UFS101 Module Evaluation

2012

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Contents

Appendices

Executive summary

UFS101 is an undergraduate core curriculum project in which first year students at the University of the Free State (UFS) are provided with an opportunity to develop as 21st century thinkers. This innovative, multidisciplinary module was developed by a team of experts and was refined following a pilot study conducted during 2011. In 2012 approximately 2,000 students enrolled for the module, which was effectively and efficiently co-ordinated by a core team of four staff members.

This module evaluation report presents the most prominent findings of a comprehensive mixed method study relating to the first full implementation of UFS101. The purpose of this report is to present evidence periodically gathered from multiple sources and perspectives during the course of 2012 to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the module by investigating: the attainment of the overall module outcomes; the attainment of individual unit outcomes; the level of academic challenge; the effectiveness of lectures, tutorials and learning experiences; the effectiveness and quality of learning materials and the platform for learning (Blackboard®); the efficiency and effectiveness of various logistical processes; assessment and student success.

The outcomes of the module are that students should demonstrate the ability to: explain the value of different disciplinary perspectives; apply different disciplinary perspectives as part of their critical thinking; demonstrate basic reflective academic skills - reading, writing and argumentation skills; and reflect on how higher education empowers citizens to engage with the challenges facing the 21$_{st}$ century world (locally and globally). The success rate of students indicates that these outcomes were achieved.

The largest proportion of students (72.79%) successfully completed the module based on the criteria set out for them, with only six students (0.31%) not achieving the subminimum of 45% to pass their assessment. The high academic success rate and self-reporting by small numbers of students, indicates that the academic level of the module content, as well as that of the assessments may not have been adequately high for first year university students. Learning facilitators were of the opinion that the marks allocated for language and technical aspects, for example, were too high and that marks received for assignments were not necessarily an accurate reflection of the quality of the students' performance. Problems were also experienced with regard to plagiarism. It is envisaged that the involvement of a moderator to be appointed as from 2013 will address these concerns.

Various respondents expressed their preference for different units presented in this module, indicating that UFS101 had catered for a diversity of interests. There was sufficient evidence that the unit outcomes had been reached, academically speaking, but the contentious nature of certain topics caused several students to disengage on an emotional level, rendering the module as dissatisfying in their opinion. The learning facilitators, lecturers and students offered two main recommendations relating to

the units. Firstly, that the diversity of interests in different topics; the variety of home languages, learning styles and other factors impacting on learning in large classes necessitate lectures to be made more interactive to keep students engaged. Secondly that, for continuity purposes, lecturers should indicate more clearly how the unit they are presenting links with the other units. Lecturers also expressed the need for better liaison amongst themselves to further enhance a sense of continuity.

There was overall enjoyment of the discussion sessions during tutorials and the learning experiences were very well received. These were indicated to be innovative and educating. The UFS101 team and the evaluator recommended that in future each unit have both a tutorial and a learning experience. It was found important for the learning facilitators to receive more specific training with regard to facilitation, in order to enhance the quality of discussion sessions. Students enjoyed the interactive nature of the learning experiences and were excited at the opportunity of meeting special guest presenters, such as Gill Marcus, Governor of the South African Reserve Bank. It was recommended that in order to make full use of such unique learning opportunities, more time should be allocated for students to interact and engage in discussion with the special guests.

Great appreciation was expressed towards the lecturers, learning facilitators and the UFS101 team for their friendly and efficient service. The lecturers were specifically commended for the thorough preparation of their presentations. The logistical arrangements and processes were found to be of an excellent standard. Students appreciated the blended learning approach, specifically because they did not have to write examinations and could submit their assignments online. They did request, however, that more opportunities be created for them to connect with the UFS101 team, their learning facilitators and the lecturers. It was recommended, for example, that a blog be opened on Blackboard® following every unit, to facilitate discussion of the unit content with the presenters.

The module guides (first and second semester) were found to be of a high standard, but unfortunately students did not make optimal use of this learning material. It was therefore decided to assess class preparation by requiring students to complete multiple choice questions relating to preparation material on Blackboard® prior to the presentations.

UFS101 is an innovative and unique module that offers tremendous learning opportunities; the optimal utilisation of which, however, is exceptionally challenging within the context of large class teaching and learning.   In order for students to benefit fully from this learning experience, attentiveness to the recommendations relating to increased student engagement could therefore be most useful. The UFS101 team, lecturers, learning facilitators and other role players who have been committed to the development of the module and its implementation during 2012, deserve commendation for the tremendous effort they have invested in aspiring to achieve excellence in this module.

Introduction

This report presents the most prominent findings from a comprehensive mixed method study conducted during the course of 2012 relating to the efficiency and effectiveness of the UFS101 module. The purpose of this report is to present evidence gathered from multiple sources and perspectives on the first implementation of the UFS101 module.

The following aspects will receive priority: the attainment of the overall module outcomes; the attainment of individual unit outcomes; the level of academic challenge; the effectiveness of lectures, tutorials and learning experiences; the effectiveness and quality of learning materials and the platform for learning (Blackboard®); the efficiency and effectiveness of various logistical processes; assessment and student success. Furthermore, since the evaluation was conducted by means of action research, the critical concerns, risks and problems identified and addressed by the UFS101 team during the course of the year will be highlighted and the strengths of the module will be identified. Finally, recommendations for future consideration will be presented.

Overview of the module

This overview is presented to provide background information concerning UFS101, clarity with regard to the implementation of the module during 2012, and also the context for the discussion of the research findings.

UFS101 is an innovative multi-disciplinary module that aims to develop 21st century thinkers. The designers of the module attempted to demonstrate to students how to engage with complex problems from multiple perspectives. The challenge presented is to teach students to engage with local and global problems through the use of intellectual and practical skills. UFS101 endeavours to develop graduates that are competent citizens and compassionate human beings, thereby providing a more enriching perspective on education.

The implementation of UFS101 during 2012 was directed by the findings and recommendations of a pilot of the module conducted in 2011. This evaluation process found the strengths of the module to be high levels of active learning, the implementation of a blended learning approach and a high quality of learning materials provided to the students. Both the lecturers and learning facilitators were found to be role models of good teaching and learning and student engagement was found to be at a deep level.

Module outcomes

After completion of this module students should demonstrate the ability to:

- ♦ Explain the value of different disciplinary perspectives;
- ♦ Apply different disciplinary perspectives as part of their critical thinking;
- ♦ Demonstrate basic reflective academic skills - reading, writing and argumentation skills; and
- ♦ Reflect on how higher education empowers citizens to engage with the challenges facing the 21_{st} century world (locally and globally).

Presentation

UFS101 aims to create an innovative, 21_{st} century learning space where students learn through lectures, podcasts, learning experiences (such as the Astronomy Fair and the Chem-Magic Show) and/or tutorials (where students have an opportunity to engage in discussions and debates).

During 2012, the module comprised of seven units presented by experts on each of the topics. The first two units were presented in the first semester and the other five during the second semester. (Refer to *Table 1* for an exposition of the units presented during 2012). The presentation of units was preceded by an official launch to market the full roll-out of the module after the 2011 pilot. The well-known comedian and motivational speaker, Corrie Campbell, made use of this opportunity to encourage students to think "out of the box". This was followed by an orientation session, which included an exposition of the module content as well as administrative information about the module, for example time tables, tutorials and assessment. The Vice-chancellor of the university, Prof. J.D. Jansen, also participated by motivating the students and explaining the rationale for the module. Various prominent figures in society, for example Gill Marcus, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, provided food for thought during certain learning experiences.

Table 1   Exposition of UFS101 units presented during 2012

Unit	Topic	Discipline	Presenter(s)	Semester
1	**How Do We Deal With Our Violent Past?** ♦ **Learning experience:** Screening of the War Museum Documentary and Discussion ♦ **Tutorial:** Evaluate medical admission policies	History	Prof. J.D. Jansen	Semester 1
2	**What Does It Mean To Be Fair?** ♦ **Learning experience:** Don't talk to me, talk to my lawyer ♦ **Learning experience:** Ask the Judge	Law	Dr. I. Keevy	
3	**Are We Alone?** ♦ **Learning experience:** Astronomy Fair - Included a **tutorial** on the Square Kilometre Array (SKA)	Astrophysics, Microbiology	Prof. M.J.H. Hoffman Prof. E. van Heerden	Semester 2
4	**Did God Really Say?** ♦ Screening of the movie *Joan of Arc* ♦ **Learning experience:** Free talk on the use and misuse of God ♦ **Tutorial:** Analysis of "God says" discourse	Theology	Prof. R.M. Britz Rev. M. Sukdaven	
5	**How Green Is Green?** ♦ **Learning experience:** Chem-Magic Show	Chemistry	Prof. A. Roodt	
6	**Why Is The Financial Crisis Described As 'Global'?** (Economics) ♦ **Learning experience:** Governor of the South African Reserve Bank	Economics	Dr. A. van Niekerk	
7	**How Do We Become South Africans?** (Anthropology) ♦ **Tutorial:** What in South Africa would illustrate an imagined community?	Anthropology	Mr. M. Serekoane	

Learning support was offered by means of the learning management system, Blackboard®, which formed the main learning platform, complemented by a module guide for each semester. These tools were used to convey important information and contained learning material and links to additional sources of information, e.g. videos. Additional communication about the module took place through text messages (SMSs), Facebook and Twitter. Students could also contact the UFS101 team by e-mail or could visit their offices during consultation hours.

Assessment and attendance requirements

Students were evaluated through assessment tasks, which included participation in discussion forums, as well as reflection journals and digital storytelling. Detailed instructions for each assessment were provided in the module guide and Blackboard®. Each assessment was submitted on Blackboard®. Seven assessments were completed during the course of the year, of which two were completed during the first semester and five during the second semester. Refer to *Table 2* for a summary of the UFS101 assessments during 2012.

Table 2   **Summary of UFS101 assessments during 2012**

Unit	Assessment	Due date
Unit 1	Essay: answer the three questions about medical school admission policies	17-Apr-12
Unit 2	Discussion forum: addressing violence against women and children	02-May-12
Unit 3	Discussion forum: impact of the SKA and parameters of life on your discipline	03-Aug-12
Unit 4	Reflection journal: analyse the transcript using "God says discourse" to do so	14-Aug-12
Unit 5	Reflection journal: reflect on questions regarding Fukushima Nuclear Crisis OR Fracking for Shale Gas OR Johannesburg Acid Water Problem	04-Sep-12
Unit 6	Discussion forum: Investigate whether globalisation benefits economic growth in emerging market economies in general, and in South Africa in particular	18-Sep-12
Unit 7	Digital Storytelling: Choose a historical event and create an imagined South African future based on that event.	09-Oct-12
Re-assessment	Integrated assessment on all topics (essay)	26-Oct-12

The learning facilitators were the assessors, each of whom took responsibility for a group of approximately 30 students. Instructions for the marking of assignments (see example in *Appendix A*) and detailed rubrics (see example in *Appendix B*) were provided for each of the assessments and the UFS101 team monitored the assessment process.

In order to successfully complete the module, students needed to:

♦ Submit all assessments in UFS101; and

♦ Achieve an average 50% or higher for the assessments.

To qualify for the additional assessment opportunity students, having submitted all assessments, needed to obtain an overall average mark of between 45% and 49% for the assessments. An average mark of less than 45% resulted in a repetition of the module.

Class and learning experience/tutorial attendance was mandatory as this could enhance student success. An attendance rate of 70% was required of students in order to successfully complete the module. Considering that almost 2000 students were registered for UFS101 during 2012, attendance was monitored through the use of a biometric scanning system. The system matches a template of the scanned fingerprints of each UFS101 enrolled student with the student number when the student clocks-in for a session.   The scanners connect to an online monitoring system called IPCORE, which records overall group attendance, as well as individual student reports.

In the event of students not being able to attend a contact session, they needed to complete an Appeal Application form with a valid excuse and proof, which was sent to the Logistics Coordinator via email within 48 hours after the missed session. The following were regarded as valid excuses:

- Timetable clash (UFS generated timetable to be attached)
- Test-timetable clash (module code, date and time and the lecturer's contact details to be attached)
- Illness (medical certificate to be attached)
- Death in the family (a death certificate to be attached)
- Provincial, National and International Sport/Cultural Events (accredited documentation to be attached).

Persons Involved in UFS101

The presentation of UFS101 necessitated the cooperation amongst an assortment of staff members, learning facilitators and various technical support personnel. The main categories of persons involved in the module, namely the UFS101 team, the learning facilitators and the students, will briefly be outlined.

The UFS101 team

UFS101 is coordinated by a team of staff members based in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The team members and their portfolios are listed below:

Module Coordinator: Dr. M.J. du Plooy
Student Coordinator: Ms. L.L. Hing
Logistics Coordinator: Ms. L. Myburgh
Learning Facilitator Coordinator: Mrs. L. Strydom

During 2012, the team was assisted by three support staff members.

Lecturers and guests

Each of the units was presented by expert lecturers on the various topics. These persons are indicated in *Table* 1. In addition, various well-known and prominent figures in society were invited to make guest

appearances during learning experiences. These guests included: Judge Musi (Unit 2), a panel of experts, including Christi van der Westhuizen (renowned book editor), who participated in the learning experience "Free talk on the use and misuse of God" (Unit 4) and Gill Marcus, Governor of the South African Reserve Bank (Unit 6).

Learning facilitators

A team of 70 learning facilitators was initially selected from 90 applicants and during the course of the year the number decreased to 67. The team mainly consisted of senior and postgraduate students. They received training at the beginning of 2012, which included an orientation to UFS101, Blackboard® training, as well as academic advising and New Academic Tutorial Training (NATP), where they had an opportunity to discuss content of the lectures of all units. Meetings were held on a regular basis to monitor their progress and to receive feedback with regard to their experiences and involvement in the module.

Their responsibilities included the attendance of all contact sessions and the facilitation of tutorial sessions. Each learning facilitator was assigned to a group of approximately 30 students and was responsible for the marking of all the assignments of the group and e-mail communication with these students. The learning facilitators also played a vital role during large gatherings as they controlled the flow of students entering the hall, were responsible for the biometric scanners used to monitor the attendance of the students and for taking microphones to students during interactive sessions. In addition, the learning facilitators assisted with the management of disruptive student behaviour, such as text messaging on cellular phones during lectures.

Students

The number of students enrolled for UFS101 gradually decreased from 2,233 at the beginning of 2012, to 1,993 towards the end of the first semester to 1,922 at the end of the year. The decrease in numbers may be attributed to the incorrect registration of students in extended programmes and students no longer studying at the UFS. Please refer to *Figure 1* and *Table 3* for a demographic profile of students involved in UFS101 during 2012. The figures are based on the number of students enrolled at the end of the first semester.
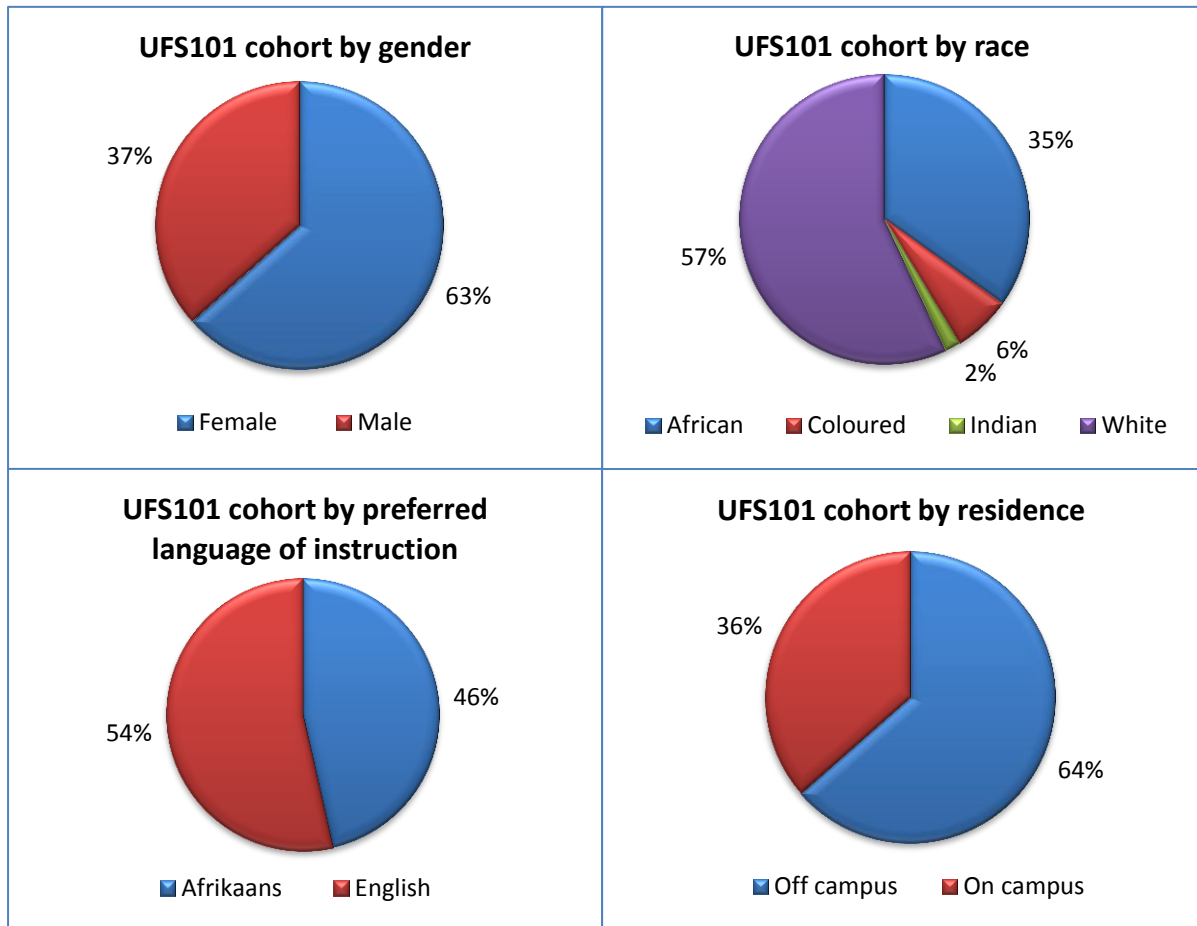
Figure 1 Demographic characteristics of UFS101 students by gender, race, language of instruction and residence

The majority of first year students enrolled for UFS101 during 2012 were female, white and were commuters. Almost half of the students (46%) preferred Afrikaans as language medium of instruction.

Table 3 UFS101 cohort by home language

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Afrikaans	1046	52.5
Chinese	1	0.1
English	284	14.2
Ndebele	4	0.2
Other	21	1.1
Pedi	3	0.2
Setswana	45	2.3
Sesotho	310	15.6
Swazi	6	0.3
Tsonga	19	1.0
Tswana	49	2.5
Venda	25	1.3
Xhosa	107	5.4
Zulu	73	3.7
Total	**1993**	**100.0**

The above mentioned table, however, clearly indicates that whilst the home language of approximately half (52.5%) of the students was Afrikaans, only 284 students (14,2%) were English-speaking, meaning that most of the students who preferred receiving instruction in English were not necessarily proficient in English.
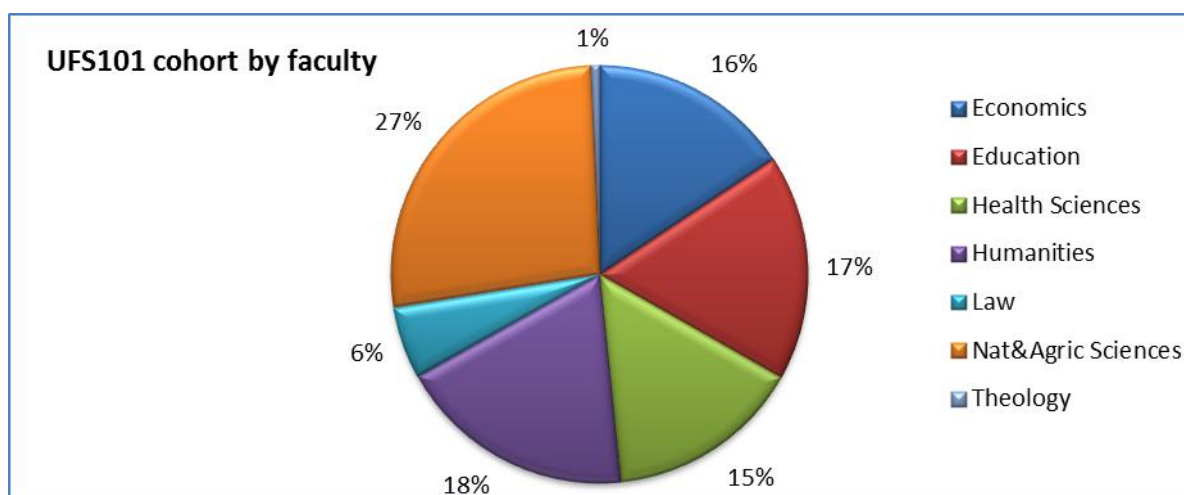
Figure 2   UFS101 cohort by faculty

Each of the faculties was represented at UFS101 in varying numbers, as indicated in *Figure 2*, with the majority of students representing the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (27%) and the smallest proportion (1%) representing the Faculty of Theology.

