



# The University of Sydney

## Sydney Conservatorium of Music

### The Research Training Experience (Research Higher Degree Students)

### Student Research Experience Questionnaire Report

#### *Includes:*

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

#### *With attachment:*

#### Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (2006 – 2008)

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

September 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 groupings<sup>1</sup>:

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

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

#### FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Supervision Scale have declined steadily since the beginning of the SREQ, with the current score of 67% agreement being the lowest recorded. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

##### *Areas of best practice*

- 28% 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: *"Excellent supervision - critical feedback helped focus research"*

##### *Suggested improvements*

- 24% of respondents to the SREQ, and who provided written observations suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- The majority of comments (20%) were unhappy with various aspects of their supervision, including: the supervisor(s); feedback on their work; and availability and frequency of meetings
- Sample comment: *"A more clearly defined role for the co-supervisor would be useful; I have never met mine and am not sure whether he knows that I have been allocated to him!"*

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<sup>1</sup> Please contact Rachel Symons ([r.symons@usyd.edu.au](mailto:r.symons@usyd.edu.au) or 9351 6560) to discuss your requirements.

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

### FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have remained in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile since 2003. The current score of 57% agreement is higher than the previous two years (2006: 55%; 2007: 52%), and identical to the 2005 score. The University average for this scale is 64%.

### QUALITATIVE DATA

#### *Areas of best practice*

- 21% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the services and resources provided by the Conservatorium library.
- The remaining comments were evenly divided between funding and facilities (5% each)
- Sample comment: *"Library. Library on the web and associated electronic resources. Powerful, wide reaching, good content"*

#### *Suggested improvements*

- 58% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
  - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; and funding for conferences; (8%)
  - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources; and instruments (22%)
  - Library resources (10%)
  - Administration, including: communication, and enrolment
- Sample comment: *"The Conservatorium of Music has no piano which can adequately perform music between 1800 and 1850 in a way recognizable by the composer - no piano (or copy based on) made between those dates. Consequently, research into historically accurate performance is impossible, without extensive personal resources"*

## Research Climate (Section 3, pp 16 – 18)

### FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 47% agreement for the Climate Scale represents an increase of 6% on the 2006 and 2007 scores of 41%, and is the highest since 2005 (45%). The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

### QUALITATIVE DATA

#### *Areas of best practice*

- 42% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 18% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 19% of respondents
- Sample comment: *"The environment in my department is very good for my research. I feel very inspired whenever I do get the chance to do my work at the department"*

#### *Suggested improvements*

- 60% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 28% of comments received.
- Opportunities for networking and collaborative projects; together with participation in the research culture of the faculty and an improvement in seminars would be appreciated by 16% of respondents.
- 14% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students
- Sample comment: *"Collegiality with other staff and students needs improving to foster a keen and active research culture"*

## **Generic Skills** (Section 4, pp 19 – 20)

### FACULTY SCORES

At 70%, Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale are identical to the previous year, and higher than the 2006 score of 66%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

### QUALITATIVE DATA

#### *Areas of best practice*

- 12% of respondents indicated in their answers to the open questions that their graduate attributes were being enhanced, they were developing research skills, they were expanding their knowledge base, and that they were learning to work independently,
- Sample comment: "*Development of critical thinking and independent planning and development of ideas*"

#### *Suggested improvements*

- No respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience.

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

### FACULTY SCORES

The current Faculty score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 75%, which is the second highest since commencement of the SREQ. The previous highest was 77% in 2006. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%.

### QUALITATIVE DATA

#### *Areas of best practice*

- 28% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (21% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.
- Sample comment: "*The opportunity to experience the variety to semester topics. Open whole new learning experience for me*"

#### *Suggested improvements*

- 8% of respondents were dissatisfied with the range of coursework offered and the lack of performance opportunities within the degree
- Sample comment: "*Master Music (composition) degrees must be required to have a public recital. Music is written on paper, but does not come to life without performance. I feel disappointed that this is not a part of the course*"

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September 2009

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## 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>PREQ</b>	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire Administered to graduates in the year after completion of studies
<b>Supervision Scale</b> <b>Infrastructure Scale</b> <b>Climate Scale</b> <b>Generic Skills Scale</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>• Climate</li><li>• Infrastructure</li><li>• Generic Skills</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>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</b> <b>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.

