



University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

# UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

Experience Survey

# 2012











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Report on the 2012 Undergraduate Student  
Experience Survey  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2012, the Strategic Planning Division conducted an undergraduate student satisfaction survey to establish levels of satisfaction among second-year undergraduates with the educational experience, the service received from the support-service departments of the University, access to facilities and the quality thereof, and their overall Wits experience. The total number of participants in the survey was 1 150. Analysis of these responses made it clear that some of the participants were not part of the target population, based on responses to two 'filter questions': *Are you a second-year undergraduate student?* and *If you are an undergraduate student, in which year of study are you – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th or 5th year?* After extensive cleaning of data, 99 responses were thus eliminated, and 1 051 remained as appropriate respondents. In this data analysis, therefore, 1 051 represent 100% of the total respondents, being 18.6% of the overall 2012 second year enrolment (5 656 headcount).

The study made the following findings:

- There were high levels of satisfaction with the course content (content selection, intellectual demand of content, and content relevance) across various learning programmes
- The majority of undergraduate students were satisfied with the course organisation and co-ordination across various programmes
- Consistency of marking against set criteria needed improvement
- Quality of feedback given on submitted work received high levels of dissatisfaction although the majority of respondents were satisfied with it
- Promptness of feedback on assignments received high levels of dissatisfaction although the majority of participants were satisfied with it
- The majority of respondents were satisfied with the development of various skills they received through teaching and learning arrangements in various learning programmes
- Availability of tutors received high levels of dissatisfaction although the majority of respondents were satisfied with it
- There were relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with service received from the support service units, although the majority of participants were satisfied with service received from every unit
- There were relatively high levels of satisfaction with library arrangements and provisioning in all Wits libraries
- The majority of respondents were dissatisfied with the speed of computer hardware and systems, and the number of workstations operating effectively in computer laboratories
- The majority of participants were satisfied with general campus facilities on all Wits campuses
- The majority of students felt that Wits was a student-centred university
- The majority of students believed that the Wits institutional culture supported diversity on campus, although some felt that Wits could improve on providing platforms for student debate and participation in decision-making processes of the University.

## 1. BACKGROUND

The Strategic Planning Division (SPD) is conducting an array of institutional studies such as graduate tracking, the undergraduate student experience survey, the postgraduate student experience survey, and the employer satisfaction survey. It is envisaged that these studies will provide an enhanced understanding of how the University's effort to become a Top 100 world-class university shapes the student experience and 'graduateness' of our students.

This report provides the conceptual framework of the Undergraduate Student Experience Survey among students currently enrolled within the institution, conducted by the SPD. The Undergraduate Student Experience Survey serves the purpose of evaluating and analysing the needs of students and their experiences with and opinions on various University services and academic programmes. It is intended to help the University establish the extent to which students are satisfied with an array of services that engage students in productive learning and the facilities put in place to support the intellectual and academic projects.

The survey is not part of the customer satisfaction assessment, given the fact that Wits does not subscribe to the notion that students are customers, but the understanding that students are co-constructors of their learning experiences with rights and responsibilities.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Given the fact that the Wits Undergraduate Student Experience Survey is not a customer satisfaction survey, it is essential to map out the theoretical trajectory that is pursued in the conceptualisation of the study. As argued (Cele, 2008)<sup>1</sup> in the HEQC (Higher Education Quality Committee) Student Participation in Quality Assurance study, various models have been used in institutions to respond to the student voice on institutional quality. These models are described below.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Student feedback approach

In the feedback approach, students are viewed as recipients of services and are surveyed about the quality of these services. Thus, students are not construed as active participants who shape and assess quality and as a result are disempowered from providing critical input into institutional quality. Naidoo (2004) argues that *‘in most cases, their [students’] involvement is passive and voluntarist’* and it is often regarded as a privilege. Citing Shyamasundar and Stella (2002), he asserts that the challenge with student feedback is in the fact that higher-education institutions (HEIs) often doubt the competence of students to provide meaningful feedback and therefore dismiss their input as unreliable. Whether this is due to inequalities in the power relations between staff and students, or the lack of competence by students fully to understand the dynamics of quality assurance, is yet to be understood.

The challenge presented by the student feedback approach is that students often have no idea of what happens to feedback given through evaluation forms at the end of each module or course. This condition makes it increasingly less desirable for students to provide detailed feedback. Notwithstanding this quandary, citing Harvey (2001) and Williams (2002), Naidoo asserts that while student feedback is increasingly seen as important in assessing quality in some developed countries, *‘there is little standardisation in how it is collected or, perhaps more significantly, what is done with it’*. He further cites Williams (2002) as reporting that British HEIs have begun to recognise students as key role-players and that their voice is increasingly listened to and acted upon as means to enhance the quality of the total learning experience. For instance, a complete feedback action cycle in the ‘Student Satisfaction Approach’ developed by Harvey for the University of Central England has been adopted by many institutions in Britain. In South Africa, for a variety of reasons, the adoption of this approach has been uneven across the HEIs. This survey seeks to address this predicament by systematically soliciting student feedback for strategic planning purposes.

<sup>1</sup> The HEQC commissioned a study on Student Participation in Quality Assurance in South African universities; the study is currently going through the publication process.

<sup>2</sup> A large part of this section is taken, with amendments, from the work written by Nhlanhla Cele in the HEQC study

### 2.2 Student rights [and responsibilities] approach

In the student rights approach the involvement of students in quality is seen as part of their legal and constitutional right, often defined by others as a ‘value for money’ question. The constitutional-right model is informed by the decisions taken at the 1990 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand, on key world education policy objectives (Hulton and Furlong, 2001). One of these decisions was the provision of universal literacy for all by enshrining the right of citizens to access quality basic education. With many countries signing up and committing their governments to these objectives through their rights-based constitutions, higher education is excluded because, as Naidoo (2004) observes, *‘no similar constitutional right exists for higher education, possibly because most countries, including [the] well-endowed ones, do not have the necessary resources to give practical effect to it’*.

Furthermore, most higher education systems, including the South African, lack robust mechanisms for enacting the legal and constitutional rights of students to quality higher education beyond the national quality-assurance agency frameworks. There is an articulated view that the right of students to quality higher education is guaranteed indirectly through the legal mandate of such agencies. While national quality-assurance frameworks attempt to ensure that the rights of students to quality education are systemically espoused, this policy position is often contested by institutions through the *academic freedom and institutional autonomy* entitlements. Institutions often argue that the right to quality education is symbiotic to the responsibilities that students have in the teaching and learning enterprise, and that students need to take full responsibility for their success within a given curriculum and epistemological space. In this regard, the nature of the environment that could limit or enhance student success is often regarded as less significant.

It is through such tensions and disconnections that institutions limit the definition of quality education to what transpires in a classroom, and fail to account for the total learning experience accorded to students. The Deputy Secretary of the South African Union of Students (SAUS), Siphokazi Mani (HEQC/SAUS 2007, was of the opinion that *‘in every single day in one campus, students step in and out of quality a thousand times’*. It is in such situations of contradictions, unevenness and inadequacies that the Wits Undergraduate Student Experience Survey will provide a meaningful platform for soliciting feedback across a wide spectrum of issues with a view to informing strategic thinking and resource allocation.

### 2.3 Students as customers approach

This model of responding to student needs is directly linked to a business view (‘customer is king’) that students are consumers, a notion that John Goodlad (1991) refers to in the context of the US high-schooling system as the ‘shopping mall high school’ syndrome. This approach to student satisfaction with quality has been repeatedly denounced by higher education scholars and policy-makers. For example, Castells (2001) argues that dismantling the walls of the ‘ivory tower’ university in the 21st century has largely been informed by a customer-focused approach to education which has seen university branding increasingly shaping what is happening inside institutions, learning programmes and individual classrooms. This commercialisation has informed the commodification of higher education (product), transformed universities into malls (marketplace), reformed student registration into business transactions (competitiveness and financial viability), and deformed academic provision as an economic enterprise (demand and supply).

In this regard, determining student satisfaction is limited to responding to the immediate needs of students from the perspective of enhancing competitiveness and business viability. Responsiveness in this context is limited to selling a product that is in demand

in the labour market, and being a university graduate is increasingly less defined by academic depth, pedagogical substance and professional competence, and more defined by enrolment and graduation massification. Viewing students as customers solicits a particular business response to student satisfaction which makes providers accountable for quality without making students responsible for their behaviour and performance as stakeholders.

## 2.4 Expert approach

The expert approach has historically shaped the way in which universities engage with students and informed university institutional cultures in South Africa and elsewhere. The pursuit of student satisfaction with the total learning experience is often perceived with contempt and scepticism since, as Friedrich Schiller (as cited by Readings, 1996) argues, a university is about the pursuit of reason, which centres upon autonomy and the ability to reflect 'upon a world of determinations from which it is liberated as a pure point of consciousness'. In this view, the university is a sovereign entity above science, societal needs and political imperatives of any given social order, and is preoccupied with scientific curiosity as the only means of knowledge generation (Cele *et al.*, 2007).

Participants in university business are organised in a pecking order and the dichotomies of 'those who know' and 'those who need to know', and 'those who teach' and 'those who are taught'. The hierarchies that inform the scaffolding of knowledge in various knowledge domains are used as a framework to restrict participation in defining quality within this dichotomy, with student satisfaction limited to a linear-transmission teaching relationship where academics possess the knowledge and means to get answers to questions that shape the academic project. Students are often perceived as less equipped with the expertise, insight and language to determine and question quality (Cele, 2007b).

This dichotomy informs the sovereignty of the academic project, which is perceived as value-free and separate from political ideology, policy imperatives or immediate student learning needs. Clearly this model has gross disadvantages and glaring limitations to student participation in quality assurance through satisfaction surveys. Students become disenfranchised and disempowered as stakeholders in the academic project, and their opinions are often taken less seriously and purged out of the mainstream quality discourse, to be confined to the periphery of the academic project. The danger in this paradigm is that student satisfaction is premised on principles of inequality where students are viewed as outsiders in relation to the academic project whose input and satisfaction is intellectually and structurally less significant.

## 2.5 Students as co-constructors approach

Naidoo (2004) asserts that although the student feedback model and the student rights approach attempt to take student views seriously, students continue to be perceived as consumers or clients that have to be satisfied with 'educational services' provided by institutions. He argues that there is a need for students to be encouraged to review and shape the quality of the institution and learning programmes as active participants and co-constructors, empowered to participate meaningfully in defining strategy, policy and practice. The challenges facing quality improvement in HEIs clearly suggest that it is increasingly becoming important *'that all stakeholders in the higher education sector, including students, are familiar and able to effectively deal with information on quality'* (Naidoo, 2004). A major issue that arises when including students in shaping quality is that the space for their participation has not been clearly defined.

Involving students as co-constructors of quality contributes to the enhancement of

quality in HEIs in a number of ways (Cele, 2007a):

- It provides space for students to voice their experiences and judgements about quality in programmes and institutional arrangements.
- It brings to the attention of institutional decision-makers direct feedback on the quality of the total learning experience accorded to and received by students.
- It positions students to provide feedback on areas that warrant immediate responsiveness and those that assist the institution in conducting long-term planning.
- It encourages dialogue among students, academics and institutional decision-makers on strategies and mechanisms that can be adopted to improve quality.
- It helps students understand the basic language of the quality discourse and the nomenclature of quality assurance in order to enable them to assess the accuracy of recruitment information they receive during registration for various programmes.
- Lastly, it enables students to make judgements about the quality of the total learning experience provided through learning programmes and other institutional mechanisms and systems. It has been indicated that, as key stakeholders in education, students should be in a position to know or at least have a better sense of how their education and study environment should be constructed (Friend-Pereira *et al.*, 2002).

Among some of the University services that are of interest to the Wits Undergraduate Student Experience Survey are areas such as admissions; financial aid; teaching and learning arrangements and facilities; assessment and feedback; curriculum; student-staff relations; student life; facilities; sport; and the total Wits experience – to mention a few. On the academic side it is also imperative to probe student experiences with High Risk Courses in Science, e.g. Anatomy I, Physics I, Accounting I, Applied and Computer Mathematics.

## 2.6 The Wits model of Student Satisfaction

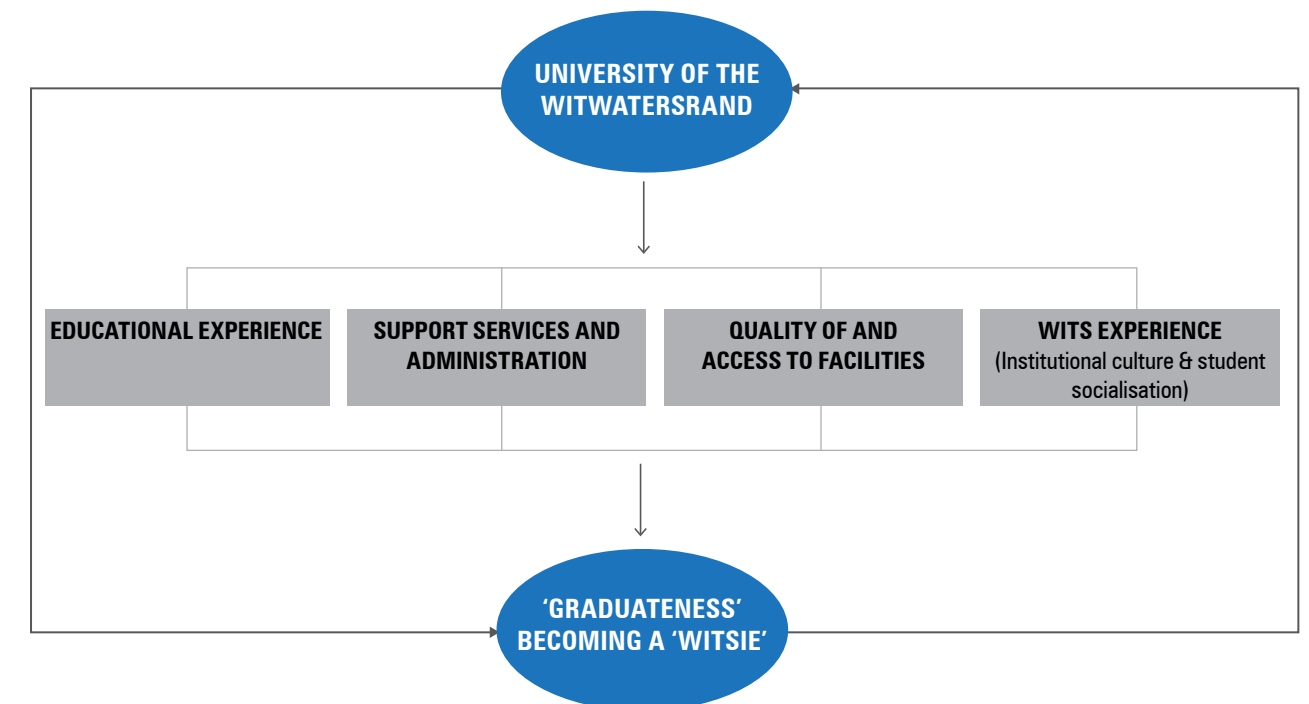


Figure 1: The Wits model of student satisfaction

It is argued in this report that gradueness (what is referred to as ‘becoming a Witsie’) is influenced by student experience in the four major categories shown above. It is critical to ensure that we enhance the student experience by providing an educational experience that goes beyond mastery of subject content. The notion of gradueness is premised on the understanding that universities should produce professionals and members of civil society with a balanced set of attributes which include: social values; a sense of public good; functioning knowledge; critical thinking skills; reflective competencies; appreciation of diversity; and understanding of life complexities as an opportunity for critical engagement. It is argued in this report that these attributes position graduates to play an essential role in civil society, both as global citizens and as citizens of the imagined world (citizens of the future). The student satisfaction survey assesses student satisfaction in relation to the total learning experience that students receive from Wits, and this is not limited to the classroom learning experience.

**2.6.1 Educational experience:** This refers to the extent to which students are satisfied by the academic aspects of teaching and learning, e.g. depth of course content and curriculum complexity; course organisation; assessment arrangements; complexity of learning opportunities; teaching modalities and pedagogies; and general values underpinning the staff-student engagement. It is argued in this report that richness of relationships between students and staff and the allocation to students of opportunities to interact with staff as advisors or mentors enhances the quality of teaching and learning. As Elliot K.M. and Healy M.A. (cited in Billups, 2008: 3) conclude, the quality of classroom interactions, the rigour of the curriculum, positive feelings about their classroom and social interactions, connections to faculty, and a sense of fitting in with campus culture contribute to the richness of the educational experience and a feeling of belonging – a sense of ‘becoming a Witsie’ in our case. It is argued that the more a student interacts with staff and receives affirmation, the stronger the personal commitment to the institution, and this makes it less likely for the student to drop out of his or her programme. Academic and support staff are found to serve as *‘important socialising agents for students, helping students adjust to college life, achieve intellectually and personally and work towards career and educational aspirations’* (Lampert, M. 1993, cited in Billups, 2008: 4). It is that positive experience that breeds a sense of belonging in a university where gradueness is defined along the lines of the attributes of global citizens.

**2.6.2 Support services and administration:** As part of the academic enterprise, universities provide other services, such as student support services, student welfare services, medical services, career guidance etc. In addition, aspects related to the administrative tasks that must be performed in order to enrol in a university have been included under this area of enquiry. Even though the services encompassed here are often perceived as peripheral, they constitute a dimension of the total learning experience. It is vital to assess levels of student satisfaction with support services, given the fact that this dimension of student experience provides significant administrative support to the teaching and learning enterprise. The values often learned through the way support staff relates to students contribute to the total learning experience students acquire from the University.

**2.6.3 Quality of and access to facilities:** The infrastructure and the environment surrounding the student is another aspect that must be considered when analysing student satisfaction. In order to deliver on their core teachings and research objectives, universities need substantial infrastructure, mostly comprising an extensive estate and facilities. Facilities include laboratories, lecture theatres, libraries, IT facilities and wireless connection, residential accommodation, catering facilities, and sports and recreation centres. Campus life outside the classroom is just as essential to student satisfaction as the educational experience (Peters, T.J. 1988, cited by Billups, 2008: 3).

**2.6.4 Wits experience (institutional culture and student socialisation):** This aspect probes the extent to which students feel a sense of belonging and being welcomed by the University. This enables the University to create an environment that encapsulates a distinct Wits experience and defines gradueness for Wits. It also entails providing a total learning experience that reflects human rights, and social values that reflect a sufficient understanding of contextual and cultural diversity (which embraces the notion of ‘a University to call our own’). The total learning experience will be informed by quality teaching, student-centred learning opportunities, mainstreamed student support services and accessible world-class learning resources. It is about Wits graduates being different from those who come from other institutions. In addition to personal relationships, this may also include students allying themselves with the University’s organisational identity and culture.

With these four aspects of student satisfaction at Wits in mind, the study was guided by the four critical research questions listed in the following section, which will also expand on the methods that were used to respond to the research questions.



# 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Critical questions

The **critical questions** posed in this study are derived from the theoretical framework and the objective presented in the introductory narrative of this report.

The study is based on the following four critical questions:

1. *What is the extent of student satisfaction with the educational experience that they receive from Wits?*
2. *Are students satisfied with nature of administrative and support services that they are receiving during their current studies at Wits?*
3. *Are students satisfied with the nature of and access to facilities that are made available to support academic activities and student social life on campus?*
4. *How satisfied are students with the unique institutional experience they receive as 'Witsies'?*

## 3.2 Online survey

The survey was conducted through a self-administered questionnaire to elicit student satisfaction levels with the various University service offerings. A web-based survey was chosen based on its cost effectiveness, efficiency and data security.

## 3.3 Scope and sample

The target population was undergraduate second-year students ( $n=5\ 564$ ), and the target response rate was at least 15% (collectively distributed across all faculties and disciplines). In social sciences the acceptable response rate is 10%. Following the logic of the target population narrated above, the response rate for this study was 18.9%.

## 3.4 Instrument design

The design of this questionnaire is informed by previous studies and in consultation with various University of the Witwatersrand departments (mostly those that contribute to the University's image) and, where possible, students, especially their representatives. Below are some of the question areas covered in the questionnaire, with a number of examples of statements to which the students were asked to respond:

- Teaching: Staff have made the subject interesting
- Assessment and feedback: The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance and feedback on submitted essays prompt
- Academic support: Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices
- Organisation and management: Timetable works efficiently and allows me to manage time effectively
- Learning resources, e.g. library and IT facilities, labs etc
- Personal development, e.g. skills gained in communication and confidence
- Work placements, in the event the course being followed requires internships/placements
- Social opportunities: I had plenty of time to interact socially with other students
- Student welfare resources
- The physical environment, e.g. security on campus
- Wits experience, e.g. institutional culture, commitment to diversity, analytical skills

## 3.5 Data collection technique

An e-mail with a link to the survey was sent to potential respondents using the student e-mail facility provided by Central Network Services (CNS). Once the survey had been completed by a respondent, submission would be done by clicking on the 'finish' icon and the data would be stored confidentially. Posters were mounted in various areas on Wits campuses to encourage students to participate in the survey. Several reminders were sent through student e-mail to ensure that as many second-year students as possible participated in the surveys. The questionnaire was self-administered online. It had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Questions were divided into four organising phases, namely:

- Educational experience
- Support services and administration
- Quality of and access to facilities
- Wits experience (institutional culture and student socialisation)

Questions posed were related to four areas of student experience, namely the educational experience, support services and administration, quality of and access to facilities, and the Wits culture, as provided in the conceptual framework for the study.

Data analysis was ethically guided by the intention to guard the confidentiality of respondents, as promised to respondents during data collection. The questionnaire assured students that their participation was confidential and the findings would not be directly traced back to them. The information on the participation sheet requiring e-mail address or cell number stated that such details would be used only to ensure that students could be contacted if they won a laptop prize for their participation. Students could also voluntarily choose to not to participate in the study if they so desired. Participants were assured that choosing not to participate would not in any way negatively impact on their academic studies. The proposal was submitted to the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC), and ethical clearance and approval to conduct the study was granted by the Registrar.



# 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The total number of participants in this survey was 1 150. During the analysis, it became clear that some of the participants were not part of the target population (second-year undergraduate students). Two 'filter questions' placed in different parts of the instrument were used to filter data; these were: *Are you a second-year undergraduate student?* and *If you are an undergraduate 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 second-year undergraduate students, or were doing 1st, 3rd, 4th or 5th year of undergraduate studies. After extensive cleaning of data, 99 responses were eliminated given that they were not part of the target audience, and only 1 051 remained as appropriate respondents. In this data analysis, therefore, 1 051 represent 100% of the total respondents, being 18.6% of the overall 2012 second year enrolment (5 656 headcount).

