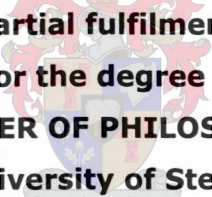


**POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**  
**AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH:**  
**AN EXPLORATION OF STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS**

**MARYKE HUNTER**

**Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY  
at the University of Stellenbosch**

The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered behind the text. It features a shield with a blue field containing a white cross, and a red field containing a white lion. Above the shield is a red banner with the Latin motto "Pectora tubercant cultus recti". The crest is flanked by two red lions.

**Supervisor: Prof J Mouton**  
**March 2002**

## DECLARATION

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

11 February 2002

**Signature**

**Date**



## **ABSTRACT**

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Changing circumstances and new initiatives have made it necessary for Higher Education institutions to reflect on all aspects of their teaching portfolios. Recent global and national trends have had numerous implications for different aspects of the university as an entity, which in turn have important implications for teaching, and particularly postgraduate teaching. The need for greater transparency and efficiency is forcing universities into discussions around facing these challenges. The overarching aims of this study were twofold: firstly, to identify historical and current tendencies and patterns in postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch and secondly, to determine the enabling and constraining factors relating to postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch. It was decided to focus on both completed postgraduate students (years 1991 – 1999) as well as current postgraduate students (year 2000). Furthermore, “postgraduate” was defined as relating to all Master`s and Doctoral students at the University of Stellenbosch.

The empirical research for this study included three components. Firstly, two postal surveys were carried out at the University of Stellenbosch in 2000 in order to explore a representative sample of postgraduate students` attitudes and perceptions. Secondly, a secondary data analysis of existing data on the University database for postgraduate students was carried out in order to do an estimate of success- and follow through rates. Finally, interviews were conducted with coordinators of four postgraduate programmes at different departments in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Stellenbosch.

Results show that the nature of postgraduate studies at the University follows the same form of dynamics, diversity and complexity that characterizes postgraduate studies worldwide. Although there has been an exceptional increase in the number of postgraduate students over the past

decade, completion rates have stayed the same. This increase in numbers places enormous additional administrative, academic and managerial demands on the University. Although postgraduate students (both completed and current students) seem to have a general positive perception of the University, its academic and administrative services as well as the quality of postgraduate supervision, there are certain aspects that can still be improved upon. For example: the University has to realize that although the completion rates of postgraduate students have reasonably stayed the same over the last decade, the number of students who did not complete increased with almost 50%. The University has to put structures in place in order to cope with the increasing demands these students are placing on administration, departments and supervisors. Also, although it seems as if the University are open to the trends in higher education, they are not totally geared for part-time and non-residential students. All four programmes in the Arts Faculty were initiated by individual academics within the departments. In terms of managing postgraduate students within departments, it seems that greater standardization regarding aspects of admission, administrative support, requirements for research proposals, examination and guidelines for the research components are needed. Supervisors and students both need to know what is expected from them. In terms of the supervisory process, supervisors must have guidelines in terms of what their responsibilities are and they have to realize the importance of their task. Students need to be informed about their rights and the whole process of postgraduate studies.

Overall, it is the responsibility of the University, together with its postgraduate students and supervisors to ensure that the process of postgraduate studies is characterized by success, effectiveness and efficiency.



## OPSOMMING

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Veranderende omstandighede en nuwe beleidsmaatreëls maak dit noodsaaklik dat Hoër Onderwysinrigtings deurentyd besin oor alle aspekte van hul missies en funksies. Resente globale en nasionale tendense het verreikende implikasies vir verskeie aspekte van die universiteitswese, waarvan die gevolge vir die onderrigtaak, en in besonder nagraadse onderrig, van besondere belang is. Oproepe tot deursigtigheid, gekoppel aan die imperatief tot doeltreffendheid, is alles faktore wat universiteite tot besinning dwing. Die doel van hierdie studie was om die historiese en huidige tendense en patrone in nagraadse studie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch te skets asook om vas te stel wat is die bemiddelende en belemmerende faktore wat nagraadse studie by die Universiteit kenmerk. Daar is besluit om te fokus op beide afgestudeerde studente (vanaf 1991 tot 1999) asook huidige studente (ingeskryf in die jaar 2000). Verder is "nagraads" gedefinieer as verwysende na alle meesters en doktorale studente by die Universiteit van Stellenbosch.

Die empiriese navorsing vir hierdie studie bestaan uit drie komponente. Eerstens is twee posopnames in 2000 uitgevoer om 'n verteenwoordigende steekproef van nagraadse studente aan die Universiteit se persepsies rakende hul nagraadse studie te toets. Verder is daar 'n sekondêre analise uitgevoer van bestaande data op die Universiteit se databasis vir nagraadse studente spesifiek met die doel om sukses- en deurvloeikoerse van nagraadse studente te bepaal. Laastens is onderhoude gevoer met koördineerders van vier nagraadse programme aan verskillende departemente binne die Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte.

Die resultate toon dat die aard van nagraadse studie aan die Universiteit van Stellenbosch dieselfde mate van dinamika, toenemende diversiteit en gepaardgaande kompleksiteit weerspieël as wat nagraadse studies wêreldwyd kenmerk. Alhoewel daar 'n buitengewone toename in nagraadse studentegetalle aan die Universiteit oor die afgelope dekade was, het die

voltooiingskoerse van studente dieselfde gebly. Hierdie toename in getalle plaas geweldige ekstra administratiewe, akademiese en bedryfseise aan die Universiteit. Alhoewel nagraadse studente (beide afgestudeerd sowel as huidig) in die algemeen 'n positiewe persepsie van die Universiteit, sy akademiese en administratiewe dienste, sowel as die kwaliteit van nagraadse studieleiding blyk te hê, is daar enkele sake waarop verbeter kan word. So byvoorbeeld moet die Universiteit besef dat alhoewel voltooiingskoerse konstant gebly het, het die getal van nagraadse studente wat nie voltooi nie, met ongeveer 50% gestyg. Die Universiteit moet strukture in plek stel om te kan voldoen aan die toenemende eise wat sy nagraadse studente aan administrasie, departemente en studieleiers stel. Alhoewel die Universiteit oop blyk te wees vir nuwe tendense in hoër onderwys, blyk dit dat hy nog nie heeltemal gerat is vir deeltydse studente en nie-residensiële studente nie. Al vier die programme in die Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte het ontwikkel uit individuele akademici binne departemente. In terme van die bestuur van nagraadse studente binne departemente, is groter standardisasie van aspekte rakende toelating, administratiewe ondersteuning, vereistes rondom navorsingsvoorstelle, eksaminering en riglyne vir die navorsingskomponent van nagraadse studies nodig. Beide studieleiers en studente moet besef wat van hulle verwag word. In terme van die proses van studieleiding, moet studieleiers oor riglyne beskik van hulle verantwoordelikhede en verder moet die belangrikheid van die taak besef word. Studente moet ingelig word oor hulle regte en die proses van nagraadse studie. Die Universiteit, tesame met sy nagraadse studente en studieleiers, moet verseker dat die proses van nagraadse studies gekenmerk word deur sukses, effektiwiteit en doeltreffendheid.

## **BEDANKINGS**

Aan my ouers, Jan en Dalene, en my broer, Jacques, vir al julle liefde, hulp en aanmoediging om 'n sukses van my loopbaan te maak.

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*Vir Oupa Bester*



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***The financial assistance of National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the National Research Foundation.***

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **BACKGROUND AND AIM OF STUDY**

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#### **1.1 Background to the study**

Changing circumstances and new initiatives have made it necessary for Higher Education institutions to reflect on all aspects of their teaching portfolios. Recent global and national trends have had numerous implications for different aspects of the university as an entity, which in turn have important implications for teaching, and particularly postgraduate teaching. The need for greater transparency and efficiency is thus forcing universities into discussions around facing these challenges. To this end, the Minister of Education in February 2001 states that "there can be little doubt that the National Plan provides us with a unique opportunity, perhaps one that will not come readily our way again, to establish a higher education system that can meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities presented to us by the contemporary world. We must be able to produce graduates with high quality skills and competencies in all fields. We must be able to produce research that will build our economy and make us significant players on the global stage" (National Plan for Higher Education, 2001).

Low through-put rates of postgraduate students have been identified by the National Plan as one of the main factors contributing to the need for greater efficiency of the system as a whole: "The National Plan recognises that efficiency improvements are dependent on addressing the underlying factors that contribute to low graduation rates" (National Plan for Higher Education, 2001:1). One of the goals of the National Plan to help universities to become more efficient is to set certain graduate benchmarks that institutions would have to meet.

Against this background, the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (CENIS) was asked by the Management of the University of Stellenbosch to conduct an in-depth study on the state of postgraduate studies at the University of



Stellenbosch. This was to be done as part of the University's Action Plan for Better Postgraduate Education (Action Plan for Research, 1999 – 2002). This thesis reports on the results of the study in which I participated during 2000. The thesis consists of two main parts. Firstly, it reports on the survey data in terms of certain descriptive aims i.e. trends in postgraduate studies, enabling and constraining factors relating to postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch and factors relating to through-put and supervision. These results are discussed in Chapters 4 to 6. Chapter 7 is based on interviews I conducted with coordinators of postgraduate programmes in order to provide examples of "good practice" in postgraduate education.

## **1.2 The main aims of the study**

- To identify historical and current tendencies and patterns in postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch with regard to:
  - Success rates
  - Completion rates
  - Differences between environments, departments and supervisors/promotors
  - Differences relating to the nature of postgraduate programmes/degrees
  - Differences relating to the personal profiles (sex, race, age, language) of postgraduate students
- To determine the enabling and constraining factors relating to postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch.

## **1.3 Procedure followed**

It was decided to focus on both completed students (years 1991 – 1999) as well as current students (year 2000). Furthermore, "postgraduate" was

defined as relating to all Master`s and Doctoral students at the University of Stellenbosch.

The empirical research done for this study, consists of the following components:

### **1.3.1 Postal surveys**

Two postal surveys were conducted during 2000 to establish the attitudes and perceptions of a representative sample of postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch. The questionnaires included the following broad themes:

- What the students` experiences of postgraduate studies at the US were/are.
- Which factors played a role in their selection of programmes.
- Which factors (enabling and constraining) played a role in the completion or non-completion of their studies. (This theme only relates to completed students).

The total number of completed Master`s and Doctoral students for the years 1991 to 1999 (n=4563) and current Master`s and Doctoral students for the year 2000 (n=3510) were defined as the target population. Questionnaires were sent out to all the students and 980 questionnaires from the completed students and 730 from the current students were returned. The response rates were 21.5% and 25.6% respectively. The data of the completed questionnaires were then integrated with the student data on the University database for postgraduate students. The postal surveys are seen as the primary research design of this thesis. Support designs in the form of secondary data and interviews were also utilized.

### **1.3.2 Secondary data**

A secondary data analysis was done of existing data in the University database for postgraduate students. Information regarding the following fields was extracted:

- Biographical information on students
- Academic information (from matric results to highest qualification)

Firstly, the data of these fields were analyzed in the whole as to determine completion rates for the entire population. Secondly, the information of the postal surveys was merged with the data on the University database for the purpose of further in-depth analyses.

### **1.3.3 Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with coordinators of four different postgraduate programmes at different departments within the Arts Faculty. The programmes were selected on the basis that they provide a unique model for postgraduate teaching and supervision.

## **1.4 Outline of remainder of thesis**

- **Chapter 2 – Literature study**

In this chapter, the literature reviewed is discussed. Three main sections are included: the international and national higher education context, factors that influence postgraduate students' experience and success with their studies and the nature of supervision.

- **Chapter 3 – Research design and methodology**

The research design and methodology for the empirical research are discussed in terms of steps taken to carry out the research.



- **Chapter 4 - Demographics and academic background information on students**

In this chapter, the demographic profiles and academically relevant background information that might have an impact on students' experience and perception of their postgraduate studies, are discussed.

- **Chapter 5 – Relationship with the supervisor/promotor**

The supervisor-student relationship is discussed in terms of aspects regarding contact, provision of information to students, the guidance needed from the supervisor, the quality of supervision and overall support provided to the student.

- **Chapter 6 – Factors relating to the duration of study**

In this chapter, I look at demographic factors relating to the duration of study, predictors of duration as well as completion and success rates. The chapter focuses only on completed students who are already in possession of a postgraduate qualification. The results presented in this chapter include analyses of the secondary data.

- **Chapter 7 - Results of the interviews**

The results of the interviews conducted with four coordinators are discussed. I firstly look at background information to the programmes. Issues like the establishment of the programmes, the aim of the programmes and the structure of the programmes are included. Secondly, general trends in all the programmes are highlighted. The focus is on trends in the nature of the programme, the type of student, type of supervision, problems and changes planned for the future.

- **Chapter 8 – Discussion and recommendations**

In this chapter, the main results of the research are discussed. I refer back to specific aspects of postgraduate studies and supervision as portrayed in the literature in Chapter 2. Certain recommendations follow after the discussion.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

---

In this part of the thesis, a picture will be provided of the most important debates and issues in the literature as it relates to this study.

The literature review will be organized following Helm's framework of factors that influence postgraduate studies i.e. the educational system, the student and the supervisor (Helm, 1989).

In the first section, I will touch on the broader context of postgraduate studies together with issues that are seen as critical at present. In the second and third sections of the literature research, I discuss factors playing a role in students' experience and success with their postgraduate studies, and the nature of supervision.

#### **2.1 The international and national higher education context**

Peter Drucker predicted in 1997 that "thirty years from now the big university campuses will be relics. Universities won't survive" (Drucker, 1997). He argues that the idea of a university as we know it, will become extinct because of forces of competition, fast developing technology and new dynamics. In a more recent publication, Morrison (1999) makes a similar point. According to him, the differences in society, as we move away from an industry driven economy (where competitive advantage is based on capital) to an information society (where knowledge in itself is capital and the competitive advantage is seen in innovation and creativity) will instigate certain changes in education. "In today's society, knowledge workers have to continually increase their skills and competencies, thereby themselves contributing to the growth of the education market" (Morrison, 1999).

Michael Gibbons (1998) recently referred to similar movements in higher education: from the traditional von Humboldt-idea of knowledge for the sake of knowledge (Mode 1) to a more pragmatic and economically driven



knowledge production to serve society (Mode 2). He further writes that "knowledge production and dissemination – research and teaching – are no longer self-contained activities, carried out in relative institutional isolation. They now involve interaction with a greater variety of knowledge producers than in the past. In this situation, the connections between the role players will increasingly involve the use of the potentialities of the new information and communication technologies". He continues: "in order to operate efficiently, universities will need to be much reduced in size, and they will have to learn to make use of intellectual resources that they don't fully control. Although universities are no longer the only providers of education, they still enjoy a privileged place in the distributed knowledge production system. Whether the fact that universities are no longer the sole providers of higher education should be seen as a threat or an opportunity for universities, depends on how they re-position themselves in the distributed knowledge production system and what type of partnerships they forge" (Gibbons, 1998).

The South African higher education system has a dual challenge: on the one hand, it has to address the international challenges of globalisation and greater commodification of knowledge, and on the other, several aspects of the apartheid inheritance still has to be overcome. Not surprisingly, one of the biggest challenges is addressing the fragmentation and duplication of the apartheid educational system – thus making it one of the aims of the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education. As Cloete and Bunting (2000) show, this aim has not been realised as yet. Moreover, it seems as if different factors have contributed to even more fragmentation and competition. Saleem Badat (1999) regards this as the danger of the "institutionalisation of rampant and even destructive competition which could make institutions excessively market-oriented with a mindset of 'marketshare', and ultimately make the achievement of a national, integrated, co-ordinated and differentiated higher education system, a key goal of the White Paper, much more difficult".



John Gultig (1999) writes as follows on the aspect of competition between universities: "Established (mostly historically white) higher education institutions have moved rapidly from a cultural conservatism to symbolise most significantly the new 'entrepreneurial' university. They are unashamedly expanding student numbers and meeting market demands for professionally-oriented courses. They are also making extensive use of new communication technologies and distance education to attract and teach new students".

This "meaningless competition" (Gultig, 1999) was largely unexpected. It is thus not surprising that the Minister of Education in July 1999 made a plea for greater intervention on the part of the state when he argued that "the size and shape of higher education cannot be left to chance if we are to realise the vision of a rational seamless higher education system, responsive to the needs of all ages and the intellectual challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (Department of Education, 1999).

One can thus see that worldwide and in South Africa, higher education in general is in a state of fundamental transformation. Smit (2000) lists the forces that seem to be leading this transformation process:

- The digital revolution makes it possible for any person to receive training, for any course, at a pace that best suites the learner, at any time or place in the world.
- Mass-education places enormous strain on higher education.
- Government expenditure for higher education is being limited worldwide. This has the implication that education is being privatized and institutions have to transform to cope with these developments.
- The way in which information is developed and distributed, is changing drastically. Training needs and research problems are becoming so complex that it is impossible to address it within one discipline and therefore an inter- and transdisciplinary focus is being introduced.

It is therefore not a surprise that the nature of postgraduate teaching is also fundamentally changing. As far back as 1986, Blume already remarked on two sets of interests or rationales of policy makers on postgraduate research:

"There are on the one hand the traditional concerns and responsibilities of higher education policy and matters such as the structure of postgraduate qualifications, or the socio-cognitive experience enjoyed by the trainee scientists, that have naturally reflected the history of decisions taken essentially about universities. But science policy makers have also played an important role and their decisions as to the availability of research funds, or their assessment of research manpower 'needs', have also been of vital importance".

Blume (1986) further states that effective co-ordination between these two areas of decision-making has been rare but that governments are moving into the picture by formulating an explicit policy.

"Both government policy and student demand are forcing a new instrumentalism upon universities. Students increasingly seek qualifications which will benefit them in an inhospitable labour market, and teachers are increasingly inclined to respond to this demand" (Blume, 1986:219).

According to Blume (1986), this move to vocationalism also has the effect that "the structure of postgraduate programmes is changing. The importance of relevance, efficiency and accountability is an imperative that universities have to keep in mind when structuring a programme. This is in line with most governmental policies that urge the industrial relevance of training" (1986:220).

Recently, Burgess (1997) commented on the changing context of postgraduate education in the United Kingdom. According to him, postgraduate education in the UK has grown 235% in the last two decades.



This positive change was brought about not only by the increase in numbers but also the way in which students were studying.

"Only 38% of the postgraduate students in 1994-1995 were studying full-time, 74% were taught in programs and 26% were doing research degrees. In the UK, 62% of bachelor's degree students indicate that they wished to pursue a master's degree. But the real demand is for 'practice-oriented' master's degrees, with 85% of enrolled master's students falling in this category. Only 15% of the master's degrees offered fall into the traditional research degree" (Burgess, 1997, quoted in Weeks, 1998:254).

These figures underline the fact that universities not only need to provide students with knowledge that will make them good scholars but also with vocational skills to make them good workers. The traditional two-fold focus on research and teaching is thus broadened to include marketability. For universities to become successful in their task, they have to again reflect on handling the traditional dichotomy so as to build on the relationship between postgraduate studies and eventual career choice. This is particularly important in an era where career enhancement and work experience are coming to the forefront in a society that demands quality of and promotes huge competition amongst economically active people.

Although these ideas seem to be in line with international trends, it is debatable if postgraduate studies in South Africa have the same successes over the past few years as what can be seen internationally.

Smit (2000:7) states that in 1997, postgraduate students made out only 13% of total enrollments at universities and technikons in South Africa. Of these, 19% were at universities and 2% at technikons. According to Smit (2000), in 1997, students enrolled for Master's and Doctoral studies at the University of Pretoria numbered 3 894 and 911 respectively. In the same year, only 662 Master's students and 114 Doctoral students graduated. These low through-put rates were also found in another study done by Smit

(2000). Results reveal the following about South African postgraduate students:

- They take very long to complete their Master`s and Doctoral degrees
- Supervisors are not always trained properly to give quality assistance
- Supervisors are not readily available to students
- Postgraduate students are not actively made part of research programmes
- Universities have no system to monitor students
- Relatively few postgraduate research results are published in a scientific journal. This has implications for universities` research funding and position globally.

These factors can impact negatively on the general labour market if drastic steps are not taken. Smit (2000:5) quotes the White Paper on Higher Education where it affirms the necessity of postgraduate studies "to address the high level skills necessary for social and economic development and to provide for the needs of the academic labour market". Smit goes further to quote a policy document of the Department of Education entitled "Higher Education Institutional Plans" where it is stated that "it is clear that unless strategies are developed at system-wide and institutional levels to make postgraduate study and academic careers attractive options, there is a danger that not only will it result in the general depletion of research and development capacity, but it will also impact on the capacity of the higher education system to replenish its own academic labour needs"(2000:5).

Although the dualism between training and research is narrowed because of the course work (keeping in mind that it must be relevant for practical use i.e. to develop careers etc.), the quality of the research component – the thesis, might decline. Two reasons can be given for this. Firstly, with new M Phil and D Phil programmes (i.e. structured course work and a research component), students are not necessarily required to have an honours degree. It is in this "jump" that valuable knowledge and specialisation (that



traditionally formed part of the honours degree) could be lost. Secondly, because these structured postgraduate programmes do not necessarily have a standardised undergraduate qualification as a prerequisite, students from different disciplines can enroll. This causes obvious problems and frustrations – for students and lecturers and can undermine the quality and success of studies. A huge number of students who enroll for these programmes, do so for career enhancement or to “catch up” on latest trends in the particular field of study. Mostly they already have permanent employment and they thus study part-time or do so called “distance studies”.

Because work experience might sometimes be seen as more important than academic experience, new models of delivery of graduate studies are being introduced that accommodate life-long learning, particularly the modular system and part time studies.

Burgess, as quoted in Weeks, (1998:252), further states that “these changes have raised many questions concerning the organization of postgraduate studies, quality, the role of education vs. training, academic vs. vocational objectives, and the relationship between postgraduate education and careers”.

As noted before, postgraduate studies are in a process of dramatic change. To cope with these changes, Weeks (1998) noted that universities should recognize the fact that many students do not go directly from undergraduate to postgraduate studies. Also, full-time postgraduate students are declining and part time or distance learning is becoming a trend more than an exception. An intervening factor is work experience.

According to Weeks, the important role of working experience cannot be undervalued in this scenario. Universities have to realise that a huge number of students do not commence with postgraduate studies directly after their undergraduate qualification. The number of full time students is

also declining and part-time studies as well as non-residential studies are nowadays more the norm than the exception.

Learning organizations have to learn to cope with these changes (according to the above) to embrace 'post-experience' postgraduate education. This dynamic includes "employers expecting 'mandatory renewal' through the acquisition of graduate modules, to the recognition of experience through admitting graduate students who do not have a first degree" (Weeks, 1998:253). The only necessity to qualify for this "life long learning paradigm" (Weeks, 1998:252) is thus work experience.

"The economics of post-experience postgraduate education and thus lifelong learning are that it will be demanded for and paid for more and more by individuals and their employers and provided for by the private sector" (Weeks, 1998:253). The programmes are also more closely linked to the needs of employers and the public sector.

The demand for this new structure seems obvious looking at the situation in the United States with "85%" (Weeks, 1998:254) of Master's students enrolled for a more 'practice oriented' Master's degree.

The inclusion of the "nexus of money, politics and technology" (Weeks, 1998:15) in the "nexus of research and teaching" (Clark, 1993:313) is apparent in this new structure of postgraduate education.

With this background, it is reasonable to understand that a number of studies have been conducted in the recent past to try to grasp the effects of these changing structures and organisation of postgraduate studies on the success-, through-put and completion rates of postgraduate students. What factors have an influence on the success, if not, of such students? Also, in what way does the quality of postgraduate supervision play a role and how can success be related to demographic and biographic profiles of students? These questions are discussed in the next section.



## **2.2 Factors that influence postgraduate students' experience and success with their studies**

A reasonable amount of research has been undertaken in the past few years with postgraduate studies as a focus (see Noble, 1994; Phillips and Pugh, 1987; Rudd, 1985). Research has shown that large numbers of students who enroll for postgraduate degrees, never finish. In a study done by Rudd and Hatch (1968) they have shown that the overall non-completion rate for a sample of 2000 doctoral students was 30%. They also found huge trans-disciplinary differences with very high non-completion rates amongst humanities students (as high as 50%) and significantly lower rates amongst natural science students (15%). Large differences between full-time and part-time students also exist, with more than 40% of the latter group not having completed their degree after nine years of enrolment.

In the following section, I will provide a summary of literature studied into factors relating to why such a large proportion of postgraduate students either fail to complete successfully (success rates) or fail to complete at all (completion rates).

The section will follow a conceptual framework presented by Mouton (2001) on possible intervening factors:

- Demographics and biographical profile of the student
- The nature of the programme being followed
- Management of the postgraduate project
- Methodological difficulties
- Writing problems



### **2.2.1 Demographics and biographical profile of the student**

The demography of the student has proved to be one of the main contributing factors in students' negative perceptions of their postgraduate studies. In this section, I will touch on certain demographical issues as covered in the literature.

#### **2.2.1.1 Age**

Wright and Lodwick (1989) undertook a study of students in their first year of doctoral study. They came to the conclusion that "students who are more mature in age appear to make quicker progress than students who have come straight from a first degree" (1989:27). They go on to say that "maturity and self-confidence are important factors to consider on the selection of PhD students" (1989:27).

Age also seems to play a factor in the management of the research. Wright and Lodwick (1989) found in the same study (mentioned above) that in the 20 - 24 age year group, three quarters of the students did not draw up a plan to manage their research. According to them, planning the research is one of the most important features of successful research.

#### **2.2.1.2 Discrimination based on race**

Nettles (1990) in his study on the difference among black, Hispanic, and white doctoral studies in the USA shows that black and Hispanic doctoral students perceive more feelings of racial discrimination than do white doctoral students. "Blacks who come from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds, also receive the fewest teaching or research assistantships" (Nettles, 1990:496). In his sample of 194 students, 115 of the black students were female. This might be a contributing factor to the low assistantships given.

In a study conducted by the DADP (Division for Academic Development Programmes, University of Stellenbosch) for the Arts Faculty in 2000, a

total of 513 questionnaires were sent out to black students (term referring to African, Coloured and Indian students). The response rate was 20.6%. It is not clear from the study if students feel discriminated against because of incidents with other students. Racism seems to occur with regard to administrative staff and financial assistance. Some quotations provided by the report are the following:

"Some are still in the old apartheid system of treating individuals".

"The university personnel are not helpful. They actually discriminate".

"Do any black students ever get the 'Stellenbosch 2000' bursary?"

"Most financial support is given to whites rather than blacks at postgraduate level". (DADP report, 1999:7)

#### **2.2.1.3 Gender**

According to Moses (1984, cited in Sutherland, 1992), although women and men seem to have equal access to primary, secondary and undergraduate level, at tertiary level in recent years, discrimination based on gender still exists. "The report provides data on departmental encouragement and information, supervision, staff structures, student career aspirations, financial support, child-care problems, women`s dual role, sexism and role models" (Sutherland, 1992:79).

Baird (1990:380) also writes: "women are more likely to interrupt their graduate studies". One might again relate this to the dual role a lot of female students have as mothers, wives and learners.

