

Sydney Law School

Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

Trends and key issues: 2006 - 2010

April 2011

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION.....	6
GLOSSARY	7
1 QUALITY OF SUPERVISION	8
2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE.....	10
3 RESEARCH CLIMATE	12
4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES.....	14
5 OVERALL SATISFACTION	16
ATTACHMENT ONE: STATISTICAL DATA	18
ATTACHMENT TWO: NOTES ON ANALYSIS AND COUNTING OF COMMENTS.....	19
ATTACHMENT THREE: SREQ SCALES: COVERAGE OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA ...	20

Report compiled by

*Rachel Symons
Executive Officer
Graduate Studies Office*

rachel.symons@sydney.edu.au

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.

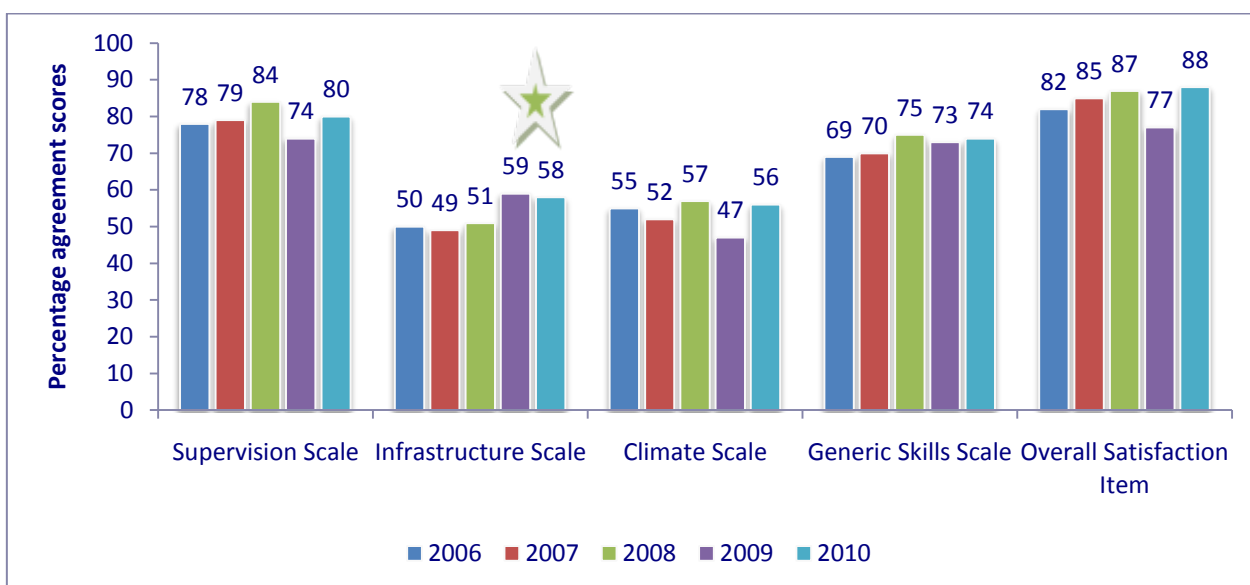
The analysis of qualitative data received between 2006 and 2010, and reported in this document, is based on written observations received from **all** respondents who answered the open questions in the SREQ.

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 Law since 2006.

Figure 1: Faculty of Law: 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 responses to the open questions in the SREQ 2006 – 2010. An average of 75% of respondents provide written observations, with more commenting on areas of best practice than suggesting improvements.

¹ More detailed data, i.e. comparing the results 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.

