



The University of Sydney

Sydney College of the Arts

Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report (Research Higher Degree Students)

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*

November 2009

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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 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.

55 respondents (49 domestic; 6 international) to the SREQ provided comments on areas of best practice; 52 (46 domestic; 6 international) suggested improvements.

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

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale have remained consistently in the low to mid 70s percentage agreement since 2005. The current score of 73% is higher than the 2007 score (70%). The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%. In 2008, domestic students rated their experience of supervision higher than their international counterparts, reversing the results from 2007.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 29% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 7% appreciated the freedom to pursue their own research and the flexibility of their working hours.
- Sample comment: *"Supervision: person to be accountable to, to prompt reconsideration of ideas, and to assist with contacts and resources"*

Suggested improvements

- 23% of respondents to the SREQ, and who provided written observations suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- The majority of these (21%) 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.
- Sample comment: *"supervisory relationships could be better"*

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

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

FACULTY SCORES

After reaching a high score of 74% in 2003, Faculty scores in the Infrastructure Scale have declined steadily, and currently sit at 58%. The University average for this scale is 64%. In 2008, the percentage agreement score for domestic students was 60%; and for international students 47%, continuing the trend of the past four years.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 64% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 33% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided by the Faculty (studio space; equipment; computers); whilst 22% were happy with library services and the availability of relevant electronic journals and databases.
- Sample comment: *"The studio facilities are highly commendable as well as afterhours access. The workshop facilities at SCA are equally so - the machinery available makes projects less time consuming"*

Suggested improvements

- 96% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships (21%)
 - Physical facilities, including: studio space; computer resources; and equipment (52%)
 - IT and technical support (10%)
 - Library services and resources (6%)
 - Administration (8%)
- Sample comment: *"Computer access for research from own computer. Having full and unlimited upload/download abilities. Larger space for research students' studios and alone?"*

Research Climate (Section 3, pp 16 – 18)

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 54% agreement for the Climate Scale is the highest since 2004 (55%), and represents an increase of 4% on the 2007 score. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%. Domestic students continue to rate their experience significantly higher than their international counterparts.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 58% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 25% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students
- 15% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 13% of respondents
- Sample comment: *"Opportunities to be involved with senior artists and facilitators in my field. Opportunity to discuss issues with other post-graduates. This enables me to focus on understanding the theoretical underpinnings of my practice"*

Suggested improvements

- 54% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- 13% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students
- Opportunities for networking and collaborative projects; together with participation in the research culture of the faculty, and a change in the focus of seminars, would be appreciated by 17% of respondents.
- 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 also no community created, and no chance for critical engagement with my colleagues, as we do not meet"*

Generic Skills (Section 4, pp 19 – 21)

FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale currently sit at 70% agreement. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%. Domestic students continue to rate this area of their experience higher than their international counterparts

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 13% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills; expanding their knowledge base; and developing the skill to work independently
- Sample comment: *"Being able to refine my ideas/concepts at a higher level. Learning to articulate my ideas"*

Suggested improvements

- 8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in writing for international students.
- Sample comment: *"Need more participation from the department to help with the writing, as I have received no guidance for this aspect of my research so far"*

Overall Satisfaction (Section 5, pp 22 – 23)

FACULTY SCORES

After the low of 62% agreement recorded in 2007, faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item increased to 79% in 2008. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. Domestic students rated this area of their experience higher than international students.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 24% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (22% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.
- Sample comment: *"It is a privilege to be able to undertake research in this environment. My research has led me to unexpected findings"*

Suggested improvements

- 13% of respondents were dissatisfied with their overall degree experience; the degree itself; the quality of staff; and the calibre of fellow research higher degree students
- Sample comment: *"Quality of research candidates is low. Many research students are not active in their engagement with contemporary ideas in their research field"*

