



The University of Sydney

Faculty of Dentistry

The Research Training Experience
(Research Higher Degree Students)

Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

Includes:

- *Executive summary: Key results for 2008*
- *Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002 – 2008*
- *Comparative results: Focus of written observations from respondents 2002 – 2008*
- *Categorised list of written observations from respondents: 2008*

July 2009

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
GLOSSARY	6
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
NOTES.....	8
1 QUALITY OF SUPERVISION.....	10
1.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	11
1.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	11
2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE.....	12
2.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	13
2.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	13
3 RESEARCH CLIMATE	14
3.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2004–2008	14
3.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	15
4 GENERIC SKILLS.....	16
4.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	17
4.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	17
5 OVERALL SATISFACTION.....	18
5.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	19
5.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	19
ATTACHMENT A CEQ 2008: CATEGORISED LIST OF COMMENTS	20
AREAS OF BEST PRACTICE	20
SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS.....	21

Executive summary

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 suggested improvements, during their research training experience.

The analysis of qualitative data reported in this document is based on written observations received from **all** respondents to the SREQ. Faculties are advised that if they are interested, it is possible to supply copies of the written observations in the following groupings¹:

- by subject matter: general (Quality of Supervision) to specific (Supervisor(s))
- by degree
- by code

Key results for 2008

The following results are an indication of those areas of the student experience that were of significance to research higher degree students during 2008. The Faculty scores reflect the experiences of respondents in relation to specific items in the survey; the qualitative data reflects the analysis of written observations provided by those respondents who answered the open ended questions on the best areas of their experience and those that were considered to be in need of improvement.

21 respondents (10 domestic; 11 international) answered the open question on areas of best practice; 17 (8 domestic; 9 international) suggested improvements.

A categorised list of all comments received is at Attachment A.

Quality of Supervision (*Section 1, pp 10 – 11*)

FACULTY SCORES

At 79% agreement, Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale are the highest since commencement of the SREQ in 2002. Previous scores ranged from a low of 61% in 2004 to the previous highest score of 76% in 2006. In 2007, international and domestic students experienced the same outcomes (67%); whilst in 2008, international students (86%) recorded higher scores than their domestic counterparts (71%). The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 33% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with the availability and supportive, encouragement and guidance that their supervisor(s) provided.

Suggested improvements

- One respondent indicated that they would appreciate improvements in supervision

¹ Please contact Rachel Symons (r.symons@usyd.edu.au or 9351 6560) to discuss your requirements.

Quality of Infrastructure (Section 2, pp 12 – 13)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have declined over the past three years and currently sit at 64% agreement. This represents a decrease of 6% on the 2006 score of 70%, but is still higher than those recorded between 2003 (45%) and 2005 (56%). Whereas in 2007 domestic students (70%) recorded better outcomes than their international counterparts (63%), this position was reversed in 2008 (domestic: 52%; international: 75%). The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 19% of respondents were satisfied with the following aspects of Infrastructure:
 - Laboratory facilities and equipment
 - Library resources
 - Technical support

Suggested improvements

- 65% of respondents suggested improvements in the following areas:
 - Financial support, scholarships and PRSS support
 - Facilities: office space, computers, internet connections, common room for students
 - Library facilities and services
 - IT and technical support

Research Climate (Section 3, pp 14 – 15)

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 51% agreement for the Climate Scale is the second highest since commencement of the SREQ. The previous highest was 58% in 2008. Previous scores were between 38% and 50%. International students have rated their experiences 8-9% higher than domestic students in both 2007 and 2008. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with the research climate within the Faculty, including:
 - Research culture: networking; being part of a research community
 - Presence of a supportive work environment
 - Cultural diversity of fellow research higher degree students

Suggested improvements

- 41% of respondents were dissatisfied with the research climate, including:
 - Lack of provisions for social contact between students within the faculty
 - Poor planning and running of faculty seminars
 - Isolation of Westmead students from activities and facilities at main campus

Generic Skills (Section 4, pp 16 – 17)