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

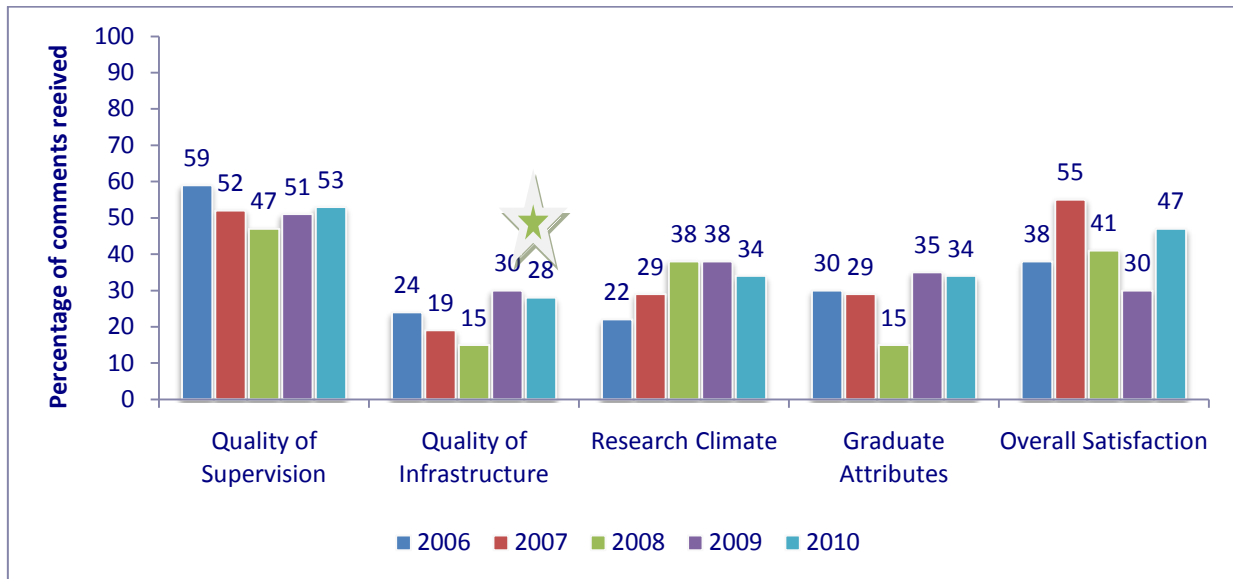
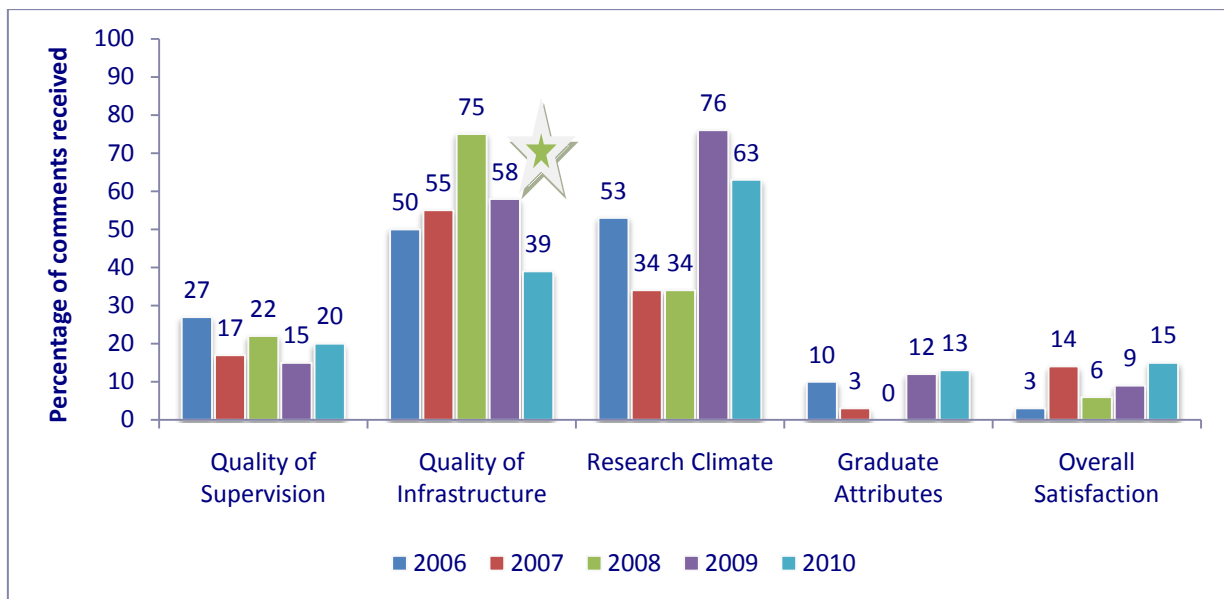


