



# STOP- OUT SURVEY

2024







**This report was produced by Institutional Research and Planning  
under the Directorate of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation.**

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This report may be used in part or in its entirety, provided that the  
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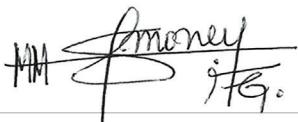
# Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the inaugural *Stop-Out Survey 2024* report, which provides critical insights into the experiences and challenges faced by students who have interrupted their studies at Walter Sisulu University. Understanding the reasons behind student stop-outs is essential for developing effective strategies to improve retention, re-engagement, and overall student success.

Higher education institutions worldwide face the challenge of student attrition, and WSU is no exception. By analysing the perspectives of students who have stepped away from their academic journey, we can identify key factors influencing their decisions and work towards creating a more supportive and responsive learning environment. This report offers a data-driven foundation for refining our institutional policies, strengthening academic and financial support systems, and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to achieve their educational aspirations.

I extend my gratitude to all participants who shared their experiences and the dedicated team responsible for conducting this survey. Your contributions will be crucial in shaping interventions that encourage student persistence and success.

As we move forward, we remain committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive academic community that enables every student to navigate challenges and reach their full potential.



**Dr Munienge Mbodila**

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# Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	9
INTRODUCTION	10
Purpose	11
Objectives	11
Critical Questions	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	12
Attitudes Toward Higher Education and Barriers to Enrolment	12
Academic and Financial Barriers to Retention	12
Understanding and Addressing Stop-outs	13
Completion Rates and Barriers for Black Students	13
The Impact of Discrimination and the Need for Flexibility	13
Primary Reasons for Stop-Outs: Work and Financial Challenges	14
The Human Capital Investment Model and University Outcomes	14
SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS	16
Overview of Student Academic Performance (2022 to Present)	16
Overview of Student Drop-Out and Throughput Rates	17
Analysis Of The 2020 Cohort	17
Gender-Based Analysis Of The 2020 Cohort	18
Analysis Of The 2021 Cohort	19
Analysis Of The 2022 Cohort	20
Faculty-Specific Analysis Of The 2022 Cohort	21
SURVEY METHODOLOGY	23
Research Design	23
Scope and Sample	23
Data Collection Technique	23
Analysis of Data	24
Ethical Considerations	24

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION	25
Respondents Profile	25
Home and School Background	28
University Related	34
RECOMMENDATIONS	66
CONCLUSION	69
APPENDICES	71
Survey Instrument	71
Email Invitations	71
The Initial Call for Participation	71
REFERENCES	74

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study explores the key factors influencing student retention, attrition, and academic success at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). The primary objective was to identify the reasons students discontinue their studies, analyse trends across different cohorts and faculties, evaluate the effectiveness of institutional support, and develop data-driven recommendations for improving student retention.

The findings reveal that academic challenges, financial difficulties, and personal circumstances significantly influence student attrition. Many students cited poor academic performance, stress, and a lack of preparedness as reasons for leaving. Additionally, financial constraints were a major barrier, with 53.46% of respondents stating they discontinued their studies due to financial struggles. While NSFAS funding supported 85.41% of students, many still faced economic hardships.

Personal and environmental factors also contributed to student dropout rates. Issues such as lack of academic support, mental health struggles, and challenges with transportation and accommodation were common. A significant number of students, 30.88%, reported having no emotional or financial support, which further exacerbated their difficulties.

Many students found institutional support services inadequate or inaccessible. Strikes, ineffective communication, and a perceived lack of engagement from academic staff were recurring concerns. Additionally, a high rate of academic exclusions—with 52.02% of affected students stating they were excluded unfairly—

raised concerns about how academic performance assessments and appeals are managed.

Despite these challenges, many students valued their experience at WSU, with 79.21% stating they would recommend the university to others. However, significant improvements in student support services, academic policies, and financial aid structures are needed to reduce dropout rates and ensure more students successfully complete their studies.

This report provides actionable recommendations, including enhanced financial support mechanisms, academic mentoring programmes, improved communication strategies, and strengthened mental health and student wellness services. Addressing these key areas, WSU can improve student retention, foster academic success, and create a more supportive learning environment for all students.



# INTRODUCTION

South Africa urgently needs to produce a greater number of high-quality graduates to support and advance social and economic development. The country also requires a robust increase in graduates to sustain and enhance the education system by contributing a new generation of well-prepared teachers, college lecturers, academics, and education leaders. Despite these pressing needs, the graduate output in South Africa falls short in several key areas, including overall numbers, equity, and the proportion of students who successfully complete their studies.

The challenges facing higher education in South Africa are significant, as evidenced by high rates of failure and dropout among students. For instance, only about one in four students enrolled in contact institutions—excluding distance education institutions like UNISA—manage to graduate within the regulation time for their degree programs. Furthermore, only 35% of the total student intake and 48% of contact students graduate within five years. Alarmingly, it is estimated that approximately 55% of students will never graduate, even when accounting for those who take longer than five years or those who return to the system after initially dropping out. These troubling statistics are compounded by disparities in access, success, and completion rates, which remain racially skewed. For example, the completion rates for white students are, on average, 50% higher than those for African students, leading to a situation where fewer than 5% of African and Coloured youth succeed in any form of higher education.

These performance patterns are not aligned with South Africa's national need to cultivate intellectual talent across all its communities. Unfortunately, these trends are not temporary anomalies but rather persistent issues that have remained largely unchanged since the intake cohort of the year 2000, the first group to be subject to sector-wide longitudinal analysis. Given the prevailing conditions within the education system, there is little reason to expect improvement without decisive and targeted intervention.

In response to these challenges, Walter Sisulu University (WSU) has undertaken a Stop Out Survey to better understand the reasons why some students choose not to re-enrol for the following academic year. This survey is critical to WSU's broader strategy to address student attrition, enhance support systems, and ultimately improve student retention and success rates. The following report presents the results of this survey, analyses the factors contributing to student dropout rates, and offers recommendations for improving the educational outcomes at WSU.

# Purpose

This study aims to explore and understand the factors contributing to student attrition at Walter Sisulu University, mainly focusing on why students choose not to re-enrol for subsequent academic years. By examining the underlying reasons for dropout and delayed graduation, the study aims to inform the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms to improve student retention and success rates.

# Objectives

1. Identify Key Factors: To identify the primary factors that contribute to students' decisions to stop out or drop out of their academic programmes at WSU.
2. Analyse Trends: To analyse trends in student attrition, retention, and graduation rates across different cohorts, faculties, and demographic groups.
3. Evaluate Institutional Support: To evaluate the effectiveness of existing institutional support services and identify areas where additional resources or interventions may be needed.
4. Develop Recommendations: To develop evidence-based recommendations for improving student retention and reducing dropout rates tailored to the specific needs of WSU's student population.

# Critical Questions

1. What are the most significant factors influencing students' decisions to stop out or drop out of their programs at WSU?
2. How do these factors vary across different cohorts, faculties, and demographic groups?
3. What roles do academic challenges, financial difficulties, personal responsibilities, and institutional support play in student attrition at WSU?
4. How effective are the current support services offered by WSU in addressing the needs of students at risk of dropping out?
5. What specific interventions can be implemented to improve student retention and ensure that more students successfully complete their academic programs within the expected timeframes?

# LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on student attrition and retention provides valuable insights into the factors contributing to university dropout and delayed graduation, as well as effective strategies for re-engaging students who have stopped out. This review examines key studies highlighting these issues, focusing on the general attitudes toward higher education and the barriers to enrolment and persistence.

## Attitudes Toward Higher Education and Barriers to Enrolment

Gallup Inc (2024), in collaboration with the Lumina Foundation, conducted a comprehensive study that underscores the strong interest among U.S. adults in pursuing higher education despite a steady decline in college enrolment over the past decade. According to their findings, 94% of adults recognise the value of obtaining at least one type of postsecondary credential, such as an associate degree, bachelor's degree, certificate, or industry certification. However, significant barriers continue to impede both enrolment and completion, with the cost of education remaining the most formidable obstacle. These financial challenges are exacerbated by emotional stress and mental health concerns, which also play a critical role in hindering students' ability to enrol or persist in their studies.

The study further reveals that while many students rate the quality of their education positively, the pressures of balancing academic responsibilities with personal life—particularly for non-traditional learners—contribute to decisions to stop out. Flexibility in course delivery, such as offering online or part-time study options, is crucial for accommodating these students and supporting their continued engagement in higher education.

## Academic and Financial Barriers to Retention

Palmer (n.d.) identifies academic underperformance as a significant factor in student attrition, with three out of five students citing it as a major reason for leaving college. Financial constraints further exacerbate these challenges, particularly for students from lower-income households who struggle to afford tuition and other associated expenses. Many students, especially those who are adult learners, first-generation students, or students of colour, also face significant family responsibilities, which can interfere with their ability to focus on their studies. The combined pressures of academic challenges, financial stress, and family obligations often lead to students pausing or discontinuing their education.

Palmer emphasises the importance of institutional support in helping students navigate these challenges. Colleges and universities must ensure that students are well-informed about available resources, such

as scholarships, emergency aid, and childcare services. These support mechanisms are vital for helping students stay enrolled and complete their education, particularly those who are most at risk of stopping out.

## Understanding and Addressing Stop-outs

EAB (2024) provides a detailed analysis of the phenomenon of "stop-outs," which refers to students who withdraw from college with the intention of returning later. The report highlights that many students do return to their studies after a short absence, with over half re-enrolling within a year. However, the likelihood of re-enrolment decreases significantly as the length of the absence increases, making tailored re-engagement strategies crucial.

The report suggests several key strategies for encouraging students to return after stopping out, including personalised outreach that addresses the specific reasons for their departure, flexible degree programs and course schedules, and the provision of dedicated advisors to guide returning students through the re-enrolment process. Additionally, colleges should emphasise the improved services and majors with high return on investment (ROI) to demonstrate the value of completing their degrees.

## Completion Rates and Barriers for Black Students

Knox (2023) discusses the significant disparities in college completion rates among different demographic groups, with Black students having the lowest six-year college completion rates of all. The primary challenges contributing to these low completion rates include financial difficulties, lack of extracurricular support, and experiences of racial discrimination. Black students often face significant family and work responsibilities, which further complicate their ability to persist in their studies.

Knox emphasises the need for institutions to focus on cultural inclusion, financial aid, and flexible class options to improve completion rates for Black students. Additionally, providing comprehensive support services, such as food pantries and mental health resources, is essential for addressing the holistic needs of these students and reducing the likelihood of stop-outs.

## The Impact of Discrimination and the Need for Flexibility

Marijolovic (2023) adds to the discussion by examining the impact of discrimination on Black students in higher education. The study reveals that Black students experience discrimination at a higher rate than their peers, particularly in less racially diverse institutions. This discrimination, combined with significant caregiving responsibilities and the need for flexible schedules, contributes to the decision to stop out.

The report underscores the importance of offering flexible learning options and accessible financial aid to support Black students as they navigate their educational journey. Institutions must also prioritise creating a culturally inclusive environment that addresses the challenges posed by discrimination and supports the success of all students.

## Primary Reasons for Stop-outs: Work and Financial Challenges

Smith (2022) identifies the need to work as the primary reason students pause their education, encompassing both financial challenges and broader concerns about the value of higher education. Many students, particularly those from lower-income backgrounds, find themselves needing to work to support themselves or their families, which can significantly interfere with their studies and lead to a decision to stop out.

The study also highlights the importance of institutional support services in improving retention and encouraging re-enrolment. For example, institutions like the University of Central Oklahoma have enhanced their retention rates by offering round-the-clock support services, such as 24/7 IT help desks. Additionally, using data and analytics to monitor student progress and identify potential challenges early on allows institutions to take proactive measures to support students.

## The Human Capital Investment Model and University Outcomes

Aina et al. (2018) provide a theoretical perspective on university dropout and delayed graduation through the human capital investment model, which has been extended by various scholars over the years. This model suggests that a sequential decision-making process influences students' decisions about university enrolment and their academic outcomes, where they continuously reassess the benefits and costs associated with their educational investment.

The study categorises the factors influencing university failures into four main categories: students' characteristics, parental background and family networks, the characteristics of the tertiary education system and institutions, and labour market performance. Aina et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of providing students with comprehensive information before they make their university choices, including accurate labour market forecasts and detailed information about educational offerings. The study also highlights the critical role of institutional resources in supporting student success, arguing that adequate human and financial resources are essential for maintaining the quality of education and reducing dropout rates.

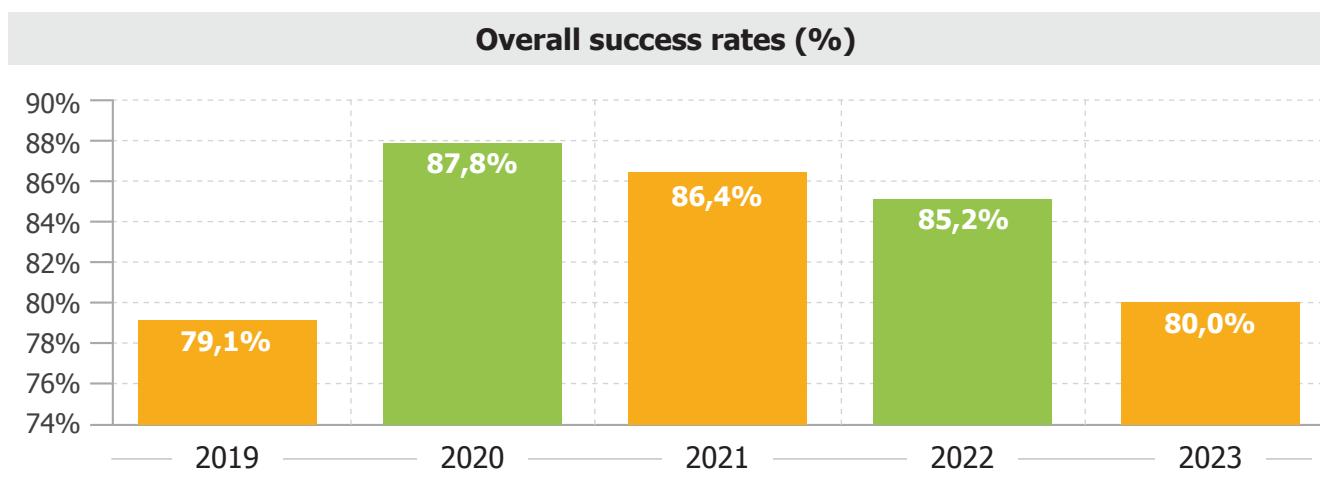
The literature reviewed in this report underscores the complex interplay of factors contributing to student stop-outs and dropout rates in higher education. Financial challenges, academic difficulties,

family responsibilities, and experiences of discrimination all play significant roles in students' decisions to pause or discontinue their studies. Institutions must adopt a multifaceted approach to address these challenges, including providing comprehensive support services, offering flexible learning options, and creating an inclusive and supportive campus environment. By implementing these strategies, colleges and universities can improve student retention and ensure that more students are able to achieve their educational goals.



# SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

## Overview of Student Academic Performance (2022 to Present)



The students' academic performance at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) from 2022 onwards presents a nuanced picture of resilience and adaptation in the face of unprecedented challenges. Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the overall success rates at WSU, measured as the percentage of students who successfully completed all enrolled modules within a specified timeframe. Before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, success rates remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 79% and 80%.

However, the emergence of COVID-19 in early 2020 brought about significant disruptions across the South African higher education sector. In response to the pandemic, the Minister of Higher Education, Science, and Technology ordered the closure of all universities and colleges in South Africa on March 18, 2020, as a precautionary measure to curb the spread of the virus. This led to a rapid transition to online learning, along with the cancellation of in-person meetings, evacuation of residences, and closure of sports and hospitality facilities.

Interestingly, WSU, like many other public institutions, witnessed a remarkable increase in success rates during this tumultuous period. In 2020, the success rate surged to 87.8%, followed by 86.4% in 2021 and 85.2% in 2022. These figures highlight the university's ability to adapt to the challenges posed by the pandemic, maintaining success rates above 85% throughout the lockdown period. This period of heightened success reflects the dedication and resilience of the WSU academic community. As the situation stabilizes, there has been a gradual return to the approximate 80% success rate, aligning with both institutional and ministerial targets. This shift suggests a return to normalcy in academic operations, where performance indicators are returning to pre-pandemic levels.

# Overview of Student Drop-out and Throughput Rates

Analysing student drop-out and throughput rates at WSU provides essential insights into student progression and retention. Throughput rates are derived from cohort analysis, which involves tracking specific groups of students—cohorts—who share common characteristics, typically their year of enrolment as first-time first-year students. This type of analysis, as detailed in the Council on Higher Education (CHE) report, enables the university to monitor and evaluate the academic progress of these groups over time.

Cohort analysis allows WSU to identify trends, performance variations, and factors influencing student success or challenges. It is particularly valuable for assessing the impact of specific interventions or initiatives targeted at particular student groups, thereby isolating the effects of these actions from other unrelated factors.