FACULTY SCORES

The 2008 faculty score for Generic Skills increased considerably between 2007 (62%) and 2008 (79%). Scores between 2002 and 2006 were between 68% and 82%. In 2007, international students (60%) rated their experience marginally lower than that of their domestic counterparts (63%). In 2008, this situation was reversed with domestic students recording 76% agreement, and international students 82%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills, including
 - Graduate attributes (problem solving, analytical skills, communication skills)
 - Expanding their knowledge
 - Research skills

Suggested improvements

- 18% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including:
 - Technical skills e.g. in operating equipment and running experiments.
 - Expanding professional knowledge

Overall Satisfaction (*Section 5, pp 18 – 19*)

FACULTY SCORES

The current faculty score of 88% for Overall satisfaction is the highest since the commencement of the SREQ. This represents an increase of 27% on the 2007 score (61%) and 11% on the previous highest in 2006 (77%) International students (92%) rated this area of their experience higher than domestic students (85%) in 2008; and lower in 2007 (domestic: 67%; international: 56%).

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 33% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with the topic of their research and the its contribution to the profession

Suggested improvements

- No respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience

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Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)
July 2009

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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
PREQ	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates in the year after completion of studies
Supervision Scale Infrastructure Scale Climate Scale Generic Skills Scale	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 • Climate • Infrastructure • Generic Skills <p>Within the report, this naming convention is used to identify information relating to the analysis of the quantitative data (survey items)</p>
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
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.

Conceptual framework

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 Dentistry between 2002 and 2008. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2008 SREQ qualitative data.

Information is arranged by the SREQ Factor Scales (Supervision; Infrastructure; Climate; Generic Skills; and Overall Satisfaction), which, taken together, comprise the student experience of research training in the Faculty.

Focus of written observations from respondents

By examining the foci of the students' comments in the 2008 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.

Notes

1 Quantitative data analysis

Minimum sample size for reporting

The minimum recommended sample size for SREQ reporting is 20 valid responses. This is the same convention applied to reporting the CEQ and SCEQ. In aggregated degrees where less than 20 valid responses have been received a report is still provided however a warning message notes that the results should be interpreted with caution².

Number of respondents to the SREQ 2002 – 2008³

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	25	14	12	9	9	10	14
International students	0	4	4	4	4	9	14
Overall	25	18	16	13	13	19	28

2 Qualitative data analysis

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

Number of respondents who answered the open questions SREQ 2002 - 2008

Areas of best practice	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				8	7	6	10
International	25	18	13	1	4	7	11
Total				9	11	13	21

Suggested improvements	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				8	6	6	8
International	25	18	13	0	2	8	9
Total				8	8	14	17

n=the number of comments received in answer to the relevant 'open response' question

NB: Separate qualitative data for international students did not become available until 2005

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 unlikely to be reliable.

Quantitative and qualitative data: Where the number of respondents is between 5 and 19 results should be viewed with caution. The minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis is 20

- Since the number of respondents who supplied answers to the open questions was less than 20 per cohort (domestic *and* international) the results of the qualitative analysis for 2007 – 2008 is shown for the total number of respondents
- Due to the low number of written observations (17 – 21) provided in 2008, and to preserve student confidentiality, the complete list of comments, as received, is at Attachment A. Broad areas of the student experience of learning and teaching mentioned are identified alongside each comment.

² Retrieved from ITL SREQ website *Using the report page* at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/reportpage.htm>

³ Data retrieved from the ITL SREQ website results and reports for the Faculty of Dentistry on 27.07.09
<http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/secure/rrr.cfm>

3 Illustrative sample comments

Comments are recorded as they appear in the original documents. However, minor spelling, grammatical and transcription errors have been corrected. [sic] indicates that the word appears exactly as provided by the student, and that it is not possible to ascertain an exact interpretation of the original meaning. To preserve student confidentiality, sample comments are only provided if there are six or more comments relating to that aspect in the responses. Comments that may possibly identify the student are not been included in the sample comments. Supervisor(s) names, where included by the respondent, have been replaced by Dentistry, YYY or ZZZ.