In the study done by the DADP in Stellenbosch (referred to earlier), finances seem to be an important problem for especially women with dependants. In the Calendar 2000 Bursaries and Loans information brochure of the University of Stellenbosch, there is no special consideration for women (p.6). "Whilst 'race' is often a criterion, gender is not. The only service available is the Independent Babin Child Care Centre that makes use of the University`s facilities" (DAPD report, 1999:6).



Other biographical problems that relate to the success or not of postgraduate studies, are finances, career prospects and marital status. Ehrenberg and Mavros (1994) used data on all graduate students who entered PhD programs in four fields during a 25 years period.

"We find that completion rates and the mean durations of their times-to-completion and to dropout are all sensitive to the types of financial support the students received" (Ehrenberg and Mavros, 1994:581). To them an increase in fellowships and assistantships will lead to more successes in postgraduate studies.

Baird (1990) seems to agree that more research funding and assistantships will lead to shorter times to complete: "Departments with more research funding, because of their greater capacity to support students through graduate research assistantships, might be hypothesized to have shorter times to the doctorate" (Baird, 1990:371).

The link between financial problems and the need to work is obvious. This can lead to more and more students enrolling for part time or distance learning because they have to work in order to cope with the financial demands placed on them, not only by their studies but in many cases because they have to support a family as well.

Personal motivation and a social and academic network that can serve as a support system are some of the most important requirements when postgraduate studies are conducted. Wright and Lodwick also state that "maturity and self confidence are important factors to consider in the selection of PhD students" (Wright and Lodwick, 1989:34).

### **2.2.1.3 Isolation**

A number of studies (Wright and Lodwick, 1989 and Welsh, 1979) have noted the effect of isolation on postgraduate studies. It does not only lead



to personal anxiety but can also affect the time it takes to complete postgraduate studies.

"The problem with isolation is particularly pertinent to social science and arts students who experience none of the stimulating cooperation and completion of the laboratory. Social networks are thus very important, not only as a buffer against stress but also a way to maintain self-esteem. Supervisors can contribute by also being a listener and a friend" (Wright and Lodwick, 1990:34). They further state that interaction between research students and also between research personnel can help to develop a feeling of belonging and a social network.

Halleck (1976, cited in Welsh, 1979) claims that loneliness and the movement to the new status of postgraduate student can be disorientating to the student and can lead to depression. The intellectual strains can have such a huge impact that enthusiasm for the research can disappear within the first year of study. A study done by Welsh (1979) confirms this claim by Halleck: more than a quarter of students that were included in the study, reported that a feeling of loneliness can be seen as a huge problem in the first year of postgraduate study.

According to Hudson (1968), the ability to think creatively does not exist in a vacuum but in relation to the environment. "Intellectual isolation may well have an impact on completion time, particularly in the social sciences where research has been highly individualised compared to the more team orientation of the natural sciences" (Hudson, 1968, cited in Welsh, 1979).

### **2.2.2 The nature of the programme being followed**

Postgraduate programmes differ in their structure and format, their duration, the requirements needed and also the way in which they are being presented. If information about the programmes and also about the administrative procedures around the programmes is not being

communicated to all students, it can have possible negative influences on the experiences students have with their studies.

In a study done by the DADP at the University of Stellenbosch in 1999, students rate operational frustrations as a primary concern i.e. difficulty in obtaining registration cards, access to reference material, lack of transport, confusion regarding registration procedures, accommodation, lack of consultation time with lecturers, lack of information about the services provided by the University, a socially inappropriate bursary scheme, too high fees etc.

A conclusion drawn from the study is that "there is no existing co-ordination (for example through information) of existing resources and services for postgraduates. Residential students therefore pay ad-hoc visits to service providers" (DADP report, 1999:8). Recommendations include that each faculty should have a postgraduate faculty officer, integrated postgraduate academic development programmes and closer collaboration.

Although it is the responsibility of the student to make sure of all the facets of the proposed programme, departments also have certain responsibilities to ensure that students make informed decisions. Both parties thus have an influence on the effectiveness of the programme and the success of the student.

#### **2.2.2.1 Full time or part time studies**

If students want to register for a specific programme, it is very important to decide if they want to do it full time, part-time, or non-residential. In all cases there are positive and negative aspects to consider. A full time study can lead to possible shorter completion rates, but on the other hand, it can have serious financial implications. This is one of the reasons for the huge shift to more part-time and non-residential programmes so as to lift financial constraints – even if it means that completion times are longer.



### **2.2.2.2 Distant or residential teaching**

Depending on where the student stays, it is sometimes better to enroll for non-residential studies as it costs much less. On the other hand, it can cause problems if library services are needed or if support from supervisors and fellow students is required. Residential study has the benefit that it is near the department and supervisors and fellow students are nearby to give advice and discuss certain problems. It has to be understood that it is very expensive to stay in a student house or student residence and the lack of private space and a quiet learning environment can cause problems.

Although no specific studies could be found where the correlation between full time/part time, residential/non-residential studies and success/throughput rates could be found, one can assume that part time and non-residential students will take longer to complete their studies.

### **2.2.3 Management of the postgraduate project**

#### **2.2.3.1 Poor project planning**

Planning the research project should start directly after the topic has been selected.

"The choice of research topics should be heavily influenced by the staff and, where appropriate, also from outside the academic institution. This is to ensure that the topic is a suitable subject for research training, that it is likely to prove a rewarding investigation and that it is of practical benefit where this is possible, that competent supervision is available and that the work can be completed within the time available" (Moses, 1985:11). Moses furthermore quotes Christopherson et al. (1983) by stating the four common causes for delay in thesis completion:

- A slow start
- Perfectionism
- Distraction from the main line of enquiry



- Inadequate collection of the data due to inadequate planning in the handling (Christopherson et al. 1983, quoted in Moses, 1985:13).

According to Howard and Sharp (1983, cited in Moses, 1985) it is therefore important for students to be clear of their aims and objectives, various critical points in the research process, time constraints, resources available and priorities and progress.

"Planning the research project is part of higher degree studies. It is the student's responsibility" (Moses, 1985:16). In the findings of his study on the problems regarding dissertations, Blanton (1983) concludes that the planning phase is considered to be the most critical. "Many of the problems which appear later could have been prevented with more careful attention to planning" (Blanton, 1983:75).

Blanton (1983:75) refers to some strategies found to be useful in dealing with problems in planning:

- Making sure the topic is interesting to the student but not so emotionally close that perspective is lost.
- Providing a choice of methodologies which reflect the resources of the student, and providing some means of outside consultation if the methodology is outside of the chair's range of expertise.
- Having the students write down key terms, define them, and complete a one-page summary of their dissertation plan.
- Having students find and critique a role model research study in the style or area they are exploring.

Wright and Lodwick (1990) also regard the planning phase as one of the most important parts of the research project. Their findings, based on a survey of second year research students at Reading University carried out in 1987, show that "40 percent of the students had not drawn up a plan and worked out a time scale for their work when they started their degree. Half

the students who made a plan did so for the whole of the first year; of the remainder, most covered the whole period of their research and only a few just the first term" (Wright and Lodwick, 1989:27).

Two other notable conclusions can be drawn:

"The number of years since completing the last full-time course is also a factor to be considered: with a gap of three years or more years a student was more likely to have made a plan" (Wright and Lodwick, 1989:29).

"The more frequent the supervision, the less likely the student was to have made a plan; about 75 percent of those who had less than fortnightly meetings with their supervisor made a plan compared with around 50 percent of those who saw their supervisor more often" (Wright and Lodwick, 1989:30).

#### **2.2.3.2 Time management**

In a study done by Kaunda and Low on students' and supervisors' perceptions of research at the University of Cape Town in 1998, students were also asked to comment on the time allocated to their projects. According to Kaunda and Low, no preferred time allocation stood out but it seemed as if it centered around working on their projects weekly, monthly, just before seeing their supervisors and intensively near the submission date. Kaunda and Low also stress the fact that drawing up a plan and adhering to the time frame was probably the most difficult aspect of the research process "especially for a novice who does not have the full understanding of what the process entails" (Kaunda and Low, 1998:133). Although the supervisors felt that students need help in drawing up time plans, students did not feel that drawing up a time frame was such a big issue.

"Our own experience with the data collection for this research suggests that the majority of students only begin to seriously think about their research



near the end of the first semester. This may not leave enough time for all the work that is involved" (Kaunda and Low, 1998:134).

In the study by Wright and Lodwick (1989), they surmise that the reason why students place less importance on the scheduling of a time frame might be the dependance on the supervisor to keep them on to track, thus managing their time for them.

A diagram (Wright and Lodwick, 1989:33) which shows the time taken to carry out stages of research work, shows for example that by the end of the first year, only 20% of the students had started the writing of the first draft chapter. According to the writers many factors influence the time taken to start and finish the stages of the research project: "The timing of the research stages must necessarily vary enormously with discipline, topic, methodology, research experience of the student, influence of the supervisor and other people, and in some cases the extent of collaboration" (Wright and Lodwick, 1990:32).

#### **2.2.4 Methodological problems**

If a research thesis is conducted, the choice of research methodology is one of the basic factors relating to the success and quality of the project (see Phillips and Pugh, 1994, Kaunda and Low, 1998; Hockey, 1991).

In this respect, Mouton (2001) writes: "Inadequate knowledge of research methodologies and poor or inappropriate levels of research skills (that) might cause delays or wrong decisions in the project. Certain types of research require rather advanced skills, for example sampling skills, skills in data-collection and statistical analysis. Many postgraduate students – especially at the Master`s level – might not have had any prior formal training in research or have forgotten the training that they had earlier, or their training was incomplete or inappropriate. There is a growing trend for master`s students to enroll for methodology courses when starting their



Master`s studies, in order to fill these gaps before they get to the fieldwork stage of their studies” (Mouton, 2001:6)

Kruger and van Niekerk (1991) agree when they write: “The student has a need to be trained in the scientific approach and research methodology of the particular discipline. Such training should be aimed at producing graduates who are able to use the intellectual and methodological processes underlying research, and to apply these in the world beyond the university” (Holzapfel, 1986, as cited in Kruger and Van Niekerk, 1991:11).

### **2.2.5 Writing skills**

Scientific writing skills are something that can be taught; it is an art that does not come naturally for all. The master`s thesis is in many cases the first extensive document in which the student must portray his/her ability to write scientifically. It is therefore very important that an appropriate style and technical formatting be learnt. Many students who encounter problems with scientific writing style, are ones whose home language is other than English. Given that English is considered as an international language as well as the language of science, it places tremendous challenges on a non-English speaking student.

Zuber-Skerrit (1985) describes the transition from analysis to synthesis as the critical phase in the research process – from the gathering and analysis of the data to the actual writing of the first draft of the thesis.

“It is often assumed in postgraduate education that candidates have developed basic research and writing skills at undergraduate level and that they will be able to translate and apply these skills to their thesis research and writing. Instead we should create a supportive learning environment and design appropriate interventions in the curriculum and in our teaching assessment, in order to help students develop their abilities and skills” (Zuber-Skerrit, 1985:6).

According to Kruger and Van Niekerk (1991) the writing phase is often the most problematic. "The writing of the text is a mental process that can only commence once the student has digested his material so well that it has become his own. He has to distance himself from his material so that his text can show signs of independent thought and conclusions, and thus make a sound contribution to scientific knowledge of his field" (1991:112).

This section tried to list some factors that have an impact on students' success with their postgraduate studies. It is important that students are aware of these factors that can lead to possible problems in the process. Furthermore, it is important that supervisors not only provide academic and intellectual guidance, but that they also have the knowledge of possible factors influencing each individual's experience with his/her studies. The next section will cover supervision as a contributing factor to the success, effectiveness and efficiency, or not, of postgraduate studies.

### **2.3 The supervisor and nature of supervision**

According to Connell (1985) the supervision of a postgraduate student can be regarded as the most advanced level of teaching in the educational system. From the perspective of teaching, postgraduate students form the cumulation point. From the perspective of research, they form the start of the knowledge production process. It is thus not surprising that there is uncertainty and a misconception about the nature and scope of the accompaniment of postgraduate students (see Kruger and Van Niekerk, 1991). It is therefore important to develop a framework on the nature and functions of supervision, the different roles assigned to the supervisor as well as the expectations of students and supervisors.

The student-supervisor relationship is one of the key aspects of the postgraduate experience. Good supervisory practices can lead to a quality thesis as well as a stimulating process for both the student and supervisor. Unfortunately this is not always the case. Many students see their



postgraduate studies as anything but stimulating and successful and many of those see a lack in supervision as a contributing factor.

"Statistics indicate that there is an alarmingly low number of students who pursue doctoral research after having completed a Master`s and this is most commonly attributed to their experience of research and supervision for the Master`s degree" (Smith, 1999:3).

Moses (1985) refers to few broad areas of dissatisfaction based on studies done in Australia, New Zealand and Britain:

- Personality factors – negligence on the part of the supervisor, clash of personalities, age differences that can lead to communication problems, cultural or language differences, personal differences in work ethic.
- Professional factors – an uninformed supervisor or one that does not have the necessary knowledge about the field of study he needs to supervise, a supervisor with relatively few research interests or research interests that differ from those of the student.
- Organisational factors – a supervisor with too many students, too busy with administration, inability to effectively manage research groups, departmental facilities and organization that isolate the student, inadequate support services and overall limitation in facilities.

According to Connell (1985), supervising a research project is a very complex and problematic task if one looks at the high number of students who do not complete their studies on this level. It is thus of utmost importance that students and personnel discuss ideas and experiences in order to come to some agreement on certain basic principles. The nature of the supervisory process will of course differ according to individual needs. Furthermore, in an academic environment, additional differences exist between disciplines, departments and educational styles and this can



contribute to different approaches to the nature of supervision and how to manage the process. A few general functions that characterize the nature of supervision do exist. Bhana (1999) focuses on three different models to postgraduate supervision that define the student-supervisor relationship:

- **Supervision through osmosis**

This type can be seen as the traditional form of supervision where the student is basically spoon-fed to complete the thesis. "The supervisor sets him/herself up as the expert (regardless of the area), and tends to pronounce rather than supervise" (Bhana, 1999:7).

According to this model, there is a huge degree of dependency on the side of the student and power on the side of the supervisor. Furthermore, it is implied that the student has extensive previous research experience so as to function on the same level as the supervisor. This idea can create huge difficulties for students with no previous research experience and from the onset it creates a negative feeling of incompetence on the part of the student.

- **Researcher-student model**

In this model, the supervisor is seen as actively taking part in the research project. He/she has a more directive approach and plays a cardinal role in sustaining interest and the way the student is approaching the topic. A power relationship between the supervisor and student still exists and a reasonable amount of research knowledge is expected from the student. According to Bhana, a negative effect coming from this model, might be that the student feels too much is expected from him/her.

- **Collaborative supervision**

This model includes the option of having a few researchers as supervisors and also a group of students that are organized around a certain research project. "The major advantage of this approach is that students enter into a relationship with the group on the basis of developing their research skills

and providing material and emotional support to each other" (Bhana, 2000:8).

The different models of supervision have definite implications for the roles and responsibilities that are placed on supervisors. According to Kruger and Van Niekerk (1991), supervision entails "a specialized form of individualised education involving both the spiritual and intellectual development of students" (1991:109).

The role of the supervisor, according to Kruger and Van Niekerk (1991), is threefold i.e. director, tutor and mentor/participant. The supervisor acting as a director, will structure his/her way of accompaniment and will manage the student's research effectively. This closely relates to the osmosis model of Bhana (1999). The supervisor as tutor will accompany students in the structuring of a study programme, in the execution of the research, in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme and in the writing of the research report. The role of mentor relates to the stimulation of students' intellectual and spiritual development. The last two roles clearly relate to the researcher-student model of Bhana (1999). Where the role of the supervisor is a participatory one, a shared feeling of responsibility and task accomplishment is needed. This then relates to the collaborative supervision model of Bhana (1999).

Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1999) have a slightly different approach to the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor. According to them, the process will differ according to three research or study phases i.e. the design phase, the work phase and the editing phase.

- **Design phase**

The student has to learn to be creative and systematic in his research. The supervisor's task in this phase is to help the student to choose a research topic. Moses (1985) stresses the importance of this role and even includes that the supervisor should assure that the topic is suitable for research, that



it will bring new insights and that it could be completed within a reasonable period of time.

Still, it is important that the student feel comfortable with the topic. Marais et al. (1998) did a study at RAU and found that almost a quarter of students didn't like their topics. It is not known what the recent trends are. Rudd (1985) also states the importance of information about different topic possibilities so that students can make an informed decision. If the student decides on a topic that falls outside of the scope of the supervisor's field of expertise, he/she should be advised to a suitable supervisor.

- **Work phase**

The student has to learn to undertake the study in a scientific manner. According to Moses (1985), the supervisor should help the student to find the most effective way to gather research, analyse the results, identify certain problems and come to certain recommendations. Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1991:12) provide two problems that can occur in the work phase:

- The student cannot distance him/herself from the literature and thus cannot produce a final draft.
- Social and intellectual isolation as a result of too close involvement in the project.

- **Editing phase**

It is important that the student receives sufficient guidance in writing a scientific report. The supervisor's responsibility in this phase is to know what the different criteria entail regarding the research report. During the first meetings, the structure of the final text as well as dates for presenting certain chapters should be discussed. According to Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1999), in most cases it is in this phase where the student and supervisor lose contact. For a student to stay motivated, it is of utmost importance that the guidance in this phase is effective. Certain problems



common to this phase include the structuring of the final text and a lack of scientific writing skills.

Smith (1999) differentiates between administrative and educational responsibilities of a supervisor. These responsibilities are based on findings of a study done in 1999 at three universities in the Western Cape.

### **Administrative responsibilities**

- Clear discussion about the degree requirements
- Frequent scheduling of consultations
- A document with clear expectations (of the student and supervisor)
- A schedule of when specific tasks should be completed

### **Educational responsibilities**

- To educate students in the analysis of results
- To provide constructive criticism
- To broaden the research skills of students
- To meet with other professionals and students in the area of research in order to provide external criticism
- To be able to identify the stage where the most guidance for each individual is needed
- To be able to meet the student's need for feedback

These responsibilities lead to certain expectations on the side of students. Smith (1999) provides a list of expectations that students might have:

- Students expect to get supervision.
- Students expect that their supervisors will read through their work.
- Students expect supervisors to be available for help.
- Students expect that their supervisors will provide them with constructive criticism.
- Students expect that their supervisors have a sufficient amount of knowledge about their area of research.

- Students expect their supervisors to share in their success and to help them in the possibility of getting an occupation by suggesting a research focus that is marketable.
- Students expect their supervisors to understand the roles and expectations assigned to them.
- Students expect their supervisors to state beforehand what they see as administrative and educational responsibilities.

It is not only the student, but also the supervisor that has certain expectations assuring an optimal guidance experience and success in postgraduate education. Mouton (2001) provides the following expectations that supervisors have of their students:

- Students have to keep to their research contract. The contract, which can be verbal or written, is very important to give a certain order in which tasks should be completed and can also help to focus the research framework.
- The student has to initiate contact and ask for appointments with the supervisor.
- The student has to know and understand that all institutions have certain formal requirements and rules regarding postgraduate studies.
- The student has to have an interest in the degree he/she is undertaking and that interest has to be maintained throughout the study.

In this chapter, the literature regarding postgraduate studies was discussed. The themes addressed in the two postal surveys were to a great extent based on issues from the literature study. Therefore, in my discussion of the survey results in Chapter 8, I will refer back to specific aspects of postgraduate studies and supervision as portrayed in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

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The empirical research for this study included three components. Firstly, two postal surveys were carried out at the University of Stellenbosch in 2000 in order to explore a representative sample of postgraduate students' attitudes and perceptions. Secondly, a secondary data analysis was done of existing data on the University database for postgraduate students in order to estimate success rates and follow through rates. Finally, interviews were conducted with coordinators of four postgraduate programmes at different departments in the Faculty of Arts.

The postal surveys can be seen as the primary research design – the design that directs the research. According to Huysamen (1993:132), surveys, of which postal surveys are an example, can be seen as the most common design used in the social sciences to test people's attitudes and perceptions. It was decided to make use of two postal surveys: one for "completed students" over a period from 1991 to 1999 and one for "current" students who were enrolled for a postgraduate program during 2000.

Because of the wide demographic spread of completed students, the only way to obtain their opinions was to send questionnaires to their most recent addresses provided in the student database. Furthermore, because of the huge amount of non-residential current students not living in Stellenbosch, the use of postal surveys was the logical choice. What follows, is an exposition of the background to the choice of the primary research design.

#### **3.1. Background to choice of design**

According to Babbie et al. (2001) the choice of a research design largely depends on:



- The aim of the study
- The focus of the study
- The unit of analysis
- The time dimension

### **3.1.1 The aim of the study**

This study aimed to determine postgraduate students' attitudes and perceptions towards their postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch. It is explorative in that no such study had previously been done at the University and it thus serves as a basis for further study regarding this topic. According to Babbie et al. (2001), "a large proportion of social research is conducted to explore a topic, or to provide a basic familiarity with that topic. This approach is typical when a researcher examines a new interest when the subject of study itself is relatively new" (2001:79).

### **3.1.2 The focus of the study**

According to Bless and Higson-Smit (2000:35), the focus of research depends on the type of social phenomena being studied. Social phenomena include the following:

- Conditions
- Orientations
- Actions

This study focuses on orientations. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995:64), research focusing on orientations is concerned with people's attitudes and beliefs". The focus of this study was postgraduate students' attitudes and perceptions of their postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch.

### **3.1.3 The unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis is the object, phenomena, entity, process or situation being under study (see Babbie et al., 2001). In this study, data were collected on individual postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch. The unit of analysis is the individual.

### **3.1.4 The time dimension**

This study can be described as a cross-sectional study. According to Babbie et al. 2001:91), "many research projects are designed to study some phenomenon by taking a cross section of it at one time and analyzing that cross section carefully".

The data collection and analysis for the primary research design was done in 2000.

### **3.1.5 Validity of the primary research design**

The aim of the study was to determine a logical link between the independent variable (i.e demographic profiles, nature of postgraduate studies and supervision) and the dependent variable (i.e. perceptions of postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch). The potential of the research design to reach this aim, is regarded as the validity of the design. Validity is determined by two dimensions i.e. internal and external validity (see Du Toit, 2001).

External validity depends on the extent to which the results of the research are applicable to all the subjects in the population. In this study, all Master`s and Doctoral students for the period 1991 to 2000 were considered.

Internal validity depends on the way to which changes in the independent variable describe changes in the dependent variable. The aim of the research design is to identify all possible factors that can influence the dependent variables. A cross-sectional study is limited in that it does not

account for the time dimension. Time-bound factors such as history and social circumstances can have a huge impact on responses. To this end, secondary data on the university database for postgraduate students were also utilized. It included demographical information on students such as age, race, gender, type of accommodation and marital status.

### **3.1.6 Additional research designs**

The primary research design (the postal surveys) was supported with secondary data and interviews.

#### **3.1.6.1 Secondary data**

Two reasons can be given for the use of the secondary data obtained from the University database: firstly, as mentioned earlier, it accounts for the time dimension. This is extremely important in a study on through-put rates at universities in South Africa where the higher education system experienced drastic socio-political transformations in the last decade. Secondly, because of the high reactivity of postal surveys, they can lead to socially desirable responses. The analysis of secondary data is non-reactive because the respondents do not know that they are being studied.

The main limitation to secondary data is that a researcher has no power over the method of data gathering. Errors in data collection (and data entry) can be verified through cross tabulations.

#### **3.1.6.2 Interviews**

The interviews with coordinators of different postgraduate programmes had as aim the identification of examples of "best practice" in postgraduate teaching. The researcher is aware of the fact that representativeness cannot be assured with the inclusion of only four programmes, but as the aim of the interviews was to elaborate on the findings from the surveys, it was seen as sufficient. Possible follow up studies can be done to explore tendencies between faculties and also between universities.



## **3.2 Methodology**

### **3.2.1 Selection of respondents**

#### **3.2.1.1 Sample design for postal surveys and secondary data**

The target population was defined as Master`s and Doctoral students at the University of Stellenbosch. It was decided to include the total number of completed Master`s and Doctoral students for 1991 to 1999 (n=4563) and current Master`s and Doctoral students for the year 2000 (n=3510) in the target population. Students were identified on the University`s central database for postgraduate students. The database served as the sample frame and was later used for the secondary data analysis. A differentiation was made between completed and current students so as to be able to identify possible differences in perceptions. Because of the fact that honours students in many environments are seen as part of undergraduate studies, they were not included in the study population.

#### **3.2.1.2 Interviews**

During 2001, interviews were conducted with coordinators of four different postgraduate programmes in the Faculty of Arts, i.e. the Master`s programme in Ancient Cultures, the Master`s programme in Clinical Psychology, the Master`s programme in Applied Ethics and the Master`s programme in Value and Policy Studies. These programmes were selected on the basis of their ability to set a new, innovative model for postgraduate teaching and supervision. It was decided to focus on programmes in the Arts Faculty, the reason being that the majority of respondents (451=37%) undertook (completed students) or is undertaking (current students) their studies at this Faculty. Also, the majority of students were/are enrolled for a postgraduate programme consisting either of coursework and a mini-thesis or coursework and a full thesis (59%). If one looks at the average duration of study for completed students, these students were the ones having the best completion rates – they generally took two years and less to complete their studies.

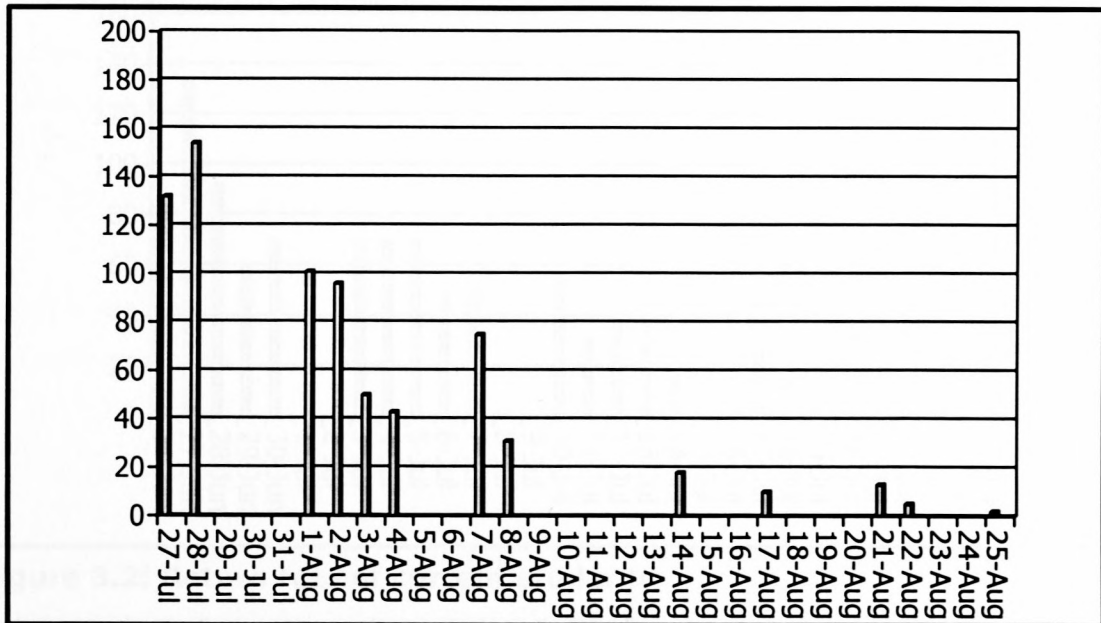
The results of the interviews will be discussed in Chapter 7. An interview schedule is provided in Appendix B.

