



# Peer Advising Support for Student Leaders in a Residential Setting

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# Structure of the presentation

Introduction  
Objectives  
Methodology  
Findings  
Limitations  
Recommendations  
Conclusion



# Department of Student Affairs

Liberating the Soul for Well-being & Flourishing



## INTRODUCTION

# UCT LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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Graduate attributes' framework

*“Create transformative learning encounters, facilitate developmental opportunities that are contextually relevant and enables individuals to create their own unique developmental journeys and foster a learning environment that is nurturing, caring, engaging and places a strong emphasis on the well-being of individuals.”*

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## **PREMISE**

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PEER LEARNING COMMUNITIES ARE OPTIMAL SPACES TO PROMOTE THE CAPABILITY FOR HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AND TO FOSTER A SENSE OF BELONGING.

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A HUMAN CAPABILITY APPROACH EMBRACES A VARIETY OF THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO FOSTER TRANSFORMATION AND AGENCY AT A COLLECTIVE AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL.

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THE HUMAN CAPABILITY THEORY ENABLES INDIVIDUALS TO IDENTIFY WHAT IS NEEDED TO FLOURISH AND TO PROMOTE THE FREEDOMS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITY TO PURSUE GOALS WHICH THEY DEEM TO BE WORTHWHILE.

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THE HUMANIZING PEDAGOGY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES AND POWER RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN A SOCIETY COULD MITIGATE AGAINST STUDENT SUCCESS.

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THROUGH APPLYING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS, STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THESE BARRIERS AND DEVELOP CAPABILITY TO PURSUE THEIR WORTHWHILE GOALS THROUGH CONSCIOUS DECISION-MAKING. THIS PROCESS INVOLVES AN ORIENTATION TOWARD TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING ENCOUNTERS.

## NATURE OF THE COLLABORATION -

OVERRIDING THEME  
STUDENT SUCCESS



The Department of Student Affairs houses the UCT-LEAD which provide access to various formal and non-formal contextually relevant development opportunities to promote student success.

We envision to be a Centre/Hub for student leadership development

To enable student to create their own developmental journeys to aid their personal & professional development



The AAI at UCT is housed under the Academic Development Programme (ADP), which adopts a strong social justice approach to educational development (Scott, 2009; Van Pletzen et al., 2020). Whilst ADP works centrally across the institution on various programmes seeking to advance academic development and student success, the AAI runs a series of peer advising and developmental programmes seeking to enable students to attain holistic success during their academic career

<b>Department of Student Affairs</b>	<b>Academic Advising Initiative</b>
<b>Humanizing pedagogy</b>	Constructivist learning design
<b>Pedagogy of discomfort</b>	Help-seeking behaviour
<b>Capabilities Theory</b>	Sense of Belonging

Capability  
Theory serves  
as a meta-  
theory

## Principled approach

Academic Recovery

Structured curriculum

Runs throughout the year

Extra curriculum

Trained peer advisors facilitate

Appreciative inquiry grounded in help seeking behavior and web of connections.





## Residential context – Living and Learning environment:

Peer to peer support through volunteers

Part of a network (ecosystem of support)

8000 students in the system supported by:

Head mentors (50), head tutors (25) and tutors (220)

These structures were trained by staff in Residence Life Office and the Academic Advising Initiative.



## Rationale - Peer – Peer advising

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### Peer learning communities

The longer-term vision is to build living and learning communities in the residence system whereby groups of residences can form hubs where tutors can gather, with the support of staff, to provide spaces for students to provide peer to peer support.

This was particularly important in the post-Covid regime as many students suffered because of isolation. Of particular concern was the impact of mental health and wellbeing on academic performance and vice versa. Contact between students and the formation of learning communities was viewed as the key driver to overcome isolation and alienation.

