

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STUDENT COURSE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SCEQ)

UNDERGRADUATE 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 undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources in 2005.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

The aspects of degree experience which attracted most positive comments from undergraduate students were:

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: practical aspects of course	23%	33%
Learning community: learning environment	23%	26%
Curriculum: content and structure	19%	22%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	19%	8%
Curriculum: relevance to career/ work	11%	1%
Curriculum: flexibility, variety, diversity	10%	6%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

The areas of degree experience which undergraduate students considered most in need of improvement were:

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	25%	26%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	18%	14%
Appropriate assessment	10%	2%
Appropriate workload	9%	14%
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	9%	8%
Learning resources: general	9%	5%

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 undergraduate students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Customer service: quality	29%	27%
Library services	26%	17%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	19%	18%
Computer access centres: university and faculty	11%	10%
Services provided: accessibility and convenience	10%	11%
Web communications: online access to services	9%	8%

Student administration and student support services: opportunities for improvement

The aspects of student administration and student support services which undergraduate students considered most in need of improvement in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Web communications: intranet/ internet	16%	6%
Services provided: availability and existence	13%	16%
Computer access centres: university	12%	14%
Web communications: online access to services	6%	8%
Administration and organisation : general	6%	4%
<i>No other aspects received more than 5% of comments</i>		

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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 undergraduate students in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources in 2005.

In 2005, an average of 80 % of students who responded to the SCEQ respondents provided comments on their degree experiences. 62% of respondents provided comments on the best aspects of their experiences of student administration and student support services, whilst 42% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement.

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. This part of the analysis is based on comments received from all students who responded to the survey – local and international.

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 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

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.*

¹ i.e. 2000 – 2003. The SCEQ was not administered in 2004.

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

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

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

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

Students undertaking double degrees were asked to identify which degree/s they were commenting on in their answer. Where this has occurred the comment is counted in the results for the applicable faculty; where this has not occurred, the comment is counted in the results for both faculties.

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 undergraduate students in reply to questions asking students to list areas in need of improvement than those asking for areas of best practice.

4 Degree experience

4.1 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects³

Curriculum: practical aspects of the course (2005: 23%)
(2003: 33%; 2002: 23%; 2000: 29%; 2000: 31%)

- The practical experience - its a lot of fun, and useful! Work experience is also a very good idea, helping to discover what you enjoy.
- It is also good that there is professional experience at firms because it gives a better idea about what we're learning and how it is applied.
- Practical classes because I enjoy them more and put into practice what I've learnt. It's leading me to the career I want.
- I really enjoyed the work experience and is a great way to apply what we have learnt in lectures. The work experience allows theory and application to come together and allows students to get a feel for the professional world.

Learning community: learning environment (2005: 23%)
(2003: 26%; 2002: 25%; 2001: 27%; 2000: 28%)

- The feeling of belonging to the university community - studying with other people like myself has probably more than anything helped me learn, understand and research more effectively.
- The size of the faculty and the number of students is quite small. This means that you can know the staff and students well and interact on a personal level with all of them. It also means that student feedback and my own research interests are easy to follow and pursue since I am one of a smaller number of students. Also the Ag faculty community is great.
- Being part of a small faculty gives me the feeling of belonging, and I never feel intimidated by the staff. I know that if I have something to comment on I will be heard, shown in recent curriculum reviews.
- Small degree size. With a small number of students in the degree we are able to interact with each other easily

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 19%)
(2003: 22%; 2002: 26%; 2001: 25%; 2000: 33%)

- I particularly like the conservation topics in the second year of my degree as they allow me to look at a range of potential uses for what I have learnt in this degree. The subject PLNT2003 whilst not particularly relevant to my degree is really good as the lecturers and the practical component really makes an effort to make the subject appealing.
- It is important that a degree program incorporates all aspects needed to succeed in the industry, and this degree program BaScAgr has inquired of the industry expectations that they have of graduates. This is helpful to us as we are then more capable of doing the work in the industry. Also the degree coordinators have been responsive in accommodating student issues with the recent changes to the course, especially with regard to the continuing of animal science for students enrolled from 2004.
- The great depth of economics learnt. Get to do even more economics than an economics degree. This makes it easier to understand economics as the different subjects complement each other. Degree program fits together nicely.
- The administration have discovered problems with this degree and are making an effort to restructure it..

