

Student Preparedness for Academic Writing

*An Evaluation of the Perceptions of Preparedness for Academic Writing of
School Leavers taking English 178 at Stellenbosch University*

By

Seamus Rory Allardice

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Supervisor:

Prof. Shaun Viljoen

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date: ... 21 March 2013

Abstract

Student Preparedness for Academic Writing examines perceptions of student preparedness for academic writing in the first-year literary studies course, English 178, located in the English Department at Stellenbosch University. The research was conducted during 2011 and 2012 making use of a survey which was completed by the 2011 first-year English 178 class, and also utilising a series of interviews with students, tutors and lecturers in 2012. Preparedness for English 178 is framed in terms of Pierre Bourdieu's notion of socially constructed habitus. In addition to the thought of Bourdieu the thesis draws on the writings of Peter Elbow, Arlene Archer and Pamela Nichols, among others, to analyse and frame the quantitative and qualitative information yielded by the study.

The dissertation assesses multiple interlocking elements that comprise student preparedness and finds striking discrepancy between student perception of their preparedness and that of the lecturers and tutors. While tutors, lecturers and the report of the National Benchmark Test all suggest that at least half of all first-year students are poorly prepared for academic writing, only about 21% of students perceive themselves to be poorly prepared. Possible reasons for the difference in views between students and other sources are explored. The thesis concludes by asking if the English 178 course at Stellenbosch University truly tests the students' academic writing abilities and if the course is balancing its "obligations to students [with the]... obligation[s] to knowledge and society" (Elbow 327).

Key Words:

Preparedness, Academic Writing, First-years, Literary Studies, Perceptions, Academic Literacy, Stellenbosch University

Opsomming

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek persepsies van studentevorbereidheid vir akademiese skryf in die eerstejaars-letterkundekursus, Engels 178, gesetel in die Departement Engels aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Die navorsing is gedurende 2011 en 2012 gedoen deur gebruik te maak van 'n vraelys wat deur 2011 se Engels 178-eerstejaarsklas voltooi is, asook van 'n reeks onderhoude met studente, tutors en lektore in 2012. In hierdie verhandeling word voorbereidheid vir Engels 178 in terme van Pierre Bourdieu se konsep van sosiaal gekonstrueerde habitus beskryf. Benewens Bourdieu se denke word daar ook na die werke van onder andere Peter Elbow, Arlene Archer en Pamela Nichols verwys om die kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe inligting wat uit die studie voortgekom het, te ontleed en te situeer.

Die verhandeling assesseeer die veelvuldige ineengeskakelde elemente wat studentevorbereidheid omvat, en bevind 'n opvallende teenstrydigheid tussen studente se persepsie van hul eie voorbereidheid en lektore en tutors se persepsie van studente se voorbereidheid. Terwyl tutors en lektore se ervaring en die Nasionale Normtoetsverslag alles daarop wys dat ten minste die helfte van alle eerstejaarstudente swak voorbereid is vir akademiese skryf, beskou slegs ongeveer 21% van studente hulself as swak voorbereid. Moontlike redes vir die verskil in beskouings tussen studente en ander bronne word ondersoek. Die verhandeling sluit af met die vraag of die Engels 178-kursus aan die Universiteit Stellenbosch werklik studente se akademiese skryfvaardighede toets, en of die kursus wel 'n ewewig handhaaf tussen verpligtinge teenoor studente en 'n verantwoordelikheid teenoor kennis en die samelewing (Elbow 327).

Sleutelwoorde:

Vorbereidheid, Akademiese Skryf, Eerstejaars, Letterkunde, Persepsies, Akademiese Geletterdheid, Universiteit Stellenbosch

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The annotation: Figure A2.6. in the thesis denotes the corresponding graph in Appendix A.2. of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Problem and Thesis

It is a fairly common perception globally amongst those involved in higher education in the early part of the twenty-first century that many first-time university students are not adequately prepared for the rigours of university-level education. Within the Department of English at Stellenbosch University this perception is echoed by both the full-time teaching staff and the large number of postgraduate tutors who are responsible for teaching the first-year course. A major concern in the English Department is the ability of first-year students to come to grips with the challenges of academic essay writing and, although there is a sense that a large number of students are poorly prepared, there is little agreement on where exactly the students' skills are lacking and on how to improve them.

This study into the general level of first-year student preparedness in the English Department at Stellenbosch University aims to determine how serious the problem of lack of preparedness is with regard to English 178¹ students and academic essay writing. By performing a review of relevant literature on student preparedness and through conducting both quantitative and qualitative research, this study hopes to provide a better understanding of students', tutors' and lecturers' views on preparedness. Preparedness for academic writing in particular and for university in general will be framed using Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*. For it is, after all, an understanding of the wider socio-cultural context of the student and the institution, and their impact on a student's ability to integrate their previously learnt skills with those being taught at universities, which determines their individual level of preparedness.

To teach the ever-increasing number of students, one has to establish what the dominant academic needs of the students are, especially if there is a wide range of levels of preparedness among a cohort of students, as is the case in an English 178 class at Stellenbosch University. It is not enough simply to say that first-years are unprepared for academic essay writing. The reasons for their being unprepared and the areas in which they are unprepared need to be established as well. Only then will it be possible to design a pedagogy to cater for the needs of the students.

¹ The first-year English Literary Studies course at Stellenbosch University is known by the title and code of English 178.

Research by Lee Jussim and Donna Eder, for example, points to the danger of teachers making assumptions about the level of intelligence of their students. According to Eder (151), the views of a teacher, whether expressed or not, affect the academic progress of individual students in a manner which has been described in terms of a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’. This is already taking place in the English first-year course at Stellenbosch University. In 2011 there were 1202 students enrolled in English 178, and of those 222 were repeating students. Of these repeaters, 96 were Bachelors of Education students. These statistics are particularly worrying when one bears in mind the language demographic of Stellenbosch University, an institution which in the main only accepted white students during the previous apartheid regime; as a result the dominant racial demographic of the student profile remains white to this day. In addition, the dominant language on campus remains Afrikaans, because of the historic precedent which led to the institution being styled and seen as an Afrikaans institution. However, the university’s language policy is becoming increasingly anglicised, due to the dictates of the global marketplace, where English is currently the dominant lingua franca. This also happens for global educational reasons, which necessitates the publishing of papers, especially at a postgraduate level, in a major world language.

A feature of the English 178 course that gives cause for concern is that the repeating students, and especially the Education students, are predominantly Afrikaans first-language speakers, for whom English and academic English in particular hold unique terrors. Often these students seem unable to break the cycle of failing first-year English, as they spend greater and greater amounts of time practice-teaching off-campus from their second-year² onwards. This compounds the problem of being able to fit full-year subjects, like English 178, into their schedule once they progress beyond first-year in their Education subjects.

² An extreme example of this is a current English 178 student who is now in her fourth year of taking the course; her progress mark in June 2012 was 42.5%. With her teaching practical keeping her off campus from the first until the twelfth teaching week of the second semester, there is little likelihood that she will be able to pass English 178 in 2012 either. Failing the course will result in her having to spend another academic year at Stellenbosch University to complete it for a fifth, and hopefully final, time, in order to graduate. (Special provision is made for Education students while they are off campus teaching, but while they are excused from class they are expected to submit all assignments electronically by the due date).

1.2. Background

As a tutor in the first-year course in the English Department at Stellenbosch University since 2009, it became increasingly difficult for me to avoid being drawn into the discussion surrounding the levels of academic competence of first-years. It became clear that continued speculation as to the general levels of academic preparedness was in no way assisting the students and that a study would need to be conducted to assess their skill levels. In the 18 months of tutoring before this study was undertaken, I gathered a great deal of anecdotal evidence which helped prompt and direct this research, but it was only in October 2010 that I began the formal process of researching the perceptions of student preparedness for academic writing.

Students raised many concerns which are addressed in this thesis but none are more pertinent than the discrepancy between what is expected at school and at university. This discrepancy is magnified by the context of the institution and the language profile of its students.

1.3. Context

As alluded to previously, the majority of students enrolling at Stellenbosch University speak Afrikaans as a home language³. This is true for the English first-year course too and as a result a large number of students are not comfortable conversing, let alone reading or writing, in the English language. These issues are addressed in greater detail in Chapter 2.1, where a discussion of the survey results explains the linguistic context in more depth along with the matter of subject choice, or lack of choice, when students choose a particular programme of study when enrolling in first-year English.

The most striking aspect of the linguistic context is the fact that 37% of students enrolled in the first-year English course took English as either first or second additional language at school level (See Figure A.2.8⁴). These students are at an immediate disadvantage compared to their peers who took English as a home language at school level,

³ 47.9% of all 2011 student enrolled at Stellenbosch University named Afrikaans as their home language with English the next largest language group on campus at 37.1% (Becker, Figure 5).

⁴ Figure A.2.8 denotes the graph 2.8 in Appendix 2: Survey Data, located from page 116 to page 134 of this document.

and these students also report difficulties in coping with the first-year course. In previous years this was addressed by offering a choice of three academic streams within the first-year course, one of which was specifically geared to those students who perceived that they needed more help with developing basic skills to cope with the demands of the course, but in 2010 these streams were condensed into one and the emphasis was shifted to literary studies. Academic assistance, at the time of this study (2011 – 2012), is now offered as a largely voluntary additional support programme.

The English 178 course is currently structured as follows: there is one lecture and two tutorials per week. One of the tutorials focuses on supporting the material taught in the lectures, while the other teaches completely separate texts and attempts to teach academic writing skills in an explicit and systematic fashion. Tutorial attendance is compulsory and missing three tutorials over a semester can result in expulsion from the course. This fact keeps tutorial attendance high, but as there is no such mechanism for the lectures, attendance at lectures drops significantly from around the end of the first term⁵. Consistent attendance of all classes has long been linked to passing and “research indicates[s] that attendance significantly influences test score averages for students across sections and institutions” (Le Blanc 1). The point is made to students so regularly, though, that they possibly become immune to the suggestion and choose to ignore advice that seems to be derived from common sense.

Going hand-in-hand with the drop in lecture attendance is the question of the usefulness of the support tutorial which is aimed at fostering a deeper understanding of the text. This often cannot be attained in a lecture (which is generally a passive mode of learning for students) due to the time constraints which would come into play when trying to explain and ensure understanding of a nuanced principle to nearly three hundred students. The tutorials are less effective in isolation, however, as tutors teach with the assumption that

⁵ Lecture attendance, by the end of the first term, drops to about 50% as a rough estimate. At third-year level it drops even further to roughly 40%. Lecture attendance for English 178 is hindered by the physical constraints of the venues; with 1200 students enrolling in English 178 in 2011 there are simply not enough seats in the largest venue in the Arts Building to accommodate all students comfortably. Traditionally the English 178 main lecture has been taught in three time slots, with two on Monday and one on Tuesday. The largest venue can only seat around 300 students and with the Monday morning 10am lecture apparently being the most convenient, the venue is practically bursting at the seams in the first term. Students often have to sit in the aisles and on the stairs, which is uncomfortable and therefore makes concentration difficult. It is surely also a significant safety violation. One has to wonder why another time slot is not made available to ease the congestion in the venue.

students have attended the lectures and have the foundation in place upon which the tutorial aims to build.

In addition to their lecture-support function, these tutorials are also essential in that they are the first place where the conventions of academic writing are taught in the English undergraduate programme – a facet which is of exceptional importance as all grades for first-year English are obtained from the marking of written exercises. In 2011, all the written exercises took the form of formal academic essays; the four semester tests also, as has traditionally been the case, took the form of essay questions⁶.

The semester tests account for half of the student's year-end mark, while the other half is obtained from assignments submitted in the tutorials. In 2010 the sub-minimum rule was introduced, which requires students to pass the test *and* tutorial sections of the course separately, whereas in the past students were able to pass on the strength of their combined average, even when they had failed one component quite badly. In its first-year of implementation the sub-minimum rule did increase the number of failures, but it is the belief of the course convenors that it will force students to pay greater attention to the lecture component of the course and help raise attendance.

Despite all the interventions by course convenors, and the use of additional resources to assist struggling students and the efforts of a group of dedicated tutors, 222 of the 2011 first-year English class were repeating students. From this number of repeating students it becomes increasingly apparent that many students are not adequately prepared for first-year English. This is corroborated by the number of students who fail, get marked as “incomplete”, or deregister from English 178. According to a number of tutors within the first-year course, some struggling students make extensive use of the support structures put in place by the English Department to assist them, but still show very little sign of improvement. This leads one to the conclusion that the *habitus* of “strategy-generating principals” is lacking some key factor (Garnham and Williams 212), therefore making it very difficult for the student to learn the new skills to cope with the writing assignments required for first-year English.

⁶ In 2012, in an attempt to expose students to other less formal forms of writing, a lecture review and film review were also used as short exercises, though all other assessment took the form of formal academic essays.

1.4. Preparedness

A more in-depth account of the broader discussions and thinking on student preparedness for tertiary education will be undertaken in the literature review section of this thesis (Section 1.7). What follows is a brief explanation of what is meant by the term “preparedness” in this research. It is essential to point out here that although preparedness in general will also be discussed, the main focus of this thesis is preparedness for academic writing.

The primary reason for making use of term “preparedness” is that it offers the possibility for studying both students who struggle and those who do not. Often student ability to cope at university is discussed in negative terms: students are characterised as “under-prepared” (Van Schalkwyk 71) or, as Van Schalkwyk points out, similar negative terminology is used, such as “at-risk, unprepared, non-mainstream, non-traditional, educationally disadvantaged, underserved and so forth” (71). The use of this negative terminology, while callously categorising struggling students, is a major practical drawback for those wishing to assist struggling students. Terms such as “under-prepared” fail to take into consideration those students who do not require extra assistance in order to complete their degrees.

In general terms “preparedness” includes the academic and life skills which students need in order to succeed at university. These skills can be framed in terms of Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*. *Habitus*, as Bourdieu defines it in his paper *Vive la crise!*, is:

the product of the incorporation of objective necessity, of necessity turned into virtue, [that] produces strategies which are objectively adjusted to the objective situation even though these strategies are neither the outcome of the explicit aiming at consciously pursued goals, nor the result of some mechanical determination by external causes (10).

Bourdieu here asserts the influence of a material externality but insists that subjectivity is not “mechanically determined” by it; it is through a dialogic process that the strategies are generated. In more practical terms, relevant to preparedness for academic writing terms, Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* can be explained as follows:

Habitus is the product of an individual incorporating previously held beliefs and knowledge and the ability to make use of these beliefs and knowledge to take in new information and process new experiences, ‘it is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions’ and habitus is always socially constructed (*Logic of Practice* 53).

In terms of academic writing, a student’s *habitus* is the ability to draw on previously gained knowledge, be it from formal or informal education, and to adapt to and learn the conventions which govern formal academic essay writing. Therefore students who have been introduced to the conventions of academic essay writing at high school should, in theory, find it easier to adapt to and develop the skills needed to master the conventions of academic essay writing at university than their classmates who have had no exposure to academic essay writing at school and for whom the genre is entirely new.

Student preparedness is intertwined with institution-specific norms or the “institutional habitus [which] can be taken to be the complex interaction between personal and organizational practices surrounding pedagogy, evident in the school” (Firkins and Wong 64), with regard to what constitutes a good grasp of the English language. This, from my experience as a tutor, would mean that a student ought to be able to present a written point coherently, in a manner which is readily followed by the reader, is logical and makes correct use of the English language. A nuanced and sophisticated turn of phrase, while appreciated, is not expected; simple, correct and direct language suffices. Perhaps most importantly, at a basic level, students should exhibit an attentiveness to detail which prompts them to research, plan, proofread and edit their essays thoroughly. The combination of these factors or skills within a student’s *habitus* should prepare them adequately for academic writing. Preparedness for the writing alone, though, will not guarantee success within the English 178 course.

Preparedness for university in general is also of crucial importance: being prepared to cope socially, emotionally, intellectually in other subjects and also, crucially, financially, will impact on a student’s chances of success. These factors all need to be considered within the broader South African context and the particular Stellenbosch University context.

Adapting to university life can be problematic for students, especially in the case of those students from outside the traditional Stellenbosch student pool, who may struggle to adapt. While the University engages in rhetoric concerning diversity and inclusion for all, practical implementation is still lagging. Socially and emotionally this can make it difficult for black⁷ students, in particular, to become comfortable on campus, as they made up only 15% of the 2011 student population (Figure A.2.50). This is made more difficult as the main campus is still predominantly Afrikaans-speaking, which affects the ability of students who are not fluent in the language to understand many of their peers and the teaching and support staff at the university. The language issue also raises the interesting question of student perceptions of the dominant cultural norms and values on campus. The campus ethos continues to be marked by tensions between assimilation into the dominant culture of the past, putative attempts to transform this, and progressive student perceptions that too little is being done to effect transformation.⁸

While the social, emotional and intellectual factors surrounding preparedness are undoubtedly important, in the South African context financial preparedness for the expense of university is often the key factor determining student success. In its research for the 2008 paper entitled *High University Drop-out Rates: a Threat to South Africa's Future*, the Human Sciences Research Council found that “70% of the families of the higher education drop-outs surveyed were in the category [of] ‘low economic status’ [...] with some parents and guardians earning less than R1 600 a month” (Letseka & Maile 6). As a result of their parents or guardians’ inability to support them “[m]any of those who dropped out indicated that they worked to augment their meagre financial resources, [which] no doubt add[ed] to their stress levels and distract[ed] them from their studies” (Letseka & Maile 6).

⁷ I use this definition in the same sense as the university’s racial demographic official jargon does, whereby separating black, coloured, white and Indian students.

⁸ Total assimilation is clearly not possible for most, nor should it be an aim, but, rather worryingly, harmonious coexistence is not as easy at Stellenbosch University as one might expect. Racism does raise its ugly head on campus from time to time and even forums established to foster intelligent debate, like the Vrye Student, a student blogging website (www.vryestudent.com) which was recently updated to Bonfire Beta Stellenbosch (<http://bonfire.com/stellenbosch/>), are not immune to this, as blog posts expressing racist views are all too common.

Bearing all of these other factors in mind, and the fact that none have been fully discussed⁹, it is apparent that what exactly constitutes “preparedness” for a literary studies course is exceptionally difficult to pin down. In order to make the task more manageable, the question of preparedness has been narrowed to preparedness for academic writing. This was discussed not only with the lecturers who teach and structure the course, but also with the post-graduate students who tutor in the English 178 course as well as with the students who take it.

Ultimately, in order to discuss notions of preparedness, given the often ambiguous and sometimes conflicting terms relevant to the research for this thesis, it is necessary to add “perceptions” as a mitigator of sorts, to illustrate the elusiveness of arriving at a definition for the term. There are few situations wherein Friedrich Nietzsche’s claim that “there are no facts, only interpretations” (Nietzsche 458) are as relevant as in discussions of student preparedness (a notion so difficult to pin-down) for English literary studies (a discipline which also seems to thrive on defying strict definition).

1.5. Methodology

To establish and assess the factors affecting perceptions of preparedness for academic writing, a review of relevant literature is conducted. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to gather data specific to Stellenbosch University. The departure point for obtaining this data is the research carried out by the English Department at Stellenbosch University in 2007, under the title of, “Support for Change in Large First-Year Classes – Towards a Model¹⁰”. This study provided the impetus for the restructuring of the English 178 course to its current form: one weekly lecture is augmented by two tutorial classes, one of which covers the same text as the lecture, while the other focuses on a separate text or on writing skills. The 2007 research took the form of a survey of student perceptions of English 178 and this survey was reformulated and then carried out at the end of 2011, with the intention of reformulating certain of the questions and adding new questions to gauge the general student consensus with regard to their personal levels of preparedness. The aim was also to ensure the new survey was not so far removed from the

⁹ For there is simply not time or space to do so within the limits of an MA thesis.

¹⁰ The scope and nature of this project can be found in: “Initiating a collaborative enquiry approach to educational development at a research-led university: lessons learnt”.

2007 document as to render the feedback unsuitable for comparison between 2007 and 2011 data.

This survey was circulated in October 2011 by the tutors and students were informed of the importance of their answers and ensured of their anonymity. Of the 1027 students still in the course at that time, 66% (684) answered the survey (Figure A2.4). The survey can be viewed in Appendix 1, the quantitative data gathered from the survey is presented in Appendix 2 and the qualitative data from the survey is available on request¹¹. A discussion and explanation of the survey findings can be found in Chapter 2.

Additional qualitative data was gathered through a number of semi-structured interviews conducted individually or in small groups with first-year students, tutors and lecturers. The aim of these interviews was to explore perceptions about preparedness and academic writing. In the discussions with students in particular, the aim was for them to raise their own concerns without being stifled by the urge to say what they felt was expected of them. The views of the lecturers and the tutors were essential in establishing a guideline to determine perceptions of what constitutes preparedness on the part of students coming into university for the first time.

These interviews were conducted in late March and early April 2012 and were recorded on a digital voice recorder. Transcriptions of these recordings were made and can be found in Appendix 3. All interviews were conducted in the English Department and every effort was taken to ensure the anonymity of the participants. Eight 2011 first-year students responded to the call for candidates and were interviewed in groups of two to four students. Five tutors responded to the call for candidates and they were interviewed as a group. Finally, two lecturers were interviewed. They were approached because of their experience in the first-year course, as both lecturers and course coordinators. These interviews yielded valuable information, with the hesitancy of students to make themselves available for interviews and the difficulty in scheduling a final lecturer to interview the only major problems faced during this process. The former problem perhaps speaks to the issue of student attitudes, which,

¹¹ The qualitative survey data is not included in this paper in order to save space. It is an 87 page document of transcribed student responses to the survey questions and its addition would make this thesis too bulky. The qualitative survey feedback can be obtained on request by emailing either me at seamusa@sun.ac.za or Dr. Viljoen at scv@sun.ac.za

while not necessarily related to preparedness, is indicative of current student consciousness. As this is a socially constructed behaviour, it will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The following two subsections are dedicated to a review of the relevant literature pertaining to educational theories and problems associated with current trends in higher education that have a bearing on preparedness, particularly the trends towards massification. The subsections are divided into three parts: the first is dedicated to the theoretical framework which has guided the thinking of this research, the second looks at global educational trends and theories on student preparedness, and the third discusses the literature emerging from South Africa about the often unique difficulties facing nation's higher education sector. This part is of particular importance as it provides an insight into the issues with which educators in this country and university grapple, while they struggle to teach ever-increasing numbers.

1.6. Theoretical Framework

In order to frame this research into perceptions of student preparedness, the work of Bourdieu, Anthony Biglan, Thomas Kuhn, David Kolb and others has been drawn upon. Bourdieu's notions of *habitus*, Biglan, Kuhn and Kolb's "domains of knowledge" and Elbow's writings on the "obligations [of teachers] to students [and their]... obligation to [the field of] knowledge and society" (Elbow 327), have been deployed to focus the thinking around this research. These theorists have been referenced within the "Research Findings" chapter¹² of this thesis in order to help explore and interpret the findings regarding perceptions and related data. This approach hopefully leads to an analysis which explores the links between the macro (the social and institutional), and the micro (of individual students within the department). It also deals with a number of the complexities entailed in analysing perceptions of preparedness for academic writing.

In addition to what has been said about Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* earlier in this chapter, the aim of this section is to expand upon the relevance of the concept to educational research. Garnham and Williams provide an outline of Bourdieu's work as summarised in his book *La Distinction* (translated as *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* by Richard Nice in 1984), which covers his work in the late 1960s and 1970s in the field of

¹² Chapter 2.

sociology in France and provides a relatively accessible introduction to the thought of Bourdieu.

In *Distinctions: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*¹³, Bourdieu reiterates that his theories are “caste in resolutely materialist terms [...] terms borrowed from economics” (Garnham & Williams 211), as this terminology offers a clear lens through which to examine the human interactions which make up our society. While Bourdieu’s theories may have a broad scope for implementation, in the Anglophone countries his writings have proved to be particularly popular in the field of “sociology of education” (Garnham & Williams 209).

Bourdieu’s explanation of the terms: “Subjectivism”, “Objectivism” and “*Habitus*” are of relevance to this study. “Subjectivism”, for Bourdieu, means the study by a sociologist of his “own society,” in a study which “focuses upon the individual actor and upon the experiential reality of social action” (Garnham & Williams 212). Bourdieu argues, though, that the problem with subjectivism is that the sociologist “cannot recognise the social determinants of human action” (Garnham & William, 212). The fact that the sociologist is too close to his subject matter makes it impossible or improbable for him to observe the “historically specific conditions [which] determine all human practice” (Garnham & Williams 212).

“Objectivism”, in Bourdieu’s terms, is the sociological study by an outsider which “goes beyond the immediate experience of the individual actor to identify the social facts, the observable regularities of social action” (Garnham & Williams, 212). Objectivism is not without its flaws, however, and sociologists making use of it have a “tendency to fetishize” the social structures of the group being studied (Garnham & Williams 212), describing only the different historic conditions which lead to the development of different ideological frameworks, instead of recognising the effect of the shared historic conditions which produce similarities between what at first glance may appear to be vastly different cultures. Objectivism, according to Bourdieu then can lead to the polarisation of peoples in sociological studies, setting up great divides between *us* and *them*.

¹³ Originally published in French as: *La Distinction*.

These forms of sociological study offer warnings of the potential pitfalls to keep in mind when discussing the education that school leavers today receive, as compared to school leavers of the early twenty-first century. There is little doubt that, as a recent school leaver (and even more recent first-year student), I will be drawn to subjectivism, but knowing that one forms part of the group being studied is the first step towards making an objective assessment of said group. In short, this study is situated as both “subjective” and “objective”, in Bourdieu’s terms, and I attempt to make use of insights from both vantage points to investigate the question of student preparedness.

The other key concept to be highlighted here is Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus*. Bourdieu proposes the *habitus* as an individual’s “set of dispositions” (Thompson 12) or a “regulating mechanism... [of] strategy-generating principle[s which] enable agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Garnham & Williams 213). Or – to draw on Bourdieu himself – *habitus* is the “internalised form of the class condition and of the conditionings by which a member of the class knows, without thinking about it, just how to react to different cultural stimuli” (*Distinctions* 101). The member of the socio-economic class knows how to react because of the “system of [socially constructed] dispositions” (*Distinctions* 2).

This system is one that, as Garnham and Williams explain, relates to “lasting, transposable dispositions which integrate[s] past experiences, [and] function[s] at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions[... making] possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to the analogical transfer of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems” (213). The *habitus* is not just a random series of dispositions but operates according to a relatively coherent logic, what Bourdieu calls the “logic of practice” (Garnham & Williams 213). Bourdieu attempts to combine a materialist analysis of class and the individual in a cultural context with a sense that there is nevertheless individual agency that can be brought to bear on a situation, such as that of a student entering a higher educational institution.

In this thesis, *Student Preparedness for Academic Writing*, Bourdieu’s concept of *habitus* forms a crucial part of explaining student preparedness. First-year students bring with them to university a myriad of socially inflected individual skills, expectations and potential gaps, all of which can be denoted by the term *habitus*, because all of these skills have been

socially constructed, either through formal education or through the individual's class (and in the South African context, racial) locatedness – and also by informal channels of learning¹⁴. A student's individual *habitus* will determine his or her ability to not only assimilate with the culture of the campus, but also to assimilate the new skills and knowledge being taught, both formally and informally, on campus. The former ability will affect all aspects of that student's university life: whether or not he or she can cope academically by being receptive and intellectually prepared to learn new skills, whether or not he or she will be able to cope socially and make new friends, or cope financially, by both having the money to study and having the skills needed to manage his or her finances while studying. Drawing on Bourdieu again it can be said that students possess not only “economic capital in the strict sense, but also cultural capital¹⁵, symbolic capital¹⁶, and so on” (Thompson 14).

It is undoubtedly a complex task to evaluate such a broad range of factors, which is why the focus will remain on preparedness for academic writing, while the other factors affecting first-year preparation in general will only be discussed briefly. However, it is important to note that these other factors were constantly kept in mind during the research. It is worth pointing out though, that when it comes to Bachelor of Arts degrees, the conversion of the academic form of cultural capital into economic capital is perhaps the most inadequately governed by society. The culturally perceived value of an Arts degree is very low in South Africa. This not only affects the employment prospects of Arts graduates, but also affects the perceptions of students, both those enrolling in Arts degrees and those of other (non-BA) students. These perceptions are rooted in the notions of the *hard* and *soft sciences*, as described by Biglan, as well as in the way modern, capitalist economies place higher economic value on fields of study that are perceived to be directly contributing to the profit economy.

¹⁴ Formal education here refers to schooling [afterschool centres, summer camps etc.] where the student is taught specific skills and knowledge in a structured manner, while informal channels [or education] refer to any skill or knowledge learnt outside formal classrooms [for example children learning behaviours from their parents or peers while at home or at play].

¹⁵ “i.e. knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications” (Thompson 14). “Furthermore... it [is] possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital” (Bourdieu, “Forms of Capital” 246); for example the government-prescribed wage for trainee doctors in South African provincial hospitals.

¹⁶ “i.e. Accumulated prestige or honour” (Thompson 14).

The domains of study at universities can be divided into four basic taxonomies according to the nature of the fields of knowledge they pertain to. The division of faculties along these lines stems from perceptions of scientific worth which are so intertwined with the institutionalisation of universities and the growth of the sciences in the development of knowledge from the industrial revolution to the present day, that it is difficult to trace its true origins. Increasingly though there is fraying at some of these borders of definition. For example, particle physics, a branch of physics, moves into realms of abstraction which philosophers might envy, while the Social Sciences strive for greater scientific recognition.

There are still, however, great disparities in popular perceptions regarding the intellectual worth of certain academic pursuits. Take for example the old physics adage that goes along the lines of, “If it’s not physics it’s not really science”, a saying which holds so much subconscious sway in the popular Western imagination that a character in a popular television series has an identity based on the fact that as a physicist he is more intelligent than his peers¹⁷. These disparities are echoed in funding for research and arguably in employment opportunities after graduation. More pertinently for this study, though, is the fact that these disparities affect the perceptions of Arts and Social Sciences students. These courses are perceived to be easier and to therefore require less effort and attention.

Kuhn provides an academic description of the faculties along these lines of the distinction between paradigmatic and pre-paradigmatic fields of knowledge. Kuhn explained that “paradigmatic knowledge is restricted to a clearly defined area of study” (Kuhn 11), while “pre-paradigmatic knowledge has no distinct methods or of phenomena that practitioners feel compelled to employ” (Kuhn 13). Kuhn’s basis for this was that paradigmatic knowledge included mathematics and the physical sciences which are more readily classified as they abide by a fixed set of rules.

The following table [Figure 1] is set out to help distinguish between the different forms of knowledge as described by Kuhn:

¹⁷ The character Sheldon Cooper portrayed by Jim Parsons in CBS’s series *Big Bang Theory*

| Paradigmatic Knowledge | Pre-Paradigmatic Knowledge |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large degree of consensus among practitioners about content and method in their field. • Knowledge is cumulative [Theories built on previous theories]. • Large degree of specialisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pluralism and disagreement among practitioners about content and method in their field. • Theorists frequently return to and contest basic principles. • Knowledge boundaries are not firmly demarcated. |

Figure 1.1: Kuhn's binary division of knowledge domains in tabulated form, summarised from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Biglan built on Kuhn's notion of paradigmatic and pre-paradigmatic knowledge and in a study where faculty members of the University of Illinois scaled subjects according perceived similarities, Biglan discovered that "judges tended to place science-orientated areas at one end of the dimension, social sciences towards the middle and humanities at the other end" (Biglan 189). From this study, Biglan decided to rename Kuhn's paradigmatic knowledge definitions, settling on the terms "hard and soft knowledge" (Biglan 202). Biglan concluded that the "physical and biological sciences were placed at the *hard* paradigmatic end of the scale, the humanities and education at the *soft* [pre]-paradigmatic end and the social sciences and business [sciences] nearer the middle [as they] strive for a paradigm, but have not yet achieved one" (Biglan 202).

Biglan's study also discovered that faculty members distinguished between "biological and social areas and areas that deal with inanimate objects" (Biglan 202). This led to Biglan concluding that in addition to *hard* and *soft* taxonomies, fields of knowledge could also be divided into *pure* and *applied* fields of knowledge. Biglan's taxonomical distinctions were corroborated, with slightly different titles, by David Kolb who "equates concrete learning styles with soft knowledge, abstract learning styles with hard knowledge, applied knowledge with active learning and pure knowledge with reflective learning" (Kolb 243).

Becher then combined the findings of Kolb and Biglan in his work *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Cultures of Discipline*, to explore the characteristics of each of the four taxonomical distinctions of knowledge. Becher's elaboration can best be represented in tabular form:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Hard Pure (Biglan) Abstract Reflective (Kolb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Sciences and Mathematics • Cumulative, atomistic structure. • Concerned with universals and simplification • Quantitative emphasis. • Competitive but gregarious knowledge communities. | <p>Soft Pure (Biglan) Concrete Reflective (Kolb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanities and Social Sciences • Reiterative and holistic structure, no sense of superseded knowledge. • Concerned with particulars. • Qualitative emphasis. • Solitary research with only a limited overlap of interest between researchers. |
| <p>Hard Applied (Biglan) Abstract Active (Kolb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science-based professions • Concerned with mastery of physical environment. • Geared towards products and techniques. | <p>Soft Applied (Biglan) Concrete Active (Kolb)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social professions • Concerned with enhancement of professional practice. • Geared towards yielding protocols and procedures. |

Figure 1.2: Becher’s division of Bigan and Kolb’s knowledge domains, summarised from *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual Enquiry and the Culture of the Disciplines*.

Kolb expanded on the description of the four taxonomies by providing descriptive factors for each in terms of their profession-based categories, as illustrated (Figure 1.3) below:

| | Social Professions | Science-based Professions | Natural Science and Mathematics | Humanities and Social Sciences |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Inquiry Strategy | Discrete Synthesis | Discrete Analysis | Integrative Analysis | Integrative Synthesis |
| Dominant Philosophy | Pragmatism | Empiricism | Structuralism | Organicism |
| Theory of Truth | Workability | Correspondence | Correlation of Structure with Secondary Qualities | Coherence |

Figure 1.3: Continued on page 18.

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------|--|----------------|--|
| Basic Inquiry Question | How | When, Where | What | Why |
| Basic Units of Knowledge | Events | Natural Laws, Empirical Uniformities | Structures | Processes |
| How Knowledge is Portrayed | Actions | Things | Symbols | Images |
| Typical Inquiry Method | Case Study | Classical Experiment | Model Building | Historical Analysis, Field Study, Clinical Observation |

Figure 1.3: Kolb's typology of knowledge structures, summarised from "Learning Styles and Interdisciplinary Differences."

Kolb's terminology paints the Humanities and Social Sciences in a far fairer light than his predecessors, but nonetheless the perception remains of *hard* and *soft sciences*, which is if anything harsher than the *hard* or *soft knowledge* that Biglan intended.

For the question of student preparedness, these distinctions are important as the study takes place within the *Soft Pure* taxonomy of research in the Humanities and Social Sciences. However, although it carries an element of sociological study and to an extent an evaluation of the unequivocally *soft pure*, English literary studies also falls into the realm of *Soft Applied*. As a study of the effectiveness of the educational systems in the first-year English course, this research bridges from the Humanities and Social Sciences to the Social Professions, where a more pragmatic philosophy dominates the approach to research. Thus this work is marked by a pragmatism which calls for action rather than quiet introspection. It is a blend, then, of the two methods of inquiry: it synthesizes the humanities' "historical analysis, field study [and] clinical observation" with the social professions' "case study" approach (Figure 1.3).

As a foundation course, first-year English, like most "soft disciplines"¹⁸[...] tend[s] to promote broad general knowledge and critical thinking skills" (Neumann 138). In order to pass "students are expected to think creatively and express themselves well" while writing a

¹⁸ A discipline which teaches what is considered *soft knowledge* or *concrete reflective* skills. (See figure 2)

sequence of academic essays and exercises throughout the year (Neumann et al. 410) and as is the standard “in soft disciplines, continuous assessment is [...] preferred over examinations” (Neumann 409), with the “aim to develop students’ ability to debate different perspectives” (Neumann et al. 410).

One of the major and on-going concerns in a “soft” discipline like literary studies is that “guidelines for marking and grading are ambiguous, since many of the skills required of students in these disciplines are implicit and resist clear description” (Neumann et al. 409). In English 178 this is compounded by the fact that almost all marking and grading is performed by tutors rather than experienced lecturers. Many students therefore feel hard done by the marking process and even in the case of many repeating students, who are more familiar with the structure and inner workings of the first-year course, the basis for the allocation of marks remains unclear.

The grading of papers is thus an area of concern, one which requires and receives constant attention from the English Department at Stellenbosch. Elbow argues that like good writers, good teachers need to be able to strike a balance between two opposites. He suggests that good writers have to “somehow be extremely creative and extremely critical [simultaneously], without letting one mentality prosper at the expense of the other, or being half-hearted in both” (Elbow 327). Teachers meanwhile have to balance the “obligations to students [with the]... obligation to knowledge and society” (Elbow 327). The English Department at Stellenbosch University goes to great lengths to remind those teaching in the first-year course of their dual responsibility, a dual responsibility that has been maintained as a cornerstone of this research.

Teachers cannot reduce standards to assist students to pass, for then they are betraying the knowledge they as academics are entrusted to teach, while concurrently neglecting their obligations to society. Degrees, courses and certificates all carry a weight of what Bourdieu terms, “cultural capital”, which is a value attributed to the qualification by society; when the benchmark is lowered to make passing a course easier (“The Forms of Capital” 242), the cultural capital of that course is lowered. Thus Elbow suggests that in reducing the standards teachers betray society as well as the knowledge they are appointed to purvey, but they also betray the students as their financial outlay towards gaining the cultural capital of a tertiary qualification is undermined by the perceived lowering in the value of the qualification.

An example of this in the South African context is the senior certificate examination. Before the introduction of the outcomes based education (O.B.E.) system in South African schools, final matric (senior certificate examination) marks were the sole academic factor determining a student's access to tertiary education. However, as the standard of secondary schooling in South Africa was perceived to slip,¹⁹ universities introduced their own access tests as well. This does not just affect students who completed their secondary school careers during the O.B.E. programme; even individuals who graduated from secondary school before O.B.E. was introduced now have to take the university entrance exams.

Being too harsh a gatekeeper on the route to further education is also not an ideal stance for a teacher, as the students are at risk of being betrayed by being tested against impossibly high standards, especially at first-year level. It seems an unlikely balancing act, but Elbow offers the solution of oscillating between the two perspectives, between being supportive of the students and then switching to being a strict gatekeeper of knowledge.

This is hardly ideal though. For the first-year context in the English department there is a more appropriate solution, and one which Elbow also touches on. If the "complete separation between teaching and official assessment" were to be legislated as Elbow suggests (Elbow 333), it would to a large extent solve the problem of obligatory contraries. To an extent, this already takes place in the first-year course, as the lecturers teach the course components but the tutors grade the essays which test each course component. However, to complete the separation of teaching and assessing would require tutors to grade each others' students' papers.

This is unfortunately not feasible because of the ambiguous guidelines for marking and grading, which each tutor interprets uniquely (and therefore teaches distinctively). So for now Elbow's advice of "mak[ing] peace between the opposites by alternating between them so that [one] never tri[es] to do contrary things at any one moment" (Elbow 334), appears to be the only realistic option. In addition to this one must be ever mindful of the fact that the first-year of tertiary study is often the most difficult for students in terms of adapting to the

¹⁹ It matters little in terms of cultural capital if the standard did really slip as the value is socially constructed and as a result the public perception of a decline in the standard of education will have a similar result in the 'value' of the qualification in terms of cultural capital.

new environment, freedoms and expectations of university. Thus the work of Anne Pitkethly and Michael Prosser, in their paper entitled “The First-Year Experience Project: A Model for University-Wide Change”, should be considered.

Globally a great deal of research is focused on the first-year experience as it has been found to be the most crucial academic year with regard to student attrition. The shock of university life and adapting to the challenges it holds proves to be too much for many students, and that is why centres of teaching and learning, student support centres and mentor groups pay so much attention to first-years. As Pitkethly and Prosser discovered at La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia, “the needs and expectations [of students] are continually changing” (198). It is therefore no simple task to design a programme which caters for all first-year students and helps them all along the path from enrolment to graduation.

Pitkethly and Prosser do, however, suggest that Tinto and Peel’s advice be taken into account. Tinto suggests that there are six principles which underpin success and ensure student retention in academic institutions, as listed below:

- 1) Students enter with, or have the opportunity to acquire, the skills needed for academic success.
- 2) Personal contact with students extends beyond academic life.
- 3) Retention actions are systematic.
- 4) Retention programs address students’ needs early.
- 5) Retention programs are student-centred.
- 6) Education is the goal of the retention programs.

(Pitkethly and Prosser 187).

Peel’s “basic set of expectations” (Pitkethly and Prosser, 187), follows a similar theme to Tinto’s, but instead of a guideline for establishing a programme to ensure student retention, Peel’s list reads more like a checklist for programmes already in place:

- A) Strategies for identifying and predicting the problems of new students.
- B) Routine collection, analysis and dissemination of data concerning the expectations of new students.
- C) Mechanisms for addressing problems related to teaching and learning.
- D) Mechanisms for addressing university-wide transition issues.
- E) Feedback and monitoring of problems, initiatives and strategies.

- F) Evaluation of outcomes in relation to objectives, and a process of strategic response.

(Pitkethly and Prosser 187)

The literature also points to non-academic factors that affect student retention. These “include [a] lack of clearly defined goals on the part of the student, [a] mismatch between the student and the course or university culture, and feelings of isolation” (Pitkethly and Prosser 186). It is suggested that “intellectual difficulties” (Pitkethly and Prosser 186), are a secondary cause for students dropping out – after “adjustment or environmental factors” (Pitkethly and Prosser 186). Given that most of the literature regarding student attrition comes from the relatively homogenous populations of developed nations, this is even more concerning in South Africa’s more diverse context. Surely if a number of Australian students feel culturally isolated in Australian universities, then one can only guess how many more South African students feel culturally isolated in South African universities.

What follows is a brief overview of prevailing trends in global higher education which have a bearing on this research.

1.7. Global Trends in and Writings on Higher Educational

While the massification of higher education is by no means new in the developed world, in emerging economies like South Africa it is very much still in its infancy. In the United States of America, the initial boom in higher education can be traced back to “immediately following World War II, and again after the Korean War, when returning soldiers were offered financial assistance from the federal government under the GI²⁰ Bill of Rights” (Gumport et al. 2). Increasing numbers of Americans attended colleges and universities in the 1950s as the nation went through a period of economic prosperity, which drove “an expansion of the middle class, increasing family wealth, and the rapid development of suburban areas. For these families, a college education became a ticket to social and economic mobility, and the children of the middle-class began enrolling in higher education in increasing numbers” (Gumport et al. 2). In Western Europe, middle class children have long enjoyed similar opportunities for higher education to their North American counterparts.

²⁰ General Infantry

However, it was only in the 1960s that true massification of higher education began to take place in the United States.

Once again it was the United States of America leading the way, “with 40% of the age cohort²¹ attending post-secondary education in 1960. Western Europe and Japan experienced rapid growth in the 1980s, followed by the developed countries of East Asia and Latin American countries” (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley vi). Rapid growth in higher education in the most populous countries in the world, China and India, has driven “the percentage of the global age cohort enrolled in tertiary education [...] from 19% in 2000 to 26% in 2007” (Altbach, Reisberg, Rumbley vi). Generally speaking, in nations with stronger economies, a greater percentage of the population has access to higher education, and it is therefore not surprising that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s 2009 study reported that “Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest participation rate in the world [of just] 5%” (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley vi). In a 2008 report on participation in higher education, the Council on Higher Education stated that South Africa had a “15.88%” participation rate” (*Higher Education Monitor* 4).

South Africa, while ahead of its neighbours, is lagging significantly behind “the average rates for Latin America and the Caribbean [31%], Central Asia [25%] and East Asia and the Pacific [25%], while ‘lagging’ does not even begin to approach the difference when compared to the average participation rate for North America and Western Europe [which] in 2006 was 70%” (*Higher Education Monitor* 4).

Increased throughput of students in institutions of higher education is key to the continued growth of the South African economy, for an educated and skilled work force will not only boost productivity but also improve the stability of our democracy²². It is essential, however, that these students receive the best education possible, because massification for its own sake, without increasing the ability of tertiary education institutions to cope with student

²¹ Age cohort refers to the traditional tertiary education student age of 18 to 25.

²² Educated voters are more likely to vote on the issues rather than with blind loyalty to a particular party, which should (though not necessarily) increase the quality of governance as underperforming governments would be voted out for poor service delivery. The United States example suggests that this might not be as straightforward as this, however: despite the relatively well-educated population, the voters still tend to vote along traditional party lines. In 2012 “23%” of US voters identified themselves as ‘swing voters’, down from a high of “33%” at the last presidential election in 2008 and a low of “21%” during the re-election of Bush/Cheney in 2004 (*Pew Research Center* n.p.).

numbers and maintain a high standard, will only inhibit the nation's potential for economic growth. Flooding the job market, with unskilled graduates many of whom will have crippling student loans, can have a double negative effect. However, as this thesis is focused on student preparedness rather than the economic factors which are inexorably intertwined with all facets of modern life, it is sufficient to point these concerns out here. South African policy-makers would be wise to heed the warning signs and learn from the difficulties currently faced by developed nations with regards to their tertiary education institutions and their graduates.

The massive number of students receiving higher education in developed nations is not always without problems, however. With the global financial crisis of 2008 and the resulting on-going recession, there are increasing numbers of graduates unable to find work globally. In Spain in particular this is a massive problem with “the current unemployment rate for Spanish graduates [reportedly ...] the highest within the European Union [at] 13.6%” (López Borrego n.p.)²³. Graduate unemployment is not the only issue, however, as George Ritzer argues in his thesis titled *The McDonaldization of Society*.

While Ritzer's theory is based on his analysis of trends in society in general, he has also specifically pointed to its relevance to higher education. He points to four aspects which indicate the “McDonaldization” of society, namely increased “efficiency, calculability, predictability, and increased control through the replacement of human labour with technology” (Ritzer 16), Christian Garland goes on to explain how these four concepts can be related to higher education in the British context:

‘Efficiency’ can be seen twofold: as the restructuring of the university toward market-defined goals of ‘value’ – both in terms of government funding, and to the student ‘stakeholder’, and of course in terms of the efficient ‘production line’ of graduates to meet the ever-changing needs of capital, or the ‘challenges’ of globalization. Such a process of instrumental rationality reduces university education and research to a ‘calculable’ formula of ‘knowledge production’ or to use the insipid management-speak term ‘knowledge transfer’, as if thought were itself merely a quantifiable known-sum to be ‘transferred’ and managed accordingly. The ‘predictability’ of the ‘McDonaldization’ process at work in UK higher education, can be seen in the

²³ Graduate unemployment is also an issue in South Africa, as I found out first-hand in 2010 before returning to University to undertake this research.

bureaucratic rationalization of teaching and research to serve straightforwardly economic ends. This can be observed in everything from the squeeze on research funding and subject areas, and the need to attract corporate investment, to the emphasis on ‘transferable skills’ to be acquired by students by the end of their studies. In critically applying the fourth aspect of Ritzer’s thesis to higher education, we can observe this process of instrumental planning and rationalization in the increasing loss of academic autonomy and bureaucratic ‘performance assessment’, which is of course directly linked to an institution’s success in churning out graduates ready for and willing to comply with the demands of the so-called ‘knowledge economy.’

(Garland 1)

The McDonaldization of Society is not without its critics, particularly for its reliance on the thought of Max Weber. Nonetheless, the concept can be used to critique prevailing and worrying trends in higher education, from which South African universities, and Stellenbosch University specifically, are not exempt. The key points which Dennis Hayes and Robin Wynyard highlight in their book *The McDonaldization of Higher Education*, are perhaps already worryingly prevalent at Stellenbosch University: the bureaucratization and the limiting of subject choices for students through a restructuring of degrees into specific, work-directed ‘programmes’ points to the McDonaldization of the institution. Both of these lead to greater control, with the limitation of student subject choices producing graduates geared towards gaining knowledge in specific areas rather than developing broad insights and a general knowledge in the Humanities while at university.

This is perhaps in conflict with the notion of the blurring of boundaries between the various domains of knowledge, for the McDonaldization of higher education relies on the pigeon-holing and separating of faculties. Arguably then, while there are instances where McDonaldization is taking place, there are others where Stellenbosch University is resisting this. The English Department seems to be caught up in this battle too, partly wanting to produce students with a clearly defined skill set to help them cope the ‘real’ world²⁴, while also attempting to “simulate intellectual curiosity [and] ... equip students to participate as critical and articulate citizens and agents in contemporary society” (*Vision and Mission Statement* n.p.).

²⁴ The tutors in particular advocate this approach as indicated by their responses to the interview questions, discussed in Chapter 2.3.2 and seen in Appendix 3 (Interview 3: Tutors).

It would seem that is easier to achieve the former, as the students' pre-university education has better prepared them for the McDonaldization approach to higher education. What follows is a discussion of the state of student preparedness for higher education in the global context of massification and commodification.

1.7.1. International Writings on Student Preparedness

Student preparedness for university is not a uniquely South African concern, but the much maligned school education system is often at the forefront of concerns about high school graduates when they enter tertiary education. There is undoubtedly a need for more students to enter higher education, for as the United States Department of Education has stated, “in a 21st century labor market, all high school students must graduate with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in some form of postsecondary education” in order to contribute to continued economic growth at a time when sustained economic growth is becoming increasingly difficult (Kirst & Venezia 1).

It is however becoming increasingly difficult for most national educational systems to produce the numbers of well-prepared high school graduates required by the massification of higher education. The initial factor identified by Michael Kirst and Andrea Venezia regarding the future of higher education is the fact that “high schools – particularly schools that educate a large proportion of underrepresented students²⁵ – are not connected to their local postsecondary institutions, and policies such as disconnected standards perpetuate the divide between the systems” (Kirst & Venezia 1). This disconnection between schools and universities or universities of technology is undeniably a problem in South Africa too. As the student responses to some of the interview and survey questions show, schools are not doing enough to prepare students for the demands of university. Perhaps in terms of academic preparedness, but especially in terms of preparedness for the workload expectations and the general difficulty, students are often poorly prepared. An example of this is that English 178 students often lament to their tutors that they passed Matric English with an ‘A’ but get marks in the 60s for English 178.

²⁵ Students from racial groups which do not produce the same percentage of students in higher education as their percentage of the national demographic suggests they should.

A closer interaction between schools and institutions of higher education should therefore be fostered and one has to question if the recent splitting South Africa's Department of Education into a Department of Basic Education and a Department of Higher Education and Training is not perhaps fostering the divide rather than helping to bridge it at the level of policy-making and governance.

The second issue raised by Kirst and Venezia is also highly pertinent to the South African context, especially for universities of technology. Although with the perceived²⁶ lowering of the "Matric Endorsement",²⁷ the following might begin to affect universities in South Africa too:

Broad access institutions admit almost every student who applies; getting admitted to college is not the most difficult hurdle. What most students do not realize is that they will face course placement tests after they enrol. Placement exams are hidden high stakes exams. The results of those tests will determine whether or not students can enrol in college-level courses. Approximately one-half of the nation's entering postsecondary students do not meet placement standards and are not ready for college-level work. Enrolling in remedial work increases the time and money spent toward earning a degree²⁸. There is virtually no way to prepare for placement standards because they are not connected to K-12 standards, nor are they communicated to high school students or educators. Consequently, the students who receive the fewest college preparation opportunities in high school – who are often the first in their families to attend college and have to rely on public institutions to provide them with the necessary knowledge and information – face the biggest challenges when they start college.

(Kirst & Venezia 1)

²⁶ While the marks required for admission might not have dropped, the perception that the previous Outcomes Based Education subjects are easier than their precursors prevails, and this affects the cultural capital of the Senior Certificate with university exemption in the same manner (as this thesis has explained) that the reduction in the cultural capital caused by the perception of decline in university standards would.

²⁷ "Previously known as university exemption" ('Western Cape Education Department Online').

²⁸ This is certainly true for students placed on the Extended Degree Programme at Stellenbosch University and although it helps them graduate it does result in an extra year at university and incurring all the costs involved for that year. This, given the financial difficulties, explained on page 8 of this thesis, makes it more likely that these students will drop out of university.

In the light of the problems experienced in the United States, South Africa should perhaps offer prospective students the option of classes to prepare them for the National Benchmark tests. This could, however, affect the effectiveness of the benchmark tests as an indicator of the student's ability to succeed at university, which brings one back to the argument in favour of the need for greater cooperation between schools and universities in South Africa. It seems that there is a need for better communication about the rigours of university and the school subjects which will best help them cope academically at university²⁹. An example of this is the need for more students to take English first language at school level in order to prepare for university; this thought is discussed in more depth in Chapter 2³⁰.

In study by a group of academics from the University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia, it was hypothesised “that a number of the[ir] study participants are casualties of their schooling and their poor long-term academic performance at high school occurred due to poor student-teacher relationships with associated poor academic engagement” (Whannell, Allen & Lynch 1). The study by Whannell, Allen and Lynch was conducted to examine a bridging programme for students who did not achieve the marks necessary for university entrance or who felt they were unprepared for university and in need of further academic skills development. “The aims of the research were to ascertain the factors from a student's background which contributed to the low levels of academic achievement demonstrated in secondary school” (Whannell, Allen & Lynch 2). This is of interest for this study, as some of the issues might be transferable from the Australian to the South African context. The study was very thorough and measured factors such as student sleeping patterns, hours of study and perceptions of student-teacher relationships. It was interesting to note that in comparison to the undergraduates at the University of the Sunshine Coast, the students in the bridging course did “not appear [...] as a whole [to] have membership of a significantly disadvantaged demographic group” (Whannell, Allen & Lynch 14). This led the researchers to the conclusion that socio-economic issues are not necessarily a determining factor in student achievement. In fact they claim that “[t]he results of th[e] study indicate that the nature of the student-teacher relationship is the only aspect of the participants' social context that the data indicated was directly correlated to their level of

²⁹ Communicated is too soft a word for the interventions required, but ‘drumming it into their heads’ is hardly a formal enough phrase for this kind of academic enquiry.

³⁰ In Chapter 2.1.

academic achievement at a statistically significant level” (Whannell, Allen & Lynch 15). This is of interest for two reasons. Firstly, there was a small, but significant minority of students in this study who reported being “poorly prepared . . . to cultivate appropriate relationships with [their] tutors and lecturers” (Survey Question 23). This issue is discussed in more detail in chapter 2³¹, but one has to question if this is an extension of an issue some students are bringing with them from school. Secondly, given the state of teaching in South Africa, where teacher absenteeism is “at an average 19 days a year – which amounts to 10% of the total number of days in the South African school year” (*Policy Brief 1*), one has to question if incompetent and disengaged school teachers are not a key factor in accounting for student lack of preparedness.

While there are numerous accounts from students in the qualitative survey feedback which suggest that there are many exceptional teachers in the country³², the average absenteeism rate among teachers nationally is nonetheless quite alarming. If a student were to miss 10% of the academic year, one would expect them to be at least 10% (and possibly more) behind in their work. A teacher being absent for a significant period of time has an even greater effect as their absence affects entire classes of pupils. Perhaps this does not relate directly to Whannell, Allen and Lynch’s study, but it remains a factor to consider. What the Whannell, Allen and Lynch study does not mention, however, is the “self-fulfilling prophecy” of teacher’s expectations stimulating or inhibiting students. As a brief aside, this should be an issue that individuals teaching in the English 178 course should be made aware of, although (given human nature) even being aware is often not enough to overcome the favouritism which one can unknowingly exhibit as a teacher. What follows is a discussion of the South African literature regarding student preparedness for higher education.

1.8. South African Trends in and Writings on Higher Education

Higher education in South Africa faces not only the challenge of keeping up the standard of other nations’ graduates, but of doing so from the basis of our troubled history. Frustratingly, one gets the impression, at times, that South Africa’s history is used as a blanket excuse for lack of progress in education in general and higher education in particular.

³¹ Chapter 2.2.5.

³² See Qualitative Survey Feedback (Appendix B) pages 248 to 265.

One must not ignore the inequalities of the past, or downplay their effect on the present, but one can also not use them as an excuse for present failures; rather, the Department of Higher Education and Training should be working with the Department of Basic Education to produce the best possible school and university graduates.

Currently South Africa cannot even begin to claim to be doing so. In a policy report by the Economics Department at Stellenbosch University, stemming from Nicolas Spall's research entitled *Equity & Efficiency in South African Primary Schools*, the following findings were tabulated:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|---------------------|--------|-----------|--------|--------|-----|-----|-----|
| Botswana | \$1228 | 10.6 days | 10.62% | 22.48% | 63% | 62% | 36% |
| Mozambique | \$79 | 6.4 days | 21.51% | 32.73% | 53% | 52% | 21% |
| Namibia | \$668 | 9.4 days | 13.63% | 47.69% | 32% | 32% | 70% |
| South Africa | \$1225 | 19.4 days | 27.26% | 40.17% | 45% | 36% | 69% |

Figure 1.4: South African numbers in a regional context (*Policy Brief 1 and 2*).

Table Column Key:

- 1) Expenditure on primary education per pupil in 2007 (In US Dollars)
- 2) Self-reported teacher absenteeism
- 3) Percentage of Grade 6 learners functionally illiterate
- 4) Percentage of Grade 6 learners functionally innumerate
- 5) Percentage of Grade 6 learners with own reading textbook
- 6) Percentage of Grade 6 learners with own mathematics textbook
- 7) Percentage of Grade 6 learners attending at least one year of preschool

Figure 1.4 illustrates that despite spending the second highest amount per student³³ and being second in providing access to pre-primary schools, South Africa is first in terms of teacher absenteeism, fourth in terms of student literacy, and third in terms of student numeracy and access to text books. The figures for grade 6 pupils show that all is not well with education in South Africa. This is reinforced by the 2012 Mpumalanga textbook saga, which at the time of writing is still ongoing, despite the rapidly approaching end of the 2012 academic year. The failings in basic education in South Africa have a domino effect on higher education.

³³ Topped only by Botswana, where the estimated population is 2 million with about 35% of the population under the age of 14 (Botswana Demographics Profile 2012), compared to South Africa where the estimated population is close on 49 million with about 29% under the age of 14 (South Africa Demographics Profile 2012). While the figures given above might not be entirely accurate, they serve to demonstrate how much more South Africa is spending on education than its neighbouring countries.

According to Nan Yeild's findings in *The National Benchmark Test Project* report to the Parliamentary Monitoring Group in 2009, the academic literacy of the students tested can be tabulated as follows:

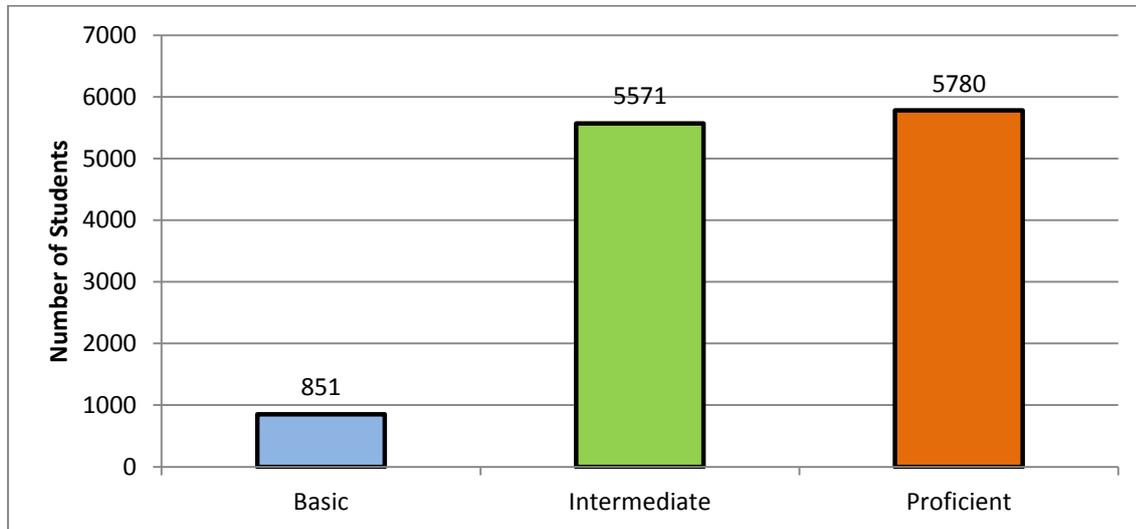


Figure 1.5: Student academic literacy levels as determined by 2009 National Benchmark tests (14)

The report goes on to explain that the 851 students whose academic literacy is scored as “basic” will experience “serious learning challenges [and require] long term, pre-tertiary intervention” (*The National Benchmark Test Project* 14). For the students whose academic literacy was scored as “intermediate”, “challenges [were] identified which it [was] predicted [would adversely affect] academic progress . If admitted, [these] students’ educational needs should be met in a way deemed appropriate by the institution”³⁴ in order to ensure that they succeeded in graduating from university (*The National Benchmark Test Project* 14). Students with ‘basic’ academic literacy and the students with ‘intermediate’ academic literacy together outnumbered the students that *The National Benchmark Test Project* declared to be “proficient” in academic literacy. The report stated that these students “perform[ed] such [in the academic literacy test] that [their] academic performance will not be affected [and that i]f admitted, [these] students should be placed on regular programmes of study” (*The National Benchmark Test Project* 14).

In total, according to the report, 53% of all students taking the National Benchmark test during the pilot phase in 2009 were not sufficiently academically literate to complete their university studies without “extended or augmented programmes” (*The National*

³⁴ The report suggested “extended or augmented programmes [with] special skills provision” for these students (*The National Benchmark Test Project* 14).

Benchmark Test Project 14), at the very least. The mathematics and quantitative literacy³⁵ findings are, if anything, even more alarming than the academic literacy findings. This echoes the finding that 27.26% of grade 6 students are functionally illiterate, while 40.17% are functionally innumerate (*Policy Brief 2*). It seems then that the education system is failing to appropriately educate and prepare students for life, and certainly for higher education

That being said, the number of students in higher education has been rising steadily in recent years. There were at the latest (2010) count 893 024 students in tertiary education in South Africa (“In leaps and Bounds” 12), spread across 25 institutions which are divided into 4 categories³⁶ (“In leaps and Bounds” 14). The growth in students in tertiary institutions can be tabulated as follows:

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Student Numbers | 578 134 | 627 277 | 667 182 | 705 255 | 744 478 | 735 073 |
| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | |
| Student Numbers | 741 380 | 760 889 | 799 490 | 837 779 | 893 024 | |

Figure 1.6: Numbers of students in higher education in South Africa (“In leaps and Bounds” 12)

Though the growth is admirable, massification of higher education – as discussed earlier in this chapter – is not without its problems, especially in the South African context where the ability of the Department of Basic Education to produce high school graduates with the skills needed to cope at university has been consistently questioned. However, it must be stressed that the massification of higher education is essential for the development of South Africa, where massification is invariably entangled with diversification along racial lines. Wandisile Mdepa and Lullu Tshiwula stress that:

South Africa’s survival depends on expanding access to higher education and improving both diversity and student-throughput rates. In order to overcome the legacy of legalised exclusion of the majority population from educational and economic opportunities, the country has no choice but to address issues related to the inclusion of diversity in higher education.

(Mdepa and Tshiwula 1)

³⁵ This tested the ability of students to “read and interpret tables, graphs, charts and text and integrate information from different sources” (“Quantitative Literacy” n.p.).

³⁶ The categories are: Universities, Universities of Technology, Comprehensive Universities and National Institutes.

In the effort to improve throughput one cannot, however, sacrifice the standard of education students are receiving. A strong case can be made that legislators, just as teachers, have “obligations to students [but also... have] obligations to knowledge and society” (Elbow 327). Another area in which legislators have, arguably, been moving in the wrong direction is “in [the] creation of behemoths through the mergers and acquisitions” of educational institutions (Maharaj 68). Manoj Maharaj argues that this leaves universities and universities of technology in a position where they are unable to adapt to the rapid advances in science and technology because the “rate of change [within South African institutions of higher education...] is less than the rate of change in industry and commerce and also lags the changes being introduced at [higher education] institutions internationally” (67, 68). Maharaj goes on to explain that “universities require up to a year to introduce programmes of study that would reflect the needs of society” (68).

In terms of the English Department at Stellenbosch University, it appears that Maharaj’s estimate of the time it would take to implement a change is rather conservative. An example of the time scale required to make a non-structural change to the course can be gathered from the department’s ‘Online Writing Laboratory’ programme³⁷. The planning phase of the programme began in late 2009 and funding was acquired in 2010 from Stellenbosch University’s Centre for Teaching and Learning. In 2011 a highly successful pilot project was launched, and most student and pilot project tutor feedback was overwhelmingly positive. It was then decided to rollout the programme across the English 178 course in January 2012. However, due to significant opposition from staff, the programme’s roll-out was shelved, potentially indefinitely. Three years of careful planning and painstaking work may never come to fruition, despite the fact that such programmes have been proven to assist students who are learning to write academic essays. This suggests that change, even with the best intentions of the students at heart, is often met with resistance from within departments. Another example of how slowly the wheels of bureaucracy can turn within the English Department is the three year gap between the 2007 first-year survey and the 2010 changes in the course, reportedly brought about by the survey.

³⁷ Details of the English Department’s Online Laboratory Programme are available on request from myself or Dr. Viljoen. Readers are also welcome to request the “E-Feedback: Online Writing Laboratory and Electronic Marking” paper which I presented to the Centre of Teaching and Learning’s Winter Teaching and Learning Conference in June 2012, or visit the Online Writing Laboratory website at <http://www.suenglish178.blogspot.com/>

It should be clear, from The National Benchmark Test results, that the level of academic literacy of many first-year students is not at a level deemed appropriate by the designers of the tests. It should also be clear then that well-structured and pedagogically sound interventions should be put in place to help students make the transition from schools to universities. Increasingly, at Stellenbosch University, this is taking place as both the Science and Engineering Faculties have introduced first-year professional communications³⁸ courses geared towards teaching students the basic academic literacy skills they will need during their degrees. There is however no equivalent faculty-wide communications course for the Art and Social Sciences Faculty or the Commerce Faculty. The argument for a course of this nature in the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty is picked up again in Chapter 2.3.3. In the meantime, the Department of English and English 178 currently serves as a service course or communication-equivalent course in faculty programmes. In the past, English 178 was streamed to allow for an “academic skills” focus for students who felt they needed additional support. However, in 2010 the three streams were combined into the current single stream, necessitating increased support for some students.

The story of the demise of the three-streams approach to teaching English Literary Studies is relevant to this thesis because any suggestions for reintroducing streams into the English 178 course would require revisiting and resolving the reasons for the 2010 amalgamation. The primary reason given for the amalgamation was the fact that there was an increasing gap developing between the content taught in the tutorials and that taught in the main lectures. It was argued that if the all tutorials were to teach the same content, rather than follow three different curricula, it would be easier to control the content taught in the tutorials. With the introduction of lecture support, tutorial students would get double the amount of teaching time on the primary texts, which are tested in semester tests – rather than having tutorials focusing on separate texts on which the students only wrote essays. The amalgamation took place in two phases: firstly the ‘Academic skills’ stream was dropped in 2010, and then the ‘Literary Studies’ stream was dropped in 2011, leaving the old ‘Fact and Fiction’ stream to form the basis of the redesigned course. The other reason for the change is that the staff decided that its main focus should not be to provide a course that served the faculty, but rather one that laid the basis for a “major” in literary studies; this should help to

³⁸ The courses are entitled Professional Communication 113 (Engineering) and Scientific Communication Skills 172 (Sciences).

draw more undergraduates into postgraduate study in English. Increased pressure on staff to produce research led to this decision to have an undergraduate curriculum which could begin to expose students to the Department's focus areas of research.

Unfortunately this amalgamation went hand-in-hand with a dramatic drop in the number of lecturers teaching tutorial classes. The effect was to free up of lecturer time to teach in the more advanced academic years and to pursue research interests. What had been forgotten, however, was the outstanding success of the 'academic skills' stream. From its inception in 1997 to its demise in 2008 the 'academic skills' course was an option that students could "elect" to take; it was described as a "very successful" course by one lecturer (Interview 1: Lecturer). A counter view from a number of tutors, however, was that the unstructured additional third period was not working, and tutors were often at a loss to know what to do with this extra time.

Part of the reason why some lecturers were so willing to forget about the success of the Academic Skills course, and were possibly eager to avoid taking tutorial classes in the first-year course, was the notion of the academic prestige attached to each stream. Apparently it was seen as less important, or less prestigious, to teach in the 'Academic Skills' course, and as a result a divide was created between the staff members whose teaching of literary studies supported their research interests, and staff members whose teaching in the Academic Skills course was viewed by their colleagues as lower-order work.

Given the sensitivity of most teachers of literature to their chosen field's location within the four taxonomies of knowledge, and its perceived worth by academia and by society in general, one would expect a greater appreciation for the value of a course like Academic Skills and for those that teach it. This was not the case and the Academic Skills stream, though sorely needed, fell by the wayside. One of the tutors very frankly described the decision as "a little bit foolish" (Interview 3: Tutors). The tutor went on to lament that the troubles currently experienced in the course could be combatted by a return to the three streams, if only "lecturers [...] put their pride aside and say yes, 'I have earned my stripes and I am willing because I care, not because I am just here for my pay cheque and I do not want to teach and just do research'" (Interview 3: Tutors).

The tutor in question might have had noble intentions, but the statement was clearly made in a moment of frustration. A more considered approach to the issue of an Academic Skills' or Professional Communications course for the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty is discussed in more detail in later in this thesis. However, now that some of the general issues regarding the state of education in South Africa have been reviewed, the next section moves on to reviewing literature regarding the state of preparedness of South African students for university.

1.8.1. Writings on Student Preparedness in terms of Academic Literacy

When attempting to assess student preparedness for university there is no sure-fire, results-guaranteed, tick-box system, a kind of question and answer table which allows students or educators to accurately gauge all the factors which affect an individual student's level of preparedness. This is precisely because students are all individuals and a myriad of personal and socio-cultural factors interact in virtually countless ways for each individual. In 2006 Stellenbosch University's annual *Fact Book* highlighted a list of factors which "may impact on student success" (24). Although this attempts to be comprehensive, one can surely add to it. In an attempt to summarise the list to allow for easier reading, Susan van Schalkwyk tabulated it as follows in her doctoral thesis entitled *Acquiring Academic Literacy: A case of first-year extended degree programme students at Stellenbosch University*:

| Variable | Factors |
|----------|--|
| Academic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transition from school to higher education • Inappropriate career choices as a result of inadequate information • Unequal preparation at school level • Poor class attendance, a poor work ethic • Under-estimation of what is to be expected at university • Lack of time management and study skills • Language of instruction • Examination and assessment expectations • Quality of teaching • Academic support systems • Computer support is also important |

Figure 1.7 continues on page 37.

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Personal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting to the new environment • Failed personal relationships • Unable to cope appropriately with sudden freedom • Difficult home circumstances (finances, recent divorce, etc.) • Qualities such as self-discipline, a sense of responsibility, motivation, dedication and perseverance. |
| Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and depression • Other health factors. |
| Financial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who have to work to support their studies • Concerns about being unable to pay fees - can also motivate students to work harder in order to pass. |
| Social | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance dependence • Too much socialising • Involvement in too many non-academic activities • A poor learning culture in residences • Students who feel alone and isolated, with no support network. |
| Accommodation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commuter students travelling by train or in lift clubs can face academic disadvantages, particularly where tests and examinations are written in the evening • Optimal access to learning and other resources may not be available to commuter students • Residential students experience the support they receive in the residences positively, but social activities in residences can be a problem. |
| Cultural | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority groups may feel isolated and alienated. |

Figure 1.7: Factors which may impact on student success (Van Schalkwyk 84).

Even this list can be expanded upon. It is clear from Van Schalkwyk's summary that the Stellenbosch list downplays the primary importance of Bourdieu's notion of *habitus*, which would lead to a more extensive focus on social factors like class, race, language background and gender. The issue of accommodation is only considered for commuting students, while no mention is made of the increasing difficulty of finding suitable accommodation at a reasonable price on campus – a situation which affects mainly poorer students, who more often than not are not “white”. This indicates once again the effect of financial pressures, which one could argue are as important as the academic factors, if not more so, in the struggle to succeed in higher education. Given this complexity, or “supercomplexity” as Ronald Barnett terms the growing number of factors influencing the modern curriculum (255), it is best to focus on the one academic factor which arguably affects all areas of study

in higher education and constitutes the foundational skill upon which the English 178 course builds.

This factor is ‘Academic Literacy’, and as the previous section indicated, South African students are being let down by the national education system at a primary school level, where “27.26% of grade 6 students are functionally illiterate” (Policy Report 2) and at a high school level, where, as was argued earlier in this thesis, “53% of all students taking the National Benchmark test during the pilot phase in 2009 were not suitably academically literate to complete their university studies without ‘extended or augmented programmes’”. Academic literacy is not only essential for the study of literature; it is one of the cornerstone skills for any student in any degree or programme. Without ‘basic’ academic literacy skills students will not be able to understand the texts they are required to read for their studies. With only an “intermediate” level of academic literacy understanding the prescribed texts will take a student significantly longer to read and understand, than would be the case for a student who is “proficiently” academically literate. In her research Schalkwyk stated the following about academic literacy:

Academic literacy in higher education points to reading and writing in the different disciplines where such reading and writing constitute the central process through which students learn new subjects and develop their knowledge. Reading and writing therefore play a fundamental role in student learning, and their acquisition during the first-year at university could be regarded as a critical factor in student success. For most students, the nature of this reading and writing will differ from that which they have been accustomed to at school. Nevertheless, many students enter university with the ability to adapt their approaches and methods in order to effectively participate in the different disciplinary discourses or communities of practice that they encounter. The literature suggests, however, that this is not equally straightforward for all students and that underprepared students will, for example, experience the gap between school and university more acutely.

(Van Schalkwyk 223).

