NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

REPORT ON THE 2020 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 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 programs to be perceived as experiences that promote student learning, student development programs 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 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.
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 50% of first-year students are involved in co-curricular

experiences.

- More than 15% of students are involved in cocurricular activities for between 1-5 hours per week.
- Overall, participants identified growth in independence, meaningful interpersonal relationships, appreciating diversity, self-awareness and development, and values exploration due to cocurricular participation.
- The Nelson Mandela University Shuttle is the most used method of transportation.
- The major barriers to involvement in campus life activities are the day or time that activities are held and lecture or class commitments.

The report comprises three sections. Section one discusses 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 4189 students. This represents 14.5% of the 28,951 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 ±1.40%.

Registered Nelson Mandela University students on the North, South, 2nd Avenue, Missionvale, 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. After the three-year period, we will be able to 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

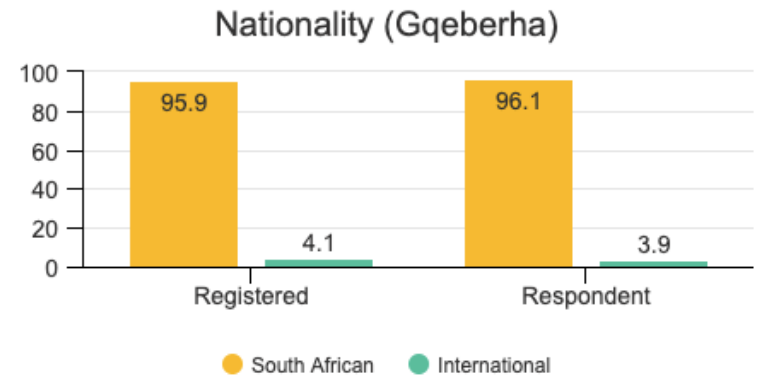
3. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION WITH RESPECT TO THE SURVEY

Of the 4189 students who participated in the survey, 3911 were from Gqeberha and 268 from George (10 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.

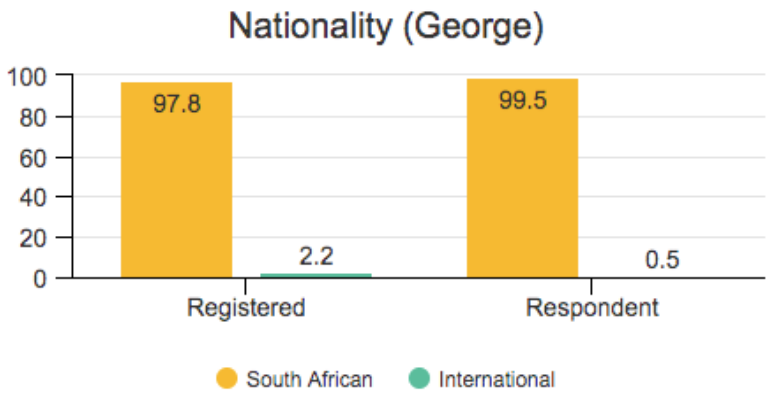
3.1. Participant information

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

3.1.1. Nationality



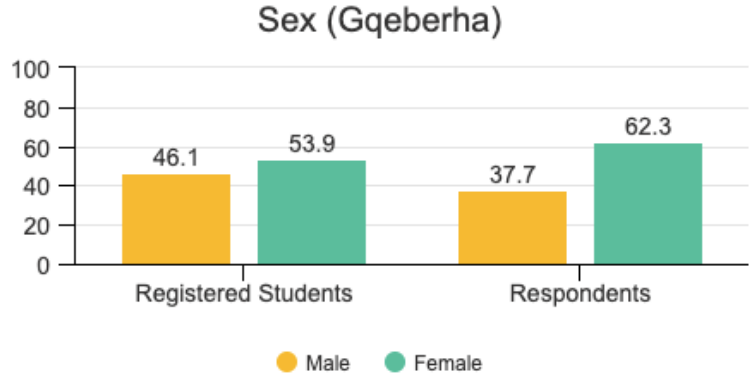
Graph 1: Registered students vs. respondents according to nationality - Gqeberha



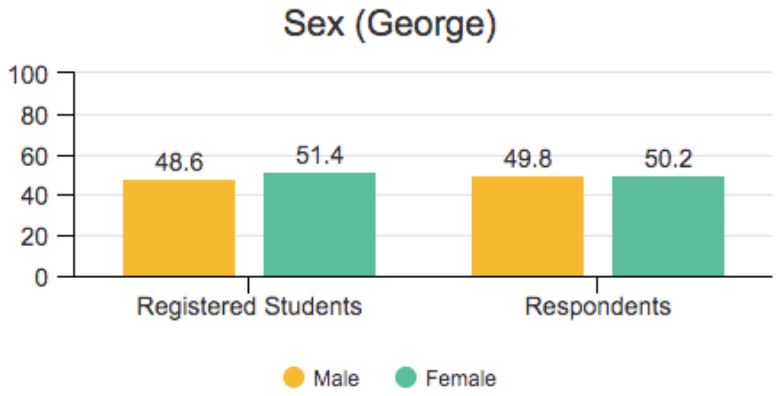
Graph 2: Registered students vs. respondents according to nationality – George

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



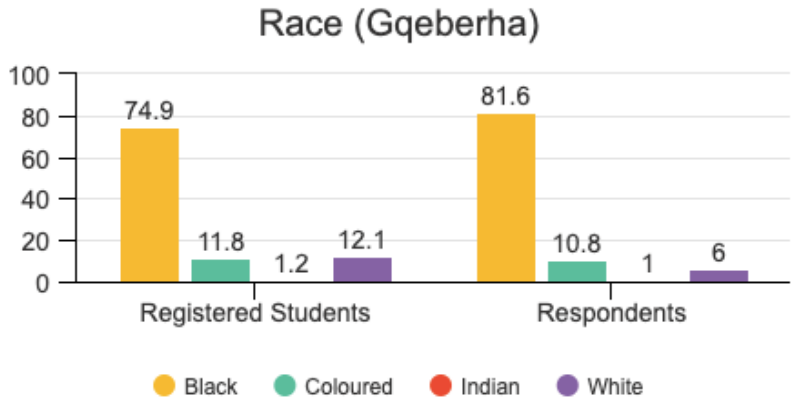
Graph 3: Registered students vs. respondents according to sex - Gqeberha



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

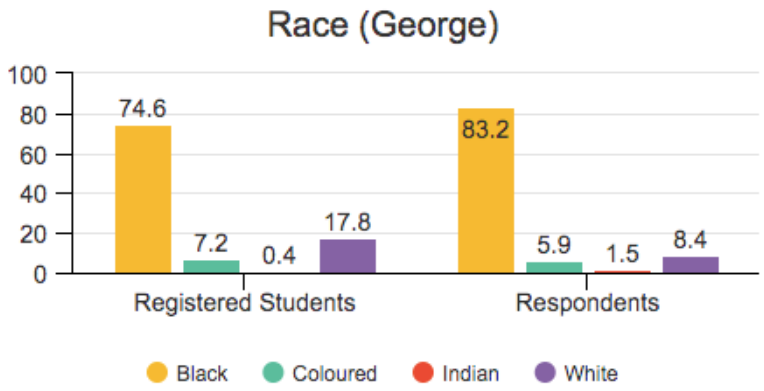
Graphs 3 and 4 demonstrate the breakdown of respondents according to sex compared to the general student population. Consistent with previous administrations of the survey, there were a higher percentage of female respondents than males in Gqeberha but a slightly larger percentage of male respondents in George. While George campus had a predominantly male student population, proportionately more respondents were female than the proportion of females in the student population.