Research methodology

In order to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the first implementation of the UFS101 module during 2012 a mixed method approach was taken. Action research was employed as the UFS101 team acted in response to themes emerging from data gathered throughout the year.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perspectives of the students, learning facilitators, lecturers and staff members involved in the UFS101 module relating to the extent to which the teaching and learning outcomes of the module were attained, their overall satisfaction with the module, as well as their recommendations for the future improvement of the module.

Research questions

In order to achieve this purpose, a number of questions were posed. The main research question was:

What were the perspectives of the students, learning facilitators, lecturers and staff members involved in the UFS101 module relating to the extent to which the teaching and learning outcomes of the module were attained, their overall satisfaction with the module, as well as their recommendations for the future improvement of the module?

Subsidiary research questions:

1. To what extent were the overall module outcomes attained?
2. To what extent were the individual unit outcomes attained?
3. What was the extent of effectiveness and quality of the:
   3.1   Lecture sessions?
   3.2   Tutorial sessions?
   3.3   Learning experiences?
   3.4   Learning materials?
   3.5   Platform for learning (Blackboard®)?
   3.6   Various logistical processes?
4. What was the extent of student success in UFS101?
5. What recommendations do students, learning facilitators, lecturers and staff members involved in the UFS101 module have for the future improvement of the module?

Population and sampling

This study made use of comprehensive sampling as the entire population of students enrolled for UFS101 and all learning facilitators involved in the module (67 in number) during 2012 were invited to participate. The main presenter of each of the seven units was also requested to participate in an individual interview. The actual number of participants in the study is presented in *Table 4.*

Table 4   Number of participants in the study

Online student evaluations		Focus group interview with students	Nominal group interviews with students		Module overview meetings with learning facilitators		Individual interviews with lecturers
1	2		1	2	1	2	
n=424 (21%)	n=423 (22%)	n=4	n=8	n=6	n=30 (45%)	n=35 (52%)	n=7

In the table above, the percentages of respondents/participants in the larger groups are provided for clarity purposes. The higher percentage, yet lower number of respondents in the online student evaluations conducted in the second semester is attributed to the decline in the number of students enrolled for the module during the course of the year. As previously mentioned, the size of the student

population was 1,993 at the end of the first semester and 1,922 at the end of the year. The percentages indicated in this table also draw attention to the high rate of participation (97%) by learning facilitators.

Participation in the study was encouraged in various ways. At the end of each semester, all students enrolled for UFS101 were invited to provide module feedback by completing a questionnaire on *Questback* or by participating in group interviews. The questionnaires were compiled in accordance with the main objectives of the study. Incentives, in the form of book vouchers, were offered for participation and students had the option of disclosing their student numbers at the end of the questionnaire, if they wanted to qualify for a lucky draw. One focus group was held to receive student feedback on the first semester and two nominal groups were held at the end of the second semester. The latter were conducted in Afrikaans and English respectively to encourage participation. For the purposes of this report, only the transcribed data from the module overview meeting held with the learning facilitators towards the end of 2012 were used. This meeting was devoted to an overview of the module and recommendations were requested for future reference. Two sessions were held to enable more fruitful participation from the 65 learning facilitators who participated in the study. Seven lecturers, representing six of the units presented during the course of the year, participated in the individual interviews.

Data Collection

Data were gathered from multiple sources and perspectives in an attempt to obtain a multifaceted view, namely: online student evaluations; group interviews with students (one focus group and two nominal groups) and learning facilitators (group meetings). Individual interviews were also conducted with the lecturers who presented each of the units. Additional sources of data were student assessment tasks and results. Observations made by the UFS101 team throughout the course of the year were also taken into consideration.

As mentioned above, data were gathered by means of quantitative and qualitative methods. The following techniques were employed:

1. An online quantitative survey for students at the end of the first semester [See *Appendix C*].
2. A focus group interview with students at the end of the first semester [See *Appendix D* for a copy of the interview schedule].
3. Nominal groups with students for an overall module evaluation where two open-ended questions were asked:
   3.1   Share your experiences relating to the UFS101 module.
   3.2   State your recommendations for the implementation of the UFS101 module in 2013.
   [See *Appendix E* for a summary of the Nominal Group Technique].
4. An online survey was compiled in response to the findings of the nominal groups in consultation with the line managers of the CTL Research Division and the UFS101 team [See *Appendix F*].

The questionnaire included three open-ended questions to which participants could relate a maximum of three responses each. The qualitative questions were as follows:

4.1 Please list things you liked about this module (list a maximum of three).

4.2 Please list things that could be improved in this module for future students (list a maximum of three).

4.3 Is there anything further that you would like to share with regard to UFS101?

The online surveys were conducted by means of *Questback*.

5. A module overview meeting was held with learning facilitators at the end of the year where data were captured by means of audio recordings. Considering the large number of learning facilitators, two sessions were held to encourage fruitful participation.

6. Structured individual interviews were held with the lecturers who presented each of the units [See *Appendix G* for a copy of the interview schedule].

Various types of triangulation were therefore employed in this study, namely:

♦ *data triangulation* whereby a variety of data sources were targeted;

♦ *investigator triangulation* with the inclusion of experienced, as well as new researchers in the research team and

♦ *method triangulation* by the use of various data collection techniques (Denzin 2001:319-323; Polit and Beck, 2008:543,546).

The variety of triangulation methods contributed to validity and reliability in the research design and data collection.

Data analysis

The cyclical nature of action research implies that feedback from data is used in an on-going cyclical process (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011:346). Furthermore, the processes of data collection and data analysis most often occur simultaneously in qualitative research (Cresswell, 2009:184; Henning, 2004:110; Polit and Beck, 2008:507). The process of scrutinising the data in search for meaningful patterns and themes that connect therefore occurred throughout.

Recordings of individual interviews, the focus group interview and the final group meetings with learning facilitators were transcribed. Transcripts of the individual interviews were made available to the participants for verification and review. Each set of qualitative data was subsequently analysed separately by means of qualitative methods. This commenced with reading and re-reading raw data before proceeding with the coding, clustering and formulation of themes. These procedures were also followed with qualitative data retrieved from *Questback*, but data from the nominal groups were reduced, verified and prioritised by the group participants themselves as described in *Appendix E*. Sets of similar data were correlated, e.g. the data from the various individual interviews, data from the two learning

facilitator meetings and also from the two nominal groups were compared and combined before being triangulated with data collected by different methods. Quantitative data from the online surveys were ultimately triangulated with the qualitative findings to provide a comprehensive view.

This approach together with data and investigator triangulation largely enhanced the reliability, validity and objectivity of the findings (Denzin 2001:319-323; Polit and Beck, 2008:543,546). The findings and emerging themes were discussed and correlated with the UFS101 team, as well as the line management and two other members of the CTL Research Division.

Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct the research was granted by the Vice Rector Academic of the UFS. The application submitted for approval of the research included ethical clearance. In the planning and implementation of the research, the ethical principles of beneficence, respect for human dignity and justice were considered (Polit and Beck, 2008:170). Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained [See *Appendix H* for examples of an informed consent form]. The study posed no direct risk for participants, but measures were taken to protect participants from social and/or emotional risks. These measures included, for example, the protection of participants in the event of making statements that could reflect negatively on the module. The identity of participants will therefore not be disclosed or attached to the data in any way. Voluntary participation, informed consent and some of the measures implemented to enhance validity of the study, such as member checking and reporting of negative and/or discrepant data, additionally contributed towards the pursuit of the principles of self-determination, full disclosure and fair treatment (Creswell, 2009:192; McMillan and Schumacher, 2010:331-332; Polit and Beck, 2008:171-174).

The role of the researcher is that of an unattached module evaluator who, as an employee at the CTL, is not directly involved in the implementation of the module. The module evaluator did, however, work closely with the UFS101 team members, who were regarded as fellow researchers, since a practitioner researcher approach was taken. The latter refers to research specifically undertaken by educators to investigate their own practice with the purpose of improving their practice and generating knowledge by asking questions aligned with improving what they are doing (Whitehead, 2008:103). Themes emerging from data gathered throughout the course of the year were discussed with the UFS101 team during regularly scheduled feedback sessions in order to provide these members of staff with an opportunity to make adjustments, as they found necessary and appropriate.

All data were managed with strict confidentiality and were managed and/or interpreted by those directly involved in the research only. Raw data were kept in safe keeping for authenticity check purposes and will be destroyed on completion of the study.

The value of the study

In striving toward excellence in teaching and learning at the UFS, insights gained from this study will contribute greatly towards enhancing the quality of this innovative module. A deeper understanding of the experiences of those involved in the module will provide valuable information with regard to student engagement in large classes of first year students and the management of contentious content within this context. Considering that tutorials were held in parallel sessions, making it difficult for lecturers and the UFS101 team to gauge the effectiveness of discussions, the feedback from students and learning facilitators is vital in establishing the extent to which tutorials contributed towards the achievement of the module outcomes. The findings of this study have guided decision-making with regard to the future implementation of UFS101 and could provide directives for the possible implementation of similar ventures at other institutions of higher education in South Africa.

Limitations of the study

The contextual nature of this research is acknowledged and a general limitation for studies of this nature is that the recorded data provides a "window in time" view. This was addressed by periodically collecting data throughout the course of the year from a variety of data sources by means of a variety of methods (i.e. data source and method triangulation).

The relatively low student response rate to invitations from the UFS101 team to participate in module evaluation was disappointing. Following cues from the research findings, this could possibly have been influenced by time constraints and workload pressures, particularly towards the end of semesters, as well as poor motivation. Inattentiveness to announcements made during lectures and electronic communication in this regard could also have contributed to the poor response.

The limitation relating to response rate was addressed by continuous efforts to encourage participation by means mentioned above. Students who had indicated that they would be willing to participate in group sessions were reminded by the use of electronic communication. Approaches that could possibly encourage more enthusiastic participation in future include: face-to-face motivation during contact sessions (including exemption from risk in the case of providing negative feedback), periodic reporting to students regarding adjustments made in response to their feedback, as well as stronger emphasis on the establishment of an inclusive learning environment. Unit feedback could possibly be facilitated by the use of a clicker system or the periodic circulation of short feedback slips at the end of each unit. The periodic circulation of feedback sheets, such as Brookfield and Preskill's (2005:48-49) Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), after tutorials sessions may provide valuable insights relating to discussions and is worth considering. It is acknowledged that the implementation of some of these recommendations may be difficult due to logistical arrangements and budget constraints.

Providing a just and balanced overview of the findings of this comprehensive study for the purposes of this report was challenging. The depth and richness of the qualitative data and thorough triangulation with literature could not be fully related within the boundaries of a report, but will be compiled into academic journal articles.

Findings of the study

In an attempt to answer the main and subsidiary research questions, the discussion of findings in this report will relate specifically to the following aspects: the attainment of the overall module outcomes; the attainment of individual unit outcomes; the level of academic challenge; the effectiveness of lectures, tutorials and learning experiences; the effectiveness and quality of learning materials and the platform for learning (Blackboard®); the efficiency and effectiveness of various logistical processes; assessment and student success. As previously mentioned, for the purposes of this report, the most prominent findings of this comprehensive study only will be discussed.

The discussion of qualitative data will be substantiated by direct quotations. The source/origin of the data will be indicated throughout, for example the learning facilitators. Responses from the qualitative section of the online survey will include the number of the respondent, for example 256. Considering that each respondent could provide up to three answers per question, the number of the statement will also be indicated, for instance: the third statement of respondent 256 will be indicated as 256.3. In the text, the quotation will therefore appear as follows:

256.3 "I do think that I have become a 21st century thinker!"

Where priority was assigned to a statement originating from a nominal group session, this too will be indicated by placing the number of the priority on the left of the statement. Refer to *Appendix E* for a summary of the Nominal Group Technique.

Attainment of the overall module outcomes

In asking to what extent the overall module outcomes were attained the feedback received from the student surveys provided valuable information. The majority of respondents (68,3%) of the survey conducted at the end of the year agreed that the content of the units challenged them to examine difficult issues from different perspectives, as well as to think in new ways about current local and global issues (see *Figure 3*).
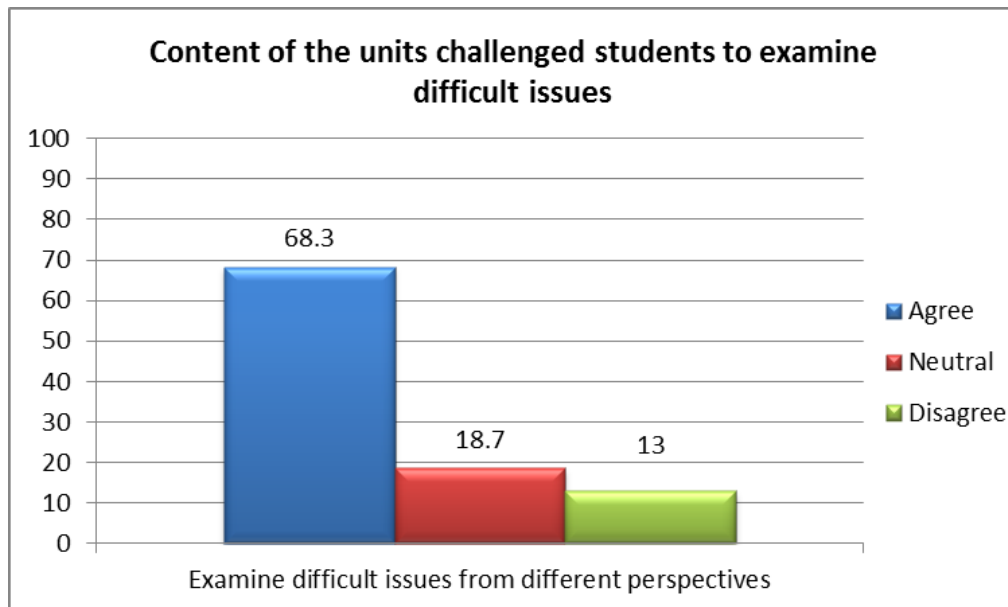
Figure 3: **Units challenged students to examine difficult issues** *(percentage of students)*

When asked how important it is that the content of UFS101 has personal relevance for students, 68.6% of respondents rated personal relevance as important. More than half of the respondents (57.4%) agreed that UFS101 does have personal relevance for students. Of the respondents, 71.5% reported that it is important to be able to apply what they have learnt in UFS101 in future, while 60% reported that they agreed that they could apply what they have learnt in UFS101 in future. In the nominal groups and qualitative data retrieved from the online survey, recommendations were made with regard to making content more relevant and applicable for first year students. These recommendations are presented in the discussion of lectures.

In response to the question posed to students relating to what they had learnt in UFS101, they responded as follows:

Table 5   Learning acquired through UFS101

By participating in UFS101, I have:	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)
Learnt to respect the views of others, even if I do not agree with them	82.2	10.9	6.9
Improved my social cohesion with diverse groups of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines, religions, etc.	62.3	20.5	17.1
Learnt to reason above emotion	69.7	17.7	12.7
Learnt to appreciate and consider both sides of an argument before making a decision	76.6	15	8.4
Improved my critical thinking skills	74.7	13.4	12
Improved my academic writing skills	60.5	19.4	20
Improved my academic argumentation skills	67.1	17.4	15.5
Been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning through learning experiences such as the Astronomy Fair, Chem-Magic Show, Presentation by Gill Marcus, the Governor of the Reserve Bank, etc.	74.9	15.8	9.4

On being asked what students liked most about the module, one respondent expressed appreciation for the interconnectedness of the units that formed part of UFS101:

389.2   "I liked how in the end of the module everything we did seemed to link with one another."

Furthermore, 137 of the statements (32%) related to learning, of which 58 statements specifically elaborated on ways in which students felt that their thinking had been broadened by UFS101. A few of these statements are listed below and the entire list is presented in *Appendix I*.

Selected student statements relating to how UFS101 broadened their thinking:

143.3   "It got me thinking outside the box. I learn more about things that were happening around me but iwasnt [sic] aware of and i also got to learn more about economics, something that as a science student i never took interest in and i enjoyed it."

227.2   "It forced me to reserach [sic] and by so doing, I learnt new things."

256.3   "I do think that I have become a 21st century thinker! I learned how to reason and also to see things from another perspective, which is extreamly [sic] important in my chosen field of study, Law!"

283   "it gives you a broader perspective about the common issues we face in society."

287.2   "To be enlightened with what is happening around the world."

287.3   "Introduction to faculties outside mine."

368   "A module that covers a wide variety of aspects that contribute to our lives."

422.1   "all the tasks we did made us think out of the box"
422.2   "we were exposed to things that we did not take into consideration."

Assessments were designed to require of students to apply different disciplinary perspectives as part of their critical thinking and to demonstrate basic reflective academic skills such as reading, writing and argumentation skills. The academic success displayed by the students bears testimony to the fact that these outcomes were achieved, however, qualitative feedback from the online survey indicates that the level of difficulty of the assignments may not have been at an academic level high enough for first year students. The aspects of student success and assessment receive more attention later on in the report.

Unit specific feedback

Questions were not specifically posed to students with regard to their experience of the units, with the exception of the focus group, where students provided feedback with regard to the first two units. The data related in this regard was therefore volunteered during the group sessions and in the qualitative section of the online survey. The distribution of feedback applying to certain units is consequently an indication of how prominent these experiences and recommendations were for the participants.

In the qualitative section of the online survey, 29 respondents (7%) expressed their appreciation for the variation of topics presented in the module. On being asked what they liked most about UFS101, 64 respondents (15%) referred to specific units that formed part of the module. Each of the different units received an extent of preference, confirming the diversity of opinions and interests represented by the UFS101 cohort. *Table 6* presents the number of respondents that indicated their preferences for certain units.

Table 6 **Self-reported student enjoyment of various units in UFS101 indicated by the number of respondents**

	The units in general	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7
Number of respondents	3	14	7	7	4	7	7	15

The response of students to contentious content also varied. While some students expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage with controversy, the responses of others indicated that they found this exceptionally difficult. Statements extracted from the respective sets of qualitative data confirmed that several students felt offended by certain content and responded with sensitivity to statements made during various contact sessions, which they had interpreted as being stereotypical or accusing. A number of responses also confirmed that students found it difficult to view issues within the given context.

Evidence which could be extracted regarding the extent to which the individual unit outcomes were attained will consequently be presented by including short extractions from the qualitative data.

Unit 1: How do we deal with our violent past?

On being asked what students enjoyed most about UFS101, 14 respondents referred to the first unit. In addition, various student responses indicated that they enjoyed the lecture by Prof. Jansen and that they felt privileged to receive instruction by high profile persons, such as their rector and the guest presenters.

As indicated in *Table 5* and confirmed by self-reporting in the online student survey, candidates of UFS101 learnt to reason above emotion and to achieve greater balance in reasoning by displaying the ability to appreciate both sides of a complex argument, even when a strong position is eventually taken in favour of one or the other issue, for example:

19.2 "i learned to listen to others [sic] opinions without criticising them"

41.3 "Learnt how to argue properly and reason out my opinion without personal emotions etc"

46.1 "I liked that I learned new arguments and learned to see new sides of a [sic] argument."

