

# Sydney Nursing School

## Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report : 2005 - 2009

September 2010

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

Data on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences are gathered each year using the Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. Analysis of this data provides a comprehensive picture of trends in the student experience, and the performance of the Faculty in relation to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for Research: Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree; and other related areas: Infrastructure; Research Climate; and Generic Skills.

Written observations, from respondents to the survey, about their experiences provide evidence to support the Faculty SREQ quantitative data results (percentage agreement scores), and provide detailed information about key issues in the Areas of best practice and Areas needing improvement, during their research training experience. The results are directly aligned with the scales and survey items used in the SREQ, with the addition of items that occur frequently in student comments.

### KEY RESULTS FOR 2009

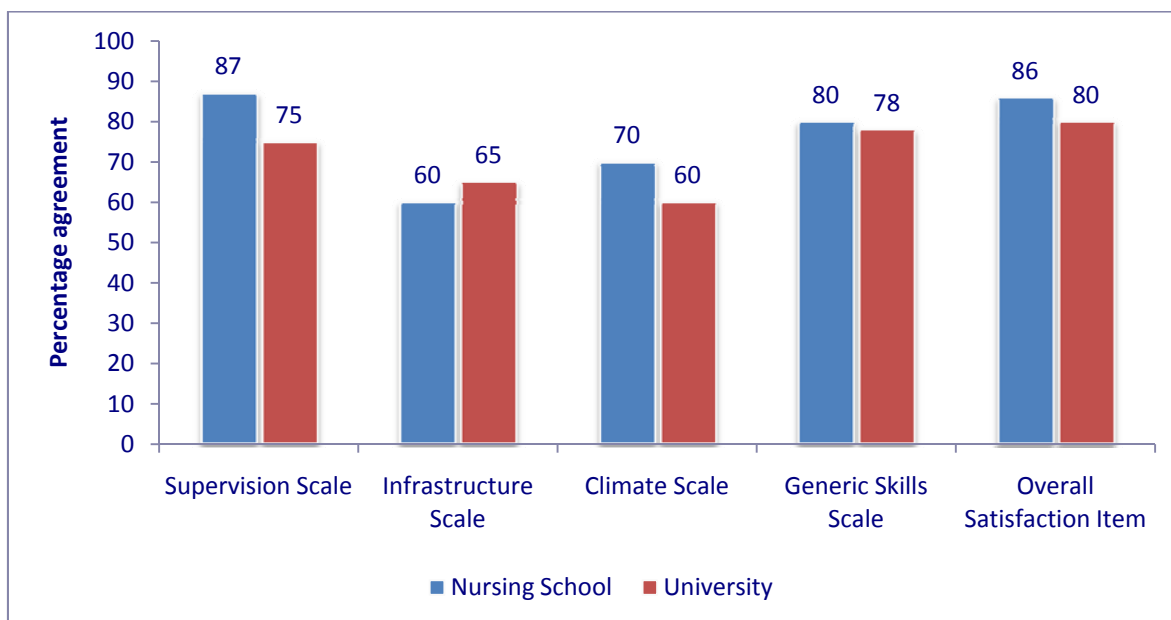
The following results are an indication of those areas of the student experience that were of significance to research higher degree students during 2009. The Faculty scores (percentage agreement results) reflect the experiences of respondents in relation to specific items in the survey; the qualitative 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.

#### 1 Quantitative data

The following chart compares the 2009 SREQ percentage agreement results (i.e. respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed with the survey items relating to each scale) for the Nursing School and for the University.

23 research higher degree students (all domestic) from the Nursing School responded to the 2009 SREQ.

Figure 1: Comparison of University and Sydney Nursing School: Percentage agreement results: SREQ 2009



As can be seen from the above chart, in 2009 the Nursing School performed better than the University in all areas except Infrastructure. At a faculty level, in all areas except Infrastructure, these results represent a considerable increase since the 2008 results, and are the highest since 2005. Particular note should be taken of the increase in the scores for Research Climate: 2005: 50%; 2006: 55%; 2007: 43%; 2008: 55%; and 2009: 70%. This is reflected in the high proportion of respondents who considered aspect of Research Climate to be an area of best practice in their answers to the relevant open question (see Part 2 of the Executive Summary and Section 3 of the report).

## 2 Focus of written observations SREQ 2009

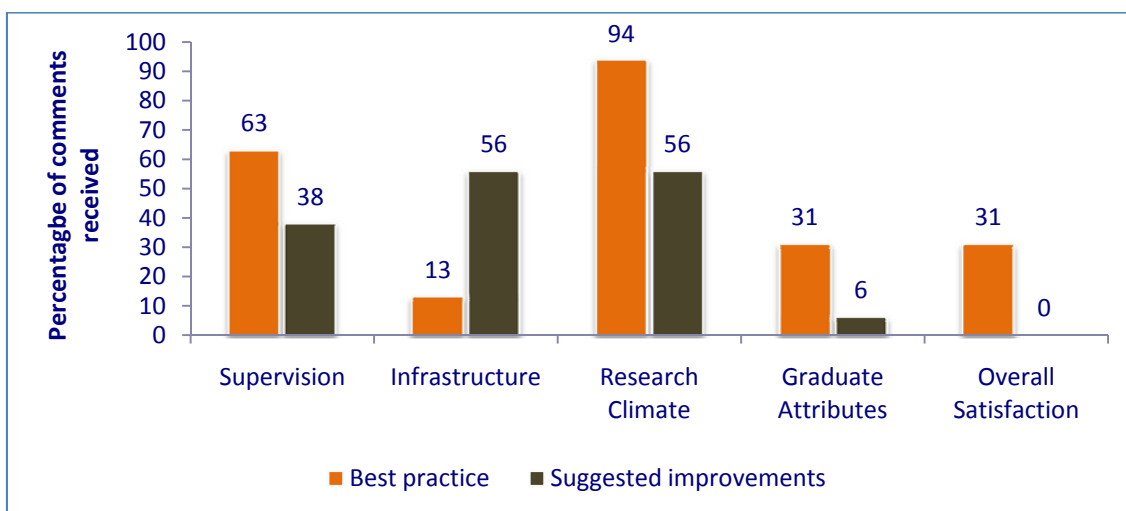
16 respondents to the 2009 SREQ answered the open questions requesting comments on areas of best practice in their research higher degree experience and areas in need of improvement.

