



The University of Sydney

Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies

Student experience of Learning and Teaching

Trends and key issues: Postgraduate coursework students
2001-2007

Date July 2008

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Glossary

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

SCEQ	Student Course Experience Questionnaire Administered to current students
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates of previous year
Faculty scores Percentage agreement	The percentage of students who either agreed or disagreed with survey items
Qualitative data Comments	Students written observations received in response to open ended questions in the surveys. Relate to aspects of best practice in degree experience and aspects in need of improvement
Graduates	Students who completed the CEQ for 2007 i.e. graduated in 2006
Current students	Students who were studying at the university during 2007; from all years of the course

Notes

Note re CEQ quantitative data

Less than 5 international graduates responded to the 2004 CEQ. Since the minimum sub-sample size for statistical reporting is 5, quantitative data is not available for 2004.

Note re analysis of qualitative data

Less than 20 graduates provided written observations in their response to the CEQ in 2006 and 2007. Since the minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis of SCEQ data is 20, the analysis of the qualitative data for the CEQ should be viewed with caution.

Due to the low number of written observations provided in 2007, and to preserve student confidentiality, the complete list of comments, as received, is at Attachment A. Broad areas of the student experience of learning and teaching mentioned are identified alongside each comment.

Note re illustrative sample comments

Comments are recorded as they appear in the original documents. However, minor spelling, grammatical and transcription errors have been corrected. [sic] indicates that the word appears exactly as provided by the student, and that it is not possible to ascertain an exact interpretation of the original meaning.

Each comment is analysed according to the *Taxonomy for analysing qualitative data from the SCEQ/ CEQ*¹, which is based on the University KPIs for Learning and Teaching. Those comments which include more than one aspect of learning and teaching are counted once for each aspect mentioned. The number of times an aspect is mentioned is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received. For example, the following comment is counted as ONE COMMENT RECEIVED; but as it is mentioned in Curriculum; and Learning Community, the comment is counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories.

1) Online delivery suits my current situation with regards to work commitments. The course is flexible so that it does not pin me to a desk at a specified hour. 2) The mixture of students from different regions/area really helps to get out of a shell and start interacting.

Curriculum: flexibility, variety, diversity and Online method of delivery

Learning community: Exploration of academic interests and Cultural diversity

¹ Available from Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

Executive summary

Data about the student degree experience in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies is collected through the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) (previous year's graduates) and the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ) (current students).

Analysis of this data provides a comprehensive picture of trends in the student experience, and the performance of the faculty in relation to Learning and Teaching Performance Fund Key Performance Indicators (Generic Skills; Good Teaching; Overall Satisfaction), and other related areas (Learning Community, Curriculum, Assessment and Workload).

Written observations from students about their experience provide evidence to support the percentage agreement scores (quantitative data), and provide detailed information about key issues in the areas of best practice or areas of concern.

Key results

- **The Faculty scores for Generic Skills** (KPI 14; Section 1)
 - Have decreased in both the SCEQ and CEQ since 2003
 - The 2007 CEQ score of 53% is lower than the University average of 62%
 - The SCEQ score of 66% is marginally higher than the University average of 65%

Evidence from the qualitative data indicates that students consider the development of graduate attributes to be satisfactory. Although there has been a decline in the percentage of comments expressing satisfaction with the development of generic skills, they still outnumber those mentioning the non-development of skills.

- The Faculty scores for **Good Teaching** (KPI 15; Section 2)
 - Have increased steadily in the SCEQ since 2003
 - Have fluctuated for the CEQ
 - The SCEQ score of 51% is equal to the University average, placing it in the middle range of faculties
 - The CEQ score of 37% is lower than the University average of 52%

Evidence from the SCEQ qualitative data suggests that students are dissatisfied with their experiences of teaching across the faculty. In 2007, 40% more comments received from current students mentioned various aspects of good teaching as an area in need of improvement than as an area of best practice. This is an increase of over 20% since 2005.

There is a relatively even spread of negative and positive comments received from graduates.

- The Faculty scores for **Overall Satisfaction** (KPI 16; Section 3)
 - Are 52% for graduates compared to the University average of 70%
 - Are 72% for current students compared to the University average of 75%
 - There is little difference between the outcomes for domestic and international current students
 - Domestic graduates appear to be more highly satisfied than their international counterparts

Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that in 2007, indicate both student and graduate dissatisfaction with their experiences relating to the knowledge, qualification and experience of academic staff, and the value for money and quality of the course compared to other universities.

