

Does a Bachelor of Nursing programme in the Western Cape, South Africa, adequately prepare graduates for their professional world of work?



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Introduction /Background



- Responses to current concerns, nationally and internationally regarding the alignment and relevance of some educational programmes to the job market
- The consequent gap between competencies and level of competence expected by the employer with those which graduates possess
- Challenges with regards to the graduate's transition from higher education to practice and ultimately their employability
- This has led to the need for evaluations of programmes through graduate tracer studies.

Research Objectives



1. To establish the graduates views on the Bachelor of Nursing programme in terms of its content, delivery and relevance to the graduate's world of work
2. To identify possible gaps in theory and clinical learning to inform improvement plans

Methodology



Approach and Design

- A tracer study using a quantitative approach and survey method was employed

Population

- All graduates of 2013 from the Bachelor of Nursing programme at UWC

Sampling

- Non-probability, purposive sampling was used
- The sample was all inclusive of the 137 graduates who completed the programme in 2013

Data collection

- An online survey was designed, using Survey Face
- Paper-based surveys were delivered to participants or administered telephonically to improve the response rate
- The survey focused on biographical and educational information and its relevance to the work needs

Data analysis

- Analyzing a web-based survey consists of a number of interrelated processes that are intended to prepare, arrange, summarize and transform data into information
- Computer statistical package for the social sciences, SPSS, version 22.0 was used to arrange and analyse the data

Results



Descriptive data

- A total of 56 graduates responded to the survey, a 41% response rate was achieved
- Ages ranged between 22 and 43 years, with a median age of 25
- Twenty five percent (25%) male and 75% female
- Approximately 68% single, 28% married and 4% divorced
- About 8% were non-South Africans
- A total of 90% received study bursaries and 10% not
- Twenty six percent lived in the university residence, 58% at home and 16% with family

Self-assessment of preference and performance



The most enjoyed discipline was Community Health Nursing (35%) followed by Midwifery (33%), Psychiatric nursing (22%) and lastly General Nursing (10%)

Theory (more than one discipline could be selected)

- More respondents fared best theoretical in Psychiatry (36%) followed Midwifery (30%)
- Higher proportion performed worst theoretical in Midwifery (30%) and Psychiatry (23%)

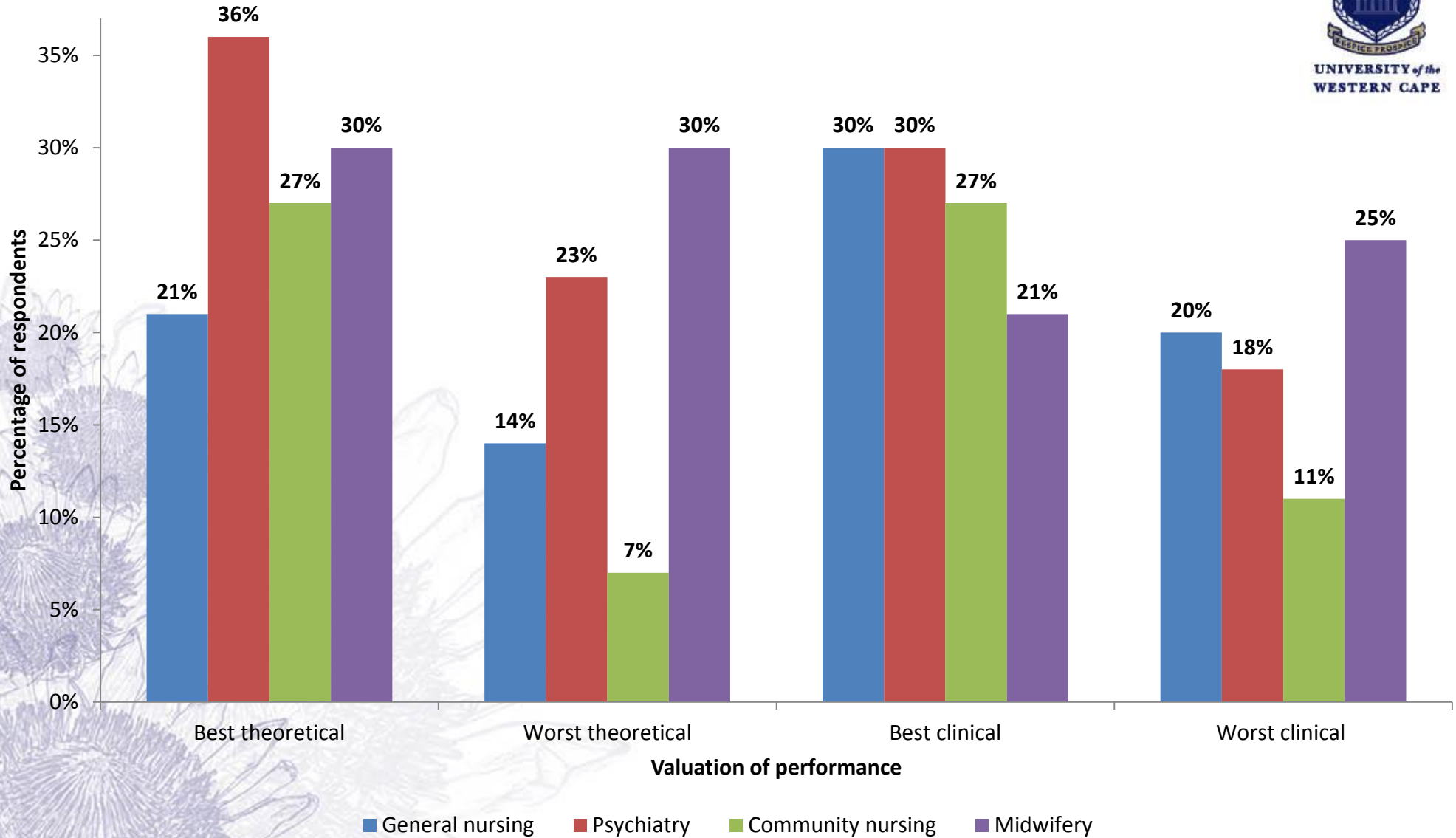
Clinical (more than one discipline could be selected)