Critical aspects of cohort analysis include annual dropout rates, retention rates, completion within the minimum time, faculty transfers, and graduation rates. These metrics offer a more nuanced understanding of student progress than broad graduation rates, which are typically calculated by dividing the total number of qualifications awarded by the total student enrolment in a given academic year. While graduation rates provide a general measure of student progress, they do not account for the time taken to graduate or the different durations of various qualifications.

## Analysis of the 2020 Cohort

**Retention and Throughput statistics over all tracking years**

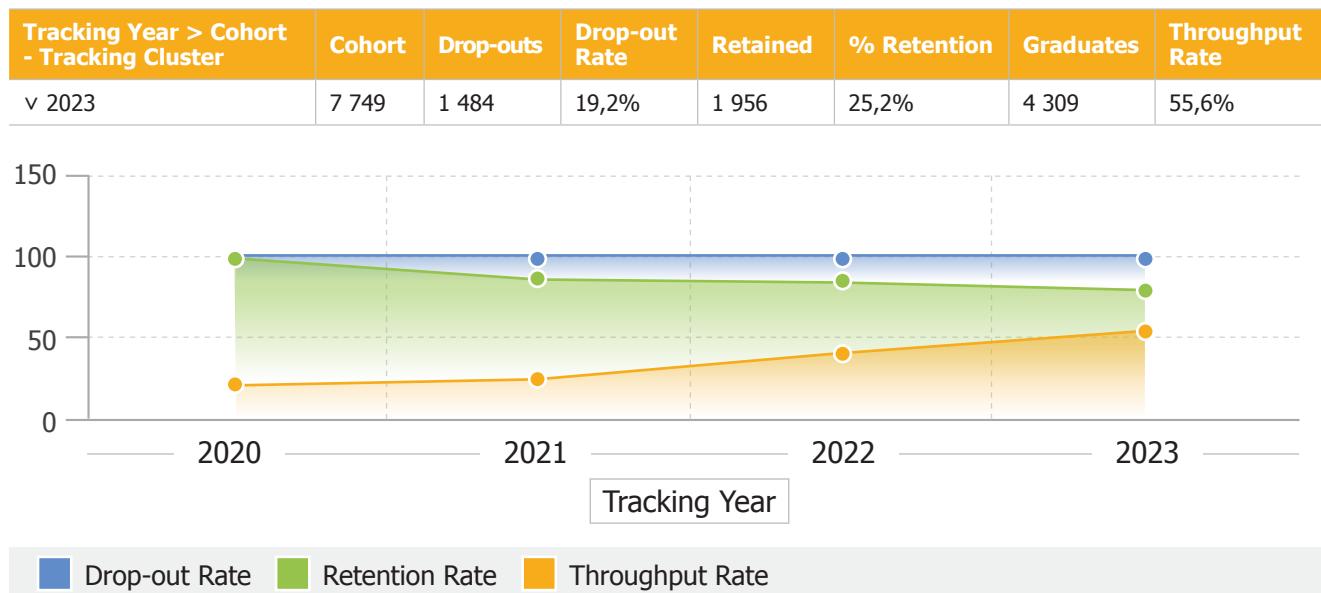


Figure 3 presents a detailed overview of the undergraduate cohort that began their studies at WSU in 2020. Given that undergraduate enrolments comprise 95% of the total student body at WSU, this cohort analysis is particularly significant. The data reveals that over the course of four years, the dropout rate for the 2020 cohort was 19.2%, indicating that nearly one-fifth of the students discontinued their studies without completing their programs.

On a more positive note, 55.6% of the 2020 cohort successfully graduated within the minimum timeframe, which typically spans three to four years for undergraduate programs. Additionally, 25.2% of the students were still actively enrolled and working towards completing their studies at the time of the analysis. These figures highlight both the successes and challenges faced by this cohort, with a substantial proportion of students achieving their academic goals while others continue to require support to reach graduation.

## Gender-Based Analysis of the 2020 Cohort

**Retention and Throughput statistics in the last tracking year by gender**

Gender	Cohort	Drop-outs	Drop-out Rate	Retained	% Retention	Graduates	Throughput Rate
♀ Female	4 508	634	14,1%	1 014	22,5%	2 860	63,4%
♂ Male	3 241	850	26,2%	942	29,1%	1 449	44,7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7 749</b>	<b>1 484</b>	<b>19,2%</b>	<b>1 956</b>	<b>25,2%</b>	<b>4 309</b>	<b>55,6%</b>

Figure 4 further disaggregates the 2020 cohort data by gender, revealing significant dropout and throughput rates disparities between male and female students. The dropout rate among female students was relatively low at 14.1%, while the rate among male students was significantly higher at 26.2%. This indicates that a larger proportion of male students struggled to complete their academic programs.

Regarding throughput, female students demonstrated a higher success rate, with 63.4% completing their studies within the analysed timeframe, compared to 44.7% of male students. These gender-based differences suggest that male students may face distinct challenges that hinder their academic progress, necessitating targeted interventions to improve their retention and success rates.

# Analysis of the 2021 Cohort

## Retention and Throughput statistics over all tracking years

Tracking Year > Cohort - Tracking Cluster	Cohort	DropOuts	DropOut Rate	Retained	% Retention	Graduates	Throughput Rate
v 2023	11 641	2 170	18,6%	5 743	49,3%	3 728	32,0%

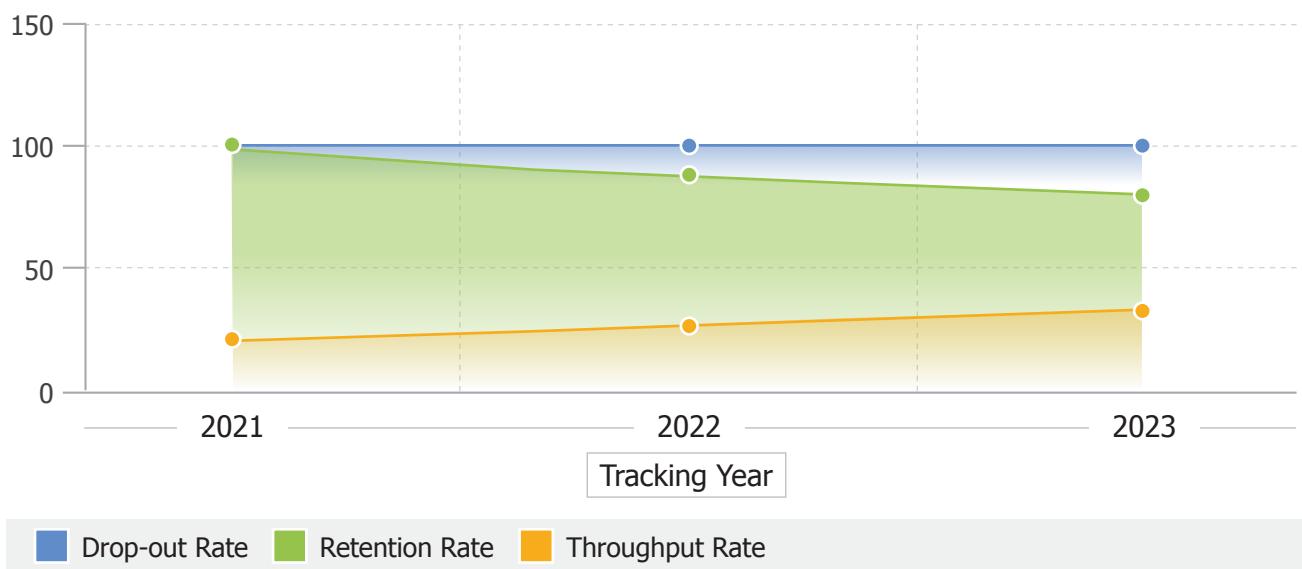


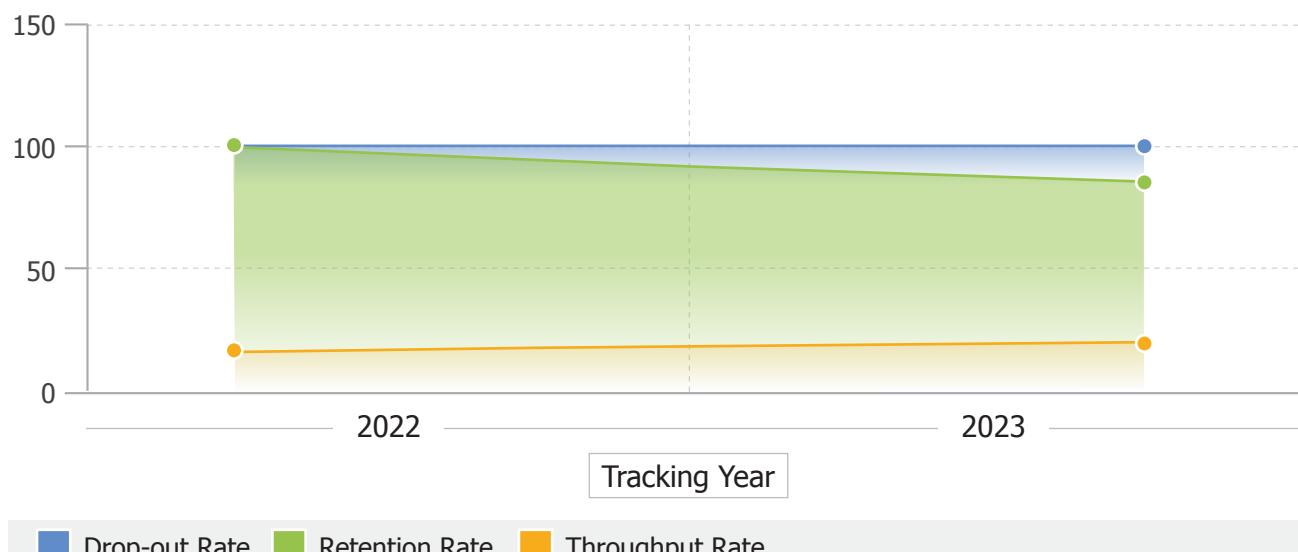
Figure 5 provides an analysis of the 2021 cohort, with the tracking year set at 2023, by which time these students would be in their third year of study. The data shows that by 2023, 18.6% of the 2021 cohort had dropped out, 49.3% were still enrolled, and 32% had graduated within the typical three-year timeframe for their undergraduate programs.

These figures indicate that while a significant portion of the cohort remained committed to their studies and successfully graduated, a considerable dropout rate still requires attention. The retention rate of nearly 50% suggests that a large number of students are continuing their studies, though efforts should be made to support these students toward timely graduation.

# Analysis of the 2022 Cohort

## Retention and Throughput statistics over all tracking years

Tracking Year > Cohort - Tracking Cluster	Cohort	Drop-outs	Drop-out Rate	Retained	% Retention	Graduates	Throughput Rate
v 2023	11 165	1 529	13,7%	7 480	67,0%	2 156	19,3%

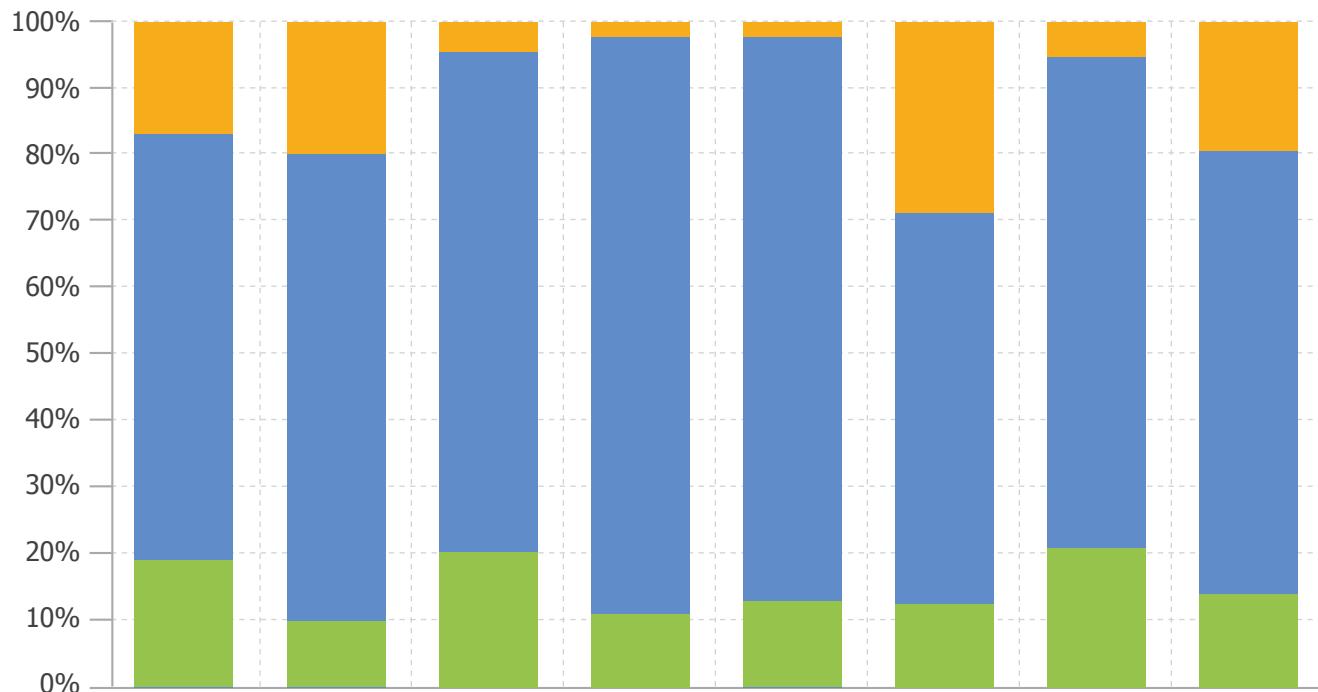


The analysis of the 2022 cohort, presented in Figure 6, offers insights into students' outcomes within a one-year timeframe. By 2023, only 13.7% of the 2022 cohort had dropped out, while 67% were still actively enrolled, and 19.3% had graduated. The graduation rate reflects the successful completion of one-year qualifications, such as Higher Certificates and Advanced Diplomas, highlighting the efficiency of these shorter-term programs.

This data suggests that the 2022 cohort has shown strong retention and success rates, with a relatively low dropout rate. Most of this cohort's ongoing engagement within the university system indicates a positive academic trajectory, though continued support will be necessary to maintain these outcomes.

# Faculty-Specific Analysis of the 2022 Cohort

**Retention and Throughput statistics per faculty (2022 Cohort)**



■ Throughput Rate ■ Retention Rate ■ Drop-out Rate

Figure 7 provides a detailed faculty-specific analysis of the 2022 cohort, revealing notable dropout and retention rates variations across different faculties at WSU. While the university has generally maintained commendably low dropout rates, certain faculties exhibit higher rates than others. For example, the Natural Sciences faculty has a dropout rate of 20.8%, Engineering, Built Environment, and IT stands at 20.3%, and Economics and Financial Sciences at 19.2%. In contrast, other faculties have dropout rates below 13%.

These disparities suggest that some faculties may face unique challenges that impact student retention and success. Addressing these issues will require targeted interventions tailored to the specific needs of students within these faculties. The high retention rates across all faculties indicate that WSU successfully keeps students enrolled. Still, focused efforts are needed to reduce dropout rates and support students in completing their programs.

The situational analysis of student academic performance at WSU from 2022 to the present reveals both strengths and areas for improvement. While the university has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in maintaining high success rates during the COVID-19 pandemic, there are ongoing challenges related to student retention and completion, particularly among specific cohorts and certain faculties. Gender disparities in academic outcomes also highlight the need for targeted support for male students.

Cohort analysis provides valuable insights into the factors influencing student success and dropout rates, offering a basis for developing interventions that address these challenges. By continuing to monitor these trends and implement evidence-based strategies, WSU can enhance its support systems, reduce dropout rates, and improve overall student success.



# SURVEY METHODOLOGY

## Research Design

This study aimed to explore and understand the factors that influenced students' decisions not to re-enrol at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) for the following academic year. The study aimed to identify trends and specific challenges contributing to student attrition and assess the effectiveness of existing support mechanisms at the university. The research employed a literature review to develop a comprehensive list of factors that were considered critical in influencing students' decisions to discontinue their studies. The study utilised a quantitative research design. Students who had not reenrolled were distributed a self-administered online questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to capture the students' perceptions and experiences related to various aspects of their academic journey, including academic performance, financial challenges, institutional support, personal responsibilities, and overall satisfaction with the university. Data collected through this survey was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to identify key trends and factors contributing to student attrition.

## Scope and Sample

This study's target population consisted of WSU students who had enrolled in the previous academic year but had not re-enrolled for the subsequent year. The sample was drawn from the university's enrolment records to achieve a response rate of at least 10%, which is considered acceptable for surveys in the social sciences. The sample represented the diverse student body at WSU, encompassing various faculties, demographic groups, and academic levels.

## Data Collection Technique

Data was collected through an online survey chosen for its cost-effectiveness, efficiency, and ability to ensure data security. Potential respondents were emailed a survey link and a participation information sheet outlining the purpose of the study and ethical considerations. Participants were informed that their responses would be confidential and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time.

A reminder email was sent two weeks after the initial invitation to encourage participation. The survey remained open for four weeks to allow ample time for responses. Upon completion, respondents' data was stored securely and anonymously.