- The Faculty scores for **Learning Community** (Section 4)
 - Are 58% for current students, which is above the University average of 54%
 - International students continue to rate this area of their experience higher than domestic students

Analysis of the qualitative data indicates that whilst students appreciate the opportunities available to explore academic interests with students and staff, the cultural diversity of the student cohort, and the community feel of the faculty, they are unhappy with class sizes and the physical facilities provided.

- The Faculty results for **Curriculum** (qualitative data only) (Section 5)
 - In 2007 CEQ 50% of graduates commented favourably on the curriculum; whilst 16% considered that improvements were needed
 - In the 2007 SCEQ, 13% of current students commented favourably on the curriculum, whilst 37% considered that improvements were needed.
- The Faculty scores for **Appropriate Assessment** (Section 6)
 - Are lower than the University average of 66%
 - The 2007 result (54%) placed it in the bottom range of faculties for this area.

There is an even spread of positive and negative comments relating to assessment from current students; whilst, for graduates, more comments expressing dissatisfaction with the types and content of assessment were received than satisfaction.

- The Faculty score for **Appropriate Workload** (Section 7)
 - is higher than the university average of 33%, and places it in the middle range of faculties.

Insufficient comments were received on this topic for analysis

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Conceptual framework

Student Evaluation of Teaching Surveys

The University Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ) and the DEST/ GCA Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) are designed to collect quantitative and qualitative data about students' perceptions of the quality of teaching and learning in their degree courses.

In both surveys students are asked to respond to statements using a five point Likert Scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. As part of the questionnaires, students are also asked to provide written comments on the best aspects of their degree experience and those that could be improved.

Quantitative and qualitative data from the CEQ and the SCEQ provide evidence of the success of University and faculty initiatives to improve the overall student experience in general and the student experience of learning and teaching in particular.

Difference between SCEQ and CEQ

Both surveys are administered by the Institute for Teaching and Learning. The SCEQ is distributed to a stratified sample of current students (i.e. all years of study, all degrees). The CEQ is distributed to all graduates of the University in the year following graduation.

Focus of the Trend Analysis Report

Based on the answers to these surveys, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the student experience of learning and teaching in the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies between 2000 and 2007. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2007 SCEQ and CEQ qualitative data. Reliable qualitative data for international students did not become available until the 2005 SCEQ.

Information is arranged by Key Performance Indicators (14: Generic skills; 15: Good teaching; and 16: Overall satisfaction) plus additional factors (Learning community; Curriculum; Assessment; and Workload) which, taken together, comprise the student experience of learning and teaching in the faculty.

When reading this report, it should be noted 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, it could be interpreted that the students are happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting on areas in need of improvement. Also of note is that students are increasingly providing constructive comments in response to the open-response questions, and often mention more than one aspect of their experiences.

1 Generic skills (KPI 14)

Definition

Generic skills includes:

- Research and inquiry (analytical, problem solving, critical thinking, knowledge expansion etc)
- Information literacy (retrieval and use of information)
- Personal and intellectual autonomy (independent learning; planning own work; intellectually curious etc)
- Ethical, social, professional understanding (including group/ team skills; professional skills and experience)
- Communication (written and oral; communicating with others; communicating understanding)

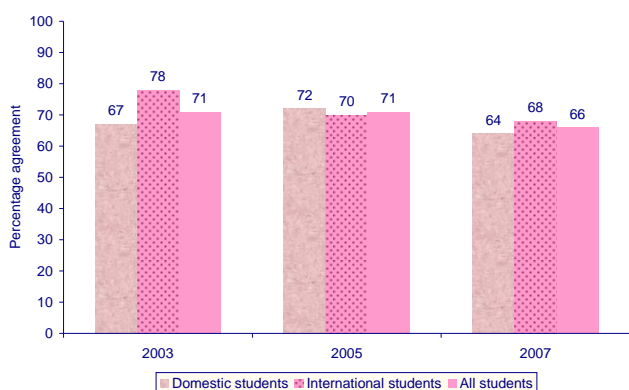
Trends

Faculty scores for both the SCEQ and CEQ have been decreasing since 2003, and currently sit at 66% for current students and 53% for graduates. The University average for Generic skills in 2007 was 65% for current students and 62% for graduates.

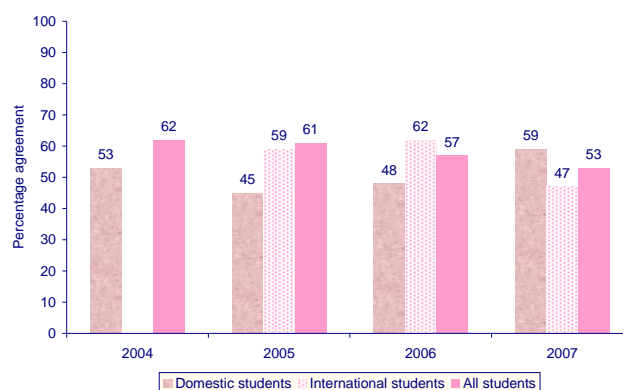
A similar decrease is evident in the analysis of both current students' and graduates' observations on the positive development of their graduate attributes. Whilst the percentage of negative comments from current students has remained reasonably steady since 2003; the number of graduates considered generic skills to be an area in need of improvement in 2007 was zero, compared with 24% in 2006.