With this in mind it is important to attempt to establish what constitutes academic literacy. A helpful point of departure is The National Benchmark Tests and what they propose to test in terms of academic literacy. The academic literacy test (which all students

taking The National Benchmark Tests write) “aims to assess a learner’s ability” to do the following (“Academic Literacy” n.p.):

- “Read carefully and make meaning from texts that are typical of the kinds that they will encounter in their studies;
- Understand vocabulary, including vocabulary related to academic study, in their contexts;
- Identify and track points and claims being made in texts;
- Understand and evaluate the evidence that is used to support claims made by writers of texts;
- Extrapolate and draw inferences and conclusions from what is stated or given in text;
- Identify main from supporting ideas in the overall and specific organisation of a text;
- Identify and understand the different types and purposes of communication in texts;
- Be aware of and identify text differences that relate to writers’ different purposes; audiences; and kinds of communication;
- Understand and interpret information that is presented visually (e.g. in graphs, tables, flow-charts); and
- Understand basic numerical concepts and information used in text, and be able to do basic numerical manipulations.”

From an English 178 perspective, the first eight points are of vital importance and from the students’ survey responses it is clear that there are specific and serious problems with at least two of these points. Firstly, students are unfamiliar, even at the end of their first-year of study, with the “vocabulary related to academic study” (“Academic Literacy” n.p.). This was made clear by the fact that although only 43% of students reported that they would like to go on to take English Literary studies at second-year level (Figure A.2.14), 77% of the students reported that they wanted to “major” in English Literary Studies (Figure A.2.16). This statistical anomaly is discussed in Chapter 2.1. in greater detail, where it is argued that students did not understand what it meant to elect a “major” in their degree.

This lack of familiarity with the vocabulary of academia was also identified by Jill Bradbury and Ronald Miller in their “analysis of the performance of students from disadvantaged schools in first-year psychology examination[s]” (1). The “findings indicate that success or failure is not simply a measure of the reproduction of content but is a function of the [in]appropriate form of responses that students generate in engaging with different

kinds of questions” (Bradbury and Miller 1). This statement holds true for English Literary Studies, where first-year students also struggle to develop the correct academic register and tone for writing an academic essay. This can sometimes appear pedantic but it is nonetheless an essential part of the academic essay format and the lessons learnt in maintaining a formal academic register and tone are readily transferable to the formal style of professional communication³⁹. This should stand students in good stead once they graduate from university.

However, shortfalls in “academic literacy” (and therefore being poorly prepared for university) “serve[s] to hide the student’s real potential” (Van Schalkwyk 80), rather than indicating a fundamental flaw in the student. The lack of preparedness exhibited by some students can at times be frustrating for tutors, but it is important that tutors and lecturers “cannot just not care for them [the students]” as one of the lecturers explained during the interviews (Interview 2: Lecturer). On a very pragmatic level, it is the “task [of the English 178 course] to try to educate the people who are put under [its] nose”: complaining about the varying levels of preparedness will not help as the English Department does not “make the entrance requirements” (Interview 2: Lecturer).

Again one has to question if a Literary Studies course is appropriate for teaching academic literacy. In the introduction to Albert Weideman’s workbook aimed at developing students’ academic literacy – *Academic Literacy: Prepare to Learn* – Weideman states that “all new students will benefit from a course such as [the one laid out in] *Academic Literacy: Prepare to Learn*, but [if the student has been identified as] at risk, [he/she] will certainly gain from doing the tasks” in the workbook (Weideman viii). With this in mind one has to question the lack of a specialised, across-the-board, academic literacy or professional communications course in the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty – especially if the Science and Engineering Faculties have identified the need for such courses and begun to introduce them. The irony of the matter is that these courses in the Science and Engineering Faculties are by and large staffed by tutors from Social Sciences postgraduate programmes. Many of the Social Sciences courses are writing-intensive and therefore at postgraduate level these

³⁹ It was the severe problems in professional communication exhibited by a large number of students which led one tutor to suggest the English 178 course should teach these skills explicitly (Interview 3: Tutors). From the small issue of students sending blank emails with their essays just attached, lacking even a subject line, to blatantly rude emails (making demands rather than polite requests), many students exhibit a worrying disregard for the basic standards of professional communication.

students tend to have developed a fair array of writing skills. It must be asked though if these skills were explicitly taught or if these students managed to learn as they went through the course because their prior-learning, preparedness or *habitus* allowed them to do so. From speaking to postgraduates in the English Department and from my own experiences as an undergraduate at Stellenbosch University, I doubt that the necessary skills are explicitly taught throughout.⁴⁰

There is not enough time, in a course which is attempting to provide students with a foundation for progression in the field of Literary Studies, to comprehensively teach academic literacy – even to the stronger students. The 2009/2010 “reconfigure[ing] of the English 178 curriculum and course structure in light of a [...] 2005 Departmental emphasis on staff research and postgraduate research output” has left the students without an inclination for Literary Studies. Alternatively, or in addition, academic literacy is underserved by the current course pedagogy (Viljoen⁴¹). Students with an inclination for Literary Studies continue on much as their predecessors did, but one can still question how well the course is preparing them for postgraduate English Literary Studies. This reconfiguration has caused conflict within the course as students, tutors and lecturers often differ on what the course should be teaching.

These differences are problematic in that they affect the success of the course in general. The problem does not stop there, however, because students in the English 178 course interact far more closely with their tutors than they do with the lecturers, and the tutors often come to personify the department in the minds of students. This may be because the role of the tutor is not clearly outlined by individual tutors, or because the English 178 course relies so heavily on tutors that they in effect replace the lecturers as the personification of the Department, especially for students who do not attend lectures. The views and beliefs of individual tutors can have a significant impact on their students’ perceptions of their own preparedness. As Van Schalkwyk explains: “The value that the university, often personified in the first-year lecturer, places on the knowledge with which the student enters the university has much to do with the extent to which she or he is perceived to be prepared or not” (82).

⁴⁰ I count myself very lucky to have had Dr. Mathilda Slabbert as a tutor in both my 2nd and 3rd years of English Literary Studies, her teaching and feedback on essays made a real difference to my own understanding of the subject.

⁴¹ This is taken from a paper Dr. Viljoen presented at the 2007 Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa, conference.

When students make a link with lecturers, most of whom have years of teaching experience, there are often discrepancies between lecturers in terms of style and approach, and this can lead to students developing erroneous perceptions of what is expected of them. One wonders then, about the discrepancies between the tutors with regard to what is deemed essential to student preparedness as many tutors have very limited teaching experience. Coupled with the the conflicting views expressed by tutors and lecturers on a supposedly simple matter like the function of the English 178 course, this can lead to individual students developing significant differences in perceptions of what is expected of them.

1.8.2. Writings on the Teaching of Academic Writing

Students should be encouraged to question these assumptions regarding preparedness, as Somikazi Deyi does when she reiterates the point made by Street and Taber that “students enter the arena of first year studies frequently bearing unexamined assumptions” about what university holds in store for them (Deyi 48). These assumptions range from unexamined perceptions of academic preparedness to assumptions regarding social conventions and the financial cost of university life. Hutchings elaborates that the problem lies with the fact that “in part the assumptions... [provide] insufficient recognition to the university as a cultural community in its own right, made up of subcultures, each with their own discourse” (103).

Each department, with its different conventions, can be seen as a subculture with its own discourse. An example of these different conventions are the ‘rules’ for academic essay writing in the various departments. In the matter of how to structure in-text references and bibliographical entries alone, students taking Psychology and English are expected to adhere to different sets of rules. This can lead to a great deal of confusion, arising from a seemingly trivial issue, for a student who has yet to come to grips with the appropriate discourses for each subject. Deyi therefore subscribes to the view that “gaining access to these discourse communities requires a careful apprenticeship” (48), a view which should be embraced by the English Department when thinking about and teaching first-year students.

It is vital that students are made aware that writing plays an essential role in learning: it allows one to arrange and rearrange thoughts while grappling with understanding in a manner which only the brightest few can accomplish without putting pen to paper. Writing is

a crucial component of the English 178 course, as academic essay writing formed the sole means of evaluation in 2011 and remains the dominant form of evaluation in 2012. In 2012 the addition of two less formal writing assignments offered students the opportunity to write more creatively, but nonetheless to *write* for marks. Due to the centrality of writing in the English 178 course this last section will review the relevant literature on academic writing, its importance and its teaching.

In her article entitled: “Student Culture and Cultural Change”, Pamela Nichols writes about not only the function of writing centres in South African universities but also about the importance of “writing [as] a vehicle of course content” (27). The point Nichols makes reiterates is that writing can be used as a powerful teaching and learning tool, regardless of the discipline.

This means that writing centres can foster broader “intellectual development, as well as [developing in students] the mechanics of clear language” usage (Nichols 22). The same can be said for first-year English: it should be more than just a literature course which teaches students how to write according to the discipline-specific principles of English literary studies. The course should “work with the assumption that writing is thinking” and therefore it is not just writing skills that English 178 develops, but also critical thinking skills (Nichols 22).

In the English 178 course prospectus, one of the tenets stated in the “vision” for the course is that English 178 should “equip students to participate as critical and articulate citizens and agents in contemporary society” (Bangeni 1). While this alludes to the belief that English 178 should be producing students who think critically in spheres of life outside of the influence of their English course, it is difficult to tell whether or not this truly takes place.

In order to teach academic writing skills in English students need to possess a fair command of the language. In her research on the Writing Centre at the University of Cape Town, Arlene Archer found that “language and grammar problems are often the main reason lecturers send students to the Writing Centre” (Archer 142). During consultations with the students, the staff at the Writing Centre discovered that while many, especially second-language English speakers, struggle with language and grammar problems, these issues were

often of secondary concern as the students had “overriding problems with structure, voice, register and general understanding of the task” (Archer 142).

What Archer’s research points out is that students need to develop the appropriate academic voice in order to take part successfully in academic dialogue. However, the problem is that each subject requires a slightly different academic voice and as Archer elaborates, quoting Street and Lillis, this is even harder for “non-traditional students” (Lillis 53). In the South African context the term “non-traditional students” is rather more loaded than it might be elsewhere. In the European or North-American context it often refers to first-generation higher education students, or students from working class backgrounds. In South Africa socio-economic class is only a facet of non-traditional student numbers: along with the global trend towards massification of higher education, in South Africa there is of course the opening of previously whites-only Universities to students of all so-called races.

Whereas first-generation university enrollers in a British context might come from a working class background, in South Africa non-traditional students could conceivably be first-generation university goers too, or they might have a long family history of higher education, but be the first of the family to attend a previously “white” institution like the University of Cape Town or Stellenbosch University. This diversity further compounds an already complex situation.

Returning to Street’s elaboration, “joining a particular literary club can be problematic for those trying to learn its rules of entry from non-dominant or disadvantaged⁴² [positions] in the power structures of the university and the society in which the university is embedded” (Street, “Academic Literacies” 101). “Social, political and economic power is closely associated with knowledge of certain discourse forms” (Archer 131), and first-year students, irrespective of whether they are traditional or non-traditional students, need time to acculturate to the conventions of “the power structures of the university and the society in which the university is embedded” (Street 101). Archer’s thinking here intersects strongly with that of Bourdieu in that she insists on inflecting socio-economic and historical conditions into the question of student preparedness.

⁴² Students in ‘Non-dominant’ or ‘disadvantaged positions’ amount to the same as Lillis’s ‘non-traditional’ students, albeit couched in slightly different terminology.

The closer the student's own cultural conventions are to those of the University as a whole and those of the various academic departments, the easier and swifter it should be for the student to either "conform to the expectations of the institution" (Archer 142), or at least become critically aware of these expectations in order to mimic them for the purpose of succeeding in a particular course or module. This could be as simple as adhering to the different referencing formats used by various departments, or as complex as adopting a different academic voice and register to conform to that which is deemed appropriate by each department.

As a foundation course, English 178 is in a similar position to that which the Writing Centre at the University of Cape Town finds itself in, according to Archer's description. One of the roles Archer highlights for the Writing Centre is helping new students adapt to and adopt the academic discourse that is appropriate for their subjects. As English 178 is the first contact between new students and English Literary Studies, the course should therefore also assist students to develop their grasp of the appropriate discourse.

First-year students, on completion of English 178, should be well on their way to becoming academically 'literate' in English Literary Studies, as the term is used in studies of New Literacies. Drawing upon Heath, Baynham, Barton & Hamilton and Gee, Archer defines "literate" to "not simply mean having acquired the skills to decode and encode signs and symbols, but having mastered a set of social practices related to a set of signs and symbols which are inevitably plural and diverse" (Archer 134). As they are only progressing into second-year level, students are not expected to be experts in this kind of literacy by any means, but they should be aware of the plurality offered by the English language and be comfortable with the social practices (voice and register) appropriate to English Literary Studies.

From a grading point of view, a student's writing can be subdivided into three basic categories to identify his or her grasp of academic literacy in terms of subject requirements. These categories originate from the work of Archer at the University of Cape Town's Writing Centre, and are as follows: "Organisation, Voice & Register and Language use" (Archer 135).

Archer defines one facet of essay writing as “organisation”. This “refers to the focus and structure of the writing, including paragraphing, coherence and cohesion [...] it is also crucially related to questions of argument, which is the basic tenet for all academic writing” (135). The second category described by Archer is “voice and register”, which she explains “refers to the appropriate ways of representing social relations between the writer and reader [...] and] also refers to the ways in which the writer establishes a presence in the text in relation to the subject matter, sources [...] constructed audience [and] issues of plagiarism” (135). Voice and register therefore denote a similar area of concern as the ‘social practices’ of the New Literacies Studies definition of literacy. The third and final subdivision that Archer makes is “language use”. This often (for the first-language English speaker) refers to errors in a text written by a non-first language speaker. As one would expect, this category pertains to “the mechanics of the text, namely vocabulary, punctuation, sentence construction, use of tenses, articles, pronouns [and] prepositions” (Archer 135). Though it is a bone of contention, even within the English Department at Stellenbosch University, ‘language use’ counts less in terms of marking than the other two categories, ‘organisation’ and ‘voice & register’.

This follows the trend of most academic disciplines in recent times, as markers choose or are instructed to focus on content rather than on spelling and grammar. This has caused controversy in the department as many feel that, as the discipline is “English”, students should be striving to write in appropriate English. Although anecdotal evidence from tutors supports Archer’s findings that often students with grammar problems “have overriding problems with structure, voice, register and general understanding of the task” (142), these students are also often unlikely to continue with English in their second-year. Far from solving the problem, this simply transfers it from the English Department to other departments – or eventually to the Stellenbosch University Writing Centre. All evidence points to the fact that “improving grammar is a long-term project”, which requires the individual student to embark on a programme of “increased practice in reading and writing” (Archer 142), a task which to few students seem ready to do.

Archer also notes that first-year students often struggle with developing an argument in their essays. In her research, she found that many writing centre consultants found this to be a “commonly encountered issue, inextricably linked to the organisation of the essay” (Archer 141). This, she theorises, could be because “students coming straight from school

tend to be unfamiliar with the academic discourses of their discipline and unsure about what style and language are appropriate” (Archer 141).

From the research at university Writing Centres it is clear that improving student academic writing is a difficult and continuous task, a task that requires the buy-in of the individual student. It is essential that this point be made clear to all first-year students from the outset of their university studies⁴³. “It is [also] clear that a student’s perception of improvement may not necessarily translate into demonstrably improved writing” (Archer 133) and for this reason voluntary support structures like the Writing Centre and the English Department’s Academic Support programme are not as successful as they might be.

Given Archer’s final caution that “a student’s perception of improvement may not necessarily translate into demonstrably improved writing” (133), it is time to address the research findings. It should be kept in mind throughout, however, that just as a student’s perception of improvement in writing may not in fact result in a marked improvement in writing, a student’s perception of preparedness may not in fact be accurate either.

⁴³ While working on this research in the Carnegie Research Commons in Stellenbosch University’s JS Gericke Library I was amazed by the number of postgraduate students struggling with writing, especially the English additional language students who often express concerns about the difficulty in writing their theses in a language they are not entirely comfortable in. This begs the question why greater effort was not made to get students used to writing in English in their undergraduate years. Admittedly more is being done now in the Science and Engineering Faculties, but one must question again the support offered by the Arts and Social Sciences.

Chapter 2: Research Findings

2.0. Introduction

In 2011 the English 178 course reached its highest student intake in the last decade. This was in no small way affected by the 222 repeating students who had to reregister for first-year English. The number peaked at 1202 students registered for the course, up by 7.3% on the 2010 class of 1 120 (Figure A.2.2 and A.2.3). This increase caused a number of problems, including the logistical issues of fitting all the students into the lecture venues and finding sufficient tutorial venues. These problems were compounded by the fact that many repeating students have irregular time tables, especially those from the Education Faculty. There was a greater demand for small-group class rooms, as the Psychology, Fine Art and History departments could not use their usual venues in their building, as it had been damaged by a fire in late 2010.

To accommodate all the English 178 students in tutorial classes required the services of 27 tutors and three staff members, all of whom taught at least one tutorial group, while some taught as many as four groups. There were 67 English tutorial groups offered in a variety of time slots for which the students could register online. A group was declared full when eighteen students had signed-up for it.

Of the 1 033 students still actively involved in the course in late October 2011, 684 (66%) took part in the course-wide survey from which the majority of this thesis's quantitative data is taken (Figure A.2.4). The survey was distributed by the tutors in the final week of the teaching term (17th-21st October 2011), before the final examinations in November/December. The statistics extrapolated from the survey data are thus from a significant and representative sample of the 2011 English 178 intake and have been used in this thesis to draw general conclusions about the entire first-year English class. The 2011 survey was a modified version of one completed by English 178 students in 2007. This has enabled a diachronic comparison of quantitative and qualitative data over a period of four years.

The student responses discussed in Chapter Two have been divided up, using the various subheadings from the 2011 survey. This chapter contains the research findings and interpretations of data yielded by the survey conducted in October 2011 along with

interviews with 2011 first-year students, tutors and lecturers about their experiences in 2011. These interviews were conducted in March and April of 2012. The interviews were only conducted in the year following the survey as the data obtained in the survey was used to guide the interview questions. A semi-structured interview process was used to ensure that feedback focussed on particular concerns with regard to preparedness, but was not limited to this narrow field of enquiry.

2.1. Contextualisation and General Statistics

Of the 1 202 students registered for the course, only 79 (7%) failed outright, while 5% deregistered, 9% were declared “incomplete” for failing to write a test, submit a semester essay or for poor class attendance and two students were expelled from the course for serious plagiarism offences (Figure A.2.5). The failing students, as defined above, can be further divided into those who failed because of the subminimum rule and those who failed both components of the course outright⁴⁴. In 2011 all students whose marks fell in the 45% to 48% category had their marks moderated at a final marks meeting. The net result was that 49% of the students who failed the course, failed both the test and tutorial components. The remainder of the failing students did so as a result of the subminimum rule, with 39% failing because of the tutorial component and 12% because of the failing the test component (Figure A.2.6).

Clarification is required here to explain that the majority (49%) of the 79 students who failed did so because they failed on their combined tutorial and test average. It appears, however, that students struggle more with the tutorial component than they do with the test component. This is supported by the survey responses, as will be seen later. What makes this strange, however, is that the majority of students report enjoying the tutorial component more than the lecture component, which is evaluated by the semester tests, but more on this later in the chapter⁴⁵.

⁴⁴ The essay and tutorial marks together make up the tutorial component of the course with the two long essays counting 60% of the tutorial mark and the 8 shorter essays 40%. The long essays are 1200 to 1800 words in length while the short essays are \pm 600 words long.

⁴⁵ This point is picked up in Chapter 2.2.2.

As was mentioned earlier, language is a contentious and problematic issue at Stellenbosch University. This is partly due to the institution's legacy as a predominantly Afrikaans university and also partly a result of the desire to retain Afrikaans as an academic language within the institution. This decision has not always been popular, as an increasing number of non-Afrikaans speakers are enrolling in Stellenbosch University. The trend globally, and in South African higher educational institutions, is to move towards English as the language of instruction in academia. The students of Stellenbosch University have traditionally been drawn from predominantly white, Afrikaans-speaking communities, but this too is slowly changing. This change can be observed in the first-year English course; though the majority of students are not English first-language speakers. The 2011 survey responses show that 49% of the students speak English at home, either as their only language (42%) or as an additional language with Afrikaans (6%) or Xhosa (1%) (Figure A.2.7). The number of first-language English speakers shows a 5% increase from 2007, when 35% of the students reported English as their sole home language, while 8.6% and 0.1% spoke either English and Afrikaans, or Xhosa and English at home.

A significant number (44%) of students still come from Afrikaans-speaking homes, though this is significantly down from the 2007 figure of 52.6%; this is followed by English (42%), a mixture of Afrikaans and English (6%), or other unspecified languages (3%), Xhosa (3%) and Xhosa and English (1%). While being fluent and comfortable in the English language is undoubtedly vital to a student's ability to achieve above-average marks in English at university, it does not appear to be vital for passing first-year English. However, common sense dictates that the students who completed the Matriculation examination with English "home language", as the course for English first-language speakers is now called, should be better prepared for university English than their classmates who took English "first-additional" or even "second-additional" language. It seems reasonable to presume that the jump from comprehension and grammar tests at school level to literary studies at university level is a very difficult one for students who did not receive the introduction to literary studies that English "home language" provides at school level.

In the sciences students are not expected to be able to cope with university mathematics after taking Mathematics Literacy at school level; similarly, one cannot expect students to make the leap from "additional language" English at school to what is essentially an extension of "home language" English at university. This view was corroborated by

students during the interviews, as students who took English as a “home language” reported significantly fewer difficulties with the course than those who took English “first additional” language. The additional language students felt that their ability to cope with the poetry component of the course in particular was inhibited by the fact that few of these students had come into contact with poetry in English at school level; they reflected that taking English as a “home language” might well have helped them prepare for university English. In an interview one student suggested that teachers “should recommend it [English “home language”] to students who are thinking of going on to university (Interview 1: Students). The fact though that 63% of the students reported taking “home language” English at school is promising (Figure A.2.9). It shows that a large number of non-first language English speakers are taking a higher level of English at school in order to better prepare themselves for university. This trend needs to be cultivated by schools and it should be an aim of universities to stress this point to school guidance counsellors in particular.

A high mark for English in a student’s senior certificate examination does not, however, relate directly to a high mark in first-year English at university. It is a commonly vocalised concern of students that they passed school English with “80%,” but only receive 50s or 60s for university English assignments. A glance at the reported school grades (Figure A.2.10 and A.2.11) shows that there is a significant discrepancy between school and university grades, as can be seen by comparing figure A.2.11 to figure A.2.12. In English 178 students most frequently score between 50% and 59%: only 23 students managed to obtain a distinction (75%+) for the subject in 2011.

Returning to the matter of additional language students: it would be far too simple, and from conversations with students seemingly incorrect, to state that the 29% of students who took English as a “first-additional” language at school level and the 8% who took English as a “second-additional” language all struggle with university level English. It is presumed that they are required to work harder to make up the gap, compared to the students who took English “home language”. Some students are more than willing to put in the extra effort than others, but with the various distractions of university life, many fall through the cracks. It could be argued that the survey did not adequately sample these students as many of them could have been among the 175 students who were already excluded or had deregistered from the course by the time the survey was conducted (Figure A.2.5).

These students are difficult to reach once they have left the course as in all likelihood they did not leave under the best of circumstances. Most of these students were excluded from the course due to failure to submit a semester essay or to write an exam, with only 59 of the 175 choosing to deregister themselves. In their research on university drop-outs, Jenny Ozga and Laura Sukhnandan, of Keele University in the United Kingdom, determined that generally speaking “[f]or conventional students the factors which appear to be of central importance are student preparedness, compatibility of choice, and time of exit [...while] in contrast, mature students are often forced into non-completion because of external circumstances” (1). This raises the question: Why, in the Stellenbosch context, do students deregister or fail to submit an assignment? The research performed at Stellenbosch University by AJN Louw on the reasons for students dropping out of Agricultural Institutions is perhaps helpful, as the social and institutional context at the Cape Institute for Agricultural Training at Elsenburg, a satellite of the greater Stellenbosch University campus, is similar to that in our own Faculty. Louw’s study demonstrated that:

Dropout rates can be attributed mainly to academic and/or social factors. These factors prevented adequate integration, which is essential to successful studies, from occurring. Various academic factors may be the reason for inadequate academic integration, of which the most important were unclear objectives, a lack of motivation, wrong academic expectations, a misconception of hard work, as well as a lack of the necessary explanatory knowledge in the agricultural study field. New students’ academic adjustment appeared to be the most problematic factor. It appeared that new students were insufficiently prepared to make the adjustment, and in fact, less prepared for this step than was generally the case in the past (3).

In addition to these academic factors, the area of social integration was found by Louw to be significant in determining student success or failure:

Unbalanced and unhealthy social activities were often the major factors that contributed to student dropout. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that non-academic factors such as inadequate accommodation or financial problems were not significant causative factors for student dropout, but rather non-academic factors such as unbalanced or unhealthy social activities and poor time management (4).

There is little academic departments can do about these external issues affecting student academic success, but highlighting these issues is important as the academic and non-academic factors are inextricably enmeshed. This recognition would also result in academic environments being more empathetic and thus more supportive of struggling students and the challenges they face.

What is of concern, though, is that students reported university residences placing greater stress on their academic performance by forcing them to take part in extramural activities, or “res[idence] stuff and campus stuff” as one student succinctly phrased it (Interview 4: Students). This should be monitored closely to ensure that this does not become a major factor in student non-completion.

2.1.1. English 178 Specific General Statistics

English 178 is a general foundation course that most students registered in the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty are required to take for their degrees, even though they have no real interest in the subject. 42% of the respondents from the survey reported having no choice in whether or not to take English Literary Studies at first-year level (Figure A.2.13). Many of these students are in all likelihood Education students, for whom English 178 is compulsory and about which very many of them are ambivalent.

There should be no doubt that a literary studies module will stand future teachers in good stead, even if they never teach English as a subject. The basic textual analysis and academic writing skills, which a course like first-year English at Stellenbosch University aims to teach, ought to assist these potential educators and provide a basis for developing other critical faculties. The contentious issue arises not from the course itself but from the perceived unfairness of forcing English “additional language” students to take what is thought by students to be almost an extension of English “home language” at school level. This perception of unfairness is exacerbated by the fact that those who took “Afrikaans additional language” are allowed the option of taking an Introduction to Afrikaans course in the first year of their Bachelor of Education degree, while the “home–language” Afrikaans students take Afrikaans literary studies and English literary studies.

Currently there is no first-year alternative at Stellenbosch University to English 178 – it is only from second year that students can choose to take Applied English Language

Studies, which is presented by the Department of Linguistics, or English for Teaching, which is presented by the Education Faculty for the Education students. The concerns of the “additional language” students, who feel they are being disadvantaged by being compelled to take literary studies, could be addressed by the establishment of an “English [course] that is appropriate for second [language] learners” (Qualitative Survey Data, 85). One can hope though, that in time these students come to realise the value of having taken at least a year of English literary studies.

In addition to the students who were compelled by their programme to take English 178, 52% chose to take first-year English willingly (Figure A.2.13), as a selection course. These students have a choice of subjects from a particular group of subjects, dependent on the programme for which they register. In addition to the above-mentioned groupings of students taking English 178, there is also a small group of 4% (Figure A.2.13), who take the course as an additional subject for their own enjoyment or a sense of self-improvement. The second two groups (those that choose English as a selection course and those that choose the subject as an additional one), are, it is presumed, easier to teach, as they are likely more willing and more engaged participants. These students are often easily identified by their expressed enthusiasm for the subject in the beginning of the year. This is obviously not a hard and fast rule, but perhaps this perception on the part of those teaching the course rubs off on the students, resulting in a form of the “self-fulfilling prophecy”, as described by Donna Eder (151) and highlighted as a potential concern in Chapter One of this thesis.

A large number of students indicated that they would like to register for English 278, the second year continuation of the first-year course. In fact, 53% of the survey respondents claimed that they intended to register for English in their second year (Figure A.2.14)⁴⁶. This sharp drop in numbers over the academic years contrasts sharply with the massive 80% of survey respondents who claimed to have started the year intending to major in English (Figure A.2.15) and the 77% who still claimed to be interested in majoring in English in

⁴⁶ A figure that when put to the final number of students passing English 178 produces a predicted 2012 English 278 enrolment of 503 students. The reality is significantly less though with only four hundred and three students registering for second year English, a number which does not take into consideration the number of students repeating the second year course. Ignoring the possibility of repeating students, this means that at best 43% of English 178 students continue on to do English 278. This drop in numbers continues to third year English, where the 2012 class is made up of only 173 students, though they come from the smaller first-year intake of 2010. Admittedly this has precious little to do with student preparedness, but it is interesting to note the overall level of enthusiasm for the subject among students.

October 2011 (Figure A.2.16). These numbers can only point to a complete misinterpretation of the question by large numbers of the respondents. (Please see questions 6 and 7 in the survey included in Appendix 1.)

It seems likely that the problem here is one of unfamiliarity with the standard language of academia. One can only infer that the word which confused the respondents was “major[ing]” (Survey Questions 7 & 8). It is very worrying that by the end of their first year some students are not yet familiar enough with the general terminology of the institution and are unaware that this term refers to their choice of final-year subjects. This lack of mastery of general academic vocabulary was identified by Bradbury and Miller in their research as a factor which affected students’ ability to answer questions in the “appropriate form” (1). It is also one of the 10 factors which the National Benchmark Academic Literacy tests evaluate. If such a large number of students are unfamiliar with a basic academic term, one wonders what the chances are of their understanding and being able to use more complex, subject-specific terminology.

This lack of knowledge of institutional register, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa claim in *Academically Adrift*, is a function of how little students learn at undergraduate level. One of the first concerns that Arum and Roksa raise is the point made by “the former president of Harvard University, Derek Bok [... that] [m]any students graduate college today [...] without being able to write well enough to satisfy their employers” (Arum & Roska, Ch. 1⁴⁷). It is clear that a passing mark for English 178 does not necessarily indicate mastery of even the basics of the subject.

Arum and Roska’s scepticism about what students learn during their undergraduate years helps identify the gaps that persist in student learning but also underestimates the discernible development in aspects of their learning. For many students progress in acquiring the knowledge and skills English 178 purportedly fosters is uneven and slow. The following sections examine perceptions of student success and failure and the role played by their levels of preparedness for the course as they enter university.

⁴⁷ The seemingly strange MLA referencing denotes the citation of a kindle ebook.

2.2 Student Perceptions of Preparedness for English 178

This subsection aims to elaborate on and discuss the 2011 first-year English students' perceptions of their preparedness for University English literary studies. The discussion is based on the student responses to the "How Prepared are you for English 178" subsection of 2011 survey and the student interview transcriptions (Survey Questions 9 – 25). The complete quantitative data used for this discussion can be found in Appendix 2, while the qualitative responses to the survey questions are available on request and the qualitative responses to the interview questions are located in Appendix 3 (Interview Transcriptions, from page 135 to page 211). This subsection is further divided along the same lines as the survey subsection, into sections focusing on literacy, articulation, analysis and time management, and social interaction in an academic setting.

2.2.1. Literacy

Given that students have graduated from high school with the marks necessary to apply for and be accepted to university, tutors and lecturers make assumptions regarding the level of competency of the first-year students. These assumptions are not necessarily valid, and one area of particular concern for those teaching in the first-year course is the actual level of academic literacy exhibited by the students. Without the ability to read and understand the relatively complex setwork texts⁴⁸ for the course, English 178 students have little hope of being able to articulate their opinions about or analyse the texts.

Levels of literacy also influence students' ability to manage their time successfully, as problems with reading and understanding texts will result in students having to spend more time doing so, and less time on the writing tasks. Analysis is also an issue for students who feel poorly prepared for reading. These students will, in all likelihood struggle to model their own academic arguments and analyses of literary texts on the examples of literary analysis provided to them by lecturers and tutors.

From the survey data it is clear that the basic reading or academic literacy skills of the 2011 English 178 class is not a major problem in the eyes of the students. Of the 679 students who responded to the question relating to students' perception of their preparedness for

⁴⁸ In 2011 the students were expected to read a collection of short stories, a poetry collection, two plays, namely: *Master Harold and the Boys* and *Much Ado about Nothing*; two novels, namely: *Nervous Conditions* and *Jane Eyre*; and read a minimum of two secondary readings for each longer text, including secondary readings for the film studies module on *The Truman Show*.

“reading and understanding [the primary] literary texts”, only 52 students, or just less than 8% (Figure A.2.19), rated their preparedness as “poor” (Survey Questions 9 – 25). This, interestingly enough, is very close to the failure rate for the course which was 7% in 2011 (Figure A.2.5). One can only speculate at the link between the two figures, but it seems unlikely that students who perceive themselves to be poorly prepared for reading the primary texts will be confident of their ability perform other more complex skills –such as reading the secondary texts (which more students reported struggling with). This indicates that students perceive secondary texts to be harder to grasp. This would also apply to the writing of academic essays, which a great number of students also report feeling poorly prepared for. It seems logical, then, that the 8% of students who feel poorly prepared for reading the primary texts will experience significant problems with the aspects of English 178 that their classmates perceive to be more challenging. As the surveys were anonymous it is not possible to identify and speak to the students concerned. However tutors, who teach small groups of students relatively intensively for an entire semester, can use their knowledge of individual students to make an informed decision as to who are most likely to struggle with academic literacy. Identifying these students is therefore not in itself a problem, and the tutors encourage these students to make use of the additional academic support. A problem with the current academic support structures in place within the course is that none deal specifically with reading skills. This also raises the question whether or not reading skills should be explicitly taught at university level. Within the English undergraduate course the skills required to read secondary sources are (arguably implicitly) taught, through the gradual increase in the complexity of required readings over the course of the undergraduate programme. No explicit teaching is focused on reading, as most lecturers probably expect students to come to university with the necessary reading skills in place.

Fortunately the majority of students (442 or 65%) (Figure A.2.19) feel well prepared for reading the primary literary texts, though the numbers drop steadily over the next three questions, which relate to the students’ perceptions of preparedness for “reading secondary critical sources”, “reading the volume of texts [...] expected for English 178”, and “completing the required reading[s] for English 178” (Survey Questions 11 & 21).

For the majority of students one of the clearest problems, emerging from the survey data, seems not to be one of understanding the primary texts but one of finding the time (or perhaps the will) to read them completely. According to their responses to the question of

how many of the primary texts they had read in their entirety, the student feedback gathered by the survey appears unrealistic, when compared to anecdotal evidence from tutors. In response to the above-mentioned question the majority of students (261 or 38%), indicated that they read 80% of the required texts (Figure A.2.44). The data from their answers indicates that 20% of the 2011 English 178 class claimed to have read all the texts fully, 38% claimed to have read 80% of the texts fully, 25% claim to have read half the texts fully, 10% only read one third of the texts fully and 4% read “almost none” of the texts (Survey Question 53).

From these figures it would appear that 58% of the students should have a fairly good grasp of the primary texts. However, these statistics are slightly misleading because it is very likely that the 20% of the texts not read by the group of students claiming to have read 80% of the texts, included the two novels (*Jane Eyre* and *Nervous Conditions*). These are arguably the most important texts for the students to read fully, yet anecdotal evidence from conversations with other tutors indicates that they are the texts least likely to be read by the students. This is an issue which the department is aware of, and fellow Masters student Jollette Roodt⁴⁹ is currently working on projects to improve the enthusiasm of students for Victorian literary studies.

Future interventions aside, in 2011 this inability of students to finish reading the novels is concerning. Perhaps it is indicative of the waning popularity of novels from the ‘Western canon’ and/or African novels dealing with colonial and post-colonial issues. Reading as a pastime is possibly not under as great a threat, but how one would convert the enthusiasm surrounding a pulp fiction novel like *Fifty Shades of Grey* to a text like *Jane Eyre* is a difficult question.

So while student enthusiasm for the choice of prescribed texts undoubtedly has an impact on the number of students who read every book from cover to cover, whether be it a play, short story collection, poetry anthology or novel, one must also consider the issue of preparedness for reading longer or more complex texts. Many students mention how they struggle with “Shakespearean words” (Qualitative Survey Data 30), or with being able “to

⁴⁹ Miss Roodt’s research towards her MA should also prove very interesting to the readers of this thesis. Unfortunately at the time of writing her data had not yet been collected, but from the survey questions I anticipate it will yield results which will corroborate the data from the 2011 survey. Part of Miss Roodt’s survey addressed to what extent students read individual texts and this data would have been particularly useful here.

read and interpret Shakespeare on [their] own” (Qualitative Survey Data 31). Some students also mention that while they “read very often and so [are...] well prepared in that area, [understanding] poetry however [was] not a strong point” (Qualitative Survey Data 17). This indicates that many of the students seem to be lacking in willingness and/or ability to engage with non-contemporary texts and poetry, which points to the type of texts they are familiar with and could explain why the relatively complex English 178 setworks are perceived to be difficult to read by some students. For them it could be a case of almost complete unfamiliarity with the language, as the differences in language complexity between *Nervous Conditions* and *Jane Eyre* are arguably smaller (despite the almost 150 years between them), than the differences between *Nervous Conditions* and currently popular fiction like *The Twilight* or *Fifty Shades* series.

Returning to the discussion on student preparedness for reading, the discrepancy between the number of students who feel prepared to read (the 65% who indicated as much in response to survey question 9) and actual number who read a decent portion of the primary texts (58%) indicates that although many students feel well enough prepared to read, some still fail to complete the required reading. This could be an issue of slow reading, though there is no evidence in the interviews or written responses to the survey to support this. Therefore the question must be raised of whether it is a time management problem rather than a reading problem.

Time management of reading appears to be a problem that a number of students are willing to admit to, with one student stating that school failed to prepare him/her for “the amount of reading required” by the course (Qualitative Survey Data 31). In fact only 35% of the students responding to the survey reported being “well prepared” to read the volume of set work texts prescribed in English 178 (Figure A.2.31). A further 39% reported themselves to have neutral feelings about their preparedness, while the remaining 26% declared themselves to be poorly prepared for reading the required number of set work texts.

This question relates not only to the primary texts but also the required secondary texts, which are usually literary criticism written about the primary text. These texts are perceived as being more difficult to read and therefore the students take longer to read and understand them. This change in their perception of the difficulty or degree of preparedness

required for reading the secondary sources is indicated by fact that significantly more students reported struggling with secondary sources than they did with primary texts.

The number of students who admit to struggling with reading the secondary sources doubles, from the 8% who reported problems with the primary texts, to 17% (Figure A.2.20). This increase can be put down to the fact that many of the students are encountering secondary sources for the first time in their first year of university studies. Again there is limited evidence to prove this from the research findings, but it seems likely that the register and language used in the more theoretical secondary sources is challenging, especially at first, for many students.

Returning to the issue of completing the required reading; 21% (Figure A.2.30) of the survey respondents reported that they were “poorly” prepared for “reading the volume of texts [...they were] expected to for English 178” (Survey Question 11). In addition to this 26% (Figure A.2.31) reported being poorly prepared to “complete the required reading for English 178”. The difference between these questions may seem subtle but 30 more students felt that they were poorly prepared to complete the readings than those who felt unprepared for the volume of readings. This could be because while the volume of readings was daunting to many, actually completing a novel or secondary text proved to be a more difficult task for many students. That is to say that more students felt able to read the texts if there were no time constraints, but in reality completing the set-work reading was affected greatly by time restrictions.

The time restrictions can be broadly divided into restrictions within the course itself, and external restrictions. It could be that students are unprepared for the demands university makes on their time as first-year students. Their other subjects and/or extra-curricular activities may curtail their ability to complete the required reading for English 178. This would of course vary significantly from student to student and course to course. It seems, though, that many students are “subject savvy”⁵⁰ from very early on in their university careers. The other explanation is that the English 178 course itself is too demanding in terms of the reading it requires, an opinion voiced by students in the student interviews. Some of

⁵⁰ Some students cultivate the ability to determine fairly accurately how much work is required to pass a subject. In the best cases this means they can focus their attention on their intended majors, while in the worst it means they can pass their degrees by putting in the least possible amount of effort.

the students in the interview claimed that English 178 “took way more time” than their other subjects, with the main reason for this given as “daai vet boeke⁵¹” (Interview 4: Students).

The ‘thickness’ of the texts on their own is only part of the problem, as this is compounded by the fact that a new text is dealt with every four weeks or so. In 2011 this was a particular issue as *Jane Eyre* followed *Much Ado about Nothing*. This sequence provided the students with limited time to read both texts during the academic term, as calls for students to read over the mid-year break by and large appeared to fall on deaf ears. To combat this issue and to allow for more lecture time for *Jane Eyre* in 2012, the module was swapped in the schedule with *The Truman Show* module. Thus in 2012 *Jane Eyre* will be taught last, leaving six teaching weeks to discuss/teach the novel. It remains to be seen if this will significantly improve the numbers of students who read the text⁵².

With regard to the completion of required reading, both in the “reading” and “time management” subsections, the survey data indicates that at least 26% of the first-year class was poorly prepared for at least one of the semester tests or essays. Not having read the primary text, from cover to cover, should surely leave a student unprepared to write a test or essay on that text. One would expect then that students would as a result perceive themselves to be poorly prepared for “articulation” and “analysis”. However, this does not seem to be the case, as only the “perception of preparedness to write an academic essay” question elicited a greater percentage of students willing to rate their level of preparedness as “poor”. What makes this more interesting is that tutors and lecturers indicate “analysis” and “articulation” as major areas of concern when discussing student preparedness. This indicates a divergence between students and the lecturers in the English 178 course with regard to what constitutes preparedness. The fact that the failure rate was significantly lower than the 26% of students who felt they were poorly prepared to complete the required reading for the course shows that students do not need to read all the texts to pass the course. Even if one includes the students who deregistered or were declared “incomplete” before the November examination⁵³, the number of students hypothetically failing the course would be 137 (57 of the incomplete and

⁵¹ Translation: Those fat books.

⁵² Miss Roodt’s thesis could be particularly revealing in this regard.

⁵³ These students were not surveyed so their perceptions can only be speculated about, but it is none the less interesting to note their performance in the course at the point of exclusion (Figure A.2.41).

deregistered students had an average below 50% at the point they left the course). This means that in the worst-case scenario the failure rate for English 178 in 2011 would have been around 11%. The significant difference between the hypothetical failure rate and the percentage of students struggling to complete the required readings suggests that perhaps many students are more “subject savvy” than they are “prepared”, as lecturers would define this.

2.2.2. Articulation

Articulation as it is used in this research refers to the extent to which students can express themselves, both in writing and speaking English. As one would expect there is a marked difference, in the survey responses, in the students’ perception of their preparedness to express themselves fluently, in writing or orally.

In response to the four questions within the “Articulation” sub-section of the survey, the question which drew the largest number of students reporting themselves as poorly prepared was the question pertaining to perceptions of preparedness for “writing [an] academic essay” (Survey Question 12). This question relates to the extent to which students feel prepared to write an academic essay for their tutors. Of the 678 responses 193 (28%), reported that they felt poorly prepared, while another 239 [35%], responded with a neutral feeling regarding preparedness for this aspect of the course. These responses produced one of the flattest histograms in the data (Figure A.2.22). For those teaching in the first-year course this is not a particularly surprising revelation, as there is general consensus that the writing of formal academic essays is a particularly difficult skill to learn. Academic essays were also the only means of assessment used in 2011⁵⁴. 53% of the students who completed the English 178 course in 2011 received a final mark of between 35% and 59% (Figure A.2.12). This shows that the majority of students in the course either fail or just pass the course, with the highest number of students (467 students or 45% of the completing class) receiving final marks in the 50% to 59% range (Figure A.2.12).

For those who teach in the course it is hardly a surprise then that many students report difficulties in writing academic essays. One would expect an even higher number of students

⁵⁴ In 2012 two less formal writing assignments were introduced, one in each semester, namely a lecture report in the first semester and a film review in the second.

to report feeling poorly prepared for this particular activity. Many students reported, in the comments section of the questionnaire, that they felt poorly prepared to “write academic essays” which are “marked more strictly”, and that much of their writing at school had been “creative” (Qualitative Survey Responses 27, 30 & 28). This assertion is echoed by the graphic representation of students’ responses to the question of “what [their] pre-university education and life failed to prepare [them] for in terms of English 178” (Survey Question 25). The two factors which stand out are academic writing and extra skills⁵⁵, with 240 students feeling poorly prepared for academic writing, while 166 felt that they lacked the extra skills to cope with the course. It also seems that in the space of 13 questions another 47 students realised that they struggled with academic writing, which perhaps explains the jump from the 193 who were willing to ‘tick the box’ for feeling poorly prepared to the 240 who were willing to express the same opinion about academic writing moments later.

Nevertheless, those teaching in the course would not be surprised to see such relatively large numbers of students express difficulties with academic writing. It is after all a new mode of writing for most students. From the qualitative responses and interviews, it appears that the students who felt adequately prepared for academic writing coped well with the course in general. These students often pointed to their “interest in English” as a subject or to a particularly positive school experience with the subject (Qualitative Survey Responses 18). Some even mentioned teachers by name as having prepared them particularly well⁵⁶, while others referred to the fact that they attended private schools which followed the Cambridge⁵⁷ or IEB⁵⁸ syllabus. These students are, however, in the minority and it is a concern within the course that they are not being adequately challenged or stimulated.

Returning to the data, there is an interesting difference between figures A.2.22 (Student perceptions of preparedness for writing academic essays) and A.2.23 (Student perceptions of preparedness for writing semester tests). Lecturers and tutors might find it unlikely that a significant number of students would report higher perceptions of

⁵⁵ “Extra skills” refers here to instances when students mentioned non-English specific skills which they felt affected their performance, for instance time management or computer skills.

⁵⁶ Mrs Lloyd at Paul Roos Gymnasium and Mr Ricci at Roedean High School (Qualitative Survey Responses 12 & 23)

⁵⁷ Cambridge International Examinations

⁵⁸ Independent Examinations Board

preparedness for the English 178 tests than they did the essays. This is odd, because in the test the students only have an hour and fifteen minutes to write what is essentially an academic essay, whereas they have around two weeks to complete the essays they need to submit for their tutorial classes. Those teaching the course were surprised that such a large number of students could perceive a significant difference between the tests and the class essays, when they are regarded as similar by tutors and lecturers.

Only 18% of the students surveyed reported feeling poorly prepared for the test component, a full 10% fewer than those who reported feeling poorly prepared for the essay-writing component. 37% reported feeling adequately prepared (neutral) and 45% reported themselves as well prepared (Figure A.2.23). This is made stranger by the student responses to questions regarding the structure of the course (Figure A.2.36 – A.2.38). 82% of the students surveyed reported that the tutorial method was effective (Figure A.2.37), while only 39% reported this for the lectures (Figure A.2.38). This is compounded by the fact that 64% reported that both the lectures and tutorials were their most preferred methods of teaching in the course (Figure A.2.36). Only 6% of the students reported that lectures were their favoured method of teaching, while 30% reported that the tutorials were their favoured method (Figure A.2.36).

It is seemingly contradictory that more students find themselves less prepared for the essays they submit to their tutors, than for those that they write in the semester tests. From the data it is clear that the tutorial method of teaching is considered more effective and is preferred by the students to the lecture method. More students are therefore reporting themselves as poorly prepared for the work submitted in the tutorials, yet they still prefer the tutorials and finding the teaching in tutorials to be more effective.

This seemingly strange response to the tutorial component can be explained in part by figure A.2.6. Of the students who failed the course in 2011, 11% failed only the test component, while 39% failed only the tutorial component and the remainder failed both the test and tutorial components (Figure A.2.6). This perhaps led to students to perceive the test component as easier. This could possibly be because the tests are marked more leniently than the essays submitted to the tutors. The fact that students felt they were granted more leeway in the tests is interesting, although one can speculate about whether or not that is true. It does, however, seem that the students' perceptions of preparedness are inextricably linked to the

marks they receive, rather than to their own independent assessments of how well they are prepared.

There is another explanation, which could work in conjunction with the perceived leniency in the marking of test scripts: it is plausible that students are taught by their school education how to ‘test’ well. Through the extensive writing of tests and examinations throughout their educational careers students arguably become adept at identifying and providing the information examiners are looking for. This might be a harder task in a subject which is marked as subjectively as English Literary Studies, than it would be in Psychology for example, but it is nonetheless true. Students learn relatively quickly to regurgitate key phrases and concepts in their test answers, which when used in conjunction with a particularly close focus on the test question⁵⁹ is enough to guarantee a passing mark in most cases. This explanation speaks more closely to the issue of student preparedness prior to the course and it would be an interesting point to pick up on in further research.

As for the final two questions in the “Articulation” sub-section (Figures A.2.24 and A.2.25), it seems that the majority of students are comfortable with expressing themselves verbally and with answering questions in English during both their tutorial classes and lectures. There is a worrying minority though who do not, however, feel this way. Slightly fewer students feel poorly prepared to answer questions in the tutorials and lectures (15%) (Figure A.2.24), than those who felt poorly prepared to verbally express themselves clearly in English (16%) (Figure A.2.25).

It is perhaps alarming that while 16% of the students taking the survey felt that they could not express themselves clearly, only 7% failed the course. This either suggests an undervaluation of their own abilities, or a lack of difficulty in the course. Anecdotal evidence from the tutors and lecturers suggests the former is the less likely of the two options, though very few were willing to express an opinion like that on the record. Again this could perhaps be linked to the issues raised around the students’ perceptions of the test component. In recent years the weight allocated to grammatical correctness and general language usage in the test answers has dropped, with the clarity and strength of the student’s argument carrying more

⁵⁹ As strange as it might seem some students choose not to adhere to the test questions but rather discuss whatever issues they feel pertinent from the text.

weight. It is therefore possible, and I would argue from my own experience of marking highly probable, that students are passing English 178 without a strong command of the English language⁶⁰.

There is also the question of how much is done to improve the language ability of those students who feel uncomfortable speaking English. Within the course, there are a few structures in place to help struggling students. One in particular, the Academic Assistance programme, now entitled Academic Support, is highly regarded by some teaching in the course. (The Academic Assistance programme was rebranded in 2012 for various reasons, all of which had nothing to do with avoiding the AA abbreviation and its connotations.) All of the support structures within the course have one major flaw, however: they rely on the students to a lesser or greater extent to schedule the support sessions themselves. This has proved less than successful as only 35% of the students made use of the Academic support tutors and only 36% made use of the university writing laboratory (Figures A.2.39 and A.2.40).

This might seem a large number compared to the 16% who struggle with English as a spoken language, but reports from the Academic Assistance tutors are less than glowing. Too many students make appointments and then never keep them, or only make one appointment, when they clearly need more assistance. The fact that many of these students still pass indicates that some at least are doing fine (in terms of the course, at least), but one must surely worry about the standard of English literary studies skills these students have achieved by the end of the English 178 course.

In an attempt to help students who struggle with grammatical and stylistic issues, the tutors implemented a sequence of mandatory, weekly grammar quizzes in the first semester of 2012. These quizzes were developed by Ms Andrea Buchanan, a senior tutor in the department, under the guidance of Dr. Shaun Viljoen and the Online Writing Laboratory

⁶⁰ At its most shocking there are students passing English 178 who are still unaware of when to use 'is' and when to use 'are'. As it is a literary studies and not a language course, the department urges tutors to do what they can to improve the situation, but one must ask if this is enough. Alternatively one can question if it is truly the place of the literary studies course to teach these skills and if another language course is not required to bridge the gap for the struggling students, who are readily identifiable by their university entrance examination performances.

project⁶¹. They were conceived on the back of the 2011 survey data which showed that 57% of the 2011 class would have “made use of a Web Studies-based Computer Assisted Language Learning programme” (the department used to implement this but it fell away in 2009) (Survey Question 35, Figure A.2.45). The quizzes, as one would suspect, given that only half the previous year’s class felt the intervention necessary, were met with a mixed response from the students. Some felt they were too simple and of no relevance at all, while others found them very helpful. As the department is cautious about stigmatising students by identifying them and earmarking them for specific extra attention, without their having volunteered, it was decided that all students would be required to complete the quizzes, even though not all would benefit equally from the experience. This is perhaps not the ideal solution, but it seemed the most appropriate for the course, given its current structure.

It is essential that tutors and lecturers do as much as they possibly can to assist students to attain the foundational building blocks of a strong command of the English language and adequate academic reading and expressive skills. These will assist them to develop the literary analysis skills that the course proposes to teach. As I will discuss in the following section, analysis is the key skill in the English Literary Studies course, but while some students are undoubtedly prepared for analysing texts, many misinterpret the concept entirely.

2.2.3. Analysis

In terms of English literary studies “analysis” can be termed a core skill that students are taught to develop. This is often a difficult task and one that students perhaps do not always realise they have not quite grasped. Arguably this is because it is rather tricky to pin down exactly what literary analysis entails. The English Department has no firm definition of the term in their official guidelines, but as I have come to understand it and therefore both taught it and used the term in the surveys, literary analysis is the “formulation [of one’s] own response” to a literary text (“Course Prospectus” 3). Appropriate literary analysis though requires a “close, interactive reading of texts” both primary and secondary, and the response has to be expressed “clearly and coherently” (“Course Prospectus” 3).

⁶¹ These quizzes are available online at www.suenglish178.blogspot.com and then clicking on the ‘Quiz’ link in the menu bar.

The student responses to the questions in the analysis subsection of the survey suggest that the majority feel well prepared “to develop a personal interpretation of a text” (Survey Question 16), with 50% of students rating themselves as well prepared, 35% as neutral and only 15% perceiving themselves to be poorly prepared to develop a personal interpretation of a text (Figure A.2.26). It would seem from anecdotal evidence from tutors that this data is an accurate reflection of classroom discussions, but when students are required to put their ideas/interpretations on paper the analysis is less compelling.

This is perhaps because when discussing a text in class, especially in a first-year class of widely varying abilities and levels of interest in the course, it is particularly difficult to go into any significant depth about a single issue within a text. Therefore class discussions tend towards general outlining of issues or themes rather than in-depth oral analysis. Stronger students consequently either already know how to perform a more in-depth analysis of the texts, or learn through trial and error through the course of the year. There is in all likelihood the odd class where a large core group of strong students makes it possible for a tutor to facilitate more comprehensive analysis, but these classes are very definitely out of the ordinary.

Students also find it very difficult to perform analysis on a text they have not encountered before for a test or essay. It seems that South African schools prepare students exceptionally well for working in groups; at best this allows them to bounce ideas off each other, while in the worst-case scenario the weaker students remain passive and leech off the stronger students. As English 178’s tutorial programme makes extensive use of group work within the tutorial room, students are very comfortable when given a text to puzzle out in groups of 3 to 4. However, when made to work on their own, students are less adept at formulating their own interpretations of a text. This is true in particular for poetry, with numerous students stating that they “struggled at first [with] poetry” or “because [they] had second language at school [...they] did not do any poetry” (Interview 4: Students); they therefore found poetry exceptionally difficult. Due to the nature of the longer texts (novels, plays, films and even short stories), students are never exposed to analysing any other form of text on their own. So it is entirely possible that they would struggle as much with the other texts as they do with poems, if they were left to analyse the text completely on their own.

Students' perceptions of preparedness for "performing close reading[s]" (Survey Question 17) are slightly worse than their perceptions of being able to develop a personal interpretation of a text. In response to the aforementioned question, 44% rated themselves as well prepared, 39% as neutral and 17% as poorly prepared to perform close readings (Figure A.2.27). The 114 students who ticked the poorly prepared box in response to this question are likely to include most of the 115 students who rated themselves as poorly prepared for the "reading and understanding of secondary critical texts" (Survey Question 10) (Figure A.2.20). One student specifically stated in the Qualitative Survey Responses that school "did not teach [him/her] how to analyse readings" (35), but the lack of other similar responses indicates that close reading is not a key factor in passing English 178. It appears that a broader understanding of the primary text is sufficient. While this it might frustrate lecturers and tutors, it could also go some way to explaining the marks distribution (Figure A.2.12).

Again, the fact that many students state that they were not taught any close reading skills at school could explain why they have trouble with poetry in particular: by its very nature and because there are fewer words on the page, the analysis of poetry has to be more in-depth and this calls for a close reading. It seems then that the students responding as 'neutral' to this question are probably finding that their ability to perform a close reading is good enough to pass, but as figure A.2.35 shows, the majority of students are more concerned with writing skills and time management issues. This could explain tutors bemoaning receiving eloquently written plot summaries – when the task required students to analyse the extended metaphor of dancing as an ideal for life in *Master Harold and the Boys*, for example.

The major area of concern in this section on analysis is also the fact that 24% of students responding to the question of how well prepared they felt "to engage secondary readings in [their] interpretation of a text" felt poorly prepared (Survey Question 18). This is superseded only by the number of student reporting themselves as poorly prepared for "writing academic essays" (28%) (Figure A.2.22) and those who felt poorly prepared "to complete the required reading for English 178" (26%) (Figure A.2.31). In addition to the 24% reporting themselves as poorly prepared, 42% responded with 'neutral' and only 34% responded that they felt well prepared (Figure A.2.28). While it is perhaps a bit much to expect a first-year to attempt a poststructuralist reading of *Nervous Conditions*, the use of simpler post-colonial theories is encouraged when writing about that text in the course.

Despite the attempts from both the lecturers and the tutors, students remain unwilling to engage with secondary sources, and will only incorporate them in an essay under severe duress.

Even the stronger students seem to struggle with incorporating the ideas of other scholars into their own work⁶² and anecdotal evidence from discussions with other tutors suggested that 34% feeling “well prepared” might be an over-representation of the actual numbers. This could be because students are unaware of how poor they actually are at incorporating secondary sources into their academic writing. Part of this problem stems from the seeming unwillingness of students to heed feedback from one essay to the next. This is not an issue with drafts and final versions of the same essay, but there appears to be an exceptionally slow learning curve from one assignment to the next. At times one wonders if the students are only checking their mark and paying no further attention to their marked essays. It must be said, however, that lecturers have observed that this slow uptake of comments in written work and in applying insights to subsequent work is a feature of the work of postgraduate students in the discipline as well.

It is not only a problem of incorporating quotations, but of formulating ideas that are the flywheel of an interpretation and the logical linking of ideas. Here is an example from a 2011 English 178 student’s *Jane Eyre* essay, reproduced with errors, submitted in September of that year:

According to Mary Wollstonecraft “a slavish bandage to parents’ cramps every faculty of the mind...this strict hand may in some degree account for the weakness of women...and thus taught slavishly to submit to their parent, they are prepared for the slavery of marriage”, (1792) but because Brought up in this Victorian style, she could perhaps not cope with what as expected of her and this could have led to her breaking down mentally.

(Student Essay)

⁶² There is the odd plagiarism case where a student will attempt to pass off another scholar’s work as his or her own, but that is a different matter, although the constant warnings about the punishment for plagiarism offences might serve to dissuade some students from attempting to make use of secondary sources.

With a little knowledge of “first-year speak” one can infer that the student is attempting to explain (with the use of Wollstonecraft’s quote) why Bertha Mason was driven insane, though this is not immediately clear to an uninformed reader. First-year students often do this, relying on the marker’s knowledge of the subject matter to fill in the gaps, rather than stating their argument clearly⁶³. This extract illustrates that if the student’s writing skills are not up to a basic standard, then analysis is almost impossible, and this perhaps is why students are more concerned about their preparedness to write academic essays rather than their preparedness to analyse texts.

This concern is neatly demonstrated by figure A.2.35, where the student responses to the survey question asking them to state “in two sentences [...] what [their] pre-university education and life failed to prepare [them] for in terms of English 178” were coded into a graphical representation of these responses. Some students listed two issues while others only listed one, so no percentages can be extrapolated from the graph, but it does provide an indication of the most commonly perceived areas of unpreparedness⁶⁴.

It is clear that academic writing looms large as an area where students feel they are poorly prepared, with 240 claiming that this was a problem area: they did not feel they came to university equipped with the skills to cope with this requirement (Figure A.2.35). In comparison only 79⁶⁵ students listed analysis or “the critical analysis of a text” as an area which they felt their pre-university education had not prepared them for (Qualitative Survey Responses 41).

The other area of major concern for students is undoubtedly ‘Time Management’, with 166 claiming to be poorly prepared by their “pre-university education and life” for this factor, which was coded as an “extra skill” in the graphic representation the quantitative survey feedback (Figure A.2.35). The step-up to university workload levels seems to catch many students unawares and it is the only subsection of the “Student Preparedness” series of

⁶³ Though it must be said, after four years of tutoring and marking first-year essays, one begins to understand their logic regardless of the sentence formulation.

⁶⁴ Another interesting representation of this feedback is presented on page 300 of the “Qualitative Survey Responses” data document as a ‘Word Cloud’ which gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the student feedback.

⁶⁵ Analysis was listed under “Lit Studies Skills” [Literary Studies Specific Skills] in figure A.2.35.

questions in the 2011 survey where the ‘neutral’ responses outnumber the ‘well prepared’ responses.

2.2.4. Time Management

Effective time management is a key to success in most areas of life and this is particularly true of academic life. The step-up from the workload of high school to that demanded by most university courses is quite dramatic. The class schedule alone is a major adjustment, with classes running from 8 a.m. till 5 p.m., in some cases. That being said, the first-year class schedules for the Bachelor of Arts degree are significantly less taxing than those for a Bachelor of Science or an Engineering degree, or even for the BA Drama. Nonetheless, the English 178 students find it especially difficult to “manage the conflicting workloads of [their] courses” (Survey Question 19).

41% of the students reported feeling ‘neutral’ about their preparedness to balance the time requirements of their various courses, while 22% felt poorly prepared and only 37% felt that they were well prepared. Part of the problem with time management in the Arts Faculty is that subjects like English, Political Science and Philosophy might not be time consuming in terms of hours spent in the classroom, in comparison to subjects like Physics or Chemistry, but they do require a large amount time for reading and essay assignments. This means that, unlike students studying in the Sciences Faculty, Arts faculty students need to manage their own time more effectively, as they have more time outside of classroom time. Perhaps this extra time outside of the classroom makes it harder for students to sit down and work, especially when they have got into the habit of not working in the afternoons, as a result of playing sport, for instance, after school.

One worries that students are not being productive until just before a deadline, when they fly into a panic, sacrificing all other subjects in order to complete the assignment that is due.⁶⁶ This is clearly not an example of effective time management or the balancing of workloads for the various courses, but for those students who still manage to receive the marks they desire, it appears to work. The problem of balancing the various courses is exacerbated when students cannot accurately estimate how long a task will take them. From

⁶⁶ From my own personal experience I know this situation all too well, and it is a habit I fear I developed and honed during my own undergraduate years.

the survey responses it is clear that estimating the “time required to complete an English 178 assignment” is a problem (Survey Question 20). However, this is not as much of an issue as “completing the required reading” for the course (Survey Question 21). 19% of students reported that they felt poorly prepared for the former, while 26% described their preparedness to complete the set-work texts as “poor” (Figures A.2.30 & A.2.31). These students are surely struggling to hand in work which of the highest standard they are capable of, simply because they are running out of time.

In their interviews, some students echoed these problems with English 178, stating that while “difficulty wise it was not too hard, [it] was just the workload” that made it difficult (Interview 4: Students)⁶⁷. This workload also results in stronger students not taking English at a second- and third-year levels as they perceive that “the workload is too much to handle with all [their] other courses” (Qualitative Survey Data 7). One of the stronger students who came for the student interviews had this to say about the course and why she would not be continuing with English 278 in second year:

I was really busy with res[idence] stuff and campus stuff and you know the other subjects were do-able, like you can plan for your one essay per term for Political Science, like this week I am going to do it. But for English [there was] one or two per week, so you are really not quite sure if you want to get involved in other stuff again. The Workload! [Sighs]⁶⁸.

(Interview 4: Students)

This raises the issue of balancing academic demands and social life to ensure an enjoyable university experience, but the social aspects are not just limited to activities outside the classroom. In English 178 in particular, the tutorials can become quite sociable: many students are able to strike up a rapport with the other students in the class and the tutor can also have a significant effect on the students’ enjoyment of the course. The student comment

⁶⁷ The students who came for the voluntary interviews were as a rule the more conscientious students from my 2011 tutorial classes, which is why it is difficult to gauge the perceptions of the course as a whole from them. This is one of the reasons why I have preferred to use the Survey feedback as the primary means of evaluating student perceptions of preparedness.

⁶⁸ This particular student’s final marks for English 178 was 70% and she did not go on to take English 278 in 2012, though she is still very active with campus activities.

above also highlights the fact that English 178 appears to be the most writing-intensive of all their first-year courses.

2.2.5. Social Interaction in an Academic Setting

Enjoying the tutorial classes and therefore being motivated to attend them can only be a positive for the students. Unfortunately though, not all the 2011 English 178 students felt comfortable enough to “cultivate academically beneficial relationships” in their tutorial classes (Survey Questions 22 & 23).

In response to both questions in this subsection⁶⁹, 8% of students reported feeling poorly prepared, while 35% responded as ‘neutral’ and the remaining 57% claimed to be “well prepared” to cultivate these relationships (Figures A.2.32 & A.2.35). The 8% of students who felt poorly prepared for this aspect of their academic lives are in all likelihood students from outside of Stellenbosch University’s historical student pool. Despite the University’s continued reiteration of its commitment to bring the student demographic profile more in line with that of the nation, 67% of students enrolled at Stellenbosch University in 2011 were white (Figure A.2.50 & *Fact Book 2011*). The remaining percentages were made up by 16% coloured students, 15% black students and 2% Indian students.

It is clear then that not all non-white students express perceptions of unpreparedness for developing a rapport with their classmates. A possible reason for this is that there is already greater integration at school level between white and non-white students from middle-class backgrounds. The 8% who still feel poorly prepared are in all probability from poorer socio-economic circumstances and it is this background rather than their cultural background that makes socialising with other students difficult. However, anecdotal evidence points to a sense of alienation among even moneyed and middle-class black students – because of the evident and disguised racism at the institution, in residences and in the town. One would have to embark on an extensive interviewing process to determine the causes of this lack of integration.

At Stellenbosch University in particular it is often easy to get caught up in thinking about demographic issues in terms of the institution’s particular historical background. In a

⁶⁹ Question 22: “To cultivate academically beneficial relationships with your peers” and Question 23: “To cultivate academically beneficial relationships with your tutors and lecturers”.

case like this though, one must not forget that some people are naturally more introverted than others and this could also account for the 8% of students who feel poorly prepared “to cultivate academically beneficial relationships” (Survey Questions 22 & 23).

Whatever the reason, it remains an issue which those teaching in and developing the course need to take into account. Tutors in particular need to be sensitive to the needs of individual students who are less inclined to communicate in the classroom. This is an area of tutor training which has been neglected over the years and one which is perhaps causing students to withdraw even more, as a result of tutors unknowingly placing them in situations in which they feel uncomfortable.

Tutors’ and lecturers’ sensitivity to the needs of the students, although important, is not their only priority as teachers. As Elbow argues, teachers “have an obligation to the students but [they] also have an obligation to knowledge and society [...] students need praise and support [but the teachers] commitment to standards [also requires teachers] to give a low grade or [a] tough comment” (327). Those teaching in the English 178 course then need to be acutely aware of the needs and perceptions of the students. That is not to say that they necessarily have to agree with the perceptions of the students. When comparing the tutor and lecturer interviews with the survey data and with student interviews, it is immediately apparent that there are significant differences. The following subsection will explore these differences and attempt to account for them.

2.3. Lecturer and Tutor Perceptions of Student Preparedness

Through my own experience of tutoring in the English 178 course since 2009, it has become clear that students and the tutors or lecturers teaching the course do not always share the same views regarding important matters in the course. These differences can be as blatant as disagreement regarding constitutes an appropriate academic source⁷⁰ or as subtle and complex as what constitutes preparedness for academic writing.

⁷⁰ Wikipedia, despite its undeniable convenience, does not make the grade, a fact that students seem to struggle with.

It was therefore essential to gather information from other tutors and lecturers as to their perceptions of English 178 student preparedness. This was done through a series of semi-structured interviews. All participants took part under the condition of anonymity and the tutors in particular spoke very frankly about their experiences teaching within the first-year course.

Five tutors and two lecturers were interviewed in order to gather the data presented in Appendix 3. It would have been beneficial to interview at least one more lecturer, but a number of lecturers were on sabbatical in the first semester of 2012 and one of the lecturers who would usually have taught in the first-year course had not done so in 2011, it was not possible, given the time constraints, to schedule, interview and transcribe another interview with a lecturer.

The individuals interviewed all taught in the English 178 course in 2011 and, in the case of the lecturers, had been very involved in the structuring of the course in previous years. Both lecturers have extensive experience teaching English at Stellenbosch University: the subject of interview 1 is now in his/her thirteenth year in the English Department, while the subject of interview 2 is in his/her fifth year. As for the tutors, most are in their second year of teaching at Stellenbosch University while one has been tutoring English 178 for five years and another has three years of tutoring experience in an English Department at another South African university.

Eight questions were used to guide the conversation, but Interviews 1 and 3 in particular were at times very broad. The views expressed in Interview 3⁷¹ support much of the anecdotal evidence gathered in tutor meetings and in discussions between tutors in the corridors and the tutor room. The transcription of this interview reflects at times a rather pessimistic attitude towards the course. It should therefore be explained that the internal strife between lecturers in the English Department was at the time spilling over into the tutor programme, with tutors feeling neglected by supervisors, unsupported by resource coordinators and feeling exposed by a poorly planned and structured start to the 2012 English 178 course.

⁷¹ Interview with tutors Appendix 3.

The tone of negativity towards the course should not taint the reader's view of the tutors' feedback however. The tutors interact far more closely with the students than the majority of lecturers do⁷², and as a result have a more realistic perception of the skills of English 178 students. The group of tutors in the interview are members of a very committed core group of tutors who have a passion for English Literature as a subject but are also enthusiastic about sharing that passion. A close reading of the transcription of Interview 3 will reveal the genuine concern expressed by each of the tutors at the levels of student preparedness and at the fate of these students once they leave the English 178 course. I would suggest then that these tutors are all grappling with Elbow's "paradoxical coherence [... between] the two conflicting mentalities needed for good teaching" (327), the supportive mothering of students on the one hand and the hard "fatherly" gatekeeping of the discipline on the other.

Returning to the lecturers, their perceptions of student preparedness are key as they have a more holistic view of English Literary Studies at Stellenbosch University. For all the tutors' insights into the first-year course, it is the lecturers who have contact with students across the different year groups, from first-years new to literary studies to doctoral students well on their way to careers in academia. The lecturers therefore have to be aware that the 2011 first-year class will provide 2014's Honours students, and as Honours students they will be expected to possess certain sets of skills. One – quite obviously then – needs to begin teaching them these skills in English 178.

2.3.1. Lecturer Perceptions of Student Preparedness

The success or failure of the first-year teaching is often not immediately apparent because, in the narrowest possible terms, the marks and the throughput rates of English 178 do not provide an indication of the skills the students learn in the course. Ideally, the marks should do so, but there is a fear that the standard of the course has declined over the years. This is a sensitive issue, as one might expect, and an issue that most lecturers are cautious of broaching.

Understandably it is best to avoid vague generalisations and the "in my day" rhetoric, and so it was not surprising that one of the lecturers declared herself to be "suspicious of

⁷² In 2011 only 3 lecturers taught tutorial classes. In 2012 this number has dropped to 2, bringing into question how in-touch the lecturers are with the strengths, weaknesses and needs of the current students.

[those ...] in my day we were all better and you know it has [now] gotten much worse” sentiments (Interview 2: Lecturer). That does not, however, mean that the standard of the course and the general levels of student preparedness should not be questioned. Since the inception of the tutor programme in 1997 it was “already clear that [there were] really struggling students [...] and at the same time students [...] who had read a range of texts” and felt well prepared for university English (Interview 1: Lecturer). This should be no surprise: there will always be students who are better prepared than others and due to natural aptitude or pre-university education, some students will excel while others struggle.

There is a feeling, however, which might not be well supported by other lecturers, that the English Department has “dropped the standard [of the English 178 course] quite a bit [...] to accommodate the weaker students” (Interview 1: Lecturer). Although unpopular, the proof of this statement will surely come in 2013 when the first group of students to not be given the option of taking the ‘Literary Studies stream’ reaches honours level. Traditionally, the majority of postgraduate students⁷³ selected this stream in their first year, but with the condensation of the course from 3 streams in 2008, to 2 in 2009 and 1 in 2010, all students, regardless of their interest in the course or their perceived skills, were compelled complete the same work. It is at postgraduate level that the majority of lecturers teach extensively in a small-group setting and this is where the skills learnt at undergraduate level are truly put to the test.

That is not to say that the shortcomings are not already being noticed. One of the lecturers bemoaned the fact that a “third-year students [came to her] weeping because she has to take English because she want[s] to teach [...] but her English is absolutely [terrible and the lecturer was left wondering] how the hell she got into third year” (Interview 1: Lecturer). At a less fundamental but nonetheless worrying level, lecturers report that “even in third year you get people who sort of incorporate quotes so the sentence breaks [and...] the argument is not clear, [with] the quote just sit[ting] there” (Interview 2: Lecturer). While it is clear that the former is a result of a lack of preparedness, or possibly a lack of basic language

⁷³ In a quick survey during a tutor meeting on the 27th of September 2012, of the 20 tutors in attendance 4 had completed their undergraduate studies elsewhere, 13 had taken the ‘Literary Studies Stream,’ 3 had taken the ‘Fact & Fiction Stream’ and none had chosen the ‘Academic Literacy’ option. (five of the tutors – all of whom took Literary Studies in their first-year – were in the 2009 first-year class where the options were limited by the removal of the ‘Academic Literacy Stream’.)

proficiency in English, the latter could well be as a result of poor teaching rather than the student's inability to grasp the concept.

This again calls into question how in-touch the lecturers are with the first-year students. Given that since 2008 the majority of tutorial classes have been taught by postgraduate tutors, the temptation must surely exist for lecturers to lay the blame for the lack of skills exhibited by current second-year, third-year and Honours students at the feet of the tutors (Figure A.2.51). One must however ask if the postgraduate students are being given too much responsibility, and if there is a lack of competent teaching, is this not a result of lecturers being unwilling to teach tutorial classes in the first-year course? In 2011 there were three lecturers teaching tutorial classes; in 2012 the number has dropped to 2; in comparison there were 24 postgraduate students teaching as tutors in 2012.

Returning to the lecturers' perceptions of student preparedness, there is a feeling that there is "a small group [of students for whom] basic literacy is a problem" but for the most part the issues they believe students face revolve around "analysis and time management" (Interview 1: Lecturer). The subject of the first interview pointed out that the weakest, those students with basic literacy problems, "take so much longer to read the novel[s] and to write the essay[s that] time management becomes [almost] obsolete" (Interview 1: Lecturer).

