

# FUTURE **lead** CHALLENGE

Programme report  
2019 - 2022

 UFS  
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Kovsies**

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STUDENT AFFAIRS  
STUDENTESAKE  
DITABA TSA BAIHTHUTI  
STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



# CONTENTS

List of figures .....	4
List of tables .....	5
Executive summary .....	6
Introduction .....	9
Evolution of the FLC .....	10
Student engagement.....	14
<i>Enrolment and participation</i> .....	14
<i>Student achievement</i> .....	15
Student feedback .....	21
<i>Overall experience</i> .....	22
<i>Content and learning experience</i> .....	24
<i>Module outcomes</i> .....	26
<i>Online experience</i> .....	30
Conclusion .....	33

# LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: FLC objectives.....	10
Figure 2: FLC module themes and content summary.....	11
Figure 3: Criteria for certificate of participation and completion – 2019 to 2022 .....	12
Figure 4: Number of active students per module.....	14
Figure 5: Number of hits on content per module .....	15
Figure 6: Number of tests written per student.....	15
Figure 7: Number of tests taken, passed and average mark obtained per module.....	16
Figure 8: Factors contributing to students not completing all four modules.....	18
Figure 9: Profile of student participation and achievement.....	19
Figure 10. Primary reasons for not submitting a PoE or participating in the FLC journal.....	19
Figure 11: Overall impression of the relevancy of themes and content.....	22
Figure 12: Percentage of students finding the FLC organisation page and lessons interesting and fun .....	22
Figure 13: Overall rating of the FLC programme .....	23
Figure 14: Student likelihood of recommending the FLC programme to others .....	23
Figure 15: The level of the training content and material.....	24
Figure 16: Overall quality of preparatory learning materials.....	24
Figure 17: Quality and value of expert panel discussions.....	25
Figure 18: Importance of panels to provide a deeper understanding of concepts.....	25
Figure 19: Percentage of students who found the tests to be reasonable .....	25
Figure 20: The session and test deadlines are accommodating.....	25
Figure 21: Level of the FLC journal questions and expected application of the knowledge gained .....	26
Figure 22: FLC journal as an opportunity for practical application of the learning concepts.....	26
Figure 23: The module outcomes were clear .....	26
Figure 24: The module outcomes were achieved .....	26
Figure 25: Percentage of students whose views and beliefs about leadership were challenged.....	27
Figure 26: Percentage of students who gained new knowledge and insight regarding leadership.....	27
Figure 27: Application in student community, future career, and society .....	28
Figure 28: Percentage of students who were inspired to pursue further leadership development.....	29
Figure 29: Personal gains from the leadership training programme.....	29
Figure 30: Convenience of the online learning platform .....	30
Figure 31: Ease of access to the FLC organisation.....	30
Figure 32: Ease of navigating the FLC organisation/page.....	30
Figure 33: Percentage of students who found it easy to access and take the online test.....	30
Figure 34: Aspects of online programme students found most effective in terms of the system and technology .....	32
Figure 35: Aspects of online programme students found most challenging in terms of the system and technology.....	32



# LIST OF **TABLES**

Table 1: Reach of the FLC programme .....	7
Table 2: Summary of recommendations .....	8
Table 3: Number of students enrolled in FLC 2019 - 2022.....	14
Table 4: Student recommendations for programme improvement: 2019 - 2022.....	34



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of the Free State's (UFS) FutureLEAD Challenge (FLC) is a co-curricular student leadership development programme designed and implemented in partnership by the Office for Student Leadership Development and the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice/ Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice.

FLC is a voluntary, non-credit-bearing programme open to all students at the UFS. Implemented for the first time in 2019, the programme has evolved and matured over the past four years into its current format. The FLC utilises a blended learning format, over a period of four to seven months, to engage students on and around understanding and using leadership in various situations and environments.






This report details the evolution of the programme since 2019, analyses student engagement in the programme and provides students' perspectives and experiences of the programme between 2019 and 2022.

*As is demonstrated in this report, the programme's evolution through the years has gone hand-in-hand with improvements in student participation, achievement, and general satisfaction, especially salient in 2021 and 2022.*

The proportion of registered students actively participating in the programme increased through the years, reaching a peak of 90% for modules 3 and 4 in 2022. In addition, the number of tests written, the percentage of tests passed, and the average score obtained per test increased substantially in 2021 and 2022. The pass rate peaked at over 90% of tests written across all four modules in 2021 and 2022. Simultaneously, test averages increased from a maximum of 80% for a module in 2019 and 2020 to over 85% for all four modules in 2021 and 2022.

Over the four years of the programme, more than 12 000 students have accessed content related to one or more modules and were considered active. 1985 students have written at least one module test and can be considered as engaged in the programme. There were 577 highly engaged students, who wrote all four module tests, of whom 247 also completed and passed the final assignment to receive a certificate of completion. A further 819 students received certificates of participation. The programme has thus achieved a wide reach over the four years (Table 1).

Table 1: Reach of the FLC programme

>12 000		<b>ACTIVE STUDENTS</b>	Accessing content for one or more module
1985		<b>ENGAGED STUDENTS</b>	Writing at least one module test
577		<b>HIGHLY ENGAGED</b>	Writing all four module tests
819		<b>RECEIVING CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION</b>	Dependent on criteria for year
247		<b>RECEIVING CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION</b>	Programme completers

**The FLC programme has consistently received positive ratings for its overall quality.** Overall, across all four years, 83% of students rated the relevancy of themes and content as good or excellent. In 2021 and 2022, over 90% of students assigned positive ratings to the relevance of the programme’s themes and content and rated the FLC organisation’s page and lessons as interesting and fun to engage with.

**Since 2020, the training content has received consistently high positive ratings,** and students’ ratings of the programme’s content and the learning experience improved over the years. The percentage of students rating the training content as good or excellent increased from 62% in 2019 to 92% in 2022.

**The quality of the preparatory learning materials has similarly received consistently positive ratings.** Across all four years, 81% of students rated the quality of the learning materials as either good or excellent.

**Overall, students found the module outcomes to be clear (92%), and in a high proportion of cases reported that the module outcomes were achieved (84%).** Similar to the other aspects evaluated, the percentage of students who agreed that the module outcomes were clear and achieved were higher in 2021 and 2022 than in the earlier years.

**Panel discussions play an important role in the learning programme, and are generally rated to be of high quality and value.** For the quality and value of the expert panel discussions, an increase in positive ratings was noted in 2021 and 2022. The percentage of positive ratings for these two aspects jumped from below 70% in 2019 to above 80% in 2021 and 2022. Overall, 75% of students across all four years rated the panel discussions as either good or excellent.

**Over the four years, there was a gradual increase in students agreeing that they found the tests to be reasonable.** For how accommodating students found the session and test deadlines, an increase in positive ratings was noted in 2021 and 2022. The percentage of positive ratings for these two aspects jumped from below 70% in 2019 and 2020 to above 80% in 2021 and 2022. Students’ increased satisfaction with the timing of the session and test deadlines in the quantitative responses dovetails with their qualitative feedback. Challenges around clashes with tests and exams peaked in 2019 but dropped sharply in 2020 and 2021.

**Overall, students reported that the programme challenged their views and beliefs about leadership (74%), that they gained new knowledge and skills around leadership through the programme (89%), and indicated that they would be able to apply what they learnt in the programme (80%).** Similar to the other aspects evaluated, the percentage of students who agreed that the training sessions challenged their views and beliefs about leadership and that they gained new knowledge and insight regarding leadership, was higher in 2021 and 2022 than in the earlier years. However, in contrast to all previous findings, the percentage of students who agreed that they would be able to apply what they learnt in future and that the program inspired them to pursue further leadership development dropped to its lowest point in 2022. Students mentioned in their qualitative feedback that they were interested in more opportunities to apply what they learnt in the programme. This lack of practical application may therefore be the reason for students not feeling confident in their abilities to apply what they learnt in the future.

Since the start of the programme, there has been a consistent and substantial increase in the number of students finding the online learning format to be convenient. Overall, students' online experience also improved markedly after 2020. There were substantial increases in the percentage of students satisfied with the duration of the online learning preparatory sessions and who found the online learning format convenient in 2021 and 2022. Likewise, a greater proportion of students found it easy to self-enrol on the platform, navigate the FLC organisation page, and take the online test in 2021 and 2022 compared to 2019 and 2020. It is possible that the compulsory shift to a virtual world following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced students to improve their online skills, resulting in them finding it easier to navigate the online world in 2021 and 2022. This hypothesis is supported by a sharp increase in 2020, followed by a sharp drop in 2021, in the number of students reporting technical challenges related to the programme in their qualitative feedback.

Qualitatively students described that through the programme they gained knowledge about leadership and leadership skills. Other often-mentioned gains include interpersonal skills, self-awareness or self-knowledge, technology-related skills, self-management knowledge, and emotional intelligence.

Table 2: Summary of recommendations

1	Expand the <b>hybrid nature</b> of the programme by including <b>more in-person sessions</b> .
2	Build <b>practicums</b> into the programme to give students the opportunity to <b>apply what they learnt</b> .
3	Add <b>more videos</b> to the programme.
4	<b>Send students reminders via email</b> when due dates approach.
5	Make sure to schedule contact sessions at <b>times convenient for students to attend</b> .
6	Make sure that <b>module tests do not clash with other tests or exams</b> .
7	<b>Advertise the programme more extensively</b> so more students can participate and benefit.
8	<b>Recognise student achievement by including student grades on certificates</b> , having the course included on students' degree transcripts and/or organising virtual international exchange opportunities for students who excel in the programme.
9	<b>Continue to revisit the curriculum</b> to make sure content stays relevant.
10	<b>Consult a data management expert</b> to develop a data management system for the programme.
11	Put mechanisms in place to <b>restrict access to follow-up modules or reassessments</b> only to students who have met the required preconditions to access and complete said modules.
12	Approach <b>postgraduate students to help assess</b> students' journal submissions.



This report demonstrates that the FLC programme has adopted a stance of continuous improvement, which has yielded positive results through the years. Perhaps the greatest testament to the programme's success is the overwhelming majority of positive comments given by students in the general feedback section of the evaluation survey and the fact that the majority of students answered that they found everything about the programme valuable when asked to note the least valuable aspects of the leadership programme.

Recommendations for further improving the programme were noted from the evaluation feedback. These are summarised in the table below.





# INTRODUCTION

The University of the Free State's FutureLEAD Challenge (FLC) is a co-curricular student leadership development programme designed and implemented in partnership by the Office for Student Leadership Development and the Institute for Reconciliation and Social Justice/ Unit for Institutional Change and Social Justice.

FLC is a voluntary, non-credit-bearing programme open to all students at the UFS. Implemented for the first time in 2019, the programme has evolved and matured over the past four years into its current format. The FLC utilises a blended learning format, over a period of four to seven months, to engage students on and around understanding and using leadership in various situations and environments (studies, personal, community and career).

This report details the evolution of the programme since 2019, analyses student engagement in the programme and provides students' perspectives and experiences of the programme between 2019 and 2022.

# EVOLUTION OF THE FLC

Prior to 2019, the UFS implemented a generic leadership development programme that consisted of onsite sessions (1-2 hours) once a month from February to June. Student governance leaders and interested students participated in large numbers. The in-person modality had the advantage of face-to-face interaction and engagement, and the programme had no assessments linked to it, which meant less impact on student time or other academics.

Although the arrangement was practical for on-campus residential students, off-campus commuter students struggled to get transport at night going home after 8 pm. Between 2015 and 2017, numbers started to wane due to the #Feesmustfall campaign and other factors, such as the inconvenience of evening sessions on campus (transport, time issues etc.). The in-person sessions also had other disadvantages. The content consisted of generic presentations with little in-depth exposure to themes. The absence of assessments meant there was no mechanism to measure or gain insight into students' understanding of the themes. Students were provided with certificates of attendance, but these did not reflect the achievement of any outcomes. The programme was also limited in terms of its impact on student employability.

In 2019 the FLC was introduced in a blended learning format on the Bloemfontein campus. At the time, three key objectives were identified for the programme (see Figure 1).

