



Year Report

2013

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In conjunction with the UFS101 Team

Year Report

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Executive Summary

UFS101 – the compulsory, credit-bearing undergraduate core curriculum module for first-year students¹ at the University of the Free State – is a flagship initiative within the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and is at the forefront of implementing engaging teaching and learning in large class contexts.

The aim of UFS101 is to nurture the next generation of citizens and young academics that can take South Africa into the 21st century; equipped with the ability to understand and engage with complex human problems from multiple perspectives. UFS101 aims to create an innovative learning space where students learn through lectures, podcasts, learning experiences (such as the Astronomy Fair and the Chem-Magic Show) and face-to-face tutorials (where students have an opportunity to engage in discussions and debates). Since its inception UFS101 has taken a blended learning approach to delivery – drawing on the strengths of both contact sessions and online learning through Blackboard. Enrolments in the module and sites of delivery have continued to increase since the pilot in 2011, and for the first time in 2013 a pilot of UFS101 was conducted on the QwaQwa campus in the Faculty of Education.

During 2013, the module comprised of seven units presented by experts on each of the topics. The first three units were presented in the first semester and the remaining four during the second semester. Each unit included two lectures, a face-to-face tutorial and a learning experience. All students were required to complete three integrated assessments during the course of the year, and an online multiple choice question (MCQ) test prior to each lecture. Each student was required to complete all three assessments (obtaining a subminimum of 45% to get a re-assessment and 50% average to pass the module). All assessments were moderated by an external moderator, after which adjustments to mark allocations were made where necessary.

In addition to this requirement, students were required to attend 70% of the contact sessions (classes, learning experiences and tutorials) in order to pass the module². Students who do not pass the module are required to repeat the module in the following year. Attendance was tracked through the use of biometric scanners.

To accommodate the expansion in delivery sites and student numbers, the UFS101 core team has expanded to include 6 full-time staff and 9 student/research assistants. The team is supported by 108 learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus and eight facilitators on the QwaQwa campus.

The purpose of this report is to explore and describe the perspectives of the students and learning facilitators on 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 future improvement. Comprehensive sampling was employed to survey the entire population of students enrolled for UFS101 and all learning facilitators through two online surveys (one in each semester)³. In addition to this, data for the analysis of attendance and performance was obtained from the UFS101 team.

¹ For mainstream students with an AP score of 30 and above, registering as first time entering students for a first degree or diploma qualification and for extended programme students in their second year of registration.

² Students with valid excuses were required to complete an appeal application in order to avoid penalisation.

³ Actual response rates and population descriptions are detailed in the Sample section of this report.

Response rates were markedly higher for the first online survey than the second – for both campuses and across students and learning facilitators. In particular, response rates on the QwaQwa campus from students and learning facilitators were very low for the second online survey. For this reason, only responses from the first online survey are included in this report for the QwaQwa campus.

All responses to the quantitative questions from students and learning facilitators were included in the analysis of the quantitative questions. However, due to the large number of respondents to the online survey for the Bloemfontein campus, a stratified random selection process was employed to identify a limited number of students for the analysis of the qualitative responses in each of the evaluations. A similar selection process was not necessary for students on the QwaQwa campus or for learning facilitators on either campus given the smaller number of respondents.

The sample of students on both campuses and at both evaluation points (in the case of the Bloemfontein campus) was similar to the population of respondents in all cases. In summary:

- Of the 3613 students enrolled for UFS101 on the Bloemfontein campus, 1311 (36%) completed the first online survey and 429 (12%) completed the second. The population of enrolled students was majority female (61%) and African, with 38% White students; both samples were roughly similar in terms of these proportions and all faculties were proportionally represented in the sample.
- Of the 150 students enrolled for UFS101 on the QwaQwa campus, 46 (31%) responded to the first online survey, and only 8 (5%) responded to the second. The population of enrolled students was majority female (69%) and all African; the sample of survey respondents was similar in terms of these proportions.
- Of the 108 learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus, 65 (60%) completed the first online survey and 30 (28%) completed the second. The population of learning facilitators was majority female (58%) and consisted of mostly African (53%) with 37% White facilitators.
- Of the 8 learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus, 7 (88%) completed the first online survey and none completed the second. The population of learning facilitators was majority female (63%) and all African.

The sections below present a summary of the major findings of the study for the students and the learning facilitators.

STUDENTS

Student attendance

Student attendance of lectures was higher on the Bloemfontein campus than on the QwaQwa campus, whilst learning experience and tutorial attendance was generally higher on the QwaQwa campus. Most students on both campuses met the attendance criteria. Very few students on either campus attended all of the UFS101 lectures, tutorials and learning experiences.

- 82% of the students on the Bloemfontein campus and 85% of students on the QwaQwa campus met the attendance criteria. A quarter of the students on the Bloemfontein campus attended more than 90% of the sessions, whilst 20% of the QwaQwa students did so.
- All students on the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campuses attended at least one lecture, learning experience or tutorial.
- Only a very small minority of students (5% on the Bloemfontein campus and 1% of students on the QwaQwa campus) attended all of the required sessions.

- For the most part, on the Bloemfontein campus around 80-90% of students attended the lectures (with a sharp decline at Unit 7) and 70-80% of students attended the tutorials and learning experiences (with a sharp decline at Units 3, 6 and 7).
- Attendance of lectures on the QwaQwa campus was somewhat more erratic with peaks and dips at various points in the semesters. Attendance of learning experiences and tutorials hovered at around 80-90% with a steep decline at Units 6 and 7.

Student academic performance

Overall, students on the Bloemfontein campus performed better than students on the QwaQwa campus in both the integrated assessments and the MCQ tests. Non-completion of the assessments was however higher on the Bloemfontein campus. Overall average academic performance in the module was 50% for the QwaQwa campus and 55% for the Bloemfontein campus, with 60% of QwaQwa and 70% of Bloemfontein students meeting the academic and attendance requirements to pass. More than half of the students who failed on the Bloemfontein campus failed on the basis of attendance and assessment criteria compared to the majority of the QwaQwa campus students who failed based on assessment criteria alone.

- The average overall performance for the MCQ tests on the Bloemfontein campus was 58% with 79 students who did not complete any of the MCQ tests.
- On the QwaQwa campus, the average for the MCQ tests was 53% and there were 3 students who did not complete any of the MCQ tests.
- On average students on the Bloemfontein campus achieved higher marks for the MCQ tests than students on the QwaQwa campus with the exception of MCQ 4 and 13, where performance across campuses was relatively similar.
- In contrast, the non-completion of MCQ tests was consistently and proportionally higher for students on the Bloemfontein campus.
- With the exception of MCQ 6 on the QwaQwa campus (47%), the average performance of the students on both campuses for the MCQ tests was 50% or higher.
- Students on both campuses did particularly well in MCQ 4 and 13 (with the averages on the Bloemfontein campus exceeding 75%).
- The average marks obtained for the three integrated assessments ranged between 56% and 66% on the Bloemfontein campus, and 49% and 52% on the QwaQwa campus.
- The final overall average (including integrated assessments, re-assessment opportunities and MCQ tests) was 55% on the Bloemfontein campus and 50% on the QwaQwa campus.
- On the Bloemfontein campus, just more than 7 out of 10 students (72%) successfully completed the module when the attendance and assessment criteria were applied. On the QwaQwa campus, just more than 6 out of 10 (63%) of students successfully completed the module.
- There were more than 500 students (15%) on the Bloemfontein campus who passed with distinction; no students on the QwaQwa campus passed with distinction.
- Of the 1003 students on the Bloemfontein campus who failed, more than half (54%) failed based on assessment and attendance criteria; slightly more than a third (35%) failed based on assessment criteria alone, and only 11% failed due to lack of attendance.
- Of the 55 students who failed on the QwaQwa campus, 80% failed based exclusively on assessment criteria, and 15% failed based on attendance criteria. Only 5% failed based on both assessment and attendance criteria.

UFS101 Module Content: Level of challenge and time allocation

Most students on both campuses agree that the content level of difficulty, the level of lecture presentations and the time allocated to each unit in UFS101 is appropriate for first-year students. With regards to the module outcomes, proportionally more students on the QwaQwa campus were challenged to think about difficult issues from different perspectives, although the majority of Bloemfontein students also agreed this was the case to some extent. There was also stronger agreement on the QwaQwa campus that the module encouraged students to think in new ways about 21st century local and global issues, although most students agreed the module facilitated this to some extent.

- Qualitative feedback suggests that students were generally positive about the module content, with students commenting on the value of the module content to open up their thinking to new topics and disciplines.
- Overall, most students (more than two-thirds) either agree or strongly agree that the level of difficulty of the UFS101 module content is appropriate for first-year students. This is confirmed in the qualitative feedback where only a few students spoke of difficulties in mastering the module contents.
 - The vast majority of students on the Bloemfontein campus and all students on the QwaQwa campus indicated that the level of difficulty was not appropriate and that the content was pitched too high.
- Around 8 out of 10 Bloemfontein students and 9 out of 10 QwaQwa students agreed that the presentation level of lectures was appropriate.
 - In the first evaluation, the proportion of students who felt the lectures were pitched too high or too low was relatively evenly distributed, whilst in the second evaluation the majority of students felt that the level at which the lectures were presented was pitched too high.
- Around two-thirds of the Bloemfontein students (in both surveys) and three-quarters of the students on the QwaQwa campus agreed to some extent that the time allocated per unit was appropriate.
 - Qualitative feedback added additional perspectives on how students experienced the time allocated to each unit. A limited, but not insignificant, number of students suggested that the time allocated to a lecture, tutorial or learning experience should be extended beyond one hour.
- Approximately two-thirds of students on the Bloemfontein campus agreed to some extent that the content of the module challenged them to think about difficult issues from different perspectives, compared to 90% of QwaQwa students who indicated so.
- 3 out of 10 Bloemfontein students and 7 out of 10 QwaQwa students strongly agreed that they were challenged to think about 21st century local issues in new ways; responses from students on both campuses were highly similar in terms of thinking anew about 21st century global issues.

UFS101 Module Content: Relevance and engagement with content

It is very important to students on the QwaQwa campus that the UFS101 module content should be relevant to their lives and applicable to their futures, and almost all students on the campus agreed that the module is both currently relevant and applicable in the future. Students on the Bloemfontein campus differed somewhat in their responses with fewer students indicating that relevance and applicability are important. Far fewer students on the Bloemfontein campus agreed that the module content is in fact currently relevant and applicable to the future. Whilst opportunity for discussion is more important to students on the QwaQwa campus, on both campuses not all students who indicated that class discussion was important had the opportunity to engage in this way.

- Almost all QwaQwa students indicated that it was important that the module content was relevant to them personally, and 9 out of 10 indicated that the module content was in fact relevant. In contrast, on the Bloemfontein campus, around three-quarters indicated this was important, and only half indicated that this was the case.
 - In the qualitative feedback, some students on the Bloemfontein campus disagreed sharply that the module was relevant to their lives.
- Almost all students on the QwaQwa campus indicated it was important to them that the module had relevance to their future – compared to around three-quarters of the Bloemfontein campus students. Whilst almost all QwaQwa students indicated that the module has relevance for their future, less than two-thirds of students on the Bloemfontein campus indicated so.
 - In the qualitative feedback, some students on the Bloemfontein campus disagreed sharply that the module had relevance for their future.
- Opportunity for discussion in-class related to UFS101 module content is very important to QwaQwa students and less so for Bloemfontein campus students, although qualitative responses show that students enjoy lectures that are interactive and have opportunity for discussion.

UFS101 Module Content: Learning experiences

The learning experiences are experienced positively by students who enjoyed their practical and engaging nature. The learning experiences helped students relate their knowledge to real-life, relevant situations and provided a platform for them to voice their opinions. Very few logistical concerns were raised and learning experiences typically ran smoothly.

- For the first Semester, the Astronomy Fair was the most interesting learning experience for the Bloemfontein campus students, while the State Your Case was rated as the most relevant. The visit to the Basotho cultural village was the most relevant and the most interesting learning experience for the QwaQwa campus students.
- The session on Media, Love and Relationships was rated by the students as the most relevant (72%; n=298) and most interesting (70%; n=296) of all the learning experiences, whilst the visit by the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank was rated as the least interesting. Qualitative feedback supports the strong appreciation students have for Unit 7: How do people change?.
- Students on the Bloemfontein campus found the Astronomy Fair and the Chem-Magic show interesting, but not relevant. The Chem-magic show also emerged strongly in the qualitative feedback as a “wow” and interesting activity.
- A very limited number of students provided strong and emotive feedback on the contents and nature of Unit 4 (How should we deal with our violent past?) and its associated learning activity. These opinions were expressed at multiple points throughout the surveys. Adequately capacitating learning facilitators to handle such topics sensitively and appropriately is needed. As a means to accomplish this, the Difficult Dialogues training to be presented in 2014 to all learning facilitators signals the UFS101 team’s commitment to building social cohesion whilst engaging in disruptive teaching.

UFS101 Learning Materials and Support

Overall, students were more positive about the module guide than negative, with most students agreeing that the module guide was user-friendly and provided them with all the information they needed. Despite this generally positive sentiment many students indicated they were unable to locate the necessary information in the module guide to complete their MCQ tests. Students also experience Blackboard positively (with only a limited number of technical difficulties reported) and the sites are well-managed, up-to-date and useful.

- The most pressing concern that students expressed was that they did not manage to find all the relevant information they needed in the module guide (specifically in relation to the weekly MCQ test).
 - Despite the fact that all the information is in fact in the module guide, this concern was raised regularly by students in response to various questions (see also the sections on assessment). One possible explanation for this is that students do not take the time to engage deeply enough with the reading material.
- Most students across campuses agree that the module guide is user-friendly. It appears as if students become more familiar with how to use the module guide as the year progresses and thus find it easier to identify all the relevant information.
 - However, changes to the timetable in the module guide should be communicated via multiple channels (e.g. Blackboard, e-mail and text) to ensure that all students are aware of the changes.
- QwaQwa students make more extensive use of the glossary than students on the Bloemfontein campus.
- Qualitative feedback suggests that students enjoy using the electronic module guide.
- The Blackboard sites were well-managed, up-to-date and useful to students (particularly the to-do-list for the week).
- Students enjoy accessing materials and completing assignments at their own convenience.
 - However, there appears to be an initial adjustment period for students in the first semester (particularly those who are not skilled at using IT) during which using Blackboard is more challenging.
 - Some students have difficulties accessing videos through Blackboard and off-campus access to videos for commuter students is costly. In 2014 the newly designed e-Guide will include embedded videos which will eliminate the need for students to incur download cost. A zipped e-Guide will also be available for download allowing students to view all videos and other content offline.
- Less than a third of students on either campus experienced difficulties with Blackboard, with technical difficulties being the most frequently reported reason for the difficulty.

UFS101 Learning Facilitators: A student perspective

Students are positive about the learning facilitators and the UFS101 tutorials. Learning facilitators are mostly described as helpful, well-prepared for sessions and respectful.

- The majority of students across campuses agreed that the learning facilitators were well-prepared for the tutorial session, although this sentiment was slightly stronger on the QwaQwa Campus.
- The overwhelming majority of students on the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campuses agreed that their learning facilitators were both respectful and helpful – although this percentage dropped slightly on the Bloemfontein campus at the second evaluation.
- Whilst almost three-quarters of students on the QwaQwa campus strongly agreed that their learning facilitators encouraged participation in activities, only around 40% of students on the Bloemfontein campus strongly agreed with this.
- Qualitative feedback regarding the learning facilitators revealed only a few concerns or negative experiences.

UFS101 Assessments

When taking all feedback across all sections of the evaluations into account, assessment is the one aspect of UFS101 that students are least positive about. Students find the MCQ tests time-consuming to complete and struggle to find the necessary information in their module guides. Some students experienced difficulties managing UFS101 in addition to their other academic responsibilities. Despite

this, the majority of students agree that the assessments challenged them to apply the skills and knowledge they learned and that they continued to learn through completing the assessments.

- The majority of students across all campuses and evaluations indicated that the assessments did indeed challenge them to apply the skills and knowledge they had learned through UFS101, and that the assessments allowed them to continue learning about the module.
- Around two-thirds of the Bloemfontein campus students and three-quarters of the QwaQwa campus students agreed to some extent that the assessments were clearly laid out and easy to understand.
- The proportion of students who were able to complete their assessment tasks on time increased between the two evaluation points on the Bloemfontein campus, whilst the vast majority of QwaQwa campus students indicated they were able to do so.
 - Despite this positive finding, about half of the Bloemfontein campus students and 40% of the QwaQwa campus students indicated they struggled to do so without neglecting their other academic responsibilities.
- Overall, students on both campuses found the assessment topics to be both relevant and interesting, with a limited number of students disagreeing in this regard in the qualitative feedback.

Learning through UFS101

Overall, more students agreed that they learned transferrable skills rather than academic skills through UFS101. A greater proportion of students on the QwaQwa campus reported acquiring both transferable and academic skills than students on the Bloemfontein campus. Qualitative feedback in various sections of the online surveys confirms that students learned greater respect for the views of others, developed stronger social cohesion within diversity and continued developing the skill of seeing both sides of an argument. An improvement in academic writing was reported by the least number of students. UFS101 successfully exposes students to new ways of teaching and learning.

- The level of agreement with each of the statements is higher for the students on the QwaQwa campus, with all QwaQwa students indicating that they had learned to respect the views of others and had improved their social cohesion with diverse groups of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines, religions, etc.
- Although still the vast majority, slightly fewer QwaQwa students indicated that they have learned to reason above emotion (87%; n=39) and consider both sides of an argument (93%; n=42).
- Most students on the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campuses across evaluation points agreed that they had learned to respect others' views, improve social cohesion, reason above emotion and consider both sides of an argument.
- Almost all QwaQwa students agreed that they had been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning and had improved their critical thinking and academic argumentation, whilst around three-quarters agreed that they had improved their academic argumentation. Comparatively fewer students on the Bloemfontein campus agreed with these statements at both evaluation points. Around 70% agreed that they had improved their critical thinking, whilst around 60% agreed they had improved their academic argumentation. Approximately half of the students on the Bloemfontein campus indicated they had improved their academic writing. At least three-quarters indicated they had been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning.

Communication with the UFS101 team

Students are generally satisfied with and complimentary of the communication between themselves and the UFS101 team. Although Blackboard was indicated as a very useful form of communication by the largest proportion of students, qualitative feedback suggests that multiple channels of communication are needed to ensure that all students receive communication timeously.

- Blackboard was indicated as being a very useful means of communication by the majority of students on the Bloemfontein campus and almost all the students on the QwaQwa campus.
- Facebook was selected as a very useful form of communication by the lowest proportion of students on both campuses.
- Cellphone communication was very useful to more students on the QwaQwa campus than on the Bloemfontein campus.
- In response to the qualitative questions in the online surveys students indicated that communication from the team was efficient, clear and effective. However, some students missed important communication that was communicated through Blackboard, text or e-mail if they had not accessed a particular platform at the time of the communication. Multiple channels of communication are suggested to ensure all students are aware of important information, particularly as this relates to changes to timetables, venues and other logistical arrangements.

What students liked about UFS101

The module content and delivery, particularly the exposure to topics outside of their discipline were aspects of UFS101 that students liked most. The opportunity for interaction with other students – both formally through discussion in the classroom and informally was appreciated by the students.

- The UFS101 module delivery and content – including the lectures, learning experiences and tutorials – was one of the most liked aspects of UFS101.
 - Students specifically liked the Chem-Magic show and the contents of Unit 7.
- In alignment with the module outcomes, students liked the opportunity to be exposed to other disciplines, to think critically and reason about topics, as well as to see different perspectives they had not considered before.
- Relationships between students – both inside and outside the classroom – along with the opportunity to engage with others were appreciated by the students.

What students disliked about UFS101

The assessment component of UFS101, particularly the weekly MCQ tests, was the least liked aspect of the module. Closely linked to the assessment dense approach, students disliked the time intensive nature of the module and the impact UFS101 activities had on their other academic work.

- Students did not like the weekly MCQ tests as they were time-consuming and there were too many of them. Many students indicated that they were unable to find the necessary information they needed to complete the MCQ tests in their module guides.
- A limited number of students did not like the topics of the integrated assessments and a few were dissatisfied with the marking.
- The combination of activities required by UFS101 contributes to the perceived disproportionate time investment in the module. Some students indicated that the time invested in the many UFS101 activities negatively impacted their overall academic performance in other modules.

- Some students indicated that they disliked tutorials, the lectures and the learning experiences due to the fact that the contents were not relevant, not interesting or too difficult.

LEARNING FACILITATORS

Learning Facilitator Training

Learning facilitator training was logistically well-organised, structured and practical. Learning facilitators agree that their training was both relevant and interesting, and that the training adequately prepared them for their role. Some additional support after training for new tutors is suggested, including tutorial observations and follow-up. The timing of training should be planned so as to avoid interfering with the academic responsibilities of the learning facilitators.

- The majority of the Bloemfontein learning facilitators and all of the QwaQwa learning facilitators agreed to some extent that their training was both relevant and interesting.
- The vast majority of learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus and all of the QwaQwa learning facilitators agreed to some extent that the training prepared them for their role as facilitators.
- Facilitators found the training effective, empowering, well-structured and practical, with some of the 2012 facilitators noting improvements from the previous year.
- Suggestions for improving the training included adding more activities and allowing experienced facilitators to be exempt from certain aspects of the training.
 - Some additional support after training for new tutors was suggested.
- Facilitators requested training to be presented prior to the start of the Semester or over weekends to avoid clashes with classes and practicals.

Tutorial Experience

Confirming the positive student experiences in tutorials, learning facilitators reported the tutorials to be effective and engaging. Learning facilitators engaged students in their sessions through: creating a conducive atmosphere and environment, paying attention to personal relationships, using small group activities and discussions and deliberately eliciting individual student input. Tutorial sizes, the sharing of venues between facilitators and co-facilitating, as well as the fact that students are not pre-assigned to a specific tutor for the entire year were the aspects of tutorials with which the facilitators were less positive.

- More than half of the Bloemfontein and less than a third of the QwaQwa facilitators strongly agreed that their class preparation materials were adequate.
- More than 90% of all facilitators agreed to some extent that they created engaging tutorials through active participation.
 - Qualitative feedback shows that learning facilitators engaged students in their sessions through creating a conducive atmosphere and environment, paying attention to personal relationships, using small group activities and discussions and deliberately eliciting individual student input. A limited number of facilitators also reported using multimedia and visual aids to encourage engagement.
- Overall, learning facilitators experienced the tutorials very positively – both in terms of the tutorial content and the facilitation process. Facilitators were particularly positive about the opportunity tutorials presented to students to engage more deeply with the materials.
- Some learning facilitators (at various points in the online survey) expressed discontentment with the co-facilitation arrangement where facilitators share a venue.

- Assigning a group of students to a particular facilitator for the year was suggested in order to regulate tutorial size more effectively and to allow for stronger relationships to be built between the facilitators and the students (this suggestion was made at various other points in the survey).
- Finding ways to engage students more effectively in tutorial sessions and ensuring they prepare adequately is an important aspect of sustaining and improving the value and quality of the tutorials.

Blackboard Experience

As was the case for the UFS101 students, the experience of the learning facilitators with Blackboard was by and large positive. The use of the Learning Facilitators Module on Blackboard decreased over time among the Bloemfontein learning facilitators, and the module appears to have been used more intensively by the QwaQwa learning facilitators.

- The vast majority of learning facilitators across both campuses had no trouble accessing Blackboard. The limited number of facilitators who did experience trouble reported technical difficulties, rather than user-friendliness as the reason for their difficulty in interacting with the learning management system (LMS).
- Most learning facilitators agreed to some extent that they accessed the Learning Facilitators Module on Blackboard. However, the proportion of facilitators doing so decreased over time on the Bloemfontein campus.
- Learning facilitators are generally positive about Blackboard, and commended the UFS101 team on their efforts to ensure effective and “easy” use of the LMS.

Assessment

Assessment was a time-consuming component of UFS101 for both students and learning facilitators. The timing of when facilitators are required to mark (e.g. during tests or exams) adds additional pressures to their own academic responsibilities. As learning facilitators became more acquainted with the rubric, the marking process was both easier and less time-consuming; however some facilitators still struggled with interpreting and applying the generic rubric. Additional assessment training, particularly for new tutors, may prove fruitful.

- Although most facilitators across both campuses agreed with the statement that the assessments were clear and easy to understand, it is evident from the qualitative information that there is some level of disagreement with this.
- Whilst a number of facilitators found the marking of assessments to be enjoyable and interesting, they frequently reported that the marking was very time-consuming. As facilitators became more acquainted with the rubric – and with the introduction of the online rubric – many facilitators found the process to be far less time-consuming and less challenging. Regardless, some facilitators still found the generic rubric difficult to interpret and apply consistently across assessments and between questions.
- The additional pressure of being required to mark during their own tests and/or exams contributed negatively to the experience of the learning facilitators.
- Additional attention is needed in the areas of plagiarism and referencing – both in terms of providing students with guidelines and in terms of clarifying expectations and boundaries for the learning facilitators.
- The qualitative feedback related to the assessments suggests that additional training would be beneficial – especially for the new tutors with little or no UFS101 experience.

Learning and Development

UFS101 is a learning experience for the facilitators, with most facilitators acquiring or improving both their transferable and academic skills. Improved academic writing and argumentation were reported by the fewest number of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus, whilst all facilitators on the QwaQwa campus reported that they improved all of their academic and transferable skills. UFS101 successfully exposes learning facilitators to new ways to teaching and learning.

- Almost all learning facilitators on both campuses agreed to some extent that they had learned to respect others' views, consider both sides of an argument, reason above emotion and had improved their social cohesion.
- Almost all learning facilitators agreed that they had improved their critical thinking and had been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning through UFS101.
- Although all learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus agreed that they improved their academic argumentation skills, slightly fewer facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus agreed with this.
- All of the learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus agreed that they improved their academic writing, and although only three-quarters of the Bloemfontein campus facilitators agreed with this in the first survey, 9 out of 10 agreed by the end of the module.

Communication with the UFS101 team

Learning facilitators are generally satisfied with and complimentary of the communication between themselves and the UFS101 team. Although e-mail was indicated as a very useful form of communication by the largest proportion of facilitators, qualitative feedback suggests that multiple channels of communication are needed to ensure that all facilitators receive communication timeously.

- Almost all of the learning facilitators agree that e-mail is a very useful form of communication, whilst less than 50% agree that Facebook is useful.
- Around 9 out of 10 facilitators indicated that announcements on Blackboard and cellphone communication are useful.