NB: The minimum sample size recommended for statistical analysis of SREQ data is 20. The following data should therefore be interpreted with caution.

### 2.1 An overview

The following chart provides an overview of the research higher degree student experience of research training in the Sydney Nursing School, as indicated in their responses to the open questions in the 2009 SREQ. It demonstrates the relationship between areas of best practice, and areas in need of improvement for each of the Scales. Results are reported as a percentage of the total number of comments received per student group.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 2: Sydney Nursing School: Focus of written observations: SREQ 2009



## 2.2 Key issues

### 2.2.1 Quality of Supervision

- 63% of all respondents to the SREQ mentioned that they were satisfied with aspects of the supervision provided within the Nursing School. All of these comments referred to satisfaction with supervisor(s).
- 31% of respondents would appreciate changes to the management of the candidature, and 6% would like more frequent meetings with their supervisor.

### 2.2.2 Quality of infrastructure

- 13% of comments received expressed satisfaction with the infrastructure, including: faculty provided and library resources (6%); and administration (6%).
- Areas that were considered to be in need of improvement included: funding (31% of comments received); administration (6%); facilities (13%); research resources (13%); and ICT support (6%).

### 2.2.3 Research Climate

- This is the first year that comments relating to Climate as one of the best aspects of the research higher degree student experience have outweighed those suggesting improvements.
- The vast majority of comments received (94%) expressed satisfaction with various aspects of the prevailing research climate within the Nursing School. Respondents expressed satisfaction with: working in a welcoming, supportive and challenging environment which respected them as fellow researchers (27% of comments received); feeling part of a research community (31%); and interaction with other research higher degree students (19%)
- Conversely, respondents considered that improvements were needed in the following areas: work environment (25% of comments received); interaction with other students (13%); and research community (13%); and the location and physical environment (6%)

<sup>1</sup> See Attachment 1: note 4 for an explanation of the analysis and counting of comments and the reliability of statistical data

#### **2.2.4 Graduate Attributes**

- 31% of comments that fell within the remit of Graduate Attributes, and referred to the development of tasks and abilities within the Research and Inquiry cluster (25%); whilst 6% related to Personal and Intellectual Autonomy.
- One respondent considered that their writing skills required improvement.

#### **2.2.5 Overall Satisfaction**

- 31% of respondents who answered the open question on areas of best practice provided comments which fell within the remit of Overall Satisfaction.
- 25% were satisfied with their research and its contribution to the field; whilst 6% appreciated the practical components of their research.
- No respondents considered this area of their experience to be in need of improvement.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

#### ***On SREQ and how to interpret results***

Staff of the ITL are available to provide support to faculties in the interpretation of the SREQ data and the development of strategic responses to address any issues identified

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Email: [itl@sydney.edu.au](mailto:itl@sydney.edu.au)

SREQ results and reports are at <http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/sreq/secure/rrr.cfm>

***Categorised lists of comments from the SREQ*** are available on request:

- By degree/ year of study
- By area of the student experience: category/ sub-category/ component (as listed in Attachment Two)

#### ***On the analysis and reporting of qualitative data***

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SREQ Faculty reports (2003 – 2009) are at: [http://www.usyd.edu.au/learning/evaluating/sreq\\_or.shtml](http://www.usyd.edu.au/learning/evaluating/sreq_or.shtml)

***SREQ quantitative data reports*** can be generated for degree/ year of study/ student group and specific survey item. Comparisons from previous years are also available.

## INTRODUCTION

### STUDENT RESEARCH EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE (SREQ)

In 2002 the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for The University community on research higher degree students' perceptions of their research training experiences. This data is gathered each year using a survey specifically developed for this task, the "Student Research Experience Questionnaire" (SREQ). The purpose of the SREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. The SREQ is based on a national survey of research higher degree students, the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). Some of the information gathered by the SREQ survey also contributes to two of the University's Key Performance Indicators for research. These KPIs are the quality of Supervision, and Overall Satisfaction with the research higher degree.

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

Students are asked to respond to statements using a five point Likert Scale to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. As part of the questionnaires, students are also asked to comment on the following questions:

- *What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience? Please explain why these aspects are good.*
- *What aspects are most in need of improvement? Please explain why*

Quantitative and qualitative data from the SREQ provide evidence of the success of University and Faculty initiatives to improve the overall student experience in general and the student experience of research training in particular.

### FOCUS OF THE REPORT

Based on the answers to the SREQ, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the postgraduate research student experience in the Sydney Nursing School since 2005. Results for the quantitative data (percentage agreement faculty scores) are shown for the period 2005 to 2009; whilst, due to the low number of responses for 2005, results for the analysis of the qualitative data (written observation) results are shown for the period 2006 to 2009. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2009 SREQ qualitative data.

