

Faculty of Arts

Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

Trends and key issues: 2006 - 2010

March 2011

NB: Since this report covers the period prior to the transfer of the School of Economics to the Faculty of Arts, the name of the Faculty will be that in use in 2010. Future reports will refer to the Faculty as the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Data on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences are gathered each year using the Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. Analysis of this data provides a comprehensive picture of trends in the student experience, and the performance of the Faculty in relation to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for Research: Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree; and other related areas: Infrastructure; Research Climate; and Generic Skills.

Written observations, from respondents to the survey, about their experiences provide evidence to support the Faculty SREQ quantitative data results (percentage agreement scores), and provide detailed information about key issues in the Areas of best practice and Areas needing improvement, during their research training experience. The results are directly aligned with the scales and survey items used in the SREQ, with the addition of items that occur frequently in student comments.

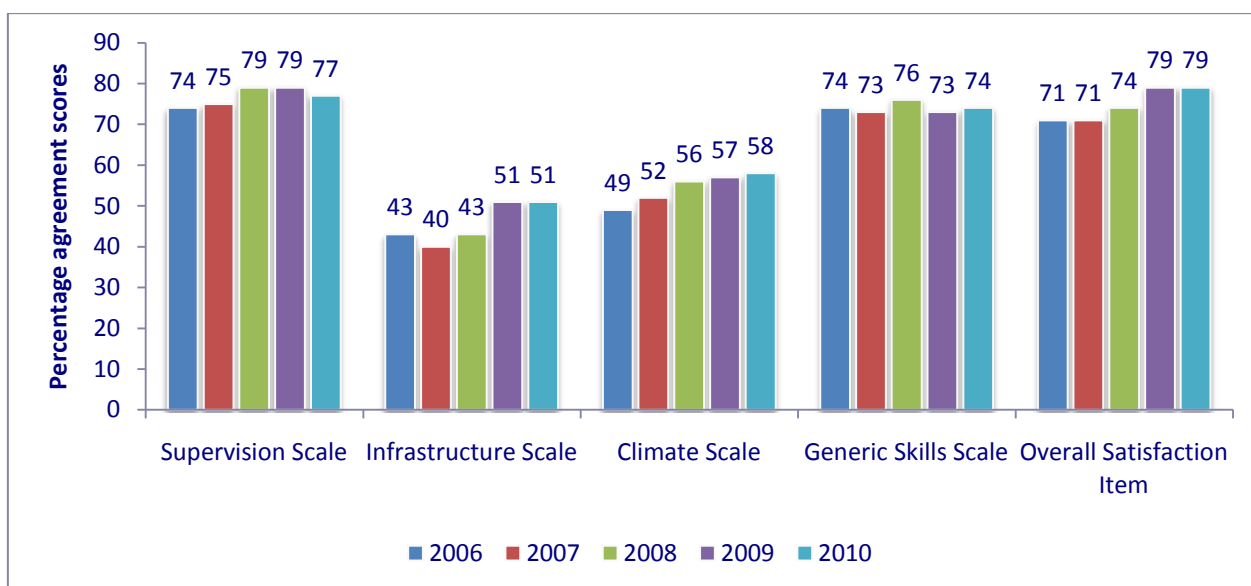
The analysis of qualitative data received between 2006 and 2009, and reported in this document, is based on written observations received from **all** respondents who answered the open questions in the SREQ. Results of the analysis of the 2010 data is further divided by School.

COMPARATIVE DATA: 2006 – 2010¹

Quantitative data

The following chart provides a comparison of the results of the SREQ percentage agreement results (i.e. respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the survey items relating to each scale) for the Faculty of Arts since 2006.

Figure 1: Faculty of Arts: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



Qualitative Data

Comparative data: 2006 – 2010

The charts on the following page provide an indication of those areas of the research higher degree student experience that respondents considered to be either of best practice or in need of improvement in their

¹ More detailed data, i.e. comparing the results by School, and from domestic and international students is available in the individual sections of the report. Statistical data regarding the number of students who responded to the SREQ, together with data on those who answered the open questions, can be found at Attachment One.

responses to the open questions in the SREQ 2006 – 2010. An average of 75-80% of respondents provide written observations, with more commenting on areas of best practice than suggesting improvements.

Figure 2: Faculty of Arts: Areas of best practice: SREQ 2006 - 2010

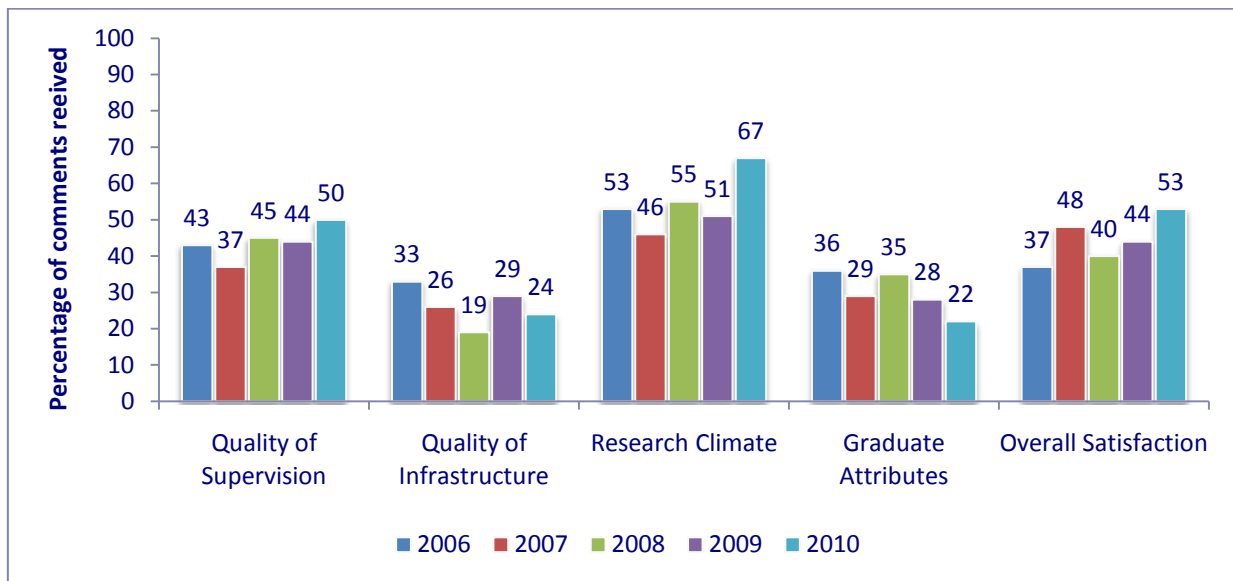
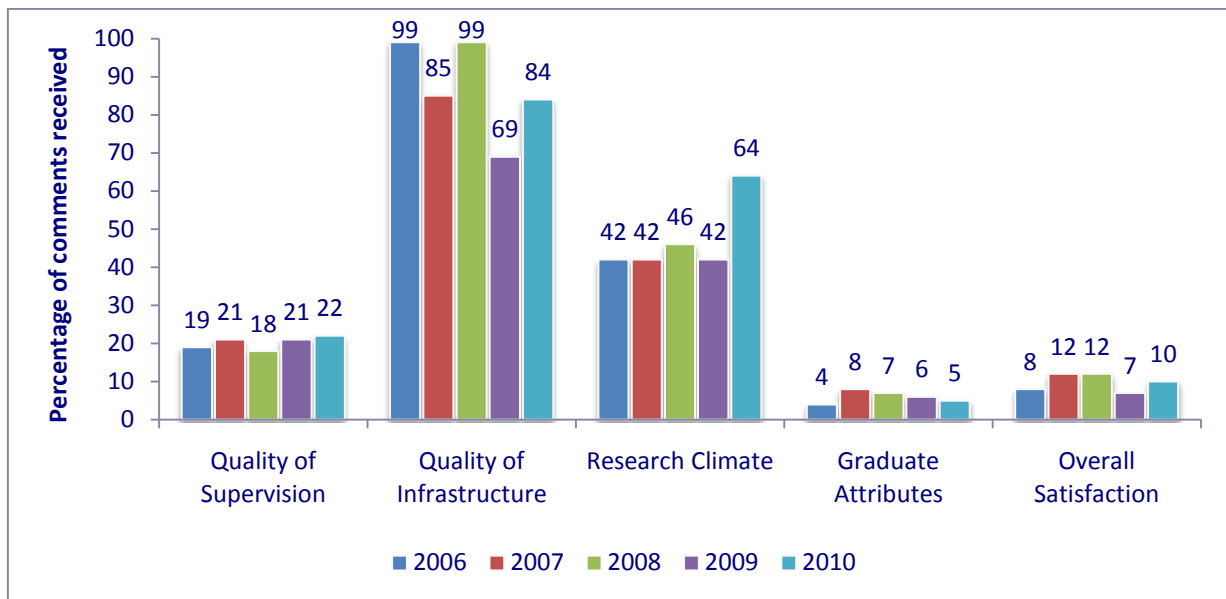