Overall experience and recommendations

UFS101 was a positive experience and a developmental opportunity for the learning facilitators. Learning facilitators grew personally, academically and professionally through their involvement in UFS101. Relationships – with other facilitators, students and the UFS101 team – are one of the aspects the facilitators liked most about UFS101. The time-consuming nature of marking the assessments and the disengagement of the UFS101 students were aspects the learning facilitators liked least.

- Overall, learning facilitators were positive about their UFS101 experience, with evidence of personal and professional growth in various areas and skills.
 - Amongst others, learning facilitators grew in the areas of confidence, ability to communicate, time management and ability to work in a team.
 - A number of learning facilitators commented on their academic growth and development through UFS101, but also on their broadened knowledge and interest in topics outside of their discipline.
- Learning facilitators liked the relational aspects of UFS101, including the relationships with the UFS101 team, their fellow facilitators and the students.
- Only a very limited number of learning facilitators reported negative experiences.

- The time-consuming nature of the assessments and the unfair distribution of marking were noted as negative experiences.
- The negative attitudes and disengagement of the students in the module was disheartening to the learning facilitators.
- Only a very limited number of logistical concerns were raised by the learning facilitators.

Introduction

UFS101 – the compulsory undergraduate core curriculum module for first-year students at the University of the Free State – is a flagship initiative within the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) and is at the forefront of implementing engaging teaching and learning in large class contexts.

The aim of UFS101 is to nurture the next generation of citizens and young academics that can take South Africa into the 21st century, equipped with the ability to understand and engage with complex human problems from multiple perspectives.

This report details the feedback from students and learning facilitators on both the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa campuses on the UFS101 module during 2013.

Overview of UFS101 and Expansion in 2013

The module was first piloted in 2011, with full roll-out in 2012 and continued expansion 2013.

The module is compulsory and credit-bearing (16 credits) for mainstream students with an AP score of 30 and above, registering as first-time entering students for a first degree or diploma qualification, as well as for extended programme students in their second year of registration. In 2012 approximately 2000 students enrolled for the module and in 2013 the module had 3613⁴ enrolments on the Bloemfontein campus. UFS101 further expanded in 2013 by implementing a pilot on the QwaQwa campus with 150 students in the Faculty of Education.

The pilot (2011) and the first year of implementation (2012) were evaluated and the findings of these evaluations were used to enhance and strengthen the module and its implementation during 2013. This report aims to detail the feedback from students and learning facilitators related to UFS101 in 2013, but does not attempt to serve as a full evaluation of the module. Although key findings and feedback will be of value to the implementation team going forward, in the context of the proposed changes to the structure, mode of delivery and content of the module in 2014 (see UFS101 FDT proposal for further details) a full evaluation of the 2013 implementation is not warranted.

Module Outcomes

After completion of UFS101 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 21st century world (locally and globally).

Module Delivery

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

⁴ Final enrolments after a limited number of students deregistered.

has taken a blended learning approach to delivery – drawing on the strengths of both contact sessions and online learning (primarily through Blackboard).

During 2013, the module comprised of seven units presented by experts on each of the topics. The first three units were presented in the first semester and the remaining four during the second semester (refer to Table 1 below for an exposition of the units presented during 2013). Each unit included two lectures, a face-to-face tutorial and a learning experience. The presentation of units was preceded by an official orientation for students. In addition, students had access to a UFS101 overview video on Blackboard to orient them to the module content.

Table 1: Outline of UFS101 Units 2013

Unit	Topic	Discipline	Presenter	Learning Experience	Semester
1	How do we become South Africans?	Anthropology & Social Psychology	Mr. M Serekoane & Mr. P. Mdunge	Sculpture Walk	1
2	What is the role of Law in society?	Law	Dr I. Keevy	State your Case	1
3	Are we alone?	Astronomy & Biophysics	Prof. M.J.H. Hoffman & Prof. E. van Heerden	Astronomy Fair	1
4	How should we deal with our violent past?	History & Pedagogy	Prof J.D. Jansen	Dealing with Battle Scars: Video documentary and virtual tour	2
5	Why is the financial crisis described as 'global'?	Economics	Dr A. van Niekerk	Lecture by the Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank	2
6	How green is green?	Chemistry	Prof. A. Roodt	Chem-Magic Show	2
7	How do people change?	Social Psychology	Dr J.F. Strydom	Media, Love and Relationships	2

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. Students were expected to attend UFS101 specific Blackboard training prior to the commencement of the module, in order to equip them to fully engage with the module content. Blackboard was 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 e-mail, text messages and Facebook. Students could also contact the UFS101 team by e-mail or could visit their offices during consultation hours.

Module Assessment

Students were evaluated through three integrated assessment tasks which spanned across units and a series of multiple choice quizzes prior to each lecture (to encourage adequate preparation and engagement). Detailed instructions for each assessment were provided in the module guide and Blackboard. Each assessment was submitted on Blackboard. Refer to Table 2 below for a summary of the UFS101 assessments during 2013.

Table 2: Outline of UFS101 Assessments

Assessment	Date for submission	Weighting
Essay	Submission at end of Unit 3	25%
Reflective Journal	Submission at end of Unit 5	25%
Digital Storytelling	Submission at end of Unit 7	25%
Multiple Choice Question Tests	All units, both lectures	25%

Each student was required to complete all three assessments (obtaining a subminimum of 45% to get a re-assessment and 50% average to pass the module). All assessments were moderated by an external moderator, after which adjustments to mark allocations were made where necessary.

In addition to this requirement, students were required to attend 70% of the contact sessions (classes, learning experiences and tutorials) in order to pass the module. Students who do not pass the module are required to repeat the module in the following year. Attendance was tracked through the use of biometric scanners. Students who were unable to attend due to valid reasons (including timetable clashes, test-timetable clashes, illness, death in the family or provincial, national and international sport/cultural events) were given the opportunity to appeal and were not penalised.

UFS101 Human Resource Capacity

Staff

At the start of 2013, UFS101 was coordinated by a team of four staff members based in the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) with 6 part-time assistants. As student numbers and sites of delivery continue to expand, the staff complement has increased to 6 full-time staff members during 2013 and 9 part-time assistants (combination of research and student assistants).

Learning Facilitators

A team of 113 learning facilitators was initially selected for the Bloemfontein campus from 372 applicants for 2013, however during the course of the year the number decreased slightly to 108. The team of facilitators mainly consisted of senior and postgraduate students. There were eight learning facilitators selected for the QwaQwa campus from 48 applicants.

All learning facilitators received three days of training at the beginning of 2013, which included an orientation to UFS101, Blackboard training and New Academic Tutorial Training (NATP), where they had an opportunity to discuss the content of the lectures for the first semester. Additional training was held prior to the start of the second semester for two days to cover the content of the lectures to be presented in the second semester. Meetings with the external moderator were arranged prior to the marking of each assessment to prepare the learning facilitators adequately for marking the assessments.

Learning facilitator 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 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.

Methodology

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe the perspectives of the students and learning facilitators on 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.

In order to understand the above, feedback from students and learning facilitators was obtained on the following:

- To what extent were the overall module outcomes attained?
- What was the extent of effectiveness and quality of the:
 - Lecture sessions?
 - Tutorial sessions?
 - Learning experiences?
 - Learning materials?
 - Platform for learning (Blackboard)?
 - Logistical processes?
- What was the extent of student success in UFS101?
- What recommendations do students and learning facilitators have for the future improvement of the module?

Population and Sampling

Comprehensive sampling was employed as the entire population of students enrolled for UFS101 and all learning facilitators involved in the module during 2013 were invited to participate. Actual response rates are detailed in the Sample section of this report.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected from students and learning facilitators on both campuses through two online mixed-method surveys – one in each semester. Data for the analysis of attendance and performance was obtained from the UFS101 team.

Response rates were markedly higher for the first online survey than the second for both campuses and across students and learning facilitators. In particular, response rates on the QwaQwa campus from students and learning facilitators were very low for the second online survey. For this reason, only responses from the first online survey are included in this report for the QwaQwa campus.

All responses to the quantitative questions from students and learning facilitators were included in the analysis of the quantitative questions. However, due to the large number of respondents to the online survey for the Bloemfontein campus, a stratified random selection process was employed to identify a limited number of students for the analysis of the qualitative responses in each of the evaluations. The stratification process ensured proportional representation of gender and race, and a disproportional representation (10%) of students who were repeating the module. In order to ensure that cases with adequately rich responses were included in the selection, only students who provided qualitative responses to at least 75% of the qualitative questions were included in the selection process. In addition, only students who provided valid student numbers could be included in the selection process as students needed to be matched with their respective biographical information. The limitation of this matching process is that students who hold extreme views may not have been willing to share their student numbers and were excluded from the selection. Although this may lead to a slight bias towards positive responses, it was important to ensure that the selected groups were adequately represented in the sample. After the analysis of the qualitative data it was evident that students did not only share positive views of UFS101 and were willing to speak out (often strongly) about aspects of the module they were not satisfied with.

A similar selection process was not necessary for students on the QwaQwa campus or for learning facilitators on either campus given the smaller number of the respondents.

Sample

Students

UFS101 Student Population Profile

The number of students enrolled for UFS101 on the Bloemfontein campus at the end of 2013 was 3613. A total of 138 students deregistered from the module during the course of the year, and were not taken into account in the student success calculations. The graphs below illustrate the demographic profile of the UFS101 students on the Bloemfontein campus.

The population of enrolled UFS101 students was predominantly female (61%), and the majority of the students were African (53%) (see Figure 1 below).

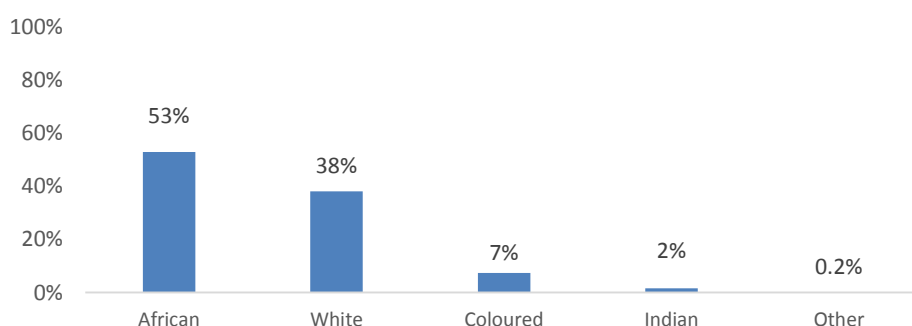


Figure 1: Racial representation of students enrolled on the Bloemfontein campus for UFS101

The distribution of students enrolled by Faculty is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

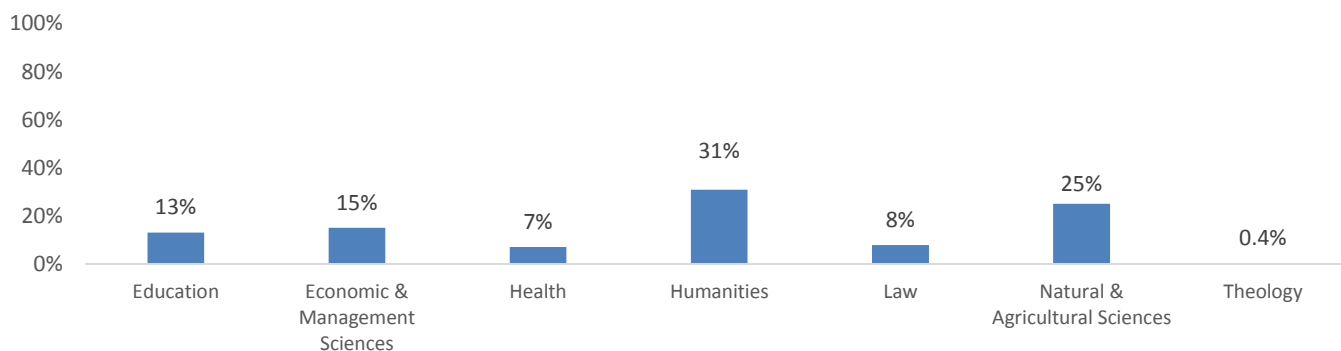


Figure 2: Faculty representation of students enrolled on the Bloemfontein campus for UFS101

The total number of students enrolled at the end of 2013 for the pilot in the Faculty of Education on the QwaQwa campus was 150, with one student who deregistered during the course of the year. As was the case on the Bloemfontein campus, the majority of students who enrolled were female (69%) and all of the students were African.

Online Survey Respondent Profile

A total of 1311 (36% of the total enrolment) students on the Bloemfontein campus completed the first online survey, whilst 429 responded to the second evaluation (9% of the total enrolment). There were 46 students from the QwaQwa campus who responded to the first online survey (31% of the total enrolment), and eight who responded to the second online survey. Due to this very low response rate for the second survey, only responses from the first survey are included in this report for the QwaQwa campus.

On the Bloemfontein campus, in the first online survey, 1145 students provided student numbers that could be matched to their demographic details and in the second Bloemfontein online survey 336 respondents could be matched. On the QwaQwa campus, 42 students were matched. The sections below describe the demographic profile of the survey respondents (based on those students who could be matched).

In the first online survey, around 33% (n=382) were male and 66% (n=750) were female, whilst in the second survey 36% (n=122) of the total 336 respondents were male and 56% (n=189) were female. These proportions are roughly similar to the proportion in the UFS101 student population, with a slight overrepresentation of females in the first evaluation and a slight underrepresentation of females in the second evaluation.

For QwaQwa's online survey, 31% of students responding were male (n=16) and 68% (n=30) were female – which is highly similar to the proportion in the population of enrolled students.

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of Bloemfontein students according to race for the two online surveys.

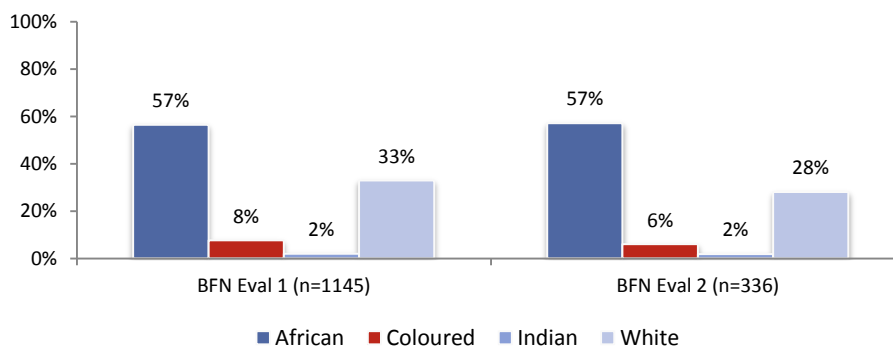


Figure 3: Racial representation of students responding to the Bloemfontein online surveys

The proportions of students across ethnic groups for both Bloemfontein surveys is very similar, with the majority of students being African (57%; n=647 and n=192 respectively). White students represented 33% (n=377) and 28% (n=94) respectively for the two Bloemfontein online surveys. Students on the QwaQwa campus were all African. In comparison to the population of UFS101 on the Bloemfontein campus, African and Coloured students are well represented, whilst White students are slightly underrepresented (especially in the second evaluation).

As can be seen in Figure 4 on the following page, the distribution of student responses across faculties are very similar across the two evaluation points. The largest proportion of students are enrolled in the Faculty of the Humanities (n=341 and n=101 respectively), followed by the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences at 22% (n=87) and 24% (n=22). In comparison to the population of UFS101 students, all faculties are proportionally represented in the sample. Given that UFS101 was piloted only in the Faculty of Education on the QwaQwa campus, all student respondents are enrolled in this faculty.

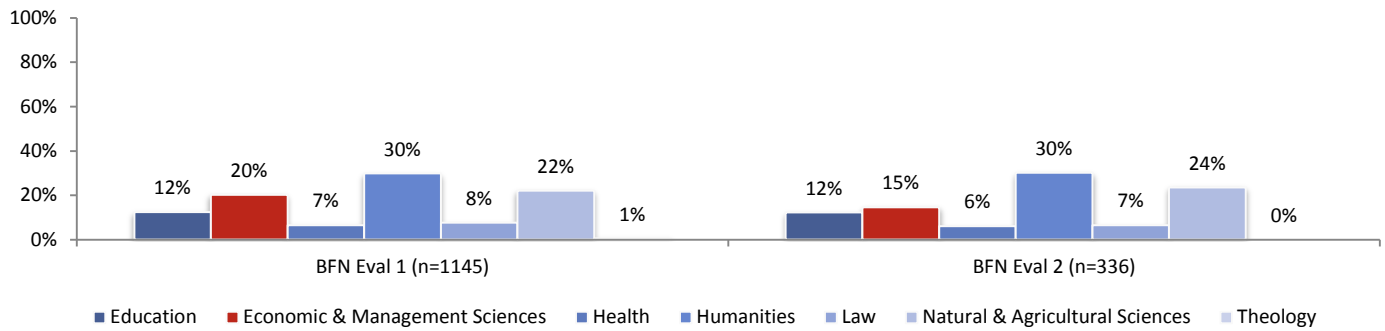


Figure 4: Faculty distributions of students responding to the Bloemfontein online surveys

For the first evaluation on the Bloemfontein campus the proportion of students indicating English as their language of instruction was approximately 71% (n=807) compared to 28% Afrikaans students. This is highly similar to the proportions in the second evaluation – where 71% (n=237) of students were English and 22% (n=75) were Afrikaans. The proportion of students enrolled for UFS101 who indicated their language of instruction as English was 66%, indicating a slight overrepresentation of English speaking students in the online surveys. All students on the QwaQwa campus have English as a language of instruction.

Learning Facilitators

UFS101 Learning Facilitator Profile

There were a total of 108 learning facilitators (5 learning facilitators left during the course of the year from the initial 113). The discussion and graphs below show the demographic profile of the UFS101 learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus.

The learning facilitators were majority female (58%, $n=66$), and more than half were African (53%) (see Figure 5 below). The profile of learning facilitators and the profile of registered students on the Bloemfontein campus is thus highly similar.

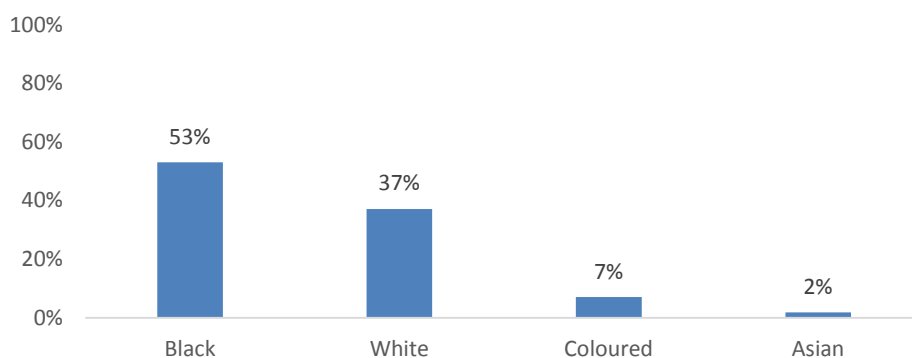


Figure 5: Racial representation of UFS101 learning facilitators

Of these learning facilitators, 41% ($n=46$) were also UFS101 learning facilitators in 2012 and 14% ($n=16$) were UFS101 students in 2012. More than two-thirds (67%) of the learning facilitators had at least one year of previous tutorial experience.

Figure 6 below shows the level of study for the Bloemfontein campus learning facilitators – of which by far the majority were in their final year of study. Less than 15% of the 2013 learning facilitators were postgraduate students.

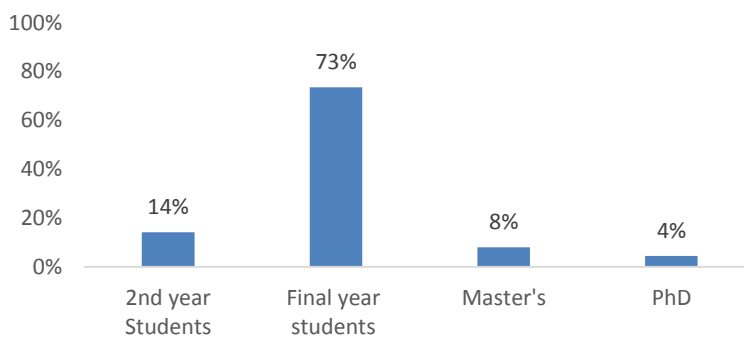


Figure 6: Degree enrolment of UFS101 learning facilitators

Approximately half of the learning facilitators were English speaking, and the other half were bilingual.

A total of eight learning facilitators out of 12 applications were selected for the pilot on the QwaQwa campus.

The learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus were majority female (63%, n=66) and all were African – thus the profile of learning facilitators and the profile of registered students on the campus are thus highly similar.

As this was the pilot of UFS101 on the campus, none of the facilitators had previously tutored UFS101 or had previously been UFS101 students. In addition, all of the tutors had other tutorial experience. All but one (88%) of the learning facilitators were in their final year of study.

Online Survey Respondent Profile

A total of 65 facilitators from the Bloemfontein campus (58% of the population) responded to the first online survey whilst 30 responded to the second survey (28% of the population). There were seven facilitators from the QwaQwa campus who responded to the first online survey (88% of the population). None of the learning facilitators responded to the second online survey.

The demographic profile of the learning facilitator respondents could not be drawn as no identifying information was requested from the participants in the online surveys.

UFS101 Student Experience and Learning 2013

Enrolment, Attendance and Academic Performance

Student Attendance

In order to pass UFS101, students are required to attend a minimum of 70% of the lectures, tutorials and learning experiences. On the Bloemfontein campus, 82% of the students met this criteria as did 85% of the students on the QwaQwa campus. Only a very small minority of students (5% on the Bloemfontein campus and 1% of students on the QwaQwa campus) attended all of the required sessions. A quarter of the students on the Bloemfontein campus attended more than 90% of the sessions, whilst 20% of the QwaQwa students did so.

The sections below detail the lecture attendance, as well as the tutorial and learning experience attendance by campus for each unit.

Lecture Attendance

Figure 7 below indicates the percentage of the registered students attending each of the lectures by campus.

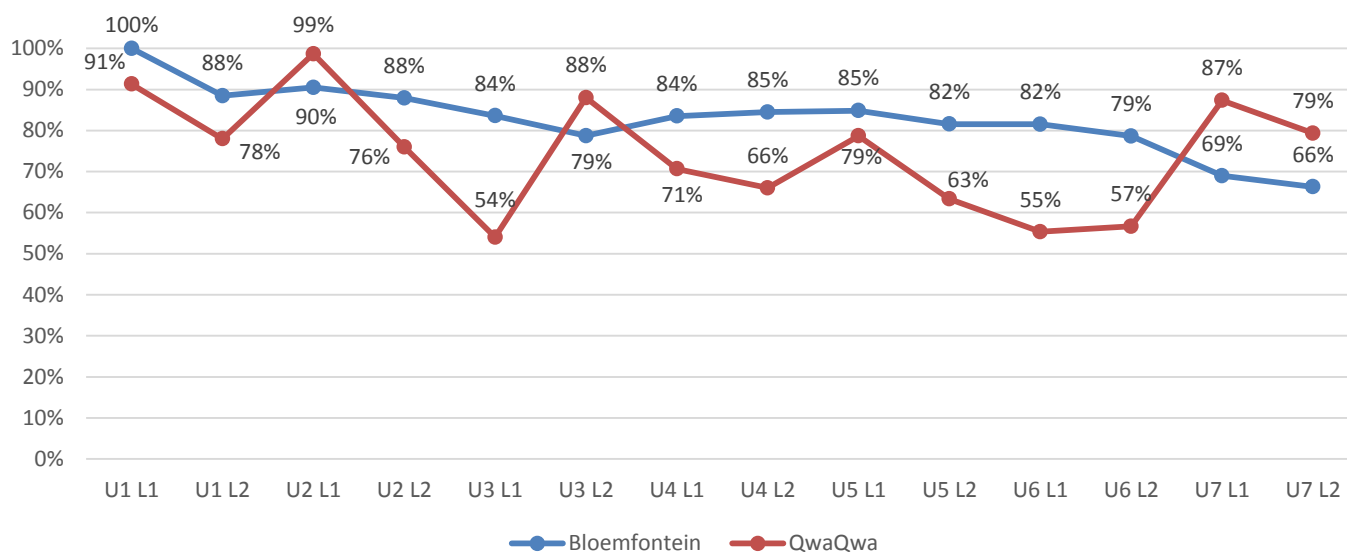


Figure 7: Student attendance of UFS101 lectures by campus (U represents the Unit number and L represents the lecture number)

As is seen in the figure above, for the most part attendance on the Bloemfontein campus hovered around 80-90% for each lecture. The steepest decline in attendance is seen at Unit 7 (possibly when students are sure they have met the attendance criteria).

On the QwaQwa campus the attendance pattern was somewhat more erratic, with peaks and dips at various points in the semesters. The lowest attendance was for Unit 3 Lecture 1 and for Unit 6 Lecture 1. In contrast to the Bloemfontein campus, attendance increased in the last Unit after declining attendance in Units 5 and 6.

Tutorial and Learning Experience Attendance

Figure 8 on the following page indicates the percentage of the registered students attending each of the tutorials and learning experiences by campus.

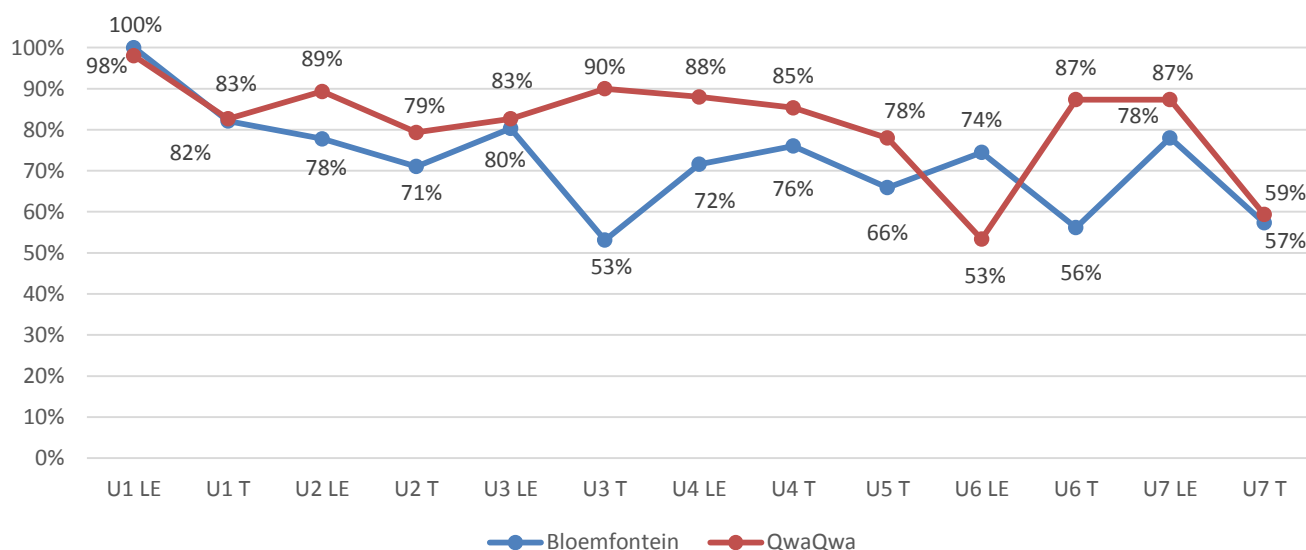


Figure 8: Student attendance of UFS101 tutorials and learning experiences by campus (U represents the Unit number, LE represents the Learning experience and T represents Tutorials)

As is seen in the figure above, the pattern of attendance on the Bloemfontein campus for learning experiences and tutorials was more erratic than the lecture attendance pattern. Overall, student attendance of the learning experiences and tutorials was lower than for the lectures – hovering mostly between 70 and 80% (with a few marked lows at Units 3, 6 and 7). The drop in attendance is only noted at Unit 7 for the lectures.