# OBJECTIVES

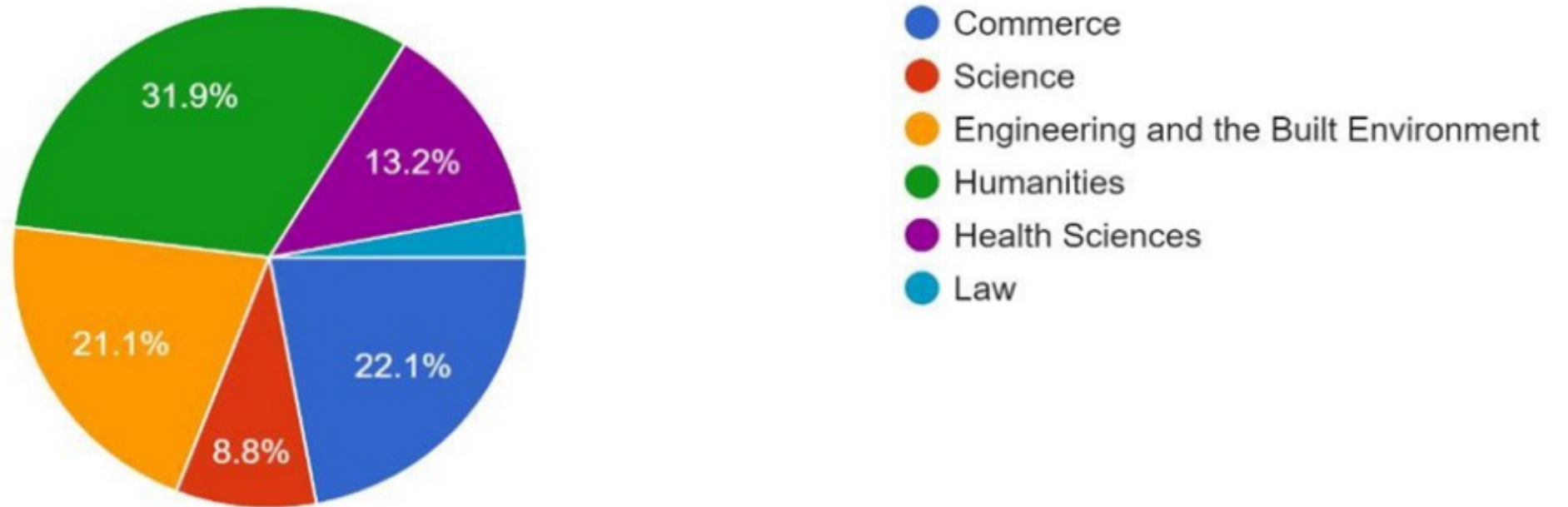
*To establish an integrated, wrap around service for peer advising support which links the faculty and residences – Residence Academic Development Committee*

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## Residence Life Needs Analysis

