – the working mother is not taken into consideration under the current highly restrictive rules

Students do not feel part of the Faculty/ School/ Department (2003: 9%)
(2002: 11%)

- The integration of mature postgraduate students into active involvement with departmental research, as it seems to me that mature students are valued only for their motivation to complete and the benefit their completions bring to the university
- Stronger and more open relationships between academic staff and research students – would foster a better sense of involvement in the department and academic community
- Within my department there is no sense of community or cooperation. I feel honours students get more attention and services than PhD graduates which essentially help find the department

² Number of comments received: 2003 – 282; 2002 – 226