There is also a feeling that it is the English department's "task to try and educate the people who are put under" its care and to make the best of the situation as the department has no control over "making the entrance requirements" (Interview 2: Lecturer). The problem is, however, to "actually [...] identify early on" in the academic year the students who will need extra assistance to pass English 178 (Interview 2: Lecturer).

The area which most concerns the lecturers is developing the students' ability to perform "critical analysis" of texts (Interview 2: Lecturer). This calls for an "interlocking of various skills" (Interview 1: Lecturer), for example, close reading and academic writing skills. One does, however, have to query whether these skills are being explicitly taught across the first-year class, or if some students are being expected to pick up the skills as they go along,

The question of whether or not students are ready to be taught these interlocking skills is however a question best answered by the tutors, as they are most often at the coalface of teaching. The urge to develop this mining metaphor and suggest that teaching in the English 178 course can be akin to exploratory mining, is difficult to resist, but suggestions of dead caneries and other bizarre extended metaphors are best left well alone. However, as a tutor, one does get the impression that most tutor feedback to staff members has gone unheeded in the past, which does leave the distinct impression that the asphyxiated cannery of another tutor warning could very well follow suit!

2.3.2. Tutor Perceptions of Student Preparedness

To engage a group of tutors in a constructive conversation about the levels of student preparedness is harder than one might think. For the most part tutors are close enough in age to the students to be able to remember their own difficulties of adapting to university, but as they come from a select group who went on to study English at postgraduate level, the individuals who are now tutors were never have been typical English 178 students and this can affect their perceptions of students' levels of preparedness.

It is difficult to establish exact numbers with Masters and Doctoral students who tutor, as many took years off in between their Honours year and subsequent further study, so it is best to use the Honours class as an example. In 2012 the Honours class had 11 students, 3 of whom tutored⁷⁴. When the current honours students were in first year, in 2009, there were 1018 students enrolled in the English 178 course. That means that in that year roughly 1% of English 178 students went on to study English at a postgraduate level.

However, this does not mean that the top 1% of the English 178 class go on to postgraduate level English, or that the current tutors even necessarily received distinctions for English 178, but regardless of how well they did, it is safe to assume that all the tutors enjoyed English Literary Studies – at least more than their classmates did – when they were undergraduates. The fact that they enjoyed English and quite probably achieved well-above-average marks, means that they tend to expect similar levels of skill and enthusiasm from their students. That particular expectation is rather unrealistic and so tutors have to be

⁷⁴ Due to the smaller 2012 English 178 class fewer than usual tutors were required, though in previous years about half the honours class has tutored. Extrapolating from that, only 0.5% of English 178 students go on to tutor English 178.

encouraged to think of their first-year classmates (rather than themselves) when assessing the current levels of student preparedness.

In the interview with the tutors the most senior tutor, who was in his fifth year of tutoring at the time, stated fairly confidently that the general standard “was actually quite good” when he started tutoring (Interview 3: Tutors). This she/he surmised was due to the fact that students had a choice of three streams⁷⁵ and as a result picked the stream which was best suited to their interests and skills. The fact most students who would go on to become tutors took Literary Studies in their own first year of study, supports the notion that the students with a keen interest in majoring in English selected that particular option. Many of my own Sport Science classmates who struggled with English as a language took Academic Skills initially because they perceived it to be an easier option⁷⁶, and one hopes that the skills they were taught there assisted them with other subjects in their degree.

Perhaps, then, students’ levels of preparedness were not dramatically different then from what they are now. The issue then is that one currently has “good students, average students and [...] the weaker students all [...] in one class” (Interview 3: Tutors). This often results in the tutors focusing on assisting the weaker students and neglecting to “give as much time to the top students as [they] would” like to (Interview 3: Tutors). Perhaps this is the reason for the decline in interest shown by many of the students for the course.

The overwhelming concern raised by tutors was not about the levels of preparedness for English Literary studies, but about the lack of preparedness to work hard at university. One tutor noted that compared to the students she had tutored at another university, the Stellenbosch English 178 students were “just lazy” or “just not keen” on the subject (Interview 3: Tutors). Another tutor strongly supported this sentiment stating that “it is actually apathy, [...] they do not care [and the students] do not read” (Interview 3: Tutors). In addition to this, one of the tutors felt that the “students’ capability to do simple administrative

⁷⁵ This tutor started tutoring in 2008 when there was still the choice of ‘Literary Studies’, ‘Fact & Fiction’ and ‘Academic Skills’.

⁷⁶ The ‘Academic Skills’ stream was perceived to be easier as it did not require students to read the extra novels that the ‘Literary Studies’ stream did, for example *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Disgrace*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Miller’s Tale*. The ‘Academic Skills’ stream did however have an 3rd tutorial per week in which they focused on writing skills.

tasks, undertake preparatory work [and] process and retain instructions and information [has] drastically declined” (Interview 3: Tutors).

The current schooling system is perhaps letting students down in a less obvious area, but one that is just as important. It is failing to prepare them for the step-up in terms of work they will be required to make at university, and many are seemingly simply unwilling to make the adjustment. Tutors lament the fact that they as tutors “spend [...] less time in class doing work and far more doing admin[istration]” and that the “students can barely manage their time and sort out their priorities [...] despite [the clear workflow schedule] in the resource packs” (Interview 3: Tutors).

What is particularly worrying is that the students made frequent mention in the survey and the interviews that the required workload made English 178 a challenging course, which is in stark contrast to the views of the tutors. The tutors feel that the English 178 course requires less work now than it did before. The English Literary Studies course at Rhodes University required students to read “three to four texts a term [...] compare[d] to the workload” of one text a term in the Stellenbosch course (Interview 3: Tutors). When told that the students felt that the workload of English 178 was too heavy a burden, one tutor questioned how so many students could have this perception if they do “not do [...] any prep[aration work for the tutorials], they [do] not read [...] the] book[s and] they are not going to lectures” (Interview 3: Tutors). If this assessment is accurate then the only work many students are doing for the course is to complete the written assignments.

The written assignments, or academic essays, are all for marks and as English 178 is a continuous assessment module, students have to submit these regularly. These assignments are generally at two-week intervals, and one could speculate that because they are marked, students focus on these at the expense of the preparing for classes and reading the primary texts. This would appear to be a symptom of the result-orientated nature of the education system, which arguably teaches students to place tremendous value on being able to regurgitate the crucial information, but does not actively encourage a more diverse general knowledge or the ability to think critically. As a result students often come across as obsessed with marks: they constantly ask if tasks are for marks and visibly relax, to the extent of dawdling at times, when told that the task is not for marks but “for [their] own personal development” (Interview 3: Tutors).

A large number of students it seems are willing to focus on the assignments, while, frustratingly for tutors, they neglect the in-class and pre-class work, perhaps to reduce the stress on themselves or, as tutors feel (in their darker moments), out of pure laziness. Either way, students who are neglecting work which is not for marks are losing out on important information and practice which will assist them in coming to grips with English Literary Studies and with academic writing. Consequently one must ask if there are not too many marked assignments in the first-year course. Would the students not benefit more from a mark for participation that might result in genuine continuous work, rather than intense bursts just before the due date of the assignments?

This type of assessment would provide other difficulties, however, as it could prove to be even more subjective than the marking of academic essays, which despite the moderation meetings and departmental marking grids, is still at the end of the day rather subjective, to say the least. It would require lecturers to surrender more control to the tutors with regard to the grading of students and that might, despite the tutors' best intentions, risk potential questions of bias arising⁷⁷.

Despite the potential questions of bias, the current lack of close engagement between lecturers and first-year students means that the tutors act as the link between the department and the first-year students. The tutors' feedback with regards to the needs of the students therefore needs to be heeded.

2.3.3. Tutor and Student Suggestions for Improvements to English 178

In their interviews tutors expressed the desire to return “back to the [three] streams” (Interview 3: Tutors), while students expressed the need for an “English [which] is appropriate for second language learners”, or as “an additional language for Afrikaans students” (Qualitative Survey Feedback 85) – they were aware that there are additional language courses for Afrikaans, Xhosa and German. Realistically, the creation of a stand-alone academic skills course would address the needs of most students more satisfactorily

⁷⁷ Not that lecturers are above bias, or immune to being accused of it, but due to the age of most tutors and their lower position on the ladder of academic hierarchy they are simply easier for students to challenge or even, in cases, to strong-arm.

than the current English 178 course, and simply returning to the three streams system would not do this.

Currently the English 178 course is attempting to prepare students to major in Literary Studies and attempting to provide basic academic skills to students with very diverse skill levels. This is an untenable situation: in the attempt to teach both, neither is being done justice. To make matters worse, the lack of clarity surrounding the learning outcomes of the course leads to tutors “all doing [their] own thing” (Interview 3: Tutors), which is clearly not good for uniformity⁷⁸ across the classes.

To ensure that tutors are all teaching to a basic standard the course needs to have clear learning outcomes. The confusion of what exactly the course is geared to teach is clear when one compares the lecturers’ and tutors’ answers to the question of what the primary skill is that students should be learning in English 178. The lecturers were rather vague in their answers, replying with the usual academic rhetoric, and suggesting that it is difficult to single out one primary skill because the course teaches “an interlocking of various skills” (Interview 1: Lecturer); or more specifically (but just as mysteriously to first-years), it was claimed that the course teaches “critical analysis” (Interview 2: Lecturer). The tutors, however, are more pragmatic, stating first that the course should teach “academic communication” (Interview 3: Tutors) – but after a brief discussion this tutor settled for “effective communication” (Interview 3: Tutors). This, they explained, should entail students being able to formulate an argument and then express that argument clearly, both in terms of logic and language.

It seems then that the group of tutors, who were interviewed, despite all being engaged in their own masters or doctoral research in the field of Literary Studies, were more concerned with teaching students skills they could use in other courses and also outside of

⁷⁸ The English Department allows a great deal of freedom within the tutorial classroom in the English 178 course, but this is a double-edged sword: it encourages young teachers to develop their own teaching style and provides a sense of personal responsibility for one’s students, but it also allows for tremendous variation between classes. While great pains are taken to ensure that all tutors mark according to the same standards, there is insufficient training and control over what takes place in the classroom – this is needed to ensure that a general standard of teaching is maintained across the board. Despite the positives of the tutor programme which lead to tremendous feedback about individual tutors, (one student who stated that he/she “really enjoy[ed] the course” and went on to personally “thank [his/her] tutor, Jenna Barlow” (Qualitative Survey Feedback) there are a fair number of tutoring horror stories too. One such incident took place in a poetry tutorial where a tutor read a poem written by the course coordinator and then uttered: “Well, what the fuck” (Interview 3: Tutors). Perhaps the less that is said of this particular incident the better: though an extreme case, it is sadly not an isolated incident and corridor gossip reveals stories like this from time to time.

university, rather than laying a foundation for future Literary Studies courses. The lecturers, on the other hand, seem to expect students to be learning the foundation skills of Literary Studies. It does not require much insight to determine that further down the road, lecturers are going to be disappointed by the skills of second-year, third-year and Honours students, because of their lack of skills and knowledge specific to Literary Studies (skills they should have acquired in first-year course).

Considering all the feedback garnered in the course of this research, what changes need to be made? Firstly, I⁷⁹ would strongly advocate the creation of an independent first-year academic skills course which explicitly teaches academic written and oral communication skills in English. This course should be compulsory across the Bachelor of Arts degree programme and could even be dovetailed with similar courses in other programmes like the first-year Scientific Communications course in the Bachelor of Science degree. If English is to continue to be the language in which all post-graduate theses are written, then it makes sense to teach academic writing in English across the entire university, rather than just hoping that students will pick it up as they go along.

It should be made clear from the outset though that stand-alone academic literacy courses are not without their problems. The primary issue within the Arts Faculty at Stellenbosch University would be which department would be responsible for teaching such a course. Research has been conducted by Jean Parkinson, Leonora Jackson, Tamlin Kirkwood and Vasanthie Padayachee on a stand-alone academic literacy course for first-year Science Faculty students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Their findings show that “students do improve their academic reading and writing, with the weakest students making the biggest improvement [but] by the end of the course the academic literacy of this weakest group is [...] still not equivalent to that of regular entrants to the Faculty” (Parkinson et al. 11). It is fairly safe to assume that the same will hold true for Arts Faculty students at Stellenbosch University, and as such one should not expect an academic literacy course to be a cure-all solution. It would, however, be a solid step in the right direction, and such a course would hopefully not only improve the quality of graduates but also assist students to graduate within the minimum allotted time frame.

⁷⁹ Every effort has been made to remain objective, but in this instance it was impossible to do so, thus this should be judged as an independent opinion reached from extensive thought about the English 178 course.

Currently, in the English 178 course, one of the biggest problems with assisting struggling students is the fact that one has to tip-toe around the issue of the varying levels of preparedness of individual students. Struggling students are encouraged to make use of the additional structures put in place to assist them, but as has been pointed out (earlier in this chapter) there are significant problems with getting students to make use of these support systems. Hopefully the introduction of a skills course would negate the need for such a cautious approach, and students could be allocated to groups according to their English university entrance test results.

These groups could then focus on teaching the skills students need to be able to write academic essays for all their courses in English⁸⁰. Students with a weaker grasp of the English language could be provided with additional assistance by specifically trained tutors, while students with a strong command of the language need not be bored with tasks to develop skills they have already mastered. Ideally, this course should be developed in conjunction with other departments and faculties, and it is entirely possible that the English Department is not best suited to run a course of this nature.

If such a course is to be located in the English Department, one could argue for the course to have the dual function of teaching both academic skills and literary appreciation. In this context literary appreciation would expose students to canonical works, without expecting them to deliver insightful, academically written analyses. Alternatively, one could use the course to deepen the student's general knowledge for the benefit of other subjects by making use of popular (but nevertheless educational) texts like Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything* or Malcolm Gladwell's *Outliers*, for example⁸¹.

⁸⁰ The explicit use of English as the language for this course could create problems in the Stellenbosch University context with its continued commitment to developing Afrikaans as an academic language, but currently this approach is counterproductive as almost all postgraduate papers (barring the papers for other language courses, obviously) have to be written in English and many students write their undergraduate assignments in English too because of ease of access to secondary sources.

⁸¹ Perhaps a blending of these two approaches to choosing texts would be best, along with the continual assertion by those teaching in the course that gaining an education is a lifelong process and that outside of formal structures of education, reading is the most reliable way of doing so.

Secondly, the Literary Studies first-year course should be a non-compulsory course, with the Academic Literacy course running parallel to it. This would free up time for the effective laying of a foundation of skills appropriate for a Literary Studies major. Currently there is no concerted attempt to teach of literary theory until the honours year and this is a major shortfall in the design of all the undergraduate courses. There are a few optional seminars which provide insights into some literary theories, but there is no integrated overview. The prescription of a text like Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, would go a long way to addressing the concern that many postgraduate students quietly express – that they have gathered most of their grasp of cultural theory from subjects like Psychology or Philosophy.

The teaching of academic writing skills in a separate course would necessitate the reduction of written assignments in the Literary Studies course, and this would in turn allow for a shift in focus from the current system of fortnightly mini-essays to true continuous assessment, where students are given a mark for participation in class. A simple and less biased system of doing this would be to set short preparatory tasks for each class and provide the student with a mark out of three for how well they have completed these tasks. It is apparent from the effectiveness of the *Jane Eyre* research tasks as preparatory tools, and from the ease with which tutors can stimulate relatively in-depth class debate, that if the entire class had completed the relevant tasks, much better results would be obtained from the students – but there would need to be strict enforcement.⁸²

These suggestions should be taken into careful consideration when the structure of the English 178 course is thrown open for debate by the English Department once again. If the strength of English graduates and the quality of postgraduate research output is to be maintained, then there needs to be a dramatic shift in the way English Literary Studies is taught at Stellenbosch University. Although there is as yet no decisive evidence – beyond the assertions of the senior tutors and one lecturer – to prove that there has been a dip in

⁸² Currently students are loath to undertake these tasks, as they are required to complete a roughly two-page research task for the second tutorial of every week, for the four weeks of *Jane Eyre* tutorials and submit a 600 word short essay on *Jane Eyre* plus their 1500 – 1800 word semester essays during a four week period. This leads to the students neglecting the Short Story component, which runs in the first tutorial of each week almost completely for the duration of the *Jane Eyre* section of the course.

standards, it is my hunch that in the next year or two this will prove to be the case. One can only hope that I am proved incorrect by time⁸³.

⁸³ Anecdotally, with the raising of the entry requirement for honours to 65% since 2011 and from the quality of nearly 30 Honours applications in 2012, where a large number have excellent results, it seems that perhaps the undergraduate courses are still progressing top students. From my own experience as an undergraduate I would suggest this is more due to the strength of the electives rather than the lecturers, though with no data on the second and third year English Literary Studies courses to draw on one can only speculate as to what the strengths of these courses are.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

3.1. Conclusion

While The National Benchmark Tests research into student preparedness for tertiary university education in South Africa indicates that up to 53% of students are not adequately prepared in terms of academic literacy, the students' perceptions are very different. As discussed in Chapter 2, a corresponding number of students do not feel poorly prepared for English 178, a fact which surprised both tutors and lecturers.

One has to question why teachers perceive their students to be poorly prepared when they themselves do not. This could be because of the natural tendency of “people [to be...] generally overconfident in their self-assessments” (Miller and Geraci 2). Millar and Geraci's research has indicated that this “overconfidence effect is greatest for people of poorer abilities” and this may help to explain the discrepancy between tutors' and lecturers' perceptions of student preparedness and students' own perceptions of preparedness (2). The “the leading interpretation [of this phenomenon] is that low performers are overconfident because they have a general deficit of metacognitive insight” in the field they are being questioned on (Miller and Geraci 2).

It does, however, also seem that students fixate on their marks and while they are passing they feel they are coping. This is obviously not the case for all students – there are clearly some who wish to excel and who are mortified by the fact that they receive marks in the 60% to 70% range for their academic essays. There are also students who know they struggle with English as a language and are acutely aware that they are unprepared for the course. Some of these students report that having to take a literary studies course is not fair, as non-Afrikaans speaking students have can choose between Afrikaans en Nederlands 178⁸⁴, Afrikaanse Taalverwerwing 178⁸⁵ and Afrikaans as Tweede Taal 188⁸⁶. Some struggling

⁸⁴ This is close to an Afrikaans equivalent of the English 178 course.

⁸⁵ Afrikaans Language Acquisition: This course is only for students who with no previous education in Afrikaans or students who took Afrikaans as a second additional language at school level. The course focuses on communication skills in Afrikaans and specifically teaches reading, listening, speaking and writing skills in an integrated matter.

⁸⁶ Afrikaans as a Second Language: This course is for Afrikaans first additional language speakers, and entrance into the course is determined by the ‘Taalvaardigheidstoetse’ (language skills tests), depending on a student's performance in this test it could be recommended that they take Afrikaanse Taalverwerwing 178 rather. Afrikaans as Tweede Taal 188, also teaches the aforementioned four communication skills, but at a higher level than the Taalverwerwing course. (Department Afrikaans and Nederlands)

students call for an “English that is appropriate for second [language] learners” or “an English additional language for Afrikaans students” (Qualitative Survey Data 85). Other students recognise the need to improve their English language skills as “writing and reading skills are required in any aspect of [...] life and [one’s] success could be determined by it” (Qualitative Survey Data 82).

There are a large number of students who find themselves passing English 178, but not excelling⁸⁷; many of these students appear fixated on the marks they receive for assignments rather than the feedback they receive. Students with this attitude are exceptionally difficult to teach as they show very little improvement in their writing. Being completely marks-orientated, these students seem to disregard the feedback on their essays unless the mark they receive is unsatisfactory to them; this means that they do not learn from the feedback in the same way as the struggling or excelling students do. This is not a factor which is documented in the student responses to either the qualitative data from the surveys or the student interviews, but one does hear a particularly frank student make similar points from time to time.

Returning to the point that if students are passing they perceive themselves to be coping and as a result feel they are well-enough prepared: when one combines the 15 graphs on student perceptions of preparedness the following general trend is observed:

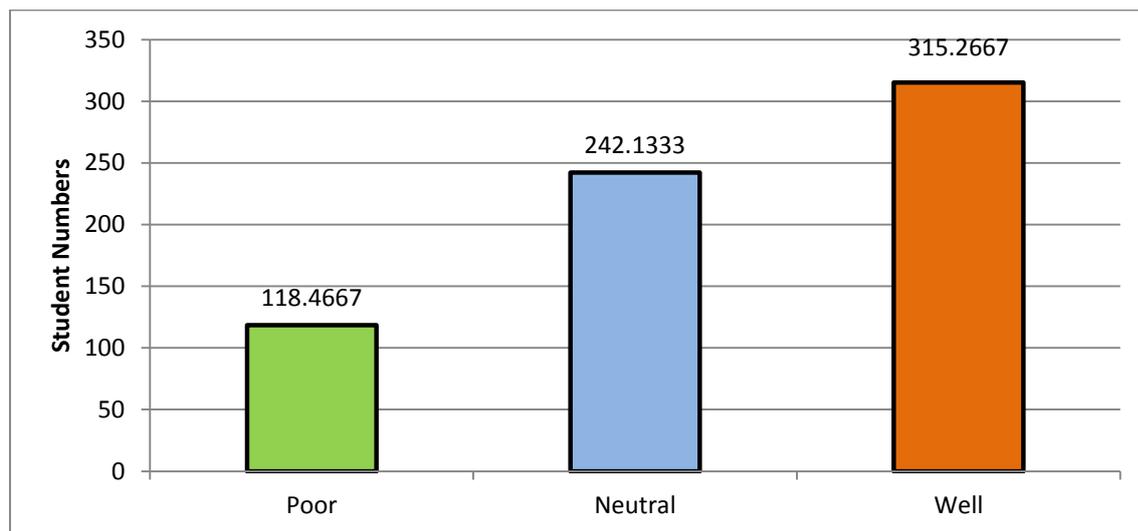


Figure 3.1: Average student perception of preparedness

⁸⁷ See figure A.2.12 to refresh on the 2011 mark groupings in English 178.

The largest group of students, (46.7%) perceive themselves to be “well prepared”, with 35.9% perceiving their level of preparedness to be “neutral” and 17.5% perceiving their level of preparedness as “poor”. Unlike the 2009 National Benchmark Test results, one cannot group the “neutral” responses with the “poor” responses, because while it was suggested that the students whose performance on the “academic literacy” tests was rated as “intermediate” would require support in order to graduate, the students reporting themselves as “neutral” do not appear to be requiring extra assistance in passing English 178.

From the fact that only 80 students failed English 178 in 2011 it appears that, despite the concerns raised by the research into student preparedness, in terms of academic literacy in particular, the overwhelming majority of English 178 students have the necessary skills to successfully complete the course. This is supported by the fact that more than half of the deregistered or incomplete students were also passing at the time when they dropped-out of the course (Figure A. 2.41). One has to conclude, then, that in terms of results the 2011 English 178 class, was, as a whole, well-enough prepared and their perceptions indicated this fairly clearly too.

That, however, is hardly the end of the discussion, because the tutors and lecturers views differ quite starkly from those of the students and the former seem more closely aligned with those expressed in The National Benchmark Test Project report. One has to question, then, whether the English 178 course is appropriately testing the students’ “academic literacy”. The problem with this, however, is that it is not an academic literacy course and therefore is not geared to testing academic literacy specifically. So one must then ask if students who are not competent in terms of academic literacy are still able to pass English 178?

At this point, with the data available, it would be mere speculation to attempt to reach a conclusion in this regard. One can, however, question the standard of the course. One of the lecturers stated quite explicitly that “we have dropped the standard quite a bit in the first-year to accommodate the weaker students” (Interview 1: Lecturer). The students’ feedback, however, contradicts this: 195 or 29% of the students rated the course as “too demanding and difficult a course” (Survey Question 60) while the majority of students (54%) rated the course as “fair and challenging” (Figure A.2.49). From the qualitative student feedback it appears that the difficulty of the work is not the factor which makes the course challenging. Students

report that “difficulty wise it was [fine], just the workload” proved problematic (Interview 4: Students).

It is, however, surprising to note that generally 17.5% of the students felt “poorly” prepared for the various aspects of the course assessed by the survey questions on student perceptions of preparedness, while 29% felt the course was too demanding. This perhaps shows again that while students perceive themselves to be prepared academically, they are less prepared in terms of time management. It is clear from the graphical representation of the students’ responses to the time management questions (Figures A2.29 to A2.31) that this is an area where students struggle – and they are aware of their struggles. It is, however, interesting to note that the lecturers and tutors do not believe the course workload to be as demanding.

One tutor drew on the experiences of the Literary Studies first-year course at Rhodes University, where reportedly there are “five compulsory periods a week [... and] three to four texts a term [...] compare[d] to the workload [in the English 178 course at Stellenbosch University, where they have 3 periods a week and] one novel a term” (Interview 3: Tutors). The tutor concluded by wondering, “If we demanded more of them would they produce more?” (Interview 3: Tutors).

This approach is taken during the *Jane Eyre* section of the course, where students are expected to hand in research tasks during every tutorial on the novel. When tutors enforce this ruling strictly it can lead to the class being well prepared to debate issues brought up in the task, which the tutorial lesson plans then focus on. While this technique is by and large successful, it is not completely without its problems. The rescheduling of the course to make *Jane Eyre* the final text in 2012 has created time for an extra lecture on the text, but it has resulted in the research tasks being due during the busiest time of the academic year. With students writing essential predicate tests⁸⁸ and handing in final essays for most of their subjects, the more academically “savvy” students realise that the research tasks are less important to their overall marks. What the 2012 students did not realise is that the research tasks could not count for marks because of a scheduling error by the lecturer responsible for the teaching the component. All the assignment marks needed to be handed in by the October

⁸⁸ The end of semester tests are often referred to, by students at Stellenbosch University, as predicate or ‘pred’ tests because they determine if the student is allowed to write the final examination for non-continuous evaluation subjects. To gain entrance to the exams for non-continuous evaluation subjects students need a predicate mark of at least 40%.

23 (2012) in order for the university to make the predicate or continuous assessment marks available to the students before the beginning of the November examinations on the October 29. The due date for the completed research task portfolio on *Jane Eyre* was October 24, which provides an example of the poor planning and administration exhibited by the course coordinators and lecturers in the English 178 course.

Although the research focused on the 2011 perceptions, the English 178 course in a broader sense provides the context for many of these perceptions. The aforementioned oversight in planning was just one of many small issues which marred English 178 in 2012. Some of these issues can perhaps be explained by the conflict which was beginning to boil to the surface in the first-year course. The first semester of 2012 was particularly disrupted, with the early assessment task changing twice (once after tutors had explained it to the students). The course hand-outs for the poetry section were also not ready in time for the beginning of the course, resulting in three separate hand-outs being given to students, when in the past all the semester's notes would have been compiled into one document. Disorganisation prevailed throughout much of the first semester, with tutors "doing [their] own thing" in the writing classes in particular (Interview 3: Tutors).

The disorganisation and the perceived lack of commitment shown by lecturers to the English 178 course could be as a result of the multiple, often conflicting, needs that the course is attempting to meet. Lecturers perceive the course as an introduction to Literary Studies course – hence they believe the course teaches "an interlocking of skills" (Interview 1: Lecturer), with "critical analysis" being one of the primary skills taught (Interview 2: Lecturer). Tutors, however, appear more concerned with the shortcomings they perceive in the students' skills and would prefer to teach "academic [... and] professional communication" skills (Interview 3: Tutors). Students pick up on this conflict and their answers to the survey and interview questions regarding "the two most important concepts/values/things [they] learnt from the course" (Survey Question 61), or "the main skill [they] learnt in English 178" (Interview Questions: Students) are rather vague at times.

During an interview one student claimed that English 178 taught her to "see more than just what is on the page, you know the deeper meaning" (Interview 6: Students). This view is echoed in the Qualitative Survey Feedback where students responded with comments like: "be neutral and look deeper", "things in books/notes are not what they seem" and

“reading between the lines” (Qualitative Survey Feedback 82). These responses indicate the beginnings of a critical reading of texts, but one would expect that after a year of literary studies classes students would be comfortable enough with the vocabulary of the subject to state that they learnt to perform “critical analysis” of texts (Qualitative Survey Feedback 84). Of the 71 students who answered the question regarding what they learnt in the English 178 course, only 8 mentioned the word “analysis” in any form and only one put the term “critical analysis” together and used it as students of literary studies traditionally would.

This perhaps shows that students are not learning what lecturers expect them to learn from the course, but admittedly there is not enough data to draw a firm conclusion in this regard. The limited numbers of students claiming to have learnt what the lecturers claimed the course teaches is reason for concern and this should be researched independently, in order to help gauge the success of the English 178 course.

With regard to academic writing, the students’ responses are a little more heartening. 60% of the respondents to the survey question (Figure A2.47) regarding their academic writing skills at the end of the course responded that they “have a much better idea of how to write an academic essay for English” (Survey Question 55). It is, however, concerning that only 15% of the 2011 class felt (Figure A2.47), at the end of the academic year, that they “know exactly what an academic essay in English requires of” them (Survey Question 55). This fact perhaps points to another failing in the course: if so few students are learning to analyse texts in English 178, and only 15% exit the course feeling competent at academic writing, then what is the course really teaching? The diversity of answers to the open-ended survey question (61) points to the alarming realisation that students are perhaps also unsure of exactly what they learnt in the course.

Some Literary Studies lecturers will undoubtedly argue that what literary studies teaches is difficult to pin down with a firm and workable definition, and this is why students find it so difficult to explain what they have learnt in the first-year course. As a postgraduate student in the English Department I can fully appreciate the ambiguity of the field and the manner in which it resists the increasing global pressure towards specialisation and specificity in disciplines. One must however question whether exposing students to this level of ambiguity (possibly unintentionally) is constructive. Surely laying a solid foundation for academic enquiry would be more useful to students in the longer term?

It is arguable that the majority of students do not recognise the ambiguity consciously as their focus is on passing the subject and progressing, rather than on skills development. It is perhaps only later in their academic careers that they will recognise the missed opportunities of their first-year. Once again, I draw on my own personal experience here: it was only in my Honours year that I realised that my undergraduate studies had failed to provide me with the foundation in literary studies theory which lecturers expected me to possess.

From the nature of the argument presented in this thesis it should be clear that it is exceptionally difficult to discuss perceptions of student preparedness for English 178. This, above all, is because of the uncertainty surrounding what the course should be teaching and what it is teaching. To reiterate the point made at the beginning of this chapter: in a purely results-orientated evaluation, the students' perceptions of their own preparedness are in general accurate, and they are well enough prepared to pass English 178. Are they well enough prepared for a true foundation course in English Literary Studies? That is less clear. Are they well enough prepared for a course which teaches formal academic writing in the English language?

This question is the maypole around which this thesis has danced, flitting close at times and swooping dramatically away at others. The lecturers' perceptions on 2011 English 178 student preparedness are arguably less grounded than the tutors' perceptions, as they have such limited contact with the students. The students' own perceptions are so intertwined with their results that it is impossible to extrapolate with any certainty regarding the development of actual skills. Given the students' fixation on marks, is there not a need for a subject like English Literary Studies to attempt to shift the focus from marks to skills development?

Returning to perceptions of the student preparedness; the at times much maligned, tutors are perhaps the most reliable judges in this regard as they echo the findings of the 2009 National Benchmark Test report, though without the specifics of being able to assign a firm percentage to the number of students they feel are poorly prepared. That being said, the surprised reaction of one tutor to the statement that 28% (Figure A.2.22) of students reported feeling poorly prepared for writing academic essays was to remark that he/she "would have

thought it would have been 50%” (Interview 3: Tutors). The remark was hardly intended as an objective assessment of the number of struggling students, but it does illustrate that tutors feel that students are underreporting their difficulties. The tutors’ feedback is not without its problems though. They tend to be fatalistic in their views of the course and the students, speaking only of extremes and lost causes. This hardly makes allowance for the multitude of levels of preparedness.

In order to better assess the real skills students possess, one needs to introduce a standardised test. This should be a low-stakes⁸⁹ test, administered within the course and could (or arguably should) replace the current early assessment exercise⁹⁰. An academic essay, though it offers many variables and though there are still some questions regarding the use of an academic essay as a means of assessment could work when marked according to the following grid or scheme rather than in the traditional manner. By marking using these grids one focuses more on the factors which the designer of this marking scheme, Archer, considers to be the important aspects of academic literacy. One must still question whether the academic essay is the most suitable means of testing for academic literacy, but in terms of testing for preparedness for academic writing, a combination of the essay and the following grids could prove more effective than the current method⁹¹:

⁸⁹ The test is low-stakes as it does not count towards the student’s final marks for the subject, as is the case with the current early assessment exercise and as it is administered once the student is already enrolled, and it does not affect the student’s entrance into the institution of higher education, unlike the National Benchmark Tests.

⁹⁰ The current English 178 early assessment exercise takes the form of an academic essay written in class on a poem the students have not had an opportunity to prepare to write a task on. It is arguably a poor test of the student’s real abilities as it is done before any significant teaching can occur and as a result the students are effectively thrown in at the deep-end, writing in a style and format many no experience in.

⁹¹ See Appendix 4, from pages 212 to 230 for an example of the two forms of marking in application.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | Criteria |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Organisation | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student focused on the task and answered the questions. • There is a clear and detailed introduction and conclusion. • Ideas are clearly stated and supported. • There is a logical sequencing of ideas and paragraphs. • Paragraphs have a strong internal structure, namely one main idea, topic sentences and connectors. • The essay is coherent (Includes links between paragraphs). • Graphs or other visuals have been explained in the written text. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is not sufficiently focused on the task and has some irrelevant detail. • There is a fair introduction and conclusion. • The essay is loosely organised, but the main ideas stand out. • The paragraphs are fairly well formulated. • The argument is logical, but there is problematic sequencing at times. • There is elaboration and support for arguments, but not enough. • Graphs or visuals are not adequately explained in the written text. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay lacks a clear focus on the task. • There is a weak introduction and conclusion. • The ideas are confused and disconnected (rambling, repetitive). • The essay lacks logical sequencing and development. • There is insufficient elaboration. • Graphs or visuals are not referred to in the written text. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is hardly any focus on the task. • There is no organisation or not enough to evaluate. • There is no clear paragraphing. • There is no link between written text and graphs or visuals. |

Figure 3.2: Organisation chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 135).

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Voice and Register | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language used is appropriate for an academic context (i.e. no colloquialisms or slang, no inappropriate jargon). • The writing is not long winded, verbose or repetitive. • There are few euphemisms, clichés or exaggerations. • The first person or third person voice has been used appropriately and consistently for the particular audience. • All sources have been correctly referenced. • There is a clear bibliography with all the relevant information. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An attempt has been made to reference in-text, but there may be problems around the mechanics of this. • The language is generally appropriate for an academic context. • The essay has a bibliography with some of the necessary information missing. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student used some secondary sources, but has not referenced them correctly. • The language is inappropriate to the audience and academic context (overly personal style, emotional adjectives or colloquialisms). • There is not enough referencing of external information and too much reliance on own experience. • The bibliography is sketchy and does not follow standard conventions. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has plagiarised secondary readings – using phrases from these reading without referencing. • The language and organisation is inappropriate for an academic assignment. • There is no bibliography. |

Figure 3.3: Voice and Register chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Language Use | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a few errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The piece is written in clear, complete sentences. • Effective complex sentence constructions are used. • There are few errors in agreement, and tenses, articles, pronouns, prepositions are used correctly. • The sentences are neither too long nor too short. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student uses effective but simple sentence constructions. • Some minor problems in complex constructions exist. • There are several errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns or prepositions. • There are occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, but the meaning is not obscured. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are major problems in simple/complex constructions. • Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, concord, articles, pronouns, prepositions, sentence structure occur. • There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, poor word processing. • The meaning is confused or obscured. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is virtually no understanding of sentence construction rules. • It is difficult to understand the meaning. • The writing is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The poor word-processing hinders meaning. |

Figure 3.4: Language Use chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

These charts are particularly useful in gauging student academic literacy, as one can see in Appendix 4, and should possibly be implemented as a tool to do just that twice per annum. A strict implementation of this marking scheme could provide interesting information on the students' progress in terms of acquiring academic literacy, rather than just gauging their progress in terms of passing the course, as is the current situation.

Speculation at this point could well be more worthwhile than it has proved to be in recent years. In 2013 the English 178 course will operate on a reported 80% of its 2012 budget, which could force lecturers to take up tutorial classes as the department will not be able to hire as many tutors as it has done in the recent past. In addition to this, the English Department is being audited in 2013, which in the light of the infighting and poor organisation which marred much of the 2012 academic year could enforce a shake-up in 2014. One can only hope that if any changes are to be made to the English 178 course the concerns raised by this thesis will be heeded by the course coordinators.

The stated aim of this research was to reduce the need for speculation regarding the levels of preparedness for academic essay writing exhibited by English 178 students. As the research has progressed it became clear that while tutors and lecturers feel that a large number of students are poorly prepared, the number of students who perceive themselves to be poorly prepared is significantly less. The difficulty encountered by the research has time and again proven to be the nature of the English 178 course itself. Perhaps the most striking finding of this research is that an overhaul the first-year English Literary Studies course is clearly needed. The only indicator students have to gauge their levels of preparedness is the course itself, and if the course is not challenging enough, as some of the interviewees strongly suggested, then this is no fault of the individual students. The course is letting them down by not being sufficiently challenging. As one of the lecturers said: "I think [we have] a group of very poor students that we are trying to accommodate because we have dropped the standard in the first-year, but we are in fact not teaching them the skills that they need" (Interview 1: Lecturer).

With this in mind, this thesis concludes by restating the key roles of a teacher, as expressed by Elbow: teachers have to balance the "obligations to students [with the]... obligation to knowledge and society" (Elbow, 327). One cannot help but wonder if the English 178 is managing to do either. By dropping the standard it is neither helping the students gain skills or knowledge, nor is it fulfilling its "obligation to knowledge and society" (Elbow 327). The very real risk is that with the focus on throughput of students and staff and on postgraduate research output, the teaching of undergraduates is/will be neglected. Regardless of the students' level of preparedness, they need to be provided with a quality education. One has to question though if the English 178 course in its current guise is capable of doing so.

3.2. Possible Future Research

Emerging from this research it is clear that one should question what the English 178 course actually teaches the first-year English Literary Studies students. Therefore, I would suggest that before any significant changes are made to the course a study should be made of what exactly the course teaches and how this aligns with the desired learning outcomes.

In addition to this proposed further research, similar studies should be made of the second- and third-year courses to assess if the students are gaining what they should from those courses. From the standard and number of honours applications for 2013, it appears that the third-year course in particular is functioning well in its role as a feeder course for the Honours course. It would be interesting to discover, however, if this is a result of the strength of the course as a whole, or a result the strength of a few of the small-group electives and the lecturers teaching those electives.

The final concern I would like to raise in this thesis is with regard to the students' academic literacy. I feel that a low-stakes test (as advocated on page 96) would provide a much useful data for evaluating the number of students who truly need further academic assistance. The original function of the early assessment exercise has been neglected by the English 178 course for too long and a test of academic literacy could serve the students, tutors, and lecturers better than the current test. By making use of the same text, question, and by using Archer's academic literacy marking scheme, the test results will be readily comparable from year to year, and this could also reduce the need for speculation regarding the standard of high school graduates' academic literacy. Before such measures can be implemented, a study should be undertaken to determine if this approach would be feasible and if it would yield the valuable data.

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Appendix 1: 2011 English 178 Survey

The following survey was compiled by Dr. Shaun Viljoen and Mr. Seamus Allardice as a revision of the 2007 English 178 Survey. It was then structured by Miss Veronica Beukes of the Centre of Teaching and Learning in order for the responses to be electronically recorded.



Universiteit Stellenbosch University
ENGLISH 178

Plak nommer hier
Paste number here

We are keen to know what you think of the English 178 module. Besides the usual formal evaluation, we ask that you take fifteen minutes to answer, anonymously and in a considered way, the following questions. If you find you want to make further comments on a question, there is space at the end of the question or right at the end for additional comments. We will use your responses in our research about the course and to help us rethink what we do in English 178 and how we do it.

Thank you for your honest and thoughtful feedback.

Note: Where you are given a choice, please tick the appropriate box.

| YOUR DETAILS | | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Home Language(s) | English <input type="checkbox"/> | Afrikaans <input type="checkbox"/> | Xhosa <input type="checkbox"/> | English and Afrikaans <input type="checkbox"/> | English and Xhosa <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state) <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| Matric level of English | Home Language <input type="checkbox"/> | | First Additional Language <input type="checkbox"/> | | Second Additional Language <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Matric symbol for English | A <input type="checkbox"/> | B <input type="checkbox"/> | C <input type="checkbox"/> | D <input type="checkbox"/> | E <input type="checkbox"/> | Other <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Specify which degree and programme you are registered for (i.e. BA Humanities or B.Ed Foundation Phase): | | | | | | |
| Why did you do English 178? | | | | | | |
| I willingly chose it as a selection course within my programme. | | | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is a compulsory course within my programme so I had to do it. | | | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I chose it as an additional course to my programme simply because I was interested in the module. | | | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Are you going to do English 278? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | Why? | | | |
| Did you start the year intending to do English as a major? | | | | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| Do you now, at the end of 2011, want to major in English? | | | | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| HOW PREPARED WERE YOU FOR ENGLISH 178? | | | | | | |
| On a scale of 1 (very poorly) to 5 (exceptionally well), rate how well you feel your pre-university education and life prepared you for the following: | Very Poorly | Poorly | Neutral | Well | Exceptionally Well | |
| Literacy : | | | | | | |
| Reading and understanding literary texts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reading and understanding secondary critical texts | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Reading the volume of texts you are expected to in English 178 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Articulation: | | | | | | |
| Writing academic essays | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Writing English 178 semester tests | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To have the confidence to answer questions in tutorials and lectures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To verbally express yourself clearly in tutorials and lectures | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Analysis: | | | | | | |
| To develop a personal interpretation of a text | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To perform close readings (discover meaningful patterns in texts) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To engage secondary readings in your interpretation of a text | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | Very Poorly | Poorly | Neutral | Well | Exceptionally well |
|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Time Management: | | | | | |
| To successfully manage the conflicting workloads of your courses | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To successfully estimate the time required to complete an English 178 assignment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To successfully complete the required reading for English 178 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Interaction in an Academic Setting: | | | | | |
| To cultivate academically beneficial relationships with your peers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To cultivate appropriate relationships with your tutors and lecturers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In two sentences say what your pre-university education and life prepared you for in terms of English 178: | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| In two sentences say what your pre-university education life failed to prepare you for in terms of English 178: | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH 178 | | | | | |
| On a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (exceptionally good), rate the following aspects of English 178: | Very Poor | Poor | Neutral | Good | Exceptionally good |
| The effectiveness of the tutorial method of teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The effectiveness of the big lecture method of teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The use of WebStudies to communicate administrative aspects of the course requirements | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The use of Webstudies to help you get to grips with a particular module or text | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The use of WebStudies to provide secondary or critical material | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The following questions are for Students' whose tutors marked electronically. | Very Poor | Poor | Neutral | Good | Exceptionally good |
| How would you rate the electronic marking programme? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| How would you rate the feedback you received from your tutor? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| How helpful were the links to the OWL website? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To what extend did the electronic marking programme help you to improve your academic writing? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Would you make use of a WebStudies based Computer Assisted Language Learning Programme? (CALL was used previously to test and develop basic English Language skills) | | | | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| One-on-one consultations with Tutors were: | | | | | |
| Never useful <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes useful <input type="checkbox"/> Often useful <input type="checkbox"/> Always helpful <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | |
| Which modes of delivery did you prefer this year in English 178? | Lectures <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Both lectures and Tutorials <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Tutorials <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Why? | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Which one of the big lectures was the best?</p> <p>Text and Context <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Nervous Conditions <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Master Harold <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Much Ado <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Jane Eyre <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Truman Show <input type="checkbox"/></p> | <p>Which one of the big lectures was the worst?</p> <p>Text and Context <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Nervous Conditions <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Master Harold <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Much Ado <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Jane Eyre <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Truman Show <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> <p>Plak nommer hier Paste number here</p> <p>_____</p> </div> | |
| Why? | Why? |
| <p>The questions in the course hand-outs on Poetry, Short Stories and the main lecture texts (choose one):</p> <p>Were a great help in preparing for and analysing the texts and must be kept <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Were sometimes helpful in preparing for and analysing the texts <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Were helpful, but the questions were generally too leading or easy <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Made no difference to my preparation and learning <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Were of no help whatsoever and must not be used in future <input type="checkbox"/></p> | |
| WRITING ASSESSMENT | |
| <p>Opportunities to develop academic writing in English 178 were: (choose one)</p> | <p>Too few <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too many but still helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Far too many <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>I visited the writing lab and found the sessions were: (choose one)</p> | <p>Never of any help to me <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Often very helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Occasionally helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I never went <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>I visited the Academic Assistance tutors and found the sessions were: (choose one)</p> | <p>Never of any help to me <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Often very helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Occasionally helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I never went <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>Formal end-of-term tests as a means of assessments were: (choose one)</p> | <p>A useless exercise <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too many <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Inaccurate as reflection of progress <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>The two longer academic essays you wrote were: (choose one)</p> | <p>A useless exercise <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too many but still helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate in number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too few <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>Opportunities to develop your creativity were: (choose one)</p> | <p>Too Few <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too many but still helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate in number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Far too many <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>Written comments made on essays by tutors were: (choose one)</p> | <p>A useless exercise <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Appropriate in number <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Far too many <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too few <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Too many but helpful <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| <p>Would you prefer your tutor to mark electronically rather than by hand on a hard copy?</p> | <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Why?</p> |
| OVERALL | |
| <p>By the end of the course: (choose one)</p> <p>I read all the texts fully <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I read about a third of the texts fully <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I read ± 80% of the texts fully <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I read virtually none of the prescribed texts <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>I read about half of the texts fully <input type="checkbox"/></p> | |
| <p>Are there any recommendations or changes you would suggest to ensure more students read the prescribed texts:</p> | |

By the end of the course: (choose one)

- I still have no idea how to write an academic essay for English
- I have some idea of how to write an academic essay for English
- I have a much better idea of how to write an academic essay for English
- I know exactly what an academic essay in English requires of me

Are there any suggestions you would make to improve the teaching of academic writing?

By the end of the course: (choose one)

- I learnt to think more deeply about texts and am keen to read more
- I learnt very little
- I was completely put off reading and thinking about literary and visual texts

How can we inspire you to read more?

How can we inspire you to write more?

Which one of the following phrases best describes English 178 for you?

- Far too easy
- An inspiring course
- An easy course
- Too demanding and difficult a course
- A fair and challenging course

What are the two most important concepts/ values/ things you learnt from the course?

If you were asked to make just one key recommendation to the course coordinator for future English 178 courses, what would this be?

Additional comments, if any:

Appendix 2: Survey Data

The graphical representation of the data compiled from the students' responses to the 2007 and 2012 English 178 surveys.

General Data:

| Break-Down of 2011 Student Numbers | |
|--|------|
| Number of Students registered for English 178 in 2011 | 1202 |
| Number of Repeating Students in 2011 | 222 |
| | |
| Deregistered Students by November 2011 | 59 |
| Incomplete Students by November 2011 | 114 |
| Students who were excluded for plagiarism by November 2011 | 2 |
| Total number of students excluded by November 2011 | 175 |
| | |
| Total number of students writing November semester Test | 1027 |
| Total number of students who pass English 178 in 2011 | 948 |
| Total number of student who failed English 178 in 2011 | 80 |

Figure 2.1: Break-down of 2011 student numbers

| Year | Number of Students | Percentage Increase year on year |
|-------------|---------------------------|---|
| 2002 | 734 | N/A |
| 2003 | 837 | 14% Increase |
| 2004 | 789 | 5.8% Drop |
| 2005 | 848 | 7.4% Increase |
| 2006 | 916 | 8% Increase |
| 2007 | 1004 | 9.6% Increase |
| 2008 | 1069 | 6.5% Increase |
| 2009 | 1018 | 4.7% Drop |
| 2010 | 1120 | 10% Increase |
| 2011 | 1202 | 7.3 % Increase |
| 2012 | 899 | 25.2% Drop |

Figure 2.2: Student numbers and percentage variation year on year since 2002

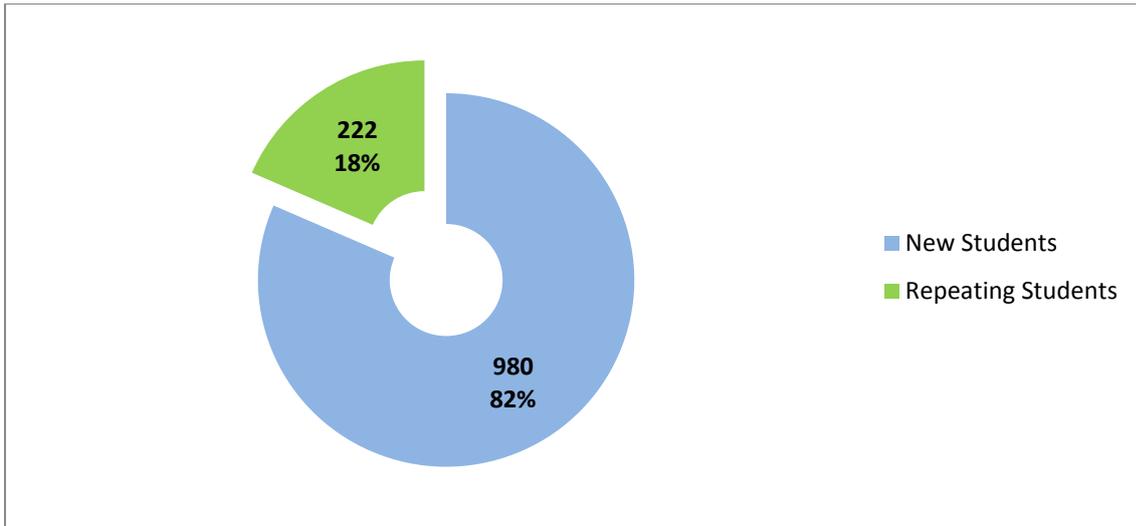


Figure 2.3: Break-up of students registered for English 178 in 2011

Pass / Failure rate and Survey Completion:

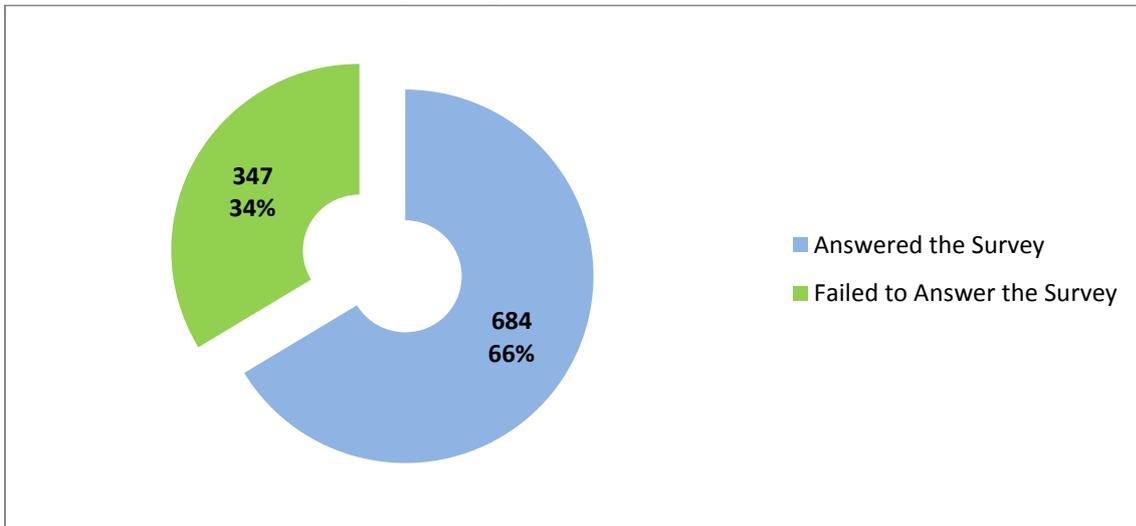


Figure 2.4: Number of students who completed the survey in November 2011

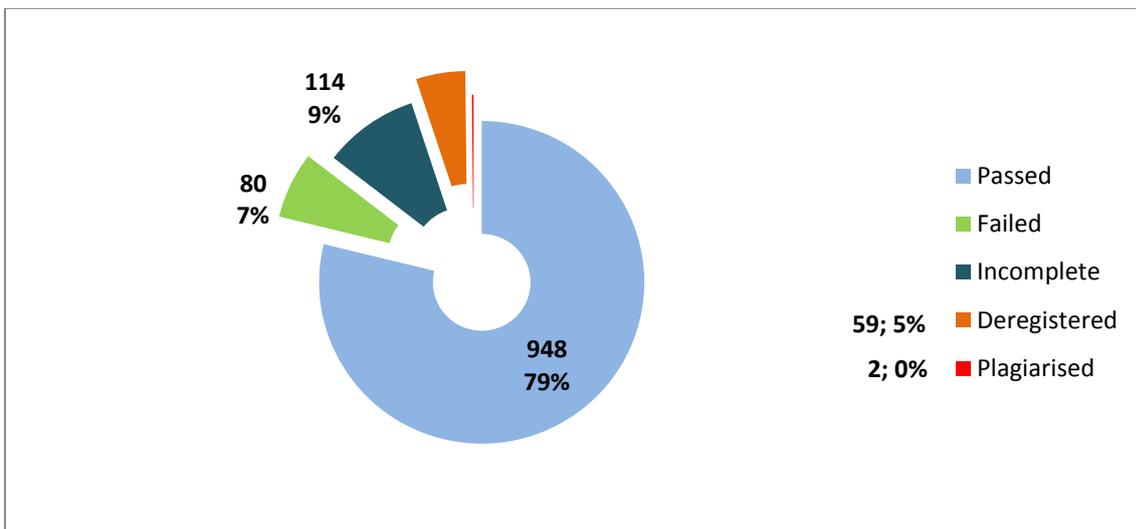


Figure 2.5: Break-up of English 178 students' status at the end of the 2011 academic year

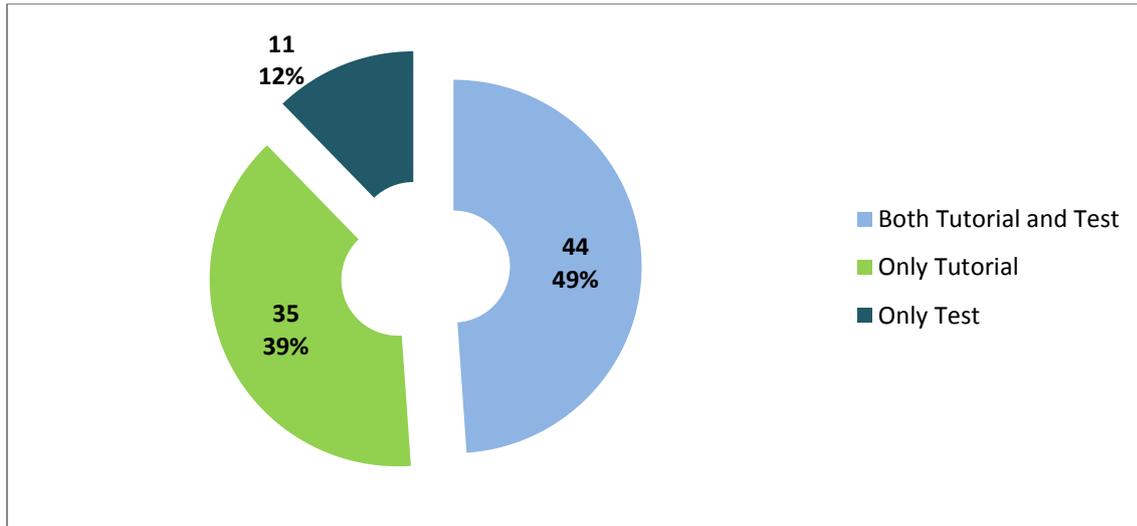


Figure 2.6: Course component failed by students who did not pass English 178 in 2011

Student Language and School:

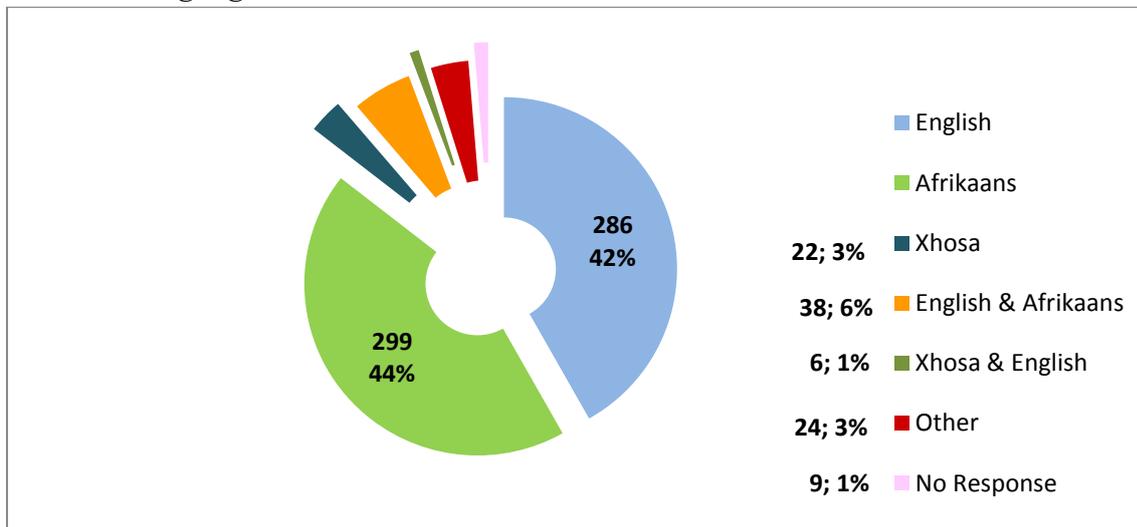


Figure 2.7: 2011 Student home language profiles

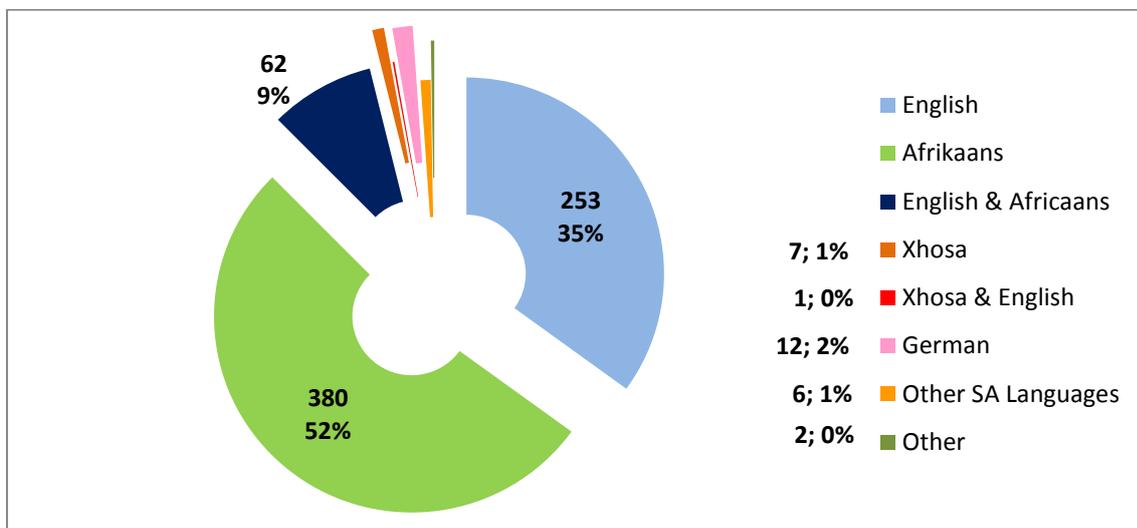


Figure 2.8: 2007 Student home language profiles

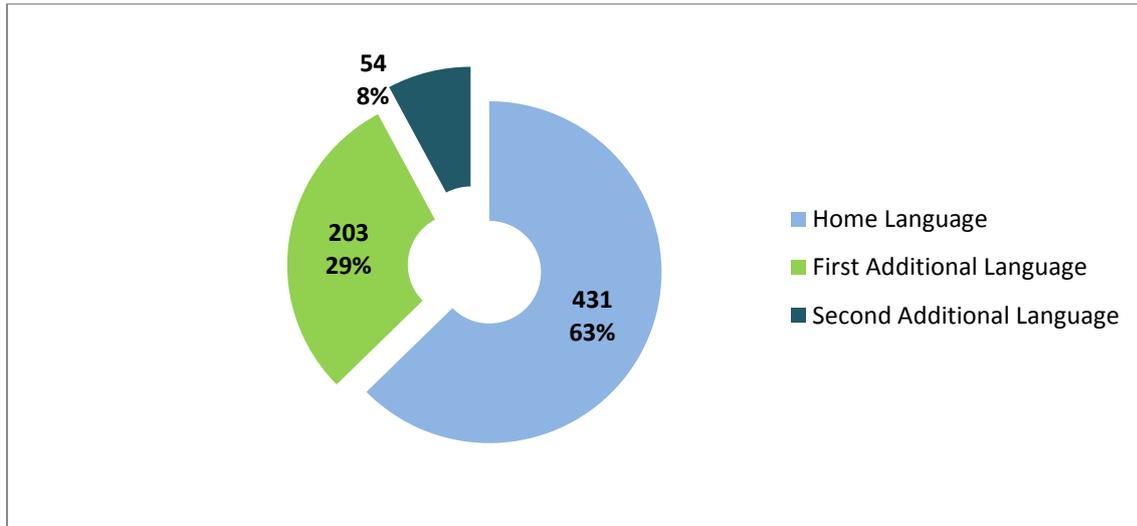


Figure 2.9: Matric level of English

| English Gr 12 [Matric] level and Symbol | A | B | C | D | E | Total |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------|------|-------|
| Home Language | 116 | 187 | 98 | 1 | 0 | 408 |
| | 28.5% | 45.9% | 24.1% | 1.5% | 0.0% | 62% |
| First Additional Language | 47 | 100 | 46 | 3 | 0 | 196 |
| | 24.0% | 51.0% | 23.5% | 1.5% | 0.0% | 30% |
| Second Additional Language | 13 | 18 | 16 | 4 | 1 | 52 |
| | 25.0% | 34.6% | 30.8% | 7.7% | 1.9% | 8% |

Figure 2.10: Matric level and symbol for English (table)

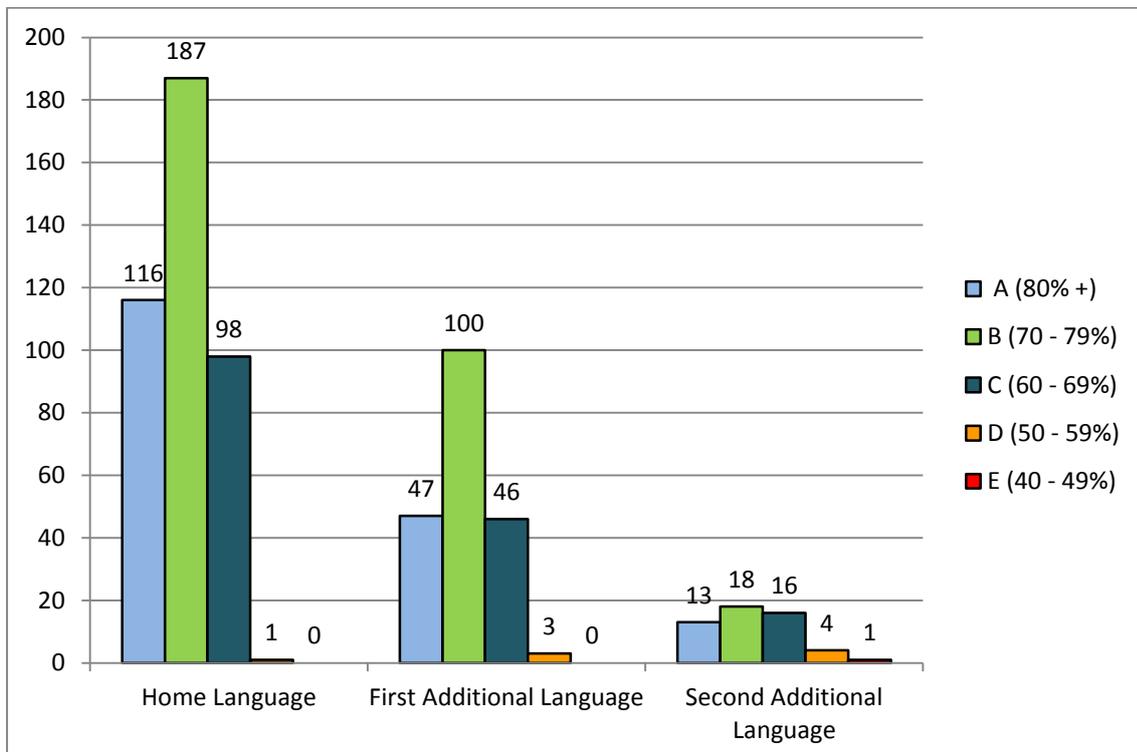


Figure 2.11: Matric level and symbol for English (graph)

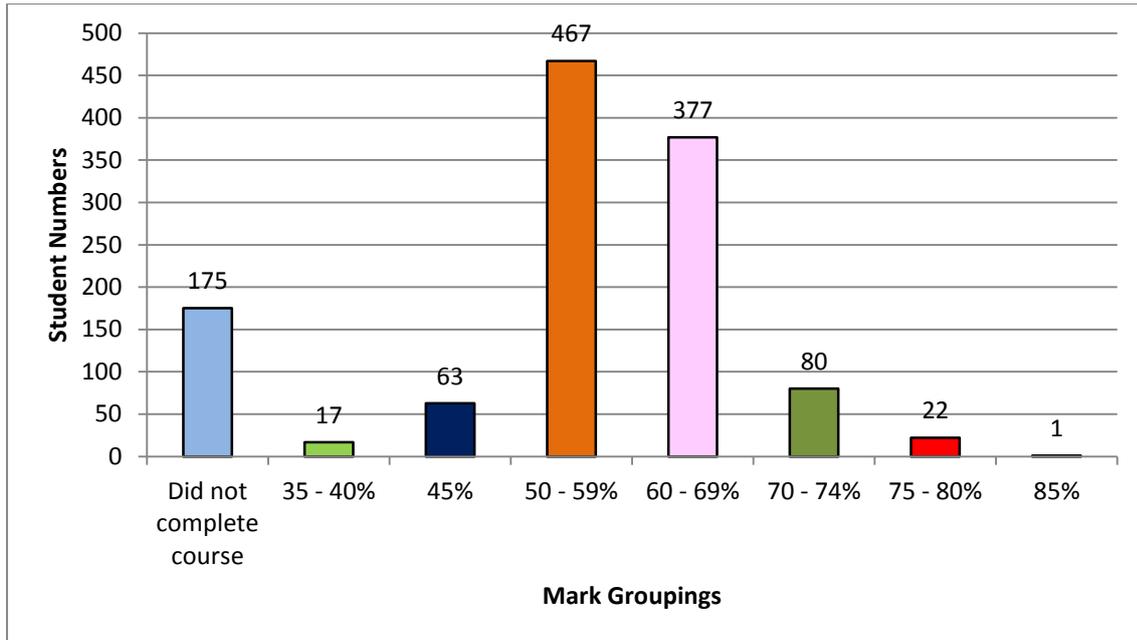


Figure 2.12: Student mark groupings by percentage

Reasons for Taking English and Prospects of further study in English:

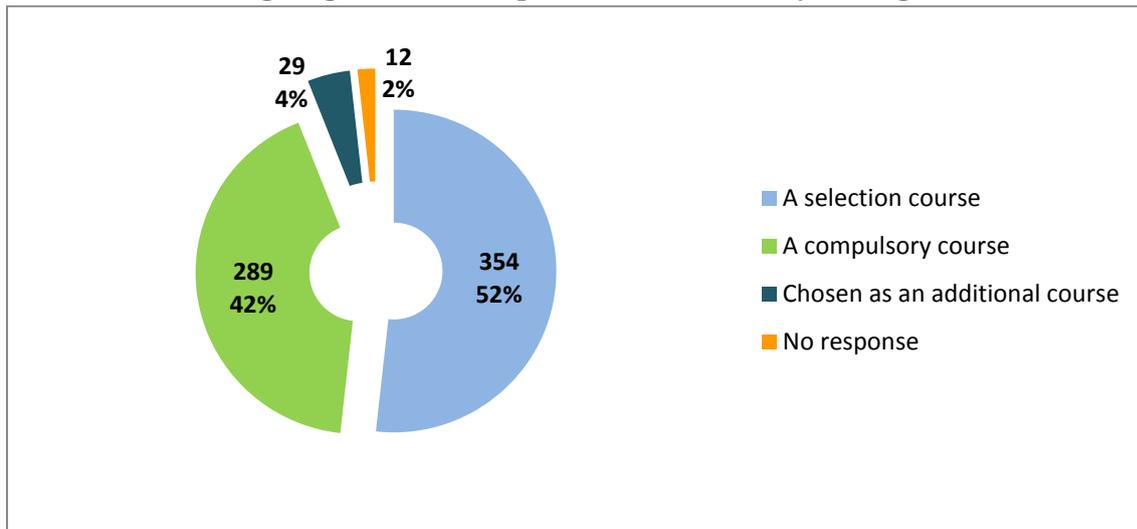


Figure 2.13: Reasons for taking English 178.

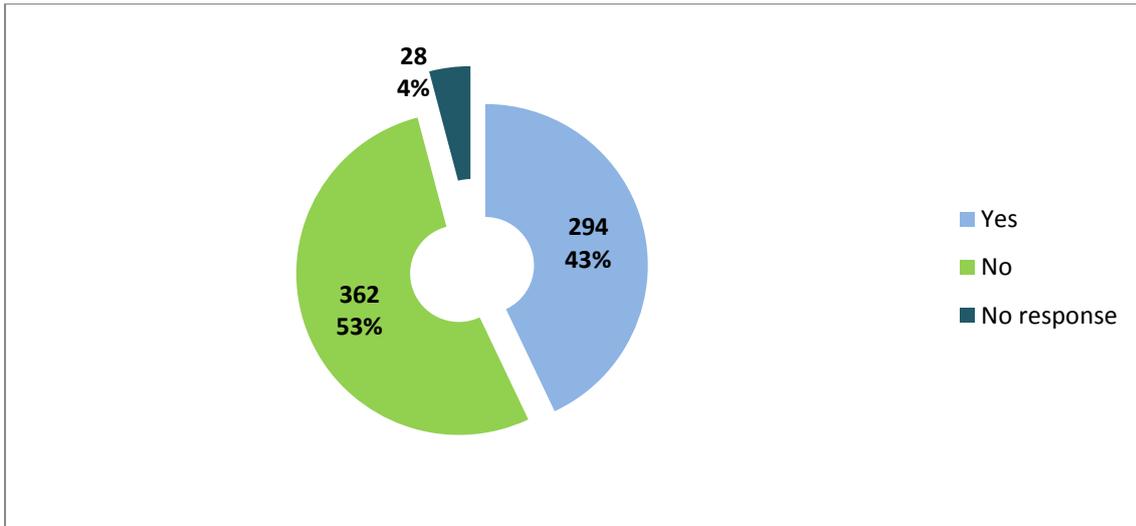


Figure 2.14: Students planning on registering for English 278.

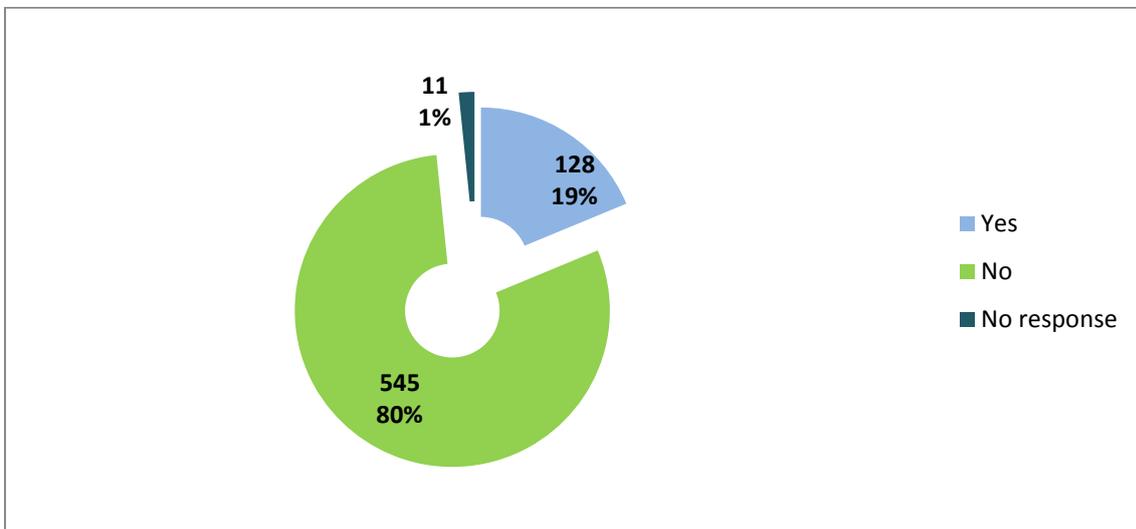


Figure 2.15: Students intending on majoring in English in January 2011.

