# REPORT ON THE 2021 NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXPERIENCES SURVEY

**Developed by the Department of Student Governance and Development and the Department of Educational Administration**


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## SECTION 1: OVERVIEW OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES SURVEY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have highlighted the importance of student engagement, a concept originating from Pace's (1982) measures of quality of effort and Astin's (1985) theory of involvement, which refers to "the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside of the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities" (Kuh, 2003, p. 25), in student development (Hu and Kuh, 2002; Shernoff, Csiksentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff, 2003; Hazeur, 2008; Wawrzynski, Heck and Remley, 2012).

Time devoted to educationally effective practices both inside and outside the classroom lead to a range of desirable outcomes (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, and Hayek, 2007, Wawrzynski and Naik, 2021; Schreiber & Yu, 2016), highlighting the importance of both academic activities and those focused outside the classroom, which are often referred to as student development or co-curricular activities.

Consistent with the national and international research examining co-curricular or student development programmes as a necessary and integral component of student engagement and the university experience, for over a decade, Student Governance and Development has used the Student Experiences Survey to assess student outcomes from participation in co-curricular programmes. For student development programmes to be perceived as experiences that promote student learning, student development programmes must be continuously assessed with methods of evaluation comparable to those used to evaluate curricular courses.

This initiative by Student Governance and Development seeks to gather student data to further explore the role of co-curricular engagement in preparing students to develop and hone skill sets often sought after by employers of our Nelson Mandela University graduates.

Moreover, assessing student co-curricular learning, motivations for involvement, and barriers to involvement is important as it will contribute to an educational experience that is relevant and responsive to students' holistic development as fully engaged citizens. Indeed, this type of assessment and evaluation is necessary to ensure the

university is achieving the desired standard of quality in students' co-curricular activities.

### 1.1 Structure of the report

This report is a continuation of the Student Experience Survey administered by the Department of Student Governance and Development (SGD). The purpose of the survey is to assess and analyse co-curricular learning of Nelson Mandela University students. The objectives of the study were

1. To conduct a survey to assess student co-curricular experiences,
2. To investigate and identify student learning outcomes,
3. To identify the top learning outcomes associated with student life activities, and
4. To explore motivations and barriers for involvement.

The survey provides the institution with anonymous detailed annual reports on co-curricular learning.

The report will

1. Identify if co-curricular learning is linked to the identified learning outcomes,
2. Identify areas where more focused interventions are needed,
3. Inform the planning of co-curricular activities to enhance the quality of student experiences, and
4. Identify barriers to overcome.

The results of the previous surveys highlighted the following

- Student perceptions of the Nelson Mandela University were generally high.
- Approximately 45% of students are involved in co-curricular experiences.
- The major motivations to involvement in campus life activities are desire to learn skills and help others.
- The major barriers to involvement in campus life activities are the day or time that activities are held and lecture or class commitments.
- Overall, participants identified growth in intellectual growth, independence,

meaningful interpersonal relationships, appreciating diversity, due to co-curricular participation.

The report comprises three sections. Section one presents the design and data collection, section two contains an interpretation of the data results and section three discusses the major findings and recommendations.

## 2. DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

A two-pronged approach to data collection was employed. First, we used a census approach. Survey notification, a link to the survey, and reminder messages were forwarded to all students.

Tacit consent is given once the participant reads the written information and clicks on the link to access the survey. The respondents were assured anonymity.

### 2.1. Survey Design

The survey was developed through a review of South African literature and then a consultative process with members of the Co-Curricular Forum at the Nelson Mandela University and included various campus stakeholders as well as Michigan State University faculty and doctoral students who conduct student engagement and student learning outcomes research. The survey was submitted to the Nelson Mandela University Research Ethics Committee (Human) for final approval.

The 68-item questionnaire is divided into the following sections and categories;

| Sections | Categories |
|---|---|
| 1 | Students' perceptions of life at Nelson Mandela University |
| 2 | Types of co-curricular involvement – a range of activities are listed varying from society involvement to sport club participation |
| 3 | For students participating: Learning outcomes linked to their participation |
| 4 | For students not participating: Perceived learning outcomes linked to their participation |
| 5 | Interferences with involvement in co-curricular experiences/ activities |
| 6 | Demographic information (e.g.: Race, Gender, Age, Year of Study, Faculty, Campus, Living Community) |

A 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) for responses to items was chosen in order to determine the perceptions and level of participation of survey respondents.

## SECTION 2: INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF THE RESULTS

The total number of respondents to the Student Experiences Survey was 5047 students. This represents 17.8% of the 28,291 students who met the criteria for inclusion in the study. The estimated sampling error based on the survey sample size, the total number of respondents, and the overall response rate is ±1.30%.

Registered Nelson Mandela University students on the North, South, 2nd Avenue, Missionvale, Ocean Science, and George campuses were offered the opportunity to participate in the study. The responses for individual items are presented in tabular form as mean scores. The number of respondents who answered each question (n) is indicated in a separate column after the mean scores in the tables.

The mean scores represent the aggregate of the responses on the range from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). In the interpretation of the individual items, mean scores are interpreted in the following manner

- A score of 4.2 and more indicates a high level of belongingness or identified learning.
- A score of between 3.4 and 4.2 indicates an acceptable level of belongingness or identified learning.
- A score of between 2.6 and 3.4 indicates room for improvement; and
- A score of 2.6 and less signals a problem that needs urgent attention.

The data were coded and analysed with the assistance of a statistician. The statistical techniques used in the analysis, based on the relevance to the research questions are frequency, cross-tabulation, and correlation analyses. Frequency analysis produces frequency counts and percentages for the value of an individual variable. Cross-tabulation enabled researchers to see if there is a relationship between two variables, while correlation analysis was used to test the existence of relationships between the variables beings studied. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequencies, tables, percentages, and correlation tests were used in the data analysis and summaries. Relationships between variables were identified, using frequencies, chi-square tests for independence, independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests.

The annual analysis of data has enabled action research based on the information received. Because of the consistent data collection for more than a decade, we can analyse trends in co-curricular learning outcomes. Gqeberha and George campuses have been analysed separately to highlight unique trends from each campus with regards to student life activities and student perceptions

## 3. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO THE SURVEY

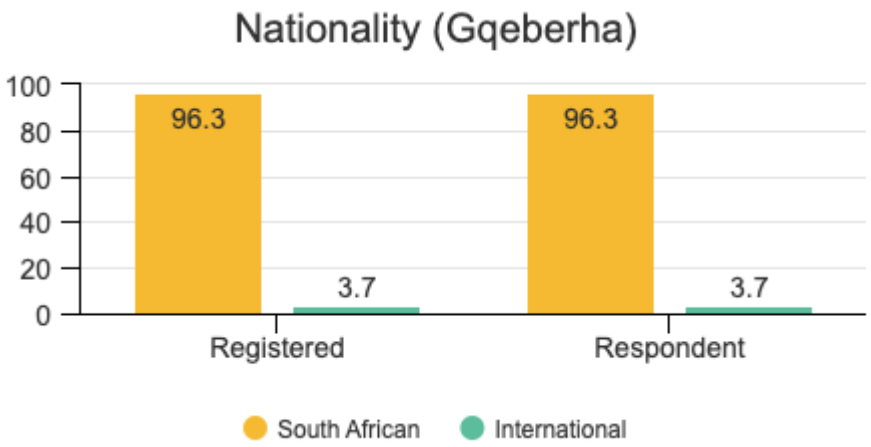
Of the 5074 students who participated in the survey, 4714 were from Gqeberha and 345 from George (15 respondents did not list a campus). Comparisons of demographic information between registered students and respondents show the respondents are generally representative of the student population in both Gqeberha and George.

### 3.1. Participant information

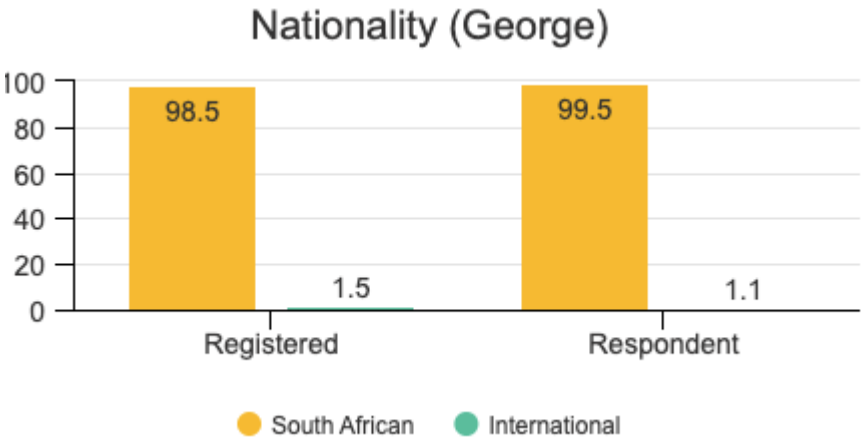
In this section, respondents are described according to specific demographic variables, namely nationality, gender, race, home language, and age range.

#### 3.1.1. Nationality

*Graph 1: Registered students vs. respondents according to nationality - Gqeberha*




*Graph 2: Registered students vs. respondents according to nationality – George*

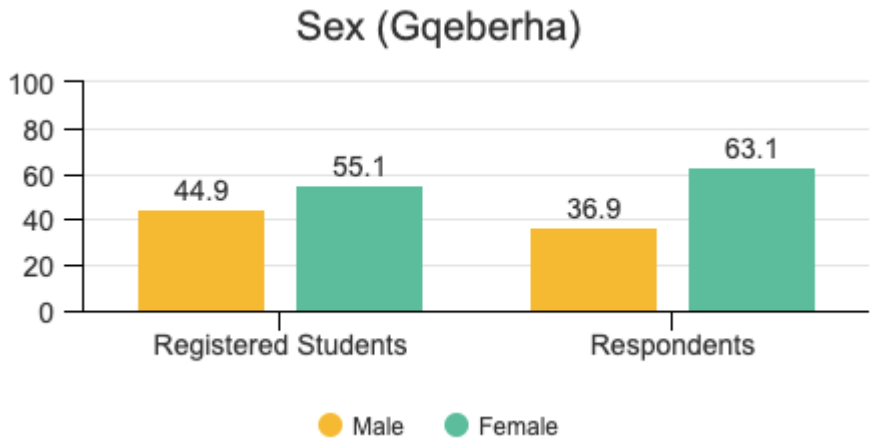



Graph 1 and 2 illustrate the breakdown of student participants' nationality compared to the general student population in Gqeberha and George respectively.

