Building first year undergraduate provisioning through strategic institutional research: The Wits case study

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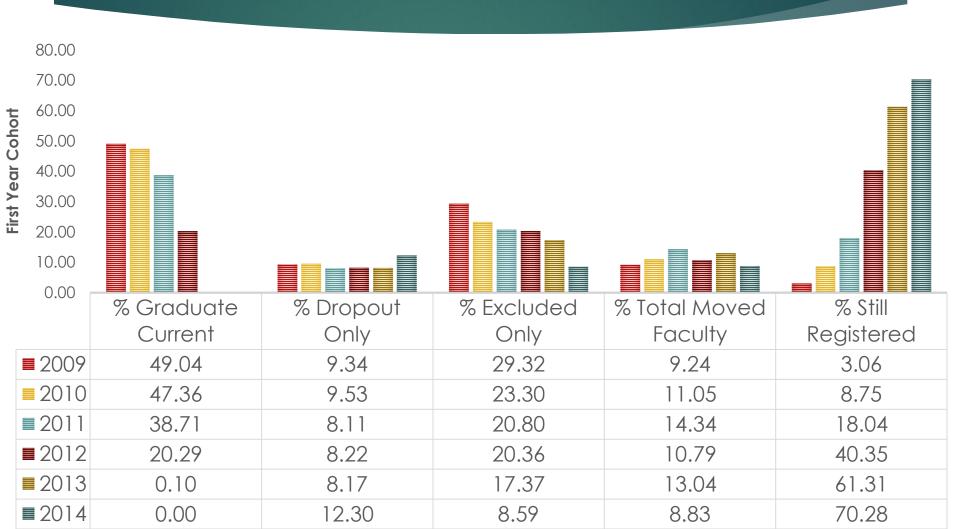


Background Information

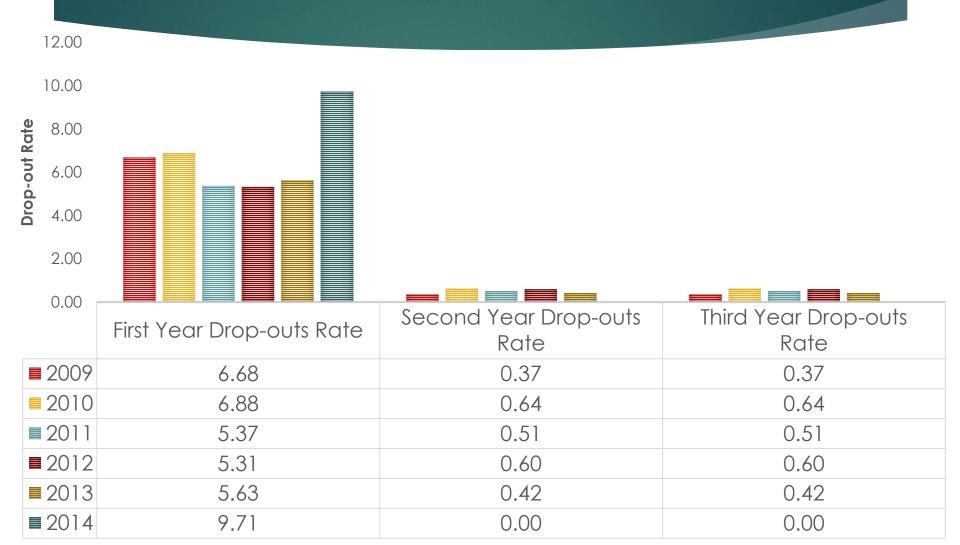
Various factors contribute to unpleasant first-year student experience

- Transition from high school to university
- High school preparedness and University performance
- Financial recourses
- Anxiety and motivation
- University support mechanisms
- Epistemological access

Background Information



Background Information



Methodology – Critical Questions

- What is the nature of the student experience, perception gained through interacting with the University prior to enrolment as firstyear students at Wits?
- What is the nature of the student experience, perception gained by students upon entering Wits in 2013?
- Are students satisfied with nature of administrative and support services that they receive during their first year at Wits?
- Are students satisfied with the nature of and access to facilities that are made available to support academic activities and student social life on campus?
- How satisfied are students with the educational and institutional experience they receive during their first year at Wits?

