

Perceptions Held by Masters Students of the NOMA  
Track Module on  
'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'

by  
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## Declaration

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## **Abstract**

### **Perceptions held by Masters Students of the NOMA<sup>a</sup> track module on ‘Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance’**

#### **Introduction and Objectives**

The interdisciplinary NOMA Track module on ‘Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance’ was developed jointly by four higher learning institutions in three countries (Norway, South Africa and Uganda). The module was incorporated into the respective Masters programmes in nutrition and consisted of three study units each of six weeks duration. The units were presented consecutively in the three countries and built on one another, totalling 18 weeks.

#### **Objectives**

The main aim of the study was to document perceptions of Masters students who completed the module. The objectives were to compare the perceptions of students about the study units in different countries, to document how students anticipated utilising their newly-acquired knowledge and to make recommendations for the development of similar interdisciplinary modules.

#### **Methodology**

A cross-sectional study design with a mixed methods approach was used. The sampling frame consisted of all registered students enrolled in the module. Informed written consent for both voluntary participation as well as voice recording of interviews was obtained from all participants. Data was extracted from students’ quantitative evaluation of each study unit. An interpretative methodological approach was used to elicit narrative accounts of students’ perceptions of the module during in-depth telephonic interviews. An inductive process was followed to identify emerging themes. The code list thus compiled was used to analyse unstructured data by using a text analysis computer programme.

#### **Results**

Twenty NOMA students enrolled at different universities participated in the study. The module was described as a life-changing experience and the way the module was structured and conducted in both developed and developing countries was highly rated. Interactive teaching styles optimised the learning experience. Presentations by a variety of experts and study visits served to enrich theoretical human rights principles by giving practical examples and by comparing implementation of these principles under varying conditions. The main difference between the

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<sup>a</sup> NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Master; NOMA signifies Norway’s current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

study units in the different countries related to time-management and different teaching styles employed by lecturers.

Transnational and interdisciplinary education provided this group of students the opportunity to enhance various professional attributes. Their willingness to learn from others provided them with valuable insight about the diverse nature of different population groups and their cultural differences. Without this understanding, poor communication, intolerance and prejudice might create barriers to optimal treatment or education of a client/community requiring professional advice.

Students applied their newly acquired knowledge about human rights principles and the link with nutrition by utilising teaching opportunities, and indicated that they intended to incorporate a human rights approach in future endeavours.

### **Conclusion**

The interdisciplinary NOMA Track module empowered a group of students to utilise the principles of a human rights-based approach in an appropriate manner. NOMA students developed an understanding of their new role as nutrition professionals, being challenged to interact in a globalized world if they want to make a meaningful contribution to the realisation of the right to food for all. Lessons learned from the implementation of the module will be useful to inform further decision-making on how to integrate a focus on human rights into training in nutrition at Stellenbosch University.

## Opsomming

### Persepsies van Meesterstudente oor die NOMA<sup>b</sup>-opsie module oor 'Voeding, Menseregte en Bestuur'

#### Inleiding en Doelwitte

Die interdisiplinêre NOMA-module opsie oor 'Voeding, Menseregte en Bestuur' is gesamentlik ontwikkel deur vier hoër opleidingsinstansies in drie lande: Noorweë, Suid Afrika en Uganda. Die module is geïnkorporeer in die toepaslike meestersgraadkursusse in voeding. Dit bestaan uit drie studie-eenhede wat elkeen 6 weke geduur het (in totaal 18 weke) en opeenvolgend aangebied is in die drie lande.

#### Doelwitte

Die hoofdoel van die studie was om persepsies van meesterstudente wat die module voltooi het te dokumenteer. Die doel was om sodanige persepsies oor die studie-eenhede in verskillende lande te vergelyk, om te dokumenteer op watter wyse studente verwag om die nuwe kennis te benut en om aanbevelings te maak vir die ontwikkeling van soortgelyke interdisiplinêre modules.

#### Metode

'n Dwarssnit studieontwerp met 'n gemengde metode benadering is gevolg. Die steekproefraamwerk het bestaan uit alle geregistreerde studente wat ingeskryf het vir die module. Ingeligde, geskrewe toestemming vir vrywillige deelname asook om stemopnames van onderhoude te maak, is van alle deelnemers verkry.

Data is onttrek uit studente se kwantitatiewe evaluering van elke studie-eenheid. 'n Metodologiese benadering van interpretasie is gevolg om 'n narratiewe weergawe van studente se persepsies te ontlok gedurende in-diepte telefoniese onderhoude. Temas is induktief geïdentifiseer en 'n ooreenstemmende kodelys is gebruik om ongestruktureerde data te analiseer met 'n teksanalise rekenaarprogram.

#### Resultate

Twintig NOMA studente, ingeskryf by verskillende universiteite, het deelgeneem aan die studie. Die module is beskryf as 'n lewensveranderende ondervinding. Die wyse waarop die module gestruktureer en aangebied is in beide ontwikkelde en ontwikkelende lande, is hoog op prys gestel. Die interaktiewe onderrigstyl het die leerervaring optimaal bevorder. Aanbiedings deur verskeie kundiges en studiebesoeke het daartoe bygedra dat teoretiese menseregte-beginsels verbreed is deur praktiese voorbeelde te verskaf. Die implementering van hierdie beginsels onder

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<sup>b</sup> NOMA: NO=Norweë, MA= Meestersgraad; NOMA beeld Noorweë huidige benadering uit, naamlik om samewerkende hoër opleiding instansies in die Suide te versterk

verskillende omstandighede is vergelyk. Die grootste verskille tussen die studie-eenhede in die onderskeie lande het verband gehou met tydsbesteding en dosente se verskillende onderrigstyle. Transnasionale en interdisiplinêre onderrig het hierdie groep studente geleentheid gegun om verskeie professionele vaardighede te ontwikkel. Hul bereidheid om by ander te leer het waardevolle insae gegee in die diverse aard van verskillende populasiegroepe en kultuurverskille. Daarsonder kon struikelblokke ontstaan het weens swak kommunikasie, onverdraagsaamheid en vooroordele. Dit kan verhoed dat optimale behandeling of onderrig verskaf word aan 'n kliënt/gemeenskap wat professionele advies benodig.

Studente het hul nuut-verworwe kennis oor menseregte-beginsels en die verband met voeding toegepas in onderriggeleenthede en het onderneem om 'n menseregte-benadering te volg in toekomstige ondernemings.

### **Gevolgtrekking**

Die interdisiplinêre NOMA-module opsie het 'n groep studente bemagtig om die beginsels van 'n menseregte-benadering op 'n toepaslike wyse te gebruik. NOMA studente verstaan nou hul nuwe rol as kundiges in voeding, naamlik dat hulle uitgedaag word tot interaksie in 'n globaliserende wêreld, as hulle 'n merkbare bydrae wil lewer tot die verwesenliking van die reg tot voldoende voedsel vir almal. Lesse wat geleer is uit die implementering van die module sal waardevol wees wanneer daar besluite geneem word oor die beste manier waarop 'n menseregte fokus ingesluit kan word in voeding-opleiding by Stellenbosch Universiteit.

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## **Contributions by Principal Researcher and Fellow Researchers**

The principal researcher (Martha Louisa Marais) developed the idea and the protocol. The principal researcher planned the research, undertook data collection (with the assistance of two research assistants), captured the data for analyses (with the assistance of two research assistants), analysed the data, interpreted the data and drafted the thesis. Em Prof Wenche Barth Eide and Prof Milla McLachlan (Supervisors) provided input at all stages and revised the protocol and thesis.

## List of Acronyms

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and People's Rights
CanMEDS	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada
CEU	Continuing Education Units
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
HPCSA	Health Professions Council of South Africa
HRBA	Human rights-based approach
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MU	Makerere University
NOMA	NO: Norway and MA: Masters NOMA signifies Norway's approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South
HiOA	Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences
NHP	Nutrition Health Professionals
UiO	University of Oslo
SA	South Africa
SAHRC	South African Human Rights Commission
SIU	Norwegian Centre for International Co-operation in Education. (SIU) is a public Norwegian agency promoting international co-operation in education and research.
SU	Stellenbosch University
UN	United Nations

## List of Definitions and Interpretations

- Capacity strengthening** Capacity building or strengthening includes broad concepts: education/training, authority, resources, motivation 'capacity building is a process by which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner'.<sup>1</sup>
- Constructive alignment** The curriculum is designed so that the learning activities and assessment tasks are aligned with the learning outcomes that are intended in the course.<sup>2</sup>
- Culture** Culture is the total way of life in a society; it is the collective programming of the mind [that] distinguishes the members of human groups from others in terms of shared beliefs, the ideologies, and the norms that influence the organisational action-taking.<sup>3</sup>
- Culture shock** Anxiety resulting from the loss of familiar signs and symbols when a person enters a new culture and familiar cues disappear.<sup>4</sup>
- Generic outcomes** Generic outcomes are referred to in variety of ways: graduate [professional] attributes, core or key skills, generic skills,<sup>5</sup> critical cross-field outcomes.<sup>6</sup>
- Human rights-based approach** A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyze inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede developmental progress (UNICEF).<sup>7</sup>
- Interdisciplinary** A process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession. It draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective.<sup>8</sup>

**Learning styles** Learning styles, which are often defined as characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment.<sup>9</sup>

**Professional** Health and nutrition professionals are committed to the health and well-being of individuals and society through ethical practice, profession-led regulation, and high personal standards of behaviour.<sup>10</sup>

**Transnational education** Transnational education implies that students are in different countries from the host university where academic qualification is being obtained.<sup>11</sup>

**Transition period** The transition period is the time when assumptions and differences (barriers) in the home education system are impacting upon the education process. Students face the natural difficulties posed by a new environment causing a period of disorientation, insecurity and incomprehension that may last for weeks, months or even longer.<sup>4</sup>

**Note:** References are listed at the end of Chapter 1

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## **Note to the reader**

In compliance with the requirements for a full research Masters of Nutrition, this thesis includes two articles ready for publication in scientific peer-reviewed journals. The format of the thesis is adapted accordingly; therefore the results of the study are presented in three different chapters. The two articles are reported in separate chapters and the third chapter reports on the remaining objectives hitherto not addressed in the two articles.

Furthermore, the relevant references are presented at the end of each chapter instead of having one comprehensive reference list at the end of the thesis.

# Chapter 1

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

### Perceptions Held by Masters Students of the NOMA<sup>c</sup> Track Module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'

#### 1 Background to the Research

A brief explanation of the development of the transnational NOMA Track module combining nutrition and human rights is provided to contextualise the literature overview and motivation for the study. Although various universities participated in the development and presentation of the module, this thesis focusses on implications for the South African context.

#### 1.1 The Origin of the NOMA Track Module

##### 1.1.1 The Collaborative Initiative of Scholars in the North and South to Develop a Human Rights Module

The University of Oslo, in conjunction with the Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences, has for fifteen years offered an international course on nutrition and human rights. To further strengthen the efforts and scope to promote the link between nutrition and human rights, scholars in Oslo had the idea of developing a module in collaboration with universities in Africa. This led to discussions between representatives of the two universities in Norway and several universities in Africa to investigate the feasibility of such a module and to apply for funding. This process is summarized in *Table 1.1*.

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<sup>c</sup> NOMA: NO=Norway and MA= Master; NOMA signifies Norway's approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

**Table 1.1: Summary of the process of obtaining NOMA funding for the collaborative development of a module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'**

Date	Activities	Participating universities
<b>May 2004</b>	Constructive meeting between delegations and specific areas of possible future collaboration were identified, including 1) Nutrition, Globalization and Governance and 2) Nutrition and Human Rights.	UiO, SU, UKZN, UCT.
<b>November 2004</b>	Seminar in Cape Town organised by UWC Community Law Centre and UiO to which all SA universities with nutrition programmes were invited	UiO, UWC Community Law Centre, Nutrition Division, SU as well as other SA universities.
<b>May/June 2006</b>	Representatives met at the University of Oslo (UiO) for a 'South Africa Week,' where it was decided to consolidate and extend international collaboration between SA and UiO.	Several South African universities (including SU).
<b>August 2007</b>	Formal discussions about the NOMA postgraduate module were initiated. The first workshop was held in Pietermaritzburg. Participants in the workshop put together the first NOMA application which was not successful at the time, said to be because South Africa was no longer considered eligible to be the main partner in the South.	UKZN, UWC, SU, MU, UiO and (then) HiAk (later HiOA) .
<b>July 2009</b>	The NOMA application was revised and resubmitted. This time Makerere University was the main partner in the South; the application was successful.	SU, MU, UiO and (then) HiAk (later HiOA). (Note: UKZN and UWC declined further participation due to changes in human resources.)
<b>March 2010</b>	Workshop in Uganda to plan the curriculum and logistical arrangements.	SU, MU, UiO and (then) HiAk (later HiOA).
<b>September 2010</b>	Workshop in Oslo to finalise the curriculum and logistical arrangements.	SU, MU, UiO and (then) HiAk (later HiOA).
<b>Abbreviations:</b> HiAk = Akershus University College for Applied Sciences HiOA = Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences MU = Makerere University NOMA = NO: Norway and MA: Masters SIU = Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education SU = Stellenbosch University UiO = University of Oslo UCT = University of Cape Town UKZN: University of KwaZulu Natal UWC: University of the Western Cape		

An important milestone was reached in 2010 when funding was obtained from the Norwegian Government (under the 'NOMA Programme' administered through the Centre for International Cooperation in Education, SIU) to develop a capacity-strengthening programme, supporting two cohorts of students for two year periods each. Students from Africa received full scholarships from the Norwegian government for two years, and the expenses of the relevant institutions were also covered. Students from Norway financed their own studies.



### 1.1.2 Development of the NOMA Track module

The overarching vision of the NOMA Track module was ‘to achieve the realisation of the human right to be free from hunger and to achieve nutritional health for all’. The NOMA Track module aimed to develop and implement Masters programmes in Africa linking nutritional sciences with principles of human rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>12</sup> The development of the NOMA Track module was an innovative venture where two universities in Africa (one in Uganda and one in South Africa), in collaboration with specialized tertiary education institutions in Norway, integrated subject matter on ‘nutrition, human rights and governance’ into one module.

The focus was on responsibilities of State and Civil society to implement, through democratic governance, measures towards enjoyment of the rights of all to have adequate food and nutritional health and to be free from hunger (*Box 1.1*).

#### **Box 1.1: Overview of organisational framework and content of the NOMA\* Track module<sup>12</sup>**

‘The course provides an overview of the right to adequate food in the context of the promotion and protection of international human rights. The course focusses especially on the need for greater awareness of the relevance of human rights to food security and nutritional health. It addresses the meaning of a rights-based approach to analysis, and the practical implications this may have for national public policy and international development efforts.

The course further discusses the relationships between right-holders and duty-bearers, and especially the obligations of the State in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to adequate food and nutritional health for all. The opportunities, constraints and future challenges that will apply to a rights-based approach to food and nutrition in development in contemporary globalisation will be discussed, and how this can be translated into action in selected countries, and by international institutions’.

\* NOMA = NO: Norway and MA: Masters

Senate approval was obtained from all relevant universities for the incorporation of the NOMA Track module in the curricula of each university. A summary of relevant academic information pertaining to the NOMA Track module presented by universities in Norway, South Africa and Uganda is provided in *Table 1.2*.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 1.2: Summary of relevant academic information pertaining to the NOMA\* Track module presented by universities in Norway, South Africa and Uganda<sup>13</sup>**

Country	Norway	South Africa	Uganda
<b>Institutional information</b>			
<b>Participating university (Department)</b>	*University of Oslo, (Department of Nutrition - Faculty of Medicine; and Centre for Human Rights - Faculty of Law) #Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences	Stellenbosch University, (Division of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Health Sciences)	Makerere University, (The School of Food Technology, Nutrition and Bio-engineering; Faculty of Agriculture -Applied Nutrition Programme; together with Human Rights Programme, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts)
<b>Masters programme offered</b>	*M in Nutrition #M in Food, Nutrition and Health	M in Nutrition	MSc in Applied Human Nutrition
<b>Credits: NOMA module's contribution</b>	8.33% contribution to Masters programme	25% contribution to Masters programme	4.5% contribution to Masters programme
<b>Academic year</b>	January- November	January- November	August - May
<b>Module organisation</b>			
<b>Number of contact sessions</b>	3 afternoons per week	2-3 full days per week	5 full days per week
<b>Duration of contact sessions per day</b>	3 sessions x 45 minutes 15 minutes breaks -	6-7 sessions x 45 minutes 15 minutes breaks 1 hour lunch	6 sessions x 1 hour - 2 hours lunch
<b>Field trips</b>	None	1 day per week and 1 week of visits only	2 field trips of 1 day each
<b>Module conduct</b>			
<b>Teaching style</b>	Lectures informal and flexible time schedule	Some lectures informal, mostly inflexible time schedule	Lectures formal and inflexible time schedule
<b>Presenters of lectures</b>	Lecturers with expertise in human rights, nutrition and/or governance (n=4)	Various presenters from different departments and institutions (n=28)	Various presenters from different departments and institutions (n=25)
<b>Presenters' place of employment</b>	University (Different departments; n=3)	University (Different departments; n=3) Government (n=15) Non-governmental (n=10)	University (Different departments; n=12) Government (n=9) Non-governmental (n=4)
<b>Format of literature</b>	Core documents: Printed Electronic links Textbook	Core documents: Printed Electronic links Articles relevant to SA: on CD	Core documents: Printed Electronic links

\* NOMA = NO: Norway and MA: Masters

The NOMA Track module consisted of three study units presented consecutively in the three different countries by the relevant universities. The teaching load was equally distributed among the three countries, i.e. three study units of six weeks each (totalling 18 weeks). It is important to point out that the three study units built on one another.

The theoretical basis and principles provided in Norway were used to critically investigate the practical application of human rights principles<sup>d</sup> and good governance to realise the right to adequate food. By visiting both South Africa and Uganda, all students were able to compare the differences and similarities in the application of human rights based principles to food and nutrition related activities in two different developing countries.

The NOMA Track module aimed to provide a learning and teaching environment conducive to student learning by incorporating a mix of teaching approaches to the module as suggested in the literature (*Box 1.2*).<sup>14</sup>

**Box 1.2: Approaches to teaching that enable learning to a wide range of learning styles. (Adapted from Felder and Silverman (1988))<sup>14</sup>**

Relate the material being presented to what has come before and what is still to come in the same course, to material in other courses, and to the students' experience (global).

Balance concrete information (sensing) with abstract concepts such as theories (intuitive).

Balance practical problem-solving methods (sensing/active) with material that emphasizes fundamental understanding (intuitive/reflective).

Provide concrete examples of the phenomena the theory describes or predicts (sensing); then develop the theory (intuitive / sequential); show how the theory can be validated (sequential); and present applications (sensing/sequential).

Use pictures, diagrams and graphs liberally before, during, and after the presentation of verbal material (sensing/visual). Show films or use multimedia simulations (sensing/visual.) Provide demonstrations (sensing/visual), and hands-on experience (active).

Use multimedia assessment (sensing/active).

Provide intervals in teaching –however brief– for students to think about what they have been told (reflective).

Small-group brainstorming activities are extremely effective for active learners (active).

Mix type of problems, in order to provide practice in the basic methods being taught through 'drill' exercises (sensing/active/sequential) but do not overdo them (intuitive/reflective/global); and use some open-ended problems and exercises that call for analysis and synthesis (intuitive/reflective/global).

Use group learning and team learning exercises to the greatest possible extent (active).

The first cohort of students (2011/12) was admitted during April 2011 and the second cohort (2012/13) during April 2012. In total, 22 nutrition professionals from different countries in the

<sup>d</sup> HRBA: A human rights based approach is based on the human rights principles of conduct in processes that should lead to outcomes in terms of relevant human rights standards (e.g. for the right to adequate food and health). Both processes and outcome are to be seen as equally important.<sup>15</sup> See further below.

North and South were accepted to complete the NOMA Track module. The aim was to offer a group of nutrition professionals the unique opportunity of achieving a solid theoretical and practical basis for understanding and accepting their human rights obligations as health professionals, and utilising the human rights-based approach (HRBA) as far as possible in their future endeavours.

During the development of the NOMA Track module, the focus was on the academic content and skills of the students. However, by learning about human rights principles and internalising the knowledge, students' professional competence was also enhanced.

The literature review includes an introduction to the concept of professional attributes required of health professionals. These attributes can be aligned with the principles of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to the processes for reaching desired standards, here of health and nutrition promotion and care. By learning about human rights, and to observe those principles - which encompass *Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Transparency, Human dignity and Respect for the Rule of Law* - the competence and conduct of nutrition professionals will be enhanced because it means adopting a holistic approach during service delivery and execution of other relevant duties in respect of these principles. Combined with an enabling environment this will empower the health and nutrition professionals to contribute to the fight against hunger and food insecurity.

Higher education institutions therefore have an important role to play in incorporating education in human rights into relevant curricula. Health and nutrition professionals with a deep understanding of the value of the appropriate utilisation of a HRBA should be able to assist in governmental or locally inspired endeavours to reduce the prevalence of hunger and improve food security in a sustainable way.

## 1.2 Literature Review

### 1.2.1 Introduction

Continual renewal of education paradigms for the training of health professionals is essential to keeping abreast of changing health-care needs for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Innovative learning opportunities can enhance the knowledge and skills of health profession students to address longstanding and emerging health and nutrition challenges. A holistic approach is essential, and by incorporating a focus on the necessary professional attributes in academic curricula, academics can facilitate competence and optimise future service and care for clients and communities.

The development and delivery of the special interdisciplinary NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', which aims to strengthen the link between nutrition and human rights, serves as an example of an initiative aimed at achieving academic as well as professional goals in this direction. NOMA signifies Norway's approach to strengthening higher education institutions in collaborating countries in the South. The present study took advantage of the opportunity of investigating participating Masters students' perceptions not only of the module as such, but also of the way it enhanced their competence as nutrition professionals.

To conceptualise the research within these frames, this chapter first provides a condensed version of professional attributes required of graduates. This is followed by a brief introduction to relevant human rights concepts and a motivation for human rights training of health professionals. It elaborates on the response of a group of educational institutions to address the need for such training, which in turn led to the development and delivery of the NOMA Track module.

### 1.2.2 Professional Attributes of Health and Nutrition Professionals

Professional attributes are seen to include, but go beyond, disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge: '[They] are the qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good in an unknown future'.<sup>16</sup> The concept of professional attributes can be adapted for different disciplines allowing for flexibility in the application thereof<sup>17</sup> which is useful during interdisciplinary education.

Various models of professional attributes are being used by educational institutions worldwide to demonstrate professional competence of graduates. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University based their required professional attributes (*Table 1.3*)<sup>18</sup> on the framework developed by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada [CanMEDS

(2005)], a well-researched classification which describes seven roles that health professionals perform.<sup>10</sup>

According to CanMEDS, the seven roles and corresponding professional attributes of a health professional<sup>e</sup> entails being a competent communicator, collaborator, manager, scholar, health [and nutrition] advocate and a professional, culminating in being a health [and nutrition] practitioner.<sup>10</sup> A summary of the interpretation of these attributes is provided in *Table 1.3*.

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<sup>e</sup> For the purpose of this article, the term 'health professionals' implies the inclusion of nutrition professionals.