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

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

### Focus of written observations from respondents

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

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

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

### Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) 2006-2008

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

## Notes

### 1 Quantitative data analysis

#### *Minimum sample size for reporting*

The minimum recommended sample size for SREQ reporting is 20 valid responses. This is the same convention applied to reporting the CEQ and SCEQ. In aggregated degrees where less than 20 valid responses have been received a report is still provided however a warning message notes that the results should be interpreted with caution<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Number of respondents to the SREQ 2002 – 2008<sup>3</sup>*

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic students	17	57	56	57	41	45	65
International students	0	2	1	2	3	3	3
Overall	17	59	57	59	44	48	68

### 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				53	36	42	55
International	17	55	51	0	2	2	2
Total				53	38	44	57

Suggested improvements	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=	n=
Domestic				48	34	37	49
International	17	51	43	0	2	2	1
Total				48	36	39	50

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.

- KPI linked results are shown for domestic students and overall results only
- Results of the qualitative analysis are expressed as the percentage of comments received from ALL respondents to the CEQ

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

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

<sup>3</sup> Data retrieved from the ITL SREQ website results and reports for the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 03.08.09 <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 Engineering and Information Technologies, YYY or ZZZ.

### 4 Analysis of comments

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

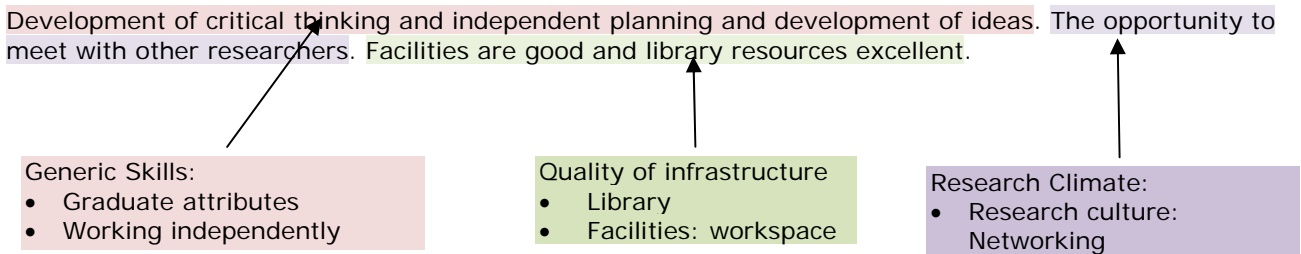
- Characteristics that define the area of the student experience
- SREQ survey items
- recurring themes in students' comments and have been developed over many years of analysing qualitative data from students' surveys.

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*<sup>4</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 Research Climate (Research culture: Networking); Generic Skills (Graduate Attributes and Working independently) and Quality of Infrastructure (Library; Physical facilities); the highlighted phrases within the comment are counted ONCE in each of the relevant categories i.e. 5 aspects in one comment.



<sup>4</sup> 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 declined steadily since the beginning of the SREQ, with the current score of 67% agreement being the lowest recorded. The University average for the Supervision Scale is 75%.

### QUALITATIVE DATA

#### *Areas of best practice*

- 28% 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*

- 24% of respondents to the SREQ, and who provided written observations suggested improvements to this area of their experience
- The majority of comments (20%) were unhappy with various aspects of their supervision, including: the supervisor(s); feedback on their work; and availability and frequency of meetings

## 1.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

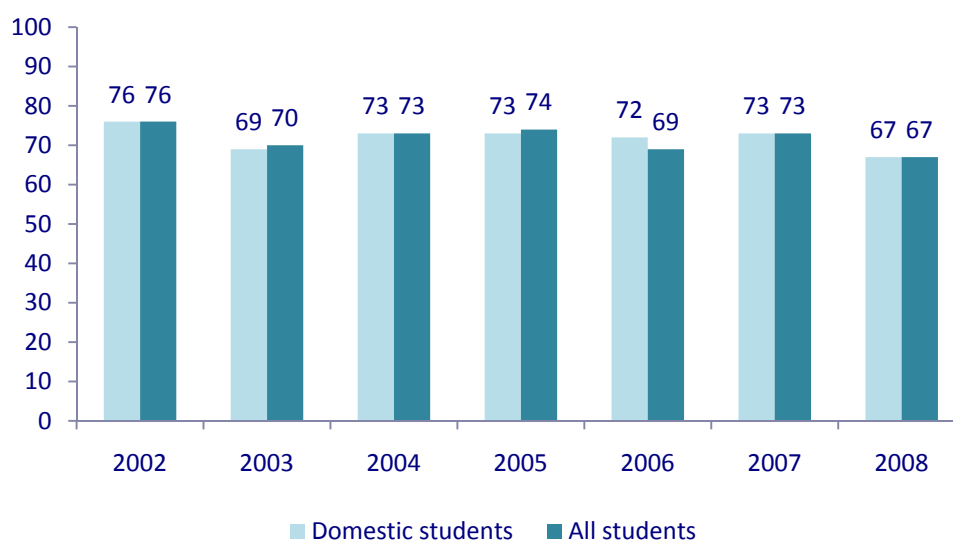


Figure 1: SREQ Supervision Scale: percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

