

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2004

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 Education and Social Work in 2004.

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 2004 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 which may possibly identify the student have not included in sample comments.

Attachment One: Categories and sub-categories for the analysis of SREQ Open Response comments

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1 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects of the degree course¹

Students are happy with their supervision (2004: 40%)

(2003: 38%; 2002: 40%)

- My supervisors and I have a great working relationship and give me the guidance and support I need when I ask them for it. I am treated exactly the way I want to be treated and have no complaints at all
- My supervisor excels in all aspects of her position. I could not ask for anything more from her
- Excellent supervision from an extremely knowledgeable person who set very high standards which I have been happy to meet
- A sympathetic supervisor who is very competent in the area, has encouraged me and enabled me to clarify issues and approaches

Students are satisfied with their research projects (2004: 21%)

(2003: 14%; 2002: 13%)

- Satisfaction and stimulation that comes from learning and understanding new concepts and ideas that enables one to see things in a new light
- Doing a project you are inspired and interested in, and seeing it through to completion
- My research has been rewarding though difficult
- Being able to come up with a proposal and being given support and freedom

Research skills/ methodology are being developed (2004: 12%)

(2003: 3%; 2002: 4%)

- Doing research degree, I have improved my research skills which are very beneficial for my future career
- I am learning how to research something interesting in an academic way
- Fine tuning my research skills at a doctoral level
- I like that I have developed my ability as a researcher, organising and participating in all the stages of doing research from the planning a research project to presenting the result

Technical skills (e.g. academic writing, statistics) are being developed (2004: 11%)

(2003: 9%; 2002: 1%)

- Furthering my written skills
- Learn presentation skills, writing skills and research skills
- Writing for publication with my supervisor and other postgraduate students because it provides opportunities to discuss contributes and articulate my ideas, and is contributing to my career development as an academic
- Experience in writing high quality essays, papers and thesis.

Students appreciate the independent nature of research (2004: 10%)

(2003: 15%; 2002: 10%)

- The intellectual independence. Following an area I passion and being able to drive through the project according to your vision instead of being constrained by set coursework requirement.
- I was allowed considerable freedom to pursue a line of research which is hardly 'fashionable' at the same time, I was kept within the bounds of proper academic procedures and time scales
- To work in an area of interest, independence in exploring issues with few impositions
- Opportunity to work independently and develop various research skills. I have learnt how to be self motivated to achieve certain goals

¹ Number of comments received: 2004: 109; 2003: 118; 2002: 72)

Generic attributes (communication, problem solving etc) are being developed (2004: 8%)
(2003: 7%; 2002: 10%)

- Opportunity to develop critical/ analytical skills
- The personal skills gained in terms of ability to critically analyse research, to problem solve, to present confidently and to write well
- The knowledge and analytical skills I've gained
- Work independently, analytical skills, writing skills and reading skills

Students appreciate the availability of research resources/ library services (2004: 7%)
(2003: 10%; 2002: 10%)

- Online library catalogue saves time
- The other major positive for me has been the outstanding library support. Both the librarian for our discipline area and general services have been excellent
- Access to library materials
- Fisher library is an excellent resource

Students feel part of a supportive Faculty/ Department (2004: 7%)
(2003: 7%; 2002: 6%)

- A I get good support from my school and from my supervisor
- My school is supportive and nurturing. I always feel welcome there, and that my opinion and presence is valued
- Discussions with departmental academic staff who are supportive, encouraging and provide sound advice
- The team has been really supportive and friendly. I have been provided with excellent facilities.

Other aspects mentioned included:

- Interaction with other postgraduate research students (2004: 6%) (2003: 7%; 2002: 11%)
- Opportunities for collaboration & networking (2004: 6%) (2003: 5%; 2002: 3%)
- Part of faculty/ department/ school (2004: 6%) (2003: 1%; 2002: 3%)
- Knowledge base is being extended (2004: 6%) (2003: 4%; 2002: 10%)
- Funding/ Scholarships (2004: 6%) (2003: 4%; 2002: 5%)

Comment in response to question *What aspects are most in need of improvement?*

“As much as I try to think of something, I cannot! The Ed Faculty is about as close to perfect as you can get!

