

## **First-year students' expectations about tertiary education:**

***What does the Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement at DUT say?***

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# RETENTION OF FIRST-TIME ENTERING STUDENTS AT DUT



# Awareness of student expectations may:

- reduce students' psychological stress;
- improve academic performance;
- encourage interaction and integration;
- increase student engagement;
- improve students' sense of belonging or sense of community;
- inform effective and appropriate first-year support initiatives

# **The South African context:**

- Changing student demographics;
- Disparities in schooling;
- First-generation students;
- Most require housing/accommodation;
- Gender disparity in academic performance;
- Academic advising of increasing importance.

# **This study is about ...**

- **What are first-year students' expectations about university?**
- **What “baggage” are they bringing?**
- **What targeted support do first-year students want (need)?**
- **What is the first-year student's journey through university and how do their support needs change?**
- **To what extent do high-school and expected university behaviours/experiences predict first-year student success?**

**BUSSE**

**CURRICULUM  
DOCS**

**WAOS  
SEQ/LEQ  
SASSE**

**ACADEMIC  
RECORDS**

**HIGH-SCHOOL BEHAVIOURS/EXPERIENCES;  
EXPECTED UNIVERSITY  
BEHAVIOURS/EXPERIENCES**

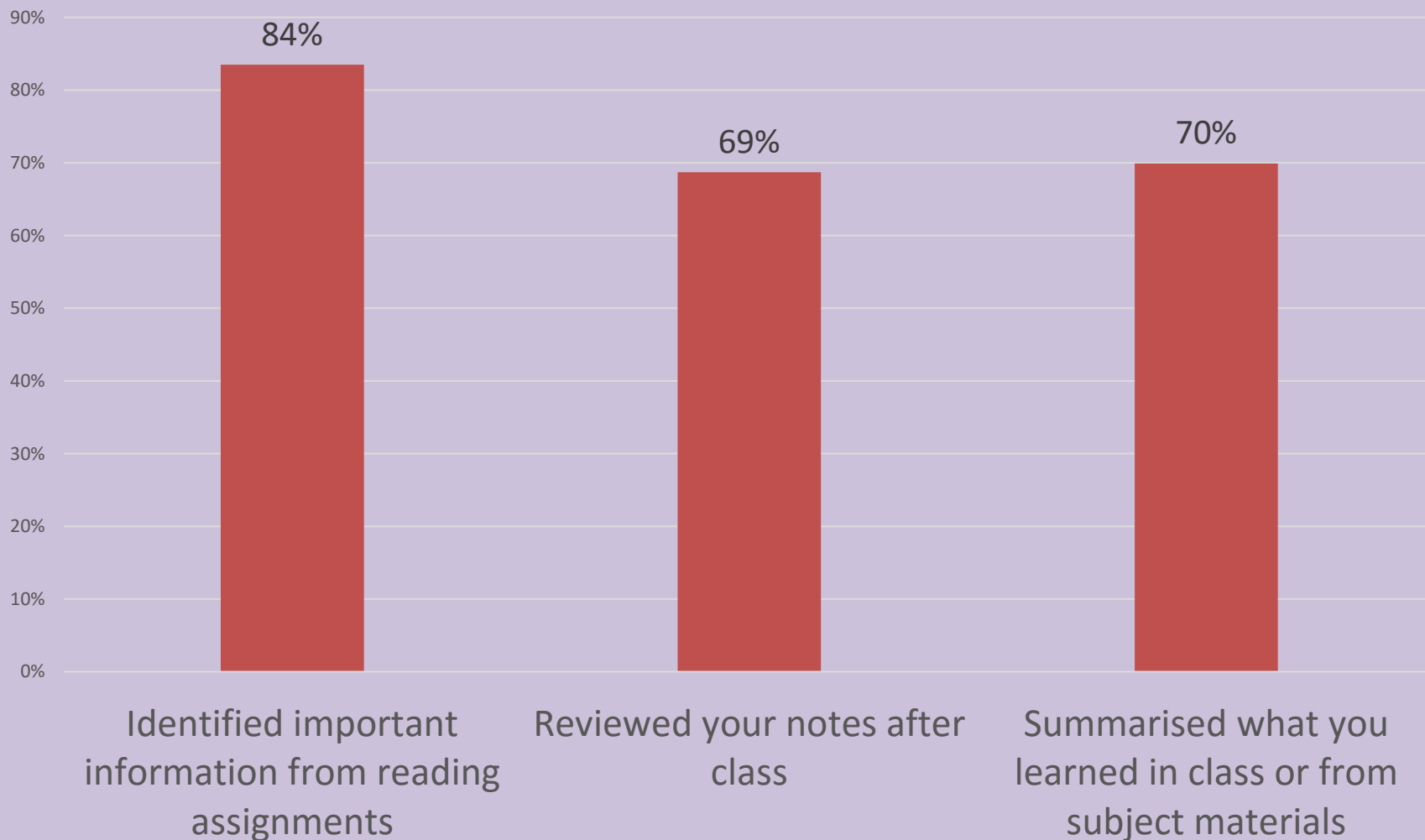
