

# Sydney College of the Arts

## Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

Trends and key issues: 2006 - 2010

June 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.

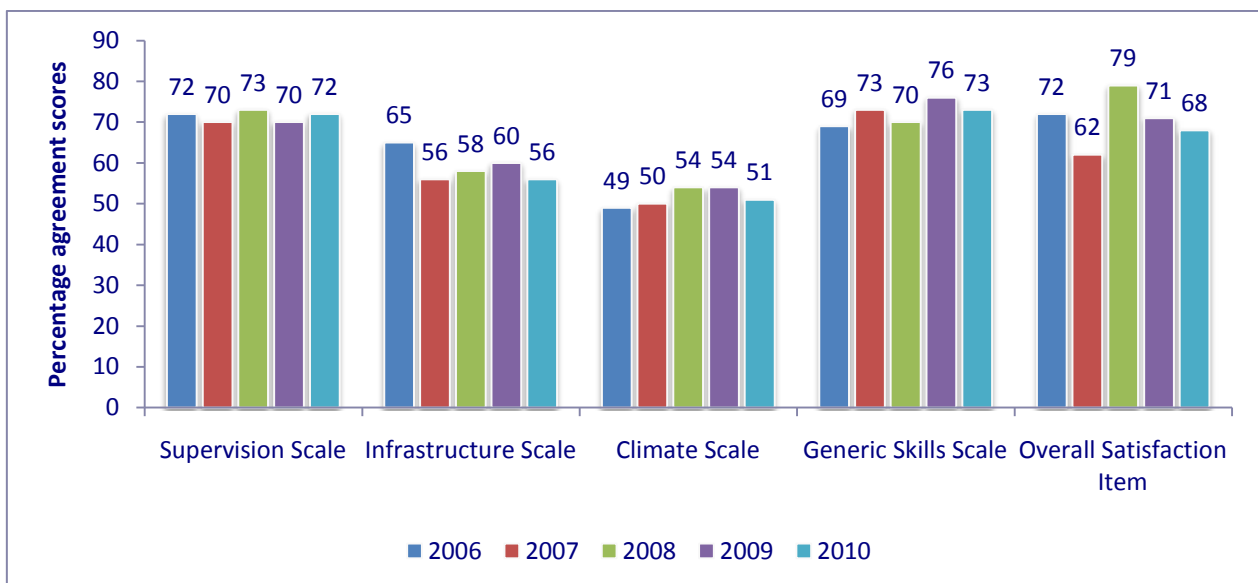
The analysis of qualitative data received between 2006 and 2009, and reported in this document, is based on written observations received from all respondents who answered the open questions in the SREQ.

### COMPARATIVE DATA: 2006 – 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 Sydney College of the Arts.

Figure 1: Sydney College of the 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 responses to the open questions in the SREQ 2006 – 2010. 87% of respondents answered the open question on areas best practice; whilst 79% suggested improvements, indicating a high level of student engagement.

<sup>1</sup> More detailed data on the SREQ Factors and sub-categories 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: Sydney College of the Arts: Areas of best practice: SREQ 2006 - 2010

