



**The University of Sydney**

Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources

Student experience of Learning and Teaching

Trends and key issues: Undergraduate students 2001-2007

September 2008

## Contents

<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>NOTES</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>7</b>
STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING SURVEYS .....	7
FOCUS OF THE TREND ANALYSIS REPORT .....	7
<b>1 GENERIC SKILLS (KPI 7)</b> .....	<b>8</b>
1.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	8
1.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	8
1.3 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	9
<b>2 GOOD TEACHING (KPI 8)</b> .....	<b>10</b>
2.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	10
2.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	10
2.3 KEY ISSUES FOR DOMESTIC COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007; CEQ 2007) .....	11
<b>3 OVERALL SATISFACTION (KPI 9)</b> .....	<b>13</b>
3.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	13
3.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	13
3.3 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	14
<b>4 LEARNING COMMUNITY</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA SCEQ 2003–2007 .....	15
4.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	15
4.3 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	16
<b>5 CURRICULUM</b> .....	<b>17</b>
5.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	17
5.2 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	18
<b>6 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT</b> .....	<b>20</b>
6.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA SCEQ 2003-2007 .....	20
6.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	20
6.3 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	21
<b>7 APPROPRIATE WORKLOAD</b> .....	<b>22</b>
7.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2003–2007 .....	22
7.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUALITATIVE DATA 2001–2007 .....	22
7.3 KEY ISSUES FOR CURRENT COURSEWORK STUDENTS (SCEQ 2007) .....	22
<b>ATTACHMENT A KEY ISSUES FOR GRADUATES (CEQ 2007)</b> .....	<b>23</b>
AREAS OF BEST PRACTICE .....	23
SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS.....	24

## Glossary

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

SCEQ	Student Course Experience Questionnaire Administered to current students
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates of previous year
Graduates	Students who completed the CEQ for 2007 i.e. graduated in 2006
Current students	Students who were studying at the University during 2007; from all years of the course
Faculty scores Percentage agreement	The percentage of current students/ graduates who either agreed or strongly agreed with relevant survey items in the SCEQ/ CEQ
Qualitative data Comments	Students written observations received in response to open ended questions in the surveys. Relate to aspects of best practice in degree experience and aspects in need of improvement
Percentage of comments received	The number of times an aspect is mentioned within the comments received from respondents is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received

## Notes

### 1 Coverage of report

Due to the low number of international students who provided written observations in their responses to the SCEQ (see note 2), results of the qualitative analysis are provided for the total student cohort. Quantitative data relating to the international student experience is provided where responses number between 5 and 20.

### 2 Analysis of quantitative data (international students)

*Current students (Student Course Experience Questionnaire)*

2003 – 2007 Less than 20 current international students responded to the SCEQ in 2003, 2005 and 2007. Since the minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis of SCEQ data is 20, the analysis of the quantitative data for this cohort should be viewed with caution.

*Graduates (Course Experience Questionnaire)*

Less than 5 international graduates responded to the CEQ in 2004 – 2007. Results are therefore excluded as they are unlikely to be reliable. Number of respondents is taken from the number answering the "Overall satisfaction" item in the CEQ.

### 3 Analysis of the qualitative data (international students)

*Current students (Student Course Experience Questionnaire)*

2001 – 2003 Separate data for international students was not available before 2005. The analysis of the qualitative data for these years includes both domestic and international students' experiences.

2005, 2007 Less than five international students, who responded to the SCEQ, provided written observations on their experiences. Results of the qualitative analysis from these students are therefore excluded from the comparative tables, and included with the domestic students results in the Key issues sections of the report.

*Graduates (Course Experience Questionnaire)*

2006 – 2007 One international graduate in 2006, and none in 2007, provided written observations on their experiences. Data from this graduate is included with the overall total in the comparative tables. (See also note 4)

#### 4 Analysis of the 2007 CEQ qualitative data (graduates)

In the 2007 CEQ, 28 domestic graduates provided written observations in their response. There were no responses from international students. Due to this low number of written observations it is not possible to provide illustrative comments within the main body of the report. The complete list of comments, as received, is at Attachment A. Broad areas of the student experience of learning and teaching mentioned are identified alongside each comment.

#### 5 Percentage of respondents providing written comments in SCEQ

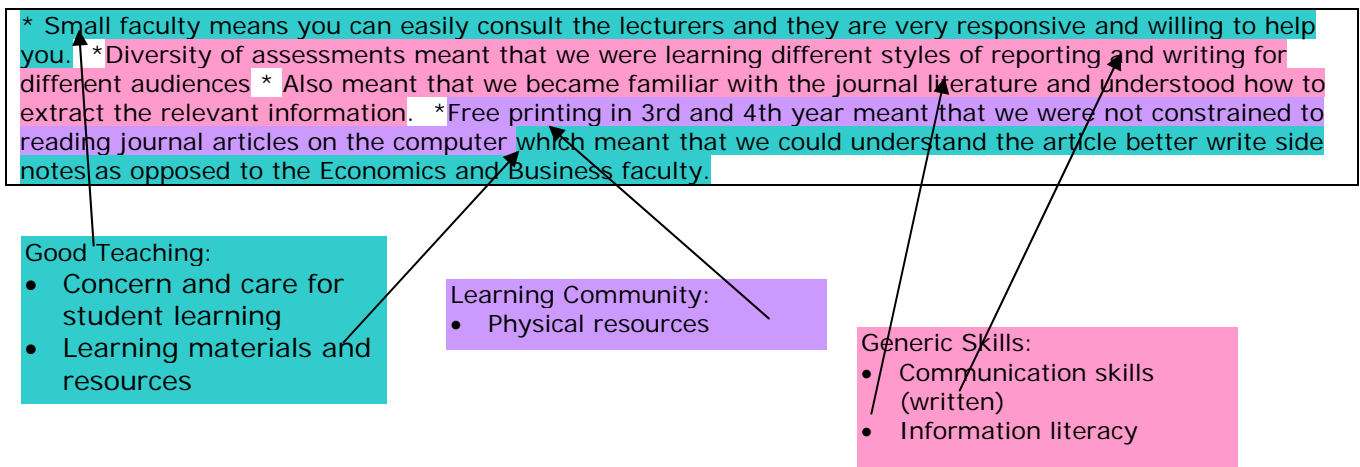
The percentage of students providing written observations in their answers to the SCEQ declined significantly in 2007. In 2005, 81% of respondents supplied written comments in answer to the open questions; in 2007 just over half (53%) of respondents supplied written observations. This reflects the results for all faculties, with an average of 20-25% less respondents answering the open responses compared to previous years (2001 – 2003, 2005).