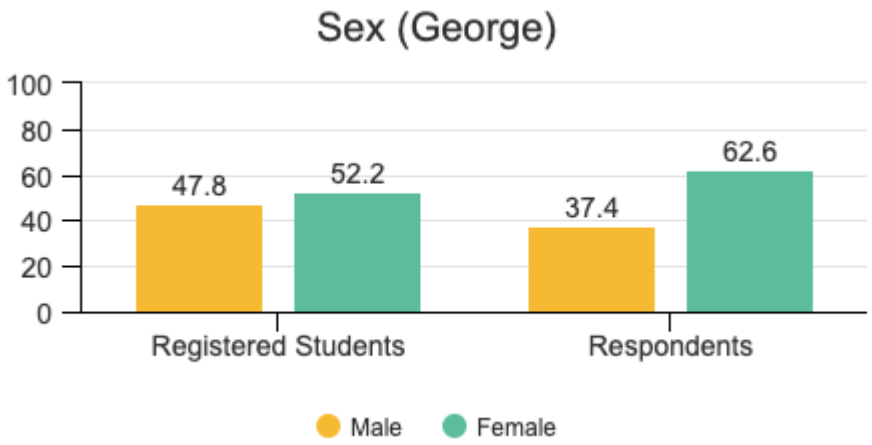
### 3.1.2. Sex

Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate the breakdown of respondents according to sex compared to the general student population. There were a higher percentage of female respondents than males in both Gqeberha and George. While the gender ratio in both campus is close to fifty-fifth, proportionately more respondents were female than the proportion of females in the student population.

*Graph 3: Registered students vs. respondents according to sex - Gqeberha*




*Graph 4: Registered students vs. respondents according to sex – George*



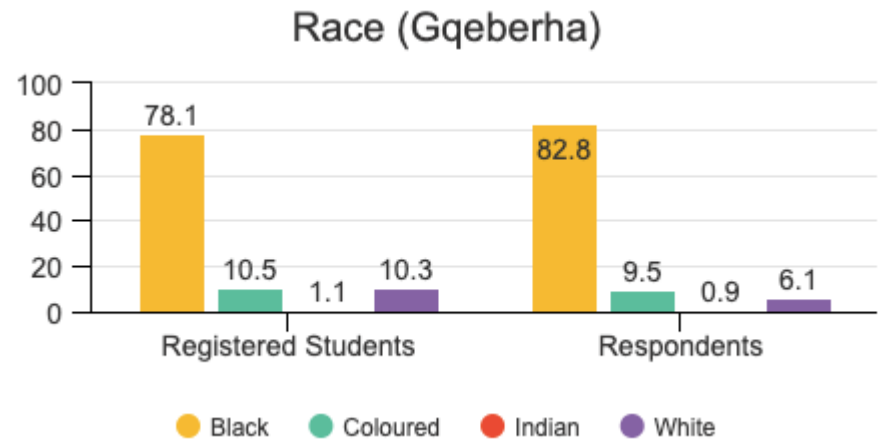

### 3.1.3. Race[1]

Graphs 5 and 6, which demonstrate a comparison of the race classification of respondents with registered students in Gqeberha and George respectively, indicate

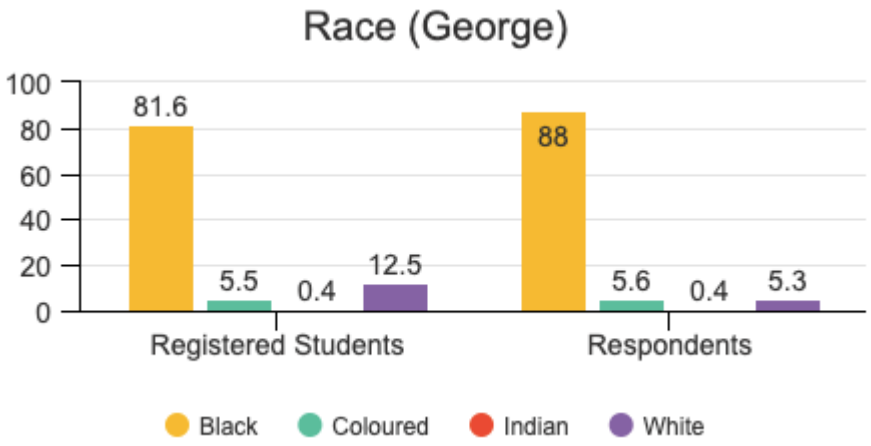
[1] Race groups are tallied according to main race groups set by Nelson Mandela University DHET according to Home Affairs specifications

relatively more Black students responded to the survey. Fewer White students responded to the survey.

*Graph 5: Registered students vs. respondents according to race - Gqeberha*



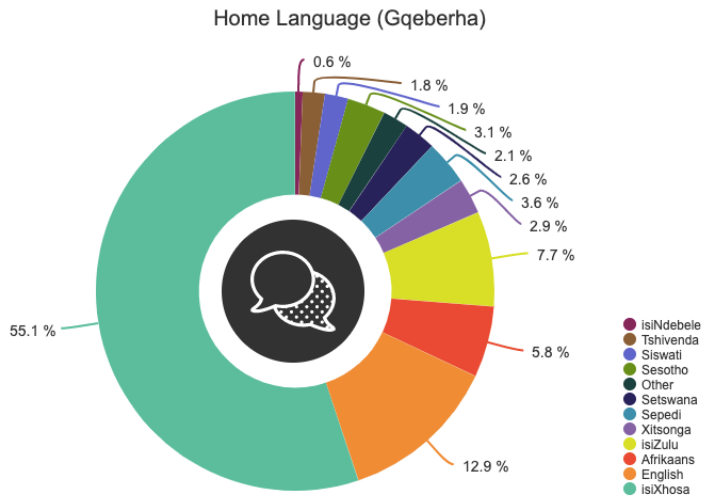

*Graph 6: Registered students vs. respondents according to race – George*



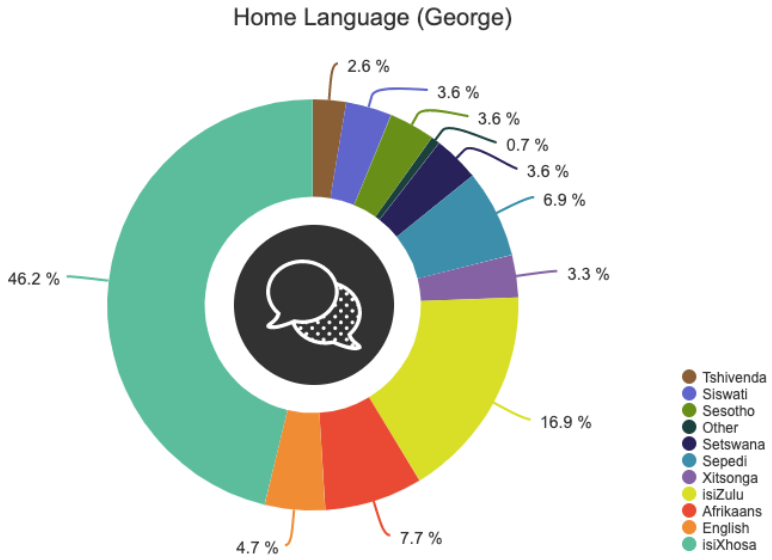

### 3.1.4. Home language

Previous scholarship indicates students' primary language, or the language they speak at home, has a major influence on their college experience. The Student Experiences Survey therefore began asking students what language they spoke at home in 2020. The most common home languages among Gqeberha respondents were isiXhosa (55.1%), English (12.9%), and isiZulu (7.7%). For George, the most common home languages were isiXhosa (46.2%), isiZulu (16.9%), and Afrikaans (7.7%).

*Graph 7: Home language – Gqeberha*



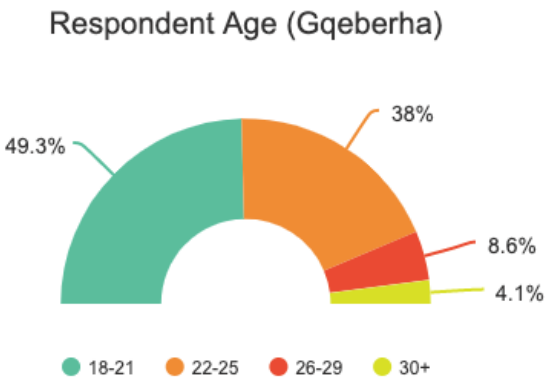

*Graph 8: Home language – George*



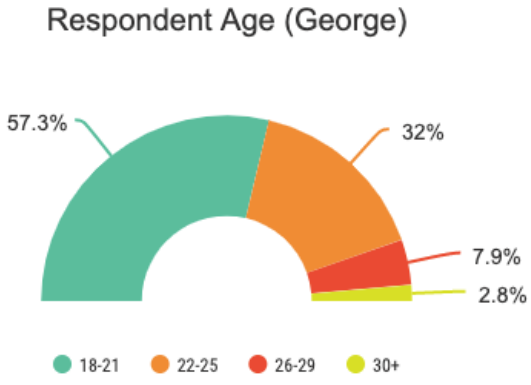

### 3.1.5. Age

As illustrated by graphs 9 and 10 below, most respondents are younger than 26. In Gqeberha, 87.3% of respondents are between the ages of 18-25, and 89.3% of respondents in George are within that age range. Specifically, 49.3% of Gqeberha respondents fall between the 18-21 age rage, and 38% between the 22-25 age range. In George, 57.3% of respondents were between 18-21, followed by 22-25 (32%).

Graph 9: Age of respondence (Gqeberha)




Graph 10: Age of respondents (George)



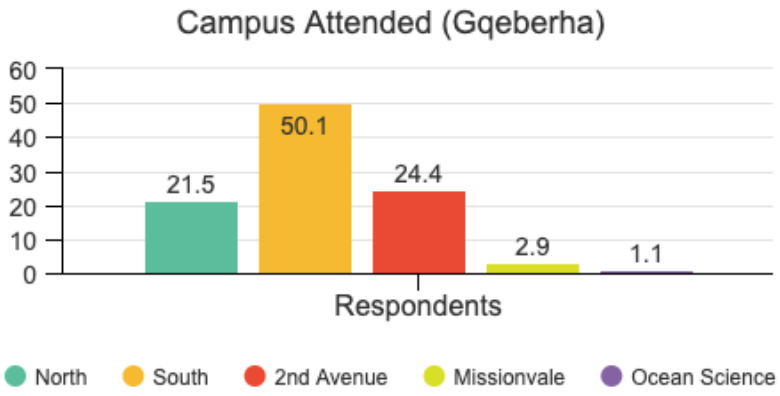

## 3.2. Faculty information Graph 9: Faculty information

This section reports respondents according to their faculty and campus information compared to the general Nelson Mandela University student population.