Figure 3: Faculty of Arts: Areas needing improvement: SREQ 2006 - 2010

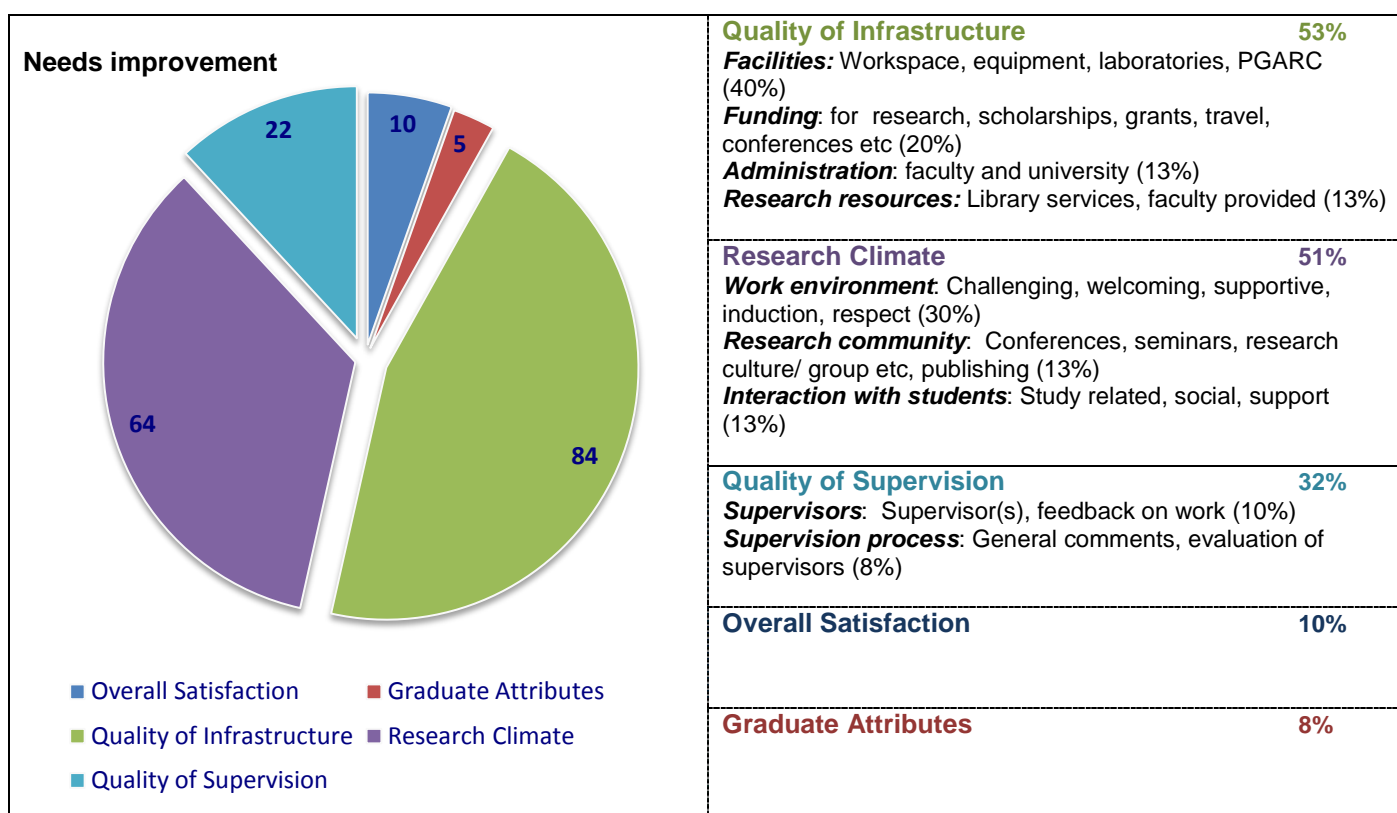
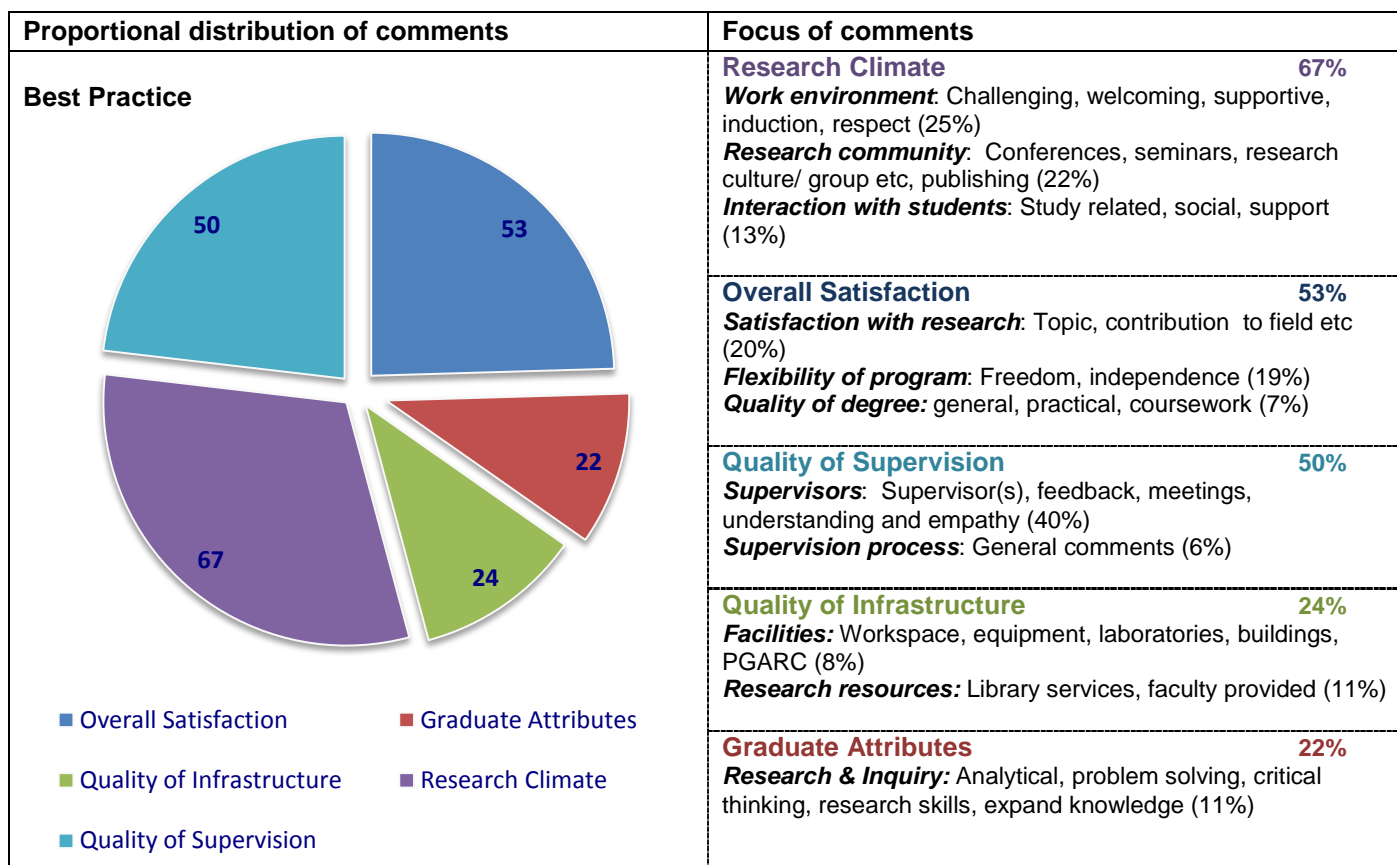


Key issues: 2010

The charts on the following page provide an overview of the issues that were of importance to research higher degree students in the Faculty in 2010.

