

FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK
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 postgraduate coursework 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 Education and Social Work in 2005.

Considerable improvements have been made in the postgraduate coursework student experience in the Faculty of Education and Social Work since the last analysis in 2003. In particular:

- The percentage of comments received that mention the standard of teaching received as being one of the best aspects of the student experience has increased from 7% in 2002 and to 23% in 2005. This aspect rated 4th in the 2003 results, and is 1st in the 2005 results. Simultaneously, the percentage of comments that consider that improvements need to be made in the standard of teaching received has decreased from 17% in 2003 to 9% in 2005.
- The percentage of comments that mention research/ research led teaching as one of the best aspects of their degree has increased from 8% to 18% in 2005, making it the third highest best aspect within the student experience.
- There has been an increase of 10% in the percentage of comments which mention the relevance of the course to their career/ work since the previous survey in 2003.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

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

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	23%	15%
Curriculum: content and structure	21%	24%
Research led teaching	18%	8%
Skills development: graduate generic attributes	16%	11%
Curriculum: relevance to work/ career	14%	4%
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	11%	19%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

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

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Curriculum: content and structure	20%	32%
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	15%	9%
Appropriate assessment	10%	7%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	9%	17%
Equity: NESB students	7%	3%
Curriculum: practical aspects of course	6%	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 postgraduate coursework students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2003
Customer service: quality	46%	44%
Library services	18%	28%
Administration and organisation: general (incl Faculty administration)	11%	
Learning Centre	8%	5%
Computer access centres: university	8%	8%
Web communication: online access to services	6%	2%

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
Library services	16%	22%
Customer service: opening hours	12%	9%
Customer service: student support: general	12%	
International student experience	12%	1%
Services provided: advertisement of services	10%	4%
Communication	10%	1%

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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 Education and Social Work in 2005.

In 2005 60% of students who responded to the SCEQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, whilst 70% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement. 47% of respondents provided comments on the best aspects of their experiences of student administration and student support services, whilst 36% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement.

Considerable improvements have been made in the postgraduate coursework student experience in the Faculty of Education and Social Work since the last analysis in 2003. In particular:

- The percentage of comments received that mention the standard of teaching received as being one of the best aspects of the postgraduate coursework student experience has increased from 7% in 2002 and to 23% in 2005. This aspect rated 4th in the 2003 results, and is 1st in the 2005 results. Simultaneously, the percentage of comments that consider that improvements need to be made in the standard of teaching received has decreased from 17% in 2003 to 9% in 2005.
- The percentage of comments that mention research/ research led teaching as one of the best aspect of their degree has increased from 8% to 18% in 2005, making it the third highest best aspect within the student experience.
- There has been an increase of 10% in the percentage of comments which mention the relevance of the course to their career/ work since the previous survey in 2003.

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. 2000 – 2003. 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.

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 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

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 23%)
(2003: 15%; 2002: 7%)

- Lecturer is: - knowledgeable of research design and methodologies - able to give clear explanations sequentially - addressing each student's research proposal by class discussion
- Support from staff e.g. xx was FANTASTIC at providing insight into course content and was happy to discuss any issues through email or face to face contact.
- Our lecturers are very approachable and understand the time restraints postgraduate students can face
- The teaching is of a high standard. I find it stimulating to learn with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Most of what I am learning helps to make me a better informed and more reflective teacher. I feel increasingly confident in the classroom and with colleagues. I felt that I learned at a newer and deeper level when I participated in an online learning community.

