Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) Reports

Faculty responses to the 2012 reports: a compilation

Part One  Improving the research higher degree student experience

- *Areas of best practice*
- *Strategies and initiatives*

Part Two  Communication Strategies

- *Research higher degree students*
- *Academic staff*
- *Postgraduate administrative staff*

Report compiled by

Rachel Symons  
Policy and Projects Officer  
Graduate Studies Office  
rachel.symons@sydney.edu.au

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SREQ Reports: Faculty responses to the 2012 reports: a compilation

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Graduate Studies Office, December 2013
Introduction
This report arose out of requests from faculties to share common issues, ideas and best practice.

The first part of the 2013 report compiles examples of best practice, strategy and initiatives regarding the higher degree by research student experience. These examples are excerpted from the faculty responses to the 2012 SREQ reports. Additional to the excerpts from the faculty responses, this report also provides a graphical presentation of trends and key issues in the SREQ qualitative data for 2009, 2010 and 2012.

The report shares faculty approaches to common issues and provides a resource of ideas and best practice for faculties to consult when approaching areas needing improvement. It is worth noting the significant efforts by most faculties in the areas of Infrastructure and Research Climate, which students have identified as the most in need of improvement.

The second part of this report describes the communication strategies used by faculties to disseminate information relevant to the research higher degree student experience.

Background
Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ)
In 2002, the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for the University community on higher degree by research students’ perceptions of their research training experiences. This data was gathered annually until 2010, when it moved to biennial collection. The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) was designed specifically for the task of gathering this data and is based on a national survey of higher degree by research students, the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). 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 University and faculties 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 Graduate Attributes.

Written observations (qualitative data), from respondents to the survey, about their experiences provide evidence to support the University and Faculty SREQ quantitative data results (percentage agreement scores), and provide detailed information about key issues in the Areas of best practice and Areas needing improvement, during their research training experience. The results are directly aligned with the scales and survey items used in the SREQ, with the addition of items that occur frequently in student comments.

SREQ Reports: Institutional and Faculty
Based on the responses to both the survey items (quantitative data) and open questions (qualitative data), the Graduate Studies Office (GSO) has been preparing and distributing institutional and faculty reports on the research higher degree student experience for a number of years. The SEG Research Training Committee position paper: Closing the Loop: disseminating the results and reports of the Student Research Experience Questionnaire provides strategies for ensuring that these reports are widely disseminated to senior management, academic and professional staff and research higher degree students. Faculty reports are compiled during the year following the distribution of the survey i.e. reports for data collected in 2012 are compiled and distributed during 2013. The institutional report which provides comparative faculty data, is compiled once all faculty reports have been finalised.

Responding to the SREQ reports
SREQ 2010
As part of the Closing the loop strategy, in 2011 faculties were asked to address issues raised by students in their responses to the SREQ, and provide reports to the SEG Research Training Committee. They were asked to provide their overall response to the report, outlining the strategies and initiatives used to improve the research higher degree student experience across the faculty, and how they had communicated the SREQ results and report to students, academic and professional staff. They were also asked to suggest ways in which the reports could be improved. Most of the improvements suggesting changes to content and formatting were incorporated into the 2013 reports. Summary reports\(^1\), based on the faculty responses, were

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\(^1\) 1. Overall response to the report; 2. Communication strategies; 3. Strategies and initiatives to improve the student experience; 4. Improving the report.

Graduate Studies Office, December 2013
preparing the Graduate Studies Office, distributed to all stakeholders and made available on the Graduate
Studies Office SREQ website.

SREQ 2012
In 2013, faculties were again asked to respond to their faculty SREQ reports in terms of their overall
response to the report; areas of best practice; strategies and initiatives to improve the student experience;
communication strategies; factors influencing the results of the 2012 survey; and suggested improvements to
the reports. A number of faculties were also asked to provide information on how strategies implemented in
2011 had improved the student experience. Whereas in 2011 information from faculty response reports
was summarised into four reports (see note 2), this year it was decided to provide one report which collated
all responses relating to areas of best practice, strategies and initiatives to improve the student
experience, and communication strategies. This would provide faculties with a resource of ideas that could
be used to improve the research higher degree student experience across the University, thereby fulfilling
the suggested improvement to the report from the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment It is hoped that the
data from the reports can be integrated, so that best practice in the area of e.g. online management of
progression requirements can be shared across Faculties. The complete faculty response reports are
available on the Graduate Studies SREQ reports website.

In 2013, representatives from the SEG Research Training Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee of
Academic Board and SUPRA provided the first ever response to a University-wide report. The response
highlighted areas of best practice across the University, and delineated present and future initiatives for
improving the student experience.

Disseminating the SREQ reports and responses
Faculty and institutional reports and responses are placed on the agendas of the SEG Research Training
Committee, the Graduate Studies Committee of the Academic Board, and Divisional Boards. The
institutional report and response were also sent to University senior management and placed on the agenda
for SEG and Senate. Reports and responses for the 2010 and 2012 SREQ are made publicly available
through the Graduate Studies Office SREQ reports website.

Arrangement of the report
The report is divided into two parts:

Part One Improving the student experience
There are five sections in this part of the report, relating to each of the five areas of the research higher
degree student experience against which SREQ data is analysed and reported: Supervision, Infrastructure,
Research Climate, Graduate Attributes and Overall Satisfaction.

Each section focuses on areas of best practice and strategies and initiatives to improve the student
experience.

Part Two Communications strategies
This part of the report addresses the strategies implemented within faculties to communication information
relating to research higher degrees to academic and professional staff, and students. Faculties responded to
this question either in terms of communicating the results of the report, or in terms of faculty communication
strategies to students, academics and postgraduate administrative staff.

2 Based on a suggestion at a meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee, this question was introduced in mid-2013.
Part One: Improving the research higher degree student experience

This part of the report includes information on the following aspects that faculties were asked to address in their responses to the SREQ Faculty Reports:

1. Examples of areas of best practice that work well in the faculty.
2. Opportunities for improvement in the student experience.

This report is divided into five sections, relating directly to the SREQ factors used in reporting mechanisms across the University:

1. Quality of supervision
2. Quality of infrastructure
3. Research climate
4. Graduate attributes/ Generic skills
5. Overall Satisfaction

Each of the above sections provides

1. Coverage: Information on categories, aspects and key issues used in the analysis of SREQ qualitative data (student comments);
3. Examples of best practice in improving the research higher degree student experience identified by faculties in their responses to the SREQ reports. This includes information relating to the success of strategies implemented on the basis of feedback from the 2011 report (2010 data)³
4. Strategies and initiatives planned by faculties to improve the research higher degree student experience.

NB: where an area of best practice, strategy or initiative crosses the boundaries between SREQ factors, it is mentioned in both areas e.g. funding for conferences may appear in both Infrastructure and Climate.

³ Eight faculties provided information on the success of strategies implemented after the 2011 reports – the request for this information was included mid-year after feedback from the Graduate Studies Committee.
1 Quality of Supervision

1.1 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 the quality of supervision.

For reporting purposes, qualitative data relating to the Quality of Supervision is divided into three main sub-categories, or key issues:

1. **Management of candidature** includes: guidance on thesis, literature review, topic etc.; workload; progress reports (APR); and help with writing the thesis.

2. **Supervision processes** includes: general comments on supervision; evaluation of supervisors by faculty; and training of supervisors.

3. **Supervisor(s)** includes: research supervisor and auxiliary supervisor; supervisory team; usefulness of sessions with supervisors; availability and frequency of meetings with supervisors; feedback on work; understanding and empathy.

1.2 Trends in qualitative data analysis

The following chart provides an indication of focus of comments relating to the Quality of Supervision in 2009, 2010 and 2012. It indicates that satisfaction with Supervision is an area that continues to rate highly with students, with consistently more comments expressing satisfaction being received than those suggesting improvement. More detailed information is found in *Quality of research higher degree training at the University of Sydney: 2012: Section 3: SREQ Factors: Trends and key issues* (Part One: Quality of Supervision).

Figure 1: SREQ: Quality of supervision: Distribution of comments: 2009 - 2012

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1.3 Examples of best practice

The following information was provided by faculties as examples of best practice in Supervision.

**Agriculture and Environment**
Students’ comments focus on the personal supervision they receive from their supervisors, and on being treated as colleagues rather than just as students. This is facilitated in the Faculty of Agriculture & Environment by the relatively small size of the Faculty, so that interactions are often quite close, and students know staff relatively well.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Best practice relates to the availability of supervisors (regular one-on-one sessions etc.).

**Dentistry**
Careful selection and recruitment of a panel of supervisors with complementary expertise.

**Education and Social Work**
Generally supervision in the faculty is considered to be of high quality, along with overall satisfaction, with only a marginal drop in satisfaction. The quality of supervision overall was considered to be outstanding, supportive and providing stimulating intellectual guidance and support.

**Engineering and Information Technologies**
The Faculty has implemented and continued to provide ‘best practice’ mechanisms which are: a more defined electronic APR process which measures performance. Where performance is marginal, students are required to complete key actions within a defined 9 week which is then measured against key performance indicators. This has assisted in ensuring students are then back on track.

**Health Sciences**
Alignment of student research projects with areas of research excellence, implemented as a result of feedback from the 2011 report has had a positive impact on the Faculty’s SREQ results.