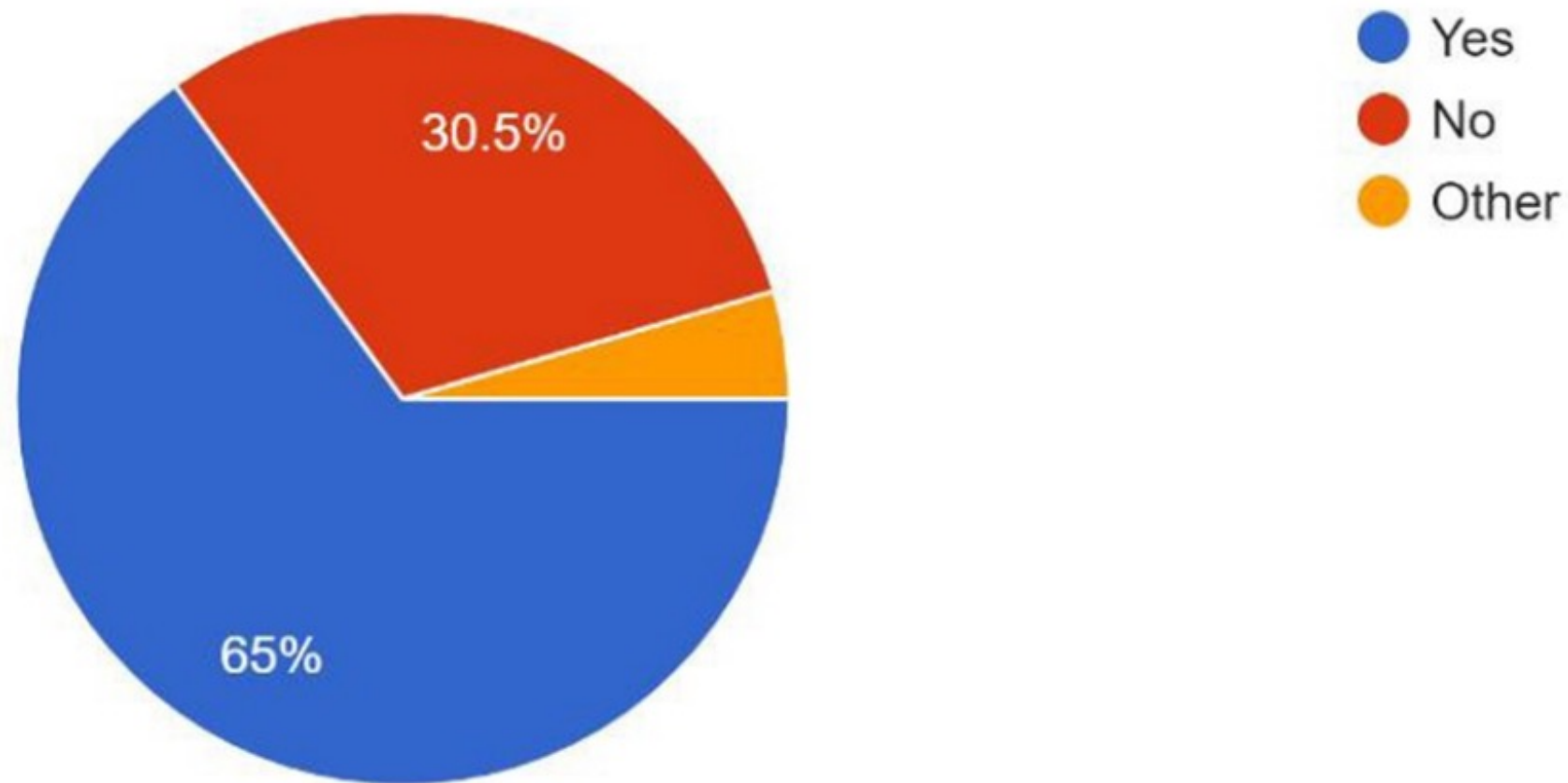
### Faculty

204 responses



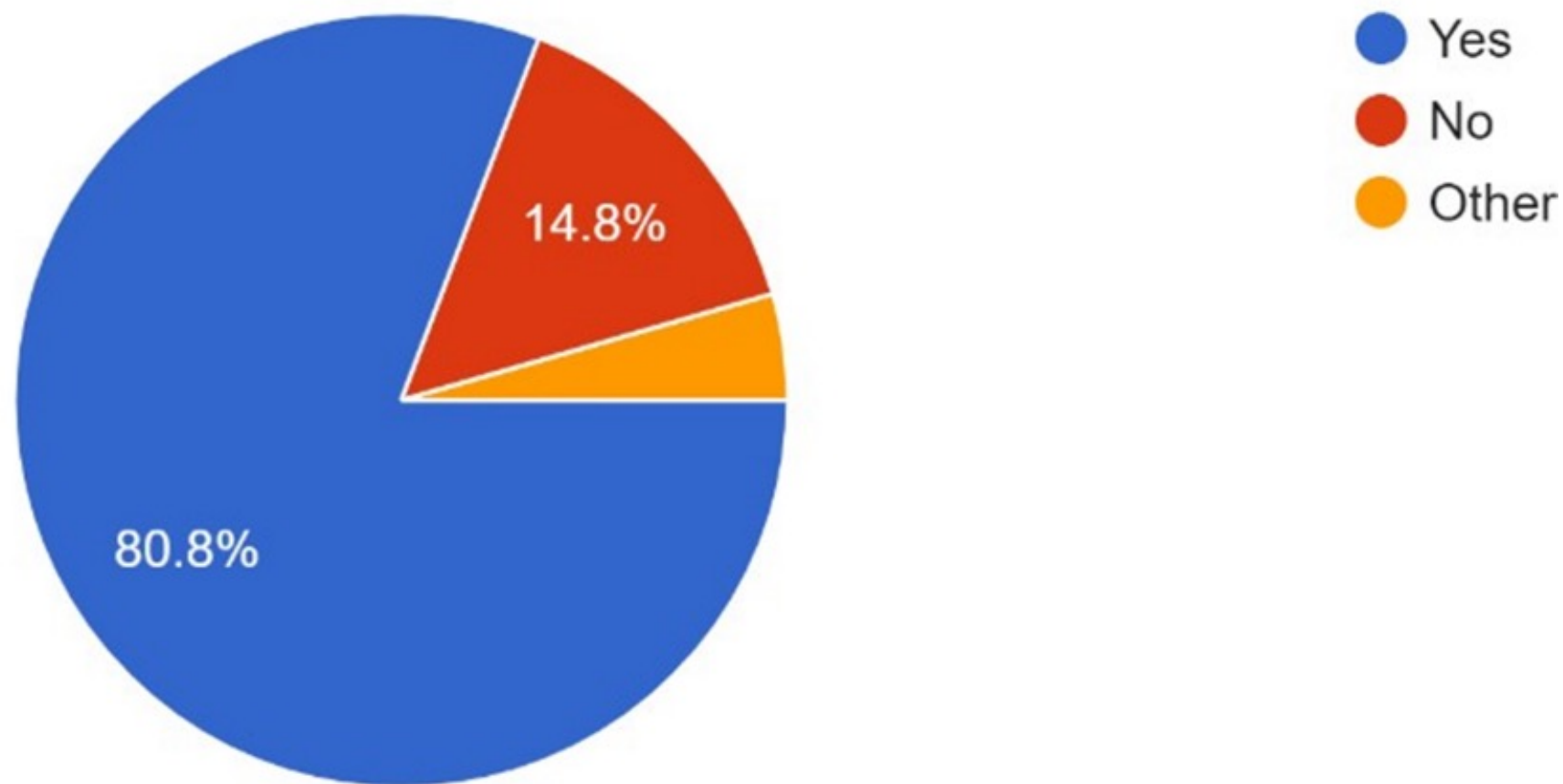
# Are you accessing residence academic support services?

