



The University of Sydney

Faculty of Law

The Research Training Experience
(Research Higher Degree Students)

Student Research Experience Questionnaire 2002 – 2008
*Including the focus of written observations received from
respondents to the 2008 survey*

July 2009

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
GLOSSARY	6
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	7
STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)	7
FOCUS OF THE REPORT	7
FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS	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
1.3 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2008).....	11
2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE	13
2.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	14
2.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	14
2.3 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2008).....	14
3 RESEARCH CLIMATE	16
3.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2004–2008	17
3.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	17
3.3 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2008).....	17
4 GENERIC SKILLS	19
4.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	20
4.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	20
4.2 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2008).....	20
5 OVERALL SATISFACTION	21
5.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2002–2008	21
5.1 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2002–2008	22
5.2 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2008).....	22

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 respondents in answer to open ended questions on the best areas of their experience and those that were considered to be in need of improvement.

Quality of Supervision (Section 1, pp 10 – 12)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale continue to increase, and at 84% are the highest since 2002. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 41% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 9% valued the flexibility of being able to work independently on topics of their own choosing
- Sample comment: *"Supervision - available, intellectually brilliant - gives strong direction to research focus"*

Suggested improvements

- 22% of respondents to the SREQ suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 19% were unhappy with supervision arrangements
- Sample comment: *"My supervisor is a bit vague and absent. He needed to be present a bit more"*

Quality of Infrastructure (Section 2, pp 13 – 15)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have increased considerably since 2003 (43%) and currently sit at 51% which is marginally lower than the 2002 score of 54%. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 15% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided by the Faculty (office space, desk, computers); whilst 6% were happy with library services.
- Sample comment: *"Being able to work independently from home, with remote access to the library"*

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

Suggested improvements

- 75% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; funding for conferences; and parking fees (28%)
 - Physical facilities, including: office space, particularly for part-time students; computer resources, including provision of textual analysis software (22%)
 - Administration, including: enrolment, general administrative issues, communication (12%)
 - Library and other research resources (9%)
- Sample comment: *"Our post graduate research room closes at 9pm which is insufficient for students. The room should be open 24 hours"*

Research Climate (Section 3, pp 16 – 18)

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 57% for the Climate Scale is the highest since 2002, and represents an overall increase of 21% since the lowest scores were recorded in 2004 (36%). The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 15% of respondents
- 9% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students
- 9% felt part of a research community
- 9% appreciated the opportunities afforded to participate in teaching at the Faculty
- Sample comment: *"I feel that everyone is proactive and very approachable and so I feel very supported"*

Suggested improvements

- 34% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority of comments focused on the lack of a supportive work environment, particularly for distance and part-time students.
- Sample comment: *"Integrating postgraduate students research in the faculty - this has been acted on in recent years, but still has further to go"*

Generic Skills (Section 4, pp 19-20)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale have increased steadily since 2005 (63%), and currently sit at 75%. This is marginally lower than the 2002 score of 76%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 29% of respondents considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 9% mentioned that their skills in problem solving, analysis, and written and oral communication had improved.
- The provision of coursework in research methodology, together with additional training in research, through the Legal Research Units, was the subject of 15% of comments received
- Sample comment: *"Compulsory legal research unit"*

Suggested improvements

- Two respondents considered that this area of their experience required improvement.
- Sample comment: *"I am an external research student. The university does not take this into consideration when planning coursework aspects of my degree"*

Overall Satisfaction (*Section 5, pp 21 – 22*)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item have remained in the mid to high 80s since 2006, and currently sit at 87%. Previously scores ranged between 66% (2005) and 80% (2003). The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.
- Sample comment: "*The satisfaction that the results of my research may change things for the better - the feeling of being able to make a difference*"

Suggested improvements

- No respondents considered that this area of their experience required improvement.

Rachel Y. Symons

Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

July 2009

r.symons@usyd.edu.au

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 Law 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 caution. Reports are not provided for samples with fewer than 5 respondents. This is necessary to ensure anonymity of respondents².

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	32	52	49	49	46	34	37
International students		7	3	1	2	5	4
Overall	32	59	51	50	48	39	41

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

<u>Areas of best practice</u>	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic	28	45	42	37	33	26	30
International				1	4	5	4
Total	28	45	42	38	37	31	34

<u>Suggested improvements</u>	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic	36	38	29	31	26	24	28
International				1	4	5	4
Total	26	38	29	32	30	29	32

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 data only: 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.

