# Graduate Tracer Study 2020

# Report

## Quality Assurance Division

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# List of acronyms

DHERST          Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology

DWU             Divine Word University

FASS            Faculty or Arts and Social Sciences

FBI             Faculty of Business and Informatics

FED             Faculty of Education

FMHS            Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

FOT             Faculty of Theology

GTS             Graduate Tracer Study

LMS             Learning Management System

SSPS            Missionary Sisters, Servant of the Holy Spirit

SVD             Society of the Divine Word

# Executive Summary

This Graduate Tracer study is a monitoring and evaluation tool employed by universities to be able to determine the employability of their graduates and trace where the graduates are and how their respective studies have or is helping them in their jobs. Divine Word University (DWU) initiated the GTS due to a recommendation made by the Department of Higher Education, Research Science and Technology (DHERST) from its External Quality Assessment of the university.

Information for this GTS was collected at the 38th DWU Graduation Ceremony at the Madang campus. A total of 322 participants from the 351 full-time undergraduates filled in the 2020 Graduate Tracer Study Survey Questionnaire. Noticeably, most respondents are graduates from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (43.17%) and Business and Informatics (38.20%). The response rate was found to be very low among graduates from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (18.63%).

Furthermore, this GTS report revealed key features of employment status of graduates, measured attributes of competency in work placements, preferred organizations sought after by graduates and revealed reflections by graduates on their students' experiences at DWU. It is anticipated that the findings will allow the University to make better and informed-decisions when developing policies dealing with academic issues (learning and teaching) and student welfare in order to better prepare graduates for the job market.

# Introduction

## Background

University Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) are commonly becoming a recognizable practice worldwide (Badiru and Wahome, 2015). The findings from Graduate Tracer Studies have informed universities worldwide to accredit their study programs to better prepare their graduates to meet the demands of the job market (Palmiano 2018), to show uniqueness and positioning of individual universities; and also to enable universities and institutions managing higher education in their respective countries make informed and evidence-based decisions about improvements and quality education; and services in higher education (Schomburg, 2011). Graduate tracer studies involve the identification and follow-up of graduates from higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide encouraged by the need to give careful consideration to how graduates view their experiences they underwent during their degree study and their transition to the job market (Badiru and Wahome, 2015).

Similarly, Divine Word University aims to progress in meeting the demands of the workforce by ensuring that its programs are on par with these demands. The use of feedback data from this graduate feedback will enable further actioning and communicating any appropriate guidance actions undertaken as a result of this feedback. Growing the current database of graduate feedback will ensure that reporting processes are also put in place through a centralized provision of a consistent careers advisory service (in conjunction with Faculties) to ensure programs are workplace oriented and that there is ongoing relationship with potential employers.

Divine Word University was co-founded by the Papua New Guinea Province of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) and the Missionary Sisters, Servant of the Holy Spirit (SSPS). In 1968, the then institution was formed by two Catholic congregations and was called the Catholic High school. Later in 1977 the Divine Word Institute (DWI) was founded.

The DWU Charter was written in 1977 by members of the Papua New Guinea Province of the Society of the Divine Word in partnership with the Missionary sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit. The Charter establishes the educational philosophy of Divine Word University.

It was in 1996 that the Divine Word Institute (DWI) took on the university identity and was recognized as the Divine Word University (DWU). DWU operates as a multi-campus, open to all, serving society through its quality research, teaching and learning and community engagement in a Christian environment. The University is privately governed by a Council but with recognized support from the National Government.

The University is comprised of five faculties that offer programs for full-time and part-time students. The five faculties are:

- Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Faculty of Business and Informatics
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
- Faculty of Theology

# Rationale

The Graduate Tracer Study (GTS) is one of the most important forms of study that happens post-graduation, especially, in institutions of higher education teaching and learning. Schomburg (2011 cited in Badiru and Wohome, 2016), stated that Graduate Tracer Studies are significant in explaining the link between Higher Education Programs in respective Institutions and the job market. It also shows the exceptionality and the position of individual institutions and their graduating cohorts. Additionally, the data collected from the study would also enable universities and institutions to make up-to-date and evidence-based resolutions about the improvement and the quality of their programs and other related services in higher education institutions.

Another significant aspect of the GTS, is that the study reveals the employability statistics of graduating cohorts every year. It also shows which fields of study that are most sought after by the job market. Apart from being able to measure the employability of graduates, ETF (2016) pointed out that the GTS will also help answer questions like:

a) What happens to graduates after successful completion of university studies?
b) Do students use the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their studies? If not, why?
c) How can the university improve student experience and better provide for the students to be able to enjoy their time whilst studying at the university?

# Methodology

The GTS 2020 employed a mixed-methods approach, comprising quantifiable data and exploratory views of graduating students. All participants in the study are from the graduating cohort of 2020. A total of 322 graduates participated in the study. The participants in the study were given codes to identify them. 'P' being participant, 'M' & 'F' identifies the participant as being either male or female and the number is in the ordering of the total participants.

The main instrument used is a survey questionnaire consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions. After the data was collected, it was then stored on the Data Officer's laptop and a backup copy saved on an external hard drive.

Excel Spreadsheet was used to analyze data using frequency tables, graphs and basic thematic analysis for the open-ended questions.

*Table 1: The table below shows the total number of responses by department and faculty for the 2020 GTS.*

| Faculty | Department | # of respondents by Dep't | % | # of respondents by Faculty | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business and Informatics | Business Accountancy | 38 | 11.80 | 123 | 38.20 |
| | Business Management | 24 | 7.45 | | |
| | Information Systems | 23 | 7.14 | | |
| | Mathematics and Computer Science | 17 | 6.52 | | |
| | Tourism and Hospitality Management | 21 | 5.9 | | |
| Arts and Social Sciences | Communication Arts (Journalism) | 17 | 7.45 | 60 | 18.63 |
| | Social and Religious Studies | 19 | 6.21 | | |
| | PNG Studies and International Relations | 24 | 7.45 | | |
| Medicine and Health Sciences | Health Management and Systems Development | 20 | 6.21 | 139 | 43.17 |
| | Rehabilitation Sciences | 26 | 8.07 | | |
| | Rural Health (Health Extension) | 59 | 18.32 | | |
| | Environmental Health Science | 34 | 10.56 | | |
| **Total** | | 322 | 100 | 322 | 100 |

A total of 322 (%) from the 351 full time undergraduates filled in the 2020 Graduate Tracer Study Survey Questionnaire. Noticeably, most of those who responded are graduates from the Faculty of Medicine and

Health Sciences (43.17%) and Business and Informatics (38.20%). The response rate was found to be very low among graduates from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (18.63%).