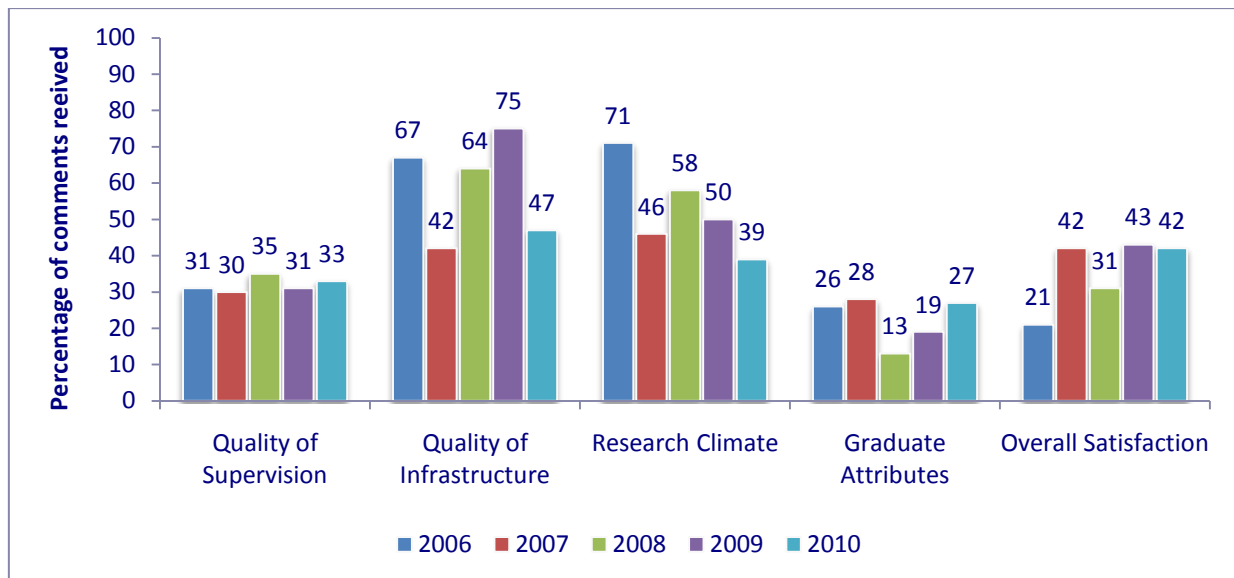
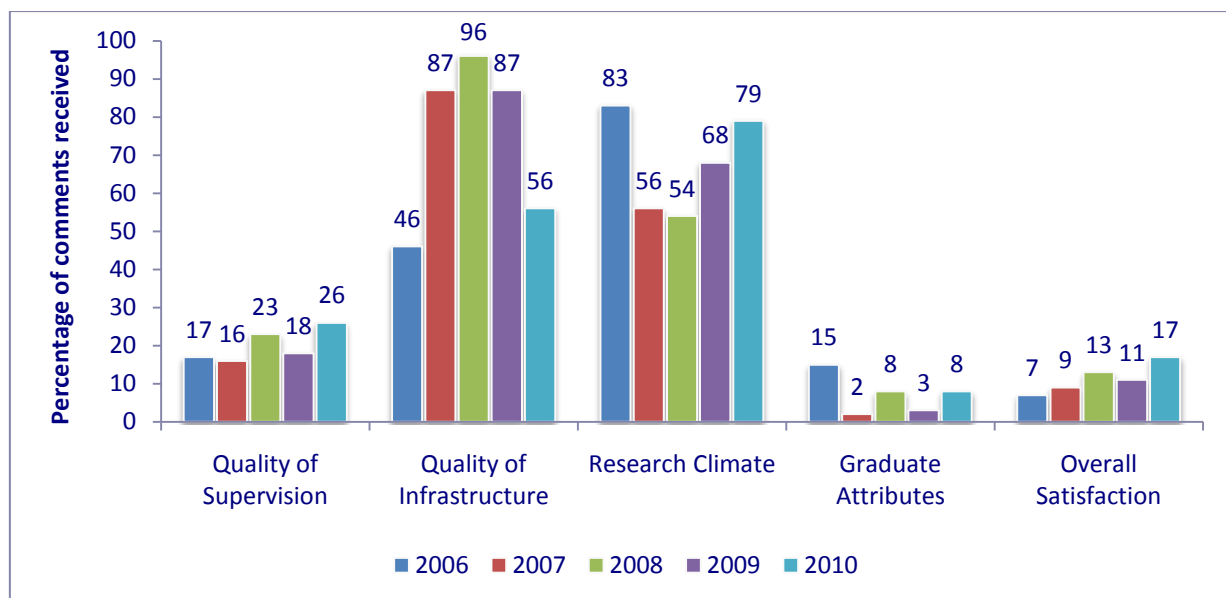


Figure 3: Sydney College of the Arts: Areas needing improvement: SREQ 2006 - 2010



**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)

Proportional distribution of comments	Focus of comments
<p><b>Best Practice</b></p> <p>■ Overall Satisfaction      ■ Graduate Attributes                  ■ Quality of Infrastructure      ■ Research Climate                  ■ Quality of Supervision</p>	<p><b>Quality of Infrastructure</b> <span style="float:right">47%</span>  <i>Facilities:</i> Workspace, equipment, studios (18%)  <i>Research resources:</i> Library services, faculty provided (12%)  <i>Funding:</i> for research, scholarships, grants, travel, conferences etc (8%)  <i>Support:</i> technical (7%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Overall Satisfaction</b> <span style="float:right">42%</span>  <i>Satisfaction with research:</i> Topic, contribution to field etc (16%)  <i>Flexibility of programme:</i> Freedom, independence (14%)  <i>Quality of degree:</i> Structure, standard, practical aspects (9%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Research Climate</b> <span style="float:right">39%</span>  <i>Work environment:</i> Challenging, welcoming, supportive, induction, respect (8%)  <i>Research community:</i> Conferences, seminars, research culture/ group etc, publishing (16%)  <i>Interaction with students:</i> Study related, social, support (9%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Quality of Supervision</b> <span style="float:right">33%</span>  <i>Supervisors:</i> Supervisor(s), feedback, meetings, understanding and empathy (27%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Graduate Attributes</b> <span style="float:right">27%</span>  <i>Research &amp; Inquiry:</i> Analytical, problem solving, critical thinking, research skills, expand knowledge (15%)  <i>Communication skills:</i> Oral, written, presentation (6%)  <i>Personal and intellectual autonomy:</i> Learning independence, tackling unfamiliar problems (8%)</p>
<p><b>Needs improvement</b></p> <p>■ Overall Satisfaction      ■ Graduate Attributes                  ■ Quality of Infrastructure      ■ Research Climate                  ■ Quality of Supervision</p>	<p><b>Research Climate</b> <span style="float:right">79%</span>  <i>Work environment:</i> Challenging, welcoming, supportive, induction, respect (31%)  <i>Research community:</i> Conferences, seminars, research culture/ group etc, publishing (16%)  <i>Interaction with students:</i> Study related, social (22%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Quality of Infrastructure</b> <span style="float:right">56%</span>  <i>Facilities:</i> Workspace, computing, equipment, studios (29%)  <i>Funding:</i> for research, scholarships, grants, travel, conferences etc (14%)  <i>Administration:</i> General comments, communication, enrolment (6%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Quality of Supervision</b> <span style="float:right">26%</span>  <i>Management of candidature:</i> Guidance, workload (6%)  <i>Supervisors:</i> Supervisor(s), feedback on work (6%)  <i>Supervision process:</i> Evaluation of; general comments on (13%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Overall Satisfaction</b> <span style="float:right">17%</span>  <i>Quality of degree:</i> Structure, standard, practical aspects, coursework (8%)</p> <hr/> <p><b>Graduate Attributes</b> <span style="float:right">8%</span></p>

## 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  
Email: [itl@sydney.edu.au](mailto: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 Sydney College of the Arts between 2006 and 2010. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2010 SREQ qualitative data.