Narrative and proportional chart data show the percentage of the total number of comments received from respondents for each of the main categories of the research higher degree student experience, together with an indication of those components that were mentioned most frequently. The statistical data indicates the distribution within each scale and category. Further detail is provided in Sections 1 – 6 of this report.

NB: the numbers in each of the pie slices add up to more than 100% because students often mention more than one aspect of their experience in their answers, each of which is counted once. (see Attachment Two for explanation on analysis and counting of comments)



FOR MORE INFORMATION

On the analysis and reporting of qualitative data

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SREQ Faculty reports are at:

http://sydney.edu.au/learning/evaluating/research_higher_degree_reports.shtml

On SREQ and how to interpret results

Staff of the Institute for Teaching and Learning are available to provide support to faculties in the interpretation of the SREQ data and the development of strategic responses to address any issues identified

Phone: + 61 2 9351 3725
Email: itl@sydney.edu.au

SREQ results and reports are at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/>

INTRODUCTION

STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)

In 2002 the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for The University community on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences. This data is gathered each year using a survey specifically developed for this task, the "Student Research Experience Questionnaire" (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. The SREQ is based on a national survey of research higher degree students, the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). Some of the information gathered by the SREQ survey also contributes to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for research. These KPIs are the quality of Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree.

The survey gathers data on students' perceptions of the quality and frequency of supervision, intellectual and social climate, infrastructure, approaches to research, and generic skills development in their research higher degree, as well as their perceptions of the administration and student support services. The ITL analyses this data and provides a range of reports to staff and students of the university through this web site.

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 comment on the following questions:

- *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*

Quantitative and qualitative data from the SREQ provide evidence of the success of University and Faculty initiatives to improve the overall student experience in general and the student experience of research training in particular.

FOCUS OF THE REPORT

Based on the answers to the SREQ, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the postgraduate research student experience in the Faculty of Arts between 2006 and 2010. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2010 CEQ qualitative data: by whole of Faculty and by School:

- *School of Letters, Arts and Media (SLAM)*
- *School of Languages and Culture (SLC)*
- *School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry (SOPHI)*
- *School of Social and Political Sciences (SLC)*

Information is arranged by the following areas of the research higher degree student experience: Quality of Supervision, Quality of Infrastructure, Research Climate, Graduate Attributes, and Overall Satisfaction, which, taken together, comprise the student experience of research training within the Faculty.

FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS

By examining the foci of the students' comments in the 2010 SREQ, this report seeks to highlight areas that were of best practice in the students' experience, together with those that have been suggested as areas of improvement. The views of the research higher degree students, on their overall experience at the University, as received through the open response comments, are a valuable insight into what is important to them; what they consider to be areas of best practice; and what they consider are in need improvement.

It is important to remember, when looking at the results of the analysis of this data, 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 were happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting about areas in need of improvement.

ATTACHMENTS

The following attachments are provided at the end of the report:

- 1 Statistical data: number of respondents to the SREQ by Faculty and by School
- 2 Analysis and counting of comments
- 3 SREQ Scales: coverage of quantitative and qualitative data

GLOSSARY

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

- SREQ** Student Research Experience Questionnaire
Administered to postgraduate research students annually, during second semester
- Supervision Scale**
Infrastructure Scale
Climate Scale
Generic Skills Scale
Overall Satisfaction Item The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon the items included in the nationally administered Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). These items have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales:
- Supervision
 - Infrastructure
 - Climate
 - Generic Skills
 - Overall Satisfaction Item
- Within the report, this naming convention is used to identify information relating to the analysis of the quantitative data (survey items)
- Faculty Scores**
Percentage agreement SREQ item responses are combined and reported in terms of the proportions of students who agreed or disagreed that their research higher degree experience was positive in the areas of: Supervision; Generic Skills; Infrastructure; Climate; and Overall Satisfaction
- Quality of Supervision**
Quality of Infrastructure
Research Climate
Graduate Attributes
Overall Satisfaction The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon categories used in the SREQ Taxonomy:
- Quality of Supervision
 - Quality of Infrastructure
 - Research Climate
 - Graduate Attributes
 - Overall Satisfaction
- Within the report, this naming convention is used as headings for each section of the report, and to identify information relating to the analysis of the qualitative data (written observations).
- Qualitative data**
Focus of written observations Students' written observations received in response to open ended questions in the SREQ:
- 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
- Percentage of comments received** The number of times an aspect is mentioned within written observations of respondents received from respondents is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received from respondents to the SREQ in any particular year.
- Key issues** As a general rule, only those aspects which receive over 5% of comments from the whole cohort (i.e. domestic and international combined; all respondents per degree) are considered significant enough to be included as key issues in the report.

1 QUALITY OF SUPERVISION

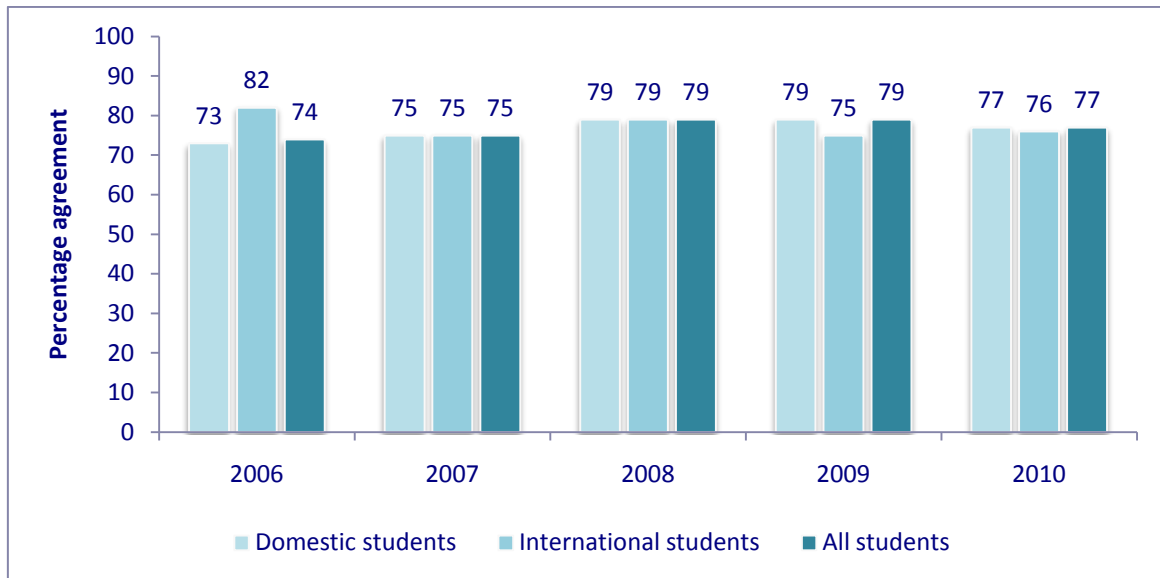
1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Supervision Scale* covers aspects of supervision including: supervision being available when needed; understanding by the supervisor(s) of difficulties; provision of additional information relevant to the thesis topic by the supervisor; provision of guidance in topic selection and refinement; provision of helpful feedback on progress; provision of good guidance in literature search; and overall satisfaction with quality of supervision.

1.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA: 2006 - 2010

The following graph shows the proportion of students who either agreed or strongly agreed with relevant Supervision Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2006 and 2010.

Figure 4: SREQ Supervision Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2006 - 2010



1.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS: 2006 – 2010

The following chart provides an indication of trends in the research higher degree student experience of the Quality of Supervision, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2006 - 2010 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice, and areas in need of improvement. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received from all respondents who supplied written observations.

