

FACULTY OF PHARMACY

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 Pharmacy 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.

Students appreciate the independent nature of research (2003: 30%)

(2002: 15%)

- Being able to work independently in a supportive environment as this fosters independent thought but there is also a 'sounding wall'
- That I have some freedom to control my own research and learning
- The self directed learning process and the development of independent ability to solve problems encountered at various stages of research

Generic skills (communication, analytical, problem solving etc) are being developed (2003: 30%)

(2002: 15%)

- The analytical and lateral-thinking skills that I have been acquiring has been one of the best aspects of this research experience. I believe these aspects are important, because it will serve as a useful asset long after my days in academia
- Being able to work independently – it provides opportunities to develop problem solving skills, analytical skills and confidence
- Improving my communication skills, problem solving skills and working independently ability

Students appreciate opportunities to present at / attend conferences (2003: 23%)

(2002: 12%)

- Big conference, you can meet other people who work in similar areas with your research
- As an international student it is great to be able to present your work at conferences where you get feedback and improve your communication skills. As part of my research I have been able to attend and present my work at different conferences this year
- Also enjoyed attending conferences – a great opportunity to learn and also to present my research work for peer review and comments

Students feel part of a research community (2003: 14%)

(2002: 12%)

- The other researchers in my field are generally happy to give advice or assistance
- Stimulating research environment within the Faculty. Being amongst a large number of other postgraduate research students has helped me move forward
- I have the experience of meeting other active researchers (who prove to be helpful and encouraging) when I have to obtain some materials that are not available in our Faculty.

Students are happy with their research / project (2003: 14%)

(2002: 31%)

- Researching something that is unique, finding new aspects to the project and hopefully able to see them evolve into the market place
- The most awesome thing about being a higher degree student is being able to have my own little project to concentrate on for a few years. Of course there are frustrating times, but when there is data, and when the results emerge, it is very exciting!!!
- Developing expertise in an area that has had little input from pharmacy area in the past in Australia. Developing new future models of case that involve pharmacists

¹ Number of comments received: 2003: 37; 2002: 26)

Students are unhappy with funding/ scholarships (2003: 33%)

(2002: 29%)

- A budget of \$1000 per annum is available for support to conferences. Even with some extra support from the PRSS this really limits the number of conferences we can go to.
- As far as resources for my research work, there are limited research grants in the area I am involved in. And, although we have had some success (albeit small) in obtaining grants to support my research these have been far from ideal
- The amount of funds available with the supervisor limits the extent of research which is unfair on the students whose supervisor has just one postgraduate student and hence cannot neatly win a grant every year for four years

Students are unhappy with administration /organisation processes (2003: 13%)

(2002: 4%)

- The streamlining of changing from one department to another. In my opinion when my candidature was changed it took too long
- Administrative processes such as getting paid for teaching or administering grants can be ridiculously complex and time consuming
- Another area in need of improvement is the finance administration office of the university. I don't know if this falls under the jurisdiction of DoGS but we are often required to pay for research related services (e.g. transcribing services) as well as registrations and airfares upfront on our own credit card. My experience this year has been that the turnover for reimbursement is about 6-8 weeks. Whilst this is being processed, we often have to pay interest on these amounts owing to us.

Students are dissatisfied with physical resources provided (2003: 13%)

(2002: 42%)

- Most of the analytical instruments are quite old and lack of maintenance due to the limited budget in this area
- Only recently has one new computer been provided for our research group all located here (off campus). This is inadequate, because we often have to 'fight' to use this new computer which is the only one with a CD Rom and has enough power to deal with the statistical packages we use. I would ask that all students be provided with up to date computer facilities, whether on or off campus
- The facilities within the department are inadequate for my needs and those that are adequate I have had to set up myself with great difficulty and a general lack of support

Students are unhappy with their supervision/ supervisors (2003: 10%)

(2002: 21%)

- Lack of appreciation of practical concerns by supervisors (i.e. lack of support in seeking funding opportunities). Advice has been nebulous and not helpful
- Supervisor needs to show more interest in the work otherwise student feels like it is going nowhere (or going round in circles, possibly making the same mistakes without realising)
- More supervision – I have the two busiest supervisors in the world

Students would like more interaction with fellow PhD students (2003: 10%)

(2002: 4%)

- More collaboration and free exchange of knowledge among students in a research group
- Communication between fellow postgraduate students within the Faculty
- It would also be nice to have more interaction with other research students in a non threatening environment

² Number of comments received: 2003: 30; 2002: 24)