

**FACULTY OF LAW**  
**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 Law in 2005.

### **Degree experience: areas of best practice**

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

	<b>% of comments received</b>	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	35%	19%
Curriculum: content and structure	30%	43%
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	18%	36%
Skills development: graduate generic attributes	9%	5%
Curriculum: relevance to work/ career	9%	5%
Learning resources: general	9%	4%

### **Degree experience: opportunities for improvement**

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

	<b>% of comments received</b>	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	16%	25%
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	15%	17%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	14%	16%
Appropriate assessment	14%	8%
Learning resources: general	11%	10%
Appropriate workload	11%	6%

### **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:

	<b>% of comments received</b>	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Customer service: quality	42%	66%
Administration and organisation: general comments	19%	
Library services	12%	20%
Web communications: online access to services	11%	
Web communications: intranet/ internet	8%	12%
<i>No other aspect received more than 5% of comments</i>		

### **Student administration and student support services: opportunities for improvement**

**Faculty of Law: Analysis of student experience:  
Postgraduate coursework students: 2005**

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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	24%	22%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	24%	2%
Customer service: quality	15%	27%
Administration and organisation: general comments	14%	8%
Customer service: opening hours	8%	7%
Services provided: advertisement of services	6%	2%

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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 Law in 2005.

In 2005 70% of students who responded to the SCEQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, whilst 62% 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 32% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement.

## 2 Arrangement

1. Degree experience
  - o Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
  - o Analysis of comments suggesting improvements
2. Experience of student administration and student support services
  - o Analysis of comments referring to best aspects
  - o 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 analysis<sup>1</sup> 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 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.<sup>2</sup>

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*;

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. 2000 – 2003. The SCEQ was not administered in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the SCEQ Taxonomy is provided as a separate attachment.

*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.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluation and feedback</li><li>• Academic Board policies</li><li>• Curriculum</li><li>• Skills development</li><li>• Learning community</li><li>• Learning resources</li><li>• Overall satisfaction</li><li>• Good teaching</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear goals and standards</li><li>• Appropriate assessment</li><li>• Appropriate workload</li><li>• Elearning</li><li>• Research-led teaching</li><li>• Student progression and retention</li><li>• Cultural diversity</li><li>• Equity</li></ul> |
|--|---|

#### **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 postgraduate coursework 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 aspects<sup>3</sup>

**Good teaching: standard of teaching received** (2005: 35%)  
(2003: 19%; 2002: 10%; 2001: 9%)

- AA and his enthusiasm and fantastic ability to explain technical concepts. The whole tax team were high quality lecturers and many with practical examples from practice eg Prof XX made lectures particularly relevant. The high quality of teachers is a reason I would recommend the course to people.
- The lecturers are easy to understand, approachable and committed to teaching the students which makes attending courses enjoyable.
- The postgrad tax lecturers are extremely impressive in understanding of subject matter, professionalism and (in most cases) its presentation. It is a great benefit to be taught by national and international leaders in the subjects covered..
- Professor XX. He is well organized. From the start of course, you are aware of what is to be covered in detail and provided with references to do your own research before the class. He obviously spends a great deal of time preparing each lecture. This could also be said for AA, BB, CC, and DD.

**Curriculum: content and structure** (2005: 30%)  
(2003: 43%; 2002: 23%; 2001: 41%; 2000: 24%)

- Master of international taxation explores my knowledge on the tax systems of different countries, the issue of transfer pricing and the problems that may happen when we deal with international taxation.
- Interesting subjects that stimulate debate in class. The ability to do the subjects as intensives and not to have the classes impinge on work.
- It's a good thing of the CLM course that it's possible to choose the courses from the whole range of courses the Law School offers.
- Intensive units - no need to attend weekly lectures; excellent learning method; very good for full-time working post graduate students with families.

**Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff<sup>4</sup>** (2005: 18%)  
(2003: 36%; 2002: 39%; 2001: 30%; 2000: 29%)

- Best aspects are the opportunity to learn from practitioners who are working with the areas of law that are covered in the courses (this is useful and valuable).
- Lecturers are very well versed on subject area. they are at the top of their field. its a wonderful experience to learn from such genius.
- Lecturers. I was able to benefit from lecturers who are highly respected in the industry who are true specialists in the field.
- lecturers very helpful, very insightful. they work in the industry as well. you see aspects of law in an academic sense and also in a working sense.