The Faculty was pleased to note the improvement on the Supervision scale from 79 (2010) to 86 (2012) and noted that this result was above the overall 2012 University result. The Faculty attributes this success to ensuring that new students are allocated to areas of research and the continued careful monitoring of HDR supervision workloads across the Faculty. All supervisors are required to complete the Foundations of Research Supervision program offered through the University (or an equivalent). Where appropriate the Faculty has integrated the concept of group style supervision to complement existing supervision practices. The introduction of co-supervision through the current Supervision Policy will provide further flexibility to tailor supervisory arrangements to the individual students’ needs.

An enhanced orientation/induction program for commencing higher degree by research students which incorporates research integrity and ethics, workplace health and safety; clarity around expectations of the supervisory relationship, procedural information, funding schemes, scholarships, publications and thesis submission. This is one of the strategies implemented on the basis of feedback from the 2011 report that has been identified by the Faculty as having a positive impact on the 2012 results.

**Science**
In the 2010 SREQ, it was noted that two of the schools were significantly lower in supervision satisfaction compared to the Faculty, and University averages. These schools were asked to develop and implement action plans.

[Supervision] is the remit of the schools. In one school they have substantially improved their APR procedures to identify at risk students. In the school, the APR process is used as a mentoring opportunity so that in essence, the APR interviewers are also case-workers. This school has the smallest proportion of over-time students in the whole faculty. Another school, with a moderate proportion of over-time students is using the APR process to introduce higher degree by research candidates to the concept of milestones and how students can use these to keep projects on track.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
In early 2012 we held a dedicated supervision workshop, with the assistance of ITL. Over two days we addressed some of the key issues in supervision within the faculty, which provided us with the opportunity to speak to needs and answer questions, and provided supervisors with the opportunity to converse with and
learn from the experience of others. From the workshop feedback we could identify areas for future training and development. From this workshop we established a mentor program for inexperienced PhD supervisors, which places experienced supervisors in an associate supervisor role to advise the primary supervisor and the candidate over the duration of the project.

**Sydney Medical School**

Supervision is based on individual needs analysis and student profile.

Recognition of research training as an essential activity in the recently revised faculty workload policy and an emphasis on completion of the ITL’s *Foundations of Research Supervision* course by junior academic staff are also playing a role in improving the research climate and supervisory performance. Similarly, increased engagement with the AP&D process is likely to place more emphasis on the development of supervisory skills. Because of the geographic spread of SMS some schools have developed local, customised programs for the supervisor development. For example, the establishment of a supervisor accreditation and development course at the Children’s Hospital at Westmead has seen a marked increase in the number of academic staff engaged in research training. Supervision is based on individual needs analysis and student profile.

**Veterinary Science**

To improve supervisor training of new academics, the Faculty implemented a forum where experienced supervisors spoke on topics ranging from sourcing research funds, dealing with distant supervision and coping with difficult student issues. New academics are encouraged to seek and work with a mentor that can provide guidance with supervision. The attributes associated with supervision were all higher or at least equal to the 2010 measures. The one area which remains a concern to students is guidance with the literature review.

### 1.4 Strategies and initiatives

The following list of strategies and initiatives that faculties have implemented to improve the Quality of Supervision within their faculty are grouped thematically by key issue (see 1.1 above).

#### 1.4.1 Management of candidature (guidance, expectations, progress)

**Agriculture and Environment**

Increase focus on completion of progression milestones, especially in first year of higher degree by research candidature.

**Education and Social Work**

Responding in a timely and systematic manner where students are identified, in the Annual Progress Review, as having progress or supervision issues.

Ensuring that students understand the level of supervision they are expected to receive by including in the induction session for all new students.

**Health Sciences**

Supervisor newsletter/distribution list.

Faculty higher degree by research handbook for students and supervisors being prepared.

**Pharmacy**

Initiatives to increase communication between supervisors and students have been proposed, specifically during the ‘first contact experience’ to create a shared understanding of the expectations of each party.

**Science**

**Strategies**: The key area for the faculty to improve on is supervision, where we were ranked 10/16 in terms of proportion of responses suggesting improvements. Some of the aspects of the supervision of HDR students is in the remit of the schools, where the Faculty has little or no direct influence. The Faculty can assist in enhancing the management of candidature and since this contributed approximately 10% of comment from student suggesting improvements, this is an important area of practice we can focus on.

**Initiatives**: As part of the Division of Natural Sciences, the Faculty of Science is heavily involved in the development of what has been termed the Graduate Research Entity (this is a placeholder name, and a new one may well be considered). This new structure is aimed at simplifying and streamlining postgraduate
candidature, with the aim that schools can then concentrate on the local, face to face aspects of supervision. A current problem with the way Ph.D. students are managed in the faculty and schools is that issues have to be addressed at multiple levels, whereas we envisage a system where the administrative detail of candidature is handled at the GRE, and the local aspects are dealt with at the school (Faculty for Agriculture & Environment and Veterinary Science) level. We see this as addressing a key concern of many higher degree by research students that the processing and administration of their candidature can be clunky and slow moving. A recent analysis of candidature times within the Faculty of Science has shown that in some Schools, there are many students exceeding eight semesters. The Faculty of Science Postgraduate Board of Research will be working with postgraduate coordinator is to try and find out what causes students in some schools to take longer, and how other schools have successfully reduced this. In general we aim to make much greater use of the Faculty of Science Postgraduate Board of Research to share best practice amongst our partner schools.

**Sydney Business School**
Maintaining regular contact with all candidates to determine their progress and any issues they may have. Candidates discuss issues with Research Unit staff formally as a result of the APR process, meeting in the office or via email.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
We will be conducting more rigorous probationary activity to ensure students are better supported at the start.

**Veterinary Science**
Inclusion in induction documentation of student and supervisor expectations regarding literature review.

### 1.4.2 Supervision process (supervisor training and development)

**Agriculture and Environment**
Increase staff awareness of best practice in higher degree by research supervision.

**Education and Social Work**
Workshops for new supervisors (generally taking on their first auxiliary supervision role) that emphasises active engagement in student supervision.

Seminar held by ITL on supervising students with English as a second language was made available to academic staff in the faculty, eliciting a positive response.

**Health Sciences**
Introduction of a semester based Supervisor Development Forum which will be mandatory for all supervisors to attend.

**Pharmacy**
All supervisors are required to attend the Foundations of Research Supervision course provided through ITL. Measures to help mentor new supervisors will be undertaken by the Postgraduate Coordinator and the Associate Dean Research.

**Sydney Business School**
Provision of more effective supervisor training to be included in Strategic Plan for 2014.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
Follow-up supervision workshop to address new issues, and to continue to implement training and mentoring commenced in previous workshop. [See 1.3: Best practice for details of first workshop held in 2012]

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
Regular supervisor development sessions.
1.4.3 Supervisors (co-supervision, supervisory panels, workload)

**Agriculture and Environment**
Encouraging co-supervision of research students by members of different departments.

**Education and Social Work**
Using the panel provisions of the *Supervision of higher degree by research students policy 2013* for students with complex academic needs in relation to their specific research project.

Introduction of strict maximum of 5 research students that can be claimed for by each academic under a new workload formula.

**Pharmacy**
Supervision responsibilities will be evaluated as part of the academic's overall performance.
2 Quality of Infrastructure

2.1 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.

For reporting purposes, qualitative data relating to the *Quality of Supervision* is divided into four main sub-categories, or key issues:

1. **Administration** includes: enrolment and admission; communication between administration and students; general comments on administration; and postgraduate coordinator.

2. **Facilities** includes: common room; workspace, buildings, etc.; computer hardware and software; equipment; and transport and parking.

3. **Finance and funding** includes funding for research, resources, equipment etc.; scholarships and grants; and travel and conference funding.

4. **Research resources** includes those provided by faculty; and those provided by internal and external libraries and archive centres.

2.2 Trends in qualitative data analysis

The following chart provides an indication of focus of comments relating to the Quality of Infrastructure in 2009, 2010 and 2012. As is evident from the percentage of comments received, the provision of facilities, and the availability of funding are high on the agenda for improvement. There has been little significant change in the distribution of comments relating to either best practice or suggested improvements in the area of Infrastructure over the past few years. More detailed information is found in *Quality of research higher degree training at the University of Sydney: 2012: Section 3: SREQ Factors: Trends and key issues* (Part Two: Quality of Infrastructure)

![Figure 2: SREQ: Quality of infrastructure: Distribution of comments: 2009 – 2012](image-url)
2.3 Examples of best practice
The following information was provided by faculties as examples of best practice relating to the Quality of Infrastructure.

**Agriculture and Environment**
Extensive investment in new buildings and facilities has led to a considerable improvement in the research infrastructure of the Faculty. This has been complemented by changes to organisational structure, such as the introduction of a Farm management committee to provide oversight for the field trials being conducted by the Faculty at Narrabri and Cobbity campuses.

Students comment favourably on the availability of funding to visit conferences overseas during their candidature. The funding process for conferences is being streamlined to allow more students to take advantage of this support fully.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Positive comments around the Library and particularly document delivery services.

**Health Sciences**
An enhanced orientation/induction program for commencing higher degree by research students which incorporates research integrity and ethics, workplace health and safety; clarity around expectations of the supervisory relationship, procedural information, funding schemes, scholarships, publications and thesis submission. This is one of the strategies implemented on the basis of feedback from the 2011 report that has been identified by the Faculty as having a positive impact on the 2012 results.

**Science**
In one school, the postgraduate committee examined the responses [from the 2010 SREQ] around infrastructure and arranged for rooms to be air-conditioned and all students to either get a PC or terminal on their desks. This school has also substantially increased the amount of travel funds available to their higher degree by research students. Obviously both such improvements take a while to work their way through.

