



The University of Sydney

Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning

The Research Training Experience
(Research Higher Degree Students)

Student Research Experience Questionnaire 2002 – 2008
*Including the focus of written observations received from
respondents to the 2008 survey*

June 2009

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Executive summary

Data on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences are gathered each year using the Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees.

Analysis of this data provides a comprehensive picture of trends in the student experience, and the performance of the Faculty in relation to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for Research: Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree; and other related areas: Infrastructure; Research Climate; and Generic Skills.

Written observations, from respondents to the survey, about their experiences provide evidence to support the Faculty SREQ quantitative data results (percentage agreement scores), and provide detailed information about key issues in the areas of best practice and suggested improvements, during their research training experience.

The analysis of qualitative data reported in this document is based on written observations received from **all** respondents to the SREQ. Faculties are advised that if they are interested, it is possible to supply copies of the written observations in the following groupings¹:

- by subject matter: general (Quality of Supervision) to specific (Supervisor(s))
- by degree
- by code

Key results for 2008

The following results are an indication of those areas of the student experience that were of significance to research higher degree students during 2008. The faculty score results reflect the experiences of respondents in relation to specific items in the survey; the qualitative data reflects the analysis of written observations provided by respondents in answer to open ended questions on the best areas of their experience and those that were considered to be in need of improvement.

Quality of Supervision (Section 1, pp 10 – 12)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale continue to rise steadily, and at 79% are the highest since 2002. International students continue to experience better outcomes in this area of their degree experience than their domestic counterparts. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 53% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their degree experience. This is the highest percentage since analysis of the qualitative data commenced. The previous highest was 44% in 2006.
- The majority of these comments (42% of comments received) related to supervision: supervisor(s) (encouragement, knowledge of topic etc); feedback from supervisors; and availability of supervisors for meetings.
- The freedom to explore research interests was appreciated by 9% of respondents.
- Sample comments: *"My supervisor and associate are a brilliant combination that make research a pleasure - a good mix of supportiveness, discipline, direction and free reign. I know where I want my ideas to be at this stage in the game, and it is a matter of bringing them to fruition"*

Suggested improvements

- 17% of respondents to the SREQ suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 8% were unhappy with their supervisor(s)
- Sample comment: *"I find my current supervisor to be arrogant and dismissive. As a consequence I am considering a change of supervisor"*

¹ Please contact Rachel Symons (r.symons@usyd.edu.au or 9351 6560) to discuss your requirements.

Quality of Infrastructure (*Section 2, pp 13 – 15*)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have decreased steadily since 2003. The current score of 56% is identical to the 2002 results. In 2008, international students recorded better outcomes for this scale than their domestic counterparts. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 28% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority (26% of comments received) valued the services of the Architecture Library.
- Sample comment: *"Accessing to the information I want via the website of University Library is the best of my research experience, because it helps me to do the best literature review"*

Suggested improvements

- 65% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; funding for conferences; and parking fees (29%)
 - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources (21%)
 - Computer, technical and laboratory support (8%)
- Sample comment: *"Student facilities, technical support, financial support, meeting space, marketing"*

Research Climate (*Section 3, pp 16 – 18*)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Research Climate Scale have declined steadily since 2006 (58%), and currently sit at 51%. In the past two years, domestic and international students have recorded similar outcomes. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 55% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 26% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 13% of respondents
- 11% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students
- Sample comment: *"Meeting with my fellow research students. They are very supportive and helpful. Do not feel so isolated"*

Suggested improvements

- 35% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience. This is the lowest percentage of comments suggesting improvements since 2004. In 2007, 55% of comments received expressed dissatisfaction with the research climate of the Faculty.
- 13% thought that the Faculty could provide more opportunities for interacting with their fellow students
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 15% of comments received.
- Sample comment: *"A better atmosphere for students to discuss research is needed. Research can be quite isolated without any information about what other students are doing. I am in the Architecture Faculty but don't receive much support or discussion from fellows or lecturers"*

Generic Skills (Section 4, pp 19 – 21)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale have increased steadily over the past six years, and currently sit at 76%. This represents an increase of 8% on the 2003/2004 results, and 22% on the 2002 result. International students have recorded better outcomes than their domestic counterparts since 2006. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 23% of respondents considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 8% of respondents considered that knowledge of their subject area had been expanded
- The remaining comments were distributed evenly between: problem solving, critical thinking and oral and written communication; research skills; working independently; and technical skills.
- Sample comment: *"How to conduct a research systematically by finding research gaps in the subject area, developing some research questions and trying to get answers of those"*

Suggested improvements

- 10% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in English language proficiency for international students.
- Sample comment: *"Personally, as I am not a native English speaker, improving English is one of the priorities for successful completion of the degree because I am facing situations where I need to explain about my ideas, the research topic and progress etc"*

Overall Satisfaction (Section 5, pp 22 – 23)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item have increased substantially since 2005, and currently sit at 86%. This represents an increase of 18% on the 2005 score of 68%. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. International students continue to record better outcomes than their domestic counterparts.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- 11% of comments focussed on satisfaction with the research – its topic, relevance, and contribution to the field.
- Sample comment: *"sense of achievement and worthiness of research progress"*

Suggested improvements

- 8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience
- Sample comment: *"There is no coursework, as there is elsewhere, and I feel that PhD coursework is valuable in teaching necessary skills and basic knowledge in the field which, with the program we have here, we have to learn ourselves"*

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Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)
June 2009

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Glossary

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

SREQ	Student Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to postgraduate research students annually, during second semester
PREQ	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates in the year after completion of studies
Supervision Scale Infrastructure Scale Climate Scale Generic Skills Scale	The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon the items included in the nationally administered Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). These items have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervision• Climate• Infrastructure• Generic Skills Within the report, this naming convention is used to identify information relating to the analysis of the quantitative data (survey items)
Faculty Scores Percentage agreement	SREQ item responses are combined and reported in terms of the proportions of students who agreed or disagreed that their research higher degree experience was positive in the areas of: Supervision; Generic Skills; Infrastructure; Climate; and Overall Satisfaction
Qualitative data Focus of written observations	Students' written observations received in response to open ended questions in the SREQ: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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
Percentage of comments received	The number of times an aspect is mentioned within written observations of respondents received from respondents is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received from respondents to the SREQ in any particular year.