*NB: Applying the guidelines on reliability of statistical data used by ITL in the analysis of quantitative data, since the number of international respondents to the 2010 SREQ is below 5, results of the analysis are expressed for the whole faculty (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
- 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

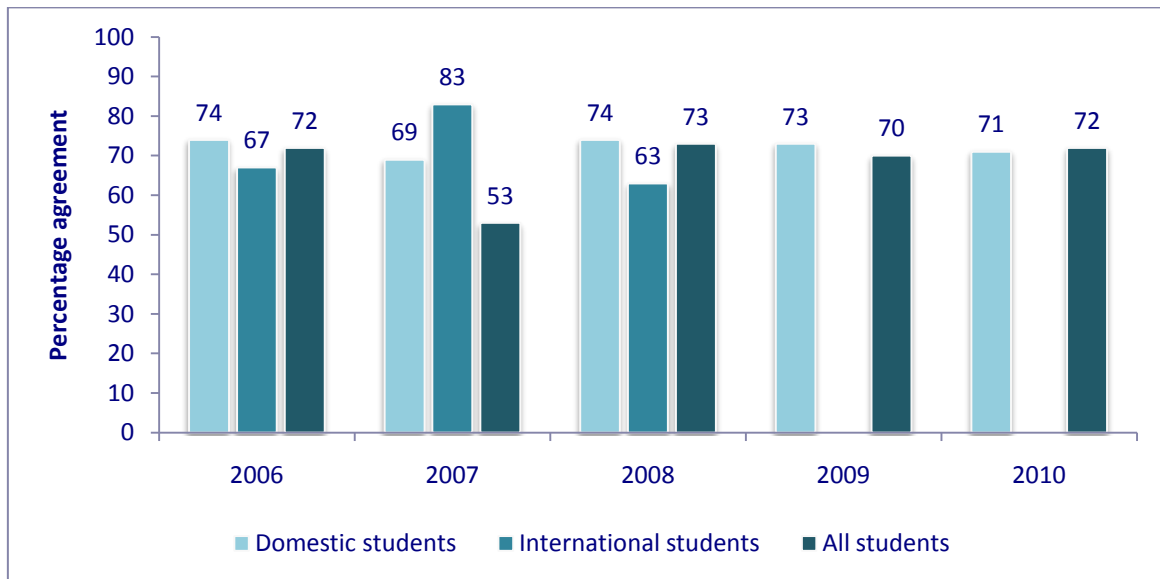
## 1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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.

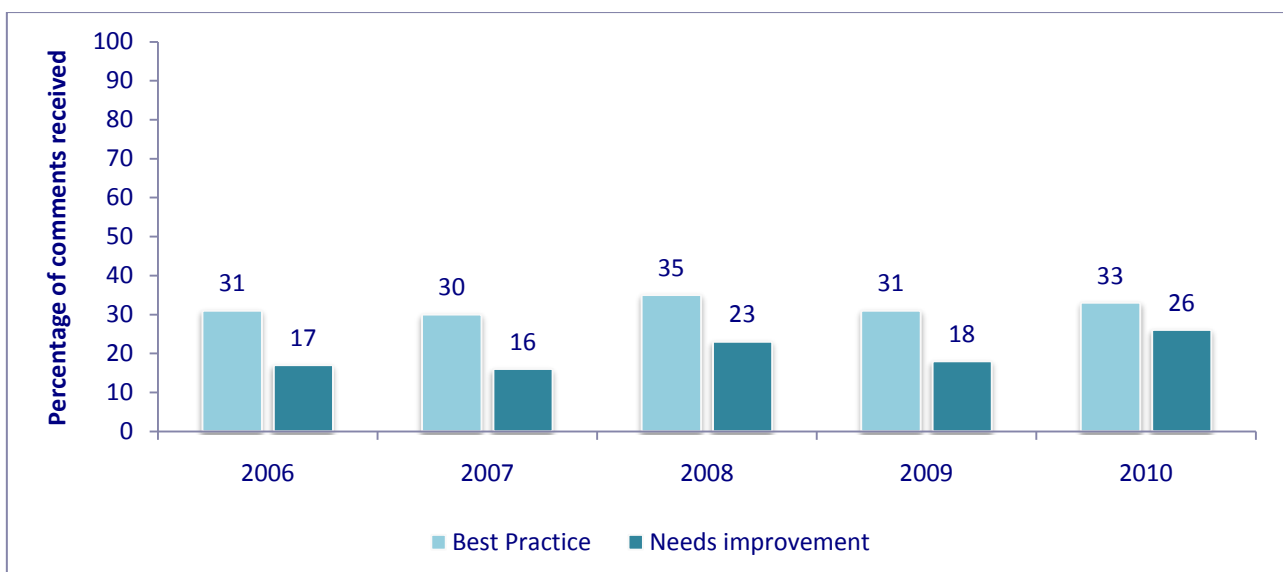
Figure 4: SREQ Supervision Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2006 - 2010