4 Analysis of comments

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

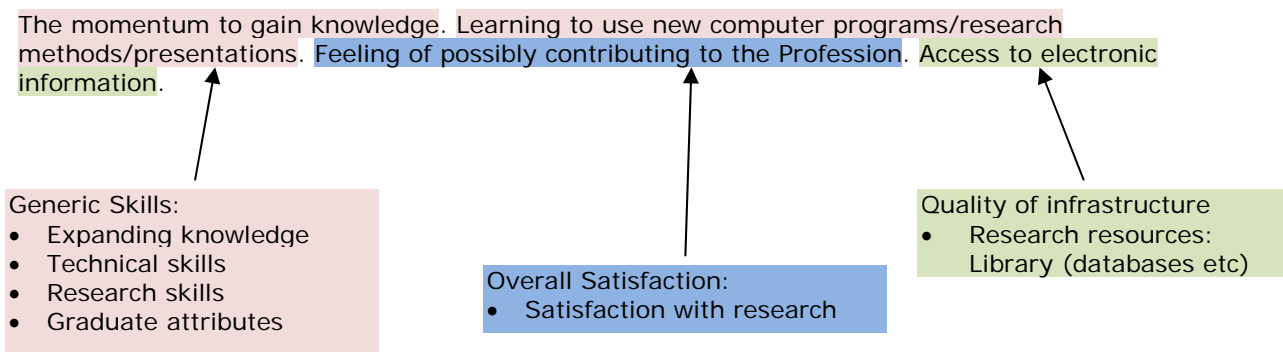
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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

5 Counting of comments

Each comment is analysed according to the *Taxonomy for analysing qualitative data from the SREQ*⁴, 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 Generic Skills (Expanding knowledge; Technical skills; Research skills; and Graduate attributes); Quality of Infrastructure (Research resources: Library (databases etc)); and Overall Satisfaction (Satisfaction with research), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 6 aspects in one comment.



⁴ Available from Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

1 Quality of Supervision

Coverage

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.

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 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

- Supervision (Supervisor/ Associate Supervisor; availability and frequency; evaluation of supervisor by student; feedback on work)
- Management of Candidature (guidance on thesis, literature review; topic etc; workload)
- Progress reports (value of process; structure)
- Flexibility of program
- Pressure to complete (e.g. within set time frame)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

At 79% agreement, Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale are the highest since commencement of the SREQ in 2002. Previous scores ranged from a low of 61% in 2004 to the previous highest score of 76% in 2006. In 2007, international and domestic students experienced the same outcomes (67%); whilst in 2008, international students (86%) recorded higher scores than their domestic counterparts (71%). The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 33% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with the availability and supportive, encouragement and guidance that their supervisor(s) provided.

Suggested improvements

- One respondent indicated that they would appreciate improvements in supervision