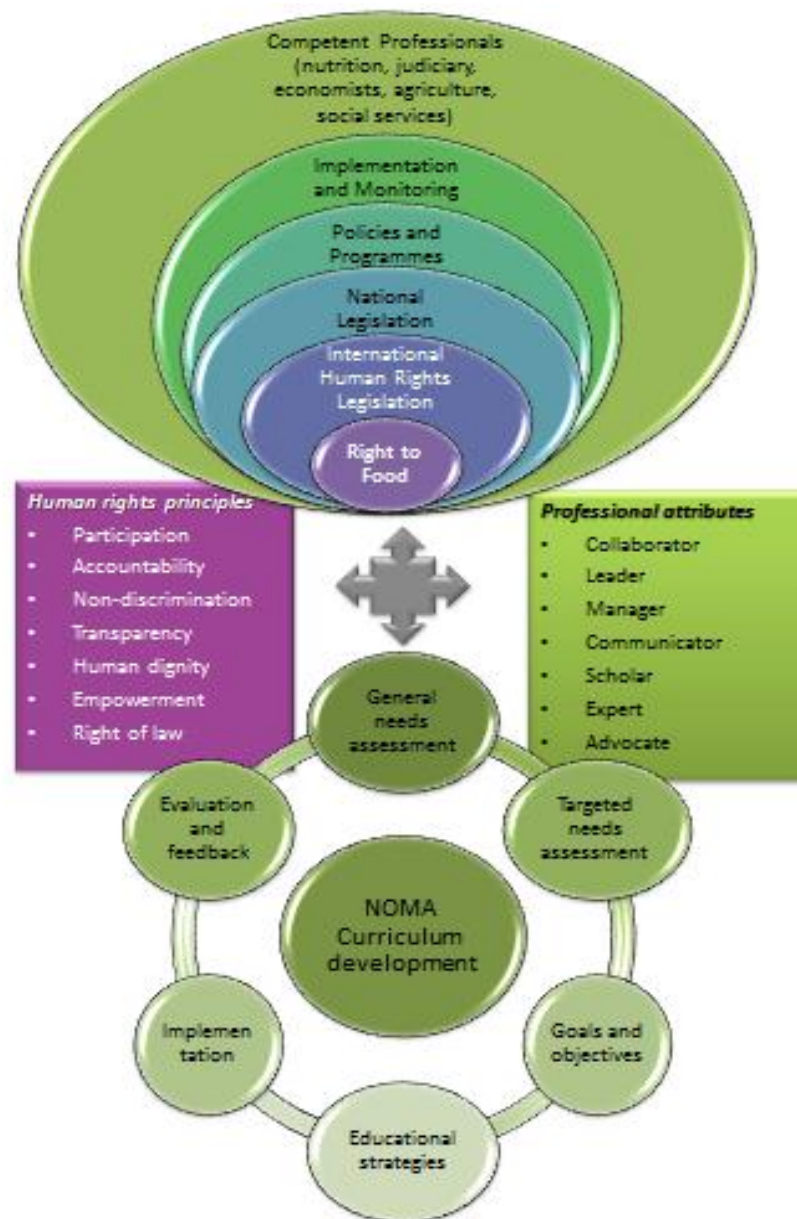
**Table 1.3: Classification of the Seven Roles and Professional Attributes of Health and Nutrition Professionals (HNP)\*<sup>10</sup>**

Role of Health and Nutrition Professionals (HNP)	Actions Illustrating Effective Execution of Corresponding Professional Attribute
As <i>Communicators</i> , HNPs effectively facilitate the carer/client relationship and the dynamic exchanges that occur before, during and after interaction.	Develop rapport, trust and ethical relationships with clients and communities from different cultural backgrounds. Accurately elicit and synthesise relevant information and perspectives of clients, communities, colleagues and other professionals. Convey relevant information and explanations accurately and effectively to clients as well as to statutory and professional bodies. Develop a common understanding on issues, problems, and plans to develop a shared plan of care/action. Convey effective and accurate oral and written information.
As <i>Collaborators</i> , HNPs effectively work within a team to achieve optimal client care (the community included).	Participate effectively and appropriately in multicultural, interprofessional and transprofessional teams, in various contexts (the community included). Work effectively with other HNPs to promote positive relationships and prevent, negotiate and resolve interprofessional conflict.
As <i>Managers</i> , HNPs are integral participants in organisations, organising sustainable practices, making decisions about allocating resources, and contributing to the effectiveness of the relevant systems.	Participate in activities that contribute to the effectiveness of the organisations and systems in which they work. Manage their practice and career effectively. Utilise finite resources appropriately. Serve in administration and leadership roles, as appropriate. Provide effective nutritional care to geographically-defined communities.
As <i>Health and Nutrition Advocates</i> , HNPs responsibly use their expertise and influence to advance the health and nutritional well-being of individuals, communities and populations.	Respond to individual client nutrition needs and related issues as part of holistic patient care. Respond to the nutrition needs of the communities that they serve.
As <i>Scholars</i> , HNPs demonstrate a lifelong commitment to reflective learning, as well as the creation, dissemination, application and translation of knowledge.	Maintain and enhance professional competence through on-going learning, both as HNPs and as responsible citizens, both locally and globally. Ask questions about practice, locate relevant evidence, critically evaluate and interpret information and sources, and consider the application of the information to practice decisions. Facilitate the learning of clients, students, other HNPs, the public, staff and others, as appropriate.
As <i>Professionals</i> , HNPs are committed to ensuring the health and well-being of individuals and communities through ethical practice, profession-led self-regulation and high personal standards of behaviour.	Demonstrate commitment and accountability to their clients, other healthcare professions and society through ethical practice. Demonstrate a commitment through participation in profession-led self-regulation. Demonstrate a commitment to own health and sustainable practice.
As <i>Healthcare and Nutrition Expert</i> , HNPs integrate all of the professional attribute roles, applying profession-specific knowledge and professional attitudes in their provision of client-centred care.	Function effectively as HNPs, integrating the six professional attribute roles to provide optimal, ethical, comprehensive and client-centred care in a plurality of health and social contexts. Establish and maintain knowledge, skills, attitudes and character appropriate to their practice. Perform a comprehensive assessment of a client/situation. Use preventive and promotive interventions effectively. Seek appropriate consultation from other HNPs, recognising the limitations of their own and others' expertise.

\*Adapted from the CanMEDS professional competency framework for healthcare professionals<sup>10</sup>

### 1.2.3 Theoretical Framework for Linking the Process of Developing the Curriculum of the NOMA Track Module to Professional Conduct

There are benefits to using a human rights-based approach to reflect on professional competencies and attributes as suggested in this research. A human rights-based approach would ensure that all relevant stakeholders are engaged appropriately along the continuum of implementation of the relevant guidelines/laws and that professional roles and attributes are not disregarded in the process, but rather strengthened. The NOMA Track module was developed by following the recommended process of curriculum development.<sup>19</sup> The various contexts relevant to the research are illustrated by means of a theoretical framework (*Figure 1.2*).



**Figure 1.1:** Theoretical framework to inform the interaction between the various contexts relevant to the research



Although the rights of the patient are a concern not explicitly mentioned in the CanMEDS, it is implicit in the requirement for ethical conduct by health professionals and for using a client-centred approach.<sup>10</sup> Similar attributes are embedded in the principles of a HRBA<sup>20</sup> to community interactions, which centres around the rights of vulnerable population groups and requires similar skills in order to interact successfully, seeking sustainable solutions.<sup>10</sup>

Using a HRBA implies that nutrition professionals should not function in isolation. Through interdisciplinary collaboration with legal experts, economists, experts in nutrition and agriculture (amongst others), better solutions may be found to deep-rooted problems.<sup>20</sup> An interdisciplinary approach provides such a team with a combination of the skills needed to communicate about the development and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at addressing diverse nutrition-related challenges.<sup>20</sup>

#### **1.2.4 Brief Overview of the Roles of Duty-bearers and Rights-holders in the Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food**

Violations of human rights receive frequent attention in the media and political arena. The Vienna Declaration on Human Rights (1993)<sup>20</sup> explicitly states that the right to food is linked to other human rights, as all human rights are indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. This implies that the violation of one right might impact negatively on other rights, for example, the lack of access to land creates inability to produce one's own food or generate income, culminating in food insecurity and an increased need for health and social services.<sup>20-22</sup> Any advocacy endorsing the right to food should therefore also consider other relevant rights, including the right to health, education, land, property/housing, procedural rights, the right to public participation or legal remedy (legal protection), a generally satisfactory environment favourable to development, and effective marketing systems that enable citizens to sell their goods.<sup>22</sup>

Ultimately the government becomes the primary duty-bearer in honouring the obligation regarding these human rights. Other duty-bearers on behalf of the State include various state agencies and institutions (such as policy-makers and administrators), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and health professionals.<sup>20</sup> Individuals and groups, referred to as 'rights-holders', are responsible for undertaking economic and other activities that enable them to have access to food. Rights-holders need to be supported to enable them to feed themselves in a dignified manner.<sup>24,25</sup> Vulnerable groups should be made aware of their entitlements; they may need to be educated as to when and how they can claim their legal rights,

or to complain to appropriate institutions about rights violations.<sup>25</sup> This can be achieved by using a HRBA in realizing the right to food, to hold government, as the primary duty-bearer, accountable to respect, protect, facilitate or provide adequate food. From this stems the need to strengthen human and institutional capacity to apply a HRBA to nutrition analysis as well as policies and programmes/ interventions.<sup>25-27</sup>

### **1.2.5 Capacity-Strengthening<sup>f</sup> through Education to Empower Nutrition Professionals to Make a Contribution to the Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food**

‘Only educated duty-bearers are able to keep to their obligations and only knowledgeable rights-holders know how to claim their right to food’.<sup>25</sup>

Capacity-strengthening entails a process by which duty-bearers enhance their ability to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner.<sup>1</sup> Essential components of strengthened capacity include the willingness to accept responsibility, having the authority to take specific action, having access to and control of resources, communicating effectively and having the capability to make rational decisions.<sup>26</sup>

To further the realisation of the right to food, capacity-strengthening for the government and judiciary, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media, the private sector and other stakeholders is crucial.<sup>25,28</sup> The capacity of duty-bearers to carry out their obligations could be enhanced through education and training to create a deep understanding of their roles as duty-bearers and the obligation to take action and implement required actions, as underscored by the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training (2012).<sup>29,30</sup> This includes amongst others, training for dietitians, nutritionists, food safety experts, other professionals working in food and nutrition, and officials such as policy-makers and administrators.<sup>25,28</sup> Trained government officials will understand their own roles in implementing the right to food. This could be through the implementation of relevant policies and programmes, by advocating for actions to realise the right to food of rights holders but also includes their obligation to provide the public, including those who are most marginalized and vulnerable, with full and unbiased information.<sup>25</sup>

Importantly, if rights-holders receive training in understanding human rights in general and the right to food in particular, they will become aware of their own responsibility towards providing

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<sup>f</sup> Capacity-building or strengthening includes broad concepts: education/training, authority, resources and motivation. ‘Capacity-building is a process by which individuals, groups, institutions, organisations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner’.<sup>1</sup>

adequate food to their families, to the best of their ability.<sup>23,25,27</sup> Furthermore, they could be empowered to participate in making decisions that affect their food security situation and also hold duty-bearers accountable.<sup>25</sup>

By integrating knowledge of nutrition professionals about the links between 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', the knowledge and skills obtained can be utilised directly or indirectly in educating and supporting duty-bearers and rights-holders.<sup>28,31</sup>

## **1.2.6 Response of Governments and their Institutions to the Need for Capacity-Strengthening to Promote the Right to Food**

### ***1.2.6.1 International Responses to Realise the Right to Food***

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) states that 'everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care'.<sup>3</sup> Hence, eradicating hunger is an obligation that the state has to fulfil under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCRs), 1966.<sup>23</sup> A brief description of important events in history will be provided to illustrate progress made in promoting the 'fundamental right of everyone to be free of hunger' (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 11(2)).<sup>23</sup>

Article 11(1) stipulates that States who ratified the ICESCR 'must take steps [...] to the maximum of [their] available resources, with the view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the [right to food] by all appropriate means'.<sup>23</sup> In a broader sense, this duty includes all institutions who execute laws (central/local government). By implication, all State representatives become duty-bearers (for example, the dietitian providing a service in a clinic). The concept of nested responsibilities illustrates the dual role of the mother acting as the duty-bearer on behalf of her breast-fed child but also as a rights holder by exercising her right to be supported by government. (Figure 1.2).<sup>33,34</sup>



**Figure 1.2<sup>g</sup>: Nested rings of duty-bearers' responsibilities<sup>34</sup>**

In 1999, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), issued its interpretation of Article 11 on the right to food, in General Comment 12 on the Right to Adequate Food, stating that 'the right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement'. And further, 'The core content of the right to adequate food implies: the availability of food in quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances and acceptable within a given culture; the accessibility of such food in such ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights'.<sup>35</sup>

Subsequently the Voluntary Guidelines on the right to adequate food provides concrete measures to be taken toward the right to adequate food as practical guidance for governments.<sup>15</sup> It suggests performing a situation analysis to identify root causes of food insecurity, to identify the most vulnerable population groups, and to design, implement, monitor and evaluate relevant interventions within a HR context to improve the efficiency and quality of processes and outcomes.<sup>36</sup> The FAO developed a training primer, which is available online, to provide duty-bearers with introductory knowledge and understanding of the right to food, and to facilitate implementation and monitoring of the outlined principles.<sup>37</sup>

Despite the development of human rights instruments and guidelines, successful implementation remains a challenge. In 2000 Devereux stated: 'It is the urgent responsibility of the present generation of national and international policymakers to translate one of the most remarkable

<sup>g</sup> The generic concept of the nested rings of responsibility developed by Kent could be adapted to depict a specific countries' governmental levels. For example, in South Africa the 5<sup>th</sup> level would be labelled as 'Provincial' instead of 'State Government'.

achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the potential to guarantee food security, the right to food and freedom from hunger for all of the world’s population – into a 21<sup>st</sup> century reality’.<sup>38</sup>

To approach malnutrition and nutrition insecurity from a human rights-based perspective has the potential to enhance the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), specifically Goal 1: Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger; Goal 4: Reduce Child Mortality; and Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health.<sup>39</sup> Even though policies and programmes have been put in place in many countries to support the MDGs, and some countries have made substantial progress, at the time when the need for the NOMA module was identified, progress towards meeting the MDG targets was unsatisfactory.<sup>40,41</sup>

According to a document compiled by the Right to Food Unit, health professionals who have a thorough knowledge and understanding of a HRBA could make a contribution to strengthen the link between human rights and nutrition, furthering the cause of addressing diverse nutrition-related challenges.<sup>25</sup>

#### **1.2.6.2 National Response to Realisation of the Right to Food in South Africa**

The HRBA emphasizes dimensions of participation, accountability and transparency.<sup>23,25</sup> These principles need to be strengthened in policy-making and programming to encourage community participation and local responsibility to ensure sustainable solutions and progress.<sup>42</sup> The South African government embraced these principles during the post-Apartheid era when South Africa became a signatory to the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights on 3 October 1994 (Signatories only: 70; States Parties: 160 as per 24 August 2013). Government hereby accepted the obligation to practise good governance which implies the duty to realise the right to adequate food in a progressive manner.<sup>43</sup> Although the act of ratification of the ICESCR per se does not guarantee improved nutritional health outcomes,<sup>44,45</sup> promoters of the right to food believe that ratifying the ICESCR will be beneficial in advancing the implementation of socio-economic rights at the national level, and more specifically, the right to adequate food.<sup>46</sup> Despite these perceived benefits the South African government has to date not yet ratified the ICESCR<sup>43</sup> even though the South African cabinet announced in 2012 that South Africa would do so.<sup>47</sup>

The South African Constitution promulgated in 1996 was developed in consultation with human rights experts and is widely acclaimed for its progressive and comprehensive nature.<sup>48</sup> Unlike the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR),<sup>49</sup> and constitutions in many other countries, the right of access to food and water is mentioned explicitly in the South African Constitution, 1996 –Section 27: ‘Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and

water, health-care services, social security, appropriate social assistance; the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights'. Furthermore the right of the child to basic nutrition (Section 28(1)(c) as well as the right of detainees to adequate nutrition (Section 35(2)(c), are also specified.<sup>48</sup>

To protect the constitutional rights of SA citizens (including the right to food and water), the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC; 1995) was established under the constitution as an independent and impartial body. SAHRC was mandated to develop an awareness of human rights in the population, to make recommendations to organs of state on the implementation of human rights, to investigate complaints of violations and seek appropriate redress, and monitor the progressive realisation of economic and social rights by the state.<sup>50</sup>

Since its inception SAHRC has not yet defended one case pertaining directly to the right to adequate food. There were a few cases which dealt with the other rights interlinked with the realisation with the right to adequate food: the right of access to adequate housing (Government of Republic of South Africa v Grootboom and others 2001 (4) SA 46 (CC)); the right of access to adequate health care (Minister of Health v Treatment Action Campaign 2002 (5) SA 721 (CC)); the right to have access to sufficient water (Lindiwe Mazibuko and others v City of Johannesburg and Others 2009 ZACC 28, Case No CCT 39/09 (CC));<sup>51,52,53</sup> and more recently, the right to have access to sufficient [and safe] water (The Federation for Sustainable Environment v the Minister of Water Affairs, Case no 35672/12).<sup>54</sup>

The absence of contested legal cases regarding the right to adequate food may be ascribed to the lack of a national legislative framework on the right to food,<sup>21</sup> and the fact that there are no clearly-outlined penalties for poor performance. Furthermore, there is also not a coordinated civil society mechanism monitoring government's action in this regard.<sup>53,55</sup>

As duty-bearer, government is accountable to respect, protect [and/or] promote and fulfil the rights of the most vulnerable population groups. To implement the HRBA in a meaningful manner, government needs to monitor performance continuously in realising these rights, (including the right to food). Government is also obliged to educate the public about their rights (including the right to food) in a way that is clear and easy to comprehend for all.<sup>56</sup>

In practice, the South African government is not adequately protecting the right to food, as many households still lack access to adequate food even though the domestic supply of food is sufficient to feed the country.<sup>53,56</sup> Based on the findings of the most recent South African National Health and Nutrition Survey (SANHANES-1, 2013) stating that nearly half of the South African population

is food insecure, the SANHANES study team strongly recommend that Government should prioritise food security, 'requiring that all sectors play their part in improving availability and/or access to food for everyone'.<sup>57</sup>

Amongst other reasons, this apparent oversight has been ascribed to the fact that current policy is fragmented and underresourced,<sup>55</sup> the failure to build capacity for implementation and monitoring policies and programmes, and the partial decentralisation of operational decision-making.<sup>53,58</sup> The lack of adequate coordination between government departments and between government and civil society results in fragmentation and inefficiency. There is a perception that food programmes and food aid have become political tools,<sup>53</sup> which undermines the realisation of the vulnerable population groups' right to adequate food. As early as 2004, the SAHRC concluded that owing to a lack of information, it seemed that programmes did not meet the needs of society in realising the right to adequate food.<sup>53,59</sup> Mechanisms need to be put in place, both encouraging public participation as well as enabling representation of those whose rights are being violated by certain policies.<sup>53,60</sup>

From the data available at the time, Chopra et al (2009) stated that there seemed to be little improvement in the nutritional situation of vulnerable groups in spite of comprehensive nutrition-related policies and programmes.<sup>58</sup> Therefore concerted efforts (including education and capacity-strengthening) of all concerned are required<sup>55,58</sup> to improve coordination of policies. It is stated in the National Development Plan (2011) that education and training, health and transport, human settlements, land use management and economic policies should work together more effectively.<sup>55</sup> These factors all impact on the realisation of the right to adequate food and nutrition.

### **1.2.7 Response of Tertiary Educational Institutions**

There is growing awareness globally of the potential benefit of incorporating human rights principles in curricula of health professionals to help resolve health [and nutrition] issues.<sup>61</sup> Owing to the indivisibility and inter-relatedness of human rights, a multi-dimensional approach where those concerned in several sectors work together towards realisation of the right to food and nutrition, is crucial.<sup>45</sup>

Maunder and Khoza identified five important points to consider when incorporating human rights into the nutrition curriculum: 1) nutrition professionals need to be aware that the HRBA focusses on the right of disadvantaged groups to decent standards of living and care; 2) training of nutrition professionals should provide a human rights perspective, enabling them to contribute in an



appropriate manner to the development and implementation of programmes to realise the right to food; 3) nutrition professionals should be able to include/adopt human rights perspectives during their usual nutrition surveillance and advise government on appropriate indicators or interpretation of nutrition data collected; 4) when practising advocacy, nutrition professionals should include reasons for fulfilling human rights and should focus on the impact of malnutrition due to rights violations; 5) nutrition professionals should help in training government and civil society to grasp the value of empowering vulnerable groups to participate and claim their rights, rather than remain objects of charity.<sup>45</sup>

Supporters of the synergy between human rights and nutrition is of the opinion that tertiary education and research institutions need to ramp up human rights-oriented education to equip graduates to operationalise concepts and standards of human rights.<sup>28,31,42,45,62</sup>

### **1.2.7.1 Response of Education Institutions to Provide Training on Human Rights in South Africa**

#### **1.2.7.1.1 Undergraduate Training on Human Rights for Nutrition Professionals in South Africa**

Despite the progressive nature of the South African Constitution and even though nutrition professionals often have to deal with matters related to human rights, the incorporation of human rights principles into undergraduate curricula for nutrition professionals in South Africa, was slow.<sup>45</sup> The importance of human rights in undergraduate training received attention when in 2007 the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) made it one of the core competencies for all health-care professionals (Health Professions Act, 1974 (Act No. 56 of 1974)).<sup>63</sup> Subsequently the Professional Board for Dietetics in South Africa incorporated a basic knowledge and understanding of Ethics and Human Rights as a critical cross-field outcome for all Dietetic graduates (Table 1.4).<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1.4: Core competencies required by the Professional Board for Dietetics (SA) in 2007 (excerpt)<sup>6</sup>**

<b>6 INTRA-PROFESSIONAL FOCUS CRITICAL CROSS-FIELD OUTCOMES</b>	
<b>EXIT LEVEL OUTCOMES</b>	<b>ASSOCIATED ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>
6.1 Demonstrate the ability to comprehend and apply standards of practice and ethics, as well as professional conduct.	Ability to comprehend and apply prescribed standards of practice and ethic. Ability to perform tasks in a professional manner in the clinical and community set-up as well as in food service systems.
6.2 Demonstrate the ability to comprehend and apply the principles of human rights in a nutrition context.	Ability to perform professional tasks without prejudice to any person or group of people. Ability to promote nutrition and nutritional care as a basic human right.



In response to the requirements of the HPCSA, principles of Ethics and Human Rights were incorporated in different modules in the curriculum of the B.Sc. Dietetics programme at Stellenbosch University in a step-wise process. One module in the third year of the programme is designated to explore the right to adequate food (*Table 1.5*).<sup>64</sup>

**Table 1.5: Modules and content pertaining to human rights (excerpt from Stellenbosch University yearbook, 2012)<sup>64</sup>**

Module	Contents
1 <sup>st</sup> year: Health in Context	Principles of applied bioethics and professionalism.
2 <sup>nd</sup> year: Ethics and Human Rights	<p>Ethical principles and universal ethical theories that apply to the health-care environment are explored, as well as the application in practice. Ethical rules and regulations according to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and appropriate professional conduct of a dietitian are discussed.</p> <p>By way of introduction, the history and international context of human rights is sketched and the various categories of human rights explained.</p> <p>The application of human rights in South Africa is examined in view of the relevant institutions and codes, among others the Constitution of South Africa, South African Human Rights Commission, Constitutional Court, Patients' Rights Charter and Batho Pele concept.</p> <p>The concept of a human rights-based approach to health is explored.</p> <p>The rationale of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) for education about ethics and human rights, and the transformation of the health-care sector are contextualised, as well as the redress mechanism within the healthcare system.</p>
3 <sup>rd</sup> year: Ethics and Human Rights	<p>Application of human rights-based approach into a development context. The concept, history and value of the Right to Adequate Food for human development, food security and poverty reduction programmes; the relevance of other human rights. Rights-holders, State obligations, the responsibilities of individuals and other parts of the society. The process of implementation of the right to food; recourse mechanisms to address violations of the right to food; the relevance of the Right to Food Guidelines as a tool to support the progressive realisation of the right to food. The role of the Constitution and the current situation in South Africa pertaining to the realisation of the right to adequate food in various situations and for vulnerable population groups.</p>
4 <sup>th</sup> year: Dietetics internship	Development of management skills in community nutrition, exposure to global nutrition and advocacy programmes and human rights and ethics in health-care in a workshop situation.

#### **1.2.7.1.2 Post-graduate Training on Human Rights for Nutrition Professionals in South Africa**

Globally, the need for comprehensive courses in human rights has been identified by academia. Short-courses and seminars are regarded as inadequate to equip health professionals to utilise the HRBA in all spheres of their individual professions.<sup>65</sup>

Since 1 January 2007, professionals registered at the HPCSA are expected to accumulate five Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every year for Ethics in order to ensure that patients are being treated with dignity and receive adequate care from healthcare professionals.<sup>63,66,67</sup> Five years later, human rights received more attention when the HPCSA announced, on 19 March 2012, the

launch of its health and human rights awareness campaign which places the spotlight firmly on patients' and professionals' rights and responsibilities in South Africa. '... by educating patients on their rights, it ensures a fair and equitable process in healthcare that benefits both the patient and healthcare practitioner'.<sup>68</sup>

In spite of the progress made at undergraduate level, nutrition professionals in South Africa have limited opportunities to expand their knowledge about HRBA. Through exposure to collaborative ventures between the University of Oslo and the Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences in Norway and Stellenbosch University, scholars in South Africa learnt of the human rights module being offered in Norway. The opportunity to participate in the NOMA programme was fully utilised and the NOMA Track module entitled 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance' formed part of the structured Masters in Nutrition offered at Stellenbosch University during 2011 and 2012 (*Box 1.3*).<sup>64</sup>

**Box 1.3: Contents of the module titled 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'**<sup>64</sup>

**Module name and number: 57800 NUTRITION AND DIETETICS**

The NOMA\* (Norad's Programme for Masters's Studies) stream may be selected. The NOMA stream consists of three sub-units (Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance I, II and III) and is presented by Stellenbosch University in South Africa, Norway and Uganda in collaboration with the Oslo and Akershus Universities (Norway) and the Makerere University (Uganda). Students should be willing to travel to these countries for a period of six weeks per country. These study units are funded by Norway and fulltime students are eligible for a two-year scholarship. A limited number of students is selected for this stream.

\*NOMA = NO: Norway and MA: Masters

The process followed to develop the NOMA Track module was discussed in Section 1.1.2. The development and implementation of the NOMA Track module offered nutrition professionals a unique opportunity to obtain in-depth knowledge of the links between human rights and nutrition. Health professionals who are educated about the potential benefits of HRBA as a strategy to promote health and combat malnutrition, will be better equipped to understand their own roles in implementing their obligation to provide the public, including those who are most marginalised and vulnerable, with unbiased information,<sup>25</sup> including information about the right to health and the right to food.

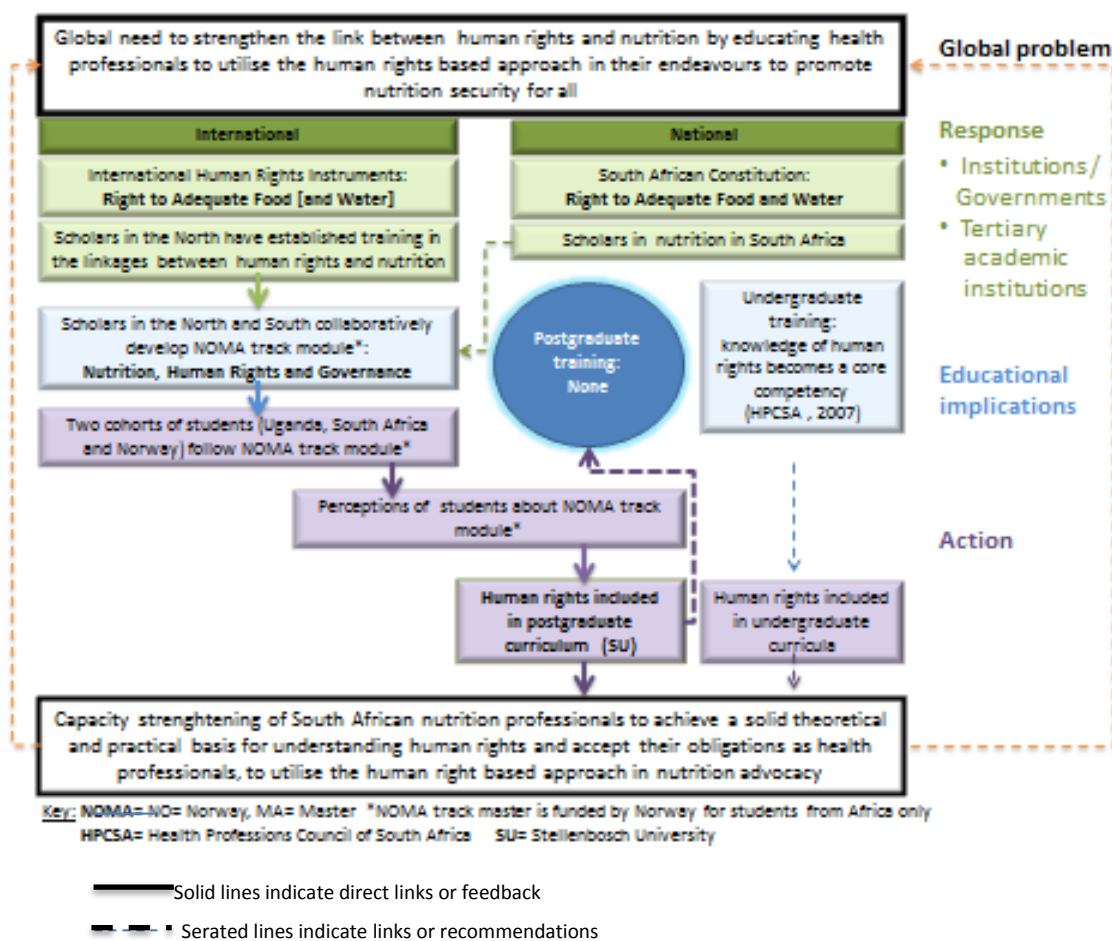
### 1.3 Conceptual Framework for the Research

Until recently, nutrition professionals in South Africa received little training regarding human rights. The University of Cape Town offers a short course in Health and Human Rights which is available to faculty members from SA Health Sciences institutions.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, there is little

opportunity for in-depth training on the right to adequate food, apart from the on-line self study module on the Right to Food prepared by Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO, 2007).<sup>37</sup>

In the NOMA project,<sup>70</sup> tertiary education institutions in the North and South<sup>h</sup> collaboratively developed a unique module entitled 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'. It offered two cohorts of nutrition professionals the opportunity to learn how the link between human rights and nutrition would enable them to make a contribution to the realisation of the right to food and nutrition. This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of students who had completed the module, as these could provide useful information for the development of other learning opportunities aimed at embedding a HRBA into nutrition curricula at Stellenbosch University, and elsewhere.

