

FACULTY OF MEDICINE
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 Medicine in 2005.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

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

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	28%	41%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	19%	11%
Curriculum: relevance to work/ career	15%	10%
Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff	11%	30%
eLearning: learning management systems	11%	
Research led teaching	10%	2%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

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

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Curriculum: content and structure	18%	31%
Good teaching: standard of teaching received	16%	8%
Good teaching: useful and timely feedback	13%	10%
Administration and organisation: general comments	10%	13%
Appropriate workload	8%	8%
Appropriate assessment	8%	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:

	% of comments received	
	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>
Customer service: quality	39%	36%
Administration and organisation: general comments	21%	
Library services	12%	22%
Web communications: online access to services	8%	13%
Computer access centres: faculty	8%	
Web communications: intranet/ internet	7%	23%

Student administration and student support services: opportunities for improvement

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

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
Customer service: quality	21%	34%
Administration and organisation: general comments	15%	
Library services	11%	19%
Web communications: intranet/ internet	10%	3%
Administration and organisation: enrolment	9%	3%
Customer service: student support: distance education/ external students	9%	3%

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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 Medicine in 2005.

In 2005 77% of students who responded to the SCEQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, whilst 70% provided comments relating to areas in need of improvement. 50% of respondents provided comments on the best aspects of their experiences of student administration and student support services, whilst 38% 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 analysis¹ 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.²

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: uptake by students/ staff; Learning management systems; Support provided;* and *Face to face vs. online learning*. NB: The

¹ i.e. 2000 – 2003. The SCEQ was not administered in 2004.

² A copy of the SCEQ Taxonomy is provided as a separate attachment.

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

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 aspects³

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 28%)

(2003: 41%; 2002: 26%; 2001: 35%; 2000: 35%)

- Generally a good correlation between lectures and tutorials. The spread of each unit across 2-3 weeks means more time to absorb and understand.
- ability to choose second semester electives to tailor the program to fit my interests, this has allowed me to target areas that I would like to pursue after the degree
- Good overview of public health issues in core work subjects and good selection of electives available to extend knowledge in specific areas. This aspect of the degree was particularly useful as it reinforced to me where my strengths and weakness lie and helped me choose an area of interest that I believe I would like to pursue as a career option in the future.
- It is an international course. It attracts students from all over the world. It provides a good opportunity for students to gain a universal point of view. Teaching content keeps pace with current international health issues.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 19%)

(2003: 11%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 2%; 2000: 12%)

- The lecturers are dedicated, understanding and friendly. I was shocked that each lecturer knew my name by the second week of the semester, this makes me feel recognised and welcomed. The MIPH is a wonderful course and I recommend it to anyone with an interest in international aid and public health.
- I admired the passion and commitment of the staff in the course I also found them very welcoming and attentive to any concerns held by the students.
- The lecturers support your ideas and give helpful feedback. They treat everyone equally despite some students having more experience than others. This creates a comfortable environment to study in and allows students to confidently express their opinions.
- Teaching personnel- obvious commitment and interest. Some education activities very elegant effective and interesting.

Curriculum: relevance to work/ career (2005: 15%)

(2003: 10%; 2002: 12%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 12%)

- Course work very relevant to my job.
- Interesting lectures that are relevant to my work e.g. health economics systematic reviews, sensitivity and speaking. Developing analytic and critical thinking skills.
- Applicable, have applied relevant principles at work.
- very relevant to work and practical experiences- more complete understanding and outlook; if to apply for another job/position in research and evaluation would feel very confident.

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 221; 2003: 174; 2002: 108; 2001: 128; 2000: 26

Overall satisfaction: quality of academic staff (2005: 11%)
(2003: 30%; 2002: 24%; 2001: 33%; 2000: 50%)

- Quality of lecturers - knowing that they are active and experience in their field - also innovative in defining research.
- The Academic staff at the School of Public Health are extremely knowledgeable, they are well published (a lot of them) excellent lecturers who inspire me to do well. I loved learning at the School of Public Health.
- The commitment of our lecturers to the area of Sleep Medicine, important to feel that their level of expertise is excellent.
- First hand experience from professionals who have worked around the world - provides valuable knowledge about practical matters. Not overly theoretical, which is good.

eLearning: learning management systems (2005: 11%)
(*new topic in 2005; previously included in Online resources*)

- Online learning. One of the subjects I studied this semester was completely on-line. I was very sceptical about learning this way but I have to say that it was by far the best learning experience I've participated in so far. The subject (PUBh5208) was well planned: learning objectives were clear, specifically addressed and assessment occurred at the conclusion of each module - which was very helpful feedback. The on-line forum facilitation encouraged participation and motivated me to be well-prepared for the sessions
- It is a correspondence course. WebCT, good feedback and excellent notes are necessary. In some modules these occur, in others the quality is much lower.
- WebCT is very useful and has complimented course work.
- The online learning allows me much more freedom to work on my course. I work very long hours and I am unable to attend onsite. A university that allows me remote access is my number one priority. Before WebCT was introduced I was considering moving my enrolment elsewhere.

