University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

POSTGRADUATE STUDENT

Experience Survey

2012

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, the Institutional Research Unit conducted a Postgraduate Student Experience Survey at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) among current first-year master's and doctoral students who had been at Wits for at least six months. This report presents the findings of that survey, and therefore contains evidence of the perceptions and experiences of first-year postgraduate students in their short period at Wits. There were 2 131 students registered in the targeted postgraduate programmes for the first time (first-year/first-time registration in the current postgraduate programme) in the year 2012. The study targeted the entire population of this group with the intension of gaining participation and responses from at least 10% (213) of them. However, after extensive cleaning of data, 164 of the 343 responses received were eliminated, given that they were not part of the target audience, and only 179 remained as appropriate respondents. In this data analysis, therefore, the 179 represent 100% of the total respondents, being 8.4% of the overall 2012 first-year master's and doctoral student enrolment. Some of the observations and findings are listed below:

- It is important to note that 70.39% of participants were of South African origin and there was a fair number (27.94%) of international student participants.

- The rate of participation by gender in this study largely reflected trends in postgraduate enrolment as a whole in 2012, where male students constituted 50.51% and female students constituted 49.48%. Participants in this study were 53.07% male and 46.37% female.

- The majority of participants (30.17%) were registered in the Faculty of Humanities. This was followed by the Faculty of Science at 18.99%; the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, 17.32%; the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, another 17.32%; and the Faculty of Health Sciences, 16.2%.

- Most participants (54.3%) chose to study at Wits based on the overall reputation of the institution; the department's subject specialisation; the University's leadership in the subject area; the fact that it was recommended by their employer or other individuals; and the fact that graduates from Wits have good career and employment prospects.

- A large group of the participants in this study (40.22%) were Wits graduates.

- More than a third (35.75%) had chosen their research programmes to enhance their career prospects and job opportunities.

- Only 25.14% indicated that they chose their research studies to pursue an academic career in a university.

- The majority of participants (86.59%) were pursuing independent research studies under the supervision of a given academic.

- The data show that 35.73% of respondents spent 15 hours or more per week on their research projects, while 21.23% spent between 1 and 5 hours per week on their research projects.

- The data indicate that a large number of Master's and doctoral students (44.69%) spend less than 10 but more than 5 hours per week on their research projects.

- The majority of participants in this study had a single supervisor (61.45%), followed by a smaller group (24.58%) who had two supervisors.

- The majority of participants in this study (88.83%) indicated that there had been no change in terms of the allocated supervisor, signalling continuity in the arrangement so far.

- Most of the respondents in this study (65.36%) had no support from a supervisory team or committee.

- The majority of participants (86.03%) in the study agreed that their supervisors were always available when they needed them, in line with set appointments.

- Most (81.57%) indicated that their supervisors gave them guidance and support in all aspects of the research processes.

- The majority (85.47%) also indicated that their supervisors were familiar with the background literature in their individual research area.

- The data show that most postgraduate students (80.44%) agreed that they received feedback on the work submitted within reasonable time.

- The majority of participants (89.39%) in this study agreed that their supervisors were sufficiently knowledgeable in their subject area to support their research studies.

- Data analysis also shows that the majority of students received proper advice on issues of research ethics, plagiarism, confidentiality and intellectual property (77.09%).

- Most respondents (69.27%) indicated that they received proper advice from their supervisors in relation to ethical clearance and the implications of that on how they conduct research.

- Wits seems to communicate clearly to postgraduate students its expectations, its standards and the quality of work required from them. Data analysis shows that 85.48% of participants indicated that they had received a clear indication of what was expected from them.

- However, almost half of the respondents had not signed agreements with their supervisors that mapped out mutual expectations and terms of reference guiding their interaction. The data reflect that only 46.93% had signed such contracts while 45.25% had not.

- The majority of postgraduate students (87.15%) were comfortable in taking the initiative to make appointments to meet their supervisors.

- The majority of students (91.07%) indicated that their engagement in their postgraduate education largely helped them develop the ability to think critically.

- The state of 'graduateness' espoused by postgraduate education at Wits seems to meet student expectation. The data show that 88.83% participants agreed that their programmes had helped them keep abreast with knowledge frontiers in their field.

- Most students (73.74%) agreed that their engagement in their programmes had helped them develop skills to work with communities of researchers.

- A large number (88.26%) of respondents agreed that they had developed skills to debate and tolerate alternate viewpoints through their learning programmes.

- The data show that 79.33% of respondents agreed that through their participation in their postgraduate education they had developed awareness of ethical practice and understanding of concepts such as intellectual property and commercialisation of research.

- Postgraduate education at Wits appears to be preparing students to work confidently as independent researchers; 90.5% of participants agreed that they had acquired skills to work independently as researchers through their postgraduate education.

- The data also show 86.04% of participants indicating that their postgraduate education has helped them to contribute to the development of knowledge hierarchies in their disciplines.

- Most participants (86.6%) also agreed that their postgraduate education developed their capacity to contribute to the development of professional practice in their field and areas of work.

- A similar majority (87.71%) indicated that their postgraduate education helped them understand the validity and accuracy with which the study was conducted.

- Most participants (84.92%) indicated that their postgraduate education prepared them to handle unexpected research-related circumstances effectively.

- The majority of postgraduate students (77.1%) felt supported and encouraged by their faculties and departments to publish their work.

- The study also shows that 72.62% felt encouraged to present conference papers based on their research.

- Most participants (72.07%) felt encouraged by their faculties and departments to develop professional networks outside of the University.

- Most (79.89%) agreed that their faculties, schools and departments provided them with a supportive working environment.

- A large number (75.97%) of respondents felt that their faculties, schools and departments provided opportunities for them to interact with other young researchers.

- Most participants (81.57%) also felt that schools and faculties promoted a culture of research across the board.

- Close to two-thirds (65.33%) of respondents felt included in the research activities and network of schools and faculties.

- Slightly more than two-thirds (67.6%) felt that they were being integrated into broader research activities of faculties and schools.

- Most (71.51%) agreed that their faculties and schools provided structured support programmes on research methodologies.

- Almost two-thirds (66.48%) of participants expressed the view that open, fair and formal procedures were in place to engage with student complaints about the quality of supervision and general support.

- Slightly more than half (56.42%) of the respondents felt that the University had put in place appropriate processes for the monitoring and review of supervision, which are conducted regularly and include student feedback on the quality of supervision.

- Most participants (81.56%) felt welcome and accepted as part of the University community.

- A majority of participants (83.8%) indicated that they felt free to express their views and opinions at Wits.

- There was a widely shared view that the University promotes a culture of tolerance and caters for cultural diversity; 86.04% of participants agreed with this view, while only 8.94% disagreed.

- The majority of participants (84.36%) felt that there was a culture of academic excellence at Wits.

- Most of our postgraduate students (90.5%) were proud to be part of the intellectual enterprise at Wits.

- More than three quarters (75.98%) felt enriched by the Wits student experience.

- It is encouraging that the majority (68.72%) felt that Wits provided equal opportunities for all.

- Most of the postgraduate students (89.94%) felt that their identity did not colour the treatment they received from their supervisors.

- The majority of respondents (82.68%) felt that the University promoted critical enquiry.

- Close to two-thirds (64.8%) felt that Wits was sufficiently student-centred.

- Most respondents (81.01%) indicated that they would indeed advise relatives or colleagues to study at Wits.

- More than three quarters (76.54%) of respondents felt that the library opening hours at Wits were convenient.

- The majority of respondents (82.68%) felt that library staff members were helpful.

- The majority of students also stated that most of the books on their reading lists were available in the University libraries (69.28%).

- The majority (77.09%) indicated that journals in their subject areas were readily available in the library.

- The study also established that the majority of students (81.01%) felt they had adequate access to quiet study facilities and spaces in the library.

- Most participants (68.72%) agreed that they had adequate access to facilities such as computers and photocopying and printing equipment in the library.

- More than three quarters (76.54%) indicated that there were sufficient inter-library loan mechanisms in the University libraries.

- The majority (87.71%) of participants in the study indicated that they accessed a wide range of databases and electronic resources through the Wits libraries.

- The majority of participants (73.18%) indicated that they were satisfied with the functionality of the ICAM machines and system.

- Slightly more than half the respondents (56.43%) indicated satisfaction with the Computer Network Services (CNS) induction services.

- Close to two thirds (64.81%) indicated that they were satisfied with the physical environment of the computing labs.

- Slightly above two thirds (68.71%) indicated satisfaction with the operating hours of the computer laboratories.

- Slightly more than half (56.43%) were satisfied with the speed of the computer hardware and networks.

- Most participants (60.33%) were satisfied with the inter-campus bus shuttle service.

- Most (83.24%) were satisfied with the levels of cleanliness of all University campuses.

- Most (70.95%) were satisfied with the arrangements for safety and security on campus.

- The majority of our Master's and doctoral students (81.01%) own computing devices.

The study suggests that there are areas in postgraduate education at Wits that are positioned for positive growth and enrichment. There are also areas that need special attention and strategic investment of resources, and these are:

- Ensuring that all academics sign student-supervisor contracts with their students.

- Creating space and a culture of inclusion for postgraduate students in all faculties, schools and departments.

- Providing students with timeous feedback on their work to enhance progress in their studies.

- Providing financial support where necessary to help postgraduate students focus much of their attention on research and educational activities.
- Providing reliable accommodation and support for postgraduate students, especially those of foreign origin.
- Ensuring that settling in Johannesburg does not become an impediment to international students who do not yet have a sense of belonging and adapting to the Johannesburg environment.

- Ensuring that postgraduate students are not kept in the system longer than necessary.

- Exposing postgraduate students to conference opportunities.

- Ensuring that all postgraduate students are expected to publish their work as part of graduation requirements.

- Ensuring that the postgraduate recruitment strategy looks beyond drawing students from the SADC region.

- Providing scholarships and research incentives to attract more students to the Wits postgraduate programme.

- Ensuring that online administration and registration modalities are put in place to improve the postgraduate student experience at Wits.

While the study clearly shows that postgraduate students at Wits are relatively satisfied with various institutional arrangements and the general culture of the University, the University needs to put emphasis on identified areas of improvement. Wits may need to develop a well-calculated strategy to accomplish this.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Postgraduate Student Experience Survey is one of an array of surveys conducted by the Strategic Planning Division. Students are important stakeholders in higher education, and the fact that national budgets are increasingly linked to student choices makes the process of attracting and retaining students more important to educational institutions (Wiers-Jenssen *et al*., 2002: 186).

The aim of the Postgraduate Student Experience Survey is to help the University enhance the quality of the student experience by collecting feedback from current postgraduate students in a systematic way. The survey also aims to identify areas where improvements could be made further to enhance the postgraduate experience.

Universities have the immense responsibility of producing cutting-edge research, generating knowledge, producing high-calibre leaders and critical thinkers for the future, and reaching out to the communities in which they are located.[1] The University's vision states: 'Wits is proudly fulfilling this role both in Africa and on the international stage. It is catering for the changing needs of a democratic South Africa and, from its location in the heart of Gauteng, reflects and celebrates its diversity of cultures.'

As stated in the *Wits 2010 Strategic Plan*, the University aims to develop its standing and reputation as a research-driven university. This focus on research intensity will ensure that Wits operates at the leading edge of all academic disciplines with which it engages, and that it responds appropriately to national, continental and international research opportunities. Wits sustains an impressive research output and strives to attain the highest levels of excellence (*ibid*.). Wits is committed to providing quality training of postgraduate students, as one means of ensuring a continuing supply of active and motivated researchers.

This survey is therefore an attempt to understand what postgraduate students experience in pursuing their ambition to become seasoned researchers.

As stated in the *Framework for Benchmarking at Wits* (2009), Wits continues to position itself as a world-class university. The distinctiveness of world-class universities is informed by their nature of being highly selective and internationalised institutions. The literature suggests that world-class universities have, among other things, these features (Mohrman, Ma and Baker, 2008; Salmi, 2009):

- They maintain high selectivity in growing student enrolment.
- They have a high proportion of carefully selected postgraduate students.
- They grow intensive international research networks.
- They attract a high proportion of international students.
- They maintain a high proportion of international academic staff.
- They maintain a relatively high degree of academic and institutional independence.

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[1] *http://web.wits.ac.za/AboutWits/IntroducingWits/MissionandVision.htm.*

Wits is determined to become one of the world's Top 100 universities by 2022, in time to celebrate its centenary that same year. To achieve this goal it has to rise to the challenge and benchmark itself against the best in the world, especially against the existing Top 100.

The University has to strengthen its research focus and grow its postgraduate student numbers in order to achieve its 2022 goal. As stated in the *Facts and Figures* (Wits, 2010), Wits has already made significant progress in areas that contribute to a world-class ranking. This is evident not only in the increasing number of A-rated scientists associated with Wits, but also in the steadily increasing research output and the large proportion of postgraduate students enrolled at Wits. Another area the University has prioritised is the implementation of exchange programmes with international universities and research partnerships with institutions locally, regionally and internationally. Wits is ambitious about its internationalisation plan to increase the number and range of our international academic staff and international students (particularly postgraduates), and to offer curricula that strongly expose students to the international context of their areas of study. All of these factors will help Wits to achieve its Top 100 vision.

As cited in the *Baseline Study on Student Participation in Quality Assurance* (CHE, 2009), Elliott & Shin (2002) argue that the ability to identify and address students' needs and expectations allows educational institutions to attract and retain quality students as well as improve the quality of their programmes. It is, therefore, crucial for higher education institutions to determine and deliver what is important to students. The purpose of this study is to determine the total experience of postgraduate students currently enrolled at Wits.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Significance of the Study

As stated in the proposal of the Postgraduate Student Satisfaction Survey, student opinions about all aspects of academic life are now sought by educational institutions worldwide, generally in the form of feedback surveys. South African universities likewise conduct student experience surveys as feedback mechanisms to determine the level of delivery of education, and such data is vital to management for making strategic decisions. An interesting aspect of student experience studies is their link with quality control in that, with the increasing number of students enrolling in South African universities, it is important to maintain quality in teaching and research programmes as this is a strong determinant of accessing more government funding.
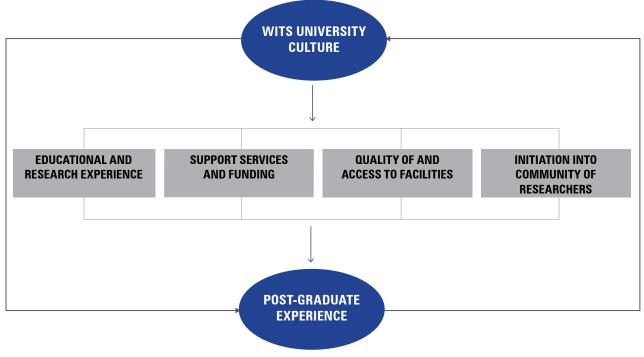
Shago (2005) argues that introducing a comprehensive student-feedback approach to evaluate students' experiences in various academic and service areas in the institution could be a beneficial exercise. Shago further argues that it is important to establish an evidence-based source that informs management on decision-making and strategic planning. Student feedback has accordingly become a necessary tool to measure the total learning experience of students in higher education institutions. It has been used to measure and maintain the quality of service provision in the institutions and to attract and sustain good students. Surveys such as this could identify quality failures and serve as a guide to the institution's quality-improvement plans and management actions.

This study seeks to establish the nature of postgraduate student experiences with the academic aspects, support services, quality of and access to facilities, and the institutional culture at Wits. The Wits model of Postgraduate Student Experience illustrates these linkages below.

2.2 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptualisation of this study is based on the Wits model of the Postgraduate Student Experience which has been developed by the Strategic Planning Division in an attempt to define what constitutes the particular experience of Wits postgraduate students. The postgraduate student experience can be defined as the students' experiences and perceived value of the education received while studying at a particular educational institution. Most university students spend considerable time, money, and effort in obtaining a quality education and should perceive their postsecondary educational experiences as being of high value. As stated in the *Vision 2022 Strategic Framework* (Wits, 2010), the University of the Witwatersrand relishes its reputation of being an internationally distinguished research-led University that promotes scholarly enquiry, innovation, and quality teaching and learning. It is in this context that the ability of the University to provide a distinct experience for its postgraduate students becomes paramount.

In order to measure and maintain the quality of service provision in the institution, and to attract and sustain good students, the Wits model focuses on four areas:

Wits University post-graduate Experience Survey

Educational and research experience: the way in which postgraduate students perceive academic aspects of their experience, such as quality of supervision, research culture and production, and research training.

Support services and funding: services available on campus to facilitate learning, such as the Postgraduate Enrolment Centre, Research Office, Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, Postgraduate Student Association, Wits International Office and Postgraduate Project Office.

Quality of and access to facilities: suitable, sufficient and current library resources; ICT infrastructure and research equipment; and facilities available for students.

Initiation into communities of scholars: the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging and being initiated into communities of scholars by their supervisors and senior academics in their schools and departments. It covers areas such as participation in faculty/school/department seminars and research events, attendance at conferences, co-authoring of research papers, etc.

The Postgraduate Student Experience Survey will be guided by the following crucial research questions:

a) What is the nature of the educational and research experience that postgraduate students receive from Wits, and how satisfied are they with this experience?
b) What is the nature of postgraduate student experience in relation to student support and funding arrangements at Wits, and how satisfied are they with this experience?
c) How satisfied are postgraduate students with the quality of and access to facilities at Wits?
d) How do students get initiated into communities of scholars in the various knowledge domains at Wits, and how satisfied are they with this experience?

2.3 Research Design

The survey targeted postgraduate students who were registered for the first time in their postgraduate programmes at Wits in 2012. Students were invited to complete the online survey and were provided with a link to the website. The survey was available online to students for approximately five weeks. A follow-up e-mail was also sent to students a week before the closing date to persuade them to participate. Incentives to encourage participation were made available. Respondents who were interested in winning the prizes on offer were requested to furnish their e-mail addresses or cell phone numbers.

2.3.1 Sampling

The total headcount of postgraduate students (i.e. Master's and doctoral only) enrolled at Wits University in 2012 was 7184. Of these, only 2131 were registered in the target postgraduate programmes for the first time (first-year/first-time registration in the current postgraduate programme) in the year 2012 (see table below). The study targeted the entire population of this group of postgraduate students with the intension of gaining participation and responses from at least 10% (213) of the target population. Two 'filter questions' placed in different parts of the instrument were used to filter data; these were: *Are you a first-year postgraduate student?;* and: *If you are a postgraduate student, in which year of study are you – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year?* These were used to clean data and eliminate all responses from those who indicated that they were not first-year postgraduate students, or were doing their 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year of postgraduate studies.