Interestingly, the opposite is noted on the QwaQwa campus where tutorial and learning experience attendance is higher than lecture attendance – hovering at around 80 to 90% with two steep dips at Unit 6 and 7. The dip at Unit 6 is also noted in the lecture attendance.

Student Academic Performance

Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) Tests

As described above in the Introduction, students were required to complete multiple choice question (MCQ) tests prior to each lecture (a total of fourteen). The average overall for the MCQ tests on the Bloemfontein campus was 58% with 79 students who did not complete any of the MCQ tests. On the QwaQwa campus, the average for the MCQ test was 53% and there were 3 students who did not complete any of the MCQ tests. Figure 9 on the following page illustrates, by campus, the average percentage for each of the MCQ tests and the percentage of students who did not submit each MCQ test.

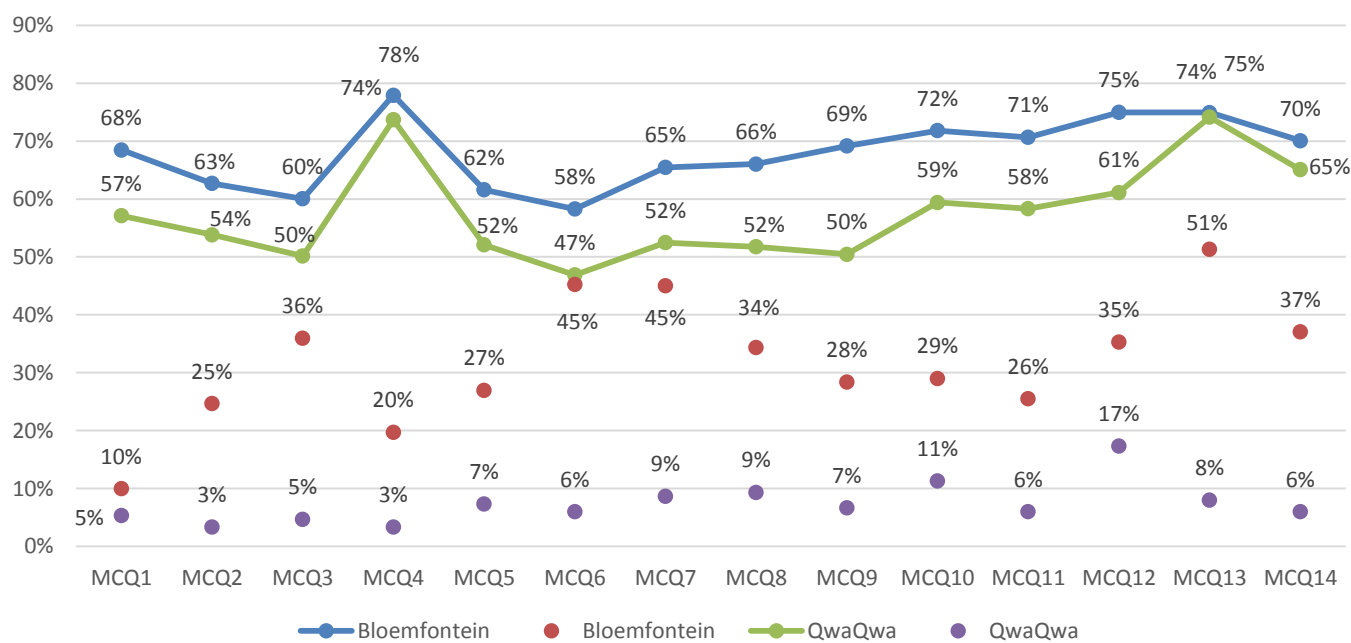


Figure 9: Student performance and non-submission of MCQ tests

As can be seen from the Figure above, on average students on the Bloemfontein campus achieved higher marks for the MCQ tests (between 9 and 19% more) than students on the QwaQwa campus with the exception of MCQ 4 and 13 where performance across campuses was relatively similar.

However, in contrast, the non-completion of MCQ tests was consistently higher (proportionally) for students on the Bloemfontein campus. With the exception of MCQ 12, non-completion by the QwaQwa students was 11% or lower. In contrast, on the Bloemfontein campus more than 20% of students did not complete the MCQ tests (with the exception of MCQ 1). The highest non-completion was MCQ 13 where more than 50% of students did not complete (this is the MCQ test for Unit 7 where attendance of lectures, tutorials and learning experiences also declined sharply – see discussions in the previous section).

With the exception of MCQ 6 on the QwaQwa campus (47%), the average performance of the students on both campuses for the MCQ tests was 50% or higher. Students on both campuses did particularly well in MCQ 4 and 13 (with the averages on the Bloemfontein campus exceeding 75%).

Integrated Assessments

Students were also required to complete three integrated assessments during the course of the year. Figure 10 on the following page details the average performance of the students across campuses for the three assessments and indicates the percentage of students who did not submit the assessments. Students who plagiarised were automatically given a mark of zero. The conditions for plagiarism were no bibliography or in-text referencing – these conditions were lenient because of the first-year level of the module. Figure 10 also indicates the final assessment average for each campus, after taking re-assessments into account (including the MCQ tests).

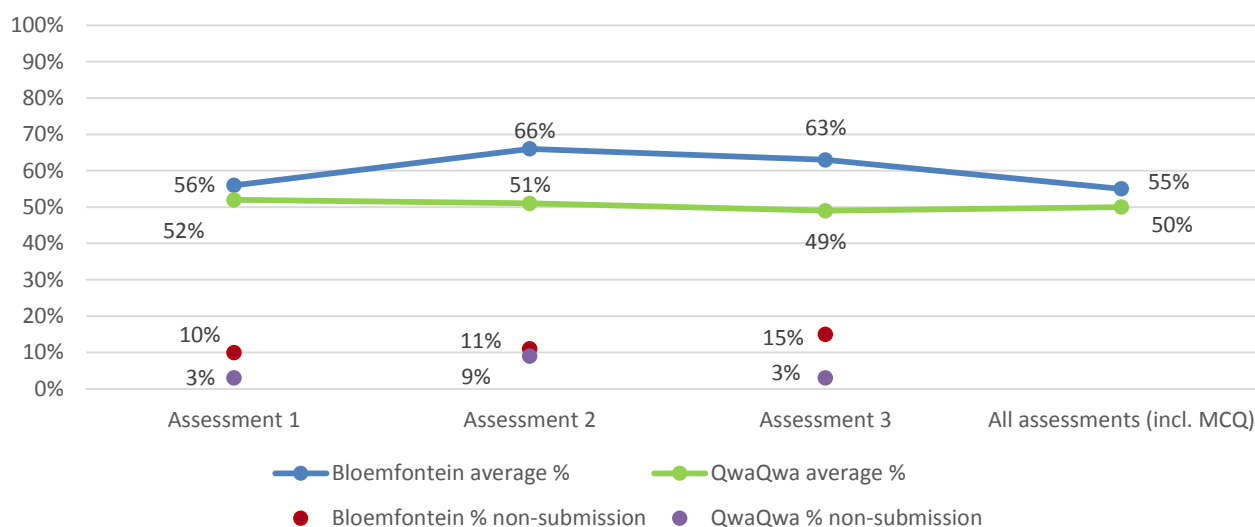


Figure 10: Student performance and non-submission of integrated assessments

As can be seen in the figure, Bloemfontein students performed marginally better in the first assessment and somewhat better in assessment two and three than the students on the QwaQwa campus. Students on the Bloemfontein campus also performed slightly better than the QwaQwa students when all assessments are taken into account – however, for both campuses the average was lower than 60%.

As was the case with the MCQ tests, more students on the Bloemfontein campus failed to submit their assignments.

Student Success

On the Bloemfontein campus, just more than 7 out of 10 students (72%) successfully completed the module when the attendance and assessment criteria (as described earlier) were applied. On the QwaQwa campus, just more than 6 out of 10 (63%) students successfully completed the module. There were more than 500 students (15%) on the Bloemfontein campus who passed with distinction; no students on the QwaQwa campus passed with distinction.

Figure 11 below illustrates the student success rate for UFS101 in 2013 by campus.

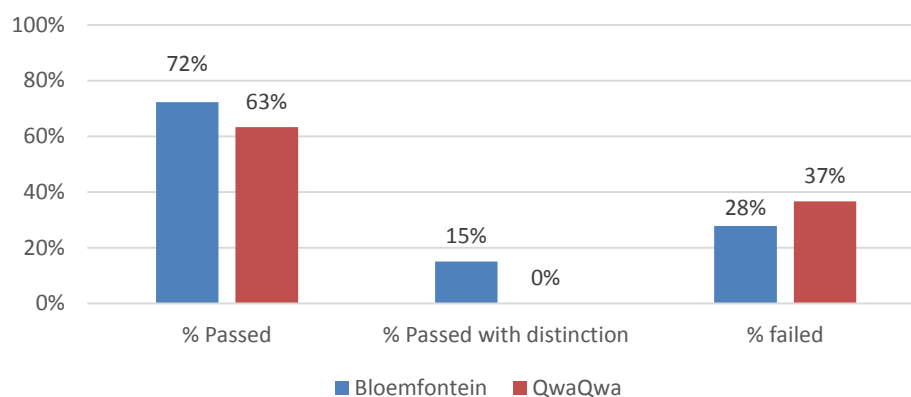


Figure 11: Student success in UFS101 by campus

There were 184 students on the Bloemfontein campus who qualified for a re-assessment, of which approximately two-thirds passed (65%). Less than 10% of the students who qualified for a re-assessment did not pass, however more than a quarter (27%) who qualified did not submit a re-assessment. On the QwaQwa campus there were 23 students who qualified for a re-assessment, of which 48% passed, 26% failed the re-assessment or failed to submit a re-assessment.

Of the 1003 students on the Bloemfontein campus who failed, more than half (54%) failed based on assessment and attendance criteria; slightly more than a third (35%) failed based on assessment criteria alone and only 11% failed due to lack of attendance. Of the 55 students who failed on the QwaQwa campus, 80% failed based exclusively on assessment criteria, and 15% failed based on attendance criteria. Only 5% failed based on both assessment and attendance criteria.

UFS101 Module Content

Academic Challenge and Appropriateness

Students were asked three questions related to the level of challenge in UFS101, namely: if the content level of difficulty is appropriate, if the level at which the lectures are presented is appropriate, and if the amount of time allocated to each unit within the module is appropriate. If students indicated that the level of content difficulty or the level of lecture presentation were inappropriate, an additional follow-up question was asked to ascertain if the content and presentation were pitched too high or too low.

Content Appropriateness

Figure 12 below illustrates how students perceived the difficulty of the UFS101 module content.

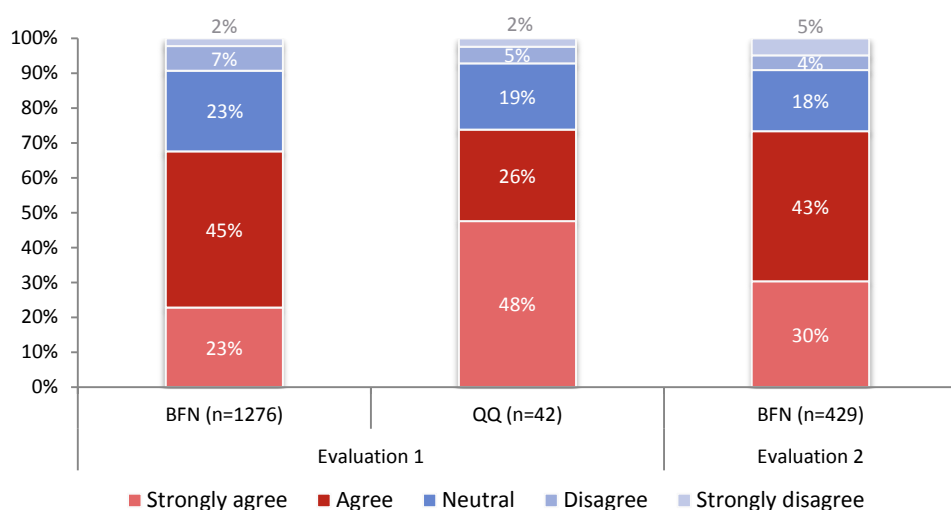


Figure 12: Student perceptions of UFS101 content level of difficulty

Overall, most students either agree or strongly agree that the level of difficulty of the UFS101 module content is appropriate for first-year students. However, while only 23% (n=291) and 30% (n=130) of Bloemfontein students strongly agreed, almost half (48%; n=20) of QwaQwa students strongly agreed that the level of difficulty is appropriate. Less than 10% of students on either campus disagreed that the level of difficulty was appropriate (BFN: 9%, n=118 and 7%, n=39; QQ: 9%, n=3).

The students who disagreed were asked a follow-up question to ascertain whether or not the level of difficulty was pitched too high or too low (see Figure 13 on the following page).

At least

6 out of 10

**BFN
students**

&

7 out of 10

**QQ
students**

**agreed
that content
level of
difficulty
was
appropriate**

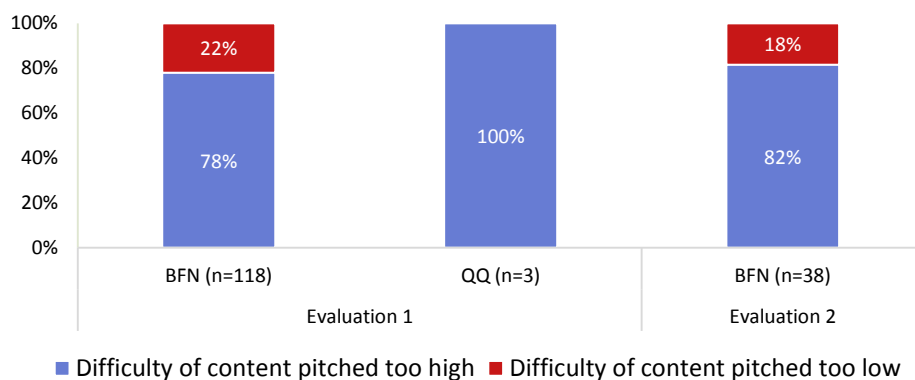


Figure 13: Student perceptions of content level of difficulty: Follow-up question

The vast majority of students on the Bloemfontein campus (and all students on the QwaQwa campus) who indicated that the level of difficulty was not appropriate also indicated that the content was pitched too high.

Lecture Presentation Appropriateness

Students were also asked to indicate whether the level at which lectures were presented was appropriate for first-year students, as shown in Figure 14 below.

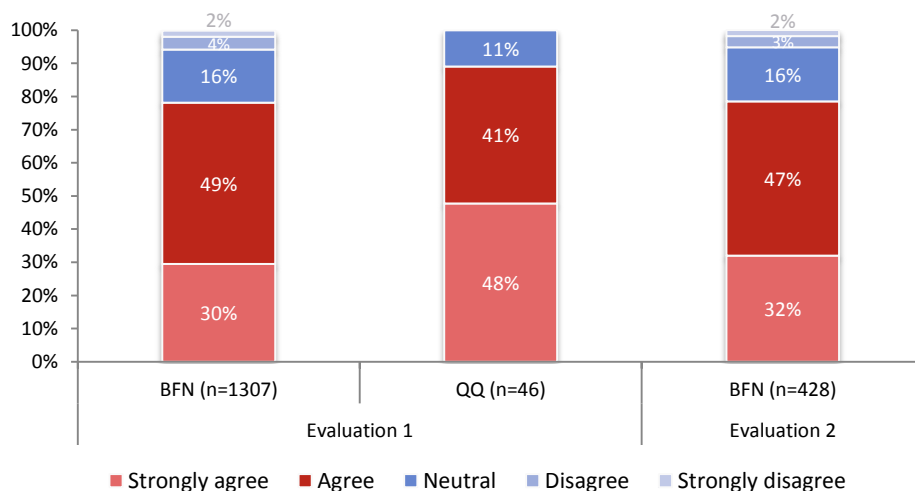


Figure 14: Student perceptions of the appropriateness of lecture presentation

Responses were again consistent between the two evaluation points on the Bloemfontein campus, with about 79% of students indicating that they either agreed or strongly agreed that the presentation level was appropriate. Furthermore, more QwaQwa students agreed with the statement, with 89% of students agreeing to some extent. There were only 6% (n=75) and 5% (n=22) of students from the two Bloemfontein evaluations who either disagreed or strongly disagreed, whilst none of the students on the QwaQwa campus disagreed to any extent.

Through a follow-up question, students were also asked to indicate why they disagreed that the presentation level was appropriate (see Figure 15 on the following page).

**Around
8 out of 10
BFN
students
&
9 out of 10
QQ
students
agreed
that the
lecture
presentation
level was
appropriate**

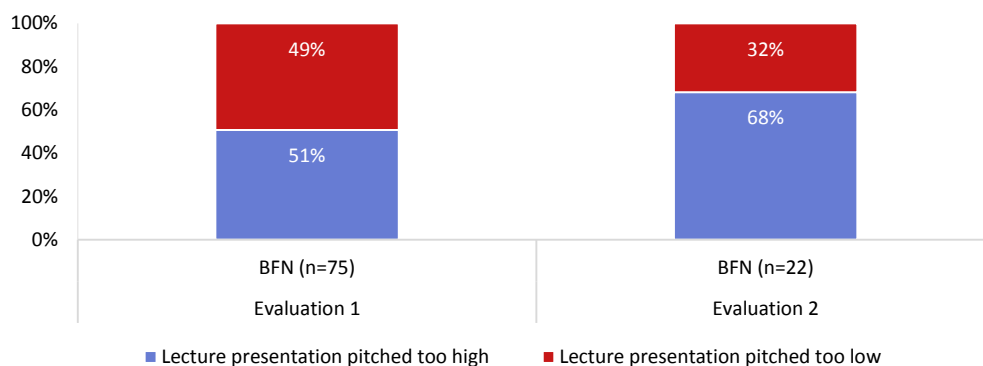


Figure 15: Student perceptions of the appropriateness of lecture presentation: Follow-up question

During the first evaluation, the proportion of students who felt the lectures were pitched too high or too low was relatively evenly distributed at 51% and 49% respectively (n=38 and n=37). However, during the second evaluation the majority of students felt that the level at which the lectures were presented was pitched too high at 68% (n=15), whilst only 32% (n=7), felt lectures were pitched too low. From the qualitative responses to other questions it is concluded that possible explanations for this difference is the content of the Economics and Chemistry Units in the second semester which some students reported to be more difficult.

Time Appropriateness

Students were asked to indicate whether the amount of time allocated to each unit was appropriate. Figure 16 below illustrates student responses.

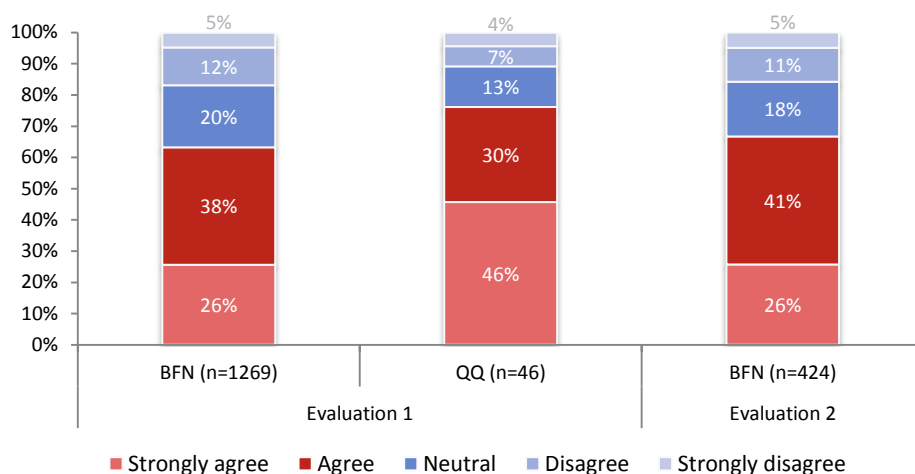


Figure 16: Student perceptions of the appropriateness of time allocated per unit

In both Bloemfontein evaluations, approximately two-thirds of students agreed or strongly agreed that the time allocated for each unit was appropriate, and just more than three-quarters of the QwaQwa students indicated so. However, only 26% of the Bloemfontein students strongly agreed in each case (n=325 and n=109 respectively), whilst 46% (n=21) of QwaQwa students strongly agreed.

**A
quarter
of BFN
students
&
half of the
QQ
students
STRONGLY
AGREE
the time
allocated
to each
unit is
appropriate**

Module Content: Challenged to Think in New Ways

Students were also asked to evaluate whether the UFS101 module challenged them to think about difficult issues from different perspectives and to think in new ways about 21st century local and global issues. Student responses to these questions are illustrated in Figures 17-19 below.

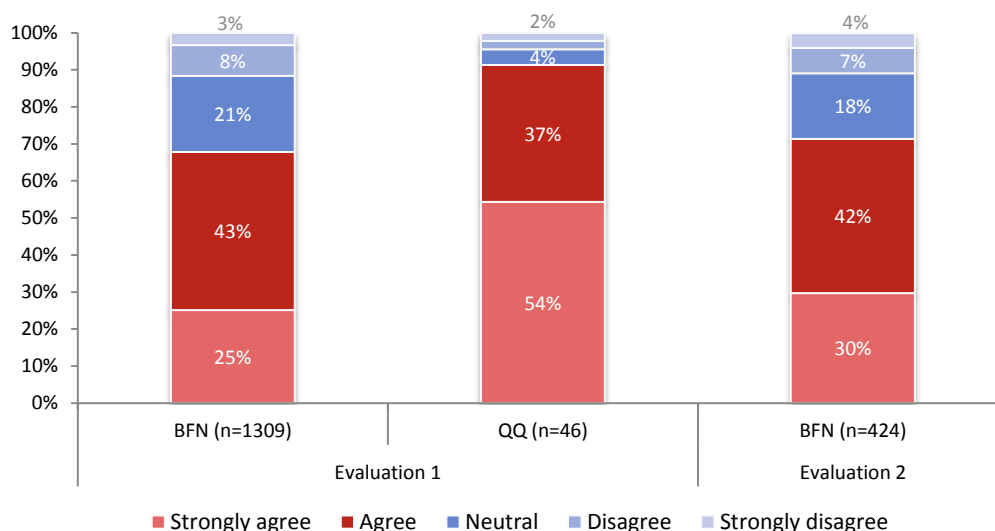


Figure 17: Challenged to examine difficult issues from different perspectives

Responses between the first and second evaluation on the Bloemfontein campus were similar with regards to thinking about difficult issues from different perspectives (as shown in figure 17 above), with approximately two-thirds of students either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the content of the module challenged them in this way. In contrast, as many as 9 out of 10 QwaQwa students agreed to some extent with the statement. This difference is due mainly to the proportion of students who strongly agreed that they had been challenged to do so. Only 25% (n=329) and 30% (n=126) respectively of Bloemfontein students strongly agreed compared to more than half (54%; n=25) of students from the QwaQwa campus.

Only around 11% (n=151 and n=46 respectively) of Bloemfontein students and a mere 4% (n=2) from the QwaQwa campus disagreed or strongly disagreed that the units helped them to view difficult issues from various perspectives.

Figure 18 on the following page indicates students' responses on whether UFS101 challenged them to think differently about 21st century local issues.

9 out of 10
QwaQwa
students
were
challenged
to think
about
difficult
issues
from
different
perspectives

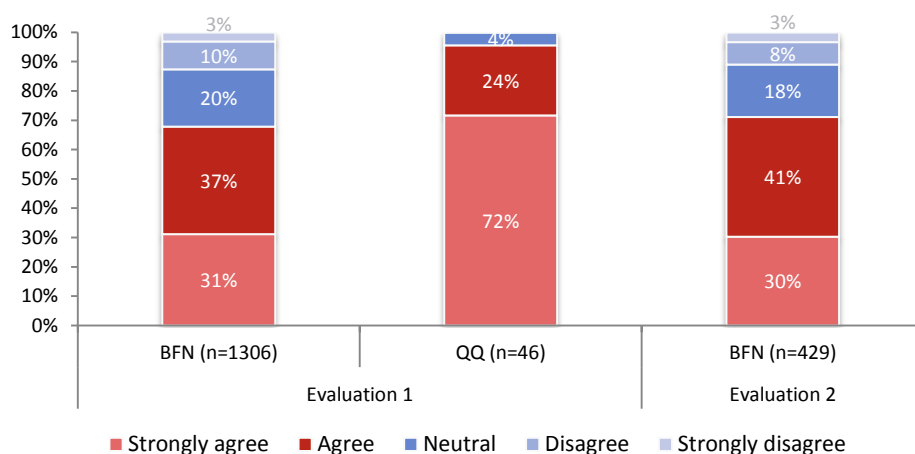


Figure 18: Challenged to think in new ways about 21st century local issues

While a large proportion of Bloemfontein first and second evaluation students either agreed or strongly agreed that UFS101 had challenged them to think anew about 21st century local issues, an even larger proportion of QwaQwa students (96%; n=44) indicated the same. Only around 30% of Bloemfontein first (n=408) and second (n=130) evaluation students strongly agreed with the statement, the vast majority of QwaQwa students strongly agreed (72%; n=33).

