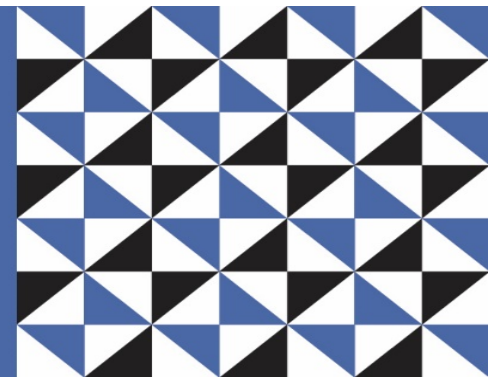
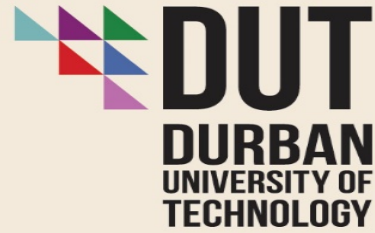




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SAAIR CONFERENCE

12-15th November 2018

Understanding and Supporting First Year students

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Introduction

Dhunpath & Vithal (2012), argue that “ universities must accept that they are, at least in part, the source of under-preparedness ideologically, structurally, and pedagogically, particularly, since organizational cultures often alienate students by failing to enable epistemological access (Morrow, 2009).”

DHET -2015

- More than 24% of students ‘drop out’ after their first year,
- 14% graduate in three years, and
- approximately 52% graduate with their first degrees after an average of seven years, while 48% of the group never graduate

DHET-2017

- under 30% graduate in regulation time;
- under two-thirds graduate within 6 years and
- one-third have not graduated after 10 years

Student success and student engagement

- **Student success** as “Enhanced student learning with a view to increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable” (CHE, 2014, p. 1)
- **Student engagement** is one avenue to explore how the experiences within and beyond the classroom impact students’ persistence behaviours (Schreiber and Yu 2016) and ‘the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities” (Kuh 2009).



Four distinct approaches to student engagement

Research identifies four distinct approaches to student engagement:

- the behavioural aspect which focusses on **what the teacher does**;
- the psychological aspect which focuses on **internal mechanisms** that drive student behaviour;
- the socio-cultural aspect which zooms in on the crucial role that **students' backgrounds** place on their success and finally
- the holistic perspective which strives to combine all these perspectives (Kahu: 2013)