Calendar Instance Year	Programme Type Description	Enrolled	New to Programme
2012	Doctoral Degree	1 416	358
	Master's Degree (Research and Coursework)	4 647	1 449
	Master's Degree (Research)	1 121	391
2012 Total		**7 184**	**2 131**

Table 1: Students enrolled for first year/first time in their postgraduate programmes

2.3.2 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. It was designed to be used to measure satisfaction with aspects of the University as narrated in the conceptual framework provided above.

a) The Educational and Research Experience section covered the following aspects:
   • Research methodology training
   • Nature and quality of supervision
   • Student/supervisor relationship
   • Experience in relation to the research culture in the department, school, faculty and University

b) The Support Services and Funding section covered issues related to the:
   • Postgraduate Enrolment Centre
   • Faculty postgraduate support systems
   • Research Office
   • Financial Aid and Scholarships Office
   • Postgraduate Student Association

- Wits International Office
- Postgraduate Project Office (PPO)

c) The section on Quality of and Access to Facilities covered aspects related to:
- Access to research facilities and laboratories
- Access to library resources
- Access to faculty-based research resources

d) The section on Institutional Culture and Initiation into Communities of Scholars covered issues related to:
- Research culture in departments, schools and faculties
- Student participation in departmental/school/faculty research events
- Support to attend conferences
- Arrangements for co-publishing with senior academics in the department/school

A four-point Likert-scale instrument was used to determine students' experiences: 1 = strongly agree; 2 = agree; 3 = disagree; 4 = strongly disagree; and 1 = very satisfied; 2 = satisfied; 3 = dissatisfied; 4 = very dissatisfied. A demographic section is included at the beginning, which makes it easy to check the representativeness of the sample and to compare different demographic groups in our analyses. The data was not used to identify any individuals.

3. PARTICIPANT PROFILE ANALYSIS

After an extensive cleaning of data, 164 (out of 343) responses were eliminated given that they were not part of the target audience, and only 179 remained as appropriate respondents. In this data analysis, therefore, the 179 represent 100% of the total respondents, being 8.4% of the overall 2012 first-year master's and doctoral student enrolment.

As depicted in table 2 below, a four-point Likert scale was used in all areas of satisfaction (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) and numerical values 1 to 4 were assigned to sentiments. Colour coding was also aligned to the numerical values. So the scale reads: Strongly Agree: 4, green; Agree: 3, light green; Disagree: 2, orange; Strongly Disagree: 1, red. Numerical values and colours give a graphical overview of the results presented in various graphs in this report. The numerical values help with the weighting of responses, which informed the aggregated analysis of responses per area, as provided in the conceptual framework. At a quick glance, colour codes will help readers establish whether the majority of respondents agreed or disagreed with the statement in a particular question.

Strongly Agree	**4**
Agree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1

Table 2: Key for analysis of Likert scale questions

Since the '179 respondent' sample is relatively small, the *significant reliability* of responses has to be at least 15%, so that any figure below that is reliable*, fairly reliable, somewhat reliable or not reliable.* The key provided in table 2, clusters levels of reliability according to the number of respondents per faculty and per area of satisfaction.

Table 3 shows that the study results can be used to acknowledge the postgraduate student experiences in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management; Faculty of Health Sciences; and the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. The study can be used to generalise about the experiences of postgraduate students in the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Science. Given that the sample was not purposive, it was extremely difficult to structure faculty representativity among respondents. It is important to state that the results can be fairly used across all faculties given the fact that not of faculties received a proportionate response of less than 5%. According to Nulty (2008), *"whether or not the response rate is adequate depends on the use that is being made of the data. If the data gathered…were to be used only to bring about improvements…and there is even one response that provides information which can be used in this way, the survey's purpose has, at least in part, been served and the response rate is technically irrelevant"* While it is conventionally understood that the reasonable response rate in social surveys is at least 10%, in this study, following the Nulty premise, a response rate above 5% was deemed sufficient for drawing inference to inform various forms of improving the Wits postgraduate student experience.

Faculty	Commerce, Law and Management	Health Science	Engineering and the Built Environment	Humanities	Science	Total
Number of Participants	31	29	31	54	34	**179**
Reliability Results	SWR	SWR	SWR	R	SR	
Target Population	546	463	427	474	221	**2131**
	5.68%	**6.26%**	**7.26%**	**11.39%**	**15.38%**	
Not Reliable (NR)					**> 04.5%**	
Somewhat Reliable (SWR)					**05 - 7.5%**	
Fairly Reliable (FR)					**08 – 9.5%**	
Reliable (R)					**10 – 14.5%**	
Significantly Reliable (SR)					**15.00% <**	

Table 3: Key for analysis of Likert scale questions

The proportional representation of individual faculties was above the 5% cut-off point which meant that all responses could be used in some form to inform educational and research arrangements in each faculty. In the case of the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Humanities, the results can be used to generalise as stated earlier in this report.
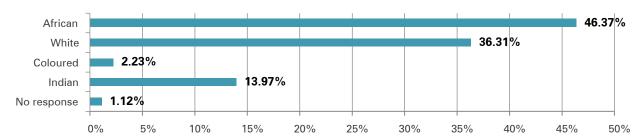
Figure 1: Profile by race

While data previously obtained suggested that the majority of postgraduate students at Wits in the past five years have been white, it is encouraging to see that the majority of participants in this study were black (see figure 1). This might raise a question about whether there are better means through which white students can be invited to participate in studies of this nature. However, it could be argued that there was a reasonable balance in race representivity among participants in this study, sufficiently in line with the general racial demographics in postgraduate enrolments. Outcomes from this study can thus be generalised across all racial groups of students pursuing postgraduate studies at Wits.
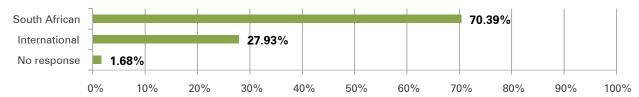
Figure 2: Nationality

One of the University's main goals is to attract as many international postgraduate students as possible. In effect, Wits plans to ensure that by 2022, international students constitute 30% of the total enrolments, and the proportion of postgraduate students among those international students should constitute at least 40%. The analysis provided in figure 2 suggests that, increasingly, international students are participating in student-satisfaction

surveys to help us understand what their particular needs are, and how the University needs to respond by putting in place mechanisms to attract and retain more of them. In this study, 70.39% of participants were of South African origin, while 27.93% were international students. This implies that lessons learnt through this study can be generalised across all postgraduate students, regardless of nationality.
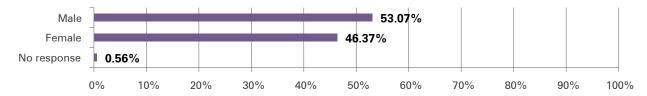
Figure 3: Gender profile

Figure 3 illustrates a reasonable gender balance among students who participated in the study. While more male students participated than female, the variance was not overwhelming. The rate of participation by gender in this study largely reflected trends in postgraduate enrolment in 2012, where male students constituted 50.51% and female students constituted 49.48%.
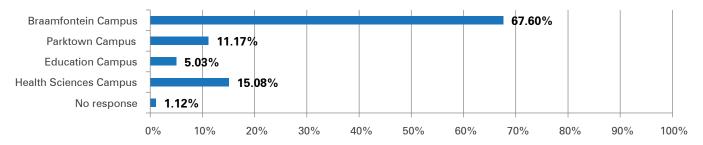
Figure 4: Campus of affiliation

Figure 4 gives us an understanding of the campus of affiliation for all students who participated in the study. It shows that the majority of participants were based at the Braamfontein main campus (67.60%). The data also show that 15.08% of participants were based at the Faculty of Health Sciences Campus in Parktown, while 11.17% of participants were based at the Parktown Business School campus ('Parktown Campus' in the figure), and only 5.03% were based at the Parktown Education Campus. While the analysis of campus affiliation is important to establish the kind of resources that postgraduate students need to support their educational and research arrangements, it has to be kept in mind that the majority of Master's and Doctoral students were enrolled on a part-time basis, especially those of South African origin, and mainly come to campus to consult with supervisors and access resources.
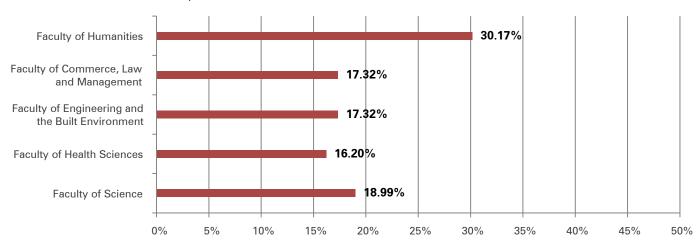
Figure 5: Faculty of affiliation

As depicted in figure 5, the majority of students (30.17%) who participated in this study were registered in the Faculty of Humanities. This was followed by the Faculty of Science at 18.99%; the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, 17.32%; the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, another 17.32%; and the Faculty of Health Sciences, 16.2%. The rate of participation by faculty of affiliation was not consonant with postgraduate enrolment figures by faculty. Looking at the reasonably balanced participation rate per faculty of affiliation, however, the findings of this study can be generalised as sentiments of postgraduate students across all faculties.

Figures 6 to 10 provide a breakdown of the school of affiliation for all participants by faculty of affiliation. Schools that are not mentioned in Figure 6 to 10 were not represented in the responses received for this study.
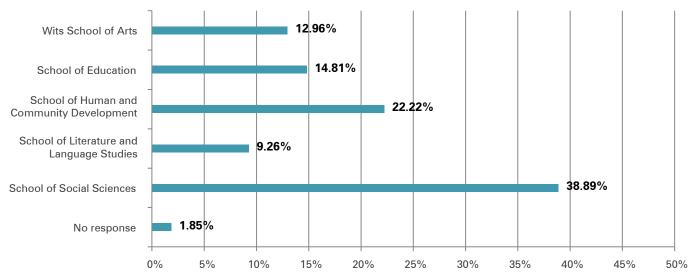
Figure 6: School of affiliation in Humanities

Figure 6 provides a breakdown of the school of affiliation for all participants enrolled in the Faculty of Humanities. Analysis shows that the majority of these students were based in the School of Social Sciences (38.89%) and the School of Human and Community Development (22.22%). Other schools had a participation rate of less than 15%.
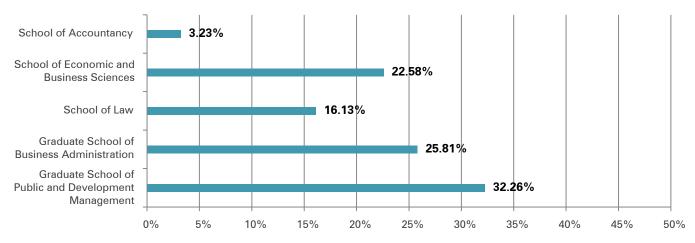
Figure 7: School of affiliation in Commerce, Law and Management

Out of those participating students enrolled in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, as shown in figure 7, 32.26% were from the Graduate School of Public and Development Management, 25.81% from the Wits Business School, 22.58% from the School of Economic and Business Sciences, 16.13% from the School of Law, and less than 5% from the School of Accountancy. It is quite clear from this analysis that sentiments expressed by participants from the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management can

reasonably be generalised across all schools, with prominent emphasis on the Wits Business School and the Graduate School of Public and Development Management.
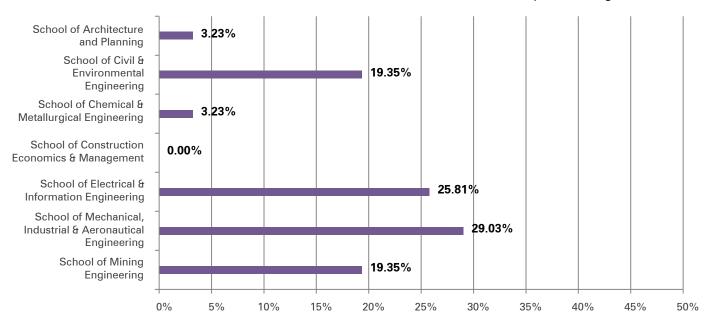
Figure 8: School of affiliation in Engineering and the Built Environment

Figure 8 shows that participating students registered in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment were predominantly from the School of Mechanical, Industrial and Aeronautical Engineering (29.03%); School of Electrical and Information Engineering (25.81%); School of Mining Engineering (19.35%); and School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (19.35%). The other schools were represented by response rates of less than 5%.
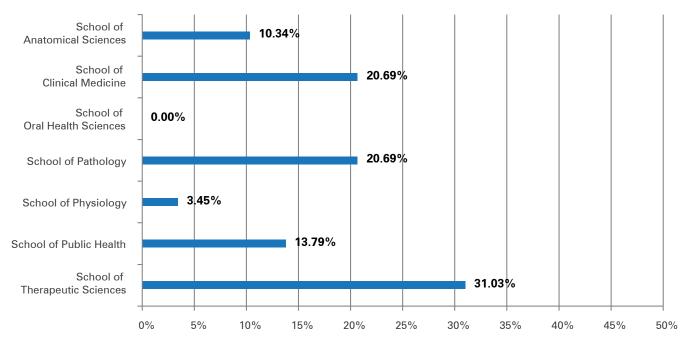
Figure 9: School of affiliation in Health Sciences

Earlier data analysis indicated that the Faculty of Health Sciences achieved the lowest participation rate in this study. Figure 9 shows that the majority of those that participated were based in the School of Therapeutic Sciences (31.03%). Participants from the School of Pathology and the School of Clinical Medicine constituted 20.69% each, and other schools in the Faculty of Health Sciences had a participation rate of less than 15%.
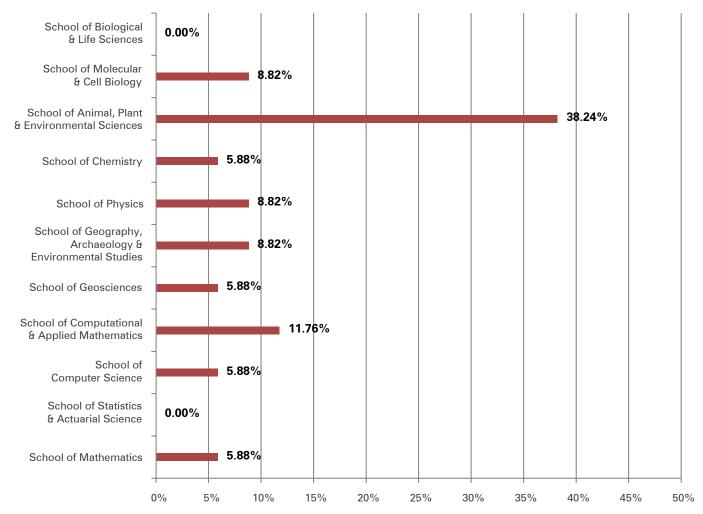
Figure 10: School of affiliation in Science

Figure 10 shows that the majority of students registered in the Faculty of Science who participated in this study were from the School of Animal, Plant and Environmental Sciences (38.24%). Participants from other schools in the faculty constituted less than 15% per school.

Figure 11 shows that the majority of participants in the study (54.3%) chose to study at Wits based on the overall reputation of the institution; the department's subject specialisation; and the University's leadership in the subject area; or because it was recommended by their employer or other individuals, and the fact that graduates from Wits have good career and employment prospects. A group of 15.8% of respondents chose to study at Wits based on the location of the institution, while 11.9% of participants indicated that they chose to enrol at Wits because they had previously studied at the institution. Only 1.8% of participants based their decision on the cost of the programme compared to other institutions, while 6.8% chose to study at Wits because of available funding. Another 4% enrolled in the programme mainly because Wits was the only institution offering the programme. This analysis suggests that the majority of students enrolled at Wits because of the reputation the University commands in the public domain.
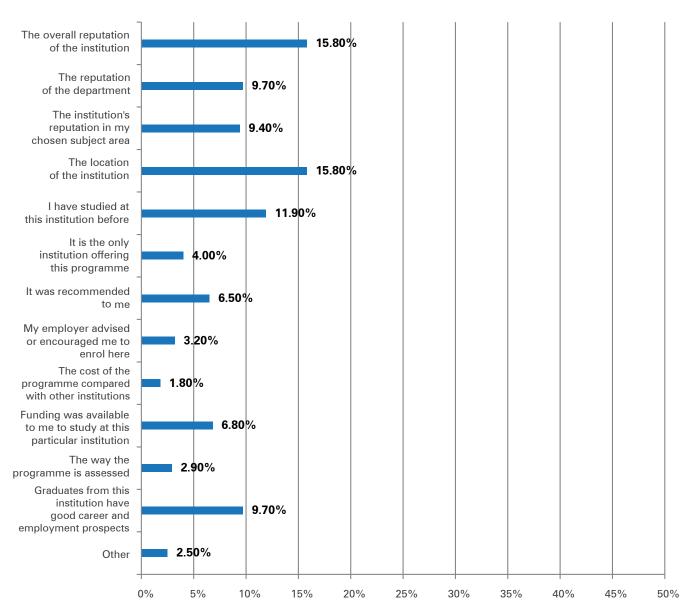
Figure 11: Reason for choosing to study at Wits

It is important for the University to continue exploring means through which it can further strengthen its reputation given the significance of such a reputation in drawing to the University a significantly large number of postgraduate students. In this study, the reputation was defined to include the:

- overall reputation of the University
- reputation of individual academic departments
- the reputation of the institution in relation to a given subject area or knowledge domain
- the employer perceptions and recommendation
- the prestige and success of graduates from the University
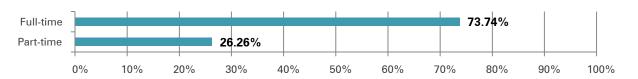
Figure 12: Terms of registration

Figure 12 shows that the majority of respondents in this study (73.74%) were enrolled at Wits on a full-time basis, as opposed to 26.26% who were enrolled on part-time basis. The claims made in this study therefore largely reflect the observations of postgraduate students who spend a lot of their time at Wits.

Wits	40.22%
International university	24.58%
South African university	34.08%
No response	1.12%
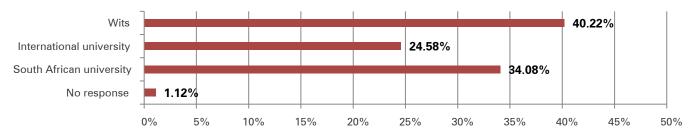
Figure 13: University where undergraduate degree was acquired

With regard to previous experiences, figure 13 shows that the largest group of participants in this study (40.22%) were Wits graduates; 34.08% had acquired their junior degrees from other South African universities, and 24.58% had junior degrees from other international universities.

4. EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE
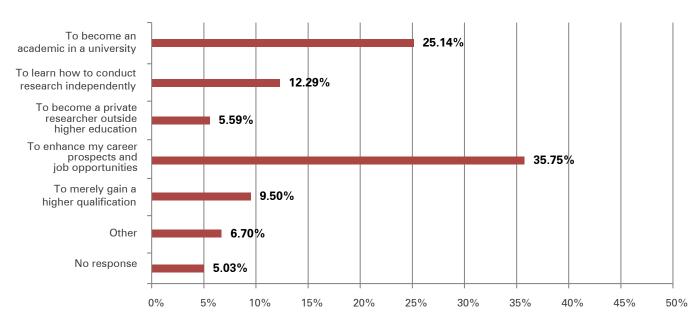
Figure 14: Main reason for enrolling in a research programme

As Figure 14 shows, the majority of participants (35.75%) in this study chose their research programmes to enhance their career prospects and job opportunities. A quarter (25.14%) of respondents indicated that they chose their research studies specifically to pursue an academic career in a university, while 12.29% of respondents indicated that they pursued research in order to learn how to conduct independent research. The data also show that 9.5% of respondents chose their research programme merely to acquire a higher qualification, and 5.59% of respondents indicated that their motivation was an intention to pursue research careers outside the higher education sector. The data in figure 14 clearly indicates that the majority of participants in the study regard the acquisition of a Master's or PhD qualification as a means to position them for better careers and job opportunities. A very small proportion of respondents are pursuing Master's or PhD studies for the sake of acquiring a higher education qualification; the majority want to acquire more knowledge or expertise for better employment opportunities.
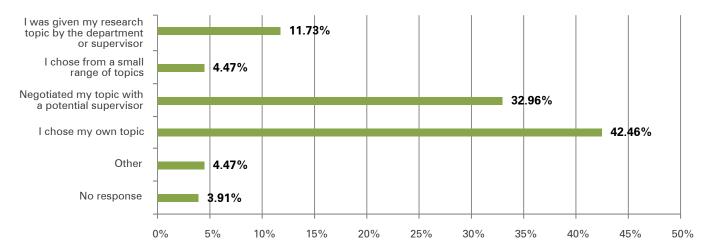
Figure 15: Research topic selection

Figure 15 shows that the largest group of participants in the study (42.46%) were allowed to choose their own topic of study. The next largest group, 32.96%, indicated that they had negotiated their topics with their potential supervisors. Some students were given research topics by the department or supervisor, which might not have been their initial area of interest (11.73%). A very small percentage (4.47%) chose their topic from a list of given topics. Figure 15 therefore suggests that the majority of Master's and PhD students either had a clear understanding of their chosen area of study, or made choices after constructive conversations with their potential supervisors; the number of students in this study who either had to choose their topic from a predetermined list of potential research topics or were prescribed topics is very small. In direct narratives articulated by the 4.47% of respondents who chose the 'other' option in figure 15, some claimed that they 'had to choose a topic that would suit the centre' or that 'my boss suggested it'.
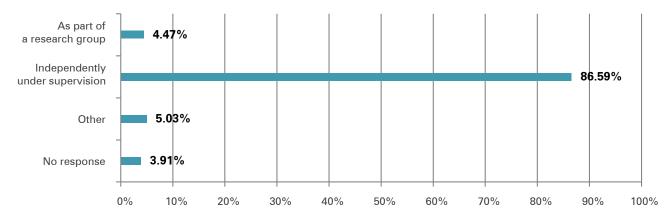
Figure 16: How research is conducted

Figure 16 shows that the majority of participants (86.59%) were pursuing independent research studies under the supervision of a given academic. It is very clear from the data that only a small group of students (4.47%) were pursuing their studies as part of a collective team. This raises the question about innovative pedagogies of supervision employed by supervisors to guide independent student researchers in achieving their mission.
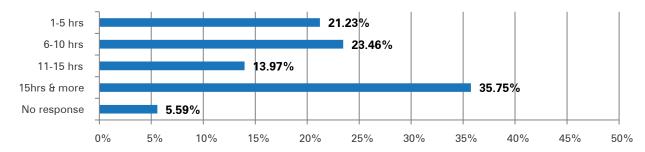
Figure 17: Time spent on research project per week

The survey set out to establish how much time most of the students spend doing their research work. Figure 17 shows that the largest percentage of participants (35.73%) indicated that they spent 15 hours or more per week, while 13.97% indicated that they spent between 11 and 15 hours per week on their research projects. A further 23.46% spent between 6 and 10 hours per week, and 21.23% spent between 1 and 5 hours per week. Given that the majority of participants in the study were full-time students, as shown in figure 12, the University may need to find ways to encourage more students to spend at least a minimum of 10 hours a week on their research projects. The data indicates that a large number of Master's and PhD students (44.69% of the sample) spend less than 10 hours per week on this work.
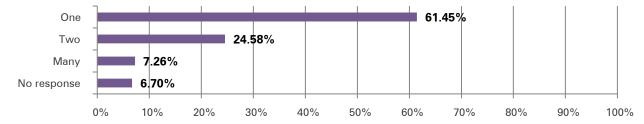
Figure 18: Number of supervisors

Figure 18 shows that the majority of participants in this study had a single supervisor (61.45%), followed by a smaller group (24.58%) who had two supervisors. Only 7.26% respondents indicated that they had many supervisors. It is clear that the dominate discourse in postgraduate supervision is that which is dominated by a 'one on one' student/supervisor relationship. While such a supervision arrangement may be ideal for particular knowledge domains and the working styles of individual researchers, it is important to ensure that other platforms and avenues are created to expose students to multiple channels of feedback and peer engagement.
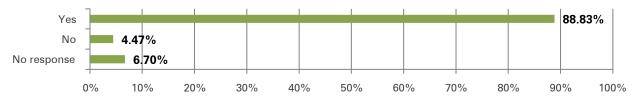
Figure 19: Change of supervisor

Figure 19 indicates that the majority of participants in this study (88.83%) indicated had not experienced a change in terms of their allocated supervisor/s. Only 4.47% indicated that they had. However, bearing in mind the fact that the target population for this study was first-time first-year Master's and PhD students, there is no guarantee that this high level of consistency would be sustained, which is often ideal to ensure the development of an acceptable long-standing research relationship between the student and the supervisor.

Some of the reasons given by students who had experienced a change of supervisor are indicated below:

> " *The supervisor I had went for green pastures in a nearby university with higher salaries and recognition for work done.* "

- Changed to add co-supervisor as my initial supervisor was ill.

- Department accepted me without having a supervisor available. Suitable supervisor started 6 months into a one-year programme.

- I changed my research topic.

- I had to request external assistance from another supervisor due to my initial supervisor's lack of interest in my work.

- I was waiting for my supervisor to join the Geography department from the United Kingdom.

- My first supervisor believed that my topic was 'a crock' and so I chose a supervisor who would support me in pursuing this topic.

- Supervisor became unavailable.
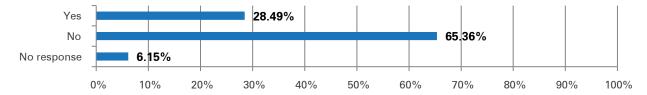
Figure 20: Support from supervisory team/committee

Given the fact that the majority of respondents indicated that they had a single supervisor (see figure 18), it was not surprising to learn that most of the respondents in this study (65.36%) had no support from a supervisory team or committee. The data presented in figure 20 show that only 28.49% received this form of support. While these arrangements might work very well in the cases where there was a healthy relationship between a student and supervisor, in most cases where such relationships break down, student performance and progress are usually compromised. Senior degree studies are often about being introduced to a community of scholars and peers in the research field. Perhaps the University might explore means through which the postgraduate office could play more of a co-ordinating role in ensuring that postgraduate students get more exposure to communal/team arrangements, which would widen the scope of feedback received on their research work.
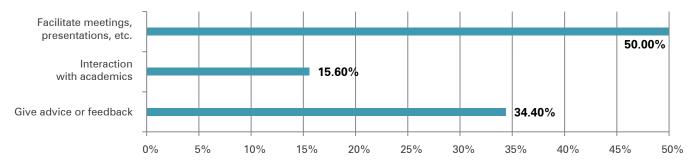
Figure 21: Supervisory team

Figure 21 shows that of the 28.49% of respondents who indicated that they had received support from supervisory teams, 50% found the support received useful because they facilitated meetings and presentations. The study also shows that 34.4% found these teams useful because they provided constructive advice or feedback, while 15.6% indicated that the support was useful because the process provided interaction with academics. The following are some of the direct observations provided by students, suggesting that supervisory teams are useful because:
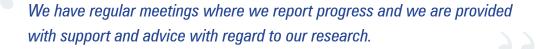
• [They provide] advice, define parameters, set realistic deadlines, and provide objective opinions.

• [They create a platform for] bi-weekly feedback meetings.

• [They are] constantly reviewing my progress and are also open to help with ideas for my project.

• Every second week each Master's student is provided feedback from the whole group.

• For the first half of the process, when developing a proposal for the ethics committee and external readers, internal meetings are held where all students and staff gather to go over each other's topics and comment and suggest ways of improvement.

• If I have a problem I consult them and they help any way that they can. They have a higher degree of connections than myself, being the student.

- [We have] group meetings every Wednesday where we discuss progress and goals for the following week.

Some of the observations made by students in relation to the benefit of having supervisory teams include the following (direct narratives):

- I have a co-supervisor from the chemical engineering department. I also attend journal review meetings (IMWaRU) every fortnight whereby a group of Master's students take turns to present a journal paper which they found interesting or had issues with. This allows for brainstorming and problem solving to occur.

- It is under the supervision of Dr Antje Schuhmann, and we meet as her students to share ideas and encourage one another.

- I wish I had one. The previous supervisor operated a team and it was good; when he left, he left with it, and now everyone is for himself and herself and it's a terrible experience.

- I'm part of the phytoremediation group in the Apes department, and therefore have access to many academics who can help me.

- My research is co-supervised and I am supported by a network of other Master's students who form part of a journal I attend.

- My research project is conducted in collaboration with other researchers that give input into my project when asked.

- Planned meetings are scheduled at the start and end of each critical phase of the project. Phases are proposal writing up and planning, field work and data analysis, and dissemination of outputs and project conclusion. Meeting intervals range from six to eight months, when bi-weekly and monthly meetings with supervisor are not included.

- Some organise text material, others edit my work.

- Students do scheduled presentations during the year and comments are given to us as to how to approach the research.

- The department runs seminars led by different academics in research, proposal writing, thesis writing and methodology.

- There is a committee who provided comments on my proposal and are available for consultation throughout the duration of my project should I feel the need to call on them for guidance.

- They provide research update meetings for corrections from several PhD students.

- Visit the supervisor to give update on progress and get necessary advise on course of action

- We meet as a team for 2 hours weekly for briefing on the progress and then share experiences and guidance to each other when necessary.

- We meet every Tuesday with as a group with one prof who mentors us. It is a group of students who are conducting academic research.

- We meet regularly to discuss each other's work and are scheduled to attend a writing retreat and workshops in the future.

- We meet whenever necessary and discuss issues regarding the research project or send e-mails to everyone for comments.

- We normally have research update meetings.

- [In] weekly research and development group meetings, problems and solutions are discussed.

We have regular meetings where we report progress and we are provided with support and advice with regard to our research.

We meet regularly and there are several postgrad seminars which are meant to provide support but are actually a bit boring

The relationship between the supervisor and the student is always an important contributing factor to student success at the level of Master's and PhD study. As shown in figure 22, it is encouraging to observe that the majority of participants (86.03%) in the study agreed that their supervisors were always available when they needed them, in line with set appointments. Only 6.15% disagreed with this statement. Furthermore, 81.57% of participants indicated that their supervisors gave them guidance and support in all aspects of the research processes, while only 8.38% indicated that they did not receive such support. The knowledge that the supervisor commands in a particular knowledge area can also enrich the quality of the research a student is conducting. The data show that 85.47% of respondents agreed that their supervisors were familiar with the background literature in their individual research area, with only 6.15% disagreeing.

When students submit work they expect to receive feedback from their supervisors. And it is not only the quality of the feedback that adds value to the student's work, but the efficiency with which feedback is provided. Figure 22 shows that 80.44% of respondents agreed that they received feedback on the work submitted within reasonable time, and 10.61% indicated that they did not.

Figure 22(a): Relationship with supervisor

Chart data:

Is available when I need him/her (per appointment)
- Strongly agree: 46.37%
- Agree: 39.66%
- Disagree: 5.03%
- Strongly disagree: 1.12%
- No response: 7.82%

Has given guidance and support in all aspects of research process
- Strongly agree: 47.49%
- Agree: 34.08%
- Disagree: 6.70%
- Strongly disagree: 1.68%
- No response: 10.06%

Is familiar with the background literature in my research area
- Strongly agree: 49.72%
- Agree: 35.75%
- Disagree: 5.59%
- Strongly disagree: 0.56%
- No response: 8.38%

Gives me timely and helpful feedback when I submit written material
- Strongly agree: 44.69%
- Agree: 35.75%
- Disagree: 7.26%
- Strongly disagree: 3.35%
- No response: 8.94%

My supervisor has adequate skills & subject knowledge to support my research
- Strongly agree: 63.13%
- Agree: 26.26%
- Disagree: 2.23%
- Strongly disagree: 0.56%
- No response: 7.82%

Has clearly explained issues such as intellectual property, confidentiality, research ethics and plagiarism
- Strongly agree: 37.43%
- Agree: 39.66%
- Disagree: 12.85%
- Strongly disagree: 1.68%
- No response: 8.38%

Has adequately explained the circumstances under which I might need Ethics Clearance from the University Ethics Committee
- Strongly agree: 37.43%
- Agree: 31.84%
- Disagree: 17.88%
- Strongly disagree: 3.35%
- No response: 9.50%

Is clear about the standard and quality of work required
- Strongly agree: 54.75%
- Agree: 30.73%
- Disagree: 3.91%
- Strongly disagree: 2.23%
- No response: 8.38%

Has signed a contract with me which guides our working relationship
- Strongly agree: 26.26%
- Agree: 20.67%
- Disagree: 29.61%
- Strongly disagree: 15.64%
- No response: 7.82%

I Feel comfortable making appointments to meet with my supervisor(s)
- Strongly agree: 56.42%
- Agree: 30.73%
- Disagree: 2.79%
- Strongly disagree: 2.23%
- No response: 7.82%

Legend: Strongly agree · Agree · Disagree · Strongly disagree · No response
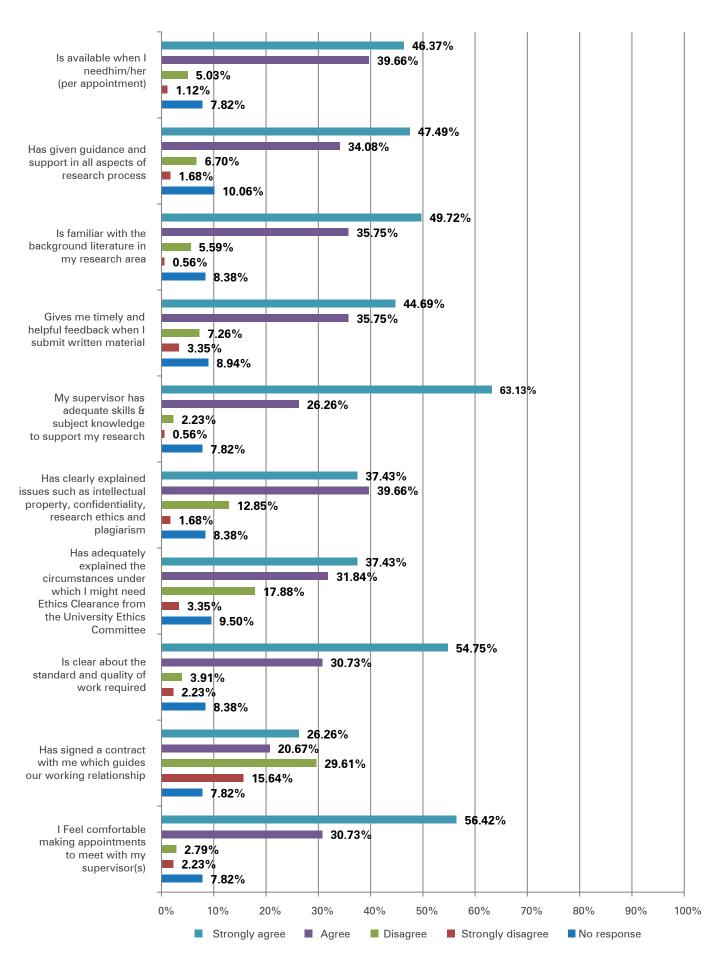
As shown in figure 22, the majority of participants (89.39%) in this study agreed that their supervisors were sufficiently knowledgeable in their subject area to support their research studies. A very low 2.79% were dissatisfied on this score. Data analysis also shows that the majority of students received proper advice on issues of research ethics, plagiarism, confidentiality and intellectual property (77.09%). Only 14.53% of respondents disagreed.

The University has mechanisms in place to ensure proper conduct and integrity in doing research. As in many other universities, supervisors have to advise students about issues of ethical clearance and implications of these on how they conduct their research. The analysis shows that 69.27% of respondents indicated that they received proper advice from their supervisors in this area, but 21.23% felt they had not.

The student/supervisor relationship is also meant to provide upfront clarity on what is expected from students in terms of standards and the quality of their work. The study shows that 85.48% of participants agreed that they had received a clear indication of what was expected from them in this regard, while only 6.14% disagreed.