None of the students on the QwaQwa campus disagreed to any extent, compared to 13% (n=164) and 11% (n=47) of students in the Bloemfontein evaluations who either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 19 below indicates students' responses to whether UFS101 challenged them to think differently about 21st century global issues.

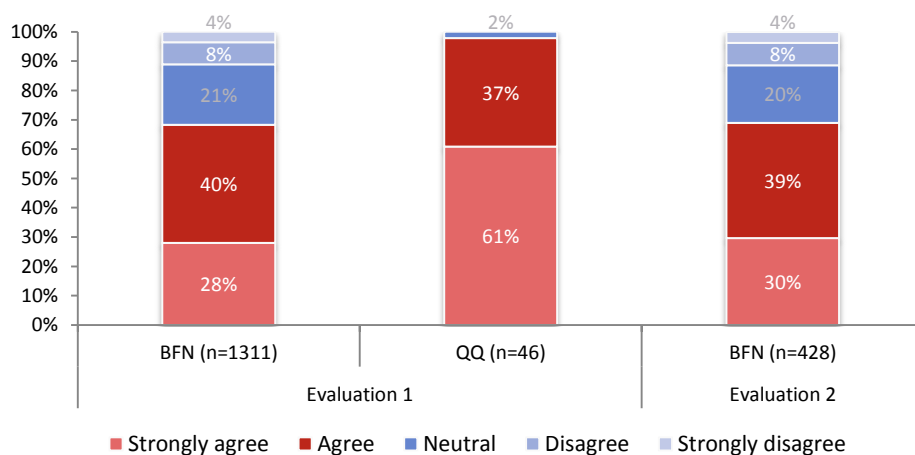


Figure 19: Challenged to think in new ways about 21st century global issues

3 out of **10**

BFN
students
&

7 out of **10**

QwaQwa
students

STRONGLY
AGREED

they were
challenged
to think
anew
about

local
issues

As was the case with thinking anew about local issues, more QwaQwa students (61%; n=28) than Bloemfontein first (28%; n=367) and second (30%; n=127) evaluation students strongly agreed that they had learned to think anew about global issues. However, across campuses most students agreed to some extent that UFS101 had challenged them in this manner.

From both Bloemfontein evaluations 12% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed (8% and 4% respectively in each case) that they had renewed thinking on 21st century global issues, whilst no students on the QwaQwa campus disagreed at all in this regard.

Relevance of and Engagement with Content

Students were asked a series of questions related to the relevance and applicability of the module – specifically whether it was *important* that content was relevant to their personal lives and applicable to their future, as well as the extent to which they agreed that the content was in fact both relevant and applicable.

Figure 20 below indicates student responses related to the personal relevance of UFS101. The bars indicate the relative importance, and the dots indicate the percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that the UFS101 module content does in fact have personal relevance for them.

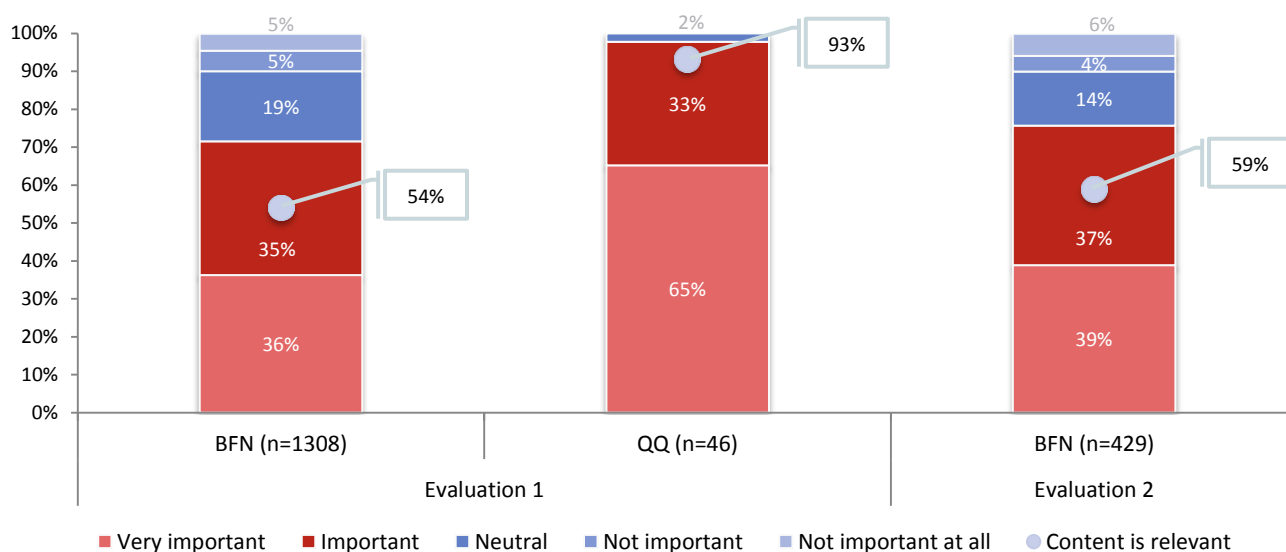


Figure 20: Personal relevance of UFS101 module content

Fewer students from the Bloemfontein campus (across both evaluation points) indicated that it was important to them that the module has personal relevance to their lives. Almost all QwaQwa students indicated that it was important that the module content was relevant to them personally, and 93% (n=41) indicated that the module content was in fact relevant. In contrast, on the Bloemfontein campus, between 70% and 75% of students (in the two evaluations) indicated this was important with only 54% and 59% indicating that this was in fact the case.

Figure 21 on the following page illustrates whether students indicated it is important that module content is applicable to them in the future, and the extent to which they agree they will in fact be able to apply UFS101 in the future.

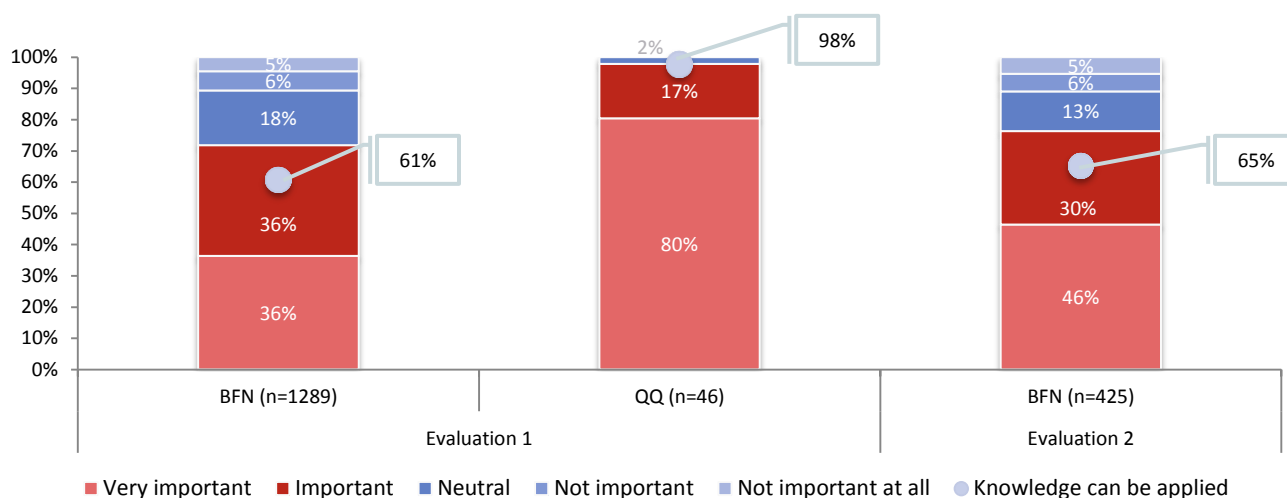


Figure 21: Future applicability of UFS101 module content

Again, the responses of the students on the two campuses differ significantly, with 97% (n=45) of students on the QwaQwa campus indicating it was important that the UFS101 module content be applicable to them in the future. This is in contrast to the 72% (n=925) to 76% (n=324) of students on the Bloemfontein campus who indicated so. A convincing 98% of students on the QwaQwa campus indicated that they would be able to apply the module content in the future, compared to 61% to 65% of students on the Bloemfontein campus (n=784 and n=277 for the two evaluations).

In addition to the questions on the relevance and applicability, students were asked if it was important for them to have an opportunity to discuss module content with others during lectures, and whether they had the opportunity to do so. Student responses in this regard are illustrated in Figure 22 below.

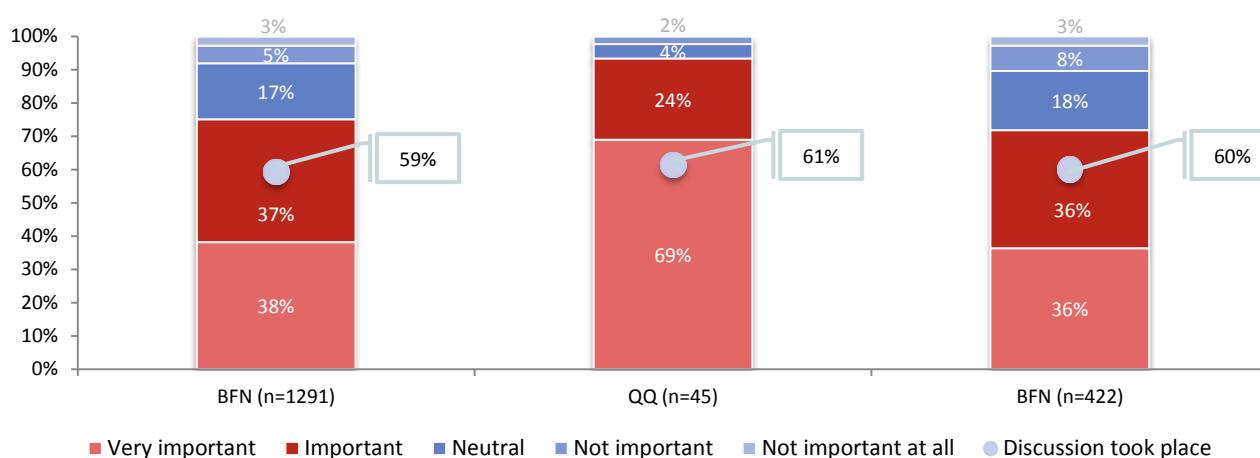


Figure 22: Opportunity for discussion related to UFS101 module content

The opportunity for discussion in class is important to more students on the QwaQwa campus, (93%; n=970), with approximately 70% to 75% of students on the Bloemfontein campus indicating that in-class opportunity for discussion is important to them. Given that students on both campuses are presented with the same lectures by the same lecturers it is not surprising that, approximately equal numbers of students across both evaluation points and campuses indicated that they actually had the opportunity for in-class discussion.

Student Perspectives on Content

In an open-ended question, students were asked to provide comments and suggestions related to the module content. Over the two evaluations on the Bloemfontein campus and the evaluation on the QwaQwa campus, a total of 329 comments were coded in response to this question.

Positive experiences

A total of 183 positive comments were provided by students across campuses over the two evaluations, including 24 comments made by QwaQwa campus students. Positive comments related to the nature of the module content (n=23), UFS101's contribution to critical thinking (n=43), the "fun" element of UFS101 (n=11), the interesting and relevant nature of the module (n=34), the contribution of the module to well-rounded students (n=23), the development of respect for student diversity (n=5), along with a number of other general comments.

In addition to the more than 100 general comments and phrases – such as *"a great learning experience"*, *"educative"*, *"a life changer"* and *"stimulating"* – students on both campuses commented on various aspects of UFS101 content as a whole (n=43). Whilst it is evident that individual students had preferences for particular units (often based on their own fields of interest), the students spoke positively of the suitability and relevance of the content to first-years, the interesting nature of the materials and the fact that the module opened their eyes to topics they did not know about. Per example:

"the ufs101 module was helpful. it had been an eye opener to lot of things tha i didnt take to consideration but to tell the truth i was one of the students that thought the moduleis totaly waste of time especialy that am doing second year but YES i was wrong i have enjoyed the module"

"Over all, I am happy in the way the module has IMPROVED me, it was really intellectually stimulating, and the learning experiences were just over the top."

Although not directly related to the content, a number of students (n=16) gave positive feedback about the manner in which the lecturers and especially the learning facilitators conveyed the content:

"I do commend the excellent presenters and facilitators - they're doing a brilliant job!"

Two students also commented that the module facilitated greater respect amongst the students for each other:

"Well for me the module was and is of great usage to us as students because of the different things that are taught. I can deffinitely say that I have learnt alot in the UFS101 module and not only has it changed the way I view things and the way I view other cultures but it has changed most of the student's attitude towards one another and I think its a great module especialy for 1st year students because we don't all come from the same places and background, so this module actually helps students in knowing and learning not only about culture but also about the dfferent things around us."

Along similar lines, a few students (n=5) indicated that the diversity of students – in terms of race and study discipline – was one of the positive aspects of the module.

There were only 91 negative comments coded (approximately half of the amount of positive comments) across campuses over the two evaluations⁵. Of these only 5 (6%) were from the QwaQwa campus.

Negative experiences or criticism

A number of the negative or critical comments illustrated the personal preferences and interests of students, whilst other comments were strongly negative and reflected an undertone of sarcasm ("*PS: I wonder if I'd win the meager book voucher, considering my honest review of the module.*") or anger ("*I will never get how dare you force something onto me like this.*").

Some of the students found the module content and the manner of delivery to be boring (including the unit dealing with Economics, Unit 5) or difficult (particularly the unit dealing with Astronomy, Unit 3). Other students commented that some of the lectures are not significant or relevant to their lives or to their current study direction:

"Most of the lectures are presented in a boring way! This a subject which most student are pessimistic about! Why not make it interesting! I think the idea of UFS101 is a good idea, but it is FUNDAMENTALLY important that te lectures are presented in a relevant and interesting way."

A handful of students commented specifically on the contents of the unit dealing with history (Unit 4). Strongly polarised opinions on the relevance or necessity of discussing South African history (in particular Apartheid) were raised. The fact that the content of the unit evokes strong emotions for students is evident throughout the feedback in various sections of this report.

Only two students commented that the language used in the module guide was difficult to understand, thus impeding their comprehension of the module content.

Suggestions for improvement

Students provided a total of 129 suggestions related to the module content (10% were from students on the QwaQwa campus).

As is expected, many students provided suggestions for changes to the current content which reflect their personal interests.

In order to increase students' understanding of the value of UFS101, two students suggested that the purpose and relevance of UFS101 should be more clearly articulated, and the relevance of the individual units should also be made explicit to students as they work through the module.

Some ideas for new topics were put forward, including units on health, poverty, pollution, homosexuality and a unit on "*IT ... like a robot exhibit or programming skills*".

Suggestions for more life-skills orientated content were also shared, one student requested that UFS101 should deal with topics such as "*how predicates work, how to use you timetable, how to study (methods) and how to*

⁵ A number of the comments provided by students did not relate directly to content, rather to other aspects of the module in general. Only content related issues are discussed in this section.

cope with varsity overall." Another suggested the content should focus more strongly on *"issues that we deal with everyday like relationships, coping with all the work"*.

Various suggestions related to class/lecture logistics were offered. Three students suggested that the large classes in the Callie Human should rather be translated into more classes with fewer students. Other students requested that the lectures be presented at more times so that class clashes will be avoided and a few students requested longer lectures to allow for more engagement. Students appreciated the lectures that were interactive and allowed for participation.

Although only one student suggested that UFS101 should be discontinued, five others suggested that the time investment students are required to make in the module should be reduced. One of the students on the QwaQwa campus suggested that all students should do UFS101, and not only the Faculty of Education.

Learning Experiences

In a series of paired questions, students were asked to indicate both how relevant and how interesting each learning experience was. Figures 23 through 32 represent the responses to both of these questions with the relevance depicted as blue bars, and the level of interest denoted by red dots.

Unit 1: Sculpture Walk and Basotho Village

For Unit 1, Bloemfontein students did the Sculpture walk, and QwaQwa students visited the Basotho cultural village. Figure 23 and 24 below illustrate how relevant and interesting each of these activities were.

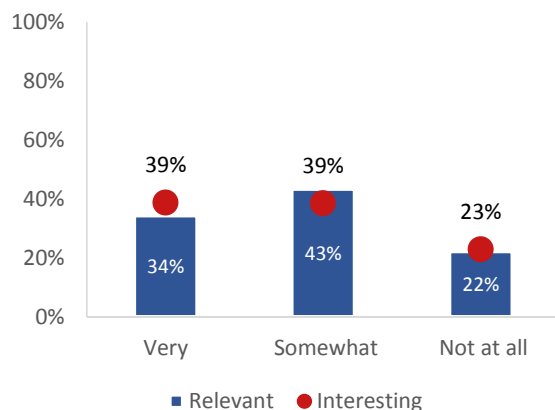


Figure 23: Sculpture walk relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=1296)

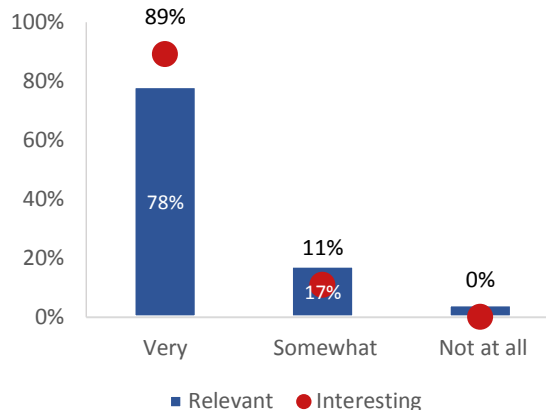


Figure 24: Basotho cultural village relevance and interest: QwaQwa campus (n=46)

The majority of Bloemfontein students indicated that the sculpture walk was either somewhat or very relevant (77%; n=1008) and somewhat or very interesting (78%; n=998), with just over 20% of students indicating that the learning experience with neither relevant nor interesting.

In contrast, students on the QwaQwa campus found the Basotho cultural village both very relevant (78%; n=36) and very interesting (89%; n=41). In fact, none of the students indicated that the visit was not interesting at all.

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, 15 students mentioned the Sculpture Walk. Of these comments, eight were negative, three positive and six offered suggestions.

Two students indicated that, due to their facilitator being late or not arriving, they did not experience the Sculpture Walk and three indicated it would have been a better experience if they physically did the walk on campus. Another two students mentioned that the way the Sculpture Walk was presented made the material unappealing and uninteresting. A few students offered suggestions on how the presentation of the Sculpture Walk could be improved:

"maybe have videos of the artists explaining what inspired them in their artistic creation. This helps diminish the monotony of reading everything from paper."

"the sculpture walk we had to do alone and then discuss in class and that would of been more interesting if we could of gone on a treasure hunt finding the sculptures and debating or talking about them when we found them"

"love art and enjoy the sculptures on campus, but the way that the learning experience was presented did not appeal to me at all. Not everyone participated and we didn't really learn anything about the art and culture and message behind the sculptures. Why was it built? Why is it at the UFS? Just asking a class in a monotone voice what art is, with no-one responding is not my idea of studying something as culturally important as art."

The students who experienced the Sculpture Walk positively indicated that they had learned new and interesting information, and enjoyed seeing the sculptures on campus in their day-to-day activities.

On the QwaQwa campus, seven students mentioned the Basotho Cultural Village in the qualitative feedback. Of these comments five were positive and two offered suggestions. There were no negative comments. Students commented that they had learned a lot about another culture at the Basotho Cultural Village:

"the learning experiences were all interesting especially Basotho Cultural Village, we enjoys a lot at that learning experience because there were lot of funny things we saw there and for us as Zulu's we learnt so many things with regard to the history of Basotho and their life style"

One of the Sotho students however, commented that activities should be sought where all students could learn about other cultures as Sotho students already knew Sotho culture. The only other suggestion offered was that food should be provided at the learning experience.

Unit 2: State your Case

For Unit 2, the State Your Case learning experience was the same for the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa students. Figure 25 and 26 illustrate student responses in this regard.

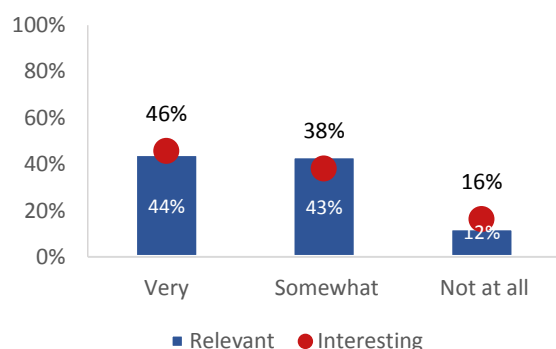


Figure 25: State Your Case relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=1294)

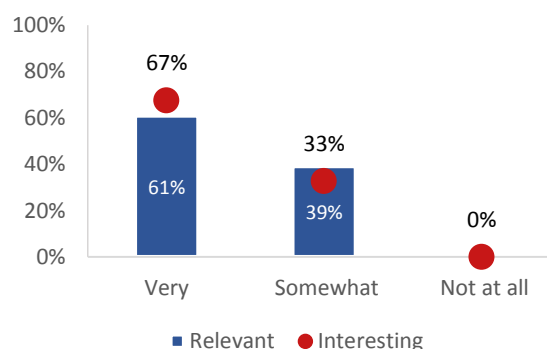


Figure 26: State Your Case relevance and interest: QwaQwa campus (n=46)

Relatively equal proportions of Bloemfontein students indicated that the State Your Case session was either very or somewhat relevant (44% and 43% respectively), while only 12% indicated that the learning experience was not relevant (n=159). Similarly, 46% (n=1135) and 38% (n=1084) of students felt that the experience was either very or somewhat interesting. Students on the Bloemfontein campus found the State Your Case Learning Experience slightly more interesting and relevant than the Sculpture Walk.

The majority of QwaQwa students indicated that the State Your Case learning experience was very relevant (61%; n=28), and interesting (67%; n=31), and no students indicated that it was not at all relevant or not at all interesting. Students on the QwaQwa campus found the State Your Case experience to be somewhat less relevant and interesting than the Basotho Cultural Village.

In the qualitative feedback, five students (one from the QwaQwa Campus) mentioned State your Case. Of these comments, two were negative and three positive. No concrete suggestions for improvement were provided. One of the students who experienced the activity positively pointed out the relevance of the learning experience to the students' lives:

"The state your case learning experience was my favourite. There are many matters in our communities that concern law, but these matters remain social problems because people have no insight on how to deal with them, so that learning experience opened my eyes on how to deal with such matters as a teacher."

Unit 3: Astronomy Fair

The learning experience for Unit 3 was the Astronomy Fair. Figure 27-28 below represent the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa students' responses relating to the Astronomy Fair.

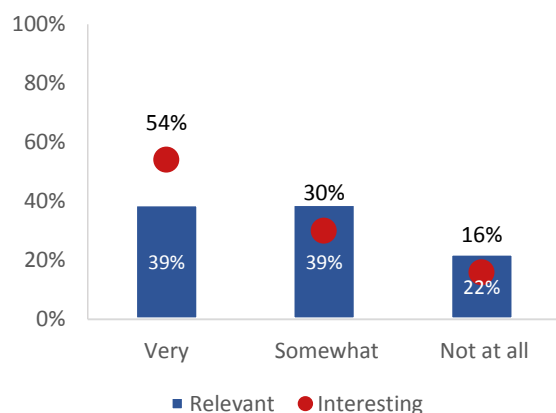


Figure 27: Astronomy Fair relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=1291 and n=1286)

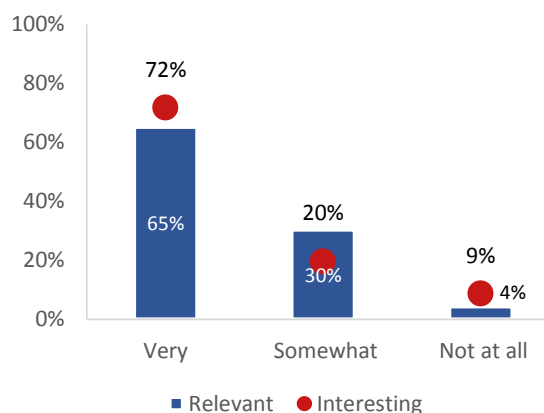


Figure 28: Astronomy Fair relevance and interest: QwaQwa campus (n=46)

Equal proportions of Bloemfontein students indicated that the Astronomy Fair was very and somewhat relevant (39% each; n=502 and 503 respectively), while only 22% (n=286) felt that the learning experience was not relevant. Bloemfontein students found the Astronomy Fair more interesting than they did relevant, with 54% (n=695) of the students indicating that it was very interesting.

The majority of the QwaQwa students indicated that the Astronomy Fair was very relevant (65%; n=30), while 30% (n=14) felt that the outing was somewhat relevant. As was the case with the Bloemfontein students, the QwaQwa students found the learning experience more interesting than they did relevant (although the difference is less pronounced).

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, 22 students (four from the QwaQwa Campus) mentioned the Astronomy Fair. Of these comments, only five were negative, sixteen were positive and three suggestions for improvement were made.

The negative comments provided were mostly students who indicated they were not interested in astronomy. One student suggested including more actual projects and experiments at the Fair to make it more interesting. The only other suggestion was to increase the amount of time allocated to the Fair to allow the students to engage more.

The positive comments all illustrated how much the students enjoyed the Fair, confirming the quantitative responses suggesting that the activity was more interesting than it was relevant to the students:

"Thank you for sharing astronomy, it made me look at the stars more and appreciate all creation more."

For the first semester, the Astronomy Fair was the most interesting learning experience for the Bloemfontein campus students, while the State Your Case was the most relevant. The visit to the Basotho cultural village was the most relevant and the most interesting learning experience for the QwaQwa campus students.

Unit 4: Dealing with Battle Scars

Figure 29 below represents the Bloemfontein students' responses regarding the session on Dealing with Battle Scars as part of Unit 4.

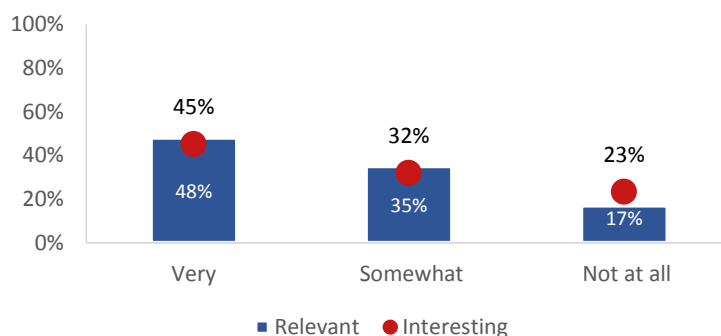


Figure 29: Dealing with Battle Scars relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=1293 and n=427)

Approximately half of the students (n=203) indicated that the session on Dealing with Battle Scars was very relevant, with a similar proportion of students indicating the session was interesting (n=192). Approximately a third of the students indicated that the session was somewhat relevant (n=148) and somewhat interesting (n=136).