### **3.2.2 Procedure for data collection**

#### **3.2.2.1 Postal surveys**

The primary data for this study were collected by means of postal surveys. Two questionnaires were designed and translated into Afrikaans and English. The addresses of postgraduate students were extracted from the University database and questionnaires were posted to them. The questionnaires for the completed students were sent out during May 2000 and those for current students during June 2000. The return dates for the questionnaires were 15 July 2000 and 7 August 2000 respectively. An incentive in the form of a book prize was promised to 10 students (5 completed and 5 current students) who returned their completed questionnaires within the given time period. The final date for the acceptance of completed questionnaires was later extended to 30 August 2000 due to factors such as holidays and exams having possibly played a role in the return thereof. Altogether 980 completed questionnaires for completed students and 730 for current students were returned. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 provide a breakdown of the return rate for completed and current questionnaires.

### Figure 3.1: Return rate of completed students

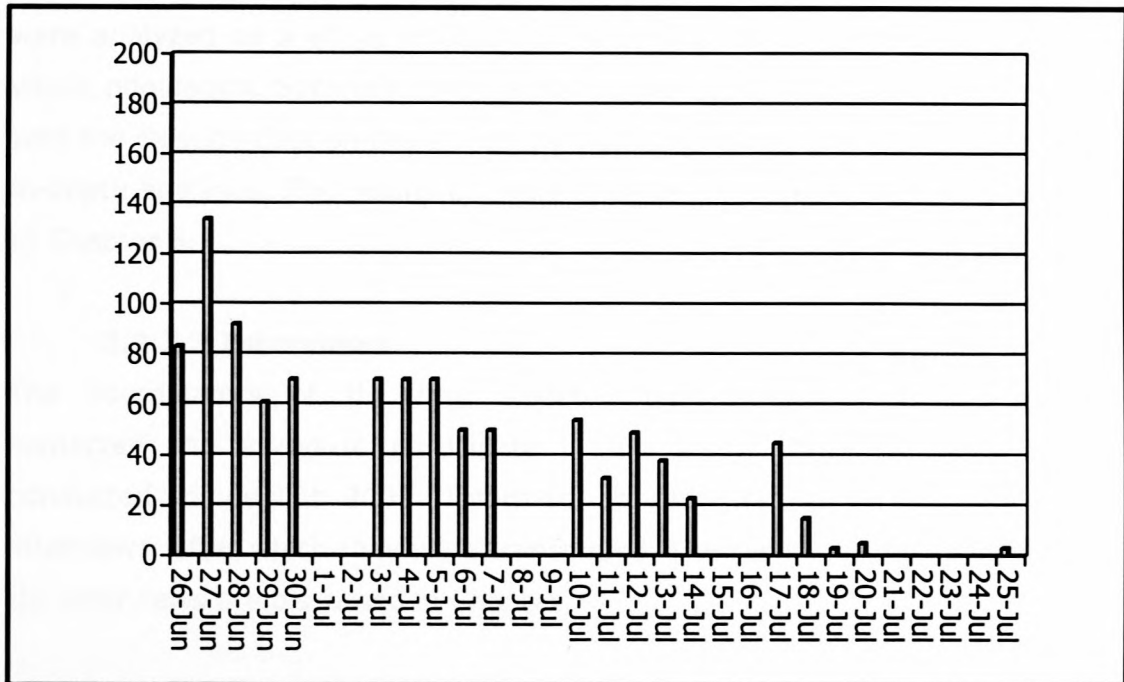


Total number of questionnaires sent out: 4563

Total number of questionnaires returned: 980

Return rate: 21.5%





**Figure 3.2: Return rate of current students**

Total number of questionnaires sent out: 3510

Total number of questionnaires returned: 730

Return rate: 25.6%

### 3.2.2.2 Secondary data

The data from the completed questionnaires were integrated with the student data on the University database for postgraduate students. Each student's responses on the questionnaire was correlated with the information already available on the database. All responses were seen as highly confidential and were only used in aggregated format.

Data on all Master's and Doctoral students for the period 1991 to 1999 were extracted from the central University database and stored in MS Access format. Information on the following was extracted:

- Biographical information on students
- Academic information (from matric results to highest qualification)

Two types of analyses were done on the secondary data: Firstly, the data were analyzed as a whole in order to determine the success rates for the whole population. Secondly, the results of the questionnaires were merged with the existing data on the University database in order to perform further in-depth analyses. The results of these analyses are presented in Chapter 4 to Chapter 6.

### **3.2.2.3 Interviews**

The coordinators of the four selected postgraduate programs were contacted and asked to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted in August 2001. Informed consent was given to tape the interviews, after which they were transcribed. The results of the analyses of the interviews are discussed in Chapter 7.

### **3.2.2.4 Ethical considerations during data collection**

The following steps were taken during data collection to account for ethical considerations:

- Participation in the research was voluntary.
- Confidentiality was assured. Information were reported only in aggregated format. Individual responses were not made public.

## **3.2.3 Measuring instruments**

### **3.2.3.1 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were designed to serve as the measuring instrument for the primary data. Two questionnaires were generated. In the design of the questionnaires, the researcher kept to the basic principles of questionnaire construction as set out by Babbie et al. (2001) and Mouton (2001). Although the two questionnaires included the same questions, additional guidelines were given to current students to only complete sections relating to them. If for example a current student was not in the process of writing a thesis and therefore had received no supervision up to date, the student

were instructed not to complete the section relating to supervision. Furthermore, the sentence construction in the questionnaire for current students was changed to the present time. Both questionnaires were translated into Afrikaans and English to accommodate more students.

The questionnaires included the following broad themes:

- What students' experiences of postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch were/are.
- Which factors played a role in their selection of programmes/supervisors.
- Which factors (enabling and constraining) played a role in the completion or non-completion of their studies.

Three sections were included in the questionnaires. The questions were constructed according to factors portrayed in the literature as having a possible influence on certain perceptions that postgraduate students might have of their studies. The three sections are as follows:

- **Section A: Background information**

Included in this section are demographic information (i.e. the period between matric and commencement of studies, relevance of postgraduate studies for current occupation etc.) as well as information regarding the nature of the programme they were/are enrolled for.

- **Section B: Perception of postgraduate studies at the US**

In this section, questions on specific factors identified in the literature that might have an impact on postgraduate students' perception of their studies, are included.



- **Section C: Perception of supervisor/promotor**

The literature showed that the perception of and relationship with the supervisor is one of the most important factors in the success of postgraduate studies. It was therefore decided to have a separate section for questions relating to the supervisor/promotor.

An example of the English questionnaire for completed students is included in Appendix A.

### **3.2.3.2 Interview schedule**

An interview schedule was designed with certain standard questions put to all four coordinators. Furthermore, certain programme-specific questions were incorporated and in that sense the schedule can be seen as semi-structured. The schedule included questions on the following: background information on the specific programmes, questions relating to the students who are enrolled for the specific programmes and also the programme-specific questions. A detailed interview schedule is included in Appendix B.

### **3.2.4 Analysis of quantitative data**

Statistical procedures were used for the analysis of the quantitative data generated from the questionnaires as well as the secondary data extracted from the University database. Each respondent's questionnaire responses were merged with the existing information on that particular student on the database. It was then exported to the statistical software package SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) where the quantitative analysis took place. The following were included in the analysis:

- Descriptive statistical procedures
- Inferential statistical procedures

### **3.2.5 Analysis of qualitative data**

The qualitative data generated from the interviews were analyzed with ATLAS/ti. It is a software package for qualitative data analysis. Certain

categories of responses were identified and quotations were extracted to show certain tendencies.

### **3.2.6 Methodological and practical constraints**

A number of methodological and practical constraints emerged:

- It was difficult to find the most recent postal addresses of graduate students. The University has an Alumni database but it is dependent on graduate students to fill in change of address forms and some never do. I received numerous phone calls of people saying we have the wrong address or that the particular person does not stay at the address anymore. Unfortunately, I was unable to trace these students and they were lost to the study.
- On the first page of the questionnaire, a sticker with the student's name and student number appeared. Although we ensured confidentiality by indicating that the student number would only be used to link each student's responses to the information we already have on the University database, a number of students were reluctant to complete the questionnaire. Some even removed the sticker after they completed the questionnaire – thereby making it impossible to link their responses to the database.
- In terms of the interviews with coordinators, their busy schedules made it in some cases difficult to find suitable time slots to conduct the interviews. Initially five interviews were planned. One respondent refused to do the interview on tape and also refused that any of his responses be used in the study unless his permission was provided. As this would have had an impact on the quality of the transcription and the interview in general, it was decided to exclude it from the study.
- The reader should keep in mind that the survey results presented in Chapters 4 to 6 are only applicable to the University of Stellenbosch and thus cannot be generalized to other universities. Also, the programmes that were selected to be included in Chapter 7, were

In Chapters 4 to 6, the results of the quantitative data will be presented. Numerical data will be presented in the form of tables and figures. The qualitative data will be presented in Chapter 7 in the form of relevant textual quotations taken from the interviews. A general discussion of the main findings and certain recommendations will be made in Chapter 8.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DEMOGRAPHICS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON STUDENTS**

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In this chapter, the demographic profiles and certain academic relevant background information of completed and current postgraduate students are discussed. Both seem to play a role in the success of postgraduate studies and reference will be made to these profiles and information when the completion and success rates are discussed in Chapter 6.

#### **4.1 Demographic profiles of students**

The most important demographic characteristics of completed and current postgraduate students are summarized below. This information was extracted from the University database for postgraduate students and relates to the whole population. Information on the following variables will be provided:

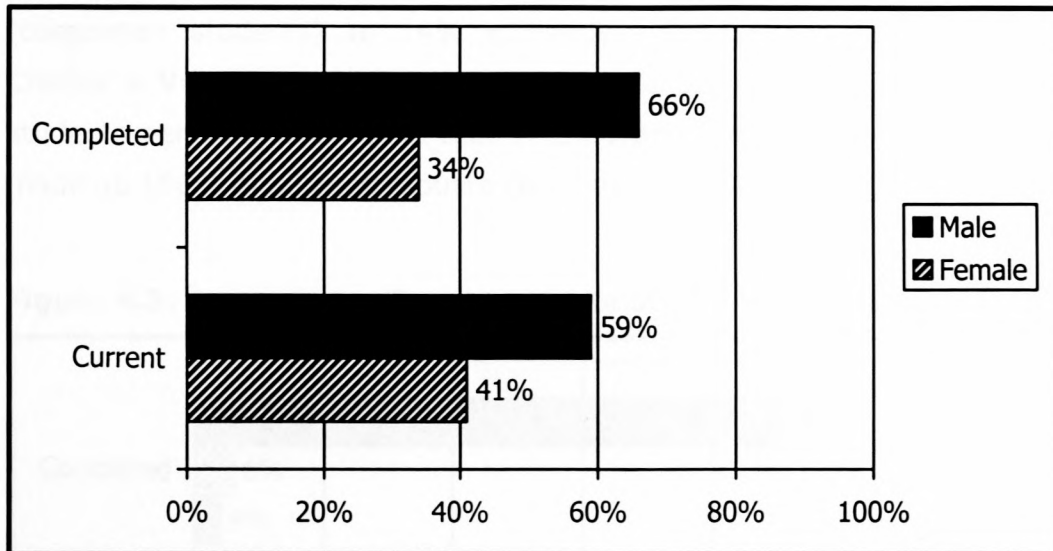
- Gender
- Race
- Age
- Language of communication
- Faculty

##### **4.1.1 Gender**

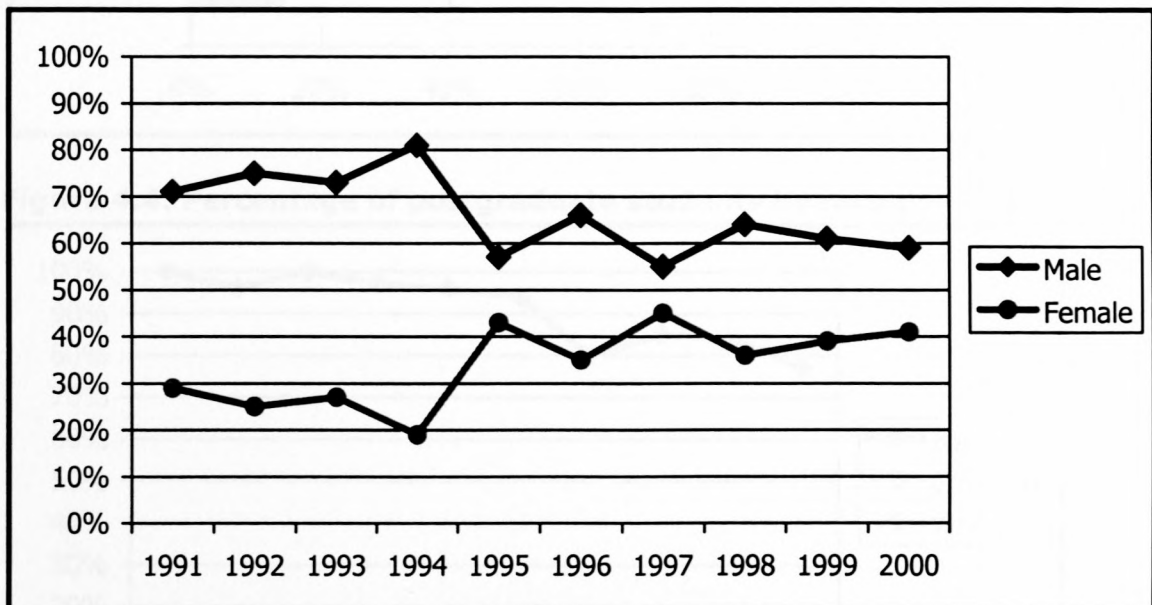
The majority of postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch are male. This trend seems to have lasted over the past decade. Currently though, it seems as if a significantly larger number of female students are being enrolled as compared to the case a few years ago (41% compared to 34% in the past). (Chi-square=6.945,  $p < 0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.066$ ). Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of completed and current postgraduate students

by gender. The decrease of male students over the past 10 years is presented in Figure 4.2.

**Figure 4.1: Percentage of postgraduate students by gender**



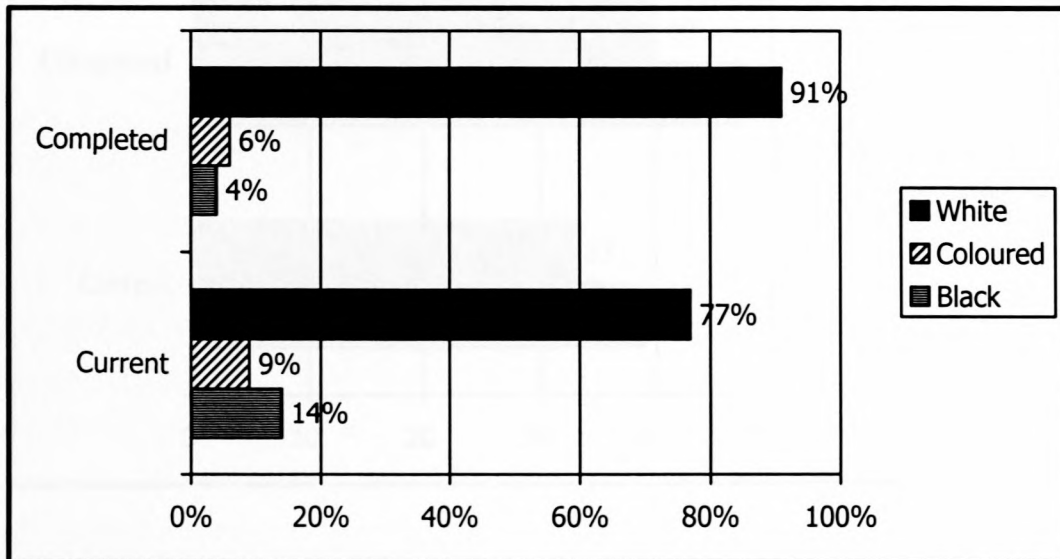
**Figure 4.2: Percentage of postgraduate students by gender per year**



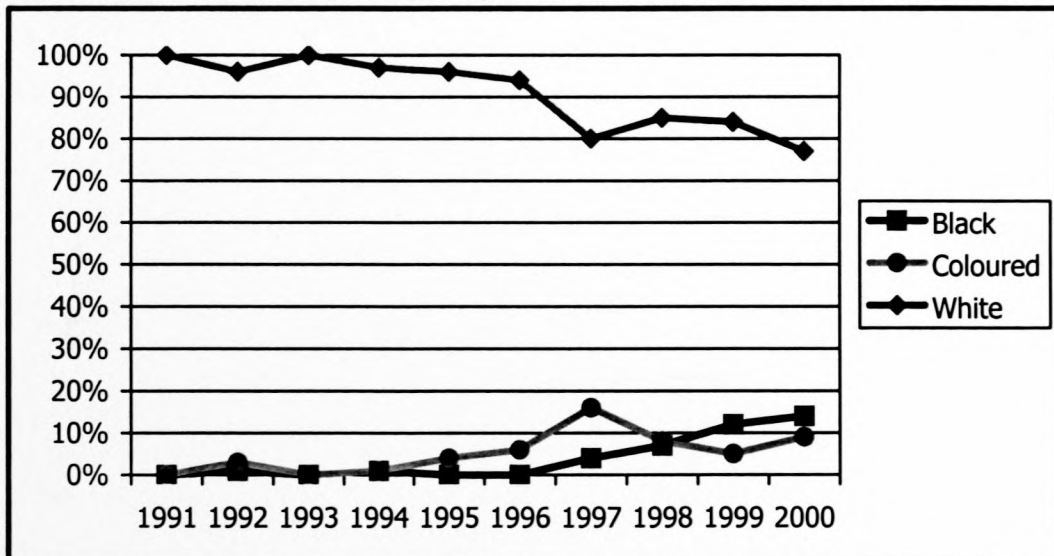
#### 4.1.2 Race

From Figure 4.3, it is clear that the composition of postgraduate students changed from almost exclusively white (91% for completed students) to just more than three quarters white (77% for current students). The highest increase seems to be in the percentage of black students – from 4% (completed students) to 14% currently. (Chi-square=58.999,  $p < 0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.197$ ). Figure 4.4 presents the composition of postgraduate students per year and shows that in 1991 and 1993, white students have made up 100% of all postgraduate students.

**Figure 4.3: Percentage of postgraduate students by race**



**Figure 4.4: Percentage of postgraduate students by race per year**

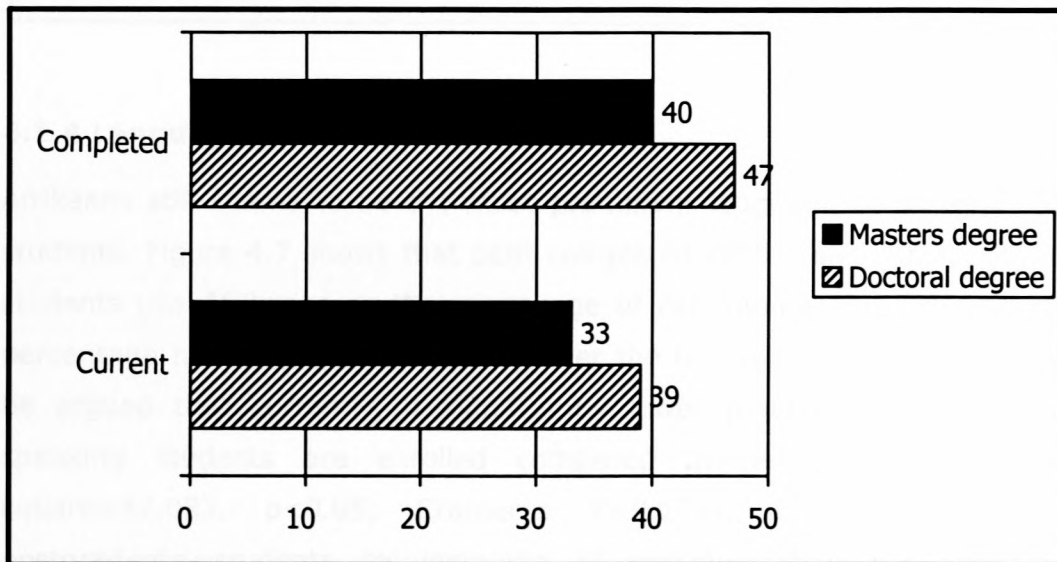


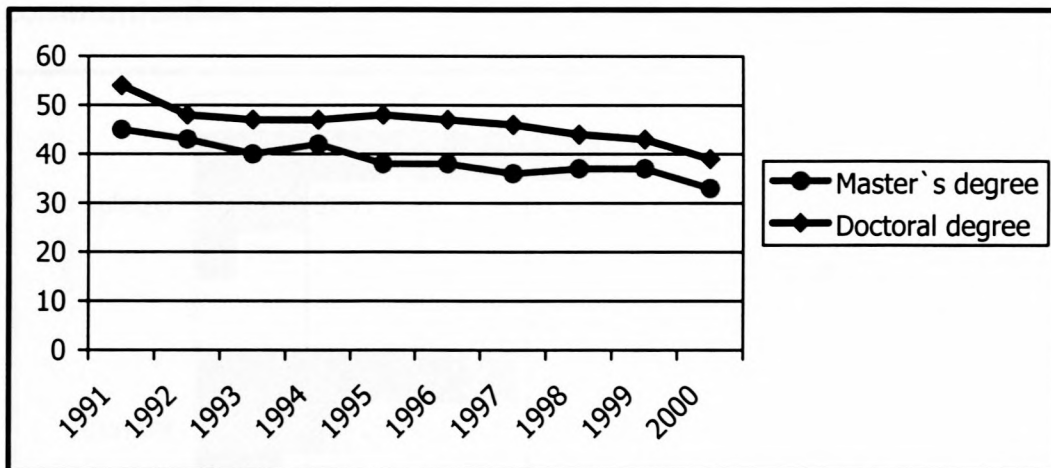


### 4.1.3 Age

Figure 4.5 shows the average age of completed and current students. The average age of the whole population is 38 years. The average age of current students (36 years) is significantly lower than that of completed students (44 years) ( $t=12.153$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Figure 4.6 presents the average age of Master's and Doctoral students per year. It shows that the average age of both groups have decreased over the period from 1991 to 2000.

**Figure 4.5: Average age of postgraduate students**

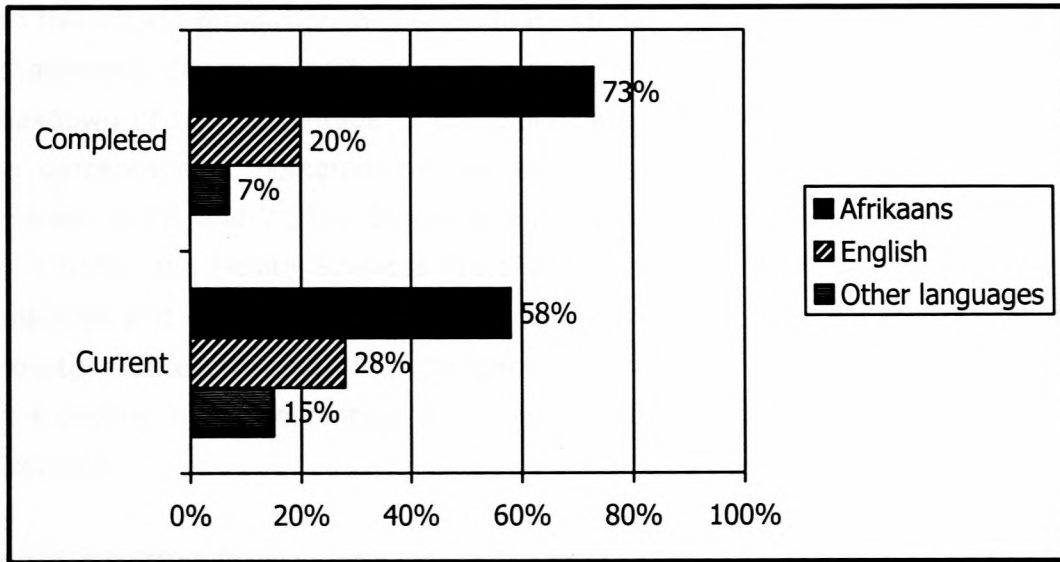


**Figure 4.6: Average age of postgraduate students per year**

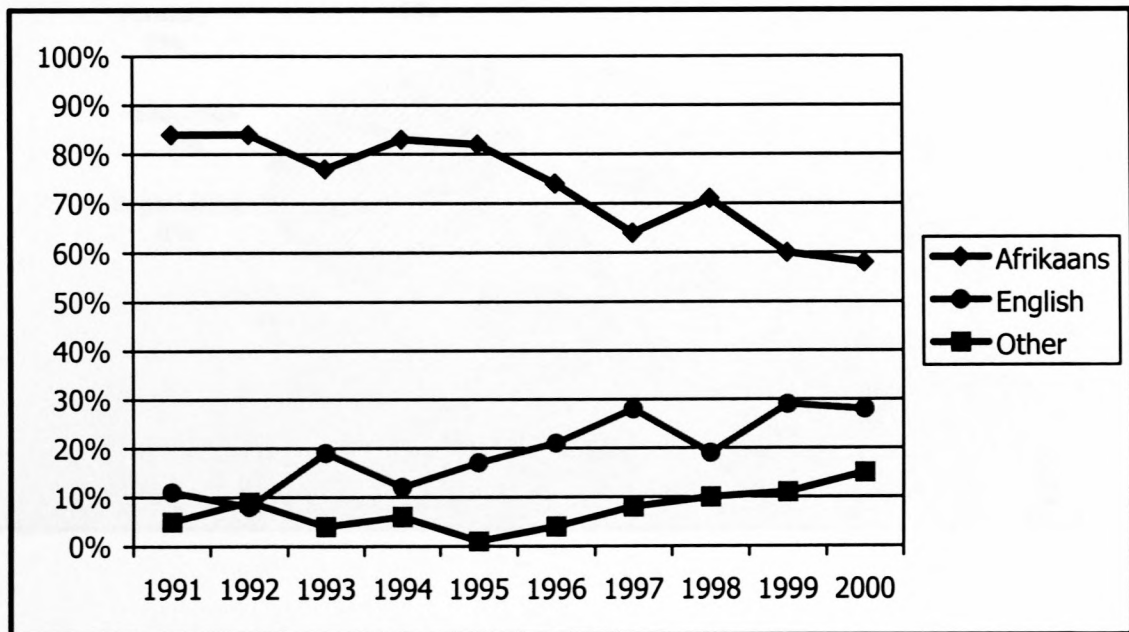
#### 4.1.4 Language of communication

Afrikaans still seems to be the most prominent language of postgraduate students. Figure 4.7 shows that both completed (73%) and current (58%) students use Afrikaans as their language of communication, although the percentage has dropped significantly over the ten year period. It can thus be argued that currently, a significantly lower percentage of Afrikaans speaking students are enrolled compared to ten years ago. (Chi-square=47.083,  $p < 0.05$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.173$ ). The percentage of postgraduate students by language of communication per year are presented in Figure 4.8 and shows that the first decline in the number of Afrikaans speaking students have occurred in 1993.

