



The University of Sydney

Faculty of Medicine

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*
- *Focus of written observations from respondents: 2008*

With attachment:

Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (2006 – 2008)

- *Quantitative data 2006 – 2008 (2005 – 2007 graduates)*
- *Focus of written observations 2008 (2007 graduates)*

January 2010

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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.

In 2008, 442 respondents to the SREQ (398 domestic, 44 international), provided written observations on areas of best practice in their degree experience; whilst 390 respondents (355 domestic, 35 international) suggested improvements.

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

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale have remained consistently in the mid to high 70s percentage agreement since the beginning of the SREQ, and currently sits at 75% agreement. International students have consistently rated their experiences slightly higher than their domestic counterparts. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 14% appreciated the freedom to pursue their own research and the flexibility of their working hours.
- Sample comment: *"My supervisors. My supervisors have taught me a lot of things, best one: asking the right questions to approach/understand a problem"*

Suggested improvements

- 23% of respondents to the SREQ, and who provided written observations suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 15% were unhappy with various aspects of their supervision, including: the supervisor(s); feedback on their work; availability and frequency of meetings; and the need for evaluation of the supervision process.
- 6% of students who provided comments would like more guidance in the management of their project including: topic selection, literature review, setting of guidelines.
- Sample comment: *"It would be nice to see a supervisor development scheme in place and that potential and existing supervisors need to pass a supervisor exam in order to be able to teach"*

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

students. Students require much more than mere access to a lab, they require supervision that includes constructive criticism and the provision of good projects. Perhaps proposed projects can be screened to determine the feasibility of projects before they can be offered to students. This screening may be done by a panel of academics and concerns about the project can be detected early"

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

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have remained in the 70th percentile since 2005, and currently sits at 74% agreement. International students have consistently recorded better outcomes than their domestic counterparts since 2004. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 12% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority of comments (5%) referred to the facilities (computer, equipment and workspace) provided.
- Sample comment: *"Excellent facilities, particularly workspace and computer provision and support, and access to equipment. It would be impossible to work on my research project without access to such equipment"*

Suggested improvements

- 53% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; and funding for conferences (21%)
 - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources; and equipment (15%)
 - Administration, including: general comments; communication; enrolment
- Sample comment: *"More IT & financial support. PhD scholarships are at the same rates they were in the 1990s - do you know how much it costs to live in Sydney!"*

Research Climate (Section 3, pp 16 – 18)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores have remained consistently in the low 60th percentile since 2004, and currently sits at 63% agreement. International students have consistently rated their experiences slightly higher than domestic students since 2006. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 46% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 17% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 16% of respondents
- Sample comment: *"The other people that I work with. They are good company, helpful with personal and work related issues and they make me feel respected by asking me for help and advice as often as I ask them"*

Suggested improvements

- 35% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 15% of comments received.
- Sample comment: *"There is, at times, a lack of support when personal problems influence progress. External support could be improved"*

Generic Skills (Section 4, pp 19 – 21)

FACULTY SCORES

The current Faculty score of 83% agreement for Generic Skills is identical to the previous three years, as well as to the 2003 score. The scores for 2002 and 2004 were marginally lower. Domestic and international students recorded similar outcomes for most years. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 54% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 16% mentioned that their skills in problem solving, analysis, and written and oral communication had improved.
- 10% were happy with the development of research skills; whilst 8% considered that their technical or disciplinary skills had been enhanced.
- 11% of respondents considered that their ability to work independently had been enhanced; and 6% considered that their knowledge base had been enhanced.
- Sample comment: *"Improvement of research skills and academic communication skills. By doing research with supervisors and other fellows involved. I have learnt more about appropriate methodology how to deal with issues I faced"*

Suggested improvements

- 10% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in English language proficiency for international students.
- Sample comment: *"The seminars conducted for teaching statistics in the Faculty of Medicine are very ineffective. A more practical approach should be used to this extremely important area of study"*

Overall Satisfaction (Section 5, pp 22 – 23)

FACULTY SCORES

The current Faculty Score of 83% agreement for the Overall Satisfaction Item is the lowest since 2005. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. In 2008, international students recorded lower scores than domestic for the first time since 2005.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (15% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.
- Sample comment: *"You will be contributing to the knowledge and your research will help a lot of patients. What you are doing will be a basis for the future. Learning new techniques and encountering new ideas. Making new professional friendships, associations for the future"*

Suggested improvements

- 5% of respondents were dissatisfied with their overall degree experience
- Sample comment: *"Realise the importance of research and improve the participation of research"*

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January 2010

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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 Medicine 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.

Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) 2006-2008

Faculty scores from the 2006 – 2008 Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ); together with a list of comments received in answer to the open response questions in the 2008 survey, are provided as an attachment to this report. The broad area(s) by which each comment has been analysed are indicated alongside each comment.

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	334	397	406	402	397	422	527
International students		32	34	34	45	42	55
Overall	334	429	440	436	442	464	582

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				306	297	358	398
International	276	315	304	12	39	32	44
Total				318	336	390	442

Suggested improvements	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				240	272	325	355
International	225	272	239	8	35	26	35
Total				248	307	351	390

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:

Qualitative data

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

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 Medicine on 16.07.09
<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 XXX, YYY or ZZZ.