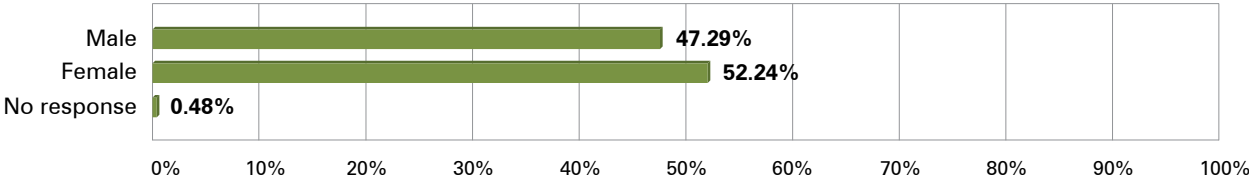


Figure 2: Profile by gender

The data presented in Figure 2 show that more female than male students participated. This is consonant with the current enrolment trends in the University, where female students constitute 53% of total student enrolments. In this study, participation of female students constituted 52.24% and male students constituted 47.29% of the sample. It can be argued from this point of view that the participation of students in this study was representative of the general gender demographics in the enrolment figures of the University.

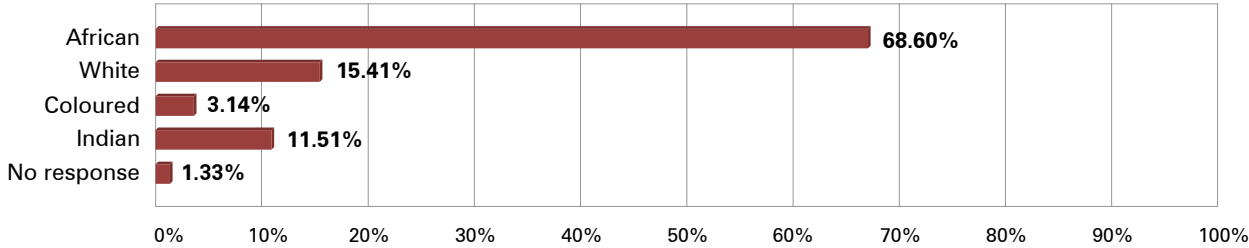


Figure 3: Profile by race

The racial breakdown of participating students was also fairly representative. Figure 3 shows that African students constituted 68.60%, white students 15.41%, Indian students 11.51%, and coloured students 3.14%. As reported in the University's Pocket Statistics (SPD, 2012), African students constituted 73% of total enrolments in the past five years, while white students constituted an average of 12%, Indian students 10% and coloured students 4% over the same period (*Ibid.*). It can therefore be argued that in relation to

this aspect of the profile of the respondents, these research findings can be generalised across the undergraduate student population.

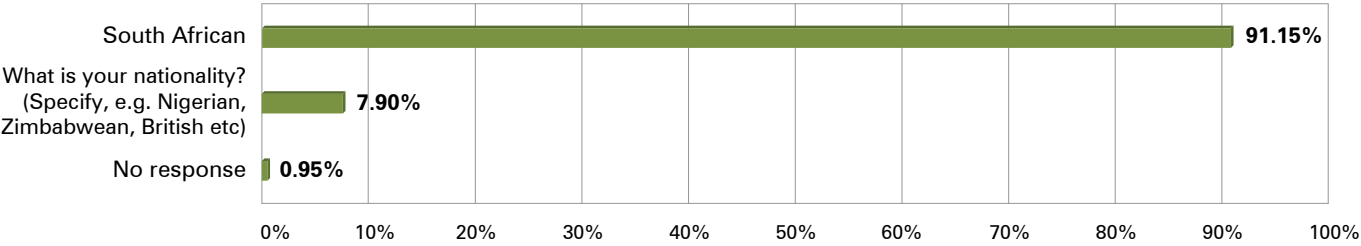


Figure 4: Profile by nationality

The majority of respondents (91.15%) indicated that they were of South African origin. International students constituted 7.9% of the sample. This trend is also in line with the enrolment of international students since 2007, which has been at a plateau of 8% over the past five years.

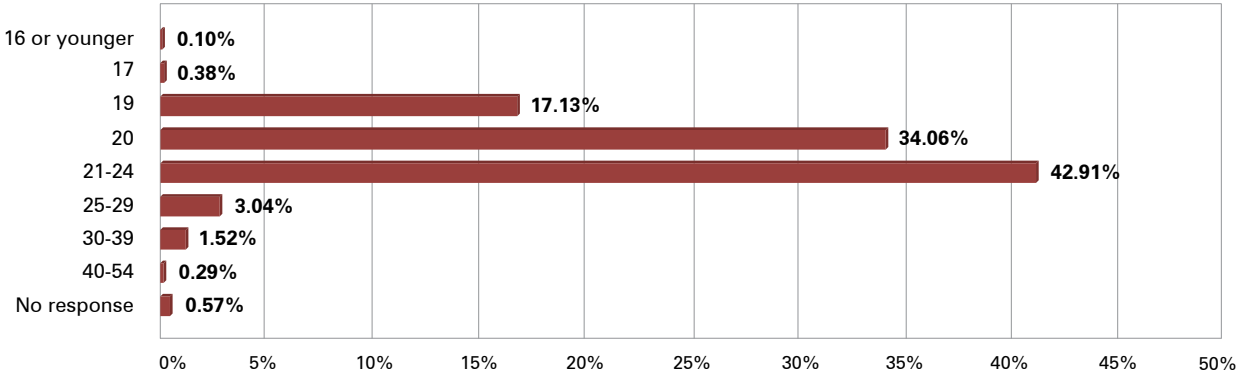


Figure 5: Profile by age

Figure 5 clearly illustrates that most undergraduate students at Wits are between the ages of 18 and 24 years. Students in this age group are within range for the undergraduate university-going age cohort. This implies that all findings emanating from this research represent the particular opinions of students of the right age, as targeted by the survey with a view to making whatever provisioning adjustments are required at undergraduate level to cater for their needs.

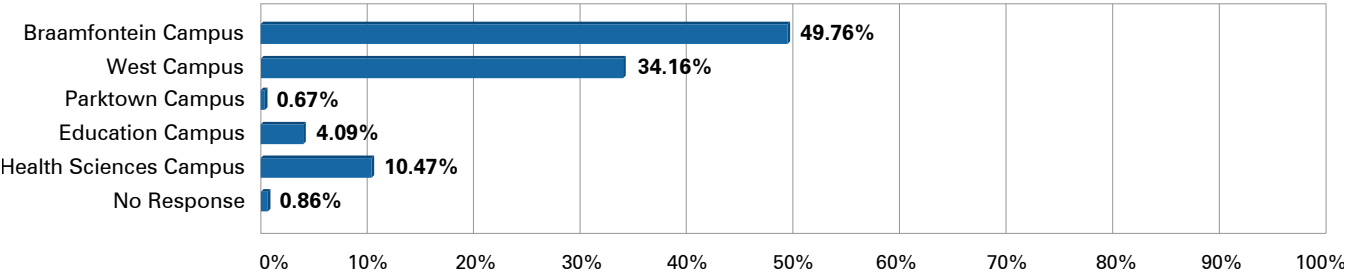


Figure 6: Campus of affiliation

As reflected in Figure 6, the data show that the majority of participants in the study were located on the Braamfontein Campus (83%). This percentage breaks down to 34.26% on the West Campus, and 49.76% on the East. Participants from the Health Sciences Campus formed 0.67% of the survey, while those from the Education Campus formed 4.09%. This is in line with the normal understanding of the location of the academic departments in which the students were registered. It is interesting to note that all Wits campuses were proportionally represented in this sample in a manner that allows the generalisation of the findings.



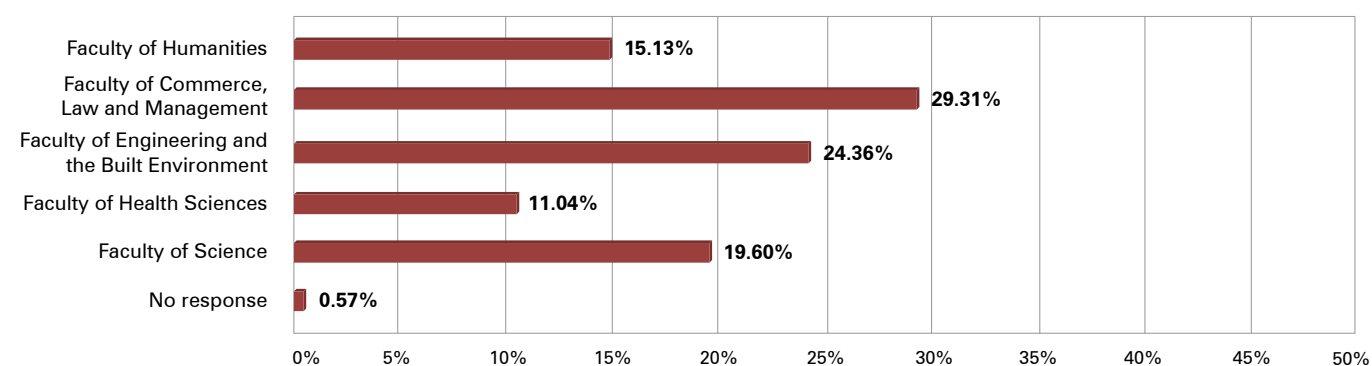


Figure 7: Faculty of affiliation

As in most previous undergraduate satisfaction surveys, and as shown in Figure 7, the faculty with the greatest number of respondents in this study was Commerce, Law and Management (29.13%). This was followed by students in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (24.36%), Faculty of Science (19.60%), Faculty of Humanities (15.13%) and Faculty of Health Sciences (11.04%). The data therefore show that participants were drawn from all faculties, and research findings can be generalised across all five faculties in the University.

In relation to Teaching and Learning, students were asked to express their satisfaction with the course content in the programmes that they are pursuing. As shown in Figure 8, the majority of students (90.77%) were satisfied with the range of topics covered in their course syllabi. Only 8.36% of the students surveyed indicated that they were not satisfied with the range of topics covered. There was a widely shared view that the intellectual depth of the course content was satisfactory to students: 91.62% of respondents declared their satisfaction. Only 7.8% indicated that they were not satisfied with this aspect of their programmes. The data also show that a large number of respondents (84.39%) were satisfied with the relevance of the content to their professional training needs. Only 14.37% of respondents indicated that they were not. The overall ratings in relation to course content suggest that the majority of students were highly satisfied with the selection of content, the intellectual depth and rigour, and the relevance of the content to their envisaged professional needs.

## On teaching and learning arrangements

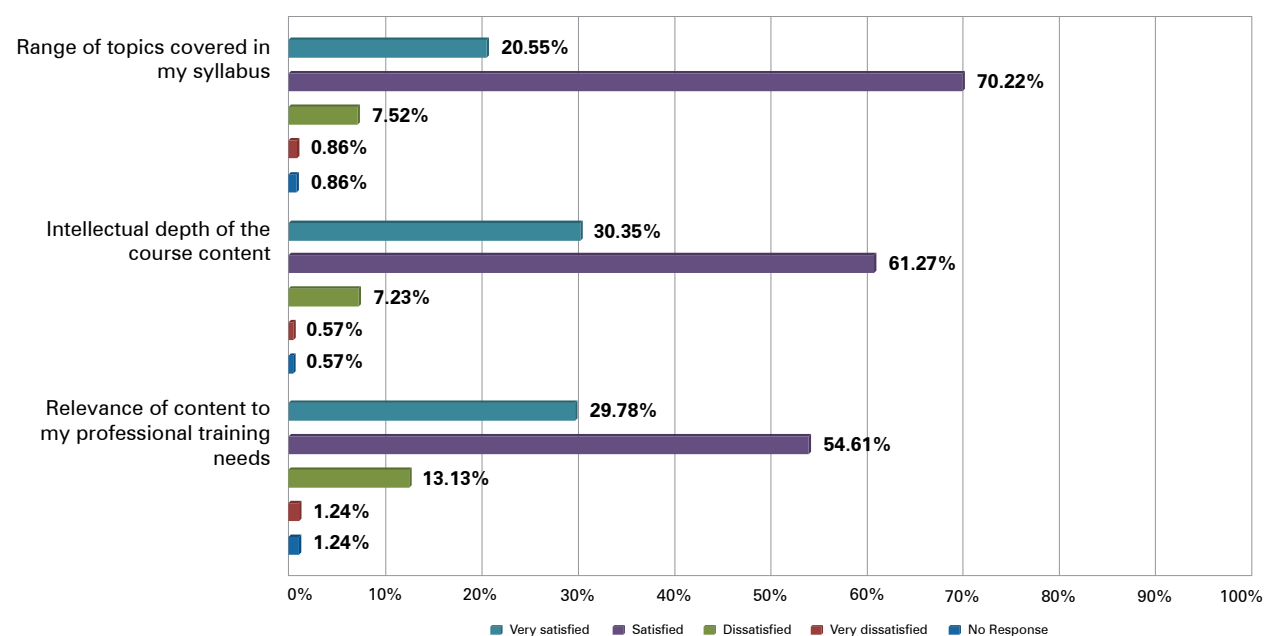


Figure 8: Course content

It was also important to establish whether students were satisfied with course organisation and timetabling arrangements within their programmes of study. The results presented in Figure 9 show that the majority of participants (80.21%) were satisfied with the way their timetables were spread over a week's schedule. Only 19.13% of respondents were not satisfied with them. A large number of respondents (77.83%) indicated that they were satisfied with the clarity of course documentation provided in each of their courses; 21.12% were not satisfied in this regard. A relatively large number of respondents (74.21%) were satisfied with prior notification given of changes to course arrangements in relation to each of the courses they were pursuing; 24.93% indicated that they were not satisfied. The data furthermore show that 74.79% of respondents knew what was expected of them as students in their individual courses, while 24.36% did not. A general opinion can be formed about the levels of satisfaction in terms of the course organisation. A large number of students are satisfied with timetabling and communication of expectations. However, a significant category of students expressed dissatisfaction in relation to course organisation. As mentioned previously, one of these areas is knowing what is expected from them in their individual courses. These are matters that can be mitigated through clear communication and the provision of course outlines clearly expressing guidelines and expectations to help students prepare sufficiently to respond to institutional requirements.

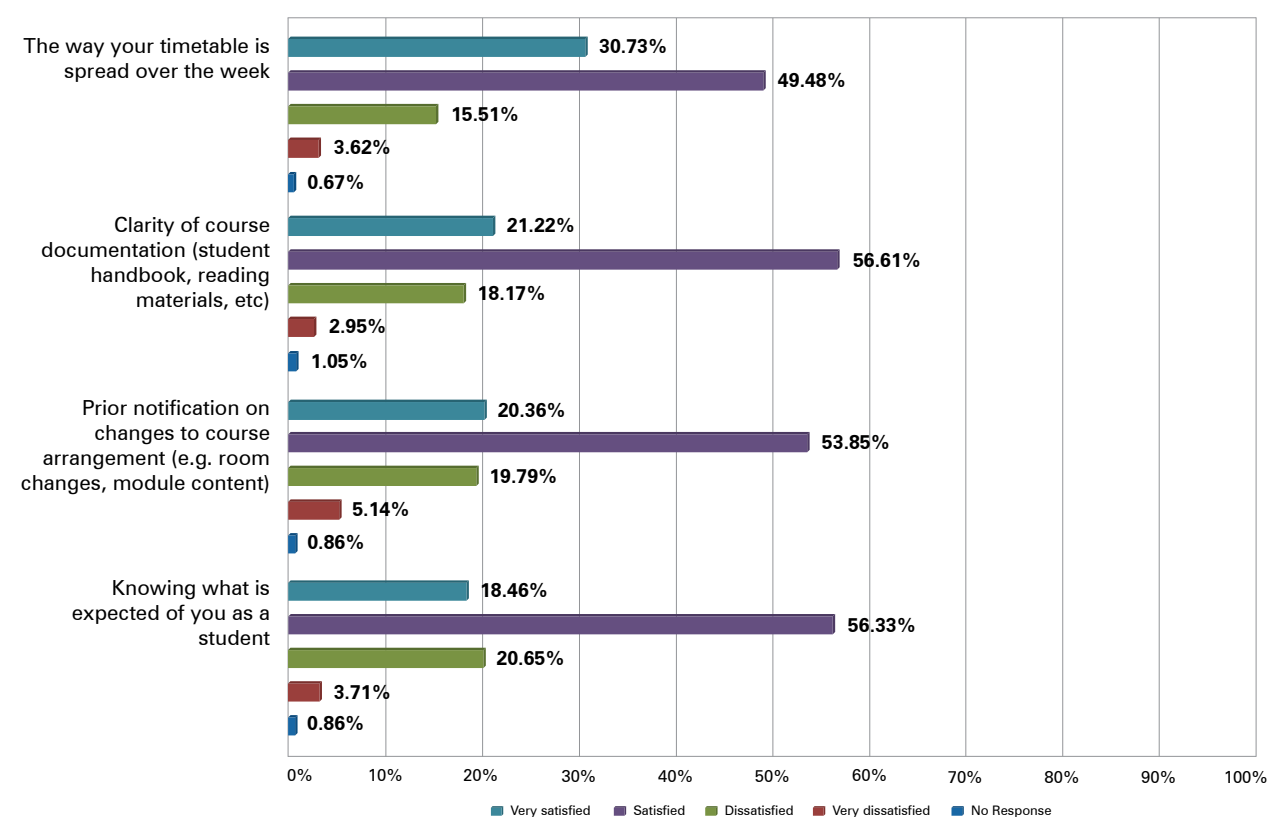


Figure 9: Course organisation

A major challenge facing a university like Wits is ensuring that there is a carefully kept balance among workload, assessment activities, and curriculum arrangements. Excessive workload can contribute to many negative consequences, such as high dropout rates, high failure rates, and a general inability of students to keep up with the learning pace. It was important for this study to establish whether students think that workload is carefully balanced in relation to mastery of content and responding to assessment requirements in each course they are pursuing. The data in Figure 10 show that most students (70.6%) were satisfied with the timetabling of assignments in each of the courses they were pursuing. However, a significant group of students (28.83%) expressed dissatisfaction with timetabling of assignments in their courses. One of the ways of ensuring that students are sufficiently prepared for their assessment tasks and activities is by communicating this information well in advance to give them sufficient



time to plan and prepare. Evidence from Figure 10 suggests that a considerable majority of students (86.3%) were satisfied with the availability of information about assessment dates. Only 12.84% of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction on this issue. It is quite clear that for any form of assessment to have the desired impact and yield the expected results, the relevant information should be clear, and students are required to have a fair understanding of the assessment criteria used to judge their work. The data indicate that most respondents (74.01%) were satisfied with the clarity of information about assessment criteria, while 25.03% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction.

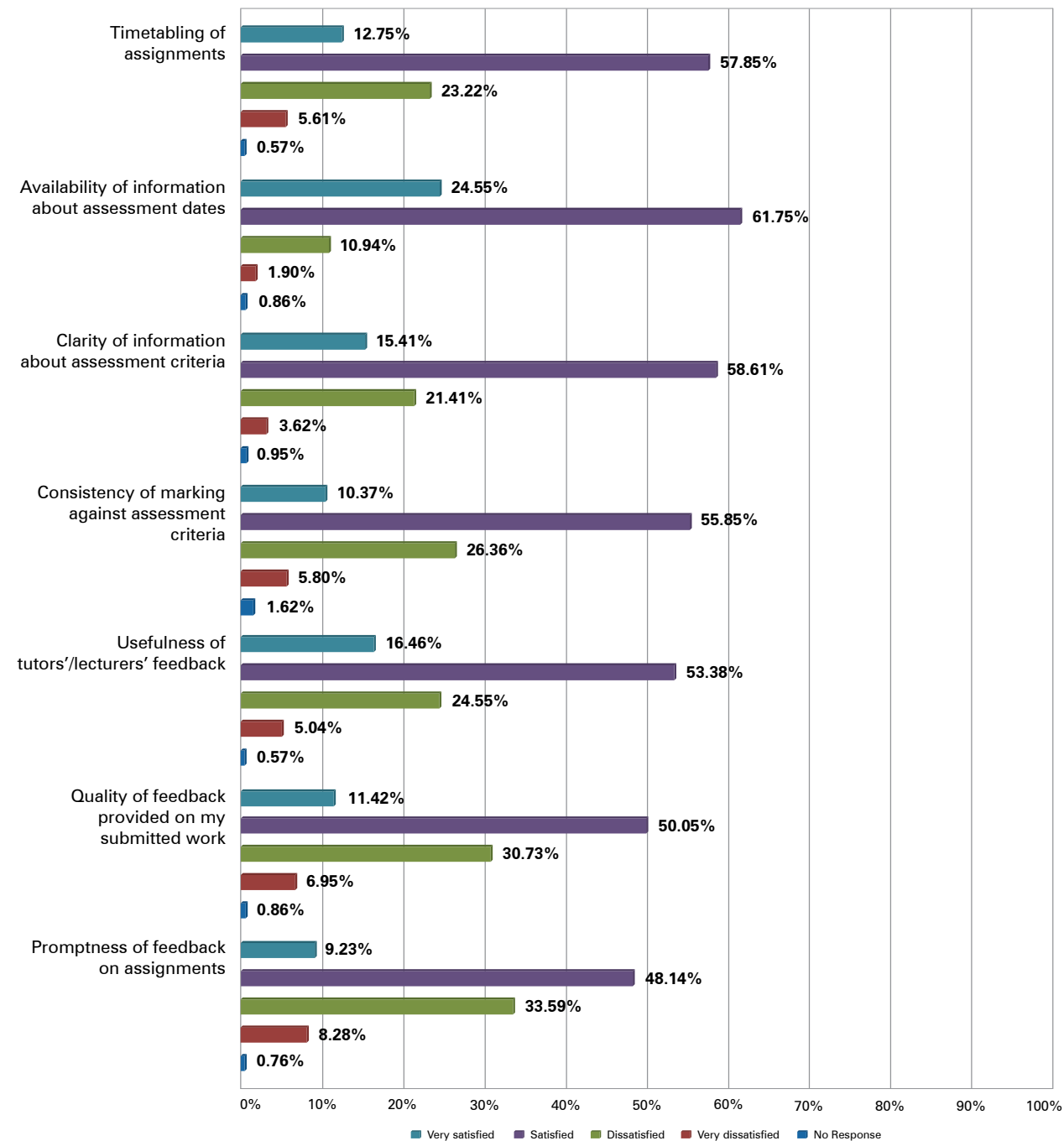


Figure 10: Workload and assessment

The data depicted in Figure 10 also show that while many respondents were satisfied with the consistency of marking against set assessment criteria, the number was not remarkably high. Satisfaction in this respect was recorded by 66.22% of respondents; 32.16% were not satisfied. It can be argued that dissatisfaction in relation to consistency of marking against criteria may indicate inconsistent marking practices, which the University may need to look into in order to ensure that in all cases marking is kept

consistent with the criteria communicated to students.