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 21%)
(2003: 24%; 2002: 11%; 2001: 23%; 2000: 37%)

- To know something more about the education system and situation in foreign countries because there are some local students from western countries in my degree course
- Has kept me up to date with current and relevant issues in relation to my area. Made me aware of the importance of my role as a life learner in the workplace
- Adult learning unit: Help understand factors influencing my students which I may not be able to perceive
Essay unit: Formally explore using case studies and determine more optimal use
Individual learning portfolio unit: More coherent approach to reflection than simply writing an essay (although Brookfield is a limiting factor if used in the latter) By accident I ended up doing individual learning portfolio focusing on my lab activities and the essay unit focusing on formal investigation of case study. The resulting synergy between these two units was outstanding and has opened my eyes to the scholarship of learning
- The opportunity to further investigate academic investigation of my professional work as a high school teacher – vis a vis management and leadership within the field of school education

Research led teaching (2005: 18%)
(2003: 8%; 2002: 2%; 2000: 6%)

- Lecturer is: - knowledgeable of research design and methodologies - able to give clear explanations sequentially - addressing each student's research proposal by class discussion
- The stimulus to research in the first semester was very high because the tasks were authentic and challenging. The study has made me look closely at my own practice to the benefit of my students. The both halves of the course have given me impetus to build relationships based on respect and enquiry. I believe I have learned how to consider my teaching as more important in my research agenda.
- The emphasis on reading and referencing quality research papers has helped me see the value in having theory inform practice and vice-versa.
- The relative autonomy to explore and research pedagogical issues in education. This is important for me as I am a distance student and require study by flexible or independent mode.

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 210; 2003: 157; 2002: 106; 2001: 85; 2000: 15

Skills development: graduate generic attributes

(2005: 16%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 11%; 2001: 3%; 2000: 3%)

- I like the presentation best. From presentation I learn the presentation skills and learn how to prepare the presentation. As a teacher I have many chances to do the presentation. I benefit from these presentations.
- It is totally distance and therefore I am able to study overseas - but distance doesn't necessarily have to be alone. There could still be interaction between students and teachers. It is relevant to my profession and the content is interesting. Being totally independent learning I am gaining self-management skills and research skills.
- Encouraging independent study and inquiry. Developing desirable analytical skills.
- I have been encouraged to improve my research and critical analysis skills. Ones has helped me achieve higher results

Curriculum: relevance to work/ career

(2005: 14%)

(2003: 4%; 2002: 9%; 2001: 15%)

- Quick feedback, lots of discussion in class, achievable, practical and relevant (to my work) assessments - in this way my university studies are directly supported by the work I am doing with my teaching and my work is also benefiting directly from the work done at uni.
- Independent choice of research topics within given subject parameters that were related to my professional experience. This allowed for a professional like myself to research my profession with greater freedom and relevancy.
- Authentic learning - some aspects of units of studies have been directly linked with my teaching and my supervision and the learning activities lead to changes to my teaching/supervision and hopefully improved the learning of my students
- The fact that the degree is linked with my occupation and that this is taken into account at lectures and in assignment work. I am stimulated by the variety of participants in the course both culturally and educationally. Despite our differences we seem to share a common interest and goal.

Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff

(2005: 11%)

(2003: 19%; 2002: 17%; 2001: 23%; 2000: 27%)

- we had real writers/authors teaching us creative writing and this was excellent - particularly when their own works are so famous
- I feel I have been involved with lecturers that have extensive knowledge and understanding. This has been an invaluable experience as a full time worker to analysis policies issues related to my work and praxis.
- My degree courses introduced many profession ideas in the field to us. It is the first time that I could know so many authorities and read the original edition of their theory. I would never have the chance to do so if I am studying in [my home country]. And the teachers are all very helpful.
- The knowledge of the lecturers and their ability to explain their academic knowledge to us. Their ability to treat us as adults and thus have a good rapport with us. The course is hands on and interesting and all the lecturers have a passion for what they teach which makes it a lot easier for us to learn and develop that same pattern

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Learning community: learning environment	10%	25%	16%	16%	17%
Curriculum: flexibility, diversity, variety	10%	8%	10%	7%	13%
Appropriate assessment	7%	7%	2%	9%	
Learning resources: library	6%	2%	2%	3%	
Online resources	5%	2%		2%	3%

4.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁴

Curriculum: content and structure

(2005: 20%)

(2003: 32%; 2002: 21%; 2001: 30%; 2000: 31%)