## 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

	All (n=84)
<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	<b>33%</b>
- Supervisor(s)	27%

#### Sample comments

- My supervisor has been excellent. I felt like I was given the right amount of critical feedback and support in terms of my research
- Um my supervisor has been fantastic, he's very supportive and has helped steer me in the right direction without controlling my research. I also find that I feel that with people that like to work on an autonomous level that's supportive but in groups is supported as well, each individual's learning methodology is supported
- The supervisor has been very sincere and helpful throughout the semester. I comprehend what I need to focus on better and it has been productive
- I am very satisfied with the supervision I receive. We meet fortnightly and her feedback is always helpful both in terms of suggesting avenues to explore related to my research and general advice on direction the work is taking. She is also available at other times for feedback and support as required

### 1.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All (n=77)
<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	<b>26%</b>
- Supervision process	13%
- Management of candidature	6%
- Supervisor(s)	6%

#### Sample comments

- A major lack of supervision. Not having done masters before, supervisors and administrative staff need to learn to articulate the standard expected rather than leaving their students in the dark. Not to imply my supervisor is incompetent, but more specifically they had far too many teaching roles to fulfil therefore often lacking the time to discuss and explain my research, what's expected and more importantly actually make it to scheduled meetings as well as having read my paper prior to discussing it. Maybe it's understaffing, I'm not sure?
- Appropriate supervision at SCA and if it is not there the support and guidance/help to find it elsewhere
- My supervisor and my assistant supervisor have never done their PhD's. I am the first student my supervisor has supervised
- Supervision needs improvement. Supervisors should provide leadership, mentorship and feedback on work and explore the direction of student work. They should also look at career planning in terms of publishing and conferences for example. All with the aim of making the work more productive and provide more guidance. Also they should improve networking within the field. They should better understand peoples personal situations that may affect their studies. Overall they should show more interest in the actual field in general

## 2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

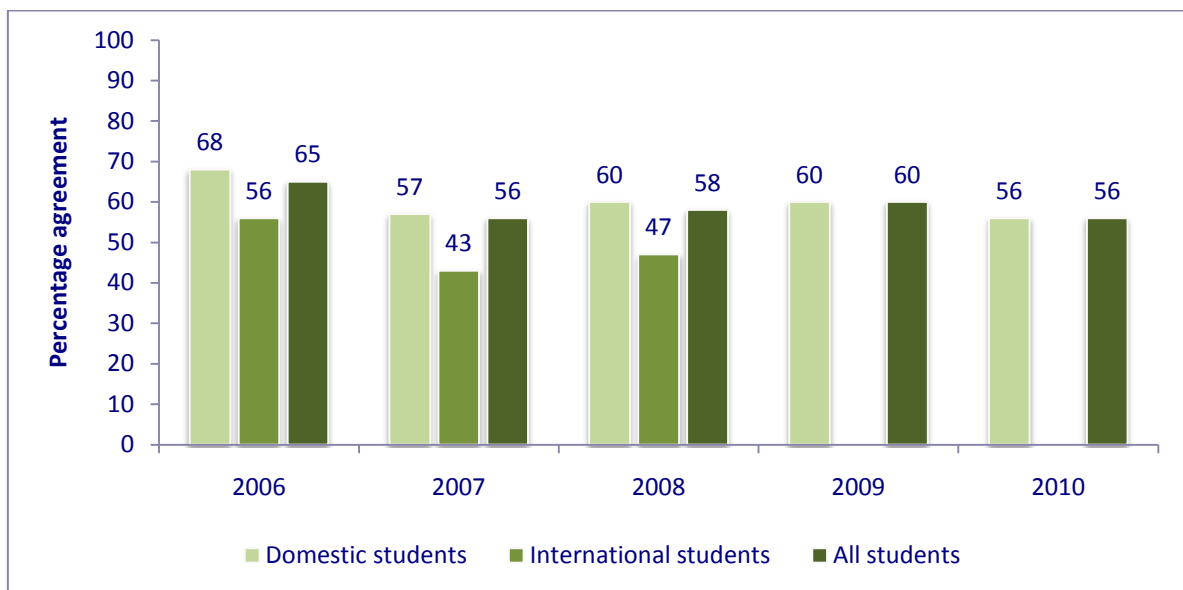
### 2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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.