3.1.3. Race[1]



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

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

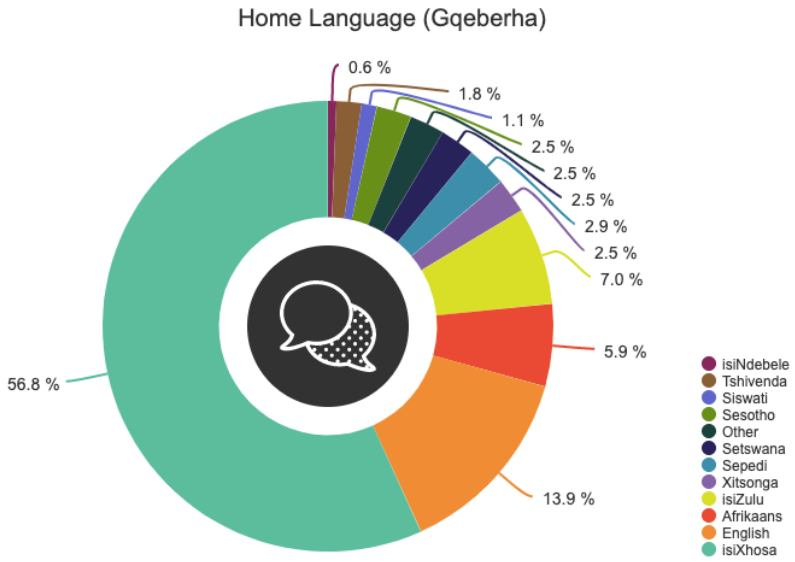


Graph 6: Registered students vs. respondents according to race – George

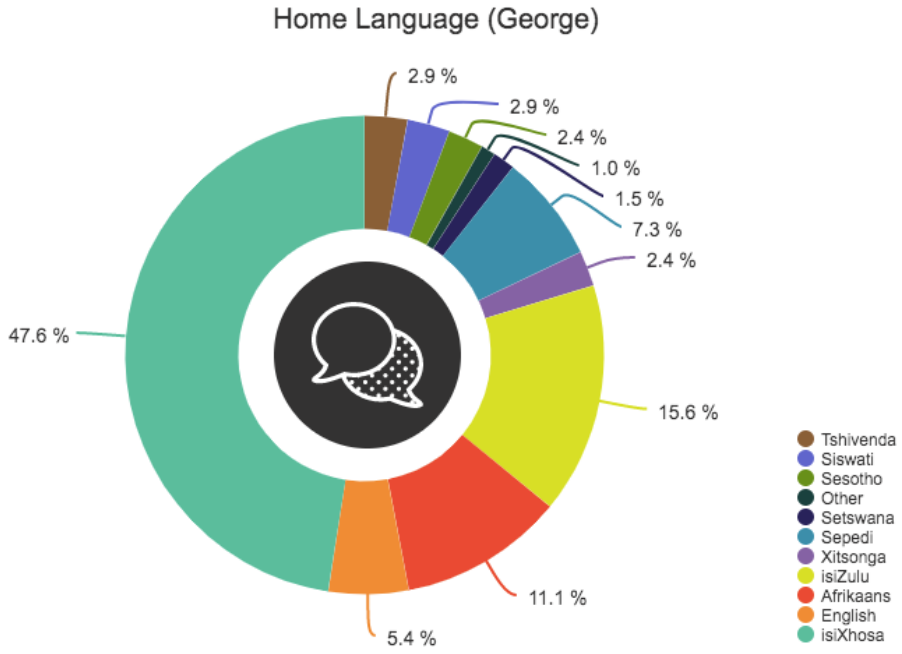
Graphs 5 and 6, which demonstrate a comparison of the race classification of respondents with registered students in Gqeberha and George respectively, indicate that relatively more black students responded to the survey. Fewer white students responded to the survey.

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 this year. The most common home languages among Gqeberha respondents were isiXhosa (56.7%), English (13.9%), and Afrikaans (5.9%). For George, the most common home languages were isiXhosa (47.8%), isiZulu (15.7%), and Afrikaans (11.2%).



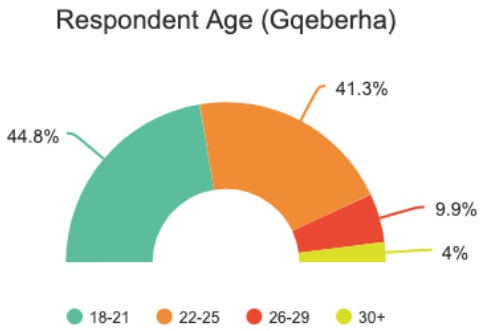
Graph 7: Home language – Gqeberha



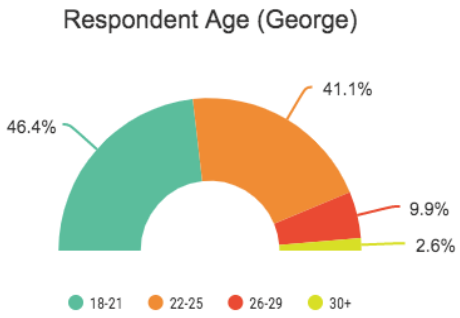
Graph 8: Home language – George

3.1.5. Age

As illustrated by graphs 9 and 10 below, most respondents are younger than 26 (85.9% of respondents in Gqeberha and 87.6% of respondents in George are between ages 18-25). More than half of all respondents fall within the 21 – 25 age range in both Gqeberha (57.2%) and George (52.1%), followed by 18-20 (28.7% in Gqeberha and 35.5% in George)



Graph 9: Age range of respondents - Gqeberha

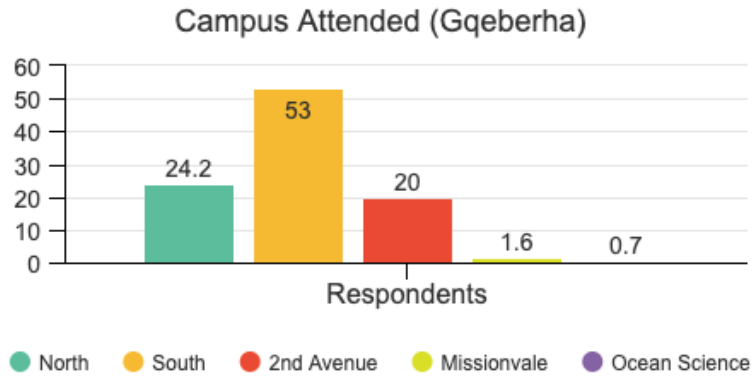


Graph 10: Age range of respondents - George

3.2. 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

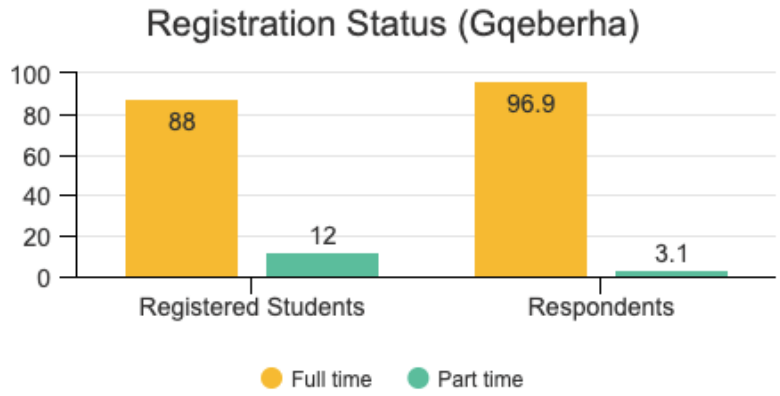


Graph 11: Campus attended - Gqeberha

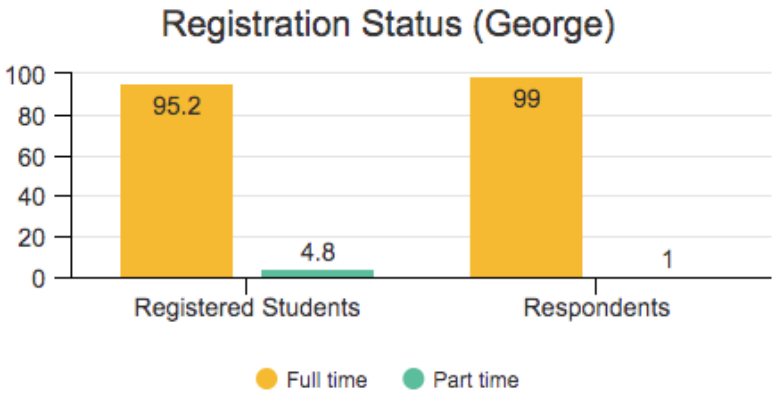
As shown by graph 11, the highest proportion of respondents were from South campus, followed by North campus and 2nd Avenue.

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.



