

## FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

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

#### POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

#### 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 Engineering 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 43<sup>1</sup>**  
**experience?**

**What are the best aspects of your research higher degree**

**Students are satisfied with their research project** (2003: 23%)  
(2002: 20%)

- In experimental work, observations and modification, exploration are a chain reaction. Issues associated with experimental work, open wider field for new idea and creativity
- I work in a very interesting field of research not available in my home country
- Present own research results. This aspect is excellent

**Students are happy with their supervision** (2003: 18%)  
(2002: 11%)

- My supervisor is a highly knowledgeable man and is very kind and helpful to me.
- My supervisor has good admin/ mgmt skills and has established a good collaborative group of students
- Excellent supervisor who is always available for support and answers to questions. HE also finds ways to help financially and gives advice on scholarships etc

**Students appreciate the opportunity to work independently** (2003: 14%)  
(2002: 13%)

- The freedom in the research atmosphere. I have sole freedom to make choice what to work on, and how should I progress
- Freedom to plan my own research and control my progress – it is easy to remain enthusiastic doing something I have control of
- That I have learned to work independently

**Graduate attributes (communication, analytical skills etc) are being developed**(2003: 12%)  
(2002: 30%)

- Research and analytical skills, as well as a deep understanding of my topic of interest
- Improve writing skills
- Allows me to communicate with companies in the USA for technical advises. Provides me or sharpen my communication skills.

**Students appreciate the physical facilities available** (2003: 9%)  
(2002: 9%)

- Use of different facilities in different departments
- The facilities I have access to at the ACFR are fantastic
- Interesting work and great facilities

**Students feel part of a research community** (2003: 9%)  
(2002: 7%)

- Research independently or cooperate with other researchers
- Funding, technical support and connections of our research centre
- Environment – true research focus

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<sup>1</sup> Number of comments received: 2003 – 99; 2002 – 56

**SREQ 2003 OR Q 44<sup>2</sup>****What aspects are most in need of improvement?**

**Students are unhappy with physical facilities provided** (2003: 15%)  
(2002: 22%)

- The building and office space is very uncomfortable. They are hot in summer and cold in winter
- Computer, network and printing facilities in order to support my research
- More office space

**Students are dissatisfied with some aspects of funding/ scholarships** (2003: 15%)  
(2002: 8%)

- Fund or loan support students to go to overseas conferences
- Duration of scholarship (APA) could be extended to match the maximum possible time to complete the postgraduate qualifications. This would reduce the stress of having to undertake some employment to complete. This also impacts on time spent on study
- Funding for conferences (visiting and/ or participation) – lack of funding inhibits ability to participate in regular international conferences

**Students are unhappy with some aspects of supervision** (2003: 13%)  
(2002: 16%)

- Access to my very time deficient supervisor. A critical mass of students working on things similar to me
- Equal and just behaviour from supervisor. No preferential treatment to a few sycophants by supervisor, MOD or other influential people
- Quality of supervision. Different students have different requirements. Students should be paired with supervisors that will help them reach their potential in terms of research. I believe the department/ school/ university should provide more assistance in this process.

**Students do not feel part of a research community** (2003: 10%)  
(2002: 14%)

- Research labs need to have a more structures and integrated approach towards research, heads of departments and labs need to have unbiased policies towards other research areas and develop a good research community environment
- More opportunities to interact with fellow researchers
- lack of formal and informal interaction with other researchers

**Students are dissatisfied with administration/ organisation** (2003: 10%)  
(2002: 4%)

- Turn around time of admin requests – it takes forever to get things done here, especially if the request has to go above departmental level
- Admin process. Not used to things taking so achingly long – private sector has spoiled me.
- Time required for administration

**Students feel isolated from other postgraduate research students** (2003: 9%)  
(2002: 18%)

- Area that can be improved is probably the research students interaction between groups in the department and in the faculty
- Social contact with other PhD students – I felt (and still sometimes do) a bit lonely
- Interaction between graduate students at both a social and academic level could be improved

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<sup>2</sup> Number of comments received: 2003 – 80; 2002 – 50