Figure 5: Quality of Supervision: Focus of written observations: 2006 - 2010



1.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2010)

1.4.1 Areas of best practice

Quality of Supervision	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	40%	73%	44%
School of Languages and Culture	60%	59%	59%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	45%	27%	43%
School of Social and Political Sciences	59%	100%	68%
Faculty	47%	65%	50%

- Supervisor(s)	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	34%	73%	39%
School of Languages and Culture	55%	47%	53%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	32%	9%	30%
School of Social and Political Sciences	49%	75%	55%
Faculty	38%	53%	40%

- Supervision process	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	3%	0%	3%
School of Languages and Culture	0%	6%	2%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	9%	18%	10%
School of Social and Political Sciences	10%	17%	11%
Faculty	6%	9%	6%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- My supervision. I chose to study at The University of Sydney because of the quality of my supervisor and this has proved to be a good choice. My supervisor is insightful, supportive and encouraging. She provides a good balance of strategic advice on topic and method when needed as well as allowing me to work through issues on my own when that is appropriate

School of Languages and Culture

- Definitely, everything related to supervision, which is excellent. My supervisors (both the principal and associate) are human and supportive people, as well as generous and knowledgeable scholars. They encourage my development as an integral researcher and linguists, by encouraging my work, providing attentive guidance, giving access to spaces for discussion, dialogue and exchange with other students and scholars, etc

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- My supervisor is superb, although it can be difficult to get time with him, but this is understandable since he is very busy. He has an excellent knowledge of the area. He provides very useful feedback that helps me clarify my ideas, writing and the direction of my research. He is also very relaxed and easy to work with. It is always an absolute joy to speak with him in whatever context. He also provides excellent practical and professional advice

School of Social and Political Sciences

- Support from the supervisor is very crucial in a life of higher degree student as it is the guiding light in his/her quest for new ideas. That's why relationship between the student and supervisor has to be based on mutual trust and respect. Supervisor has to build his/her image in such a way so that the student can turn to him/her whenever s/he feels like. I'm lucky that I have such a supervisor

1.4.2 Areas needing improvement

Quality of Supervision	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	19%	43%	21%
School of Languages and Culture	9%	6%	8%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	35%	0%	32%
School of Social and Political Sciences	15%	8%	13%
Faculty	23%	15%	22%

- Supervisor(s)	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	6%	36%	10%
School of Languages and Culture	6%	6%	6%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	14%	10%	14%
School of Social and Political Sciences	5%	0%	4%
Faculty	9%	13%	10%

- Supervision process	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	8%	0%	7%
School of Languages and Culture	0%	0%	0%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	12%	0%	11%
School of Social and Political Sciences	8%	8%	8%
Faculty	9%	2%	8%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- There should be measures in place for students in their first year to evaluate their candidature earlier than the annual progress report at the end year. This should be formal and in writing

School of Languages and Culture

- My supervisor is not very pro-active. It seems it is always up to me to make contact. Although he is usually available when I need assistance, I would like it if he "paid attention" to me a bit more

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- The relationship with my supervisor. It has been disappointing that I have not had sufficient support, guidance and direction from my supervisor despite many attempts to facilitate a structured timetable of meeting opportunities, we rarely speak and never meet

School of Social and Political Sciences

- Relationships with supervisors need strengthening and clarifying, especially the division of responsibilities between principal supervisor (technical) and deputy supervisor (administrative). There has been little or no response to work submitted to supervisors for comment throughout semester 1 of 2010

2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

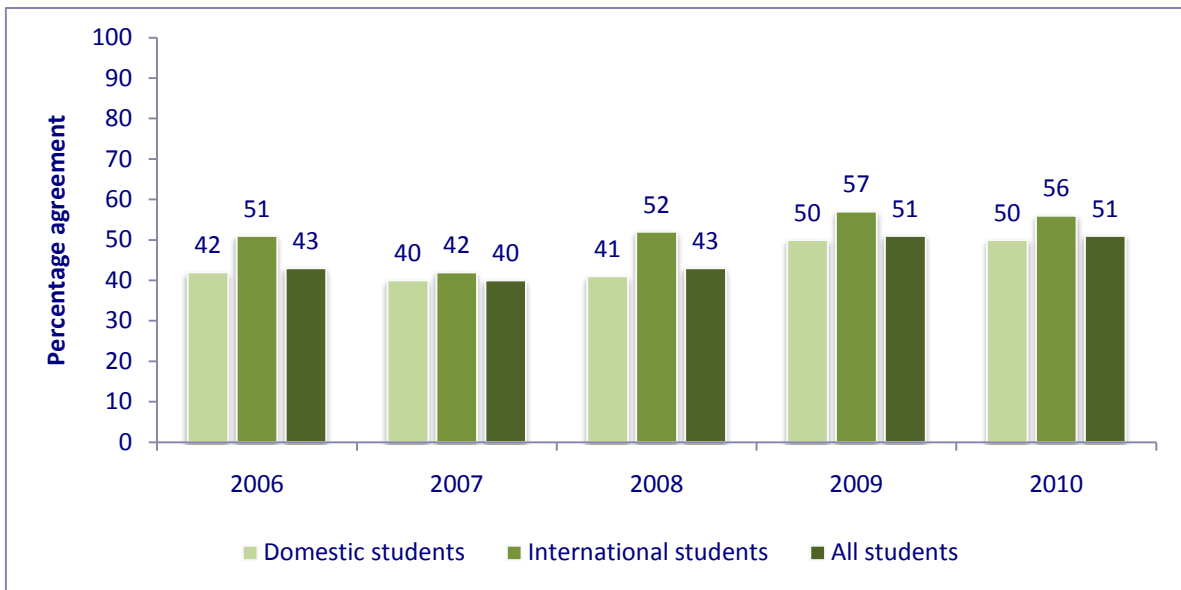
2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Infrastructure Scale* covers aspects of the infrastructure available to research students, including: access to a suitable working space; access to technical support; access to a common room; access to necessary equipment; access to computing facilities and resources; appropriate financial support; and overall satisfaction with the quality of services and facilities.

2.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA: 2006 - 2010

The following graph shows the proportion of students who either agreed or strongly agreed with Infrastructure Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2006 and 2010.

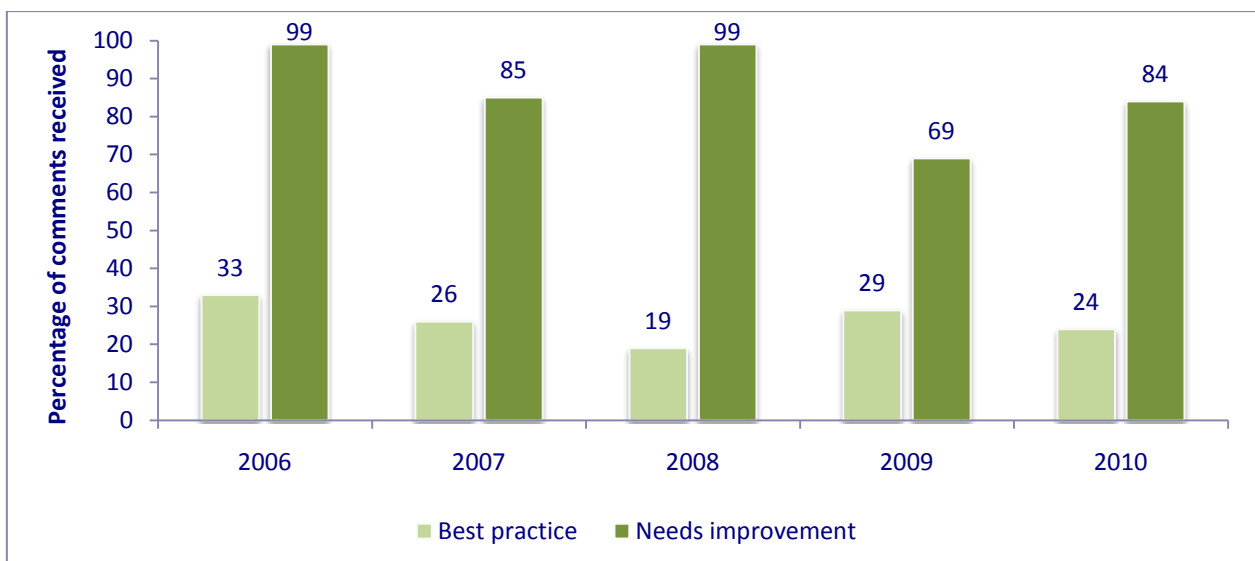
Figure 6: Quality of Infrastructure: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



2.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS: 2006 – 2010

The following chart provides an indication of trends in the research higher degree student experience of the Quality of Infrastructure, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2006 – 2010 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice and areas in need of improvement. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received from all respondents who supplied written observations.