## Analysis of Data

Once data collection was completed, the responses were analysed using statistical software such as SPSS and Microsoft Excel. The analysis involved generating frequency tables and descriptive statistics to summarise the data and identify patterns in student responses. Additionally, thematic analysis was applied to qualitative responses to uncover underlying themes and insights about the factors influencing student attrition.

The final analysis focused on the findings' applicability to the research objectives, with an emphasis on identifying the most significant factors contributing to students' decisions not to re-enrol at WSU. 363 students responded to the survey and after data cleansing 353 of the responses were used in the analysis of this report. The results were reported in a comprehensive format, including tables, graphs, and narrative descriptions to provide a clear and detailed understanding of the findings.

## Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study. Participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and no direct identifiers such as names, identification numbers, or other personal information were used in the analysis. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined by the university, including obtaining informed consent from all participants and ensuring that their participation was voluntary.

The research complied with the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, ensuring that all personal data was handled responsibly and securely.

The ethical principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible publication were strictly followed. The study's aim was to advance research and improve student support services at WSU. The findings are intended to contribute to the university's efforts to enhance student retention and success, particularly among vulnerable student populations.

# FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

## Respondents Profile

The respondent profile provides a demographic overview of students who participated in the Stop-Out Survey. This analysis explores qualification level, year of study, faculty affiliation, campus distribution, gender, and home province to identify trends in student attrition and retention.

<b>Qualification Level</b>		
Postgraduate	53	16,86%
Undergraduate	298	83,02%
(Blank)	2	0,12%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Year of Study</b>		
First year	115	30,79%
Second year	90	25,63%
Third year	86	25,91%
Fourth year	27	7,67%
Other	28	8,32%
(Blank)	7	1,68%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Faculty of Affiliation</b>		
Faculty of Economic and Financial Sciences	60	17,54%
Faculty of Education	40	10,52%
Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology	91	28,21%
Faculty of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences	32	9,04%
Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences	53	14,12%
Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	20	4,56%
Faculty of Natural Sciences	50	13,63%
(Blank)	7	2,37%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

<b>Campus of Affiliation</b>		
Buffalo City Campus	93	26,19%
Butterworth Campus	60	18,48%
Komani Campus	41	11,82%
Mthatha Campus	155	42,76%
(Blank)	4	0,75%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	161	42,49%
Male	190	57,24%
Prefer not to say	1	0,18%
(Blank)	1	0,08%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>
<b>Home Province</b>		
Eastern Cape	258	72,94%
Free State	8	2,05%
Gauteng	15	3,42%
International Student	2	0,90%
KwaZulu-Natal	45	12,95%
Limpopo	8	2,85%
Mpumalanga	3	0,88%
Northwest	3	0,75%
Western Cape	9	2,92%
(Blank)	2	0,34%
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>100,00%</b>

The majority of respondents (83.02%) were undergraduate students, while 16.86% were postgraduates. This suggests that most stop-out cases occur at the undergraduate level, where students may face academic, financial, or personal challenges early in their studies. When examining the year of study, a significant proportion of respondents were in their first (30.79%), second (25.63%), and third years (25.91%). This trend indicates that attrition is highest in the early years of study, where students may struggle with academic preparedness, financial constraints, or institutional adaptation. Students in their first and second years are at the highest risk of dropping out, whereas fourth-year students (7.67%) were the least represented, suggesting that those who persist beyond the third year are more likely to graduate.

Faculty affiliation data shows that the largest group of respondents belonged to the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology (28.21%), followed by the Faculty of Economic and Financial Sciences (17.54%) and the Faculty of Management and Public Administration

Sciences (14.12%). The relatively lower representation from faculties such as Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (9.04%), Education (10.52%), and Medicine and Health Sciences (4.56%) suggests that some disciplines may have higher retention rates due to structured curriculums or career-driven motivations. STEM-related faculties (Engineering, Natural Sciences) appear to have higher dropout rates, possibly due to academic difficulty and workload, whereas Education and Law faculties show more remarkable student persistence.

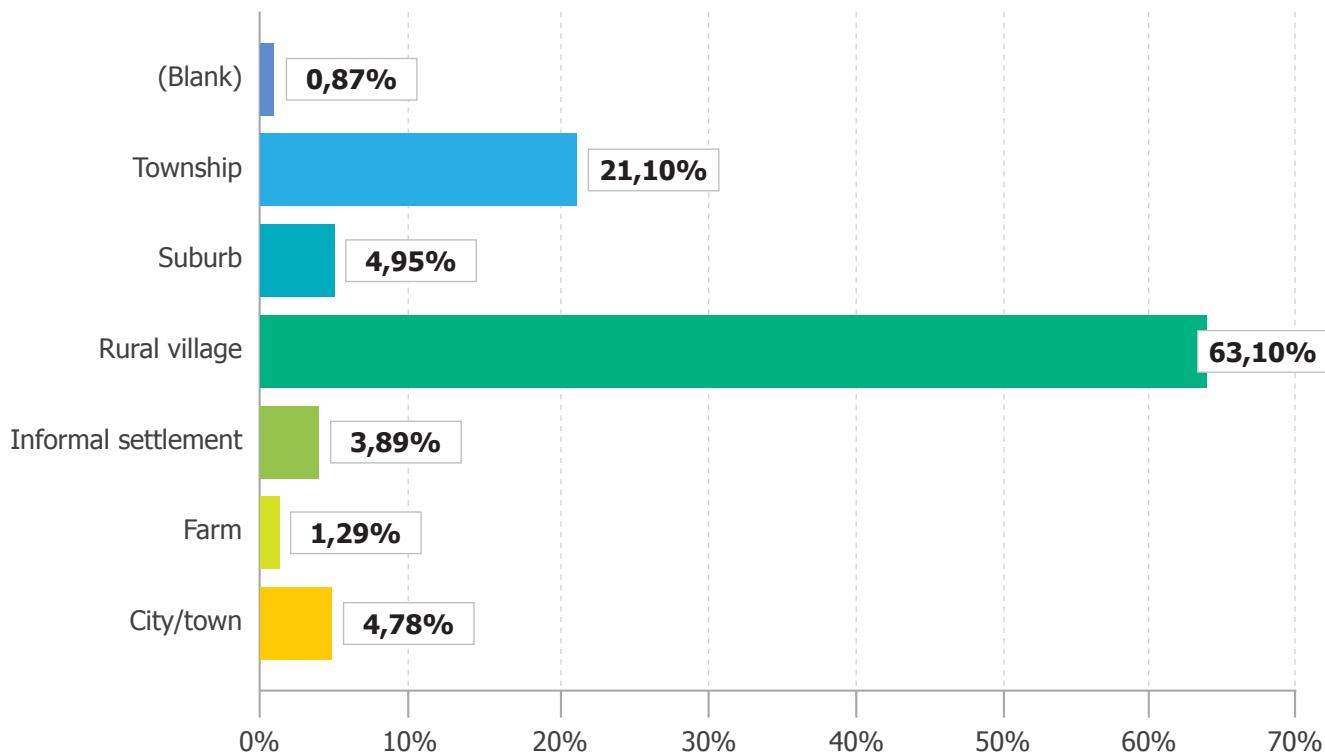
Regarding campus affiliation, the Mthatha Campus had the highest representation (42.76%), followed by the Buffalo City Campus (26.19%), Butterworth Campus (18.48%), and Komani Campus (11.82%). This distribution suggests that the Mthatha Campus faces the most significant stop-out issues, potentially due to larger student enrolment, campus-specific challenges, or program difficulties. As a result, Mthatha and Buffalo City Campuses may require focused interventions to reduce dropout rates, while Komani and Butterworth Campuses show lower attrition cases, possibly due to smaller student populations or better support structures.

The gender distribution among respondents indicates that 57.24% were male and 42.49% were female. The higher male representation could suggest that male students are more likely to stop out due to financial pressures, academic performance, or external responsibilities. This highlights the need for gender-specific retention strategies to support male students, while female students demonstrate slightly higher retention rates, potentially due to different support-seeking behaviours or academic engagement levels.

In terms of home province, a significant majority of respondents (72.94%) were from the Eastern Cape, indicating that WSU primarily serves local students. Other notable provinces represented include KwaZulu-Natal (12.95%), Gauteng (3.42%), and Limpopo (2.85%). International students accounted for only 0.90% of respondents, suggesting that WSU primarily caters to domestic students. Eastern Cape students face the highest attrition risk, requiring province-specific financial aid and academic support programs, while non-Eastern Cape students may experience challenges such as transportation, accommodation, or cultural adjustment.

Overall, the respondent profile highlights key areas where WSU can implement targeted interventions to reduce student attrition. First- and second-year students require additional academic and financial support to improve retention rates. Engineering and STEM faculties need enhanced student support programs, particularly for course difficulty and academic preparedness. Mthatha and Buffalo City Campuses require campus-specific retention strategies, including improved student services and infrastructure. Additionally, male students may need tailored engagement strategies to improve persistence and completion rates, while Eastern Cape students face the highest drop-out risks, emphasising the need for financial aid stabilisation and localised support systems. Addressing these trends can help WSU create a more inclusive and supportive environment, ultimately reducing student dropout rates and enhancing long-term student success.

# Home and School Background

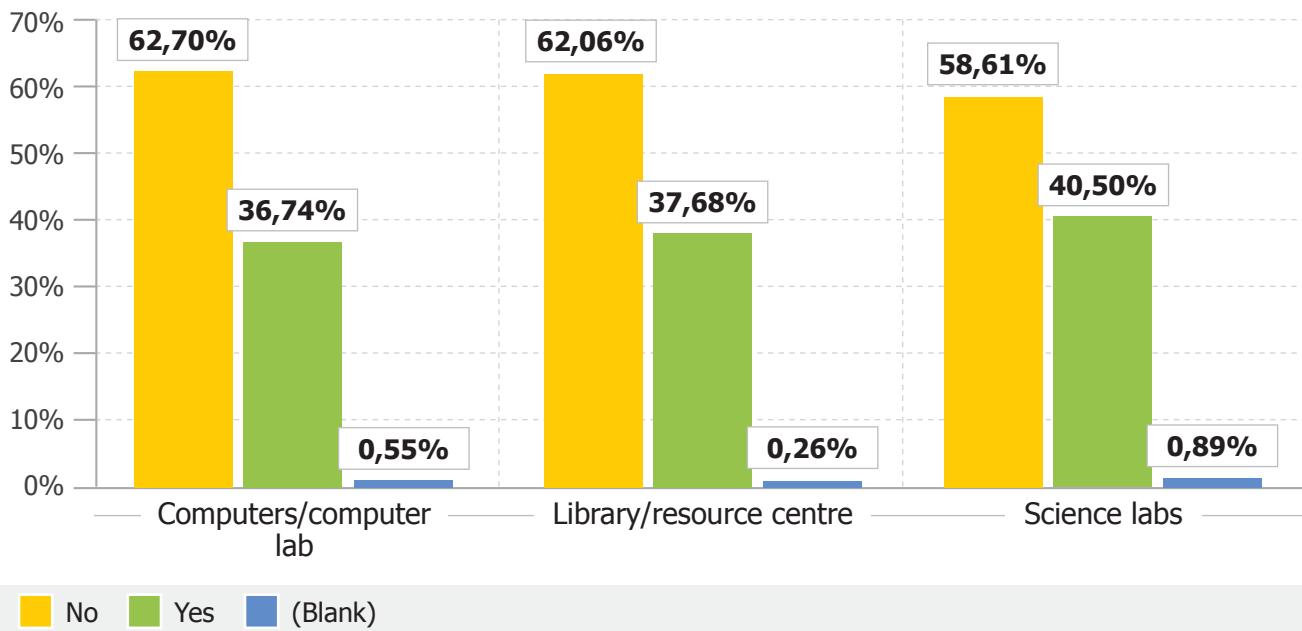


**Figure 1:** How would you describe the place in which your home is situated?

The majority of respondents (63.10%) come from rural villages, highlighting the significant rural representation among WSU students. This suggests that many students face unique challenges associated with limited access to educational resources, financial instability, transport difficulties, and adjusting to urban campus life. Additionally, 21.10% of students are from townships, further emphasising the socio-economic challenges that may affect student retention and success.

Smaller proportions of students come from suburbs (4.95%), cities or towns (4.78%), and informal settlements (3.89%), while only 1.29% reported living on farms. The low representation of students from urban and suburban backgrounds suggests that WSU serves a predominantly rural and lower-income student population, reinforcing the need for financial aid, academic support, and adequate student accommodation.

Given the high proportion of students from rural villages and townships, challenges such as transportation issues, access to technology, and financial constraints must be considered when designing student support initiatives. Improving First-Year Student Experience programmes, digital accessibility, and targeted financial support could help students from these backgrounds integrate better into university life and improve retention rates.



**Figure 2:** Did you have these facilities in your secondary/high school?

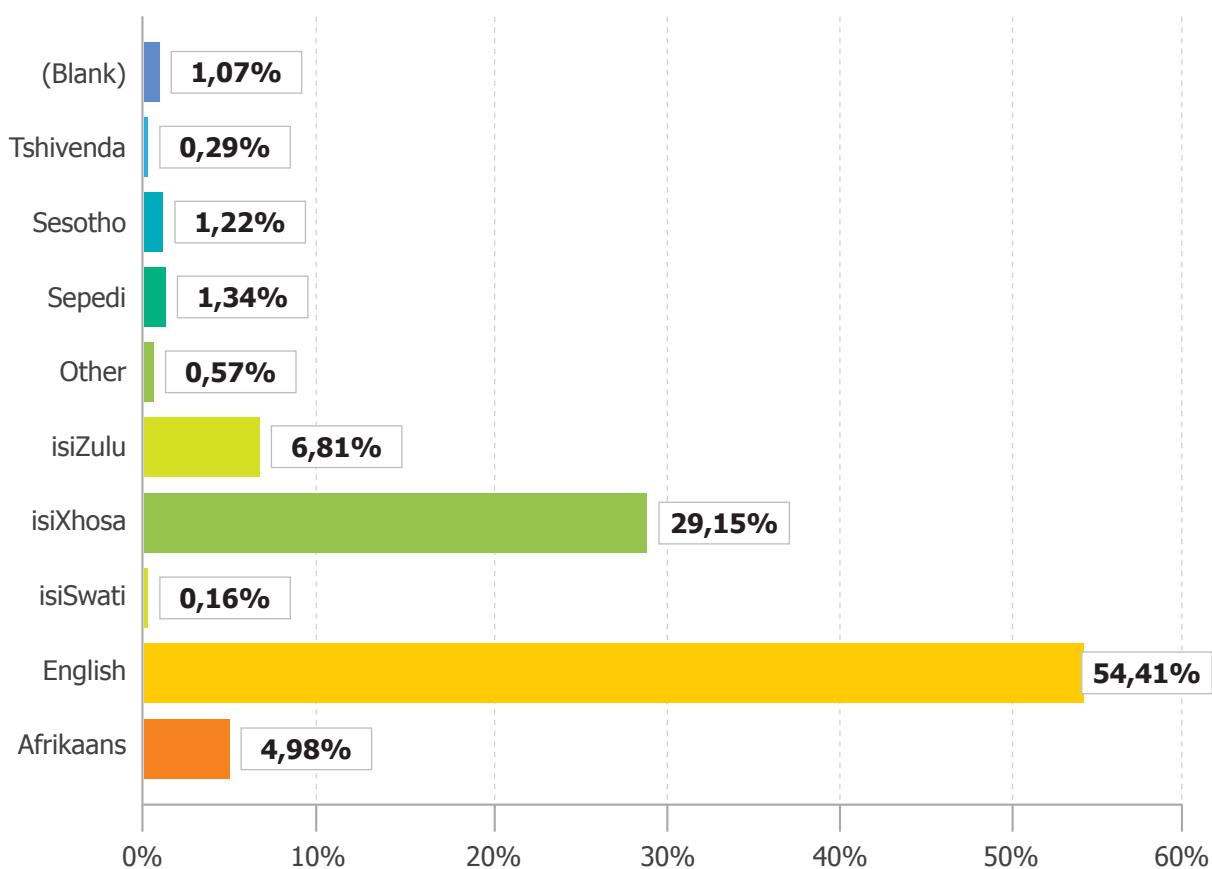
A significant number of students entering WSU come from high schools that lack essential academic facilities, which may contribute to their academic challenges at the university level. The majority of respondents reported not having access to computers or computer labs (62.70%), library/resource centers (62.06%), and science laboratories (58.61%) during their high school years. This indicates that many students start university with limited exposure to essential academic tools, making it more difficult for them to adapt to tertiary education requirements and coursework.

Access to computers and computer labs varied significantly by faculty. The Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology had the highest percentage of students (11.47%) who reported having access to computer labs, followed by the Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences (7.12%) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences (6.08%). On the other hand, the Faculty of Education (8.02%) and the Faculty of Law, Humanities, and Social Sciences (5.88%) had the highest number of students who reported no access to computer labs, suggesting that students from non-technical fields often enter university with little to no prior exposure to digital learning resources.