It is standard practice at Wits for supervisors and students to sign an agreement which maps out the expectations of each party and the terms of reference guiding their interaction. This is done with the view to forming a meaningful student/supervisor relationship and to help students structure their engagement with their supervisors. In spite of this being standard practice, almost half of the respondents had not signed such agreements with their supervisors. The data show that only 46.93% had done so, and 45.25% had not. On the other hand, the majority of students (87.15%) appeared to be comfortable in taking the initiative to make appointments to meet their supervisors. The study produced a result of only 5.02% who indicated that they were not, although no reasons were given to explain their discomfort.   Figure 22b shows that in most of the cases, students agreed that they were the state of the relationships they had with their supervisors. In this area of enquiry, the sentiment mean was mainly above 3, signalling that they either agreed or strongly agreed with statement stating that they were satisfied with educational and research arrangements.

|	1	2	3	4	-	Sentiment Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(blank)	
Is available when I need him/her (per appointment)	1.12%	5.03%	39.66%	46.37%	7.82%	3.2
Has given guidance and support in all aspects of research process	1.68%	6.70%	34.08%	47.49%	10.06%	3.1
Is familiar with the background literature in my research area	0.56%	5.59%	35.75%	49.72%	8.38%	3.2
Gives me timely and helpful feedback when I submit written material	3.35%	7.26%	35.75%	44.69%	8.94%	3.0
My supervisor has adequate skills & subject knowledge to support my research	0.56%	2.23%	26.26%	63.13%	7.82%	3.4
Has clearly explained issues such as intellectual property, confidentiality, research ethics and plagiarism	1.68%	12.85%	39.66%	37.43%	8.38%	3.0
The arrangements for providing student accommodation	2.23%	5.03%	2.23%	1.68%	88.83%	Blanks
Has adequately explained the circumstances under which I might need Ethics Clearance from the University Ethics Committee	3.35%	17.88%	31.84%	37.43%	9.50%	2.8
The quality of the advice and help offered by university accommodation staff	0.56%	2.79%	3.91%	2.79%	89.94%	Blanks
Is clear about the standard and quality of work required	2.23%	3.91%	30.73%	54.75%	8.38%	3.2
The quality of student accommodation	0.56%	5.03%	2.79%	2.23%	89.39%	Blanks
Has signed a contract with me which guides our working relationship	15.64%	29.61%	20.67%	26.26%	7.82%	2.4
Feel comfortable making appointments to meet with my supervisor(s)	2.23%	2.79%	30.73%	56.42%	7.82%	3.3

Figure 22 (b): Relationship with supervisor
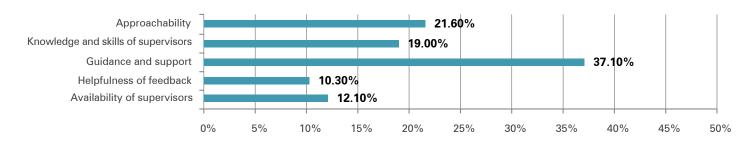
Figure 23: Good traits of my supervisor

Figure 23 highlights the five broad areas which emerged from students' comments about the good traits of their supervisors. These were: guidance and support (37.1%), approachability (21.6%), knowledge and skills (19%), availability (12.1%) and helpfulness of feedback provided (10.3%). The following are some of the directly captured narratives about best aspects of the supervision experience:

- The supervisor is always available for consultation.

- I can speak openly with them.

- Receiving feedback from a professional academic helps broaden my thinking in a more nuanced manner.

- Being advised at every stage of my research.

- Allow you the freedom to develop your own thoughts and feelings towards the subject matter being investigated/researched.

- Always available and willing to help, has a positive attitude and is supportive.

- An understanding supervisor who gives extra material to guide me through writing.

- Being able to approach my supervisor whenever I need to and my supervisor has adequate skills & subject [knowledge].

- Being able to discuss my research with my supervisor over coffee.

- Being able to tap into the vast knowledge base that both my supervisors have is very useful, particularly to a young scientist such as myself who still has very much to learn. They are thus often easily able to help me solve problems as they have gained so much experience in a number of different facets of science.

- Being given relevant and current guidelines on literature related to my topic.

- Constructive criticism. Continued support and striving for quality work .

- Designed a programme given in lectures that is aimed at making research understanding easier. Detailed comments on where to improve after hand-in. Always available for consultation. One of the leading founding scientists in the research field pursued.
- Developing working relationship and knowledge production as a team.

- Excellent, friendly, accommodating.

- Explaining the process and protocols of the research work.

- Good lessons that improve self-understanding, unlocking of my potential.

- Good flow of different ideas between me and my supervisors. Good support system for me when I encounter problems in my research.

- Good guidance, two-way debate. Opened many unexpected doors.

- Great open working relationship that provides support but pushes me to work independently.

- Haven't really encountered any best aspects.

- Having a supervisor who guides the process of research is the best one ever enjoys. I have benefited a lot from my supervisor who is always there during times of appointments and with positive feedback to make you progress and not to retard your progress.

- He tries to make a good relationship by talking about my likes and dislikes. He tends to me whenever I need assistance and never turns me away. He reads my reports continuously and improves them.

- Helps to demystify concepts when I am stuck. The experience coming from a supervisor often acts as a torch as I get marshalled to do feasible research or [create a] balance between [that and] my ambitions.

- His research experience is very helpful in my topic even when my topic is not the area of his expertise.

- How understanding my supervisor was when I was going through a family crisis and how knowledgeable he is when he is needed, as well as the freedom I experience in terms of conducting my study.

- I had a wonderful experience as I was able to talk to my supervisor freely anytime I hit a barrier or did not understand any aspect of my research.

- I have benefited from the strong points of one supervisor where the other has been weaker.

- I have developed a good working relationship with my supervisor. His expertise is very helpful.

- I have had little or no help from my supervisor

- I was admitted for the second intake, July, and so far I'm struggling to get a supervisor or a research topic.

- Information on how to use search engines in order to find the latest articles.

- Interaction and explanation.

- It is difficult to answer as I am just starting. My supervisor has been helpful but we have not yet met formally to do this work.
- It offers a strategic buffer and guidance key to the research process.

- Learning from highly qualified supervisors, very intelligent people who understand how to tackle advanced problems.

- My main supervisor is based at the University of North Carolina and is extremely experienced, makes a lot of time for me, and is always supportive and gives timely feedback

- My second supervisor is very good in statistical analysis so I did not have issues on that.

- My supervisor allows me to be in control and drive my research. He is there as a guide, and as someone I can bounce my ideas off   .

- So far all the professors and doctors I have consulted with have been helpful so I do not sit and do nothing When I finally get a supervisor next year I will have made progress.

- Supervisor is helpful in the research design and makes me aware of potential sources of funding to apply for.

- The best aspect is that my supervisor is the one of the leading mathematicians in the world, and according to South African ranking, he is the top mathematician of South Africa.

- The direct personal contacts with the supervisor are very helpful and goal orientated.

- Interaction, which I have never experienced before, because I am embraced in totality.

- The quality of the feedback obtained is high and my supervisor is very knowledgeable in his field and is always available to assist me.

- The quick responses and advice by e-mail.

- The relationship to improve my knowledge base as well as writing skills.

- The supervisor advised on doing the research, the practical aspects of the field, and what I should be doing analytically and methodologically, which enhanced my understanding of doing good research.

- My supervisor also assisted me in writing and drawing themes and concepts from my data, which I can now do independently.

- The supervisors are always available when I need help.

- They have graciously found funding to send me to a conference overseas. They are always willing to meet and help me with any issues I have with my particular research. I feel that my supervisors perform their duties and also leave me free to explore the avenues of the research I find most interesting.

- Timely feedback and a good working relationship.

- To have an approachable supervisor that is genuinely interested and concerned about my research efforts.

- Very patient and willing to help me learn and become independent and confident in my laboratory and science abilities.

- We are only starting. I am sure there will be plenty with time.

- When supervision is forthcoming it is a really helpful guide on the administrative side of things, and meeting the departmental requirements. The formulaic aspects of writing a PhD proposal were also explained so that the first draft could be altered accordingly.

- With having two supervisors I find I get a broader insight, which is useful and insightful.

- Working together to publish papers.

While the data suggest that the majority of students are satisfied with the quality of supervision they receive from the University, the study also asked them to express their views on perceived areas of improvement in relation to the quality of supervision. The following are direct narratives highlighting suggested areas of improvement:

- There is not enough supervision in terms of deadlines.

- A fixed method of communication with a response within a certain time frame.

- A clearer direction of research or outline of project.

- A lack of clarity and logic regarding the differences between full- and part-time deadlines for proposal submissions. They are the same?? (This may relate more to administration.)

- Assisting students in identifying a topic, especially if Wits forces you to pick a field that you are unfamiliar with.

- Continuous guidance with respect to the substance of the document being written.

- Timely feedback on work produced.

- Critical assessment of arguments made.

- Because I am a new student, I am uncertain about who to speak to about funding, how the library works and general University admin, beyond my supervisor's job.

- Details of research manual to be given to students.

- Difficult to be supervised by a supervisor that is not an expert in your field of study.

- Do not accept students without suitable supervisor having been identified. My research topic would have been more suitable to the forced migration unit but I did not know of its existence before arriving in SA.

- Employ more lecturers, and supervisors should help students when there is need.

- Familiarisation with regulations on the supervisor's part.

- Finer detail explanation, of university requirements, etc.

- General feedback on deadlines and deadline accountability from both the student and supervisor.
- Give new students from other universities attention and listen to their concerns rather than judging the institutions they come from, because that is unfair and undermining democracy.

- I am a PhD candidate and I have been at Wits for just about two months. I have not encountered any significant difficulties yet. However, it would be helpful to meet other PhD students regularly for discussions on our research; the process is so far too solitary. Further, Wits, like other high-profile universities, should provide office space with internet access for all its PhD students.

- I think we should have two supervisors, as the sciences do.

- I would need her to read thoroughly the submissions I make.

- If students could be appointed (allocated) two supervisors.

- Letting students personally know what is expected of them by the University, instead of going through the schools-appointed postgraduate studies co-ordinator.

- More constructive comments would be appreciated without personalising inadequacies of student (even though not explicitly stated).

- More defined and timeously attainable goals. Providing assistance with initial entry and orientation in the laboratory.

- More hands-on supervision and advice on informal courses on statistical analysis of ecological data, GIS, modelling and remote sensing.

- More structure and being open about opportunities for presentations, symposiums, etc.

- More time spent on ensuring that the necessary admin functions are completed, and detailed descriptions on how and when these forms need to be submitted.

- My previous supervisor was rude, did not read my submissions before meeting with me and was not able to tell me how to improve, only what was wrong with my paper. I think supervisors need to be trained to give practical advice on how to write a research paper and how to form an argument.

- My supervisor is not interested in my work, which is a concern. Making appointments with him and getting him to read through my material is most challenging. I am yet to receive any meaningful feedback despite several attempts. I feel short-changed.

- My supervisor sometimes gets so busy that it takes him weeks to provide feedback and guidance.

- Number of students given to supervisor.

- Poor organisation by management in allocating supervisors.

- Unfair and unethical practice of certain supervisors allocating the entire topic, proposal and lit[erature] review to student they supervising in the area of their current research – so student has already done a chapter for publication or presenting at conference – totally unfair when viewed against the whole class – should be done independently.

- Sometimes I feel supervisors can be misleading.

- Supervisor availability [should be] made clear from beginning of the programme; [we should have our] own input in choosing supervisors.

- Supervisors are overwhelmed with many students' work. They are always stressed.

- The way in which she sometimes comments on my work is harsh and unnecessarily worded.

- Timely feedback, make hidden agendas regarding research explicit.

- Too many students for each supervisor means that they cannot provide each student with sufficient attention.

- When [the student is] doing research for the first time the supervisor needs to come down to the student's level of understanding and then draw the student to a higher level of conceptual analysis and understanding.

In addition to structured questions analysed above, participants were asked to comment on good aspects of the research culture at Wits. The following are direct narratives given

by participants on this open-ended question.

- Many well-recognised and well-published researchers in the department, which is highly motivating.

- Ability to escalate issues to the LLM Coursework co-ordinator as and when the need arises.

- Absolutely nothing – it has been shocking what has been expected of the student.

- Assistance with ideas is abundant. Everyone [is] very helpful.

- CAM has got the honour of having top mathematicians of the country.

- Department encourages students to engage in new areas rather than forcing students into supervisor's fields.

- Department of Pharmacy is extremely research orientated and so the environment and surrounding staff allow for productivity.

- E-mails on conferences and call for papers are regularly circulated.

- Encouragement to publish.

- Excellent assessor group – knowledgeable and full of advice.

- Given information about relevant conferences in the region.

- I always feel encouraged to enter into the research field so as to improve on current research.

- I am considered part of the team of researchers, including my supervisor, and other support staff are very dedicated.

- I have enjoyed the research and other supportive seminars.

- I like the spirit of commitment in the supervision.

- I also like the research mentoring.

- Incredibly positive working together as a team rather than feeling like being at the bottom end of a hierarchy scale.

- It provides a structured support programme on research methodologies.

- It's a research institution, so it's perfect.

- Master's room allows for students to interact and work together.

- My school encourages all members to get their work published and get their findings out into the world. There is a wide array of topics covered by various people within the school, and most of these people are very happy to lend their expertise to people starting off with a particular research method/area.

- My supervisor constantly checks on my progress.

- My supervisor was always available and very supportive   .

- Open-minded to attendance of conferences.

- Opportunities to attend conferences and interact with research peers.

- PhD retreats.

- Postgraduate students are encouraged to present their work and attend seminars.

- Professionalism and encouragement to express different viewpoints.

- Publication record, writing retreats etc.

- Awards for publications.

- Publish[ing] actively in best journals possible; public lectures; internal seminars.

- School is strong in support and is incredibly helpful to those who make an effort to use the resources available.

- School promotes a culture of research.

- Strong support system from people in the school and they are always open to new ideas.

- Support of peers and supervisors with research issues, and the efforts put in to ensure all necessary equipment is provided.

- Teaching of the research methodology.

- Team work during field trials.

- The availability of a research group.

- The close reading of all of my produced work.

- The department assists students in ways and means of conducting research.

- The department has a research seminar where local and international scholars come and present as well as chat with students on research methodology.

- The faculty has very little to do with students and the school even less. [There is] monthly support from the department but my main support is from my research group – Health Communication project.

- The Media Studies department is very supportive of its postgraduates; I feel part of the department.

- The School of Public Health is fully prepared to conduct prestigious research and the culture of research is highly encouraged. In addition, guest speakers further enhance and promote the spirit of being involved in research activities both locally and internationally.

- The staff are always accessible and very helpful.

- The staff in my department are mostly researchers themselves, and provide encouragement and motivation.

- The standards are high.

- The vast number of published lecturers.

- There is always someone in the department around to give you some advice.

- There is great support from supervisors, lecturers and heads of departments for research.

- There is great understanding and patience.

- We are encouraged to write well so that we can publish our own work.

- We are provided with the necessary programmes to develop the skills to become researchers.

- I am always being reminded about how I will be the University's author and so need to learn to write academically, and that plagiarism at Wits is at zero tolerance.

Participants were asked to comment on areas that need improvement in relation to the research culture in their faculty/school/department at Wits. The following are direct narratives given by participants on this open-ended question.

- Students need to be encouraged to publish as well as to learn to write in a way that is publishable.

- I have just started, but it does appear that communication regarding events is a problem that needs to be addressed.

- It is more like each 'man' for 'himself', if you do not ask you will remain ignorant. if you do not know you find out from friends if you are lucky – [that] sort of thing.

- My supervisor, and the fact that if I have to survive the Wits Admin process again [mean that] I will not come back.

- Academic work should be geared toward publishing.

- Need to encourage us as students to publish articles and our research papers.

- A better involvement of postgraduates in academic and staff-related activities.

- Being a learning institution, more conferences should be encouraged so that students could acquire skills and competencies.
- Collaborations with other leading Universities in the relevant fields.

- Conflict between staff, whether minor or major, is obvious to the postgraduate students and this is not helpful for our studies. You end up having to suck up to ten different people to simply get some help with your work, when what really should be happening is that staff should be working cohesively, regardless of their personal issues with each other, to make Wits a worthwhile postgraduate experience.

- Doing an MA research by dissertation only can be quite lonely: maybe formal processes where students can exchange on their research progress could be put in place?

- I do not have access to a working space (a shared office) in my department like other postgraduate students have. I would spend more time on campus and probably would be more productive if I had access to such space.

- Expectations should be clarified up front.

- Funding for conference attendance.

- Greater discipline in meetings would lead to greater productivity.

- I feel the presentation of proposals to the research ethics committee (REC) is too slow.

- I have not been told of the publishing writing format.

- I want to feel part of the faculty and not be seen as possible replacement. I am here to learn and develop vital and strategic skills for individual and societal benefit.

- I would like more courses on research methodology.

- Inter-faculty relations.

- It is very hard to contact them/get advice when you are applying for an MA from abroad.

- It would be helpful if there was some sort of student feedback mechanism on the quality of supervision.

- It would be useful to institute 'tutorial' sessions for Master's and PhD students in similar academic areas and disciplines. Contact between research students is limited and some unifying on-going activity driven by the department and school would be very worthwhile and useful.

- More activities to encourage the culture of researchers meeting other researchers.

- More seminars or possibilities to meet and share with other doctoral students in the same department or school. More importantly, increase the available funding opportunities for PhD students.

- Need to promote networking.

- Need to provide more research grants and scholarships to the local and, especially, to the international students.

- One-to-one discussion, research lectures, need for research manual in Faculty of Health Sciences.
- Perhaps networking and conference attendance could be better publicised.

- Electronic resource for regular information for research students on available support and seminar programmes on research methodologies and data analysis and modelling.

- Published papers must have the student's name first and not the supervisor's or any other.

- Research design course has been somewhat of a waste because [there was] no general teaching, but it required me to focus on my research and method involved.

- Is a clean space to much to ask for? Filthy space not conducive classroom conditions.

- More time should be spent on designing the proposal because it forms the framework – [it is] unacceptable to rush a student who has not even thought of a topic and starts a course in the middle of July to have a proposal with literature review by end of September, while being supervised by a supervisor who is doing his own research and supervising 10 other students.

> *Being told by the academics giving the course that no one but supervisor and examiner and mother will read your work – you do not aim high – you are not going to change the world – unethical – demotivating considering the hours of part-time we put in.*

- Disorganisation in classroom practice – shocking to think the same lecturers [are] in charge of preparing future teachers – now we know why?

- Poor teaching didactics and methodologies and assessment practices.

> *Research methodologies as offered by the Construction, Economics and Management School ……... could be considered a waste of time.*

- Seminars held in the Graduate Centre are very good, could it be possible to create a database where we can access material on the topics discussed which could help with our research?

- Stronger encouragement to publish and attend conferences and workshops.

> *Students should be encouraged to attend conferences and publish research in peer-reviewed journals.*

- The encouragement to produce and attend conferences needs a big boost in my Department.

> *The entire ethics approach needs overhauling. The process takes so much time and having just one person to handle the paperwork wastes students' time.*

- There is need to have more than one person who helps postgraduate students. In my faculty there is only one person, who is currently on maternity leave. We therefore have no one to consult when we need help.

- The school should promote interdisciplinary research awareness and support.

- There is need [to provide] PhD students with departmental space where they can all be working together, just as other departments have done, e.g. the School of Law. PhD students are given the necessary support.

- There needs to be an improvement in the support given to Master's students doing their research, especially international students.

Participants were asked to comment on good aspects of the research training they received in their faculty/school/department at Wits. The following are direct narratives given by participants on this open-ended question.

- An understanding of various aspects that need to be [attended to] to ensure progress, this then helps to ensure a successful final outcome.

- Encouragement to increase output quality.

- Faculty research courses great – supervisors provide great guidance.

- Final (4th) year projects served well as 'research training'.

- Fortunate to have done qualitative and quantitative types of research, and thus understand both.

