

ECU InProgress Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (iPREQ) 2013 - Qualitative Results Summary

Background

Each year, the Edith Cowan University Graduate Research School 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 2013, 340 Higher Degree by Research candidates completed the ECU iPREQ (54% response rate). The quantitative results are summarised in a separate report: *ECU In-Progress Postgraduate Research Experience: Questionnaire for 2013 - 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. In particular, you noted the availability, approachability of supervisors, and the effort they make to understand the difficulties you can face. Adjectives such as 'fantastic, excellent, professional, supportive and encouraging' were applied to the academic staff involved in supervision at ECU.

Skill Development

Many of you commented on the skills you are developing throughout the research journey. In particular, you commented on improving academic writing skills, developing analytical and research skills, accumulating specialist knowledge in their field, and making the transition to becoming an independent researcher.

Support Services

A large number of you commented on support received outside of the supervisor team. This included research and writing consultants and support staff based in the Faculties, school based writing circles and seminars, Library interactions and the Graduate Research School.

Other Areas of General Satisfaction

Many of you commented on the flexibility of doing a 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 personally or professionally.

Feeling part of a research community was also a highlight for many of you. This including meeting, interacting and engaging in rigorous debate with other candidates, working with experts in your fields, and for some of you, working in interdisciplinary projects.

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 have specialist training, expensive research materials or extensive field work as part of your research projects. For Master by Research candidates, consideration in scholarship rankings was also raised as an issue. 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.

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 cancel meetings, who take a long time or who fail to respond to emails and other forms of communication, and also periods of disruption to your studies when supervisors leave ECU. 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.

Other Areas in Need of Improvement

For some of you feeling isolated is an issue, particularly those of you studying part-time or not located near a metropolitan campus. Navigating the institution and understanding the administrative processes is challenging (and time consuming) for many of you. And a few of you highlighted specific training requests or support services, such as advanced statistics, that would be of benefit to your studies.

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 Faculty, and we invite them to respond to the survey data. Copies of the reports are also tabled at the research committees at both Faculty and University level for comment and deliberation. Please watch the Survey Results website for an update on what has changed thanks to your input.