1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant survey items for Generic Skills in SCEQ and the CEQ.



1.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



1.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

1.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments received that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement. The trends provide an indication of the student satisfaction with the development of University graduate attributes / generic skills between 2001 and 2007.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	26%	11%	25%	13%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	53%	24%	36%	0%
	All	0%	14%	20%	38%	17%	33%	6%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	5%	4%	25%	0%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	14%	21%	23%	0%
	All	0%	3%	11%	9%	12%	24%	0%

1.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

1.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=28)	International (n=25)	All (n=53)
Research and inquiry			
- The capacity to make decisions and solve problems			
- Development of analytical skills	7%	4%	6%
- Ability to apply critical judgement and thinking			
- Recognition of knowledge boundaries			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Expanding my field of knowledge, the fact that I can do it in my own time*
- *It forces you to learn more on your own rather than relying upon teaching staff which makes you more motivated*
- *Exposure to different points of views with peers in the same industry, it fosters the expansion of my knowledge and develops a holistic view with the input and ideas of others*

Sample comments: international students

- *communication skills, presentation skills, team work, team leadership experience. every student is involved*
- *Aside from the obvious, this course has helped me understand practical issues in Engineering more clearly. I am now able to comprehend and analyse problems independently since it has given me a lot of confidence*
- *To develop my skills such verbal, writing and think critically.*

1.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
Ethical, social, professional understanding			
- Ability to work in a group/ team working skills	4%	8%	6%
- Development of discipline/ professional skills			
- Presence of work placement/ industry experience in the course			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Definitely need to go into more detail on quantitative skills in the core subjects. I feel like I am lacking in this regard and I'm almost finished the masters course. Some lessons on how to use a PM software like Project would also be beneficial.*

Sample comments: international students

- *Communication skills, written skills and problem solving*
- *oral communication could be improved and a sense of team spirit and co-operation also*
- *There should be more demonstrations, workshops, field trips etc. Like for example if we could just visit the ongoing construction sites at the University things could be understood more clearly and many doubts removed...it boosts one's confidence when one has more field experience*

2 Good teaching (KPI 15)

Definition

Good teaching includes:

- Good teaching experiences (interesting, teaching methods, discussions encouraged etc)
- Motivating teaching (enthusiasm, passion of teachers)
- Concern and care for student learning
- Good explanations received (includes English language proficiency of teachers)
- Feedback on work (timely, constructive)

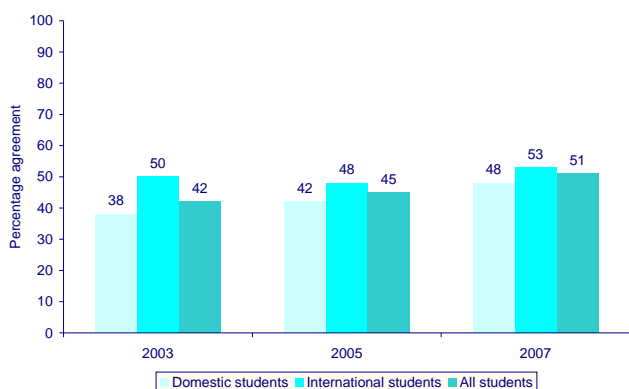
Trends

Faculty scores for Good teaching for the SCEQ have increased steadily over the past four years; whilst those for the CEQ have fluctuated. In 2007 there was little difference between the outcomes for domestic and international students in the SCEQ; whilst in the CEQ there was a difference of 17%. These results are equal to the University average in the SCEQ, placing it in the middle range of faculties for this KPI. The University average for the CEQ is 52%, compared to the Faculty score of 37%.

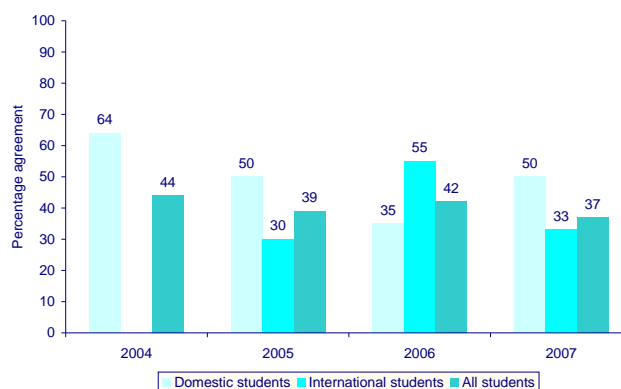
Evidence from the qualitative data indicates student dissatisfaction with their experiences of teaching across the faculty. In 2007, 40% more comments received from current students mentioned various aspects of good teaching as an area in need of improvement than as an area of best practice. This is an increase of over 20% since 2005. There is a relatively even spread of negative and positive comments received from graduates.