A conceptual framework is provided to illustrate the response of the South African government and education institutions to the need of health professionals to have a thorough understanding of the link between human rights, nutrition advocacy and practice (*Figure 1.3*).



**Figure 1.3: Conceptual framework to depict the role of human rights education in strengthening the capacity of nutrition professionals to act as duty-bearers in promoting food security for all**

<sup>h</sup> Tertiary education institutions 'in the North' refers to institutions in Norway; 'in the South' here refers to institutions in Africa.

## **1.4 Problem Statement and Motivation for the Study**

Despite the fact that the South African constitution recognises the right to adequate food and water, progress towards the goal of eradicating hunger and attaining optimal nutritional status is not satisfactory. Nutrition professionals need to make concerted efforts to contribute to changing the current incidence of malnutrition and alleviating the long term consequences of malnutrition; they need to utilise a number of different strategies to combat malnutrition and improve nutritional health.

Embedding a HRBA when developing policies and programmes, would place the emphasis on governments' obligation to promote the human right(s) to adequate food and health. A key element of the HRBA is empowerment through capacity-strengthening of duty-bearers to fulfil their duty, and of rights-holders to claim their rights. It stands to reason that health professionals need to develop their own HRBA as a strategy to promote health and combat malnutrition.

As mentioned, until recently nutrition professionals in South Africa received very little training regarding human rights in general and the right to adequate food and water more specifically. To date, qualified nutrition professionals, including university lecturers, have had little opportunity for in-depth training on a rights-based approach. The development of the NOMA Track module was an attempt to set an example of a new approach to human rights education which may act as a stimulus for education institutions. By investigating the perceptions of students who completed the international module, valuable information obtained may inform future decision-making as to how to integrate a focus on human rights into training in nutrition at Stellenbosch University.

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# Chapter 2

## METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The methodology followed to investigate the research questions is discussed in this chapter. It first provides the study aims and objectives, followed by a description of the process of identifying and recruiting participants for this cross-sectional descriptive study. A description of the two methods of data collection illustrates details of the research process. Participants completed a quantitative questionnaire in order to evaluate the NOMA Track module. Telephonic interviews were also conducted to obtain information about participants' perceptions about the said module. The chapter concludes with a description of the research instruments, the process of data analysis and the ethical and legal aspects relevant to this research.

### 2.2 Study Aims and Objectives

#### 2.2.1 Aim of the Study

The main aim of the study was to document Masters students' perceptions about the module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', in order to make recommendations for the development of a post-graduate module on human rights and nutrition at Stellenbosch University.

#### 2.2.2 Research Objectives

- To describe the perceptions about the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', held by two cohorts of NOMA Track students.
- To compare the perceptions of the students from the different countries, regarding the NOMA Track module.
- To document if and how students from the first cohort utilised opportunities to implement the acquired knowledge and insight about a human rights-based approach to nutrition.
- To make recommendations for the development of a module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance' for the structured Masters of Nutrition programme at Stellenbosch University.

## 2.3 Research Questions

- What are the perceptions of different components of the NOMA Track module held by students who completed the module?
- What skills and competencies did the students develop by completing the NOMA Track module?
- What shortcomings that prevented them from having an optimal learning experience, if any, were identified by the students?
- How do the students perceive the success of the NOMA Track module in empowering them to build dimensions of a human rights-based approach into future endeavours addressing food insecurity and nutrition conditions, especially among vulnerable population groups?
- What are the implications of these perceptions for the development of a module on human rights and nutrition at Stellenbosch University?
- How could possible differences in their perceptions of the NOMA Track module of students from universities in Norway, South Africa and Uganda influence the approach to the development of modules in future<sup>a</sup>?

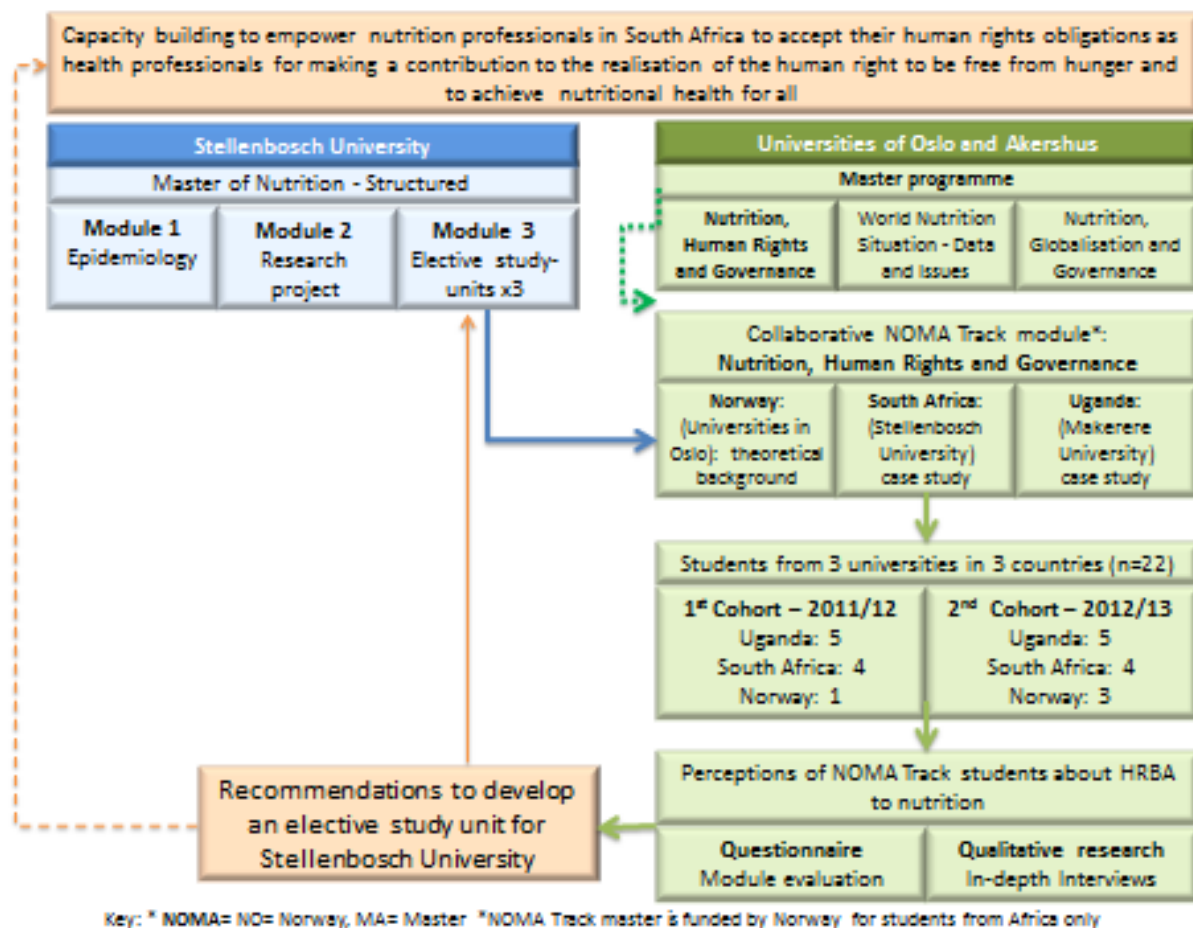
## 2.4 Study Design

### 2.4.1 Study Design Overview

A cross-sectional descriptive study design was followed to obtain the perceptions of the students about the NOMA Track module. The content of the NOMA Track module, the number of NOMA students from the different countries and the aim of the study are depicted diagrammatically in *Figure 2.1*.

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<sup>a</sup> The Master of Nutrition at Stellenbosch University is offered as a distance-learning programme and 36a sa multi-cultural student universe.



**Figure 2.1: Diagrammatical depiction of the content of the NOMA\* Track module, the number of NOMA students from the different countries and the aim of the study**

## 2.4.2 Study Population

Students who chose to follow the elective option of the NOMA Track module were registered as Masters students at their respective universities: University of Oslo (Norway), Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences (Norway), Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and Makerere University (Uganda). In accordance with the approved budget, each university was allocated a specific number of students whom they could recruit for the NOMA programme. Potential students had to complete a NOMA application form, submit a letter of motivation and undergo a screening interview. Students were selected according to a predetermined set of criteria. Applicants from Africa who were accepted for the NOMA Track module received a full scholarship to support them for two years on condition that they undertook to complete their studies within two years and apply a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in their research. Students from Norway were responsible for finding their own funding, and relied on governmental student loan facilities.

### 2.4.2.1 Sample Selection

The study population consisted of all students participating in the two cohorts of the NOMA Track module (2011/12 and 2012/13).

### 2.4.2.2 Sample Size

The total number of students eligible for participation in the study was 22. The country of origin, number of students and their gender are summarised in *Table 2.1*. The original aim was to recruit equal numbers from both genders but the total number of applications was not adequate to attain this ratio.

**Table 2.1: The country of origin, number of students and gender of NOMA\* Track students (n=22<sup>#</sup>)**

Country where enrolled as student	Number of students		Gender	
	2011/2012	2012/2013	Female	Male
Uganda	5	5	6	4
South Africa	4	4	8	
Norway	1	3	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22<sup>#</sup></b>		<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>

\* NOMA: NO = Norway, MA = Masters

<sup>#</sup> One student did not complete the NOMA Track module

### 2.4.2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

#### 2.4.2.3.1 Inclusion

- All NOMA Track students

#### 2.4.2.3.2 Exclusion

- NOMA Track students who did not fully comply with the conditions set by the NOMA Track module (n=1)

## 2.5 Methods of Data Collection

Data was collected using a mixed methods approach. Students evaluated each study unit by completing a questionnaire using a 7-point Likert-type scale. Also, their perceptions were investigated through in-depth interviews.

### 2.5.1 Questionnaire - Evaluation of the NOMA Track Study Units

Permission was obtained from the colleagues in the NOMA organising committee<sup>b</sup> for the

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<sup>b</sup> The NOMA organising committee consists of representatives from the various institutions including heads of relevant departments, academic coordinators, financial and administrative officials

researcher to use the results from the module evaluation forms (*Addendum A*) for further analysis. Students evaluated each study unit by responding to the same pre-formulated statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale. They also responded to three open-ended questions.

The module evaluation form was sent to all students electronically after completion of the module. Students were requested to complete the questionnaire and return it to the administrative officer. She removed any personal information and handed a hard copy to the researcher who then summarised and analysed the data (Refer to Section 2.8).

### **2.5.2 Qualitative Research Methods - Interviews**

Students were verbally informed about prospective research during their stay in South Africa. In October 2012, the researcher sent out an electronic invitation offering participation in the research. Students willing to participate in the research provided informed consent (Refer to Section 2.9.3).

Qualitative research methodology was used to obtain information about the students' perceptions of the NOMA Track module. Due to the fact that students resided in different countries, it was not possible to have focus group interviews even though it would have been the preferred method, as discussions may remind participants of information they could share and introverted participants may feel safer in sharing their perceptions.<sup>1</sup> The researcher planned to conduct interviews by using video-Skype technology but unstable Internet connections hampered the process. The researcher had to resort to conducting interviews telephonically.

The researcher was the NOMA Track co-ordinator in South Africa, so to minimise bias it was decided to use two trained research assistants (one male and one female) to conduct the interviews. The researcher provided the research assistants with names and contact details of participants, and suitable times for interviews during October and November 2012 were arranged with each student.

The research assistants were located in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences and used telephones with a speaker phones to enable voice recordings. Due to poor connectivity some students were phoned three times to complete the interviews. It was anticipated that interviews would last around 30 to 45 minutes but some lasted up to 125 minutes, due to poor connectivity.

Except for one Afrikaans interview, all interviews were conducted in English. At the beginning of each interview, the research assistant confirmed that the participant gave consent and that the

interview could be voice recorded. Interviewers used a discussion guide (*Addendum B*) based on themes and prompts relevant to the module, developed and tested by the researcher during the pilot study (Refer to Section 2.7: Pilot study). Data obtained during the pilot study was included in the research findings. Questions proceeded reflexively in response to the interviewee's answers.

Interviews were transcribed by the research assistants. Due to the poor quality of the telephone connection and/or the foreign accent of some students, the researcher had to redo four transcriptions. Thereafter the researcher checked all transcripts against the recorded interviews to ensure that they were true versions of the discussion. The researcher analyzed the unstructured data according to emerging themes and summarised the findings. (Refer to Section 2.8.2).

## 2.6 Instruments Used for Collecting Data

Two types of research instruments were used to collect data. All research instruments were available in English as the module was conducted in English only.

### 2.6.1 Evaluation Forms of the NOMA Track Module

A rubric to evaluate the study units of the NOMA Track module was developed jointly by the module co-ordinators, based on a form previously used with success by the institutions in Norway. An additional category was added pertaining to study visits in SA and Uganda. The rubric was used to obtain the overall perceptions of NOMA students after completion of the six weeks' study unit in each country (*Addendum A*).

The evaluation focused on feedback for improving the course according to the following categories:

<i>Section 1:</i>	Overall assessment <sup>c</sup> of the course	5 questions
<i>Section 2:</i>	Matters relating to the planning and content of the course	5 questions
<i>Section 3:</i>	Matters relating to working methods used in the course	4 questions
<i>Section 4:</i>	Matters relating to the conduct of the course	6 questions
<i>Section 5:</i>	Matters relating to organisation of the course and allocation of time	6 questions
<i>Section 6:</i>	Assessment <sup>c</sup> of lecturers	2 questions
<i>Section 7:</i>	Matters relating to the [prescribed] literature	5 questions
<i>Section 8:</i>	Matters relating to the study visits	5 questions

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<sup>c</sup> 'Assessment' per definition refers to the process followed to determine students' progress, which consists of formative and summative feedback. As the original evaluation form used the term 'assessment of the course/lectures', the term will be used throughout when reporting the findings of the research.



A 7-point Likert-type scale was used to elicit response to statements: *Strongly disagree; Disagree; Disagree a little; Neutral/ don't know; Agree a little; Agree; Strongly agree*. To enable further analysis of data obtained from the evaluation form, a score was awarded to each scale point ranging from *Strongly disagree* = 1 to *Strongly agree* = 7.

Normally a 7-point Likert scale is not suitable for use in small study populations.<sup>3,4</sup> The researcher therefor combined the two highest scores and the two lowest scores during the reporting of the findings.

An additional section used three open-ended questions about positive aspects, negative aspects and further comments.

## 2.6.2 Discussion Guide for Interviews

A discussion guide containing open-ended questions was compiled by the researcher to facilitate in-depth discussion and to ensure that the discussion remained focussed on the specific topic (*Addendum B*). Students were asked to share their reasons for applying for the NOMA Track module and their experience of completing the module, to describe what impact the NOMA Track module had on them as nutrition professionals, to discuss challenges in incorporating a HRBA to food and nutrition in education, to explain whether they were comfortable participating in the research and to evaluate the module. The first cohort students were also asked to share how, when and where they were or would be able to utilise their knowledge and the insights acquired during the NOMA Track module.

## 2.7 Pilot Study

### 2.7.1 Evaluation Form of the NOMA Track Module

The **content validity** of the questionnaire was not evaluated as it was based on a form previously used with success in Norway by tertiary education institutions with expertise in the field of curriculum evaluation and/or student assessment. All questions were deemed relevant to the proposed outcomes of the NOMA Track module.

### 2.7.2 Discussion Guide for Interviews

An advisory committee consisting of a lecturer from each participating university was appointed. Collectively, they were considered to have a good understanding of human rights-based

approaches to nutrition, as well as curriculum development and post-graduate education. They examined the discussion guide and assessed the **content and face validity** of the questions. Their feedback did not require any improvement of the content nor any adaptations of the questions. Additionally, the researcher successfully completed a semester module on qualitative research methods. Subsequently, the discussion guide was refined by shortening the questions.

### 2.7.3 Pilot study

The researcher conducted the first two interviews for the study during September 2012 as part of the pilot study. Data from these two interviews were included in the research findings as the discussion guide remained unchanged. During the pilot study research was identified as an emerging theme thus probes about students' experiences while planning their research were added.

## 2.8 Data Analysis

### 2.8.1 Quantitative Data

The form used to evaluate each study unit consisted of 8 categories and the number of statements per category varied from two to six (*Addendum A*). Students responded to each statement by responding to a 7-point Likert-type scale. The Likert-type scale is designed in such a manner that participants should agree with the positive statements and disagree with the negative ones.

In order to investigate differences in the perceptions of the students about the study units offered in different countries, values were assigned according to the Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* = 1 to *Strongly agree* = 7. Some statements (Statements 4.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5 and 8.4) were phrased negatively and in order to summarise responses, the researcher had to use reverse item scoring.

A participant code was assigned to each questionnaire and the responses were summarised on a spreadsheet using Excel for Windows 2007. Average scores were calculated per statement per study unit as well as the module as a whole. Statements that received an average score <5 were deemed to require further discussion. Additionally, the total number of responses per statement and category was calculated. The statements showing the biggest variation in responses were deemed to require further discussion.

After summarising the three sets of questionnaires, the total responses per section were analyzed for similarities or differences in the countries. Due to the small study sample it was not possible to compare the countries per statement. It also did not allow for comparisons between the two cohorts (cohort 1: n=8 vs cohort 2: n=10) nor genders (male: n=4 vs female: n=16).

Information obtained in the open questions was recorded, common themes identified and summarised. The findings were compared to the qualitative data obtained from the interviews to identify any discrepancies.

Descriptive statistics and histograms were used to describe ranking data obtained from the evaluation forms as well as differences in perceptions of students about the study units presented in the different countries.

### **2.8.2 Qualitative Data**

The researcher used a systematic approach to analyse unstructured data. Constant comparison of information ensured that the themes reflected the original data. An inductive process was followed as themes emerging from the transcribed text were used to compile a code list. A text analysis computer programme (Atlas TI version 6) was used to code the text. To ensure that all emerging themes were identified and to check for inconsistencies and contradictions, the text was re-read several times.

Realising that her own experience during the two cohorts may influence the interpretations, the researcher consciously aimed to remain focussed on the participants' opinions and perceptions. The study leaders assisted her to remain unbiased by discussing the summaries of sensitive issues and the best way to report the findings.

Separate sets of themes were identified and reported in the results under different topics. One set of themes that emerged related to the categories used in the evaluation form and are presented as such in Chapter 3. Through a deductive process the second set of emerging themes related to the seven professional roles according to the framework developed by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada [CanMEDS (2005)]<sup>2</sup> and is reported in Chapter 4.

## **2.9 Ethics and Legal Aspects**

### **2.9.1 Ethics Approval**

Approval for the study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Stellenbosch (N12/08/044) (*Addendum C*). The research was conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the International Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Ethical Guidelines for Research.

### **2.9.2 Permission to Allow Students' Participation in the Study**

Co-ordinators of the NOMA Track module in each country confirmed that the students registered at the respective institutions would be allowed to participate in this research project.

### **2.9.3 Informed Consent**

Informed consent (*Addendum D*) was obtained from each participant by submitting a signed electronic version of the consent form. These were co-signed and returned by the researcher. Informed consent for voice recording of interviews was obtained separately. It was explained that participation was voluntary, that they may refuse to participate in the project and that refusal to participate would not in any way compromise them.

### **2.9.4 Anonymity**

The researcher aimed to maintain anonymity by assigning participant codes during coding of text and whenever direct quotes were used in reports. Students submitted questionnaires electronically to an administrative officer who removed all personal information before forwarding the questionnaires to the researcher.

### **2.9.5 Confidentiality**

All information was treated in a confidential manner. No reference was made to specific individuals during reporting of findings. Only the researchers had access to the data.

All transcripts and voice recordings were stored in protected files and voice recordings destroyed after six months.

## 2.10 Concluding Statement on the Methodology

A cross-sectional study design was followed to obtain perceptions of students about the NOMA Track module. The study population consisted of a group of international Masters students who completed the NOMA Track module. Data was collected using a mixed methods approach by analysis of a quantitative module evaluation form and by the conducting of telephonic in-depth interviews to investigate students' perceptions of the NOMA Track module.

Quantitative data was captured and analysed. Statements with an average score <5 were deemed important to discuss as well as statements with the biggest variation in responses. In-depth interviews were transcribed to allow for content analysis.

The results of the research will be reported in the next three chapters according to the research objectives. The first objective is reported in the form of two peer-reviewed journal articles: Chapter 3 describes the perceptions of two cohorts of students who completed the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', and Chapter 4 relates the way students' professional attributes were enhanced. Chapter 5 is a report on the remaining objectives: the perceptions of NOMA students about the study units presented in different countries and opportunities to utilise their newly-acquired knowledge. However, caution should be exercised when interpreting the findings from the quantitative component of this study as it should be done within the context of the small sample size (n=20).

A holistic discussion of the results, as well as implications of student perceptions of the NOMA Track module for future development of modules including human rights and nutrition, will be provided in Chapter 6. The thesis is concluded by Chapter 7 which also includes details of the limitations of the study and recommendations for incorporation of human rights in relevant documents and programmes, as well as opportunities for teaching and learning research.

## 2.11 References: Chapter 2

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## Chapter 3

### RESULTS Part 1

#### Perceptions Held by Masters Students of the NOMA<sup>a</sup> track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'

##### Abstract

##### Background

A NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance' was developed jointly by four academic institutions in Norway, South Africa and Uganda, and incorporated into their respective Masters programmes in nutrition. The module consisted of three study units each of six weeks' duration (totalling 18 weeks), presented consecutively in the three countries, built on one another.

##### Objectives

The perceptions of participating students about various aspects of the module were documented to inform future curriculum endeavours.

##### Methods

A mixed methods approach was followed. A module evaluation form completed by students for each study unit was analysed. In-depth telephonic interviews were voice recorded and transcribed. Through an inductive process, emerging themes were used to compile a code list and content analysis of the unstructured data.

##### Results

The overall positive module evaluation by 20 participants (90,9% response rate) can be ascribed to the planning and content of the module, enlightening study visits, the expertise of lecturers and an interactive approach which enhanced student learning. Logistical issues regarding time-management and administrative differences among the academic institutions caused some concerns. Students experienced some resistance against qualitative research in natural science faculties.

Students benefitted from being exposed to different teaching styles and education systems at universities in different countries. Constructive alignment of teaching and learning activities could be optimised through involvement and empowerment of all relevant lecturers.

##### Conclusion

The successful implementation of the module not only provides nutrition Masters students with knowledge to operationalise a human rights-based approach during future interactions in their professional practice, but also serves as an example of the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinary and transnational collaboration in module development.