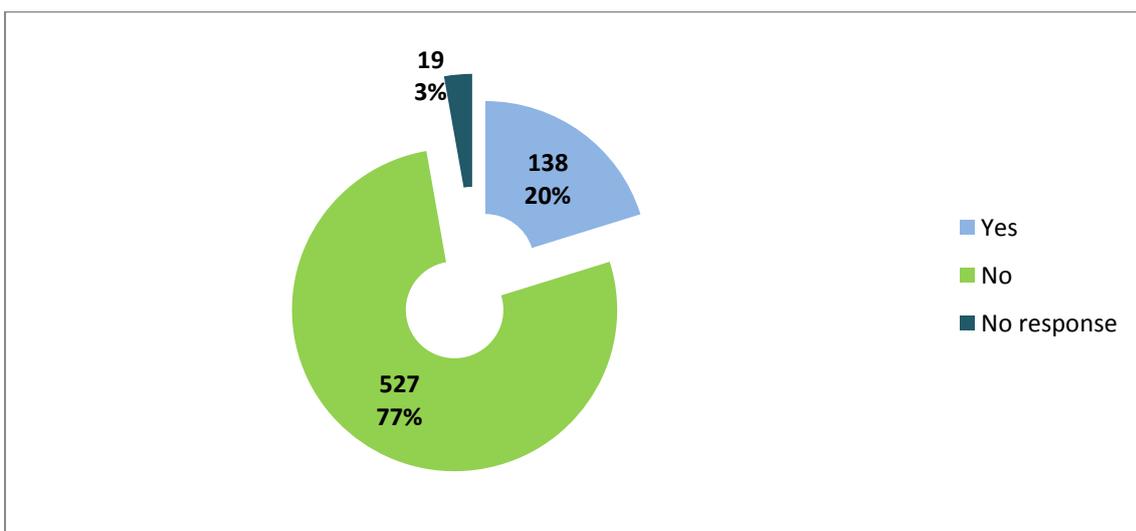


Figure 2.16: Students intending on majoring in English in October 2011.

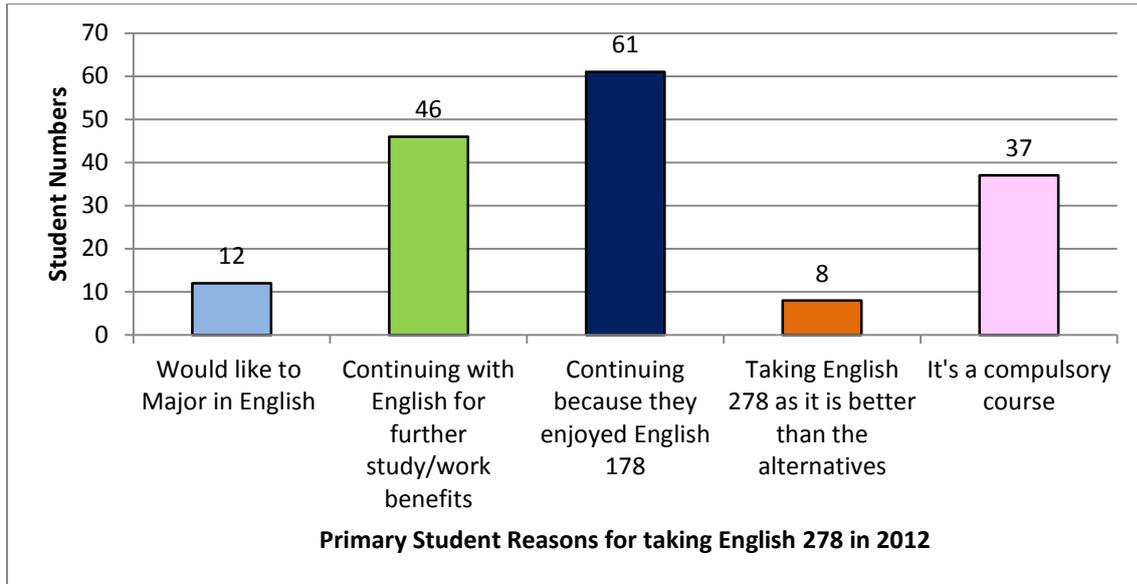


Figure 2.17: Primary reasons for students wanting to continue with English 278

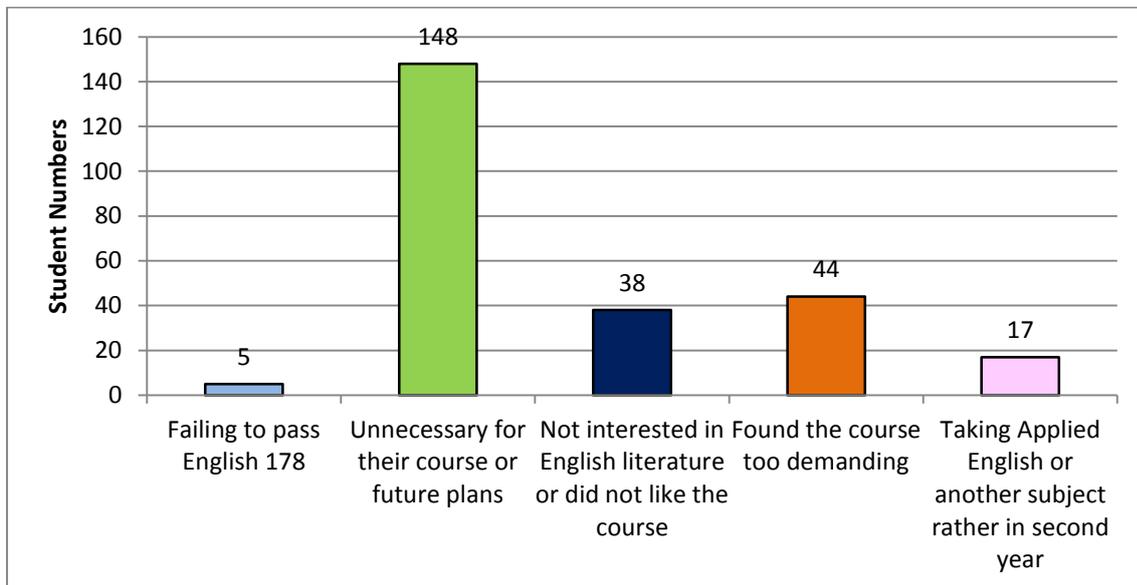


Figure 2.18: Primary reasons for students not wanting to take English 278 in 2012

Student Perceptions of Preparedness

Reading:

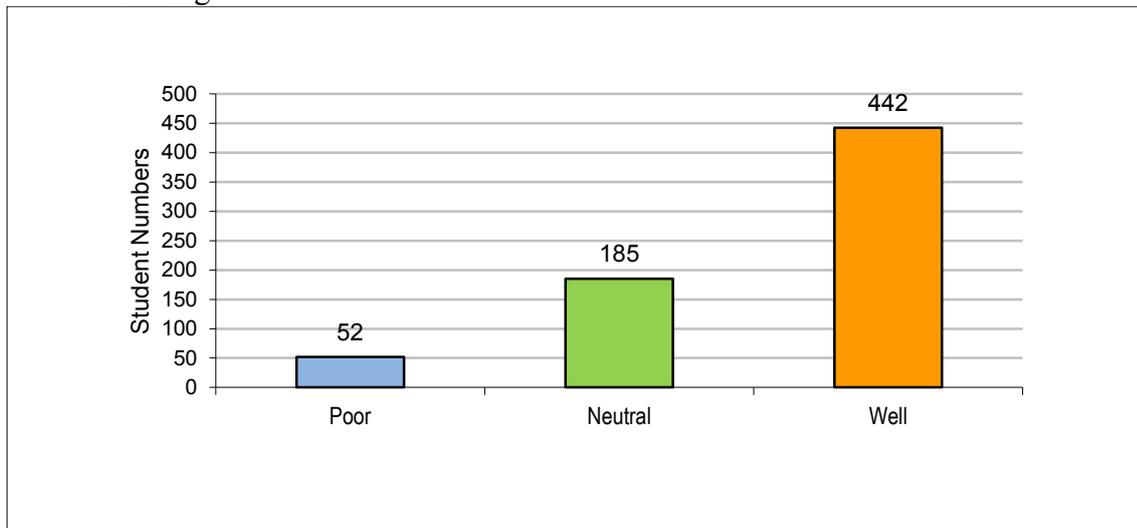


Figure 2.19: Reading and understanding literary texts.

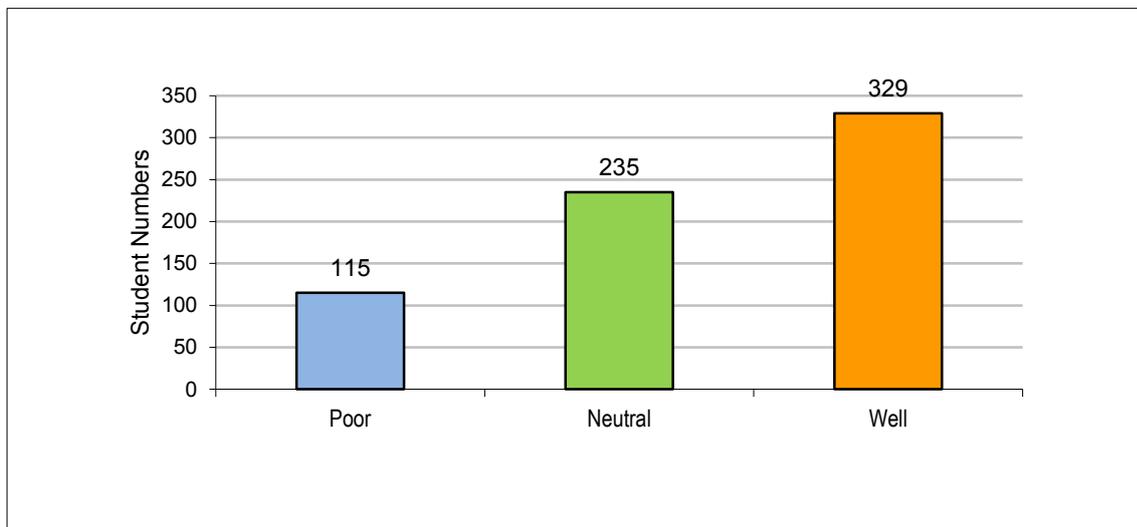


Figure 2.20: Reading and understanding secondary critical resources.

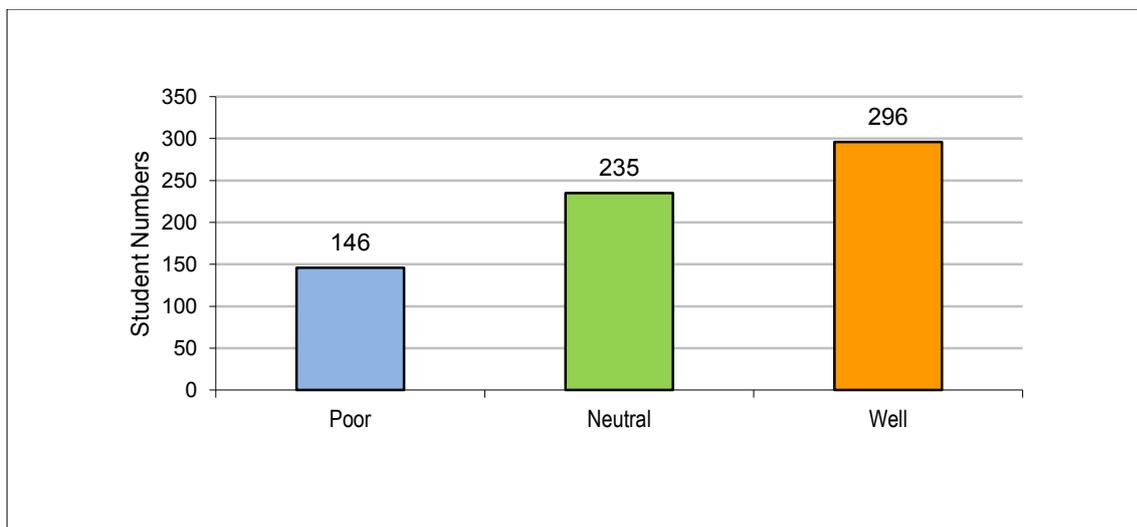


Figure 2.21: Reading the volume of texts you are expected to for English 178.

Articulation:

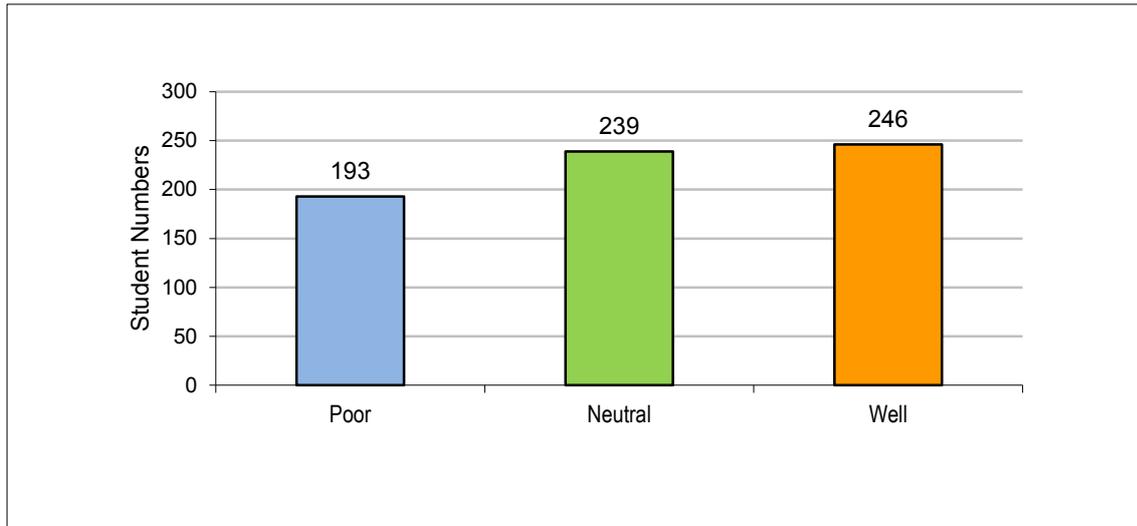


Figure 2.22: Writing academic essays.

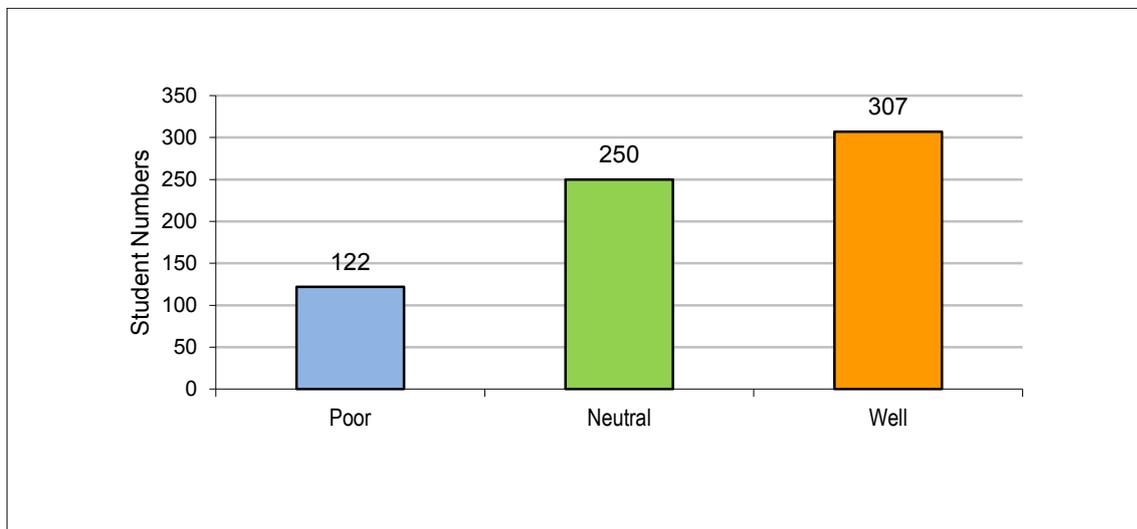


Figure 2.23: Writing English 178 semester tests

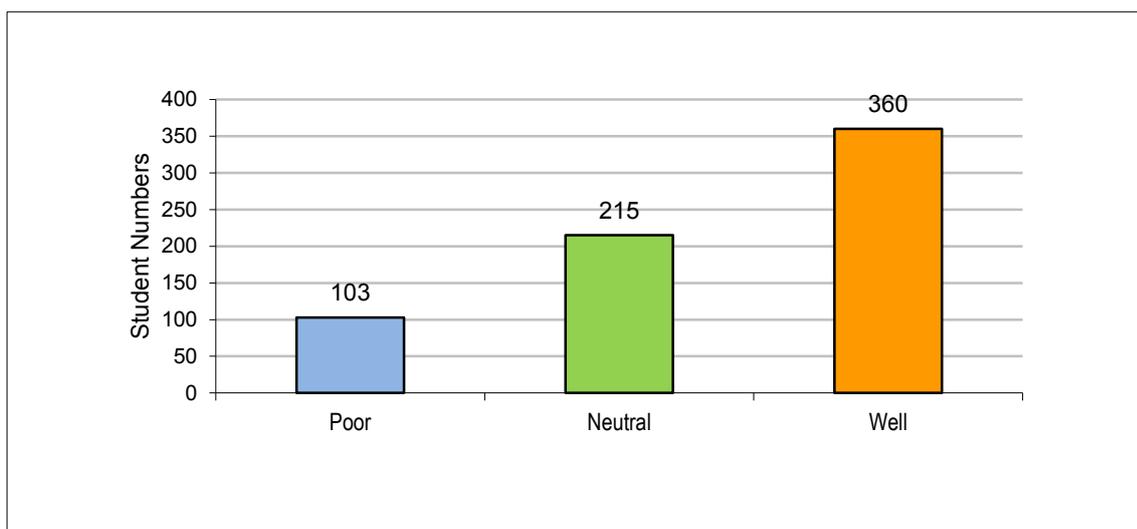


Figure 2.24: To have the confidence to answer questions in tutorials & lectures

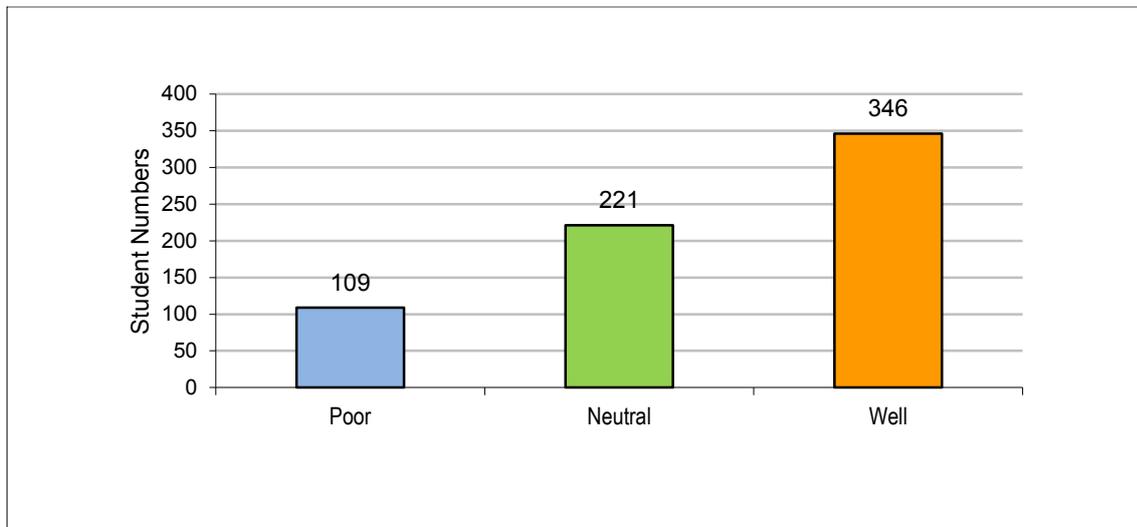


Figure 2.25: To verbally express yourself clearly in tutorials & lectures

Analysis:

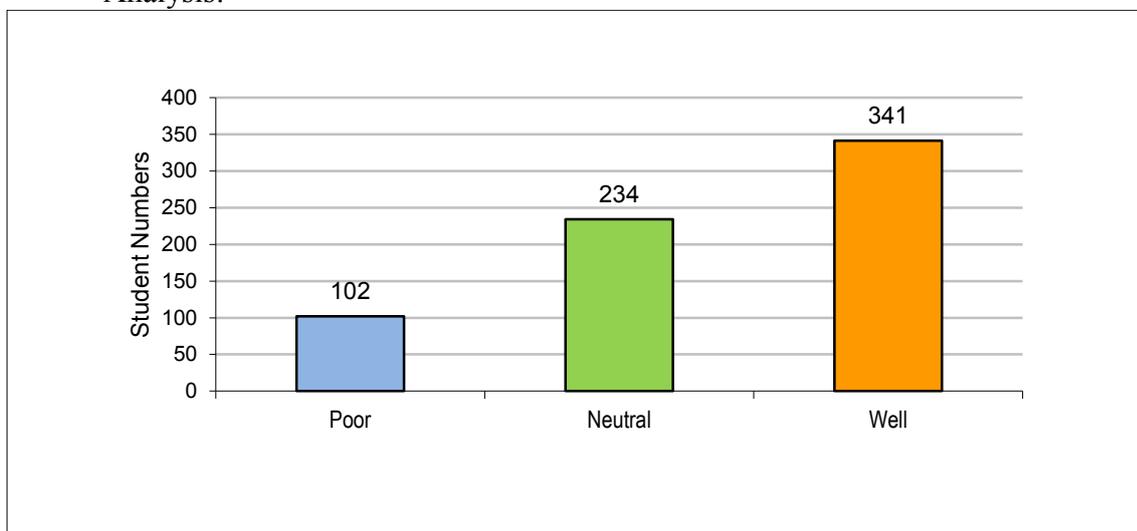


Figure 2.26: To develop a personal interpretation of a text.

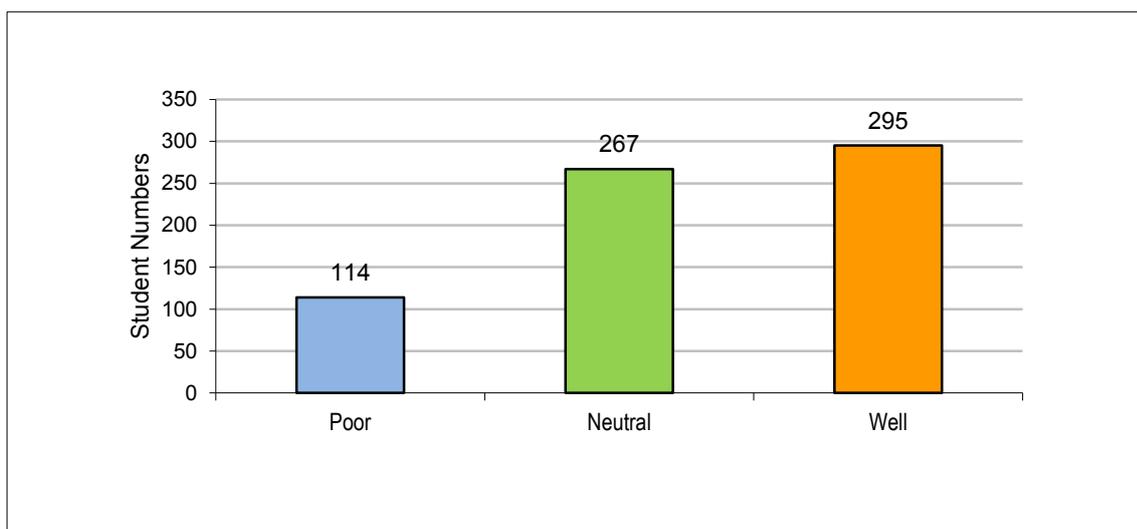


Figure 2.27: To perform a close reading.

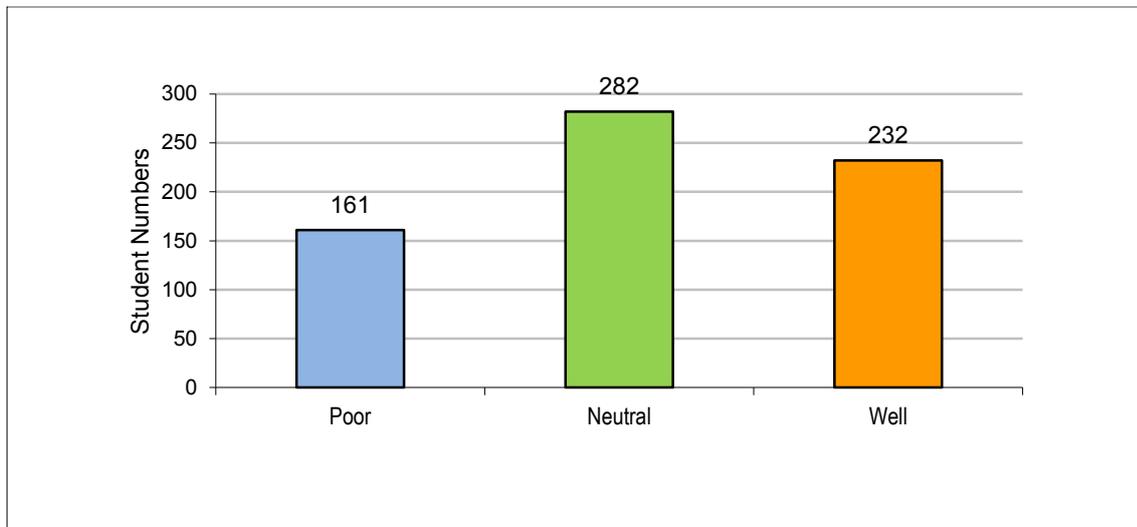


Figure 2.28: Engage secondary readings in your interpretation of a text.

Time Management:

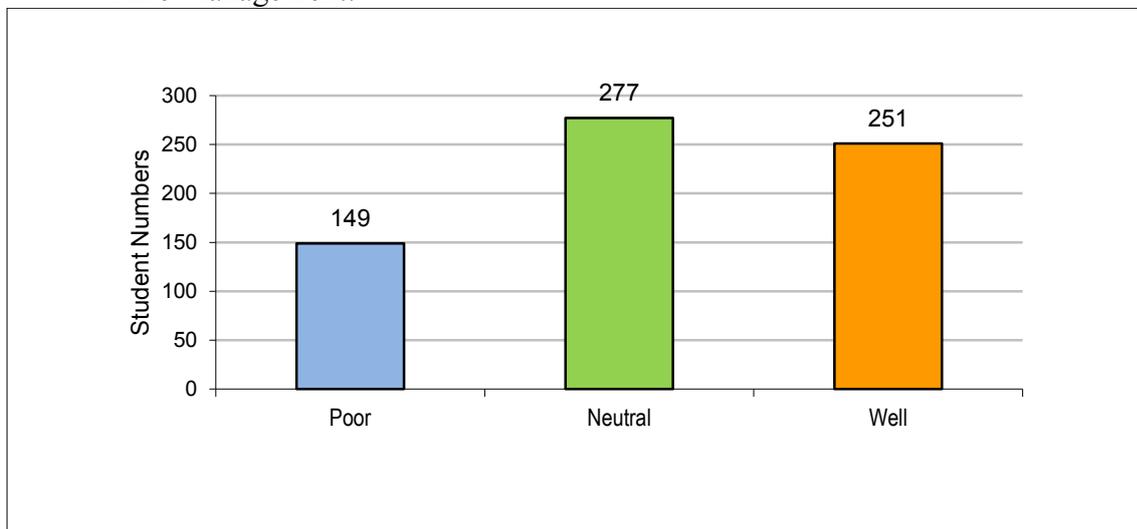


Figure 2.29: To successfully manage the conflicting workloads of you courses.

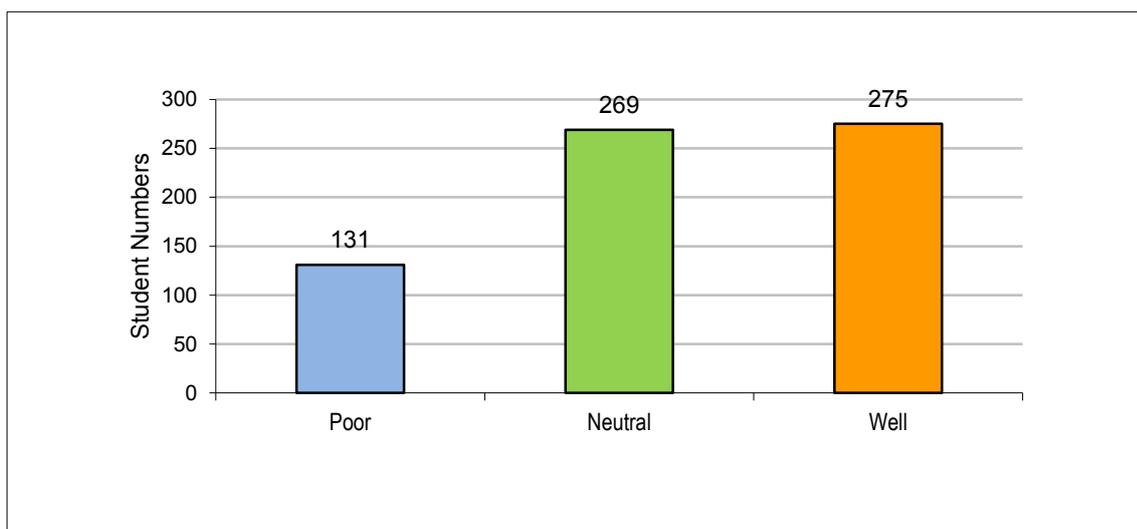


Figure 2.30: To successfully estimate the time required to complete an English 178 assignment.

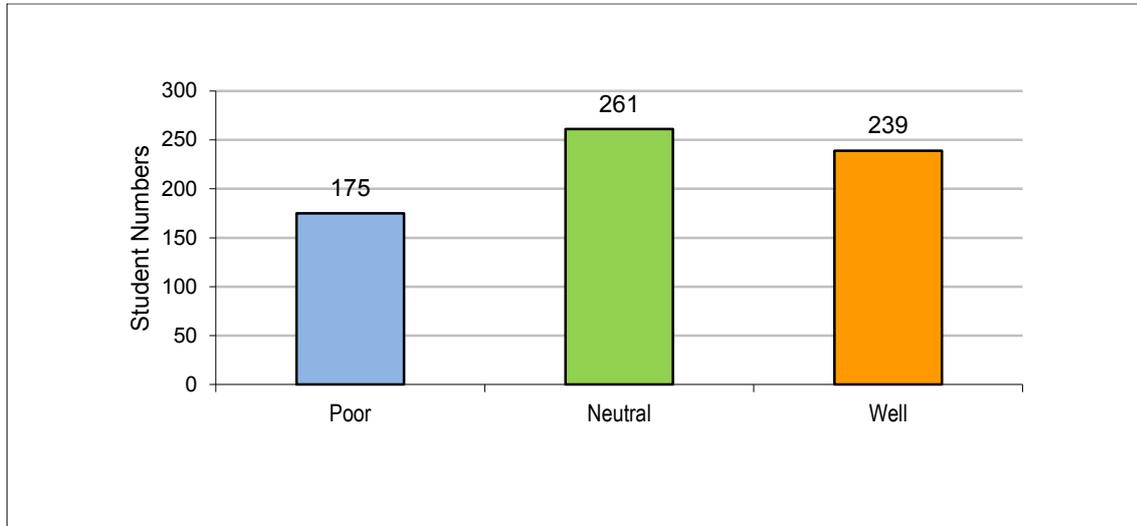


Figure 2.31: To successfully complete the required reading for English 178.

Social Interaction in an Academic Setting:

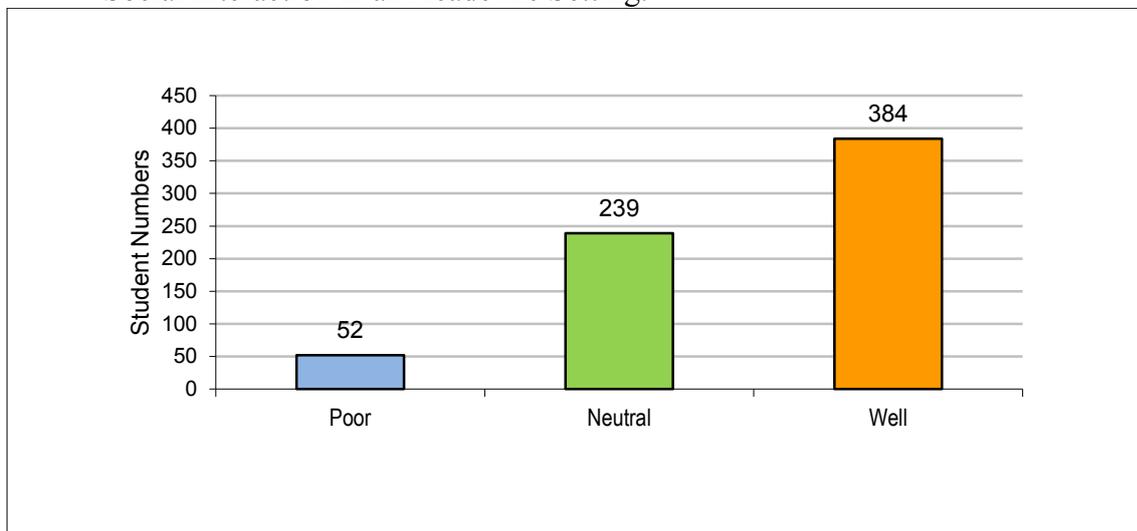


Figure 2.32: To cultivate academically beneficial relationships with your peers.

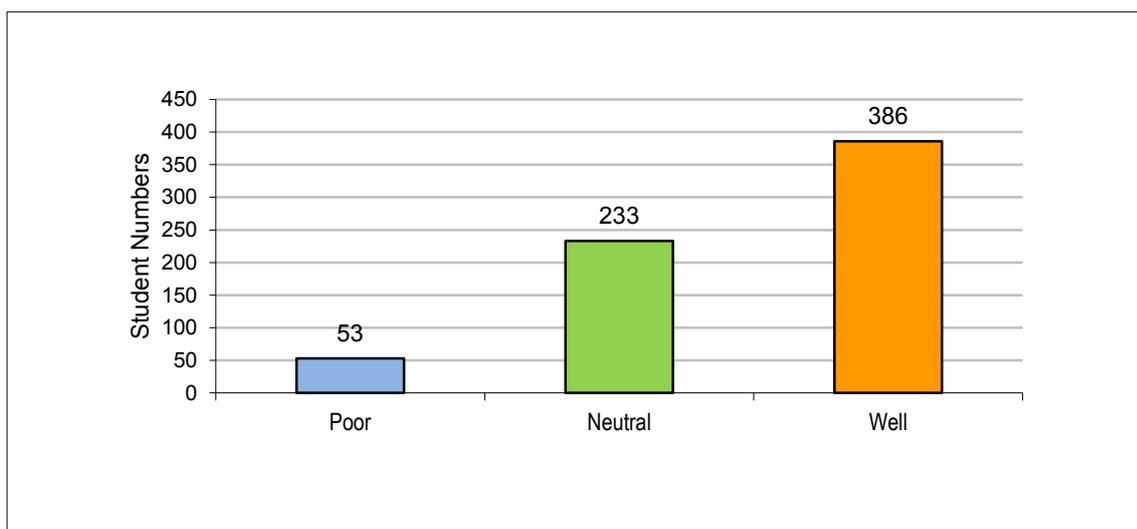


Figure 2.33: To cultivate appropriate relationships with your tutors and lecturers.

Stats Compiled from Qualitative Survey Responses:

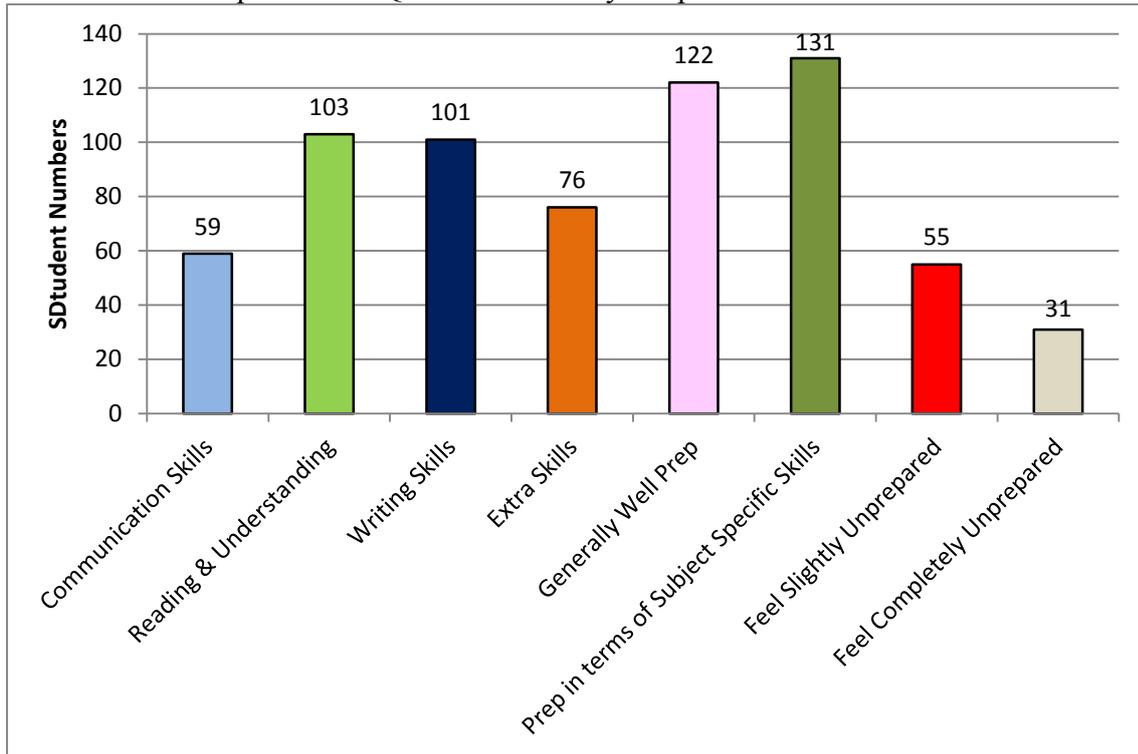


Figure 2.34: Graphic representation of student response – State in two sentences what your pre-university education and life prepared you for in terms of English 178

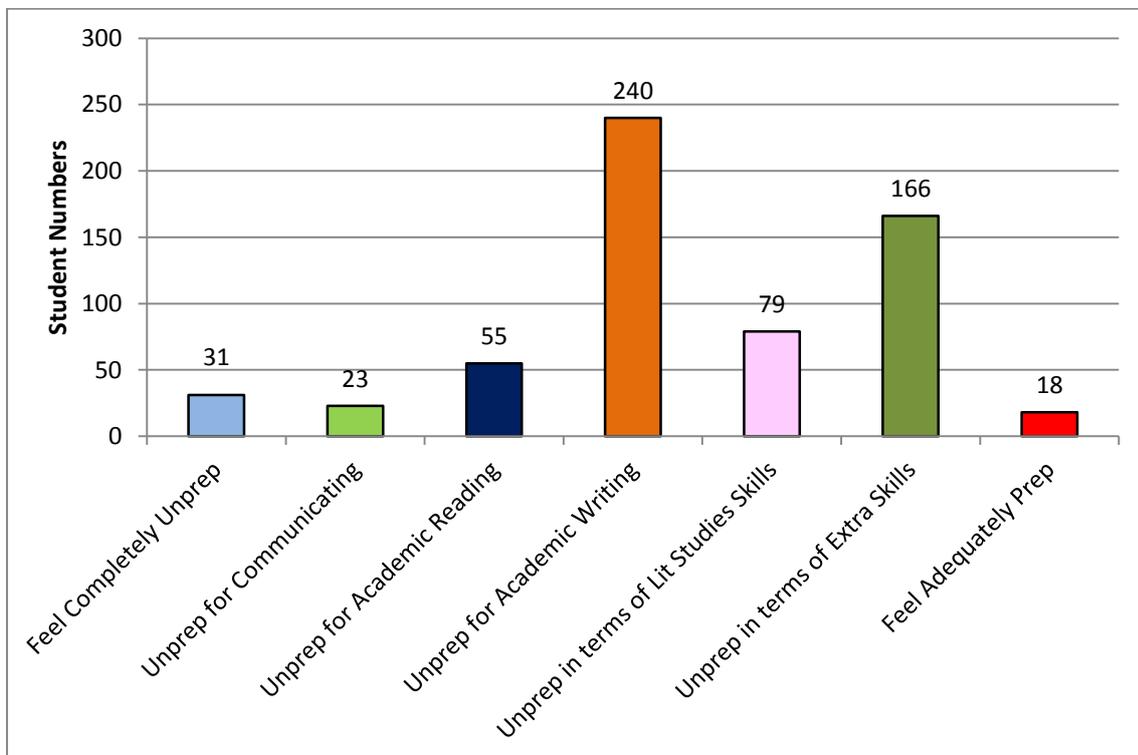


Figure 2.35: Graphic representation of student response – State in two sentences what your pre-university education and life failed to prepared you for in terms of English 178

Student Responses to Course Structure:

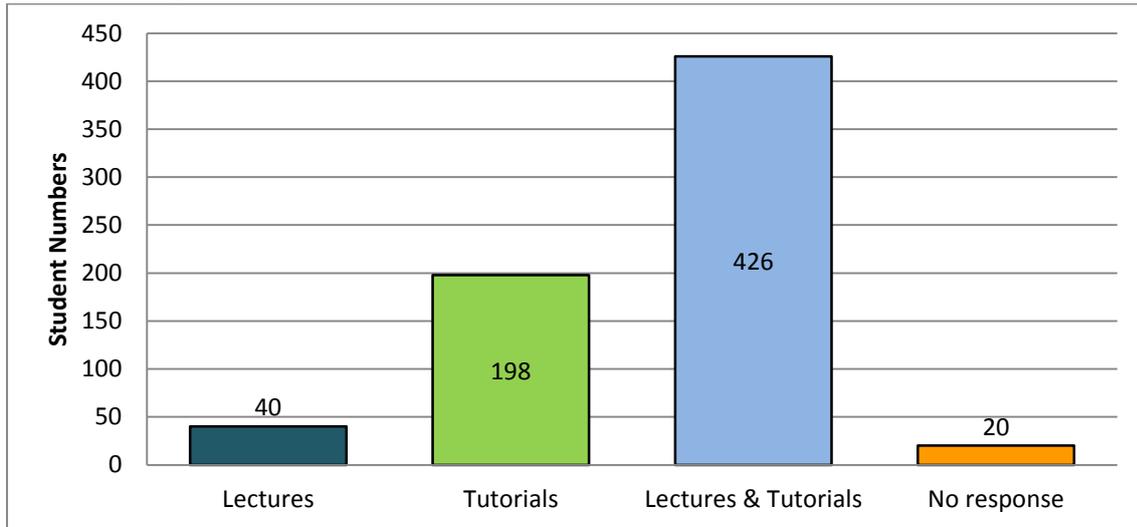


Figure 2.36: The mode of teaching preferred by students

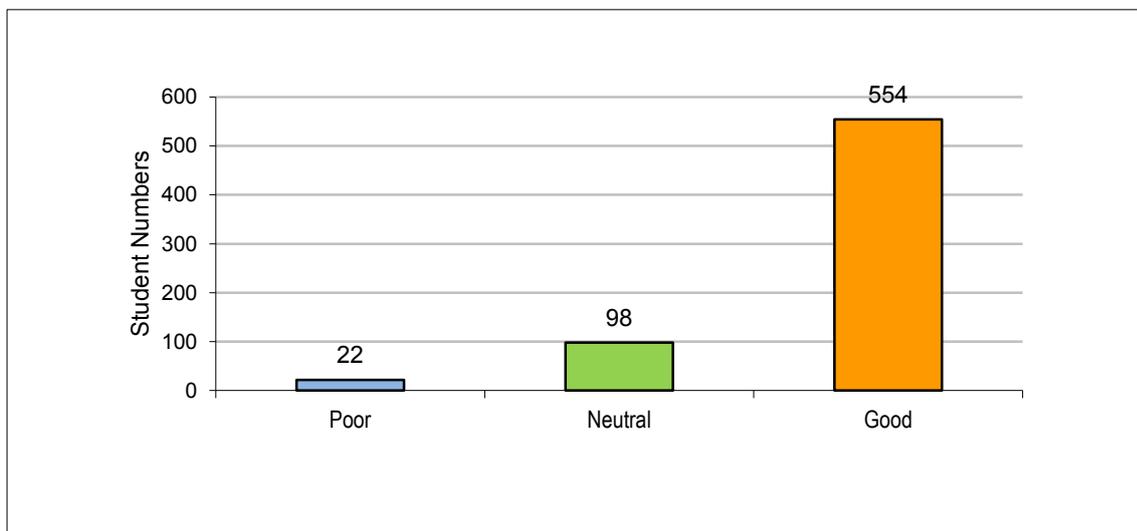


Figure 2.37: Student perceptions of the effectiveness of the tutorial method of teaching.

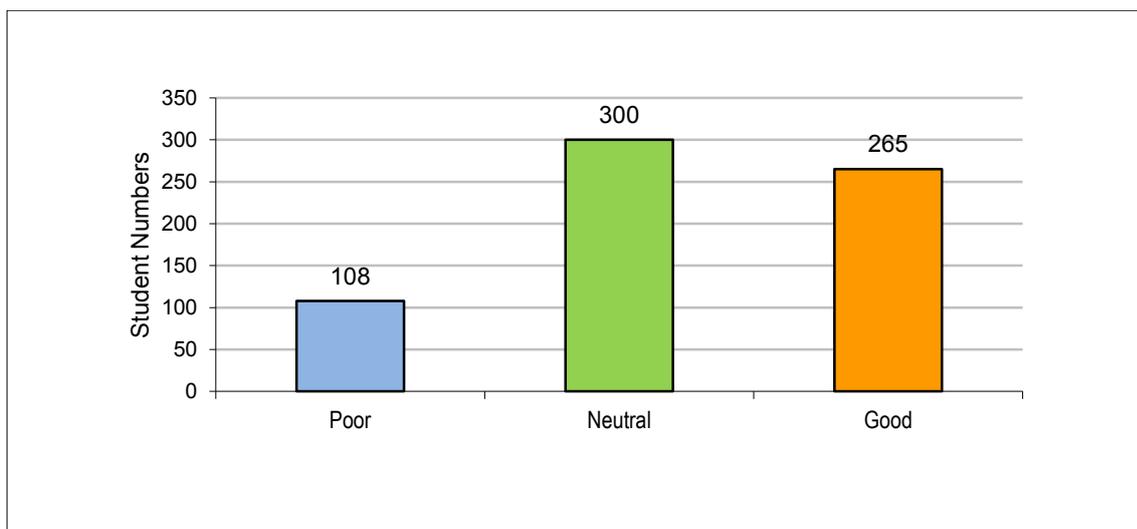


Figure 2.38: Student perceptions of the effectiveness of the main lecture method of teaching.

Academic Support:

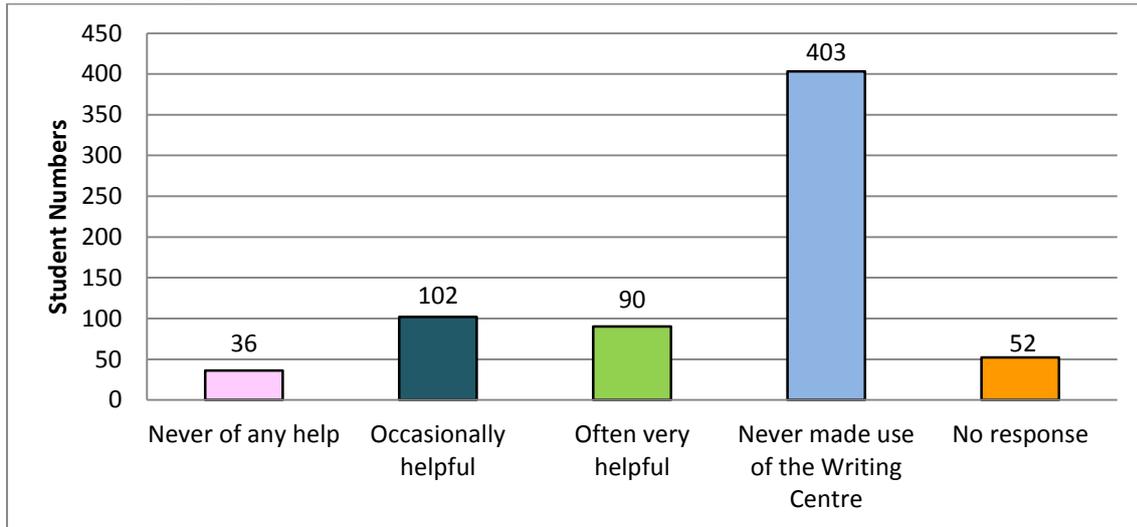


Figure 2.39: Student perception of the usefulness of the academic support offered by the Writing Centre.

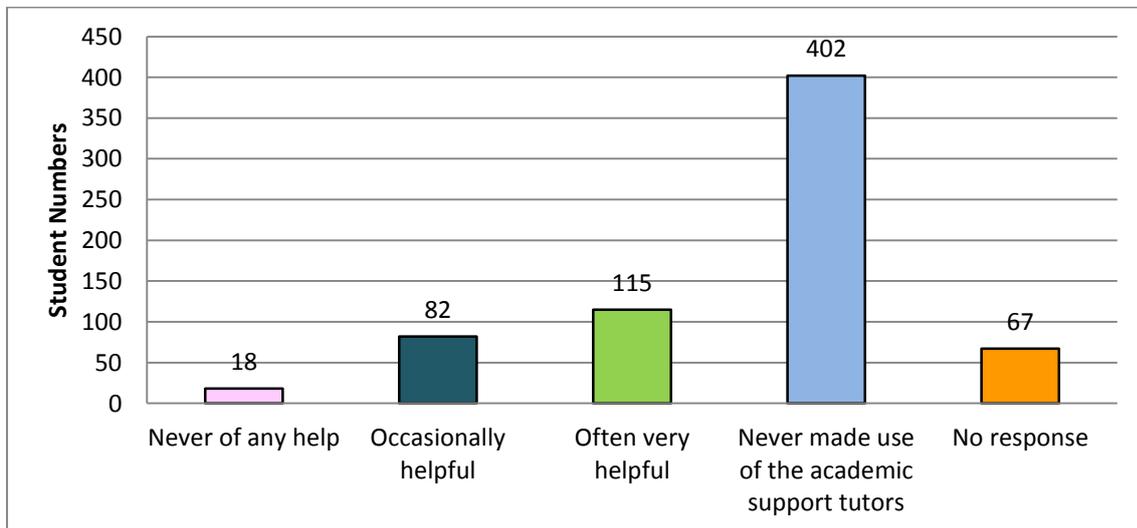


Figure 2.40: Student perception of the usefulness of the English department academic support tutors.

Status of Incomplete Students and 2012 Repeaters

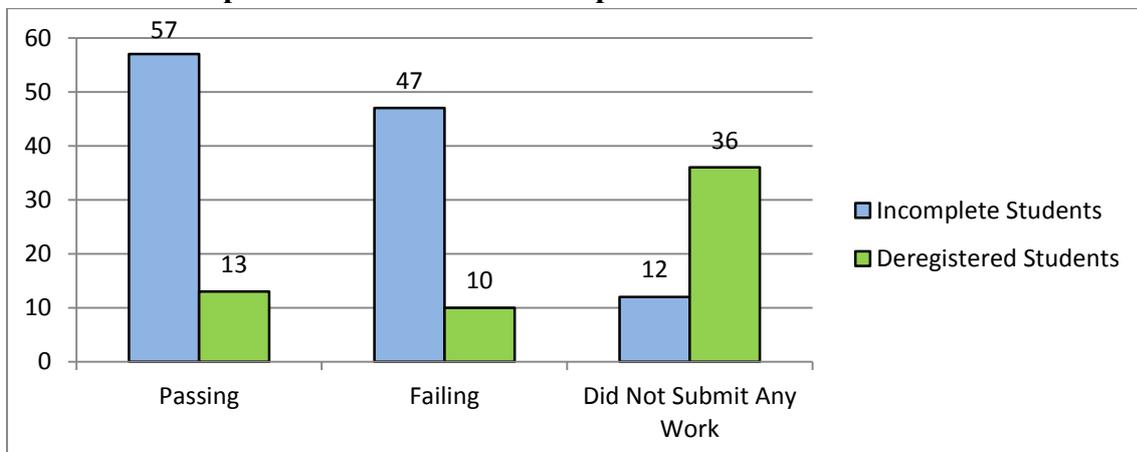


Figure 2.41: Student academic process when declared incomplete or deregistered

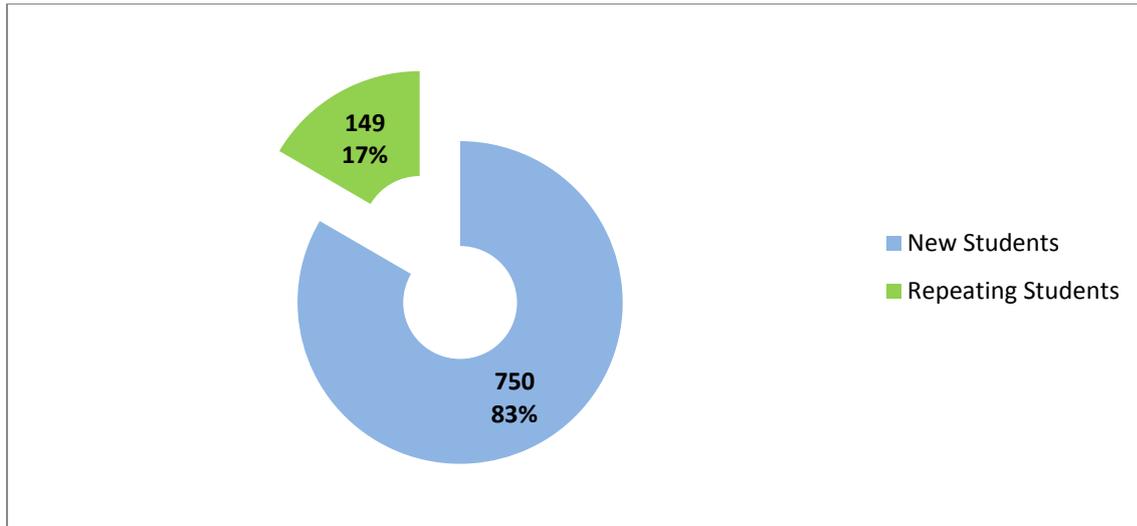


Figure 2.42: Percentage of New and Repeating Students in 2012

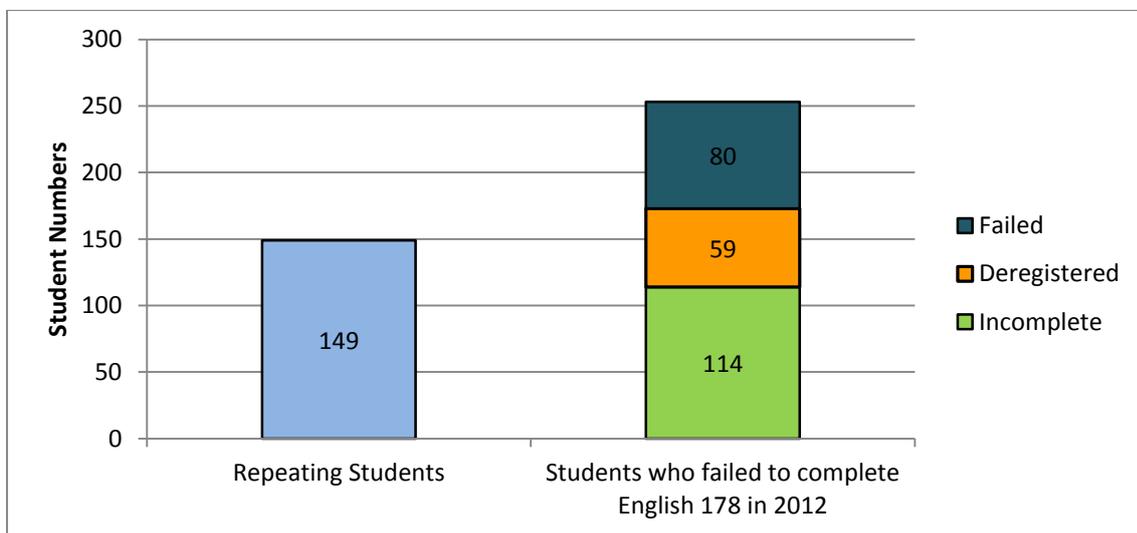


Figure 2.43: Variation between 2011 Non-Completing students and 2012 Repeating Students

Required Reading:

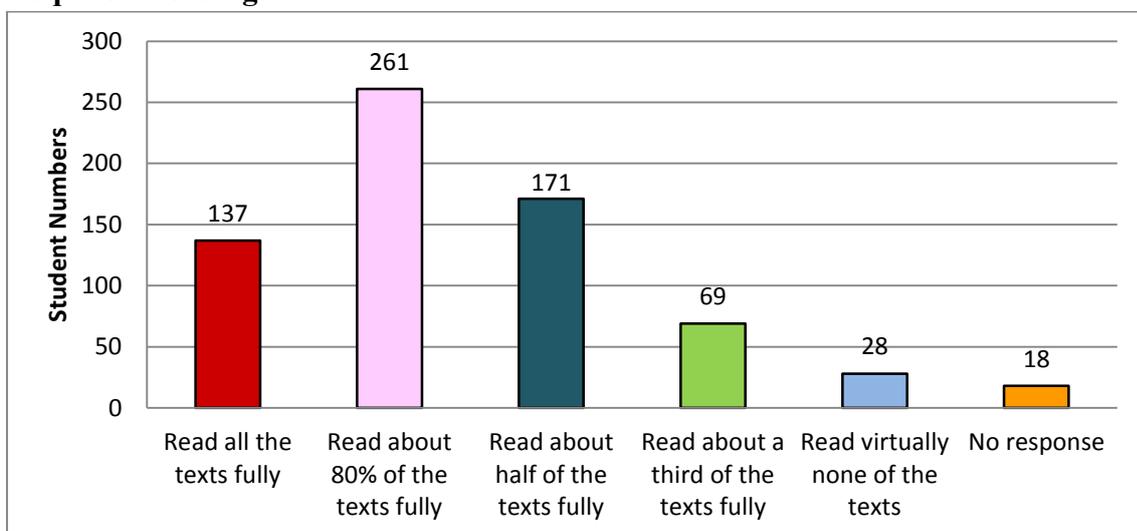


Figure 2.44: Number and extent of student reading of the prescribed primary texts

Computer Assisted Language Learning and OWL Quizzes:

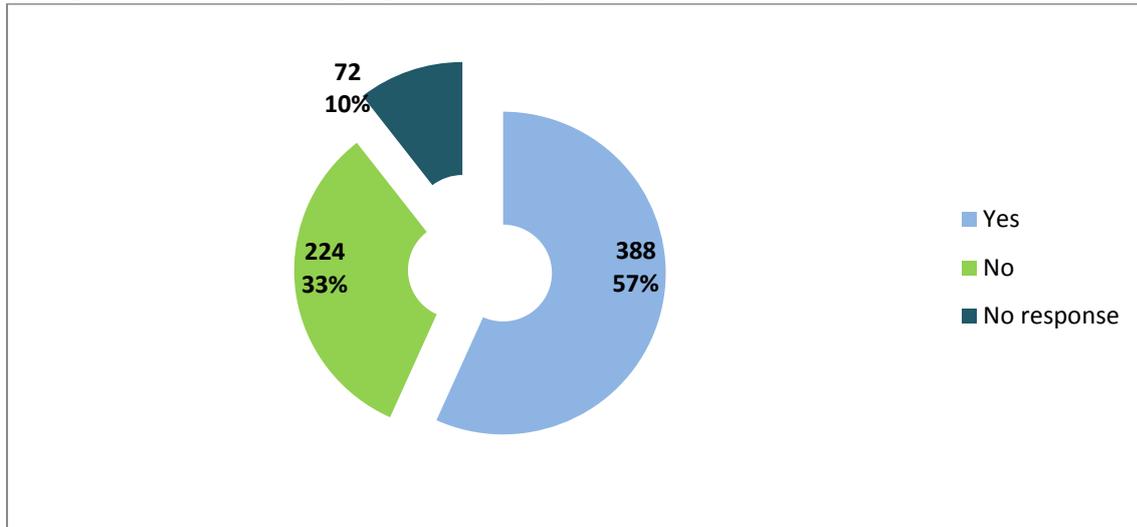


Figure 2.45: Students who would have found a Computer Assisted Language Learning programme helpful in 2011.

Breakdown of Students by Course:

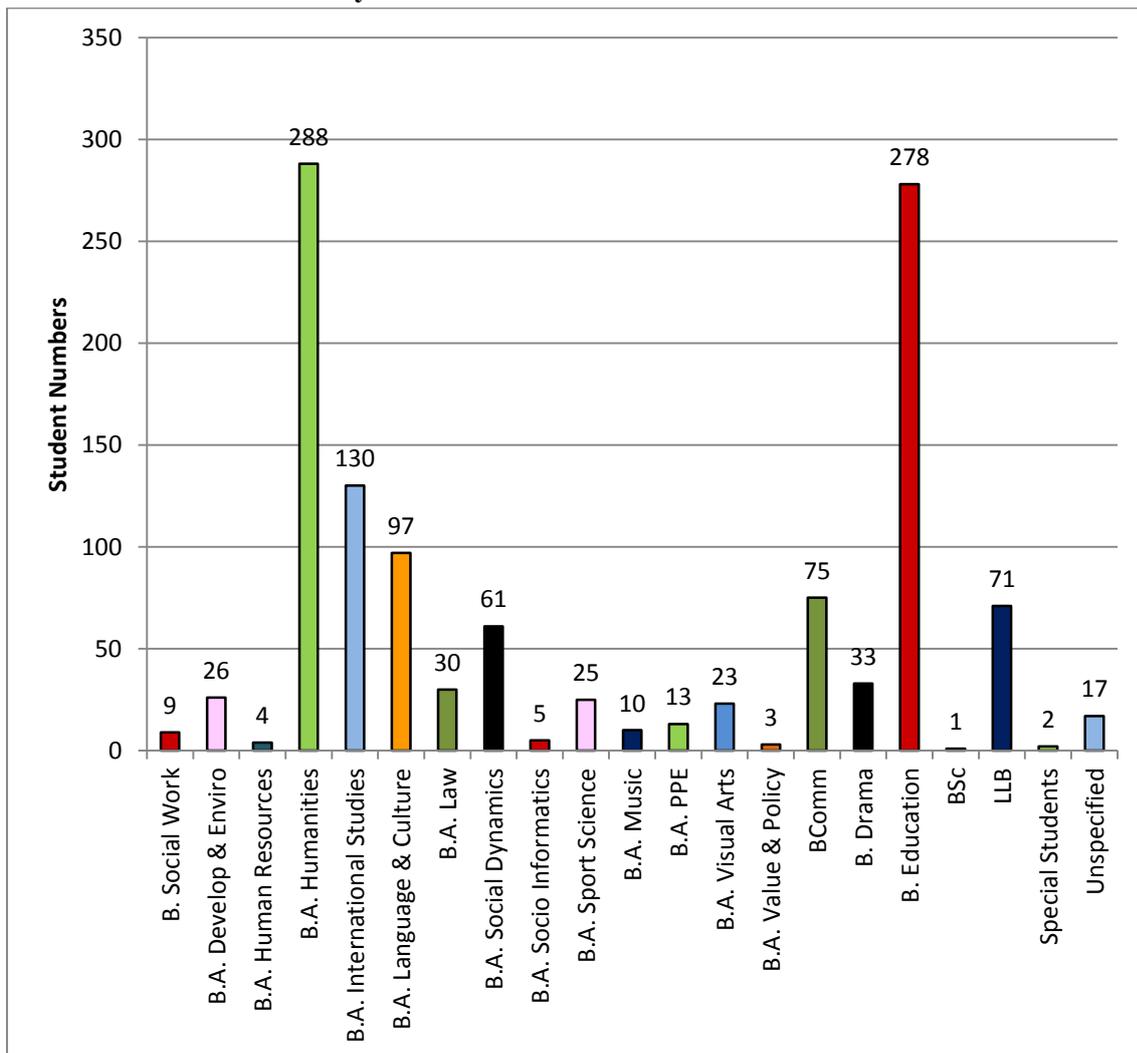


Figure 2.46: Graphical breakdown of students taking English 178 by course selections in 2011

Student Comments about their Abilities on Completion of English 178:

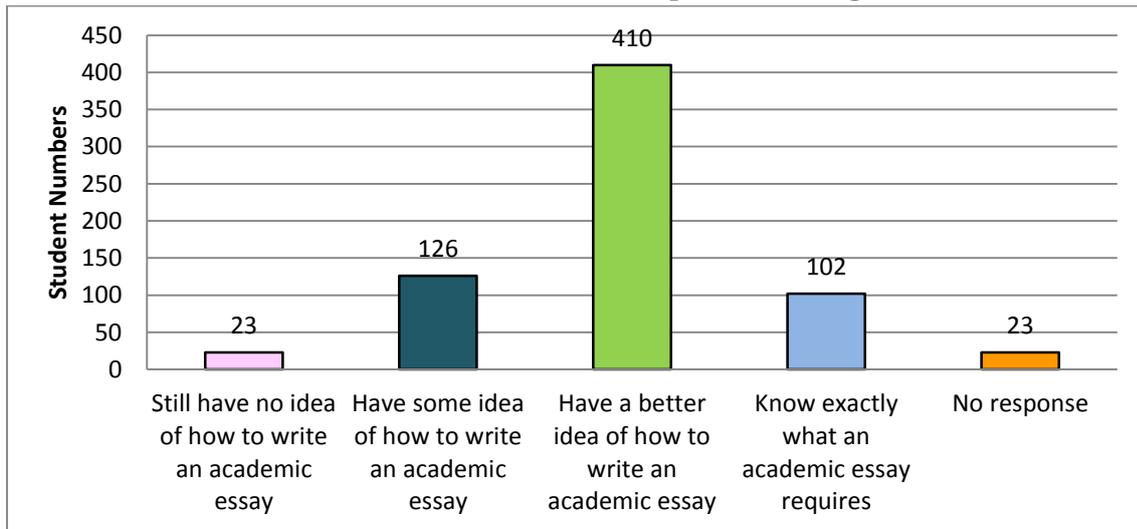


Figure 2.47: Student grasp of academic essay writing for English on completion of the course.

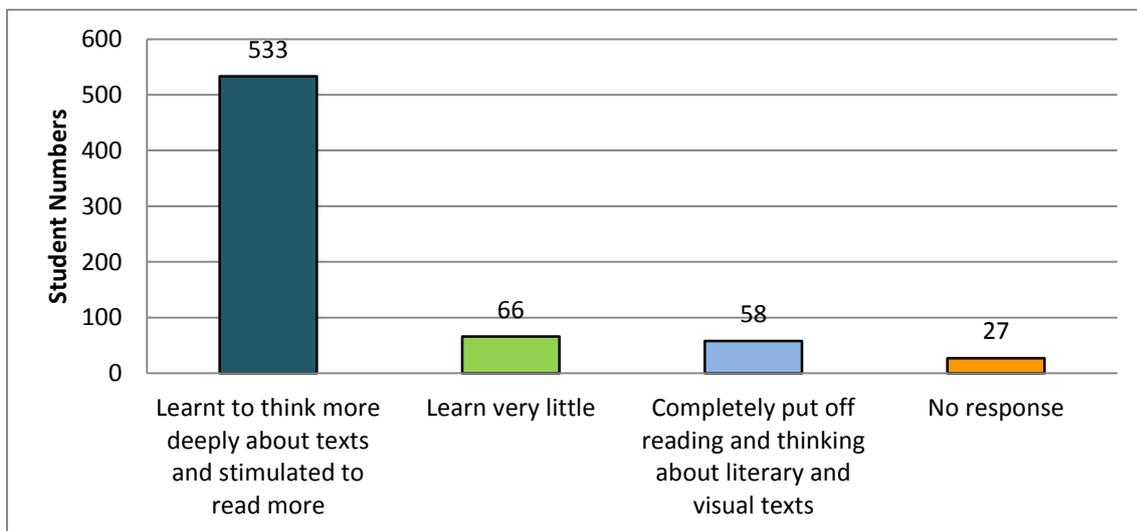


Figure 2.48: Student perceptions of learning during English 178 and the course's stimulation of students to read further

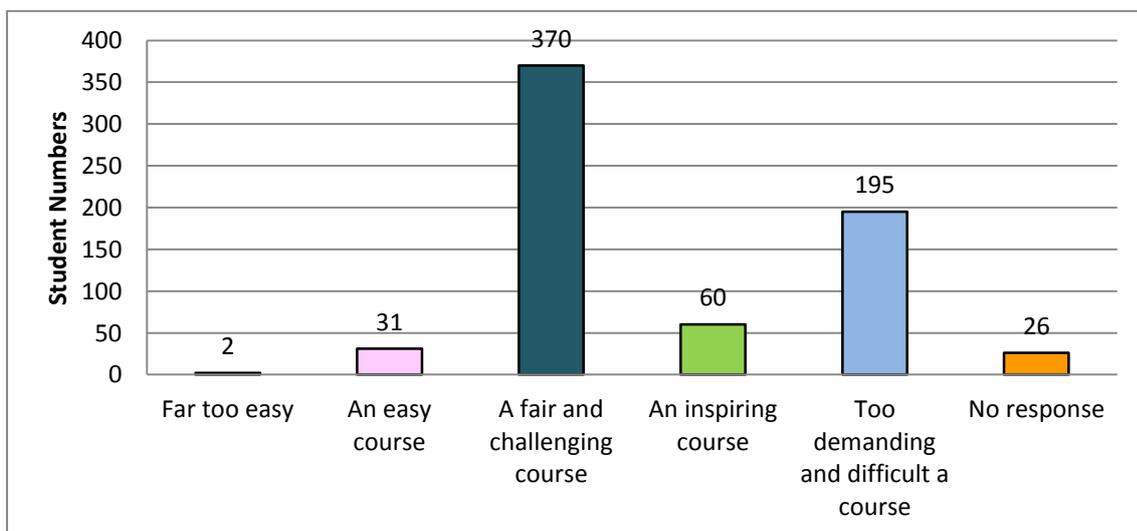


Figure 2.49: Student description of the course.

Statistical Breakdown of University Demographic Profile:

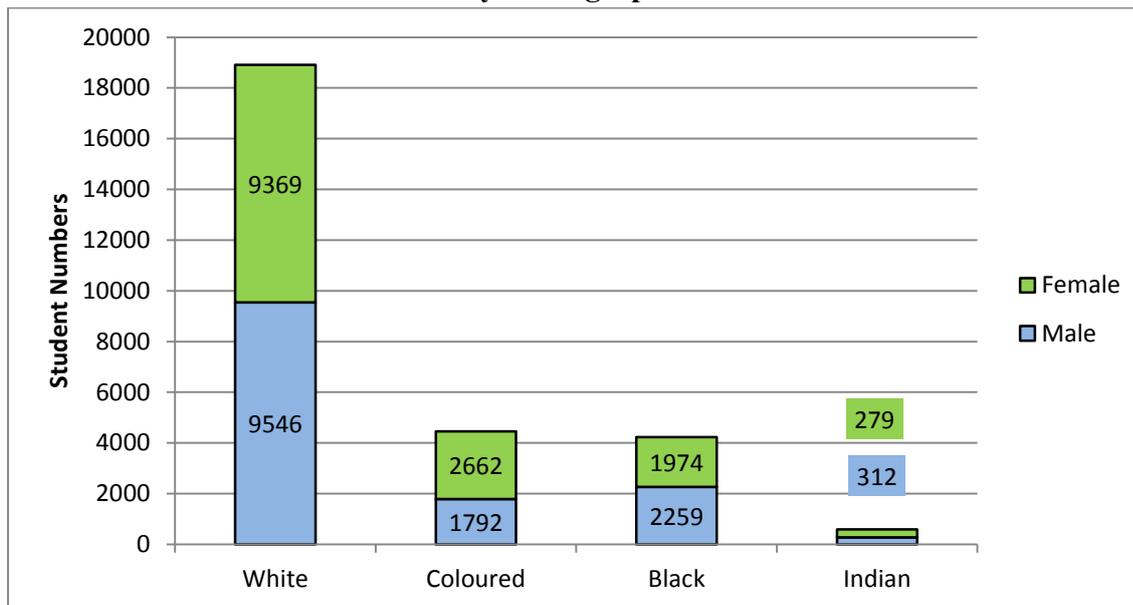


Figure 2.50: Graphical breakdown of racial and gender demographics of 2011 Stellenbosch University student population (Fact Book 2011)

Failure Rate per Annum in English 178:

| Year | Streams | No. Failures | Total Students | % Failure Rate |
|-------|---|--------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2002* | 3: Academic Skills Fact & Fiction Literary Studies | 73 | 734 | 9,95% |
| 2003* | 3 | 115 | 837 | 13,72% |
| 2004* | 3 | 69 | 789 | 8,75% |
| 2005* | 3 | 27 | 848 | 3,18% |
| 2006* | 3 | 32 | 916 | 3,49% |
| 2007* | 3 | 73 | 1004 | 7,27% |
| 2008 | 3 | 40 – Fail 161 – Incomplete | 1069 | 4,1% 15,6% Total: 19,7 |
| 2009 | 2: Fact & Fiction Literary Studies | 28 – Fail 89 – Incomplete | 1018 | 2,85% 8,74% Total: 11,59 |
| 2010 | 1 | 173 – Fail 120 – Incomplete | 1120 | 15,4% 10,7% Total: 26.1% |
| 2011 | 1 | 80 – Fail 175 – Incomplete | 1202 | 6,6% 14,5% Total: 21.1% |

Figure 2.51: Break-down of number and percentage of students failing English 178 since 2002. The asterisks (*) indicate the years where lecturers taught the majority of tutorial classes.

Appendix 3: Interview Transcriptions

The following questions were posed to the interview participants during the collection of the qualitative data. These questions acted as a guideline for the conversations into student preparedness, though in two of the student interviews the questions were answered in a more traditional question and answer format.

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and then transcribed by Miss Julia Marinelli in June and July 2012. The following questions were posed to the lecturers, tutors and students respectively:

Lecturers & Tutors:

1. How long have you been teaching in the first year English course at SU and how many contact sessions do you have with the students in a year?
2. What is your general impression of the standard of the course and the students in the time you have been at SU? Can you justify that impression in any way?
3. With which of the following aspects would you expect students to have the most troubles with: Literacy, Articulation, Analysis or Time Management? And why?
4. Would it surprise you to hear that 28% of students report having significant problems writing academic essays for their tutorials while only 17% report struggling with the test questions? Could you offer any insights into this?
5. 8% of students responding to the 2011 survey reported having problems reading and understanding the primary text, which correlates closely with the overall failure rate of 7% in 2011. How would you suggest identifying these students early in the year and what assistance would they require?
6. Just over double the number of students report problems with reading and understanding the secondary texts (17%) compared to the number who experience problems with the primary text (8%). In addition to this 23% struggled to incorporate secondary sources into their essays. Do you feel that the department is teaching this appropriately and if not how can this be improved?
7. The overwhelming majority of students never made use of the university writing centre or the academic support tutors, do you feel these services should be utilised better, and if so how do you suggest the students are encouraged to do so?
8. What is the main skill you believe students should learn from English 178?