## 1.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	29%	40%	20%	47%	53%	45%	40%
Suggested improvements	24%	29%	28%	23%	28%	31%	24%

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

### 1.3.1 Areas of best practice

	All (n= 57 )
<b>Supervision</b>	
- Satisfied with performance of supervisor(s)	28%
- Supervisor(s) available for regular meetings	
- Supervisor(s) provide feedback on work	
<b>Flexibility of program</b>	
- Freedom to pursue own research interests appreciated	7%
- Flexibility of working hours appreciated	
<b>Sample comments</b>	
- <i>My supervisor is very helpful and supportive, while still providing necessary criticism in a constructive manner</i>	
- <i>Excellent supervision- quality of supervisor, availability and feedback!</i>	
- <i>My supervisor is extremely supportive and goes beyond what she needs to in order to provide me with opportunities to develop and to pursue an academic career</i>	
- <i>Supervisor is helpful but also willing to stay in the background when stress levels make this advisable!</i>	
- <i>Flexibility of timeline of units studied which allows me to fit research around full time work commitments</i>	
- <i>Degree of autonomy in topic choice. It's a 100% creative field (music composition) to this is good.</i>	

### 1.3.2 Suggested improvements

All  
(n=50)

#### 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
- 20%

#### Sample comments: domestic students

- *1st Year supervisor- A few formal supervision sessions would be helpful even once a semester to help provide general focus and direction with program notes, Recital program and general research*
- *A more clearly defined role for the co-supervisor would be useful; I have never met mine and am not sure whether he knows that I have been allocated to him!*
- *Feedback from projects; supervisor out of touch, not helping*
- *No direct or topic specific supervision for first 2 semesters. Very unclear guides as to viable topics and desirable methods.*
- *More direct access to supervisor - like being able to telephone supervisor*
- *Difficult to find supervision*

## 2 Quality of Infrastructure

### Coverage

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

#### *SREQ Survey items*

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

#### *Qualitative data analysis*

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

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

### Summary

#### FACULTY SCORES

Faculty scores for the Infrastructure Scale have remained in the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile since 2003. The current score of 57% agreement is higher than the previous two years (2006: 55%; 2007: 52%), and identical to the 2005 score. The University average for this scale is 64%.

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

##### *Areas of best practice*

- 21% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their experience
- 9% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the services and resources provided by the Conservatorium library.
- The remaining comments were evenly divided between funding and facilities (5% each)

##### *Suggested improvements*

- 58% of respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience
- Comments were divided between:
  - Funding and scholarships, including: PRSS availability; and funding for conferences; (8%)
  - Physical facilities, including: office space; computer resources; and instruments (22%)
  - Library resources (10%)
  - Administration, including: communication, and enrolment