Since neither of the two major infrastructural developments at the University (CPC and AIN) are yet available, their effect is yet to be counted. The success of research-active members of the Faculty of Science in the ARC and NHMRC grant schemes has meant that higher degree by research students in the Faculty of Science have access to high-quality equipment, their own computer (usually) and reasonable workspaces. For those students moving into the new buildings, they will have their own desks and benches in laboratories, although the latter will obviously vary by research activity and the needs of other members of the research community.

**Sydney Business School**
We have a well-equipped student centre.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
We continue to provide all full time (and some part time) students with a dedicated studio space in which to work, with access after-hours and over weekends. These studios are supported by dedicated technical staff who oversees a full health and safety induction and provide assistance with equipment and facilities.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
Single administrator (we had two and this caused a problem).

**Sydney Law School**
Improve the working spaces available to students (strategy identified in the 2011 report): A range of initiatives were taken in 2011 and 2012 to improve the facilities available to research students following feedback from them [in the 2011 report]. These included a hot-desk arrangement for spaces in the postgraduate research student computer lab on level 5. According to this arrangement desks are allocated to students on a semi-permanent basis and according to a roster. Students are also provided with individual lockable storage units in this room and given access to the building and facilities outside of usual work hours, such as on weekends. The 2012 report indicates that there is a remaining dissatisfaction with these arrangements – particularly with the narrow width of the desks (approx. one metre wide). We also believe there are opportunities for improvement (see 2.4.3 below).
Veterinary Science
All students are provided with a computer on enrolment and a desk space at the time of induction. Increased IT support with 3 IT staff members affiliated with the Faculty.

2.4 Strategies and initiatives
The following list of strategies and initiatives that faculties have implemented to improve the Quality of Infrastructure within their faculty are grouped thematically by key issue (see 2.1 above).

2.4.1 Infrastructure: general comments
Dentistry
Scrutiny of student research projects to ensure that resources, expertise and thematic links are in place.

Sydney Medical School
The need to improve the University’s research infrastructure was recognised in the Will’s Review of Health and Medical Research. Sydney Medical School looks forward to being actively involved in the implementation of the Wills’ recommendations.

Veterinary Science
The quality of infrastructure is a University wide issue.

2.4.2 Administration
Agriculture and Environment
Increase focus on maintaining an integrated higher degree by research administration team, with close links to the Faculty of Science, the International Office and the Graduate Studies Office, in order to streamline and standardise best practice in administration processes.

Transition from paper-based postgraduate portfolio to more interactive and online means of communication. Postgraduate eCommunity website will provide administrative aspects of candidature including communication of scholarship applications, progression requirements, and a forum for the postgraduate association.

Education and Social Work
Students appreciated the services of the student liaison officer.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Streamlining administration, admissions and progression processes. A tighter faculty understanding of policy regarding admission, progression and completion will help in the coordination of meaningful developments in the student experience.

Sydney Nursing School
A new student email account has been created so that students can directly email the Research Support Unit administration, rather than individuals within the Unit. This will ensure that emails from students are continuously monitored and SNS and enquiries are directed to the appropriate staff either within SNS or to Sydney Medical School.

2.4.3 Facilities (workspace, computing, internet, equipment etc.)
Arts and Social Sciences
Continued improvement of the PGARC spaces, as a key measure to lift the low higher degree by research student satisfaction with the Faculty’s infrastructure.

Education and Social Work
The shared desk policy for new students was introduced in 2011. As we don’t have data for this year, it’s not possible to determine how satisfaction ratings were affected by this change in policy.

Engineering and Information Technologies
The Graduate School is committed to enhancing the quality of infrastructure with the refurbishment of major research laboratories and facilities in the Faculty.

Each higher degree by research student has their own designated desk space and computer.
Health Sciences
Allocation of workspaces and computer resources for part time students will be reviewed by the higher degree by research sub-committee during 2014.

Internet access to higher degree by research information rather than intranet minimising access issues.

Pharmacy
Since 2010 numerous refurbishment projects have been undertaken to improve and maximise Faculty lab space; rigorous measures were instituted to ensure WHS guidelines were adhered to during the renovations.

Sydney College of the Arts
Improvements in the physical environment, including updating available research equipment, will proceed, although this may take place slowly.

We have already undertaken (prior to the release of the SREQ results) a review of the studio allocation and access procedure, with the goal of streamlining induction and access to studio spaces, and we are committed to ongoing monitoring and improvement.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
New BYOD higher degree by research room, new software on PCs in the old room (spaces increased).

Sydney Law School
The Associate Dean Postgraduate Research organised for the Executive Director of the Law School and the School’s Facilities Officer to meet with the Postgraduate Research Law Student’s Committee to discuss the students’ concerns and options for improving workspaces. The Executive Director informed the student of possible additional work areas and the use of a kitchen/break out area. The Student Committee members will consider these options and will discuss them further with management in early 2014.

2.4.4 Finance and funding

Arts and Social Sciences
Doubling of Faculty doctoral student annual travel funds to $100,000.

Engineering and Information Technologies
Provision of funds to attend and present at international conferences.

Pharmacy
Continue to financially support student research with Faculty allocated funds.

Continue to match funding for equipment repairs and support the improvement of research infrastructure.

The Faculty provided an additional $25,000 to supplement the 2013 PRSS. The guidelines, provided by the Scholarship Office, for equitable allocation and application for PRSS funds are strictly adhered to and the process and funding priorities, including international conference attendance and research training are clearly communicated to the higher degree by research students with full transparency.

Faculty research maintenance funds have been renamed research student support funds to align with the Faculty’s intent to facilitate research and provide supervisors the opportunity to support their higher degree by research students.

Sydney Business School
The Business School will be doubling the number of available scholarships in 2014, as well as developing a match funding scholarship (with industry) initiative to encourage more of our candidates to engage with industry sponsors.

Sydney Medical School
In earlier SREQs and Annual Progress Reviews some higher degree by research candidates identified a need for formal research training in biostatistics and qualitative analyses. In response SMS has made available fee scholarships to facilitate higher degree by research candidates undertaking coursework units of study. These commenced in semester 1 2013 and to date 36 scholarships have been awarded to 25 candidates. It is planned to increase the range of units of study offered and the number of scholarships, subject to funding and need.
**Veterinary Science**

The extent of financial support available to students during their candidature is limited and really confined to RIBG funds, a small number of Faculty scholarships and the PRSS scheme. Specialised equipment often needs to be purchased from grant funding.

It is clear that the funding for infrastructure is a University wide problem. The Faculty can provide very limited direct financial support to students. It is important to avoid creating the misconception that enrolment in the Faculty in some way guarantees a financial commitment. This issue and the Faculty position is now highlighted during the enrolment process. It is now common practice to make clear to potential supervisors that they need to have plans in place that adequately support their student’s research needs. While we encourage international students to the Faculty there are clear efforts made to identify to them the costs involved and the financial realities of studying here. The emphasis is to guarantee the financial status for the student and their research is sustainable through the candidature. Students have access to University wide facilities and this is emphasised to them. There can’t just be a reliance on the Faculty investing in specialised equipment for individual students when it is available somewhere else in the University.

Distribution of the Faculty PRSS funds are now heavily weighted to supporting students presenting at domestic and international conferences. These funds are now also linked to student presenting their work at Faculty seminars.
3 Research Climate

3.1 Coverage
The Climate Scale covers aspects of the prevailing research climate in a student’s school/department, including: opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students; integration into the school/department community; opportunities to become involved in the wider research culture; perception of other research students as supporting; 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.

For reporting purposes, qualitative data relating to the Research Climate is divided into three main sub-categories, or key issues:

1. Interaction with other research higher degree students includes: academic; social; and support from peers.

2. Research culture and community includes: collaborative or interdisciplinary research; research culture internal and external to faculty; general comments; faculty seminars, workshops and discussion groups; networking; participation in conferences; and opportunities for and encouragement to publish.

3. Work environment includes: challenging and stimulating; induction and/or orientation programme; integration into faculty/department/school; isolation (emotional); respect as fellow researcher; supportive environment; and support for part-time, distance, international students.

The following aspects, also included in Research Climate, are mentioned as areas of best practice, strategies and initiatives in faculty responses: Career development and planning; Evaluation and Feedback.

3.2 Trends in qualitative data analysis
The following chart provides an indication of the focus of comments relating to the prevailing Research Climate in 2009, 2010 and 2012. Satisfaction with the research community and culture continues to increase. However, the experiences of students in relation to the work environment and interaction with other students has remained relatively stable. More detailed information is found in Quality of research higher degree training at the University of Sydney: 2012: Section 3: SREQ Factors: Trends and key issues (Part Three: Research Climate)

Figure 3: SREQ: Research Climate: Distribution of comments: 2009 – 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Interaction with other students</th>
<th>Research Community &amp; Culture</th>
<th>Work Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Best practice</td>
<td>Best practice</td>
<td>Needs improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2009 needs improvement</th>
<th>2010 needs improvement</th>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Examples of best practice
The following information was provided by faculties as examples of best practice relating to the Research Climate.

**Agriculture and Environment**
Students comment favourably on the availability of funding to visit conferences overseas during their candidature. The funding process for conferences is being streamlined to allow more students to take advantage of this support fully.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Departments with relevant and inclusive seminar and workshop programs rate highly.

**Dentistry**
Aggregation of faculty research under priority themes.

**Engineering and Information Technologies**
Mandatory Research Induction Workshop for all new students has received positive feedback.

