



Graduate Tracer Study 2020

A presentation by the Quality Assurance Division, Divine Word University
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Background and Rationale

University Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) are commonly becoming a recognizable practice worldwide (Badiru and Wahome, 2015).

The findings from GTS:

- 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
- 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).

The GTS:

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).


Is one of the most important forms of study that happens post-graduation, especially, in institutions of higher education teaching and learning. Schomburg (2016), stated that Graduate Tracer Studies are significant in explaining the link between Higher Education Programs in respective Institutions and the job market.

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.



Similarly, Divine Word University aims to progress in meeting the demands of the workforce in ensuring that its programs are on par with these demands.

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.

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Graduate Tracer Study answers the following questions:

Question 1

What happens to graduates after successful completion of university studies?

Question 2

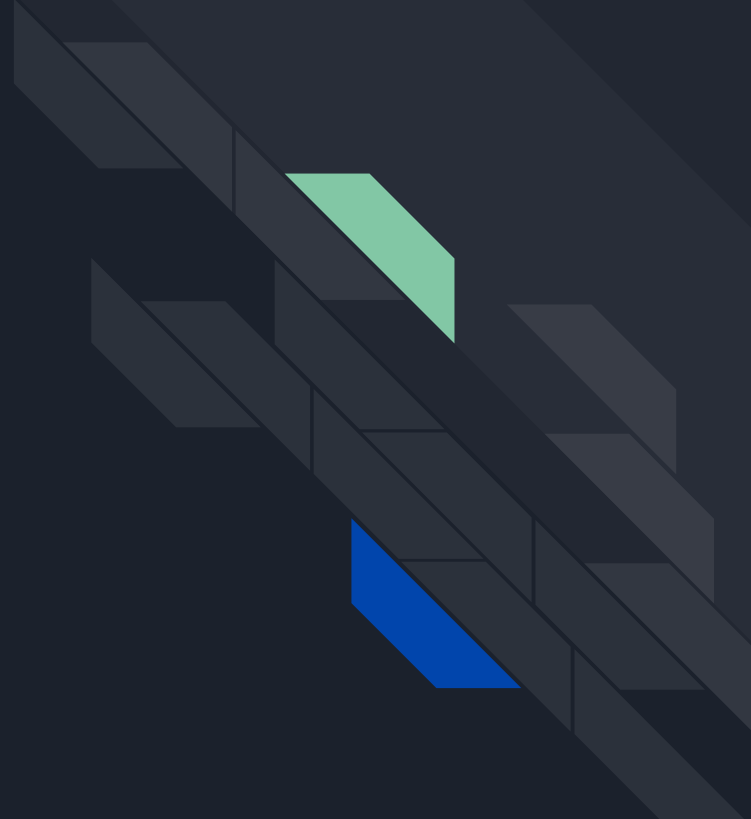
Do students use the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their studies? If not, why?

Question 3

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: Mixed-methods Study





- All participants for the study are from the graduating class of 2020
- 322 graduates filled in the survey questionnaire
- Excel spreadsheet was used to analyze data using frequency tables and thematic analysis analysis was used to analyze open ended questions

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Table 1

The table below shows the total number of responses by departments under each of the faculties.

Table 1

- A total of 322 (91.73%) 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%).