The GTS established that graduates of Health Extension Department had the highest response rate (18.32%) followed closely by graduates from the Business Studies Department, specifically Business and Accountancy (11.80%). The Registrar's Office reported that these two departments had the highest number of graduates in 2020 and this may be a contributing factor to having high response rates.

## Findings and Discussion

This section of the report will highlight the main findings and discuss the main themes derived from the analysis of the data collated.
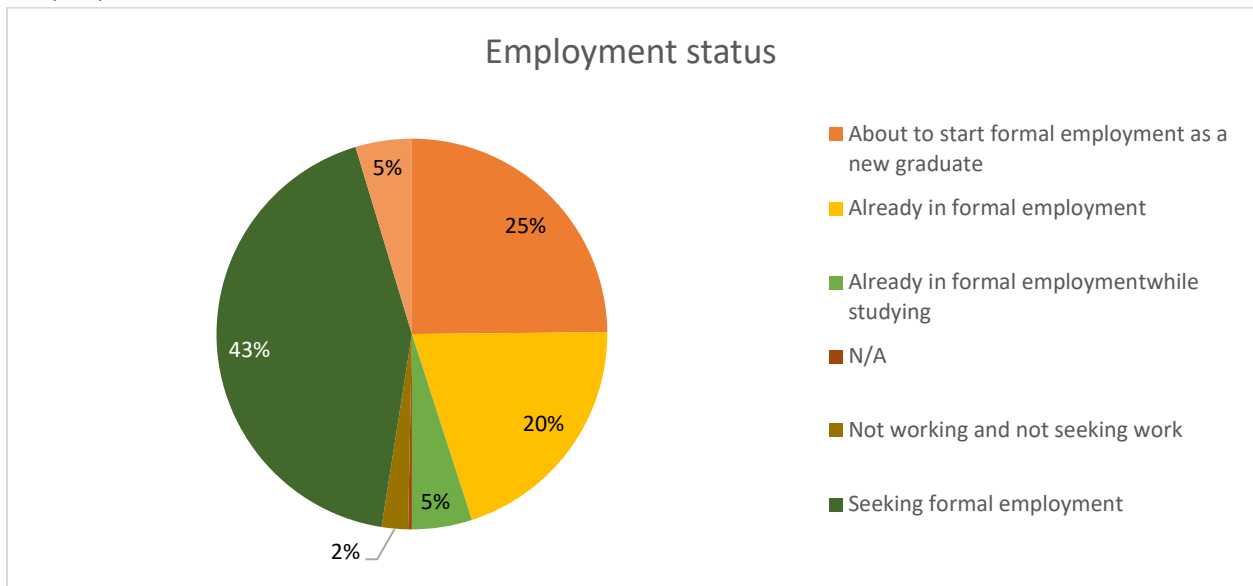
## Employment Status



*Figure 1 shows the employment status of 2020 graduates as of March, 2020.*

Almost half of the pie chart indicates the percentile of graduates 'seeking formal employment' (43%). 25% of the graduates are 'about to start formal employment', and 20% of the graduates are 'already in formal employment'.

## How studies have helped graduates in the workforce

The collective view of how graduates' university studies have helped them in in the workforce were categorized and summarized based on the frequency of their responses.

*Table 2: How university studies has helped graduates in their current roles and jobs*

| Category | Sum of Frequency |
|---|---|
| Adaptive | 2 |
| Agent of change | 1 |
| Being competent in the workforce | 6 |
| Better perform professional officer | 1 |
| Better perform a professional practice | 1 |
| Better perform a professional role | 23 |
| Competent and experienced | 1 |
| For further studies | 2 |
| Job is available | 4 |
| Knowledgeable on professional discipline | 16 |
| Practice theory knowledge | 5 |
| Securing a job whilst still studying | 1 |
| Securing a job different from the field of study | 1 |
| To be recognized in professional discipline | 1 |
| To get certified and practice | 2 |
| To get promotion | 3 |
| To have empathy and care for others | 1 |
| To pursue personal goals in life | 1 |
| Units undertook increased chances of employment | 1 |
| Upskill in professional discipline | 3 |
| **Grand Total** | **76** |