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November 2009

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Glossary

The following terms and phrases are used throughout the report

SREQ	Student Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to postgraduate research students annually, during second semester
PREQ	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates in the year after completion of studies
Supervision Scale Infrastructure Scale Climate Scale Generic Skills Scale	The University of Sydney Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ) is based upon the items included in the nationally administered Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ). These items have been shown to cluster together to form factor scales: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision • Climate • Infrastructure • Generic Skills <p>Within the report, this naming convention is used to identify information relating to the analysis of the quantitative data (survey items)</p>
Faculty Scores Percentage agreement	SREQ item responses are combined and reported in terms of the proportions of students who agreed or disagreed that their research higher degree experience was positive in the areas of: Supervision; Generic Skills; Infrastructure; Climate; and Overall Satisfaction
Qualitative data Focus of written observations	Students' written observations received in response to open ended questions in the SREQ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the best aspects of your research higher degree experience? Please explain why these aspects are good • What aspects are most in need of improvement? Please explain why
Percentage of comments received	The number of times an aspect is mentioned within written observations of respondents received from respondents is presented as a percentage of the total number of comments received from respondents to the SREQ in any particular year.

Conceptual framework

Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ)

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

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

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

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

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

Focus of the Report

Based on the answers to the SREQ, this report seeks to provide an analysis of observable trends in the postgraduate research student experience in the Sydney College of the Arts between 2002 and 2008. The report also provides detailed information on the key issues highlighted in the analysis of the 2008 SREQ qualitative data.

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

Focus of written observations from respondents

By examining the foci of the students' comments in the 2008 SREQ, this report seeks to highlight areas that were of best practice in the students' experience, together with those that have been suggested as areas of improvement.

The views of the research higher degree students, on their overall experience at the University, as received through the open response comments, are a valuable insight into what is important to them; what they consider to be areas of best practice; and what they consider are in need improvement.

It is important to remember, when looking at the results of the analysis of this data, that the absence of favourable comments on a particular aspect of learning and teaching does not reflect that this is not an area of best practice. Rather, it could be interpreted that the students were happy with their experiences, and prefer to focus on commenting about areas in need of improvement.

Notes

1 Quantitative data analysis

Minimum sample size for reporting

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

Number of respondents to the SREQ 2002 – 2008³

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	30	36	45	45	38	46	65
International students	0	6	7	5	10	7	9
Overall	30	42	52	50	48	53	74

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				41	36	44	49
International	28	41	48	1	6	6	6
Total				42	42	50	55

Suggested improvements	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				38	32	39	46
International	27	38	43	1	9	6	6
Total				39	41	45	52

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

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

3 Reliability of quantitative and qualitative data

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

Quantitative and qualitative data: Where the number of respondents is less than 5 results are excluded from the report as they are unlikely to be reliable.

- Percentage agreement results are shown for domestic students and overall results only (2002)
- Results of the qualitative analysis are expressed as the percentage of comments received from ALL respondents to the SREQ (2005)

Quantitative 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

Qualitative data only: Where the number of respondents who have supplied written observations on their experiences is between 5 and 10, results are excluded from the report as they lie within the lower range of statistics that should be viewed with caution.

- Results of the qualitative analysis are expressed as the percentage of comments received from ALL respondents to the SREQ (2006 – 2008)

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 Sydney College of the Arts on 03.11.09 <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:

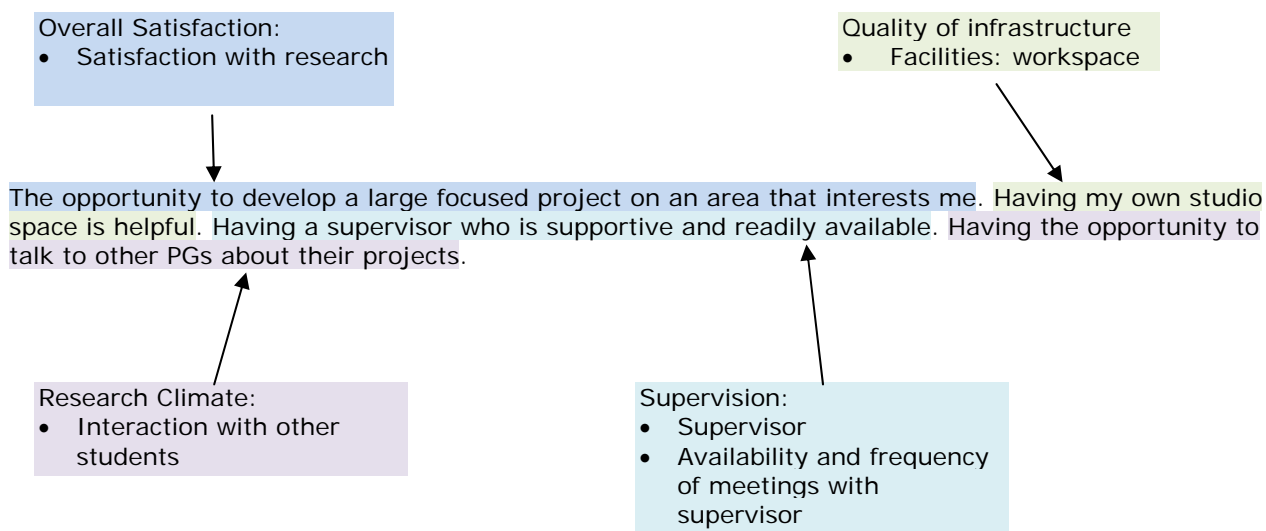
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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 Overall Satisfaction (Satisfaction with research); Quality of Infrastructure (Facilities: workspace); Research Climate (Interaction with other students); and Supervision (Supervisor; Availability and frequency of meetings with supervisor) the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 5 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 low to mid 70s percentage agreement since 2005. The current score of 73% is higher than the 2007 score (70%). The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%. In 2008, domestic students rated their experience of supervision higher than their international counterparts, reversing the results from 2007.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 29% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey expressed satisfaction with their supervisor and/or co-supervisors
- 7% 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
- The majority of these (21%) 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.

