

In Progress Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire 2008

ECU Response

In the second semester of 2008, the GRS administered an electronic survey to 503 in-progress postgraduate research students (similar to a national survey distributed to research students at graduation) to evaluate students' needs and monitor their overall postgraduate experience. A report summarized the qualitative responses of respondents to two open-ended survey questions: 1) What are the best aspects of your course? 2) What aspects of your course are most in need of improvement?

This paper is the response from the University to comments provided by students, and themes highlighted in the report. Thank you to all the students who took the time to complete the survey, we appreciate your feedback.

Funding

Graduate Research School Response:

ECU raised the stipend of scholarships commencing in 2009 to \$25,000 per annum for APA, ECU-PRS and related international scholarships.

Information on finding scholarships and funding for research will be included in the 2010 Doctoral and Master by Research Guide.

Faculty of Computing, Health and Science Response:

In order to ensure that students are more fully aware of the financial support available for their research projects, the faculty will:

- Review the financial support models used in Schools;
- Ensure all students receive explanations of the Schools' postgraduate funding models (both financial and infrastructure support);
- Review the research proposal approval process to ensure that financial and other resources issues are highlighted and acknowledged by the School, supervisors and students.

Infrastructure

Graduate Research School Response:

A software license management committee has been established in May 2009, to put in place processes for the roll out and upgrade of University wide software such as Endnote, SPSS, and NVivo. Professor Joe Luca is representing the interests of research students and staff on the working party.

Subsequent to the restructure at the beginning of 2009, the Graduate Research School has implemented the following to provide support for students:

- In conjunction with CLD, employed a research training consultant (was Sarah Chivers, now Silvia Torezani) to provide workshops, seminars and other support services for students. The training consultant has run the iPREQ survey and a training needs survey to seek feedback from students.
- Employed a student support officer (Heather Williams) to run monthly networking opportunities, monthly Forum of Postgraduate Students (FOPS) workshops and regular social events.

The Graduate Research School is scoping a project that will look at making information on academic rules, policies and resources more easily available to research students and staff.

The Graduate Research School is scoping a project that will provide online support for students in the early stages of their degree (from commencement to confirmation of candidature). It is intended the project be complete by semester 1, 2010.

Library Response:

The library purchases online subscriptions where possible. For example, the Library has been able to purchase the deep backfile of the Sage package. Expanding the online collection is on the agenda for discussions on the library budget.

The Library welcomes any suggestions for expanding the collection. For examples, texts on geostatistics have been added to the library profile for selection. Students can recommend a purchase through <http://www.ecu.edu.au/library/contacts/purchases/acquire.html>

Recent improvements to library services include:

- Improvements made to the web page and searching tools following a useability study late in 2008.
- Replacing all library photocopiers in October 2008.

IT Services Response

Clarification on the various agreements for research software: SPSS licensing allows the installation on University computers and precludes the use by students at home. The software is available for use in the eLabs on both Joondalup and Mt Lawley. Students are able to use the eLab on each campus regardless of which is their "home" campus. NVivo licensing allows home use for postgraduate students, with CD available for loan from the library. Endnote software is available to all students for download from the IT Services website:

http://research.ecu.edu.au/grs/resources/endnote_software.php

Faculty of Education and Arts Response:

FEA will audit postgraduate study facilities and identify any aspects in need of improvement, by the end of September 2009.

Supervision

Overall, student satisfaction with supervision was high. However, there are several initiatives that will continue or be implemented in 2009:

Graduate Research School Response:

The Graduate Research School will continue to provide 10 Supervisor Training to new supervisors and refresher courses for experienced supervisors annually.

The Graduate Research School will continue to run the “How to Manage Your Supervisor” workshops for students annually.

A supervisor register will be implemented at the end of 2009. In order to be registered, all supervisors will need to have met the criteria outlined in Edith Cowan's Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students Policy.

Faculty of Education and Arts Response:

The Faculty will audit supervisors' attendance at supervision training workshops.

Faculty of Computing, Health and Science Response:

The Faculty will continue to focus on the quality of supervision for postgraduate research students. While the survey repeatedly highlighted good process in terms of supervision, many respondents also identified the workload on supervisors as an issue affecting their availability and capacity to take on new students. Among the specific actions to be implemented are:

- Appointment of accomplished researchers as adjunct research staff in key research fields;
- Pursuing appointments of staff with supervisory capability.
- Maintain the focus on building a strong research culture for research students to participate in through seminar series, training opportunities and promoting these through the Faculty research newsletter 'Connexions'.

Skill Development and Intellectual Climate

Graduate Research School Response:

The Graduate Research School will continue to foster a stronger research community through encouraging student participation in Google groups, Forum of Postgraduate Students (FOPS) workshops and events, and regular social events such as coffee mornings. The GRS is aiming to provide a minimum of 20 events by the end of 2009.

The Graduate Research School will continue to run specialised courses, training and workshops for students such as research methodologies, introduction to research software (SPSS, Endnote and NVivo), data management, publishing and reviewing and applying for ethics. Data collected from the research training needs survey will be used to develop the training programme for Semester 2, 2009.

The Graduate Research School is running 'Research Week' in conjunction with the Office of Research and Innovation. Kolyne Tan has been employed to market research week and develop a programme of events. Research Week is to raise student and staff awareness of the excellent research carried

out at ECU, and the excellent researchers involved in this research, and will help create an exciting and stimulating research environment. GRS intends to run Research Week as an annual event.

Faculty of Education and Arts Response:

The Education Research Institute and CREATEC will continue to offer comprehensive seminar programs throughout the year which offer good opportunities for networking and engaging with the community of researchers.

A number of special events are planned for Research Week in August e.g. the Education Postgraduate Research Colloquium scheduled for August 21.

Faculty of Business and Law Response:

In order to improve overall student satisfaction, particularly intellectual climate and facilities, the Faculty of Business and Law will:

- Invite post graduate students to engage in discussions with the Research & Higher Degrees Office, Semester 2 2009.
- Set up a working party to monitor HDR student satisfaction in the Faculty, reporting to the Research & Higher Degrees Committee
- Discuss ideas with other Faculties to find out what they think works best
- Implement suggested strategies (e.g., more faculty research forums, better access to facilities for off-campus students)

Faculty of Computing, Health and Science Response:

In order to ensure the relevancy and flexibility of coursework components of research degrees, the Faculty will review its research preparation unit offerings during 2009.