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<sup>3</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 159; 2003: 140; 2002: 108; 2001: 123; 2000: 34

<sup>4</sup> Includes: Qualifications (as tertiary teacher); experience (in subject area); English language proficiency

**Skills development: graduate generic attributes**

**(2005: 9%)**

(2003: 5%; 2002: 7%; 2001: 3%; 2000: 6%)

- Increased my technical knowledge and sharpened my analytical skills
- The way in which it was presented helped students develop the analytical skills necessary.
- Analytical skills and research skills. Written skills workshop by learning centres are really good.
- One lecturer helped me prepare an essay for publication. This has helped me enormously in my writing. I have not had several more articles published and was asked to edit a state editor of a journal.

**Curriculum: relevance to work/ career**

**(2005: 9%)**

(2003: 5%; 2002: 4%; 2001: 11%; 2000: 9%)

- The M.A.L.P is a good learning experience and extremely relevant to the professional demands and skills required for my employment
- Very relevant for my day to day work. I have picked courses that I have found very interesting. The university is very flexible with students and managing study requirements with work obligations.
- Problem based structure of course has meant that all units studied have had direct relevance and practical application in my career as a Chartered Accountant in public practice. Problems discussed and covered in assignments have been constantly referred to in work experience both with training and assisting my staff, and providing advice to clients.
- All material studied is relevant and valuable.

**Learning resources: general**

**(2005: 9%)**

(2003: 4%; 2002: 8%; 2001: 6%; 2000: 4%)

- Materials and course guides/unit outlines very thorough and clear. The reading materials, course materials, including essay topics, were available several weeks before the start of the course, which was extremely helpful for students, particularly those working full time.
- Very good outlines with reading guides that were helpful for writing assignments too.
- The material is good (resources, readings etc). The lecturers and tutors are intelligent.
- The completeness of the reading materials and handouts means I don't have to buy additional text books.

**Other aspects mentioned included:**

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Learning community: learning environment	9%	4%	5%	12%	6%
Research led teaching	8%	4%	1%		3%
Curriculum: flexibility, diversity, variety	7%	5%	10%	9%	12%
Appropriate assessment	7%	1%	2%	3%	3%
Industry and professions: visiting staff/ lecturers etc	7%		3%		

## 4.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements<sup>5</sup>

### Curriculum: content and structure

(2005: 16%)

(2003: 25%; 2002: 20%; 2001: 26%; 2000: 30%)

- It would be good to have some of the postgraduate law subjects offered at the St James Campus in addition to the overseas universities, such as Introduction to Intellectual Property Law. For those of us working full-time and studying part-time, studying abroad is not a viable option.
- The subjects I wanted to take initially were not offered when I started my degree, which was very disappointing. There should be more semester-length units offered, esp. for international students to integrate them into uni life. Furthermore, there should be the chance to take some courses in the morning and not only in the evening!
- Subjects offered more frequently and in block mode - I will not be able to enrol in some of the subjects I am interested in because they are weekly and/or only offered every 2nd year..
- Intensive classes could be run over four solid days which would make it easier to get time off work. Also I would like to see more subjects offered so that there is more choice towards the end of the degree.

### Good teaching: useful and timely feedback

(2005: 15%)

(2003: 17%; 2002: 12%; 2001: 19%; 2000: 23%)

- We never received back several assignments and have no idea of our marks in them. Guest lecturers were particularly bad in this department.
- Some more feedback on assessments like how I could improve even further for my next paper.
- There is very little feedback. Often I had to chase lecturers for my essays to be returned and the faculty were not much assistance. Even if my essays were returned, they had few comments.
- Better feedback and guidance on written work, especially supervision of Independent Research Project

### Good teaching: standard of teaching received

(2005: 14%)

(2003: 16%; 2002: 18%; 2001: 10%; 2000: 3%)

- Skills of teaching and knowledge of the lecturers can be improved. Generally even though they are already very good ( there is always room to improve ).
- Some lecturers are not very well structured and even seem unorganised. I would have enjoyed more variety of courses available.
- Occasional lecturer approach seems lacking in areas of teaching expertise. E.g., sometimes great lawyers etc. with worldly experience and qualifications in their field - not so good educators.
- Academic staff with whom I had contact was very unapproachable and did not foster a nurturing learning environment. Very patronising and unsupportive.