2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant survey item statements for Good teaching in the SCEQ and the CEQ.



2.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



2.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

2.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments received which can be classified as areas of best practice or areas of improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of good teaching between 2001 and 2007, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SCEQ and the CEQ.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	28%	18%	25%	13%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	24%	8%	18%	38%
	All	3%	21%	18%	26%	13%	20%	25%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	62%	74%	50%	45%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	36%	29%	23%	13%
	All	67%	55%	36%	49%	53%	29%	32%

2.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

2.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=28)	International (n=25)	All (n=53)
Good teaching experiences			
- Use of innovative and up to date teaching methods and techniques	4%	8%	6%
- Learning resources are up to date, and relevant to curriculum			
- Appreciate group work method of learning			
Concern and care for student learning			
- Students felt supported in their learning; help and advice readily available	7%	0%	4%
- Lecturers understood problems and difficulties of students (academic and personal)			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Some of the module convenors are particularly good. They went to a lot of trouble to make sure everyone was learning and supported. Also, they were very enthusiastic about the subject matter, which helped raise enthusiasm, and were generally nice people*
- *The lecturer was highly motivated, interactive with students and fast in responding*
- *Lecturers are great, very friendly too*
- *Friendly lecturers extremely knowledgeable in their fields*

Sample comments: international students

- *in one lecture, the lecturer is very kind and he taught me a lot about that area outside of the lecture*
- *Some of lecturers are very good at explanation, and tutorial is really helpful for me understanding*
- *Working as a group and course outline. It is useful to build my career.*

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
Good teaching experiences			
- Teaching methods used are outdated; Lectures were boring			
- Discussions of issues raised during lectures and tutorials are not encouraged	44%	8%	27%
- Learning resources are out of date, and not relevant to curriculum, unhelpful, long			
Concern and care for student learning			
- Staff do not provide support and help for students, including one-on-one consultations	15%	8%	12%
- Staff do not seem to understand student difficulties and problems			
- Staff are perceived to be more interested in their research than in teaching			
Good explanations received			
- Communication skills of lecturers should be improved	7%	4%	6%
- Lecturers did not explain subject matter clearly			
- Lecturers/ tutors lack proficiency in English language oral communication			
Feedback on work (from staff to students)			
- Comments on work are not constructive; do not explain where mistakes occur that can be rectified.	7%	4%	6%
- Marks only supplied, no comments			
- Feedback is untimely and not helpful			
- Perceived lack of staff effort in provision of feedback on assessment			

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
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Sample comments: domestic students

- *I feel as though there is a minimum of effort put into this degree by the lecturers. They reproduce notes from their consulting companies and make the course feel like a sales pitch rather than an exploration*
- *I found some instructors really good, but others, particularly ones who seem to use English as a second language, often are unable to adequately explain their positions or descriptions. This led to an over reliance on various text books to try and understand different aspects*
- *I think that some aspects of the course materials should be reviewed periodically. There have been a number of editorial oversights (spelling and layouts) that I would not have expected*

Sample comments: international students

- *And the feed back on assignments should not be just marks and simple comment on the class, but excellent examples and recommendations on how to do them better*
- *Introduce more different learning methods*
- *In my opinion, some leaders in the school can not focus on the teaching*

3 Overall satisfaction (KPI 16)

Definition

This single item asks graduates about their overall level of satisfaction with their degree course. Aspects include:

- Reputation of the university/ faculty/ degree (including reputation in the professional arena)
- Value for money (cost of course; entry standard of students; level of course content)
- Qualifications (teaching/ subject), knowledge and relevant experience of academic staff

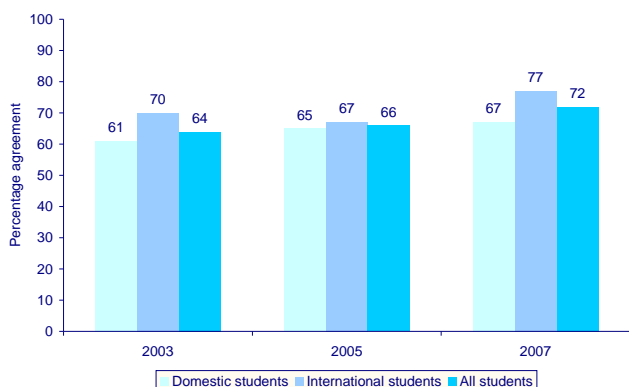
Trends

Overall satisfaction with the degree course currently rates at 52% for graduates and 72% for current students. The University average for graduates is 70% and for current students is 75%. Whilst there is little difference between outcomes for current domestic and international students; domestic graduates appear to be more highly satisfied than their international counterparts.

