



## Faculty of Education and Social Work

### Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

#### Trends and key issues: 2006 - 2010

April 2011

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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.

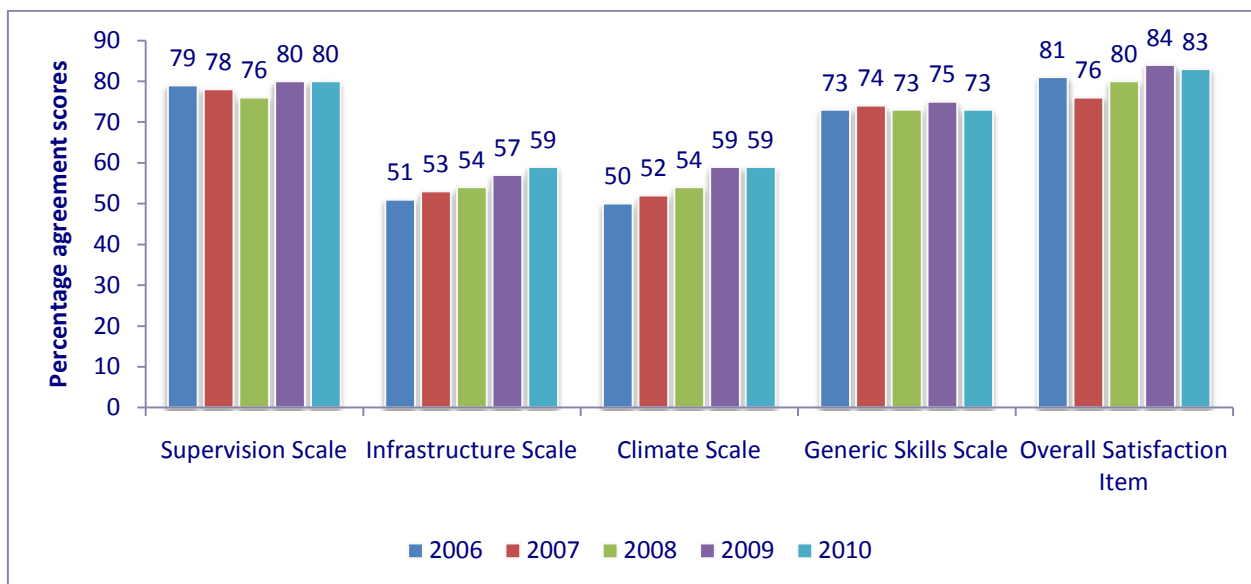
The analysis of qualitative data received between 2006 and 2010, and reported in this document, is based on written observations received from **all** respondents who answered the open questions in the SREQ. Results of the analysis of the 2010 data is further divided by area of study: Education *and* Social Work (as indicated in the degree title).

### COMPARATIVE DATA: 2006 – 2010<sup>1</sup>

#### 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 Education and Social Work since 2006.

Figure 1: Faculty of Education and Social Work: 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

<sup>1</sup> More detailed data, i.e. comparing the results by area of study, 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. (See Attachment One)

Figure 2: Faculty of Education and Social Work: Areas of best practice: SREQ 2006 - 2010