From the 322 respondents, 76 indicated a response when asked about how they perceive their studies to have helped them in their current role in the workforce. Hence the responses as displayed in the above table show that graduates felt strongly that their studies mostly helped them to 'better perform a professional role' (30.26%) and to be 'knowledgeable on professional discipline' (21.05%). The response rate for these two categories accounts for half of the total responses given for this particular question, outlining that their studies prepared them to be able to have knowledge on their respective professional disciplinces resulting in them feeling that they better perform their respective professional roles in the workforce.
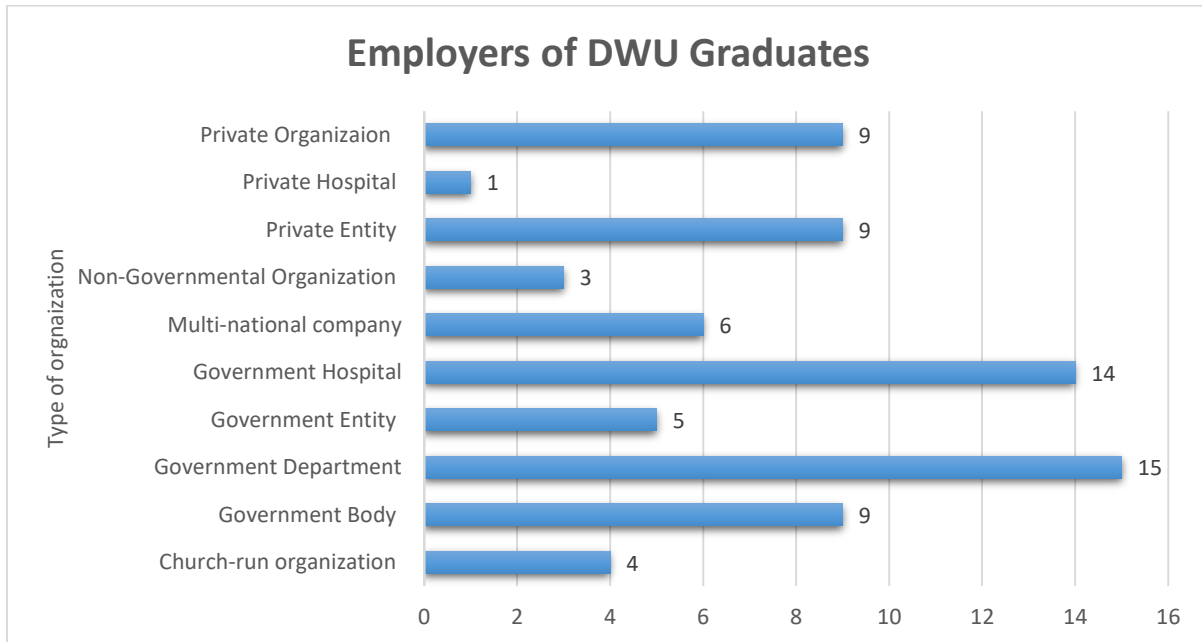
*Figure 2. This figure displays the type of organizations that have employed DWU graduates by March of 2020.*

The graph above indicates that the majority of DWU graduates from 2020 were employed largely by the government sector. This could be due to the fact that most respondents from this survey were clinical graduates and are immediately attached with hospitals for their two-year residency. A handful of the graduates are engaged with private organizations. This graph is not specific on which type of private organizations they are attached with.

The biggest hurdle that many new graduates face after successfully completing tertiary education is transitioning into employment or the job market. The socio-economic factors and the graduate's personal traits determine the period of transition or waiting time for a graduate to obtain their first employment (Jayamane and Ramanayake, 2017).

The standard job search theory (McMahon, 1987), suggests that the problem of the potential worker is to choose an acceptance wage or salary that assures an income greater than that which the potential worker might have received by continued search. The individual's expectation of what might yet be received is the reservation wage, making the passing up of lesser offers and continuation of the search the most reasonable choice where the remaining period of unemployment is thought to be temporary. As more time passes, the cost of the search (mostly in terms of foregone earnings) increases, forcing a re-evaluation of the reservation wage, especially if this had been based on active past full-time employment experience. This theory explains in part why graduates can accept certain jobs after a long job search, even when the conditions attached to the offer including financial benefits may be far below expectations (Ama, 2008).

For the different parts in the discussion below; Part D, D1, and E, the total number of student responses vary due to the relevance of student response to a particular question. However, the coding of student

responses is the same. The codes used in the discussion are as follow: 'S' refers to the student, 'P' being participant, 'M' & 'F' identifies the participant as being either male or female and the number is the ordering of total participants in the different parts accordingly. Part D has a total of 132 responses, D1 - 38 and E - 8 responses. All these responses were analyzed accordingly.

## Graduates preferred organization for employment

Under this section, graduates were expected to describe their preferred organization which they are planning to write to or if they have already written to these organizations. All graduate responses are categorized respectively into their organization type, but a few of these categories are a combination of two categories to capture what the graduates had stated in their responses.
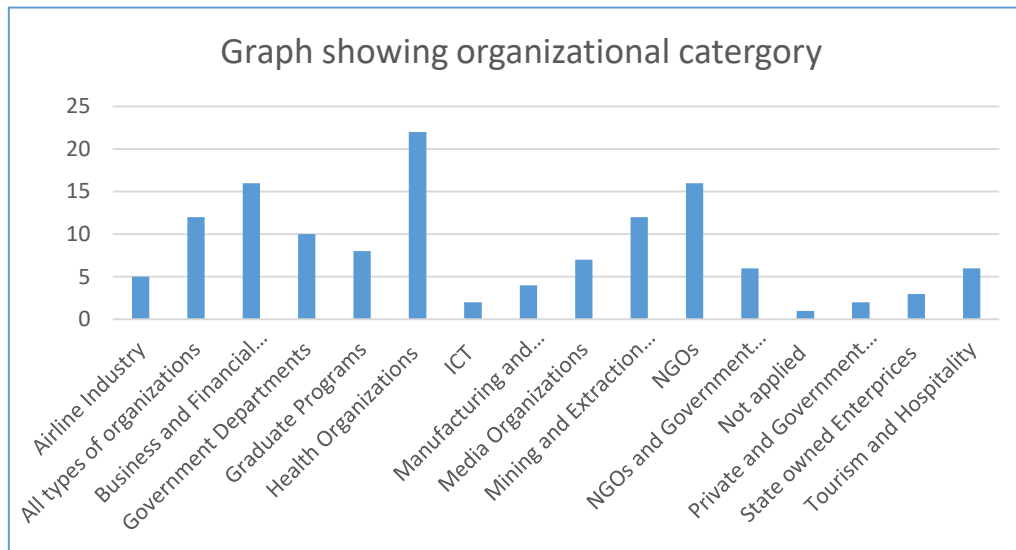


*Figure 3 shows the organizational category and the total number of students that have applied or are applying to these organization types*

Based on the data that has been collected for this section, out of 132 responses, 22 graduates targeted Health Organizations. This category consists of graduates applying to institutions like the Health Department, Provincial health authority, Red Cross, and hospitals. Additionally, this category also consists of graduates doing their residency, that is, they have already been attached to these respective organizations, particularly hospitals. For instance, Male participant 3 stated, "*I'm mainly targeting health organizations; I did approach one organization but wrote to several other health organizations*". Another graduate stated, "*Targeting the non-government and Government organization in the Health Sector*" (FP#84). There could be two main reasons as to why this particular category has the highest number of responses. Firstly, most of the graduates that attempted this section or study, in general, were from FMHS. Secondly, unlike programs in FASS or some programs in FBI that have the flexibility in graduates applying into different fields, FMHS graduates would be in a position to apply into specific departments and organizations that are associated with their area field of study. However, this is not entirely the case for some graduates in the FMHS programs applying to non-Health organizations or having to work anywhere where any type of employment is available.

