

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ) ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2003

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

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 Medicine in 2003.

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 2003 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.

SREQ 2003 OR Q 43¹**What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?****Students appreciate the opportunity to work independently****(2003: 23%)**

(2002: 20%)

- Being given the freedom to work independently, yet still being supported by my supervisors when help is needed
- The fact that my projects direction is largely my responsibility this builds independence and confidence
- Independent working ability. This will be helpful especially when I get back to my home country where insufficiency of guidance and technology is common

Generic attributes (e.g. problem solving, analytical skills) are being developed.**(2003: 18%)**

(2002: 20%)

- Improving analytical and problem solving skills. This will hold me in good stead in the future
- Developing my research and analytical skills. These are very useful in my career
- I have learnt how to analyse the complicated problem systematically. In addition, I have learnt how to communicate effectively, professionally and academically.

Students are happy with their supervision**(2003: 17%)**

(2002: 20%)

- I found the relationship with my supervisor to be a particularly beneficial one. I found I had good access to supervision when needed and enough freedom to explore my own ideas. My supervisor was able to provide a relaxed atmosphere for scientific discussion between lab members and I found this to be both stimulating and useful
- The support and guidance of my supervisors. They are available as needed, helpful with problems and direct and guide my research
- Supervision – they have been very supportive, accessible and friendly throughout my PhD

Students feel part of a research community**(2003: 13%)**

(2002: 10%)

- Being in a research/ academic environment. Learning is encouraged and there is the opportunity to interact with people in other research areas to develop a broader outlook on my work
- Research environment at Centenary Institute. Centenary Institute provides a good collaborative research environment where students and researchers can interact easily with each other allowing cooperation
- The best aspects great research community – good feeling of cohesiveness

Students appreciate opportunities for collaboration and networking**(2003: 10%)**

(2002: 7%)

- Collaborative work. Made me to understand and accept various kinds of people and their personalities
- Learning about how research is actually done including collaborating and communicating with other researchers. Collaboration with other researchers is really important and is something I have felt I have learnt a bit about during my degree as my supervisor had encouraged me to contact people rather than doing it for me.
- Forming collaborations with other researchers – this confirms your research is worthwhile and fits into the broader research picture

¹ Number of comments received: 2003 – 315; 2002 – 276

SREQ 2003 OR Q 44²**What aspects are most in need of improvement?****Students are unhappy with funding/ scholarships/ PRSS****(2003: 21%)**

(2002: 22%)

- PRSS – there wasn't enough money to go around even though at the start of the year we were told there was enough to cover everybody
- Time available to focus on PhD balanced with financial support. Because of the lack of financial support for research time, I work part-time, which makes it difficult to give my research the time it deserves
- Funding is always uncertain within this group. This causes some discontentment among all the research staff

Students are unhappy with their supervision**(2003: 15%)**

(2002: 19%)

- Sometimes I feel that one of my supervisors does not have enough time to discuss problems about my project. I know that he/she is supervising other students too which means that his/ her time is spread quite thinly
- Supervisors providing adequate notice of absences from university
- The quality of supervision. Minimum standards or contributions of supervisors need to be explicitly stated. Perhaps the progress report should include more ratings of the supervisors contribution or assistance

Students are dissatisfied with the physical resources provided**(2003: 14%)**

(2002: 20%)

- Support within the department – limited support provided at Concord Hospital. No computer, no designated work space, poor support from other staff members, research is low on the priority of things
- Computer service. Most of the computers used by students in our department are quite old and not enough computers could be used. For the PhD student, it is even more difficult. They could not even find a computer to store their whole thesis
- More computers and office space are needed for postgraduate students. At present about 8 people share a computer for email access

Students who are off campus feel isolated**(2003: 14%)**

(2002: 8%)

- More social activities at the external campuses so that we can interact with other students and still feel that we are part of the university
- Being based at Westmead Hospital means no contact with the Uni at all yet I still pay Union fees but receive no union services. (One union rep came out once in over a year). There are no common rooms for postgraduates, nowhere to eat, no cohesion between the different research groups, very isolated
- Not being located on campus makes it hard to be involved in the department, activities should try and incorporate other students who are not located on campus

Students would appreciate more interaction with other RHD students**(2003: 9%)**

(2002: 11%)

- Getting together informally with other PhD students
- More interaction with other research students
- Communication with other students because I feel isolated and lonely

² Number of comments received: 2003 – 272; 2002 – 225