



BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

The benchmarks are based on 34 key questions from the CSSE survey and capture vital aspects of the student experience.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Students learn more when they are actively involved in their education and have opportunities to think about and apply what they are learning in different settings. Through collaborating with others to solve problems or master challenging content, students develop valuable skills that prepare them to deal with the kinds of situations and problems they will encounter in the workplace, the community, and their personal lives.

Items:

How often have you:

- Asked questions in class;
- Contributed to class discussions;
- Made a class presentation;
- Worked with other students on projects during class;
- Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments;
- Been a peer helper (tutor) or taught other students (paid or voluntary);
- Participated in a group-work project as part of a regular course;
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others (students, family members, co-workers, etc.) outside of class.

South African Student Effort

Students' own behaviours contribute significantly to their learning and the likelihood that they will successfully attain their educational goals. "Time on task" is a key variable, and there are a variety of settings and means through which students may apply themselves to the learning process.

Items:

How often have you:

- Prepared two or more drafts (versions) of an assignment before handing it in;
- Worked on a project that required integrating (combining) ideas or information from various sources;
- Come to class without completing readings or assignments.

Number of books read on your own (not compulsory) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment.

How many hours have you spent:

- Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, rehearsing, doing homework, or other activities related to your programme).

Academic Challenge

Challenging intellectual and creative work is central to student learning and collegiate quality. Ten survey items address the nature and amount of assigned academic work, the complexity of cognitive tasks presented to students, and the standards staff members use to evaluate student performance.

Items:

How often have you worked harder than you thought you could to achieve the expectations of the lecturer?

How much have your academic activities focused on you:

- Identifying the different parts that make up an idea, experience or opinion;
- Putting together and organising ideas, information or experiences in new ways;
- Deciding what you think about new information and other people's thoughts or ways of doing things;
- Being able to take an idea that you have learned and use it to solve problems or handle new challenges;
- Using information you have read or heard to do something you have never done before.

Number of compulsory textbooks or subject readings.

Number of written assignments or reports of any length.

During this academic year how much have your assessment tasks (tests, exams and assignments) made you want to do your best work?

How much does this college focus on encouraging you to spend a large amount of time studying?

Student-staff Interaction

The more contact students have with their lecturers, the more likely they are to learn effectively and persist toward achievement of their educational goals. Personal interaction with staff members strengthens students' connections to the college and helps them focus on their academic progress. Working with a lecturer on a project or serving with staff members on a college committee allows students to see first-hand how experts identify and solve practical problems. Through such interactions staff members become role models, mentors, and guides for continuous, lifelong-learning.

Items:

How often have you:

- Communicated with a lecturer using an electronic medium (SMS, email, instant messaging, etc.) outside of class;
- Discussed marks or assignments with a lecturer;
- Talked about career plans with a lecturer or counsellor;
- Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with a lecturer outside of class;
- Received prompt (quick) feedback (written or oral) from a lecturer on your assessment tasks;
- Worked with a lecturer on activities other than your studies.

South African Support for Learners

Students perform better and are more satisfied at colleges that are committed to their success and cultivate positive working and social relationships among different groups on campus. College students also benefit from services targeted to assist them with academic and career planning, academic skill development, and other areas that may affect learning and retention.

Items:

How much does this college place focus on:

- Providing the academic support you need to help you succeed at this college;
- Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds;
- Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.);
- Providing the support you need to interact socially;
- Providing the financial support you need to afford your education.

For further details contact

Ms Melody Mentz

Researcher: Centre for Teaching and Learning

☎051 401 3061

✉ mentzm@ufs.ac.za

Ms Lana Swart

Researcher: Centre for Teaching and Learning

☎051 401 9767

✉ swartl1@ufs.ac.za