**Health Sciences**
An enhanced orientation/induction program for commencing higher degree by research students which incorporates research integrity and ethics, workplace health and safety; clarity around expectations of the supervisory relationship, procedural information, funding schemes, scholarships, publications and thesis submission. This is one of the strategies implemented on the basis of feedback from the 2011 report that has been identified by the Faculty as having a positive impact on the 2012 results.

The Faculty has identified the need to focus on enhancing communication of existing opportunities to students and specifically the Faculty has provided a more formalise program of research seminars and workshops and promoted the availability of the resources available across the University.

The Faculty is aware that a large percentage of its higher degree by research students are enrolled part time and are not based on campus as a result which is reflected in more than 20% of the student responding negatively in the quantitative section, 39.2% of respondents agree “I tend to feel isolated”, 25.8% disagree “I feel integrated into the department/School”. The higher degree by research committee will be discussing strategies to support these part time students.

**Science**
Across the faculty, PhD students are embedded within research teams. In fact, for many disciplines, they are the research teams. So although the students benefit hugely from being closely aligned with postdoctoral and academic staff members work at the bench, and in the field, there is a problem that some students can feel isolated within lab-groups. To address this, one school has introduced more postgraduate social/research “lab-chat” type activities across discipline areas to ensure higher degree by research students do not feel confined to the laboratory or their lab team. In other schools, the postgraduate committee facilitate a lively and active postgraduate committee which runs social activities and organises prizes/lectures and lab visits.

**Sydney Business School**
We have implemented regular functions to celebrate: new admissions/orientation; thesis submission/graduation; as well as end of year celebrations. We are able to informally discuss issues directly with candidates at these gatherings and gauge morale and general well-being of our candidates.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
Since early 2013 we have delivered a new exhibition program in the Graduate School Gallery, which provides students with the opportunity to work with each other and a curator in developing an exhibition of professional standard. This program not only addresses the professional development needs of our research students, but gives them an opportunity to build new connections within the cohort and to test the ideas they have developed within the studio environment. This program is supported by a series of interviews and exhibition documentation published on a dedicated blog, designed to develop the research conversation. The annual PhD conference provides a similar occasion for students to present and develop their research projects and develop professional skills in public speaking and presentation, writing, and exhibition standards.
Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Grad Seminar 2 is now compulsory and creates a ‘cohort’ group of higher degree by research students. The 2012 group are still active collaborators and the 2013 group looks to be the same. Higher degree by research presentation series has been successful as has the ability to attend regular faculty research seminars.

Sydney Law School
The Law School holds an annual conference for postgraduate research students studying law at Sydney Law School and other law schools in Australia and New Zealand. Sydney Law School students organise the conference and present at it. Academic staff chair sessions, attend sessions and determine the prize winning paper. This conference enables our students to discuss their work with each other, students at other universities and academic staff.

Improve induction activities for new students (strategy identified in the 2011 report): An Induction Day has been held for the past three years. The format includes a welcome from the Dean, an initial session held by the Associate Dean Postgraduate Research, and a series of sessions held by members of the Faculty. The Induction Day has evolved and improved since it started in 2011. It serves the important function of introducing students to the postgraduate research experience and to the staff of the Law School.

Improve student involvement in faculty life (strategy identified in the 2011 report): The [2011] report indicates that students in the Law School expressed concerns regarding integration into the faculty and opportunities for research collaboration. While the Law School notifies students of faculty-based activities, it is apparent that there is little participation by postgraduate research students and that there is room for improvement. (See 3.4.2 below)

Sydney Medical School
Over the past two years SMS has restructured the support delivered to HDR candidates through postgraduate coordinators (now termed Sub---Deans (Postgraduate Research)). There has been a move to School---based, geographic support. Schools are better placed to provide tailored support and training to students. Most schools have local training programs, seminar series and student research fairs, and many promote opportunities for social interaction among HDR candidates. As these initiatives are consolidated the research climate experienced by HDR candidates will improve. One example of improved delivery of HDR support is the appointment of one or more deputy PGCs at each school. This allows the workload to be shared, provides additional support persons for candidates to consult and helps with succession planning for PGCs.

Sydney Nursing School
There are three events per year based around our research higher degree students. There are two informal workshops per year (in February and November). The February workshops (2 days) incorporates orientation and induction activities. The content of the workshops is suggested by students from the student-led meeting held annually during Research Week (our major research event of the year). Evaluations of Research Week are very positive and also work as a vehicle for identifying areas in which current students may require support. Students elect a HRD student representative at this meeting. The representative attends the Research and Research Training Committee meetings of the faculty and has full access to the ADSR, PGC and Research Support staff.

Veterinary Science
The faculty was recently ranked 5/5 for quality of its research in Australian Veterinary Faculties. The faculty has many researchers who are qualified world experts in their fields. This expertise supports the student experience and guarantees that students work in the most relevant research fields for Veterinary Science and Animal Production.

Annual Postgraduate conference: the two day annual faculty postgraduate conference remains a significant highlight of the student experience. It provides an opportunity for all postgraduate students to present their research and interact with others. It is significant especially for our remote students, as often this can be one of the only times they meet with staff and other students. It is also an opportune times for students from the main and Camden campuses to get together.
3.4 Strategies and initiatives
The following list of strategies and initiatives that faculties have implemented to improve the Research Climate within their faculty are grouped thematically by key issue (see 3.1 above).

3.4.1 Interaction with other students

Health Sciences
Integrate the use of social media for FHS higher degree by research students.

Establish an eCommunity for FHS higher degree by research student on Blackboard.

Pharmacy
Higher degree by research students will be invited to Faculty networking and socialisation opportunities, such as the monthly Dean’s Drinks. Additional opportunities for socialisation between higher degree by research students will be promoted by the Faculty when appropriate.

The American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists (AAPS) established a Student Chapter in the Faculty with the strong support of the Dean. This Student Chapter provides another opportunity for higher degree by research students to interact with each other and for peer support, with the Faculty providing an academic staff mentor for Chapter.

Sydney College of the Arts
We will investigate establishing a Graduate School Committee, constituted primarily by postgraduate students, to represent the concerns of the cohort, provide support to existing programs, and initiate and facilitate social and fundraising events.

Sydney Nursing School
The higher degree by research student representative will be encouraged to meet with elected representatives of the Sydney Nursing School Student Society (SUNS – Sydney University Nursing Society) to discuss the possibility of forming a research student chapter. SUNS holds a range of social activities throughout the year, including an annual ball.

A Research Student newsletter will be sent electronically to all higher degree by research students each quarter and previous student profile pictures and bios will be reinstated on the website.

3.4.2 Research community and culture (collaborative research, seminars, workshops, conferences)

Agriculture and Environment
Promote cross-linking and interdisciplinarity between the three departments in the Faculty.

Increase the emphasis on departmental interactions to promote research climate, in particular by encouraging co-supervision of research students by members of different departments.

Arts and Social Sciences
First annual Divisional higher degree by research conference on 27 November 2013.

Dentistry
Concentration of research at Westmead.

A faculty register of research expertise to provide a first port of call for all enquiries; access to a tissue databank; coordination of clinical research.

Education and Social Work
Increasingly throughout 2013 there have been more email invitations sent to research students to attend cross-disciplinary seminars within the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences.

By the end of 2013, a ‘SharePoint’ site will go live where research students in the DHSS can see and participate in cross-disciplinary events.
**Engineering and Information Technologies**

The Graduate School is committed to improving its research climate for students and has sought to do so by holding events throughout the year to encourage cross-discipline collaboration. Such events include an annual student conference, the Research Conversazione, the Three Minute Thesis Competition and the Research Methods Induction Workshop.

In 2009 the Graduate School implemented the initiative of an annual student conference with the aim of improving the research climate and encouraging cross-collaboration between various disciplines. Through analysing student feedback, the Graduate School has sought to continuously improve the running of this event to promote student participation and encourage external industry sponsors to support research ventures. In 2012 this event attracted prize money for students from sponsors in excess of $4500 and drew an audience of over 170.

In 2013 for the first time the Graduate School introduced Faculty Heats for the University’s Three Minute Thesis Competition with the aim of improving the research climate and promoting presentation skills in research candidates. The heats were tremendously successful attracting 26 participants and were met with positive feedback from both participants and judges. It is anticipated that this event will be held as an annual event.

**Health Sciences**

In 2013 the Faculty introduced Faculty based 3MT Heats and the higher degree by research completion seminars where students nearing completion provide a 30 minute synopsis of their research to the Faculty.

Reinstating the Biennial FHS higher degree by research conference from 2014.

Review and expansion of higher degree by research annual workshops (ongoing).

**Pharmacy**

Improve the research culture and climate by encouraging students and supervisors to regularly attend the weekly Faculty seminar program, and also encourage students to maximise cross divisional and centrally offered opportunities.

Seminars and workshops will be coordinated and offered at a Divisional level (Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing) and attendance will be open to all divisional higher degree by research students.

Higher degree by research students are encouraged to actively participate in research theme activities and invited to attend activities across all themes to encourage collaboration. Theme activities and meetings will be organised in a central calendar which will be available to all higher degree by research students.

**Sydney Business School**

Research Unit staff network informally, when at the Research Centre, at colloquiums and workshops or at social events. The Program Manager is also in regular contact with Postgraduate Coordinators and supervisors for advice on policy and procedures relating to higher degree by research candidates.