#### 6 Illustrative sample comments

Comments are recorded as they appear in the original documents. However, minor spelling, grammatical and transcription errors have been corrected. [sic] indicates that the word appears exactly as provided by the student, and that it is not possible to ascertain an exact interpretation of the original meaning.

#### 7 Analysis and counting of comments

Each comment is analysed according to the *Taxonomy for analysing qualitative data from the SCEQ/ CEQ*<sup>1</sup>, which is based on the University KPIs for Learning and Teaching, with those comments including more than one aspect being counted once for each aspect mentioned. The number of times an aspect is mentioned is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received. For example, the following comment is counted as ONE COMMENT RECEIVED; but as it is mentioned in Good Teaching (Concern and Care for Student Learning; and Learning materials and resources); Generic Skills (Communication skills; Information literacy); and Learning Community (Physical resources), the comment is counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories.



<sup>1</sup> Available from Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

## Executive summary

Data about the student degree experience in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources is collected through the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (previous year's graduates) and the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ) (current students).

Analysis of this data provides a comprehensive picture of trends in the student experience, and the performance of the Faculty in relation to Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF) Key Performance Indicators (Generic Skills; Good Teaching; Overall Satisfaction), and other related areas (Learning Community; Curriculum; Assessment; and Workload).

Written observations, from respondents to the surveys, about their experience provide evidence to support the Faculty (percentage agreement) scores, and provide detailed information about key issues in the areas of best practice or areas of concern.

The term "Faculty scores" refers to the proportion of current students/ graduates who either agreed or strongly agreed with the relevant survey items in the SCEQ/ CEQ for 2007.

## Key results

- Faculty scores for **Generic Skills** (KPI 7; Section 1)
  - for current students (SCEQ) have remained steady since 2003, and are currently 64%
  - are below the University average for current students (SCEQ)
  - for graduates (CEQ) are currently at 76%
  - are the second highest in the University for graduates (CEQ)

The development of practical skills and experience, including the opportunities to acquire these through the professional experience program, form the majority of student comments relating to this KPI; however students are aware that they are developing the full range of University Graduate Attributes.

- Faculty scores for **Good Teaching** (KPI 8; Section 2)
  - are 37% for current students (SCEQ),
  - are below the University average for current students (SCEQ)
  - international current students are having a better experience than domestic students (SCEQ)
  - are 56% for graduates (CEQ),
  - are above the University average for graduates (CEQ)

Evidence from the analysis of the qualitative data suggests that whilst students benefit from the support, care and concern for their learning from staff within the Faculty, current students (SCEQ) are largely dissatisfied with teaching practices and learning resources within the Faculty. Since 2001, the trend has been for fewer comments to be received which commend the standard of teaching, than those suggesting improvements. The Faculty has continued its good results in the area of research-enhanced learning and teaching, with 7% of students in both 2005 and 2007 expressing satisfaction with this aspect of their experience.

- Faculty scores for **Overall Satisfaction** (KPI 9; Section 3)
  - are 71% for current students (SCEQ) and 75% for graduates (CEQ)
  - have increased for current students (SCEQ) and decreased for graduates (CEQ)
  - are below the University average for current students (SCEQ)
  - are above the University average for graduates (CEQ)

Whilst current students expressed satisfaction with the uniqueness of the degree, and the relevant knowledge and experience of academic staff; they were concerned about the lack of consultation and communication from Faculty in relation to changes in their degree.

- Faculty scores for **Learning Community** (Section 4)
  - are at 55% for current students (SCEQ)
  - are lower than the University average

Evidence from the qualitative data contradicts this low score in the quantitative data, with substantially more positive than negative comments being received on this topic since 2001. Students appreciate the community feel that being in a small faculty engenders, and the fact that this allows for more interaction with both students and staff.

- Faculty scores for **Curriculum (qualitative data only)** (Section 5)
  - in 2007, 67% of comments from current students (SCEQ) were favourable whilst 48% recommended areas in need of improvement.
  - in 2007, 50% of comments received from graduates were favourable, 52% recommended areas for improvement.

The significant difference between the percentage of positive and negative comments received from current students (SCEQ), indicates a high level of satisfaction with the curriculum provided within the Faculty. Students appreciate the ability to take a variety of subjects across faculties (e.g. Veterinary Science; Economics and Business); and the linking of practical and theory aspects of their units of study, through practical exercises and excursions.

- Faculty scores for **Appropriate Assessment** (Section 6)
  - SCEQ score of 46% is the amongst the lowest in the University

Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that current students (SCEQ) appreciated the assignments that engaged students in active research; and the use of assignment based assessment rather than exams. However, they prefer assignments to exams; are dissatisfied with the marking of group assessments; and would like to be tested on understanding not memorising.

- Faculty scores for **Appropriate Workload** (Section 7)
  - are lower than the University average of 23%
  - place the Faculty in the middle range of faculties

The main focus of comments received on this topic was the high amount of work involved in the degree.

*Rachel Y. Symons  
Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)  
September 2008*

[r.symons@usyd.edu.au](mailto:r.symons@usyd.edu.au)

## Conceptual framework

### Student Evaluation of Teaching Surveys

The University Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ) and the DEEWR/ GCA Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) are designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data about students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning in their degree courses.

In both surveys students are asked to respond to statements using a five point Likert Scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. As part of the questionnaires, students are also asked to provide written comments on the best aspects of their degree experience and those that could be improved.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the CEQ and the SCEQ provide evidence of the success of University and Faculty initiatives to improve the overall student experience in general and the student experience of learning and teaching in particular.

#### *Difference between SCEQ and CEQ*

Both surveys are administered by the Institute for Teaching and Learning. The SCEQ is distributed to a stratified sample of current students (i.e. all years of study, all degrees). The CEQ is distributed to all graduates of the University in the year following graduation.