248.1 "Straight talking"

248.2 "Not avoiding the past"

256.1 "This module was a great experience. I learned how to think objectively about something and how to respect other peoples [sic] views even though I don't aggree [sic] with them."

256.3 "I do think that I have become a 21st century thinker! I learned how to reason and also to see things from another perspective, which is extreamly [sic] important in my chosen field of study, Law!"

Opinions relating to the topic of "our violent past" varied and some students contradicted one another. Whilst some found the topic engaging, others felt repelled by reference to the Apartheid era, for instance, as illustrated by the following responses to the question of what students liked about the module:

389.1 "I liked how I was able to hear from other people how they feel about the Apartheid era."

387 "The things that had nothing to do with apartheid."

Some students also found it difficult to engage with controversy. They responded with sensitivity to illustrations used during the contact sessions and had trouble distinguishing the context in which statements were made, for example:

"In die eerste eenheid het [naam uitgelaat] gepraat oor die "violent past" en het 'n stelling gemaak wat Apartheid met Nazi's vergelyk. Ek is nie vir Apartheid nie, maar is nou wit en word gelykgestel aan 'n Nazi. Was baie ongemaklik."

"In the first unit [name omitted] spoke about the "violent past" and made a statement that compared Apartheid with Nazi's. I am not for Apartheid, but am now white and am made equal with a Nazi. Was very uncomfortable."

The sensitivity experienced could possibly account for the fact that the following recommendation received fourth priority during the English nominal group session held with students:

4

"No racial comments should be allowed or linked in any way. Only academic principles should be addressed."

"Only focusing on the past causes learners to point fingers to one another. Making us cross about things we weren't involved in. Driving us apart, not bringing us together."

A group of learning facilitators was of the opinion that some students started developing a negative attitude toward the module after the presentation of Unit 1. Learning facilitators also reported that students responded defensively during tutorials and that learning facilitators were rudely treated at times.

It was not possible for the presenters to anticipate the response of students to the content, neither was it possible to get a real sense thereof during the lectures. Although the negativity of students was detected, the communication with one of the lecturers on the discussion blog was kept on a civil level. The presenters were therefore dependent on the feedback from the learning facilitators with regard to what had transpired during the tutorial sessions in order to form a more accurate picture of student experiences. One of the presenters found the level of aggression and anguish displayed by students disturbing and commented that negativity from students could form a barrier during lectures. The presenter felt that in future students need to receive more thorough briefing during the orientation session as to what to expect from the module, as well as more unit-specific preparation. The time limit of lectures unfortunately does not allow this type of orientation once the unit starts.

This qualitative feedback confirms that facilitating learning with regard to effective engagement with controversy is very challenging and even more so within the context of large class teaching and learning, where it is difficult to gauge student responses and progress. Thus, whilst evidence is brought forward that the outcomes for Unit 1 were reached on an academic level it is difficult to assess the extent to which deep learning occurred.

Unit 2   What does it mean to be fair?

Seven respondents from the online survey indicated that this unit was what they liked most about UFS101, for example:

91   "The lectures that told us about our rights and other legal aspects."

The link between this and the previous unit was clearly indicated in both the module guide and during the introduction of the first lecture. The participants of the focus group related that they could see the connection and reached consensus that the "take-home message" for them was:

"…be fair in the circumstances we have now, and build from the present."

Although it was difficult to assess the extent to which the outcomes of this unit were reached from the available data, it was clear that the illustrations relating to human rights made a deep impression. In both of the nominal groups reference was made to the case scenario relating to correctional rape. Whereas a member of the Afrikaans group found the video clip touching and educating, a member of the English group related finding it shocking and disturbing. This once again illustrates the variation of responses to the same experience.

In the opinion of the learning facilitators an attempt was made to cover too much content in this unit. They felt that the required reading was extensive and on a high level. One of the learning facilitators, who has completed a postgraduate degree and is proficient in English, reported that she found it difficult to master the reading material and another added that he found it to be not entirely relevant for first year students. The learning facilitators added that they did not find the learning experience to be very effective. There was also a poor link between the lecture content and the assessment for this unit, in their opinion.

The presenters of the second unit did not participate in the pilot study conducted the previous year and therefore had little time to prepare. Considering that the subject matter is specialised, an attempt was therefore made to convey a critical mass of information to provide students with the necessary background before engaging in discussion. The two main aims for the lecturers were to accentuate the importance of knowing one's basic rights, starting off with fundamental human rights, as well as basic values. The reasoning behind this was that such knowledge is "a starting point for really becoming a good citizen in South Africa".

The lecturers' planning for the next presentation of the unit includes a decision to encourage engagement with the learning material by cutting the volume and making it more interactive; also to make the assessment more interactive.

Unit 3   Are we alone?

In the online survey, four students indicated their enjoyment of this unit. Whereas some participants of the nominal groups found this unit very interesting, others found it difficult due to the fact that the subject matter was unfamiliar to them:

> "Party onderwerpe was baie interessant, maar by ander kon ek nie verstaan wat hulle sê nie. Asof dit bo my vuurmaakplek was. Met Astronomie, bv. was party dinge op 'n gewone vlak en ander hoog"
>
> *"Some topics were very interesting, but in others I could not understand what they were saying. As if it were above my level of understanding. With Astronomy, e.g., some things were on an average level and others were high."*

Second language speakers of English found it more difficult to remain engaged when dealing with unfamiliar content during lectures and learning experiences. The following recommendation from the online survey requests that the content be presented in a more understandable way, yet relates satisfaction with the cognitive level of the assessment in this unit:

> 415. "Astronomy, a more simpler [sic] way, so that all students can learn some thing [sic] from the subject. The assessment however wasn't difficult."

Some of the learning facilitators found the content of this unit to be challenging too and wondered about the relevance for first year students. Although the Astronomy Fair was very well received by all, the learning facilitators found the tutorial session during the Astronomy Fair to be long and exhausting, as they had to be present throughout the evening (3 hours) and were facilitating various sessions sequentially.

The presenter of this unit also came to the realisation that one needs to be less ambitious with regard to the amount of content covered within the context of this module. Here too, it was found necessary to prepare the students with the appropriate vocabulary, because it is a multidisciplinary group of students who don't necessarily know the terms. In order for the content to make sense to students within the given time limit, it was decided to shorten the list of concepts, reduce the bulk of reading material and to align the reading material more optimally with what is actually presented in class.

Unit 4   Did God really say?

Four students indicated that this unit was what they most enjoyed about UFS101 and another reported having enjoyed listening to the various national anthems played during one of the lectures. However, many students responded to this unit with great sensitivity and negativity. Consequently, a great deal of time was devoted to it during the nominal group sessions held with students, as well as the feedback meetings with the learning facilitators. The following statement, which was made in the nominal group held with Afrikaans students, evoked lively participation during the round of discussion and received first priority following anonymous voting:

> "Die eenheid oor die Bybel was nie vir my relevant nie. Dit het my aangeraak oor hoe ek oor my eie geloof voel. Ander is ook aangeraak."

> "Veral by besprekingsessies het mense gesê net wat hulle wil. Weet nie waaroor hulle praat nie. Geloof is 'n baie sensitiewe saak en opinies daaroor moet nie maklik veralgemeen word nie. Ek het krities daaroor gedink en kon na ander perspektiewe luister, maar ek kon nie "closure" bereik nie. Daar is nie genoeg tyd spandeer om voluit daaruit te leer nie. Geleentheid is gegee om jou emosie uit te druk.

1

> - Fokus was meerendeels op Christenskap & ander is uitgesluit.

- Sluit aan by die geloof van jou ouerhuis en nou word dit bevraagteken. Dit word persoonlik.

- Die video was erg. Beeld Christene uit as mal mense.

- Het gevoel ek het berading nodig, het in trane uitgebars.

- Assessering was verpligtend. Wat van iemand wat nie glo nie?"

"The unit on the Bible was not relevant to me. It touched me as to how I feel about my own faith. Others were touched too."

Especially at discussion sessions people said just what they wanted to. Don't know what they're talking about. Religion is a very sensitive issue and opinions about it should not easily be generalised. I thought critically about it and could listen to other perspectives, but could not reach closure. Enough time was not spent to learn from it fully. Opportunity was granted for you to express your emotion.

- Focus was mainly on Christianity & others were excluded

- Join the religion of your parents and now it is questioned. It becomes personal.

- The video was bad. Portrayed Christians as mad people.

- Felt that I needed counselling, burst into tears.

- Assessment was compulsory. What about someone who does not believe?"

The bulleted section of the above-mentioned quotation indicates statements added by the rest of the group during the round of discussion. Considering that the original statement was made by a male student, who was four years older than the rest of the group, adds significance to the sensitivity experienced by a number of students. This emotional response by students may have contributed greatly towards the drafting of a petition and the lodging of a complaint against the module.

Participants from both the English and Afrikaans nominal groups expressed their distress at the movie, "Joan of Arc," which they were required to watch in preparation for the unit. The following extract formed part of a recommendation that received second priority in the English nominal group:

"When someone is offended, do something about it. Don't refer them to KOVSIE counselling. 90% won't go there → e.g. in response to Joan of Arc movie → too offending. Can't believe people made me watch that. Made me hate 101. I had nightmares. Shocking. Disturbing."

The learning facilitators described the movie as being very confusing and reported that they found it difficult to facilitate discussions during the tutorial sessions. Reportedly students were also confused and didn't "get the point". Some of the learning facilitators added information to make it more neutral, but others did not. Student participants, in turn, felt that some of the learning facilitators were inadequately prepared to facilitate discussion during the tutorial session of this unit. The learning facilitators reported that they found it difficult to facilitate the tutorials due to the defensive attitude and ill-preparation displayed by students.

The learning facilitators admitted that although the lectures of Unit 4 were well presented, they found it hard to make sense of the content, which they found to be on an abstract level. This caused them to reason that it would be even harder for first year students. In the opinion of one of the learning facilitator groups, students are still struggling to distinguish between different religions and are not yet ready to "go so deep". Some students reportedly protested that they had their own beliefs and maintained that they had come to university to study, not to debate about religion. In addition, the negative response of students to the first presentation was observed to have had a negative influence on the students who attended the next session.

One learning facilitator, a more senior person, shared that it was hard for her to remain focused on the theme during the lecture and she continuously felt as if Christianity were under attack. It was hard for her to keep re-orienting herself that this was relating to a god in general. Another learning facilitator, who belongs to the Muslim faith, found the assessment of this unit challenging as students responded defensively in their assignments by attacking the Muslim faith. One of the groups of learning facilitators concluded that they found the content to be too sensitive and pitched at a level too high for the average student. They felt that students were confused, instead of being interested in the topic. It is therefore uncertain to which extent the unit outcomes were achieved.

The presenters felt that time limitation was a problem, because they could not interact with students to the extent that they would have liked to. This prevented them from getting a sense of the students' responses and they needed to rely on the feedback received from the tutorials. By that time the next unit was to be presented and "it was too late to address some of the issues" that had arisen.

It was realised that the students related the content to their own religious perspectives and found it hard to make the paradigm shift to the general sense of what the unit intended to convey. It was therefore found necessary to present a wider perspective and to provide a better explanation of the main thoughts in future, so that Christians, who were used as an example, do not feel alienated.

Unit 5   How green is green?

Seven respondents from the online survey indicated that they most enjoyed this unit and found it interesting:

> 124.1   "the green lecture was interesting"

In the nominal groups some participants also expressed an interest in this unit. One participant specifically indicated that they had learnt a lot in this unit although it was not his/her field of interest. The learning experience of this unit, the Chem-Magic Show, was exceptionally well received and learning facilitators reported that students remained engaged throughout the session.

In the qualitative feedback, however, some students conveyed feeling bored during the Chemistry presentation, as it was difficult for them to follow and they did not find the content interesting or relevant, for example:

"Ek weet nie wat relevant is van die chemiese verbindings nie."

"I don't know what is relevant about the chemical compounds."

The following recommendation was made in the online survey:

280.2 "Learning outcomes like chemistry must not go much into detail because we differ with the courses we are doing. It is not all of us who can understand those complex things. They should be more generalised in such a way that everyone feels accomodated [sic] and hence can participate in the discussion."

This statement indicates that some students, at least, found the unit outcomes difficult to understand and consequently, difficult to achieve.

Unit 6   Why is the financial crisis described as "global"?

Seven respondents from the online survey indicated that they most enjoyed this unit and many students expressed appreciation for the learning experience.

48.1 "I liked unit 6 because it is my comfort zone. I reaaly [sic] enjoyed the visit from the Governor"

332.1 "The economy [sic] lecturer presented very well and interesting."

Others found it to contain little opportunity for active engagement and consequently expressed feeling bored during the presentations. Some of the recommendations made to enhance student engagement in this unit are as follows:

403.1 "Some of the modules can be made more interesting [sic]; like Unit 6; we as students are not really interested in the global economy, what if you can teach us how we can act in bad economic times, like spending less and saving more or teach us better ways of working with our money"

"Make topics relate more to our lives, e.g. compiling a budget, …. More relevant to what we need now."

The last statement received first priority during the English nominal group session, indicating that the recommendation was well supported by fellow participants. Adequate evidence could not be found in the data to determine whether the unit outcomes were fully achieved.

As with the other presenters involved in UFS101, the presenter of Unit 6 also found the limited time available during lectures to be a problem. Planning for future presentations includes more active student engagement by use of discussion and the use of more illustrations to give the unit a "real world feel".

Unit 7   How do we become South Africans?

Fifteen respondents reported that this unit was what they liked most about UFS101. The following statements were offered in support of this choice:

77.1   "Being a south African (showing us what we have to do to be one and not just say we are)"

189.3   "And the last lecture where we had a talk show"

197.2   "Unit 7, the lecturer made it more interesting than it was."

365.2   "Made me realise how I can be a better citizen"

171.3   "I liked the Unit 7 lecturer,he [sic] made the last class very captivating and thought provoking and engaged with us better than ther [sic] other lecturers"

It is interesting to note that active engagement during these lectures contributed towards students feeling positive towards the content of the unit. Barkley (2010:9) concedes that students who seem generally unmotivated to learn may become quite enthusiastic about learning during a specific module. One respondent did indicate, however, that the last tutorial was not found to be useful.

As was the case in Unit 1, the presenter of this unit found that the negativity of students towards the module formed a barrier during the lectures. Furthermore, it was felt that there was not a sense of synergy and continuity among the various units. A concern was that UFS101 had possibly created too much dissonance, resulting in students disengaging:

"I understand the principle of creating a bit of dissonance, teaching to disrupt, but you don't disrupt to lose the student, you disrupt to actually engage them a little bit better. If you lose them, then come the other last sessions there's no way that I'm actually going to rescue the situation."

The challenge therefore lies in finding a balance between dissonance and support, as Torres (2012) recommends, where the attention of students can be captured and they can explore difficult issues in a safe environment.

The level of academic challenge

To meet with the criteria as set out in the university regulations, students had to have an AP Score of 30 and above to register for UFS101 in the first year of roll out. The majority of the students in the UFS101 cohort performed at the proficient level on the National Benchmark Tests.

The majority of respondents (above 70%) in both the midyear and end-of-year student surveys were of the opinion that the level at which lectures were presented, as well as the level of difficulty of content covered in UFS101, were appropriate for first-year students. The figure below indicates the results from the second semester survey.
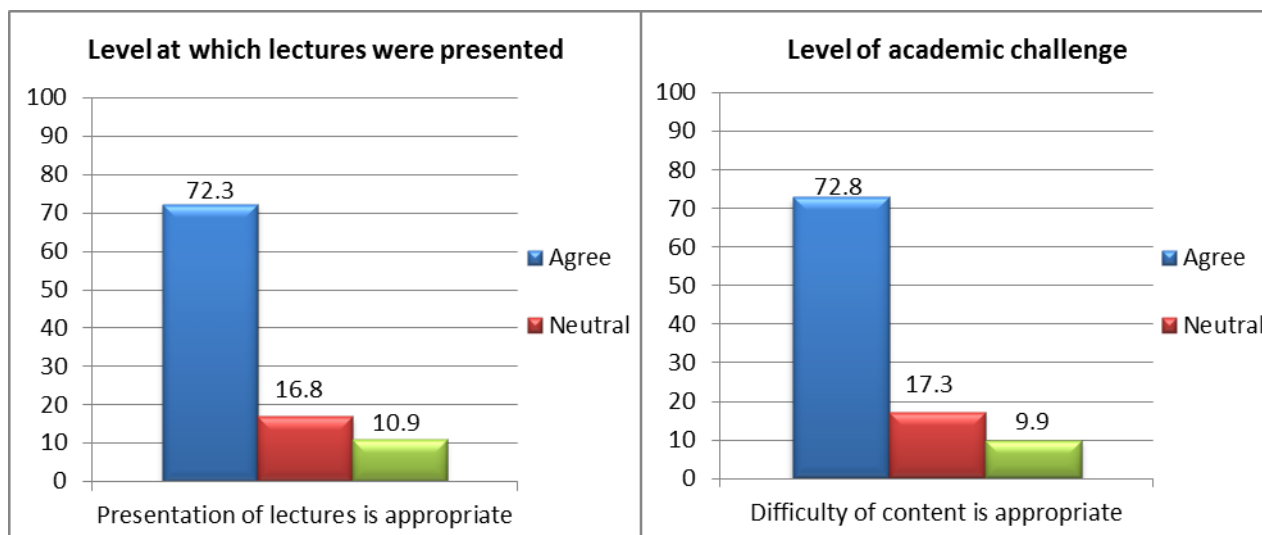
Figure 4: **Level of challenge in UFS101** *(percentage of students)*

During the second semester, an opportunity was given for those who disagreed with these statements concerning the appropriateness of the level at which lectures were presented and the level of academic challenge, to elaborate on their opinion. The majority (57.8%) of respondents who disagreed with the appropriateness of the level at which lectures were presented, said that the pitch was too high. Here, it may be important to consider the fact that by far the majority (85.8%) of students enrolled for UFS101 during 2012 were not first language speakers of English (see *Table 3*), which may have had a great impact on their ability to follow during lectures. More specifically so, as a participant of the Afrikaans nominal group session indicated, when attending lectures relating to subject content that was unfamiliar to them:

> "Party onderwerpe was baie interessant, maar by ander kon ek nie verstaan wat hulle sê nie. Asof dit bo my vuurmaakplek was. Met Astronomie bv. was party dinge op 'n gewone vlak en ander hoog. Ek weet nie wat relevant is van die chemiese verbindings nie.
> Vlak te hoog.
> Gekompliseer en maak nie sin vir iemand wat nie in daardie rigting studeer nie, en dit in 'n tweede taal."

> *"Some topics were very interesting, but in others I could not understand what they were saying. As if it was above my level of understanding. With Astronomy, e.g., some things were on an average level and others were high. I don't know what is relevant about the chemical compounds.*

Level too high.

Complicated and does not make sense to someone who does not study in that direction; and that in a second language."

Of the respondents who disagreed with the appropriateness of the level of the difficulty of content for first-year students, the majority (54.8%) reported that the pitch was too low. This may correlate with the feedback relating to the assessment that was found to be easy in comparison to the lecture, as illustrated in the discussion of Unit 3:

> 415. "Astronomy, a more simpler [sic] way, so that all students can learn some thing [sic] from the subject. The assessment however wasn't difficult."

Most of the respondents (70.8%) agreed that the amount of time allocated to work through each unit is appropriate for first-year students. This was confirmed in the qualitative section where 14 respondents (3%) indicated that what they liked most about the module was that they were afforded enough time to complete their assessments.

Effectiveness of the lectures

In the open-ended section of the online survey, 31 respondents (7%) indicated that what they enjoyed most about UFS101 was the lectures. Lectures were well prepared in general and contained audio-visual presentations to capture the attention of the students. Five respondents specifically expressed their appreciation of the fact that the lecturers were well-prepared for their presentations.

As mentioned above, the issue of students attending lectures presented in a second or third language deserves consideration. This accentuates the importance of active student engagement in this large class. Most lecturers asked questions or invited students to ask questions during the lectures to encourage student engagement. Yet, while the majority of respondents (67.1%) indicated that it is important that students should be able to discuss content with one another during lectures, only 49% indicated that this actually does happen.

