Feedback on the research training experiences of Monash University postgraduates

Research postgraduates were asked to provide the Monash Postgraduate Association with feedback relating to their research training experiences. Specifically they were asked to report on research training strengths, research training weaknesses and recommendations for improvement. The call for feedback was sent to all currently enrolled HDRs on all campuses. Thirty-seven responses were received. Responses were summarised and sorted by issue. Recommendations made by individual postgraduates were sorted by issue. The full text of comments made by postgraduates was de-identified and presented by issue as well as by faculty. Given the small number of responses received there was no analysis of the data.

This report is intended to be used to provide feedback to the MRGS and faculties in light of the forthcoming audit of research training practices at Monash University.

Compiled by Dina Galanopoulos
MPA Research Officer
June 2011
1. **Summary of responses by issue**
   - 1.1 Supervision
   - 1.2 Intellectual property
   - 1.3 Scholarships and grants
   - 1.4 Travel grants
   - 1.5 Support seminars
   - 1.6 Access to facilities and services
   - 1.7 Research culture/peer interaction
   - 1.8 IT support and software access
   - 1.9 Course-specific feedback
   - 1.10 General comments

2. **Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvement**
   - 2.1 Research training strengths
   - 2.2 Research training weaknesses
   - 2.3 Recommendations for improvement
     - 2.3.1 Supervision
     - 2.3.2 Intellectual property
     - 2.3.3 Scholarships and grants
     - 2.3.4 Travel grants
     - 2.3.5 Support seminars
     - 2.3.6 Access to facilities and services
     - 2.3.7 Research culture/peer interaction
     - 2.3.8 IT support and software access
     - 2.3.9 Course-specific feedback
     - 2.3.10 General comments

3. **Detailed postgraduate responses**
   - 3.1 Responses arranged by issue
   - 3.2 Responses arranged by faculty

   *Please note all comments are direct quotes from student emails with identifying information removed.*

**Attachment 1**

Copy of the original email that was sent to HDR postgraduates
1. Summary of issues

1.1 Supervision

25 responses received: 12 positive, 3 neutral, 10 negative

Twelve postgraduates provided positive feedback regarding supervision. The qualities postgraduates most valued in their supervisors included; meeting regularly, providing feedback in a timely manner, being approachable, being good networkers and being well informed about theory and administrative procedures. Some postgraduates felt that having more than one supervisor was extremely beneficial and two of the postgraduates responding had nominated their supervisors for the “MPA Supervisor of the Year Award”.

Negative feedback was provided by ten postgraduates and was predominantly about not having access to supervisors. Many postgraduates felt that their supervisors were unavailable for meetings and did not provide appropriate support. Some postgraduates reported extremely inappropriate behaviour by their supervisors, including blackmail, interrogation, abuse, bullying and sabotaging applications for projects.

1.2 Intellectual property

8 responses received: 4 positive, 1 neutral, 3 negative

There were eight responses in this category. Responses ranged from good, detailed information being provided about IP to not knowing information was available. Two postgraduates identified problems with their supervisors’ lack of knowledge and poor handling of IP issues.

1.3 Scholarships and grants

18 responses received: 6 positive, 3 neutral, 9 negative

Postgraduates with access to scholarships such as APAs appreciated having access to funding but many commented that the amount was too low to live on and the duration of three years was unrealistic. This applied to eight of the 17 responses. Some postgraduates found the information provided about scholarships and the processes for applying for scholarships confusing.

1.4 Travel grants

14 responses received: 2 positive, 1 neutral, 11 negative

While two postgraduates appreciated having access to the travel grants, 11 postgraduates experienced problems including:

- A difficult and complicated application process
- University agents being more expensive than others
Method by which travel grant was given, meant it counted as taxable income rather than a reimbursement
Timing of application being problematic as postgraduates need to be accepted into a conference prior to application which does not leave much time to process the actual application
Criteria of applying within 36 months of candidature too strict as some conferences may fall just outside of this, towards the end of a PhD if not completed within 36 months
No consideration of different costs between local and international conferences
Not available to international students

1.5 Support seminars

20 responses received: 11 positive, 1 neutral, 9 negative

Eleven postgraduates found support seminars useful and the content relevant. They were particularly impressed with the seminars run by the MRGS, the library, the Education Faculty’s MERC seminar series, the Arts Faculty’s Tricks of the Trade seminars and HDR workshops run by Associate Professor Rosemary Sheehan in Social Work. It was felt that not only did these seminars provide useful information but they helped to create a sense of cohesion among postgraduates and helped to combat isolation.

While postgraduates appreciated having access to support seminars, eight postgraduates experienced problems including:
- Seminars being abundant at the beginning of candidature, but fewer being available towards the end of candidature
- Part-time postgraduates found it difficult to access support seminars due to timing and recorded seminars not being in one centralised place
- Postgraduates at smaller campuses and off-campus locations missing out on a good selection of seminars due to location ie. Alfred and Berwick
- Requiring mandatory attendance at faculty seminars even when they were not relevant ie. Sunway campus

1.6 Access to facilities and services

19 responses received: 6 positive, 2 neutral, 11 negative

While six postgraduates appreciated having access to facilities such as office space in the postgraduate centre, free photocopying and printing in the Menzies postgraduate room, computer access in the Social Work department, sufficient funding at the Alfred, helpful and friendly staff at MRGS, MPA and School of Biological Sciences, and the many facilities offered by the library, 11 experienced problems in this area.

Problems included:
- Part-time postgraduates found a lack of access to facilities especially during December-January
One postgraduate moved offices at least once, had access to computers that would stop working, printing was bad, and changes in Monash email address system meant it took time to establish new address systems.

“Hot spots” system at Caulfield, (where postgraduates looked for an empty desk and moved their belongings each time they attended campus) was not conducive to producing quality research.

Postgraduate room for Political and Social Inquiry students at Caulfield was noisy and not conducive to research.

Underfunded labs lacking basic equipment, particularly bad at Sunway and some labs in Medicine Faculty. Postgraduates were not allowed to order reagents and lower grade chemicals were ordered by administrative staff to cut costs.

Postgraduates at Sunway campus are unable to borrow university cars to conduct field work.

Refurbishment in Education faculty without notice being given to postgraduates caused disruption to accessing facilities and the research community.

Accessing appropriate assistance from Statistical Consulting service particularly problematic for one postgraduate.

Sport facilities too expensive for students.

1.7 Research culture/peer interaction

17 responses received: 8 positive, 1 neutral, 8 negative

Responses relating to research culture and peer interaction were divided between eight positive and eight negative responses. Students were extremely happy with the research community created by the Monash Education Research Community (MERC) in the Faculty of Education. Off-campus students located at the Alfred responded that peer interaction was improving as more inter-departmental seminars were being organised. Likewise postgraduates in some areas of the Medicine and Science Faculties also found that peer interaction and research culture were good.

Conversely postgraduates in the Faculties of Arts, Art and Design and Engineering found that a research culture was lacking in their experience. One postgraduate stated that in his faculty this was “Atrocious! Non-existent”. Despite the positive feedback received regarding MERC, one part-time student from the Faculty of Education expressed a similar sentiment, “non-existent as far as I can access it, and being an HDR student is very isolating. Everything seems geared towards full-time and on-campus students”.

1.8 IT support and software access

13 responses received: 10 positive, 2 neutral, 1 negative

Most postgraduates responded positively regarding their access to IT support and software. Responses included “fairly good”, “good to very good”, “excellent”, “fantastic” and “incredible”.
One postgraduate expressed frustration in that her supervisor’s computer was not powerful enough to handle receipt of the documents she was emailing. This was particularly problematic given the postgraduate was a part-time student and relied very heavily on email communication.

1.9 Course specific feedback

5 responses received: 1 neutral, 4 negative

Four postgraduates expressed dissatisfaction with the coursework components of their research degrees:

- Lack of communication between lecturer and students in coursework component of research degree
- The special unit for distance education postgraduates was too focused on undergraduate/coursework students
- The relevance of having a coursework component as part of an honours degree was questioned
- “Commercialisation of Research” certificate was too general and not relevant for doctoral research

1.10 General comments

8 responses received: 4 positive, 1 neutral, 3 negative

General comments were divided evenly between positive and negative. Four respondents stated their overall experiences at Monash were “positive”, “very worthwhile”, “really terrific” and “absolutely loving my research”.

Another four were less enthusiastic:

- Negative experience as a tutor, nature of Monash very bureaucratic and run more like a business than a university
- Interdisciplinary research is encouraged but nothing is done in practice to support this
- Food prices on campus are exorbitant
- Clubs and activities available are very undergraduate focussed, not much for postgraduates
2. Strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for improvement

2.1 Research training strengths

4 responses received: 4 positive

Four postgraduates provided examples of research training strengths. They included:

- A good explanation of library and IP
- Good access to equipment and peer culture
- Seminar and conference access encouraged
- Availability of seminars by various providers and having milestones through the PhD eg. confirmation of candidature

2.2 Research training weaknesses

12 responses received: 12 negative

Eleven postgraduates provided examples of research training weaknesses. They included:

- Lack of research training leading to PhD candidates working very much in isolation
- Lack of information on what to do after a PhD
- Lack of supervision in terms of strategy and handling different stages of a thesis
- Lack of funds
- Lack of appropriate office space especially in final stages
- Lack of appropriate office space, interruptions caused by Menzies construction noise
- Lack of interaction with postgraduates in similar location
- Lack of adequate training on qualitative skills such as Nvivo
- Lack of information for international students regarding facilities available to them
- Lack of information/training on copyright and citations
- Lack of university knowledge regarding difficulties involved in conducting research overseas, especially in developing countries
- Lack of ethical practice by academics in department

2.3 Recommendations for improvement

Thirty one postgraduates provided recommendations for improvement.

2.3.1 Supervision

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:

- That students be provided with more information on supervisors prior to selection, for example information: how many students a supervisor has seen to completion and how many failed to complete.
- That the faculties provide or better advertise the existence of an independent person with whom students could discuss supervisory problems outside their departments
• That faculties ensure that supervisors can afford to take on a PhD student and finance them until the end of candidature
• That the university provide better training for supervisors and enforce the MRGS code of conduct for supervision

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:
• That faculties better inform postgraduates of the roles of postgraduate coordinators and Associate Deans Research/Graduate Studies very early on in their candidature so students can approach the appropriate people if/when problems arise.
• That MPA’s attendance at faculty/school postgraduate orientations is extended to all faculty postgraduate orientations so that postgraduates are informed of the independent advocacy service available should they need to access it. This is particularly important at smaller campuses and off-campus locations where the academic community is relatively small.
• That supervisors and research candidates are encouraged to agree on a schedule of meeting dates and/or regularity of meetings at the beginning of each semester, so that problems regarding supervisor unavailability are prevented.

2.3.2 Intellectual Property

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:
• That faculties ensure postgraduates and supervisors are aware of the details of the ARROW publication policy for theses, and in particular, the difference between compulsory submission to the restricted access section of the ARROW repository and voluntary publication in the open access section of the ARROW repository.

2.3.3 Scholarships and grants

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:
• That the University provides a supplementary allowance
• That the government makes changes to the eligibility for a Low Income Health Care Card, Youth Allowance, Austudy and allows postgraduate access to transport concession cards

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:
• That the University continue to support HDR completion scholarships for postgraduates who have extended their candidature beyond 3.5 years.
• That all departmental and faculty-based scholarships are kept in line with APA scholarship rates and conditions.

2.3.4 Travel grants

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:
• That travel grants should be extended to cover accommodation and/or conference registration costs.
• That the travel grant application process be simplified.

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:
• That the University allow postgraduates in receipt of travel grants to book cheap flights by allowing direct online booking instead of going through university-approved agents, a process which is time consuming and often results in the agents unable to match online low cost fares.

2.3.5 Support seminars

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:
• That the number of seminars relevant to end of candidature postgraduates, be increased.
• That MRGS rotate/increase the number of seminars on all campuses including smaller campuses and off-campus locations.
• That more out-of-hours seminars are scheduled.
• That more support seminars after hours and online are scheduled to improve access for part-time and distance education postgraduates.
• That more training seminars are scheduled in the areas such as: different statistical methods; difficulties encountered in the final stages; meditation; getting published; and qualitative research methods.

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:
• That the University allocate more funding to MRGS to increase the number of exPERT seminar series so that more seminars are offered to postgraduates at smaller campuses and off-campus locations.
• That all postgraduate support seminar providers better use existing technologies to ensure that seminars are available online and in one central online location to ensure easy access by part-time and distance education postgraduates.
• That MRGS and MPA expand the postgraduate seminar day, currently being run at Peninsula, Gippsland and AMREP, to each of the smaller campuses and major off-campus locations.
• That the MRGS and MPA expand the postgraduate seminar day, currently being run at Peninsula, Gippsland and AMREP, to cater for part-time and distance education postgraduates, eg. one weekend per semester.

2.3.6 Access to facilities and services

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:
• That library access/opening times at Berwick for research postgraduates be extended.
• That free photocopying and printing be provided to all HDR students via funding from the university budget or faculty contributions
• That a central chemical store managed by the university be established.
• That access to a car for research related travel be granted to postgraduates at Sunway campus.
• That the university ensure appropriate work spaces are provided.
2.3.7 Research culture and peer interaction

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:

- That the MPA organise more social and networking events for postgraduates at faculty level, and at smaller campuses and off-campus locations to improve peer interaction and research culture.
- That the MPA’s ‘faculty-based postgraduate representative structure’ is supported by the university to increase peer interaction and improve communication channels, especially in the humanities-based disciplines.
- That the university help to promote the MPA’s online postgraduate forum, to assist part-time and distance education postgraduates to establish connections.

2.3.8 IT support and software access

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:

- That free/cheaper access to training on NVivo software be provided.
- That access to Microsoft Project be provided.
- That access to e-Primer for MDS analyses be provided.
- That more detailed information about IT-related services for postgraduates be provided at orientation.

Recommendations proposed by the MPA:

- That the university ensure all HDR postgraduates have access to a dedicated computer and study space, and where relevant, to laboratory and studio space.

2.3.9 Course-specific feedback

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:

- That a combined qualitative/quantitative unit be introduced at the end of the first semester of a research degree.
- That a coursework component be included in the PhD.

2.3.10 General comments

Recommendations proposed by postgraduate respondents:

- That interdisciplinary research be improved by encouraging and facilitating the supervisor and their postgraduate in drawing upon the expertise of different faculties relevant to their research project.
- That the confirmation process be improved by making it more collaborative.
- That smaller campuses be promoted for their own strengths
- That better information be provided to postgraduates about the Voluntary Separation Packages where this has resulted in the loss of a supervisor.
- That a limit be placed on what can be charged for particular foods and that a student-run food co-operative be established.
- That funding be provided for clubs to include postgraduates or for MPA to coordinate postgraduate-specific clubs and societies.
- That public transport to the university be improved.
3. Detailed postgraduate responses

*Please note all comments are direct quotes from student emails with identifying information removed.*

3.1 Responses arranged by issue

3.1.1 Supervision

“Excellent. My supervisors are both awesome... no matter how busy they are they always make time to see me, email reply is almost always immediately or on the same day and week. I have my drafts corrected and feedback given no later than a month. In my first year, this was fortnightly, particularly with my main supervisor Colleen Lewis, because she wanted me to practice writing.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“good, don't have much to compare it to” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“supervision - overall good” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“My supervision was good and assisted me in every way in completing my thesis.” (School of ECPS, Arts)

“My supervision experience has been very good. My supervisor was extremely well informed about the theoretical framework of my study and had wide national and international networks. She introduced me to a range of other academics as well as encouraged me to share my work in different conferences and journals. My supervisor met with me regularly although because of her own overseas commitments there were occasions where there were quite long periods between supervision sessions.” (Education Faculty)

“Excellent supervision.” (Arts Faculty)

“One of my supervisors is absolutely amazing, providing detailed feedback on drafts and making time for me whenever I pop by his office. I nominated him for a MPA supervision award for these and other reasons. The other supervisor is largely absent from the university campus, conducting work overseas and interstate. I would highly recommend students undertake co-supervision for this reason. With recent VSPs throughout the school, this is even more relevant. My supervisors seem well trained in academic and personal support skills and are dedicated and highly skilled to their work, therefore my experience has been overwhelmingly positive.” (Science Faculty)

“The two supervisor system worked really well for me, as my supervisors had complementary skills and gave different but really helpful feedback.” (Arts Faculty)

“at the beginning of my candidature I was a full time student, but I was advised (and rightly so) to go part time due to my outside work commitments that seemed to take time away a lot of time from my studies. So I moved happily into part time status where I have been able to have the room to expand my thinking and creativity, which I think my work really needed (it was great insight from my supervisor). The process to do this was great and I found it really easy to be able to move from one status to the other it was not difficult at all, and almost no red tape.

