

**COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**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 Health Sciences 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 five or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments which may possibly identify the student are 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 course<sup>1</sup>**

### **Students are happy with their supervision (2004: 33%)** (2003: 36%; 2002: 33%)

- My supervisor is fantastic. Her support, guidance, conceptual feedback and overall approach is out of this world. I cannot recommend her highly enough. I have learnt more from her over the past years than any other supervisor
- The quality of supervision. My supervisors not only give inputs at the right time but also encourage independent work and give flexibility to my personal circumstances
- Compared with the supervisory situations in other universities, Sydney Uni has a more rigorous requirement for supervisors to be involved in students' progress.
- As an off campus student, I feel supervisor support is sufficient. She is not too strict or too relaxed, and this leaves a lot of room for me to develop as an independent research and mature clinician. This is the best aspect of my experience

### **Students are satisfied with their research projects (2004: 18%)** (2003: 15%; 2002: 23%)

- Learning and contributing to Science – sense of adding knowledge to my practice.
- For me the best aspect of the experience is the opportunity to formalise a process of discovery that guides me as I seek solutions for clinical problems. Nursing is in trouble and I wish to make a positive contribution to the profession and especially for the sake of young inexperienced nurses
- Contributing to the development of knowledge that can be practically applied and wanted by my profession. Making a difference. Learning something new
- The knowledge and challenge of research topic because it encourages further research and commitment

### **Research skills are being developed (2004: 13%)** (2003: 9%; 2002: 13%)

- Developing skills that enable me to devise and conduct research in an independent manner. This is important as it has provided me with a lot of confidence for future endeavours.
- I have learned research techniques and skills that will help me to develop my career
- The opportunity to have a study program that is so clearly focussed towards developing comprehensive research skills
- Learning from other people's projects and how they do their research. I can then review my own methodology and make necessary revisions

### **Graduate attributes (analytical, problem solving etc) are being developed (2004: 12%)** (2003: 17%; 2002: 11%)

- Ability to problem solve increases, challenging, improve time management skills.
- Gaining confidence in research design, analytical and writing skills
- Developing skills to undertake a project developing analytical skills
- The best aspect of my research experience is that my problem solving skills has been improved. Since my problem solving skills is improved, I can organise well every step of my research and complete it in expected time

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<sup>1</sup> Number of comments received: 2004: 190; 2003: 173; 2002: 151)

**Students appreciate the independent nature of research** (2004: 11%)  
(2003: 8%; 2002: 11%)

- Learning to work independently - it gives me confidence in my own ideas and in making decisions about the direction to take my research
- I feel totally independence to program my study, while in the past I use to be dependent on teacher. Entering to a new area of study. Knowing that there are lots of new things to learn encourage me to work harder which is good
- Working independently. Because I can choose the correct and appropriate method for my research
- Being totally responsible for you choices and actions and performance, regardless of whether you feel there is a lack of active or intensive support from your supervisor, it's all your own doing and work. There's a great sense of achievement if you manage to deliver on your personal deadlines

**Students appreciate the availability of research resources/ library services** (2004: 8%)  
(2003: 9%; 2002: 11%)

- The Health Sciences library is just brilliant – can't praise the services and the staff enough
- External access to the library, in particular online journal access. As a distance/ remote student, this is invaluable to the point that I wouldn't contemplate this degree without it.
- The library system is excellent – the availability of online searching and the provision of documents that are not accessible at one's home library.
- Access to the library, document delivery service and interlibrary loans has been exceptional and incredibly important. I do not feel that I would have progressed as far had I not had the availability of these services

**Students find the experience challenging, stimulating, motivating** (2004:7%)  
(2003: 5%; 2002: 7%)

- Stimulating research culture
- Work with academics which is stimulating
- Encouragement to think outside the square. Encouragement to push personal boundaries and challenge limits
- Challenge of conducting a research project

***Other aspects mentioned included:***

- |   |            |                      |
|---|------------|----------------------|
| • Development of technical skills (writing, stats)      | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 9%; 2002: 5%) |
| • Interaction with other postgraduate research students | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 8%; 2002: 5%) |
| • Supportive faculty/ department                        | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 8%; 2002: 7%) |
| • Part of a research community                          | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 6%; 2002: 7%) |
| • Opportunities for collaboration and networking        | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 5%; 2002: 8%) |
| • Feedback from supervisor                              | (2004: 6%) | (2003: 1%)           |
| • Support for distance/ remote students                 | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 1%; 2002: 1%) |

## **2 Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved<sup>2</sup>**

### **Students are dissatisfied with their supervision (2004: 16%)** (2003: 18%; 2002: 20%)

- Quality of supervision – supervisors need to learn how to supervise and have measures in place for quality assurance. I am very happy to be proactive in my learning needs, but do expect my supervisor to meet his/her commitment to my learning/ research process
- Supervision: because supervision today is all a subjective matter for the academic. There should perhaps be some structure to it, and supervision is something that must be taken seriously by the supervisor and also the supervisor needs to be available and responsive
- Supervisors have too many students and other academic responsibilities. Their workload is too high and therefore they cannot provide adequate time for individual students
- Quality control of supervision. What is to be expected. How much help are we entitled to? More than one (active) supervisor to assist misunderstanding and avoid frustrations