### 3.2.1. Campus attended

As shown by Graph 11, the highest proportion of respondents were from South campus, followed by 2nd Avenue, and then North campus. Only a small percentage were from the Missionvale and Ocean Science campuses.

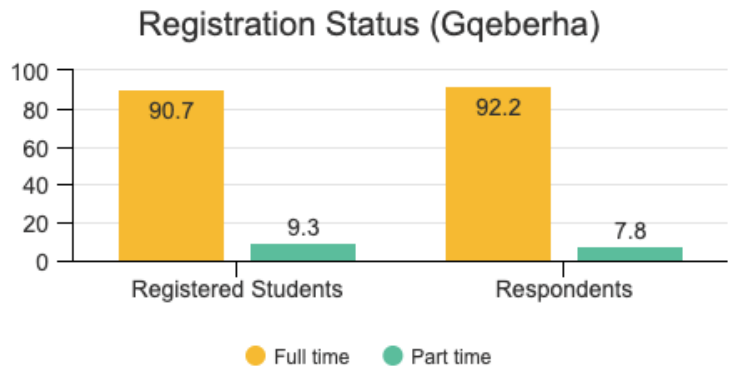
*Graph 11: Campus attended - Gqeberha*



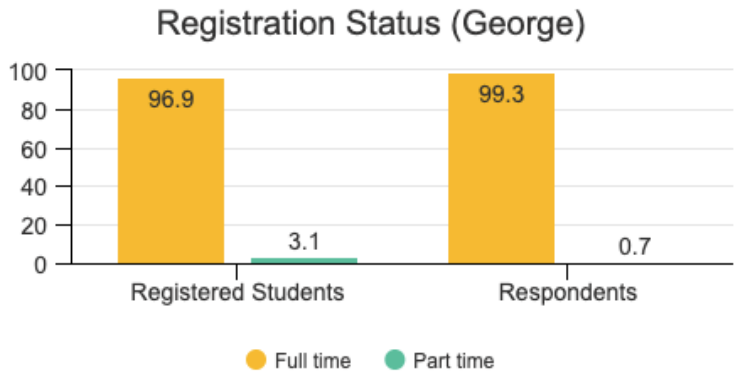

### 3.2.2. Registration status

Graphs 12 and 13 convey the number of respondents who are registered full-time versus those who are registered part time compared to the general population in Gqeberha and George respectively. Overall, when compared to the Nelson Mandela University population, there were more full-time students who responded to the survey.

*Graph 12: Registered students vs. respondents according to registration status- Gqeberha*



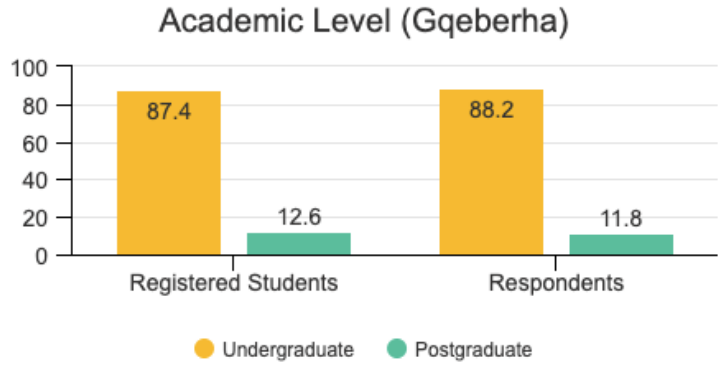

*Graph 13: Registered students vs. respondents according to registration status – George*



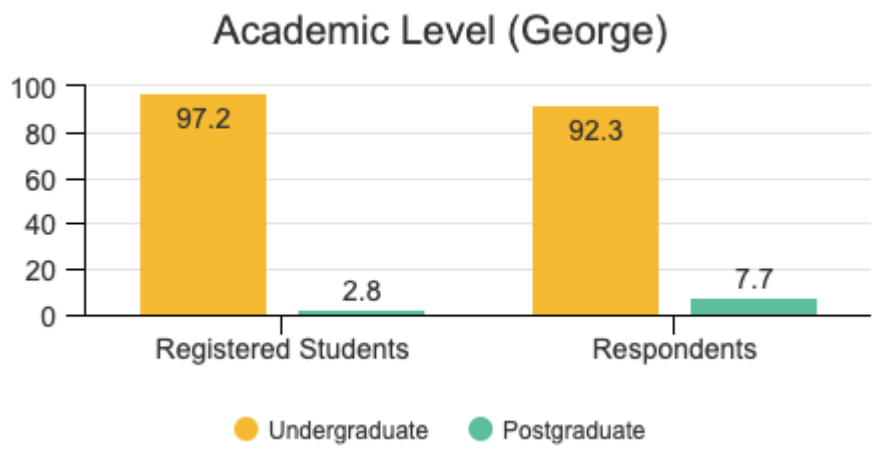

### 3.2.3. Academic level

Academic level refers to whether students are undergraduate or postgraduate students. Graph 14 shows the academic level ratio of respondents in Gqeberha is similar to the registered university population. Graph 15 shows slightly more postgraduate students at the George campus responded to the survey when compared to its registered students.

*Graph 14: Registered students vs. respondents according to academic status - Gqeberha*



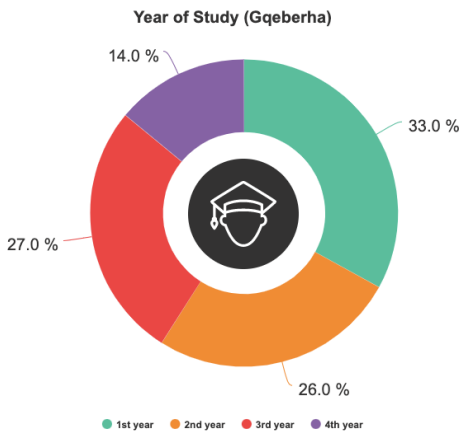
*Graph 15: Registered students vs. respondents according to academic status – George*



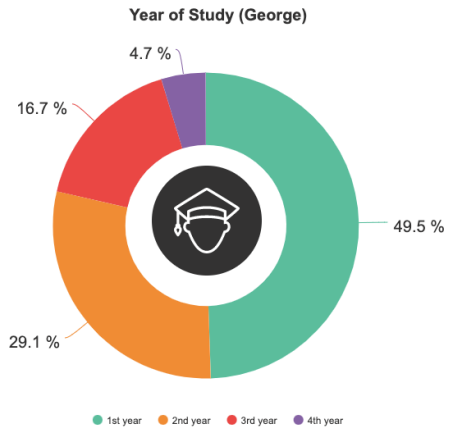

### 3.2.4. Academic year of study

Academic year of study refers to the year of study of the course a student is in. In Gqeberha, most of the respondents were in their first year (33%). Similar number of students were in their second year (26%) and third year (26%). In George, most respondents were first year students (49.5%) followed by second year (29.1%) and third year (16.7%) students.

*Graph 16: Year of study - Gqeberha*



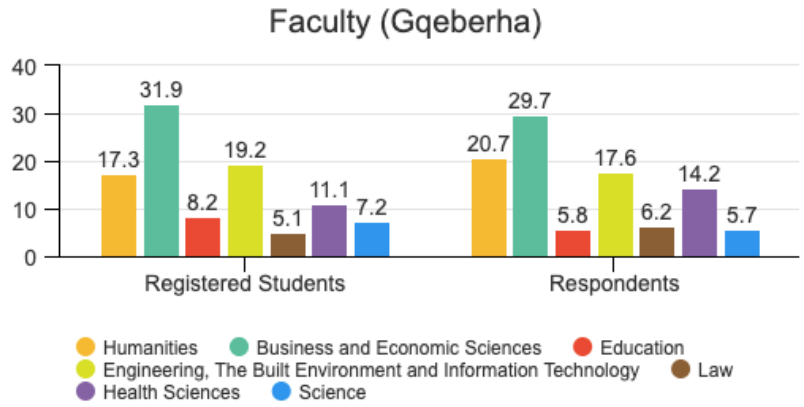

*Graph 17: Year of study – George*



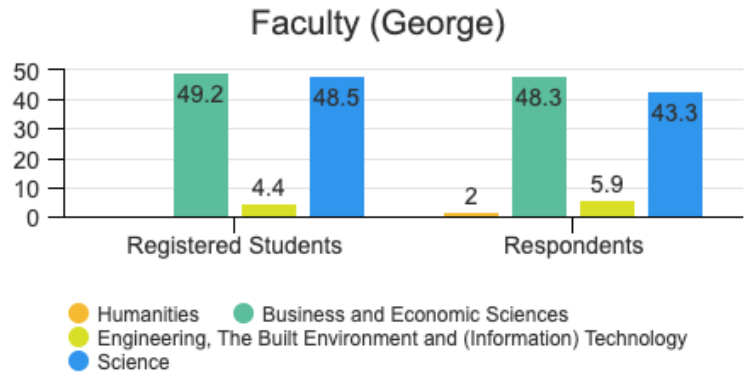

### 3.2.5. Faculty

Graphs 18 and 19 reflect the breakdown of respondents according to the faculties in Gqeberha and George respectively. Overall, respondents are generally representative of the Nelson Mandela University population with regards to faculty in Gqeberha . In George, 47.6% or the respondents are from Business and Economic Sciences.

*Graph 18: Registered students vs. respondents by faculty – Gqeberha*




*Graph 19: Registered students vs. respondents by faculty – George*



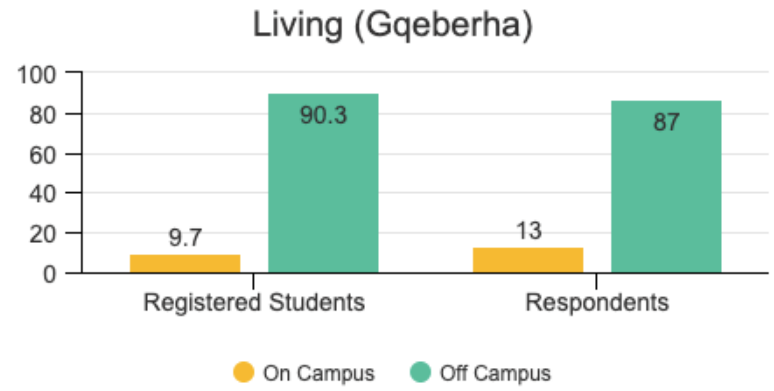

## 3.3. Living and commuting

This section provides characteristics of respondents according to on and off campus variables, how respondents commute, and how they finance their studies.