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<sup>a</sup> NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Master; NOMA signifies Norway's current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

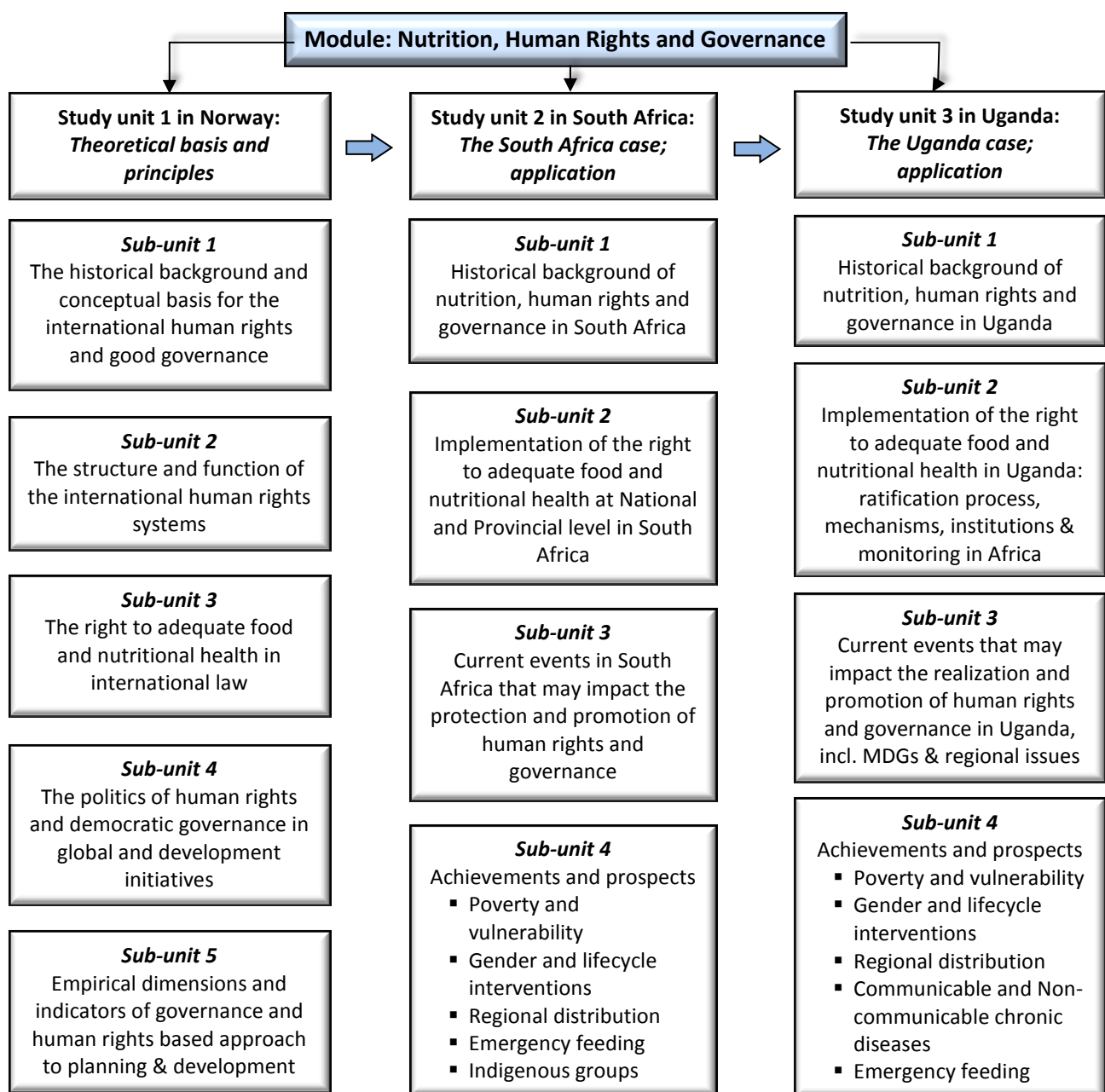
### 3.1 Introduction

A lack of democratic governance and failure to respect human rights contributes to persistent food insecurity and malnutrition in many African countries.<sup>1</sup> Health professionals need to make concerted efforts to change the current prevalence of malnutrition and alleviate its long-term consequences. To strengthen the link between human rights and nutrition, tertiary education institutions need to provide human rights-oriented education to equip graduates to operationalise concepts, standards and principles of human rights.<sup>2-7</sup>

Scholars at the University of Oslo (Norway), Oslo and Akershus University College for Applied Sciences (Norway), Stellenbosch University (South Africa) and Makerere University (Uganda) proposed to develop and deliver a module focussing on these links. Funding was obtained from the Norwegian Government under a programme to strengthen universities in the South (NOMA), supporting two cohorts of students from the universities in Africa, each for a period of two years (2011-12 and 2012-13).<sup>8</sup> Norwegian students were also accepted for the module but they supported themselves financially.

A special transnational and interdisciplinary NOMA Track Module (henceforth referred to as 'the module') was designed and approved by all four institutions for incorporation into their respective Masters of Nutrition curricula for the participating students. The module was presented through a six weeks' study unit in each country, the content of which built on one another, totalling 18 weeks (April-August). The focus was on the theoretical and institutional background to international human rights, and the responsibilities of State and civil society to implement, through democratic governance, measures towards enjoyment of the rights of all to adequate food and nutritional health and to be free from hunger (*Figure 3.1*). An additional aim was to provide a model that could raise the interest of other universities in Africa.





\* NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Masters; NOMA signifies Norway's current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

**Figure 3.1: Framework for the NOMA\* Track Module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance' 2011/12 and 2012/13**

To introduce a transnational module posed challenges to the institutions given several seemingly incompatible administrative differences (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Summary of relevant academic information pertaining to the NOMA\* Track module presented by universities in Norway, South Africa and Uganda<sup>13</sup>**

Country	Norway	South Africa	Uganda
<b>Institutional information</b>			
<b>Participating university (Department)</b>	*University of Oslo, (Department of Nutrition - Faculty of Medicine; and Centre for Human Rights - Faculty of Law) #Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences	Stellenbosch University, (Division of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Health Sciences)	Makerere University, (The School of Food Technology, Nutrition and Bio-engineering; Faculty of Agriculture -Applied Nutrition Programme; together with Human Rights Programme, Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts)
<b>Masters programme offered</b>	*M in Nutrition #M in Food, Nutrition and Health	M in Nutrition	MSc in Applied Human Nutrition
<b>Credits: NOMA Module's contribution</b>	8.33% contribution to Masters programme	25% contribution to Masters programme	4.5% contribution to Masters programme
<b>Academic year</b>	January- November	January- November	August - May
<b>Module organisation</b>			
<b>Number of contact sessions</b>	3 afternoons per week	2-3 full days per week	5 full days per week
<b>Duration of contact sessions per day</b>	3 sessions x 45 minutes 15 minutes breaks -	6-7 sessions x 45 minutes 15 minutes breaks 1 hour lunch	6 sessions x 1 hour - 2 hours lunch
<b>Field trips</b>	None	1 day per week and 1 week of visits only	2 field trips of 1 day each
<b>Module conduct</b>			
<b>Teaching style</b>	Lectures informal and flexible time schedule	Some lectures informal, mostly inflexible time schedule	Lectures formal and inflexible time schedule
<b>Presenters of lectures</b>	Lecturers with expertise in human rights, nutrition and/or governance (n=4)	Various presenters from different departments and institutions (n=28)	Various presenters from different departments and institutions (n=25)
<b>Presenters' place of employment</b>	University (Different departments; n=3)	University (Different departments; n=3) Government (n=15) Non-governmental (n=10)	University (Different departments; n=12) Government (n=9) Non-governmental (n=4)
<b>Format of literature</b>	Core documents: Printed Electronic links Textbook	Core documents: Printed Electronic links Articles relevant to SA: on CD	Core documents: Printed Electronic links

Through close collaboration and good-will, some compromises regarding academic calendars and accreditation systems were accommodated. The way the module slotted into the academic schedules in the three countries is illustrated in *Figure 3.2*. While Ugandan students completed the NOMA Track module as an elective module prior to commencing their next academic year starting in August, an obligatory semester module of Stellenbosch University overlapped with two NOMA study units and needed to be accommodated concurrently (*Figure 3.2*).

Year 1 of the NOMA* programme										
Jan	Feb	Mch	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
<b>Norway:</b> Academic year starts in January.				In Norway: Study unit 1	In SA: Study unit 2	In Uganda: Study unit 3	<b>Norway:</b> Students conduct research			
<b>South Africa:</b> Epidemiology Module Academic year starts in January.			(overlap)				<b>SA:</b> Students conduct research			
				In Norway: Study unit 1	In SA: Study unit 2	In Uganda: Study unit 3				
<b>Uganda:</b>				In Norway: Study unit 1	In SA: Study unit 2	In Uganda: Study unit 3	<b>Uganda<sup>#</sup>:</b> Academic year starts at the end of August until May.			
<b>Year 2 of the NOMA programme:</b> Students in Norway and SA complete their research and submit thesis Students in Uganda complete their academic programme in May; commence their research in August but submit their thesis in following year										
<small>*NOMA: NO= Norway and MA= Masters programme <sup>#</sup>Uganda: Students conduct research in following year</small>										

**Figure 3.2: Time schedule to indicate how the NOMA\* Track module slotted into the various academic calendars of academic institutions in Norway, South Africa and Uganda, being presented in each country from April-August**

The aim of this paper was to document perceptions of the students enrolled in the module, on its planning and conduct. Understanding how students experienced the module could inform future efforts to embed a human rights-based approach (HRBA) into nutrition curricula.

## 3.2 Methodology

The sampling frame consisted of all students (n=22) participating in the two cohorts of the module (2011-12 and 2012-13). Data was collected during October and November 2012 by following a mixed methods approach. Firstly, data was extracted from a quantitative evaluation by students for each study unit. The evaluation form consisted of 8 categories of statements investigating various aspects of the module (*Addendum A*). Students anonymously responded to statements relevant to each category, by using a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'Strongly disagree' to 'Strongly agree'.

Secondly, an interpretative methodological approach was used to elicit narrative accounts of students' perceptions of the module through in-depth interviews. Two research assistants conducted the research to minimise the potential bias due to the fact that the researcher was also the study co-ordinator in SA. As students resided in different countries, the assistants conducted interviews (35 to 125 minutes long) telephonically. Due to unstable connectivity and poor audibility, some participants were contacted up to three times in order to complete the interviews. Interviews were conducted in English using a discussion guide based on themes and probes relevant to the module, for example, positive and negative aspects of the module as well as students' view on the incorporation of a HRBA in nutrition curricula.

Interviews were transcribed by the research assistants and checked by the researcher to ensure that the text was a true reflection of the recorded interviews. The researcher used a systematic approach to analyse unstructured data. Constant comparison of texts ensured that the themes reflected the original data. An inductive process was followed as themes emerging from the text were used to compile a code list. A text analysis computer programme (Atlas TI Version 6) was used to code the transcribed text according to themes. To ensure that all emerging themes were identified and to check for inconsistencies and contradictions, the text was re-read several times. One set of themes that emerged related to the categories used in the evaluation form and are presented as such.

### **3.3 Ethics and Legal Aspects**

Approval for the research project was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University (N12/08/044). Informed written consent for both voluntary participation and voice recording of interviews was obtained from all participants. Each participant received a signed electronic copy of the completed consent form. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained by assigning participant codes during transcribing of interviews and whenever direct quotes were used. All transcripts and voice recordings were stored in protected files and voice recordings were destroyed.

### **3.4 Background Information about Participants**

Twenty NOMA students (average age 30,1 [ $\pm 6.01$ ] years) enrolled at the different universities provided consent to participate in the study (90,9% response rate). Some participants had no work experience as they were still registered students, others had between 1.25 and 18 years'

experience in various professions (namely community dietitian, nutritionist, research scientist or cook) (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2: Demographic Information of Participants in the NOMA\* Track Module (2011/12 and 2012/13)**

Country	Gender	Age (yrs)	Marital Status	Highest Qualification	Occupation	Experience (years)
Norway	F	49.3	Married	B Public Health Nutrition	Cook	18
	F	30.3	Single	B Nutrition	Student	0
	F	27.2	Single	B Nutrition	Student	0
	F	26.0	Single	B Public Nutrition	Student	0
SA <sup>#</sup>	F	30.8	Single	B.Sc (Med) Hons. Nutrition & Dietetics	Dietitian	6
	F	28.3	Single	BSc Dietetics	Dietitian	3
	F	25.5	Single	BSc Dietetics	Dietitian	0
	F	30.6	Single	BSc Human Nutrition, Dipl Community Nutrition	Nutritionist	9
	F	26.3	Single	BSc Dietetics	Dietitian	3
	F	25.7	Single	BSc Dietetics	Dietitian	2
	F	42.9	Married	BSc Med Hons in Dietetics	Dietitian	15
	F	26.9	Single	BSc Food Science and Technology	Research scientist	1.5
	F	29.7	Single	BSc Food Science and Technology	Nutritionist	3
	F	33.8	Single	BSc Food Science and Technology	Dietitian	8
Uganda	F	27.7	Married	BSc Food Science and Technology	Research scientist	3
	F	25.9	Single	BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics	Assistant Nutritionist	1.25
	M	30.5	Single	BSc Food Science and Technology	Dietitian	6
	M	25.6	Single	BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics	Dietitian	1
	M	29.6	Single	BSc in Human Nutrition and Dietetics	Nutritionist	4
Ave age 30.2 [ $\pm 6.01$ ]				Average experience: 4.5 years		

\* NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Masters; NOMA signifies Norway's current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

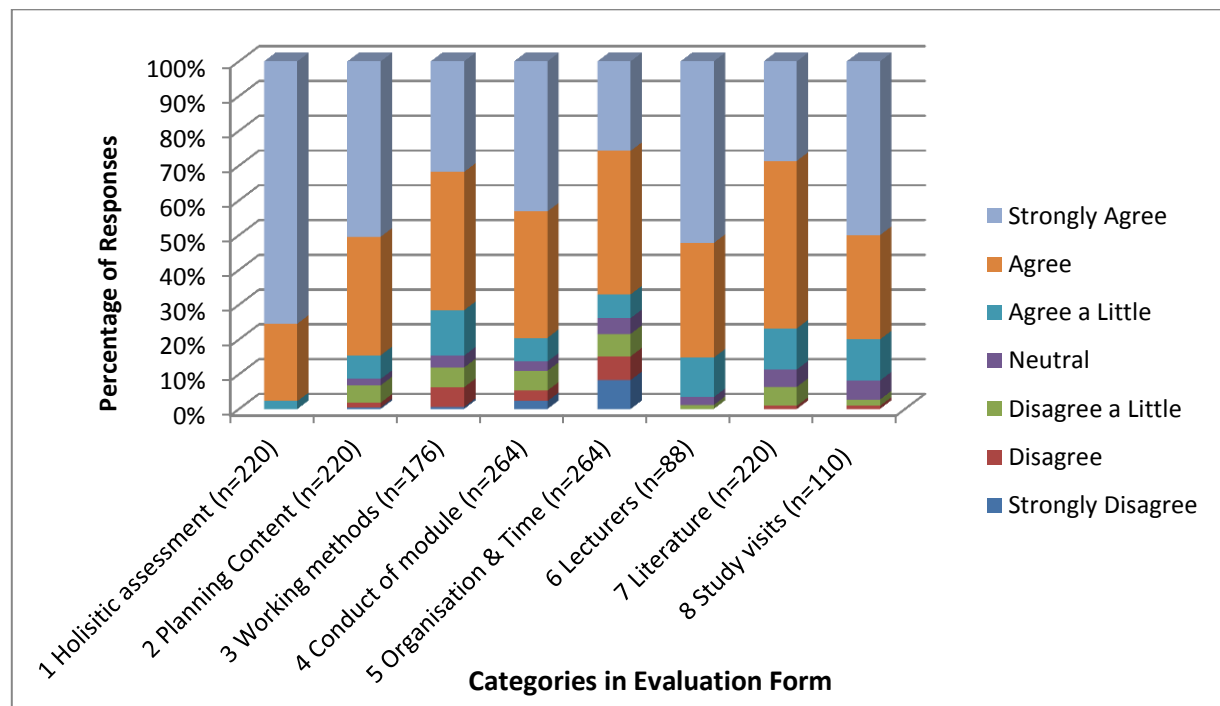
<sup>#</sup> SA: South Africa

## 3.5 Results

### 3.5.1 Introduction

Participants' curiosity was raised by the unique content and nature of the module. The NOMA scholarship not only enabled students to register for a Masters degree in Nutrition but also provided them with the opportunity to study abroad. There were some logistical issues pertaining to the conditions of the scholarship, which were a cause of concern for some students, but these were mostly due to different administrative systems at the universities and were largely resolved during the first cohort. Despite careful planning, students were concerned that the difference between the various universities' credit allocation was to the disadvantage of some students as the workload was not always aligned with the number of credits (Table 3.1).

Data from the quantitative module evaluation indicates that overall, students were very positive about the module (98% *agreed* and *strongly agreed*). Students were impressed with the planning and content of the module as well as the choice of lecturers (85% of responses *agreed* and *strongly agreed*). The biggest variation in responses was over the organisation and time allocation (67% *agreed* and *strongly agreed*; 15% of responses *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed*) (Figure 3.3).



**Figure 3.3: Summary of students' quantitative evaluation of the NOMA Track module according to the number of responses per category (n=1562)**

Reasons for this variation became apparent during the in-depth interviews which revealed nuances of students' perceptions about the module (Table 3.3). For greater clarity, students' perceptions about the module were grouped according to the categories in the evaluation form.

**Table 3.3: Quotes of Masters in Nutrition students to describe various aspects of the NOMA\* Track module grouped according to the categories in the quantitative questionnaire**

Category	Quotes
A overall assessment of NOMA Track Module	<p>'I was so glad that they set up the NOMA Track module, if I jumped out of the programme right now, I can never remain the same person... that can be attributed to the programme'. (Male student, Uganda)</p> <p>'I don't think any of us could have done it if it wasn't funded'. (Female student, SA)</p> <p>'It has been wonderful in general and it was more than what I expected it to be. It has been beyond my expectations in every way'. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>'It was generally a good course, especially the exposure I got to the different countries: Norway, Uganda and South Africa... I'm finding it quite hard to really bring out one particular highlight'. (Male student, Uganda)</p> <p>'The best part was that we moved from country to country. You could see the differences in economic status, culture.... just how different the country had developed... You could see, this is a country that's just beginning, like Uganda... Then you had South Africa, which is somewhere in</p>

	<p>between. It's like... a midway transition from being a developing country, to being a developed country. Then you had Norway, which is the most developed of the three. It was nice to see that unfold, as you moved from country to country. You could also identify negatives about this development'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'When you have been away and then at home again and knowing you need to catch up and you have a certain amount of time and get ready to go away again. It was actually very hard to have the dual studying and getting ready for exams and try and catch up and being home... that was hard'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'Of course I missed my family and friends.... But I did not work with that in my mind. I was trying very hard to learn. I thought of them after studying'. <i>(Female student, Uganda).</i></p>
Matters relating to the planning and content of the module	<p>'I feel that since this was the very first time that the course was run, this was a fantastic effort, and I feel that not much could have been changed or improved. It was obvious that a lot of hard work, preparation and consideration went into the planning of this module, and I think that every one of the students would have benefitted from this. Thank you very much for a very stimulating, challenging and well-organised course'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'Whatever could have been covered, was covered as much as possible in the module in a very short format'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'[The module] should be planned with a collective mind. The module was incorporated into on-going Masters programmes but when you go back [to your country], you get into the Masters programme and then there is no mention of human rights; and until you get to your research, you will not find it anywhere. I think in the future they need to streamline the programme to become uniform across the 3 countries and we get the same qualifications to do that.... Because now after studying that long, I get a transcript from the university for 3 credit units'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'The NOMA team has the regulation that we are supposed to do research on human rights and the right to food. And then you choose this supervisor and you draw up your proposal on the thing which suits the context very well and how you are incorporating it into your proposal. Personally, I have changed my entire topic [after working on it for a year] because of the department saying you are doing a Masters of Science in Applied Human Nutrition..... So they are saying, issues of human rights shouldn't be the one to dominate in your proposal. Of course I am saying, it is issues of human rights, so there is this kind of confusion. So how do I meet the expectations of the university and the requirements of human rights?'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'The NOMA course increased my understanding of the world and especially with South Africa and its history and the problems and hopefully, how to increase the situation there and the same with Uganda. It has just been excellent'. <i>(Female student, Norway)</i></p> <p>'We had a chance to analyze the politics of the three different countries. In that, I found a good basis for comparison, and generally understood the world, and how it is. The interactions between the three different countries were good'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p>
Matters relating to working methods in the module	<p>'You don't just get knowledge about things.... you see what you are learning'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'These universities, they have their way of learning and teaching that was unique' <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'I think, that the three universities involved gave it a different character, I would say. I found Norway was a new experience.... in Oslo. Then when we go to Stellenbosch - it was a different environment.... Method of lecturing and teaching... and come to Uganda it was a different thing. It gave us insight, an idea of how different products from different universities was'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'It has so many different dimensions and it is also a very individualistic way of experiencing learning, what I hear is different from what someone else hears; and what I understand is not the same as what other people understands; so it is just a mixture and you must really be ready to engage'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
Matters	<p>'I was probably expressing things that I only express to people that I was close with. I do hope it</p>



relating to the conduct of the module	<p>means something to someone because I don't want it to just be feedback and then it sits on a piece of paper somewhere. It is nice to do a post mortem of what you have been through'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'I think the evaluation was good...it was good to explain how you experienced the situations. And in South Africa, because we had different lecturers and we could get the evaluation directly after the lecture. It was good to say how you see the lecturer, his method of teaching. And for them to ask us how we feel about the course and the modules and how we experienced it, so evaluation was good'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>It [the module] was good, because it was interactive and basically it was good that it was put together by three different universities; because by interacting and exposure to the outside – we were able to meet different people, different cultures and different norms. The course basically, was so good, because like these people of Norway – is from a developed country... and how the situation is in this underdeveloped country. Because of that, and also because we are from different regions, the focus of facilitators were interesting to understand basically what the norms are and how things are and why the evaluation is from country to country'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'In South Africa... just to see what we do right... it was not just the theory but we had to apply the practical part also. What and how can I apply what I learned in the workplace, what can I do to incorporate human rights. The practical application...that was a big positive'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
Assessment of the lecturers	<p>'In South Africa I think it was extremely important that we also evaluated every lecturer and lecture, which we did not do either in Norway nor Uganda, so that is actually something I think should have been done also in the other two countries. This interview here, maybe for me it would have been better to have it written, as it is very difficult with the poor line, but I think it is extremely important because I want the NOMA course to continue'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>[Students valued the input of experts with practical experience]: '...people who can think on ground level... are involved in integration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They understand it very well and bring it in a way that is very relevant to the students. They see it every day in their lives, and they appreciate it'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'We had great lecturers and it was very good because we had different lectures from different fields and we got different perspectives of things. I really loved the visiting of institutions and we had lectures there as well which was great'. <i>(Female student, Norway)</i></p>
Matters relating to organisation of the module and allocation of time	<p>'There was quite a lot happening around that time..... We were travelling back, we had written exam in NO, came back [to SA], wrote an exam here, started lectures, and all of that'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'It was difficult, it was too close. We were flying from Norway to SA, you did not have time to settle in; and from SA to Uganda. You fall in there, you begin with classes. The time was so, so, so close to each other'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'I mean we did not get the information until the very last minute, in all three countries..... we are used to getting the information about a course at least one month before'. <i>(Female student, Norway)</i></p> <p>'As soon as we arrived for example in South Africa, everything was sort of already organized. The whole program was all in place, we did not have any difficulties. all we had to do was get down and study and work and so on'. <i>(Female student, Norway)</i></p> <p>'For us, we never used to take time seriously, but we also learnt through Norway, because everything was on schedule..... So you agree on a time and you keep within that time [limit]'. <i>(Male student, Uganda)</i></p>
Matters relating to the literature	<p>'The other positive was the resources, that we got exposed to, and we got textbooks, readings, articles that I hadn't seen before, websites'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'The readings also... the fact that we couldn't get to all of them. I still got them as resources. I could still go and use them if I wanted to. I don't think the readings should have necessarily been cut down...'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>



Matters relating to the study visits	<p>‘...We saw with our own eyes what the situation is, what is being done about it and then discussed how those situations could be remedied, looking at how the country is progressing towards realisation of the right to food’. (Male student, Uganda)</p> <p>‘If you read about it in a book you don’t get the same as if you see it with your own eyes... like the field trips’. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>‘We heard from people who were directly involved in the actual activities regarding the right to food, that also was a new experience. We went directly to the fields talking to the different farmers and people who are suffering and people that were currently misplaced and talking about it’. (Female student, Uganda)</p>
* NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Masters; NOMA signifies Norway’s current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South	

### 3.5.1.1 General Assessment of the NOMA Track Module

‘I was so glad that they set up the NOMA Track module, if I jumped out of the programme right now, I can never remain the same person... that can be attributed to the programme’.  
(Male student, Uganda)

The experience was described as an emotional roller-coaster because students were exposed to so many different areas, issues, and solutions.<sup>9</sup> As much as students benefitted from physically being in a developed country (Norway), going to different developing countries provided the opportunity to grapple with issues regarding the implementation of the right to food within the context of a specific country’s situation. The sequence in which countries were visited was regarded as optimal. For example the rights-based South African Constitution is widely acclaimed and the implementation thereof illustrated theoretical principles studied in Norway. One student remarked that ‘if we did not go to SA first, if we went directly to Uganda, we would not have known how to implement the international human rights’.

Even though students missed their families and friends, some admitted that ‘it was easier to study while away in a foreign country as they were distracted more when they were back in their home country’.

### 3.5.1.2 Matters Relating to the Content of the Module

‘... Nutrition alone is not complete without human rights. Nutrition involves other issues like the way people grow the food, the environment and all the other factors they all affect nutrition. To look at nutrition as only one component is not complete but if you integrate with human rights, then it brings in the other aspects like water, land, production....’. (Female student, Uganda)

Over-arching outcomes for the module were formulated during the development of the module. Students appreciated having specific study objectives for study units as offered in Norway and South Africa, as the outcomes provided an overview and guided them during their studies.

Participants regarded the opportunity to learn about the theoretical and institutional background to international human rights in Norway as a highlight of the module. Building on the theoretical principles, a variety of topics was included in SA and Uganda to illustrate the practical application of human rights principles (*Figure 3.1*). A holistic approach to the incorporation of a HRBA into food and nutrition was nurtured as students came to a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues, 'that human rights are not just about poverty but about the whole aspect of human beings'. One student disagreed and was uncomfortable with the impression that a HRBA should be the only way nutrition can be strengthened. She believed that any approach based on strong moral values would make an equally valuable contribution to the attainment of nutritional health and food security for all.

Regarding the study-units in SA and Uganda, students from both cohorts identified the limitations of focussing on one province/region only. They suggested that different provinces should be compared to get a better perspective of the national situation. As Uganda was the third country to present a study unit, students found some repetition of the theory and it was suggested that lecturers should ensure that the content of study units remains country-specific. Students from outside Uganda regretted not being exposed to the positive contributions of Ugandan NGOs and civil society.

Through critical observations in the foreign countries, students also became aware of various aspects pertaining to the right to food in their own country: 'learning about where we are, what has been our past, how we have gotten to where we are now'. Some felt honoured to visit places they had never been to before and being allowed to go into people's houses.

'Whatever could have been covered, was covered as much as possible in the module in a very short format'. (*Female student, SA*)

Although students felt that the module content needed no change, there were some requests for an additional topic, namely a session on intercultural communication, prior to departing to a foreign country, informing students about country-specific differences.

One student commented that it would be ideal if the human rights principles could be imbedded in all modules of their Masters programme, not only in the NOMA module and the research

module. However, there was some doubt about the capacity of academic institutions to teach human rights as few lecturers have an adequate background in human rights.