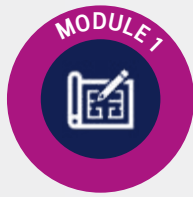
Figure 1: FLC objectives



Although the modality of delivery and achievement criteria have evolved over the past three years (as discussed below), these objectives for the programme have remained constant.

Four themes were identified for the FLC, and content per theme was developed. The themes have remained relatively constant across the three years, with minor tweaks in 2020 (indicated in brackets in Figure 2 below).

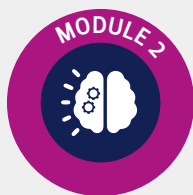
Figure 2: FLC module themes and content summary



### COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

*Design thinking  
(and leadership in problem solving)*

- Understand how challenges create opportunities for Leadership, Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Discuss how finding solutions to challenges requires empathy, creativity, critical and analytical thinking
- Formulate a new approach to a challenge



### COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

*Reflective Thinking  
(and personal development)*

- Demonstrate an understanding of the importance of reflective thinking and personal development as a leader
- Distinguish between the steps of the Ladder of Inference
- Discuss the process of reflective thinking
- Apply steps on how to think reflectively and to create positive changes and new ways of self-management



### INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE

*Interpersonal Relations  
(and relating positively to others)*

- Critically analyse what it means to successfully 'lead' an idea/ association/ team/ project
- Recognise the steps of the process to become a Transformational Leader
- Describe the value of a leader being Emotionally Intelligent
- Identify and discuss why leaders also need the skills of Collaboration and Conflict Management



### PRACTICAL COMPETENCE

*Technological Competence  
(in leadership)*

- Critically analyse the role of technology in leadership
- Describe the challenges that technology has posed to the relationship leaders have with followers
- Identify and discuss the influence that technology has had in changing how collaboration works
- Recognise the capabilities needed and best strategies to lead with technology

In 2019, the FLC content was presented over 4-6 months on Blackboard, along with one onsite panel discussion per theme. Each theme was active for a period of two weeks, after which a test was written. The content remained available for students to access after a theme was completed.

This new modality added an element of convenience to the programme – students could work at their own time and pace within the specified timeframe. The theme-based approach provided in-depth exposure to topics, and assessments measured students’ deeper understanding of concepts.

The new approach was, however, not without drawbacks. The opportunity for dialogue and engagement was limited, and students experienced added pressure as they needed to engage with module content and complete assessments alongside their academic programme. Furthermore, the programme was only implemented on the Bloemfontein campus.

Adjustments were made in 2020 to help address some of the drawbacks. While the four themes were retained, the online programme was expanded to the South and Qwaqwa campuses – with strong interest from students on these campuses. Each module included presentations, reading material, videos, practical assignments, expert panel discussions and online assessments per module. The fully online format of the programme meant that students could participate despite the COVID-19 lockdown measures. This format adopted in 2020 has mostly been retained for 2021 and 2022.

The programme is designed to offer students two different types of achievement – acknowledging participation and completion. The evolution of the programme in this respect is outlined in Figure 3. Based on lessons learned each year, the programme has been evolving in terms of the requirements for acknowledgement of participation and completion.

Figure 3: Criteria for certificate of participation and completion – 2019 to 2022





In 2019, onsite dialogues were poorly attended – and from 2020 onwards, the onsite dialogues were replaced with pre-recorded panel discussions. Initially, students did not receive acknowledgement of the individual modules passed if they did not manage to complete three out of the four modules. Thus, from 2021 each module passed was acknowledged on the certificate of participation.

Over the first two years (2019–2020), engagement on Blackboard increased, and there were a high number of hits on the video panel discussions – however interest in submitting the portfolio of evidence stayed consistently low. The project portfolio of evidence required students to identify a challenge which needed solving. Students had to research the challenge and solutions that had previously been applied. Using their skills from the programme, they were required to design a solution to the challenge and submit a portfolio of evidence. They also needed to prepare a PowerPoint presentation on their project and be prepared to present and undergo an interview process. The low interest in the portfolio of evidence led to the introduction of the reflection journal in 2020. The journal required students to write short reflections on each of the four themes in the programme.

## FROM **2021** ONWARDS...

*...it was compulsory for students to pass the module 1 test with a minimum of **60%** to continue with the programme.*

*Students who did not complete the FLC often cited personal factors and time constraints as the factors influencing their non-completion, and many expressed interest in completing the programme at a later date. Thus in 2022, an extended FLC was introduced for students who started the programme in 2021. This provided the opportunity for students to complete the programme over a two-year period.*





# STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

## Enrolment and participation

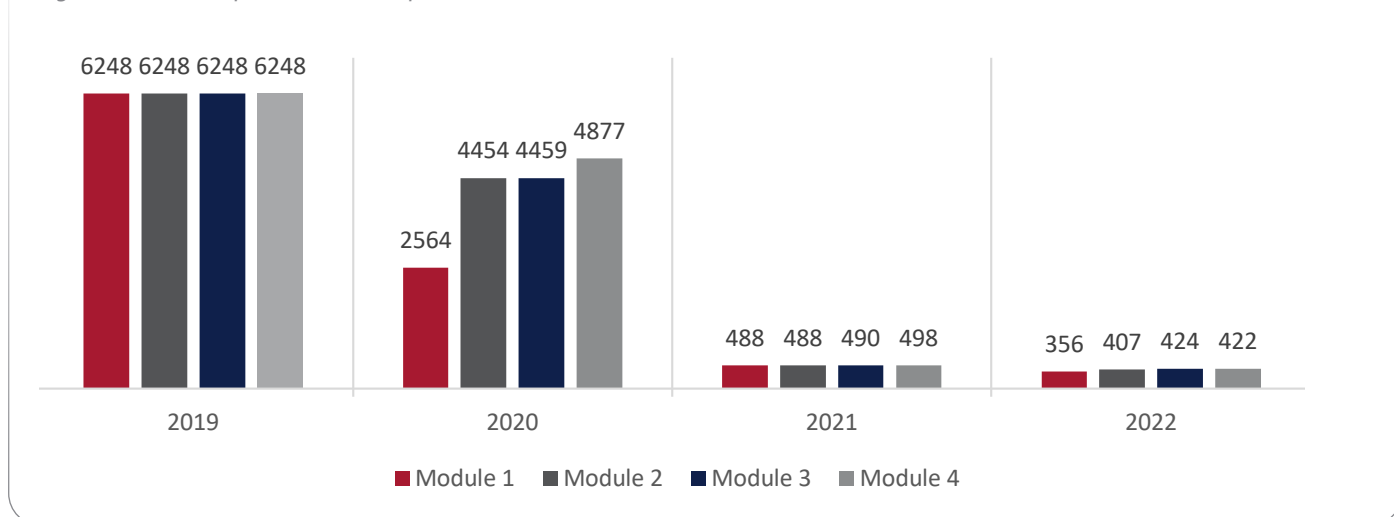
Although the FLC is a voluntary programme, in 2019 all Bloemfontein undergraduate students were automatically enrolled on Blackboard. Similarly, in 2020, all Bloemfontein first-year students, as well as all South and Qwaqwa campus students, were automatically enrolled. This approach presented several administrative challenges even though it had the advantage of automatically giving all students access to the content. Thus, from 2021 only students who indicated an interest in the programme were enrolled on Blackboard. Table 2 shows the enrolment numbers across the four years.

Table 3: Number of students enrolled in FLC 2019 - 2022

	2019 21 Feb – 13 May	2020 2 March–12 June	2021 19 April – 6 Sep	2022 19 April – 6 Sep
Enrolments	23 883	14 542	759	470

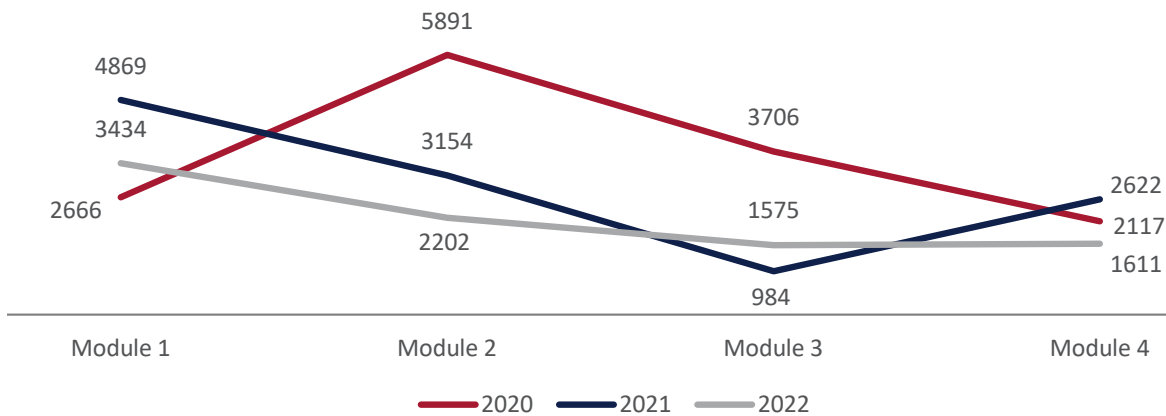
However, not all enrolled students were active in the programme. In particular, when students were automatically enrolled, the number of active students was significantly lower than that of enrolled students. The number of students active per module each year, illustrated in Figure 4, shows this clearly. In 2019, approximately a quarter of enrolled students (26%) were active, compared to a maximum of 34% (for module 4) in 2020, 66% (for module 3) in 2021, and 90% (for modules 3 and 4) in 2022. Thus, although automatically enrolling students resulted in an impressive enrolment figure for the FLC, the active participation in 2021 and 2022 was significantly higher.

Figure 4: Number of active students per module



Students can access content on Blackboard for each module both before and after the module assessments are due. This enables students to revisit materials either to prepare for the assessments or for personal learning and enrichment. The number of hits per module content for the period 2020 to 2022 is shown in Figure 5. Module content remains accessible to all students who were enrolled on the module – regardless of whether or not they qualified to continue with the module tests. Thus, the number of active students and the number of hits on module content is higher than the number of students who qualified to continue with the module (2021 and 2022). The aim is that students should still learn and benefit from the learning material, although they will not be assessed or receive certificates.

Figure 5: Number of hits on content per module

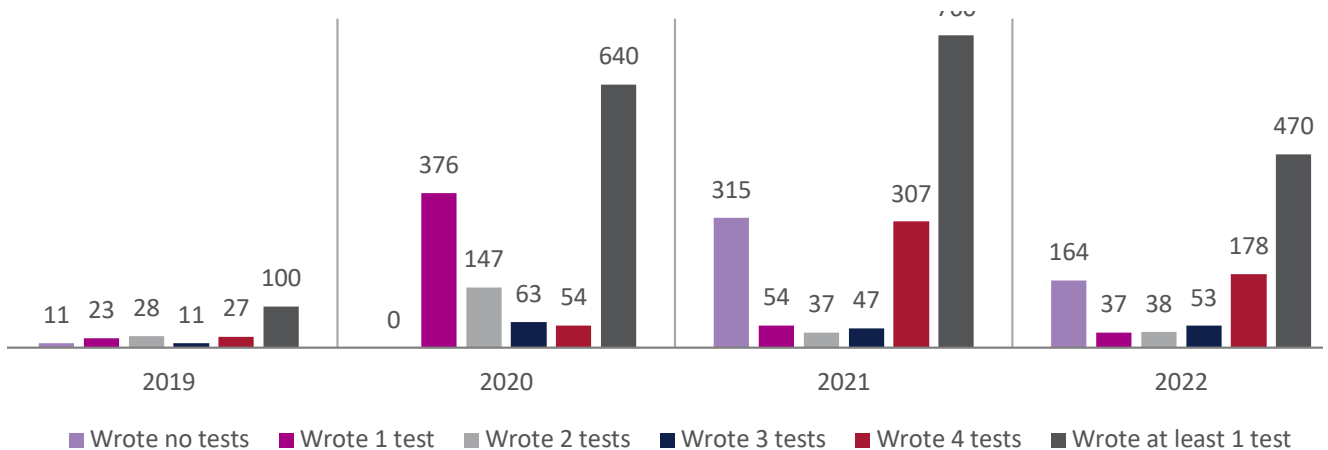


## Student achievement

There was a clear increase in the number of tests written, the percentage of tests passed, and the average score obtained per test through the years.