1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

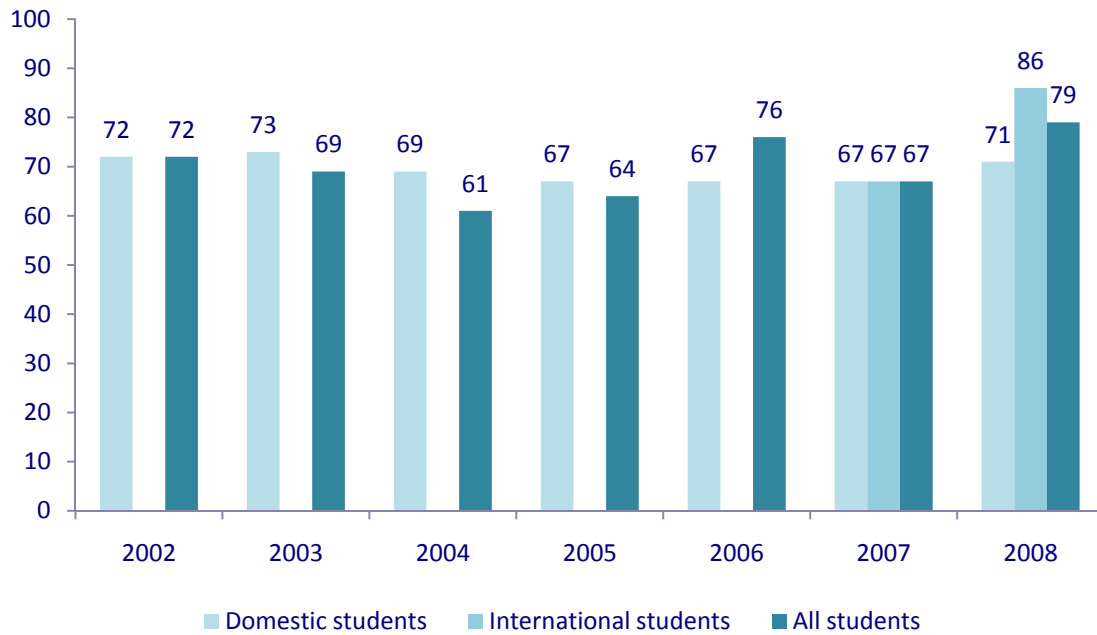


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

1.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement under the heading of Quality of Supervision. The trends provide an indication of student satisfaction with this area of their experience between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	28%	28%	15%	89%	45%	23%	33%
Suggested improvements	32%	17%	0%	25%	25%	7%	6%

2 Quality of Infrastructure

Coverage

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.

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 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.

- Finance and funding (funding for resources, equipment etc; scholarships, PRSS, APA etc)
- Facilities (computer hardware and software; equipment; workspace, building, parking etc)
- Research resources (provided by faculty; provided by library)
- Support (IT; technical; laboratory)
- Administration (enrolment and admission; communication between faculty and students; general comments on administration (faculty and university))

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have declined over the past three years and currently sit at 64% agreement. This represents a decrease of 6% on the 2006 score of 70%, but is still higher than those recorded between 2003 (45%) and 2005 (56%). Whereas in 2007 domestic students (70%) recorded better outcomes than their international counterparts (63%), this position was reversed in 2008 (domestic: 52%; international: 75%). The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 19% of respondents were satisfied with the following aspects of Infrastructure:
 - Laboratory facilities and equipment
 - Library resources
 - Technical support

Suggested improvements

- 65% of respondents suggested improvements in the following areas:
 - Financial support, scholarships and PRSS support
 - Facilities: office space, computers, internet connections, common room for students
 - Library facilities and services
 - IT and technical support

2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

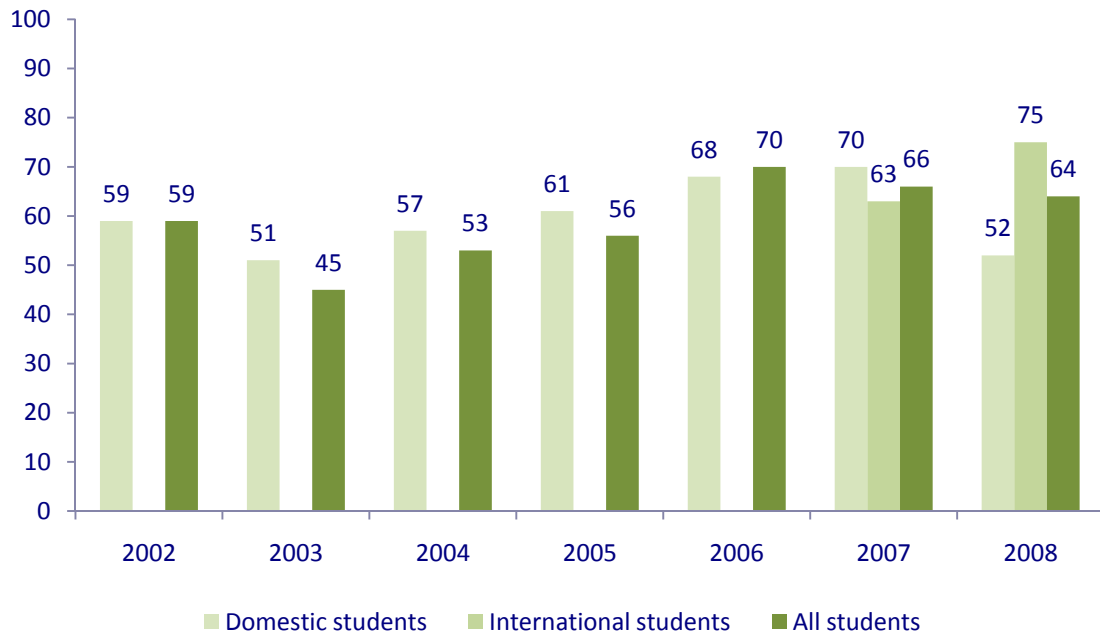


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

2.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the survey, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	24%	0%	0%	44%	36%	0%	19%
Suggested improvements	64%	67%	85%	88%	88%	36%	65%

3 Research Climate

Coverage

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.