Conceptual framework

Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ)

In 2002 the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for The University community on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences. This data is gathered each year using a survey specifically developed for this task, the "Student Research Experience Questionnaire" (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. The SREQ is based on a national survey of research higher degree students, the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). Some of the information gathered by the SREQ survey also contributes to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for research. These KPIs are the quality of Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree.

The survey gathers data on students' perceptions of the quality and frequency of supervision, intellectual and social climate, infrastructure, approaches to research, and generic skills development in their research higher degree, as well as their perceptions of the administration and student support services. The ITL analyses this data and provides a range of reports to staff and students of the university through this web site.

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 comment on the following questions:

- 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

Quantitative and qualitative data from the SREQ provide evidence of the success of University and Faculty initiatives to improve the overall student experience in general and the student experience of research training in particular.

Focus of the Report

Based on the answers to the SREQ, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the postgraduate research student experience in the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning between 2002 and 2008. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2008 SREQ qualitative data.

Information is arranged by the SREQ Factor Scales (Supervision; Infrastructure; Climate; Generic Skills; and Overall Satisfaction, which, taken together, comprise the student experience of research training in the Faculty.

Focus of written observations from respondents

By examining the foci of the students' comments in the 2008 SREQ, this report seeks to highlight areas that were of best practice in the students' experience, together with those that have been suggested as areas of improvement.

The views of the research higher degree students, on their overall experience at the University, as received through the open response comments, are a valuable insight into what is important to them; what they consider to be areas of best practice; and what they consider are in need improvement.

It is important to remember, when looking at the results of the analysis of this data, 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, it could be interpreted that the students were happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting about areas in need of improvement.

Notes

1 Quantitative data analysis

Minimum sample size for reporting

The minimum recommended sample size for SREQ reporting is 20 valid responses. This is the same convention applied to reporting the CEQ and SCEQ. In aggregated degrees where less than 20 valid responses have been received a report is still provided however a warning message notes that the results should be interpreted with caution. Reports are not provided for samples with fewer than 5 respondents. This is necessary to ensure anonymity of respondents².

Number of respondents to the SREQ 2002 – 2008³

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	32	49	40	44	43	34	46
International students		4	8	6	8	13	19
Overall	32	53	48	50	51	47	65

2 Qualitative data analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data is based on responses to the open questions received from respondents to the SREQ.

Number of respondents who answered the open questions SREQ 2002 - 2008

<u>Areas of best practice</u>	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				35	30	30	38
International				3	13	12	15
Total	30	44	37	38	43	42	53

<u>Suggested improvements</u>	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				32	28	28	35
International				3	13	10	13
Total	27	37	34	35	41	38	48

n=the number of comments received in answer to the relevant 'open response' question

NB: *Separate qualitative data for international students did not become available until 2005*

3 Reliability of quantitative and qualitative data

The following information on the reliability of statistical data in the above tables should be taken into consideration when reading this report:

Quantitative and qualitative data: Where the number of respondents is less than 5 results are excluded from the report as they are unlikely to be reliable. In the qualitative data tables, this is indicated by the phrase *Too few*

Quantitative and qualitative data: Where the number of respondents is between 5 and 20 results should be viewed with caution. The minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis is 20

Qualitative data only: Where the number of respondents who have supplied written observations on their experiences is between 5 and 10 results are excluded from the report as they lie within the lower range of statistics that should be viewed with caution. This is indicated in the relevant tables by the phrase *Too few*

² Retrieved from ITL SREQ website *Using the report page* at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/reportpage.htm>

³ Data retrieved from the ITL SREQ website results and reports for the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning on 16.06.09 <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/secure/rrr.cfm>

3 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. 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. Supervisor(s) names, where included by the respondent, have been replaced by Architecture, Design and Planning, YYY or ZZZ. Research topics have been replaced by TTT where they may identify the author of the comment.

4 Analysis of comments

The components of categories and sub-categories used in the analysis of qualitative data are based on:

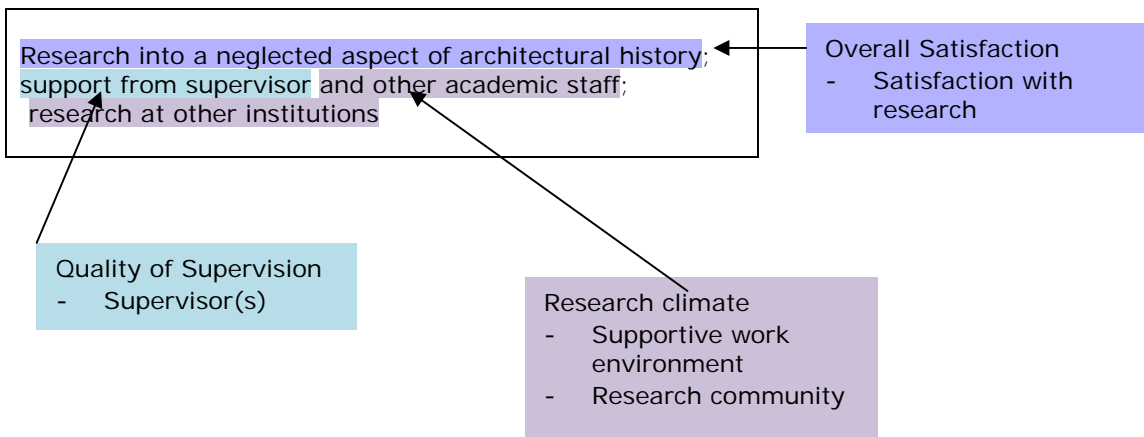
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