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 162; 2003: 195; 2002: 217; 2001: 226; 2000: 93

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 19%)
(2003: 8%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 12%; 2000: 15%)

- Some lecturers such as XX really make it interesting to learn and you want to come to class.
- When some staff are passionate in assisting you when you need help, or when some staff give you marks for effort rather than awarding you for a good memory!
- The opportunity to study and work with enthusiastic teaching staff who are also highly credentialed researchers. This meant I was not only being taught what I needed to know but assisted and encouraged in learning what I should know.
- A few lecturers have been truly excited about their subject area and have been keen to see students learn and understand. These staff have made university an exciting place to learn, unfortunately they have been in the minority. If more of the staff had an understanding of how to teach it would be good.

Curriculum: relevance to work/ career (2005: 11%)
(2003: 1%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 8%)

- The final year of the degree was by far the best in the degree. Leading academics and members of industry came to talk to us about relevant issues and career opportunities. Also workshop style lectures in fourth year added greatly to the learning experience.
- The applied aspect. Doing Agricultural Economics (rather than just Economics) has improved my understanding and has also made the degree more interesting and relevant to where I hope to work.
- Some interesting content that is relevant to skills needed in the workplace
- Aspects such as practical work out at Camden in ANSC2002 and PLNT2003 are important and relevant to acquiring skills that will be useful in the industry.

Curriculum: flexibility, diversity, variety (2005: 10%)
(2003: 6%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 6%)

- The great depth of economics learnt. Get to do even more economics than an economics degree. This makes it easier to understand economics as the different subjects complement each other. Degree program fits together nicely.
- The diversity of subject choices means there is not too much boring maths related economics and statistics. The research into and study of current issues provides us practical applications for the theory.
- The wide variety of subjects that can be chosen as electives which caters for divers interests.
- Ability to pick from a variety of subjects such as economics, accounting and finance. Learn economics theory of production rather than just plain economic subjects such as economic history

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Research led teaching	7%	4%	3%	2%	2%
Learning community: class sizes	7%	3%	6%	11%	8%
Curriculum: practical : work experience	7%				
Skills development: generic graduate attributes	6%	4%	3%	4%	5%
eLearning: uptake by students and staff	6%				

4.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁴

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 25%) (2003: 26%; 2002: 34%; 2001: 33%; 2000: 29%)

- Both "agronomy 3" and "ag systems and irrigation" in third year were extremely disappointing subjects. Agronomy should be the flagship subject of the BScAg degree, yet in the entire subject no actual agronomy was taught.
- Organisation of more appropriate subjects. More appropriate subjects needed as the first 2 years of the degree involved several subjects which were not entirely important for the B. Animal science degree (e.g. Agricultural economics, crop science). It was not until third and fourth year when all the appropriate subjects came about.
- The degree is poorly structured. As of yet, it is nothing like what was advertised. I feel a lot of these first two years of my uni life have been such a waste. We have been forced to subjects that either do not acknowledge our existence or that are completely irrelevant to our degree. At times I feel this degree is completely redundant and only exists for the university to make money.
- More relevant subjects catered to the interests of those undertaking this course. Doing B. Animal Science it is sometimes hard to justify doing subjects like Plant Form and Function and Soil Science as core subjects. I feel that once i leave this degree b/c of the range of subjects i would have undertaken, i will not have allowed myself to specialise in areas of interest to me..

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 18%) (2003: 14%; 2002: 9%; 2001: 17%; 2000: 23%)

- Some lecturers assume all knowledge is present when entering a lecture, they should first determine what level of understanding a cohort has and then 'sculpture' the for of delivery and learning based on that - improves efficiency in understanding.
- the teaching- Lecturers should understand the material they are lecturing on and be able to explain in a clear and concise manner, not "you know what i mean" or " is that right?". They should also have to be able to communicate clearly
- Lecturers who still adopt traditional non-interactive methods of teaching fail to inspire or encourage interest in a subject. Training in how to teach and a reduced curriculum to enable flexibility in teaching would be good.
- Lectures - The vast majority of lectures within the Faculty of Agriculture are outdated and stubborn in their old ways. The vast majority are afraid of computers thus, not making the most of this resource.