NB: since the number of international respondents from the Faculty of Law in 2003 and 2007 lies within the lower range of statistics that should be viewed with caution (i.e. between 5 and 10 respondents), results for these years have also been excluded from the report.

Qualitative data only: Where the number of respondents who have supplied written observations on their experiences is between 5 and 10 results are excluded from the report as they lie within the lower range of statistics that should be viewed with caution. NB: Statistics and sample comments in this part of the report will be shown for all respondents and not separated into domestic and international.

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 Law on 03.07.09
<http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/secure/rrr.cfm>

4 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 XXX, YYY or ZZZ.

5 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

6 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 Research Climate (Work environment: supportive; Interaction with other students; and Research culture: conferences); and Quality of Supervision (Supervisor); the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 4 aspects in one comment.

My supervisor is great. The faculty has been really supportive. Because I've worked as a research assistant I have known other PhD students who have been great. The post grad conference was really good.

Quality of Supervision:
• Supervisor

Research Climate:
• Work environment: Supportive
• Interaction with other students
• Research Culture: Conferences

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

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale continue to increase, and at 84% are the highest since 2002. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 41% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 9% valued the flexibility of being able to work independently on topics of their own choosing

Suggested improvements

- 22% of respondents to the SREQ suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 19% were unhappy with supervision arrangements

1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of research higher degree students who either strongly agreed or agreed with relevant Supervision Scale survey items in the SREQ.

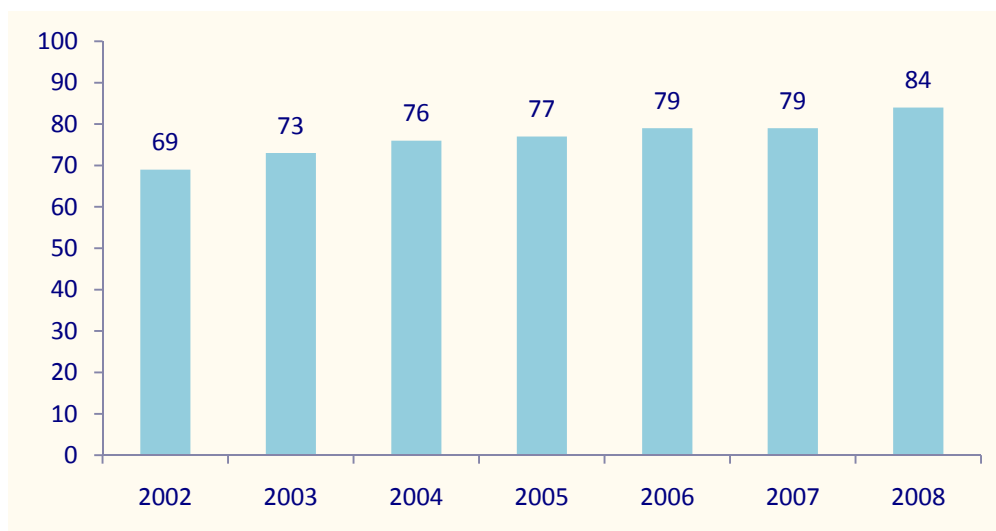


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: 2002 - 2008

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	32%	40%	52%	68%	68%	61%	56%
Suggested improvements	38%	11%	31%	28%	27%	17%	22%

1.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

1.3.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n= 34)
Supervision	
- Satisfied with performance of supervisor(s)	41%
- Supervisor(s) available for regular meetings	
- Supervisor(s) provide feedback on work	
Flexibility of program	9%
- Appreciate flexibility and freedom of working independently	
- Allowed to set own topics, plan of work	
Sample comments	
- <i>Supervision - available, intellectually brilliant - gives strong direction to research focus.</i>	
- <i>My supervisor is engaged with my research intellectually. I believe the final product will be better because of this</i>	
- <i>My supervisor is the leader in the field and is a great support for my work. I admire and respect them and am privileged to be their student</i>	
- <i>Independently able to pursue new, more ideas without pressure to achieve a given, pre-determined 'end'</i>	
- <i>My supervisor is a world known expert and became a true friend over the years</i>	
- <i>Excellent resources and supervisors extremely receptive and attentive to research students</i>	