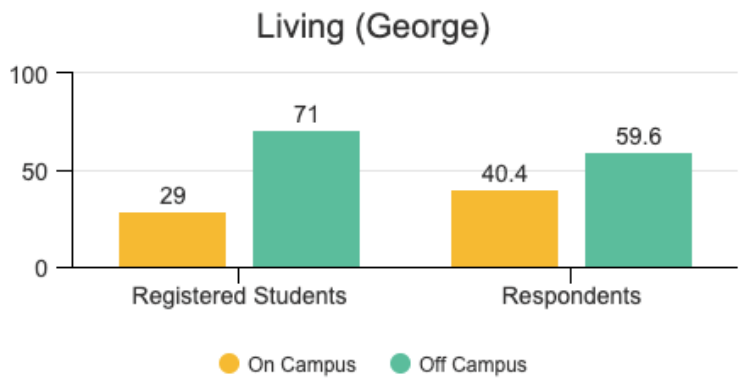
### 3.3.1. On vs off campus breakdown

Graphs 20 and 21 demonstrate the on- and off-campus breakdown of respondents compared to the registered Nelson Mandela University students.

*Graph 20: On vs. off campus breakdown - Gqeberha*



*Graph 21: On vs. off campus breakdown – George*

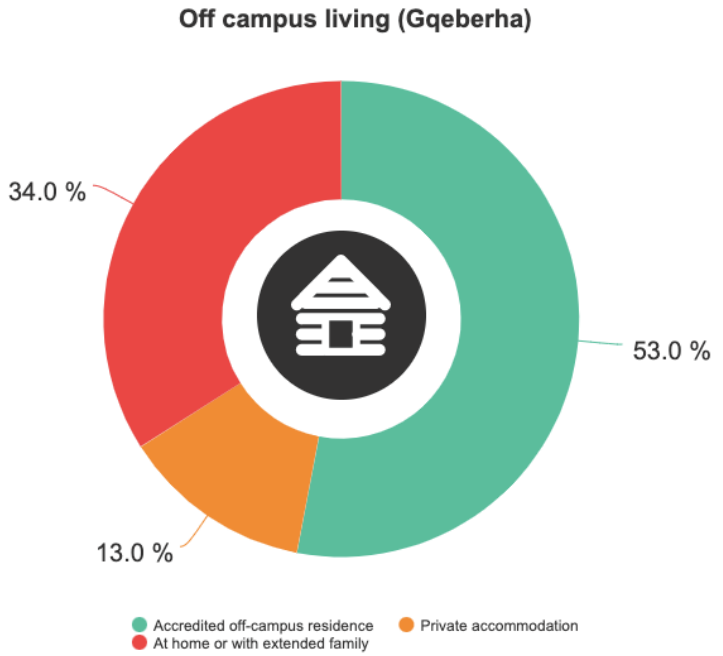



When compared to the general student population, the survey attracted a smaller larger of students who reside on campus in Gqeberha and George. For example, in George, while 29% of registered students live on campus, there are 40.4% of the respondents living on campus.

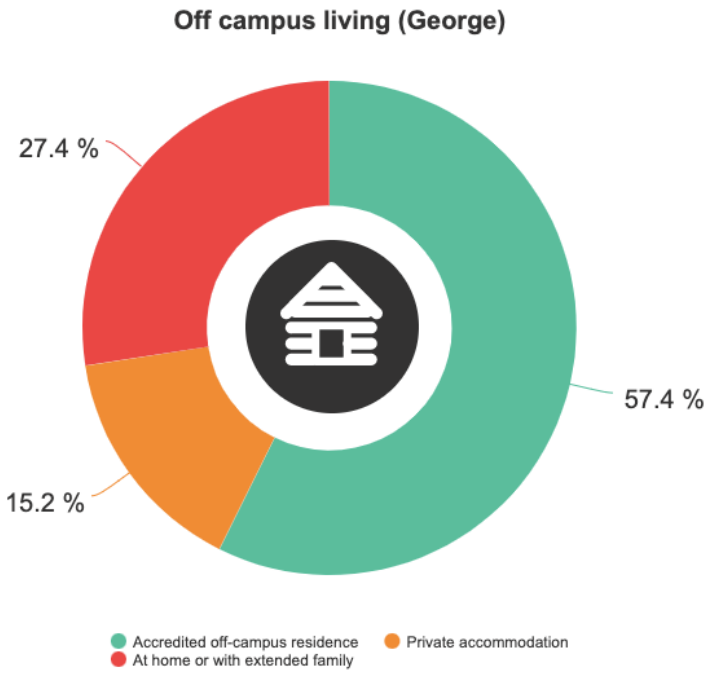
### 3.3.2. Off campus type of living

Of the 3435 respondents who live off campus in Gqeberha, 53% reside in an accredited off-campus residence, 13% live in a private accommodation, and 34% live at home or with extended family.

*Graph 21: Off campus living breakdown – Gqeberha*



*Graph 21: Off campus living breakdown - George*



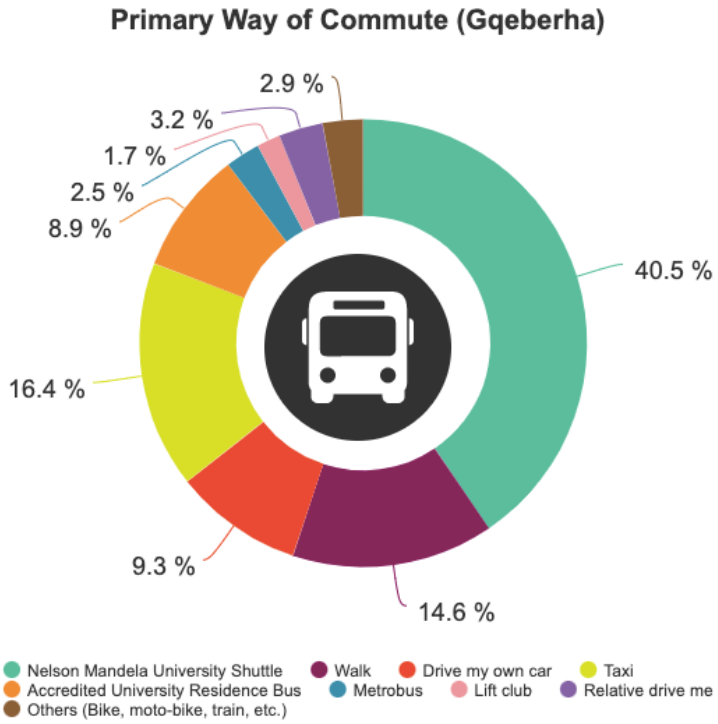

Of the 164 respondents who live off campus in George, 57.4% live in an accredited university residence or house, 15.2% live in a private accommodation, and 27.4% live at home with family or extended family.

### 3.3.3. Primary commute to campus

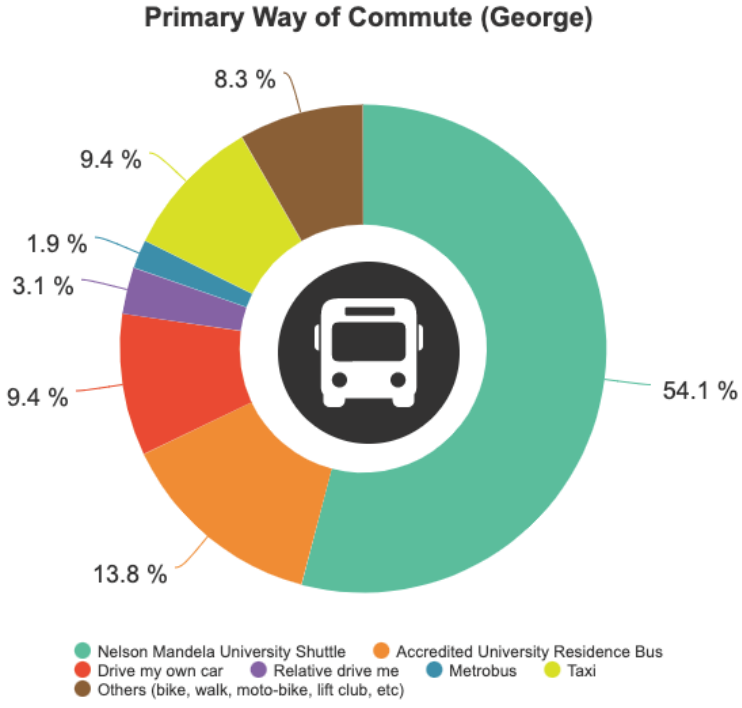
The following graphs indicate the top primary way to commute to campus on both campuses is the Nelson Mandela University shuttle service.

As shown by Graph 22 and Graph 23, the top five modes of commuting to campus by respondents in Gqeberha are the Nelson Mandela University shuttle (40.5%), taxi (16.4), walking (14.6%), driving own car (9.3%), and accredited university residence bus (8.79%). The top modes of commute in George are the Nelson Mandela University Shuttle (54.1%), accredited university residence bus (13.8%), and drive own car (9.4%), and taxi (9.4%).

Graph 22: Primary commute to campus - Gqeberha



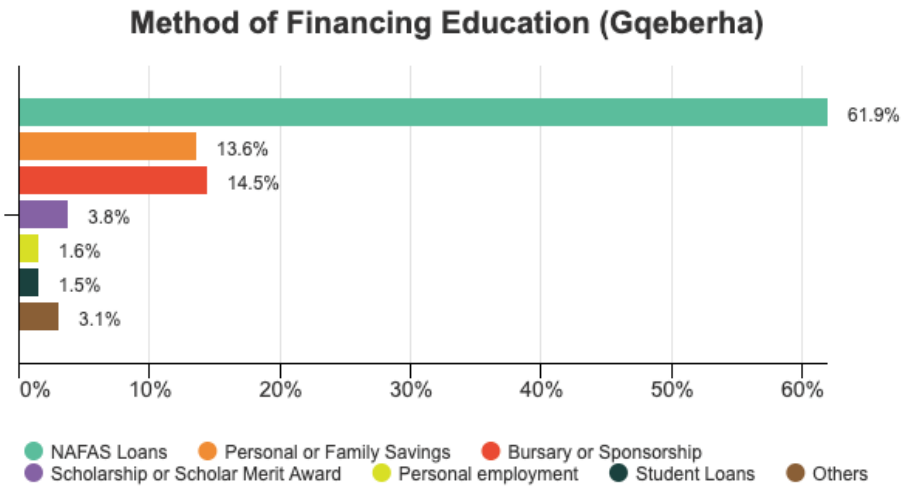

*Graph 23: Primary commute to campus – George*



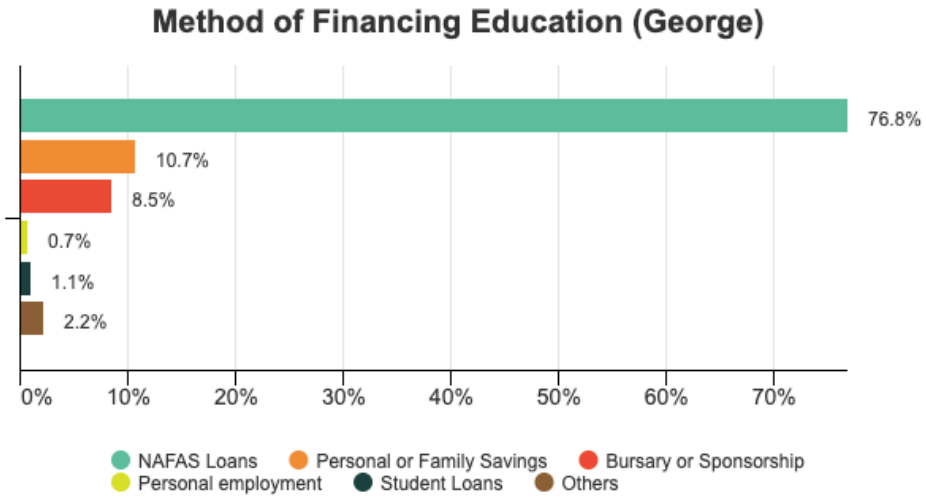

### 3.3.4. Primary method of financing education

As shown in graph 24 and graph 25, the top methods respondents use overall to finance their education are NSFAS loans, personal or family savings, and bursary or sponsorship in both Gqeberha and George.

