

COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES
FACULTY OF PHARMACY
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)
ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS 2004

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 Pharmacy in 2004.

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 2004 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.

Attachment One: Categories and sub-categories for the analysis of SREQ Open Response comments

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1 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects of the degree course¹

Students are satisfied with their research projects (2004: 36%)
(2003: 14%; 2002: 31%)

- Being introduced to a new area of research which is related to my background but of which I did not have the opportunity to study before. It is good because when I finish my project I will go back to my country and will be share something which is important and new
- The best things about this experience is the ability to concentrate on an area of interest and to be able to thoroughly study things that are of interest
- Enjoying the project. Seeing positive results. Hoping your research findings will make some impact in the scientific world
- Dynamics of scientific research, open possibilities of research project

Graduate attributes (analytical, problem solving etc) are being developed (2004: 25%)
(2003: 30%; 2002: 15%)

- It helps me in problem solving skills e.g. it helps me to analyse the problem, search solutions and finally to solve it
- My research has developed my problem solving skills. Because these skills do not help me only academic field but also my social life
- Improvement of written communication skills, this could be helpful for better assessment of me
- The best aspects of my PhD experience is the opportunities which enable me to develop my problem solving skills and self directed learning

Students are happy with their supervision (2004: 18%)
(2003: 8%; 2002: 12%)

- One of the best aspects of my experience to date has been the development of my relationship with my supervisors – they are supportive, kind, provide encouragement and guidance, and are positive role models for young researchers
- Very supportive supervisors – easy to communicate with and give valuable input; main supervisor also very proactive in making sure everything is going ok
- The relationship with supervisors
- Supervisors working with you or who are contactable any time

Students appreciate the opportunities to present at conferences (2004: 18%)
(2003: 23%; 2002: 12%)

- Opportunities to attend international and national conferences where I am given invaluable exposure to a wide variety of research areas and methodologies, which ultimately enrich my own research experience
- Opportunities provided: conferences, seminars etc
- Regular opportunities to present at conferences which helps improve communication skills and requires you to critically appraise your work
- Having the opportunity to present your work at conferences where you can meet new people and share ideas

Students appreciate the interaction with other postgraduate research students (2004:18%)
(2002: 8%)

- Meeting other postgraduate students
- The support from the other postgraduates in the room
- Working with other PhD students – most of the advice and help I get is from them
- Strong peer support, especially from other postgraduate students that sit around me, invaluable exchange of info and just friendship in general, provides good morals [sic] to keep going

¹ Number of comments received: 2004: 28; 2003: 37; 2002: 28)

Other aspects mentioned included:

- Opportunities for collaboration and networking (2004: 11%) (2003: 3%; 2002: 19%)
- Physical facilities/ infrastructure (2004: 7%) (2003: 11%; 2002: 19%)
- Challenging/ stimulating/ motivating (2004: 7%) (2002: 4%)
- Flexibility of program (2004: 5%) (2003: 6%; 2002: 5%)

2 Analysis of comments referring to aspects that could be improved²

Students are dissatisfied with availability of funding/ scholarships (2004: 25%)
(2003: 33%; 2002: 29 %)

- I feel that the aspects that need to be improved are the financial support schemes offered to postgraduate students. We are allocated \$1000 pa for the cost of stationary, expenses of conference attendance (e.g. airfares, accommodation, conference registration fees), specialist courses and other research related activities. This amount of financial aid is just insufficient
- More financial support for students requiring travel money for oral presentations – it has decreased
- The finance office should work out a system which is more efficient for reimbursing postgraduate students e.g. for conference travel expenses
- Financial support – have to seek other work to ??? ???³ distraction and time taken away from researchers and long delays in payment when money paid for conference rego, accom and travel – actually lose money

Students are unhappy with the physical facilities provided (2004: 25%)
(2003: 13%; 2002: 42%)

- Better facilities and support need to be provided for research activities of students
- It is best to have access to instruments located in the department rather than work in another institution
- Off campus provision of support for faculty researchers (students) re physical infrastructure, workstations, computers etc
- Work space – not enough

Other aspects mentioned included⁴:

- Feedback from supervisor (2004: 20%) (2003: 7; 2002: 8%)
- Isolation for off main campus students (2004: 15%)
- Supervision (2004: 10%) (2003: 10%; 2002: 21%)
- Management of candidature (2004: 10%) (2003: 3%; 2002: 8%)
- Technical and lab support (2004: 10%)
- Support for part-time/ distance ed students (2004: 10%) (2003: 7%)
- International student experiences (2004: 10%) (2003: 7%)
- Development of graduate attributes (2004: 10%) (2002: 4%)
- Development of technical skills (2004: 10%) (2003: 3%)
- Oral and written communications skills for NESB students (2004: 10%) (2003: 3%)
- Administration and organisation (university / faculty) (2004: 10%) (2003: 13%; 2002: 4%)