We have recently implemented a Doctoral Colloquium for all incoming candidates at the end of their first session, where they present their work to senior academic staff who mentor them and give them feedback. There is a 3 minute thesis session at the Colloquium for students to practice their communication and presentation skills and the winner is selected for the University 3 minute thesis competition.

**Sydney College of the Arts**

Prior to the SREQ results we instituted a dedicated seminar program for MFA students in the third semester of their candidature, which replaces their attendance at the PhD forums and more accurately reflects the concerns and needs of MFA research outcomes. This program will continue, and be reviewed after one year.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**

The research methods seminar sessions are already making an impact on student experience (where the most negative aspect has been about isolation.

**Sydney Law School**

Improve integration within the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences: The Law School’s inclusion in the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences enables opportunities for our research students to meet and
discuss their work with students and staff of related disciplines. There have been developments in the Division that highlight the opportunities for law students. In November 2013 there will be a conference for postgraduate research students in the Division. The conference theme is social justice—a topic that resonates across many of the faculties and schools. There have been numerous training seminars, mostly offered by Education and Social Work, that I understand have been enthusiastically taken up by law students. A Division SharePoint site is about to be released which will inform students of events and training that they can participate in. The inclusion of the Law School within the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences creates interdisciplinary research training opportunities that were not previously available.

**Improve student involvement in faculty life:** There are numerous opportunities available. First, PG research students are currently informed by email of all seminars and functions held in the School. However, students’ participation in such events is low. The Dean of the School has informed supervisors that they should take personal responsibility to inform and encourage students to attend such events. Secondly, the research clusters within the School hold regular workshops. Students do attend these and in doing so should develop an understanding of the research methodologies and approaches of academic staff. The research clusters should also be encouraged to have students present their work in these workshops. Thirdly, the Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) has suggested to the PG research students that a monthly seminar series should be developed for their needs. Such seminars would relate to staff members’ research, methodology and ethics. It would also provide a regular meeting for students to get to know each other and staff. This was discussed in a recent meeting with the Postgraduate Research Law Students’ Committee and will be discussed again in early 2014.

**Sydney Nursing School**
Research workshops in February and November (2 days) and the annual Research Week event (mid-year) will continue. Students have provided a wide range of topics they would like organised for 2013-14.

**Veterinary Science**
The satisfaction with the research climate remained similar to 2010, but was higher than the University average. The research culture could be improved by greater participation of supervisors in the Faculty seminars and supporting students to present at these. The PERT committee have worked with senior faculty management to encourage greater participation of supervisors and staff in developing our research culture. Various approaches have been implemented to encourage greater participation in the Faculty seminar series. These efforts have been directed at greater participation from supervisors and Faculty staff to encourage a research culture from the top down.

A new initiative will be to provide seminar presentations across our two campuses so students have access to all seminar presentations.

Research publication is encouraged with the provision of Faculty funded incentives to postgraduate students. This year the Faculty contributed $16,000 to this activity.

**3.4.3 Work environment (induction, orientation, integration into faculty, supportive environment)**

**Agriculture and Environment**
The coming two years has the potential to be a period of considerable change and restructuring for the faculty. Considerable action will be required to ensure a smooth transition for higher degree by research students in this process, and to maintain a supportive research climate for the rest of the faculty.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Introduction of the first two-day higher degree by research orientation and induction program in March 2013, with a smaller event in August 2013. From 2014, this will be a Divisional event (with Law and Education and Social Work).

**Dentistry**
Focussing on team work to address significant problems will be a key aspect in raising morale.

**Engineering and Information Technologies**
In response to student feedback, in 2010 the Graduate School changed its semester-length Research Induction program to a two-day event for commencing research candidates including an Induction and a full day Workshop. The Graduate School is committed to streamlining this event to ensure that the information
given to commencing students is concise and relevant so based on the feedback received from students in 2011/12, the Induction program will be trialled in 2013 as a one day event. This event will include a variety of presenters from across the University and from within the Faculty, including current students that will provide a first-hand experience of what to expect. The benefits of condensing this program into one day will be evaluated in assessing the feedback from students after the event.

Health Sciences
The higher degree by research orientation program is reviewed and improved each semester to ensure depth and breadth of content.

The Faculty is working towards providing Webinars i.e. to be integrated into electronic media for part time/remote students via blackboard or website (or both).

Pharmacy
Higher degree by research students will be invited to Faculty networking and socialisation opportunities, such as the monthly Dean’s Drinks. Additional opportunities for socialisation between higher degree by research students will be promoted by the Faculty when appropriate.

Sydney Nursing School
The E-communities site (Research Hub) will be revisited and revamped. The student representative will be more involved in content. RSU staff will check that all current students have access. A process for format and updating will be negotiated.

3.4.4 Career development and planning

Arts and Social Sciences
The major strategy has been to build on the already good individual supervision experience with provision of more structured collective research experiences for our higher degree by research students, so that they are better equipped to enter academic life or other research-oriented callings.

Revised Teaching Fellows program for final year higher degree by research students.

3.4.5 Evaluation and feedback

Health Sciences
Building in feedback loops for seminars and orientation and other specific higher degree by research events.

Sydney Business School
We are continually improving the student experience by gathering feedback on specific issues from candidates and UoS Coordinators which supplements the ITL feedback. Recently feedback was sought from candidates and UoS Coordinators on the integration of FASS candidates into Business School higher degree by research UoS.
4 Graduate Attributes/ Generic Skills

4.1 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.

For reporting purposes, qualitative data relating to Graduate Attributes is divided into the five University Graduate Attribute clusters:

1. **Communication skills** includes: oral communication; written communication; and presentation.

2. **Ethical, social, professional understanding** includes: collaboration and teamwork; ethical, social, cultural understanding; and professional skills including academic.

3. **Information literacy** includes: retrieval and use of information; computing skills e.g. using EndNote, searching databases etc.; and referencing.

4. **Personal and intellectual autonomy** includes: independent learning; planning own work; intellectually curious; and new ways of thinking, etc.

5. **Research and inquiry** includes: analytical, critical, problem solving; expanding knowledge base; creativity and imagination; statistical skills; and research skills

4.2 Trends in qualitative data analysis

The following chart provides an indication of the focus of comments relating Graduate Attributes. More detailed information is found in Quality of research higher degree training at the University of Sydney: 2012: Section 3: SREQ Factors: Trends and key issues (Part Four: Graduate Attributes)

![Figure 4: Graduate Attributes: Distribution of comments: 2009 – 2012](image)

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<tr>
<td>5 Research and Inquiry</td>
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Graduate Studies Office, December 2013
4.3 Examples of best practice
The following information was provided by faculties as examples of best practice relating to Graduate Attributes.

**Agriculture and Environment**
Students comment most positively on the training that is given them to become independent researchers. This is enhanced by the academic breadth of the Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, which is home to researchers in subjects ranging from Soil Physics through Molecular Biology to Resource Economics. This breadth allows the students the opportunity to attend seminars and gather expertise from a truly interdisciplinary palette of staff knowledge.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Improved written and presentation skills through programs such as the ‘Introduction to Thesis Writing’ and ‘Writing a Thesis Chapter’ run by Dr Bronwyn Dyson.

**Dentistry**
The Research methods course is successful.

**Education and Social Work**
Although below the university average of 80% faculty scores for generic skills were high at 72% with domestic students reporting higher satisfaction (75%) than their international counterparts (65%).

**Health Sciences**
An enhanced orientation/induction program for commencing higher degree by research students which incorporates research integrity and ethics, workplace health and safety; clarity around expectations of the supervisory relationship, procedural information, funding schemes, scholarships, publications and thesis submission. This is one of the strategies implemented on the basis of feedback from the 2011 report that has been identified by the Faculty as having a positive impact on the 2012 results.

**Pharmacy**
While the faculty continues to identify areas for improvement and strives to improve the higher degree by research student experience, the persistent high rate of satisfaction in the category of Graduate Attributes is a cumulative result of the overall quality of higher degree by research programs offered by the Faculty of Pharmacy. The results reveal that students feel prepared to conduct their own scientific research and enquiry upon graduation, and, through their degree program, have developed personal and intellectual autonomy along with excellent communication skills. Pharmacy higher degree by research graduates are employed in key industry, government and academic roles, reflecting the high level of skill attained through a research degree in the Faculty of Pharmacy.

**Sydney Business School**
The Business School has put significant resources into research training (six UoS are offered to candidates by top specialists in each area – 3 UoS are mandatory for MPhil and 6 are mandatory for PhD students). This ensures that our candidates are well equipped to conduct their research projects. All candidates undergo two 3hr writing skills sessions.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
In response to feedback from the supervision workshop, we have developed and realised a set of first year milestones for PhD candidates, to be evaluated at the probation review. These milestones are supported by an amplified, tailored program of first year PhD seminars, designed to equip students with the skills required to accomplish the milestones. These milestones also establish clear expectations for supervisors overseeing new PhD candidates.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
Two compulsory research methods seminars.

**Sydney Law School**
The Law School has for many years provided students with research training through three units of study. All three are mandatory for PhD students and the first is mandatory for Masters research students. These units introduce methodology techniques and issues, enable students to meet and get to know each other, and most importantly help students to refine their thesis and manage the difficulties that arise in the writing process. There are sometimes concerns raised by students who are practising lawyers as to whether these
units of study should be compulsory, however the current Dean and Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) are strongly committed to the units and that they remain mandatory.

