

FACULTY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ) ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2003

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

Introduction

The following document provides an analysis of the comments received in answer to the SREQ open response comments from postgraduate research students in the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources in 2003.

Students were asked to provide comments on the following:

- *What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience? Please explain why these aspects are good.*
- *What aspects are most in need of improvement? Please explain why.*

Each comment received was analysed for subject content and categorised into aspects which are closely aligned with the following SREQ Scales and their characteristics:

- *Quality of Supervision*
- *Quality of Infrastructure*
- *Research Climate*
- *Generic Skills*
- *Overall satisfaction*

Comments which included more than one aspect (e.g. quality of supervision and infrastructure) were counted in all aspects mentioned.

Arrangement

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

Responses are ranked according to the percentage of comments received for each aspect. Sample comments have been provided for the aspects that received the most number of comments. Results from the previous years qualitative analysis are provided as a percentage. Only aspects that received 5% or more comments in 2003 are included in this report. To preserve student confidentiality, sample comments are only provided if there are five or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments which may possibly identify the student are not included in sample comments.

Students are happy with their actual research/ project (2003: 25%)
(2002: 24%)

- My work has not been done before anywhere, so it gives lots of inspiration
- I have developed complete propagation protocol for Moreton Bay Fig and Port Jackson Fig. This is the newly developed area as well as low cost technology which can be adopted by the commercial users and ultimate users
- Will be helpful to reduce toxicity from soils. Will improve human health

Students appreciate the ability to work independently (2003: 18%)
(2002: 22%)

- Improve ability of independent working. You have to organise your own work. You will not be in a rush if you manage your time well
- The freedom to explore a topic of choice
- Gaining the ability to work independently and develop a stronger sense of motivation in order to achieve a desired outcome, or goal

Students are happy with their supervisor/ supervision (2003: 15%)
(2002: 20%)

- My supervisor is very much on top of things so there are no surprises
- My supervisors are supportive and encourage personal and professional development
- Supervision (I think it is about the first and foremost thing that I consider very necessary for postgraduate work). My supervisors are always in touch with me and are aware of whatever step I take

Students appreciate the physical facilities available (2003: 13%)
(2002: 7%)

- Access to technical equipment is good
- My research requirements. Resources are easily available whenever I need them e.g. the chemicals or tools used in my research can be easily ordered and they can become available in no time
- The availability of lab equipment and analytical machines is quite good within the department

Graduate attributes (communication, analytical skills etc) are being developed (2003: 11%)
(2002: 22%)

- Research higher degree experience has helped me to develop oral, written communication skills and I have developed confidence about handling difficult situations
- Developing own research and problem solving skills – improves research independence
- It has improved my analytical and problem solving skills

Other aspects mentioned included:

- | | | |
|--|-------------|------------|
| • Interaction with other PhD students | (2003: 11%) | (2002: 4%) |
| • Stimulating/ challenging nature of research | (2003: 8%) | (2002: 2%) |
| • Opportunities for collaboration and networking | (2003: 8%) | (2002: 7%) |
| • Flexibility of degree program | (2003: 7%) | |
| • Research resources/ library | (2003: 7%) | 2002: 4%) |
| • Feel part of a research community | (2003: 6%) | 2002: 13%) |

¹ Number of comments received: 2003: 71; 2002: 55

Students are unhappy with physical resources provided (2003: 31%)
(2002: 22%)

- Computer facility needs to be improved. We don't have good access to computer. The computer we have in the office is very old and I cannot even use A driver
- Poor facilities in the Ross St Building. We are working in an outdated asbestos building which was meant to be temporary fifty years ago and which has holes in the interior walls. I have concerns for the health of all staff and students who work in this building
- EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES: I am sorry to say but my institute P.B.I has one lab to offer 15 people i.e. scientists staff and students. And the use of equipment is prioritised often ending up in postponement leading to after hour work for students .I understand that its heaps expense to set up new lab but if there are more equipment it should solve the problem to some extent.

Students are unhappy with some aspects of supervision in the Faculty (2003: 14%)
(2002: 27%)

- A supervisor of students should only be asked to supervise students - not manage other research programs too. Fortunately my supervisor has provided plentiful support, but a lesser individual would have been completely overwhelmed by the demands. I have seen the pressure my supervisor has had to endure at times and believe this is not conducive to protecting students interests and maintaining the services of quality individuals in the longer term. Don't allow them to be burnt out. They are training the next generation of academics and we need the best.
- Supervisors require training so they know how to manage students
- My supervisor is always busy and the students seem to be a low priority

Students would like some guidance on the management of their candidature (2003: 10%)
(2002: 7%)

- More guidance on what is to be expected
- Setting a timetable on progress of work. I have wasted a lot of time because of not getting advice on planning progress etc
- More explanation of what is required by the end of the year and the standard required

Students are unhappy with some aspects of funding/ scholarships (2003: 10%)
(2002: 4%)

- Funding for resources – PRSS is a joke
- More project support funding for students on APA's
- The funding in postgraduate lab research is very minimal and is non existent, and this needs to be funded more appropriately

Other aspects mentioned included:

- | | | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| • Dissatisfaction with research resources/ library | (2003: 8%) | (2002: 2%) |
| • Isolation from other PhD students | (2003: 6%) | (2002: 11%) |
| • Lack of feedback from supervisor | (2003: 6%) | |
| • Dissatisfaction with annual review process | (2003: 4%) | |
| • Feel isolated from main campus | (2003: 4%) | (2002: 4%) |
| • Need development of graduate attributes | (2003: 4%) | (2002: 9%) |
| • Need development of technical skills e.g. statistics, thesis writing | (2003: 4%) | (2002: 16%) |

² Number of comments received: 2003: 46; 2002: 29