- More respondents performed best in General Nursing (30%) and Psychiatry (30%).
- Respondents fared worst in Midwifery (25%)

Assessment of performance in various disciplines



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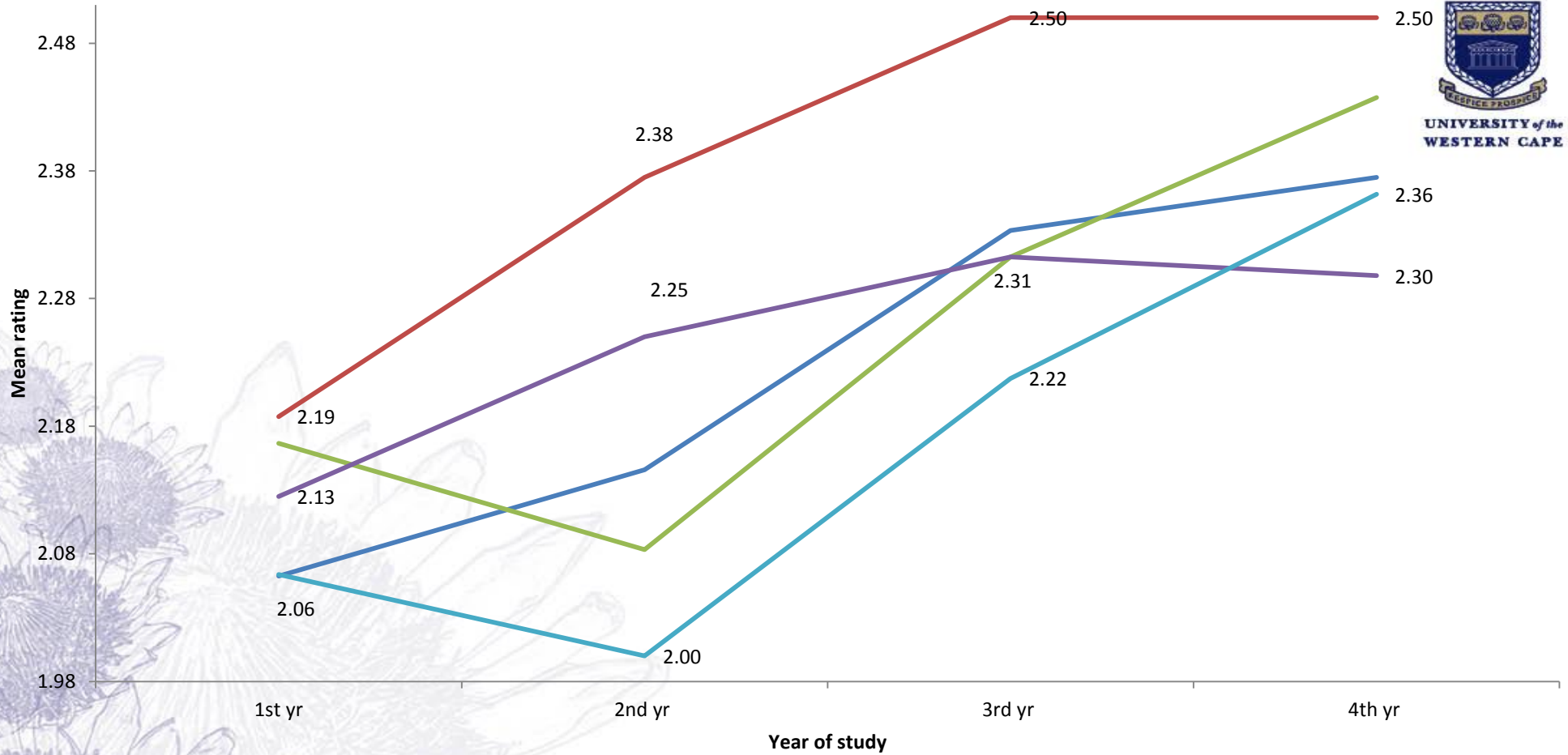