- Fosters independence and creative problem-solving.

- Gaining certain skills and techniques in the laboratory, as well as the ability to understand concepts in research that will assist in future professional development.

- Good all-round coverage of the topics.

- I am encouraged to read extensively so as to come up with a good and sound paper.

- I have attended some seminars that are interesting and appear adequate. I am not doing coursework so the questions are possibly irrelevant to me.

- I have had tremendous workshops and seminars offered by the faculty to support my research. However I feel the training should be systematic since students come into the programmes from different backgrounds. It is also good for students to develop a relationship with the resource facilitators in the workshop should they need more support.

- I have learnt to think logically with regard to research.

- I learnt a lot from workshops that are organised for postgraduate students by the University.

- It has been very good since I arrived here and it is almost comparable to the institution I came from.

- It has broadened my research abilities.

- More than adequate resources and patient lab managers willing to help.

- State-of-the-art equipment in use.

- The ability to write research essays in journal format, trained me in the skills of writing a publication journal.

- The training programme is sent to my e-mail to remind me and I can book online.

- The research classes last semester were fantastic!

- The research methods course was useful leading up to the proposal stage. However, no formal guide on report writing is given.

- The research training helped me produce a good-quality research report.

- The training covers all the important aspects.

- There was no 'formal' research training, but the undergraduate degree was excellent preparation.

- Working on a project that draws from my background, experience and expertise, and then developing them, as well as introducing me to a new range of research approaches, critical thinking, highly technical equipment and a suite of new research skills.

5. INITIATION INTO COMMUNITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND CULTURE

As shown in figure 24, the majority of students (91.07%) indicated that their engagement in their postgraduate education helped them develop the ability to think critically, while only 2.08% disagreed with the relevant statement. The majority of participating postgraduate students (88.83%) also agreed that their programmes had helped them keep abreast of knowledge frontiers in their field. Only 3.91% of respondents did not share that view.

One of the added advantages of pursuing postgraduate education is that it is about developing not only the expertise to conduct research, but also the ability to work with peer researchers. Most participants (73.74%) agreed that their engagement in their programmes had helped them develop skills to work with communities of researchers; 18.44% felt that they had not acquired these skills. The data also show that 88.26% of respondents agreed that they had developed skills to debate and tolerate alternate viewpoints through their learning programmes, while only 4.47% disagreed. Further analysis also showed that 79.33% of respondents agreed that through their participation in their postgraduate education they had developed awareness of ethical practice and understanding of concepts such as intellectual property and commercialisation of research. Only 13.41% felt they had not been helped in this way.

It is important for every researcher to develop the skills needed to work independently on their research projects. The study shows 90.5% of participants agreeing that they had acquired these skills through their postgraduate education, while only 2.24% disagreed.

Being a researcher is not merely about conducting research, regardless of whether it makes an intellectual contribution to the development of knowledge hierarchies in a given knowledge domain. It is largely about contributing to that development. In this study, 86.04% of participants indicated that their postgraduate education was helping them to contribute in this way, and only 6.7% felt that it was not. In most cases research can also be about contributing to the development of professional practice in different fields and areas of work; and it was again gratifying to find that 86.6% of the sample agreed that their postgraduate education developed their capacity to do this, with 10.7% disagreeing. The integrity of any research project is often determined by the extent to which methodology adheres to issues of validity based on the accuracy with which the study was conducted. The majority of participants (87.71%) in this study indicated that their postgraduate education helped them understand the validity and accuracy with which the study was conducted. A very small number, 4.47%, said it had not.

No researcher is guaranteed a smooth process and good results. Often there are situations where particular steps have to be repeated to address shortcomings or unforeseen circumstances. The majority of participants in this study (84.92%) indicated that their postgraduate education prepared them to handle unexpected research-related circumstances effectively, while only 6.71% disagreed with this statement.

Figure 24b shows that in most of the cases, students agreed that they were satisfied with the way in which they experienced the manifestation of learning outcomes in the programme through processes supported by their supervisors. In this area of enquiry, the sentiment mean was mainly above 3, signalling that they either agreed or strongly agreed with statement stating that they were satisfied with educational and research arrangements.
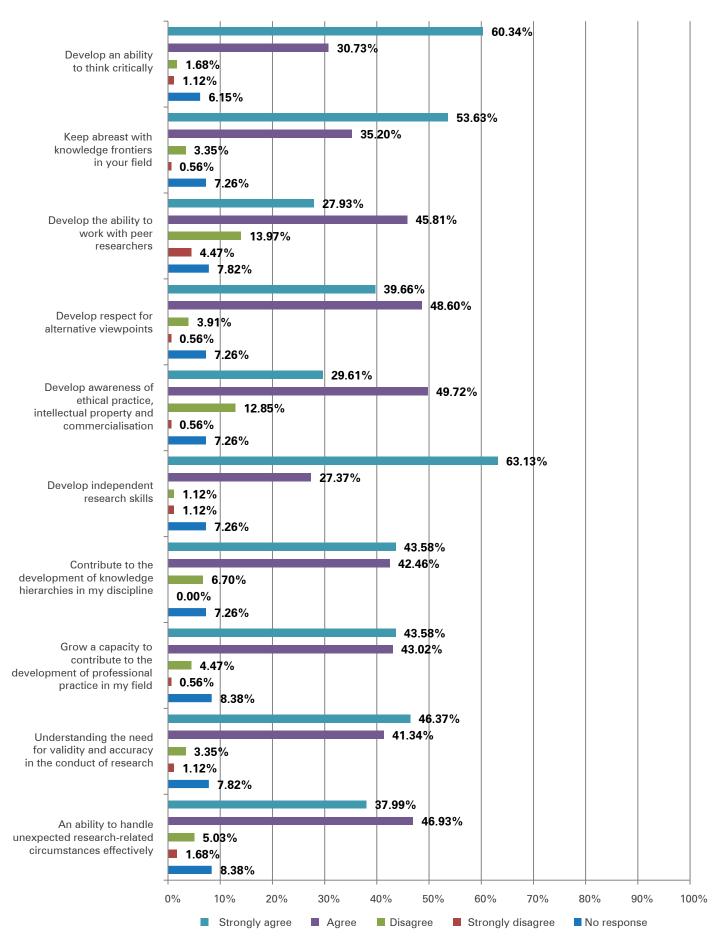
Figure 24(a): Experience of learning outcomes in the programme as supported by supervisor

	1	2	3	4	-	Sentiment Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(blank)	
Develop an ability to think critically	1.12%	1.68%	30.73%	60.34%	6.15%	3.4
Keep abreast with knowledge frontiers in your field	0.56%	3.35%	35.20%	53.63%	7.26%	3.3
Develop the ability to work with peer researchers	4.47%	13.97%	45.81%	27.93%	7.82%	2.8
Develop respect for alternative viewpoints	0.56%	3.91%	48.60%	39.66%	7.26%	3.1
Develop awareness of ethical practice, intellectual property and commercialisation	0.56%	12.85%	49.72%	29.61%	7.26%	2.9
Develop independent research skills	1.12%	1.12%	27.37%	63.13%	7.26%	3.4
Contribute to the development of knowledge hierarchies in my discipline	0.00%	6.70%	42.46%	43.58%	7.26%	3.2
Grow a capacity to contribute to the development of professional practice in my field	0.56%	4.47%	43.02%	43.58%	8.38%	3.1
Understanding the need for validity and accuracy in the conduct of research	1.12%	3.35%	41.34%	46.37%	7.82%	3.2
An ability to handle the unexpected research related circumstances effectively	1.68%	5.03%	46.93%	37.99%	8.38%	3.0

Figure 24(b): Experience of learning outcomes in the programme as supported by supervisor

It is often said that one of the challenging aspects of being a postgraduate student in a university is a sense of academic loneliness and isolation. This implies that in most cases students are not adequately exposed to other communities of researchers and scholars in their faculties, schools and departments. As shown in figure 25, this study suggests that the majority of postgraduate students at Wits (77.1% of the sample) felt supported and encouraged by their faculties and departments to publish their work. Only 15.64% of participants did not feel they had that support. The majority of participants (72.62%) felt encouraged to present conference papers based on their research, while 19.55% did not. When presenting papers at conferences, postgraduate students are often encouraged to network with both young and seasoned scholars in their fields of study, outside the boundaries of any given university. The majority of participants in this study agreed that they felt encouraged by their faculties and departments to develop professional networks outside of the University (72.07%); 19% disagreed with this statement. As part of developing a sustainable research culture in any faculty, school and department, it is always advisable to integrate postgraduate studies into the mainstream research activities of the given academic structure. This broadens the base of intellectual support that students receive in a faculty or department. In this respect, 79.89% of participants agreed that their faculties, schools and departments provided them with a supportive working environment. Only 11.17% of participants disagreed.
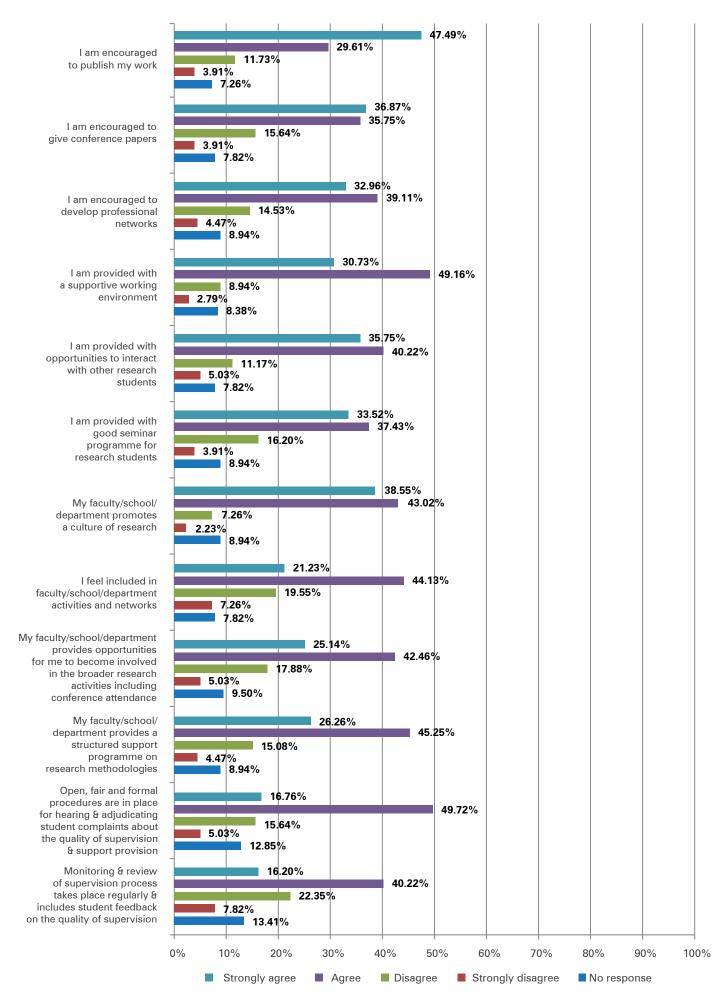
Figure 25(a): Experience of research culture within the faculty, school or department

The facilitation of opportunities for interaction among young researchers forms an integral part of a progressive research culture in any faculty. The study shows that 75.97% of respondents felt that their faculties, schools and departments provided these opportunities, and only 16.2% did not.

There was a widely shared view that faculties and schools provided research students with good seminar programmes and opportunities. The data show that 70.95% of participants felt that faculties and schools provided such opportunities; 20.11% did not. The majority of participants (81.57%) also felt that schools and faculties promoted a culture of research across the board, while only 9.49% disagreed. A reasonably high percentage of students (65.33%) felt included in the research activities and network of schools and faculties, but 26.81% felt excluded. A similar percentage of participants, 67.6%, felt that they were being integrated into broader research activities of faculties and schools, including conference attendance, while 22.91% did not feel integrated into mainstream activities. In recent years the provision of structure programmes on research methodology has helped to improve the throughput rates in postgraduate education. In this study, 71.51% of participants agreed that their faculties and schools provided such programmes, while 19.55% disagreed.

The study also shows that a reasonable majority (66.48%) of participants expressed the view that open, fair and formal procedures were in place to engage with student complaints about the quality of supervision and general support. However, 20.67% disagreed with this statement. It is also important, if supervisors are quality guards in any research project, to ensure that a programme to guard the guards is institutionalised. In this regard, 56.42% of respondents felt that the University had put in place appropriate measures, comprising the monitoring and regular review of supervision processes and student feedback on the quality of supervision. The percentage of participants who felt that the University lacked such monitoring and review systems was an unsatisfactorily high 30.17%. The University may need to revisit the means through which it provides a platform for students to give feedback on the quality of supervision across faculties and schools.

Figure 25b shows that while most of the responses were positive, showing that students agreed that they were relatively satisfied with the way in which they experienced the research culture in the their faculties, schools and departments, the sentiment mean was below 3 in many instances. This signals that faculties, schools and departments still have more work to do to integrate their postgraduate students into the mainstream culture in faculties.

	1	2	3	4	-	Sentiment Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(blank)	
I am encouraged to publish my work	3.91%	11.73%	29.61%	47.49%	7.26%	3.1
I am encouraged to give conference papers	3.91%	15.64%	35.75%	36.87%	7.82%	2.9
I am encouraged to develop professional networks	4.47%	14.53%	39.11%	32.96%	8.94%	2.8
I am provided with a supportive working environment	2.79%	8.94%	49.16%	30.73%	8.38%	2.9
I am provided with opportunities to interact with other research students	5.03%	11.17%	40.22%	35.75%	7.82%	2.9
My faculty/school/ department promotes a culture of research	2.23%	7.26%	43.02%	38.55%	8.94%	3.0
I feel included in faculty/school/ department activities and networks.	7.26%	19.55%	44.13%	21.23%	7.82%	2.6
My faculty/school/ department provides opportunities for me to become involved in the broader research activities including conference attendance	5.03%	17.88%	42.46%	25.14%	9.50%	2.7
My faculty/school/ department provides a structured support programme on research methodologies.	4.47%	15.08%	45.25%	26.26%	8.94%	2.8
Open, fair & formal procedures are in place for hearing & adjudicating student complaints about the quality of supervision & support provision.	5.03%	15.64%	49.72%	16.76%	12.85%	2.5
Monitoring & review of supervision process takes place regularly & includes student feedback on the quality of supervision.	7.82%	22.35%	40.22%	16.20%	13.41%	2.4

Figure 25(b): Experience of research culture within the faculty, school or department

In Wits Vision 2022 and the Wits 2013 Strategy the University promises to create an environment conducive to a better educational and research experience provided to all staff and students. Figure 26 gives us an indication of how postgraduate students who participated in this study viewed the Wits cultural experience.

The evidence shows that the majority of students (81.56%) felt welcome and accepted as part of the University community, and only 13.96% of respondents did not. The majority of students (83.8%) indicated that they felt free to express their views and opinions at Wits, and only 10.62% of students did not share this view. There was a widely shared view that the University promotes a culture of tolerance and caters for cultural diversity: 86.04% of participants agreed with this view, while only 8.94% disagreed. It is not surprising that the majority of students expressed the view that Wits had a strong culture of academic excellence, given the fact that the University's reputation was one of the determining factors in bringing the majority of participants to Wits. In this study, 84.36% of respondents felt that there was a culture of academic excellence at Wits; only 8.93% disagreed.
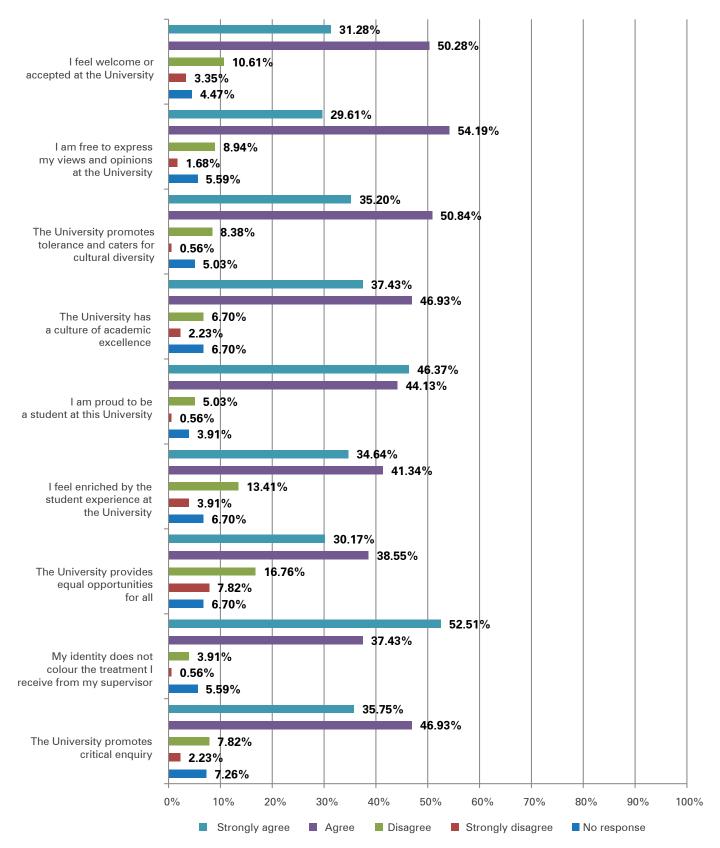
Figure 26(a): The cultural experience at Wits in general

Most of our postgraduate students (90.5%) were proud to be part of the intellectual enterprise at Wits, and 5.59% disagreed with this statement. The general student experience at Wits was viewed as a satisfying aspect of being part of the University by 75.98% of participants, while 17.32% did not feel enriched by the experience.

It is vital that the University present itself as a platform for equal opportunities for all. This does not merely speak to the purpose of the University as a cosmopolitan institution, producing intellectual capital and being the moral compass of civil society, but also to

its standing and role in advancing the public good. It is encouraging that the majority (68.72%) felt that Wits provided equal opportunities for all, although 24.88% disagreed. Most of the postgraduate students in the study (89.94%) felt that their identity did not colour the treatment they received from their supervisors; only 4.47% of respondents felt that it did. It is also important for the University to espouse values of critical enquiry and social justice; in this study, 82.68% of respondents felt that the University did so, and only 10.05% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

	1	2	3	4	-	Sentiment Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(blank)	
I feel welcome or accepted at the University	3.35%	10.61%	50.28%	31.28%	4.47%	3.0
I am free to express my views and opinions at the University	1.68%	8.94%	54.19%	29.61%	5.59%	3.0
The University promotes tolerance and caters cultural diversity	0.56%	8.38%	50.84%	35.20%	5.03%	3.1
The University has a culture of academic excellence	2.23%	6.70%	46.93%	37.43%	6.70%	3.1
I am proud to be a student at this University	0.56%	5.03%	44.13%	46.37%	3.91%	3.3
I feel enriched by the student experience at the University	3.91%	13.41%	41.34%	34.64%	6.70%	2.9
The University provides equal opportunities for all	7.82%	16.76%	38.55%	30.17%	6.70%	2.8
My identity does not colour the treatment I receive from my supervisor	0.56%	3.91%	37.43%	52.51%	5.59%	3.3
The University promotes critical enquiry	2.23%	7.82%	46.93%	35.75%	7.26%	3.0

Figure 26(b): The cultural experience at Wits in general

Figure 26b shows that while most of the responses were positive, showing that students agreed that they were relatively satisfied with the way in which they experienced the research culture in the University their faculties, schools and departments, the sentiment mean was below 3 in many instances. In this area of enquiry, the sentiment mean was mainly above 3, signalling that they either agreed or strongly agreed with statement stating that they were satisfied with the cultural experience at Wits.