**Figure 4.7: Percentage of postgraduate students by language of communication**



**Figure 4.8: Percentage of postgraduate students by language of communication per year**

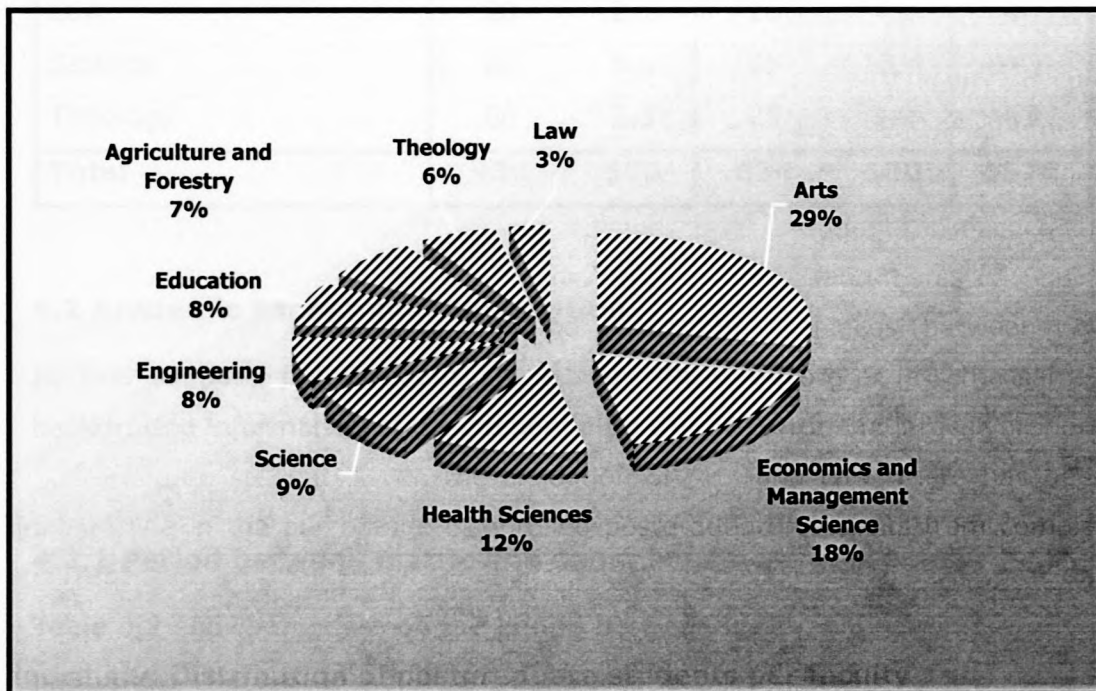




#### 4.1.5 Faculty

Figure 4.9 shows the distribution of postgraduate students per faculty. Faculties with the largest proportion of postgraduate students are Arts (29%), Economic and Management Sciences (18%) and Health Sciences (12%). Table 4.5 provides a breakdown of the percentage of completed and current students in each faculty. The percentage of postgraduate students in Agriculture and Forestry Sciences (between 7.1% and 7.5%), Economic and Management Sciences (between 17.4% and 17.5%) and Health Sciences (12.1%) have stayed more or less the same for completed and current students. The Arts Faculty caters for the largest proportion of postgraduate students. With the exception of Arts and Law, there has been a slight decline in the percentage of enrolled postgraduate students from completed to current.

**Figure 4.9: Distribution of postgraduate students per faculty**



**Table 4.1: Breakdown of completed and current postgraduate students per faculty**

Faculty	Group				Total
	Completed		Current		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Agriculture and Forestry Sciences	70	7.5	45	7.1	115
Arts	258	27.6	193	30.5	451
Economic and Management Sciences	163	17.4	111	17.5	274
Education	88	9.4	37	5.8	125
Engineering	94	10.0	35	5.5	129
Health Sciences	113	12.1	77	12.2	190
Law	20	2.1	26	4.1	46
Science	62	6.6	85	13.4	147
Theology	68	7.3	25	3.9	93
Total	936	100	634	100	1570

## 4.2 Academic background information

In this section, results from the survey data relating to the academic background information of the respondents will be presented.

### 4.2.1 Period between matric and commencement of studies

Table 4.2 shows the data on the period between matric and commencement of studies. There is no significant difference between completed and current postgraduate students regarding the time passed before they started with their undergraduate studies (Chi-square=4.499,  $p=0.212$ ; Cramer's  $V=0.052$ ). However, it is clear that more than half of all postgraduate students (completed and current) commenced with their studies directly after matric (66% and 69%).

**Table 4.2: Period between matric and commencement of studies**

Period	Group				Total
	Completed		Current		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Directly after matric	638	66	497	69	1135
One year after matric	115	12	80	11	195
Two years after matric	64	6	54	8	118
More than two years after matric	155	16	91	12	246
Total	972	100	722	100	1694

#### 4.2.2 Period between completion of undergraduate studies and commencement of postgraduate studies

Table 4.3 shows that completed and current students do not differ significantly regarding their response to the question how long after completion of undergraduate studies they commenced with their postgraduate studies (50% of completed and 55% of current students commenced directly after their undergraduate studies).

**Table 4.3: Have you commenced with your postgraduate studies directly after completion of undergraduate studies?**

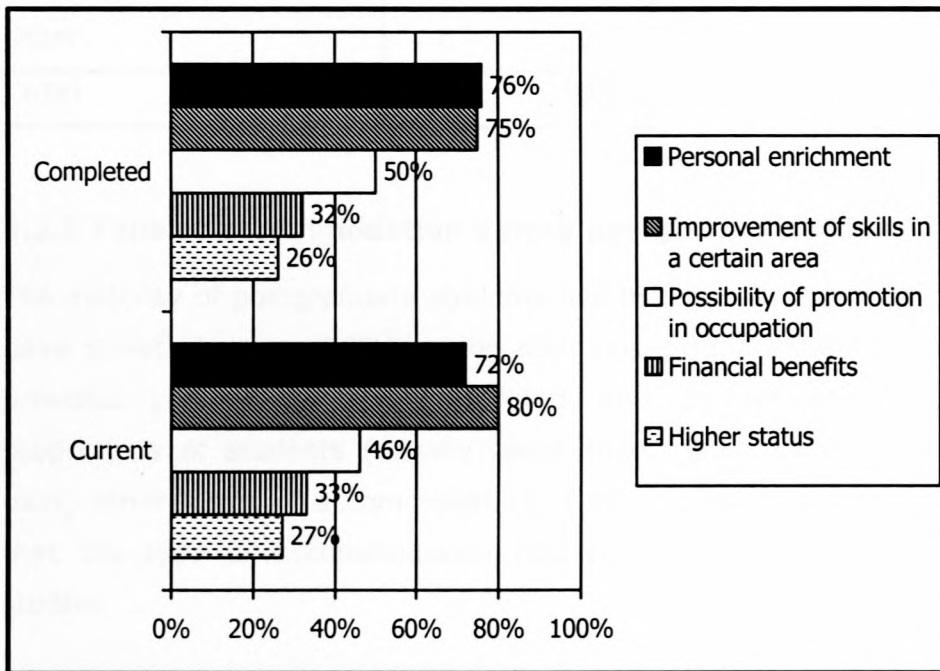
	Group			
	Completed		Current	
	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	485	50	391	55
No	481	50	326	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>100</b>



#### 4.2.3 Motivation for further studies

Figure 4.10 lists the five aspects that have received the highest support in terms of motivation to commence with postgraduate studies. For both completed and current students, the improvement of skills in a certain area (between 75% and 80%) and personal enrichment (between 72% and 80%) are the biggest motivators to enroll for a postgraduate program.

**Figure 4.10: Motivation for further studies**



#### 4.2.4 Main source of funding for postgraduate studies

The primary source of funding for studies was/is the student him/herself (completed=43% and current 38%). Bursaries are the second most important source, followed by loans and other sources. A larger proportion of current students receive bursaries (26%) compared to completed students (17%).

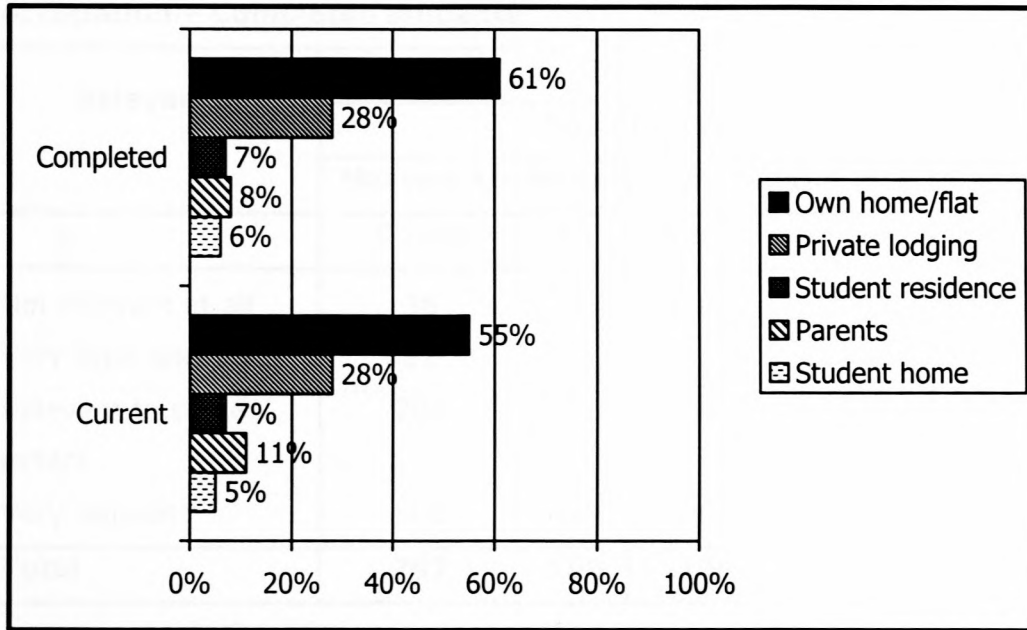
**Table 4.4: Main source of funding for postgraduate studies**

Source	Group				Total
	Completed		Current		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Parents	52	6	33	5	85
Student him/herself	397	43	239	38	636
Loan	77	8	39	6	116
Employer	160	17	100	16	260
Bursaries	163	17	165	26	328
Other	87	9	55	9	142
Total	936	100	631	100	1567

#### 4.2.5 Type of accommodation during postgraduate studies

The majority of postgraduate students live in their own home/flat (58%) or have private lodging (28%) during their postgraduate studies. Figure 4.11 provides percentages for completed and current students. Smaller proportions of students (usually fewer than 10%) used or are currently using other forms of accommodation. Three quarters of students reported that the type of accommodation had no impact on their postgraduate studies.

**Figure 4.11: Type of accommodation during postgraduate studies**



#### 4.2.6 Relevance of postgraduate studies for current occupation

Tables 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 show that the majority of master's and doctoral students, completed and current, feel that their postgraduate studies are very relevant for their current occupation. There seems to be a difference in the percentage of "very relevant" responses of completed (68%) and current (86%) students, with current students reporting more positively. It is notable that the difference is bigger for Doctoral students than Master's students.



**Table 4.5.1: Relevance of postgraduate studies for current occupation – Completed students**

Relevance	Group				Total
	Completed				
	Masters students		Doctoralstudents		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Not relevant at all	36	5	8	7	44
Very little relevance	51	6	9	7	60
Relevant to some extent	204	25	22	18	226
Very relevant	506	64	81	68	587
Total	797	100	120	100	917

**Table 4.5.2: Relevance of postgraduate studies for current occupation – Current students**

Relevance	Group				Total
	Current				
	Masters students		Doctoral students		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Not relevant at all	17	5			17
Very little relevance	12	3	4	5	16
Relevant to some extent	79	22	7	9	86
Very relevant	253	70	67	86	320
Total	361	100	78	100	439

**4.2.7 Postgraduate studies as preparation for current occupation**

Almost two thirds of all the respondents reported that their postgraduate studies to a great extent prepared them for their current occupation. In the case of completed students, a significantly larger percentage of Doctoral

students (73%) than Master`s students (66%) reported that their studies have prepared them for their current occupation.

**Table 4.6.1: Postgraduate studies as preparation for current occupation – Completed students**

Level of preparation	Group				Total
	Completed				
	Masters students		Doctoral students		
	Count	%	Count	%	
To no extent	60	8	14	12	74
To some extent	207	26	18	15	225
To a large extent	512	66	88	73	600
Total	779	100	120	100	899

**Table 4.6.2: Postgraduate studies as preparation for current occupation - Current students**

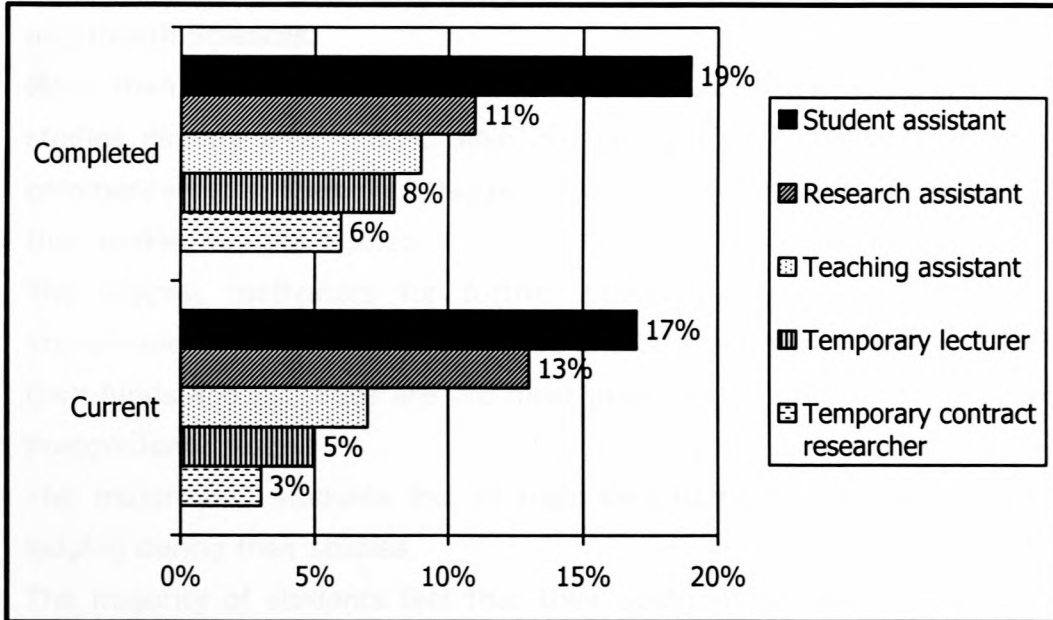
Level of preparation	Group				Total
	Current				
	Masters students		Doctoral students		
	Count	%	Count	%	
To no extent	27	7	4	5	31
To some extent	110	30	19	24	129
To a large extent	233	63	56	71	289
Total	370	100	79	100	449

#### **4.2.8 Involvement in activities of home department**

In general, small percentages (fewer than 20%) of postgraduate students were/are involved in their home department. The most important involvements are shown in Figure 4.12. It seems that the greatest

involvement is in the form of student assistantships (17% to 19%) and research assistantships (11% to 13%).

**Figure 4.12: Involvement in activities of home department**



### 4.3 Concluding comments

The demography and academic backgrounds of postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch reveal the following:

- The majority of completed and current postgraduate students are male. Although this is currently still the case, the percentage of female students is increasing.
- The racial distribution of postgraduate students changed from exclusively white (in the nineties) to just more than three quarters white in 2000. A larger proportion of black students are currently enrolled.
- The average age of students is 38 years. Students who are currently enrolled are on average younger than their counterparts between 1991 and 1999.



- Although Afrikaans still seems to be the predominant language of communication, the percentage of Afrikaans speaking students has dropped.
- The largest proportion of postgraduate students seem to be enrolled for programmes in the Arts Faculty, Economic and Management Sciences and Health Sciences.
- More than half of all students commenced with their undergraduate studies directly after matric. Also, just more than half of all students commenced with their postgraduate studies directly after completion of their undergraduate studies.
- The biggest motivators for further study are reported to be the improvement of skills in a certain area and personal enrichment.
- Own funds and bursaries are the most prominent sources of funding for postgraduate studies.
- The majority of students live in their own home/flat or have private lodging during their studies.
- The majority of students feel that their postgraduate studies are very relevant for their current occupation and almost three quarters reported that their postgraduate studies were to a great extent preparing them for their current occupation.
- Only a small percentage of postgraduate students were/are in one way or another way involved in the activities of their home department. The greatest involvement was in the form of student and research assistantships.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPERVISOR/PROMOTOR**

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The different dimensions of the relationship between the student and supervisor/promotor are as follows:

- Aspects regarding contact (frequency and initiation of contact)
- Provision of information to student and guidance needed
- Quality of supervision as rated by the student
- Aspects of student support
- Nature and speed of supervisor feedback

It is important to note that the responses to these items do not have the same meaning or relevance to students from the two samples. A distinction between completed and current students will be made throughout this chapter because of the fact that the distinction (at least in principal) might influence responses to these items. Furthermore, the possibility of supervision relates to the nature of the programme, being either structured or a full thesis. For these reasons, respondents were specifically asked to complete only the questions relating to their situation.

#### **5.1 Aspects of contact**

##### **5.1.1 Frequency of contact**

The responses to the question of frequency of contact make more sense for students who have graduated. Only their responses are shown in Table 5.1. It seems that more than half (58%) of completed Master's students had contact with their supervisor/promotor on a weekly or monthly basis. More than half (58%) of completed Doctoral students reported contact between

monthly and three/four times per year. The differences in responses between Master`s and Doctoral students are significant (Chi-square=12.430,  $p<0.05$ ; Cramer`s  $V=0.118$ ). More than half of all postgraduate students reported that they only had contact three or four times per year, infrequently or never. Regarding the contact with a co-supervisor/co-promotor, completed Master`s (39%) and Doctoral (49%) students reported between monthly and three to four times per year. The difference between Master`s and Doctoral students is significant (Chi-square=18.508,  $p<0.05$ ; Cramer`s  $V=0.227$ ).

**Table 5.1: Frequency of contact with supervisor/co-supervisor – Completed students**

Frequency of contact (supervisor)	Completed				Total
	Masters		Doctoral		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Never	4	1	1	1	5
Weekly	244	31	22	19	266
Monthly	213	27	33	28	246
Three/Four times a year	167	21	36	30	203
Infrequently (less than three times per year)	59	8	6	5	65
Other	93	12	20	17	113
Frequency of contact (co-supervisor)	Completed				Total
	Masters		Doctoral		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Never	44	15	3	5	47
Weekly	54	18	7	12	61
Monthly	64	21	8	14	72
Three/Four times a year	55	18	20	35	75
Infrequently (less than three times per year)	56	19	8	14	64
Other	27	9	12	21	39



### 5.1.2 Initiation of contact

From Tables 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 it is clear that contact were/is mostly initiated equally by both by the supervisor/promotor and the student him/herself. This tendency relates to Master`s and Doctoral students, completed and current (completed = between 49% and 50%; current = 47%).

**Table 5.2.1: Initiation of contact – Completed students**

Initiation of contact	Completed				Total
	Masters		Doctoral		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Always by my supervisor/co-supervisor	14	2	2	2	16
Mostly by my supervisor/co-supervisor	30	4	8	7	38
Equally by my supervisor/co-supervisor and me	391	50	59	49	450
Mostly by myself	254	32	37	31	291
Always by myself	69	9	10	8	79
Other	26	3	4	3	30
Total	784	100	120	100	904

**Table 5.2.2: Initiation of contact – Current students**

Initiation of contact	Current				Total
	Masters		Doctoral		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Always by my supervisor/co-supervisor	4	1	2	2	6
Mostly by my supervisor/co-supervisor	22	5	1	1	23
Equally by my supervisor/co-supervisor and me	220	47	49	47	269
Mostly by myself	127	27	36	35	163
Always by myself	75	16	10	10	85
Other	18	4	5	5	23
Total	466	100	103	100	569

## 5.2 Provision of information to the student and guidance needed

### 5.2.1 Provision of information to the student

Table 5.3 summarizes the responses to the question: On which formal aspects of your study did you receive information? It is clear that supervisors do not provide sufficient information regarding the different aspects of the process of supervision and that students can expect better information regarding it. The majority of completed students (73%) and current students (59) reported that they received information regarding the process/scheduling of the study. Completed students also seem to have been informed about the examination of the seminars/thesis/dissertation (73%). The table provides a picture of a relationship that is highly unstructured. There is no sense of a research contract or of students' rights. All of this suggests a very informal, ad hoc type of relationship – one that is not understood as requiring management.

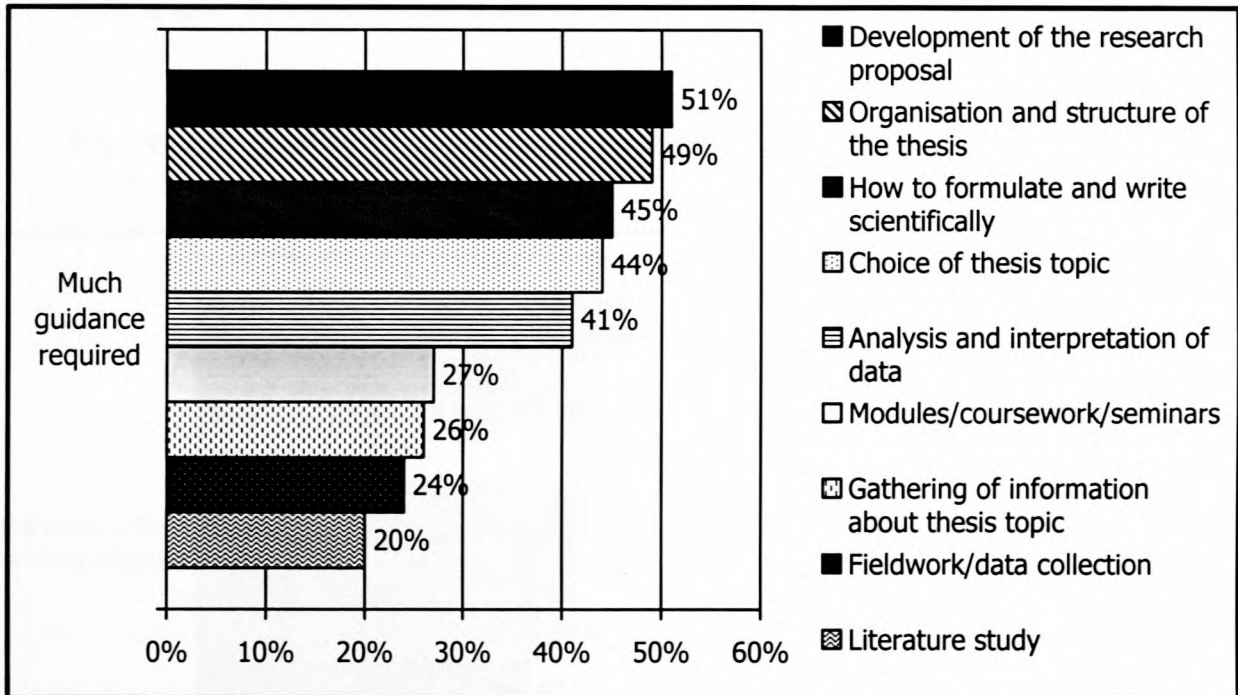
**Table 5.3 Information received from supervisor/promotor**

Aspect		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
Your responsibility as a postgraduate student	Yes	469	48	362	50	831
	No	511	52	368	50	879
Your rights as a postgraduate student	Yes	154	16	132	18	286
	No	826	84	598	82	1424
A research agreement/contract	Yes	237	24	169	23	406
	No	743	76	559	77	1302
The process/scheduling of your studies	Yes	745	76	432	59	1177
	No	235	24	296	41	531
The examination of seminars/thesis/dissertation	Yes	719	73	341	47	1060
	No	261	26	387	53	648
The weights of components of the study	Yes	443	45	293	40	736
	No	537	55	435	60	972

### 5.2.2 Aspects of study where guidance from supervisor is needed

Figure 5.1 provides a list of the aspects of study where students reported much guidance needed. The aspect that needed most guidance seems to be the development of a research proposal with 51% of students having reported that much guidance is needed. Only 24% reported that they needed guidance with the fieldwork/data collection and 20% said that they needed much guidance with the literature research.



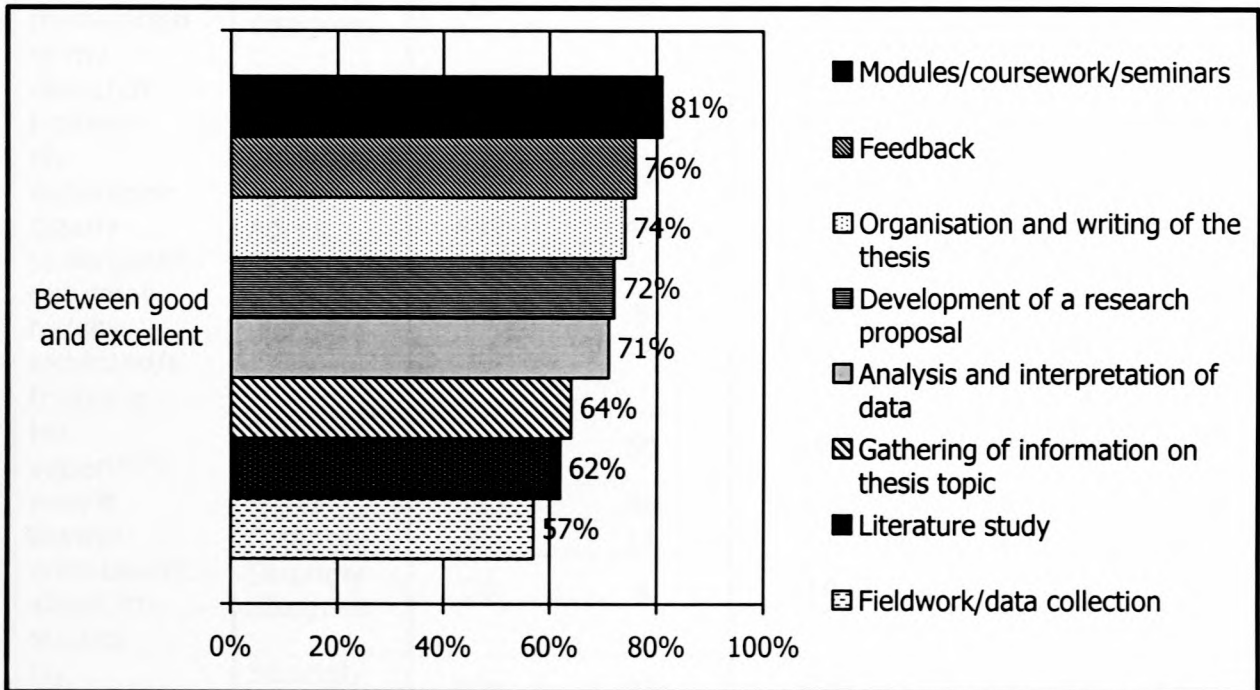
**Figure 5.1: Aspects where much guidance is needed**

### 5.3 Quality of supervision as reported by students

The students generally reported positively regarding the quality of supervision they received. In no instance was an "average" or "very poor" rating in the majority. It is nevertheless interesting and significant that ratings on the quality of supervision on aspects such as "fieldwork and data collection" and "literature research" were not extremely positive with 57% reporting between good and excellent on quality of supervision regarding fieldwork and data collection and 62% regarding the literature research. This is compared to 81% reporting between good and excellent regarding supervision of modules/coursework/seminars. A possible explanation can be that the quality of supervision can mainly be evaluated in terms of aspects that are incorporated in the roles of supervisors i.e. the presentation of modules/coursework/seminars, provision of feedback, help with organisational and writing skills and the development of a research proposal. On aspects that are seen as part of the craft of scholarship i.e. the

literature study, gathering of information, fieldwork and data collection and analysis and interpretation of data, supervisors (should) play a limited role as it is seen as aspects that students should work on independently.