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, five students mentioned Dealing with Battle Scars. Five of these comments were negative and two were positive. One suggestion for improvement was provided.

Students who were negative towards the learning experience all indicated that they did not want to continue talking about Apartheid, history and the past. Even though other students were positive about the fact that they had the opportunity to engage with the topic of the past, two indicated that there was not enough time for discussion and engagement.

Confirming this finding, feedback in other sections of the online surveys (see for example the feedback under module content) suggest that for some students the material triggered deep-seated, strong emotions which were not always fully resolved.

Unit 5: Visit by Deputy Governor of the SA Reserve Bank

The visit from the Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank was the learning experience for Unit 5. Bloemfontein student responses regarding how interesting and relevant the experience was are illustrated in Figure 30 below.

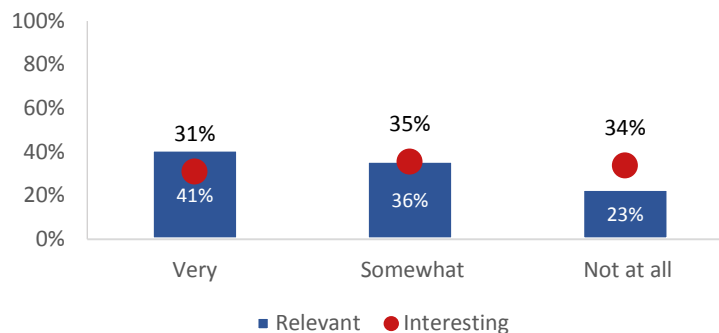


Figure 30: Deputy Governor of the South African Reserve Bank relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=421 and n=424)

Whilst 4 out of 10 students indicated that the visit from the Deputy Governor was very relevant, less than a third indicated that it was very interesting. A third of students indicated that it was not interesting at all – the highest proportion for any of the learning experiences.

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, six students mentioned the visit by the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank. Two of these comments were negative and two were positive. One suggestion for improvement was provided.

On the one hand, students indicated that the lecture was “above my level of understanding of economics and financials” and “to some extent boring”. On the other hand, students said “The Reserve Bank rep. was really interesting!”. Even students who were positive about the learning experience, noted that it was not presented in an interesting or interactive manner:

“The visit from the deputy governor was boring. he was sharing very interesting facts in a boring way. it is like he was delivering a speech in parliament and not ufs 101 students”

“I however suggest that next year when the Governor of the Reserve Bank comes, the session should be interactive. This can be done by first having a presentation from the governor and then followed by a panel discussion so that the presentation will be greatly unpacked.”

Unit 6: Chem-Magic Show

Bloemfontein student responses to the Chem-Magic Show (Unit 6) are illustrated in Figure 31 below.

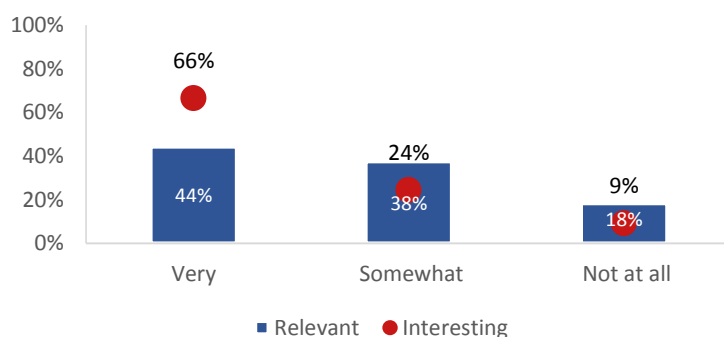


Figure 31: Chem-Magic Show relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=421 and n=426)

Students found the Chem-Magic show more interesting than relevant, with two-thirds of students (n=283) indicating that it was very interesting and 44% (n=186) indicating that it was very relevant. In fact qualitative responses in other parts of the online survey clearly show that the Chem-Magic Show is one of the two most interesting learning experiences.

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, six students mentioned the visit by the Chem-Magic Show. All but one of these comments was positive feedback. Students really enjoyed this learning experience:

"I enjoyed the magic show far more than the other activities. I could rest my brain for that hour and just enjoy magic at show."

The one student who was not positive about the Chem-Magic show expressed strong negative opinions of UFS101 overall, and not only about the Chem-Magic show itself.

Unit 7: Media, Love and Relationships

Finally, Figure 32 on the following page represents the Bloemfontein students' responses regarding the session on Media, Love and Relationships associated with Unit 7.

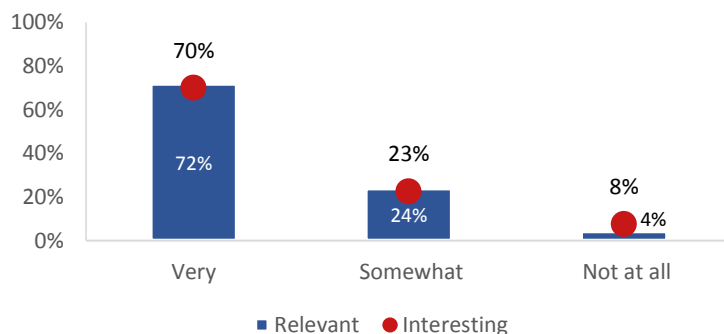


Figure 32: Media, Love and Relationships relevance and interest: Bloemfontein campus (n=415 and n=423)

The session on Media, Love and Relationships was rated by the students as the most relevant (72%; n=298) and most interesting (70%; n=296) of all the learning experiences. Less than 10% of students indicated that the session was not interesting and less than 5% that it was not relevant. This learning experience is the only session where more than half of the students indicated that it was very relevant to them.

In the qualitative feedback on the learning experiences, three students made positive comments on the learning experience. No negative comments or suggestions were provided. Qualitative responses in other parts of the survey clearly illustrate the extent to which students enjoyed this Unit, in particular the relevance of the contents to their lives:

"the topic on Media, love and relationship was very interesting because it was about things that students can easily relate to"

Learning Experiences: General

In addition to the qualitative feedback provided about specific learning experiences, 100 students (15 from the QwaQwa campus) also provided general feedback. This included 72 positive statements, 18 negative comments and 27 suggestions for improvement.

Students indicated that the learning experiences gave them an opportunity to engage with learning material and to learn more about what the lectures were about. In particular, students appreciated the practical nature of the learning experiences and enjoyed participating in the activities. In fact, one student suggested that there should be more learning experiences so that students would be more engaged with UFS101.

The learning experiences helped students relate their knowledge to real-life, relevant situations and provided a platform for them to voice their opinions.

Generally students found the learning experiences *"enjoyable"*, *"exciting"*, *"fun"* and *"interesting"*. Furthermore, students like the insightful exposure to topics they did not know anything about or subjects that they did not take at school:

"I have to admit the learning experiences were so out of the box. I learnt so much that i did not know and how to look at issues differently. I walk away a very different person"

There were very few logistical concerns and the learning experiences were both well-planned and executed. However, one student requested that the learning experiences be slotted into the timetable or that announcements be made throughout the year about when the learning experiences were happening. A limited number of students suggested extending the time allocated to the learning experiences to allow for deeper and more engagement.

Students who were not positive about the learning experiences described them as *"boring"*, *"difficult"*, *"irrelevant"* and *"not interesting"*. Two students indicated that too little time was allocated to the learning experiences. Again, differing personal interests played a role in whether students enjoyed the learning experiences or not.

Suggestions to improve the learning experiences provided by students included: recording the learning experiences and making them accessible to students, providing food at learning experiences, ensuring that all

learning experiences are interactive and/or practical, adding a “career day” as one of the learning experiences and using incentives to encourage participation.

Only one of the students said there should not be any learning experiences, although another suggested they should not be compulsory – but that extra marks could be given to those who attend.

Learning Materials

UFS101 Module Guide

Participants were asked three questions regarding the UFS101 module guide. These questions related to the user-friendliness of the guide, the availability of all relevant content in the guide, as well as whether students made use of the glossary provided.

Figure 33 below indicates student responses related to the user-friendliness of the UFS101 module guide.

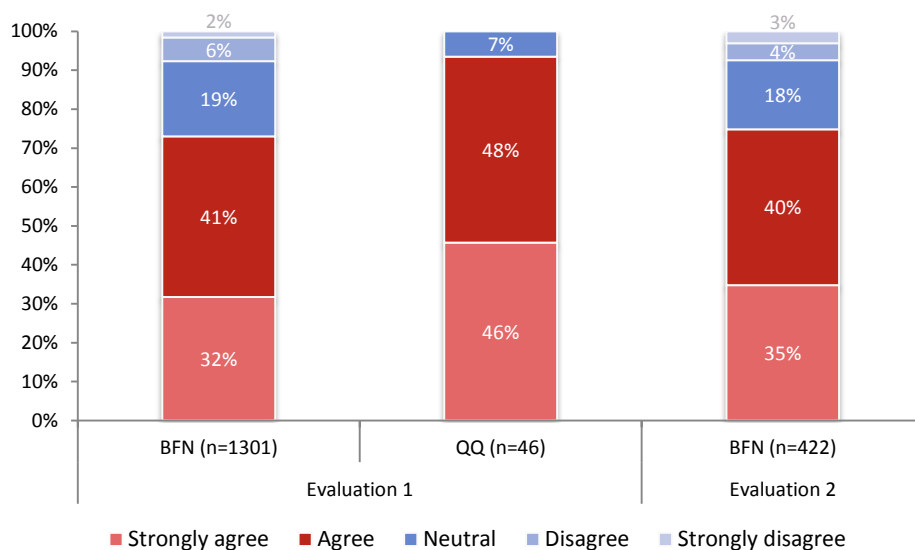


Figure 33: Module Guide: User-friendliness

Generally students either agree or strongly agree that the UFS101 module guide is user-friendly, with around 72% (n=950) of Bloemfontein students in the first evaluation, 93% (n=43) of QwaQwa students and 75% (n=316) of Bloemfontein second evaluation students respectively agreeing to some extent that the module guide is user-friendly.

Whilst none of the QwaQwa students disagreed that the module guide was user-friendly, around 7% (n=100) and 8% (n=31) respectively of the Bloemfontein first and second evaluation students either disagreed or strongly disagreed in this regard.

Students' opinions on whether all the relevant information they needed was found in the module guide is depicted in Figure 34 on the following page.

**Most
students
across
campuses
agree that
the
module
guide is
user-
friendly**

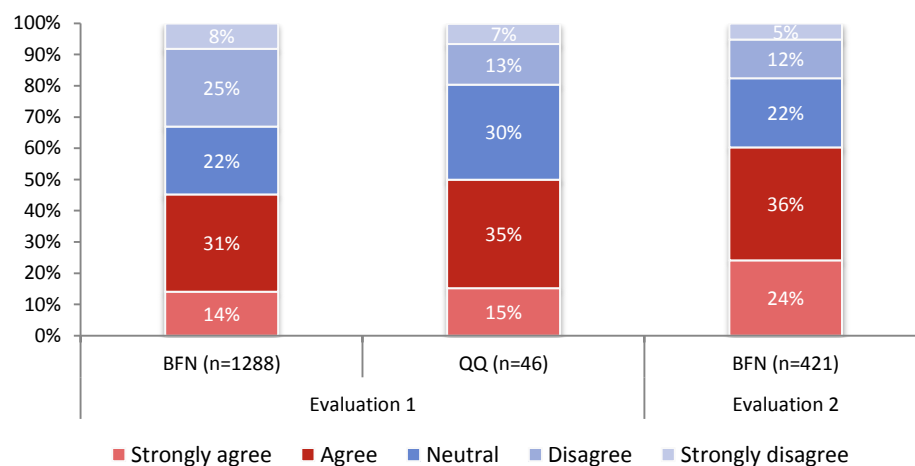


Figure 34: Module guide: All relevant information included

Interestingly, while only 14% (n=182) and 15% (n=7) respectively of the first evaluation Bloemfontein and QwaQwa students strongly agreed that they were able to find all the information they needed in the module guide, around 24% (n=102) of second evaluation Bloemfontein students strongly agreed with the statement. As many as a third of students in the first evaluation (n=321) disagreed to some extent that they could not find the information they needed in the module guide – compared to 17% (n=74) in the second evaluation. This may be an indication that as the year progressed students became more familiar with the guide and thus were more familiar with where to find the information.

Figure 35 below indicates whether students made use of the glossary provided in the module guide.

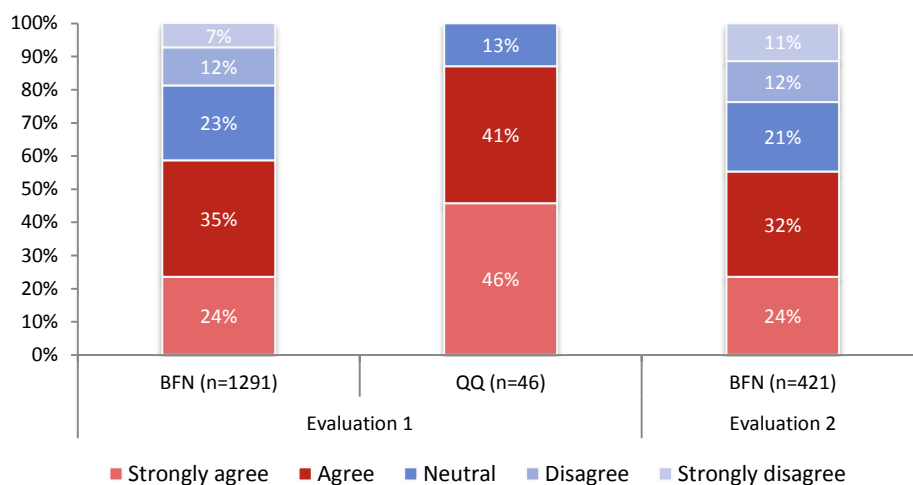


Figure 35: Module guide: Use of glossary

In this regard, the responses of the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa students are strikingly different, with the vast majority of QwaQwa students agreeing or strongly agreeing that they used the module guide glossary (87%; n=40). Less than 60% of

**QwaQwa
students
engaged
with the
module
glossary
more
than the
BFN
students**

Bloemfontein students across both evaluation points (n=757 and n=233) agreed to some extent with the statement.

In response to the qualitative question on the module guide a total of 54 negative comments, 94 positive comments and 80 suggestions were provided by students.

Students who were positive about the module guide used words and phrases such as "*easy to understand*", "*there was nothing wrong*", "*has all the information we need*", "*extremely helpful*" and "*relevant*". About 20% of the students who provided positive comments noted that the module guide was well-planned, structured and easy to navigate. Three students indicated they preferred the electronic module guide to the hardcopy, and four students suggested only having the electronic guide.

Despite the fact that students were positive about the module guide, many students mentioned that they were not able to find all of the information for the MCQ tests in the module guide (this included students who had provided otherwise positive comments). Why students were unable to find the necessary information is not clear, given that all the relevant information is in fact provided in the guide. One possible explanation is that students do not take sufficient time to read the preparatory materials thoroughly in preparation for the lectures and MCQ tests. Three of the students commented that the materials were time-consuming to work through, whilst others noted that the reading materials were confusing and that the appendices were not well-organised. These may also be contributing reasons to why students struggled to find the necessary information.

In addition to the above, a limited number of students indicated that the incorrect timetable provided in the guide resulted in them missing classes. Although the UFS101 team communicated the changes on Blackboard (and through other channels), not all students received the communication (see also sections on communication, assessment and Blackboard and the need for multiple channels of communication and notifications).

In terms of suggestions to improve the module guide, students offered the following:

- The most frequently mentioned suggestion was to include additional information in the module guide, including:
 - the names of all the lecturers and speakers,
 - an accurate and complete timetable,
 - more detailed information about the different topics covered in each unit, particularly all the information needed to complete the MCQ tests,
 - information from all the sources posted on Blackboard, including links to videos and online materials.
- Eight students suggested an improved layout, including more graphics;
- Four students requested that all links to sites and videos should be tested to ensure they work;
- Three students indicated that the materials in the module guide should be used more directly and more frequently by the lecturers in class;
- One student requested an Afrikaans module guide.

Blackboard

As Blackboard is an integral part of the UFS101 module and serves as the platform from which a number of activities are leveraged, it is important that students are able to access tasks and information when needed from the platform. Students were thus asked whether they had experienced problems accessing any tasks and/or information on Blackboard. Students who experienced problems were then probed to select, from a number of provided reasons, why they experienced trouble. In addition, students were also asked in an open-ended question to provide any additional feedback regarding Blackboard.

The results are shown in Figure 36 below. The triangular indicators denote the percentage of students who experienced difficulties with Blackboard, and the bars indicate the percentage of these students who selected each of the reasons for experiencing difficulty.

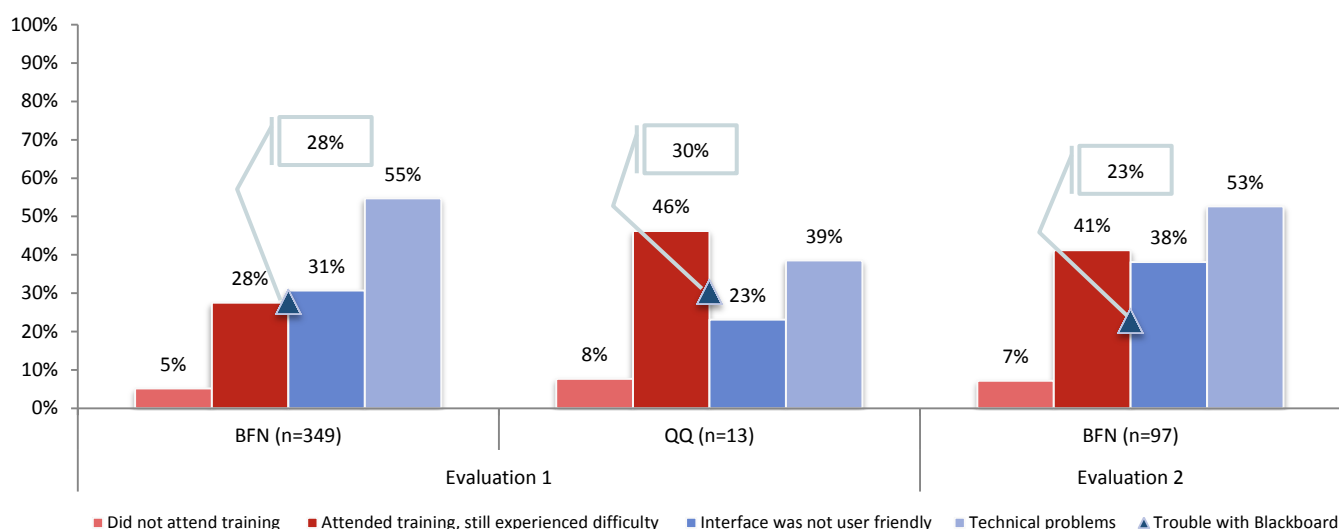


Figure 36: Percentage of students experiencing problems with Blackboard and related reasons

The proportion of students who had trouble accessing the necessary tasks and/or information on Blackboard was relatively similar across campuses and evaluations at 28% (n=364), 30% (n=14) and 23% (n=98) respectively for the Bloemfontein and QwaQwa first evaluations and the Bloemfontein second evaluation.

Technical problems were the most frequent difficulties reported by students on the Bloemfontein campus (55%; n=191 and 53%; n=51) in both evaluations, and at both points more than a 30% of the students who indicated they had trouble with Blackboard said that the interface was not user friendly. A smaller proportion of students on the QwaQwa campus indicated that they experienced technical problems (39%; n=5).

Across all campuses and evaluations, the vast majority of students who experienced trouble had attended the Blackboard training.

In an open ended question, students were asked for additional feedback on Blackboard. A total of 111 positive comments were provided by students (including 19 positive comments from QwaQwa students).

Overall, students experienced the LMS positively, with many students reporting no problems or difficulties. Students indicated that they had all the information they needed in Blackboard and for the most part they were

able to access necessary materials when needed. In particular, students were positive about the electronic module guide:

"Blackboard really help! By providing the electronic module guide and resources I could do the work more efficient (and I believe better)."

The Blackboard sites were well-managed and up-to-date, with the to-do-list for the week being especially liked by the students. Students enjoyed the fact that they could access materials and assessments at times that are convenient to them.

There is an initial adjustment period for some students who struggle with Blackboard in the first weeks of the first semester – especially those who indicated that it was their first time working with computers. However, it appears that after this initial period students start to enjoy working in the online environment, and commented that UFS101 helped them develop their computer skills:

"in my first week i told my parent that we are doing our school work in the blackboard, i was very sad about that because i did not know how to use a cormpute, and in the second week i was the one to tell them i am experiencing many this in my blackboard, and i am enjoying, it give me skills about useing the cormpute."

"the use of blackboard helps to become more used to finding information online, not for UFS101 only but for also other modules. It was very important and it exposes students in the use of technology. i am happy UFS101 exposed us on this."

Other students commented on how the UFS101 Blackboard experience had helped them in other modules where they were required to use Blackboard, but were not given any information or training on how to do so.

Whilst the overall students experience with Blackboard was positive, there were 49 negative comments provided by students (including seven negative comments from QwaQwa students).

The negative experiences students had with Blackboard included some technical difficulties (although not all were directly Blackboard related), trouble accessing videos or playing videos from Blackboard and a limited number of problems with completing the MCQ tests.

There were isolated cases of students struggling to access Blackboard or reporting that Blackboard was offline, however the most frequent challenge students experienced with Blackboard itself was accessing and playing videos.

Furthermore off-campus access for commuter students to videos is costly and data dense. One student indicated that UFS101 resulted in a high internet bill on campus. Other technical problems that students experienced – not directly related to Blackboard – were internet connectivity issues and trouble with Novell login and passwords.

A limited number of students mentioned problems with the MCQ tests, including that one of the online assessments closed too early and that some of the response options were inactive. Students also felt that there was too little time allowed for students to complete the assessments.

Although not frequently mentioned, some students found the two Blackboard sites (the Bloemfontein campus module site and the assessment group site) to be confusing.

A mobile version of Blackboard and notifications via other channels for new posts or information on Blackboard were among the suggestions provided by students for improving the Blackboard experience.

Learning Facilitators: A UFS101 Student Perspective

Students were asked a series of questions about their experience with the learning facilitators. Students were asked whether the facilitators were prepared for their tutorial sessions, whether they were respectful and helpful, and whether they encouraged students to participate in activities.

Figure 37 below indicates student opinions regarding learning facilitator's level of preparation.

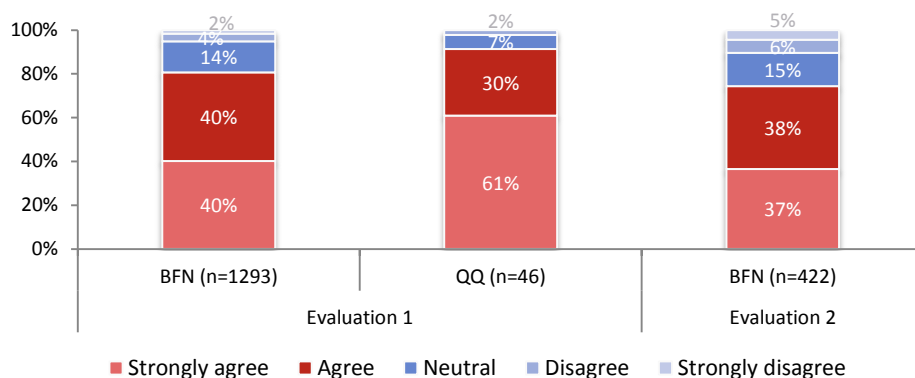


Figure 37: Learning facilitator preparation: Student perspective

The majority of students across both campuses and evaluations indicated that the learning facilitators were well-prepared for the tutorial sessions. A high proportion of students on the QwaQwa campus (61%; n=28) strongly agreed that the facilitators were well-prepared, whilst approximately 40% (n=520) and 37% (n=154) of students from the two Bloemfontein evaluations indicated so.

Students were asked in a series of two questions to indicate whether they their learning facilitators were respectful and helpful. Figure 38 below indicates the proportion of students who either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements in blue, and the proportion of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements in red.

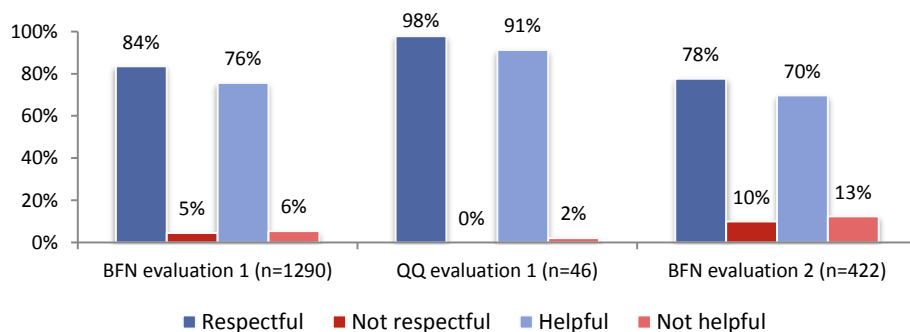


Figure 38: Learning facilitator behaviours: Student perspective

**Most
students
across
campuses
agreed
that
learning
facilitators
were
well-
prepared**

From the graph above it is clear that students across campuses and evaluations agree that their learning facilitators are respectful and helpful. However, the percentage of students who agreed that their learning facilitators are helpful and respectful dropped slightly at the second evaluation point on the Bloemfontein campus.

Figure 39 below indicates student responses with regards to their learning facilitator's ability to encourage participation in sessions from all students.