Together, they represent the range of features of each aspect which are considered to be essential to student satisfaction with their research training experience

5 Counting of comments

Each comment is analysed according to the *Taxonomy for analysing qualitative data from the SREQ*⁴, which is based on the Factors used in the SREQ. Based on the premise that a comment is what is written by an individual respondent in response to one of the open response questions, and a tally in the statistics being a specific phrase or sentence referring to one aspect of the student experience, the total number of times an aspect is mentioned in any one set of comments is calculated as a percentage of comments received in the year of the survey. As a general rule, only those aspects which receive over 5% of comments from the whole cohort (i.e. domestic and international combined) are considered significant enough to be included as specific issues in the report.

For example, the following comment is counted as ONE COMMENT RECEIVED; but as it is mentioned in Overall Satisfaction (Satisfaction with research); Research Climate (Supportive work environment); and Quality of Supervision (Supervisor(s)); the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 4 aspects in one comment.



⁴ Available from Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

1 Quality of Supervision

Coverage

The *Supervision Scale* covers aspects of supervision including: supervision being available when needed; understanding by the supervisor(s) of difficulties; provision of additional information relevant to the thesis topic by the supervisor; provision of guidance in topic selection and refinement; provision of helpful feedback on progress; provision of good guidance in literature search; and overall satisfaction with quality of supervision.

SREQ Survey items

1	Supervision is available when I need it
5	My supervisor(s) make(s) a real effort to understand difficulties I face
13	My supervisor(s) provide(s) me with additional information relevant to my topic
18	I am given good guidance in topic selection and refinement
22	My supervisor(s) provide(s) helpful feedback on my progress
26	I have received good guidance in my literature search
36	Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my supervision

Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 sub-categories within *Quality of Supervision*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research student experience of Supervision. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments

- Supervision (Supervisor/ Associate Supervisor; availability and frequency; evaluation of supervisor by student; feedback on work)
- Management of Candidature (guidance on thesis, literature review; topic etc; workload)
- Progress reports (value of process; structure)
- Flexibility of program
- Pressure to complete (e.g. within set time frame)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale continue to rise steadily, and at 79% are the highest since 2002. International students continue to experience better outcomes in this area of their degree experience than their domestic counterparts. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 53% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their degree experience. This is the highest percentage since analysis of the qualitative data commenced. The previous highest was 44% in 2006.
- The majority of these comments (42% of comments received) related to supervision: supervisor(s) (encouragement, knowledge of topic etc); feedback from supervisors; and availability of supervisors for meetings.
- The freedom to explore research interests was appreciated by 9% of respondents.

Suggested improvements

- 17% of respondents to the SREQ suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 8% were unhappy with the supervision received

1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant Supervision Scale survey items in the SREQ.

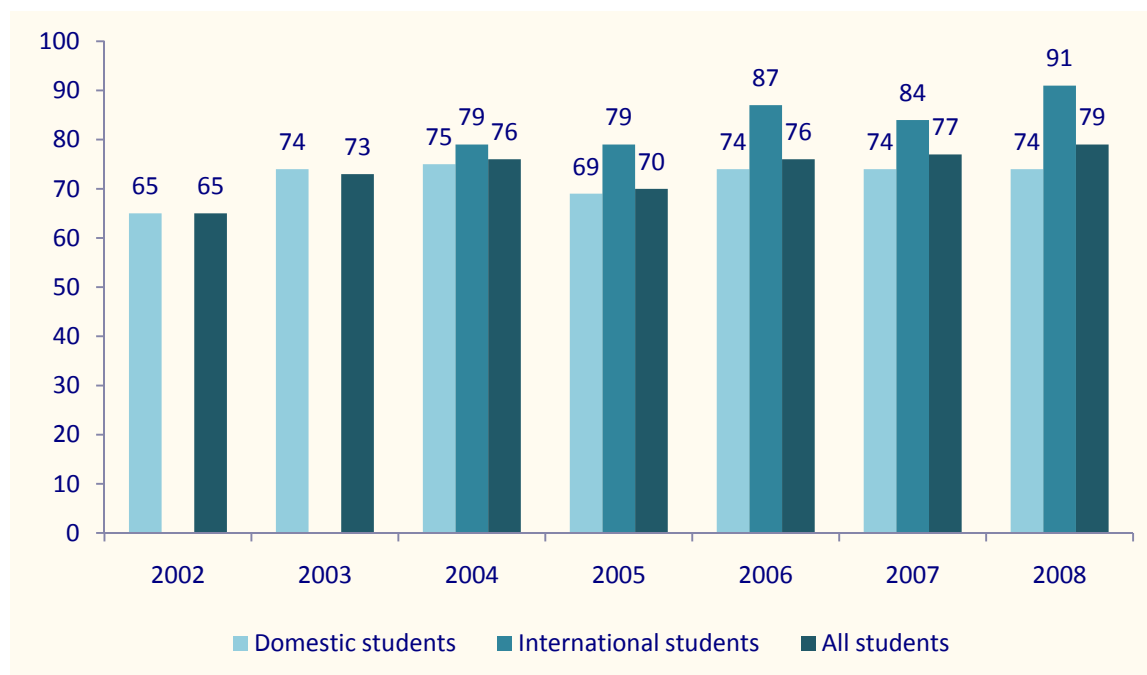


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: 2002 – 2008 (percentage agreement results)