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 6 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.

- Interaction with other research higher degree students (study related; social; support of peers)
- Research culture (part of research community; conference participation; networking)
- Work environment (integration into faculty/ department/ school; supportive environment; stimulating; induction/ orientation programme; respect as fellow researcher; support for students)
- Cultural diversity and equity
- Preparation for academia (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing)
- Location and physical environment

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 51% agreement for the Climate Scale is the second highest since commencement of the SREQ. The previous highest was 58% in 2008. Previous scores were between 38% and 50%. International students have rated their experiences 8-9% higher than domestic students in both 2007 and 2008. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with the research climate within the Faculty, including:
 - Research culture: networking; being part of a research community
 - Presence of a supportive work environment
 - Cultural diversity of fellow research higher degree students

Suggested improvements

- 41% of respondents were dissatisfied with the research climate, including:
 - Lack of provisions for social contact between students within the faculty
 - Poor planning and running of faculty seminars
 - Isolation of Westmead students from activities and facilities at main campus

3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2004–2008

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

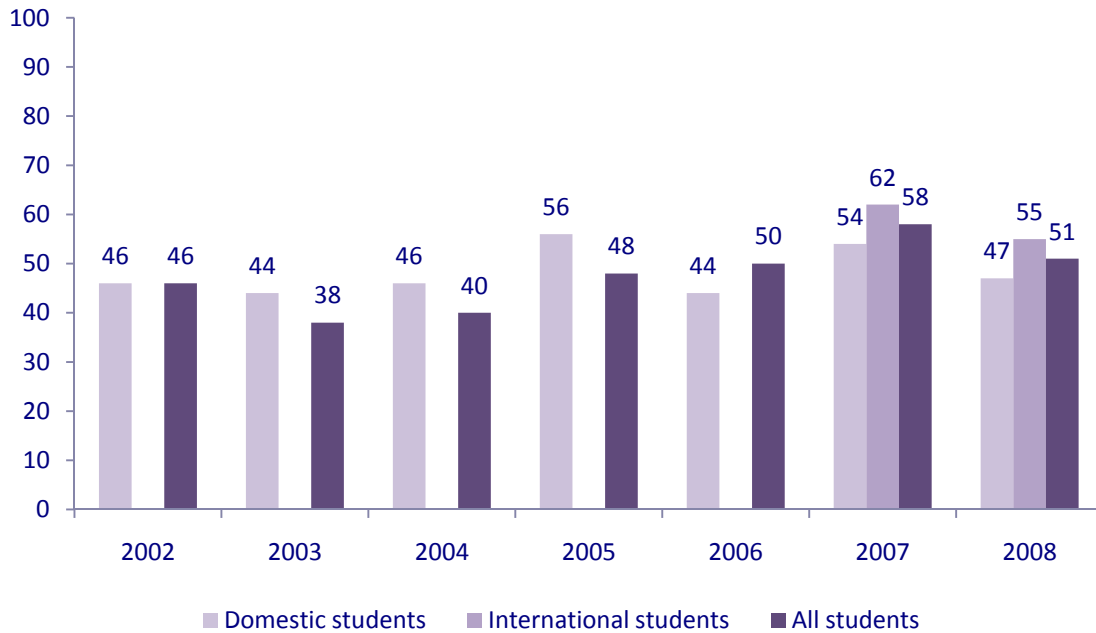


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

3.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the students experiences of the prevailing research climate in the faculty between 2002 and 2008, as indicated in the responses to open questions in the SREQ.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	48%	28%	31%	44%	9%	15%	38%
Suggested improvements	32%	56%	69%	38%	63%	21%	41%

4 Generic Skills

Coverage

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

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 8 sub-categories within *Generic Skills*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) which are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Graduate Attributes (includes: problem solving, analytical skills, oral and written communication, presentation, and planning)
- Technical skills (statistics, thesis/ academic writing, disciplinary, and training in use of equipment)
- Research skills
- Publishing skills (writing for publication; opportunities for publication provided)
- Collaboration with other researchers
- Expansion of knowledge base (i.e. on research topic and associated subjects)
- Working independently
- English language skills for NESB/ international students (proficiency, support with academic writing, proof reading etc)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