1.3.2 Suggested improvements

	All (n=32)
--	----------------

Supervision

- Performance of supervisor(s) unsatisfactory
- Supervisor(s) unavailable for regular meetings

19%

Sample comments

- *My supervisor is a bit vague and absent. He needed to be present a bit more*
- *supervisors who can manage email communication very well AND have the capacity to schedule regular telephone / Skype calls.*
- *There should be a system in place to check on supervisor input. Perhaps in a similar, but less detailed, manner supervisors should have to complete an annual review process similar to that of students. If they know that there will be yearly accountability of their approach to research students they may be more pro-active in their supervision*
- *My supervision is grossly inadequate. My supervisor has insufficient knowledge of my sub-discipline and is yet to properly engage with (or even constructively read) my work*
- *More clarity about supervision arrangements early on*

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 increased considerably since 2003 (43%) and currently sit at 51% which is marginally lower than the 2002 score of 54%. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 15% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided by the Faculty (office space, desk, computers); whilst 6% were happy with library services.

Suggested improvements

- 75% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; funding for conferences; and parking fees (28%)
 - Physical facilities, including: a room for research higher degree students; office space, particularly for part-time students; computer resources, including provision of textual analysis software (22%)
 - Administration, including: enrolment, general administrative issues, communication (12%)
 - Library and other research resources (9%)

2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of research higher degree students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Infrastructure Scale survey items in the SREQ.

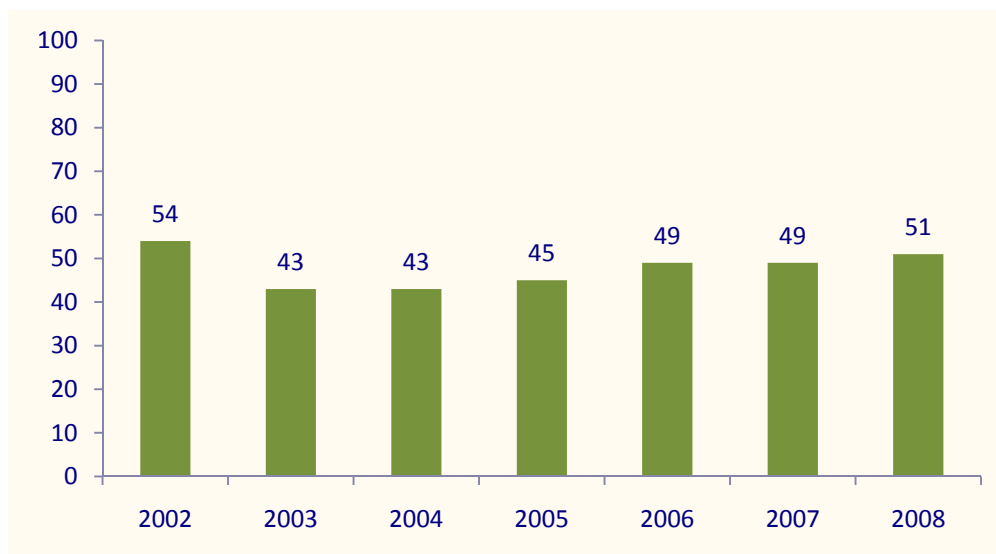


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: 2002 - 2008

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	7%	16%	7%	11%	24%	19%	15%
Suggested improvements	31%	53%	34%	66%	50%	55%	75%

2.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

2.3.1 Areas of best practice

15% (i.e. 5/34 comments received appreciated the intranet, free printing, remote access to the library, and facilities provided by the faculty.

Due to the low number of comments received, and to preserve student anonymity, no sample comments are provided.

