

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2003

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 Economics and Business 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.

NB: *The number of comments received on each aspect is displayed as a percentage of the total number of comments received for each question. Total number of comments received for each question is provided in footnotes.*

SREQ 2003 OR Q 43¹ What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?

Students are happy with their supervision (2003: 38%)
(2002: 23%)

- A very supportive supervisor who understands the challenges of part-time enrolment in a research degree and has guided me to consider my research from a different perspective
- Supervisor – my supervisor is excellent and hands on. This keeps progress on track
- The quality of supervision has been superb with regard to technical aspects. The feedback has always been constructive, timely and incisive.

Students gain satisfaction from their research (2003: 22%)
(2002: 21%)

- Actually doing the research is fantastic as I am researching areas that have long interested me. Therefore I am very much enjoying the experience
- The best aspect is the chance to conduct my own research
- The research itself as it is very interesting

Generic attributes (e.g. problem solving, analytical skills) are being developed. (2003: 13%)
(2002: 11%)

- Doing the degree has refined my research, communication and analytical skills
- This is the best opportunity to practice my research and analytical skills under the supervision of an expert in the area
- Working closely with the supervisor which enhance critical thinking and developing research skills

Students are happy with the physical resources/ infrastructure provided (2003: 13%)
(2002: 15%)

- The Faculty of Economics and Business offers excellent carrel facilities and printing facilities for free however there are no free photocopying services
- Facilities in Econ and Business – secure, closed and open areas of privacy and communication when needed.
- The facilities at the Faculty for PhD students have been the best part of my degree. This means that there are no resource impediments to my completion

Students feel supported by their Faculty/ Department (2003: 10%)
(2002: 5%)

- My supervisor and academics within the discipline provide a great support including job and research opportunities and introductions to other scholars in the field. This gives confidence in the moment plus provides opportunities for the future
- The support and faith in my abilities that the staff have given me, and the sense that I actually add to the strong research being done at ITS. It is a great feeling to be accepted as a research peer, and the high expectations that come with that drive me to come up with something special
- General level of support provided by supervisor, and department academics and fellow

SREQ 2003 OR Q 44² What aspects are most in need of improvement?

¹ Number of comments received: 2003 – 61; 2002 – 63

Students are unhappy with their supervision (2003: 22%)

(2002: 18%)

- My supervisor has too much work to do, looking after the classes he teaches. He has very little time to read my work or discuss it with me. I am left to find my own way.
- I feel that a more realistic workload for my supervisors would give them more time to spend thinking about my work and helping me
- There are insufficient mechanisms for ensuring the quality of supervision. I have been extremely dissatisfied with supervision this year and there are no formal procedures for my grievances to be heard. There should be at least an annual interview with all PhD students to make sure everything is going ok

Students are dissatisfied with physical resources/ infrastructure (2003: 17%)

(2002: 18%)

- Carrel facilities – firstly, it takes too long to get organised an allocated room and computer. Secondly, not really much privacy and silence to concentrate. Computers – burners should be installed into computers because it is always better to keep a copy of your material on a CD and on the hard drive too.
- The physical location of students is in a different building to staff – making it difficult to interact.
- The computer in my carrel is antique – it does not work properly

Part-time students feel disadvantaged (2003: 13%)

(2002: 11%)

- Provision of administration, workshops etc to suit part-time students (who are full-time workers)
- Faculty does not recognise part-time students as students facing different pressures (esp. time) and with special needs. All administrators assume students to be full-time.
- Part-time student (while working full-time) for whole of PhD so isolation from main student research body an ongoing issue. This has partially alleviated by research seminars, but work commitments often preclude attendance.

Students are unhappy with funding and financial aspects of candidature (2003: 9%)

(2002: 9%)

- No support from university to attend relevant conferences. I need to beg for funds
- I feel that there is a lack of meaningful financial assistance to mature age researchers – perhaps the university's priority is attracting the best researchers
- Despite receiving a grant for attending and presenting a paper at a conference the 'advance' was paid a couple of weeks before I went (after airfares etc had already been paid) despite all paperwork being in two months beforehand

Students would like more interaction with fellow PhD students (2003: 9%)

(2002: 9%)

- Encouraging interactions between research students
- Probably more interaction facilities between postgraduate research students of different disciplines who can share their diverse experiences about their mode of study could be looked into for future students
- A greater social aspect of a Faculty organised drinks or bbq would be great to involve everyone not just people in small groups.

² Number of comments received: 2003 – 45; 2002 – 54