

**FACULTY OF LAW**  
**STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)**  
**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS**  
**ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience 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 research 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 research students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Quality of supervision: supervisor	45%	38%
Generic skills: research skills	16%	14%
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	13%	24%
Generic skills: working independently	11%	10%
Research climate: supportive work environment	11%	5%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	8%	5%

### Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

The areas of degree experience which postgraduate research students considered most in need of improvement in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, building, office	19%	17%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	19%	
Research climate: interaction with other research students (study related)	16%	21%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	9%	31%
Quality of infrastructure: research resources: library	9%	7%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	6%	3%

It should be noted that the percentage of comments received which mentioned the quality of supervision: supervisor as an area in need of improvement has fallen dramatically – from 31% and first place in 2004 to 9% and 4<sup>th</sup> place in 2005.

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## **1 Introduction**

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire postgraduate research students are asked to provide comments on the following:

- What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?
- What aspects are most in need of improvement?

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 research students in the Faculty of Law in 2005.

In 2005 76% of students who responded to the SREQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, and 64% on those that were considered to be in need of improvement. The substantial difference in the number of positive comments received compared to those expressing the opposite opinion, possibly indicates an overall satisfaction with the degree experience of postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Law.

## **2 Arrangement**

1. Analysis of comments referring to best aspects of the degree course
2. Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved

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 (2002 – 2004) 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 SREQ quantitative analysis reports. Within the taxonomy, categories used for the SREQ are identical to the SREQ factor scales, with the addition of Administration and organisation, Ethics Administration, Academic Board policies, International Office, and other administrative areas and support services. This taxonomy is under constant revision as the need to sub-divide categories and create new ones becomes apparent.

Each comment received is analysed according to the SREQ Taxonomy, with those including more than one aspect being counted in each aspect mentioned.

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.

**4 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects<sup>1</sup>**

*NB: Only two aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

**Quality of supervision: supervisor (2005: 45%)**  
(2004: 38%; 2003: 40%; 2002: 32%)

- My supervisor is very good. he provides excellent feedback when requested and uses a great mixture of supportiveness and encouraging you to produce words early and often
- To find and have an appropriate supervisor is really important, especially when he or she shares interested in your research proposal. I feel happy that I've got one.
- I think that my supervisors have a wealth of knowledge that they are willing to impart and lots of helpful guidance
- The best aspect would be my supervisor who is a clear thinker and sharp analytical mind whose are very comments very useful in constructing my arguments.

**Generic skills: research skills (2005: 16%)**  
(2004: 14%; 2003: 16%; 2002: 18%)

- Legal research units with X . The seminars are directly related to the task of research, analysis and writing. They are constructive and collegiate. I have learned a lot about research.
- Excellent subject, Legal Research 1, introductory subject.
- The legal research classes, enable the interaction with other research students and the frequent encouragement of a knowledgeable academic researcher
- Learning how research and write

**Other aspects mentioned included:**

*NB: all the aspects mentioned below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	13%	24%	13%	32%
Generic skills: working independently	11%	10%	11%	7%
Research climate: supportive work environment	11%	5%	18%	
Generic skills: graduate attributes	8%	5%	11%	18%
Quality of infrastructure: research resources: library	8%	7%	2%	7%

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<sup>1</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 38; 2004: 42; 2003: 45; 2002: 28

## **5 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements<sup>2</sup>**

NB: *Only two aspects in this section of the report were mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

### **Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, building, office (2005: 19%)** (2004: 17%; 2003: 13%; 2002: 27%)

- For me, I need to get a dedicated space at home or work. Neither is satisfactory as yet. Also I tend keep up with organizing my materials so can be ready to write whenever time is available.
- Provision of information to students about accessing suitable working space (many people unaware of available facilities)
- The postgraduate room, it is stuffy, overcrowded and poorly equipped.
- Accessibility to work space

### **Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources (2005: 19%)** (*new topic in 2005; previously included with workspace, buildings etc*)

- Limiting one's computing access to outside sides - with a limited free cache - is horrible. No other university where I've pursued research has limited students' ability to access websites either on or off campus. The university must accept the simple fact that there is a host of valuable information outside its domain - and it must give students -- and particularly research students -- unlimited access to this information. Failure to allow unlimited internet access is equivalent to a failure to allow a completely free exchange and exploration of ideas - plainly and simply.
- Software availability in research areas still expensive or limited
- more facilities should be given to research students. free internet service, free photocopying
- Services through faculty/department computer centres

### **Other aspects mentioned included:**

NB: *all the aspects below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (study related)	16%	21%	18%	23%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	9%	31%	11%	35%
Quality of infrastructure: research resources: library	9%	7%	11%	4%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: other (not scholarships/ PRSS)	6%	3%	3%	
Administration and organisation: general comments	6%	3%	13%	
Quality of supervision: progress reports	6%			
Quality of infrastructure: funding: not scholarships/ PRSS	6%			

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<sup>2</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 32; 2004: 29; 2003: 38; 2002: 26