As illustrated in Figure 6, only 100 students wrote at least one test in 2019, compared to the 640 students in 2020, 760 students in 2021 and 470 students in 2022. Proportionally, only 27% of students who wrote at least one test in 2019 went on to write all four tests, compared to 40% in 2021 and 38% in 2022.

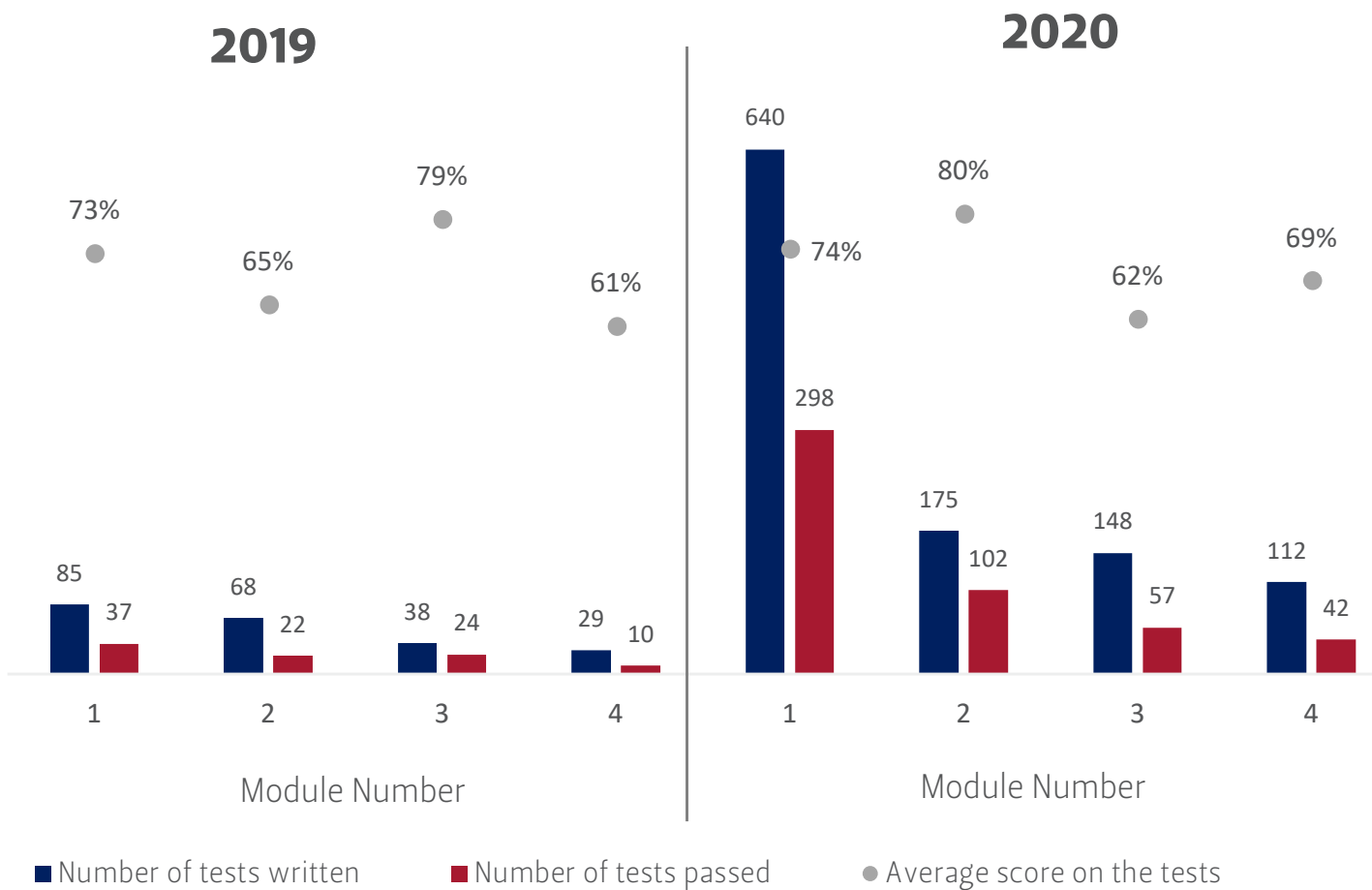
Figure 6: Number of tests written per student



In 2019, fewer than 100 students wrote tests for modules 1 and 2, while fewer than 50 wrote tests for modules 3 and 4. In addition, fewer than 50% of students who wrote tests for modules 1, 2 and 4 passed the tests. In 2020, significantly more students wrote tests for modules 1 to 4, although the pass rates were still low, with fewer than half the students passing the tests for modules 1, 3 and 4 (Figure 7).

In the 2021, 2021 extension, and 2022 cohorts, clear improvements were evident, with over 90% of students passing the tests for all four modules in all groups. The average percentages obtained for the tests through the years also showed a clear increase. Test averages were 80% or below for all modules in 2019 and 2020 but increased to over 85% for all modules in 2021 and 2022. This is an interesting trend given that the pass rate for modules decreased in 2021 – lowering the pass rate did not negatively impact performance.

Figure 7: Number of tests taken, passed and average mark obtained per module



The proportion of registered students actively participating in the programme increased through the years, reaching a peak of 90% for modules 3 and 4 in 2022.



The number of tests written, the percentage of tests passed, and the average score obtained per test increased substantially in 2021 and 2022.

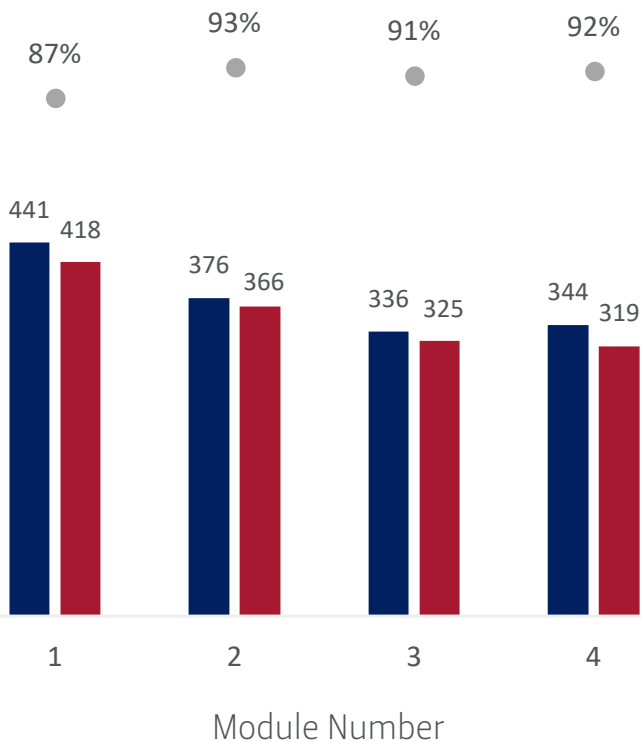


The pass rate peaked at over 90% of tests written across all four modules in 2021 and 2022.

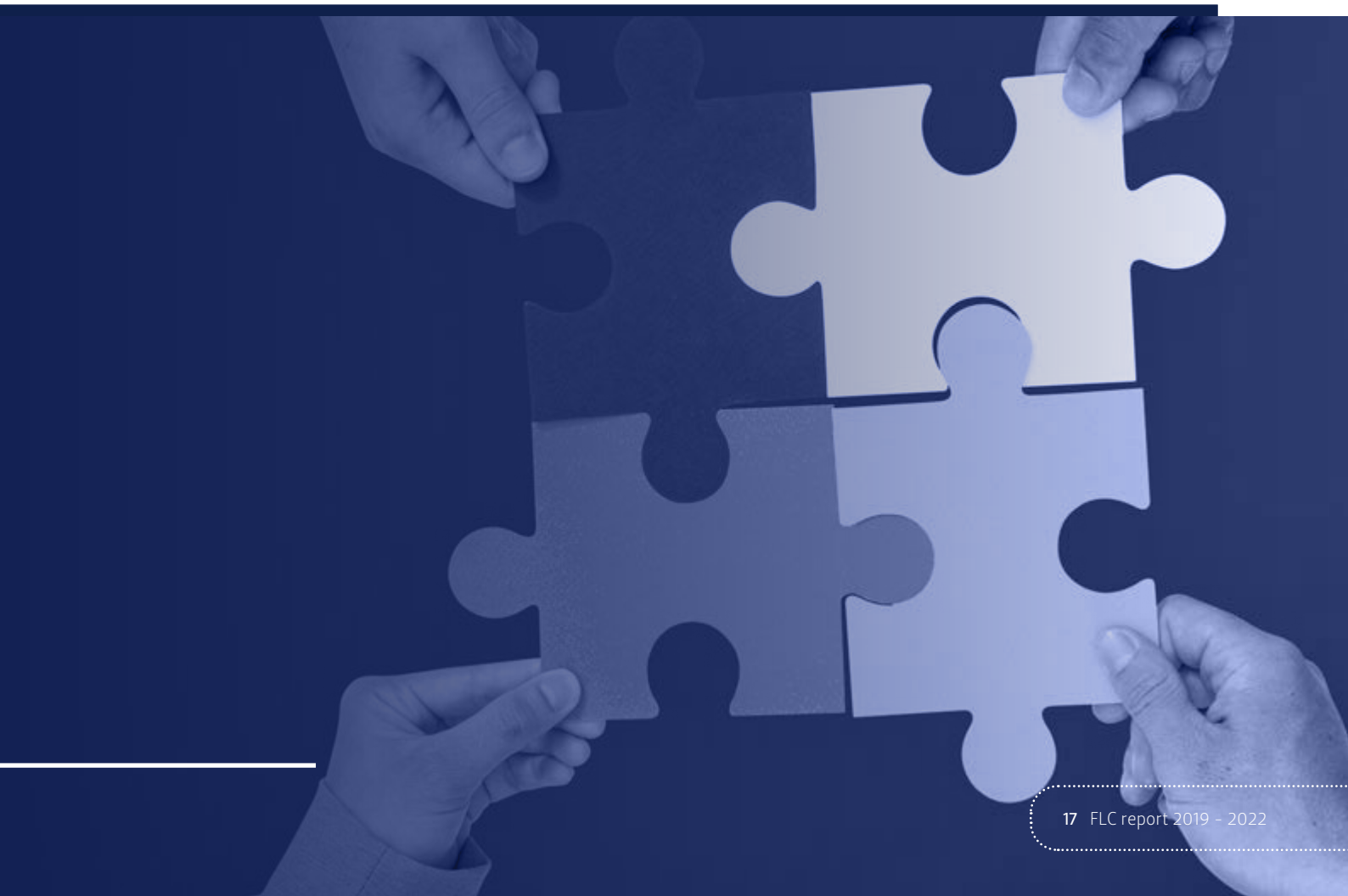
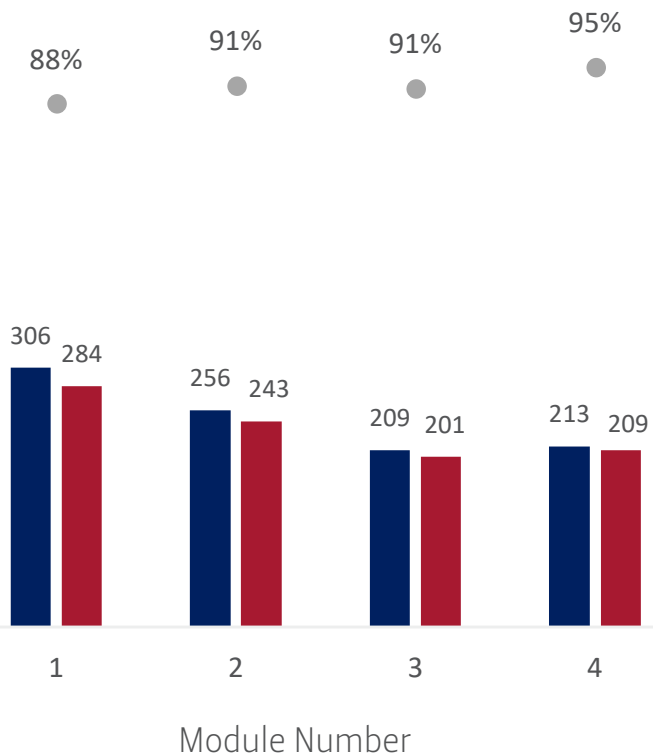


Test averages increased from a maximum of 80% for a module in 2019 and 2020 to over 85% for all four modules in 2021 and 2022.

