

QUALITY MANAGEMENT & ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

NCU PROGRAMME COMPLETION SURVEY- RESULTS

During the Fall 2012 semester the Department of Institutional Research (DIR) undertook the NCU Programme Completion Survey. During this semester there were 3300 students registered on the Main campus (Mandeville campus). With 67 students responding to this survey, the DIR can express 90% confidence in the results reported. There, in fact, exists a margin of error of plus or minus 10% which should be kept under consideration when reviewing the results below and attempting to generalise the findings to the entire population. The main purpose of this analysis is to ascertain whether or not the average student takes longer to complete their course of study than indicated by their Bulletin. If this is in fact so, what factors can be identified as having contributed to this occurrence? The survey also sought to gather suggestions from respondents as to how to correct or eliminate the factors identified.

Demographics

Of the 67 students who responded to the Programme Completion Survey, only 33% were male. As can be seen in Figure 1, most of these respondents fell within the 21-25 years age group, followed by the 26-30 age group. Given the distribution below, the average age of respondents was approximately 28 years old.¹

Figure 1. Table showing the Age Distribution of the Respondents

Respondents' Ages		
	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	10	15
21-25	29	43
26-30	11	16
31-35	4	6
36-40	7	10
41-45	2	3
46-50	1	2
51 and over	3	5
Total	67	100.0

¹ This was derived under the assumption that the "51 and over" age group could be calculated as "51-60" years.

Most respondents completed or are pursuing a degree in Management Studies (19%)², Business Administration (12%) and Social Work (10%). While every department was not represented in the sample, a wide variety of departments was represented and each college/school was also represented. The Department of Business Administration and Hospitality Management was the most prominent throughout the sample at a rate of almost 30%. As such, most respondents reported being affiliated with the College of Business and Hospitality Management (approximately 27%) followed by those respondents from the College of Humanities, Behavioural and Social Sciences (approximately 22%). Figures 2 and 3 provide a breakdown of this information.

Figure 2. Table showing the Representation of Respondents from the Various Departments

Respondents' Departments		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Department of Behavioural Sciences	8	11.9
Department of Biology, Chemistry & Environmental Science	5	7.5
Department of Business Administration & Hospitality Management	18	26.9
Department of Communication Studies	5	7.5
Department of Computer & Information Science	4	6.0
Department of Dietetics	1	1.5
Department of History, Geography & Social Sciences	1	1.5
Department of Humanities	1	1.5
Department of Medical Technology	5	7.5
Department of Nursing	1	1.5
Department of Religion & Theology	4	6.0
Department of Teacher Education	8	11.9
School of Graduate Studies	3	4.5
Undisclosed	3	4.5
Total	67	100.0

² Some respondents reported that they were pursuing a double major.

Figure 3. Table showing the Representation of Respondents from the Various Schools/Colleges

Schools/Colleges		
	Frequency	Percentage
College of Allied Health & Nursing	7	10.4
College of Business Administration & Hospitality Management	18	26.9
College of Education & Leadership	8	11.9
College of Humanities, Behavioural and Social Sciences	15	22.4
College of Natural and Applied Sciences	9	13.4
School of Graduate Studies	3	4.5
School of Religion & Theology	4	6.0
Undisclosed	3	4.5
Total	67	100.0

Analysis

Respondents were then asked to indicate when they commenced study at the University. This was, however, an open-ended question and resulted in a lack of uniformity or consistency in the answers given. It was thought best to group responses according to the academic year in which they fell. If, for example, a student responded “2008” this was assumed to be during the academic year 2008-2009. This may not necessarily be an accurate method of categorising but it was essential to use same or some other method in order to continue analysis of the sample. The results showed that most respondents commenced studies during the academic year 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 (19.4% respectively). This grouping revealed that some respondents have been at NCU for as much as nine years. Figure 4 provides more information.