### Focus of the Trend Analysis Report

Based on the answers to these surveys, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the student experience of learning and teaching in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources between 2001 and 2007. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2007 SCEQ and CEQ qualitative data. Reliable qualitative data for international students did not become available until the 2005 SCEQ.

Information is arranged by Key Performance Indicators (7: Generic Skills; 8: Good Teaching; and 9: Overall Satisfaction) plus additional factors (Learning Community; Curriculum; Assessment; and Workload) which, taken together, comprise the student experience of learning and teaching in the Faculty.

When reading this report, it should be noted that the absence of favourable comments on a particular aspect of learning and teaching does not reflect student dissatisfaction on the relevant topic. Rather, it could be interpreted that the students are happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on providing written observations on areas in need of improvement. Also of note is that students are increasingly providing constructive observations, and often mention more than one aspect of their experiences in these comments.

# 1 Generic Skills (KPI 7)

## Definition

Generic Skills includes:

- Research and inquiry (analytical, problem solving, critical thinking, knowledge expansion etc)
- Information literacy (retrieval and use of information)
- Personal and intellectual autonomy (independent learning; planning own work; intellectually curious etc)
- Ethical, social, professional understanding (including group/ team skills; professional skills and experience)
- Communication (written and oral; communicating with others; communicating understanding)

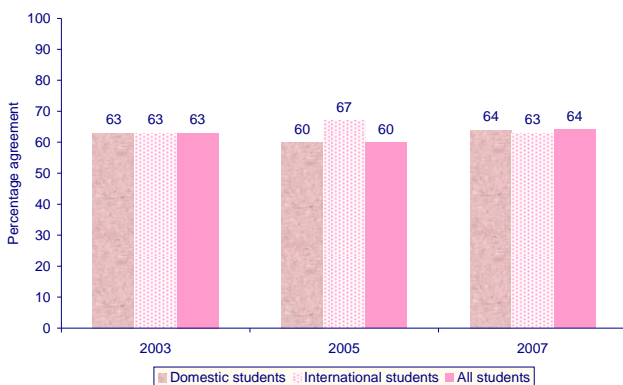
## Trends

Faculty scores for Generic Skills for current students (SCEQ) have remained in the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile since 2000, and currently stand at 64%, which is below the University average of 66%. This score places the Faculty sixth in the bottom third of rankings for this scale. For graduates (CEQ), scores have remained in the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile since 2003; with the current score of 76% being lower than the previous two years. The current score of 76% is the second highest in the University.

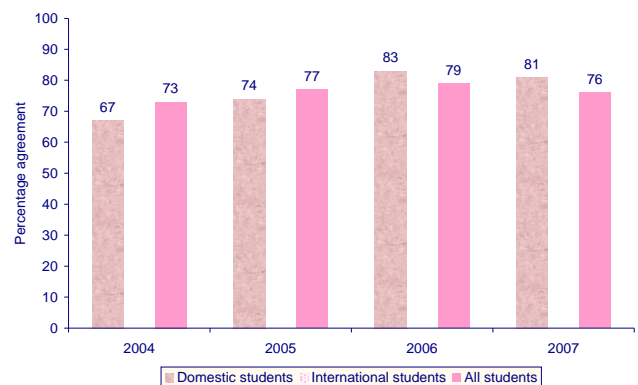
The development of practical skills and experience, including the opportunities to acquire these through the professional experience program, form the majority of student comments relating to this KPI; however students are aware that they are developing the full range of University Graduate Attributes.

### 1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant survey items for Generic Skills in SCEQ and the CEQ.



1.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



1.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

### 1.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement under the heading of Generic Skills. The trends provide an indication of the student satisfaction with the development of University graduate attributes / generic skills between 2001 and 2007.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	33%	26%	37%	25%	17%	19%	18%
Suggested improvements	9%	14%	9%	9%	4%	15%	4%

### 1.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

#### 1.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=151)
Ethical, social, professional understanding	8%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of discipline/ professional skills</li> <li>- Professional experience component of the course</li> </ul>	
Sample comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The access to gain experience into the workforce: professional experience before completing the degree, makes for a broader base of skills</i></li> <li>- <i>The use of Faculty Excursions and Professional Experience make sure that everyone has to gain some experience in different fields. There is plenty of choice and opportunity at the end of the course</i></li> <li>- <i>The professional experience: going beyond theory into practical side</i></li> <li>- <i>The best aspects of my degree are, helping me to do critical thinking. This allows me to think beyond what is shown to me. Allowing me to improve on the effectiveness and speed of doing research. I have learnt some useful research techniques and one the it is that I realise research is not just about internet research</i></li> <li>- <i>Allowing me to develop time management skills. EG practice for me to manage study, work, and leisure well. Practice my time skill to organising things well</i></li> <li>- <i>Improving my essay writing skills, allowing me to use more formal words and I actually started to look through the thesaurus when I was writing my essay</i></li> </ul>	

#### 1.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

4% (i.e. 6/150) undergraduate respondents to the SCEQ suggested improvements to the practical aspects of the course including the development of relevant practical skills; extension of the professional experience program; and the incorporation of problem solving and analytical skills into the professional experience program.

Due to the low number of respondents, and to protect student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

## 2 Good Teaching (KPI 8)

### Definition

Good Teaching includes:

- Good teaching experiences (interesting, teaching methods, discussions encouraged; learning materials and resources, including online resources)
- Motivating teaching (enthusiasm, passion of teachers)
- Concern and care for student learning
- Good explanations received (includes English language proficiency of teachers)
- Feedback on work (timely, constructive)

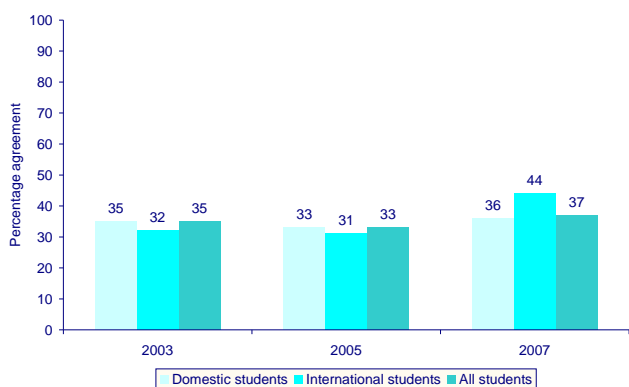
### Trends

For current students (SCEQ) Faculty scores for Good Teaching have remained below the University average (44%) since the commencement of the SCEQ, and currently stand at 37%. This represents an increase of 4% on the 2005 results. Whilst the experiences of domestic and international students were similar in 2003 and 2005, in 2007 international students recorded a better experience than their domestic counterparts. For graduates (CEQ), the current Faculty score of 56% is higher than the University average of 48%.