Findings and Discussions



Employment status

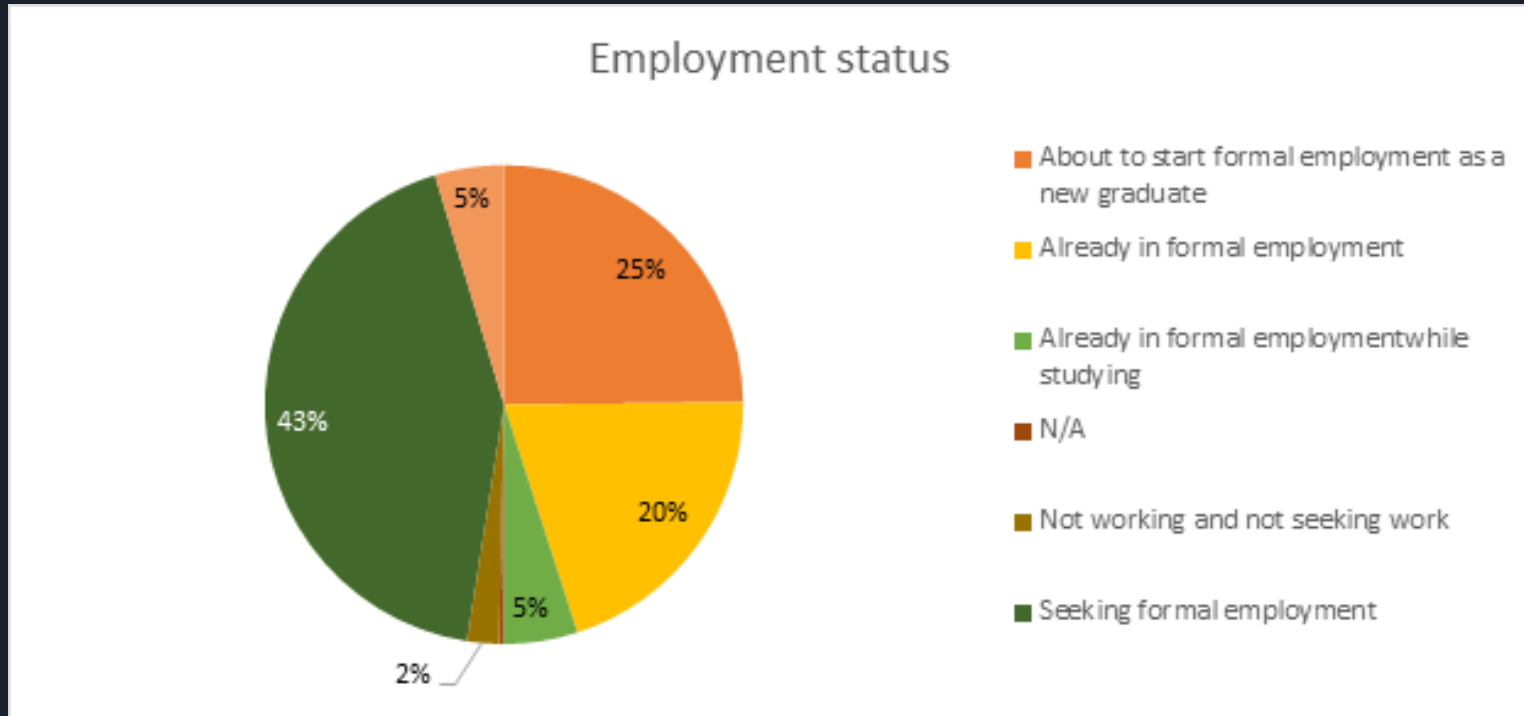


Figure 1 shows the employment status of 2020 graduates as of March, 2020.



How studies have helped graduates in the workforce

The collective view of how graduates' university studies have helped them in the workforce were categorized and summarized under specific categories. Below are the dominant themes.