Figure 7: Quality of Infrastructure: Focus of written observations: SREQ 2006 - 2010



2.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2010)

2.4.1 Areas of best practice

Quality of Infrastructure	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	22%	20%	22%
School of Languages and Culture	21%	65%	34%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	25%	0%	23%
School of Social and Political Sciences	20%	25%	21%
Faculty	23%	31%	24%

- Facilities	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	7%	0%	6%
School of Languages and Culture	2%	24%	8%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	11%	0%	10%
School of Social and Political Sciences	7%	0%	6%
Faculty	8%	7%	8%

- Research resources	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	12%	13%	12%
School of Languages and Culture	17%	35%	22%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	6%	0%	5%
School of Social and Political Sciences	7%	25%	11%
Faculty	10%	20%	11%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- The PGARC workspaces provide access to computers and other equipment plus space in which to work, as well as the opportunity to meet with fellow postgraduates

School of Languages and Culture

- Library services. It is very easy to find books and journal articles, the support is excellent. I feel fully supported when there is a need

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- The PGARC (Quad) work space for completing students is a very positive working environment and allows contact with other students at similar stages of the PhD process. The facilities are excellent and the support from IT and the PG ARC co-ordinator is attentive and timely

School of Social and Political Sciences

- I appreciate that there is some funding for travel and conferences as these are also an important part of academic development

2.4.2 Areas needing improvement

Quality of Infrastructure	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	86%	86%	86%
School of Languages and Culture	94%	81%	90%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	78%	50%	76%
School of Social and Political Sciences	87%	100%	90%
Faculty	84%	81%	84%

- Facilities	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	44%	43%	44%
School of Languages and Culture	34%	31%	33%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	42%	20%	40%
School of Social and Political Sciences	38%	38%	38%
Faculty	41%	34%	40%

- Funding and scholarships	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	19%	7%	17%
School of Languages and Culture	25%	19%	23%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	18%	10%	17%
School of Social and Political Sciences	31%	23%	29%
Faculty	21%	15%	20%

- Administration	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	17%	14%	17%
School of Languages and Culture	9%	13%	10%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	13%	20%	14%
School of Social and Political Sciences	8%	0%	6%
Faculty	13%	11%	13%

- Research resources	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	3%	14%	4%
School of Languages and Culture	19%	13%	17%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	4%	0%	3%
School of Social and Political Sciences	8%	31%	13%
Faculty	6%	15%	7%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- Physical amenities. Insufficient access to dedicated office space and computers with internet access on campus. It is very difficult to conduct research without research space! I am always lugging around piles of books, and juggling resources between different spaces. It is exhausting, frustrating and a waste of time

School of Languages and Culture

- Better funding opportunities for Arts students (esp. in Languages) - I had to travel overseas for research (to Europe), and was unable to make full use of resources abroad because I couldn't afford to stay in some cities, or for extended periods

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- The attitude of the admin staff in the faculty office is just appalling. You are just made to feel like you get in the way. Nothing joins up and no one seems to know what others are doing

School of Social and Political Sciences

- Learning facilities - A dedicated desk for PhD students. Most universities provide dedicated work stations for PhD students. It is essential for PhD students to have a dedicated desk and not have to worry about working space. Hot-desking situation is bad, not conducive for research students. In this area, this university is a disappointment

3 RESEARCH CLIMATE

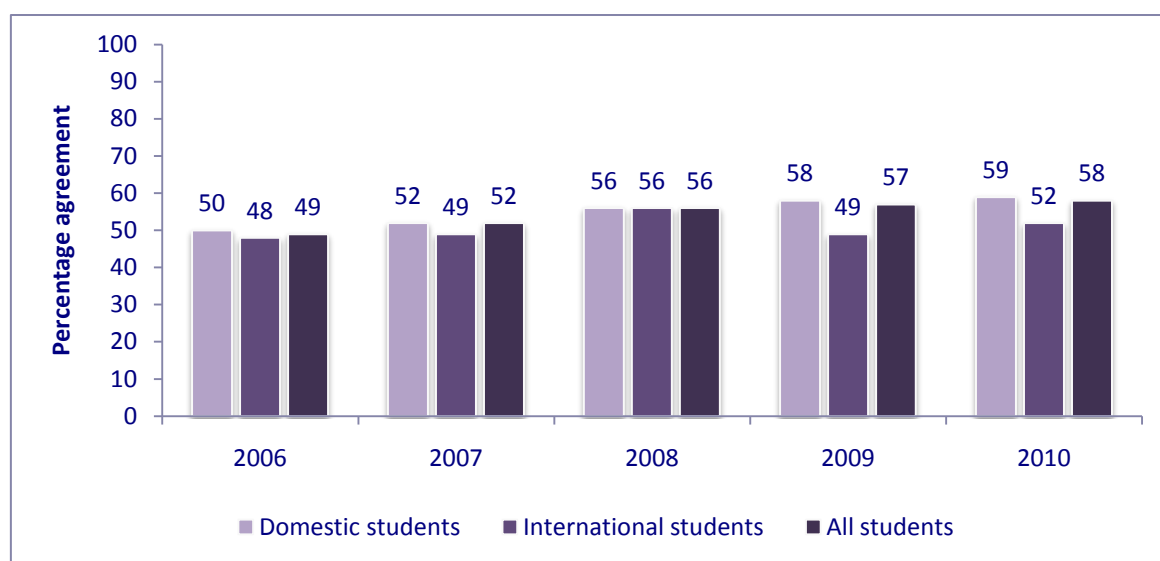
3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Climate Scale* covers aspects of the prevailing research climate in a students' school/ department, including: opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students; integration into the school/ department community; opportunities to become involved in the broader research culture; perception of other research students as supportive; feelings of isolation within the school/ department; encouragement of interaction with other research students; provision of a good seminar programme; stimulation of personal work by the prevailing research ambience; provision of a supportive work environment; and feeling respected as a fellow researcher.

3.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA: 2006 - 2010

The following graph shows the proportion of students who either agreed or strongly agreed with Climate Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2006 and 2010.

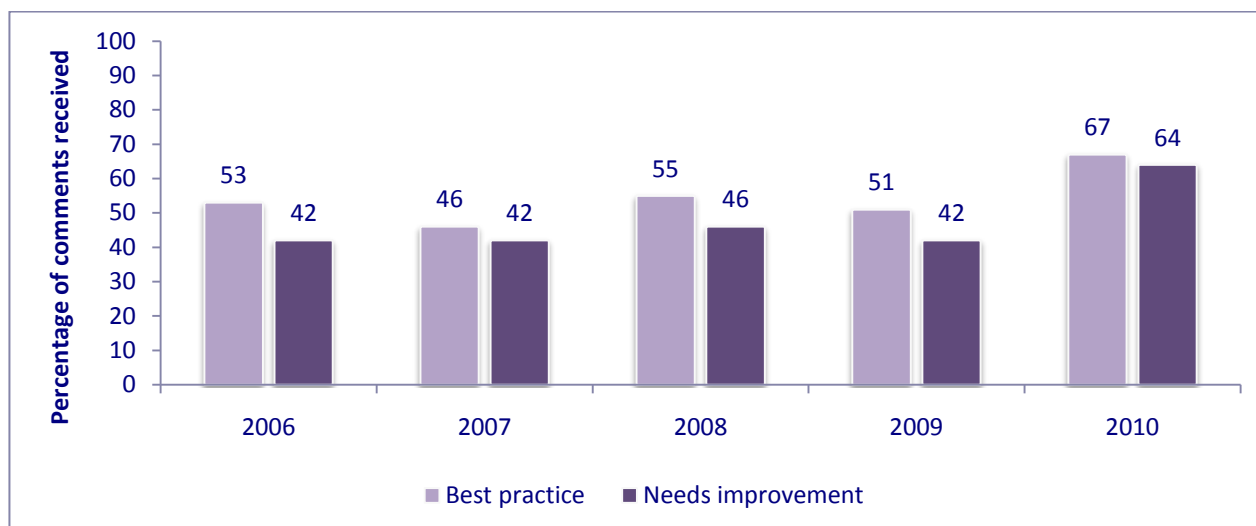
Figure 8: Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



3.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS: 2006 – 2010

The following chart provides an indication of trends in the research higher degree student experience of Research Climate, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2006 – 2010 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice and areas in need of improvement. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received from all respondents who supplied written observations.