Students:

1. How did you find English 178 last year (2011)?
2. What did you struggle the most with?
3. What was the easiest?
4. Are any of you taking English 278?
5. Was university English a shock to you after school English? Especially first additional language students.
6. Did you do English Home Language at school? Do you think it helped / would have helped?
7. How did English compare to your other subjects? (Easier/harder)
8. Is there any part of the course which needs changing to help the students?
9. What is the main skill you learnt in English 178?
10. Did you work part-time last year? If so how did you cope juggling your academics and work commitments?

Transcription – Interview 1: Lecturer

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| NAME OF AUDIO | : | INTRERVIEW 1 – LECTURER |
| DATE OF AUDIO | : | 30 March 2012 |
| LENGTH OF AUDIO | : | 58:07 |
| TRANSCRIBER NAME | : | JULIA MARTINELLI |
| TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND | : | RESEARCHER R |
| | : | INTERVIEWEE I |

R: So the first one is just a general how long have you been, have you been teaching in the first year course at Stellenbosch?

I: Well I start in 1997 then I had a little bit of a break, I think I had three year break. The dates are a little bit, so it was 1997 I think till 2002. Then I came back in 20... it was 2003, 2003 and then I came back in 2006.

R: You doing well. Okay so what is your general impression of the standard of the course and the students over that time?

I: Well difficult because we basically talking about two, but I am going to generalize. I think that first of all, I think I must register that the course has changed substantially. So doing first period it was quite a different kind a course which addressed very different means. At that point I was obviously completely involved in opening access and academic devolvment. And that's where they implemented the tutorial program as well.

R: What year was that?

I: 1997 because that was when we had money from outside with the Tutu trust funding. We trained tutors specifically how to use, you know, integrated methods of teaching so it was an outside funded intervention with the aim of open access to help bring more black students in to the department. To provide support but not to single out black students so the argument there was that so many from whatever racial back ground needed support. So we integrated skills and content teaching. With the tutorial support and lectures quite explicitly for the first time. We looked we trained teachers how to draw up lessen plans, looking at scaffolding of skills. So the aim that was very specifically to intervene very strongly, to teach to different proficiency levels as well. Again without separating the group, so how do you take a group of students who are differently able and improve, construct and create material

that would speak to those different levels. How do you, a lot of group work, you know that's when we first introduced we actually had those rooms build at the bottom with the round tables, so that we can have students working together. Having discussions, so less of a top down kind a teaching more of a kind an active learning context that we introduced. As a foil to the lectures that worked wonderfully well because what happened then was that from that flowed the different streams particularly, you know I run the academic skills courses. Because I taught in all three these streams. So it was very easy for me, I needed to do it see how they compared. How the interventions compared. And then already it was clear that we got really struggling students coming in and at the same time students from private schools. Who'd read a range of text's, student coming from poorer backgrounds never did, you know the average student sitting there. So than already it was very clear that we needed to intervene quite strongly but particularly at different levels. You know that it wasn't just... what is happening now. If I can just quickly interrupt myself here. Is that you, in a way the debone has got right back to an early system which was to separate out struggling students into a kind a ghetto I think. With because no those student get additional help. They identified etc. etc. And even though there was some process of identification you know because we had the Ealing Degree Program at that point. By having the academic skills course student could actually elect that options. So you had a number of students that were not actually identified but they liked the contact. The spate different contact, which spoke more to the work that they were doing in other subjects. That attracted the majority of students so psychology, physiology, politics. So we looked at gender, you know all the things that had to do with in other course as well. So there was far integrated in terms of the facility content if I can say.

R: But that seems to be a lot of student ask for that sort of course?

I: It was very successful. It was a successful course if, it worked when I was here because I was really invested in it and I could train people to teach it. If you don't have someone strong running it, with the kind a knowledge and the drive to make it work. It falters, so the moment I stepped out. And it wasn't because I am great, it's just simply because I have the knowledge and the training and I know which to. And I, I really wanted to do it. Then it just collapsed, it just became part of the of the fact infection. Just with an addition tutorial so. So what I think what we are back to now, we have moved away from integrated. The integrated approach. And possible this is exactly, you know something one must think about. I think at the moment, now I am jumping into my return and having been teaching lecturing at first year and I had a first year tutorial group. When I first came back because I wanted to see at that point, we did not have the support tutorials yet. It didn't, it wasn't the

support for the, we still had content being taught in the tutorials. Remember it was *Pride and Prejudice*?

R: Yes, my first year tutoring, we still did that.

I: So there it was more materials to go. My sense then already was that we sitting with a huge problem because we not, I think in a sustained way addressing mixed group scenario at all. That is what I am trying to do with the *Jane Eyre* portfolio and you got the tasks that you can actually give stronger students the opportunity to really perform but you can give support to the not so strong students. But having contextualized everything the point is I think we have very weak students but I also think we have very, very strong students. Concerned the strong student are falling by the way side because they get board during the first year. I think that we could do more in the first year. So I think that we have dropped the standard quite a bit in the first year to accommodate the weaker students. When what I think should be happening.. Okay you not actually asking me that, you just asking me to evaluate. Okay my situation or my interpretation is senses that we sitting with the situation where you still have basically mixed group scenario where you have a group of very strong students. That I don't think there need are necessary being met or that they being challenged enough. Then I think you have the average student who are just floating and I think the course is adequate for them. And I think I can put further and I think a group of very poor student that we are trying to accommodate because we have dropped the standard in the first year. But we are in fact not teaching them the skills that they need.

R: No. No. They still struggling because they don't actually, they don't know what they meant to be learning.

I: They haven't learnt the basics. I think that they struggle to read, they don't have the kind a thinking skills, the argumentative skills and the writing that's just obvious.

R: So which of the following, in my survey I broke it, broke it there, the problems that the students had up into literacy, articulation, analysis and time management. And I have three or four questions in there where they tick very poor, poor, average or going up like that. And so which of those do you think student are struggling with most with? Which do you expect student to struggle the most with literacy, articulation, analysis or time management?

I: Okay I have to see it... where are we?

R: Point three. So it is.

I: Okay let's start with literacy. What kind of literacy?

- R: Just being able to read and comprehend what they reading.
- I: Not academic literacy. Just basic literacy. Well can I qualify, I think not basic, I think that we have a small group where basic literacy is a problem. Because if I were to say that basic literacy problem, I mean gosh how do they get through matric? And of course that's a significant question to ask as well. So I don't think basic literacy is to me the most. I think when I come to English as a language and coupled to that academic literacy. The ability to and then for me articulation analysis and time management will fall under the academic literacy rule book. So I would say problems with English as a second language and to me that is not the same as literacy at all. It that they've not acquired language as well as they ought to have done during their school years. So when they come into English it's that they can, they able to read, they able to write but they not able to do so well in English. So English there becomes the big thing. And then simultaneously I also think they have not, that even though they may be equipped in a kind a basic academic literacy in school in their mother tongue particularly in Afrikaans that they or ja that they have not necessarily acquired those skills in English. And for me time management it seems to be something entirely separate, I almost want to take time management out of this. Because I think that time management is another level of skill. It falls into a different kind a category. For me and it's related but if you struggling to read it's going to take you longer to read. If you don't have, if you struggle, I used to have this third year student sitting here weeping, because she has to take English because she want to teach. But her English is absolutely, I don't know how the hell she got into third year. But for her it's going to take much longer to read the novel and to write the essay. So time management almost becomes a kind an obsolete in that context because it just a practical reality to this situation. It's just she did not have enough English to be able to do what she is supposed to be doing quickly and efficiently. So someone whose first language doesn't certainly in most cases here I generalize cause I also have first language student how cannot string a sentence together. So I don't think it's necessarily about it being first or second language because I want to couple the kind an acquisition of particular academic skills with facility in language. Or with that kind of do you at least know how, do you understand the concord, do you have a vocabulary to be able to understand the text that you read. Those kinds of things to me and that's not literacy. Because they can read, they can read, they can write, they can but in English something is missing. So that is...
- R: Yes.
- I: Am I giving you too much?
- R: No, maybe just a little bit too much to write down quickly but I got the recording anyway so I can go back and check. Would you be surprised that

twenty eight per cent of the students last year reported having significant problems with academic essays for their tutorials. Will only seventeen per cent reported struggling with the test questions?

I: That's a trick question. Twenty eight I won't be surprised if only twenty eight.

R: That's what I said as well.

I: I am not surprised. And seventeen per cent I also would again I want to qualify that because I think one should have asked them about specific test questions. And I think most probably problem there also was they given the choice between Jane Eyre and Truman so ja, maybe let's just do that as your back ground comment. Me making your back ground comment. I think it makes sense because a test, it's a sort of a, hour long test. They prepare for it and we don't mark for, we mark for content basically and I think we are far more lenient when we mark tests. And then the different order, you know a variety of skills. Come into play when they write essays. So I do, I can see there is a difference there but I am surprised, it should be much more. Which suggests the point that you are making with the students seem to think that there are okay, but the tutors can see they're not.

R: Ja, what was I going to say now about that. That's the thing though with the essays you can see that a lot of them don't copy their stuff. They just type it out and hand there is no proof reading. Even like little things like just justifying the justifying the text so it looks neat. It's all aligned left and...

I: But would we teach those protocols?

R: Ja.

I: They just don't...

R: It takes at least, at least three essays of, with my students I find at least three essays with me, like doing it and trying changes and showing them, showing them in the writing, in the writing tutorials. Making that part of the presentation and actually taking a screen shot and circling the justify icon in word and saying this is where you have to have to...

I: Then my question is are they, do you attach a mark to that?

R: Ja, we the only thing we can subtract marks is the if they don't have the plagiarism declaration or bibliography.

I: But that none since. Because I think, then you retract it, it's just me being extreme again. What I mean is like what, what really should be happening I think, is that you, it's that test, teach, test that kind a process. Because your early assessment test is that you evaluate the student when they enter into the course. And then because you have identified a certain set of skills that they

should have to be able to do this course. Then you see that they don't have them, then you teach those skills then you test whether they have acquired those skills. The only way in our system I think that we are able really to send a message to the student that they have or have not, is to say well, I am going to make you write one page and I expect, even one paragraph. And for this exercise we going to test, we going to give you a mark based on this formulation. Content, structure possible, maybe you might even do an exercise entirely based on whether they quote accurately, format accurately all this kind of technical skills. And that's what they get marked with and then in the future you always have a five per cent sitting there and that's why marking grids become so important. Because when I did the program when I coordinated the program, I always had marking grids always had a section at the bottom five per cent for languages. So we deducted up to ten per cent sometimes for language. Because how else do you send a, this is not okay, you didn't pro read you didn't correct errors and you have already gone through drafting which means, really you know. And possible the solution would be to have five per cent allocated to formatting.

R: Ja.

I: Because this is where we expect them to have that when they get to second and third year. So maybe a way to address it is to formally introduce it into the marking of the test. How you get your marks, you have to do things properly.

R: Ja. Question five, again to the survey eight per cent of student responded that they have problems with reading and understanding the primary text which correlates closely with the overall failure rate of seven per cent. Do you think we are identifying the student that have these reading problems early enough? Is there anything currently to identify them and then is there anything in place to help them?

I: Okay, it a very difficult question because the thing is we assume that when they come to English that they able to read. A particularly length of text and the text that we prescribing at the beginning of the year I don't think they are difficult to read. Or they ort not to be difficult to read for someone that coming into English One. Because it's not a language acquisition course. So is it really our duty to teach reading? Basic reading or are we expected to teach a particular kind of reading which I think we are doing. But then are we doing it efficiently are we achieving what we want to achieve. Should we make reading or how we read literature, ways of reading in other words I supposed it would be close reading as central and explicitly central to our teaching as we should do. What are the various interventions we can use to make students aware of the fact that they reading now in a different way. They not just reading for the story, they read far more self-consciously. And that they have different strategies possible that one can introduce right to the

beginning and possible one could then look at poetry, poetry is supposed to fill that function. Close reading to be teaching close reading.

R: I think what came out yesterday very clearly was that there is a vastly different standard across the course. Because student by now they sort of maybe sixty per cent of student going to main lectures and so the rest of, those that go don't always pay that much attention. And so the ones that don't pay attention and the ones that don't go are being taught by the tutors only. And then it just depends on the tutor

I: Luck of the draw basically.

R: How much they get out of it. And every year there are these sort of horror stories of varying degrees of how some tutors cancelling classes and...

I: Does it [inaudible] does it, were does this information go?

R: I suppose, I don't know. That one must surely JH must surely know about it.

I: I have never heard, I hear anecdotal sort of little bits here and there.

R: I think that's the problem everybody is just hearing...

I: And I think that's were...

R: Corridor gossip...

I: I hate that because I also feel very uncomfortable going to my colleagues and there is this story because I don't want to find it very uncomfortable. But this is what I was hoping to address by suggesting the minutes so that sort of thing but that... That this is incredibly worrying. That's why I think your research is so important because... It's very. Alright what is really happening at the moment is that there is not sustained, to use that word, it's a traumatic word but let me use it. Standardized approached to teaching close reading in the tutorials. Because I mean in a lecture you cannot do it, you can demonstrate, you know that's what I try to do when I teach Jane Eyre. It to demonstrate that's why I work so closely with the novel. With examples of the novel I am trying to demonstrate to student how they should work with the text. But that's not something they can just pick up.

R: No they have to practice it and ... Ja I think just sort of on the side that I think the tutor program has slipped from when I first, when I first started. Maybe when you first start you look up to these people who have been there so long and then we don't feel by the time you get to that point that you sort a know as much as they did. But you probably do but it just, it just doesn't seem that there's quite the same standard.

- I: Well it the, you know when I coordinated the program it was an entirely different system. We had staff member every Monday we came to meetings, we had a first year board. That's what I am trying to reintroduce. With a committee but people are reluctant. So that we were always involved and so forth and we had to teach a first year tutorial. That was just we taught first year tutorials. And then in first, so we had permanent staff working alongside student tutors and we had a much smaller group of tutors of course then because we had staff involvement. And staff basically were allowed because they had the experience they were give the freedom. But the eventually that start to change as well. But the idea there was just to introduce precisely to introduce that coherent standardized program at first to address various needs. The various needs of student but also to teach more explicitly, to be more explicate in our teaching skills. Were you absolutely integrate skills and contents and that's why you'll look at, look at my lesson plans, you will see. I hope it's clear that I constantly scaffold. If you introduce one set of skills you build on it in the next class, you build on it in the next class so you first have to introduce one then to be able to do the next thing. So you have to have that overview so you can't just do what's currently happening. Which is that you pulling a lecture plan out of a hat. Without looking back at what have we done already.
- R: Ja, this what you just said yesterday as well that the student come to every single class or lecture as if it's the very first English that they are attending. There's no sense that they have continuity and it's frustrating to teach.
- I: Ja, because you also have to, that has to be, you have to actually have to in the third year lectures what I try to do, I do it in the first year lecture as well what you supposed to do and what you, in the lesson plans what also should be happening. Is that you say your first is like a pre task, which is to link what you done before with what you doing today. Yesterday or last week this is work we did, now today it has to be made explicate, today we going to do this. So the lecture last week I spoke about this, this week we going to go on. So it's that, you have to sort of point to what it is you doing so that it almost creates a mental structure in the students mind as well. Because they learn to do that because you constantly using the same set of phrases. [inaudible] Then, now that links to this, this refers from that in order to understand this you should be able to do this. That is why I am really feel student shouldn't write a essay in the first semester. They should be writing paragraphs, they should be getting the kind a building blocks in place. Then we work toward a full essay in the second semester. Because the longer, shorter tasks building into longer tasks. Getting basics in place then move, because then they start to think about their own writing. That also how you can address reading. You can ask them, I want you to analyse this extract of this text or this poem, this is why poems work so well. But with novels as well, plays whatever, identify a

particular section of text. Then they were to reading that and literally use that, you have to do a reading of this section. So that they can understand the languages and what it is they are doing. So it's all, it's a kind of, its crucial for us to have a sense that we begin in the first year with, at that point and you building toward that. That's why we can afford to have Jane Eyre right end of the year. And then all of us should be aware of that kind of building process that's constantly happening toward the end. But you have to take the student with us, on that journey, it has to be explained explicit to them.

R: But I think needs to be made explicit to the tutors as well because at this stage the tutors are teaching everything as separate.

I: By we, I include the tutors in my we.

R: Because it's just sort of a lot of the time the lecturers seem to just forget that there new tutors, the old tutors also need some help.

I: Yes, that true.

R: And they just come in and sort of just dropped on the tutors and then leave again and you sort of left to...

I: Figure it out?

R: Ja.

I: Some can and some can't and some are willing to and some not.

R: And just because you figure out doesn't mean you, you've figured it out the same way the lecturer intended and you come out with different outcomes. And so you know one student or one tutor's class is going to be Nervous Conditions as a feminist text and the other will be looking at it as post-colonial text and it just sort of. A little difference like that is going to make a big difference at the end because students get different idea.

I: Certain people will teach feminism in the wrong way. Their particular view of what it is and others will come with a completely different. Which is fine, for me it's not, okay I will tell you my sense is that we have to protect individual tutors kind of teaching approaches. But there is something else that we need to protect as well and that is the kind of coherent integrity of the content. So we have to also protect the students and that's why I fight so hard to have those schedules out. So that they students know what they supposed to be doing, so that a tutor can't just pitch up saying, oh today we going to, which is not. It's a kind of very strategic thing to have in place to protect the integrity of the course.

R: Ja, it sort of, it has got better since the beginning of the year but it's also maybe one has sort of adapted to it and just going along. But at the moment

these three resource packs and you can't, you can't actually get angry with student for not bring the right resource pack because they will turn up for the poetry lecture and they will pull out these three resource packs and sort of page through them all and try to figure out what, which one they meant to be in. I had a girl in my class on Tuesday who had all three resource packs with her but she had two of the same ones because her friend next to her had taken the other one and had left one of her in the previous class.

I: So bizarre.

R: So she had two things with the essay questions in and didn't have one with the, with the poems.

I: So they not, at the moment it's all separate still.

R: Nervous Conditions and Master Harold were put together but they never put poetry in with that like we had last year. That we had like week two, tut one is an introduction to tut two. Tut three is this.

I: Sorry.

R: It's just such a small thing that makes such a big difference.

I: You have to have the ground work in place. That's where you start. Because in, it's not, it shouldn't be the tutor's problem. It should be there in place for them because you do work for us and you being paid.

R: We get things like, this lecturer report would sort of tear it out so the student would do it. But there was never anything like what was expected and when one of the tutors asked they were told what we expect from the student is good writing.

I: I think this is why this sort of work is so important because we have, we going to have this conversation with staff meetings. But you know this area that you have to you have different types of tutors you have lecturers approach they approach differently. So have to also decide as staff, as a department what, how we want to address the fact that student are struggling with their reading and one can only do it when one actually has the sense. Say let me, I can be honest with you when I started with the Tutu Trust funded work in this department, the department resisted it every way, it was the most difficult, I found it an incredibly difficult working context. Very few people supported what we were doing here. We got a lot of support for outside but within the department people thought we were, you know interfering with what they were doing. And I was a student here, so you know the people knew me but yet just taking on that became and it's understandable because you are questioning what the people doing and you say maybe this is not working because the context has changed. We have different needs now, the demography has

changed. All sorts of things we need to take into play, into, we need to keep in mind. But people screamed at us, I mean, it was a terribly, it was a difficult situation. And that is why I coercion you as well, you got to be very careful. What you do.

R: Ja, I know, tread very carefully.

I: You don't want to be the person people identify as the enemy because it's not good for you research.

R: No.

I: So you got to be very subtle and so cautious.

R: Ja, I have. There's sort of a vocal minority in the tutor group at the moment that has sort of could make thing quiet difficult for everybody. Well for us mainly if their sort of views can get heard by sort of members of staff. Because they quiet critical of...

I: This is what I want to warn you about because it has be mentioned and if you associated with that group, it's not going to be helpful because it will affect your, people will start to question your research. So you have to talk to those people and there has to be, there's different ways of doing, one can be critical without being confrontational. And at the moment if people feel criticized you know they will become defensive and you know what happens when people become defensive so I really us think you should caution people. Not to say, don't be critical, but that's why, that why I suggested the agendas and the minutes because the tutors just need a voice. That must be, do you get the minutes so all the tutors gets a copy of the minutes.

[5 minutes removed from original transcription as the discussion had strayed off topic.]

R: Ja. Okay can we move on quickly just over double the number of student report problem with reading and understanding the secondary text. Just over seventeen per cent compared to the number who struggle to recall. Compared to the number who experience problems with the primary text. Just over eight per cent. In addition to this twenty three per cent struggle to incorporate secondary sources into their essays. That seems to be sort of the main problem.

I: Integration.

R: Is using, is understanding secondary source and integrating secondary source. Do you feel that the department is teaching this appropriately and if not how can it be imported?

- I: I don't know because I'm not, I can't really, I haven't seen what happens in the other, I don't know. I need to see what is actually happening in the tutorial plans. For the various courses where you teach. So but I can certainly if I were to judge from what I've seen third year. Then they not taught it at all. Cause in my seminar now I've just consulted with every single student in my group because they still attach even for the primary text. They attach quotations it's a tagged on at the end of sentence so they don't form part of the writing structure of the sentence. So I don't see it applied even if its taught it doesn't seem, the penny doesn't seem to drop.
- R: Actually quite interesting one of the ideas with the, these grammar quiz's that we make the student do. Is to have in the second term now more English specific related things to give them. Like referencing exercises and this sort of incorporating the quotations as. And setting up a bibliography and things like that.
- I: That's excellent.
- R: And because its stuff that there's a definite right answer for. So we can give them the exercise and tell them to go and check it themselves. Against the answer sheet. So hopefully that will put into place.
- I: Lovely, that's wonderful. You know and with the secondary sources as well they don't grasp what the reading, the just use it in a kind of mechanical way. They know they have to quote so they find something that seems to be relevant and they just sort of plonk it down. But of course there are various ways of teaching it, and I think it's great that you going to have exercises with in. And I remember we used to have it to, use the material that, say for instance it was poetry or a novel you get. I think one year we did Things Fall Apart what we did is we used, we actually set a whole set of exercise, they had the quote then they had to write a sentence and integrate the quote in the sentence. So it was that sort of, also very converse specific targeting. But then secondary work, I think is quite different because it means that they have a grasp on the whole article and they've actually thought very carefully about their own argument. So there I think the different skills also being tested which is, do they know, do they first fall, are they relying on the secondary source to make the argument for them or are they able to formulate their own argument and use the quotation from the secondary source to support to support and develop that argument. So also do they know and understand that you can use a secondary source in different ways. Also used a quotation from a secondary source as a kind of platform to launch your own, you kind of engage in conversation. So I think again it's kind of explicate teaching of what it is you able to do. Yes.
- R: Okay. Seven over whelming majority of students never made use of the University writing centre or academic support tutors. Do you feel these

services should be utilized better? And if so, how do you suggest the student are encouraged to do so?

I: Language centre, so the writing library in other works?

R: Ja.

I: They [inaudible] about this because I think that what we do is what we do is so very specific to our field so I think there is a place for that. Absolutely I don't say there isn't. But I also feel that what I tell my student is come to me first, consult with me first. I feel the tutors, that we employ tutors to provide exactly that kind of service, the one to one consultation. Should I think be, its, I cannot see how you can tutor without seeing your student regularly. To deal with specific problem, you know. In that kind of context, I don't even think tutors consult anymore. Do they? Or some do.

R: They all meant to between the draft and the final that the only specified time. A lot of tutors do have other times as well. You know Randi sits in Nielsie here on Thursday mornings. She tells her students they she will be sitting in a quiet corner in the Nielsie and...

I: That's wonderful.

R: and they can come to her and she says most Thursday's she has maybe one or two that just pop in quickly and ask questions.

I: Then why do they, when we first employed tutors it was part of the time, we worked out, I think two hours a week that the tutor had to be available for consultations. And they were paid for that. That it was one of the that was the whole point. You have that, you don't just want to set up appointments, so there always a person you try to fold you time and you consult it. This is exactly what is don't, student troubles to integrate a rotation. Because maybe for some or other reason they find it difficult to grasp then there is an opportunity to sit and work with the student. You know on a one to one basis. So that seems to be something that I feel we should be doing with our own students. And then at the moment what is happening is that we sort of sending them out to the writing lab. What is not, it's not a terrible thing, but I think there is a part to play. But really ideally I think that we need to also play a more, or have a more sustained presence in the teaching vibration. Here because it's about content as well, we back to this question on the integration of content and skill and I think that a lot, much goes wrong because student have not yet learned that kind of discourse. How is it that we talk about text how, literary text or cultural, other cultural text but particularly literary text. So I think there's a specific way in which we talk about it, there's a specific way we write about it, or think about it and it demands very specific skills. So you can go to someone and they can teach you how to write a introduction, but

there very different ways of writing an introduction and it depends on your text and how you want to approach that text. So I don't think our course, we don't start off our course by saying, this is the range of essay forms you might want to choose from when you write. We say okay this is how we expect this is the little recipe we're teaching you and this is how, because it's the simplest thing to teach. But there are different ways of, if you do commentary on a poem it's not the same as analysis. Or if it's just like the lecture review, a review of the lecture is something entirely different, it has a particular format and you need to teach that. We need to say well this is what we expect you to do, write a, you know this is when I did *Pride and Prejudice* for instance. Then I worked with a format adaptation, I gave students a list of things that they supposed to look at and integrate into their review. Because it's not just a review for a magazine it's a literary work, you know it's an academic review of the film. So I think it's articulating what we expect and once that becomes clear to the student it becomes a kind of tick the box. If I am writing an expository essay then this is what I need to do. If I am writing just a commentary on a poem then something else happens, you know. Am I taking too much time?

I: No, no I am just checking that that is still running. Last question. What is the main skill that you think students should learn from English seminars?

R: That's not fair.

I: Can you put it down to one, one skill or sort of a group maybe?

R: Can I just, just not quite an answer, can I just think towards my answer, or speak and think towards my answer? I think we go back to that skills and content that interlocking skills and content. In other words it is an overarching ability to do specific things for specific text and therefore it can't even be one skill singled out because it's an interlocking of various skills. Which I think we have spoken about throughout this interview. We've mentioned reading, thinking, writing and those of sort of those almost, this is above the ground, these are above the ground. They have to rest on a very solid foundation. With a variety of other skills as well. So their language skills they sit there already the sort of the ability to be able to read English and write English. At least at an acceptable level, that seems to be a given. But built on that we are teaching certain skills, within a literary and English literature course. With us doing it's an English studies course. Were all its various permutations. But I do not think it's possible for me at all, I do not think that it's productive to try and single out one skill. Because that skill is integration of skill, the skill is integrating skills variety of skills. And you know in a very complex way and then of course I think we don't spend enough time with knowledge, I don't think we teach knowledge we need to know certain things, you need to have the critical vocabulary for argument sake. If we, there certain things, like with any discipline, you have to lay the foundation, whatever that foundation, that

depends, I am not talking about the language, I am talking about the knowledge phase for that particular discipline. What is it that student need to know to be able to do this particular subject from first year through to third year then to honours. You know why is it that student who are now in horrors and they don't know, people are tutoring and they don't know the basic critical vocabulary. They know [inaudible] and they can sort of jargon about it but the kind of literacy discourse they don't seem to have.

[End of Recording: 58.07]

Transcription – Interview 2: Lecturer

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|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| AUDIO | : | INTERVIEW 2 – LECTURER |
| LENGTH OF AUDIO | : | 30:39 |
| DATE OF INTERVIEW | : | 12/04/2012 |
| TRANSCRIBER | : | JULIA MARTINELLI |
| TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND | : | RESEARCHER: R |
| | : | INTERVIEWEE: I |

- R: So the first question is just how many years have you been in teaching at Stellenbosch and involved in the first year course?
- I: Since two thousand and eight and I started as the co-ordinator so I got, I was here as a post doc in two thousand and seven and then when I got the job I was immediately sort of thrown in in the deep end. So in November Shaun gave me the list, these are your duties, this is the kind of thing you need to do and then Dirk said you know we think you can do it, which wasn't the nicest way to start a job but anyway, ja.
- R: Did you tutor before that in the department?
- I: Only at UCT. I gave a third year seminar as a post doc but I didn't tutor at first year level as a post doc.
- R: So what is your general impression of the standard of the course and the students since two thousand and eight then? Do you think the course has got easier, the course has got harder, the students are weaker or stronger?
- I: Uhm I don't know I find that is so difficult to say. [Sighs] I don't think that the course got easier. I think we have less reading requirements but I also don't believe that the more you read the more you learn, so I don't think that that's you know, necessarily a reason for it to become easier. Maybe less time consuming okay. So I don't think the course is easier. In terms of students, I don't know. I think in the past [this is now the fifth year] I think there has always been a high number of students that struggle with expression writing English fluently. I wouldn't even be able to say if that is more than that was. I am a bit suspicious of these you know 'in my times we were all better and you know it has gotten much worse.' I don't really believe in those kinds of rhetoric.

- R: It is quite interesting to see that the students feel that English is one of their hardest subjects but just because of the workload, not so much that the concepts are difficult to grasp it is just the time that it takes them to learn.
- I: But what takes so long? That is what I want to know.
- R: From what I have seen from this year the not doing things seems to take long. [Laughs] So the survey was broken down into literacy articulation, analysis and time management and do you think there is sought of one of those four that you would pick out as a particular area where we found students to struggle?
- I: Ja I think...
- R: Just being able to read the primary text and the secondary text, articulation, being able to say what they think clearly or being able to write what they think clearly or write what they think clearly, analysis to actually go a little bit more in depth instead and then obviously just being able to manage their time.
- I: I think actually key is time management for them. If you look at their timetables and how full the timetables are and I think thinking and learning requires some free space you know. Time to think about things. Time to read. So I am really worried. I think there is a sense that quantity somehow, if you cram as much as you can into a syllabus and if you can make, particularly the first year's timetable as full as you can, then that is when they are learning a lot, which I think is actually counterproductive.
- I: So if, and I mean it would be interesting to see if we are going to have an experiment where students have a less full timetable that are not necessarily already identified as struggling students. Right because you get the extra time students but that is not what I mean. What would happen to a medium student or a good student if they had more time? Would they actually learn more or not? I don't know. But I mean of course all the other categories that you mentioned you know in various ways, you know address struggles that our students have.
- R: Yeah. There is quite an interesting schooling system that they used in New York, the Kips system. They are taking the kids from, they have started these Kip Schools in particular disadvantaged areas and they are middle schools and the kids come in and they are there from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon and they just get more time to do everything. So instead of an hour of maths they have got two hours and they do the exact same syllabus, they just get more time and the students seem to, like their English and that is not that much better than the main stream students but their maths and science and chemistry skills are just way above and that is just because they have the time to go through things better.

- R: And so the teachers can move at a slower pace and help everybody along.
- I: That makes sense to me.
- R: It is crazy. It is like really poor areas and like eighty per cent of the kids from those schools go on to get scholarships to high schools and then most of them go on to get scholarships to universities as well.
- I: Wow.
- R: And it is just because of spreading the school day half over another three hours.
- I: And the problem is that you look at our first year timetables it is already the full day.
- R: Ja.
- I: Like they have classes till four or five and I mean then to expect them to work on an assignment in the evening, to do more reading in the evening when they are exhausted from a full day of classes one after the other, I just I don't know if that is a good recipe for learning.
- R: Okay. Would you be surprised to hear that twenty eight percent of the student's reports having significant problems arising academic essays for the tutorials, when only seventeen percent report only struggling with the test questions?
- I: Ja that really baffles me.
- R: That is being the tutor's answers as well. [Laughs]
- I: That is so weird because generally they tend to do better in the tut work than they do in the test work.
- R: Well actually the figures don't really support that.
- I: Oh really?
- R: The amount of students that failed last year, more students failed on the type component.
- I: Oh was that on the type component.
- R: Than the test component.
- I: Yeah but isn't that just because they didn't hand in stuff like small exercises and got zero.

- R: It could be but they also, the students say that they enjoyed the tuts more but they find the tuts harder.
- I: That is very interesting. Ja. No. I didn't know. I mean I am baffled.
- R: Well look the only thing that we could come up with is because the tests are marked slightly more leniently they feel that they might be easier.
- I: Mm. Maybe. Ja.
- R: And eighty per cent of the students responding to the twenty eleven survey reported having problems with reading and understanding the primary text, which correlates closely with the overall failure rate of seven per cent in twenty eleven. Do you think that we are doing enough to identify these students that are poor readers early on and if not, is there something that we could do or is there some way that we could help them?
- I: I don't know.
- R: Because we felt that we should be helping them. I mean it is not...
- I: Well I mean I, Ja, I do think that it is our task to try and educate the people who are put under our noses so if we do have a variably contingent of students we can't just not care for them I think. I mean you know, we are not the ones who make the entrance requirements so that is another set of questions. So I do think we have to kind of deal with them. [Sighs] The question, I think the difficulty actually is to identify early on whether the student manages to read and understand. How do you do that? Because the early assessment is really just one point of one little task that might early on give us some indication but actually, I mean in the tut it is people who. It is difficult.
- R: People that don't respond, it is difficult to know if they are just shy .
- I: Ja well exactly or whether there could be deep thinkers. I mean I have quite a few students that understand the text. And you also have students that can talk around the text and sort of in a waffling way but not negatively but they are very proficient at masking what they don't understand. So I think it is actually really quite difficult to identify that. Though I have heard and I wouldn't know but maybe you can find out is that those entrance tests, the comprehension entrance tests are often a much better indicator of how a student would do in English than our English matric marks. So it would be really interesting to find out whether this is indeed a good indicator and if so then one could I guess follow up on that and look at that. You know they do a version of the peek test. I don't know what the test is called here at Stellenbosch.

- R: I don't know if last year, I think it may have been the year before last, Stellenbosch didn't use the standard national benchmark test.
- I: Okay I don't know.
- R: We used our own one because they felt that for the Afrikaans assessing the English tests wouldn't work. But I mean what about for the Xhosa setting and the Zulu setting where they have run the tests at Wits.
- I: Ja but even the Stellenbosch one, one would then see whether there is any correlation between the comprehension part which I guess is about showing how one can read and interpret what one has read and see if that correlates. If there is some measure of overlap between those figures.
- R: And then ja so then after the eighty per cent struggle the primary text seventeen per cent said they struggle with reading secondary text and then twenty three per cent said they struggled incorporating secondary text into their essays and that was the thing that stood out immediately as the thing that students feel that they really struggle with is the secondary source and the use of secondary sources. Do you think that we are teaching it appropriately and if it can be improved at all?
- I: Mm. No. I obviously this is sort of out of the blue. I mean I think it is worse how Shaun approaches this you know. One has to actually track it over a three year degree and for the students who come from schools where they are not required to attribute sources so then they actually then absorb. I think that it is a new thing and it is a difficult thing and twenty three per cent is not so much though. I mean it is a quarter of the class that say that this is a difficult thing.
- R: But I think that is also under scored in my talking to students I would say that maybe twenty three per cent understand perhaps less than three per cent the really like top one or two in that class who will get it straight away. By the end of the year maybe half will get it.
- I: Ja but I mean even in third year you get people who sort of incorporate quotes so that the sentence breaks, you know the argument isn't clear, the quote just sits there and it doesn't fit with the rest of what they have just said. So I think you see that actually over the whole university career and even at honour sometimes you have to say ja but you know what were you, why did you incorporate that quotation? So I think it is actually part of learning to write academically you know, whether there is a sort of something that one can do in first year to make it easier I don't know. Because I also don't think, I don't think difficulty is a problem right. Difficulty is something that challenges learning so if everything is easy and they can do everything what are they here for? So it is good that some things are difficult. I don't know. [Laughs]

R: Ja. So it is still, there is still something that you do notice at third year honours level?

I: Ja. Definitely. I mean it is difficult. Even at PhD level you find that uhm what happens quite often, which I find interesting, I remember it happened to me as well, that you read something, a theorist that is talking about something else but it is totally applicable to what you are arguing and the way in which you reference suggests that that critic would have read the primary text that you dealt with, meanwhile they haven't and that can easily happen. That happens at PhD level that you know the way in which you set up that conversation between the critic and the text has to show that this critic is talking about something else but you are applying it to your context. But I mean that is a common mistake that I see in my supervision of PhD students and I know that has happened to me.

R: I mean that is quite a higher grade.

I: Ja I know! But it also means that it has slipped your attention that they are actually applying what they are talking about is something quite different to what you are talking about. Meanwhile they can talk to what you are doing. But what I am saying, is it is something that sort of really takes years to acquire and I mean it is also quite clear that you know even as whatever you know as a staff member and you know I don't know if one ever thinks one has a right but I guess for a first year student one is quite competent right, you still read loads of tons of stuff that you don't understand, secondary material where the argument is alien and you can't follow. And that never ceases and that shouldn't. I think it would be very sad if you arrived at a point where you understood everything. So I think maybe what is needed then or how one could help students is to make that encounter more explicit to say this is normal to battle with secondary text. It is normal to have to read the multiple times before one gets the argument, it is normal you know, that sort of thing. Maybe it just needs to be unpacked and made less, de-mystified in a way right. You could say to them look as academics we read each other's works and sometimes people use frameworks or you know tools of analysis that are so different from the ones that we use that we can't follow what they are saying. And that is when the work comes in because surely studying is also about working you know. Doing some work. And that doing some work would mean you know to engage with it. Read it again and again and again if needed. I don't know. I really think that students have this idea that things should be clear.

R: Ja.

I: But I don't think that is how the world works and I don't think that is how work works. At least not in our disincline. It is not like where you can in

Biology while I obviously have got a very simplistic idea of biology but is that you learn processes by heart. Like you learn how an organism works and then you know how that organism works. But texts and narratives are different creature's altogether.

R: Ja. I think that seems to be a bit of a problem just almost with everybody who just expects an answer, a right answer and it is very difficult in English.

I: And maybe that is something that we do in school.

R: It is quite difficult to teach sometimes as well because like they are expecting an answer and you can't really give them one. But we now hopefully are going to do, we have been doing these grammar quizzes in the first semester now in the second term we are doing some also same sort of thing but we are doing referencing and incorporating [interrupted by I]

I: That is nice. That is really nice.

R: So someone that has a right answer or [interrupted by I]

I: Exactly. Ja. That is great. And I think maybe also that is the other issue. I think there is very little time devoted to practice. Now I know we have actually now in the last four years extended the writing tutorials, we have extended the help we give with writing, the drafting has been you know much, made much more conscious in the course and that is a good development. But I still think you know to have a whole class devoted or more than one class to referencing make them do practicing things at home, bring them, is this correct, isn't this correct, peer reviews are also good you know. Not like always with the teacher but with each other, does this make sense or not and maybe they get too little practice.

R: In the peer review a lot of them are very kind to their friends and are very scared of saying like 'I don't understand.'

I: But like with referencing they should be clear. Like is this correctly incorporated this quotation, does it make sense or not and does the sentence work? Ja but I mean it is difficult I guess.

R: Yeah. Uhm, so and then seven, the overwhelming majority of students near made use of the university writing centre or academic support tutors. Do you feel that these services should be utilized better and how can we encourage students to do that?

I: Ja well I thought a lot about this and that is really strange. I think that students are so reluctant but then again I would link it back to that idea of the time. You know if they had more time maybe they would be more willing to take up those additional support structures. I also wonder because I mean that is what

I have heard in the past, the feedback from tutors and students who have gone to the writing centre that it is quite uhm arbitrary whether or not you get good feedback or not so that the response from students who have gone is quite mixed, which might deter other students. But depending on which consultant you get, you either get a lot out of the session or nothing at all, or you leave more bamboozled than you were before. So I don't know if that is true. That is just hearsay.

R: That is also something that came up with the tutors is that they feel a lot of these things and it is especially the secondary source, it very much depends on the tutor. If you are lucky you get a good tutor and then you could be alright. But if you get a tutor who doesn't put in as much effort you just don't learn much and it is the same at the writing centre. Although the people say that if they send someone to the writing centre they make sure that they go to uhm to Martina and actually ask for her by name so that they know that the students are being helped properly.

I: The same with our structures you know. The biggest problem we have always had is not with what we offer I think is with making people actually come.

R: Yeah.

I: So there has always been this problem of any of these offerings is to make people come and I don't know if it is because they feel like they are in any stigmatized or whether they underestimate their problems or whether it is because they simply cannot fit in another task. It could be that as well. You know. So there are a range of factors. It is almost like we really would need to follow up you know from the previous years, the people who have gotten initiations who then went to tutoring sessions and then who decided they were going to stay and some decided no we won't go again and why they made and how they made those decisions. I actually think we offer them a lot.

R: Ja.

I: I really think we are really trying very hard and I can't imagine I mean they might be, I really can't imagine also that if a student comes to the tutor and says look I am really struggling with this can you help me that there would be tutors that would say no you know I don't have time or go away kind of thing. I don't think so. I mean and if so then that would be a really rare case right?

R: Yeah that would be quite a shock.

I: Ja. So I don't know why they are so reluctant to take up extra tutoring.

R: I was talking to Tamsyn yesterday she organized a meeting with the a student for last week and one of the repeating BA students who they have now asked to help and they got given a list of names who are repeating students who

needed help and she emailed them and setup an appointment and he missed the one the first week and then she emailed him and asked why didn't you come and he said well I can come at two on Wednesday and she was there and he didn't pitch and then she emailed him again and he replied straight away and he said 'oh sorry, I forgot, I can come' and she said; 'well your meeting was meant to be at three, come at three' so he said; 'okay I will see you at three and he never showed.'

I: Okay then that feedback must go to the B.Ed. I mean that must get to the other side because I sometimes think I mean I have been sitting in those meetings now for a long time with the education faculty and I think they think it is us who can fix us and it is very clear that it is very much a collaborative effort. So they need to know that the people are not coming because they insist that for their students we need to have these things in place. And I mean it is a real problem if a student has failed once because of the syllabus. It is a super big problem if they fail twice. Then they are so buggered in their sequence.

R: What do you think the main skill that you should have for English 178? Or if it is something that you could put it down to?

I: [Laughs] Aaah! That is such a difficult question because it is always this 'what do we actually do in this discipline?' I think for me anyway I think to understand the mechanics of the narrative. So basically I mean that is a way of saying critical analysis, is like seeing how something is put together, seeing how a story is told and what that means. I think that is really, if students struggle with that even at the end of their major in English then that is quite sad I think.

R: Okay. Thank you very much. Do you have anything else to add or just something that you are concerned about maybe in the first year course at all?

I: No but I wanted to say something uhm it doesn't really relate to this but it relates to the discussion around the text and nervous conditions. I have thought about this a bit more because quite frankly the feedback to Disgrace was negative, the feedback to Thirteenth Sense was negative, the feedback, well no, not I mean actually that is even putting it to global. Some of the feedback was negative, the feedback to Nervous Conditions was not, well I mean it is interesting because Nicole was saying she is having a wonderful time with her class. So it also seems as though the tutors who are having a negative experience with their class, they are more vocal around the negative experience rather than those. I think Maria also said no she is having a good time but, and I actually think it is a complex problem. It is not easily solved by replacing the text because we have tried several times right, we have replaced Disgrace and we have replaced Thirteenth Sense. I am very happy to try again you know because I have now lectured it three years, so it might be

time to lecture something else because it is more interesting for me. But it is a bigger problem you know. It is not the text itself and then I mean you know we have to ask ourselves do A) students have to like the text?, B) do students, does the text have to speak to their lives? I mean does it need to be contemporary and you know popular? I mean those are the kinds of questions and are we are not doing them disservice if we don't sort of extend their comfort zone a little bit. And what is it that they find so difficult to acknowledge that they live in Africa, they study in Africa, most of them are African. So what is the big deal? You know. I don't get it?

R: I don't know.

I: And I mean it is so interesting because Jayne Eyre or that other text, we had Jayne Eyre in the past, we had Great Expectations in the first year syllabus. They also get similarly negative ratings than the African novel but it is the two novels which are the fattest texts, which require the most investment that I often see as the obstacle.

R: And I don't think it is the novel, the particular novel. I think it is the fact that it is a novel.

I: Well is this?

R: I just find that a lot of them are just lazy to read and to actually just do the work. It is like they have a perception of university but it doesn't actually involve working.

I: Oh. Ja.

R: And like I find that just a lot of them this year in particular seem to be like wilfully not learning anything. You would think that they just pick things up by just being there but the questions that they ask and then they will email you with a question that you have gone over in class and gone over again and they will still not get it. It is like they just don't pay attention at all sometimes.

I: Mm.

R: But then some classes, I have got one class which is uhm they are not the liveliest bunch but I have had one absentee from that class in the entire semester so far.

I: Brilliant!

R: And that was when they brought a doctor's note. They hand everything in on time, they prepare and everything but they are still a little bit dry. But I mean it is such an easy class to teach and their essays are all so good because they all have paid attention. Everybody in the class is scared to slip up because they are worried about what the others are going to think of them. But of course the

other class is a bit of a slacker class and there is just nothing that you can do to them that will get them to pull their socks up. They just, they are the liveliest bunch and there are great debates but it is all talking around the subject than talking about it. And then today with the you know those conditions credit stuff I set them a writing task because I knew there would be some of them that wouldn't have read and then they came to the class and there were six novels in a class of thirteen and probably about four secondary sources who, people who had articles. So there wasn't even enough like material to share.

I: Ja.

R: So we ended up, each reading a paragraph and then going through it and then discussing it.

I: Oh but that is quite nice.

R: But I mean [interrupted by I]

I: That was a good strategy.

R: That took us thirty five minutes of the class.

I: Ja of course.

R: Just in reading it.

I: Ja. But I mean at least then they have done something in the class. I don't know it is like, well I mean it is interesting because I heard Jean say, I don't know if you are going to interview her as well?

R: Ja I have, I have spoken to her as well.

I: Because I mean she thinks we are not expecting enough of them and that is why they think they can do nothing. Now I don't know if this is true. I don't think it is true.

R: I think the problem is we have got students from a wide range of courses and there are some courses that they like expect quite a lot of their students and so those people that are taking those really, really struggle with the workload. The law students struggle and students like the, I have got a design, a jewelry design student in my class and she is permanently doing practical stuff, so she is finding it very difficult to get to the English lectures and to do the work for English. But then there are other students, xxx students that don't have such a hectic workload and just kind of float through everything because no one expects anything of them.

I: But they still don't do the work.

R: No.

I: Mm.

R: That is because no one ever expects them to almost.

I: Ja.

[End of Recording: 30.39]

Transcription – Interview 3: Tutors

NAME OF AUDIO : **INTERVIEW 3 - TUTORS**

DATE OF AUDIO : **29 March 2012**

LENGTH OF AUDIO : **57:35**

TRANSCRIBER NAME : **JULIA MARTINELLI**

TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND : **RESEARCHER R**

: **TUTORS T**

TUTORS NAMES REMOVED AND INDICATED WITH XXXX

- R: Okay, so I've just got, got eight questions and I'd just like you guys to be able to answer them like, as individually and as a group. Try and get some, some feedback from, from that. A lot of the stuff is stuff that we've discussed generally, so I know you will, will probably have, have views and probably quite strong views on that anyway. But first of all, just some general stuff, like, uh, the first one is, how long have you been teaching first year, the first year course at Stellenbosch?
- T: At Stellenbosch?
- R: Yeah.
- T: This is my second year, I taught for three years at Rhodes before that.
- R: You guys are all in your second year, hey?
- T: Yes, yes.
- R: XXXX, you are...
- T: Fifth year.
- T: Fifth, awesome, how have you not killed any first years yet?
- T: Um, I've been close, (laughter) character assassination and such. (laughter).
- R: Okay. So what's your general impression of the standard of the course and the students in the time that you've been at Stellenbosch? Can you justify that in any way, it's just a gut feeling. XXXX, maybe you'd like to uh...

- T: Uh, it's fluctuated, or...
- R: Wildly?
- T: Um, we started off with text and context, um, text and context but fact and fiction three streams. Fact and fiction, literary studies and academic skills. That was my first year.
- R: Which one did you teach?
- T: I taught fact and fiction. That was, that was good, I really enjoyed that and then the standard was also pretty solid.
- R: The student's um....
- T: Ja, and everyone, everyone knew what they were teaching and they could choose, which was actually quite good. And then, they decided to change that to two streams, uh, and then.....
- T: Which one was cut?
- T: Academic skills which was a little bit foolish.
- T: I was going to say, wouldn't that cater to the Education.....?
- T: That, that was the thing, that was a, that was a very silly idea. Because then we had, I mean you've got the good students, you got the average students and you got the weaker students all put in one class, and then I mean, you can't give as much time to the top students as you would, because you got to explain basic language issues to the weaker students. So I think they've, they've started to address that with the academic skills, the ask and the writing lab, but I mean, we still have the students in the class, so it's not entirely eliminated that issue. And then the fact that the students can't pick the stream means that they often don't have any enthusiasm for a course.
- T: Because I really enjoyed, I did a stream as you say in my first year and it was great because everybody there had a real interest in literature.....
- T: Those classes were very productive.
- T: Ja, because they chose what they were doing.
- T: Exactly.
- T: That's what I found as well, sorry I may sound like a stuck record but your Dictaphone has heard me say this before, but obviously my kind of comparison to Stellenbosch are coloured by my perception of Rhodes, I don't know how helpful that is going to be to you but I found that the Stellenbosch course was much less demanding than the Rhodes course; and I think it's

because at Rhodes it's not a compulsory subject for the course. So like you were saying, everyone who was there chose to be there, or have some interest and kind of had a natural aptitude for literature. So, then they are willing to work a bit harder, they are willing in more ways to engage, where I found the students at Stellenbosch, they just lazy, I don't know, they just not keen.

- T: Ja, there's a lack of enthusiasm.
- T: Ja, it's really like, it is actually apathy, you know, they don't care, they just don't want to, they don't. They don't read.
- T: When I was teaching the first year, when I was teaching literature studies and what we teaching now, it seems a lot easier but the course seems a little better.
- T: I also find a difference, I mean, my classes last year, most of my students were there because they had to be there because their BEd's or whatever their course was. This year, across my three classes most of them actually want to be there, so I'm actually having quite amazing classes this year.
- T: Oh Wow!!
- T: The students, I am not giving up my classes, I love them. I literally just did feedback with them today and they were like, they are really enjoying Nervous Conditions and were enjoying the course and they want to continue with it and it's purely because they want to be there, so the few students who don't want to be there are picking up their enthusiasm.
- R: apparently, I spoke briefly to Linda the other day, there's, there was a stuff up, not a stuff up but there was a botch with Stellenbosch admissions, they were really slow in getting back to people, and so that is why there are so few first years this year. People got in elsewhere, and hadn't heard back from Stellenbosch, so, they just, just didn't come and that's why we're three hundred down on, on what we had on last year. So next year it's going back to the increasing trends like, one thousand four hundred.
- T: Oh.
- R: [Laughter] Something ridiculous.
- T: No, we'll probably have more.
- R: And admissions are going to be centrally controlled by the government, not by, by the universities.
- T: By the government?
- R: Possibly, ja.
- T: [Inaudible]

- R: There might, ja, so there might be a, a few changes.
- T: That was in my natural voice. (laughter).
- T: Can I add something? I was just talking to someone about today, um, I don't know if this is possible, so it's not something I am basing scientifically, but it does seem to me that the student's capability to do simple administrative tasks, preparatory tasks, um, to process and retain instructions and information, to read and understand instructions, those kinds of skills seem to me to have.....
- T: They have drastically declined.
- T: They are in terminal decline.
- T: I'm not going to say drastically, but I mean, I can see the difference between this year's group and like last year's group.
- T: Ja, definitely.
- T: And that is what is bothering me, if we are, if the standard is declining, yearly, annually, then what are we going to be teaching in five years' time? My students can barely manage their time and sort of priorities as it is, and, and they don't know what is expected of them despite everything that's in the resource pack and everything I say and repeat in e-mail, in writing.
- T: Ja.
- T: And even the better students find....
- T: Even the better students, that's what's bothering me because last year there were students who never listened in class, and I knew they would ask me by e-mail and I just decided, you know, to stop answering them after, after a term. But this year, even the bright ones, who did, did well in the early assessments and exceptionally well in the electory board, they are the ones who ask me how do I do index referencing from an online source? And I go, I sent you a step by step guide to using Guido from the bib website yesterday, it's in your in box, you to want to maybe try reading that?
- T: No, but we don't check our e-mails and the thing is, we spending less time in class doing work and far more doing admin stuff, you must do this, you must e-mail me, you must listen, that takes up to maybe ten minutes in class, where it shouldn't eat into class time at all.
- T: Ja, the amount of time spent on admin this year...
- T: Ja, that's exactly the thing. We don't get paid for XXXX, which we don't get paid for. If I took on one more class, if I took four groups, I would not be able to do anything else. I would consider that a full time job, I would not try doing post grad studies with four groups. I, I would not try that.

- T: Ja, I was just amazed with the not answering thing like, I set them a bibliography; like copy and paste this, and then they'd say how do I do the bibliography? And I say but I sent you.....
- T: By what do you mean copy and paste?
- T: And I mean, how is it in any way unclear?
- T: Yes, like my one student, I sent them that reference and then I told them about Guido encyclopaedias on the bib web site, and Guido generates a citation for every entry and then he sent me his essay and said well, you said you are going to deduct five per cent if we don't have a bibliography but I don't have one because I didn't use any secondary sources.
- T: The poem is a source.
- T: But surely it must come from somewhere? I am going to deduct five per cent, so ja, it's for not listening. Not reading e-mail, so...
- R: You should actually deduct more than five per cent for not listening.
- T: Yes, I should. I've told my class three times how to do index referencing for poetry and I am still got e-mails yesterday, is this how I do it? They've got the author's name and the year and everything else and I'm like I've shown you this three times. When you're in class and you explain something for five minutes and then you know, two minutes later someone puts up their hand and asks you a question which you just spent explaining to them for five minutes!
- T: It's literally that they think every tut, this is for the ones who take English 178 for the first time, there's no sense but this is a continuance, that anything you do is carrying over to the next tut or I need to remember what I've learnt.
- T: Yes, so there's no what Jean called scaffolding, there's no building on what you learnt in the last tut and using that, and so you know, reaching a higher level of academic sort of inquisitiveness in the next tut at all.
- T: It's an amnesiac approach.
- T: I find with mine, that if I explain a concept and then I ask them in the next class what does it mean, even those that took notes, they can't tell me, they just sit there.
- T: They can't tell you.
- T: And vegetate.
- T: I had big problems with, with that this year, with the assignment classes, all three of mine, usually I have at least one class that is really chatty, but you ask a question and it, it's just...

- T: Silence.
- T: It just feels very still to me.
- T: I don't want any of your classes!
- R: That digging poem, I had the most densest, the most densest like lesson plan I have ever done, and I went through it in about twenty minutes because no-one responded.
- T: You telling them everything...
- T: I have had a lot of that this year, by, by about half past, twenty five to I've already kind of scraping myself.
- T: Yes, I know....
- T: I give them a writing tasks in every class now just to...
- T: Fill the time. We shouldn't have to do that.
- T: I have one class at the moment [all talking at once]
- T: Usually you have one good one, all three of my classes. But just to go back to your original question about you know the quality of work, I always wonder if that kind of response you, what we demand of them, but what Linda was saying at the meeting on Monday, like I think back to Rhodes [and I'm sorry I keep going back to Rhodes but that's basically my experience] in my first year we had five compulsory periods a week that we had to attend, and we had three, three to four texts a term that we had to study. And I just compare it to the workload these kids have got and they think they are so busy and there's so much reading and they have got like one novel a term. I often wonder if we demanded more of them, then they would produce more?
- R: I must mention that with the students, uh, last year's students earlier in the week, they all said that the workload in English 178 was significantly more than the other subjects,
- T: What!
- T: What?
- R: They said that the hardest, the hardest part of English was the workload.
- T: But I can't believe that.
- T: How the hell can you have a workload one time a week?
- T: They come to their two tuts and they don't prepare for it.

- T: They read the poem with us in class.
- T: They only spend two hours a week on English, how is that...
- T: In class! [laughs].
- T: Because they not doing any prep, they not reading a book, they're not going to the lectures. What the hell...
- T: What exactly is taking up their time?
- T: On the job training.
- T: They imagine the work they should have been doing, in their minds or something.
- R: Are the other classes where they don't have compulsory stuff, will they just not do anything until the exams?
- T: Because you don't have to in a lot of the other BA subjects, I mean lectures, they don't ask you to prepare, you don't have the tuts situation, you just have the lectures, you don't have to do anything. If I remember correctly the biggest workload subject I had was political science, and I think in your first year I think you had...
- T: We didn't have any tutorials in political science the first year, there was really no...
- T: They did quite a few essays but they don't have tuts.
- T: But someone had told me because now in these informal settlements I just did, pretty much every student complained about the lectures.
- T: Mmm I have had a lot of them as well.
- T: And I think this comes more from reading articles at the moment from the BBC and New York Times about studies that are coming out about how we learn and the lectures are no longer an effective method. So I think it's quite easy in our tuts to make it accessible to them because you can adjust and adapt to them, but somehow I just don't think that is the the way they are currently structured.
- T: It depends on the lecturers though, because look how popular the Daniel's lectures always are.
- T: Ja, but they, they respond to him as a person. They enjoy him I think more on an entertaining than a...
- T: Ja, then they connect that to learning. With XXXX they don't respond at all, they don't, they don't.

- T: They just cannot take for fifty minutes of hearing.
- T: And I think that they battle to actually follow the thread of the lecture.
- T: That's what my complaint was, she didn't understand why we don't start when we read a book, look at the title then at the beginning of the book, then to the middle, then to the end.
- T: They don't actually.....
- T: That's what they did in school!
- T: They have problems to finish reading it but that's what they did in school.
- T: They're struggling with the structure.
- T: But I disagree, you can't approach text like that at university, you just can't.
- R: Okay.
- T: Some of them have like, not a learning disability, but like compared to how our high school education was, there's certain skills to do basic things, like, um, follow instructions and like, um actually you know, think about like that whole thing of following the thread of the lecture, it has to be linear, if it's not...but they don't seem to follow it.
- T: I think they used to getting everything you know, here's a pack, read this. It's not I wonder, it's I want to know, it's....
- R: But that's why a lot of them can't follow *Nervous Conditions* as well, because it's not linear.
- T: Mmmm. And as in school they go, they actually read it in class pretty much and now they have a task and must go home and actually be independent and they must read it in their own time, so they just not doing it, so they not part of the lecture so they not doing the work and...you know....
- R: [Inaudible] the *Nervous Conditions* movie.
- T: Ja, but that is the question because that's a movie.
- T: They are making one.
- T: Really?
- T: Ja, because [inaudible].
- R: Okay, question three. So in that survey last year I broke up the, the problems the students were having or, or sort of like the things the students had to do

into three things. Literacy, articulation, analysis, and time management, so which of those do you think they, they struggle with the most? Is it...

T: Can you repeat that?

R: Literacy, is it...?

T: Can we agree they struggle with all four? (laughter) Because I think they do.

R: Articulation can they, can they write not something that's in-depth, can they just write and speak, express themselves clearly? Can they analyse something, do they know what to say when you say to them you not providing any analysis? Then time management.

T: I think analysis is probably the most high end concern, that, but that, that follows only if you can read properly.

T: That's true.

T: That's the thing, you don't understand what the word condition means, then you can't analyse.

T: Oh, that's the other problem, when they come across words they don't understand, they don't....

T: They don't look it up, it's blank.

T: Yes, they prefer to be ignorant.

T: It bothers my mind because they are all sitting with smart phones, they have the flipping capability to look it up.

T: Ja but they are more interested in bbming while you are busy telling them stuff.

T: Or talking [sorry just completely aside, I had one answer her phone call and speak at the top of her voice, everyone was just...what are you doing?]

T: Ja, ja, could you be quiet please, I'm having a conversation, now that, that is special.

T: I would lose it completely.

T: We should be allowed to send those students out.

T: But I think the problem as well with analysis is when, I find when you sit there with essays and can you see it's not analysis, they can't see it either. I find the difference between description analysis.

T: Ja summary and analysis.

- T: Ja, they're always worried about the work on the essay, whereas if you actually did the analysis, it would be really easy, but they just can't do it.
- T: Ja, I think I agree with XXXX, all four are concerns but I think analysis is probably....
- T: It's the hardest one.
- T: I have a few BEd's that can't express.
- T: Ja but like it's a language barrier for them. Ja. I've got it with the Black students, I can just see they can't, they can't understand.
- T: Ja, well why not ask, I've got two Afrikaans students and the other two English, English is their first language.
- T: The worst thing is when they think in Afrikaans and they try to express that Afrikaans word in English.
- T: I don't have a problem with that really, if, if they trying, not talking about junk they saw on the U-tube then it's really fine with me, but I mean you can't pass an essay on that kind of writing.
- T: I think time management as well, ...
- T: Yes, that's my second one, yes.
- T: I have informal discussions with them before class, they always discuss about this and that, but I think, I think that's a first year problem. It is an adjustment from school to university and you know, and it will, it will take them at least six months to learn it. It's quite natural but I just feel that they're struggling on a level that we didn't in our first year.
- T: Yes.
- T: It's just so much work.
- T: Yes, definitely analysis and time management as the second one because as, you know, if you going to get sick, as one of my BA's has gotten sick now and you've not written your essay which you have to hand in today, then you're really going to have a problem because I can't give you an extension and now is not the time to be writing your essay. So you should have been thinking, you know, you should have thought ahead, way before now, now is too late.
- T: Don't write the essay on deadline day.
- T: Exactly, exactly.

- T: Or just with reading, I can totally advise, if you are a slow reader, start earlier. You don't start on the third tut you know.
- T: No, no, that's why I'm terrified.
- T: That's what I don't understand. Literally from the very first tut, I say to them buy *Nervous Conditions*, read it now. If you buy it now you have got to read ten pages a day like whatever, and I still, most of my mine haven't finished it.
- T: These *Nervous Conditions* tuts are a write-off, I tell you that honestly, an absolute write-off.
- T: But you think, well really, what the hell are you doing?
- T: But my students expressed a genuine offence when I asked them to write a content test this week Friday, and....
- T: But you didn't tell us this was going to count marks....
- T: But also it's been like three weeks of lectures, they should have read it all by now but the fact that I would have asked them to read it by this Friday, they really can't believe I am asking...
- T: No, it's too much to ask for them to go to go to the lecture and to read the book.
- T: I just don't understand this mind-set that it's okay you are going to get stuff out of lectures and tuts if you haven't read the book, like, why, why you reading the book while the tuts are going on, you should read the book from the start.
- T: Can I just say that I saw that shocking email that XXXX showed me from one of her students, where the student wrote; 'I can't find anything on the internet about the poem [inaudible].' So X XXX sends one back saying well, there's nothing on it, you are supposed to use your critical faculties and there is nothing on the internet on the poem and anyway you shouldn't be using it for it. The child sends back, 'that sucks, unhappy face, and then went on about how unfair it was and how she is angry at [inaudible] for not giving her a poem like this on the internet!
- T: Ja, it's so unfair!
- R: Okay, so would it surprise you to hear that last year that twenty eight per cent of the students reported having significant problems with writing academic essays for their tuts, while only seventeen per cent reported struggling to the same extent with the test questions?
- T: I'd have thought that twenty eight would have been more.
- T: I would have thought it would've been fifty percent.

- T: It was at the end of the year, wasn't it?
- T: Ja, but still, if you look at their marks...
- R: It was only seventy nine out of, out of almost nine hundred, that were, no, there were more than nine hundred. Only seventy nine out of a thousand one hundred and forty something students actually failed at the end of uh, at the end of the year.
- T: I had some students that passed last year that was, I was just like horrified.
- T: Ja, it, it's very weird the way the system works because we've got a top end which is tiny, tiny which is people who get seventy five per cent or more, hardly anybody, got a mass between fifty or fifty eight or sixty, quite a few people and then forty nine, forty eight, forties a lot and then...
- T: I've been a lot more generous with my markings this year...
- T: The thing is, we end up being so generous when you get a good essay, that's the thing because you get so much crap, be, being objective is...
- T: Being over-generous with a good one. Mmm. Mmm and try not be too harsh on the bad ones.
- T: But I also find like the, being constantly forced to be soft with your Bed students. Last year, I mean, I just think that it is so, so wrong.
- T: There shouldn't be two standards.
- T: Ja, I have such an issue with the Education Department. I just don't understand how, why they deserve to have special treatment. If you have a problem with the department, then don't make English compulsory, I am sorry.
- T: Teach your own English course, something like English for professionals.
- T: Ja, but they must have it, they must not do....
- R: But they've got second and third year students...
- T: They can't do a literary studies thing, they must do an English language, but..
- R: I was speaking to...
- T: I wonder what people think this course is sometimes..
- R: I was speaking to XXXX's supervisor when I had that meeting with her and she was saying that they really don't want, or some people in the faculty don't want the BA students to do a language course, they want them to do a difficult

first year course, because they find that, that if you're having problems with Xhosa and the people that take Afrikaans for an additional language at university, when they get to second and third year they just nowhere with those subjects, and they can't, and they'll never even be able to teach it even at a primary school level.

T: None of the other subjects teach them to think correctly, English is the only one.

T: That's my issue with the whole BA Department, this English 178 shouldn't be the most difficult subject that they have. Like...

R: Ever.

T: Ja, like, it seems like they not really concerned with turning out good teachers, they just concerned with turning out volume, you know, just as many teachers as they can and they don't seem to be particularly qualified. I mean, mine have zero interest in learning anything outside of like their own tiny little bubble, and I don't see how they going to go out and teach high school when they have this kind of attitude towards reading and.....

T: Do you know what's scary is that our education department is rated one of the highest in the country.

T: Ja, well it's the best in the country

T: Well, the research output, but ja.....

T: Did that answer your question at all?

R: No, not at all. [Laughter] But it's fine. [Inaudible] started off with a good answer.

T: We're surprised, yes. Not because it's high, because it's low and I mean, judging by the feedback we got from our students...

T: It seems low.

R: And the, the tests, do you think the tests are easier or are they marked more leniently?

T: They are marked more leniently, and I think they almost approach a test like a once off, like it's not part of the course, like, oh, I got a question, you know, and it's almost like they see it as sort of part of, of the normal syllabus.

T: I don't know, I just think some people have a magnificent facility for, you know, having moments of extreme inspiration under pressure, but when it comes to something and perhaps that's why they leave essays for the last moment, they hoping for the same feeling of pressure. Um, because you know, once they have to sit down and think about it, because then, let's say the

assignment questions are more challenging and obviously they're more in-depth than the test questions, um, once they have to sit down and think about the thing and for heaven's sake do a spell checker and re-read the thing and edit the thing, I mean, you know, that just, they not up to it at all, they'd rather be there for an hour and fifty minutes and right, they pass.

T: That comes in with the marking, like when you're marking an exam essay you're still looking for structure and that kind of thing, but you're definitely more forgiving because of the time constraint.

T: Yes.

T: Whereas when you mark an essay that you know they've had weeks to do and...

T: Ja, and they've got a lot of freedom to make spelling errors and stuff like that in their test, so they feel oh, now I'm comfortable if I get some form of original thought, then, I mean like Daniel's *text and context* stuff last year, it's like, no if you cover the content well, even if you make terrible errors if you get an original thought you still get seventy five per cent.

T: Yes.

T: It's like Wow!!

T: That's why I think the way from all the moderations us lecturers are very much pushed passing them because then we're in a very restricted criteria.

T: Absolutely.

T: So I think you know, we might have failed...

T: Yes.

T: On their criteria not pass. I think questions seem to me to be a big thing.

T: Ja. What they can do, I don't know how much power you have, is give them five minutes more and give them just a few extra instructions, you know, remember to have proper paragraphs,....

T: Ja, I do that.

T: Remember the stuff, it could be a problem and then they have no excuse and we don't have to deal with it because it's right in front of them to remind them.

R: Well I was actually looking at the stats last year, it was, I think, of the seventy nine that failed, I think about fifty five per cent failed both the test and the, and the tuts and then it was like of the rest I think it was about thirty something per cent failed tuts. [Inaudible] Failed the tests, so it seems like there's more

students that struggle with the tuts, the tuts alone rather than, the weakest of the weak struggle across the board.

T: Do you know how we always lie about this participation mark thing? [I don't know if everyone does, or if I am the only one who does that?] but we tell them that there is a participation mark in tutorials, but I think we should really do that.

T: Yes.

T: They do that at UWC, it counts quite a bit, it counts twenty per cent.

T: [Inaudible] English Department, we got ten per cent for it.

T: I think we should do it.

T: I don't know, I think if it will push some marks up and bring some down or what but I think it's important, I think being prepared, you know, ready to be prepared to contribute in a tutorial.

T: Yes, and UWC has uh, multiple choice content questions before the lectures even start on the novels and these count marks. I think that is a wonderful idea.

T: Yes, we did it second year at Wits, ja, why don't they do it in first year?

T: Yes, why don't they?

T: I feel to take off marks for the student like who keeps on coming late,...

T: Exactly. Mmm.

T: And those who contribute a lot, you want to reward them you know.

R: Or the students who just sit there and sit on their phone.

T: Obviously there is going to be the argument, what if there is a naturally shy student who is going to be at a disadvantage with the participation mark; but you can actually see the difference between a student who is shy in class and a student who is just unprepared. You can tell the difference.

R: Ja, and you'll see the difference in their essays and then you try to get it out of them. Okay, so question five. So, last year eight per cent of the students responding to the survey reported problems with reading and understanding the primary text, which correlates closely with the overall failure rate of seven per cent. Do you think we're doing enough to, to get to those, those students that, that struggle with reading early on? Is there, should we not be identifying them?

T: But what would be the practical way to do that?

- R: Does the, does the early assessments....
- T: Well, the early assessment now is it sufficient? I am not sure. Actually don't know what's going on in the course, and that's, you know I don't know what's happened, but this is the most chaotic it's been in five years for sure, and finding out on a weekly basis what you doing, I mean I don't know about anybody else, but I'm not getting to my own work. You know...
- T: If a student were to tell me that they have trouble reading, my advice to them would be to read more in general, to read more slowly, to not try to squeeze it in in a night, uh, to re-read the novel before a test or assignment if possible, and at all times to have a form of dictionary with them. But none of these is anything we can do something about practically.
- T: It will take time, no matter what happens.
- T: No, what I was going to say is exactly what she's saying, for example, I'm early on, but if they not taking the initiative, if they not doing anything, there's nothing we can do. If at university level you don't read...
- T: It's too late, you know, you can't stop the rot.
- T: That's what I'm thinking, if eight per cent can't understand the primary text, how the hell did they get in, you know? They probably read three chapters of Jane Ayres and gave up.
- T: Do we still have literacy tests before they get in here, Seamus, do you know?
- R: Ja, they do.
- T: I, I want to take a look at, or I think you should take a look those and determine you know, what gets someone through that, because obviously reading skills aren't tested, I'm not even talking about critical reading, I'm talking about literacy.
- T: Comprehension.
- T: It's probably text like Shakespeare and Jane Eyre because it is very high English.
- T: It's a kind of English, ja, because they read a sentence and there's four words they don't get hey.
- T: But I think it's also a matter of perseverance, instead they're probably giving up after three pages. Yes.
- T: When you get to university level you should have the brain power to challenge yourself and get through a text like that. What is on my mind is, what are these students doing at university if they can't even be willing to try?

- R: I think the problem is we, because some of us have still got a very Afrikaans language policy that they didn't use the standard benchmark tests this year for getting in here, that they used at UCT and UJ and Wits and I think it's us and possibly Bloemfontein.
- T: So what did we use?
- R: We used our own one, one that we've used all along.
- T: Why?
- T: I recall quite a comprehensive...
- T: We did quite a challenging access test, and...
- R: The standard benchmark test is a multiple choice thing.
- T: Well then they should find a way of you know, they should give a little reading passage and test comprehension in that way, the same way that they do in schools, because that will determine whether you can understand a vaguely challenging piece.
- R: Ja.
- T: I'm just worried about these tests if they are some way being simplified in order to you know, accommodate the uh, you know, the large uh majority of say the Afrikaans speaking students. That creates a false sense of security for the Afrikaans students, and you know, I feel very loyal towards Afrikaans students because many of my actively contributing students who get very good marks are Afrikaans first language speakers, and you know, I would hate for any speaker of any language that's not English to feel, you know that they have been privileged to get them in here, because um, I don't think they have, um, you know, that some people just don't belong here of, of all languages and they shouldn't have passed that test. So, you know, perhaps it's very important that we use the standard one used in the rest of the Province.
- T: Just to go back to the question of reading, I think it is to an extent a symptom of you know, the wider reading culture of the country because I saw the stats, like over fifty per cent of households in this country don't own a book
- T: Yes.
- T: So, you know, I'm not really surprised at these kind of things that our students come here not reading.
- T: Also there needs to be a change the perception of what university is because when we were in high school it was like, it was told to us, university is difficult, it's a big jump up and you must be prepared to work.

- T: These first years seem to be like...
- T: Ja it was the impression that it was only for like a for like a select few you know, and now they think it's not, it's just a continuation of their school.
- T: Ja. That's, that's what they see on TV. Let's make university free for everybody and everybody MUST go, and everybody must not go to university.
- T: Ja, I have had a couple of questions this year, I was getting eighty per cent for English in school, why am I battling now?
- T: But you got eighty per cent in school because you could memorise what you were taught....
- T: Yes, now you have to think.
- T: Now you have to think. I have to think, and as soon as I have to think, it doesn't work.
- T: When you ask the students what are their favourite books, then two people would name a book because the rest of them don't read.
- T: Some read magazines.
- T: I'm friends with one of my student's father on Facebook, it's a very long story, um, he works for my father don't worry, he, the other day posted a picture of his son, my student um, sitting on the couch reading a car magazine, and he posted this picture because he was so amazed, my son is reading! I was like, Oh my God, it's a car magazine! You know. (laughter)
- T: He's not reading, he's staring!
- T: No, it was such an occasion that he was [inaudible] his ex-boss, that it warrants a picture on Facebook.
- T: But you know what's amazing, with the internet and stuff, we're actually reading more than ever, so our kids are reading ten thousand words a day or something ridiculous but they just can't do it like in a book form.
- T: No, but I don't know if they're actually reading.
- T: No, they read. They'll speak on Facebook statuses.
- T: And that's why they can't spell and they can't express themselves.
- T: They're not reading anything they have to actually learn.
- T: Ja, but they're reading opinion pieces, it's not literature and blogs are not the same thing.