Conceptual Framework

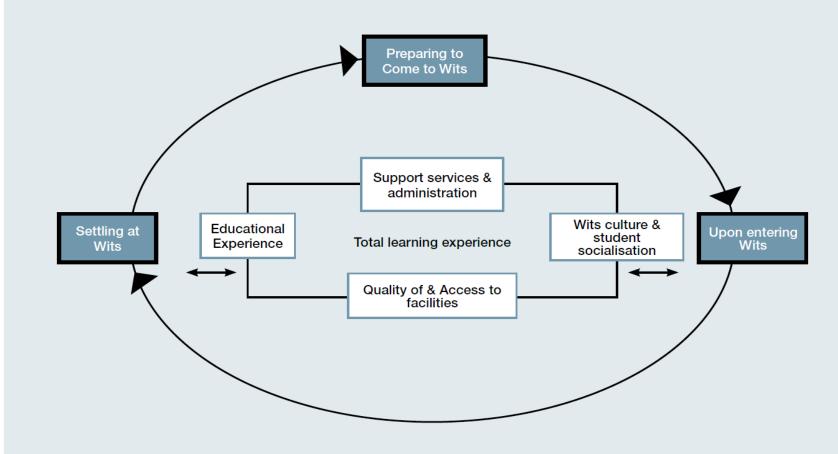


Figure 1: The Wits Model of Student Satisfaction with the First-year Experience

Methodology – Research Design & Sample

- Survey targeted all Wits undergraduate first-year first-time students
- Web-based survey platform
- Quantitative and qualitative questions

Methodology – Research Design & Sample

	2011	2012	2013
New to Wits	5575	4887	4 782
Survey participants	747	989	462
Participation rate (%)	13.40%	20.24%	9.66%

Excludes dropouts

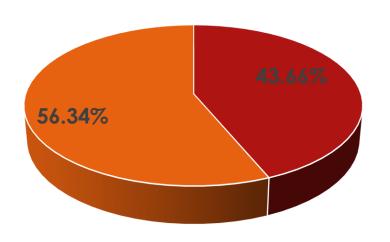
Benefits of the study

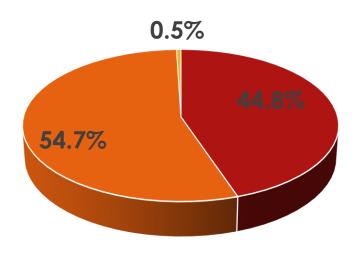
- Influence expectations and perceptions of other students
- An improved quality of service and total learning experience at Wits
- Enhanced responsiveness through strategic planning
- An indication of future student success and throughput
- The nurturing of a long-lasting graduate sense of pride and attachment to Wits
- Contribution to reduced dropout rates