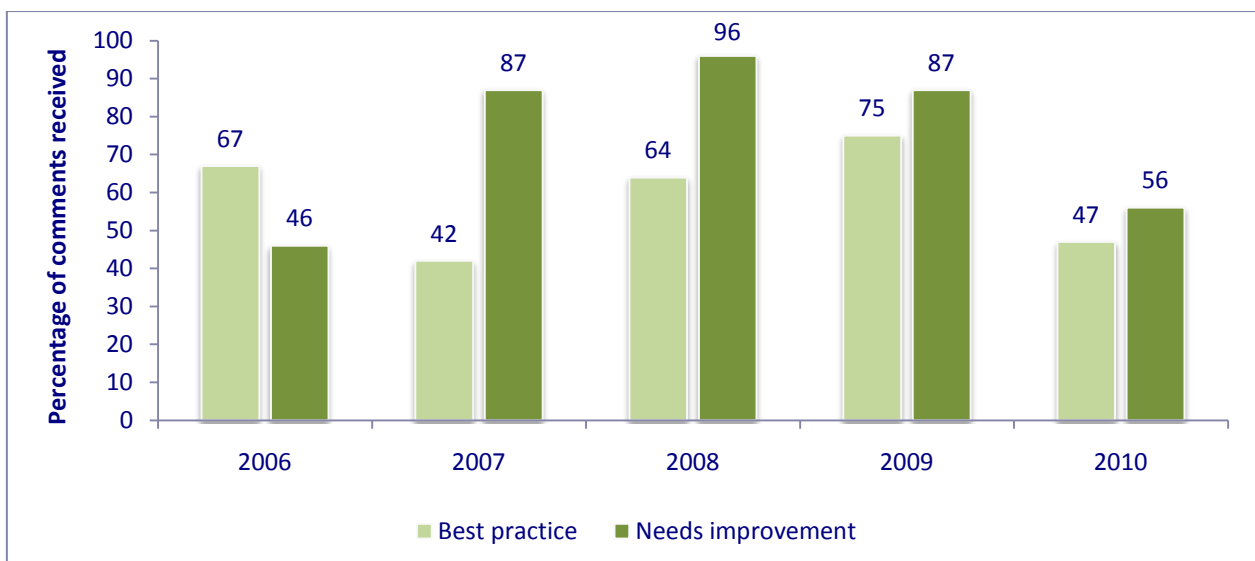
Figure 6: Quality of Infrastructure: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



### 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

	All (n=84)
<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	<b>47%</b>
- Facilities	18%
- Administration	15%
- Research resources	12%
- Finance and funding	8%
- Technical support	7%

#### Sample comments

- I love the working environment and studio and workshop facilities provided at SCA. I find them world class. My studio space is a dream, and I love going there every day. I can concentrate on my research without distractions
- The library and facilities at SCA are a wonderful resource. Technical help is also much appreciated
- The Postgraduate Research Support Scheme allows postgraduate students to engage other organisations and international sources to assist in their research, it is an excellent program as it encourages a diverse research practice
- Great studio facilities let me try diversity of techniques and trials

### 2.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All (n=77)
<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	<b>56%</b>
- Facilities	29%
- Finance and funding	14%
- Administration	6%

#### Sample comments

- How quickly we get our studios is pretty bad. They emphasise we need to move out quickly but the people before us are there for sometimes months longer than they should be. Sometimes our studios are ready and we wait weeks for our keys because of simple bureaucratic nonsense
- Departments are loathe to spend money on facilities and events that would show they respect the customer experience of being a student
- I feel that the studio areas at SCA could be larger for Post grads. The allocation of studio spaces for most seemed to be a confusing time consuming process also. The fact that the library at SCA is not open at all over the weekend
- The school is architecturally spread out over a large area designed to support the health of mentally ill patients. It is not a design that encourages a sense of community and togetherness. As a Masters student I would have felt more comfortable with my own lockable studio space - not possible on this campus. As a result I practiced mostly at home. I was given a space in Ceramics (because my supervisor is from Ceramics) when I am in fact a Sculpture student, as there was not enough room in Sculpture. Too many students and not enough space

### 3 RESEARCH CLIMATE

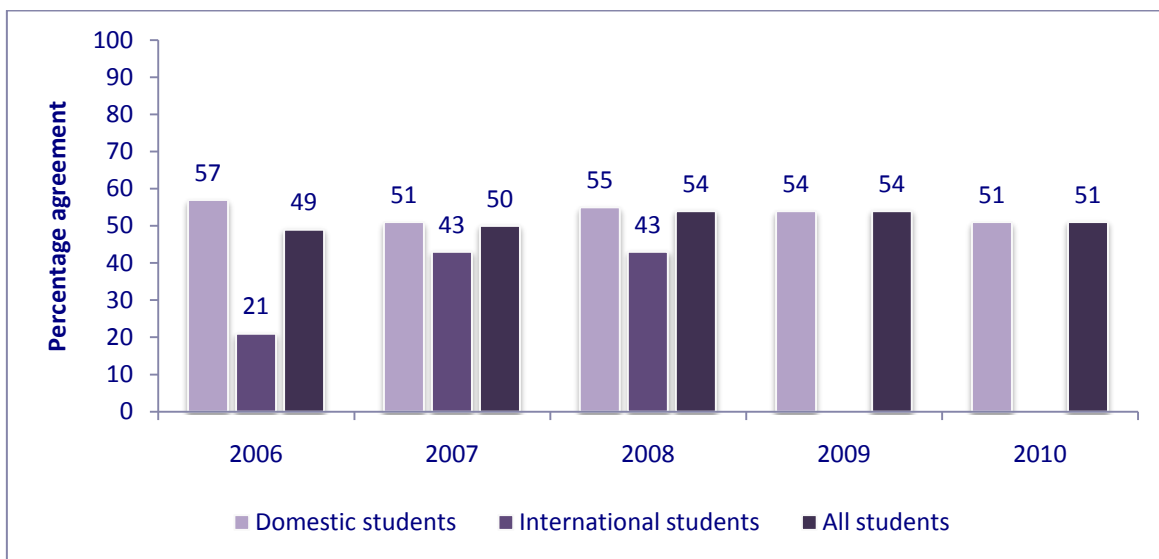
#### 3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	All (n=84)
<b>Research Climate</b>	<b>39%</b>
- Research community/ culture	16%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	9%
- Work environment	8%