4 Analysis of comments

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

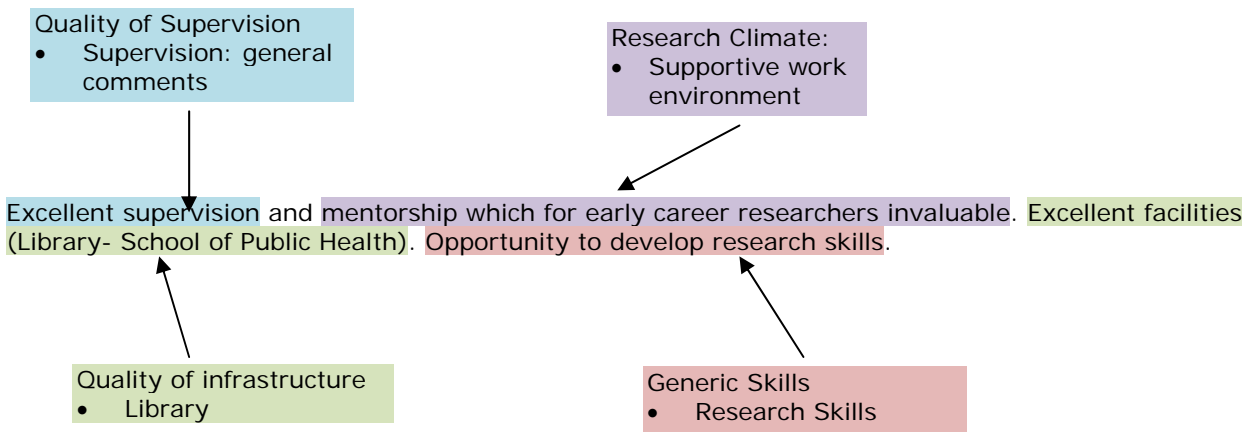
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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 Quality of Supervision (Supervision: general comments); Research Climate (Supportive work environment); Quality of Infrastructure (Library); and Generic Skills (Research Skills), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 4 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

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale have remained consistently in the mid to high 70s percentage agreement since the beginning of the SREQ, and currently sits at 75% agreement. International students have consistently rated their experiences slightly higher than their domestic counterparts. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 14% appreciated the freedom to pursue their own research and the flexibility of their working hours.

Suggested improvements

- 23% of respondents to the SREQ, and who provided written observations suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- Of these, 15% were unhappy with various aspects of their supervision, including: the supervisor(s); feedback on their work; availability and frequency of meetings; and the need for evaluation of the supervision process.
- 6% of students who provided comments would like more guidance in the management of their project including: topic selection, literature review, setting of guidelines.

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.

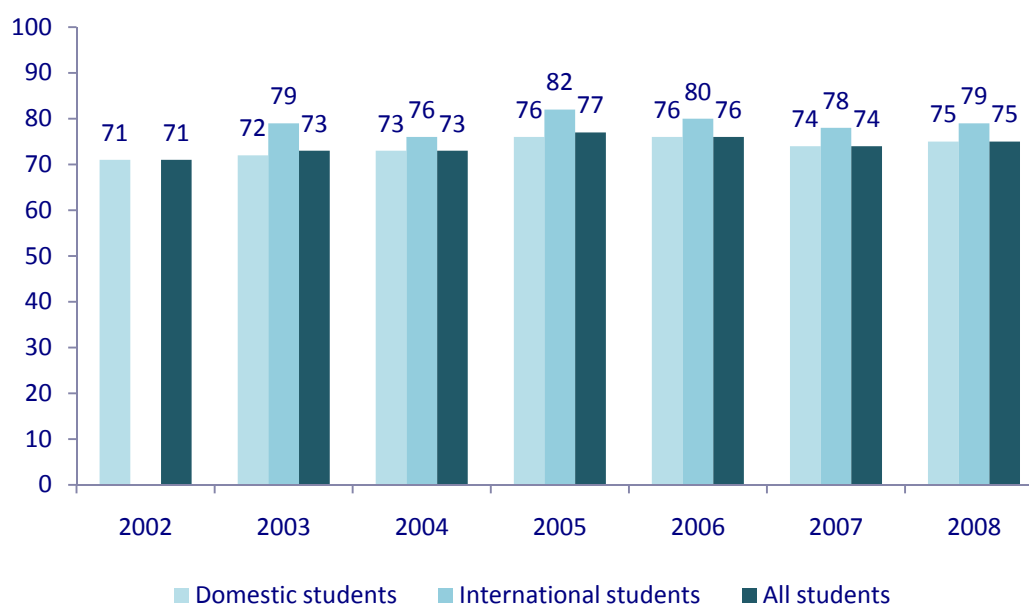


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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, providing an indication of trends in the focus of the students' comments relating to 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	Domestic			39%	40%	38%	37%
	International			17%	33%	44%	41%
	All	25%	24%	26%	38%	39%	37%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			27%	22%	25%	24%
	International			13%	9%	15%	11%
	All	29%	22%	29%	26%	21%	23%

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

1.3.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=398)	International (n= 44)	All (n= 442)
Supervision			
- Satisfied with performance of supervisor(s)	20%	25%	21%
- Supervisor(s) available for regular meetings			
- Supervisor(s) provide feedback on work			
Flexibility of program			
- Freedom to pursue own research interests appreciated	14%	14%	14%
- Flexibility of working hours appreciated			

	Domestic (n=398)	International (n= 44)	All (n= 442)
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Sample comments: domestic students

- *Freedom to pursue the project direction myself, within reason. Important so that I feel in control of my work and don't get bored*
- *Supervisor has allowed me to also do coursework which has been invaluable and allowed me to truly understand what I need to do to put my research project together*
- *The supervision has been exemplary. I feel it is important to have the supervisor be very approachable, encouraging and show good leadership; mine has all these qualities. This allows continued enthusiasm in my project, and a desire to conduct further research through the school*

Sample comments: international students

- *The supervision I have encountered so far is perhaps the most comprehensive I have ever seen. It made me to look at things at different perspectives and be confident in the techniques I do*
- *Good quality supervision. My supervisor always replies my emails with query promptly and understands my problem and discusses my ideas with me often*
- *The best aspect is that I have a very good supervisory team that gives me a lot of support and guides me not only towards my PhD but are very interested and worried about my career and my future as a researcher*

1.3.2 Suggested improvements

	Domestic (n=355)	International (n=35)	All (n=390)
--	----------------------	--------------------------	-----------------