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.

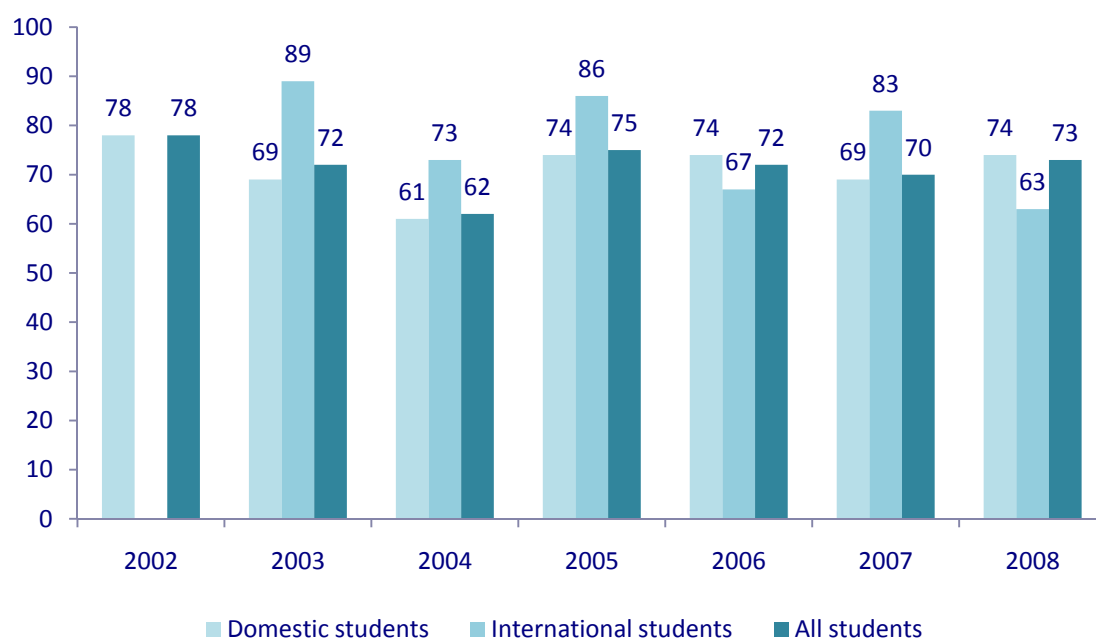


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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, providing an indication of trends in the focus of the students' comments relating to the Quality of Supervision between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	36%	27%	52%	38%	45%	46%	42%
Suggested improvements	11%	21%	23%	23%	17%	18%	23%

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

1.3.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n= 55)
Supervision	
- Satisfied with performance of supervisor(s)	29%
- Supervisor(s) available for regular meetings	
- Supervisor(s) provide feedback on work	
Flexibility of program	
- Freedom to pursue own research interests appreciated	7%
- Flexibility of working hours appreciated	

All
(n= 55)