Research led teaching (2005: 10%)
(2003: 2%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 2%; 2000: 8%)

- The best aspects in the degree I do is that it update my knowledge with the most recent information in the area of study so I am aware of the last work and research which is undertaken.
- developed the ability to understand research and evaluation and why research needs to happen; better understanding of course content- structure of research and evaluation;
- Staff committed to and enthusiastic about their research and teaching interests, and keen to communicate their interest and enthusiasm to students.
- the academics who are currently involved in active research giving us their experiences.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2000</i>
Learning community: learning environment	9%	12%	11%	8%	19%
Curriculum: flexibility, diversity, variety	9%	4%	12%	9%	12%
Good teaching: challenging, motivating, stimulating	8%	1%	9%	7%	15%
Cultural diversity: international students	7%	5%	9%	5%	4%

4.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁴

Curriculum: content and structure (2005: 18%)
(2003: 31%; 2002: 16%; 2001: 27%; 2000: 24%)

- Some of the subjects offered only in the second semester, if they were offered in the first that would be much appreciated. Some courses have night times only, if they were also offered in day time. No consideration for the part timers with assignments to be submitted at late night.
- Core International public health subjects are vague, poorly lectured and poorly resourced. They have an inadequate up to date focus and did not challenge me sufficiently.
- Please do not go down the path of online learning. This was not at all well organised or integrated with the face-to-face learning. You also completely lose the most important aspect of postgrad learning in public health, which is learning from others' experience, whether it be from lecturers, or other students. I understand that you are trying to make the course more flexible, however the quality has dropped significantly.
- 1. The content is too general and too broad. The subjects need to be redesigned. There is too much overlap across different subjects. 2. Scientific knowledge should be given as much focus as political, social knowledge.

Good teaching: standard of teaching received (2005: 16%)
(2003: 8%; 2002: 7%; 2001: 5%)

- Most subjects were delivered in a traditional, lecture based, manner. There was no integration between the subjects towards the overall objective of the course in order to make the degree more competency oriented. Teaching was teacher centered mostly. The whole teaching approach needs to be updated according to modern trends in tertiary training.
- The lecture quality is very poor - we are bombarded with facts and data that could be easily read in a journal article or else where (often in the readings we are issued) - it would be most effective to have lectures share field stories, scenarios and case studies - aspects that will inspire enthusiasm in the field and interest to pursue further information independently.
- Lecturers must be good teachers and have some background in academics to be able to teach us and not waste our time.
- To maintain the overall good reputation of the course the high standard of teaching staff should be maintained, if not improved. Some teaching staff are merely more qualified than myself and unable to teach.

Good teaching: useful and timely feedback (2005: 13%)
(2003: 10%; 2002: 13%; 2001: 13%; 2000: 10%)

- Despite being busy, I think it's important to get our results back from the previous units work that has been submitted prior to having to submit the next units work as the feedback can be used to improve areas that may be identified as needing attention.
- Move feedback on work. Most papers weren't returned until about 6-8 weeks later and would have other assignment due before that.
- Also feedback on assignments particularly online assessment, is non-existent apart from the grade.
- Often not much feedback given on assignments when they were returned. It makes it hard to learn from these for other assignments.

⁴ Number of comment received: 2005: 201; 2003: 158; 2002: 107; 2001: 111; 2000: 21

Administration and organisation: general comments

(2005: 10%)

(2003: 13%; 2002: 12%; 2001: 20%; 2000: 5%)

- Also, it has never been clear to me who to contact about which matters within the department. It'd be nice if people's roles were more defined in terms of who is really in charge of a unit, who is in charge of enrolment, etc, etc, because I always end up bugging the wrong person and then having to be passed along to someone else.
- Admin a bit disorganised. Timetable not adhered to with changes and cancellations. Communication lines not clear. Some teaching activities not well structured.
- better information prior to starting- core units and electives. Where to get information- was all a bit trial and error at the beginning and word of mouth. We did not get a list of core and electives until mid year!
- The admin and office hours - as a part time student working full time, it's frustrating to have to hand in/pick up assignments by 5pm when I am still at work. Don't offer part-time courses if you expect part-timers to keep hours as if they were available between 9am and 5pm.