The following statements, made during the nominal group sessions and in the online survey, relate some of the experiences with regard to inadequate student engagement in UFS101:

> "First lecture with Prof. Jansen was great – set a standard → became gradually boring."

> "Some of the topics were so interesting, but the lectures were boring. They just talk & talk and you literally count down the minutes to leave, e.g. the environment & physics & chemistry → too many facts."

> 40.3 "some lecture is make me for the sleep, is talk for the boring [sic]."

> 77.2 "Some lectures were to [sic] boring and message was not passed over to students"

One of the factors contributing to lecturers attempting to work through content, rather than engaging students actively, is the limited time available for lectures. Students tended to arrive late and to start leaving before the end of sessions. Lecturers agreed that they therefore essentially had no longer than 40 minutes to present their lectures. There was not sufficient time to explain, place content within proper context or to thoroughly discuss issues of importance. Negativity sensed from the student audience also formed a barrier for lecturers in accomplishing their task efficiently and effectively.

Some of the recommendations offered by nominal group participants relating to student engagement are as follows:

> "Keep up the spirit & enthusiasm throughout the year – lectures monotone & factual"

> "Moving around, asking questions, chem. show, the postman → had our attention. Fun, active"

> "Make topics relate more to our lives, e.g. compiling a budget, cooking classes. More relevant to what we need now."

> "Should divide large group in smaller groups (+- 80 each) for lectures. Students will have better chance to interact with lecturer."

Considering the logistical arrangements required for such a large class, division into smaller groups presents challenges. Judging from the feedback from lecturers, however, they have given considerable thought to student engagement and will continue investigating ways in which they can encourage active learning during their presentations. In addition to the strategies already shared in the discussion of the individual units, two of the presenters, for instance, recommended that the involvement of drama and the fine arts could be enriching, either by contributions made during current units or by the addition of another question.

Another strategy would be to prevent disengagement. A way in which a number of lecturers felt that student disengagement could be prevented is by more thorough and specific briefing of students at the beginning of the year. This could give students a better sense of what to expect from the module, as well as from the various units. One lecturer commented:

> "It's not just like any academic module where they try to pass. It's really about understanding life better and the real world."

In pursuit of a deeper learning experience for students, a number of strategies may need to be considered.

An observation made by one of the lecturers who was responsible for one of the last units of UFS101, for example, was that momentum was lost during the course of the year with regard to a sense of continuity between the various units. It would therefore be useful if the link between the various units could be more explicitly stated and reinforced throughout the year:

"So we need to just go find a bit of synergy between the different sessions and if we can do that I'm hopeful that it can actually help as far as 2013 is concerned. If you cannot give a student structure, then you lose them. And that's probably, for my part experience, something that is actually missing."

A fellow lecturer agreed:

"There're strong interconnections, which I think they [the students] need to be made aware of."

To further enhance the sense of continuity, one of the lecturers recommended that an overarching approach be taken by all the presenters:

"…an overarching approach, that is implemented by each and every unit facilitator to bring consolidation."

This would necessitate communication between the various presenters, which was another recommendation presenters made:

"Better liaison between unit presenters to debrief and discuss."

"Maybe what I would like is just to get a bit of a feel of how the students responded with different lectures. Unfortunately the UFS101 clashes with my mainstream, so I couldn't really sit in those lectures … So, if they can share that particular feedback with us then that might prepare us very well, the people that are still to present. Just to know what are the challenges, what we need to be working on, stuff like that, an open kind of teaching principle that we can embrace or maybe if it didn't work here, then I can try something totally different, depending on the context of course. We need to really communicate as units; shouldn't be stand-alone, it should be something that builds up."

Though sensible and necessary, given their busy schedules, it may be difficult for the presenters to meet on a regular basis and they may need to resort to electronic communication strategies. These recommendations do, however, deserve consideration.

A request by one of the lecturers related to improved communication between the UFS101 team and the management of the home departments of the various presenters to increase mutual understanding of what is expected of unit presenters:

"Better communication between the UFS101 team and the line management of the presenter – the preparation for this presentation is additional to one's current workload and it is difficult and challenging to deliver preparation material on time."

This introduces another dimension of being a presenter in this innovative module, namely that of workload pressures and expectations that could make their involvement stressful and unpleasant. This therefore deserves consideration.

Class preparation and participation

An overall observation by the learning facilitators was that most of the students did not bring their module guides along to the tutorials or lectures and also that students were not well-prepared for tutorials, as evidenced by their ill-preparation for discussion. Although lecturers found it difficult to judge to what extent students had prepared for lectures, they could judge from the type of questions students asked or the responses shared by students during classes, that they did not have an understanding of the required pre-reading.

The participants of the focus group disclosed that most of them and many of the fellow students from their residence, for example, did not prepare for class. They attributed this neglect to boredom, a lack of interest and finding the content irrelevant to them, within their given context. They concluded:

> "It's almost like this generation only prepares for what they have to prepare for. They aren't hungry to learn.

One participant commented that she did prepare for class and that she did it out of a sense of obligation, even though she did not enjoy doing it.

In line with a recommendation by Brookfield and Preskill (2005:56), the UFS101 team decided that in future, students' preparation will be assessed by requiring them to complete multiple choice questions on the learning management system prior to lectures. This will be implemented as from 2013.

As previously discussed in the section relating to lectures, students and lecturers alike value active engagement. Various strategies to encourage student engagement were recommended by both of these groups. In the qualitative feedback from students, however, it was evident that students responded differently to the type of participation required of them. While some students appreciated the opportunity to share their opinions during class, others felt angered at being compelled to respond to questions during the lectures. A group of first year students related this to their lecturer, who is also one of the UFS101 presenters and one student made the following recommendation in the online survey:

> 45.1   "No microphones in my face!"

Some students also commented that they were not able to follow discussions when questions were answered in Afrikaans. A participant in the English nominal group session explained:

> Mixing of languages was a problem in the lectures – I got lost, because I don't understand Afrikaans. …. I wondered how they would feel if they couldn't follow."

In line with the parallel language policy of the university, students were permitted to express themselves in Afrikaans. The agreement was, however, that these contributions should first be translated and that the lecturers or facilitators should then respond in English. This unfortunately did not always happen, resulting in fellow students being excluded from discussions.

By voluntary response, 33 respondents (8%) in the online survey valued the opportunities for discussion. Some of these responses are listed below:

67.1 "How we talked about sensetive [sic] issues openly"

70.3 "people were given a chance to express their views"

81.1 "The group discussions, really wished there were more."

95.2 "It allows students to take part in the module by discussion more than any model [sic]"

145.3 "The discussion groups"

159 "I liked the fact that most lectures were open up for discussions which made us students to even understand things more better [sic]"

250.3 "group discussions on blackboard and in the tutorials"

256.4 "The learning facilitators were prepared and the fellow students respected each other's views. Tutorials were a chance for us to sit down with fellow students all from different back rounds [sic] and to just talk with each other. The facilitators created a pleasant atmosphere and I really enjoyed UFS101!"

298 "i would like ufs101 to atleast [sic] have tutorials each and every week so in order to have much better time to discuss problem in the units."

Participants from the focus group confirmed that they would more readily participate in small group discussions. Answering a question in the large class, however, was found to be intimidating for some students and caused them to feel self-conscious.
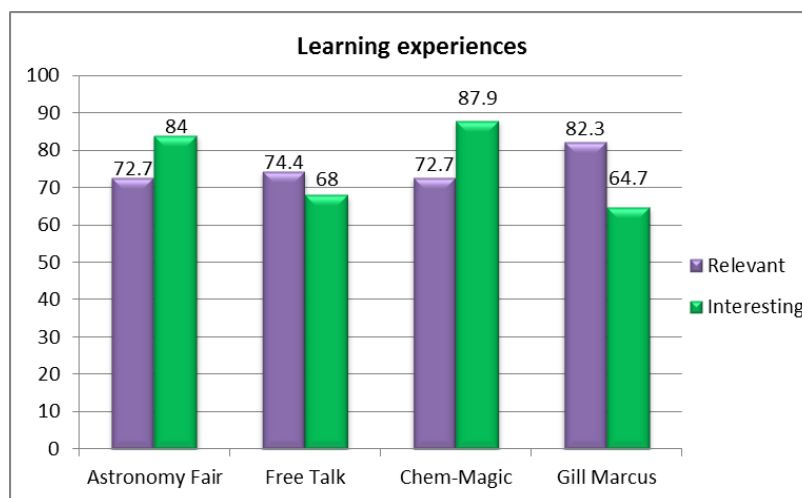
Learning experiences

The learning experiences were received enthusiastically. In response to the question of what students liked most about UFS101, 189 respondents (45%) in the online survey referred to the learning experiences. The number of responses relating to the various learning experiences is presented in *Table* 7.

Table 7: **Self-reported student enjoyment of various learning experiences in UFS101 indicated by the number of respondents**

	The learning experiences in general	Ask the judge	The Astronomy Fair	Free talk on the use and misuse of God	The Chem-Magic Show	The Governor of the South African Reserve Bank
Number of respondents	27	1	61	7	73	20

As presented in *Table 5*, the learning experiences were found to be innovative and to encourage learning. The majority of respondents (74.9%) indicated that the learning experiences had exposed students to new ways of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the majority of respondents indicated that

they had found the learning experiences to be relevant and interesting. The Astronomy Fair and Chem-Magic Show received the highest ratings for being interesting in the second semester feedback (see *Figure 5*).

Figure 5: Learning experiences *(percentage of students)*

The learning facilitators confirmed that students responded positively to the learning experiences and most particularly to those in which students were actively engaged, such as the Chem-Magic Show. They did recommend, however, that the learning experiences should be "more of an experience than a lecture". Here they were referring to some of the guests who reverted to "making a speech" and observed that students found it difficult to maintain their attention on such occasions. In addition, they felt that the level of those presentations, for example the presentations by the High Court judge, individual members of the panel of experts and the Governor of the South African Reserve Bank, were pitched at a level that was difficult for the learning facilitators themselves to understand. They therefore assumed that students also found it difficult to follow. Although the students enjoyed engaging in discussion with the special guests, the time for discussion was limited. The overall recommendation was therefore that the time allocated for presentations by special guests be limited to allow enough time for questions and discussion.

Tutorials

The tutorials provided a variety of learning opportunities and many students reported having enjoyed their participation in these discussion groups. Four tutorials were held during the course of the year; one each for Units 1, 3, 4 and 7 (see *Table 1*).

On being asked what students enjoyed most about UFS101, 23 respondents (5%) referred to the tutorials and 33 (8%) reported having enjoyed participation in various forms of discussion. A few examples of these statements are listed below:

53.2   "the tutorials because it helped me to understand more about the concept"

67.1   "How we talked about sensitive [sic] issues openly"

121.2   "we had a chance to express our views during the tutorials"

228.1   "discussions we had during our tutorials"

256.4   "The learning facilitators were prepared and the fellow students respected each other's views. Tutorials were a chance for us to sit down with fellow students all from different back rounds [sic] and to just talk with each other. The facilitators created a pleasant atmosphere and I really enjoyed UFS101!"

298   "i would like ufs101 to atleast [sic] have tutorials each and every week so in order to have much better time to discuss problem in the units"

303   "platform to discuss important sensetive [sic] issues"

340.1   "tutorials-makes it easier for us to understand the task"

Tutorials not only created opportunities for students to develop a better understanding of the learning material and content, but also to engage in meaningful discussion with fellow students.

Various frustrations were also experienced during these sessions. Students and learning facilitators alike felt frustrated with one another, for example, at ill-preparation for the discussions. Students also felt that not all learning facilitators were equally capable of effectively facilitating discussions, specifically when it came to the discussion of contentious issues. The Afrikaans nominal group allocated second and fourth priority to statements in this regard, as follows:

"Kwessie van wit en swart was te veel beklemtoon."
"Basies gaan alles terug na Apartheid. Alles word politiek, veral in 'discussion'. Konflik word uitgelok, veral in tutoriale. Ek gee my opinie, soos gevra, en dan vat [naam uitgelaat] jou aan

2   voor al daai mense. Lyk 'stupid'."
"Issue of white and black was emphasised too much."
"Basically everything reverts back to Apartheid. Everything becomes politics, especially in discussion. Conflict is evoked, especially in tutorials. I give my opinion, as asked, and then [name omitted] takes you on in front of all those people. Look stupid."

"By tutoriale klasse word klein goedjies uit proporsie geblaas en party mense is baie sensitief daaroor, bv. 4 persone van verskillende gelowe in Godsdienssessie. Hulle was kwaad."

4   *"At tutorial classes little things are blown up out of proportion and some people are very sensitive about it, e.g. 4 persons of different religions in the Religion session. They were*

angry."

As mentioned in the discussion of Units 1 and 4, the learning facilitators and students found tutorials relating to the discussion of contentious content exceptionally challenging. Students were angered when their point of view was disregarded or negated. Not all learning facilitators permitted students to express honest opinions and an inclusive learning environment was therefore not always created. Learning facilitators resorted to their own initiative, as discussed in the unit specific feedback of Unit 4, which contributed to a variation of student responses within tutorials.

A problem was also experienced with regard to language. To promote social cohesion, the language of instruction in UFS101 is English only. Considering that almost half of the students (46%) enrolled for UFS101 were Afrikaans-speaking and that the UFS is a bilingual institution, they were, however, permitted to comment or ask questions in Afrikaans during contact sessions. The lecturer or facilitator was then supposed to translate what had been said into English and to respond in English. This did not always happen and as previously stated, students who do not understand Afrikaans felt excluded from such discussions.

During the group interviews with both students and learning facilitators, lively discussion was ignited on the issue of language. The following paraphrased contributions were made by learning facilitators:

"Students want to express themselves in their own language, but then others cannot follow. Some students struggle with English."

"Students feel unhappy that they have come here to study in Afrikaans and feel unhappy that they have to switch to English. Yet their English has improved during the course of the year."

"A large proportion of negativity can be attributed to the language issue. A lot of students come from the "platteland" [country] or from rural areas where English is seldom spoken and find it very hard to communicate in English, because they have not been exposed to it before."

"The language issue receives too much attention."

"Learning facilitators should acknowledge when they too are struggling with the language. This helps students to relax."

"Ask a student to translate for the rest, if you cannot do so yourself."

Various views and experiences were also related by students. Some of the recommendations made by respondents in the online survey, relating to language, were as follows:

163. "By giving Afrikaans students the opertunity to partivipate in their own languauge, their attitude owrads UFS!01 will chang3e a bit." [sic]

198.2. "Offer the module in Afrikaans"

213.2. "Get facilitators who can speak clear and proper English [sic]".

213.3. "No Afrikaans during lectures, its [sic] not fair to students who don't understand the langauage, [sic] plus UFS101 is an English [sic] lecture".

219.1 "since this is an english [sic] module, please afrikaans [sic] must be prohibited to both lectures and students."

The issue of language, as is the case with other issues of identity, such as race and religion, remains contentious. Consequently, emotions easily flair up when such topics are raised, as was experienced in UFS101. Many students and learning facilitators found it difficult to remain neutral and to focus on developing mutual understanding during discussions. Both of these groups therefore need support in developing the skills of civil discourse. This will receive more attention in the section relating to learning facilitators.

Learning facilitators

Appreciation was expressed toward learning facilitators in the online survey, where they were commended for their friendliness, preparation for sessions, assistance and for creating a respectful atmosphere for discussion.

When asked how important it is that learning facilitators create an environment where all students feel respected, the vast majority of respondents (91.5%) indicated that it is important. The majority of respondents (93.3%) by far also reported that it is important that learning facilitators create an environment where all student perspectives are welcomed. Although high priority was assigned to these aspects, the same degree of agreement was not expressed when students were asked to what extent these aspects were present in UFS101. More than half (66.3%) of the participants, however, did agree that the learning facilitators created an environment where students felt respected, as well as where all student perspectives were welcomed (71.7%).

Whereas some students related having positive experiences, others conveyed the opposite and expressed sharp criticism towards some of the learning facilitators. This criticism was expressed in the various group sessions, as well as in the online survey. Students felt that learning facilitators were not friendly people and were hostile toward them; that they were not well-equipped to facilitate discussion, particularly on contentious issues; that they were not always informed about the topic of discussion; did not always show an interest in the students as people; lost motivation during the course of the year and were just doing their jobs for payment, not taking it seriously, etc. These complaints are mentioned in other sections of this report. In addition, students recommended that the learning facilitators be more

informed about the topic of discussion in the tutorials and that for the sake of marking assignments and facilitating tutorials more effectively and efficiently, they should be from the faculty related to the topic.

In listening to the recordings and analysing the transcripts of the feedback meetings held with the learning facilitators, however, it became clear that the immense task that was laid before them unfolded during the full roll-out of the module. The assessment of reflective journals, for example, requires experience, as well as thorough knowledge of the subject content. Furthermore, the facilitation of discussion on contentious content requires specific skills, acquired through specialised training (TJCPFE, 2006; van Jaarsveldt, 2012).

The learning facilitators accepted responsibility for their performance by stating that it is important to face failures in order to improve. They admitted that they were not adequately prepared and expressed a need for more specific training with regard to facilitation skills. They also requested more briefing from lecturers with regard to their expectations for tutorials and assignments. In addition, they discussed the problem of some learning facilitators arriving at the last minute, still not knowing what the session is about or what to do with the students. One learning facilitator urged the group to be honest about their incompetence by admitting it to one another and thereby strengthening the relationships amongst themselves so that they can help and support one another. They also resolved to work on their attitude.

Although they did not agree on everything that was discussed in these sessions, these young people advocated for the students and made recommendations that included changes that they needed to make for the improvement of the module. In discussing their interaction with students they felt that it is important that learning facilitators get to know the students and to have a good relationship with them. They needed to make it comfortable for students to talk with them and to feel free to ask questions. When students come and complain, the advice one of the learning facilitators offered was as follows:

> "Thank them and congratulate them for achieving one of the purposes of the module and that is to voice out. It really works for me."

Others offered advice with regard to facilitation:

> "Give them examples that they can relate to, like in a subject at school."

They agreed that they needed to learn skills, such as the use of humour and responding according to the situation. In both groups advice was exchanged and mutual support was offered.

In response to specific incidents which had occurred during the course of the year, special consideration was given to matters such as the needs of Muslim students during times of fasting. They also expressed their embarrassment at students leaving the venue during a guest lecture, for example with the visit by Gill Marcus, as well as their dilemma in being faced with inconsistency. They explained that the learning facilitators were told to be strict with students about the time of arrival and departure, also with

submission deadlines and marking. It did happen on occasions, however, that students were permitted to come in late or to leave early, which caused some of the learning facilitators to feel disempowered and caused perceived negativity towards them by students. It also happened at times that learning facilitators had finished marking and then had to tend to another assignment that had been forwarded by the team. Although these cases had received careful consideration based upon the evidence and/or the legitimacy of excuses presented by students (see the discussion on assessment an attendance requirements), learning facilitators experienced late submission to be disruptive to their personal schedules.

The rules with regard to cellular phones were also discussed. Students were not permitted to use their cellular phones during lectures and the learning facilitators had to ensure that this did not happen. Some of the learning facilitators felt that students are adults and need to take responsibility for their own learning. They also noticed that some of the students were using their cellular phones to access information relating to the lecture on the internet and therefore felt that the rules needed to be revised. It did happen that some learning facilitators were stricter than others, causing some students to be hostile towards them. The learning facilitators concluded that they needed to be more united and consistent among themselves to prevent them from "looking mean" and becoming unpopular with students.

Both groups of learning facilitators displayed leadership qualities in their ability to engage in self-reflection and to devise problem-solving strategies. Self-awareness is regarded to be an absolute prerequisite in establishing an inclusive learning environment (Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2009:17; Ortiz and Patton, 2012:12; van Jaarsveldt, 2011). Their conduct during the feedback sessions serves as evidence of the personal growth that had taken place during the course of the year. Their co-ordinator deserves to be commended for her achievement in this regard.

Learning materials

Learning support was offered by means of the learning management system, Blackboard®, which formed the main learning platform, complemented by a module guide. These tools were used to convey important information and contained learning material and links to additional sources of information, e.g. videos.