### **Students are dissatisfied with availability of funding/ scholarships (2004: 16%)** (2003: 15%; 2002: 12%)

- Funding needs to be increased in order to staff the department adequately at both administrative and academic levels – there are too few people, and they are being asked to do too much
- In a perfect world, more scholarships would be great
- A lot of the clinical gold standard measurements cost a lot of money, also a lot of hospital Ethics committees expect the transport fees for the subjects etc ( which is understandable) to be paid for. The small amount of money available and the small grants that are available to PhD students are not enough, especially with the large number of subjects are required and if the topic is not trendy. This limits the type of research (which is probably more relevant) that you can do in 3 years of full time effort.
- The lack of financial support – any money I have accessed has been competitive. There have been no maintenance monies available to me over my candidature. To have to apply for money takes away from the task.

### **Distance education/ external students do not feel supported (2004: 12%)** 2003: 10%; 2002: 8%)

- Support for distance postgraduate students is limited and financial/ computing support non-existent. This increases both difficulty and isolation. Not really convinced distance research is taken seriously by the faculty
- Often administrative procedures do not take into account the needs of external students. Often time limits to submit documentation are inadequate or general procedures such as research interviews and presentations are basically only designed for on campus students
- Changes in administrative procedures with little notice given to distance students
- More access for distance students to support outside of direct supervision i.e. other academics/ student support networks by email

### **Technical skills are not being developed (2004: 11%)** (2003: 4%; 2002: 13%)

- Access to technical support e.g. use of SPSS program
- Statistics. As I have heard most students have difficulty in this regard. Therefore providing statistical classes at the beginning of study will be very useful.
- Advice about “how” to use word processing and graphic software in a way to facilitate the production of the thesis e.g. setting styles, drawing figures, etc
- Computer skills for database analysis.

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<sup>2</sup> Number of comments received: 2004: 152; 2003: 153; 2002: 143)

**More interaction with fellow students required** (2004: 9%)  
(2003: 10%; 2002: 17%)

- Peer support group. This should be setup by the department so we have means of contacting and interacting with fellow research students to share joy and discuss problems. This is certainly almost non-existence at the moment. When I studied for my master degree I was more motivated because we have weekly email discussion and online based discussion board. This issue needs to be address for the HScD students
- Contact with other research students: because a research degree is a very lonely journey, therefore support and contact with others in the same situation as you is very valuable
- Postgraduate student interaction – it's too easy to be isolated but there is no mechanism to move out of isolation unless supervisor has access to promoting interaction
- More organised contact with students in the same discipline, to allow the opportunity to discuss our research specifically and get/give feedback

**Students are unhappy with the physical facilities provided** (2004: 8%)  
(2003: 10%; 2002: 15%)

- I still think that what is in most need of improvement is the ability to access a small, individual, private space with access to a computer and printer at the university where I could just get on with my work and not be constantly interrupted. I live in hope
- Doctoral student should be ale to get access to a free printing or photocopy equipment, especially on the stage of writing up
- Resources (funding, equipment) available for postgraduate students
- Suitable, cheap accommodation for international students. This was not sufficient in 2002 and 2003

**Students are dissatisfied with Faculty/ University administration/ organisation** (2004: 7%)  
(2003: 10%; 2002: 3%)

- Administration problems with the process of re-enrolment and course changes have been the source of much unnecessary anxiety and stress. There has to be a better way!
- My enrolment in the program was very last minute as my application was misplaced after I was told verbally it was approved. Student administration were helpful in getting me enrolled at the last minute, however it was stressful for the first few weeks of first semester when I was still waiting for my official acceptance letter and then running around organizing student id, email etc, while working full time and working on class assignments.
- At present I am under the School of Behavioural Sciences and Community Health and several times I have found their administration lacking badly - they have lost a submitted essay, forgotten to send materials and forgotten to invite me to on-campus classes.
- I have just had a look at the new renewal process. My first impression is that it will use much more human resources from students and supervisors than is really necessary - a increased cost to the University in both hard costs (per hour wages) and time lost in productivity in other areas (e.g., getting studies ready for publication). But, I will assess this aspect for next years report.

**Other aspects mentioned included:**

- |   |            |                       |
|---|------------|-----------------------|
| • Graduate attributes are not being developed | (2004: 7%) | (2003: 1%; 2002: 3%)  |
| • Supportive faculty/ department/ school      | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 10%; 2002: 8%) |
| • Research resources/ library                 | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 8%; 2002: 7%)  |
| • Research skills are not being developed     | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 1%; 2002: 7%)  |

**Attachment One Categories and Sub categories used in analysis of SREQ open response comments<sup>3</sup>**

Category	Sub category	Includes
<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	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
<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	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
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	Satisfaction with research	Comments on research projects; benefits of research etc
	General comments	With university, location, etc

<sup>3</sup> 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
<b>Generic skills</b>	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
<b>Administration and organisation</b>	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
<b>Other</b>	Ethics administration	
	Equity	Harassment, discrimination etc
	Academic Board policies	Academic Honesty; Intellectual Property