Students from the second cohort thoroughly enjoyed an introductory lecture about the political history of SA and Uganda respectively, and how it has impacted on the right to food. Notwithstanding this, students requested more information about the governmental structure in each country, including Norway. One student confessed that the course was ‘definitely emotionally draining when it comes to the history... [it] is something that I wished we did not have to go through’. (*Female student, SA*)

One of the conditions of participating in the module was the inclusion of a HRBA in students’ research design. Co-ordinators tried to encourage students to start with ideas for their theses as early as the first study unit. At the time students thought that this was too far in advance. Eventually students realised that research is a time-consuming process. Thinking back to discussions about research ideas held in Norway and again in SA, students remembered the challenges faced by everyone in this regard. Because students were continually receiving new information about human rights in each study unit, they felt they had to complete the full module before they had the ‘big picture’. Then only, did they feel equipped to ‘cement a research topic’. Other students found it difficult to focus on research, *per se*, and preferred to focus on the information relevant to each country and the subsequent examinations.

‘During the module there was no time to even consider working on a literature review or anything... other than just thinking about it’. (*Female student, SA*)

Norwegian students who planned to do their research in Uganda initially had numerous ideas for research topics. However, they soon realized that problems in countries differ according to the local context and they had to change their ideas accordingly.

Another example of the challenges emanating from interdisciplinary collaboration was the discrepancy between the expectations of a science faculty and the NOMA module requirements regarding interdisciplinary research combining human rights and the right to adequate food and nutrition. On presentation of the research protocol using a HRBA, some students were instructed to change their topic as a HRBA was not deemed appropriate for a research proposal in a natural science faculty. (*Table 3.2*)

### **3.5.1.3 Matters Relating to Working Methods Used in the Module**

Students benefitted from being exposed to different teaching styles and education systems at universities in different countries. They enjoyed the interaction with foreign students and learnt from one another. Overall, students were very positive about the participative nature of the module: 'you don't just get knowledge about things... you see what you are learning'. Students rated highly the integrated and reflective assignments to be compiled on all field trips as they needed to 'incorporate their knowledge and all [they] had been learning'.

It is important for a module of this integrated kind to allow students enough time for self-study. Students found it challenging at times to balance everything, i.e. reading literature, completing assignments, studying for the examinations, and also, tourist attractions. In Norway, students were grateful that the lectures and workload were timetabled to provide adequate time to read and study for the examination.

### **3.5.1.4 Matters Relating to the Conduct of the Module**

In spite of the overall positive response about the module, some issues were raised which could have impacted negatively on students' learning experience. It was felt that some lecturers discussed irrelevant information, didn't pitch their lectures at an appropriate level or did not adequately link nutrition and human rights. It was suggested that lecturers should receive adequate orientation regarding the aim of the module and the content of all study units.

The reason why the teaching style in Uganda was perceived as less interactive than in Norway could be ascribed to the fact that lecturers there were perceived as elders/authority figures and '...in our African culture you don't talk back to your elders... And in terms of educational qualifications, it is sort of like a parent-child relationship'.

Students found 'it was so inclusive' to evaluate each study unit and make recommendations for improvement: '[giving feedback] felt good ... people in charge will know what went wrong'. One student was concerned about the confidentiality of the interviews due to the sensitive nature of the information conveyed.

### **3.5.1.5 Assessment of Lecturers**

One of the main themes which emerged was the appreciation students expressed for the privilege of learning from people who were experts in their fields of practice. The lecturers in Norway in particular were acclaimed for their patience and ability to explain unfamiliar human rights concepts clearly, and incorporate legal terminology.

It was very beneficial to have a variety of presenters sourced from different institutions and departments: ‘One person wouldn’t have all the knowledge that those people had’. It provided students with a broader understanding of the implementation of human rights instruments and violations of the right to food.

#### **3.5.1.6 Matters Relating to the Organisation of the Module and Allocation of Time**

‘We did not worry about general arrangements’. (*Female student, Uganda*)

With the invaluable assistance of resident students in Norway and the international office at the host universities, foreign students were able to settle in within a few days. Students were appreciative because the module was well-coordinated and they were timeously informed about changes in the programme, although they requested that they might receive information concerning a study unit earlier than a week before the time.

The way lectures were scheduled in Norway (*Table 3.1*) allowed for time to reflect and ask questions, but nevertheless, students would have preferred longer lectures. Some students found the schedule in SA and Uganda (*Table 3.1*) overwhelming and inflexible; students needed more time to interact with lecturers. The long days with inadequate breaks were tiring and affected their studies as they had little time to process information. This was considered unnecessary at a Masters level. Despite the full schedule, students still enjoyed it ‘because we learned so much and we were exposed to so much... it was great’.

#### **3.5.1.7 Matters Relating to the Literature**

Mastering unfamiliar concepts such as human rights principles, necessitated that students immersed themselves in literature provided in print, on CD or as internet sources. Despite comprehensive reading lists provided in the relevant countries’ study guide, much of the literature was not country-specific, and students struggled to obtain access to some of the recommended sources.

Students were concerned about the amount of reading material as the sheer volume encouraged superficial reading. Others regarded it in a positive light: ‘we got textbooks, articles and websites that I hadn’t seen before... and I could keep it for future reference’.

#### **3.5.1.8 Matters Relating to the Study Visits**

‘If you read about it in a book you don’t get the same as if you see it with your own eyes... like [during] the field trips’. (*Female student, Norway*)

The highlights of the module were the study visits to various government departments, and national and international organisations in the two African countries (*Table 3.1*). The study visits necessitated a substantial amount of travelling which required ‘early mornings’ to ensure arrival in good time at the relevant institutions. On the positive side, students utilised the time spent in the buses to reflect and debrief. Students expressed their regret that ‘we did not really see the aspects of those living at the grassroots [in Norway]’.

Not all expectations of students were met in SA as some wanted to observe the implementation of programmes in deeper rural areas. The two field-trips in Uganda were valued as unique opportunities which should be extended to a week and combined with lectures presented at these sites.

#### **3.5.1.9 Students’ Opinions of the Incorporation of a Human Rights-Based Approach in Curricula**

Even though both nutrition and human rights principles form part of a holistic approach to client care, currently very few lecturers in nutrition have received training in human rights. The incorporation of a HRBA in a holistic manner from an early point in one’s academic career should be encouraged in all academic institutions to empower graduates to utilise a HRBA, should they become involved in policy-making and programming:

‘It is not an add-on – it is more a way of doing things... it is not only for the community dietitians or government dietitians or NGO dietitians’. (*Female student, SA*)

This could be achieved if nutrition departments adopt the principles of a HRBA and understand the links to health and nutrition. It will then become easier for lecturers to incorporate human rights principles into their subjects where relevant.

### **3.6 Discussion**

‘Human rights education and training is a lifelong process’.<sup>4</sup> Globally, the need for more comprehensive courses in human rights has been identified by academics,<sup>4</sup> as short courses and seminars are regarded as inadequate to equip health-care professionals to operationalise the HRBA in all spheres of their individual professions.<sup>9</sup> Although these courses should be based on human rights law, procedures and principles, they should be responsive to the context within which they are offered and according to various societies’ own ideals.<sup>4,10</sup> The interactive and participative approach followed during the NOMA Track module offered this group of nutrition professionals the unique opportunity to learn how they, as health professionals, could utilise a HRBA to make a contribution to the realisation of the human right to be free from hunger and to

achieve nutritional health for all. The way the module impacted on students' professional competence, was reported by Marais et al and indicated an enhanced awareness of their roles as nutrition practitioners.<sup>11</sup>

Lessons learnt from this experience are applicable at both undergraduate and post-graduate level and useful during the development of transnational and/or interdisciplinary modules. In order to create successful modules, it is crucial to follow all steps of curriculum development,<sup>12</sup> from the needs assessment to a feedback and critical reflection upon completion of the module. Commitment from all partners and thorough planning during the initial phases are also essential. The academic and institutional requirements need to be reconciled, and the diverse needs and talents of all participating lecturers need to be considered.

Participants expressed great appreciation for the way the module was structured, the sequence in which countries were visited and the content of the curriculum. Suggestions for improvement mainly focussed on logistical issues or some additional lecture themes. Comments on the differences between various academic institutions firstly concerned the individual systems of awarding credits to a module and the corresponding work load. The substantial differences in the approach to the concept of credits was also a major hurdle during the development phase of the module. Even though the negotiated solution to the problem was acceptable to the post-graduate committees and senates of all participating universities, the unequal credit load caused some friction and students requested that the matter be reassessed in future.

Secondly, students perceived prejudice in natural science faculties against qualitative research methods which have been only recently introduced in the health sciences.<sup>13</sup> Students were faced with this dilemma and needed to defend or even change their research proposals, after they spent several months on planning their research where qualitative research suited the topics best.

Limitations of the module were identified by students, for example, the fact that specific learning outcomes were sometimes lacking; the relevance, amount and availability of reading material was in question, and there was some unnecessary repetition of information. Constructive alignment of the curriculum objectives as well as the teaching and learning activities is of paramount importance to facilitate students' performance at the desired cognitive level.<sup>14,15</sup> It is of even greater importance when using an interdisciplinary approach<sup>16</sup> and when different parts of the same module are developed and presented in different countries. To ensure that all lecturers from the different institutions and departments are fully aware of the pre-defined scope of the lectures and to minimise repetition it is recommended to conduct several workshops dedicated to the

alignment of module objectives and content presented by the collaborating institutions and/or departments.

Evaluation and feedback is an essential part of the curriculum development cycle.<sup>14</sup> It was encouraging to see students keen to participate in the evaluation, and their input will be invaluable during future development of transnational and interdisciplinary modules.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The NOMA Track module succeeded in providing a group of nutrition professionals with knowledge to operationalise the principles of a HRBA in an appropriate manner. The interactive teaching style proved to be effective in enhancing students' comprehension of unfamiliar human rights concepts. The module serves as an example of transnational and interdisciplinary collaboration in module development which requires commitment to the cause and a willingness to share expertise.



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# Chapter 4

## RESULTS Part 2

### The NOMA<sup>a</sup> Track Module – Fostering Competency Attributes Important to Health and Nutrition Professionals

#### Abstract

##### Background

Innovation in teaching and education is globally required of academic institutions to respond in an adequate manner to the health needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In response to this challenge, and specifically to integrate a human rights-based approach into graduate education in nutrition, four academic institutions in Norway, South Africa and Uganda developed the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'.

##### Objectives

The aim of this paper was to capture students' perceptions about the NOMA Track module, focussing on the development of professional attributes.

##### Methods

Employing a qualitative approach, 20 (90,9% response rate) in-depth telephonic interviews were conducted, voice recorded and transcribed. Through an inductive process, emerging themes were used to compile a code list and for content analysis of the transcribed text. Relevant themes were reported according to a set of professional attributes established for competent health and nutrition professionals.

##### Results

Participation in the module enhanced the professional attributes; for example, communication skills and adopting a holistic approach to client/community interaction. Their role as collaborator was enhanced by learning to embrace diversity and cultural differences and similarities. Incorporation of activities to develop teamwork could be advantageous.

Students had to adapt to different cultures and educational systems and students were inspired to contribute in diverse contexts; to act as agents for change in the organisations in which they may work or act as leaders or co-ordinators during interaction with community groups and policy makers. Higher education institutions offering transnational modules should support lecturers to manage the resultant diversity in the classroom to enhance student performance.

##### Conclusion

After completion of the NOMA Track module, this group of nutrition professionals felt better equipped to deal with relevant nutrition-related issues in a holistic manner. The development of future transdisciplinary modules will benefit from the inclusion of professional attributes as part of the module outcome, and the incorporation of relevant activities in the programme.

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<sup>a</sup> NOMA: NO=Norway, MA= Master; NOMA signifies Norway's current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

## 4.1 Introduction and Backg round

Education of health professionals has not kept pace with the major challenges involved in providing health security for all during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>1,2</sup> Despite the fact that professional bodies require professional attributes and that these attributes feature in teaching and learning policies of training institutions, they are not necessarily embedded in the formal curriculum and it is often assumed to be acquired through the ‘hidden’ curriculum.<sup>3</sup> Training of competent health-care professionals equipped with the attributes to provide the highest standard of care for their clients is challenging, as academics themselves grapple to understand the meaning of these attributes.<sup>4</sup>

Professional attributes are seen to include, but go beyond, disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge, ‘[T]hey are the qualities that also prepare graduates as agents for social good in an unknown future’.<sup>5</sup> Various models of professional attributes are being used by educational institutions worldwide to demonstrate professional competence of graduates. The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at Stellenbosch University bases its professional attributes<sup>6</sup> (*Table 4.1, left column*) on the framework of the seven roles developed by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (CanMEDS, 2005).<sup>7</sup> CanMEDS proposes that being a competent health professional<sup>b</sup> entails being a communicator, collaborator, manager, scholar, health [and nutrition] advocate and a professional, culminating in being a health [and nutrition] expert.<sup>7</sup>

Similar attributes are also embedded in the principles of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) which centres around the primary rights and duties of the rights-holders, such as vulnerable population groups. For example, the HRBA principles emphasize participation, transparency, non-discrimination and respect for the rule of law.<sup>8</sup> Thus these professional attributes correspond with several of the HR principles required by nutrition professionals in fulfilling their roles as duty-bearers, honouring their obligation towards the fulfilment of the human rights the rights holders.<sup>9</sup>

The HRBA also implies that nutrition professionals, as duty-bearers, should not function in isolation. Through interdisciplinary collaboration between experts in nutrition, legal experts, economists, and experts in agriculture (amongst others), sustainable solutions may be found to deep-rooted nutrition problems.<sup>9</sup> Such an interdisciplinary approach provides duty-bearers with a combination of skills valuable to the development and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at addressing the myriad of nutrition-related challenges faced by vulnerable population groups.

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<sup>b</sup> For the purpose of this article, the term ‘health professionals’ implies the inclusion of nutrition professionals.

In agreeing about many of the educational challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, universities in Norway, South Africa and Uganda collaboratively developed the NOMA<sup>c</sup> Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance' (henceforth referred to as the module).<sup>10</sup> Participating students were registered for a Masters degree in Nutrition at their respective universities.

As the module was presented stepwise for six weeks in each of the three countries (totalling 18 weeks) students had to adapt to different cultures and educational systems twice. NOMA students (n=22) were exposed to the associated culture shock which caused anxiety resulting from absence of familiar surroundings and national culture. The available literature reports that international students are exposed to different beliefs of what constitute knowledge; how it should be learned, taught and assessed.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the transition period in a foreign country is associated with disorientation, insecurity and incomprehension, all of which may impact negatively on the learning process and preclude transfer of skills. During the transition period there may be a disparity between a student's learning expectations and accomplishments and those anticipated by lecturers.<sup>11</sup>

Marais et al<sup>10</sup> reported the perceptions of NOMA students on the development and conduct of the module which presented students with different challenges. The aim of this paper is to explore NOMA students' development of competence as nutrition professionals, based on their own accounts of their experiences of the module.

Twenty NOMA students (average age 30,1 [±6.01] years), enrolled at four different universities, provided consent to participate in the study (90,9% response rate). Some participants had no work experience as they were still registered students, others had 1,25-18 years working experience as community dietitian, nutritionist, research scientist or cook.<sup>10</sup>

## 4.2 Methodology

Data was collected during October and November 2012. As the students resided in different countries, two trained research assistants conducted telephonic interviews (35-125 minutes). Due to unstable connectivity and poor audibility, some participants were contacted up to three times in order to complete the interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted using an interpretative methodological approach to elicit narrative accounts of students' perceptions of the module.

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<sup>c</sup> NOMA: NO= Norway MA= Masters programme. Funding was obtained from the Norwegian Government (through the Centre for International Cooperation in Education, SIU). NOMA signifies Norway's current approach to strengthen higher education institutions in collaborative countries in the South

Interviews were conducted in English using a discussion guide based on themes and probes relevant to the module, for example, students' experience of participating in the module and how it affected their personal and professional skills.

Transcriptions were checked by the researcher to ensure that the text was a true reflection of the recorded interviews. The researcher used a systematic approach to analyse unstructured data. Constant comparison of information ensured that the themes reflected the original data. An inductive process was followed as themes emerging from the text were used to compile a code list. A text analysis computer programme (Atlas TI Version 6) was used to code the transcribed text according to themes. To ensure that all emerging themes were identified and to check for inconsistencies and contradictions, the text was re-read several times. The researcher was the coordinator of the study unit in SA and, realising that her own experience during the two cohorts may influence her interpretations, she consciously aimed to remain focussed on the participants' opinions and perceptions. One set of themes that emerged related to the seven professional CanMEDS roles and are presented as such.

Approval for the study was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Stellenbosch (N12/08/044) (*Addendum C*). Informed written consent for both voluntary participation as well as voice recording of interviews was obtained from all participants. Anonymity and confidentiality was maintained during transcribing of interviews and whenever direct quotes were used. All transcripts and voice recordings were stored in protected files and voice recordings destroyed after six months.

### 4.3 Results

The module was generally described as a memorable, once in a lifetime opportunity, with 'an incredible learning curve'. Participants wanted to further their educational qualifications, but the main stated reason why students applied for the module was the unique combination of nutrition and human rights.

During content analysis an inductive process was followed, and one set of emerging themes was grouped according to the professional attributes<sup>6</sup> required of nutrition professionals (*Table 4.1*). This is followed by brief comments on the results as regards each attribute. The study illustrates the concept of life-long learning as participants testified to professional development and personal growth during this unique experience.

**Table 4.1: Examples of professional roles and attributes enhanced through Masters in Nutrition students' participation in the NOMA Track Module 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance', as perceived by the students**

Roles of Health and Nutrition Professionals (HNP) <sup>5</sup>	Summary of Perceptions of NOMA Track Students	Selected Quotes to Illustrate the Development of Professional Attributes
<p><i>As Communicators,</i> HNPs effectively facilitate the carer/client relationship and the dynamic exchanges that occur before, during and after interaction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained confidence in expressing own feelings</li> <li>• Communication with people from different cultures</li> </ul>	<p>'I felt within the group I could ask the questions I needed to ask to get an understanding, because the others were better in English than we Norwegians. Sometimes they laughed at our understanding but I can handle that'. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>'And sometimes you don't know what they are thinking and that can lead to a lot of confusion because you could potentially keep on saying things that annoy them, but in their culture they don't complain... they just keep it inside or ignore it'. (Female student, SA)</p> <p>'[There is a] different way of thinking: as a Norwegian person I may have understood one situation as positive and an African person may have understood the situation completely otherwise. .... you meet people and think everything is okay and that you are just behaving normally, but then you realize after a while that you have been rude or been perceived that you have been rude'. (Female student, Norway)</p>
<p><i>As Collaborators,</i> HNPs effectively work within a team to achieve optimal client care (the community included).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students from different countries embraced the diversity as a platform to grow as person and as professional</li> <li>• Adapting to foreign cultures</li> <li>• Embracing cultural differences</li> <li>• Conflict management</li> </ul>	<p>'There were some good interactions amongst the students. We got to know each other. By the time we left Norway, we were very familiar with each other... eventually we became one team'. (Female student, Uganda)</p> <p>'We respected the fact that we were from different cultures, we are different people raised up in different countries. So we needed to respect each other'. (Female student, Uganda)</p> <p>'Try not to compare it to your own culture or the culture you just been to, but you have to accept it that is just the way it is'. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>'What seems right in the one country, you realize was wrong in another'. (Female student, Uganda)</p> <p>'From my perspective it is very strange not to help people, if you are insulted it is considered the norm to tell people how you feel... and for them not telling, disappointed me, because I don't want to offend my friends... '. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>'When it comes to culture, it brings out a positive something. But as soon as it does not coincide with the other countries, then they bring up those issues of someone being offended'. (Female student, Uganda)</p> <p>'I think it was good for me to learn the South African way of thinking, and to understand that the Norwegian way of thinking are maybe more progressive and it is not the way of thinking as the rest of the world'. (Female student, Norway)</p> <p>'If you put a bunch of people together that are basically</p>

		strangers and you expect them to live together, study together, work together, travel together, you know.... it gets hectic'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i>
As <i>Managers</i> , HNPs are integral participants in organisations, organising sustainable practices, making decisions about allocating resources, and contributing to the effectiveness of the relevant systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritising</li> <li>• Time-management</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Need to influence policy makers</li> </ul>	<p>'I certainly feel more equipped and competent to work at a level where I am not just on the ground but I am able to work with... people who are possibly making policy decisions...'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'If you want to start a program or launch a project you should decide who you want to reach, how you want to reach them and what difference you want to see or make. To involve and empower people, eg if you distribute soup, how can you empower them instead of what you could gain...'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
As <i>Health and Nutrition Advocates</i> , HNPs responsibly use their expertise and influence to advance the health and nutritional well-being of individuals, communities and populations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of the community during the planning phase</li> <li>• Enhanced awareness of people's needs</li> <li>• Representation of vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Advocacy for nutrition using HRBA</li> </ul>	<p>'If you have a patient sitting in front of you who has a malnourished child, not eating well is not the problem... there are so many other things; and you need to be able to tell them that... and speak to the people who can solve the other problems which you as a nutritionist cannot'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
As <i>Scholars</i> , HNPs demonstrate a lifelong commitment to reflective learning, as well as the creation, dissemination, application and translation of knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversity enhanced learning process</li> <li>• Intention to teach others about HRBA</li> </ul>	<p>'You were not just hearing the lecturer speak..... just give you information.... You'd go back and discuss. It wasn't: 'this is the way it is.... and there's no other way'. You could engage..... argue back and forth .... and fight. You have an idea of how it can be applied in different settings'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
As <i>Professionals</i> , HNPs are committed to ensure the health and well-being of individuals and communities through ethical practice, profession-led self-regulation and high personal standards of behaviour.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved understanding of the broad scope of factors having an impact on nutrition</li> <li>• Motivated to promote preventative care</li> <li>• Ability to incorporate human rights principles in own work ethic</li> </ul>	<p>'Not to just rush into something and try and change things but rather to look at the reason why you want to change things... what impact it will have on people'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'I believe using the human rights way where you have inclusion... even the marginalised people, if they are involved in the planning, if you work to get an impact, then they will help you; to create a sense of ownership and responsibility for everyone'. <i>(Female student, Uganda)</i></p> <p>'I feel the impact will come. It's not going to be an immediate thing where you suddenly see the light and that everything just flows smoothly. It is a process'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p>
As <i>Healthcare and Nutrition Experts</i> , HNPs integrate all of the professional attribute roles, applying profession-specific knowledge and professional attitudes in their provision of client-centred care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadened understanding of their role as professional</li> <li>• Holistic approach to nutrition and human rights</li> <li>• Life changing</li> </ul>	<p>'I don't think I could have foreseen how it would change me or the way I look at things'. <i>(Female student, SA)</i></p> <p>'My interest within the nutritional field is at a global level.... and the prevention of diseases more than the clinical treatment of diseases. It made me more politically interested and I see my future more clearly than I did before'. <i>(Female student, Norway)</i></p>



### 4.3.1 Communicators: Learning to Effectively Participate during Dynamic Exchanges

Students testified to personal growth as they grew more independent during the study period in foreign countries and gained confidence in expressing their feelings. Some students identified communicating in English as a second language as a barrier which limited spontaneous participation and self expression at times.

They learnt how to communicate with students from different cultures<sup>d</sup> but responded in different ways to the context and the manner in which issues were raised. Some students felt supported by the group and free to ask questions.

‘You learn when to keep quiet and when to say your say.... to state why you disagree or have different ideas’. (*Female student, SA*)

Although outgoing students easily expressed their viewpoints, more reserved students were afraid of ‘saying anything wrong’ whenever sensitive issues were discussed. It was a source of frustration for some students when fellow-students did not voice their opinion during the lectures. Students willing to interact in a meaningful way learnt from each other how to participate in discussions and debates in a culturally sensitive way.

### 4.3.2 Collaborators: Learning to Embrace Differences

Participating students were from different countries and studying at different universities. This introduced different perspectives, values, and social norms.

‘Take it in your stride and inhale as much as you possibly could... Look to compare... so many differences but so many similarities...’ (*Female student, SA*)

Overall, students embraced the opportunity of meeting people from different nations and used the opportunity to find out ‘why they believe what they believe’. More mature students or those who had travelled before seemed more tolerant of and respectful towards inherent differences.

To enable co-operation and develop an understanding of different cultures required some effort and awareness that there would be some issues within one’s own culture<sup>c</sup> or country unacceptable to foreigners. Cultural differences became most pronounced in Uganda and some of

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d Definition of culture according to Hofstede (1986, 2008): Culture is the total way of life in a society; it is the collective programming of the mind [that] distinguishes the members of human groups from another in terms of shared beliefs, the ideologies, and the norms that influence the organisational action taking.<sup>12</sup>

the foreign students adapted with difficulty. What was considered as rude or discourteous differed according to the cultural context. For example, in Uganda, all conversations start with a reciprocal enquiry about each individual's well-being before the actual conversation begins. In contrast, people in Norway use fewer formalities, 'If you want to do something, you don't waste any time doing it'. Also, in Norway, religion is regarded as a private matter but in Uganda it was discussed freely.

'When it comes to culture, it brings out a positive something. But as soon as it does not coincide with the other countries, then they [foreign students] bring up those issues of someone being offended'. (*Female student, Uganda*)

Diversity provided many opportunities for interesting and sometimes heated debates and those who were able to accept differences, refined the skill of dealing with difficult situations. Unknowingly, an 'ignorant' question was sometimes perceived as being offensive or it came across as being derogatory. For example, being unaware that sometimes things in Uganda were just accepted and not challenged, created a situation where a student offended people by asking questions. Yet according to the Ugandan culture, it is rude to tell someone if they were in the wrong.

Foreign students regarded Ugandan people as warm, friendly and helpful. In contrast Norwegians were sometimes perceived as being emotionally reserved, until you got to know them. Inherent cultural differences were a potential source of misunderstanding and conflict, for instance differences in time-management sometimes interrupted the teaching schedule.

People have different ways of coping with stress and unfamiliar situations. More than one student admitted that they needed to become more tolerant and to learn how to deal with conflict. One student mentioned that she initially became psychologically disengaged to avoid offending people by saying 'something wrong'. The stress caused another student to overreact; she became emotional 'where I didn't expect I would have'. Others learnt how to manage their own emotions and felt better equipped to handle difficult situations in future.