A fair majority of respondents (69.84%) were satisfied with the usefulness of feedback given by tutors and lecturers on their submitted work. However, 29.59% of respondents were not. There is a generally shared view in educational institutions that the quality of feedback on assessment activities should always lead to better understanding of requirements and improvement of student performance. That close to one-third of the respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the usefulness of such feedback means that the University needs to put in place mechanisms to improve the quality of feedback that tutors and lecturers give to students. This is evident, too, in data emanating from the analysis of a further line of enquiry in this particular area. It was important for the research to establish whether feedback was seen by some respondents as less useful merely because it was not detailed enough, or because the quality was questionable. Data analysis shows that a high 37.68% of respondents were not satisfied with the quality of the feedback, while 61.7% were satisfied. However, it is quite clear that it is not only the quality of feedback that is important, but the promptness with which feedback is given to allow students to improve on their performance. We further find that 41.87% of respondents were dissatisfied with the promptness of feedback while 57.37% of respondents were satisfied.

From this analysis it is evident that the University may need to consider improving the workload and assessment practices in some areas to help students to learn better. Clearly, the promptness with which feedback is provided is one critical area requiring significant improvement. Consistency of marking against set assessment criteria is a second area calling for improvement, and the quality of feedback provided on submitted work is a third area where there is a strong need for improvement.



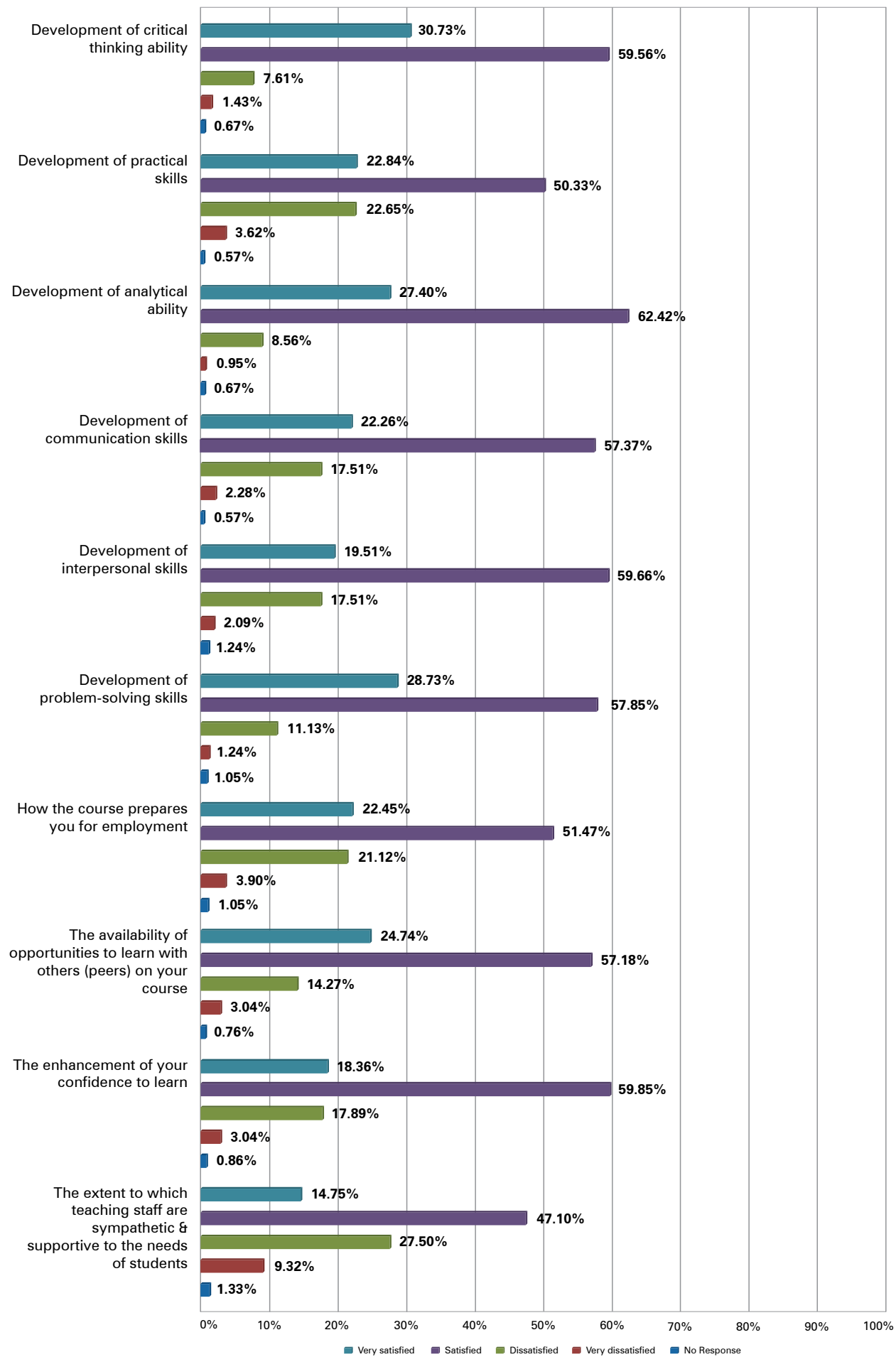


Figure 11(a): Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are the two sides of one of the core activities of a university. Under this heading fall aspects such as the development of critical thinking ability, the development of practical skills, the development of analytical ability, communication and interpersonal skills and the development of problem-solving skills.

Data analysis presented in Figure 11(a) shows that by far the majority of respondents (90.29%) were satisfied that their ability to think critically had been adequately developed, while only 9.71% were dissatisfied. A smaller majority (73.17%) were satisfied that the courses in which they were enrolled had developed their practical skills, while 26.83% were dissatisfied. The data also show that a large majority of the students surveyed (89.82%) felt that their analytical ability had been developed, while a small number (10.18%) felt that this was not the case.

A relatively large proportion of respondents (79.63%) were satisfied with the development of communication skills in their programmes. Only 19.79% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction. The evidence also shows a similar majority (79.17%) to be satisfied with the development of interpersonal skills in their programmes, while 19.6% were not satisfied. As indicated previously, problem-solving competence is a very important part of graduateness, and our undergraduate students must therefore develop the relevant skills. A large number of respondents (86.58%) expressed satisfaction with the development of problem-solving skills within their programmes, while a small proportion (12.37%) were dissatisfied.

There is a contested view that Wits education is not meant to prepare students for specific positions in the labour market. It is sometimes generally argued that Wits education is meant to prepare students to live meaningful lives in civil society and as professionals with a comprehensive understanding of life's complexities, not necessarily preparing students directly for employment. Having said that, it has to be acknowledged that most learning programmes provided at Wits lead to students qualifying for professional practice in particular sectors of the labour market. This suggests that we should be able, as a university, to prepare students for employment. The data show that 73.92% of respondents believe that we are doing that, while 25.02% of respondents were dissatisfied with the extent to which courses were preparing them for employment.

Joint projects and activities that allow students to deploy team effort in learning is one of the key critical areas that a university education should promote. For this to happen, opportunities for students to work with their peers on similar projects as a community of learners should be created. It is encouraging to observe that the majority of respondents (81.92%) were satisfied with the availability of opportunities to work and learn with their peers through given projects. Only 17.31% of respondents who were not satisfied with the opportunities provided. The majority of students who responded to the survey (76.04%) also felt that their courses encouraged them to work with other students in class in group work; 21.69% reported that they did not experience this to a satisfactory extent.

For students to continue pursuing their learning goals, it is important to develop and enhance their confidence to learn more, and in this survey 78.21% of respondents were satisfied with the way in which this was being done. Dissatisfaction was registered by 20.93% of respondents. There is a general view, shared by more than one-third of the respondents, that teaching staff are not as sympathetic and supportive to the needs of students as they should be. The group that held this view comprised 36.82% of the sample; 61.85% of respondents expressed satisfaction in relation to this factor.



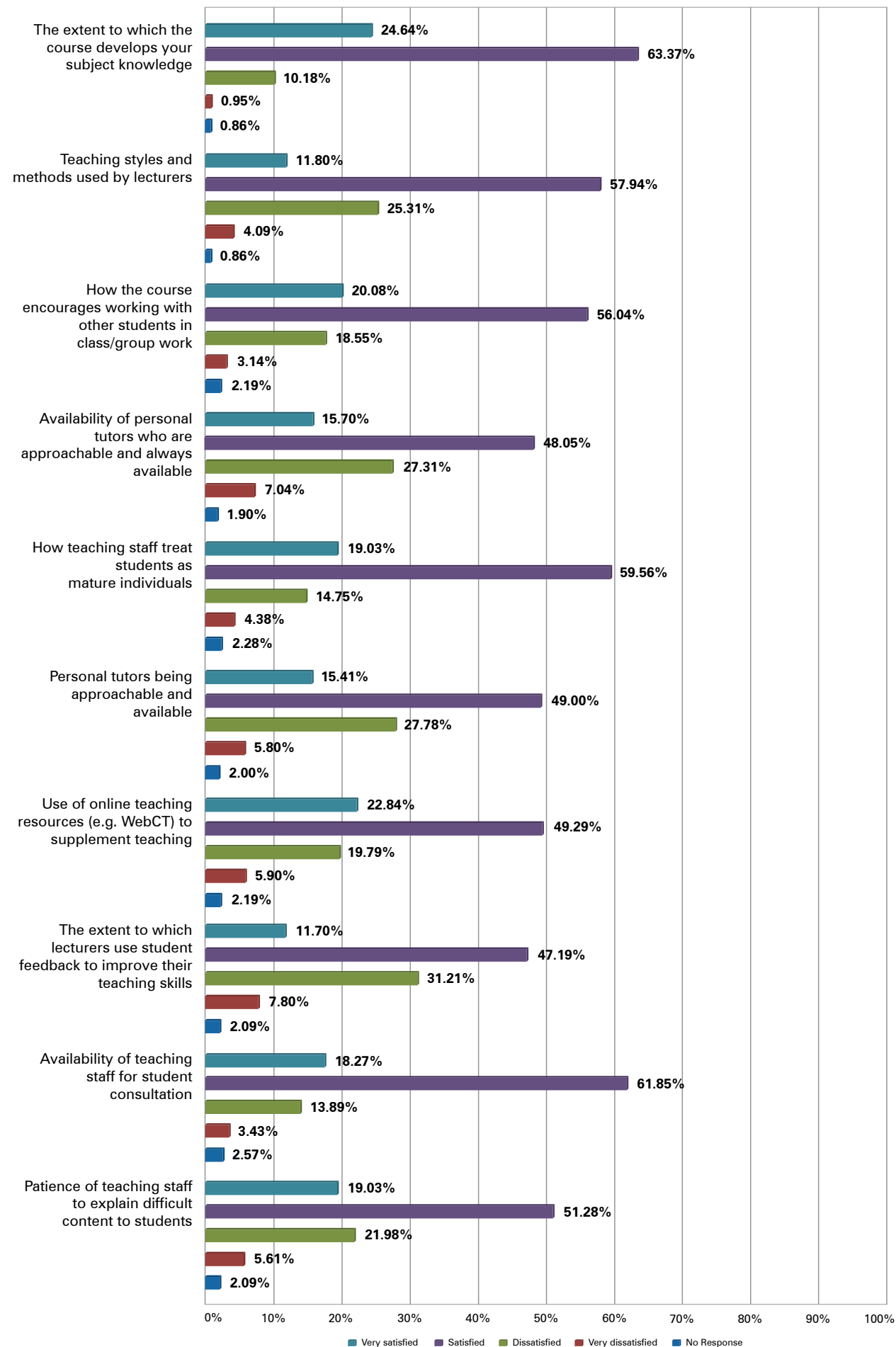


Figure 11(b): Teaching and learning

On the other hand [as shown in Figure 11(b)], a large proportion (88.01%) of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the extent to which the course developed their subject knowledge. Only 11.13% of respondents were not satisfied.

Another critical element to effective teaching and learning is the teaching styles and methods employed by lecturers to deliver subject content. The results show 69.74% of respondents as satisfied in this regard; however, a notably high percentage of respondents (29.4%) were dissatisfied with the teaching style and methods they experienced.

Given the fact that students encounter different kinds of challenges during the learning process, it is often important to support them through tutors who are willing to assist in different areas of need. Such tutors should always be accessible (available and approachable). A fair number of respondents (63.75%) were satisfied with the availability of personal tutors, but the fact that more than one-third (34.35%) were dissatisfied indicates that it is important for the University to improve its provisioning of tutoring services at undergraduate level. Wits should make sure that tutors are not only physically available, but are also approachable to students to help them resolve any learning difficulties they may experience.

As part of its extended teaching modalities, the University has provided e-learning facilities as a platform on which provide students with more learning opportunities. A large number of respondents (72.13%) were satisfied with the use of online teaching resources to supplement mainstream teaching and cater for their academic development needs; however, 25.69% were not satisfied.

In a reciprocal teaching and learning environment, as lecturers have to provide feedback to learners, learners themselves have to give feedback to academics to improve the quality of their teaching. Not only should this feedback be provided by students, it should also be a means for the lecturers to improve their teaching skills. The data show that many students are not satisfied with the extent to which lecturers use student feedback for improvement. About 39% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, while only 58.89% were satisfied.

In contrast, there is a widely shared view that lecturers are often available for student consultations, with a satisfaction rating of 80.12%, while only 17.32% were dissatisfied with staff availability for this purpose. Generally, teaching staff were regarded by most respondents as demonstrating patience in explaining difficult concepts. The data show that 70.31% of respondents as satisfied with the patience with which they were treated, while 27.59% were dissatisfied.

On quality of support services and access to facilities at Wits

Participants were asked to rate the support services that they have directly used and to comment on these services further, specifying the unit referred to. These comments are arranged in the following order:

- Office of the Dean of Students
- Career Counselling and Development Unit
- Student Development and Leadership Unit
- Campus Health and Clinic
- Student Enrolment Centre
- Financial Aid and Scholarships Office
- Computer Networking Services
- Registrar’s Office
- Wits International Office
- Disability Unit
- Wits Security Office
- Others

Figure 12 provides an understanding of the extent to which respondents used various support service units. A large proportion of respondents (84.40%) indicated that they had not directly used the services of the office of the Dean of Students. Only 13.13% of respondents indicated that they had done so. Although the Career Counselling and Development Unit provides the University with an essential service in co-ordinating professional support for students at risk, it appears that that the majority of our second-year students had not used their services at the time of survey. Only 36.92% had used the services of the CCDU. Given the different kinds of challenges faced by students at an undergraduate level and the kind of support that students need in a university, most of which are clearly articulated in our First-Year Student Experience Survey, it is important that the University find mechanisms to improve the use of facilities like the CCDU to enhance student well-being on campus. Most students who responded to the survey (77.35%) also indicated that they had not yet used the services of the Student Development and Leadership Unit. Only 19.98% of respondents had used the services of SDLU.

It has to be noted that the unit under Student Affairs that had been used by the highest percentage of undergraduate students who participated in this survey was the Campus Health and Clinic Facility. Almost half (45%) the participants had used the Campus Health and Clinic Facility, while 52.43% had not. There is no need to explain why a large proportion of respondents had used the Student Enrolment Centre (SEnC). While it is understood that all registered students had in one way or another used its services, 13.99% of these respondents were not aware that registration takes place through this centre. This is apparent from the fact that they declared that they had not used its services, while it is common knowledge that no registration can be finalised without the services of the SEnC. Accordingly, 83.54% of respondents declared that they had used its services. This suggests that feedback in relation to this outfit was based on a conscious understanding of what such services entail.

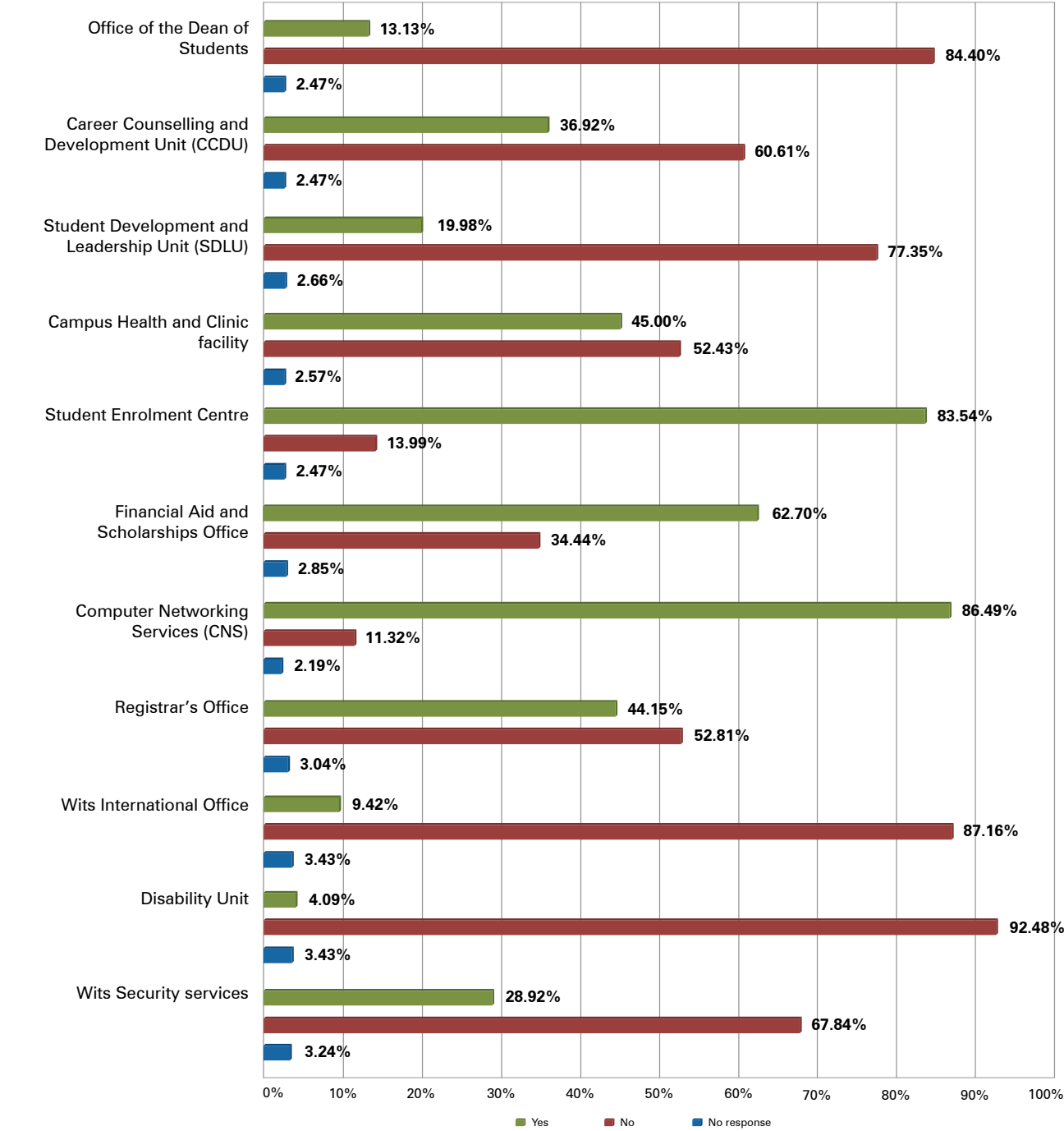


Figure 12: Use of support service units

The data also show that just over a third of the respondents (34.44%) had not used the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office, and 62.7% declared that they had. A large proportion (86.49%) had used the services of Computer Networking Services Department, while 11.32% had not done so. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that there is an appropriate use of services from the Registrar’s Office. Although 52.81% of respondents had not made use of them, 44.15% had.

Given the fact that the majority of participants in this study were local students, it is not surprising to learn that 87.16% had not used the services of the Wits International Office (WIO); only 9.42% had. Only 4.09% of respondents in this study had used the services of the Disability Unit, while 92.48% had not. The services of the Wits Security Service had been used by 28.92% of respondents, while 67.84% declared that they had not done so directly (clearly, security services do in fact affect the lives of everyone on Wits’s campuses).



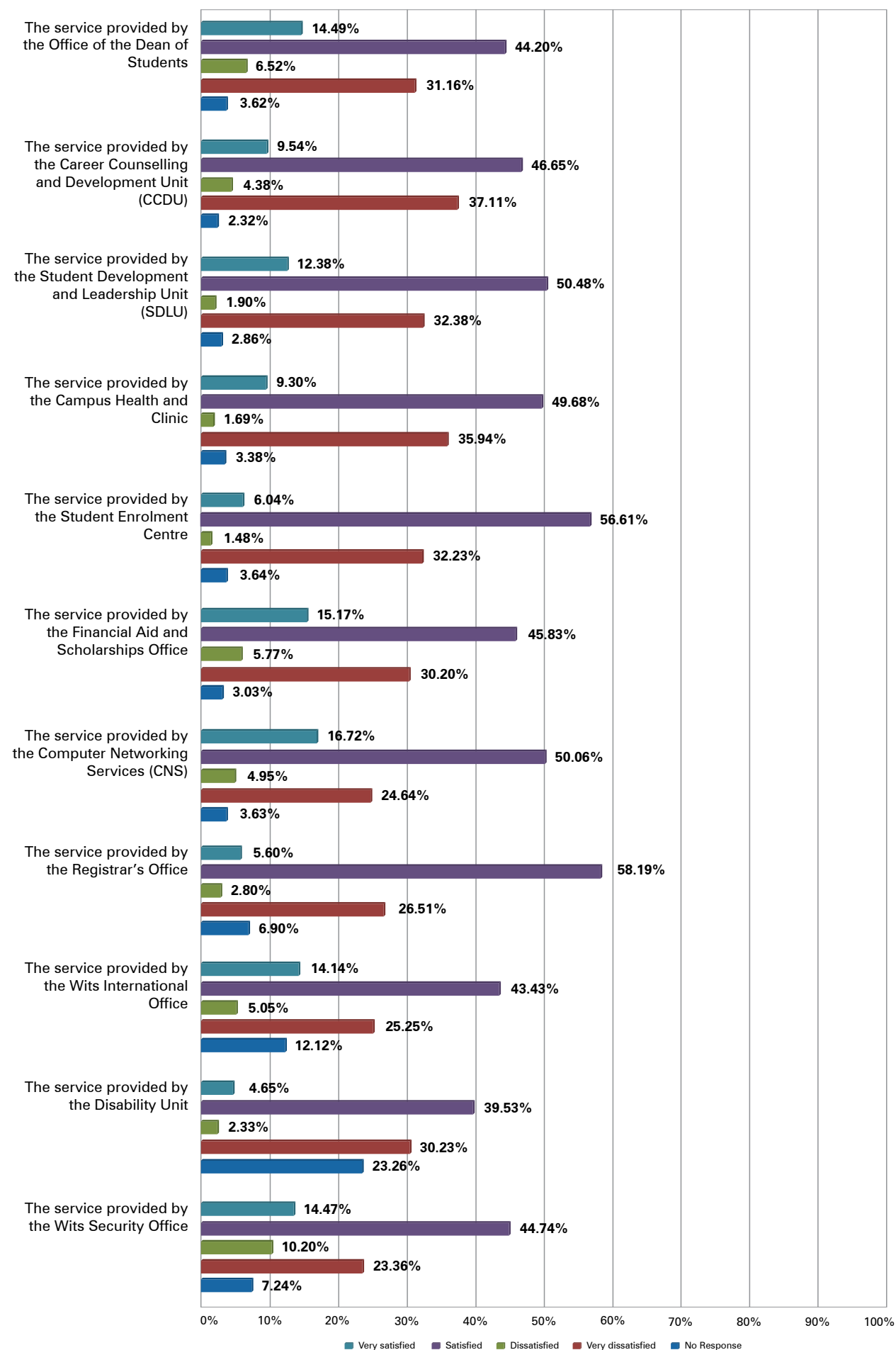


Figure 13: Support service units satisfaction rating

The analysis of data provided in Figure 13 is derived from the analysis provided in Figure 12. The rating of the services of each support service unit is limited to those respondents who indicated that they had made use of the services of that unit. This was done to ensure that only fair and meaningful judgements were reflected, eliminating, for example, judgements based on hearsay.