An interesting finding in part D is that the second equal most sought-after organization type that graduates are interested in joining is NGOs, with a total of 16 responses. It would good to further explore why more students are targeting NGOs and not government departments (10 in total).  6 graduates chose 'either to apply to work for both NGOs and the government'.

The category of Business and Financial Organization has a total of 16 student responses.  This category consists of graduates interested in joining financial and business-oriented institutions like Deloitte, BSP, Westpac, and PMB, government financial departments. A participant stated, "*I am looking at all organizations that have openings in the Finance Division*" (FP#42).

A category that was added is, 'All types of organizations'. This particular category was created because a large number of participants did not specify what type of organization they would prefer working for. For instance, when asked the question, 'which organization are you targeting?' Female participant 71 stated openly, "*Any organization that would have a vacancy. Tried many organizations and still waiting for their response*". A likely explanation for such responses could be, that after completing university graduates may most likely feel obligated to start taking care of their family. All they want is to be employed to earn an income. Therefore, there is no particular preference shown toward specific organizations or institutions but rather the willingness to be employed because of possible non-specified commitments or some other social expectations. Another possible explanation may be that graduates are keen to take up any role in any one type of organization to attain some form of job experience.

To conclude, the rest of the graduate responses in this section are interpreted through figure 4.

## Organizations approached by graduates

This section covers the question which required graduates to state in number, the total number of organizations they have approached.  This section only received 38 responses which can be seen in the figure below.
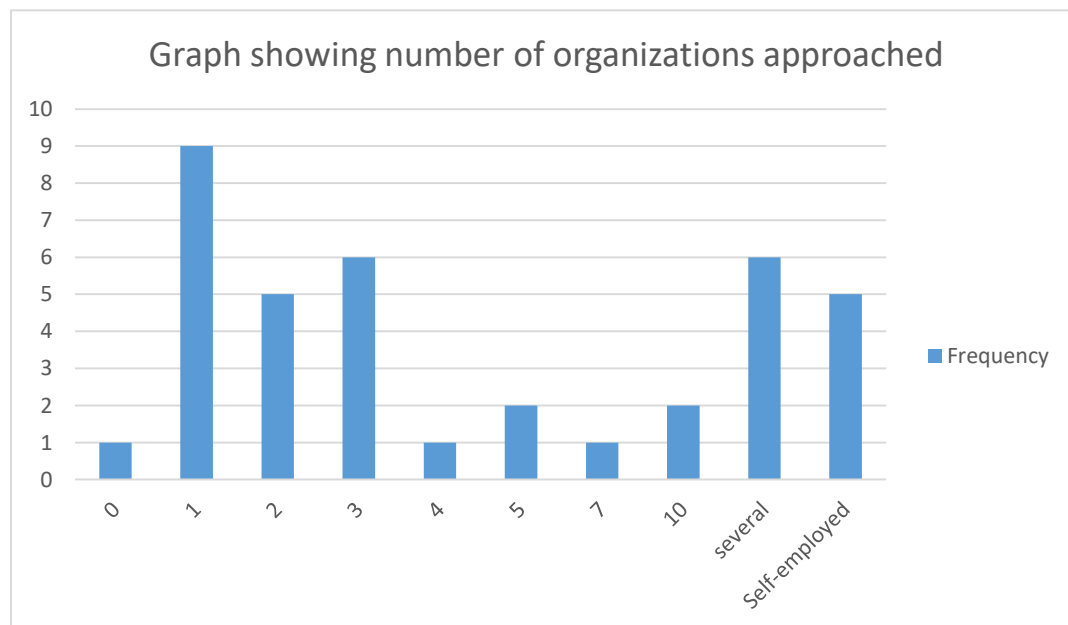


*Figure 4 shows the total number and two categorical value of the total number of organizations approached.*

As displayed in figure 4 a total of 9 participants approached only 1 organization. There is no clearly sought out reason why most graduates would approach just 1 organisation. But it can be assumed that after this study was attempted, graduates would have approached additional organizations. The second-highest response for the number of organizations approached was 3 as stated by 6 participants. On the contrary, a total of 6 participants did not specify the number of organizations they approached or applied for. Their responses left the interpretation of their response in a state of ambiguity. For instance, when asked, 'How many organizations have you approached?' FSP9 stated that she has approached more than 3. FSP13 further stated that '*Have reached/approached few*'. These responses are nonspecific to a quantifiable value, hence, the category that these responses would appropriately come under is 'Several'. Additionally, under this category there have also been some responses stating less than 20 organizations or more than 5. However, these responses are not easily prescribed with a particular value as it can be any number i.e. less than 20 or any number more than 5. Again, such responses could be interpreted as being vague in term of numerical value, an d therefore ambiguous.

There was also a category created to measure student responses regarding the students' state of employment under Part D1. Since the question asked graduates to state the total number of their organizations approached, 5 participants stated that they are currently engaged in their own privately run or family-run businesses and other community-based initiatives. This, in a way, answers the question of engagement. However, the limitation in part D1 is the data size, because in terms of actually trying to see a trend in future responses, the data set here does not cater for it with a small a sample size of 38 responses.