Supervision

- | | | | |
|---|-----|----|-----|
| - Performance of supervisor(s) unsatisfactory | | | |
| - Supervisor(s) unavailable for regular meetings | 15% | 9% | 15% |
| - Supervisor(s) do not provide feedback on work | | | |
| - Process for evaluating supervisor performance suggested | | | |

Management of candidature

- | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|
| - additional information relevant to the thesis topic not provided | 7% | 3% | 6% |
| - insufficient guidance in topic selection and refinement | | | |
| - lack of good guidance in literature search | | | |

Sample comments: domestic students

- *I don't think I've had enough supervision. The supervision hasn't been very hands-on. We haven't sort of made a plan about my progress and what we should be looking at*
- *Supervisory arrangements in terms of genuine supervisor interest in the research project, communication with supervisor, review of written material and data*
- *Progress interviews. Every year, I know of at least a couple of people who have an issue with their supervisor but feel unable to say anything in the interview as they fear their supervisor will find out and make things difficult for them*

Sample comments: international students

- *Supervisors need to undergo some sort of training in being supervisors*
- *Better and more appropriate supervision. I also need more attention from my supervisor. They are busy on their own work and so trying to be ignorant*
- *I need more guidance about writing up the thesis*

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)
- Student support services (Ethics Office; Research Office; Childcare; International Office; Learning Centres; Student associations etc)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have remained in the 70th percentile since 2005, and currently sits at 74% agreement. International students have consistently recorded better outcomes than their domestic counterparts since 2004. The University average for this scale is 64%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 12% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- The majority of comments (5%) referred to the facilities (computer, equipment and workspace) provided.

Suggested improvements

- 53% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; and funding for conferences (21%)
 - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources; and equipment (15%)
 - Administration, including: general comments; communication; enrolment

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.

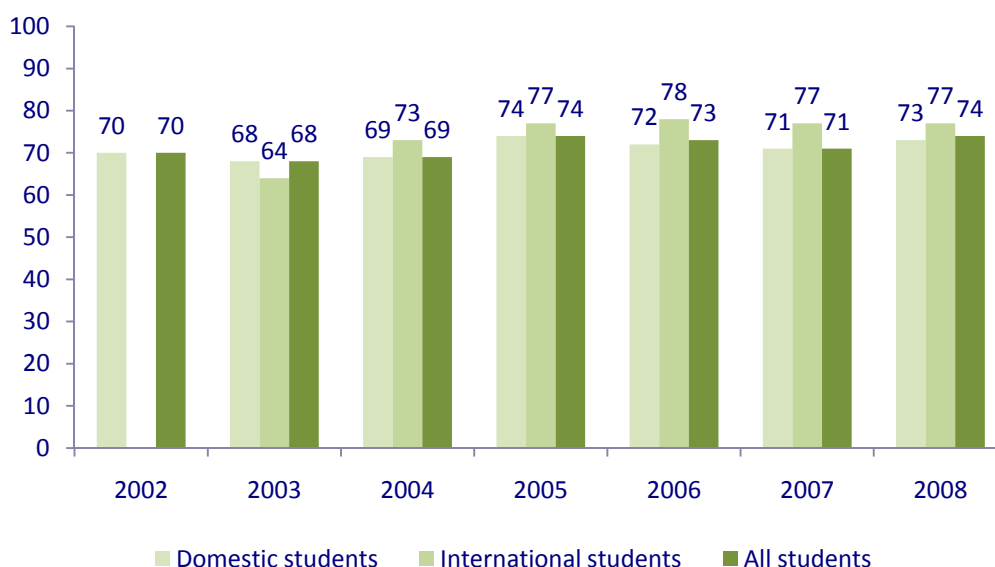


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 the focus of the students' comments relating to 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	Domestic			15%	13%	14%	12%
	International			33%	26%	13%	11%
	All	15%	12%	14%	16%	15%	14%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			58%	52%	53%	54%
	International			100%	51%	42%	51%
	All	51%	53%	54%	59%	52%	53%

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

2.3.1 Areas of best practice

12% of respondents (51/442 comments received) expressed satisfaction with the quality of infrastructure. The majority of comments (5%) related to the physical facilities provided by the Faculty (computer hardware and software, office accommodation, and equipment). The remaining comments were evenly divided between: Funding; support (IT, laboratory, technical); Research resources; Student support services; and Administration.

Sample comments: domestic students

- Supportive PG admin. I've had a few difficulties and they have been very helpful or at least they guide me onto someone who can
- Excellent facilities, particularly workspace and computer provision and support, and access to equipment. It would be impossible to work on my research project without access to such equipment
- We're pretty well funded and I like that we have good access to equipment, and they're not very tight on money. Some labs are quite tight on money, but here we can get what we want

Sample comments: international students

- Availability of equipment essential for the experiments
- Good library
- the courses by Learning Centre are really 2 helpful

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

	Domestic (n=355)	International (n=35)	All (n=390)
Finance and funding			
- Funding for conferences not available	20%	29%	21%
- Scholarships unavailable or unsatisfactory			
- PRSS, APA provisions unsatisfactory			
Facilities			
- Computers are not provided by faculty	15%	11%	15%
- Workspace, office, not provided by faculty			
- Equipment provided is not up to date or functional			
- Would like a postgraduate common room			
Administration			
- Services supplied by Faculty and Department administration unsatisfactory	8%	3%	7%
- Enrolment process unsatisfactory			
- Lack of communication between staff and students; faculty and other departments etc			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Mainly administration, it's very confusing and there is no real guidance and you never really find out the whole picture. There is a lack of information on the website. It is really hard to get any information out of administrative staff*
- *The services at Westmead campus are horrible. The common rooms are disgusting, the campus lacks basic facilities. Although there is a sizeable population of students, there isn't enough attention paid to them because they're not on main campus*
- *Funding to travel and living expenses. I understand that this is a wider issue but if the university/government is interested in attracting the highest quality applicants then they should fund a stipend that is commensurate with what these people earn in the clinical sphere*