Sample comments

- *The freedom to explore things that are relevant to my research*
- *Having a supervisor who is supportive and readily available*
- *Good supervision team, who cover the different aspects of my research very well*
- *Having a very supportive supervisor who leads more by what he does not say allowing me to really see for myself*
- *My supervisor is really supportive, understands what I am trying to do, and stretches my brain when I need it*
- *No restrictions upon what I am researching, gives me the freedom to explore specific issues that are of interest*

1.3.2 Suggested improvements

All
(n=52)

Supervision

- Performance of supervisor(s) unsatisfactory
 - Supervisor(s) unavailable for regular meetings
 - Supervisor(s) do not provide feedback on work
 - Process for evaluating supervisor performance suggested
- 21%

Sample comments

- *I understand that acting as a supervisor is a huge task. I can only speak on behalf of my own experiences in my own faculty, but the dedication of supervisors is less than expected*
- *With supervision students need to feel they have equal footing to agree and disagree*
- *Supervisor not prepared for PhD students*
- *making sure [staff] are skilled enough to properly supervise PhD candidates would help*
- *I never quite knew how to get information regarding the requirements of my course. It was in conversation with others that I gained this information, knowledge of documents and guidelines*

2 Quality of Infrastructure

Coverage

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

SREQ Survey items

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

Qualitative data analysis

There are 5 sub-categories within *Quality of Infrastructure*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the research students' perceptions of the quality of infrastructure. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

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

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

After reaching a high score of 74% in 2003, Faculty scores in the Infrastructure Scale have declined steadily, and currently sit at 58%. The University average for this scale is 64%. In 2008, the percentage agreement score for domestic students was 60%; and for international students 47%, continuing the trend of the past four years.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 64% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 33% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided by the Faculty (studio space; equipment; computers); whilst 22% were happy with library services and the availability of relevant electronic journals and databases.

Suggested improvements

- 96% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
 - Funding and scholarships (21%)
 - Physical facilities, including: studio space; computer resources; and equipment (52%)
 - IT and technical support (10%)
 - Library services and resources (6%)
 - Administration (8%)

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.

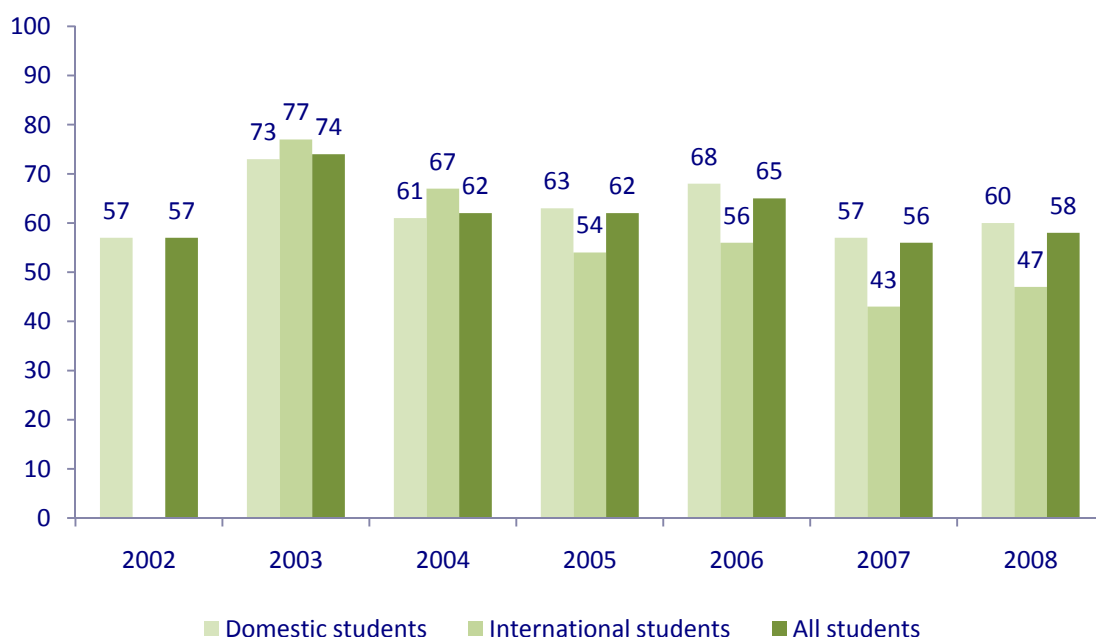


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 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	43%	44%	31%	50%	67%	42%	64%
Suggested improvements	70%	37%	74%	77%	46%	87%	96%