## Job roles of graduates already employed

This section required a response from graduates regarding two things: their employment status and the type of role they play if they are already employed.
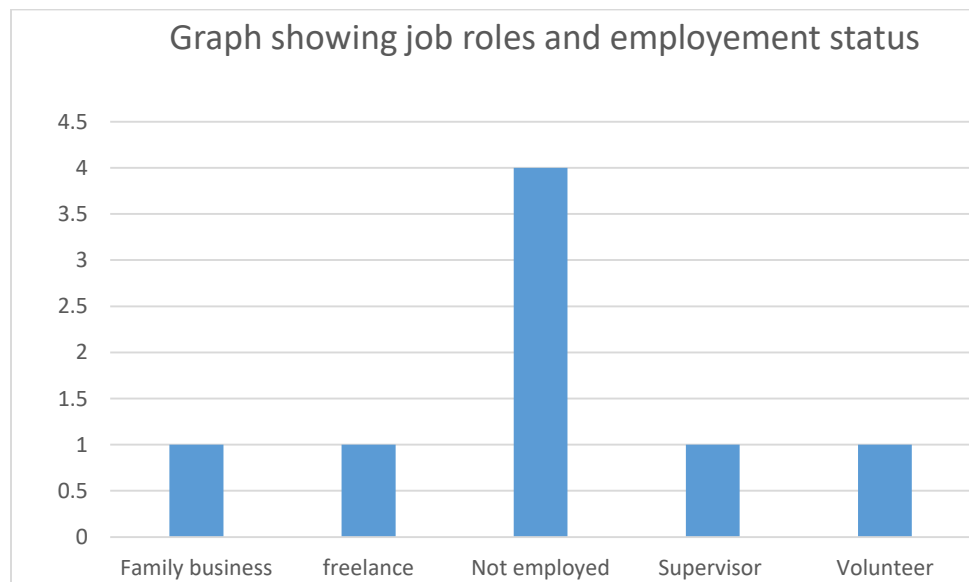


Figure 5 shows the job roles and employee status of students after they graduate.

Under Part D a total of 8 graduates attempted this section. Figure 5 above, shows the 5 categories according to the 8 participant responses

There are two main groups: those that are employed or engaged in some type of work and those that are not employed. According to the responses, a total of 4 graduates stated that they are not yet employed, which is half of the total number of responses. On the contrary, the remainder of the responses indicate that graduates are engaged in some type of work after university. As specified in Figure 5 one participant indicated being engaged in a family business, another as freelancing, one as a supervisor, and the other as a volunteer. These are the 4 out of the 8 respondents who indicated that they are employed.

## Use of studies

The GTS explored how graduates would use the skills and knowledge gained upon completion of their four-year degree program.

The following three themes emerged dominantly from the analysis of the survey:
1. To seek job opportunities/employment,
2. Become an entrepreneur/start a small business, and
3. Assist family/helping family.

Each theme is briefly explained below by drawing from participant's responses to illustrate.

### 1. Seek job opportunities/employment

It is strongly perceived by respondents that after they graduate from the university, the knowledge and skills they have obtained while studying through their respective four-year degree programs will have helped them to secure formal employment. "…*I will look for job.*" (MP#249)

### 2. Become an entrepreneur/start a small business

Few of the respondents suggested that they plan on using what they have studied at university to initiate a small business and become self-employed/entrepreneurs after they graduate. "*To create my own business.*" (MP#67)

### 3. Assist my family/Help my family

Respondents agreed that the reason why they came for studies at the university and made sure they completed their studies and graduated was for them to be able to help their families. A number of graduates felt that after obtaining a degree, they must return to their homes (home provinces and districts) and give back to their family as a way of showing appreciation for the support they got from them whilst undertaking studies at the university. "*I plan to stay at home and utilize my free time doing some work need by my family.*" (MP#52)

## Most enjoyed aspect of being at DWU

In understanding what graduates enjoyed during their studies at the university, DWU is able to identify what is deemed to be good or from what the survey sought to be, 'enjoyable', so to maintain, enhance and promote these aspects. Below are aspects graduates mostly enjoyed during their studies at DWU.

**Internet**

Respondents strongly agreed that their university experience was very enhancing and fulfilling due to the availability of the internet. The access to the internet in and around the Madang Campus provides the students with accessing learning material and resources with ease online. *The access to the internet* (FP#32) and *Having access to the internet* (MP#33)

**Learning Management System – Moodle**

Respondents highly praised and appreciated being able to access learning materials and resources online using the Learning Management System (LMS) – Moodle. Moodle helped enjoy their learning whilst studying at the university.

**Online learning**

The use of the LMS encourages online learning according to the participants. Using Moodle to facilitate teaching and learning at the university positioned the respondents to positively agree that learning online was a very enjoyable aspect of their student experience here at DWU. *The online study that makes learning more interesting* (FP#172), *The thing that I enjoyed the most is the submission of assignments online* (MP#173), *Mostly the online studies and my field of study-IS* (MP#169), and *I mostly enjoy online learning* (MP#10).

**Paperless policy**

Several respondents believe that the university's Paperless Policy allowed for the excessive use of the internet on campus, promoting their learning to be mostly conducted online. This gave them the opportunity to enjoy learning and student academic life at the university. *The paperless policy of the university -Free internet and learning facilities.* (MP#152), *Friendly atmosphere (Pasin Diwai) and the paper less policy with Internet services* (MP#25), *The paperless policy (Use of computers for studies)* (FP#30), and *Learning with the internet (paperless policy)* (MP#36)

**Environment**

*Friendly*

A large number of the respondents described the DWU Madang campus as being very friendly that it creates an atmosphere for them to be able to enjoy learning. *The friendly environment and people and my studies.* (FP#155), *Building relationships with everyone and being part of the DWU community.* (FP#151), *The environment is so friendly* (FP#139), *The environment and the learning resources; internet, books and the resourceful lecturers.* (MP#135), and *Friendly atmosphere (Pasin Diwai) and the paper less policy with Internet services* (MP#25)

### *Conducive for learning – learning facilities*

The learning facilities are appraised by respondents. They feel that the learning facilities promoted and enhanced their learning. The facilities provided a conducive space for teaching and learning for the lecturers and the students respectively. *Learning facilities like library, internet services* (MP#153), and *Everything, the campus facilities the people from different provinces in and around PNG* (FP#29)

### Extracurricular academic activities

### *Open day and symposiums*

It is perceived that university-sanctioned events such as the Open Day and Faculty Symposiums at the Madang Campus stimulate academic interaction and discourse between academics and students. These sanctioned activities somewhat provide enjoyment to the respondents which most strongly agreed with. *I have enjoyed every activity/events organized in DWU. Mostly open day and BS symposium* (FP#157), and *I enjoyed being a student by getting involved with the school organized activities.* (MP#149)

### *Student enrichment programs*

Programs provided by the Centre for Learning and Teaching and by academic and leadership clubs prepare students to be equipped with skills that are necessary to further add value to the degree they obtain after four years of studies at the university. The respondents strongly agree that these programs provided by the Centre and the clubs have helped them to be able to enjoy their student life at university.