## 2.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

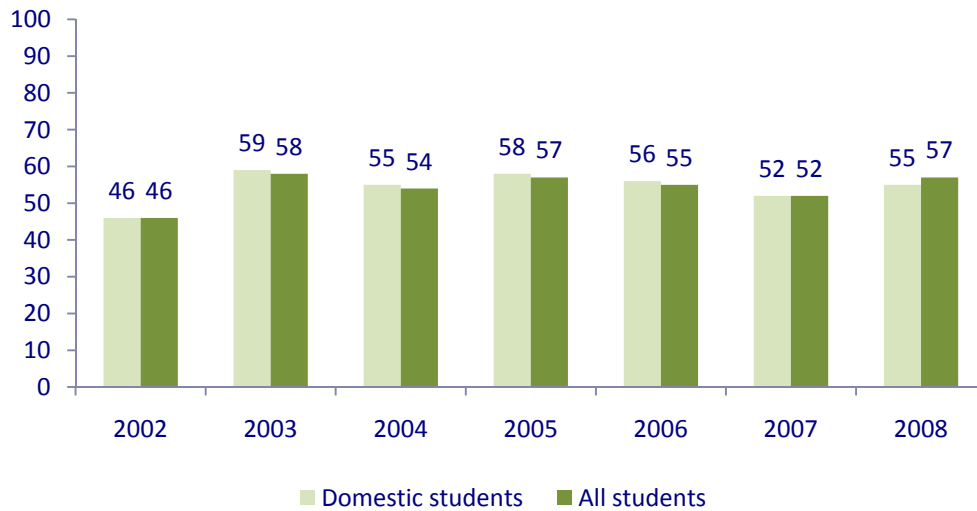


Figure 2: SREQ Infrastructure Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

## 2.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	29%	27%	14%	11%	34%	23%	21%
Suggested improvements	53%	45%	67%	60%	42%	51%	58%

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

### 2.3.1 Areas of best practice

All  
(n=57)

#### Research resources

- Research resources are provided by faculty
- Library services satisfactory

9%

#### Sample comments: domestic students

- *The facilities. The Conservatorium provides exceptional facilities. There is a quiet post-graduate room, many sound-proofed practice rooms and beautiful recital halls to record music in.*
- *UPA enables greater focus on studies rather than having to stack up working hours*
- *Library. Library on the web and associated electronic resources. Powerful, wide reaching, good content*
- *Ability to apply for PRSS and use it for research purposes*
- *The library CD's, books, online access to academic literature*
- *Facilities are good and library resources excellent*

## 2.3.2 Suggested improvements

	All (n=50)
<b>Finance and funding</b>	
- Funding for research unavailable	8%
- Scholarships unavailable or unsatisfactory	
- PRSS, APA provisions unsatisfactory	
<b>Facilities</b>	
- Computers are not provided by faculty	22%
- Workspace, office, not provided by faculty	
- Equipment provided is not up to date or functional	
- Would like a postgraduate common room	
<b>Research resources</b>	10%
- Library services unsatisfactory	
<b>Administration</b>	18%
- Administration unsatisfactory	
- Dissatisfied with enrolment procedures	
- Communication between faculty and students could be improved	
<b>Sample comments</b>	
- <i>Lack of communication on the administration side regarding organisation and paperwork. Process between change of supervisors is slow</i>	
- <i>Also communication between faculty and students is not that great either. Often emails get forwarded around and it's hard to know who is responsible for what</i>	
- <i>After hours access to audio/technological equipment, people and rehearsal space that doesn't necessitate extra cost to my department</i>	
- <i>Access to research materials. I discover a delay in some document deliveries and limited sources in the library causing a set back in the progress of my research</i>	
- <i>Had problems in transferring of information regarding funding opportunities. There was a few enrolment processes errors that occurred due to miscommunication between departments</i>	
- <i>Funding for research students is the better stages of their work (i.e. completion scholarships).</i>	

### 3 Research Climate

#### Coverage

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

#### *SREQ Survey items*

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

#### *Qualitative data analysis*

There are 6 sub-categories within *Research Climate*, against which students comments are analysed. Each of these sub-categories may be further broken down into relevant aspects (or components) of the student experience of the prevailing research climate within the faculty. The components of these sub-categories are based on the SREQ survey items together with recurring themes in students' comments.

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

#### Summary

##### FACULTY SCORES

The current score of 47% agreement for the Climate Scale represents an increase of 6% on the 2006 and 2007 scores of 41%, and is the highest since 2005 (45%). The University average for the Climate Scale was 59%.

##### QUALITATIVE DATA

###### *Areas of best practice*

- 42% of respondents who provided written observations on their experiences expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience.
- 18% felt part of a research community, and considered that this stimulated their work
- A supportive and welcoming work environment was experienced by 19% of respondents

###### *Suggested improvements*

- 60% of respondents were dissatisfied with this area of their experience
- The lack of a supportive work environment, and a feeling of isolation from staff and students within the faculty/ department was the focus of 28% of comments received.
- Opportunities for networking and collaborative projects; together with participation in the research culture of the faculty and an improvement in seminars would be appreciated by 16% of respondents.
- 14% thought that the more opportunities could be provided for interacting with their fellow students