Student Demographics

Overall gender profile

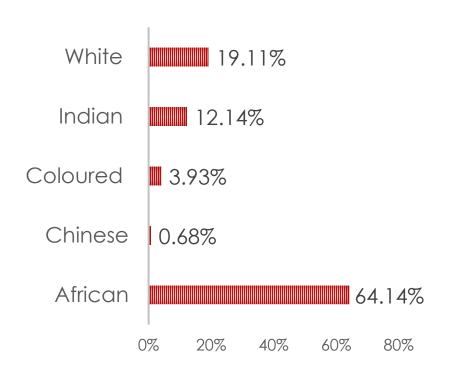
Respondents gender profile



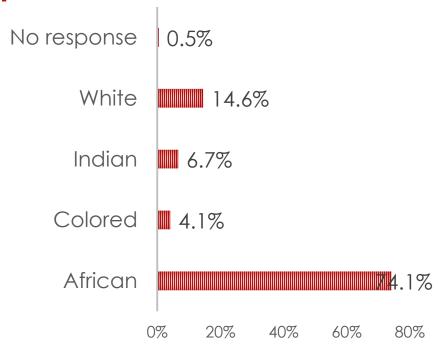


Student Demographics

Overall Race profile



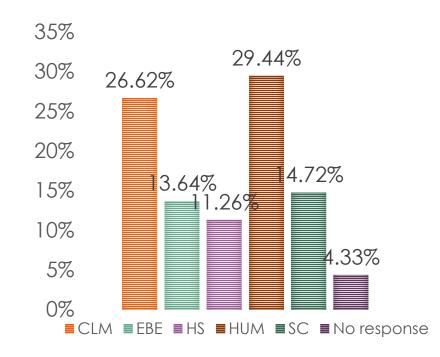
Respondents race profile



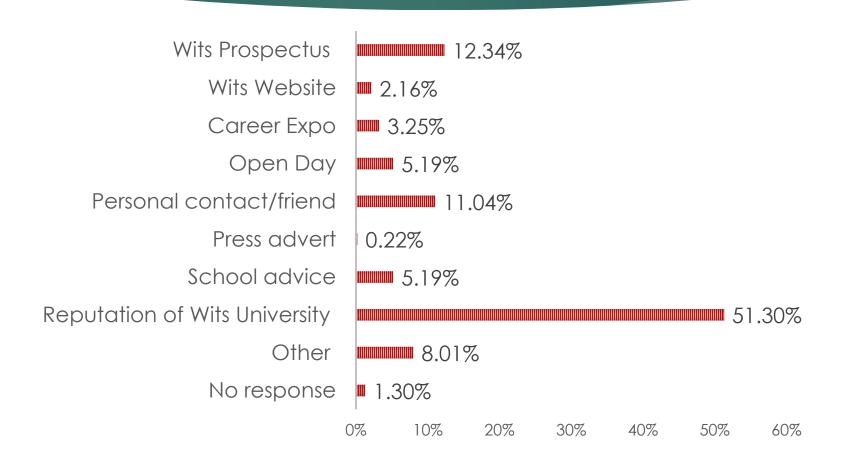
Student Demographics

Overall profile by Faculty

Respondents profile by Faculty



Why do students choose Wits?

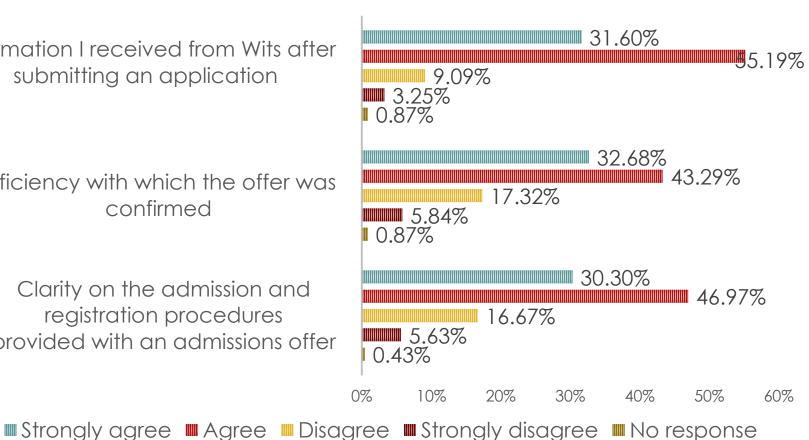


Applying to Wits

Information I received from Wits after submitting an application

Efficiency with which the offer was confirmed

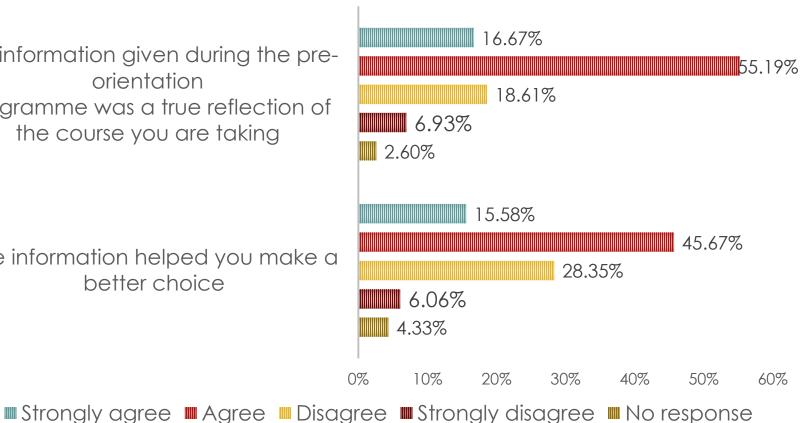
Clarity on the admission and registration procedures provided with an admissions offer