I meet with my supervisor once or twice a month depending on what I have been up to but I mostly just touch base with her through email. It has been great being able to do that as my work itself is heavily based within this technology.” (Art and Design Faculty)
“I believe that when there are problems with supervisors and wanting to change supervisor is a greater problem than perhaps expressed, and is another area of concern for many postgraduates. It is often a deeply personal relationship and often a very difficult issue to discuss. I think it is important that there are more than one supervisor assigned, not just on paper. I have had no dealings with my second supervisor at all.” (Arts Faculty)

“generally poor/supervisors unavailable too often” (Arts Faculty)

“While supervisors were driven for research and had bright ideas, little could be done when the supervisors themselves are often drowned in administrative paper work. This left little time for the supervisors to interact and brainstorm with students, who most of the time, are left to fend for themselves and work the project out themselves. This is very risky because it could mean that the student may be working in the wrong direction for long periods of time, wasting their precious time and achieving little.” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway campus)

“I've had some trouble catching my supervisor - very difficult to track down and often goes weeks without replying to emails, phone messages etc. When you are working full time and have two young kids and only have a certain amount of time available, this is very frustrating. It also meant that my ethics application was not submitted until very late and has subsequently delayed my intervention timeline. BUT once I do catch up with him, I find his feedback fantastic and very helpful.” (Education Faculty)

“I was originally in (previous faculty) but had to move faculties when my primary supervisor moved. My initial secondary supervisor retired, so that meant yet another change of supervisor. My primary supervisor (new faculty) likewise left Monash, so another change... even trying to see my supervisor has been a trial. I feel that I am an impost on his time. There has been no help with facilities, everything had to be done in isolation as supervisors not interested. In sum, I feel that I am on my own and that if I didn't contact my advisor for 6 months he wouldn't notice.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“Average. Could be on my own it would be the same thing.”

“Research training is lacking. My supervisor supervises my studio work, but not my written work. I don't know who can provide feedback for me. Lack of progress feedback and barometers as to what is expected of me.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“Pick who is allowed to supervise better. You can't teach niceness and understanding in a training course. Some supervisors are just****** who want free labour.” (Medicine Faculty)

“The supervision of my actual research was like the "curate's egg". When my supervisor was available her support was excellent. However there were long periods of time when she was not available. I actually kept a file of "excuses presented by supervisor for not returning work in reasonable time" and when these numbered over 40 I realised that I had a genuine complaint here. Nevertheless I persevered, drawing on a lifetime's practice in developing patience and eventually reached publication stage.

There were other areas that left a lot to be desired. I have come away from my four years in the Halls of Academe quite concerned for future young post-graduates who have to contend with many obstacles along the way, obstacles that should not be there. The path for these students must be made smoother. After all these are the students you should be encouraging.” (Education Faculty)
“From my experience and from discussion with other doctoral students I would conclude that the quality of supervision varies considerably between supervisors. My own experience is of joint supervision with one supervisor providing a substantial amount of support and encouragement and the other much less so. The latter is my primary supervisor and tends to push me to seek help from outside of the supervision relationship when I bring concerns about my research to supervision. Over time I have come to interpret this as “don’t come to me with your concerns. Get someone else to help you”.” (Education Faculty)

“My supervisor is excellent (won supervisor of the year award 2010). Definitely need two supervisors as give difference in opinion & understanding. Should look to find two supervisors with different backgrounds.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“My supervisor was fantastic and colleagues and I nominated him for supervisor of the year in 2010 - sadly he has now left Monash.” (DE, Gippsland)

“I have various things to say about the postgraduate experience at Monash. While overall I have had a positive experience for the past 3 years I know many people who have had unnecessarily difficult and bad experiences. Most of which have been the result of problems with their supervisors. I feel that this could be improved by the university by:

- Having a really clear (and well advertised?) person who students can discuss supervisor problems with outside their departments (as these can be small places, and it can be hard to get an impartial opinion, and for any criticism to not to get back to the supervisor). Perhaps this might be faculty based (as what is acceptable in Med seems like it might be completely different to what is done in humanities, in terms of authorship, progress made or workload etc).
- I also think there should be a process in place that allows students to find out about the past student supervision done by supervisors before they undertake a project. i.e. How many students have they supervised to completion, how long did these students take, have any dropped out, have any formal complaints been made about them in the past. I know of several experienced supervisors that have had complaints made about them, had students not complete, and have worked students long past the 3-4 year mark - unfortunately these supervisors are able to continue taking on new students who have no idea what they are getting into. It is difficult for co-workers within a department to become involved because we often do not meet students until they start, and you need to be very careful about what you say about anyone in such close knit environments. And it would be virtually impossible for current students to "warn" prospective students in case their supervisors found out.

It seems supervisors can get away with anything, and nothing changes for students having supervisor problems, or future students. It is easy to forget how much power supervisors hold over their higher degree students, so it's important they are able to get help when they need it, and that complaints to the university are taken seriously.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“my supervisor has failed to help me publish two peer review journal articles; has given bad references on jobs I have applied for; sabotaged applications and projects I have worked on; and ordered my dissolve relationships with people who didn’t ‘FIT’ my personal and professional goals. My supervisor threaten to destroy my career if I didn’t submit to a relationship with her. My refusal to her advances is evidenced by the aforementioned bad behaviour. I have been subject to intimidation,
interrogation, humiliation, sexual harassment, black mail, and the biggest 'mind trip' of my life. (Medicine Faculty)

“I had a horrendous experience with my former supervisors. Their mentality was to take on as many students as they were allowed by MRGS such that they could increase their research output, which they openly boasted. There was extreme pressure to produce results, weekly group meetings were like interrogation, and because it was all about their research output, multiple students were working on the same project. I was horrified when I found out that my project was given to someone else because they thought I didn't have the 'knack'. I was forced to race the other student to get publishable results for my thesis. Heads of Departments need to more closely monitor lab environments, especially those that are commercially driven, and considered ‘successful’ labs.” (Engineering Faculty)

“I have had both extreme ends of the spectrum when it comes to my experience with PhD supervisors. I was initially supervised by well established academics, who were "star" researchers. I quickly discovered that the reason why they had been so successful in research was that they were somewhat ruthless, with little regard for anyone or anything except themselves and their research success. They were supervisor-accredited to the highest Monash level, and had won awards for teaching and research, but seemed to have no interest in the educational component of academia. To me, they seemed more suited to careers in private research. Just a few examples of their abhorrent behaviour towards HDR students include:
- verbally abusing students, both in private and in public;
- sending students rude, forceful and threatening emails;
- revoking students’ lab access privileges and computers, and even threatening to not supervise them, in order to get the students to do what the supervisors wanted;
- bullying students into signing legal forms without giving them an opportunity to seek independent advice (see IP section for more detail);
- forcing students to maintain lab equipment and train others to use it, which required lots of hours for no pay;
- depriving students of vital research training opportunities, such as attending an international conference to present their work, on the grounds that the students are not good enough to represent the supervisors and their group; and
- having no regard for students’ PhD deadlines, expecting them to keep conducting research and publishing papers while writing their theses, which has resulted in multiple instances of students running over their thesis deadlines and having no scholarships.

At the other end of the spectrum, my new supervisor, whom I transferred to due to some of the problems outlined above with my former supervisors, has been absolutely terrific. He is only a junior lecturer and doesn't have much supervision experience, but he has been incredibly good to work under. He is far more sympathetic towards the practical challenges I face in my research, and is much more appreciative for what I contribute. I am also indebted to him for taking on my supervision at a time when my faculty had decided to terminate my candidature, without hearing, because my former supervisors were unwilling to continue supervising me (because I was not willing to be bullied anymore...). My current supervisor has restored my faith in research and the spirit in which it is meant to be conducted. The university needs to identify ways to better monitor supervisor performance, and to discipline them if and when necessary, in the same way the university disciplines students. The university should also continue to reward supervision through student-nominated awards, which is a tremendously positive initiative.” (Engineering Faculty)
3.1.2 Intellectual property

“good information on patents, but we have not had any information on copyright/citations styles etc.-which should be helpful and practical.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“I haven’t delved into this, but have been made aware of the issues associated with IP and support and advice available through the university. My school and the MRGS have provided lots of great information, as has the Monash University website” (Science Faculty)

“The issue of compulsory publication on Arrow is problematic for anyone considering publication as a book, but the three year embargo provision is helpful.” (Arts Faculty)

“I haven’t had to deal with any issues in this area I feel very secure with my work and how it is handled by the university (as long as it doesn’t get lost)” (Art and Design Faculty)

“my supervisor gives me credit and pushes me to be first author.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“didn’t know there were any resources available” (Part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“In my opinion, supervisors simply have no idea about intellectual property. My former supervisors sought an invalid assignment late in my PhD for reasons such as patents from other universities, and background information on projects that weren’t even relevant to mine. When I didn’t assign, they refused to sign my paperwork to upgrade my PhD, even after being successful in the examination. Needless to say, I then had to change supervisors, and was not allowed to take the project that I had been working on in the past year with me.” (Engineering Faculty)

“Where do I start?! As a student at Monash, I sole-invented a device with significant commercial potential. My then supervisors believed that they were equal inventors of this technology. Unwilling to sit down and discuss inventorship, they signed the invention disclosure form on my behalf, stating that the contribution by all inventors was equal, and the university proceeded to file a provisional patent therefrom. It took me almost one year, with the legal assistance of the MPA, to have my sole-inventorship rights recognised and returned by the university. During this time, my supervisors, my department and my faculty did everything to try to force me to be quiet and to drop it. This includes sending threatening emails, refusing to investigate, revoking my lab access, confiscating my departmental entitlements, refusing me the opportunity to confirm my candidature, terminating my candidature, and defaming my name both inside and outside the university. I was forced to remain at home for over seven months without supervision nor a PhD. Even with the MPA's terrific assistance it was a stretch to get the rightful outcome. In the end though, we did, and I am now recognised as the sole inventor of the technology, although I am still very much disliked within my faculty for standing up for my rights.

Recently, I also invented another technology under the supervision of my new supervisor, who has been terrific about the whole thing, and who has equally contributed to the invention. I have found it incredibly slow to get my faculty's Business Development Managers to file a provisional patent application to protect this technology, having been waiting for over one month already now. This delay not only risks the patentability of the technology, but is holding up my thesis, as I cannot publish the corresponding research paper, and am doing a thesis by publication. The university is far too under-resourced and understaffed in this area, which is to the detriment of the students and ultimately the university.

Finally, I would like to say that filing a patent is one side of the "IP coin", commercialising it is the other. I have found Monash lacking when it comes to commercialisation. They do not dedicate
resources to this activity, and do not sufficiently equip any of their staff to do this job. As a result, the university's mantra seems to be to protect things at any cost, but don't worry about doing anything with them. If Monash is truly dedicated to delivering practical, useful technologies to society in order to solve the problems facing humanity, it seriously needs to smarten up in the commercialisation department!” (Engineering Faculty)

3.1.3 Scholarships and grants

“I have been fortunate to be given support through an APA scholarship and will be attending a conference in Rome later in the year with my airfare funded by a travel grant. These funds have certainly assisted me to undertake PhD study, but also provide a sense of commitment from the university to me that I feel obliged to repay by studying conscientiously and making the effort to keep going through difficult stages of the research. I imagine dropout rates are much higher among students who do not feel this mutual commitment and responsibility.” (Education Faculty)

“My scholarship is industry supported and I've had a great experience in terms of being paid on time and the correct amount. I received excellent funding to travel to the US and various locations interstate for conference participation, from both my school and the MRGS. The online forms are easy to fill in and funds are transferred efficiently. It's been a positive experience.” (Science Faculty)

“I was well informed regarding possible scholarships and grants. I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship and found it enabled me to concentrate on my studies instead of always worrying about money. It would be great if there were more scholarships and if the stipend was increased.” (Education Faculty)

“I was grateful to have an MRGS.” (Arts Faculty)

“good to have this support -although the support is financially very low.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“I'm part time so there doesn't seem much available” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“As for scholarships and grants, there is still some confusing things about how they work, but the MRGS seems quite efficient about answering inquires and helping students. There is also the constant battle between scholarship rates and the poverty line (but that is not a Monash issue), but obviously affects students greatly.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Completely unhelpful. Only limited to a selected few.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“The greatest problem for me, and I know this is the case for many other postgraduates, is the financial situation. Even though I have been lucky to receive a scholarship for 3.5 years, I didn't submit until the 4 years were up, which I believe is quite common. For financial reasons I therefore took on sessional work after my scholarship ended, which meant further stress and delay. I haven't earned any money over the summer period at all, and am now heavily in debt. I did apply for a completion scholarship to tie me over the last 3 months but this was prioritised and given to students who had not received scholarships, which meant I missed out. This is a very real and stressful problem for most postgraduates to try and juggle, and is one of the most discussed concern amongst postgraduate students. Especially for mature age students who might have extra financial stress from having children to support etc.” (Arts Faculty)
“Need clarity on what is covered eg. IPRS which is beneficial for international students with families as these scholarships provide for childcare relief from Centrelink. I only realised this when I applied for Centrelink benefits and was told that APA/MGS scholarships are not the equivalent of IPRS coverage.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“most unfair/unless you come to Monash via VCE in the last year, you've got no hope/although I was born in Australia (as were my parents) I could not get a scholarship & yet I'm sharing a room at Monash with an overseas student who has one/Australian Government scholarships should go to Australian citizens, not to overseas students.” (Arts Faculty)

“i find that the APA scholarship is too little to live on. If one was to divide it into a normal hourly rate based on "normal" fulltime hours, it equals to around $10 an hour. This is quite simply inadequate, and i have troubles paying essential bills and guaranteeing myself three healthy meals a day.