## 2021



## 2022

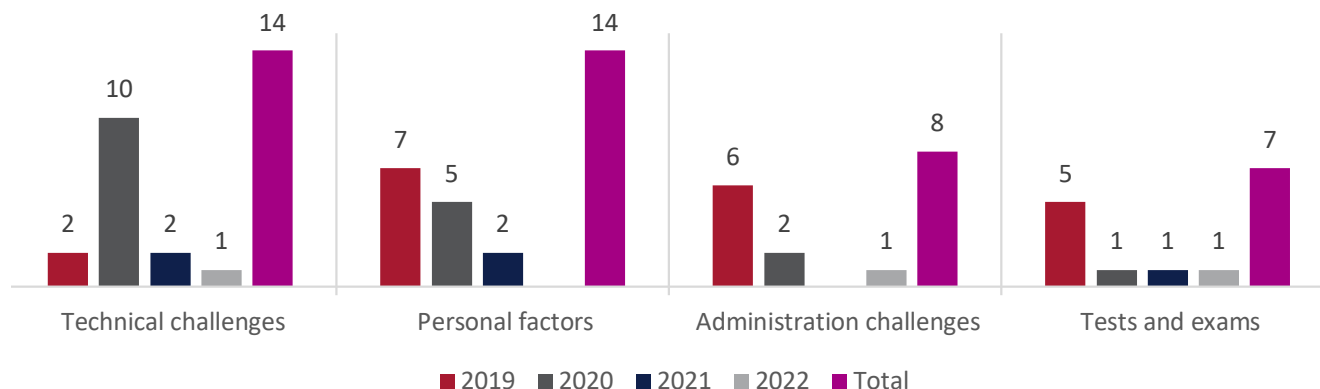


Qualitative feedback provided insight into why students did not complete all the assessments. The two factors that significantly contributed to students not completing (passing) all four modules over the past four years were technical challenges and personal factors (Figure 8).

In terms of technical challenges, nine students reported issues with connectivity over the four years, and three reported that they did not have enough data. Loadshedding was mentioned as a constraint in 2022. However, technical challenges were especially prevalent in 2020. It can be assumed that the reason for the students experiencing so many technical challenges in 2020 was due to them not having access to on-campus facilities such as network connection and data during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Some students found it challenging to adapt during the COVID-19 period. One student reported, “Due to Covid-19, I was struggling very hard with adjusting to online learning, and hence I ended up missing some assessments”.

The biggest administrative challenge experienced by the students was poor communication concerning dates. Students felt they didn’t receive enough reminders regarding due dates. In addition, students reported that the FLC programme module tests were scheduled simultaneously with their other module tests or exams. Therefore, they did not have sufficient time to participate in the FLC programme module tests because the workload was too high, with everything happening simultaneously. That said, most complaints regarding communication and clashes with tests and exams were made in 2019. It seems that these areas of concern were adequately addressed in subsequent years.

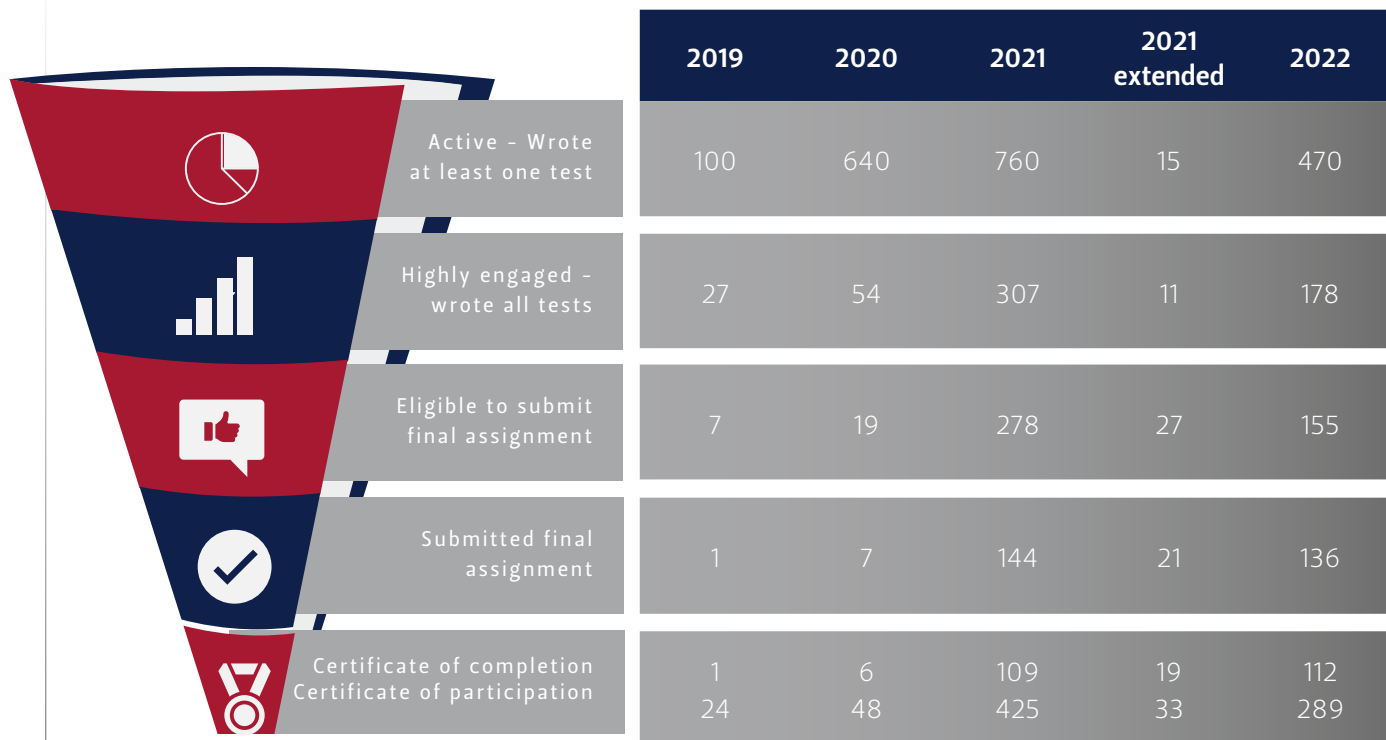
Figure 8: Factors contributing to students not completing all four modules



There was a clear increase in the number of students eligible to submit final assessments in 2021 and 2022 compared to 2019 and 2020 (Figure 9). The number of students eligible to submit final assessments jumped from below 20 in 2019 and 2020 to over 250 in 2021 and over 150 in 2022. The number of submissions also increased sharply from only one in 2019 to 144 and 136 submitted in 2021 and 2022, respectively. Although fewer students submitted final assessments in 2022 than in 2021, the percentage of students passing the final assessments increased from 76% in 2021 to 82% in 2022.

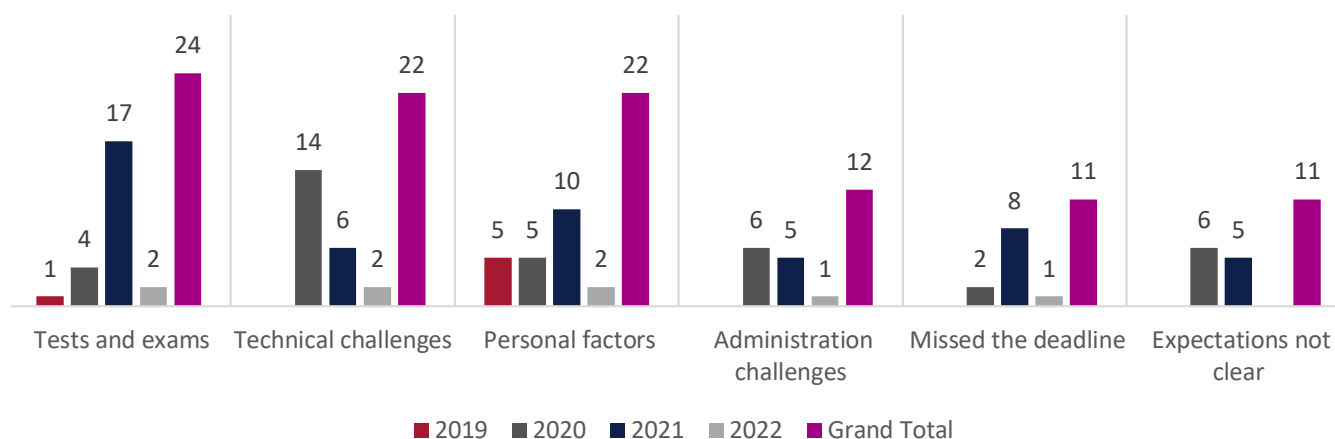


Figure 9: Profile of student participation and achievement



From the qualitative feedback, the most frequently cited reasons for not submitting a portfolio of evidence (PoE) or participating in the FLC journal were related to academic pressures outside of the programme, personal factors and technical challenges (Figure 10). Reasons cited less frequently were unclear expectations, administrative challenges and missing the deadline.

Figure 10. Primary reasons for not submitting a PoE or participating in the FLC journal





“

*Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.*

*Warren Bennis*

”

Students wrote tests and exams and had to submit assignments for their degree courses during the same time that the final assessments were due. As a result, students did not have enough time to participate in the FLC journal.

In addition to academic pressures, several students cited personal factors and technical challenges as reasons for not submitting a PoE or participating in the FLC journal. Personal factors ranged from students not feeling confident enough to participate in the journal, to family problems and commitments, needing to work, and losing their computers due to misplacement and theft.

The reports of technical challenges peaked in 2020 and mostly centred around not having access to the internet due to poor network connectivity and a lack of data. The COVID-19 lockdown period and students not being able to access on-campus facilities no doubt played a role in this regard. Other technical challenges mentioned included being unable to find the submission link to submit the journal and loadshedding.

A smaller number of students noted that they were not clear about what was expected of them regarding the journal, with some students saying that they were unaware they had to submit a journal, while others cited not knowing when it was due (and hence they missed the deadline). In addition, some students mentioned administrative challenges as the reason for not submitting. These challenges included students not receiving any emails regarding the journals and their marks for the other modules not being out yet.