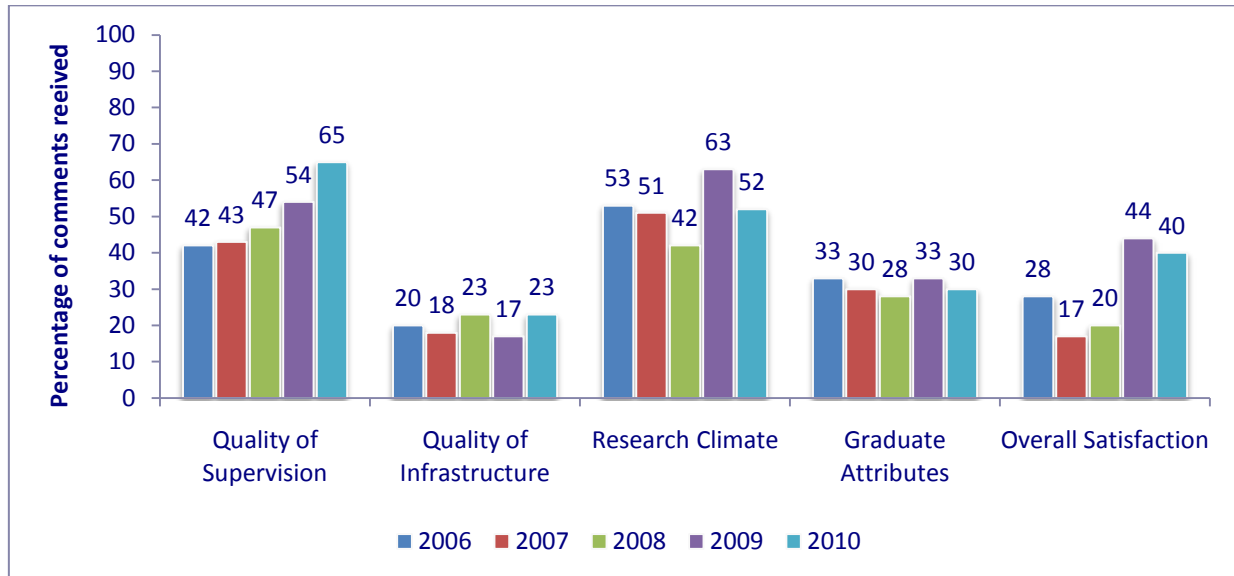
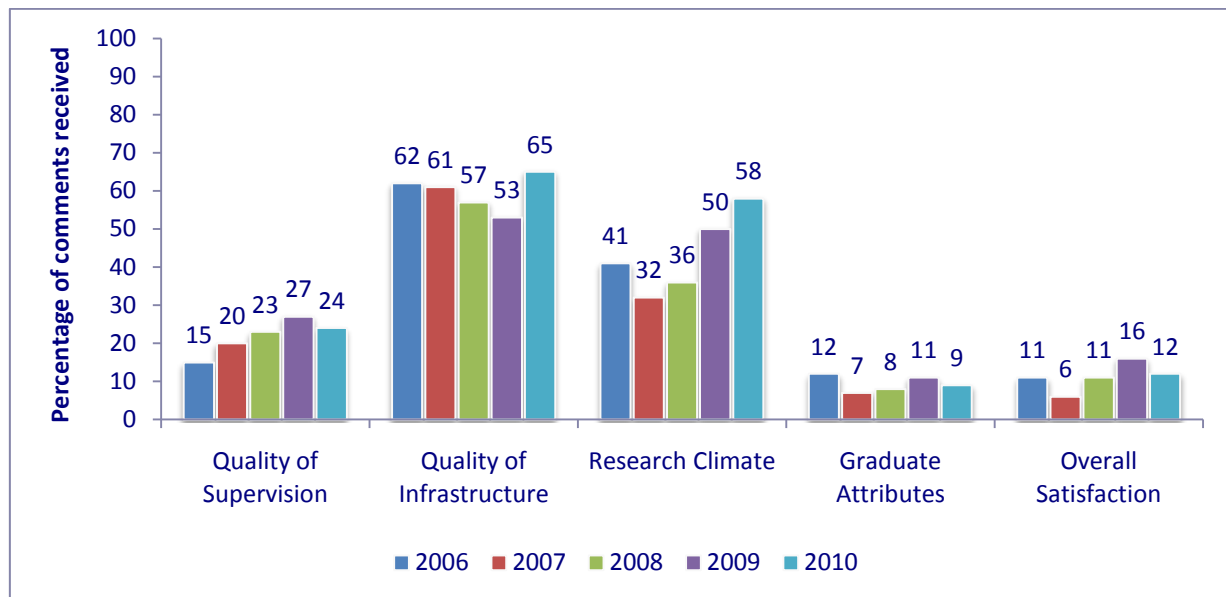


Figure 3: Faculty of Education and Social Work: Areas needing improvement: SREQ 2006 - 2010