Graph 24: Primary method of financing education - Gqeberha




Graph 25: Primary method of financing education – George



## 4. PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT LIFE AT NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

The first section of the survey was completed by respondents in order to better understand students' perceptions of sense of belonging at Nelson Mandela University. Participants were asked to rate the level at which they agree with the following statements from strongly agree to strongly disagree:

- My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University
- I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University
- I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University
- I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University
- I feel like Nelson Mandela University is a community
- I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus

The overall results are as follows:

| Question | Mean (SD) | n | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University | 4.4 (1.0) | 4704 | 63% | 23.8% | 8.4% | 1.2% | 3.6% |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University | 4.0 (1.0) | 4673 | 35.8% | 37.5% | 20% | 3.7% | 3% |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University | 4.4 (0.9) | 4668 | 62.1% | 26.9% | 6.2% | 1.7% | 3.1% |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University | 4.4 (0.9) | 4656 | 60.5% | 28.8% | 7.1% | 0.6% | 3.0% |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community | 4.0 (1.0) | 4667 | 36.5% | 38.6% | 18.4% | 4.0% | 2.5% |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus | 2.6 (1.1) | 4662 | 6.6% | 15.3% | 28.4% | 31.9% | 17.8% |

Table 1: Perceptions of sense of belonging - Gqeberha

| Question | Mean (SD) | n | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| My family encourages me to continue my | 4.5 (0.9) | 345 | 64.1% | 24.6% | 7.2% | 1.7% | 2.3% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| education at the Nelson Mandela University | | | | | | | |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University | 4.2 (0.9) | 343 | 41.4% | 39.1% | 16% | 2.0% | 1.5% |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University | 4.6 (0.8) | 343 | 67.1% | 26.5% | 4.1% | 0.6% | 1.7% |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University | 4.6 (0.8) | 343 | 68.2% | 25.7% | 3.8% | 0.4% | 1.7% |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community | 4.1 (0.9) | 344 | 42.2% | 35.2% | 18.6% | 2.9% | 1.2% |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus | 2.6 (1.2) | 342 | 7.9% | 17.5% | 24.6% | 29.8% | 20.2% |

Table 2: Perceptions of sense of belonging – George

Student perceptions were overall positive on both campuses, as evident in the relatively low mean score of students who feel excluded (Mean score=2.6, SD=1.1 and Mean = 2.5, SD = 1.2 in Gqeberha and George respectively). The mean scores of other perceptions indicate an acceptable level of belongingness overall.

Although student perceptions are overall positive, the following variables scored the lowest mean scores on both campuses, which may be an artifact of students dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic:

- I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University (Mean = 4.0, SD = 1.0 in Gqeberha ; Mean = 4.2, SD = 0.9 in George)
- I feel like Nelson Mandela University is a community (Mean = 4.0, SD = 1.0 in Gqeberha ; Mean = 4.1, SD = 0.9 in George).

The results were further analysed using multivariate analysis techniques. T-tests were conducted on student perceptions according to sex in order to determine whether there were any significant differences in perceptions between males and females. Analysis of variance tests (ANOVAS) were then used to determine the differences between the race groups.

The results of the analyses follow.

### 4.1. Student perceptions according to sex

Table 3 shows that in Gqeberha, male and female respondents differed statistically on one perception.

| Question | Sex | | | | Sig | Effect Size (Cohen's *d*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (2449) | | Male (1434) | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University.** | 4.47 | 0.92 | 4.36 | 0.97 | <.001 | 0.12 |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University.* | 3.98 | 0.96 | 4.03 | 1.02 | .061 | 0.52 |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.45 | 0.87 | 4.43 | 0.96 | .235 | 0.24 |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.45 | 0.84 | 4.43 | 0.92 | .286 | 0.19 |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community. | 4.04 | 0.94 | 4.03 | 0.98 | .421 | 0.007 |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus. | 2.62 | 1.13 | 2.62 | 1.16 | .461 | 0.003 |

In Gqeberha , male and female respondents had statistically significant differences, with female respondents reporting slightly higher mean scores and a small magnitude or effect size for "My family encourages me to continue with my education at the Nelson Mandela University" (Cohen's d = .94). These results suggest female students are more likely to receive support from the families to earn their degree at the NMU. The effect size is small.

| Question | Sex | | | | Sig | Effect Size (Cohen's *d*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female (n = 171) | | Male (n = 102) | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.48 | 0.93 | 4.45 | 0.79 | 0.80 | 0.03 |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.15 | 0.86 | 4.23 | 0.88 | 0.47 | 0.09 |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.60 | 0.70 | 4.53 | 0.80 | 0.46 | 0.09 |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.58 | 0.73 | 4.61 | 0.72 | 0.78 | 0.04 |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community. | 4.18 | 0.86 | 4.07 | 0.90 | 0.33 | 0.12 |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus. | 2.66 | 1.14 | 2.67 | 1.34 | 0.96 | 0.25 |

Further analysis of the student perceptions according to sex found there were no statistically significant differences between female and male respondents at the George campus.

## 4.2. Student perceptions according to race

Tables 5 and 6 highlight student perceptions by race in Gqeberha and George respectively.

*Table 5: Student Perceptions according to race – Gqeberha*

| Question | Race | | | | | | Sig.* | Effect Size (Eta squared) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Black (n = 3085) | | Coloured (n = 355) | | White (n=226) | | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.42 | .96 | 4.44 | .91 | 4.46 | .76 | | |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.06 | .98 | 3.86 | .95 | 3.58 | .95 | B v C<br>B v W<br>C v W | .009 |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.49 | .88 | 4.32 | .97 | 4.19 | .89 | B v C<br>B v W | .003 |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.48 | .87 | 4.39 | .80 | 4.12 | .77 | B v W<br>C v W | .005 |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community. | 4.10 | .93 | 3.95 | .93 | 3.49 | 1.02 | B v C<br>B v W<br>C v W | .016 |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus. | 2.60 | 1.16 | 2.65 | 1.04 | 2.70 | 1.03 | 0.438 | .000 |

Note: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; *p $\leq$ .01

*Table 6: Student Perceptions according to race - George*

| Question | Race | | | | | | Effect Size (Cohen's *d*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Black (n = 232) | | Coloured (n = 15) | | White (n = 14) | | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | |
| My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.49 | 0.84 | 4.00 | 1.51 | 4.64 | 0.63 | N/A |
| I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.18 | 0.88 | 4.47 | 0.64 | 3.79 | 0.98 | N/A |
| I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.61 | 0.72 | 4.40 | 1.05 | 4.43 | 0.65 | N/A |
| I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University. | 4.61 | 0.74 | 4.67 | 0.49 | 4.29 | 0.61 | N/A |
| I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community. | 4.18 | 0.88 | 3.87 | 1.06 | 3.93 | 0.48 | N/A |
| I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus. | 2.63 | 1.23 | 2.80 | 1.15 | 2.86 | 1.17 | N/A |

Note: 1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*; no statistically significant differences.

For Gqeberha, the overall ANOVAs were statistically significant for 4 of the 6 perceptions. Black students (M = 4.06, SD = .98) were more likely to report "a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University than White (M = 3.58, SD = .95) and Coloured (M = 3.86, SD = .95) students. Additionally, Black students were more likely than White students to report higher perceptions on three additional perceptions including "I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University", "I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University", "I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community". The effect size of the differences, however, is small.

When comparing white students and coloured students, perceptions also differed in statements "I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University", "I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University", and "I feel like Nelson Mandela University is a community". White students were more likely than coloured students to

report lower perceptions in the three statements above. For example, there is statistical significance to suggest that White students (M=3.58, SD=0.95) and Coloured students (M=3.86, SD=0.95) in their perception of whether they feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University. Overall, inspection of the mean scores indicates there is room for improvement regarding this statement for White and Coloured students.

Further analysis of the student perceptions according to race found there were no statistically significant differences between female and male respondents at the George campus.

### 4.3. Participation in student life activities

Graphs 26 and 27 show the number of respondents who participate in student life activities versus those who do not in Gqeberha and George respectively.


Graph 26: Respondents who participate in student activities vs. non-participants - Gqeberha


Graph 27: Respondents who participate in student activities vs. non-participants - George

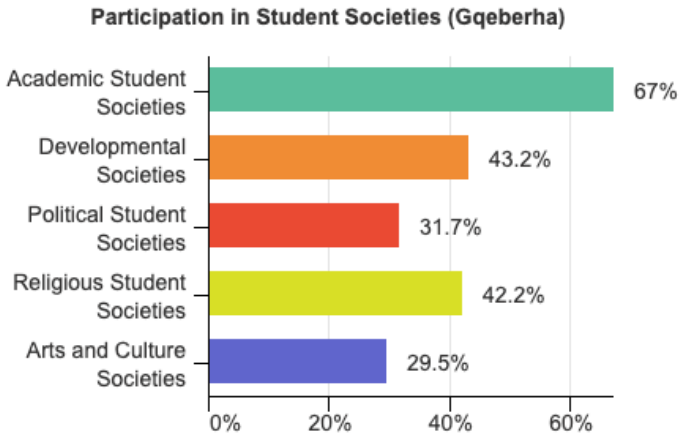
The survey attracted a smaller number of students who participate in student life activities in both Gqeberha and George. 44.9% of Gqeberha respondents and 43.3% of George participants participate in student life activities.