Of the respondents who had used the services of the Dean of Students, 58.69% were satisfied, and 37.68% were not. The data also show that of those respondents who had used the services of CCDU, only 56.19% were satisfied with the level of service provided by this unit, and 41.49% of respondents were dissatisfied. Of those students who had used the services of SDLU, 62.86% were satisfied, and 34.28% were not.

The services of the Campus Health and Clinic Facility were seen as satisfactory by 58.98% of those who had used them, and as unsatisfactory by 37.63%. Of those students who indicated that they had made use of the services of the SEnC, 62.65% indicated that they were satisfied with the service provided, and 33.71% were not. A similar approval level was reached by the Financial Aid and Scholarships office, with 61% of those who had used it satisfied, and 35.97% expressing dissatisfaction.

CNS achieved a somewhat higher percentage approval, as 66.78% of its users were satisfied with the services provided; 29.59% were dissatisfied. Of the students who indicated that they had used the services of the Registrar's Office, 63.79% were satisfied, and 29.31% dissatisfied.

Of the small number of students who had made use of the services of the WIO, 57.57% were satisfied, and 30.3% were not. Another service provider used by only a small proportion of respondents was the Disability Unit. Of its users, 44.18% were satisfied with its services and 32.56% were not. However, an unusually large proportion of these respondents, 23.26%, did not respond to this question.

Of those students who had used the services of the Wits Security Office, 59.21% of respondents were satisfied while 33.56% of respondents were dissatisfied.

Although it is clear that the majority of students who had made use of the various support service units were satisfied with the quality of service received, there is glaring evidence to suggest that there are also relatively high levels of dissatisfaction with these services.

## Open Comments on the Support Service Units

### Office of the Dean of Students

“Office of the Dean: Assisted with the administration of the bursary I currently hold. Provided academic support and advice for my problems, which affect my studies. Recommended my application for admission at Wits.”

- Dean of Students – [I] wanted to volunteer, was never contacted whether successful or not, even though asked to leave my details.
- I would like the Dean of Student Affairs to be far more accessible to students, through perhaps student reps.
- The Dean of Students could be more hands-on with helping students, because the

fees office is very misleading when it comes to reimbursements. Since last block, I have been on a wild-goose chase.

- More feedback from Office of Dean would be great in letting students know that Wits deans are directly interested in bettering our education.

“*The support systems are readily available but there is not much attention drawn to all aspects of these facilities, as we are not always made aware of them until we are in need of them, e.g. Dean of Students.*”

### Career Counselling Development Unit

“*Provided emotional support to my addiction problem. Also suggested organisations which can help me overcome my addiction problem.*”

“*The CCDU was absolutely unhelpful in terms of career counselling as they insisted on me doing psychometric tests, even though I have done these tests at a different institute. It was apparent that the lady was insistent on me paying for their services even though she hadn't helped me with anything.*”

- Am very pleased with the services though I think the Career and Development Unit should engage in more outdoor activities to get more students engaged.
- CCDU – honestly a waste of time, they hardly provide any relevant information.
- CCDU can do more to orientate students about how to cope with being a student and to help students who are uncertain if they are in the right degree.
- CCDU is helpful to the extent that a student realises that it does not provide immediate solutions but substantial advice and suggestions.
- CCDU is one of the units that helped me with preparing myself for school and how I can help others.

“*The CCDU seems to be there for show rather than action. I've been there several times but didn't get any valuable assistance.*”

“*CCDU closes too early for students with a full day of lectures to possibly have time to attend counselling!*”

- CCDU is the best. They should continue doing the good work helping the first-years with their first-year university problems. CCDU should call students when they say they will.
- The CCDU are always ready and willing to support students. But I think that they are unable to deal with personal issues which might lead to people committing suicide. The enrolment centre has wonderful people who are doing an excellent job at helping students.
- The CCDU demands too much paperwork for student events. They should deal with requisitions as far as possible, and even perhaps negotiate 'packs', or standardised purchases of items for student societies so that it is easy to acquire an appropriate amount of stuff for an event.
- The CCDU should run more exercises to train students how to conduct themselves during bursary and job interviews. The CCDU units helped to improve my confidence and self-esteem.

“*The staff at CCDU is really polite and friendly, and that always makes a student very comfortable to come to them to enquire or to get advice*”

### Student Development and Leadership Unit

“*... they don't contact you back even though they ask you to leave your details.*”

- SDLU – not very helpful when looking for info. If you're not already connected, you miss out on a lot of opportunities.
- SDLU loses my paper work all the time.
- SDLU was not prompt in assisting the society I represent with budgeting for an event.
- SDLU and Campus Health have always worked ambitiously to meet what I have needed from them. They must keep it up.



“ *The services that are offered at the SDLU and CCDU should be given more publicity, more especially (among) first-year students.* ”

### Student Enrolment Centre

- Student Enrolment Centre can assist students to a larger extent with information about changing courses or degrees and how that all works.
- The enrolment centre failed to register me for all my subjects for the second year in a row.
- Certain admin officers, specifically in the Student Enrolment Centre (who dealt with a postgrad application), were exceptionally rude and completely disregarded the tiny issue that students are – in fact – human beings as well, and should not be treated as if they were said admin officer’s three-year-old child. I am dismayed at the lack of people skills in a field of work that requires such excellent interactive abilities. I do, however, understand that bad days do happen, but hell, HOLD YOUR FIRE! Politeness and respect should work both ways.

“ *... I was wrongly informed by someone who was clearly in a rush on the day of registration and simply told me that I ‘have to register for all the first-year courses’ which it turns out is not true.* ”

- I changed courses from BA to BCom. There was nobody who really advised me about the courses I still need as prerequisites for my major and it turns out that I have now wasted an entire year due to that, as I could have completed my major this year having already passed Economics I (the only prerequisite for my major). Maybe something can be done to assist other first-years so that they do not make the same mistake as it is frustrating having to waste an entire year unnecessarily. It would be helpful to have the process computerised...

“ *The Student Enrolment Centre sometimes gives out incorrect, or rather different, information on enquiries. I was sent from pillar to post by different assistants on the same matter.* ”

- The Student Enrolment Centre really helped me when I wanted to apply because they explained everything and made everything clear as to what I needed to do to be accepted into the University.

### Financial Aid and Scholarship Office

- Financial Aid and Scholarships failed to upload the scholarship I attained from Wits last year, due to my results, timeously. However my complaint was dealt with efficiently once lodged.

- I was sort of not satisfied with the fact that when I had to claim some money which is rightfully mine, the Financial Aid offices could not give it to me. I’m still waiting for them to send it to me but still there’s nothing.

- Financial Aid and Scholarship Office: they should provide consistent assistance in their awarding of financial assistance and the amount offered. They are not fair when granting financial aid.

- Some of the staff at the Financial Aid Office are not in the least patient with us, and they are rude sometimes.

“ *Some of the staff of the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office are rude and impatient and will take their time before coming to assist you, and they don’t give you full, clear information on what is required from you. For instance they did not tell us that this year we would have to a sign a separate form so that our accommodation fees could be paid.* ”

- The Financial Aid and Scholarships Office is very helpful when submitting documents etc., especially the reception. They are always willing to help. Keep up the good work.

- The Financial Aid and Scholarships Office: they do not have good communication skills and are impatient with us students.

### Computer Networking Services (CNS)

“ *90% of the time the printers in the computer labs are not working or out of paper.* ”

“ *The login system is very slow for students. CLM [Commerce, Law and Management] is a nightmare lab, where most PCs don’t work, and the printers have not been working since last year.* ”

- CNS promised that they would fix the log-on issues (it takes a very long time to log on this year) but they haven’t done anything or even given us feedback.

- CNS – Very disorganised and did not simplify the wireless access process for iPad users well. Basically offered no help whatsoever. Also, do nothing to regulate the use of sites like YouTube in the computer labs. Some of us want to use those facilities for work!

- CNS can be improved. The PC pool meant for engineering students needs more space, computers and the printers do not work. It really gets overcrowded in the PC pool and unfortunately, we have to use it as all of our simulation is done there.

- CNS can keep up its quick response to the assistance we often require of them in our school (Hillman building, e.g. help with the printer and when we need paper) – we

don't often wait long.

*CNS computers are very slow and there are not enough computers for students who do not own a computer.*

*Very few computers have Microsoft Office (or equivalent software) installed*

- CNS is a group of unsympathetic and unhelpful people who lack the expertise they claim to have. They have used profanities in front of students and others. They refuse to deal with difficult problems that are directly related to a campus network issue. They are the most disappointing support unit in the University and urgently require some strong intervention.

*CNS is so convenient when doing assignments and the internet is much faster, with the aid of printing facilities.*

- CNS requires new management, service is bad, and on the weekends it is not available. Sometimes when you go there the staff members are so rude.
- CNS should fix computers at commerce lab. There is a great number of computers not functioning. CNS took a while to get through to on the line but very helpful.
- Computers at CNS are very slow at times and the printers are almost always faulty when most needed or under pressure. All staff in those units are very supportive and professional.
- CNS computer labs are slow when logging in and the printer is always not working. Even the cellular network at med school is poor. More computers at CNS or PCs to students who can't afford to buy their own.
- The CNS service gives me problems during the weekend because I cannot even print out my assignments, and sometimes the computers are locked. I am dependent on these computers as a source of information for most of my studies.
- The Computer Networking Services are not satisfactory at all due to slow rate at which the computers work, and the fact that some residences, like Esselen res, have very poor computer service as compared to other residences. It makes no sense to have only about 10 computers in a residence that caters for more than 200 students.

*The service rendered at CNS needs to improve radically. The printers usually process the work but do not actually print most of the time, resulting in unnecessary loss to students. Also, although some printers do have an option for scanning, the actual process is denied.*

- The Computer Networking Services unit is VERY POOR. Trying to get help with connecting my laptop to the Wits wireless was impossible. They are not approachable and don't tell you what you need to do fix your problem, they just say, 'NO, we can't help you with that.' This happened twice! VERY POOR SERVICE! I got help from a STUDENT; in less than 10 minutes I was connected! The computers at CNS tend to be slow at times.
- The only problem I have with CNS, as I do not have a personal computer, is that their systems are always not working when you need them the most. I'm not sure if it is because they cannot deal with the pressure during the submission dates as their internet stops working during those times. This happened on more than one occasion. Their printers also stop working, and then students end up submitting their work late. The people should try to be nicer and faster.

### Registrar's Office

- Registrar's Office could provide no information as to my subject choices as well as the requisite number of courses I had to take. Secondly, they refused to assist in resolving my enrolment issues.
- I am satisfied with the services I have utilised at the University, but more especially the service provided by the Registrar's Office. **They continuously try to make the process of registering at the beginning of the year a lot more efficient.** Introducing the new system of registering during the year may assist in making the process even quicker and more efficient than it is presently.
- The Registrar's Office does not provide enough assistance in terms of the point system, one always finds out at the last minute about points they could have made up the previous year.

### Wits International Office

- It was very enlightening and helpful in making my life-experience at Wits as an international student a more exciting experience.
- The issue of fees being cleared all at once during registration for an international student is unfair. A stand should be taken by the relevant authorities because it is unbearable.

*The International Office is disappointing. They are not helping international students in any way, they just facilitate formalities such as registrations, medical aid etc. They don't even ask about our problems/difficulties and opinions as international students.*

- The International Office needs to improve its services to and interaction with international students.



## Disability Unit

- Units like Disability and Wits Security Office could be more marketable to students, liaise with them and share what they do with students – a platform to make them accessible to us would be great.
- The Disability Unit aided me last year when I sustained a hand injury and could not write, therefore I typed out a test in the Unit. The staff was very helpful in accommodating me.

## Wits Security Office

- Campus Control must stop harassing students and treating us like we are criminals.
- I can say that the Wits Security Office seems to drag feet when something bad happens to students. For example, I was given a muffin [laced] with cocaine by another student, I hallucinated and went to Helen Joseph Hospital where they figured out that my blood [showed traces of] cocaine. That day I only took that muffin and I reported this case, but there was no help at all.

*I filed with Campus Control in a written statement six months ago about being verbally abused on campus and I have not got any feedback on the case. I currently don't feel safe on campus.*

- The security on campus should be the primary concern as of late the crime levels have escalated. For a university such a problem should not be a concern.
- I was very satisfied with the help of Campus Control, they are a wonderful team.
- I wish the University could be very safe for everyone, the theft of students' phones and laptops in libraries make me feel not safe at all. This really affects my perception of the University and its capabilities.
- I would like the security to improve their services to students and really take the issue we bring to them seriously. There should be cameras in some places where there currently aren't as this would reduce the number of thefts and other inconveniences around the school. There have been several thefts around the school, especially in safe places like the library.
- I would like to praise and honour people from Wits Security Office. Their dedication towards the work that they are doing for students and for the entire institution is indeed significant. They have taken care of me and other fellow students several times when we were late to catch the last bus at midnight.
- I'd appreciate it if the security system becomes more alert so we can feel safe being within the campus, because recent events have proven that we are not safe, and I fear to walk around on campus.
- I'm incredibly disappointed by the lack of security at Wits. How can we be expected to learn in such environments? No wonder Wits is nowhere NEAR the top of the top universities of the world. You still have a LONG way to go. Take our complaints seriously. We know what we want out of a university.

- In the Wits Security Office, I think that they do very well allowing students to go through the camera [recordings] when they have lost items. But I would like to suggest that they ensure that they orientate cameras in such a way to cover the entire area that they are placed at. You find that there are maybe three cameras in the same room, but they are focused on the same area while other areas in that very same room are not covered. I do not know how the camera system works, but I would like to suggest that they take a look at it, because it is so sad to go through the cameras and not even one was focused in the direction where you lost your property.

*My laptop was stolen and the security guards were unavailable in the security room at West Campus in the FNB building so I could not report the case at 14h00.*

- On the security system, they must improve and implant more hidden cameras. I lost my phone (X6) at Education Campus in ten minutes, I never got it back. Memory sticks are lost in CNS we don't get them back.
- Security did not follow up on my stolen phone as they said they would, despite saying they would phone me and update me, etc.
- They must improve the security system, especially on the Education Campus. I left my phone on the table, went out, and when I come back in five minutes it was gone. I tried to talk to security, they couldn't help me.
- Campus security needs to be more serious. They should not focus on looking at lecture doors at FNB, but on keeping the campus safe. We are being mugged on campus.
- The security are very un-understanding at the gates and are EXTREMELY rude to the public. My mum has had countless incidents with them swearing and saying things about her in a different language.
- The Wits Security Office was sensational when my friend's laptop was stolen. They recovered it within a few hours and were understanding throughout the entire ordeal.
- There is lack of competency and urgency in terms of curbing and prevention of crime on the Braamfontein Campus from the Wits Security Office, especially for students like myself who are not in residence around Braamfontein.
- There is no proper system for students who have lost or forgotten their student cards to enter and exit the campus.
- The Security Office staff need to show an interest in our situations – this is never the case.
- We need tight security, especially at night; the bus service must run 24 hours, even on weekends. It does not matter if it's every two hours or more.
- The security services weren't helpful when I was at the bus stop at around 10pm and one girl started having an asthma attack.
- Wits Security Office – very helpful, I had something stolen and they helped me with everything, including reviewing video tapes.
- Wits Security Office: CCTV cameras must be in each and every computer [room] and all areas except for toilets, because people forget their important belongings almost everywhere due to their overworked minds, and it's heartbreaking to go to the CCTV

room with the hope of finding your belongings only to be disappointed. Security should be tightened. Lost a full drawing kit worth R1 150.29 in my first year (2010) and also lost a phone worth R500, in Senate House, by the public phones, and in the CNS computer lab. Some students went to the extent of using tut rooms to fulfil their sexual | desires, which is only not disturbing but also unacceptable. I think I have made my point. Thank you.

- Wits Security should have more patrols as campus no longer feels safe.
- The Security Office should try to be a bit more friendly and accommodating; a student should not feel guilty and awkward to ask about lost possessions.
- More buses please, and the buses should not only go to Rosebank, sometimes we do not find things we want there or we just cannot afford them.
- Support services should contribute more to student transport. The difficulty of many courses, especially in third year and postgrad is compounded by the parking situation at Wits. If students were able to rely on better integration with metro buses and a friendlier approach to parking it would enhance my experience at Wits.
- The Wits bus service: sometimes routes taken by bus drivers are not those which the bus is to take, i.e. bus drivers who are supposed to take a direct route to Education Campus sometimes take the Esselen route, and turn down the road before Esselen into the police station road, then go to Education Campus.

***There was a high level of concern about unfriendly staff. Some comments are listed above. Below are some of additional comments:***

- All the Support Services should try to understand that whether or not they have a bad day or whatever it might be, they shouldn't take it out on us students. Sometimes it's like they just don't have the will and desire to help, we deserve the respect we give to them too. Yes, I might be 20 and the other person 47, but respect is a two-way thing. Excluding that, I have been fortunate to have more great service experiences as opposed to the bad ones. So yes, they should keep up the good work, but with all due respect, they should improve on their moods.
- I found the staff at the Financial Aid and Scholarships office to be rather rude and unhelpful.
- I wish the staff at Financial Office could be more patient with students.
- I would like for the staff members at the Financial Aid office to treat us with more patience and mutual respect.
- If only the staff would stop being dismissive, always acting like there is something better for them to do than to help the student at hand. The staff is there because the students require them.
- In all aspects I think that it is certain individuals who create a bad name for the University services. Nonetheless, I'm very much satisfied with the services we receive at Wits.
- A little more patience and efficiency from the staff will go a long way.
- It's difficult to get anything to work in this place. You might report issues, for example, the internet at our residence was not working for an entire week, but when we called

CNS the lady was very abrupt, said she'd call back to give feedback and never did, and the internet was still not working. There are just some people in this institution that seem like they come here for the pay day and resent the fact that they need to provide a service to students. It's really sad. Some students would rather do their Honours elsewhere than have to face the dysfunctional nature of this place.

- May the NSFAS [National Student Financial Aid Scheme] offices be approachable, employees must handle students kindly, and personal and serious financial problems must be addressed quickly.
- Some of the staff at our clinic are not friendly and patient.
- The faculty must live up to its promise of being student-based, and by that I imply every-student-based, regardless of colour. The Faculty of Science needs friendlier people helping the students who are confused. They need to be more informed. I have asked five people in the Science Faculty Office the same question and received five different answers.
- The staff is rude and impatient. Wits Security is a disappointment, I don't feel safe at all on campus. The CCDU is not really appealing to me, I only went there because it was part of my assessment but other than that I don't know what it's there for. The staff is very rude....
- As much as SRC [Students Representative Council] does its job in helping students who are excluded and in helping students who have financial problems, they must be specific about whether they will be able to help students or not, and they must do this in time. I remember having financial problems last year and I went to them to ask for help but they kept on telling me different stories and delaying in answering me, and this led to a point where I had to borrow money from someone and pay that money back monthly out of monthly allowance that I get from NSFAS.
- It should be made easier to acquire results transcripts on demand, rather than the strict formalities that we face. Why can't we just download such information from your database when we need it?
- It would be really nice if the SRC took responsibility for the communication errors it makes, for example, the issue of the lockers. I feel that they are indifferent about how they handled it. Everyone knew that if you wanted a locker, you had to go to the SRC, but then they had changed the strategy by which to operationalise the distribution of lockers. I lost confidence in them because I felt that they didn't take my personal plight seriously, a plight that was created by the miscommunication between them.
- The support structures available at Wits aren't adequately 'advertised' to the Wits community. Giving brochures during O-week is not enough. This is a time when first-years get bombarded with information. Students, for example, don't know about academic exclusion and how it works. This should be consistently told to them and not at the end of the year when they're already excluded and need assistance from one or more of these structures. Students do not know about support services.
- Wits needs to have a better online service with regard to our assignments and timetables.



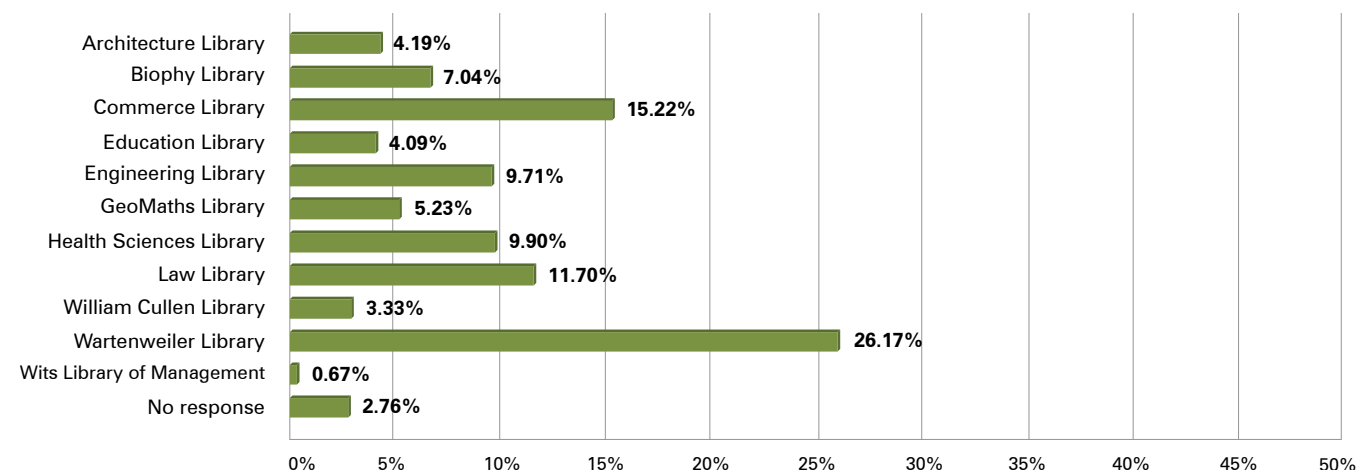


Figure 14: Library used

The data provided in Figure 14 show that the Wartenweiler is the most used library (26.17%), followed by the Commerce Library (15.2%), the Law Library (11.7%), the Engineering Library (9.71%), the Health Sciences Library (9.9%), the Biophy Library (7.04%), the GeoMaths Library (5.23%), the Architecture Library (4.19%), the Education Library (4.09%), the William Cullen Library (3.33%) and the Wits Library of Management (0.67%). The analysis of data provided in Figure 14 should be linked to that contained in Figure 15, which is about satisfaction with the library facilities mainly used by the majority of students at Wits.