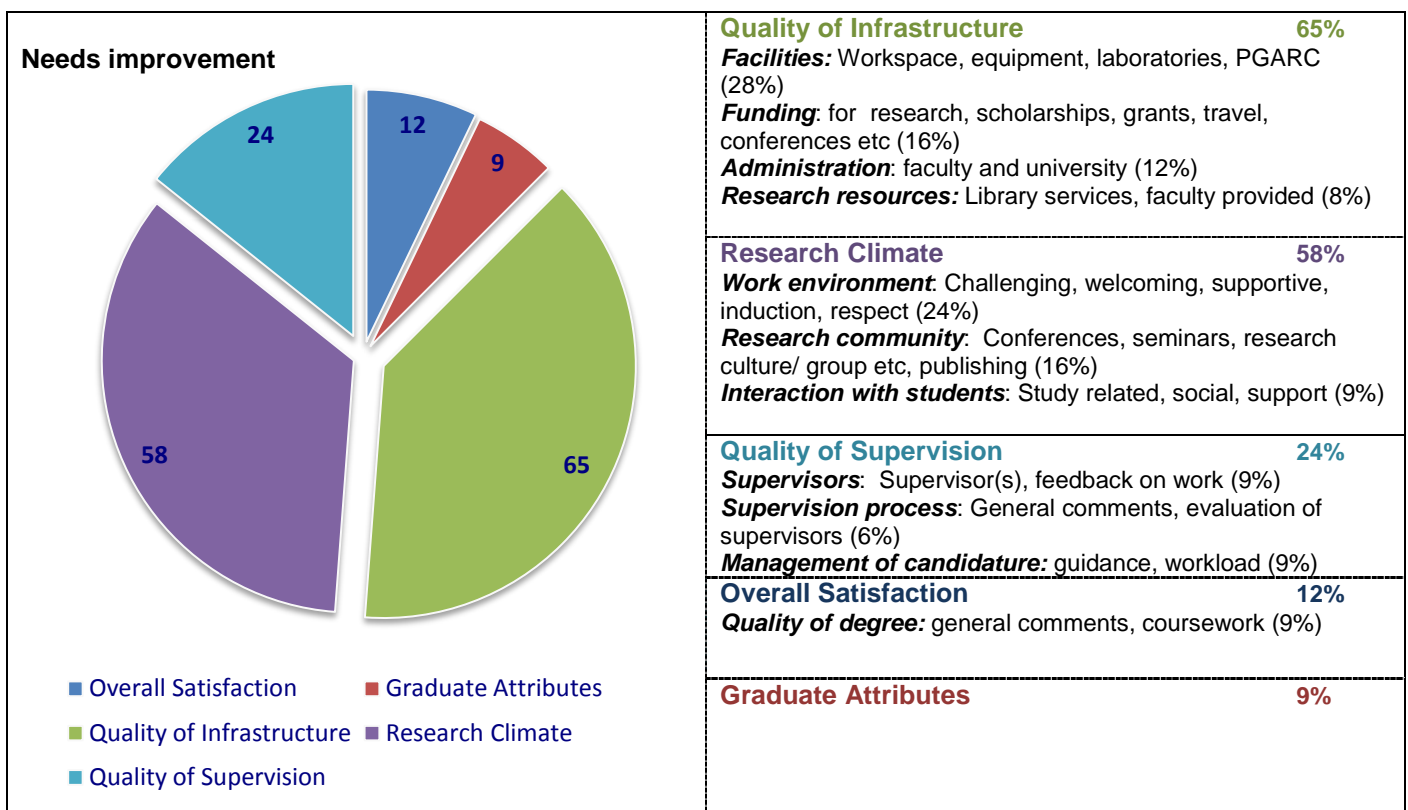
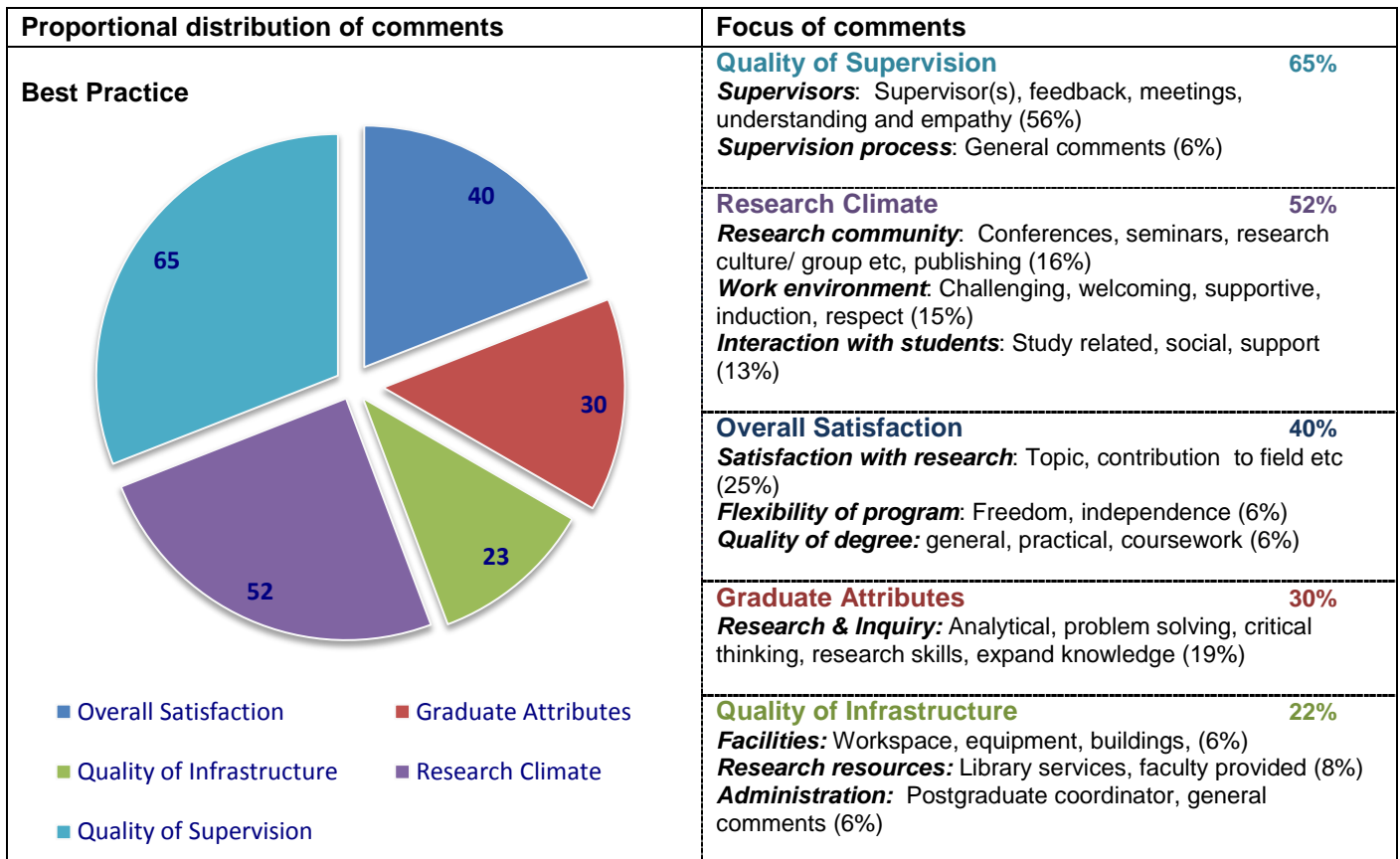