#### Sample comments

- Opportunity to collaborate with other researchers and to work in a stimulating environment that is nurturing [sic]
- Best aspects- seminars/lectures that invite experts from both Australia and overseas to give talks/presentations. This provides inspiration and a view of how research can operate outside university
- Masters seminar group. The seminars were useful for discussing and presenting my research and the writing tasks helped me to focus my ideas for my thesis. I also found the seminars to be a good opportunity to meet with other research students socially during the coffee break
- well the department has a good supportive culture, technically and socially. there's a free exchange of information when requested and required

#### 3.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All (n=77)
<b>Research Climate</b>	<b>79%</b>
- Work environment	31%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	22%
- Research community/ culture	16%

#### Sample comments

- Encouragement of students researching in outcomes based areas (practice/creative work) to present their work in forums exterior of the college. There is a significant proportion of research students completely disconnected from what would be perceived as their field post-study. This is not only unhealthy for their personal development, but also a source of frustration and annoyance to those who actively pursue opportunities exterior of the university and frankly is a major restriction when engaging in group critiques/forums. There seems to be a resigned acceptance of these low standards which quite disturbing
- Adequate opportunities to discuss and exchange ideas with fellow students and academics were not provided in the second year of an MFA. As a result, I found this degree to be an isolating experience.
- I feel isolated, apart from the activities that my supervisor runs monthly. I feel like I am disconnected from other students in the same field and degree as me. More group work, study groups and feedback sessions would be greatly appreciated. Also, as a student coming from an undergraduate degree at another university, no-one gave me an orientation of the campus, as a new postgraduate student. I am still finding that I do not know where to borrow equipment that I may need, or exactly what resources are available to me, and how to use them, such as scanners and cameras
- There could be improvement in the dialogue between myself and other postgraduate students in my faculty, perhaps an improvement in the weekly seminars. Currently Masters students at Sydney College of the Arts attend a weekly presentation by PHD students, which is interesting and helpful but often the conversations are limited and unenthusiastic. There could be improvement in this area, perhaps a specific seminar for masters students, where a greater level of conversation can take place on the progress of masters students research

## 4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

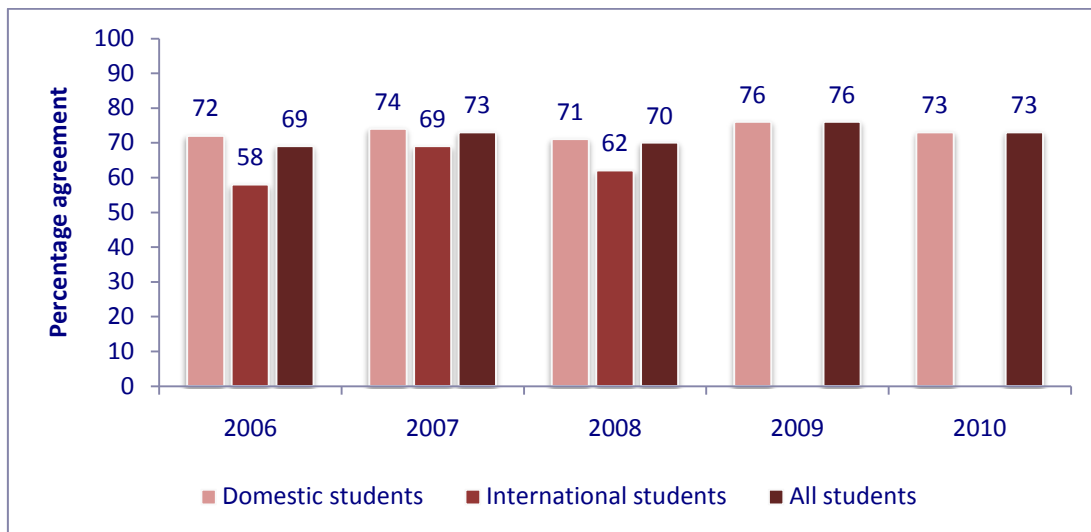
### 4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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.