### Making friends

Respondents cohesively agreed that forging new friendships through the course of their university student life has given them some form of enjoyment as they established lifelong friendships and relationships. *I enjoyed spending time with my friends, going to classes and most of all the DWU community* (FP#156), and *Online learning and making life-long friends.* (MP#53)

### Social activities

According to the respondents, students at the main campus enjoy an array of activities organized by the Student Representative Council, respective cultural groups, departments, and even faculties. These

activities include sports, which is played by almost three-quarters of the student body. Both male and female students take part in basketball, rugby, volleyball, rugby touch, tennis and there is even netball for the female students. Apart from these sporting activities that respondents perceive to have been a part of their enjoyment at university; cultural groups and faculties organized and host fun nights and barbecues to raise funds that provide entertainment and an avenue for the students to be able to wind down and relax during the weekend. Respondents agreed that these activities provide them to have a social life and made them enjoy their university experience. *Social events organized by the school, provincial clubs, and departments.* (FP#138), and *Community gatherings and social and spiritual activities within the campus* (FP#23)

### DWU Core values, Christian Ethics, and Spiritual activities

The findings suggest that the university promoted Christian values in its delivery of units and the general community life. Respondents suggested that these provided them a place to be able to find themselves and grow. Some of them enjoyed very much church-oriented activities on campus that allowed them to have a good spiritual life. They also very much enjoyed the fact that the university stood upon Christian principles that were entailed in its 8 Core Values. Christian ethical principles were taught to students and encouraged to be practiced.

> *Some of the things I enjoyed most while being in DWU are its environment, meeting new people and participating in church group activities.* (FP#160)
> *Enjoy fellowshipping with my fellow students and most of all studying human body.* (MP#143)
> *Learning more about the core values and discipline with Christian ethics* (MP#141)
> *I enjoyed studying ethics, it made me a better person.* (MP#136)
> *I can say that DWU really transform me to a modern human to combat and share different content with others* (MP#26)

Fournier (1997) attempted to provide a plausible explanation on graduates' career and personal psychology. He conducted a study among graduates of Chicago School and found out the roles played by social behavior system construct and achievement and competence construct. His theory found consistency with the nature of the job and the behavior of the worker. Those who experienced success at early cycle are competent and achievers who later on, of years of being successful, become flexible and adhere to positive social behavior.

### Clinical tutorial, practical, field trips, and community engagements

Respondents agreed that an enjoyable aspect of university life is the different field trips that lecturers organized for them to go visit sites or to take part in an activity outside of campus. These experiences are said to have made student enjoy their learning as they are not only sitting and learning in the classroom but they also have a feel of what is happening out in the real world, the practical hands-on-experience. Community engagements, which is a core value of the university, have encouraged and promoted service contribution from the student-led clubs and groups to be able to give back to the community in Madang. The findings from this study suggest that clinical students very much enjoy their hospital tutorials/practical

at the hospital and/or health centers as they get to experience firsthand and learn from the health workers. *Engaging with communities outside Madang through our community engagement in our THM units.* (MP#163), *I enjoyed practical work as physiotherapist* (FP#13), and *Academically, my clinical practices (@Modilon Gen) + Rural Block* (FP#17)

**Everything**

The study also found that several of the respondents felt that they enjoyed very much all aspects of the student life experience at the university and didn't seem to find anything which they did not like. *I enjoyed everything that DWU has offered, its culture of learning was most enjoyable.* (FP#170), *WIFI/Friends/social nights/practical work/sports/crotonizing* (MP#165), *I enjoyed everything about DWU* (FP#159), and *Almost everything. Theories learnt in class as well as ethics. All these has allowed me to be a better person.* (FP#31)

## Least enjoyed aspect of being at DWU

Understanding what is least enjoyed by graduates can inform the university to reassess and improve. The following are aspects that graduates felt they least enjoyed during their four-year of studying at DWU.

### *Food at the mess*

It is strongly perceived by respondents that the food provided at the student dining hall is least enjoyed by them. Almost all respondents expressed distaste for the quality of food served at the student dining hall.

> *The least thing I enjoy at DWU was the type of recipe they use to prepare food for the students at the student mess.* (FP#8)
> *The thing I enjoy the least is the mess food.* (FP#32) *Food at the mess.* (MP#33)
> *The food is not really in my best choice, but I am thankful I survived those four years.* (FP#35)
> *The food offered in the mess.* (MP#40)
> *The food at the dining hall and social nights at school.* (FP#50)
> *The meal offered a was the least enjoyed of all.* (MP#105)
> *Food from the student mess. Health standards are very low.* (FP#139)

**Social activities**

### *Sports and other student activities*

Although social activities were enjoyed by most students, few students disliked it. They felt it was a waste of their study time and so did not take part in any of the activities. The responses indicate individual preferences.

> *The least I enjoyed is the social activities which I don't feel like to cope.* (FP#118)

*What I enjoyed least was the cultural club activities at school that disrupted a lot of student studies.* (MP#84)

Sporting activities are not enjoyed by few students as well although the majority quite liked it. *The least thing I enjoyed was playing sports because I was not a sporty person.* (FP#95)

## Security on campus

### *Walking from Paramed to the main campus*

The study found that students had a distaste for security on campus. They felt that most times, their safety and the safety of their belongings are not guaranteed. Clinical students who reside at the Paramed campus disliked the fact that they have to walk to and fro every day between the Paramed campus to the main campus.