The 2008 faculty score for Generic Skills increased considerably between 2007 (62%) and 2008 (79%). Scores between 2002 and 2006 were between 68% and 82%. In 2007, international students (60%) rated their experience marginally lower than that of their domestic counterparts (63%). In 2008, this situation was reversed with domestic students recording 76% agreement, and international students 82%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills, including
 - Graduate attributes (problem solving, analytical skills, communication skills)
 - Expanding their knowledge
 - Research skills

Suggested improvements

- 18% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including:
 - Technical skills e.g. in operating equipment and running experiments.
 - Expanding professional knowledge

4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

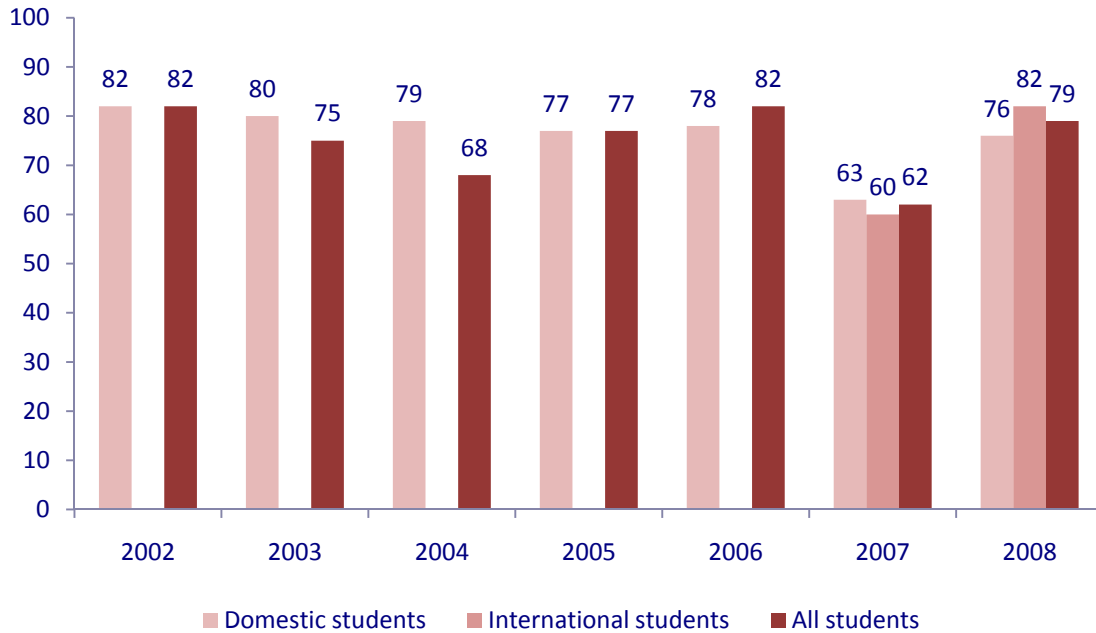


Figure 4: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

4.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the surveys, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the development of Generic Skills by respondents between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	48%	67%	92%	11%	55%	62%	38%
Suggested improvements	0%	6%	23%	13%	0%	36%	18%

5 Overall Satisfaction

Coverage

This single item asks students about their overall level of satisfaction with their research higher degree experience.

SREQ Survey items

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 3 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
- Satisfaction with research (topic, contribution to field)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

The current faculty score of 88% for Overall satisfaction is the highest since the commencement of the SREQ. This represents an increase of 27% on the 2007 score (61%) and 11% on the previous highest in 2006 (77%). International students (92%) rated this area of their experience higher than domestic students (85%) in 2008; and lower in 2007 (domestic: 67%; international: 56%).