Figure 3: Faculty of Law: Areas needing improvement: SREQ 2006 - 2010



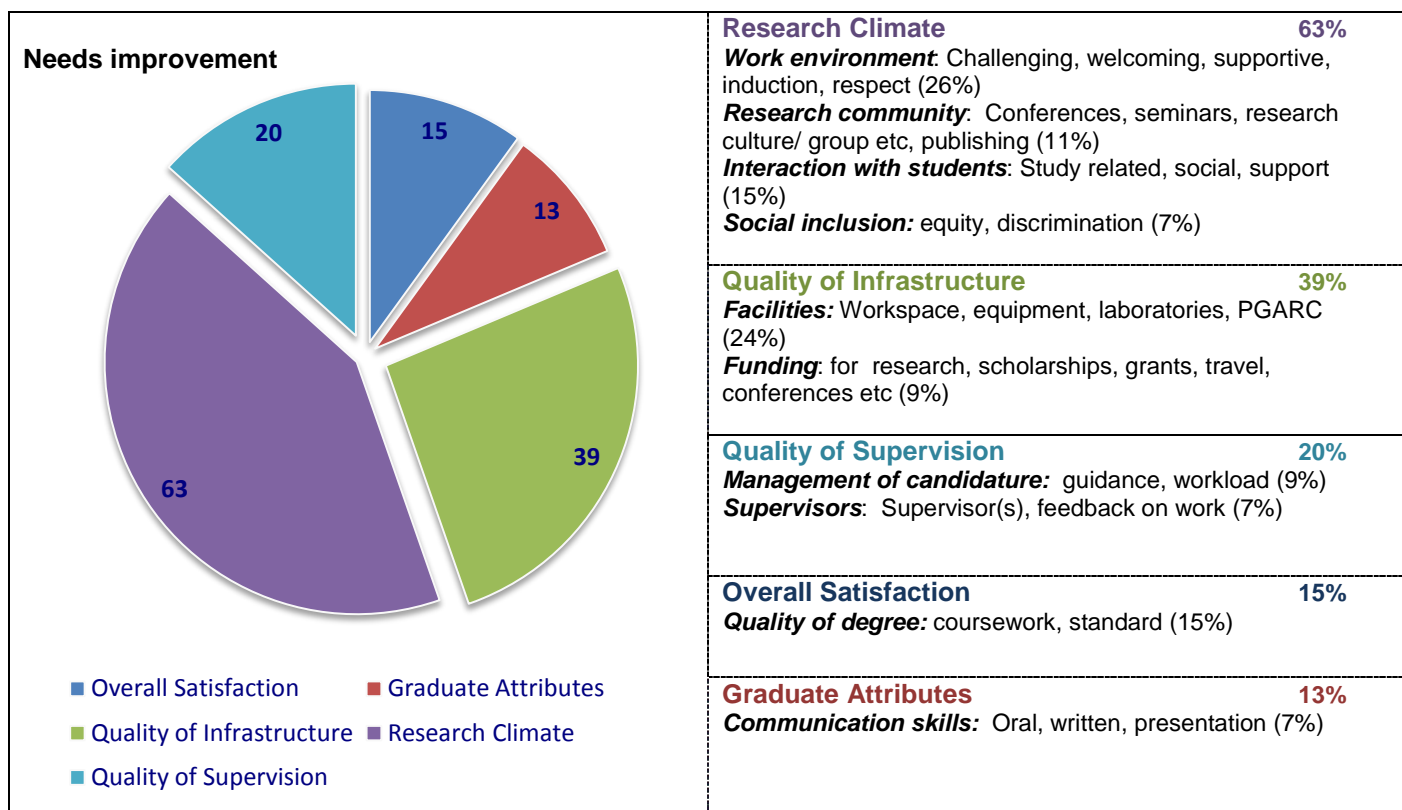
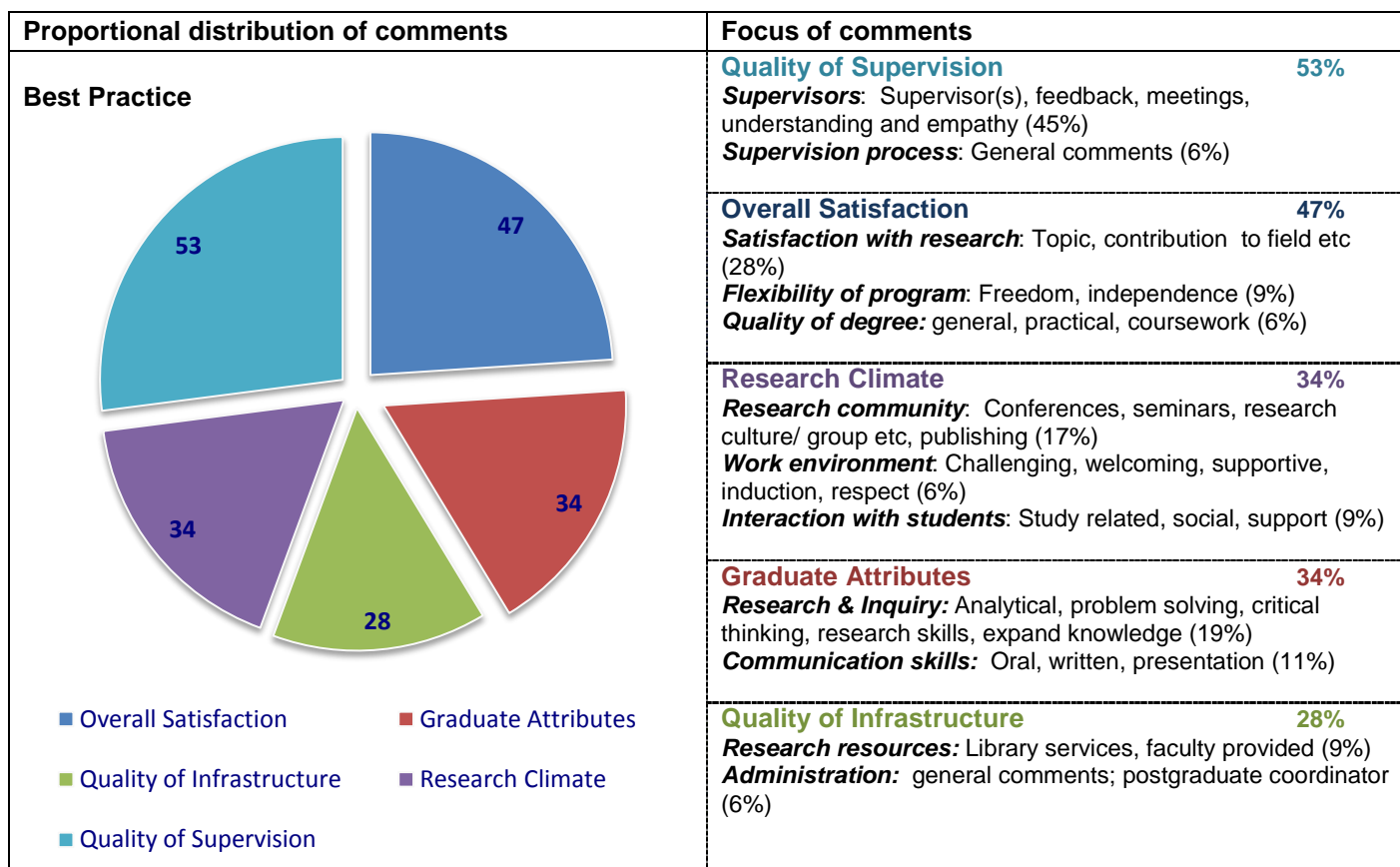
NB: Since Sydney Law School moved to the new Law School Building in February 2009, there has been an increase the percentage agreement score for INFRASTRUCTURE, together with comparable improvements in the number of respondents mentioning aspects of Infrastructure as an area of best practice, and a considerable decrease in the number of respondents suggesting improvements. For more details see Section Two: Quality of Infrastructure.