Employers of DWU Graduates

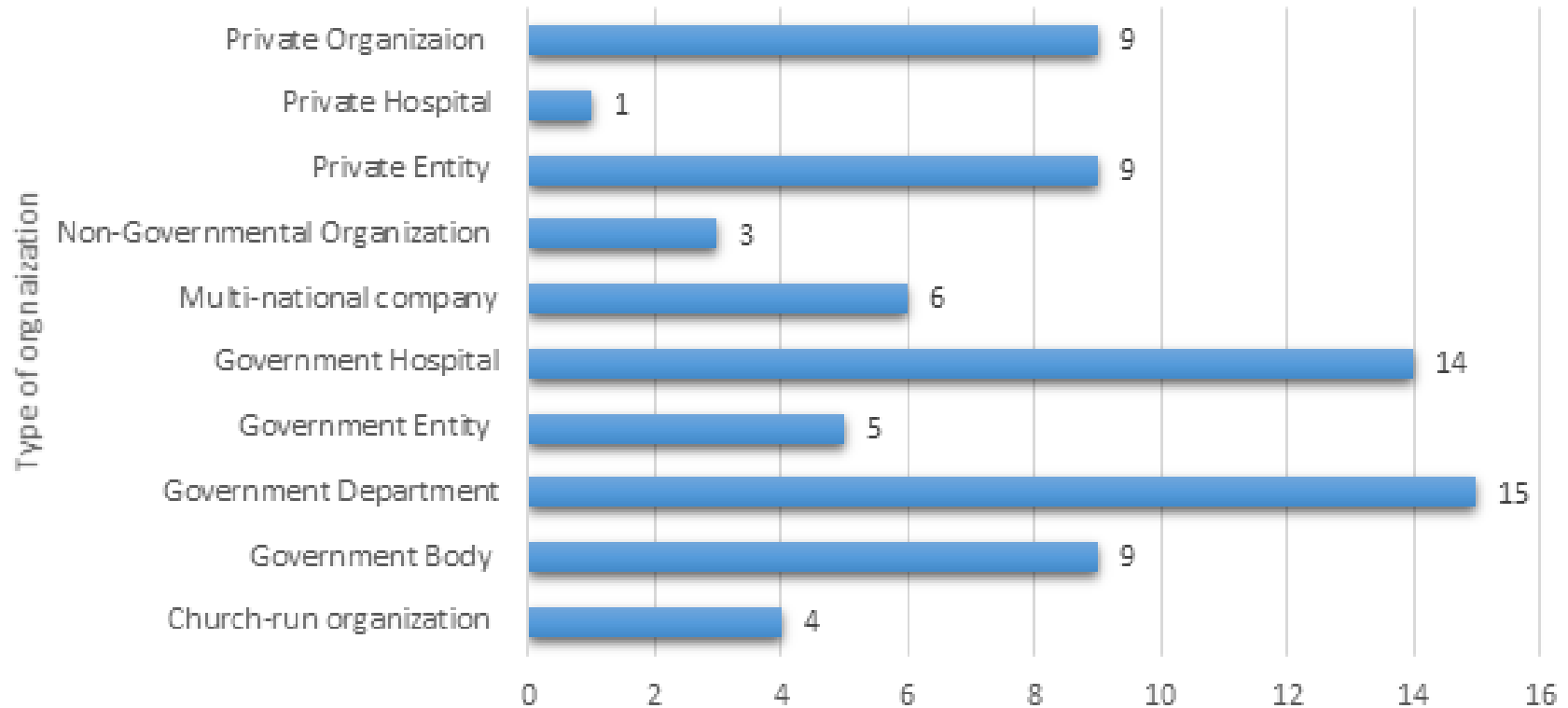


Figure 2 displays the type of organizations that have employed DWU graduates by March of 2020