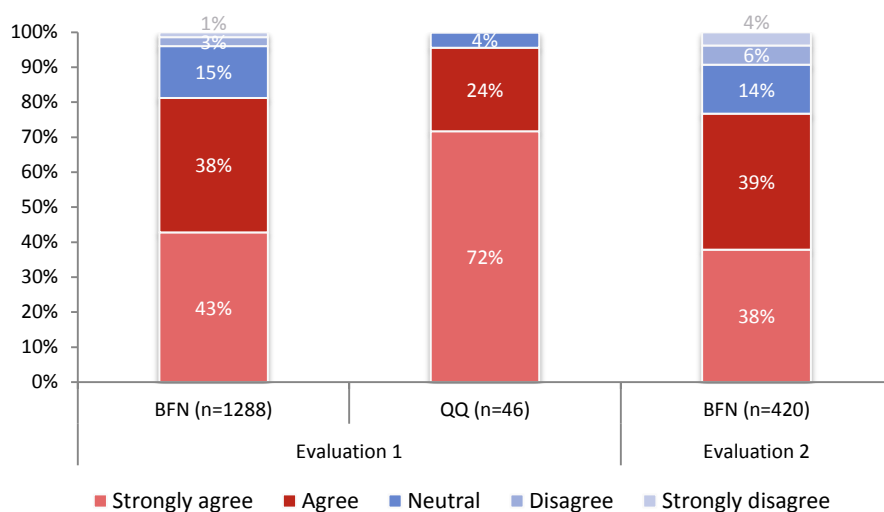


Figure 39: Learning facilitator encouragement of participation: Student perspective

The vast majority of students from the QwaQwa campus strongly agreed (72%; n=33) that their learning facilitators encouraged all students to participate in activities, while only 43% (n=520) and 38% (n=159) of students respectively from the two Bloemfontein evaluations strongly agreed with the statement. However, despite this difference, most students across campuses agreed to some extent that their facilitators encouraged participation – with only 4% (n=34 and 10% (n=16) of students in the two Bloemfontein evaluations disagreeing with the statement.

From the qualitative feedback, a total of 217 comments were coded related to the learning facilitators (including 32 from the QwaQwa campus). Of these 127 were positive comments, with only 39 negative comments. There were 51 suggestions for improvement provided by the students.

The most frequent positive feedback about the learning facilitators was that they were helpful (n=26), well-prepared for sessions (n=20), respectful (n=12) and they encouraged participation in the tutorials (n=11). All these responses were in line with the quantitative questions, possibility suggesting that students elaborated on or used the previous questions as a guideline for responses.

***Students
experience
learning
facilitators
as
respectful
&
helpful***

"All the learning facilitators i've come across during the course were all prepared for the tutorials and encouraged participation from everybody. Even if you are a shy person, when you're having tutorials, you feel, like there's nothing that can stop you from expressing your views. I remember my first UFS101 tutorial where the learning facilitator made us do an ice-breaker because we all couldn't speak, we were shy. Because of what she did, we all ended up enjoying the tutorial and participating."

Other feedback about the learning facilitators (mentioned by fewer than 5 students each) showed that they were committed, well-trained, interesting and able to answer student questions.

However, given the size of the learning facilitator group it is not unexpected that not all facilitators received the same complimentary feedback from students. However, within the negative feedback about the learning facilitators there was no one particular theme or concern which emerged strongly – with most concerns mentioned by only a few students.

The most frequently mentioned feedback about the facilitators (n=8) was that some were rude and at times dismissive of the students:

"I had bad experiences with learning facilitators in two tutorials, in one we were doing Economics and we could not hear her and she replied so rude, saying that she can't shout. We asked her again to explain a question to us and she said we act like high school children. I found that very rude. Another facilitator, while we were talking about Medical admission policies, she said we should get over Apartheid, forgetting that she is not of colour and was born with a silver spoon in her mouth."

In addition to the above, six students noted that the learning facilitators were not adequately enough informed about the topics they facilitated and four students commented that some of the learning facilitators were not always well-prepared for sessions:

"Some do prepare thoroughly and some don't and the way they present their work is sometimes not helpful to help us understand some of the topics/issues addressed in UFS101"

Two students commented that participation in the tutorials is hindered by the fact that there are too many students in the group, and another two indicated that juggling between English and Afrikaans in tutorials was a hindrance.

Other feedback about the facilitators (mentioned only by one student each) was that they need additional training, were late for tutorial sessions and were not enthusiastic about being facilitators.

Students provided various suggestions for strengthening the learning facilitator component of UFS101. Five students made suggestions related to language, primarily about ensuring the proficiency of the facilitator to lead a session in the assigned language. Comments about lack of proficiency in English and Afrikaans were noted.

Students suggested that facilitators must encourage participation, but also noted that they should not force students to speak in sessions:

"learning facilitators ... must not force students to answer when they don't want to, again they must know that not all of us know English so they must translate where necessary and don't lose patience on other students."

In addition to the above, students (one or two in each case) suggested facilitators should be friendly and enthusiastic, communicate articulately with first-years at an appropriate level, encourage creative thinking and strive to make tutorial sessions fun. Aligned with the negative experiences, a limited number of students suggested decreasing the number of students in a tutorial group. Finally, one student requested all facilitators to wear their uniforms during tutorial sessions and lectures so that they are easy to identify.

Assessment

Students were asked a series of questions enquiring whether the assessments challenged them to apply the knowledge they had learned in UFS101; whether the assessments enabled them to continue to learn about the module; and whether the assessment instructions were clear and easy to understand. In addition to these questions, students were asked to indicate whether they were able to complete the assessments in the required time, whether they struggled to complete the assessments alongside their other academic obligations, and whether the assessments were interesting and relevant.

Figure 40 below indicates whether or not the assessments encouraged knowledge application and continued learning. The proportion of students who either agreed or strongly agreed is indicated in blue, and the proportion of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed in red.

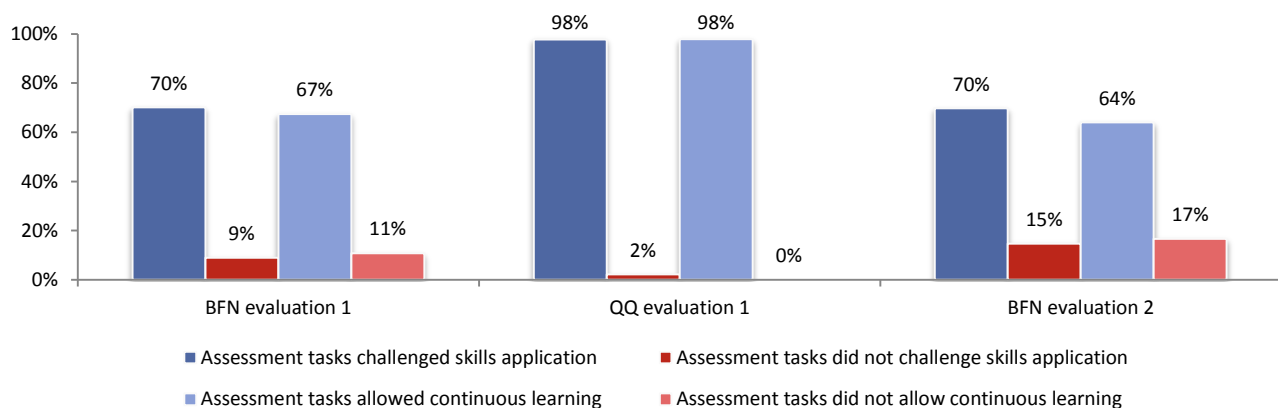


Figure 40: Knowledge application and continued learning through assessment tasks (BFN Eval 1: n = 1289-1266; QQ Eval 1: n= 46; BFN Eval 2 n= 412-422)

The majority of students across all campuses and evaluations indicated that the assessments did indeed challenge them to apply the skills and knowledge they had learned through UFS101, and that the assessments allowed them to continue learning about the module.

Responses to both Bloemfontein evaluations were relatively similar with approximately 70% of students in each evaluation (n=902 and n=294 respectively) indicating that the assessments challenged them to apply their skills and knowledge, while only 9% (n=115) and 15% (n=62) respectively felt that this was not the case.

Furthermore, students from the Bloemfontein campus across the two evaluations responded similarly with regards to continued learning through the assessments with 67% (n=853) and 64% (n=264) respectively agreeing with the statement.

A convincing 98% of students on the QwaQwa campus indicated that assessment tasks both challenged them to apply their knowledge and skills (n=45), and that the assessments allowed for continued learning (n=45). Only 2% (n=1) of students on the QwaQwa campus felt that assessment tasks did not challenge skills application.

Figure 41 illustrates students' level of agreement that the assessment instructions were clear and easy to understand.

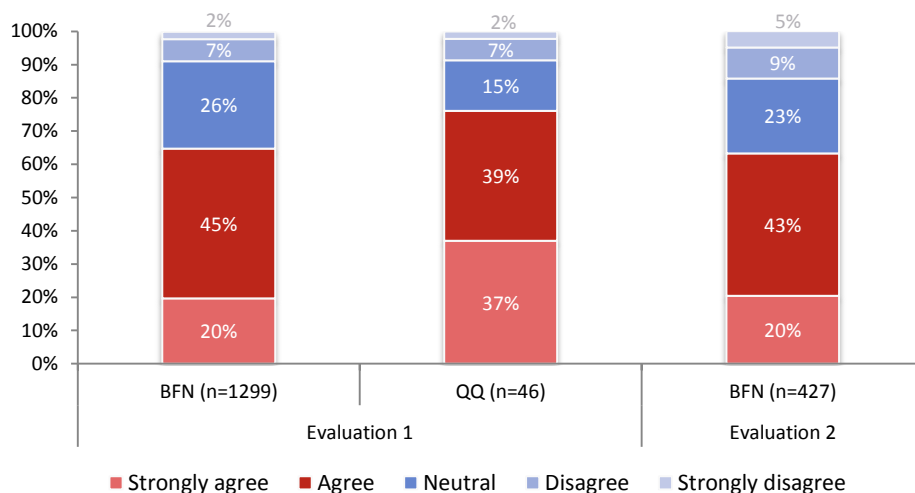


Figure 41: Clarity and ease of understanding UFS101 assessment tasks

Most students either agreed or strongly agreed that the assessment tasks were clearly laid out and easy to understand. Responses from both Bloemfontein evaluations were relatively similar with 20% (n=256 and n=87) strongly agreeing in each case and 45% (n=585) and 43% (n=183) respectively agreeing. There was a slight increase in the levels of disagreement between the two evaluation points on the Bloemfontein campus.

This was slightly higher on the QwaQwa campus with 37% (n=17) strongly agreeing and 39% agreeing (n=18).

Students' responses to the additional assessment related questions are presented in Figure 42 below.

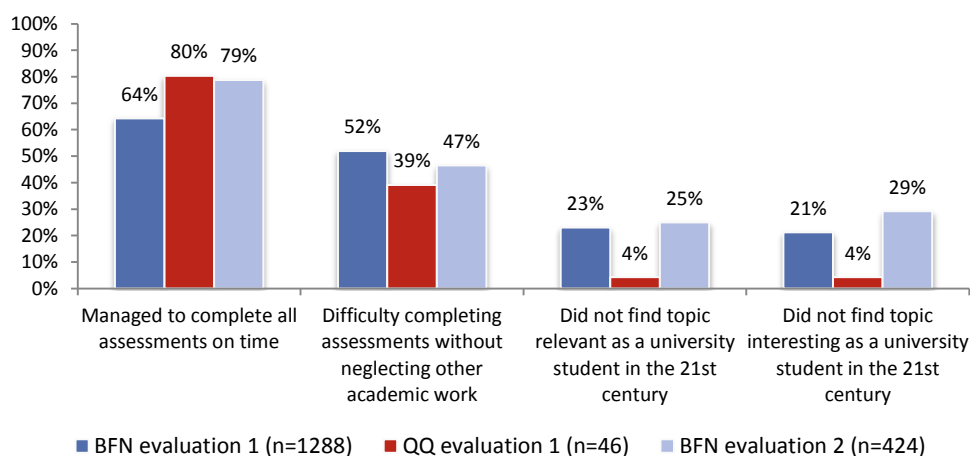


Figure 42: Student feelings regarding the completion of assessments

The number of students who managed to complete their assessments on time

**Assessment
tasks
challenged
students
to
apply
their
knowledge
&
continue
learning**

increased between the two evaluation points on the Bloemfontein campus from 64% to 79%. The proportion of students who managed to complete on time in the second evaluation is similar to the proportion of QwaQwa students who managed to complete (80%; n=37)

While this is a positive finding, it is noteworthy that approximately half of the students on the Bloemfontein campus (across both evaluation points) indicated that they struggled to complete the assessments without having to neglect their other academic responsibilities. This was true for 39% (n=18) of the QwaQwa students.

For the most part, students found the assessment topics both relevant and interesting. This is particularly true on the QwaQwa campus where only 4% (n=2) of students indicated that they did not find the topics relevant or interesting.

Students were invited to provide additional feedback related to the assessments in an open-ended question. A total of 162 comments were coded (including 37 from the QwaQwa Campus). No strong themes emerged from either the positive or negative feedback nor the suggestions – which is surprising given the comparatively strong responses related to assessment in the open-ended question on what students dislike about UFS101 (see later discussion).

Positive aspects about the assessments were that they aided students' understanding of the material and helped them prepare for class (n=5), challenged students to do their best (n=4) and ensured that they think critically (n=4).

Four of the students indicated that the assessments were fair and two commented that the instructions were clear and adequate. On the other hand, two students felt that additional guidelines should be given (including length, font etc.) Nine students indicated there was enough time to complete the assessments, compared to two who indicated there was not enough time provided.

A limited number of students found the assessments interesting and fun, whilst others found them difficult and challenging to complete or were disinterested in the assessment topics. Two students noted that completing the UFS101 assessments impacted negatively on their academic performance in other modules.

Two students mentioned trouble accessing the MCQ tests on Blackboard and one student struggled to submit their task on the LMS. As was discussed under the section on Blackboard, some students had trouble finding the information and resources they needed to complete the online assessments.

***Assessment
tasks are
RELEVANT
&
INTERESTING,
but put
time
pressures
on
students***

Student Learning through UFS101

Participants were asked a series of 8 questions relating to what they have learned through the UFS101 experience. These questions fall into two broad categories, namely transferrable skills and academic skills. The questions asked regarding transferable skills included being respectful of others' views even when not in agreement of them, improved cohesion with diverse people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines and religions, learning to reason above emotion and learning to consider both sides of an argument. In terms of academic skills, the questions covered the following: critical thinking, academic writing and academic argumentation. Students were also asked the extent to which they were exposed to new methods of teaching and learning through the learning experiences.

Figure 43 below depicts the transferable skills that students learned – the bars represent the percentage of students who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they have learned each specific skill.

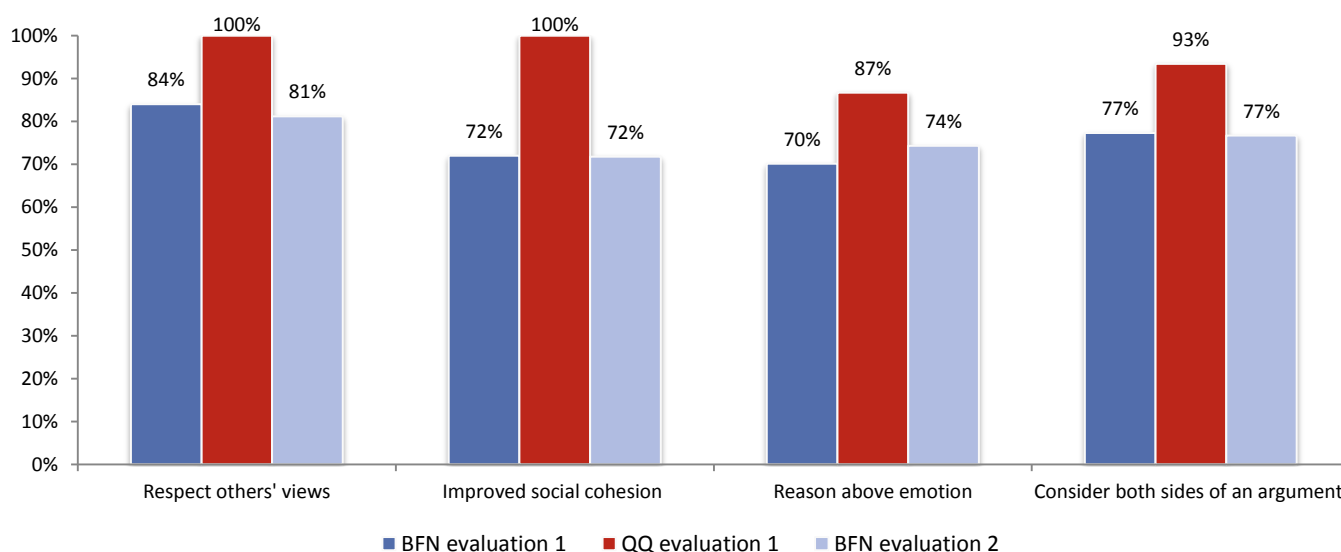


Figure 43: Proportion of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they learned transferable skills in UFS101 (BFN Eval 1: n = 1292-1295; QQ Eval 1: n= 43-45; BFN Eval 2 n= 419-425)

The level of agreement with each of the statements is higher for the students on the QwaQwa campus, with all QwaQwa students indicating that they had learned to respect the views of others and had improved their social cohesion with diverse groups of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines, religions, etc.

Although still the vast majority, slightly fewer QwaQwa students indicated that they have learned to reason above emotion (87%; n=39) and consider both sides of an argument (93%; n=42).

Most students on the Bloemfontein campus across evaluation points agreed that they had learned each of the four skills. The proportion of students who agreed with each statement was highly consistent between the two evaluation points on the Bloemfontein campus. The highest proportion of students agreed that they had learned to respect the view of others (84% (n=345) and 81% (n=1094) respectively).

Figure 44 below depicts the academic skills that students learned - the bars represent the percentage of students who indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they have learned each specific skill.

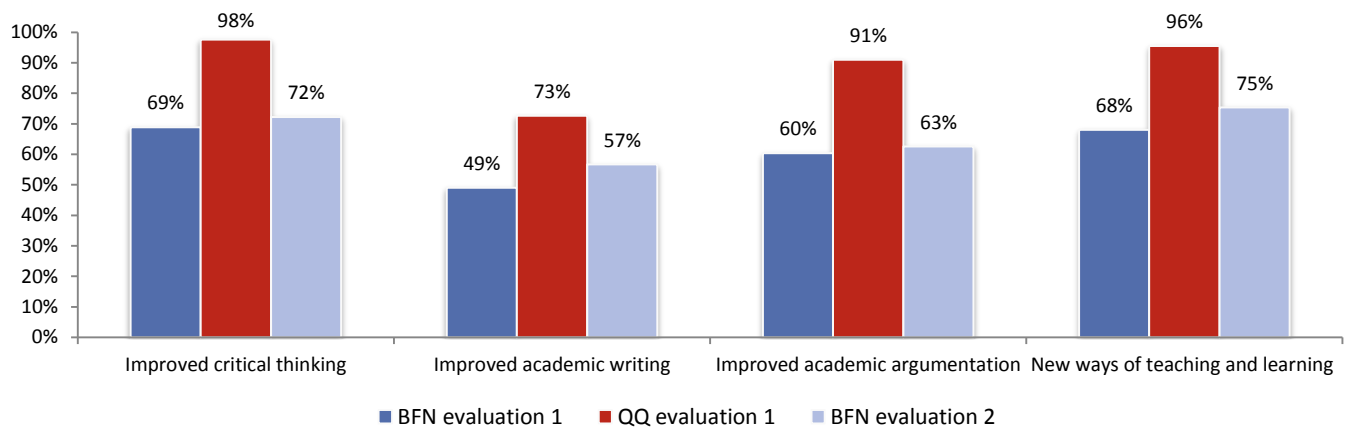


Figure 44: Proportion of students who agreed or strongly agreed that they learned academic skills in UFS101 (BFN Eval 1: n = 1292-1299; QQ Eval 1: n = 43-45; BFN Eval 2 n = 419-425)

Again, students on the QwaQwa campus expressed stronger levels of agreement with each of the statements, with more than 90% of students agreeing that they had improved their critical thinking skills, their academic argumentation skills and had been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning. Around three-quarters (n=32) of the QwaQwa students indicated that they improved their academic writing skills.

Fewer students on the Bloemfontein campus agreed with each of the statements, and in each case slightly more students agreed with the statements in the second evaluation. The highest proportion of students on the Bloemfontein campus agreed that they had improved their critical thinking skills (69%; n=894 and 72%; n=894) and that they had been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning (68%; n=316 and 75%; n=882). As was the case with the QwaQwa students, fewer students agreed that they had improved their academic writing skills.

Communication with the UFS101 Team

Students were asked a series of questions about the effectiveness of various forms of communication used by the UFS101 team. These communication forms included Facebook, Blackboard, cellphone and e-mail. Results are shown in Figure 45 below – bars represent the percentage of students indicating whether the particular form of communication was *very useful*.

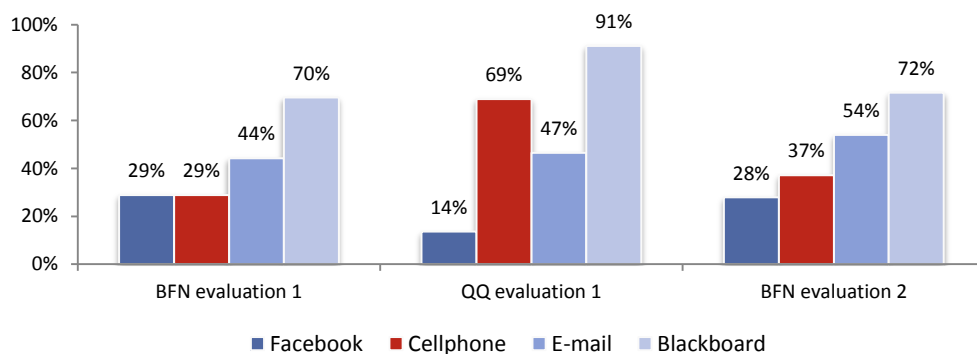


Figure 45: Students' opinions on the usefulness of various communication forms used by the UFS101 team (BFN Eval 1: n = 1284-1294; QQ Eval 1: n = 43-45; BFN Eval 2 n = 415-422)

Across campuses and evaluation points, Blackboard was noted as very useful by the highest proportion of students, with 91% (n=41) of students on the QwaQwa campus indicating so. On the Bloemfontein campus, across both evaluation points e-mail was indicated as being a very useful form of communication by 44% (n=573) to 54% (n=224) of students. In contrast, on the QwaQwa campus cellphone communication was indicated as very useful by more students than e-mail communication.

Across campuses, Facebook communication was rated by the least number of students as being very useful.

**For
students....**

**Blackboard
is the
MOST
useful
form of
communication**



**is the
LEAST
useful
form of
communication**

Overall Experience with UFS101: Student Perspective

In the second evaluation, students were asked two open-ended questions – What did you like and what did you dislike about UFS101? The sections below detail their responses to these two questions.

What did you like about UFS101?

There were 164 coded comments on what students liked about UFS101 which covered a broad range of topics including the lectures, learning experiences and tutorials, the new and interesting things they learned in the module – including (but not limited to) the module content, the development of their critical thinking skills, and the discussions and interactions with other students.

The UFS101 module delivery and content – including the lectures (n=22), learning experiences (n=24) and tutorials (n=11) – was one of the most liked aspects of the module. Although most students only made general references to these three aspects, some students made mention of specific units and learning experiences which they enjoyed. Most frequently mentioned was the Chem-Magic show (n=12) and the contents of Unit 7 (n=14), although a limited number of students also mentioned all of the other units at least once each. Closely linked to the tutorial sessions, there were 21 students who commented that they liked the opportunity to voice their opinions through discussions and debates.

Aligned with the module outcomes, 16 students liked the fact that UFS101 had taught them to think more critically, reason about topics, to see different perspectives or be more open-minded.

Also closely aligned to the module outcomes, a number of students (n=24) commented on how much they had learned from UFS101 about topics outside of their discipline and about the world around them.

"The module talks about issues that affect the country at large. The issues about our history, fracking, the economy etc. Hence that makes it more interesting and one of the most important modules in first year, though most students seem not to take it seriously. But for me, it was exhilarating most of the time to be in UFS101 class"

The relational aspect of UFS101 was noted by 16 students as what they liked about the module. This included both general interaction between different students, as well as the opportunity to engage with diverse others.

"Students from different cultures got time to share the differences as well as similarities among their cultures....this paved the way for all students irrespective of their race, to live in Unity in Diversity."

**Students
LIKED
the
lectures,
tutorials,
learning
experiences
&
how much
they learnt
outside of
their
discipline**

Fewer students liked the assignments (n=4), the personal growth they experienced (n=8), the practical nature of work (n=3), the respect between and towards the first-years (n=6) and helpfulness of the UFS101 team (n=1).

What did you dislike about UFS101?

There were 161 coded comments on what students disliked about UFS101 which covered a broad range of topics. The three aspects which the most students disliked were the tests/assignments (n=42), the tutorials (n=16) and the time-consuming nature of the module (n=24).

Of the students who indicated that they did not like the assessments, approximately half referred specifically to the weekly MCQ tests, indicating that they were time-consuming and there were too many of them. Although some students gave general comments (i.e. merely stating that they dislike the assessments), some students mentioned they did not like the assessments because they took a great deal of time to complete. There were four students who specifically stated that they did not like the assessment topics, and three were not satisfied with the marking (noting it as too strict and indicating that some facilitators needed additional training in marking assessments).

Students disliked the tutorials for a wide variety of reasons, including the fact that they are time-consuming, some sessions were not interesting or relevant and the sign-up sheets did not function as intended. Directly linked to the tutorials, six students indicated they did not like the learning facilitators due to, inter alia, their lack of knowledge about the content and their inadequate preparation.

In terms of the other aspects of module delivery and content in the lectures and learning experiences, there were only four students who mentioned they did not like the lectures and four who mentioned the learning experiences.

A few students indicated that the content of the units was not relevant or interesting to them (n=7) and another said they disliked particular units because the materials were too difficult (n=1). Only two students said the class size in the Callie Human was too big leading to disengagement by students.

In terms of the learning experiences, the visit from the Deputy Governor of the Reserve bank (due to the manner of presentation and lack of interactivity) and the Chem-Magic show were mentioned. One student mentioned that the use of Afrikaans in some sessions limited their ability to understand.

The combination of activities required by UFS101 in a given week was mentioned by a number of students who did not like the time-consuming nature of the module. Some of the students also commented that this dense time commitment to one module impacted negatively on their performance in other modules (n=7). On the other hand, seven students thought lectures and tutorials should be longer as there was not enough time to fully engage with the topics.

**Students
DISLIKED
the volume
of
assessments
&
the time-
consuming
nature of
the module**

From a logistical perspective, students did not like the clashes with their other modules (n=6) and the changes in the timetable for UFS101 at short notice (n=7).

Again, a limited number of students (n=4) perceived UFS101 to be unnecessarily racialised (specifically referring to Unit 4). One of the students reported that there was a physically violent fight in the tutorial about racial issues as a result. Even though the number of students raising the issue remained relatively small throughout the surveys, dealing with difficult and contentious issues is a skill the learning facilitators should be equipped to handle appropriately.