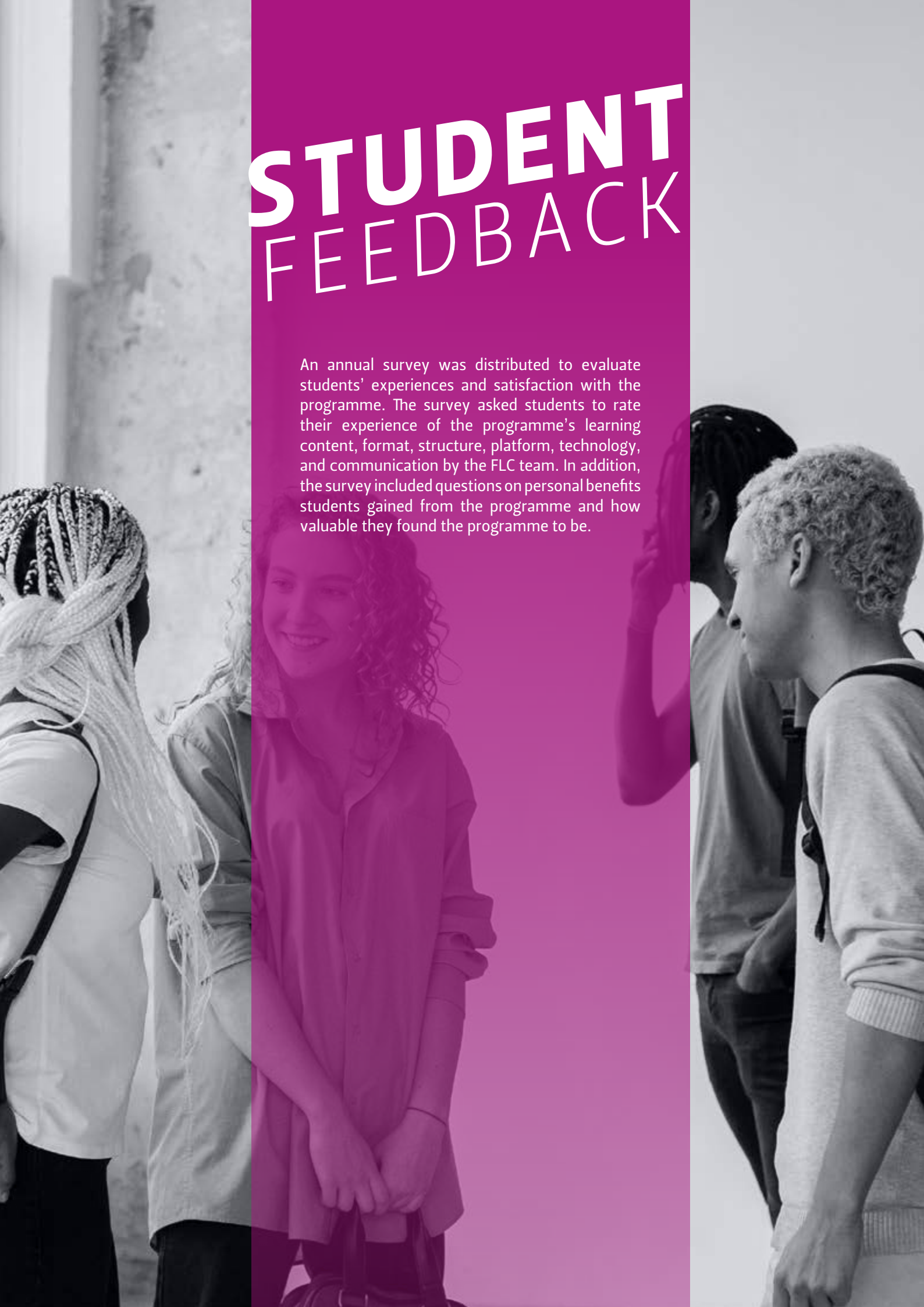
Other reasons for not submitting, mentioned by ten or fewer students, included performing poorly on or not completing modules, not writing all the tests, missing the deadline, being unable to or not wanting to do an interview, and other types of time constraints.

In 2022, the top three performing students in the FLC were acknowledged at the Executive Director's Students Awards (EDSA). The students who received the awards obtained the highest overall marks in the module tests combined with the FLC journal assessments.



# STUDENT FEEDBACK

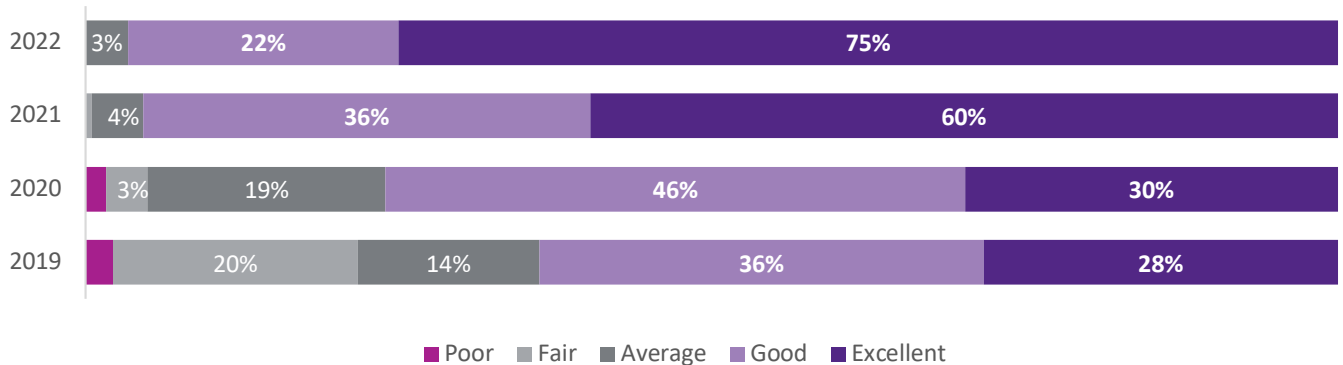
An annual survey was distributed to evaluate students' experiences and satisfaction with the programme. The survey asked students to rate their experience of the programme's learning content, format, structure, platform, technology, and communication by the FLC team. In addition, the survey included questions on personal benefits students gained from the programme and how valuable they found the programme to be.



## Overall experience

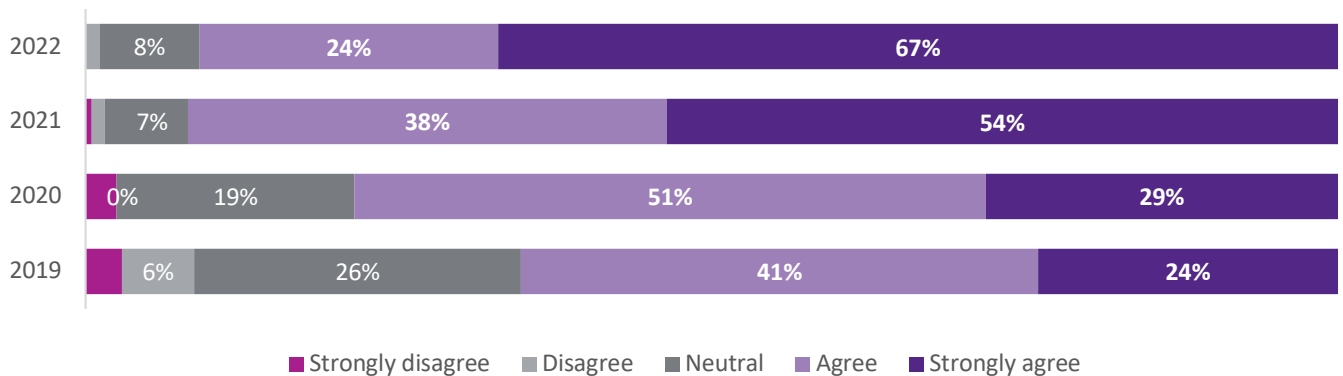
Overall, across all four years, students generally rated the relevancy of themes and content as good or excellent (Figure 11). In 2021 and 2022, over 95% of students rated the themes and content's relevancy as good or excellent, compared to 64% and 76% of students in 2019 and 2020.

Figure 11: Overall impression of the relevancy of themes and content



The same trend was evident for how students experienced the FLC organisation page and lessons, with the percentage of students agreeing that the page and lessons were interesting and fun to engage with increasing from below 70% in 2019 to 80% in 2020, and to above 90% in 2021 and 2022. The administrative challenges experienced on the platform in 2019 due to the large volume of students on the organisation likely played a role in the lower rating in this year.

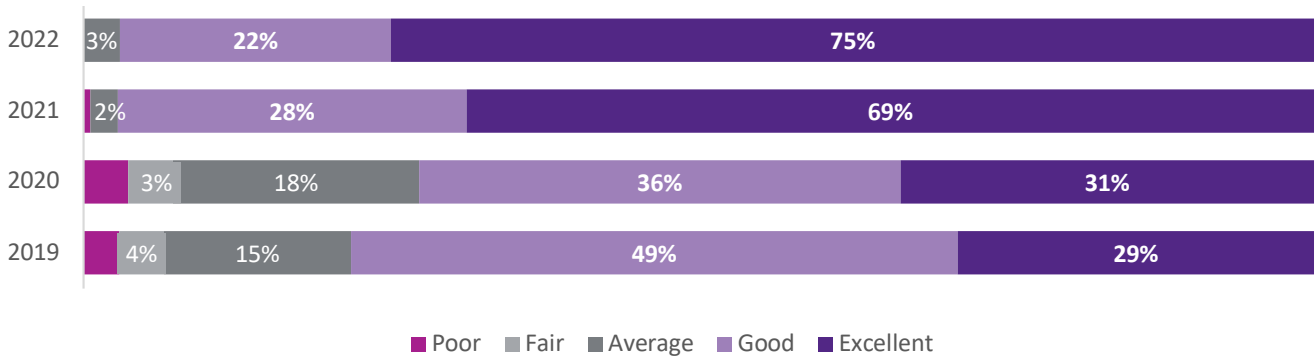
Figure 12: Percentage of students finding the FLC organisation page and lessons interesting and fun



**The FLC programme has consistently received positive ratings for its overall quality.** Students' overall rating of the programme improved significantly in 2021 and 2022. Nearly all students (97%) rated the programme as good or excellent in 2021 and 2022, while less than 80% assigned equally positive ratings to the programme in 2019 and 2020 (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Overall rating of the FLC programme



In line with the positive feedback on the overall quality, relevance and engaging nature of the programme described above, more than 90% of the students indicated that they would recommend the programme to other students in 2019 (94%) and 2021 (97%), and close to 80% of students indicated they would recommend the programme in 2020 and 2022 (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Student likelihood of recommending the FLC programme to others

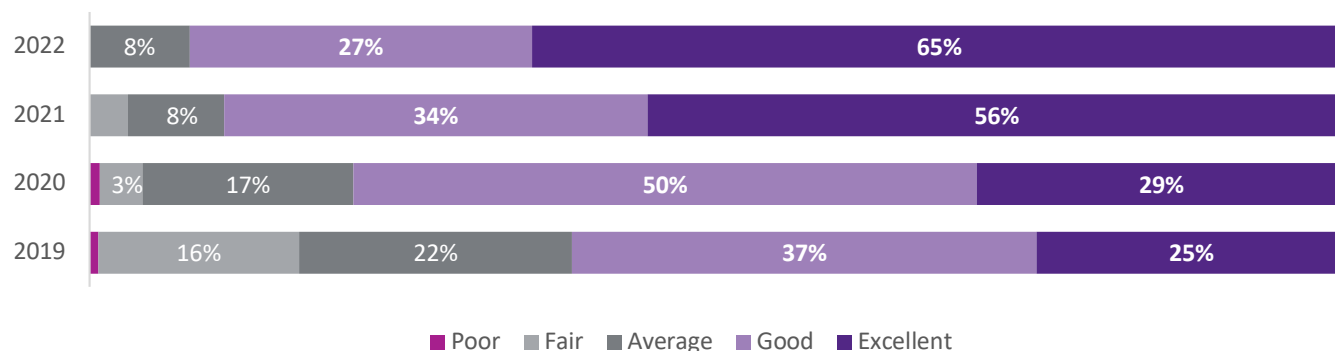




## Content and learning experience

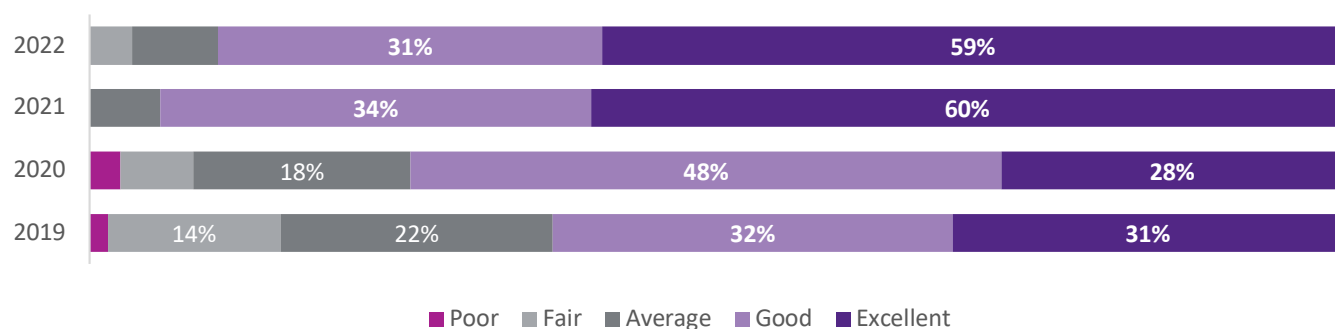
Since 2020, the training content and materials have received consistently high positive ratings, with the percentage rating the levels as good or excellent increasing from 62% in 2019 to 92% in 2022. In addition, in 2022, not one student reported the level of the training content and material as poor or fair (Figure 15).