Graduates preferred organization of employment

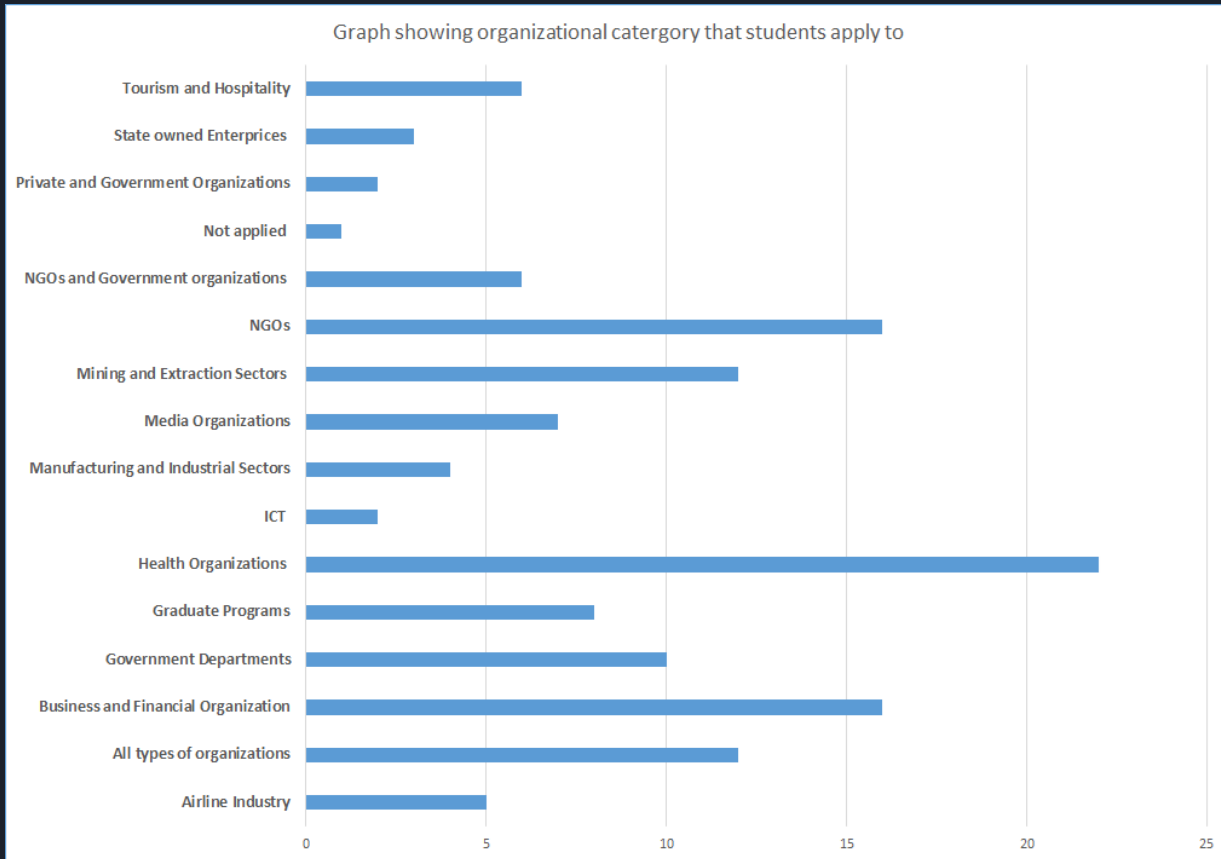


Figure 3 shows the organizational category and the total number of students that have applied or are applying to these organization types

Organizations approached by graduates

Graph showing number of organizations approached

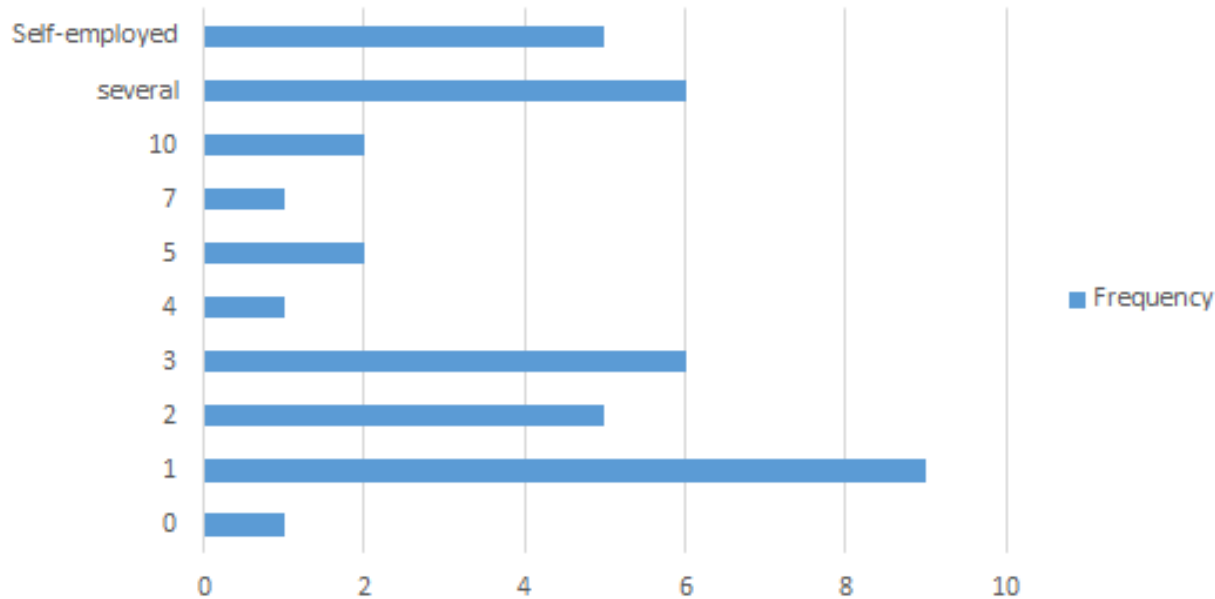


Figure 4 shows the total number of organizations approached by graduates.

Use of studies

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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)

Become an entrepreneur/start a small business

Some 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)

Help and assist 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 [sic] by my family."* (MP#52)