Figure 4. Table showing the Academic Year in which Respondents Commenced Studies at NCU

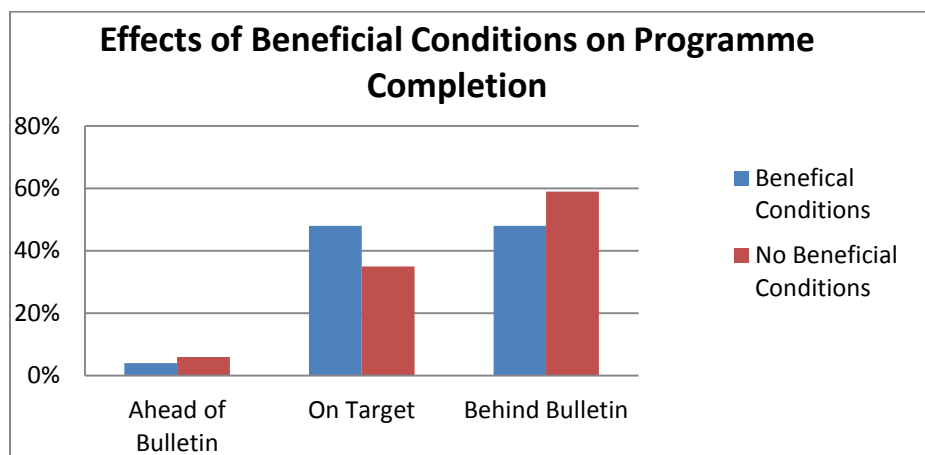
Year that Respondents Commenced Studies at NCU		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
2004-2005	2	3.0
2006-2007	1	1.5
2007-2008	5	7.5
2008-2009	9	13.4
2009-2010	13	19.4
2010-2011	13	19.4
2011-2012	9	13.4
2012-2013	8	11.9
Undisclosed	7	10.4
Total	67	100.0

Where the information was most useful was in the expected duration of the programme of study. Of the 60 students who disclosed the year in which they commenced studies, 80% indicated that they were enrolled in a four year programme; two students indicated a three year programme while another seven students stated that their programme was slated to last between two and two and a half years. The remaining respondents did not provide an answer to this question. Looking at Figure 4 we can then ascertain that a minimum of eight respondents have been at the University longer than the longest programme of study. This accounts for almost 15% of respondents to this question.

Next, students were asked to indicate their current stage in the programme of study he/she is enrolled in (whether it be first year, second year, etc.). Most respondents were in their second or third year. Using this information, along with the year the students entered and the expected duration of the programme, a cross-tabulation analysis ensued and revealed that less than half of students (specifically 37%) are on target to complete their programme of study during the timeframe stipulated by the Bulletin. Only 5% of respondents were ahead of the timeframe stipulated in the Bulletin and the remaining 58% of respondents were behind. This may suggest that the majority of the students enrolled at the University complete or anticipate completing their programme of study after the stipulated time period.

The survey instrument then sought to identify factors which may have been accounting for this delay. Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not there were beneficial conditions associated with their entry or tenure at the University; these included being able to transfer credits to NCU. Approximately 60% of the respondents indicated that there were no beneficial conditions. Further analysis of this group revealed that 35% were on target to complete their programme of study within the stipulated time frame; 59% of the respondents were behind in the Bulletins while the remaining 6% were ahead. Approximately 40% of the respondents indicated that they experienced beneficial conditions while at the University. Less than 5% of respondents in this group were ahead of the Bulletin; another 48% were on target according to their Bulletin and the remaining 48% behind. Figure 5 illustrates this information. The data reveals that students who benefit from certain conditions are not at a significant advantage as it relates to completing their course of study ahead of the Bulletin but it must be noted that students who benefit from these conditions are more likely to complete their programme of study within the timeline stipulated by the Bulletin.

Figure 5. Bar Chart Illustrating how Programme Completion is Affected by Beneficial Conditions



Next, respondents were asked to identify what they considered to be the major reason along with two prominent reasons for the delay that they have experienced in completing their programme of study. Approximately 50 respondents answered this question and their responses have been listed in descending order in Figure 6 below. Given the fact that students were permitted to supply more than one response, a total of 71 responses were reported.