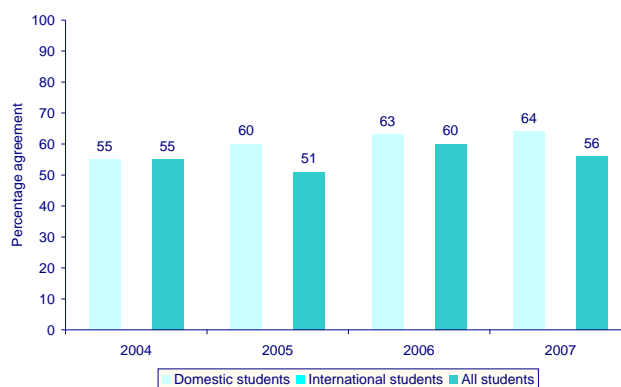
Evidence from the analysis of the qualitative data suggests that whilst students benefit from the support, care and concern for their learning from staff within the Faculty, current students (SCEQ) are largely dissatisfied with teaching practices and learning resources within the Faculty. Since 2001, the trend has been for fewer comments to be received which commend the standard of teaching, than those suggesting improvements. The Faculty has continued its good results in the area of research-enhanced learning and teaching, with 7% of students in both 2005 and 2007 expressing satisfaction with this aspect of their experience.

### 2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant survey item statements for Good Teaching in the SCEQ and the CEQ.



2.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



2.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

### 2.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of Good Teaching between 2001 and 2007, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SCEQ and the CEQ.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	22%	15%	13%	31%	23%	23%	4%
Suggested improvements	36%	27%	36%	40%	41%	23%	6%

## 2.3 Key issues for domestic coursework students (SCEQ 2007; CEQ 2007)

### 2.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=151)
<p>Concern and care for student learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students felt supported in their learning; help and advice readily available</li> <li>- Lecturers understood problems and difficulties of students (academic and personal)</li> </ul>	9%
<p>Research-enhanced learning and teaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students participate in research projects</li> <li>- Students are aware of lecturers' research interests</li> <li>- There is a research component in the curriculum</li> <li>- <i>(mentioned in 7% of comments received in 2005 and 2007 cf. with 2% in previous years)</i></li> </ul>	7%
<p>Sample comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I study Agricultural Economics which is split between the Agriculture and E&amp;B faculties. The Ag. faculty are helpful, approachable and are experienced in the practical side of what they do. They are generally experienced in research AND have relevant industry experience themselves</i></li> <li>- <i>Small classes, able to interact with other students and teachers easily. Course coordinator for this course knows most of us individually, and so provides helpful advices on course decisions like choosing a major etc</i></li> <li>- <i>Because the Agriculture faculty is quite small, there is greater opportunity to get to know lecturers and tutors. This makes it much easier when you need help (either for a subject or the degree overall).</i></li> <li>- <i>Bachelor of Agricultural Economics. I believe the best aspects of the course was assessments that required students to engage in active research. Also, the learning experience gained from the one-year research project was definitely a highlight of the course</i></li> <li>- <i>Individual research projects. Gives a hands on experience into all the theoretical components (from first year up until fourth year) of the degree. It provides a sense of achievement when results are obtained (regardless if they are expected or unexpected), especially knowing if your project could potentially benefit the community as a whole</i></li> <li>- <i>It's good that the subjects and lecturers incorporate recent research to better connect the information students learn to relevant, useful issues of today and the future</i></li> </ul>	

### 2.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=150)
<p>Good teaching experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Teaching methods used are outdated; Lectures were boring</li> <li>- Discussions of issues raised during lectures and tutorials are not encouraged</li> <li>- Learning resources are out of date, and not relevant to curriculum</li> </ul>	17%
<p>Concern and care for student learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Students did not feel supported in their learning;</li> <li>- Help and advice was not readily available</li> </ul>	6%
<p>Good explanations received</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clear explanations were not received from lecturers</li> <li>- Lecturers do not take prior knowledge of students into account</li> <li>- Lecturers lack good communication skills</li> <li>- Lecturers difficult to understand e.g. because of foreign accent</li> </ul>	6%
<p>Feedback on work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Feedback on written work is not provided in a timely manner</li> <li>- No comments provided; only marks/ grades</li> <li>- Difficult to know how student progressing due to lack of constructive feedback</li> </ul>	6%

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

(n=150)

Sample comments

- *Greater emphasis should be placed on student feedback for assessments. Currently, most subjects in this degree do not give adequate feedback (some don't give any feedback). This is quite absurd considering the amount of work actually put into completing the assessment.*
- *Increased individual feedback about assessments, some assessments you do not know where you went wrong and are unable to correct your learning, you just get a grade and that is it. You may still make the same mistake in another assessment because you don't even know that you are wrong. Even on assessments you get handed back there are no explanations about what you did wrong*
- *this semester have had a lecture who speaks very poor English and when he asks a question in class no one understands the question and hence don't know the answer. he then looks to the class and says 'oh well, next slide' and doesn't explain the answer. it is very frustrating*
- *Feedback on assessments: to work out individually where to improve. Quality of lecturers, understanding their spoken English*
- *in the agriculture department there are some lectures' such as ?? ?? who I can't really understand what he is saying, as well as not being approachable, not organising tutorial work and having negative marking exams where 87% of the students fail. this to me isn't acceptable, and I have become less enthusiastic about my studies at universities*
- *The lecturers are also very monotonous and boring, it sounds like they are not interested in their subject which is portrayed in their voices. This makes it very hard to concentrate and be interested in what they have to say*

### 3 Overall Satisfaction (KPI 9)

#### Definition

This single item asks graduates about their overall level of satisfaction with their degree course. Aspects include:

- Reputation of the University/ Faculty/ degree (including reputation in the professional arena)
- Value for money (cost of course; entry standard of students; level of course content)
- Qualifications (teaching/ subject), knowledge and relevant experience of academic staff