Most enjoyed aspects of being at DWU



Internet

- Learning Management System - Moodle
- Online Learning
- Paperless Policy

Environment

- Friendly
- Conducive for learning - learning facilities

Extracurricular academic activities

- Open Day and Symposiums
- Student enrichment programs

- Social Activities
- Making friends

- DWU core values
- Christian ethics
- Spiritual activities

- Clinical tutorials/practicals
- Field trips
- Community engagement activities

- Everything

Least enjoyed aspect of being at DWU



Food at the mess

Social activities

- Sport and other student activities

Security on campus

- Walking from paramed to main campus
- Felt unsafe within campus

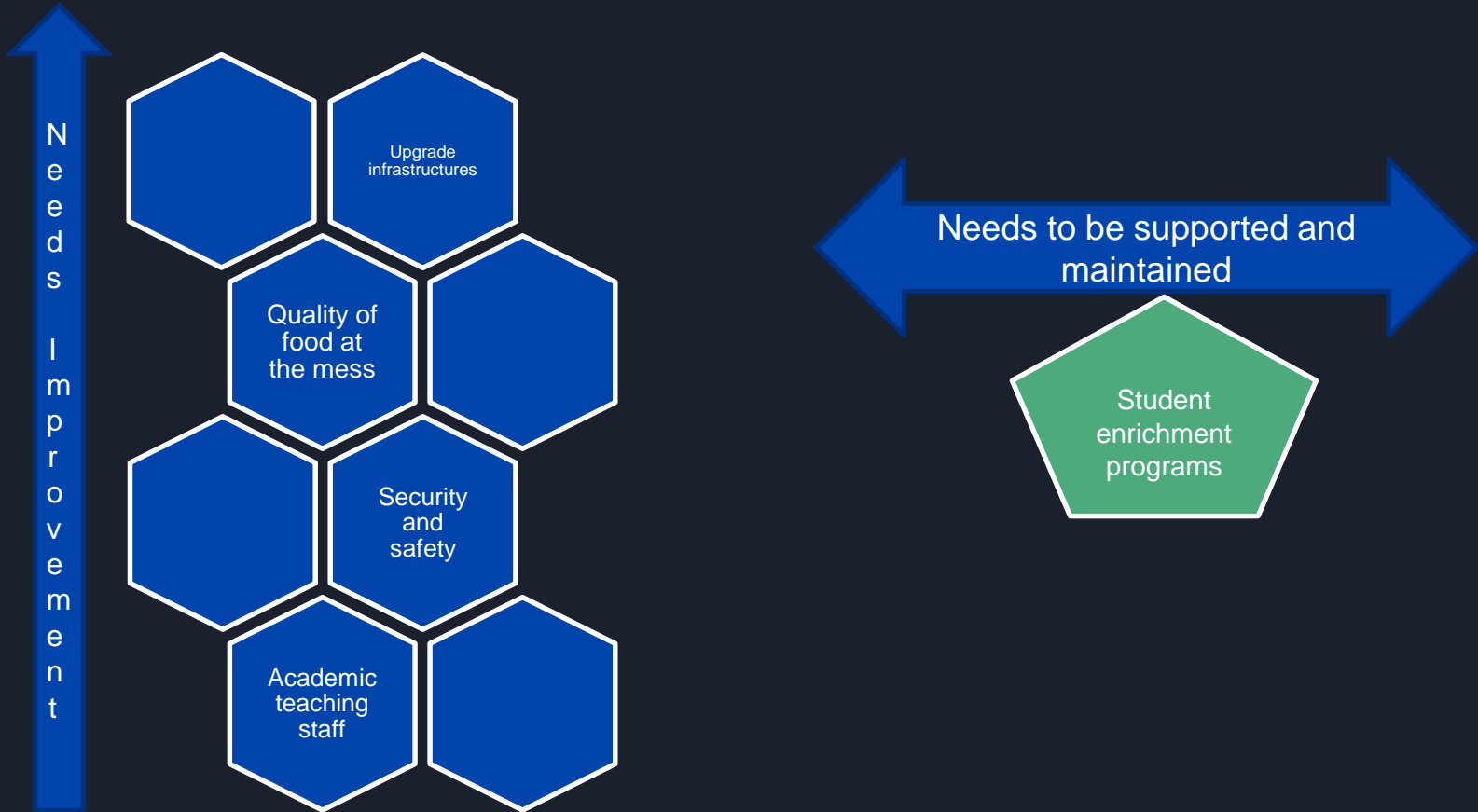
Substance abuse on campus

Network connectivity issues

Delivery of certain units

- Unqualified and inexperienced lecturers

Improving DWU and the student experience



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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.



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.



Recommendations

From this GTS 202, the following are recommendations offered for the university to take into consideration.

1. There has to be an increased awareness to 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 of graduates.
2. The university must take into account feedbacks from its stakeholders (students, alumnae and alumni, etc.) through feedback 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 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 component 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 – JTC and Diversity and Inclusion) that function outside of the student's day to day learning, which teaches the students other skills necessary for them.

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.



References

Badiru, E. O., & Wahome, M. (2016). Conducting Graduate Tracer Studies for Quality Assurance in East African Universities: A Focus on Graduate Students Voices on Quality Culture. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(6), 174–181.

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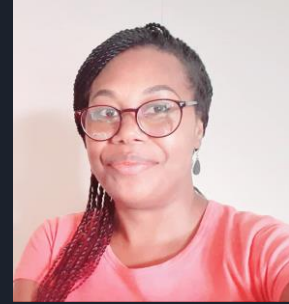
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