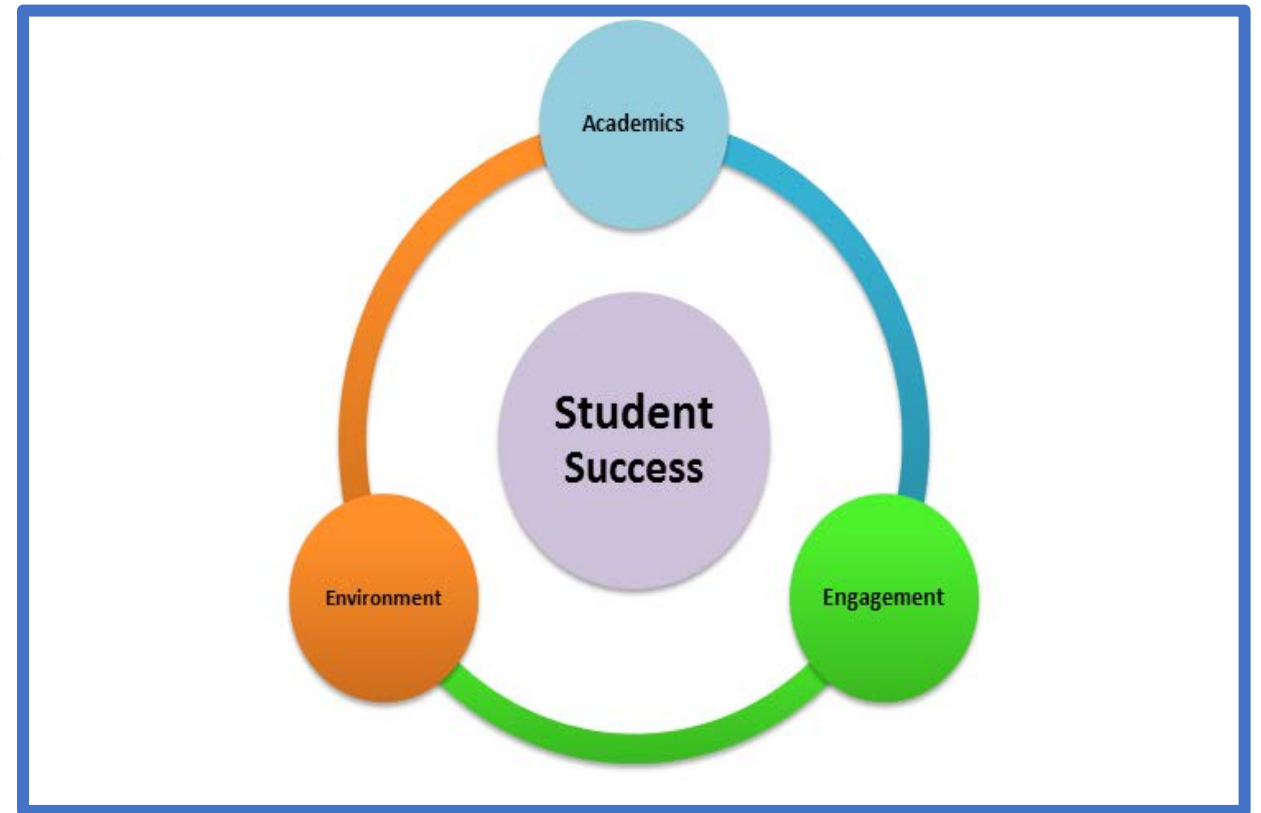


Diagram 1: Multi-pronged nature of student engagement Data

source:<https://assessment.uncc.edu/node/705>

Aim and Methodology

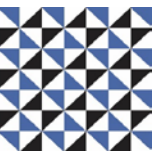
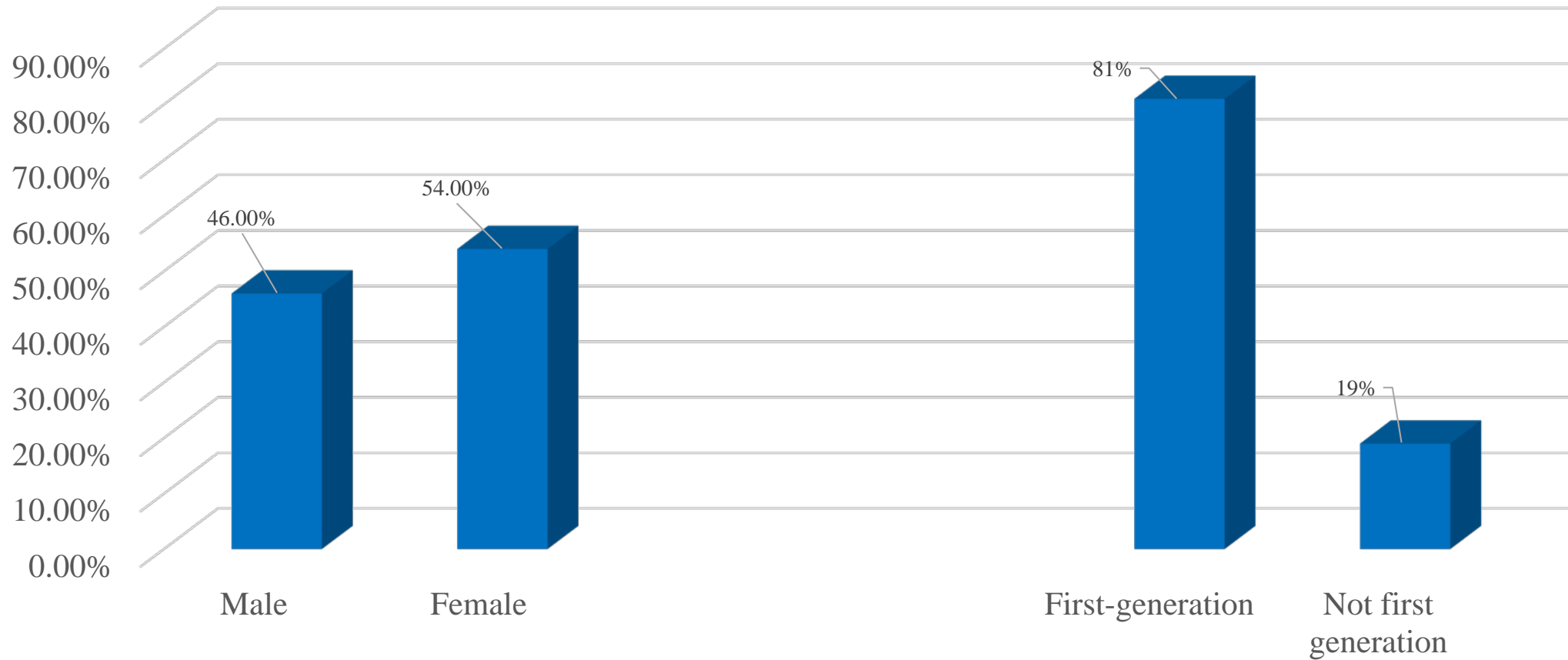
Aim: This project explores the preparedness of first year students for higher education and the preparedness of the institution to support first year students.