Information is arranged by the following areas of the research higher degree student experience: Quality of Supervision, Quality of Infrastructure, Research Climate, Graduate Attributes, and Overall Satisfaction, which, taken together, comprise the student experience of research training within the Faculty.

### FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS FROM RESPONDENTS

By examining the foci of the students' comments in the 2009 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.

NB: In 2010 a review of the taxonomy used in the analysis of comments from the SREQ was undertaken in conjunction with staff from the ITL. This resulted in reassignment of Flexibility of program and Pressure to complete from Supervision to Overall Satisfaction, and the realignment of aspects within Graduate Attributes to match the Clusters, Tasks and abilities within the University Graduate Attributes framework. The analysis of qualitative data from 2005 – 2008 has been updated to match the revised criteria.

Notes relating to the analysis and counting of comments are provided in attachments to the report.

## GLOSSARY

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

<b>SREQ</b>	Student Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to postgraduate research students annually, during second semester
<b>Supervision Scale</b> <b>Infrastructure Scale</b> <b>Climate Scale</b> <b>Generic Skills Scale</b> <b>Overall Satisfaction Item</b>	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"><li>• Supervision</li><li>• Infrastructure</li><li>• Climate</li><li>• Generic Skills</li><li>• Overall Satisfaction Item</li></ul> Within the report, this naming convention is used to identify information relating to the analysis of the quantitative data (survey items)
<b>Faculty Scores</b> <b>Percentage agreement</b>	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
<b>Quality of Supervision</b> <b>Quality of Infrastructure</b> <b>Research Climate</b> <b>Graduate Attributes</b> <b>Overall Satisfaction</b>	The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon categories used in the SREQ Taxonomy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of Supervision</li><li>• Quality of Infrastructure</li><li>• Research Climate</li><li>• Graduate Attributes</li><li>• Overall Satisfaction</li></ul> Within the report, this naming convention is used as headings for each section of the report, and to identify information relating to the analysis of the qualitative data (written observations).
<b>Qualitative data</b> <b>Focus of written observations</b>	Students' written observations received in response to open ended questions in the SREQ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are the <b>best</b> aspects of your research higher degree experience? Please explain why these aspects are good</li><li>• What aspects are most in need of <b>improvement</b>? Please explain why</li></ul>
<b>Percentage of comments received</b>	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.
<b>Key issues</b>	As a general rule, only those aspects which receive over 5% of comments from the <u>whole</u> cohort (i.e. domestic and international combined; all respondents per degree) are considered significant enough to be included as key issues in the report.

## 1 QUALITY OF SUPERVISION

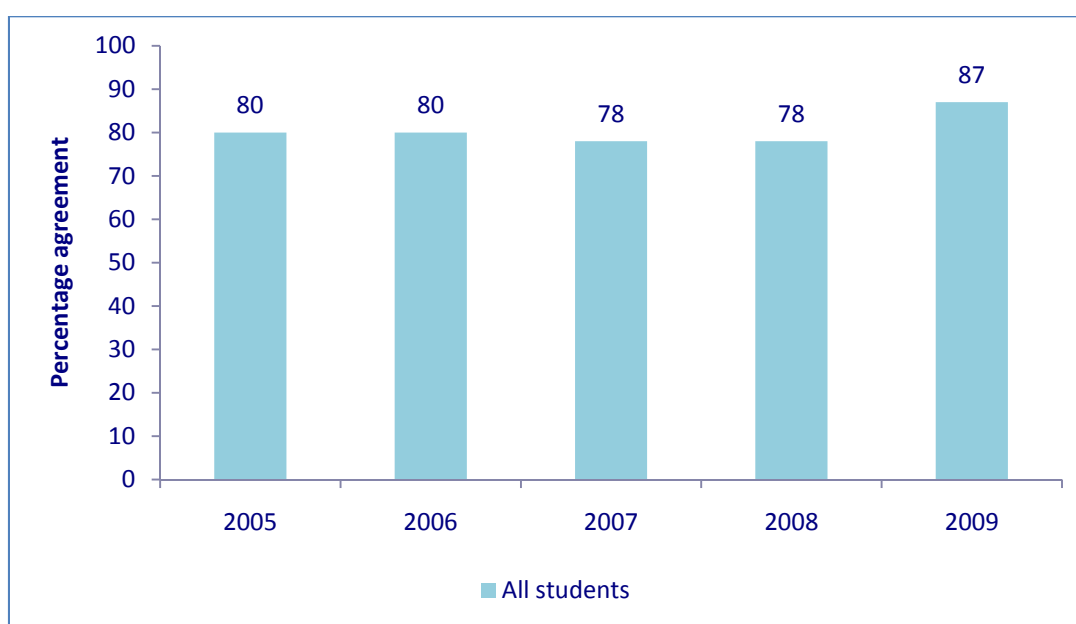
### 1.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Supervision Scale* covers aspects of supervision including: supervision being available when needed; understanding by the supervisor(s) of difficulties; provision of additional information relevant to the thesis topic by the supervisor; provision of guidance in topic selection and refinement; provision of helpful feedback on progress; provision of good guidance in literature search; and overall satisfaction with quality of supervision.