200 responses



# Are you accessing faculty academic support services in the faculty?

203 responses





# INTERVENTION DESIGN

IN DESIGNING THE PROGRAMME, WE FOLLOWED THE LEARNING DESIGN PROCESS OF ADDIE: ANALYSIS, DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION.

IN DESIGNING THIS PROGRAMME, WE IDENTIFIED A SET OF SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES THAT OUR TARGET AUDIENCE WOULD BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPING THROUGH THE PROGRAMME. THESE WERE ALIGNED WITH THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE PROGRAMME. ONCE THESE WERE IDENTIFIED, WE DEVELOPED FOUR SESSIONS, TO BE HELD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, WHICH WOULD COVER A SET OF LINKED SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES AND BE ALIGNED WITH THE PERIOD OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR, TO ENSURE THAT THE MOST RELEVANT INFORMATION WAS PRESENTED AT THE MOST RELEVANT TIME.

FOR EXAMPLE OUR FIRST SESSION, FOCUSED ON HELPING THE PEER ADVISORS (IN THIS CASE THE HEAD TUTORS AND HEAD MENTORS) TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL AS AN OVERVIEW OF THE VARIOUS SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE (ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY), FOR STUDENTS IN THE RESIDENCE SYSTEM. THROUGH INWARD REFLECTION, THEY WILL ALSO DISCUSS THE CHALLENGES STUDENTS FACE IN THE RESIDENCE SYSTEM AND HOW THEY CAN RESPOND APPROPRIATELY. LASTLY, THEY WILL BE INTRODUCED TO PEER-SUPPORTED LEARNING AND THE SKILLS NEEDED TO FACILITATE PEER LEARNING COMMUNITIES.

OUR SECOND SESSION, LOCATED IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE FIRST SEMESTER, FOCUSED ON BUILDING PEER LEARNING COMMUNITIES, SUPPORTING PERFORMANCE TOWARDS SEMESTER-END EXAMS AND STUDY TECHNIQUES. IN OUR THIRD SESSION, WE LOOKED AT BUILDING A WEB OF CONNECTION, THE WELLBEING OF OUR STUDENTS, AND DEALING WITH PERFORMANCE OUT OF THE FIRST SEMESTER EXAMS. FINALLY, OUR LAST SESSION EXPLORED "SAVING THE ACADEMIC YEAR" - A WAY OF PREPARING STUDENTS TO MANAGE THEIR WORKLOAD, GET ON TRACK AS NEEDED, AND PREPARE FOR FINAL EXAMINATIONS.

# METHODOLOGY





# Methodology

The research methods that were employed in this research include conducting a questionnaire that was completed by Head Tutors and Tutors which they were required to complete online. We then collated that data and categorised it thematically based on each question that was asked. Of the nine questions in the questionnaire, we drew four key questions as outlined below:

From Question A, we drew data on the help-seeking capability; from Question B we drew data on the belonging capability, and Questions C and D dealt with capabilities generally.

Regarding course content on help seeking behaviour, how have you managed to use this skill in your own academic journey as a strategy for success?

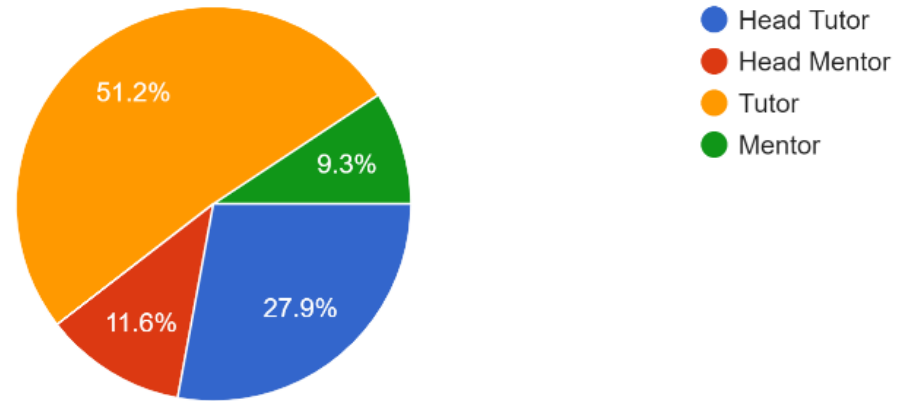
What aspects of this Training Programme were most useful or valuable?