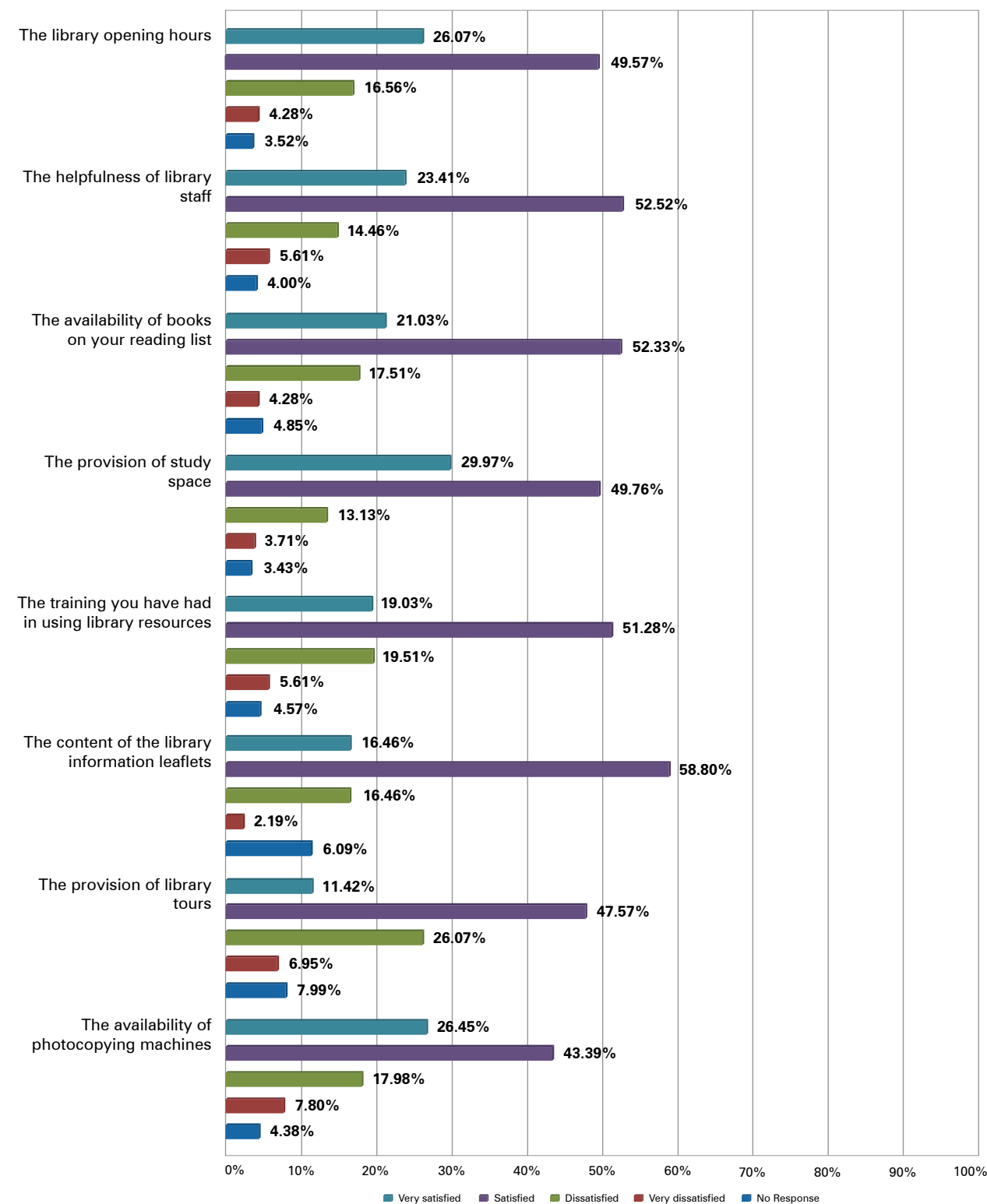


Figure 15: Satisfaction with library used

The analysis of data in Figure 15 is based on questions requiring students to declare their levels of satisfaction with the services provided by the library that they mainly use. This analysis can be generalised across all the libraries assessed.

The data indicate that the majority of students (75.64%) were satisfied with the library opening hours, with 20.84% expressing dissatisfaction. There is also evidence that the majority of students (75.93%) were satisfied with the helpfulness of the library staff; 20.07% were not. The availability of books in the library is always a significant feature in determining the usefulness of the library in any teaching and learning environment.

Students need to be able to access the materials and resources in the reading lists provided by academics in their programmes. The data indicate that 21.79% of respondents were not satisfied with the availability of books on their reading list, while 73.36% of respondents were satisfied in this regard. It is a function of the libraries not only to provide books and reading material, but also sufficient space for students to study. The majority of students (79.73%) were satisfied with the provision of space for studying in the library, with only 16.84% not satisfied.

The majority of respondents (70.31%) also felt that the training they received on how to use the library resources was satisfactory, but 25.12% felt it was not.

Among other services, the libraries also provide information leaflets. These contain detailed information on various facilities and resources available in the library, and the services provided by the library. The data show that 75.26% of respondents were satisfied with the content of the library information leaflets, while only 18.65% of respondents were dissatisfied. In relation to the provision of library tours, one-third of respondents (33.02%) were dissatisfied. The tours were regarded as satisfactory by 58.99% of respondents.

Most respondents (69.84%) felt that the availability of photocopying machines in the library was satisfactory, but 25.78% indicated that it was not adequate.

It is important to note in this survey that there was a relatively widely shared view that provisioning in the library was sufficient for the respondents' needs. However, in some areas the libraries would have to put mechanisms in place to improve on the quality of their provisioning if they are to provide an acceptable level of satisfaction. For example, they could improve the provision of library tours, and also work on improving the availability of the books contained in students' reading lists.

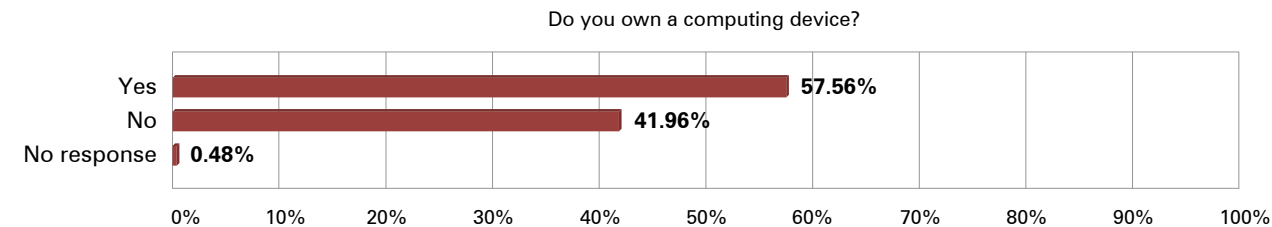


Figure 16: Ownership of a computing device

The majority of participants in this study (57.56%) owned a computing device, but a high 41.96% did not. Given the fact that the target population for this study is second-year students, who are required by University policy to own a computing device, this result suggests that the Computer Ownership Policy and Programme has not had a huge impact among undergraduate students, and the University has to establish mechanisms to expedite computer ownership among second-year students.

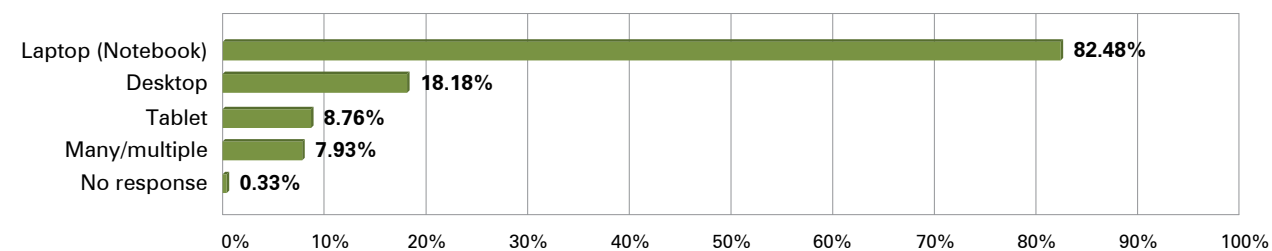


Figure 17: Type of computing device owned

Of the 57.56% who indicated that they owned a computing device, 82.48% owned a laptop computer, 18.18% owned a desktop computer, 8.76% owned a tablet, and 7.93% owned multiple computing devices. There are clearly a large number of students on campus who own portable computing devices. This calls for the University to revisit its commitment to create more WiFi hotspots with a view to widening access to wireless internet connection across the campus as provided in the Vision 2022 Strategic Framework. While clearly not all undergraduate students own mobile computing devices, the number is growing, putting more demand on existing wireless connectivity.

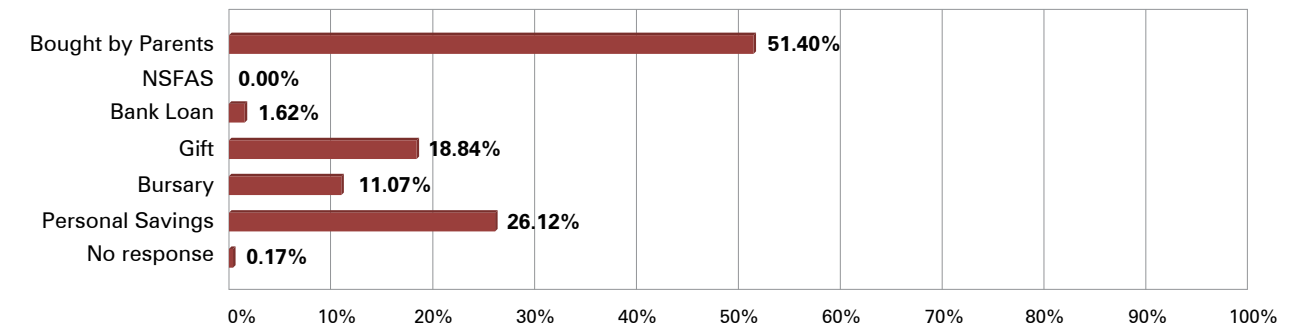


Figure 18: How the device was acquired

As shown in Figure 18, parents and guardians purchased computing devices for the just over half of the students (51.4%) who indicated that they owned them. The next largest group of students (26.12%) indicated that they purchased their devices out of their personal savings. It is encouraging to see, too, that 18.84% of respondents acquired these devices as gifts, and 11.07% acquired their devices as part of a bursary scheme. However, only 1.62% purchased their computing devices using a bank loan. The data therefore suggest that bank loan arrangements are not a popular way of acquiring computing devices. If the University has a system in place to facilitate bank loan arrangements between external institutions and students, it is clear that the scheme does not have a significant impact and may need to be revisited. It is encouraging, however, to observe that there is a strong, emerging trend of students taking the initiative of purchasing these devices with their personal savings, suggesting that many undergraduate students are beginning to invest significantly in resources that are meant to improve their teaching and learning experience at Wits.

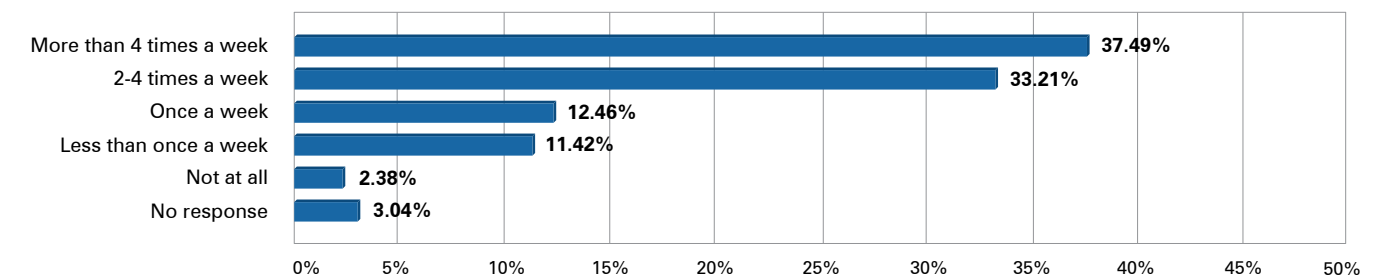


Figure 19: How often do you use Wits computing facilities?

Figure 19 provides sufficient evidence to suggest that a large proportion of undergraduate students at Wits use the University computing facilities more than four times a week, as 37.49% of respondents in this study indicated. A further third (33.21%) were using the facilities between two and four times a week, 12.46% of respondents used them once a week and 11.42% used them less than once a week. Only 2.38% of respondents indicated that they did not use the facilities at all.

Figure 20 shows that the majority of participants (81.54%) were satisfied with the functionality of the ICAM machines and system. Only 13.89% of respondents reported dissatisfaction. CNS also provides students with induction services on the use of its resources and facilities. This programme received the approval of a relatively large



proportion of respondents (69.46%). The physical environment of the computing labs should be conducive to their use, and the layout and positioning of space and resources should facilitate easy access. The research data show that 66.51% of respondents were satisfied with the physical environment of the computer labs, while 28.54% were dissatisfied.

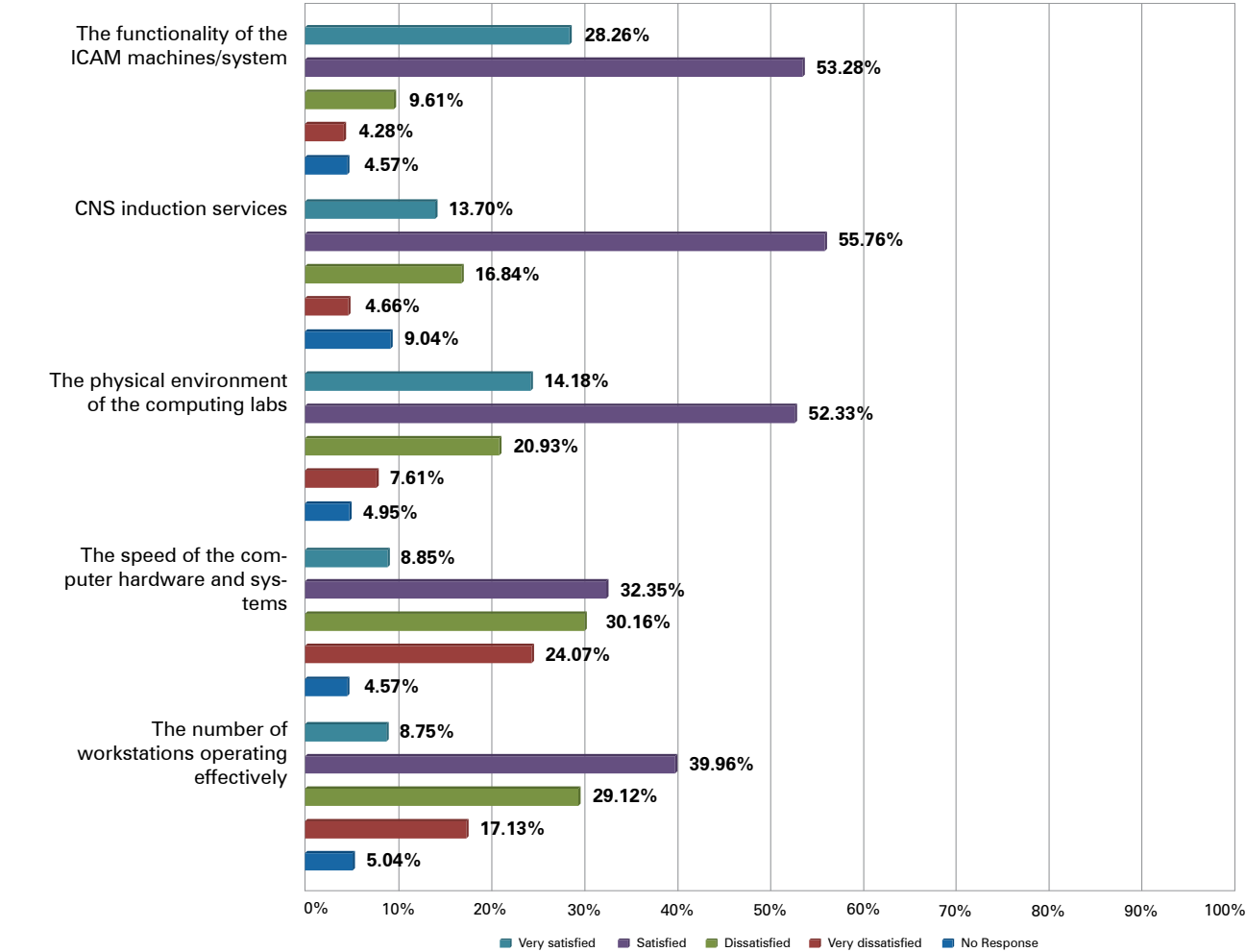


Figure 20: Computer services

A very small number of respondents (41.2 %) were satisfied with the speed of computer hardware, with 54.23% expressing dissatisfaction. It is quite clear that the University has to increase the number of computer workstations accessible to students, as further analysis reveals that only 48.71% of students were satisfied with the number of effectively operating workstations available for student use, while 46.25% were not satisfied. It has to be mentioned that one critical question that was missed in this survey was whether the speed of the internet network and connectivity was satisfactory. However, the general analysis provided in Figure 20 clearly suggests that there are areas in which the University should consider significant improvements in relation to provision of computer services. These relate to issues such as the speed of computer hardware, the number of workstations available to students that work effectively, and the general physical environment provided in the computer labs on campus.

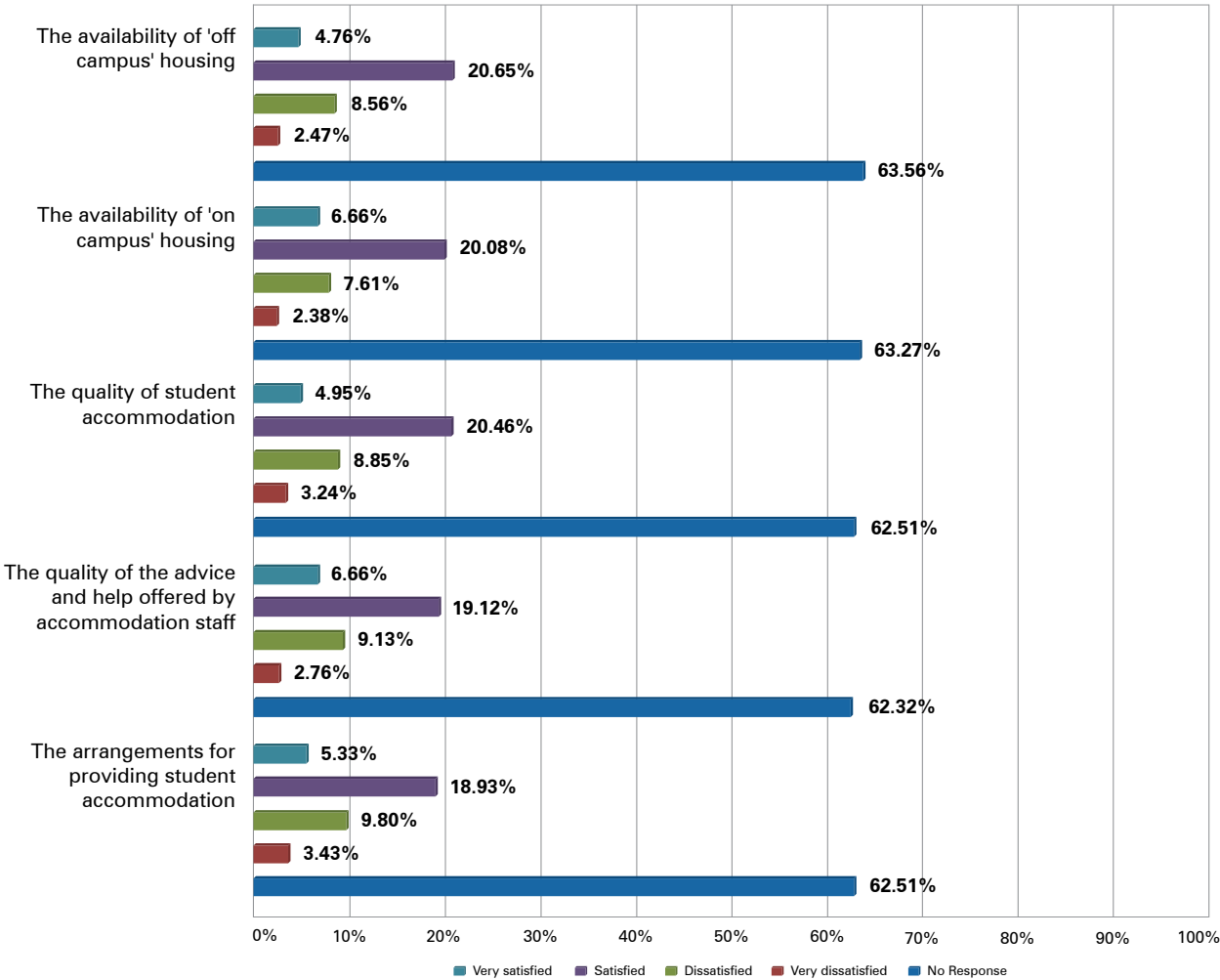


Figure 21: Accommodation

It is worth noting that a large number of respondents decided not to comment on almost all the areas of probing in relation to student accommodation on campus. More than 62% of respondents in each question did not comment. A very small proportion of respondents (25.41%) were satisfied with the availability of off-campus housing, while 11.03% of respondents were dissatisfied. The availability of student accommodation on campus remains an area of concern and priority for the University. Only 26.4% of students were satisfied in this respect, while 9.99% of respondents were not. As far as the quality of student accommodation was concerned, 25.41% of respondents were satisfied, and 12.09% dissatisfied. Similar results were achieved with regard to the quality of advice and help offered by accommodation staff in student residences, 25.78% being satisfied, and 11.89% dissatisfied.

On the issue of arrangements and administration related to the provision of student accommodation on campus, 24.26% of respondents were found to be satisfied and 13.23% dissatisfied. It has to be mentioned that there is a general frustration related to the lack of sufficient accommodation facilities in the University, which to a certain extent continues to frustrate the ambition of the University to attract students from outside the Gauteng province and South Africa to study at Wits. The low participation of students in this area of research may be assumed to be closely linked to the fact that the University has been largely unable to accommodate the majority of undergraduate students who study on campus.