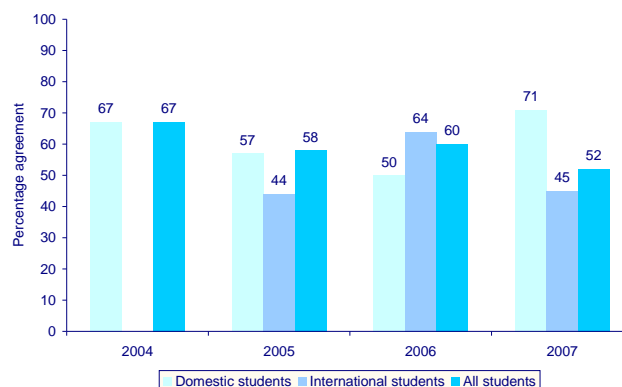
Analysis of the 2007 qualitative data indicates both student and graduate dissatisfaction with their experiences relating to the knowledge, qualification and experience of academic staff, and the value for money and quality of the course compared to other universities. Trends indicate a reduction of reporting of best practice and increase in reporting of areas for improvement.

3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2001–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with the survey statement 'Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this degree course' in the SCEQ and the CEQ.



3.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)



3.1.2 Course Experience Questionnaire 2004–2007 (graduates from previous year)

3.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments received which can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in students' overall satisfaction between 2001 and 2007.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	8%	7%	50%	0%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%	0%	0%	13%
	All	26%	10%	6%	4%	4%	13%	6%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	5%	22%	25%	9%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	8%	13%	8%	38%
	All	9%	13%	5%	7%	18%	12%	21%

3.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

3.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

In 2007, very few current students who provided written observations in their responses to the SCEQ mentioned aspects relating to overall satisfaction i.e. reputation/ quality of degree/ university; qualifications, knowledge and experience of staff, including guest lecturers; the entry standards or students; or the cost of the course. Only 4% of postgraduate coursework students (2/53 comments received) mentioned the aforementioned aspects as being areas of best practice.

Due to the low number of comments, and to maintain student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

3.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
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In 2007, 18% of graduates (9/51 comments received) provided written observations relating to their overall dissatisfaction with the degree course experience.

Sample comments: domestic students

- *I was going to withdraw from the course prior to census but I decided to stick it out because I have heard that other lecturers are more interactive with students. I may look for a course that offers on campus study as I feel I need the face to face aspect more*
- *Reduce the cost per unit - USyd charge \$2600 per unit; USQ charge \$1400 and their quality is at least twice as good, implying that they offer ~4 times the value.*
- *Should be more communication from tutors to students especially in the first few weeks of each semester I'm aware of a lot of students that did not do a lot of work and still manage to get their masters degree and that decreases the value of my degree.*

Sample comments: international students

- *Find more qualified lecturers*
- *Quality of lectures: sometimes they are given by PHD students or some researchers who may understand the course yet could not tell*
- *The school should pay me the insurance if I found opportunity for work experience, just as undergraduate students*

4 Learning community

Definition

Learning community includes the following:

- Learning environment (exploration of academic interests with staff and students; belonging to a community, social experiences; cultural diversity; equity issues)
- Location/ isolation (affiliated campuses, hospitals, institutes)
- Induction and orientation
- Responsiveness to student feedback

Trends

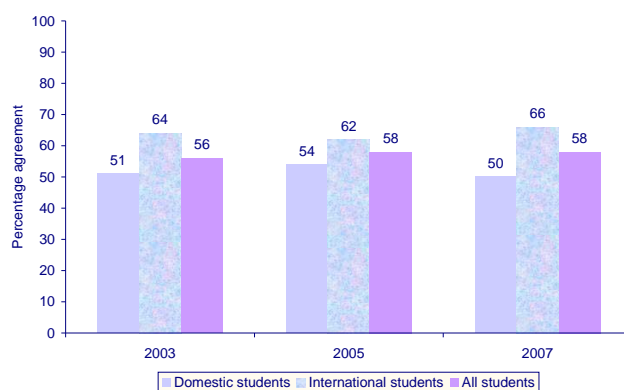
Fifty eight percent of students either agreed or strongly agreed with SCEQ survey items on the Learning Community. This is above the university average of 54%, and places the faculty in the middle range of results for the Learning Community Scale. With a percentage agreement score of 62% in 2007 and 66% in 2005, international students continue to rate this area of their experience higher than domestic students (54% in 2007; 50% in 2005).