1.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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 Quality of Supervision. The trends provide an indication of student satisfaction with this area of their experience between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic			37%	47%	40%	58%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	38%	25%	40%
	All	30%	30%	24%	37%	44%	36%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			47%	29%	36%	23%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	23%	<i>Too few</i>	0%
	All	41%	32%	29%	43%	27%	26%

1.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

1.3.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n=23)
Supervision			
- Satisfied with performance of supervisor(s)	45%	33%	42%
- Supervisor(s) available for regular meetings			
- Supervisor(s) provide feedback on work			
Flexibility of program			
- Appreciate flexibility and freedom of working independently	13%	0%	9%
- Allowed to set own topics, plan of work			

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n=23)
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Sample comments: domestic students

- *Freedom to explore new and complex ideas with the support base of the University*
- *My supervisor (subsequently associate supervisor) XXX. XXX's manner is superb. He is considered, and very practical in his suggestions. He was able to help me see the politics of academia and in turn decipher critique. That is, he was able to contextualise critique and help me see past the emotional content*
- *My supervisor and associate are a brilliant combination that make research a pleasure - a good mix of supportiveness, discipline, direction and free reign. I know where I want my ideas to be at this stage in the game, and it is a matter of bringing them to fruition*
- *The value of supervisors who are experts in their field*

Sample comments: international students

- *My supervisor helped me to re-aligned my thoughts on my subject, on the topics on my research*
- *High quality of supervision given by my supervisor because he guides, helps, supports, encourages, in so many ways*
- *My supervisors are very supportive of my work and they take positive steps to assist me in every way possible*

1.3.2 Suggested improvements

	Domestic (n=35)	International (n=13)	All (n=48)
--	---------------------	--------------------------	----------------

Supervision

- | | | | |
|--|-----|----|----|
| - Performance of supervisor(s) unsatisfactory | 11% | 0% | 8% |
| - Supervisor(s) unavailable for regular meetings | | | |
| - Supervisor(s) do not provide feedback on work | | | |

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Frequency of communication from supervisor could be improved*
- *I find my current supervisor to be arrogant and dismissive. As a consequence I am considering a change of supervisor*
- *At the stage of assessment, reviewers should be objective to the point that they are able to assess if the student has met the aims they themselves have set i.e., not impose their agenda. Better advice regarding the assessment process is needed so students know what to expect. Students must also be given a better sense of the ambiguity involved in assessing a research dissertation.*
- *The impact of one bad supervisor has escalated into an avalanche of despondency for a whole cohort of PhD students*
- *Three years is simply not enough time for a PhD. Possibly it is if somebody has come from a Masters, but for people straight out of honours at age 23 it was never going to happen. I think that instead of vilifying students who take 4-5 years there could be more support for helping them - more carrot and less stick - as often they are doing great work. (Note: I am not at this stage in my research but it changes the focus to people seeing PhD's as a step in their training rather than as a genuine contribution; they just want to get it done).*
- *Assurance of getting supervisors in need*

2 Quality of Infrastructure

Coverage

The *Infrastructure Scale* covers aspects of the infrastructure available to research students, including: access to a suitable working space; access to technical support; access to a common room; access to necessary equipment; access to computing facilities and resources; appropriate financial support; and overall satisfaction with the quality of services and facilities.

SREQ Survey items

2	I have access to a suitable working space
6	I have good access to the technical support I need
10	I have access to a common room or a similar type of meeting place
12	I am able to organise good access to necessary equipment
19	I have good access to computing facilities and services
28	There is appropriate financial support for research activities
35	Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the services and facilities

Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 sub-categories within *Quality of Infrastructure*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Finance and funding (funding for resources, equipment etc; scholarships, PRSS, APA etc)
- Facilities (computer hardware and software; equipment; workspace, building, parking etc)
- Research resources (provided by faculty; provided by library)
- Support (IT; technical; laboratory)
- Administration (enrolment and admission; communication between faculty and students; general comments on administration (faculty and university))

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have decreased steadily since 2003. The current score of 56% is identical to the 2002 results. In 2008, international students recorded better outcomes for this scale than their domestic counterparts. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 28% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority (26% of comments received) valued the services of the Architecture Library.

Suggested improvements

- 65% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; funding for conferences; and parking fees (29%)
 - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources (21%)
 - Computer, technical and laboratory support (8%)

2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Infrastructure Scale survey items in the SREQ.