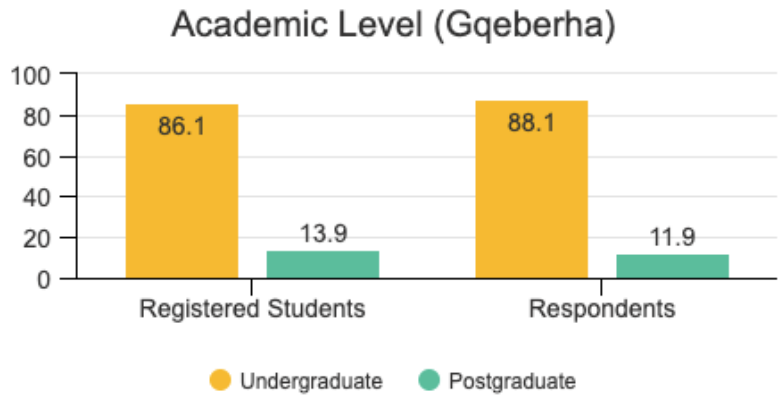
Graph 12: Registered students vs. respondents according to registration status- Gqeberha



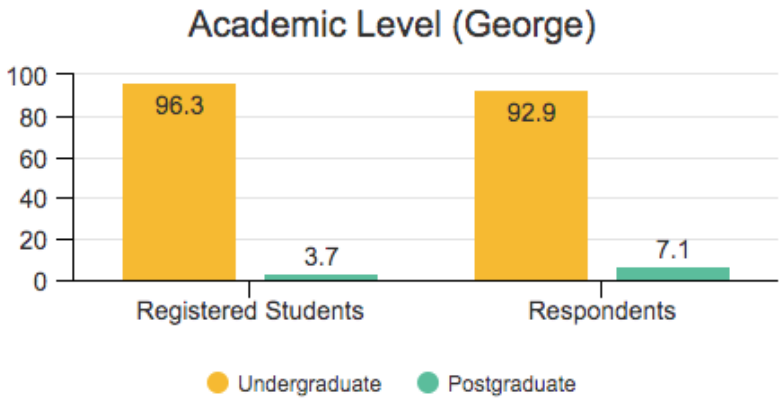
Graph 13: Registered students vs. respondents according to registration status – George

3.2.3. Academic level

Academic level refers to whether students are undergraduate or postgraduate students.



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



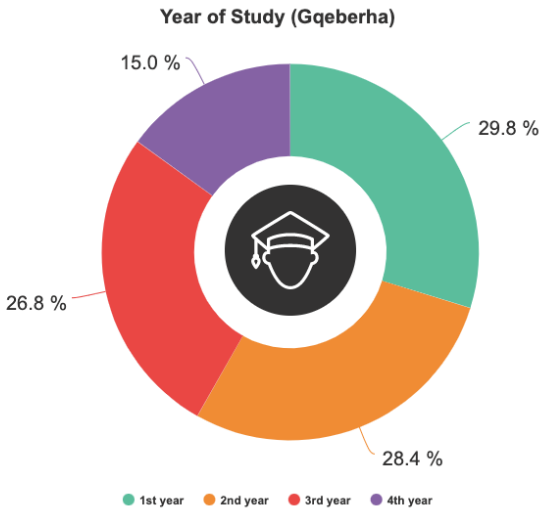
Graph 15: Registered students vs. respondents according to academic status – George

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.

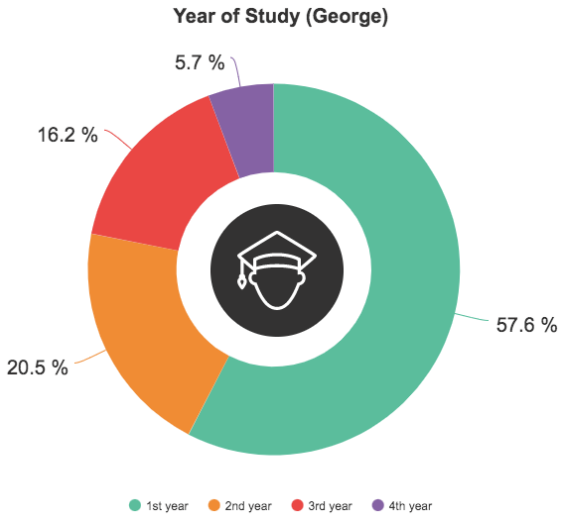
3.2.4. Academic year of study

Academic year of study refers to the year of study of the course that a student is in.

In Gqeberha , most of the respondents were in their first or second year. More specifically, 29.8% were in their first year, 28.4% were in their second year, and 26.8% were in their third year. Most respondents in George were first year students (57.6%) followed by second year (20.5%) and third year (16.2%) students.



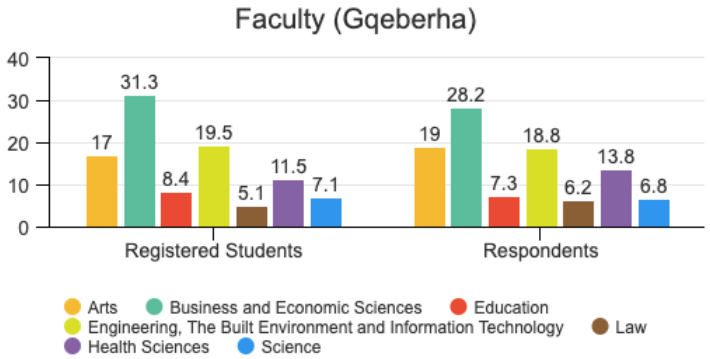
Graph 16: Year of study - Gqeberha



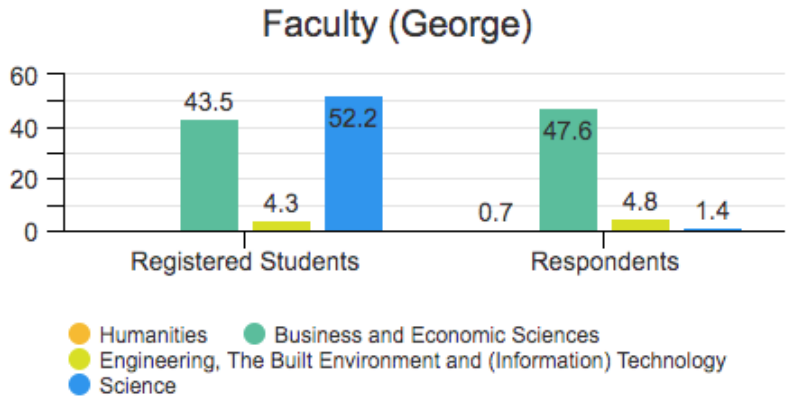
Graph 17: Year of study – George

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



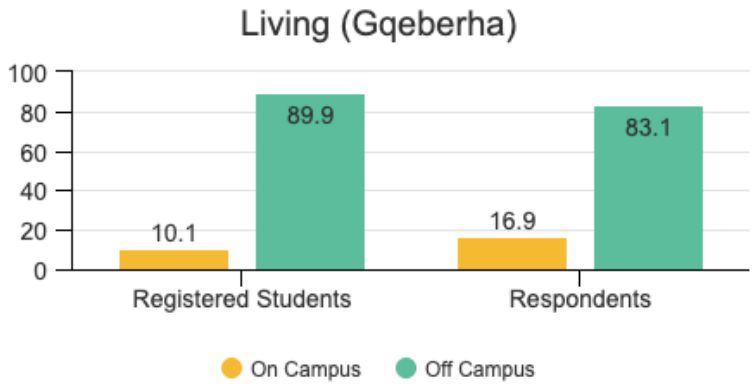
Graph 19: Registered students vs. respondents by faculty – George

3.3. Living and commuting

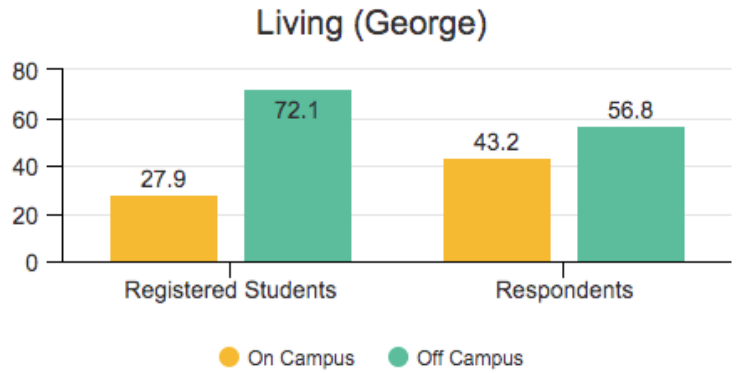
This section provides characteristics of respondents according to on and off campus variables, how respondents commute, and how they finance their studies.

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 number of students who reside on campus in Gqeberha.

Similarly, in Gqeberha, the survey attracted a comparatively lower number of on-campus students, with 56.8% of respondents residing on campus compared to 72.1% of the proportion of registered students.