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

Ms Rachel Symons
Executive Officer
Graduate Studies Office
Phone: + 61 2 9351 6560
Email: rachel.symons@sydney.edu.au

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 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
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 Law between 2006 and 2010. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2010 SREQ qualitative data.

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 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 <u>whole</u> 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

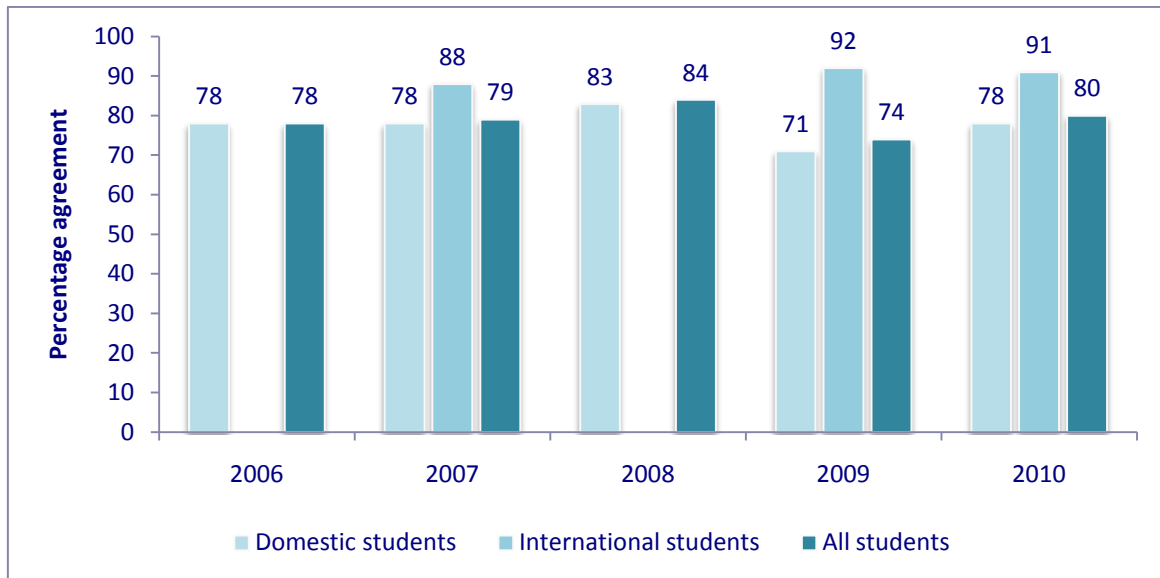
1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=8)	All (n=47)
Quality of Supervision	49%	75%	53%
- Supervisor(s)	38%	75%	45%
- Supervision process	8%	0%	6%