Appropriate workload

(2005: 8%)

(2003: 8%; 2002: 9%; 2001: 14%; 2000: 24%)

- Being a part-time student, the reading load and expectations for online participation in Society, Behaviour and Public Health course were quite high. The workload was tough!
- Assessments could be better distributed over the entire semester rather than having everything allocated at the end of the term.
- It starts off too slow and not quite sure what is expected and then work between all 24 credits suddenly becomes ridiculous to schedule between class, tutorials, group meetings, eating, work. Felt way too spread thin and not gaining quality understanding of topics.
- There is excessive work. I understand that it is intended to further ones ability to work in a group, but in the field surely you would be working intensively with your group - not part time, trying to organise meeting between all the other subjects that also require group work - I think it is more appropriate to intensive short-course scenarios.

Appropriate assessment

(2005: 8%)

(2003: 6%; 2002: 5%; 2001: 5%; 2000: 10%)

- The type of assessment is NOT graduate level, the assignments are just exercises not opportunities to grow in an individual direction, there is no real feedback and the word limits are too short to write good papers.
- Use multiple choice for exam instead of short/long answers. I hope each assignment gives more time for research. Average 3 weeks is not enough at least extra 2-3 weeks for each research assignment.
- assignments are based on things we have not been well taught. it seems certain topics are purposely poorly taught so they can be tested in assignments.
- The assessments are meaningless. A 2,000-word essay on a topic of your choice for 100% of your mark is useless. It's an exercise in producing what the lecturers want to read, and I could do it blind-folded. I don't need to attend the lectures in order to do the assessments. The assessments have nothing to do with learning, and I'm embarrassed to even admit that a 2,000-word assignment is all I need to do for an entire subject.

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

Other aspects mentioned included:

	2005	2003	2002	2001	2000
Learning resources: general	8%	6%	3%	5%	10%
Clear goals and standards	8%	1%	9%	3%	10%
Learning community: student support: part-time students	7%	2%	6%	5%	5%
Curriculum: clinical and practical aspects of course	6%	4%	4%	4%	
Learning community: student support: distance education/ external students	6%	1%	1%	3%	
Overall satisfaction: quality of degree	6%	1%		1%	14%
eLearning: learning management systems	6%		<i>New topic in 2005</i>		
eLearning: face to face vs online	8%		<i>New topic in 2005</i>		

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 aspects⁵

Customer service: quality (2005: 39%)
(2003: 36%; 2002: 59%; 2001: 47%)

- There is often someone available at most times to answer any enquiries - even after 5pm to accommodate part-time students. Also, email contact was often rapid and responses were informative
- they listen to students' needs carefully and tries to solve their problem. It is good as I am an international student, it gave me a feeling of security and at home.
- The staff are prompt and keen to approach help me with my problem. They do effective jobs. They really have a sense of humour.
- Friendly and helpful staff. Whatever the query or problem I always felt comfortable raising it with them

Administration and organisation: general (2005⁶: 21%)
(no comments on this aspect in previous years)

- Faculty staff are very good, especially for pre enrolment as this never seems to work properly.
- International Public Health support and administration staff were extremely helpful. Knew students and made receiving marks, registering for classes very easy.
- The Medical Faculty, they know who their students are and act immediately to help.
- The faculty student administration are helpful in answering questions and understand that web based services sometimes do not work. They are very supportive in trying to get enrolment right and assist in selection of available electives.

Library services (2005: 12%)
(2003: 22%; 2002: 22%; 2001: 18%)

- the library delivery of articles service is truly excellent and must be continued
- I'm particularly impressed with the level of service provided by the Burkitt Ford library and the ease of access to support service via my unikey account. As a part-time student working full-time being able to dial into the library databases from home or work, check notices via email and pre-enrol on-line are fantastic developments.
- Library is great. Librarians are very helpful and supportive. Libraries are quite rich and lib. catalogue is very nice.
- The library services are very good, particularly tracking down publications.

⁵ Number of comment received: 2005: 145; 2003: 100; 2002: 68; 2001: 68; 2000: 17

⁶ In 2005, this includes Faculty of Medicine administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

Web communications: online access to services

(205: 8%)

(2003: 13%; 2002: 3%; 2001: 1%)

- The ability to use MyAdmin online is very useful for avoiding queues at the Student Centre.
- Ability to enrol, change subjects, check grades, pay fees online --> saves time, quick, no need to visit campus during break/holidays.
- Being able to do many things online makes life easier and more efficient as a part time student who is working full time as well.
- Online services, as it helps the students and save their time.