Figure 6. Table Containing Respondents' Reasons for Delay in their Programme of Study

Reason Stated	No. of Respondents	Percentages
Financial Constraints	27	37%
Had to satisfy pre-requisites for minor/ for matriculation from the Pre-University programme	7	10%
Insufficient academic advising	4	6%
Courses not offered every semester	4	6%
Too many courses (some overlapping in content)	4	6%
Too much bureaucracy to transfer credits/get exemptions (it is not possible in some cases)	4	6%
Did not complete summer sessions/ Had a problem with summer sessions	3	4%
Failed courses	3	4%
Limited credit offerings (reported for the Main campus, the Mandeville Evening Division and the Extension campuses)	3	4%
No time/Personal challenges	3	4%
Limited/Biased Faculty	2	3%
Courses not offered when advertised	2	3%
Courses clashing	2	3%
Change in programme structure after students start	1	1%
System failure affecting registration	1	1%
Lack of financial clearance prevented registration in time.	1	1%
Did not carry full course load	1	1%
TOTAL	72	100%

Most respondents indicated that the main reason for the delay in completing their programme of study was a financial constraint. Almost 40% of the respondents included this in their reasons listed. Another major source of delay was the fact that some persons enrolled in the Pre-University programme and did not matriculate to their desired programme of study immediately. This would have added at least another semester to their programme of study. Respondents also indicated issues with academic advising, course offerings, transfer of credits and summer sessions. Some students were also delayed due to failing various courses, personal challenges and problems experienced with the system during registration.

Students were asked to offer suggestions as to how they could have overcome the delays experienced. These are listed in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Table Containing Respondents' Suggestions for Alleviating Delay in their Programme of Study

Suggestions	Number of Respondents	Percentages
Nothing	15	40%
Apply for student loan/ JAMVAT/ Work-Study Programme	7	19%
Been more diligent in studies	4	11%
Do recommended/required courses	3	8%
Better planning	2	5%
Attend Government subsidised university instead (to avert financial challenges)	2	5%
Apply for scholarships	1	3%
Persevere	1	3%
Taken online courses	1	3%
Seek assistance from higher administrators	1	3%
TOTAL	37	100%

There appeared to be a general sense of powerlessness among the respondents as 40% of the persons who provided appropriate responses³ for this question did not believe that there is anything that they could have done to alleviate the delays. Approximately 20% of the respondents suggested that they could have applied for student loans or participated in JAMVAT or the NCU work-study

³ Some respondents did not suggest what could have been done on their part to alleviate the delays but made reference to changes which they believed that NCU could undertake to alleviate same. These are addressed in the following section.

programme. Some responded that had they been more diligent in studies, undertaken better planning and if they had done the required courses when they should have, then they would not have experienced the delays which they did. Approximately 5% of this group anticipated that had they attended a Government subsidized university instead of NCU then they would not have been faced with the various issues which contributed to the delay in completing their programme of study. The other suggestions are listed in Figure 7.

Some respondents indicated, what they believed to be changes which NCU could undertake in order to resolve the current situation. Details can be found in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Table Containing Respondents' Suggestions for NCU which will Alleviate Delay in their Programme of Study

Suggestions for NCU	Number of Respondents	Percentages
Eliminate unnecessary general courses (for students who are 'upgrading' as well	7	45%
Offer more courses in the Mandeville Evening Division	2	13%
Institute and automatic credit transfer system	1	6%
Offer more scholarships	1	6%
Increase wages for student workers	1	6%
Allow students to complete studies and then pay	1	6%
Offer courses when they are advertised in Bulletin (for Main Campus as well as Modular programmes)	1	6%
Refrain from making changes to programme structure after student has begun	1	6%
Advisors should be assessed regularly	1	6%
TOTAL	16	100%

Finally, a cross-tabular analysis was done to ascertain if any of the factors identified as contributing to delays were concentrated around a particular programme of study. It was found that financial constraint was a prominent issue for students pursuing Business Administration, Management Studies, Mass Communication and Social Work. This is not surprising since most of the respondents were pursuing degrees in these areas and this must be kept in mind when reviewing the result. Conversely, failure of courses was an issue which seemed to be mostly concentrated around students pursuing Management Studies.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis brought many issues to the fore; financial constraints appear to be a major deterrent as it relates to students completing their programme on time and stipulated by the Bulletins.