Did you enjoy the training programme and why?

What training course content would you like to see being added here to this programme?

3. Describe the capacity with which you attended this programme as:

43 responses



### Sample size

From our sample, we had about 37 respondents out of the 75 head tutors and head mentors as well as tutors and mentors.

# POST INTERVENTION FEEDBACK

A total of 222 responses were received for the 9 questions.

The determination of which capabilities the students developed will be extracted from the complete set of data.

The capabilities are identified as the **freedom to pursue worthy goals. While the capability to create a sense of belonging and to adopt help-seeking behaviour were fundamental to pursuing academic success;**

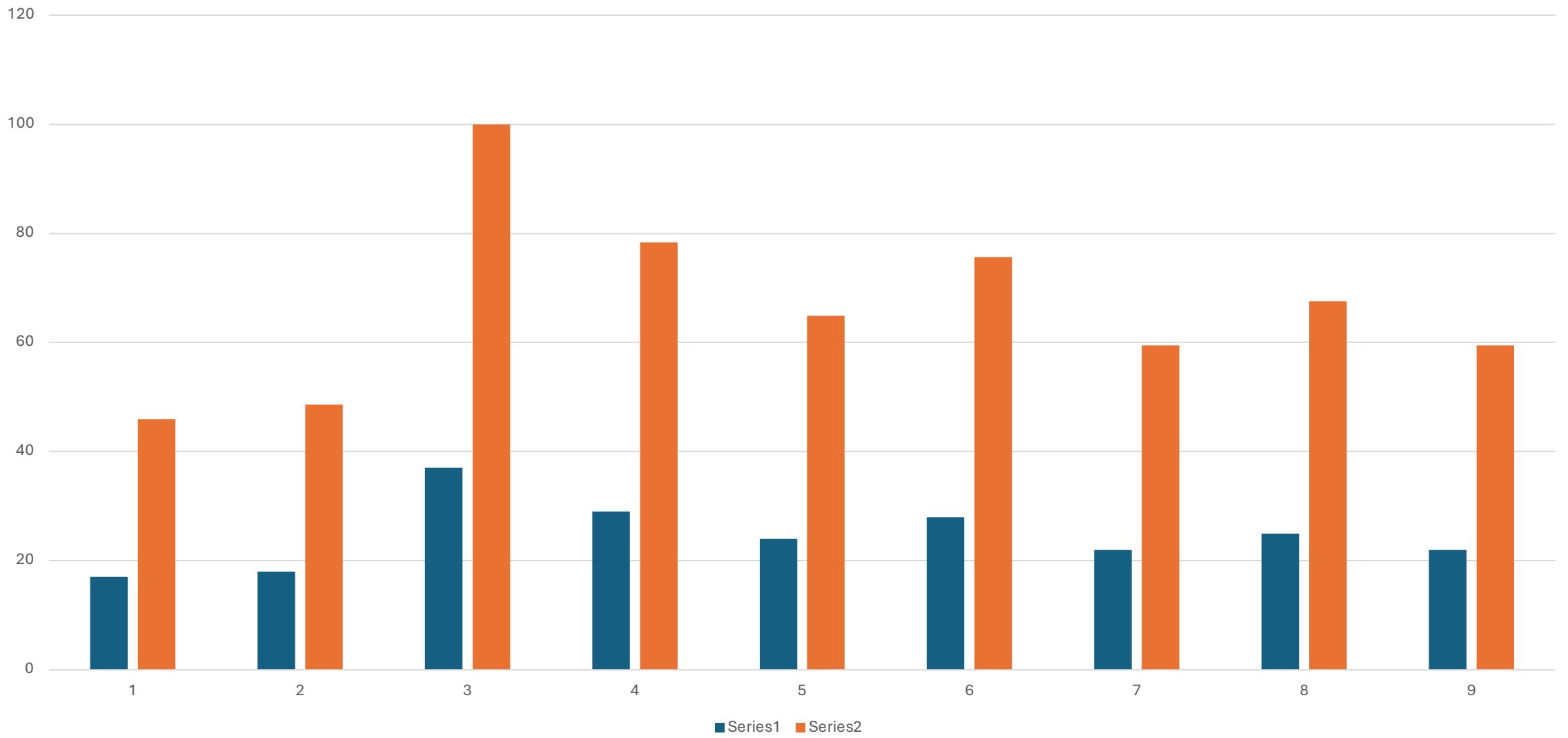
Another set of unintended capabilities were also developed, thereby underscoring specific modules that can be elaborated on in the future.