**Key issues: 2010**

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](http://sydney.edu.au/learning/evaluating/research_higher_degree_reports.shtml)

### ***On SREQ and how to interpret results***

Staff of the ITL 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  
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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 Education and Social Work between 2006 and 2010. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2010 SREQ qualitative data: by Faculty and by area of study (Education and Social Work)

*NB: Applying the guidelines on reliability of statistical data used by ITL in the analysis of quantitative data, since the number of respondents answering the open questions for international students in the Social Work research higher degree program is below 5, results of the analysis are expressed for the whole Social Work cohort (domestic and international combined).*

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 area of study
- 2 Analysis and counting of comments
- 3 SREQ Factors

## 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

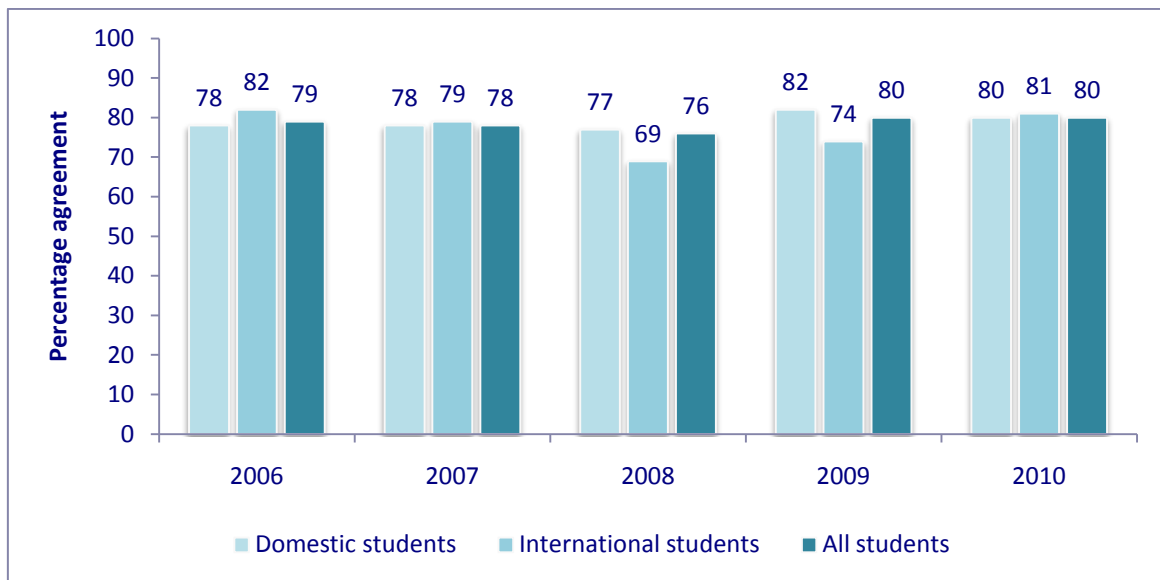
## 1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	66%	43%	<b>61%</b>
Social Work			<b>85%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>65%</b>

<b>- Supervision process</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	6%	4%	<b>6%</b>
Social Work			<b>10%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>

<b>- Supervisor(s)</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	58%	39%	<b>54%</b>
Social Work			<b>70%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>56%</b>

#### Sample comments

##### Education

- Guidance for literature searches and reviews. My supervisor is able to identify some "jump-off" points for recommended works and writers. This is invaluable in the early stages of literature review, when the initial pile of reading seems insurmountable
- My supervisor is very supportive and responsive. I believe we gave a mutual respect for each other's intellect and working style. We have been able to discuss issues openly and constructively. My assistant supervisor has also been available to meet with when requested, and also has been very supportive

##### Social Work

- My supervisors are vigilant and very support. They are available when I need them! They are also flexible in the time I can see them!
- Excellent supervision, encouragement and understanding

### 1.4.2 Areas needing improvement

<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	23%	19%	<b>22%</b>
Social Work			<b>33%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>24%</b>

<b>- Supervisor(s)</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	10%	10%	<b>10%</b>
Social Work			<b>6%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>

- <b>Supervision process</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	4%	10%	<b>5%</b>
Social Work			<b>11%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6%</b>

- <b>Management of candidature</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	9%	0%	<b>7%</b>
Social Work			<b>17%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>