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 33% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with the topic of their research and the its contribution to the profession

Suggested improvements

- No respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience

5.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

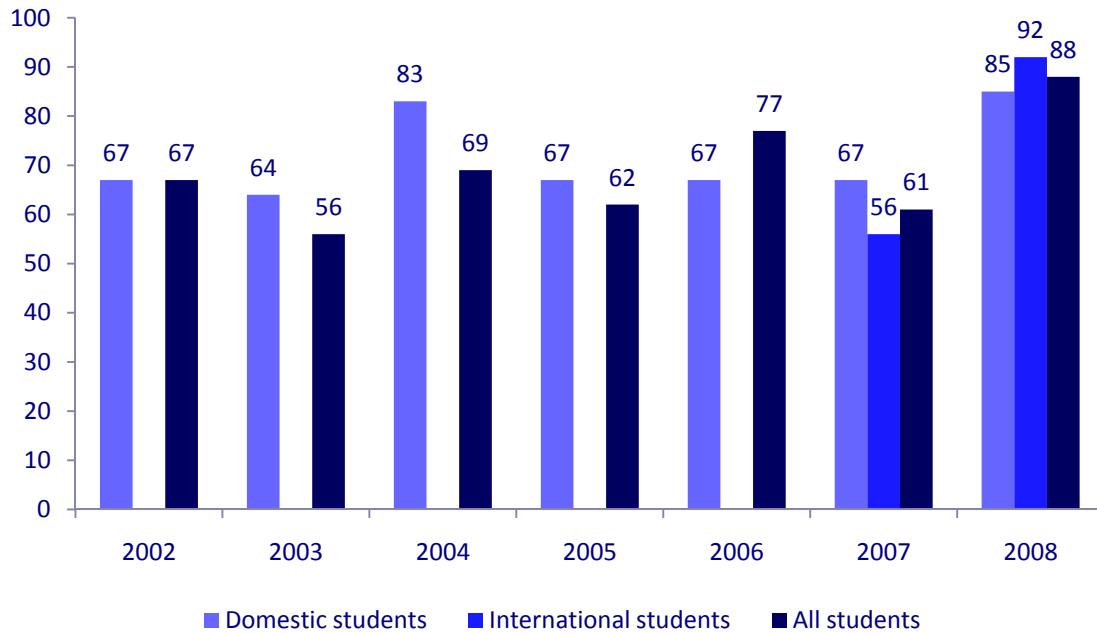


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

5.1 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

The following table includes the percentage of comments received from respondents to the survey, that can be classified as areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in research higher degree students’ overall satisfaction between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	12%	6%	0%	11%	45%	54%	33%
Suggested improvements	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%

Attachment A SREQ 2008: Categorised list of comments

The following comments were received from research higher degree students in response to the 2008 SREQ. The broad area(s) by which each comment has been analysed is indicated in the second column.

Areas of best practice

21 respondents (10 domestic and 11 international) answered the open question requesting respondents to list areas of best aspects in their research higher degree experience.

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING
Domestic students	
Publishing my research results in poor review journals. Very rewarding experience, brings a feeling that your work is needed for the community.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Learn to solve problems, organise tasks.	GENERIC SKILLS
Supportive supervisor, excellent technical support from non-University laboratory.	SUPERVISION INFRASTRUCTURE
Opportunity to exercise my mind in a different way and to interact with academics and specialists in the area of interest.	GENERIC SKILLS RESEARCH CLIMATE
That most recently I have met people who are hopefully going to provide the support that I desperately desire and need, even if this involves changing my topic.	RESEARCH CLIMATE
The fact that my research is in a field of personal interest and that the results of my research will have direct clinical benefit	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Knowing that my research was meaningful and that it will add to our evidence base.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
My secondary supervision has been available when needed. He is very supportive.	SUPERVISION
Supervisors with an open door policy, with assistance at hand as required, supportive environment in order to develop ideas and new skills.	SUPERVISION RESEARCH CLIMATE
The momentum to gain knowledge. Learning to use new computer programs/research methods/presentations. Feeling of possibly contributing to the Profession. Access to electronic information.	GENERIC SKILLS OVERALL SATISFACTION
International students	
Not in my department but generally the University has good technical equipments to do research comparatively.	INFRASTRUCTURE
I have dreamed of studying in this project since my childhood. I feel myself more important and as I'm living for a special reason. It is like that I will investigate something very useful for the survival of whole human beings.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
The best aspects are directing the thinking framework toward more analytical approach.	GENERIC SKILLS

COMMENT

AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING

I came here as a blank student with no research experience before. So I started from beginning and found the supervisor very helpful in this regard. I found the research environment very friendly and encouraging. I have recently joined the department but I am learning very well. I can access supervision opinion whenever I need it.