### *Delivery of certain units*

The findings from this study also suggest that respondents did not enjoy very much how certain units in their respective programs were facilitated. *More theory than practical* (FP#82), and *The lecturer and tutorial periods of junior lecturers of FBI that only presents more of theory based teachings which gives less of the reality of their teaching.* (MP#106)

### *Substance abuse on campus*

According to the respondents, the abuse of alcohol and other illicit drugs on campus is strictly prohibited and not tolerated on campus. Yet, students find ways to sneak in these drugs and abuse its use on campus causing disharmony when they are drunk or on high. This behavior is disliked by several respondents who believe that this was least enjoyed by them. As male participant 36 recalls, "*I least enjoy when there are too many students drinking on campus*".

### *Network connectivity issues*

With the ease of enjoying online learning, the study found that respondents expressed disfavor when there are internet connectivity issues. As students then, they feel internet connectivity issues disrupt their learning because the university practices blended learning mode. *Network issues and sometimes food in the mess.* (FP#56)

## Improving DWU and the student experience

It is important to note that there is a distinct correlation between what is most and least enjoyed by graduates to their responses in regard to what needs to be maintained and improved at DWU. The following are suggestions made by graduates on how or what the university needs to improve and maintain in order to provide the best experience for students.

### *Upgrade infrastructures*

There is an increased concern among the respondents expressing that a number of infrastructures, especially laboratories for the health science students, needs to be upgraded. *By building science lab and move buildings or classrooms and encourage students on the usage of the computer wisely and make the very best out of it.* (FP#29)

Clinical students who reside up at the Paramed campus express concern about the type of dormitories they used to live in. They further reiterated the need for laboratories to be equipped with necessary equipment for teaching and learning purposes. Male Participant 260 highlights, "*Would be good if some changes were made up at Paramed, mainly infrastructure and medical learning equipment in place for RH students…*" This is supported by Male Participant 44: "*Build new dormitories at Paramed Campus.*"

Dormitories which students are boarding in needs to be refurbished or better still, be demolished and new ones should be built to provide conducive study areas for students. *Improving student dormitories and studying area.* (MP#27)

### *Security and safety*

Campus security is also a grave concern as expressed by the graduates. Respondents noted that although there is a strong presence of the Diwai Rangers on campus, their safety is not a hundred percent guaranteed.

As suggested by male participant 76. For improvement, he states; "*… the level of security provided on the main campus.*" This is strongly supported by Male Participant 83; "*DWU should improve in terms … of security in and around the campus.*" *DWU should provide transport for students at Modilon campus for their everyday classes and meals.* (FP#2)

Findings from the study strongly indicate also that in order for the university to better protect students and to ensure the safety of the students, they would have to monitor the students' movements in and out of the campus and for the university to enforce tougher regulations on students' conduct. *By monitoring all students' movements & activities occurring within the campus and enforce more rules at schools.* (FP#16)

### *Quality of food*

The respondents stated that the quality of food is the least enjoyable thing from their DWU experience as they find the food served at the dining hall at times not to be appealing and tasty. This has prompted a distaste in the quality of food served at the student dining hall. This study found that respondents coherently agreed that the food served at the student dining hall needs to be improved to some extent. It is also perceived that the food served at the mess may at times lack nutritional value.

> *I think DWU has to improve on the food in the mess.* (FP#19)
> *Try and improve the quality of the food at the mess.* (MP#74)
> *Improvement in culinary staff at the mess and build more dormitories.* (MP#21)
> *First of all improve the meals at the staff mess to a more nutritious level...* (FP#49)

Furthermore, respondents felt that their student experience at university could have been better if the food at the student dining hall was improved to a certain degree. *DWU can improve its programs and student experience by improving its mess food and build more dormitories.* (FP#20), and *DWU could improve its program or student experience through upgrading of mess and library facilities.* (MP#51)

### *Academic teaching staff*

This study found that although participants felt that they learnt a lot and were prepared to take on the challenges of the world once they graduate, the respondents expressed concerned that the university should look at either upskilling its current academic staff or better still, employ academics who are more experienced, holding post graduate qualifications and have been working in the field for some time. Respondents felt that at the moment, the quality of facilitating certain units by academic staff is somewhat lacking.

> *DWU should employ lecturers and many more professors to help students experience in learning more in-depth. Employing tutors might not help much as they are inexperienced, however tutors working under professors or senior lecturers will help a lot in the programs improvement.* (FP#9)
> *…most of all, teaching staff, there must be more professors so that every student should learn this effectively.* (MP#22)
> *Provide better incentives for high class (PHD holders) lecturers. For the theoretical courses and for the example medical courses, hire lecturers with vast medical experience…*(FP#27)
> *DWU should improve adding qualified lecturers and tutors.* (MP#38)
> *By updating its units to meet the jobs in the field.* (MP#76)
> *Increase the number of lecturers with PhD and doctorates.* (MP#76)
> *Send more staff to get further studies and come back and teach in the departments.* (MP#123)
> *DWU could improve its programs by delivering more than 4 programs each semester at least 6 would be sufficient. Also DWU should engage more Professors and for other staff should have a least qualification of Masters. Also they all should undergo teaching education.* (FP#242)
> *Encourage practical learning for students and work placement for students in the work place.* (MP#245)
> *From experience it is obvious that the university needs to bring more qualified and experience lecturers with masters and doctorate to teach.* (MP#277)

### *Student enhancement programs*

There is a call for student enhancement programs to be maintained and supported further by the university. Respondents agreed that the student enhancement programs provided by clubs on campus such as the Junior Toastmasters Club and Diversity and Inclusion, and the academic courses offered by the Centre for Learning and Teaching are of significance to building a holistic student.