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

2.3.1 Areas of best practice

All (n=55)	
Facilities	
- Computers are provided by faculty	33%
- Workspace, office, provided by faculty	
- Equipment provided is up to date and functional	
Research resources	
- Research resources are provided by faculty	22%
- Library services satisfactory	

All (n=55)

Sample comments

- *The studio facilities are highly commendable as well as afterhours access. The workshop facilities at SCA are equally so - the machinery available makes projects less time consuming*
- *I was fortunate to have light filled studios. Weekend and late access is good*
- *It was fantastic to have a scholarship this year which allowed me to focus on my work*
- *Access to research literature library/journals to obtain literature relevant to topic*
- *technical staff are excellent*
- *digital equipment & computers and software that are available*

2.3.2 Suggested improvements

All (n=52)

Finance and funding

- | | |
|--|-----|
| - Funding for research unavailable | 21% |
| - Scholarships unavailable or unsatisfactory | |
| - PRSS, APA provisions unsatisfactory | |

Facilities

- | | |
|--|-----|
| - Computers/ internet access unsatisfactory | 52% |
| - Studio space unsatisfactory | |
| - Equipment provided is not up to date or functional | |
| - Would like a postgraduate common room | |

Support

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| - Technical support not provided | 10% |
|----------------------------------|-----|

Administration

- | | |
|--|----|
| - Faculty administration unsatisfactory | 8% |
| - Lack of communication between faculty and students | |

Research resources

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| - Research resources not available | 6% |
| - Library services unsatisfactory | |

Sample comments

- *I have been forced to pay for outside courses to learn things that are taught at SCA and hire equipment outside, and use outside printing bureaus at considerable cost because of the lack of professionalism and limited nature of the facilities and services at SCA*
- *24hr access to studio facilities because I normally work/research from 4am and generally can't use the studio facilities at the time they are open during the week (9 - midnight).*
- *Access to a list of what equipment is available in the University, - like a catalogue with responsible officers - because there is unnecessary duplication and expense and difficulty finding what is available for research purposes*
- *Newer computers in postgraduate building (#11 SCA campus). They are very slow. Better printers are needed too, you have to swipe your card too much*
- *It is completely ridiculous that both art libraries (SCA and Schaeffer) are closed on the weekend. Last year I was working and couldn't make it to the library and found it supremely difficult to deal with them both. Phone enquiries are a joke. I've never been put on such a run around*
- *Communication between staff and students as to new techniques and services available on campus*

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/ discrimination
- Preparation for academia (e.g. availability of tutoring, lecturing)
- Location and physical environment

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 54% agreement for the Climate Scale is the highest since 2004 (55%), and represents an increase of 4% on the 2007 score. The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%. Domestic students continue to rate their experience significantly higher than their international counterparts.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 58% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 25% valued the opportunities to interact with other research higher degree students
- 15% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 13% of respondents

Suggested improvements

- 54% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- 13% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students
- Opportunities for networking; together with participation in the research culture of the faculty, and a change in the focus of seminars, would be appreciated by 17% of respondents.
- The lack of a supportive work environment 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.