**Sample comments**

Education

- Supervisors appear to be willing for help, but they don't really involve in deeply. They don't update their research knowledge in some fields and give vague guidance. They question a lot, but can't really lead me to a clear goal. Often I feel helpless with the supervision
- The level of supervision is sometimes much too strong and critical of my suggestions to the extent that I need to remind myself it is 'my' research project. The supervisor needs to respect that I'm capable of doing the research, and want to make good progress so that I finish within the required time for a full-time PhD

Social Work

- Make sure you pick supportive people to be on the panel of the progress interviews (like last year and this year)- who also have an understanding of the social work field not just teaching
- Supervision- not enough exchange of ideas

## 2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

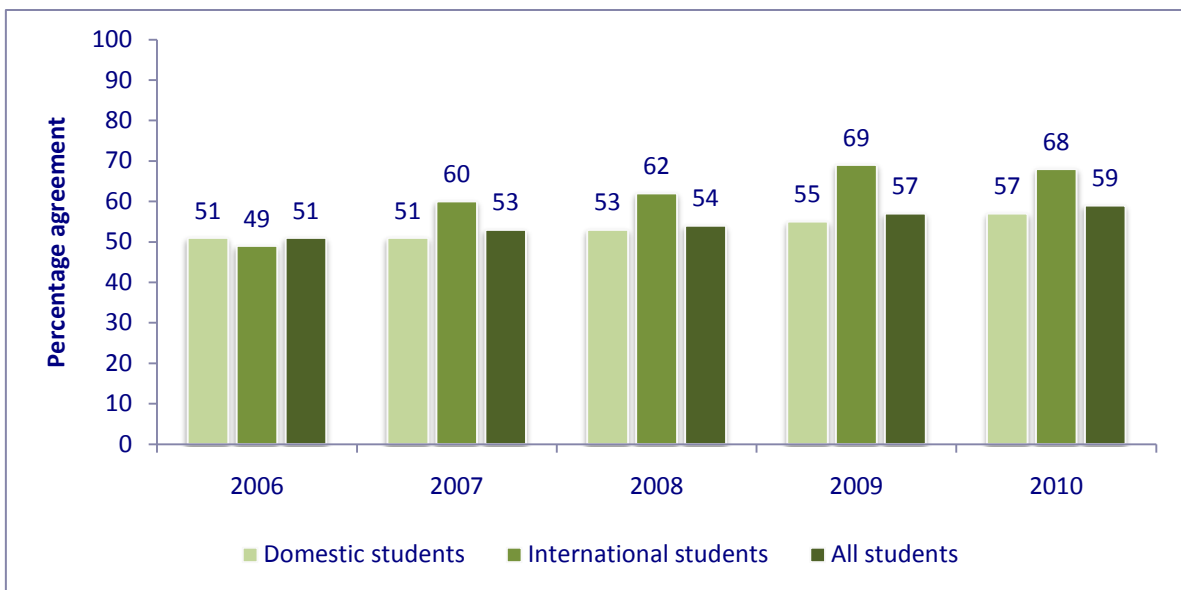
### 2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 – 2009 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

<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	21%	22%	<b>21%</b>
Social Work			<b>30%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>23%</b>

- <b>Research resources</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	8%	9%	<b>8%</b>
Social Work			<b>10%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>8%</b>

- <b>Administration</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	7%	0%	<b>6%</b>
Social Work			<b>5%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>

- <b>Facilities</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	4%	13%	<b>6%</b>
Social Work			<b>5%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>

#### Sample comments

##### Education

- We have a great Research Student Liaison Officer, who makes every effort to keep us informed and welcomed
- Having access to data bases related to my topic of interest

##### Social Work

- Great library and journal collection
- University scholarship to support research

### 2.4.2 Areas needing improvement

<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	62%	71%	<b>64%</b>
Social Work			<b>67%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>65%</b>

- <b>Facilities</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	23%	38%	<b>27%</b>
Social Work			<b>33%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>28%</b>

- <b>Funding and scholarships</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	17%	10%	<b>15%</b>
Social Work			<b>17%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>16%</b>

- <b>Administration</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	14%	5%	<b>12%</b>
Social Work			<b>11%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>12%</b>

- <b>Research resources</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	5%	19%	<b>8%</b>
Social Work			<b>6%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>8%</b>

### Sample comments

#### Education

- As a part time student I feel that infrastructure could be improved (e.g. rooms, equipment, furniture could be improved, lack of 'friendly' and 'warm' spaces prevents me from spending more time on campus)
- My office space has two desks shared by 4 people - the timetable of desk-use suits me fine, but the people I share with are often loud and disruptive, which means I have to move elsewhere to work productively. They often invite students in to discuss work etc in the office. I am happy using share spaces, but there is normally some level of etiquette by others that doesn't need to be spelt out

#### Social Work

- Research funding for part-timers; research funding for PhD students with non-traditional routes to RHD's
- Sharing office space- because there is some pressure to use the space (from other students) and being large in space has limited value for work