Figure 15: The level of the training content and material



The quality of the preparatory learning materials has similarly received consistently positive ratings (Figure 16). From 2020 onwards, preparatory learning materials have been rated as either good or excellent by more than 75% of students.

Figure 16: Overall quality of preparatory learning materials



Panel discussions play an important role in the learning programme, and are generally rated to be of high quality and value. In 2021 and 2022, the percentage of students rating the quality and value of expert panel discussions as good or excellent increased by more than 20% compared to 2019 (62%) when the in-person discussions were held. Additionally, the number of students who reported that the quality and value of expert panel discussions were poor or fair decreased from 15% in 2019 to 2% in 2022 (Figure 17). During 2021 and 2022, 90% or more of students indicated that the panel discussions were important to help provide a deeper understanding of concepts (Figure 18).

Figure 17: Quality and value of expert panel discussions

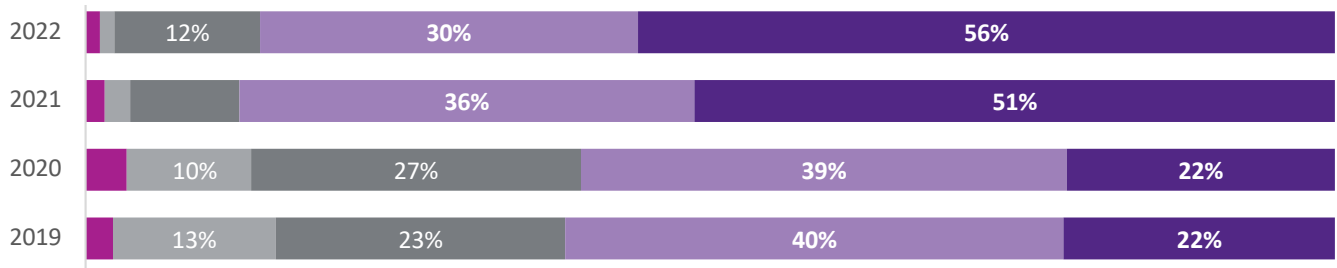
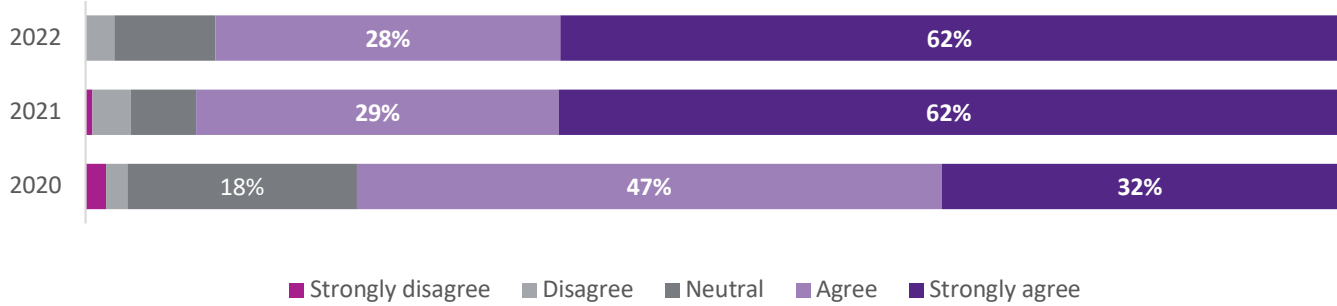


Figure 18: Importance of panels to provide a deeper understanding of concepts



Over the four years, there was a gradual increase in students agreeing that they found the tests to be reasonable. Additionally, there was a significant decrease in students having a neutral opinion on the reasonability of the tests from 2019 (26%) to 2022 (Figure 19). There was a significant increase in 2021 (90%) and 2022 (91%) in students agreeing that the session and test deadlines are accommodating, compared to 2019 (67%) and 2020 (68%) (Figure 20).

Figure 19: Percentage of students who found the tests to be reasonable

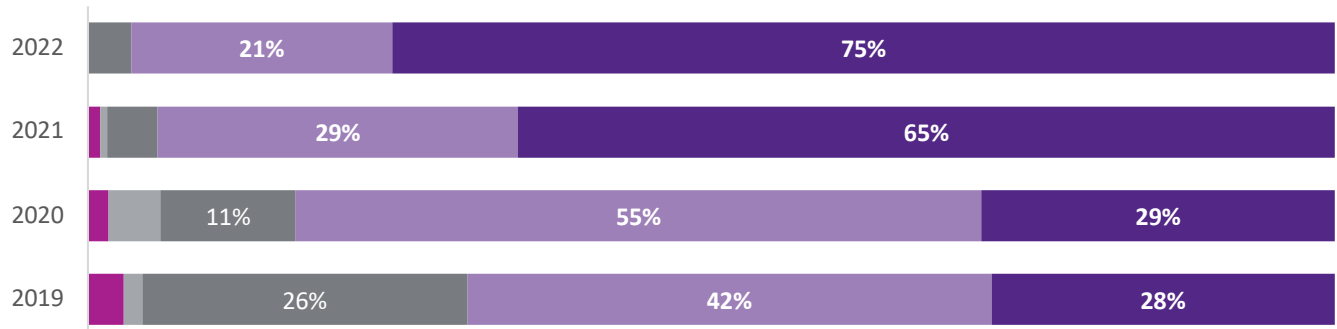
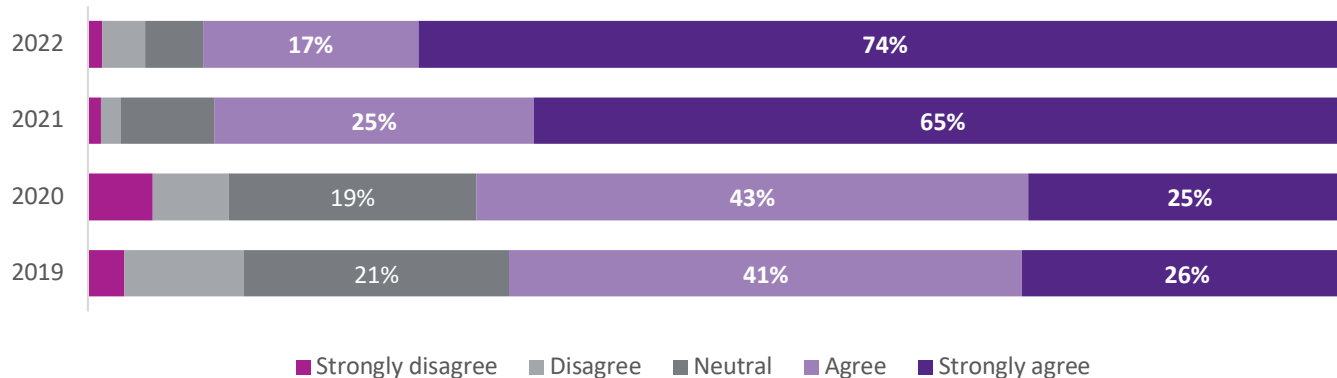


Figure 20: The session and test deadlines are accommodating

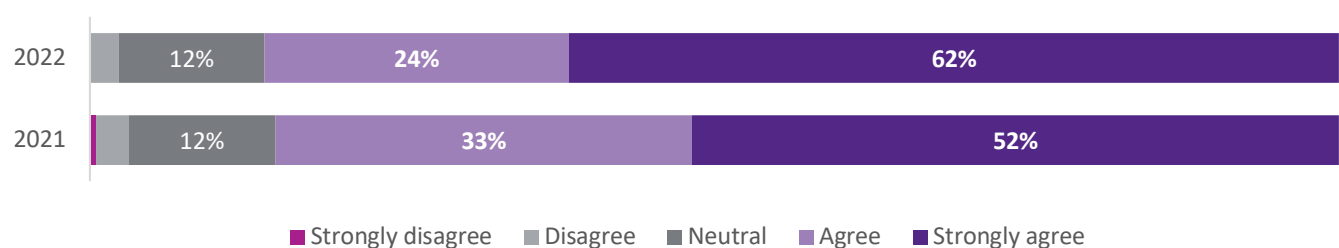


Students were mostly positive about the level of the FLC journal questions and the expected application of the knowledge gained in 2021 and 2022, with more than 80% rating the level as good or excellent in both years (Figure 21). In addition, the vast majority of students in 2021 (85%) and 2022 (86%) agreed that the FLC journal provided an opportunity to apply the learning concepts practically (Figure 22).

Figure 21: Level of the FLC journal questions and expected application of the knowledge gained



Figure 22: FLC journal as an opportunity for practical application of the learning concepts



### Module outcomes

Overall, students found the module outcomes to be clear, and in a high proportion of cases reported that the module outcomes were achieved. Although the module outcomes were clear to most students in 2020 (83%), this percentage increased considerably in 2021 and 2022, with almost all students in the latter two years indicating that the module outcomes were clear (96% in both years) (Figure 23). In addition, the percentage of students who agreed that the module outcomes were achieved increased from below 70% in 2019 to above 90% in 2021 and 2022 (Figure 24).

Figure 23: The module outcomes were clear

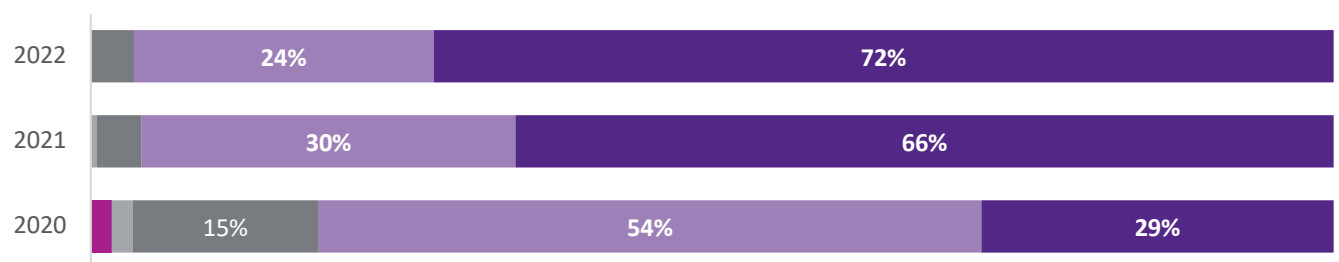
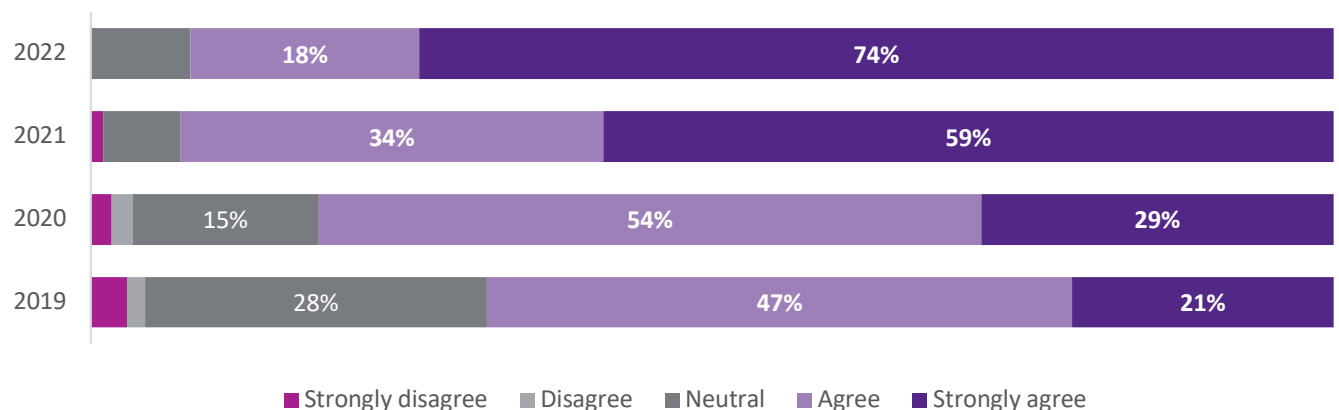


Figure 24: The module outcomes were achieved



Overall, students reported that the programme challenged their views and beliefs about leadership, that they gained new knowledge and skills around leadership through the programme, and indicated that they would be able to apply what they learnt in the programme.