Methodology:

- Two sets of data were used:
 - The Beginning University Survey of student engagement (BUSSE) which were administered to 1633 first year students in 2017 and
 - Feedback from 86 first year lecturers at the First Year Academy Workshop held on 6 June 2018
- The BUSSE data centered on secondary school educational experiences and student expectations and preparedness for university .
- The data from first year lecturers focused on the types of institutional support available for first year students and what lecturers do/could do to support students.
- Some questions were selected from the BUSSE survey and the data from the lecturers was thematically coded.

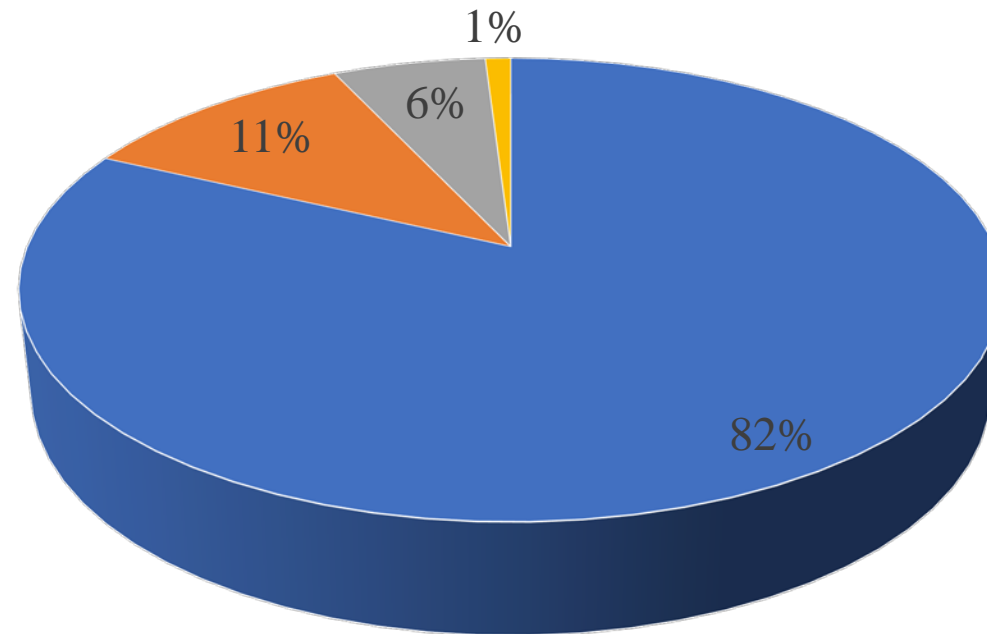


Gender and First generation status

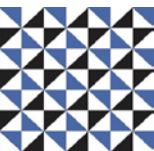


High school

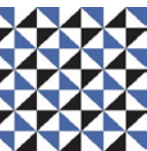
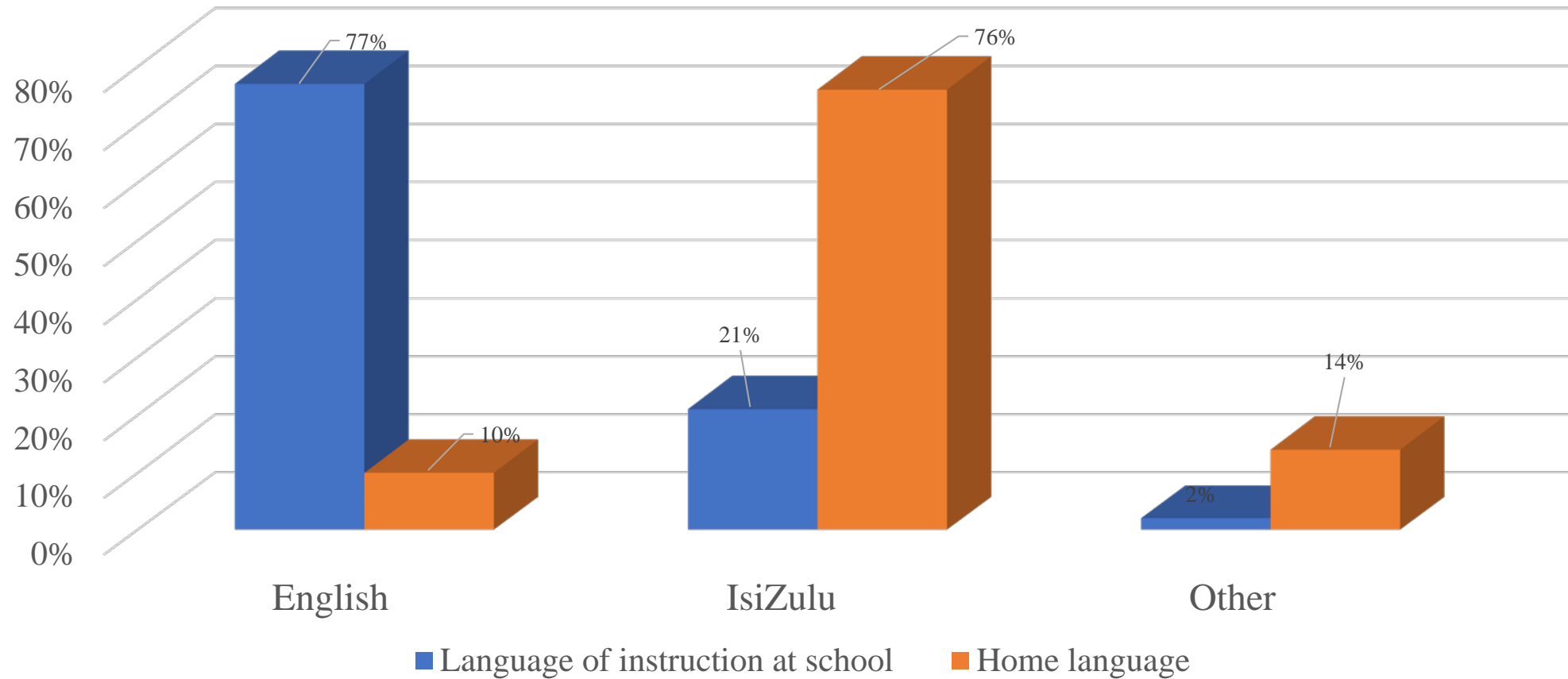
Chart Title