### 3.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2004–2008

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

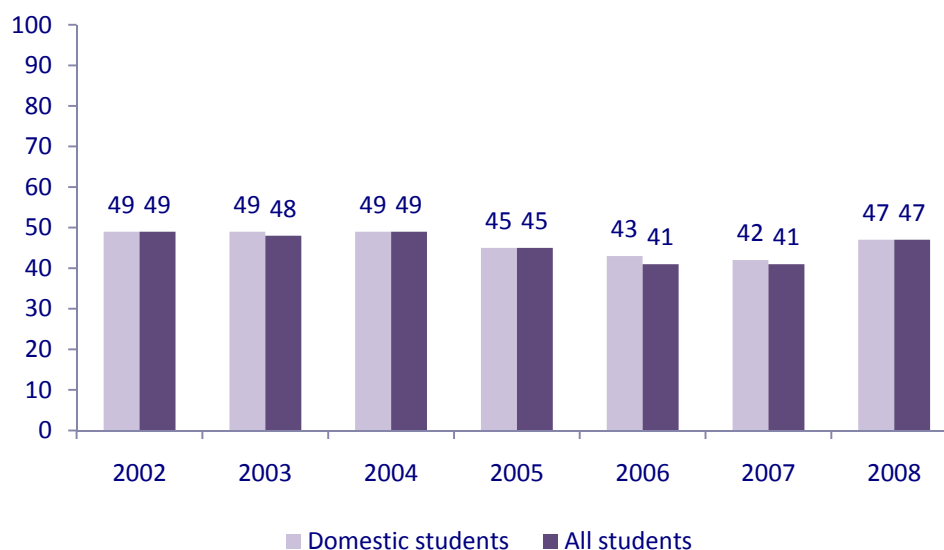


Figure 3: SREQ Climate Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

### 3.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	59%	51%	55%	26%	47%	34%	42%
Suggested improvements	29%	35%	56%	67%	64%	41%	60%

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

#### 3.3.1 Areas of best practice

All  
(n=57)

#### Research culture

- Opportunities provided to participate at conferences 18%
- Networking opportunities available
- Feel part of a research community
- Seminar program provided by faculty

#### Work environment

- Research ambience stimulating, challenging
- Satisfactory induction or orientation programme is provided 19%
- 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

All (n=57)
---------------

## Sample comments

- *Getting to meet people who are experts in my field through my supervisor*
- *being part of the research community*
- *Seminar taken on main campus with variety of students from other areas of study was mind-broadening and fun (as well as inspiring a potential PhD topic!). Introduction to Music Research seminar was interesting as all research students (even 'beginners' from performance etc) were enrolled which enabled wide debate - although unfortunately not always very well-informed*
- *The environment in my department is very good for my research. I feel very inspired whenever I do get the chance to do my work at the department*
- *Some very supportive staff members - can dig deeper into topic*
- *The students I meet everyday allow me to discuss and formulate ideas in order to stimulate further theoretical development in addressing my research topic. Sense of community*

## 3.3.2 Suggested improvements

All (n=50)
---------------

## Interaction with other research students

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| - Opportunities are not provided to discuss research with other students | 14% |
| - Opportunities are not provided for social contact with other students  |     |
| - Other students are not supportive                                      |     |

## Research culture

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| - Opportunities not provided to participate at conferences | 16% |
| - Networking opportunities unavailable                     |     |
| - Do not feel part of a research community                 |     |
| - Seminar program not provided by faculty                  |     |

## Work environment

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| - Research ambience is not stimulating, challenging                     |     |
| - Induction or orientation programme is not provided                    |     |
| - Do not feel part of / welcomed by the faculty/ department             | 28% |
| - Are not respected as a fellow researcher                              |     |
| - Support is not provided for students (especially part-time, external) |     |
| - Supportive work environment not present                               |     |

## Sample comments

- *Collegiality with other staff and students needs improving to foster a keen and active research culture*
- *In the absence of a more varied range of seminars available, clearer explanation of the options/ process/ benefits of taking a seminar on main campus would be helpful.*
- *I have not met any other composition students. It is isolating, I don't feel part of the Conservatorium community*
- *I feel there needs to be more opportunities to connect with staff members other than my supervisor. Generally more networking opportunities and public outcomes would be welcomed. More high level goals and opportunities set*
- *Better ways of coordinating post grad student body would be helpful; maybe an afternoon tea or something for everyone to get to know each other (at least by sight) or an optional sign-up mailing list would help students create their own sense of a junior research community?*
- *More concern from head of department and interest in what I am involved in my research*

## 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

At 70%, Faculty scores for the Generic Skills Scale are identical to the previous year, and higher than the 2006 score of 66%. The University average for the Generic Skills Scale is 79%.

