



**Siyaphumelela Conference**  
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**Students' voices: First Year student experience and student success**

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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

# Introduction

Lewin and Mawoyo (2014) emphasise the link between the issue of **access and success**, they argue that it doesn't matter when students begin university it still creates feelings of anxiety as students traverse into the unknown territory of higher education.

The FYSE's primary goal is **student success** which Kuh et al posits can include “academic achievement , engagement in educationally purposeful activities , satisfaction, acquisition of desired knowledge, skills and competencies, persistence , attainment of educational objectives... (Kuh et al 2008: 541).

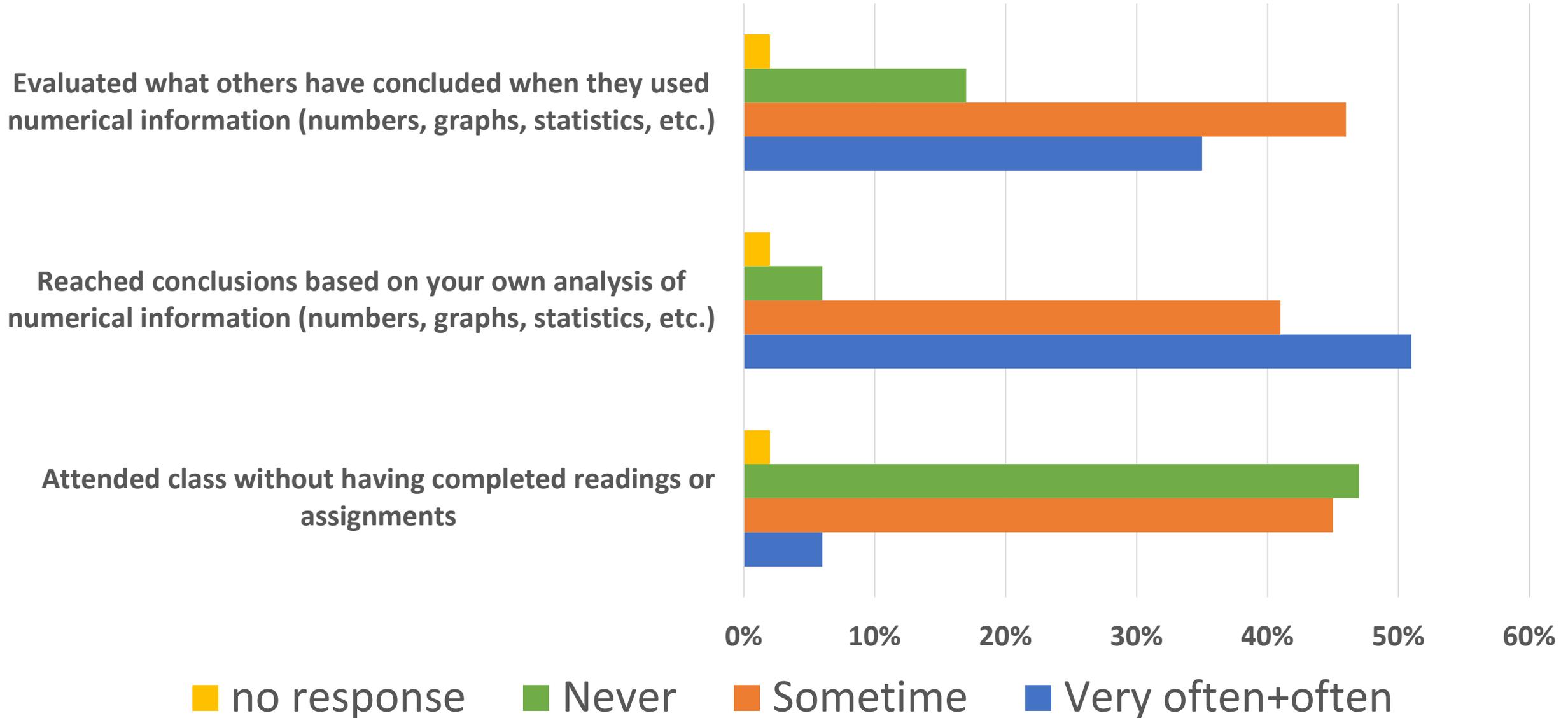
# Student Success

**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)

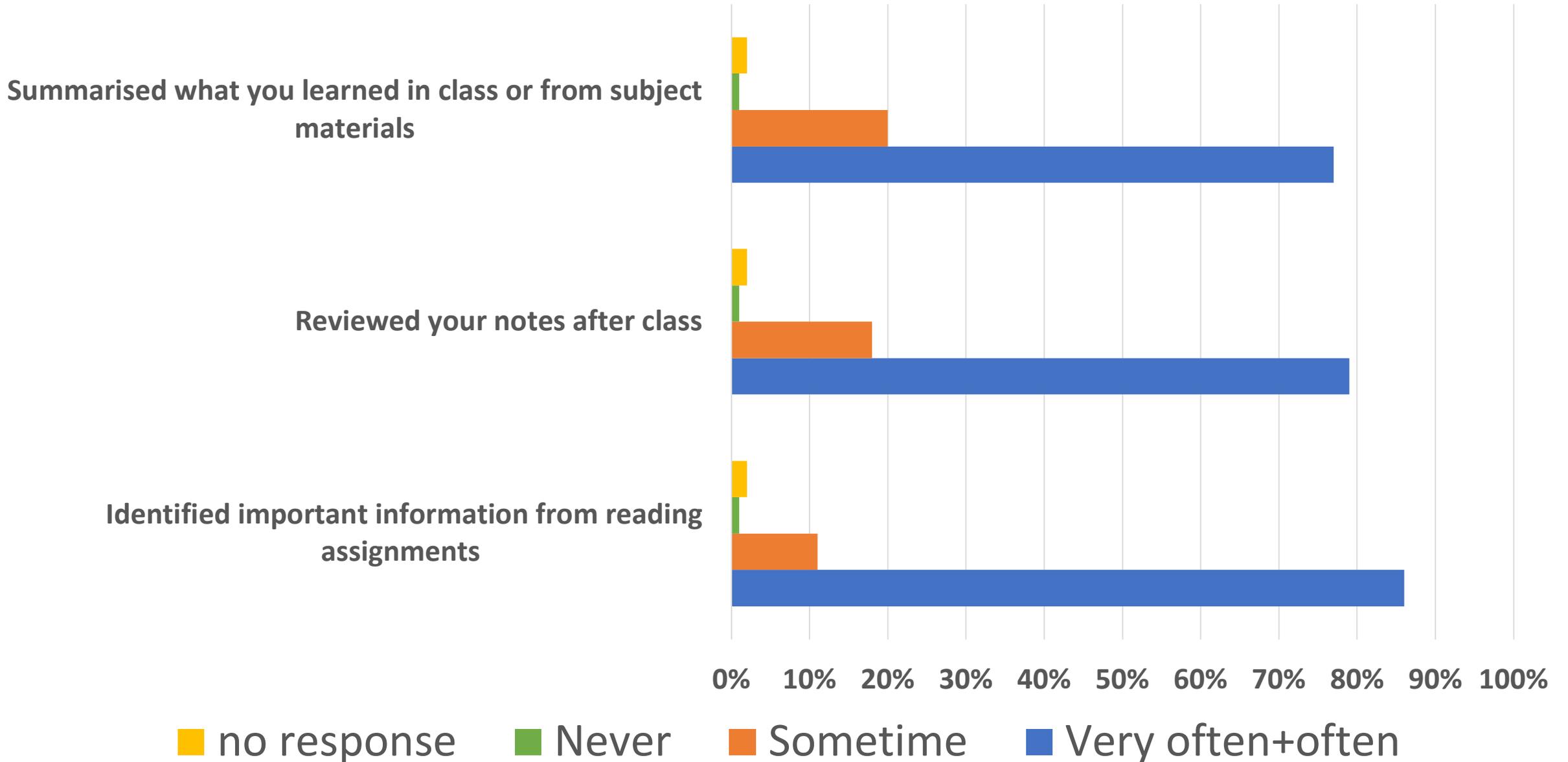
“**Student success** does not arise by chance. Nor does substantial improvement in institutional rates of student retention and graduation. It is intentional, structured and proactive actions and policies directed towards the success of all students” (Tinto, 2012:116-117).