Sample comments: international students

- *Condition of the environment i.e. building should be improved to create a more relaxed and pleasant place to work*
- *Funding for conferences - usually you have to apply for funding AFTER the conference has occurred and then you don't know if you will receive reimbursement. This makes it very difficult to decide whether to attend international conferences as it is hard to budget these expenses in if you are a student and if the funding doesn't come through*
- *More funding for going to conferences. I also think that the scholarships need to be higher. No one can survive in Sydney with \$20,000 per year. Rents is too high and the money is too low. Students end up having to work and lose time they should be doing PhD work*

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

Faculty scores have remained consistently in the low 60th percentile since 2004, and currently sits at 63% agreement. International students have consistently rated their experiences slightly higher than domestic students since 2006. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 46% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 17% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 16% of respondents

Suggested improvements

- 35% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 15% of comments received.

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.

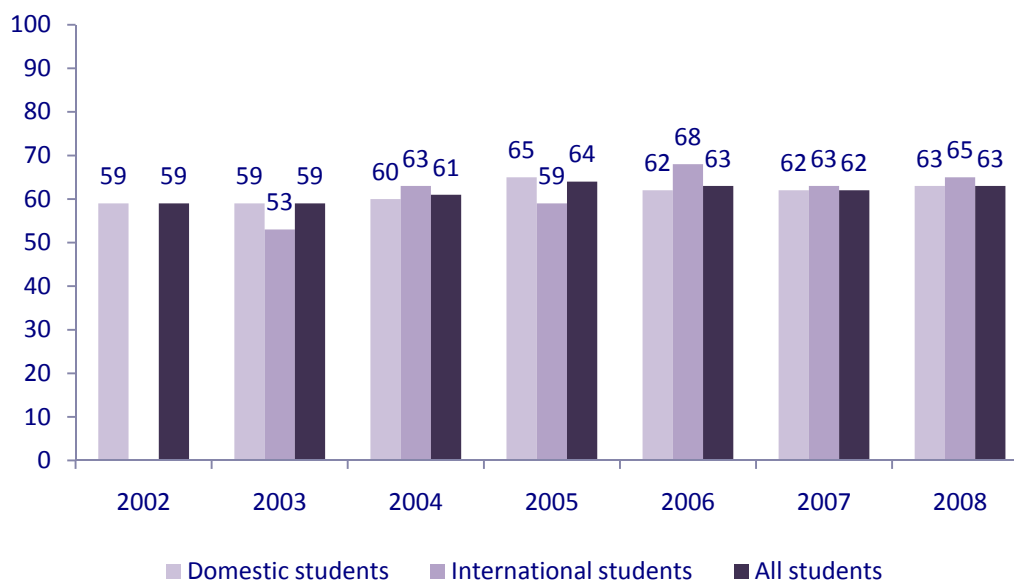


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 focus of the students' comments relating to 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	Domestic			45%	38%	50%	47%
	International			25%	36%	13%	30%
	All	33%	48%	40%	45%	38%	47%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			42%	35%	29%	34%
	International			13%	34%	23%	37%
	All	40%	42%	37%	41%	35%	35%

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

3.3.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=398)	International (n= 44)	All (n=442)
Research culture			
- Opportunities provided to participate at conferences	18%	14%	17%
- 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	17%	5%	16%
- Feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department			
- Respected as a fellow researcher			
- Support is provided for students (especially part-time, external)			
- Presence of a supportive work environment			

Domestic (n=398)	International (n= 44)	All (n=442)
----------------------	---------------------------	-----------------

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Getting exposure within the research community and having the opportunity to express my ideas at scientific and industry related conferences. Furthermore, developing close relationships with industry and other academics in the field has potentially opened new doorways into my future development*
- *Going to conferences, exchanging each other's knowledge, good learning opportunity and experience looking at others work and what research has/is been carried out across the nation and internationally*
- *Many opportunities to present and discuss data with other Researchers, Post Grads and Students at our Annual Campus Postgrad Research Conference. We are required to submit a written abstract and give an oral presentation, both of which are given good written feedback*

Sample comments: international students

- *Good supportive atmosphere. Supervisors are kind persons and fellow students are really supportive*
- *Having the support of other postgraduates students working with me*
- *The university environment, so different and better compared to what I experienced until now*

3.3.2 Suggested improvements

Domestic (n=355)	International (n=35)	All (n=390)
----------------------	--------------------------	-----------------

Interaction with other research students

- | | | | |
|--|----|----|----|
| - Opportunities are not provided to discuss research with other students | 9% | 6% | 9% |
| - Opportunities are not provided for social contact with other students | | | |
| - Other students are not supportive | | | |

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 | 16% | 9% | 15% |
| - Are not respected as a fellow researcher | | | |
| - Support is not provided for students (especially part-time, external) | | | |
| - Supportive work environment not present | | | |

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Student support for attendance at conferences when not presenting. Not enough support for going to conferences when not presenting limits exposure to unpublished knowledge and methods that may help development of student skills. Better support independent of supervisors and host labs would be good*
- *Research ambience in school/faculty - not sure how I could feel more connected/involved with fellow students and researchers. The focus of the University at present seems more to external world than to supporting its staff and students*
- *Interaction with other students is minimal and could be improved through more social activities organised by the various faculties. This can lead to a feeling of isolation sometimes*

Sample comments: international students

- *Research exchange with other research students within the school of public health*
- *More frequent post-grad meetings. Opportunity to exchange ideas*
- *For my project, I need experts in my area. At Westmead hospital we are far from the University, and find it difficult to get there. We need more support, more learning based at Westmead*

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 current Faculty score of 83% agreement for Generic Skills is identical to the previous three years, as well as to the 2003 score. The scores for 2002 and 2004 were marginally lower. Domestic and international students recorded similar outcomes for most years. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 54% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills
- 16% mentioned that their skills in problem solving, analysis, and written and oral communication had improved.
- 10% were happy with the development of research skills; whilst 8% considered that their technical or disciplinary skills had been enhanced.
- 11% of respondents considered that their ability to work independently had been enhanced; and 6% considered that their knowledge base had been enhanced.