3.3.2. Off campus type of living

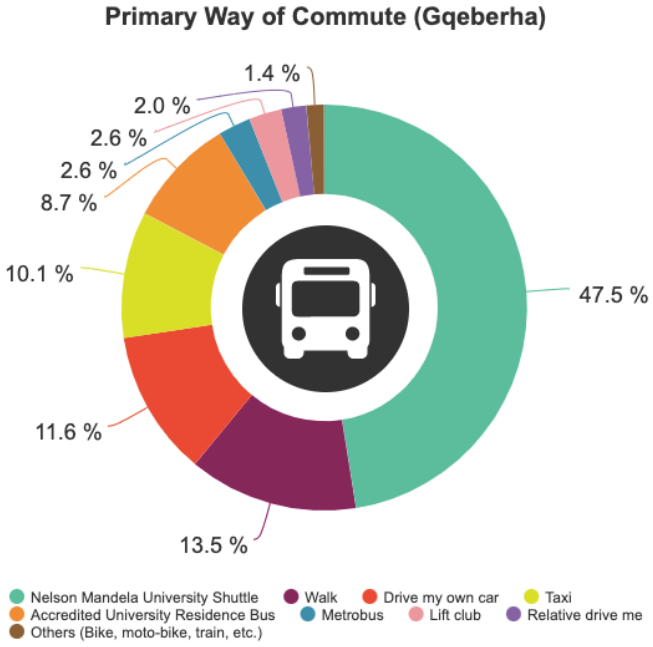
Of the 2956 respondents who live off campus in Gqeberha, 54.1% reside in an accredited off-campus residence, 18.9% live in a private accommodation, and 27% live at home or with extended family.

Of the 67 respondents who live off campus in George, 53.7% live in an accredited university residence or house, 20.6% live in a private accommodation, and 25.7% live at home with family or extended family.

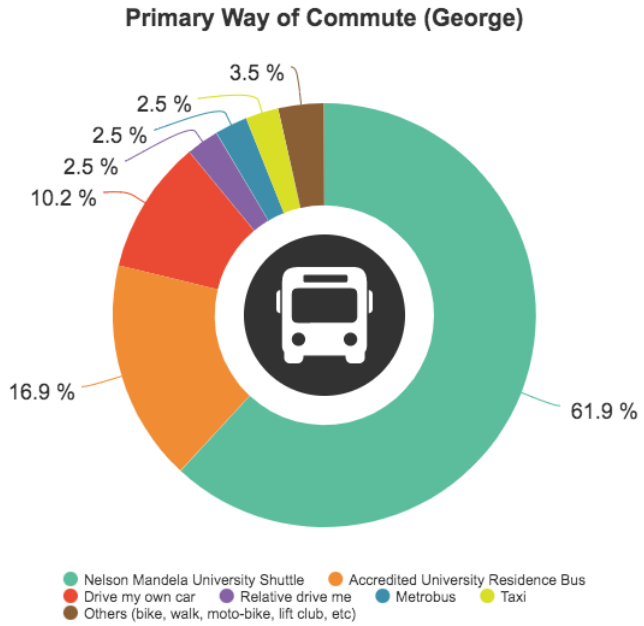
3.3.3. Primary commute to campus

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 (47.5%), walking (13.5%), driving own car (11.6%), and taxis (10.1%), and accredited university residence bus (8.7%). The top modes of commute in George are the Nelson Mandela University Shuttle (61.9%), accredited university residence bus (16.9%), and drive own car (10.2%).



Graph 22: Primary commute to campus - Gqeberha



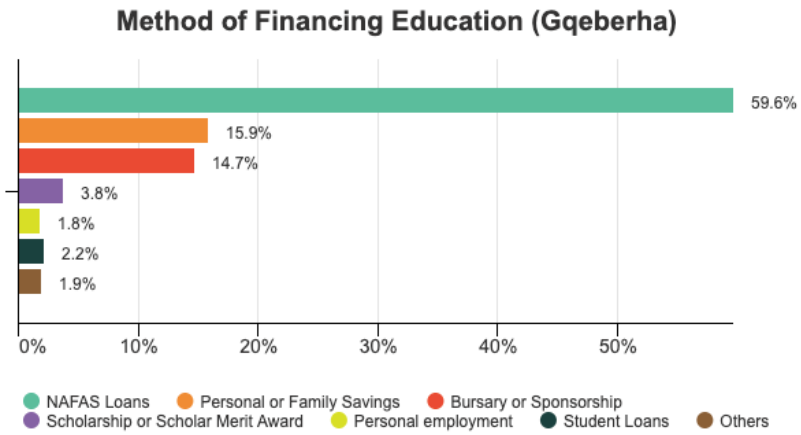
Graph 23: Primary commute to campus – George

3.3.4. Primary method of financing education

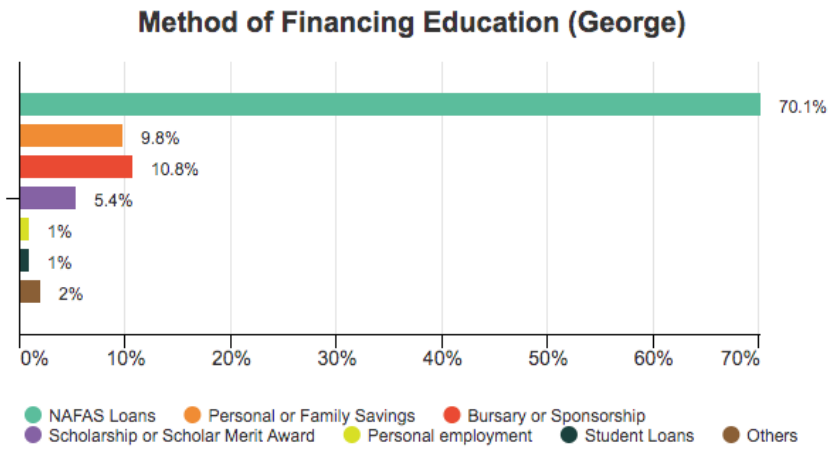
The top methods respondents use overall to finance their education are NSFAS loans, personal or family savings, and bursary or sponsorship.

In Gqeberha, Graph 24 shows most respondents' education was funded by NSFAS loans (59.6%) followed by personal or family savings (15.9%) and bursary or sponsorship (14.7%).

As indicated by Graph 25, most respondents in George finance their education through NSFAS loans (70.1%) followed by bursary or sponsorship (10.8%) and personal or family savings (9.8%).



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 all respondents in order to get an idea of their perceptions of student life 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 (0.9)	3895	59.9%	26.7%	9.1%	1.4%	3.0%
I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University	3.8 (0.9)	3763	32.3%	40.8%	20.8%	3.8%	2.3%
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than	4.5 (0.8)	3837	64.8%	28.4%	4.0%	0.6%	2.3%

me at the Nelson Mandela University							
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University	4.4 (0.8)	3810	56.7%	31.9%	8.4%	1.0%	2.0%
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community	4.0 (1.0)	3833	33.0%	39.7%	20.5%	4.5%	2.4%
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus	2.6 (1.1)	3853	5.7%	15.7%	30.5%	31.9%	15.1%

Table 1: Perceptions of student life - Gqeberha

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 (0.9)	267	61.4%	26.6%	7.1%	2.2%	2.6%
I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University	4.1 (1.0)	251	40.6%	37.1%	16.7%	2.0%	3.6%
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University	4.5 (0.8)	262	66.4%	26.7%	3.4%	0.4%	3.1%
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University	4.5 (0.8)	259	60.2%	29.3%	7.7%	0.4%	2.3%
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community	4.0 (1.0)	260	35.8%	37.3%	18.8%	6.2%	1.9%
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus	2.5 (1.2)	264	6.4%	13.6%	23.5%	33.7%	22.7%

Table 2: Perceptions of student life – 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:

- I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University (Mean = 3.8, SD = 0.9 in Gqeberha ; Mean = 4.1, SD = 1.0 in George)
- I feel like Nelson Mandela University is a community (Mean = 4.0, SD = 1.0 in Gqeberha ; Mean = 4.0, SD = 1.0 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 significantly on two perceptions.

Table 3: Student Perceptions according to sex - Gqeberha

Question	Sex				Effect Size (Cohen's *d*)
	Female (n = 1764)		Male (n = 1094)		
	M	SD	M	SD	
My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University.**	4.46	0.86	4.31	.97	.17
I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University.*	3.93	0.94	4.00	.93	.08
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.55	0.75	4.51	.80	N/A
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University.	4.40	0.82	4.41	.82	N/A
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community.	3.94	0.94	4.00	.98	N/A
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus.	2.69	1.08	2.62	1.14	N/A

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; *p≤.05, **p≤.001; Cohen's *d* effect sizes = .2 small effect, .5 = medium effect, .8 = large effect.

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 = .17) and males "I feel a sense of connection

with the Nelson Mandela University" (Cohen's d =.08). These results suggest female students are more likely to receive support from the families to earn their degree at the NMU, yet at the same time female students were less likely to feel a sense of connection with the NMU. The two perceptions had small effect sizes.