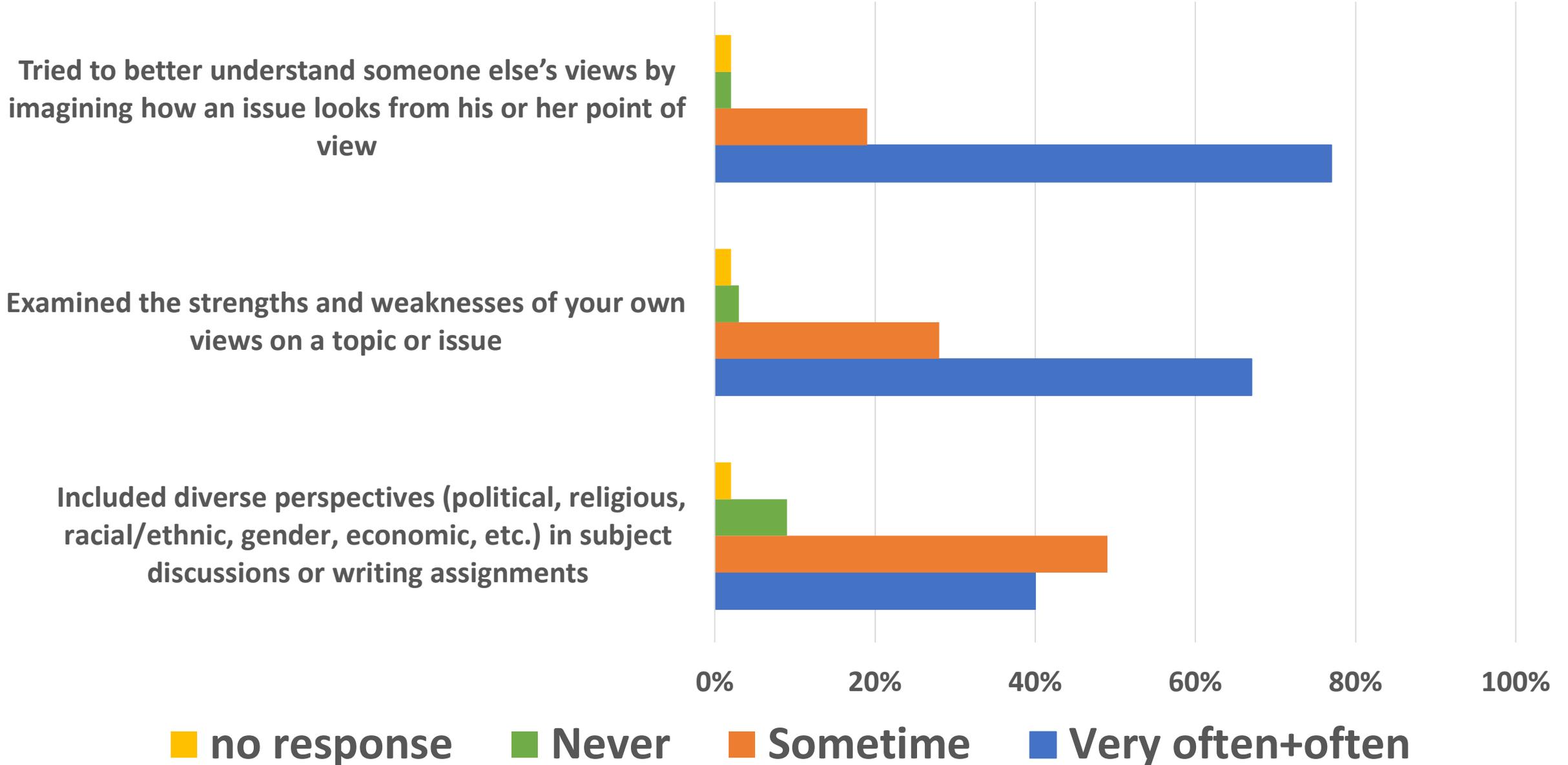
# Student engagement in high school



# Student engagement in high school



# Student engagement in high school



# Aim and Research Questions

**Aim:** This project explores the effectiveness of the first year student experience and its impact on student success in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics

## Research Questions:

How is the FYSE programme designed to support first year students in the transition from secondary school to university?

What graduate competencies are being developed in the FYSE programme?

How does the FYSE programme contribute to student success?



# Research Methodology

## Four sets of data were used:

- BUSSE Data -2018
- responses from a questionnaire which was administered to approximately 340 first year students which focussed on their experiences with the FYSE programme
- responses from a questionnaire administered to 10 FYSE Tutor Mentor Advisors (TMA's).
- Feedback from five first year lecturers