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

All (n= 32)	
Finance and funding	
- Funding for research unavailable	28%
- Scholarships unavailable or unsatisfactory	
- PRSS, APA provisions unsatisfactory	
Facilities	
- Computers are not provided by faculty	22%
- Workspace, office, not provided by faculty	
- Equipment provided is not up to date or functional	

All (n= 32)

Research resources

- Dissatisfied with services provided by library
- Would appreciate more material available in library

9%

Sample comments

- *Facilities in the faculty. Only one room is available for all PhD students. If we each had our own office, there would be a strong incentive to work at the faculty rather than at home. Home is much more comfortable but less efficient*
- *A distance student also has NO need for facilities such as common rooms, computers, work spaces etc - but instead it would be of enormous benefit to receive some sort of financial assistance to offset laptop / Internet costs*
- *Library facilities; particularly inter library loans. Sometimes the material is not there: needs more funding*
- *I have experienced considerable difficulty in getting advice on computer related applications e.g. using track changes in Microsoft Windows and not finding anyone to help me sort these out (some problems are tricky).*
- *The law research lab is insufficient. Especially the early curfew is counterproductive. These should be access 24/7*
- *The PRSS is lower than at other universities (e.g. MQ) and can hardly fund one international conference though two were ideal*

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 8 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; integration into faculty/ department/ school; conference participation; networking)
- Work environment (supportive environment; stimulating; induction/ orientation programme; respect as fellow researcher; support for students)
- Cultural diversity and equity
- Practical aspects (field work; industry/ professional experience)
- Relevance to career/ work
- Preparation for academia (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing)
- Location and physical environment

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 57% for the Climate Scale is the highest since 2002, and represents an overall increase of 21% since the lowest scores were recorded in 2004 (36%). The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 38% of respondents expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 15% of respondents
- 9% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students
- 9% felt part of a research community
- 9% appreciated the opportunities afforded to participate in teaching at the Faculty

Suggested improvements

- 34% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority of comments focused on the lack of a supportive work environment, particularly for distance and part-time students.

3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2004–2008

The following tables show the proportion of research higher degree students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Climate Scale survey items in the SREQ.

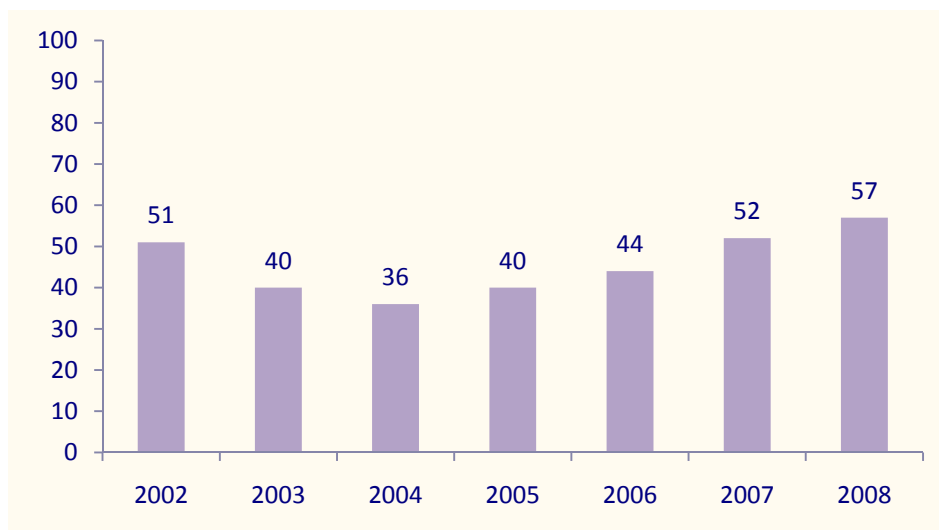


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale: 2002 - 2008

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	25%	38%	26%	32%	22%	29%	38%
Suggested improvements	42%	32%	66%	50%	53%	34%	34%

3.3 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

3.3.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n=34)
Interaction with other research students	
- Opportunities are provided to discuss research with other students	9%
- Opportunities are provided for social contact with other students	
- Other students are supportive	
Research culture	
- Opportunities provided to participate at conferences	9%
- Networking opportunities available	
- Feel part of a research community	
- Seminar program provided by faculty	
Work environment	
- Research ambience stimulating, challenging	
- Satisfactory induction or orientation programme is provided	
- Feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department	15%
- Respected as a fellow researcher	
- Support is provided for students (especially part-time, external)	
- Presence of a supportive work environment	

	All (n=34)
Preparation for academia	9%
- Appreciation of opportunities for teaching/ tutoring	