**Figure 5.2: Quality of supervision received**



#### **5.4 Support and guidance received from the supervisor**

The previous question related to the supervision students reported they needed. In this section, the focus shifts to guidance as received by the student. Tables 5.4.1 and 5.4.2 summarise the main results. The overall impression is that huge majorities of students in both groups are happy with the level of support and guidance they received. For all eight aspects, more than 70% of students (completed and current) reported that they “strongly agree” or “agree” that support and guidance were received.



**Tabel 5.4.1 Support and guidance received from supervisor**

		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
My supervisor could/can help me in the formulation of my research problem	Strongly agree	441	49	214	37	655
	Agree	391	43	289	50	680
	Disagree	56	6	58	10	114
	Strongly disagree	21	2	15	3	36
My supervisor clearly spelt/spells out what he/she expected/s from me	Strongly agree	289	31	192	32	481
	Agree	439	47	288	48	727
	Disagree	148	16	96	16	244
	Strongly disagree	50	5	23	4	73
My supervisor was/is always enthusiastic about my studies	Strongly agree	466	50	298	50	764
	Agree	336	36	232	39	568
	Disagree	98	11	54	9	152
	Strongly disagree	33	4	18	3	51
My supervisor showed/shows interest in my progress on a continuous basis	Strongly agree	406	43	229	42	635
	Agree	358	38	210	39	568
	Disagree	123	13	79	15	202
	Strongly disagree	53	6	26	5	79



**Tabel 5.4.1 Support and guidance received from supervisor (continued)**

		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
My supervisor was/is able to provide useful methodological advice on all aspects of my studies	Strongly agree	335	36	231	39	566
	Agree	401	43	265	45	666
	Disagree	146	16	72	12	218
	Strongly disagree	47	5	22	4	69
My supervisor was/is readily available to meet with me	Strongly agree	462	49	260	43	722
	Agree	331	35	262	43	593
	Disagree	103	11	62	10	165
	Strongly disagree	44	5	19	3	63
My supervisor was/is able to monitor my progress effectively	Strongly agree	302	33	165	28	467
	Agree	380	41	261	44	641
	Disagree	181	20	127	22	308
	Strongly disagree	56	6	35	6	91
My supervisor was/is sufficiently knowledgeable about my research topic	Strongly agree	523	56	338	57	861
	Agree	288	31	212	35	500
	Disagree	92	10	36	6	128
	Strongly disagree	31	3	10	2	41

**5.5 Feedback received from supervisor/promotor**

Table 5.5 reports the results on the time students said to have passed before they received feedback on different sections of their theses/dissertation. Overall positive reporting can be found. Table 5.5 shows that the majority of Master's and Doctoral students, completed and current, reported that they received feedback on their thesis proposal within a week (66% completed and 63% current), on the finished

thesis/dissertation within a month (52% completed and 56% current) and feedback on the individual chapters largely within a week (49% - 50% graduated and 49% current).

**Table 5.5: Feedback to students**

		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
How long did/do you normally have to wait for feedback on thesis proposal?	Within a week	561	66	304	63	865
	Within a month	238	28	141	29	379
	Longer	54	6	36	7	90
How long did/do you normally have to wait for feedback on the first chapter?	Within a week	407	50	160	49	567
	Within a month	336	42	136	42	472
	Longer	65	8	32	10	97
How long did/do you normally have to wait for feedback on the last chapter?	Within a week	397	49	109	49	506
	Within a month	325	40	92	41	417
	Longer	85	10	23	10	108
How long did/do you normally have to wait for feedback on the finished thesis/dissertation	Within a week	270	31	54	26	324
	Within a month	457	52	116	56	573
	Longer	156	18	37	18	193

## 5.6 Requirements set by supervisor/promotor

Different supervisors set different requirements regarding aspects of the postgraduate process. Tables 5.6.1 and 5.6.2 document these differences. Completed and current students seem to have more positive responses regarding requirements set on the following aspects: the thesis to be edited for language usage (between 83% and 85%), a thesis proposal/protocol to be approved by him/her before the research could commence (between 71% and 76%) and the final product to be evaluated as a whole in addition to every chapter separately (between 58% and 76%). The number of



"unsure" responses has increased from completed to current students with percentages such as 48% not being sure if their supervisor/promotor set the requirement that the final chapter/conclusions should not include new findings. This is compared to only 17% of completed students reporting to be unsure regarding the same matter. Overall, for current students, the results reveal a huge degree of uncertainty and lack of clarity on the different requirements set by supervisors.

**Table 5.6: Requirements set to students**

		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
A thesis proposal/protocol to be approved by him/her before my research could commence	Yes	686	76	392	71	1078
	No	155	17	91	17	246
	Unsure	63	7	68	12	131
The research proposal to be discussed at a departmental seminar	Yes	277	31	199	38	476
	No	429	49	170	33	599
	Unsure	175	20	153	29	328
Each chapter to be accepted before the next could be written	Yes	199	23	123	25	322
	No	644	73	241	48	885
	Unsure	34	4	134	27	168
The final chapter/conclusions could not include new findings	Yes	297	34	94	21	391
	No	422	49	145	32	567
	Unsure	149	17	216	48	365



**Table 5.6: Requirements set to students (continued)**

		Group				Total
		Completed		Current		
		Count	%	Count	%	
The final product to be evaluated as a whole, in addition to every chapter separately	Yes	667	76	273	58	940
	No	101	12	26	6	127
	Unsure	114	13	175	37	289
The thesis to be edited for language usage	Yes	743	83	442	85	1185
	No	132	15	14	3	146
	Unsure	26	3	62	12	88
Ethical approval to be obtained where humans/animals/tissue is involved in the inquiry	Yes	221	43	181	50	402
	No	170	33	38	11	208
	Unsure	125	24	144	40	269
A journal article to be prepared for the publication of the findings	Yes	390	46	270	55	660
	No	388	46	71	15	459
	Unsure	65	8	146	30	211

## 5.7 Concluding comments

Salient points:

- More than half of completed Master`s students had contact with their supervisor/promotor on a weekly or monthly basis. More than half of completed Doctoral students reported contact between monthly and three/four times per week.
- Contact seems to be initiated both by the supervisor/promotor and the student him/herself. This tendency relates to all students regardless of degree.
- Supervisors do not provide sufficient information regarding the different aspects of the process of supervision and students can expect more than the current ad hoc type of relationship they are having with their supervisors.
- The aspects where most guidance is needed seem to be the development of a research proposal.
- All the groups had predominantly positive responses regarding the quality of supervision they received. No "average" or "very poor" responses were in the majority.
- Huge majorities of students were/are happy with the level of support and guidance they receive/received from their supervisors.
- The majority of Master`s and Doctoral students, completed and current, report that they received feedback on their thesis proposal within a week, on the finished thesis within a month and on individual chapters within a week.

In summary, different supervisors set different requirements regarding aspects of the postgraduate process. Furthermore, there is a huge degree of uncertainty and a lack of clarity on the side of current students regarding the different requirements set by supervisors. Overall, the

relationship between the student and supervisor seem to be an informal, ad hoc type. Greater standardization of supervisory practices is thus required, not only between environments (e.g. disciplines/faculties) but also between individual supervisors within the same discipline or faculty.

This chapter focuses primarily on the first two research objectives, which relate to students who have completed their first year of postgraduate studies. Two research approaches are used to address these objectives. A general survey will be conducted with all students who have completed their first year of postgraduate studies, and a more detailed study will be conducted relating to the above-mentioned students who are currently enrolled in a postgraduate programme. The results of the general survey will be presented in Chapter 3, and the results of the detailed study will be presented in Chapter 4. The results of the detailed study will be presented for postgraduate students.

## SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS RELATING TO THE DURATION OF STUDY

Two themes are addressed in this section. Firstly, the relationship between demographic factors and the duration of study is explored. Information regarding differences in duration of study is presented for a range of demographic variables. The relationship between duration of study and demographic variables is explored for a range of demographic variables: programme, gender, race, native language, and age. Secondly, Chi-square analyses were done to determine which demographic variables are the best predictors of duration of study.

### 3.1 Cross tabulations of duration of study with demographic variables

Duration of study was cross tabulated with the following demographic variables:

- Faculty
- Type of programme



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FACTORS RELATING TO THE DURATION OF STUDY**

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This chapter focuses primarily on duration of study. Results in this chapter only relate to students who have already completed their postgraduate studies. Two research approaches are used: In Section A, the results of the postal surveys will be presented. I will focus on certain demographic factors relating to the time it took students to complete their studies. In Section B, the results of the secondary data from the University database will be presented. The focus will be on completion rates and through-put of postgraduate students.

#### **SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS RELATING TO DURATION OF STUDY**

Two themes are addressed in this section. Firstly, the descriptive information regarding differences in duration will be reported for a number of demographic variables. The selection of variables (i.e. faculty, type of programme, gender, race, home language and marital status) was chosen from the literature study as being possible predictors of duration of study. Secondly, Chaid-analyses were done to determine which variables/factors are the best predictors of duration of study.

##### **6.1 Cross tabulations of duration of study with demographic variables**

Duration of study was cross tabulated with the following demographic variables:

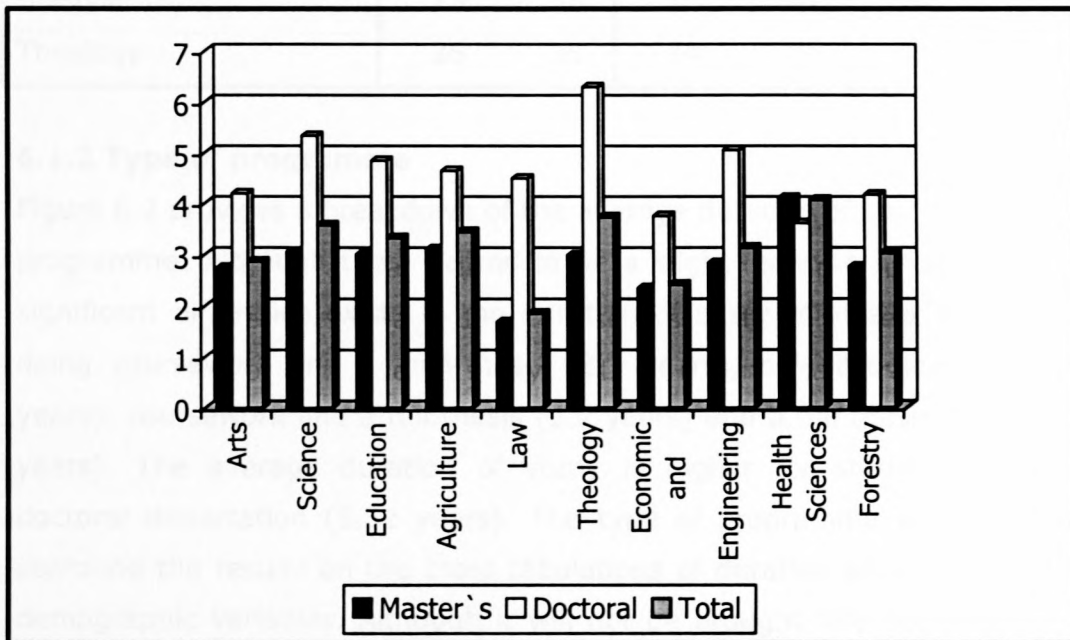
- Faculty
- Type of programme

- Gender
- Race
- Language of communication
- Marital status

### 6.1.1 Faculty

Figure 6.1 shows the average duration of study for completed students for the period between 1991 and 1999. It seems that all Master`s students, with the exception of students studying Law, reported a duration of more than 2 years. All Doctoral students, except those in the Health Sciences and Economic and Management Sciences, report a duration of more than 4 years. More specific results are given in Table 6.1.

**Figure 6.1: Average duration of study by faculty (1991- 1999)**



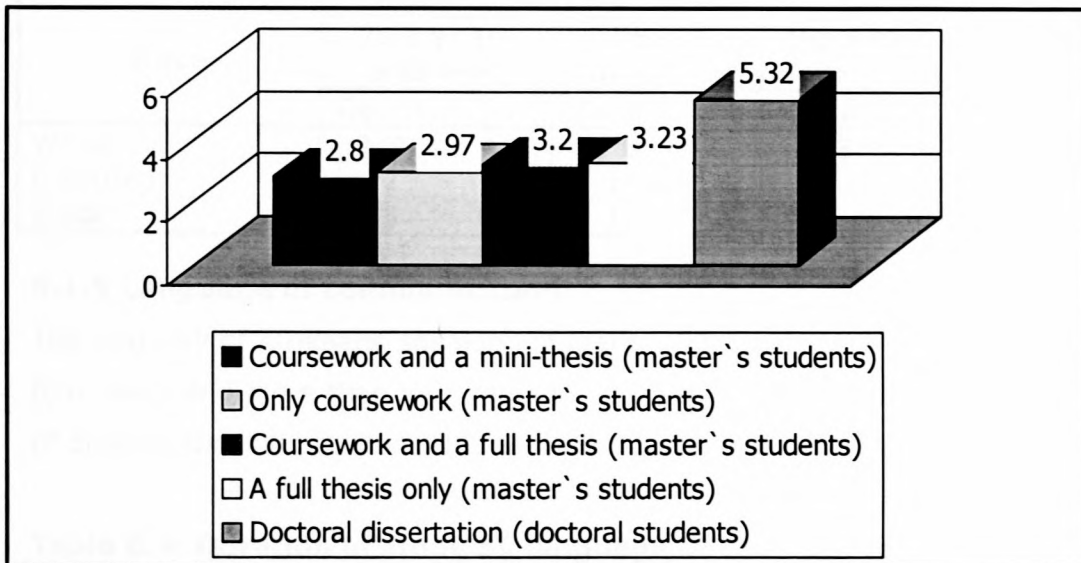
**Table 6.1: Duration of study by faculty**

Faculty	Duration of study						Total
	Two years and less		Three to four years		More than four years		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Agriculture and Forestry Sciences	22	31	27	38	23	32	72
Arts	125	48	55	21	82	31	262
Economic and Management Sciences	98	60	27	17	38	23	163
Education	36	40	26	29	27	30	89
Engineering	40	43	21	22	33	35	94
Health Sciences	13	11	21	18	80	70	114
Law	9	45	6	30	5	25	20
Science	23	35	18	28	24	37	65
Theology	26	35	14	19	35	47	75

### 6.1.2 Type of programme

Figure 6.2 provides a breakdown of the average duration of study by type of programme. Although there seems to be a slight increase in duration, no significant difference exists in the duration of study of Master's students doing coursework and a mini-thesis (2.8 years), only coursework (2.97 years), coursework and a full thesis (3.2 years) and a full thesis only (3.23 years). The average duration of study is higher for students doing a doctoral dissertation (5.32 years). The type of programme will obviously confound the results on the cross tabulations of duration of study with the demographic variables. Although it will not be brought into account in the separate cross tabulations with each variable, type of programme will be included in the predictors of duration in section 6.2.



**Figure 6.2: Average duration of study by type of programme**

### 6.1.3 Gender

Male and female students do not differ significantly regarding the duration of study with 41% of male and female students reporting a duration of two years and less and between 22% and 23% between three to four years and between 36% and 37% more than four years.

**Table 6.2: Duration of study by gender**

Gender	Duration of study						Total
	Two years and less		Three to four years		More than four years		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Male	259	41	139	22	231	37	629
Female	133	41	76	23	116	36	325

### 6.1.4 Race

It seems that the majority of black students (64%) reported taking two years and less. The majority of white (59%) and coloured (58%) students reported taking between three to four years and more than four years to complete.

**Table 6.3: Duration of study by race**

Race	Duration of study						Total
	Two years and less		Three to four years		More than four years		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
White	340	41	184	22	313	37	837
Coloured	22	42	15	28	16	30	53
Black	25	64	10	26	4	10	39

**6.1.5 Language of communication**

The majority of Afrikaans-speaking students (62%) reported taking three to four years and more than four years to complete their studies. The majority of English-speaking students (51%) reported to take two years and less.

**Table 6.4: Duration of study by language of communication**

Language of communication	Duration of study						Total
	Two years and less		Three to four years		More than four years		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Afrikaans	266	38	152	22	276	40	694
English	98	51	45	24	48	25	191
Other	28	41	18	26	23	33	69

**6.1.6 Marital status**

Table 6.5 shows that there is a slight difference in duration of studies between single and married students with 49% single students taking two years and less compared to 38% married students.

**Table 6.5: Duration of study by marital status**

Marital status	Duration of study						Total
	Two years and less		Three to four years		More than four years		
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	
Single	149	49	80	26	76	25	305
Married	228	38	125	21	252	42	605

## **6.2 Predictors of duration**

### **6.2.1 Background to Chaid presentation**

One of the main aims of this study was to determine what factors of postgraduate study have possible effects on the duration of study. To this end, the following framework was used:

"Duration" of studies (according to the University database) was put into three categories:

- Two years and less
- Three to four years
- More than four years

Furthermore, four indices were constructed to reduce the responses regarding supervision to more general constructs. The four indices are as follows:

- Contact with supervisor (Questions 16a, b en c) (Index = 0 - 12)
- Quality of supervision (Question 20) (Index = 0 - 32)
- Nature and scope of support received from supervisor (Question 21)  
(Index = 0 - 44)
- Feedback and response (Question 22) (Index = 0 - 12)

The overarching index, i.e. GUIDANCE, together with the four sub indices (CONTACT, QUALITY, SUPPORT, FEEDBACK) were used as variables in all the following analyses.



The following demographic variables were also included in these analyses:

- Gender of student
- Race of student
- Language of communication
- Faculty
- Marital status

Finally, the following "programme" variables were also included in the analyses:

- Nature of the programme (master`s coursework only, master`s coursework and a mini-thesis, master`s coursework and a full thesis, a full master`s thesis only, a doctoral dissertation)
- Full time or part time student
- Degree code (Master`s or Doctoral students)
- Group (completed or current)

A series of CHAID-analyses was done based on all the variables above. Chaid is an exploratory analysis technique for categorical data. A dependent variable (in Figure 6.3 = DURATION) is selected. Thereafter, a list of possible variables that might have an effect on the dependent variable is specified. Chaid, with the use of a Chi-square procedure, then selects the most significant predictors. The results of the analyses are shown in the tree diagram in Figure 6.3.

### **6.2.2 Discussion of results of Chaid presentation (Figure 6.3)**

According to the diagram, Faculty differences are the first and most significant predictor of duration of study. For completed students as a whole, almost 40% completed their study within 2 years, 22% took between two and three years and 38% more than four years.

The first level of the sample is grouped according to FACULTY. Chaid develops groupings (based on pure statistical grounds) of those subgroups of which the responses look the same. Six groupings of Faculty were made: Arts (1), Sciences, Education, Agriculture and Forestry Sciences and Law together (2-5), Theology (6), Economic and Management Sciences (7), Engineering (8) and Health Sciences (9). These distributions are based on the fact that significant differences exist within these groupings. For example, 51% of Theology students and 70% of Health Science students take four years and longer to complete their studies compared to the sample percentage of 38%.

On the second level, within each subgroup (with one exception), the NATURE of the PROGRAMME is the second significant predictor. For example, in the Faculty of Arts, significant differences exist in completion times of those doing coursework only (Groupings 1 – 3) and those mainly doing thesis/dissertation work (Group 4 and 5). Of the first group, 55% completed their studies within 2 years compared to only 27% of the latter.

Interestingly enough, "marital status" appears twice as a predictor in this result. In both cases (but with no huge effect), single students have shorter completion times than married students.

On the third level, one of the GUIDANCE index variables namely RESPCAT, is a predictor. RESPCAT refers to the response time or feedback time of supervisors.

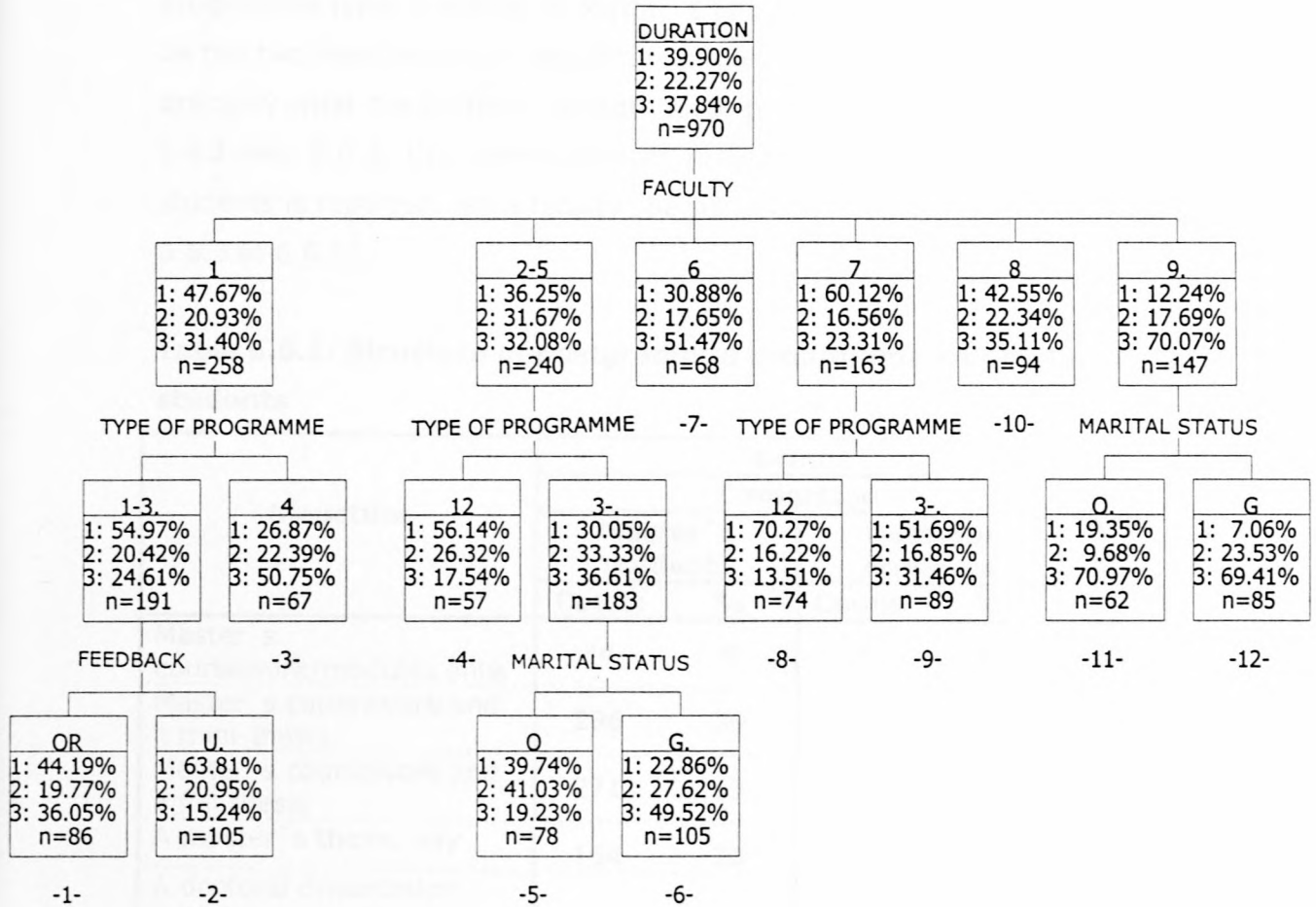
Three categories were developed: IRREGULAR, REGULAR and EXCELLENT feedback. The results show that 44% of students who reported the feedback they received to be "irregular" or "regular", completed their studies within two years compared to 64% of students in the same category who reported

"excellent" feedback. This is a significant result as no other "guidance variable" came to the forefront in this analysis as a significant predictor.

Differences between faculties and between programme types (which relates to Master`s and Doctoral programmes) are the two most important predictors. Factors relating to the personal situation of the students (with the exception of "marital status" that possibly correlates with "full time/part time") and guidance (with the exception in one instance of "feedback") don`t seem to be significant factors.





**Figure 6.3: Predictors of duration**

### 6.2.3 Nature of postgraduate programmes

Because of the fact that differences between faculties and between programme types (relating to Master`s and Doctoral programmes) seem to be the two most important predictors of duration, it was decided to focus on precisely what the profile of postgraduate programmes looks like. In Tables 6.6.1 and 6.6.2, the composition of programs for completed and current students is reported, while faculty specific profiles are summarized in Tables 6.6.3 to 6.6.11.

**Table 6.6.1: Structure of postgraduate programme – Completed students**

Structure	Group				Total
	Completed				
	Master`s students		Doctoral students		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Master`s coursework/modules only	34	4	0	0	34
Master`s coursework and a mini-thesis	296	36	0	0	296
Master`s coursework and a full thesis	271	33	0	0	271
A master`s thesis only	154	20	0	0	154
A doctoral dissertation only			101	91	101
Other	57	7	11	9	68
Total	812	100	112	100	924

**Table 6.6.2: Structure of postgraduate programme – Current students**

Structure	Group				Total
	Current				
	Master`s students		Doctoral students		
	Count	%	Count	%	
Master`s coursework/modules only	22	4	0	0	22
Master`s coursework and a mini-thesis	202	38	0	0	202
Master`s coursework and a full thesis	168	33	0	0	168
A master`s thesis only	103	20	0	0	103
A doctoral dissertation only			91	90	91
Other	29	5	10	10	39
Total	524	100	101	100	625

Tables 6.6.1 and 6.6.2 show that for both completed and current master`s students, the majority took postgraduate programmes existing of both coursework and a thesis (mini or full).

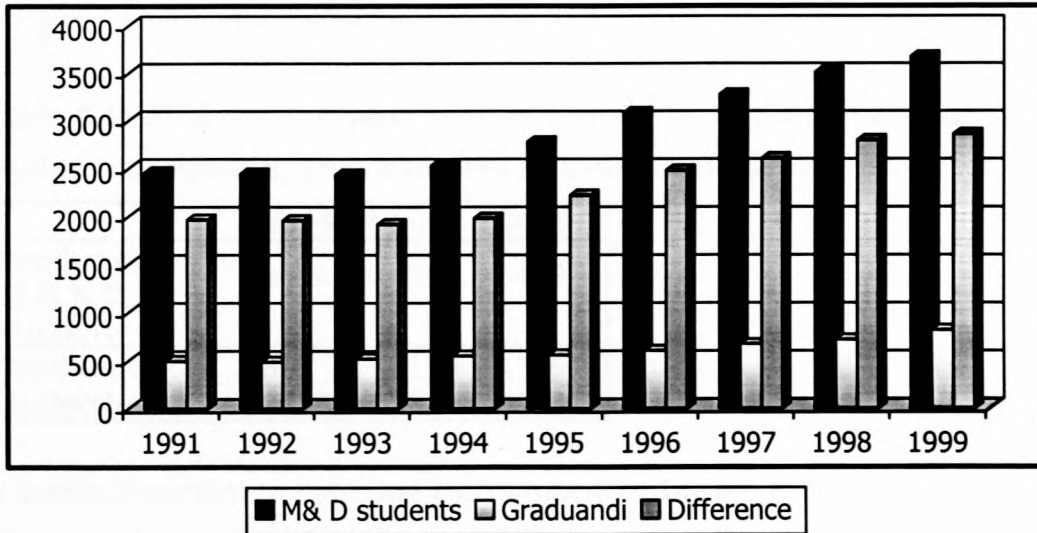
## **SECTION B: COMPLETION RATES AND THROUGH-PUT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

In this section, I focus on completion rates of Master`s and Doctoral students over the period from 1991 to 1999. More specifically, I focus on what impact the completion rates might have on possible “pile up” in the system. Differences between Master`s and Doctoral students, as well as differences in programme types, will be reported.