- Units in Grad cert semester #2 do not fit together as well as semester #1. Some courses were flexible on topics (e.g. adult education) and others were excessively rigid (e.g. academic profession) which dismissed a personal and abiding interest in electronic journal. Ensuring substance over form is my general comment
- A wider range of subjects offered at summer and winter schools or via flexible mode
- Is it proper to allow the intake in Semester 2 on the program in which I am enrolled? It seems that the units in semester 1 and 2 exist the relation in sequence. If yes, there would cause learning difficulty for those who enrol in semester 2
- The time per class currently stands at 2hours per week. I would think 4hours would be good, contributing 2 hours to theory and the other 2 hours to open discussions or debates on the realities of current educational practices in Australia and the world. Students would then benefit from the way different cultures carry out their practices thus bring the entire educational community as one. I'm an ethical person.

Good teaching: useful and timely feedback

(2005: 15%)

(2003: 9%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 16%; 2000: 7%)

- Students need more comments about their assignment. Some tutors just marked "fine" without any specific comment. How fine it is? What aspects are fine? They just said "Fine means ok.", and that's all about their comment. For non-native English writers, we need more specific comment about our assignment so that we can get a correct direction in writing another assignments. This is especially important for students who just begins their degree program. Some teaching staff do not give detailed explanation of feedback, so I'm not really what to be improved to achieve better understanding.
- Also, some assessments were given no feedback, just a mark. For one assessment (a seminar presentation) no mark or feedback was given.
- When assessment is handed back the feedback is poor. We should be given clear criteria so we understand the marks we got.

⁴ Number of comment received: 2005: 82; 2003: 129; 2002: 80; 2001: 100; 2000: 29

Appropriate assessment

(2005: 10%)

(2003: 7%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 2%; 2000: 7%)

- Lack of acceptance of student diversity in the way assessment was evaluated in semester 2.
- The fact that some units or some assessment tasks are marked as satisfactory/unsatisfactory and others are getting a mark out of 100 can be confusing. Especially if individual tasks in a unit of study are marked satisfactory/unsatisfactory but the final mark is a mark out of 100.
- There are no innovative ways of assessing - just essay writing. Other courses I know have joint essays/projects, discussion boards etc
- The only things that could be improved is that of the assignment requirements and lecturer expectations on us. Another thing is also the validity of their marking scales and how they tend to be more lenient towards the older students in our course.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received

(2005: 9%)

(2003: 17%; 2002: 19%; 2001: 8%; 2000: 14%)

- Lectures may be a little more interesting
- if the lecturer (not all of them) changes her theoretical words for easier spoken discourse in explaining problems may help students better understanding the knowledge.
- I felt that a couple of the lecturers/tutors weren't so well prepared and didn't add more to my understanding of their subject than reading the core texts did.
- Teaching staff- tutorial staff don't offer much support. Need teaching skills to be improved

Other aspects mentioned included:

The following aspects were mentioned in 5-7% of comments received (i.e. 6 or less). To protect student confidentiality, no sample comments are included for these aspects.

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Equity: NESB students	7%	3%	1%		3%
Clear goals and standards	6%	8%	14%	12%	10%
Administration and organisation: general	6%	6%	10%	9%	3%
Curriculum: practical aspects of the course	6%	5%	4%	1%	
Learning community: tutorials and seminars	6%	2%			
Good teaching: group work	6%	2%	8%	1%	
Learning resources: library	6%	3%	8%	7%	14%
Research led teaching	6%		3%		
Learning resources: physical facilities	6%		1%	1%	7%
Good teaching: clear explanations	5%	6%	1%		
Overall satisfaction: quality of degree	5%	3%	5%	7%	3%
Learning community: learning environment	5%	3%		4%	
Student progression: quality of student intake	5%	2%			3%
International students experiences	5%	2%			
Elearning: learning management systems (WebCT)	5%				

