

**SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS**  
**STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)**  
**POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS**  
**ANALYSIS OF OPEN RESPONSE COMMENTS: 2005**

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## **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 Sydney College of the Arts 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 infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office	21%	25%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	19%	35%
Research climate: supportive work environment	17%	6%
Research climate: seminars/ workshops	17%	6%
Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research	14%	21%
Quality of infrastructure: research resources: library	14%	2%

### **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
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office	19%	42%
Research climate: seminars/ workshops	14%	14%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: scholarships/ PRSS	14%	
Quality of infrastructure: interaction with other research students (study related)	11%	7%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	8%	21%
Research climate: supportive work environment	8%	7%

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 21% and second place in 2004 to 8% and 5<sup>th</sup> place in 2005. In addition, the percentage of comments relating to dissatisfaction with the physical facilities: workspace, buildings etc, has fallen from 42% in 2004 to 19% in 2005.

*Rachel Symons  
Special Projects Officer and Executive Assistant  
Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)*

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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 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 Sydney College of the Arts in 2005.

In 2005 84% of students who responded to the SREQ provided comments on the best aspects of their degree experience, and 74% on those 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 Sydney College of the Arts.

## **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 services. 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.

#### **4 Analysis of comments referring to the best aspects<sup>1</sup>**

**Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, buildings, office** (2005: 21%)  
(2004: 25%; 2003: 32%; 2002: 25%)

- a suitable working space because it needs to be quiet and spacious which is ideal at Rozelle
- Access to workshop facilities enabled me to explore possibilities not otherwise available to me
- Facilities such as workshops, galleries etc.
- Being given a studio space within which to work, financial restraints had previously restricted access to a studio, having access to equipment, previously limited due to finances, again having access to the library, to its extensive range, is fantastic.

**Quality of supervision: supervisor** (2005: 19%)  
(2004: 35%; 2003: 27%; 2002: 29%)

- XXXXX is a great supervisor. She has helped me explore ideas thoroughly and in ways I wouldn't have thought of myself. She's very helpful in determining what is relevant and showing me how to fine-tune and weed through the information I've collected.
- Commitment from supervisors. My supervisor, X X was totally committed and diligent to my research. She was constructive, supportive and pushed my research. It was a great experience to work with X X on my research.
- One on One supervision provides the opportunity to discuss your work/research to express verbally ideas, concerns and get immediate feedback, meeting your supervisor bi weekly enables this and I enjoy the process.
- Realising that my supervisor's help has been enormously effective

**Research climate: supportive work environment** (2005: 17%)  
(2004: 6%; 2003: 5%; 2002: 14%)

- the supportive environment of SCA enable the production of intensive high quality research.
- The best aspect is the wonderful opportunity of being able to research my topic of interest and make art in a supportive and inspiring environment. The SCA staff are friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. With the SCA community there is a lot of access to information about events, exhibitions, conferences workshops etc
- Friendly and supportive staff.
- The freedom to explore my field in a supportive environment, the lack of structure allows one to flesh out their concepts and let them grow in a non-linear manner. While the supervisor ensures that I keep on track.

**Research climate: seminars/ workshops** (2005: 17%)  
(2004: 6%; 2003: 10%; 2002: 18%)

- having regular seminars and artists' talks and shows help to stimulate dialogue and mutual learning
- The organized seminars in 2nd year were particularly useful, as many of us found links in our research that otherwise would have gone unnoticed.
- I enjoy the weekly seminar we take part in and hearing about others areas of research in detail.
- The weekly seminar groups provide a chance to see and discuss the topics other students are working on and to form some social bond with others.

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<sup>1</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 42; 2004: 48; 2003: 41; 2002: 28

**Sydney College of the Arts: Analysis of student experience:  
Postgraduate research students: 2005**

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**Overall satisfaction: satisfaction with research** (2005: 14%)  
(2004: 21%; 2003: 15%; 2002: 21%)

- Realising that my nearly finished project is worthwhile, interesting and makes a contribution to knowledge!
- It provides me with an opportunity to consolidate a life-long interest in making sense of my art practice.
- The opportunity to really embrace a topic/ area of personal interest, in relation to the dissertation also to expand one's practice in a professional environment. Knowing what your doing is valued by the faculty/studio community.
- Projects outside university with supervisor and students painting murals, holding exhibitions etc. This was realistic artist research.

**Quality of infrastructure: research resources: library** (2005: 14%)  
(2004: 2%; 2003: 10%; 2002: 18%)

- Access to faculties such as University of Sydney library and computer facilities. These provide opportunities to learn and develop work.
- Library facilities and ease of getting access to books from all over the world.
- I have also had excellent help from Fisher librarians who are all extremely generous & nice & a couple of Sydney College Librarians
- again having access to the library, to its extensive range, is fantastic.

**Other aspects mentioned included:**

*NB: all the aspects mentioned below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2002</i>
Research climate: interaction with other postgraduate research students (Study related)	12%	17%	17%	11%
Generic skills: working independently	10%		8%	4%
Research climate: part of research community: general comments	7%	4%	10%	7%
Generic skills: graduate attributes	7%		10%	4%

## **5 Analysis of comments suggesting improvements<sup>2</sup>**

NB: *Only one aspect in this section of the report was mentioned in more than five comments. Therefore, to preserve student confidentiality, no sample comments have been provided for the remaining top aspects.*

**Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: workspace, building, office** (2005: 19%)  
(2004: 42%; 2003: 18%; 2002: 30%)

- The second area of improvement should be a more open type of art school similar to the European model where students are allowed to use facilities outside of their department for instance I am in the painting department, because it is the best. Yet I make photo-media work and I am not allowed to use allot of the facilities in the photography and electric art depts.or attend classes in say sculpture if I am interested in a particular area of that subject. While I understand there must be structured depts, for undergraduates at a postgraduate level it should be open.... IT IS ALL ART it doesn't matter what shape it takes and especially today when artists work cross many different types of mediums to express their ideas.
- There needs to be an on-campus art supply facility; for convenience and competitive pricing of art materials for ALL art students. Thank you.
- The studio spaces at SCA are not really sufficient in terms of size, light etc for post graduate students
- There is a need for more spaces where MVA candidates can have access to other people's opinions, such as curators, collectors and art critics.

### **Other aspects mentioned included:**

NB: *all the aspects below were mentioned in less than six comments*

	2005	2004	2003	2002
Research climate: seminars/ workshops	14%	14%	21%	11%
Quality of infrastructure: funding: scholarships/ PRSS	14%			
Quality of infrastructure: interaction with other postgraduate research students (Study related)	11%	7%	11%	22%
Quality of supervision: supervisor	8%	21%	18%	4%
Research climate: supportive work environment	8%	7%	5%	4%
Research climate: isolation: affiliated campuses	8%	5%	5%	
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: computing facilities and resources	8%			
Quality of infrastructure: physical facilities: equipment	8%			

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<sup>2</sup> Number of comment received: 2005: 32; 2004: 29; 2003: 38; 2002: 26