Participants were asked to comment on good aspects of institutional culture at Wits. The following are direct narratives given by participants on this open-ended question:

• The diversity of the University.

• Diversity, acceptance, social networks.

• A sense of togetherness.

- Cultural/racial tolerance.

- Cultural and race mix.

- Culture of excellence.

- Culture of freedom of expression and equal opportunities for students is good.

- Diverse, academic culture.

- Diversity allows for interactions with all types of people and allows for the development of adequate social skills.

- Equality for all.

- Everything is done professionally.

- Free and fair for all.

- Generally people are helpful and cheerful.

- Good mix of people and cultures.

- Good study and research culture.

- I am free to express my views.

- I feel welcome in the education faculty – everywhere else I feel I am dealing with a huge impersonal bureaucratic machine where one part does not correspond with other parts.

- If you work hard, doors are opened for you, with staff taking on extra time and effort to help you achieve.

- It's multicultural, and there are support structures.

- Lectures are conducted adequately and timeously.

- Limited judgement of people's beliefs and ways.

- Multiracial and lots of fun in the diversity.

- My department has a great culture of inclusion for all its postgraduate students.

- My supervisor shows appreciation and respect for people irrespective of their identity.

- Observed [that] there are equal opportunities for all students.

- Some lecturers tend to work on the basis of race, which is wrong.

- The ability to keep in touch with former students and create platforms for the students to network.

- The best aspect [of the] institutional culture [is] that your identity does not affect the treatment or assessment one receives from lecturers and supervisors. Performance is assessed objectively.

- The diversity of voices on campus should at all times be encouraged.

- The diversity of student body.

- The environment is welcoming for all races.

- The natural space, but even that is clouded by filthy classrooms.

- The students are active here and not apathetic when it comes to social and political issues.

- The University promotes tolerance and caters for cultural diversity.

- The University's constant thirst for academic excellence.

- The way my lecturers, who [are mostly] PhD holders, prefer to be called by their first name, a thing that cannot happen back in my country. This just makes you feel part of the Wits community.

- There is a proven culture of learning and interaction with freedom and tolerance from others. There is a great deal of multiculturalism and working together [regardless] of race, gender or family origin.

- There is a sense of higher achievement when attending the University of Witwatersrand. The institutional culture is a very professional one and meets international standards (in my opinion, regarding the department that I am involved in).

- There is a strong attitude of integration and cultures are well accepted. Wonderful atmosphere at Wits, I love it.

- Wits has a fantastic brand, which is backed up by a positive experience at the University, with a number of seminars and sessions available for me to attend to improve my chances of doing well.
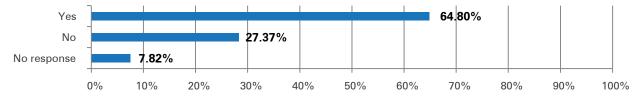

Figure 27: Is Wits a student-centred university?

The University has not explicitly defined its understanding of its aspiration to become a student-centred university. While it is widely understood that a student-centred university would respond to the intellectual and social needs of its students, specific components that build up a complete notion of a student-centred university have not been debated and explicitly understood by all stakeholders. Students were asked to express their opinions about the general student-centredness of the institution. Figure 27 shows that the majority of participants (64.8%) felt that Wits was sufficiently student-centred, while 27.37% felt that it was not. Students were further asked to express their views on the issue, and particularly on what the University should address to become student-centred; below are direct transcriptions of some of their opinions:

- The social gathering spots encourage interaction.

- There are many campaigns and information available about career choice and jobs. This promotes various opportunities for students which is an excellent aspect.

- A student is given freedom to choose a course that will enable him or her [to grow] professionally. At least resources [are available], though not adequate, but as a starter

to pursue studies.

- Activities, resources are all student-geared. Whilst I appreciate being a student at Wits, I don't think the facility is staff-geared as they seem overburdened, often beyond their control.

- All aspects and activities occurring are centred on the interest of students.

- Apart from growing class sizes, considerable effort is made [in] lectures to promote discussions and engage students.

- Apart from other factors, integration is impeded by diversity of languages.

- At least many things are revolving around the welfare of students. There is also a visible effort to integrate students regardless of race, religion and even sexual orientation as per the virtues of modern-day democracy.

- They are money conscious, and students fees are relatively expensive, more especially, international fees and accommodation fees.

- Wits only cares about publication and money, and not at all about the quality of teaching provided to students. I've known numerous students who have complained on numerous accounts and the answer was that if the lecturer makes the University money, they don't care about our lack of education or teaching issues experienced.

- Bureaucratic procedures and rigidity stop the University from being truly student-centred.

- Communication with students and involvement in key University activities are good.

- Efforts are made to accommodate students.

- Efforts are made to meet student needs, as best as possible.

- Every activity done is at the end of the day good for the student. Highly qualified staff, world-class libraries, computers and internet etc., are what defines Wits and benefits us as students.

- Everything is centred on providing students with a quality education.

- Everything is geared for the student, part time or full time, facilities, lectures etc.

- Facilities and resources to support students exist.

- Far too many admin staff; admin staff, parking office, etc. work to make life difficult for students to get on and do their work.

- Fees are too high.

- Focus is on academic excellence.

- From the libraries to the gardens, everything is made to assist the students.

- Functions like any other business. provides a service to make a profit.

- Generally the atmosphere is about progressing the students and the co-ordination of other services help achieve this, such as the inter-campus bus service, the dining hall, the gyms and the infrastructure. They all work together to accommodate the

student.

- Having studied for two degrees for five years at another South African university, I have experienced the administration at Wits to be highly inefficient and unnecessarily bureaucratic, which makes it not student centred. I never get replies to e-mails I send to administration and when I do get through to your administration, I get sent to someone else, which is highly frustrating and is an unnecessary waste of time. I don't understand why the administrative system is so bureaucratic yet so inefficient. At my previous university queries were dealt with immediately, professionally and efficiently, which, unfortunately, is not the case at Wits.

- I believe that Wits focuses on excellent communication, taking student views into account.

- I believe the administration side of Wits could be more helpful and staff more accommodating to the needs of students.

- I don't think it is. I think Wits would like to be portrayed/perceived that way, however the focus does not lie on promoting young adults' development, it is very capitalistic and strives to make more and more money. If Wits cared about students, they would not make us pay exorbitant amounts on our courses, on extra notes and readings when we don't even get any, on copyright fees, and so much on parking when there aren't even enough parking bays to accommodate the number of allocated parking permits each year.

- I feel as though it's becoming a lot more exclusive and run like a business.

- I feel the University is centred on research output, but students come a close second or third.

- I find Wits campus student-centred because the facilities available on campus make my life easy as a student.

- I have felt welcomed and respected, but not pampered and crooned over. I am a student attempting to master my discipline, so this experience seems right to me.

- I think the institution tries its best to meet the needs of the students first, before any other issues.

- I would say yes, because the academic standards are never compromised.

- I would say yes, but I haven't been here long enough to really make an informed decision.

- If I could have I would have answered 'not sure'. You need to define what you mean by 'student centred'.

- If the University cared about students it would be addressing their concerns, like the issue of exorbitant fees.

- In general terms, people attend to gain knowledge, and over the past decade major improvements with regard to the facilities available at Wits have been focused on making the student more comfortable and [able to access] knowledge.

- In my department a student is the reason the lecturers come to work. When a problem is spotted, drastic measures are taken ensure students understand what they are being taught and so this makes it student centred in my opinion.

- In my experience, in my department students are consulted on issues that affect them and on how learning and research can be improved, and even with regard to social and economic well-being.

- The international office should be the face of the University. Every international student you ask says bad things about the international office. They should improve and facilitate by any means possible international students being heard.

- It is a building-centred approach – human factor not considered, not a human leading a human, more like a building leading a human. It is a business. There are not sufficient structures in place to support both struggling and excelling students to do better, insufficient student-exchange programmes in different faculties.

- It would appear that management does not provide a regular, sufficient time slot in which SRC members can interact with them and air grievances. That has an important bearing on how ordinary students view management, and consequently the University.

- It's profit-centred. Not interested in students' welfare, more interested in how much it makes off students.

- Too few activities occur at the Faculty of Health Science for students. On main campus this is otherwise.

- There is no place to just sit and relax apart from the canteen.

- Many students have to fit in and sometimes it takes time.

- Most of the facilities appear to be designed with students in mind, however, the administration (and admin process) is not.

- Much attention is given to the student body as a whole, however, the individual is not recognised adequately.

- My experience with the administration side of the University leads me to conclude that Wits is more interested in the money students bring to the University, and is increasingly acting like a corporation instead of a learning institution.

- My undergraduate and postgraduate degree at another university was centred on staff that didn't care about the students and just wanted to get the job done.

- No proper advice and professional direction from supervisors.

- Often I feel that the University bends over too far for students – especially the undergraduates ...

- Poor ability to register and manage processes remotely.

- Poor administration, slow and filled with mistakes.

- Relatively, compared to international universities.

- I have been shunted from pillar to post and find it impossible to get answers. I could not even find a map of the campus.

- Staff are willing to assist where they can.

- Staff place their best effort on making the students happy and allowing them to get a good education.

- Student interests are not first on most staff members' (I encountered) to-do lists.

- Students are a key element of the excellence and prestige of the University and are treated as such.

- Students have access to the vital services and that is crucial for their developing intellectually.

- The facilities available make you feel like, yes, indeed, I am in a school – although much needs to be done on this.

- The fees are too high.

- The institution built around the need for students.

- The institution has invested a lot in facilities that help the students and that is greatly appreciated.

- The social integration of students and the approach to group work is well conceived.

- The needs of the students shape policy in balance with the other requirements of a university.

- The University caters more for the staff, despite continuous complaints, either about some of the poor lecturing or the poor administration.

- The University is centred on providing the best services for students so as to [help them] achieve their goals.

- The University is generally concerned with feedback from students and is interested in the impression it has on students.

- The University is sensitised to the need for a social lifestyle, which goes hand in hand with our academic life

- There is a very effective consultative process with the students to make decisions that affect their future careers and the time they spend at the University.

- There is always someone to speak to if the student is having issues.

- There is high expectation, which is good, and the University gives enough support to the students to excel in their studies.

- Wits does spend time focusing on student improvement and promotion in some cases, but there also seem to be a lot of politics that cause problems, and some people seem to treat

- Wits more as a business than a learning institution with, for example, the exorbitant fees charged to international students.

- Wits seems to [pay] more attention to the staff, and none to students. The SRC is not even functional in providing full service to students, and many students experience difficulties because of financial issues which they fail to address because the arm that is supposed to help is useless.

- Wits seems largely focused on getting students through as quickly as possible, rather than providing a quality education.

- Wits thrives on placing the students at the fore of her operations. From the resources to the infrastructure.

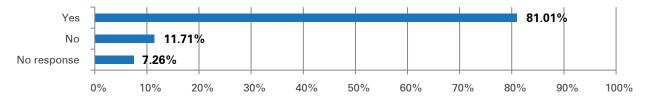| Response	Percentage
Yes	**81.01%**
No	**11.71%**
No response	**7.26%**

Figure 28: Would you advise a friend or relative to come and study at Wits?

Figure 28 provides strong evidence that postgraduate students think of Wits as a university of choice. It is based on the question that asked the participants to state whether they would advise a friend or relative to study at Wits. Of the study sample, 81.01% indicated that they would indeed do so; only 11.73% indicated that they would not. While 11.73% is a small proportion of the sample, it is essential to understand why these current students would not recommend Wits to others as an institution of choice. The students were also asked to provide open-ended views about their postgraduate experience at Wits, which are cited below:

- Master's is a different ball game, there were a few hiccups with my registration, it has been sorted and I am looking forward to the research aspect of my Masters.

- My postgraduate experience has been, and continues to be, one of the BEST experiences of my life. I have grown so much, both academically and as an individual. Wits definitely gave (and continues to give) me my edge!!

- Amazing experience once registered. Troublesome experience during registration – faculty staff were not helpful, while school staff were more helpful.

- There is no substitute for hard work. If you don't work hard leave the institution.

- Bad experience with supporting departments like financial aid; I always get paid late and I don't know why and I'm still waiting for the scholarship to be approved. Library – I put a book on hold but for some strange reason the holder was allowed to renew the book even though it was overdue and on hold.

- Basically, in terms of what I have learnt so far, I feel if I [were to] graduate tomorrow, or if by any chance I find am unable to pay for my fees and cannot proceed with what am studying, I would still make a difference back in my country. The teaching and learning culture is very good, which I take back home with me .... I feel encouraged to go on with my studies and before going back home I would love to apply for a PhD so that I benefit from the culture I have experienced so far. I truly agree with the saying which goes 'Wits gives you the edge'!!!

- Has opened many doors for me professionally and I look forward to seeing what the future holds.

- I am proud to be a Witsie. The University should strive to maintain its reputation as one of the world's best and should constantly seek to push the frontiers of knowledge.

- I am still new, so need to spend a bit more time here before I can comment appropriately. I do, however, feel that administration in general could be much improved.

- I am worried about the administrative state of the University, and the effect that may have on the future value of my degree. I have had several issues, including problems with registration (both as an undergrad and postgrad), and problems getting funding

out of Wits after my bursar had paid them.

- I feel that the administration of postgraduate enquiries and applications has to be vastly improved if the University wants to attract students outside of Africa. Also, it needs a better orientation programme for postgrads, as I felt like too much emphasis was put on the new undergrad students and we were left to it. There need to be more social events for postgrads to introduce us to each other and engage people from different disciplines.

- I feel more responsible for the decisions I make as opposed to undergraduate studies where I felt I was forced to get the work done.

- I feel that whilst there has definitely been an improvement in my overall knowledge, this is solely thanks to one professor. I do not feel that the course is aligned with the price.

- I have been given power to present my potential through the abundance of study and research tools or resources. I engage with world-class researchers who pick my brain and explain what they understand in ways that demonstrates how much, what and how I have to learn to be world-class researcher and better.

- I have learnt a lot and it has really been an eye opener for me. I wish our government could send more people for the course, specifically to Wits.

- I have really experienced a lot at Wits and all that I have seen met my previous expectation. This is really a very good institution that is culturally diverse, the best. What I also like about Wits is the way it incorporates international students from the entire African region. I would strongly recommend this institution to any student.

- I have spent half the year simply trying to get enrolled, get a student card etc., so am unable to comment on the actual experience as a student. Without access to the library I have bought what I needed and worked at home. I was overcharged and am steeling myself for the battle to get refunded – apparently I need a stamp from my bank (a ridiculous requirement) just to be refunded an amount I should not have been asked to pay in the first place. My application was lost and not submitted at the right time, meaning I was put in a later intake (July rather than April!). Through all of this I have become quite demotivated. There is very little effort given to welcoming or orientating new PG students (MEd by Dissertation.) I am not talking about individuals in the Education faculty, who have bent over backwards to help me, it is the absence of system to help integrate new PG students that I am referring to.

- I only wish that part-time students were allowed to do their dissertations in a 3rd year as opposed to whilst being registered for other core subjects.

- I think the two things the WBS research students' needs are: 1) a welcome pack with due dates, contact numbers, etc. clarifying what to do when for which students (full time, part time, etc.), and 2) a tutorial system to be set up grouping students within similar disciplines and areas of study to promote and encourage debate and interaction.

- I was highly disappointed in the lack of support in assisting with the study permit for the continuance if my research report.

- It is not an easy experience. Lots of running around from one campus to another – not enough integration of services.

- It needs the human factor more – this is a journey – it does not have to be lonely – there should be a rigorous selection process by people who are capable of selecting

– take on those who are capable of succeeding because you provide a programme you are confident in – the programme on the whole to become one of choice, needs a rethink, look at institutional action and what we should be doing – the questions have not taken into account that PG students have had their first university experience and these are probably second-generation users, and the fact that it is part-time and there are more factors involved, and it does not account for the importance of social capital building or the development of skills for the workforce.

- It would be good if international students are allowed to pay part of their fees to be able to register and pay the other part in instalments over a set period. The current system financially strains us.

- It would be great to have had a proper induction exercise at the beginning of the year.

- It's a great learning experience.

- It's an honour and a privilege to study at Wits, which I consider as being one of the better institutions in South Africa.

- It's been an enriching process despite challenges of lack of stipend and research funds. The lectures have been great!

- It's been okay thus far and indeed Wits does make the effort to make the experience worthwhile over and above certain limitations.

- It's thrilling and exciting, with a plethora of opportunities.

- Kindly rethink the international fee for foreign students. Some of the students lose their livelihood when they enrol in Wits and raising the international fee is a nightmare, and that is how some have their dreams buried. As an institution you can recover this cost by introducing work study for those who are not able to get the funds.

- Liberating and mentally enriching. Would advise all others to try Wits.

- My views are somewhat biased by my negative experience of Master's thus far. Having a supervisor recently arrived from a different country has led to discrepancies in what I'm expected to know and be capable of, and what I feel capable of doing. This in turn has led to slower than desirable progress and poor supervisor/student relations.

- Need more scholarships, plus the fee structure for international [students] needs to come down.

- Overall, it has been a good experience, and I am thankful to have had the opportunity to engage in postgraduate studies.

- Please, departments should organise working hubs for PhD students in their department.

- Postgraduate experience is a tough journey, a journey that has to be endured and has to be completed like all journeys, thank goodness for that.

- Regardless of my negative experiences, I am still proud to be a Witsie. I only hope that one day students could only have positive things to say about Wits. It is wishful thinking, but I wish Wits would take a keen interest in its students and place them at the centre focus of its strategy (over and above publications). (Besides, in the long it would still pay off profit-wise).

- The fees system for international students must be sorted out. Paying for a whole year

of study and being reimbursed is not acceptable. I came to Wits to study for one year and thought I had paid for the full course; I've spent a year fighting and have ended up paying twice my original quote for this course.