Upon Joining Wits — Pre-registration orientation

The information given during the preorientation programme was a true reflection of the course you are taking

The information helped you make a better choice



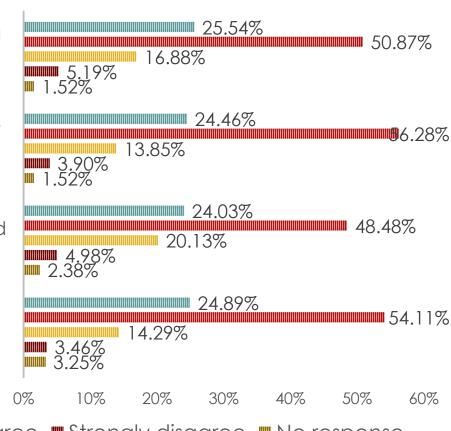
Upon Joining Wits – Registration

The procedures I went through during registration at the beginning of the year

The provision of information during the orientation week at Wits

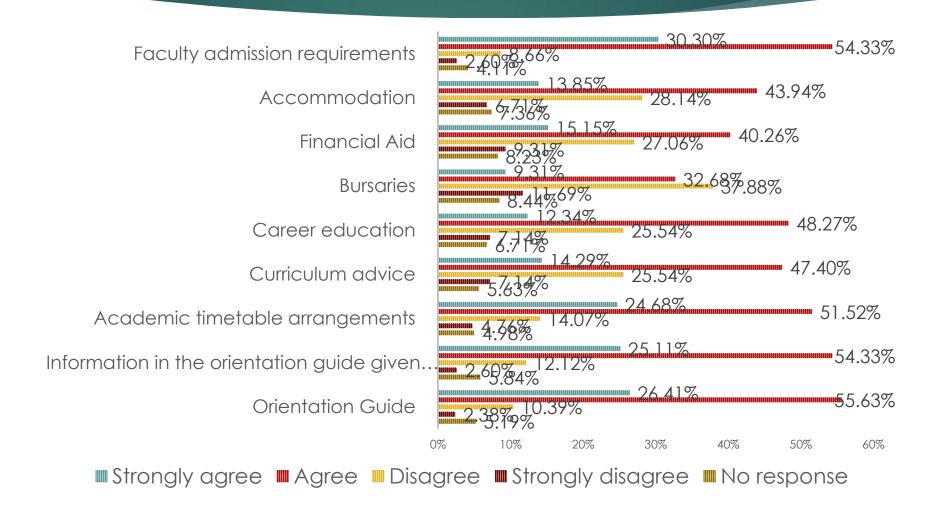
The usefulness of information provided during my orientation week

The general arrangements for the induction and welcome



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ No response

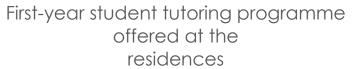
Upon Joining Wits- Orientation Week ("O-Week")