*SUPERVISION
RESEARCH CLIMATE*

I am very comfortable and at ease with my fellow researchers and my supervisor. The guidance from my supervisor and the collaborative research culture has been great.

*RESEARCH CLIMATE
SUPERVISION*

Clinical guidance for dentists to work in the clinic.

RESEARCH CLIMATE

Working with people from many countries in the world and chances for sharing research ideas. Good lab facilities.

*RESEARCH CLIMATE
INFRASTRUCTURE*

It has increased both my personal and professional skills in doing research and organizing my plans.

GENERIC SKILLS

I feel that my project is quite a unique topic (after reviewing the literature of course) and it can give very comprehensive view to other researchers as well. While it is a higher degree research project, it is very simple to understand and therefore easy to discuss with other fellow researchers. It is highly expandable hence I feel I can continue this topic in future. Analytical ability is my most favourite part in my research, this makes you feel better everyday to work and study on your topic.

*OVERALL SATISFACTION
GENERIC SKILLS*

My supervisor is a good man, who encourages me and the other students to do research and the research facilities provided are excellent.

SUPERVISION

To discover the unknown; to develop the known.

OVERALL SATISFACTION

Suggested improvements

17 respondents (8 domestic and 9 international) answered the open question requesting respondents to suggest areas in their research higher degree experience that required improvements.

COMMENT

AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING

Domestic students

Technical support in planning and preparation of the experiments. Very poor support on this.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Financial support. PRSS financial support only \$400 yearly for computer and other stuff. Getting worse.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Relief from teaching and administrative duties in department, so I can devote more time to research.

RESEARCH CLIMATE

Understanding of how my work outside the university is organised and appreciation of planning and notice required to attend for special workshops etc.

RESEARCH CLIMATE

Supervision and integration within the Faculty.

*SUPERVISION
RESEARCH CLIMATE*

Programmes (seminars, conferences etc) arranged by the university tend to be poorly pre-planned and poorly run (i.e. disorganised).

RESEARCH CLIMATE

Assistance in getting materials, using facilities has been very difficult.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Would very much appreciate less mail as I am also a full time dentist. Many journal articles are not available in full text only abstract.

INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMENT

AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING

International students

Physical conditions are too bad. Although I am studying PhD, even I do not have my own desk in my department.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Understanding and refinement of experimental study design.

GENERIC SKILLS

Application process for animal ethics takes too much time and the students loose their time for waiting to get access to the animals. The University should also provide net supply to the student accommodation complex as we don't have officially net connection at our residential complex from University side. All University students should be provided with transport concession.

*INFRASTRUCTURE
ADMINISTRATION*

Better IT facility since not sufficient for all students in the department. Faster and better access to library books at main campus. More lab and office space required for post graduate research students.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Lab facilities to be improved. Financial support if needed.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Our basic knowledge in our professional field of study which I believe that we need to consistently improve it and expand it.

GENERIC SKILLS

On basis of broad range of concepts in research, I need to improve my knowledge in more complex concepts in this topic; e.g. laboratory techniques and their fundamental basis.

GENERIC SKILLS

There needs a lot of improvement in terms of providing facilities to the students, there is no common room or other facility for the post graduate students. There is not enough space, things are cramped. The student room, department common room and department library are in the same place and is very noisy. There is no library loan area from the main campus. We are based at Westmead Campus and are completely cut from the main campus and we feel neglected and left out. There is no much facility or adequate information about post graduate student in the faculty website. There are no events organised by the faculty for the post graduate students to socialise. There are gym or exercise facility available to any students in the Westmead Campus, even if it is available there is no information about it.

*INFRASTRUCTURE
RESEARCH CLIMATE*

The financial support for the overseas students. Here are limited scholarships and heavy burden of tuition fees and living expenses for the international students. We cannot concentrate on the research work and spend lots of time and energy to earn money. What a pity it is!

INFRASTRUCTURE