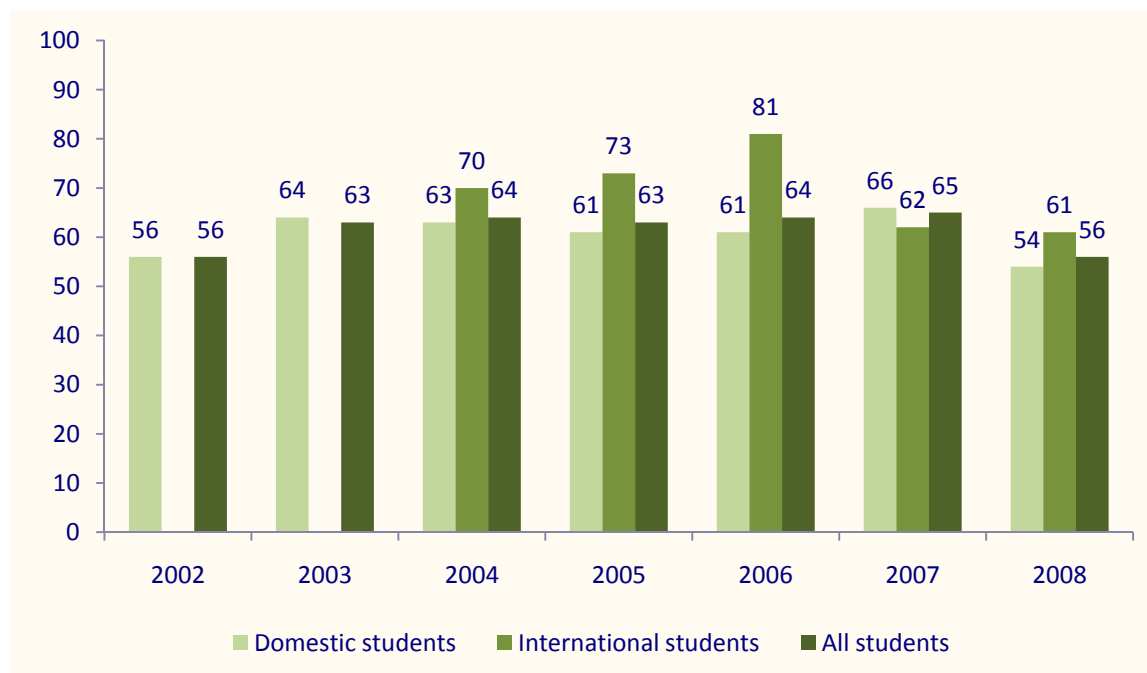


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: 2002 – 2008 (percentage agreement results)

2.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the survey, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic			20%	33%	50%	29%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	0%	<i>Too few</i>	27%
	All	23%	36%	54%	18%	30%	28%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			53%	82%	61%	57%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	62%	<i>Too few</i>	85%
	All	56%	62%	50%	49%	76%	65%

2.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

2.3.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n= 15)	All (n=53)
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Research resources

- Research resources are provided by faculty
- Library services satisfactory

29% 20% 26%

Sample comments: domestic students

- *I am getting access to most journals, important books from library and it is providing me the scope to learn from different culture and different country*
- *Access to the library facilities. My research impossible without this breadth and depth*
- *The old architecture library and staff were very helpful*

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n= 15)	All (n=53)
Sample comments: international students			
-			<i>A good virtual library</i>
-			<i>Accessing to the information I want via the website of University Library is the best of my research experience, because it helps me to do the best literature review</i>
-			<i>Very good library and scientific databases</i>

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

	Domestic (n=35)	International (n=13)	All (n=48)
Finance and funding			
-	29%	31%	29%
-			Funding for research unavailable
-			Scholarships unavailable or unsatisfactory
-			PRSS, APA provisions unsatisfactory
Facilities			
-	17%	31%	21%
-			Computers are not provided by faculty
-			Workspace, office, not provided by faculty
-			Equipment provided is not up to date or functional
Support			
-	3%	23%	8%
-			Computer support not readily available
-			Technical support not available

Sample comments: domestic students

- *The physical space for research students. In the architecture faculty there is nowhere to meet, i.e., no informal post grad space. There is no where even to have our seminars except an embarrassing room in terrible condition, which reflects poorly on the faculty when there are invited guests. It is terrible for both presenter and audience. In general the space and ambiance provided does not say 'world class research is happening here' rather forgotten dusty academics in the making*
- *Financial assistance to all doctorate students. Right now it's pathetic for a country like Australia. Only a few people are on scholarships. Most of the people are not. In all the other countries in Europe and everywhere else, you're paid to do your doctorate and supported. In Australia it seems to be otherwise. It is really big punch in the gut by the institution and the government*
- *Financial support for conference attendance (PRSS), specifically the three claim limit. Perhaps a monetary limit would be easier*

Sample comments: international students

- *Students should be assisted much more about the alternative income opportunities, the people at the career centre are NOT so friendly and supportive. Financial issues do not affect the research practices of the research students and the university I think should pay more attention to the financial matters of the research students*
- *Technical facility. I wanted to get my computer fixed, it took them more than 1 week to do it*
- *More technical and financial support for research activities*

3 Research Climate

Coverage

The *Climate Scale* covers aspects of the prevailing research climate in a students' school/ department, including: opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students; integration into the school/ department community; opportunities to become involved in the broader research culture; perception of other research students as supportive; feelings of isolation within the school/ department; encouragement of interaction with other research students; provision of a good seminar programme; stimulation of personal work by the prevailing research ambience; provision of a supportive work environment; and feeling respected as a fellow researcher.