*FIRST-YEAR SUPPORT INTERVENTIONS*

**ACTUAL UNIVERSITY BEHAVIOURS/EXPERIENCES**

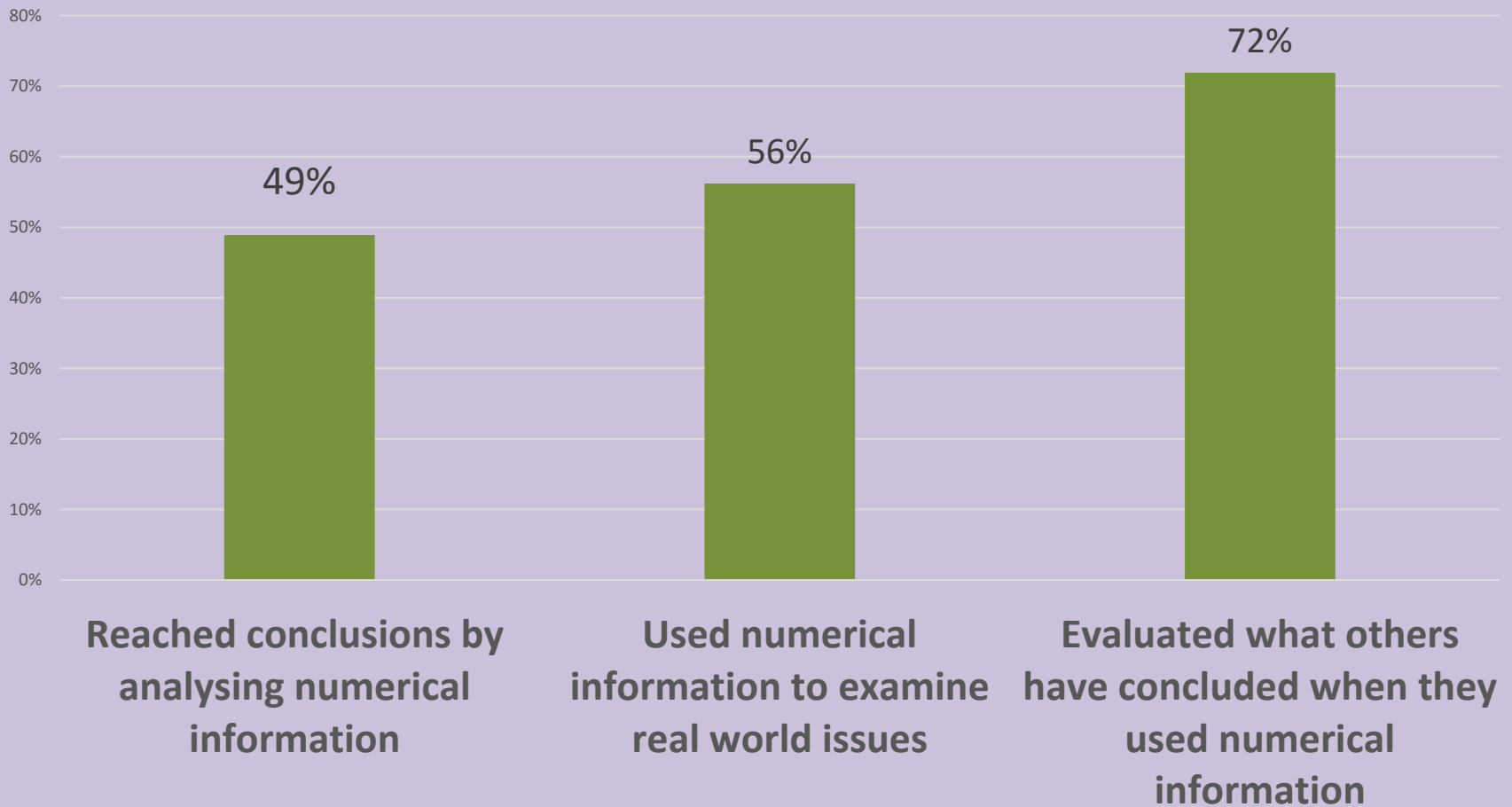
**ACADEMIC SUCCESS/FAILURE  
ATTAINMENT OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES**

# HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

OFTEN/VERY OFTEN



## NEVER/SOMETIMES



# **EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE RIGOUR OF UNIVERSITY**

- **More and lengthier writing tasks (11+ pages)**
- **More time on assigned reading**
- **Spend equal time preparing for class, socialising and on extracurricular activities.**
- **Easy to find additional information and ask lecturers for help when needed.**

# **EXPECTATIONS ABOUT RIGOUR (cont.)**

- **Females expected greater difficulty in learning material but less difficulty getting help.**
- **First gen. students expected less difficulty in learning material, asking lecturers for help, making new friends and managing their time;**
- **Those studying their 1<sup>st</sup> choice programmes expected less difficulty getting help academically and interacting with staff;**
- **Males more confident about making new friends and interacting with staff**

# **EXPECTATIONS ABOUT COMMITMENT TO STUDIES**

- **45% were very certain they would persevere in the face of challenges;**
- **35% were very certain they would study even if there were distractions**
- **65% felt it would be very difficult to stay positive if they performed poorly on an assessment.**