- The International Office makes me abhor registration. Otherwise my postgraduate experience has been challenging, as it should be, and exciting.

- The policy of postgraduate accommodation is stiff. There is need for a provision to, more especially international students, to have their wives visit them in the hostel; whenever we invite our wives, the University surcharges us. But it does allow undergrads to host their prostitutes freely. We need to be given the opportunity to at least have contact with our legal wives periodically.

- The Wits experience for me has been great, especially with regard to academic and social interaction; I was enriched.

- There are high levels of support from the whole University in the studies and the courses are taught by renowned scholars who have extensive experience in the respective fields of study.

- Very different from undergrad. You learn to be independent and to do everything on your own, working at your own pace.

- Very enriching and it is preparing me well for industry.

- Wits is abusing their PGs in their teaching assistant positions. The hours required are often unreasonable compared to the remuneration. Those students who do not pull their weight are not punished; those who do are not rewarded.

- With regard to my answer, it's both yes and no, however the No is based on the fees, as well as depending on the field of study [one] would like to pursue. If it is within the field that I am currently enrolled in, then I would advise them not to come study at Wits; however, if it is for another field, then definitely. Wits has a lot to offer and there are many good things one can achieve from Wits, no doubt, but I feel the focus relies heavily on research instead of being more practical.

- Wits does not have the equipment required to do proper research and it does not upgrade.

- Wits is a wonderful experience, I thoroughly enjoy it.

- Wits is one of the top universities in the country, and highly ranked in the world. When you leave with a Wits degree, people know and appreciate that degree.
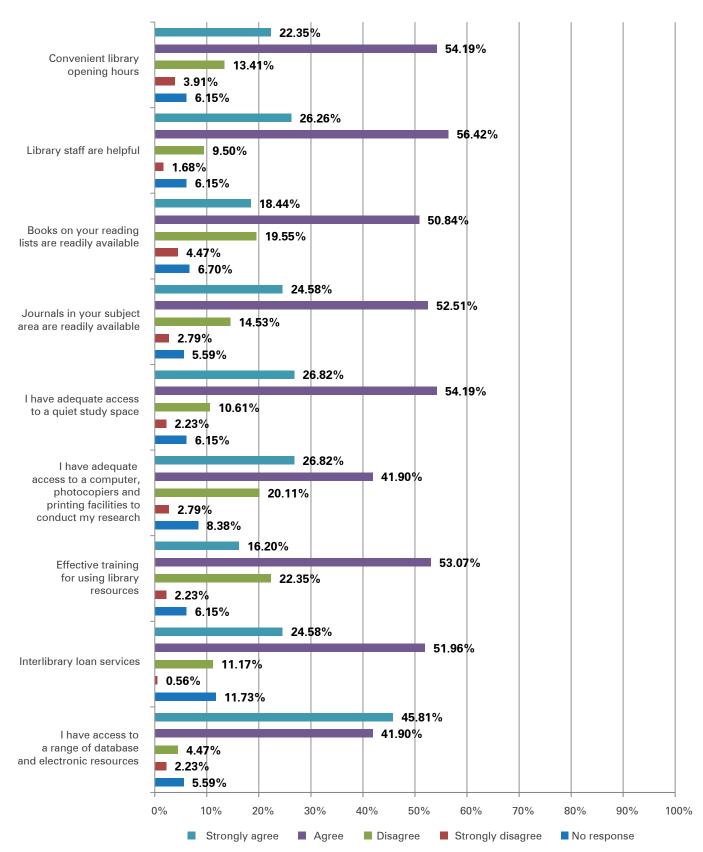
Figure 29(a): Satisfaction with the range of services provided by the University libraries

As presented in figure 29a, the majority of students (76.54%) felt that the library opening hours at Wits were convenient; 17.32% felt they were not. Most of the postgraduate students (82.68%) felt that library staff was helpful, while only 11.18% disagreed with this statement. A smaller majority also felt that most of the books on their reading lists were available in the University libraries (69.28%), but 24.02% disagreed. Access to journals

(both hard copies and electronic) is one of the essential mechanisms through which students get exposed to research literature. The majority of respondents in this study (77.09%) indicated that journals in their subject areas were readily available in the library; only 17.32% of respondents disagreed. The study also established that the majority of students (81.01%) indicated that they had adequate access to quiet study facilities and spaces in the library, while 12.84% disagreed with this statement. Access to computers and photocopying and printing facilities is one of the most important support mechanisms for postgraduate study. Again, a smaller majority of participants (68.72%) agreed that they had adequate access to these facilities in the library, while 22.9% disagreed.

Students have to be provided with an orientation programme on how to use the library and its facilities to speed up the efficiency with which they are able to access resources. In this study, 69.27% of respondents agreed that their training effectively enabled them to use the library resources, while 24.58% disagreed. More respondents, 76.54%, indicated that there were sufficient inter-library loan mechanisms in the University libraries, and 11.73% felt there were not. A pleasingly large number of participants, 87.71%, indicated that they accessed a wide range of databases and electronic resources through the Wits libraries, and only 6.7% reported that they did not.

The analysis of data in figure 29a above suggests that the quality of provisioning and resources in the Wits libraries is reasonably sufficient to support the needs of the University's postgraduate students.

	1	2	3	4	-	Sentiment Mean
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	(blank)	
Convenient library opening hours	3.91%	13.41%	54.19%	22.35%	6.15%	2.8
Library staff are helpful	1.68%	9.50%	56.42%	26.26%	6.15%	2.9
Books on your reading list are readily available	4.47%	19.55%	50.84%	18.44%	6.70%	2.7
Journals in your subject area readily available	2.79%	14.53%	52.51%	24.58%	5.59%	2.9
I have adequate access to a quiet study space	2.23%	10.61%	54.19%	26.82%	6.15%	2.9
In have adequate access to computer, photocopiers and printing facilities to conduct my research	2.79%	20.11%	41.90%	26.82%	8.38%	2.8
Effective training for using library resources	2.23%	22.35%	53.07%	16.20%	6.15%	2.7
Interlibrary loan services	0.56%	11.17%	51.96%	24.58%	11.73%	2.8
I have access to range of database and electronic resources	2.23%	4.47%	41.90%	45.81%	5.59%	3.2

Figure 29(b): Satisfaction with the range of services provided by the University libraries

Figure 29b shows that while most of the responses were positive, showing that students agreed that they were relatively satisfied with the range of services provided in the University libraries, the sentiment mean was below 3 in almost all cases. This signals that the library still has some work to do to satisfy the needs of some of our postgraduate students.

Participants were also asked to comment on the best aspects of the library and the IT infrastructure, and the following direct comments were received:

- The interlibrary loans are very efficient.

- The electronic database is comprehensive.

- Front desk assistance is very good. Enough space to work in.

- 24hr library services are very good.

- 4X renew of books via internet, organised structure.

- Ability to access book list online and journals.

- Ability to access electronic journals.

- Ability to renew books online.

- Access to computers and other equipment allows for faster research.

- Access to online journals.

- All round very pleasant.

- There is always a librarian present to provide assistance.

- Availability of electronics journal.

- Availability of photocopying machines and computers to use whenever you want to.

- Being online most of the time.

- E-journal portal great. Library staff willing to assist to get articles not on normal list.

- Electronic resources are good, except when they are unavailable when the library site is down.

- Free WiFi helps a lot.

- Good access to electronic journals.

- Good content and electronic resources.

- Good resources. However, there are times when the library staff is indifferent to students

- Guidance on looking for journal papers is good.

- Have own office/computer/printer, so mainly use books and e-journals.

- Having an allocated research assistant on the library staff as a PhD student has been invaluable. She is always available and responds promptly, thus there is never any time wastage or delay.

- I believe the library is fully equipped, I just do not know how it works.

- I like that the media room often has available computers, but the ladies aren't very warm and are quick to scold, even when [one is] merely asking questions about the library.

- I love that there is access to electronic theses.

- I liked the warm welcome to the postgraduate study room in the library, and a warm carpet.

- Interlibrary loans are helpful. The problem of having to request a book and wait for it ... I renew my books but if I see that someone else has requested it then I make a plan to return it as soon as possible. Perhaps e-mails should be sent to students when books they have are requested.

- Interlibrary loans are efficient and really brilliant at the University.

- Internet access is good; therefore electronic literature search is easy.

- E-mail system works very well.

- Internet service is good and relatively fast. All books I have needed have been available and library staff is very helpful.

- Is there an IT infrastructure? Get with the times...... help us to do things such as access journal articles online. Not all of us can get to the library.

- It works really well. I am very pleased.

- Library is well resourced and has adequate computers.

- Library staff is readily available and effective in giving assistance when needed. The IT infrastructure is user friendly.

- Most journals are available online and I enjoy being able to access them from home.

- Most of the online journals I require are easily accessible.

- Need to buy more books on statistics and proper understanding on how the electronic database works.

- Online resources and ability to access most journals very helpful.

- Postgraduate students are given private work space by the School.

- Power source and network connections are more readily available in the new engineering library for laptop connections. There are discussion rooms available which makes group work much more convenient in the library.

- Providing training on how to use the resources at the library.

- Quiet, e-catalogue and searching tools very effective. E-journal access great.

- Readily available books and internet.

- Research commons in William Cullen library was a great idea.

- Some queuing during the day. Better after hours.

- The [ability] to check if books are in the library before you go there, saving time and effort.

- The availability of the books and journals.

- The best aspect of the library services is that most of the books that we need during my course are available in the library.

- The discussion room, which allows students to freely talk on the subject at hand or being discussed.

- The electronic journals catalogue is very helpful; however some publications in my field (media studies) are not available.

- The librarians are always happy to help. The books are generally in good condition and order.

- The personnel are helpful. However, the library needs to purchase new books [and] latest versions.
- Creswell has 2009 copies that are not available in the WHSL library.

- The remote accessibility of the library.

- The search engine gives you a vast array of material related to the material requested, thus improving the scope of the work one is doing.

- The staff is very helpful and friendly, and are accommodating to postgraduate students.

- The wide range of journals available and the ability to access these from home, easing my library login.

- There are books available that I am able to utilise.

- There are more than enough books and journals which are very useful for my studies at Wits.

- There is a postgraduate library that is very convenient.

- There are more than enough photocopiers and the staff of William Cullen Library are very helpful and professional.

- They communicate with us; for example, if you send an interlibrary loan request they respond and make sure to provide the item requested.

- In terms of IT, I have enjoyed the fact that the internet is always fast, which is very necessary when doing research.

Following are comments on areas which need improvement with regard to library services and IT infrastructure:

- All libraries need to have friendly facilities now that the number of students has swollen. Cullen Library does not have toilets for the physically challenged.

- An electronic subscription to the journal 'Nature' is lacking and is strongly recommended due to its high ranking and wide readership across the biological and earth sciences.

- An introduction to new students about these facilities and their use should be offered.

- As a part-time student with a full-time job and who lives out of town, access after-hours during the week would be really helpful.

- As young researchers, especially in the molecular sciences, we need to keep up to date with the latest publications, very few of these are open access/freely available to us.

- Books which are apparently in the library are often nowhere to be found, and no one knows where they are.

- Buy new books with the latest versions.

- Connectivity to online journals is not attainable and not always available.

- Few of the specialist neuropsychology text books are available.

- Guidance on how to use library resources; guidance on how to access online resources by librarians.

- Hours of operation should be extended; the library opens after 8h00 in the morning. Some students are available from 6h00; this is an extra 2 hours that could be used doing constructive work.

- I think it's necessary for all PhD students to have private office space with access to internet and possibly access to printing and photocopy machines for free.

- If it is possible, when we register mid-year, can we have like a tour to re-familiarise us with the services available to us? The research commons in the Cullen library, who is it for? What services can they offer?

- Internet speed during the day is rather slow.

- Is it not possible for the student staying off campus in non-Wits residences, but close to campus, to access Wits WiFi?

- IT infrastructure within library needs work. PC never available (use personal PC/phone for searching).

- Often my returned books are not checked in, which means I have exorbitant fines for books on library shelves, which requires me to go find them and show the library staff. This has happened on numerous occasions.

- Books 'available' on the system cannot be found on the shelves. There is very little that can be done to find them.

- Journals for purchase must be more easily attainable by post-graduate students independently of the supervisor. Student log-in details to unlock such material.

- Longer opening hours, more laptop plug points, better temperature control, and quieter environment.

- Make more books available and buy latest editions whenever the needs arises.

- More accessible catalogue of books. Electronic library catalogue system is quite poor.

- Not enough photocopiers or printers. Cannot connect to the printers or photocopiers remotely from my laptop. Often cannot find any computers, photocopiers or printers that are working.

- No [areas for improvement] that I have noted, everything looks perfect, perhaps owing to my background. I come from Zambia. The Wits Library is top of the range, something I have never seen before.

- Opening hours at the Parktown campus should be extended. Library is small and stuffy, and there are limited study areas.

- Open on public holidays.

- Opening library at 10:30am on Wednesday should change to at least 8:30 am.

- Keep both quantitative and qualitative research books more updated.

- PepWeb and such psychoanalytic databases (which are NB) are unavailable.

- The postgrad knowledge commons is not just for postgrads, and is often closed. Also, the use of sites like Facebook and Yahoo aren't monitored.

- The staff at West Campus in the Management Library are not helpful and are intimidating.

- Photocopying and printing are expensive and card machines to add money to student card aren't readily available everywhere.

- Please, the times that the library operates affect many students. Why is it not opening during the weekend and closing late on the normal days?

- Printing and copying a huge issue there, with faculty staff photocopying their admin there too.

- Printing in libraries and computer labs is shockingly bad with there always being technical problems. Photocopying is fine.

- It is extremely difficult to access journals. It's limiting and inaccessible because to enter the site they expect you to know the volume and publication you are looking for, thus simply searching a journal site with keywords looking for articles that can help you cannot be done.

- Provision of library tours to enable effective use of library resources by students.

- Quieter library.

- Some books on my reading list are nowhere to be found in the library, even though the system shows that they are available – so more careful shelving of books should be done.

- There are approximately 5 photocopying machines in the Health Science library, however, on average 2 only are working to full capacity, also only one out of the 5 allows you to print documents.

- There is only one plug point in the discussion room of the Health Science library that can cater for a maximum of two electronic devices at any one time.

- Some of the books in my subject area – especially newer books – are not available. Journals are essential, but so are books by the best thinkers in their fields.

- Some of the stupid rules on computer usage and things not allowed should be abolished.

- Some psychology journals are not available electronically without payment. This is a nuisance.

- Sometimes they do not have the latest hard copies of required and recommended textbooks.

- Staff behave like we're mongrels, because 80% of the time they have an unsavoury attitude towards students. As human beings we would like more respect. In my first year of varsity, it was hard to approach the librarians for help as they were cold and unfriendly and couldn't care less that I didn't know the system. However, later on I did have a positive experience with one librarian who helped me set up my WiFi on my laptop.

- Students' orientation to the use of library. Printing machines – some are faulty.

- The amount of e-journals available could always increase.

- The books that I have requested have never been available to check out of the library, which is particularly frustrating as a student who is employed full time.

- The IT infrastructure needs to be broadened to allow registered students to quickly and easily access wireless networks on laptops, tablets and smartphones without having to go through a laborious configuration process.

- The journal portal is not very user friendly.

- The library [claim] that they train all students on how to use the library services. When I arrived at Wits for the June enrolment I was not given any prior training to use the library. I had to learn as I go.

- The library should be opened as early as 7:30am.

- The number of books available, particularly for larger groups of students.

- The number of books on ICT and social issues is limited.

- The opening times are not favourable as I usually get to school before 8 and would love to read a little before classes begin.

- The papers in the printer need to be filled at all times. It is mostly empty early mornings and in the evenings.

- The staff at the libraries are extremely unhelpful and rude.

- The staff at the libraries are sometimes not the most helpful or approachable. The photocopiers also need to be constantly maintained, as spending your breaks in queues to use one machine is a big time waste!

- The staff need to be more polite, my experiences with staff on the first floor were not great. No one is ever there to assist me, and there is one particular staff member who was on two occasions very rude to me unnecessarily.

- There is no need to hold on to training materials for students just because they have not filled the evaluation form. I find it very unprofessional on the side of the library staff.

6. EXPERIENCE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

The data provided in figure 30 show that 53.63% of participants in the study were satisfied with the services provided by the Postgraduate Student Association, while 26.26% were not satisfied. The data also show that 49.16% of respondents were satisfied with services provided by the Wits International Office, and 17.32% were not. Similarly, 47.49% of respondents were satisfied with the services offered by the Disability Unit, but only 5.03% were not. The services of the Wits Security Office were regarded as satisfactory by 56.99% of respondents; 11.73% disagreed. A relatively high proportion of participants (62.01%) were satisfied with the services of the Wits Research Office, while 12.85% were not. The data in figure 30 also show that 51.95% of respondents were satisfied with the services of the Postgraduate Project Office, while 13.96% were not satisfied. As with the Wits International Office and the Disability Unit, less than half of the respondents (45.81%) were satisfied with the services of the Office of the Dean of Students; 16.76% indicated that they were not. However, more than half of the sample (57.55%) indicated satisfaction with the services of the Career Counselling and Development Centre; 11.18% of the respondents were not satisfied. The data also show 53.07% of the respondents as satisfied with services of the Campus Health Clinic, while 15.08% were not satisfied with that service. Almost two-thirds of respondents (64.8%) were satisfied with the services of the Student Enrolment Centre while 11.73% were not. Slightly more than half of the respondents (51.4%) were satisfied with the services of the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, but 21.79% were not. As regards the services of the Computer Networking Services, 58.66% of respondents were satisfied; 16.76% expressed dissatisfaction. Lastly, the data show that the same percentage, 58.66%, were satisfied with the services of the Registrar's Office, while only 8.93% were not satisfied.

It is important to explore in detail specific reasons why certain participants were not satisfied with services provided by particular divisions. The next survey will focus on that aspect of student satisfaction.