5 Experience of student administration and student support services

NB: *In 2000, less than 20 postgraduate coursework students provided comments in response to the to the open questions on their experiences of student administration and student support services. Since it statistically invalid to convert this low number into percentages, results from 2000 are not included in this part of the comparative results..*

5.1 Analysis of comments referring to best aspects⁵

Customer service: quality (2005: 46%)
(2003: 44%; 2002: 48%; 2001: 61%)

- They are always able to assist with enquiries and it is never too hard
- The staff seem genuinely interested in each student's case. They try to stay up to date with changes in policy and advice
- Their willingness to help and assist
- They were able to respond to my enquiries relatively efficiently and effectively

Library services (2005: 18%)
(2003: 28%; 2002: 23%; 2001: 18%)

- The library introductory courses. They introduce many useful stuff for students, like endnote and database. The curriculum library is useful. Sufficient resources aid students to practice using them as teaching aids.
- I have only used the library. The fact that the catalogue can be accessed via the internet at home is excellent. It makes library visits less stressful.
- In relation to using library, I have learned lots of useful information from the library introduction service and I was satisfied with the other service too.
- The online library service is also really good. It means I can look things up quickly from work or home without the need to always travel to the uni library - especially the online resources are a life saver.

Administration and organisation: general (2005⁶: 11%)
(no comments on this aspect in previous years)

- The faculty student administration (international) is very helpful and prompt with the services provided. It is strategically located within the faculty building and is therefore very convenient.
- Being able to access student administration services at faculty level. I found this convenient.
- Staff are happy and willing to facilitate administrative enquiries from a distance and arrange alternate arrangements (eg. for enrolment) where possible to alleviate the need to travel to Sydney excessively.
- XX in the Education Faculty is a very helpful, kind person who helped me sort out a problem I was having about a credit. She deserves a promotion!

⁵ Number of comment received: 2005: 65; 2003: 64; 2002: 40; 2001: 49; 2000: 16

⁶ In 2005, this includes Faculty of Education and Social Work Administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

Other aspects and services mentioned included:

The following aspects and services were mentioned in 5-8% of comments received (i.e. 6 or less). To protect student confidentiality, no sample comments are included for these aspects.

	2005	2003	2002	2001
<u>Aspects</u>				
Web communications: online access to services	6%	2%	5%	2%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	5%	6%	15%	4%
Services provided: availability and existence of services	5%		3%	2%
<u>Services</u>				
Computer access centres	8%	8%	18%	8%
Learning centre	8%	5%		4%

5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁷

Library services

(2005: 16%)

(2003: 22%; 2002: 22%; 2001: 21%)

- Library is very difficult, too few resources, too many students. Trying to find set readings is impossible unless they're in special reserve. A practical suggestion, how about a prior booking system for special research items? And is there any way of preventing other students from hiding books elsewhere in the library reserve? So frustrating e.g., SR items issued at a desk, not on shelves?)
- The library should be accessible to ex-students without having to pay a fee to borrow books after your degree is complete.
- It took me a while to negotiate my way around the library - when I finally asked for help, I wasn't made to feel as stupid as I expected to.
- library is good, but hard to find book. esp. when it says 'check shelf'

Other aspects mentioned included:

The following aspects were mentioned in 5-12% of comments received (i.e. 6 or less). To protect student confidentiality, no sample comments are included for these aspects.

	2005	2003	2002	2001
Customer service: opening hours	12%	9%	8%	8%
Customer service: student support: general	12%			
International student experience	12%			
Services provided: advertisement of services	10%	4%	11%	5%
Communication	10%	1%	6%	2%
Administration and organisation: general (incl faculty administration)	10%			
Web communications: online access to services	8%			2%
Administration and organisation: enrolment	8%		3%	
Customer service: quality	8%	24%	25%	31%
Customer service: student support: part-time students	6%	4%	3%	7%
Services provided: variety of services	6%			
Web communications: intranet/ internet	6%	7%	3%	

⁷ Number of comment received: 2005: 146; 2003: 91; 2002: 56; 2001: 50; 2000: 4