#### **4.3.3 Managers: Learning to Enhance Effectiveness**

'I certainly feel more equipped and competent to work at a level where I am not just on the ground but I am able to work with... people who are possibly making policy decisions...'. (*Female student, SA*)

Problem-solving skills were enhanced as students had to evaluate situations, identify areas for improvement and compare different countries. Students felt better-equipped to be part of an interdisciplinary group, as knowledge of the HRBA ‘adds to any professional that works with people, policies or scarce resources that you need to redistribute’.

Students learnt how to prioritise their responsibilities and how to manage large volumes of information. One student realised that ‘time is a very, very important factor which I did not take into consideration [previously]’. According to their current job description, some students felt apprehensive about immediate implementation of a HRBA. To effectuate change, the usual planning process needs to be followed which will require hard work and perseverance:

‘I feel the impact will come. It’s not going to be an immediate thing where you suddenly see the light and that everything just flows smoothly. It is a process’. (*Female student, SA*)

#### **4.3.4 Health and Nutrition Advocates: Learning to Influence Well-being of Individuals and Communities**

Students became aware that nutrition is inter-related and integrated, that issues of food, nutrition and food security cannot be addressed without attention to broader socio-cultural, political, economic and technical issues. They anticipated the future implementation of a HRBA in their daily practice by assessing clients in a holistic manner, by involving the client/community in decision-making processes and consulting the community about new projects.

‘Not to just rush into something and try and change things but rather to look at the reason why you want to change things... what impact it will have on people’. (*Female student, SA*)

Some students were enthusiastic about utilising newly-acquired skills when doing advocacy for nutrition or when engaging with public officials or non-governmental organisations. Another student was more cautious since she realised that government officials may have a limited understanding of the human right to food. She regarded it a challenge for nutrition professionals who want to act as agents for change:

‘We have to first teach people in government about human rights... because if they don’t understand it, they can’t accept nor implement it’. (*Female student, Uganda*)

### 4.3.5 Scholars – Lifelong Learning

The module provided students with a global perspective and challenged them on intellectual, emotional and physical levels. Students felt enriched by being exposed to new concepts and unique experiences. It motivated them to share their knowledge with colleagues and to train other health professionals.

‘I don’t think I could have foreseen how it would change me or the way I look at things’.  
(Female student, SA)

Students accepted the responsibility of acting or speaking on behalf of vulnerable groups in future and providing accurate information. In various ways, diversity helped to develop a better comprehension of the module content. Male students expressed the opinion that diversity in the group prevented the module from becoming ‘static’. Students with previous work experience were used to working in an interdisciplinary environment and could provide practical examples, explain specific situations or compare policies and programmes implemented in different countries.

Students from all countries benefitted from new information about their own countries and found that they understood global events better. Other interests relevant to nutrition were developed, for example, the interrelationship between nutrition, agriculture and political stability.

### 4.3.6 Professionals and Ethical Practice

Examples used earlier showing that students embraced diversity and adopted a holistic approach to client interaction, bear evidence of students’ enhanced professional and ethical practice. Some students felt relieved when they realised that they did not need to conform to peer pressure, and that they should remain true to their values. Some students found it frustrating that fellow students perceived situations, moral and ethical aspects differently.

‘I think it was good for me to learn the South African [students’] way of thinking, and to understand that the Norwegian [students’] way of thinking are maybe more progressive and it is not the way of thinking as the rest of the world’. (Female student, Norway)

### 4.3.7 Healthcare and Nutrition Experts Integrate their Competencies

Overall an awareness of global hardship was developed, one which helped to foster a changed mind-set, ‘...to give more than I receive. To look where I can make a difference...’. Students’

passion for nutrition was reinvigorated and it inspired students to serve needy communities in a meaningful way. They regarded themselves not only as dietitians/nutritionists, but also as advocates and consultants for human rights.

In conclusion, NOMA students regarded themselves as privileged. They realised that they previously had had a narrow technical focus without a broader contextual understanding of food and nutrition security. They are now equipped to foster a client-centred approach, being part of a global network promoting the right to adequate food.

## 4.4 Discussion

The Lancet's Global Independent Commission into the Education of Health Professionals<sup>e</sup> for the 21st Century (2010) argued that 'tribalism of professions' should be replaced with collaboration to optimise mutual learning opportunities across countries.<sup>1</sup> As an example of transnational<sup>13</sup> education,<sup>f</sup> the development of this module was brought about through successful collaboration of universities from different countries, with a willingness to form a network and share educational content and teaching resources. In search of sustainable solutions to nutrition-related problems, the module strived to integrate human rights and nutrition using a HRBA. Professionals from both fields aim at educating students to contribute to societies, as they currently exist and for the future changes these societies may undergo.<sup>8,14</sup>

In line with the need to transform the education of health professionals to fit with the health-care needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and to foster a culture of lifelong learning,<sup>1</sup> the NOMA Track module provided this group of nutrition professionals with a unique set of competencies, equipping them better to deal with relevant issues in future.

NOMA students had to adapt to different cultures and educational systems every six weeks during the module. Even with the assistance of peers, international students still needed time to adjust to different sets of social rules which regulate interaction and communication.<sup>11</sup> Kelly suggests that while students are still adapting, they are less inclined to be interactive and this might have caused gaps in understanding as lecturers and peers may perceive students as unwilling or unable to participate.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>e</sup> Although current literature focusses on entry level requirements for health professionals, it refers to generic attributes which are deemed applicable to participants in this research, namely nutrition professionals (community dietitian, nutritionist, research scientist or cook).

<sup>f</sup> Transnational education = student is in a different country than the host university and where academic qualification is obtained [GATE]<sup>13</sup>

Lecturers need to be aware of the potential for culture to influence student preferences and expectations by introducing sufficient flexibility into their approach to teaching to accommodate various nationalities, educational backgrounds, learning styles and language proficiencies.<sup>15</sup> Lecturers may have had assumptions about students' competence, for example, their referencing skills, their comprehension of plagiarism, their ability to use powerpoint or to manage a large volume of literature. Even though international students may be English literate, using a second language may impact negatively on their ability to participate optimally during interactive learning opportunities.<sup>11</sup>

Academic institutions should strive to reduce the transition period for international students by reassessing whether the curriculum is culturally responsive and relevant to the needs of such students, making them feel included rather than excluded or disadvantaged. If not, it has the potential to promote surface learning and/or an inability to solve problems independently.<sup>11</sup>

Different teaching strategies to help the adaptation process and to enhance learning, were employed in the module.<sup>10</sup> However, there is no single correct way to learn. Ultimately, different learning cultures have the potential to stretch individual students beyond their established styles, to develop more adaptive learning strategies/approaches. This may also create a greater capacity to engage in lifelong learning and professional development opportunities.<sup>15,16</sup> Thus, lecturers need to consider carefully which approaches they should encourage/discourage and how these approaches should be utilised and developed.<sup>15</sup>

Several NOMA students from different countries formed close relationships and it is possible that collaboration and understanding would have been enhanced if more opportunities for socialisation were integrated in the module programme.<sup>11,17</sup> Future modules may consider the use of team bonding exercises, communication activities and allocation of mentors and 'buddy mentoring' to facilitate the adaptation process and to develop skills in collaboration and teamwork.<sup>11</sup>

Interviews revealed that underlying tension and conflict during the training period may be ascribed to interpersonal differences. However, it could also be due to power differences between groups formed during the four month period, or it could be caused by a lack of leadership, indicating the absence of a common group identity and resulting in misunderstandings arising from poor communication.<sup>18</sup> There were situations which arose due to cultural insensitivity or

poor communication that might have been avoided by pro-actively developing a mutually-agreed process for handling disagreements within such a diverse group.<sup>19</sup>

It is unfortunate that some human rights students were trapped in the habit of stereotyping; for example, referring to 'the Norwegian way of doing'. Other students embraced diversity by learning more about observable elements (i.e. language) and hidden elements (i.e. customs) of cultural characteristics.<sup>20</sup> NOMA students identified the need for an introductory lecture about cultural diversity to enhance mutual understanding.<sup>10</sup> However, students should also be advised that they will not always fully understand the foreign culture, that it is often helpful to assume the role of the 'respected outsider', and be encouraged to focus on commonality rather than separateness.<sup>20</sup>

Generally the need to develop competence generates an intrinsic interest in what is being learned.<sup>11</sup> Students who previously had a strictly scientific approach to nutrition were drawn to participate in the module due to their keen interest in the link between nutrition and human rights. Students were also introduced to aspects of political science and agriculture, nurturing the potential to join in public reasoning as informed citizens and on behalf of vulnerable groups.<sup>1,2</sup> After completion of the module several students were inspired to contribute in diverse contexts beyond their own countries<sup>10</sup>; to act as agents for change in the organisations in which they may work or act as leaders or co-ordinators during interaction with community groups and policy makers.<sup>1,2</sup>

## 4.5 Conclusion

Designing a module about an integrated approach to human rights and nutrition succeeded in enhancing professional attributes of a group of Masters students, supporting the recommendations made by the Lancet Commission to 'promote quality, uphold a strong service ethic, and be centred around the interests of [individuals] and populations'.<sup>1</sup>

Transnational and interdisciplinary education provided health-care professionals the opportunity to obtain unique skills. Besides learning to respect diversity and embracing cultural differences and similarities, the students learned to see critical issues from the perspective of political, social and agricultural sciences. Without this understanding, intolerance and prejudice often create a barrier to optimal treatment or education of a client/community requiring professional advice. The development of future transnational modules will benefit from the inclusion of professional attributes as part of the module outcome.

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# Chapter 5

## RESULTS – Part 3

### 5.1 The Perceptions of NOMA Students about the Study Units Presented in Different Countries and Opportunities to Utilise their Newly Acquired Knowledge.

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

The perceptions of the students about the study units offered in the three countries are presented in this chapter. Data obtained from the quantitative evaluation forms completed after each study unit (using a Likert-type scale) is reported according to the number of responses per category and the average rating per statement in the questionnaire. Statements with average ratings of <5 were considered for further investigation. Emerging themes from the in-depth interviews serve to contextualise the said statements. Lastly, examples of opportunities where some students from the first cohort were able to utilise their newly-acquired knowledge and insights about a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to nutrition, are presented.

#### 5.1.2 Quantitative Evaluation of The NOMA Track Module

NOMA students voluntarily completed the evaluation forms after each study unit. The total number of evaluation forms returned per study unit and for both cohorts varied: Norway (n=9), South Africa (n=22) and Uganda (n=13).

The evaluation form consisted of eight thematic categories and the number of statements per category varied from two to six. Students rated 38 statements according to the Likert-type scale with a resultant total number of responses to all statements of 1562. The number of responses per category differed according to the number of statements and respondents:

- Overall assessment<sup>a</sup> of study unit (n=220)
- Matters relating to the planning and content of the study unit (n=220)
- Matters relating to working methods in the study unit (n=176)
- Matters relating to the conduct of the study unit (n=264)
- Matters relating to organisation of the study unit and allocation of time (n=264)

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a 'Assessment' per definition refers to the process followed to determine students' progress, which consists of formative and summative feedback. As the original evaluation form used the term 'assessment of the course/lectures', the term will be used throughout when reporting the findings of the research.

- Assessment of the lecturers (n=88)
- Matters relating to the literature (n=220)
- Matters relating to the study visits (n=110)

In order to investigate differences between the perceptions of the students about the study units offered in different countries, values were assigned according to the Likert-type scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* = 1 to *Strongly agree* = 7. Average scores were calculated per statement per study unit as well as the module as a whole. (Table 5.1)

**Table 5.1: Average rating of the NOMA Track module and each study unit according to the evaluation form using a 7-point Likert-type scale (range from *strongly disagree* =1 to *strongly agree* =7)**

Category and Statements	Average ratings			
	Module overall	Norway	South Africa	Uganda
<b>1. Overall assessment of study unit</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.4</b>
1.1 The study unit gave me new insight in the issues addressed	6.8	6.8	6.9	6.6
1.2 The unit helped me obtain a more integrated understanding of the human right to adequate food and principles of governance, relevant to nutrition	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.5
1.3 The unit made me interested in learning more about some of the issues covered	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.5
1.4 The unit triggered my interest in working with Human Rights and Governance aspects of nutrition	6.7	6.8	6.9	6.5
1.5 The unit as a whole was good	6.6	6.9	6.8	6.1
<b>2. Matters relating to the planning and content of the study unit</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.8</b>
2.1 I got satisfactory information about 'Nutrition, Governance and Human Rights' prior to the module	5.4	4.2	6.2	5.7
2.2 The study unit plan and learning objectives were satisfactorily explained at the beginning of the module	6.0	6.6	6.1	5.4
2.3 The learning objectives were of direct interest to me	6.6	6.8	6.6	6.5
2.4 It was clear to me from the beginning that I was expected to be active in the learning process	6.5	6.8	6.7	5.9
2.5 The content of the study unit met my expectations	6.0	5.7	6.6	5.6
<b>3. Matters relating to working methods in the study unit</b>	<b>5.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>
3.1 The learning methods and literature stimulated me to actively participate in the discussions	6.2	6.7	6.5	5.5
3.2 The shift between individual study and lectures encouraged me to be active during the study unit	6.0	6.7	5.8	5.5
3.3 During the study unit I had the opportunity to work at my own pace (speed)	4.7	5.7	4.4	4.2
3.4 The learning objectives helped me to keep track of what I was expected to learn	6.1	6.4	6.3	5.5
<b>4. Matters relating to the conduct of the study unit</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>4.8</b>
4.1 The lecturers were sufficiently open	5.9	6.9	6.5	4.4
4.2 The atmosphere in the study unit stimulated me to serious work	6.3	6.7	6.5	5.9
4.3 The lecturers allowed critical comments	5.7	6.9	6.3	3.9
4.4 The lecturers tried to reply to my questions	6.1	6.9	6.5	4.8
4.5 The lecturers listened when others spoke	6.4	7.0	6.6	5.5
4.6 The lecturers talked too much*	5.0	5.6	5.0	4.5

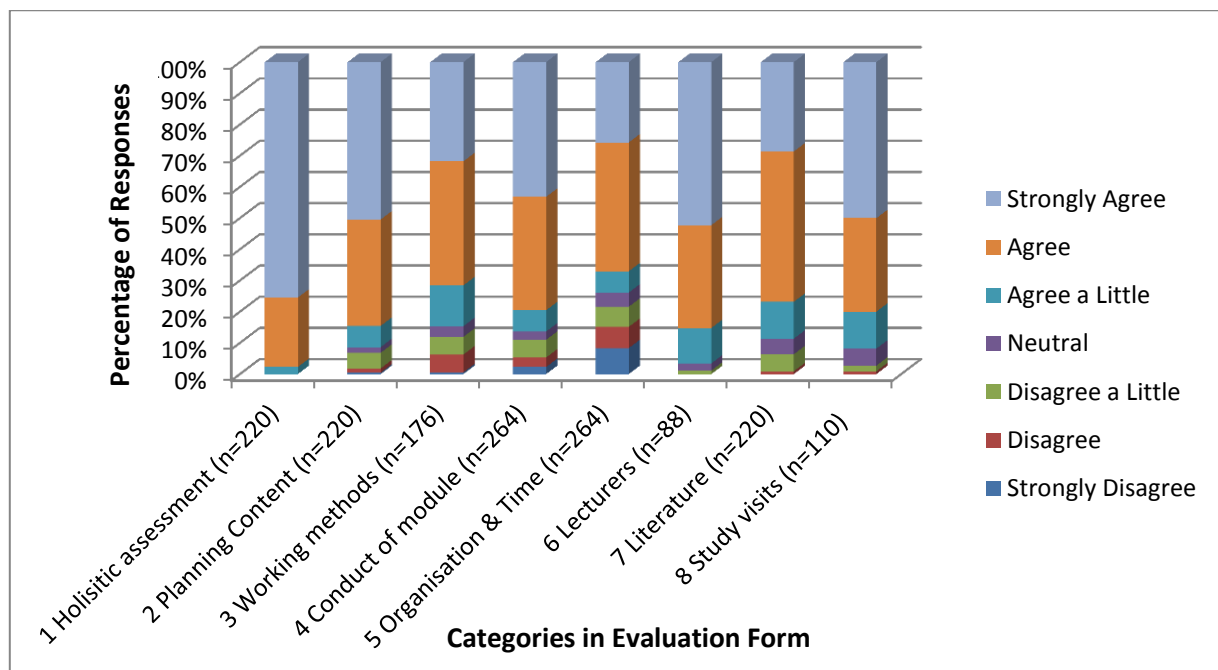
<b>5. Matters relating to organisation of the study unit and allocation of time</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>5.4</b>	<b>4.7</b>
5.1 <i>There was adequate formal time available for classes per week*</i>	5.8	5.2	6.1	6.1
5.2 <i>Classes were not too long*</i>	<b>3.8</b>	5.9	<b>3.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>
5.3 Rooms used for classes were satisfactory	5.6	6.6	6.0	<b>4.3</b>
5.4 Time of the day was satisfactory	5.4	5.8	5.5	5.1
5.5 <i>There were too many outside resource persons to talk*</i>	5.1	5.0	<b>4.8</b>	5.5
5.6 The number of external lecturers was satisfactory	5.6	5.4	6.4	<b>4.9</b>
<b>6. Assessment of the lecturers</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>5.7</b>
6.1 The choices of lecturers fitted well to the themes	6.4	<b>7.0</b>	6.5	5.8
6.2 The lecturer was clear and informative	6.3	6.9	6.5	5.5
<b>7. Matters relating to the literature</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>5.3</b>
7.1 There was consistency between the learning objectives and the literature selected	5.8	6.6	5.8	5.2
7.2 The literature was adequate in quantity	5.8	6.2	5.9	5.4
7.3 The literature was sufficiently easy to follow	5.7	5.9	6.0	5.4
7.4 The combination of the material given out and lectures was adequate for meeting the learning objectives	5.9	6.2	6.2	5.3
7.5 The content and level of the literature stimulated me to want to learn more in the areas covered	6.1	6.6	6.2	5.4
<b>8. Matters relating to the study visits</b>	<b>6.0</b>	#	<b>6.2</b>	<b>5.8</b>
8.1 There was consistency between the learning objectives and the study visits	5.8	#	6.6	5.0
8.2 The number of study visits was satisfactory	5.3	#	6.2	<b>4.5</b>
8.3 The study visits helped illustrate the theoretical matters as lectured and studied	6.5	#	6.6	6.5
8.4 None of the study visits were superfluous	6.0	#	5.5	6.5
8.5 The study visits were well organised	6.4	#	6.4	6.5

\* Statements were reversed scored prior to data analysis

# No study visits

### 5.1.3 Student Perceptions of the NOMA Track Module

According to the average rating of the overall evaluation of all study units, students were overall very satisfied with the of the NOMA Track module (98% of responses *agreed* and *strongly agreed*) (Figure 5.1).



**Figure 5.1: Summary of students' quantitative evaluation of the NOMA Track module according to the number of responses per category (n=1562)**

Students were impressed with the planning and content of the module as well as the choices of lecturers (85% of responses *agreed* and *strongly agreed*). In total 15,6% of the total responses (n=1562) indicated a degree of indecision: *disagree a little* (4,4%); *neutral* (3.1%); *agree a little* (8.2%).

The biggest variation in responses was about the organisation and time allocation (67% of responses *agreed* and *strongly agreed*; 15% of responses *disagreed* and *strongly disagreed*) (Figure 5.1). Reasons for this variation became apparent during the in-depth interviews.

The statement with the highest average rating for the module as a whole was *The study unit gave me new insight in the issues addressed* (average rating = 6.8). The score of individual statements which obtained less than 5 (*Agree a little*) were deemed important: *Classes were not too long* (average rating = 3.8) and *During the study unit I had the opportunity to work at my own pace* (average rating = 4.7).

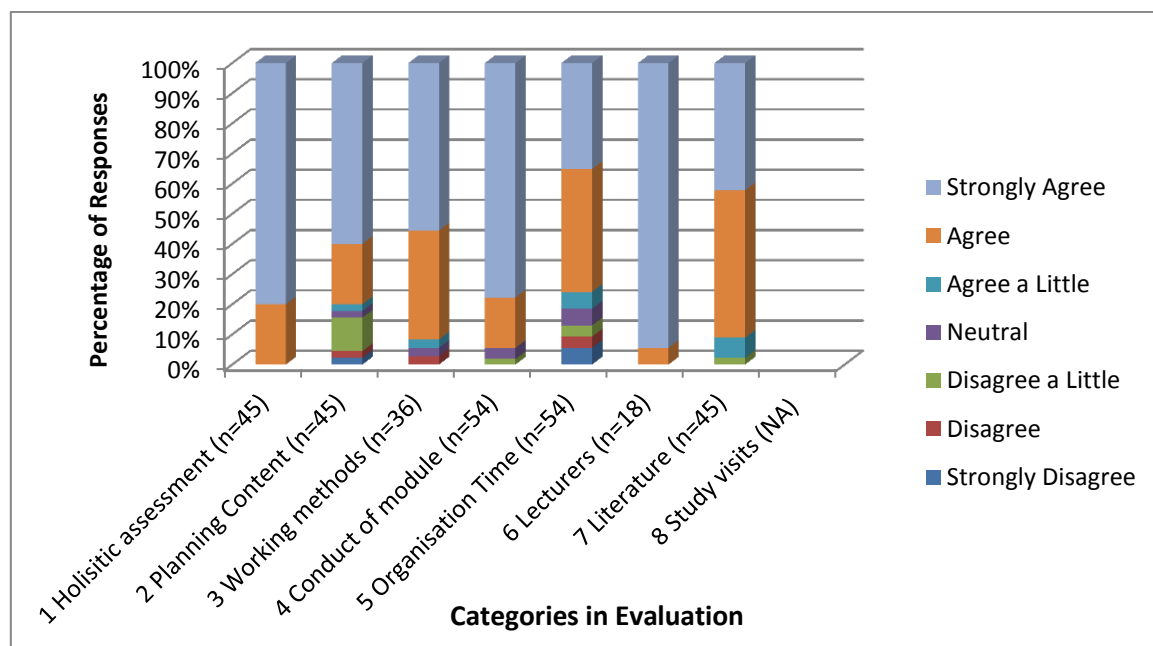
One additional aspect students commented upon during the in-depth interviews was the importance of giving feedback. While there was some concern about expressing personal views or offering sensitive information, the value of such feedback for future planning was acknowledged. They recommended that the timing for completion of evaluation forms should be planned carefully, that it is not ideal to receive the evaluation form just prior to an examination. It takes

time to provide constructive feedback, so it could be valuable to allow a few days to complete the form in their own time.

### 5.1.4 Comparison of the Perceptions of the Students about the Study Units Offered in Different Countries.

#### 5.1.4.1 Perceptions about the Study Unit Presented in Norway

Figure 5.2 illustrates students' responses (n=297) to statements evaluating the study unit presented in Norway. The biggest variation in responses was in the category of organisation and time-management (9% of responses *strongly disagree* or *disagree*). The way lectures were scheduled in Norway (Table 1.5) allowed for time to reflect and ask questions, nevertheless some students would have preferred longer lectures. There were also different opinions about the best time of the day to have lectures, some preferred the mornings while others preferred afternoons.

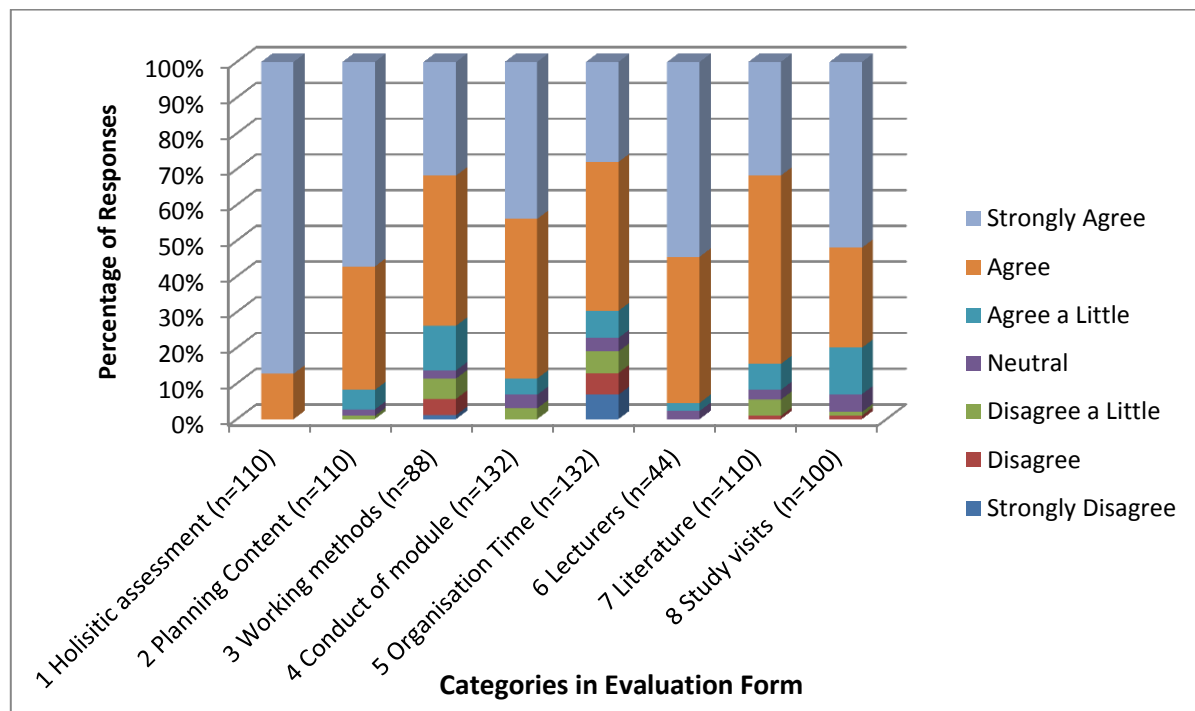


**Figure 5.2: NOMA students' evaluation of the study unit presented in Norway according to the number of responses per category (n=297)**

Regarding the study unit presented in Norway, two statements received a score of 7, namely *The lecturers listened when others spoke* and *The choices of lecturers fitted well with the themes*. One statement rated lower than 5: *I got satisfactory information prior to the module* (average rating = 4.2). During the in-depth interviews, the need to receive information about the forthcoming study unit sooner than a week before the time was expressed.