SREQ Survey items

- 3 The department / school provides opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students
- 8 I feel integrated into the department's / school's community
- 15 The department / school provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture
- 16 I feel that other postgraduate students in my department / school are supportive
- 20 I tend to feel isolated within this department / school
- 23 Interaction with other postgraduate students is actively encouraged in this department / school
- 24 A good seminar program for postgraduate students is provided
- 25 The research ambience in the department / school or faculty stimulates my work
- 29 I feel that this department / school provides a supportive working environment
- 31 I feel respected as a fellow researcher within my department / school

Qualitative data analysis

There are 8 sub-categories within *Research Climate*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the student experience of the prevailing research climate within the faculty. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Interaction with other research higher degree students (study related; social; support of peers)
- Research culture (part of research community; integration into faculty/ department/ school; conference participation; networking)
- Work environment (supportive environment; stimulating; induction/ orientation programme; respect as fellow researcher; support for students)
- Cultural diversity and equity
- Practical aspects (field work; industry/ professional experience)
- Preparation for academia (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Research Climate Scale have declined steadily since 2006 (58%), and currently sit at 51%. In the past two years, domestic and international students have recorded similar outcomes. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 55% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 26% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 13% of respondents
- 11% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students

Suggested improvements

- 35% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience. This is the lowest percentage of comments suggesting improvements since 2004. In 2007, 55% of comments received expressed dissatisfaction with the research climate of the Faculty.
- 13% thought that the Faculty could provide more opportunities for interacting with their fellow students
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 15% of comments received.

3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2004–2008

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Climate Scale survey items in the SREQ.

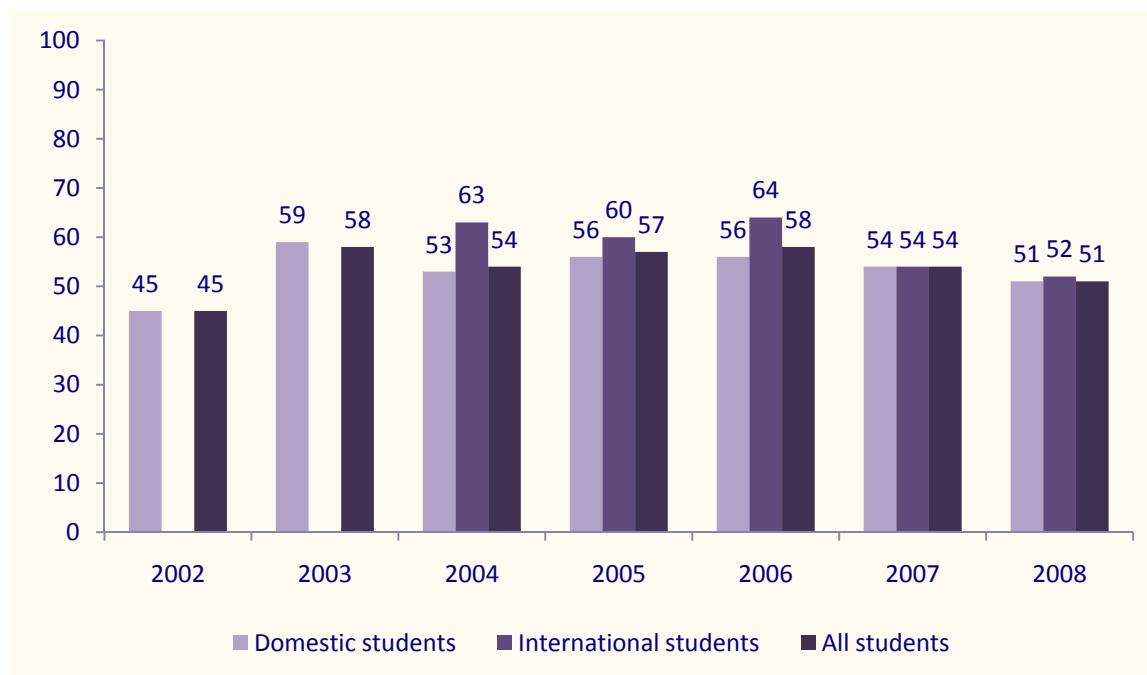


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale : 2002 – 2008 (percentage agreement results)

3.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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 students experiences of the prevailing research climate in the faculty between 2002 and 2008, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SREQ.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic			29%	57%	57%	53%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	31%	<i>Too few</i>	60%
	All	43%	57%	41%	29%	49%	55%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			66%	36%	46%	43%
	International			<i>Too few</i>	85%	<i>Too few</i>	15%
	All	63%	35%	29%	71%	51%	35%

3.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

3.3.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n= 53)
Interaction with other research students			
- Opportunities are provided to discuss research with other students	8%	20%	11%
- Opportunities are provided for social contact with other students			
- Other students are supportive			
Research culture			
- Opportunities provided to participate at conferences	26%	27%	26%
- Networking opportunities available			
- Feel part of a research community			
- Seminar program provided by faculty			

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n= 53)
Work environment			
- Research ambience stimulating, challenging			
- Satisfactory induction or orientation programme is provided	16%	7%	13%
- Feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department			
- Respected as a fellow researcher			
- Support is provided for students (especially part-time, external)			
- Presence of a supportive work environment			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Conferences. Meeting people in working in the same field, exchange ideas, health check my research. Establish contacts*
- *Working with well-established scholars and researchers. The support network is good. Being encouraged to seek help*
- *Interaction with other students, sharing ideas*

Sample comments: international students

- *Being together with the researchers having similar interests*
- *Meeting with my fellow research students. They are very supportive and helpful. Do not feel so isolated*
- *They actually helped me to understand that I am a related researcher in my field, and introduced me to other research*