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<sup>5</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 140; 2003: 115; 2002: 102; 2001: 98; 2000: 30

**Appropriate assessment**

(2005: 14%)

(2003: 8%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 4%; 2000: 7%)

- Exam questions were identical to class problem questions which everybody shares - this discouraged original thought and genuine understand as people could copy others' prepared answers.
- Assessments have generally been one assessment worth 100%. While this allows me to focus on a more in depth project, the lack of prior feedback and weight on just one assignment can be quite stressful.
- The assessment process does not appear to work well. For example in my last course assignments (equal to 30% of the total assessment) were not handed back to students, even after the examination was finished, despite repeated requests to lecturer and university staff. In addition the method of selecting assignment questions for the exam is not a system of assessment that tests the overall knowledge of the subject..
- Make all exams open book. Of course they should be marked rigorously and a higher standard should be expected than 'closed-book' but instead of testing what one has remembered the exam would reflect real life when one generally has time to research.

**Learning resources: general**

(2005: 11%)

(2003: 10%; 2002: 13%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 7%)

- The reading materials and course outline for intensives are provided too late. They should be provided at the beginning of the semester not just a week or so before. Juggling work, family and a masters means time allocated for preparation is inflexible and sometimes there is little time to prepare.
- I would like to have had the unit outlines (especially reading lists) during the semester break before the unit started. Some prior reading of background material would have facilitated better/quicker understanding of the first few weeks' lectures. There hasn't been enough time during the semester to read everything I would have liked to read. Perhaps a list of background (broader) reading could posted on the web site either permanently or some weeks prior to commencement.
- Reading materials and course outlines for intensively taught units should be made available at least one month prior to class to allow reading time in advance.
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**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

## 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 aspects<sup>6</sup>

**Customer service: quality** (2005: 42%)  
(2003: 66%; 2002: 57%; 2001: 62%)

- When you speak to someone, they are always friendly and helpful
- Commitment to quality; Responsiveness; Respect; Cheerful helpfulness. The respect and cheerfulness was important: I was able to feel confident asking those potentially 'stupid questions' without being embarrassed. I have been constantly impressed at the speedy responses to all things 'online' and the expertise of the staff. This increases my confidence in the university because it acts as a 'benchmark' for the kind of quality expected of students.
- Staff are always willing to help and are always friendly. Any queries are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The fact that I am able to receive answers to my questions relatively promptly always helps to make a more informed decision.

**Administration and organisation: general** (2005<sup>7</sup>: 19%)  
(no comments on this aspect in previous years)

- The people on the desk at the Law School, extremely helpful and happy to do whatever it takes to assist.
- These services are good at the Law School, because there is more personal service, more likelihood that a staff member might know students and vice versa.
- The law faculty administration staff are very helpful and extremely efficient in processing paperwork. They make it easier to get on with the study side of uni.
- Faculty administration staff are very helpful and always happy to assist in meeting requests.

**Library services** (2005: 12%)  
(2003: 20%; 2002: 18%; 2001: 17%)

- The Law School Library is also a great resource - particularly the catalogues and those articles which can be obtained online. Any possibility of expanding the number of full text journals obtainable online should be pursued.
- I have generally always found the library to have the information that I need. The staff will answer most questions. The computer research databases are good .
- The departmental library staff are very knowledgeable and willing to offer assistance. Remote access to database search engines has been especially useful.
- Library services excellent; was pleased to see a suggested purchase acted on within days.

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<sup>6</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 106; 2003: 82; 2002: 56; 2001: 47; 2000: 17

<sup>7</sup> In 2005, this includes Faculty of Law Administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

**Web communications: online access to services**

(2005: 11%)

(2002: 4%)

- No waiting to be served. Online availability of personal data.
- Online assistance as I work full time and don't have time to visit in person.
- Being able to access information on-line as I work full-time and am unable to get to the uni campus regularly.
- Online Student admin, because it's very easy to use and saves me a lot of time.