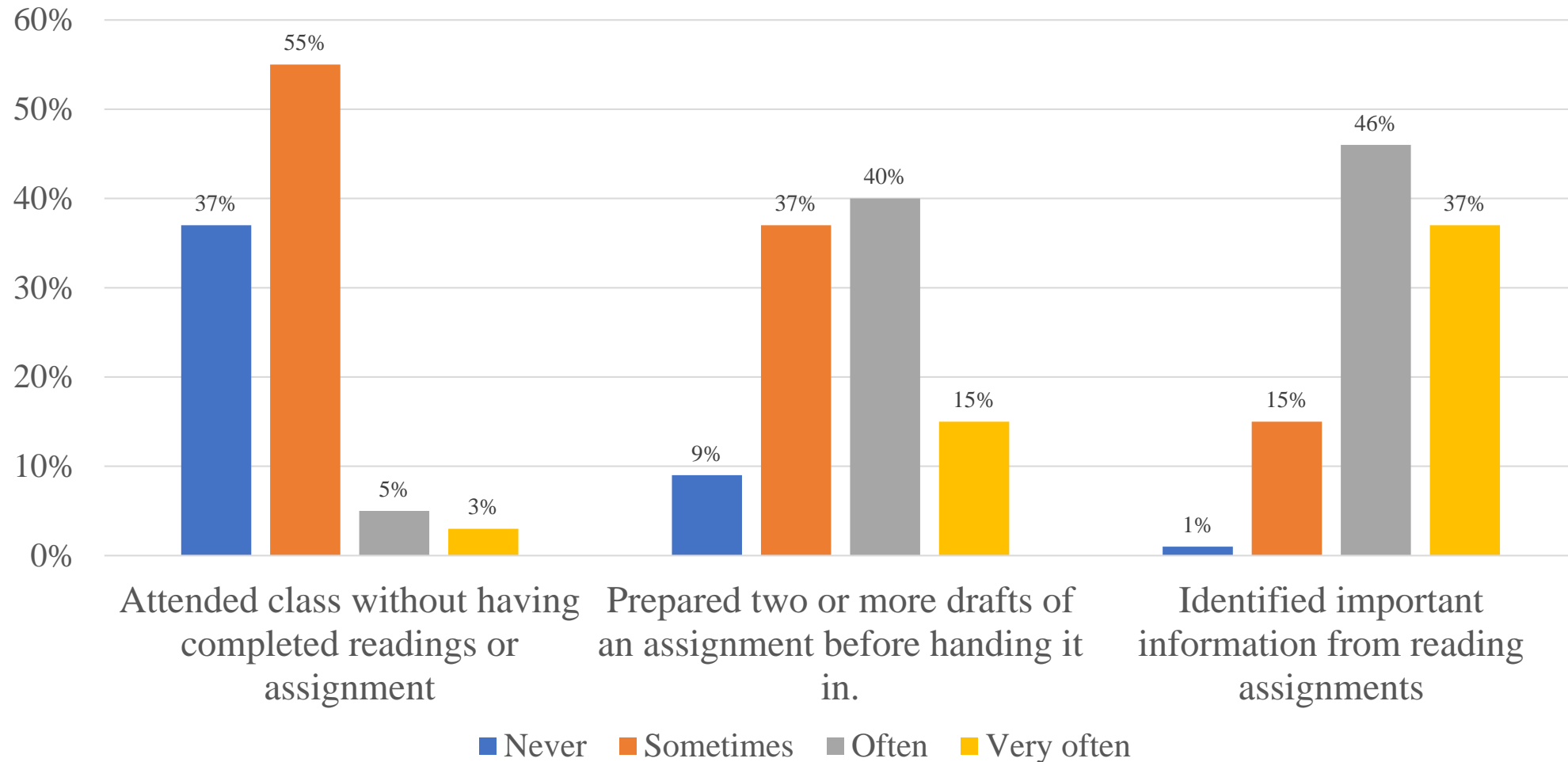
■ Public school ■ Private and Former model school ■ Farm school ■ Other