Module guide

During 2012 two module guides were compiled, one for each semester. These were meticulously structured to provide consistency and contained all the necessary general information (e.g. the module outcomes; supplementary information about the module; expectations of students, such as ground rules; information about assessment, timetables and student success in UFS101) as well as unit specific

details (e.g. unit outcomes; outlines of the lectures, learning experiences and tutorials; assessment guidelines; glossaries; reading material and space for notes). Icons were used to draw students' attention to certain instructions, e.g. required preparation for classes, discussions that would be taking place, assessment activities, material available on Blackboard® (Bb) and extra resources.

The module guides were provided in printed, as well as electronic format, to allow easy access for students. In the focus group, however, some of the participants disclosed that they did not refer to the module guide at all, but just tore out the timetable:

> "I've never opened mine. The only thing that I have, I tore out the, like, Monday you have this class and that's the only thing I use."

> "It's the only thing anyone uses in the book. So it's basically a waste of time"

One participant, however, related that she did engage with the content and enjoyed doing so. In the online survey one respondent indicated that the module guide was what he/she enjoyed most about UFS101. One learning facilitator confirmed that, judging from assignments that she had marked, there were students who had used the module guide as a resource.

In general, learning facilitators were of the opinion that although the module guide contains all the necessary information and stipulates that students should prepare for lectures and tutorials, this did not happen. Most students did not bring their module guides along to classes or the tutorials and were ill-prepared for discussion. Clipboards provided to students for note-taking purposes were also never used. This disinterest, facilitators felt, could possibly be attributed to a negative attitude on the part of the students.

The learning facilitators also felt that the module guide was not really student-friendly. The second semester module guide, though, was found to be structured better. The following recommendations were made with regard to improvements which could be considered:

- A lot of the reading material is above the students' level of understanding. Bring it down, giving special consideration to the fact that most of them are not first language speakers of English.
- Reduce the volume of additional reading.
- Provide more clarity in the assessment guidelines.
- Incorporate the reading material in the assessment to encourage reading.
- Include more videos as additional sources to discourage plagiarism.

When asked what recommendation students have for UFS101, a few of the respondents suggested ways in which the module guide could be made more user-friendly:

> 12.3   "The book needs space for notes of my own."
> 123.1   "Add pictures in ur [sic] module guide, so that students can understand the unit fully"

275.3 "A more interesting study guide with colour and pictures"

The module guide does contain space for notes and written activities, but these were apparently missed. The request for more visually stimulating and engaging material confirms the statement made during the focus group that this generation does not give preference to written material. Unless lecturers specifically require the use of module guides during class, one may have to consider whether it should be made available in printed format. It may be more cost-effective to provide the electronic version only.

Platform for learning (Blackboard®)

Blackboard® (Bb) was used for a variety of purposes, such as orientation; general feedback; the provision of learning material; communication; assessment, e.g. the submission of assignments and participation in discussion forums, as well as a blogs. All announcements made and material used during lectures, as well as video recordings of the sessions were also placed on Bb.

In the qualitative feedback provided via the online survey, the following statements were made in support of the use of Bb:

279.1 "the information was always there on Blackboard."
319.3 "it tought [sic] me how to use black bord [sic]"

In addition, 15 respondents related having enjoyed participating in the discussion forums and 9 were appreciative of the fact that they could submit their assignments online.

When students were asked if they had trouble accessing tasks and/or information on Bb, more than 2/3 of the respondents (73.2%) indicated that they did not experience any such difficulties. Of the 26.8% of respondents that did have trouble accessing tasks and/or information on Bb, the majority indicated that they had encountered technical problems, such as the learning management system itself, or the internet being down.

Some students conveyed having difficulty with sign-ups and with the submission of assessments. When asked for recommendations relating to the module, six students asked that Bb be made more user-friendly, for example:

405. "Reflection Journals should be posted as Word documents and not in the current form, because I posted a reflection journal in the provided space and it became lost, I was forced to rewrite it. I suggest that reflection journals be requested as Word documents so that students may save their work on their computer should their journal fail to upload allowing them to try again."

In general, however, the learning management system served its purpose well and was efficiently and effectively managed by the team. It not only eliminated the burden of paperwork, such as marking

written assignments, but also made UFS101 more accessible to students, particularly those with special needs.

Logistical processes

The logistical arrangements required for a module involving large numbers of students, various lecturers, high profile guests and the provision of a wide variety of learning opportunities, such as the learning experiences and tutorials, each with its own venue specifics, presented enormous challenges. Considering that the large number of students attending lectures implied that each attendee could not have a desk in front of them, clipboards were provided for note taking purposes. All lectures were video-taped and these recordings were made available on Blackboard®. In addition, the efficient and effective administration of a communication service involving the use of text messages (SMSs) and e-mail, as well as social networks (Facebook and Twitter) required exceptional technological management skills.

All this considered there was consensus among all the groups of participants in expressing their gratitude towards and admiration for the efficiency and effectiveness of all logistical processes and arrangements, as well as the attentiveness of the UFS101 team in supporting the lecturers, responding to students and tending to detail. Some of the comments by lecturers are as follows:

"The support is fantastic, the venue is fantastic."

"Well I think the logistical support from the organisers is magnificent. I think they have a really good enthusiastic team."

The main problems expressed by lecturers with regard to logistical arrangements related to the challenges presented to them and their guests in adapting to large class teaching, as well as to the venue which was used for the lectures.

The Callie Human Centre is a large multi-purpose venue, intended for large public gatherings, such as graduation ceremonies and sport events. This meant that all equipment and physical resources required for lectures or learning experiences needed to be set up afresh for each contact session. As far as possible, arrangements were made for lecturers to have a "dry run" before their presentations. A number of lecturers and guests still expressed feeling intimidated by the size of the venue and the fact that the students did not have a writing surface in front of them reinforced the impression that they needed to "entertain the audience". The effective use of technical devices required practice and some lecturers expressed frustration with regard to "dead spots" in the venue where the sound system did not pick up the signal from the cordless microphones.

One of the lecturers made the following positive comment about the venue:

"I really enjoyed the venue, it was in my mind the best class facilitation experience on campus that I've had. The visuals were excellent, you know nice big screens, the sound was very good and I really enjoyed the space and the fact that I could walk in between the chairs and in front. Everything in my mind was just perfect. So for me it was ideal."

Others felt that the venue was not conducive to teaching and learning and a recommendation was made that some of the new large lecture halls on campus be considered. One motivated, as follows:

"The huge class in an environment that's not conducive for teaching and learning its actually defeating a bit of purpose."

In this regard the venue offered many distractions and the sense of space allowed individuals to "get lost" in a sea of faces.

Student respondents were mainly appreciative of the organisation of the module and the communication systems employed. Some of the student contributions with regard to the organisation of the module are:

305.2 "The level of organisation was remarkable."

380 "The module was extremely organised."

The prompt response to email communication was also appreciated:

176.2 "email system, always had quick response an [sic] valuable help"

180.2 "The cooporation [sic] of facilitators and the incharge [sic] team"

198.3 "Constantly being reminded of assessment dates and tutorials,personally [sic] helped me as a first year because what I found was university can get overwhelming with no-one reminding you of what to do when(huge transition from high school)"

Some students, however, felt dissatisfied with the impersonal nature of electronic communication, for example through the use of generic templates, which were employed to facilitate consistency in conveying certain information:

201.2 "The UFS101 team could communicate on a more personal level with students (instead of e.g. using a generic template for ALL email correspondence)."

Other student participants felt that their concerns were not always taken to heart. Participants of the English nominal group explained that students felt upset when they were referred to KOVSIE counselling after sharing their distress over the screening of "Joan of Arc". They felt that they wanted support from the persons involved in UFS101. The participants responded:

"Must take people's comments into consideration, like here. Take it to heart & make changes. Not just blow it away."

The nominal group sessions doubled up as debriefing sessions for student participants as they were granted the freedom to share their experiences, hurts and concerns about UFS101. They expressed appreciation of the opportunity to vent their feelings. Hence, the added phrase "like here".

Students reportedly did not make optimal use of the opportunities presented to them to communicate with the UFS101 team via the social media and e-mail correspondence. Although students did correspond via e-mail with regard to general business such as the submission of apologies for not being able to attend class, they did not willingly use this avenue to communicate with the team about the module content or their response to the various units. A group of learning facilitators recommended that a blog be set up for each unit, as was the case with Unit 1, to provide an opportunity for students to interact directly with their lecturers.

Assessment

Students needed to complete seven assignments during the course of the year, of which two were completed during the first semester and five during the second semester. The submission of assignments was in accordance with the completion of the various units. See *Table 2* for a summary of the assessments completed during 2012.

More than three quarters of the respondents of the online survey (76.1%) agreed that the assessment instructions were clear and understandable (see *Figure 6*).
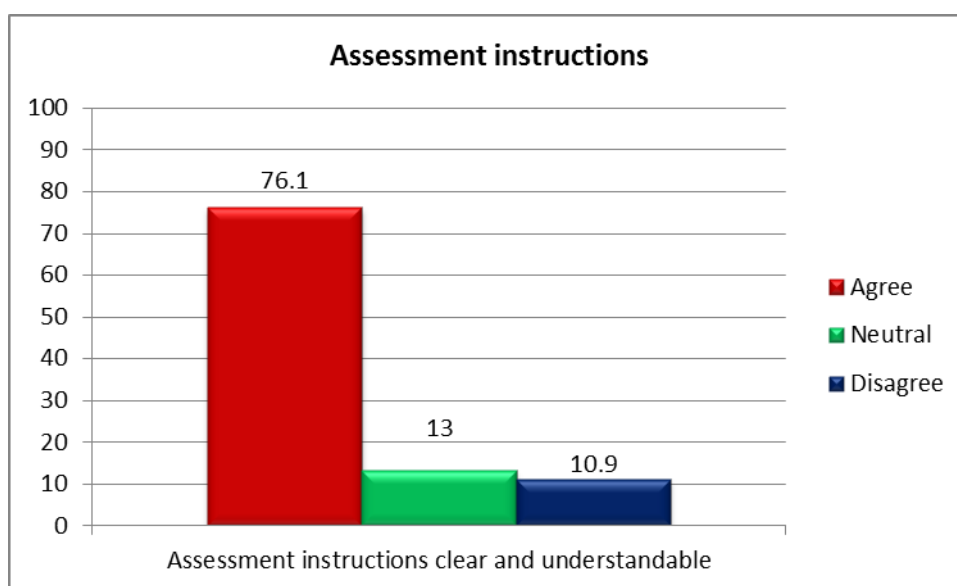
Figure 6:   Assessment instructions *(percentage of students)*

When asked about the completion of assessments, students responded as follows:

Table 8: **Completion of assessment** *(percentage of students)*

With regard to the completion of assessments: (Mark all those that apply).	%
I managed to complete all assessments on time	79.1
I experienced difficulty completing assessments without neglecting my academic work in other modules	41.0
I would have preferred to choose between different topics to write on	51.7
I would have preferred to choose between different ways to do the assessment, e.g. write, or discuss, or make a PowerPoint, or do an activity	48.3
I did not find the topic relevant to me as a university student in a 21st century learning environment	25.6
I did not find the topic interesting as a university student in a 21st century learning environment	26.5
Other	11.1

When asked how important it is that UFS101 provides opportunities for choice, e.g. selecting either Section A or B of an assessment, 73.1% of the respondents indicated that it is important.

Furthermore, in the qualitative section of the same questionnaire, 70 responses (17%) to the question of what they liked most about UFS101 related to the assessments. The respondents confirmed that the assessments were found to be interesting and enjoyable, that the instructions were clear and that enough time was given to complete the assignments. Five respondents indicated that they enjoyed not having to write tests or examinations. The different forms of assessment catered for a variety of interests and one respondent commented that the assessments challenged him/her to be open-minded and to think deeply. Appreciation was expressed for the assistance rendered with assignments, as well as the feedback provided by the learning facilitators. The fact that the assignments could be submitted online was also met with approval.

Five respondents from the online survey reported that what they liked most about the module was that the assessments were easy. In support of these statements, a participant from the focus group gave the following description:

> "I don't enjoy the subject, but I do all my projects. I do everything and I don't have less than 90%, if I, you know, do all that stuff. So, it's like, it's easy and you don't have to go to class and you just have to read. And you just read Blackboard and it's like 'oh let me quickly do it' then you do it and then it's over."

Another participant from the same group recommended that the assessments be audited to ensure reliability:

"I think they somehow should be audited to make them more reliable."

There is thus an indication that students were able to successfully complete their assessments with relative ease, without deep learning having taken place.

As previously mentioned in the section relating to learning facilitators, the late submission of assignments were experienced as disruptive, as many of the learning facilitators are students and needed to pay attention to their own studies. In this regard, some of the learning facilitators perceived the UFS101 team to be too lenient towards students. Consideration does need to be given to the agreement made with learning facilitators to mark the assessments of the entire group allocated to them, as well as the discretion displayed by the UFS101 team in making decisions based on the assessment and attendance criteria.

Another concern expressed was that the compilation of the assessment rubrics enabled students to earn marks too easily. The good use of language, for example, was credited when the content was poor. They were of the opinion that the marks allocated for language and technical aspects were too high and that the mark received for an assignment was not necessarily an accurate reflection of the quality of the student's performance.

Participants of the nominal groups for students also expressed a concern with regard to assessment criteria not being fair and the following statements were allocated a joint fifth position in the English group:

"The assessment criteria were unfair, especially in the discussion forums, e.g. not being relevant or irrelevant during discussion – there are different points of view & there shouldn't be grading for relevant / irrelevant."

"Dealing with difficult / controversial topics without engaging with controversy. Your remarks were accepted when they were common / cliché, not critical thinking. LF's are students, not educated on the topic. LF's were briefed to agree / disagree. If they couldn't relate to a point of view they took it as irrelevant"

The same theme came up in the online survey:

221.2 "give students the freedom to say what they want and not get penelised [sic] for it"

For this reason students who participated in the nominal groups, as well as respondents in the online survey, conveyed the opinion that they were not given the freedom to engage with controversy by honestly expressing their own opinion. On being asked to make recommendations for the improvement of the module, one respondent suggested including debates:

"If they want debate during tutorials there should be proper format for that; like a proper debate."

This form of discussion could well be assessed for future consideration.

As is the case in many other modules, problems were experienced with plagiarism. One learning facilitator explained that some of the assignments did not make sense as they had been compiled by "pasting" various snippets of information in different types of font, presumably copied from the internet. In spite of repetitive discussions on the management of plagiarism during their training and follow-up meetings, not all the learning facilitators were clear about procedures to follow when plagiarism was suspected.

Student success in UFS101 during 2012

The largest proportion of students (72.79%) successfully completed the module based on the criteria set out for them. In addition, two of the five students who qualified for re-assessment managed to pass. A nuanced analysis of the student success rate revealed that the largest proportion of students who were not successful failed to meet both the assessment and attendance criteria (14.93%), whilst 163 students (8.48%) failed to meet the assessment criteria only and 73 students (3.8%) failed to meet the attendance criteria only.

Looking more closely at factors contributing to students failing their assessments, it was discovered that a mere 6 students (0.31%) did not achieve the subminimum of 45% to pass their assessment. Poor academic achievement was therefore not the main reason for students failing UFS101. The largest proportion of students who failed their assessment (23.1%) did not submit all their assignments. In the first semester an overwhelming number of 296 (14.9%) students did not complete the assessments. There was no significant increase in the number of students who failed to hand in their assignments towards the end of the year. In fact, 74 students (16.4%) never submitted their assignments at all and 48.7% submitted their assignments randomly. See *Figure 7* for a presentation of the pattern of submission during the course of the year.
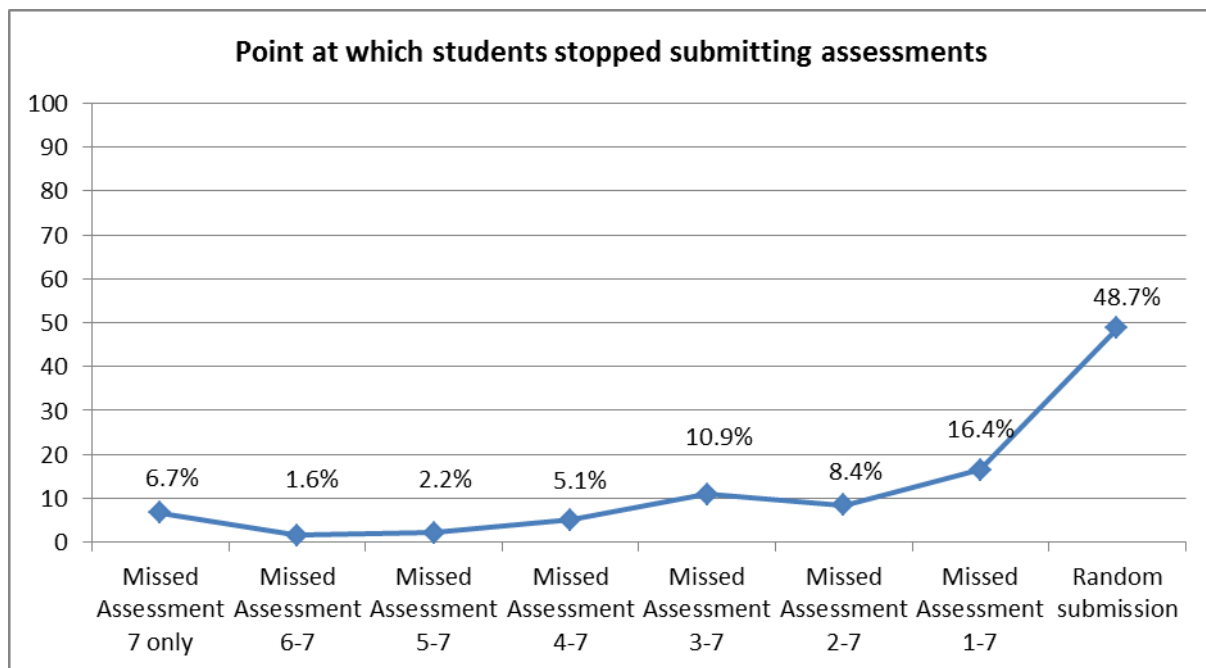
Figure 7: **The point at which students stopped submitting assessments during the course of 2012**

The UFS101 team attempted to address the problem by granting leniency for the submission of assignments during the first semester and by introducing integrated assessment in the second semester, to lighten the load of assessments. In addition, students could qualify for an additional examination at the end of the year, if they obtained an overall average mark of between 45% and 49% in the assessments.

As previously stated in this report, the academic success rate was high and the level of cognitive challenge required, as well as the time provided for the completion of assignments were found to be reasonable. In search of possible reasons for students not submitting their assignments, a few contributing factors were identified.

The fact that the credits do not count for degree purposes may have largely resulted in students giving preference to other modules. This is supported by the qualitative feedback received at the end of the second semester, where a respondent acknowledged not taking the module seriously for this reason:

164.3 "We don't really take UFS101 serious [sic] as it counts no credits"

Others found time constraints and workload pressures related to their formal academic programmes to be a barrier:

13.1 "I really do not think this module is something you MUST take to complete your grade because there isit [sic] time to do 7assessments when your learing [sic] and working hard in your studys [sic]."

13.3 "i came to study a grade that will be exacting but now i have to take a module that took so much time from me and i hated it, irealy do not think it must be a module you have to had to complete your grade [sic]"

Barkley (2010:9) explains that even students that are generally motivated to learn may experience a loss of enthusiasm in a module they feel coerced to take.

Reasons impacting more directly on student motivation were also expressed. The emotional response to contentious content, as already discussed, caused certain students to disengage and even to respond with aversion toward the module as a whole. The following statement made during the English nominal group session caused much discussion and received second priority following voting:

"A lot of tweaks need to be made in order to achieve the purpose of making well-rounded individuals, e.g. by listening to what we have to say; looking at our recommendations. When someone is offended, do something about it. Don't refer them to KOVSIE counselling.
90% won't go there → e.g. in response to Joan of Arc movie → too offending. "Can't believe people made me watch that". Made me hate 101. I had nightmares. Shocking. Disturbing. A student got angry in a lecture and pointed at white students in accusing way. Nothing was done. → Limits should be set.
Also law lecture on correctional rape."