Furthermore, three students did not like the attendance criteria and one specifically mentioned they did not like the fact that the module was compulsory.

There were 24 students who said there was nothing they disliked about UFS101 and three who said they disliked everything.

UFS101 Learning Facilitator Experience 2013

Training Experiences

Given the important role of the learning facilitators in the teaching and learning process, a strong emphasis is placed on the training provided to the facilitators. Learning facilitators were asked to indicate how relevant and interesting they felt the training was, as well as whether they felt that the training provided sufficiently prepared them to take on their role as learning facilitators. In an open-ended question, facilitators were also asked to provide comments and suggestions regarding their experiences related to the training provided⁶.

Figure 46 below depicts learning facilitators' perceptions of the relevance of the training they received.

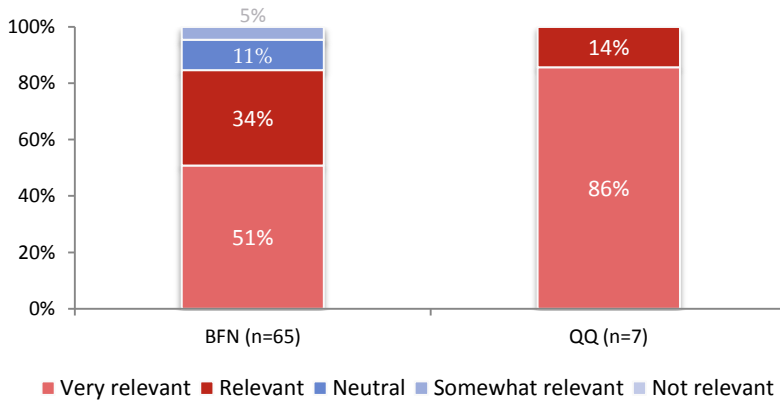


Figure 46: Learning facilitators' perception of training relevance

Overall, learning facilitators on both campuses are in agreement that the training they received was relevant. Approximately 86% of Bloemfontein facilitators and all of the QwaQwa facilitators expressed that they felt the training was either relevant or very relevant. The vast majority of learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus indicated that the training was very relevant (86%; n=6), compared to 51% (n=33) of learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus who indicated so. None of the learning facilitators indicated that the training was irrelevant, whilst only 11% (n=7) and 5% (n=3) of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus expressed neutral feelings or indicated that the training was only somewhat relevant respectively.

Figure 47 on the following page illustrates how interesting the learning facilitators found the training to be¹. Whilst all of the learning facilitators from the QwaQwa campus indicated that the training was either interesting (57%; n=4) or very interesting (43%; n=3), learning facilitators from the Bloemfontein campus differed slightly with only 26% (n=17) finding the training very interesting and 46% (n=30)

⁶ This question was only asked in the first evaluation.

**85% of
BFN
facilitators
&
all
QwaQwa
facilitators**

**AGREED
to some
extent**

**that their
training was
RELEVANT**

finding the training interesting.

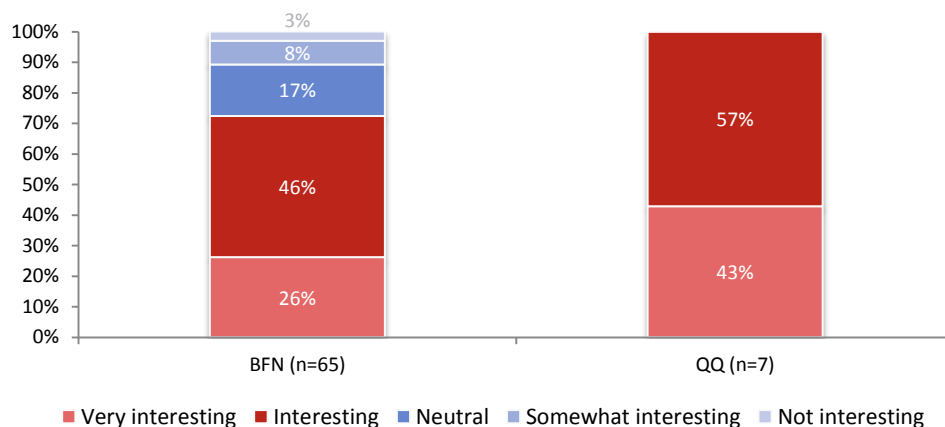


Figure 47: Learning facilitators' perception on how interesting training was

Around 17% of individuals from the Bloemfontein campus (n=11) expressed indifference, whilst only 8% and 3% respectively indicated that the training was either somewhat interesting or not interesting at all.

Figure 48 below depicts learning facilitator's perceptions regarding whether the training they received was sufficient in preparing them for their role in UFS101⁷.

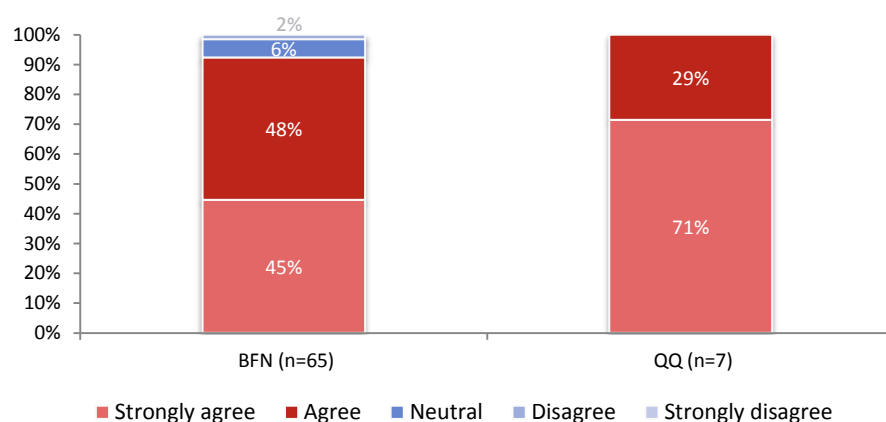


Figure 48: Learning facilitators' perception on how well training prepared them for their role

Overall, the learning facilitators indicated that the training was an integral part of preparing them for their role in UFS101, with over 90% of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus either agreeing or strongly agreeing that the training was sufficient. All of the facilitators on the QwaQwa campus agreed to some extent that the training was sufficient, with the majority strongly agreeing (71%; n=5). Only 2%

**7 out of 10
BFN
facilitators
&
all
QwaQwa
facilitators**

**AGREED
to some
extent**

**that their
training was
INTERESTING**

⁷ This question was only asked in the first evaluation

(n=1) of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus indicated that the training was not sufficient in preparing them for the role they were expected to play in UFS101,

Learning facilitators were asked to provide comments related to their training in an open-ended question⁸.

There were 19 positive comments provided by the learning facilitators across both campuses with regards to the facilitator training. Facilitators found the training effective, empowering, well-structured and practical – in fact one facilitator commented that the training was even better than in 2012. One of the learning facilitators commented that the role playing activities were particularly useful in preparing them for their role:

Typical comments provided by learning facilitators included:

"The sessions are informative even about general topics outside the module, always learn something. the team relates to us using their own lives and makes learning more than the norm."

"The team is always prepared and pro-active and uses current tools to put the message across."

"I think the training was very empowering to the facilitators and that the team had worked really hard, and was all a success."

In addition to these positive responses, there were 18 negative comments and 9 suggestions provided by the learning facilitators across both campuses. The negative feedback and suggestions related to the training can be broadly categorised into three categories: the content and delivery of the training, the timing and duration of the training and logistical feedback.

In terms of the *training content*, two of the facilitators from the Bloemfontein campus noted the importance of excellent group dynamics between the learning facilitators and identified the training as a platform to establish an appropriate dynamic. One of these facilitators suggested additional activities as a means to achieve this. Two additional learning facilitators mentioned that they would like more activities in the training related to the specific units. Specific activities such as discussions and debates were mentioned by single facilitators. One learning facilitator on the Bloemfontein campus requested additional role playing of scenarios that facilitators may be faced with in the tutorials.

⁸ This question was only asked in the first online survey.

**9 out of 10
BFN
facilitators
&
all
QwaQwa
facilitators**

**AGREED
to some
extent**

**that their
training
PREPARED
them for
their role**

One of the facilitators on the QwaQwa campus commented that the same training and presenters should be provided and used on both campuses:

"I would suggest that it might be wise and profitable to make sure that all facilitators receives equal and same time training from both campus e.g. at QwaQwa campus some of the speakers were not able to come, therefore be expected to watch a video of which to some of us that was not that effective."

Four of the tutors who also tutored in 2012 suggested that the old facilitators be exempted from training that they have attended already, and only be required to attend the sessions that differ from previous years – in particular the tutorial training.

Some additional support for the new tutors beyond the training was suggested. One of the tutors from the Bloemfontein campus suggested that new tutors should have the opportunity to observe tutorials as a form of training before they facilitate their sessions as *"deep end swimming is a bit tough"*. One of the QwaQwa learning facilitators stated that the UFS101 team should follow-up with the learning facilitators to *"find out if we are fine or just ask us if we need any help"*

With regards to the *timing, pace and duration of the training* two facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus noted that sessions were too long (with too few breaks), although another indicated that the Blackboard training was too rushed. One facilitator suggested that training should be presented prior to the start of classes to make it easier for them to attend and three facilitators (two of whom are from the QwaQwa campus) suggested training on the weekends to avoid clashes with classes and practicals.

In terms of *training logistics* there was only one facilitator (from the Bloemfontein campus) who indicated that the food provided was not fresh.

Tutorial Experiences

Learning facilitators were asked whether the material they received was sufficient for their class preparation. In addition they were asked if they believed they successfully created an environment which encouraged engagement and discussion during tutorial sessions.

Responses related to the adequacy of preparation materials are illustrated in Figure 49 below.

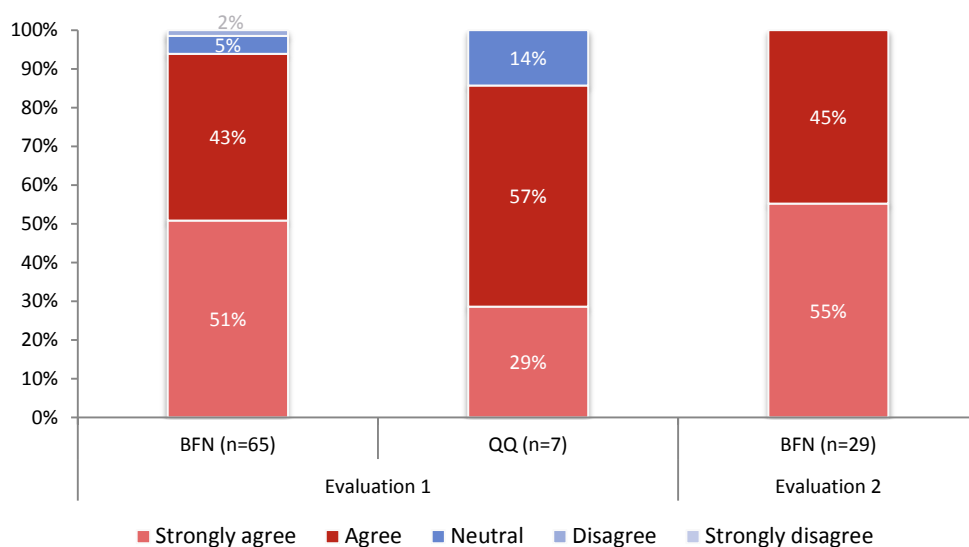


Figure 49: Learning facilitators' perceptions on the adequacy of preparation materials provided

In general, the majority of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus (more than 90%) either agree or strongly agree that the materials provided were sufficient for class preparation. In terms of the facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus, the majority strongly agreed that the materials provided were sufficient for successful class preparation, and this remained relatively constant across both evaluation periods at 51% (n=33) and 55% (n=16) respectively. The proportion of facilitators agreeing that the materials were adequate also remained relatively consistent at both evaluation points – with 43% (n=28) in evaluation 1 and 45% (n=13) in evaluation 2 respectively. During the first evaluation only 2% (n=1) disagreed that the materials provided were sufficient for them to prepare.

In contrast, on the QwaQwa campus (n=2), only 29% strongly agreed that sufficient materials were provided, and the majority (57%, n=28) agreed. However, overall, most facilitators on the QwaQwa campus still agreed to some extent that the materials provided were adequate.

Learning facilitators' perceptions of their ability to create an environment that encouraged engagement and discussion during tutorial sessions are depicted in Figure

**MORE
than
HALF of
the BFN
&
LESS
than a
THIRD
of the
QQ
facilitators
STRONGLY
AGREED
that their
class
preparation
materials
were
adequate**

50 below.

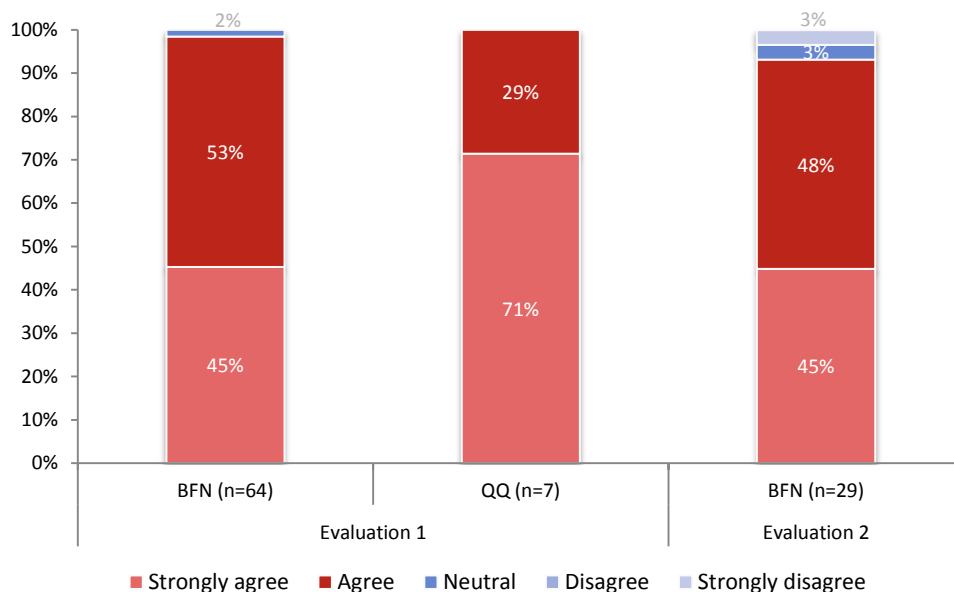


Figure 50: Learning facilitators' perception of their ability to create engaging environments

Over 90% of the facilitators on both campuses and at both evaluation points either agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to create an environment which allowed for active participation and engagement by students. The majority of learning facilitators on the QwaQwa campus expressed that they strongly agreed (71%; n=5) in this regard, whilst facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus were somewhat less confident (45% strongly agreeing for both evaluations; n=29 and n=13 respectively). Whilst responses are relatively consistent across the two evaluation points, 3% (n=1) of facilitators in the second evaluation on the Bloemfontein campus indicated they were unable to create the appropriate environment.

In follow-up to this question, the learning facilitators were asked how they managed to create an active and engaging environment in their tutorial session. A total of 92 comments were provided by facilitators from both campuses over the two evaluation points.

Learning facilitators were asked to describe what strategies, methods or techniques they used to engage the students actively in tutorials. A total of 92 comments were coded, centring on six main themes namely: creating a conducive atmosphere and environment for engagement, paying attention to interpersonal relationships, using small groups and group activities, deliberately eliciting individual inputs and using multimedia and visual aids. Facilitators also spoke of how they drew on their own personal characteristics to encourage student participation.

Creating a conducive environment and atmosphere for engagement was one of the

**More
than
90%**
**of all
facilitators**
AGREED
**to some
extent**
that they
create
engaging
tutorials

most frequently mentioned broad strategies the learning facilitators used to encourage engagement (n=39). In order to create a conducive environment learning facilitators employed a number of strategies including: beginning the session with an overview of the topic to orientate them (n=6), assuring students that there are no right or wrong answers (n=6) and encouraging students to speak freely (n=4). Learning facilitators also noted that they clarified expectations for the session/activity (n=3), set ground rules for engagement (n=1), used ice breakers to get students comfortable (n=4) and allowed students to speak in the language they are most comfortable with (and then interpreting into English) (n=1). Creating the opportunity for students to comment – either individually or after discussions in small groups – was another strategy used by learning facilitators to create an engaging atmosphere (n=6). One learning facilitator said that an engaging atmosphere was created by introducing the topic for the day with a controversial statement.

Learning facilitators used various strategies to pay attention to interpersonal relationships as a means to encourage engagement and participation (n=11). They mentioned strategies such as acknowledging each student and addressing them personally (n=6), learning students' names (n=1), opening up to the students by sharing some of their own personal experiences (n=2) and encouraging students to get to know each other better (n=1).

In terms of actual strategies used, the learning facilitators mentioned techniques to elicit individual inputs (n=45), group-oriented activities (n=51), as well of the use of multimedia and visual aids (n=5).

Learning facilitators elicited students' personal opinions primarily through asking questions, as well as by intentionally asking shy students what their opinion was or making statements that were contrary to popular opinion in order to get students motivated to counteract. A few of the facilitators said that they allowed students to comment on each other's opinions as a form of debate. One of the learning facilitators mentioned providing students with tasks to do in order to engage them in the material.

The most frequently used strategy for engagement was group-orientated activities (often used in combination with individual inputs describe above. There were 47 learning facilitators who mentioned using group discussions and small-groups in their sessions in order to get students to engage.

"The student were divided into small groups of less than 5 students to ensure each of the student in the session can make some form of contribution. there was a summary of the topic to explain what is expected and also what the discussion would be about. After group consultation, a chosen representative from each group is given some few minutes to explain to the whole tutorial class what their opinions were and why they came up with such conclusions. Other members of the tutorial session are allowed to question, probe and contribute to points raised by each group"

Many of the facilitators who used small groups did so to help students feel more at ease with engaging and sharing their opinions:

"Some students dont have the confidence to speak in front of large classes. So what I did to make sure everyone participates i divided them into smaller groups so that they can discuss in their group and ask a confident person to give feedback to the rest of the class. While they were discussing in their group I will walk around to ensure that everyone participates."

The small group discussions were also used as a platform to hold debates on the topic:

"I created smaller groups, which then debated with each other according to side that I chose for them, which is not necessarily their own opinion so they could learn to argue for both sides of an argument"

One of the facilitators mentioned that they encourage gender and race diversity in the small group discussions to expose the students to different ways of thinking.

A limited number of learning facilitators mentioned using videos, music and other visual aids to enhance their sessions:

"I have internet usage bills purely generated by obtaining content for my tutorials, because I took initiative in downloading YouTube videos; sound tracks from speeches etc. And that added to creating a good tutorial environment. I found that playing music before the session while students are still entering works well."

A few of the facilitators (n=6) mentioned how they drew on their personal characteristics such as being friendly, polite or making jokes to ensure that students are comfortable enough to engage. Three facilitators indicated that they made a deliberate effort to engage with the students on their level and one facilitators said they made an attempt to read the tone of the group and respond appropriately.

Tutorial Experience: Learning Facilitator Comments and Suggestions

Finally, the learning facilitators were to share additional comments and suggestions with regards to the UFS101 tutorials. A total of 86 comments were provided in response to this question over the two evaluation points on both campuses. Comments were primarily positive (n=29) or providing suggestions (n=37), with very few negative comments relating to the tutorials (n=7).

Positive comments and experiences

The positive learning facilitator comments covered two broad themes: content and information, as well as tutorial experience.

Learning facilitators were positive about the content of the tutorials (no negative comments were made in this regard) mentioning specifically that the guidelines provided were clear and that the information provided was sufficient (n=1 each). Three learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus mentioned that the content is good, well-structured and relevant.

In terms of the tutorial experience, five of the learning facilitators (from across both campuses) stated that the tutorials increased student engagement and allowed students to participate in discussions (which they are not always able to do in the lectures). One of the facilitators mentioned that the tutorials encouraged students to engage with current affairs outside of the classroom (e.g. through watching the news).

"tutorials are really awesome, students are more active and each have time to say something. i think thats the best part"

In addition to the students' engagement, two of the facilitators were positive about how much they learned from being tutors for UFS101, and two of the 2012 facilitators commended the UFS101 team on the improvements implemented in 2013.

Negative comments and experiences

Negative comments relating to the tutorials were that very small groups do not lend themselves to interesting discussions (n=1), that repeating students disrupted tutorials (n=1) and that students appeared disengaged (n=1). Two of the facilitators (one from each campus) mentioned that the tutorials were too short and that more time would allow for greater discussion – both facilitators noted the impracticality of changing this and one mentioned the benefit of the online forum on Blackboard to continue discussion.

Two of the facilitators (both on the Bloemfontein campus) were not positive about the co-facilitation arrangement:

"I do not like sharing a venue with other tutors so most of the times I would sit back and facilitate as usual, I consider it rude to have to prepare and at the end of the day not entirely use my material - so I would give the others a change to do all their parts. Each facilitator deserves to tutor their own group on their own."

Suggestions for improvement

Various suggestions for the improvement of the tutorials were offered by the learning facilitators, relating to the following broad themes: the tutorial structure, size etc., the facilitator's role and contribution, infrastructure and access to technology.

With respect to the tutorial structure, the size of the tutorial groups was mentioned by three of the learning facilitators who commented on the wide variation in the size of the groups (ranging from 8 – 150 students). They suggested that better ways of regulating the group's size be sought. Related to this, five other learning facilitators suggested having fixed tutorial groups (where a facilitator has the same students for the entire year). Not only will this allow for group size to be better regulated, but will also allow the facilitators to build stronger relationships with the students.

Interactive tutorials seem to have been well-received, with some facilitators suggesting more interactive tutorials, e.g. games. However, three of the facilitators noted difficulties with the economics game as it was difficult to explain and implement and they suggested that it be removed.

One learning facilitator suggested a time slot from 17:00-18:00 and another suggested the option of online tutorials. There was only one learning facilitator who suggested splitting English and Afrikaans students.

Relating to student disengagement, one of the learning facilitators suggested renaming the tutorials in order to make it clear to the students that they should be doing the talking:

"It would be great if in the students are orientated so that they know tutorials are there for discussions, perhaps they could not be called tutorial so that students know they will be the ones doing the talking. It is not easy for them to understand how things are done in UFS101 considering it is the only module in which they are the ones who have to do the talking instead of having someone talk to them all the time."

Furthermore, finding ways to ensure student preparation to allow for greater tutorial engagement was suggested by two of the learning facilitators. In terms of attendance, one facilitator suggested having separate attendance criteria for lectures and tutorials to encourage greater tutorial participation in order that students should pass the module.

A few suggestions were made with respect to the learning facilitators. Regarding tutorial materials, one facilitator requested that they be informed further in advance what will be expected of them so that they have more time to prepare, whilst another suggested that all tutorials be standardised so that students know they will get the same inputs regardless of which session they attend. It was noted by four of the facilitators that some of the learning facilitators (particularly the first time UFS101 facilitators) need additional guidance and input on how to conduct effective tutorials (e.g. which techniques to use to engage students, how to use ice-breakers etc.)

In terms of *infrastructure and access to technology* one of the learning facilitators requested access to computers in the tutorial venues, another requested that they be allowed to download YouTube videos and music for use in tutorials and two suggested whiteboard/flipcharts with markers for writing on during tutorials.

Blackboard Experience

Blackboard formed an integral part of the UFS101 experience as a means of communication and resource-sharing between facilitators and students. To gain an understanding of facilitators' feelings towards and experiences with Blackboard they were asked three questions relating to: whether they had trouble accessing Blackboard and what kind of trouble they experienced, as well as whether they used the Learning Facilitator module on Blackboard. Facilitators were also asked, in an open-ended question, to provide additional comments regarding Blackboard.

Figure 51 below indicates whether facilitators had trouble accessing Blackboard.

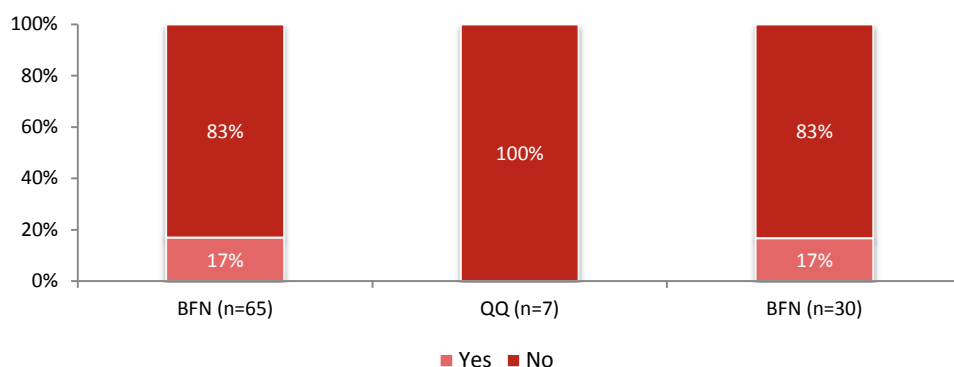


Figure 51: Facilitators experiencing trouble accessing Blackboard

As is seen above, the vast majority of facilitators, on both campuses and across both evaluation points, did not experience problems accessing the necessary information and/or tasks on Blackboard.

Learning facilitators who indicated that they had in fact experienced problems were redirected to a follow-up question in order to understand the reasons why they might have experienced these problems. Responses to this follow up question are indicated in Figure 52 below.

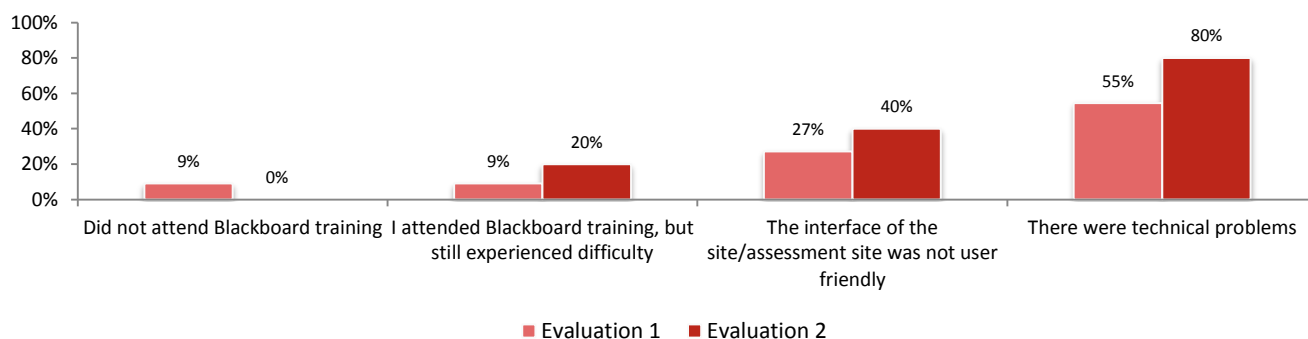


Figure 52: Reasons for trouble accessing relevant information and/or tasks on Blackboard

The predominant reason for learning facilitators' trouble navigating Blackboard is due to technical problems including problematic internet connections, lack of computers

**The
VAST
MAJORITY
of all
facilitators
had
NO
TROUBLE
accessing
Bb**

and the blackboard site being down. This was reported by 55% (n=6) of the facilitators during the first evaluation and 80% (n=4) during the second evaluation.

