

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING
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 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 Engineering in 2005.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

The aspects of degree experience which attracted most positive comments from postgraduate coursework students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	25%	22%
Research led teaching	16%	2%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	13%	6%
Good teaching: group work	12%	25%
Skills development: generic graduate attributes	10%	15%
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	10%	6%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

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

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	20%	18%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	16%	11%
eLearning: learning management systems (WebCT and Breeze)	13%	
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	11%	8%
Appropriate assessment	10%	11%
Learning community: tutorial and seminars	7%	6%

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	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Customer service: quality	40%	54%
Library services	26%	19%
Administration and organisation: general	12%	
Services provided: accessibility and convenience	10%	
International Office	10%	
Web communications: intranet/ internet (includes WebCT)	7%	16%

Student administration and student support services: opportunities for improvement

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
Web communications: intranet/ internet (includes WebCT)	19%	19%
Library services	19%	9%
Administration and organisation: general	17%	
Customer service: quality	17%	22%
Communication	11%	3%
Customer service: advertisement/ promotion of services	6%	19%

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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 Engineering in 2005.

In 2005 67% of students who responded to the SCEQ provided comments on their degree experience, and 38% on their experiences of student administration and student support services.

2 Arrangement

1. Degree experience
 - Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
 - Analysis of comments suggesting improvements

2. Experience of student administration and student support services
 - Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
 - 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.

¹ i.e. 2001 – 2003. There were no responses from postgraduate coursework students in 2000; and the SCEQ was not administered in 2004.

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

- | | |
|--|---|
| <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

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

Each comment received is analysed according to the SCEQ 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. 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.

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

4 Degree experience

4.1 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects³

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 25%)
(2003: 22%; 2002: 24%; 2001: 42%)

- The content of each module of the course is very practical. They are good coverage of the latest knowledge of the project management field. The course convenors and tutors are capable to provide insight from their expertise on the subjects.
- The best aspects of the Master of Project Management is learning and becoming more aware about project management and the application of the principles.
- As a person being committed full time to workplace, the course being online and part time is a good aspect for me.
- Personally speaking, the opportunity of contacting with some new techniques in the world is the best aspects of my degree course. Because it is the most interesting thing that stimulates me to do my further study.

Research led teaching (2005: 16%)
(2003: 2%; 2002: 10%)

- Additionally, exposure to the literature & previous research conducted in my interest area was excellent - I have learnt a lot about research & have developed a desire to continue to learn & write.
- I like that there is a lot of emphasis in the technical side of engineering and a lot of research
- Research : I admire the huge resources available for research including the IT and library. This facility supported by my professor has developed research interest in me even though my degree is a course work one. I am longing to have the opportunity to carry out my research in this university in the very near future.
- Course content is good with encouragement for wider research.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 13%)
(2003: 6%; 2002: 7%)

- Teachers : The professors under whom I studied were very committed in their teachings and supportive to my interest of learning.
- Found XX to be an excellent module leader. He encouraged participation, gave feedback, offered insights and developed the group through out the semester. An impeccable effort
- All teaching staff are helpful and good at explaining concepts and theories. Lots of assistance is given from the teaching staff in preparing assignments. We are encouraged to raise questions as we only had a small class.
- The quality of teaching of some lecturers, especially experienced professors. They are qualified and diligent.

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 68; 2003: 65; 2002: 29; 2001: 31

Good teaching: group work
(2003: 25%; 2002: 24%)

(2005: 12%)

- Group interaction on degree course work, benefits everyone from seeing things with different perspective and methods. It also act like patching up any incompetence of individual during the course.
- The course stimulates group work which is a very important tool nowadays.
- Group interaction, 4 or 5 members totally committed, each willing to share knowledge, workload and obtain quality outputs. All members bringing practical experience to group dynamics.
- The online teamwork aspect is most interesting. I find it a really interesting challenge. In the past I have despised teamwork but there is so much to learn about team dynamics specific to this field that we are all able to approach the task and while we analyse the manner in which we interact.

Skills development: generic graduate attributes
(2003: 15%; 2002: 7%)

(2005: 10%)

- Written communications developed through assignment work
- the good aspects of my degree course could help me to improve my written and oral ability because the degree course include report and presentation.
- PMGP Program improved my confidence and added my professionalism.
- The best aspect is the opportunity to improve self-study capacities of individual students to acquire the relevant knowledge. This is due to the fact that everything about the subject is not spoon-fed to the student.

Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff⁴
(2003: 6%; 2002: 3%; 2001: 19%)

(2005: 10%)

- The course convenors and tutors are capable to provide insight from their expertise on the subjects.
- a lecturer with work experience in project management
- There is a lot of professional lecturers in my faculty
- The teaching staff are well-qualified

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001
eLearning: uptake by students/ staff	10%		<i>New topic in 2005</i>	
Curriculum: flexibility, variety, diversity	6%	8%	7%	6%
Curriculum: practical aspects of the course	6%	5%	7%	
Learning resources: general	6%	2%	10%	

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: 20%)

(2003: 18%; 2002: 16%; 2001: 27%)

- 1. The number of subject options need to be increased. 2. Postgraduate and undergraduate courses could be taught separately irrespective of the number of postgraduate students even if the subject is the same.
- The academic level for postgraduate coursework programs is not very good. All subjects are the same as the 4 year undergraduate subjects. As an International Student I was expecting classes dedicated only to postgraduate and the topics being high level. I think that the Brochure didn't reflect the actual course and that is quite frustrating. I am happy with what I am learning in the course, but I believe I could have been doing more interesting and stimulating subjects.
- The most crucial aspects that should be improved. I think, are providing students with more practical techniques which recent companies required and giving students more opportunities to communicate with the companies
- Change the course structure. Learning is a process not an output. At master level, two years is a minimal duration for study. I think it is a very bad idea to make it become 1 (one) year. I don't understand why a fourth year undergraduate courses can be a master degree?

Good teaching: standard of teaching received

(2005: 16%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 10%; 2001: 6%)

- Teacher quality and learning materials - all have been poor and quite difficult to understand. In fact the teacher was not only disinterested, but down right rude when asked for help.
- 6867 - YY Points of clarification requested by workgroups and students were responded to in a round about way. Questions were not answered directly and confusion (and bewilderment) built through out the semester at a seemingly lack of clarity in response by YY to students questions. This was frustrating and again not expected by a module leader
- I sometimes felt we didn't actually have a tutor, more someone that marked our work. Most of the course was left up to interaction between team members which was good in some aspects but would have benefited from more participation by the tutor.
- Greater interaction from teaching personnel. Expecting more discussion/guidance during hearing assignments, perhaps applying their practical experience to the task. Seems to be hands off unless question raised, then skirting around the question. Could be a language barrier.

⁵ Number of comment received: 2005: 70; 2003: 66; 2002: 31; 2001: 33

eLearning: learning management systems

(2005: 13%)

(new item in 2005; previously included in Online Resources)

- WebCT can be improved. Design appears to be out of date. Methodologies for more effectively building relationships with course lecturers should be explored for online courses.
- In the online subjects, more breeze presentations in a virtual classroom situation. I feel that the current research and assignment self learning system will suite some people, especially those who are technical or IT focussed. I think more human interaction via a breeze virtual classroom would be of much more assistance, especially if the session were actual structured "lessons", rather than open the forum "does anyone have any questions". I understand my degree is nearly 100% internet based, but the option of attending classes either after hours or on weekends may provide those who prefer a different learning style.
- I believe the WebCT account setup should be standardised. I have had to make several phones and emails to get my access setup correctly to be access WebCT, breeze and library services. It is difficult to tell when undertaking an online course that when you get access denied errors that you really don't have access or your account has not been setup properly.
- WebCT had inaccurate and inadequate info on it - Breeze no better than MSN chat.

Good teaching: useful and timely feedback

(2005: 11%)

(2003: 8%; 2002: 29%; 2001: 33%)

- More time spent by lecturers to provide feedback as opposed to feeling like you are interrupting their full time jobs as they only lecture out of office hours.
- Furthermore, suggest instructor to give more explanation, comment and elaboration on assignment feedback so that we are able to understand what went wrong. Without clear direction, we are not able to put on track if things went wrong on understanding module.
- 6868 - XX No feedback what so ever on all submitted assignments. (Actually submitted a detailed response to all assignments AFTER the course had finished) For students to identify where they were, and gauge their understanding of particular topics it would have been beneficial to receive feedback. Not receiving feedback on say one assignment I could live with but on all of them I consider a poor contribution in feedback to a student and not what was expected from a module leader.
- However, on the team base assignments, the comments and feedback is too harsh and comparatively inadequate constructive feedback. .