Similarly, access to library and resource centers was unevenly distributed across faculties. Students from the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology (11.65%) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences (7.01%) reported the highest access to library resources in high school. However, the fact that over 62% of respondents reported their high schools did not provide library facilities suggests that many students lack prior experience in research-based learning before entering university. This gap can have serious implications for their ability to conduct independent research, engage with academic texts, and develop strong analytical skills.

When considering science laboratory access, 40.50% of students had access, while 58.61% did not. The highest proportion of students with access to science labs came from the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment, and Information Technology (14.14%) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences (7.07%), which aligns with their fields of study. However, students from non-STEM faculties, such as Law (6.12%) and Education (7.01%), reported lower access rates. This suggests that high school academic preparation disparities may be influenced by subject streams, where students in non-scientific disciplines may not have been provided with laboratory-based learning opportunities.

The lack of access to computers, libraries, and science labs in high schools places many students at a disadvantage when transitioning to university. This limitation affects their ability to engage with digital learning tools, conduct independent research, and perform laboratory-based coursework. Faculty-specific differences suggest that students entering STEM-related programs might have slightly better access to science and computer labs than those entering humanities-based disciplines. However, the overall access rate remains low, even for students in science and engineering fields. Given these disparities, WSU must consider implementing additional academic support programs, such as computer literacy training, research skills workshops, and expanded access to laboratory experiences, to bridge the gap for students from under-resourced schools. By addressing these challenges, WSU can enhance student preparedness, improve academic performance, and increase retention rates, particularly among first-year students who face the greatest difficulty adapting to university-level learning.

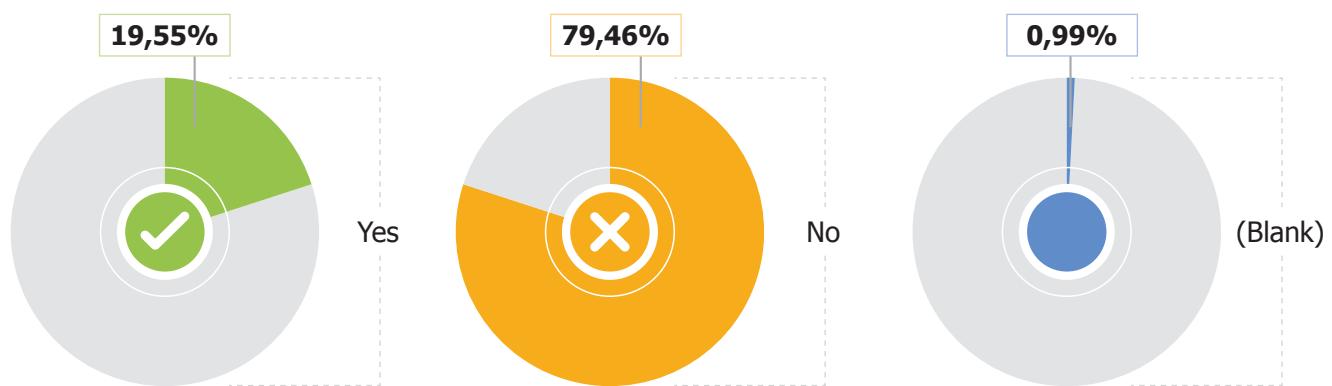


**Figure 3:** Additional language of teaching and learning while still at school

The majority of respondents (54.41%) indicated that English was the most commonly used language in addition to being the official medium of instruction in their secondary or high schools. However, a significant portion (29.15%) reported isiXhosa as an additional language of instruction, reflecting the linguistic demographics of many students at WSU. This aligns with the high representation of students from the Eastern Cape, where isiXhosa is the predominant home language.

Other widely spoken languages included isiZulu (6.81%), Afrikaans (4.98%), and smaller percentages of Sepedi (1.34%), Sesotho (1.22%), Tshivenda (0.29%), and isiSwati (0.16%). Additionally, 0.57% of students mentioned "Other" languages, indicating a diversity of linguistic backgrounds.

The significant reliance on English as the primary language of instruction, coupled with the prevalence of isiXhosa and other indigenous languages, suggests that some students may face language barriers when transitioning to university-level English instruction. Students from non-English-speaking backgrounds may require additional academic support, particularly in reading comprehension, writing, and oral communication, to improve their engagement and success at WSU. Addressing language-related challenges through language support programmes, multilingual tutoring, and improved academic writing resources could contribute to better retention and academic performance.

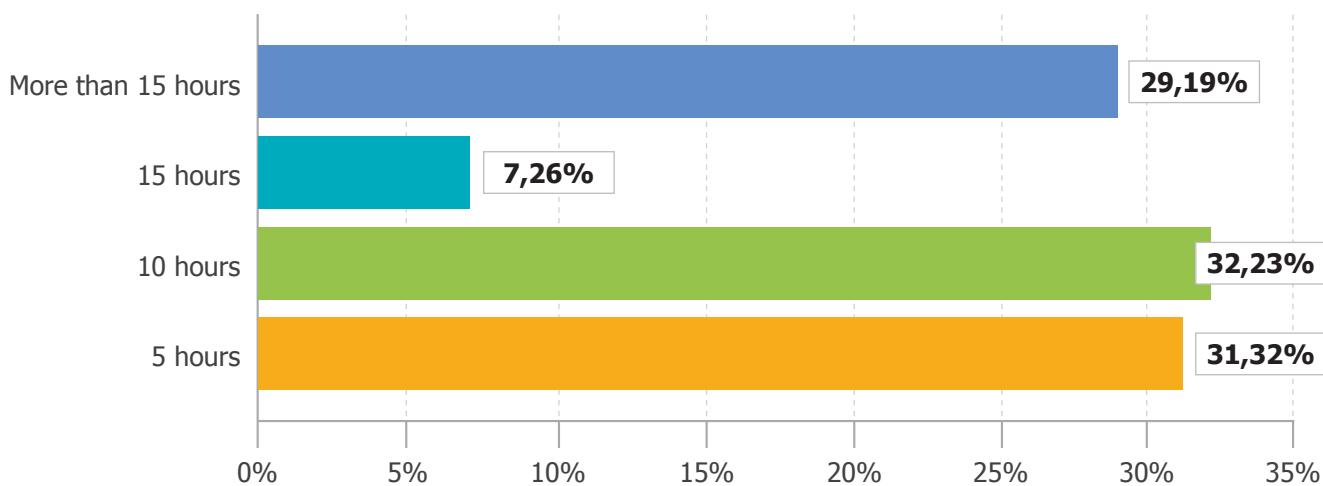


**Figure 4:** Working part-time

The majority of students (79.46%) reported that they do not work part-time during their studies, while 19.55% indicated that they do. A small percentage (0.99%) did not respond to this question.

The relatively low percentage of students working part-time suggests that many rely primarily on financial aid, parental support, or other funding mechanisms to sustain their studies. However, for the nearly one-fifth of students who do work part-time, balancing academic responsibilities with employment may present additional challenges, including time constraints, increased stress levels, and potential academic underperformance.

Given the high proportion of students who depend on financial aid, institutions like WSU could consider expanding work-study opportunities on campus, providing financial literacy programs, and offering flexible support services for working students. Ensuring that part-time work does not interfere with academic success is crucial in improving retention and graduation rates.

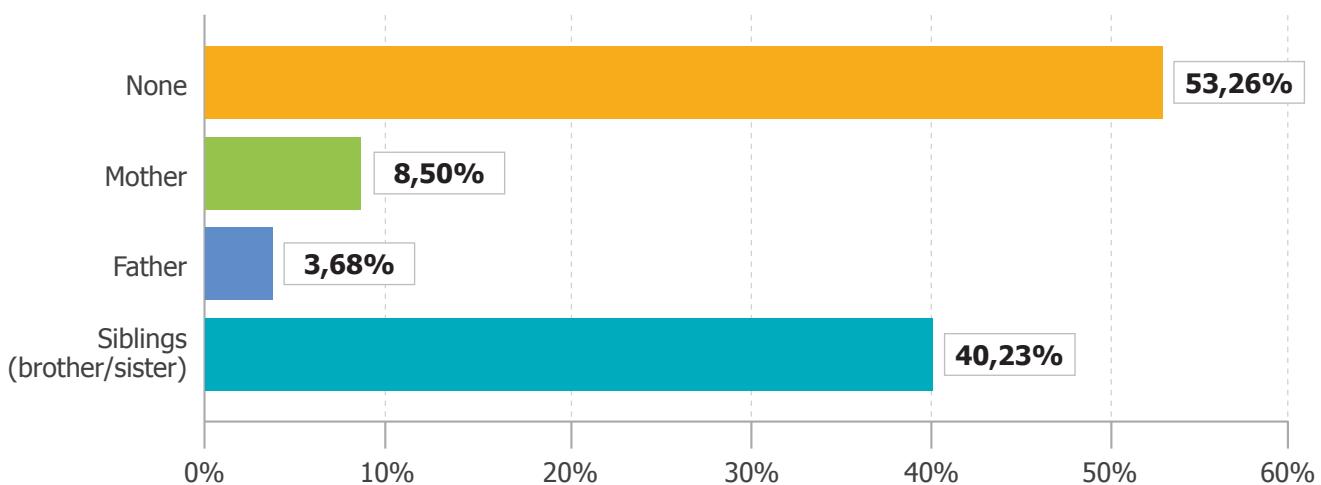


**Figure 5:** Working part-time

Among students who worked part-time during their studies, 32.23% reported working 10 hours per week, while 31.32% worked 5 hours per week. A smaller proportion, 7.26%, worked 15 hours per week, and 29.19% worked more than 15 hours per week.

These findings highlight the varying degrees of work commitments among students, with nearly one-third working more than 15 hours per week, which may significantly impact their academic performance and well-being. Balancing work and study can be particularly challenging, especially for students who also face financial difficulties or demanding coursework.

Given that over 60% of working students are dedicating 10 hours or more per week to employment, WSU should consider introducing structured support systems, such as flexible study options, academic counselling, and work-study programs to help students manage their responsibilities effectively. Additionally, ensuring that working students have access to financial aid and on-campus employment opportunities could help alleviate financial burdens without compromising academic success.

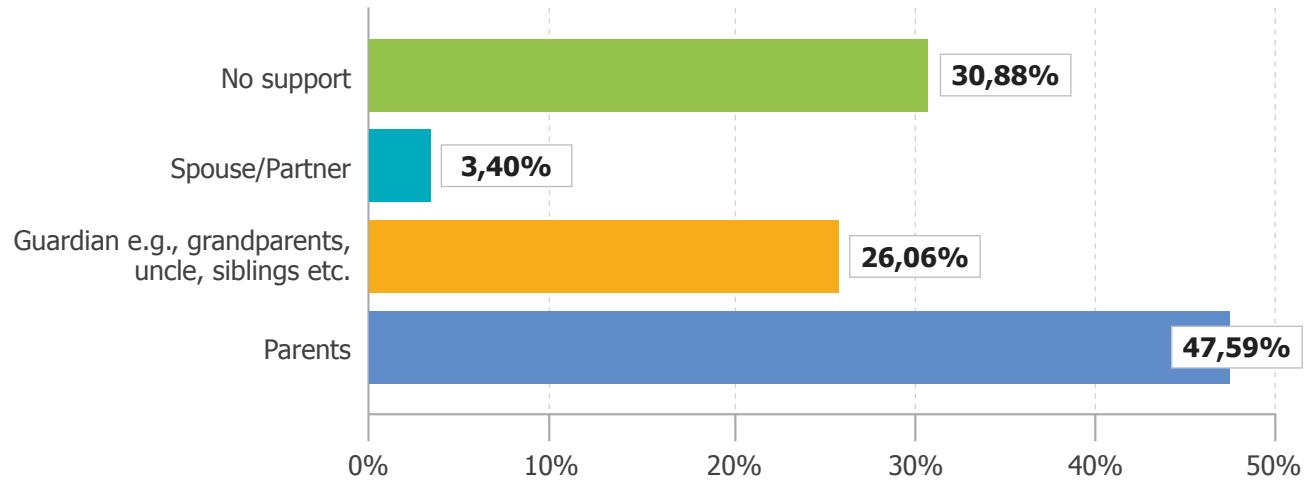


**Figure 6:** Family members who attended university (first generation)

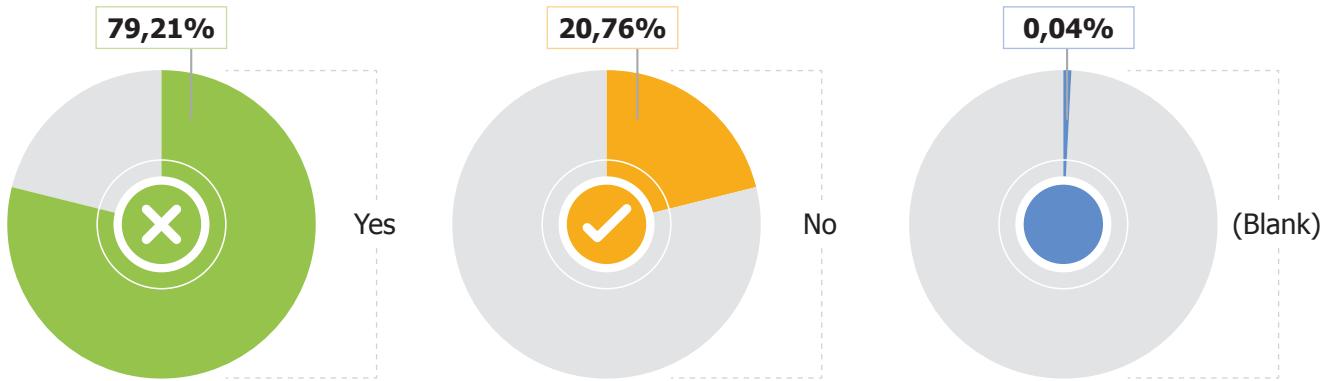
The data indicates that 53.26% of students reported that none of their close family members had attended university, highlighting a significant population of first-generation university students. Additionally, 40.23% had siblings who attended university, suggesting that for many, higher education was introduced through their peers rather than parents.

Parental university attendance was relatively low, with only 8.5% of students reporting that their mother had attended and 3.68% stating that their father had attended. This suggests that many students may lack direct parental guidance in navigating the higher education system.

These findings emphasize the importance of institutional support structures, such as mentorship programs, first-generation student support services, and academic guidance, to help students adapt to university life and succeed in their studies.



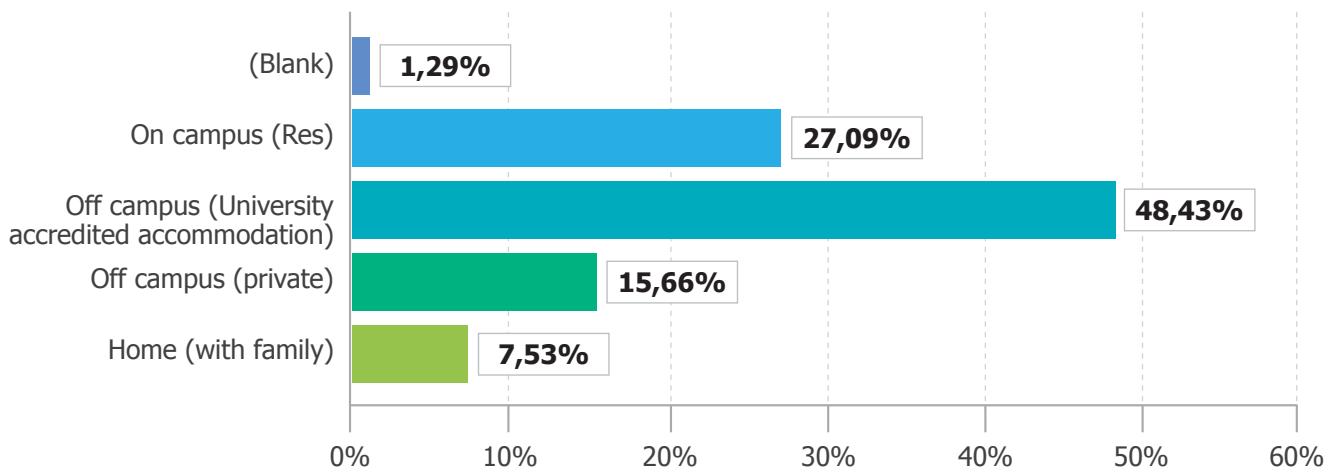
**Figure 7:** During the period of your studies at WSU, who provided you with general support?

**Figure 8:** Recommend WSU

A significant majority of respondents (79.21%) indicated that they would recommend Walter Sisulu University (WSU) to others, including family and friends. This suggests that despite the challenges faced by students, most of them recognise the value of the education and experiences gained at WSU. However, 20.76% of students stated they would not recommend the university, pointing to areas of dissatisfaction. As highlighted in other sections of the survey, the reasons for this dissatisfaction may be linked to academic challenges, financial difficulties, institutional support gaps, and campus experiences.