Increase access to skills training relevant to research higher degree students (strategy identified in the 2011 report): The report does not focus on skills training. However, there has been greatly increased access to, and take-up of, such training since 2011. The 2011 faculty report refers to 10 students attending the US Studies Centre skills training, paid for by the Law School other students attended this training in 2012 however it was cancelled in 2013. There has also been an increase in skills training offered by the Division of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2012 and 2013 which have been taken up by Law School students. (See 4.4. below)

**Sydney Medical School**
Administratively, SMS’s research committee has become the Research and Research Training Committee and Office for Research and Research Training is actively engaged in supporting research training, both reflecting SMS’s commitment to excellence in research training.

SMS is also actively engaged in the SEG Research Committee’s review of the Research Training Needs Analysis (RTNA). The faculty recognises the value of a RTNA but is keen to see the implementation of a streamlined and constructive instrument.

**Veterinary Science**
Extra statistical support is now available with the appointment of another part time staff member.

### 4.4 Strategies and initiatives
The following is a list of strategies and initiatives that faculties are implementing to improve the Graduate Attributes of their research higher degree students.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Construction of a Divisional Research Training Needs website to inform higher degree by research students and their supervisors of research training opportunities.

**Education and Social Work**
Students with English as a second language would appreciate help with communication and academic writing. Students may not have been aware of the Learning Centre’s courses for non-English background postgraduate students.

**Engineering and Information Technologies**
In 2013, the School of Civil Engineering has introduced a series of Thesis Writing Workshops for its research students and the Graduate School is planning to introduce this model to all schools. This is intended to improve the writing skills for research students in an environment that is specifically designed for their disciplinary needs.

**Health Sciences**
Appointment of a biostatistician – available for staff and research students.

**Sydney Business School**
There is a 3 minute thesis session at the Doctoral Colloquium for students to practice their communication and presentation skills and the winner is selected for the University 3 minute thesis competition.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
A tighter faculty understanding of policy regarding admission, progression and completion will help in the coordination of meaningful developments in student experience. Changing the formal curriculum elements and using the RTNA will also assist.

**Sydney Law School**
Increase access to skills training relevant to research higher degree students: there is an increasing recognition that some law students need more developed empirical research training. The Postgraduate Research Committee has started to plan how such training should be provided. The Committee has decided to make this their primary project for 2014.
Veterinary Science
In general, the development of the generic skills is ranked highly. The graduate attributes were ranked higher than the University average but slightly lower than 2010. The main area of concern seemed to be statistical support. The Faculty, in 2012, increased the statistical support available to students by employing an extra staff member to help in this area. It is felt that this will help alleviate some of the students concerns in this area.
5 Overall Satisfaction

5.1 Coverage
This single item in the survey instrument asks students about their overall level of satisfaction with their research higher degree experience. In the analysis of the qualitative data, additional aspects, which are not covered in other areas of the survey, but which contribute to the overall satisfaction of the research higher degree student experience area included e.g. satisfaction with research, flexibility of program, quality of degree (pressure to complete, coursework, field work, overseas research), and reputation of the university/faculty.

For reporting purposes, qualitative data relating to Overall Satisfaction is divided into three main subcategories, or key issues:

1. **Flexibility of the program** includes: freedom to follow own research; choose own topics; compared to undergraduate degree; flexible working hours.

2. **Quality of degree** includes: length; inclusion of coursework, practical aspects, including field work and visits to other institutions in Australia and overseas.

3. **Satisfaction with research** includes: research topic, contribution to field

5.2 Trends in qualitative data analysis
The following chart provides an indication of the focus of comments relating to Overall Satisfaction. More detailed information is found in *Quality of research higher degree training at the University of Sydney: 2012: Section 3: SREQ Factors: Trends and key issues (Part Five: Overall Satisfaction)*

**Figure 5: Overall Satisfaction: Distribution of comments: 2009 – 2012**

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility of program</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of degree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction with research</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
5.3 Examples of best practice
The following information was provided by faculties as examples of best practice relating to Graduate Attributes.

**Arts and Social Sciences**
Departments with relevant and inclusive seminar and workshop programs rate highly. This practice relates closely to positive feedback on *Overall Satisfaction* (See FASS SREQ report 2012, 3.5.2 on p.31)

**Education and Social Work**
Overall Satisfaction was also high with 79% of students providing a positive response, again this was significantly higher for domestic students than international students. Students were satisfied with the value of their research and its contribution to the field of knowledge and appreciate the flexibility of setting their own research direction.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**
Flexible performance opportunities; inclusion of ensemble work.

**Sydney Nursing School**
Despite dissatisfaction with infrastructure and research climate, respondents have recorded their highest level of overall satisfaction on the SREQ within the reporting period (2007 – 2012).

**Veterinary Science**
Postgraduate Coordinators: students are linked with an academic, postgraduate coordinator at induction. It is highlighted to the students that this can be a first point of contact for them if they are faced with any issue during their degree.

5.4 Strategies and initiatives
The following is a list of strategies and initiatives that faculties are implementing that fall within the remit of Overall Satisfaction.

**Dentistry**
Perusal/ approval of postgraduate projects by the Research Committee requires a more vigorous approach.

**Science**
In general we aim to make much greater use of the Faculty of Science Postgraduate Board of Research to share best practice amongst our partner schools.

**Veterinary Science**
While individual students have identified specific issues, the measure of overall satisfaction was high especially with the international students where it was 100%. This level of satisfaction was slightly higher than the University average but slightly down on the 2010 level (around 5%). This might be related to the many changes seen in the Faculty in 2011 – 2012.
Part Two  Communication Strategies
This part of the report addresses the strategies implemented within faculties to communication information relating to research higher degrees. It is arranged as follows:

1. General comments
2. Communication with research higher degree students
3. Communication with academic staff
4. Communication with postgraduate administrative staff

Each section is arranged by faculty and includes strategies and responses where provided.

NB: Faculties responded to this question either in terms of communicating the results of the report, or in terms of faculty communication strategies to students, academics and postgraduate administrative staff.

1  General comments

*Agriculture and Environment*

In previous years, the major strategy for communication in the postgraduate field has been the holding of an annual Postgraduate Forum, where staff and students have been separately asked to discuss and respond to the results tabled in the SREQ report. In 2013, the Faculty postgraduate management team was renewed (appointment of a new Associate Dean, Postgraduate, and of a new Postgraduate Administrator), and while the new team is establishing itself, a Postgraduate Forum has not yet taken place. In addition, the re-introduction of a departmental structure in 2012 has had a considerable effect on the organization of the Faculty, and communication strategies are now dominated by departmental communication, rather than communication on a Faculty level. From 2013, the departmental postgraduate coordinators have therefore assumed a more important role in this communication than was previously held by the Research Group PG coordinators.

2  Communication with research higher degree students

*Agriculture and Environment*

**Strategies**

- Improve communication of progression requirements, using targeted workshops and departmental communications.
- Implement an e-community website to provide a forum for Postgraduate students to communicate, and as a central source of information regarding scholarships, progression requirements, Annual progress review scheduling etc.
- Integrate seminar programs between departments to provide a more uniform experience for students across departments.

**Responses**

Students report a perceived need for more clarity about progression requirements, and more feedback on written work during their candidature. Since these requirements are already in place, it is clear that this information needs to be provided more clearly to both students and academic staff.

While some students report good exposure to international speakers and seminars, others have requested more such opportunities.

*Arts and Social Sciences*

The 2012 results have not been used in communication with HDR students, although they have informed the Faculty’s broader HDR student communication strategies, such as the Divisional Research Training Needs website.

*Dentistry*

**Strategies**

- Improve and maintain the faculty’s research page.
- Provide supervisory environment that facilitates progress.
Responses
In a competitive environment the number of overseas students enquiring about PhD training has been maintained.

**Education and Social Work**

**Strategies**
The Office of Doctoral Studies has two student representatives on the ODS Management Committee. The students act as a communication conduit for the matters arising from the students as well as information to flow back to the students from the committee.

In the first RHD student Forum in 2013 (April) Professor Freebody gave a keynote address to students on the findings and recommendations of the Research Training review. The big emphasis in this was on rounded research training as opposed to a singular focus on the thesis (in keeping with the University wide research training objectives).

On admissions we have instituted individual interviews with all applicants to ensure that they understand the time requirements for the degree and status (p/t or f/t) prior to making formal offers with the aim of deterring students who are not prepared to spend sufficient time of their candidature and to emphasise the new expanding research training expectations in their degree.

**Responses**
The committee supported the student’s initiative to establish a social media page on Blackboard for the Faculty’s RHD students so that they could communicate with each other – this has been developed throughout 2013.

Students have participated in the research modules and attended to the RT assessments.
New students have entered their degree prepared to spend sufficient time on their study and to engage in the broad research training offerings by the faculty and the Division.

**Engineering and Information Technologies**

**Strategies**
The SREQ results have been communicated to the representatives of the HDR students through School committee meetings. To ensure these are communicated to all research students across the faculty, the Graduate School will produce a summary of the SREQ results (including information on the faculty’s response) which will be placed on the current student website. Once this has been implemented an email will be sent to all HDR students to direct them to the website.

**Health Sciences**

**Strategies**
The SREQ results have been communicated to the representatives of the higher degree by research students through the Faculty Higher degree by research Committee and via the other higher degree by research representatives. The faculty will also make available a summary of the SREQ results and the Faculty’s response to the SREQ. This information will be made available on the Faculty’s current higher degree by research student website and the availability of these documents will be communicated to students via the student newsletter (sent to all currently enrolled higher degree by research students).