Student life activities are divided into Societies (which are grouped into five types: academic, developmental, political, religious, and art and culture), Sports Clubs, and Residence Leagues and Events. The following section demonstrates a breakdown of the number of participants of each student life activity according to the type of student

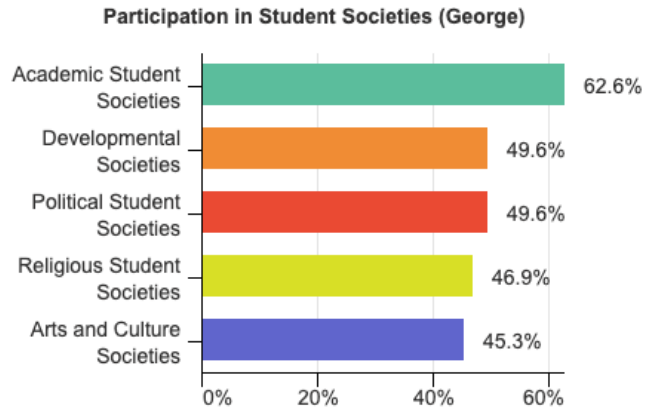
life activity for Gqeberha and George respectively as well as the amount of time per week participants devoted to these societies.

### 4.3.1. Societies

Graphs 28 and 29 are the percentages of students involved in each type of society, with the overall population here being those who indicated they participated in some form of co-curricular activity. Graph 28 shows that most society participants in Gqeberha participated in academic societies, followed by religious societies, and developmental societies. Graph 29 shows that in George, academic participation was the highest, followed by developmental and political societies.

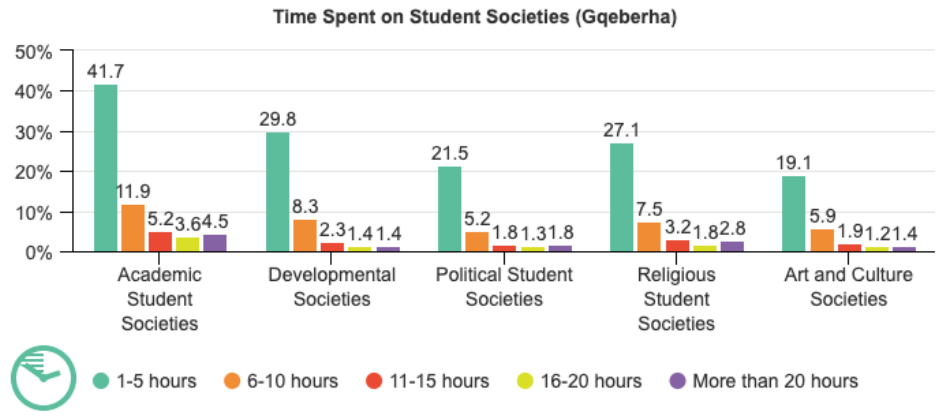



Graph 28: Society participation – Gqeberha

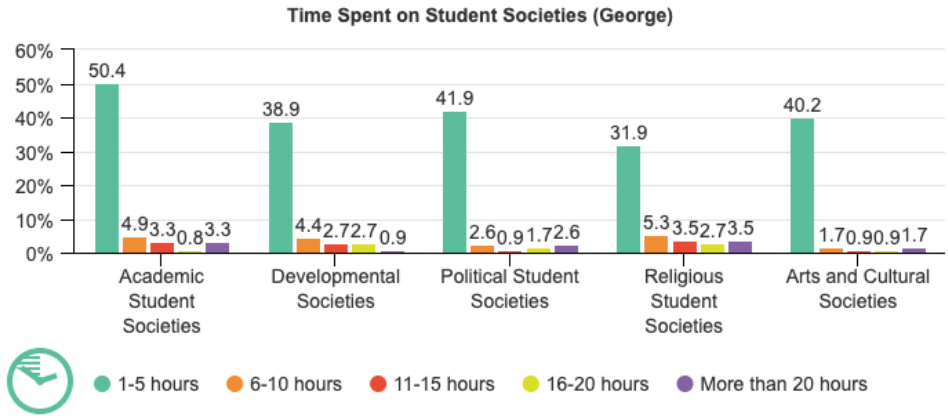



Graph 29: Society participation – George

Graphs 30 and 31 show most students involved in a society spend between 1 to 5 hours a week on the society.




Graph 30: Time spent on societies – Gqeberha

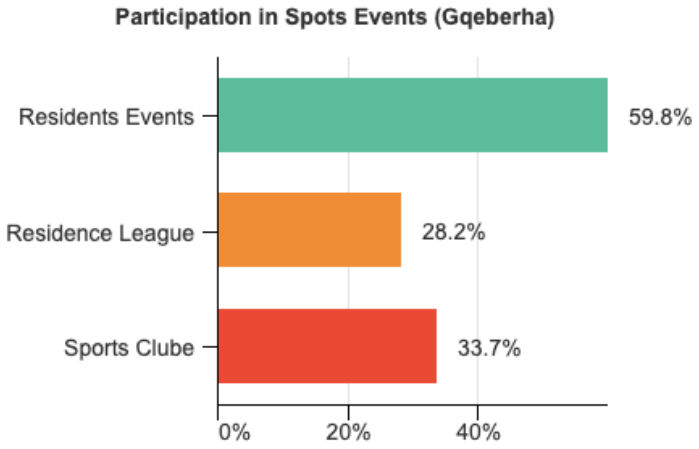



Graph 31: Time spent on societies – George

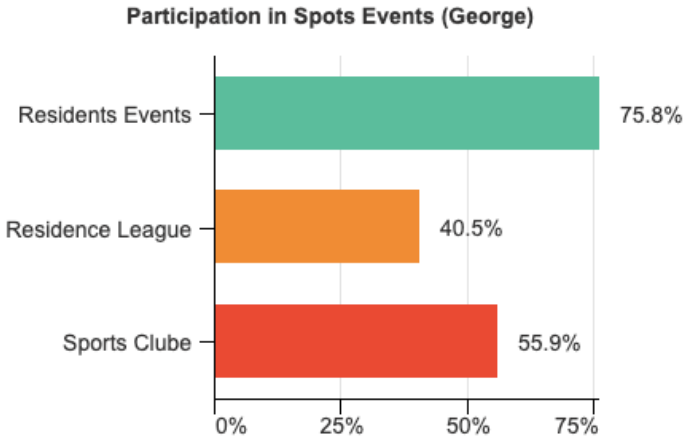
### 4.3.2. Participation in Residents Events, Residents League, and Sports Club

30.6% of Gqeberha and 54.4% of George respondents reported participating in residence league activities.

Graphs 32 and 33 are the percentages of students involved in residents events, residents leagues, and sports club, with the overall population here being those who indicated they participated in some form of co-curricular activity. Graph 30 shows most society participants in Gqeberha participated in residents events (59.8%), followed by sports club (33.7%) and residents league (28.2%). Similarly, Graph 31 shows George residents events were the most popular with 75.8% of respondents participating, followed by sports club (55.9%), and residents league (40.5%).

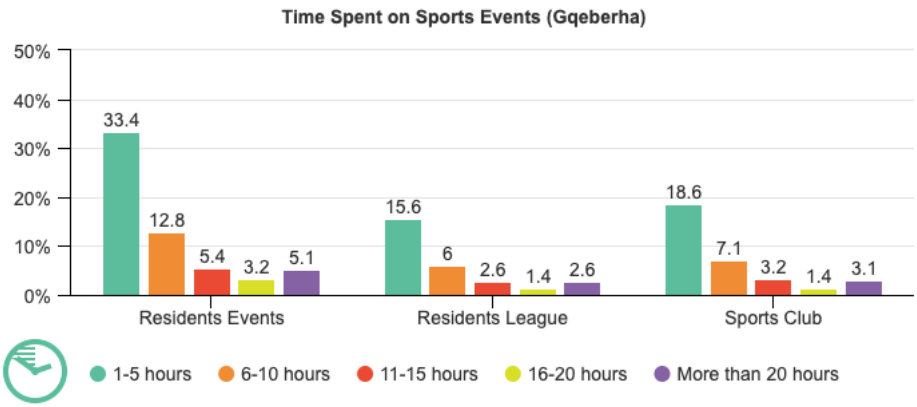



Graph 32: Sports events participation – Gqeberha

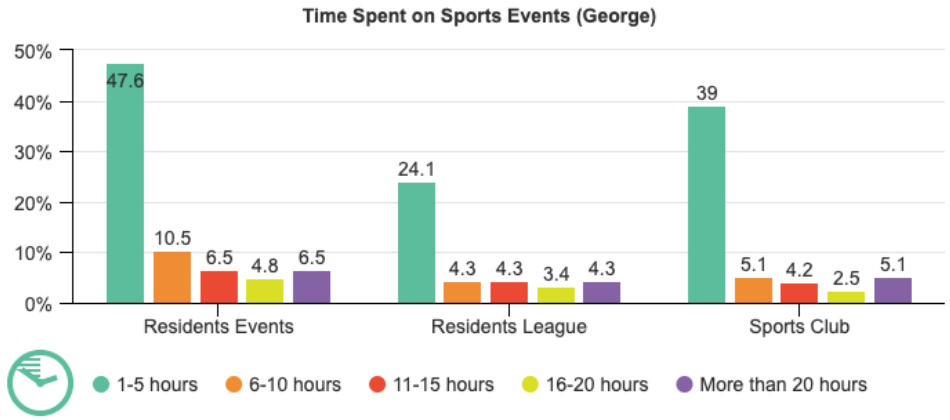



Graph 33: Sports events participation – George

Graphs 34 and 35 show most students involved in residents events, residents league, and sports club spend between 1 to 5 hours a week on the society.