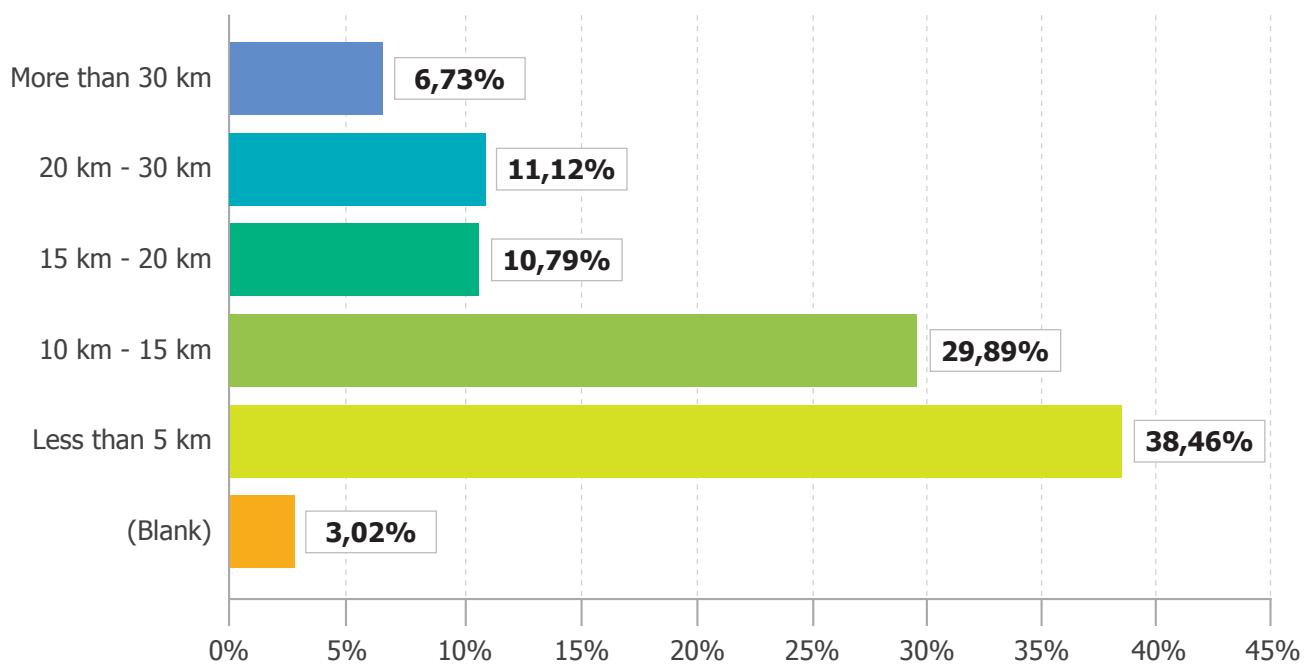
The fact that nearly one in five students would not recommend WSU underscores the need for improvements in student support services, academic resources, infrastructure, and overall student experience. Addressing these concerns through targeted interventions, enhanced communication, and better student engagement strategies could further improve the university's reputation and student satisfaction.

## University Related

**Figure 9:** Accommodation while at university

The majority of students (48.43%) resided in university-accredited off-campus accommodation, followed by 27.09% who lived in on-campus residences (Res). A smaller proportion (15.66%) lived in private off-campus housing, while only 7.53% stayed at home with their families during their studies. These findings indicate that a large portion of students rely on off-campus housing, whether university-accredited or private. The limited number of students staying at home suggests that most students are from areas far from the university, making access to reliable and affordable student accommodation a critical issue.

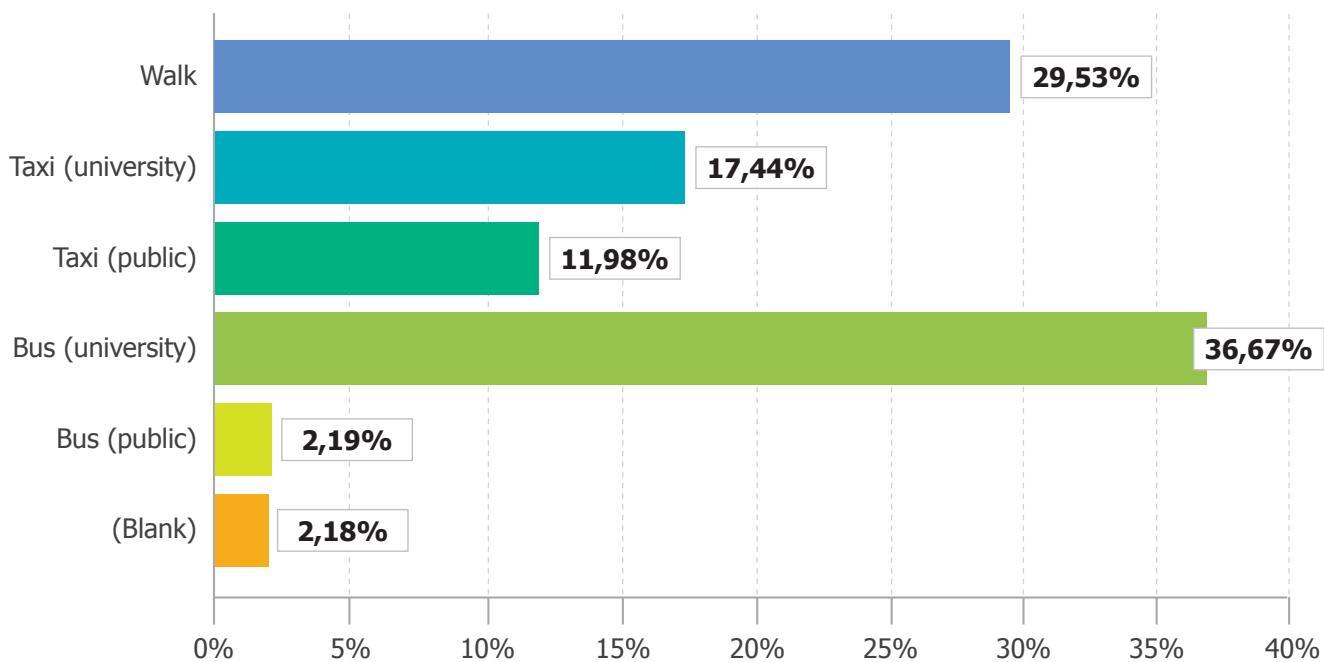
Given that over 75% of students live off-campus, ensuring affordable, safe, and well-maintained student housing is essential for student well-being and academic success. The university may need to strengthen partnerships with private landlords, improve housing conditions, and expand on-campus accommodation options to better support students.



**Figure 10:** Distance from campus

The ideal distance from campus for the majority of students is less than 5 km (38.46%), highlighting a strong preference for close proximity to university facilities. Additionally, 29.89% of students considered 10-15 km as an acceptable distance. Fewer students (10.79% and 11.12%) found distances of 15-20 km and 20-30 km, respectively, ideal, while 6.73% of students preferred living more than 30 km away.

These findings suggest that most students prioritise accessibility to campus, likely due to transportation costs, commuting time, and ease of attending lectures and accessing university services. The university could explore ways to increase on-campus accommodation capacity, improve shuttle services, or establish partnerships with nearby housing providers to ensure students have affordable and convenient living options.

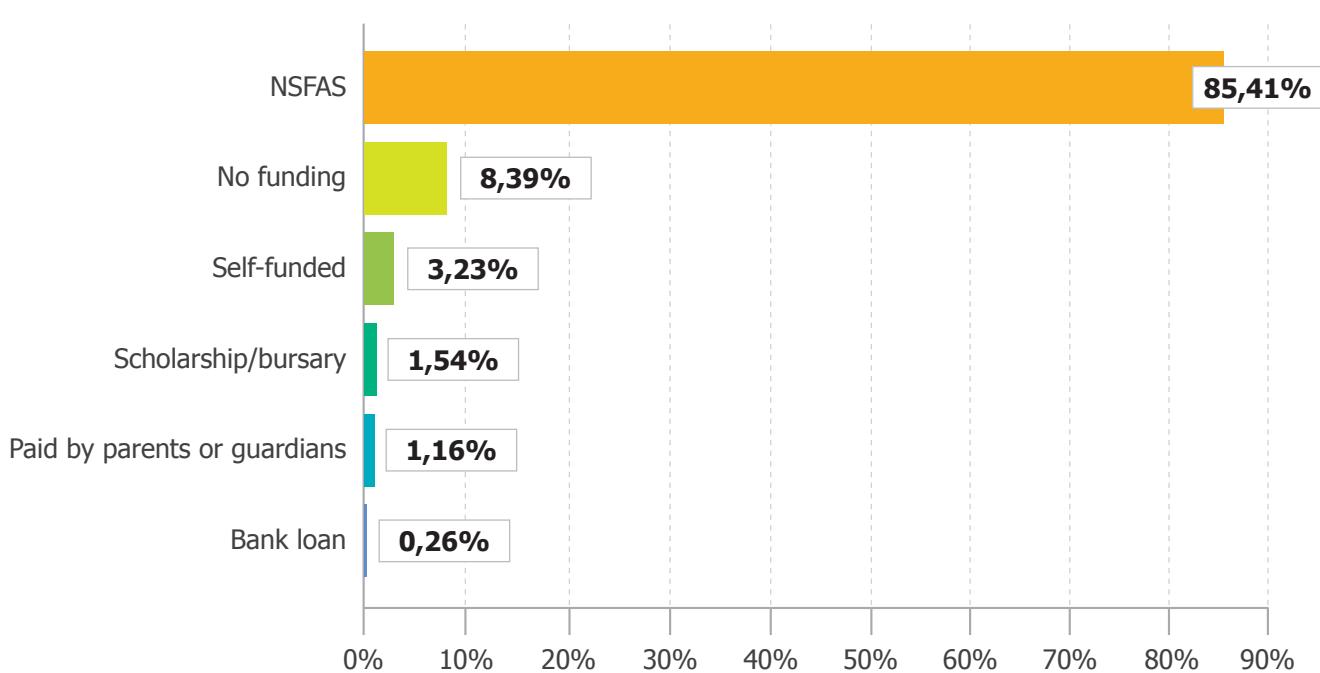


**Figure 11:** Mode of transportation

The most common mode of travel to campus among students was the university bus (36.67%), indicating a high reliance on institutional transportation services. A significant proportion of students (29.53%) walked to campus, suggesting that many live within close proximity. Public and university taxis were used by 11.98% and 17.44% of students, respectively, while only 2.19% relied on public buses.



These findings suggest that transportation accessibility is crucial for students, with university-provided transport playing a significant role in ensuring student mobility. Investments in expanding shuttle services, improving reliability, and increasing frequency could enhance the student experience. Additionally, ensuring safe pedestrian routes for those walking to campus can improve overall accessibility and convenience.

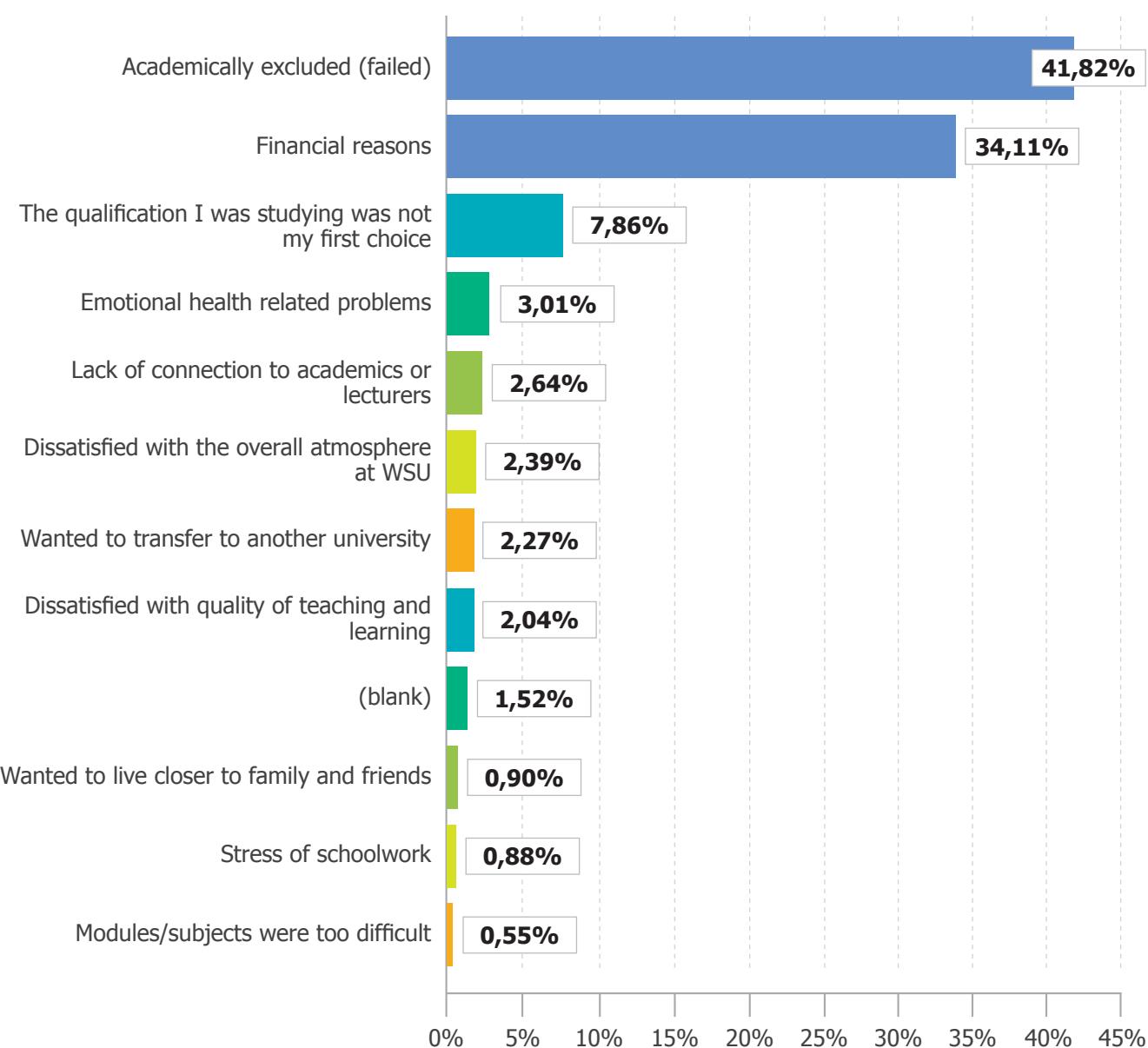


**Figure 12:** Person/s/entity responsible for tuition fees

The majority of respondents (85.41%) relied on NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) to pay for their university fees, indicating that financial assistance plays a crucial role in student enrolment and retention at WSU. However, 8.39% of students reported having no funding, which suggests that a significant proportion of students face financial insecurity, potentially contributing to dropout rates.

Other sources of funding included self-funding (3.23%), scholarships or bursaries (1.54%), and parental or guardian support (1.16%). Only 0.26% of students used a bank loan, likely due to the limited availability of student loan options and the financial burden associated with repayment.

The overwhelming reliance on NSFAS funding highlights the importance of ensuring timely disbursements, improved financial aid administration, and emergency financial assistance for students who lose funding. The 8.39% of students with no funding represent a particularly vulnerable group that may struggle with tuition, accommodation, and basic living expenses, increasing their risk of academic exclusion or voluntary withdrawal. Addressing financial barriers is essential for improving student retention and success at WSU.



**Figure 13:** The most important reason for not coming back to WSU

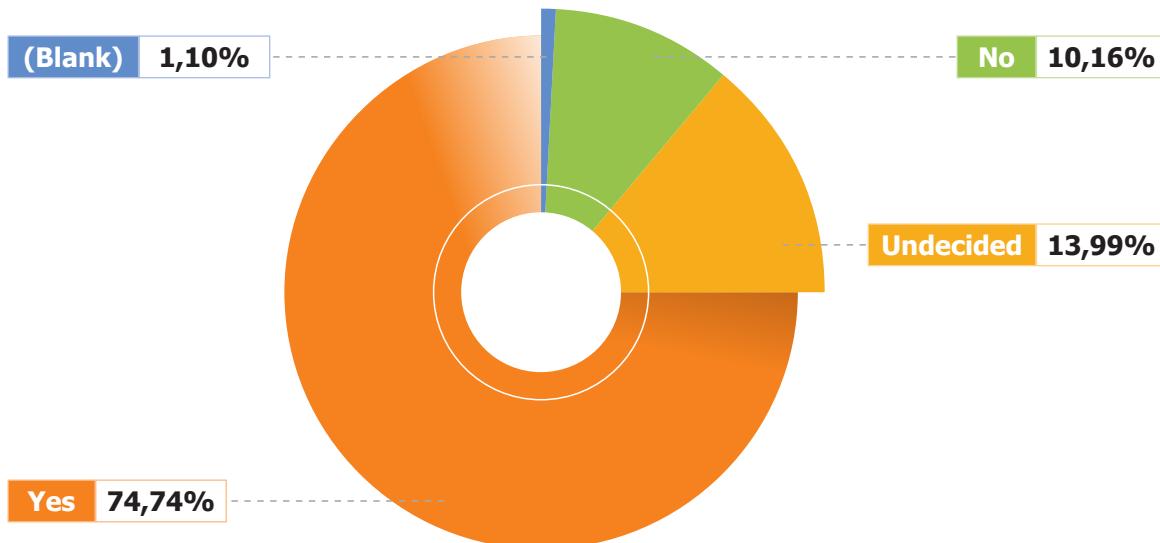
The most significant reason for students to stop out at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) is academic exclusion (failure), as cited by 41.82% of survey respondents. This indicates that nearly half of the students who do not return are unable to continue due to academic performance challenges, making it the most critical factor affecting student retention. Academic exclusion often results from multiple interrelated factors, including insufficient foundational knowledge, difficulty adapting to the expectations of higher education, and inadequate use of academic support structures. Many students enter university underprepared, particularly in subjects such as mathematics, science, and language proficiency, which are essential for success. Additionally, the transition from secondary education to university requires a higher level of independent learning and critical thinking, which some students struggle to manage. Although WSU provides tutoring and academic support programs, these resources may not be fully utilised due to a lack of awareness, stigma, or ineffective outreach. High failure rates

in key courses also contribute to academic exclusion, as certain "gatekeeper" or "bottleneck" subjects create barriers to progression for struggling students.