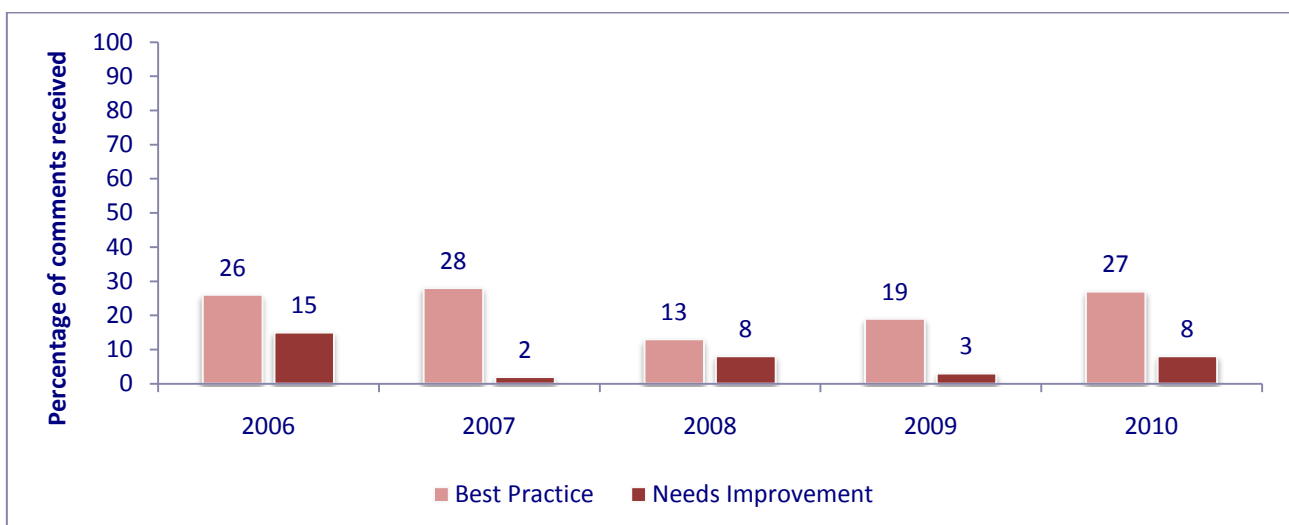
Figure 10: Generic Skills: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2006 - 2010



### 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

	All (n=84)
<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	<b>27%</b>
- Research and Inquiry	15%
- Personal and Intellectual Autonomy	8%

##### Sample comments

- Through years of research I have learn to think independently and to make valid analysis on situations. I have also gained valuable knowledge in the field of critical theories which could not be the same level of interpretation in my own country, therefore I have learned to be objective in making judgement and expressing ideas. Research experiences have also allowed me to generalize, to categorize and to document materials with an academic attitude, hence the academic methods are applicable to my future work. In-depth research also allows me to think further and to explore the nature of things
- Learning how to progress and time manage my own research. Consequently I realised I can make sound judgements and create ideas confidently
- Learning more about the subject of my research, developing independent working habits. These are good because they are what I came here to do
- The process of research has developed my writing skills and my ability to think analytically

##### 4.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All (n=77)
<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	<b>8%</b>

##### Sample comments

- The aspects that are most in need of improvement in my case include two points: (1) to learn more skills in conducting interdisciplinary research, to what extent it should be used, and to be valid. (2) to learn more theories and cultural studies, while discerning the differences and values in humanity research
- To encourage artist to write in a way artist do, not scholars/academics
- I need to work more on my reading and writing aspects as English is not my first language
- My English, especially oral skills

## 5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

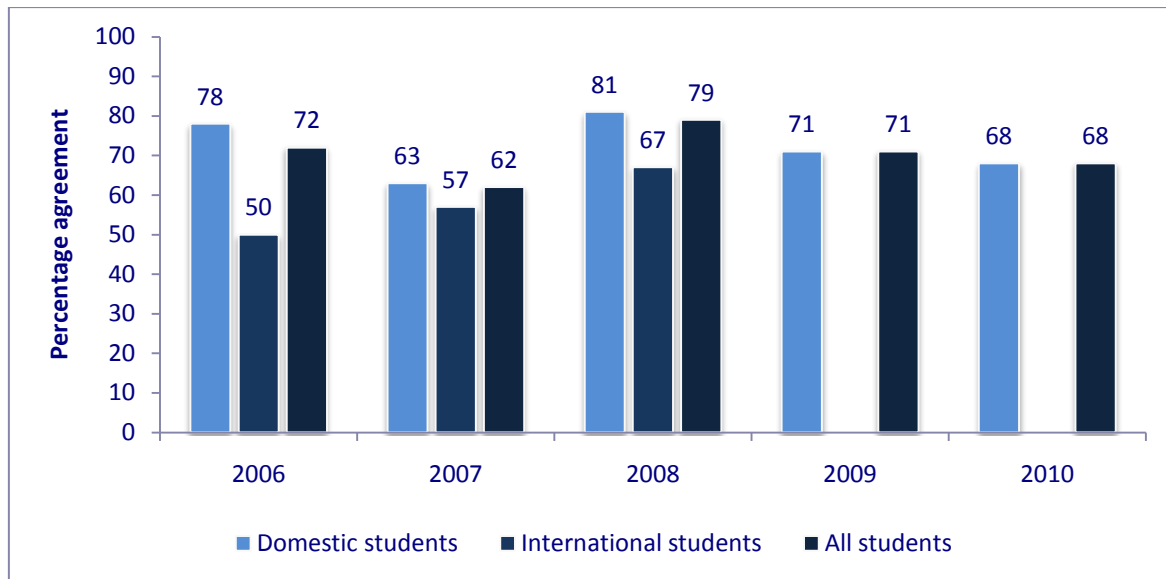
### 5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

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

	All (n=84)
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>42%</b>
- Satisfaction with research	16%
- Flexibility of programme	14%
- Quality of degree	9%

#### Sample comments

- Freedom to continue my practice within the framework established by the University - there has been no pressure to conform to a preordained research model
- I enjoy the freedom to research my particular subject area because I my research is leading me to information and ideas I had not previously considered
- Finding results of experiments that move me closer to my research goal, because achievement and progress are intrinsically motivating. Being provided with access to presentations of other researchers' work, because it is fun to swim in unknown seas
- Autonomy because it enables me to decide what aspects need to be more analysed or discussed in the thesis