Solutions may include: the University to provide a supplementary allowance; lobbying the Government to make changes to qualify for a Low Income Health Care Card through Centrelink (as at the time of writing, if one was receiving just $12 an hour, fulltime, they would not qualify as low income); and to lobby the Government to have my course (Master of Arts) and others approved as a postgrad course to receive Youth Allowance or Austudy.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

“More money is always better”

“The duration of scholarships is just too short. In the biomedical sciences, it is a very unusual person who finishes in 3 years. Most do not finish in 3.5. Make the base scholarship 3.5 years with a 6 month extension. I worked out the other day I got paid 3 times more per hour when I was 12! The most important thing, by a very very long mile, is the issue of concession cards. Not giving PhD students concession cards is grossly unfair. We are still students making very little money. The cost to the government would be tiny but make a big difference to us.” (Medicine Faculty)

“I have been sent a few scholarship and grant information from my supervisor and have seen them posted on the weekly post-grad email newsletter but a lot of them I feel don’t suit me or that I wouldn’t get it; I was told, that if you had applied for a university grant before and didn’t get it you won’t be considered again so I don’t really bother. I hope I haven’t got that wrong.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“Whilst I am very appreciative of being provided with the APA scholarship I find that even with supplementary income from casual employment it is insufficient to cover my living expenses. My circumstances are probably not the norm. I am a single parent who has the sole financial responsibility of two adolescent/young adult students. My APA scholarship almost covers my rent. Therefore, during out of semester dates (when sessional tutoring work is not available) my scholarship does not cover living expenses. However, I imagine that for those doctoral students living at home, with partners, or living independently without dependents the scholarship is sufficient.” (Education Faculty)

“I have found this hard = am unsuccessful despite 3 first author papers + 1 coauthored paper. this will now be the biggest gap in my ‘competitive edge’.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“On a very positive note: I have always found the scholarship and admissions staff at MRGS to be some of the most friendly, helpful, skilled and proactive people in the university! They are a shining beacon in what can otherwise be a gloomy organisation at times.
I recently went through the process of applying for a research travel grant. Again, the MRGS staff
were very helpful, but my department managed to make the process incredibly onerous and confusing. So much so that you have to wonder whether it's worth the hassle of applying for the money at all...” (Engineering Faculty)

3.1.4 Travel grants

“I received a travel grant to attend a conference in France and on the way to present my work in Hong Kong. The grant made it possible for me to attend and I found it very helpful. I had no problems accessing the grant as I was helped by the admin staff in the faculty. I also found that staff and other students kept me well aware of possible funding opportunities.” (Education Faculty)

“The travel grant isn't bad, but please don't make us use the uni travel agents. They are more expensive than other travel agents.” (Medicine Faculty)

“I'm part-time and I work so doesn't seem much opportunity to use them, but I'm less than halfway through so far” (Education Faculty)

“Applying for travel grants was, like everything else at Monash, needlessly complicated and stressful. The worst situation was when I purchased registration and tickets to a conference believing that I was qualified for reimbursement. However, I later found out that as I was not presenting a paper I would not be reimbursed. Nowhere on the conditions form for the application did it say I had to present a paper to be reimbursed. Instead, the guidelines were vague and open, saying that the conference must contribute to my thesis work, which this particular conference did. I was told that the school had run out of money that semester, so I would have to bare the costs myself. I found this to be a pathetically amateurish approach. Either funding regulations need to be made clearer and more concrete, or a system of reimbursement before payment needs to be introduced.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“As for travel grants, I am currently in the process of applying for one, the application is really quite involved. And it is difficult that I cannot apply until I have been accepted at the conference, which doesn't leave much time. Perhaps students can be approved, on the condition that they are accepted? Instead of waiting to hear back from the conference and struggling to get your application in 6 weeks before the conference starts. It is also odd what the travel grant will cover - "airfares, but not conference registration or accommodation” when clearly things like conference registration are work costs.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Not great, very limited, very restricted” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“Need to be flexible to take into account the different costs of conferences and expenses in cities around the world. Perhaps can stipulate to 1 x local conference per year and 2 x international conferences (Asia Pacific region etc)” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“I did receive from the Faculty a small travel grant which helped to meet some of the costs of travelling... to examine primary sources, for which I was most grateful. However, the way I was given the money by the faculty meant that I had to pay tax on it as 'extra income' rather than as a reimbursement of expenses.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“I feel no consideration has been given to those who have to do field work overseas including in developing countries which needs additional help - both financial and expertise wise.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)
“Unfortunately, as an international student travel grants are not available to me.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“concept terrific, amount of grant thin.” (Arts Faculty)

“Unfortunately the only conference held over the final 2 years of my PhD which relates specifically to my research is scheduled for later this year, falling outside of the university’s criteria for a travel grant (i.e., after 36 months). It occurs to me that doctoral students would presumably have something more substantial to say towards the end of their PhD than in the early stages of their research. I am in no position to personally fund a trip to Europe to attend and present my research at the conference so will not be able to make use of the rare opportunity to engage with peers at this level.” (Education Faculty)

“none received - where do I apply? I haven't seen any info.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“The most confusing and frustrating forms that I have ever filled out in my life!” (Engineering Faculty)

“I recently went through the process of applying for a research travel grant. Again, the MRGS staff were very helpful, but my department managed to make the process incredibly onerous and confusing. So much so that you have to wonder whether it's worth the hassle of applying for the money at all...” (Engineering Faculty)

3.1.5 Support seminars

“HDR workshops (faculty run) were fantastic when I could attend, however, working full time means that I miss most of them this year as they are during the working day - can some be moved to after 4pm?” (Education Faculty)

“Prefer for the support seminars to be rotated across campuses eg. Clayton, Caulfield, Berwick, Peninsula etc. This is because it takes time to get to a particular campus and is not fair to charge transport costs for such incidental seminars.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“difficult to get to, I only have one day a week I'm able to get to the campus Mon - Fri - most of my time is on the weekends. Also, although some are available as recordings, there's not one centralised access point, I have to keep and sort through all of the emails to try and remember which ones to borrow/access. Which really doesn't happen when I'm also trying to do a lit. review and develop a system for the threads I want to remember to chase in the future.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“As a student enrolled at the Alfred we are often forgotten, and don't really have a lot of support seminars. It seems that recently this is slowly changing (especially now it has finally been recognised how many students there really are here). In regards to services, only recently have we got a student services manager here to help. Prior to this is has been difficult to arrange confirmation seminars, to know exactly what is required of us by the university, and just deal with forms and problems in general.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“...it has been recently mandated that HDR students are required to attend seminars that the university would organize (sometimes by fellow HDR students, other times by invited speakers) during weekdays. While their efforts to share knowledge is appreciated, research is multidisciplinary and
many times these topics do not interest or are not relevant to the topics of other HDR students. By making this and our weekly teaching duties (for our scholarship) compulsory, it is immensely difficult to conduct meaningful research, especially if field trips longer than a week are to be organized, which is often required in fields such as tropical biology (campus research strength).” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“the faculty research seminars are all on topics which are esoteric to say the least. I have attended a number of the seminars/sessions offered by MRGS, the Library and the MPA and they have almost always been of great benefit. Unfortunately as a part-time student who works fulltime, I am unable to attend as many as I would like.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“The (faculty) seminars should be made available on alternative days or held more frequently. Art and design workshops would be of great benefit. The Colloquium should be held twice a year” (Art and Design Faculty)

“limited at Alfred campus. It was great when we had wine and cheese night last year. Please reorganise these” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“My experience is that the MRGS run exPERT seminars are all run for the lowest common denominator, so to speak, which prevents a lot of HDR students from participating in them. I have been to a couple, and was bored stiff within about two seconds. A great example of what the university needs to move towards is the MPA Excellence Seminar Series. I have found this to be undoubtedly one of the very best resources available to HDR students at Monash, and it is something I would see as a big pro when comparing universities.” (Engineering Faculty)

### 3.1.6 Access to facilities and services

“I’m lucky as my group had $$ to set me up. i don’t know what I am missing out on by being at Alfred centre and not Clayton.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Excellent- i have been using social work facilities/services more - eg. rooms, computers - most staff are also very accessible and help you as required.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“The postgraduate centre has been of great help where I have had a shared office space. This space has been invaluable. It is often a very isolating experience and the centre helps this sense of isolation. David and Colin are both very helpful in any matter” (Arts Faculty)

“as I also worked in the University part time during this period, this was not an issue for me.” (Arts Faculty)

“Everything in this area has been great the library on both Caulfield and Clayton is excellent I always find what I am looking for and even more.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“MRGS in general are wonderful to deal with for their friendly, relaxed, and very competent and efficient manner. The online forms for services and requests are easy to use and the website provides excellent information about all PhD matters. Recently, my colleagues and I were also able to call a lady at MRGS regarding concerns about end of candidature, and had an impromptu phone conference where she answered all our questions in detail and provided invaluable advice. It was great for us just to be able to call unannounced and get such personal and detailed advice! I can’t commend MRGS
enough! MPA have also been absolutely wonderful, although I have been less involved with them than with the MRGS, simply because I got to know people at the MRGS centre early on in my candidature. I really don't know what I would have done without the wonderful support and advice of both MRGS and MPA. Keep up the great work!

Fiona Hibbert at the School of Biological Sciences has been equally amazing, providing all the support a PhD could need. She is available to chat and provide advice whenever we drop by her office, and is patient, kind, and very efficient and competent. She even helped develop a page on the school's website which is dedicated to providing links for postgrads. She works closely with our postgrad representative committee and knows the ins and outs of all school, MRGS, and Faculty wide postgrad related matters. Our School is very lucky to have her.

MRGS has been excellent! My school has also been great, providing an office space near to my lab and other school facilities. This office is quite noisy and crowded (there are 8 occupants in quite a small room) due to a lack of space within the school in general. However, new spaces are being developed and I have now moved into a newer, quieter office.

The school is always happy to talk about postgrad concerns and provides wonderful academic support and training (particularly through the Australian Centre of Biodiversity). The technical support and training from lab technicians such as Ric San Martin, Sheila Hamilton-Brown, and Belinda Lees is wonderful, and includes OH&S, equipment maintenance, equipment training and scientific protocols, sample storage, and borrowing systems. Everyone is super helpful, and therefore any facilities/equipment/training I have needed, has been provided. For example, I was lucky enough to run experiments at the Jock Marshall Reserve for over a year with help from technical staff, which contributed greatly to my dataset. Also, the school vehicles were brilliant for country field work - a necessary component of most ecological studies.

We have two school seminar streams (one casual, one formal) and lots of school events, which enhance social cohesion and support within the school and encourage collaborations. Lab space and facilities are quite good, as are the availability of seminar rooms when needed, access to printers and pigeon holes, tea room facilities, and financial support for laboratory analyses, equipment purchases, and conference attendance.

IT facilities have been excellent. The school purchased our laptops (which have been very good), and IT provide great software and support. Monash's website, Blackboard, my monash portal, and google mail are indispensable and well developed. Faculty training has also been quite good depending on the speakers (as has teaching support for demonstrators from the Faculty and School level). In addition to this, the counselling services for stressed out PhD through the Monash Well-Being Hub is top-notch.” (Science Faculty)

“part-time, in one day a week and on weekends - facilities are OK except during the Dec-Jan holidays which is when I'm off from school and everything closes earlier. Services - difficult.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“Access to equipment was patchy. I moved office at least once, and newly installed equipment took some time to start working. Printing facilities were particularly bad, but computers would also occasionally stop working which was very frustrating. Changes in the email address system (between 2009 to 2010 in particular) were needless and frustrating. It took me some time to establish my new email address. Again, this is not the fault of any individual, but an outcome of Monash's seeming desire to change things even if they are working fine.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)
“It’s not a very interactive environment, students aren’t supported at all, even at the level of desks and working spaces. There are so called ‘hot spots’ at Caulfield, where you come in and u look for an empty desk. If there is no free desk, bad luck you go. You have to move your stuff each time, because it’s not your desk - how on earth can a PhD be done in this way? I’m lucky cause I got a space towards the end of 1st year, but the idea of these hot spots for phd students is something I can’t understand. This is work that requires so much focus yet, I don’t get how they can be done in this way? The Post Grad room on level 11 for PSI students is also a common room, a kitchen and a photocopying room. Do you think anyone could write anything there with the printer going all day, people making coffee and chatting, much less a thesis? Excuse my blunt language, I’m in a hurry right now, and just going on and on....but I'm really looking forward to finish as soon as possible, and work, cause as much as I love my thesis, my work, and my project, I'm not a fan of the whole experience as such.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“... the libraries can grant research students access to the library to return books, especially on weekends or school holiday terms. This is because research students do not follow the normal academic semester and what this means is that the library can remain closed but with the student IDs, research students can then enter the library to drop books off or borrow using self help terminals.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“office space/printing and copying. Currently, i have shared office space on level 8 of the Menzies building. However, i made recently enquiries for the office space provided in the MRGS to which was more aesthetically pleasing and provided a lot more storage for my books/papers/folders. However, i decided that i should keep the office space in the Menzies purely because i had access to free photocopying and printing. I would have liked to have taken the opportunity to be at the MRGS instead of the Menzies.

Solutions can include: extra funding to the MRGS to provide for such free services from the university budget or invested into a pool by the various faculties/departments; or to provide a photocopy/printing allowance that is put onto a students’ ID card weekly or fortnightly; or to provide free photocopying and printing to HDR students with a swipe of their ID card; or to allow access to all Arts Faculty postgrad students access to the free photocopying and printing at level 8 in the Menzies building. In addition, more storage space can be introduced into the postgrad shared office spaces too.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

“It is no secret that the Sunway Campus is lacking in facilities and research equipments and also, funding. As I currently pursue a PhD program in the same campus, I find the provision of an annual RM12,000 grant a year too meagre to produce quality work. I say this with no condemnation. If the university was already well-equipped with research facilities and equipment, having RM12,000 a year for consumables would be alright, but our campus does not have much of the equipment required. Even though my topic is highly relevant to bioactivity and tropical biology, which are both supposed research strengths of the campus, there is little equipment and funding that we have access to in campus. For example, simple, functional heating mantles and Kjeldahl flasks of suitable volumes could not be found in campus, and these are simple equipment that are almost essential to nutrient cycling studies, which are central to tropical biology. While we would love to have modern Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium and Carbon analysers, we dare not even think about it because our campus cannot even provide the rural form of such equipment. Apart from that, the university cars available are also off-limits to research students who wish to conduct field trips for data gathering and research, which forces students to use their own cars or seek transport from other parties before getting compensated later through mileage claims. Field trip destinations that are pristine enough for study
are often hard to access and would best be done with four-wheel drives, which average students would not have/could not afford. I ask that the university consider having several of such cars that research students could borrow responsibly for research-related trips. To add to that, if the university could offer a ferrying service for new international students by fetching each of them from the airport to the university (~130 km roundtrip), I believe the university is well-capable of providing a few cars that research students can benefit from. Ultimately, better research would only bring glory to the university.

As a current PhD student, I would like to mention also the lacks of some other facilities. Examples would be chemicals, many of which we require to purchase on our own. This is often time-consuming, given the many administrative steps involved in purchasing. There has also been cases of the purchasing/finance department swapping orders for the requested items for lower grade, and unacceptable equipment/chemicals that they deemed suitable. This is very unhealthy, and would require students to lodge complaints and re-process the entire purchasing ordeal. I suggest a common chemical store managed by the university where research students could obtain chemicals from - akin to how top European institutes run their chemical store. Monash University is supposed to be a world famous university, why not run it like what it's supposed to be?” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“At present I am trying to put together a draft, and assistance with formatting/presentation would be invaluable. However, the University appears to have no process in place to assist. There are likewise as far as I can determine, no definitive guidelines on thesis structure - up to the individual and/or supervisor? assuming you can get any advice.

What would be useful would be a formal induction, an assessment of the priority areas for training, and an annual opportunity to talk about these matters. BusEco did the latter and the one time I attended, I found it extremely useful, because you can ask the questions relevant to the stage of your candidature which you are at.” (Arts Faculty Gippsland)

“we are not allowed to order reagents, and only if it’s absolutely necessary, which is an ongoing process in 2011, since our lab is running out of money. And now we are feeling so much pressure, and even worried that, how we are going to finish it smoothly. So, we urge University should have some kind of regulation to prevent these situations happening anymore. When supervisors are allowed to take students, University must make sure (should have some regulation to confirm) that, they are capable of looking after their students all the way.” (Medicine Faculty)

“Lack of funds for buying reagents when there are 4 PhD students in the lab. Enough money should be available for each PhD student for the years of the PhD.”