Academic exclusion directly impacts WSU's retention and graduation rates, further contributing to the broader national challenge of low university completion rates. The high rate of exclusion disproportionately affects students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, exacerbating existing inequalities in higher education. Compounding these academic difficulties, financial constraints emerged as the second most cited reason for stopping out, affecting 34.11% of students. Financial stress often intersects with academic performance, as students struggling to afford textbooks, internet access, or transportation may find their studies negatively impacted. Economic pressure may also force students to take on part-time work, limiting their ability to engage fully with coursework. Furthermore, concerns about tuition fees and living expenses contribute to anxiety and disengagement, further affecting academic outcomes. This suggests that many students are at risk of exclusion not solely due to their academic ability but because financial hardship undermines their capacity to succeed. Addressing student retention at WSU will require an approach that simultaneously tackles academic and financial barriers.

Beyond academic and financial challenges, students cited several other reasons for stopping out, though at lower rates. Some respondents (**7.86%**) indicated that their qualification was not their first choice, pointing to a potential need for improved career guidance and pre-university advising. Emotional and mental health challenges (**3.01%**) were also identified as contributing factors, reflecting a growing issue that can influence both academic failure and withdrawal from university. Additionally, dissatisfaction with the university experience, including lack of connection with lecturers (**2.64%**), dissatisfaction with the overall atmosphere at WSU (**2.39%**), and concerns about the quality of teaching and learning (**2.04%**), highlight areas where institutional improvements could be made. Though a smaller percentage of students cite these factors, they indicate that retention efforts should include a combination of academic support, financial aid, career counselling, and mental health services.

The high academic exclusion rate as the primary reason for student stop-out at WSU underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to improve student success. To address these challenges, WSU could strengthen academic support programs by expanding tutoring services, offering structured remedial courses, and increasing awareness of available academic resources. Implementing early warning systems to identify at-risk students and provide timely interventions could also help reduce failure rates. Additionally, bridging academic preparedness gaps through foundational courses, particularly in high-risk subjects, may improve student performance. To alleviate financial pressures, expanding bursary opportunities, offering flexible payment options, and creating on-campus work-study programs could provide students with more stability. Furthermore, improving student engagement through enhanced lecturer-student interactions, increased access to mental health services, and more substantial career counselling could ensure students are placed in suitable academic programs.



**Figure 14:** I plan to go back and complete my studies

The survey results indicate that 74.74% of respondents expressed a willingness to return to Walter Sisulu University (WSU) to complete their studies. This is a promising finding, as it suggests that most students who have stopped out do not view their departure as permanent. Instead, many see it as a temporary interruption, likely due to financial, academic, or personal challenges, rather than a complete disengagement from higher education. However, 13.99% of respondents were undecided about returning, highlighting a segment of students who may require additional encouragement, guidance, or support to facilitate their re-enrollment. This group represents an opportunity for targeted outreach, particularly in addressing concerns related to financial aid, academic support, or personal circumstances that may be influencing their uncertainty.

A smaller but notable 10.16% explicitly stated that they do not plan to return, indicating that some students have either transitioned to alternative education pathways, found employment, or become disengaged from university studies altogether. Understanding why they decided not to return could provide valuable insights into how WSU can improve retention strategies and support services. Additionally, the 1.10% of blank responses suggest a minimal level of non-response, which does not significantly impact the overall trends in student intent.

Given that a substantial proportion of students are interested in returning, WSU has an opportunity to develop structured re-engagement programs aimed at easing their transition back into university life. Expanding financial aid opportunities, flexible payment plans, and work-study options could help address financial constraints identified as a significant reason for stopping out. Academic reintegration programs, including refresher courses and personalised academic advising, may also support students who previously struggled academically. Furthermore, direct outreach and counselling efforts targeted at undecided students could increase their likelihood of returning by addressing their specific concerns. Simplifying the re-enrollment process and reducing administrative barriers could encourage students to continue their studies.

With nearly three-quarters of students open to returning, WSU has a strong foundation to implement retention-focused strategies that bring students back and ensure they successfully complete their academic programs.

## Open-ended Response

Respondents were asked to respond to the question, "**If you do not plan to return to WSU, what could WSU have done differently to keep you as a student?**" The qualitative responses from students who chose not to return to Walter Sisulu University (WSU) offer valuable insights into the factors influencing their decision to stop out. Several recurring themes emerged, including academic exclusion policies, financial constraints, gaps in institutional support, the quality of education, and disruptions on campus.

A significant number of students expressed frustration over academic exclusion policies, particularly for first-year students. Many felt they were not given sufficient time to adapt to university life before being excluded.

One student remarked,



“Academic exclusion should be experienced by returning, not first years, because adapting to a new environment takes time.”

Others believed that they deserved a second chance due to personal hardships that impacted their academic performance, with one respondent stating,



“Given a second chance to complete my studies because I had challenges I faced that led to my failure.”

Additionally, some students felt that the appeals process was either unfair or ineffective, as illustrated by this response:



“They should have approved my appeal in time to know the way forward. Re-check if I was failing during the year or if I only failed finals and figure out with me what the problem was.”

These responses highlight a perception among students that the exclusion system does not adequately consider personal circumstances or academic progress.

Financial difficulties were another major factor contributing to student attrition, with several students citing the high costs of tuition, travel, and accommodation as barriers to continuing their studies.

One student shared,



“I was once funded by NSFAS, but they defunded me because of income greater than 350k. I find this unfair because they don't look at the monthly responsibility a family is facing.”

Another student emphasized the financial burden associated with attending contact sessions:



“Traveling from MP to EC for a contact exam is very costly... We work in internships and don't have money to fund travel, accommodation, and food expenses just for exams.”

These responses reflect the financial strain many students experience and how funding policies may not always align with their realities.

Several students also pointed to gaps in institutional support and communication, with frustration over administrative inefficiencies and a perceived lack of engagement from faculty and staff.

One student detailed a particularly distressing experience:



"I requested to write Test 2 of the qualifying tests for the semester exam, and my lecturer agreed. I came back a week before the final exams with all the documents proving my whereabouts during the test, but I was told I couldn't write it. I wrote the final exam, passed it, but when results came out, my marks for Financial Accounting were missing. I contacted the lecturer—no response. The HOD said if the lecturer couldn't do anything, neither could he. I went to the SRC, but they also failed to assist me."

This account underscores the challenges some students face when dealing with administrative processes, highlighting the need for improved responsiveness from university departments.

Concerns about the quality of education and learning conditions were also evident in the responses. Some students mentioned outdated infrastructure, lack of access to academic resources, and faculty-related challenges. One student expressed dissatisfaction with the learning environment, saying,



"First improve the studying facilities. Our labs were very old, cardboards falling off, strikes now and then, but we're expected to write tests when it's exam time."

Others noted inconsistencies in teaching quality, such as one student who wrote,



"Some lecturers must do their job. One of the lecturers did not do his job for many months, and he came later and rushed us to finish the syllabus, although he knows that Mechanical Engineering is very difficult."

These statements suggest that students expect a more stable and well-supported learning experience, with better-equipped facilities and consistent teaching standards.

Another prevalent issue raised by students was the frequency of campus disruptions, particularly strikes and shutdowns. One student summarised their frustration by stating,



“I would have finished my degree and come back, but the level of strikes and how WSU handles students is not it.”

Another student recounted the consequences of abrupt disruptions to online learning:



“The abrupt cancellation of online tuition without any prior notification was devastating. I live in Johannesburg and couldn't find accommodation in Mthatha in July 2023 to continue my studies, so I had to cancel my modules. That surely hurt because I would now (2024) have been completing my LLB.”

These responses indicate that ongoing instability has made it difficult for some students to continue their studies, particularly those who rely on online learning or must travel long distances to attend classes.

A few students also raised concerns about language barriers and cultural inclusivity. Some felt that they were at a disadvantage because lecturers primarily used Xhosa, making it difficult for students from other provinces to integrate.

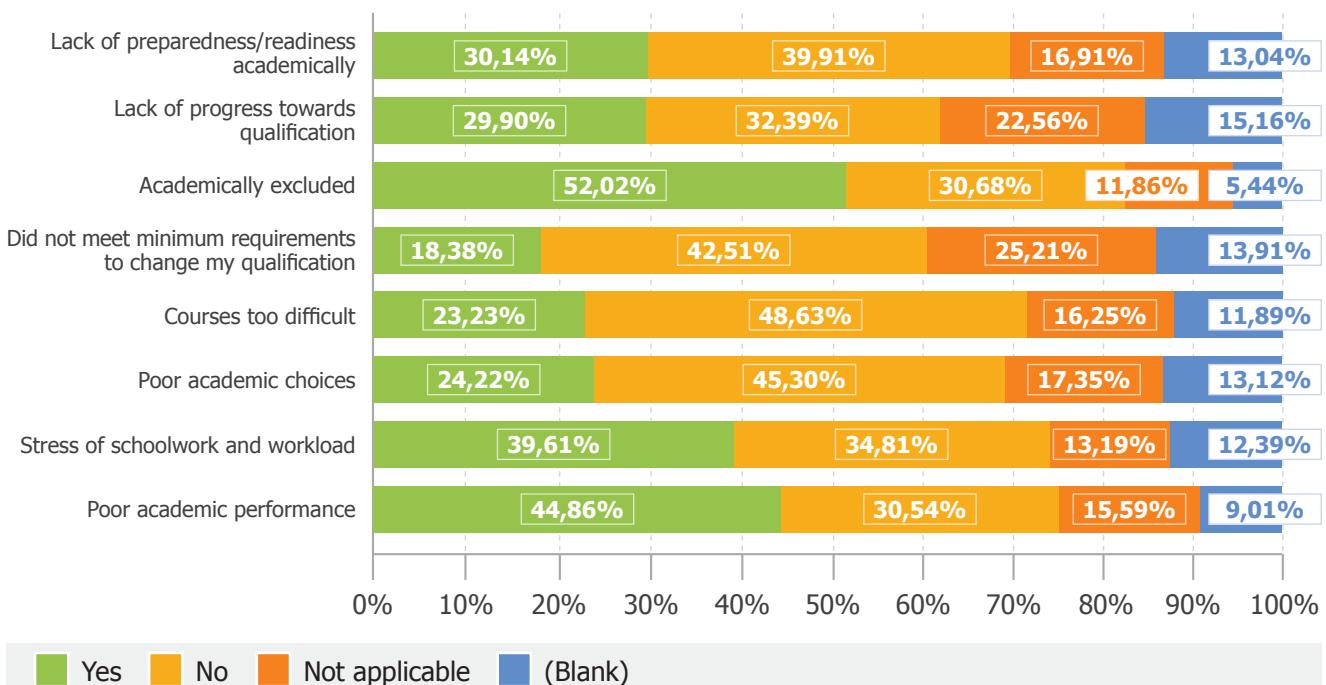
One student expressed this sentiment:



"WSU doesn't consider other ethnic groups because the main language that the lecturers prefer to lecture and communicate with their students is Xhosa. They don't understand that some of us come from different provinces, and they are not willing to accommodate us, so it is very difficult to sit in class and feel like an outsider instead of feeling like you belong."

This highlights the importance of ensuring inclusivity in language use and communication across faculties. Overall, these student responses provide a deeper understanding of the key challenges affecting retention at WSU. The findings indicate that students feel strongly about the fairness of academic exclusion policies, financial constraints, administrative inefficiencies, academic quality, and campus disruptions.

## Academic Related Reasons



**Figure 15:** Academic reasons for not returning to continue your studies at WSU

The data provides a quantitative breakdown of the academic-related reasons why students did not return to Walter Sisulu University (WSU). The most frequently cited reason was academic exclusion, with 52.02% of students indicating that they left because they were excluded due to poor performance. This aligns with previous findings that exclusion is a major driver of student attrition at WSU.

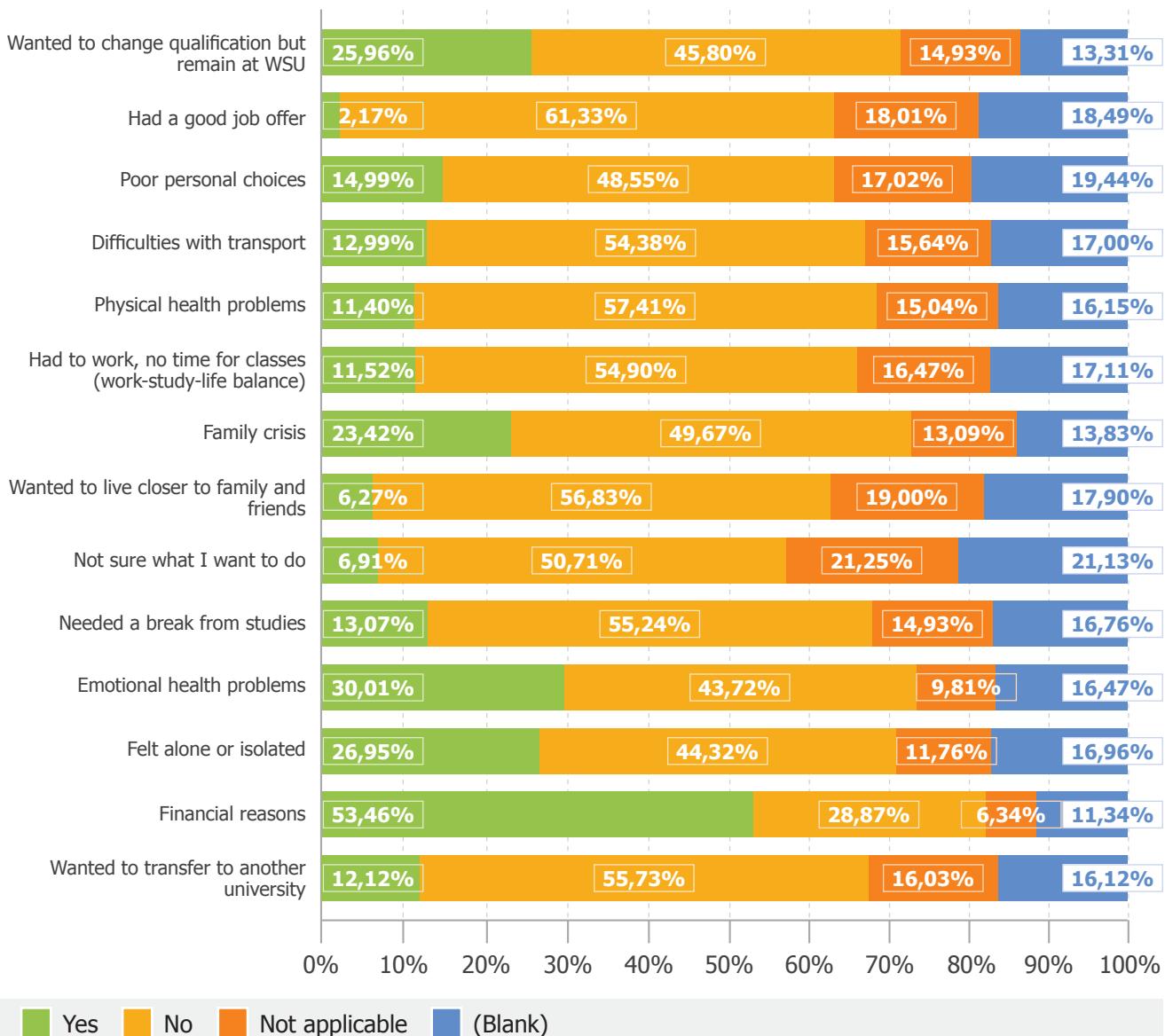
Following academic exclusion, poor academic performance was the next most cited reason, with 44.86% of students stating that their struggles in coursework led them to stop out. This suggests that nearly half of the students who left were already experiencing academic difficulties before facing exclusion. Additionally, 39.61% of students identified the stress of schoolwork and workload as a contributing factor, highlighting the pressures associated with university studies.

A significant portion of students (30.14%) reported that they were not academically prepared for university-level education, which suggests that many struggled with the transition from high school to higher education. This lack of preparedness may have compounded other challenges, such as poor academic choices (24.22%) and difficulty of courses (23.23%), both of which were cited as reasons for stopping out.