### 6.3 Completion rates of postgraduate students

**Figure 6.4: Proportion of students who completed their postgraduate studies (1991 - 1999)**



The data on which Figure 6.4 is based, is summarized in Table 6.7:

**Table 6.7 : Through-put of postgraduate students**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>M &amp; D students</b>	2462	2446	2474	2531	2779	3083	3277	3501	3674
<b>Completed students</b>	494	486	517	547	556	602	670	716	815
	20%	20%	21%	22%	20%	18%	20%	21%	22%
<b>Unfinished</b>	1968	1960	1957	2084	2223	2481	2607	2785	2859

The following interesting trends are revealed:

- The total number of master`s and doctoral students increased with about 50% (from 2462 to 3674) from 1991 to 1999. In the same period, the number of students who graduated annually, increased by about 65% (from 494 to 815).
- The annual completion rates vary between 17% and 22% with an average of 20%.

- The increase in the number of students who did not complete their studies in a specific year (from 1968 in 1991 to 2859 in 1999) represents an increase of 45%.

If one extrapolates these tendencies over the next 5 year and 10 year periods, results (summarized in Table 6.8) show the following:

**Table 6.8: Five and ten year projections showing the number of students completing/not completing their studies**

	1999	2004	2009
<b>Total number of M &amp; D students</b>	3674	4857	5482
<b>Graduandi</b>	815	1180	1329
<b>Unfinished</b>	2859	3677	4153

It is also important to note that the numbers in Table 6.8 don't differentiate between Master's and Doctoral students. This differentiation is made in Table 6.9 and the following interesting tendencies occur:

#### 6.4 Success rates of postgraduate students

**Table 6.9 Success rates of postgraduate students**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Master's students</b>	1922	1935	1963	2043	2257	2553	2708	2913	3038
<b>Doctoral students</b>	540	511	474	488	522	530	569	598	636
<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>2462</b>	<b>2446</b>	<b>2437</b>	<b>2531</b>	<b>2779</b>	<b>3083</b>	<b>3277</b>	<b>3511</b>	<b>3674</b>

(Table 6.9 continued)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Completed Master`s students</b>	414	423	457	473	492	535	601	627	730
	22%	22%	23%	23%	22%	21%	22%	22%	24%
<b>Completed Doctoral students</b>	80	63	60	74	64	67	69	89	85
	15%	12%	13%	15%	12%	13%	12%	15%	14%
<b>Total number of graduated students</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>486</b>	<b>517</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>815</b>
	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>22%</b>

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>Masters unfinished</b>	1508	1512	1506	1570	1765	2018	2107	2286	2308
<b>Doctorates unsuccessful</b>	460	448	414	414	458	463	500	509	551
<b>Total unsuccessful</b>	<b>1968</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1920</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>2223</b>	<b>2481</b>	<b>2607</b>	<b>2795</b>	<b>2859</b>

The percentage of postgraduate studies (as a proportion of the enrolled Master`s students) who graduated per year, varies between 21% and 24% per year. The same percentage of Doctoral students varies between 12% and 15%. The fact that these proportions stayed the same during the decade in the nineties, suggests that it is the existing capacity within the University of Stellenbosch – unless other strategies or mechanisms can be found to change the situation – to deliver Master`s and Doctoral students. The increase in Master`s students who did not complete their studies (from 1508 in 1991 to 2308 in 1999) represents an increase of 53%. The increase for Doctoral students (from 460 in 1991 to 551 in 1999) is 20%. It is clear that the “pile up” in the system is definitely caused by Master`s students.

## 6.5 Concluding comments

This chapter mainly focused on duration of study. In Section A, two themes were addressed. Firstly, the descriptive information regarding differences in duration was reported for a number of demographic variables and secondly, Chaid-analyses were done to determine what variables/factors seem to be the best predictors of duration of study. Differences between faculties and



between programme types (relating to Master`s and Doctoral programmes) are the two most important predictors of duration. Factors relating to the personal situation of the students (with the exception of "marital status" that possibly correlate with "full time/part time") and guidance (with the exception in one instance of "feedback") don`t seem to be significant factors.

In Section B, the focus was on completion rates and through-put of Master`s and Doctoral students from 1991 to 1999. Differences between Master`s and Doctoral students, as well as differences in programme types, were reported. The proportions of Master`s and Doctoral students who graduated stayed the same during the nineties. It suggests that it is the existing capacity within the University of Stellenbosch – unless other strategies or mechanisms can be found to change the situation – to deliver Master`s and Doctoral students. If a "pile up" in the system must be identified, it definitely relates to Master`s students, with an increase of 53% from 1991 to 1999 not completing their studies.

To conclude: In the recent National Plan for Higher Education, specific attention is given to through-put rates of students at universities and technikons. It is clear that low through-put rates of specifically postgraduate students seem to be a source of great distress. Universities can expect that the Department of National Education will particularly look at the quality of postgraduate education when institutional plans are evaluated. The National Plan also set some "benchmarks" as to how universities will be evaluated: For master`s students success rates of 33% for residential students and 25% for non-residential students are set. For Doctoral students, a success rate of 20% is set as the ideal. These minimum requirements will place extreme demands on the management of postgraduate students.

Chapters 4 to 6 presented the results of the survey and secondary data. In terms of through-put, faculty and programme type seem to be the best predictors of duration. This poses the question as to how the University can



## **CHAPTER 7**

### **RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS**

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In the discussion that follows, I will firstly focus on each programme individually by looking at the following: the establishment of the programme, the aim(s) of the programme and the structure of the programme. Thereafter, certain general trends regarding the nature of the programme, the students and supervision will be discussed.

#### **7.1 Background information on each of the four programmes**

##### **7.1.1 M Programme in Applied Ethics**

###### **7.1.1.1 The establishment of the programme**

The M Programme in Applied Ethics started in 1996 as a broadening of the work that was being done in the Centre for Applied Ethics in the Department of Philosophy. The first reason for the start of the programme was that it would make more sense to change the activities and research that was being done in the centre into a teaching programme whereby more clients (and not only philosophy students) could benefit. Secondly, according to the respondent, philosophy as a discipline was at a stage where it had great growth potential in terms of not only being beneficial to undergraduate students, but also people already actively involved in the workplace.

*"Dat jy daardie mense liewer op 'n modulêre basis kan inbring op 'n meer gevorderde stadium van hulle lewens en beroepsvelde en hulle dan begin bekendstel aan filosofie, veral met die oog op toegepaste etiese kwessies, veral sake etiek en mediese etiek en later ook omgewingsetiek, want dit is brandende dinge waarmee hulle te make kry. Ons aanvoeling was perfek reg. Die mark was daar".*

Thirdly, the Faculty of Arts placed more and more pressure on its departments to promote postgraduate studies.



*"Daar was nooit 'n pistool teen my kop gehou nie, maar dit was die algemene gees. Op daardie stadium was daar dramatiese nuwe verwickelinge rondom die eis tot vergrotings van die student-dosent ratio, maar veral ook dan die feit dat dinge nie gunstig gelyk het vir die humaniora nie. Ek meen dit is vir enige akademiese departement goed om sy nagraadse studente op te skerp, en boy het ons dit nie gedoen nie!"*

#### **7.1.1.2 The aim of the programme**

The aim of the program is to refer to moral issues in concrete situations so that in their decision-making, management strategies and policy formulations, people can come to recommendations that were thought through carefully.

*"Engaging in the challenges of a developing nation, this programme is designed to equip professional people in government, business, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations with the knowledge, skills and strategies to successfully address moral issues in their fields of expertise. It will also benefit anyone with a general interest in philosophy and applied ethics"*  
([www.sun.ac.za/philosophy/mphil.htm:4](http://www.sun.ac.za/philosophy/mphil.htm:4))

#### **7.1.1.3 The structure of the programme**

This is a two year programme and it consists of a so-called "base line" component which is the first year of study, and a "specialisation" component – the second year of study. In the first year, background and basic skills in applied philosophy and ethical analysis are discussed. It consists of four modules for a period of five days each. In the second year, students can specialise in either Environmental ethics, Biomedical Ethics or Business Ethics. Four modules are presented over a period of five days for each.

Two modules are presented per session, so students only attend classes two times per year for ten days each.

The examination is as follows:

- A series of structured papers which cover both the base-line and specialisation components
- A formal examination on the first six modules
- A mini-thesis on a specialisation field chosen by the student or two research articles. (see [www.sun.ac.za/philosophy/mphil.htm:4](http://www.sun.ac.za/philosophy/mphil.htm:4))

### **7.1.2 M Programme in Ancient Cultures**

#### **7.1.2.1 The establishment of the programme**

The M Programme in Ancient Cultures started together with other programmes in the Faculty of Arts in 2000. It had two precursors i.e. the MA in Classical Cultures and the MA in Near Ancient Studies. The programme thus started as a combination of the two programmes.

*"Die uiteenlopende inhoude van die vorige twee programme moes geïntegreer word en dit het ook saamgehang met die herstrukturering van die twee departemente – die samesmelting in een departement".*

Furthermore, the establishment of the programme also came from a need for a programme with greater focus:

*"Met die hele beplanning – dit loop oor twee jaar – van die eerste semester tot die laaste semester, wou ons 'n duidelike, logiese vloei daarstel in die ontwikkeling en opbou van die program. Dit was reeds in 'n mate aanwesig in die vorige programme. Ons wou dit net baie duideliker en skerp stel".*

#### **7.1.2.2 The aim of the programme**

The programme has as aim the study of ancient cultures, i.e. the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East. Furthermore, students need to be able to:

- have insight into the cultures of the Ancient world and the interaction between them
- understand the fundamental and formative influences of the ancient cultures on the modern culture, morals and institutions
- master certain skills to be able to create a theoretical framework and interpretations for ancient texts and artifacts
- have the skills to make connections between the ancient and modern world

(see [www.sun.ac.za/as/mphilancientcultures.htm](http://www.sun.ac.za/as/mphilancientcultures.htm))

### **7.1.2.3 The structure of the programme**

The programme is non-residential and it consists of two years. Students can decide between two options i.e. a modular option and a thesis option.

The modular option consists of four modules, two per year. Each contributes 25% of the final mark. In the second year of study, the last module is seen as the research component where the student must hand in a research paper. Contact sessions are scheduled for one week – once a year.

In the thesis option, the first year has the same structure and content of the first year in the modular option. In the second year, students have to write a thesis based on a topic they have to choose in the second module of the first year.

### **7.1.3 M Programme in Clinical Psychology**

#### **7.1.3.1 The establishment of the programme**

The programme started in the eighties and changes that took place up to now, were dictated by the discipline and the practice of Clinical Psychology. The content – theoretical and practical is based on the demands of the profession.



### **7.1.3.2 The aim of the programme**

The programme has as aim the theoretical and practical training of future Clinical Psychologists.

*"Dit beteken gewoon dat jy vir studente inhoude en praktiese vaardighede moet gee om 'n bepaalde beroep te beoefen".*

### **7.1.3.3 The structure of the programme**

Although according to the regulations of the Professional Board of Psychology, from 2004, people can only register as psychologists if they have a doctoral degree, the master's degree will still have the same structure until 2003.

The programme consists of two years. In the first year, modules are presented on a weekly basis. The modules follow logically on each other to form a whole at the end of the year:

*"Jy moet vir studente die kennis gee om te praktiseer, m.a.w. jy moet vir hulle leer hoe om 'n kliniese onderhoud te doen, hoe om 'n diagnose te maak en hoe om behandeling toe te pas. En die hele program is daarop gemik dat jy kliniese modules het en elke module word aan 'n bepaalde tydperiode gekoppel waar die student aktief met daardie probleem besig is. Dan maak ons van rolspel gebruik om die basiese vaardighede uit te werk en dan kry jy 'n pasiënt. So die struktuur van die program is elke module het sy eie praktiese werk en jy stapel modules en praktiese werk op tot aan die einde van die jaar. So daar is 'n bepaalde volgorde in terme van die vaardighede wat jy nodig het om verder te vorder".*

At the end of the first year, students have to write an exam whereby they have the basic qualifications of a Clinical Psychologist. Parallel to the theoretical work, students also have to complete a research article. The exam and the research component count 50/50. Frequent reports are written on students' progress.

*"Die intern sal nie toegelaat word om te praktiseer tensy ons kan sertifiseer dat hy of sy bevredigend presteer het nie. So dit is 'n kwalitatiewe beoordeling, maar aan die einde van die jaar is daar 'n vorm wat ek moet onderteken en wat die hoof van die hospitaal moet teken wat sê dat die student se kennis en vaardighede voldoende is".*

In the second year, students have to do an internship whereafter their supervisor at the institution writes a report confirming that the student has sufficient knowledge and skills to practice Clinical Psychology.

#### **7.1.4 M Programme in Value and Policy Studies**

##### **7.1.4.1 The establishment of the programme**

The first students were taken in in 1996. According to the respondent, it was before the era of programmes in the Faculty of Arts:

*"Die konsep gaan al terug na die tagtigerjare toe die politiek van SA op almal se agenda was en jy redelik fundamentele vrae moes deurdink soos wat is 'n demokrasie, sal 'n demokrasie in SA werk. So dit is nie heeltemal 'n politieke vraag nie, dit is ook nie heeltemal 'n filosofiese vraag nie. Dit het 'n praktiese implikasie, maar dit is gewortel in 'n klomp teoretiese goed en aannames, jy moet probeer objektiveer wat is in die aannames, so 'n groepie van ons het bymekaar gekom en gesê hoe hanteer jy hierdie soort van ding binne hierdie universiteit op 'n manier dat dit 'n kursus is. Die punt is die ding het ontstaan lank voor die konsep programme. Dit het ontstaan in reaksie op wat jy kan noem tendense in die samelewing. Dit het ook ontstaan omdat daar sekere van ons besigheidsvennote was wat ons ander programme wat glad nie doseer programme was nie, gedoen het en gesê het hierdie soort resepe moet julle in 'n doseervorm aanbied, want dit is useful vir ons daar buite."*

#### **7.1.4.2 The aim of the programme**

The aim is to equip students with the following:

- an advanced level of academic knowledge, theoretical abilities and practical skills to be able to make a contribution in decision making, leadership and policy formulation processes in the context of a complex, contemporary market-driven society
- sufficient research skills to do independent research in the field of Value and Policy, to formulate policy documents and to give expert advice (see: [www.sun.ac.za/vaps/postgraduate/mphilmarks.htm](http://www.sun.ac.za/vaps/postgraduate/mphilmarks.htm))

#### **7.1.4.3 The structure of the programme**

The part-time M Programme is scheduled over a 15 month period and it consists of coursework and a thesis component. Students do not have previous knowledge of Value and Policy studies. The full time M Programme is only presented to students with prior qualifications in Value and Policy studies. Coursework is presented over a 9 month period whereafter the student has to do an internship of one month. Thereafter, a thesis component is incorporated. The total duration of both the M Programmes is two years.

### **7.2 General trends in the four programmes**

As mentioned earlier, these programmes were selected on the basis that they set a new, innovative model for postgraduate teaching and supervision. In this section, I will identify certain general trends in the four programmes that might characterise such a model. Although these programmes are quite diverse regarding their establishment, aims and structure, certain similarities exist regarding the nature of the programmes, the type of student who enrolls and the supervisory process.

#### **7.2.1 The nature of the programme**

It is clear that, with the exception of one, the programmes were initiated as part of demands from "outside", i.e. modern society and not so much as a



result of specific demands from the University of Stellenbosch or due to more general, trends in higher education.

*"Dit het wêreldwyd duidelik geword dat die groei van filosofie op voorgraadse vlak nie agteruitgaan nie .....maar dat daar 'n veel beter groeipotensiaal is as jy mense wat reeds in hulle werksomgewings gevestig is.....begin bekendstel aan filosofie. Dit was die eintlike oorweging en een wat meegebring het dat ons dit waarskynlik sou gedoen het selfs al was die eise wat op die Fakulteit geplaas is, nie daar nie". (Applied Ethics)*

*"Die inhoud en formaat is redelik gedikteer deur die vereistes van die beroep. Om die waarheid te sê, het ek dit al as 'n program beskou op die tydstip toe die universiteit nog vakkursusse gehad het". (Clinical Psychology)*

*"Kyk op daai stadium toe ons begin het, was dit voor die era van programme. Dit het ontstaan in reaksie op wat jy kan noem tendense in die samelewing. Van my kant af moet ek regtig vir jou sê ek het my byna nooit gesteur aan enige goed wat van die onderwysdepartement af gekom het nie. Ek is oortuig daarvan dat die ding wat ons probeer ontwikkel het, 'n reaksie is op behoeftes wat daar is". (Value and Policy Studies)*

The M Programme in Ancient Cultures seems to have developed greatly through the conglomeration of two departments, i.e. Classical Cultures and Near Eastern Studies and according to the respondent it also developed according to the demands of higher education.

*"Dit het nou saamgehang met die herstrukturering van die twee departemente – die samesmelting in een departement. So ons moet taamlike uiteenlopende inhoude van die vorige twee programme integreer. Dit het ook nou saamgehang met die soort van eise wat aan nuwe programme gestel is – om meer duideliker, meer eksplisiete strukturering daar te stel. Dit is ook een van die vereistes van die nuwe*

*hoër onderwys beleid, dat 'n mens meer holisties te werk moet gaan".*

(Ancient Cultures)

It is clear though, that in terms of the structuring of the programmes and the types of content that is presented, it definitely links to shifts in the nature of postgraduate education. All four programmes have a modular focus, a certain emphasis is placed on interdisciplinarity and they stress the importance of vocational skills. All these are presented in more detail below.

#### **7.2.1.1 The modular focus**

Except for the M Programme in Clinical Psychology where students have to have an undergraduate qualification in Psychology, students with any bachelors degree can enroll for the programmes. It is important to note that knowledge of philosophy, ancient studies and value and policy (except in the case of the full time M Programme) is not required. The modules are presented in such a way as to introduce students to the respective fields and to bring them to a level where they will be able to do postgraduate work.

*"Dit is 'n nagraadse program wat ons op nagraadse vlak aanbied, so dit is nagraads in terme van die standaard en interpretasie en someer, maar baie van hierdie studente maak eintlik eers kennis met die antieke wêreld op hierdie vlak. Dit word dus as 'n ideaal gestel dat mense in terme van hulle moontlikheid om toegang te kry, nie noodwendig kwalitikasies vooraf het nie".* (Ancient Studies)

*"Dit is 'n M Phil en nie 'n MA nie en ons het inskrywings van verskillende agtergronde".* (Value and Policy Studies)

*"In ons geval het die meerderheid van ons studente geen filosofie agtergrond nie".* (Applied Ethics)

### **7.2.1.2 Training people to become academics vs. the provision of personal enrichment**

It seems that all the four programmes (except the M Programme in Clinical Psychology) have two streams. The one being the traditional stream whereby people are trained for academic purposes, i.e. where there is a traditional master's and doctoral path and the other whereby people are trained to gain personal enrichment that they can use in their particular occupation. It seems as if the M Programme in Clinical Psychology is more set on training people for a specific occupation and not only for personal enrichment in an occupation. From the first year of undergraduate study, one focus is in mind:

*"Die fokus word in 'n mate gedikteer deur die dissipline van die kliniese sielkunde en praktyk van kliniese sielkunde. Dit beteken gewoon dat jy moet vir die student inhoude en praktiese vaardighede gee om 'n bepaalde beroep te kan beoefen. Ons lei immers mense hier op wat as kliniese sielkundiges moet uitgaan en die vaardighede wat hulle hier aanleer, moet aanwend". (Clinical Psychology)*

As stated before, the other three programmes have personal enrichment in mind and not so much preparation for a specific occupation:

*"Kyk hierdie mense doen die kursus op nagraadse vlak nie net vir akademiese redes nie, maar ook vir persoonlike verryking – omdat daar leemtes was voorgaads. Ek sê dikwels vir studente – ek meen studente wat straight forward filosofie doen, is altyd geworried oor wat hulle eendag daarmee gaan doen en ek is ook bekommerd daaroor, maar ek sê altyd vir hulle filosofie gaan nie vir jou 'n werk in die eerste plek kry nie. Filosofie se grootste waarde lê daarin dat wanneer jy eers gevestig is en jy wil verder gaan, dan lyk dit my die soort kritiese en kreatiewe vaardighede en persoonlike verryking, vorming, die vermoë tot meer laterale tipe van denke, die sensitiwiteit om probleme op 'n meer onkonvensionele manier aan te pak en om dimensies van problematiek te sien wat nie eenogig is nie. Dit is eintlik op daai vlak wat filosofie*



*gewoon vanuit 'n beroepsgerigte perspektief vir jou die meeste beteken. (Applied Ethics)*

*"Omdat dit nie 'n dissipline is wat homself moet voortplant nie en jy dus nie iemand vir die akademie in die dissipline oplei nie, moet dit in wisselwerking staan tot die wêreld daar buite". (Value and Policy Studies)*

*"Ons sien dit nie as 'n program wat akademies voorbereidend is nie. Ek dink op die oomblik in elk geval is die voorkeur dat akademici wat in hierdie rigting, in die antieke wêreld wil werk, moet 'n baie sterk taalbasis hê en dit is nie waarvoor ons die program in die eerste plek ontwikkel het nie. So ons bedoeling is nie in die eerste plek om akademici op te lei of om mense beroepspesifiek op te lei nie. Dit is 'n breë vormende program" (Ancient Cultures)*

### **7.2.1.3 Work-specific vs. work-related**

It seems as if the ideal the respondents set with these particular programmes is that students gain additional expertise to their qualification that can help them in their particular occupations. The feeling is that students who already have an occupation, realize that there are limitations in their qualifications. Therefore they must enroll for programmes such as these in order to stay marketable. Whereas the M Programme in Clinical Psychology can be seen as more work-specific, the other three are more work-related.

*"Daar is mense wat alreeds 'n beroep het, maar wat voel dat hulle beroepspesifieke opleiding te eng was, te skraal was en dat hulle self 'n breë agtergrond wil hê en ek dink dit is interessant dat selfs in die handelswêreld, is daar die gevoel dat die tradisionele B Comm, jy weet daardie soort opleiding, maak nie noodwendig van mense goeie afgeronde besigheidsmense nie. Jy het breë perspektiewe nodig om met verbeelding nuwe voorstelle te maak. So dit is daardie tipe mark wat ons trek". (Ancient Cultures)*

*"Ons is die healtyd gevra wat die onderskeidende faktor is om binne die Fakulteit Lettere en Wysbegeerte geplaas te word en nie by die bestuurskool nie – nie in die soort van omgewings wat in hulle dag tot dag take in interface met ondernemings is nie. Ons het gesê die voordeel van in Lettere te wees, is dat jy die erfenis van werklik deurdagte geesteswetenskaplike kennis tot jou beskikking het, in jou mondering het en dat dit nie eksterne goed is wat jy moet gaan kry nie. Ek wil dus sê dat dit was in die ding ingebou, die uitdaging wat ons op ons neem dat die geesteswetenskappe vir die handelswêreld net so belangrik is as die finansies. Dit is ook 'n reaksie daarop wat baie gesê word dat die geesteswetenskappe geen betekenis het vir daardie mense nie. En ons sê dit is nonsens". (Value and Policy Studies)*

To make it more work-related, students have the opportunity to choose a topic for their research component that directly relates to their specific work:

*"Wat ek al opgetel het is dat daar bv. in die sakewêreld op redelike hoë bestuursvlak behoeftes is aan nie net stimulasie aan etiese problematiek waarmee hulle te make het nie, maar dat hulle stimulasie behoeftes het oor, kom ons sê 'n meer algemene, breë orientasie in die humaniora. Mense wil versekering hê dat hulle die 10 of 20 interessante, relatief onlangste boeke gelees het". (Applied Ethics)*

The M Programme in Applied Ethics also has three different speciality areas that are introduced in the second year. In terms of occupation-relatedness, people are free to choose topics for their papers or theses that are directly linked to their specific occupation.

*"Die M Phil is primêr beroepsgerig. Dit is primêr bedoel om mense vir die behoeftes in hulle werksomgewing toegerus te kry. Die enigste ding wat jy kan doen om dit meer beroepsgerig te maak, is om bepaalde mense se spesifieke behoeftes op die een of ander manier aan te spreek. Ek bedoel ons kry nou psigiaters – hulle is uit die aard van die saak baie geïnteresseerd in die sake rondom die behandeling van psigiatryse pasiënte, maar 'n pediater het nie noodwendig daarby belang nie, so*

*daar moet 'n mens probeer om 'n balans te tref. Ons benadering is 'n mens moet weet wat is op die teoretiese vlak noodsaaklik vir almal om te weet en daar is sekere basiese goed. En dan kom ons by die tweede jaar waar ons 'n verskeidenheid van meer gerigte onderwerpe ter sake bring en in terme van beroepsgerigtheid is mense dus daar vry om keuses te maak". (Applied Ethics)*

### **7.2.1.3 Practical components and internships**

Another way to show the importance the programmes place on training for an occupation is the way practical components are included in the structure of the programme. Clinical Psychology has practical components that students have to do after each module, in order to apply what they have learnt.

*"So die struktuur van die program is elke module het sy praktiese werk.....hy kry leeswerk, kom die volgende dag in, kry 'n pasiënt, toets die pasiënt, interpreteer die resultate skryf 'n verslag, gaan huis toe, doen leeswerk en kom die volgende dag in en kry 'n ander pasiënt. Jy moet vir studente kennis gee hoe om te praktiseer, m.a.w. jy moet vir hulle leer hoe om 'n kliniese onderhoud te doen – hoe om 'n diagnose te maak en hoe om behandeling toe te pas. Dit is dan die rede vir die praktiese werk". (Clinical Psychology)*

Together with the practical components, an internship is introduced in the second year of study whereby students have to work at a hospital.

*"Dit is dan ook 'n poging van ons kant om te sorg dat hulle goed opgelei is,so u kan sien dat dit 'n baie deeglike proses is. Die intern sal nie toegelaat word om te praktiseer tensy ons kan sertifiseer dat hy bevredigend presteer het nie. So dit is 'n kwalitatiewe beoordeling, maar aan die einde van die jaar is daar 'n vorm wat ek moet teken en wat die hoof van die hospitaal moet teken wat sê dat die student se kennis en vaardighede voldoende is". (Clinical Psychology)*



The M Programme in Value and Policy Studies also has an internship for students taking the full-time option. Students who have an undergraduate qualification in Value and Policy Studies but no experience in the field, have to then work at a private company for one month.