2 Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved²

Students are unhappy with the physical facilities provided (2004: 27%)
(2003: 18%; 2002: 12%)

- The battery hen type accommodation for postgraduates who need to work on campus is not conducive to productivity
- Corral-like work spaces for full-time research students. Full-time research students use their workspace for intellectually-demanding work requiring sustained concentration. Too many of the current workspaces suffer from a lack of ventilation, lack of natural light, insufficient desk space to use several texts simultaneously and insufficient storage space.
- The facilities dearly need to be improved e.g. computers for research students are too old to be really helpful
- Perhaps a dedicated computer lab for postgraduates who research study and write mainly off site. Sometimes when an emergency occurs it is good to know that a back up is available

Students are dissatisfied with their supervision (2004: 15%)
(2003: 26%; 2002: 28%)

- Supervisors could spend more time with me, read material and give feedback in a timely fashion
- Supervisors could be more polite and supportive and not so demanding
- Supervision. Appointment of an associate supervisor who might be available when main supervisor is absent
- Consistency of supervisors advice – changed from year to year throwing doubt on purpose of doing the study and on worth the while continuing

Students would appreciate opportunities to interact with fellow RHD students (2004:15%)
(2003: 15%; 2002: 15%)

- Interaction between fellow students. In doing so you are not isolated by your own research
- Postgraduate research networking/ socialising/ events related to research
- Common room – I may come to the faculty buildings more if frequently if there is a comfortable space to read/ drink coffee and maybe meet and talk with other students as they pass by... at present there is little incentive to spend any time there unless it is for a specific purpose
- I don't feel like there was a strong community of research students within my faculty with whom I felt comfortable working with in a group or team situation

Students do not feel part of the Faculty/ Department/ School (2004: 12%)
(2003: 13%; 2002: 4%)

- Faculty appreciation/ inclusion of research students – it is mostly lip service... They have no time or money to create a real research culture... for them the best PhD student is a low maintenance one
- Students position in the faculty (research students are not respected by other staff)
- Work towards developing collegial cultures where postgraduates are embraced as part of the faculty academic community
- Attitude of academic staff to PhD students

² Number of comments received: 2004: 93; 2003: 82; 2002: 67)

Part-time/ distance education/ students would appreciate more support (2004: 12%)
(2003: 13%; 2002: 13%)

- Provision for understanding of the needs of part-time students. We don't count or appear to
- As a part-time student, a means of making research students feel welcome and respected in faculty and relevant school
- More support for part-time students and access to the same privileges as full-time students e.g. photocopying, printing
- Facilities for part-time, distance postgraduate students. This could be improved by making a space available when able to be onsite. A shared desk/ computer would be fine. Use of video conferencing facilities/ distance lending service

University/ Faculty administration could be improved (2004: 11%)
(2003: 10%; 2002: 12%)

- Re-enrolling after 5pm is a problem
- Administration in the faculty was woeful. Other students I've talked to had the same experience – lost paperwork, lack of follow-up and information arriving too late. It has improved over the past five years but still is not up to scratch
- The administrative part of the is faculty, because of its unclear policy, students always feel frustrated
- Admin office closes at lunch time! (makes it difficult for part-time students)

Students do not feel supported by the faculty/ department (2004: 11%)
(2003: 7%; 2002: 10%)

- Support for indigenous students needs to be better integrated into work of individual schools/ faculties assumption shouldn't be made that all indigenous students can gain relevant support of adequate standard from Koori Centre/ Yoorang Garang
- Faculty support structure: individuals are good but seems to be little systematic support (other than provision of computer, filling in an annual research report
- The faculty needs to actively support research students. Better ongoing funding, integration of research students within clusters, basically it means developing a culture of learning not down to individual supervision efforts. There should be more!!
- No support network is provided or maintained by the Faculty - all of the support programs rely on the work of other PG students, who work very hard as volunteers. PG students do not feel welcomed or valued in the Faculty. Very little funding is available for PG events/travel/conference attendance etc. PGs are not treated as colleagues, but as undergraduates. Many PG's are trying to find places in other universities that will provide more support and recognition, and many will not return to this university to continue their research after completion.