In 2021, there was a significant increase in the percentage of students who agreed that their views and beliefs about leadership were challenged by the training sessions (85%), compared to 2019 (59%) and 2020 (68%) (Figure 25).

The percentage of students who agreed that they gained new knowledge and insight regarding leadership skills through the programme increased steadily through the years, from 76% in 2019 to 97% in 2022 (Figure 26).

Figure 25: Percentage of students whose views and beliefs about leadership were challenged

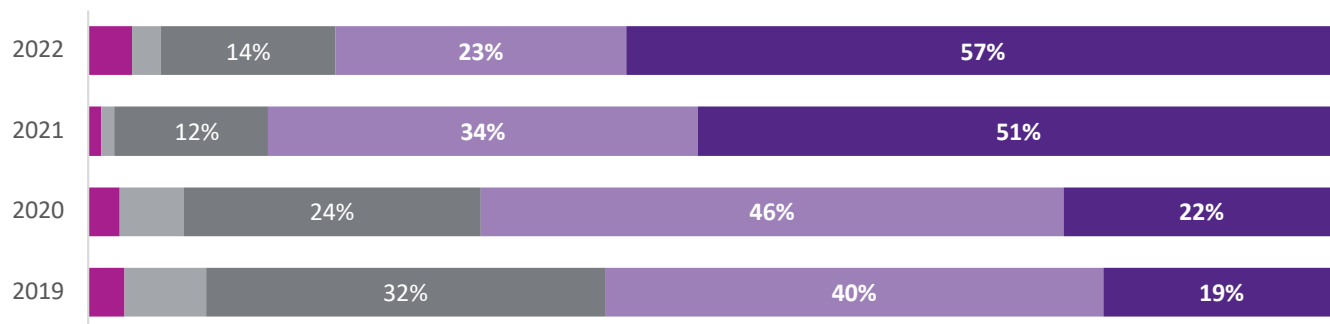
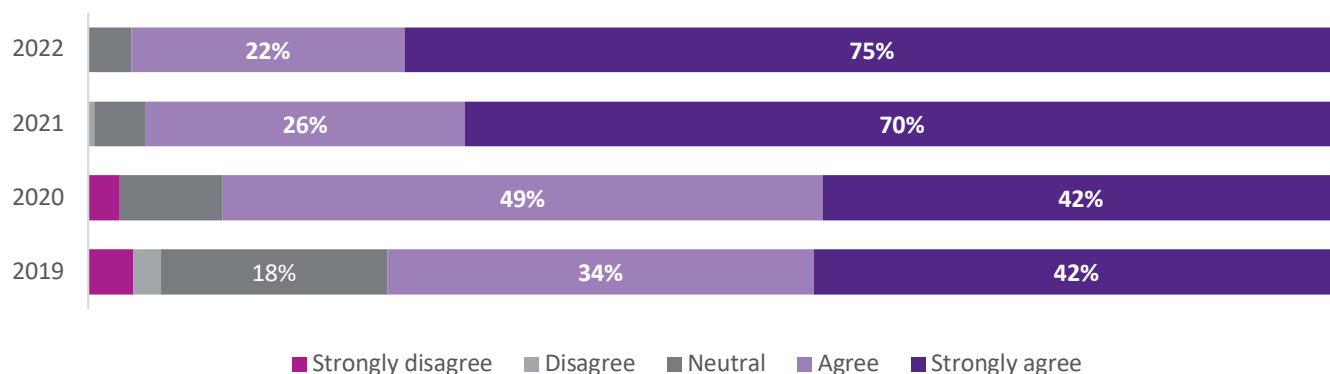


Figure 26: Percentage of students who gained new knowledge and insight regarding leadership



“

*I have learn a lot things, like using reflective thinking and design in solving [problems]. The way I see things now, I can proudly say I have changed.*

*Student feedback*

”

In all four years of the programme at least three-quarters of students indicated that they would be able to apply what they learnt in the student community, their future career or more broadly within society. However, over all four years, a fluctuation was evident in the number of students reacting positively to the statement that they would be able to apply what they have learnt. It was not clear from the qualitative feedback what the reasons for these fluctuations were (Figure 27).

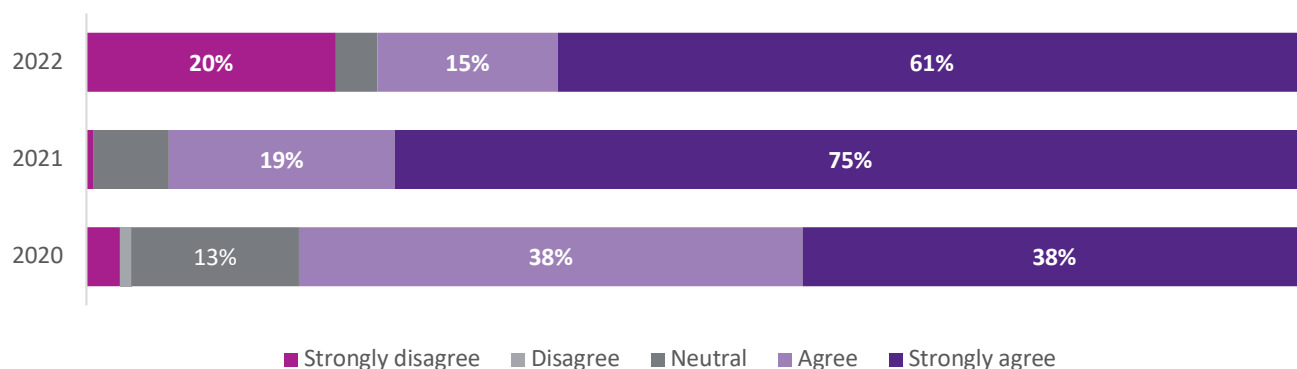
Figure 27: Application in student community, future career, and society





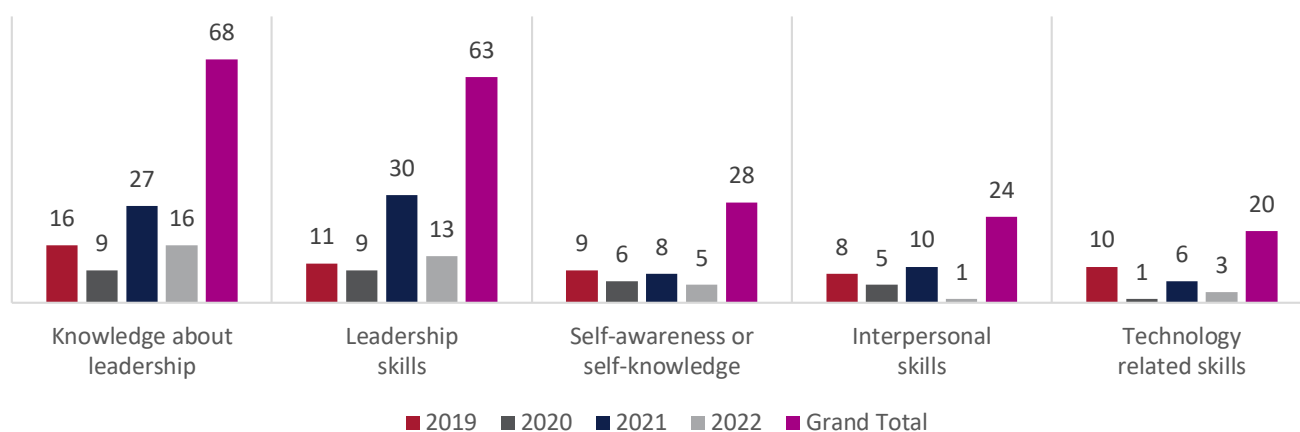
**At least three-quarters of students participating in the programme indicated that they were inspired to pursue leadership development in the future (Figure 28)**

Figure 28: Percentage of students who were inspired to pursue further leadership development



Students were asked to describe what they gained from the programme in a qualitative question. Students most frequently responded that they gained knowledge about leadership and leadership skills. Other often-mentioned gains include interpersonal skills, self-awareness or self-knowledge, technology-related skills, self-management knowledge, and emotional intelligence (Figure 29).

Figure 29: Personal gains from the leadership training programme



In addition to the above, it is encouraging to note that, when asked what was least valuable about the leadership training programme, the most frequent response (by 71% of students who provided a response) was that nothing was not valuable. In the survey’s general comments and recommendations section, students most frequently responded with positive comments. They complimented the programme in general and emphasised how helpful they found it.

## Online experience

Prior to 2020 the FLC programme included online and in-person aspects. In 2019, 68% of students felt that contact discussions were necessary, although in a follow-up question, 53% of the students indicated they preferred watching the recorded discussion sessions online, and 28% did not prefer online or in-person sessions.

When the FLC was moved fully online in 2020 (even prior to the pandemic), one of the motivating factors was improving the convenience of participation for students. **Since the start of the programme, there has been a consistent and substantial increase in the number of students finding the online learning format to be convenient**, from 69% in 2019 to 93% in 2022 (Figure 30).