Analysis of the comments received in the 2007 surveys indicate that whilst students appreciate the opportunities available to explore academic interests with students and staff, the cultural diversity of the student cohort, and the community feel of the faculty, they are unhappy with class sizes and the physical facilities provided.

4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data SCEQ 2003–2007

The following table show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on Learning Community in the Student Course Experience Questionnaire.

Note: The Learning Community Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



4.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

4.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments received which can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of the learning community between 2001 and 2007.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	18%	25%	50%	13%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	9%	24%	9%	0%
	All	3%	3%	11%	14%	25%	20%	6%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	31%	19%	25%	18%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	3%	13%	0%	13%
	All	3%	10%	15%	17%	16%	6%	16%

4.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

4.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=28)	International (n=25)	All (n=53)
Learning environment			
- Experienced social experience of being at university			
- Felt that they belonged to a community (degree/ faculty)	25%	16%	21%
- Academic interests were being explored with staff and students e.g. in tutorials			
- Enjoyed the cultural mix of students in the course			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *The mixture of students from different regions/area really helps to get out of a shell and start interacting.*
- *Working with the group and discussing our views and the final outcome*
- *The on-line interaction with students from different experiences from all around the world*

Sample comments: international students

- *global exposure, sharing my knowledge with different students.*
- *Computer lab. We can not study without computer now, fortunately, we have enough computers in the lab and also we can surf the internet*
- *The best aspect is to discuss problems with professor as well as fellow students, which is very helpful*

4.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
Learning environment			
- Did not feel that they belonged to a community	7%	13%	10%
- Academic interests were not explored with staff and students e.g. in tutorials			
Physical facilities			
- Students dissatisfied with facilities provided e.g. computers	11%	0%	6%
- Buildings and class rooms unsuitable; in need of repair			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Facilities, especially computational and internet access, are extremely poor. Every single one of my subjects involved extensive computational work, often using specialised software which was only available on campus. However, most of the PC's on campus are old and of poor quality. Simulations that should have taken a few hours to run, end up taking a few days. Internet access is also highly restricted, understandably so, but it does make the extensive research that was required of me very difficult*
- *As a postgraduate student, I feel I should be treated with a bit more priority than undergraduate students. We should not have to 'compete' for the same computers, and we should be able to have access to the department computer labs on weekends as MER students do, to be able to do the work that needs to be done.*
- *Improvements Lab: for example to buy more test equipments*

Sample comments: international students

- *Increase the consultant time e.g. tutorial*

5 Curriculum

Definition

Student perceptions of the curriculum used in their degree course include:

- Content and structure of degree(s) (intensive courses; relationship between Units of Study; content of Units of Study; relevance to work/ career/ industry)
- Method of delivery (PBL, Online)
- Flexibility of degree, including ability to take a range of Units of Study
- Availability/ cancellation of advertised courses
- Cultural aspects i.e. inclusion of international or indigenous themes

Trends

In 2007 50% of comments received from graduates and 13% from current students commented favourably on various aspects of the curriculum. The opposite point of view was mentioned in 37% of comments received in the SCEQ and 16% in the CEQ.

Note: Specific items on Curriculum are not included in either the SCEQ or CEQ. Therefore no comparative quantitative data is available for this aspect of the student experience. Due to the high proportion of student comments on the delivery, content, structure and relevance of the curriculum this important aspect of the student experience has been included as a separate item in reports since 2002.

5.1 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments received that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of curriculum between 2001 and 2005.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	59%	7%	0%	50%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	32%	20%	27%	50%
	All	84%	45%	34%	47%	13%	20%	50%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	33%	41%	75%	9%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	56%	33%	31%	25%
	All	30%	16%	24%	44%	37%	41%	16%

5.2 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

5.2.2 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=28)	International (n=25)	All (n=53)
Content and structure			
- Content and structure of whole degree program/ individual units of study	7%	20%	13%
- Intensive courses			
- Subjects appear to be linked together			
- Subject content is relevant to work/ career and industry requirements			
Method of delivery			
- Online mode incl WebCT	11%	0%	6%
Diversity, flexibility, variety			
- Flexibility of degree structure	7%	4%	6%
- Ability to take a range of units of study			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *The course materials and teaching techniques focus on real world situations which brings a sense of practical reality to the program.*
- *Online delivery suits my current situation with regards to work commitments. The course is flexible so that it does not pin me to a desk at a specified hour*
- *Stimulating and interesting subject matter*