Sample comments

- My relationship with both my supervisors (primary and secondary) is excellent. They are highly supportive and accessible to me
- My supervisor reads everything I send in a timely way and provides excellent feedback. This has not only made my thesis better but has improved my skills and confidence
- my supervision - my supervisor gives constructive, timely advice. She is an expert in related fields of research to my PhD and is generous with her advice and expertise. She also allows flexibility in my working plan
- effective communications with both supervisors. They have contributed to a steady and easy-going working environment where I can concentrate on advancing research progress

1.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=7)	All (n=46)
Quality of Supervision	21%	14%	20%
- Management of candidature	8%	14%	9%
- Supervisor(s)	8%	0%	7%

Sample comments

- The Law school should adopt a policy of providing better guidance in choosing a topic for those who have difficulty finding a topic large enough and useful for PhD research
- better support when there is a change of supervisor
- I have also not had the benefit of any contact with my primary supervisor since commencing
- Setting a regular pattern for study and supervision

2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

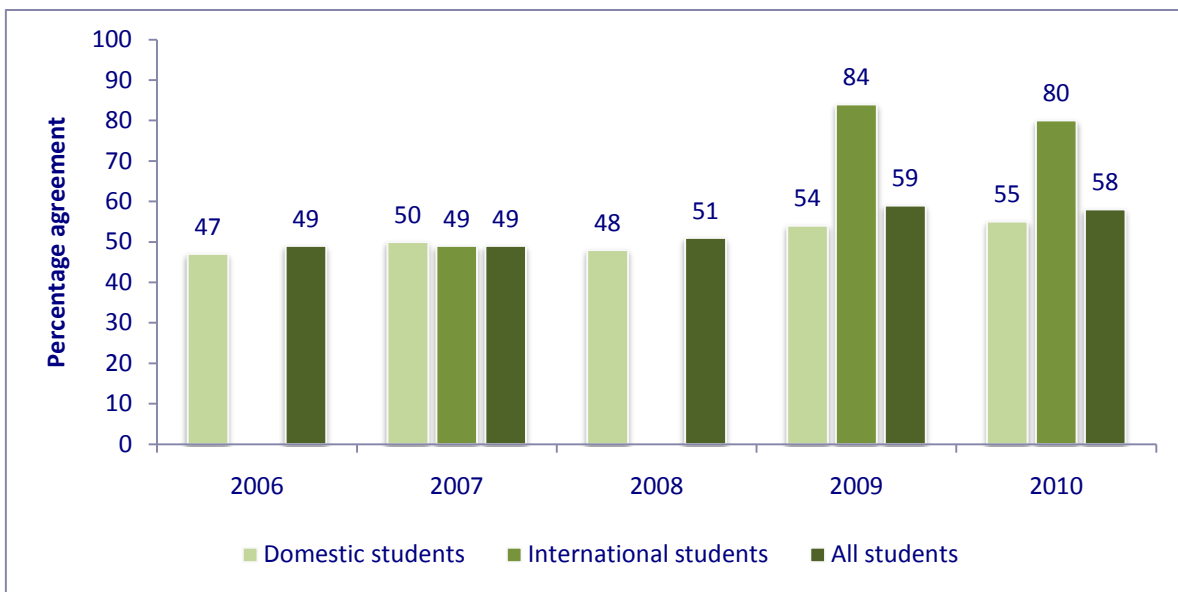
2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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.

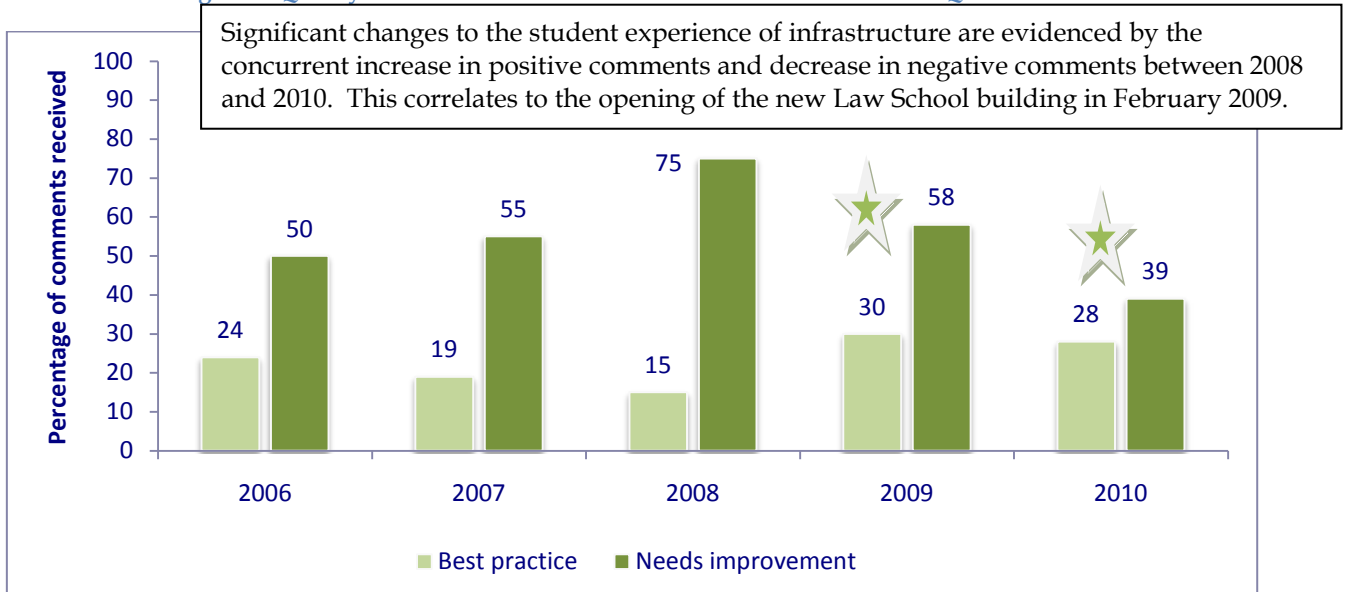
Figure 6: Quality of Infrastructure: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