Table 4: Student Perceptions according to sex - George

Question	Sex				Effect Size (Cohen's *d*)
	Female (n = 89)		Male (n = 95)		
	M	SD	M	SD	
My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.52	0.84	4.36	1.06	N/A
I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University.	4.16	.87	4.01	1.14	N/A
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.55	.84	4.52	.84	N/A
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University.	4.46	0.83	4.46	.84	N/A
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community.	4.04	1.04	3.87	1.04	N/A
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus.	2.53	1.16	2.60	1.21	N/A

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

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
	Black (n = 2378)	Coloured (n = 313)	Indian (n = 28)	White (n=174)		

										(Eta squared)
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.39	.94	4.45	.82	4.64	.56	4.47	.84	N/A	N/A
I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University.	4.02	.94	3.82	.92	3.79	.74	3.53	.92	B v C B v W	.02
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.56	.79	4.51	.69	4.29	.94	4.34	.81	B v W	.01
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University.	4.45	.83	4.40	.76	4.36	.73	4.03	.77	B v W C v W	.01
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community.	4.03	.93	3.84	.91	3.82	.72	3.40	1.05	B v C B v W C v W	.03
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus.	2.64	1.11	2.70	1.02	2.71	1.08	2.89	1.08	B v W	.003

Note: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; *p ≤ .01

Table 6: Student Perceptions according to race - George

Question	Race						Effect Size (Cohen's *d*)
	Black (n = 167)		Coloured (n = 12)		White (n = 17)		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
My family encourages me to continue my education at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.44	1.00	4.17	1.19	4.41	.51	N/A
I feel a sense of connection with the	4.17	1.00	3.91	.94	3.71	.69	N/A

Nelson Mandela University.							
I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me at the Nelson Mandela University.	4.55	.87	4.58	.52	4.41	.62	N/A
I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University.	4.54	.82	4.42	.79	4.18	.73	N/A
I feel like the Nelson Mandela University is a community.	4.01	.99	4.00	.95	3.59	1.06	N/A
I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus.	2.51	1.19	2.75	1.06	3.00	.87	N/A

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

For Gqeberha, the overall ANOVAs were statistically significant for 5 of the 6 perceptions.

Black students (M = 4.02, SD = .94) were more likely to report “a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University than were White (M = 3.53, SD = .92) and Coloured (M = 3.79, SD = .74) students. White students were also more likely than Black students to report lower perceptions on four 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”, and “I sometimes feel excluded from activities or events on campus”.

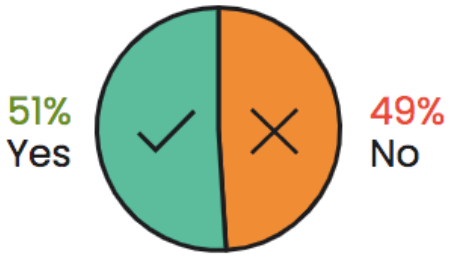
White students’ perceptions also differed from Black and Coloured students when it comes to the statement “I feel a sense of connection with the Nelson Mandela University.” The magnitude or effect size of the difference is small (eta squared = 0.01). The scores indicated that Black students (M = 4.1, SD=1) and Coloured students (M = 3.8, SD=0.9) had slightly higher mean scores than White students (M=3.6, SD = 0.9). White students additionally had different perceptions from both Black and Coloured students in the statements “I am meeting people with different backgrounds than me,” and “I am proud to be attending the Nelson Mandela University.” When it comes to meeting people with different backgrounds, White students (M = 4.3, SD = 0.8) had a lower mean score than Black (M = 4.5, SD = 0.8) and Coloured (M = 4.5,

SD = 0.7). The magnitude or effect size of the difference is small (eta squared = 0.02). White students' pride in attending Nelson Mandela University (M = 4.0, SD = 0.8) differed from Black (M = 4.5, SD = 0.8) and Coloured (M = 4.4, SD = 0.8) students' perceptions with a small effect size (eta squared=0.01). Finally, Coloured (M = 2.7, SD = 1.0) and White students (M = 2.9, SD = 1.1) reported higher feelings of exclusion compared to Black students (M = 2.5, SD = 1.2). Inspection of the mean scores indicates there is room for improvement regarding this statement for White and Coloured students.

In George, the ANOVA found no statistically significant differences by race with regards to perceptions.

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

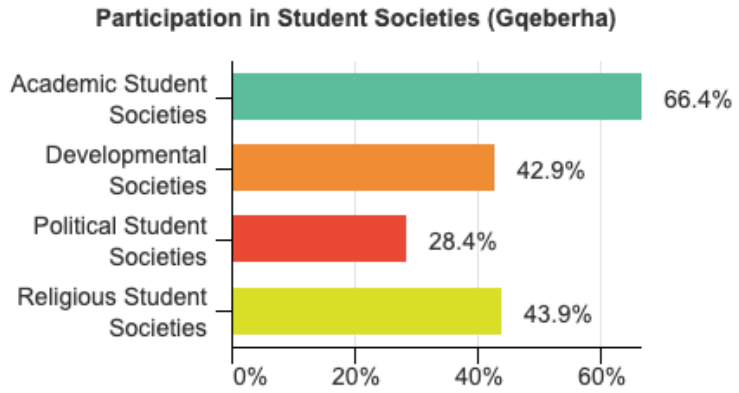
Graph 27: Respondents who participate in student activities vs. non-participants - George

The survey attracted a greater number of students who participate in student life activities in both Gqeberha and George. 51% of Gqeberha respondents and 61% or George participants participate in student life activities.

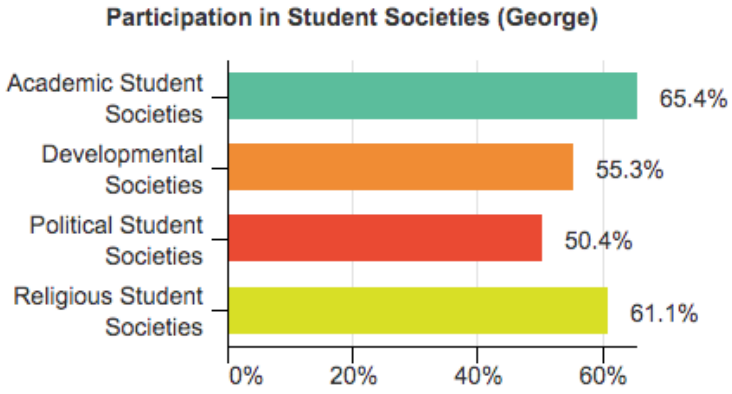
4.3. Participation in student life activities

Student life activities are divided into Societies (which are broken down to four types: academic, developmental, religious, and political), Arts and Culture activities, 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



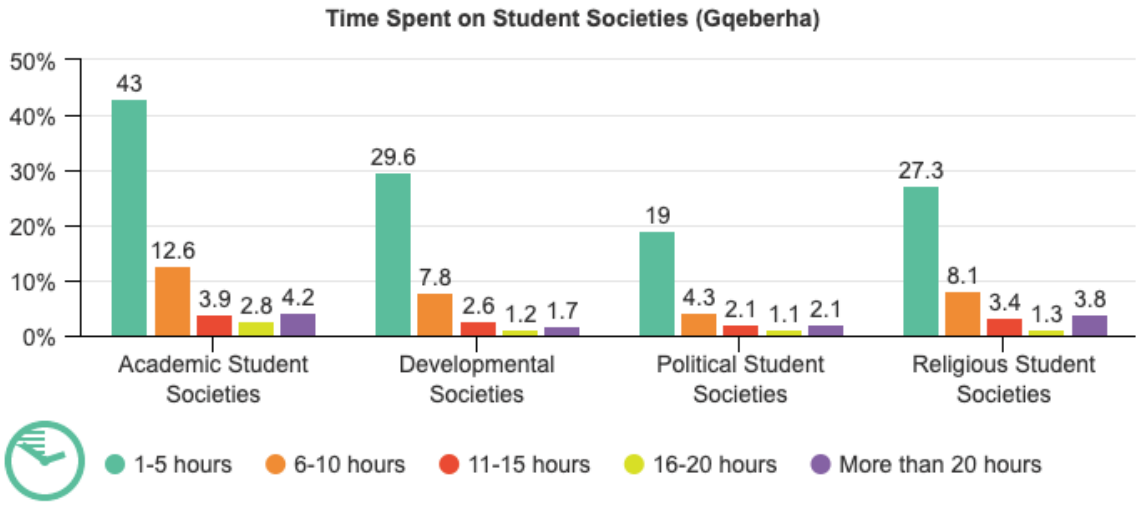
Graph 26: Society participation – Gqeberha