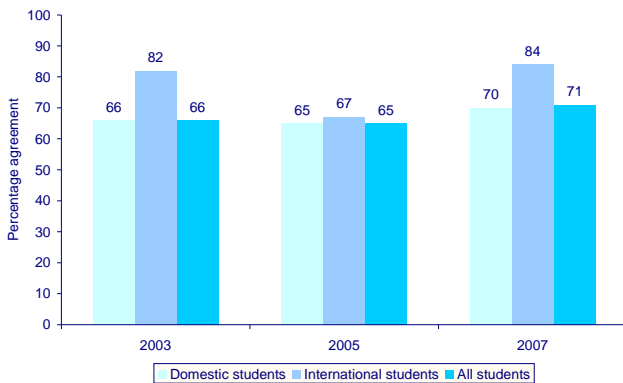
#### Trends

Overall Satisfaction with the degree course currently rates 71% for current students (SCEQ) and 75% for graduates (CEQ). This represents an increase of 6% on previous years for current students and a decrease of 10% for graduates. The University average for current students is 73% and for graduates is 71%.

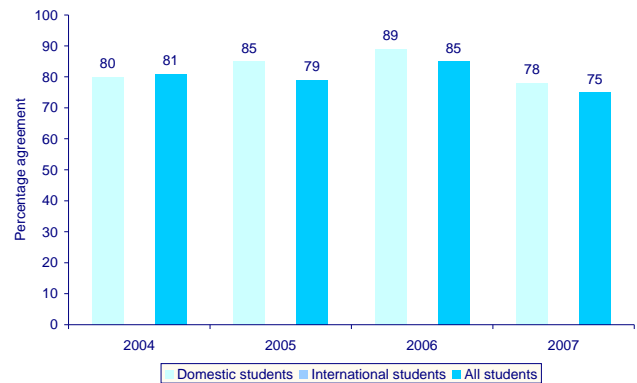
Whilst current students expressed satisfaction with the uniqueness of the degree, and the relevant knowledge and experience of academic staff; they were concerned about the lack of consultation and communication from Faculty in relation to changes in their degree.

#### 3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with the survey statement ‘Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course’ in the SCEQ and the CEQ.



3.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



3.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

#### 3.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in students’ overall satisfaction between 2001 and 2007.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	9%	16%	7%	4%	3%	10%	7%
Suggested improvements	9%	11%	11%	8%	8%	15%	7%

### 3.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

#### 3.3.1 Areas of best practice

##### Current students (SCEQ 2007)

3% of current undergraduate students (i.e. 4/150 comments received) mentioned that they were satisfied with the relevant experience and knowledge of academic staff, and considered that their degree was unique and interesting.

Due to the low number of comments, and to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

#### 3.3.2 Suggested improvements

##### Current students (SCEQ 2007)

7% of undergraduate students (i.e. 10/150 comments received) expressed dissatisfaction with their overall experience; with the knowledge; experience and professionalism of academic staff; with the quality of the degree; and with the lack of consultation and communication from Faculty in relation to changes in their degree.

##### Sample comments

- *On another note, Lecturers ought to present themselves in a professional manner so they at least look the part. One dude I have rocks up 10 mins late, coffee in hand, shirt untucked, unshaven, rips his work off Wikipedia, and thinks he's killing it. And he's a Dr. If he is as good as he makes out to be with all those letters after his name he should be working in the real world for himself. Then we'll see how good he thinks he is. This is Australia's benchmark uni..... it should act accordingly and lecturers should set the standard*
- *The way the faculty deals with issues. e.g. when they tried to abolish the animal component of the degree they did not consult or tell the students and were extremely reluctant to cooperate and at least talk to the students involved. i.e. they changed the degree half way through and did not tell the students who had signed up for the animal section*
- *Also the level of sciences completed are too hard considering a UAI of 72 is needed to get into ag science and we are expected to be as competent as animal and vet bioscience students who require over UAI of 90 to get into there course and this occurs in over half our subjects. Tis course needs to change to keep its appeal otherwise there will be no students in the future*
- *Some tutors are also useless and it is hard to understand how they could be completing post graduate study when the students they are tutoring are far more capable*
- *this faculty should be one of the best in the world yet the departments in them don't work together and instead there is rivalry between them and they hardly communicate with each other. it is really weird if you ask me*
- *understaffed!*

## 4 Learning Community

### Definition

Learning Community includes the following:

- Learning environment (exploration of academic interests with staff and students (tutorials, laboratory work; belonging to a community, social experiences; cultural diversity; equity issues)
- Location/ isolation (affiliated campuses, hospitals, institutes)
- Induction and orientation
- Responsiveness to student feedback
- Learning resources (physical facilities; library)

### Trends

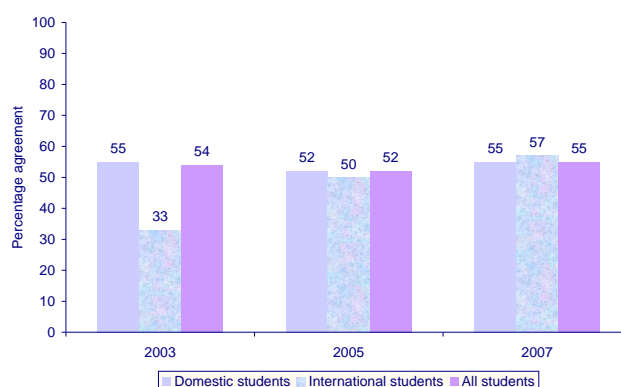
The Faculty score for Learning Community is currently 55%, which is below the University average of 58%. This places the Faculty in the middle range of faculties for this score. Domestic and international students have similar experiences.

Evidence from the qualitative data contradicts this low score in the quantitative data, with substantially more positive than negative comments being received on this topic since 2001. Students appreciate the community feel that being in a small faculty engenders, and the fact that this allows for more interaction with both students and staff in terms of academic discussions.

#### 4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data SCEQ 2003–2007

The following table show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on Learning Community in the Student Course Experience Questionnaire.