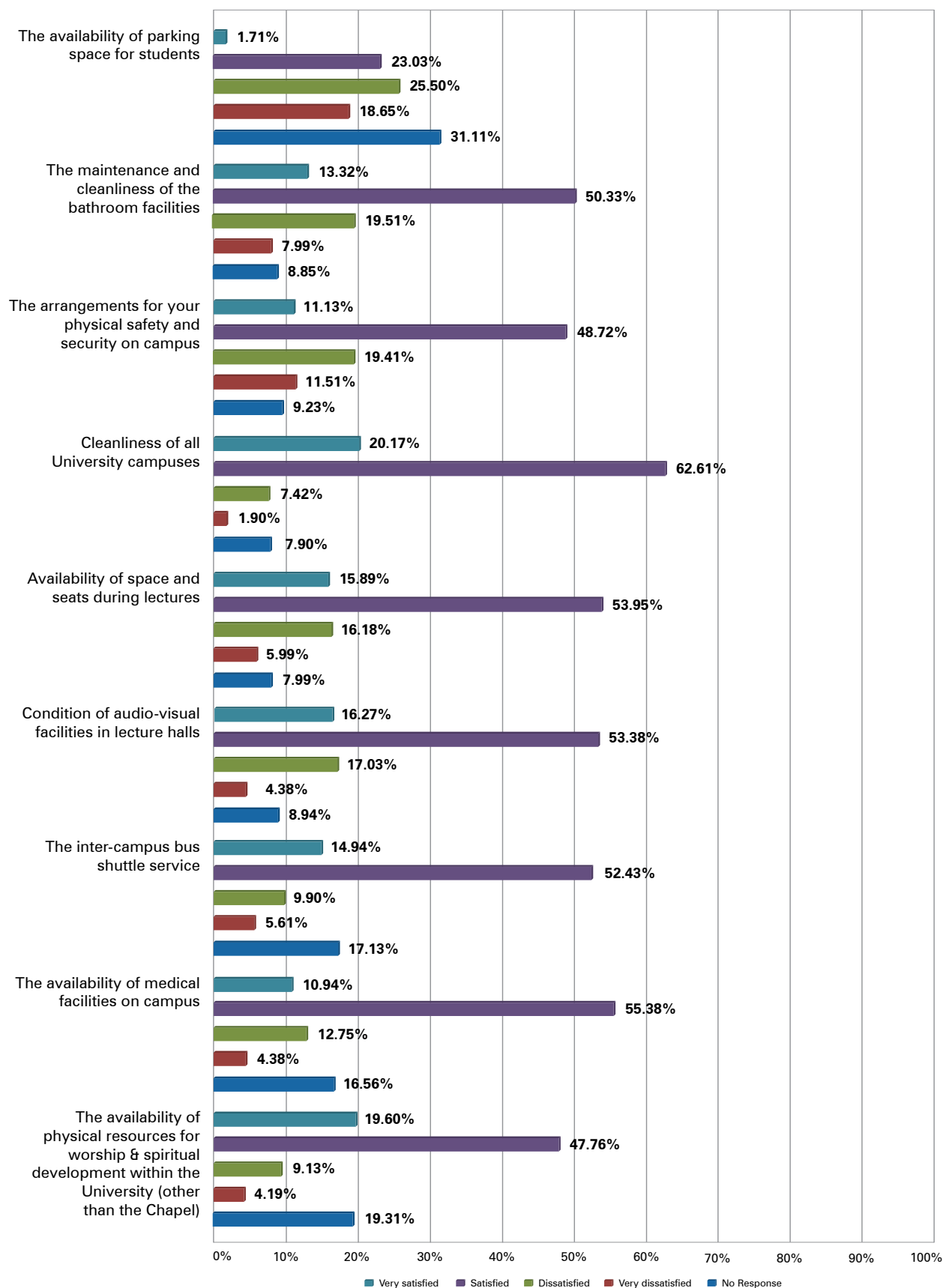


Figure 22: General campus facilities

Data provided in Figure 22 suggest that the availability of parking spaces for students remains a big challenge on campus. Only 24.74% of respondents were satisfied with it, and a high 44.15% of respondents were dissatisfied. At this stage, it is not clear whether the 31.11% of respondents who offered no response to this question are not regular users of the University parking facilities. The maintenance and cleanliness of toilets and

bathroom facilities on campus are very important factors in promoting hygiene among students across the entire campus. A relatively high number of respondents (63.65%) were satisfied with the current situation, while 27.5% were dissatisfied. Arrangements for physical safety and security on campus form part of an essential obligation of the University to provide a safe and secure environment for students and all other stakeholders. The data indicate that the majority of respondents (59.85%) were satisfied with these arrangements. However, it should be noted that 30.92% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the arrangements for physical safety and security on campus, which suggests that these respondents do not see Wits as a safe environment, conducive to teaching and learning. This in turn suggests that the University should consider putting in place mechanisms to deal with the anxieties of students in relation to safety and security, or address the widely shared perceptions that the Wits environment is not a reasonably safe one.

Vision 2022 states that the University intends to embark on a campus beautification drive as one of its strategic initiatives, in order to help make Wits a university to 'call our own'. The cleanliness of all University campuses and facilities is one of the most important factors to be considered as part of creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. The data show 82.78% of respondents as satisfied in this regard and only 9.32% dissatisfied. It is also important for the physical plant and lecture theatres to cater for the needs of students when attending classes. A reasonable majority of 69.84% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the availability of space and seats in lectures, while 22.17% were dissatisfied. Participants in the study were also invited to declare their levels of satisfaction with the audio-visual facilities in lecture halls; 69.65% of respondents were satisfied with the condition of these facilities, and 21.41% were not.

As the University owns facilities distributed across several campuses within the greater Johannesburg area, it provides a bus shuttle service to ferry students from one campus to the other. Results indicate that 67.37% of respondents were satisfied with the inter-campus bus shuttle service, while only 15.51% were dissatisfied.

With regard to the availability of medical facilities on campus, 66.32% of respondents were satisfied and 17.13% were not.

The University environment derives its identity and character not only from catering for students' intellectual needs, but also from catering for their spiritual needs. Given the fact that Wits promotes diversity among students and all its stakeholders, it was important to assess students' satisfaction with the availability of physical resources for worship and spiritual development within the University. A relatively high number of students (67.36%) were satisfied with the availability of resources to address this aspect of their lives, while only 13.32% of respondents were not satisfied.



On institutional culture

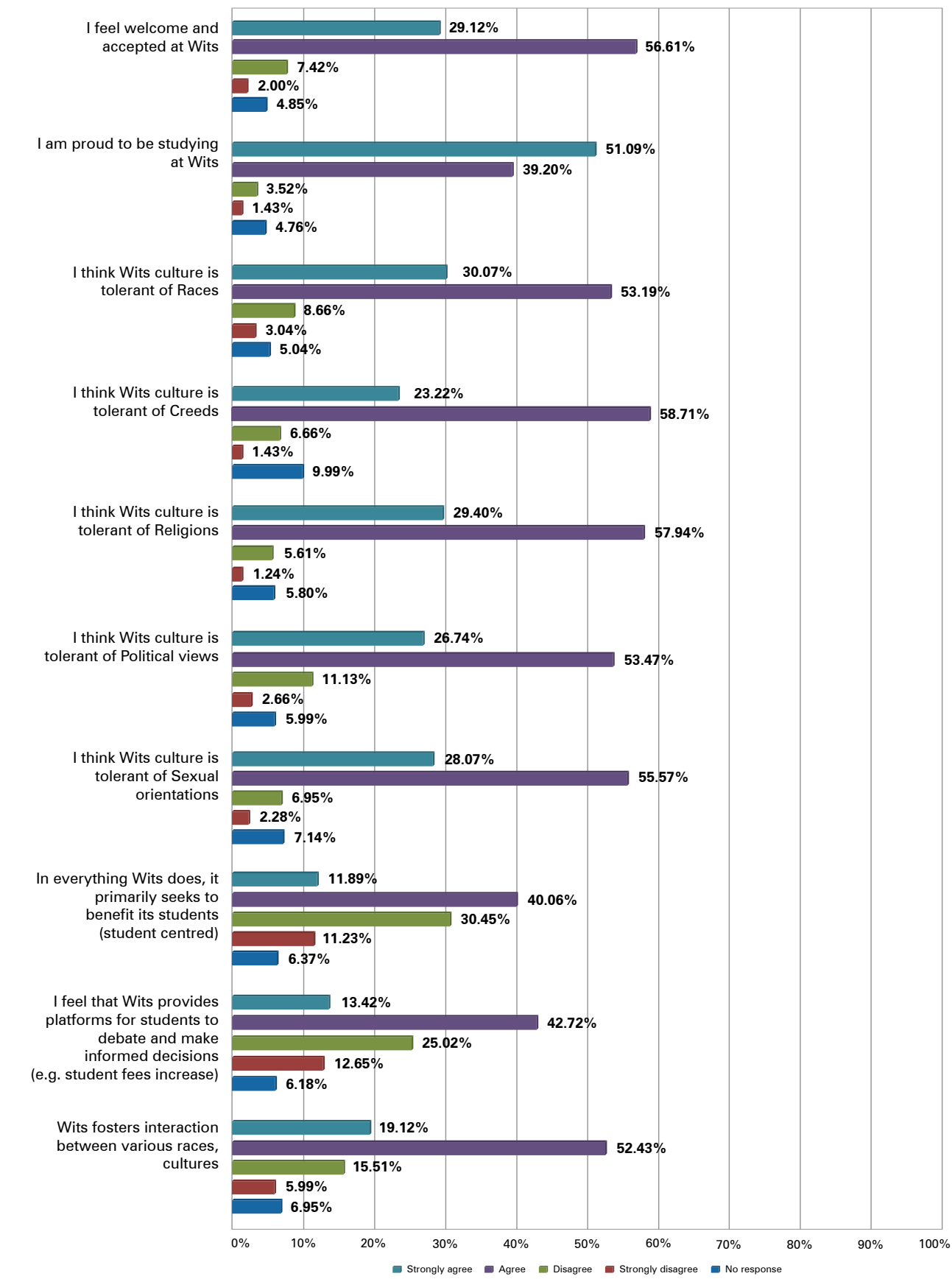


Figure 23: Institutional culture

Institutional culture is one of the intangible qualities that can have a powerful long-term impact on the sense of belonging that students feel in the Wits environment. Evidence gleaned through this study, as contained in Figure 23, suggests that the majority of students (85.73%) felt welcome and accepted at Wits. Only 9.42% of respondents disagreed with the relevant statement. It is also encouraging to note that the majority of students studying at this University felt proud to be part of the University. This statement elicited a particularly high positive response of 90.29%. Disagreement was registered by only 4.95% of the respondents.

On the subject of tolerance at Wits, a sizeable majority of students (83.26%) thought that the Wits culture was tolerant of racial diversity, only 11.7% of respondents disagreeing with this statement. Further analysis shows that the majority of students (81.93%) thought that the Wits culture was tolerant of diversity of creed. Only 8.09% of respondents disagreed with this statement. Still in this area of analysis, it is encouraging to note that the majority of respondents (87.34%) thought that the Wits culture was tolerant of diversity of religion; only 6.85% did not share this view. The view that there is high tolerance of diverse political views was also predominant, with 80.21% of respondents reacting positively to this statement, while only 13.79% disagreed. Similarly, the majority of respondents (83.64%) agreed that the Wits culture was tolerant of diverse sexual orientations, and only 9.23% of respondents felt that it was not.

However, the view that Wits primarily seeks to benefit its students (that it is student centred) in everything that it does was not widely shared. Only 51.95% of respondents agreed that Wits was a student-centred university, while 41.68% of respondents disagreed. This can be linked to a fairly general view expressed that Wits did not provide platforms for students to debate and make informed decisions, a view that was shared by 37.67% of respondents, while 56.14% of respondents expressed the opinion that it does provide such platforms.

There was general consensus among most respondents (71.55%) that Wits fostered interaction among various races and cultures on campus, but this view was not shared by 21.5% of respondents.

It is very clear from the analysis of this data that the University in general is perceived by undergraduate students as an environment that promotes various forms of cultural diversity and individual identities as an important part of the social fabric of the University community. However, there are areas where the University may need to consider improving student perceptions, such as making Wits a student centred University; providing sufficient platforms to engage students in debate and shape decision-making within the University; and the promotion of stronger interaction among various races and cultures on campus.

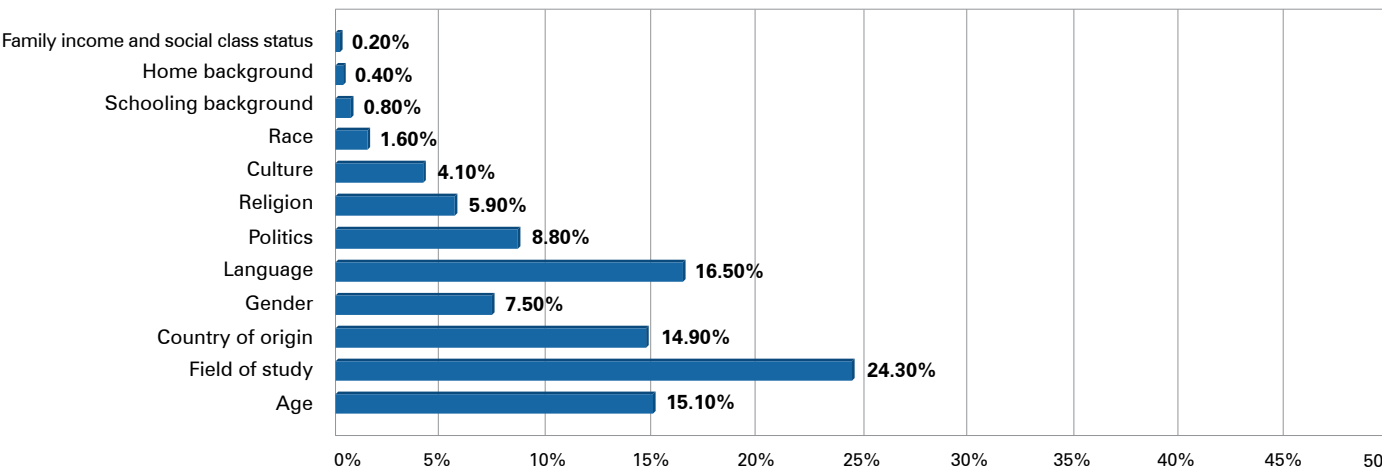


Figure 24: Differences negatively affecting student integration at Wits

Participants were asked to indicate which factors they thought negatively affected student integration at Wits. Figure 24 shows that the majority of respondents felt that the field of study (24.30%) was the main factor preventing proper cultural integration. This was followed by language (16.50%); age (15.10%); country of origin (14.9%); politics (8.8%); gender (7.5%); religion (5.9%); culture (4.10%); race (1.6%); schooling background (0.80%); home background (0.4%) and social class status (0.20%). So the top four factors that students believe block integration are: (i) the field of study, (ii) language, (iii) age, and (iv) country of origin. It is important to note that Wits students do not believe that class, race and family background are factors that can prevent their cultural integration.

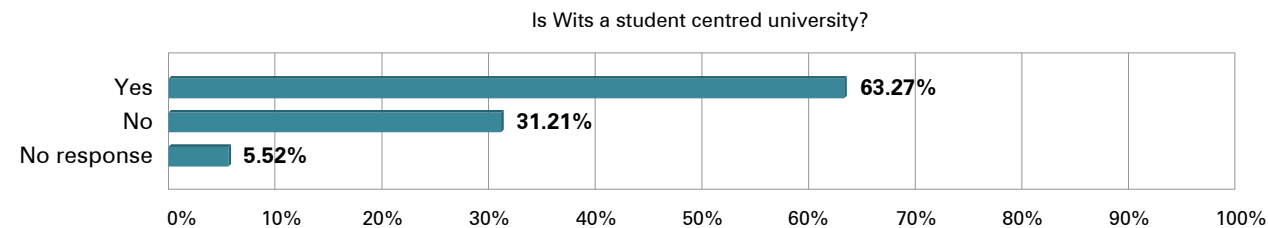


Figure 25: Student centredness

Participants were also asked to indicate whether they regarded Wits as a student-centred university, and 63.27% declared that they believed it was. However, a high 31.21% disagreed. While it is gratifying to note that the majority of students believe that Wits is a student-centred university, it is equally important to register the significant dissatisfaction on this issue.

Participants were asked if they think Wits is a student-centred university, with the option of answering 'yes' or 'no'. They were further asked to explain their answers to this question.

#### Comments made by students who chose 'yes' as answer:

- Wits has services like the CCDU which endeavour to help students cope with their lives in general and hence studies.
- A large number of activities at Wits are about student empowerment, like the SDLU, CCDU and so on.
- As a student I feel as though every resource Wits has is mainly for me and my studies, if it wasn't for any form of interaction with the lecturers, through consultations and so on, I would even forget that they are part of a valuable resource.
- Decisions are made with the sole purpose of making things more comfortable for the students.
- [Wits] benefits its students (is student-centred), more especially when it comes to the standards of the education offered in its respective fields.
- Because it has provided the information needed by students all over the internet for students to check and get the information that they really need based on the University itself.
- Because it manages to accommodate everyone and helps people interact with each other, not just in an academic sense also in a social level.

*Because they make sure that at least students get the chance to state their opinion. Especially when it comes to fees, it tries by all means to involve the students in [whatever] possible way it can.*

- Campus life, development of new buildings, as well as implementing more technology in the lecture rooms.
- [Wits] creates a platform to give a voice to the voiceless. Encourages the individual to constantly be questioning and not just accepting of any aspect.
- Even though not everything it does is to satisfy all of us students, the most important things that it does is for students to be able to work, study and succeed.
- Even though students really don't have a say in most cases and decisions, students are [what] makes Wits to be the university that it is today.
- Ever since I set my foot on the Wits premises it has been about students, even when the unions go on strike they take minimal time from the students. The SRC usually resorts to negotiation as opposed to protest marches, as recently displayed in other institutions of higher learning.
- Every possible service made available at Wits is aimed at helping the student to integrate into the new environment more easily. In addition they are also there for current students to make use of in order to make their lives easier, especially for those who have no access to specific instruments.
- Everything about Wits screams student life. There is the Matrix where students can hang out, the library lawns where people just chill, the parties that are organised by various clubs and societies, and the many students who are generally around the ages of 18–27.

*Because Wits puts students first. And students are given much priority in terms of their needs, abilities, interests and learning skills. Students are active and responsible participants in their own learning.*

- Everything at Wits is orientated around students, and them becoming the best professionals and maintaining Wits's reputation of being a world-class varsity.
- Everything done is in the best interest of the students. Priority and emphasis is granted more to students than anyone.
- Everything that is done and implemented at the varsity is in the name of making it benefit the students. So it is student centred because whatever they do, they think of students.
- Everything Wits provides on its campuses is for the best of its students. There are enough facilities for students in all fields, i.e. academic, sports and other social activities.
- Feedback often asked, felt in control of some aspects of the University.
- Focuses on improving and empowering students... be it in lectures, tut classes, or



social events.

- However, sometimes I think that Wits is not very accommodating to student's needs, especially with regard to paying so much money to write a supplementary exam, when at UJ it is free, and at UP about half the price of Wits.
- I actually think that it is a bit of both. Yes, because the staff really try hard to ensure that they give us a quality education, and no, because management seems really self-centred. They refuse to live up to their agreement with the staff, i.e. raising their increase, meaning that they do not care whether or not there is a strike. They take forever to negotiate. They did not treat the previous catering business [as they should have] even though that was impacting on students as well. For the first time since I came to Wits, I got an e-mail from the Chancellor; it is as if he did so only because he was pressured to. Besides that, management does not communicate with us.
- I agree because students like me feel at home when on campus. I get education, entertainment and social interaction on campus. The accommodation is safe and homely, and the staff and lecturers are amazing.
- I always feel as though my interests are well taken care of, and the calibre of graduates is top class.
- I am friends with people of different genders, races, religions and political views. However due to the different campuses and timetables it is difficult to become good friends with students studying other degrees.

*I believe that its standards are set to train us and equip us as best as we can possibly get, even though it's hard most of the time. What I've noticed is that Wits ensures a high quality of graduates instead of quantity, so in order to meet that quality it has to (and does) invest a lot in students!!!*

- I believe that on the surface Wits is integrated. You walk into a lecture hall and it's multiracial, multicultural, diverse religions and backgrounds; however, those of certain groupings for the most part tend to stick together. White people are friends mostly with white people, black people are mostly friends with black people, Indians are mostly friends with Indians, Jewish people are mostly friends with Jewish people etc. Furthermore, people are often separated into their social classes. There aren't many activities at Wits that bring people together, especially those who don't live at Res who go home to families or friends and only really come to Wits to study, not to be integrated with others and make their university somewhere they would enjoy socialising. If there are sporting events, an activity which always brings people together, there is never enough information about them and people barely know what's happening at Wits. There should be a page on the Wits website which informs students of 'what's on', perhaps even has the schedule for all the Wits Theatre shows. I really wanted to go to one of the shows with some friends but couldn't find what shows were on anywhere. If there is one, I don't know about it and that in itself shows that there hasn't been enough publicity. Wits is renowned for its political stance. Students' feeling liberated is important but it does interfere with some of our learning time.
- I would say that Wits is for the most part student centred; I mean Wits wouldn't exist if it weren't for its students. I just wish there was a way to ensure that people felt more integrated. I will add that the activities that are held on the library lawns at lunch are

great and really do bring people together. Well done for that :) Oh and I love the Wits market. The last one was the best one, the stalls were amazing and diverse and I was excited to see what they all had. Stuff like that is great!

*I believe that Wits focuses on delivering the best obtainable education to a high level necessary to students.*

- I come from Rhodes. This University does give students the edge and tries by all means to assist students but I never know whether it is for the students, or to show the general public – a mere facade – that Wits is about helping its students and is student centred.
- I don't know about others but I feel welcome here at Wits, they do everything humanly possible to teach us how to tackle real-life problems in the real world.
- I feel like there is a great deal of attention on student satisfaction. Teachers are concerned and care about how students are doing.
- I feel surveys like these imply that the school is concerned with what students think and feel.

*I feel that everything it does is for the benefits of its students, such as the building improvements, and the lecturer rating surveys we receive during lectures.*

- I feel that Wits does maintain and consider a healthy student life. I think that Wits also attempts to focus mainly on the student's needs and requirements!

*I guess everything that is done in the institution is what is best for us as students. We are groomed to withstand the harsh world of work.*

- I guess, but I think management should look into improving the University's standing by promoting research and publications in all fields. And maybe upgrade some lab equipment.