### 1.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2005–2009

The following graph shows the proportion of students (domestic and international combined) who either agreed or strongly agreed with relevant Supervision Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 3: SREQ Supervision Scale: Percentage agreement results: All students: 2005 - 2009



### 1.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2006–2009

The following table shows the percentage of comments, received from respondents to the survey (domestic and international combined), which can be classified as either areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the focus of students' comments relating to the Quality of Supervision between 2006 and 2009.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	<b>50%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>63%</b>
<i>Areas needing improvement</i>	<b>40%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>38%</b>

## 1.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2009)

### 1.4.1 Areas of best practice

	All students (n= 16 )
<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	<b>63%</b>
- Supervisor(s)	63%

#### Sample comments

- *Having the ability to progress ideas with my supervisors and for them to tease out my ideas and develop them to be meaningful for my research*
- *Having an understanding & supportive supervisor*
- *My primary supervisor who supports, encourages, coaches and challenges me*
- *My supervision is excellent. I feel very supported, but not overpowered. My supervisor makes me feel valued and also that my research is worthwhile*

### 1.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All students (n= 16 )
<b>Quality of Supervision</b>	<b>38%</b>
- Management of candidature (guidance and workload)	31%
- Supervisor(s)	6%

#### Sample comments

- *Supervision- academics very with department meetings so difficult to pin them down for a meeting, often needs to be changed*
- *A 'How To' guide for thesis preparation and undertaking a research project would be good*
- *I must apply more of a routine to my study as I feel I am falling behind with the work*
- *Everything I do seems to be in a rush*

## 2 QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

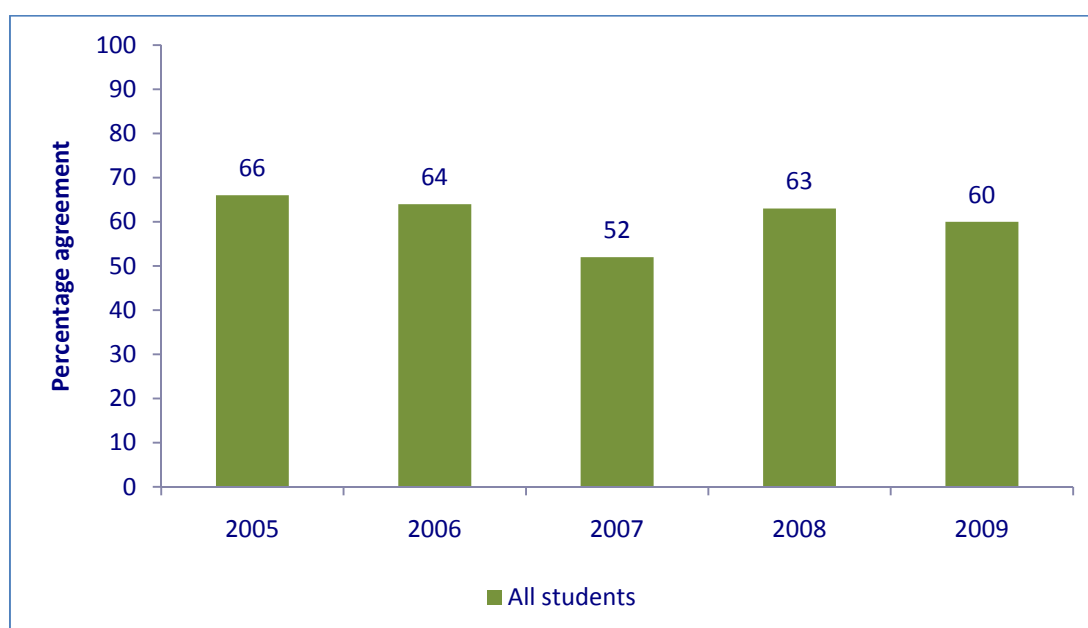
### 2.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Infrastructure Scale* covers aspects of the infrastructure available to research students, including: access to a suitable working space; access to technical support; access to a common room; access to necessary equipment; access to computing facilities and resources; appropriate financial support; and overall satisfaction with the quality of services and facilities.

### 2.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2005–2009

The following graph shows the proportion of students (domestic and international combined) who either agreed or strongly agreed with Infrastructure Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 4: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: Percentage agreement results: All students: 2005 - 2009



### 2.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2006–2009

The following table shows the percentage of comments, received from respondents to the survey (domestic and international combined), which can be classified as either areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the focus of students' comments relating to the Quality of Infrastructure between 2006 and 2009.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<i>Areas needing improvement</i>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>56%</b>

## 2.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2009)

### 2.4.1 Areas of best practice

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	<b>13%</b>
- Physical facilities	6%
- Administration - communication	6%

#### Sample comments

- Another best aspects is that we frequently obtain updates re: scholarship opportunities, research grants, guest lecturers through email
- Being able to put all of the articles, books etc which I need for my research in one place

### 2.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Quality of Infrastructure</b>	<b>56%</b>
- Finance and funding	31%
- Facilities	13%
- Administration	6%
- ICT Support	6%

#### Sample comments:

- Faculty being removed from Main campus has made IT access hard when there are difficulties, difficult for part timers
- Access to financial support other than research student maintenance for those of us who have to work - consider 'write-up' scholarship/stipend for those who have not had access to scholarship until this stage of the PhD process
- Parking could be better!
- Students on APAs do not have the available funds to pay for themselves and then claim money back - monies should be available all year round, not just PRSS