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

##### *Areas of best practice*

- 12% of respondents indicated in their answers to the open questions that their graduate attributes were being enhanced, they were developing research skills, they were expanding their knowledge base, and that they were learning to work independently,

##### *Suggested improvements*

- No respondents suggested improvements in this area of their experience.

## 4.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

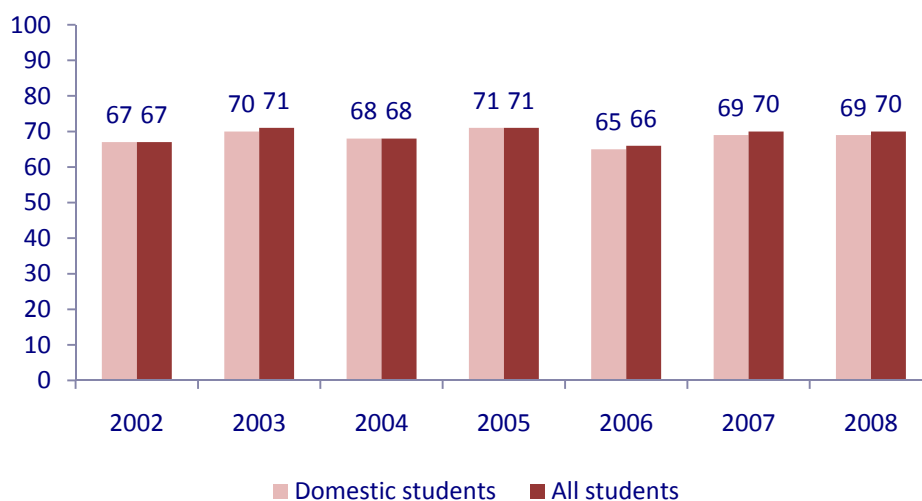


Figure 4: SREQ Generic Skills Scale: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

## 4.2 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	29%	44%	55%	23%	24%	18%	12%
Suggested improvements	18%	4%	5%	2%	6%	0%	0%

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

### 4.2.1 Areas of best practice

12% of students (i.e. 7 /57 comments received ) who responded to the SREQ indicated that their graduate attributes were being enhanced, they were developing research skills, they were expanding their knowledge base, and that they were learning to work independently.

#### Sample comments

- *Deepening the process of learning. Expanding knowledge*
- *Learning to write analytically - helped with thinking skills in my daily work*
- *Development of critical thinking and independent planning and development of ideas*
- *Having access to and learning how to manage the literature. Having access to HCS net. These help in an interdisciplinary field to make links with research that is otherwise not connected. Being forced to write/produce*
- *In depth research and analysis. Find answers to questions you did not realise existed*
- *Personal development*

### 4.2.2 Suggested improvements

No respondents provided evidence in the answers to the open questions that improvements were needed in this area of their experience.

## 5 Overall Satisfaction

### Coverage

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

#### *SREQ Survey items*

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

#### *Qualitative data analysis*

There are 3 sub-categories within Overall Satisfaction. They represent the range of aspects of the postgraduate research student experience which are considered to have a major influence on the quality of the research degree experience, and which are not covered elsewhere.

- General comments
- Quality of degree (including coursework, practical components)
- Satisfaction with research (relevance, topic, contribution to field)

### Summary

#### FACULTY SCORES

The current Faculty score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 75%, which is the second highest since commencement of the SREQ. The previous highest was 77% in 2006. The University score for the Overall Satisfaction Item is 80%.

#### QUALITATIVE DATA

##### *Areas of best practice*

- 28% of respondents who answered the open questions expressed satisfaction with this area of their experience
- The majority of these (21% of comments received) were satisfied with their research, its topic, and its contribution to the field.