During the same session students also stated their discouragement at a lack of active engagement in some of the sessions and their perceived over-stringency relating to class attendance. The priority assigned to each of these statements is indicated on the left:

3	Just went because it's compulsory. Eventually there was no encouragement to attend class or to do assessments – no room to think. I was learning nothing. *Everyone, also LF's, lost interest.*
1	"Very tedious, e.g. lots of paperwork when missed one class. When attendance has been good / marks have been high throughout → don't see why necessary → experienced clashes with classes & sport activities"
5	"Criteria relating to attendance were too stringent. What was accepted in my faculty was found irrelevant here. *UFS101 team take module too seriously → makes you not enjoy it"*

The demotivating effect of stringency was also expressed on the online survey:

192.1 "The module could take into considertion [sic] that students do have other modules that take proirity [sic] over it and should not try to force the students to do the work in a threatening

way ie. 'You must do all the assessments and attend all classes otherwise you must repeat the module again next year'"

This statement illustrates the influence that students' emotional responses, even to day-to-day communication or announcements, could have on their motivation. Ginsberg and Wlodkowsi (2009:3) explain:

> "…the day-to-day, face-to-face feelings matter tremendously with respect to whether people stay or leave and whether they are willing to direct their energy toward learning."

Considering that student engagement is enhanced by a sense of community, where students feel connected to their educators and classmates, it is important to pay attention to dissatisfaction expressed with regard to actions that could have a negative impact on their sense of belonging (Barkley, 2010:25).

Some of the factors that could possibly have contributed towards discontinuation of the module assessments are therefore: the fact that credits do not count for degree purposes; a loss of motivation related to the emotional response of students to contentious content; the lack of active learning in some of the sessions and perceived stringency with regard to class rules, resulting in a feeling of coercion. The matter of student engagement in UFS101 is summarised hereafter.

Student engagement

Themes relating to student engagement, offered by each of the data sources, were prominent in the data. Many reasons for disengagement were mentioned and on finer analysis of the nominal group data, factors impacting more specifically on student motivation were identified. These correlated with Ginsberg and Wlodkowski's (2009) four motivational conditions for diverse learning environments. Considering that Barkley (2010:8) defines student engagement as a process and product that is experienced on a continuum and results from the synergistic interaction between motivation and active learning, it is important to try and develop a deeper understanding of student motivation within this context.

It was consequently decided to weave questions relating to Ginsberg and Wlodkowski's (2009) four motivational conditions into the next online survey. The purpose was twofold: firstly to discover the level of importance the UFS101 cohort assigned to these conditions and secondly to assess to what extent they felt that these conditions were met in UFS101.

In this section these findings will be reported, after which the factors that impacted negatively on student engagement during the contact sessions will be summarised. The purpose of this discussion is to identify those factors that could be addressed to increase student motivation and consequently to further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the module.

Student motivation in UFS101

Motivation forms a pivotal part of student engagement, as it may be regarded as the internal force that drives a student to want to learn. Barkley (2010:9) views motivation as "the feeling of interest and enthusiasm that makes somebody want to do something." This differs from person to person. Student perceptions and ways of making meaning vary from one another, their educators and others involved in their learning, as evidenced by the findings of this study. This is why Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009:1) are of the opinion that "postsecondary teaching has become a highly nuanced endeavour".

In their effort to find concrete ways to create a milieu that promotes learning for a diverse group of learners, four intersecting motivational conditions were identified (Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2009:34). These conditions, that are intrinsically motivating for classes of diverse learners, are as follows:

1. *Establish inclusion: Respect and connectedness*
   Norms and practices are woven together to create a learning environment in which learners and teachers feel respected and connected to one another.

2. *Develop attitude: Volition and personal relevance*
   Norms and practices create a favourable disposition toward the learning experience through personal relevance and volition (choice and self-determination).

3. *Enhance meaning: Challenge and engagement*
   Norms and practices create challenging and engaging learning experiences that include learners' perspectives and values.

4. *Engender competence: Authenticity and effectiveness*
   Norms and practices help learners understand how they are effectively learning something they value and is of authentic value to their community (Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2009:34-35).

As mentioned above, on deeper analysis of the nominal group data, most of the themes expressed by the student participants correlated with the themes of these motivational conditions. In search of directives to improve student motivation in UFS101, it was therefore decided to investigate the degree of significance these conditions had for the UFS101 cohort. Questions were subsequently formulated in consultation with the line management of the Research Division of CTL to describe each of these conditions. Some aspects were specifically adapted to make provision for the context of UFS101, for example questions relating to a feeling of connectedness included the learning facilitators. The students were asked to assign importance to each of these factors and then to indicate the extent to which these were present in UFS101. Some of the results relating to these questions have already been discussed, but will briefly be summarised for consolidation purposes.

The majority of respondents reported that it is important that they feel connected to one another (74.4%), connected to the lecturers (74.4%), and connected to the learning facilitators (71.7%). They rated it most

important that they are respected and that their various perspectives and values are respected. When asked to what extent they agree that this is happening, less than half of the respondents agreed that they were connected to one another (46.1%), connected to the lecturers (49.5%), or connected to the learning facilitators (49.9%). However, two thirds of the respondents felt that they are respected (68.4%) and that their various perspectives and values were respected (66.3%).

When asked how important it is that learning facilitators create an environment where all students feel respected, the majority of respondents (91.5%) indicated that it is important. The vast majority of respondents (93.3%) also reported that it is important that learning facilitators create an environment where all student perspectives are welcomed. Although high priority was assigned to these aspects, the same degree of agreement was not expressed when students were asked to what extent these aspects were present in UFS101. More than half (66.3%) of the participants did agree that the learning facilitators created an environment where students felt respected, as well as where all student perspectives were welcomed (71.7%). See *Figure 8* for a presentation of these results.
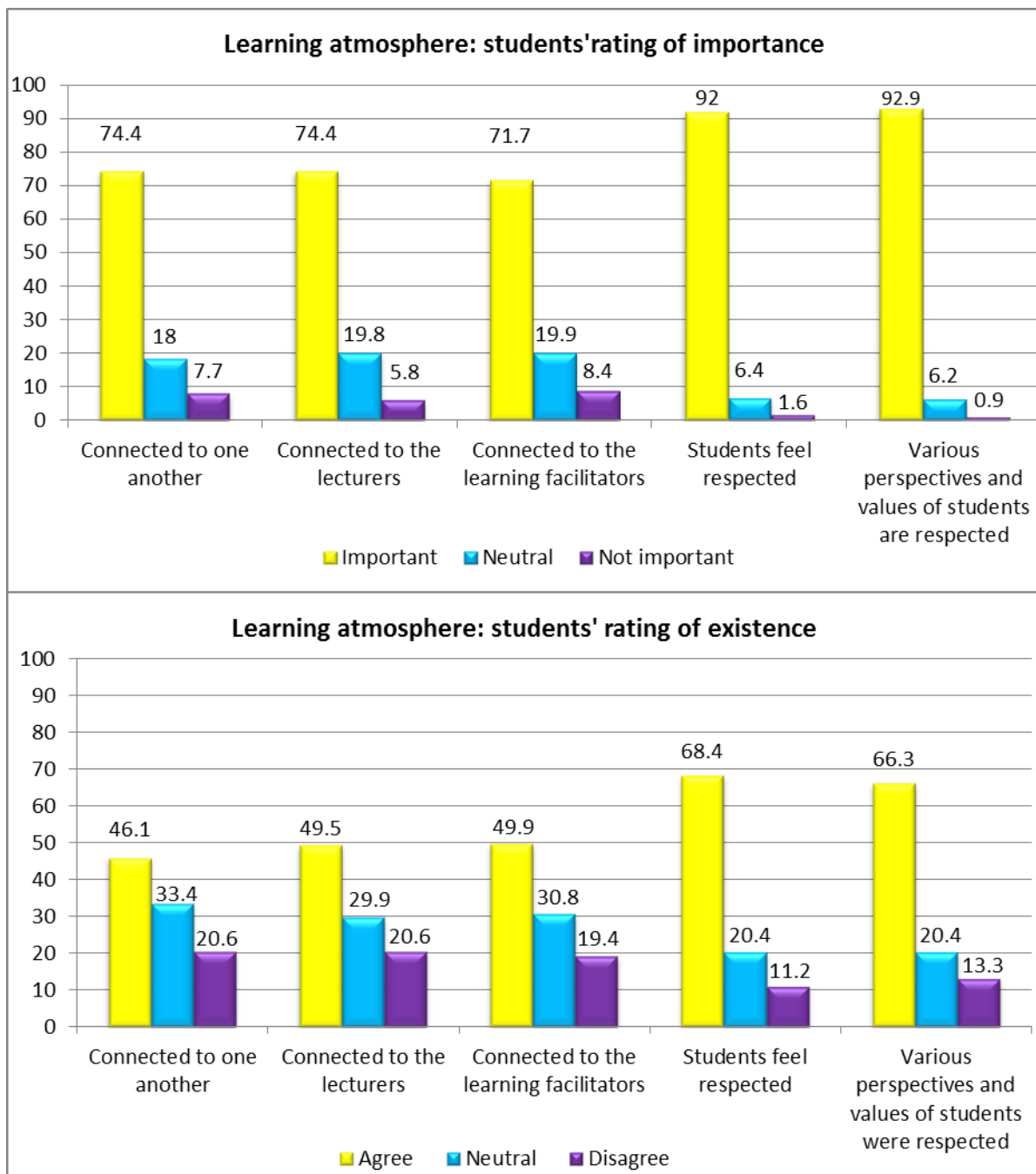
Figure 8:   **Learning atmosphere** *(percentage of students)*

When asked how important it is that UFS101 provides opportunities for choice, e.g. selecting either Section A or B of an assessment, 73.1% of the respondents indicated that it is important. When asked how important it is that the content of UFS101 has personal relevance for students, 68.6% of respondents rated personal relevance important. More than half of the respondents (57.4%) agreed that UFS101 does have personal relevance for students. Most of the participants (67.1%) indicated that it is important that students should be able to discuss content with one another during lectures, while 49% indicated that this does happen. Of the respondents, 71.5% reported that it is important to be able to

apply what they have learnt in UFS101 in future, while 60% reported that they agreed that they could apply what they have learnt in UFS101 in future.

Considering the qualitative findings of the study that have already been discussed, the disparity between importance respondents assigned to the factors contributing to an atmosphere conducive to learning and the actual experience of such an atmosphere, could provide a valuable focus area for future improvement. More specifically, the pursuit of the establishment of an inclusive learning environment could make a large contribution towards enhancing student satisfaction. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009:75) explain:

> "This environment, within reason, welcomes each person's sense of worth and self-expression without fear of threat or blame. In such an atmosphere, people know they are respected because they feel safe, capable and accepted. They feel respected because they know their perspective matters."

Furthermore, inclusive learning environments, where difficult dialogues can be conducted, create welcoming campus environments (Torres, Arminio and Pope, 2012:3).

Student disengagement in UFS101

It comes as no surprise that student engagement in such a large class presents tremendous challenges. It may be helpful to try and consolidate those factors impacting negatively on student engagement in UFS101 in an attempt to identify the most important issues to be addressed.

Many of these factors intertwine with the motivational conditions discussed in the previous section. In summary then, some of the main reasons for student disengagement during the contact sessions were the following:

- Personal disinterest in certain topics.
- Unfamiliarity with the language and content of certain subjects.
- Cognitive challenges presented by the difficulty of certain subjects, for example the natural sciences and some presentations being pitched on a high level.
- Language barriers, which were particularly challenging for students with poor proficiency in English, who are not strong auditory learners and who were disinterested or unfamiliar with certain topics.
- Lectures, as opposed to sessions requiring student activity, such as discussion, calculations, participation in a student panel including responses from the floor, etc.
- Inadequate preparation for contact sessions as evidenced by poor engagement with learning material on the part of many students, which decreased their ability to follow and participate during lectures and tutorials. Also failure to make use of module guides or note taking during

lectures. Clipboards provided by the UFS101 team for the purposes of note taking were not used.

- "Disappearing" in a sea of attendance numbers or the anonymity of learners in a large class. More introverted students, for example, are less likely to ask or respond to questions during lectures.

- Distractions in the large venue, such as movement of students in and out of the venue, casual peer interaction and social activities on cellular phones during lectures.

- The sensitive nature of certain topics, particularly in the light of limited time for thorough discussion during lectures; the limited experience of many of the learning facilitators in the effective management of reflective dialogue on contentious issues and the immaturity of many students relating to their ability to engage with controversy and diversity.

- Students feeling offended by statements made during lectures and tutorials that were interpreted as being stereotypical, accusing or insulting, specifically relating to issues of identity, such as race, culture and religion.

- Students feeling offended by the use of vulgar or suggestive humour during the launch and some of the presentations, as conveyed in a discussion forum and in the online survey.

It is not easy to create an optimal space for learning in large classes, let alone tending to the diversity of needs and experiences represented in such large groups of students. Yet, Barkley (2010:42) challenges educators to approach teaching with the aim to honour students by "genuinely engaging their spirit, their experience and their perspective". Furthermore, Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009:1) encourage educators to be increasingly intentional and imaginative about their practice. Addressing the issues that cause students to disengage may therefore make a positive contribution towards their attitude towards the module and to learning.

Recommendations

The recommendations offered by students, learning facilitators, lecturers and staff members involved in the UFS101 module, were considered throughout the year and many strategies have already been implemented for the present and future improvement of the module. These will be discussed briefly.

Recommendations already brought forward by the UFS101 team

Following the midyear evaluation the UFS101 team proposed that UFS101 be included in the curriculum (as part of the minimum number of credits required for completion of a qualification) of all first year students and that this module be indicated on the university timetable. These recommendations were supported by student participants, some of the lecturers, as well as learning facilitators. One lecturer recommended that it be considered to make the module a compulsory credit-bearing elective in

Philosophy. Thus far, the Faculty of Education has responded positively and the module will receive credits in the undergraduate programme of this faculty.

Strategies already implemented by the UFS101 team and additional recommendations

During the course of the year and during their planning for 2013, the UFS101 team devised many strategies for the improvement of the module. These will be briefly outlined together with forthcoming recommendations.

1. Student preparation

It was decided to encourage students to prepare for lectures by giving them an incentive for time spent in this effort, as Brookfield and Preskill (2005:56) recommend. Pre-reading will consequently be assessed by means of multiple choice questions to be completed on the learning management system, Blackboard®. Marks earned for preparation will constitute 10% of the module mark.

2. Module guides

Attempts have been made to make the module guides more user-friendly by reducing the bulk of learning material and additional readings, adding visual material to capture the attention of readers and by including pages for note taking.

The learning facilitators also recommended that information about academic support services available to students on campus be included in the module guide.

3. Learning experiences

The team envisions making the learning experiences more interactive and to prepare the guests who participate in these sessions more thoroughly, for example by ensuring that presentations are brief, so as to allow time for discussion.

The learning facilitators recommended that the visits of special guests, such as Gill Marcus, be marketed more effectively for the rest of campus to attend and also that the necessary arrangements are made to ensure that guests can stay for both sessions. The recommendation that sessions extending into the late evening should be avoided for the sake of commuting students and learning facilitators was given consideration.

4.   Tutorials

In response to the overwhelming call for more opportunities for active learning and discussion, it was decided to have a learning experience and tutorial for each of the units. Flip charts or electronic media will be made available for use during discussion sessions. The topic of discussion for the tutorials will also be focused more specifically on the preparation for the integrated assessments.

5.   Learning facilitators

The requirements stated in the advertisement for the position were adjusted according to the needs identified during the course of the year, e.g. language proficiency in English and Afrikaans. In future, the training of learning facilitators will take place before the onset of lectures and will focus more specifically on facilitation skills.   In addition, academic advising will be included in the on-going training of the learning facilitators.

The learning facilitators also recommended that an orientation with regard to special student needs, e.g. religious festivals and times of fasting, be included in the training.   The positive management of disruptive student behaviour, with case based role play sessions, is also to be included.

In order to enhance the quality of tutorials and the assessment of assignments, opportunities will be created for to receive briefing from lecturers.   The learning facilitators will be encouraged to take responsibility for familiarising themselves with the content. More scaffolding will be provided for learning facilitators to present tutorials. A subject-specific consultation service could be considered in the future, for example by promoting more contact between lecturers and learning facilitators.

6.   Consulting hours

In addition to an efficient electronic communication service rendered to students by means of e-mail, social network services and text messaging, opportunities were created for face-to-face contact. Students were invited to visit the UFS101 offices during scheduled consulting hours.

7.   Assessment

As discussed, it was decided to take a more nuanced approach to the language by permitting students to submit written assignments in Afrikaans and by crediting fewer marks for language and organisation. As from 2013 a moderator will also be appointed to: ensure that the academic level of assessment is appropriate for first year students, ensure consistency and fairness in marking; manage plagiarism, etc.

The procedure that learning facilitators need to follow when plagiarism is suspected, was managed within their meetings to provide more clarity.   The learning facilitators were also encouraged to engage

in discussion with students when providing feedback on assignments. A recommendation for future consideration was that not all assignments contribute towards the final mark.

Integrated assessment was introduced to reduce the number of assessments. This aligned the number of assessments in the module more closely to other modules at the UFS. In addition, it is intended to lighten the load of marking for the learning facilitators by having three spaced assessments during the course of the year, instead of seven assessments to mark. Positive feedback was received with regard to the integrated assessment which was implemented during the second semester, as well as the innovative ways in which students could present their work, e.g. the digital story. It is envisaged to make the assignments more interesting by implementing three integrated assessments that involve practical or imagined application and where students have the opportunity to see the link between various units. Group assignments requiring student research and public service will be considered in the future.

8.   Organisation of the module

A new topic, that of social change, will be included and the sequence of topics has been restructured. An attempt will also be made to create more opportunities for discussion during the course of the year.

During the orientation session for students they will receive briefing by Prof. Jansen with regard to what to expect of the module, as well as of specific units. The learning facilitators also requested that the language policy for UFS101 be clarified (English to be used as the official medium of communication for the purposes of social cohesion; Afrikaans permitted in written assessment). They also requested that students be reminded to report a change of contact details. This should also be specifically mentioned during Bb training.

A recommendation made by the learning facilitators, as well as one of the lecturers, is the possibility of presenting this module to senior students. This could automatically decrease student numbers, and consequently lower logistical and budget demands.

9.   Student engagement

Facilitating active learning and enhancing motivation in large class teaching and learning is tremendously challenging, especially considering the diversity of interests, learning styles, ways of meaning-making, cognitive skills and abilities, etc. congregated in such a group (Burgstahler, 2006; Ginsberg and Wlodkowski, 2009:vii)

Having considered the discussion on the findings relating to student engagement and the factors impacting on student disengagement in UFS101, it may be useful for those involved in co-ordination and facilitation to prioritise a list of factors to address, and use that as starting point.

10.   Engaging with controversy

The effective management of student engagement with controversy requires advanced facilitation skills. The CTL offers professional development opportunities in this regard, which lecturers and facilitators involved in UFS101 may find beneficial.

Handling controversy with civility is deemed to be one of the key dimensions of leadership for positive social change (Higher Education Research Institute [HERI] 1996, cited in Komives and Wagner, 2009:xiii). It is important that individuals learn to display civility by voicing their disagreement and also responding to disagreement expressed by others in a way that respects other points of view (Alvarez, 2009:270). This is what is generally meant by the term *civil discourse,* which could be more precisely defined as "a nonviolent, democratic approach to problem-solving in which competing points of view may be expressed, considered and evaluated in an environment of mutual respect" (Landis, 2008:viii). In dialogue on controversial topics the emphasis should consequently be placed on understanding the issue, rather than defending any one position as "right" or "wrong" (Alvarez, 2009:283). By promoting this type of discourse, universities can make a positive contribution to building a democratic society:

> "A truly engaged society begins when two people with vastly different life experiences sit down together, share their deepest thinking about the challenges facing our world, and are transformed as a result. As engaged universities, we must re-learn the tools of civil discourse in partnership with the generations that will build the future" (Driscoll cited in Landis, 2008:ii).