A relatively large proportion, 27% (n=3) and 40% (n=2) respectively for each evaluation, indicated that the Blackboard interface was not user friendly. Less than 10% of facilitators (n=1) experienced problems because they did not attend the training, while 9% (n=1) and 20% (n=1) respectively for each evaluation did attend the training, yet still experienced difficulty.

Figure 53 below illustrates the proportion of facilitators who used the facilitator module on Blackboard.

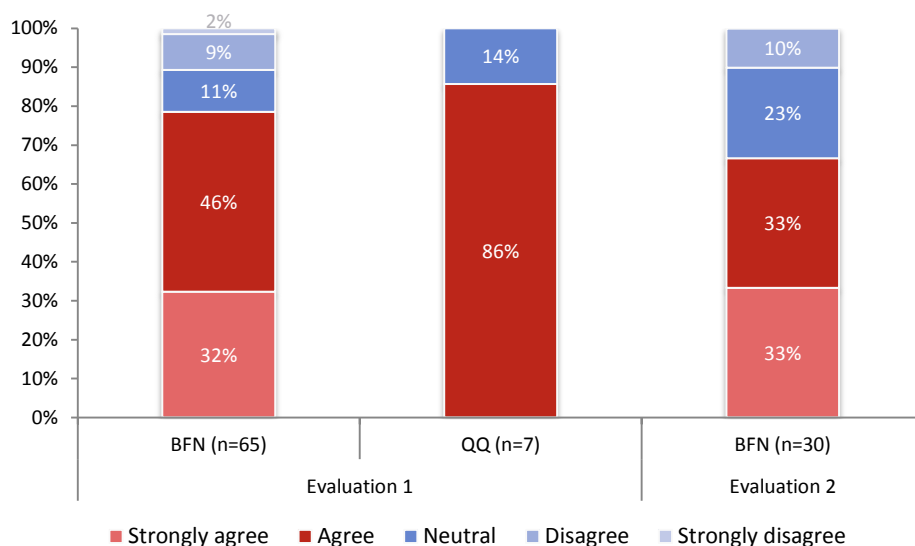


Figure 53: Proportion of learning facilitators who accessed the Learning Facilitators Module on Blackboard

Learning facilitators across both campuses and at both evaluation points predominantly agreed or strongly agreed that they did access the Learning Facilitator Module on Blackboard. However, the proportion of Bloemfontein campus facilitators who agreed decreased from 46% (n=30) at evaluation 1 to 33% (n=10) at evaluation 2. Approximately 10% of Bloemfontein learning facilitators either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they used the Learning facilitator Module on Blackboard for both the first (n=7) and second (n=3) evaluations.

None of the QwaQwa facilitators disagreed to any extent, nor did they strongly agree that they accessed the module on Blackboard.

The learning facilitators⁹ were asked to provide comments or suggestions relating to Blackboard in an open-ended question. A total of 17 comments were provided.

⁹ This question was only asked in the second online survey and was thus only completed by the learning facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus.

*The
proportion
of
facilitators
using their*

*LF
module
on Bb*



*over
time*

There were nine positive and five negative comments made, along with three suggestions.

Learning facilitators were generally positive about Blackboard, and particularly positive about the fact that they could access the necessary materials at their own convenience through Blackboard (n=1). Various facilitators commended the UFS101 team on their efforts to ensure effective and “easy” use of Blackboard (n=3).

In terms of negative comments, learning facilitators mentioned that Blackboard was offline occasionally (n=2), that they had trouble finding the additional materials on Blackboard (n=1), that off-campus access was sub-optimal (n=1) and the online sign-up was problematic at times (n=1). Most of these facilitators also provided positive comments related to other aspects of Blackboard, and the overall experience of the learning facilitators with the LMS was positive.

Learning facilitators suggested that urgent information should rather be communicated via SMS or e-mail (n=1), that a video showing learning facilitators how to use Blackboard should be uploaded for them to access as needed (n=1) and that the learning facilitator page should be made more visually appealing (as is the case for the UFS101 student site on Blackboard) (n=1).

Assessment

Regarding assessments, the learning facilitators were asked whether they thought the assessments were clear and easy to understand (see Figure 54 below). In addition, facilitators were also asked to comment on their experiences related to marking the assessments, as well as to give additional comments on the assessments in two open-ended questions.

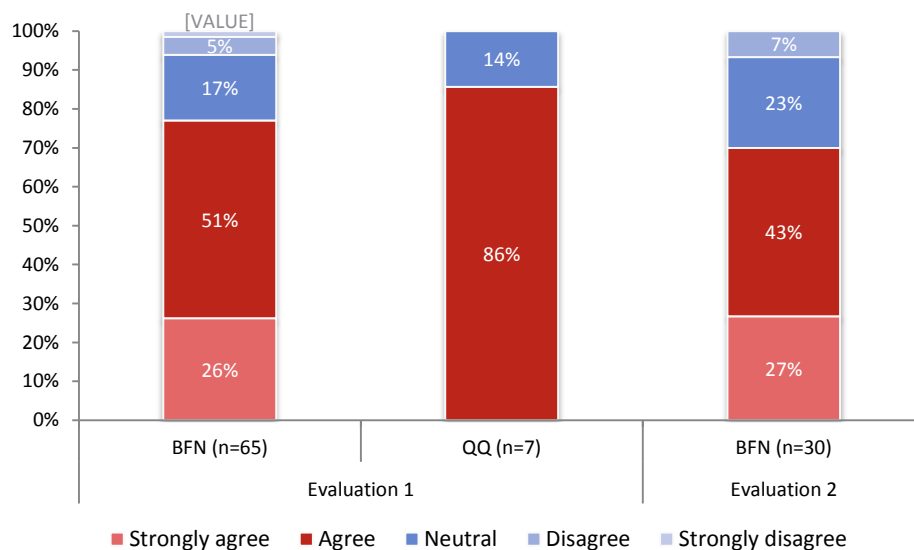


Figure 54: Proportion of learning facilitators indicating the assessments were clear and easy to understand

More than 70% of learning facilitators across evaluation points and campuses agreed to some extent that the assessments were clear and easy to understand. However, only a quarter of facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus (n=17 and n=8 for the first and second evaluations respectively) strongly agreed with this statement. In contrast, none of the QwaQwa learning facilitators strongly agreed with the statement.

Only around 7% of facilitators from the Bloemfontein campus disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement at both evaluation points (n=4 and n=302 respectively).

Marking and Overall Experience with Assessments

Learning facilitators were invited to provide comments on their experience of marking the UFS101 assignments, and also to give any additional comments or suggestions related to the assessments.

Assessment Marking

A total of 100 comments were provided in response to the question on how the learning facilitators experienced marking the assessments. Sentiments were mixed, with many facilitators indicating that their experience was positive (n=56) and many others indicating it was difficult/challenging (n=66). A smaller, although not insignificant, number of learning facilitators indicated that the marking was very time-consuming (n=23). Only a few facilitators provided suggestions for improvement of the marking process (n=12).

A number of the learning facilitators found the marking process to be interesting and enjoyed reading the different opinions of the students (n=11) and some even commented that they learned a great deal by marking the assessments.

As learning facilitators became more acquainted with the marking procedures and the rubric, the task became less time-consuming and less challenging – most of the facilitators who indicated the marking was challenging qualified this statement in this manner.

However, despite the fact that marking became easier, some of the facilitators experienced time pressures when they needed to mark near to or during their tests/exams (n=3) commenting that the marking was too much work. In addition, one of the facilitators was disconcerted by the fact that some facilitators were required to mark significantly more assessments than others. One of the facilitators noted the value of the marking meetings to assist their understanding, and two commented on the good support received from the UFS101 team. Three facilitators noted that they were always well-informed about the process and what was required of them.

Facilitators were both positive and negative about the rubric. Twelve of the learning facilitators commented on the value of the rubric in the marking process – especially the use of the online system and the electronic rubric. In contrast, a similar number of learning facilitators mentioned that the rubric was confusing and was difficult to interpret. One of the learning facilitators indicated that the guidelines were not clear enough. Lack of clarity around how lenient or strict they should be around plagiarism was mentioned by three of the facilitators and another suggested that a software programme to identify plagiarism should be used to decrease the time facilitators spend on marking.

Unrelated to the assessment process or procedure, three of the learning facilitators commented on the lack of effort on the part of the students to submit good assignments. Facilitators also mentioned the fact that many students did not understand the questions presented to them.

In terms of suggestions, the following were offered by the facilitators:

- The rubric should be tailored to each assessment and not purely generic;
- The rubric attached to the assignment should be in the language the assignment was completed in;
- Additional training relating to assessment should be provided, along with practice assessments for new facilitators to do as part of the training;
- More time should be allowed for marking or facilitators should be allowed to mark assessments during the holiday periods.

Overall Experience and Suggestions

A total of 49 comments were provided in response to the open-ended question for additional comments and suggestions. The learning facilitators mostly provided suggestions for improvement, with only a limited number of positive (n=9) and negative (n=6) comments.

Most of the negative comments related to students not understanding the assignments (n=2) and facilitators thought that the questions were too challenging for the first-years (n=1).

A limited number of learning facilitators (n=3) provided positive comments on the decreased number of assignments from 2012 to 2013, as well as the integrated approach to the assignment (n=1). Facilitators were also positive about and grateful for the online rubric in the second semester (n=3).

In terms of suggestions, the learning facilitators provided comments around the following themes: student related, marking related and training related.

Learning facilitators commented that the assessments were difficult for the first-year students, particularly due to their integrated nature. Various suggestions to overcome this were offered including simplifying the assignment (n=1), having sub-questions underneath the overarching questions to provide additional clarity (n=1) and providing additional and more detailed instructions to students (also during tutorial times) on what is expected of them (n=1). Two facilitators commented that additional guidelines were needed for the digital stories in particular. A number of facilitators (n=7) suggested providing additional information (in tutorials, not only in print) on what plagiarism is and how to avoid plagiarising (n=4); it was also noted that additional information related to referencing and bibliographies should be provided (n=2). One of the facilitators mentioned that the discussion forums utilised in 2012 helped students with their assignments, and should be reinstated. In addition, the facilitator suggested allowing students to submit draft assignments to assist them – especially for the first assessment where the first-years are still very unsure.

With regards to the marking of assessments, one of the facilitators suggested a group marking facility in a computer lab:

“if possible the ufs 101 team could book computer lab for one week for us to mark in that vicinity, so that if a facilitator struggles to mark an assessment there a fellow facilitator in the same room who can help out instead of running to the office all the time”

Learning facilitators also requested clearer instructions to be provided regarding expectations and marking, specifically with regards to spelling (n=4) and additional training on assessment (n=4). Not surprisingly, a few facilitators requested additional time to mark (n=1) and that marking should be scheduled not to coincide with exams (n=2).

The matter of fairly distributing marking between learning facilitators was again raised, and one learning facilitator requested that they mark the assignments of the students in their tutorials (allowing for reference back to tutorial discussions in the feedback).

Learning and Development

Participants were asked what they learned through the experience of being a learning facilitator for UFS101 through a series of eight questions. These questions fall into two broad categories, namely transferable skills and academic skills. The questions asked regarding transferable skills included: being respectful of others' views even when not in agreement with them; improved cohesion with diverse people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines and religions; learning to reason above emotion; and learning to consider both sides of an argument. In terms of academic skills, the questions covered the following: critical thinking skills, academic writing skills, academic argumentation skills and exposure to new ways of teaching and learning.

Figure 55 below depicts the transferrable skills that the learning facilitators indicated they have learned.

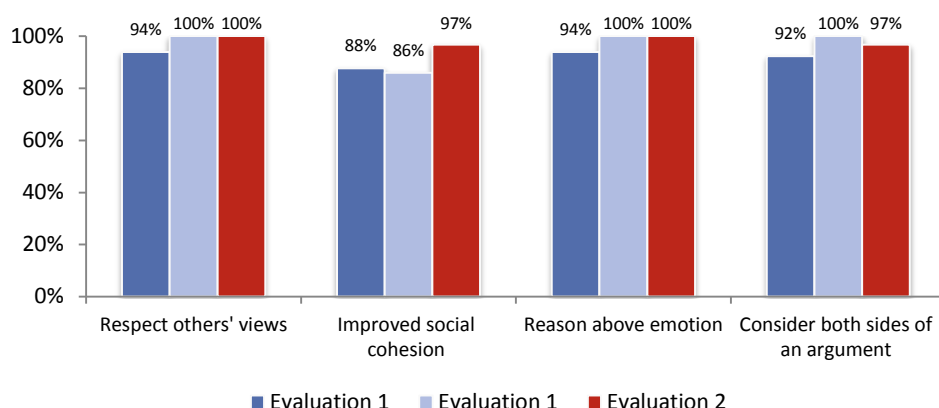


Figure 55: Proportion of learning facilitators who agreed or strongly agreed that they learned a particular skills through participation in UFS101

Number of learning facilitators responding ranged from n=63 to 65 for the Bloemfontein campus in the first evaluation n= 29 to 30 for the Bloemfontein campus in the second evaluation, and n=7 for the QwaQwa campus

Overall, the majority of learning facilitators on both campuses at both evaluation points indicated that they learned each of the transferable skills through their involvement in UFS101.

The two skills most facilitators indicated they have learned were to respect the views of others even when they do not agree with them, and to reason above emotion. All of the facilitators on the QwaQwa campus, and all the facilitators in the second evaluation on the Bloemfontein campus indicated they had learned these skills.

Slightly fewer facilitators – regardless of campus or evaluation point – agreed that they improved their social cohesion with diverse groups of people from different ethnicities, backgrounds, disciplines, religions, etc. Specifically only 88% (n=57) and 86% (n=6) of Bloemfontein and QwaQwa first evaluation respondents respectively, and 97% (n=29) of Bloemfontein second evaluation respondents agreed or strongly

**Almost
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facilitators
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to.....**

**REASON
above
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&
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others'
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agreed with this statement.

Figure 56 below depicts the academic skills that learning facilitators learned.

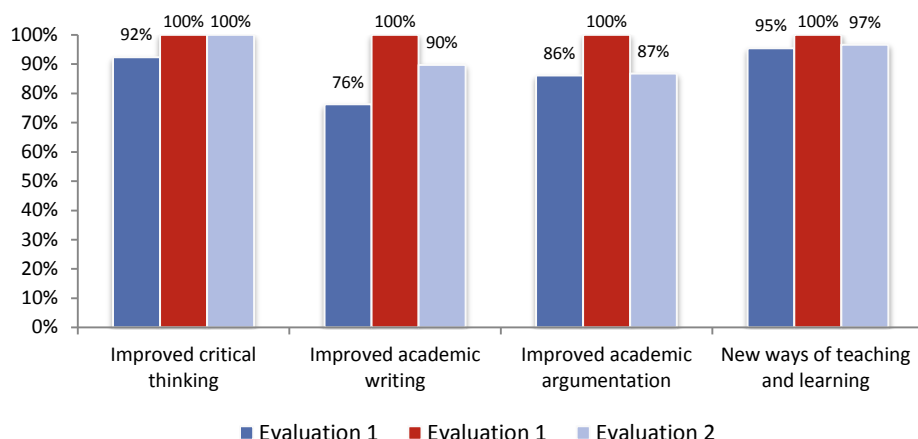


Figure 56: Proportion of learning facilitators who agreed or strongly agreed that they learned a particular academic skills from being part of UFS101

Number of learning facilitators responding ranged from n=63 to 65 for the Bloemfontein campus in the first evaluation n= 29 to 30 for the Bloemfontein campus in the second evaluation, and n=7 for the QwaQwa campus

In terms of academic skills, the vast majority of learning facilitators either agreed or strongly agreed that they had learned most of the skills. All the QwaQwa facilitators agreed or strongly agreed with all of the statements regarding the acquisition of academic skills.

The academic skill most facilitators indicated they have learned was improved critical thinking. As many as 92% of first evaluation Bloemfontein facilitators (n=60) and all of the QwaQwa (n=7) and second evaluation Bloemfontein (n=30) facilitators agreed or strongly agreed that they had improved their critical thinking skills through their involvement in UFS101.

The overwhelming majority of facilitators indicated that they have been exposed to new ways of teaching and learning through UFS101. This included 95% (n=62) and 97% (n=29) of the first and second Bloemfontein evaluation respondents respectively, and all of the QwaQwa facilitators.

Proportionally fewer facilitators on the Bloemfontein campus agreed that they had improved their academic writing or academic argumentation skills through UFS101. At both evaluation points, just under 90% of the facilitators agreed that they improved their academic argumentation skills. Interestingly, only 76% (n=48) agreed, during the first evaluation, that they improved their academic writing skills, however 90% (n=26) agreed with this statement during the second evaluation.

**Almost
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facilitators
improved
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&

**were
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Communication

During the second evaluation learning facilitators were asked a series of questions relating to the effectiveness of various forms of communication used by the UFS101 team, namely Facebook, Blackboard, cellphone and e-mail. Facilitator responses to this series of questions are illustrated in Figure 57 below.

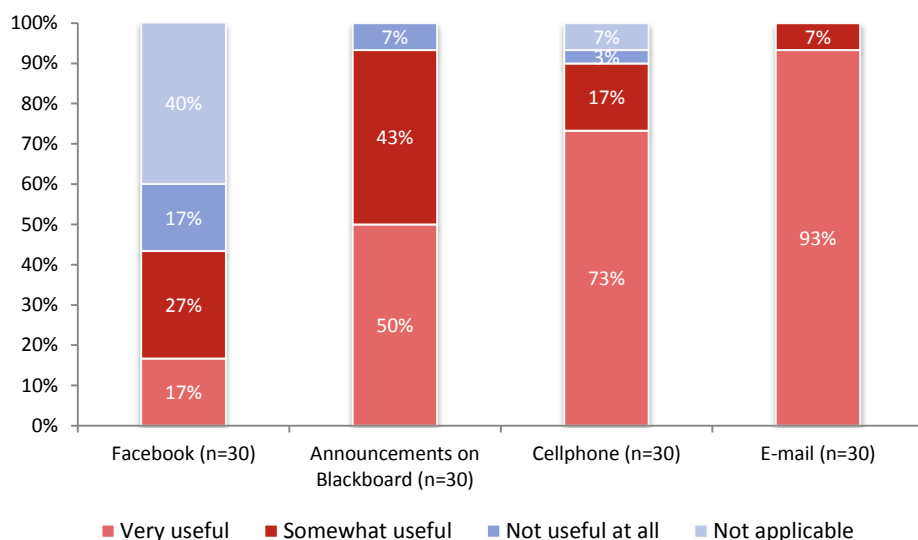


Figure 57: Learning facilitators' opinions on the usefulness of various communication forms used by the UFS101 team

All of the learning facilitators either agreed (7%; n=2) or strongly agreed (93%; n=28) that e-mail was a useful form of communication. At least 90% of facilitators agreed that Blackboard and cellphone communication were useful to some extent, although 73% of facilitators indicated that cellphone communication was very useful (compared to 50% who indicated that Blackboard announcements were very useful).

Facebook was not perceived to be as useful as the other forms of communication – only 27% (n=8) agreed and 17% strongly agreed (n=5) that Facebook was a useful form of communication.



is the
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communication



is the
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Overall Experiences and Recommendations

At the end of each of the online surveys the learning facilitators were asked one or more general open-ended questions. Both online surveys asked the facilitators for any additional comments or suggestions, whilst the second online survey asked the facilitators to note what they liked about UFS101 and what they disliked about UFS101¹⁰.

Overall Experience

In response to the open-ended questions a total of 62 comments were provided by learning facilitators regarding their experience and suggestions for UFS101 (across both evaluations and including both campuses). The responses were overwhelming positive, with only three facilitators providing negative comments and eight providing suggestions.

Positive Experiences

Learning facilitators were positive about their UFS101 experience – many general comments (n=46) were provided such as “it was a good experience”, “a priceless experience”, “a once in a life time opportunity” and “one of the most amazing experiences”.

Facilitators also provided more specific positive feedback relating to: their personal and professional growth, the personal and professional growth of the students, the UFS101 team. By far the majority of comments provided focussed on the personal and professional growth of the learning facilitators.

Personally, the learning facilitators noted their growth in confidence and ability to communicate (particularly in front of a group) (n=8) and their improved ability to work in a team (n=1). Two of the facilitators expressed heartfelt gratitude for the financial difference UFS101 made in helping them pay their tuition and support themselves as students.

Professionally, three of the learning facilitators noted improved time management skills (n=2) and their growth in ability to lead a classroom environment and facilitate learning:

“i really enjoyed facilitating UFS101 module and it really exposed me to the classroom environment. I learned how to control my class and how to use different methods of teaching that i learn in class so it was beneficial for me as a student teacher, it's worth my sacrifice.”

Academically, the learning facilitators also spoke of how UFS101 had helped them learn to think critically, reason beyond emotion and improve their own academic performance (n=3). However, far more facilitators spoke of how they had been exposed to new things and learned about topics and disciplines beyond their own (n=11).

“it was one of the most amazing experience and challenging at the same time. learnt so much and am grateful for this opportunity for been afforded to be a LF. My ability to reason and critically analyse things have improved tremendously. I learnt about things outside my field”

In addition to the changes in their own lives, the learning facilitators (n=4) commented on the growth and changes they noted in the students who improved their ability to think critically and see the perspectives of those around them.

¹⁰ These two questions were thus only answered by the Bloemfontein campus facilitators

Finally, a limited number of facilitators complimented the UFS101 team for their communication with the facilitators (n=2), their support and guidance provided during the year (n=2) and the professional manner in which they conducted themselves as role models (n=2).

Negative Experiences and Challenges

One of the facilitators who shared negative experiences about UFS101 felt that conflict situations within meetings were not handled appropriately and that the facilitators were not at liberty to discuss financial matters and concerns with the team. The same facilitator noted the need for more male staff within the team to role model gender equity.

Two facilitators raised the negative attitudes and poor behaviour of the students – by citing the example of the visit by the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank. The learning facilitator also suggested that facilitators should be postgraduate students.

Two of the learning facilitators expressed the concern that not all of the facilitators were equally committed to the task and to putting in the necessary effort (the 2012 facilitators were specifically referred to here). It was suggested that the experienced facilitators be assigned to the new facilitators in a mentorship type role to provide them with additional support they may need.

Other suggestions resonated with the feedback provided in other sections of the survey, including the need to visual materials in tutorials and access to computers and the request to assign a group of students to a specific learning facilitator.

What do you like about UFS101?

Learning facilitators (n=29) noted a broad range of things they liked about UFS101 – from the module content and delivery to their own professional growth and development.

Module content and delivery related aspects which the learning facilitators liked included: the content of the module (n=5), the broad spectrum of disciplines the module covers (n=5), the learning experiences (n=5) (specifically the Astronomy Fair and the visit by the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank were mentioned), the lectures and the way they were conducted (n=5), and the tutorials (n=5).

I liked the lecture sessions the most, especially when the lecturer interact with the students during the lecture session. This also help because you get to know the possible way in which the students will interact with you on the tutorial.

A few of the learning facilitators mentioned that they like the way the module encouraged critical thinking in the students (n=1) and the way the content broadened their own thinking (n=2). One of the facilitators mentioned that they like how UFS101 helped students to reason above emotion and another noted that they enjoyed hearing different opinions from their own. One facilitator said they like how the module encouraged social cohesion:

"The diverse cultures coming together and actually realizing that they are not very different ..."

The relational aspect of UFS101 was particularly appreciated by the learning facilitators – including their interaction with the UFS101 team (n=5), their positive and friendly relationships with each other (n=5) and their interactions with the students (n=5).

The facilitators found the UFS101 team to be dedicated, approachable and efficient:

"i enjoyed the constant communication that the dedicated 101 team always gives us, our meetings, the generous salary and overall meeting and working with such a great bunch of people!!! It had its times but if I'm honest I loved every moment of it!!!! THANK YOU!!!!"

Finally, in addition to the above, a limited number of learning facilitators mentioned they enjoyed the online tutorials (n=1), marking their students' assessments (n=1) and the organised and efficient manner in which the module was run (n=1). Two students noted the generous salary and the difference this made in their lives.

What do you dislike about UFS101?

Learning facilitators (n=29) also commented on aspects of UFS101 that they did not like.

The aspect of UFS101 that the most learning facilitators disliked related to the assessments (n=8). This included one facilitator who commented on the uneven distribution of the number of assessments each facilitator was required to mark. Four learning facilitators indicated that the time periods during which they had to mark were highly pressurised (their own exam and test periods) and that time frame within which the assessments had to be completed was too limited. One other facilitator commented that being UFS101 learning facilitator was too much work.

In addition to the above, three of the facilitators commented on the negative attitudes of the first year students:

"There is nothing to dislike about the module. Except for the attitude of first years in this module which is not the same when one tutors other first year module"

Logistical aspects of UFS101 were not frequently mentioned, however the scheduling of meetings and the tutorial schedule were each mentioned by two facilitators. One of the facilitators commented that they did not like meetings in the week, another that they did not like meetings on Saturdays. Financial issues were only mentioned by one facilitator who indicated they were not at liberty to discuss money. In terms of the tutorial schedule one facilitator again referred to co-facilitation model

"The fact that the tutorial sessions are open to different facilitators. It makes it very difficult to prepare for a session if you dont know what the other facilitators had planned."

There was one learning facilitator who felt that UFS101 focussed too much on racial issues:

"I dislike that everything starts and ends with black and white even the finances was about BEE. Students feel we are trying to antagonise them."

Other aspects about UFS101 that the learning facilitators did not like were the constant e-mails (n=1), the manner in which lectures were conducted (n=1) and the t-shirt design (n=1).

There were five learning facilitators who, in response to the question of what they did not like, indicated that there was nothing about UFS101 they did not like.