Background

1. The MUSEQ-R annual survey of all enrolled HDR students was developed in 2006, in consultation with the Higher Degree Research Committee (HDRC), to provide MQ HDR students with a confidential feedback instrument as part of Macquarie’s commitment to providing an evidence base for a strong and supportive research culture.

2. The survey is based on the annual national Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) for completed HDR students, thus allowing comparison with previous MQ HDR feedback and national ratings. The survey was administered by the Management Information Unit (MIU).

3. The response rate was 29% (n=376). 35% of respondents were first-year HDR students (n=121). 92% of external domestic students (n=95) participated in the survey and 26% of respondents (n=98) were international students.

4. Divisional student response was generally proportional with MQ's HDR population. ELS had the highest participation (44%) while Law and EFS had the lowest, 15% and 16% respectively.

Findings

1. MUSEQ-R students rated their overall satisfaction with their research experience so far (77%) lower than 2004 PREQ MQ (82%) and national graduates (83%). MPhil and part-time students are more likely to be satisfied with their research experience (86% and 80% respectively). Charts 2a, 4 & 8b

2. The highest overall satisfaction rating was for supervision (81%) and the lowest for support services (71%). First-year HDR students are the most satisfied with their supervision experience (87%) compared with later year students. Chart 2c

3. On the PREQ scales MUSEQ-R students are more satisfied with supervision (75%) than 2004 MQ (69%) graduates. First year HDR students were most satisfied with supervision (80%), consistent with the findings of the 2006 Improving the first year research experience project. All MUSEQ-R respondents are less satisfied with their skill development (80%) and infrastructure (61%) than 2004 MQ (90% & 69%) and national graduates (91% & 70%). Chart 7c

4. First year HDR students rated their satisfaction with intellectual climate highest (66%) compared with other HDR students (56%) and MQ and national 2004 graduates (57% & 58%), consistent with the 2006 Improving the first year research experience project findings. Chart 7c

5. External HDR students had the highest response rate and have comparatively low levels of satisfaction with supervision (70% cf internal 76%), intellectual climate (50% cf 58%), infrastructure (49% cf 65%) and overall satisfaction with their research experience (72% cf 78%). Chart 10

6. International HDR students are more satisfied than domestic students with infrastructure provision (66% cf 60%) and less satisfied with intellectual climate (52% cf 58%). There is, however, considerable divisional variation with L&P international students markedly more satisfied with intellectual climate (64% cf 49%) and ICS international students more strongly dissatisfied with intellectual climate than domestic students (29% cf 62%). Chart 7 Int.

7. While domestic and international students rate their satisfaction on the PREQ skill development scale similarly (84% domestic cf 81% international) there is marked variation in rating on the MQ specific item Q11 provision of research methods training. Domestic students rate 57% satisfaction and international students rate 43%. This difference in perception is marked within the Divisions ELS, ICS and L&P. Charts 7 Int, 17Int
8. Students in professional doctorate programs have lower levels of satisfaction than PhD and MPhil students with supervision (71% cf 75% & 76%), intellectual climate (43% cf 58% & 55%) and infrastructure (48% cf 63% & 64%). Chart 8b

9. There was considerable variation among divisional ratings on the three overall satisfaction ratings, the PREQ scales and the 11 MQ specific items. Division-specific reports have been produced where there was at least a 20% response rate. Of these, ICS student satisfaction ratings are of most concern. Charts 6, 11,16b, 17b, 18b, 19b, 20b, 21b, 22b, 23b, 24b

Recommendations
1. Improve the overall MUSEQ-R response rate to 50% or better and improve each divisional response rate to 30-50% of their enrolment. [A/Professor Neumann; Divisional Directors HDR].

2. Develop a stronger institutional and divisional HDR feedback culture in second and third years as a key part of quality enhancement (e.g. 1st year response rate = 35% cf MUSEQ-R 29%) [A/Professor Neumann; Divisional Directors HDR].

3. Examine ways to improve satisfaction among students at later stages of their HDR candidature by providing more targeted support e.g. in supervision and intellectual climate. [Directors HDR]

4. Examine how external domestic HDR student satisfaction with different aspects of their research experience (e.g. supervision, intellectual climate and infrastructure) can be improved and advise HDRC on divisional strategies for improvement. [Directors HDR]

5. Examine how the research experience of international HDR students, in particular in relation to intellectual climate and the provision of appropriate research methods training, can be improved and advise HDRC on divisional strategies for improvement. [Directors HDR ELS, ICS, L&P]

6. Examine how Divisions offering professional doctorate programs can improve satisfaction levels with supervision, infrastructure support and intellectual climate. [Dean L&P and Dean MGSM]

7. Examine which student service improvements could increase HDR satisfaction ratings, (e.g. ITS for internal & external students, space & access to Union services) and advise HDRC on strategies for improvement. [DVC Administration]

8. Examine the reasons for relatively low levels of HDR satisfaction in ICS on almost all items and advise HDRC on ICS strategies to increase HDR satisfaction ratings. [Dean ICS and Director HDR]

RN, May, 2007