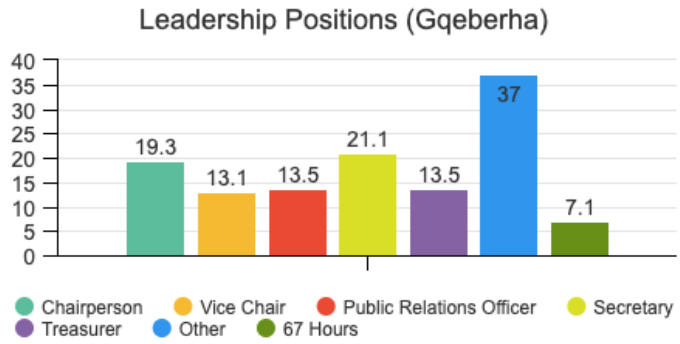

Graph 34: Time spent on sports events – Gqeberha



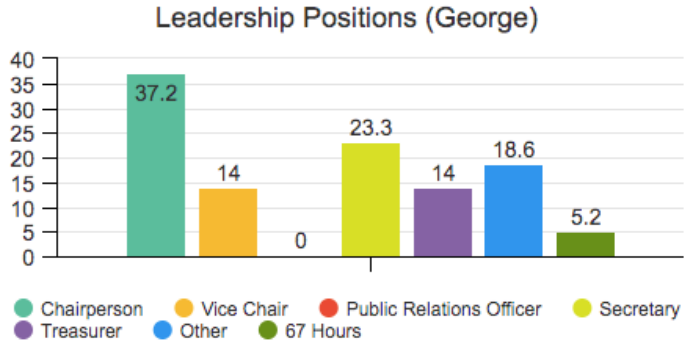

Graph 35: Time spent on sports events – George

## 4.4. Participants in leadership positions

23.6% of Gqeberha and 34.8% of George respondents reported being in leadership positions. Graphs 34 and 35 highlight the types of leadership positions respondents hold. In Gqeberha and George, most respondents in leadership positions held the position of chairperson and secretary. Other common positions respondents reported as “other” in the overall survey included captain, subcommittee member, or event organizer.




Graph 34: Leadership positions held by participants - Gqeberha

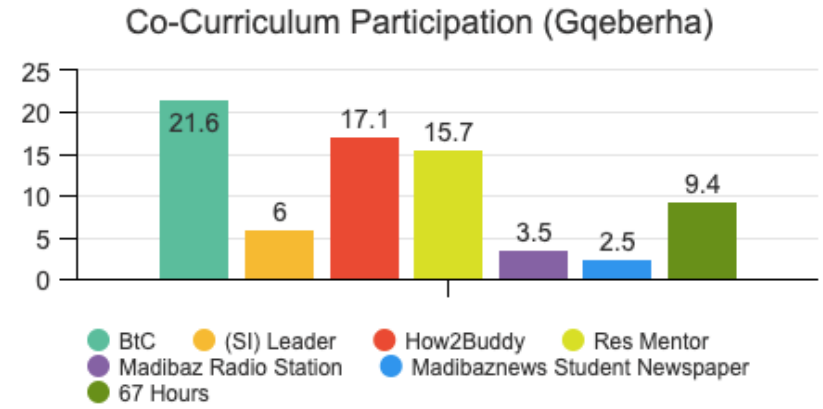



Graph 35: Leadership positions held by participants George

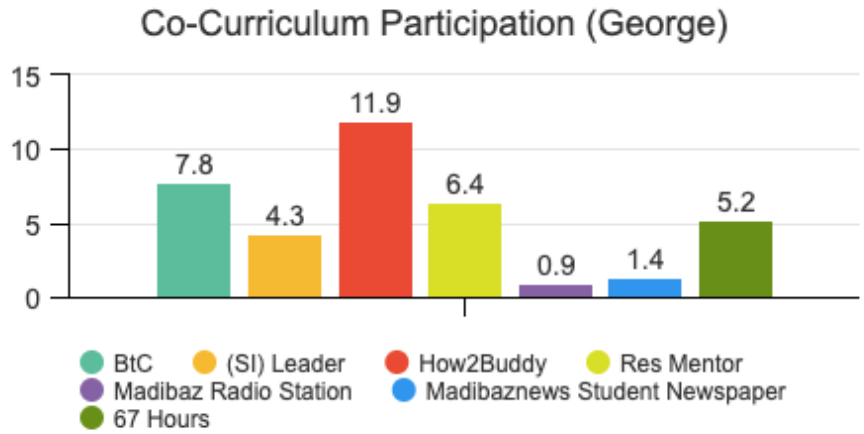
## 5. CO-CURRICULAR PARTICIPATION

Co-curricular activities refer to the following: Beyond the Classroom (BtC), Supplementary Instruction (SI) Leader, How2Buddy, Residence Mentor, Madibaz Radio Station, Madibaznews Student Newspaper, and 67 Hours. Participation in these activities results in a co-curricular record (CCR) (an official record recognising involvement in Nelson Mandela University co-curricular activities) that enables students to record their learning and involvement and allows them to plan their growth and development.

Graphs 36 and 37 demonstrate a breakdown of respondents according to co-curricular participation in Gqeberha and George respectively.




Graph 36: Co-curricular participation - Gqeberha




Graph 37: Co-curricular participation – George

Of the respondents who participate in co-curricular activities in Gqeberha, most participate in Beyond the Classroom (21.6%), then How2Budyy (17.1%) Residence Mentors (15.7%), and 67 Hour (9.4%). In George, most respondents were in

How2Buddy (11.9%), followed by the BtC programme (7.8%), Res Mentor (6.4%), and SI Leaders (5.2%).

## 6. LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPETENCIES

This section focuses on the competencies gained from student life activities. Respondents who participate in student life activities were asked to identify the learning they gain from participating in student life activities. Non-participants were also asked what they felt they would gain from participating in student life activities.

These competencies were adapted from the development indicators of the learning outcomes of co-curricular activities as set by the Nelson Mandela University.[2] Although there are 17 competencies, only those learning outcomes most likely to be identified among most co-curricular activities were included on the survey (the learning outcome from which each competency is derived is listed next to the competency). This section also compares the perceived learning outcomes of BtC participants with those set out by the programme in order to determine whether their participants' perceived views correlate with those set out by the programme.

### 6.1. Perceived competencies by students who participate in student life activities

The tables below show the perceived learning outcomes by students who participate in student life activities for Gqeberha and George respectively.

| Competency and corresponding learning outcomes | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly | 4.07 | 0.9 |
| Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations | 4.18 | 0.8 |
| Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences | 4.44 | 0.8 |
| Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view | 4.28 | 0.8 |
| Explore career fields and workplace options | 4.04 | 0.9 |
| Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution | 4.12 | 0.8 |
| Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Listen attentively to others | 4.45 | 0.7 |
| Implement ways to manage stress effectively | 4.05 | 0.9 |
| Manage my time effectively | 4.02 | 0.9 |
| Plan and implement a task without direct oversight | 3.91 | 0.9 |
| Take responsibility for my actions | 4.41 | 0.7 |

[2] NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY learning outcomes and development indicators are attached to this report as an appendix

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument | 4.26 | 0.8 |
| Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem | 4.21 | 0.8 |
| Effectively facilitate group discussions | 4.09 | 0.8 |
| Actively engage in my community to work for positive change | 4.04 | 0.9 |
| Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others | 4.21 | 0.8 |
| Increase my self-confidence | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Identify and pursue individual goals | 4.26 | 0.8 |
| Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them | 4.22 | 0.8 |
| Identify personal strengths and growth areas | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| Understand how values and ethics affect decision making | 4.26 | 0.8 |
| Commit to personal morals and ethics | 4.28 | 0.8 |
| Experience greater career development opportunities | 4.11 | 0.9 |
| Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose | 4.27 | 0.7 |
| Able to articulate ideas | 4.16 | 0.8 |
| Realize learning is a lifelong process | 4.44 | 0.8 |
| Follow basic protocols | 4.34 | 0.7 |
| Demonstrate respect for the environment | 4.39 | 0.8 |

Table 7: Perceived competencies of student life activity participants - Gqeberha

| Competency and corresponding learning outcomes | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly | 3.92 | 1.0 |
| Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations | 4.18 | 1.0 |
| Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences | 4.49 | 0.9 |
| Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view | 4.26 | 0.8 |
| Explore career fields and workplace options | 4.09 | 1.0 |
| Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution | 4.17 | 1.0 |
| Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication | 4.36 | 0.9 |
| Listen attentively to others | 4.55 | 0.7 |
| Implement ways to manage stress effectively | 4.03 | 1.0 |
| Manage my time effectively | 4.06 | 1.0 |
| Plan and implement a task without direct oversight | 3.94 | 1.0 |
| Take responsibility for my actions | 4.43 | 0.9 |
| Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument | 4.22 | 0.9 |
| Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem | 4.2 | 0.9 |
| Effectively facilitate group discussions | 4.04 | 1.0 |
| Actively engage in my community to work for positive change | 3.98 | 1.0 |
| Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others | 4.25 | 0.9 |
| Increase my self-confidence | 4.38 | 0.8 |
| Identify and pursue individual goals | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them | 4.26 | 0.9 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Identify personal strengths and growth areas | 4.25 | 0.9 |
| Understand how values and ethics affect decision making | 4.35 | 0.8 |
| Commit to personal morals and ethics | 4.31 | 0.9 |
| Experience greater career development opportunities | 4.16 | 1.0 |
| Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose | 4.42 | 0.8 |
| Able to articulate ideas | 4.2 | 0.9 |
| Realize learning is a lifelong process | 4.54 | 0.8 |
| Follow basic protocols | 4.3 | 0.9 |
| Demonstrate respect for the environment | 4.46 | 0.8 |

Table 8: Perceived competencies of student life activity participants - George

Tables 7 and 8 show participants rated all competencies on an acceptable level of learning or higher.

For participants in Gqeberha, the top competencies are

- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)
- Realize learning is a lifelong process (self-awareness and development)
- Take responsibility for my actions (independence)
- Demonstrate respect for the environment (social responsibility)

For participants in George, the top competencies are

- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)
- Increase my self-confidence (self-awareness and development)
- Realize learning is a lifelong process (self-awareness and development)
- Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication (effective communication)
- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)

### 6.2. Perceived competencies by non-participants

Tables 9 and 10 show the perceived learning outcomes of student life participation by non-participants.

| Competency and corresponding learning outcomes | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly | 4.26 | 0.8 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations | 4.32 | 0.7 |
| Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences | 4.45 | 0.7 |
| Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view | 4.38 | 0.7 |
| Explore career fields and workplace options | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution | 4.25 | 0.7 |
| Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication | 4.4 | 0.7 |
| Listen attentively to others | 4.4 | 0.7 |
| Implement ways to manage stress effectively | 4.18 | 0.8 |
| Manage my time effectively | 4.11 | 0.9 |
| Plan and implement a task without direct oversight | 3.98 | 0.9 |
| Take responsibility for my actions | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument | 4.28 | 0.8 |
| Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem | 4.26 | 0.7 |
| Effectively facilitate group discussions | 4.22 | 0.8 |
| Actively engage in my community to work for positive change | 4.22 | 0.8 |
| Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others | 4.33 | 0.7 |
| Increase my self-confidence | 4.43 | 0.8 |
| Identify and pursue individual goals | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them | 4.29 | 0.7 |
| Identify personal strengths and growth areas | 4.38 | 0.7 |
| Understand how values and ethics affect decision making | 4.31 | 0.7 |
| Commit to personal morals and ethics | 4.26 | 0.8 |
| Experience greater career development opportunities | 4.3 | 0.8 |
| Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose | 4.36 | 0.7 |
| Able to articulate ideas | 4.24 | 0.7 |
| Realize learning is a lifelong process | 4.42 | 0.7 |
| Follow basic protocols | 4.3 | 0.7 |
| Demonstrate respect for the environment | 4.36 | 0.8 |