“I had access to office space, computer, photocopying etc as required. I was assigned to an office space and computer for the full length of my candidature. This space was very suitable to my needs. However there has been a rearrangement of space for HDR students and it seems to be that this is less suitable as it is more squashed but students do still have their own space and computer.” (Education Faculty)

“My own faculty [education] undertook a major refurbishment of existing research offices towards the end of 2010 and unfortunately did not manage the relocation of our offices during this 3 month period at all well. Research students were not given any advance notice of the commencement of the work and had their computers and personal items removed from their desks and relocated to a storage area without notice. Indeed, it was not until I arrived on campus one day and tried to access the office that I learnt of the changed arrangements. The refurbishment caused a considerable disruption in
access to computer, printing and telephone facilities. The random dispersion of student’s computers and possessions to a number of cramped offices disrupted the “research community” that we had developed within our small group of associated researchers. Having 4-6 students randomly assigned a small office (built to accommodate one academic) without telephone access and limited internet access was not conducive to a productive research process. Had the project team consulted with the primary stakeholders before they commenced the relocation a considerable amount of angst and disruption could have been avoided.” (Education Faculty)

“Statistics consulting service: I have had a very difficult time in accessing the statistics consultation service. It is advertised on the MRGS website as a primary resource for research students but there are some obvious areas in which this service needs to be improved. These involve the administration of the service and providing a good match between the student’s needs and the consultant’s expertise. Twice over a 6 month period I have had considerable difficulty in just getting through to the service allocated to my faculty provided by the BUSECO faculty. In the first instance my many phone messages were not returned and emails were not responded to. I gave up after 4-6 weeks and contacted the service provided by the engineering/maths schools who responded to my request immediately. I met with a consultant who advised me that the statistical procedure I was using was not an area he was particularly familiar with and that I should specifically request a consultant who was. I respected his response and agreed it was in my best interests to find a consultant who could better meet my needs. After many more attempts to contact the BUSECO stats service someone finally answered the phone. I was told that any of the consultants would be able to help. However, my own experiential knowledge had already shown me that this was not the case. I was also told that my phone messages had not been returned because the faculty had recently reallocated phone extensions (which does not explain why emails were not responded to). This prolonged and frustrating attempt to get help left me feeling unsupported and without confidence in the stats consulting service. I subsequently decided to try and plod on without their assistance. Yet a full 5 months later I recently found myself again in need of some specific statistical help. And again I went through the same difficult process of trying to contact the BUSECO service (5 emails and 3 phone messages unanswered from December 7th to February 18th ). Eventually I gave up and met with the consultant in Maths/Engineering. However, it became clear very early on that he was not familiar with SPSS (the statistical package for social sciences that I was using). I emailed a consultant at the BUSECO stats service directly (via his Monash staff address rather than the stats service address) and specifically requested help with SPSS-related issues. I had one meeting and came away feeling he knew less about conducting the analysis within SPSS than I did. So, six months down the track, I do not have my statistical analyses completed, I have a supervisor telling me to get help from a stats service that I have lost confidence in and I am considering paying for external consultancy, even though this will cause me considerable financial hardship.

The service needs to provide help that is specific to the student’s needs. This could be achieved by having students complete a form stating what statistical package they are using and what methods they are using (if known) from their first phone/online contact and allocating consultants based on this data. This could also help consultants better prepare for meetings with students by familiarising themselves with the relevant method for the specific statistical program the student is using before meeting with them. Given that many of the Arts and Education students use SPSS there seems some need to engage consultants whose statistical package of choice is SPSS. I question the value of funding this centralised statistics consultancy and think students would be much better served if the funding was used to provide designated stats consultants within the faculties who use the statistical programs taught in that faculty. This system currently benefits doctoral students within the school of
psychology. The most worrisome aspect of this experience was not having emails and phone calls responded to. It conveys the message that they just didn't care and suggests that the system is not used by many students.” (Education Faculty)

“Generally very good, but sport is far too expensive for poverty-stricken students”. (Engineering Faculty)

### 3.1.7 Research culture/peer interaction

“This was excellent. There is a strong research culture among the HDR students and support networks occurred on campus and between campuses. Students organised their own monthly meetings and invited staff to run workshops on a wide range of research topics. Students also organised a yearly conference and were able to practice presentation skills and conference organisation in a supportive environment.” (Education Faculty)

“Overall, I think the research training I have received in the Faculty of Education has been very good. The faculty has provided seminars on various aspects of writing the thesis and confirmation proposal etc, and my supervisor has encouraged her students to join in faculty research group meetings, reading groups and to prepare conference papers etc. But by far the biggest strength that the faculty of Ed has going for it is MERC (Monash Education Research Community). This organisation has provided regular seminars on interesting and relevant issues, but even more importantly provides informal support and connects us with fellow students with which to share the highs and lows of academic research. I have probably learnt as much about how to conduct research from my fellow MERC members as I have from faculty staff!” (Education Faculty)

“I think the research culture and peer interactions here at the Alfred are quite good. More and more inter-departmental seminars are starting, and some money is being provided towards more social things in order to get everyone to know each other more and more. Having a significant number of research minds, together with the accessibility of clinical samples and clinical work within the hospital is probably one of the research strengths for the sort of work we do here.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“love it. Lucky to have a semi-large group at the Alfred campus. the social drinks etc doesn't work as everyone too busy. but the professional seminars aimed at PhD students or FREE wine and drinks within the workplace work.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“The culture is pretty good. There is a lot of publish-or-perish pressure, but not the extent at other institutes.” (Medicine Faculty)

“Good- again i have been more involved in the social work - i do get info. from time to time from MRGS and MPA but i have not utilised them fully. social work conducts two compulsory interactions through HDR conference which is helpful. some of us/students have also started a monthly peer interaction with social work professor and we discuss many research related issues - this has been excellent. something like this i.e monthly peer interaction could be organised in a structured way for everyone - will be worth looking into for others as well.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“Support from my office mates as been crucial to my experience. I couldn't have got so far without them, both in terms of academic advice and discussion, and personal support and encouragement. Other peers within the school who are at a similar stage in thesis preparation provide the most
valuable support and I am in daily contact with my network, including those students who have returned home to overseas countries to finish their write-up. Social events around birthdays and finished chapters help everyone feel included, supported, and to have a little fun.

There is a competitive research culture within my school, which is excellent to see. Many collaborations and friendly discussions about science can be heard about the corridors, much support is given to grant writers (particularly through the ACB), and academic success is duely celebrated. There is a real sense of community within the school, which is promoted by regular social events (like fundraisers and photography competitions), school seminars, the ACB student TalkFest (whereby students present their work to the school and prizes are awarded), demonstrating opportunities for postgraduate students, meetings between heads of school and academic, postgrad, and other groups on a monthly basis, overall school morning teas, and group emails about all important issues. It’s a fun place to work.

Recent issues within the school as a result of VSPs have lowered morale and brought lots of sudden change, including the loss of technical staff and supervisors. I hope the school culture and provision of facilities continue despite these.” (Science Faculty)

“good. I found as I moved through towards the final stages of pre-submission, that I had less time and mental space to accommodate a truly reciprocal peer interaction, so dropped out in the third year, but it was good to have a choice. Given that the main task had to be done in isolation, it was good to know there was a peer group out there. School seminars were excellent opportunities for social as well as intellectual exchange.” (Arts Faculty)

“non-existent as far as I can access it, and being an HDR student its very isolating. Everything seems geared towards full-time and on-campus students.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“As far as I could tell there was virtually no culture of peer interaction or research in the school. This is not the fault of individual academics, but rather stems from a multi-campus system in which academics are either scattered around Melbourne on different campuses or work from home. Over my 3 years as a PhD candidate, there were several academics, prominent in my field, who I set eyes on maybe a half a dozen times.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“Atrocious! Non-existent. There is no collegial culture here. No academic culture. I think this goes for the social sciences. I come from a medical science background, and postgrads communities are strong in the sciences. They are fully supported in so many ways. Students have scholarships and travel grants, if not from the Uni, or the faculty, then from the individual lab. So, those with H1 or H2A or H2B are all supported equally. They have fortnightly seminars, discussions and work together a lot/collaborate. I feel like in the social science, students are encouraged to enrol, and then it's like "oh well welcome but you're on your own" sort of culture. Older post-grads used to tell me PhDs in the social science are isolating, good luck to you, and I never knew what that meant. But come to 2nd year, and I get it.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“I have not found my experience in the faculty at all collegial or helpful. In (previous faculty) I felt a part of the faculty and academic staff could not have been more helpful. In Arts, I do not know other postgrads, “ (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“Funding for students to host conferences in their areas of research” (Business and Economics Faculty)
“I'm disappointed in the lack of peer interaction. The Masters by research program is far too dependent on independent work.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“On the university cultural environment for part time students, I feel this is a little isolating, as you don’t know anyone. Over the years I have seen familiar faces around but I really don’t feel involved with in the university community at all. There are lectures every Wednesday that you can go to, but that is not really a forum for social networking. I knew a few people when I started but they have mostly all finished, as they were all full time students. At the start of my candidature we were split up into groups where we all sat around and chatted about our work and other peoples work which was nice but that ended after the first year, and also not many people turned up in the end so that really didn’t work. My supervisor also started up a similar thing with her candidates but that ended as well due to lack of attendance by everyone, even me. I don’t know how to fix that I guess you can’t fix other people complacency and it is hard to coordinate other people’s timetables etc. Plus part time students that work might not be able to come to a weekly thing because of other commitments in their lives.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“In my opinion the research culture is very poor. There is a mentality (at least in my faculty) that students are merely tools to be used by their supervisors. I know of many incidents where supervisors have pushed their own personal agendas and even taken credit for students’ works through authorship and patents. Supervisors are very protective of their research fields, so strongly discourage collaboration of their students with students from other labs. This is a shame. The joke amongst postgrads in our Department is that the academics are like kids in a play ground, who don't want to share the monkey bars with each other!” (Engineering Faculty)

“In my department, the research culture is woeful. It's like a game of monopoly, with all of the academics trying to protect their little pieces of turf! As usual, the students get caught in the middle and suffer, as we cannot mingle and collaborate with students from the "other side". This is a serious administrative fault of the university. Worst of all, being research training, students subjected to this will be trained that this is the norm, which is a serious concern.” (Engineering Faculty)

3.1.8 IT support and software access

“The only thing I can think of to improve my research training would be better access to training on NVivo software. The training run by QSR is prohibitively expensive and there seems to be limited knowledge of the software by staff in the faculty. Perhaps the university or faculty could pay for a faculty member to do extensive training so that they are able to offer support to other students and staff trying to use this software.” (Education Faculty)

“the library tutorials I've found have been good. What software am I able to access? I've received an email about NVIVO training but there's a fee for that.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“Excellent service but I would have liked more and cheaper access to training in the NVivo qualitative data analysis.” (Education Faculty)

“excellent, blackboard system works REALLY well” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Good-i have not been very good at using all the facilities but am starting to use them more - just working on installing LARDS and they have been very helpful. however I do feel we have not had
good structured orientation regarding all the IT related services available for students - this will be helpful.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“Good to Very good” (PSI, Arts Faculty.)

“fairly good but it can be difficult at times to speak with anyone in IT.” (Arts Faculty)

“Microsoft Project please!” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“ IT support and software is fantastic” (Education Faculty)

“Very good”

“The Monash network is incredible. The Science Faculty IT guys have helped me on the spot whenever I've dropped in. Great software is provided through the Faculty (although e-Primer would be a welcome addition for MDS analyses).” (Science Faculty)

“I did not require specialist software but found IT support forthcoming. Over my candidature these facilities have been improved and now audio/visual equipment is also available to students with support.” (Education Faculty)

“one of the main things that I feel is lacking for me, as a student is that my supervisor’s computer equipment which is a basic lap top and software is not up to date or powerful enough for her to view my work properly. Even when I have gone in with a DVD of my work she was unable to play it properly though the equipment that she had in her office. So as a result of this it makes it extremely hard for her to fully understand what I am doing, all because of poor equipment and technical support which frustrates me to no end, as well as her I am positive of this. Even this week she was unable to open and read a basic word document that I sent her with my thesis writing and this has happened a few times. I think that this is bad especially for part students who rely on sending their writing and other details to their supervisors by email. Hopefully this is not the same for all departments but I really think that this should be looked at in detail.” (Art and Design Faculty)

3.1.9  Course-specific feedback

“During the four years of my study I completed some course work in the first year then researched and presented a 40,000 word thesis. During the second part of the course work, I felt let down because whenever I sought advice re clarification of assignment tasks, I was never contacted. Calls and messages left on the communications system that is part of the University's support system for students were never answered. I felt very sorry for some obviously younger students studying overseas who were posting queries regarding the same areas I was questioning and they, too received no replies so we tried to help each other in efforts to interpret the often ambiguous assignment requests. To add to my dissatisfaction, one of my assignments was "lost" between the mail centre (that acknowledged receipt of my work ) and the lecturer's desk. I had to resubmit by email and the format apparently changed in transit consequently I was admonished for poor presentation! I was very disappointed with my score of Credit for this subject and had I been 50 years younger would have taken it further.” (Education Faculty)

“If I was not already an experienced researcher and academic, as a Distance Ed student I would have been really struggling to complete my tasks competently. I find the special unit in Gippsland (for
distance ed students) is/was so focused on undergraduate/course work students that is was of no help to me at all.” (DE, Gippsland)

“... the coursework components in my Honours degree made little sense, as an Honours degree is meant to prepare one for research. Everyone who enters the Honours program would have finish a relevant science degree with at least a distinction average of selected year 3 units, which already proves their capabilities in terms of theory. Having a multidisciplinary, non-specific coursework paper which requires students to further spend time studying for an exam that does not relate to their research is a burden that in the long haul, does not even benefit them. I propose that the course work exam component of this degree be removed for the betterment of the program. Other components such as proposal and final presentations, and literature reviews were good in aiding students understand their topic. Another suggestion would be to have progress report presentations by students to their supervisors and examiners so that suitable adjustments and input into their projects could be made possible. This would ultimately result in higher quality research.” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“During my PhD I was able to participate in the "Commercialization of Research" certificate, which was of limited value as the four components (Organizational Management, Accounting for Business, Copyright & patent Law, and Commercialization of Research), were all dealing with generalities which had little relevance to the immediate challenge of completing useful doctoral research.”

“ It would have been really great if there was a combined qualitative/quantitative unit that ran during semester 1 last year.” (Education Faculty)

3.1.10 General comments

“overall I have had a positive experience of doing my research in Monash with support from supervisors as well as from across the university through various expert and other seminars” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“I’m absolutely loving my research as it has given me a sense of pride and has allowed me to branch out from my normal work as a teacher.” (Education Faculty)

“I had a very worthwhile HDR experience at Monash and have just completed my degree.” (Education Faculty)

“as I found the whole P-G research experience really terrific. As a mature age student and an experienced researcher, my experience was perhaps not typical. I am truly grateful to Monash for the opportunity and the whole experience. I appreciate the University's commitment to best practice.” (Arts Faculty)

“they (Med Faculty) have actually hired someone (maybe at the end of last year?) called Gladys Britto she is the "student services manager" and hopefully she will help to improve things for the students here” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“My overall experience as a Monash PhD and sessional tutor was a negative one, characterised by stress caused by the systematic incompetence and needles bureaucracy of the Monash administrative system. I do not know if this was the case for the school in which I was enrolled, the Arts Faculty or Monash as a whole. It was certainly not caused by any individuals, but was more systematic. Overall,
I found Monash to be uninspiring, and less like a University than a Business.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“Another factor which could assist future post-grads whose research has an interdisciplinary focus is some consideration of how to encourage & facilitate the supervisor and their postgrad in drawing upon the expertise of different faculties relevant to their research project. While lip-service is paid to the notion of inter-disciplinary collaboration, in practice there seems to be little in the way of policy or procedure to encourage and support supervisors who believe it may be advantageous for a post grad to consult with members of other faculties in order to bring complementary forms of expertise to bear on a multi-disciplinary research project.”

“the food provided on campus is at exorbitant price.