Some strategies for the promotion of civil discourse which could be useful in UFS101, are as follows:
- A code of conduct for discussion sessions should preferably be compiled by the students themselves during the first small group gatherings. Specific steps are recommended to ensure meaningful compilation of such guidelines (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005:52-56).
- Various discussion techniques could be employed and can be specifically chosen according to the topics and purposes of the sessions. See *Table 9* for examples of general discussion techniques which could be put to use in large classes and *Table 10* for examples of techniques that promote democratic discussion of contentious issues.
- Constant gauging and improvement of discussions by means of the completion of anonymous session evaluations would be ideal. The Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) was compiled by Brookfield and Preskill (2005:48-50) to assess student engagement and learning during democratic discussion and in addition, has proven to be a very useful qualitative evaluation tool (see *Table 11*). The use of this instrument or another form of evaluation could therefore be most beneficial. It is acknowledged, however, that the logistical and cost implications of such a venture present great challenges considering the large numbers of students enrolled for the module. Implementation of such methods will therefore require innovative thinking.

Table 9: General discussion techniques

Purpose of the activity	Examples of discussion technique
Encouraging participation	*Paired listening;* S*tructured or relaxed buzz groups*
Ensuring equal participation	*A circle of voices* (circular sharing in small groups)
Thoughtful and relevant participation	*Structured or critical pre-reading; Recalling memorable experiences.* *The hatful of quotes* (small groups)
Reflection	*Quick writes; Shared writing; Reflective journals* or a *Discussion Forum* on a learning management system, such as Blackboard® (Bb)
The constructive use of silence	*Silent reflection* before or after discussion
Reporting to the large group	*Jigsaw; Snowballing*

Activities taken from Brookfield and Preskill (2005) and Landis (2008).

Table 10: Techniques to promote democratic discussion of contentious issues

Purpose of the activity	Examples of discussion techniques	Description of technique and/or topic of discussion
Establishing a code of conduct	*Generating ground rules for discussion*	Drafting of a charter for discussion by means of small group discussions on previous good and bad experiences
Valuing multiple perspectives	*Modular debate*	Debating on positions taken by various constituencies on a fictitious proposition.
Honouring and respecting difference	*A circle of objects*	Circular sharing on objects reflecting ancestry
	Identity groups/"Stand where you stand"	Grouping according to or identification of a group with which one prefers to be associated
	Naming ourselves	Group identity – Naming the group with which one prefers to be associated
Ensuring respectful engagement	*Perception checks*	Verifying whether one has understood correctly
	Monitoring discussion for insensitivity	A multiracial panel that monitors discussion for signs of insensitivity
Considering opposite views	*The five-minute rule*	Making a conscious effort for five minutes to explore the truth of a different view with the help of four structured questions
Honouring and respecting deep or emotional expressions	** Declaring a "Sacred space"*	Using silence to pay respect to someone following an expression accompanied by deep emotion
	Introducing periods of reflective silence	Asking the group to reflect in silence on the significance of what someone has shared
Expressing appreciation	*The stone of gratitude*	A pebble is handed to someone who made a positive contribution to ones learning
Demonstrating democracy	*The critical incident questionnaire (CIQ)*	An evaluation tool containing a set of questions relating to student engagement and learning.

Activities taken from Brookfield and Preskill (2005) and Landis (2008) with the exception of those marked with an asterisk*

11.   Student feedback

Though very challenging considering the number of students enrolled for UFS101, it would be useful to receive student feedback on a continuous basis. Feedback on each unit and after each discussion

session would be ideal. The management of such bulk data could possibly be facilitated by the use of technology, such as a clicker system using mobile technology for unit feedback and feedback in smaller groups following tutorial sessions. Anonymous qualitative feedback on discussion sessions could possibly be given to the learning facilitators by means of structured tools, such as the CIQ (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005:48-49). See *Table 11* for an example of an adapted CIQ.

Table 11:   Questions contained in the critical incident questionnaire (CIQ)

1. At what moment were you most engaged as a learner?
2. At what moment were you most distanced as a learner?
3. What action that anyone in the room took did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What contributed to making the environment safe and conducive to democratic discussion? What might render it more conducive for discussion?
5. What action that anyone in the room took did you find most puzzling or confusing?
6. What surprised you most?

Adapted from Brookfield and Preskill (2005, 48-49).

This questionnaire may be adapted according to the context in which the discussion is taking place.

Concluding thoughts

The developers of the UFS101 module attempted to achieve academic excellence and worked exceptionally hard to ensure that the module was structured and presented in an innovative and cognitively stimulating way. The challenges that emerged in this regard were therefore manageable and could be addressed by the UFS101 team with relative ease. The responses of students to this unique learning opportunity could, however, not be anticipated.

The main challenges arising with the first implementation of the module therefore related mainly to student experience. As students started responding to content, presentations and various forms of interaction during the course of 2012, it became evident what an enormous influence student experience and negative emotional responses in particular, can have on student engagement. Negativity is contagious and has the potential to blind one to the numerous positive attributes of a learning experience. As a number of students started losing motivation, they progressively disengaged from the learning opportunities presented to them, which in turn presented challenges to the lecturers who were pressured to attain and maintain their involvement.

A proportion of students felt offended by contentious content and they were discouraged by the perception that their perspectives were not respected or taken into consideration. The limited time allocated per unit and the short duration of contact sessions, limited lecturers in providing a wider context

and engaging in discussion with students on controversial content, which could have enhanced meaning-making. This contributed to a feeling among certain students that content was delivered from a biased perspective.   This perception was reinforced by unsatisfactory discussions during tutorials. Certain students felt stereotyped or accused and responded in a defensive way. A desire to "have a voice" may be considered to be the main reason for students resorting to the lodging of an official complaint and the drafting of a petition against the module. Learning facilitators were also placed under pressure as they were not adequately prepared to facilitate discussion on controversial content.

Nevertheless, a large proportion of students expressed their appreciation for the module as it contributed toward their development as 21st century thinkers. A number of students who had previously responded negatively also later realised the value of this learning experience. Ultimately, gratitude was expressed to those involved for their attentiveness and good organisation of various facets. It is believed that following the recommendations made by those who participated in this study and particularly those factors that impact directly on student engagement will make a positive contribution towards the further enhancement of this innovative module.

The UFS101 team, lecturers, learning facilitators and other role players who have been committed to the development of the module and the implementation during 2012 deserve a standing ovation for the tremendous effort they have invested in aspiring to achieve excellence.

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APPENDIX A

Instructions for the marking of assignments

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MARKING

Marking: Your response to students

1) **If a student submits in Afrikaans:**

Dear Student

You submitted your essay in Afrikaans. Please note the announcement on Blackboard regarding language of instruction. You will not be penalised as this is your first attempt, but please send the English draft of your essay to me via email at: (insert email address) for marking.

After you have sent your draft, you will receive feedback. You must incorporate this feedback into your final draft which is due 17 April by 11am. You have a week in which to submit, and ask questions if you have any. If you have questions regarding content, you are welcome to contact me. If you have questions regarding Blackboard or excuses or related matters, you must please contact the UFS101 Team at ufs101@ufs.ac.za. Do not submit later than 17 April at 11am, as your essay will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you do not submit a final draft, you will not be able to continue with this module this year, and a fail will appear on your study record.

2) **If a student submits, but the submission is still in progress (notepad icon and not green exclamation mark icon):**

Dear Student

Your essay did not upload successfully on Blackboard. Please email your essay to me at (insert email address) for marking.

After you have sent your draft, you will receive feedback. You must incorporate this feedback into your final draft which is due 17 April by 11am. You have a week in which to submit, and ask questions if you have any. If you have questions regarding content, you are welcome to contact me. If you have questions regarding Blackboard or excuses or related matters, you must please contact the UFS101 Team at ufs101@ufs.ac.za. Do not submit later than 17 April at 11am, as your essay will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you do not submit a final draft, you will not be able to continue with this module this year, and a fail will appear on your study record.

3) **If a student submits as a comment in Blackboard, and not as an attachment:**

Dear Student

You did not follow instructions on how to submit your essay. Please log in to Blackboard, go to My Courses, click on UFS101, click on the red tab on the left marked "Blackboard Support". This is a detailed step-by-step guide to find your way around Blackboard – this also includes how to submit assessments.

As a result, I have had to copy your essay into a Word document in order to mark it. Please follow instructions for the final submission of your essay and upload it as an attachment.

After I have marked your draft, you will receive feedback. You must incorporate this feedback into your final draft which is due 17 April by 11am. You have a week in which to submit, and ask questions if you have any. If you have questions regarding content, you are welcome to contact me. If you have questions regarding Blackboard or excuses or related matters, you must please contact the UFS101 Team at ufs101@ufs.ac.za. Do not submit later than 17 April at 11am, as your essay will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you do not submit a final draft, you will not be able to continue with this module this year, and a fail will appear on your study record.

4) **If a student emails a late submission to you:**

Forward the email to the UFS101 Team – we will respond to the student. Please do not mark late submissions unless you do so on instruction from the team.

5) **If a student does not submit:**

Dear Student

You did not submit your draft essay, thus you will not receive feedback to improve your essay.

Your final draft is due 17 April by 11am. You have a week in which to submit, and ask questions if you have any. If you have questions regarding content, you are welcome to contact me. If you have questions regarding Blackboard or excuses or related matters, you must please contact the UFS101 Team at ufs101@ufs.ac.za. Do not submit later than 17 April at 11am, as your essay will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you do not submit a final draft, you will not be able to continue with this module this year, and a fail will appear on your study record.

6) **If a student submits successfully and on time:**

Dear Student

Thank you for submitting your essay on time. You will receive feedback in due course.

Your final draft is due 17 April by 11am. You have a week in which to submit, and ask questions if you have any. If you have questions regarding content, you are welcome to contact me. If you have questions regarding Blackboard or excuses or related matters, you must please contact the UFS101 Team at ufs101@ufs.ac.za. Do not submit later than 17 April at 11am, it will not be accepted without a valid excuse. If you do not submit a final draft, you will not be able to continue with this module this year, and a fail will appear on your study record.

Marking: How to Mark

You need to give a comment in each category on the rubric. Use the following template:

Feedback:

Organisation (2/5): Your argument is not logically developed. Make use of paragraphs to separate ideas.

Content (5/10): You demonstrated critical thinking when answering the third question on how you would design a medical admission policy. However, you lost marks because you did not answer all the questions.

Language (2/5): Good spelling. However, you must work on writing complete sentences that are coherent.

APPENDIX B

Examples of assessment rubrics

Assessment rubric for an essay

Assessment 1: Essay Writing Rubric		
Organisation: /5		
Argument is not logically developed: no logical sequencing and development of ideas. It does not clearly communicate the main idea of the topic. Not enough written to be assessed.	3	Argument is logically developed: logical sequencing and development of ideas. It clearly communicates the main idea of the topic. Enough has been written to be assessed.
Cohesion: ideas and sentences are disconnected or not clearly linked.	2	Cohesion: ideas and sentences are clearly connected or linked.
Language: /5		
Punctuation and capitalisation: not correctly used (detracts from meaning).	1	Punctuation and capitalization: correctly used.
Inappropriate language: incorrect spelling, including sms spelling and use of slang.	2	Inappropriate language: correct spelling, no sms spelling or slang.
Sentence construction: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, word omission and incoherent sentences (subject-verb agreement).	2	Sentence construction: complete sentences and no run on sentences, coherent sentences (subject verb agreement).
Content: /10		
Demonstrate critical thinking: does not demonstrate the ability to consider alternative views of an argument before choosing the best one.	3	Demonstrate critical thinking: demonstrates the ability to consider alternative views of an argument before choosing one as the best.
The response does not take all of the questions posed on the admission policies into account.	3	The response takes all of the questions posed on the admission policies into account.
Sufficient support without digression: does not provide support for argument. Does not stick to the topic – contains mostly irrelevant information.	4	Sufficient support without digression: provide support for argument. Sticks to the topic –does not contain irrelevant information

Assessment rubric for a discussion forum

Unit 2: Discussion Forum		
Low Mark	**Mark**	**High Mark**
Participation: /5		
Argument is not logically developed: no logical sequencing and development of ideas. It does not clearly communicate the main idea of the topic. Not enough written to be assessed.	**2**	Argument is logically developed: logical sequencing and development of ideas. It clearly communicates the main idea of the topic. Enough has been written to be assessed.
The post does not add quality (relevant information) to the discussion. (The quality, not the quantity of the response is graded)	**2**	The post does add quality (relevant information) to the discussion. (The quality, not the quantity of the response is graded)
Cohesion: ideas and sentences are disconnected or not clearly linked.	**1**	Cohesion: ideas and sentences are clearly connected or linked.
Content: /10		
Does not indicate understanding of a) the fact that the rate of violence against women and children are extremely high and b) that "corrective" rape is a burning issue in South Africa.	**2**	Indicates understanding of a) the fact that the rate of violence against women and children are extremely high and b) that "corrective" rape is a burning issue in South Africa.
Does not suggest a solution to the posed problem based on their knowledge of human rights.	**4**	Suggests a well thought through solution to the posed problem based on their knowledge of human rights.
Demonstrate understanding of the question: does not make connections between information from reading material, and lecture. Little application of gained knowledge	**2**	Demonstrate understanding of the question: makes connections between information from reading material, and lecture. Good application of gained knowledge.
Sufficient support without digression: does not provide support for argument. Does not stick to the topic – contains mostly irrelevant information.	**2**	Sufficient support without digression: provide support for argument. Sticks to the topic – does not contain irrelevant information
Language: /5		
Punctuation and capitalisation: not correctly used (detracts from meaning).	**1**	Punctuation and capitalisation: correctly used.
Inappropriate language: incorrect spelling, including sms spelling and use of slang.	**2**	Appropriate language: correct spelling, no sms spelling or slang.
Sentence construction: sentence fragments, run-on sentences, word omission and incoherent sentences (subject-verb agreement).	**2**	Sentence construction: complete sentences and no run-on sentences, coherent sentences (subject-verb agreement).
Total: /20		

APPENDIX C

Online quantitative survey for students
- End of first semester 2012

Dear UFS101 Student,

This evaluation is designed to allow you to give feedback on the UFS101 module. You will be asked questions about the content of the units, the contact sessions, your lecturers and learning facilitators, as well as other logistical aspects such as the study guide and communication from the UFS101 team.

Your feedback is tremendously valuable to the UFS101 team and will be used to improve the module for students participating in years to come. We therefore ask you to complete this evaluation as honestly and thoughtfully as possible.

It is important for you to note that the evaluation of this module is being conducted by an independent evaluator and all your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If you complete this evaluation you stand a chance to win a Van Schaik's voucher, thus you need to fill in your student number so that the winner can be identified.

PLEASE NOTE: You must have completed this evaluation before 23h59 on 11 May, 2012.

1) * Please provide your student number:

---

2) I prepared in advance for each unit by doing the readings and/or watching the videos.

○ Always

○ For some units, but not for others

○ Never

This box is shown in preview only.

The following criteria must be fulfilled for this question to be shown:

- If I prepared in advance for each unit by doing the readings and/or watching the videos. *equals* Never
- or
- If I prepared in advance for each unit by doing the readings and/or watching the videos. *equals* For some units, but not for others

3) Please indicate the reason why you did not prepare in advance (mark all that apply).

☐ The material was too complex for me to understand

☐ I did not have enough time between lectures to do all the preparation

☐ The reading material was not relevant to the unit

☐ The reading material was not interesting

☐ Other

---

4) The level of difficulty of the content covered in this module is appropriate for first-year students.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

---

5) The content of the units challenged me to examine difficult issues from different perspectives.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

⇨

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6) The content of the units challenged me to think in new ways about current 21st century LOCAL issues.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

---

7) The content of the units challenged me to think in new ways about current 21st century GLOBAL issues.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

⇨

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8) The class activities improved my understanding of the lecture content.

○ Strongly agree

○ Agree

○ Neutral

○ Disagree

○ Strongly disagree

---

9) I participated in the in-class activities.

○ Never

○ Rarely

74

○ Sometimes

○ Often

---

10) I participated in discussions during the tutorial.

○ Never

○ Rarely

○ Sometimes

○ Often

⇨

---

11) Please rate how relevant each of the following activities were to the unit content.

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant
Screening of the documentary of the War Museum & Women's Memorial	○	○	○
Medical School admissions policy analysis	○	○	○
Don't talk to me, talk to my lawyer	○	○	○
Ask the Judge	○	○	○

---

12) Please indicate how interesting each of the following activities were.

	Very interesting	Somewhat interesting	Not interesting
Screening of the documentary of the War Museum & Women's Memorial	○	○	○
Medical School admissions policy analysis	○	○	○
Don't talk to me, talk to my lawyer	○	○	○
Ask the Judge	○	○	○

⇨

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13) Please answer the following questions related to the UFS101 module guide.

	Yes, for both units	Only for unit 1	Only for unit 2
The module guide is user friendly	○	○	○
I could find all of the relevant information I needed in the module guide	○	○	○
I made use of the glossary provided in the module guide	○	○	○
I made use of the additional resources provided in the module guide to deepen my understanding of the units	○	○	○

---

14) Please answer the following questions concerning Blackboard.

	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never
I have used Blackboard before I participated in UFS101	○	○	○	○
It was a problem for me to log on to Blackboard because I did not have internet access	○	○	○	○
I had trouble finding the relevant tasks and/or information on Blackboard	○	○	○	○
The instructions for the activities on Blackboard were clear	○	○	○	○

15) Please answer the following questions in relation to the UFS101 assessment tasks.

	Yes, for all tasks	Only for unit 1	Only for unit 2
The instructions for the assessment tasks were clear and easy for me to understand	○	○	○
The assessment tasks I completed challenged me to apply the skills and knowledge I have learnt in this module	○	○	○
By completing the assessment tasks I continued to learn more about the unit	○	○	○

16) Please answer the following questions regarding the UFS101 lecturers.

	Yes, all lecturers	Only some lecturers	None of the lecturers
The lecturer was well prepared	○	○	○
The lecturer communicated the material clearly	○	○	○
The lecturer encouraged discussion from all students	○	○	○
The lecturer facilitated class activities effectively	○	○	○

17) Please answer the following questions regarding your learning facilitator.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My learning facilitator was well prepared for the tutorial session	○	○	○	○	○
My learning facilitator was friendly	○	○	○	○	○
My learning facilitator was available	○	○	○	○	○
My learning facilitator was helpful	○	○	○	○	○
My learning facilitator encouraged participation from all students in the activities	○	○	○	○	○
The feedback provided on assessment tasks was useful in helping me improve my writing skills	○	○	○	○	○

The feedback provided on assessment tasks was useful in helping me improve my argumentation skills

◌   ◌   ◌   ◌   ◌

↪

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18) Rate the usefulness of the communication from the UFS101 team via each of the following channels

	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not useful at all	Not applicable
Communication from the UFS101 team on Twitter	◌	◌	◌	◌
Communication from the UFS101 team via Facebook	◌	◌	◌	◌
Communication from the UFS101 team via Cellphone	◌	◌	◌	◌
Communication from the UFS101 team via E-mail	◌	◌	◌	◌
Communication from the UFS101 team via announcements on Blackboard	◌	◌	◌	◌

---

19) Please answer the following questions regarding the scheduling of UFS101.

	There was enough time	I had some difficulty with this	There was not enough time
There was enough time in my current academic schedule to attend UFS101 lectures and tutorials	◌	◌	◌
I had enough time to complete my UFS101 assessment tasks without neglecting my academic work in other modules	◌	◌	◌

APPENDIX D

Interview schedule for focus group with students

Interview schedule for focus group with UFS101 students 2012

1. Think about Unit 1 and 2 ("How do we deal with our violent past?" and "What does it mean to be fair?"). What were the take home messages for you?

2. If you did not prepare in advance, please specify why not?

3. How did you experience the level of difficulty of the content covered in this module? Give an example to support your answer.

4. Did the content of the units challenge you to examine difficult issues from different perspectives? Please give an example to support your answer.

5. Did the content of the units challenge you to think in new ways about current 21st century local and global issues? Please give an example to support your answer.

6. Did the class activities improve your understanding of the lecture content? Please give an example to support your answer.

7. Are there any comments or suggestions you would like to share with the UFS101 team regarding:

   - the UFS101 module guide?
   - your experiences with Blackboard?
   - the assessment tasks?
   - the lecturers?
   - your learning facilitator?