## **EXPECTATIONS ABOUT SUPPORT**

- **79% said it's very important that the university provides them help to succeed academically**
- **75% said provision of learning support services are very important**
- **28% said it was very important that the university provided opportunities for social involvement**

# SOME PRELIM. WAOS FEEDBACK

*“In the beginning it was challenging, different dynamics. (I) got better at relating to people from different cultures. It opened my eyes.”*

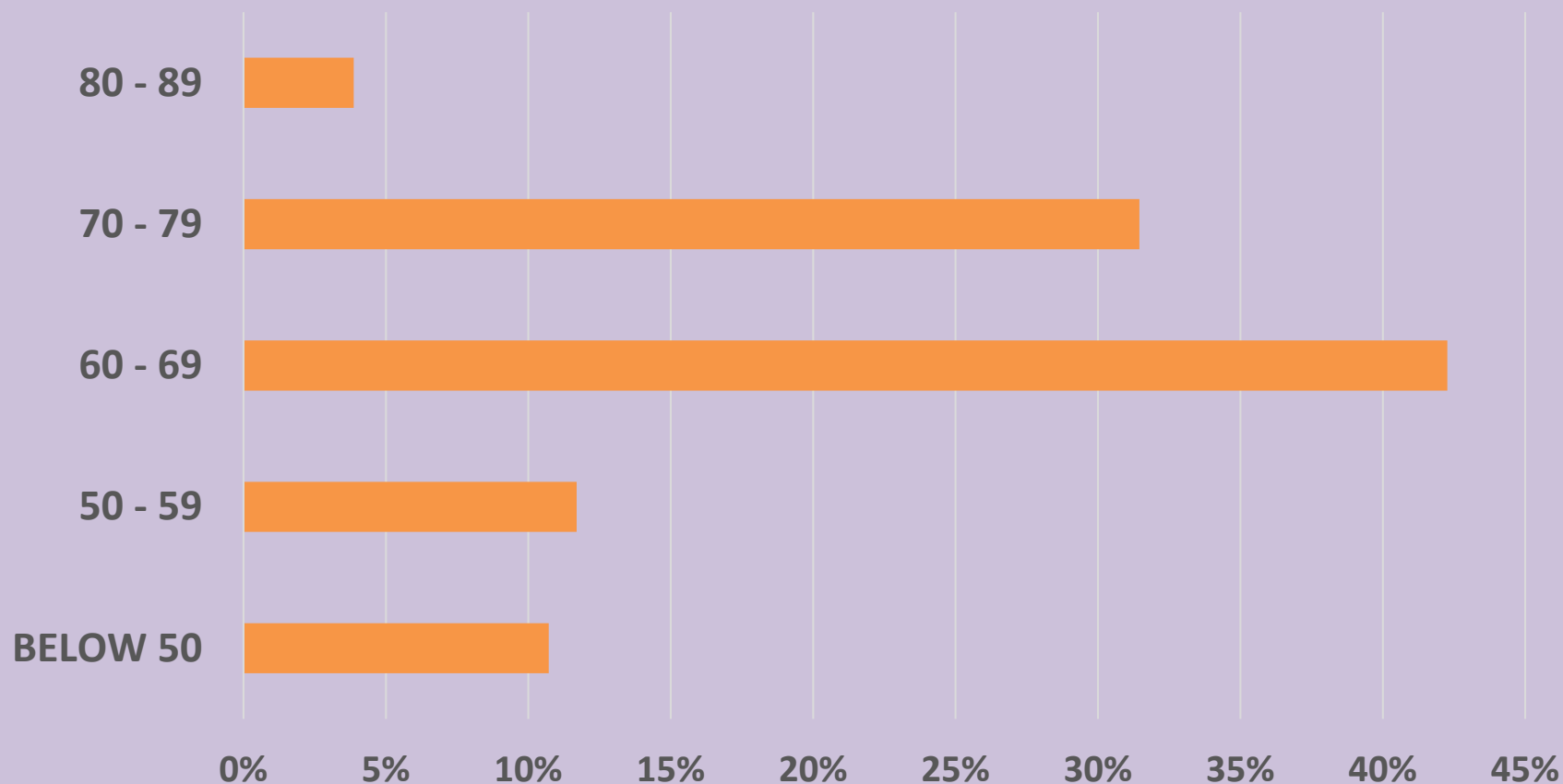
*“No ... Getting to know the campus, actually the campus is too big for me ... high school is very slow[small] so everything is nearby. Here, everything was complicated.”*

*“I had problems with using things that involved computers since I was coming from the school that did not have computers”*

# IN CLOSING

- First-year students expect to do more reading and writing, but it's still not enough.
- Underestimating the rigour of tertiary education, particularly first-generation students.
- Not expecting the extent of culture shock it can be.
- Under-prepared for numerical/quantitative work.
- Practicalities are important.
- Need holistic data from multiple sources.

# **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT – DIP. MANAGEMENT SCIENCES 2017**



THANK YOU