Interestingly, 45.30% of students explicitly stated that their academic choices played a role in their decision not to return. This could indicate that a significant number of students enrolled in programs that did not align with their strengths or interests, potentially leading to disengagement or failure. Additionally, 18.38% of students mentioned that they were unable to change their qualifications due to not meeting the minimum requirements, further limiting their ability to adjust their academic paths.

Lastly, lack of progress towards qualification (29.90%) was another notable factor, suggesting that some students left because they felt that they were not advancing at a satisfactory pace. Combined with other data points, this suggests that students who struggle academically may become discouraged over time, leading to a higher likelihood of stopping out.

# Personal Environment Reasons



**Figure 16:** Personal environment reasons for not returning to continue your studies at WSU

The data reveals that financial reasons were the most significant personal environment-related factor influencing students' decisions not to return to Walter Sisulu University (WSU), with 53.46% of respondents citing financial constraints as a key reason. This aligns with previous findings that economic difficulties significantly impact student retention, making it a major barrier to completing studies.

Emotional and social factors also played a notable role. 30.01% of students reported emotional health problems, while 26.95% mentioned feeling alone or isolated. These figures highlight the importance of mental health and social support systems in student retention.

Additionally, 23.42% of students cited a family crisis as a reason for stopping out, indicating that personal responsibilities and challenges at home can interfere with academic progress.

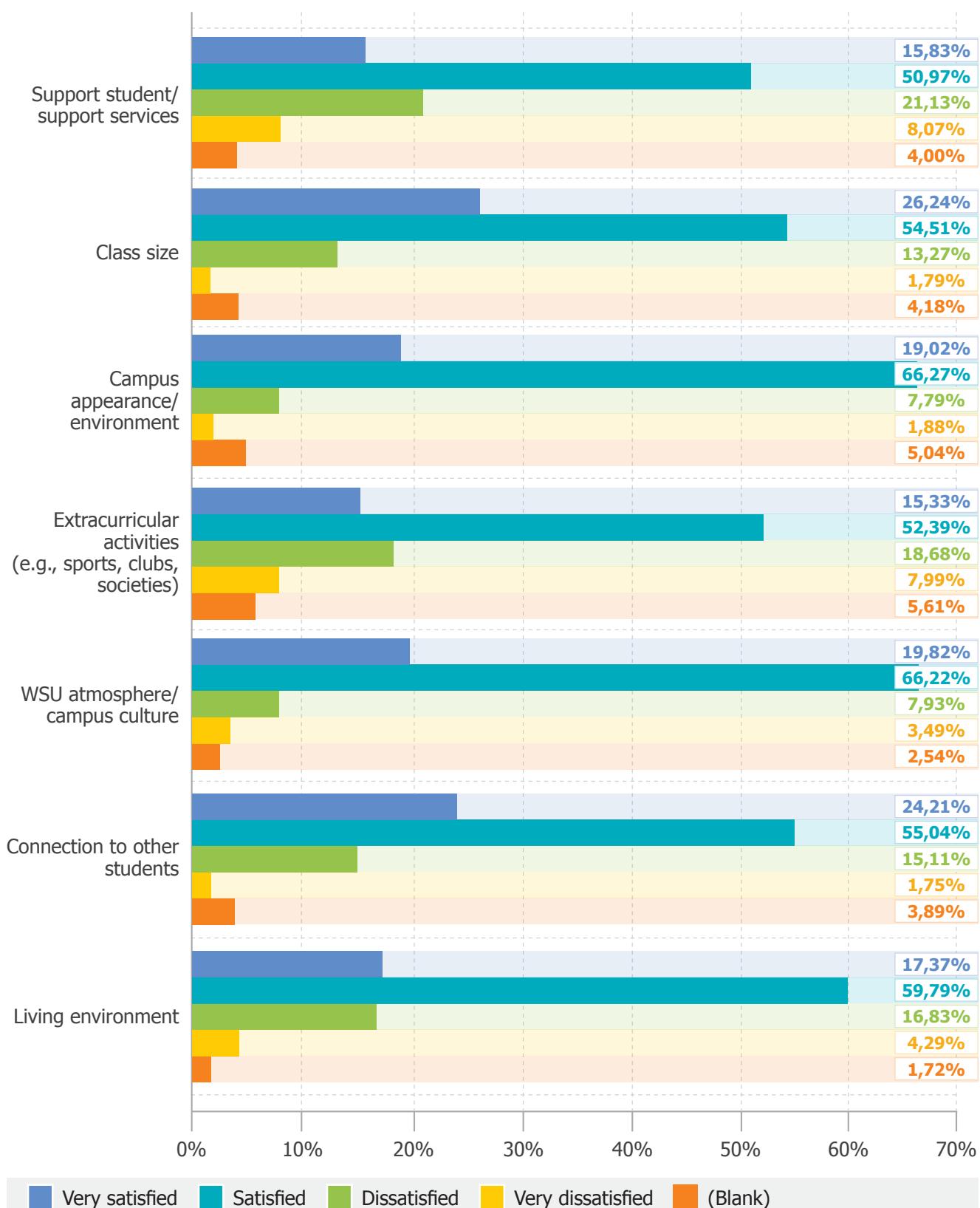
A smaller but still significant portion of students (25.96%) indicated that they wanted to change their qualifications but remain at WSU, suggesting that a lack of flexibility in program switching may have contributed to their decision to leave. Meanwhile, 6.91% of students were simply unsure about their academic or career path, indicating a need for better academic and career advising services to help students make informed decisions.

Other logistical and life circumstances also influenced attrition. 12.99% of students cited transport difficulties, while 11.52% said they had to balance work, study, and life commitments, making it difficult to continue their education. Additionally, 11.40% of students mentioned physical health issues as a contributing factor.

A relatively low percentage (12.12%) of students left WSU to transfer to another university, suggesting that competition from other institutions is not a primary reason for student attrition. Additionally, only 2.17% cited receiving a good job offer as their reason for leaving, indicating that employment opportunities were not a major driver of dropout rates.



# Overall Satisfaction



**Figure 17:** Overall satisfaction

The survey data provides insights into student satisfaction with various aspects of the campus environment, student support, and extracurricular activities at Walter Sisulu University (WSU).

A majority of students (59.79%) reported being satisfied with their living environment, while 17.37% were very satisfied. However, 16.83% were dissatisfied, and 4.29% were very dissatisfied, indicating that while most students had a positive experience, a significant minority faced challenges related to housing and accommodations.

Regarding campus atmosphere and culture, 66.22% of students were satisfied, and 19.82% were very satisfied, making it one of the most positively rated aspects of university life. Only 7.93% were dissatisfied, suggesting that, overall, WSU provides a welcoming and engaging campus environment for students.

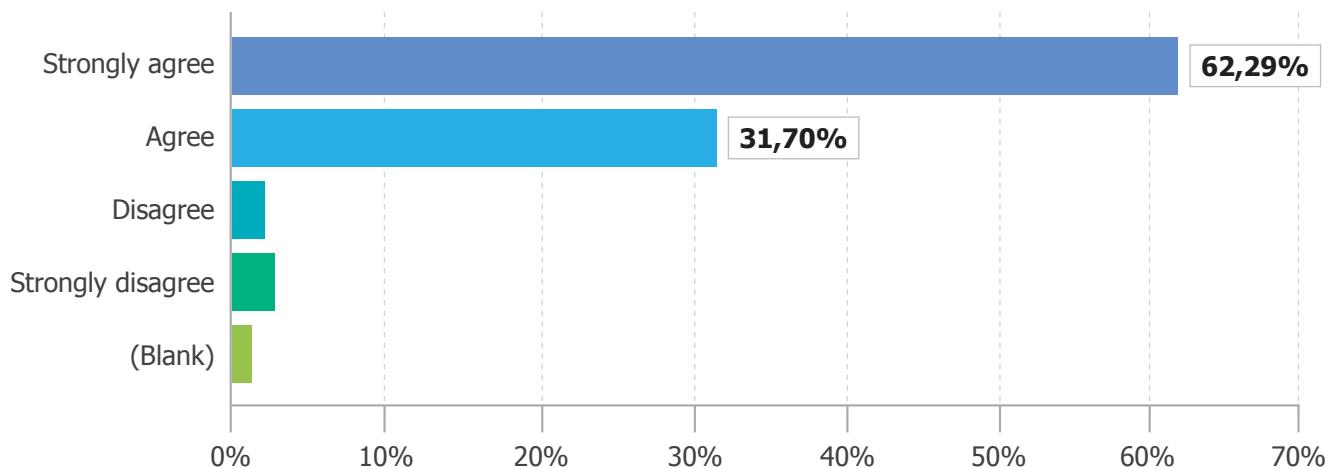
Student connection to peers was generally positive, with 55.04% expressing satisfaction and 24.21% indicating that they were very satisfied. However, 15.11% were dissatisfied, which suggests that while most students found it easy to connect with others, a notable proportion may have struggled with social integration.

Class sizes received mixed responses. A majority (54.51%) were satisfied, and 26.24% were very satisfied, indicating that most students felt comfortable with the number of students per class. However, 13.27% were dissatisfied, which could suggest that in certain courses or faculties, class sizes may have been too large or too small to meet student expectations.

Extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, and societies, had lower satisfaction ratings compared to other categories. While 52.39% of students were satisfied, only 15.33% were very satisfied, whereas 18.68% were dissatisfied, and 7.99% were very dissatisfied. This suggests that while many students had access to extracurricular activities, there is room for improvement in the variety, quality, or accessibility of such programs.

In contrast, campus appearance and environment were rated positively by students. 66.27% were satisfied, and 19.02% were very satisfied, making it one of the highest-rated categories. Only 7.79% were dissatisfied, indicating that students generally found the campus well-maintained and conducive to learning.

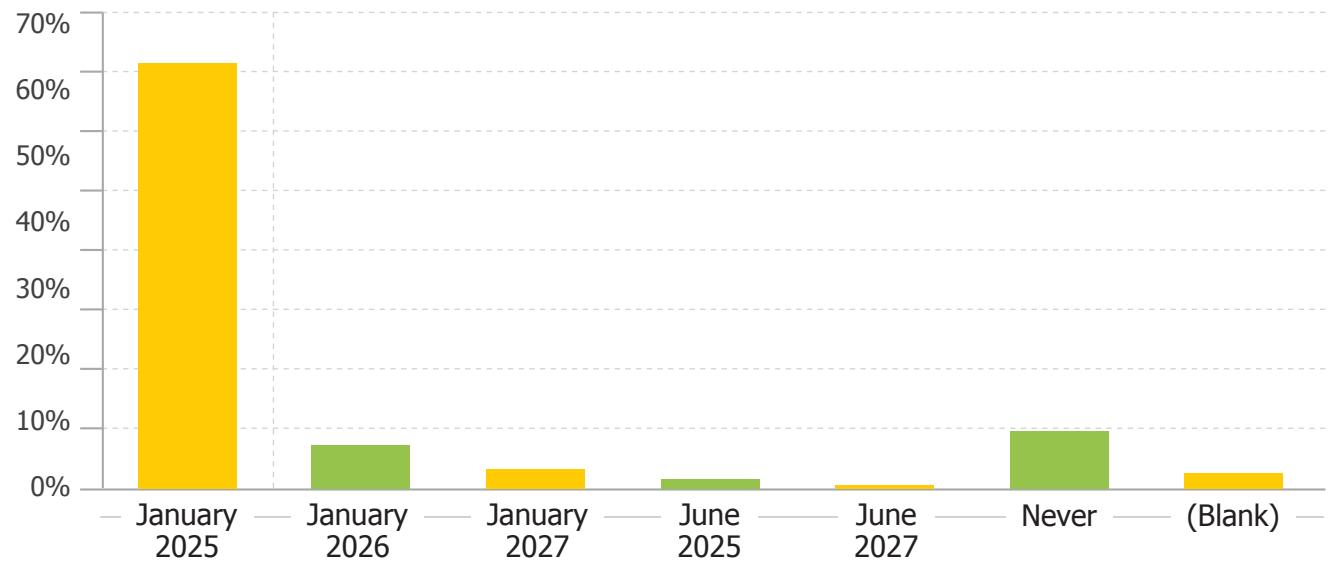
The lowest satisfaction ratings were recorded in student support services, with 21.13% of students expressing dissatisfaction and 8.07% indicating that they were very dissatisfied. While 50.97% were satisfied, and 15.83% were very satisfied, these figures suggest that many students felt that the support structures in place were not sufficient or effective in addressing their needs. This is a critical area for improvement, as support services play a key role in student retention and success.



**Figure 18:** I can succeed at WSU and eventually graduate

The data reveals that 94% of respondents expressed confidence in their ability to succeed at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and eventually graduate. A significant 62.29% of students strongly agreed, while 31.70% agreed with the statement, indicating that the vast majority of students believe they have the capacity to complete their studies.

Conversely, only 4.95% of students expressed doubts about their ability to graduate, with 2.14% disagreeing and 2.81% strongly disagreeing. The low percentage of negative responses suggests that while most students are confident, a small proportion may feel unsupported, unprepared, or uncertain about their academic journey.



**Figure 19:** When do you plan to go back to WSU to complete your studies?

# Analysis of Students' Worst Experiences at WSU

The open-ended responses provide deep insights into the most challenging experiences students encountered at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). Several recurring themes emerged, highlighting academic struggles, financial difficulties, institutional inefficiencies, personal hardships, and campus safety concerns.

## 1. Academic Exclusion and Challenges

A significant number of students identified academic exclusion as their worst experience. Many expressed frustration over the exclusion process, particularly feeling that they were not given enough warning or support before being excluded. One student stated,



"I was academically excluded without prior notice."

while another mentioned,



"I was academically excluded despite passing all my modules except for one."

Additionally, some students experienced grading errors, missing marks, or inconsistencies in assessment, with one reporting,



"My marks vanished, and no one was willing to assist me. Only after I decided to study elsewhere did my marks miraculously reappear."

Other students struggled with adapting to university-level academics, especially those transitioning from high school. A respondent shared,



"First time dealing with accounting in my life, and I had no support. It was overwhelming."

Another student emphasised the difficulty of certain courses, saying,



“Failing one module twice in 2023 discouraged me a lot, even though I tried my best.”

## 2. Financial Struggles and Funding Issues

Financial difficulties were another major area of concern. Several students recounted experiences of not receiving their NSFAS allowances on time or losing funding unexpectedly. One student stated,



“I was unfunded in 2021 and had no accommodation or food. That year ruined me; now I am excluded.”

Another shared,



“I had to drop out because I was no longer funded, even though I was eligible. WSU didn’t treat me well from my first year to the last.”

Some students also expressed frustration with how financial aid issues were handled, with one stating,



“I spent months going to the finance office to sort out my funding, but I was ignored every time.”

The impact of these financial difficulties extended beyond tuition, with students struggling to pay for transport, food, and basic living expenses.

### 3. Administrative and Institutional Challenges

Many students described frustrating experiences with administrative inefficiencies. Issues such as delayed registration, miscommunication from faculty, and unresponsive university departments were commonly cited. One student explained,



“I wrote an email asking for re-admission, and I was told I would be readmitted, but it never happened. I am still waiting.”

Additionally, students reported challenges in changing qualifications, with one stating,



“I tried to switch courses for two years, but they refused. Now I am stuck in a degree I don’t want.”

Another mentioned,



“Not being allowed to change my qualification made me so stressed that I eventually dropped out.”

### 4. Strikes and Campus Disruptions

Strikes and campus shutdowns had a significant impact on students' academic experiences. Many students felt that frequent strikes disrupted learning, caused exam postponements, and created instability. One student shared,



“There was a strike, and school was closed. When it reopened, we had too much work, and some topics were not even covered before exams.”

Another student recalled the emotional and physical toll of strikes, stating,



“I was traumatised by the frequent protests. Sometimes, they got violent, and I felt unsafe.”

Some students reported that they were forced to participate in strikes or risked missing out on key academic activities.

## 5. Safety and Personal Well-Being

Several students recounted safety concerns, including incidents of theft, violence, and lack of university intervention in serious matters. One student shared a traumatic experience:



“I was raped at an off-campus residence, and no one helped me. That experience destroyed my academics and mental health.”

Another stated,



“I got shot during a house robbery at my residence and almost lost my life. The university did not support me.”

Additionally, some students felt isolated and unsupported, particularly those who struggled with mental health. One student described feeling completely alone, stating,



“I had a mental breakdown, but there was no one to help me. I had to deal with everything on my own.”

## 6. Housing and Transport Difficulties

Accommodation and transportation issues also contributed to negative experiences at WSU. Some students struggled with poor living conditions, stating,



“The residence I was placed in was dirty, had poor management, and was far from campus.”

Others highlighted transport issues, with one student explaining,



“The university shuttle was unreliable. I was late to class many times because it never arrived on time.”

## Analysis of Students' Best Experiences at WSU

The open-ended responses provide valuable insights into students' positive experiences at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). Several key themes emerged: academic achievements, social connections, extracurricular activities, institutional support, and personal growth.