### 3 RESEARCH CLIMATE

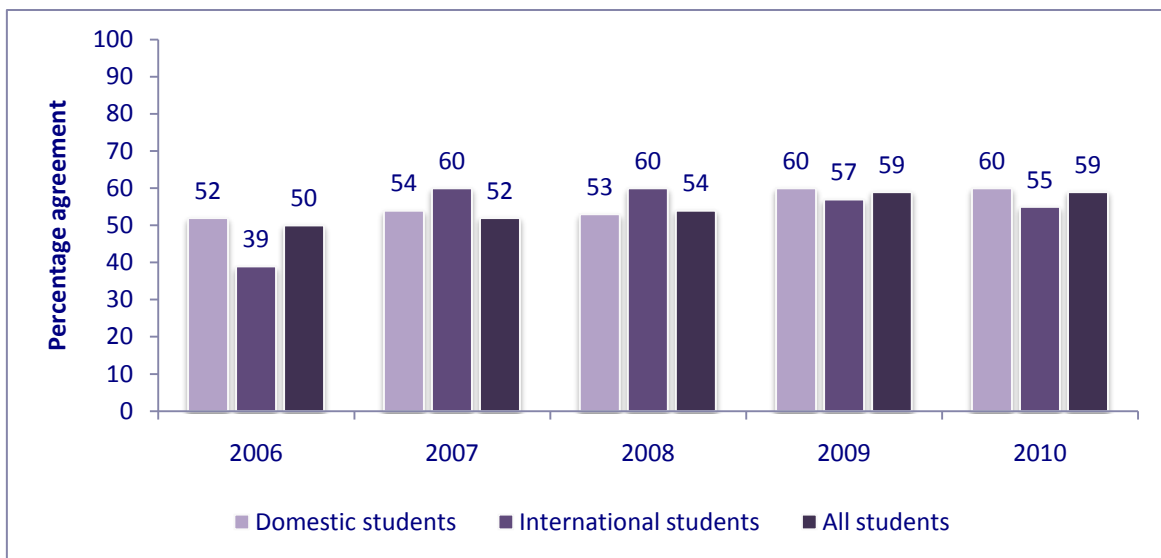
#### 3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

<b>Research Climate</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	59%	43%	<b>56%</b>
Social Work			<b>30%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>52%</b>

- <b>Research community/ culture</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	17%	22%	<b>18%</b>
Social Work			<b>5%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>16%</b>

- <b>Work environment</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	16%	4%	<b>14%</b>
Social Work			<b>25%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>15%</b>

- <b>Interaction with other research higher degree students</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	16%	13%	<b>16%</b>
Social Work			<b>0%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>

#### Sample comments

##### Education

- Being able to share and exchange knowledge with masters' students in the postgraduate courses as a tutor has been valuable in my own higher degree experience. I enjoy working with students
- Having the opportunities to attend local and international conferences. This has provided me the chance to discuss my research with other experts in the field and to update the knowledge of cutting-edge research around the world

##### Social Work

- The best aspects are the network of support. Academic, administration, collegial by the school and the considerable interest in my research
- Learning to raise the right questions has been invaluable in my research journey. This has been possible due to interactions especially with supervisor and the thesis proposal workshop. These interactions gave my thinking a dynamic aspect and has been enjoyable

### 3.4.2 Areas needing improvement

<b>Research Climate</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	57%	57%	<b>57%</b>
Social Work			<b>61%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>58%</b>

- <b>Work environment</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	26%	19%	<b>24%</b>
Social Work			<b>22%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>24%</b>

- <b>Research community/ culture</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	14%	19%	<b>15%</b>
Social Work			<b>22%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>16%</b>

- <b>Interaction with other research higher degree students</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	9%	14%	<b>10%</b>
Social Work			<b>6%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>

#### Sample comments

##### Education

- Perhaps some better social networking tools for postgrad students to enable us to find others working in similar fields, though perhaps within other disciplines?
- The faculty really needs to bring in some structured meeting groups for postgrads particularly part-timers. To help avoid isolation. The writing group has kept me at the university

##### Social Work

- Isolation, lack of support from faculty and supervisor
- There needs to be more avenues for postgraduate students to interact with experts in the field (other universities) - either in terms of faculty seminars, forums etc. Or perhaps host national level conferences
- in social work