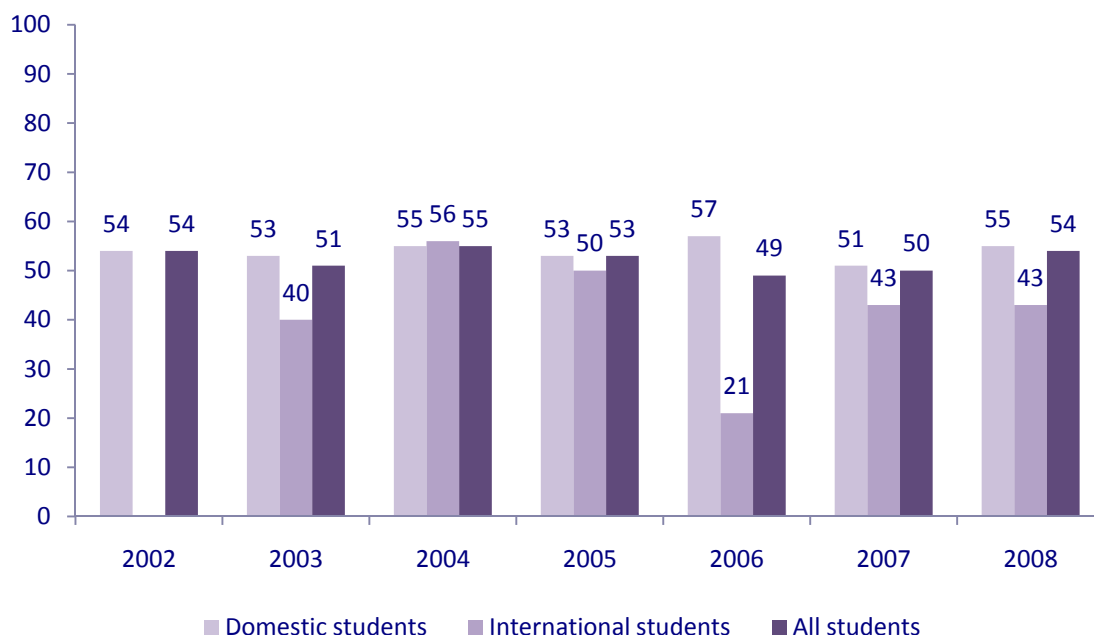


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 students’ comments relating to the prevailing research climate in the faculty between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	61%	51%	48%	60%	71%	46%	58%
Suggested improvements	63%	61%	47%	62%	83%	56%	54%

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

3.3.1 Areas of best practice

		All (n=55)
Interaction with other research students		
-	Opportunities are provided to discuss research with other students	25%
-	Opportunities are provided for social contact with other students	
-	Other students are supportive	
Research culture		
-	Opportunities provided to participate at conferences	15%
-	Networking opportunities available	
-	Feel part of a research community	
-	Seminar program provided by faculty	

All (n=55)

Work environment

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research ambience stimulating, challenging - Satisfactory induction or orientation programme is provided - 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 | 13% |
|---|-----|

Sample comments

- *Opportunities to be involved with senior artists and facilitators in my field. Opportunity to discuss issues with other post-graduates. This enables me to focus on understanding the theoretical underpinnings of my practice*
- *I enjoyed the first year seminar program because it provided an overview of the different projects others were working on, there was a generosity of spirit between peers when it came to feedback, and different methodologies/approaches to producing a thesis were discussed*
- *Access to fellow postgraduates within the college yet from separate departments has made my time in the Masters degree much more enjoyable and stimulating intellectually*
- *Interacting with other students. Post graduated and under graduates. An integral approach in my research*
- *Having the opportunity to talk to other PGs about their projects*
- *Faculty is very supportive and available and knowledgeable*

3.3.2 Suggested improvements

All (n=52)

Interaction with other research students

- | | |
|--|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities are not provided to discuss research with other students - Opportunities are not provided for social contact with other students - Other students are not supportive | 13% |
|--|-----|

Research culture

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunities not provided to participate at conferences - Networking opportunities unavailable - Do not feel part of a research community - Seminar program not provided by faculty | 17% |
|---|-----|

Work environment

- | | |
|---|-----|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research ambience is not stimulating, challenging - Induction or orientation programme is not provided - Do not feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department - Are not respected as a fellow researcher - Support is not provided for students - Supportive work environment not present | 15% |
|---|-----|

Sample comments

- *Community, both in department and field of research. Department does not integrate with the outside world or organise conferences*
- *More opportunities to meet with fellow postgraduate students and to have seminars/critiques/discussions in small groups*
- *The weekly seminar program is too formal, and does not foster critical discussion of our work amongst ourselves. We are lumped together with Masters students whose projects don't approach the scale of ours so their input is limited*
- *Not enough involvement between the disciplines - no orientation program exists*
- *More off-campus group activities. To integrate the different departments which feel quite segregated*
- *I have a sense that PG's are of no value to the school, and yet we are a wonderful resource at SCA in terms of our abilities and input and this is not supported*

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

Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale currently sit at 70% agreement. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%. Domestic students continue to rate this area of their experience higher than their international counterparts

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 13% of respondents who answered the open questions in the survey considered that they were developing relevant generic skills; expanding their knowledge base; and developing the skill to work independently

Suggested improvements

- 8% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with this area of their experience, including: oral and written communication skills; organisational skills; research skills; and help in writing 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.