**Responses**
There are no responses to date although the student representative on the higher degree by research committee contributed to the discussion and suggestions arising from the Faculty higher degree by research sub-committee.

**Pharmacy**

**Strategies**
The Postgraduate Coordinator met with selected student representatives, representing the research themes and including both domestic and international students to discuss the results.

**Responses**
Feedback was solicited from the students and actions were discussed to address the concerns raised in the report. The Postgraduate Coordinator presented an action plan as outlined in the initiatives section to address the issues raised. (See Part One of this report)
Science
The 2012 results have not been using communication with higher degree by research students, but formed an important information source in the development of the Graduate Research Entity. (See Part One: Section 1.4.1 for explanation of Graduate Research Entity)

Sydney Business School
Strategies
An executive summary of the report is being generated to highlight pertinent information for circulation to our HDR students and this will form part of our current review of the HDR student communications strategy.

Responses
We are investigating the use of BB as an integrated platform for HDR student communications and information provision so the SREQ information will be pivotal to the outcome of this review.

Sydney College of the Arts
Strategies
All HDR students were emailed a brief explanation of the SREQ and a link to the 2012 faculty report online. These students were invited to send or make known their comments on the report, additional feedback and/or any suggested improvements to the Graduate School Manager.

Responses
We received one email response from a first year PhD candidate, reiterating the excellent service & support provided by the SCA Library, and nominating infrastructure & supervision as areas requiring improvement.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Strategies
We disseminated the results of the survey in the graduate seminar and asked candidates to respond with developmental ideas.

Responses
They were dismissive of the isolation comments indicating that there were many opportunities to be involved in campus life. The current cohort has good access to space and rehearsal time and were happy with the changes since 2011. They were keen to establish how often they should see their supervisors through candidacy. Many found the RTNA helpful, and others found it irrelevant.

Sydney Law School
Strategies
The Associate Dean (Postgraduate Research) met with the Postgraduate Research Law Students’ Committee on 13 November 2013 to discuss the report. The members of the Committee expressed their views about the difficulties regarding the computer lab and the lack of integration into the faculty.

Responses
A range of different responses were discussed. The Committee and the Associate Dean agreed to meet again in early 2014 to resolve a plan for better integration and to try to make the computer lab work better. One option that looks promising is the monthly lunch seminars (see 3.4.2).

Sydney Medical School
An article summarising the results of the SREQ and the faculty’s response was included in the September 5th edition of the SMS Newsletter which goes to all staff, students and affiliates (http://wordvine.sydney.edu.au/app/webroot/files/335/3330/).

Sydney Nursing School
Strategies
The results of the 2012 SREQ were summarised and presented to HRD students during our annual Research Week (17 – 21st June 2013). A written summary of the SREQ report was prepared and tabled at the HRD student meeting. A section of this summary is copied below [in italics]. Students were asked to discuss and provide comment.
 Extract from ADR Report to HDR students

Many positive comments were received on a range of subjects and this is both exciting and encouraging. However, Sydney Nursing School is striving to do better, and we are interested in any ideas you might have. An analysis of your written comments indicates that the top three areas in need of improvement at Sydney Nursing School are:

1. IT support (access to computers plus access to programs on own computer)
2. Student services provided through Sydney Medical School (confusion and not feeling part of Nursing and Midwifery faculty)
3. Financial support (accommodation, travel, scholarships)

Student comments on those aspects of candidature that are identified as most in need of improvement (in no particular order) are summarised below. Some actions/responses are suggested but we would love to hear your thoughts, ideas or innovative solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested improvements</th>
<th>Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More opportunities to meet with researchers (including within Faculty)</td>
<td>GoSSiP and Brown Bag Lunches were ceased this year due to consistently poor attendance. Research student workshops (2 days) are held twice per year in February and November. Does this work for you?</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Research Week includes national and international researcher and student presentations – in 2013 free time has again been programmed for interaction and networking with faculty. Academics from faculty are included as presenters. Does this work for you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment and administrative processes</td>
<td>Managed by Sydney Medical School and under Divisional structure for Board of Postgraduate Studies. Specific feedback would be helpful to get to what part of the process is not working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial support (scholarships, conferences, research dissemination)</td>
<td>Postgraduate Research Support Scheme fund distribution. How to become more competitive for APA/UPA?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2013 is the first year Skellern Scholarship is offered. Can you recommend different things to try?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing work and study</td>
<td>Has anyone got something to share with others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking and cost of transport</td>
<td>Difficult to resolve – a problem for Sydney staff also but any ideas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student access to resources</td>
<td>The university released a new policy on minimum student resources Dec 2011. There is some confusion about what students are entitled to and what is additional support e.g. we are not required to give every student a laptop and the University IT department is not required to service your private laptop. We have developed a document (attached) outlining what we provide at this time. This document is distributed to all new students at orientation (Feb). Any comments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling ‘connected’ and supported by the school and by other students</td>
<td>Confused and feeling isolated when candidature is managed through Sydney Medical School and under Divisional structure for Board of Postgraduate Studies. We will start a newsletter from us to you, and we are constantly in contact with the Medical School but this structure will not change. Any specific feedback on what is not working?</td>
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</table>

Responses

HRD students provided a written response to the ADR and PGC (minutes of the meeting). Edited sections of these minutes are below:

- Communication:
  - Newsletter – students would like to be able to contribute e.g. conferences attended, funding opportunities, new important news most visible, links to website e.g. peer abstract pages.
  - University website difficult to navigate – E-Community has never been fully utilised.
- Discussion regarding the Sydney University App and the Lost On Campus App; each works differently i.e., a resource site vs. community site, and each is available in iOS and Android/Windows format. Websites such as the University of Melbourne (http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/handbooks/phd/) is a standard that should be sought.
- Internet issues: All student abstracts and photos are no longer on the website. We thought it was a peer resource and a student recruitment tool with potential as a participant recruitment tool. There are currently four bios only and they are not appearing to change monthly. The group felt that it was of great benefit to have everyone’s research be concurrently posted on the website instead of the ‘highlights’ in place.
- Funding issues: Early and clearer information on scholarships to be distributed please.
- Re-enrolment errors: Straw poll: has occurred for a few students only.
- Future workshop topics:
  - A range of issues recur and are not adequately catered for by the University website:
  - Long document formatting.
Requirements e.g. basic information such as thesis font (Times New Roman because we use APA), single and double spacing, word-count limits etc. We are aware that it’s on the SUPRA site but this remains unavailable.

Student workshop where we bring our computers to learn where to find resources which we can then save to our own favourite’s folder or preferred place, and share resources we have found independently. Similar to the library session.

Student Representative: Needs to be in early stages of candidature.

Veterinary Science

Strategies

The frequency of communication between students and supervisors remains an essential component of the annual review process. The faculty has remote students and catering for these can be difficult but with the new technologies available is can be managed far better now.

Students with issue related to communication with supervisors are encouraged to work with their PG coordinators to solve any issue early.

The maintenance of an e-communities site provides direct student access to many of the formal administrative procedures, student support services, details of thesis submission and the various WH&S obligations of students.

Responses

During Probationary and annual review the communication between supervisor and student is given significant consideration by the PG coordinators. The significance for remote student is given adequate consideration during these reviews.

Early intervention to communication problems has been successful. Once an issue is identified it is followed up by the Associate-Dean, Sub-Dean and at PERTc meetings until satisfactorily resolved.

Students are now encouraged to make the e-communities site their first point of call when trying to source information about their candidature.

3 Communication with academic staff

Agriculture and Environment

Strategies

Implementation of regular higher degree by research best practice workshops in the Faculty, focussing on specific topics of concern (e.g. scholarships; research support funding for students; managing problems with students that are not progressing; effective candidature management; supervisory policy and recruitment of high-achieving PhD students.

Encouragement of new supervisory practices (e.g. co-supervision, panel supervision) through active mentoring of academic staff during the student application process (coordination between the Postgraduate Coordinators and the Postgraduate Research Administrator).

Responses

Academic staff have commented on the need for more transparency concerning allocation of research support funding and of the criteria used to award scholarships.

Academic staff have requested more information on University policy concerning supervision and supervisory structures.

New academic staff, in particular, have commented on the need for clearer communication of Faculty policy concerning supervision, especially when taking on their first postgraduate student.

Arts and Social Sciences

The results of the 2012 SREQ have been discussed by the FASS Postgraduate Research Committee and by the Dean’s Executive Committee. Further identification and dissemination of good practice examples from across the Faculty is being undertaken.
Dentistry

Strategies
The draft workload policy allows supervisory commitments to count towards teaching hours.

Collaboration to facilitate achievement of research targets.

Responses
There is a new perception of career progression through postgraduate research supervision.

Education and Social Work

Strategies
At Faculty meetings staff have been informed of the Research Training review with a presentation by Professor Freebody and have been briefed on the RT needs assessment. This has included discussions about the load of research higher degree students both for the faculty in budgetary terms and for individual supervisors and its impact on workloads.

Academic staff recruited to chair APRs were specially briefed by the Associate Dean (Research higher degree) on the key targets in the progress reviews of reducing untimely completions and ensuring appropriate follow-up for students facing progress difficulties.

Responses
Academic staff have been more aware of strategies adopted by the ODS in the faculty and are cooperating regarding research training needs. Academic staff have also been generously participating in the research models in the faculty.

Due to an excellent level of participation in the chairing process, the APRs in 2013 have resulted in a very thorough alerting to problems and efficient follow-up for all students experiencing any delays in their progress.