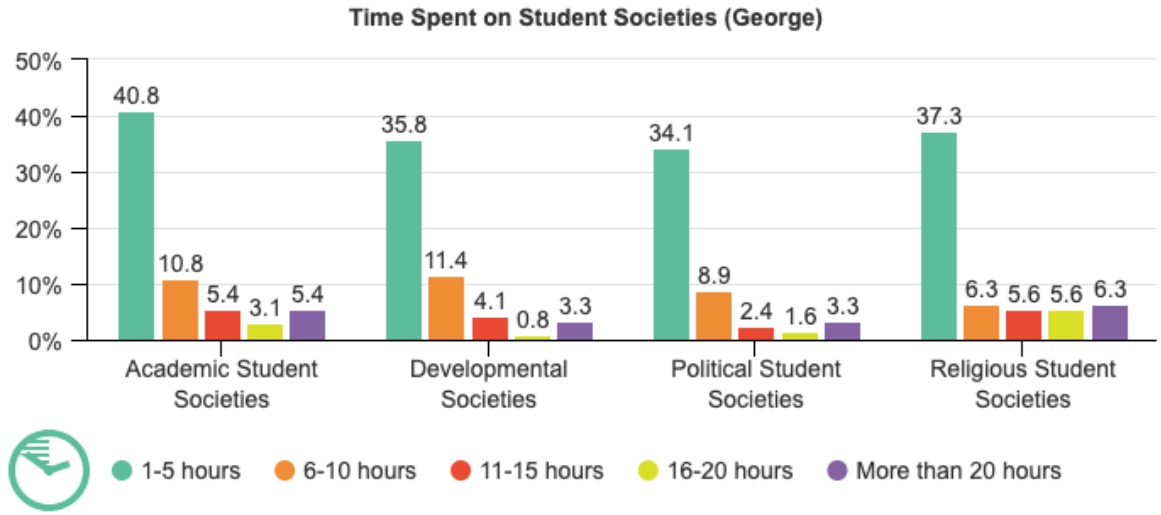
Graph 27: Society participation - George

Graphs 26 and 27 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 26 shows that most society participants in Gqeberha participated in academic societies, followed by religious societies, then political and developmental societies.

Graph 27 shows that in George, political society participation was the highest, followed by academic, then religious and developmental societies.



Graph 28: Time spent on societies – Gqeberha

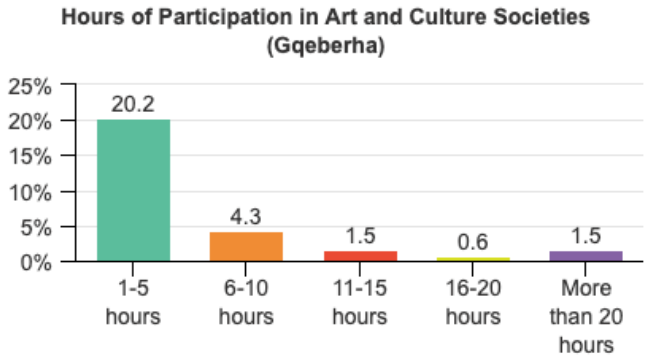


Graph 29: Time spent on societies – George

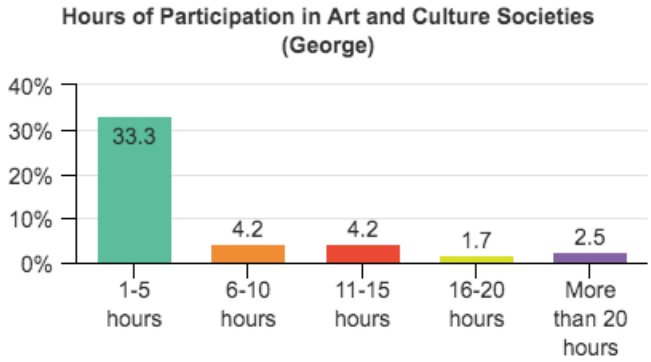
Graphs 28 and 29 show most students involved in a society spend between 1 to 5 hours a week on the society.

4.3.2. Arts and Culture

28% of Gqeberha respondents reported participating in an Arts and Culture activity. 45.8% of George respondents reported participating in an Arts and Culture activity. Graphs 30 and 31 show that approximately 20.2% of Gqeberha participants and 33.3% George participants spend between 1 to 5 hours per week in Arts and Culture activities.



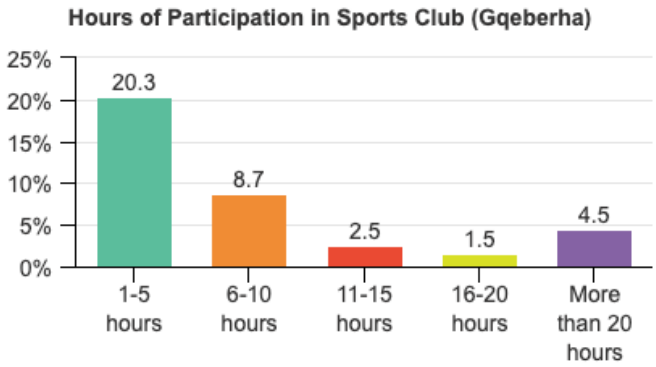
Graph 30: Time spent on Arts and Culture activities – Gqeberha



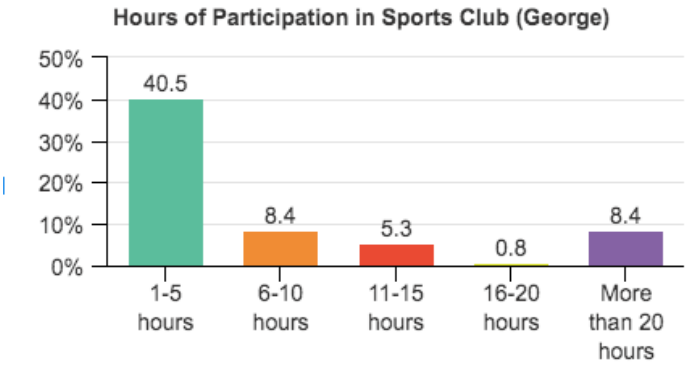
Graph 31: Time spent on Arts and Culture activities - George

4.3.3. Sports Club

37% of Gqeberha respondents participate in a sport club. In George, 63.4% of respondents were part of a sports club.



Graph 32: Time spent on Sports Club activities – Gqeberha

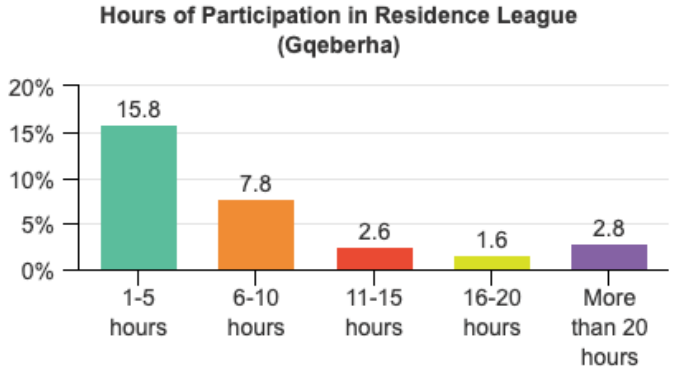


Graph 33: Time spent on Sports Club activities – George

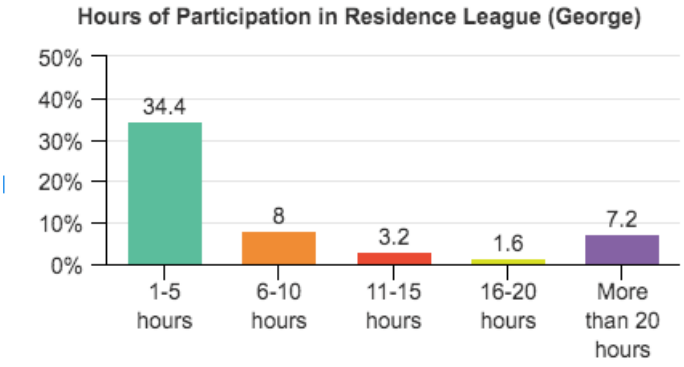
In Gqeberha , 20.3% of participants dedicate 1-5 hours per week to sports clubs as indicated by graph 32. Graph 33 indicates that 40.5% of George participants spend 1-5 hours a week on sports club participation.

4.3.4. Residence League

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



Graph 34: Time spent on Residence League activities – Gqeberha



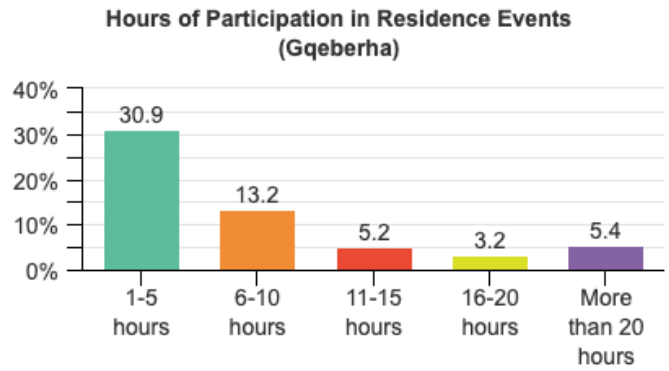
Graph 35: Time spent on Residence League activities – George

15.8% of participants spend between 1 to 5 hours on Residence League activities in Gqeberha. In George, 34.4% of participants spend 1 to 5 hours per week on Residence League activities.