- R: Maybe you should set tasks of uh, of tasks of critically analysing BBM messages?
- T: And, and beauty of comments
- T: I think we should read the beauty of novels to them in small chunks and then they'll get it
- T: [Inaudible] let them sign it
- R: Okay. Um. So then seven per cent said their problems with the reading the reading the secondary text which, hang on, let me read my whole question, instead of just jumping in the middle. Just over, just over double the students reported problems with reading and understanding the secondary text, seventeen per cent compared to the number expressed problems from the primary text, eight per cent. In addition to this twenty two per cent struggled to incorporate secondary sources into their essays. Do you feel that the department is teaching this appropriately and if not, how can it be improved?
- T: In a word yes, they just not listening.
- T: Really, I don't know how much more we can do this, I know I spent entire periods talking about how to incorporate secondary material, how to quote properly and I don't really know what else to do.
- T: Last year for the Shakespeare I gave them the introduction by Bill Bryson written on Shakespeare which was very entertaining, it's for people who don't read Shakespeare and I thought that would be really great for them, because it's not an academic article, maybe like an introduction for secondary sources because the *Nervous Conditions* one they didn't want anything to do with that, and they didn't even want to read that, they didn't read it, I think I had one student who read it, I gave them hand-outs. So, um, its, ja, even when you try and incorporate that non-academic secondary stuff...
- T: Ja, I'm, I'm very tempted to say that they must literally spend the money, charge them and put the secondary sources in a pack and hand it to them. Don't even mark it as secondary sources, tell them it's course material.
- T: Why do we give them so little? But I do think the choice has to be made, because some of the secondary material [inaudible]
- T: Ja, but the Jane Ayre, the way we've been teaching it is like an Honours course.
- T: Yes, but that's fortunately going to be revamped with a little bit of help from yours truly, so I'm very diplomatically going to try and make it slide into third year level. Yes.
- T: Well, ja, I really felt it was much higher than what we did in first year.

- T: Oh, yes.
- T: But, but then again, once students responded, the good ones...
- T: The good ones, yes.
- T: Yes, the good ones, they respond well.
- T: You see, that's what the thing is, if you, if you make them step up there are those who will rise to the occasion but the majority will stay behind in the gutter, and we can't have that because then our through put rate will be even lower.
- T: We should go back to the streams...
- T: Yes, it's back to the streams we go.
- T: What you supposed to when you have the strongest and weakest in a class?
- T: Yes. It is still a stream issue, and that, lecturers have got to put their pride aside and say yes, I've earned my stripes and I am willing because I care, not because I'm just here for my pay cheque and I don't want to teach and just do research. That's a fact, because they don't want to teach, they say oh no, I can't do an academic course. You know. They've said that in meetings and it's ridiculous.
- R: You must go for just for interest sake and cast contact sessions on their, on their doors, you know. Everyone has got their timetables on their doors. I think six is about, is about average and that's counting...
- T: And that's quite high.
- T: That's when, And that's when they have like third year lectures without lecture one class in the entire year, but they have that.
- T: I don't know. It's just um, I think [I lost my train of thought].
- T: I just want to say what are you thinking with uh, when it comes to teaching ... when using secondary resources and disclose a number of other issues. I think it very dependent on who their tutor is if they have been taught that line. And I think the problem with the way our specifically writing tutorials are set out, our students are getting vastly different... um...
- T: Yes.
- T: Levels of help with it.
- R: Writing tutorials we, we haven't had, every other class there's a lesson plan presented the writing is as far as.....

- T: We're all doing our own thing, because I mean the ones that we are given in the pack are not great, I think we are all doing something...
- T: I think we're all doing our own thing, period.
- T: Ja, I mean Seamus you were asking is the department teaching it?
- T: I know that I am, you know but I can't speak for anyone else, well this bunch really...
- T: No well you hope they get a senior tutor.
- T: But that's the thing, you know junior tutors might not, less enthused tutors might not...
- T: Yes, please say less enthused because...
- T: Yes it's unfair to say junior tutors, less enthused.
- T: The thing is, that they are less enthused tutors that are blatantly less enthused.
- T: But I think [inaudible] it comes back to what you are saying, there's no like
- T: Uniformity.
- T: Nobody is on the same page.
- T: Nobody knows.
- T: When are we going to be in the same library?
- T: We never even have a discussion in these meetings where it's, okay but please, be honest, what is going on in your tut? How and then we actually have a proper meeting and it's like, well these are the Agenda points and.....just be...
- T: If we ask questions [inaudible]
- T: The tutors have issues and they treat us like five year olds.
- T: I don't have an opinion, but it's (laughter)
- T: I think at the beginning of a term if can't we just spend one meeting say these are the outcomes for this term...
- T: Yes, yes.
- T: Why don't we have tutor training?
- T: We have got to, we don't have to have five thousand Rand sushi, but even if we just sit and have coffee where everybody can just, I mean, because there's

a massive divide because the new tutors, they rock up, who really knows them I mean that vibe we had last year is not there.

T: Ja, but that's the biggest problem with the courses, with each lesson that's in the pack should have a learning outcome, this is what this poem, this is the skill the student should get. That's why I don't know, I look at my lesson plan and what exactly is it that the students are supposed to be taking away from this? Because especially with Digging, where does this fall in?

T: Exactly. How was this poem chosen?

R: [Inaudible] and suddenly one would ask without any clearer...

T: How was it chosen?

T: What was the point of the whole thing last year, with the poetry thing, I mean these were all the complaints that came up, and it's still just as rampant.

T: It is, it's more.

T: The first years aren't getting the same standard 178 course, it's different for everyone.

T: Yes, it's different.

T: I have the feeling...sorry...no, no, no, it's alright.

T: You have all the seniors are just throwing stuff out and you know ...

T: And there is a certain senior tutor that I now heard, read Leon's poem and then said, "Well what the fuck!" and I, I don't see how that's appropriate in any, in any way....

T: It wasn't me!

T: No it wasn't. I know who it is and I can fully imagine that this person would....

T: That also ties in with outcomes. You know, tell us why, don't sit in front of there and do a poem analysis, do a poetry workshop in our meeting. We all know how to analyse a paper, we can see very clearly that this is natural imagery, tell us why you chose this poem and why it's in here, in this specific slot in this week, and also before each module, I think the lecturer should tell us in five, in two sentences what are my purposes with this text. I'm teaching *Nervous Conditions* again for another year because I would like them to learn the following things. I think Linda kind of touched on that when she said she would like students to work harder, or she would like them to learn how to engage with the critical material. So that was, that was pretty good, but just so we also know what to go with, more...

- T: Poetry is the biggest problem.
- T: Yes, that's the biggest problem, yes.
- T: Students keep asking me why these poems, why is there no chronology, what is the learning outcome?
- T: Yes.
- T: That was supposed, that was supposed to be the big change this year.
- T: Yes, yes, and it wasn't and even more relevantly, why are we doing poetry for the whole of next term when we never writing on this ever again, not an assignment or a test.
- T: Ja.
- R: I had that question, and I was just like, well, it's for your own personal development...
- T: Ja, that's why we study literature, that's what we do here.
- T: You lose all credibility when you come up with something like that, that's for your own good.
- T: Even the lecturers found that poetry lectures, they enjoyed the performance but they found them so random and they don't know what the point is.
- T: Ja.
- T: But you know what, I think all these deficiencies we've been talking about in their skills and I really, you wonder does it go back to the amount of support that we as tutors are actually giving? You know. This tutor training, like it's just deficient on the most sort of basic levels, as you said we have this poetry workshop and you're giving papers on...but
- T: The thing is we have...
- T: But okay but how [inaudible]
- T: We have a lack we still have a lack of investment in our own course. They really want then, say okay we doing poetry, now, who has a poem that they are really passionate about and would like to present a lesson plan? And then?
- T: Do you know that I the poetry course... [all talking at once]
- T: But that's the point. That's why I'm not even involved...
- T: That's why I just...

- T: It's like chucking content to us and saying 'teach this' but not like 'why?' what are we supposed to be teaching exactly? Okay, we're teaching *Nervous Conditions*, why? You know. So we all on the same page at least.
- T: But you know what annoys me keep falling back to our tutoring department is better than other tutoring departments.
- T: But we have the highest. That is such bullshit that is such crap.
- T: Yeah I have been in another tutoring department and I can tell you right now... [laughs]
- T: And we keep flaunting this and let's pat ourselves on the back you know. This is one of the more enthusiastic groups among the tutors.
- R: I'm getting more and more depressed.
- T: We like a bunch of dentists!
- T: Even now I am in my fifth year, I don't know if you feel the same, my fifth year of tutoring, even I feel like okay I could do with more input about what I'm supposed to teach. Because specially in this department because at Rhodes, sorry, me at Rhodes again, at Rhodes they had three lectures that were compulsory and the main teaching took place in the lectures and tutorials were kind of our support areas. Where I think here it seems to be the opposite, because half of them don't go to lectures, half of them don't understand what goes on in lectures, and the actual learning happens in tutorials. So, it's so vital that we are actually all are on the same page and we all actually know...
- T: That we all know we teaching the same outcomes skills.
- T: Ja absolutely.
- T: Absolutely. But then I think somebody made a suggestion in one of our two meetings recently that the first, last week, that first lecture, we should be giving the students an overview of the whole course. Well, Louisa said that. And I think that would also help a lot, (a) first of all to department needs to figure out why they doing the same text but once the students find that out it makes sense to them. I mean, I find that they are doing this text because of this, then they get it and then they much more willing to do it, the department needs to do it for them and I think then it will make sense to them.
- T: Ja,
- T: The thing is with us is that we might forget, you know, we've been doing this shit years now, so sometimes we might forget ourselves to tell them what it is. So we just need a bit of reminding ourselves.

- T: Look, we've got to find, we've still got to find a middle ground between what we want them to know and what they going to enjoy. Because if they don't enjoy it, God knows they not going on to second and third year. They just not.
- T: I had to be sure as well. I had to because I took it to second year, I had to, I mean that's...
- T: And we can make it interesting, you know, I don't, there's no excuse for saying oh they have to learn this, because I did my Masters on it so they have to learn it. I'm sorry, but this is not about you, it's about the students.
- T: Ja, I mean like, as a lover of literature, I bunked nearly every single English lecture in first and second year. I only started going in third year.
- T: I remember asking you what did you do in this term, you couldn't recall.
- T: I read all the books but I mean and I love literature.
- T: I missed plenty, I will admit that, I did.
- T: So something is not working.
- T: It's not a very good introduction to an English university I don't think, I mean especially....
- T: No, it's whacked! It's wacked! (laughter) . It starts off awesome with Daniel, it's like (sound of plane going down).
- R: Every time I see those three resource books come out, the students go, which one is it now?
- T: Hahhh.
- T: How are they supposed to not know it's a resource book and they've got three...
- R: Some of mine have got, I don't know how they've managed it, but obviously they got confused with the person next to them, they have two of the same and are missing the third one.
- T: Okay, what's next Seamus?
- R: Okay, number seven, two more to go. So, the overwhelming majority of students never make use of the university writing centre or academic support tutors, do you feel these services should be better utilised? And if so, how do you suggest the students are encouraged to make use of them?
- T: Can I be brutally honest with you? Last year, they kept saying tell the students to come and use the activist sports centre, tell the students and I was like, okay, but I don't actually know the basis of myself, where are they supposed

to go, what are they supposed to do, what is this thing, what are they actually going to learn? And I felt too embarrassed to ask. At that stage I was a new teacher and I was too embarrassed to ask and by the time I got to actually ask it had gotten to the point where it was too late to ask.

T: And they changed it so much this year that [Inaudible]

T: So yes, how do you make use of this wonderful thing.

T: Who knows what's going on? Everything is done in secrecy, and I will send you an e-mail, are we not allowed to know what's going on?

T: I just don't think anyone knows what's going on, I think as soon as someone knows they will let us know.

T: But going back to the students...

R: You might wait a while.

T: Yes, we might wait a while, but then aren't we used to that after this term?

T: And then we'll get a fantastic e-mail saying, nothing is going on, please continue.

T: The shit is back on course.

T: Can I say something about the writing lab Seamus, and this is completely confidential. Um, some of my students, I sent them to the writing lab last year, some of my students, and they came and they said they learnt absolutely nothing. It was uncomfortable, they didn't understand the consultant and the consultant, the consultant didn't understand them at all, and the consultant didn't help them at all, that they left there with no guidelines, no improvement, no nothing and they will never go to the writing lab ever again. So, while that's not your business, I don't think the screening process for consultants is effective enough and if I send my students to the writing lab I tell them go Martina. (laugh) Because she's the best one there.

T: I also told a student to go last year and she came back with blatantly wrong information.

T: Yes, that also happens, and I can't believe that.

T: Because they can't help them with the content. So I think our writing lab would be amazing. If it functions, we can all help it function but at the end of the day I think the better part of the students don't take responsibility.

T: Yes.

T: They fail and they tell you that they struggling, I mean, when you tell them to do something about it. They won't.

- T: That's the thing, that's the thing, I think there are actually a very few of them that actually have fundamental problems with writing, and those are the ones who would actually benefit from the writing lab, but the others who might go to the writing lab, would do just as well to note the comments on my essays.
- T: Ja. Okay, Seamus as a suggestion then, I think, I mean, no matter how good or bad you are, make one visit compulsory at the start, just for them to see if they need help, if they don't, fine, just to check them out. And then, I mean, we need to have some form of power, we can't just say well, it's up to you,
- T: Mmm.
- T: Then it's another year they struggle or they fail.
- T: It's just at university level it shouldn't be compulsory, but I'll just give you an example, my student, she failed early assessment, and then uh, as she left the class I asked do you understand why she failed you? She said oh, I thought I'd fail it, I'm used to failing essays and she laughed. And I was like, but do you care that you failed? Not really.
- R: But that means she's going to fail the year?
- T: Ja, and she's not stupid and also its basic things that would take her from a fail to a pass but she won't do it. She won't take the initiative to do it, so I mean, you can do nothing with a student, if they want to fail they will fail.
- R: Okay, last question. What do you think is the main skill that students should learn [inaudible]
- T: You mean one thing?
- R: Is there one thing?
- T: Yes, but it's pretty broad. Um, academic communication, and that includes speaking, reading, listening and writing. So that's it.
- T: And curiosity.
- T: Oh, thank you, that's in my thesis as well.
- T: But for me, before you can do the writing, he must be able to do the reading,
- T: That's true.
- T: And if you're in the lecture you have to be able to listen and not write down. Someone managed to remember that Finula Dowling um went through a break up and that led to her accidentally starting to write poetry, but they can't tell me anything else. Um, about the info bill, for example. Um, and then what was the other one, reading, writing, speaking, speaking, English speaking yes.

Um, being able to articulate yourself not in terms of ja, I thought twilight was pretty cool, but in terms of twilight questions, you know, gender issues in supernatural twenty first century fiction, something like that, you know just critical vocabulary. I don't mean hermeneutics, ontology shite, I mean just expressing your opinions in something broader than I like it or I don't like it.

T: And not even necessarily, you know, academic communication, just effective communication.

T: Effective communication, yes.

T: There's a skill that you apply to, you know, to the real world.

T: Yes a job.

T: The mythological real world...

T: Yes.

T: Every day kind of communication.

T And I'm going to dare to include professional communication in there, in the sense that when you e-mail you tutor that is a form of academic communication, it's not like I get every time from one of my students, AA thanks for the help, you know! Shot!

T: Actually, mine were very good this year.

T: Mine don't even address me. It's like stop.

T: Yes it's like a running start and stops...

T: I want to see you write a letter to your boss one day.

T: Ja no, no capitals.

T: [Inaudible] the link does not work, that's what I got from one of my students.

T: The link does not work, help.

T: It does not work, it does not work.

T: I got one saying; 'Hello Barlow, hey that rhymes, just saying!' [Laughter].

T: That's also not acceptable, that's also not acceptable.

T: I think [inaudible] thinking that and, and this is my brilliant class's feedback today, with something like I've been drilling into them, this idea of you know, we're doing this so that you can really critically look at a text and stuff. The feedback they gave me today was like, we're starting to see, and question

things and you know read into other things besides the text that they were doing and I think that is what, I mean that's what I want them to get out of the course, that ability to...

T: Critical thinking and understand this course.

T: I agree with you XXXX, but I have to say that if you can't put that into writing, then essentially, maybe for first year if you are compelled to take the course then if you can teach them critical thinking, then at least take that out of it by all means, just go and finish your sports science degree. But, uh if it's, uh you know, (laughter), but for anything else really, essentially we can't have them leave a BA without being able to put that on paper. That would be just pointless.

[End of Recording: 57.35]

Transcription – Interview 4: Students

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| AUDIO | : | Interview 4 – Students |
| LENGTH OF AUDIO | : | 24:40 |
| DATE OF INTERVIEW | : | 27/03/2012 |
| TRANSCRIBER | : | JULIA MARTINELLI |
| TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND | : | RESEARCHER: R |
| | : | INTERVIEWEES: I |

R: So I have got ten questions for you. It shouldn't take too long to go through them top to bottom. I want you to sort give your responses. First of all how did you find English 178 last year?

I: [No response]

R: Anybody?

I: Is that for the whole year?

R: Ja.

I: I found it quite difficult at first, a lot of things were new to me [inaudible] is that the word?

R: Yes.

I: [Laughs] Daarsei! Ja.

I: I thought it was quite similar to school English. Well like the poetry and literature was kind of just a follow through but a lot of the tasks were a bit more intensive.

R: Okay. Sandy?

I: It was definitely a lot of work. The workload was amazing and also just getting used to the marking. Like it was such a, it is a much higher standard, they expect much more from you than high school does.

R: Okay. You René?

I: I enjoyed it but I agree that the workload is quite a lot and just getting used to academic writing is quite something, I had to adapt to.

- R: Okay.
- I: Because at school you only write creative writing.
- I: Mm. Especially the marking was like hard to get used to I agree with that.
- R: Did you find the marking the same across both semesters or was it quite harsh compared to [interrupted by all the girls who talk simultaneously]
- I: It was like terrible. My marks went down for me.
- I: Uh uh. Way up! [Everybody laughs]
- I: No the second semester is definitely different in terms of marking.
- R: Who did you have?
- I: She had red hair?
- R: Oh _____. [Name removed for privacy reasons]
- I: Ja, interesting character.
- I: You were more interesting, that [inaudible].
- R: Yes you were in my second semester class.
- I: Yeah and you were into that!
- R: That was amazing! [Everybody laughs and comments]
- I: Loud! Wild!
- R: Okay, cool. What did you struggle most with?
- I: Like which book or?
- R: Which book or like anything, which concept or?
- I: What was it the one with the lady with feminism and all that?
- R: Jane Eyre.
- I: I hated that!
- R: Do you know why?
- I: No, maybe it was the tutor or I don't know, I just didn't enjoy it.
- R: Okay.
- I: And it is quite difficult English.

- I: Ja the fact that it is all more old school like. The fact that it's harder to grasp.
- I: I really liked it! [Everybody laughs]
- R: Despite the blog?
- I: Despite the blog, it almost ruined it for me! She must have a blog!
[Everybody laughs]
- I: I like to read Jane Eyre but not like, do the work. Like essays and all of that, I kind of struggled with that.
- R: Yeah.
- I: And just the whole referencing system.
- I: Ja but like what was the question again?
- R: What did you struggle with the most?
- I: Oh, it is just sometimes I felt that like the lecturer and like you guys saw something totally different from me and no matter how much I tried I was still not getting what your interpretation of like whatever passage or whatever thing Jane or Tambo did.
- I: Like there wasn't like clarity.
- I: Ja it was like a bit abstract, actually.
- I: Oh! What I also struggled with at first was poetry.
- I: Mm. Definitely.
- I: Huh?
- I: Poetry. Like analysing it.
- R: Do you think maybe like it wasn't explained properly to you like how do you support your argument, or with that thing like you not seeing the same thing as the lecturer, do you feel like that it was treated as your answer was wrong or...?
- I: I don't know I just felt really nervous when I got to the exam now because every time I came to a text I would see things differently from the lecturer and the rest of my class and I was like 'how is this going to get marked?' So it made me more nervous than anything else and then I felt as if I was wrong because that's how I saw it and that really didn't help with the stress.
- R: Okay and anything about the poetry in particular?

- I: Well it was new to me because I had like second language at school and I didn't do any poetry and English and stuff and it was new and I had to like analyze the stuff and actually I couldn't do it and was struggling to really go in-depth with everything.
- R: Ja. Do you two have anything to add?
- I: I don't know if it really relates to the question but every time when I handed in like an essay I just hoped that I would get through. It wasn't like I felt sure okay this is a good piece of work or anything. It was just every time it was like 'we will just see how it goes'.
- I: Mm. Like in the beginning of the year it was, I don't know you kind of felt thrown in the deep end and you didn't like really know what was expected of you with some of the tasks and you just tried to gather something, like you tried to understand from a few words what was actually asked of you and then just hope for the best.
- I: But also when you get here you know that it is university and it is going to be harder than school, so we understand that we shouldn't get spoon fed or something like that but it is just, I don't know that whole marking system...
- I: It is just different.
- I: Each tutor marks differently.
- R: So like getting mid-sixties in the first semester didn't make you feel more like confident for the second semester really?
- I: It did but still I felt with every piece I handed in that I am not sure what I am going to get.
- R: Okay.
- I: Ja but also it wasn't explained properly. I remember doing the stills for The Truman Show and I wasn't sure like and we just got like a thing go to this page and then when we got to the page, I am not quite sure what to do with these pictures. So I feel like it wasn't really explained what you needed to do.
- I: Ja like I think the Truman Show particularly was quite vague. Like I understood it a bit more because of school background knowledge but if I hadn't had that I don't think I would have known what was potting.
- I: Yes the lecturer was very broad. Each lesson of him was like just a broad kind of view from his side.
- R: Ja.

- I: Ja, it wasn't like factual things, or let's look at this today. [Someone's cell phone vibrates] It was like 'we are going to look at this and na na na'. Ja.
- R: Okay cool. Geepers that like, ja actually I don't have anything to add to that. I was going to make it better somehow but I don't actually know how with that. Okay what was the easiest thing in English for you?
- I: Easiest?
- R: Nothing!
- I: Nothing was easy! But like in your letter [inaudible] definitely, what do you call this? Nervous conditions and mainly because I had done it back in school and also I could relate to it a lot because of patriarchal structures, and also I love it, so that is much easier than other stuff.
- R: Okay. Yes?
- I: I think the easiest was to plan the blog thingies because it wasn't that [I don't know how to explain it] but formal, the way we had it in and the marks we will also get, especially with the referencing and all of that.
- R: I think you are going to be hating the fact that this year they have done a poetry lecture report.
- I: Sorry?
- R: Like an article for a magazine kind of style or thing for their first exercise in the poetry classes.
- I: Shame.
- R: No it is easy and the nervous conditions of exercise this year is you are a publisher and you have to come up with a new title for the novel. [Everyone talks simultaneously.]
- I: No. That's wrong.
- I: I think that the ongoing assessment aspects make it easier because if you stuff up with one you can counter on another to back it up.
- R: Okay.
- I: I think Master Harrold and The Boys was quite an easy concept to grasp because it is in South Africa and we are used to the theme.
- I: And also it is such a short text.
- I: Ja, it is a short text because I don't read any of the books. [Everyone laughs]

- R: Okay cool! [Everyone laughs]
- I: I started but I couldn't finish.
- R: Are you doing English 278?
- I: I wanted to do AOL's.
- R: Applied English?
- I: Ja I am doing AOL's.
- I: I wanted to do it but I changed my course.
- R: Oh okay.
- I: They said it needed to match so I just leave it.
- R: What are you studying now?
- I: I am doing theatre studies.
- R: Oh. Okay. Cool. So Master Harrold will stand you in good stead.
- I: Sorry?
- R: I say Master Harrold will stand you in good stead then having done some theatre studies already.
- I: Oh yeah.
- R: Ja, so from your answers before like I think university English maybe was a bit of a shock to you after school. It was quite different.
- I: Mm.
- I: Not really, like for me especially, with the approach analysis of the book, my English Matric and Grade 11 was actually really thorough and the way you know, you guys taught us to do it was the same way that she taught us to do it. It is just that when we came in and the marking was just so much more stricter and the workload was more, so it was just kind of like difficult to do. But I feel like my background, my high school really did teach me well, well the essays.
- I: Ja I think it is just the marking. You know what is expected of you in high school and then when you come here it is completely different criteria's they are looking for because obviously it is a different market, which is good in a way as well because your high school teacher might have had set standards and set ideas about your work.

- R: And your second language or an additional language? You took tweede taal English?
- I: No, eerste taal.
- R: So it was only an additional language.
- I: Ja and you wouldn't say!
- R: And you found it was a big difference?
- I: Oh definitely because like additional language is really easy and like the basic stuff and that was like totally different.
- R: Would you say that maybe if you had like taken first language at school it would have helped you? Do you think it should be recommended to students?
- I: It would definitely have helped. Yes I think they should recommend it.
- I: It's a stressful day, don't judge me! [laughter]
- R: How did English compare to your other subjects? Was it easier? Harder? Was the workload more or less?
- I: More work.
- I: It took way more time.
- I: Way more time. Time I didn't have.
- I: I think also just because you had to read on top of it, it took extra time.
- I: Daai vet boeke.
- I: Ja I was carrying Jane Eyre around with me everywhere during the June holidays, I was a mad child.
- I: Aaah. I just gave up!
- [Laughter]
- I: Can I just say, I spent most of my time on English according to the other subjects but I did better in my other subjects than English.
- I: True story.
- I: The subjects that I spent the least time on I spent on I did the best.
- R: Maybe it was the easiest subject! Or was it? Don't say computer studies because that doesn't even count as a subject!
- [Laughter]

- R: So do you think English maybe made the marks in your other subjects suffer a bit?
- I: Not really, I wouldn't say that.
- I: That was one of my lowest marks really.
- R: Is that because of the nature of English not being like a study subject that you can get a hundred per cent for?
- I: That has always been my problem with English. I was never actually an 'A' student in English in high school anyway, so I didn't come with like high expectations at all but I think it is still, ja I think mostly because I can't study for it.
- R: [Inaudible]
- I: Wat is die vra Meneer?
- R: How was English compared to the other subjects? Was it easier or harder?
- I: No it was much harder.
- I: Ja the workload definitely.
- I: English isn't really hard. So it was just Afrikaans that was also very hard.
- I: I think difficulty wise it was just the workload and also like you said, it is not fact or information that you are learning, so you are not a parrot that you can really put forward an idea that can still be marked, so you never really know.
- R: Do you think that there is any part of the course that could change to help the students do better? I mean something that you just don't relate to?
- I: The lecturers.
- [Laughter]
- I: Like most of them are really bad. Like I remember the Nervous Conditions one.
- I: Ja like she really stood there with slides and she just talked the whole time.
- I: She spoke very nice English.
- I: She is German.
- I: I liked to listen to her but I slept sometimes.
- [Everybody laughs]

- I: That first guy [I forgot] is it Le Roux?
- R: Daniel Roux.
- I: Ja, he was amazing.
- I: Oh he is so good. I love him.
- I: You have to find a way to present it to the class to make it more interesting so they want to listen and they want to learn more.
- I: Ja instead of reading all the slides because I can read off the slides.
- I: Exactly.
- I: And Nervous Conditions for us weren't too useful, they were just quotes, random quotes without explanations and stuff.
- [Laughter]
- I: Like for example with the Truman show, a guy like, I can't remember his name?
- R: Riaan.
- I: Ja he has like always used examples that you can know exactly what it means.
- R: Ja.
- I: And he kept you entertained and he knew what he was talking about.
- I: Ja he was entertaining but I didn't experience him as giving me like insight in the Truman Show. It was more like in my, in the two tutor sessions that I actually learned what was going on in the Truman show.
- I: But I felt like that for every book or thing we did because lectures are very boring than the lectures where you can actually learn stuff.
- I: And some of them have really like [I don't know how to say] is heavy accents.
- I: Yes, very!
- I: It is quite difficult to listen to them.
- I: Heavy accents and like you use sms language on slides!
- I: Exactly, oh my word.
- R: That was, ja, that was a unique situation which only happened because the course presenter for that year was on sabbatical last year.
- [Everyone laughs]

- I: Oh that makes sense.
- R: So what is like the main skill, if you could say you learnt like one skill or one important thing in English, could you put that in a word or in words?
- I: Writing a good essay.
[Laughter]
- I: Really. With the whole intro and the body and the conclusion with all the referencing. We did it so many times that it quite, you got quite used to it. It was really hard at the beginning and then later on it got easier. Not much but a little bit.
- I: Also like taking meaning from the text and being able to relate it to what was being explained I guess.
- R: Do you think those two in particular you can use or you will use ever again outside of university?
- I: Oh yes.
- I: Yes, when I mark essays.
[Everyone laughs]
- I: If you are writing emails or something to your boss or to clients or something then you will know a good structure but also just in everyday situations, just taking things that are relevant. It is not in text but I mean you can still take things from different experiences and interpret them.
- I: But I can say something that we didn't do and that is like grammar
- I: We should be doing that on Friday.
- I: I know but it's like still English 178, it is not English literature.
- R: It is English literature! [laughter].
- I: Okay ja sorry, I take that back.
- R: Okay that's the sort of thing, we get that a lot and it kind of needs to be made more specific.
[Everybody talks at the same time.]
- I: But it should intertwine a little bit because mine is shocking.
- I: Like when we I came and decided to take English, that is actually what I expected.

- R: Ja.
- I: But ja.
- I: But definitely we learnt a lot though.
- R: Anything specific? Ja what you learnt.
- I: Oh just like academic writing and my [how do you say], use of words and stuff is so much improved that I can, I am able to write essays in other subjects in English especially.
- I: Ja.
- R: And all your other subjects you write in English?
- I: I am starting to write from this, ja I basically do all of my work in English and it is really helping me.
- R: Okay. Sandy?
- I: What have I taken from English 178?
- R: Ja.
- I: Definitely the critical thinking, reading part. Movies were ruined for me after The Truman Show, I kept on seeing things that were implied and also, I can't really say because the essays I write in English aren't really the same as the essays I write in History or Political Science, it is totally two different things. I can't really get that from that but definitely seeing more than just what is on the surface, which has really helped with my research and stuff.
- R: Your research in what?
- I: My research just in general for my subjects you know because I do political science, so if anything someone says I have to think about where he is coming from, context he is saying it in, you know those kinds of things.
- R: Are you planning on running for President sometime soon?
- [Everyone laughs]
- I: No, not me. There is so much stress in life. I want to be happy.
- I: You can take over the Youth League!
- [Everyone talks at the same time]
- [Laughter]

- R: And just the last one, I don't know, did anyone of you work last year? Like work part time at a bar or waitering or anything like that?
- I: No.
- R: Okay.
- I: But if I did, I would not be able to do English and that.
- I: I wasn't working but I was really busy with res stuff and campus stuff and you know the other subjects were doable, like you can plan for your one essay per term for political science, like this week I am going to do it. But for English it took me like one or two per week, so you are really not quite sure if you want to get involved in other stuff again. The workload! [Sighs]
- R: Okay on that sort of note, do you have trouble juggling your social aspects?
- I: What social aspects!?
- [Everybody laughs]
- I: Oh so just by the way I was a regular all-nighter.
- [Everyone laughs]
- I: Ja.
- [Laughter]
- R: In the essays or in the Springboks?
- [Everybody laughs]
- I: No essays. Work orientated.
- [Laughter]
- R: Okay cool. Thank you very much for coming.
- I: Thank you.

[End of Recording: 24.40]

Transcription – Interview 5: Students

AUDIO : **INTERVIEW 5 – STUDENTS**
LENGTH OF AUDIO : **4:16**
DATE OF INTERVIEW : **28/03/2012**
TRANSCRIBER : **JULIA MARTINELLI**
TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND : **RESEARCHER: R**
: **INTERVIEWEE: I**

- R: So just how do you find English one last year? Easy course? Difficult?
- I: Difficult. Hectic and too much work.
- R: So the work load is heavy?
- I: Yes the workload is heavy ja.
- R: Okay we heard that yesterday as well. What did you struggle with most in the course?
- I: Uhm the thick books, the novels and all that.
- R: Okay. What was the easiest part of the course?
- I: The film, the children's show. [Laughs]
- R: Is that just because you didn't have to read all of it?
- I: Ja. Definitely.
- R: Cool. You are saying that English two seven eight this year?
- I: Nope.
- R: Was University English a shock for you after your English at school? You didn't go to school in South Africa hey?
- I: No I didn't. But I kind of did literature back home so it was kind the same bridge.
- R: And you did English first language back home as well?
- I: Yeah my schooling was in English.

- R: So it wasn't a big shock to you?
- I: No it wasn't.
- R: Do you think that maybe students who take English second language at school struggle more than you did with English literature studies at school? [Cell phone rings]
- I: I think they should take first language, take first language.
- R: Okay how did English compare to your other first year subjects? Was it harder than easier? And the workload?
- I: It was harder.
- R: What made it harder?
- I: The assignments and teachers, assignments every day and the essays and all that. It was kind of hectic.
- R: Okay. Is there any part of the course that you think could change to help students do better or to help students understand a little bit better?
- I: No.
- R: You think it's alright. What is the main skill you learnt in English last year?
- I: Analyzing text and thinking critically as well.
- R: Have you found that has helped you already in your other subjects?
- I: Yeah it did help.
- R: And did you work at all last year or do anything with res that like took up a lot of time, or you found that there was a conflict between that and your academics was it a struggle at all?
- I: No. I didn't really have any experience, res experience.
- R: Okay cool. That is it.
- I: Thank you very much.

[End of Recording: 4.16]

Transcription – Interview 6: Students

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|
| NAME OF AUDIO | : | INTERVIEW 6 – STUDENTS |
| LENGTH OF AUDIO | : | 9:48 |
| DATE OF INTERVIEW | : | 16/04/2012 |
| TRANSCRIBER | : | JULIA MARTINELLI |
| TRANSCRIPTION LEGEND | : | RESEARCHER: R |
| | : | INTERVIEWEES: I |

- R: So the first question was how did you find English last year? Was it difficult? Easy? Just like your overall impressions.
- I: I thought it was easy.
- R: Do you know why?
- I: Well I enjoyed it and I found it interesting so I didn't mind working hard for something I enjoyed and I think school prepared me well enough for English.
- I: Ja. In my case as well school but I didn't find it easy. I found it challenging because I don't like English and so I didn't want to put time into it. It is very time consuming so beforehand I uhm so ek het 'n negatiewe konutasie daarmee so dit is vir my 'n baie groot issue.
- I: 'n Effort.
- I: Ja but when you get to it, it is not that bad.
- R: [Whispers something]
[Everybody laughs]
- I: Ek dink eerste. [Giggles and shuffling]
- R: [Laughs]
- R: What did you struggle with the most in English?
- I: The grammar.
- R: And you Mia?

- I: Can I say I really dislike the poetry. That is what I remember was the worst for me. I hated it. I am not good at it.
- R: And the easiest?
- I: Sjoe, it is short stories [they all talk at the same time]
- I: Yes short stories for me too.
- I: Ja.
- R: Is it just because it was easy to relate to or that you just found it easy to read?
- I: It was just simple compared to the other things because we had to do Jane Eyre and Macbeth, well not Macbeth but Shakespeare.
- [Everybody laughs]
- I: So the short stories are much simpler.
- R: I taught you the Shakespeare part, it was second semester Shakespeare.
- I: Ja.
- R: And it was obviously not good that you did not know which one it was?
- I: It was 'Much to Do.'
- I: That was very easy. That I enjoyed the most.
- I: I kind of liked Jane Eyre as well.
- R: So Jamie it is only you taking English II this year hey?
- I: Mm.
- R: Ja.
- I: Yes.
- R: And you are taking the Sciences. So for the two of you University English was obviously not a shock after school, you obviously coped quite well and made the transfer quite easily?
- I: Mm.
- R: Did you both take English first language at school?
- I: Only for the first two years, Matric I did second.
- R: Really?

- I: I did all two years.
- R: I wouldn't have said you did second language.
- I: Something happened so I didn't go on. [Laughs]
- I: Dit klink so dodgy! [Laughs]
- I: Maar dit is nie dodgy nie. Die juffrou het net opgehou opdaag vir die klasse.
- R: What!
- I: So my marks went downhill and I said okay I am not going to continue so I went out to the other class.
- R: Okay. And do you think like the gap between the additional language English and University English is quite big or were you alright with that?
- I: Well we also did short stories and poems in Matric.
- R: Okay.
- I: But it is different still.
- R: There seems to be quite a difference in like the first language kids all seem to have done quite a lot of the same stuff but the additional language like some people never did any poetry at all.
- I: Ja that is the thing. We did a lot of poetry in first year and we did Shakespeare and everything and second language just really, really basic so actually it is a big difference. You don't have to study for second language but you do have to study for first language English. [Laughs]
- R: How did the English compare to your other subjects last year? Just like easier? Harder? Workload?
- I: Uhm it was uh, okay it was one of my easier I think because Political Science which was my main subject, I had to do two essays per term and I had to like prepare a whole like thirty pages for each lesson and stuff so that was awful. So I actually didn't mind doing English.
- R: Okay. Jamie?
- I: Me neither. It was fine for me. It was quite similar. The reading was the most work but I didn't see it as an effort so.
- I: Ja and we did have a lot of essays in English but it wasn't like big essays, so it went by very quickly.
- I: But not as much theory study and so on.

- I: With Mandarin I had a lot of stuff to do.
- I: Mm. It was Xhosa work. Ja. Dis net prakties.
- R: Okay. Do you think that there is any part of the course that needs changing to help the students?
- I: More tutors should be like you. [Laughs]
[Everyone laughs]
- R: You never got cup-cakes last year, so maybe they can help now! [Cup-cakes were used as a sweetener to get the students to attend the interviews]
- I: What you call that thing, uhm, that helped me a lot on like this year I don't have anything so I don't know what I am going to fall back on when it comes to studying. So things like that and taking notes, someone telling you something or answering a question for you and not leaving it up to you entirely.
- I: Ja the module is important and also that, the tutors actually follow it because some people just do their own thing and don't pay attention to it and then some classes get behind.
- R: [Inaudible].
- I: And maybe the lecturer can be two smaller ones instead of the big ones that can also maybe help for more interaction for being able to concentrate in such a big class is hard sometimes and it is easy to check your phone now and then [laughs]
[Everyone laughs]
- I: And what was annoying last year was that we actually only had three Jane Eyre lectures because something happened.
- R: I think there was a public holiday.
- I: No it was because that other English department.
- R: Oh yes!
- I: Then they took up two lectures so they must just be better prepared because that was actually the biggest part of English and we had the most little time.
- R: Ja.
- I: It is like the short stories we don't have to spend so much time on it if they give us notes it will be fine but something like Jane Eyre.

- I: I think if there were more lectures then maybe people would have enjoyed it more.
- I: Dis nou genoeg nou!
- R: [Laughs]
[Everyone laughs]
- I: Fine.
[Laughing continues]
- R: You should not talk with your mouth full then!
[Everybody laughs]
- R: What do you think was the main skill that you learnt in English last year? Do you think you learnt a main skill? [Laughs]
- I: Uhm.
- R: Something that has helped you?
- I: Ja seeing more than just what is on the page you know the deeper meaning and like analyzing text that was a big part of English last year.
- I: Yes.
- R: Do you think that's helped for one of the sciences?
- I: Maybe in the future but not now.
- R: Uhm, and did either of you do work at all last year like do part-time work or like having anything to do with res that really kept you busy so you found it difficult to juggle the academics and that?
- I: No. I did part-time work but it didn't influence it.
- R: Did you not work many hours then?
- I: Mm. Not many hours.
- R: Ok. Cool. That is it.
- I: Is that all?
- R: Ja. Do you have anything else that we need to add?

[End of Recording: 9.48]

Appendix 4: Student Essay Example

The following three essays were written by one English 178 student eight months apart. The first was the student's early assessment exercise written on the 18th of March 2012 on Ramon Carver's poem "My Crow," the second was written on the 29th of August 2012 on Peter Weir's 1998 film, *The Truman Show*, while the third was written on the 13th of October 2012 on Charlotte Bronte's novel, *Jane Eyre*. The first essay was marked by myself while the second was marked by another tutor, though from long experience working with the tutor in question I know that we grade very similarly in terms of marks. The third is unmarked, in traditional sense, as it only serves to illustrate the progress the student has made in terms of academic literacy, which is gauged according to the academic literacy charts introduced in Chapter 3 of this paper. The essays follow and are formatted in "Arial" font to clearly separate them from my analysis and the comment balloons have been deleted, leaving them intact would play havoc with the formatting of this paper and the precise feedback is less important than the grading of the paper. When marking I make use of a 'marking grid' to provide students with a better idea of how I arrived at their mark, by highlighting the relevant sections. I have done the same with Arlene Archer's three charts.

Essay 1:

"My Crow"

By Raymond Carver

The poem "My Crow" written by Raymond Carver can be interpreted in different ways. The form of the poem "My Crow" is short and sweet, the poet does not elaborate unnecessarily on the point he is trying to make. In lines two and three Carver mentions several famous poets from different era's, this contributes to intertextuality. Ted Hughes, Galaway, Frost, Pasternak, Lorca and Horner are all being compared to a crow. This comparison that is made between the famous poets and the crow is a metaphor. The short and sweet idea of "My Crow" is supported by the punctuation and lengths of the lines in the poem. The lines are heavily punctuated and contain one idea per line. [What are you arguing in this essay? There is no clear thesis statement in the introduction.](#)

The poem "My Crow" can be separated into two parts, lines 1-5 explains what the crow is not, and there is also a visible rhyme technique used in these lines: "window", "crow", "crow" and "crow" rhymes with each other. The poet continues in lines 6-10 to explain what this crow is. The crow is the poet who is referring to himself. The poet is trying to convey the message that he is just a person who is doing what he loves and that is writing. [Why not use this idea as your thesis statement?](#)

He has never done anything significant or worth mentioning, he actually feels quite worthless. He never thought of himself as being a brilliant poet and becoming as famous as the poets he admires from previous era's. The poet's poems might not have such an impact on society but the reader will be amused and will be forced to think about what is being said by the poet. Even though his poetry is not as famous as the ones he admires, his poetry is just as beautiful. [It is essential that you realise that the poet is not necessarily the speaker...](#)

The poem "My Crow" in it's whole is an extended metaphor for what the poet feels about himself as a writer. A crow is associated with a dry environment, as well as with evil or cruelty but in this poem the poet's comparing his insecurities to a crow, he does not feel that he is good enough. It is also ironic that the poet uses the words such as "flew beautifully" (line 9) to describe the flying away action of the crow. [This is the first time you quote to support your argument. You need to do so in every paragraph.](#)

[The crow only sat on the branch for a short while but he left a bit of himself before he flew away. He shared his insecurities and overcame his fears and therefore he, the once ugly crow, could fly away beautiful. Can there be this much progression in such a short piece of writing? Can a poem be a bildungsroman? I think you are simplifying matters somewhat to fit your reading of the poem. Reread it and see if you agree.](#)

The short and sweet idea of "My Crow" is supported by the punctuation and lengths of the lines in the poem. The lines are heavily punctuated and contain one idea per line. [What is your conclusion? How are you tying up the argument you made above?](#)

[Word count?](#)

[Bibliography?](#)

[Plagiarism declaration?](#)

Electronic Feedback Form

Here are a few aspects of your essay which require your attention. Please follow the links to the English Department's Online Writing Lab to see how best to improve your essay writing. If you have any questions don't hesitate to email me.

Higher Order Concerns:

1) Introduction and Thesis Statement

Your introduction lacks a clear thesis statement, which means it is difficult to discern what you intend on arguing. As we have discussed subsequently to you handing this essay in, the thesis statement is an essential part of any academic essay. If you need more advice on constructing a thesis statement please follow the link below:

[Click for tips on how to write an Introduction and Thesis Statement](#)

2) Quoting to support

You need to quote to support your argument. There are two places you can quote from, the primary text [in this case the poem] and secondary sources. You can use acceptable secondary sources to provide background information to support your reading/argument. With the type of argument you are making the poet's biographical details are vitally important. If he was wildly successful your argument would be null and void. So do the research and quote from it to support your points.

Lower Order Concerns:

1) Academic Language

Remember you need to maintain a formal academic tone at all times in an academic essay. I have indicated in the comment balloons a few occasions where you slip into informality.

[Click for tips on maintaining appropriate academic Writing style](#)

This is the departmental marking grid. I have highlighted the block which best describes your essay for each category in order for you to understand how I arrived at your mark. Remember that each category does not carry equal weight, the most important aspect and therefore the one which affects your marks the most is the *logic and clarity* of your argument.

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Submitted on due date? | YES | NO: ____ days late = - ____ % | | | |
| | Plagiarism declaration and MLA referencing? | | YES | NO: - ____ % | | |
| Introduction | No introduction. No thesis statement | Some attempt at introduction, but no clear argument | Adequate. Contains a thesis statement, but might be weak & not specific | Good. Thesis statement clear and specific. Overview of argument and delivery lacking. | Very good. Context, thesis statement and overview of argument present, but delivery might need work | Excellent. Context of essay, thesis statement & overview of argument well delivered, engaging. |
| Spelling & Grammar | Severe spelling and grammar problems detract from delivery of argument | Frequent spelling mistakes. Grammar problems. | A few mistakes persist, does not detract from argument. | Good spelling and grammar overall, few mistakes | No spelling or grammar mistakes | Sophisticated and varied sentence structure and appropriate word selection adds interest |
| Language use | Incomprehensible, colloquialisms employed, informal, clumsy/incomplete sentences | Poor language use, but readable. Informal at times. Clumsy sentences. Contractions | Adequately formal and readable. Sentence structure sometimes needs work. | Mostly formal, academic register. Good use of language to convey ideas. Few language errors. | Very good. Consistently formal and engaging. Shows strong command of language | Excellent use of idiom, engaging and interesting language use. Always formal and easily readable |
| Paragraphing | No coherence or flow, frequent repetition. More than one idea per paragraph. No topic sentence | Some sense of coherence, but ideas are still scattered and do not flow. Some repetition | Adequate paragraphing One idea per paragraph. Infrequent repetition. Flow needs much work | Good. Ideas organised. No repetition. Some problems with flow. Problems with coherence. | Very good. Ideas all flow into one another and are grouped logically into paragraphs. Coherence. | Excellent. Paragraphs are refined, clear and flow compellingly to expand and strengthen argument. |
| Quoting & Referencing | Ideas not supported from text. Severe problems with referencing. No bibliography | Some textual support, but mostly inadequate to strengthen argument. Poor referencing | Textual support for most points. Referencing good. Bibliography provided with some errors. | Good. Ideas might need more development and support. Referencing/ bibliography good. | Very good. Close engagement with text. Referencing and bibliography correct | Excellent support for each point. Secondary sources used effectively. Bibliography correct. |
| Logic & Clarity | Irrelevant ideas, generalisation Weak argument and very unclear ideas | Some logical flow, mostly the argument is very weak, some generalization & vagueness | Adequate logical flow. Ideas are mostly clear and tied to argument. Superficial reading | Good logical flow. Ideas all support argument, but need more elaboration and clarity | Good, logical argument with clear points. Might suffer from over- or understatement | All ideas logically tied to argument, refined, relevant, & clearly stated. Argument strong and considered |
| General Comments and Mark | <p>____, you make a few good points but you need to support them with evidence from the text. Mark: 55%</p> | | | | | |

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | Criteria |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Organisation | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student focused on the task and answered the questions. • There is a clear and detailed introduction and conclusion. • Ideas are clearly stated and supported. • There is a logical sequencing of ideas and paragraphs. • Paragraphs have a strong internal structure, namely one main idea, topic sentences and connectors. • The essay is coherent (Includes links between paragraphs). • Graphs or other visuals have been explained in the written text. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is not sufficiently focused on the task and has some irrelevant detail. • There is a fair introduction and conclusion. • The essay is loosely organised, but the main ideas stand out. • The paragraphs are fairly well formulated. • The argument is logical, but there is problematic sequencing at times. • There is elaboration and support for arguments, but not enough. • Graphs or visuals are not adequately explained in the written text. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay lacks a clear focus on the task. • There is a weak introduction and conclusion. • The ideas are confused and disconnected (rambling, repetitive). • The essay lacks logical sequencing and development. • There is insufficient elaboration. • Graphs or visuals are not referred to in the written text. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is hardly any focus on the task. • There is no organisation or not enough to evaluate. • There is no clear paragraphing. • There is no link between written text and graphs or visuals. |

Figure 3.2: Organisation chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 135).

With some scores in the ‘Average to Good’ range and others in the ‘Poor to Fair’ range I’d score this essay 4 for ‘Organisation’.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Voice and Register | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language used is appropriate for an academic context (i.e. no colloquialisms or slang, no inappropriate jargon). • The writing is not long winded, verbose or repetitive. • There are few euphemisms, clichés or exaggerations. • The first person or third person voice has been used appropriately and consistently for the particular audience. • All sources have been correctly referenced. • There is a clear bibliography with all the relevant information. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An attempt has been made to reference in-text, but there may be problems around the mechanics of this. • The language is generally appropriate for an academic context. • The essay has a bibliography with some of the necessary information missing. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student used some secondary sources, but has not referenced them correctly. • The language is inappropriate to the audience and academic context (overly personal style, emotional adjectives or colloquialisms). • There is not enough referencing of external information and too much reliance on own experience. • The bibliography is sketchy and does not follow standard conventions. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student has plagiarised secondary readings – using phrases from these reading without referencing. • The language and organisation is inappropriate for an academic assignment. • There is no bibliography. |

Figure 3.3: Voice and Register chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

The lack of a bibliography hinders the essay's score in the 'Voice and Register' category, the essay would with a bibliography have scored a 6 but without one it scores a 4.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Language Use | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a few errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The piece is written in clear, complete sentences. • Effective complex sentence constructions are used. • There are few errors in agreement, and tenses, articles, pronouns, prepositions are used correctly. • The sentences are neither too long nor too short. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student uses effective but simple sentence constructions. • Some minor problems in complex constructions exist. • There are several errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns or prepositions. • There are occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, but the meaning is not obscured. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are major problems in simple/complex constructions. • Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, concord, articles, pronouns, prepositions, sentence structure occur. • There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, poor word processing. • The meaning is confused or obscured. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is virtually no understanding of sentence construction rules. • It is difficult to understand the meaning. • The writing is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The poor word-processing hinders meaning. |

Figure 3.4: Language Use chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

The student's 'Language Use' is generally just above average, there are no major errors and the meaning is easily discernable. I would score this essay a 6 for 'Language Use'.

Total: $6 + 4 + 4 = 14/30$ or 47%

This is 8% lower and the difference between a pass and a fail, when compared to the original mark I gave this essay.

Essay 2:**Analyzing the stills.****The Truman Show**

Truman is the star on a reality television show but he is the only one who is unaware of the fact that he is being filmed. *The Truman Show* will be analyzed by referring to the theme of “celebrity culture” and also the impact that film and television has on the character of Truman. What about the film techniques that convey those concepts?

The Truman Show is a reality series started by a ~~big corporation~~ [Omnicom](#) in attempt to portray real and genuine emotions instead of actors trying to portray unauthentic emotions. They adopted a baby and raised him on television without him knowing that he is being filmed. He lives in Seahaven studio and the producers and directors manipulate him for instance to fall in love with certain characters and to be friends with others. Unfortunately they cannot determine the feelings of the actors on the show. Truman falls in love with a woman who’s name on the show is Lauren but she tells him to call her Sylvia. On a date with Truman, Sylvia implies to Truman that he should question everything that has ever happened to him. [Relevance?](#)

The first time the audience of the film sees Truman is through the mirror in his bathroom. This scene is very important to the film because of the framing techniques used to portray what is going on. There are six frames around his face excluding one frame which only has two sides called a “flanking” frame. These frames all contribute to putting the focus on Truman’s entrapment. Truman is talking to himself in the

mirror and it is clear that he is not aware of the fact that he is being watched because of the dazed look on his face.

This setting is important because in this part of the film Truman is talking to himself, it is something many people do but on their own, but the fact that Truman does this without knowing that he is being filmed proves his innocence and genuineness as just a human being. [Argument?](#)

The director of the reality show speaks to the audience of the film, he explains most of what the viewers see happening. "We find that viewers leave him on all night for comfort" (Still 2). Viewers leave "*Truman*" and not the *The Truman Show* on all through the night because they are so obsessed with this real person, they cannot let him be. It is not the show that is important to the viewers it is Truman. The viewers have gotten to know Truman and all of them care for him. It is important to them to know what is going on in his life. [Analysis?](#)

Still number three shows the viewer of the film just how long the audience have been watching Truman. Almost 30 years has gone by since he was born. In most scenes of this film the audience are big fans of Truman, they truly care for him. On this specific still it is clear that around the television there are posters of Truman which also frame him, they are anticipating his thirtieth birthday so that they can celebrate it with him just as all his other birthdays. In this still all the focus is on Truman, his wedding ring can be seen quite clearly which is interesting because a marriage is the one place someone can be themselves and there should be trust, but in his life the person that manipulates him the most is his wife. All the frames in still

three show how trapped Truman really is. He is inside a box, his wedding ring also implies that he is trapped. [Argument?](#)

Truman finds the edge of the dome he is in, which leads the audience to see the last ever scene on *The Truman Show*. In still four the director of *The Truman Show*, Christof, is being filmed from a low angle. This shot is a close-up where he is speaking to Truman and explaining to him that he has been living on a reality show and that he is the star of it. He tells Truman that he is real; Truman was the only thing real in the entire show. The low angle shot focuses the attention on Christof and his superiority over Truman, he was the one initiating the plot and forcing the changes in Truman's life. The light that fades in the background implies the ending of *The Truman Show*.

After Christof speaks to Truman, Truman is standing on the steps ready to exit the dome, the steps he climbs is implying that he is on his way to freedom. Even though Truman did not know he was on a reality show, after talking to Christof he realizes that he can be the better person, he said "Good day, good evening and goodnight" and then took a bow, ending the show in a polite way. The darkness in the door represents the unknown and the light inside the set is what is known.

The Truman Show could not have been a success without the film techniques that was used to film it. In every scene every character plays an important role in the success of the film. Truman was not the picture of a reality T.V show star, modern day reality shows are still fake, people act differently when they are being filmed but

the significance of Truman is that he was true to himself, he was only himself and stayed who he really is.

Bibliography

The Truman Show. Dir Peter Weir. Screenplay Jim Carry, Ed Harris and Laura Linney. Writer Andrew Niccol. Parramont Pictures, 1998. Film.

[45](#)

[Arguments weak and visual elements not adequately analyzed.](#)

[\[Word Count: 872\]](#)

Note:

The student's second semester tutor did not make use of the 'departmental marking grid, so one can only guess at the reasons for her mark. Though I support it as the student failed to answer the essay question and one could make the argument that this mark is fairly lenient.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | Criteria |
|---------------------|-------------|--|
| Organisation | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student focused on the task and answered the questions. • There is a clear and detailed introduction and conclusion. • Ideas are clearly stated and supported. • There is a logical sequencing of ideas and paragraphs. • Paragraphs have a strong internal structure, namely one main idea, topic sentences and connectors. • The essay is coherent (Includes links between paragraphs). • Graphs or other visuals have been explained in the written text. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is not sufficiently focused on the task and has some irrelevant detail. • There is a fair introduction and conclusion. • The essay is loosely organised, but the main ideas stand out. • The paragraphs are fairly well formulated. • The argument is logical, but there is problematic sequencing at times. • There is elaboration and support for arguments, but not enough. • Graphs or visuals are not adequately explained in the written text. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay lacks a clear focus on the task. • There is a weak introduction and conclusion. • The ideas are confused and disconnected (rambling, repetitive). • The essay lacks logical sequencing and development. • There is insufficient elaboration. • Graphs or visuals are not referred to in the written text. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is hardly any focus on the task. • There is no organisation or not enough to evaluate. • There is no clear paragraphing. • There is no link between written text and graphs or visuals. |

Figure 3.2: Organisation chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 135).

The lack of focus on the task means that this essay would receive a 3 for ‘Organisation’.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Voice and Register | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The language used is appropriate for an academic context (i.e. no colloquialisms or slang, no inappropriate jargon). The writing is not long winded, verbose or repetitive. There are few euphemisms, clichés or exaggerations. The first person or third person voice has been used appropriately and consistently for the particular audience. All sources have been correctly referenced. There is a clear bibliography with all the relevant information. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An attempt has been made to reference in-text, but there may be problems around the mechanics of this. The language is generally appropriate for an academic context. The essay has a bibliography with some of the necessary information missing. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student used some secondary sources, but has not referenced them correctly. The language is inappropriate to the audience and academic context (overly personal style, emotional adjectives or colloquialisms). There is not enough referencing of external information and too much reliance on own experience. The bibliography is sketchy and does not follow standard conventions. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student has plagiarised secondary readings – using phrases from these reading without referencing. The language and organisation is inappropriate for an academic assignment. There is no bibliography. |

Figure 3.3: Voice and Register chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

In terms of ‘Voice and Register’ this essay is a mixed bag, I would give the essay a 5, as the bibliography does not carry as much weight as the rest because students should be able to structure a simple bibliography correctly by August of their first-years.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Language Use | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a few errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The piece is written in clear, complete sentences. • Effective complex sentence constructions are used. • There are few errors in agreement, and tenses, articles, pronouns, prepositions are used correctly. • The sentences are neither too long nor too short. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student uses effective but simple sentence constructions. • Some minor problems in complex constructions exist. • There are several errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns or prepositions. • There are occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, but the meaning is not obscured. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are major problems in simple/complex constructions. • Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, concord, articles, pronouns, prepositions, sentence structure occur. • There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, poor word processing. • The meaning is confused or obscured. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is virtually no understanding of sentence construction rules. • It is difficult to understand the meaning. • The writing is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The poor word-processing hinders meaning. |

Figure 3.4: Language Use chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

The student's language use is good and has clearly improved over the course of the academic year, therefore I would give this essay 7 for 'Language Use'.

Total: $7 + 5 + 3 = 15/30$ or 50%

Although this essay fails in the traditional sense because it does not answer the essay question the student's academic literacy has improved generally, if only by one point. It would be interesting to see another essay of where the question was appropriately answered.

Essay 3:

Jane Eyre is the novel written by Charlotte Brontë, it is about a young orphan girl who has to find a way to survive the physical and emotional abuse from her aunt and cousins. All ends well for Jane but there is much she had to endure to get to where she is at the end. The beginning of the book is where Jane's journey to escape starts. The novel is written in a first-person narrative structure from Jane's point of view.

The film translates this first-person narrative of Jane's autobiography to the screen by still conveying the story from Jane's perspective. The film is produced by Cary Fukunaga in the third person narrative to give the audience of the film an objective view of all the characters so that they can make form their own opinion. The film always focuses on what is happening to Jane, the other characters contribute to the characterization of Jane in the film.

The opening sequence of the film up to the red room scene will be compared with the novel's opening chapter and other corresponding sections of the novel. There are a few significant differences between the novel and the film adaptation. The most prominent difference is the beginning of the film differs from the novel. The film starts where Jane is running away from Thornfield, the audience does not know this yet but she ran away after discovering that Mr. Rochester, her love interest, was married. The novel on the other hand starts where Mrs. Reed accuses Jane of something Bessie said she has done and when Jane asks what it is that she has done

Mrs. Reed tells Jane "I don't like cavillers of questioners... Be seated somewhere; and until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent" (Brontë, 5) the way Mrs. Reed speaks to Jane shows that she is cruel and cold towards Jane. Jane slips away to go find a book in the bookcase and went to sit in the window seat behind the curtain to read the book "History of British Birds" by Thomas Bewick. John Reed, Jane's cousin, comes looking for her but she stays quietly behind the curtain, when he asked his sisters where Jane is, Eliza says she is in the window seat. Jane immediately came out to avoid John dragging her out. The film's version of this part in the novel is different because Jane does not come out when John is looking for her, he calls for her by saying "where are you rat" (Brontë, 7), she is startled when he finds her and he then hits her with the book she was reading, there is no evidence in the film that he asked this sister where Jane was. Quite a significant difference in this part is that in the film Jane stands up against John Reed immediately, she does not seem scared of him but the novel shows the reader the build up before Jane attacks him. The book explains her fear in much more detail. After Jane attacked John, Mrs. Reed pulls Jane off of him, she tells Bessie and Miss Abbot to take Jane to the red-room.

In the film Jane cries out "no please, it's haunted" but these words are not in the novel. In the movie you don't understand why she is so afraid to go sit in the red-room but in the novel she explains that it is haunted by Mr. Reed her uncle who died in there it is "where he took his last breath" (Brontë: 11). In the film the red-room is not significant it is just a minute of the film but in the novel it is the red-room is very important it is the first time the reader sees Jane's imprisonment. In the red-room Jane makes the choice to fight back and improve her own future. There are some major differences between the film and the novel, the novel contains much more

information than the film and the reader go through the experiences with Jane. Although there is a good story line in the film, it lacks some key elements and it does not include significant moments that happened in the novel which makes the novel much more enjoyable than the film.

[Word Count: 667]

Bibliography:

Brontë, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2001. Print.

Jane Eyre. Dir Cary Fubjunaga. Screenplay Mia Wasikowska, Ed Melanie Oliver. Writter Charlotte Brontë and Moira Boffini. Parramont Pictures,

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | Criteria |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Organisation | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student focused on the task and answered the questions. • There is a clear and detailed introduction and conclusion. • Ideas are clearly stated and supported. • There is a logical sequencing of ideas and paragraphs. • Paragraphs have a strong internal structure, namely one main idea, topic sentences and connectors. • The essay is coherent (Includes links between paragraphs). • Graphs or other visuals have been explained in the written text. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay is not sufficiently focused on the task and has some irrelevant detail. • There is a fair introduction and conclusion. • The essay is loosely organised, but the main ideas stand out. • The paragraphs are fairly well formulated. • The argument is logical, but there is problematic sequencing at times. • There is elaboration and support for arguments, but not enough. • Graphs or visuals are not adequately explained in the written text. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essay lacks a clear focus on the task. • There is a weak introduction and conclusion. • The ideas are confused and disconnected (rambling, repetitive). • The essay lacks logical sequencing and development. • There is insufficient elaboration. • Graphs or visuals are not referred to in the written text. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is hardly any focus on the task. • There is no organisation or not enough to evaluate. • There is no clear paragraphing. • There is no link between written text and graphs or visuals. |

Figure 3.2: Organisation chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 135).

This essay would be at risk of failing as entirely focused on the topic, but according to this chart I would give it a 5 for ‘Organisation’.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------------|-------------|--|
| Voice and Register | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The language used is appropriate for an academic context (i.e. no colloquialisms or slang, no inappropriate jargon). The writing is not long winded, verbose or repetitive. There are few euphemisms, clichés or exaggerations. The first person or third person voice has been used appropriately and consistently for the particular audience. All sources have been correctly referenced. There is a clear bibliography with all the relevant information. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An attempt has been made to reference in-text, but there may be problems around the mechanics of this. The language is generally appropriate for an academic context. The essay has a bibliography with some of the necessary information missing. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student used some secondary sources, but has not referenced them correctly. The language is inappropriate to the audience and academic context (overly personal style, emotional adjectives or colloquialisms). There is not enough referencing of external information and too much reliance on own experience. The bibliography is sketchy and does not follow standard conventions. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The student has plagiarised secondary readings – using phrases from these reading without referencing. The language and organisation is inappropriate for an academic assignment. There is no bibliography. |

Figure 3.3: Voice and Register chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

The ‘Voice and Register’ are improved from essay 1 and the inclusion of quotes and references improves the showing made in essay 2. I would give it a 7 according to this chart for ‘Voice and Register’.

| ITEM | SCORE RANGE | CRITERIA |
|--------------|-------------|--|
| Language Use | 8 – 10 | <p>Very Good to Excellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a few errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The piece is written in clear, complete sentences. • Effective complex sentence constructions are used. • There are few errors in agreement, and tenses, articles, pronouns, prepositions are used correctly. • The sentences are neither too long nor too short. |
| | 5 – 7 | <p>Average to Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student uses effective but simple sentence constructions. • Some minor problems in complex constructions exist. • There are several errors of agreement, tense, articles, pronouns or prepositions. • There are occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, but the meaning is not obscured. |
| | 3 – 4 | <p>Poor to Fair</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are major problems in simple/complex constructions. • Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, concord, articles, pronouns, prepositions, sentence structure occur. • There are frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, poor word processing. • The meaning is confused or obscured. |
| | 0 – 2 | <p>Very Poor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is virtually no understanding of sentence construction rules. • It is difficult to understand the meaning. • The writing is dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation or capitalisation. • The poor word-processing hinders meaning. |

Figure 3.4: Language Use chart for gauging academic literacy (Archer 136).

There are a few more spelling and grammatical errors than in the other two essays which is strange; I would give this essay a 6 for 'Language Use'.

Total: $6 + 7 + 5 = 18/30$ or 60%

This is a significant improvement from essay 1, which received a mark of 14/30, in terms of 'academic literacy' to Essay 3, which received a mark of 18/30. I would like to point out though that Essay 3 would receive a mark in the low 50's if not a failing mark if it were marked in accordance to the conventional English Literary Studies marking standards. This illustrates perfectly that a student's marks can fail to improve despite the improvement in 'academic literacy'.

Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance for Interviews



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Ethical Clearance

Seamus Allardice, a registered MA student in the Department of English, applied to the Department for ethical clearance for his MA thesis “Student Preparedness for Academic Writing: An Evaluation of the Perceptions of Preparedness for Academic Writing of School Leavers taking English 178 at Stellenbosch University”. The work entailed conducting a survey with our first-year students, as well as interviewing students, tutors and lecturing staff in our department.

In 2011, at the start of his research, he submitted documentation to support his application: the informed consent that participants would sign; a suggested list of possible interview questions, and a draft of the survey. We are satisfied he has complied with requirements for low level ethical clearance for this project and may proceed.

Dr. Shaun Viljoen
Head, Department of English
Stellenbosch University
scv@sun.ac.za

Dr. Daniel Roux
MA coordinator
Department of English

27 November 2011

Appendix 6: Informed Consent form for Interviews



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CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Student Preparedness for Academic Writing:

*An Evaluation of the Varying Levels of Preparedness for Academic Writing of School
Leavers Taking English 178 at Stellenbosch University*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Seamus Allardice (BA Honours (English), from the Department of English Literature at Stellenbosch University, as part of his Master's Degree thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of your experience as a lecturer/tutor/student in the English Department.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study into the general level of first year student preparedness in the English Department at Stellenbosch University aims to alleviate the need for speculation as to the cause and severity of the lack of preparedness, exhibited by first year students, for academic essay writing. By performing a literature review on student preparedness and conducting both quantitative and qualitative research this study hopes to provide a better understanding of students, tutors and lecturers view preparedness. Preparedness for academic writing in particular and for university in general will be unpacked making use of Pierre Bourdieu's

notion of habitus. For it is after all, a student's ability to integrate their previously learnt skills with those being taught at universities which determines their individual level of preparedness.

2. PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

- **Participate in an interview with open-ended questions.** This will be conducted at a location, date and time that is convenient to you, by arrangement. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The interview should take between one and an hour and a half to complete.
- **Answer further clarification questions on the transcript** after the interview either via email or, if necessary, a second (shorter) interview.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

N/A

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND TO SOCIETY

- Contribution to the field of research into higher education being conducted both locally and internationally.
- Clarification of the skill sets brought to Stellenbosch University by first year students.

- Potentially highlight shortfalls in both the schooling and higher education systems which currently inhibit the throughput of skilled graduates from Stellenbosch University.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Participation is voluntary and unpaid.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

The greatest care will be exercised to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewees; however the study acknowledges the concern that particularly the lecturers could be identified by their responses. The study will therefore endeavour not to publish any potentially damaging statements which could be tracked back to the individual interviewee.

In the research paper all responses will be documented anonymously, unless otherwise requested by the interviewee.

As an interviewee you have the right to review any use of the material and to comment on, edit or withdraw permission for the use of your recorded words. Recordings and transcriptions of interview(s) and notes, as well as a copy of the final thesis and any research articles will be made available to you, if you so wish.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Recordings will remain the intellectual property of the University of Stellenbosch. Transcripts will be stored

as password protected files on my personal computer and office computer. Recordings will be kept in my office, which is locked.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisor, Dr Shaun Viljoen Viljoen, via email on scv@sun.ac.za or on 082 789 0439. Dr Viljoen's work address is room 580, Arts Faculty; Humanities Building; Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch, 7602.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims or rights because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms Maryke Hunter-Husselmann at the Stellenbosch Unit for Research Development, on (021) 808 4623.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to me by Seamus Allardice in English and I am in command of this language. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant**Date**

I **would** / **would not** (delete whichever is not applicable) like a copy of the thesis and any articles leading from this interview to be made available to me.

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____
[*name of the subject/participant*]. [*He/she*] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

Signature of Investigator**Date**

Appendix B.1: Qualitative Survey Data (Qualitative Written Survey Responses)

This Appendix is made up of the transcriptions of all the written responses to the 2011 English 178 survey. These responses have yielded some interesting data and where possible this data has been presented in graphical format in Appendix 2 of the thesis paper, in an effort to ease the extrapolation process for the reader. In order to reduce the overall size of the thesis document this section is not included with the rest of the thesis but forms a stand-alone document available on request from the author or the Department of English at Stellenbosch University.

The 2011 survey responses were transcribed verbatim by the Centre of Teaching and Learning and therefore include some strange turns of phrase and abbreviations.

Are you going to do English 278? Why?

- No. Because I will still do 178.
- Yes. I want to major in English.
- Yes. It is compulsory.
- Yes. I want to do AELS – it would be good for journalism.
- Yes. It is compulsory.
- No. I think it will be unnecessary.
- Yes. It is a compulsory course.
- No. Don't need to.
- Yes. I have to do it.
- Yes. I think English will contribute to my future success.
- No. I have B.Ed English.
- Yes. It is compulsory.
- No. I'm not interested.
- No. It's not compulsory.
- No. Rather give me maths.
- No. Not part of course. Do B.Ed English 278
- Yes, because it is compulsory.
- Yes, it is compulsory to do it.
- No, it is too demanding.
- No, not part of my programme.

- No, I'm starting a new course.
- No; it is not part of my course anymore.
- Yes. I enjoy the set works and creativity involved.
- No; because I need to focus on my BComm subjects.
- Yes, possibly am enjoying this course.
- Yes, I enjoy English.
- Yes, I would like to major in English.
- Because I am failing English 178, I don't see the use of it.
- I think it is compulsory.
- I don't wanna study the language next year, so I'm taking ALES next year.
- No, not part of my programme. Not one of the main subjects.
- No, all my subjects are previously set out by the department.
- Yes, I really enjoy the subject and would like to make it part of my career.
- Yes, I plan to major in English.
- Yes, it is a subject I would like to give.
- Yes. I want to major in English.
- Don't need it for BComm 2nd year.
- No. too many essays.
- No. Not part of my course.
- No, not part of my course.
- No, I can only take one BA subject next year and I want to take Psychology.
- Yes. Because I want to do Psychology so I need to have as many languages possible.
- No. I have a very heavy workload next year and Eng 278 would cause unnecessary stress.
- Yes. I enjoy English.
- No. I did not like 178 that much.
- No, not needed for degree.
- Yes. As a back-up, in case I can't do anything with Art.
- No. Not part of my current course.
- No. I don't have to.
- Yes. It is an enjoyable subject.

- No. It is not compulsory for my 2nd year.
- No. Not part of the programme.
- Yes. I have a passion for English and reading which I want to continue.
- No. I want to do AELS.
- Yes. I want to become a teacher and need it.
- No. It is not easy.
- Yes. I really enjoy English.
- Yes. It is compulsory.
- No. I don't need to carry on with it.
- No. It is not necessary.
- Yes. Very interested; love the way it allows me to think.
- No. I don't like the set work part. Too dif. I will do AELS instead.
- No. I do not like writing!
- Yes. I am an English buff and I enjoy it.
- No. Not part of my course next year.
- No. I struggle with English 178.
- No. There are other courses I am interested in doing.
- Yes. I really enjoy it.
- Yes. I like it + good for 4th year education.
- Yes. I enjoyed English and want to continue.
- No. For me it is really difficult and a lot of work.
- No. Not part of degree.
- Yes. Thinking about taking AELS.
- No. Switching to AELS.
- No. My course ends.
- Yes. I want to major in English.
- No. It is not required.
- Yes. I aspire to being a writer and want to use a wide literature background as a means to attaining that.
- No. It is not part of my course.
- No. It is not an option in my program.
- Yes. To do a NOS.

- Yes. Have to with my course.
- Yes. Had to.
- Yes. Compulsory to my degree.
- Yes. Part of course.
- Yes. I enjoy English.
- No. The workload is too heavy and I am unable to give it the attention it deserves.
- Yes. Requirement for my career path.
- No. Changing courses.
- No. I don't have to.
- No. Not part of my course.
- No. I am a Law student and English is the reason for me not cum(ming).
- Yes. I'd prefer it above another subject.
- Yes. I want to ultimately do Journalism & English will be important for that.
- No. I am interested in the aspects that the Applied English studies have to offer.
- Yes. I enjoy English.
- No. Not in programme.
- Yes. Because I really want to.
- No. I don't need to take it.
- No. We are doing B.Ed English.
- No. Not compulsory.
- No. I'm doing Social Work next year.
- No. B.Ed students are only required to do BA English in the first year.
- No. Don't need or want to.
- No. Don't need to.
- No. Haven't enjoyed it this year, so don't think I will next year.
- No. I really didn't enjoy it.
- No. No need for it next year.
- No. It is not compulsory in my course. This year has been too much work in Eng.
- Yes. I have always been interested in studying English further – possibly teach it one day.
- No. Because it is not compulsory.
- Yes. I want to improve my English for my degree.