37 of a total of 75 respondents (49.3%) returned completed questionnaires. As none of the questions were mandatory to answer, the participants selected which ones to respond to. As this analysis focused on two key themes – **promoting the capability for help-seeking behaviours and fostering a sense of belonging**; the analysis will focus on the responses in this regard. In addition, the analysis will also make reference to the other human capabilities required for student success. A grounded theory approach was employed to analyse the data into themes.



Respondents per question N=37



# DATA ANALYSIS





## Grounded theory was utilized to analyze the data

Stage	Purpose
<i>Codes</i>	Identifying anchors that allow the key points of the data to be gathered
<i>Concepts</i>	Collections of <i>codes</i> of similar content that allows the data to be grouped
<i>Categories</i>	Broad groups of similar <i>concepts</i> that are used to generate a theory
<i>Theory</i>	A collection of <i>categories</i> that detail the subject of the research

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grounded\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grounded_theory)



# FINDINGS





No of respondents	Enhancement areas
11	Questioning skills
9	Time management skills
8	Mental health management
3	Self image

### Help seeking capability:

The participants of the course responded that having acquired help-seeking behavior had a positive effect on their capability to become a protagonist for their own academic success and by implication, the success of others that they help.

- In this regard 11 (29%) participants reported that they felt more confident to ask questions for the purpose of understanding their academic work; 9 (24%) indicated that it has improved their time management and ability to set healthy boundaries; 8 (21%) have responded that they were better able to manage their mental health and to confidently develop and take charge of their success strategies and 3 (8%) indicated that it improved their self-image.
- From the feedback it is abundantly evident that the course provided students with the confidence to become agents of their own academic success. This quality also reflects on the humanising experience of the course which could also be reflective of the effectiveness of the selected content, mode of delivery and the qualities, knowledge attitude and skills of the facilitators.

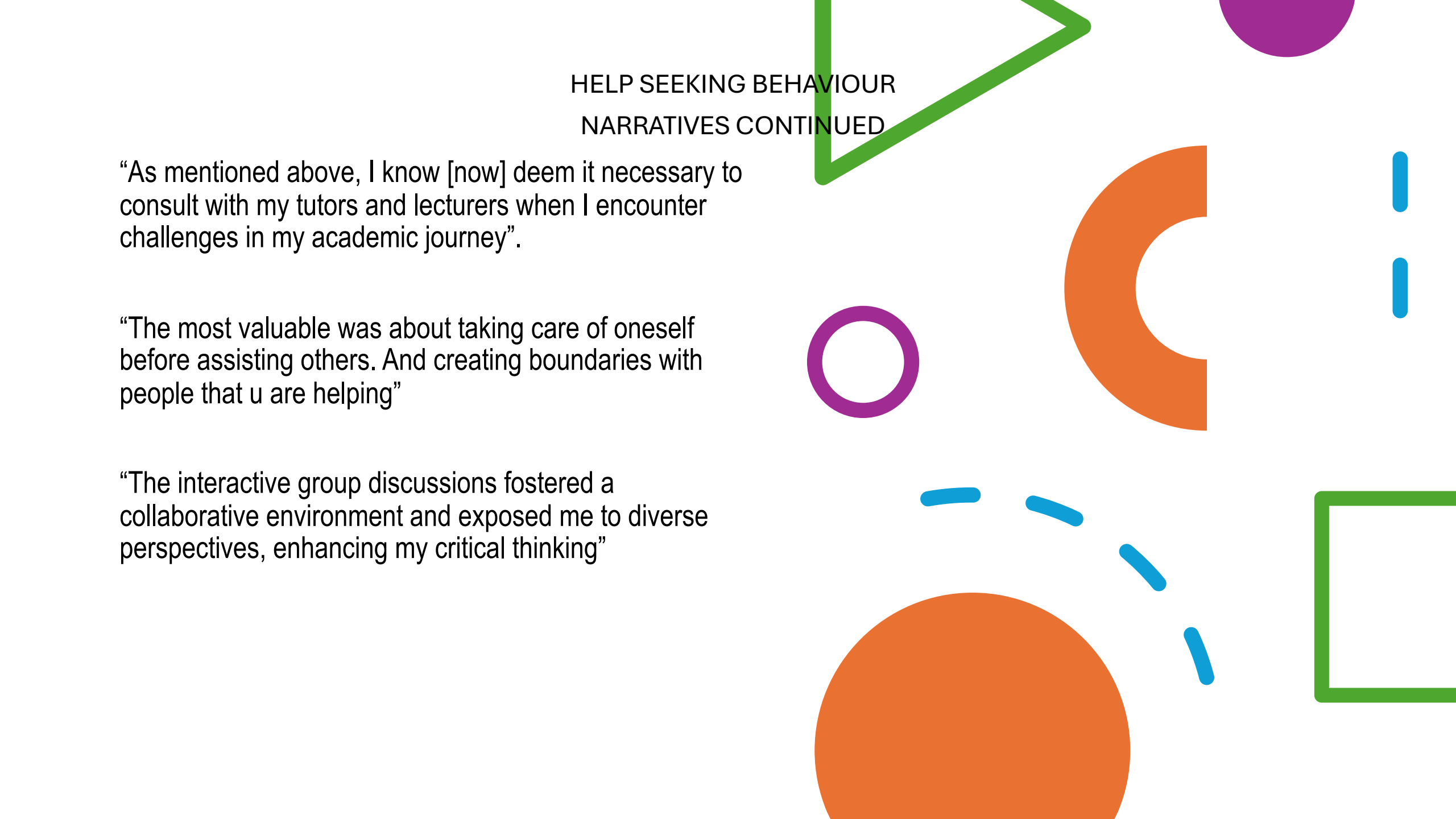
## HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR NARRATIVES