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

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=8)	All (n=47)
Quality of Infrastructure	23%	50%	28%
- Research resources	8%	13%	9%
- Administration	3%	25%	6%

Sample comments

- Law faculty postgraduate team leader very encouraging and supportive
- The library has been very helpful (and quick) in finding resources and the on-line ordering system is great
- On-line access to huge volumes of library materials
- The most impressive parts of my research experiences so far come from the following sources: 1) professional Faculty administrative services

2.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=7)	All (n=46)
Quality of Infrastructure	36%	57%	39%
- Facilities	23%	29%	24%
- Finance and funding	5%	29%	9%

Sample comments

- The post graduate research room on level 5 of the Law building is small and claustrophobic. Plans to change the space are underway but the general impression of students who will be using the room is that these plans do not provide any more desk space than is currently available and this is seen to be a problem
- Those aspects may be in need of improvement: 1) A common room to create an interactive atmosphere for social contact of PhD students (not just a computer lab)
- The research space provided to postgraduate research students in Law is inadequate. High schools have better facilities. This lack of quality impacts on my ability to produce quality work
- Scholarships for international PhD students should be provided for the whole 4 years of their candidature instead of only 3.5 years. The current arrangement is putting unnecessary pressure on the candidates

3 RESEARCH CLIMATE

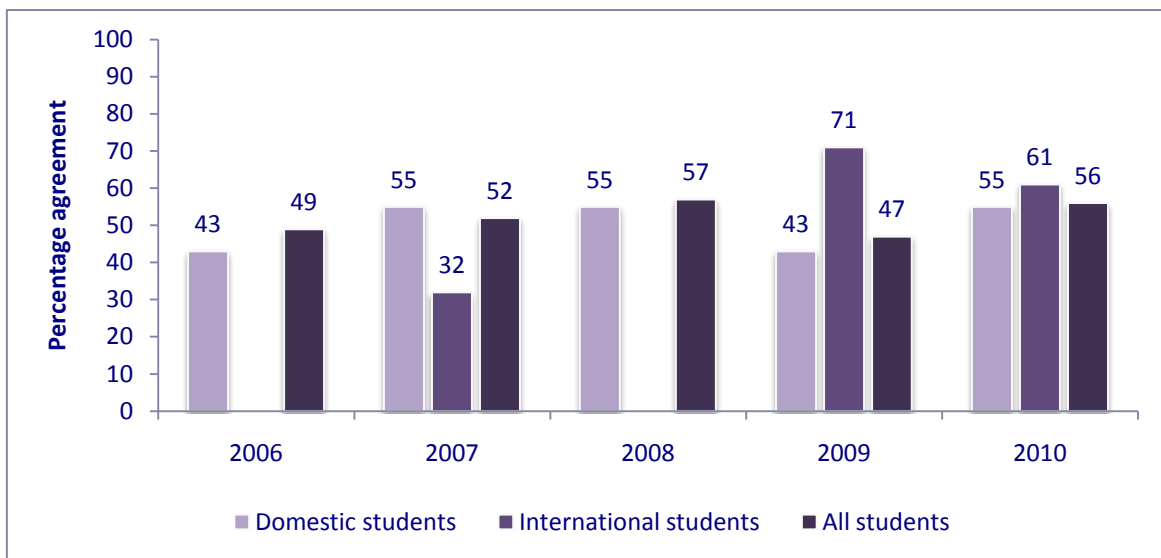
3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=8)	All (n=47)
Research Climate	33%	38%	34%
- Research community/ culture	15%	25%	17%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	10%	0%	9%
- Work environment	5%	13%	6%