#### 5.1.4.2 Perceptions about the Study Unit Presented in South Africa

Figure 5.3 illustrates students' responses (n=826) to statements evaluating the study unit presented in South Africa. The biggest variation in responses was in the categories about working methods (6% *strongly disagree* or *disagree*) and organisation and time-management (13% *strongly disagree* or *disagree*).



**Figure 5.3: NOMA students' evaluation of the study unit presented in South Africa according to the number of responses per category (n=826)**

In SA, statements with the highest ratings pertained to the overall evaluation of the study unit (average rating = 6.9).

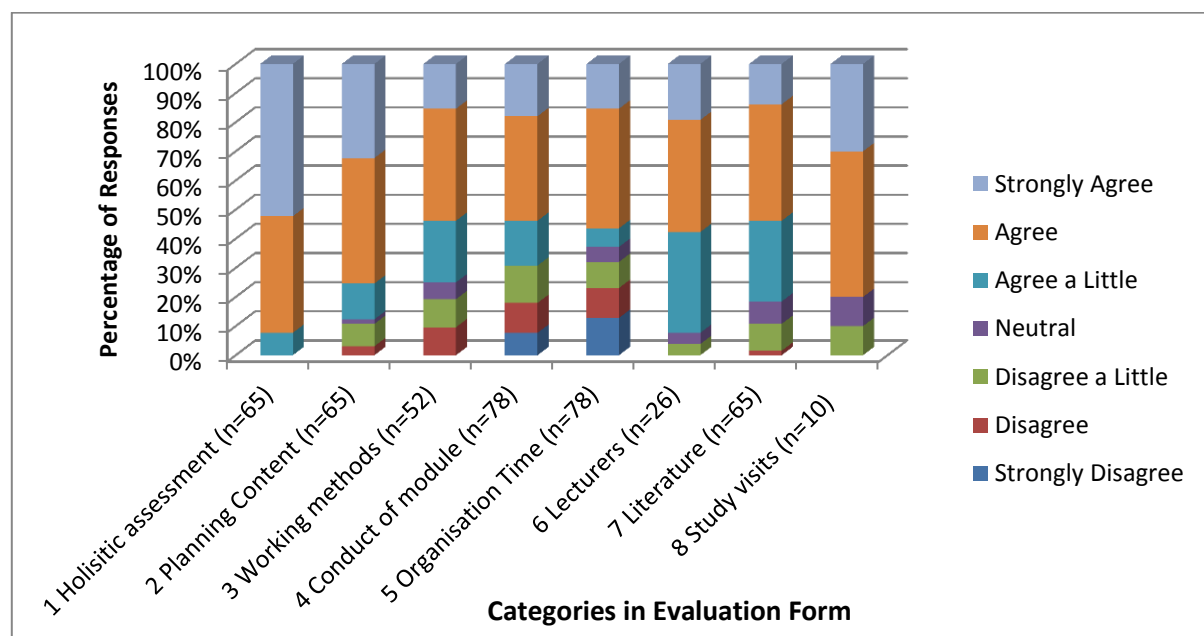
Statements with the lowest ratings pertained to *Classes were not too long* (average rating = 3.4), *During the study unit I had the opportunity to work at my own pace* (average rating = 4.4) and *There were not too many outside resource persons to talk* (average rating = 4.8).

Some students found the schedule in SA (Table 1.5) overwhelming and inflexible; students needed more time to interact with lecturers. The long days with inadequate breaks were tiring and affected their studies as they had little time to process information. Students found it challenging at times to balance everything, i.e. reading literature, compiling assignments, studying for the examination, and fitting in tourist attractions. This was considered unnecessary at a Masters level. Despite the full schedule, students still enjoyed it 'because we learned so much and we were exposed to so much.... it was great'.

One of the main emerging themes was the appreciation students expressed for the privilege of learning from people who were experts in their fields of practice. It was very beneficial to have a variety of lecturers sourced from different institutions and departments: ‘one person wouldn’t have all the knowledge that those people had’. It provided students with a broader understanding of the implementation of human rights instruments and violations of the right to food.

#### 5.1.4.3 Perceptions about the Study Unit Presented in Uganda

Figure 5.4 illustrates students’ responses (n=439) to statements evaluating the study unit in Uganda. The biggest variation in responses was in the category *Conduct of the module* (18% *strongly disagree* or *disagree*) and *Organisation and time-management* (23% *strongly disagree* or *disagree*).



**Figure 5.4: NOMA students’ evaluation of the study unit presented in Uganda according to the number of responses per category (n=439)**

In Uganda, the statement with the highest ratings pertained to *The study unit gave me new insight in the issues addressed* (average rating = 6.5). The study visits to various government departments, and national and international organisations in the two African countries were identified as the highlight of the module.

The three statements with the lowest ratings were: *Classes were not too long* (average rating = 2.2), *The lecturers allowed critical comments* (average rating = 3.9) and *Rooms used for classes were satisfactory* (average rating = 4.3). Even though lecturers were acclaimed for their expertise, students from all countries perceived lecturers in Uganda as less approachable, that they did not welcome students’ comments during lectures and were perceived as unwilling to answer students’



questions. The acoustic quality of lecture rooms made it difficult for some students to follow the lecturers, especially when lecturers had a strong foreign accent.

## 5.2 Opportunities for NOMA Students to Implement their Acquired Knowledge and Insight about a Human Rights-Based Approach to Nutrition

### 5.2.1 Opportunities Utilised by NOMA Students from the First Cohort

Students were eager to implement their newly-acquired knowledge about human rights principles and the link to nutrition. The two main activities mentioned by students from the first cohort were training opportunities, and presentations to peers (or other health professionals) on the right to adequate food. All opportunities utilised by students from the first cohort are summarised in *Table 5.2*.

**Table 5.2: Examples of opportunities utilised by NOMA students from the first cohort to implement their knowledge about a human rights-based approach to nutrition**

Opportunity to utilise knowledge	Country
Lecturing undergraduate Dietetic students (2 opportunities)	SA
Develop and present a 6 week human rights course for 150 outreach workers	SA
Train other health professionals	Uganda
Presentation on the Right to Food to Dietitians as Continued Nutrition Education (July 2012)	SA
Journal clubs for private practicing dietitians (2 opportunities) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The role of the private sector and industry to realize the right to food</li> <li>Nutrition and human rights</li> </ul>	SA
Present the students perspective of the NOMA experience at the FANUS International congress (September 2012)	SA
Incorporation of a HRBA into the Dietetics profession by the president of the Uganda Dietetic Association	Uganda
Networking	SA
Potential job opportunities	SA, Norway
Incorporate HRBA in daily practice e.g. service provision to vulnerable groups, in clinics, communities, patient counselling, diabetic councillor	SA, Uganda, Norway
Advocacy to promote HRBA; sharing experiences with colleagues and other platforms	SA, Uganda
Approached as co-author of an article through my involvement in the course and networking	SA

## 5.2.2 Anticipated Opportunities to Implement a Human Rights-Based Approach in Future Endeavours

NOMA students from both cohorts were inspired to utilise a HRBA during all relevant future endeavours as they felt that it would be part of their lives forever. Quotations to illustrate this positive attitude are included in *Box 5.1*. The main themes emerging from the quotations, are the inclusion of the client/community in decision-making processes, and the opportunity to incorporate human rights principles when giving input into policy formulation and strategic planning sessions.

### **Box 5.1: Selected quotes to illustrate future endeavours when NOMA students anticipate implementing their knowledge about a human rights-based approach to nutrition**

'If you want to start a program or launch a project you should decide who you want to reach, how you want to reach them and what difference you want to see or make. To involve and empower people... for example if you distribute soup, how can you empower them, instead of what you could gain. Also how to help others... not to just look at the organization but what the organization can mean to others'. *Female student, SA*

'I'd love to work maybe at NGOs.... I think it is extremely important to use the human rights-based approach.... empowerment and participation..... you can't work with these issues just being a dietitian'. *Female student, Norway*

'How [a HRBA] should be considered in their policies and strategies... in every way possible'. *Female student, Norway*

'I believe using the human rights way of where you have inclusion... even the marginalised people, if they are involved in the planning, if you work to get an impact, then they will help you to create a sense of ownership and responsibility for everyone'. *Male student, Uganda*

'In future, I would focus on the programming for nutrition, with more emphasis... I can use the knowledge we've learnt to bring on board, people on the ground, the vulnerable people. I've realised that they need to be consulted, they need to be talked to, and their opinions really considered. That is something I can do differently other than just sitting in the office and coming up with projects, and then taking them to the community. In most cases, [the projects] haven't worked..... because of lack of satisfaction and involvement'. *Male student, Uganda*

'It would be good to have this HRBA in government.....not just talking about macro-economic level and all that'. *Male student, Uganda*

'Hopefully to convince the politicians or policy makers so that they can also see the view or perceptions of those who are really living in poverty, and listen to them rather than listening to the budget'. *Female student, Norway*

## 5.3 Concluding Statement on Results

According to the average rating of the overall evaluation of all study units, students were very satisfied with the NOMA Track module. Students responded strongly to the statements about various aspects of the study units, as only a small percentage of students indicated a degree of indecision. The biggest variation in responses was related to organisational matters and time allocation. Further analysis of data revealed that it was due to students' needing more time to work at their own pace.

Country-specific findings showed that students regarded lecturers in Norway as experts in their respective fields and enjoyed their interactive teaching style. The highlights in South Africa and Uganda were the study visits as well as the variety of topics presented by various speakers. In Norway, students had adequate time for self-study but the lecturing schedules in SA and Uganda were perceived to be too compact and described as exhausting.

Students from the first cohort utilised teaching and training opportunities to share their newly-acquired knowledge with students and colleagues. Students from both cohorts were inspired to want to utilise a HRBA in all future endeavours as the experience made a lifelong impression.

## Chapter 6

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The need for the NOMA Track module arose from the lack of learning opportunities for nutrition professionals on the combined topics of nutrition and human rights as explained in Chapter 1. The NOMA Track module aimed to develop and implement an innovative Masters programme in Africa, linking nutritional sciences with principles of human rights, especially economic, social and cultural rights, for nutrition professionals. This aim corresponded with the identified need expressed by the Lancet's Global Independent Commission into the Education of Health Professionals for the 21st Century to transform education of health professionals to fit with future health-care needs.<sup>1</sup> As an example of transnational<sup>a</sup> education<sup>2</sup>, this module was developed through successful collaboration of universities from different countries. The institutions were willing to form a network and share educational content and teaching resources.

In search of solutions to persistent nutrition-related problems, the module strived to link human rights and nutrition in order to develop and deliver ideas about new approaches to finding sustainable solutions. Educators in both human rights and nutrition aim at empowering students with the skills to contribute to the development of societies as they currently exist, and according to their changing future needs.<sup>3,4</sup>

It is accepted practice to give a global perspective at the beginning of a transnational module.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the first NOMA study unit provided the theoretical background of international human rights principles and institutional practice. The subsequent study units strengthened the theory by providing a variety of topics and practical examples related to nutrition, and linking nutrition and human rights. Study visits concretized the concepts offering students the opportunity to engage with community members and other role-players.

The NOMA Track module was presented in three very diverse countries and combined with the richness of the cultural diversity amongst this group of international students, the perceptions of their NOMA experience offer new insights and will be useful during the future development of similar modules. The findings of the study will be discussed according to the study objectives.

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<sup>a</sup> Transnational education = students are in different country that host university and academic qualification is obtained [GATE]<sup>2</sup>

## **6.2 The Perceptions of Students who Completed the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'.**

Students described the NOMA Track module as a life-changing opportunity with an incredible learning curve which broadened their horizons as nutrition professionals. Overall, participants expressed great appreciation for the way the module was structured and presented, the expertise of lecturers and the interactive approach to teaching and learning. They also embraced the dimensions of the group diversity. Each of these topics warrants further discussion.

### **6.2.1 NOMA Track Module Structure**

The recognised cycle of curriculum-planning which entails a continuous process of development, implementation, feedback and adaptation<sup>6</sup> was followed during the development and presentation of the NOMA Track module. Lecturers and co-ordinators from all participating universities attended planning workshops to develop the module and to coordinate logistical challenges such as different academic calendars and the allocation of credits to the module.

This module was developed and presented in different countries, by different universities, embedded in different educational systems. Therefore, the content of the three study units was constructed to complement one another. Even so, the diverse group of international students identified some areas of improvement such as a lack of specific learning outcomes in some themes; the relevance, amount and availability of reading material; and some unnecessary repetition of information between countries.

Overarching outcomes compiled for the NOMA Track module formed the basis for the specific objectives in each study unit. Owing to the interdisciplinary and transnational nature of the module, it was a challenge to optimise constructive alignment of curriculum objectives and the teaching and learning activities in each study unit. Even though constructive alignment is of paramount importance to facilitate students' performance at the desired cognitive level,<sup>7-9</sup> Biggs suggested that it is usually not fully achieved during the first attempt towards module development.<sup>8</sup> Although such constructive alignment was not fully achieved during some themes in the NOMA Track module, students still benefitted from the practical experience shared by experts from different institutions and departments.<sup>10</sup>

Student feedback is an essential part of curriculum development and improvement.<sup>7</sup> An existing module evaluation form currently being used in Norway was deemed suitable during the planning phase, to obtain the NOMA students' feedback about each study unit. However, some limitations

of the evaluation form were identified during the research process. It is recommended that additional categories related to professional attributes, and personal experience of the process are included in future (*Refer to Section 6.6.3*).

Some NOMA students identified the use of a second language (English) as a medium of communication as a barrier to articulating their opinions.<sup>10</sup> Even though it may not be significant in this study population, educators should consider the potential impact of using a second language as the medium of communication during feedback sessions and when a Likert-type scale is used to elicit responses.<sup>11</sup>

A 26-country study showed that extreme responses are more likely when participants are using their home language, while middle responses are more likely when English as second language is used, possibly due to response bias or the differential interpretation of the statements and scales used.<sup>11</sup> The tendency for participants to choose the middle responses when using a Likert scale with an unequal number of options<sup>14</sup> was not observed in this study. Possibly the 7-point Likert scale gave participants adequate options to choose from.<sup>11</sup> Alternatively, the nature of human rights discourse draws individuals with strong opinions, and the strong viewpoints expressed by NOMA students may be an outcome of the module, encouraging students to voice their opinions during debates and discussions.

NOMA students were keen to participate in in-depth interviews (90.9% response rate) about their perceptions of the NOMA Track module, and alluded to the fact that they felt honoured to provide feedback which could be useful to future module development processes.<sup>12</sup> Considering NOMA students' perceptions of the module was a recognition of the students as essential partners of the process<sup>14</sup> which is a good example of practising the human rights principles of participation and transparency.<sup>15</sup>

### **6.2.2 Presentation of the NOMA Track Module**

NOMA students benefitted from being exposed to different education systems and learning from a wide variety of lecturers or practitioners, each with their particular field of interest. Even though speakers were invited on the basis of their relevant expertise, not all were human rights experts *per se*, hence some did not link their topic explicitly to human rights principles and outcomes. It could be valuable to facilitate group discussions to enable students to contextualise the content of such lectures.<sup>16</sup>

The integrated and reflective assignment NOMA students had to compile after completion of the third study unit was highly rated<sup>10</sup> as it assisted students to process their experiences, contextualise their perceptions and construct meaning.<sup>16,17</sup>

### 6.2.3 Expertise of Lecturers

Two of the main emerging themes from the qualitative data were appreciation of the privilege of learning from experts, and the variety of topics covered. In Norway, students felt privileged to have lecturers internationally acclaimed for their contribution to promoting economic, social and cultural rights and the right to food. The perception of NOMA students who found it beneficial to have a variety of lecturers sourced from different institutions and departments in South Africa and Uganda,<sup>12</sup> corresponds with findings in current literature that international students value the input from guest speakers from within the host countries.<sup>18</sup>

NOMA students requested more time to interact with lecturers.<sup>10</sup> As it is known that international students highly value interaction with lecturers,<sup>19</sup> it is important to allocate adequate time during the module to provide opportunities for interaction with students.<sup>20</sup> International students are also looking for other forms of support in culturally-diverse surroundings, thus the relationships they form with lecturers can enhance their academic performance.<sup>5,19</sup>

### 6.2.4 Interactive Approach to Teaching and Learning

According to Kolb, there are four self-selected preferences for learning: to learn by actively experimenting, abstract conceptualisation, reflective observation or concrete experience.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, apart from having individual learning styles<sup>b</sup>, students from different countries also display different tendencies towards preferred styles of learning.<sup>5,18</sup>

Studies show that lecturers' teaching styles determine the learning context as this affects the way students approach their learning.<sup>5</sup> Within the context of transnational education there seems to be disagreement amongst researchers whether teaching styles should be compatible with students' preferred styles of learning to optimise information retention.<sup>18</sup> Thus it seems appropriate to use an interactive teaching style and incorporate different strategies in transnational education, where the lecturer accommodates the needs of all students.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>b</sup> Learning styles, which are often defined as '... characteristic cognitive, affective, and physiological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment' Heffernan 1999; p33<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, an interactive and participative approach is deemed optimal for human rights education.<sup>5,14</sup>

In-depth interviews with NOMA students revealed that they valued the informal and interactive teaching style in Norway where students were encouraged to engage in dialogue. It made it more difficult for students to adjust to the more formal teaching style used in Uganda. Even though an interactive teaching style tends to optimise student participation and progress,<sup>11</sup> it is difficult for lecturers to break away from traditional teaching styles, where the lecturer is perceived as the possessor of all knowledge and the student is a passive recipient of the knowledge being shared.<sup>8,19</sup> Continued education and support of lecturers by academic institutions is required to empower lecturers to engage with international students optimally.<sup>19</sup>

As mentioned by Crose, traditional teaching styles could create a barrier to optimal learning.<sup>19</sup> In Uganda, NOMA students felt uncertain about lecturers' expectations of student participation. They sometimes felt discouraged when requesting clarification of unfamiliar concepts, and opted to follow the example of local students, which was to remain passive. To minimise these barriers, lecturers of transnational modules could consider utilising local students to set an example of the extent of interaction expected by the lecturer, to minimise uncertainty amongst students, misunderstanding and possible conflict.<sup>19</sup>

### **6.2.5 Diversity in the NOMA Track Module**

Generally international students need to adapt to differences between national cultures, teaching styles, and education and examination systems in foreign academic institutions.<sup>5,21</sup> NOMA students were supported by the international offices of academic institutions, module co-ordinators and fellow students to minimise the transition period and help them to fit into the various educational systems.

Cultural diversity in the classroom poses challenges to both students and lecturers since it impacts both on the pedagogy of lecturers as well as student welfare.<sup>5</sup> From NOMA students' perceptions expressed during in-depth interviews, it seems as if some lecturers were not fully cognisant of the cultural diversity that existed in the classroom, nor of how their own cultural experiences influenced their pedagogy.<sup>10</sup> Literature suggests that these challenges can be overcome through an enhanced awareness of the cultural differences and similarities that exist in the classroom and the utilization of varying teaching techniques as discussed before.<sup>5,8,19,22</sup> As stated by Crose, all students will benefit by 'meeting the needs of international students in the classroom, allowing for



academic success and an appreciation and awareness of cultural differences and similarities that exist in our world'.<sup>19</sup>

Creating opportunities to reflect upon students' personal experience could enable students to contextualise possible tensions resulting from cultural diversity. Corbin suggests a step-wise process for reflecting on cultural and ethical dilemmas: 1) identification of such dilemmas, 2) in-depth discussions of experiences that raised tensions, 3) development of culturally-sensitive responses, and 4) continued review and reflection on experiences.<sup>16</sup>

### **6.3 Skills and Competencies of Students Developed by Completing the NOMA Track Module**

The recent Lancet series on maternal and child nutrition (2013) argues the need for nutrition champions, influential leaders able to transfer information, change perceptions and resolve conflicts. They are essential 'to advance the nutrition agenda in the context of fragmentation and competing interests between and within various groups of stakeholders'.<sup>23</sup>

Similar requirements are formulated in the framework for professional attributes vital to health [and nutrition] professionals to function optimally in a globalised context, compiled by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (CanMEDS, 2005).<sup>24</sup> Even though the professional attributes listed in the CanMEDS framework do not mention the right of the patient explicitly, the NOMA Track module which focussed on embedding a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in nutrition education, succeeded in enhancing the competence of this group of nutrition professionals equipping them better to deal with important nutrition-related issues in future. Marais et al reported that students expressed an enhanced awareness of people's needs and human rights, especially those of vulnerable population groups. NOMA students were inspired to incorporate human rights principles in their work ethic at all times.<sup>12</sup>

### **6.4 Shortcomings in the NOMA Track Module that Prevented Students from having an Optimal Learning Experience**

The NOMA Track module was highly-rated, according to the responses to the statements in the evaluation forms pertaining to the module as a whole, and this was confirmed during the in-depth interviews. Findings from the quantitative evaluation of the module can be contextualised by referring to the emerging themes derived from the in-depth interviews.

The biggest variation in responses was over *Organisation and time-management* due to different practises in various countries. The reasons why the statements *During the study unit I had the opportunity to work at my own pace* and *Classes were not too long* received the lowest ratings for the module were inter-related.

Firstly, the study unit in Norway formed part of an existing programme offered as an elective at the University of Oslo. Lectures were presented three afternoons per week, thus the programme allowed ample time for self-study. In Norway, NOMA students requested longer classes as they wanted more interaction with lecturers.

Secondly, in contrast, the study units in SA and Uganda were newly-developed and they had more lectures (three full days in SA and five full days in Uganda). The programmes were more time-consuming due to the inclusion of study visits, and the wide variety of topics necessitated numerous speakers. Although the study unit in SA was developed to allow two days per week self study, students found having six to seven lectures for three full days a week exhausting. They recommended that lectures could be distributed more evenly, allowing for longer breaks in between lectures, and more contact time with lecturers. As lectures in Uganda were scheduled daily, students requested more time for self-study. They suggested that some lecture time could be utilised better by expanding the study visits, deemed to be very insightful. If less time could be spent in SA and Uganda on attending lectures, students would have more time to work at their own pace.

The in-depth interviews revealed nuances of students' perceptions about the module, which was not forthcoming from the quantitative evaluation. Differences of perception among students from different countries can be ascribed mainly to cultural diversity. They learnt how to communicate with students from different cultures, which prepared them for future situations of interdisciplinary collaboration they could encounter.<sup>12</sup>

The low rating of the statement *I got satisfactory information prior to the module* indicated the need of international students to obtain all relevant information pertaining to the module well in advance. According to Kelly, the inclusion of information about the educational strategies in such documents could aid in reducing the transition period at the foreign academic institution.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned in Section 6.2.4, certain traditional teaching styles could create a barrier to optimal learning. Even though lecturers were acclaimed for their expertise, students from all countries

perceived some lecturers in Uganda less approachable, that they did not welcome students' comments during lectures and were perceived as unwilling to answer students' questions.<sup>10</sup>

Some NOMA students formed close relationships with students from the other countries. In hindsight, the researcher realised that team-building *per se* was not pursued purposefully in the development of the NOMA Track module. This may be regarded as a missed opportunity to develop a core group of nutrition professionals able to act as agents for change, and to promote the utilisation of a HRBA in seeking sustainable solutions to global nutrition dilemmas in joint endeavours.

## **6.5 Utilisation of Opportunities for Students from the First Cohort to Implement the Acquired Knowledge and Insight about a Human Rights-Based Approach to Nutrition**

The aim of the NOMA Track module was to strengthen the capacity of nutrition professionals to incorporate human rights principles in future endeavours. Students testified to the fact that this life-changing experience inspired them to utilise their knowledge to promote nutritional health for all. Several students from the first cohort provided examples of such opportunities upon their return to their home countries, for example, in lecturing undergraduate students or training other health professionals about the right to adequate food (*Table 5.2*).

One of the pre-requisites for the NOMA module, is that all students are expected to incorporate human rights principles in their individual research projects required for a Masters degree in Nutrition. This should further strengthen their skill to utilise a HRBA in practice and complement the enhancement of their professional attributes.

## **6.6 Implications of Student Perceptions of the NOMA Track Module for the Development of Future Modules, including a Module on Human Rights and Nutrition at Stellenbosch University**

Stellenbosch University offers a structured Masters degree in Nutrition as a distance learning programme. The NOMA Track module was included in this Masters programme. Emerging themes emanating from the findings of the study are summarised for consideration during the development of future modules about human rights and nutrition.

### 6.6.1 Planning an interdisciplinary or transnational module

- **Embrace interdisciplinary collaboration.** The right to food is a complex concept which necessitates the input of numerous disciplines, such as nutrition science, agriculture, law, health, social services and economics. It requires a willingness of lecturers to accept ensuing challenges and share expertise to strengthen the links between disciplines in pursuit of effective strategies to attain sustainable solutions to nutrition challenges.
- **Include study visits to illustrate the theoretical principles** and facilitate deeper understanding of critical issues and constructing meaning. If it is not practical to offer a transnational module, field visits in different geographical areas of a country with unique characteristics (for example, different provinces or districts) is advised.
- **Create ample opportunities to discuss issues and debrief tension.** Acknowledge the emotional impact of encountering seemingly-insurmountable barriers to the realisation of the right to adequate food. Embrace the value of diversity and cultural differences by encouraging interaction.
- **Integrate opportunities for socialisation into the module programme** to enhance reciprocal understanding of cultural diversity and similarities.
- **Incorporate team building exercises and group work** to facilitate the development of the requisite professional attributes.

### 6.6.2 Education

- **Adopt a participative teaching** style which embodies a key principle of a HRBA. Lecturers need support from academic institutions to acquire the necessary skills. Provide training sessions to all lecturers and facilitators who contribute to interdisciplinary modules.
- **Optimise constructive alignment** of module outcomes, objectives, activities and assessment methods. All participants in the process involved in the development of an interdisciplinary or transnational module should participate in workshops to achieve this goal.
- **Provide the pre-defined scope of lectures** to all lecturers and invited speakers participating in a module, to minimise unnecessary repetition. Some repetition may be necessary but it should be done in a co-ordinated manner.