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

	Domestic (n= 35)	International (n= 13)	All (n= 48)
Interaction with other research students			
- Opportunities are not provided to discuss research with other students	14%	8%	13%
- Opportunities are not provided for social contact with other students			
- Other students are not supportive			
Research culture			
- Opportunities not provided to participate at conferences	6%	8%	6%
- Networking opportunities unavailable			
- Do not feel part of a research community			
- Seminar program not provided by faculty			
Work environment			
- Research ambience is not stimulating, challenging			
- Induction or orientation programme is not provided			
- Do not feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department	20%	0%	15%
- Are not respected as a fellow researcher			
- Support is not provided for students (especially part-time, external)			
- Supportive work environment not present			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *regular research students seminars are infrequently attended by relevant lecturers who often seem to be on leave*
- *Integration of research work into the faculty/courses. Research is almost completely disconnected from undergrads and teaching*
- *PhD students should be respected as future professionals and not patronised as it happens by some academics in my group*
- *No attempts to organise social/informal gatherings for research students to discuss their ideas*

Sample comments: international students

- *Need more chance to interact with other post grads*
- *I never meet a person who is inside of my discipline - who is a specialist in XXX architecture.*

4 Generic Skills

Coverage

The *Generic Skills* scale reflects the extent to which students perceive their studies to have fostered the development of the generic skills recognised by the university as being a valuable outcome of university education, in addition to discipline specific skills and knowledge. Skills include problem solving; oral and written communication; development of ideas and their written presentation; collaboration with other researchers; analytical skills; planning; confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems; and ability to learn independently

SREQ Survey items

4	My research has further developed my problem-solving skills
7	Doing my research has helped to develop my written communication skills
9	I have learned to develop my ideas and present them in my written work
11	As a result of my research, I have developed the ability to work collaboratively with other researchers
14	My research has sharpened my analytical skills
17	Doing my research has helped to develop my oral communication skills
21	Doing my research has developed my ability to plan my own work
27	As a result of my research I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
30	As a result of my research I have developed the ability to learn independently

Qualitative data analysis

There are 8 sub-categories within *Generic Skills*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) which are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Graduate Attributes (includes: problem solving, analytical skills, oral and written communication, presentation, and planning)
- Technical skills (statistics, thesis/ academic writing, disciplinary, and training in use of equipment)
- Research skills
- Publishing skills (writing for publication; opportunities for publication provided)
- Collaboration with other researchers
- Expansion of knowledge base (i.e. on research topic and associated subjects)
- Working independently
- English language skills for NESB/ international students (proficiency, support with academic writing, proof reading etc)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale have increased steadily over the past six years, and currently sit at 76%. This represents an increase of 8% on the 2003/2004 results, and 22% on the 2002 result. International students have recorded better outcomes than their domestic counterparts since 2006. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 23% of respondents considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 8% of respondents considered that knowledge of their subject area had been expanded
- The remaining comments were distributed evenly between: problem solving, critical thinking and oral and written communication; research skills; working independently; and technical skills.

Suggested improvements

- 10% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in English language proficiency for international students.

4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Generic Skills Scale survey items in the SREQ.

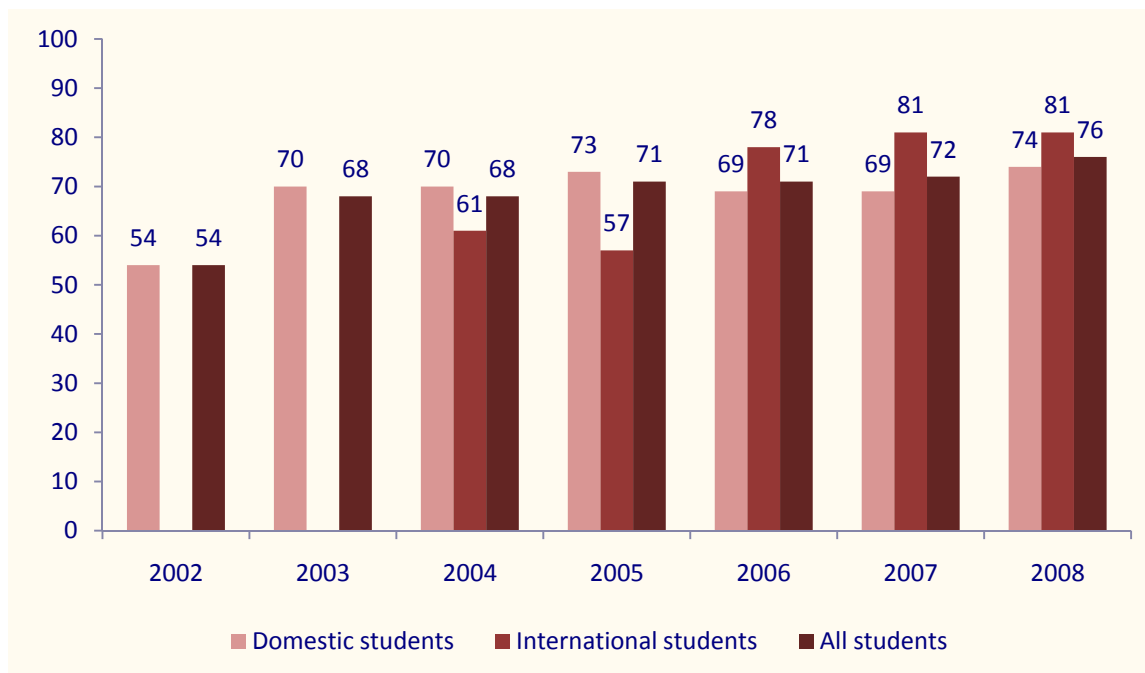


Figure 4: SREQ: Generic Skills Scale: 2002 – 2008 (percentage agreement results)

4.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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 development of Generic Skills by respondents between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic			51%	37%	30%	21%
	International			Too few	31%	Too few	27%
	All	43%	39%	27%	47%	35%	36%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			22%	4%	0%	11%
	International			Too few	15%	Too few	8%
	All	4%	3%	12%	20%	7%	11%