### 1. Academic Exclusion and Challenges

Many students highlighted their **academic success** as their best experience, particularly passing modules, excelling in coursework, and receiving motivation from lecturers. One student stated,



“2022, I passed all of my modules,”

while another shared,



“My best experience was reaching my third year—it felt like a major accomplishment.”

Additionally, several students appreciated the supportive lecturers who encouraged them. One student recalled,



“My Cost Accounting lecturer told me that I can be anything I want as long as I put my mind to it,”

while another mentioned,



“My lecturer personally motivated me after my first failed test, and I performed better than before.”

This suggests that effective and engaged lecturers positively impacted students' experiences.

Some students also enjoyed practical and hands-on learning experiences, such as lab work, research projects, and academic competitions. One stated,



“Doing our practicals in the lab gave us a better experience of the real working world.”

## 2. Social Connections and Campus Life

Many students valued the friendships and relationships they built at WSU. Responses such as



“Meeting new friends and developing strong bonds with classmates”

and,



“My best experience was the unity among students and the friendships I made”

suggests that social integration played a significant role in students' satisfaction with their university experience.

Extracurricular activities, particularly sports and student organisations, also contributed to positive experiences. Several students mentioned being part of the rugby team, the Student Christian Organization (SCO), and other clubs. One student said,



“Being part of WSU All Blacks Rugby and seeing them win was the best experience.”

while another stated,



“Joining SCO helped me grow spiritually and emotionally.”

Events such as the first-year orientation, social bashes, and university-hosted celebrations were also highlighted as memorable moments. One student remarked,



“The FTEN’s party (First-Time Entering New Students) was amazing—it made me feel welcomed at WSU.”

### 3. Institutional Support and Student Services

Although some students reported negative experiences with financial aid, others highlighted the support they received. One student shared,



“WSU provided me with therapy sessions when I had personal issues affecting my studies.”

Another stated,



"I was assisted with residence as soon as I arrived on campus, and that made my transition to university life easier."

Graduation day was another commonly mentioned highlight, with one student describing it as,



"The moment I finally walked across the stage, hearing my name called, it was the ultimate prize for all the learners."

The joy of completing their degree was a defining moment for many.

#### **4. Exposure to New Opportunities and Personal Growth**

Several students noted that their time at WSU allowed them to explore new opportunities, discover hidden talents, and gain confidence. One student said,



"I discovered my passion for public speaking during presentations."

while another shared,



"I was able to learn about different cultures and meet people from diverse backgrounds."

Others highlighted the personal growth they experienced, stating,



“Being at WSU helped me discover who I really am.”

and,



“The journey was tough, but it made me stronger and more independent.”



# Analysis of General Student Reflections on Their Experience at WSU

The open-ended responses reveal mixed sentiments regarding students' experiences at Walter Sisulu University (WSU). While some students praised the university for academic growth, social connections, and institutional support, others highlighted challenges such as academic exclusion, financial struggles, inadequate student support, and administrative inefficiencies.

## 1. Positive Experiences at WSU

### Academic Growth and Achievements

Several students appreciated the academic experience they received at WSU, with comments like:



“WSU helped me develop important life skills like time management, critical thinking, and independence.”

“It was a mix of difficulties and valuable learning experiences that shaped my journey in Medicine, and I enjoyed every moment.”

“I gained a lot of knowledge, and I am proud to have studied at WSU.”

Some students expressed a **strong desire to return to WSU** to complete their studies:



“I just wish I could be given one last chance to finish my diploma.”

“I would love to return and finish my studies; I see WSU as my home.”

## Social and Personal Growth

Many students acknowledged the friendships and connections they built:



“I had a great connection and experience with WSU students and lecturers.”

“Being part of student organisations and social events helped me grow personally and professionally.”

Additionally, some students found **motivation and support from their lecturers**, as reflected in:



“My Cost Accounting lecturer told me that I can be anything I want if I put my mind to it.”

“The support from faculty members and mentors made my academic journey fulfilling.”

## Institutional Support and Career Preparation

While some students **criticised** financial aid processes, others praised WSU for offering **scholarships and career-building opportunities**:



“I was able to work as a library assistant, which gave me real-world work experience.”

“WSU supported me with therapy sessions when I was struggling mentally.”

Some students **strongly recommended** WSU, stating:



“WSU is one of the best universities in South Africa.”

“Despite challenges, I would still advise students to study at WSU because of the opportunities available.”

## 2. Negative Experiences at WSU

### Academic Exclusion and Poor Communication

One of the most **common grievances** was **academic exclusion**, with many students feeling that they were excluded unfairly or without proper warning. Some of their comments include:



“I was excluded without prior notice, and it completely derailed my academic journey.”

“I wish WSU would give students a second chance, as some exclusions happen without understanding our challenges.”

Additionally, poor communication regarding academic policies was a frequent complaint:



“I was not informed that I needed to re-register in April; now I must wait until 2026 to graduate.”

“WSU needs to improve how they communicate with students about deadlines and requirements.”

### Financial Challenges and NSFAS Issues

Many students **struggled with financial support**, particularly in dealing with NSFAS funding delays or cuts. Some notable comments include:



“I had to drop out because my funding was cut unexpectedly.”

“Too much student debt is not cleared by the university, even when NSFAS is funding us.”

“It was very painful and sad to attend school at WSU as a postgraduate student with no funding.”

Several students **suggested policy improvements**, such as allowing students with **small outstanding debts to register**:



“Unfunded students with one or two outstanding modules and a debt of less than R30,000 should be allowed to register.”

### Strikes, Administration Issues, and Institutional Inefficiencies

WSU has experienced **frequent student protests and strikes**, which negatively impacted many students:



“The culture of protests every year should be put to an end.”

“Strikes disrupted my academic progress, making it difficult to complete my modules on time.”

Administrative inefficiencies, particularly in **registration and academic appeals**, were also widely criticised:



“WSU’s administration is slow and inefficient. They need to streamline processes to avoid unnecessary delays.”

“If a lecturer does not like you, they do not care about your complaints. That should change.”

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the Stop-Out Survey at Walter Sisulu University (WSU), several key areas require targeted interventions to improve student retention, academic success, and overall university experience. The following recommendations address academic support, financial assistance, institutional policies, student well-being, and campus environment improvements.

## 1. Strengthen Academic Support Systems

A significant number of students cited academic exclusion, poor academic performance, course difficulty, and lack of preparedness as reasons for stopping out. To address these challenges, WSU should:

- Implement early intervention systems – Introduce academic warning systems that identify struggling students early and provide tailored support before exclusion becomes necessary.
- Expand tutoring and mentorship programs – Offer subject-specific tutoring, peer mentorship, and structured academic advising to assist students in challenging courses.
- Improve course guidance and qualification flexibility – Many students indicated they were in the wrong qualification or struggled to change courses. WSU should provide clearer academic guidance, streamlined course-switching policies, and qualification review options.
- Enhance lecturer engagement and feedback – Students reported poor lecturer responsiveness and inadequate academic support. Regular lecturer training on student-centred teaching, communication, and support strategies should be implemented.
- Develop academic readiness programs – Provide pre-university bridging courses or extended learning support programs to help students transition from high school to university-level education.

## 2. Improve Financial Support and Accessibility

Financial difficulties were one of the leading causes of student attrition, with many students losing NSFAS funding, struggling with outstanding debt, and experiencing food insecurity. WSU should:

- Advocate for NSFAS reforms and improve financial aid processing – Work closely with NSFAS to reduce delays, improve communication, and ensure continuity of funding for eligible students.
- Introduce emergency financial assistance – Establish an Emergency Student Relief Fund to support students at risk of dropping out due to unexpected financial hardships.
- Allow limited registration for students with outstanding debt – Students with small outstanding balances (e.g., less than R30,000) and one or two modules left should be allowed to register and complete their qualifications before debt repayment.

- Expand campus-based work opportunities – Increase student employment programs, paid internships, and research assistantships to help students earn money while studying.
- Improve financial literacy support – Introduce budgeting workshops, financial counselling services, and NSFAS information sessions to help students manage their funding effectively.

### **3. Enhance Student Well-Being and Mental Health Support**

Many students cited emotional and mental health struggles, feelings of isolation, and lack of psychological support as reasons for discontinuing their studies. To address these concerns, WSU should:

- Expand mental health services – Increase the number of counsellors, psychologists, and peer support programs to provide timely and confidential mental health assistance.
- Introduce mandatory wellness check-ins – Implement a system where students at risk of stress, depression, or anxiety receive automatic check-ins from student support services.
- Foster a sense of belonging and community – Organize social events, support groups, and student integration activities to help students build relationships and reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation.
- Provide mental health awareness and training – Train lecturers, residence managers, and student leaders in mental health first aid to better support students experiencing psychological distress.

### **4. Address Institutional Inefficiencies and Improve Student Services**

Administrative challenges such as delayed registration, slow response times, and difficulty in appealing exclusions were major student concerns. WSU should:

- Streamline registration and appeal processes – Ensure faster registration, smoother appeals for exclusions, and quicker processing of academic and financial queries.
- Improve communication channels – Implement clear and timely updates through emails, SMS alerts, and a dedicated student help portal for critical information such as exclusion notices, funding updates, and academic requirements.
- Enhance student grievance mechanisms – Establish a transparent, student-friendly complaint resolution system that efficiently tracks and resolves student concerns.
- Improve lecturer accountability—Ensure that lecturers adhere to grading deadlines, provide timely feedback, and effectively respond to student queries.

### **5. Minimize Campus Disruptions and Strikes**

Strikes and institutional disruptions were repeatedly mentioned as barriers to academic success, causing missed lectures, postponed exams, and academic instability. WSU should:

- Address student grievances proactively – Create regular dialogue forums between university management, SRC, and student groups to resolve concerns before they escalate into protests.

- Develop a crisis management strategy – Implement contingency plans such as online alternatives, extended teaching hours, and flexible assessment schedules to mitigate the impact of strikes.
- Improve student engagement in decision-making—Involve students in policy discussions, financial planning, and institutional decision-making to increase transparency and reduce frustration that leads to strikes.

## 6. Improve Campus Facilities, Accommodation, and Transport

Many students struggled with housing conditions, unreliable transport, and inadequate study spaces, affecting their academic experience. WSU should:

- Upgrade student residences and ensure safety – Improve residence conditions, increase accommodation capacity, and enhance security in student housing facilities.
- Expand and improve campus transport services – Address complaints about unreliable university shuttles, long waiting times, and inadequate transportation for students in off-campus accommodations.
- Invest in better study environments – Ensure libraries, labs, and study spaces are well-maintained, have stable internet access, and operate extended hours during exam seasons.

# CONCLUSION

This study sought to understand the key factors influencing student attrition at Walter Sisulu University (WSU) and to develop evidence-based recommendations to improve student retention and graduation rates. Through the Stop-Out Survey, we identified a range of academic and non-academic challenges that contribute to students stopping out or dropping out. These findings provide critical insights into trends in student retention, the effectiveness of institutional support, and potential interventions for improving student success at WSU.

## Identifying Key Factors Influencing Attrition

The survey revealed that the most significant factors leading to student dropout include academic exclusion, financial struggles, poor academic preparedness, emotional and mental health challenges, and dissatisfaction with institutional support. Academic-related factors, such as course difficulty, poor academic choices, and lack of progress towards qualification, were particularly prevalent. At the same time, financial instability—especially the loss of NSFAS funding—emerged as a critical barrier to student persistence. Other personal factors, including family responsibilities, work commitments, and transport difficulties, also played a role in student decisions to discontinue their studies.

## Trends in Student Attrition and Retention

The findings highlight that student attrition disproportionately affects certain demographic groups, particularly financially disadvantaged students and those from marginalised backgrounds. Differences in faculty-specific dropout rates suggest that some academic programs experience higher attrition due to course difficulty, poor lecturer engagement, and inadequate academic support. Additionally, students who live off-campus or lack access to reliable transport were more likely to drop out due to logistical and financial constraints.

## Evaluation of Institutional Support Services

While some students reported positive experiences with lecturer support, campus resources, and student services, a significant number expressed dissatisfaction with institutional inefficiencies, slow response times, and a lack of proactive interventions for at-risk students. Many students felt that academic exclusion policies were too rigid and did not consider external challenges such as financial distress or mental health struggles. Additionally, frequent strikes and administrative delays disrupted academic progress, making it difficult for students to complete their studies within the expected timeframe.

# Recommendations for Improving Student Retention

Based on these findings, targeted recommendations were developed to address the main causes of student attrition. Key interventions include:

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Person/unit responsible</b>
1. Strengthen tutoring, PALL, mentorship programs, and early intervention for at-risk students.	Strengthening academic support services	Faculties, DLT and Student Affairs
2. Ensuring timely disbursement of funds and providing emergency financial assistance for struggling students.	Enhancing financial aid accessibility and management	Finance (Bursary Office and NSFAS)
3. Increasing access to psychological support, wellness check-ins, and peer support networks.	Expanding mental health and well-being services	Student Affairs and DLT
4. Streamlining institutional processes such as registration, appeals, and lecturer responsiveness, to improve the overall student experience.	Streamlining institutional processes	Registrar's office, ICT and Faculties,
5. Fostering proactive engagement between students and university management.	Reducing the impact of strikes and disruptions	ISRC and IMC
6. Ensuring students have access to safe accommodation and reliable commuting options.	Improving campus infrastructure and transport systems	Residence office, ICT, and Transport Department

The findings of this study underscore the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to improving student retention at WSU. While academic difficulties and financial struggles remain dominant factors in student dropout, institutional inefficiencies and inadequate support services exacerbate these challenges. By implementing the recommended interventions, WSU can create a more inclusive, supportive, and resilient learning environment that enables more students to complete their academic programs successfully.

Moving forward, ongoing data collection, student feedback mechanisms, and continuous policy adjustments will be essential in ensuring sustained improvements in student retention and success. With targeted reforms, WSU can fulfil its mission of producing high-quality graduates who contribute meaningfully to South Africa's socio-economic development.

# APPENDICES

- Survey Instrument
- Email Invitations
- The Initial Call for Participation

## **Subject: We Value your Feedback: Participate in the WSU Stop-Out Survey**

Dear [name]

I hope this message finds you well. As a valued member of the Walter Sisulu University community, we would like to invite you to participate in an important survey that will help us better understand why some students choose not to return for the following academic year.

### **Why your Feedback Matters:**

At WSU, we are committed to providing an enriching and supportive educational experience for all our students. Your feedback is crucial in helping us identify areas for improvement and better support our students in achieving their academic goals. Sharing your experiences directly enhances the WSU experience for current and future students. Survey link

### **About the Survey:**

The survey is designed to be short and straightforward, taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. It includes questions about your academic experience, personal circumstances, and any challenges you may have faced during your time at WSU. Survey link

### **Your Privacy is our Priority:**

Please be assured that your responses will be kept entirely anonymous and confidential. The survey does not collect any personally identifiable information, and all data will be reported in aggregate form, ensuring that your individual feedback cannot be traced back to you.

### **How to Participate:**

To participate in the survey, simply click on the link below: <https://forms.office.com/r/WWK6pbINQ8>  
The survey will remain open until 30 August 2024. Your input is invaluable, and we strongly encourage you to share your thoughts with us before the deadline.

## Need More Information?

If you have any questions about the survey or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our research team at Institutional Research and Planning at [irp@wsu.ac.za](mailto:irp@wsu.ac.za). We are here to help.

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with your feedback. We genuinely appreciate your contribution to making Walter Sisulu University a better place for everyone.

Warm regards,

### **Institutional Research and Planning**

Walter Sisulu University

## Reminder Call for Participation

### **Subject: Friendly Reminder: Your Feedback is Important to Us – Complete the WSU Stop-Out Survey**

Dear KWASA,

I hope you're doing well. We recently invited you to participate in the Walter Sisulu University Stop Out Survey, and we noticed that you haven't had a chance to complete it yet. We understand that you may have a busy schedule, but we would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time to share your experiences with us.

### **Why Your Input Matters:**

Your feedback is vital in helping us understand students' challenges and improving the overall experience at WSU. By completing this survey, you're contributing to positive changes that will benefit both current and future students. Survey link

### **Survey Details:**

**Time Commitment:** The survey takes about 10-15 minutes to complete.

**Confidentiality:** Your responses are completely anonymous and will be kept confidential. The data will be used in aggregate form to guide improvements at WSU.

### **Survey Link:**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kpnoSCseCEmAOOnIX4swcvQBXivyZ2\\_xOmbrk-2vnvqpUOTE0UKJHM1ZKVEpVWldNVzRIWEtYMjRHSC4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=kpnoSCseCEmAOOnIX4swcvQBXivyZ2_xOmbrk-2vnvqpUOTE0UKJHM1ZKVEpVWldNVzRIWEtYMjRHSC4u)

Please take a moment to complete the survey before the deadline on 30 August. Your insights are invaluable, and we would really like to hear from you.

**Important:** If you have completed the survey, please ignore this email. We sincerely appreciate your participation.

## Need Assistance?

If you have any questions or concerns or need help accessing the survey, please feel free to contact our research team at [irp@wsu.ac.za](mailto:irp@wsu.ac.za).

Thank you again for considering this request. Your participation is deeply appreciated and will make a meaningful difference in our community.

Warm regards,

**Institutional Research and Planning**

Walter Sisulu University

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