_____

APPENDIX E

Summary of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

Summary of the Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

The Nominal Group Technique (NGT) is a consensus method, which makes use of a highly structured meeting to gather specific information from each of the six to eight group participants (van Jaarsveldt 2005:32). The NGT is usually conducted in four steps, as follows (Dunham, 1998; Macphail, 2001:162; van Jaarsveldt, 2005:32):

Step1:   Silent generation of ideas

A question is posed orally and in writing to which the participants respond by spending a few minutes in silence, jotting down ideas. (The question is posed in the language used during the group).

Step 2:   Round robin of sharing

Each participant shares one of his/her answers in turn and the facilitator lists each contribution on a flip chart as it is read. The responses are numbered as they are listed and an effort is made to record the contributions in the exact words of the participants. The participants are asked to verify the accuracy of each recording. Participants are requested not to duplicate experiences by repeating an item already listed, but to proceed to the following item on their list. In so doing, data are reduced in the process. Participants are permitted to "pass" if they have no new items to share, but may re-enter later, if they so wish. The procedure is continued around the table until each participant's list is exhausted and data saturation is accomplished.

Step 3:   Serial discussion

This is followed by a round of discussion, in which each of the listed items is presented to the group for elaboration. Participants may add to the statements made by fellow group members and these contributions are noted on the flip chart using a different colour of pen.

Step 4:   Voting

Finally, the group prioritises their statements by participating in a round of voting. The pages of the flip chart are displayed next to each other for viewing prior to voting.

Step 4a

Each participant is handed five colour coded record cards and the participants are instructed to add the group code in the centre at the top of the card. Subsequently they are requested to select 5 priority or most important items from the entire list of contributions from the flip chart display. Each of the priorities is separately noted, recording the number of the item in the top left-hand corner of the card (see the figure below). The facilitator approached each participant to ensure that they had understood correctly.
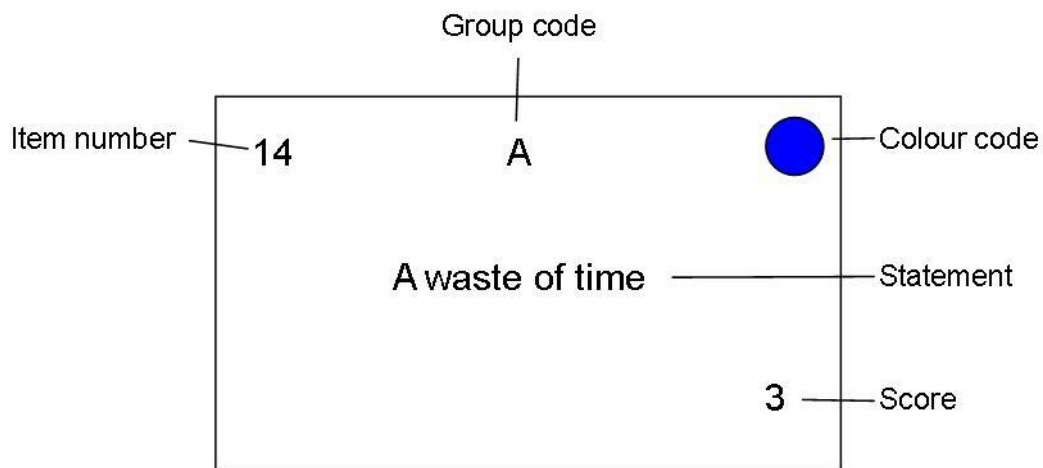
Figure 9 Illustration of a voting card

Step 4b

The participants are requested to rank-order the cards, one at a time, allocating a score of five (5) to the highest priority and decreasing the score accordingly. The score is indicated in the lower right-hand corner of the card (see *Figure 9*).

Step 4c

The Facilitator prepares a tally sheet on the flip chart by listing numbers down the left-hand side of the chart corresponding to the number of items from the Round-Robin listing. One of the participants is asked to gather the cards into one pile and shuffle them, after which the item number and number of points from each index card are read aloud. The rest of the participants are asked to check for accuracy as the facilitator records the scores on the tally sheet. The total score for each item is calculated and the top five priorities are encircled in order to identify the statements most highly rated by the group as a whole. The results are listed on the flip chart to provide a permanent record of the group's agreement.

This study made use of two research questions, thus necessitating two rounds of the nominal group process.

APPENDIX F

Module overview online quantitative survey for students

End of second semester 2012

UFS101 Module Evaluation 1

Dear UFS101 Student,

This evaluation is designed to allow you to give feedback on the UFS101 module. You will be asked questions about the content of the units, contact sessions, assessments, Blackboard usage, etc.

Your feedback is tremendously valuable to the UFS101 team and will be used to improve the module for students participating in years to come. We therefore ask you to complete this evaluation as honestly and thoughtfully as possible.

It is important for you to note that the evaluation of this module is being conducted by an independent evaluator and all your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

If you complete this evaluation you stand a chance to win a Van Schaik's voucher, thus you need to fill in your student number so that the winner can be identified. Please see the end of the questionnaire.

Please answer the following questions regarding the module.

1) **How important is it that a learning atmosphere be created in which students feel respected in UFS101?**

   ○ Very important
   ○ Important
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat important
   ○ Not important at all

2) **To which extent do you agree that UFS101 created a learning atmosphere in which students felt respected?**

   ○ Strongly agree
   ○ Somewhat agree
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat disagree
   ○ Strongly disagree

3) **How important is it that a learning atmosphere be created in which students feel connected to one another in UFS101?**

   ○ Very important
   ○ Important
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat important
   ○ Not important at all

4) **To which extent do you agree that UFS101 created a learning atmosphere in which students felt connected to one another?**

   ○ Strongly agree
   ○ Somewhat agree
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Somewhat disagree
   ○ Strongly disagree

5) **How important is it that a learning atmosphere be created in which students feel connected to the lecturers in UFS101?**

   ○ Very important
   ○ Important
   ○ Neutral
   ○ Not important
   ○ Not important at all

6) To which extent do you agree that UFS101 created a learning atmosphere in which students felt connected to their lecturers?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

7) How important is it that a learning atmosphere be created in which students feel connected to the learning facilitators in UFS101?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

8) To which extent do you agree that UFS101 created a learning atmosphere in which students felt connected to the learning facilitators?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○

9) How important is it that the various perspectives and values of students are respected in UFS101?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

10) To which extent do you agree that the various perspectives and values of students were respected in UFS101?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Please answer the following questions regarding the content of the module.

11) The level of difficulty of the content covered in this module is appropriate for first-year students.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

12) The level at which the lectures were presented is appropriate for first-year students.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

13) How important is it that the content of UFS101 has personal relevance for students?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

14) To which extent do you agree that the content of UFS101 has personal relevance for students?

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

15) How important is it that UFS101 provides opportunities for individual student choice, e.g. selecting either section A or B of an assignment?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

16) The amount of time allocated to work through each unit is appropriate for first-year students.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

17) The content of the units challenged me to examine difficult issues from different perspectives.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

18) How important is it that you should be able to apply what you have learnt in UFS101 in the future?

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

19) **To which extent do you agree that you can apply what you have learnt in UFS101 in future?**

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Please answer the following questions regarding face-to-face tutorials in UFS101.

20) **How important is it that learning facilitators create an environment where students feel respected?**

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

21) **To what extent do you agree that learning facilitators created an environment where students felt respected?**

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

22) **How important is it that learning facilitators create an environment where all student perspectives are welcomed?**

- ○ Very important
- ○ Important
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Not important
- ○ Not important at all

23) **To what extent do you agree that learning facilitators created an environment where all student perspectives were welcomed?**

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Somewhat agree
- ○ Neutral
- ○ Somewhat disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Please answer the following questions regarding the learning experiences in UFS101

24) **Please rate how relevant each of the following activities were to you as a university student in a 21st century learning environment.**

	Very relevant	Somewhat relevant	Not relevant
Astronomy Fair	○	○	○
Free Talk on the Use and Misuse of God (panel discussion)	○	○	○
Chem-Magic Show	○	○	○
Presentation by Gill Marcus, the Governor of the Reserve Bank	○	○	○

25) **Please indicate how interesting each of the following activities was to you as a university student in a 21st century learning environment.**

	Very interesting	Somewhat interesting	Not interesting
Astronomy Fair	○	○	○
Free Talk on the Use and Misuse of God (panel discussion)	○	○	○
Chem-Magic Show	○	○	○
Presentation by Gill Marcus, the Governor of the Reserve Bank	○	○	○

Please answer the following questions concerning Blackboard.

26) **I had trouble accessing relevant tasks and/or information on Blackboard.**

○ Yes
○ No

27) **Please indicate the reason you experienced trouble accessing tasks and/or information on Blackboard (Mark all that apply).**

○ I did not attend Blackboard training and was thus unsure of how to navigate my way around Blackboard
○ I attended Blackboard training, but still experienced difficulty navigating my way around Blackboard
○ The interface of the UFS101 site/assessment site was not user friendly
○ There were technical problems, e.g. Blackboard was down, the internet was down, I did not have access to a computer, etc.

28) **To which extent do you agree that the instructions for the assessment tasks were clear and easy to understand?**

○ Strongly agree
○ Somewhat agree
○ Neutral
○ Somewhat disagree
○ Strongly disagree

29) **With regard to the completion of assessments, mark all those that apply.**

○ I managed to complete all assessments on time
○ I experienced difficulty completing assessments without neglecting my academic work in other modules
○ I would have preferred to choose between different topics to write on
○ I would have preferred to choose between different ways to do the assessment, e.g. write or discuss or make a PowerPoint or do an activity
○ I did not find the topic relevant to me as a university student in a 21st century learning environment
○ I did not find the topic interesting as a university student in a 21st century learning environment
○ Other

Please reflect on your experiences within the entire UFS101 module. Please answer the following questions:

30) By participating in UFS101 I have:

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neutral	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Learnt to respect the views of others, even if I do not agree with them	○	○	○	○	○
Improved my social cohesion with diverse groups of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines, religions, etc.	○	○	○	○	○
Learnt to reason above emotion	○	○	○	○	○
Learnt to appreciate and consider both sides of an argument before making a decision	○	○	○	○	○
Improved my critical thinking skills	○	○	○	○	○
Improved my academic writing skills	○	○	○	○	○
Improved my academic argumentation skills	○	○	○	○	○
Been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning through learning experiences such as the Astronomy Fair, Chem-Magic Show, A day in the life of the Governor of the Reserve Bank, etc.	○	○	○	○	○

31) Please list things you liked about this module (list a maximum of three):

32) Please list things that could be improved in this module for future students (list a maximum of three):

33) Is there anything further that you would like to share with regard to UFS101?

If you would like to stand a chance to win a Van Schaik's voucher, please provide your details so that the winner can be identified.

1) * Please provide your student number:

2) * Please provide your email address:

APPENDIX G

Interview schedule for structured individual interviews with the
unit presenters

Interview schedule for structured individual interviews with the unit presenters

Thank you for your willingness to provide feedback on the classes you presented in the UFS101 module. Please respond briefly to the following questions based on your two lectures:

1. **To what extent do you think students interacted with the learning material in the manner you intended?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. **Evaluate the venue (visuals, sound system, space).**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. **What do you think worked well in your lectures?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. **Did you experience any logistical problems within the context of your unit that needs attention for the 2013 implementation?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____-_____

5. **Did you achieve what you set out to in your two lectures? Explain briefly.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What could be improved in 2013 within your unit?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **Do you have any other suggestions for UFS101 in 2013?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. **How did UFS101 influence you?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX H

Examples of an English and an Afrikaans informed consent form

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UFS101 Module evaluation

RESEARCHER: D.E. van Jaarsveldt   (+27(51) 410 9380; vjaarsvd@ufs.ac.za)

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the UFS101 team.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the UFS101, University of the Free State, in order to assess and ultimately to enhance the overall quality of the module. The module will be evaluated in terms of the:

- attainment of the overall module outcomes;
- attainment of the individual unit outcomes;
- effectiveness and quality of lecture sessions;
- effectiveness and quality of tutorials;
- effectiveness and quality of learning experiences;
- effectiveness and quality of the learning material;
- effectiveness and quality of the learning management system (Blackboard®);
- efficiency and effectiveness of various logistical processes;
- student success in UFS101.

The results will be compiled in the form of an annual report and extracts from the study will be compiled into articles which will be submitted for publication in academic journals.

You are requested to participate in a focus group interview that will last approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be captured on an audio recording and you will have the opportunity to verify the data.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Your name will not be associated with the research findings. All raw data will be handled with strict confidentiality and will be retained in safekeeping.

Although there may be no direct benefits to you for participating in the study, the research may contribute to the improvement of the UFS101 module.

Please sign your consent with knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you for safekeeping.

I understand the implications of my participation in the study and give my consent.

_____   _____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

I have explained the implications of participation in the study to the above-mentioned participant and have sought his/her understanding for informed consent.

_____   _____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCHER   DATE

Ingeligte toestemming: Nominale groeponderhoud

UFS101 Module-evaluering

NAVORSER: D.E. van Jaarsveldt   (+27(51) 410 9380; vjaarsvd@ufs.ac.za)

Die volgende inligting word aan u verskaf sodat u kan besluit of u aan hierdie studie wil deelneem of nie. U deelname is vrywillig en u het die reg om op enige tydstip te onttrek sonder om u verhouding met die UFS101-span te benadeel.

Die doel van hierdie studie is om die gehalte van die UFS101-module, Universiteit van die Vrystaat, in die breë te evalueer en uiteindelik te verhoog. Die module word in terme van die volgende geëvalueer:
- ♦ bereiking van die oorhoofse module-uitkomste;
- ♦ bereiking van die individuele eenheidsuitkomste;
- ♦ effektiwiteit en gehalte van die lesings;
- ♦ effektiwiteit en gehalte van tutoriale sessies;
- ♦ effektiwiteit en gehalte van leerervarings;
- ♦ effektiwiteit en gehalte van die leermateriaal;
- ♦ effektiwiteit en gehalte van die leerbestuurstelsel (Blackboard®);
- ♦ doeltreffendheid en gehalte van verskeie logistiese prosesse;
- ♦ studentesukses in UFS101.

Die bevindinge sal in die vorm van 'n jaarverslag saamgestel word, terwyl uittreksels van die studie ook in artikelvorm verwerk sal word vir moontlike publikasie in akademiese joernale.

U word versoek om aan 'n nominale groeponderhoud deel te neem, wat ongeveer 2 ure sal duur. Stellings gedurende die onderhoud gemaak, sal op 'n blaaibord aangeteken word. U sal tydens die onderhoud die geleentheid kry om die data te bevestig en te prioritiseer.

Hierdie studie dra geen bekende risikos nie. U naam sal nie met die navorsingsbevindinge geassosieer word nie. Alle onverwerkte data sal met streng vertroulikheid hanteer word en sal in veilige bewaring gehou word.

Alhoewel deelname aan die studie geen direkte voordele inhou nie, kan die navorsing tot die verbetering van die UFS101-module bydra.

Teken asseblief om te bevestig dat u tot deelname toestem en kennis van die aard en doel van die prosedure dra. 'n Afskrif van hierdie vorm sal aan u vir veilige bewaring oorhandig word.

Ek begryp die implikasies van my deelname aan die studie en verleen my toestemming.

_____   _____
HANDTEKENING VAN DEELNEMER   DATUM

Ek het die implikasies van deelname aan die studie aan bogemelde deelnemer verduidelik en het gepoog om sy/haar begrip hieromtrent, as voorvereiste vir ingeligte toestemming, te bewerkstellig.

_____   _____
HANDTEKENING VAN NAVORSER   DATUM

95

APPENDIX I

Statements from the online survey relating to how UFS101 had broadened students' thinking in various ways

Broadened thinking (58 responses)

1	1.2 - Learnt to look at both sides before making a decision or judging. 1.3 - Learnt to always have an opinion about world and South African concerned issues.
7	7.1 exposure to things not related to my course, which is interesting. 7.2 learning things that happen around us that we care less about(globalisation)
16	16 I liked the fact that professinals and specialist come to explain more to us on different topics
19	19.1 Gettingunvolve in different things which are not connected with my course.
20	20.1 Increases my general knowledge.
23	23.2 it helped me to improve my thinking ability and my wrighting skills. 23.3 it helped me to have information about things that i did not know before or cared to know.
29	29.3 we were exposed to things that we knew but not aware of them. e.g the use and misuse of GOD discourse
27	27.2 it covered different fieds
28	28.1 Diverse range of learning topics
35	35.2 I liked the way in which the module improved my way of thinking and approaching topics.
41	41.1 Exposed me to things I never knew about 41.2 Gave us opportunities to see the bigger picture of things for eg. The reserve bank governor
57	57.3 also that i got the opportunity to learn new things that are important,most of which i can apply in the near future.the module was interesting
58	58.1 it provide very important things to knw
65	65.1 It makes me to think abroad 65.2 As I did commerce subject I have learned the others subjects like chemistry
72	72 it forced me to learn to think on my own
75	75.2 IT HELPED ME TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OTHER FIELDS OF STUDY
97	97.4 I even learn more about other degree,because of UFS101
118	118.1 Exposure to new things
120	120 it exposed us to every field,im studying Bsc biochemistry but i got envolved in theology and economics
121	121.1 the fact that we learned about something of the things iwasnt aware of even if they were not releveant for a student in university
143	143.3 It got me thinking outside the box.I learn more about things that were happening around me but iwasnt aware of and i also got to learn more about economics, something that as a science student i never took interest in and i enjoyed it.
151	151 It provides the students with information that we need but don't realise that we need it until the information is given to us.
152	152.1 It creates 21st century thinkers.
160	160.1 i liked the fact that we learned a few things from other fields and
164	164.3 as well as the overall program. We touched basis on a variety of issues making it easy to understand how many things functions, like globalization as well as all or most faculties.
164	164.1 The new things I learnt,
172	172.2 UFS101 broaden my knowledge
191	191.1 i had a chance to learn more about other fields of study 191.2 the fact that UFS101 showed us that SA still have a huge racial issues
200	200.3 xpanding on my horizons of knowledge
208	208.2 all disciplines(courses)
217	217.2 I was able to learn about topics i was not studying.
219	219.1 allowed us to think out of the box, think beyond your proffession.
223	223.1 I learnt a lot of new things.
227	227.2 It forced me to reserach and by so doing, I learnt new things.
243	243.2 To think further than usual.
256	256.3 I do think that I have become a 21st century thinker! I learned how to reason and also to see things from another perspective, which is extreamly important in my chosen field of study, Law!
282	282.3 Very eye opening for different fields of education, having to learn on Chemistry when one studies Media for example. It raised my level of being open minded.
283	283 it gives you a broader perspective about the common issues we face in society.

287	287.2 To be enlightened with what is happening around the world 287.3 Introduction to faculties outside mine
294	294 exposed me to allot of things and i like that
300	300.2 the content of the module(IT deal with things beyond my field of study),which gave us more knowledge about whats going on around us
305	305.1 * Getting to learn about things that are not related to what I am study.
306	306.2its informative 306.3 improves one 's knowledge
309	309 Interessting , learning different things, not being focused on just one subject
321	321 Tought us about other disciplines not just the one we are studying
323	323.1 To be more objective regarding certain issues in our environment.
343	343.1 Broad spectrum of information 343.2 Challenged a new generation of thinking
345	345.2 *We get a chance to explore or learn other things besides the one's involved in our own courses
361	361.2 It brodened my knowledge on different topics
368	368 A module that covers a wide variety of aspects that contribute to our lives
369	369.3 Learning new things
376	376.3 I grasped hold of knowledge i didn't realise I had. Now I feel like I want to give back to the community and the country as 21st century thinker.
377	377 some sections were extremely enjoyable and I learnt alot
385	385.1 Made me to think fairly 385.2Gives information i never thought about or knew
389	389.2 I liked how in the end of the module everything we did seemed to link with one another.
391	391.1 It developed my thinkings towards everyday life issues. 391.2 It made me realise the importance of knowing who you are, where you from and where are you going.
401	401.3 It broadens our way of seeing things and promotes critical thinking
422	422.1 all the tasks we did made us think out of the box 422.2 we were exposed to things that we did not take into consideration