Appropriate assessment

(2005: 10%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 6%)

- The assessments of the course are solely based on assignments. There are students taking advantage of this by not doing and submitting their own work.
- The assessment criteria for assignments isn't made explicit. The assessments seem more concerned with ranking us as, then in ensuring that as students, we have learned what we need to in order to properly understand our work.
- Clearer explanations by staff regarding requirements for work submitted would make group assignments far less confusing to complete.
- The structure of my unit of study is absolutely incomprehensible. There are 2 instances in which an assignment has 3 different names. Each assignment seems also to have 2 different due by dates. It is very poorly coordinated.

Other aspects mentioned included:

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

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>
Learning community: tutorials and seminars	7%	6%		
Administration and organisation: general comments	7%	6%	6%	12%
Learning resources: general	6%	9%	10%	15%
Good teaching: group work	6%	8%	3%	3%
Curriculum: practical aspects of the course	6%	5%	3%	
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	6%	5%	10%	6%
Learning resources: library	6%	2%		
Communication	6%		6%	
eLearning: uptake by students and staff	6%		<i>New topic in 2005</i>	

5 Experience of student administration and student support services

5.1 Analysis of comments referring to best aspects⁶

Customer service: quality (2005: 40%)
(2003: 54%; 2002: 44%; 2001: 46%)

- Speedy reply after service. The instruction / information provided are clear and easy for reading
- I think the smile and clear explanation of the staff are the best aspects. Although sometimes they cannot solve the problem I have but let me know what should I do next.
- The best aspects of the student administration and support services, they help and support students and give advice and also they work effectively.
- People were very nice, helpful where they could be.

Library services (2005: 26%)
(2003: 19%; 2002: 22%; 2001: 8%)

- Library services. In the website of library, I can get the most advanced technology in the world. I cannot download the newest paper from magazines.
- Friendly helpful service. I was extremely impressed with the service provided, most especially with the library staff. I'm sure they must get endless seemingly insignificant enquiries, but the help they provided to me in the first week of attending this uni was very much appreciated.
- The staff of the Civil Engineering Faculty and the library are very helpful!!! Thanks!!! I have had to make several phones calls asking questions which I wasn't sure whether where problems with my access or something I was doing wrong through WebCT or the library services. Thanks!!!
- .Library, Inter-library loans and document delivery service.

Other aspects mentioned included:

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

	2005	2003	2002	2001
Administration and organisation: general ⁷	12%			
Services provided: accessibility and convenience of services	10%			
International Office	10%			
Web communications: intranet/ internet (includes WebCT)	7%	16%	11%	31%

⁶ Number of comment received: 2005: 42; 2003: 37; 2002: 9; 2001: 13

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

5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁸

Web communications: intranet/ internet

(2005: 19%)

(2003: 19%; 2001: 11%)

- Better linkages between the WebCT and online items in the library to reduce the amount of clicks, links and passwords to get to a prescribed item.
- Standardise WebCT account setup and make some information available account about what type of questions should be asked of the WebCT helpdesk and what should be pointed to the faculty. For example: Self Assessment Test was unavailable and I contacted the WebCT helpdesk. I actually needed to contact the faculty.
- Maybe open a website to let students ask questions online and reply in 24 hours
- Improve intranet.

Library services

(2005: 19%)

(2003: 9%; 2002: 20%; 2001: 17%)

- Why did I not put library on excellent quality, even it is the largest library in Australia??? Firstly, in comparison to others, such as UTS lib or UNSW lib, students studying in these universities could order and pick up their books wherever they think it is convenient for them, but for our uni, I have to go everywhere in Sydney. Maybe our library is too busy, so they could not do it for us :-(. Secondly, new books are not updated. Most books are more than 10 years ago, TOO OLD. That's the reason somehow I could not find the new resources for my thesis.
- I had to go to other universities for books. The library is very big but they lack the most recent books in different subjects.
- faculty library. how about don't close the faculty libraries during weekends.
- More remote library resources (eg, scanned books rather than mainly database access).

Other aspects mentioned included:

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

	2005	2003	2002	2001
Administration and organisation: general	17%			
Customer service: quality	17%	22%	30%	33%
Communication	11%	3%		
Customer service: advertisement/ promotion of services	6%	19%		11%
Services provided: accessibility and convenience of services	6%	6%		
International students experiences	6%	6%		
Customer service: student support: distance education and external students	6%			

⁸ Number of comment received: 2005: 36; 2003: 32; 2002: 10; 2001: 18