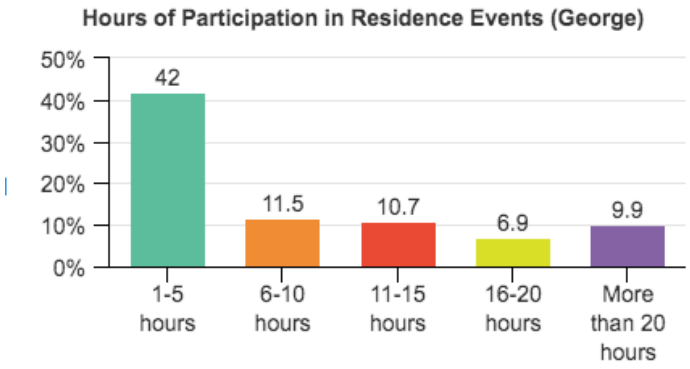
4.3.5. Residence Events

Many respondents reported spending time on residence related events. 30.6% of respondents partook in residence events in Gqeberha. In George, 54.4% of respondents participated in residence events.

Time spent on Residence Events activities



Graph 36: Time spent on Residence Events activities – Gqeberha

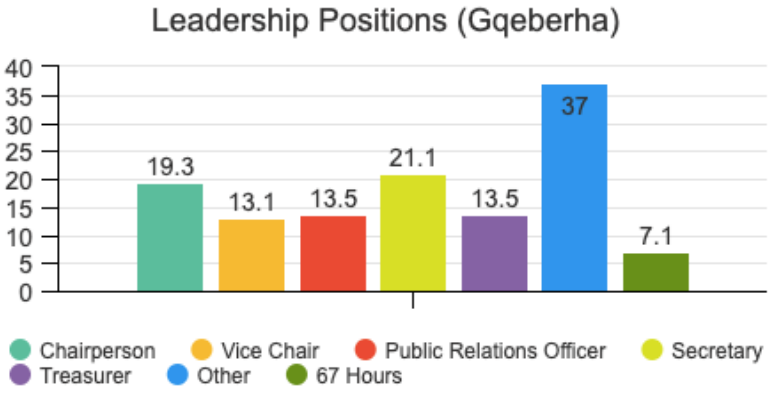


Graph 37: Time spent on Residence Events activities – George

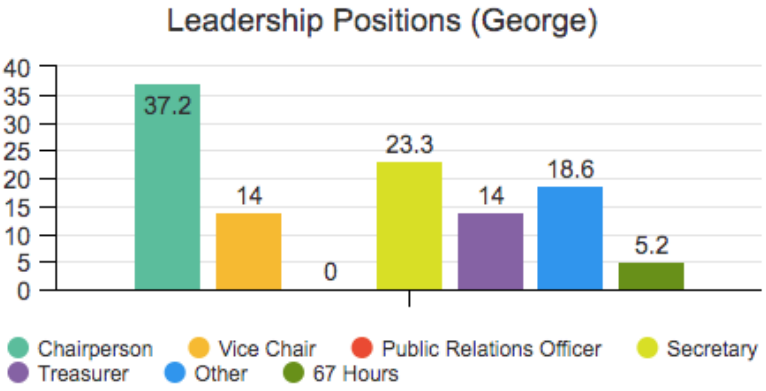
In Gqeberha, 30.9% of participants spent between 1 to 5 hours per week on Residence Events. In George, 42% of participants spent 1 to 5 hours per week on Residence Events.

4.4. Participants in leadership positions

27.5% of Gqeberha and 27% of George respondents reported being in leadership positions. Graphs 38 and 39 highlight the types of leadership positions respondents hold.



Graph 38: Leadership positions held by participants - Gqeberha



Graph 39: Leadership positions held by participants George

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.

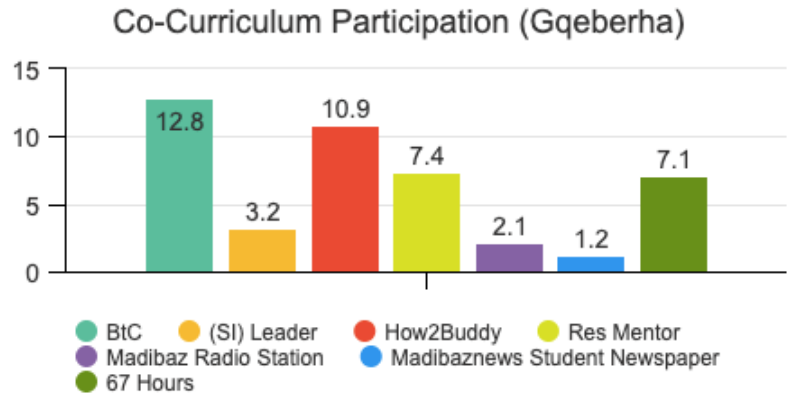
5.3. Co-curricular participation

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

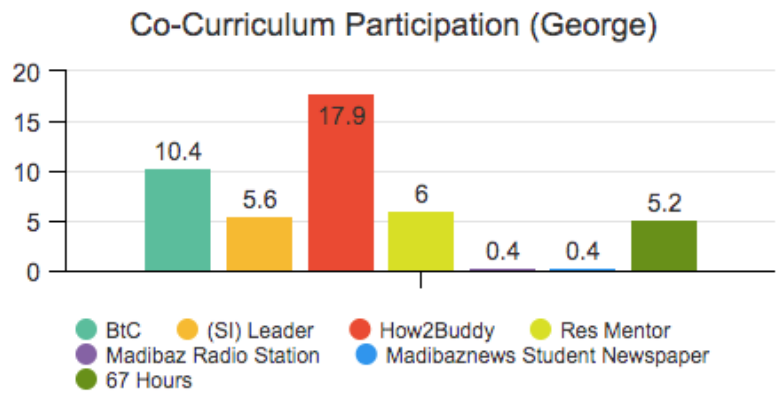
students to record their learning and involvement and allows them to plan their growth and development.

Overall, around 45% of all respondents participate in co-curriculum activities. 44.7% of Gqeberha and 45.9% of George respondents.

Graphs 40 and 41 demonstrate a breakdown of respondents according to co-curricular participation in Gqeberha and George respectively.



Graph 40: Co-curricular participation - Gqeberha



Graph 41: Co-curricular participation – George

Of the respondents who participate in co-curricular activities in Gqeberha , most participate in Beyond the Classroom (12.8%), then How2Budyy (10.9%), Residence Mentors (7.4%), 67 Hours (7.1%), Supplementary Instruction (SI) Leaders (3.2%), Madibaz Radio Station (2.1%), and Madibaznews Student Newspaper (1.2%).

In George, most respondents were in How2Buddy (17.9%), followed by the BtC programme (10.4%), SI Leaders (5.6%), 67 Hours (5.2%), Residence Mentors (6.0%), Madibaznews Sutdent Newspaper (0.4%), and Madibaz Radio Station (0.4%).

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 ranked from highest to lowest by mean score for Gqeberha and George respectively.

Competency and corresponding learning outcome	Mean	SD
Realize learning is a lifelong process	4.1	0.8
Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences	4.17	0.8
Listen attentively to others	4.46	0.7
Take responsibility for my actions	4.29	0.8
Demonstrate respect for the environment	4.00	0.9
Identify personal strengths and growth areas	4.16	0.8

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

Increase my self-confidence	4.28	0.8
Identify and pursue individual goals	4.44	0.7
Effectively communicate through speaking, writing, and other means of communication	4.02	0.9
Commit to personal morals and ethics	3.97	0.9
Understand how values and ethics affect decision making	3.88	0.9
Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them	4.41	0.7
Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose	4.26	0.8
Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view	4.21	0.7
Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument	4.07	0.8
Follow basic protocols	4.04	0.9
Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others	4.21	0.7
Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations	4.31	0.8
Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem	4.29	0.8
Able to articulate ideas	4.22	0.8
Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly	4.31	0.7
Effectively facilitate group discussions	4.29	0.8
Experience greater career development opportunities	4.32	0.7
Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution	4.09	0.9
Actively engage in my community to work for positive change	4.28	0.7
Explore career fields and workplace options	4.15	0.7
Plan and implement a task without direct oversight	4.46	0.7
Implement ways to manage stress effectively	4.33	0.7
Manage my time effectively	4.41	0.7