Solutions may include: putting a limit as to what can be charged for particular foods; and/or to have a student-run food co-op whereby students prepare and serve food to other students at particular times/days free of charge.

i am quite envious of the range of clubs and activities that is available to undergrad students. For instance, i identify myself as not being heterosexual and i was disappointed that the Monash university queer club was only meant for undergrads. Further, i wanted to pick up acting again to boost my confidence and make friends with others at university, but i found again that the Monash uni student theatre club was only for undergrads as well.

Possible solutions may be: to increase funding for those departments and others so that they may be open to postgrad students as well; or for MPA to receive extra funding to duplicate the clubs and societies that already exist for undergrad students.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

3.1.11 Research training strengths

“explanation of library resources and how IP works” (Engineering Faculty)

“Good access to equipment and very knowledge sharing with other researchers and Phd students”

“highly dependent on the student, supervisors and group, mine have been excellent. lots of course work available and encouraged, seminars encouraged, conferences attendance but more participation at conferences encouraged” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“various seminars run to enhance our research skills - esp. expert, HDR conferences, various seminars by library and learning skills unit on writing/readability/english skills. having milestones during the candidature such as confirmation, ethics, HDR conferences is also helpful.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

3.1.12 Research training weaknesses

“No strengths at all. Training is up to the candidate to acquire. There is no guidance, besides supervisor feedback and mentoring of course. Training is absent. PhD students are left "just to deal with it" it seems.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)
“Lack of post PhD opportunities and also clarity as to what are the requirements for a research fellow position (eg. training for ARC grant application)” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Lack of supervision from the supervisor in term of strategy and how to handle the different steps of the project. Lack of funds”

“Office space is too crowded, particularly at the write-up stage (although the upstairs room at the Matheson Library is an excellent substitute!)”

Sudden, unexpected change as a result of VSPs within the school” (Science Faculty)

“Menzies construction noise meant that it was not a conducive environment for study.” (Arts Faculty)

“don't interact with other groups in different Fields but proximity close, don't interact with similar topic groups in different locations / far proximity” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“less focus appears to be on qualitative skills esp in broader university seminars. expert has many on quantitative/statistics/experimentation and by comparison very low on qualitative and programs such as N-VIVO - which we have to then request for department to do specifically for us”.

“there is also less information for international students both on processes we have to do and resources available for us. national and intl. students get same financial support to conduct field work - although the international field work costs significantly much more. “

“training/info., on copyright/citation etc missing in the overall research training schedule. “

“the university also appears to be less knowledgeable regarding conducting research in overseas especially in developing countries and therefore has less to offer to students - eg. ethics process takes a very narrow australian lens and makes it difficult for students wanting to undertake research in developing countries. for research to be truly liberating and of significant impact international expertise should be built into the university systems.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“Too many to count! Poor practises breed poor practises. For example, if the Head of Department is willing to admit that their are “mate's rates” when it comes to authorship, then the student will develop those same practises. If supervisors use those under them as a way to boost their research output, then the students will develop these same habits. The best research training that a student can receive is by witnessing their supervisor conducting ethical research.” (Engineering Faculty)

3.1.12 Recommendations for improvement

“Perhaps PhD students should have coursework components?” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“The main suggestion for improvement is to have more available online so that external students like me can get access to some of the training offered, e.g. Expert seminars” (distance education candidate, Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“Promote each campus for its own merits and not give preference to Clayton or Caulfield because of higher TER scores” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Confirmation should be a collaborative process, not an interrogation and an attempt to 'catch out' the student.” (Arts Faculty)
“More statistical training would be great.”

“More advice about the difficulties encountered in the final write-up stage (stress, need for sustained concentration and quiet)”

“once or twice a semester, after hours workshops or seminars for part-time students, surely there are a lot of us who work and can’t make Mon-Fri business hours sessions? I don’t want weekly or even monthly sessions, that’s too many. But 3-4 tailored, targeted sessions over 1 or 2 weeks would be great, they’d be ‘special events’ and would get prioritised.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“I understand how it might be hard to teach and whilst it might be one of those things you pick up on the run, but I would like to hear a little about the politics and formalities that are set up between different levels of research: supervisors, other students, collaborators…” (Engineering Faculty)

“Be sure that the supervisor can afford a Phd student in term of finance for the 4 years of the Phd. Better handling of the research project in term of timeline and experiments needed to publish.”

“Meditation recommended for postgrads (mindfulness meditation has helped a bunch of us).

Less crowded offices (quiet makes writing much, much, much easier)

Public transport to the university could be improved.

More information about the VSPs occurring in the school and impacts on postgraduates (some students have lost their supervisors mid-candidature).

More getting published workshops with scientific editors (we held one of these through the school and it was indispensable)” (Science Faculty)

“Future researchers would benefit from a more conducive workspace if one is to be provided” (Arts Faculty)

“we have a PhD coordinator. if a student has problems they know to go to them. If not available to others, then that should be top priority.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“more focus on qualitative research, international research both in terms of resources and information to students should be enhanced.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“Better training for supervisors, and enforcing the MRGS code of conduct for supervisors as they do for students. Also, for postgrad coordinators to be more in touch with the postgrads.” (Engineering Faculty)
3.2 Responses arranged by faculty

There were no responses received from HDR postgraduates in the Faculties of Information Technology, Law and Pharmacy.

3.2.1 Art and Design Faculty

“at the beginning of my candidature I was a full time student, but I was advised (and rightly so) to go part time due to my outside work commitments that seemed to take time away a lot of time from my studies. So I moved happily into part time status where I have been able to have the room to expand my thinking and creativity, which I think my work really needed (it was great insight from my supervisor). The process to do this was great and I found it really easy to be able to move from one status to the other it was not difficult at all, and almost no red tape.

I meet with my supervisor once or twice a month depending on what I have been up to but I mostly just touch base with her through email. It has been great being able to do that as my work itself is heavily based within this technology.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“Research training is lacking. My supervisor supervises my studio work, but not my written work. I don't know who can provide feedback for me. Lack of progress feedback and barometers as to what is expected of me.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“I haven’t had to deal with any issues in this area (intellectual property) I feel very secure with my work and how it is handled by the university (as long as it doesn’t get lost)” (Art and Design Faculty)

“I have been sent a few scholarship and grant information from my supervisor and have seen them posted on the weekly post-grad email newsletter but a lot of them I feel don’t suit me or that I wouldn’t get it; I was told, that if you had applied for a university grant before and didn’t get it you won’t be considered again so I don’t really bother. I hope I haven’t got that wrong.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“Unfortunately, as an international student travel grants are not available to me.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“ They (library) even run seminars that help you with writing your thesis and they are always there to help you with any questions regarding research writing and referencing they even supplied us with the program end note which is the best thing ever. They are great absolutely” (Art and Design Faculty)

“The (faculty) seminars should be made available on alternative days or held more frequently. Art and design workshops would be of great benefit. The Colloquium should be held twice a year” (Art and Design Faculty)

“Everything in this area (facilities and services) has been great the library on both Caulfield and Clayton is excellent I always find what I am looking for and even more.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“I'm disappointed in the lack of peer interaction. The Masters by research program is far too dependent on independent work.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“On the university cultural environment for part time students, I feel this is a little isolating, as you don’t know anyone. Over the years I have seen familiar faces around but I really don’t feel involved with in the university community at all. There are lectures every Wednesday that you can go to, but that is not really a forum for social networking. I knew a few people when I started but they have
mostly all finished, as they were all full time students. At the start of my candidature we were split up into groups where we all sat around and chatted about our work and other peoples work which was nice but that ended after the first year, and also not many people turned up in the end so that really didn’t work. My supervisor also started up a similar thing with her candidates but that ended as well due to lack of attendance by everyone, even me. I don’t know how to fix that I guess you can’t fix other people complacency and it is hard to coordinate other people’s timetables etc. Plus part time students that work might not be able to come to a weekly thing because of other commitments in their lives.” (Art and Design Faculty)

“one of the main things that I feel is lacking for me, as a student is that my supervisor’s computer equipment which is a basic lap top and software is not up to date or powerful enough for her to view my work properly. Even when I have gone in with a DVD of my work she was unable to play it properly though the equipment that she had in her office. So as a result of this it makes it extremely hard for her to fully understand what I am doing, all because of poor equipment and technical support which frustrates me to no end, as well as her I am positive of this. Even this week she was unable to open and read a basic word document that I sent her with my thesis writing and this has happened a few times. I think that this is bad especially for part students who rely on sending their work and other details to their supervisors by email. Hopefully this is not the same for all departments but I really think that this should be looked at in detail.” (Art and Design Faculty)

3.2.2 Arts Faculty

“Excellent. My supervisors are both awesome... no matter how busy they are they always make time to see me, email reply is almost always immediately or on the same day and week. I have my drafts corrected and feedback given no later than a month. In my first year, this was fortnightly, particularly with my main supervisor Colleen Lewis, because she wanted me to practice writing.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“My supervision was good and assisted me in every way in completing my thesis.” (School of ECPS, Arts)

“Excellent supervision.” (Arts Faculty)

“The two supervisor system worked really well for me, as my supervisors had complementary skills and gave different but really helpful feedback.” (Arts Faculty)

“I believe that when there are problems with supervisors and wanting to change supervisor is a greater problem than perhaps expressed, and is another area of concern for many postgraduates. It is often a deeply personal relationship and often a very difficult issue to discuss. I think it is important that there are more than one supervisor assigned, not just on paper. I have had no dealings with my second supervisor at all.” (Arts Faculty)

“generally poor/supervisors unavailable too often” (Arts Faculty)

“I was originally in (previous faculty) but had to move faculties when my primary supervisor moved. My initial secondary supervisor retired, so that meant yet another change of supervisor. My primary supervisor (new faculty) likewise left Monash, so another change... even trying to see my supervisor has been a trial. I feel that I am an impost on his time. There has been no help with facilities, everything had to be done in isolation as supervisors not interested. In sum, I feel that I am on my
own and that if I didn't contact my advisor for 6 months he wouldn't notice.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“The issue of compulsory publication on Arrow is problematic for anyone considering publication as a book, but the three year embargo provision is helpful.” (Arts Faculty)

“I was grateful to have an MRGS (scholarship).” (Arts Faculty)

“(Scholarships) Completely unhelpful. Only limited to a selected few.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“The greatest problem for me, and I know this is the case for many other postgraduates, is the financial situation. Even though I have been lucky to receive a scholarship for 3.5 years, I didn't submit until the 4 years were up, which I believe is quite common. For financial reasons I therefore took on sessional work after my scholarship ended, which meant further stress and delay. I haven’t earned any money over the summer period at all, and am now heavily in debt. I did apply for a completion scholarship to tie me over the last 3 months but this was prioritised and given to students who had not received scholarships, which meant I missed out. This is a very real and stressful problem for most postgraduates to try and juggle, and is one of the most discussed concern amongst postgraduate students. Especially for mature age students who might have extra financial stress from having children to support etc.” (Arts Faculty)

“most unfair/unless you come to Monash via VCE in the last year, you've got no hope/although I was born in Australia (as were my parents)I could not get a scholarship & yet I'm sharing a room at Monash with an overseas student who has one/Australian Government scholarships should go to Australian citizens, not to overseas students.” (Arts Faculty)

“i find that the APA scholarship is too little to live on. If one was to divide it into a normal hourly rate based on "normal" fulltime hours, it equals to around $10 an hour. This is quite simply inadequate, and i have troubles paying essential bills and guaranteeing myself three healthy meals a day.

Solutions (to financial difficulties) may include: the University to provide a supplementary allowance; lobbying the Government to make changes to qualify for a Low Income Health Care Card through Centrelink (as at the time of writing, if one was receiving just $12 an hour, fulltime, they would not qualify as low income); and to lobby the Government to have my course (Master of Arts) and others approved as a postgrad course to receive Youth Allowance or Austudy.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

“Not great (travel grants), very limited, very restricted” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“I did receive from the Faculty a small travel grant which helped to meet some of the costs of travelling... to examine primary sources, for which I was most grateful. However, the way I was given the money by the faculty meant that I had to pay tax on it as 'extra income' rather than as a reimbursement of expenses.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“concept terrific, amount of (travel) grant thin.” (Arts Faculty)

“Applying for travel grants was, like everything else at Monash, needlessly complicated and stressful. The worst situation was when I purchased registration and tickets to a conference believing that I was qualified for reimbursement. However, I later found out that as I was not presenting a paper I would not be reimbursed. Nowhere on the conditions form for the application did it say I had to present a paper to be reimbursed. Instead, the guidelines were vague and open, saying that the conference must
contribute to my thesis work, which this particular conference did. I was told that the school had run out of money that semester, so I would have to bare (sic) the costs myself. I found this to be a pathetically amateurish approach. Either funding regulations need to be made clearer and more concrete, or a system of reimbursement before payment needs to be introduced.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“In general, the exPERT seminar series are good and the ENDNOTE training run by the library staff is also very helpful.” (Arts Faculty)

“Lecture series on thesis preparation and survival was great.” (Tricks seminar, Arts Faculty)

“excellent in the early stages for establishing a cohort group and building confidence. the quality of the seminar depended very much on the degree of engagement of the tutor.” (Arts Faculty)

“There are plenty of support in the beginning of the postgraduate period with seminars etc but I do think the last and final period of a candidature is the hardest and where extra support is needed. There have been many opportunities to participate in seminars and events, such as conferences etc and the travel grant has been most helpful.” (Arts Faculty)

“There were ample support seminars, and although I did not attend all, it was good to know they were being run.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“the faculty research seminars are all on topics which are esoteric to say the least. I have attended a number of the seminars/sessions offered by MRGS, the Library and the MPA and they have almost always been of great benefit. Unfortunately as a part-time student who works fulltime, I am unable to attend as many as I would like.” (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“The postgraduate centre has been of great help where I have had a shared office space. This space has been invaluable. It is often a very isolating experience and the centre helps this sense of isolation. David and Colin are both very helpful in any matter” (Arts Faculty)

“as I also worked in the University part time during this period, this (facilities and services) was not an issue for me.” (Arts Faculty)

“Access to equipment was patchy. I moved office at least once, and newly installed equipment took some time to start working. Printing facilities were particularly bad, but computers would also occasionally stop working which was very frustrating. Changes in the email address system (between 2009 to 2010 in particular) were needless and frustrating. It took me some time to establish my new email address. Again, this is not the fault of any individual, but an outcome of Monash's seeming desire to change things even if they are working fine.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“It's not a very interactive environment, students aren't supported at all, even at the level of desks and working spaces. There are so called 'hot spots” at Caulfield, where you come in and u look for an empty desk. If there is no free desk, bad luck you go. You have to move your stuff each time, because it's not your desk - how on earth can a PhD be done in this way? I'm lucky cause I got a space towards the end of 1st year, but the idea of these hot spots for phd students is something I can’t understand. This is work that requires so much focus yet, I don’t get how they can be done in this way? The Post Grad room on level 11 for PSI students is also a common room, a kitchen and a photocopying room. Do you think anyone could write anything there with the printer going all day, people making coffee and chatting, much less a thesis? Excuse my blunt language, I'm in a hurry right now, and just going on and on....but I'm really looking forward to finish as soon as possible, and work, cause as much as I
love my thesis, my work, and my project, I'm not a fan of the whole experience as such.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

“office space/printing and copying. Currently, i have shared office space on level 8 of the Menzies building. However, i made recently enquiries for the office space provided in the MRGS to which was more aesthetically pleasing and provided a lot more storage for my books/papers/folders. However, i decided that i should keep the office space in the Menzies purely because i had access to free photocopying and printing. I would have liked to have taken the opportunity to be at the MRGS instead of the Menzies.