### 3 RESEARCH CLIMATE

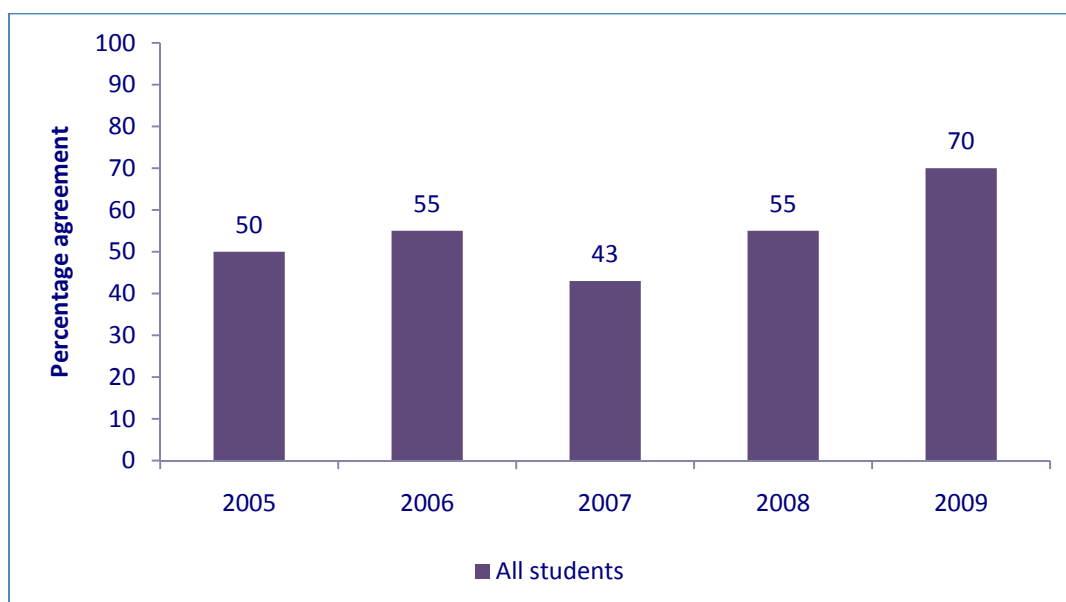
#### 3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Climate Scale* covers aspects of the prevailing research climate in a students' school/ department, including: opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students; integration into the school/ department community; opportunities to become involved in the broader research culture; perception of other research students as supportive; feelings of isolation within the school/ department; encouragement of interaction with other research students; provision of a good seminar programme; stimulation of personal work by the prevailing research ambience; provision of a supportive work environment; and feeling respected as a fellow researcher.

#### 3.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2005–2009

The following graph shows the proportion of students (domestic and international combined) who either agreed or strongly agreed with Climate Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 5: SREQ Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: All students: 2005 - 2008



#### 3.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2006–2009

The following table shows the percentage of comments, received from respondents to the survey (domestic and international combined), which can be classified as either areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the focus of students' comments relating to Research Climate between 2006 and 2009.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Areas of best practice	0%	10%	59%	94%
Areas needing improvement	60%	50%	73%	56%

### 3.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2009)

#### 3.4.1 Areas of best practice

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Research Climate</b>	<b>94%</b>
- Work environment	27%
- Research community	31%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	44%

#### Sample comments

- *The support, encouragement from all my supervisors and fellow research students is great. I feel part of a team, don't feel like a student and I am respected and an important member of that team*
- *Attending conferences and presenting my work to national and international audiences - good to 'test the waters' of my work and taking it out of my discipline*
- *The respect with which research students are treated in the Faculty and supported. Encouragement is always provided along with valuable suggestions at forums where individual research projects are shared. Interaction and sharing of research in progress and scholarly debate on critical issues resulting from regular opportunities to attend research seminars is shared equally between staff, post graduate students and clinical associates. This contributes to a community of scholars, and an amazing array of shared knowledge. Having attended other universities and seen how other systems operate, this collaborative engagement in research is indeed rare I think. It contributes to, and sustains the feeling of being respected and valued as a research student*
- *Being part of a dynamic faculty with strong research interests and wide range of expertise*

#### 3.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Research Climate</b>	<b>56%</b>
- Work environment	25%
- Research community	13%
- Interaction with other research higher degree students	13%

#### Sample comments

- *There are no ways for external students to participate in ongoing research seminars*
- *I study from interstate - I miss contact with other students*
- *There is not motivation to do research but needs support from Research Centre and Faculty*
- *Better collaboration with Uni and my employer. Hard for me to get away from work Uni activities*