Appropriate assessment (2005: 10%) (2003: 2%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 6%; 2000: 11%)

- Mid-semester exams especially in the AG FACULTY generally have no structured format and format is only known when u actually sit the exam. Would help to provide general sample questions before the exam to help understand whether theory or application of concepts is tested. Most of the time you go into the exam not knowing what you are expected to do...
- Reduce the amount of assessments with little weighting placed on them, because if one puts a lot of effort and time into handing in so many tutorials or small assignments, this diverts energy and time away from preparing for lectures and exams.
- More actual analytical work, not just learning what is in the text and then writing that down in an essay, also more broad reaching assessment, i have always done better when the course includes tutorial marks, assignments, assessments, etc as opposed to just two mid term assessments and a final exam
- Less emphasis on less than 30% final exams. Progressive testing has notably improved my learning and has made me get more involved in University at an academic and social level.

⁴ Number of comment received: 2005: 159; 2003: 195; 2002: 214; 2001: 211; 2000: 84

Appropriate workload (2005: 9%)
(2003: 14%; 2002: 9%; 2001: 8%; 2000: 12%)

- Too much work. The amount of time spent at uni, and the time spent on assignments is completely unacceptable. They need to give us a bit of a break, and a chance to actually think about things, instead of cramming facts into our heads.
- The spacing out of assessments- each subject should be aware of each others assessment due dates instead of cramming them in at the end of semester!! and into student vacation - most students want to study!!
- Space the due dates of assignments out more. (Maybe lecturers need to communicate more?)
- Assessment is all loaded at the back end of the semester all due at the same time, not enough time is given for exam preparation.

Good teaching: useful and timely feedback (2005: 9%)
(2003: 8%; 2002: 3%; 2001: 7%; 2000: 10%)

- We need more feedback on our assessable work, comments rather than just pure marks so we can identify our strengths and improve upon our weaknesses.
- Feedback - a tick at the end of an essay with a grade doesn't really tell you what you could have improved on.
- More feedback on results, especially with comparison with other students marks.
- more feedback on how I'm going and what is expected.

Learning resources: general (2005: 9%)
(2003: 5%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 4%; 2000: 5%)

- Content of lecture notes, some lecturers need to learn to include relevant material only!
- The majority of my lecturers don't approve of the prescribed texts being used. So, why do subjects prescribe such textbooks? It doesn't make sense. Each subject should prescribe texts which are agreeable with the staff.
- the readings should have been published at the copy centre.
- There could be a course outline for each subjects, meaning you know what to focus on in study.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Curriculum: flexibility, diversity, variety	9%				
eLearning: uptake by students/ staff	9%				
Curriculum: practical aspects of course	8%	9%	12%	9%	18%
Clear goals and standards	7%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Administration and organisation: general comments	6%	8%	4%	6%	6%
Overall satisfaction: quality of degree	6%	2%	2%	2%	2%

5 Experience of student administration and student support services

5.1 Analysis of comments referring to best aspects⁵

Customer service: quality (2005: 29%)
(2003: 27%; 2002: 38%; 2001: 37%; 2000: 45%)

- They are often quick to fix problems and if you call them by phone they will usually deal with your individual problem right then while you are on the phone. Also, if you leave a message on message machines then the people always call you back with the right information or are always willing to help you..
- That most of the staff seem to be well trained and know what they are doing.
- They are often quick to fix problems and if you call them by phone they will usually deal with your individual problem right then while you are on the phone. Also, if you leave a message on message machines then the people always call you back with the right information or are always willing to help you
- The best thing is that the people are always willing to help and try even though they're sometimes not sure

Library services (2005: 26%)
(2003: 17%; 2002: 18%; 2001: 16%; 2000: 19%)

- I haven't really used any of the other libraries but the Badham library is really good, generally they have the right material and information I need for assessments and they have multiple copies of the texts which are more popular. The librarians at Badham are very nice and always willing to help me locate the texts I need.
- The library (i.e. Badham) is highly efficient and catered and support all learning in my degree. The library staff were also extremely helpful.
- The library services were good, though some books the I required were kept at Camden and not available at Badham library which was an inconvenience.
- The library access to journal data bases (as well as at home access) greatly improves my ability to access large amounts of information quickly and effectively. Time limits at Badham library are very effective at mediating fair access.