Note: The Learning Community Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



4.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

#### 4.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of the Learning Community between 2001 and 2007.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	45%	34%	34%	38%	40%	46%	29%
Suggested improvements	18%	17%	9%	11%	24%	21%	26%

### 4.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

#### 4.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=151)
------------------------------	---------

##### Learning environment

- Felt that they belonged to a community (degree/ Faculty/ profession) 36%
- Academic interests were being explored with staff and students e.g. in tutorials and during group work
- Were happy with class sizes

##### Sample comments

- *Being part of a small faculty has really helped me learn and be involved. My lecturers and tutors always have time for me and know my name, so I've never felt like a 'number'.*
- *small amount of students doing the course, being integrated into the economics faculty and taking subjects of this nature brings up the quality of the degree.*
- *The best aspects of my course is the close relationship between all subjects. The fact that most of my subjects are within the same faculty improve the communication between the teaching staff and improve the community feel of the University*
- *it gives me an edge over normal economics students, because I get the feeling that the economics and business faculty is very competitive and has a lot of bright students, by studying an AGEC degree I have an edge over them. a lot of skills that aren't taught in that faculty in also taught in Ag economics. the small sizes in the course allows for more direct teaching and access to staff, which is very helpful*
- *Small classes allow for more personal interaction with lecturers. They get to know us better and can help us to learn more effectively because of this closer relationship*
- *interactive learning -helps me to better understand ideas raised in lectures, workshops and tutorials can see the relevance of my degree and subjects which I am studying*

#### 4.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=150)
------------------------------	---------

##### Learning environment

- Did not feel that they belonged to a community (degree/ Faculty/ profession) 9%
- Academic interests were not being explored with staff and students e.g. in tutorials and during group work
- Were unhappy with class sizes

##### Physical resources

- Library services inadequate 9%
- Physical facilities poor e.g. buildings; computers; printing facilities

##### Sample comments

- *Socially, it can sometimes feel as if there isn't a set degree with students involved, especially in first semester of the degree. It's unavoidable given the number of students enrolled in the degree and the varied subjects chosen within the degree, but it could sometimes feel as if you were the only person in uni doing the degree.*
- *the lecturers- letting the students have their say and put forward their views and not get shot down by the person standing at the front of the room- the best way to learn is to have a go and have interaction between the students in the class however students are greatly disheartened when the lecturer puts them down in front of the rest of the students for having a go- does not really encourage others to 'have a go' at answering questions when asked if the response is ALWAYS a negative one!!!*
- *possibly create a university survival mentoring scheme where first year students learn to utilise the library, how to be a part of the student body, how the counselling service helps with issues (e.g. stress, exam anxiety) find out how to use excel, genstat, end note and other useful computer programs that I am still discovering some parts of (as a third year student).*
- *Improved online facilities would be useful and more available library resources on plant-microbe interactions especially in the fields of plant pathology and mycorrhizae would aid future students.*
- *The faculty could be cleaned a bit, as it is often dusty =]*
- *The facilities in which practical classes are held. Many of the labs such as those in the Ross St Building are grossly inadequate and strongly let the standards of the University down. The labs are old and look drab, and the equipment to student ratio is inadequate i.e. there are not enough machines like the AAS to go around; this results in practicals being unnecessarily long*

## 5 Curriculum

### Definition

Student perceptions of the Curriculum used in their degree course include:

- Content and structure of degree(s) (relationship between Units of Study; content of Units of Study; relevance to work/ career/ industry)
- Online mode of delivery (WebCT)
- Practical components of the degree<sup>2</sup>
- Flexibility of degree, including ability to take a range of Units of Study
- Availability/ cancellation of advertised courses

### Trends

In 2007 67% of comments received from current students (SCEQ) and 50% from graduates (CEQ) commented favourably on various aspects of the Curriculum; whilst 48% of comments received in the SCEQ and 52% in the CEQ suggested improvements in this area of their experience.

The significant difference between the percentage of positive and negative comments received, indicates a high level of satisfaction with the curriculum provided within the Faculty. Students appreciate the ability to take a variety of subjects across faculties (e.g. Veterinary Science; Economics and Business); and the linking of practical and theory aspects of their units of study, through practical exercises and excursions.

Note: Specific items on Curriculum are not included in either the SCEQ or CEQ. Therefore no comparative quantitative data is available for this aspect of the student experience. Due to the high proportion of student comments on the delivery, content, structure and relevance of the curriculum this important aspect of the student experience has been included as a separate item in reports since 2002.

### 5.1 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of Curriculum between 2001 and 2007.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	35%	36%	29%	53%	67%	52%	50%
Suggested improvements	33%	37%	28%	48%	48%	26%	52%

<sup>2</sup> NB: development of practical skills is analysed in Generic Skills: Professional skills and experience

## 5.2 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

### 5.2.2 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=151)
<b>Content and structure</b>	
- Content and structure of whole degree program/ individual units of study	32%
- Subjects appear to be linked together	
- Subject content is relevant to work/ career and industry requirements	
<b>Flexibility, diversity, variety</b>	
- Appreciate diversity in subject choice	7%
- Course structure is flexible	
<b>Practical components of curriculum</b>	
- Satisfaction with practical components of curriculum	18%
- Appreciated mix of theory and practical	
<b>Sample comments</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>I like that the information we learn in the subjects is well integrated. The information we learn from one course is relevant to the others, so it doesn't feel like they're random subjects that are stand alone with obsolete information that won't be used in later life. It's good that the subjects and lecturers incorporate recent research to better connect the information students learn to relevant, useful issues of today and the future</i></li> <li>- <i>Learning more general knowledge of how economies work etc, instead of just learning theories and mathematical equations. A more general understanding of topics such as economics makes it much more interesting and makes you want to learn more because you can relate to issues that you see on the news etc. Instead if you only learn theories and maths then you don't quite have the overall knowledge and understanding of how these things work. If you had this knowledge first, perhaps the maths etc would make more sense afterwards.</i></li> <li>- <i>The diversity in subject options once in 3rd and 4th year. It covers a broad range of areas, from economics, animal science, plant science, agronomy and soil science etc. The more option in specialising the better.</i></li> <li>- <i>Best aspect is the number excursions/field trips that this degree provides. These excursions give me a better understand of what is currently going on in Australia and gives practical experience to the content taught by lecturers. Plus they are extremely enjoyable</i></li> <li>- <i>My BLWSc degree incorporates excellent practical learning. We have attended many field trips and have attained a broad perspective of the many different facets and operations of agriculture and natural resources. Theory and prac work, along with my thesis this year has truly helped my learning</i></li> <li>- <i>the practical applied sides of Agricultural Economics which relate to real issues in Australian industries, and that will have relevance to a large portion of the students in the next few years of their careers</i></li> </ul>	