## 4 GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

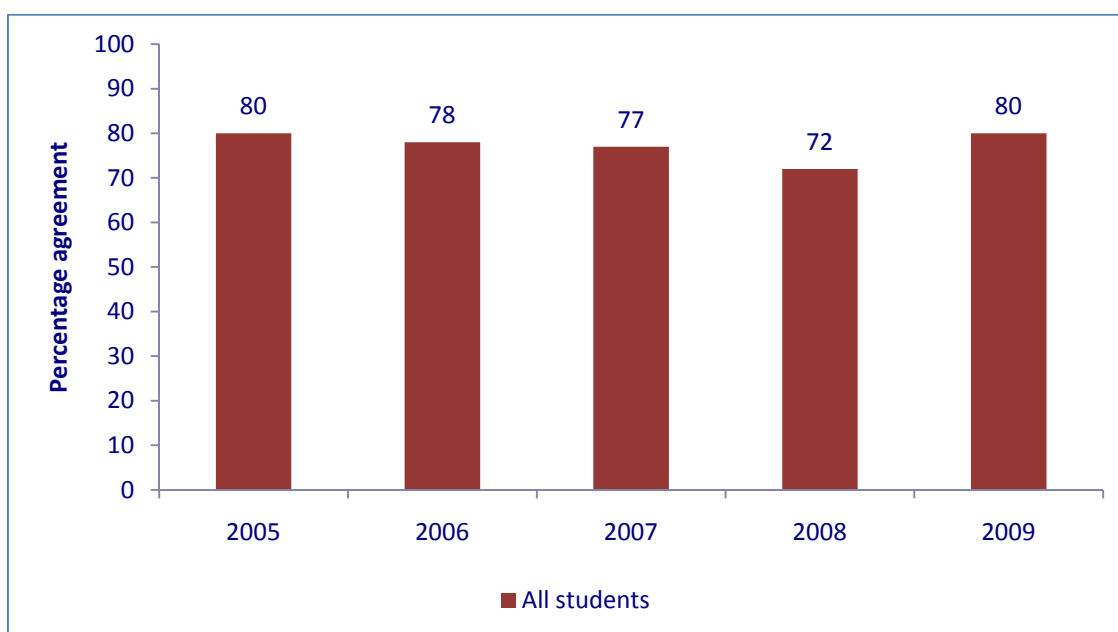
### 4.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Generic Skills* scale reflects the extent to which students perceive their studies to have fostered the development of the generic skills recognised by the university as being a valuable outcome of university education, in addition to discipline specific skills and knowledge. Skills include problem solving; oral and written communication; development of ideas and their written presentation; collaboration with other researchers; analytical skills; planning; confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems; and ability to learn independently

### 4.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2005–2009

The following graph shows the proportion of students (domestic and international combined) who either strongly agreed or agreed with Generic Skills Scale survey items in the SREQ between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 6: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2005 - 2009



### 4.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2006–2009

The following table shows the percentage of comments, received from respondents to the survey (domestic and international combined), which can be classified as either areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the focus of students' comments relating to the expansion of Graduate Attributes between 2006 and 2009.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<i>Areas needing improvement</i>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>6%</b>

#### 4.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2009)

##### 4.4.1 Areas of best practice

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	<b>31%</b>
- Research and inquiry	25%
- Personal and Intellectual Autonomy	6%

##### Sample comments

- *The learning, being able to incorporate my research skills and knowledge into clinical practice, thus the patients and carers get benefit as well as myself from the skills I learn & develop*
- *what I am learning*
- *The meetings are always inspiring re: facilitate development of critical thinking*
- *I have learnt to think beyond the box*

##### 4.4.2 Areas needing improvement

	All students (n=16 )
<b>Graduate Attributes</b>	<b>6%</b>
- Communication skills	6%

One respondent mentioned that *“Definitely my writing needs improvement but this is because I need to do more writing & practice, not because I do not have the support “*

## 5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

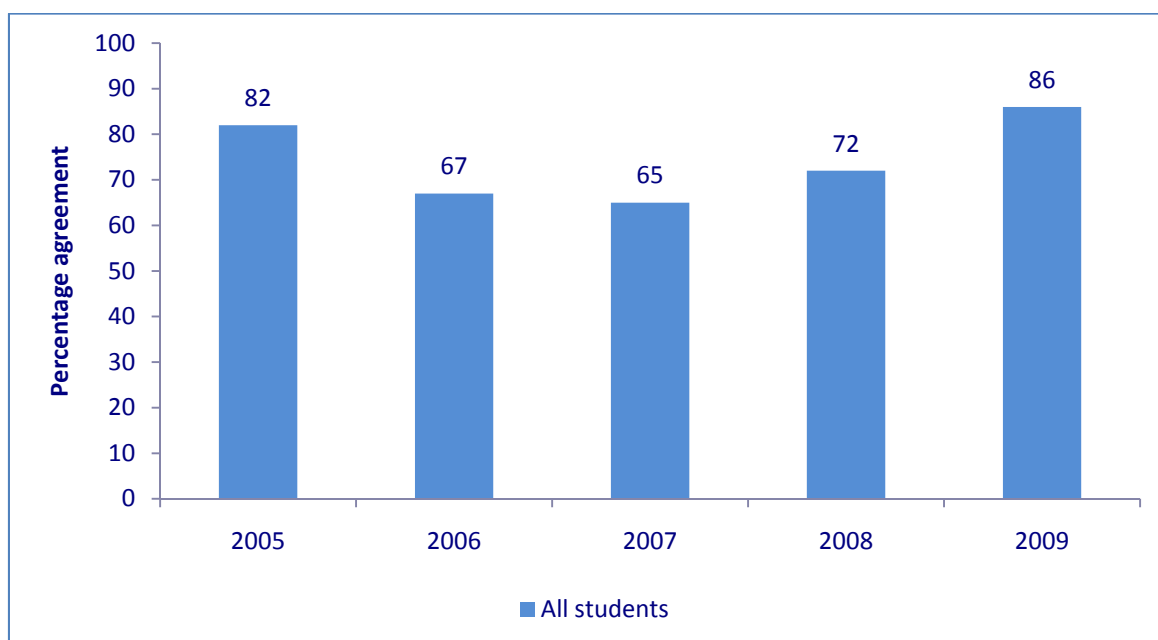
### 5.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This single item asks students about their overall level of satisfaction with their research higher degree experience. In the analysis of the qualitative data, additional aspects, which are not covered in other areas of the survey, but which contribute to the overall satisfaction of the research higher degree student experience area included e.g. satisfaction with research, quality of degree (pressure to complete, flexibility of program), reputation of the university/ faculty, and staffing issues and resources.