Figure 30: Convenience of the online learning platform

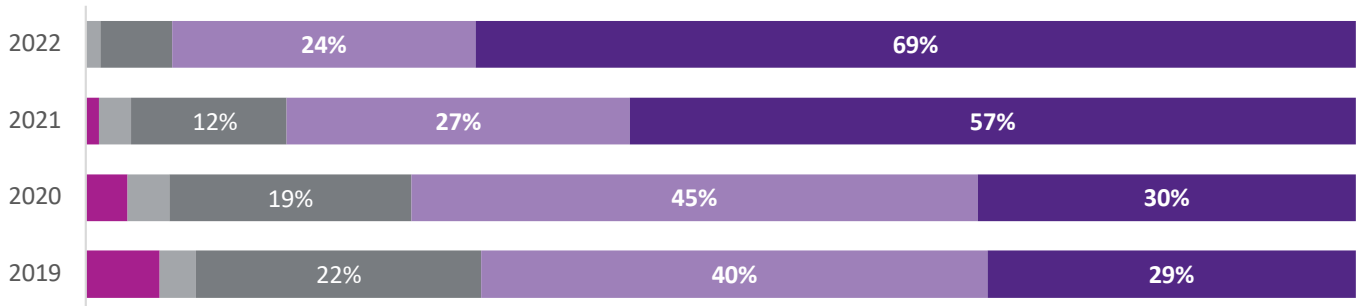


Figure 31: Ease of access to the FLC organisation

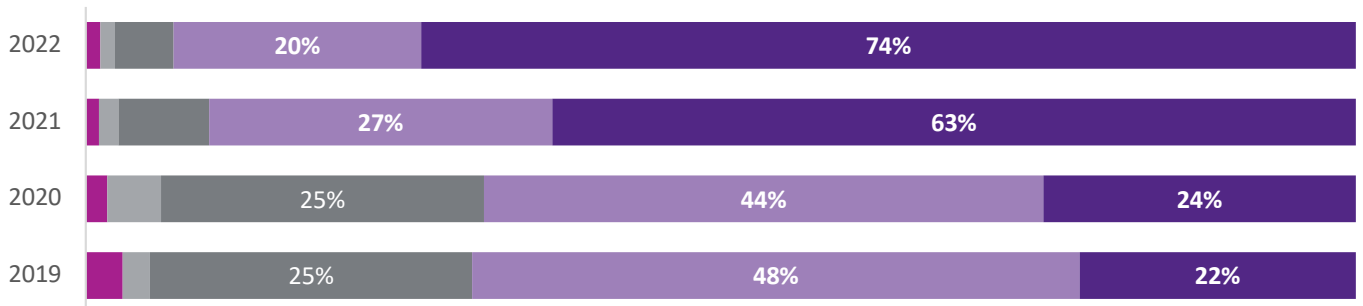


Figure 32: Ease of navigating the FLC organisation/page

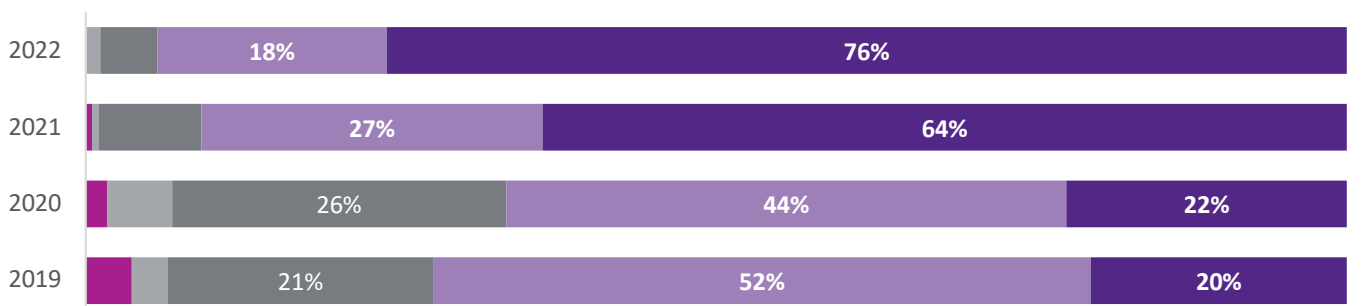
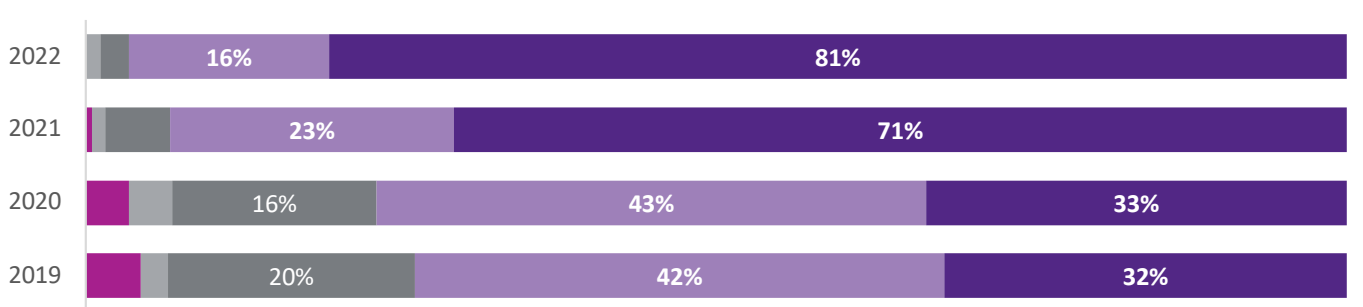


Figure 33: Percentage of students who found it easy to access and take the online test



■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

**The online platform has also improved in terms of ease of access to the FLC organisation, ease of navigation, and ease of taking the online tests.** There was a significant increase in the percentage of students who experienced ease of access to the FLC organisation in 2021 (90%) and 2022 (94%), compared to 2019 (70%) and 2020 (68%) (Figure 31). A considerably greater percentage of students found it easy to navigate the FLC organisation and page in 2021 and 2022 (above 90% in both years) compared to 2019 (72%) and 2020 (66%) (Figure 32). Similarly, students found it significantly easier to access and take the online test in 2022 (97%) and 2021 (94%) compared to 2019 (74%) and 2020 (76%) (Figure 33).

The FLC has consistently been working towards continuous improvement of the online experience. Furthermore, it is likely that the compulsory shift to a virtual world following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 forced students to improve their online skills, resulting in them being more comfortable in an online space and finding it easier to navigate the online world in 2021. Both of these factors likely contributed to the improved online experience for students in the FLC.

“

*I found the entire online platform to be exceptional. I enjoyed the online material and found that, being presented with the material online, I could peruse on my own, learn from it more and engage with the content more thoroughly. If the course did not have this online aspect, I would not have bothered to participate whatsoever.*

”

Students were asked to provide qualitative feedback on what the most effective aspects of the online programme was in terms of the system and technology. In their feedback students most frequently mentioned the online tests as the most effective aspect of the online programme in terms of the system and technology. Numerous students mentioned that they found all aspects of the online programme effective. In particular, the video recordings of the panel discussions were mentioned frequently. The accessibility of the materials, the convenience of working online and the user-friendly design of the organisation emerged as themes from the qualitative analysis. The selection of Blackboard as the platform for the programme was also identified as an effective technology (Figure 34).

Figure 34: Aspects of online programme students found most effective in terms of the system and technology

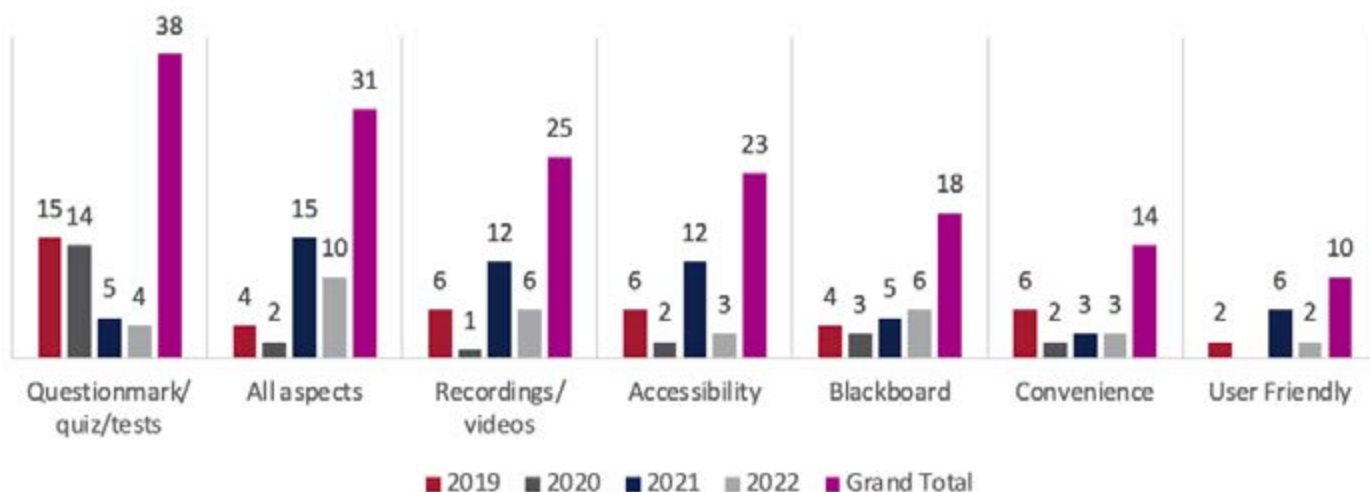
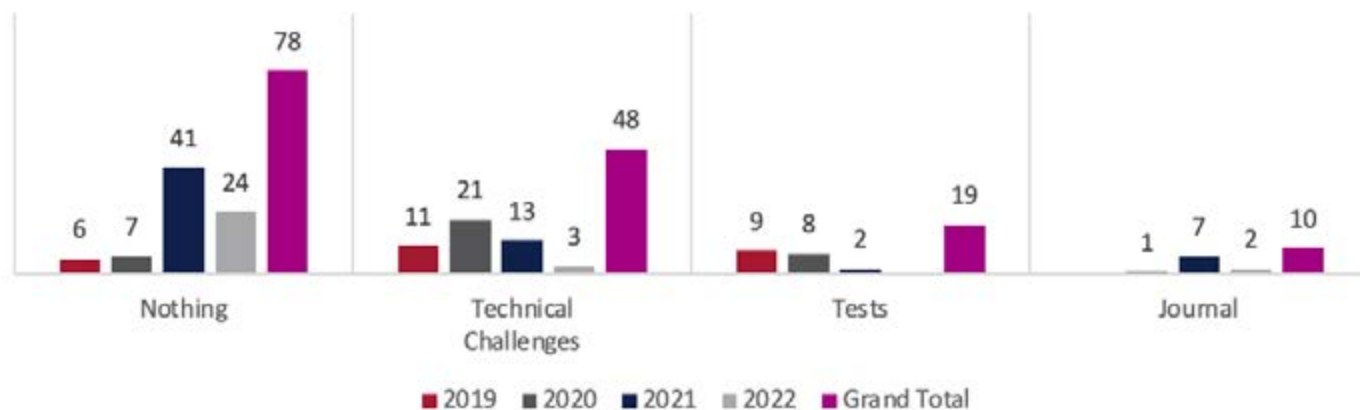


Figure 35: Aspects of online programme students found most challenging in terms of the system and technology



It is also encouraging to note that, when asked which aspects of the programme students found most frustrating in terms of the system and technology, the most frequent response was “nothing”. That said, 45 students did indicate that they experienced technical challenges, with the number of students reporting technical challenges peaking in 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. The technical challenges students reported were mostly similar to those discussed in other sections of the report – data, network connectivity and loadshedding. In addition, 19 said they found the tests challenging, and 10 found the journal challenging or frustrating (Figure 35). Very little detail was provided in the qualitative responses as to which aspects of the journal or tests were challenging for students from a systems/technology perspective.



# CONCLUSION

As is demonstrated in this report, the programme's evolution through the years has gone hand-in-hand with improvements in student participation, achievement, and general satisfaction, especially salient in 2021 and 2022.

An orientation towards continuous improvement has been adopted within the programme implementation team, which has contributed towards these positive trends. Students are provided an annual opportunity to share their recommendations and suggestions for the programme. Student feedback has been taken on board annually and has informed several of the adaptations within the programme over the years.

Across the four years, the students' recommendations in the feedback survey mostly related to the modality of programme delivery, improving communication, needing more time, the timing of module tests, advertising, and programme awareness.

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DITABA TSA BAIHUTHI  
STUDENT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Table 4: Student recommendations for programme improvement: 2019 - 2022

MODALITY OF DELIVERY	COMMUNICATION	TIMING RELATED	PROGRAMME AWARENESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Include <b>in-person engagements</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More communication around <b>due dates</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>More time</b> to complete activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More <b>extensive advertising</b> so that more students can benefit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adding more <b>practical components</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ More frequent <b>reminders</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Avoid <b>scheduling</b> programme tests around curricular tests/exams</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Adding additional <b>videos</b></li> </ul>			

Some of the recommendations made by students have already been incorporated. For example, the timing of module tests appears to have been most challenging in 2019. Students asked for more time to complete activities given their busy schedules and to schedule the contact sessions at more convenient times for students. Although this seems to have been adequately addressed in subsequent years, consideration should still be given in future to not schedule module tests simultaneously with other tests or exams. The addition of the extended programme, where students can complete in two years, will also help address some of the challenges students experienced related to academic and personal pressures that prevented them from completing the programme.

In-depth interviews with programme staff highlighted future opportunities for further developing the programme. Several are in line with the recommendations and suggestions made by the students. There is an opportunity to consider a hybrid approach now that the COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. The convenience and benefits of the online programme have been clearly demonstrated in this report; however, some in-person engagements can add value.

Although the report has demonstrated that students still find the content relevant, given that the same four themes have been taught for the past four years, consideration will be given to reforming and enhancing the curriculum to ensure content stays relevant. This could entail introducing new themes, and/or expanding the course to include different levels of expertise and complexity. Students would need to pass prior levels to access the more complex levels.

Additional mechanisms to recognise students who excel in the programme should be considered. One way is to give students recognition for achievement on their certificates instead of only issuing certificates indicating completion. Recognition can also be given in the form of virtual international exchange opportunities for students who excel in the programme. Having the course form part of students' degree transcripts can also be of great value to students, especially when they apply for employment in the future.

From a programme implementation perspective, improvements are in progress to improve data management practices. This will help ease some of the administrative burden linked to monitoring student engagement and achievement and enable mechanisms to be put in place to ensure that only students who qualify for reassessment or follow-up modules are able to access and complete said modules.

Additional human resource capacity could be considered to help ease the burden of marking the journals. Postgraduate students could be engaged on a part-time, short-term basis to assist.







*In conclusion, the FLC's evolution into its current format was accompanied by clear improvements in student participation, achievement and general satisfaction. Although there are plans for growth and further evolution, the programme can be deemed successful and, in students' own words,*

***“an amazing experience”,***

***“excellent”,***

***and “the best programme ever”.***

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**Kovsies**

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