Settling-in at Wits - Accommodation

Satisfied

Dissatisfied

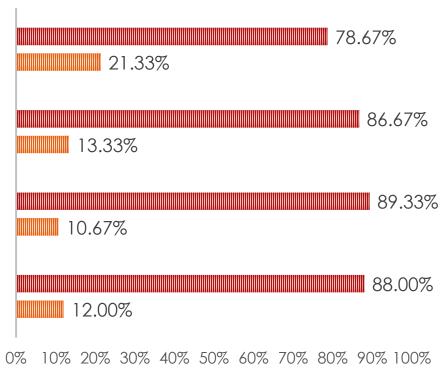


The quality of student accommodation

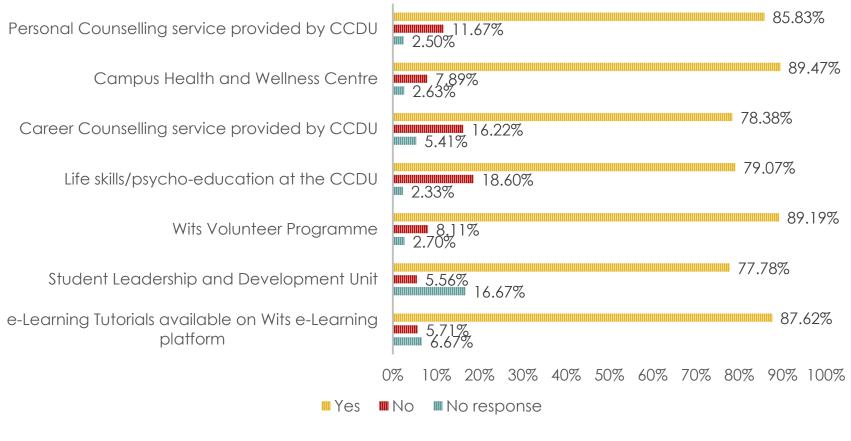
The quality of the advice and help offered by
University accommodation staff

the arrangements for providing stude

The arrangements for providing student accommodation



Settling in at Wits — Psycho-social Support

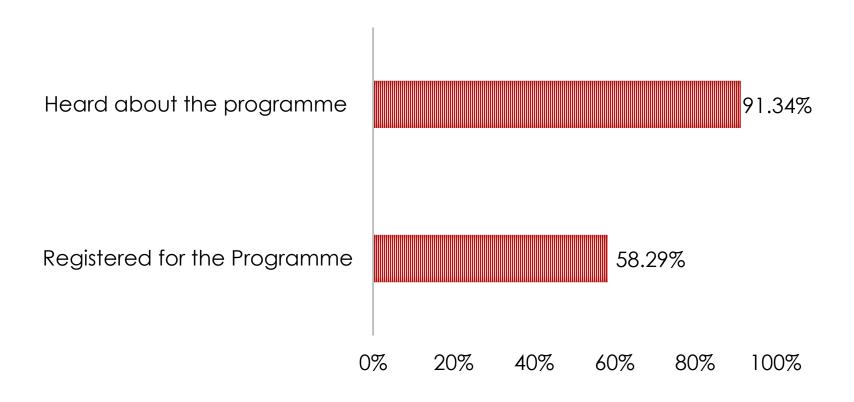


The First Year Experience Programme (FYE)

An attempt to mitigate the risks that first-year students face, includes:

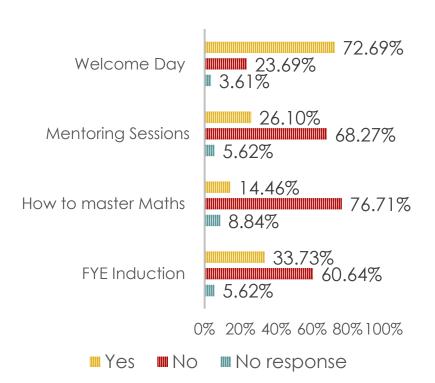
- Student counseling services
- Devolved academic development programmes
- e-Learning tutorials
- First-year students tutoring programme @ residences