Figure 9: Research Climate: Focus of written observations: SREQ 2006 - 2010



3.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2010)

3.4.1 Areas of best practice

Research Climate	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	73%	33%	69%
School of Languages and Culture	45%	35%	42%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	78%	45%	75%
School of Social and Political Sciences	80%	58%	75%
Faculty	72%	42%	67%

- Work environment	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	31%	7%	28%
School of Languages and Culture	19%	29%	22%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	24%	27%	24%
School of Social and Political Sciences	27%	8%	23%
Faculty	26%	18%	25%

- Research community/ culture	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	24%	27%	25%
School of Languages and Culture	12%	0%	8%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	28%	0%	25%
School of Social and Political Sciences	22%	33%	25%
Faculty	23%	15%	22%

- Interaction with other research higher degree students	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	13%	0%	11%
School of Languages and Culture	5%	6%	5%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	20%	9%	19%
School of Social and Political Sciences	17%	8%	15%
Faculty	15%	5%	13%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- The fostering of personal and professional relationships with peers and academics within my discipline - thus providing a professional network that will open doors to future employment, along with other opportunities

School of Languages and Culture

- I am encouraged, I am supported and I feel valued as a member of the learning community

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- I feel there is a very strong support network within the department, mainly through our weekly seminar series. These allow me access to a broader range of research (that I may not necessarily meet with) that have provided support, direction, ideas, access to comparative material, that I would not have direct access to otherwise

School of Social and Political Sciences

- Culture of department: intellectually stimulating but also supportive

3.4.2 Areas needing improvement

Research Climate	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	54%	50%	54%
School of Languages and Culture	53%	94%	67%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	58%	100%	61%
School of Social and Political Sciences	92%	100%	94%
Faculty	61%	85%	64%

- Work environment	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	25%	7%	23%
School of Languages and Culture	6%	50%	21%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	27%	60%	30%
School of Social and Political Sciences	46%	69%	52%
Faculty	27%	45%	30%

- Research community/ culture	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	13%	14%	13%
School of Languages and Culture	19%	13%	17%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	11%	0%	10%
School of Social and Political Sciences	18%	15%	17%
Faculty	13%	11%	13%

- Interaction with other research higher degree students	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	9%	21%	10%
School of Languages and Culture	16%	25%	19%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	9%	30%	11%
School of Social and Political Sciences	23%	15%	21%
Faculty	12%	23%	13%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- Erosion of number of academic staff and associated resources in the department has reduced the capacity to promote strong research culture - e.g. through regular research seminars, initiation of more focussed research events, or research activities that connect with broader research community

School of Languages and Culture

- Possibly greater access to other students with similar interests to compare research and to be able to guide further reading

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- From talking to other postgraduates in philosophy, most feel excluded by the departmental seminars (by the choice of topics, ignoring students in question time, and a general lack of interest in postgrad students on the part of staff, by which I mean that, staff do not actively welcome postgrads, they do not go to any effort to say hi to them, introduce themselves and chat to them, as I have found to be common at other universities) - and these are postgrad friends in a range of completely different areas that I have no interest in.

School of Social and Political Sciences

- There is also room for improvement in creating a welcoming and helpful environment for PhD students. Proper orientation and introductory programmes could be organised to provide some form of orientation for them

4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

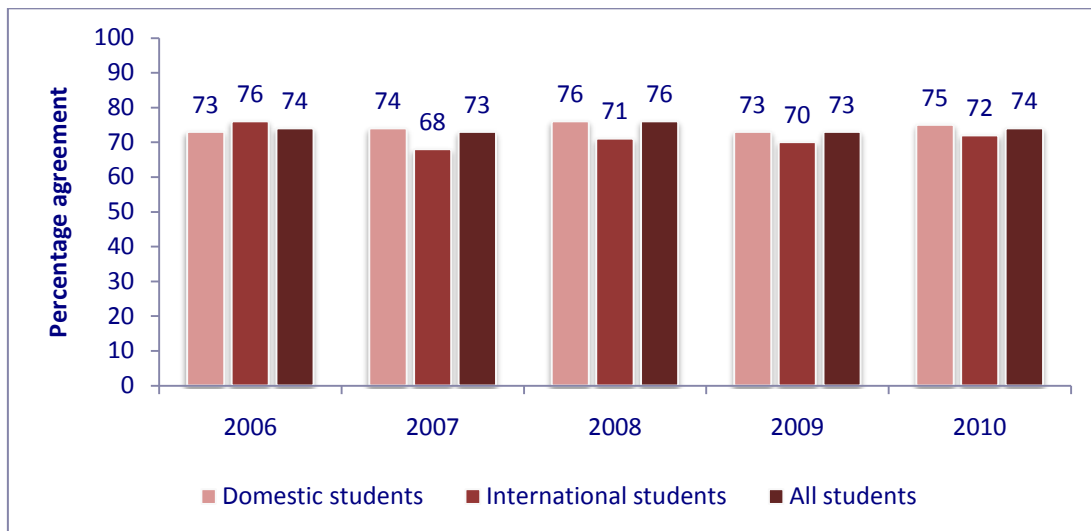
4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Generic Skills* scale reflects the extent to which students perceive their studies to have fostered the development of the generic skills recognised by the university as being a valuable outcome of university education, in addition to discipline specific skills and knowledge. Skills include problem solving; oral and written communication; development of ideas and their written presentation; collaboration with other researchers; analytical skills; planning; confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems; and ability to learn independently

4.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA: 2006 - 2010

The following graph shows the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Generic Skills Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2006 and 2010.

Figure 10: Generic Skills: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



4.4 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS: 2006 – 2010

The following chart provides an indication of trends in the research higher degree student experience relating to the enhancement of University Graduate Attributes, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2006 – 2010 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice and areas in need of improvement. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received from all respondents who supplied written observations.

Figure 11: Graduate Attributes: Focus of written observations: 2006 - 2010



4.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2010)

4.4.1 Areas of best practice

Graduate Attributes	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	18%	47%	22%
School of Languages and Culture	33%	47%	37%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	17%	27%	18%
School of Social and Political Sciences	10%	17%	11%
Faculty	19%	36%	22%

- Research and Inquiry	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	9%	20%	10%
School of Languages and Culture	21%	12%	19%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	10%	18%	11%
School of Social and Political Sciences	5%	8%	6%
Faculty	11%	15%	11%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- So far, the best aspects of my research higher degree experience are the improved capacity to develop ideas and become more self confident in terms of language and thinking aptitudes, apart from the improved capacity of expressing my opinions and sharing them

School of Languages and Culture

- developing independent research skills and the ability to plan a long term project. These skills will no doubt be of much use after my PhD work, when I my find employment as a research assistant or visiting fellow in a research facility

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- The best aspect will be the provocation it offers my thinking and how it enhances my analytical thinking skills

School of Social and Political Sciences

- I have learned a lot about qualitative and quantitative research methods and about the fields that are related to my research

4.4.2 Areas needing improvement

Graduate Attributes	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	4%	7%	5%
School of Languages and Culture	3%	13%	6%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	2%	20%	3%
School of Social and Political Sciences	8%	8%	8%
Faculty	4%	11%	5%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- The xxx department needs to have a relationship with other departments such as Psych, IT, Maths to help with statistical processing of our research data. When I had some big questions about how to learn and apply statistical methods, my supervisor was not able to help me and was not happy with me seeking help from other campuses. And no concrete suggestions on facilities in the uni to learn this was offered to me

School of Languages and Culture

- I think the university should organise course of research methodology for all PhD students

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- I think a lot of post-graduate students go into their degrees not having sound enough research skills from their undergraduate degrees, need to be addressed. basic literacy skills, and there should probably be more focus on access to research skills.