### 5.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All (n=77)
<b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	<b>17%</b>
- Quality of degree	8%

#### Sample comments

- I would have liked more creative play - especially in the first year. I feel as if the 'making' has suffered in favour of the 'writing/research'. Some schools internationally have a different style of Masters - one you can tailor more to your interests by attending various specialist courses - one that is broken up into various units of accountability over the two years, rather than this intense process of research with only a big stressful accountability at the end. I wonder if this would have worked better for me.
- The various departments in the Faculty of Fine Arts (SCA) for example Film and Digital Art, need to update their curriculum. The lectures are the same each year round and taught by the same staff. There needs to be more involvement with staff and students, who perhaps work together to create a curriculum that suits both parties. To appeal to each students unique artistic practice, electives across the faculty and university wide need to be made freely available. More visiting lectures, emerging researchers and artists to encourage intense discussions and activity across the faculty
- Thoroughly disappointed by the disrespect shown by the Dean with regards to the redundancy of supervisor. (No discussion with students or prior warning. Severely affected students who are nearing the completion of their research.)
- Also people that enter the Masters Fine Arts at SCA mid semester can't go on exchange which is very unfair

## 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	91	103	120	134	145

<b>Number of respondents to the SREQ 2006 – 2010</b>					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	38	46	65	73	93
International students	10	7	9	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>97</b>
<i>% who responded</i>	53%	51%	62%	65%	67%

### 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 Sydney College of the Arts.

<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	36	44	49	68	80
	International students	6	6	6	0	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>84</b>
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	88%	94%	74%	92%	87%

<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Domestic students	32	39	46	62	73
	International students	9	6	6	0	4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>77</b>
	<i>% who provided comments</i>	85%	85%	70%	84%	79%

### 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. In 2010 written observations (qualitative data) received for both open questions is 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:

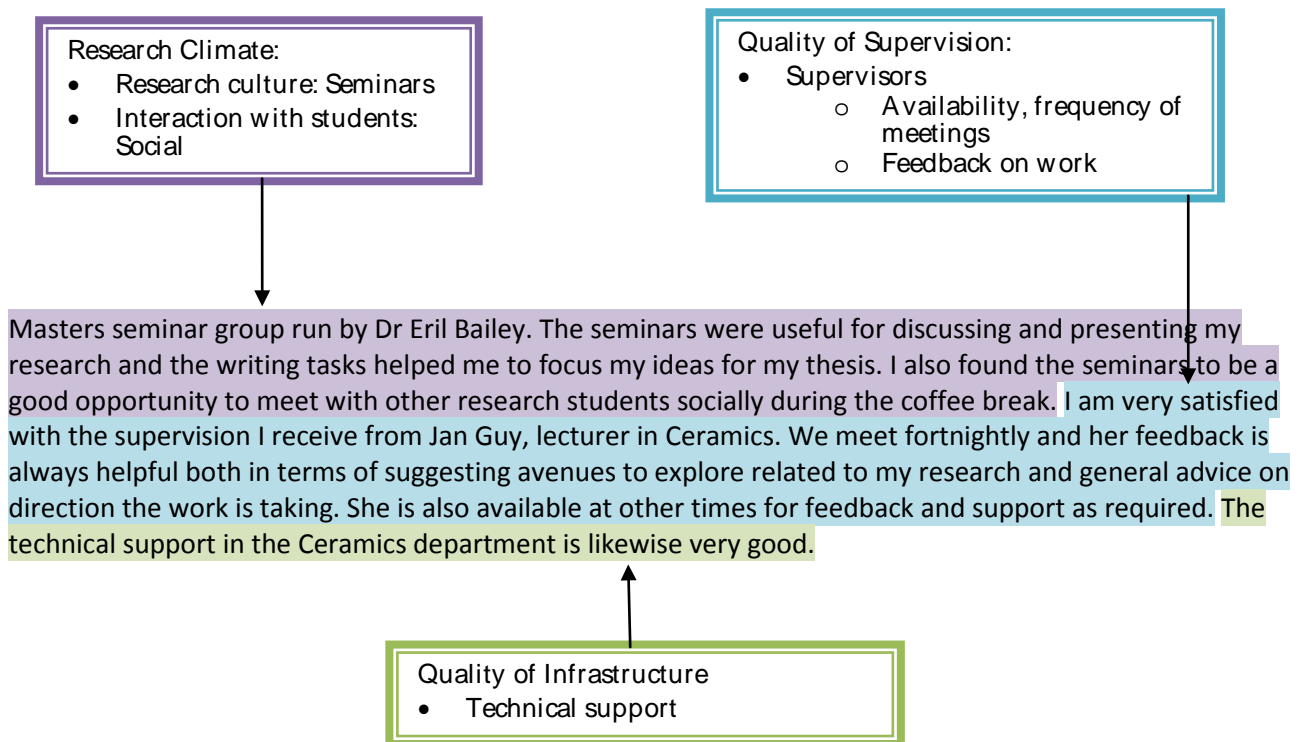
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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 Research Climate (Research culture; Interaction with students); Quality of Supervision (Supervisors: Availability and frequency of meetings; Feedback on work); and Quality of Infrastructure: Technical support) the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 5 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