Solutions can include: extra funding to the MRGS to provide for such free services from the university budget or invested into a pool by the various faculties/departments; or to provide a photocopy/printing allowance that is put onto a students’ ID card weekly or fortnightly; or to provide free photocopying and printing to HDR students with a swipe of their ID card; or to allow access to all Arts Faculty postgrad students access to the free photocopying and printing at level 8 in the Menzies building. In addition, more storage space can be introduced into the postgrad shared office spaces too.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

“At present I am trying to put together a draft, and assistance with formatting/presentation would be invaluable. However, the University appears to have no process in place to assist. There are likewise as far as I can determine, no definitive guidelines on thesis structure - up to the individual and/or supervisor? assuming you can get any advice.

What would be useful would be a formal induction, an assessment of the priority areas for training, and an annual opportunity to talk about these matters. BusEco did the latter and the one time I attended, I found it extremely useful, because you can ask the questions relevant to the stage of your candidature which you are at.” (Arts Faculty Gippsland)

“good (research culture). I found as I moved through towards the final stages of pre-submission, that I had less time and mental space to accommodate a truly reciprocal peer interaction, so dropped out in the third year, but it was good to have a choice. Given that the main task had to be done in isolation, it was good to know there was a peer group out there. School seminars were excellent opportunities for social as well as intellectual exchange.” (Arts Faculty)

“As far as I could tell there was virtually no culture of peer interaction or research in the school. This is not the fault of individual academics, but rather stems from a multi-campus system in which academics are either scattered around Melbourne on different campuses or work from home. Over my 3 years as a PhD candidate, there were several academics, prominent in my field, who I set eyes on maybe a half a dozen times.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“Atrocious! Non-existent (research culture). There is no collegial culture here. No academic culture. I think this goes for the social sciences. I come from a medical science background, and postgrads communities are strong in the sciences. They are fully supported in so many ways. Students have scholarships and travel grants, if not from the Uni, or the faculty, then from the individual lab. So, those with H1 or H2A or H2B are all supported equally. They have fortnightly seminars, discussions and work together a lot/collaborate. I feel like in the social science, students are encouraged to enrol, and then it's like "oh well welcome but you're on your own" sort of culture. Older post-grads used to tell me PhDs in the social science are isolating, good luck to you, and I never knew what that meant. But come to 2nd year, and I get it.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)
“I have not found my experience in the faculty at all collegial or helpful. In (previous faculty) I felt a part of the faculty and academic staff could not have been more helpful. In Arts, I do not know other postgrads. “ (Arts Faculty, Gippsland)

“(IT support) Good to Very good” (PSI, Arts Faculty.)

“(IT support) fairly good but it can be difficult at times to speak with anyone in IT.” (Arts Faculty)

“as I found the whole P-G research experience really terrific. As a mature age student and an experienced researcher, my experience was perhaps not typical. I am truly grateful to Monash for the opportunity and the whole experience. I appreciate the University's commitment to best practice.” (Arts Faculty)

“My overall experience as a Monash PhD and sessional tutor was a negative one, characterised by stress caused by the systematic incompetence and needles bureaucracy of the Monash administrative system. I do not know if this was the case for the school in which I was enrolled, the Arts Faculty or Monash as a whole. It was certainly not caused by any individuals, but was more systematic. Overall, I found Monash to be uninspiring, and less like a University than a Business.” (School of ECPS, Arts Faculty)

“the food provided on campus is at exorbitant price. Solutions may include: putting a limit as to what can be charged for particular foods; and/or to have a student-run food co-op whereby students prepare and serve food to other students at particular times/days free of charge.

i am quite envious of the range of clubs and activities that is available to undergrad students. For instance, i identify myself as not being heterosexual and i was disappointed that the Monash university queer club was only meant for undergrads. Further, i wanted to pick up acting again to boost my confidence and make friends with others at university, but i found again that the Monash uni student theatre club was only for undergrads as well.

Possible solutions may be: to increase funding for those departments and others so that they may be open to postgrad students as well; or for MPA to receive extra funding to duplicate the clubs and societies that already exist for undergrad students.” (Criminology, Arts Faculty)

“No strengths at all. Training is up to the candidate to acquire. There is no guidance, besides supervisor feedback and mentoring of course. Training is absent. PhD students are left "just to deal with it" it seems.” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

(research weakness) - “Menzies construction noise meant that it was not a conducive environment for study.” (Arts Faculty)

(recommendation) - “Perhaps PhD students should have coursework components?” (PSI, Arts Faculty)

(recommendation) - “Confirmation should be a collaborative process, not an interrogation and an attempt to 'catch out' the student.” (Arts Faculty)

(recommendation) - “Future researchers would benefit from a more conducive workspace if one is to be provided” (Arts Faculty)
3.2.3 Business and Economics Faculty

“Need clarity on what is covered eg. IPRS which is beneficial for international students with families as these scholarships provide for childcare relief from Centrelink. I only realised this when I applied for Centrelink benefits and was told that APA/MGS scholarships are not the equivalent of IPRS coverage.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Need to be flexible to take into account the different costs of conferences and expenses in cities around the world. Perhaps can stipulate to 1 x local conference per year and 2 x international conferences (Asia Pacific region etc)” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Prefer for the support seminars to be rotated across campuses eg. Clayton, Caulfield, Berwick, Peninsula etc. This is because it takes time to get to a particular campus and is not fair to charge transport costs for such incidental seminars.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“... the libraries can grant research students access to the library to return books, especially on weekends or school holiday terms. This is because research students do not follow the normal academic semester and what this means is that the library can remain closed but with the student IDs, research students can then enter the library to drop books off or borrow using self help terminals.” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Funding (is provided) for students to host conferences in their areas of research” (Business and Economics Faculty)

“Microsoft Project please!” (Business and Economics Faculty)

(research weakness) - “Lack of post PhD opportunities and also clarity as to what are the requirements for a research fellow position (eg. training for ARC grant application)” (Business and Economics Faculty)

(recommendation) - “Promote each campus for its own merits and not give preference to Clayton or Caulfield because of higher TER scores” (Business and Economics Faculty)

3.2.4 Education Faculty

“My supervision experience has been very good. My supervisor was extremely well informed about the theoretical framework of my study and had wide national and international networks. She introduced me to a range of other academics as well as encouraged me to share my work in different conferences and journals. My supervisor met with me regularly although because of her own overseas commitments there were occasions where there were quite long periods between supervision sessions.” (Education Faculty)

“good (supervision), don't have much to compare it to” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“I’ve had some trouble catching my supervisor - very difficult to track down and often goes weeks without replying to emails, phone messages etc. When you are working full time and have two young kids and only have a certain amount of time available, this is very frustrating. It also meant that my ethics application was not submitted until very late and has subsequently delayed my intervention
timeline. BUT once I do catch up with him, I find his feedback fantastic and very helpful.” (Education Faculty)

“The supervision of my actual research was like the "curate's egg". When my supervisor was available her support was excellent. However there were long periods of time when she was not available. I actually kept a file of "excuses presented by supervisor for not returning work in reasonable time” and when these numbered over 40 I realised that I had a genuine complaint here. Nevertheless I persevered, drawing on a lifetime's practice in developing patience and eventually reached publication stage.

There were other areas that left a lot to be desired. I have come away from my four years in the Halls of Academe quite concerned for future young post-graduates who have to contend with many obstacles along the way, obstacles that should not be there. The path for these students must be made smoother. After all these are the students you should be encouraging.” (Education Faculty)

“From my experience and from discussion with other doctoral students I would conclude that the quality of supervision varies considerably between supervisors. My own experience is of joint supervision with one supervisor providing a substantial amount of support and encouragement and the other much less so. The latter is my primary supervisor and tends to push me to seek help from outside of the supervision relationship when I bring concerns about my research to supervision. Over time I have come to interpret this as “don’t come to me with your concerns. Get someone else to help you”. “ (Education Faculty)

“didn't know there were any (intellectual property) resources available” (Part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“I have been fortunate to be given support through an APA scholarship and will be attending a conference in Rome later in the year with my airfare funded by a travel grant. These funds have certainly assisted me to undertake PhD study, but also provide a sense of commitment from the university to me that I feel obliged to repay by studying conscientiously and making the effort to keep going through difficult stages of the research. I imagine dropout rates are much higher among students who do not feel this mutual commitment and responsibility.” (Education Faculty)

“I was well informed regarding possible scholarships and grants. I was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship and found it enabled me to concentrate on my studies instead of always worrying about money. It would be great if there were more scholarships and if the stipend was increased.” (Education Faculty)

“I'm part time so there doesn't seem much (scholarships and grants) available” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“Whilst I am very appreciative of being provided with the APA scholarship I find that even with supplementary income from casual employment it is insufficient to cover my living expenses. My circumstances are probably not the norm. I am a single parent who has the sole financial responsibility of two adolescent/young adult students. My APA scholarship almost covers my rent. Therefore, during out of semester dates (when sessional tutoring work is not available) my scholarship does not cover living expenses. However, I imagine that for those doctoral students living at home, with partners, or living independently without dependents the scholarship is sufficient.” (Education Faculty)
“I received a travel grant to attend a conference in France and on the way to present my work in Hong Kong. The grant made it possible for me to attend and I found it very helpful. I had no problems accessing the grant as I was helped by the admin staff in the faculty. I also found that staff and other students kept me well aware of possible funding opportunities.” (Education Faculty)

“I'm part-time and I work so doesn't seem much opportunity to use them (travel grants), but I'm less than halfway through so far” (Education Faculty)

“Unfortunately the only conference held over the final 2 years of my PhD which relates specifically to my research is scheduled for later this year, falling outside of the university’s criteria for a travel grant (i.e., after 36 months). It occurs to me that doctoral students would presumably have something more substantial to say towards the end of their PhD than in the early stages of their research. I am in no position to personally fund a trip to Europe to attend and present my research at the conference so will not be able to make use of the rare opportunity to engage with peers at this level.” (Education Faculty)

“A wide range of seminars and workshops were provided for me during my candidature. Some were local on my campus and others offered in other places but I could access them via the audio visual network in the faculty. I attended some ExPERT seminars but not many, most were run by the faculty or the faculty research group I belonged to or by our MERC student group who arranged various speakers to run monthly workshops. There were always plenty of different seminars to attend run at different times by different groups of people.” (Education Faculty)

“Very useful to attend (seminars). More so for the maintenance of my continued engagement in the research process for me than for the actual content. The email contacts from David Bell are also appreciated. He sends reminders of upcoming events and seminars and this creates a sense of continuity and connection to the research community as a whole in what can often be a rather alienating process.” (Education Faculty)

“HDR workshops (faculty run) were fantastic when I could attend, however, working full time means that I miss most of them this year as they are during the working day - can some be moved to after 4pm?” (Education Faculty)

“(seminars) difficult to get to, I only have one day a week I'm able to get to the campus Mon - Fri - most of my time is on the weekends. Also, although some are available as recordings, there's not one centralised access point, I have to keep and sort through all of the emails to try and remember which ones to borrow/access. Which really doesn't happen when I'm also trying to do a lit. review and develop a system for the threads I want to remember to chase in the future.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“I had access to office space, computer, photocopying etc as required. I was assigned to an office space and computer for the full length of my candidature. This space was very suitable to my needs. However there has been a rearrangement of space for HDR students and it seems to be that this is less suitable as it is more squashed but students do still have their own space and computer.” (Education Faculty)

“My own faculty [education] undertook a major refurbishment of existing research offices towards the end of 2010 and unfortunately did not manage the relocation of our offices during this 3 month period at all well. Research students were not given any advance notice of the commencement of the work and had their computers and personal items removed from their desks and relocated to a storage area without notice. Indeed, it was not until I arrived on campus one day and tried to access the office
that I learnt of the changed arrangements. The refurbishment caused a considerable disruption in access to computer, printing and telephone facilities. The random dispersion of student’s computers and possessions to a number of cramped offices disrupted the “research community” that we had developed within our small group of associated researchers. Having 4-6 students randomly assigned a small office (built to accommodate one academic) without telephone access and limited internet access was not conducive to a productive research process. Had the project team consulted with the primary stakeholders before they commenced the relocation a considerable amount of angst and disruption could have been avoided.” (Education Faculty)

“Statistics consulting service: I have had a very difficult time in accessing the statistics consultation service. It is advertised on the MRGS website as a primary resource for research students but there are some obvious areas in which this service needs to be improved. These involve the administration of the service and providing a good match between the student’s needs and the consultant’s expertise. Twice over a 6 month period I have had considerable difficulty in just getting through to the service allocated to my faculty provided by the BUSECO faculty. In the first instance my many phone messages were not returned and emails were not responded to. I gave up after 4-6 weeks and contacted the service provided by the engineering/maths schools who responded to my request immediately. I met with a consultant who advised me that the statistical procedure I was using was not an area he was particularly familiar with and that I should specifically request a consultant who was. I respected his response and agreed it was in my best interests to find a consultant who could better meet my needs. After many more attempts to contact the BUSECO stats service someone finally answered the phone. I was told that any of the consultants would be able to help. However, my own experiential knowledge had already shown me that this was not the case. I was also told that my phone messages had not been returned because the faculty had recently reallocated phone extensions (which does not explain why emails were not responded to). This prolonged and frustrating attempt to get help left me feeling unsupported and without confidence in the stats consulting service. I subsequently decided to try and plod on without their assistance. Yet a full 5 months later I recently found myself again in need of some specific statistical help. And again I went through the same difficult process of trying to contact the BUSECO service (5 emails and 3 phone messages unanswered from December 7th to February 18th ). Eventually I gave up and met with the consultant in Maths/Engineering. However, it became clear very early on that he was not familiar with SPSS (the statistical package for social sciences that I was using). I emailed a consultant at the BUSECO stats service directly (via his Monash staff address rather than the stats service address) and specifically requested help with SPSS-related issues. I had one meeting and came away feeling he knew less about conducting the analysis within SPSS than I did. So, six months down the track, I do not have my statistical analyses completed, I have a supervisor telling me to get help from a stats service that I have lost confidence in and I am considering paying for external consultancy, even though this will cause me considerable financial hardship.