Sample comments: international students

- *Aside from the obvious, this course has helped me understand practical issues in Engineering more clearly*
- *In this degree, I can freely select the courses I want. Since some of the courses are not relevant to my previous degree*
- *there was an opportunity to do some research work in that degree that qualifies me to apply for PhD degree directly*

5.2.3 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)	Domestic (n=27)	International (n=24)	All (n=51)
Content and structure			
- Unhappy with content and structure of whole degree program/ individual units of study	11%	29%	20%
- Subject content is not relevant to work/ career and industry requirements			
Method of delivery			
- Online mode incl WebCT	22%	0%	12%

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Many of the optional electives which attracted me to do this degree at the University of Sydney were not run, meaning I did electives which I had no intention of doing*
- *There is also a sense of the material becoming a little stale. It appears that not much has been done to 'update' the content.*
- *Course interface, as I am currently undertaking a course delivered online, the method and structure of this delivery has lacked somewhat*

Sample comments: international students

- *the subjects in our school are limited .also there are no subjects that we can take on the summer school.*
- *Since my degree is practical related, it should be taught with all types of practical samples...But most of them lag in that.*
- *some more practical things, it's too theoretical.*

6 Appropriate assessment

Definition

Appropriate assessment includes:

- extent to which assessment measures higher order thinking and understanding;
- types of assessment (incl. group work as assessment practice);
- marking of assessments (weighting; marks; by staff)

Trends

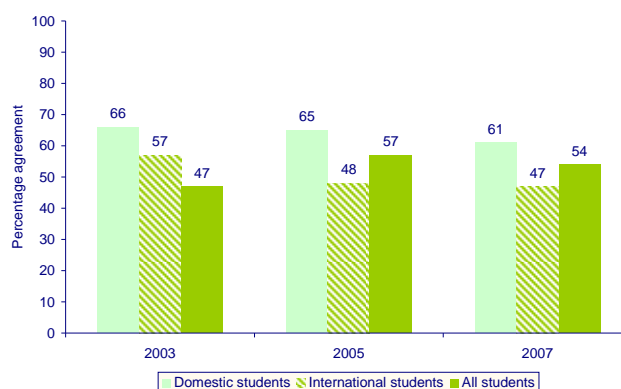
The percentage agreement scores for appropriate assessment (54%) in the 2007 SCEQ is lower than the university average of 66%, and places it in the bottom range of faculties for this area.

In relation to comments received which mention assessment, there is an even spread of positive and negative comments from current students; whilst, for graduates, more comments express dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

6.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data SCEQ 2003-2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on appropriate assessment in the SCEQ.

NB: The Appropriate assessment Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



6.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

6.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table includes the percentage of qualitative comments can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the student experience of appropriate assessment between 2001 and 2007.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	3%	11%	0%	0%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	6%	0%	27%	13%
	All	0%	0%	0%	4%	6%	20%	6%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	13%	7%	0%	9%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	6%	4%	0%	25%
	All	0%	6%	11%	9%	6%	0%	15%

6.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

6.3.1 Areas of best practice

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

Six percent of students (i.e. 3/53) expressed satisfaction with the choice, aptness and design of assessments.

Due to the low number of comments, and to maintain student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

6.3.2 Suggested improvements

Current students (SCEQ 2007)

Six percent of students (i.e. 3/51) expressed dissatisfaction with the choice, aptness and design of assessments.

Due to the low number of comments, and to maintain student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

7 Appropriate workload

Definition

Appropriate workload includes:

- Reasonable workload
- Even distribution of assignment deadlines
- Pressure of course; not having enough time to understand the topic
- Inability to comprehend subject matter due to sheer volume of work

Trends

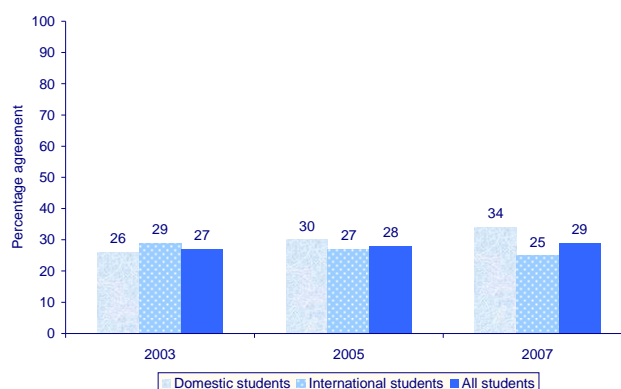
The percentage agreement scores for appropriate workload (29%) in the 2007 SCEQ is higher than the university average of 33%, and places it in the middle range of faculties.