Suggested improvements

- 10% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in English language proficiency for international students.

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.

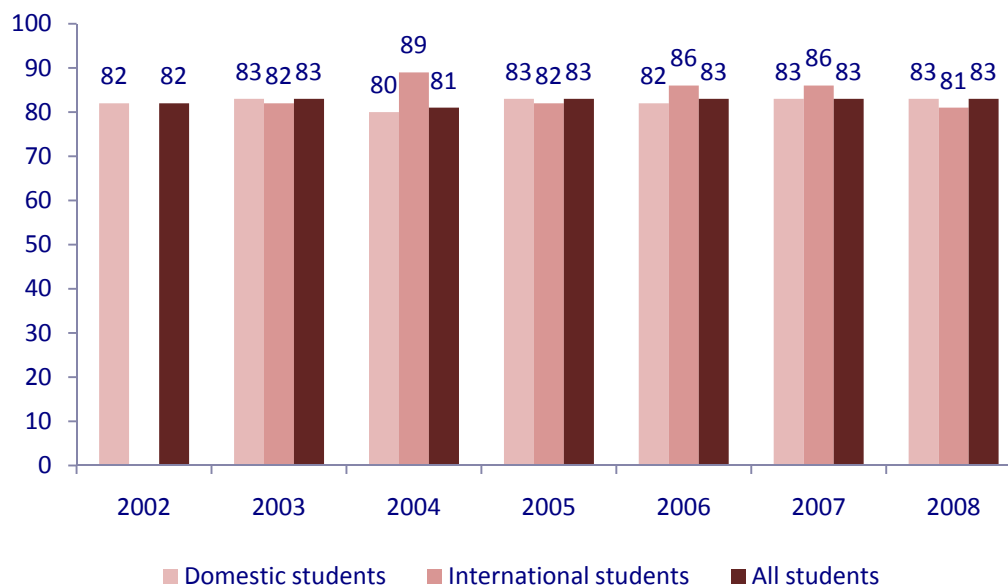


Figure 4: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 focus of the students' comments relating to Generic Skills between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic			57%	56%	48%	53%
	International			58%	36%	59%	68%
	All	69%	70%	63%	57%	53%	49%
Suggested improvements	Domestic			8%	11%	8%	10%
	International			0%	29%	38%	11%
	All	16%	12%	15%	8%	13%	11%

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

4.2.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n=398)	International (n=44)	All (n=442)
Graduate Attributes			
- Problem solving skills are being developed	16%	16%	16%
- Analytical skills are being developed			
- Oral and written communication, and presentation skills are being developed			
Working independently			
- Ability to plan own work developed	10%	20%	11%
- Ability to learn independently developed			

	Domestic (n=398)	International (n=44)	All (n=442)
Research skills			
- Ability to retrieve and use information	11%	7%	10%
- Developed confidence as a researcher			
Expand knowledge base			
- Knowledge of research topic is being expanded	5%	9%	6%
- Knowledge of associated topics is being expanded			
Technical skills			
- Disciplinary skills being developed	8%	11%	8%
- Learning new and relevant techniques e.g. on equipment			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Gaining knowledge and having the confidence to tackle problems*
- *Analysis, problem solving skill development. Experience in designing and executing experiments provides great skills for approaching problems both in and outside workplace*
- *Develop ability to problem solve and use techniques that allow hypotheses to be proven or rejected. Develop ability to write manuscripts and critically analyse papers/journals. These aspects are good because they have all contributed to my increased knowledge and ability to answer research questions*

Sample comments: international students

- *Communication and the ability of oral presentation. Because they are very important research skills in my careers in the future*
- *I have improved my English and written skills*
- *It has improved my laboratory skills and allowed me to share others ideas. It has expanded my horizon in terms of developing the way of learning independently. These features are important in my writing of the thesis and to achieve my projects aims*

4.2.2 Suggested improvements

10% of respondents (i.e. 40/390 comments received) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in this area of their experience.

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Provision of relevant courses on statistics and not just introductory but courses that enable PhD students to contact own data analysis using available computer software*
- *Writing academically such as research papers and grant applications. Development of questions and thinking when listening to other research studies*
- *Feel the department needs to provide seminars / workshops on research methodologies and techniques, as do other departments in the University*

Sample comments: international students

- *Communication skills. I still have to improve on my communication skill particularly on international stages*
- *More help for people from non English speaking backgrounds in writing theses*
- *I still need to improve my writing skill to be accepted by editors as well as researchers because I am not a native speaker*

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 83% agreement for the Overall Satisfaction Item is the lowest since 2005. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. In 2008, international students recorded lower scores than domestic for the first time since 2005.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 21% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (15% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.

Suggested improvements

- 5% of respondents were dissatisfied with their overall degree 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.

