

FACULTY OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)
POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1 INTRODUCTION	3
2 ARRANGEMENT.....	3
3 ANALYSIS OF THE COMMENTS.....	3
4 ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS REFERRING TO THE BEST ASPECTS	4
5 ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS SUGGESTING IMPROVEMENTS.....	6

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments on the best aspects of their university experience and those that could be improved.

Based on the responses to these questions, this document seeks to provide an analysis of the areas of best practice, and opportunities for improvement, in the experiences of postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Economics and Business in 2005.

Degree experience: areas of best practice

The aspects of degree experience which attracted most positive comments from postgraduate research students in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Quality of supervision: supervisor	50%	48%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, building etc	24%	15%
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	14%	17%
Research climate: supportive work environment	14%	1%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	11%	11%
Generic skills: research skills	11%	1%

Degree experience: opportunities for improvement

The areas of degree experience which postgraduate research students considered most in need of improvement in 2005 were:

	% of comments received	
	2005	2004
Research climate: interaction with other research students (study related)	16%	15%
Research climate: seminars, workshops	16%	7%
Research climate: integration into faculty/ department/ school	11%	12%
Research climate: part of research community (general comments)	8%	4%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: not scholarships or PRSS	8%	
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	8%	

It should be noted that the percentage of comments received which mentioned the quality of supervision: supervisor as an area in need of improvement has fallen dramatically – from 18% and first place in 2004 to 6% and 8th place in 2005.

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1 Introduction

The Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), which evaluates the quality of research higher degree students' experiences, was introduced in 2002. As part of the questionnaire students are asked to provide comments postgraduate research students are asked to provide comments on the following:

- What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience?
- What aspects are most in need of improvement?

Based on the responses to these questions, this document seeks to provide an analysis of the areas of best practice, and opportunities for improvement, in the experiences of postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Economics and Business in 2005.

In 2005 77% of students who responded to the SREQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, and 57% on aspects that were considered to be in need of improvement. The substantial difference in the number of positive comments received compared to those expressing the opposite opinion, possibly indicates an overall satisfaction with the degree experience of postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Economics and Business.

2 Arrangement

1. Analysis of comments referring to best aspects of the degree course
2. Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved

Within each section, responses are ranked according to the percentage of comments received for each aspect. Sample comments are provided for the six aspects that received the highest percentage of comments. For comparison, results for the previous years qualitative analysis (2002 – 2004) are provided in brackets after the 2005 results.

Only aspects that received more than 5% of comments in 2005 are included in this report. To preserve student confidentiality, sample comments are only provided if there are six or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments that may possibly identify the student are not been included in the sample comments. Comments are transcribed exactly as they appear in the original documents.

3 Analysis of the comments: taxonomy and process

The manual analysis and evaluation method used by the University is based on an in-house taxonomy which allows for standardisation of reporting across the university and ease of comparison with the SREQ quantitative analysis reports. Within the taxonomy, categories used for the SREQ are identical to the SREQ factor scales, with the addition of Administration and organisation, Ethics Administration, Academic Board policies, International Office, and other administrative areas and support services¹. This taxonomy is under constant revision as the need to sub-divide categories and create new ones becomes apparent.

Each comment received is analysed according to the SREQ Taxonomy, with those including more than one aspect being counted in each aspect mentioned.

It should be noted, however, that the absence of favourable comments on a particular aspect of learning and teaching does not reflect that this is not an area of best practice. Rather that the students are happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting on areas in need of improvement.

¹ A copy of the taxonomy is provided as a separate document

4 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects²

Quality of supervision: supervisor (2005: 50%)
(2004: 48%; 2003: 38%; 2002: 23%)

- The enthusiasm, support and experience of my supervisors. Both are attentive to detail and have a seemingly endless supply of energy when it comes to facilitating research
- My experience of supervision has been exceptionally good. My supervisor has helped me develop my research skills. He has encouraged me, talked to others about my work and offered me publishing opportunities by working jointly with me after being offered solo publishing opportunities. My supervisor's generosity has inspired me to be generous with others in turn. He has turned the view of competitive academia on its head and instead encouraged a more collegial atmosphere in which I can work.
- Interaction with supervisor because this enabled me the thorough enquiry of why I do what I do and whether it is done to the highest standard
- My relationship with my supervisor who has been extremely supportive and provides very good guidance, and the thrill/ joy of working through my ideas and gaining knowledge

Quality of infrastructure: Physical facilities (2005: 24%)
(2004: 15%; 2003: 13%; 2002: 15%)

- My faculty offers great facilities (computers, desk, printer, common room) for its PhD students. This is an enormous privilege and provides an excellent working environment.
- Faculty research lab for students. The shared environment, and access to a work friendly space is great. Really overcomes isolation.
- The best aspects of my degree are the facilities provided to me for doing research and my research supervisor. The facilities are excellent and state-of-the-art and my supervisor is really nice and understanding.
- The post graduate research centre where I have a spacious ergonomic desk, fast computer and an easy to read flat screen monitor and access to a good printer. The centre is well managed by XXXXX. There, I am surrounded by fellow students and whilst I may not have research interests in common with them, it is very supportive to be in the company of so many fellow researchers.

Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research (2005: 14%)
(2004: 17%; 2003: 22%; 2002: 21%)

- Working intensively on an issue and research topic, having time to read and study and explore a topic thoroughly
- The best aspects of my higher degree experience is the whole research process. Half way through my program, I am starting to realise how invaluable and beneficial is the research process. My realisation is demonstrated in my current work and the way I deal with other areas of research. I am much more critical and analytical in the way I view reality.
- great to immerse myself in research
- Researching a topic that is of interest to me and presenting the results at national and international conferences and being published in an international journal.

² Number of comment received: 2005: 161; 2003: 143; 2002: 104; 2001: 154; 2000: 83

**Faculty of Economics and Business: Analysis of student experience:
Postgraduate research students: 2005**

Research climate: supportive work environment (2005: 14%)
(2004: 1%; 2003: 10%; 2002: 5%)

- I have found E&B showing interested in the area of research in which I am interested and supportive of it.
- Academic staff in department overall are very helpful and inspiring.
- Also, the collaborative environment of sharing and exchange ideas with others.
- Receiving good support from school staff and the collegiality of fellow students, helped focusing and solving problems as a group context.

Generic skills: graduate attributes (2005: 11%)
(2004: 11%; 2003: 13%; 2002: 11%)

- Improving my communication skills, writing up your own thesis entice you to communicate better your ideas in a feasible way.
- helping to develop an analytical mind
- Developing my mind and analytical skills, and my relationship with my supervisor. My supervisor is very supportive and my "guru" and we have good discussions about my work. I like to know that my mind is developing - although I am doing a PhD for personal interest, it is great to know that I am developing my skills.
- I am also able to apply my project management skills and problems solving skills in my work. These skills were developed through research. My ability now to present an argument in front of an audience. Before I was terrified of having an independent mind and being seen as non-conformist. Now I am more able to justify my argument. I am also more careful on what I say - I always make sure that I have evidence to back up my statement. It is exciting

Generic skills: research skills (2005: 11%)
(2004: 1%; 2003: 7%; 2002: 3%)

- Learning research techniques
- The ability to develop research, analytical skills and confidence.
- Writing skills, intellectual discussions and debate, increased research and analytical skills.
- Being able to transfer the skills that I learned in my research in real work situation particularly in policy development. Policy development require highly developed research skills.

Other aspects mentioned included:

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
Generic skills: working independently	7%	11%	5%	8%
Quality of supervision: management of candidature: guidance	5%	1%	2%	2%
Quality of infrastructure: funding (not scholarships or PRSS)	5%			
Administration and organisation: general	5%			

5 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements³

Research climate: interaction with other research students (study related) (2005: 16%)
(2004: 15%; 2003: 17%; 2002: 9%)

- More possibilities for communication with other research students (up to now I even don't know who are the students doing a research degree in the same discipline with me as there is no any occasion to meet them).
- Interaction with other research students and having a forum to exchange idea/experience.
- Little 'organised' opportunity to meet and discuss research with other higher degree researchers in Discipline.
- Ever since I have started doing research I feel isolated. Other people doing PhD etc in my Faculty are in a world of their own. I tend to feel socially deprived and feel that there is a need to interact more.

Research climate: seminars, workshops (2005: 16%)
(2004: 7%; 2002: 7%)

- 1. Departmental seminar series. Seminars appear to be sporadic and poorly advertised. 2. Communication of seminars & courses across the faculty/university that may be of relevance to me. So far I have only found out about great opportunities to learn by talking to my colleagues from other departments. Surely the university can find more effective ways of communicating.
- The seminar program is too inflexible and not properly designed to meet the needs of research students.
- Some seminars are too long and unnecessary for honours students.
- Greater differentiation between international relations/political economy students and staff, and Australian politics students and staff. The overlap of these two areas is not helpful in creating a stronger research culture in their areas. Separate seminars and informal gatherings should be organised..

Research climate: integration into faculty/ department/ school (2005: 11%)
(2004: 12%)

- links with faculty, students in a secure area removed from academic staff makes it a bit removed
- Personally I would like more day to day contact with what is going on in the Department. Why? To get a feel about what other people think about the writers I am reading or thoughts or directions I have on my topic.
- Sometimes interaction within my school is a little disjointed and the students are physically separated from staff resulting in less opportunities for informal communication than I would hope.
- Integration of research students into the research life of the faculty, particularly into faculty research programs and interests.

³ Number of comment received: 2005: 164; 2003: 153; 2002: 108; 2001: 168; 2000: 95

**Faculty of Economics and Business: Analysis of student experience:
Postgraduate research students: 2005**

Other aspects mentioned included:

NB: All the following aspects received less than six comments.

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
Research climate: part of research community (general comments)	8%	4%		13%
Quality of infrastructure: funding (not scholarships or PRSS)	8%			
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities	8%			
Research climate: social contact with research students	8%			
Quality of supervision: supervisor	6%	18%	22%	18%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	6%			7%
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings etc	6%	9%	17%	18%
Research community: part of research community (external to university)	6%			
Quality of infrastructure: scholarships or PRSS	5%	7%	9%	9%
Overall satisfaction: general comments	5%			
Overall satisfaction: quality of degree	5%	1%		