The service needs to provide help that is specific to the student’s needs. This could be achieved by having students complete a form stating what statistical package they are using and what methods they are using (if known) from their first phone/online contact and allocating consultants based on this data. This could also help consultants better prepare for meetings with students by familiarising themselves with the relevant method for the specific statistical program the student is using before meeting with them. Given that many of the Arts and Education students use SPSS there seems some need to engage consultants whose statistical package of choice is SPSS. I question the value of funding this centralised statistics consultancy and think students would be much better served if the funding was used to provide designated stats consultants within the faculties who use the statistical
programs taught in that faculty. This system currently benefits doctoral students within the school of psychology. The most worrisome aspect of this experience was not having emails and phone calls responded to. It conveys the message that they just didn't care and suggests that the system is not used by many students.” (Education Faculty)

“part-time, in one day a week and on weekends - facilities are OK except during the Dec-Jan holidays which is when I'm off from school and everything closes earlier. Services - difficult.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“This (research culture) was excellent. There is a strong research culture among the HDR students and support networks occurred on campus and between campuses. Students organised their own monthly meetings and invited staff to run workshops on a wide range of research topics. Students also organised a yearly conference and were able to practice presentation skills and conference organisation in a supportive environment.” (Education Faculty)

“Overall, I think the research training I have received in the Faculty of Education has been very good. The faculty has provided seminars on various aspects of writing the thesis and confirmation proposal etc, and my supervisor has encouraged her students to join in faculty research group meetings, reading groups and to prepare conference papers etc. But by far the biggest strength that the faculty of Ed has going for it is MERC (Monash Education Research Community). This organisation has provided regular seminars on interesting and relevant issues, but even more importantly provides informal support and connects us with fellow students with which to share the highs and lows of academic research. I have probably learnt as much about how to conduct research from my fellow MERC members as I have from faculty staff!” (Education Faculty)

“(research culture) non-existent as far as I can access it, and being an HDR student its very isolating. Everything seems geared towards full-time and on-campus students.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“The only thing I can think of to improve my research training would be better access to training on NVivo software. The training run by QSR is prohibitively expensive and there seems to be limited knowledge of the software by staff in the faculty. Perhaps the university or faculty could pay for a faculty member to do extensive training so that they are able to offer support to other students and staff trying to use this software.” (Education Faculty)

“the library tutorials I've found have been good. What software am I able to access? I've received an email about NVIVO training but there's a fee for that.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

“Excellent (IT) service but I would have liked more and cheaper access to training in the NVivo qualitative data analysis.” (Education Faculty)

“ IT support and software is fantastic” (Education Faculty)

“I did not require specialist software but found IT support forthcoming. Over my candidature these facilities have been improved and now audio/visual equipment is also available to students with support.” (Education Faculty)

“During the four years of my study I completed some course work in the first year then researched and presented a 40,000 word thesis. During the second part of the course work, I felt let down because whenever I sought advice re clarification of assignment tasks, I was never contacted. Calls and messages left on the communications system that is part of the University's support system for
students were never answered. I felt very sorry for some obviously younger students studying overseas who were posting queries regarding the same areas I was questioning and they, too received no replies so we tried to help each other in efforts to interpret the often ambiguous assignment requests. To add to my dissatisfaction, one of my assignments was "lost" between the mail centre (that acknowledged receipt of my work) and the lecturer's desk. I had to resubmit by email and the format apparently changed in transit consequently I was admonished for poor presentation! I was very disappointed with my score of Credit for this subject and had I been 50 years younger would have taken it further.” (Education Faculty)

“It would have been really great if there was a combined qualitative/quantitative unit that ran during semester 1 last year.” (Education Faculty)

“I'm absolutely loving my research as it has given me a sense of pride and has allowed me to branch out from my normal work as a teacher.” (Education Faculty)

“I had a very worthwhile HDR experience at Monash and have just completed my degree.” (Education Faculty)

(recommendation) - “once or twice a semester, after hours workshops or seminars for part-time students, surely there are a lot of us who work and can't make Mon-Fri business hours sessions? I don't want weekly or even monthly sessions, that's too many. But 3-4 tailored, targeted sessions over 1 or 2 weeks would be great, they'd be 'special events' and would get prioritised.” (part-time candidate, Education Faculty)

3.2.5   Engineering Faculty

“I had a horrendous experience with my former supervisors. Their mentality was to take on as many students as they were allowed by MRGS such that they could increase their research output, which they openly boasted. There was extreme pressure to produce results, weekly group meetings were like interrogation, and because it was all about their research output, multiple students were working on the same project. I was horrified when I found out that my project was given to someone else because they thought I didn't have the 'knack'. I was forced to race the other student to get publishable results for my thesis. Heads of Departments need to more closely monitor lab environments, especially those that are commercially driven, and considered ‘successful’ labs.” (Engineering Faculty)

“I have had both extreme ends of the spectrum when it comes to my experience with PhD supervisors. I was initially supervised by well established academics, who were "star" researchers. I quickly discovered that the reason why they had been so successful in research was that they were somewhat ruthless, with little regard for anyone or anything except themselves and their research success. They were supervisor-accredited to the highest Monash level, and had won awards for teaching and research, but seemed to have no interest in the educational component of academia. To me, they seemed more suited to careers in private research. Just a few examples of their abhorrent behaviour towards HDR students include:

- verbally abusing students, both in private and in public;
- sending students rude, forceful and threatening emails;
- revoking students' lab access privileges and computers, and even threatening to not supervise them, in order to get the students to do what the supervisors wanted;
- bullying students into signing legal forms without giving them an opportunity to seek independent advice (see IP section for more detail);
- forcing students to maintain lab equipment and train others to use it, which
required lots of hours for no pay; - depriving students of vital research training opportunities, such as attending an international conference to present their work, on the grounds that the students are not good enough to represent the supervisors and their group; and - having no regard for students’ PhD deadlines, expecting them to keep conducting research and publishing papers while writing their theses, which has resulted in multiple instances of students running over their thesis deadlines and having no scholarships.

At the other end of the spectrum, my new supervisor, whom I transferred to due to some of the problems outlined above with my former supervisors, has been absolutely terrific. He is only a junior lecturer and doesn't have much supervision experience, but he has been incredibly good to work under. He is far more sympathetic towards the practical challenges I face in my research, and is much more appreciative for what I contribute. I am also indebted to him for taking on my supervision at a time when my faculty had decided to terminate my candidature, without hearing, because my former supervisors were unwilling to continue supervising me (because I was not willing to be bullied anymore...). My current supervisor has restored my faith in research and the spirit in which it is meant to be conducted. The university needs to identify ways to better monitor supervisor performance, and to discipline them if and when necessary, in the same way the university disciplines students. The university should also continue to reward supervision through student-nominated awards, which is a tremendously positive initiative.” (Engineering Faculty)

“In my opinion, supervisors simply have no idea about intellectual property. My former supervisors sought an invalid assignment late in my PhD for reasons such as patents from other universities, and background information on projects that weren't even relevant to mine. When I didn't assign, they refused to sign my paperwork to upgrade my PhD, even after being successful in the examination. Needless to say, I then had to change supervisors, and was not allowed to take the project that I had been working on in the past year with me.” (Engineering Faculty)

“Where do I start?! As a student at Monash, I sole-invented a device with significant commercial potential. My then supervisors believed that they were equal inventors of this technology. Unwilling to sit down and discuss inventorship, they signed the invention disclosure form on my behalf, stating that the contribution by all inventors was equal, and the university proceeded to file a provisional patent therefrom. It took me almost one year, with the legal assistance of the MPA, to have my sole-inventorship rights recognised and returned by the university. During this time, my supervisors, my department and my faculty did everything to try to force me to be quiet and to drop it. This includes sending threatening emails, refusing to investigate, revoking my lab access, confiscating my departmental entitlements, refusing me the opportunity to confirm my candidature, terminating my candidature, and defaming my name both inside and outside the university. I was forced to remain at home for over seven months without supervision nor a PhD. Even with the MPA's terrific assistance it was a stretch to get the rightful outcome. In the end though, we did, and I am now recognised as the sole inventor of the technology, although I am still very much disliked within my faculty for standing up for my rights.

Recently, I also invented another technology under the supervision of my new supervisor, who has been terrific about the whole thing, and who has equally contributed to the invention. I have found it incredibly slow to get my faculty’s Business Development Managers to file a provisional patent application to protect this technology, having been waiting for over one month already now. This delay not only risks the patentability of the technology, but is holding up my thesis, as I cannot publish the corresponding research paper, and am doing a thesis by publication. The university is far too under-resourced and understaffed in this area, which is to the detriment of the students and ultimately the university.
Finally, I would like to say that filing a patent is one side of the "IP coin", commercialising it is the other. I have found Monash lacking when it comes to commercialisation. They do not dedicate resources to this activity, and do not sufficiently equip any of their staff to do this job. As a result, the university's mantra seems to be to protect things at any cost, but don't worry about doing anything with them. If Monash is truly dedicated to delivering practical, useful technologies to society in order to solve the problems facing humanity, it seriously needs to smarten up in the commercialisation department!” (Engineering Faculty)

“On a very positive note: I have always found the scholarship and admissions staff at MRGS to be some of the most friendly, helpful, skilled and proactive people in the university! They are a shining beacon in what can otherwise be a gloomy organisation at times. I recently went through the process of applying for a research travel grant. Again, the MRGS staff were very helpful, but my department managed to make the process incredibly onerous and confusing. So much so that you have to wonder whether it's worth the hassle of applying for the money at all...” (Engineering Faculty)

“The most confusing and frustrating (travel grant) forms that I have ever filled out in my life!” (Engineering Faculty)

“I recently went through the process of applying for a research travel grant. Again, the MRGS staff were very helpful, but my department managed to make the process incredibly onerous and confusing. So much so that you have to wonder whether it's worth the hassle of applying for the money at all...” (Engineering Faculty)

“My experience is that the MRGS run exPERT seminars are all run for the lowest common denominator, so to speak, which prevents a lot of HDR students from participating in them. I have been to a couple, and was bored stiff within about two seconds. A great example of what the university needs to move towards is the MPA Excellence Seminar Series. I have found this to be undoubtedly one of the very best resources available to HDR students at Monash, and it is something I would see as a big pro when comparing universities.” (Engineering Faculty)

“Generally very good, but sport is far too expensive for poverty-stricken students”. (Engineering Faculty)

“In my opinion the research culture is very poor. There is a mentality (at least in my faculty) that students are merely tools to be used by their supervisors. I know of many incidents where supervisors have pushed their own personal agendas and even taken credit for students' works through authorship and patents. Supervisors are very protective of their research fields, so strongly discourage collaboration of their students with students from other labs. This is a shame. The joke amongst postgrads in our Department is that the academics are like kids in a playground, who don't want to share the monkey bars with each other!” (Engineering Faculty)

“In my department, the research culture is woeful. It's like a game of monopoly, with all of the academics trying to protect their little pieces of turf! As usual, the students get caught in the middle and suffer, as we cannot mingle and collaborate with students from the "other side". This is a serious administrative fault of the university. Worst of all, being research training, students subjected to this will be trained that this is the norm, which is a serious concern.” (Engineering Faculty)

(research strength) - “explanation of library resources and how IP works” (Engineering Faculty)
(research weaknesses) - “Too many to count! Poor practices breed poor practices. For example, if the Head of Department is willing to admit that their are "mate's rates" when it comes to authorship, then the student will develop those same practices. If supervisors use those under them as a way to boost their research output, then the students will develop these same habits. The best research training that a student can receive is by witnessing their supervisor conducting ethical research.” (Engineering Faculty)

(recommendation) - “Better training for supervisors, and enforcing the MRGS code of conduct for supervisors as they do for students. Also, for postgrad coordinators to be more in touch with the postgrads.” (Engineering Faculty)

(recommendation) - “I understand how it might be hard to teach and whilst it might be one of those things you pick up on the run, but I would like to hear a little about the politics and formalities that are set up between different levels of research: supervisors, other students, collaborators...” (Engineering Faculty)

3.2.6 Medicine Faculty

“supervision - overall good” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“While supervisors were driven for research and had bright ideas, little could be done when the supervisors themselves are often drowned in administrative paper work. This left little time for the supervisors to interact and brainstorm with students, who most of the time, are left to fend for themselves and work the project out themselves. This is very risky because it could mean that the student may be working in the wrong direction for long periods of time, wasting their precious time and achieving little.” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway campus)

“Pick who is allowed to supervise better. You can't teach niceness and understanding in a training course. Some supervisors are just ******** who want free labour.” (Medicine Faculty)

“My supervisor is excellent (won supervisor of the year award 2010). Definitely need two supervisors as give difference in opinion & understanding. Should look to find two supervisors with different backgrounds.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“I have various things to say about the postgraduate experience at Monash. While overall I have had a positive experience for the past 3 years I know many people who have had unnecessarily difficult and bad experiences. Most of which have been the result of problems with their supervisors. I feel that this could be improved by the university by:

- Having a really clear (and well advertised?) person who students can discuss supervisor problems with outside their departments (as these can be small places, and it can be hard to get an impartial opinion, and for any criticism to not to get back to the supervisor). Perhaps this might be faculty based (as what is acceptable in Med seems like it might be completely different to what is done in humanities, in terms of authorship, progress made or workload etc).
- I also think there should be a process in place that allows students to find out about the past student supervision done by supervisors before they undertake a project. i.e. How many students have they supervised to completion, how long did these students take, have any dropped out, have any formal complaints been made about them in the past. I know of several
experienced supervisors that have had complaints made about them, had students not complete, and have worked students long past the 3-4 year mark - unfortunately these supervisors are able to continue taking on new students who have no idea what they are getting into. It is difficult for co-workers within a department to become involved because we often do not meet students until they start, and you need to be very careful about what you say about anyone in such close knit environments. And it would be virtually impossible for current students to "warn" prospective students in case their supervisors found out.

It seems supervisors can get away with anything, and nothing changes for students having supervisor problems, or future students. It is easy to forget how much power supervisors hold over their higher degree students, so it's important they are able to get help when they need it, and that complaints to the university are taken seriously.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“my supervisor has failed to help me publish two peer review journal articles; has given bad references on jobs I have applied for; sabotaged applications and projects I have worked on; and ordered my dissolve relationships with people who didn’t ‘FIT’ my personal and professional goals. My supervisor threaten to destroy my career if I didn’t submit to a relationship with her; My refusal to her advances is evidenced by the aforementioned bad behaviour. I have been subject to intimidation, interrogation, humiliation, sexual harassment, black mail, and the biggest ‘mind trip’ of my life.  (Medicine Faculty)

“good information on patents , but we have not had any information on copyright/citations styles etc.- which should be helpful and practical.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“my supervisor gives me credit and pushes me to be first author.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“good to have this support (scholarships) -although the support is financially very low.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“As for scholarships and grants, there is still some confusing things about how they work, but the MRGS seems quite efficient about answering inquires and helping students. There is also the constant battle between scholarship rates and the poverty line (but that is not a Monash issue), but obviously affects students greatly.”  (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“The duration of scholarships is just too short. In the biomedical sciences, it is a very unusual person who finishes in 3 years. Most do not finish in 3.5. Make the base scholarship 3.5 years with a 6 month extension. I worked out the other day I got paid 3 times more per hour when I was 12! The most important thing, by a very very long mile, is the issue of concession cards. Not giving PhD students concession cards is grossly unfair. We are still students making very little money. The cost to the government would be tiny but make a big difference to us.” (Medicine Faculty)

“I have found this hard (travel grants) = am unsuccessful despite 3 first author papers + 1 coauthored paper. this will now be the biggest gap in my ‘competitive edge’. (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“I feel no consideration has been given (re travel grants) to those who have to do field work overseas including in developing countries which needs additional help - both financial and expertise wise.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“The travel grant isn't bad, but please don't make us use the uni travel agents. They are more expensive than other travel agents.” (Medicine Faculty)
“As for travel grants, I am currently in the process of applying for one, the application is really quite involved. And it is difficult that I cannot apply until I have been accepted at the conference, which doesn't leave much time. Perhaps students can be approved, on the condition that they are accepted? Instead of waiting to hear back from the conference and struggling to get your application in 6 weeks before the conference starts. It is also odd what the travel grant will cover - "airfares, but not conference registration or accommodation" when clearly things like conference registration are work costs.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“none received (travel grants) - where do I apply? I haven't seen any info.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“I have found the training to be excellent overall. The school I am associated with does an excellent job in providing HDR workshops... Assoc. Professor Rosemary Sheehan from Social Work organizes them to occur twice per year on Caulfield campus. It is an expectation on enrolment that we attend these 2 day workshops. Rosemary invites people from other parts of the univ. Such as the library, endnote, Research office and so on to come and talk to us. From my perspective though I do notice some of the topics being provided by Expert and wish I could access them, as they would be a useful supplement to the SW workshops.” (Distance education, Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“As a student enrolled at the Alfred we are often forgotten, and don't really have a lot of support seminars. It seems that recently this is slowly changing (especially now it has finally been recognised how many students there really are here). In regards to services, only recently have we got a student services manager here to help. Prior to this is has been difficult to arrange confirmation seminars, to know exactly what is required of us by the university, and just deal with forms and problems in general.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“...it has been recently mandated that HDR students are required to attend seminars that the university would organize (sometimes by fellow HDR students, other times by invited speakers) during weekdays. While their efforts to share knowledge is appreciated, research is multidisciplinary and many times these topics do not interest or are not relevant to the topics of other HDR students. By making this and our weekly teaching duties (for our scholarship) compulsory, it is immensely difficult to conduct meaningful research, especially if field trips longer than a week are to be organized, which is often required in fields such as tropical biology (campus research strength).” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“(seminars) limited at Alfred campus. It was great when we had wine and cheese night last year. Please reorganise these” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“I'm lucky as my group had $$ to set me up. i don't know what I am missing out on (facilities and services) by being at Alfred centre and not Clayton.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Excellent- i have been using social work facilities /services more - eg. rooms, computers - most staff are also very accessible and help you as required.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“It is no secret that the Sunway Campus is lacking in facilities and research equipments and also, funding. As I currently pursue a PhD program in the same campus, I find the provision of an annual RM12,000 grant a year too meagre to produce quality work. I say this with no condemnation. If the university was already well-equipped with research facilities and equipment, having RM12,000 a year for consumables would be alright, but our campus does not have much of the equipment required. Even though my topic is highly relevant to bioactivity and tropical biology, which are both supposed
research strengths of the campus, there is little equipment and funding that we have access to in campus. For example, simple, functional heating mantles and Kjeldahl flasks of suitable volumes could not be found in campus, and these are simple equipment that are almost essential to nutrient cycling studies, which are central to tropical biology. While we would love to have modern Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium and Carbon analysers, we dare not even think about it because our campus cannot even provide the rural form of such equipment. Apart from that, the university cars available are also off-limits to research students who wish to conduct field trips for data gathering and research, which forces students to use their own cars or seek transport from other parties before getting compensated later through mileage claims. Field trip destinations that are pristine enough for study are often hard to access and would best be done with four-wheel drives, which average students would not have/could not afford. I ask that the university consider having several of such cars that research students could borrow responsibly for research-related trips. To add to that, if the university could offer a ferrying service for new international students by fetching each of them from the airport to the university (~ 130 km roundtrip), I believe the university is well-capable of providing a few cars that research students can benefit from. Ultimately, better research would only bring glory to the university.