### 6.6.3 Feedback

- **Timing of student feedback and duration of feedback sessions** is of paramount importance to improve the internal validity and optimise the quality of the information. Evaluation should be conducted promptly at the completion of each study unit, and should be allowed adequate time.<sup>25</sup> It may be wise to distribute the evaluation forms prior to the module completion date and preferably not directly before the examination.
- **Adapt the evaluation rubric** to make provision for cultural dimensions, management of diversity and development of professional attributes. Open questions to elicit spontaneous feedback are essential. Statements in the rubric should be examined within the context of the specific groups' diverse profile and linguistic abilities. Rubrics should be pre-tested to enhance the face and content validity.

### 6.6.4 Reflection

- **Encourage students to keep a reflective journal.** Reflecting on personal experiences and challenges can enable students to contextualise their perceptions and possible tensions.<sup>26</sup> It would also provide insights on professional attributes which have been developed, and reveal opportunities for personal growth.
- **Allow adequate time and opportunities to reflect.** This could include an integrative reflective assignment<sup>16</sup> or even a specified period of time allocated for participants to internalise their learning experience (for example, a few days at the end of the module). The objectives of these opportunities would be to reflect on the relationship between the theory and practical application of a HRBA, to identify specific cultural and professional dimensions that contributed to their enhanced understanding of the subject matter, and to combine the full spectrum of their experience within the context of their professional obligations.
- **Encourage lecturers to become reflective practitioners** which implies having the ability to evaluate their own practices and perceptions, and show a willingness to change. In-depth discussions of student feedback as well as the process of implementing a new module should be conducted soon after completion of the module.<sup>27</sup> Once again, all participants should be present to discuss the experience and to obtain consensus about positive aspects of the module, as well as potential improvements, should the opportunity to resume or adapt the programme arise.

### 6.6.5 Working with international students

- **Utilise cultural diversity to empower students.** Cultural diversity serves to enrich learning experiences within any group of students. The various cultures in a particular group need to be analysed beforehand. Relevant orientation about the specific cultures at the outset of a module will facilitate participation and co-operation, and encourage reciprocal respect and empathy.
- **Offering introductory lectures may create an awareness** of the observable elements (i.e. language) and hidden elements (i.e. customs, history) of cultural characteristics. Students should be encouraged to focus on commonality and regard differences as opportunities to learn about themselves and others. They also need to accept that they will not fully understand the foreign culture, and that it is advisable to assume the role of the respected observer.
- **Agree on a process for handling disagreements.** At the outset of a module, a diverse group of students should develop a mutually-agreed process for handling possible disagreements within the group and to address potential conflict pro-actively, thereby reducing underlying tension and limiting communication barriers.
- **Reduce the transition period needed by international students to adjust.** Lecturers concerned with transnational education need not only to be aware of international students' cultural diversity, but also their level of competence, relevant to the outcomes of the module. Also needed is sensitivity over the impact of barriers created by studying in a second language, as it may impact negatively on their ability to participate during interactive learning opportunities. Students need support from co-ordinators or supervisors during the transition period to assist them to understand and manage challenges optimally. Although international students cannot be fully prepared for the challenges they may experience during a transnational education opportunity, it will be beneficial if they could receive information to sensitise them about the relevant cultural differences.<sup>2</sup>

### 6.6.6 Logistical matters

- **Appoint administrative personnel to manage administrative and logistical matters,** such as accommodation, transport, communicating with lecturers/presenters, booking venues, arranging study visits and organising the submission of progress reports and feedback forms.

- **Obtain the input of financial advisors to plan the budget and monitor all expenses.**

## 6.7 Summary

The NOMA Track module succeeded in empowering a group of nutrition professionals to utilise a HRBA in practice. According to the perceptions of the students, the NOMA Track module succeeded in incorporating the five points important to human rights education as mentioned by Maunder and Khoza (Section 1.2.6): 1) NOMA students became aware that the HRBA focusses on the right of the disadvantaged groups to decent standards of living and care; 2) the NOMA Track module provided a human rights perspective, enabling students to contribute in the appropriate manner to the development and implementation of future programmes to realise the right to food; 3) NOMA students were inspired to include/adopt human rights perspectives during their usual nutrition surveillance and advice to government on appropriate indicators or interpretation of nutrition data collected; 4) when practising future advocacy for nutrition, NOMA students intend to include reasons to fulfill human rights and the subsequent impact of malnutrition due to rights violations and 5) some NOMA students are already in the position, or intend to, help in training government and civil society to grasp the value of empowering vulnerable groups to participate and claim their rights, rather than remain objects soliciting charity.<sup>28</sup>

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## **Chapter 7**

### **SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In this final chapter, a summary of the key findings is presented. This is followed by acknowledgement of possible limitations of the study, recommendations for future consideration and conclusions.

#### **7.2 Summary**

This study documented perceptions of Masters students enrolled in the module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'. Based on the findings of the study, a set of general guidelines was constructed to inform the development of a module at Stellenbosch University.

Upon completion of the NOMA Track module, students described the experience as 'positive and inspiring, a life-changing event'. The module was well-organised and logistical matters, such as financial issues, accommodation and transport, were mostly resolved with the help of the international offices and module co-ordinators at the various institutions.

The presentation of the module in three very diverse countries provided students the opportunity to compare different situations critically by applying their newly-acquired knowledge. In Norway, students benefitted from the lecturers' interactive and participative approach to teaching and learning. They valued the expertise of the lecturers who provided a sound theoretical background about human rights principles and a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to good governance. In South Africa and Uganda, the variety of resource persons was highly acclaimed. Study visits served to enrich theoretical principles by giving students practical examples and providing them with the opportunity to engage with members of the community.

Aspects which potentially impacted on students' academic performance were mainly matters concerning time-management. Some lectures could be replaced by allowing additional time for self-study and increasing the number of study visits.

To improve the module, students requested study visits in more than one province/district per country. There was a need for more opportunities to interact with lecturers. Understanding of cultural diversity in the participating countries should be facilitated through introductory lectures and opportunities for socialisation.

Interdisciplinary education provided these health-care professionals with the opportunity to obtain exceptional skills and to enhance a holistic approach towards their clients. The willingness to learn from others provided them with valuable insight about the diverse nature of different population groups, their culture and traditions. Without this understanding, poor communication, intolerance and prejudice might create barriers to optimal treatment or education of a client/community requiring professional advice.

The study showed that students felt empowered with the capacity to build the dimensions of a HRBA into future endeavours addressing food insecurity and nutrition conditions. Examples were given of the way they will practise human rights principles during client interactions, encouraging participation and providing information or interventions in a client-centred manner. Students from the first cohort reportedly utilised opportunities to implement the newly-acquired knowledge and insight by lecturing undergraduate students and training fellow dietitians and other health-care professionals on the subject of human rights and the right to adequate food for all.

NOMA students developed a renewed understanding of their role as nutrition professionals, being challenged to interact in a globalized world if they want to make a meaningful contribution to the realisation to the right to food for all. The NOMA Track module succeeded in enhancing professional attributes of this group of Masters students, supporting the recommendations by the Lancet's Global Independent Commission into the Education of Health Professional for the 21st Century to 'promote quality, uphold a strong service ethic, and be centred around the interests of [individuals] and populations'.<sup>1</sup>

## 7.3 Limitations of the Study

### 7.3.1 Process of Data Collection

- Due to logistical constraints it was impractical to conduct personal in-depth interviews with participants residing in provinces outside the Western Cape or in other countries (Norway, Uganda and Zimbabwe). Telephonic interviewing is not regarded as an optimal technique to collect qualitative data as the interviewer has to rely on the interviewee's tone of voice and words to gauge emotional cues. During personal interviews the observation of body language enriches qualitative data and enhances data interpretation.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that subtle cues were lost due to poor connectivity which also hampered the accuracy of the transcribed text to some extent.
- The link between human rights principles and nutrition was not necessarily discussed in-depth in all interviews. A possible explanation for the apparent deviation from the aim of the study could be ascribed to the content of the discussion guide which used neutral probes to investigate topics not included in the quantitative questionnaire. Furthermore, the research assistants were knowledgeable of the protocol and were experienced in conducting in-depth interviews, but they were not educated about human rights *per se*. The researchers could have missed opportunities to probe participants' responses which were indicative of students' internalisation of human rights principles. Not all students embraced the HRBA to the same extent due to factors such as the students' attitude, personality type, work experience and maturity, therefore some shared more insight than others about the impact of the human rights dimensions on their personal life.

### 7.3.2 Administration of the Evaluation Form in the Different Countries

- During the planning phase, it was decided that all participating academic institutions will administer the evaluation form at the end of each study unit, on the day of the examination. This was not done consistently and some evaluation forms were obtained retrospectively. The time lapse resulted in a lower response rate, decreasing the study size. Caution should thus be exercised when interpreting the findings from the quantitative component of this study.

### **7.3.3 Power of the Researcher**

- Research assistants were appointed to conduct and transcribe interviews. If the researcher conducted the interviews herself, students could have been influenced unconsciously due to the observer-expectancy effect as the researcher was also the co-ordinator in SA.<sup>3</sup> Due to the personal nature of qualitative research, researcher bias cannot be fully excluded but the researcher made an attempt to ensure all necessary measures were taken to minimise the impact thereof.<sup>2</sup> However, the researcher still played an important role in contextualising information accurately due to her involvement in the module.

## 7.4 Recommendations

### 7.4.1 Incorporation of Human Rights in Relevant Documents and Programmes

- **Explicitly Incorporate Human Rights into the Framework for Professional Attributes.** The incorporation of patient and client rights could enhance the content of the framework for professional attributes for healthcare professionals compiled by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (CanMEDS)<sup>4</sup> and the resultant set of attributes adopted by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (Stellenbosch University).<sup>5</sup> Currently the CanMEDS framework for professional attributes of health [and nutrition] professionals refers to ethical aspects of professional conduct in a generic way. Incorporating the legal dimensions provided by a rights-based approach will serve to strengthen the advocacy role of health and nutrition practitioners.
- **Incorporate a HRBA in a holistic manner from an early point in the academic career** to empower nutrition graduates to utilise a HRBA in future practice. This could be achieved if nutrition departments adopt the principles of a HRBA and train all lecturers to develop an understanding of the synergy between human rights principles and policies and conduct towards good nutrition. It will then be easier for lecturers to incorporate human rights principles into their subjects where relevant.

### 7.4.2 Teaching and Learning Research Opportunities

- **Conduct focus group discussions to evaluate modules.** Due to time constraints and other logistical considerations, module evaluations are often conducted by means of structured questionnaires. The additional use of qualitative research methods may elicit information invaluable to the development of new modules or updating of existing modules. Focus group discussions by participants about their perceptions of the process and their professional development may be the preferred method as more information is usually elicited through group interaction.<sup>6</sup>
- **Conduct action research during the implementation of a new module.** The service learning pedagogy could be utilised by analysing students' reflections on a module at the beginning, in the middle and after completion of the module to gather information for improvement of the said module.<sup>7</sup>

- **Co-ordinators of the NOMA Track module should reflect on their experience.** The NOMA Track module was a unique experience which needs to be well-documented. In-depth interviews with the co-ordinators of the study units and developers of the module could provide useful information, in addition to the students' recommendations, reported in this study.
- **Investigate the use of Likert-type scales in transnational modules.** Literature reports that the use of a 5 or 7-point Likert-type scale was found to produce slightly higher mean scores relative to the highest possible attainable score, compared to those produced from a 10-point scale.<sup>8</sup> An investigation to determine the validity of a 7-point Likert scale used during evaluation of transnational modules may provide useful information about the compilation of such scales.

## **7.5 Conclusion**

The NOMA Track module was successful in offering a group of nutrition professionals the unique opportunity of achieving a solid theoretical and practical basis for understanding and accepting their human rights obligations as health professionals, and utilising the HRBA as far as possible in their future endeavours.

In conclusion, the success of the NOMA Track module can be ascribed to the transnational and interdisciplinary collaboration of several faculties at different academic institutions and a willingness to share their expertise. The lecturers and co-ordinators who developed and presented the NOMA Track module accepted the challenge of providing human rights-oriented education equipping a group of nutrition professionals with the necessary knowledge to operationalise concepts, values and standards of human rights. Even though a similar transnational collaborative module may not be duplicated, the value of this experience for future interdisciplinary ventures cannot be overestimated.



## 7.6 References: Chapter 7

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- 5 Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Graduate attributes. Centre for Health Professions Education (CHSE), Stellenbosch University. August 2013.
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- 7 Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). *Service-learning in the curriculum: a resource for higher education institutions*. Pretoria: The Council on Higher Education: 2004.
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# Addenda

## Addendum A:

### Qualitative evaluation form used to evaluate NOMA Track study units

**NOMA Track for Master Programme in Nutrition ‘Nutrition, Governance, and Human Rights’**  
**Study Unit 1: University of Oslo and Akershus University College, Norway**  
**Study Unit 2: Stellenbosch University, South Africa**  
**Study Unit 3: Makerere University, Uganda**  
**April – August 2011 and 2012**

The evaluation is compulsory for all participants in the NOMA Track Module. The evaluation is anonymous. Please deliver the filled-in forms as soon as possible after the final case study presentation/examination. Please read carefully the statements regarding various aspects of the course before you tick off in one of the boxes along the range of eight sets of statements, which allow you to make graded positive or negative answers.

This evaluation focuses particularly on improving the courses by giving your honest assessment regarding:

1. General assessment of the course
2. Matters relating to the planning and content of the course
3. Matters relating to working methods used in the course
4. Matters relating to the conduct of the course
5. Matters relating to the organisation of the course and allocation of time
6. Assessment of lecturers
7. Matters related to the literature
8. Matters relating to the study visits
9. General observations or comments

In addition to ticking off in the chosen box, you are welcome to make comments to any of the points - if so do it below the table on each page (continue on the back side if you need it).

At the end you are asked kindly to provide your observations regarding the 2-3 most positive aspects of the course and the 2-3 most negative aspects.

1. A holistic assessment of Study Unit	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree a little	Neutral/ don't know	Agree a little	Agree	Strongly agree
1.1 The Study Unit gave me new insight in the issues addressed							
1.2 The Unit helped me obtain a more integrated understanding of the human right to adequate food and principles of governance as relevant to nutrition							
1.3 The course made me interested in learning more about some of the issues covered							
1.4 The course triggered my interest in working with Human Rights and Governance aspects of nutrition							
1.5 The course as a whole was good							
2. Matters relating to the planning and content of the course	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Disagree a little	Neutral/ don't know	Agree a little	Agree	Strongly agree
2.1 I got satisfactory information about 'Nutrition, Governance and Human Rights' prior to the course							
2.2 The course plan and learning objectives were satisfactorily explained at the beginning of the course							
2.3 The learning objectives were of direct interest to me							
2.4 It was clear to me from the beginning that I was expected to be active in the learning process							
2.5 The content of the course met my expectations							

<b>3. Matters relating to working methods in the course</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
3.1 The learning methods and literature stimulated me to actively participate in the discussions							
3.2 The shift between individual study and lectures encouraged me to be active during the course							
3.3 During the course I had the opportunity to work at my own pace (speed)							
3.4 The learning objectives helped me to keep track of what I was expected to learn							
<b>4. Matters relating to the conduct of the course</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
4.1 The teachers were sufficiently open							
4.2 The atmosphere in the course stimulated me to serious work							
4.3 The teachers allowed critical comments							
4.4 The teachers tried to reply to my questions							
4.5 The teachers listened when others spoke							
4.6 The teachers talked too much							
<b>5. Matters relating to organisation of the course and allocation of time</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
5.1 There was too little formal time available for classes per week							
5.2 Classes were too long							
5.3 Rooms used for classes were satisfactory							
5.4 Time of the day was satisfactory							
5.5 There were too many outside resource persons to talk							
5.6 The number of external lecturers was satisfactory							
<b>6. E of the lecturers</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
6.1 The choices of lecturers fitted well to the themes							
6.2 The lecturer was clear and informative:							
<b>7. Matters relating to the literature</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
7.1 There was consistency between the learning objectives and the literature selected							
7.2 The literature was adequate in quantity							
7.3 The literature was sufficiently easy to follow							
7.4 The combination of the material given out and lectures was adequate for meeting the learning objectives							
7.5 The content and level of the literature stimulated me to want to learn more in the areas covered							
7.6 Please specify if any literature was unnecessary: 1. 2. 3.							
<b>8. Matters relating to the study visits</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree a little</b>	<b>Neutral/ don't know</b>	<b>Agree a little</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
8.1 There was consistency between the learning objectives and the study visits							
8.2 The number of study visits was satisfactory							
8.3 The study visits helped illustrate the theoretical matters as lectured and studied							
8.4 Some study visits were superfluous and does not need to be repeated PLEASE SPECIFY							
8.5 The study visits were well organised							

9. General observations or comments regarding the course

9.1 Please, if any, give the 2-3 most positive aspects of the course

9.2 Please, if any, give the 2-3 most negative aspects of the course

9.3 Any other comments

## Addendum B:

### Discussion guide for in-depth interviews

Date: .....

Participant code: No/SA/Ugn Chrt1/Chrt2\_ M/F nr \_\_\_\_

- It will be interesting to hear why you **applied** for the NOMA Track module in the first place?
  - Tell me about **your** experience?

CONTENT	VALUE TO PERSON
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you think that countries and training institutions <b>should</b> address food and nutrition as a development concern from a human rights perspective?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If <b>yes</b>: difficulties in incorporating a human rights based approach to food and nutrition in development in education?</li> <li>If <b>no</b>: Why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>What do you regard as <b>positive</b> aspects of the <b>module</b> / course?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probe for Norway &amp; Uganda &amp; SA</li> <li>met all expectations</li> <li>highlights / most rewarding for you as person</li> <li>most surprising</li> <li>course offered in three countries</li> <li>coordinated by different institutions</li> <li>use of experts in the field / use designated lecturers</li> </ul> </li> <li>What do you regard as <b>negative</b> aspects of the module / course?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probe for Norway &amp; Uganda &amp; SA</li> <li>most difficult / frustrating</li> <li>disturbing</li> <li>gaps / limitations</li> </ul> </li> <li>Describe any <b>factors</b> that prevented <b>you</b> from having an <b>optimal</b> learning experience.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probe for Norway &amp; Uganda &amp; SA individually</li> <li>Time</li> <li>Adaptation in foreign country</li> <li>- different cultural attitudes/behaviour/ customs</li> <li>Language</li> <li>Family or friends (when in home country)</li> <li>Family or friends (when NOT in home country)</li> <li>Climate</li> <li>Foreign cuisine</li> <li>History of the country</li> <li>SPECIFICALLY ask about their research – factors that prevented them from making quick progress</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the <b>diverse</b> profile of the students affect you?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>learn about the other students</li> <li>learn about yourself?</li> </ul> </li> <li>During contact session, did you feel <b>free</b> to air your <b>perceptions</b> frankly or to clarify queries?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If <b>yes</b>, please explain what you mean or can you give an example?</li> <li>If <b>not</b>, what kept you from doing so?</li> <li>How did you feel about evaluating the NOMA Track module and to provide feedback?</li> </ul> </li> <li>What <b>impact</b> did the NOMA Track module have on you as nutrition <b>professional</b>?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What skills and competencies did you develop by completing the NOMA track module?</li> <li>In what way will you be able use the human rights based approach to nutrition in future endeavours?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Are there any **other** experiences from one of the countries that you need to share?
  - Norway?
  - South Africa?
  - Uganda?
- What would you **tell prospective** students who consider enrolment to a similar course?
- Students from the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort only:** Describe any opportunities where you were able to **utilise the knowledge** and insight acquired during the NOMA Track module
  - at your workplace,
  - professional organisations,
  - continued education, conferences/seminars,
  - fellow students, in the community, vulnerable groups

## Addendum C:

### Ethics approval



UNIVERSITEIT-STELLENBOSCH-UNIVERSITY  
Jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

#### Approval Notice New Application

17-Sep-2012  
Marais, Martha ML

**Ethics Reference #:** N12/08/044

**Title:** Perception: held by Master Students of the NOMA track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'

Dear Mrs. Martha Marais,

The New Application received on 03-Aug-2012, was reviewed by members of Health Research Ethics Committee 1 via Expedited review procedures on 17-Sep-2012 and was approved.

Please note the following information about your approved research protocol:

Protocol Approval Period: 17-Sep-2012 -17-Sep-2013

Please remember to use your protocol number (N12/08/044) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your research protocol.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

#### After Ethical Review:

Please note a template of the progress report is obtainable on [www.sun.ac.za/rd](http://www.sun.ac.za/rd) and should be submitted to the Committee before the year has expired. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary). Annually a number projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.

Translation of the consent document in the language applicable to the study participants should be submitted.

Federal Wide Assurance Number: 00001372

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Number: IRB0005239

The Health Research Ethics Committee complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research and the United States Code of Federal Regulations Title 45 Part 46. This committee abides by the ethical norms and principles for research, established by the Declaration of Helsinki, the South African Medical Research Council Guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Ethical Research: Principles Structures and Processes 2004 (Department of Health).

#### Provincial and City of Cape Town Approval

Please note that for research at a primary or secondary healthcare facility permission must still be obtained from the relevant authorities (Western Cape Department of Health and/or City Health) to conduct the research as stated in the protocol. Contact persons are Ms Claudette Abrahams at Western Cape Department of Health ([healthres@pgwc.gov.za](mailto:healthres@pgwc.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 483 9907) and Dr Helene Visser at City Health ([Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za](mailto:Helene.Visser@capetown.gov.za) Tel: +27 21 400 3981). Research that will be conducted at any tertiary academic institution requires approval from the relevant hospital manager. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these health authorities.

We wish you the best as you conduct your research.

For standard REC forms and documents please visit: [www.sun.ac.za/rd](http://www.sun.ac.za/rd)

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at 0219389657.

#### Included Documents:

Protocol  
Synopsis  
Application  
CV  
Consent  
Declaration  
Letter  
Checklist

Sincerely,

## Addendum D:

### Participant Information Leaflet and Consent Form

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

**Perceptions held by Master Students of the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'**

**REFERENCE NUMBER: N12/08/044**

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: M.L. Marais**

**ADDRESS:** Division of Human Nutrition, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University, PO Box 19063, Tygerberg 7505

**CONTACT NUMBER: 021 938 9136/9259**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information presented here, which will explain the details of this project. Please ask the study staff any questions about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are fully satisfied that you clearly understand what this research entails and how you could be involved. Also, your participation is **entirely voluntary** and you are free to decline to participate. If you say no, this will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part.

This study has been approved by the **Health Research Ethics Committee at Stellenbosch University** and will be conducted according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the international Declaration of Helsinki, South African Guidelines for Good Clinical Practice and the Medical Research Council (MRC) Ethical Guidelines for Research.

***What is this research study all about?***

The aim of the research project is to record the perceptions of students who enrolled for the NOMA Track module. The information obtained will be used to make recommendations for the development of a study-unit on human rights and nutrition for the Master in Nutrition programme offered at Stellenbosch University.

***Why have you been invited to participate?***

You have been invited to participate in the study as you are part of the group of students who were accepted for the NOMA Track module during 2011 or 2012.

***What will your responsibilities be?***

Participants will be interviewed telephonically to express their perceptions of the module (duration 30-45 min) in a frank manner. Your permission is required that all discussions may be voice recorded and transcribed. The evaluation forms of the NOMA track module will also be summarised and analysed.

***Will you benefit from taking part in this research?***

The evaluation will give you an opportunity to reflect on the experience of participating in the NOMA module. By incorporating the recommendations from this study to develop a study unit on human rights and nutrition, future students at Stellenbosch University may benefit indirectly. It may lead to improved capacity strengthening of nutrition professionals to utilise a human rights based approach in advocacy and action for nutritional wellbeing of all population groups and the realisation of their right to adequate food.

***Are there risks or inconveniences involved in taking part in this research?***

There are no risks involved. The time required for the telephonic interview may be an inconvenience.

***What are the consequences of not agreeing to take part?***

Participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from participation at any time. Should you be unable or unwilling to participate in the study you will not be discriminated against in any way. You will be notified of relevant new findings during the course of the study, when it has the potential to impact on your continued participation in the study

***Who will have access to the data?***

Only the researchers will have access to the data. All information collected will be treated as confidential and anonymity will be ensured by using reference numbers. If the information is used in a publication or thesis, the identity of all participants will remain anonymous.

***Will you be paid to take part in this study and are there any costs involved?***

No, you will not be paid to take part in the study. There will be no costs involved for you, if you do take part.

***How will personal information be protected?***

- *A unique code will be allocated which will be used during transcribing and coding of data.*
- *All personal information will remain confidential and will only be disclosed with your permission, if it is.*
- *All recordings will remain the property of Stellenbosch University and will not be made available to any persons or entities other than the researchers.*
- *Recordings and electronic transcripts will be password protected. All recordings and printed transcripts will be destroyed six months after completion of the research.*
- *A research assistant will conduct all interviews and transcribe the content before submitting it to the principal investigator for coding and analysis.*

***Is there anything else that you should know or do?***

You can contact the Health Research Ethics Committee at +27 +21 938 9207 if you have any concerns or complaints that have not been adequately addressed by the researcher.

Should you have any queries about the results, you may contact Maritha Marais at the Division of Human Nutrition at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at +27 +21 938 9136.

You will receive a copy of this information and consent form for your own records.

## Declaration by participant

By signing below, I ..... agree to take part in a research study entitled **'Perceptions held by Master Students of the NOMA Track module on 'Nutrition, Human Rights and Governance'**.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and it is written in a language with which I am fluent and comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that taking part in this study is **voluntary** and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave the study before it has finished, if the researcher feels it is in my best interests, or if I do not follow the study plan, as agreed to.

.....  
Participant name (Printed)

.....  
Date of birth

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Date**

## Informed consent for the taping of the interview

I understand that this interview will be voice recorded to enable the researcher to accurately transcribe the interview. It has been explained to me that the recordings and all electronic documents will be stored safely and destroyed after six months of completion of the research. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all queries were explained to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of the consent form.

.....  
Participant name (Printed)

.....  
Date of birth

.....  
**Signature of participant**

.....  
**Date**

**TELEPHONE NUMBER WHERE I CAN BE CONTACTED:** .....

## Declaration by investigator

I **M.L. Marais** declare that:

- I explained the information in this document to .....
- I encouraged him/her to ask questions and took adequate time to answer them.
- I am satisfied that he/she adequately understands all aspects of the research, as discussed above
- I did not use an interpreter.

Signed at (*place*) .....

on (*date*)..... 2012.

.....  
**Signature of investigator**

.....  
**Signature of witness**