School of Social and Political Sciences

- specifically methodology courses in the Faculty

5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

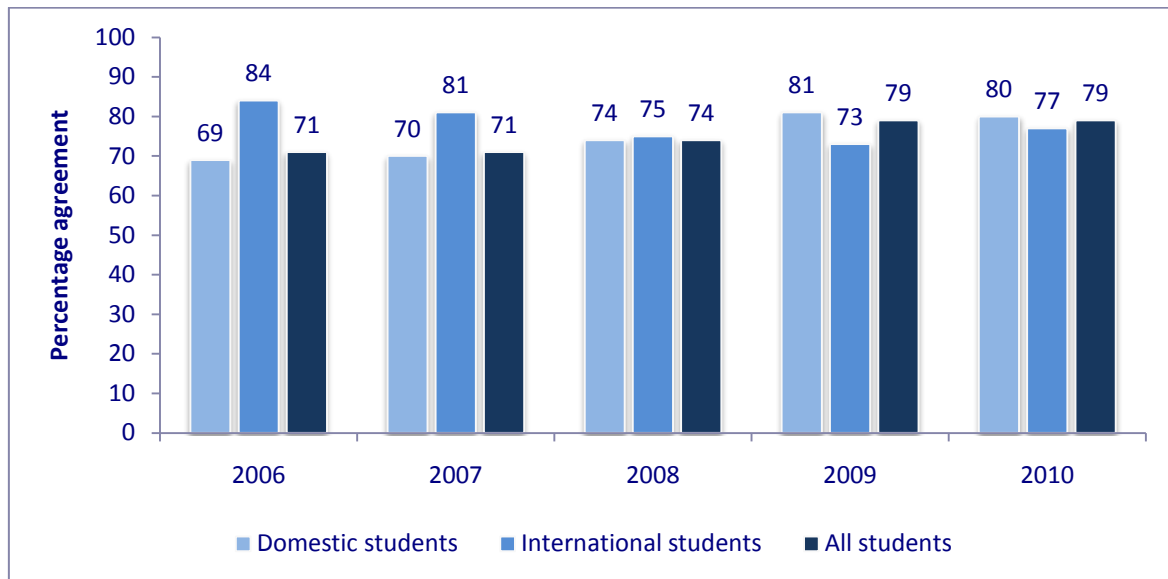
5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This single item asks students about their overall level of satisfaction with their research higher degree experience. In the analysis of the qualitative data, additional aspects, which are not covered in other areas of the survey, but which contribute to the overall satisfaction of the research higher degree student experience area included e.g. satisfaction with research, flexibility of programme, quality of degree (pressure to complete, coursework, field work, overseas research), and reputation of the university/ faculty.

5.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA: 2006 - 2010

The following graph shows the proportion of students who either strongly agreed or agreed with the Overall Satisfaction item in the SREQ between 2006 and 2010.

Figure 12: Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



5.4 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS: 2006 – 2010

The following chart provides an indication of trends in the research higher degree student experience aspects which fall within the remit of Overall Satisfaction, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2006 – 2010 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice and areas in need of improvement. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received from all respondents who supplied written observations.

Figure 13: Overall Satisfaction: Focus of written observations: SREQ 2005 - 2009



5.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2010)

5.4.1 Areas of best practice

Overall Satisfaction	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	58%	40%	56%
School of Languages and Culture	48%	18%	39%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	57%	36%	55%
School of Social and Political Sciences	56%	67%	58%
Faculty	56%	38%	53%

- Satisfaction with research	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	25%	7%	23%
School of Languages and Culture	24%	12%	20%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	18%	18%	18%
School of Social and Political Sciences	17%	17%	17%
Faculty	22%	13%	20%

- Flexibility of programme	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	21%	20%	21%
School of Languages and Culture	5%	6%	5%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	22%	18%	22%
School of Social and Political Sciences	24%	17%	23%
Faculty	20%	15%	19%

- Quality of degree	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	6%	13%	7%
School of Languages and Culture	10%	0%	7%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	6%	0%	6%
School of Social and Political Sciences	10%	0%	8%
Faculty	7%	4%	7%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- The opportunity to dedicate myself so totally to a research topic which I consider incredibly important is always fulfilling, even at its most challenging, because I am sustained by my enthusiasm for my field, by the acknowledgment of my achievements along the way and my sense of continuing evolution as an academic. It almost seems selfish to be able to devote so much energy, time and passion to what is essentially my own development and enrichment

School of Languages and Culture

- I have the possibility to research on a meaningful topic which interests me very much and that it will contribute to make the author I am researching on known also in Australia. I strongly agree with question 37: I see my research as contributing in some way to "big picture" issues

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- Satisfaction in tackling and completing a very difficult thesis

School of Social and Political Sciences

- I have been involved in auditing some classes relevant for my research and found myself enjoying the intellectual interaction with other students

5.4.2 Areas needing improvement

Overall Satisfaction	Domestic	International	All
School of Letters, Arts and Media	12%	0%	10%
School of Languages and Culture	3%	19%	8%
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	11%	10%	11%
School of Social and Political Sciences	8%	15%	10%
Faculty	10%	11%	10%

Sample comments

School of Letters, Arts and Media

- I also think that beginning a PhD is like being thrown into the deep end - there isn't a mandatory masters program in English and it can be overwhelming. I think that the undergrad/honours program should be more rigorous in preparing postgrad students for the intensity of PhD

School of Languages and Culture

- the students are not allowed to take any coursework for widening or inspiring the research

School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry

- I did notice a lack of breadth in the topics for PhD coursework seminars, and the mixing of PhD students with honours students is frustrating since the discussion amongst honours students is well below the level at which postgraduate discussion should be held

School of Social and Political Sciences

- The lack of relevant expertise in my area of research within the department. As such, it is hard to discuss ideas, readings and topics related to my own work

ATTACHMENT ONE: STATISTICAL DATA

1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Number of research higher degree students surveyed/ enrolled 2005 – 2009					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Total	486	525	562	587	653

Number of respondents to the SREQ 2005 – 2009					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	243	278	315	309	389
International students	39	32	55	66	71
Total	282	310	370	375	460
<i>% who responded</i>	<i>58%</i>	<i>59%</i>	<i>66%</i>	<i>64%</i>	<i>70%</i>

2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

2.1 Faculty level: 2005 - 2010

The analysis of the qualitative data is based on responses to the open questions received from **ALL** respondents to the SREQ from the Faculty of Arts.

Number of respondents who answered the open questions SREQ 2005 – 2009						
	<i>Date of survey</i>	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
		n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	Domestic students	207	247	264	250	311
	International students	33	26	45	48	55
	Total	240	273	309	298	366
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	<i>85%</i>	<i>88%</i>	<i>84%</i>	<i>79%</i>	<i>80%</i>

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Domestic students	193	238	243	225	289
	International students	29	28	39	46	53
	Total	222	266	282	271	342
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	<i>79%</i>	<i>86%</i>	<i>76%</i>	<i>72%</i>	<i>74%</i>

2.1 School level: 2010

The analysis of the qualitative data is based on responses to the open questions received from respondents to the SREQ from each School within the Faculty of Arts.