Web communications: intranet/ internet (*incl. webCT*) (2005: 19%)
(2003: 18%; 2002: 13%; 2001: 10%; 2000: 15%)

- "My Uni" is great for enrolment and collecting the semester timetable. Blackboard is also a great service as it enables one to gather all course information online.
- The University website/intranet and WebCT and email service is excellent. Definitely aids in my learning. On line library also very handy in getting information.
- the H drive service is really convenient, in that I can easily access documents and webpages I used or have bookmarked on another computer.
- The internet and all internet access and learning sites are extremely helpful, provide great support.

⁵ Number of comment received: 2005: 124; 2003: 125; 2002: 157; 2001: 150; 2000: 47

Computer access centres: university and faculty **(2005: 11%)**
(2003: 10%; 2002: 10%; 2001: 9%; 2000: 2%)

- I think that the technology available in terms of computers and online material is excellent. Computers etc are well maintained.
- There were always computers available for student use in the Agricultural Faculty computer centres.
- The after hours computer access centre at Camden campus was exceptionally useful this year in enabling the successful completion of both assignment and thesis related work.
- Ease of access to computers in the ag. faculty and printing credit is greatly appreciated by all students...especially in fourth year when a lot of material must be printed.

Services provided: accessibility and convenience of services **(2005: 10%)**
(2003: 11%; 2002: 14%; 2001: 9%; 2000: 4%)

- Overall, there is an abundance of services available in close proximity to the university locality which is very convenient and most staff are extremely polite. Everybody is treated equally.
- Everything is close by and you can access so many services without having to go far.
- They are readily available and easy to find and use when needed. This is good because it means that administration is not a lengthy process or terribly difficult.
- If you go looking for help, it will be fairly easily available.

Web communications: online access to support services **(2005: 9%)**
(2003: 8%; 2002: 2%; 2001: 4%; 2000: 2%)

- Use of online administration allows students to change anything easily with an internet connection, it allows students to avoid the student centre if possible.
- The good online access to most administration is great as it saves time and is really easy
- The use of the Intranet to enable us to access necessary Administration items without needing to leave the house. Good for efficiency and ease of use.
- Use of internet for administration is fantastic and saves a lot of time, rather than waiting in queues.

Other aspects and services mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Services provided: variety of services	6%	7%	3%	11%	4%

5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁶

Web communication: intranet/ internet (incl. WebCT) (2005: 16%)
(2003: 6%; 2002: 8%; 2001: 14%; 2000: 6%)

- Make all subjects utilise webCT interface, because communicating is easy, efficient, and you cant go wrong with finding the relevant information
- The website is very confusing since the update a year or so ago
- uni email has constant advertisements from outside sources. they become quiet annoying and clog your inbox. it would be good if these were filtered out.
- Internet at the computer centre out here costs us money as neither the agriculture/vet faculty's will set up accounts for us. Also I think the Intranet is confusing. I can never find what I want when I want it especially logging on for personal information and exam results etc.

Services provided: availability and existence of services (2005: 13%)
(2003: 16%; 2002: 12%; 2001: 13%; 2000: 13%)

- Increase awareness of their services via email etc. and allowing students to actually have the option available in front of them, instead of having to search for help.
- I think they might need more communication with the students, I mean let me, the student know how they can be helpful and what exactly they do.
- They could be promoted a little more. I only knew of counselling service this year and it's my fourth year. The websites could also be improved highlighting important services
- More advertising of these services and the location of these services.

Computer access centres: university (2005: 12%)
(2003: 14%; 2002: 22%; 2001: 21%; 2000: 9%)

- There is always not enough computer stations. Have to wait in a long queue, and line up a long time for computer access.
- Computer access centres overcrowded and huge queues..
- The availability of library resources and computers is unreliable, particularly when all the computer labs are being used by tutorial classes.
- To reduce the down time of computers at the Agriculture Faculty and also to improve cleanliness of desks, computers at Faculty Computer Centres, Carslaw Computer Centre and the main entrance level of the Fisher library.

NB: all the aspects mentioned below were mentioned in more than 5% of comments, and received less than 6 comments.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Customer service: quality	9%	19%	25%	23%	26%
Library services	9%	6%	11%	14%	9%
Computer access centres: faculty	7%				
Administration and organisation : general	6%	4%	5%	1%	
Web communications: online access to services	6%	8%	2%	2%	2%

⁶ Number of comment received: 2005: 85; 2003: 101; 2002: 113; 2001: 107; 2000: 47