

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

FACULTY OF LAW

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 Law 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 characteristics¹:

- *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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23 May 2005

¹ A list of categories and sub-categories developed for the analysis of SREQ open response comments is available at Attachment One

1 *Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects of the degree course²*

Students are happy with their supervision (2004: 38%)
(2003: 40%; 2002: 32%)

- My supervisor has encouraged me to develop a concise and well thought out thesis topic as well as providing me with constant feedback on my work in a formal context every 6 weeks
- My supervisor who is wonderful and supportive as well as being very knowledgeable and an expert in the field
- The quality of my supervisor – exceptionally experienced and strong feedback
- My supervisor is brilliant and extremely supportive of my efforts

Students are satisfied with their research projects (2004: 24%)
(2003: 13%; 2002: 32%)

- Having the time and freedom to pursue my own topic of research
- Opportunity to consider a single topic in exhaustive detail
- Ability to do wide range in research in topic over extended period of time
- Going through the process of ‘picking an appropriate topic’ area. This has helped me focus on the main purpose of pursuing this particular path

Research skills/ methodology are being developed (2004: 14%)
(2003: 16%; 2002: 18%)

- The research modules are well planned and equally well taught
- The legal research classes were very helpful
- Structured legal research classes in 1st semester – support and accountability as well as info re the process of research
- Legal research 1, 2 and 3 excellent

Other aspects mentioned included³:

- | | | |
|---|-------------|------------------------|
| • Appreciation of independent nature of research | (2004: 10%) | (2003: 11%; 2002: 7%) |
| • Appreciation of feedback from supervisor | (2004: 10%) | |
| • Research resources/ library | (2004: 7%) | (2003: 2%; 2002: 7%) |
| • Opportunities for collaboration and networking | (2004: 7%) | (2002: 7%) |
| • Feel part of a supportive faculty | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 18%) |
| • Development of graduate attributes (communication, problem solving) | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 11%; 2002: 18%) |
| • Experience is challenging/ stimulating | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 4%; 2002: 4%) |
| • Opportunities to present at conferences | (2004: 5%) | (2003: 2%; 2002: 4%) |
| • Appreciation of seminars/ workshops | (2004: 5%) | |
| • Support for part-time/ external students | (2004: 5%) | |

² Number of comments received: 2004: 42; 2003: 45; 2002: 28)

³ These aspects received less than five comments each. In order to maintain student confidentiality, sample comments are not provided for these aspect.

2 Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved⁴

Students are dissatisfied with their supervision (2004: 31%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 35%)

- Training and accountability of supervisors. There seems to be little motivation on the part of supervisors to proactively support and advise
- 1/3 of my thesis was never read by my supervisors even though they had seven months to read it
- More regular meetings with my sole supervisor, perhaps the opportunity to have another supervisor review my drafts
- Supervision should provide us with more help in tackling technical problems rather than a monitor in the distance

Students would appreciate opportunities to interact with fellow RHD students (2004:21%)

(2003: 18%; 2002: 23%)

- More interaction between research students
- More interaction with my supervisor and other research students because it helps to motivate and switch my thinking about my topic
- Interaction with other postgraduate students
- The opportunity for meetings with other PhD students in the faculty is rare

Students do not feel part of the Faculty/ Department/ School (2004: 21%)

(2003: 3%; 2002: 15%)

- Very poor appreciation of challenges facing postgraduate research students. Treatment as second class citizen. A mere student rather than a valued colleague
- Integrating postgraduate students into the research environment of the faculty as a whole
- Opportunities to present aspects of work on informed basis in faculty lacking
- More interaction between research candidates and academics

Students are unhappy with the physical facilities/ resources provided (2004: 17%)

(2003: 13%; 2002: 27%)

- Only student 'space' facilities very limited student work spaces
- There should be unlimited internet access/ printing quotas/ photocopying quotas for research students
- More research accommodation – just one big room shared by many
- The law faculty facilities are not conducive to social and intellectual intercourse between students in general and postgraduate and staff in particular in comparison with other faculties

Other aspects mentioned included⁵:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| • Feedback from supervisor | (2004: 10%) | (2003: 5%) |
| • Research resources/ library | (2004: 7%) | (2003: 11%; 2002: 4%) |
| • International students' experiences | (2004: 7%) | (2002: 4%) |

⁴ Number of comments received: 2004: 29; 2003: 38; 2002: 26)

⁵ These aspects received less than five comments each. In order to maintain student confidentiality, sample comments are not provided for these aspect.

Attachment One Categories and Sub categories used in analysis of SREQ open response comments⁶

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

⁶ 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