*I have a right to state my opinion and get my voice heard via the SRC, House committees.*

- I have never felt that Wits has treated students in any way that might negatively affect the students.
- I think because Wits has so much to give and there always something happening around here that just makes students love it!

*I think emphasis is put on getting the student equipped with all he or she needs to be competent in the real outside world.*

*I think even this survey bears testament to the fact that Wits is student centred. I've never felt that any lecturer or member of teaching staff was not there for the development of students. There is a lot of student support and facilities geared at or for students.*

- I think that the students do gain a lot of benefits from Wits despite the disadvantages (such as high fees, etc.) because the quality of the education is high.
- I think it is, as at least for me. I have found that the lecturers go out of their way to help you by trying to integrate different learning styles, and in essence the lecturers of a university represent the university as a whole and its attitude toward the students that go there.
- I think that Wits focuses most events or groups that it organises on students, like the FYE [First Year Experience], CCDU and many other groups. Events it organises usually have speakers who speak to what is relevant for students, like the media roundtable. Those kinds of events are usually aimed at students. So in this sense then it can be said that Wits is a student-centred university.
- I think Wits is student centred because it seems to give students an opportunity to grasp more information than [they would if it] just spoon fed them.

*I think Wits makes it its priority to develop students, and the staff is always available to help students who are struggling. The tutoring sessions are also a strong indication that they have the students' best interests as their primary goal.*

- I would hope Wits is centred around autonomous, objective pursuit of knowledge and that students should align themselves. Also, the discrepancy between profit and morals should be a non-issue.
- I would suggest that the University provides an environment that is student-friendly and has sufficient resources to enable students to achieve the best that they can. Additionally, there are many opportunities available.
- In all the University does, they always strive for peace amongst students and offer assistance as far as they can when it comes to academic work.

*In as much as getting a Wits degree is challenging, many arrangements are in place to see to it that the necessary aid is provided to students at all times.*

- In my courses I can see a good effort to produce competent graduates rather than many graduates. Course content also shows a great deal of research.

*In my faculty, in the subjects I take, lecturers make an effort to put the needs and interests of students first. Beyond that, I don't know how a university could exist at all without that focus of entrusting knowledge to a future generation.*

- It allows students involvement in decision-making about the work to be covered and methods that are easy to understand.
- It allows students to run their own committees, whether it be voting for SRC or forming student groups like SAUJS [South African Union of Jewish Students] or DASO [Democratic Alliance Student Organisation]. It's great!
- It caters for all students, it does not have areas meant only for a certain group of people, and it is open to accepting every single individual as they are.
- It clearly aims to provide for the students and hasn't lost that appeal. Clear effort is made to accommodate the students.
- It does focus on its students and accommodate their needs; however, there should more involvement with the students about the decisions made by the University.
- It employs people from all over the world and it accepts international students. It also provides academic support to students, which is a good thing because some students are distracted by things around them, ranging from finance or family problems to issues in class like understanding the topic, etc.
- It focuses on empowering and encouraging each student's ability to be able to reach their potential capabilities based on their social and academic work.
- It focuses completely on students and their interaction with everything concerning the University and themselves.
- It has our interests as students at heart, well grooming us for the work environment with very challenging courses.
- It mostly is student centred, as students are allowed to voice their opinions. However, there is a lot that the administration and executive can do in terms of service.
- It provides entertainment and has a student entertainment centre – the Matrix. Students are constantly encouraged to study, and facilities such as the library lawns and sports facilities encourage student activities such as relaxing whilst studying and keeping your body in shape.
- It provides the necessary for students to explore things which are of interest to them, for example, cultural societies, debate forums, gym facilities, access to libraries, etc. It also gives credit where it is due, for example by awarding scholarships to students with good grades. In principle, though, it treats students who are funded by NSFAS differently.
- It seems to me like almost all the decisions and facilities offered are for the benefit of the students rather than making money.



- It takes into consideration what students think and their concerns. [The staff] try to [improve] the situation and make a better environment for students to be in.

“ *It tries its best to make sure that when students leave the University they are well equipped to deal with life's challenges, whether it be employment or social interactions.* ”

- It's a university, after all. But I strongly feel that the University needs to do something about the layout of how courses are structured. The courses should be more practical. It's all good to learn the background theory but it's even better when I can link the theory to the world at large and apply it. Half the time I don't see the link between the course material and the career I'll be pursuing in future.
- It's a student-centred university because it provides for most, if not all, of its students' needs and wants. It makes us ready to face the real world out there!
- It's all about the progression of the students in every field of faculty and the broad interactions of other activities, e.g. politics.
  - It's an environment which allows students to be free and have the liberty to be who they want to be. Language, home background, family income and social class do, however, play a part in the little integration happening across races and creed. Wits, I must admit, creates a platform for rigorous debate and integration between students. They care about what our needs are, albeit much can be improved though security and student financing, to name a couple of things. I hope you guys would invite me to a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor or open more spaces like this for us to share our views respectively and honestly. Wits is a great school and out of 10 I'd say it gets 7.5 as a student-centred university, scoring strictly on basis of quality of education, the facilities and overall impressions.
  - It's available to anyone able and up to the standard that the University requires them to be. It's a free space to be in and not oppressing in any way, although it is a tad expensive, especially for those whose parents are paying for their tuition.
  - Its main focus is on its students and it can be clearly seen that Wits has its students' interests at heart.
  - Its main focus is developing students in their career choice and it also exposes students to the student lifestyle.
  - Its main focus is providing a safe and free working environment for students. It tries to optimise the performances of the students.
  - Its priority is to make sure that students are passing, which is the reason why they are providing us with the best lecturers.
  - Everything is mostly focused around students and their needs.
  - It's student centred because it thrives on student success and the decisions primarily taken by the University are based on students' needs and excellence.
  - I've realised that at Wits you learn a lot in a very short period of time, it allows you to have your own space [to form] judgments.

- Lecturers listen to student complaints and compliments, and sometimes use these when designing assignments.
- Most of the fundamental decisions are taken in the presence of students, so in that manner, yes, Wits is student-centred university.
- My answer is purely based on the amount of academic support one receives at Medical School, i.e. your lecturers, compulsory tutorials, ADP<sup>3</sup> tutorials and private tutors.
- My answer above does not mean Wits is 100% student centred, but it tries to achieve that. At the end we see that the University is failing to achieve it.
- My experience at Wits thus far makes me believe that it strives towards the progress and development of its students. The academic structure and campus environment enable this.
- Normally Wits does not fully cater to students from disadvantaged families in terms of the speed [with which they adapt].
- Only students are studying at Wits, and there a lot of facilities designed for students, and it is more like a home.
- Our opinion is asked a lot of the time, e.g. rating the lecturers, being able to change exam dates if we organise it as a class
- Partly yes, in that it has made adequate (not exceptional) academic provision for students to 'skim the surface' in their quest for the outstanding standard.
- Primarily, Wits offers a wide range of facilities which is beneficial for us students to do well academically.
- The School of Electrical Engineering encourages students to be confident in doing things themselves and being satisfied with the result. This builds student self-confidence and improves a student's grasp of the concepts.
- A student-centred university like Wits enjoys advising on enlarging the domain of concerns beyond basic student decisions about the formal curriculum – i.e., beyond questions of what major to choose and what courses to take. The overarching question for the student becomes 'what activities and experiences should I programme to develop my understandings and capacities as a learner?' The path chosen can be thought of as the student's development curriculum, and it should be the centrepiece of the advisor/advisee relationship.

“ *The input or criticism by students is always taken seriously and addressed. It is also often encouraged.* ”

- Students are actively involved with the Wits staff. Students are also allowed to develop themselves and express themselves in a comfortable way.
- Students are allowed to engage in decisions that affect them, e.g. in organisations that represent students.

<sup>3</sup> ADP – Academic Development Programme for students

- Students are free and enjoy being at Wits. Everyone is friendly and tolerant towards others. Students have a say on how they want things to be run.

- Students at Wits are a priority, they are provided with the best facilities which are very comfortable for studying. We have the best lecturers in the country. So almost all of the needs of the students are provided for. But Wits should consult the students before fees increments instead of just dictating to us.

- The campus is big enough to accommodate a lot of competent students, with a number of libraries for each faculty. It has innovative curriculum activities and excellent sport facilities.
- The education provided at Wits is of a high standard which benefits not only the University but the students as well.
- The environment allows students to express their views and opinions with little judgment and prejudice. The facilities provided make it easy for a student to have a home away from home and can be help a student adapt easily to the varsity culture.
- The main focus at Wits, in my faculty, is on the academic preparation of students and equipping students with the necessary knowledge and thinking skills. More academic support mechanisms could be provided to students, however.
- The most important concern in a university is for students and lecturers to have productive relationships. In the Humanities Faculty the standard is high and the interaction between lecturers and students is very good. This allows students to develop
- The University continues to allow the interaction of students as well as student participation in all areas, allowing student groups such as the SRC and MSA [Muslim Students Association] to play major roles in our Wits experience.
- The University does everything to ensure that learners are getting advanced and industry-based knowledge; hence the more research papers being published by Wits academics.
- The University provides up to date information on current and relevant events (the strike, for example). It provides students with help systems like the CCDU, etc. – there is always help available if you look for it. The lecturers and tutors are very accessible which is great to have.
- The Wits environment complements student life perfectly. The benches and lawns and abundance of entertainment facilities allow students to benefit the most.

*There is lots of room for improvement with regard to facilities for students, better infrastructure, and updated technologies in the buildings such as bathrooms, more computer labs and especially efficient printing stations.*

- There is lots of support for students, especially the ones in first year, and once you use all the support provided, your life at Wits just becomes much easier.

*They are always embarking on initiatives to provide opportunities for their students and surveys such as this show us that Wits does care and wants to improve the services for our benefit.*

- They are willing to help whoever is in need, for example, if a student did not make arrangements at the beginning of the year for payment and if they are going through a rough patch during the year. Arrangements can be made to assist the student and not victimise him or her by not releasing results.
- They bring law firms in so that we can apply for vacation work, to shadow what lawyers do every day. This develops the way students think about themselves.
- They do not just focus on postgraduates and the academic accomplishments of their lecturers, but have many services that are just for students, and they are sympathetic towards the problems students have, e.g. the health and safety drives and the CCDU and the Writing Centre.
- They encourage every student to become more and do more to be future leaders, both nationally and internationally.
- They make sure students are informed as much as possible. Applications and enrolment are friendly and quick, though there needs to be some improvement about better communication and clarification about tests and their content.
- Wits and its management try to help students out, for instance, if you did not do well during the first semester you will be asked to come to the faculty office to see what the problem might be.

*Though Wits is known to be academically brutal, it is, to a large extent, considerate to the needs of the students. There are many facilities made available for students to enable them to thrive not only in their studies, but in other dimensions as well.*

- There are many instances in which Wits gives students the power to think and do what they have the right to do. The University also has many activities and events that prepare us for the real world.
- To a great extent it is [a student-centred university]; there are many learning opportunities at Wits and support structures that generally care about students.
- We are at least offered a platform as students to voice our concerns about everything going on at the University.

*We have the ability to interact with each other and the lecturers but most importantly Wits gives one the ability to move beyond boundaries and establish a well-learned persona to survive in the 'real world'.*

- The University seems to do everything for the benefit of students, even though as students we are not provided with the reasons underlying some of the things they do, or enough information about those University decisions e.g. fee increment.
- I've been here long enough to know this. I believe that Wits goes out of its way to make sure that students are academically undisturbed. I'm talking from experience because one time I needed someone to pay for my fees and it was too late to apply for financial aid, and I was referred to the Head of School, who directed me to the Dean, and everyone showed me support rather than suggesting that I deregister.
- Wits always gives students the opportunity to express their views as students through the SRC, and, as well, there are so many diverse and vibrant student societies which I feel are absolutely vital in terms of catering for different students' needs and pleasure.
- What really makes Wits is students and lecturers. And most lecturers, especially the ones from School of Mathematics (including CAM [Computational and Applied Mathematics]), not only focus on the pass rate of their students, but also on the understanding and application of the material covered in the course in various practical situations. And lecturers are also socially supportive to the extent that they would ask you about your family and situation back at home, judging from your academic performance, and they would recommend a professional if needed :)
- Wits aims at grooming the student into a well-informed professional. It's not just about getting through the course, but about being equipped with the right tools to be the best you can be as a professional.
- Wits allows for public discourse on critical issues and responds immediately to student grievances when required.
- Wits allows students the freedom to be themselves within an environment that promotes knowledge and skills development to equip them for a secure future.
- Wits does ensure that lectures are held by professional people; they also ensure that the student facilities are up to standard. Hence they strive ensure proper learning.
- Wits does most things with the interest of the students in mind and if students are still not happy, Wits will discuss and make a plan to sort out any issues.

*“Wits encourages all students to strive and be the best they can be. The lecturers in the science field are amazing and are always pushing us to do better. Wits as a university gives us many opportunities to better ourselves as well as our degree, which I feel is important when competing for jobs outside Wits. Wits really does give students the edge by encouraging us to become creative thinkers. Wits is all about the students and what we need, therefore we hardly ever strike as compared to other universities.”*

- Wits focuses on academics and also provides good sporting facilities and allows students to have parties.
- Wits has an approach to education focusing on the needs of the students, even though it also looks at the needs of others involved in the University, such as lecturers

and cleaners, but it prioritises the students' needs. The design of curriculum, course content, and interactivity of courses are good. Wits is focused on the student's needs, abilities, interests, and learning styles with the teacher as a facilitator of learning. This acknowledges the student voice as central to the learning experience for every learner.

*“Wits in general is committed to equipping us with all the knowledge we need in our careers. I enjoy being in this university and I am not afraid of what will happen in the workplace in future with the skills and knowledge I am equipped with. I feel like a leader, due to the mentorship I receive here at Wits.”*

- Wits incorporates all students, of different races, genders and religious backgrounds. Wits respects all students equally and does a good job in welcoming all.
- Wits is a student-centred university because the needs of students are met and students are made to see that they are an integral part of the University.
- Wits is adequately resourced to support the learning activity. Teaching staff are knowledgeable and approachable and the content keeps up with modern times.
- Wits is giving all students a fair chance to attain their goals. The staff and lecturers are very competent. I think Wits is very student orientated.
- Wits is student centred because all the workers it has hired have one task, 'to provide services to the students', creating and maintaining a conducive environment. The job description is the same for the Vice-Chancellor to the gardener.
- Wits lecturers are always primarily concerned with the students' progress and development and the University ensuring this shows that its main focus is the students.
- Wits listens to student voices. We have the SRC, which fights for students, and [my] own requests are always answered.
- Wits provides students with a number of facilities that are designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Wits, through its support structures, demonstrates that it is a student-centred university.
- Wits provides students with all necessary facilities in order for a student to achieve aims in life, socially, academically and spiritually.
- Wits provides a platform for students to be themselves and it takes into consideration the needs of students. It is sympathetic to student's needs and give us a more healthy environment to study in.
- Wits provides students with the most current technology in lecture rooms (B 45 JCE) and computer labs, and security that values our safety as students. Wits libraries are in abundance so that students have access to information. The only problem is that it does not take into cognisance the ability of students to afford these facilities, thus interest charges on accounts disregarding your financial background or aid, plus the 10 % increase in fees for education students even when some courses, like teaching experience, require so much money. The increase in registration every year is just not considerate. Yes, Wits is a student-centred university (if you can afford it).
- Wits seems to be in line with being a student-centred university in that the majority of



services offered by the institution are student focused.

- Wits takes into account views from the students that is why there is a Student Representative Council.
- Wits tries to make students aware of what choices they have regarding services offered on campus and everything relating to schoolwork.
- It aims at not just teaching students but helping them in developing skill, attitude and behaviour which they will take with them after graduating.
- Students have their rights and they are involved in many activities that take place at the University.
- Wits takes care of its students, lots of resources are spent to make students feel comfortable and able to work
- Yes, in that the students generally have all resources and services they need, although the services may not be exceptional. We need better computers at the Law library and more computer labs, which are overcrowded in the afternoons.
- They provide tutorials, which other universities do not. They aim at helping students gain a mind of their own and always seek what is best for the student.
- Wits is mostly focused on bettering the students and making sure that the students are happy with the quality of education that they are receiving.
- Everything at Wits is about students, the University goes all out in improving means of teaching, and buildings around campus; lectures are being improved and computer labs as well. Our satisfaction as students is their number one priority. We see this in, for instance, this very survey form. If the institution wasn't concerned about students they wouldn't have done this nor would they work on improving means of teaching, etc., to our benefit.

For the students who chose 'no' as an answer, the answers were grouped into categories in order to express graphically the areas of most concern (Figure 26). The main criticism levelled against Wits as a less student-centred university revolves around affordability and financial resources. Analysis of data provided in figure 26 suggests that the majority of students who think Wits is not student-centred fees and perceived university intolerance of student inability to pay Wits fees.

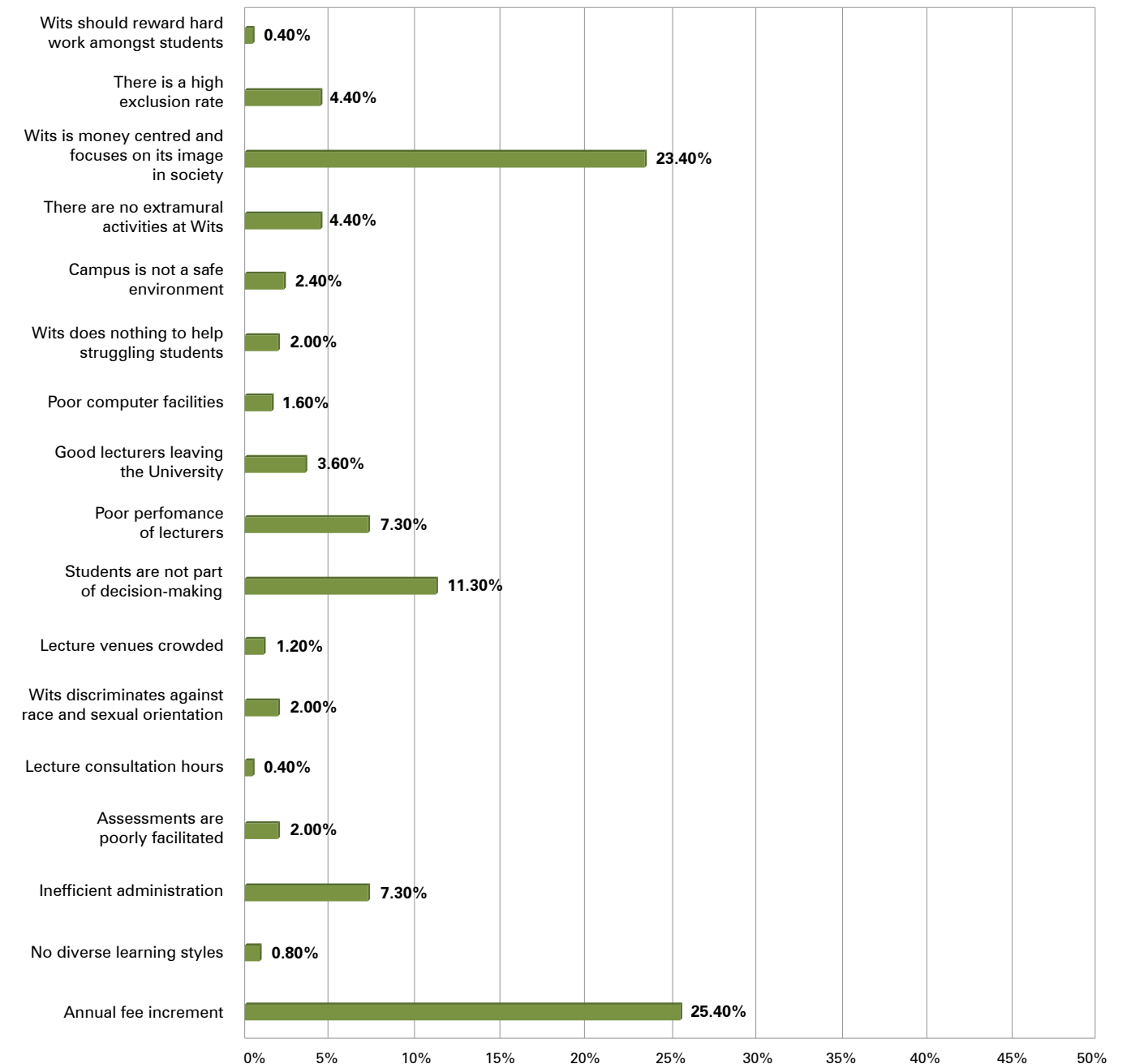


Figure 26: Why students think that Wits is not a student-centred university

- In most cases our views on issues concerning our style of learning are never considered.
- There is the feeling of a student-centred university, but in a lot of cases it still feels like it's the students vs. the system.
- A lot of decisions are made to benefit the executives and people up top!! Example: the fees issue – have they no sympathy for us normal people, the majority of whose parents don't have all that glamorous salaries?!?!
- Activities, lectures, fees etc. are all dictated by the University without any involvement from students.
- Administration at times seems as if it is especially made as difficult as possible. Particularly faculty-related issues.

“After many attempts to get access to some of my lecturers for consultation, it has still not been done (six months later).”

“Exams and tests not inspected properly before given, spelling and formula mistakes.”

“All Wits is, is a money-making scheme. They don't care about residences [where you] have to pay high fees.”

- Although we are made to believe that Wits goes all out to benefit its students, it does not. Wits is a money-centred university. We are charged for everything, I would not be surprised if we were to be charged for just entering the lecture halls. Although students may benefit with regard to their education and careers, Wits aims to enrich whoever is at the top and it is also biased as to race.

“As a student I don't feel I've ever been a part of any decision at all. Wits changes fees without consulting us, or at least the SRC. Our lecture venues are overcrowded and people sit on the floor and for the money we pay that's not acceptable.”

- I've seen students strike and most of the time I never get feedback that they got a positive outcome out of the strike. I would like to think that a university should be about students; hence they should be given the platform to comment on certain decision-making that involves them. Wits has not been doing that, hence students are forever complaining. It is not that as students we do not trust that we have great management. We actually do have trust in our management, but when as students we face difficulties that management does not want to listen to, we start to wonder. At the end of all this, management should just ask themselves where the University will end up with so many unhappy people in it. Yes, it is not about happiness, but who would say anything good about a university that they feel is not good at all. Who would even be proud to come from it?
- As students we feel like Wits doesn't do their best to help us succeed, it's almost as if the University is working against us and wants us to fail, in certain courses.

“As students we have no platform to stand on when it comes to complaining about the poor performance of lecturers. We are sometimes at their mercy when we are in actual fact entitled to a friendly environment that fosters learning, not a hostile one where we are only encouraged to fear.”

“They let good lecturers leave the institution instead of paying them better salaries.”