With regard to Computer Services (figure 30), the majority of participants (73.18%) indicated that they were satisfied with the functionality of the ICAM machines and system, while 11.17% indicated that they were not satisfied. Slightly more than half the total participants (56.43%) indicated satisfaction with the CNS induction services, while 17.88% indicated that they were not satisfied. The majority of respondents (64.81%) found the physical environment of the computing labs satisfactory, while 14.52% disagreed. The data analysis also shows 68.71% of respondents as satisfied with the operating hours of the computer laboratories, while 9.5% indicated that they were dissatisfied with their opening hours. While 56.43% of respondents were satisfied with the speed of the computer hardware and networks, a relatively high 22.9% expressed dissatisfaction in this regard. Figure 31 also shows that 59.78% of students who participated in the survey were satisfied with the number of workstations operating effectively, while 17.88% were dissatisfied.
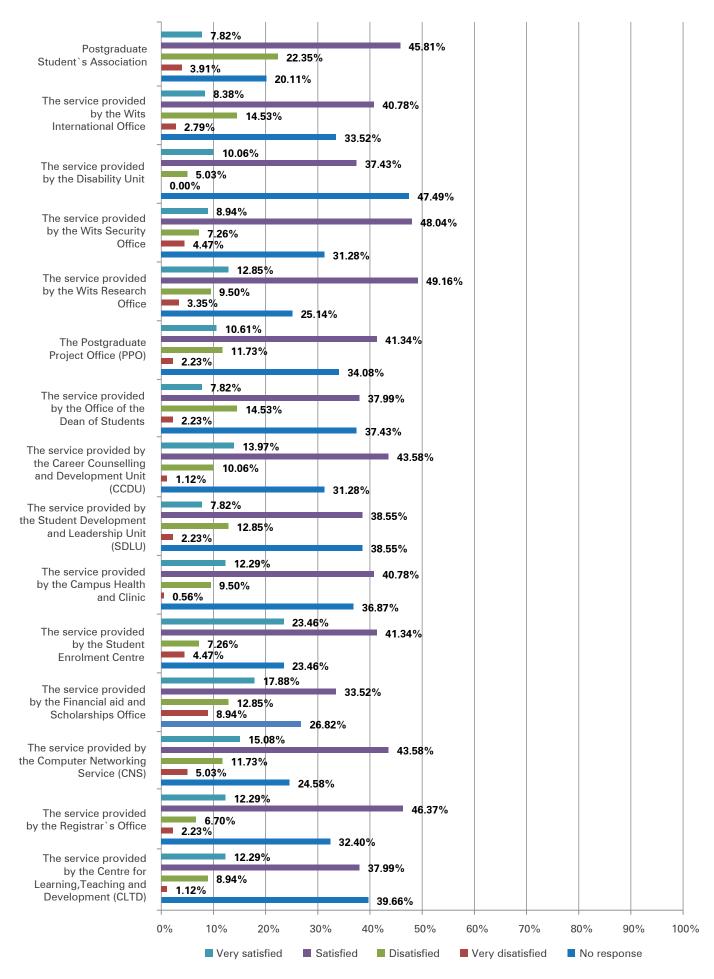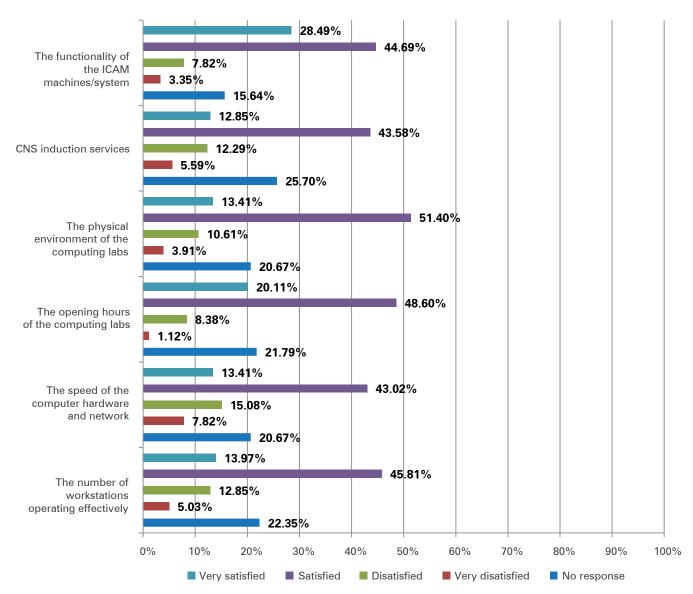
Figure 30: Level of satisfaction with Support Services

Figure 31: Level of satisfaction with Computer Services

Figure 32 below indicates that 55.31% of respondents were satisfied with the availability of physical resources for worship and spiritual development on campus; only 8.38% of respondents did not agree. Slightly more half the total of respondents (56.98%) felt that the availability of medical facilities on campus was adequate, while 14.52% were not satisfied. The data also show that 60.33% of participants were satisfied with the inter-campus bus shuttle service; 12.29% were not satisfied. With regard to the condition of audio-visual facilities in lecture halls, 14.52% were not satisfied, while the majority, 65.92%, were satisfied. Close to a third of the respondents (74.31%) were satisfied with the availability of seats in lecture halls; only 6.15% were not satisfied. When the cleanliness of facilities on all University campuses was assessed, 83.24% of participants said they were satisfied, while 7.82% were not. Also reflected in figure 32 is a more specific question with regard to cleanliness: although 64.81% of participants were satisfied with the maintenance and cleanliness of bathroom facilities on campus, a significant 23.47% were not.

The data also show that 70.95% of participants were satisfied with arrangements for safety and security on campus, and 17.88% dissatisfied. The availability of parking space for students on all campuses is one of the main support-service challenges for the University. Only 29.05% of participants were satisfied with the availability of parking spaces, while 53.64% were dissatisfied.
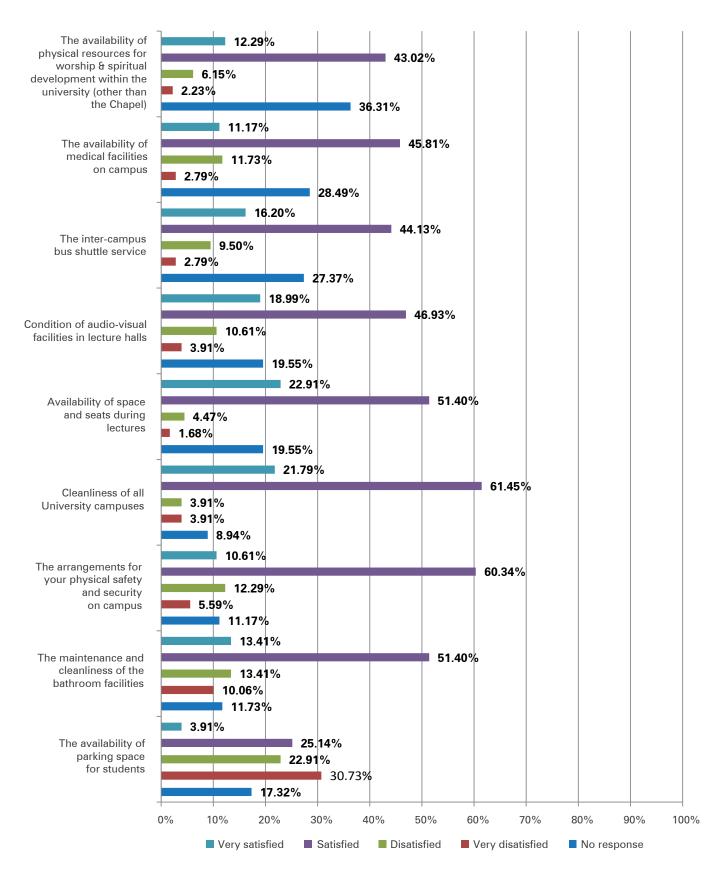
Figure 32: Level of satisfaction with general campus

The following are comments on areas which need improvement in relation to the support services at Wits:

- Technological equipment is outdated.

- More computers are needed at computer labs.

- More staff assistants are needed to refill paper and assist with other printing queries.

- Administrative issues at the level of the University (fees, ICAM, parking) are never easy to deal with.

- Although the computers in the labs are functional they need to be upgraded on time as some are not working, and as the student population is growing, more computer labs will be necessary.

- An alarming number of male toilet cubicles on West Campus and many on East Campus do not have working door locks.

- Audio-visual services as well as lifts in Senate House need overhaul.

- Bathroom cleanliness and the lack of AV equipment in lecture halls.

- Bathrooms require regular cleaning during the day.

- CNS is not customer centred, their customer service is poor and the way they treat the students is not nice.

- General campus cleanliness can be improved and food should not be served in polystyrene if we are trying to be a leading environmentally conscious university.

- Helping postgraduate part-time students orientate to the campus and services. I still don't know where to get a cup of coffee on the education campus, where to find parking or how to get there without using my car. How does one find out these things? Even getting my student card was a huge mission. I can't be satisfied or dissatisfied with services I didn't know existed.

- I believe the University should also promote spiritual development, not only in a religious context but in other areas also. Many students and staff suffer from the disease of addiction, for example. More openly available programmes should be available for such psychosocial issues.

- Improved IT services.

- In my experience, interaction with the Fees Office has always left me irritated and frustrated. Wits is very slow to pay out credit on student accounts, and the requirement of a letter of motivation to have the credit paid out to the student is ridiculous.

- In my opinion, a lot of people who need the support services are not aware of their existence. Maybe services such as CCDU should be promoted more, and students be more informed about them and what they do.

- It was extremely hard to get any help from the departments. When I was applying for my MA, people didn't respond to my e-mails and did not seem to want to help. I had problems from the international office, the accommodation office, the faculty and the Wits website, which provides next to no information about the content of the degree courses and how one must go about applying. It took a year of admin to get an offer at the University and it is not an encouraging sign for a university that wants to be internationally recognised.

- Long queues at the International Office and Fees Office.

- New computer booking system in the squash courts is not working properly.

- Parking is shocking! It is expensive and there are never parking spaces available.

- Parking needs to be addressed, and appropriate-sized bays added to specific areas. Also, stop having parties in the parking lots and expect students to either find alternative parking or not have parking at all.

- Parking Office [staff] are unnecessarily rude to both students and staff. Postgrad parking needs to be restricted to postgrads year round, no first-years in postgrad parking at the beginning of the year. Shuttle drivers need to drive more safely.

- Parking space and computing facilities.

- Payment of bursaries follows a rigorous process. If a payment on a three-year bursary is to be paid quarterly, I really don't see the need for making requisitions every quarter, which results in delays in payments of the bursaries to students of even up to 3–4 weeks. A supervisor should just fill an authorisation form to allow a quarterly electronic payment to the student; a student can also be notified of the impending payment via e-mail. When a student is absconding or is not doing their duties, only then can a supervisor fill in another form to terminate payments.

- People need to be told about the student portal and how to access it.

- Security staff must be seen at all times on campus at both safe and unsafe places.

- The cleanliness of the toilets around Wits [leaves] something to be desired. The availability of parking is also an issue, where after 10am and till 12.30 there is no parking available to postgraduates.

- The dining hall food can improve substantially. An ATM on West Campus would be nice.

- The International Office does not offer any support services to international students. In fact they function to make your registration a nightmare. They should change from being rigid to helping students who find themselves in various predicaments, as they imply they do.

- The international office personnel need further training on how to care for the needs of the international students. The international office should assume a more responsible role than just confirming that an international student has paid international fees. They should actually make international students welcome here.

- The financial office needs to sure of their fees quotation when sending it out. Financial office personnel should demonstrate more warmth in the reception of their client – they should at least respond when greeted.

- The only office I have encountered problems with is the ICAM office because to date I am still following up to get my R200 back, which I could use for printing study and research resources.

- The registration process at Wits is a complete joke. I cannot believe that after nearly 10 years of studying here it still takes me so many hours to register and that the processes have actually become LESS efficient over this time. Why re-registration cannot happen online at a university of this calibre I do not know. The fees office and how they operate is also completely inefficient and the personnel are rude and unhelpful. Security staff are rude, unhelpful and sometimes intimidating and

aggressive. I have visited the University of Pretoria campus as a lecturer and a student and have always found the security staff helpful and polite, so dealing with students just isn't an excuse – I believe that they are managed poorly and that they are actually encouraged to be rude and aggressive.

- The system that was configured is taking too long to load, like 7 minutes, and this is not convincing. The printing service is also a mess here and there is a lot that is required to improve. Why do they only operate during the working days and after hours [there is] no help and no paper. CNS still needs to do more on this.

- This questionnaire needs improvement. I have no option to say that I have not interacted with most of these services so I cannot have an opinion on them.
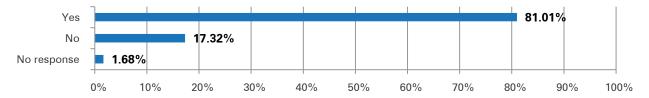

Figure 33: Computing device ownership

Figure 33 suggests that the majority of our Master's and PhD students (81.01% of the sample) own computing devices. However, 17.32% of participants stated that they did not own any computing device, while 1.68% gave no indication on this matter. It is encouraging to learn that the majority of our Master's and PhD students do own such devices, given the fact that these tools are largely used to enhance access to information and resources in postgraduate education. As the majority of participating students in this study were registered on a full-time basis (see figure 12), their ownership of a computing device (laptops and tablets – see figure 34 below) suggests that the University could expand wireless connectivity and facilities to allow the majority of postgraduate students to access data and information with ease anywhere on Wits campuses. This could be done by creating more postgraduate intellectual chill-zones on campus.
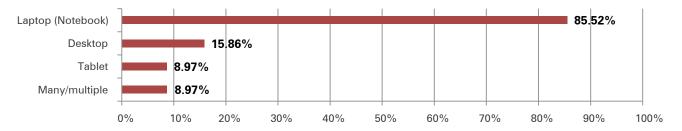

Figure 34: Type of computing device

Figure 34 shows that 85.52% of the 81.01% (145 respondents) who indicated that they owned a computing device (figure 33 above) owned a laptop, while 8.97% of the same group owned a tablet, and 15.86% of them owned a desktop computer. It has to be understood that some of these students could own multiple devices.
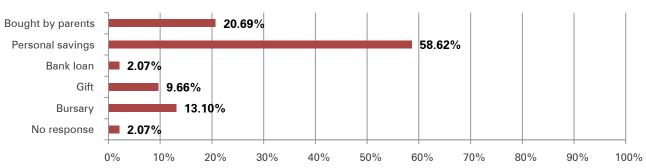

Figure 35: How the computing device was acquired

Figure 35 gives an understanding of how the 145 participants who participated in the study acquired their computing devices. The majority (58.62%) purchased the device with personal savings, while 20.69% indicated that theirs had been bought by their parents. Of the remainder, 13.10% acquired their devices through a bursary scheme, 9.66% received them as gifts, and only 2.07% purchased them using a bank loan. Given the fact that the study was focusing on Master's and PhD postgraduate students, the University may want to consider the possibility of offering these students a laptop computing device as part of their enrolment package.

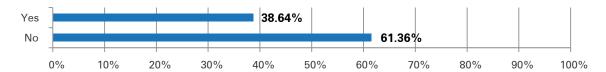# 7. QUALITY OF AND ACCESS TO FACILITIES

Figure 36: Receiving a living allowance

As shown in figure 36, the study reveals that 61.36% of the full-time students in the sample were not receiving any form of living allowance. In this regard, the University may want to explore means through which funding available for postgraduate students could be used to cater for both their studying and accommodation needs.

Figure 37: On- or off-campus accommodation

As shown in figure 36, the study reveals that 61.36% of the full-time students in the sample were not receiving any form of living allowance. In this regard, the University may want to explore means through which funding available for postgraduate students could be used to cater for both their studying and accommodation needs.
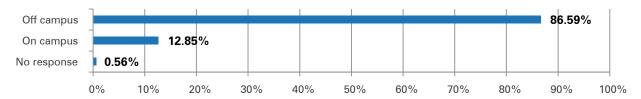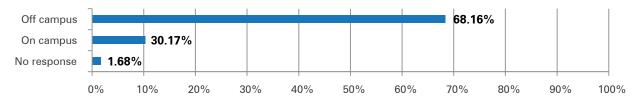

Figure 38: Accommodation preference

Evidence gleaned through the analysis of data in figure 39 also suggests that accommodation is an area of significant dissatisfaction. The majority of students who stayed on campus (43.48%) were not satisfied with the quality of student accommodation; only 39.13% indicated that they were.
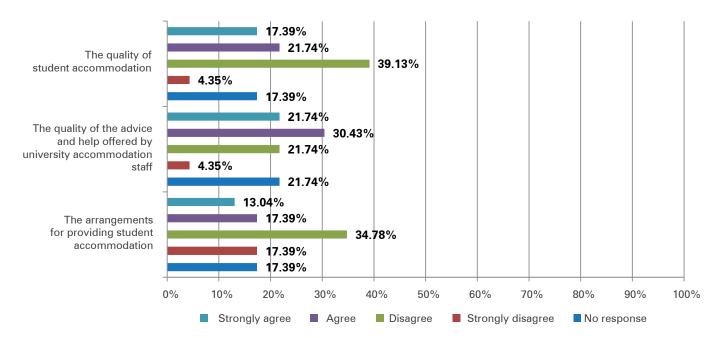
Figure 39: Satisfaction with on-campus accommodation

Figure 39 also shows that of the 12.85% of respondents who indicated that they stayed on campus only 30.43% agreed that they were satisfied with the University arrangements for providing student accommodation. More than half (52.17%) indicated that they were not satisfied with these arrangements. The data also show that 52.17% of this group agreed that they were satisfied with the advice and help offered by University accommodation staff, and a significant 26.09% indicated dissatisfaction.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the *Wits 2013 Strategy,* the University promises to 'intensify the postgraduate programme by attracting high level postgraduate students who stand to benefit from our educational and research arrangements'. This calls for Wits to invest in postgraduate strategy and policies that seek to enrich the experiences of postgraduate students in ways that contribute to a positive sense of belonging, and enhanced research productivity and throughput rates. It has to be noted in this report that the study suggests that there are areas in postgraduate education at Wits that are positioned for positive growth and enrichment. There are also areas that need special attention and strategic investment of resources, and these are:

- Ensuring that all academics sign student-supervisor contracts with their students.
- Creating space and a culture of inclusion for postgraduate students in all faculties, schools and departments.
- Providing students with timeous feedback on their work to enhance progress in their studies.
- Providing financial support where necessary to help postgraduate students focus much of their attention on research and educational activities.
- Providing reliable accommodation and support for postgraduate students, especially those of foreign origin.
- Ensuring that settling in Johannesburg does not become an impediment to international students who do not yet have a sense of belonging and adapting to the Johannesburg environment.
- Ensuring that postgraduate students are not kept in the system longer than necessary.
- Exposing postgraduate students to conference opportunities.
- Ensuring that all postgraduate students are expected to publish their work as part of graduation requirements.
- Ensuring that the postgraduate recruitment strategy looks beyond drawing students from the SADC region.
- Providing scholarships and research incentives to attract more students to the Wits postgraduate programme.
- Ensuring that online administration and registration modalities are put in place to improve the postgraduate student experience at Wits.

While the study clearly shows that postgraduate students at Wits are relatively satisfied with various institutional arrangements and the general culture of the University, the University needs to put emphasis on identified areas of improvement. Wits may need to develop a well-calculated strategy to accomplish this.

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