*"Die internskap is baie omvattend. Daar is 'n hele instrument wat ons vir hulle gee met 'n klomp vrae en goed wat hulle moet doen as hulle daar is. Dit is 'n poging om studente op dieselfde vlak te kry as diegene wat alreeds in 'n beroep staan en hulle dus daai blootstelling ook te gee". (Value and Policy Studies)*

#### **7.2.1.4 Disciplinarity vs. interdisciplinarity and multi-disciplinarity**

All four programmes have some sort of interdisciplinary focus. There are different understandings of the term but the general feeling is that certain issues cannot be addressed within one discipline only.

Students from different fields can enroll for the M Programme in Applied Ethics and modules are presented by lecturers from different fields. The respondent was unsure if he should call the programme a multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary one. It is clear though, that different disciplines are brought together to address a philosophical question:

*"Ek meen dit is vir my onmoontlik om met studente in bio-etiek te praat oor Aids in Afrika en dit net filosofies te doen – ek meen dit is tog te gek vir woorde. Jy moet met die Antropologiese en Sosiologiese perspektiewe rekening hou. Maar uiteindelik is die finale stempel wat ek plaas op die manier waarop ek modules daaroor sal aanbied, filosofies. Ek probeer dit deurstoot na interessante filosofiese problematiek wat daarmee saamhang. So ek dink die ding het twee kante. Ek dink wat betref veral die primêre dosente, ons probeer dit in daai sin interdisiplinêr maak. Ten opsigte van die konsentrasie mense wat ons trek om die program te help doseer, is dit beslis multidissiplinêr. Ons verwag nie van 'n medikus om hier in te kom en 'n perspektief in te bring en dit onmiddelik filosofies te doen nie". (Applied Ethics)*

Regarding the M Programme in Value and Policy Studies, it was decided from the start that the type of issues that are addressed cannot be done within one particular discipline:

*"Dit werk so – jy sit 'n klompie dissiplines langs mekaar neer – dit is 'n seleksie van dissiplines wat jy het en in die soort vraagstellings wat hanteer word, word studente gekonfronteer met hierdie dissiplines wat hulle andersins nie op nagraadse vlak bymekaar kan bring nie. Dit was die oorspronklike model – die 1996 model. Die program is egter daarna radikaal gewysig. Studente se terugvoering was dat hulle "afgewaterde sosiologie, afgewaterde filosofie, afgewaterde godsdienskunde, afgewaterde ekonomie ens. kry". (Value and Policy Studies)*

The question then emerged as to how to address complex issues that cannot be discussed within one discipline only:

*"Dit het met tref en trap gekom. Ek het partykeer direktief ingetree en dit het omtrent twee jaar geduur. Wat op die ou einde gebeur het, is dit het al hoe meer my onderneming geword met die hulp van 'n paar ander kollegas wat inkom. Dit het soort van 'n community of practice geword. En dit het die integrasie geskep wat daar nou is. En dit is nie maklik nie, want jy het twee bestanddele nodig. Eerstens is die soort van ervaring, nie blote intellektuele persepsie of konsep nie, maar 'n soort van 'n ervaring wat jy buite die akademie kry en wat jou laat besef dat 'n dissipline, hoe belangrik ookal, nie goed genoeg is nie. Jy het dus 'n eksistensiële ervaring wat interdissiplinêre denke eis, maar jy moet êrens in 'n praktiese situasie wees wat jou laat besef dat ek met my dissipline kan nie die antwoord gee nie en dan begin jy communities of practice soek. En dit skep ook spanning. Elkeen wil claim dat hulle area is die werklike oplossing. En dit is dan ook so dat jy baie keer by hierdie tipe van interdissiplinêre goed kry dat dit oppervlakkig word, maar die verklaring daarvoor is dat dit nie regtig interdissiplinêr is nie – dit word multi-dissiplinêr. Dit is net so 'n spul dissiplines wat saamgevoeg word, maar hulle slaag nie daarin om 'n vraagstuk op te los nie. As jy interdissiplinêr te werk gaan, dan definieer die kernuitkoms al die ander goed wat jy vra en as die kernuitkoms self 'n baie komplekse ding is en*

*komplekse vrae ontlok, dan het jy 'n magtige ding". (Value and Policy Studies)*

*Wel, ja, as 'n mens begin met die interdisiplinariteit – dit lê eintlik op twee vlakke. Die een is dat die studente wat toetree tot die program uit verskillende areas kom. So kom ons sê dan nou maar die basis van die program is interdisiplinêr. Maar die program is eintlik ook interdisiplinêr. Die antieke wêreld of antieke studie dek die hele wêreld. So jy het kuns, godsdiens, sosiale strukture, geskiedenis, letterkunde en in hierdie program kom 'n mens tot 'n meerdere of mindere mate veral met die verskillende fasette van die antieke wêreld in aanraking. 'n Mens leer dan ook verskillende benaderings by, so in daai opsig is dit interdisiplinêr." (Ancient Cultures)*

*"Wat interdisiplinariteit aan betref, moet 'n mens egter begryp dat kliniese sielkunde beteken gewoon sielkunde ten opsigte van teorie en praktyk soos toegepas binne die kliniese opset. Dus moet jy verwag dat as daar samewerking van ander dissiplines ter sprake is, dan is dit veral met geneeskunde. So ja, ons werk baie nou saam met psigiatrie. Daar is 'n oorvleueling tussen psigiatrie en kliniese sielkunde. Ons werk met dieselfde diagnostiese stelsel vir psigiatryse versteurings. Ons en psigiaters doen almal psigoterapie. Maar daar is ook bv. nou betrokkenheid van interne geneeskunde. 'n Doktorale student van ons doen 'n doktorsgraad in kliniese sielkunde en 'n professor van interne geneeskunde is die mede promotor gewoon omdat ons doen 'n sekere behandeling en hulle doen vir ons sekere breinskanderings om vas te stel of die behandeling wat ons doen ook breinveranderinge teweeg bring, so ja, daar is interdisiplinêre samewerking, maar grootliks van geneeskunde se kant af". (Clinical Psychology)*

#### **7.2.1.5 The uniqueness of the programmes**

All four programmes emerged before the period when the programme focus became fashionable at universities. In that way, it is unique in itself. On the question if other similar programmes existed at other universities in South Africa, the respondents seemed quite confident that regarding the content, structure and focus of the programme, it is unique and that no real



competition exists at other universities. Again, the M Programme in Clinical Psychology seems to be a bit different. The Professional Board for Psychology is an external body that sets certain guidelines for all universities. This means that Clinical Psychology as a postgraduate programme does exist at other universities, but the Professional Board still respects that autonomy of universities:

*"Dit is binne die riglyne universiteite se prerogatief om sy program in te kleur soos dit hom pas of soos wat hy goeddink. Ons mag bv. voel dit is baie belangrik vir die werk van 'n kliniese sielkundige om 'n goeie kennis van neurosielkunde te hê. 'n Ander departement mag dalk minder tyd daaraan spandeer. Dit beteken egter nie dat hulle lei swakker sielkundiges op nie. Ons program is waarskynlik ook uniek omdat dit 'n eiesoortige klem op psigoterapie sit en ons ervaring is dat studente van ander universiteite juis hier aansoek doen vanweë hierdie eiesoortigheid". (Clinical Psychology)*

The other three programs seem to be unique in terms of the fact that nowhere else in South Africa similar programs are being presented:

*"Nagraadse programme in die Antieke Geskiedenis bestaan wel, maar hulle vereis almal 'n voorgraadse studie daarin. En ons kry selfs van mense in daardie programme, wat voorgraads daar gestudeer het, wat na ons toe kom juis omdat ons eksplisiet die antieke wêreld met die moderne wêreld in verband bring. En dit is wat die program uniek maak. Dit is nie tipies tradisioneel wat in die antieke gedoen word nie." (Ancient Cultures)*

*"Nee, daar word nêrens so iets aangebied nie. Dit word beskou as 'n niche wat die universiteit moet uitbou." (Value and Policy Studies)*

*"Daar is nie een waarvan ek weet wat spesifiek soos hierdie een lyk nie. Kaapstad probeer nou al vir 'n hele paar jaar 'n M Phil program in die Mediese Fakulteit tot stand bring en ons is sterk met hulle in gesprek oof samewerking. Maar ek kan met vrymoedigheid vir jou sê – ons s'n is die enigste een wat regtig goed werk, wat al goed gevestig is, wat al 6*

*jaar aan die gang is en wat 'n model of formule het wat werkbaar is. In daardie sin dink ek is ons uniek.” (Applied Ethics)*

### **7.2.2 The student**

In this section, issues regarding the students that enroll for the particular programmes will be discussed. I will focus on the type of student, the incorporation of students in research projects in the department and typical problems students have with the programs.

#### **7.2.2.1 The type of student**

The uniqueness of these programmes extends to the type of students who enroll for them. It is required of students to either already have an occupation or to have had one previously, or to have a certain level of personal development to benefit from the programme in the best possible way. With the exception of the M Programme in Clinical Psychology and the full-time M Programme in Value and Policy Studies, students do not have to have a previous qualification in the specific field. Students thus enroll for the sake of personal enrichment or for improvement of skills in their occupation.

*“Jy sit met mense wat alreeds redelik meerderjarig is en baie van hulle het alreeds 'n doktorsgraad en alhoewel hulle nie 'n voorgraadse kwalifikasie in die antieke het nie, het baie al wel informeel te doen gekry met die antieke wêreld – baie het al self gelees, gaan gereeld Europa toe, hulle het 'n sterk belangstelling en omdat die meeste van hulle alreeds meer volwasse studente is, het hulle ook al in 'n groot mate inhoude geïntegreer in die moderne wêreld wat aansluit by die antieke wêreld. So ons is regtig verras met die gehalte van werk wat hierdie studente kan doen met, soos ek sê, sonder enige formele opleiding in die antieke.” (Ancient Culture)*

*“Ons kry inskrywings van verskillende agtergronde, en dit maak dit interessanter om so 'n groep mense bymekaar te kry. Die meeste van die studente is mense wat alreeds in 'n beroep staan en dus executive minded is.” (Value and Policy Studies)*

*"Die tipiese student staan alreeds in 'n beroep." (Applied Ethics)*

Regarding the M Programme in Value and Policy Studies, students who go directly from a undergraduate qualification in Value and Policy Studies to postgraduate studies have to do an intensive internship in order to reach a level where they can identify with the specific demands of an occupation.

The M Programme in Clinical Psychology requires an undergraduate qualification in Psychology. This is due to the fact that students are trained for a specific occupation. Because students are required to be Clinical Psychologists after their training, very few students can be accommodated in the programme. A number of selection procedures exist.

*"Ons het 163 aansoeke gekry van reg oor die land en op hierdie stadium kan ons 9 studente neem. Daar is twee oorwegings – die eerste is die hoeveelheid interne poste wat ons tot ons beskikking het. Ons kyk verder ook na akademiese prestasie voorgaads en dan, omdat die opleiding geweldig intensief is, kyk ons ook na ervaring, ons kyk na persoonlike aanpassingsvermoë." (Clinical Psychology)*

#### **7.2.2.2 Research outputs of students**

Students do not deliver much in the form of research articles but they are drawn into research of the department by means of bringing new insights and perspectives.

The limitation in outputs is due to the fact that on the one hand, the particular programmes are developed not to train students to become academics, or to provide occupation-specific or occupation-related skills. The knowledge they acquire might not be sufficient to produce research outputs on an advanced level. On the other hand, a huge amount of students are non-residential and therefore not on campus for most of their studies. This makes it impossible to be actively involved in research activities of the department.



*"Hulle word wel ingetrek, maar nee, daar is geen uitsette nie. Die vlak van projekte is te hoog. Studente is nie ervare genoeg nie. So ons gebruik sekere terugvoer van studente, maar omdat studente nie fisies hier is nie, is dit nog 'n probleem."* (Value and Policy Studies)

*"Ek dink die probleem met die antieke en dit is nou meer 'n algemene probleem, is dat dit 'n baie lank voorbereidingsproses verg om op 'n akademiese aanvaarbare vlak navorsingsuitsette te kan lewer. Die onderrig wat ons bied is slegs om mense bekend te stel aan die vak. Ons sien egter nie hierdie program as 'n steng akademiese een nie, so daar is studente wat baie interessante werk doen, maar dit is iets waaraan ons nog werk."* (Ancient Cultures)

*"Studente moet goed navorsingsgeoriënteerd wees en daarom maak ons voorsiening vir twee bane – die wat hulle oriëntasie wil voortsit op 'n dieper vlak en hom wil voorberei vir Doktorale studie en die wat die M Phil wil doen wat meer beroepsgerig is."* (Applied Ethics)

Sometimes students are so involved in coursework and practical work, that the research component receives little attention. In the case of the M Programme in Clinical Psychology, the coursework, practical work and internship are so intensive that students often struggle to finish their research component.

#### **7.2.2.3 Typical problems that students encounter**

Although the typical problems students encounter cannot be generalised to students in all programmes due to the differences in the nature thereof, certain general issues can be identified.

In the case of the M Programmes in Applied Ethics, Value and Policy Studies and Ancient Cultures, the fact that students already have an occupation causes huge problems in terms of time and contact with supervisors. Students find it very difficult to complete their studies within the set time because they have to comply with the demands of their occupation, hand in assignments, write exams and do research.

*"Soveel van die mense werk en dit is vir baie min moontlik om binne die twee jaar te voltooi. Die meeste doen dit binne drie of vier jaar. Daar is wel sommige wat dit onmoontlik vind om dit saam met 'n voltydse werk te voltooi. So om daai rede vat hulle of lank, of hulle maak nie klaar nie."* (Ancient Cultures)

*"Sommige van hulle ondervind probleme om die twee weke blok lesings voluit te kan neem vanweë hulle werksituasies."* (Applied Ethics)

*"Ek dink die ding wat ek die meeste terugkry is die tipe mense wat ons kry, is juis mense wat ondernemende mense is en in 'n posisie sit in hulle werk waar hulle nie baie tyd het nie."* (Value and Policy Studies)

Value and Policy Studies have a solution to the problem by means of forcing students to come to Stellenbosch for a period of two weeks per session to attend class, see their supervisor and work on assignments:

*"Een van ons antwoorde daarop is dat ons vir hulle sê julle het relatief min werk tussen sessies, maar as daar 'n sessie is, dan sluk ons julle vir twee weke. Jy is weg. Jy is nie die helfte van die dag by die klas en dan kan jy huis toe gaan en jou kantoor aan die gang hou nie. Dit is twee weke wat jy uit jou lewe uit vat – ons gee minimaal klas, maar die res van die tyd sit jy in jou kamer, jy lees en werk aan jou werkstukke. En in 'n jaar het ons drie van daai sessies. Die ure daarvan is op die ou einde meer kontakure as 'n konvensionele een maal 'n week kontaksessie."* (Value and Policy Studies)

The fact that most students are non-residential, causes further problems. Scheduled contact times with supervisors are limited and for some, access to facilities such as the library, are limited. It places additional strain on students and in many cases it leads to longer completion times or sometimes non-completion of studies.

*"As 'n mens studente hier gehad het, sou 'n mens hulle makliker kom gelei het, maar ek weet ook nie of ons die soort tyd sou gehad het om*

*hierdie soort intensiewe aandag aan mense te gee nie.” (Ancient Cultures)*

*“Die kwessie van afstand is `n vermoeiende ding. Jy kan nie eintlik op die telefoon praat nie, jy moet als op skrif sit. Ons kan nie heeltemal in afsondering werk nie.” (Applied Ethics)*

*“Ek meen dit hang af van persoon tot persoon. Jy kry mense wat jy kan los en aangaan, maar ander nie.” (Value and Policy Studies)*

Time is also a huge problem for students in the Clinical Psychology programme, but in this case because they have huge amounts of reading, practical work, reports to write, an internship of a full year and a research report to write – all in two years. Many students take an additional year in which they do the research report.

Value and Policy Studies try to solve the problems of non-residential students living in Gauteng by presenting the majority of classes in Gauteng. According to the respondent, many of their students live in Gauteng and it is cheaper for him and his lecturers to fly there (and at the same time see other clients) than for students to fly to Cape Town. This also promotes contact with students:

*“Ons doen moeite om self van tyd tot tyd soontoe te gaan en mense persoonlik te sien. Ons doen nie epos nie en ons doen nie telefoon nie. Dit is mens tot mens interaksie en ek dink dit is waarskynlik die ding wat die program op die ou einde gaan laat voortloop.” (Value and Policy Studies)*

An additional problem in the case of the M Programs in Ancient Cultures, Applied Ethics and Clinical Psychology seems to be that students from historically disadvantaged universities struggle to cope with the demands placed on them.



*"Die een groot probleem en ek dink dit is nie tipies aan die program nie, is dat baie van ons swart studente is nie al voorbereid vir nagraadse studies nie. Party van hulle is ook nie goed opgelei om op 'n akademiese manier te argumenteer nie. So dit is 'n taamlike lang proses vir hulle om hulle sover te kry om werkstukke op 'n bevredigende vorm afgehandel te kry."* (Ancient Cultures)

*"Ek wil dit nou nie aan ras koppel nie, maar die agtergrond veral van sommige van die histories agtergeblewene universiteite is, laat ons nou maar eerlik met mekaar wees, is nie op standaard nie. Dit skep 'n probleem."* (Applied Ethics)

*"So as jy my vra na die profiel van studente, is dit akademiese suksesvolle studente wat redelik gebalanseerd is, maar nou moet jy ook agtergeblewene studente akkomodeer en die Beroepsraad is baie spesifiek daaroor. Dit skep in sommige gevalle probleme."* (Clinical Psychology)

Finances seem to be another huge problem:

*"Ek meen hulle moet hulle lewe aan die gang kan hou."* (Value and Policy Studies)

*"Sommige van hulle vind die finansiële kant van die sake knellend."* (Applied Ethics)

*"En ja, geld is natuurlik ook 'n faktor. Ek dink hierdie program en baie ander van ons fakulteit is heeltemal te duur. As ons die klasgeld afskaal, sal dit dan ook die programme meer toeganklik maak."* (Ancient Cultures)

In the case of Value and Policy Studies, the respondent also mentioned the issue of motivation. Students seem motivated for the period they are having classes but when the two weeks are over and they go back to their offices, it is difficult to stay motivated:

*"Motivering is 'n groot probleem omdat hulle nie heeldag in die klas is nie. Ek meen hulle sit in 'n werksessie en hulle gaan op 'n vreeslike high hier uit, maar dan kom hulle by die huis en dan moet hulle op hulle eie baklei met die goed."* (Value and Policy Studies)

In the case of Clinical Psychology, personal adjustment is an additional problem. Although students go through a very strenuous selection process, the respondent finds that some students still can not meet the personal demands of the programme:

*"Ten spyte daarvan dat ons kyk na die mense se persoonlike aanpassing by keuring, is daar gevalle waar die student nie aan die eise kan voldoen nie en dan moet 'n mens met die student werk om die soort van goed te kan hanteer. Ek dink in hierdie opsig is die program anders as die ander waar jy jou navorsing doen en modules. Hier moet jy ook geleer word om jou persoonlike reserwes te gebruik in die hulpverlening aan ander mense en dit is moeilik."* (Clinical Psychology)

### **8.2.3 Demands to the department and supervisors**

The nature of the programme seems to put huge demands on their respective departments and supervisors:

*"Nee, dit is 'n geweldige oormaat – dit wat 'n mens se tyd. Dit kan ook 'n duur ding raak. Van die goed is ingereken in die prys van die program. Ja, en dan probeer 'n mens jou bes om dinge so te skeduleer dat jy studente sien, maar ook lesings gee en somer afsprake ens. reël. Maar dit is op die ou einde ver meer tyd en dit is 'n vraag of dit die moeite werd is. Dit stel wel in die sin ook ekstra eise aan ons studieleiers, omdat die aard van die ding interdisiplinêr is. Jy gaan geen studieleier kry wat regtig 'n ekspert is nie. So studieleiers moet helder in hulle koppe wees en besef wat hulle kan doen en wat nie en dan moet hulle kan sê vir daai ding stuur ek jou na die een toe en so aan. Om daardie oopheid te hê, maar ook om die ding te organiseer, is ekstra vir my."* (Value and Policy Studies)

*"In 'n meerdere of mindere mate is die hele departement betrokke by die program. En ek dink 'n mens moet waak daarteen om nie die departement te oorlaai nie."* (Ancient Cultures)

*"Ja goed, studieleiding is lastig en die feit dat jy dit oor 'n afstand moet doen, is lastig, maar 'n mens verwag nie dat als maanskyn en rose moet wees nie. Daar is 'n klomp lastighede wat meer te make het met hoe ons die program intern organiseer binne die departement. Dit is 'n reusagtige addisionele las wat die departement opneem. Daar moet geen twyfel daaroor wees nie. Vir my vanuit 'n doseer perspektief is die goed wat ek voorgaads doseer, peanuts in vergelyking met die werk wat ek nagraads doen. Dit konsumeer 'n mens se tyd."* (Applied Ethics)

*"Die ding is, jy sit hier met 'n gegewendheid en dit is die personeellede in die departement. Jy kan wonderlike ideale hê, maar jy is gebind met die mensekrag wat jy tot jou beskikking het om die program aan te bied."* (Clinical Psychology)

An additional demand placed on the Department of Psychology, is the practical work that is incorporated in the M Programme in Clinical Psychology. Lecturers not only present modules but also have to evaluate practical work at the end of each module. Furthermore, in the internship year, a supervisor is selected in each hospital to assist the intern throughout the year. He/she has to write three monthly reports on the progress of the student. The lecturers in the department also have contact with the internships on a three-monthly basis to discuss problems or additional information they might require. A mentor system is also in place to help students with personal adjustment. The mentor has to be fully trusted by the student and at no time can he/she reveal problems discussed by the student. The mentor thus cannot judge the student to be unfit to qualify:

*"Kyk, ons onderskei tussen die supervisor wat die kliniese verantwoordelikheid dra vir die pasient. As daar iets verkeerd gaan in die praktiese werk, dan dra daai persoon die verantwoordelikheid. Die*



*internskap supervisor is iets heeltemal anders. Dit is die persoon wat daar by die hospitaal is. Hier het jy supervisors wat van die departement se kliniese personeel is wat dan vir sy kliniese hantering van pasiënte as deel van sy praktiese werk daar is. Die mentor sisteem is, ons laat die student met die jaar begin, ons gee hulle so twee weke om te settle en dan gee ons vir hulle geleentheid om te praat oor hulle probleme, so dit is byna op 'n terapeutiese grondslag.” (Clinical Psychology)*

#### **7.2.4 Improvements for the future**

The four respondents have different ideas regarding possible adjustments to be made to the programmes in the future. Those will be discussed separately.

##### **7.2.4.1 M Programme in Clinical Psychology**

As from 2004, the requirement set by the Professional Board for Psychology, is that students can only register as Clinical Psychologists with a doctors degree. This in itself will bring certain changes to the programme:

*“Ek dink die belangrikste verandering wat dit aan die program teweeg sal bring, is dat dit 'n baie sterk navorsingskomponent in die program sal inbring en in 'n mate het ons dit nou toe ons ons finale beplanning gedoen het vir die programvoorleggings reeds al geïnkorporeer om ook die fokus van die navorsingskomponent nou aan te sluit met die fokus van die kursuswerk. Ons spesifiseer dan ook bepaalde navorsingsareas waarbinne studente sal moet werk. Dit is om te sorg dat die navorsingsfokus heeltemal inpas by die res van die program”.*

The respondent also feels that in terms of marketing, the department should rather focus on honours level. Because there is a strong need for more students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, the department should have control over the quality of students that enrolls. The idea is thus to have more coloured/black students from honours level so that they can be prepared for the high standards and demands that will be placed on them at postgraduate level:

*"Ons het in die verlede advertensies geplaas, maar wat ons besluit het, is om meer te bemark by universiteite wat bekend is daarvoor dat hulle swart studente het. Die rede daarvoor is dat die swart studente wat ons trek, die graad moet kan deurkom. As 'n ou nie akademies sterk is nie, dan sukkel hulle. Ek het 'n baie sterk gevoel dat ons moet ophou bemark vir die M Program en eerder bemark vir die Honeurs, want daardeur as hy op Stellenbosch is, kan jy hom leer ken en hom op die regte vlak kry."*

Furthermore, the respondent feels that more students should be accommodated:

*"Ons is nou besig om nuwe internskappe oop te maak, wat nie so maklik is nie, maar ek dink ons sal dit binnekort meer kan maak. Ons sal egter nooit meer as 12 kan akkomodeer nie."*

#### **7.2.4.2 M Programme in Value and Policy Studies**

The respondent feels that the University of Stellenbosch should become more market orientated:

*"Een van die probleme, veral dan nou van die universiteit se kant af wat eintlik die hele proses kelder, is die universiteit het eintlik nog geen begrip van markgeoriënteerd wees nie. Mense sê vir ons ek kan vanaf Februarie tot Maart dit doen, maar tussenin kan ek dit nie doen nie. En ek het gevra is dit nie moontlik dat ons 'n modulêre struktuur gee dat 'n mens sê sulke mense op bestuursvlak neem 5 of 6 of 7 modules oor 'n tydperk van 5 jaar nie. Maar in totaal net vir wanneer hulle die modules doen. Die antwoord van die universiteit was – sorry. Die universiteit skryf iemand vir 'n jaar in en dit is dit."*

According to the respondent, the University's misconception regarding marketability is the main reason why one of the programmes initiated by Value and Policy Studies, i.e. the so called "Executive Masters class" still only exists on paper:

*"Ja, dit is nou op papier. Daar is besigheidsmense wat sê hulle stel belang in 'n sekere onderwerp, maar daar is geen manier waarop hulle vir 'n jaar kan inskryf vir 'n meestersgraad nie. So ons het die ding op papier neergesit, maar dit was nog glad nie in werking nie."*

#### **7.2.4.3 M Programme in Ancient Cultures**

According to the respondent, the M Programme in Ancient Cultures needs further rationalisation. The possibility exists that some general components can be identified that students from all programmes in the department should take. The respondent feels that this will lead to greater cohesion and the demands on the department in terms of lecturing will be less. An extension of the latter might be the inclusion of a compulsory language component. It will extend the possibility of students to go on with a doctorate as knowledge of an ancient language is compulsory for doctoral studies.

Furthermore, there is a feeling that contact times should be more, but the respondent realises that because of the type of student that is attracted, i.e. people already in an occupation, this is highly unlikely to happen.

