

## 2011 PREQ Methodology

### Overview

The Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire (PREQ) is administered to research doctoral and research masters graduates as a component of the Australian Graduate Survey (AGS), along with the more outcomes-focused Graduate Destination Survey (GDS). Students who qualify for an award from an Australian higher education institution are invited to complete the AGS by means of a paper questionnaire, online questionnaire or telephone interview. Students who complete their course of study in the first half of the year are surveyed as at 31 October, while students who complete their course of study in the second half are surveyed as at 30 April the following year. A total of 4,230 graduates from 41 institutions provided a valid response to the 2011 PREQ, representing a national response rate of 60.7 per cent.

The PREQ measures seven facets of the higher education research experience, underpinned by 28 Likert-type items that share a common five-point response scale. These items are listed in Table 1. The points on the response scale are labelled *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neither agree nor disagree*, *agree* and *strongly agree*. Additionally, the response scale includes a *does not apply* category, which graduates can mark if they feel that a particular item is not relevant to their research experience.

A detailed discussion of the development and properties of the PREQ is beyond the scope of this document. Interested readers are directed to GCA & ACER (2010) for further detail in this regard.

**Table 1. PREQ scales and constituent items**

Scale	Label	Item
Supervision	PREQ01	Supervision was available when I needed it
	PREQ07	My supervisor/s made a real effort to understand difficulties I faced
	PREQ13	My supervisor/s provided additional information relevant to my topic
	PREQ17	I was given good guidance in topic selection and refinement
	PREQ21	My supervisor/s provided helpful feedback on my progress
	PREQ24	I received good guidance in my literature search
Intellectual Climate	PREQ05	The department provided opportunities for social contact with other postgraduate students
	PREQ09	I was integrated into the department's community
	PREQ16	The department provided opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research culture
	PREQ22	A good seminar program for postgraduate students was provided
	PREQ23	The research ambience in the department or faculty stimulated my work
Skill Development	PREQ06	My research further developed my problem-solving skills
	PREQ10	I learned to develop my ideas and present them in my written work
	PREQ14	My research sharpened my analytic skills
	PREQ20	Doing my research helped me to develop my ability to plan my own work
	PREQ26	As a result of my research, I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
Infrastructure	PREQ03	I had access to a suitable working space
	PREQ08	I had good access to the technical support I needed
	PREQ12	I was able to organise good access to necessary equipment
	PREQ18	I had good access to computing facilities and services
	PREQ27	There was appropriate financial support for research activities
Thesis Examination	PREQ02	The thesis examination process was fair
	PREQ15	I was satisfied with the thesis examination process
	PREQ25	The examination of my thesis was completed in a reasonable time
Goals and Expectations	PREQ04	I developed an understanding of the standard of work expected
	PREQ11	I understood the required standard for the thesis
	PREQ19	I understood the requirements of thesis examination
Overall Satisfaction	PREQ28	Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of my higher degree research experience

## Preparation of PREQ data

Following routine processing of AGS data by Graduate Careers Australia (GCA), filters are applied to eliminate invalid PREQ responses from the data file. A PREQ response must satisfy three main criteria to be considered valid and thus be included in the final analysis file.

1. Graduates must have responded to enough items to produce a valid score for the *Overall Satisfaction Item* or one of the six PREQ scales.
2. Graduates must specify the level of their recently completed qualification.
3. Graduates must specify their major field of education.

A number of steps are taken to produce the various PREQ item and scale scores. PREQ items are initially recoded to the conventional PREQ reporting metric (1=-100, 2=-50, 3=0, 4=50, 5=100) and the generic 'PREQ' item prefix is replaced with a three letter scale prefix. For example, PREQ04 is retitled to GOA04 and PREQ05 is retitled to INT05. Responses in the *does not apply* category are classified accordingly, while missing item scores are designated as unplanned missing data.

Percentage agreement (PA) and percentage broad agreement (BA) scores are produced for each item. These are binary scores in which a response is coded '1' for agreement and '0' otherwise. PA reflects a response in either the *agree* or *strongly agree* response categories. BA reflects a response in the *neither agree nor disagree*, *agree* and *strongly agree* response categories.

For each valid PREQ response, mean scores are calculated for each scale. To allow for missing data, scale scores are computed when graduates respond to at least two items of the three-item scales and at least four items of the five or six-item scales. As a single-item indicator, the mean score for the OSI is equal to its item score. PA and BA scores are produced for each scale in a similar fashion.

SPSS syntax to produce a PREQ analysis data file from the 2011 AGS national data file is available for [download](#). Please note that this syntax is not compatible with earlier AGS national data files.

## References

GCA & ACER, 2010. *Postgraduate Research Experience 2009*. Melbourne: GCA.