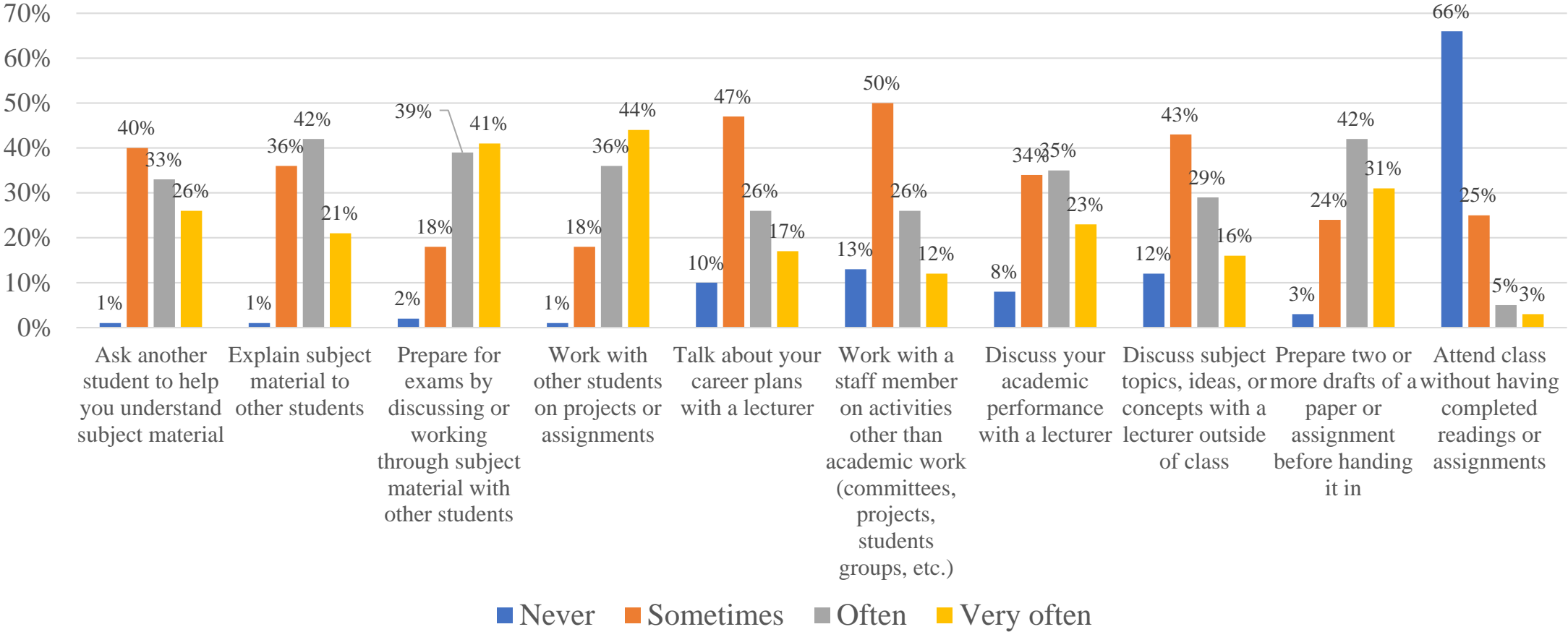
Language of instruction at school and home language



