

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience 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 research 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 postgraduate research students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Generic skills: working independently	22%	20%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	14%	16%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	14%	6%
Research climate: interaction with other research students (study related)	10%	10%
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	8%	19%
Generic skills: research skills	8%	10%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

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

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Quality of supervision: supervisor	13%	18%
Administration and organisation	11%	9%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office	11%	8%
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (study related)	11%	3%
Generic skills: technical skills	9%	9%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	9%	8%

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1 Introduction

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire postgraduate research students are asked to provide comments on the following:

- What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?
- What aspects are most in need of improvement?

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

In 2005 70% of students who responded to the SREQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, and 65% on those that were considered to be in need of improvement.

2 Arrangement

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

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 analysis (2002 – 2004) 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.

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 SREQ quantitative analysis reports. Within the taxonomy, categories used for the SREQ are identical to the SREQ factor scales, with the addition of Administration and organisation, Ethics Administration, Academic Board policies, International Office, and other administrative areas and support services. This taxonomy is under constant revision as the need to sub-divide categories and create new ones becomes apparent.

Each comment received is analysed according to the SREQ 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.

4 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects¹

NB: *Only three aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

Generic skills: working independently (2005: 22%)
(2004: 20%; 2003: 18%; 2002: 22%)

- Doing research independently with the discussion with fellow researchers (if needed), and the scope of attending seminar. Because these facilities encourage and widen research knowledge.
- The most exciting part of my research studies is the independence of thinking and organising my work. This allowed me to decide priorities of the research. It also gave me self confidence for tackling the difficulties of research work.
- Self motivation, independent research, technical skills. Very helpful for future career.
- Planning and working independently. Time management. Both are necessary when one sets to job. They help build confidence and increase work efficiency.

Quality of supervision: supervisor (2005: 14%)
(2004: 16%; 2003: 15%; 2002: 20%)

- My supervisors are interested in what I do, and support my ideas for research
- Good supervisors - they often (not always!) provide clear feedback about what I'm doing and what I should be doing
- Supervision and access to equipment. I find it very easy to run into my supervisors at any time to discuss problems whenever they arise and solutions are promptly found.
- My supervisor challenged me to work independently. This prepared me for the responsibilities I intend to undertake after graduation i.e. project management or teaching at uni back home

Generic skills: graduate attributes (2005: 14%)
(2004: 6%; 2003: 11%; 2002: 22%)

- Learn a lot of laboratory analytical skills and developed my writing skill
- Homing of my analytical skills. Tutoring was fun.
- I have developed interpersonal, intercommunication, research ideas and oral presentation skills.
- Learning how to write correctly and completing independent research. These are good as they enable me to develop my skills as a competent researcher.

¹ Number of comment received: 2005: 49; 2004: 69; 2003: 71; 2002: 55

**Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources: Analysis of student experience:
Postgraduate research students: 2005**

Other aspects mentioned included:

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

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (study related)	10%	10%	11%	4%
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	8%	19%	25%	24%
Generic skills: research skills	8%	10%	6%	15%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office	8%	9%	13%	7%
Generic skills: technical skills	8%	7%		11%
Quality of infrastructure: research resources; library	6%	10%	7%	4%
Research climate: Supportive work environment	6%	6%	1%	5%
Quality of supervision: flexibility of program	6%	3%	7%	
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	6%			

5 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements²

NB: *No aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided.*

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Quality of supervision: supervisor	13%	18%	14%	27%
Administration and organisation	11%	9%	3%	
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office	11%	8%	10%	4%
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (study related)	11%	3%	6%	11%
Generic skills: technical skills	9%	9%	4%	16%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	9%	8%	10%	4%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	7%			
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: equipment	7%			

² Number of comment received: 2005: 46; 2004: 66; 2003: 71; 2002: 55