		Domestic	International	All
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	School of Letters, Arts and Media	119	15	134
	School of Languages and Culture	42	17	29
	School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	109	11	120
	School of Social and Political Sciences	41	12	53

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	School of Letters, Arts and Media	112	14	126
	School of Languages and Culture	32	16	48
	School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry	106	10	116
	School of Social and Political Sciences	39	13	52

ATTACHMENT TWO: NOTES ON ANALYSIS AND COUNTING OF COMMENTS

1 ANALYSIS OF COMMENTS

The components of categories and sub-categories used in the analysis of qualitative data are based on:

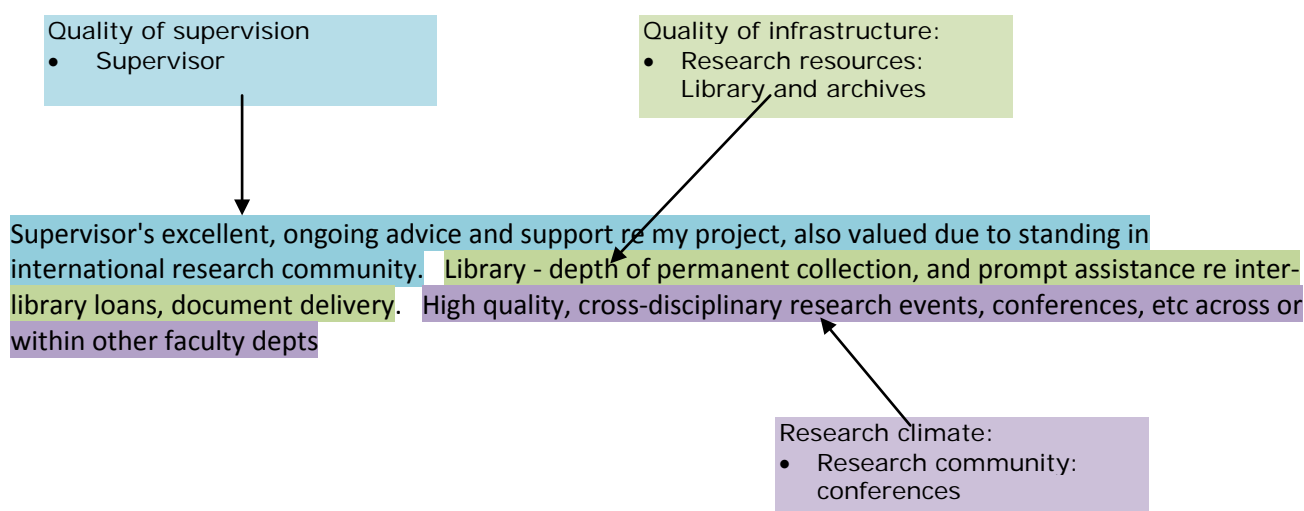
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

Together, they represent the range of features of each aspect which are considered to be essential to student satisfaction with their research training experience

2 COUNTING OF COMMENTS

Each comment is analysed according to the *Taxonomy for analysing qualitative data from the SREQ*, which is based on the Factors used in the SREQ. Based on the premise that a comment is what is written by an individual respondent in response to one of the open response questions, and a tally in the statistics being a specific phrase or sentence referring to one aspect of the student experience, the total number of times an aspect is mentioned in any one set of comments is calculated as a percentage of comments received in the year of the survey. As a general rule, only those aspects which receive over 5% of comments from the whole cohort (i.e. domestic and international combined) are considered significant enough to be included as specific issues in the report.

For example, the following comment is counted as ONE COMMENT RECEIVED; but as it is mentioned in Quality of Supervision (Supervisor); Quality of Infrastructure (Research resources); and Research Climate (Research community), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 3 aspects in one comment.



ATTACHMENT THREE: SREQ SCALES: COVERAGE OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon the items included in the nationally administered Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). These items have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales: Supervision, Climate, Infrastructure, and Generic Skills. These items, together with recurring themes in students' comments are used as the basis for categories, sub-categories and components for the analysis of qualitative data. This attachment lists the relevant survey items and sub-categories and components used in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from the SREQ.

1 SUPERVISION SCALE/ QUALITY OF SUPERVISION

1.1 SREQ Survey items

- 1 Supervision is available when I need it
- 5 My supervisor(s) make(s) a real effort to understand difficulties I face
- 13 My supervisor(s) provide(s) me with additional information relevant to my topic
- 18 I am given good guidance in topic selection and refinement
- 22 My supervisor(s) provide(s) helpful feedback on my progress
- 26 I have received good guidance in my literature search
- 36 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my supervision

1.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 4 sub-categories within *Quality of Supervision*, against which students' comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research student experience of Supervision. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments:

- Supervisor(s) (*supervisor/ associate supervisor; usefulness of sessions with; availability and frequency of meetings with; feedback on work; understanding and empathy*)
- Supervision processes within faculty (*general comments on supervision; evaluation of supervisors by faculty; training*)
- Management of Candidature (*guidance on thesis, literature review; topic etc; workload; progress reports*)
- IP and plagiarism

2 INFRASTRUCTURE SCALE/ QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

2.1 SREQ Survey items

- 2 I have access to a suitable working space
- 6 I have good access to the technical support I need
- 10 I have access to a common room or a similar type of meeting place
- 12 I am able to organise good access to necessary equipment
- 19 I have good access to computing facilities and services
- 28 There is appropriate financial support for research activities
- 35 Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the services and facilities

2.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 7 sub-categories within *Quality of Infrastructure*, against which students' comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Administration (*enrolment and admission; communication between faculty and students; general comments on administration (faculty and university); postgraduate coordinator*)
- Facilities (*PGARC; common room; workspace, buildings, etc; computer hardware and software; equipment; transport and parking*)
- Finance and funding (*funding for resources, equipment etc; scholarships and grants; travel grants*)
- Research resources (*provided by faculty; provided by internal and external libraries and archive centres*)
- Student support services (*Ethics Office; Research Office; International Office etc*)
- Support (*IT; technical; laboratory*)

3 CLIMATE SCALE/ RESEARCH CLIMATE

3.1 SREQ Survey items

- 3 The department / school provides opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students
 8 I feel integrated into the department's / school's community
 15 The department / school provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture
 16 I feel that other postgraduate students in my department / school are supportive
 20 I tend to feel isolated within this department / school
 23 Interaction with other postgraduate students is actively encouraged in this department / school
 24 A good seminar program for postgraduate students is provided
 25 The research ambience in the department / school or faculty stimulates my work
 29 I feel that this department / school provides a supportive working environment
 31 I feel respected as a fellow researcher within my department / school

3.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 7 sub-categories within *Research Climate*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the student experience of the prevailing research climate within the faculty. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Social inclusion (*cultural diversity; equity, discrimination, and harassment*)
- Research community (*general comments; faculty seminars, workshops, and discussion groups; networking/ collaborating; participation in conferences; opportunities for and encouragement to publish*)
- Work environment (*challenging and stimulating; induction/ orientation programme; integration into faculty/ department/ school; isolation (emotional); respect as fellow researcher; supportive environment; support for part-time, distance, international students*)
- Interaction with other research higher degree students (*academic; social; support of peers*)
- Location and physical environment
- Interaction with industry partners e.g. ARC projects
- Career preparation (*academic (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing); general comments*)

4 GENERIC SKILLS SCALE/ GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

4.1 SREQ Survey items

- 4 My research has further developed my problem-solving skills
 7 Doing my research has helped to develop my written communication skills
 9 I have learned to develop my ideas and present them in my written work
 11 As a result of my research, I have developed the ability to work collaboratively with other researchers
 14 My research has sharpened my analytical skills
 17 Doing my research has helped to develop my oral communication skills
 21 Doing my research has developed my ability to plan my own work
 27 As a result of my research I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
 30 As a result of my research I have developed the ability to learn independently

4.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 sub-categories within Graduate Attributes, against which students comments are analysed. These match the five main University Generic Graduate Attributes. The components of these sub-categories are allied to the skills and abilities for each attribute provided in the University policy framework for Graduate Attributes.

- Communication (*oral communication; written communication*)
- Ethical, social, professional understanding (*collaboration/ team work; ethical, social, cultural understanding; professional skills including academic*)
- Information literacy (*retrieval and use of information; computing skills e.g. using endnote, searching databases etc; referencing*)
- Personal and intellectual autonomy (*independent learning; planning own work; intellectually curious; new ways of thinking, etc*)
- Research and inquiry (*analytical, critical, problem solving; expanding knowledge base; creativity and imagination; statistical skills; research skills*)

5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

5.1 SREQ Survey item

43 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my research higher degree experience.

5.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 9 sub-categories within Overall Satisfaction. They represent the range of aspects of the postgraduate research student experience which are considered to have a major influence on the quality of the research degree experience, and which are not covered elsewhere.

- General comments
- Quality of degree/ program (*length; inclusion of coursework, practical aspects, including field work and visits to other institutions in Australia and overseas*)
- Pressure to complete (*i.e. within time frame set by APA conditions etc*)
- Satisfaction with research (*topic, contribution to field*)
- Flexibility of the program (*freedom to follow own research; choose own topics; compared to undergraduate degree; flexible working hours*)
- Reputation/ prestige of university/ faculty/ department/ academic staff
- Quality of students
- Staffing issues and resources (*i.e. that affect students overall experience*)
- Writing and completing the thesis