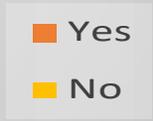
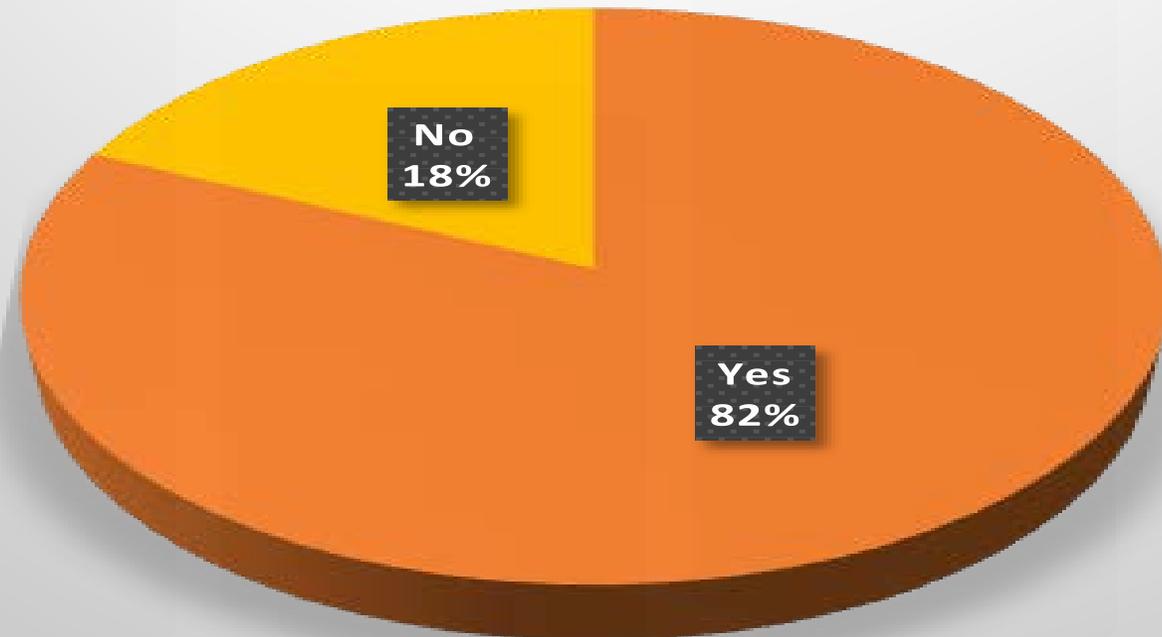
The data from the questionnaire and feedback were thematically coded.



# RESPONSES FROM THE STUDENTS (2 Departments)

| Answer   | Has the programme assisted you to adapt to the university |     |
|----------|---|-----|
| Yes      |   | 117 |
| No       |   | 26  |
| Not sure |   | 0   |

**Has the programme assisted you to adapt to the university**



# RESPONSES FROM THE STUDENTS

## Adapting to campus life

- “It has increased my knowledge and how to adapt to the university”
- “Engaging with fellow classmates gave me a sense of belonging”
- “It has given me tips on how to handle my finances”
- “It has assisted me to cope with my studies and be familiar with my surroundings”
- “It assisted me emotionally and academically”
- “Understanding the university better”
- “Discussions on university life has helped me adapt to the changes”
- “Students were given full support in issues they came across”