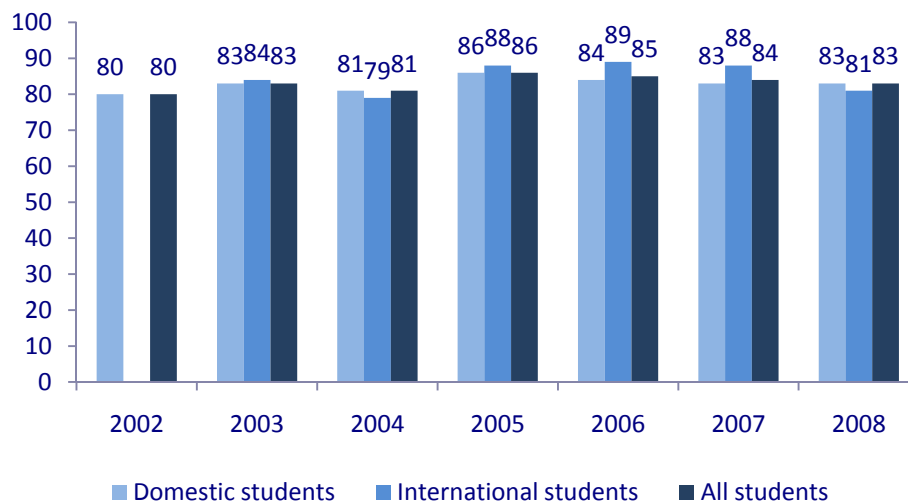


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 the focus of the graduates' comments relating to Overall Satisfaction between 2002 and 2008.

		SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	Domestic				20%	26%	20%	22%
	International				8%	15%	25%	11%
	All	26%	21%	20%	19%	25%	21%	21%
Suggested improvements	Domestic				2%	4%	3%	4%
	International				0%	0%	0%	9%
	All	0%	1%	1%	2%	3%	3%	5%

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

5.2.1 Areas of best practice

	Domestic (n= 398)	International (n= 44)	All (n= 442)
Satisfaction with research			
- Research topic will contribute to field	16%	9%	15%
- Researching topic that have always been interested in			
- Research is worthwhile			

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Really enjoying the opportunity to be a researcher and appreciated Sydney University's trust in my ability*
- *A good sense of direction and relevance. There is a great sense of achievement when planning, executing and analysing data and understanding the relevance of the results*
- *Opportunity to pursue a research topic of intrinsic interest to me. Opportunity to experience first hand how the theoretical aspects of a research project fit together and inform each other*

Sample comments: international students

- *The ability for my research to really contribute to the field of study and this is satisfying*
- *You will be contributing to the knowledge and your research will help a lot of patients. What you are doing will be a basis for the future. Learning new techniques and encountering new ideas. Making new professional friendships, associations for the future*
- *As my research work will help me to know about my countries health status, it is certainly a good aspect for me. Because I will work on these issues after completing my degree successfully . I intend to contribute myself to develop the health sector of my country in future*

5.2.3 Suggested improvements

5% of students (i.e. 18/390 comments received) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in this area of their experience.

Sample comments: domestic students

- *Even after doing PhD career doesn't get secured. In my opinion, it's not very attractive career, a person is always in uncertainty of his/her future*
- *100,000 word treatise no longer an appropriate method of examination - needs a more relevant method - by publication not necessarily the best*
- *Medicine Department topic selection is a big thing. Topic selection is important, that can make you or break you. We can choose, but the selection process isn't really given enough time, it isn't thorough enough*
- *Issues about funding: you can't do everything you want to do. We should organise collective projects. Often the projects are isolating, with a single researcher working alone on a big question, rather than having more researchers working on more aspects of the question. This means the quality of the research is lower than it is at those institutions in the world where the projects are collaborative. If we are going to be internationally competitive we have to do more collaborative research*

Sample comments: international students

- *Support for international students - no travel concessions, no access to funding. I would not recommend University of Sydney for other International Students*
- *My project is not working properly, we have a lot of problems in the lab, some of them caused by our supervisor*

Attachment A Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ 2008)

The survey

In 2002 the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for The University community on research higher degree graduates' perceptions of their research training experiences. This data is gathered each year using a national survey specifically developed for this task, the "Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire" (PREQ). The purpose of the PREQ 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 PREQ also provides data for benchmarking between similar programmes in different universities.

The survey gathers data on students' perceptions of the quality and frequency of supervision, intellectual and social climate, infrastructure, approaches to research, quality of thesis examination, and generic skills development in their research higher degree. The ITL analyses this data and provides a range of reports to staff and students of the university through their web site⁵

The ITL use responses obtained from graduates of the University of Sydney who completed their courses in the previous year (i.e. the 2008 reports are for students who completed in 2007). As an example: the 2008 reports are for graduates who completed their degree in 2007.

Quantitative data 2006 – 2008 (2005 – 2007 graduates)

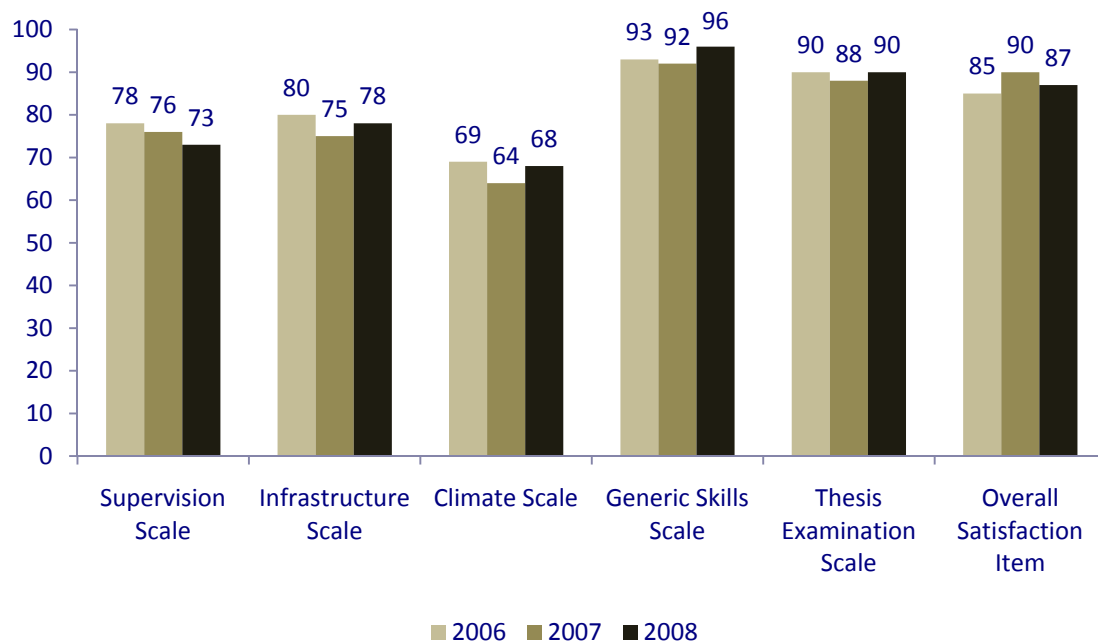


Figure 6: PREQ Factor Scales: Percentage Agreement results: 2006 - 2008

⁵ For more information on the PREQ, and results and reports 2002 - 2008 see <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/preq/>