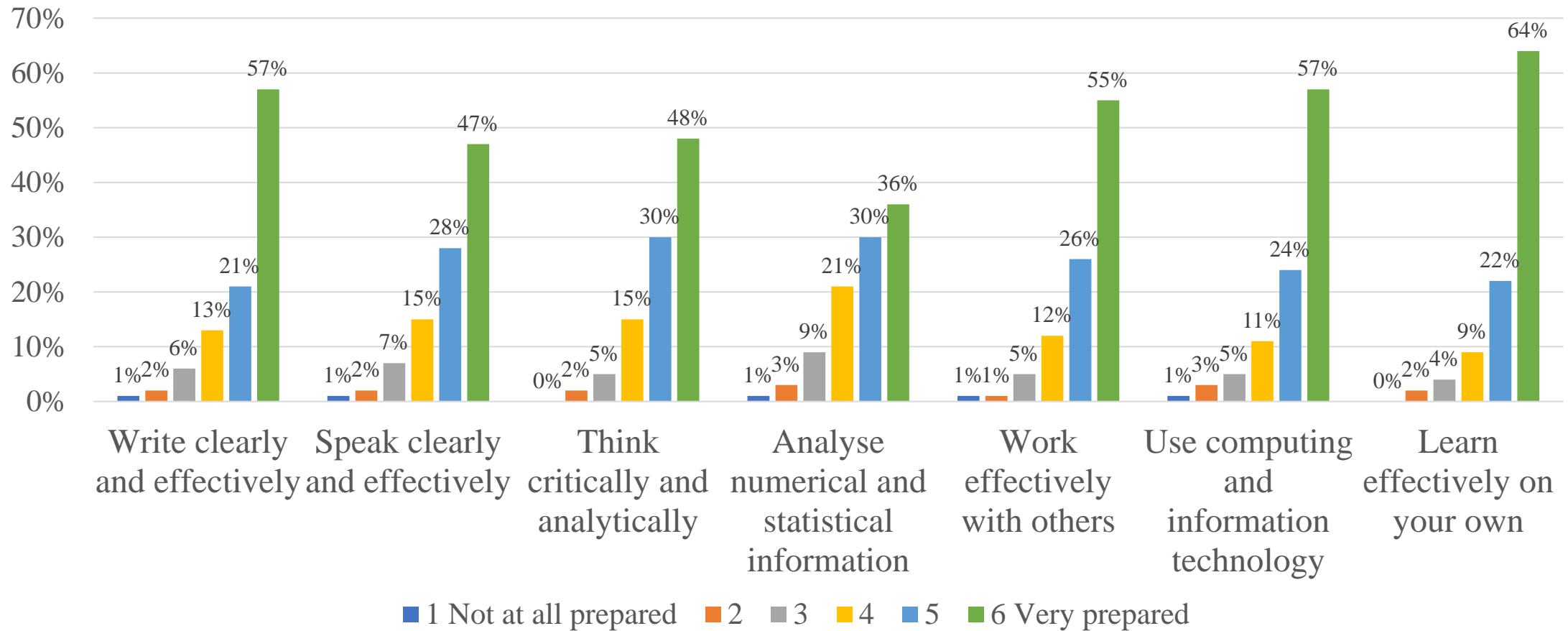
During their last year of high school, about how often did students do each?