## 4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

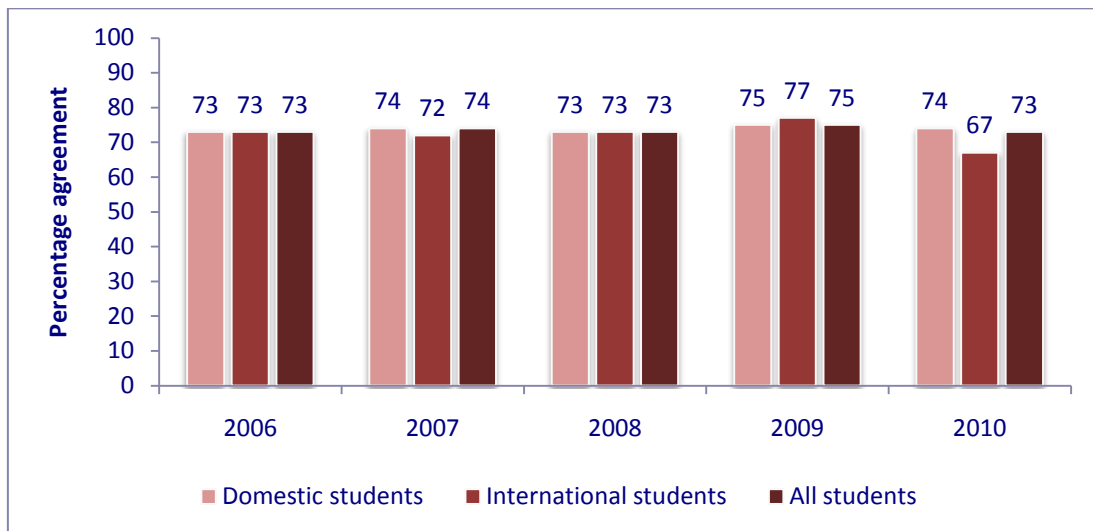
### 4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	29%	48%	<b>33%</b>
Social Work			<b>10%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>30%</b>

- <b>Research and Inquiry</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	18%	30%	<b>20%</b>
Social Work			<b>10%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>19%</b>

##### Sample comments

###### Education

- Working on skills, writing, researching, referencing - these have helped me to become efficient and accountable and more precise
- Developing new ways to approach the same topic as it develops thinking and analytical skill as well as one's ability to go beyond that which is obvious

###### Social Work

- Exposure to new literature; the wider reading in my discipline
- Knowledge of the subject area has deepened

##### 4.4.2 Areas needing improvement

<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	8%	19%	<b>10%</b>
Social Work			<b>6%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>9%</b>

##### Sample comments

###### Education

- Courses related with research methodology (including thesis and dissertation writing) need to be updated to help PhD students design their methodology
- Support in research methods and statistical analysis
- Since I am an international student, I think my writing ability and oral abilities need to be more worked on

###### Social Work

- Ongoing learning and self reflection process. Being patient

## 5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

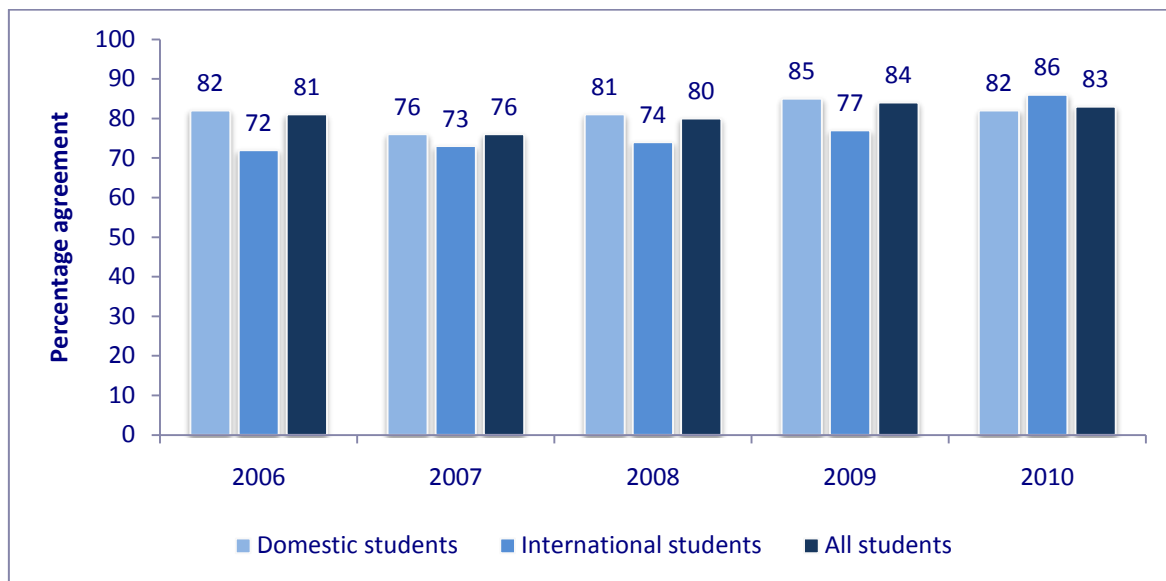
### 5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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 2006 - 2010



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

### 5.4.1 Areas of best practice

<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	40%	35%	<b>39%</b>
Social Work			<b>45%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>40%</b>

- <b>Satisfaction with research</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	23%	22%	<b>23%</b>
Social Work			<b>40%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>25%</b>

- <b>Flexibility of programme</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	5%	13%	<b>7%</b>
Social Work			<b>0%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>

- <b>Quality of degree</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	8%	0%	<b>7%</b>
Social Work			<b>5%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>6%</b>

#### Sample comments

##### Education

- Flexibility of meeting times, reviews, etc. The fewer the deadlines and pressures the better it is for the student
- That I feel like my research is directly related to a need in my particular area, and that I see it as helping me in my work and also in the wider educational community, I love the chance to read widely and deeply on the topic and to make links between practice and theory and that it has given me opportunities to engage with the profession both within the faculty and the broader community

##### Social Work

- I chose a topic that interests me strongly. I am enjoying the opportunity to explore research questions that interest me and which inform my teaching
- Research thesis coming to an end and a good level of satisfaction "the process and end product".