Focus of written observations 2008 (2007 graduates)

The following written observations were received from research higher degree graduates in response to the open questions in the 2008 PREQ. The broad area(s) by which each comment has been analysed is indicated in the second column

Areas of best practice

Domestic students

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Attendance at various scientific gatherings and discuss research with other scientists.	CLIMATE
Doing it by research, I did not have to attend university.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Developing problem solving skills and the ability to work both independently and as part of a team.	GENERIC SKILLS
Independent thinking/working. Good network of people. Development of people skills.	GENERIC SKILLS CLIMATE
Cancer Institute Scholarship provided a real opportunity to explore areas of research that were not necessarily areas of interest for my supervisor. Development of my own ideas and interests.	INFRASTRUCTURE OVERALL SATISFACTION
Fabulous primary supervisor. The beautiful campus was a constant source of inspiration, encouragement and source of motivation. The campus has a 'soul'.	SUPERVISION INFRASTRUCTURE
Good supervision - always available. –	SUPERVISION
Sense of achievement when I completed my thesis!	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Developing independent research and problem solving skills.	GENERIC SKILLS
The development of my problem-solving skills, the financial support to attend conferences (postgraduate research scholarship scheme). The bio-statistics courses.	GENERIC SKILLS INFRASTRUCTURE
The best aspects of my course is being able to conduct research and produce publishable results.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Great supportive learning environment; approachable and available post-graduate unit team; and finally, the flexibility provided that enabled me to complete my study.	CLIMATE SUPERVISION
I worked within a vigorous and successful research organisation affiliated with the University of Sydney.	CLIMATE
Finishing thesis on time.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
The community of PhD students on campus was very supportive.	CLIMATE
Opportunity to do research overseas.	CLIMATE
Having time to do research properly.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Supervision.	SUPERVISION
On completion I had enhanced my organisational abilities. My supervisors understood my PhD would take time due to my occupation.	GENERIC SKILLS SUPERVISION
Learning about a new field.	GENERIC SKILLS
Meeting my partner. Finishing.	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Statistic subjects were well taught. Good written manuals for stats.	GENERIC SKILLS

Flexibility and autonomy granted by supervisor.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Research community.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Developing written and verbal communication skills.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Research.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Time to do research.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Personal growth from facing challenges. Developed research and analytical skills.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Being able to perform research in a highly regarded laboratory with excellent supervision.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i>
Environment that I worked in was stimulating, supportive and educational.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
University of Sydney Doctorate Degree - Internationally recognised and well known. Encouraged to attend and present at International Conferences and expenses subsidised by the Department of Medicine - Gained valuable experience and knowledge from attending and presenting to top international experts and academics.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i> <i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i> <i>CLIMATE</i>
Excellent team to work with. Good supervisors, and excellent intellectual climate in which to learn.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i>
Working as a research student at the Sax Institute (NGO, off-campus health research institute) gave me the opportunity to work in a real-world setting and alongside future colleagues. My supervisor there was superb in meeting with me regularly, answering any questions by email in a timely manner, and helping me with any issues.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i>
The amount I learned on how to conduct a research project.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Meeting new people (especially fellow PhD students), learning more about medical science, improving my writing and editing skills, having opportunities to teach undergraduate courses.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Learning to research independently. Learning the skills required for subsequent employment.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Quality of supervision - I had an excellent primary supervisor, and a good set of associate supervisors with different skill-sets. Opportunity to attend and present at a variety of national and international conferences.	<i>SUPERVISION</i> <i>CLIMATE</i>
I am in control of my research progress without intervention from my supervisors.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Choose a good supervisor.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
I had a great supervisor(s) who were always available and very helpful. She also gave me the ability to mix with many other academics.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Conference travel. Publications. Friendships with fellow students and post doctorates.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Support from primary supervisor.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Learnt how to do research, how to make research system valuable, how to ask questions and solve problems. Scientific skills beyond the technical.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
The research culture in the department.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
My supervisor was an exceptional scientist and became a good colleague/friend.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Working in a hospital environment allowed work to occur in a bench to bedside manner.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Access to equipment for research. Support from peers.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i> <i>CLIMATE</i>

Facilities, supervision, support and encouragement for further research.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE SUPERVISION CLIMATE</i>
Good supervision, learnt to develop ideas and write papers.	<i>SUPERVISION GENERIC SKILLS CLIMATE</i>
I have met interesting people and improved my research and analytical skills.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS GENERIC SKILLS INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE</i>
It helped develop my analytical and problem solving skills - I also gained a lot of independence and I had access to great facilities as well as academic staff.	<i>SUPERVISION INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE</i>
Material. Knowledge of supervisor. Research environment.	<i>SUPERVISION INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE</i>
Problem solving and time organising.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Skills developed, good co-supervisor.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS SUPERVISION</i>
Supervision.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Supervisor. Honing writing skills.	<i>SUPERVISION GENERIC SKILLS</i>