There were 2% comments on workload in the SCEQ and no comments in the CEQ.

7.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2003–2007

The following tables show the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with survey item statements on Appropriate Workload in the Student Course Experience Questionnaire (SCEQ).

NB: The Appropriate Workload Scale is not included in the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ).



6.1.1 Student Course Experience Questionnaire: 2003; 2005; 2007 (current students)

7.2 Comparative results: Qualitative data 2001–2007

The following table provides an indication of trends in the student experience of appropriate workload between 2001 and 2007, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SCEQ and the CEQ.

		SCEQ 2001	SCEQ 2002	SCEQ 2003	SCEQ 2005	SCEQ 2007	CEQ 2006	CEQ 2007
Areas of best practice	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%	4%	0%	0%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%	0%	0%	0%
	All	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Suggested improvements	Domestic	n/a	n/a	n/a	0%	0%	0%	0%
	International	n/a	n/a	n/a	8%	4%	0%	0%
	All	0%	6%	0%	4%	2%	0%	0%

7.3 Key issues for current coursework students (SCEQ 2007)

The main issues raised by current students related to the time frame required to complete the course, requirement to spread the workload across the course, and too many readings.

Due to the low number of comments, and to maintain student confidentiality, no sample comments are provided.

Attachment A Key issues for graduates in 2007

The following comments were received from graduates in response to the 2007 CEO. The broad area(s) by which each comment has been analysed is indicated in the second column.

NB: Areas of the student experience that are mentioned by students that do not fall into the coverage of this report are in italics.

Areas of best practice

Domestic students

COMMENT	ASPECTS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
Working in teams with other people from different industries with different experiences.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
External studies was a challenge, but it was a open experience because, it has help me develop myself to work in a more schematic way, managing my time, because have to work at the same time make research work and study.	GENERIC SKILLS
Hands on experience related to Engineering Practice.	GENERIC SKILLS
Working in teams	GOOD TEACHING
MES offers an good extension from the undergraduate course with a re-cap of fundamentals and introduction to advanced theories. The flexibility of the course enable me to have a thesis like project and same coursework.	CURRICULUM
Fellow peers interaction.	LEARNING COMMUNITY
The broad focus.	CURRICULUM
Team working. Exposure to multiple and varied concepts and literature. WebCT tool/flexibility.	CURRICULUM

International students

COMMENT	ASPECTS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING
Excellent teaching shows some lecturers high level technique in theory and practice.	GOOD TEACHING
The course included many interesting subjects, which helped me approach the new level of study.	CURRICULUM
Insight to Australian industry/management.	CURRICULUM
Good lecturer and interesting subject.	GOOD TEACHING CURRICULUM
Thesis.	ASSESSMENT
Course materials were good. Subject matter was extensive, relevant and interesting. Some of the teachers were very knowledgeable, helpful and interacted very well.	GOOD TEACHING OVERALL SATISFACTION CURRICULUM

Suggested improvements

Domestic students

COMMENT

The interaction of some tutors.

ASPECTS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

GOOD TEACHING

As an external student the difficult part was communicating with the professional / teacher for more discussion.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

Effective communication.

GOOD TEACHING

More interested, engaging

GOOD TEACHING

I agreed that the advanced work don't in MES is unable to be covered in a two hour exam paper, I appreciate the trust from the professionals however there are people taking advantage on the nearest system on assignments.

ASSESSMENT

Lecturers need to vary material instead of repeating.

GOOD TEACHING

Most approachable lecturers!!!! Less rude.

GOOD TEACHING

Thought the course was mechatronic (although told this at the beginning of course!) but it turned out that this was not the focus. (only 1 in 12 was mechatronic related.)

CURRICULUM

I spent a large part of my time being an English teacher to foreign students. Teamwork and experience can only be used as an excuse up to a point.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Greater tutor involvement (more frequent).

GOOD TEACHING

International students

COMMENT

More lecture time.

ASPECTS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

CURRICULUM

The subject 'Professional Development' was absolutely necessary for master student. The difficulty level of the course needs to be increased. It most have a compulsory project (< six credits) relating to experiments.

CURRICULUM
ASSESSMENT

Need more Professors to do lectures rather than just 'senior lecturers'.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Need more group assignment.

ASSESSMENT

All aspects, so that graduates can get job after completing their study.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Taking international students into consideration.

LEARNING COMMUNITY

Variety in the level of teacher feedback. The 'team work' element needs better defined processes to ensure individual effort and learning is recognised.

GOOD TEACHING
ASSESSMENT

After investing lot of money and time to do master's currently I am unable to get employment. I am struggling to get a job, since last six months.

OVERALL SATISFACTION