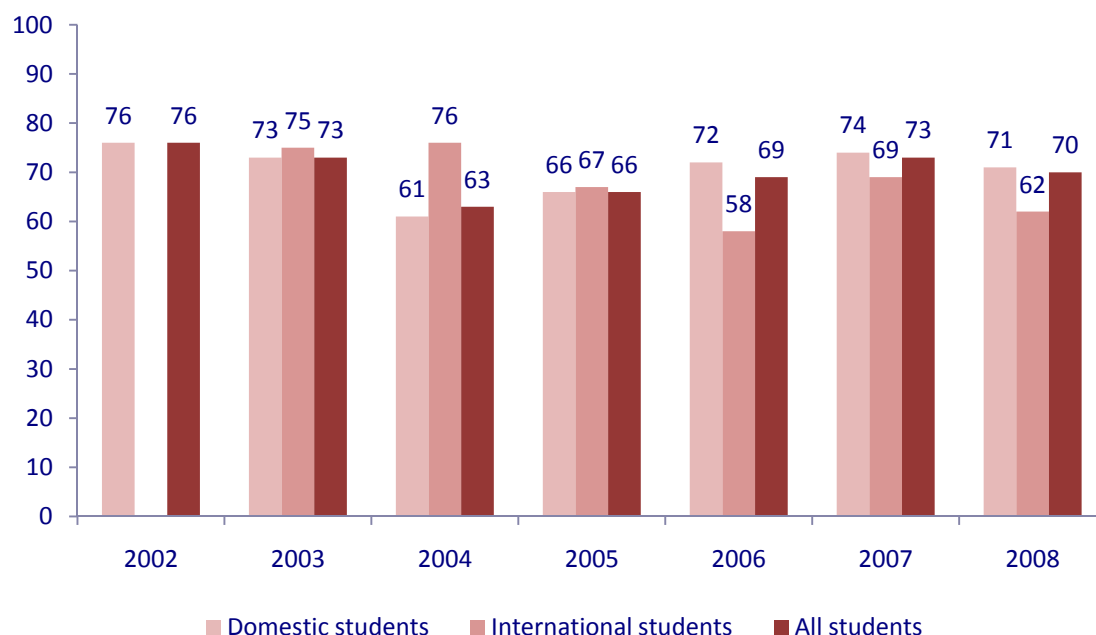


Figure 4: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	7%	29%	21%	10%	26%	28%	13%
Suggested improvements	4%	11%	0%	3%	15%	2%	8%

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

4.2.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n=55)
Expand knowledge base	7%
- Knowledge of topic has increased	
- Aware of further issues related to research topic	

Sample comments

- *Making students be confident. This research higher degree helps us to build and organize what we need. I guess higher degree studying is the process of searching for answers. In that point the research degree is a very suitable course for people who want to reveal their intentions*
- *Being able to refine my ideas/concepts at a higher level. Learning to articulate my ideas*
- *Access to new technical skills*
- *Built confidence and independence*
- *a stronger understanding in practice through the research of the paper*
- *Access to libraries, on-line journals and critical feedback. This enables me to make organised leaps in knowledge*

4.2.2 Suggested improvements

8% of students (i.e. 4/52 comments received) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in relation to the development of graduate attributes.

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

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 4 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
- Quality of staff (i.e. not supervisors)
- Quality of students
- Satisfaction with research (topic, contribution to field)

Summary

FACULTY SCORES

After the low of 62% agreement recorded in 2007, faculty scores for the Overall Satisfaction Item increased to 79% in 2008. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%. Domestic students rated this area of their experience higher than international students.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Areas of best practice

- 24% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (22% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.

Suggested improvements

- 13% of respondents were dissatisfied with their overall degree experience; the degree itself; the quality of staff; and the calibre of fellow research higher degree students

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.