Other aspects mentioned included:

- | | | |
|--|------------|------------------------|
| • Funding/scholarships | (2004: 9%) | (2003: 18%; 2002: 12%) |
| • Research resources/ library | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 10%; 2002: 1%) |
| • IT support | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 10%; 2002: 3%) |
| • Coursework component/ require coursework | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 1%; 2002: 1%) |

Attachment One Categories and Sub categories used in analysis of SREQ open response comments³

Category	Sub category	Includes
Quality of Supervision	Supervision	Supervisor Supervision in general, including processes in place for feedback regarding satisfaction/ dissatisfaction with supervisor
	Management of candidature	Guidance on management of candidature; steps in the process
	Progress reports	Progress reports/ processes in place Value of the reporting process Structure of reporting process
	Flexibility of program	Compared to undergraduate/ postgraduate coursework Working hours etc
	Pressure to complete	Pressure to complete on time (i.e. within time frame set by APA). Workload
	Feedback from supervisor	Feedback on drafts, papers, presentations, seminars; final thesis
Quality of Infrastructure	Funding/ Scholarships	APA, UPA and other scholarships; PRSS Funding for research within faculty/ department etc
	Physical resources	Physical facilities available to postgraduate research students including workplace, computers – provided by University/ Faculty Building maintenance
	Industry facilities	Physical facilities provided by industry partner/ CRC etc
	IT support	Support available for computer hardware and software
	Research resources/ library	Electronic resources such as databases, online journals Interlibrary loan for hard-copy resources Services provided by library
	Technical and Lab support	Support available in laboratories; technician availability for experiments etc
	Resource issues	Issues which affect experience e.g. staffing and funding within department which may reduce face to face time with supervisor, or lack of supervisor due to retirement etc
Overall satisfaction	Satisfaction with research	Comments on research projects; benefits of research etc
	General comments	With university, location, etc

³ NB: Not all categories appear in responses for individual faculties.

Category	Sub category	Includes
Research climate	Challenging and stimulating	Is the research stimulating, challenging Do they feel motivated by supervisor etc
	Induction/ orientation program	Induction/ orientation program for new students, particularly those who start mid year or who come from another university
	Cultural diversity	Part of a culturally diverse student group
	Isolation: off main campus	Issues relating to students situated off main campus/ at training hospitals
	Interaction with other postgraduate research students	Opportunities to interact with other postgraduate research students Feelings of isolation from other students
	Collaboration and networking	Provision of opportunities to collaborate and network with other researchers, academics etc (university, national, international)
	Conference presentations	Opportunities to present at international and national conferences
	Research community	Part of research community/ culture within faculty/ school/ department Part of research community outside university
	Part of faculty/ school/ department	Acceptance by faculty/ department/ school Inclusion in meetings, social events etc Part of communication cycle
	Support of faculty/ school/ department	Support of faculty/ department/ school for their research etc
	Seminars, workshops	Presence of, frequency of seminar or workshop program for postgraduate research students Cross faculty involvement in seminars
	Field work, practical aspects	Field work – help with collecting data etc Practical aspects e.g. in hospitals
	Interaction with industry	Industry partnerships Support from industry in research
	Teaching opportunities/ preparation for academia	Teaching and/or tutoring opportunities offered/ available
	Location/ physical environment	Does not include buildings – location of campus, university etc
	Relevance to future/ current work/ career	Will the research be useful in the future to their careers Is it useful in their present work environment
	Support for part-time/ distance education/ external students	Support for students studying externally or part-time; recognition of difficulties faced/ access to resources etc
International student experiences	Experiences, support for international students	
Coursework component	Issues relating to coursework component of some research degrees e.g. Research Methods	

Category	Sub category	Includes
Generic skills	Graduate attributes, skills	Development of Graduate attributes e.g. communication, analytical, problem-solving skills
	Technical skills	Development of technical skills e.g. statistical skills, thesis/ academic writing, subject specific skills; use of laboratory equipment
	Research skills	Training in research methods; Development of research skills
	Expand knowledge base	Acquisition of new knowledge
	Work independently	Ability to work independently on project compared to structured work of undergraduate degree
	English language for NESB students	Development of English language proficiency Help in academic writing Specific support e.g. proof reading of thesis etc
Administration and organisation	Administration and organisation	Administration and organisation of research higher degree program
	Communication	Between administration and faculty; between support services; between staff and students
	Enrolment	Enrolment process
Other	Ethics administration	
	Equity	Harassment, discrimination etc
	Academic Board policies	Academic Honesty; Intellectual Property