**Web communications: internet/ intranet**

(2005: 8%)

(2003: 12%; 2002: 14%; 2001: 9%)

- The information available on WebCT and MyUni
- WebCT is a great resource for those doing post graduate degrees - in particular, putting reading materials on line
- Email auto-forwarding and updates on course information (with the exception of assessment information - see above) were generally excellent and assisted me greatly in managing work and study
- Timely and cater to students needs, accessible and easy to use -> eg. Intranet is great! I feel well informed.

*No other aspects were mentioned in more than 5% of the comments received.*

## **5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements<sup>8</sup>**

**Library services**

(2005: 24%)

(2003: 22%; 2002: 24%; 2001: 20%)

- A better way of making sure library books are not stolen, misplaced or hidden
- More library courses, to enable updating of skills, especially for post-graduate students. I am a candidate for an LLM and tools for legal research are very different to the time I did my undergraduate degree. I was very concerned during my course that I was not accessing all relevant material. If these courses are offered, they should be more publicised through email contact with students
- Greater on-line access to academic resources through the library would better support my study as much of my free time is at night. As a result I use the Library as far as possible through the internet. Physical attendance at the Library is not always possible for me.
- The practice of the library to re-call a book (which is only on loan for 4 weeks) before the end of the loan period because another person has reserved it. This is extremely inconvenient, unfair, and makes a mockery of students who are trying to complete a 10,000 word paper with reference to an essential text for less than the promised loan period. Most postgrad students work, and many like me also have young families, therefore we only have weekends and evenings to complete assignments. In such circumstances, the benefit of a fixed loan period is critical. This is the most disappointing aspect of the entire course. (Please note, the staff have always been very pleasant and helpful - it is the policy that requires attention)

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<sup>8</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 72; 2003: 59; 2002: 54; 2001: 54; 2000: 19

**Web communications: internet/ intranet** (2005: 24%)  
(2003: 2%; 2002: 15%; 2001: 13%)

- I had problems accessing course materials on WebCT. The help desk response was basically "change your browser settings", which is fine if you're computer literate, but not helpful to me.
- too many passwords to remember for library access and online administration.
- I don't know if this is the relevant section for this comment but I found MyUni online difficult to orientate around..
- The Law Faculty home page could be made easier to use. Also it is very difficult to find phone numbers for Faculty staff.

**Customer service: quality** (2005: 15%)  
(2003: 27%; 2002: 31%; 2001: 46%)

- Be available - post-grad students who work full-time do not want to get voicemail when they need help with something, nor do they want to have to wait more than 24 hours for a response.
- Some essential data is very poorly provided on these services. Human staff are unwilling and provide slow response to questions where the answer is not available on the web, often giving the run around. Not sure if this requires better education of staff or a clear point of call for questions. There must be a phone service for local students regarding financial statements - requiring all students that are not international to attend in person is unfeasible
- Respond more quickly to telephone messages
- Improved customer service ethic among support staff.

**Administration and organisation: general** (2005<sup>9</sup>: 14%)  
(2003: 8%; 2002: 11%)

- Law Faculty admin should answer the phone.
- The law faculty administration and library staff are grumpy and could be friendlier.
- There must be a better way to do student cards e.g., electronically, than old method of cut a photo and then go to University during work hours.
- The door to the staff offices on Level 13 is a nuisance. I loath having to disturb someone who has to come and open it (only to find the person I'm after isn't there) and I have thus become extremely reluctant to call in on lecturers/supervisors. I understand the security issues there must be , but it would help if there were an intercom/internal phone with ext numbers for the staff in those offices so that I can buzz the staff member I'm looking for (and even better if they can buzz the door open rather than have to come and open it). The whole setup makes the staff seem very unavailable.

**Customer service: opening hours** (2005: 8%)  
(2003: 7%; 2002: 11%; 2001: 11%)

- Ensure they are open to 6pm for those who work
- Also, the hours posted for the level 5 office in the Law School did not accurately reflect the actual times the office was actually open, so that could be changed
- Longer opening hours
- A lot of the activities or sessions are during 9am to 5pm which limits postgraduate students' ability to attend these events

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<sup>9</sup> In 2005, this includes Faculty of Law Administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

**Other aspects mentioned included:**

The following aspects were mentioned in 6 or less comments received. To protect student confidentiality, no sample comments are included for these aspects.

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>
Services provided: advertisement of services	6%	2%	4%	
Web communications: online access to services	6%	2%		