##### *Suggested improvements*

- 8% of respondents were dissatisfied with the range of coursework offered and the lack of performance opportunities within the degree

### 5.1 Comparative results: Quantitative data 2002–2008

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

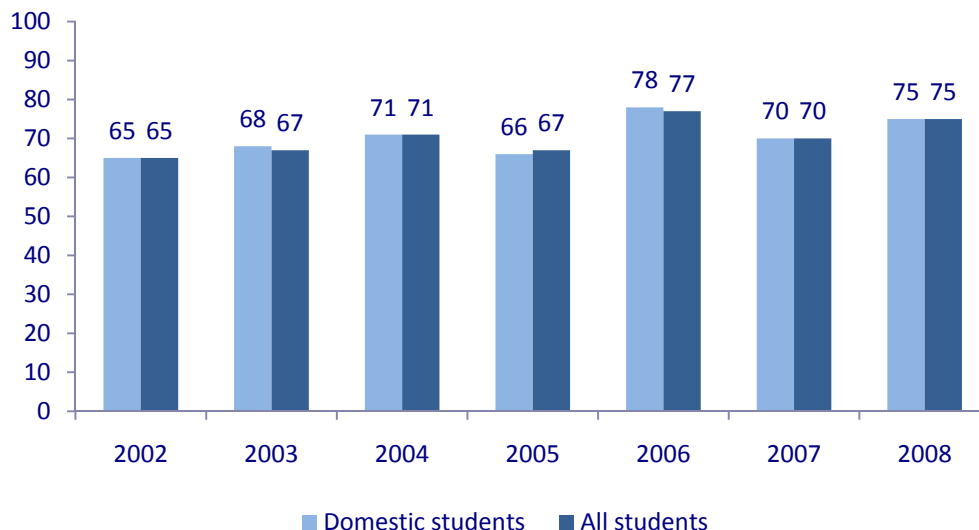


Figure 5: SREQ Overall Satisfaction Item: Percentage agreement results: 2002 - 2008

## 5.1 Comparative results: Focus of written observations 2002–2008

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

	SREQ 2002	SREQ 2003	SREQ 2004	SREQ 2005	SREQ 2006	SREQ 2007	SREQ 2008
Areas of best practice	18%	22%	33%	19%	26%	34%	28%
Suggested improvements	12%	8%	5%	27%	6%	21%	8%

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

### 5.2.1 Areas of best practice

All  
(n= 57 )

#### Satisfaction with research

- Research topic will contribute to field 21%
- Researching topic that have always been interested in
- Research is worthwhile

#### Sample comments

- *Being able to conduct my own research in a topic area very important to me*
- *I enjoy my topic which I chose. It interests me and has led to areas of exploration which were not fully anticipated. My topic is totally practical*
- *The opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge in my field.*
- *The journey of the research is very stimulating - very keen to get in to do research. Feel can do the best thing for my country by conducting research*
- *Performance opportunities provided - as a conductor, there is only one way to gain experience - performing!*
- *I got to decide what I was doing, there was a lot of assistance in fine tuning the direction of my research and I feel my research is worthwhile and important*

### 5.2.3 Suggested improvements

8% of students (i.e. 4 /50 comments received ) who responded to the SREQ considered that improvements were needed in this area of their experience.

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

## Attachment A Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ 2008)

### The survey

In 2002 the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL) began collecting data for The University community on research higher degree graduates' perceptions of their research training experiences. This data is gathered each year using a national survey specifically developed for this task, the "Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire" (PREQ). The purpose of the PREQ is to provide the University community with a basis for strategic, faculty level academic development and curriculum review to further enhance the quality of research higher degrees. The PREQ also provides data for benchmarking between similar programmes in different universities.

The survey gathers data on students' perceptions of the quality and frequency of supervision, intellectual and social climate, infrastructure, approaches to research, quality of thesis examination, and generic skills development in their research higher degree. The ITL analyses this data and provides a range of reports to staff and students of the university through their web site<sup>5</sup>