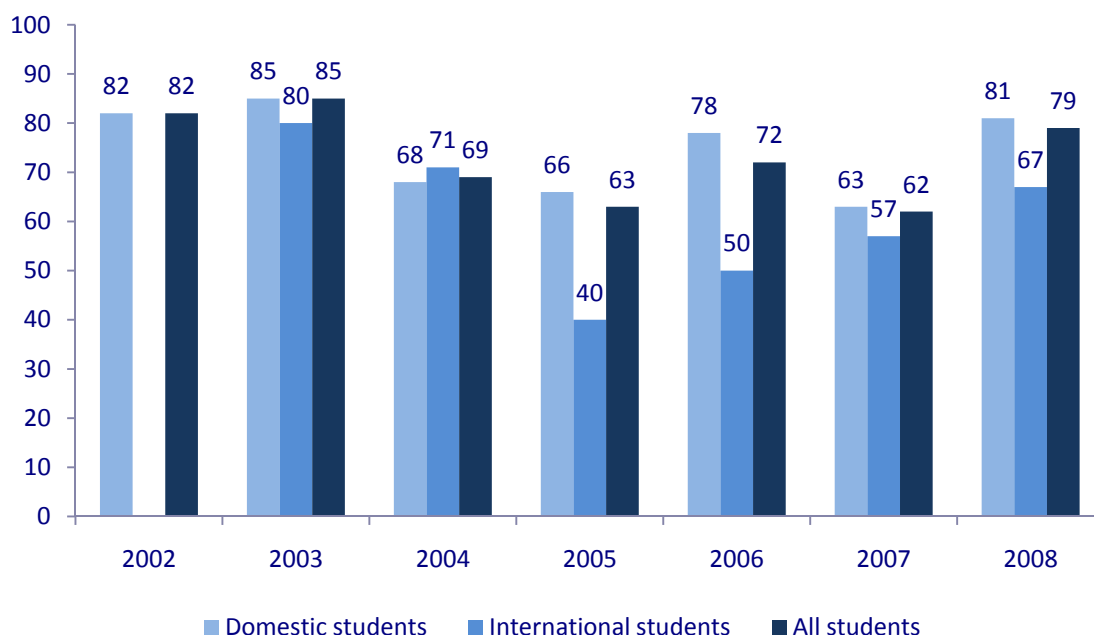


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

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 comments from research higher degree students' in relation to their overall satisfaction between 2002 and 2008.

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	25%	15%	27%	17%	12%	26%	24%
Suggested improvements	15%	29%	9%	13%	7%	7%	13%

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

5.2.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n= 55)
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Satisfaction with research

- Research topic will contribute to field 22%
- Researching topic that have always been interested in
- Research is worthwhile

All (n= 55)

Sample comments

- *It has laid down a foundation for me to ask more questions that relate to personal interests and ideas I have about the world, things I see and want to talk about in my creative arts practice. The theory has given me the perspective I need to understand a contemporary artist's mindset*
- *Pursuing my dream and doing something I am passionate about*
- *The opportunity to develop a large focused project on an area that interests me*
- *The best aspects of my research are: I love my work both the art and the thesis and I get to do it with funding by University of Sydney*
- *Technical sharpening - ability to investigate new technical parameters and how the technical works with the conceptual framework in relation to my Research topic*
- *It is a privilege to be able to undertake research in this environment. My research has led me to unexpected findings*

5.2.3 Suggested improvements

13% of students (i.e. 7/52 comments received) who responded to the SREQ expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of the degree; the quality of non-supervisory staff; and the calibre of fellow postgraduate research students.

Sample comments

- *Tutors and supervisors! There needs to be a restructuring of the way that art is taught at SCA. Artists need access to a variety of different tutors especially PRACTICING artists and researchers*
- *Quality of research candidates is low. Many research students are not active in their engagement with contemporary ideas in their research field*
- *Many of the PhD candidates seem lost within their topic and aren't stimulating in seminars. Many of the artists aren't connected with the exhibiting community and don't seem to be making work connected to contemporary issues. Their lack of engagement has come up time and time again in groups and if given critical feedback they seem to feel personally attacked (this is not true of the small group of engaged students). I've been shocked that some of these people have got to this level.*
- *Re-examination of chapters and how they sit in the overall picture*
- *Having been to XXX in my undergraduate years, I enjoyed the use of highly professional and well organised and resourced technical assistance that they offer there. SCA is well behind this which is embarrassing if they want to present as a teaching facility of any standard*
- *the quality of the staff*