### 5.2.3 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	(n=150)
<b>Content and structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unhappy with content and structure of whole degree program/ individual units of study</li> <li>- Subject content is not relevant to work/ career and industry requirements</li> </ul>	31%
<b>Online delivery of content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unhappy with aspects of WebCT</li> <li>- Online components not utilised</li> </ul>	7%
<b>Sample comments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Have a more focused program in first years where students are made aware of how the choices of subjects can affect the types of careers you can expect to come out with after you have graduated. As I feel disadvantaged that we were told to pick any elective just to make up for the credit points and later realising that I should've picked another subject instead</i></li> <li>- <i>I think the structure and what is expected in this degree are extremely hazy. It is hard to know what to expect from each individual agriculture subject and what part of the study will be most emphasised. The structure of the degree needs to be more organised so that students are able to gauge how they are going and what subjects need to be undertaken. In comparison to other faculties I find Agriculture disorganised and scattered in terms of contact points and general overview of what is expected in each subject (please keep this confidential)</i></li> <li>- <i>More agricultural based subjects in first year to allow students to feel as they are studying agriculture not a straight science course especially for the students who aren't so keen on science but more on agriculture production, the course should not have so many hours on face to face contact</i></li> <li>- <i>There are too many core subjects that are irrelevant to a lot of people completing the course. 20 core subjects of which at least 15 are science based subjects is ridiculous when not everyone doing the course is going to research this certain area. I believe that electives have to be offered after 1st year in order to keep students involved in this course. Two years of no choice is not appealing at all to students.</i></li> <li>- <i>I study half my units with the Agriculture faculty and the other half with the Economics faculty. While the Economics blackboard facility is great the WebCT that Agriculture use is terrible. Why the University cannot have one online facility that caters for all faculties is beyond me.</i></li> <li>- <i>There is a strong emphasis in the BA. Science in Agriculture to create researchers rather than more practical jobs such as agronomists or farm managers. While I realise that a good proportion of graduates will go into research I believe more of the course should be composed of electives rather than core subjects of interest to only those going into research. I'm especially resentful that the food chemistry has become a core subject for third year students, replacing those subjects more relevant to my chosen career course</i></li> </ul>	

## 6 Appropriate Assessment

### Definition

Appropriate Assessment includes:

- extent to which assessment measures higher order thinking and understanding;
- types of assessment (incl. group work as assessment practice);
- marking of assessments (weighting; marks; by staff) (*explanation of marking criteria* is included in Clear Goals and Standards).

### Trends

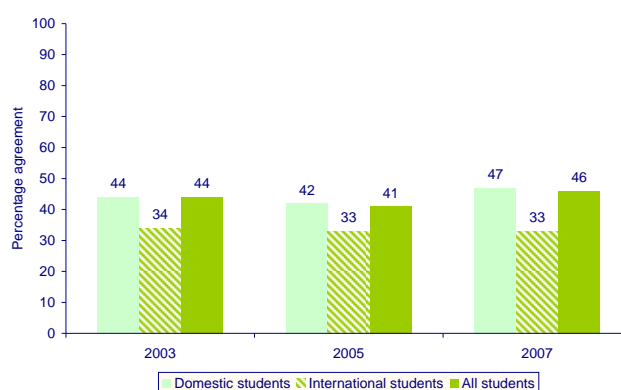
The percentage agreement scores for Appropriate Assessment (46%) in the 2007 SCEQ is amongst the lowest in the University, where the average is 55%. The Faculty has been consistently below the University average for this topic since the SCEQ commenced in 1999.

Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that current students (SCEQ) appreciated the assignments that engaged students in active research; and the use of assignment based assessment rather than exams. However, they prefer assignments to exams; are dissatisfied with the marking of group assessments; and would like to be tested on understanding not memorising.

#### 6.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data SCEQ 2003-2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on appropriate assessment in the SCEQ.

NB: The Appropriate Assessment Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



6.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

#### 6.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of Appropriate Assessment between 2001 and 2007.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	2%	1%	2%	3%	1%	6%	14%
Suggested improvements	6%	5%	2%	14%	7%	4%	7%

## 6.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

### 6.3.1 Areas of best practice

#### Current students (SCEQ 2007)

1% of students (i.e. 2/151 comments received) who responded to the SCEQ appreciated the assignments that engaged students in active research; and the use of assignment based assessment rather than exams.

Due to the low number of comments, and to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

### 6.3.2 Suggested improvements

#### Current students (SCEQ 2007)

7% of students (i.e. 11/150 comments received) who responded to the SCEQ expressed dissatisfaction with the choice, aptness, design and marking of group assessments.

#### Sample comments

- *Also it is frustrating that because it is a group assignment some people will get marks that aren't deserved for their lack of effort. I think that there should be tighter control over this where perhaps people who do not participate enough should perhaps be warned of being withdrawn from it and given an alternative assessment???*
- *More practical activities and not weekly assessments for EVERY subject*
- *There is too much weighting on exams. Problem because of the pressure it puts me under. Don't see how exams help in the future. Not enough hand-in assessment*
- *To much emphasis is placed on exam assessment. I understand that this is easier for staff but the amount concepts taught cannot be fully assessed through exams and in some cases essays and assignments would be more appropriate.*
- *A few of the lecturers. The lecturer for Agriculture has given no direction or substance to the degree. Examined things he did not teach, so about 80% failed*
- *the practicals could have less content in them and exams that are not just based on how well you memorise the content*

## 7 Appropriate Workload

### Definition

Appropriate Workload includes:

- Reasonable workload
- Even distribution of assignment deadlines
- Pressure of course; not having enough time to understand the topic
- Inability to comprehend subject matter due to sheer volume of work

### Trends

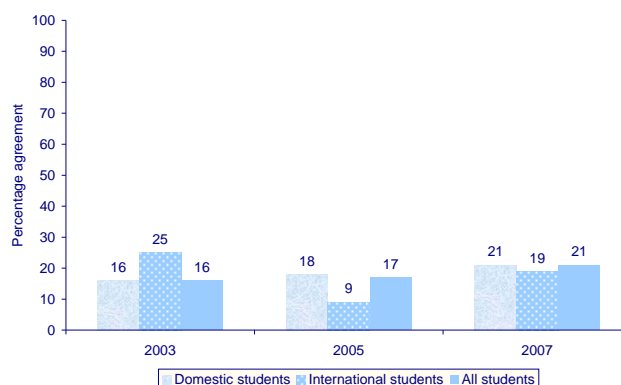
The percentage agreement scores for Appropriate Workload (21%) in the 2007 SCEQ is marginally lower than the University average of 23%, and places it in the middle range of faculties.