² Number of comments received: 2004: 20; 2003: 30; 2002: 24

³ Indicates unable to transcribe written comments in original

⁴ The following aspects were mentioned in four or less comments received from students

Attachment One Categories and Sub categories used in analysis of SREQ open response comments⁵

Category	Sub category	Includes
Quality of Supervision	Supervision	Supervisor Supervision in general, including processes in place for feedback regarding satisfaction/ dissatisfaction with supervisor
	Management of candidature	Guidance on management of candidature; steps in the process
	Progress reports	Progress reports/ processes in place Value of the reporting process Structure of reporting process
	Flexibility of program	Compared to undergraduate/ postgraduate coursework Working hours etc
	Pressure to complete	Pressure to complete on time (i.e. within time frame set by APA). Workload
	Feedback from supervisor	Feedback on drafts, papers, presentations, seminars; final thesis
Quality of Infrastructure	Funding/ Scholarships	APA, UPA and other scholarships; PRSS Funding for research within faculty/ department etc
	Physical resources	Physical facilities available to postgraduate research students including workplace, computers – provided by University/ Faculty Building maintenance
	Industry facilities	Physical facilities provided by industry partner/ CRC etc
	IT support	Support available for computer hardware and software
	Research resources/ library	Electronic resources such as databases, online journals Interlibrary loan for hard-copy resources Services provided by library
	Technical and Lab support	Support available in laboratories; technician availability for experiments etc
	Resource issues	Issues which affect experience e.g. staffing and funding within department which may reduce face to face time with supervisor, or lack of supervisor due to retirement etc
Overall satisfaction	Satisfaction with research	Comments on research projects; benefits of research etc
	General comments	With university, location, etc

⁵ NB: Not all categories appear in responses for individual faculties.

Category	Sub category	Includes
Research climate	Challenging and stimulating	Is the research stimulating, challenging Do they feel motivated by supervisor etc
	Induction/ orientation program	Induction/ orientation program for new students, particularly those who start mid year or who come from another university
	Cultural diversity	Part of a culturally diverse student group
	Isolation: off main campus	Issues relating to students situated off main campus/ at training hospitals
	Interaction with other postgraduate research students	Opportunities to interact with other postgraduate research students Feelings of isolation from other students
	Collaboration and networking	Provision of opportunities to collaborate and network with other researchers, academics etc (university, national, international)
	Conference presentations	Opportunities to present at international and national conferences
	Research community	Part of research community/ culture within faculty/ school/ department Part of research community outside university
	Part of faculty/ school/ department	Acceptance by faculty/ department/ school Inclusion in meetings, social events etc Part of communication cycle
	Support of faculty/ school/ department	Support of faculty/ department/ school for their research etc
	Seminars, workshops	Presence of, frequency of seminar or workshop program for postgraduate research students Cross faculty involvement in seminars
	Field work, practical aspects	Field work – help with collecting data etc Practical aspects e.g. in hospitals
	Interaction with industry	Industry partnerships Support from industry in research
	Teaching opportunities/ preparation for academia	Teaching and/or tutoring opportunities offered/ available
	Location/ physical environment	Does not include buildings – location of campus, university etc
	Relevance to future/ current work/ career	Will the research be useful in the future to their careers Is it useful in their present work environment
	Support for part-time/ distance education/ external students	Support for students studying externally or part-time; recognition of difficulties faced/ access to resources etc
	International student experiences	Experiences, support for international students
Coursework component	Issues relating to coursework component of some research degrees e.g. Research Methods	

Category	Sub category	Includes
Generic skills	Graduate attributes, skills	Development of Graduate attributes e.g. communication, analytical, problem-solving skills
	Technical skills	Development of technical skills e.g. statistical skills, thesis/ academic writing, subject specific skills; use of laboratory equipment
	Research skills	Training in research methods; Development of research skills
	Expand knowledge base	Acquisition of new knowledge
	Work independently	Ability to work independently on project compared to structured work of undergraduate degree
	English language for NESB students	Development of English language proficiency Help in academic writing Specific support e.g. proof reading of thesis etc
Administration and organisation	Administration and organisation	Administration and organisation of research higher degree program
	Communication	Between administration and faculty; between support services; between staff and students
	Enrolment	Enrolment process
Other	Ethics administration	
	Equity	Harassment, discrimination etc
	Academic Board policies	Academic Honesty; Intellectual Property