- Yes. It is a compulsory course within my programme.
- Yes. I need it for what I want to do.
- No. It is not necessary.
- Yes. My course.
- I am taking it into consideration. I would love to do it, but hear it's very difficult.
- No. Not part of my course programme.
- No. It is not part of my course.
- No. It's too much work.
- Yes. Because I'm only allowed to drop one subject and I'd rather drop Visual studies.
- Yes. I love languages, particularly the English language.
- Yes. English course. Within my first year I had a lot of interest.
- No. It is no compulsory for my course.
- Yes. I like it.
- No. It's not needed.
- No. Change of programme.
- Yes. I like it.
- Yes. I like English and want to go on with it.
- Yes. I intend to complete my Honours (career in Eng).
- No. My degree provides different English.
- No. Moving to Elizabeth Gallaway Fashion Academy.
- No. Because it is too much additional work added to my course.
- No. My grades are bad and I hate it.
- No. My course does not allow me to.
- No. I'm already struggling with 178.
- No. Because I hate varsity English.
- Yes. It will help with my degree.
- No. I do not have to.
- No. Not in my prog.
- No. Not interested.
- Yes. I feel that it is important for what I want to do.
- No. It is a year subject for the course.
- No. Not an option – too many other compulsory subjects.

- No. It hard.
- Yes. It's enjoyable.
- Yes. Find it interesting.
- No. I'll be doing B.Ed English studies.
- No. Course provides different English programme.
- No. Too much work for my course next year.
- No. I need to do something more specialised.
- Yes. I thoroughly enjoy English and consider it to be enriching for every other subject.
- No. It's not compulsory.
- Yes. I want to major in English as I'd like to do my Honours in Journalism.
- No. English is boring & I see no point in doing it.
- Yes. I have to, it's part of my course.
- Yes. To improve my skills in analysis.
- Yes. Because English is a lot of fun.
- No. English maak my tong seer.
- No. I'm only entitled to do it for one year (part of course).
- Yes. I would like to major in it. I enjoy it very much.
- Yes. I would like to major in English studies.
- Yes. My course allows me to.
- Yes. I loved 178, I hope 278 will be this fun.
- No. Not needed in my course.
- No. I don't have to.
- No. Not part of my 2nd year course.
- Yes. Because I like English.
- Yes. I enjoy the subject and I would like to major in it as I believe it will open many doors.
- No. I'm learning the country.
- No. Because although I like English, it's a lot of work in an already busy lifestyle.
- No. It's not needed for my course.
- Yes. Because my other choice subject is too difficult.

- Irritated by how the English department does not except views in essays contrary to their own.
- Yes. The elective seminars & set books seem very exciting & interesting.
- Yes. I am very interested in the subject.
- Yes. Cause it is the elective that accompanies my course.
- No. Low interest level.
- No. Actually not sure but it is too much.
- No. Not interested.
- Yes. Compulsory.
- Yes. I want to major in English.
- Yes. It's better than Sociology.
- Yes. I enjoy the Novels & analysing them.
- Yes. Because I want to.
- No. Time limited.
- No. Graduating this year.
- No. The workload is big.
- No. Psychology interests me more.
- No. Do not enjoy the subject.
- No. I am going to do AELS 278.
- No. 178 Fulfils my language requirement.
- Yes. Would rather do English than Philosophy.
- Yes. Because I'd rather do English than Philosophy.
- Yes. I enjoyed the course a lot.
- No. Not part of degree.
- Yes. Because I have to.
- No. It is not part of my course.
- No. My programme does not require it.
- Yes. Because it is compulsory, need credits.
- No. I find its writing style and tone different from humanities.
- Yes. Because it is a good compliment to my general course.
- No. I do not need to take a language in my second year.
- No. Too many essays and it's a difficult subject to get above 50%.

- Yes. It makes things available.
- Yes. Part of course.
- No. Essays are too lengthy & time consuming & too many of them.
- No. Don't like the subject.
- No. Going to a different institution.
- Yes. I enjoy it and it is compulsory for my course.
- No. I only have to do English 178 for my course.
- Yes. I enjoyed English 178.
- No. I feel my other subjects have a bigger influence on my future.
- No. It is not prescribed.
- No. I don't enjoy English.
- No. I don't need English.
- No. Not relevant in my future.
- No. I do not enjoy English 178.
- Yes. I enjoy it.
- No. Does not form part of course.
- Yes. Because I want to major in English.
- No. Not part of course.
- No. It sucks.
- No. It is too much work and it takes too much time off my Law preparations.
- Yes. Further my communication and writing skills.
- No. Not necessary in degree.
- No. Because I do not want to.
- No. I drop the subject 2nd year.
- No. Doing AELS instead.
- No. I'd rather do Sociology, because I don't like English.
- No. I am changing my course.
- Yes. Compulsory.
- Yes. Why not?
- No. It is not a compulsory course in my programme.
- Yes. I am switching to languages next year.
- No. Not part of B.Ed.

- Yes. Compulsory.
- Yes. I enjoy it.
- Yes. In today's modern world, English is the norm.
- No. Not part of the course.
- No. Too much essays to write.
- Yes. It is compulsory to have it in my course.
- Yes. Interesting.
- No. Workload is too hectic, not interested.
- No. Sometimes it is too difficult and I was worrying that I won't make it.
- No. It is not required of me, but maybe, don't know.
- Yes. I would like to become a English teacher.
- No. I'm not interested.
- No. Not part of my course.
- No. Course does not require it.
- No. I nearly pass 178.
- No. Because it's not included in my course, not needed.
- No. Not my strong point.
- Yes. I think I have to for my bursary, but I also enjoy it.
- No. It is not mandatory.
- Yes. As I enjoy it.
- No. Not in my course.
- No. A need to pick up other subject, Economics.
- Yes. I like the course.
- No. Not in my course.
- No. Not part of the B.Ed course next year. We have different English then.
- No. B.Ed does not have that option.
- No. Don't need it.
- No. We are not allowed to do more than one course at a time.
- No. I am not going to specialise in English.
- No. It is too difficult and has a lot of tasks.
- No. It's not part of my course for next year.
- No. I don't like it.

- No. Can't choose my own subjects – compulsory.
- No. It is very hard and we have a lot of work in English.
- Not sure yet.
- No. I am taking AELS next year.
- Yes. I like to read & write.
- No. Can't choose subjects.
- Yes. I like studying literature.
- No. It is difficult.
- No. Going to finish degree.
- Yes. It will help me with other languages.
- No. Not part of my course.
- No. Not part of my course.
- Yes. I enjoyed it this year.
- No. I will have to do it extra, because it is not included in my course.
- No. The workload is too much to handle with all my other courses.
- No. Not needed.
- No. My course does not require me to do it.
- No. We are doing B.Ed next year.
- No. I do English within the B.Ed department.
- No. Going to do AELS – less reading.
- No. Doing AELS.
- No. I don't have that choice.
- No. Have too many subjects, not compulsory.
- Yes. Have to have a certain amount of BA subjects.
- No. Don't want to do it.
- Yes. I think it is a requirement for my course.
- No. Too much work.
- Yes. It is necessary for me to do in order to complete degree.
- No. Because it requires a lot of time thinking and reading.
- No. Not compulsory.
- No. I don't want to give English as a subject.
- No. It's not compulsory.

- Yes. Compulsory.
- Yes. Because I need to do it for credits.
- No. I don't have a choice.
- Yes. Goes in accordance with my degree.
- Yes. We have to.
- No. Too difficult.
- Yes. Required for course.
- No. Do not like it & not part of course.
- No. Moving overseas.
- No. Too much reading & debate which revolves around meaningless things.
- No. 178 have no creative writing.
- Yes. I have to, to get Hemis next year.
- Yes. It's a choice between English or Philosophy.
- No. I do not find it interesting.
- I'm not sure.
- No. I am doing AELS.
- Yes. I am going to major in English.
- Yes. I want to do Journalism post grad.
- No. I am not sure yet.
- No. Is not needed for my degree.
- Yes. I enjoy it, it is challenging.
- No. Too much work.
- No. It is not required.
- No. English is too hard.
- No. Want to do AELS.
- No. The level of work, I feel will interfere with my Law modules.
- Yes. It fits in well with what I want to study.
- No. My course is already a lot of work without including my BA subjects.
- No. Can't stand all the irrelevant reading.
- No. Might take AELS in its place.
- Yes. Enjoy English literature.
- No. The course was quite difficult.

- No. Want to take AELS, because studies have too much literature and I would rather do grammar.
- Yes. Helpful for writing skills.
- Yes. Very useful for my course.
- No. I'm not a big fan of English studies.
- No. I don't enjoy poetry.
- Yes. I have to.
- No. Course is too demanding.
- Yes. I love English.
- Yes. I have to do 4 subjects out of my 6 first year subjects.
- No. Don't have the time within my course.
- Yes. I would like to major in English studies.
- Yes. Need English.
- Yes. I aim to major in it in order to teach English. It's also a passion of mine.
- No. I am changing courses.
- No. It is not in my course next year.
- No. Not in course (B.Ed).
- Yes. Because I have to do it until I complete my course.
- Yes. It has improved my method of thinking!!
- No. Not part of my course. Don't enjoy it!
- No. If I pass (which I will), it's not part of my course anymore.
- No. Changing course.
- No. No lawyer need to do an EA subject.
- Unsure, it is very time consuming.
- Maybe (workload is too much).
- No. I don't have to.
- No. Workload too much, difficult.
- Yes. I enjoy the course.
- Yes. Reading and writing is a good positive anyway.
- Yes. I'm dropping Sociology; English goes on till 3rd year.
- No. Not compulsory and not interested.
- Yes. I love English literature.

- No. Not a fan of literature.
- Yes. It is interesting.
- Yes. It is more fun than my other subjects.
- Yes. It is compulsory.
- Yes. Enlarge my understanding of literature.
- No. Not compulsory for my degree.
- Yes. I think it is useful for my career path.
- No. I doubt I'm going to pass 178.
- No. I am studying in Australia next year.
- No. Not interested in the style of writing or set works.
- Yes. My degree requires me to do a language for two years.
- No. I have too much work already with my course.
- No. I do not need to do it next year.
- No. Didn't read any of the books.
- No. It is not a subject which is compulsory in my course.
- No. Changing degree to a BSc.
- No. It is not part of my course anymore.
- No. Not part of the course.
- No. I did not enjoy the course.
- No. It is no longer compulsory within my programme.
- Yes. I want to teach English.
- No. It is not included in my degree programme.
- No. It is not necessary for my course.
- No. Not compulsory, too many subjects.
- Yes. I wish to lecture English in the near future.
- No. English is not my major.
- No. I'm still deciding.
- Yes. Have to due to my subject choice.
- Yes. I enjoy the subject.
- No. Not an optional subject for course.
- Yes. To eventually major in it (maybe).
- Yes. I enjoy literature + poetry and I loved this course.

- No. I hear 2nd year English is demanding and I already do Mandarin.
- No. It's not part of my course.
- No. Not compulsory.
- No. My course only requires 1 year of it.
- No. It is not part of my 2nd year course.
- No. Will be doing educational English next year.
- No. Have another English module in education.
- No. It's too difficult.
- No. Not a compulsory course within my programme.
- No. I will do Applied English studies instead.
- Yes. I would like to pursue English post-grad.
- Yes. I enjoy English.
- No. Next year is my Honours year and I want to focus on that.
- No. Don't have the time.
- Yes. I enjoy it.
- No. I will be doing 278 next year.
- Yes. My tutor says it gets better.
- Yes. I am interested in the module.
- Yes. I love literature.
- Yes. I enjoy it.
- Yes. I enjoy English.
- No. I'm doing B.Ed next year.
- Yes. The career I want to go into requires it.
- No. I don't like languages. Don't enjoy English.
- No. Not in my programme.
- No. Not going to study next year.
- No. Not compulsory.
- No. It's too difficult.
- Yes. In the course.
- Yes. In the programme.
- Yes. Because it is a compulsory course.
- No. cause I am not coping to English 178.

In two sentences, say what your pre-University education and life prepared you for in terms of English 178.

- Nothing, because the English that I did is not done to what I have now and this is not understandable.
- It really sparked my interest in English and prepared me for the University workload and way of thinking.
- Interpreting advertisements and analysing poems.
- It prepared me to read exceptionally well and to understand certain terms.
- My pre-University education did not prepare me well for this course.
- To be professional English teacher and to communicate with other using English.
- During school we did not do such intense “workload”. School did not prepare me for this.
- Nothing in school really prepared me for English 178.
- I don’t see how the modules in this course are going to help me in the future.
- School doesn’t prepare you at all. There is a huge gap and difference between school and here.
- I don’t like English 178 because it is so discouraging. It doesn’t do me good because I’m not passing it.
- It prepared me for a hectic time schedule and to prioritise. It also contributed to literature skills.
- To stay motivated and to do things you don’t want to or does not like, but you have to do it the best you can because it’s being marked.
- Well, not much. Although I was reading it, it makes no sense at first.
- There was nothing in school prepared for English 178.
- It is nothing like what we did at school was extremely dangerous.
- Nothing in school prepared me to do Eng 178.
- Nothing prepared me.
- Nothing in school prepared me for English 178.
- Nothing.
- No preparation for English 178.
- Writing longer texts essays and analysing of poems.

- I am not going to major in English. It has never been my liking; it did not prepare me that well.
- School did not prepare me for English 178.
- Interpret advertisements and short stories.
- It helped with basic literary concepts such as similes, metaphors.
- My pre-University education taught me how to structure arguments and close readings.
- To analyse and close read texts. As well as working-writing under pressure.
- Reading the volume of texts; you are expected to perform close readings.
- I think my pre-University education prepared me for Eng 178, because my teacher focussed on literature.
- It prepared me to look at deeper meaning in a text. It prepared me to think for myself and that there is no wrong answer in their evidence.
- The module changed my perception of the language in terms of my ability and understanding.
- I did a lot of reading. My parents keep many books in the house.
- It prepared me for a stricter marking institution. It taught me how to focus intently on the topic in order to not lose marks.
- Nothing really prepared me for English 178. English 178 was what I expected.
- Essay writing and poems and orals and grammar.
- It taught me to write essays, orals, poems and grammar.
- It's the same.
- Made me understand how to interpret and read essays.
- It prepared me well in analysing and to interpret texts.
- It is completely different to University although you do poetry and Shakespeare it does not prepare you exactly.
- Essays helped a lot.
- Taught us how to write essays. Taught us to analyse and contextualise.
- Essay writing and analysis of poetry.
- I had an incredible English teacher at school who taught me to turn my love of the English language into well structured essays and to keep an open mind.
- My English teacher at school, my circumstances and influences of English.
- I read a lot as a child. I was raised multilingual.

- I had Ms Lloyd at Paul Roos as an English teacher in matric. She was quality.
- It prepared me to know how to express myself on paper and feel confident to read and answer in class.
- It helped me a lot, especially when it comes to essay writing.
- It offered so much for free, and honestly the tutors and lectures are doing exceptionally well on their sides.
- The tutors tried to help but I failed English 178.
- I love to read, so the reading given was not hard to handle. Jane Eyre is the best.
- Interpreting, analysing and expressing.
- Prepared me to contribute with peers in class and to be prepared to write an essay.
- The bonus of what is needed for English 178, meaning skills and so forth.
- I did Cambridge AS levels in English, so that helped a lot. The school I went to had very enthusiastic English teachers.
- My pre-University education and life prepared me for understanding and expressing ideas and concepts, esp. in literature.
- High school created a basis and foundation for English studies, as it taught me how to analyse texts, discuss poems etc.
- Understanding literature and being able to respond to texts. Interacting with peers to assist learning.
- My home environment was always very English based and a love for literature. My high school English teacher taught is how to write academic essays quite well.
- Well, just the theory was helpful but the rest was provided or helped with by English 178.
- Nothing much more than interpretation of text and formulating relationships.
- I had 2 very enthusiastic English teachers and they taught me well + I really loved English so I think I find it easy.
- The work we did and how the teacher did her job.
- I got the right education to prepare me for English in the sense that I can write essays correctly and analyse poems etc.
- English in high school prepared me well for English 178 – in terms of poetry, set works & essays.
- It prepared me for the volume of reading. It also helped with the interpretation of complicated texts such as Shakespeare and film studies.

- I read very often and so was well prepared in that area, poetry however is not a strong point.
- I'm able to understand texts well and interpret understanding on essays.
- I am paired overseas and was mentally ready to study further, therefore I felt prepared for University.
- An extensive amount of reading was done as well as analysing literary texts. Interaction between learners & teachers was beneficial.
- In high school my English teacher was very strict and rigid which prepared me to be precise and thorough.
- My pre-university education prepared me to write well enough structured essays that were then improved at University, my reading skills also prepared me.
- I learned a lot of things from this module, how interact with students.
- The demand to get work done in school helped me be prepared for deadlines as well as heavy engagement with the text's in school.
- To read and understand English.
- It enabled me to closely read texts, but otherwise I feel I wasn't prepared.
- It only prepared me how to read a text.
- It prepared me to start thinking for myself and form my own opinions.
- I knew it was going to be more difficult than school, so I did not expect an easy year.
- I worked for 10 years before coming to University, so already I have an idea of what to expect in terms of workload.
- Doing English as my 1st additional language at school helped a lot as we did some of the work I did at school!
- I was prepared for the type of work required in English 178. I had acquired knowledge which assisted me in English.
- Well I wouldn't say it prepared me that well, the hectic workload was not in varsity was not expected. Although I did English 1st language in high school, can't say it prepared me for this.
- Fine.
- In terms of English I think I was well prepared however the drop in my marks took adjustment.
- The workload and the understanding of meaning established through reading into various texts. Being able to apply literacy knowledge to texts.

- My classes at school were very interactive and therefore made it easier to interact & interpret texts.
- Pre-University education prepared me in terms of English by using appropriate texts and poetry to teach me basics about criticism.
- Basically just speaking and understanding the language, matric English is nothing compared to 178.
- It taught me to learn by myself and be independent in my studies as I did homeschooling.
- I can understand text and poems well.
- My pre-university education and life have prepared me in that I can see deeper meaning and images as well as pick up some writing styles.
- It prepared me to think creatively, rather than academically.
- Terminology was instilled in terms of social issues raised helped.
- I felt really prepared when it came to verbal interaction but essay writing I struggled with.
- I was homeschooled and was exposed to a vast array of literature and social experiences.
- Time management and good, thorough interpretations of different texts as well as the ability to be creative.
- It prepared me to be able to articulate myself correctly and to understand basic concepts that are discussed in Eng 178.
- The grammar part of it was good. How to structure my essays.
- It prepared me quite well for time management and I was able to confidently speak out in tutorials and give my idea.
- Pre-university education definitely prepared me to write essays on a standard expected in this course.
- School prepared me for poetry and analysing and interpret poems.
- Exposure to literary texts from an early age was close, critically readings of texts in high school.
- My love for literature grew through my high school life. I always had good relationships with my teachers.
- I've been working in banking & PR for several years prior to University & I enjoy reading. Critical analysis is new!

- To take responsibility for the quality of your own work. Make sure you meet deadlines.
- All the language and interpretation of stuff.
- Private school education prepared me well for the standard of work. I read a lot.
- Poorly, seeing that I was not in a Model C school.
- Reading in school.
- No question is a stupid question. Ask for help, don't be shy.
- We did Shakespeare every year and that helped with the Shakespeare part. Reading a lot of books.
- I was taught the language to a sufficient level. I saw the importance of English.
- Having matriculated in 2007 and having had English First Language Higher Grade, I was taught the analytical skills needed.
- Reading is a strong point of me.
- I grew up in a very liberal household where we discussed everything and forming opinions and analysis of events were crucial, this prepared me for English 178.
- Pretty much everything, particularly thanks to the in-depth poetry course taught at school.
- In terms of preparation I was granted a solid foundation of English as well as evoked with interest from various texts.
- My pre-university & education prepared me very well because I took Cambridge English HIGCSE as a first language.
- Communication with tutors and peers.
- It was similar work, except that the workload increased exponentially.
- My school English was enriching for me as person. It encouraged me to read widely.
- I was able to speak my mind and voice my opinions on subjects. I also feel that my pre-university allowed me to be able to form my own ideas.
- Analytical ability.
- It gave me at least the basic tools to analyse texts.
- It prepared me of how to think critically & read a text thoroughly.
- It helped me with the basics but that was all.
- Good understanding of the language, but I still have problems speaking English properly.

- Pre-university education prepared me in terms of what to expect in terms of tertiary English.
- It did not prepare me at all; I am so poorly in English.
- Taught me how to understand texts.
- Nothing, it is different.
- To write and think academically in English. I did home language so it was familiar to me.
- Writing essays in an academic manner.
- High school we did University set work.
- Learned to write and talk English better.
- It only prepared me to read, write and interpret.
- It was lacking in engagement. Not enough intellectual stimulation.
- I would say everything.
- Time management.
- How to formulate my sentences and that is pretty much how I passed.
- It provided me with the necessary vocabulary to understand my course.
- We did a lot of analysing of text with Universal themes. We focused on what will be important for future reference.
- I had English Home Language which forced me to read and analyse the different readings. It taught me to focus when reading.
- The types of work we would be doing, like books and films.
- In pre-university education I learned to analyse poems and how to write essays on books.
- My pre-university education and life prepared me for the workload and reading skills. It also enabled me to form my own arguments and statements.
- It didn't. We wrote to many comprehensions.
- Prepared me to focus and keep up with the work, reading and essays.
- It prepared me to have my own individual opinion and gave me the tools to bring across that opinion.
- We did a lot of poetry analysis, so was prepared in that section.
- I was taught how to analyse and understand different texts and how to write about my own ideas.

- I had a good teacher, so she helped me well with essays and understandings of the work.
- Work hard and come prepared.
- A vocabulary and reading skills to be understood and understand.
- It taught me how to express myself and to engage in debating.
- Being able to read enough and write under pressure for semester tests.
- There was a major jump from school to varsity standard.
- The reading of poetry in schools as well as planning essays is notable.
- I grew up in a country that has English as the major spoken language. I covered 12 years of school-English work.
- The number of books we had to read in matric/ pre-university prepared me well for the load in 178. It also prepared me by having educated me in similar aspects of Eng, e.g. poetry and novels.
- It did not prepare me much because we did do secondary sources. Life prepared me for some theme we came across.
- Mainly essay writing and to communicate with tutors and peers.
- I was taught to work hard and complain less. These values helped get through English 178.
- Basic understanding of terms.
- Reading and analysis of texts. Forming/ finding own interpretation.
- It prepared me for what type of work we do.
- To be able to interpret texts and to analyse poetry.
- To interpret literary text and speak English correctly.
- Writing essays, interpreting poetry, Shakespeare.
- To write a grammatically correct essay, enhanced my vocabulary and ability to convey my thoughts.
- English was secondary language but with a lot of reading I grew in this language.
- Analysing and understanding text.
- Pre-university, we did some of the poems which were good because I knew something. Doing Shakespeare.
- Appreciating literature.
- General English literacy.

- I had a fantastic English Home Language teacher at school who helped me to understand literature.
- Engaging with texts (on primary texts) and personal interaction with lecturer's and tutor.
- Essay writing and interpreting reading pieces.
- It prepared me to interact with peers in English.
- Interpret and analyse texts. Give own opinion & develop and integrate thoughts.
- Understanding the texts that I read better. Formalising an opinion over texts.
- It prepared me to analyse literary texts, and to look for hidden meanings in texts.
- It prepared me for nothing, excluding the basics of course.
- I only need to speak it and the marking is very strict.
- Prepared me for the workload of English 178.
- What I studied in high school has had very little for this course.
- My secondary education was excellent and thus prepared me for all areas in the 178 course.
- In grade 12 my English results were as they were all my life and that is exceptional. But the work and workload was totally different to English.
- I gave me everything I needed to 'survive'. I was better prepared than people who had English as an additional language.
- Due to the fact that I matriculated in 2005, my writing skills etc were very poor in the beginning of the year. I therefore needed to pay a lot of attention to this module to be able to progress.
- The workload. Engaging in the work.
- I can speak English and write English.
- Basic essay writing and be able to talk the language.
- It prepared me for poetry and Shakespeare, as well as reading books and answering questions about it.
- My high school education was exceptional. My school prepared me well.
- Prepared me more or less to be able to write a standard essay.
- Even though it did prepare me a lot, if I think of where I'm standing now, 178 is still hard with First Add. Lang.
- School prepared a larger emphasis on creativity and innovation while 178 is all about skills.

- To communicate better in terms of English. To analyse.
- My pre-university education has prepared me well enough to cope with English 178.
- It helped in managing time and improved writing skills.
- My teacher at my school analysed poems really well. Film study was also well done.
- My English teacher at school prepared me very well for the poetry and short-story section.
- School was more beneficial to me in that it taught me how to work hard when I need to, to manage my time and prioritise and to juggle a number of different subjects.
- Writing long essays.
- Analysing poetry - understanding themes, images etc. Language construction.
- Well English – 178 feels as I am back in high-school some old work that is so irrelevant in today's world.
- The ability of writing an essay about any form of literature & passing it. The ability of analysing a poem.
- I did Cambridge English which was not as demanding but equally challenging.
- We needed to do a lot of readings and orals in school.
- I was prepared for everything we have studied.
- It prepared me in the sense of helping me think critically write clearly and how to manage my time.
- I was not prepared to handle the freedom. I was prepared to handle the loud.
- Made me consider to maybe give English on school. Makes me comfortable to talk more English.
- My high school education was based on Cambridge International examinations which part heavy emphasis on essay writing, literature study + interactive orals about the literature.
- My pre-university education taught me how to handle large amounts of work and to read more.
- I have read longer Novels so the Novel was not that of a struggle and we had a lot of assignments due in pre-university, so I was used to the workload.
- In school we did the same work. Two of the theme (book & movie) I did last year.
- Engaging in conversation with respect for others opinions and contextualising.
- I had a very strict teacher in high school and she prepared me thoroughly for University. I am also very hard-working.

- I was taught to analyse texts. I was taught to look for deeper meanings in texts.
- To manage time and complete work in time.
- My pre-university education prepared me well for English 178.
- I went to a school with a good English department and I went on a literature hour in matric.
- I did English First Additional language. Enough said.
- I expected English to be a lot more technical, in school they spent too much time on the technical aspect of language.
- My education prepared me to have my own opinion about English yet, also listen to others and that it's incredibly interesting to hear others' opinions.
- Reading set work novels and critical analysis of text.
- It prepared me to look deeper into texts as well as write academically.
- I read a lot of literature.
- I grew up in a family with an innate love of books. I had an excellent English teacher (gr 10-12).
- School level English is too easy and basic. They have to be stricter when marking essays.
- Reading and analysing plays, I was prepared for, but the Novels are difficult.
- As most people speak English and can understand English if importance to know it myself.
- School prepared me very little – completely different view point.
- Not much, considering the difficult instructions.
- Reading and writing basic essays.
- It was a home language, I was at a multicultural school, and had tests and assignments.
- Spoke English all my life, attended Eng 1st language school. Reading + writing + orals.
- My teachers and what I was taught at school significantly.
- Not much really. This English is much harder.
- It didn't really help much. Just time development of my language and understanding of the languages helped.
- It introduced me to analysing literature texts. It gave me an interest in Eng.
- It prepared me to have a good work ethic. Understand readings I get.

- I did the IB so essay writing, close reading, critical analysis and time management skills were a focus.
- Having an open mind and learning to be analytical and open. My home language is English as well as doing it as Home language.
- It helped me to enjoy English literature.
- It taught me not just to read texts, but to think about it and form ideas.
- Prepared in terms of technical requirements for English 178 understanding.
- I attended a top private school which offered 1st language. We covered a lot of the reading that I was given this year.
- My pre-university education prepared me to be diligent, hard working & studious in meeting deadlines with English essays.
- Prepared me for the workload and necessary analysis.
- I was not prepared for English 178. I never had any formal education of English. I came to SA and started University.
- English at school was very much a step-down from English at University.
- My essay writing. My interest in English.
- In terms of literature, matric English did help with the English 178 course, especially the poetry.
- English was an 'easy' subject in school as I find the interpretation and understanding of the language enjoyable.
- The analysis of poetry. Comparing texts.
- The standard of literacy and quality of writing expected.
- I have always been an avid reader and through school have learned to interact well with teachers and thusly tutors and lecturers.
- It gave me a basis to develop the further skills from.
- How to analyse texts and poems.
- I got basic grammar.
- Great high school teacher – taught to be precise, intuitive, personal approach, notice pedantic, abstract approach.
- I studied through Cambridge University, which seems to have prepared me for my English 178 module very well.
- To be confident to speak English in front of others; and also to analyse a poem (even though I still had difficulties but it helped me to understand the basics).

- To know what the basic analysis is for a text in terms of terminology.
- Reading poetry correctly. Proof reading your essays.
- I can read well.
- Reading and writing.
- Helped me to balance my work and prepare properly. Helped me through many work related situations.
- Time management really helped a lot from pre-varsity experience.
- It helped me cope with the workload and it prepared me for everything, English 178 included.
- It gave me the basic skills that were then developed in University.
- Clearer understanding of analysing information and using it to write academic essays.
- It taught us how to analyse texts.
- Improved my English on University level.
- It allowed me to be confident in group situations & have good time management.
- Taught me to understand poetry. Understanding movies.
- How to analyse poems and how to write an academic essay.
- Understanding poetry and essays e.g. writing interpreting.
- Prepared me to understand, speak and apply English at a University level.
- Analysing text and identifying speech devices.
- My pre-university education did not really prepare me that well for English 178, nor did my life.
- Writing constructive essays and analysing texts.
- It made me passionate about the subject which is a major importance. Studying overseas taught me about other concepts.
- Have too many subjects already.
- Helping to better understand the English language and to analyse a text.
- The IEB course taught me to interpret and question rather than accept given text.
- Came to University with the ability to write an essay and especially write about literature.
- It prepared me to make sure I know what the outcomes of the subject are.
- How to go about approaching literature and poems in terms of analysing.
- We repeated a lot of the work done in high school.

- It set a good base to start from. It covered a general knowledge of English.
- Time management skills.
- English home language and recreational reading.
- Nothing really, only vocabulary.
- I was prepared for writing literacy essays, analysing literature, yet we were not expected to provide evidence for our assignments from anywhere but the actual piece of literature we were working on.
- Did the poems in school.
- My education prepared me in essays writing and being able to analyse text.
- The basis of education. Nothing can prepare you for a student's life.
- It did not, but that's my fault.
- Nothing, reading and writing.
- It helped me construct sentences well, because I'm actually Afrikaans.
- The English standard in Afrikaans school is not the same as in English base schools.
- They were always open to discussion and help your understanding.
- Prepared us for most of what we covered.
- Fairly small, thorough classes in school.
- It helped me gain the confidence to speak in another language. Gave me a wider form to argue with.
- To get through all the work in time.
- English 178 is very difficult than English in schools, so nothing could really prepare me for this.
- To be able to analyse texts or poems.
- I have better writing skills and due to the course my English has improved dramatically.
- It helped me to read the deeper underlying meaning of text, whether it be books &/ poetry.
- Critically analysing texts in an objective way. Realising the different levels in a text.
- How to write academic essays. Handle lots of books/ reading.
- In terms of writing an academic essay, pre-education did not help much because we never wrote essays like that.
- None.

- I was not prepared for University by my school. I was definitely not prepared for English 178.
- Nothing about pre-university education prepared me for English 178.
- I had a good English teacher at school who gave us University preparing tasks.
- It did not prepare me at all for this sort of writing.
- At school we were taught to critically analyse texts.
- I had English 2nd language and had a pretty good English teacher.
- It always warned me to work harder (encouraged me) because the workload is bigger on University standard.
- It didn't really prepare me with essays but definitely with structures.
- I learned to communicate in the language. I also developed a love for the literature of English.
- It gave me insight to the English language and helped me identify elements.
- The love of reading and how to successfully write essays.
- Lightly interpret and analyse a text.
- To engage and learn from others through discussion and the standard at my school was rather high-forced to work harder.
- As an Afrikaans student English come as a shock, but now I am grateful for having a first language teacher in school.
- Prior knowledge of various fields makes understanding some references easier.
- High school assisted me in terms of analysing poetry specifically, writing essays and encouraging participation in class.
- The workload was easy to cope with because less time was given at school to complete tasks. Reading and analysing had also been prepared.
- Can do most of the work in English 178. We repeat some of the work.
- To manage time and reading amounts. To be interactive with peers or person teaching.
- To be honest, it didn't help me. English 178 is different from the English they use to teach me on school.
- Nothing, except for preparing me to be able to analyse a poem.
- It prepared me to understand texts, but not as in depth as English 178. How to manage my time regarding the subject.

- Personal interpretation and to verbally express myself (questions, answers, not understanding etc).
- That English 178 is very hard. Do what you do best and ask questions if you don't understand.
- To express myself in a different language. Communicate with people with different cultures and backgrounds, as well as time management.
- It helped me with literacy and ways to express myself.
- The answers needed, the way I have to interpret certain texts (novels, poems etc). Basically, expressing myself my opinion.
- We read quite a number of novels and plays in Gr. 12 therefore I was well prepared for the amount of reading.
- Prepared me for being able to interact and get the most out of all lessons.
- I was offered a number of extra-curricular activities to learn to work fast & thoroughly and I discussed literature with my Eng teacher.
- It prepared me to.
- The writing we did at school was creative vs the academic writing at University so I was unprepared.
- Private school. Books.
- Able to read + understand text.
- It prepared me to pace myself better with essays and hand in on time. It taught me to think laterally in poetry.
- The course has enabled me to be able to write excellent essays.
- My education prepared me for the workload and difficulty that one could expect at University.
- Reading, forming logical arguments, analysing and answering in an essay form.
- Very well. Huge amounts of reading.
- We did a lot of essay writing, but focussed on creative story telling essays. Academic essays were done, but not in detail.
- Eng home language definitely set me on a higher level and helped me a lot to be able to cope with the heavy loaded Eng programme and to understand most of it.
- High-school prepared me for the type of books which will be handled in University. Like Shakespeare.
- Understanding of English and completing of tasks.

- Time management with regard to tasks.
- Creative essay writing and the development of good basics in language structure.
- Pre-university education and life prepared me by supplying me with a good vocabulary. It also helped my writing skills.
- To remain active in the dealings of my subjects. To prepare in advance.
- I was well prepared for essays. I possess adequate analytical skills and when I was in school English was my favourite.
- To formulate personal understand of texts. To understand authorisation.
- High school prepared me with structure and work ethic that is essential to University.
- The amount of work + poems.
- The analysis of movies as well as writing essays.
- I learned to write in English and we did quite a few essays in school.
- To take control of managing my own work.
- Verbal expressions.
- Shakespeare was important in school, I could analyse it well. My parents taught me great people skills & tuts was fun, I made many friends.
- Going to English school prepared me for difficulty. Sorting out problems when they arose as parents can't speak English.
- I felt that pre-university education lacked in this area. Could not sufficiently prepare me for the type of work we did in English 178.
- I have not done any reading before, meaning books, just English articles.
- There is barely a link, pre-University and University work engages almost completely different approaches to understanding the work that is presented.
- To read a book and answer questions about the book and not analyse one sentence in the book.
- It seems the same as matric but is marked much more harshly.
- The analysis of texts as well as the understanding needed for the interpretation of text.
- To analyse the texts and give a write up of that analysis.
- Reading and understanding.
- Good, solid grounding. Capable student forced me to get my work done on time.
- It gave me the background I needed, but I definitely learnt more skills at University.
- Grammar and vocabulary.

- Reading and speaking English.
- The amount and the difficulty of the workload, especially writing essays.
- I learned to write more than needed.
- Prepared me in that we learnt to analyse texts and see how different interpretations..
- Creative writing not! Academic writing.
- English in school was a good head start. Talking English frequently.
- It prepared me for reading Shakespeare and writing correctly formatted essays.
- Evaluation and analysis of texts, movies and poems.
- I got taught to critically analyse and interpret things in terms of educated opinions.
- My writing skills and ability to think broadly.
- It prepared me for the workload. It prepared me for meaningful interactions with others.
- Essay writing to an extent as well as being able to express myself.
- I know how to communicate my questions clearly and interpret my answers.
- Previous English teachers prepared me for analysing texts and adverts (at school).
- Pre-university taught me to write and appreciate English.
- Verbal expression.
- The ability to understand what is required and to take the necessary steps in completing tasks effectively.
- Thinking creatively and out-of-the-box in terms of writing essays.
- Always enjoyed & was encouraged to read, which helped with this course.
- Reading volume, time management, oral, planning written work.
- It prepared me to be able to draft a well constructed essay. It also prepared me for criticism.
- Books I have previously read helped me to better understand and analyse the texts (except Jane Eyre).
- My education prepared me but it did not prepare me as much as I hope.
- Being English speaking helped. I also enjoy reading, thus making the reading workload easier.
- To prepare well before the class, and to manage my time accordingly for the module.
- To have an opinion about a topic and express it by supporting myself through the text.

- English was my favourite subject in school because we had a brilliant teacher; he taught me how to interpret texts creatively and in depth.
- Contextualising and analysing.
- English home language as a subject prepared me for English 178 as it provided me with the required tools, vocabulary and skills needed.
- To read prescribed text effectively. To analyse prescribed text.
- To write structured essays and forces me to communicate properly.
- High school English taught me nothing compared to the skills I learned in English 178.
- Minimum knowledge for the module i.e. speech, writing.
- Prepared me for writing literature essays and analysing poetry and advertisements.
- Had an extremely good English teacher who was passionate about the subject.
- In school they taught one to interpret literature the way you think. Essays were not marked harshly.
- Being able to have an understanding of how poems and poetry is supposed to be read and analysed.
- In school we analysed poems that helped with University poem analysis and essay writing.
- It prepared me for the reading & the amount of poems we did.
- Critical analysis of Shakespeare and Cambridge first language English requirements.
- The level of work expected.
- My pre-university education at Roedean school SA, with Mr Digby Ricci, as my teacher taught me all the necessary skills as well as most of the set works that we only did this year.
- Close reading and interpretation.
- I can analyse texts better now than before.
- The marking of essays was very strict (except for the finals). It prepared me to work hard at every essay.
- The difficulty of the prescribed texts.
- High school prepared me for analysing poems and my love for books helped when it came to reading novels.
- I was prepared in confidence and basic aspects of understanding and interpreting literature.

- To read and understand literature.
- Not much essay writing.
- It prepared me with analytical skills to fully understand literary texts. It taught me to manage my time sufficiently.
- My pre-varsity education prepared me for poem analysis and also for finding meaning in texts.
- It only prepared me to do the basic things. English 178 is on a much higher level and it was hard for me at the beginning.
- It prepared me with the basics of English. It prepared me for the more difficult English.
- The syllabus at school was not adequate enough to prepare me for English 178. As a waitron I get to work with different personalities.
- It prepared me to handle the workload successfully.
- I was able to critically analyse poems and contextualise readings quite moderately.
- Nothing, the work is totally different. It just taught me about language that I am now applying in assignments.
- My pre-university education did not prepare me enough for what was expected of me in this course therefore I could not do as well as I wanted.
- It taught me how to speak and understand English.
- It prepared me for reading novels and understanding the texts.
- To interpret certain texts at an acceptable level. To be able to analyse texts.
- We were extremely well prepared. The structure of our school essays were exactly the same as the current structure.
- Interpretation of literacy texts and presentation of essays.
- It prepared me very well, because I had great education standards at school and our department of ENG.
- I was prepared for essay writing especially under pressure.
- Writing academic papers and having an opinion on things.
- Essays and tests, helped to adapt to University style of doing things (tests and essays).
- Critical thinking, in depth analysis. Time management.
- My secondary education did very little for me. I find this course pleasurable purely due to my own interests.
- Well, basically nothing, in school we were spoon fed everything.

- Being in an English class in an Afrikaans school I was expected to perform well in things like moderations.
- Pre-university education taught me basic writing skills (essays); also enabling me to express myself verbally.
- Assignments are similar to those at school.
- Very well.
- It prepared me for the themes that were brought up during the analysis of books and poems.
- To read a number of texts and to form a good student-teacher relationship – helpful in forming a tutor-student relationship at University.
- The things that were done in English, can be compared with real life situations.
- Reading poetry and Novels as well as basic film study.
- My pre-university education prepared me for most of the challenges that I have to face with Eng 178, especially writing essays and understanding texts.
- I had great teachers at my high school. I love languages and literature.
- It taught me how to read basic things in my daily life/ routine. It also taught me to write academically.
- Analysing literacy text in certain context. Analysing literacy poems in certain content and the meaning of it.
- I was able to confidently express myself in class and engage in intellectual conversations with my tutors.
- Prepared me well for understanding various texts and for writing substantial academic essays.
- School taught me how to analyse texts & interpret poetry, movies & novels; taught valuable skills.
- I am well read and have always been interested in literature particularly due to my exposure; I was already prepared for the course.
- The basic structure of an essay.
- The literature helped immensely to understand the books of 178.
- It prepared me to write essay answers on prescribed work. It taught me to read effectively.
- I was prepared for large amounts of work and challenging texts.
- Ability to analyse a stressful workload. Manage the reading required for 178.

- To help make conversation with others and to some degree learn to interpret text.
- That it will be hard and a lot of work.
- How to interpret things other than what I read. I learned how to study.
- 178 was a whole new experience.
- Know how to analyse in much deeper ways.
- I learned to study by myself so I could teach myself. Good vocabulary and reading a lot before Uni helped.
- Academically it helped me understand.
- Well-prepared for poetry analysis and analysis of Novels.
- Everything we do in English. I went to a very good school, therefore I felt extremely prepared.
- They taught me how to write essays well, analyse texts and poetry well.
- How to structure an essay and the techniques used to dissect & analyse poems.
- It gave me a good understanding with regard to interpreting English literature. It also aided my English writing skills.
- My pre-university education prepared me for the workload and the standard of work expected.
- Deeper analysis as opposed to mere memorisation.
- To give my opinion and point of view about texts. To read very carefully and understanding it.
- To develop a deeper level of interpretation of the texts. To develop an ability to write essays and discover patterns.
- Honestly, high school doesn't prepare you for the amount of work.
- The general interpretation of texts.
- It prepared me for critically analysing texts and understanding texts. It also gave me confidence to express myself in English.
- Writing essays and the structure of a well-structured essay. Case reading.
- Provided the expected foundation + analysis and interpretation that University no longer touches on.
- I was prepared for essay writing and close reading of texts.
- By taking English First Additional Language I was not prepared for English 178 at all.
- Not very well.

- How to analyse the written text to be more understandable; I'm more prepared, it gave me an open-eye.
- Gave me the necessary skills to analyse texts.
- It taught me how to love English. It taught me to want to teach English.
- The basic, broad work is the same.
- School we did Shakespeare etc. But not as in depth as well as not being prepared for the length of the essays.
- I understood my grammar and punctuation well.
- It prepared me to critically analyse texts.
- Understanding deeper meaning in texts.
- Good school.
- Prepared me for the academic standard of text done in English 178.
- It prepared me for nearly all aspects, just not referencing.
- Encouraged me to participate in class and articulate my opinions.
- I went to a private school so there was a lot of individual attention, which helped me, develops my own style. The English teacher was excellent – the Cambridge system – lots of essays.
- It taught me how to read and encouraged my love and passion for English literature.
- Prepared me how to do basic analysis of literary texts.
- English in Grade 12 was a lot more demanding than English 178. I enjoy reading now but prefer to read at my own pace.
- To engage with the text. Critically amazing written and spoken requirements.
- It prepared me for the level of difficulty of the work and which in turn helped with essays and poetry analysis, which I didn't struggle with.
- Analysis of certain texts like poems helped with poem analysis.
- Basically I only felt prepared for the poetry in English 178.
- Communicating with confidence and be interested in poetry.
- Only the basics since Eng are not my home language.
- It helped me with the imagery of poetry an time balance (management).
- A basic foundation for skills in interpreting texts and understanding literary devices used within poems.
- I read a great deal all my life, so a large amount of reading is not a problem. We were also taught analysis + writing style sufficiently.

- It prepared me for essays, critically analysing poems, adverts, articles. School helped me a great deal.
- English at school and reading in my own time prepared me well for workload, assignments and tests.
- It prepared me for essay and the tests. It gave me a better serve of writing.
- Writing essays.
- The fact that I am able to read & write helps. The amount of Shakespeare read at school makes understanding text such as poetry easier.
- The English essays, English test and also poetry prepared me for 278.
- Prepared me for good essay writing and articulation in tutorials.
- I was well prepared for essay writing. My education at school really helped me develop skills sufficiently, as well to analyse texts.
- Writing essays and poetry.
- I learned to read very young. Thank you!!
- Only reading the work in the required time. My official education was useless.
- An ability to write essays comfortably and the ability to interact with peers towards analysing texts.
- The standard of work as well as being able to interact with my peers.
- Understanding texts and doing extra research on texts.
- My pre-university education provided me with the skills to understand, critically analyse and express opinions about texts.
- Poetry and a little of the interaction.
- Not much for First Additional English, only teach the basics.
- Because I had English as an additional language, the classes at school were very different to what English 178 is.
- A very good English program in high school.
- It prepared me to analyse texts and interpret underlying meanings.
- They were effective in language usage and grammar.
- Enabled me to learn how to write well structured essays and answer exam questions.
- Not a lot.
- Not much really. How to spell and write in sentences.
- Not at all. I never learn about stuff like this in my school. It prepared me to work hard I suppose.

- Nothing.
- It enabled me to be able to write literary essays and the essay format although more concentration was put on language.
- I was prepared to manage the work for myself as well as my time. I expected the work to increase.
- Not much. Books were just plain and simple.
- To be honest it has not prepared me because no matter how hard I tried I kept failing and my interest for English is down.
- There were lots of resources to work on it but the problem is that you don't know how to use them.



Figure 1: Student perceptions of areas that their pre-university education and life prepared them for in terms of English 178. Generated by wordle.net

In two sentences, say what your pre-University education and life failed to prepare you for in terms of English 178:

- Everything.
- We never had to reference if not using direct quotes.
- Writing academic essays. Reading so many novels in a short period of time.
- It failed me to look at a novel critically and to analyse things. It also failed me to write academic essays, especially on poetry.
- To write academic essays, because on school essays were written different.
- It is obvious that a course in University is going to be more difficult. One just don't expect that.
- Everything, first additional language doesn't cover anything for English 178.
- It did not prepare me for English 178.
- Yes, it did very much so.
- I failed English in 2010 and I'm still not doing good in 2011.
- It failed to prepare me in essay writing skills. My pre-University education also failed to teach me how to reference.
- The workload. English in school and on University is very different.
- University work is far more sophisticated than school work.
- Nothing. It was very hard.
- Essays.
- Essays.
- Nothing.
- I didn't have first language. No understanding for terms, Shakespearian words.
- Importance of handing works in and does it at your best.
- We never did academic writing in school.
- Writing academic essays. Reading novels.
- To read thick Novels and how to approach them.
- It did not prepare me for the tutorials and lectures, in a sense that the way in which these were conducted are very different to my classroom setting.
- Implementing secondary resources and analysing different texts – other than stories.
- Writing English 178 semester tests. Writing English 178 essays.
- It failed to prepare me for the amount of work we are expected to do now.

- Preparing enough time to read required books (although it is because of my other subject's workload).
- In English first add. language we never wrote analytical essays – just creative writing.
- It failed at test and exam preparation. It failed at test and exam feedback.
- It failed to prepare me for the short time in which texts needs to be read. It also did not prepare me with regards to the amount of work.
- The loads of essays we had to write.
- Thesis statements, close readings & analysing argument.
- It didn't teach me to write the right or proper kind of essays.
- It didn't.
- Possibly not enough.
- The heavy loads of work completed in a short time.
- To read at the magnitude one does in University is different and the way in which we write essays.
- Eng 178 is much harder.
- Never taught us how to reference. The work is on different levels.
- The MLA reference.
- Writing academic essays. Analysing texts.
- I was not sufficiently prepared for writing poetry essays although I can interpret poetry verbally.
- The workload at school is very little compared to varsity, did not do work in such a variety.
- Not enough contact with the language. Wasn't fed well literature wise.
- Workload at Varsity is completely different.
- I did know how to write an academic essay and did not receive the marks I hoped for.
- Time management - it has become the most crucial things that I must be aware of.
- It failed to give a choice, and now I can blame them because I do not see the real meaning of this English.
- I don't get enough support in the writing lab.
- School failed to analyse texts to the degree in which it is done in 178. There also was not such a big variety of texts.
- Writing enough essays.

- Interpreting poetry completely alone and fewer spoon-fed in University.
- Essay writing techniques.
- I was not prepared for the amount of assignments we received. We were also marked on different criteria at school.
- It took a while to get used to the strictly independent approach – pre-University life was all about group work.
- In University writing an essay is very different to writing an essay in high school especially referencing, in-text referencing and bibliography.
- The requirements of an academic essay.
- Being able to listen and take thing in, in lectures.
- To write an academic essay. The reading was also not as important as in English 178.
- Everything else esp. referencing.
- At school essays are structured differently so we had to learn how to write essays again. Also school should introduce you to referencing.
- The amount of time I will need for a task.
- I wasn't prepared for the mass readings that we had to do.
- Workload.
- Pre-university education failed to teach the administrative elements of writing essays, such as referencing.
- Poetry interpretation and evaluation is tough. Also spelling isn't too great.
- Failed to prepare me well for academic essays and also managing time required to read the required reading for English.
- To balance all the different subject's assignments and tasks all at once.
- Didn't really make use of secondary readings for interpretation of texts and was not prepared for the volume of work in 178.
- Having a different tutor each semester. Because I had the same teacher since Gr. 8 to matric.
- It failed to prepare me for reading so much books and then analysing them and it failed me in verbally participating in tutorials and lectures.
- Taking a gap year, it made me a bit lazy and forgets some of the things I learnt at school.
- The work was overloaded, they expected more from us (students).
- Essay writing – the correct structure.

- The way school teachers spoon-fed students in school.
- Essay writing. Tests.
- The amount of essay to write and books to read, using secondary articles as a response.
- It failed to teach me good writing skills, a good way of analysing a text as well as ways of communication my views.
- To have time to manage every second to be able to complete everything.
- I did not write this many essays never had to form an argument of my own. Also the structure is quite different from school essays.
- The amount of reading plus supplementary material needed to read.
- Jane Eyre being so difficult and boring.
- It may have lacked in preparing us with individual and independent thought. We were spoon-fed quite a lot.
- The workload in High school as not hectic. We weren't required to hand in assignment every week. I had to adjust to the not so cool routine here.
- Not.
- As I said before, you expect certain marks but because University work is marked more strictly, your drop in marks can be very disappointing.
- The analysis of films.
- Pre-University education did not prepare me in regards to the volume of work to be completed during a term.
- Pre-university education failed to prepare me to write academic, well structured essays.
- Writing academic essays, terms like patriarchy, bilingualism and properly analysing poetry.
- It failed to prepare me for the workload as well as the way in which to approach English 178.
- They failed to teach me how to write an academic essay.
- They failed in preparing me for the large amount of reading that would be required and they failed in teaching me how to write bibliographies and referencing.
- It did not prepare me to write an academic essay. It did not prepare me to do close readings.
- Application of terminology etc. was not prepared well in pre-university.

- It failed to help me to write coherently.
- It failed to prepare me for the diversity of educational achievement represented within the students of English 178. Some students are quite well read and literate while many are not.
- To read and interpret Shakespeare on my own.
- Did not allow me to think critically about all the texts we looked at on school. Stayed with the teacher's interpretation of works.
- How to analyse texts at University level more, especially Novels and poetry.
- Shakespeare preparation was definitely lacking & became evident in this course.
- The style to write essays/ academic essays.
- Failed to prepare me to establish my own opinions adequately.
- Workload, time management.
- Nothing.
- Teaching one how to construct a good essay. Analysing poetry and reading pieces.
- I failed in learning time management and to study every day.
- High school didn't emphasise the importance of "plagiarism"! The hours required to go through secondary sources and form our own opinion.
- No academic essays in school.
- The amount of reading required.
- The time needed. Academic writing, we did a lot of creative writing.
- It failed to make me impose things in texts and film. I was taught to look at clear evidence.
- Time management.
- I definitely struggled to answer essay questions in semester tests.
- My pre-university life did not expect me to do the amount of work English 178 requires and therefore it failed to prepare me.
- Masses of reading!
- Pre-university life failed to prepare me for the amount of work that will be covered in English 178.
- The level of analysis & interpretation was very low compared to what we are expected to develop at University.
- The workload.
- The workload was unexpectedly high.

- We never wrote with referencing. Opinions mattered, which I've had to shake off.
- To me, the workload was excessive. I battled to finish projects on time as some projects entailed a lot of work at times.
- Referencing & academic writing.
- It did not really help me to write essays in the required way for University level.
- Not to good in terms of essay structure.
- Did not do any English since 16. English studie not compulsory in England.
- No, because 178 is more focused on written works.
- Pre-university education failed to clarify the workload.
- The understanding of text, the close reading, language terms.
- How to write academic essay.
- Work here is not as easy as school.
- The test was really difficult in the beginning. I got lower marks than usually.
- The quantity of essays and exercises due.
- High school had bias marking, one loses faith in one's work, however at University some hard work gets me better results.
- It did not prepare me for the workload or style of essays.
- The amount of work required and the volume.
- Not reading so much and not doing so many essays. Essays are NOT the only way to test our knowledge.
- Essay and argument construction.
- I did not always manage my time correctly.
- We did not go into so much detail. We did not analyse so many themes and motifs that are basically universal in all texts & did not link them.
- The workload was very little. It didn't prepare me.
- The way of answering questions.
- Def. failed me to learn how to write proper standard required essays + my spelling sucks!!! HELP!!
- Pre-university education and life did not prepare me for the basic skills and expectations needed in writing an academic essay.
- Not enough essays. Not enough deep analysis.

- It failed to prepare me for the quantity of reading that has to be done for example, Jane Eyre.
- Referencing was very difficult as we were just thrown into the deep end. The lengthy Novels (Jane Eyre) we were required to do ourselves.
- We only scratched the surface of all that is needed to analyse texts and we had a much smaller workload.
- Poetry essays.
- Analysing texts and writing about my own meaning.
- Some terminology was unknown for me which made it difficult sometimes.
- It did not prepare me for academic essays.
- Being able to understand and write academic essays.
- The standard of essays.
- The amount of short readings + depth of poetry.
- I did not have English as a home language so for me Eng 178 is very difficult.
- In school we focussed too little on writing academic essays, my spoken English is bad, since I preferred to operate and communicate in the German-speaking society.
- It failed to prepare me for the way in which we write academic essays. It failed to educate us in a way that made us comfortable with referring to secondary texts and incorporating them into our own work.
- For academic writing. Reading large books.
- The amount of work.
- There was no movie/ film studies at my school and English was not a first language.
- They did not prepare us to critically read an article and write academically.
- Writing academic essays and using secondary text and referencing correctly.
- The amount of workload and how intense the work. Also the level of difficulty of all the work.
- Academic essay writing.
- To write academic essays and how to use secondary sources. Referencing was also not taught.
- Secondary resources, speaking in Public.
- My essay writing and how to reference.
- Writing academically.
- Academic register when writing so many different texts in one year by yourself.

- Writing an academic essay.
- The academic writing. Own interpretation.
- Reading. Writing academic essays.
- The workload and also the books is not what I am interested in.
- Engaging with secondary texts.
- The big workload.
- My English in schools didn't prepare me well enough for English 178. There is a big gap that I had to fill.
- I do not enjoy reading & therefore did not finish any of the assigned books.
- I expected more from the poetry course. The short stories also didn't make sense to me, I don't see the relevancy.
- It didn't prepare me properly to do writing exercises at a University level.
- Proper essay construction and analysis.
- The level of difficulty of the work.
- There's a huge gap between high school and varsity. High school does not prepare anyone for varsity.
- We were practically spoon-fed due to a lack of clever learners otherwise it would result in less than a handful that passes at the end of the year.
- Everything!
- The amount of work.
- My passion for literature in general, helped me to at least enjoy the course content.
- My standard of thinking in English was not on a high enough level.
- To be focused on more academic essay writing, analysing book.
- It did not prepare me for reading into texts, reading books in my own time and for the workload.
- It did not prepare me for the high standards, difficulty and mass of work of English 178.
- Nothing, I found myself well prepared for University level English.
- For First Add. Lang. it's hard, because this course is very much for English students I think.
- The volume of reading is far greater.
- For a student whom took English First Add Language in school. English 178 was a challenge.

- Poetry essays.
- Certain categories of the course were not planned out well and at times we were not sure what was really expected from us writing that specific essay topic.
- The workload and the required depth of analysis.
- I was not prepared for Shakespeare or Jane Eyre which require exceptionally excellent and well developed close reading and critical analysis skills.
- School never required me to personally engage with my work. Regulating someone else's opinion was always sufficient and consequently I felt I severely lack the ability to really express my own opinion.
- Discussing two different texts in the same essay.
- Writing essays correctly.
- Voel net as hulle wil hê ons moet Eng 178 vat, moet Engels eerste taal op skool 'n vereistes wees.
- Nothing, matric did it all for me.
- Participation in tutorials, in school one was not forced to convey their thoughts out a loud. Where as in University, it is part of a mark so one has too.
- The workload.
- The English in school was taught on a lower level.
- Referencing.
- Woman. We will fight them as the crutches.
- How to present it to my class.
- My time management is a bit weak – we were given too much time to complete essays in school.
- It did not teach me how to work at the fast pace you are expected to work as well as not teaching me about referencing.
- Sometimes the understanding of Novels and how to write academically.
- Nothing. 278 would be the tough one.
- The level of work ethic and the fact to manage time efficiently.
- I do not think I was not prepared for 178, I have always loved English and will continue with it till the end of my academic career.
- In depth analysis of texts. Workload.
- In writing academic essays.

- I was able to voice my opinion, understand and interpret texts and write a reasonable essay.
- They didn't teach us how to write proper academic essays.
- I read many modern classic Novels as well as the film study of Kubrick in my matric year was fascinating.
- Time management there's a lot of work in English 178, (at University in general) and I get away with very little at school.
- There were too little essays in high school that are similar to what you're required to do at University level.
- It did not prepare me to estimate the time I needed as in school English assignments did not need so much preparation and time.
- Never wrote an academic style essay before, not adequately prepared.
- Proper referencing (haha). Explaining every statement you write.
- Novel's analysing.
- Analysing and writing an essay of more than 1000 words.
- Academic writing and load.
- Referencing.
- The way in which the University expects you to write essays (format).
- It didn't prepare us for the amount of work, as well as to analyse books on our own.
- English 178 is nothing like English in school.
- Eng 178 is very different from school English.
- Write proper analcites.
- Education's curriculum at school level was too low. Not learning about reference and plagiarism.
- It failed to guide me as to write effective, understandable essays.
- The reading and interpreting of secondary sources.
- Failed terribly in terms of critical analysis of texts. Also in expressing oneself during tutorials.
- We were not taught how to reference in the same ways that the University requires us to.
- My pre-university education did not prepare me in terms of reading so much reading material/ books/ plays etc.
- Failed to prepare me for poetry analysis.

- N/a. I had an incredible high school English teacher.
- I would not say that matric English prepared me to such an extent that it was sufficient for English 178.
- Time management.
- Essay writing/ formulation. Amount of reading.
- Didn't pay much attention to English as a subject.
- The volume of work and the academic technicalities of essay writing such as referencing.
- Time management between courses and the workload that would be given to us was underestimated.
- You do not know how long you will need to finish an assignment.
- Referencing methods.
- I think missed a lot of analysis.
- Not prepared for workload. Big jump in level of Shakespeare.
- Essay writing is completely different and unhelpful at school level. The specific books were of a lower calibre to University.
- The workload; in school I usually spend 1-2 hours to prepare for my main exams and never got less than 75%, my work was between 75-80%. So I thought that it would most probably be the same.
- The vocabulary and writing essays using secondary sources and referencing.
- Writing essays correctly. Film studies.
- It has failed to show me the correct path.
- Mostly stricter marking and complexity of structures in essay writing.
- The amount of work we do. Write proper analytical essays.
- The large amount of weekly essays.
- I wasn't prepared for the amount of reading English 178 had and for the amount of essays we had to do.
- Failed to prepare us for workload. Research & referencing.
- Poetry, analysing text ourselves, rather than them doing it for us.
- It is very difficult, very different to adapt to.
- The stretch from High school English to University English is huge. I did not expect so big of a workload.
- There was too little emphasis on analysis & argument.

- Did not teach me how to analyse readings. Write correct essays for English.
- Failed to prepare me for all the reading done in University and how to analyse movies on a University level.
- Explain how at Uni level marking techniques change. Preparation for tests.
- Referencing and writing critical essays.
- Most of it.
- It failed to teach me to think critically and with depth and insight. It also failed to teach me to manage my time efficiently as due dates could be transgressed – resulting in a bad habit at University level.
- The workload of the course. Managing my English course with all the others.
- Referencing was a problem and expansion and ideas that I wanted to write about.
- The amount of reading that is expected. Very fast paced.
- Long essays were something new to master and the ability to complete it in time.
- It failed to prepare me for the incredible workload to which English is a big contributor.
- Time management and the volume of work were underestimated in my pre-university education.
- Referencing.
- To be able to speak confidently in class. To reference properly in essays.
- In terms of certain essay topics, resources were limited.
- We were spoon-fed.
- It failed to prepare me for academic writing. Also to manage time sufficiently in test circumstances.
- Level of language needed in terms of varsity.
- Critically analysing something.
- We never used academic essays, only the internet. We also did not have so many essays due in a year – maybe two or three essays and the rest orals and homework.
- None.
- It failed to prepare me for the correct form of academic essay writing.
- The way/ methods to analyse texts. To manage workloads.
- It didn't at all prepare us to do proper academic essays. I also didn't know how to reference at the beginning of the year.
- Analysing & writing of formal essays (sentence structure, thesis statement).

- Understanding a reading text.
- To write specific analysis essay. To write factual essays.
- For academic writing. Only did creative writing.
- They did not let me practice English on a daily basis. System was poor.
- English 178 is a very good course and I feel the course did not fail in any aspect.
- We did not do enough critical analysis or formal writing.
- Time management. Writing essays in such a short time (texts).
- It is too hectic, work-overload with all the essays. Could never write an essay, had to find resources/ background info.
- To write an academic essay.
- I don't think we were well prepared when it came to writing an academic essay + referencing etc.
- How to write academic essays. How to find and use academic articles.
- There was no academic writing done in pre-university education and the length of essays was much shorter.
- The high level of writing.
- Writing essays for school was not well conveyed to us, and therefore I was not prepared for English 178.
- I had English 2nd language.
- Reading all prescribed books.
- Failed to prepare me for thinking from other points of view.
- The writing of the academic essays. At school we could always choose and I chose fictional and creative writing – never forced to write academically.
- How to write academically, being specific and concise.
- It did not prepare me well enough with essays writing analysis, bibliographies and description.
- Thesis statement of introduction as well as referencing.
- Most aspects but (not the strict essay format, referencing, cover page etc).
- Referencing and abstract thinking. Critical essays in high school are very limited.
- The length of the longer essays was rather hard to fill.
- Not enough reading, not writing academic essays and not enough close reading to the extent of English studies 178.

- English 178 requires academic writing and pre-university education requires creative writing. There is a big contrast between the two.
- Our prescribed texts in high school were read during class and thus very seldom were we required to read it ourselves. I struggle reading a prescribed text by myself.
- The technique involved in writing academic essays.
- The way we did it is not good enough for English 178. Struggle with some work now.
- To do close-readings of poems, plays, essays and films, to have your own opinion.
- My pre-university education failed to prepare me to write Academic essays.
- To be able to express myself in words. To be able to say what I really want to say.
- Failed to prepare me for critical texts and understanding them. To perform close readings and reading volumes of texts and writing academic essays.
- Writing an essay correctly and using secondary sources and texts.
- The amount of books I had to read. The amount of workload, the essays was a lot.
- Writing of academic essays. Close analysis of text.
- It did not prepare me for the really tuff essays and bibliography.
- The diversity of work and the workload (much more work in University).
- The academic writing skills we are prepared for in school was completely different from the one at University.
- The academic writing of essays.
- The workload was ridiculously low and I can't spell as well as I would like to.
- It didn't prepare me to write essays correctly, no close readings, no supplementary texts.
- Would have preferred to be used to using secondary critical texts.
- It failed to prepare me for academic writing my first year BSc taught me that.
- The close reading and critically analysing texts.
- Construction of essays.
- It didn't prepare me for the literature reading workload. It didn't prepare me to reference properly.
- In depth look into poetry and short stories.
- The amount of reading that need to be done, little time allowed doing all the reading.
- Essay structure.

- We did not read and analyse so many books. Effective critical analysis of work was also neglected.
- It only helped me (Eng home language).
- The workload is much higher and in school, essays were never this difficult.
- Time management and the workload.
- To work continually.
- The workload.
- Academic essay writing and close-reading analysis of different sources.
- I was ill-prepared for what an academic essay required of me.
- The workload becomes too much and time management issues.
- Tutorials are not a strong point; therefore I lack the confidence to express myself verbally in an adequate manner.
- Essay writing skills.
- High school did not cover the necessary foundations that are elaborated upon in University.
- Exactly how you analyse a text, more in depth especially film analysis + contextualisation.
- Poetry; reading quantity.
- The amount of work.
- To write the academic form of essays sometimes required.
- Writing academic essays.
- The extreme amount of time I have to put aside for a subject. The social life sacrifices I had to make.
- Time management. Too much work.
- I struggled to sufficiently answer questions which required of me to critically analyse a text. I also struggled to complete the Novel in English 178 because my pre-University education did not endorse this.
- I think English should be the dominant language on University, because not only does it teach us a second language and communicate.
- No real in depth analysis. There was concern for the surface and if not the theme of the work.
- The amount of work should have been more and thicker textbooks to read and more difficult.

- I wasn't raised in an English home, we never spoke English to each other. I also didn't do English – home language.
- The volume of work with regards to texts and essays.
- To enter into philosophical and deeper arguments about the texts we studied.
- Time management.
- We did not do enough analytical essays.
- High school English barely prepares you for English at University level, especially the writing of essays, in school one is expected to write creative essays and at University one is expected to write academic essays.
- Not being diligent enough to understand how important reading actually and essay writing.
- Writing and analysing books, texts academically. The University is much harder and schools do not provide for this.
- So much analysis into short texts.
- Workload – essays and reading the prescribed texts etc.
- Academic writing.
- The academic sense of the writing of essays in English 178. To do the close reading immediately (takes time).
- The workload – so many other assignments due, I don't get enough time to focus on English assignments.
- They failed to prepare me with sentence constructing.
- The amount of reading & information required to know each week.
- We did not get taught to properly reference.
- Workload.
- To incorporate secondary material in my work. To do the level of close reading in texts, especially poetry.
- To develop my own argument where it come to writing varsity essays.
- Academic essay writing.
- The reading quantity.
- It failed to teach one time management, academic style of writing essays, using secondary sources & the volume of work.
- Quantity of essays or assignments which need to be handled in so frequently.

- To research secondary sources for an essay. To pick up themes in terms of history e.g. Jane Eyre - slavery or Nervous Conditions – colonialism.
- The expectations regarding writing essays are greater in University.
- Lack of specific writing techniques/ references.
- The length of the essays at school was very much less and so was the amount of reading.
- I wasn't equipped at school level to write the standard of essays and referencing required.
- It did not prepare me with time management at all.
- The time management.
- The workload is more than anticipated.
- To manage the amount of reading that needs to be done, as well as following up/ keeping up with all the work.
- Writing an University level academic essay and the amount of work.
- The workload is something beyond my expectations. It is too heavy especially when there are more important subjects at hand.
- The workload in my pre-university years, for English as a subject was basically fish and chips compared to how heavy it is now.
- To write academic essays effectively. To reference text effectively.
- To communicate with English people.
- Writing academically.
- Did not prepare me to write longer essays.
- Government-school syllabus for grade twelve English: 1 Novel, 1 Drama, 15 Poems. We covered that in 1½ terms @ Stellenbosch.
- In University they have a set way of marking essays. It's different to school.
- The amount of books we have to read and writing so many essays.
- In school they didn't go into so much depth. They didn't prepare you for the heavy workload.
- It didn't prepare me for in depth research tasks on a Novel.
- The workload is larger and more hectic. The amount of work that needs to be completed.
- The amount of work.
- Academic essays and critical analysing of a text.

- I do not always know the words or key terms.
- The amount of work within the department of English. The reading of texts (the amount).
- The writing of an academic essay. Everything you were taught at school regarding essays is WRONG!!!
- The workload.
- I was unprepared in terms of academic writing and referencing and integrating secondary texts.
- The incredible amount of work. To answer tests in essay form only.
- Amount of essays and amount of words, also lack of terms.
- It did not all prepare me for academic essays, as we wrote mostly creative essays. I also don't manage my time to read prescribed texts in time.
- Novel and poem essay writing.
- To reference secondary resources. To write well structured academic essays.
- We never had to use secondary sources. We also have never learned about plagiarism.
- The work at school was not adequate enough to prepare me for English 178.
- It failed to prepare me to write an academic essay.
- Typing and structuring academic essays. Also analysing movie scenes.
- Writing academic essays.
- The workload is much higher and I was not prepared on handling it. My idea of a "good" essay was not Uni's idea of "good".
- I was not prepared well enough to write well academic essays and to develop my own interpretation of secondary texts.
- To teach me how to reference and write long essays as text analysis and how to analyse a poem. And the correct form of an essay (how to write an introduction etc).
- It did not prepare me for writing essays and answering tests in the way in which University expects.
- We did not write as much last year. We only did four essays a year.
- Academic essays, reading.
- The sheer workload in terms of all the essays that had to be written on a regular basis and the amount of reading.

- Absolutely nothing. English would be extremely easy were it not for the fact that my specific degree is extremely challenging.
- Engaging secondary readings into a text interpretation and 500 page novels.
- Not that much focus on essays. Not much really.
- To write academic essays as well as to reference and critically analyse.
- I was not prepared for the quantity of work and managing completely on my own.
- Critical analyse and interpret texts. Writing in academic form with argument.
- Texts are too long to read, how to fit in with the rest of the work.
- The intensity of detail in analysing work pieces. Amount of workload.
- Referencing.
- Completely. It taught me how to put out work with minimal effort.
- Essay writing.
- The amount of time it takes to read the literacy texts and the amount of time the analysis essays take to write.
- Pre-university doesn't sufficiently prepare you for English 178; we did not engage critically with texts & the workload is polar to pre-university education.
- At school, the books were shorter. We also did not have to write essays on the books and poems.
- Writing creatively and academically.
- It failed to prepare me for the amount of texts/ books I have to read in a short amount of time.
- I speak too much Afrikaans. When I speak with my English friends, I often adopt their slang.
- Academic writing.
- Structuring essays. Analysing films.
- The amount of reading was rather large compared to what I am used to and literature is taught in a different way @ University than @ school, however equally as effective.
- To have confidence to answer questions the tutor asked.
- Not enough bibliography & referencing knowledge. I struggle with tenses & spelling which was never helped.
- Academic essays, referencing and critical analysis are completely new.

- High school did not prepare me well because I kinder did English in 2010. That is what happens when one goes to public schools.
- To be able to effectively analyse a text.
- I would say turn-it-in, long essays, contextualising and answer an essay correctly.
- It failed to prepare me for academic writing. It failed to prepare me to use secondary literature.
- The very academic style of writing which actually not include much creativity.
- In terms of articulation, the big difference between creative writing and academic writing. Also the strict marking.
- It failed to teach me proper essay development by analysis & interpretation.
- Essay writing. Poetry analysis.
- They didn't tell me that English on University level would be such a struggle to cope with.
- A lot.
- The workload is too much for too little time.
- The amount of work is more than I expected. Reading novels, also I never learned how to analyse anything.
- Time management, big classes.
- The amount of content learned in 1st year.
- Boost my confidence in my ability to write an essay and the talent I actually have.
- To look at secondary sources and understand other academic writings.
- Reading of books such as Jane Eyre, difficult type of literature.
- I do not believe I was unprepared for anything.
- Workload (or other variety) of work and lack of time spent on each.
- Academic essay writing, with the correct quoting was never done. To use certain key words with analysing text.
- The strict and high standard of marking.
- Everything was spoon-fed in high school.
- The workload of prescribed texts.
- The workload is a lot more.
- Reading a lot of books. On my own. In school it was read to you with notes given.
- Essay writing at a University level and referencing methods.

- I was not prepared to include secondary texts and also to deal with conflicting workload.
- Writing essays.
- How to actually express my own views based on the content.
- Nothing.
- The amount of work required for English 178. The boring text of Jane Eyre.
- I had Additional Language for English so the work in this module was difficult.
- It didn't as school English and University English is completely different.
- The understanding that there is only one right answer. The workload.
- It did not prepare me at all. Everything that I learnt in high school about essays are not relevant.
- To some extent it failed to prepare me for the pace of the module.
- Referencing.
- Workload.
- I never used academic journals and articles before; it was not too hard to apply it to the texts.
- Provide skills to do close readings and estimate times for task completion accurately.
- It failed to prepare me for the writing of academic essays.
- The tutorials, they scared me in the beginning but now they are fine.
- We did not do film studies.
- Lack of preparation in terms of spelling and workload. Too little emphasis was placed on grammar.
- The academic essays. How to write a proper one as well as referencing.
- The workload and academic writing.
- The workload and the way in which to correctly analyse a text academically.
- How to critically analyse a text and to have enough time for an essay.
- How to write an essay academically.
- The way to analyse texts and Shakespeare. We were not taught the "coreness" of poetry.
- The length and volume of English 178 essays.
- Before we had always received very explain instructions, so sometimes there were open-ended questions posed a bit of a problem.

- Analysing a poem completely by myself. That is all.
- I feel that I learnt how to analyse texts better at University and with clearer understanding than at school. It didn't prepare me for using/ reading secondary texts, or writing essays (in terms of referencing etc).
- It failed with the reading factor.
- The workload.
- It wasn't critical enough and it would've been better to have an understanding of text analysis before University.
- The skills of writing academically.
- They failed to prepare me on writing academic essays; the way in which I write in the University is different to the way I used to write in high school.
- Clear interpretation of a text.
- I felt sufficiently prepared for English 178 in all aspects.
- Irritating questions.
- Interpreting texts and expressing myself.
- The amount of work and the pace it is done.
- No failure.
- It did not prepare me for the workload.
- To analyse poems, how to write a proper essay.
- Nothing could have prepared me for the workload. Afrikaans upbringing.
- Time management.
- Failed to expose us to a lot of essay writing about poems and also did not prepare us for critical analysis of text.
- Deeper analysis of texts.
- Nothing, since it's not part of my field of studies.
- How to properly write an essay.
- It did not prepare me for the difficult and extreme loads of work.
- The academic writing and tutors that do not tutor you well.
- Not enough analysing techniques.
- The way in which I previously wrote essays is very different to the Universities criteria.