Computer access centres: faculty

(2005: 8%)

(new topic in 2005; previously included in computer access centres: university)

- After hours access to Faculty Computer Centre.
- The Public Health computer access is very helpful.
- Faculty computer access and support is excellent - good facilities and great to have someone there to fix any problems that come up quickly.
- the faculty computer room is an excellent resource.

Web communications: intranet/ internet

(205: 7%)

(2003: 23%; 2002: 6%; 2001: 18%)

- Web CT and other internet sources are constructed very well.
- Clear instructions on website of what to do.
- WebCT helpdesk answered to my e-mails after 5 pm and it was very prompt and very helpful
- As I am a part-time student I find the Usynet service the best aspect as I can easily access it off-site.

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

5.2 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements⁷

Customer service: quality (2005: 21%)
(2003: 34%; 2002: 45%; 2001: 25%)

- Staff should be trained and have good communication skills. Experience also need in this service
- When someone has a complaint, maybe consider it, instead of treating them like the "pissy, whingeing" student.
- For the services which I have used I think the first impression of how good the services are will come from the approach of the staff from to the students seeking the services. So improving the good communication skills of the staff is important.
- What they are concerning as how to serve students better instead of just finishing their work.

Administration and organisation: general (2005⁸: 15%)
(2001: 10%)

- I wasn't aware of enrolment dates and processes. I feel like I am always behind the game in finding out what is required. My phone calls are always returned a couple of days later if at all. I am paying \$7,000 a year for this course and I don't feel that the administration support is of an adequate standard. Potentially they are busy but what do our fees cover? Hire more people if necessary. No other business would be run in such an appalling manner.
- Individual student Letter box should be provided in each Faculty department Admin office so that students could pick their mail. rather than sending to their residential addresses. Thanks
- The Departmental student administration for this course is extremely under-staffed and as a consequence unhelpful to my needs as a post graduate part time student!! More staff (qualified in administration services) to help when it is required i.e., enquiries etc.
- Student/Departmental Student Admin. They could make some effort to be helpful as opposed to disdainful.

Library services (2005: 11%)
(2003: 19%; 2002: 13%; 2001: 11%)

- Would like the Burkitt-Ford library to be open more evenings til 8pm. Some evenings I had lectures but the library closed at 5pm, so I had to come back an additional day.
- I sometimes found getting books from my relevant library difficult due to opening hours. It would be great if I could request a book and have it sent to me and would be more than happy to pay for this service.
- For goodness sake, spend some money refurbishing Fisher Library! It looked run down when I was an undergrad in the late 80s. Not a cent has been spent on it since it seems. It really is embarrassing for an institution with international aspirations.
- More articles on professional journals should be provided free of charge

⁷ Number of comment received: 2005: 110; 2003: 89; 2002: 62; 2001: 61; 2000: 10

⁸ In 2005, this includes Faculty of Medicine administration (where specifically mentioned in the comment). These comments were previously counted in Customer Service: Quality

Web communications: intranet/ internet (2005: 10%)
(2003: 3%; 2002: 2%; 2001: 10%)

- The format of WebCT is a bit confusing
- Some web pages were too complicated
- better understanding/design of the MyUni/My Admin sites on the web to be able to find these services. They seem to be located on all different sites on the Usyd website, not easy to find, especially if you don't know exactly the name of the service you're looking for.
- More stuff on the internet at the beginning of each semester. Welcome new students to Uni. Thank you.

Administration and organisation: enrolment (2005: 9%)
(2003: 3%; 2002: 3%; 2001: 7%)

- I had some issues with my enrolment and was not provided with the correct information by either my department administration office or the student centre, this meant that I had to go into the university twice during my working hours to try and sort things out. This would not have been an issue if I had been given accurate information.
- Enrolment process. Still long queues on enrolment day at the student centre. Surely the fee payment process could be streamlined so that there are more people processing accounts or automated or the enrolment dates be staggered to minimise the hour long wait.
- Provide correct information about enrolment i.e.. transparent definitions of subjects for masters both for student and for staff doing enrolment (done by telephone).
- Processing of enrolments for a distance course - solely internet accessible needs to be timely so when you can't physically turn up to get the ball rolling you can start on time.

Customer service: student support: distance education and external students (2005: 7%)

- Acknowledge that students off campus are generally ignored by general administration and make enrolment changes etc difficult and say stupid suggestions such as attend the campus and meet with appropriate parties, even if you live in a different state.
- Distance-learning students have virtually no access to student administration & support services. Perhaps the university could try and figure out ways to make more of these services accessible in a virtual manner, or consider charging less fees to distance students.
- Better communication especially with Distance Education Students. This is a very long standing problem I have previously identified
- 1800 number to phone for those who didn't live in Sydney

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