*"Ons sou graag ons kontaktye wou uitbrei, maar studente kan dit nie bekostig nie".*

#### **7.2.4.4 M Programme in Applied Ethics**

The respondent sees the following as possible improvements:

*"'n Mens kan altyd verbeter. Dit sou arrogant wees om te sê die program is volmaak. Alles behalwe. 'n Mens kan sekerlik die akademiese dimensie daarvan verder opskerp. Ek dink die program kan nog beter gestruktureer word. Ek vind die struktureering van die program nog nie heeltemal lekker nie. Ons behoort op 'n stadium te gaan sit en dit te herbedink. Op die logistieke vlak, lokale word toenemend 'n probleem. Ons sukkel ons vrek om lokale te kry. Op 'n stadium was daar 'n groot opskop oor die logistieke steun wat die Universiteit gegee het. Ons hele administratiewe sisteem is geared vir dagstudente. Dit*



*gaan nou beter. Ons het minder probleme, maar dit is 'n paradigma skuif wat nodig is wat hierdie soort van goed aan betref".*

### **7.3 Concluding comments**

- It seems as if the programmes were initiated not only out of demands set to them by the University in terms of the broadening of postgraduate programmes but also because of demands from "outside" i.e. the market.
- In terms of the aims of the programmes, it is becoming increasingly important that departments set programmes that will help students to gain skills that they can utilize in their specific occupations.
- All four programmes are scheduled for two years. Knowledge of the specific fields is not specifically required in all cases but a bachelors degree is set as the minimum requirement. The programmes consist of a modular/course as well as a thesis/research component.
- The nature of the programmes implies a move away from the traditional focus on training people to become academics towards a more occupation-specific or occupation-related focus. This is also pertinent in the inclusion of practical components and/or internships.
- There is a focus on interdisciplinarity. The respondents all feel that modern society brings new issues and problems that cannot necessarily be addressed and solved within one discipline. The programmes have as aim the inclusion of different disciplines or perspectives in their training.
- The type of student attracted to the programmes seems to be the student already in an occupation. This has the effect of lesser research outputs and also puts a lot of extra strain on the department in terms of time and contact with students.
- Typical problems students have are time constraints, contact with supervisors, insufficient skills to perform on a postgraduate level, finances and motivation.

This Chapter pointed out some characteristics of four programmes in the Arts Faculty. It is clear that with its unique approach to postgraduate studies, it sets an example for a move away from the traditional idea of

postgraduate studies as preparation for those who want to become specialists in a particular academic field towards a more occupationally orientated model whereby students can become equipped with the necessary skills to become specialists in their respective occupations.

Trends and patterns in postgraduate research have been identified at Stellenbosch regarding subjects, the nature of the research, the environments, departments and supervisors. The results of the study have been compared to the nature of postgraduate programmes at other universities in South Africa. The personal profiles of postgraduate students at Stellenbosch have also been identified.

In this chapter, the results of the main findings of the study are discussed. The interviews are discussed in more detail. References to relevant literature discussed in Chapter 2 and certain personal reflections are made in terms of further studies.

The chapter follows the same structure as the previous chapters. The findings are organised as follows:

### 3.1 Demographics and academic relevant background information

As shown in studies done by Wright and Lodwick (1999), Lodge (1999), Moses (1999), and others (1999), the demographic profile of postgraduate students is changing. In this particular study on postgraduate students at the University of Stellenbosch, results show that the demographic profile of students have changed significantly over the last decade. Many students are older (the average age being 38 years) and therefore more mature. According to Wright and Lodwick (1999), people who are more mature appear to make quicker progress with their postgraduate studies. Although age did not seem to be a significant predictor of duration of postgraduate studies in this study, almost half of all postgraduate

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The aims of this study were twofold: firstly to identify historical and current trends and patterns in postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch regarding success rates, completion rates, differences between environments, departments and supervisors/promotors, differences relating to the nature of postgraduate programmes/degrees and differences relating to the personal profiles of postgraduate students. Secondly, the enabling and constraining factors relating to postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch have also been identified.

In this chapter, the results of the main findings of the postal surveys and interviews are discussed in more detail. Reference is made to the relevant literature discussed in Chapter 2 and certain general recommendations will be made in terms of further studies.

The chapter follows the same structure as the previous chapters and findings are organized accordingly.

#### **8.1 Demographics and academic relevant background information**

As shown in studies done by Wright and Lodwick (1989), Nettles (1990), Moses (1990, cited in Sutherland, 1992) and Baird (1990), the demographics of students play a huge role in their success with postgraduate studies. In this particular study on postgraduate studies at the University of Stellenbosch, results show that the demographic profiles of students have changed significantly over the last decade. Firstly, students are older (the average age being 38 years) and therefore (hopefully) more mature. According to Wright and Lodwick (1989), people who are more mature in age appear to make quicker progress with their postgraduate studies. Although age didn't seem to be a significant predictor of duration of postgraduate studies in this study, almost half of all postgraduate



students (completed and current) did not enroll for a postgraduate programme directly after completion of their undergraduate studies. This might relate to the fact that vocational skills are becoming more important. Therefore, many students first pursue an occupation and then commence with postgraduate studies for improvement of skills and/or personal enrichment. These two aspects also motivate students for further studies with more than three quarters of all students reporting it being their biggest motivators.

In terms of gender, although there has been an increase in the number of women students over the last decade, the majority are still male. Female students obviously have dual roles as mothers, wives and learners. This can put a lot of strain on these students and might lead to their reluctance to enroll. Still, it is clear that a significantly larger proportion of female students are currently enrolled compared to the past.

Nettles (1990) sees discrimination based on race as another huge problem in postgraduate studies. In recent years, national higher education policies demanded far more and more diversity and equal access to tertiary institutions. The University of Stellenbosch seems to have addressed this and the distribution has changed from almost exclusively white to just more than three quarters white. This might be due to the ongoing transformation processes currently implemented at the University. This possibly has the effect of a more "positive" image being portrayed and therefore more non-white students enroll. Although the aim of the study was not to identify cases of discrimination towards students based on their race, it would have been interesting to ask students if during their postgraduate studies, they experienced any form of racial discrimination.

The language policy of the University has caused many discussions in the recent past. Although the majority of students are still Afrikaans speaking, the percentage of Afrikaans speaking postgraduate students has declined in

the last decade. More than three quarters of students reported that the fact that the University is seen as an Afrikaans university, did/do not influence their studies in any way.

Ehrenberg and Mavros (1994) state that financial support is a determinant of success of postgraduate students. In this study, the primary source of funding seems to be own funds for both graduate and current students. Although students in this study reported bursaries as to be the second most important source of funding, elsewhere they reported that in terms of non-academic facilities at the University, they were not impressed with the availability of postgraduate bursaries.

In terms of relevance of postgraduate studies for their occupations, the majority of students felt that their studies prepared them for their occupations and that it was largely relevant. Although this is the case, there is a significant difference in the percentage "very relevant" responses of graduate and current students with more current postgraduate students reporting positively. The reason for this can be that the University in the last decade has moved with the global trends in higher education as specified in the literature – addressing the need for more relevant postgraduate programs to equip students with the necessary skills to use in the workplace. Almost two thirds of all students reported that their postgraduate studies prepared them to a great extent for their current occupation.

Involvement in the home department also seems to have an impact on the success of postgraduate studies. Baird (1990) states that more assistantships will help students with their financial constraints and this might in turn lead to shorter completion times. In general, small percentages of students in this study were involved in any way in their home departments. The greatest involvement seems to be in the form of student assistantships and research assistantships.

In terms of the distribution of students per faculty, the largest proportion seem to fall in Arts, Economic and Management Sciences and Health Sciences and the majority of students enrolled for a postgraduate programme consisting of coursework and a mini or full thesis. These two factors (i.e. faculty and programme type) seemed to be the biggest predictors of duration of study. This will be dealt with in another section later in this chapter.

These demographic profiles of students seem to put additional demands on the University and it is doubtful if the University were in all aspects fully geared for these demands. The University's response on these demands were largely in the form of broadening and diversification of postgraduate programmes, including more modular and non-residential programmes. There still seems to be a need for greater institutionalization of these programmes into the academic and administrative systems of the University as a whole.

## **8.2 The relationship with the supervisor/promotor**

In terms of the results on questions applicable to the relationship with the supervisor, differentiations were made between completed and current students as it might have had an impact on responses. Some current students might not have had any supervision at the time of completing the questionnaire. For these reasons, respondents were asked only to complete the questions relating to their situation.

From the literature, it is clear that the nature of supervision and more specifically the relationship with the supervisor is a contributing factor to the success, effectiveness and efficiency of postgraduate studies. According to Connell (1985), the supervision of a postgraduate student is the most advanced level of teaching in the educational system. In this study, special attention was given to the supervisory process. Aspects that were covered included contact with the supervisor, information received and guidance



needed, the quality of supervision as perceived by the students, support and feedback received from the supervisor and requirements set by supervisors.

Moses (1985) indicated that one of the broad areas of dissatisfaction students have with their supervisors includes so-called "organizational factors". Many supervisors are too busy with administration and have too many students to supervise. This then might lead to little or infrequent contact between the student and the supervisor. In this study, results show that almost half of all respondents reported contact with their supervisor as being either weekly or monthly. More than a third reported that they only had contact three or four times, infrequent and some even never. Students were not asked if the contact times they had were sufficient to address their specific needs.

Mouton (2001) states that one of the expectations supervisors have of their students is to initiate contact and ask for appointments with the supervisor. In terms of initiation of contact, students in this study reported that contact was initiated by themselves and/or the supervisor/promotor.

According to Moses (1985), Rudd (1985), Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1991) and Smith (1999), another very important aspect in the success of postgraduate studies is the provision of information to students.

Rudd (1985), for example, states that information on different topic possibilities helps the student to make informed decisions. Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1991) place emphasis on what they call the "design phase", "work phase" and "editing phase". Integrated in each is the importance of the provision of sufficient information and guidance to students. In this study, it is clear that students were not sufficiently informed about the various aspects of supervision and that they actually could have demanded more and better information. Students responded

more positively towards information that were received regarding the examination of the seminars/thesis/dissertation (graduate students) and information regarding the process/scheduling of the study (current students).

Although, as stated before, students were not informed on all aspects of the process of supervision, this might be due to the fact that they seemed not to need much guidance regarding most of the aspects of their studies. Aspects where much guidance is needed seem to be only in the development of a research proposal. This form of guidance falls in the "design phase" of Helm and Van der Westhuisen (1999). Students reported the least guidance needed with the literature study and the fieldwork/data collection. Although according to Helm and Van der Westhuisen, the "working phase" and "editing phase" also places huge responsibilities on the part of the supervisor, it does not seem that students in this study particularly need guidance and support regarding issues falling within those two phases.

Overall, students reported to be very happy with the level of support and guidance they received from their supervisors. The majority of students also reported positively on the quality of supervision. For none of the indicators of quality of supervision did more than 50% of respondents tick the "average" or "very poor" response option. Interestingly enough, although students reported that they required the least amount of guidance with the literature study and fieldwork/data collection, they rated the quality of supervision relating to those two aspects as relatively less positive. One may argue here in favour of the supervisors: because the ability of the students in these particular cases were already known to the supervisor, he/she could have known that little guidance was needed.

According to Smith (1999), one of the educational responsibilities of supervisors is to be able to meet students' need for feedback. The majority of students in this study reported feedback on their thesis proposal within

one week, on the finished thesis/dissertation within one month and on individual chapters mostly within one week.

In terms of the requirements set by the supervisor/promotor, different supervisors set different requirements regarding aspects of the postgraduate process. This might be due to individual preferences or factors relating to the field. The question comes to mind if greater standardization between environments/individuals would be needed in the future.

### **8.3 Factors regarding the duration of study**

In a study done by Smith and Tyson (2000, mentioned in Smit, 2000) it was found that South African postgraduate students take very long to complete their master`s and doctoral studies. These low completion rates were also found in studies done by Noble (1992), Phillips and Pugh (1987) and Rudd (1985). They also found huge trans-disciplinary differences with very high non-completion rates among humanities students. Large differences between full time and part time students also exist.

In this study, differences between faculties and programme types (Master`s and Doctoral programmes) seem to be the two most important predictors of duration of studies. Factors relating to the personal situation of the student (with the exception of "marital status" which probably correlates with "full time/part time") and supervision (with the exception in one instance of "feedback") did not turn out to be significant predictors.

In terms of through-put and completion rates, the total number of Master`s and Doctoral students has grown with about 50% from 1991 to 1999. During the same time, the number of students who completed increased with about 65%. The annual completion rates vary between 11% and 14% for Doctoral students and 21% and 24% for Master`s students. The increase in the number of students who did not complete their studies (from 1968 in 1991 to 2859 in 1999) represents an increase of 45%.



The large increase in the number of postgraduate students over the past decade placed new academic, administrative and managerial demands on the university. There is no evidence that the efficiency of the system has declined over the past few years. On the contrary, the completion rates have stayed the same over the past few years even though the number of master's and doctoral students has increased. It is however not clear if the University has the infrastructure and sufficient structures in place to address the increasing demands this increase in students will place on it.

With the increase in postgraduate numbers, there is also a concomitant increase in the need for more market orientated postgraduate courses or what Gultig (1999) calls "professionally-oriented courses". He states that higher education institutions have to move from a cultural conservatism to what he calls "entrepreneurial" institutions. Blume (1986) also states that students are increasingly seeking qualifications that will benefit them in their respective occupations.

#### **8.4 New initiatives for postgraduate education**

It seems as if in the past few years, shifts in the nature of postgraduate studies at the University have greatly been driven by individual academics and departments. They have developed their own initiatives in order to keep track with the changes and demands of postgraduate studies. An example can be seen in the initiatives of four postgraduate programmes in the Arts Faculty. This particular Faculty was chosen as an example because of the fact that it has the largest number of enrolled postgraduate students. Furthermore, it is the Faculty in which the majority of postgraduate programmes consist of coursework and a mini/full thesis and this relates to the trend in higher education. Burgess (1997, quoted in Weeks, 1998) also stresses the growing importance of 'practice-oriented' degrees. This importance is also stressed by the White Paper on Higher Education where it clearly states that postgraduate studies should address the high level skills needed to provide for the academic labour market. The four programmes

included in the study were selected on the basis that they quite clearly address these needs.

In terms of the aims of the programmes, it seems that it is becoming more and more important that departments set programmes that will help students to gain skills that they can utilize in their specific occupations. The nature of the programmes are also such that it implies a move away from the traditional focus on training people to become academics towards a more occupation-specific or occupation related focus. This is also pertinent in the inclusion of practical components and/or internships.

The type of student drawn to these programmes (with the exception of the M Programme in Clinical Psychology) seems to be those already employed. This has the effect of less research outputs and also puts a lot of extra strain on the department in terms of administration, management, time and contact with students. Although it is argued in the literature that students who study part time and non-residential might take longer to complete their studies, it seems that in terms of time to completion, the majority of students in the Faculty of Arts take two years and less to complete their studies. This is in contrast to a study done by Rudd and Hatch (1968) where they found very high non-completion rates amongst humanities students.

### **8.5 Recommendations**

Although postgraduate students, completed and current, seem to have a general positive perception of the University, its academic and administrative services as well as the quality of postgraduate supervision, there are certain aspects on which improvements can be made in order to improve through-put rates. The University has to put structures in place in order to cope with the increasing demands these students are placing on administration, departments and supervisors. Also, although it seems as if the University are open to the trends in higher education, they are not totally geared for part-time and non-residential students. In fact, all four programmes in the Arts Faculty were initiated by individual academics

within their departments and not as part of a University initiative. In terms of managing postgraduate students within departments, it seems that greater standardization regarding aspects of admission, administrative support, requirements for research proposals, examination and guidelines for the research components are needed.

Supervisors and students both need to know what are expected from them. In terms of the supervisory process, supervisors must have guidelines in terms of what their responsibilities are and they have to realize the importance of their task. Students need to be informed about their rights and the whole process of postgraduate studies.

In order to improve through-put rate and efficiency, it is the task of the University, its postgraduate students and supervisors to ensure that postgraduate studies are structured, managed and executed in such a way that it is in line with trends in higher education.



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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire sent out to graduate students

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UNIVERSITEIT VAN STELLENBOSCH  
UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

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#### INVESTIGATION INTO POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH

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##### Dear Student

The University of Stellenbosch recently decided to launch an in-depth investigation into the state of postgraduate studies at the University. Changing circumstances and new initiatives have made it necessary for the University to reflect on all aspects of its teaching portfolio. The aim of the study is to conduct a survey of past and current postgraduate students regarding various aspects of their postgraduate studies at the US. We are particularly interested in identifying factors that play a role in the success or failure of such studies. On the basis of these findings we will be making recommendations so as to ensure the quality and relevance of postgraduate studies at the US remain of the highest international standards.

As a postgraduate student of the US you are therefore cordially requested to complete this questionnaire. I wish to assure you that any information supplied by you will be treated as strictly confidential. The information obtained through the survey will only be reported in aggregated format. Individual responses will not be made public under any circumstances. The inclusion of your student number and name on the questionnaire is only to allow us to relate your responses to information on your academic record at the US, which is already available on the university database.

Thank you, in anticipation, for your participation in this very important investigation.

Prof AH van Wyk  
Rector



### **INSTRUCTIONS**

Please answer the questions below by circling the appropriate number in each box. In some cases you will be asked to circle ONE number only, in other cases you have to encircle MORE than one option. It is essential that you read all instructions carefully.

### **SECTION A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

1(a). How long after matric did you start your **undergraduate** studies?

Directly after matric	1
One year after matric	2
Two years after matric	3
More than two years after matric	4

1(b). If you did not start with your **undergraduate** studies directly after matric, please provide reason(s).

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2(a). Did you continue with **postgraduate** studies directly after finishing your undergraduate degree?

Yes	1
No	2

2(b). If NOT, how long after completing your undergraduate studies did you commence with your postgraduate studies?

.....years

2(c). Please provide reason(s) for your answer in question 2(b).

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**NB: WITH REGARD TO THE REMAINDER OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONS WITH REFERENCE TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE OBTAINED AT THE US.**

3(a). What is the ***highest postgraduate qualification*** you obtained at the University of Stellenbosch?

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3(b). How long did it take you to obtain this qualification?

.....years

3(c). Do you think that you could have completed your degree in a shorter period of time?

Yes	1
No	2

3(d). If YES, which factors would have enabled you to complete the degree in a shorter period of time?

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4. What did the postgraduate program that you were enrolled for consist of?

Coursework/ modules only	1
Coursework and a mini thesis	2
Coursework and a full thesis	3
A thesis/dissertation only	4
Other (specify):..... .....	5

5. What was the primary source of funding for your studies? (Choose **ONE** option only)

Parents	1
Myself	2
Loan	3
My employer	4
Scholarships	5
Other (specify):..... .....	6

6(a). Please state your current occupation:

.....

6(b). What relevance do your postgraduate studies have to your current occupation?

Very relevant	4
Relevant to some extent	3
Very little relevance	2
No relevance at all	1

6(c). To what extent did your postgraduate studies at the US prepare you for your current occupation/job?

To a large extent	3
To some extent	2
To no extent	1

### **SECTION B: PERCEPTION OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES AT THE US**

7. After completing your undergraduate studies, what made you decide to enroll for a postgraduate programme? (Circle ALL the relevant responses)

Possibility of promotion in my occupation	1
Financial benefits	2
Higher status	3
Improvement of my skills in a certain area	4
Personal enrichment	5
Lack of employment	6
Encouragement from the department where I completed my undergraduate degree	7
Encouragement from my employer	8
Other (specify).....	9
.....	



8. Why did you decide to do your postgraduate degree at the University of Stellenbosch?

(Circle **ALL** the appropriate responses).

I regard the US as one of the foremost universities in South Africa.	1
A qualification at the US would enhance my chances of getting a job/promotion.	2
I regard the US as one of the most outstanding universities in SA.	3
The scientific standing of my supervisor/promoter.	4
I did my undergraduate studies here.	5
I received a bursary from the US.	6
My parents studied at the US.	7
The reputation of the department within the work environment/outside world.	8
It was the only university that offered the degree/programme that I was interested in.	9
I was persuaded by students who had already done the programme.	10
I enjoy the Stellenbosch environment.	11
Other (specify).....	12

9(a). Did you consider any other university for further studies before enrolling at the US?

NO	1
YES (Specify).....	2

9(b). If you could choose again now, which institution would you choose?

US	1
Other (Specify).....	2

10(a). Where did you live whilst doing your postgraduate studies? (Select **ALL** appropriate responses)

Student residence	1
Student house	2
Private lodging	3
Own home/flat	4
Parents	5
Other (specify).....	6

10(b). Would you say that the type of accommodation mentioned in 10(a) affected your postgraduate studies in any way?

Yes	1
No	2

10(c). If Yes, please provide reasons for your answer in 10(b).

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11. Describe, on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 4 (excellent), how you would assess the following facilities at the US (at the time of your studies). (Circle those options relevant to you).

	Very poor	Inadequate	Adequate	Excellent
Library facilities	1	2	3	4
Computer services/ Information technology	1	2	3	4
Course inquiries/-information	1	2	3	4
Student accounts	1	2	3	4
Postgraduate bursaries	1	2	3	4
General administration	1	2	3	4

12(a). Did the fact that the University is predominantly Afrikaans affect your studies in any way?

Yes	1
No	2

12(b). Provide reasons for your answer in question 12(a):

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13. To what extent was the knowledge that you acquired during your undergraduate studies of value to your postgraduate studies? (Select **ONE** option only).

Of NO value whatsoever	1
Of LIMITED value	2
Of GREAT value	3
Other (specify)..... .....	4

14. Were you involved in any way in the activities of your home department whilst enrolled for your postgraduate programme? (Select ALL relevant options)

Teaching assistant	1
Student assistant	2
Research assistant	3
Laboratory assistant	4
Temporary lecturer	5
Temporary contract researcher	6
Other (specify)..... .....	7

**SECTION C: PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR SUPERVISOR**

15(a). Select the appropriate response:

I chose my supervisor myself.	1
My supervisor was allocated to me.	2

15(b). If you chose your supervisor yourself, what were your reasons for your choice?

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15(c). If your supervisor was allocated to you, were you happy with the decision? Please give reasons for your answer.

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16(a). How often did you have contact with your supervisor and co-supervisor (where appropriate)? (Select ONE option in each column only)

	Supervisor	Co-supervisor
Never	1	1
Weekly	2	2
Monthly	3	3
Three/four times a year	4	4
Infrequently (less than three times per year)	5	5
Other (specify)..... .....	6	6

16(b). By whom was the contact initiated? (Choose ONE option only)

Always by my supervisor/co-supervisor	1
Mostly by my supervisor/co-supervisor	2
Equally by my supervisor/co-supervisor and me	3
Mostly by myself	4
Always by myself	5
Other (specify)..... .....	6

16(c). Did you receive any of the following information regarding the formal aspects of your studies? (Select ALL that apply)

Your responsibilities as a postgraduate student	1
Your rights as a postgraduate student	2
A research agreement/ contract	3
The process/ scheduling of your studies	4
The examination of seminars/ thesis/dissertation	5
The weights of components of the study (where appropriate)	6

17. Indicate on the scale below with which of the following aspects of your study you required the most guidance from your supervisor. (Respond to those questions only which apply to your studies)

	Required much guidance	Required little guidance	Required no guidance
Modules/course work/seminars	1	2	3
Choice of thesis topic	1	2	3
Gathering of information on my thesis topic	1	2	3
Development of the research proposal	1	2	3
Literature study	1	2	3
Fieldwork/ data collection	1	2	3
Analysis and interpretation of data	1	2	3
Organisation and structure of the thesis	1	2	3
How to formulate and write scientifically	1	2	3
Other (specify)..... .....	1	2	3

18. What kind of study/research design did you undertake? Please be as specific as possible, e.g. laboratory experiment, field studies, surveys, textual analysis, historical study, conceptual analysis, programme evaluation, etc.

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19. Would you say that the kind of study which you undertook had an effect on the time it took you to complete your studies? Please give reasons for your answer.

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20 Indicate on the scale below, how you would rate the **quality** of supervision received from your supervisor. (Respond to those questions only which apply to your studies)

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Very poor</b>
Quality of modules/coursework/ seminars	1	2	3	4
Gathering of information on thesis topic	1	2	3	4
Development of a research proposal	1	2	3	4
Literature study	1	2	3	4
Fieldwork/ data-collection	1	2	3	4
Analysis and interpretation of my data	1	2	3	4
Organisation and writing of the thesis	1	2	3	4
The feedback that I received from my supervisor	1	2	3	4

21. Indicate below to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about aspects of your supervisor's guidance during your studies.

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
My supervisor was able to help me in the formulation of my research problem.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor clearly spelt out what he/she expected from me.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor was always enthusiastic about my studies.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor showed interest in my progress on a continuous basis.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor was able to provide useful methodological advice on all aspects of my studies.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor was readily available to meet with me.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor was able to monitor my progress effectively.	1	2	3	4
My supervisor was sufficiently knowledgeable about my research topic.	1	2	3	4
The guidance which I received from my supervisor was effective.	1	2	3	4
My relationship with my supervisor on the whole was positive.	1	2	3	4
My contact meetings with my supervisor were structured and planned ahead.	1	2	3	4



22. Please indicate how long you usually had to wait for feedback from your supervisor:

	Within one week	Within one month	Longer
On thesis proposal	1	2	3
On the first chapter	1	2	3
On the last chapter	1	2	3
On the finished thesis	1	2	3

23. My supervisor set the following requirements:

	Yes	No	Unsure
A thesis proposal/protocol was approved by him/her before my research could commence.	1	2	3
My research proposals was discussed at a departmental seminar.	1	2	3
Each chapter was accepted before the next one was written.	1	2	3
The final chapter/conclusions included no new findings.	1	2	3
The final product was evaluated as a whole, in addition to every chapter separately.	1	2	3
The thesis was edited for language usage.	1	2	3
Ethical approvement was obtained where humans/animals/tissue were involved in the inquiry.	1	2	3
A journal article was prepared for the publication of the findings.	1	2	3

24. Postgraduate studies are not inexpensive and often require exceptional investments (time/money). Would you say that the postgraduate studies which you completed at the US was worth the cost? Please select one of the responses below.

It was an excellent investment.	1
It was a good investment.	2
It was a reasonable investment.	3
It was a poor investment (a waste of money).	4

25. Do you have any other comments regarding your postgraduate studies which you deem important and which could assist us in our investigation?

Regarding the University:

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Regarding the Department:

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Regarding your supervisor:

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION**  
**PLEASE RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE BEFORE THE 15<sup>th</sup> OF JULY 2000**

**APPENDIX B**  
**Semi structured interview schedule**

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1. Hoe lank is die program al in werking?
2. Hoekom is daar op daardie stadium besluit op so 'n program?
3. As mens kyk na tendense in hoër onderwys – modulêre programme, toepasbaarheid, interdisiplinariteit, hoe skakel die program by hierdie tendense in?
4. Hoe veralgemeenbaar is hierdie model tot ander departemente? Dink bv. aan voorbeelde van "good practice" binne hierdie program wat van nut kan wees vir ander departemente?
5. Vereis die program residensie van studente? Wat sou u sê is die voordele en nadele hieraan verbonde?
6. Honneurs nie 'n voorvereiste – het dit enige impak op die kwaliteit van student wat getrek word?
7. Het die program 'n dissiplinêre of interdisiplinêre fokus? Wat is die rede(s) daarvoor?
8. Watter tipe student word getrek en wat is die impak daarvan?
9. Wat sou u sê is die tipiese probleme wat studente in hierdie program ondervind met hul nagraadse studies?
10. Op watter manier word studente ingetrek in navorsingsprojekte van die departement?
11. Die aard van die program trek natuurlik 'n sekere tipe student (staan in 'n beroep ens.) – watter impak het dit op die studieleiding?
12. In die algemeen, as u iets moet verander aan die program, wat sou dit wees en hoekom?
13. Hoe word die program bemark?
14. Enigiets wat u sou wou byvoeg wat u dink belangrik is tot die ondersoek?