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

### Quantitative data 2006 – 2008 (2005 – 2007 graduates)

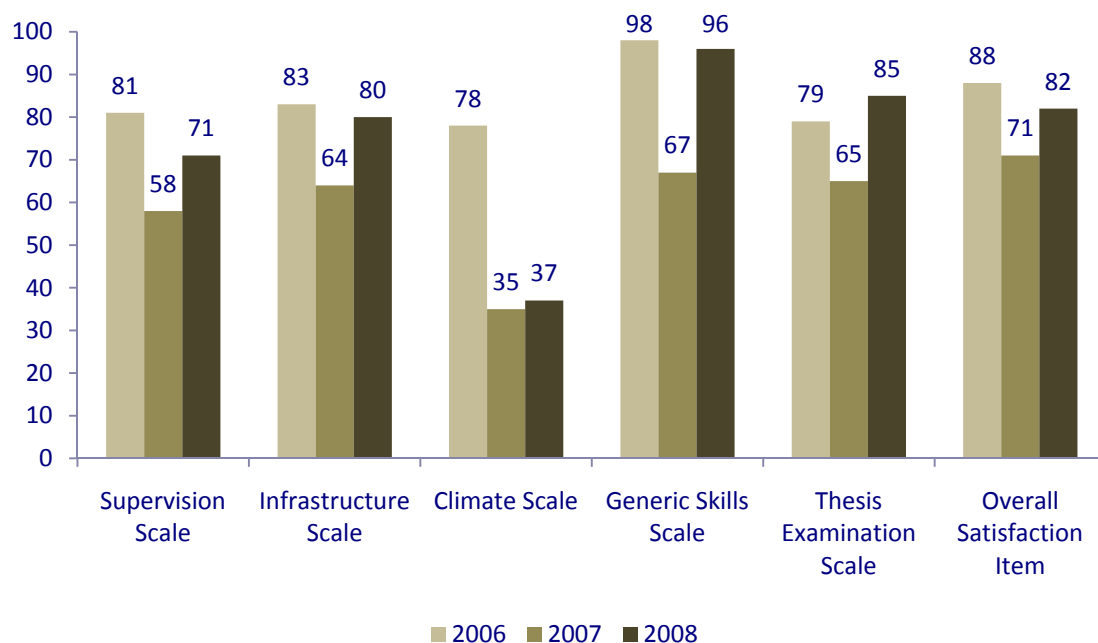


Figure 6: PREQ Factor Scales: 2006 - 2008

*NB: In 2006-2008 less than 20 graduates from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music responded to the PREQ. Since this is below the minimum number recommended for statistical analysis of PREQ data (20) the results in the above graph should be viewed with caution.*

2006 n=8; 2007 n=13; 2008 n=11

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

## Focus of written observations 2008 (2007 graduates)

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

### Areas of best practice

#### *Domestic students*

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Supportive supervisor with good contacts through the industry/allied health fields.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
Access to all the literature I needed, very good library support access and research lab and own computer and desk in the final stages of write-up.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Excellent supervisor and lecturers, good training in library/research skills.	<i>SUPERVISION GENERIC SKILLS</i>
Learning efficient research skills, developing presentation skills and the experience of writing an extended thesis.	<i>GENERIC SKILLS</i>
The ability to speak to experts in related fields. The amount of performance opportunities within the research degree.	<i>RESEARCH CLIMATE OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>
One on one lessons with my accompaniment teacher. These lessons provided me with the knowledge I used to write my thesis and also helped me to formulate my written work.	<i>RESEARCH CLIMATE</i>
As a university staff member, I had better access to resources than I would have had as an ordinary student.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Library facilities. Portable recording set-up provided for field recording.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
The research culture was very good, research students had lots of opportunities to discuss work, the facilities at the Conservatorium were very good, even though there is still an emphasis on performance rather than research. My supervisor was very thorough, even though she was not a specialist in the field.	<i>RESEARCH CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE SUPERVISION</i>

### Suggested improvements

COMMENT	AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE
Access to computing facilities and adequate library resources.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
As an older student with a varied life experience, I didn't fit the 'normative' profile of a postgraduate fresh from undergraduate study, and therefore didn't meet the criteria for scholarship (e.g. APA) support. I had to complete my degree while working full time, putting severe strain on marriage, family life etc.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Departments of Music seemed troubled by funding issues and lacked prominence within the faculty as a whole.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Integration and broader research areas of the Department of Psychology was non-existent. Poor collegial communication (only once per year on a formal basis).	<i>RESEARCH CLIMATE INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
It took 9 months for my thesis to be marked, I think this is totally unacceptable as I handed it in on time.	<i>THESIS EXAMINATION</i>

<b>COMMENT</b>	<b>AREAS OF RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE</b>
My off-campus supervisor needed a better room at my campus as we ended up having to use the coffee shop.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Sometimes, there was insufficient funding for human resources in the course i.e. for accompanists to be paid to rehearse with us, but this was mainly in the practical/performance part of the degree. The research side of things was pretty well resourced.	<i>INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
Staff with necessary knowledge and experience to advise, so that I did not need to go to another university (UNSW) to seek advice and unofficial supervision. If it were not for this assistance, I would not have completed my thesis.	<i>SUPERVISION INFRASTRUCTURE</i>
The availability of my supervisor or any supervisor for my area on my campus.	<i>SUPERVISION</i>
The courses titled 'History and Analysis' and 'Transcription and Analysis' needed more structure.	<i>OVERALL SATISFACTION</i>