Sample comments

- discussing my work with other students and academics, which I find stimulating and generates new ideas
- The exposure to research seminars and conferences at Sydney and other universities which are stimulating and through provoking
- The seminar courses are fantastic because they introduced me to other researchers and taught me about what is necessary to do a PhD and are emotionally reassuring
- Possibility to work collaboratively, with other researchers. This is the most effective way to do research

3.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=7)	All (n=46)
Research Climate	72%	14%	63%
- Work environment	31%	0%	26%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	15%	14%	15%
- Research community/ culture	13%	0%	11%
- Social inclusion	8%	0%	7%

Sample comments

- There is not enough interaction between the research students. We are all starved of company. It would be incredibly easy to solve this problem and yet no one is given that task. We do not need to physically interact. If it was up to me, I would recommend that everyone (not just law researchers - but all faculties) join academia.net and that we all blog and chat on line. The three minute thesis competition was a brilliant opportunity to meet lots of other people doing research. There should be more opportunities like that
- The culture of the faculty seems (in comparison with others I have seen) to be quite divided between academics and students, which detracts from encouraging a research culture where ideas bounce between people and schools of thought develop
- The ability of students to use the networking capacity of the faculty needs to be developed. It would be useful if research students could be informed of expertise within faculty.
- Interaction with peers. My interaction with peers is mostly confined to the classroom context when I meet them during legal research modules. Outside of that interactions are limited because there isn't a room where we can meet and chat and work, except for the library

4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

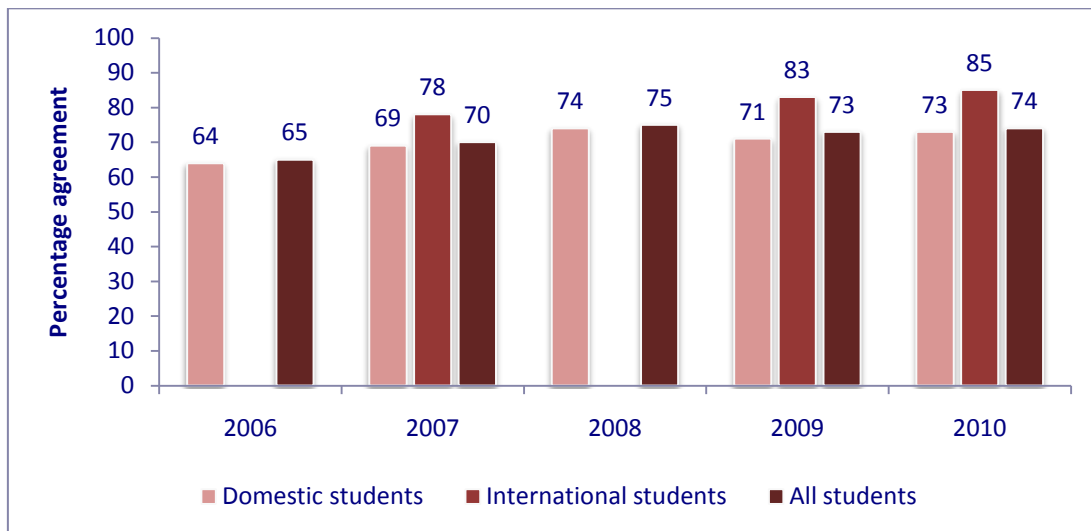
4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=8)	All (n=47)
Graduate Attributes	33%	38%	34%
- Communication skills	8%	25%	11%
- Research and Inquiry	21%	13%	19%

Sample comments

- developing writing skills that are transferrable
- I do feel as if I am slowly progressing in my analytical skills. This is being forced upon me by my supervisors and for that I am grateful
- Ability to do research and write effectively. It is the most obvious benefit that I received from doing a PhD study
- broadened scope of knowledge, deepened understanding of the entire field of my research

4.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=7)	All (n=46)
Graduate Attributes	5%	57%	13%
- Communication skills	0%	43%	7%

Sample comments

- I have found it impossible to get adequate support about computer problems. I have also not been able to use the SPSS program in the PG computer research laboratory even though it has been promised for over a year. I believe there is no package installed here although there was one in the old Law Faculty research labs in the city before the faculty moved to the new campus. There is also no training that I have been able to access at all even though the specialised SPSS system needs some preliminary formal training. Even though I know that some faculties and disciplines provide this sort of training to their research students, they do not extend this help for other research students as far as I have been able to find out
- Writing skills. My writing skills do not meet the PhD criteria still. It bothers me because I am getting close to the end of my third year
- Academy writing as English is my second language.
- My writing and time management