### 5.2 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: QUANTITATIVE DATA 2005–2009

The following graph shows the proportion of students (domestic and international combined) who either strongly agreed or agreed with the Overall Satisfaction item in the SREQ between 2005 and 2009.

Figure 7: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: 2005 - 2009



### 5.3 COMPARATIVE RESULTS: FOCUS OF WRITTEN OBSERVATIONS 2006–2009

The following table shows the percentage of comments, received from respondents to the survey (domestic and international combined), which can be classified as either areas of best practice or areas for improvement, providing an indication of trends in the focus of students' comments relating to overall satisfaction with the degree experience between 2006 and 2009.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	<b>60%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>31%</b>
<i>Areas needing improvement</i>	<b>0%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

## 5.4 KEY ISSUES FOR RESEARCH HIGHER DEGREE STUDENTS (SREQ 2009)

### 5.4.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n= 16 )
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>31%</b>
- Satisfaction with research	23%
- Practical components of the degree	6%

#### Sample comments

- *Doing research on a topic that is problematic in the clinical field*
- *I am made to feel I am making a significant contribution to Nursing knowledge.*
- *My research topic is highly relevant to my work. This allows me to enhance the quality of my practice but also to lower the stress of my studies*
- *the project seems to be working*

### 5.4.2 Areas needing improvement

No respondents commented on this aspect of their research higher degree experience as being in need of improvement.

## ATTACHMENT ONE: NOTES ON ANALYSIS AND COUNTING OF COMMENTS

### 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.

#### **Number of respondents to the SREQ 2005 – 2009**

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	11	18	17	20	23
International students	0	0	0	2	0
Total	11	18	17	22	23

### 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 2005 - 2008**

	Date of survey	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
		n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
<i>Areas of best practice</i>	Domestic students	4	10	9	16	16
	International students	0	0	1	1	0
	Total	4	10	10	17	16
<i>Areas of improvement</i>	Domestic students	4	10	11	14	16
	International students	0	0	1	1	0
	Total	4	10	12	15	16

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

### 3 RELIABILITY OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

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

#### Quantitative and qualitative data

Where the number of respondents is less than 5, results are excluded from the report as they are likely to be unreliable.

Within the report all statistical data and charts are displayed for domestic and international respondents combined. No qualitative data is provided for 2005

#### Quantitative and qualitative data

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

### 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:

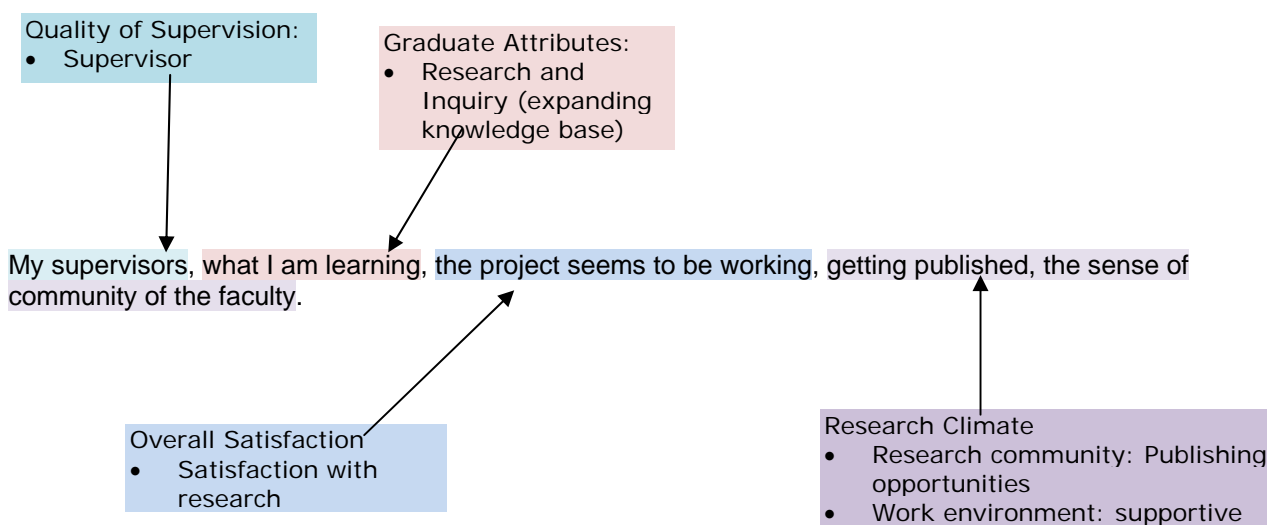
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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<sup>2</sup>*, 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 (Supervisor); Graduate Attributes (Research and Inquiry); Overall Satisfaction (Satisfaction with research) and Research Climate (Research community; Work environment), the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 5 aspects in one comment.



<sup>2</sup> Available from Quality Assurance Officer (Learning and Teaching)

## ATTACHMENT TWO: SREQ SCALES: COVERAGE OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DATA

The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon the items included in the nationally administered Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). These items have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales: Supervision, Climate, Infrastructure, and Generic Skills. These items, together with recurring themes in students' comments are used as the basis for categories, sub-categories and components for the analysis of qualitative data. This attachment lists the relevant survey items and sub-categories and components used in the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from the SREQ.