# RESPONSES FROM STUDENTS

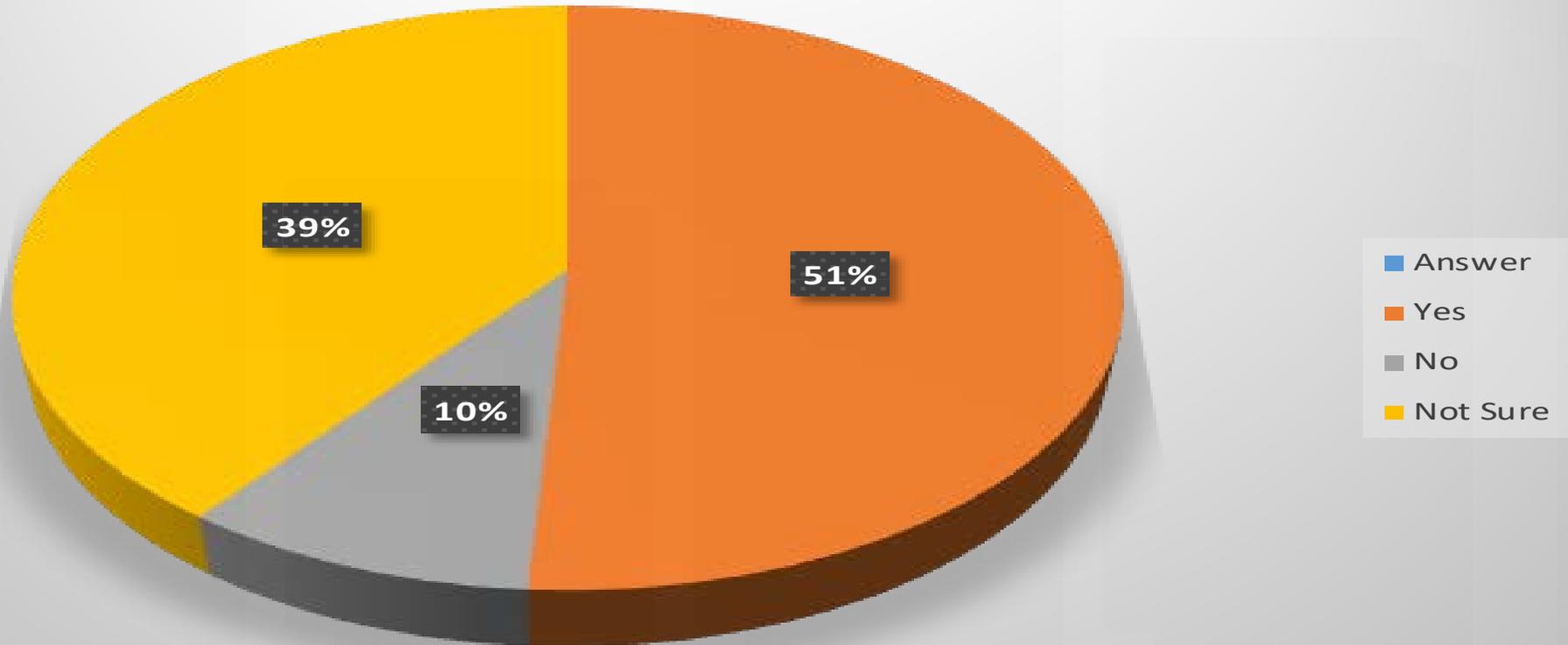
## Information

- “It taught me how to access Technologies for learning as I was having difficulty accessing blackboard”
- “It provided me with information about employment opportunities in my field of study”
- “It has given me information on how to handle diversity”
- “Informed me about my surroundings, such as lecture venues and all the support departments such as the library”
- “Access to DUT resources and information on how the university operates”
- “Familiarised students with the environment, provides clarity when there is uncertainty”

# RESPONSES FROM THE STUDENTS

|          |     |
|----------|-----|
| Yes      | 172 |
| No       | 32  |
| Not Sure | 133 |

**Were the seminars helpful?**



# WHAT STUDENTS LEARNT FROM THE SESSIONS

- Adapting to university life
- Presentation Skills
- Workplace Skills
- Emotional well-being and mental health
- Handling Diversity
- Group Dynamics
- Assertive communication and conflict resolution
- Time Management
- Stress Management

- Security Software
- Masculinities and femininities
- Introduction to DUT and resources (libraries, writing centre, etc.)
- Study Techniques
- Fundamentals of Security

# TMA Feedback: Student Interactions

“Initially the students didn’t interact that much with me and it was me just mostly talking with them with a few students engaging here and there but now most of the students take part in the seminars as they have become more comfortable”

“The students have opened and gained confidence of working with each other as groups”

“They have improved a lot, they are more confident about speaking up”

“They seem to trust me more and willing to share their problem or where they might need help”

# TMA Feedback: Collaborative learning

- “Students have learned to work in groups and with different people from their group assignments from there other modules and I can tell it has gotten better from my discussions with them”
- “There is a difference now as students now are able to communicate effectively in class”
- “They engage in discussions, they are more confident now about presenting or reporting their work back to the class”

# TMA Feedback: Social & Emotional Growth

- “The students who attend the seminar have developed a sense of friendship with one another as these seminars are different from lectures in the sense that they are more personal and intimate that’s why I feel it has benefited all of us”
- “Their social growth has increased, now they are more open minded and understand that University is not only about obtaining your qualification, now they are trying to use the things they learn to come up with new innovative ideas”

# FEEDBACK FROM LECTURERS

## Impact of the Programme in the Faculty

“It had a positive impact on those students that attended because they started taking responsibility for their own learning and requested assistance/advice from the TMAs on academic and personal matters. From the feedback received from the TMAs, students became a lot more comfortable engaging with their peers during the seminars as the semester progressed.

“I am happy with the current selection of TMAs. Having TMAs from the IT dept has made a significant impact on 1st year students since they can relate to these senior students. My meetings with TMAs every alternate week have been beneficial since the TMAs get an opportunity to share their experiences (challenges and successes) with each other – there is peer learning taking place”

# Findings and Conclusion

The FYSE Programme:

- is assisting students in their transition from high school to university and provides vital information that is imperative to student success.
- is flexible and responsive to the needs of the students.
- is helping students to develop skills, knowledge, values and attitudes which are important for their success.
- Develops graduate competencies required for success

Findings also show

- that the students require more time for FYSE seminars
- There is a need for the FYSE programme to extend beyond academic support.
- Should be embedded in the programme to improve student participation



thank you!