*Incorporating the principles of help-seeking behavior into my academic journey has been transformative. Initially, I struggled with the idea of asking for assistance, equating it with admitting weakness. However, after understanding the importance and benefits of help-seeking from the course content, I began to view it as a **strength and a strategy for success**.*

*By actively reaching out to professors during office hours, joining study groups, and utilizing tutoring resources,*

*I found that my comprehension of complex topics improved. Additionally, I was able to build stronger academic relationships and felt more integrated into the learning community. Embracing help-seeking behavior not only enhanced my academic performance but also fostered a more collaborative and supportive learning environment.'*

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HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOUR  
NARRATIVES CONTINUED

“As mentioned above, I know [now] deem it necessary to consult with my tutors and lecturers when I encounter challenges in my academic journey”.

“The most valuable was about taking care of oneself before assisting others. And creating boundaries with people that u are helping”

“The interactive group discussions fostered a collaborative environment and exposed me to diverse perspectives, enhancing my critical thinking”

## Sense of belonging

Students were asked in question four about which aspects of the programme they found most useful and valuable. This was the second highest question responded to.

29 (50%) responses were received of which 2 provided in sufficient information and therefore could not be coded.

Of the 27(93%) responses coded, the following categories emerged:

10 (34%) indicated that the benefit of the programme was being part of a learning community.



## **Sense of belonging**

Connected to that, an additional 8 (27.5%) students reported that the learning was transformative in nature and an additional 7 (24%) students reported that the course contributed to their personal development.

The most valuable aspects of this training program were the practical skills and knowledge it provided. Learning effective communication, problem-solving, and time management skills were particularly useful. Additionally, understanding how to access and utilize campus resources and support services was invaluable for a successful academic journey.



## Sense of belonging

### Respondent narrative

“The training programme offered several invaluable components that greatly benefited my learning experience.

Firstly, the hands-on practical exercises allowed me to **apply theoretical knowledge in real-life scenarios**, which greatly solidified my understanding.

Secondly, the interactive group discussions fostered a collaborative environment and exposed me to diverse perspectives, **enhancing my critical thinking**.

These elements, combined with the expert insights provided by our trainers, made the programme exceptionally beneficial for my personal and academic growth.”



**Sense of belonging**  
**Respondent narrative**

“I believe it would be beneficial to include modules on soft skills development, such as communication, teamwork, and time management. These skills are often just as vital as technical knowledge in real-world applications. Additionally, a section on emerging trends or technologies in the field would keep us updated and prepared for the future. Lastly, more hands-on workshops or simulations would be a great way to apply theoretical knowledge in practice and gain practical experience.”



## Observations – Peer to Peer learning encounter

It is evident from other responses that some students gained some of these capabilities however, taking into consideration the scope of this particular learning encounter, it does create an opportunity for further exploration. The mode of humanizing the learning content encourages collaboration between the facilitator and the participant so as to humanise and engage in a collective, collaborative learning encounter.





## Some emerging capabilities for student success

Over and above the two primary objectives, other critical capabilities were highlighted as unintended outcomes. This section will speak to these capabilities.

### **Communication skills:**

“The most valuable aspects of this training program were the practical skills and knowledge it provided. **Learning effective communication**, problem-solving, and time management skills were particularly useful. Additionally, understanding how to access and utilize campus resources and support services was invaluable for a successful academic journey”.

### **Leadership skills:**

“Peer training that I received was really helpful it helped me get some experience in public speaking and leadership”.

“My highlights of the Head Tutor role I was assigned, would have been leadership. I have gained better leadership skills. I have made better connections through this program”.