Assessment of facilitation of class by lecturer based on five (5) items:



- The “lecturer appeared to be an expert in the areas” was rated highest, and the evaluation of this item increase with year of study
- Items “were the assessments fair”, “sufficient opportunity for questions” and “lecturer able to link theory to practice” were rated lower in the second
- The lowest rating consistently from first year to fourth year (relative to the other items) was “were the assessment fair”. This was most likely regarded as unsatisfactory or satisfactory

Average scores of student rating of “*facilitation of class session by lecturer*” items on a scale of 0 (unsatisfied) to 3 (excellent)



- Lecturer able to link theory to practice
- Lecturer appeared to be an expert in the areas
- Sufficient opportunity to question
- Lecturer required students to problem solve
- Were the assessments fair?

Assessment of structure and content of programme/module



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- “Module assisted students to develop problem-solving skills” was rated consistently and progressively high from first to fourth year
- “Module addressed current issues faced by nurses in practice” and “module assisted students to develop critical thinking skills” were also high
- The lowest rating was “module required students to conduct research”.
- Items “module required students to conduct research”, “adequate in preparation for role as a registered nurse” and “module assisted students to develop critical thinking skills” were rated lower in the second year
- Overall, majority found the structure and content of programme/module items as either good or excellent

Assessment of structure and content of programme / module

Item	Scale	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
Modules required students to conduct research	Unsatisfactory	2.2	2.2	2.2	4.3
	Satisfactory	30.4	37.0	19.6	13.0
	Good	34.8	37.0	37.0	39.1
	Excellent	32.6	23.9	41.3	43.5
Modules assisted students to develop critical thinking skills	Unsatisfactory	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Satisfactory	13.0	15.2	8.7	8.7
	Good	41.3	43.5	43.5	32.6
	Excellent	41.3	41.3	47.8	58.7
Modules assisted students to develop problem solving skills	Unsatisfactory	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Satisfactory	8.7	8.7	4.3	6.5
	Good	37.0	45.7	47.8	39.1
	Excellent	50.0	45.7	47.8	54.3
Modules addressed current issues faced by nurses in practice	Unsatisfactory	4.3	2.2	0.0	0.0
	Satisfactory	15.2	10.9	8.7	8.7
	Good	34.8	34.8	39.1	30.4
	Excellent	45.7	52.2	52.2	60.9
Adequate in preparation for role as a registered nurse	Unsatisfactory	2.2	6.5	2.2	4.3
	Satisfactory	23.9	15.2	15.2	15.2
	Good	41.3	47.8	37.0	28.3
	Excellent	32.6	30.4	45.7	52.2

Clinical teaching and learning



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- Majority rated the items under this domain as good or excellent
- “Lecturer / clinical supervisor able to link practice to theory” was rated good or excellent
- Rating of the various items were similar in the first and second year, however it increased in the third year of study for almost all items
- “Adequate in preparation for role as a registered nurse” had a high rating as unsatisfactory especially in the first year and the highest rating as excellent in the fourth year of study

Clinical placement



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- Majority rated the items under this domain as good and excellent
- A higher proportion rated “sufficient learning opportunity at placement” as good and excellent
- The lowest rated was “sufficient time spent per placement”
- Respondents were more likely to be less satisfied in all the items during the second year
- The level of satisfaction however increased in the third and fourth year
- “Appropriate placement for linking of theory and practice”, “adequate in preparation for role as a registered nurse” and “sufficient orientation to placement” were rated similarly in the second, third and fourth year

Clinical supervision



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- Majority rated all items as good or excellent; and excellent and good rating was reported for “clinical supervisor provided effective feedback”
- Consistently lower rating was reported for “demonstration pitched at the correct level”
- A relatively higher proportion found “support from registered nurses at the placement” as unsatisfactory in the first and second year
- The rating of the items under this domain progressively increased from first to third year of study and either stayed similar in the third and fourth year of study respectively or dropped slightly in the fourth year