### 1 SUPERVISION SCALE/ QUALITY OF SUPERVISION

#### 1.1 SREQ Survey items

- 1 Supervision is available when I need it
- 5 My supervisor(s) make(s) a real effort to understand difficulties I face
- 13 My supervisor(s) provide(s) me with additional information relevant to my topic
- 18 I am given good guidance in topic selection and refinement
- 22 My supervisor(s) provide(s) helpful feedback on my progress
- 26 I have received good guidance in my literature search
- 36 Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my supervision

#### 1.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 4 sub-categories within *Quality of Supervision*, against which students' comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research student experience of Supervision. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments:

- Supervisor(s) (*supervisor/ associate supervisor; usefulness of sessions with; availability and frequency of meetings with; feedback on work; understanding and empathy*)
- Supervision processes within faculty (*general comments on supervision; evaluation of supervisors by faculty; training*)
- Management of Candidature (*guidance on thesis, literature review; topic etc; workload; progress reports*)
- IP and plagiarism

### 2 INFRASTRUCTURE SCALE/ QUALITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE

#### 2.1 SREQ Survey items

- 2 I have access to a suitable working space
- 6 I have good access to the technical support I need
- 10 I have access to a common room or a similar type of meeting place
- 12 I am able to organise good access to necessary equipment
- 19 I have good access to computing facilities and services
- 28 There is appropriate financial support for research activities
- 35 Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the services and facilities

#### 2.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 7 sub-categories within *Quality of Infrastructure*, against which students' comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Administration (*enrolment and admission; communication between faculty and students; general comments on administration (faculty and university); postgraduate coordinator*)
- Facilities (*common room; workspace, buildings, etc; computer hardware and software; equipment; transport and parking*)
- Finance and funding (*funding for resources, equipment etc; scholarships and grants; travel grants*)
- Research resources (*provided by faculty; provided by internal and external libraries and archive centres*)
- Student support services (*Ethics Office; Research Office; International Office etc*)
- Support (*IT; technical; laboratory*)
- Resource issues that affect students' overall experience (*under-resourced infrastructure at a faculty level*)

### 3 CLIMATE SCALE/ RESEARCH CLIMATE

#### 3.1 SREQ Survey items

- 3 The department / school provides opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students  
8 I feel integrated into the department's / school's community  
15 The department / school provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture  
16 I feel that other postgraduate students in my department / school are supportive  
20 I tend to feel isolated within this department / school  
23 Interaction with other postgraduate students is actively encouraged in this department / school  
24 A good seminar program for postgraduate students is provided  
25 The research ambience in the department / school or faculty stimulates my work  
29 I feel that this department / school provides a supportive working environment  
31 I feel respected as a fellow researcher within my department / school

#### 3.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 7 sub-categories within *Research Climate*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the student experience of the prevailing research climate within the faculty. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

- Social inclusion (*cultural diversity; equity, discrimination, and harassment*)
- Research community (*internal and external to faculty (general comments; faculty seminars, workshops, and discussion groups; networking/ collaborating; participation in conferences; opportunities for and encouragement to publish)*)
- Work environment (*challenging and stimulating; induction/ orientation programme; integration into faculty/ department/ school; isolation (emotional); respect as fellow researcher; supportive environment; support for part-time, distance, students*)
- Interaction with other research higher degree students (*academic; social; support of peers*)
- Location and physical environment
- Interaction with industry partners e.g. ARC projects
- Career preparation (*academic (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing); general comments*)

### 4 GENERIC SKILLS SCALE/ GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

#### 4.1 SREQ Survey items

- 4 My research has further developed my problem-solving skills  
7 Doing my research has helped to develop my written communication skills  
9 I have learned to develop my ideas and present them in my written work  
11 As a result of my research, I have developed the ability to work collaboratively with other researchers  
14 My research has sharpened my analytical skills  
17 Doing my research has helped to develop my oral communication skills  
21 Doing my research has developed my ability to plan my own work  
27 As a result of my research I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems  
30 As a result of my research I have developed the ability to learn independently

#### 4.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 sub-categories within Graduate Attributes, against which students comments are analysed. These match the five main University Generic Graduate Attributes. The components of these sub-categories are allied to the skills and abilities for each attribute provided in the University policy framework for Graduate Attributes.

- Communication (*oral communication; written communication*)
- Ethical, social, professional understanding (*collaboration/ team work; ethical, social, cultural understanding; professional skills including academic*)
- Information literacy (*retrieval and use of information; computing skills e.g. using endnote, searching databases etc; referencing*)
- Personal and intellectual autonomy (*independent learning; planning own work; intellectually curious; new ways of thinking, etc*)
- Research and inquiry (*analytical, critical, problem solving; expanding knowledge base; creativity and imagination; statistical skills; research skills*)

## 5 OVERALL SATISFACTION

### 5.1 SREQ Survey item

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

### 5.2 Qualitative data analysis

There are 7 sub-categories within Overall Satisfaction. They represent the range of aspects of the postgraduate research student experience which are considered to have a major influence on the quality of the research degree experience, and which are not covered elsewhere.

- General comments
- Quality of degree/ program (*length; inclusion of coursework, etc*)
- Pressure to complete (*i.e. within time frame set by APA conditions etc*)
- Satisfaction with research (*topic, contribution to field*)
- Flexibility of the program (*freedom to follow own research; choose own topics; compared to undergraduate degree; flexible working hours*)
- Practical aspects of the degree (*field work, interviews etc*)
- Reputation/ prestige of university/ faculty/ department/ academic staff
- Staffing issues and resources