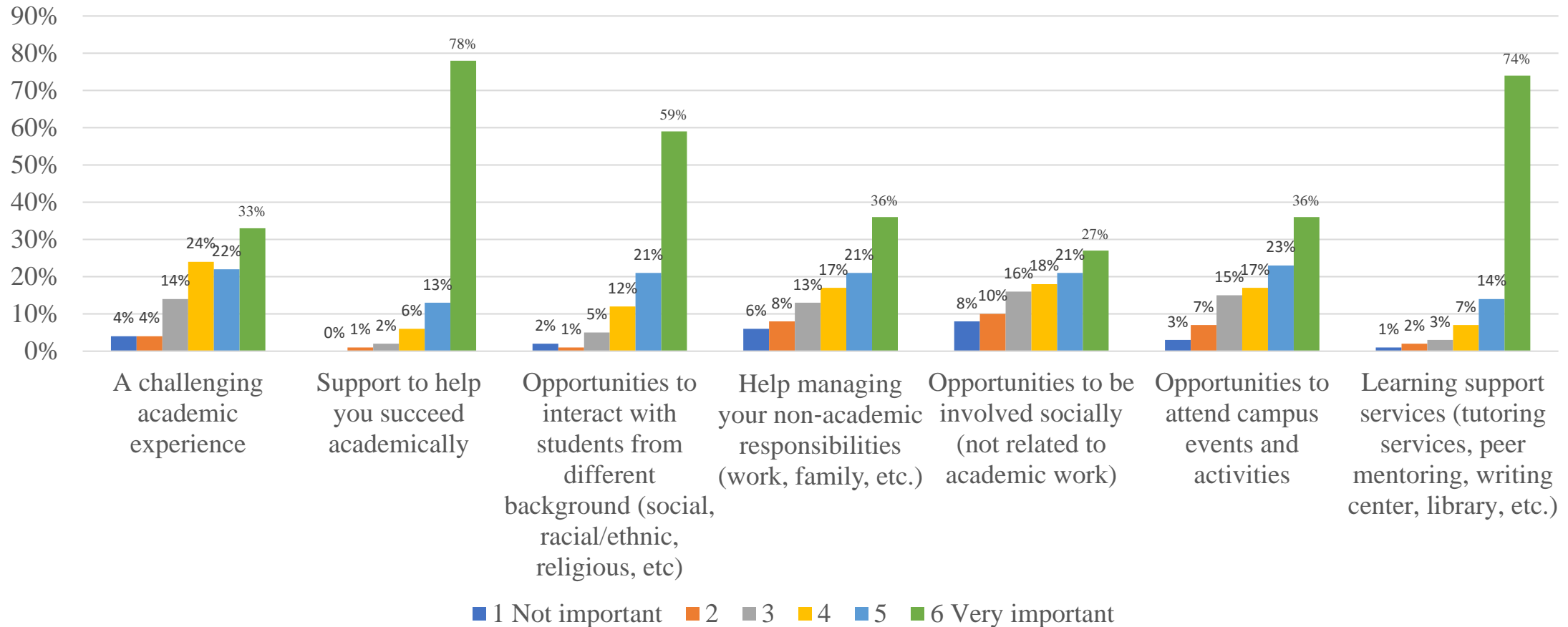
During the coming academic year, how often do you expect to do each of the following?