- What to expect and what to be familiar with. Lack of language studies in school such as the basics in writing essays.
- Most definitely the essay writing part. I find it very difficult to write an essay on University level.
- It has failed to show me the need of doing English as a subject and what is the use of writing so many essays that load me with more work.
- By not consulting you as a learner and tell you your mistakes where you go wrong and what you must try to improve.

Which modes of delivery did you prefer this year in English 178? Why?

- Tutorials. Because they are more approachable.
- Both lectures and tutorials. Thought the lecturers were very interesting and enjoyed all the lectures. I found tutorials very helpful.
- Tutorials. Individual attention is considered valuable.
- Tutorials. Learn more in the tutorials and more info given to us.
- Tutorials. You can ask questions and it was more personal.
- Both lectures and tutorials. It balances each other out, where the lectures give you the background of the work, and the tutorials explains what you are supposed to do.
- Lectures. They provide me with a meaningful feedback.
- Tutorials. It easier to ask questions in tut.
- Tutorials. In the tutorials we've discussed it better as a group.
- Tutorials. My tutor was very helpful. And it was more intense; the smaller classes helped a lot.
- Tutorials. Tutor explained and helped as really understood.
- Tutorials made me to be able to share my ideas and views.
- Tutorials. It allowed me to ask and listen in a comfortable environment; it provides a lower level of explanations – on a student level.
- Tutorials. Tutorials are more one-on-one. You get to know your tutor and therefore it's more helpful. In lectures it's just 50min you wish would past. Our tutor made the tutorials very exciting.
- Tutorials. Understand the classes more.
- Tutorials. It was more intimate and you felt free to ask questions.
- Tutorials. Smaller groups.
- Tutorials. Very good tutor: Martina Muller.
- Tutorials. Helps more.
- Tutorials. Tutor communicated very well and was helpful than the lecturers and classes.
- Tuts, because we discuss work more in depth.
- Tuts, it is easier to communicate with the tutors and they are more willing to help. They also help you more on a personal basis.
- Tuts, lectures were boring.

- Lectures; the lectures are fun unlike in the tutorials where stupid kids play the smart guys and all. It nerves!!!
- Both. They were both useful and the lectures focused on the aspects of the literature and tutorials helped unpack these further and helped us to write the essays required.
- Both, I always looked forward to the lectures as well as the tutorials.
- Tuts. More personal.
- We are given a more personal education.
- Tuts, they went into more depth of what we were writing on and communication is/ was a lot easier.
- Both. It always changes thus it doesn't get boring.
- Tuts, lectures do not give invaluable information such as tutorials do.
- Both. I learn from both of them.
- Tuts, it's a more personal interaction which allows for a deeper understanding and grasping of the work.
- Tutorials were more productive than lectures. You actually learn something.
- Tuts, more in detail.
- Tuts; it gave the opportunity to ask things I really struggled with.
- Both; the lectures cover the surface of the information and the tuts allow for the info to be covered in depth.
- Tuts. More exclusive one to one learning.
- Both, both were good.
- Tuts. Because I never go to the main lectures/ I never attend main lectures.
- Both were helpful.
- Lectures provided bulk of theory which tutors contextualised.
- Tuts. Feel more comfortable in smaller groups.
- Tuts. Smaller groups help develop our understanding of the work.
- Tuts. The discussions were good.
- Both. Tutorials elaborated on concepts discussed in lectures in a more conversational and understandable manner.
- Both, because the lectures help in the assignments for tutorials.
- Both, complement each other.
- Tuts, Randi & Tamlyn Ross are the best.

- Tuts, it was more personal.
- Tuts, there was more detail given in tutorials than in the lectures. I feel the tutorials were more effective.
- Both, because we can get clear explanation.
- Tuts, because at least tutorials give us time in order to understand well enough of what is being taught.
- Both, because they don't teach in the same way.
- Both, lectures give insights to the text and good analysis and tutorials helps to make the student active in the analysis, to take it further and to make the text your own.
- Tuts, they were more personal level.
- Tuts, to the point, compulsory.
- More personal and can therefore get direct answers.
- Tuts, much more personalised.
- Tuts, more personal, more confident to ask questions, tutors repeat what is said in lectures.
- Tuts, there is a more personal relationship between the students and tutors and the work becomes more enjoyable.
- Tuts, they were more interactive, kept one interested.
- Lectures are too big. I prefer the smaller group where in depth discussions take place. Lectures were also quite boring.
- Both, the lectures were engaging and gave an overview of the work. The tutorials were more in depth, gave the opportunity to really understand texts and discuss the work.
- Tuts. The tutorials were interactive and I felt that they were more useful than the lectures. The feedback I received in my tutorials helped me to improve my academic writing.
- Tuts. I battled to focus in big lectures but I do enjoy the subject therefore I did enjoy it in smaller groups.
- Tuts. Impossible to pay attention during lectures.
- Tuts. The environment enabled me to learn more.
- Tuts. The work is dealt with in depth.
- Tuts. Don't learn much in the lecture, would rather just have tuts where I can actually learn something and give in complete worksheets/ tasks.

- Tuts. I preferred smaller groups.
- Both. I liked the interactive element of tutorials and lectures reinforced this information.
- Tuts. Smaller group, more communication and better feedback. I find English lectures a waste most of the time.
- Tuts. Tutor can articulate well what is required and confident to ask questions.
- Both. Broad overview and introduction to the new concepts was helpful in the lectures. The tutorials were more personal and allowed for in-depth discussions.
- Tuts. Direct interaction is good.
- Both. Because I feel the main lectures give a good outline of the work and the tutorials round it off with more in depth focus on details.
- Tuts. It is more personal and more exciting than lectures. You get more attention and help than in a class of 200+ people.
- Tuts. It was more in depth.
- Both. Because can easily understand better form both of them.
- Both. Lectures work gets taught. Tutorials – smaller environment. Good balance.
- Tutorials. Students are engaged with the work more effectively.
- Both. Tuts helps you understand the work done in lectures.
- Tuts. Cover more and the class is smaller, so more one-on-one time with the tutor as well as the topic.
- Tutorials. My second semester tutor helped me a lot, she made me realise that I could actually improve my marks. This was done by the comments I received from my work her tutoring style.
- Lectures. Gives all the information needed.
- Both. The tutorials explain the lectures in more depth.
- Both. Lectures gave a basic outline. Tutorials allowed us to expand on those basic outlines.
- Tuts. Interaction with fellow students and one-on-one communication with tutor.
- Tuts. I prefer a closer, more intimate class. It makes the class easier to participate and concentrate in.
- Tuts. Smaller class lectures not helpful.
- Tuts. I find that interaction and discussion of the work helps me learn.

- Tuts. A lot more precise and effective. Involved a lot more participation + interaction from students.
- Tuts. Smaller & more intimate.
- Tuts. Tutorials allow for in depth discussions in a more relaxed environment as there are smaller groups.
- Tuts. More detail, lectures sometimes felt like just a presentation of slides.
- Tuts. Lectures are too big, No interaction makes it difficult to fully understand what is expected of the student.
- Tuts. If you have the right tutor you learn more about the work than in lectures.
- Tuts. Lecturers can often be boring and will lose my attention. Also, tutors can help explain concepts so that an individual can understand them, instead of addressing a class.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Tuts. More personal, developed a relationship with tutor & seems as though time was taken to look & mark work. In depth discussion. Easier to give ideas/ contribute in a smaller class, much more manageable.
- Tuts. It was more personal and the tutors were often more available.
- Lectures. Because the tut can often be a waste of time as many students do not prepare and one often ends up reading the work again in the text.
- Tuts. Tutorials are more intimate and in depth discussions can occur.
- Both. Can ask questions in tutorials that you cannot ask in lectures.
- Both. What you missed in the lecture could be explained in the tut and vice versa.
- Tuts. They allowed for more interaction and a better understanding of the given subject. It also allowed you to voice your opinions.
- Tuts. Gained the most from tuts, received most information & learnt the most. Definitely best way to learn.
- Tuts. Everything was discussed and I understood the work much better in tuts.
- Tuts. More interactive and a concentrated mode of receiving information.
- Both. Informative & entertaining.
- Both. The combination of tutorials and lectures allowed me to gain a better understanding of the work.
- Tuts. Lectures were very boring.
- Both. Fear of missing out.

- Both. Lectures provided a broader outline and tutorials were more focused.
- Tuts. Explains everything better in detail.
- Both. Lectures gave you a broad view and the tutorials focused on the most important things.
- Tuts. Exciting, insightful and intellectually stimulating.
- Tuts. Intimate setting, makes for more relaxed learning. It is also impossible to hide and thusly to daydream.
- Tuts. Tutorials to me were more intimate and the relationship with your tutor is academically more beneficial to me.
- Both. The lectures introduced topics and ideas that was discussed further in tutorials, they work together to make the course effective.
- Tuts. One can consult an argument as to one's own point of view, being able to substantiate and express more freely in a small group.
- Tuts. It allows for lengthy discussions and debates which allows for a deeper understanding.
- Tuts. The tutors explained and presented us with meaningful arguments based on what was said in the lectures. I found it pointless to attend lectures because of this reason.
- Both. To get the most possible information.
- Tuts. It is more interactive/ convenient.
- Tuts. I feel I can speak up and voice opinions different from what was discussed in the lecture.
- Tuts. It is more interactive.
- Tuts. Only thing I attended.
- Tuts. Gave better explanations.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Both. Did different things, was a good way of doing it properly.
- Both. Enjoyed contextualising the text.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Tuts. Less people, more face to face communication.
- Both. Both were interesting and insightful.
- Both. Various teaching methods.

- Both. Together these tuts components work well together to help you thoroughly understand the work.
- Both. It helps if you attend both to understand better.
- Tuts. More personal based and work more in depth explained.
- Tuts. It was better to be in a small group.
- Tuts. Depending on what tutor, in my case she was exceptionally good, (Andrea Buchanan), so she really helped a lot.
- Tuts. Classes too big and tutorials help much more, goes in deeper.
- Tuts. More effective.
- Both were helpful.
- Both. They complement each other well enough to give a well rounded instruction.
- Tuts. Smaller groups.
- Tuts. Compulsory tutorials, smaller classes, better communication.
- Lectures. Lecturers know more and in this regard everyone will have a similar approach to texts. Whereas with 500 different tutors subjectiveness play a huge role AND it should not be.
- Both. Lectures provide us with the knowledge we need to ask questions in the tuts.
- Both. Tutorials helped to explain and contextualise (and make clearer) that was said and done in the lectures.
- Tuts. Lectures just repeated their slides!
- Tuts. More personal.
- Tuts. Both my tutors Gerhardus and Janka was amazing and really helped me in writing and understanding the text. They were always friendly and helpful.
- Tuts. The tutorials give you an in depth description of what was done in the main lectures. Tutorials also allow you to ask questions more willingly.
- Tuts. Personal, ask questions.
- Both. Helpful, get your mind on the work.
- Both. They are both effective and help you gain insight into the world.
- Tuts. More intense and more info to gain; however sometimes too much short stories.
- Tuts. We learned a lot, and the work was explained very thoroughly.
- Tuts. I think the main lectures don't help at all to do well in tests.
- Lectures. Tutorials seemed like a waste of time.

- Tuts. I attend the tutorials more than the lectures.
- Both. The tutorials give you more info and are more personal than the lectures, which gives a general understanding of a topic.
- Tuts. A lot more was uncovered in tutorials and it was good to hear different viewpoints.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Lectures. Entertaining and meaningful.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Tuts. More one-on-one and in depth.
- Tuts. Prepare you better for your work.
- Both. In lectures important and interesting information on the topics was given, which was discussed and analysed in the tutorials.
- Both. The lectures taught the overall content of the work, and the tutorials narrowed down and explained important concepts. I enjoyed learning this way.
- Tuts. It better in smaller groups. Lectures are boring and big!
- The work was explained in more detail. And tutors could give individual help unlike lectures.
- Both. Different explanations for the same thing always work better.
- Both. Lectures are interesting and tutorials force you to work.
- Both help in different ways but they don't come together enough. What is done in lectures, are very different from the tuts.
- Both help.
- Tuts. I understand more in tuts than in the lectures. Tuts helps us more than the lectures when it comes to our work.
- Both. The lectures are good for general information, whereas the tutorials aided in providing more details and assistance in understanding.
- Both. In a lecture you get to hear about the work then in the tutorials you apply it – helps you prepare for tests.
- Both. It was effective to listen to a lecture and get personal attention and more detail concerning the work in the tutorials.
- Tutorials. I enjoy the tutorials more; they are more intimate.
- Lectures. They were not compulsory.
- Tuts. I work better in small groups.

- Tuts. Found the University lecturers and never attended more than two second semester lectures.
- Both. What you miss out on the lecture, you can ask it on your tutor for clearance.
- Both. The lectures are interesting and the tutorials help a lot academically.
- Both. Questions could be asked in tutorials.
- Lectures. I chose to go, I was not forced.
- Lectures. All the students here have access to the same information being presented. It is fair.
- Tuts. Good tutor.
- Tuts. Personal, great tutor.
- Tuts. More interaction between learners and communications was better.
- Tuts. Effective learning and useful feedback.
- Both. Lectures for insight and tutorials for discussion.
- Tuts. It's easier and you know how you'll hand it in on time, because you have to be in your tut.
- Both. The lecture touches on important aspects and the tutorials go into more detail.
- Tuts. Tuts are more interactive.
- Tuts. Because I felt I received more information & learned more during tutorials.
- Tuts. Concentrated and provide individual attention that is needed.
- Tuts. My tutor is excellent.
- Tuts. You could communicate with tutorials more.
- Tuts. I feel that the only time I really learnt anything (which did through interaction) was during the tutorials.
- Tuts. Some lectures put you off going.
- Tuts. Is a lot more interactive than main lectures.
- Tuts. It's a small group and the tutor actually cares and interacts with the students.
- Both. Lectures were more general, while tutorials were more personal and weak areas could be targeted.
- Lectures. It helped me more and I felt more comfortable in that lectures than in tuts.
- Both. Different styles, always learned something new.
- Both. Both gave good insight on the work content. Tutorials helped a bit more, as the work could be discussed more in detail and interaction could take place.

- Tuts. Most of the lecturers were not as engaging as the tutors are. And the tutors brought more relevant examples in the small lectures.
- Tuts. I could ask more questions.
- Both. Lectures gave you a brief background of a model and tuts were more intensely focussing on the work.
- Both. It gave me more information on the lectures and the tutorials discussed into more detail.
- Both. Lectures gave me a broad understanding of concepts. Tutorials expanded on this and helped with my personal progress.
- Both. The lecture helped to form the idea and the tutorials help me to understand these concepts better.
- Tuts. I prefer to communicate & learn in smaller groups. My focus drifts in large groups.
- Tuts. It's very more interactive with the masses.
- Both. Lectures could be more in depth at times, but tutorials worked well.
- Tuts. It's easier to ask questions.
- Both. The tutorials are often much more descriptive. The lectures on the other hand motivate preparation for tests, assignments etc.
- Both. Lectures gave one a basic idea – tutorials developed the understanding of the topic.
- Tuts. Apart from the film study lectures, lectures were too boring to bear.
- Both. It definitely depended on the lecturer. I disliked the Master and the Boys as well as Nervous Conditions lectures. The Jane Eyre, Much Ado About Nothing, the Text and Context and the Truman Show lectures have been really good. Tutorials are awesome because you learn things you can't learn in a big lecture hall.
- Tuts. The small class set-up really gave me confidence to explore my own ideas without the fear of sounding uninformed or unintelligent. Both my tutors also encouraged this greatly. I thoroughly enjoyed the tutorials and looked forward to them.
- Tuts. You feel involved in what you are currently doing as the attention is on individuals and not a group.
- Tuts. More personal, able to dive into texts more deeply and I also feel more confident in answering questions and sharing my opinion.

- Personal questions could be asked more attention to problems.
- Lectures. Interesting @ least.
- Tuts. It was more intimate and more open to discussion.
- Both. They were both informative.
- Tuts. Because it was very personal and one could get feedback on ones opinion immediately.
- Both. All lecturers and my tutor were very engaging and helped me to learn as much as possible from the modules.
- Tuts. More interactive.
- Both. Lectures provided insight. Tutorials provided assistance and relationship.
- Tuts. Martina was my tutor, and she knows more about teaching than the lecturers.
- Tuts. It's small and you concentrate much better.
- Tuts. My tutor made everything clear and always helped me to improve.
- Both. Tutorials are an excellent way of getting to grips with the material. Lectures help students get a uniform picture of what is expected in the course with multimedia used as well.
- Both. During lectures you are given a broad overview of the work but in the tutorials you discuss it in detail, therefore they are both useful.
- Tuts. It's a smellier group of people and I've learned a lot form the tutor.
- Tuts. Tutors better explained what was started in the lecture.
- Tuts. More intermediate and a lot more focused.
- Both. The lectures were informative and the tutorials explained the lectures very well.
- Both. Lectures gave a basic outline of the work, while tutorials discussed topics in greater detail.
- Tuts. It was more in depth.
- Tuts. More interactive.
- Lectures. Less distraction.
- Tuts. Did not attend lectures.
- Both. Interaction with tutor worked and having to interpret work on your own.
- Tuts. More in depth & you know exactly what is expected of you.
- Tuts. I found the tutorials more engaging & in depth.

- Both. Because both offered different perspectives and complimented each other.
- Tutorials. More personal + smaller classes.
- Both. They were equally informative.
- Tuts. Groups were smaller and the work was more relevant to learn the skills needed to write our assignments.
- Tuts. Often I felt the lecturer didn't help with the assignments we were given.
- Both. Engaging and illuminating.
- Tuts. Because I benefit better with one-on-one teaching. My tutors very engaged and good, however tutorials and enjoyment of them solely depends on the tutor so it is risky.
- Tuts. More personal; smaller class + develop one-on-one relationship with class + tutor thus easier to understand work.
- Tuts. As a tutorial is a more personal also in lectures it is usually announced at the end when one is leaving thus the message can be distorted.
- Lectures. Very professional.
- Both. I have fantastic lecturers & fun tutorial classes.
- Tuts. It is more detailed.
- Tuts. More hands-on.
- Both. Tutorials = smaller and more focused. Lecture = general overview.
- Both. Different methods of teaching.
- Tuts. Fewer people.
- Tuts. More interactive and better explanations & could ask questions.
- Tuts. Lecturers boring + tutorials repeated what was done in lectures and done more in depth/ more attention paid and therefore more useful.
- Tuts. The tutors allowed us to say what we thought and then they commented on it. They were always interesting.
- Tuts. Because it's more intimate.
- Tuts. Because being taught like one would in school will always be a failure.
- Tuts. Very good tut teachers.
- Tuts. It was more personal.
- Both. They both help each other and in turn students.
- Tuts. It was more interactive and we could ask questions more openly.

- Lectures. I enjoyed the interesting lectures with their different styles.
- Both. It gives you a detailed and more general take on the work.
- Both. Lectures more general. Tutorials dove deep into texts.
- Both. Whatever was misunderstood in lectures could be explained in tutorials.
- Both. Some things are sometimes missed by either the lecturer or the tutor, but together everything gets covered.
- Tuts. Some of the lectures were very boring & zoned out because I did not feel engaged with the subject being discussed.
- Tuts. Lectures were generally boring and not very informative.
- Both. It compliments each other.
- Tuts. Easier to learn and concentrate in tuts.
- Tuts. More discussion and debate. More one-on-one attention. Less intimidating.
- Tuts. Smaller groups; covered the work efficiently, making lectures useless.
- Tuts. Not as boring.
- Tuts. I found the lectures boring and not entirely useful. I chose to use that time for other modules. The tutorials were much more useful.
- Tuts. More in depth.
- Tuts. Allow more interaction between student and tutors/ lecturers.
- Lectures. Lectures were informative whilst tutorials repeated information already learnt.
- Tuts. Gave me a chance to interact and express my own thought. It was also more interactive and compelled me to listen and express.
- Both. They are both useful.
- Tuts. Because we got to view video's & talk more intimately/ critically.
- Both. Lectures could be authoritative while tutors could be on common ground as us.
- Tuts. More personal; one-on-one; helpful.
- Tuts. More interesting and gripping.
- Tuts. Smaller classes.
- Tuts. The lectures aren't all that valuable, perhaps they are too big, and they have a very generic feeling. I do just as well if 'don't go to lectures and see the tutorials and WebCT notes which is odd.
- Tuts. The lectures were usually very boring; and I always fell asleep in the tutorials; we were a smaller group and everybody could participate.

- Lectures. Some tutorials are unnecessary and two a week are too much. One tut is enough.
- Lectures. Can leave when you want and isn't compulsory.
- Tuts. It helps with spelling.
- Tuts. More informative.
- Tuts. Can spend more time going over specifics.
- Tuts. Easier to concentrate.
- Tuts. They were less boring than lectures.
- Tuts. Smaller groups.
- Both. More info from 2 sources, diff ways of seeing it.
- Tuts. Interactive, fun.
- Tuts. More helpful.
- Both. You get to discuss the work in lectures and get it explained further in depth in the tutorials.
- Tuts. Obtained & learned all needed information to understand & pass the course.
- Tuts. Makes you understand everything clearer, smaller group attention is better. I had good and excellent tutors.
- Both. I enjoyed both and received relevant information in both.
- Tuts. The lectures are too overcrowded. I like my tutorials because the tutors that I have had has been awesome and my whole class gets along well.
- Tuts. Prefer the personal attention and help.
- Tuts. Taught us in an in depth way.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more in depth.
- Both. Effective and accurate.
- Tuts. Lectures were boring and uninteresting – tutorials taught much better.
- Tuts. More interaction, more excitement & encouragement.
- Both were well constructed.
- Tuts. More personal. Easier to learn.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Tuts. It was more personal as lecture attendance could reach 200 +, often distracting one's attention. Difference in teaching styles by lecturers sometimes resulted in not attending class.

- Tuts. More interactive and friendly.
- Tuts. Much more integrated and interesting. Gave clearer overview and better consultation.
- Tuts. Better understanding and explaining.
- Tuts. Lectures are overcrowded.
- Tuts. Smaller group of people, able to ask question easier and discuss difficulties.
- Tuts. Didn't attend lectures.
- Tuts. Smaller class therefore could interact more.
- Tuts. Lectures are less interactive.
- Lectures. The tutors have very different teaching & making approaches. This leads to inconsistency with marking. Average dropped from 70's to 40's + 50's in 2nd semester.
- Tuts. More personal.
- Both. Lectures are more vague, but still useful, more things are being discussed in tutorials.
- Both. In tutorials you practice your analytical skills based on the theoretical information and guideline received in lectures.
- Were both interesting.
- Tuts. I found it easier to concentrate, get more out of a smaller class.
- Tuts. Better discussions to form own opinions.
- Tuts. Because tuts are the best part of my boring day.
- Tuts. One-on-one is better than to sit in lectures with 300 students in.
- Both. The more interaction, the more information, the more you learn.
- Tuts. I like the interaction and understanding the deeper meanings of things, not someone talking, us listening.
- Tuts. Smaller number of people. Easier to understand.
- Both. They were interesting.
- Both. It provides with a wide scope of information.
- Tuts. The tutors were good and gave another perspective to the work. They made it more interesting.
- Tuts. Can ask more questions.
- Both. They are both great.

- Both. When certain aspects of our work were not understandable in the lectures, the tutors will explain it to the students more quickly.
- Tuts. It is a more one-on-one method of learning, easier to ask questions & discuss topics.
- Tuts. More personal. Easier to engage with tutors.
- Tuts. Much more helpful. Could talk more easily and questions could be answered.
- Both. It was insightful to listen to lectures, but in this case I would lean more towards the tutors, I had a wonderful tutor being more helpful than what a lecturer would be.
- Both. I felt that it was good to go to the lectures and then get more background information and ideas from you're tutor.
- Tuts. Smaller, more interactive.
- Tuts. Much easier to concentrate.
- Tuts. They were intimate and we were able to ask more questions and interact more with the text.
- Tuts. It's more personal and more effective.
- Tuts. Smaller groups, better information and better understanding.
- Tuts. Got a better understanding of what is expected of me.
- Tuts. We are structured in a group, were each and every student can ask something and give their opinion on it.
- Tuts. It is more personal and the tutor can skip what we understand and really focus on what we are struggling with. This is hard to do in a lecture.
- Tuts. The smaller group of people and tutor interaction is more helpful.
- Tuts. It was communicated better and more clearly.
- Tuts. Fun and interesting. More personal and better understanding.
- Tuts. Personal, better as there were not so many students to go through.
- Both. Lectures are very helpful and the tutorials round off the work and any other loose ends.
- Both. Gave more than one insight on a topic one more broad and the other focused usually.
- Tuts. It was more personal and not as boring as the main lectures. Much more useful.
- Tuts. Lectures seem very impersonal and are quite large.
- Tuts. Most information given in lectures was read off slides (available on WebCT). Tutorials were a deeper analysis of whatever we were doing.

- Both. Lecturers were always entertaining but with tutorials there was much more interaction and it was easier to understand.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more specific.
- Both. Lecture lessons were discussed in tutorials, tutorials made discussion easy where lectures made listening easy.
- Tuts. Learn more during the tutorials maybe because there was good interaction.
- Tuts. They are both helpful. The tutorials were good because it is easier asking a question in the tutorials, than asking in the main lecture.
- Both. If I didn't quite understand a concept in the lecture, I understood it in the tutorial and vice versa.
- Tuts. Because that is when I learnt the most. All the lectures, besides the Truman show and Shakespeare didn't help me at all with anything with regards to the books and plays.
- Tuts. You are being told while you are in class and focused.
- Tuts. Main lectures are not as interesting and helpful as the tutorials. It does however depend on the tutor though.
- Tuts. We worked one-on-one, things were discussed and I understood more clearly.
- Tuts. Much more helpful and interesting.
- Both. The lectures helped to get a basic grip with the material, which was refined and intensified in tutorials.
- Lectures. More to the point.
- Tuts. Lectures often fail to control the noisy education kids, and the topics discussed seem of low importance.
- Both. The lectures provide a fun way to take in information, and the tuts help us analyse and understand.
- Tuts. I never go to lectures anymore, they don't help. I like the tutorials because it gives you more than enough information and you get feedback on ideas.
- Both. In the tutorials some of the work was more in detail, but then there was also a lot of unnecessary tutorials e.g. too much poetry.
- Tuts. Better communication.
- Both. Interesting.
- Lectures. It has a bigger venue with more students and slideshows.

- Both. Sometimes the lectures do not explain something properly but the tutors will clear all the misunderstandings.
- Tuts. Lectures were farfetched and often opinionated.
- Both. One-on-one assistance in tuts if needed and a broader overview in lectures.
- Tuts. They were more informing and also better interaction in the small groups.
- Both. Interactive and fun.
- Tuts. In tutorials we discussed the work being done in more detail with much more input from others. The lectures were very vague.
- Tuts. Tutors give individual attention and explain work better.
- Tuts. It is a smaller class and individual attention can be given to the learners.
- Both. Lectures provide a great overview and tutorials go into detail. It's the best method.
- Tuts. Smaller group; down to the point.
- Tuts. It is a much smaller group and one can interact better within smaller groups. The tutor gets to know everyone as well.
- Tuts. Tutors work close and personal with students.
- Tuts. All the work content was discussed in the tutorials in a very structured and focused way – the class debates and open-ended discussions developed critical thinking and analysis.
- Tuts. I simply prefer smaller learning environments and lectures were not very interesting.
- Tuts. It is more focused learning.
- Lectures. I concentrate better.
- Tuts. Allows for more individual attention.
- Both. Because lectures introduced the work and tutorials elaborated on that work.
- Both. What we do in lectures gets discussed more in depth and clearly in tuts, and they coincide.
- Tuts. I don't attend the main lectures.
- Tuts. They are compulsory therefore one has to attend and learn.
- Tuts. In depth focus.
- Tuts. Lectures are useless in English 178, lecture doesn't deliver the work correctly & the tutorials are the reason I am passing – tutorials are awesome!!!
- Tuts. Learn more.

- Both. Tutorials were extremely informative & helped me to improve my English (overall). The lectures were just as helpful but the tutorials exceeded my expectations.
- Both. Because if I want to have a better understanding of the text, I must attend class and tutorials.
- Tuts. The tutor went into detail with the work and explained everything very well. The exercises that he gave us really helped me.
- Tuts. The tutor makes broad things clearer.
- Tuts. The small class setting is more effective with regards to voicing your opinion and engaging with the texts.
- Both. The lectures and tutors discussed different aspects of the text.
- Tuts. More detailed structure of teaching.
- Tuts. More intimate and personal questions may be answered. More detailed.
- Tuts. In tutorials we engaged in more discussions with the small group. Tutor kept it interesting and explained the work covered in the lecture in more detail.
- Tuts. I feel more comfortable to ask questions and to say when I do not understand something. It is also easier to pay attention when the class is so small.
- Tuts. Less people.
- Both. The lectures provide the information, but the tutorials are more intimate and more in detail which helps a lot.
- Tuts. You can ask questions.
- Tuts. Smaller group-more interesting to hear different people's views as oppose to just the lecturer's view.
- Tuts. It's more personal and you can focus more.
- Tuts. Smaller classes, more interesting and clear.
- Tuts. Lectures are at awkward times and don't offer much information.
- Tuts. It was easy to talk to them.
- Tuts. More direct teaching, easier to understand & respond.
- Tuts. Some lectures merely read their slides. We can do that without their help.
- Both. Because through the use of both I was able to have a better understanding of the work.
- Tuts. Intimate classes make it easier to learn and communicate.

- Tuts. The groups in which we discussed work were small, hence we received more individual attention.
- Both. Going to the lecture you grasped basic concepts, then going to the tutorial you were able to understand in depth. At least for me anyway.
- Tuts. Drama has a hectic schedule and therefore it was difficult to attend both.
- Tuts. More discussions, big lectures become boring.
- Both. Both aid our learning.
- Tuts. More interactive and direct. Dependant on the tutor though.
- Both. We expand on what we did in lectures and the tutor could give each individual more attention of the student does not understand.
- Tuts. Lectures often contained irrelevant information.
- Tuts. Interactive, interesting, small classes.
- Lectures. It's more captivating than tutorials.
- Tuts. Lectures were too big and often uninteresting. Tutorials were more focussed.
- Tuts. Tutorials are more focussed on the work, where the lectures are a wide perception of the work.
- Tuts. More interactive and a smaller group.
- Both. It helped me to get to grips with the text.
- Tuts. Much more centred on a specific topic and therefore one can focus on what is relevant.
- Tuts. I found the lectures very vague.
- Tuts. It's easier and more comfortable to work in smaller groups so that we can ask questions easier, etc. English is a fun and interactive subject.
- Lectures. Much more interesting (only a few lecturers). Tutorials were an epic fail!!!
- Tuts. Feel free to communicate and ask many questions.
- Tuts. More personal & interactive. Better learning environment.
- Both. It is really effective.
- Tuts. They taught me the skills to pass this module.
- Tuts. A lot more helpful and easier to listen and concentrate.
- Tuts. Did not go to lectures; tutorials are way better! More individual attention/ in-depth discussions/ participation.
- Both. Both covers the work in detail and makes one understand.

- Tuts. More personal and better understanding.
- Tuts. It helps more. You can ask more questions. You go more in depth with analysing.
- Both. The tuts help explain content spoken of in class (lectures).
- Both. They were very informative and gave better understanding of the texts.
- Tuts. Lectures were boring, seemed a bit silly.
- Lectures. The lecturers seem to be better qualified and therefore more beneficial than tutors.
- Lectures. They are very practical in lecturers.
- Lectures. We always did the same things in tutorials, it would have been better to do a discussion with the tutor leading, instead of group work.
- Both. Lectures give a broad overview and tutorials are more in depth PLUS you can ask questions and debate freely in the tutorials.
- Tuts. Things were explained in more detail, smaller groups made it easier for interactions and tutors were more accessible.
- Tuts. They were personal; direct and intensely explained and helped with the understanding of the lectures; literature.
- Tuts. I was able to understand and take in a lot more in tut class than in lectures.
- Tuts. Learn the most.
- Tuts. In tutorials there are smaller group discussions which make you more eager to take part. It's also easier to voice your opinion in this environment.
- Both. Tutorials were one-on-one.
- Tuts. The discussions were more intimate and it was easier to understand. I was more at ease to ask questions.
- Tuts. Less students in the classrooms, leading to a better understanding of the work.
- Tuts. The lectures did not do anything for me. In the tutorials work is explained a little more.
- Tuts. The tutorials is more personal and personally. I would rather ask a question in a tutorial than in a lecture.
- Tuts. There is more understanding in the tuts and there is an interpersonal relation.
- Lectures. More enjoyable, enjoyed enthusiasm of lectures & the open, relaxed atmosphere created.
- Tuts. More interaction.

- Tuts. I learnt much more.
- Tuts. You could ask more your questions and the tutor could pay more attention only on your work.
- Both. It helped me to get a better perspective on what will follow in the tutorials.
- Lectures. They were great and explained everything.
- Tuts. You get the work you need to do done in them.
- Lectures. Simply because I found that 2 tutorials a week is not needed and often the work that we had to do was not relevant in light of the semester tests. Being in a tutorial for 50min twice a week doing work simply for the sake of it is frustrating as it is time wasted.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more on-point on text interpretation and student engagement.
- Tuts. Got a better understanding. Never attended the lectures and still passed well.
- Tuts. Easier to ask questions and received the needed feedback.
- Lectures. Lecturer made use of good examples and explanations to get a message across.
- Tuts. Could focus on specific themes or concepts of work and discuss it, rather than just absorbing information during a lecture.
- Both. Able to ask questions in a smaller group and have discussions not possible in BIG lectures, more comfortable.
- Both. Interesting perspective in lectures, different, only slightly, in tutorials.
- Both. Lecturers give excellent insight. Tutors offer personal consultation.
- Tuts. The tut work was sufficient to complete the course on its own, particularly since it revised the lecture work.
- Tuts. More interactive.
- Tuts. More interactive.
- Tuts. Smaller group; allows more of an interaction between lecturer and scholar to take place.
- Tuts. It is easier to be assisted.
- Tuts. It was more in-depth and accessible. The work was easier to understand when the tutor taught it to us.
- Tuts. More personal and engaging.
- Tuts. Tut classes are smaller and things are explained in detail.

- Both. The lectures gave a broad outline of the topic at hand; the tuts applied the learnt work.
- Tuts. You get a more in-depth understanding of the work than in the lectures.
- Tuts. Tutorials are way more interactive.
- Tuts. I could engage more.
- Both. Lecture would give you a basic discussion and it is being repeated and thoroughly discussed in tuts.
- Both. Coz it confirmed what the other person said.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more personal and I prefer smaller groups. Lectures always felt impersonal and there were too many people in the lecture for me to feel confident in expressing myself.
- Tuts. Tutorials helped a lot more as they are more personal and specific aspects can be discussed.
- Tuts. Lectures are too large & can't ask questions. Quite boring, I need one-on-one + special attention to explain and understand. Lectures act as a base to start with the further learning in tutorials.
- Tuts. I never went to lectures.
- Tuts. It was very interactive and so it is quicker to understand the work.
- Tuts. More specific and detailed.
- Tuts. It is more effective, because it is possible to have group discussions and easier to have you own opinion.
- Tuts. More interactive & easier to ask questions.
- Lectures. The tutorial environment felt forced and though I learnt new things in the tutorials – I hated them.
- Lectures. Gave a broad picture as well as in detail discussions.
- Both. Helps to understand work better.
- Both. Both helped me to understand more what was expected from me. It improved my skills.
- Both. They both link together a complete understanding of the work.
- Both. The lectures are sometimes not that and then the tutorials help a lot.
- Tuts. Put frankly, lectures are boring. Nice, helpful, knowledgeable tutors and small groups help me learn & stay interested more. I enjoy English tutorials most out of all my University classes.

- Both. It gives you an overview and a detailed description.
- Tuts. More one on one.
- Tuts. More one-on-one addition which allowed me to have a better understanding of the work.
- Both. Had interesting discussions in the tutorials and the lectures were often interesting and made me see different aspects of the text.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more intensive, more hands-on.
- Both. It provides the student with sufficient knowledge in order to understand and complete the required work.
- Both. They both work well together to give a well-rounded understanding of the work.
- Tuts. Interaction & shared thoughts on texts are NB!!
- Tuts. It's effective because we as the students were divided in smaller groups and had more confidence to ask questions.
- Both. Tutorials were informative and fun and allowed us to look at topics more closely. Some lecturers were enthusiastic thus making it easier to enjoy the work.
- Tuts. It was more personal.
- Both. The lectures assisted you with information the tutorials did not. The tutorials are still needed, because it is not as fast paced as the lectures and you have the confidence to ask questions.
- Tuts. In the tutorials the work is explained more clearly.
- Tuts. Personal and focused.
- Both. Lectures provide general ideas and in tutorials, these are discussed more in depth and one-on-one.
- Tuts. More interactive way of learning.
- Tuts. Helped me more in terms of understanding the text and how to write essays.
- Tuts. They gave us the actual content of what is needed and helped us understand better what is required.
- Tuts. Did not find main lectures worthwhile/ beneficial.
- Both. English lecturers were brilliant & tutorials enriching.
- Both. Tuts help but only if the work was dealt with before we had to hand in assignments on that work. Thus it can help us with work.
- Tuts. It gives a more in depth understanding of the work.

- Tuts. More discussed in a hour more personal & easier to address issues.
- Tuts. It is a smaller group and I feel confident in asking questions.
- Both. It was helpful because the tuts would discuss more detail of the main lecture.
- Tuts. Tutorials were more interesting and interactive.
- Tuts. I found the more personal approach better.
- Both. The lectures provided a framework of understanding for the subject matter and the tuts elaborated and build on this understanding.
- Both. The lectures were good for taking in more information although in 1 hour a week is very limiting (but then again, sufficient for 1st year) but the tutorial groups were far more important in terms of learning skills and forming opinions about texts.
- Both. Lectures helped gain a broader understanding of material that would help in discussion in tutorials which were fun.
- Tuts. You are able to discuss a topic better with fewer students.
- Both. Lecturers knew what they were talking about but said too much in one lecture for me to process, but the tutorials made the texts a lot easier to understand and they knew what they were talking about.
- Both. Tutorials explain the lectures better.
- Lectures. Gave a brief overview of the topic.
- Tuts. The amount of people in lectures makes it impossible to concentrate. The tutorials were more intimate and there was more explaining done and when one does not understand well enough, the tutor is there to explain.
- Tuts. A more one-on-one basis. Easier to understand and made queries easier to ask.
- Both. Lectures give a big overview of things where tutorials explain things in a clearer level.
- Tuts. Everything is discussed in more depth.
- Both. You need to attend the lectures to follow what's going on in tuts.
- Tuts. Because there were less children and it was more a one-on-one basis.
- Both. The lecture gave a good oversight of the course material while tutorials focused on the discussions and assignments pertaining to the weekly lecture.
- Tuts. Tutorials are more personal and one-on-one.
- Both. They achieve different functions. It is very dependant, however, as the lecturer and the tutor you have - if they weren't good, the course simply will not be interesting.

- Tuts. They were compulsory, however I enjoyed them too.
- Tuts. Lectures are basic information on the text, whereas I felt that the tutorials were where the real learning, discussing and understanding took place. I went to lectures for interest sake if the lecturer was good but most of the information could just as easily be read on WebCT, and important information was given in tutorials.
- Both. Questions on the lecture can be asked at the tut. They are useful together.
- Tuts. It encourages discussions between peers. Makes understanding the work easier.
- Tuts. Because I got enough time to learn from other students & tutor.
- Tuts. They help.
- Tuts. Because in tutorials they try to explain more even though they are not helping much.
- Tuts. More intimate.
- Tuts. They were the most interesting & got the most individual attention.
- Tuts. I enjoy the teaching skills of my tutor.
- Tuts. It's better to actively participate when discussing texts.
- Both. I find class and tuts combined the best way to learn.
- Tuts. More personal, directed, a better environment to work in.
- Both. The work you learnt in lecture was reinforced in tutorials.
- Tuts. It is more detailed, controlled and prepared.
- Both. Useful to get a broad overview in the lecture and discuss more specific issues in tutorials.
- Tuts. It's easier to work within such an environment.
- Tuts. Tutorials are more focussed on a few students than a whole group, feels more comfortable in discussions.
- Tuts. More interactive.
- Tuts. They taught me a lot and gave a good insight into the texts.
- Lectures. Because a lot was said, in a different context they didn't know everyone and couldn't be biased or judge.
- Both. Different perspectives on things help for better consolidation.
- Tuts. More detail.
- Both. Because I kind of learned something.
- Both. I wanted to do well.

- Tuts. I found I got a lot more out of the smaller groups and interactions.
- Tuts. It was a smaller group and I understood a lot better. I was able to keep up and ask questions.
- Both. The main lecture gives one a better understanding what to expect in the tut class. Especially the Truman Show lecturer.
- Both. Because they are both helpful.
- Both. They both work.

Which one of the big lectures was the best? Why?

- The lecture gave excellent class.
- Play.
- The lecturer was good.
- The lecturer.
- The lecturer lectures extremely good.
- Like the lectures given.
- Cool lecturer.
- More likely.
- The lecturer had his way of making us (the students) participate and enjoy the lectures.
- Made very interesting.
- I enjoy analysing images. The lecturer was funny/ entertaining.
- Easy interesting.
- They went into depth and gave good feedback.
- Much easier and understandable.
- Because they are relevant to real life situation.
- Was easy to understand and lecturer was not boring.
- It was easy.
- Because I enjoyed it.
- Understood it quickly.
- None. Was just boring.
- Lecturers active and engaging.

- Class is being represented in an interesting manner which keep entertained.
- We watched the play and the lecturer used clips from the play to explain her lecture.
- Both the lectors are funny and made the subject/module interesting.
- He made use of humour and relevant topics to intrigue students.
- The lecturer was interesting.
- Interactive.
- Interesting, showed difficult perspective on the book which I enjoyed.
- That man was super entertaining I did not want to sleep in his class.
- The lecturer was funny and enthusiastic.
- Exciting lecturer.
- It's fun, he's good.
- Keeps you interested.
- He was enthusiastic and exciting – made it easier to pay attention.
- It was interesting.
- Text and context was also good. Love the lecturer (he entertains the class).
- I enjoyed the lecturer and the way we studies it (move last).
- Interesting.
- Jane Eyre is a good second. The lecturer is fun and the work of Truman show is interesting.
- Because the book is easy to understand.
- The lecturer is more fun to listen to.
- It's a remarkable movie.
- Lecturer was great.
- The lecturer is enthusiastic and the film studies are fascinating.
- Lecturer engaged with the students.
- Liked the lecturer.
- I always enjoy film study.
- Interesting, funny.
- Way more interesting.
- I enjoyed the novel and learnt to read it better, deeper.
- It is very exciting to go to the lectures.
- Was the most interesting.

- Because he is good and makes the work understandable.
- Cool, interesting, exciting.
- Fun.
- It's my favourite movie.
- Dr Roux is good as this job.
- Good lecturer.
- Best lecturer.
- The lecturer captivated you – I listened all the time.
- Lecturer interacts with the class more.
- The lectures engaged well with the students. Conveyed their message well.
- It was the most relevant and entertaining.
- The lecturers were engaging.
- The lecturer was entertaining, he had ways to exclude boredom.
- Enjoyed the Truman show.
- The lecturer captures your attention, while teaching you something and entertaining you.
- The lecturer made it interesting.
- The lecturer was interesting and made the work engaging.
- The lecture was clearly understandable.
- The movie was brilliant and easy to discuss and understand.
- It was interesting and kept my attention.
- The lecturer was engaging..
- New and different from school" English. The concepts analysed was very interesting.
- Lecturer was good.
- Lecturer was great!
- The lecturer was passionate and interesting.
- A lot was covered.
- Neither... don't like the subject.
- Wasn't too much reading and I understood what was going on in the book.
- I enjoyed the movie.
- Well presented interactive.
- The lecturer is able to make the lecture interesting and keep my attention.

- Liked subject.
- They were all clear, helped and they showed enthusiasm.
- Interactive.
- The lecturer is very interactive and energetic. His methods of teaching encourage you to want to learn more.
- She was interesting and original.
- The lecturer is clearly passionate about what he teaches. This makes it more interesting and enjoyable to learn.
- The lecturer was friendly had a positive attitude and perfectly & professionally presented the novel.
- I find it interesting.
- Interesting.
- Was easy to relate.
- Good lecturer.
- It was interesting and relevant.
- Engaged lectures and personal interest.
- They were sweet movie.
- I enjoy film studies.
- Lecture was creative.
- The lecturer were funny and kept my attention.
- Great and interesting lecturers.
- I understand the work better.
- The lecturer was very good.
- Awesome lecturer.
- Lecturer was interesting, enjoyed the work.
- Nice and short local story.
- It was fun.
- Daniel is funny.
- Daniel was funny I still remember something from his first lesson.
- Visual used to get through to students.
- The lecturer is young and gives a lecture amazingly well.
- It was relevant to the past of South Africa.

- Discussed in a way that kept our attention – interactive + relevant.
- Lecturer.
- It was more interesting.
- It was interesting. And good lecturer.
- Entertaining.
- Cool lecturer he was excited about it.
- I understood it more.
- Was interesting.
- Learned me more.
- The lecturer was enthusiastic.
- Because it is interesting.
- The lecturer was awesome and provided insight.
- I enjoyed the visual & the enthusiasm of the lecturer.
- Explained it very well was interesting.
- The lecturer understood the group and got everyone to participate in a fun environment (made something boring, fun).
- The lecturer was prepared and engaged well with the students.
- I had more interest in the film study.
- Lecturer was great.
- It was more familiar.
- The lecturer was captivating and provided many examples. Which makes learning concepts easier.
- It was entertaining and they used nice ways to remember important notes.
- They handled it the most extensively.
- The lecturer was funny, enthusiastic and approachable.
- I liked the structure and lecturer.
- It's a tie I thoroughly enjoyed both these lecturers.
- Lecturer made everything so interesting.
- I enjoyed the teaching style of the lecturer.
- They were all good!
- Fun, interesting.
- Explained well & engaging.

- It was interesting.

Which one the big lectures was the worst? Why?

- The book is too difficult and the lecturer mostly re-told the novel.
- Too much reading.
- Could not take lecturer seriously.
- The book itself.
- Almost feel asleep during class.
- Did not like nervous conditions.
- Boring book.
- Too fast.
- The whole novel was boring, therefore the lectures were not as interesting.
- So boring.
- The lecturer lacked interest.
- Difficult, boring.
- They don't help you understand the text.
- Language is not understandable. Many difficult words.
- Too long.
- Because is not difficult to analyse film.
- Too many new terms = difficult.
- It was difficult to understand and the lecturers did not make it any easier.
- It is a bit complicated.
- Too long to read takes a lot of time.
- Hard to understand.
- It was boring.
- Not much action.
- It was extremely boring!!!
- I found it boring.
- NC= Boring and much ado the Shakespeare language was difficult.
- Monotone and single minded lectures were boring.
- The lecturer could not maintain the classes attention.

- Non interactive.
- It was boring, uninteresting, unstimulating.
- The slides were useless and she killed the book.
- Shame, the novel was boring as well as the lecturer.
- Boring lecturer.
- Her voice was terrible.
- It was really boring.
- There was not much enthusiasm – there was nothing interesting about the lectures.
- I did not enjoy the novel.
- I'm sure the lecturer is an amazing person but she didn't express passion and excitement like the lect. Of text and context and Truman show. And Nervous conditions.
- The novel was boring and the lectures went into depth of something I really wasn't interested in.
- Boring.
- I could not understand the lecturer. Students were never involved with the lectures. Boring book.
- The book is difficult to understand.
- Not enough info and lecturer did not engage the class.
- Pointless. Apartheid/ discrimination should stay pre-94.
- Not enough clarification.
- Very, very boring book.
- Boring!
- Don't like Shakespeare.
- Found it. Really boring.
- It was boring.
- I don't enjoy film studies, find it challenging.
- I did not like the book.
- I couldn't keep up with the reading pace so it made lectures useless..
- She was very boring.
- So boring...
- Boring.

- I'm not that interested in it.
- Didn't like the book academically.
- Bad lecturer.
- Could not see the relevance of the lectures in relation to the text.
- Bored, they failed to interest the students and couldn't teach.
- I found it rather boring and unengaging.
- I had done Master Harold in school so everything was a bit repetitive.
- Had a boring style of lecturing the class, lost my attention.
- Not my favourite part of English.
- I don't feel like this lecturer has prepared me at all for the exam.
- The themes and ideologies became tiresome and irritating.
- Lecturer.
- I can't do Shakespeare to save my life. It's a big struggle.
- It was not interesting – boring.
- I felt it explained too little of what we needed to know.
- Very boring to be honest.
- Did not really understand lecturer.
- Too big to handle.
- I don't enjoy Shakespeare.
- Boring and uninformative.
- Unorganised.
- I didn't do too well in them and they were boring.
- Did not enjoy it.
- Had no real connection to the text. Felt alien.
- I did not understand anything she said.
- Didn't like the subject.
- The lecturer did not show any interest in the course.
- Boring.
- Too much work that has to be done in a very short period.
- I hated the book!
- Although the lecturer gave a goof analysis & feedback of the book, I often felt that it was not made much more interesting that it could have been.

- These lectures became too worn out too much information one could not relate to.
- It is a lot of work!!! Very difficult to understand.
- Boring book for lecturer to interpret.
- Hard to relate.
- Bad lecturer.
- It was difficulty to.
- Lack of interest and engagement from the lecturer.
- Too long.
- I did not enjoy the book, but the lectures we quite put together good.
- Tax and context did not interest me.
- Not fond of work.
- Disorganised and unclear lecturers.
- Was hard to focus and struggled to keep up.
- The lecturer really wasn't good.
- Didn't enjoy the play.
- Lectures were good but I didn't particularly enjoy them.
- Couldn't understand the language.
- Did not enjoy now it was taught to us.
- It is a really boring book.
- Hard to understand terms. Moving fast.
- It is boring and I feel it has no use to the course.
- There is a lot of chapters in the book, I find it hard to finish it.
- Lecturer.
- It was boring.
- Bad lecturer.
- Worst lecturer.
- No chronological cohesiveness.
- The book is too difficult.
- Didn't enjoy the novel.
- Boring.
- The lecturer was on monotone and disengaged with audience.
- Because it was boring.

- The lecturer didn't provide any relevant work.
- Did not relate to the book & therefore got extremely bored.
- Boring.
- The lecturer did not teach in a gripping fashion.
- The lecturer did not use mic.
- Text was boring.
- Did not allow us enough viewing of movie.
- It was a difficult text and the lectures did not help much with that.
- The lecturer made up words quotes, etc. she was ill prepared and honestly seemed like she'd rather be anywhere else.
- The lecturer didn't give lectures to up the class interest and therefore we slept in her class.
- Lecturers could not be heard, funny accents. Only read the slides. Really boring and seemed like she was just reading slides.
- She seemed to wonder of the topic and never engaged.
- Lecturer talking very fast on go through work very fast.
- I didn't enjoy the teaching style of the lecturer.
- Lecture's accent.
- Monotonous.
- Confusing.

Would you prefer your tutor to mark electronically rather than by hand on hard copy?

Why?

- It's just so impersonal, we are people not computers, not all of us can get to our e-mail all the time.
- It works more effectively.
- Doesn't matter.
- Helps with editing and it saves paper.
- I like seeing his remarks on paper.
- Don't have a specific reason.
- Do not always have access to computer.
- Nice to have something in your hand.

- The feedback is better and one can refer to it later, when doing another exercise.
- It is easier to compare & edit.
- We don't have to print things out and it is more effectively.
- Saves paper! But they should still give a lot of feedback.
- I want to see that I need to make right next time.
- Can correct it that way and save it.
- She gives more feedback.
- It is clear and pick o every mistake. It helps improve my writing.
- The handwriting comments was much more helpful.
- It takes longer to mark.
- Because I spend more time on computers.
- Marking with the hand is more "complete".
- It is easier for a tutor to give comments on a written essay
- It is better to work with and understand.
- Write more.
- Doesn't matter.
- It takes her, longer to mark and she gives less feedback.
- Handwriting are something's hard to read.
- Because handwritten is more detailed.
- The feedback is more clear and is one's mistakes more visible – helps to improve.
- It is much more effective; you can actually read what they are saying, because some tutors handwriting is awful.
- It is much more effective, you can actually read what they are saying, because some tutors handwriting is awful.
- Electronically, more helpful. My 1st semesters tutors handwriting was not understandable so I never knew what he expected. With electronic marking I exactly know what to do. It also save printing credits for you have to e-mail.
- It makes it more clear as to what you need to correct and easy to store.
- I just us more time to read it.
- I don't actually mind, both were good.
- I can't always make out their handwriting.
- It is quicker and more accurate.

- Easier to read. Some tutors can't write neatly.
- It looks much more neat. It gave more and clearer comments.
- It's more useful.
- It's easier to identify your mistakes and you can't always read the handwriting.
- Able to give more feedback neatly show what you did wrong.
- More convenient.
- Personal preference. I prefer working off paper.
- Because it is easier to edit on electronic copy.
- You type it out and therefore saving all documents on your laptop makes it easier to work by.
- Clear + easy to save + edit.
- I find it easier & more efficient.
- There is more space for comments, which helped me improve my mark.
- Because I am getting a lot of errors.
- Because I am failing because of it.
- Because the comments are clear.
- There is more criticism and help given.
- Why not!
- I don't quite see the difference.
- Much more convenient.
- Saves paper, convenient.
- Don't like walking around with hard copy.
- Save paper and easier for the tutor.
- Makes it easier to correct errors.
- Can get a better message across.
- More commentary.
- It is easier to access.
- It is more convenient.
- Because it is better for the printers.
- It is good.
- Hate electronics.
- Don't mind really.

- More convenient.
- I can take it home with me if my computers is dead/ offline.
- I don't like computers.
- Undecided.
- It is less hassle and eco-friendly.
- Easier to see exactly what you did wrong.
- The tutor can indicate where and what should be corrected or improved.
- I prefer receiving things electronically; I also like the fact that it's neatly laid out.
- More criticism can be given, so more improvements can be made.
- It's quicker if it's hand marked.
- Technology sometimes fail.
- Much easier as you have the essay on email wherever you are.
- It is easy to understand handwriting.
- They can give many more comments and it is easier to read.
- It's easier to see what you've done wrong.
- The feedback given was more indepth.
- Very boring.
- It prevents others from seeing your mark when you haven't done too well.
- It's more structural and easy to see your mistakes.
- It is neat and precise.
- They are able to give more advice to better essays.
- Easier to read what tutor is trying to say – some have horrible writing!
- Either is fine.
- More efficient more helpful.
- It is more convenient.
- Give better advice to improve.
- Easier to see faults.
- More information and help can be included.
- Because it is easier to transfer information onto final drafts.
- It helped me more. I somehow improved.
- They are able to give us better feedback.
- It saves a lot of time.

- I don't know how to rate electronic marking.
- I prefer and work better with hard copies.
- I really do not like computers.
- I can read the writing.
- Neater and easier.
- It's easier to go through.
- I don't mind, any feedback is great.
- Written and electronic feedback helps me develop my writing better.
- It is more accessible for me. I get my essays back faster.
- Does not matter.
- Because the comments she makes are often useful.
- Don't mind.
- Easier to rewrite to a final essay.
- I found it easier for me to see the exact places in which I should correct my work.
- A hard copy is easier to access and carry around – anything other is impersonal.
- A hard copy is better and safe.
- More consistent I feel.
- So much more convenient.
- Easier to correct.
- The tutor can provide more feedback.
- Never as personal as it's gets when it's by hand.
- It's better.
- Much easier to read and understand what the comments say.
- It seems to be easier for tutors to type – out comments, as on the hard copies, comments were nearly nonexistent.
- Save money and paper and printing credits.
- I actually do not care. Either way works. You can print out the electronically marked copy if you need it next to you.
- I doesn't really matter to me, but it's environment friendly.
- His easier to store these copies and send assignment in electronically.
- Too stricked when electronically.
- I can see clearly what I have done wrong after my tutor has marked my hard copy.

- Because it saves paper & lead!
- It is easier to correspond with tutor and less printing work.
- Easy across.
- Hand on hard copy is more personal and can be better interpreted.
- It is better.
- Comments is useful.
- A hard copy could be reflected upon more easily.
- Takes less time, replies quicker.
- Makes submission easier.
- Helps more with comments.
- Save paper.
- Electronically they give more comments and it is fast and effective.
- The comments are helpful.
- Save paper & easier to hand in.
- It is easier to read text rather than handwriting and it was more organised allowing clarity of comments.
- Because I would have the electronic copy available if I lost the hard copy.
- It does not bother me but the electronic copy is marked quicker.
- I feel that electronically it is neater & easier to work from & comments are greater in depth & helpful.
- I feel as though it was really read them and take the comments into more consideration.
- Because I can't read some tutors handwriting. Otherwise I don't feel it makes that much of a difference.
- Because then they add feedback and comments.
- Lectures could not be heard, funny accents. Only read the slides.
- Sometimes it is hard to read handwriting, electronic solves this problem.
- It's easy to print and work off when correcting. Hard copy handings are silly though think of the trees.
- Faster.
- It gives one more feedback and suggestions to improve.
- It does not really matter either why.

- Easier and more personal.
- It's better to see on a hard copy where to improve.

Are there any recommendations or changes you would suggest to ensure more students read the prescribed texts:

- No, it's up to a person to read it.
- Choose different books!!
- Shorter texts.
- Books are boring.
- More interesting and modern texts.
- Make it more "fun". Stuff students can relate to.
- No.
- Ja, kry ander "text" wat meer van toepassing is op ons tyd en nie oor geslagsrolle ens nie.
- It's too much, all my time goes into English and I couldn't finish the texts when I were supposed to.
- Choose more interesting texts.
- Maybe more tuts and less main lectures.
- More notes on texts and pointing out what is more important.
- Detailed tests about the texts would ensure texts being read.
- Hate 178. Don't get why and how writing essay will help me when teaching.
- Too much work!!
- No.
- Maybe have a variety of themes, not only patriarchal stories and themes.
- Encourage them more.
- No.
- Nope.
- Break away from the patriarchal society, women oppressed by men, apartheid war.
- The poetry essay of 18:00 – 20:00 words is too long.
- Choose interesting books that matter now.
- None.

- More time to read to text before the lecture starts.
- Allowing students more time to complete their reading, it is difficult for students to cope with the heavy workload of English 178.
- No.
- Get prescribed texts that will engage them. Not everyone could relate to nervous conditions nor Jane Eyre as they were kind of feminist. Get South African texts.
- No.
- No, students just have to start reading!
- No.
- Use new texts
- Better non-depressing books.
- More time (give before a long holiday/break).
- Do not use Nervous conditions.
- They must work hard and attend all the lecture & tutorials.
- Make it more fun to read. Most of the text is boring.
- None.
- Less freaking essays every second week! English 178 isn't the only subject at University! Jeez...
- Chose nicer texts. Like: "The little red riding hood".
- Less reading material.
- Make it clear that longer texts will take longer to read and should be read well in advance.
- Nope.
- Find more interesting books.
- No.
- Give more interesting texts.
- The books are too many and very boring.
- No.
- Change the texts.
- Ask the students what they want to read.
- Don't do Jane Eyre.
- Focus on the same material in tuts as in lectures.

- Let people know in advance that they need to buy a specific Jan Eyre book.
- Jane Eyre was way too long and we didn't spend a lot of time on it. A shorter text would be more appropriate.
- Choose interesting books that will appeal to students.
- Give more time, other subjects take up time that could have been used for reading.
- Books should not be out-dated and about segregation of race, one would feel we should stay away from things like apartheid/ Master Harold and the boys and move on.
- Prescribe them way in advance and recommend they be read before the year so students are familiar with the text..
- No, they will only read the texts if they choose to. Nothing you do can force them to read something they aren't interested in.
- Start early and read beforehand through the resource tut packs.
- Try not to focus on texts revolving around race and gender, it becomes tiresome and boring.
- More efficient, one cannot always read the tutors handwriting.
- Make the prescribed texts more fun.
- No, I feel it is the responsibility of the students to read the prescribed text.
- Small tasks for each lesson that would could force students to read the text to prepare for the tutorials.
- Like Jane Eyre, give more exercises referring to the texts.
- Give less reading or reduce workload.
- Lower the amount of prescribed texts or reduce the depth of the text for examples Jan Eyre.
- The depth should send out a list of books the previous year to the first years of the next year, so they know what is expected.
- The tutors must engage more in the feedback for the first draft essays.
- Prescribe books people actually want to read, something that appeals to the majority... harry potter?
- Not specifically.
- Less texts prescribed.
- Choose more interesting books (except Jane Eyre she was epic).
- Nervous conditions was monotonous, boring and frustrating. All other texts were great!

- Perhaps there should be a choice between the books that need to be read.
- Choose shorter prescribed works – Jane Eyre is too long for examples.
- I loved it, either you do or you don't.
- Less poetry, scrap Jane Eyre.
- Get told earlier to start reading so that we can prepare.
- Make novels/texts interesting and reduce the workload.
- Yes, student that read slow, a speed reading course will be most useful.
- Tell us at the end of the year what the next years text will be.
- Update the books that are in the course.
- None that I can think of.
- Books with more depth and vastness in terms of themes and ideologies etc.
- Better books!! Nervous conditions.
- Either the terms should be differencing in genres and discuss different. Issues so that more people will be interested, on the lecturer should provide a more interesting/engaging way with introducing the students to the text.
- Encourage the students to read the book and watch the movies during the holidays.
- Easier books to understand. Not so much tutorials – more free time to read the books.
- Decrease the amount of texts so we have time to finish them.
- Less work and more focus on certain sections.
- Get prescribed texts that students of this age would like to read and engage with.
- More time.
- Don't let the students read it over the holiday 80% of them wasn't read it by then.
- No.
- I don't think there is a way to force them, they will read what they enjoy (well, I do) and it's hard to prescribe books everyone will enjoy.
- No.
- Watch the movie!!
- Smaller books.
- If a student is serious about English he/she will read the texts.
- Try making a hand out that's actually clear for tutlings to understand. The hand out is depressing.
- The books level of difficulty is high.

- Give more time for reading of material or have shorter prescribed texts.
- Ensure that all the texts would be found interesting by majority of the students and that they aren't that difficult to get into.
- Warn them looooong in advance. Ask small tut tests in advance on chapters.
- No. it depends on the students.
- Exclude Jane Eyre for another interesting novel.
- Not really.
- Less large novels like Jane Eyre/ I knew majority if student haven't/ won't read it the expectation is too great, we have other subjects to work for besides English.
- The book prices are expensive so maybe they can help with that somehow and maybe lesson the number of books and rather handle some of the other books more extensively.
- Texts handed out more soon. More exciting books shorter stories. More class readings.
- Nervous conditions should be replaced. Have small test/chapters per week to read.
- Releasing the reading list earlier (before the holidays).
- Introduce classics that are popular with the youth and also more modern written books.
- Reminders. Certain parts for reading as homework.

Are there any suggestions you would make to improve the teaching of academic writing?

- More one on one instructing.
- The students could be given examples of well written academic essays with notes on what was done right.
- I would prefer that in the first few weeks of the 1st term. They give an additional course of academic writing, because after the first semester I was able to know what was a thesis statement and how to state my argument. If I knew it in the beginning my marks would be better.
- No, it is time as it is.
- No.
- More practical practice of topics in class.

- No.
- Give examples in class do not always send students away to the writing lab – give points in class.
- Write less essays.
- Writing thesis statement.
- No.
- No.
- No.
- No.
- No, it's hard to change how you do things on school.
- N/A.
- TO have 2 more tuts focusing on that.
- No.
- NO.
- No.
- No.
- More essays much more.
- There should be more guidelines given.
- No.
- None.
- No.
- More exercises.
- None.
- Teach students how to engage with the text more effectively.
- More help to students whose home language is not English! I would suggest the tutor's explaining in detail the first essay to students.
- N/A.
- More referencing classes!
- Teach us how to reference don't expect us to know it!
- More examples on WebCT and writing tuts.
- No.
- Focus on making sure students get the Thesis statement right!

- Questions are so vague, explain more.
- More help on how to write them.
- Directioning.
- No.
- You must firstly do map.
- More tuts focused on academic writing.
- Provide a good example at the beginning.
- Explain it better in the beginning of the year.

How can we inspire you to read more?

- Make book easier.
- I don't need inspiring but you could recommend good books to read as additional material.
- You've done enough.
- There is no way.
- By giving us interesting texts to read.
- By making use of more relevant and interesting literature, something that would intrigue students
- Don't know I read more this year than I read my whole life in English.
- Provide interesting texts that students would want to read.
- Interesting topics.
- More interesting books.
- Get books that are of interest for us as students.
- Give more interesting texts, and text that are more on the level of the students.
- More interesting books.
- I am inspired.
- Give simpler texts.
- Don't.
- N/A.
- More interesting stories.
- Use better books.

- More relevant texts.
- Give us better books to read. Lord of the rings etc. Terry Prachett!!
- Books chooses more interesting.
- I will read when I feel like it.
- No.
- By explaining the book, make it fun ☺ yay.
- I don't know.
- Try giving tuts with a variation of themes.
- Maybe more interesting books!
- Choose texts relevant to our generation.
- I believe it is a student's individual choice.
- Possibly change the reading material, some of it is extremely boring.
- Better, more relevant to society today, books.
- Introducing books that are maybe more age appropriate.
- Approach texts in a way that makes it relevant for students. What about more contemporary books?
- More popular texts.
- Make first years do more novels.
- Not letting us read boring stuff.
- More interesting texts.
- Provide suggestions of other texts we could read if we like one. e.g.: if you like Nervous conditions you'll like Coconut.
- Give more fun and interesting readings.
- I think you doing the beste possible now.
- No more books that have taught us the same message since grade eight.
- Make me read stuff I like.
- More interesting books.
- You can't.
- More texts to relate to. Most of the texts are boring.
- By supporting.
- Do not use Nervous conditions.
- Make the readings more interesting.

- Inspire is by selecting nicer books.
 - Prescribe better books.
 - Use books of interest.
 - It's not going to happen!!
 - Students will be students.
 - No way.
 - Make reading fun. I don't know how but please do.
 - Books that doesn't read forever like Jane Eyre.
-
- **How can we inspire you to write more?**
 - Work more of the essay!
 - You can't.
 - You've done enough.
 - There is no way.
 - By giving us more freedom to write what we want to write about.
 - To motivate creativity – by allowing students one essay of a topic of their choice thing a specified theme.
 - I do not like writing so I would not be inspired easily.
 - I have no idea.
 - Make the topics fun.
 - Give texts that are not that difficult.
 - Give texts that are from today's date and not written long ago, e.g. Shakespeare.
 - Allow us to choose our own topics about anything we want.
 - Don't.
 - N/A.
 - Give more help regarding writing.
 - By not failing me the whole time.
 - Give better topics to write about.
 - More relevant topics.
 - Give us a wider array of choice.
 - Give more fun essays.

- I'm not interested in writing essays all the time.
- By actually letting us write something that we want to.
- I don't know.
- Extra classes.
- Letting us do creative writing.
- It's a lost cause.
- Change the questions asked.
- Don't think it is possible with the limited time we have free.
- Have opportunities to show case our creativity.
- Have creative writing opportunities with incentives.
- Less "respond to text", more creative writing.
- Teach us about writers relevant to us that will inspire us.
- Giving more fun topics.
- More interesting topics.
- Have us submit some of our own creative work.
- Fun topics.
- Allow for creative writing.
- You can't.
- Less exercises.
- You can't.
- I am not a writer. Numbers person.
- By giving me more time to support.
- I think we wrote enough this year – no inspiration needed.
- Give students more writing freedom.
- Think you already did.
- Give reasonable topics.
- Give interesting and reasonable topics.
- No way.
- Don't demand too much from us.
- Work more of the essay.
- Perhaps give students the opportunity to write a creative essay once a semester that counts very little.

What are the two most important concepts/values/things you learnt from the course?

- Reading in between the lines so I can get more from the book.
- There is always another side to texts, with other meanings.
- Deursettingsvermoëns met opstelle.
- How to manage my time and how to express myself in English.
- Writing and reading skills are required in any aspect of your life and your success could be determined by it.
- Time management. Determination. It improved my English.
- Time management, and the way I think about things. I know now that I cannot hesitate, I must just do the work.
- How to write an academic essay, and how to analyse texts.
- You must have in life if you want to pass. Things in books/ notes are not what they seem.
- Read and rewrite.
- Reading, writing.
- How to analyse. How to write academic.
- How to write and understand essays and texts.
- To look for a deeper meaning
- Think before you write and think deep!!
- Attempting essay questions.
- I like to read + write.
- It is hard work.
- Be neutral and look deeper.
- Not to make essays personal or just assume things. Always have reasons for statements made.
- Working hard + constant knowing what is going on.
- Do all the work.
- Improve language and use of words.
- Academic writing. Work harder.
- Academic writing. Taking apart texts.

- Text interpretation and analysis.
- Read, write.
- You need to work hard just to pass.
- Essay writing & contextualising.
- I enjoyed analysing and implying the different concepts.
- I learnt to write more academically and I have increased my vocabulary.
- How to structure an academic essay and do close reading of texts.
- How to write a proper essay and handle a big load of work.
- Reading is important.
- Nothing.
- Essay writing.
- Nothing is as it seems and everything can be interpreted differently you must just explain it fully and well.
- Participation in class discussion. Essay structure (helps in all subjects).
- Literacy skills.
- Nothing is as it seems at first glance. Everyone interprets texts in different ways.
- Academic essay writing. Close reading skills.
- Thinking out of the best.
- Essay writing.
- Time management. Work hard and do your part.
- Essay writing.
- Nothing.
- “Hard work”.
- Keep up to date.
- Hard work. Planning.
- To think critically and questions.
- How to write essays. To analyse.
- Improved writing skills, better insight.
- Writing academic essay.
- How to interpret texts and writing more effectively.
- Work harder.

- Don't do English 178 if you don't like Shakespeare. If English 178 is compulsory, then I wish you best of luck.
- Time management.
- How to write an academic essay. Nothing else.
- To have time management by doing work on time and to analyse the texts.
- Analysis. Enjoying texts.
- Essay writing + time management.
- To read texts more deeply.
- To look deeper into things.
- Better literature and register.
- Academic writing and picture analysis.
- Essay structure and text analysis – with regards to themes.
- State your own argument.
- Essay writing.
- Always motivate. Always create a thesis statement.
- To write better.
- Critical thinking and critical analysis.

If you were asked to make just one key recommendation to the course coordinator for future English 178 courses, what would this be?

- Make the English more on our level. Too difficult.
- Look into how effective the lectures are and how well students respond to them.
- To announce to the students when a good time would be to start teaching the texts.
- Less essays.
- Try to make the lectures more interesting and interactive.
- That there be a creative essay that allow students to write about their own topic within a specified theme.
- The main lectures must improve or should not exist for tutorials are much more learning.
- Less books to read, and the main lectures are not of any help, make all lessons tutorials.

- They should find a way to make lectures more interesting so that time students would come to the lectures.
- Fewer workload.
- Change prescribed texts, themes.
- To make the course a little easier.
- To write academic essays.
- Let the test count less, it is a continuous subject; don't kill us in the tests.
- N/A.
- More group activities – group needs 2 bond.
- Do not connect everything to racism and politics, the concepts got worn out.
- Why must Afrikaans speaking pupils be marked the same strict way than the English pupils, if they can take. Afrikaans second lang?
- Use interesting books.
- More relevant text.
- Terry Pratchett.
- Make it easier.
- Nothing.
- No online e-mail.
- Variation in texts. Most of the texts were about patriarchy.
- Make the novel lectures more interesting.
- More tie for essays and extra help with essays.
- They should not overload the work to students. Some of the books were difficult you understand.
- More help to students who did not have English on 1st language or home language is English.
- The English standard could increase I felt that some exercises required little work to achieve a satisfactory mark.
- Make lectures more interesting.
- Less lectures more tuts.
- Don't let us read old lit.
- Less exercises in between, to focus more on bigger assignments for English 178.
- Jack up your game!

- None.
- Do not change the tutors because we learn to do things the one tutors way and the other one does things different.
- Less reading material.
- Make sure the tutors all adhere to the same standard.
- To not be so strict.
- Have more lectures that are interesting.
- Less work please!
- I don't know, coz I know he wouldn't be reading it.
- Chill out with the workload.
- Make the course more fun.
- Support students and encourage them.
- Do not use nervous conditions.
- To change all the weekly Jan Eyre assignments into one big portfolio task.
- Too many exercises/ essays.
- More focus on academic writing skills.
- None.
- Interact more (forced interaction) with your students.
- More focus on creative writing.
- Make the work load lighter and focus more on the work.
- Only tutorial classes.
- Make it easier.
- Away with the thick novels.

Additional comments, if any:

- We should have 1 tutorial a week instead of 2.
- I learnt what I did in this course only from the tutorials and WebCT notes.
- Make a English that is appropriate for second addition learners.
- The tutor helped a lot.
- None.
- I pass ALL my assignments, but fail my tests and I do everything to pass it!

- None.
- Hate it!!!
- N/A.
- None.
- I think there should be an English additional language for Afrikaans students.
- Die Eng 178 vat my hele kursus oor, spandeer baie tyd daaraan en dop nogsteeds!
- More lectures, less tuts.
- More modern books, perhaps a choice in that, more tuts, more class, more essays.
Become a proper course and not a secondary one.
- Much Ado about nothing was boring.
- Thank you for an awesome year and Eng 178! Wish I could take it further, but my degree is a set course.
- 2nd time in English 178 it's difficult.
- I wish I was able to continue with English next year.
- I really enjoy this course – thanks also to my tutor, Jenna Barlow.
- Tutors work!
- Nah.
- None.
- None.
- Tutors must be fair when they marking trying to understand what other students trying to say.
- It was fun.
- Make lectures more interesting.
- English 178 made that I don't like English anymore.