Participation in the FYE

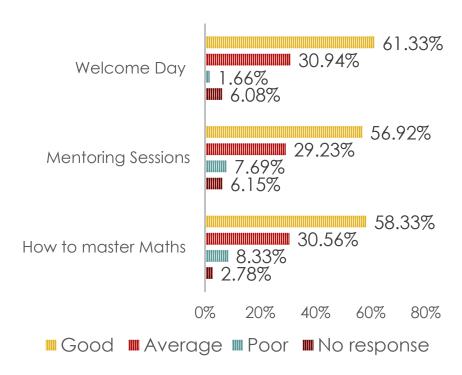


Experience of the FYE Modules

Sessions attended

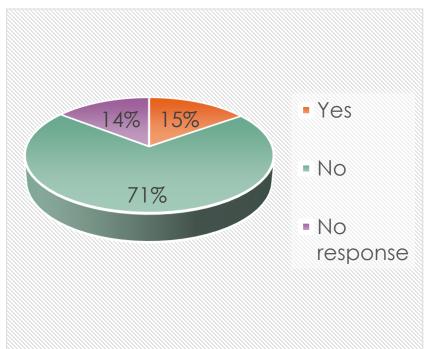


Rate of overall experience

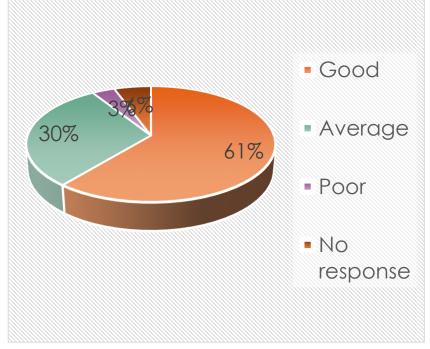


Participation in Voluntary Programs

Participation in modules



Module experience rating



Voluntary Modules

- Winter Leadership Camp (An Emerging Leaders Programme)
- Coping with Exam Anxiety
- Exam Preparations Ukufunda
- Writing skills and note taking
- Stress Management
- Career Development
- What to do after lectures

- Copyright and Plagiarism
- FYE Camp
- Computer Skills
- Community engagement
- Personal Action Plans
- How to master Chemistry
- Time Management and Balance
- Ukufunda Study Skills

Expectations of the FYE Programme

Did you know what to expect Learn about how to adjust to university Learn how to cope with studies Learn new study skills Mentoring Tutorina Orientation to university Sporting activities **Entertainment activities** Career guidance Help with language difficulties Help with computer skills Help with academic difficulties To meet other first year students



Difficulties with attending the Programme

- Weekends are an inconvenience
- Did not get any notification about the events
- Off-campus accommodation
- Events clash with the academic timetable

Settling-in at Wits – Institutional Culture

9.52% 36%

6.49% 14%

15.58% 7.58%

11.26% 36%

7.14%11.90%

7.79%.01%

9.96%7.79%

8.23%8.87%

15.80% 9.31%

80%

9.09%

7.79%

100%

I feel welcome and accepted at Wits 83.12% I am proud to be studying at Wits 86.36% I am free to express my views and opinions at Wits 76.84% I think Wits is tolerant of races 81.39% I think Wits is tolerant of creeds 80 95% I think Wits is tolerant of religions 84.20% I think Wits is tolerant of political views 82 25% I think Wits is tolerant of sexual orientations 82.90% In everything Wits does, it primarily seeks to... 66.88% 24.03% I feel that Wits provides platforms for students to.. 69.26% 22.94% Wits fosters interaction between various races.... 74.89% 20% 40% 60%

Dissatisfied

■ No response

■ Satisfied

Research Findings

Areas that need special attention and strategic investment of resources:

- becoming more student-centred to improve the student experience of first-year students
- exploring more mechanisms to reduce the drop-out rate and improve student throughput
- improving the quality of feedback on student assessment tasks for purposes of enhancing learning
- developing understood principles of teaching and learning premised on student-centeredness

Research Findings...

- improving the quality of student support across all professional and administrative services
- putting in place mechanisms mitigating against the high first-year drop-out rate
- improving student participation in the Wits First-Year Experience Programme
- providing guaranteed University residence accommodation to all first-year students
- helping students to develop better studying skills to cope with curriculum demands in their individual programmes

an ambition to educate global citizens with critical thinking skills and a rich knowledge base – should be premised on good-quality resources, a vibrant culture and an embracing institutional culture. If the University is able to create an educational environment that helps first-year

students become successful in their studies, it

becoming an institution of intellectual achievers.

could be a guarantee of achieving the ideal of

THE WITS NOTION OF GRADUATENESS

Some comments about FYE

"I feel Wits is a good institute and has lived up to its expectations, promises etc. It's a rather interesting place to be at. One really learns to appreciate diversity and open-mindedness here.

Everyday there's something new."

rdid not expect the programme to cover such a variety of issues that concerned first-year students and I did not know of how involved it would be in our everyday activities and studies."

"Wits does not only encourage educational programmes but also the importance of socialising and interacting with different students, and also participating in different sports and recreational activities that are offered at the university"