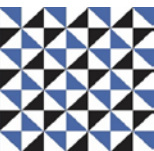
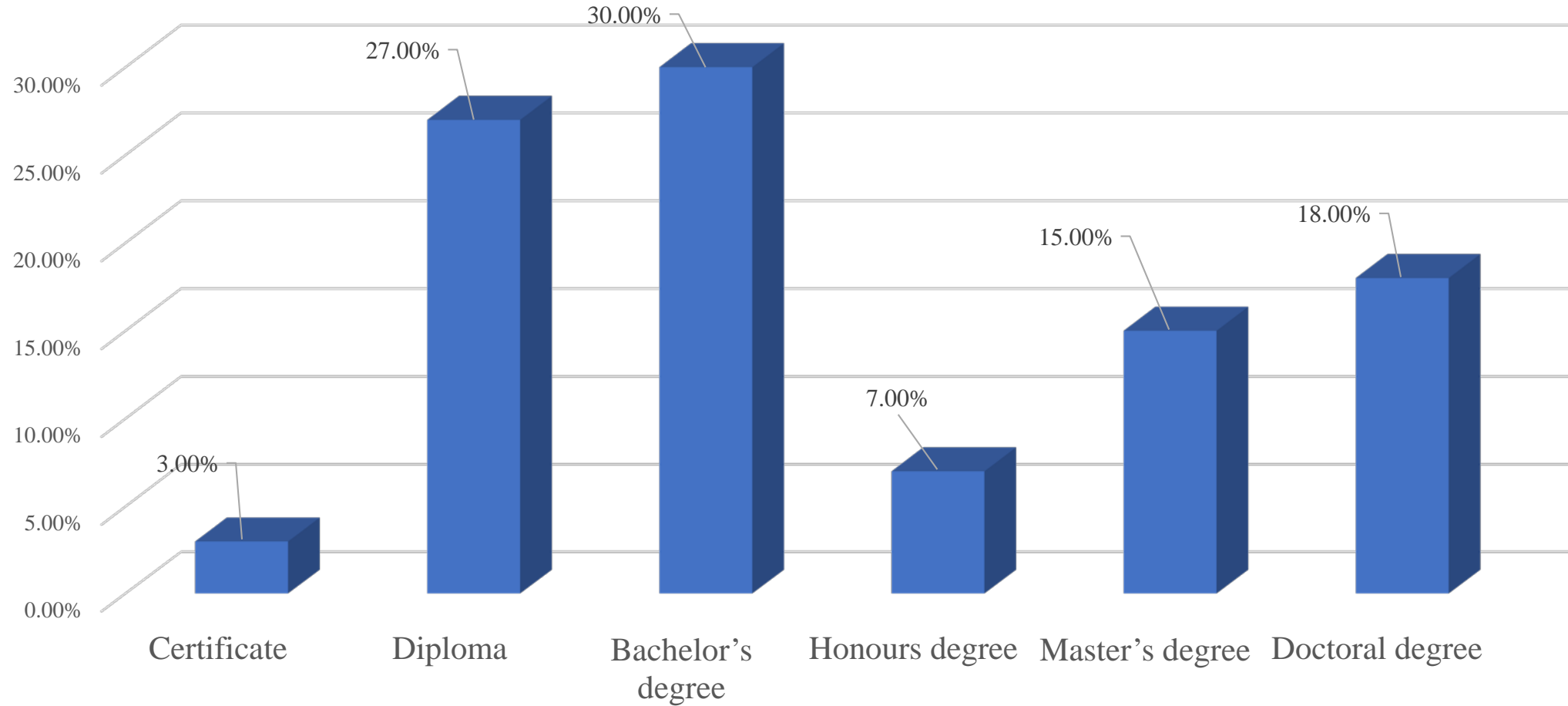
How prepared are students to do the following in their academic work at university ?



How important is it to students that the university provide each of the following?



Highest level of education plan to completed



Feedback from First year lecturers

Challenges in the classroom:

- reading , numeracy, critical thinking, computer skills, referencing, academic writing, plagiarism

What lecturers are currently doing/plan to do/suggestions

- Curriculum -Programme design, General Education
- Support structures: Library, writing Centre, Tutorials, Mentorship, FYSE, REP
- Classroom intervention:

Debate, Case studies, research, scaffold learning, use of reflective writing, Academic literacies, make readings available to students, Student demonstrations, use the LMS tools, Social media, increase consultation times, blackboard and dropbox, Compulsory attendance at writing seminars /centres/libraries .Peer mentoring

- Academic to liaise /engage with academic support on a regular basis

Findings and Conclusion

Findings show that students indicated that they were exposed to different learning styles and are familiar with reading, writing and speaking tasks.

Students have experience in engaging with academic activities that require evaluation and critical thinking and students are amiable to diverse and cooperative environments.

Data from lecturers revealed that support for students should be multipronged:

- the curriculum needs to be designed to support learning,
- there must be a greater collaboration with support services ,
- classroom intervention and finally
- peer mentoring and tutorials

It is envisaged that the findings from this project will assist the university in being better prepared to enable student success.



thank you!