> *… I think DWU is at the top of its game with extracurricular groups such as JTFC, the sports competitors, the social nights and the cultural and spiritual groups, which DWU allows to operate without any bias is more than enough.* (FP#27)
>
> *Improve on its dining services and have more social enrichment programs.* (FP#101)

Harvey (1999) postulates that educational attainment is one thing and the right preparation for the world of work is quite another. It is important that students are provided with tools that will improve their ability to think, learn and communicate.

### *Job placements/Industrial experience*

Respondents believe that their chances of securing a job after university will be much better if they were provided opportunities for placements while studying. The transitioning of university graduates into the workforce market is smooth and better handled when graduates are presented with experiences to be able to utilize their theoretical content knowledge in the field whilst still studying.

> *For the courses that require industrial training for their final year. Advice for the school to attach with industrial institutes for training opportunities. Also might contribute to excellent final year projects and research.* (FP#7)
>
> *In terms of my department, there should be industrial training programs set in place.* (FP#3)
>
> *Engage students practically in their respective fields of study to support the theory lessons.* (FP#11)
>
> *Liaise with organisations for industrial trainings.* (FP#47)
>
> *I would suggest that the departments and faculty branch out and have students do on job training as a form of assessment and also a way to gain experience.* (MP#53)
>
> *I believe the end of semester evaluations is the best way of improving the teaching strategies and the overall program. With the program that I undertake, I believe it needs more practical hours or sessions with respective organizations that the department has contract with. These practical lessons will help students to explore their potentials outside of lectures.* (FP#54)
>
> *By providing more training or practical for students while in class.* (MP#69)
>
> *DWU can also engage some companies as well for those departments that do not go out for practicum, so that they at least have some field work knowledge when graduating.* (FP#72)

Relevant knowledge and skills are significant in enhancing a student's ability to eventually succeed in the labour market. As articulated in a UNESCO report, the quality and relevance of what the students learnt are necessary for acceptance into the labour market, not necessarily the degrees earned or the number of years spent at school (UNESCO, 1998). The onus is therefore on a University to ensure that mismatch between what is learnt at school and what is required by the world of work is reduced to the barest minimum. This can be accomplished by the universities reviewing how the institutions will interact externally with employers, employer organizations and other agencies, and the extent to which

partnerships with employers can be enhanced and developed. University programs will need to ensure that employability elements are explicit parts of undergraduate programs (Ama, 2008).

## Conclusion

Divine Word University as a higher learning institution in PNG initiated the Graduate Tracer Study upon a recommendation from the DWU External Quality Assessment 2018 – 2020. The Quality Assessment conducted by an External Panel commissioned by the Department of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (DHERST) outlined a number of recommendations. Under Standard 5.2 of the Quality Assessment, it outlined:

> **Standard 5.2**: It is recommended that DWU develops processes for consistent collection of staff and graduate feedback, and for ensuring use of feedback data, including actioning and communicating any of appropriate guidance actions undertaken as a result of this feedback from all stakeholders – students, staff and alumni (DHERST Quality Assessment Report, 2018).

This report is therefore in response to graduate feedback for purposes of self-improvement on how the university can help prepare its graduates for the workforce and based on market demands. It is anticipated that the results will allow the university to make better and informed-decisions when developing policies, dealing with student welfare, and to prepare students for the job market.

This Graduate Tracer Study underlined the quality of education provided by Divine Word University which is seen to be the leading university in blended learning. The university has begun small and hopes to advance its learning and teaching by benchmarking on international standards. Facilitating teaching and learning online through the Learning and Management System (LMS) – Moodle and offering certain units and/or programs fully online are efforts towards realizing the DWU Vision of the Third Decade (DWU Third Decade Strategic Master Plan, 2017). This has proven to be an advantage for the university during the advent of Covid-19 and it's impacts on the movements of people. In spite of restricting face-to-face learning at times, the university continued its teaching and learning with minimal disruption due to its practice of using the LMS Moodle. Having access to the internet for purposes of teaching and learning is the most enjoyed aspect of the student experience for graduates of 2020 who participated in the GTS.

Graduates felt that the least enjoyed aspect of being at DWU is the food served at the student dining hall which needs to be improved. Apart from that, there are a number of other things that graduates felt should be improved. These are:

- Infrastructures – dormitories and science labs
- Security on campus
- Upskilling of academic teaching staff
- Job placements and Industrial experience for students while they are still studying and when after successful completion of programs

The 2020 GTS highlighted that student enrichment programs should be supported and students should be encouraged to part-take in them. Such enrichment programs have proven to provide students with necessary soft and hard skills that enables them a holistic experience at the university.

## Recommendations

From this GTS 2020, the following are recommendations offered for the university to take into consideration.

1. There has to be an increased awareness for students to take up the GTS every year to ensure that results are easily generalized in future studies. With more reliable results, we can reflect on the real situation, views, and evaluations by graduates.
2. The university must take into account feedbacks from its stakeholders (students, alumnae and alumni, etc.) through mechanisms such as the GTS in order to provide quality experience for students studying at the university.

It is seen in the data that for most programs, there is little to no focus given on the practicability of course-related content. That is why most students from the Health-related courses are easily more engaged. In general, work placements or casual employments should be incorporated into programs as a practical component for students.

3. Work placements should be offered through the partnerships or through amalgamated programs the university has or will have with other organizations. For example, the MOA between PNG Customs Services and DWU could include work placements for FASS and FBI students.

Additionally, in programs offered,

4. There should also be improvements on linking the relationship between theoretical content in the teaching and learning with what is happening in the workforce to allow graduates to be up to date with the industry. This can be in terms of developing different types of study conditions provided to students and the overall contents covered.

5. In order to better prepare graduates, there is also need for the university to maintain the extra-curricular programs (such as DWU Junior Toastmasters Club and Diversity and Inclusion) that function outside of the student's day to day learning. Such programs teach students other relevant and significant skills needed for lifelong learning and to cope in the workforce.

6. There is need for the university to empower its graduates to not only be ready for the industry to become employees but also to become employers'/job creators/entrepreneurs.

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