Sample comments

- *The opportunity to teach has been invaluable because it forces me to understand at a level that enables me to teach*
- *My Dean is very supportive and I am given many opportunities to advance my academic career besides my thesis*
- *The post grad conference was really good*
- *Confidence in my supervisor and lecturer/support programs offered by the Faculty*
- *I feel that everyone is proactive and very approachable and so I feel very supported*
- *Also, other aspects which I appreciate are the other PG research students - underutilised resource*

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

	All (n= 32)
Interaction with other research students	
- Opportunities are not provided to discuss research with other students	6%
- Opportunities are not provided for social contact with other students	
- Other students are not supportive	

Research culture

- Opportunities not provided to participate at conferences
 6% |
- Networking opportunities unavailable
- Do not feel part of a research community
- Seminar program not provided by faculty

Work environment

- Research ambience is not stimulating, challenging
- Induction or orientation programme is not provided
- Do not feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department
 22% |
- Are not respected as a fellow researcher
- Support is not provided for students (especially part-time, external)
- Supportive work environment not present

Sample comments

- *It is hard for part-time students whose commitments outside of study prevent attendance at seminars and other activities during the day.*
- *Integrating postgraduate students research in the faculty - this has been acted on in recent years, but still has further to go*
- *Law school needs to improve opportunities for post graduate social exchange in order to stimulate more general exchange*
- *Promoting a collegial atmosphere*
- *More integration with faculty/department*
- *Faculty, generally, doesn't appear to cope well with research students located off-campus. I am a distance student and hardly have anything to do with the faculty, the staff or students.... Distance students cost the university next to nothing but we receive the least support*

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 (including participation in Faculty of Law Legal Research Units)
- 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

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale have increased steadily since 2005 (63%), and currently sit at 75%. This is marginally lower than the 2002 score of 76%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 29% of respondents considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 9% mentioned that their skills in problem solving, analysis, and written and oral communication had improved.
- The provision of coursework in research methodology, together with additional training in research, through the Legal Research Units, was the subject of 15% of comments received

Suggested improvements

- No respondents considered that this area of their experience required improvement.

4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

The following tables show the proportion of research higher degree students who either strongly agreed or agreed with Generic Skills Scale survey items in the SREQ.

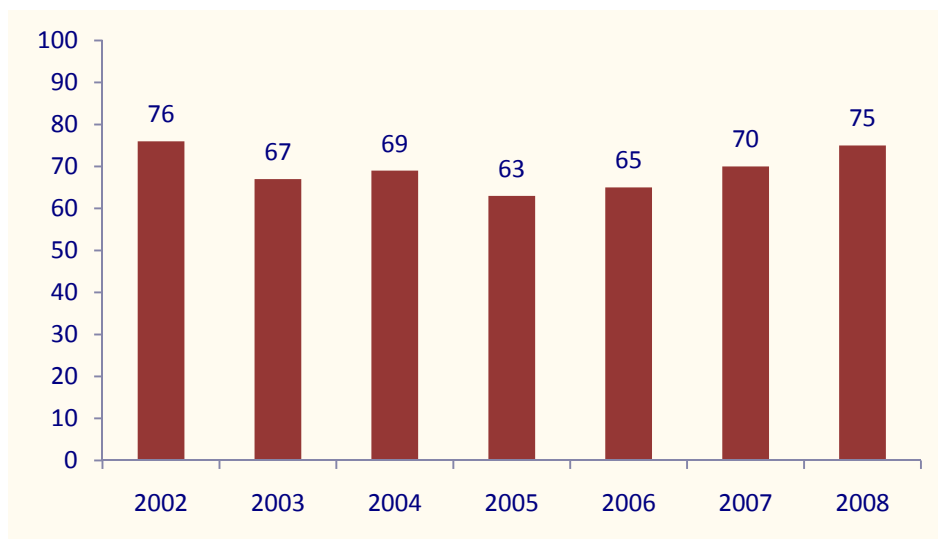


Figure 4: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: 2002 - 2008

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	57%	51%	40%	18%	35%	55%	29%
Suggested improvements	12%	0%	7%	9%	10%	10%	0%

4.2 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

4.2.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n=34)
Graduate Attributes	
- Problem solving skills are being developed	9%
- Analytical skills are being developed	
- Oral and written communication, and presentation skills are being developed	
Legal Research Units	15%
- Students appreciate content of Legal Research Units	
Sample comments	
- <i>Development of analytical skills and writing skills</i>	
- <i>The legal research course was brilliant. The professor was great and the group was great. We all learnt a lot</i>	
- <i>Research broader and more efficient</i>	
- <i>Organising skills and analytical writing</i>	
- <i>The legal research subjects organised by the Faculty of Law</i>	
- <i>The fact that I have acquired knowledge and skills in areas of much wider application than I could have imagined</i>	

4.2.2 Suggested improvements

No respondents considered that this area of their experience was in need of improvement.