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

Competency and corresponding learning outcome	Mean	SD
Demonstrate respect for the environment	4.03	0.9
Take responsibility for my actions	4.2	0.9
Listen attentively to others	4.36	0.8
Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences	4.24	0.7
Effectively communicate through speaking, writing, and other means of communication	4.05	0.8
Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument	4.16	0.7
Realize learning is a lifelong process	4.38	0.7
Increase my self-confidence	4.46	0.7
Identify and pursue individual goals	4.18	0.8
Understand how values and ethics affect decision making	4.09	0.8
Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others	3.84	0.9
Commit to personal morals and ethics	4.42	0.7
Identify personal strengths and growth areas	4.38	0.7
Follow basic protocols	4.23	0.7
Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose	4.1	0.8
Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view	3.96	0.8

Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them	4.25	0.6
Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations	4.33	0.7
Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution	4.22	0.8
Explore career fields and workplace options	4.23	0.7
Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem	4.21	0.7
Experience greater career development opportunities	4.24	0.7
Actively engage in my community to work for positive change	4.21	0.7
Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly	4.13	0.7
Able to articulate ideas	4.29	0.7
Manage my time effectively	4.17	0.7
Effectively facilitate group discussions	4.46	0.7
Plan and implement a task without direct oversight	4.25	0.7
Implement ways to manage stress effectively	4.54	0.6

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

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

For participants in Gqeberha, the top competencies are

- Plan and implement a task without direct oversight (Independence)
- Listen attentively to others (Meaningful interpersonal relationships)
- Identify and pursue individual goals (Self-awareness and development)
- Manage my time effectively (Independence)
- Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them (Self-awareness and development)

For participants in George, the top competencies are

- Implement ways to manage stress effectively (Healthy behaviour)
- Increase my self-confidence (Self-awareness and development)
- Effectively facilitate group discussions (Leadership development)
- Commit to personal morals and ethics (Value exploration)
- Realize learning is a lifelong process (Intellectual growth)

6.2. Perceived competencies by non-participants

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

Gqeberha Learning Outcome	Mean	SD
Realize learning is a lifelong process	4.23	0.7

Demonstrate respect for the environment	4.38	0.8
Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences	4.33	0.8
Listen attentively to others	4.21	0.8
Effectively communicate through speaking, writing, and other means of communication	4.19	0.7
Increase my self-confidence	4.36	0.7
Identify personal strengths and growth areas	4.34	0.7
Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose	4.12	0.8
Follow basic protocols	4.05	0.9
Take responsibility for my actions	3.93	0.8
Understand how values and ethics affect decision making	4.27	0.8
Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view	4.23	0.7
Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others	4.18	0.7
Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them	4.16	0.7
Experience greater career development opportunities	4.18	0.8
Identify and pursue individual goals	4.3	0.7
Commit to personal morals and ethics	4.37	0.8
Able to articulate ideas	4.25	0.7
Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument	4.21	0.8
Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations	4.31	0.7
Explore career fields and workplace options	4.23	0.7
Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem	4.2	0.8
Effectively facilitate group discussions	4.2	0.8
Actively engage in my community to work for positive change	4.27	0.7
Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution	4.18	0.7
Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly	4.34	0.7
Implement ways to manage stress effectively	4.25	0.7
Plan and implement a task without direct oversight	4.33	0.7
Manage my time effectively	4.33	0.7

Table 9: Perceived competencies by non-participants – Gqeberha

George Learning Outcome	Mean	SD
Demonstrate respect for the environment	4.41	0.8
Realize learning is a lifelong process	4.44	0.7
Effectively communicate through speaking, writing, and other means of communication	4.43	0.7
Experience greater career development opportunities	4.43	0.7
Listen attentively to others	4.37	0.7
Identify personal strengths and growth areas	4.27	0.8
Commit to personal morals and ethics	4.36	0.8
Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences	4.46	0.6
Understand how values and ethics affect decision making	4.12	0.8
Take responsibility for my actions	4.23	0.9

Seek involvement with people different than me and/or with different points of view	3.96	0.8
Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them	4.34	0.7
Increase my self-confidence	4.38	0.6
Explore career fields and workplace options	4.4	0.6
Seek to negotiate and balance diverse views to reach a workable solution	4.23	0.8
Identify and pursue individual goals	4.21	0.8
Develop mutually beneficial relationships with others	4.42	0.7
Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations	4.46	0.8
Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument	4.47	0.7
Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose	4.58	0.5
Able to articulate ideas	4.47	0.7
Implement ways to manage stress effectively	4.42	0.6
Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly	4.22	0.9
Follow basic protocols	4.41	0.7
Actively engage in my community to work for positive change	4.46	0.6
Effectively facilitate group discussions	4.32	0.7
Manage my time effectively	4.32	0.9
Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem	4.25	0.7
Plan and implement a task without direct oversight	4.45	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

- Demonstrate respect for the environment (Social responsibility)
- Commit to personal morals and ethics (Value exploration)
- Increase my self-confidence (Self-awareness and development)
- Identify personal strengths and growth areas (Self-awareness and development)
- Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly (Adaptivity)

The top perceived potential competencies for George non-participants are

- Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose (Collaboration)
- Use information from a variety of sources (including past experiences) to make decisions, form an opinion or argument (Information literacy)
- Able to articulate ideas (Effective communication)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (Appreciating diversity)
- Think creatively to generate new ideas and innovations (Adaptivity)
- Actively engage in my community to work for positive change (Social responsibility)

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:

- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (Appreciating diversity)
- Plan and implement a task without direct oversight (Independence)
- Identify and pursue individual goals (Self-awareness and development)
- Identify obstacles to achieving goals and ways to overcome them (Self-awareness and development)
- Identify and develop an effective solution to a problem (Intellectual growth)

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

- Respond to challenges, transitions, and new situations more openly (Adaptivity)
- Understand and appreciate human and cultural differences (Appreciating diversity)
- Implement ways to manage stress effectively (Healthy habits)
- Cooperates with others to achieve a common purpose (Collaboration)
- Explore career fields and workplace options (Career development)

Gqeberha and George respondents identified different competencies 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
Appreciating diversity	Adaptivity
Independence	Appreciating diversity
Self-awareness and development	Healthy habits
Intellectual growth	Collaboration
	Career development

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	Independence
Appreciating diversity	Appreciating diversity
Meaningful interpersonal relationships	Self-awareness and development

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 self-awareness and development than appreciating diversity.

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 (n=3911)	George (n=268)
To learn skills (33.5%)	To learn skills (40.7%)
Desire to help others/community outreach (25.3%)	For recreation or enjoyment (28.7%)
Need to add something to my CV (21.2%)	Desire to help others/community outreach (28%)
For recreation or enjoyment (19.7%)	Need to add something to my CV (25.7%)
Interest in making friends (16.4%)	Interests in making friends (21.6%)

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

Gqeberha (n=3911)	George (n=268)
Day/time the activity is held (52%)	Lectures/class (47.8%)
Lectures/class (51.5%)	Day/time the activity is held (47%)
Finances, lack of money (44.5%)	Time (involvement in other activities) (40.3%)
Transport (difficulty getting to activities) (42.1%)	Finances, lack of money (40.3%)
Time (involvement in other activities) (39.5%)	Transport (difficulty getting to activities) (38.1%)

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 2020, 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 (85.9% in Gqeberha and 87.6% in George).

With regards to faculty information, slightly more respondents were registered full-time in Gqeberha (96.9%) as compared to the general student population (88%). In George,

almost all respondents were full-time registered students (99%). In Gqeberha , most respondents were in their first academic year of study (29.8%) followed by second year students (28.4%). Most George participants were in their first academic year (57.6%) followed by second and third year students (20.5% and 16.2%). In George, half of respondents were from the science faculty (52.5%) and 43.5% 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. In Gqeberha and George, most students are either living in a university accredited accommodation, at home, or in a private accommodation. The Nelson Mandela University shuttle is the primary commute to campus for respondents. Other popular ways of commute include walking 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 more respondents that participate in student life activities than those that do not in Gqeberha . The inverse is true for George. Most participants devote approximately 1-5 hours per week on each type of society.

With regards to leadership positions, 27.5% of respondents in Gqeberha and 27.0% of George respondents reported being in leadership positions.

Overall, over half of respondents reported being in co-curricular activities (51.2% in Gqeberha and 61.2% in George). In Gqeberha , most were BtC participants and most How2Buddies in George.

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
- Meaningful interpersonal relationship
- Social responsibility

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

- Appreciating diversity
- Self-awareness and development
- Effective communication
- Intellectual growth

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	Self-awareness and development

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 5 interferences were the day/time the activity is held, lectures/class, finances (lack of money), transport (difficulty getting to activities), and time (involvement in other activities). In George, the top 5 were lectures/class, day/time the activity is held, time, finances, and transport (difficulty getting to 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 that 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 that 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. This will increase student awareness of programmes on offer that will assist them to be 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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