### 5.4.2 Areas needing improvement

<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	14%	14%	<b>14%</b>
Social Work			<b>0%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>12%</b>

- <b>Quality of degree</b>	Domestic	International	<b>All</b>
Education	9%	14%	<b>10%</b>
Social Work			<b>0%</b>
<b>Faculty</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>

### **Sample comments**

#### Education

- More flexibility is needed to allow for potential candidates to undertake research. Currently, the admission criteria for some HDR degrees is based on outdated elitist values. Someone with a Masters degree (coursework) and a postgraduate certificate (coursework) is not allowed entry to a PhD because their prior studies had no research component- this is backward and silly
- EDPK 5002 and EDPK 5003 should be integrated into one, streamlined preliminary course for HDRS as they are a prerequisite for most and would therefore flow with the nature of first year candidature. Also didn't like students presenting parts of the course - we were learners ourselves, and coursework at this level needs the expertise of academic staff; it was also made more difficult presentations by students with low English ability which is tough on them too to be teaching students

## ATTACHMENT ONE: STATISTICAL DATA

### 1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

<b>Number of research higher degree students surveyed/enrolled 2006 – 2010</b>					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Total	181	209	236	256	258

<b>Number of respondents to the SREQ 2006 – 2010</b>					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	107	117	139	136	147
International students	18	27	27	27	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>175</b>
<i>% who responded</i>	69%	69%	70%	64%	68%

### 2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

#### 2.1 Faculty level: 2006 - 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 Education and Social Work.

<b>Number of respondents who answered the open questions SREQ 2006 – 2010</b>						
	<i>Date of survey</i>	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
		n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	Domestic students	95	100	116	112	118
	International students	14	20	21	18	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>142</b>
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	87%	83%	83%	80%	81%

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Domestic students	90	99	99	92	95
	International students	15	22	23	22	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>116</b>
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	84%	84%	73%	70%	66%

#### 2.1 Area of study: 2010

The analysis of the qualitative data is based on responses to the open questions received from respondents to the SREQ from each area of study within the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

		Domestic	International	All
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	Education	99	23	<b>124</b>
	Social Work	19	1	<b>20</b>

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Education	77	21	<b>98</b>
	Social Work	18	0	<b>18</b>

## 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:

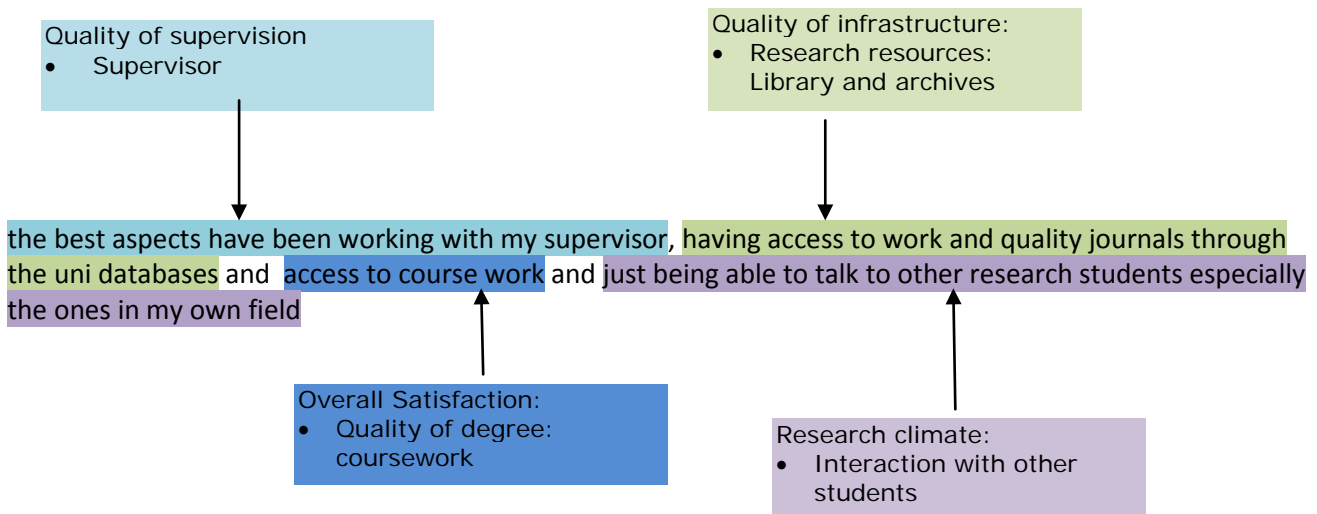
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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); Research Climate (Interaction with other students); and Overall Satisfaction (Quality of degree), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 4 aspects in one comment.



## ATTACHMENT TWO: 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