Engineering and Information Technologies

Strategies
The SREQ results have been distributed to all academic staff in the Faculty and discussed at the Faculty Research Training Committee and in School Board meetings.

Responses
Some academic staff members have submitted comment/suggestions for improvements.

Health Sciences

Strategies
The SREQ results have been discussed at the Faculty Executive, Faculty Research Committee, and the Faculty higher degree by research sub-committee, where the Faculty research groups are represented.

Responses
A number of the initiatives noted in the Faculty response arose from these discussions.

Pharmacy

Strategies
The report was tabled and discussed at a Pharmacy Research Committee meeting.

Postgraduate Coordinator and Associate Dean Research presented the 2012 results to the Faculty at a special forum focussing on higher degree by research students.

Responses
Discussion and feedback were solicited from both the Faculty and Research Committee. Feedback was received that a shared understanding of expectations between supervisors and students was needed.

Science

The 2012 results have not been using communication with academic staff, but formed an important information source in the development of the Graduate Research Entity. (See Part One: Section 1.4.1 for explanation of Graduate Research Entity)
**Sydney Business School**

**Strategies**
The report was circulated to key academic staff and board members and was discussed with them at:
- Disciplinary higher degree by research co-ordinators meetings
- Research Committee meeting
- Business School Board meeting
- We are also presenting an overview of the report as part of Disciplinary “roadshows” over the course of 2013.

**Responses**
The report, and feedback on it, has been used as input to the current round of refinements to the program in the areas of admissions, supervision and research training.

**Sydney College of the Arts**

**Strategies**
The link to the 2012 SREQ and the faculty response were sent to members of the Research Committee and the Senior Management team (this group consists of the Dean, Associate Dean (Research), Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Heads of Department, and executive professional staff. Members were asked to review the report and provide feedback. The link to the 2012 SREQ was circulated to all academic and professional staff in the next Dean’s newsletter.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**

**Strategies**
The SREQ report was discussed at our Chairs’ meeting, at the Research Committee and during our supervisor development program.

**Responses**
The use of the RTNA was discussed at length, the probation initiatives endorsed.

**Sydney Law School**

**Strategies**
There have been numerous communication strategies used with staff. The Dean emailed all academic staff when the 2012 report was received notifying them of the postgraduate students’ concerns and suggesting options for better integration of students into academic staff’s activities.

The Associate Dean also raised the concerns for discussion at a Faculty meeting. The ensuing discussion raised some important points about steps that had previously been used to address such matters. The Associate Dean met with the Teaching and Curriculum Committee to discuss the report. That Committee has a lot of experience with student concerns and faculty responses.

**Responses**
It was commonly suggested that supervisors should take personal responsibility for inviting and encouraging students to take part in Faculty events. The Associate Dean Postgraduate Research will also have to take responsibility for informing supervisors of this.

**Sydney Medical School**
The results of the SREQ are discussed at SMS’s Research and Research Training Committee, Combined Board of Postgraduate Studies (CBPGS) and Dean’s Advisory Committee. The latter is comprised of Heads of Schools and Heads of Disciplines, while the CBPGS is comprised of Sub-Deans (postgraduate research) for each school and for the larger affiliated medical research institutes. Supervisors receive the results of the survey through the School and Discipline distribution lists and from the SMS newsletter.

**Sydney Nursing School**

**Strategies**
The 2012 SREQ results have been communicated to academic and professional staff at the:

1. Faculty Management Committee (membership includes Dean, Associate Deans and Faculty Manager): meetings in June and July 2013
2. Faculty Research and Research Training Committee Meeting (membership includes representative from Faculty of Health Sciences, post doc, higher degree by research student representative and health industry partners): meetings of 25th June and 13th August 2013.
4. Faculty Meeting (all faculty present): meeting on 15th August 2013.

Responses
Strategies and approaches are supported by academic staff.

**Veterinary Science**

**Strategies**

Development of staff supervision skills and student management are encouraged in the Faculty. A workshop for new academic staff was held where senior staff presented on a range of issues related to supervision, research funding and ways of managing difficult situations.

Responses
Newly appointed staff have quickly integrated into the research culture and mentoring is strongly encouraged by the faculty.

4. Communication with Postgraduate administrative staff

**Agriculture and Environment**

**Strategies**

The faculty has limited administrative support for postgraduate research, with only one full time administrator designated for this responsibility, though other administrative staff members also assist where necessary. This staff member works actively with the Associate Dean (Postgraduate) and the Faculty Manager. Development of new initiatives is actively discussed with the administrative staff, and they are encouraged to provide input and feedback. The Postgraduate Administrator also communicates actively with the Graduate Office and International Office, and provides an important line of communication for the Faculty.

Responses
There is a common frustration among the administrative staff about a perceived need to streamline administrative tasks which could be done online, and that Sydney Student is taking too long to achieve this. It should be possible to carry out processes like the APR largely using online tools to complement and record comments in the APR interview, in order to maximise continuity from year to year for the benefit of the students.

Because of the low level of support for postgraduate administration, staff recognise challenges in answering student requests during busy periods such as enrolments.

Administrative staff recognise the difficulties for students that arose during the staff changeover in 2012, which have since been resolved.

**Arts and Social Sciences**

The results of the 2012 SREQ have been discussed by the FASS Postgraduate Research Committee and by the Dean’s Executive Committee. Further identification and dissemination of good practice examples from across the Faculty is being undertaken.

**Dentistry**

**Strategies**

Audit of research support mechanisms.

Responses
Proposed new structure to streamline support and services.

**Education and Social Work**

**Strategies**

Ensuring adequate support for all processes in the student experience, particularly in relation to filling in for staff absences.

Responses
All processes have been managed very well.
**Engineering and Information Technologies**

**Strategies**
The SREQ results have been communicated to postgraduate administrative staff through School Board meetings and through the minutes of the Faculty Research and Research Training Committee.

**Health Sciences**

**Strategies**
The SREQ results have been communicated via the minutes of the Faculty Higher Degree Research Subcommittee.

**Responses**
Faculty now makes more regular use of well-formatted and informative email bulletins to all research higher degree students.

**Pharmacy**

**Strategies**
A meeting to discuss the results was held with the following in attendance: Dean, ADR, Faculty Manager, Postgraduate Coordinator and Research Services Officer.

The Research Services Officer and Student Coordinator (Postgraduate) attended the Research Committee Meeting when the report was tabled.

**Science**
The 2012 results have not been using communication with Professional Administrative staff, but formed an important information source in the development of the Graduate Research Entity. (See Part One: Section 1.4.1 for explanation of Graduate Research Entity)

**Sydney Business School**

**Strategies**
The report will be used by the Research Training UoS coordinators, Program Manager, DoD and Associate Dean Research to plan and implement change to the program on a continuous basis.

**Responses**
The report, and feedback on it, will be used to input to the higher degree by research Strategic Plan for 2014 which will be presented at the Business School Research Planning Day in September.

**Sydney College of the Arts**
The Graduate School Manager (who has sole responsibility for higher degree by research candidatures) is very familiar with the content of the SREQ report, participated in a needs analysis to improve the student experience, and has facilitated the other communication strategies.

**Sydney Conservatorium of Music**

**Strategies**
Use new application and audition process to streamline applications. Provide regular updates to supervisors and candidates regarding progression and completion requirements. Become the one stop for all higher degree by research administrative matters.

**Responses**
In progress.

**Sydney Law School**

**Strategies**
The 2012 report was forwarded to postgraduate administrative staff.

**Responses**
The information in the report will be used to inform administration and policies of the Postgraduate research program in 2014.

**Sydney Medical School**
Administrative staff responsible for higher degree by research candidates are copied into all correspondence from CBPGS. They also receive the results of the survey through the SMS newsletter.
**Sydney Nursing School**

**Strategies**
Progress in University strategic directions, divisionally based student administration and candidature management, and the resignation of a staff member within the Research Support Unit (July 2012) promoted a review of the support services offered by the faculty Research Support Unit during 2012. Two existing administrative positions had been created at a time when the faculty was fully responsible for all research student and staff matters (enrolment, candidature management, examination, grants and ethics management etc.). Since then, centralisation through the Research portfolio and student enrolment and candidature management through Student Services and the Combined Board of Postgraduate Studies at Sydney Medical School had significantly changed these roles.

In March 2013, 1.8 FTE administrative staff were employed under a new model to provide support to faculty HRD students, the ADR and PGC and members the professoriate (n=10). Currently, these staff are undergoing a range of orientation and training activities such as:

1. Establishing regular meetings with Student Services at Sydney Medical School to facilitate improved communication and share workload.
2. Attending training in web and other e-communication or e-learning tools applicable to HRD students.
3. Organising and updating a range of procedures and other materials relevant to HRD students and their supervisors.

**Responses**
It is gratifying to have a full complement of administrative support for research students in 2013 after a 1.0FTE vacancy for six months in 2012. This may be one of the frustrations reflected in the research infrastructure and research climate results for 2012.

HRD students were able to meet the newly appointed postgraduate administrative staff during Research Week (June 2013) and have already begun to utilise these positions as a communication conduit and information resource.

Both appointees have brought energy and excellent ideas to the Research Support Unit.

**Veterinary Science**

**Strategies**
Three faculty staff re responsibility for all aspects of postgraduate student enrolment, scholarship oversight, student support and the general administrative activities.

**Responses**
It is concerning that we could potentially lose this Faculty level support now that there are processes efforts to centralise many of these activities.