As a current PhD student, I would like to mention also the lacks of some other facilities. Examples would be chemicals, many of which we require to purchase on our own. This is often time-consuming, given the many administrative steps involved in purchasing. There has also been cases of the purchasing/finance department swapping orders for the requested items for lower grade, and unacceptable equipment/chemicals that they deemed suitable. This is very unhealthy, and would require students to lodge complaints and re-process the entire purchasing ordeal. I suggest a common chemical store managed by the university where research students could obtain chemicals from akin to how top European institutes run their chemical store. Monash University is supposed to be a world famous university, why not run it like what it's supposed to be?” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“we are not allowed to order reagents, and only if it's absolutely necessary, which is an ongoing process in 2011, since our lab is running out of money. And now we are feeling so much pressure, and even worried that, how we are going to finish it smoothly. So, we urge University should have some kind of regulation to prevent these situations happening anymore. When supervisors are allowed to take students, University must make sure (should have some regulation to confirm) that, they are capable of looking after their students all the way.” (Medicine Faculty)

“I think the research culture and peer interactions here at the Alfred are quite good. More and more inter-departmental seminars are starting, and some money is being provided towards more social things in order to get everyone to know each other more and more. Having a significant number of research minds, together with the accessibility of clinical samples and clinical work within the hospital is probably one of the research strengths for the sort of work we do here.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“love it. Lucky to have a semi-large group at the Alfred campus. the social drinks etc doesn't work as everyone too busy. but the professional seminars aimed at PhD students or FREE wine and drinks within the workplace work.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“The culture is pretty good. There is a lot of publish-or-perish pressure, but not the extent at other institutes.” (Medicine Faculty)
“Good (research culture) - again i have been more involved in the social work - i do get info. from time to time from MRGS and MPA but i have not utilised them fully. social work conducts two compulsory interactions through HDR conference which is helpful. some of us/students have also started a monthly peer interaction with social work professor and we discuss many research related issues - this has been excellent. something like this i.e monthly peer interaction could be organised in a structured way for everyone - will be worth looking into for others as well.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“excellent (IT support), blackboard system works REALLY well” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

“Good (IT support) -i have not been very good at using all the facilities but am starting to use them more - just working on installing LARDS and they have been very helpful. however I do feel we have not had good structured orientation regarding all the IT related services available for students - this will be helpful.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“... the coursework components in my Honours degree made little sense, as an Honours degree is meant to prepare one for research. Everyone who enters the Honours program would have finish a relevant science degree with at least a distinction average of selected year 3 units, which already proves their capabilities in terms of theory. Having a multidisciplinary, non-specific coursework paper which requires students to further spend time studying for an exam that does not relate to their research is a burden that in the long haul, does not even benefit them. I propose that the course work exam component of this degree be removed for the betterment of the program. Other components such as proposal and final presentations, and literature reviews were good in aiding students understand their topic. Another suggestion would be to have progress report presentations by students to their supervisors and examiners so that suitable adjustments and input into their projects could be made possible. This would ultimately result in higher quality research.” (Medicine Faculty, Sunway)

“overall I have had a positive experience of doing my research in Monash with support from supervisors as well as from across the university through various expert and other seminars” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

“They (Med Faculty) have actually hired someone (maybe at the end of last year?) called Gladys Britto she is the "student services manager" and hopefully she will help to improve things for the students here” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

(research strength) -“ highly dependent on the student, supervisors and group, mine have been excellent. lots of course work available and encouraged, seminars encouraged, conferences attendance but more participation at conferences encouraged” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

(research strength) -“various seminars run to enhance our research skills - esp. expert, HDR conferences, various seminars by library and learning skills unit on writing/readability/english skills. having milestones during the candidature such as confirmation, ethics, HDR conferences is also helpful.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

(research weakness) - “the university also appears to be less knowledgeable regarding conducting research in overseas especially in developing countries and therefore has less to offer to students - eg. ethics process takes a very narrow australian lens and makes it difficult for students wanting to undertake research in developing countries. for research to be truly liberating and of significant impact international expertise should be built into the university systems.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)
(research weakness) - “don't interact with other groups in different Fields but proximity close, don't interact with similar topic groups in different locations / far proximity” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

(recommendation) - “we have a PhD coordinator. if a student has problems they know to go to them. If not available to others, then that should be top priority.” (Alfred, Medicine Faculty)

(recommendation) - “more focus on qualitative research, international research both in terms of resources and information to students should be enhanced.” (Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

(recommendation) - “The main suggestion for improvement is to have more available online so that external students like me can get access to some of the training offered, e.g. Expert seminars”
(distance education candidate, Social Work, Medicine Faculty)

3.2.7 Science Faculty

“One of my supervisors is absolutely amazing, providing detailed feedback on drafts and making time for me whenever I pop by his office. I nominated him for a MPA supervision award for these and other reasons. The other supervisor is largely absent from the university campus, conducting work overseas and interstate. I would highly recommend students undertake co-supervision for this reason. With recent VSPs throughout the school, this is even more relevant. My supervisors seem well trained in academic and personal support skills and are dedicated and highly skilled to their work, therefore my experience has been overwhelmingly positive.” (Science Faculty)

“I haven't delved into this, but have been made aware of the issues associated with IP and support and advice available through the university. My school and the MRGS have provided lots of great information, as has the Monash University website” (Science Faculty)

“My scholarship is industry supported and I've had a great experience in terms of being paid on time and the correct amount. I received excellent funding to travel to the US and various locations interstate for conference participation, from both my school and the MRGS. The online forms are easy to fill in and funds are transferred efficiently. It's been a positive experience.” (Science Faculty)

“I cannot stress how wonderful MRGS has been in providing support to me throughout my candidature, both in terms of the excellent training seminars relevant to each stage of conducting research and thesis preparation, facilities, in meeting other postgrads, and general advice and support. David Bell in particular has been fantastic in providing reminders about upcoming seminars, letting me know about facilities at the MRGS centre, and answering any of my queries promptly and in detail whenever they arise. He is a really approachable, friendly, helpful, and knowledgeable person and his support has been hugely appreciated!” (Science Faculty)

“MRGS in general are wonderful to deal with for their friendly, relaxed, and very competent and efficient manner. The online forms for services and requests are easy to use and the website provides excellent information about all PhD matters. Recently, my colleagues and I were also able to call a lady at MRGS regarding concerns about end of candidature, and had an impromptu phone conference where she answered all our questions in detail and provided invaluable advice. It was great for us just to be able to call unannounced and get such personal and detailed advice! I can't commend MRGS enough! MPA have also been absolutely wonderful, although I have been less involved with them than with the MRGS, simply because I got to know people at the MRGS centre early on in my candidature. I really don't know what I would have done without the wonderful support and advice of
both MRGS and MPA. Keep up the great work! Fiona Hibbert at the School of Biological Sciences has been equally amazing, providing all the support a PhD could need. She is available to chat and provide advice whenever we drop by her office, and is patient, kind, and very efficient and competent. She even helped develop a page on the school's website which is dedicated to providing links for postgrads. She works closely with our postgrad representative committee and knows the ins and outs of all school, MRGS, and Faculty wide postgrad related matters. Our School is very lucky to have her.

MRGS has been excellent! My school has also been great, providing an office space near to my lab and other school facilities. This office is quite noisy and crowded (there are 8 occupants in quite a small room) due to a lack of space within the school in general. However, new spaces are being developed and I have now moved into a newer, quieter office.

The school is always happy to talk about postgrad concerns and provides wonderful academic support and training (particularly through the Australian Centre of Biodiversity). The technical support and training from lab technicians such as Ric San Martin, Sheila Hamilton-Brown, and Belinda Lees is wonderful, and includes OH&S, equipment maintenance, equipment training and scientific protocols, sample storage, and borrowing systems. Everyone is super helpful, and therefore any facilities/equipment/training I have needed, has been provided. For example, I was lucky enough to run experiments at the Jock Marshall Reserve for over a year with help from technical staff, which contributed greatly to my dataset. Also, the school vehicles were brilliant for country field work - a necessary component of most ecological studies.

We have two school seminar streams (one casual, one formal) and lots of school events, which enhance social cohesion and support within the school and encourage collaborations. Lab space and facilities are quite good, as are the availability of seminar rooms when needed, access to printers and pigeon holes, tea room facilities, and financial support for laboratory analyses, equipment purchases, and conference attendance.

IT facilities have been excellent. The school purchased our laptops (which have been very good), and IT provide great software and support. Monash's website, Blackboard, my monash portal, and google mail are indispensable and well developed. Faculty training has also been quite good depending on the speakers (as has teaching support for demonstrators from the Faculty and School level). In addition to this, the counselling services for stressed out PhD through the Monash Well-Being Hub is top-notch.” (Science Faculty)

“Support from my office mates as been crucial to my experience. I couldn't have got so far without them, both in terms of academic advice and discussion, and personal support and encouragement. Other peers within the school who are at a similar stage in thesis preparation provide the most valuable support and I am in daily contact with my network, including those students who have returned home to overseas countries to finish their write-up. Social events around birthdays and finished chapters help everyone feel included, supported, and to have a little fun.

There is a competitive research culture within my school, which is excellent to see. Many collaborations and friendly discussions about science can be heard about the corridors, much support is given to grant writers (particularly through the ACB), and academic success is duely celebrated. There is a real sense of community within the school, which is promoted by regular social events (like fundraisers and photography competitions), school seminars, the ACB student TalkFest (whereby students present their work to the school and prizes are awarded), demonstrating opportunities for postgraduate students, meetings between heads of school and academic, postgrad, and other groups on
a monthly basis, overall school morning teas, and group emails about all important issues. It's a fun place to work.

Recent issues within the school as a result of VSPs have lowered morale and brought lots of sudden change, including the loss of technical staff and supervisors. I hope the school culture and provision of facilities continue despite these.” (Science Faculty)

“The Monash network is incredible. The Science Faculty IT guys have helped me on the spot whenever I've dropped in. Great software is provided through the Faculty (although e-Primer would be a welcome addition for MDS analyses).” (Science Faculty)

(research weakness) - Sudden, unexpected change as a result of VSPs within the school” (Science Faculty)

(recommendation) - More getting published workshops with scientific editors (we held one of these through the school and it was indispensable)” (Science Faculty)

3.2.8 Faculty not identified

“Average (supervision). Could be on my own it would be the same thing.”

“My supervisor was fantastic and colleagues and I nominated him for supervisor of the year in 2010 - sadly he has now left Monash.” (DE, Gippsland)

“More money is always better (scholarships)”

“Very good (support seminars)”

“Lack of funds for buying reagents when there are 4 PhD students in the lab. Enough money should be available for each PhD student for the years of the PhD.”

“Very good (IT support)”

“During my PhD I was able to participate in the "Commercialization of Research" certificate, which was of limited value as the four components (Organizational Management, Accounting for Business, Copyright & patent Law, and Commercialization of Research), were all dealing with generalities which had little relevance to the immediate challenge of completing useful doctoral research.”

“If I was not already an experienced researcher and academic, as a Distance Ed student I would have been really struggling to complete my tasks competently. I find the special unit in Gippsland (for distance ed students) is/was so focused on undergraduate/course work students that is was of no help to me at all.” (DE, Gippsland)

“Another factor which could assist future post-grads whose research has an interdisciplinary focus is some consideration of how to encourage & facilitate the supervisor and their postgrad in drawing upon the expertise of different faculties relevant to their research project. While lip-service is paid to the notion of inter-disciplinary collaboration, in practice there seems to be little in the way of policy or procedure to encourage and support supervisors who believe it may be advantageous for a post grad to consult with members of other faculties in order to bring complementary forms of expertise to bear on a multi-disciplinary research project.”
(research strength) - “Good access to equipment and very knowledge sharing with other researchers and Phd students”

(research weakness) - “Lack of supervision from the supervisor in term of strategy and how to handle the different steps of the project. Lack of funds”

(research weakness) - “Office space is too crowded, particularly at the write-up stage (although the upstairs room at the Matheson Library is an excellent substitute!)”

(research weakness) - “less focus appears to be on qualitative skills esp in broader university seminars. expert has many on quantitative/statistics/experimentation and by comparison very low on qualitative and programs such as N-VIVO - which we have to then request for department to do specifically for us”.

(research weakness) - “there is also less information for international students both on processes we have to do and resources available for us. national and intl. students get same financial support to conduct field work - although the international field work costs significantly much more. “

(research weakness) - “training/info., on copyright/citation etc missing in the overall research training schedule. “

(recommendation) - “More statistical training would be great.”

(recommendation) - “More advice about the difficulties encountered in the final write-up stage (stress, need for sustained concentration and quiet)”

(recommendation) - “Be sure that the supervisor can afford a Phd student in term of finance for the 4 years of the Phd. Better handling of the research project in term of timeline and experiments needed to publish.”

(recommendation) - “Meditation recommended for postgrads (mindfulness meditation has helped a bunch of us)."

(recommendation) - Less crowded offices (quiet makes writing much, much, much easier)

(recommendation) - Public transport to the university could be improved.

(recommendation) - More information about the VSPs occurring in the school and impacts on postgraduates (some students have lost their supervisors mid-candidature).
THE MPA SEEKS FEEDBACK ON YOUR RESEARCH TRAINING EXPERIENCE

Monash University is preparing to undergo the Australian Universities Quality Audit (AUQA) in September 2012. This is an opportunity for the Monash Postgraduate Association (MPA) to provide feedback to the university in a number of areas, including the area of research training, with a view to improving the postgraduate experience. We would like to hear from you about your overall research training experience, including comments about:

- supervision
- intellectual property
- scholarships and grants
- travel grants
- support seminars
- access to facilities and services
- research culture/peer interaction
- IT support and software access

All responses will be de-identified before use. Please note that the MPA does not have access to any details about you other than those you provide to us in your email, so it would be helpful if you would let us know your faculty.

We would especially like to hear about:

1. research training strengths
2. research training weaknesses
3. recommendations for improvement

Please reply by email to dina.galanopoulos@monash.edu by 7 March.