## Problem-solving skills:

“The most valuable aspects of this training program were the practical skills and knowledge it provided. Learning effective communication, **problem-solving**, and time management skills were particularly useful. Additionally, understanding how to access and utilize campus resources and support services was invaluable for a successful academic journey”.

## Time-management skills

“Managing my time and understanding that there are limits to the help I can offer”

“Time management skills to ensure that able to fulfil duty as a res tutor”.

“The most valuable aspects of this training program were the practical skills and knowledge it provided. Learning effective communication, problem-solving, **and time management skills were particularly useful**. Additionally, understanding how to access and utilize campus resources and support services was invaluable for a successful academic journey”.

“It has helped me to manage my time better”.

These are very practical capabilities that students need to develop and can also been seen as foundational skills for individuals to succeed and ultimately develop help-seeking and sense of belonging.



## A CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR PEER LEARNING COMMUNITIES

UCT Lead Graduate Attribute	Peer Advising capability - Help Seeking Behaviours	Peer Advising capability – Sense of belonging
1 Leaders in society		The programme developed my communication and public speaking skills
2 Resilient agents of change for themselves and in society.	The programme assisted me to develop academic success strategies.	The programme promoted questioning skills
3 Have a sense of social citizenship in the creation of a sustainable and generative world.	The programme assisted me to see myself as being part of and contributing to a learning community.	
4 Contribute to different knowledge fields, the workplace and civil society thinkers who are capable of shaping, adapting to and responding to the unknown.	The programme assisted me to develop the confidence to consult on my academic challenges.	I am keen to explore the technical aspects of learning.
5 Emotional intelligence, creativity, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, judgement and decision-making and cognitive flexibility.	The programme developed my critical thinking skills	The programme promoted my problem-solving skills
6 Ability to manage people, to coordinate with others, to be service-orientated and able to negotiate.		The programme facilitated teamwork
7 A sense of Afrikan citizenship and global citizenship, responsibility towards the natural environment, and a strong valorisation of cultural diversity.		I learnt how to utilise the campus resources for learning.
8 Leaders that are humane, and that can heal and nurture human relationships on a deep and meaningful human level.	The programme assisted me to set boundaries and preserve my mental health	
9 Student leaders with the stature to lead themselves with integrity and ethical character.		The programme developed my leadership capability.
10 Leaders that serve society with their professional knowledge and expertise to provide practical, innovative, and sustainable solutions to the real needs of real people in communities – locally, continentally, and globally.		The programme assisted me to apply theory to real life scenarios through practical hands-on workshops.

# LIMITATIONS





### **Limitations and recommendations for the way forward**



The study focused primarily on the capacity building of head mentors and head tutors.



It is recommended that in further studies, the impact mentors and tutors on tutees and mentees could also be considered.



Consideration could also be given to linking with relevant staff who can measure the academic performance of students who were supported through this programme.



Post training needs are to be incorporated into a continuous learning process. (January, 2007:115). Overall, whilst the programme is excellent there is also a need for ongoing support and accompanying of the participants by the various stakeholders. This finding is consistent with other studies on programme design as is evidenced from the above-mentioned study.

# RECOMMENDATIONS





### **FINDINGS AND WAY FORWARD**



THIS FINDINGS WILL BE USED TO DEVELOP A MANUAL FOR TUTORS, TAKING THE FEEDBACK INTO CONSIDERATION.



THE FINDINGS WILL BE USED AS A BASELINE FOR FURTHER PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT.



HOW TRANSFERABLE WERE THE SKILLS THAT THE STUDENT LEADERS ACQUIRED?

# CONCLUSION







## CONCLUSION



THE PROGRAMME'S HUMANIZING PEDAGOGY, WHICH COULD BE FURTHER EXPLORED IN THIS PARTNERSHIP, PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON THEIR UNIQUE ACADEMIC JOURNEYS AND TO BECOME PROTAGONISTS FOR THEIR OWN SUCCESS. CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING DESIGN IS A POWERFUL METHODOLOGY FOR BUILDING STUDENT CAPABILITY THAT PROMOTES THAT SUCCESS. THE RES PHAMBILI PROGRAMME MET ITS OBJECTIVES. IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL PILOT WHICH PROVIDES A BASELINE FOR FUTURE PROGRAMMES. IT RAISES VALUABLE INSIGHTS FOR THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF THIS WORK. FOR EXAMPLE: HOW CAN THESE QUALITATIVE ASPECTS FORM PART OF A BROADER SET OF INDICATORS AND CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THE DATA ANALYTIC MEXTRIX. HOW CAN THE CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK FURTHER CONTRIBUTE TOWARD AN OVER-ARCHING FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENT SUCCESS TO GUIDE THE ANALYSIS OF DATA?

# THANK YOU

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