International students

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
My main supervisor encouraged me to publish article during my research and helped me with editing and by being co-author.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
The supervisory team.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
I really enjoyed my time in Sydney. The department made me feel welcome and the support I received was excellent.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Good equipments and persons to work with. Interesting work area.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE</i>
The working environment within the department where everyone is equal whether you're a student, post-doc or technical assistant.	<i>CLIMATE</i>

Suggested improvements

Domestic students

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
A better system for thesis marking - I had to wait 9 months, this is unacceptable. We need to be told before we start how hard a science life is.	<i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i>
A course in literature searches would be good. A speedier response from co-authors for publishing papers.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
A part-time PhD when in full-time employment is not a satisfactory way to complete research. I would not encourage part-time PhD research.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Access to expert bioinformatic support on the Westmead campus is very poor, so students are essentially required to be self-taught bioinformaticians. Computing power and data storage available is also inadequate. Department (Discipline of Paediatrics & Child Health) has a strong clinical focus, sometimes making it difficult to gain support as a basic researcher - this is understandable to some extent, but could probably be improved.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE CLIMATE</i>
Access to statistical support.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Apart from supervisor, little contact with school.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Appropriate supervision - i.e. contact with a co-supervisors who had the correct level of knowledge, skill and attitude towards students, so that students don't outgrow supervisor during their studies.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Appropriateness of supervisor.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
As with everything - more funding would have provided opportunities for greater scope. Statistical support was difficult to acquire, but very needed.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Before I was doing clinical research, now I was back to basic research. The scientific thinking about medical problems. The way the medical research is done.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Better interaction with main campus. (I was at HRI). Politics of multiple supervisors.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i>
Better supervisor support: a supervisor that is understanding of time constraints and has the time and the skill to manage students.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Better training and monitoring of co-supervisors to assure they are fit for the position. Closer contact with the principal supervisor to assure overall satisfaction. Appropriate people (lab supervisor and other skilled personnel) were technically competent and responsible.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Communication with other academics. Exposure to additional techniques. Especially undergraduate courses need to equip students with better skills.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i> <i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Contact with other postgraduate students on-campus. Involvement in on-campus activities.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Deeper understanding of choice of supervisor. If supervisor has serious time issues, there is little support to solve that problem. This was problematic at the start of my PhD.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Doing a PhD is isolating! It is also an unknown - not only do you need to learn about the content area you need to learn how to complete a PhD. No one told me that at the start. Therefore my expectations going into the degree were out of whack!	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Examination process was very lengthy.	<i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i>
Facilities/Technical Support.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Few practical resources provided. Relatively, funding allowed through PRSS very poor (e.g. \$900 on three occasions compared to \$4000 for PhD students in the faculty in which I am now employed). Lots of bureaucratic issues that got in the way - e.g. being unable to load university software onto computer that I owned, but no computing facilities available. Poor access to office space. Given the amount of money that flows into the university for every successful PhD candidate, the amount reaching the department I was in appeared minimal.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Financial assistance during PhD and career support after education. Spent enormous amount of time and money to complete a higher degree in medicine such as a masters and doctorate in medicine, yet no career opportunities after graduation.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i> <i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
Financial support from the University.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Funding.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
I had poor support from the postgraduate coordinator of the xxx campus and only weak support from WMI management. Thesis examination was too long and follow up of examiners by PG unit was not satisfactory, nor was communication about examination progress.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i>
Increase financial assistance. There should be personal reviews by students of their supervisors attitude, conduct and for e.g. manner in which they speak to you. This should be confidential for the student but the review reported on a website so future prospective students have some idea of what to expect.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i>
It was a very good experience which I owe largely to my supervisor.	<i>N/A</i>
Lack of technical assistance/expertise.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Library access.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
More directives with supervisors.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
More involvement into the department activities for off-campus part-time students.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
More opportunities for student's (students who do not have external grants do not have these opportunities) independent research; collaboration should be encouraged; work-life balance should also be considered.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
More supervision time from the university supervisor. Good quality supervision from the associate (non-university supervisor).	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
More supervision/guidance throughout the courses was needed.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Need more help about scientific writing.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Primary supervisors abilities.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Progress monitoring was pure oil service and did not tackle whether enough progress was being made in any concrete or objective way.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Skills in literature search.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Statistics.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Supervision and support particularly in 1st year. Less required in subsequent years.	<i>SUPERVISION</i> <i>CLIMATE</i>
Supervision. My primary supervisor does not have interpersonal skills required for successfully leading a research team and supervising students. He also discourages me from trying to publish my data.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Supervisor very busy and tried to be available as much as possible but sometimes due to workload was not able to complete editing in a timely fashion.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
The department's desire to chase politically useful research, and complete disinterest in the world class research being performed in our laboratory finally destroyed it, and I only really just finished in time for this not to harm my work overall, although it did slow me down somewhat while we did other work to keep funds coming in so we could finish. The juxtaposition of a great scientist in my supervisor, and very poor science and philosophy in the department as a whole was depressing.	<i>CLIMATE</i> <i>SUPERVISION</i> <i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
The initial organization of my research was quite difficult.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
The post-graduate research supervisor in the faculty of public health was terrible in terms of providing guidance. I found her manner of working with students unprofessional, unsupportive, and rude.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
the time taken for thesis examination. The postgraduate student seminar program. Social contact with other students.	<i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i> <i>CLIMATE</i>
There is no requirement for supervisors to have a research proposal or to develop one with the student, before the student starts. This would help students finish within the time limits and secure scholarships or funding.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Time taken for the examination of the thesis submitted in august 2006 and did not receive a reply until December.	<i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i>
Trying to finish your thesis in 3.5 years, It's too hard in Science, doing laboratory based research.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>

International students

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Sometimes main supervisor and PhD supervisor gave differing advice and when this happens in the last 6 months of research - can be frustrating.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Providing a more supportive and encouraging environment for PhD research by the department.	<i>CLIMATE</i>
Computer facilities could be improved.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>