5 Overall Satisfaction

Coverage

This single item asks graduates 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

Faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item have remained in the mid to high 80s since 2006, and currently sit at 87%. Previously scores ranged between 66% (2005) and 80% (2003). The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.

Suggested improvements

- Two respondents considered that this area of their experience required improvement.

5.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

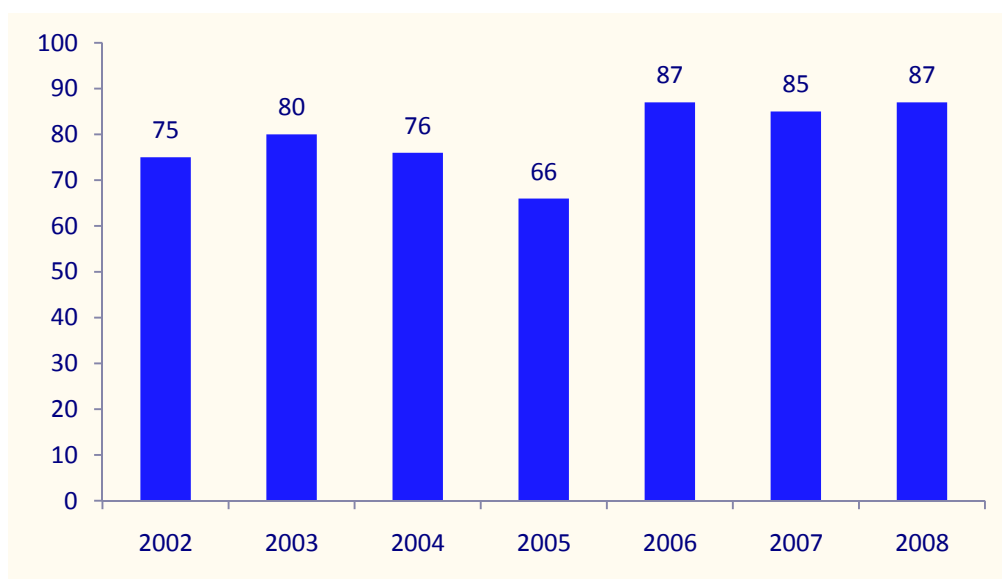


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: 2002 - 2008

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	32%	13%	24%	16%	24%	19%	21%
Suggested improvements	0%	0%	0%	6%	3%	7%	6%

5.2 Key issues for research higher degree students (SREQ 2008)

5.2.2 Areas of best practice

	All (n=34)
Satisfaction with research	
- Research topic will contribute to field	21%
- Researching topic that have always been interested in	
- Research is worthwhile	
Sample comments	
- <i>Being able to immerse myself in a topic that I am passionate about - Having come from the workforce where I would get frustrated as only 10-20% of my work was inspiring</i>	
- <i>Being able to make a contribution to a broader area of study, particularly when the contribution has practical applications that make a real difference within a community, state or internationally</i>	
- <i>The satisfaction that the results of my research may change things for the better - the feeling of being able to make a difference</i>	
- <i>I feel very well when I can make some original contribution to current scholarship in my field</i>	
- <i>Having the opportunity to obtain empirical evidence from a government agency with ethics approval from the agency and Sydney University Ethics Committee</i>	
- <i>I am still extremely interested by my research and value the opportunity to work exclusively on projects that matter to me</i>	

5.2.3 Suggested improvements

6% of research higher degree students (i.e. 2 / 32 comments received) who responded to the SREQ expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of their degree experience. In particular, they would appreciate consideration of the needs of external students, particularly in planning coursework requirements.

Due to the low number of comments, and to preserve student anonymity, no sample comments are provided.