5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

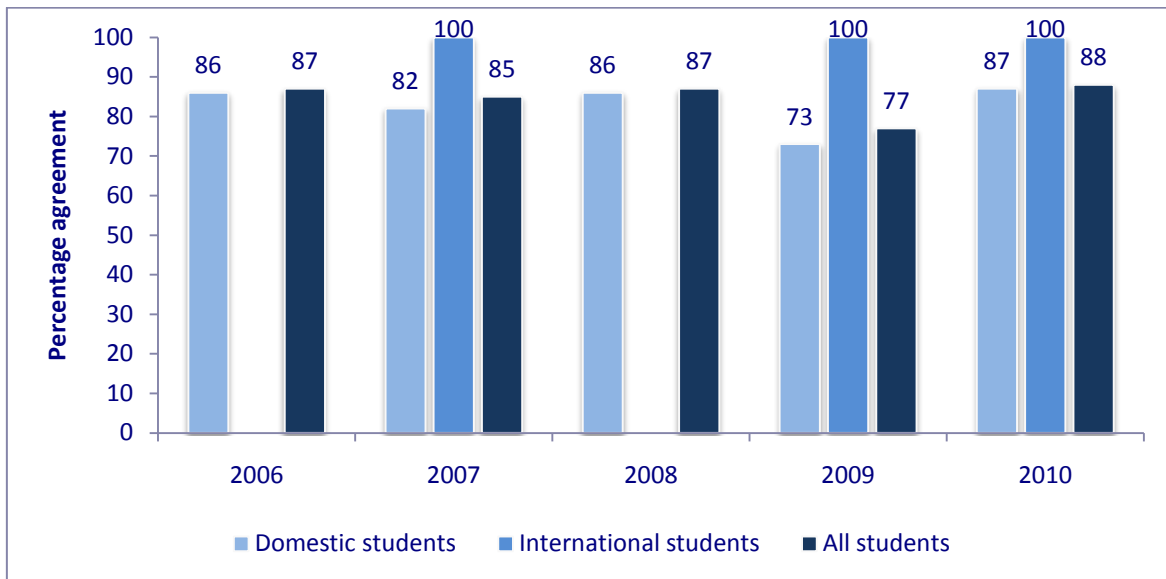
5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=8)	All (n=47)
Overall Satisfaction	49%	38%	47%
- Satisfaction with research	28%	25%	28%
- Flexibility of program	8%	13%	9%
- Quality of degree (coursework)	8%	0%	8%

Sample comments

- legal research 1 (a course offered to help new research students with general research and thesis related issues)
- The ability to do this research is aided by the legitimacy of the Law faculty of University of Sydney
- The opportunity to spend significant time thinking about and writing on an area of law that I find very interesting and is pertinent to my work and my goal to teach in this area. I am going to miss the process of writing this thesis when it is over. I have a lot of professional and family obligations that consume an enormous amount of my time and head space. Having the PhD in an exclusive corner of my life that everyone leaves me alone to get on with has been enriching and has taught me the value of setting aside time for my own work
- I am grateful for the chance to focus only on researching and publishing for four years, which I am not only learning a great deal from, but I will benefit from that experience for the rest of my career as a researcher, lecturer, and consultant

5.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	Domestic (n=39)	International (n=7)	All (n=46)
Overall Satisfaction	15%	14%	15%
- Quality of degree (incl. coursework)	15%	14%	15%

Sample comments

- more information at the start of degree about the effect of part-time /fulltime study on the duration of your degree
- I don't have practical suggestions for course changes, but what I did/do need was perhaps encouragement to audit appropriate courses, help narrowing the field of literature within which my thesis is located
- The compulsory courses for PhD in Law are not always suitable, helpful or appropriately adapted for working (part time study) post-graduates
- Examination period for PhD students is longer than the specified 3 months period that is burdensome for us International students

ATTACHMENT ONE: STATISTICAL DATA

1 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Number of research higher degree students surveyed/enrolled 2006 – 2010					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Total	87	85	83	90	89

Number of respondents to the SREQ 2006 – 2010					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	46	34	37	43	54
International students	2	5	4	7	9
Total	48	39	41	50	63
<i>% who responded</i>	55%	46%	49%	56%	71%

2 QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

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 Law.

Number of respondents who answered the open questions SREQ 2006 – 2010						
	<i>Date of survey</i>	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
		n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	Domestic students	33	26	30	30	39
	International students	4	5	4	7	8
	Total	37	31	34	37	47
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	77%	79%	83%	74%	75%

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Domestic students	26	24	28	28	39
	International students	4	5	4	5	7
	Total	30	29	32	33	46
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	63%	74%	78%	66%	73%

3 RELIABILITY OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The following information on the reliability of statistical data in the above tables should be taken into consideration when reading this report:

Quantitative and Qualitative data

Where the number of respondents is less than 5, results are excluded from the report as they are likely to be unreliable. For 2006 and 2008, written observations (qualitative data) received for both open questions are shown as a total.

Quantitative and qualitative data

Where the number of respondents is between 5 and 20 results should be viewed with caution. The minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis is 20

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 (Supervisory team); Overall satisfaction (Satisfaction with research); and Research Climate (Research community: general comments *and* Interaction with other research higher degree students), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 4 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