The main focus of comments received on this topic was the high amount of work involved in the degree.

#### 7.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2003–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on Appropriate Workload in the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ).

NB: The Appropriate Workload Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



6.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

#### 7.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table provides an indication of trends in the student experience of Appropriate Workload between 2001 and 2007, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SCEQ and the CEQ.

	SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Suggested improvements	8%	9%	14%	9%	3%	2%	4%

#### 7.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

Relatively few undergraduate students comments on workload issues. The main concern raised was the amount of work required. The similarity of comments provided on this topic negates the purpose of providing sample comments to illustrate student concerns.

## Attachment A Key issues for graduates (CEQ 2007)

The following comments were received from graduates in response to the 2007 CEQ. The broad area(s) by which each comment has been analysed is indicated in the second column.

### Areas of best practice

<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>AREAS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING</b>
The close-knit staff and students (e.g. Department of Economics).	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Assessments which involved field/practical work, concepts from lectures and team work.	ASSESSMENT
Development of problem solving skills.	GENERIC SKILLS
Excellent staff/student relationships. Easy to get along with and easy to approach.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Field Trips; XXX was an amazing teacher in final years; thesis / research project convinced me to want to study further.	CURRICULUM GOOD TEACHING OVERALL SATISFACTION
Field work, team work and the applied nature of the course.	CURRICULUM
Field work; able to communicate directly to lecturers because of small classes.	CURRICULUM LEARNING COMMUNITY
Final project.	ASSESSMENT
Flexibility in choosing subjects.	CURRICULUM
Flexibility of subject choice across different faculties.	CURRICULUM
Having the opportunity to study at Camden farms and specialise in animal production in my fourth year.	CURRICULUM
Honours project and major assignments brought skills and content together into one package that if done well enough, are a very useful reference for future.	ASSESSMENT GENERIC SKILLS
I enjoyed the field trips and practice classes.	CURRICULUM
Learning to analyse problems.	CURRICULUM
Learning to think. Considering business strategies. Intuitive and contemporary thought.	GENERIC SKILLS CURRICULUM
Meeting new people. Contacts.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Peers. Social networks within faculty.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Practical and Scientific understanding of land and water issues, management and the disciplines that fall with it. Most of the course was taught within the content of the Australian environment.	CURRICULUM
Practical component made theoretical learning easier and gave me new skills.	CURRICULUM
Practical work, hand outs.	CURRICULUM
Professional experience.	GENERIC SKILLS
Small Class sizes, approachable lecturers.	LEARNING COMMUNITY

<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>AREAS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING</b>
Small tutorial group - participation in discussion/addressing problems as a group.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
The field trips and group work meant I made great friends and helped me to work in a group.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
The group projects	ASSESSMENT
The practical component.	CURRICULUM
The staff were great, good balance between practical and theory work.	CURRICULUM
Wonderful supervisors - xxxxx xxxxxxxx was a pleasure to work with	OVERALL SATISFACTION
 Suggested improvements	
<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>AREAS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING</b>
Clearer structure on Hydrology and Hydrogeology, so that they teach in line with each other.	CURRICULUM
Compulsory 3rd year Biometry	CURRICULUM
Consideration to students who live out of the area and travel each day.	GOOD TEACHING
Course subjects, student contact.	CURRICULUM
First and second year no effort was made regarding feedback or help on difficulties we may be having with our studies; it was truly terrible!	GOOD TEACHING LEARNING COMMUNITY
Generally okay.	<i>POSITIVE COMMENT: OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Lecture theatres and commuting time to Camden.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Lecturer-student relationship. Practical aspects.	CURRICULUM
Less focus on theory and more focus on the practical side of undertaking environmental investigations.	CURRICULUM
More specialised subjects - power, central, networks.	CURRICULUM
More tutorials and less lectures. Student need more personal attention.	LEARNING COMMUNITY GOOD TEACHING
Need For Mathematics as a core subject, improvement to 4th year curriculum.	CURRICULUM
Need more industry (agriculture focus) in first two years.	CURRICULUM
Possibly more practical skills IE budgeting. P and L spreadsheets. More contemporary issues of guest speakers with industry knowledge.	GENERIC SKILLS
Professional experience- poorly run by faculty. Need to improve database to make it easier to identify and search relevant placements.	FACULTY/ DEPT ADMINISTRATION
Relevance to modern day Agriculture. Affinity of lecturers to Agriculture.	CURRICULUM
Staff (lecturers) complacent, uninteresting. Out of date course material (finished course work in 2000).	GOOD TEACHING

COMMENT	AREAS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
Structure of compulsory course work. Also the fact it was during practical work.	CURRICULUM
Student facilities at Camden. IE. computers, Internet and printing facilities. Main campus has an advantage after Camden campus.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
Subject currency and lecturer competency way too variable. Group work needs to find a better way of ensuring reasonably equitable contribution. Too much leniency given for poor marks. This erodes quality of whole degree University.	ASSESSMENT CURRICULUM OVERALL SATISFACTION
Teaching style not engaging.	GOOD TEACHING
The laboratory facilities, especially in the ?? building.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
The syllabus needs to be updated.	CURRICULUM
The workload was too heavy.	WORKLOAD
To not include subjects involved with agronomy, maybe more statistics to ensure that you have enough knowledge for your thesis.	CURRICULUM
Unnecessary subjects 'fill ins'. 2nd year Botany consisted of drawing weeds. Also strong emphasis on statistics when in industry, scientists are required to work alongside engineers and should therefore have some basic engineering knowledge e.g. hydraulics.	CURRICULUM
Variety in land and water major projects each year.	ASSESSMENT