Resources for skills laboratories



- Majority of the items were rated satisfactory and good
- The rating of the “quality of equipment in the skills laboratory” and “sufficient opportunity to use equipment” were consistent from the first to fourth year
- “Adequate training in preparation for placement” increased in the first and second year but plateaued in the third and fourth year

Skills acquired during undergraduate training



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Respondents rated the skills acquired during undergraduate training. The next table is ordered from the highest positively rated to the lowest positively rated

- The positive rating was based on the combined proportion that rated the respective items from satisfactory to excellent
- The highest positive utilization ratings were “attention to detail”, followed by “ability to work independently”, “verbal communication skills” and “team work”
- The lowest rated skill item was “nursing-specific theoretical knowledge” followed by “nursing computer literacy” and “initiative and adaptability”
- Despite the rating, 75% of respondents rated all the items positively

Skills acquired during undergraduate training



Attributes / competencies	Non-existent	Pre-existent	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Attention to detail	0	0	2.3	14	41.9	41.9
Ability to work independently	0	2.4	0	19	33.3	45.2
Verbal communication skills	0	4.9	2.4	9.8	43.9	39
Team work	0	7	2.3	16.3	41.9	32.6
Problem solving skills	2.4	4.8	2.4	16.7	47.6	26.2
Planning and organizing skills	4.8	2.4	2.4	9.5	45.2	35.7
Written communication skills	2.4	4.8	2.4	11.9	45.2	33.3
Ability to work under pressure	2.4	4.8	4.8	9.5	38.1	40.5
Nursing-specific clinical knowledge	9.8	2.4	2.4	12.2	48.8	24.4
Initiative and Adaptability	2.4	4.8	9.5	54.8	28.6	0
General Computer literacy	2.4	7.3	7.3	17.1	43.9	22
Nursing-specific theoretical knowledge	9.8	4.9	7.3	12.2	48.8	17.1

Rate of utilization of skills acquired during undergraduate training



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- The table below is ordered based on skills used frequently and very frequently
- Items “feel confident communicating with physicians, colleagues, patients and families” followed by “attention to detail is important in accomplishing an assigned task” and “collect information on client status from variety of sources using assessment skills” are most frequently used
- Items “do not feel overwhelmed by patient care responsibilities and workload” and “feel at ease asking for the support of co-workers, subordinates, or supervisors to complete a task” are least utilized

Rate of utilization of skills acquired during undergraduate training

Skill	Never	Very rarely	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently
Feel confident communicating with physicians, colleagues, patients and families	0	0	0	0	40.9	59.1
Attention to detail is important in accomplishing an assigned task	0	0	0	4.5	40.9	54.5
Collect information on client status from variety of sources using assessment skills	0	0	0	9.5	38.1	52.4
Document timeously and appropriate reports of assessments, decisions about client status, plan and interventions	0	0	0	9.5	47.6	42.9
Base practice on current evidence	0	0	0	20	40	40
Feel comfortable making suggestions for changes to nursing plan of care	0	0	9.1	18.2	27.3	45.5
Able to make decisions on my own			4.5	22.7	31.8	40.9
Understand how to use Internet etc.	0	0	4.8	23.8	42.9	28.6
Analyze information and make recommendations.			4.8	23.8	52.4	19
Not having difficulty prioritizing and organizing patient care needs	4.8	9.5	0	14.3	47.6	23.8
Feel at ease asking for the support of co-workers to complete a task	0	4.5	4.5	22.7	27.3	40.9
Do not feel overwhelmed by patient care responsibilities and workload	4.8	9.5	9.5	9.5	38.1	28.6

Recommendations for programme review based on low scores for the following items

- Midwifery and Psychiatry theory and Midwifery clinical
- Linking theory to practice
- Module required students to conduct research
- Module assisted students to develop critical thinking skills
- Computer literacy
- Fairness of assessments
- Overall review of the second year
- Sufficient time spent per placement
- Adequate preparation for role as a registered nurse
- Initiative and adaptability
- Support by registered nurses at the placement

Conclusion



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Conducting tracer studies are known to be challenging especially in terms of ensuring a reasonable response rate. All possible methods must be applied to trace and motivate graduates to complete the survey, as their contributions to improving the programme is invaluable.

Despite graduates reporting positively on many items in the survey, in many instances these responses were related to the third and fourth year of the programme. Many of the items which were scored low relates to the second year of the programme, which raises a concern as the second year is in fact the year in which the highest number of students repeat modules in this programme.

Further qualitative exploration of the graduates experiences would assist in providing a deeper understanding of the specific issues which positively or negatively influenced their experience of the programme.

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