- At times I see Wits as having a personal agenda which does not put the requirements of students first.
- Wits does the best in its power to take into consideration the best interest of its students, but it is not in all cases that you will find that every decision that Wits takes only benefits students. Wits staff benefits in some things that are happening at Wits and Wits as a varsity also benefits in the long run.
- Decisions are not made to benefit students. For example, were students consulted regarding the increase of registration fees? Wits knows that tertiary education is very expensive yet R8 600 is considered little money for registration. That is very unfair as not everyone has financial aid. The moment your guardian earns more than R120 000 a year they automatically assume you afford everything. What about the rest of the family in that R120 000? What about your siblings who are in school and general home needs?
- Due to the mere fact that Wits fails to assure provisions to nurture the student to succeed in their chosen career path. Wits prefers you fail, and blatantly fail, due to disorganisation and bad performance by administration staff.
- Everything is institutionalised, and students do not have much say in many aspects of the University, and are not involved in many aspects that govern the University.

“Facilities aimed at benefiting students are usually in bad condition or not delivering as they should, i.e. computers and WiFi services.”

- How can you claim to be student centred if you do not listen to our concerns, like, for instance, increasing the upfront payment fee without consulting students first. We have made it clear that this fee is too high and we cannot afford it, but they will not listen to us.
- I don't feel that students are the primary priority of Wits. The fees increases aren't to our benefit at all. The registration fee rates; the difficulty in getting financial aid; the lack of security on campus; the decrease in university rankings; the overcrowded lecture halls; the difficult, ineffective procedures in trying to implement anything as a student (dealing with authority as a society); the overflow of students in courses like geology which can only cater for a certain number. All these things are not synonymous with a student-centred university. Wits management knows nothing about the needs of their students.

- I don't think Wits is student centred mainly because even though the education we receive is quality, most lecturers just have expectations from us that are too high when it comes to assessment, they don't understand that second-year students can't think on the same level as PhD students and there is not enough academic support to help improve our marks. For example, in my geology course we don't have tutorials at all. I also think that Wits focuses more on raising its standards than preparing us for the workplace or maintaining our interest in our courses. We can't be interested in our courses long enough if every time we work hard to move forward, lecturers do all they can to make sure we don't pass.

*From my experience, there isn't enough being done to help students who aren't coping.*

- I feel it is a more like a business than a 'student-centred' university. Entrepreneurial opportunities for students are scarce. Everything, it seems, is expensive... from food at the Matrix to the Wits clothing in the Wits shop. Further, management is aloof (I've only seen the VC once EVER!). A lot can be done to make students safer and more welcome. Wits also focuses too little on extramural activities, sports especially.
- I feel that though Wits is very pleasant to interact with in general, when one has an administrative issue often procedure is vague and bureaucratic, suggesting that systems are designed for people with experience in functioning within said systems rather than students who have had little experience of these systems. Though this may only apply to my studies as an undergraduate architecture student, I have found difficulties around every corner when applying for a scholarship and no one willing to discuss options when discussing the possibility of a liberal arts credit such as a philosophy minor, and even in trying to access the internet proxy or use the printers. I also feel like Wits is a very profession-oriented university and the content of my and a few of my friends' undergraduate degrees, while providing a strong skills sets, are rigid enough that pursuing academic interests within the bounds of a professional discipline is impossible.
- I feel that Wits cares more about itself as an institution, making sure that it operates even at the expense of students potentially losing their education. The fees are ridiculous and the price increase affects self-funding students and even parents. If they cared so much, they would have rates similar to other institutions. It's the most expensive school but all we really get is the brand, not quality.

*I feel that Wits only cares about making money and looking good to the public and government.*

- I feel that Wits only cares about itself and not the students, because the amount of fees we have to pay in January at registration is too expensive. Our parents can't afford so much so early in the year.
- I once had a lecturer tell the class that whether we pass or fail doesn't concern her much as the bulk of her salary is due to the research she does for Wits. I just question what Wits's priority really is, research or development of students. But to fund research Wits needs students. I acknowledge that research improves the quality of the work we learn but I somewhat feel Wits is all about making money and power in the sense of being known to be a high-quality institution. If it really were a student-centred university then a BSc, for example in Computer Science, would contain options of increased work in the field of computer science to gain the required points in order to graduate,

as opposed to being forced to do other modules not relating to computer science. You'll find a student doing a BSc in Comp. Science doing a subject like psychology, applied math, economics, biology etc. I understand it provides a platform for variety but what if the student is clear on what he/she wants to study? The most logical thing to do is increase the work load of content regarding the field being studied as opposed to the current system of forcing one to do other subjects for points in order to graduate.

- I personally feel that Wits does not take into account the students' needs in terms of the high fees and increase in fees that are being paid. Students who cannot afford it are not being heard and helped even though they deserve to be here.
- I personally think that Wits is more focused on how the outside world views it rather than the quality of education students get. For example, we have top-rated lecturers who are geniuses in their respective fields but simply don't have the skill to teach. They can do research well but getting the message to the students becomes a challenge.

*I think Wits is just centred on making money, hence they milk students dry in the form of fees. Also, Wits does not encourage and support students in achieving their goals, a lot more students get excluded than those who graduate.*

*I think that the university puts more emphasis on money than considering the needs of students, and they do not consider the fact that some people are from very poor backgrounds and cannot afford the ever-increasing fees.*

*I think that Wits at all times is mainly focused on its reputation rather than helping students to become better future leaders at what they are studying.*

*I think they don't take serious measures on issues such as robbery of students, and other issues such as financial support to the underprivileged.*

- I think Wits doesn't care about students. They care more about the image they portray to the public and are driven by profits. Overall, Wits staff are absolutely disgusting individuals. The security and library staff at main campus are arrogant and unapproachable. They are too rude. Lecturers constantly put us down and tell us we will fail and be unsuccessful. It is not the ideal learning environment. I am very successful academically but it is from my own efforts and mostly self-studying. Courses are designed to best facilitate learning and the education is impeccable.



“ I think Wits is a management-centred university. They annually increase the fees but provide us with poor study materials (peeling-off pages of course packs) and do not pay academic staff well... but after all I still like the university, I believe that being here is a qualification itself. ”

“ I think Wits is more concerned about how the world sees it and its reputation, they don't really care about what happens to the students. It's like a business institution. ”

- If it was centred on students, firstly it would take into consideration that some students can't afford the high registration fee, especially those that don't have bursaries. Secondly, having to pay tuition fees upfront in full is not an easy feat, especially in my case. I am not an S.A. citizen but I have stayed here since 2004 and can't seem to obtain a permanent residence permit.
- If it was [student centred] Wits would actually work with the SRC, but half the time we have to beg to be heard.
- If it were a student-based university it wouldn't increase the registration fees so high that it becomes so impossible for some students to pay them.
- If it were a student-centred university, we would not be treated like rubbish by the faculty and school offices and some members of the teaching staff who clearly feel that they owe us no sense of understanding or helpfulness.
- If Wits was truly a student-centred university it would be consulting students broadly on issues of fees and responding to parking complaints by students.
- I'm referring more specifically to the school's way of handling some failures (i.e. exclusion policy, the 'cost' of repeating a course in terms of money and time). I think that that could be reconsidered. I think sometimes failing a prerequisite subject does not mean that the on-following course would also be failed.

“ ...a happy university = happy lecturers = happy students = prosperous university (top 100 in the world) = 'student centred university'... :) ”

“ In most cases, the student's interest is of least concern for academic and support staff. As a student I feel oppressed by the bureaucratic structures at Wits which are rigid and have little or no room for change or challenge. ”

“ In the Faculty of Science there has not been a functional Science Student Council since the year 2000. The science students are being neglected and we don't get to hear or know about fee increases, yet we are called on to strike and protest for things. If there are facilities broken or exam clashes students are left to fend for themselves and there is no one to help them. ”

“ It is a postgraduate-student-centred university. Not enough guidance and support is afforded to undergraduate students. ”

“ Firstly, Wits doesn't promote innovation in and outside the classroom. An example: at UCT, I came across a number of student entrepreneurs who started businesses at the university and those businesses somehow had something to do with students. The red tape one has at Wits makes it impossible to start something like this. This is a shame really, because some of the leading businesses across the world started when those people were in university. ”

“ It is money centred... Trying hard to be a top-100 university, but fails to recognise students as individuals... ”

- In my faculty disorganisation of the admin staff and lecturers hugely affects the students' ability to move forward smoothly.
- In no way does Wits make a student feel that it is trying to ensure that they are there to get them to pass. Even though they may say 'Yes, we are on your side', there is still a sense of insecurity.
- In respect to the diversity of culture and race it is not fully developed in the sense that there are racial divides still very much apparent, in my view.
- It more and more seems like a money-centred university, especially when it comes to fee increases, and residence fees at places like Wits Junction. Basically, if you don't have money, you don't normally fit in. The food on campus is expensive; a can of cola is the same price as a buddy bottle. Even a bottle of water, considering there are not enough taps. It doesn't cater to students' needs effectively, even though they pay large amounts of money for quality in everything.
- It originally was, but I find it slowly becoming more centred on the politics and the financial income. It is the home of many great achievers but is slowly declining into the home of money-makers and political activism if care is not taken.

- It's too expensive to study here, like jokes aside, as in seriously – at other South African universities [students] pay R2 000 less for registration fees and what not, and some of the degrees here are way too expensive. They place more of an emphasis on money received than on the greater academic well-being of the student, I think... the student is like an accessory to the academic money-making 'scheme' that's going on.
- The systematic closing down of the different pubs on campus and the difficulty student societies have in hosting campus parties (with alcohol) adds to [it's not being student centred]. It's actually quite dangerous for students to be drinking off campus, keeping it on campus ensures students stay safe. Drinking (whether management approves of this or not) is a part of student life across the world. It shouldn't be banned, but rather regulated. Wits is slowly clamping down on this. There is literally no place on campus where students can chill after a long day/week of lectures and have a drink or two.
- Management is not really concerned with the student needs and what is good for them. They just want to benefit financially from us.
- My faculty admission system is very racially centred as opposed to intellectually centred and as a result the first- and second-year drop-out rates are very high, while individuals who applied and failed to be accepted into their desired degree are able to pass and even excel, proving that the Health Sciences admission system is reminiscent of an apartheid-style education system.
- Not accommodating Wits staff members causes the staff members to disagree and protest. This affects the learning/lecture time of the students. Wits fees are very high, even rivalling those of a private institution. Many students struggle to pay for their courses, and in some cases, the materials provided and the maintenance of facilities are rather pathetic for the price they must pay.
- Not particularly [student centred], it often feels that Wits is more concerned with a good reputation or the bottom line than advancing actual current students. Also certain lecturers, although highly intelligent, are poorly trained to teach and this is a great disadvantage for being a student, as a poor lecturer can squash desire in most cases. This reflects back to 'not being student centred', as the selection and training of lecturers is fundamental to a great education.
- Our lectures have resorted to strike action and the University management does not care about the effect it has on students. We students are negatively affected.
- Some lecturers go out of their way to set difficult tests for the students, i.e. a student with a 50% aggregate from Wits would outclass a student with a 70% aggregate [from elsewhere]. When looking for employment HR officers look at the marks and not too much at the training one has received.
- Teaching is not of a high standard, often lecturers are reading off textbook prepared slides, not actually adding value to the content already available in the textbook. Libraries are not quiet for studying and have broken lights. Information regarding changes to test venues and times is not always available; inclusion of obscure facts relating to the US is used in tests instead of testing knowledge of the core concepts of the course; ratios of students to tutors are too high.
- The system is designed to help us learn as much as we can, but it also seeks to find balance with what lecturers prefer. More often than not, students have to adapt to what suits the lecturer's technique of teaching. We always have to fit into what already exists whether it works or not. That doesn't make the University feel like it is student-based.
- The University is business centred because it basically is led by business-minded people where its aim is to make money. The students are just a source of income and

everything at the University is overcharged, from the tuition to accommodation.

*The needs of students are not considered a priority; if a student is struggling the lecturers make fun of them.*

*No, most times I don't feel like students here are a top priority due to the shocking expenses and the exclusion rate. Sometimes I feel like it is just a business with the aim of making money.*

*Looks as if the aim of the university is to get rid of as many students possible by the time they get to final year.*

- The needs of the students are not first priority, if they were, then all students would pay AFFORDABLE fees, not such high amounts of money. Lecturers are not taken care of and they are the ones that deliver teaching material to students. If they are not paid, how are they supposed to do their work to their full potential? So stop raising fees, and start being selfless!

*The university hardly takes any responsibility for errors, especially in administration. The timetable and subject clashes do not highlight student priorities, i.e. if your subjects clash you have to pick up whatever subject the following year, which does not benefit the student in terms of time and funds. It demoralising.*

- The University is run like a business and at the end of each FINANCIAL year, the big shots in management think of new ways of making a bigger profit. This is often to the detriment and alienation of many deserving students who just can't make ends meet in terms of academic and accommodation fees. Therefore I cannot honestly say Wits is 'student centred'!!!
- There is a lot of bureaucracy and dictation from university management in what seems like anything other than the student's interests.

*They have a set number for students that should actually graduate, due to lack or limited number of supervisors for completing or final-year students. As such, the educational standards are set to meet the required or expected number; thus cutting out even deserving students!*

- Things are expensive at Wits, from the Wits shop (food and clothing) to the book shops, expensive temporary learning material (textbook), interests of the owners are

considered over those of the students.

- Very self-centred, its first priority is money, Wits is proud of a 30% lower pass rate in many schools. Lack of support and effort by staff clearly shows this (i.e. Engineering schools).

*There's nothing student centred about Wits while you find people being separated due to their race, language and sex.*

- When they increase the fees they tend to forget how expensive the institution already is, and there is no change that you can see happening with the increase. Nothing is being done about the division of lectures to make [classes] smaller.
- While I found my experience with the Student Enrolment Centre to be very helpful and student-centred, the general attitude of the Law Faculty does not appear to be student-centred. With some exceptions, we are treated like children who are expected not to attend lectures or study – I would prefer being treated like an adult and therefore take full responsibility for whether I pass or fail.

*They keep increasing their fees every year... It's like they don't care how we fund our studies. If they really cared they would take into account students who have a disadvantaged background!!*

*While the university makes significant effort to benefit students, they do not appear to be the main focus, as indicated by misuse of funds provided to cater for additional Health Science students and research, etc.*

- Wits actions primarily seek to benefit the Wits management system. As long as they are getting money from student's fees then all is well. It is money that they worry about the most. However the level of education provided by Wits is very good, hence the University is internationally recognised.
- Wits does things only for the status of the University, not for the students. It always protests against external issues, e.g. the Dalai Lama being denied a visa. I asked myself whether he was coming to Wits or what, because we have our own problems within the University like fee increments and outsourcing of the workers.
- Wits fails to consider that most students struggle to pay their fees due to poverty accompanied by average academics (thus making bursaries impossible to achieve), which is further exacerbated by the increasing fees. To make things even worse, Wits has a large surplus at the end of every year, so they cannot claim to be on a tight budget.
- Wits focuses more on its reputation than it does on student support service and initiatives within campus. When a student enters Wits everything is his/her responsibility academically, socially, sexually, [in terms of] safety etc., and at own risk. CCDU talks in res are no longer as relevant as they were three years ago. SDLU is hostile to first-years and students in general, focusing on programmes and initiatives

to strengthen its relevance on campus.

- Wits is a great university, it's just that we as students feel that even with the services that we are provided for the fees we are paying, the fees are too high!! And I feel Wits can do more to help us continue with our studies by allowing faculties like the Science Faculty to have supplementary exams, because if I get a 48% or 49% I feel I could have been the chance to show that I can proceed, because sometimes exams are just too jammed.

*Wits and its staff cater for only a certain type of race/class/background of people. The staff in particular is extremely lazy and unhelpful and Wits does not provide sufficient facilities in relation to the amount of fee. Also, every sport is charged for!*

*Wits fails to retain some of the best lecturers because they continue to pay less than most universities, leading to an exodus of quality as lecturers accept better offers. Recent wage disputes leading to the cancellation of lectures is indicative that Wits would rather the students suffer than pay the lecturers what they are worth.*

- The fact that we have the longest holidays in December and we are given a very short school term doesn't help us with anything.
- Wits is a research-centred University. Research is very important here, it's more important than the students, e.g. in the Geology Department, the really intelligent students are encouraged to stay on and do things like Master's Degrees (which is research), rather than go into the workplace.
- Wits is famous for being unyielding and dogmatic. The focus is not on helping students, but on accommodating lecturers. Other universities are far more considerate to students than Wits.
- Wits is more about making profit. The fees are far too high. I know this because I have been a student at an institution ranked higher than Wits and the fees were lower there. Student problems such as security are not addressed even after so many incidents. At my res we don't have WiFi in every room and we don't have a functioning computer room. We also can't walk to computer labs at night as it is not safe! So what must we do? I'm told to speak to the house committee about this. They cite budget problems for our situation. What budget problems when I'm paying fees??? And don't get me started on the residence food situation. The food is not up to standard. I KNOW this! I was a student at another institution last year. Better food, computer room at res there, with printers, even!

*The utter incompetence of almost every Wits department I have dealt with this year has left me exceedingly frustrated. I have had numerous issues this year, none of which were resolved by Wits departments timeously.*



“ There are a lot of instances where one is led to believe that the campus is run in a defensive stance (i.e. defence for poor facilities) rather than that of an institution endeavouring to be the best at what it does. We pay an exorbitant amount of fees yet have less than adequate facilities compared to our less popular, less expensive contemporaries, leading me to believe that I am investing in a name and money-making enterprise rather than my education. ”

“ There could be more focus on encouraging the academic success of students, not just providing facilities and leaving it up to students to utilise them; especially when it comes to students who clearly aren't coping and aren't using the facilities available. ”

“ The upfront fee is way too high. That can make someone think that Wits is planning to get rid of students who come from families which are not affluent. ”

“ There are many times when Wits seems only to think about the amount of money they want to make. Lecturers are not being paid sufficiently and they are leaving, this means that the ranking of Wits by international standards is dropping. ”

- Wits is run like a business institute that only caters for its financial needs and not for the needs of its students. Any decision made by the University is done so on the basis of cost and COST alone.
- Wits is working very hard to accommodate the students, but I think they are working under pressure to keep it the best in the country and as a result the students are expected to swallow more than they can chew.
- Wits seems to worry about everything else but their students. People fail here, and instead of rooting out what the cause of it is, we are busy building buildings.
- Wits should reward students for getting distinctions with a much higher academic scholarship. If Wits was student centred it would. Example: when you are accepted to study at Wits you get R4 000 for every distinction and a maximum of R20 000. After first-year engineering I got a distinction for every subject and I got R10 000 off, but first year was far more work than matric, it should be AT LEAST equivalent to the enrolment academic scholarship!
- Wits student life is not like other universities, like UP, where interaction and the student's balanced life style is fostered. I think the Matrix should be expanded to offer

more food shops and become an open, bright and less dull place to chill at.

- Wits students are not the number one priority for Wits staff. Everything is a battle if you want to get anything done. So by virtue of the fact that this is meant to be an academic institution, the fact that people are not ready and/or willing to help, and the difficulty students face to get things done or to work, Wits is not a student-centred university. The administration is just about themselves.

“ Wits to me feels like it's more of a business than an institution of education, I feel like their focus is mainly about making profit rather than giving a reasonable number of students the edge as promised. ”

“ Wits underpays its lecturers! This causes many lecturers to leave which has an adverse effect on students! If Wits cared about its students, it would be caring about holding on to good lecturers. ”

- Wits lacks a solid and functioning administration system that can report to students effectively about notices both academic and cultural. This dissociates the students not only from the rest of the University but from each other.
- Wits promotes NO student life for students who aren't at res. There's literally no real interest in the students apart from academics. We want a holistic university experience instead of you just shoving the stressful university environment down our throats. Why aren't there any events that are just for fun? For students! Parties? There is NO student atmosphere.

“ Wits is not financially considerate of students that might not be able to afford paying fees yet there are ridiculous fees increases. We pay ridiculous amounts of money for services like food at the Matrix but the academics are still low, the exclusion rate is high and half the computers at the school are broken and there are not enough printers. ”

“ WITS ignores student grievances, suppresses genuine protests and then puts on a mask of being 'democratic'. The university is only 'student' centred as far as those students are paying their fees, not complaining about anything and not having any fun. Wits management is extremely arrogant and views students as little more than kids with beards, and a source to extort funds. ”

“In most of the decisions Wits takes they don't consider students, like when they set test dates on the same day or when everybody wants their assignments on the same day.”

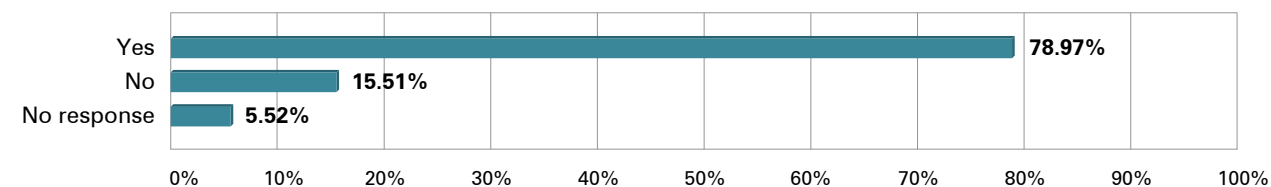


Figure 27: Advising friends to study at Wits

Figure 27 suggests that the overall experience that undergraduate students receive from Wits has a strong element of satisfaction. Although no follow-up questions were asked to establish the main reason for this articulated opinion, it affirms the prospects of a positive experience. This is good news for the University, which seeks to attract more talented students. The commitment of the current undergraduate students to recommending Wits to other potential students is affirming news. While it remains important to understand that the framework provides for various areas of satisfaction, recommending Wits to prospective students is an indication of a positive overall experience. It is therefore gratifying that 78.97% of respondents agreed that they would recommend Wits to other prospective students, while only 15.51% disagreed.

## 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

While the study shows that second-year undergraduate students at Wits are predominantly satisfied with various institutional arrangements and the general culture of the University, there are also areas that need special attention and strategic investment of resources. These include:

- (a) Improving promptness of feedback given to students on their assessment tasks
- (b) Improving the quality of feedback given to students to make this more useful
- (c) Improving student awareness of various support-service units essential to improving their learning experience at Wits, and encouraging the use thereof
- (d) Increasing ownership of portable computing devices by undergraduate students
- (e) Improving the speed of hardware in the student public computer laboratories
- (f) Increasing the number of effectively operating computer workstations
- (g) Providing more university residence accommodation
- (h) Improving arrangements for physical safety and security on campus
- (i) Creating more space for student engagement and debate to enrich decision-making
- (j) Enhancing student-centredness and the principles shaping the culture of student-centredness at Wits
- (k) Encouraging staff to develop a better attitude and improve levels of politeness when dealing with student queries.

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