

ECU InProgress Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (iPREQ) 2015 - Qualitative Results Summary

Background

Each year, Edith Cowan University administers an InProgress Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (iPREQ) to its current cohort of Higher Degree by Research candidates. The purpose of this data collection is to evaluate candidates' needs and monitor their overall experience. The survey measures are designed to complement the Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire that candidates are asked to complete following graduation.

In 2015, 335 Higher Degree by Research candidates completed the ECU iPREQ (55% response rate). The quantitative results are summarised in a separate report: [ECU In-Progress Postgraduate Research Experience: Questionnaire for 2015 - Quantitative Results](#) which is available at the GRS [Survey Results Page](#)

This report details the results pertaining to two open-ended questions:

- *What are the best aspects of your course?;*
- *What aspects of your course are most in need of improvement?;* and

Results

What are the best aspects of your course?

Supervision

As with previous surveys, supervision rated frequently as one of the best aspects of a course, with over one third of comments relating to supervisors. In particular, you noted the mentoring, encouragement and support from supervisors, and the effort they make to understand the difficulties you can face. Adjectives such as 'empathetic, excellent, professional, amazing and encouraging" were applied to the academic staff involved in supervision at ECU.

The research itself

Many of you commented on exploring an area of research, your research topic, or growing as an independent researcher in a particular field as a rewarding aspect of your course. Some of you referred to your projects as "a topic I love" or "an area if feel passionate about". Others commented on the contribution expected from your research, either to knowledge, broader audiences, or your careers as a course highlight.

The research community

Feeling part of a research community also featured frequently in the comments. This including meeting, interacting and engaging in rigorous debate with other candidates, support from peers, working with experts in your fields, and for some of you, forming close friendships.

Other Areas of General Satisfaction

A large number of you commented on support received outside of your supervisor team. This included interactions with the Library, technicians and the Graduate Research School, as well as the training program and learning opportunities provided by ECU. Flexibility of the research degree not only in

terms of managing other commitments such as family or work, but also the flexibility to select a research topic of interest was also commented on favourably.

What aspects of your course are in need of improvement?

Financial Support and Infrastructure

Many of you commented on a need for greater financial support, particularly for those of you with that need specialist training, expensive research materials or extensive field work as part of your research projects. For some of you, financial support to attend conferences or research overseas would be appreciated.

Some of you commented that you do not have appropriate workspaces on campus (the areas are noisy, or not fully equipped in terms of computer, software and printer facilities) and some of you indicated lack of access to desk, lab or rehearsal spaces are an issue.

Intellectual Climate

For some of you feeling isolated is an issue, particularly those of you studying part-time or not located near a metropolitan campus. Many of you commented that opportunities to network and interact with researchers outside of ECU are limited, and that you would like to feel part of a broader research community. For others, specialist or advanced training was highlighted as a need.

Supervision

Although supervision rated highly for many of you as a best aspect of your course, for others it is an area in need of improvement. For many of you, access to supervision is a problem. You reported supervisors who take a long time or who fail to respond to emails and to provide feedback on work. For some of you, the match between your research topic and supervisor team was not apparent, and for others, the contribution of various supervisor team members varied in terms of input and commitment.

Using your feedback

The feedback you have provided in the iPREQ survey is extremely valuable to us. The Graduate Research School utilises the survey data in operational planning, developing the training calendar, and planning support services.

A summary of the qualitative results and comments is provided to the Schools, and we invite them to respond to the survey data. Copies of the reports are also tabled at various research committees at both School and University level for comment and deliberation. Please watch the Survey Results website for an update on what has changed thanks to your input.