Table 9: Perceived competencies by non-participants – Gqeberha

| Competency and corresponding learning outcomes | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly | 4.29 | 0.8 |
| Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations | 4.34 | 0.7 |
| Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences | 4.52 | 0.7 |
| Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view | 4.36 | 0.9 |
| Explore career fields and workplace options | 4.28 | 0.9 |
| Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution | 4.36 | 0.7 |
| Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication | 4.49 | 0.7 |
| Listen attentively to others | 4.53 | 0.7 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Implement ways to manage stress effectively | 4.23 | 0.9 |
| Manage my time effectively | 4.18 | 0.9 |
| Plan and implement a task without direct oversight | 4.03 | 0.8 |
| Take responsibility for my actions | 4.43 | 0.7 |
| Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem | 4.31 | 0.7 |
| Effectively facilitate group discussions | 4.22 | 0.8 |
| Actively engage in my community to work for positive change | 4.18 | 0.8 |
| Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others | 4.32 | 0.7 |
| Increase my self-confidence | 4.5 | 0.7 |
| Identify and pursue individual goals | 4.4 | 0.7 |
| Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them | 4.39 | 0.7 |
| Identify personal strengths and growth areas | 4.36 | 0.8 |
| Understand how values and ethics affect decision making | 4.31 | 0.8 |
| Commit to personal morals and ethics | 4.28 | 0.8 |
| Experience greater career development opportunities | 4.29 | 0.7 |
| Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose | 4.33 | 0.7 |
| Able to articulate ideas | 4.24 | 0.7 |
| Realize learning is a lifelong process | 4.42 | 0.8 |
| Follow basic protocols | 4.37 | 0.7 |
| Demonstrate respect for the environment | 4.4 | 0.7 |

Table 10: Perceived competencies by non-participants – George

For non-participants, the perceived potential competencies gained from involvement are also ranked at an acceptable level of belongingness or identified learning and higher, indicating non-participants understand the potential benefits of co-curricular involvement but are not involved. Working with these students to identify the barriers to involvement could encourage further growth.

The top perceived potential competencies for Gqeberha non-participants are

- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)
- Increase my self-confidence (self-awareness and development)
- Effectively communicate with people through speaking, writing, and other means of communication (effective communication)
- Take responsibility for my actions (independence)

The top perceived potential competencies for George non-participants are

- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)
- Realize learning is a lifelong process (intellectual growth)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)
- Demonstrate respect for the environment (social responsibility)
- Take responsibility for my actions (independence)

### 6.3. Perceived learning outcomes of co-curricular activities –BtC

The BtC leadership programme was designed to help students understand and develop themselves with a comprehensive focus on leadership. Members are required to be actively engaged in sessions that expose them to new perspectives, foster reflection, and encourage action in their daily lives.

The learning outcomes of BtC as indicated in the CCR are:

- Intellectual growth
- Appreciating diversity
- Meaningful interpersonal relationships

According to BtC participants in Gqeberha , the major competencies they receive from participating in the programme are:

- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)
- Increase my self-confidence (self-awareness and development)
- Realize learning is a lifelong process (intellectual growth)
- Take responsibility for my actions (social responsibility)

According to BtC participants in George, the major competencies they receive from participating in the programme are:

- Realize learning is a lifelong process (intellectual growth)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (appreciate diversity)

- Take responsibility for my actions (independence)
- Listen attentively to others (meaningful interpersonal relationship)
- Demonstrate respect for the environment (social responsibility)

Gqeberha and George respondents identified similar competencies, except for one, they feel they receive from being part of the BtC programme. Table 11 identifies the learning outcomes identified by BtC participants in Gqeberha and in George.

| Gqeberha | George |
|---|---|
| Meaningful interpersonal relationship | Intellectual growth |
| Appreciate diversity | Appreciating diversity |
| Self-awareness and development | Independence |
| Intellectual growth | Meaningful interpersonal relationship |
| Social responsibility | Social responsibility |

Table 11: Top learning outcomes as identified by BtC participants - Gqeberha vs. George

Based on these top competencies, the overall learning outcomes identified by BtC participants can be highlighted. Table 11 compares the learning outcomes as out outlined by the programme with the top three identified by participants overall.

| BtC learning outcomes | Top reported learning outcomes according to BtC participants |
|---|---|
| Intellectual growth | Intellectual growth |
| Appreciating diversity | Appreciating diversity |
| Meaningful interpersonal relationships | Social responsibility |
| | Meaningful interpersonal relationships |

Table 12: BtC learning outcomes, vs. learning outcomes according to participants

Overall, the BtC programme meets all of the three learning outcomes set out by the programme according to BtC participants on both campuses, though respondents reported higher gains in social responsibility than meaningful interpersonal relationships

## 7. MOTIVATIONS AND INTERFERENCE

This section highlights the top motivations for involvement and top reasons likely to interfere with participation in co-curricular activities or experiences in Gqeberha vs. George.

| Gqeberha | George |
|---|---|
| To learn skills (34.8%) | To learn skills (34.2) |
| Desire to help others/community outreach (24.9%) | Desire to help others/community outreach (22.9%) |
| Need to add something to my CV (21.2%) | For recreation or enjoyment (18%) |
| Interest in making friends (19.5%) | Need to add something to my CV (17.7%) |
| For recreation or enjoyment (19.2%) | Interests in making friends (17.1%) |

Table 13: Top motivations for student life activities – Gqeberha vs. George

| Gqeberha | George |
|---|---|
| Lectures/class (50.5%) | Day/time the activity is held (47%) |
| Day/time the activity is held (49.9%) | Lectures/class (45.8%) |
| Finances, lack of money (46.9%) | Time (involvement in other activities) (40.9%) |
| Transport (difficulty getting to activities) (41.5%) | Finances, lack of money (39.7%) |
| Time (involvement in other activities) (38.9%) | Lack of knowledge of activities (37.7%) |

Table 14: Top interferences in student life activities - Gqeberha vs. George

As indicated by Tables 13 and 14, the top motivation for participation was to learn skills, and the top interference in student life participation for all respondents is the day or time that activities are held.

## SECTION 3: CONCLUSIONS

## 8. MAJOR FINDINGS

In 2021, the survey attracted a comparable number of respondents than past years.

Overall the biographical characteristics of respondents are similar to the general Nelson Mandela University population. The survey also attracted comparatively more Black students and more on-campus students. Most respondents were between the ages of 18 to 25 (87.3% in Gqeberha and 89.3% in George).

With regards to faculty information, slightly more respondents were registered full-time in Gqeberha (92.2%) as compared to the general student population (90.7%). In George, almost all respondents were full-time registered students (99.3%). In Gqeberha , most respondents were in their first academic year of study (33%) followed by second year students (26%). Most George participants were in their first academic year (49.5%) followed by second- and third-year students (29.1% and 16.7%). In George, almost half of respondents were from the science faculty (48.3%) and 43.3% from the business and economic sciences faculty. In Gqeberha , respondents were generally representative of the general Nelson Mandela University population when it comes to faculties attended.

The survey attracted more on-campus respondents when compared to the general student population, significantly so in George campus. Different from previous years, in Gqeberha and George, most students were living off campus when the survey was administered in 2021. This is most likely due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nelson Mandela University shuttle is the primary commute to campus for respondents. Other popular ways of commute include walking, taxi, and riving their own car on Gqeberha campus and riding accredited university residence bus on George campus. On both campuses, NSFAS loans were the main method that students used to finance their studies.

Student perceptions are overall positive as mean scores indicate an acceptable level of belongingness. The lowest rated perceptions on both campuses were “I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University” and “I feel like Nelson Mandela

University is a community.” Perceptions differed across sex only minimally with several statistically significant differences in Gqeberha and George, but the sizes of the differences were practically small. There were also statistically significant, though practically small, differences by race for all perceptions in Gqeberha. White students generally scored lower than Black and Coloured students. In George, the only difference was in “I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University,” but the effect size was medium.

There were fewer respondents who participated in student life activities than those who did not in Gqeberha and George. Most participants devote approximately 1-5 hours per week on each type of society.

With regards to leadership positions, 23.6% of respondents in Gqeberha and 34.8% of George respondents reported being in leadership positions.

As for co-curriculum activities, most students were BtC participants (21.6%), followed by How2Buddy (17.1%) in Gqeberha . In George, most were How2Buddies (11.9%).

With regards to learning outcomes and competencies, both student life participants and non-participants rated all competencies on an acceptable level of belongingness or higher.

Based on the top-rated competencies, the overall top learning outcomes of student life participation for participants on both campuses are

- Intellectual growth
- Appreciating diversity
- Independence
- Meaningful interpersonal relationship
- Social responsibility

The top-rated perceived potential competencies for non-participants are

- Intellectual growth
- Appreciating diversity
- Social responsibility

- Meaningful interpersonal relationship

Gqeberha and George respondents identified similar competencies that they feel they received from being part of the BtC programme. Based on the top competencies, the overall learning outcomes identified by BtC participants generally aligned with the intended learning outcomes, indicating the BtC programme is largely achieving its stated educational goals.

| BtC learning outcomes | Top reported learning outcomes according to BtC participants |
|---|---|
| Intellectual growth | Independence |
| Appreciating diversity | Appreciating diversity |
| Meaningful interpersonal relationships | Meaningful interpersonal relationships |

The top motivation for involvement in co-curricular and student life activities was to learn new skills. The major interference in participating in student life activities overall were the day or time the activity is held. The top 5 interferences differ only in rank for Gqeberha and George. In Gqeberha , the top interferences both Gqeberha and George students reported were the day/time the activity is held, lectures/class, finances (lack of money), lectures/class, and time (involvement in other activities).

## 9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this survey support the claim that the benefits of co-curricular student engagement cannot be overlooked. The survey highlights students who do not participate also recognise the benefits of student engagement. Both students who participate in student life activities and those who do not participate believe that from participating in student life activities, they would achieve the following learning outcomes: appreciating diversity, intellectual growth and social responsibility. Survey findings support student development theories as the positive benefits of participating in student life activities on students' lives is evident.

It is recommended these findings receive consideration as a follow-up to the survey and to:

- Communicate the findings of the student experience survey with relevant staff
- Intensify marketing and communication strategies to students will increase student awareness of programmes offered and may lead to them being more employable graduates
- Use the results of the survey to enhance the current offerings to inform the development of future programmes to best meet the needs of Nelson Mandela University students

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