4.2 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

4.2.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n=53)
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Expand knowledge base

- Knowledge of research topic is being expanded
- Knowledge of associated topics is being expanded

5% 13% 8%

Sample comments: domestic students

- *I have learned many things not only related to my research, but also things beside the research topic which I was wondering for so long. I believe that this is the best aspect of doing research*
- *The skill to express the thoughts. As a research student, the way to express the thoughts is an essential process to let others understand and convince others to accept them*
- *Understanding the scientific approach, understanding academia. Developing skills*
- *It is helping me to improve my writing and speaking skill*

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n=15)	All (n=53)
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Sample comments: international students

- *How to conduct a research systematically by finding research gaps in the subject area, developing some research questions and trying to get answers of those*
- *Learning new skills*

4.2.2 Suggested improvements

10% of graduates (i.e. 5 / 48 comments received) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in this area of their experience. Due to the low number of comments, and to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided

5 Overall Satisfaction

Coverage

This single item asks graduates about their overall level of satisfaction with their research higher degree experience.

SREQ Survey items

43 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my research higher degree experience.

Qualitative data analysis

There are 3 sub-categories within Overall Satisfaction. They represent the range of aspects of the postgraduate research student experience which are considered to have a major influence on the quality of the research degree experience, and which are not covered elsewhere.

- General comments
- Quality of degree
- Satisfaction with research (topic, relevance, and contribution to field)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item have increased substantially since 2005, and currently sit at 86%. This represents an increase of 18% on the 2005 score of 68%. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. International students continue to record better outcomes than their domestic counterparts.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- 11% of comments focussed on satisfaction with the research – its topic, relevance, and contribution to the field.

Suggested improvements

- 8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience

5.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with the Overall Satisfaction item in the SREQ.

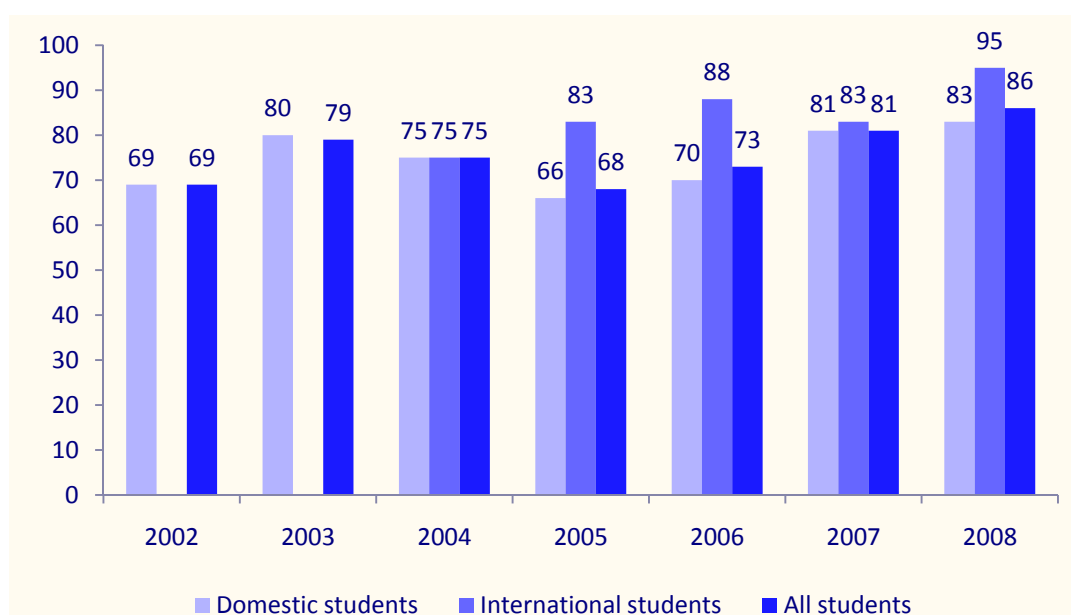


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: 2002 – 2008 (percentage agreement results)

5.1 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the survey, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in research higher degree students' overall satisfaction between 2002 and 2008.

		SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic				29%	20%	33%	21%
	International				<i>Too few</i>	31%	<i>Too few</i>	20%
	All	20%	16%	14%	26%	23%	26%	21%
Suggested improvements	Domestic				16%	14%	7%	6%
	International				<i>Too few</i>	8%	<i>Too few</i>	15%
	All	4%	5%	6%	14%	12%	5%	8%

5.2 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

5.2.2 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=38)	International (n= 15)	All (n= 53)
Overall satisfaction	8%	13%	9%
- Satisfied with the overall experience of undertaking the degree			

Satisfaction with research

- Research topic will contribute to field	13%	7%	11%
- Researching topic that have always been interested in			
- Research is worthwhile			
- Research topic is relevant to career/ work			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *The ability to pursue an idea over a significant period of time*
- *sense of achievement and worthiness of research progress*
- *The very best aspect - the joy of discovery - the buzz of a "eureka" moment. Comprehending something from a new perspective and its application to making this a better world - that's why*
- *Satisfaction at level of research progress and interpretation*

Sample comments: international students

- *I had a very different background to the area I decided to do my PhD in. The three years have been an exponential learning curve and it is very satisfying to make the progress I have made in this new area, to build in the area*
- *Research experiments: creativity*

5.2.3 Suggested improvements

8% of graduates (i.e. 4/ 48 comments received) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in this area of their experience. Due to the low number of comments, and to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided