Cape Peninsula
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IMPACT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES OFFERED AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

by

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DECLARATION

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I, Nandipa Mfecane, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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ABSTRACT

The higher education system in South Africa has gone through significant restructuring and transformation since the dawn of democracy. One of these changes in the higher education landscape was the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which appointed a permanent Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The major functions of the HEQC are to ensure quality, audit the quality assurance mechanisms and accredit programmes in higher education. The HEQC is however adamant that responsibility for the programmes and for institutional quality rests primarily with the institution itself.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are therefore under pressure and are facing tough competition to ensure that programmes and services they offer are of the best quality. It is assumed that clients' (students and visitors) first point of contact in a university is the administrative office. In an HEI there are numerous departments offering administrative support, for example, during student registration, academic clearance is performed by the relevant department; financial clearance is performed by the student debtors' department and access to registration is performed at the faculty. Therefore, students are required to deal with all these departments to complete their registration when they access the HEI.

With the aim to determine the effects of administrative services offered to stakeholders by the faculty and all departments involved with admissions and registration, this research question was posed: How do administrative services offered to stakeholders within the faculty affect service delivery at a university of technology in the Western Cape, South Africa? The participants included students and administrative staff members involved with student registration. A sample size consisted of 187 students and seven staff members. Data was collected using both qualitative and quantitative means in order to determine the administrative service culture in place as well as the beliefs of the participants. Basically, data was gathered through individual questionnaires, one-on-one interviews and focus-group discussions. R-Statistical Computing was used to analyse quantitative data while the narrative research was utilised to analyse qualitative data. The findings identified that a majority of research participants believe that a considerable improvement in quality of services offered at a university is required. This may be achieved by creating awareness of services offered and proper implementation of policies, as well as improvement of systems in place which may eradicate the level of stakeholder dissatisfaction with service quality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

To

my family

KEYWORDS

Administration

Customer Service

Customer Satisfaction

Students

Higher Education

Academic

Service Quality

Teamwork

Perceptions

Stakeholders

Systems

Higher Education Institutions

Customer Relationship Management

Total Quality Management

Admissions and Registration

Assessment and Graduation

Faculty

Student Debtors

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ABBREVIATIONS

AGC	Assessment and Graduation Centre
ARC	Admissions and Registration Centre
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
TQM	Total Quality Management

GLOSSARY

Customer Relationship Management	Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a business strategy and information system that helps businesses to harmonise and manage their functions by using technology and information (Gibson-Odgers, 2008:176).
Customer service	Customer service is defined as the practice of ensuring that a customer is satisfied with a product or service, in any way he or she classifies it, and that service is rendered with proficiency, empathy and compassion (Gibson-Odgers, 2008:6).
Quality	Quality is described as the measurement of how well the product or service of the organisation conforms to the customers wants and expectations (Brink & Berndt, 2005:46).
Stakeholder	A stakeholder can be described as any party or group that has ability to influence or be influenced by the organisation and its activities (Berndt & Tait, 2014:154).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1   Introduction

The higher education system in South Africa has gone through significant restructuring and transformation since 1994, with mergers and incorporation of traditional and comprehensive universities with technikons, resulting in universities of technology.

Another aspect of transformation in the higher education landscape was the establishment of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) which appointed a permanent Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as mandated by the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (as amended by Act 25 of 2001). The major functions of the HEQC are to perform quality promotion, audit the quality assurance mechanisms and accredit programmes in higher education. The HEQC is however adamant that the responsibility for the programmes and for institutional quality rests primarily with the institution itself.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are thus under pressure to adjust to the systems as well as ensure that programmes and services they offer are of the best quality.

1.2   Problem Statement

With the introduction of the HEQC in 2001, South Africa has followed the United Kingdom, United States and Australia in calling higher education institutions to account for the quality of services they offer. HEIs are subject to quality audits every five years. The purpose of the audit is to (1) assess the effectiveness of the systems that institutions have implemented to manage the quality of their core functions, and (2) identify, acknowledge or commend areas of strength as well as areas of inadequacy that need to be addressed with different levels of urgency (South Africa, 1997:8). The audit focuses on various areas, including an institution's policies, strategies, and systems, as well as resources for quality monitoring of the main functions with the aim of promoting and improving quality in higher education. Core functions include teaching and learning, research, community engagement and relevant academic support services.

Literature shows that quality in higher education has been widely debated, especially internationally; however, as the HEQC declares, the focus is mainly on teaching, research and community engagement, thus very little attention is given to administrative functions. Student administration and support such as admissions and registration, academic and financial

support, accommodation, health services and assessment results cater for many aspects of student life, from the first contact with the institution until graduation. These services play a pivotal role in supplementing the academic development of the student (South Africa. Ministry of Education, 2003:43).

Properly conducted administrative functions lend credence to the quality of service delivered by an institution of higher learning to its public. In the view of Liebenberg and Barnes (2004:2), quality relates to all levels of service, including administration, and not only to the content of the academic programmes that the customer receives. The university administrator plays a critical role in providing the quality of service delivery in higher education (Owusu & Owusu, 2014:215). Soutar and McNeil (1996:81) concur and affirm that a total university perspective goes beyond academic boundaries and that perceptions of administrative service quality could be fundamental to students' overall satisfaction with a specific university. Basically, because of the extensive administration processes involved, administrative services in higher education play an important role in the quality of higher education.

Interestingly, students are often unaware of the administrative processes in place and the problems they might encounter for the rest of their student lives. They become aware of these processes once difficulties arise. Some students might not even be aware of the administrative support services available to them. It is assumed that each candidate applying at a university has the objective of acquiring a qualification without unnecessary obstacles. It is therefore necessary on the basis of the foregoing to determine the effects of administrative services offered to stakeholders (students and visitors) by the faculty office and all departments involved with admissions and registration. The overall objective is to establish how these stakeholders perceive the services they are offered. Therefore, the researcher aims to explore their experiences with departments' administrative procedures. Basically, the focus of this study is to determine how effective the delivery of administrative services by the different arms of a university's administrative team is to students. These various arms include the registrar's office, finance, and student services.

1.3   Objectives of the Study

1.3.1   Primary objective

To investigate the effects of administrative services offered to stakeholders by the faculty and all departments involved with admissions and registration.

1.3.2   Secondary objectives

(a)   To determine the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of the quality of service.

(b)   To identify and recommend areas that could be improved with regard to quality of service.

(c)   To study the effect of quality on administrative services offered.

(d)   To determine the effect of departmental cooperation on administration procedures.

1.4   Method of Research

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were applied in this study by means of open-ended questionnaires printed and hand delivered to students in academic departments, one-on-one interviews and focus-group discussions with staff members.

1.5   Chapter and Content Analysis

Chapter 1

This chapter provides the introduction, objectives of the study, and problem statement.

Chapter 2

This chapter explores existing literature on the quality of administrative services in higher education and how previous research influences the current topic.

Chapter 3

This chapter discusses data-collection phases, designs and processes utilised in this study as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents a detailed analysis and interpretation of the results.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents a discussion of the results in detail.

Chapter 6

This chapter revisits the objectives of the study and provides conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

A literature review is the process of exploring existing literature to establish what has been written or published on a phenomenon, how previous research was conducted on the phenomenon, and how it influences the current topic. In reviewing literature, the purpose is to convey to the reader what knowledge and ideas have been published on a topic (Bryman & Bell, 2011:556). In the case of this study, the research seeks to address the impact of administrative services offered to stakeholders; essentially, the focus is to determine customer service quality, staff productivity, perceptions of stakeholders, and systems in higher education.

The responsibility for ensuring that South African universities maintain high standards in teaching and learning rests with the Council on Higher Education (CHE). This responsibility includes the administration of those services due to the institutions' stakeholders. To ensure this responsibility, the CHE established the permanent Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) with a mandate to perform institutional audits, programme accreditation and quality promotion. However, quality improvement and the pursuit of excellence is, in the first instance, the responsibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) themselves (South Africa, 1997:8).

For this reason, the higher education institution in question has established a quality management directorate with the goal of establishing professional criteria for quality control in order to monitor, improve and develop academic and administrative performance as well as instituting extensive self-evaluation methods in the area of quality management in the university. The quality management directorate has implemented tasks in an attempt to achieve goals, such as evaluation of the services offered by the university, in accordance with the criteria established by the quality assurance committee. These tasks contribute to a quality control report among the institution's academic departments as well as provide feedback on the results of implementation, and monitor the policies, procedures, regulations and instructions in accordance with the university's criteria.

The HEQC has developed a quality assurance structure and standards appraising the intended objective on the basis of national goals, priorities and targets as well as transformation in the form of improving the competencies of individuals for personal growth, addressing social and economic development, and increasing employment rates.

In preparation for quality audits and reviews, principles for self-evaluation and review of academic programmes, 19 criteria were developed by the HEQC. Each criterion has demonstrators of quality standard, self-evaluation rating, motivation for rating, sources of evidence, and rectifying action if necessary.

Table 2.1: Guidelines for self-evaluation of academic programmes

CRITERIA	CLASSIFICATION
Criterion 1	Programme design
Criterion 2	Student recruitment, admission and selection
Criteria 3 & 4	Staffing
Criterion 5	Teaching and learning strategy
Criterion 6	Student assessment policies and procedures
Criterion 7	Infrastructure and library resources
Criterion 8	Programme administration
Criterion 9	Postgraduate policies and regulation
Criterion 10	Programme coordination
Criterion 11	Academic development for student success
Criterion 12	Teaching and learning interactions
Criteria 13 & 14	Student assessment practices
Criterion 15	Coordination of work-based learning
Criterion 16	Postgraduate programmes
Criterion 17	Student retention and throughput rates
Criterion 18	Programme Impact
Criterion 19	Programme Review

[Cape Peninsula University of Technology, n.d.]

2.2   Stakeholders of Higher Education

2.2.1   Who is a stakeholder?

A stakeholder can be described as any party or group that has ability to influence or be influenced by the organisation and its activities (Berndt & Tait, 2014:154). They further describe stakeholders as being strategically significant to the organisation because they can influence the functioning and ultimate survival of the organisation.

HEIs have a range of stakeholders, including students, staff, potential employers, sponsors and more. While all their needs must be met, the student is viewed to be the stakeholder with the most influence (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006:27).

Table 2.2: Stakeholder categories and constitutive groups

STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY	STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS
Governing entities	Government; governing boards
Administration	Management
Employees	Faculty staff; administrative and support staff
Clients	Students; parents; employers; service partners; sponsors; experiential-learning sites
Suppliers	High schools; alumni; contracted services; insurance companies
Competitors	Other higher education institutions; employer sponsored programmes
Donors	Individuals (alumni; parents; friends; industry)
Communities	Social services; chamber of commerce; special interest groups
Government regulators	Government financial aid; Department of Education; Government research support
Non-governmental regulators	Foundations; institutional and accrediting bodies
Financial intermediaries	Banks; funders
Joint venture partners	Associations; corporate co-sponsors of research and educational services

Burrows (1999:5)

2.2.2   Stakeholder engagement

The HEI's mission, core values and institutional strategy should commit to hands-on stakeholder engagement. Collaboration with stakeholders by promoting open discussion, deliberation and participation should be a component of the collective mission and culture of every institution. Assigning power to a certain degree to stakeholders would allow them to raise critical matters and reveal any disputes earlier in the decision-making process (Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2018:332). Organisations should have an ability to engage in open communication and interaction with stakeholders; this may involve an audit among every stakeholder group to identify the key issues associated with each.

Stakeholders are believed to have the power to influence or be influenced by the organisation's objective because they are part of a more well-informed and perceptive public than in the past (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004:170). Maintaining good relationships and meeting their demands concurrently is critical. In order for some stakeholders to be satisfied, they need to know that the needs of other stakeholders are also taken into account. For example, lecturers need to feel that not only is management satisfying their needs, but students' needs also.

HEIs should encourage stakeholder engagement by introducing educational programmes on the significance of social, learning and organisational structures for their success, utilising the function of administrative and support staff to stabilise the varying interests of stakeholders, and participating in the design of engagement initiatives (Ferrero-Ferrero et al., 2018:332).

HEIs need to realise that a customer will form perceptions of the value delivered based on how they build relationships with their stakeholders. Sponsors and investors might be hesitant to support a university that is known for neglecting its employees' needs or social responsibilities. It is critical for HEIs to recognise whom they serve and who their customers are by simply maintaining the truth. Customer-focused organisations are successful because they have a unified focus on a strong commitment to fulfil or even anticipate the needs of the customer (Lewis & Smith, 1994:40).

It is vital that all staff deliver a quality service, even those at the frontline, as it is often they who deal directly with the public. Faculty student administration should acknowledge that HEIs are part of a market in which stakeholders who pay a fee for a service may expect more than if the service were free (Shanahan & Gerber 2004:168).

2.3   Perceptions of Stakeholders

Quality, as defined by Soutar and McNeil (1996:74), is what customers think it is and customer perceptions are important.

Typically, customers in higher education may form expectations from various sources like advertisements or word of mouth. They perceive service they receive based on how it measures up to their expectations. Ideally, customers' perceptions should be higher than their expectations of the services, to be regarded as high quality. Hence managing student expectations is important to ensure proper service quality in higher education (Yeo, 2008:159).

Customers perceive service quality differently; therefore, level of satisfaction can be influenced by different factors (Brink & Berndt, 2005:138). Factors such as responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy or tangibles may play a major role on customer perception of service quality. Similarly, Gibson-Odgers (2008:40) contends that how customers determine whether a service provided was exceptional, depends on their perceptions. Therefore, it becomes increasingly important for organisations to understand how their customers perceive them, and this could bring needed improvement of service quality.

Notwithstanding a wide understanding of educational objectives and results, stakeholders are likely to have different perceptions and interests that may on occasion need adjustment and integration (Bolton & Nie, 2010:704).

Similarly, organisations should realise that to be able to satisfy external stakeholder needs successfully, internal customers' needs must be satisfied. With regard to HEIs, the expectations of their students are especially essential as they are both their stakeholders and main customers (Khan & Matlay, 2009:770).

In order for institutions of higher education to compete well and successfully in their target market, they should offer exceptional service that caters for all their stakeholders. A sound organisational culture that respects internal stakeholders can make it possible to build driven manpower, commitment, high efficiency, invention, and a unique competitive advantage (Khan & Matlay, 2009:769).

Perception of service quality needs to be consistent, as student perceptions may change over time and higher education institutions should constantly track them (O'Neill, 2003:311). Conventional wisdom holds that institutions that know and understand their stakeholders and their expectations are better equipped to respond to them (Burrows, 1999:5).

HEIs that are committed to improving customer satisfaction and customer relationships should work with internal and external stakeholders to understand their expectations (Maguad, 2007:340).

Hence it is extremely important for the university to maintain the relationships by establishing trust, where participants are empowered and open discussions are encouraged.

2.4   Customer Service Quality

2.4.1   Definition of service quality

Gibson-Odgers (2008:6) describes customer service as the practice of ensuring that a customer is satisfied with a product or service, in any way he or she classifies it, and that service is rendered with proficiency, empathy and compassion. O'Reilly (2012:8) also affirms that customer care is how the service encounter makes a customer feel, a simple approach that is usually disregarded. Oliverio et al. (2007:50) add that thinking through what is delivered in relation to what it will mean to the customer is a key focus in many organisations.

Arshad and Ameen (2010:323) also believe that service quality can be ascertained by evaluating the divergence between perceptions and expectations and it can be better defined by those who acquire the service than by those who provide it. Berndt and Tait (2014:55) define service quality as the capability of an institution to establish customer expectations appropriately and to provide quality service at a level corresponding to customer expectations. A quality culture is created when trust, honesty, motivation and transparency are fostered by management and followed by all employees. When quality awareness is created among the employees of the organisation by conducting workshops, by regular assessments and by celebrating events such as quality month, the quality culture of the organisation is restored. The organisation has to be proactive in anticipating customers' needs. A quality culture is developed in the organisation by creating a quality mind set among employees (Hebbar & Mathew, 2017:96).

Todorut (2013:1105) shares similar views that forming a culture of quality and introducing a quality management system is essential to keep improving quality in a faculty or university. Quality management is a very important matter for many universities that have acquired new market approaches on monitoring, organising and planning, taking into account the improvement of service quality in compliance with customer needs.

Van Schalkwyk and Steenkamp (2014:88) are of the view that quality management, customer service and quality of service are key drivers in the business world, and higher education institutions should be no exception in adopting this principle to gain competitive benefit in respect of exceptional service. Furthermore, service excellence may increase student satisfaction, and this could lead to improved student enrolment and provide the foundation of

a strategic competitive advantage, which in turn may increase market share and contribute to the financial stability and viability of the institution.

Figure 2.1: Customer service quality cycle
Van Schalkwyk and Steenkamp (2014:88)

Organisations known for a high level of customer service delivery consider alternative methods to outperform their competitors (Berndt & Tait, 2014:55). Asmal (2012:152) concurs: customer satisfaction is closely related and influenced by the quality of the services delivered by an organisation. The quality of service and level of communication influence customer satisfaction, thus strengthening the theory that a relationship exists between service quality and customer satisfaction.

Quality, as value for money, underlines the presence of a relationship between price and quality in which customers view a higher price to mean a higher quality. Therefore, the experience of extra-mile service by student administration may be noticed and appreciated, and therefore seen as a value-added service (Shanahan & Gerber, 2004:169).

To maintain customer satisfaction, it is important that organisations undertake to structure and enhance their process operations in order to deliver service with the expected levels of quality (Asmal, 2012:154). He also believes that regular feedback and evaluation on how best the service can improve to suit customer needs will sustain the relationship between the university and its customers.

With this in mind, the provision of service excellence is a crucial part of the competitive strategy of most service businesses. Therefore, they should endeavour to discover their customer expectations and address them more effectively than their competitors (Khan & Matlay, 2009:769).

2.4.2 Customers of the university[1]

Literature highlights a number of important factors relating to customer service quality in higher education institutions. Maguad (2007:336) insists that students are the primary internal customers of HEIs. In fact, students, especially mature ones, view themselves as such (Finney & Finney, 2010:288). Hence it is significant for HEIs to be mindful and understand students' needs and expectations to be able to recognise, fulfil and exceed those which can be closely controlled (Sherry et al., 2004).

To view a student as a customer entails a broad insight into service quality, not only into teaching and learning standards, but also in so far as ensuring that the student enjoys university life; student administrative services have a responsibility in this respect (Pitman, 2000:166). Furthermore, considering students as customers affords HEIs the upper hand over competitors and improves their capacity to attract and keep them.

Customer-focused organisations are efficient because of their total commitment to meet and anticipate the needs of their customers. The prospective success of HEIs is increasingly defined by how efficiently they determine and please their various customers (Maguad, 2007:332). Therefore, HEIs that sincerely trust in the quality of their services form a great bond with their customers by addressing the primary key issues, thereby building good customer relationships.

Maguad (2007:339) also emphasises that for the total quality ideology to have a long-term effect on transformation and enhancement of service quality in higher education, it is essential that HEIs implement the right customer-centric standard. Customer expectations and perceptions are the major elements of quality definition, and gaps should be identified and

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[1] University students evolved into customers in the 1970s (Pen State News, 2005).

managed. However, if perceptions do not meet expectations, poor quality service will exist (Arshad & Ameen, 2010:313). Managing student expectations is of extreme significance to ensure a proper service quality in higher education (Yeo, 2008:159).

Arshad and Ameen (2010:323) critically indicate that customers are paramount in the judgement of quality; therefore, making them a priority, perceiving their needs and providing them with quality services should be a continuous process with systematic reviews.

Additionally, service quality is one of the fundamental components of a marketing strategy. Businesses are likely to succeed provided that they can satisfy customer needs and enable service quality (Valmohammadi & Beladpas, 2014:77).

With the various definitions of customer service quality mentioned above, and with students viewing themselves as customers of the university, as well as increasing competition among HEIs, it is rational to explore quality service management in higher education.

2.4.3 Response to service failure

In the opinion of Helms and Mayo (2008:611), customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the result of an experience during a service engagement and the assessment of that experience to the expected standard.

Given that customer reaction is often negative towards service breakdown, to minimise this, organisations and service providers should institute service evaluation and employee appraisal systems to oversee service quality and improve efficiency of staff (Tsai et al., 2014:155). Regular student feedback surveys and suggestions may play a role in improving service quality and provide a better service to stakeholders. Arguably, reducing the causes of the more frequent complaints could be one of the most cost friendly approaches to improve customer service, minimise complaints and avoid the drastic actions of disgruntled customers (Helms & Mayo, 2008:611). They are also of the opinion that if organisations view complaints as a result of service failures as possibilities, they can obtain the most advantage from customer evaluation. Working to remove main customer fallouts due to frustration is key to increasing fulfilment with service experiences.

From a customer relationship point of view, devoted and reliable customers of the company perceive a greater sense of betrayal if they experience injustice through a service interaction. This results in a service disappointment where a service provider fails to meet customer

expectations and accomplish customer satisfaction during the service interaction (Tsai et al., 2014:140). In this regard, HEIs' failure to understand student perceptions of value will result in their failure to produce them (Bolton & Nie, 2010:708).

Even though complaints are annoying, organisations are generally grateful, as they show that the customer is willing to continue to support the organisation. Furthermore, most complaints are in fact implied recommendations, and are a reflection of future customer expectations (George & Hegde, 2004:392). Allowing customers to be actively involved in the decision process may reduce complaints to a certain extent.

Management of and improvement in the quality of products and services and coordination of all processes involved can potentially aid customer retention. Having said that, the skill and eagerness of an employee to wilfully participate in this process play a role in the quality of service (George & Hegde, 2004:392).

2.5 Teamwork and Productivity

2.5.1 Definition of teams

Teams, as defined by West (2012:27), are groups of people working together in organisations in order to achieve common goals within or outside the organisation. Teams are formed for a specific purpose: the key is knowing the distinction between working in a team and working as a group of people. Teams are most successful when the team members are willing to share their challenging goals and accomplishments (Odgers, 2005:306).

Various forms of teams exist. They include strategy and policy development teams, production teams, sales teams, service teams, project teams and action and development teams.

Gibson-Odgers (2008:62) states that a good team approach indicates that the company is organised and that all team members are working towards a common goal of offering a good-quality service. When customer service is built with organisational teamwork as its foundation, there are many benefits. Teamwork can create more effective ways of sharing responsibilities and any additional actions to be taken (Gibson-Odgers, 2008:63).

She further states that teamwork creates a synergy, which means that the combined power of many individuals working together is greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

Teamwork strategies that promote customer service:

- Support teammates by sharing information

- Discuss new policies

● Identify area of improvement

● Show pride in one another

2.5.2 Benefits of teamwork in higher education

In an attempt to meet and exceed customer expectations, administrative units and departments in higher education have to work together and in cooperation with academic departments; they need to be involved in the continuous practice of quality enhancement (Maguad, 2007:337). Most administrative processes are performed by several departments, for instance, during registration, faculties should ensure that all students are admitted on the system for the current year as indicated by the academic departments and grant them web access to register online. Students with no outstanding debts and registration fees obtain financial clearance from the student debtors' department to proceed with online registration: once this step in completed, they can proceed to print proof of registration and activate or print student cards.

When departments operate in silos, communication is eventually compromised and that may affect service delivery. Units that function in isolation without shared values, viewpoints, and goals can be detrimental to students and all those they serve. Aligning processes and achieving a seamless interface between front- and back-office services provided by all sections ensure continuity, maximum efficacy and minimal service disruptions (Saravanan & Sathiyaseelan, 2014:41).

With different departments and sections performing various tasks, employees should view one another as internal customers and view functions as in-house products and services that serve the needs of these internal customers. Challenging the purposes of the organisation could improve service excellence (Khan & Matlay, 2009:770).
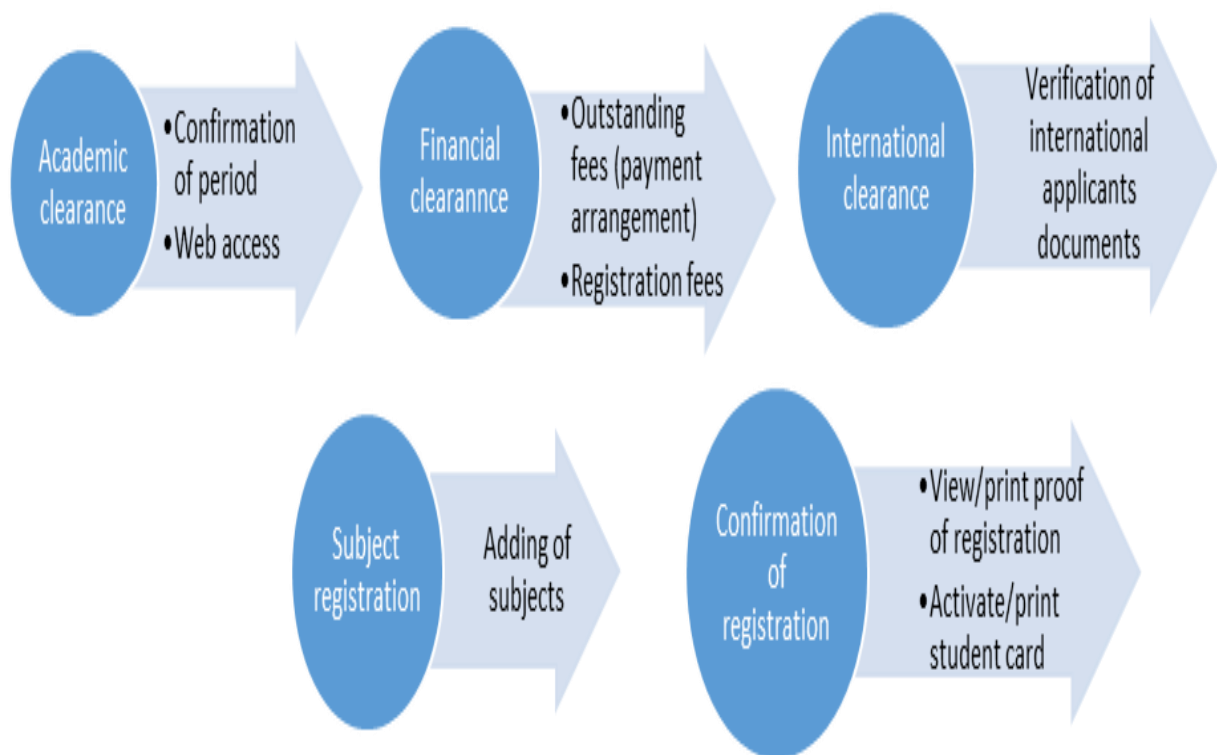
Figure 2.2: Registration process

Costa (2003:606) is of the opinion that in organisations, traditional management methods have given way to more collaborative approaches that emphasise coordination, sharing of responsibilities and the engagement of employees in decision-making processes. Organisations have become flatter and more team centred. Experiences from organisations applying a team-centred approach to improve performance and productivity have shown that team work is an essential instrument in economic achievement (Ulloa & Adams, 2004:145). This approach may improve service quality in higher education.

One of the most important benefits of teamwork is that it helps break down walls that can sometimes exist within departments and units in organisations: this affects productivity and service delivery to customers. Gibson-Odgers (2008:61) describes teamwork as internal customer service where services are directed towards others inside the organisation; it relates to the degree of receptiveness, quality and communication. Ineffective teamwork in higher education may result in students going from one department to another without getting any meaningful assistance.

To build a team is not just placing a group of people together and allocating them a role; there are components that make teams functional. Individuals in teams need to know the specific skills required to achieve team effectiveness (Ulloa & Adams, 2004:146). They further note targets that guide the team to accomplish them.

Effective teamwork has been characterised by cooperation and communication in order to promote productivity. Therefore, a lack of these within administrative units may impact greatly on a total unfavourable opinion of the university's administration by stakeholders (Soutar & McNeil, 1996:81). Administrators play an important role in providing quality of service delivery in higher education. Their role complements that of the faculty within the institutional structures to bring about desired results (Owusu & Owusu, 2014:215).

In a higher education environment, productivity is central to administrative services and operations. As discussed earlier, no function can operate in isolation and the success of the organisation requires every function to operate efficiently. There is an assumption that the interaction that takes place between the functions may affect productivity and quality of service. Higher education institutions are no exception, therefore the importance of cooperation and interaction between all functions needs to be acknowledged (Berndt & Tait, 2014:49).

2.5.3   Factors that could improve productivity

Good customer service starts with empowering employees; empowerment utilises a worker's abilities and potential to a much greater extent, while cutting costs and serving customers better. This eliminates the need for customers to be shifted from one person to another, promotes fast-track decision making, and decreases mistakes because fewer people are involved in solving the customers' concerns (Odgers, 2005:90).

Many of the factors that improve productivity also increase quality because they simplify processes and reduce the number of errors. Organisations focus on improving the efficiency of workflow through operational and communication processes in order to improve productivity (Hultman & Baum, 2016:111).

They also contend the effective application of systems and technology can improve the workflow of every process; however ineffective use can do the opposite and compromise service delivery. Hebbar and Mathew (2017:97) share a similar view – that effective and efficient communication in the work space influences the organisation to head methodically towards employees' involvement and customer satisfaction, hence improving performance quality.

As explained by Khan and Matlay (2009:771), investing in training and development of employees is important. Effective business processes are mandatory in delivering quality services to customers, while inadequate processes may contribute to poor productivity which may affect service delivery, thereby attracting unnecessary complaints.

George (2003:36-37) concurs, stating that management in higher education should play a role in providing an empowering workplace that allows employees to perform their jobs efficiently, while also providing the necessary training, education and support. He also indicates that organisations that have the potential for greater growth are those that put their clients first and enable their employees to satisfy them. This is extremely important, as employees who have a key impact on service delivery perceptions are among the lowest-ranking individuals in the organisation, therefore if they do not demonstrate excellence in their contact with customers, it will negatively influence the perception customers have of the organisation (Fourie & De Jager, 2005:233).

In some instances, customer service is viewed as a dying art by many people – this could be as a result of a lack of training provided to service professionals or poor attitude. Whatever the cause, the organisation's goal should be to strive consciously to increase the level of service provided to customers (Lucas, 2011:64). On the other hand, frontline employees do not necessarily consider that meeting customer needs and desires is their responsibility, and organisations often put themselves and their needs first and not those of the customers (Fourie & De Jager, 2005:230).

Quality of services offered shapes stakeholder experiences and thoughts in higher education – therefore it is important that employees working with stakeholders are properly trained to address them professionally (Njie et al., 2012:161).

It could be argued that employees should understand the principle of service delivery in order to execute their jobs effectively and efficiently, and in doing so ensure that stakeholders are well served by the organisation.

As part of the quality of value-added service, the faculty student administration should be service focused and client centred to be able to communicate effectively with students. Communication should occur in a satisfying encounter where qualified personnel display professional conduct and offer a hospitable atmosphere (Shanahan & Gerber 2004:169). Clear communication between departments and among employees is key to strengthening quality service information and sharing best practices (Khan & Matlay, 2009:775).

Fourie and De Jager (2005:234) affirm that teamwork should be emphasised, employees should be motivated through measurement and rewards, and people should be provided with the freedom to do well. It is essential that management understands the internal customer. It is also clear that the overall role that human resources have to play in the utilisation of the business strategy should not be underestimated.

In a service business, customer satisfaction, evaluation of unit productivity and organisational efficiency are some of the critical performance indicators (Adsit et al., 1996:62). Hence Berndt and Tait (2014:55) believe that providing quality service that is consistent, fair and reliable may be the best way to establish and maintain customer relationships.

In order for organisations to be centralised on customer support service to improve customer loyalty, employees' state of mind and behaviour should be customer focused. A staff member may solely be the first point of contact a particular customer has with the organisation during a service interaction, therefore in that customer's eyes a staff member represents the business. Any individual or section that is not customer focused threatens the good reputation of the entire business (Berndt & Tait, 2014:49).

Adsit et al. (1996:72) also suggest that investing in the improvement of employee attitudes towards their jobs may produce measurable outcomes in performance. This may be easier to establish than to implement, therefore employees in the organisation should be empowered to think about ways to increase the quality of the services they offer for the purpose of satisfying their customers (Odgers, 2005:90).

As global education competitiveness is increasing, continuous evaluation of service quality from a comprehensive approach is critical. In order to keep improving support services and utilise facilities in place effectively, non-teaching staff should be service focused and not just be operationally effective (Yeo, 2008:158).

Yeo further expounds that staff roles and responsibilities should be clear, with emphasis on what should be the expected level of service. Lack of these may easily cripple productivity, which in turn may affect customer service. Encouraging the commitment of all staff in applying a student-centred approach as opposed to focusing on getting the job done can contribute to high service quality in higher education and improve the experience of students.

Owusu and Owusu (2014:215) concur, noting that universities are responsible for the quality of services they offer and the management of core functions. The administrator's role in ensuring that this is possible is immense and cannot be underestimated. Support services provided by administrators to stakeholders complement those provided by academic staff.

To many employees and managers, a customer does not have a face, which can lead to the customer becoming less human in their minds and therefore less deserving of respect (Berndt & Tait, 2014:60). This perspective may be common in higher education.

2.6   Systems in Higher Education

In higher education, a student-centred information system that allows all student administration processes, whether they are interactive learning, applications, registration, student accounts or examination results, may be utilised. Students should be able to view and update any information related to their studies without office assistance unless difficulties arise (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006:31). Therefore, understanding the importance of and valuing customer insights are crucial not only in improving customer service, but also in the design of the service delivery system (Berndt & Tait, 2014:45).

They further note that HEIs are gradually being faced with the challenge to sustain student enrolment targets. A business information system designed to focus on students as customers could improve enrolment and retention levels.

This being the case, HEIs should position themselves strongly to compete in the marketplace. As such, innovation can prove to be a driving force in achieving success, given how higher education is exposed to the market and the effects of global dynamics. HEIs that welcome inventive services have an opportunity to benefit, seeing that service inventiveness could increase their proficiency in providing services to various stakeholders that would impact quality service delivery positively (Danjuma & Rasli, 2012:350).

In order for the systems to work properly, they require people working with them, and people responsible for updating information, to understand this.

Many organisations have adopted different systems and strategies such as Total Quality Management, Business Process Management, and Customer Relationship Management in an effort to meet and satisfy the needs of their customers.

Valmohammadi and Beladpas (2014:78) agree that the system enables organisations to restructure and manage their operational processes to improve efficiency in production and services, marketing, and human resources, and at the same time reduce customer costs. Organisations are also able to gain a better understanding of customers' needs and preferences to interact with and serve them well, and therefore gain competitive advantage.

Liebenberg and Barnes (2004:3) are also of the opinion that processes strengthened by technology may improve customer service delivery, although the human aspect is still essential.

Customers admire established, effective communication. Organisations may improve and maintain their relationships with customers if information is communicated efficiently and accurately (Valmohammadi & Beladpas, 2014:78).

2.7   Types of Systems

2.7.1   Customer Relationship Management

Gibson-Odgers (2008:176) defines Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as a business strategy and information system that helps businesses to harmonise and manage their functions by using technology and information. Organisations can better understand the customer's needs and capitalise on this knowledge to increase sales and improve service quality.

CRM allows measures to be applied automatically by analysing customer data. To be effective, it must be seen by organisations as a universal business strategy and a customer-centric principle of doing business that benefits all stakeholders (Gibson-Odgers, 2008:176).

CRM enables customised interaction between organisations and its customers, by using a database of information (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006:25).

International HEIs have also implemented systems such as CRM. The benefits of implementing CRM in a higher education environment may include a student-centred approach in programmes and services, improved student learning data and process management, increased customer satisfaction, enrolments, and retention (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006:26).

Technology is a fundamental part of our society; hence students expect to benefit from it and assume a high level of access to information. An information system with improved CRM that offers customised, fast-paced support and solutions, can have a strong competitive advantage over other institutions (Seeman & O'Hara, 2006:26).

Relationship marketing aims to satisfy current customers so that they share experiences and in doing so recommend the business to others. It also aims at forming a long-term customer relationship by developing a database of reliable customers and in turn increasing turnover (Berndt & Tait, 2014:7,23). Businesses that lead in adopting relationship marketing principles in their industries and apply the concepts with vigour have the potential to gain a first mover advantage that is difficult for competitors to emulate (Berndt & Tait, 2014:16).

In a higher education setting, universities that are quick to process applications and respond to applicants have an opportunity to secure the best candidates and meet their enrolment targets. Candidates are likely to accept the offer they receive from the university that responds first to their applications, even if it is not their first choice.

2.7.2 Factors determining CRM success

Customer Centricity: A customer-focused business shares the belief that the customer comes first. The customer information gathered and distributed provides competitive benefit to render better value to customers. A customer-centric business adapts to customer needs and market pressure.

Operational CRM emphasises automation of the customer service functions of the business, such as marketing, sales, and support. Marketing automation allows businesses to establish excellent cost-effective campaigns, while service automation enables businesses to computerise their service operations.

Customer information is important to CRM. For it to be potentially useful in the decision-making process it must be flexible to maintain contact with the evolving audience and be accessible to stakeholders. Every customer interaction is managed in order to maximise and grow customer loyalty (Berndt & Tait, 2014:175-177).

Partner	A person in partnership with you within an organisation
Advocate	A person who actively endorses your organisation to others, i.e., who does your marketing
Supporter	A person who supports your organisation passively
Client	A person who has done business with you repeatedly but may be negative, or at best neutral
Purchaser	A person who had a once-off business interaction with your organisation
Prospect	A person you believe may be convinced to do business with you

Figure 2.3: The relationship marketing ladder of loyalty

Berndt and Tait, (2014:175)

2.7.3   Total quality management

Total quality is a management system dedicated to people, and to continuous improvement of business operations and customer satisfaction. It is a total system approach that operates across all functions and employees of the entire organisation. Total quality emphasis is on learning and ongoing revision as key to organisational success (Buch, 2009:2).

Total quality practices in higher education include all quality service activities and facilities to satisfy the needs of all stakeholders. TQM has become very important to HEIs, whose motivation is to offer information and understanding in relation to teaching proficient and skilful individuals (Karahan & Mete, 2014:1296).

HEIs are similar to production enterprises: there are inputs, processes, outputs and customers. To continue participating in the market, they need to strengthen resources, processes and outputs to the satisfaction of their stakeholders.

Odgers (2005:12) asserts that quality management is both a philosophical system and a set of standards that governs the entire organisation in improving all operations, increasing productivity in every area, and fulfilling customers' needs. She explains that one of Deming's 14 points on quality management is that quality comes from the improvement of the process and that the improvement should be constant. To apply this approach would require commitment and effort.

TQM has become a well-established and well-documented area of research as a result of strong worldwide competition, increasing customer awareness of quality and fast-changing technology, and achieving world-renowned standing. Many organisations are applying the TQM approach as a quality initiative to enhance sustainable competitive advantage and increase their performance (Hebbar & Mathew, 2017:95).

Todorut (2013:1105) attests to this by stating that TQM is a vision that HEIs can only accomplish through a high level of planning and execution to meet a set of objectives. The main aim of TQM is to build an atmosphere within the organisation where all resources are employed constructively and which inspires employee confidence in management.

Effective systems may have a unique selling point over other organisations, according to Ferreira et al. (2009:25). However, systems in place need to be operated by highly trained users to ensure productivity and service quality. Incapacity to anticipate the needs of students may not be because of the behaviour of staff – unclear roles and poorly implemented systems may have an influence (Yeo, 2008:158). Errors that may occur in the system can have an effect on students. While computer systems may have reduced certain difficulties, students are still confronted by countless administrative activities that often require a considerable number of steps to follow and time spent at different departments. The approach of TQM as people management focuses on better understanding of customer service, employee engagement, teamwork and improvement of human resource management. TQM as quality management is to maintain consistency and control, define responsibilities and ensure that employees' actions are guided by policies, rules and regulations (Vinni, 2007:107).

Berndt and Tait (2014:79) believe that all employees in an organisation should be involved in the systems that organise the running of a business. These systems should be designed for the convenience and benefit of the customer, rather than the organisation.

TQM aims at continuously elevating standards: by doing so it establishes objectives and monitors progress through performance auditing and quality data reporting. The control of processes thus is to ensure constant productivity levels within the performance structure (Vinni, 2007:107).

Arguably, the organisation's ability to deliver customer service of a high quality is a requirement for international standards requirements as well for competing effectively in the global market (Liebenberg & Barnes, 2004:1). Building good relationships with customers rests upon the quality of customer contact staff who fully understand the products and services (Maguad, 2007:340).

Organisations should invest in systems that promote quality of processes and practices and all aspects that may improve customer service (Liebenberg & Barnes 2004:1).

2.8 Applications and Registration Administration Process

There are various departments in a university that directly service students, such as the admissions and registration centre, faculty office, academic departments, student debtors, and assessment and graduation centre. In an effort to run a successful application and registration process, the necessary preparations and testing are conducted.

Applications are online for South African candidates with South African qualifications. Non-South African candidates, South African candidates with non-South African qualifications, and candidates who wish to apply for recognition of prior learning must submit manual application forms at one of the university campuses.

Step-by-step guides for different categories of applications and a registration booklet are available on the website; however, a number of candidates prefer direct contact with the university for assistance and guidance on the application process.

Both online and manual applications go through the admissions and registration centre for capturing and screening before they are distributed to academic departments via the faculty office for selection and further evaluation.

Applications are then returned to the admissions and registration centre for statuses to be updated with the outcome of the application once they have been evaluated and signed off by

the relevant academic departments. The candidates are able to track the status of their applications and download the necessary documents on the website. The application may either be accepted, not accepted, provisionally accepted, pending further evaluation, placed on a waiting list, or rejected, to name a few. Even though the majority of applications are online, staff in these sections are responsible for back-office processes such as capturing information, ensuring that the relevant documents are submitted, verifying supporting documents and certificates, updating the system, and handling queries.

During this period, the university deals with numerous queries in various forms of communication from different stakeholders, hence it is crucial for staff in all relevant departments to be well informed, efficient and customer oriented in order to offer the requisite service.

Before registration commences, a number of processes take place, such as verification of results for candidates who were provisionally accepted, update of statuses, and bulk acceptance for returning students. During registration, faculties and academic departments monitor the enrolment targets in order to take necessary steps, for instance, considering candidates on the waiting list or opening for late applications.

Registration opens for a certain period to allow academic and financial clearance procedures to take place for all students to register.

2.9   Conclusion of the Literature Review

The literature review addressed a number of important factors relating to quality of service in higher education institutions as well as in production and service organisations in general. The chapter attempted to define stakeholders and customers of higher education institutions and their perceptions and expectations of service quality. In addition, it addressed the importance of stakeholder engagement to improve customer satisfaction, effective team work and how it may improve productivity. Benefits of systems in higher education and what could enhance process operations and potentially raise throughput and turnover were highlighted.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The mixed-methods approach was employed in this study to achieve its objectives. Mixed methods include the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data in relation to research questions. Quantitative data was collected in the form of open-ended questionnaires, qualitative data collection involved one-on-one interviews and a focus-group discussions. Owing to the likelihood of students not feeling comfortable expressing themselves in focus group discussions and individual interviews, the questionnaire enabled them to voice their experiences and perceptions on quality of service delivery in administrative processes (Frazer & Lawley, 2000:45).

Qualitative data was analysed in a narrative approach detailing staff experiences and perceptions of service quality. The narrative form of analysis is the forming of past experiences, a way of understanding oneself and others actions, organising events and objects into a meaningful whole, connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time (Chase, 2011:656). This instrument was chosen to allow participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms. During the interviews and focus group meetings, participants were questioned on various aspects relating to administrative services offered.

3.2   Sample Population

Set in a South African university of technology, data was collected via a simple random sample consisting of senior students from six academic departments within the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences. Staff members from administrative departments (admissions and registration, assessment and graduation, and student debtors) as well as staff members of health and wellness sciences faculty office. The departments included Nursing, Medical Imaging and Therapeutic Sciences (previously Radiography), Biomedical Sciences, Dental Sciences, Somatology and Wellness Sciences. These academic departments are spread across 3 campuses with 3 departments based in Bellville Campus, 1 department based in Tygerberg Campus and 2 departments based in Cape Town Campus. With simple random sampling, each unit of the population has an equal likely chance of selection in the sample. A total of 187 students and seven staff members participated in this study.

It should be noted that the department where the researcher is employed was excluded from the study owing to likely bias. Furthermore, the researcher took the decision to exclude first-year students because they either are unfamiliar with university processes or are overwhelmed by the ones they experienced. A future study may consider including first years. A graphical representation of the sample of this study is offered below in Figure 3.1.

Given the nature and objectives of the study, the researcher believed the participants chosen were the key informants on the subject and would make a valuable contribution to the research.
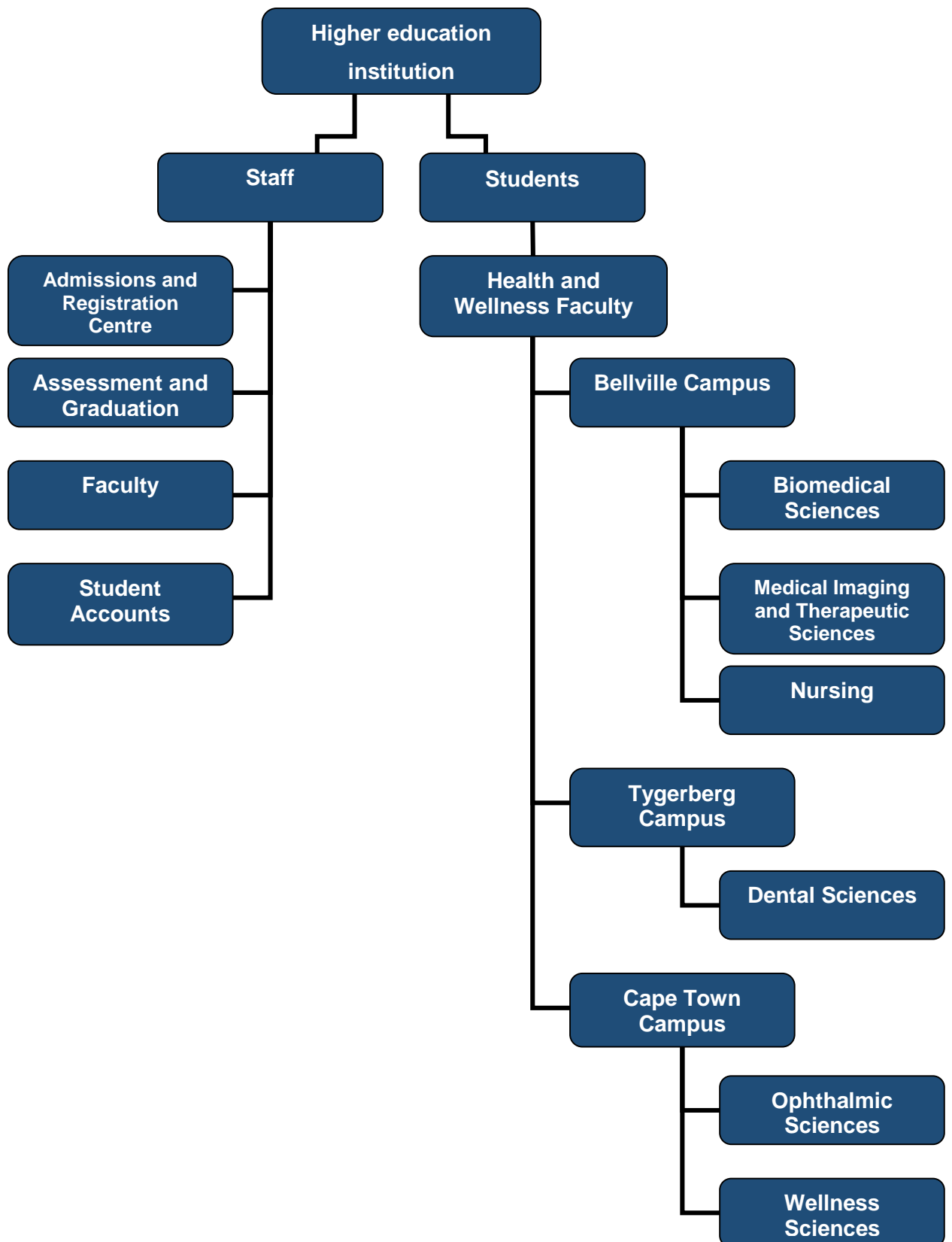
Figure 3.1: Sampling frame

3.2.1 Questionnaire development and construction

The research instrument used was a questionnaire for students developed by the researcher. The aim was to determine their perceptions of service quality with a view to achieving the research objectives and responding to the research problem.

3.2.1.1 Student questionnaire

This questionnaire comprised the following:

(a)   Participant Information

The purpose of this section was to enable the researcher to determine biographical data of participants for analysis.

- Level of study of the participant
- Age of the participant
- Gender of the participant
- Department participant is registered
- Campus course is offered

(b)   Level of service from faculty

The intention of this section was to establish the perceptions of service offered by the faculty

- Who is the customer of the university?
- Level of service offered by faculty
- Faculty office telephone number
- How often is the number called?
- Faculty staff helpful and friendly?

(c)   Level of service during registration

Registration is one of the eventful periods in the university. The research question was asked to determine the perceptions and experiences of students of service quality during this time as well as of the registration process itself.

- Satisfied with quality of service during registration
- Encounter problems during registration
- Specific problems encountered during registration
- Registration process quick and easy
- Time spent in queues during registration
- Receive registration booklet

- Information in the book helpful
- Staff at registration points trained and informed
- Staff at registration points friendly and helpful
- Preferred method of registration

(d)   Level of service in accounts and results

Accounts, Assessment and the Graduation Centre are the departments involved with registration. The purpose of this section was to establish the perceptions of level of service, especially during registration.

- Queries regarding fee accounts
- Assistance regarding fee accounts
- Queries regarding results

(e)   Awareness of available service

The aim of this section was to determine the awareness of participants of services available to them.

- Service available
- Section to go to with specific query
- Department quality service rating (Faculty, Accounts, AGC)

(f)   Effects on academics

The purpose of this section was to determine the effects registration issues have on studies

- Lecturers understand registration issues
- Registration problems affect studies
- Section need to improve

3.2.1.2 Staff interviews and focus group

Interviews – both one-on-one and focus-group discussions – were conducted with staff members involved in student services, specifically admissions, registration, accounts, and results to understand their views on and perceptions of quality of services offered to stakeholders. The semi-structured interview entailed a brief introduction to the study followed by obtaining informed consent. The interviews were digitally recorded.

3.3 Reliability and Validity

Validity is focused on the integrity of the findings elicited from a study, whereas reliability refers to the extent to which the study generates consistent results (Bryman & Bell, 2011:41). To ensure validity and reliability, different methods are applied with individual methodological stringency and combined in the analysis. A pilot test was conducted to ensure that the questions were fully understood – basically to test the functionality of the chosen instrument. The sample instrument was distributed to four students from a department that was not part of the full study, peer debriefing was utilised with the questionnaire and interview questions that were reviewed by two academic staff members.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

3.4.1 Institutional approval

Ethics approval was obtained from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee as well as from the institution before data collection occurred. Approval from the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences management was also obtained prior to data collection.

3.4.2 Confidentiality and group harm

A research project pledges that confidentiality will be maintained (Babbie, 2013:36). Confidentiality of the research participants was ensured by not requesting any indication of name, number or any other means that could be traceable to the participant on the data sources.

3.4.3 Consent and participation

Participants were briefed beforehand regarding the nature of the study to be conducted and were given a choice of participation. The researcher approached students and staff to explain the aims, purpose and potential benefits of the study. Consent forms were distributed to subjects prior to their involvement in the study. Participation was voluntary – students and staff were not coerced into participating in this study. Subjects were informed that withdrawal from the study was acceptable at any time with no consequences to the participant.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to determine the effects of administrative services offered to stakeholders by the faculty and all departments involved with admissions and registration. The research objectives were to determine the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of the quality of service; to identify and recommend areas that could be improved with regard to quality of service; to study the effects of administrative services on academic processes; and to determine the effects of departmental cooperation on administrative procedures.

The target population for this study included students registered in the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences as well as administrative staff members from various departments involved with registration and results. 187 student questionnaires from six departments were received, three staff members were interviewed individually, and a semi-structured focus-group discussion with four staff members was conducted.

Data was captured and cleaned using relevant Microsoft office programs such as Excel and Word. A digital file was saved in an external hard drive and hard copies of data were kept in a storage area fitted with controlled access.

Statistical analysis was carried out using 'R Statistical Computing', a free-access software that is used by statisticians and other data miners worldwide (Chambers, 2008:9).

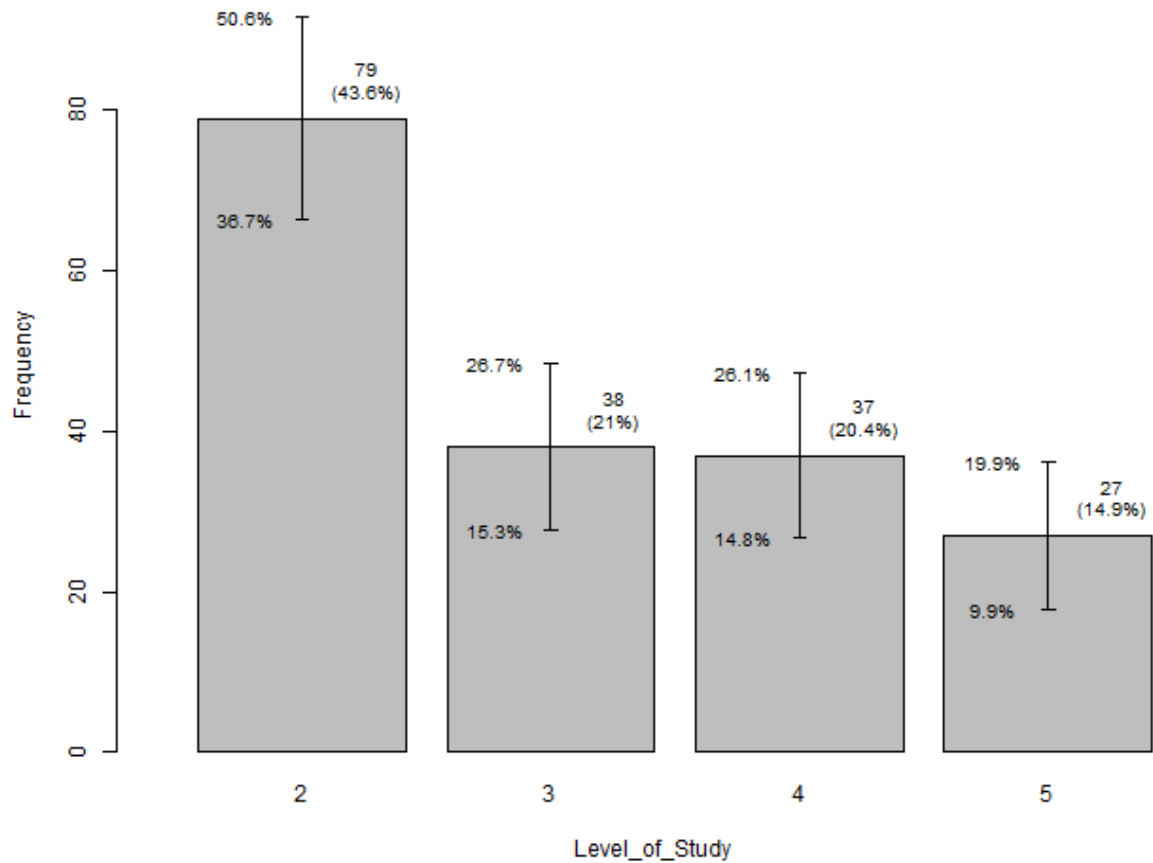## 4.2   Analysis of Student Questionnaire Data

Figure 4.1: Level of study

Level 2 was the most heavily represented of all; however, this reflects the demographic breakdown of the student body.
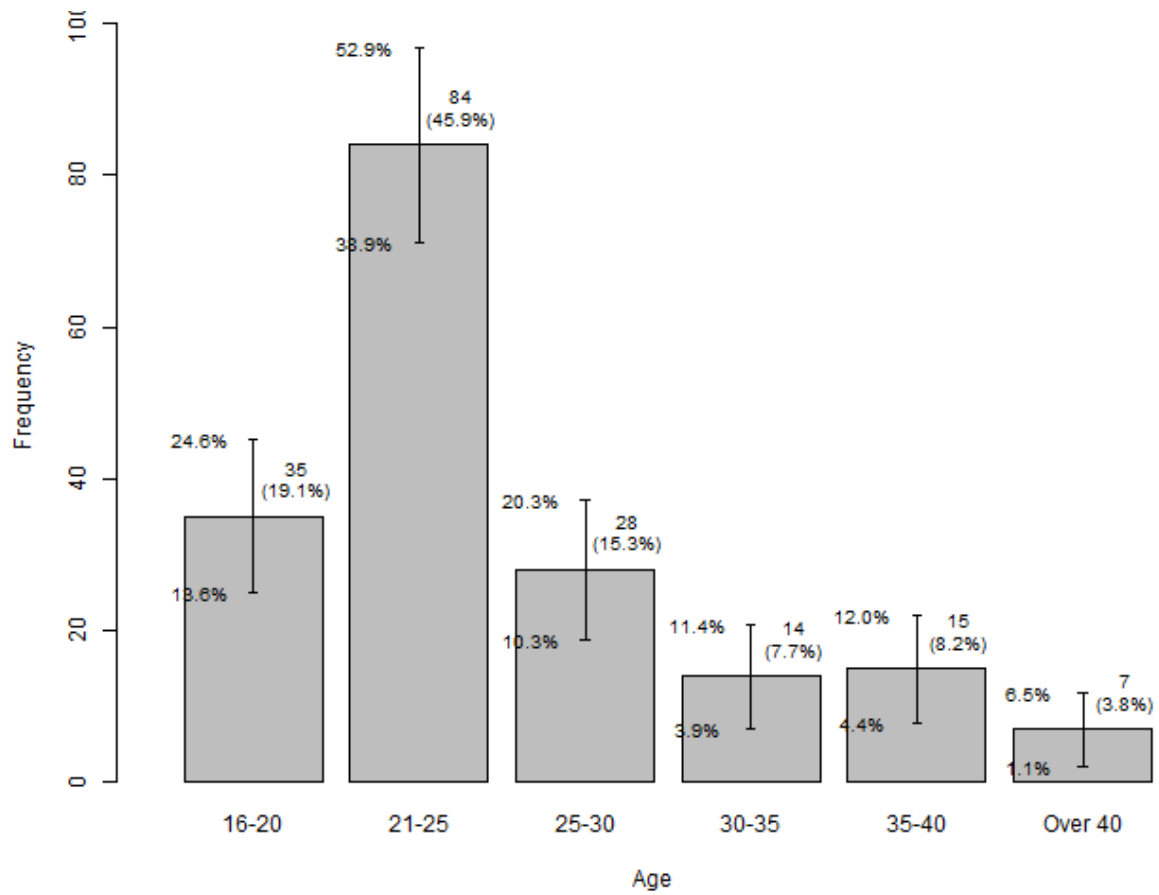
Figure 4.2: Age

Student age is concentrated mainly in the 16–25 age group, with about one-third of respondents being above age 25. Students over 40 are registered for post graduate qualification.
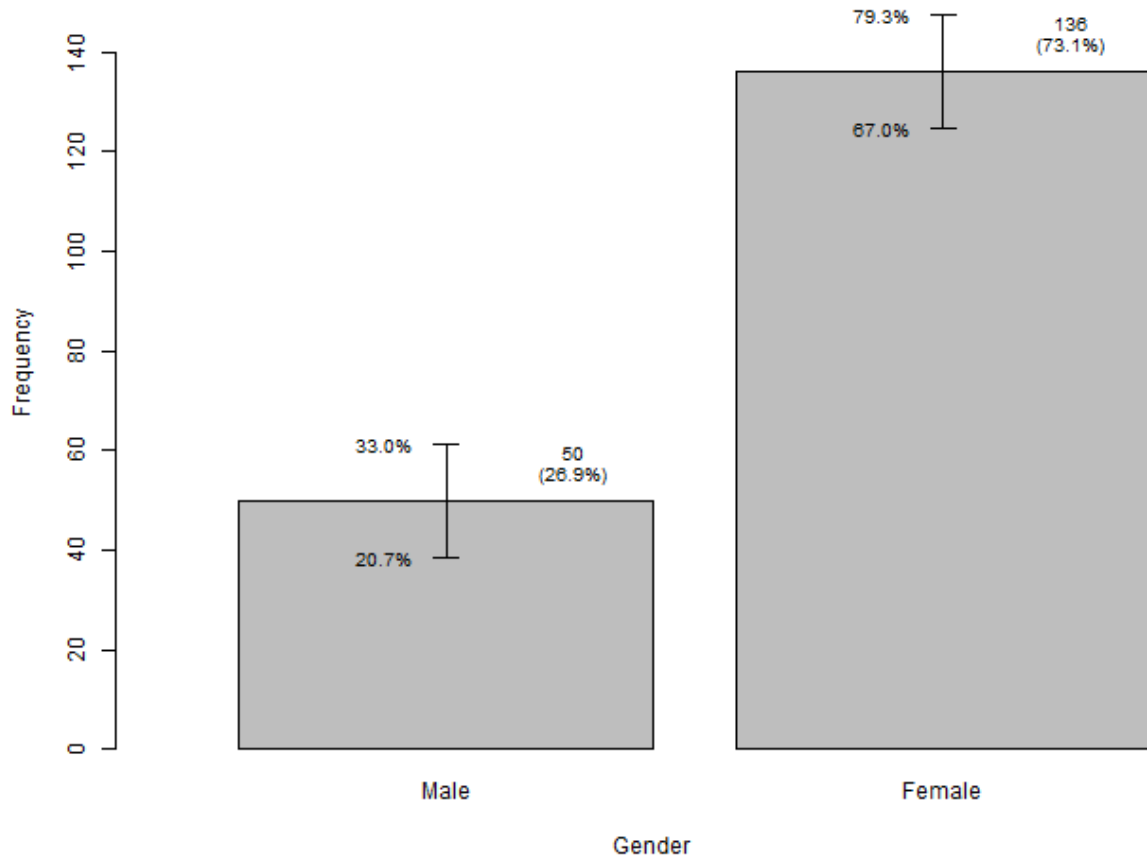
Figure 4.3: Gender

A glance at the PowerHEDA institutional dashboard indicates that within the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences students are predominantly female (over 75% of currently enrolled students) and 24.2% are male.
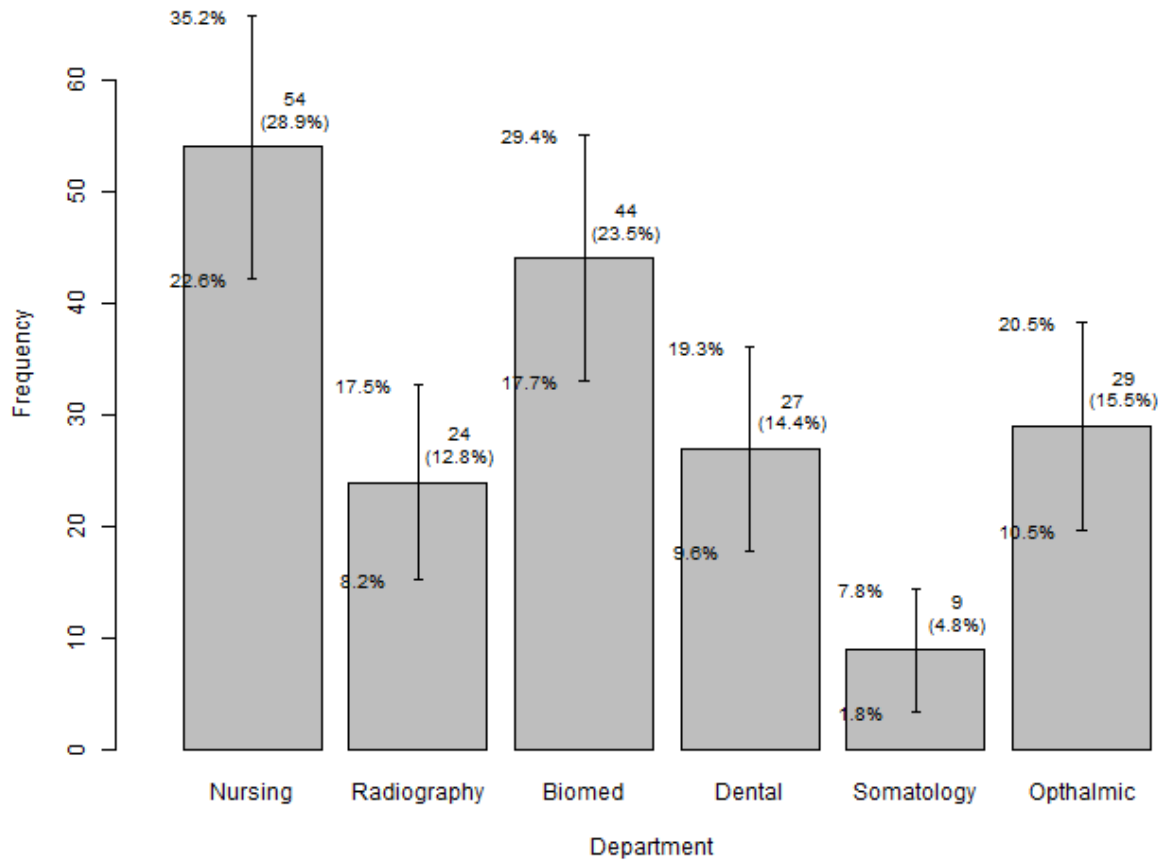
Figure 4.4: Departments

The Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences (FHWS) at CPUT consists of seven academic departments: Biomedical Sciences, Dental Sciences, Emergency Medical Sciences, Medical Imaging and Therapeutic Sciences (previously Radiography), Nursing, Ophthalmic Sciences, and Wellness Sciences (a.k.a. Somatology). Having noted that the Emergency Medical Sciences (EMS) department was excluded methodologically, the remaining six departments are all now represented in the sample. (Figures on the CPUT Enrolment Planning Monitor indicate that 45.7% of students in the FHWS are in Nursing, 14.3% are in Medical Imaging and Therapeutic Sciences, 14.2% are in Biomedical Sciences, 5.0% are in Wellness Sciences (Somatology), 4.1% are in Ophthalmic Sciences, 7.0% are in Dental Sciences, and 9.6% are in Emergency Medical Sciences.) Nursing department was mostly represented in the study with 29% followed by Biomedical Sciences with 24% and Opthalmic Sciences with 16%.
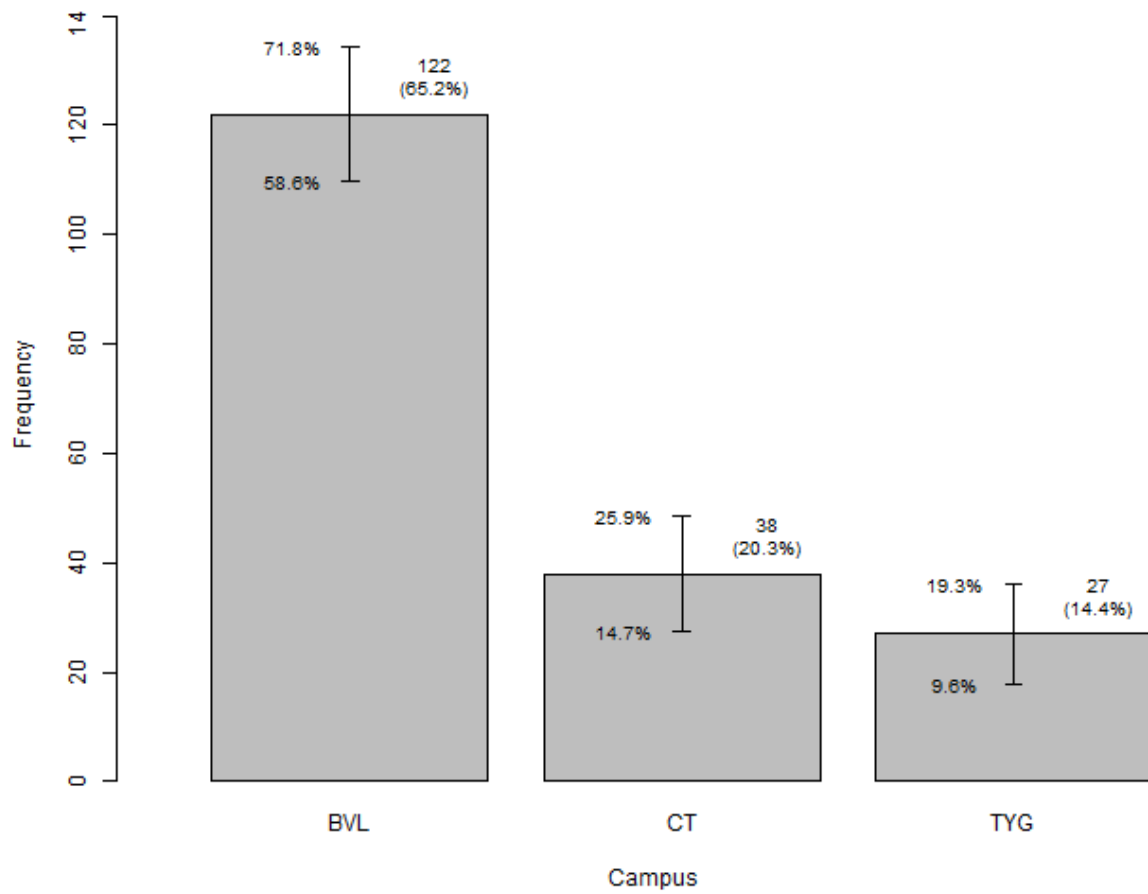
Figure 4.5: Campus

The majority of the students sampled were on the Bellville Campus as this is where most of this faculty's students are studying.
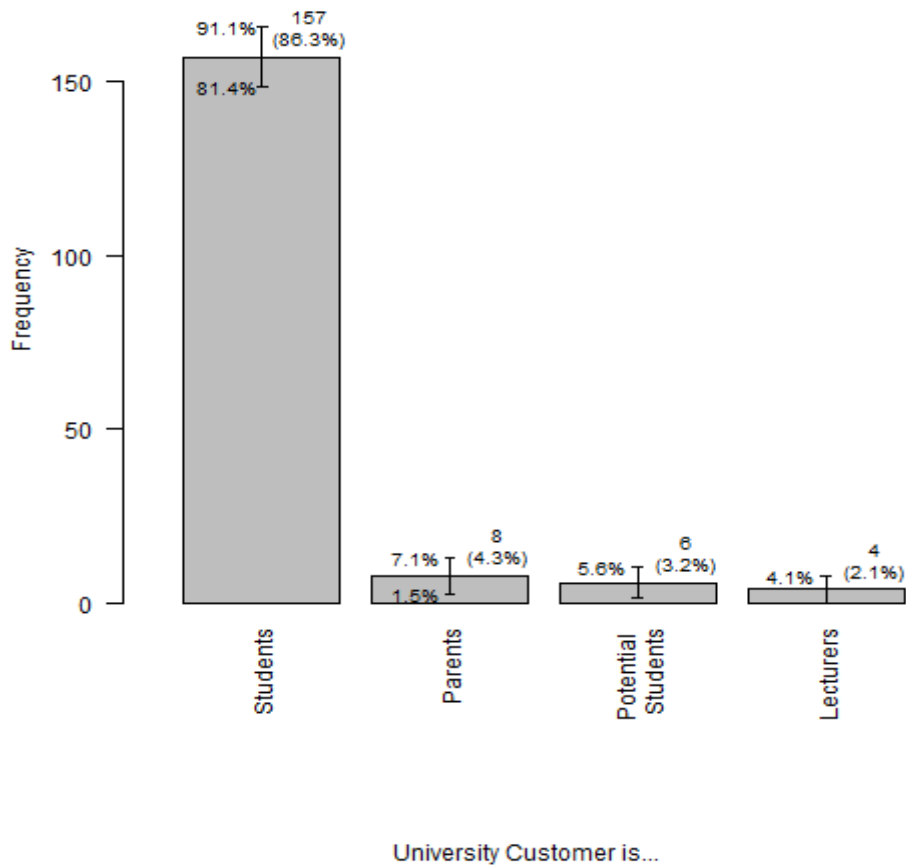
Figure 4.6: Customer of the university

The vast majority of students (86%) considered themselves to be the customer of the university in this open-ended question. Less common responses included parents (4%), potential students (3%) and lecturers (2%).
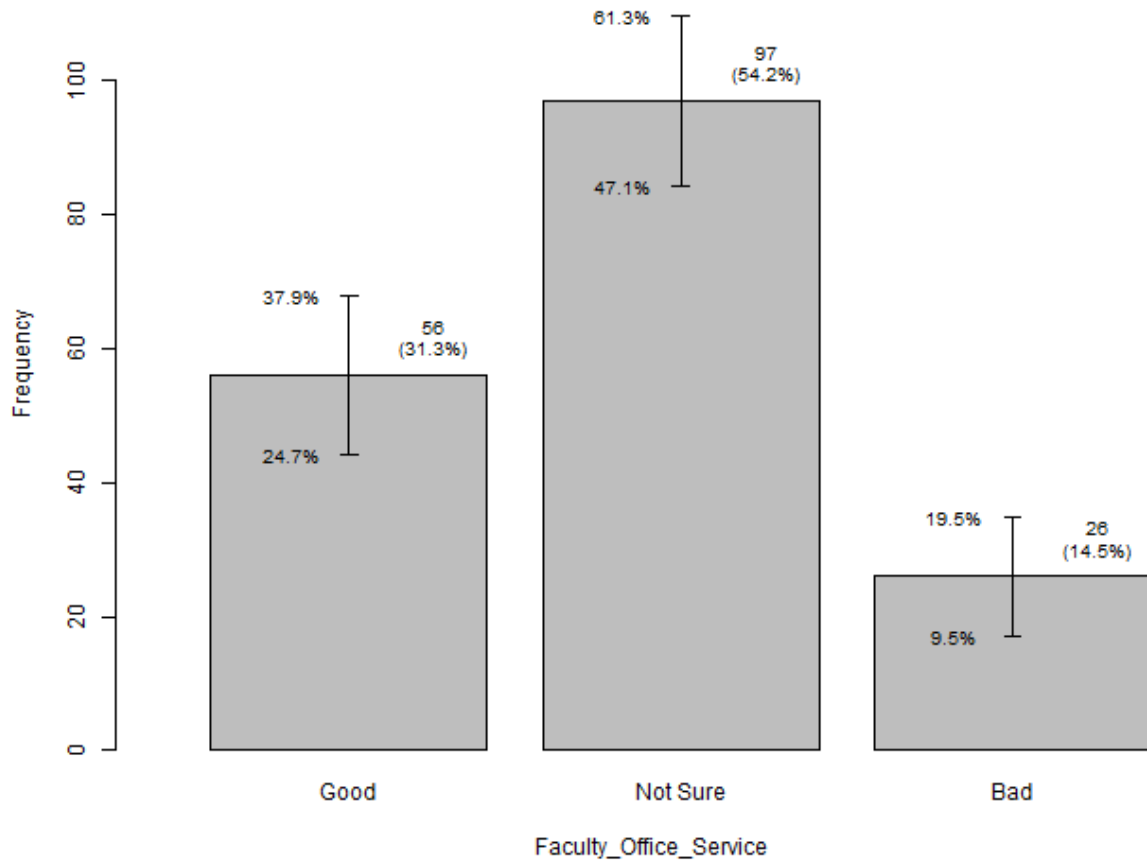
Figure 4.7: Rate the service you receive in the faculty office

The majority of students considered themselves "not sure" about how they rated the service they receive in the faculty office. However, the number that rated the service "good" was more than double the number that rated it "bad".
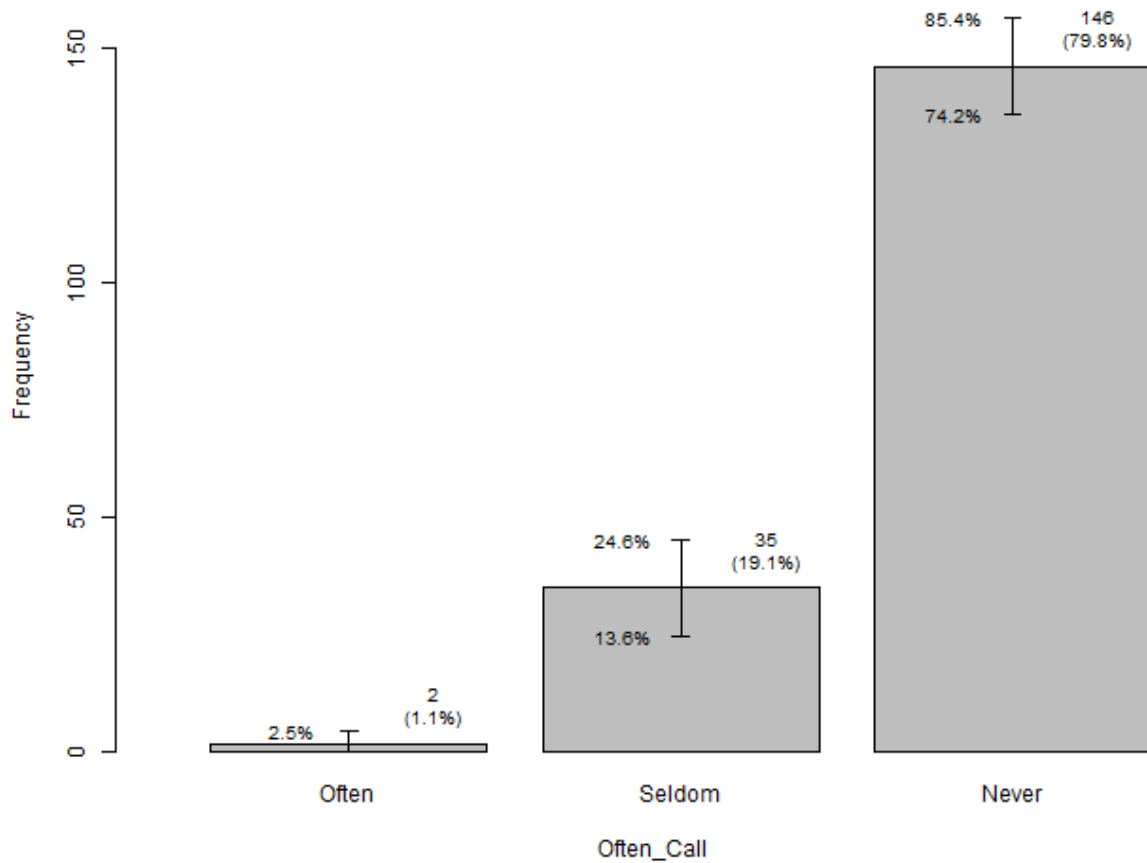
Figure 4.8: How often do you call this number (i.e. the contact number of the faculty office)

Only one of the 187 students sampled indicated the contact number of the faculty office on their form. However, not being able to recall the number from memory is not necessarily important, since some of them might have it saved on their phones, look it up on the website when needed, or prefer to make enquiries in person or via email. Indeed, only 1% of respondents indicated that they 'Often' call the faculty office and almost 4 in 5 respondents indicated that they 'Never' call it. Clearly, the telephone is not the primary means that students use to access services in the faculty office.
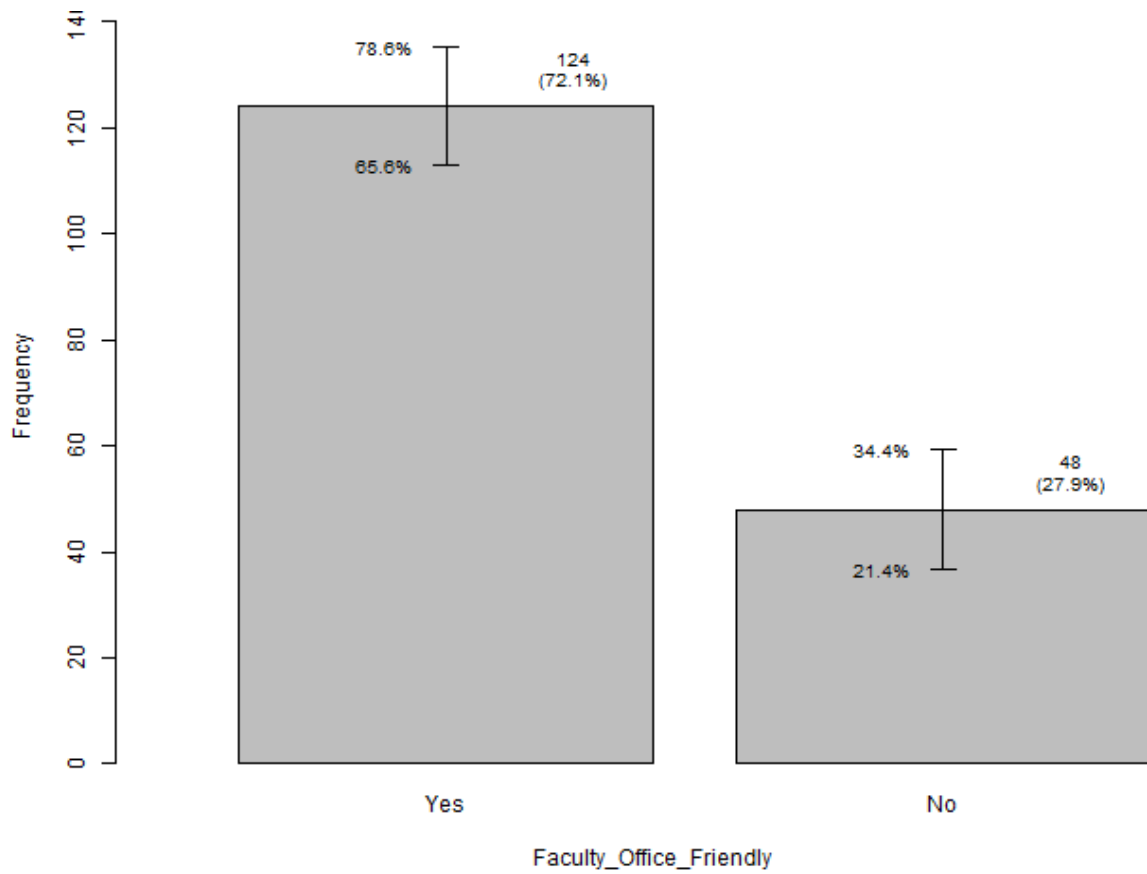
Figure 4.9: Staff in the faculty office helpful and friendly

The great majority (almost three-quarters) of respondents indicated that the faculty office staff were helpful and friendly.
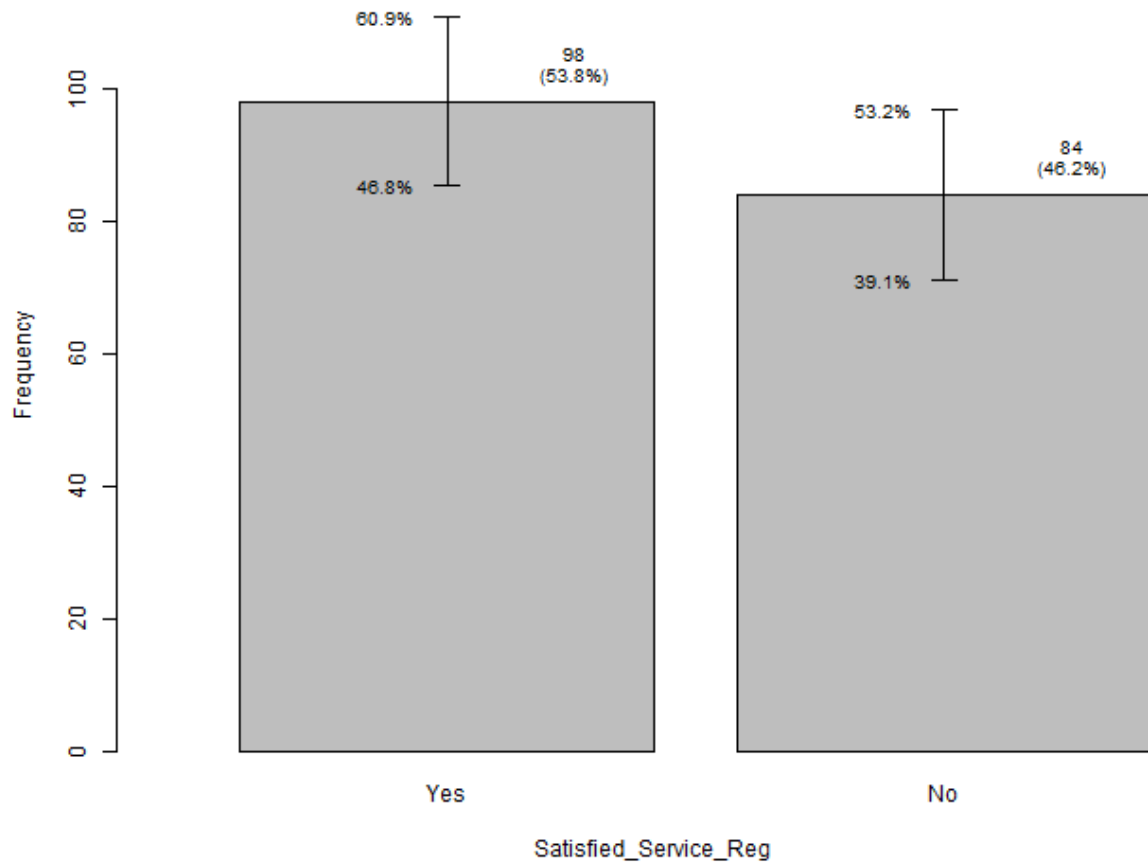
Figure 4.10: I am satisfied with the quality of service offered during registration

A slight majority of respondents (54%) indicated that they were satisfied with the quality of service offered during registration.
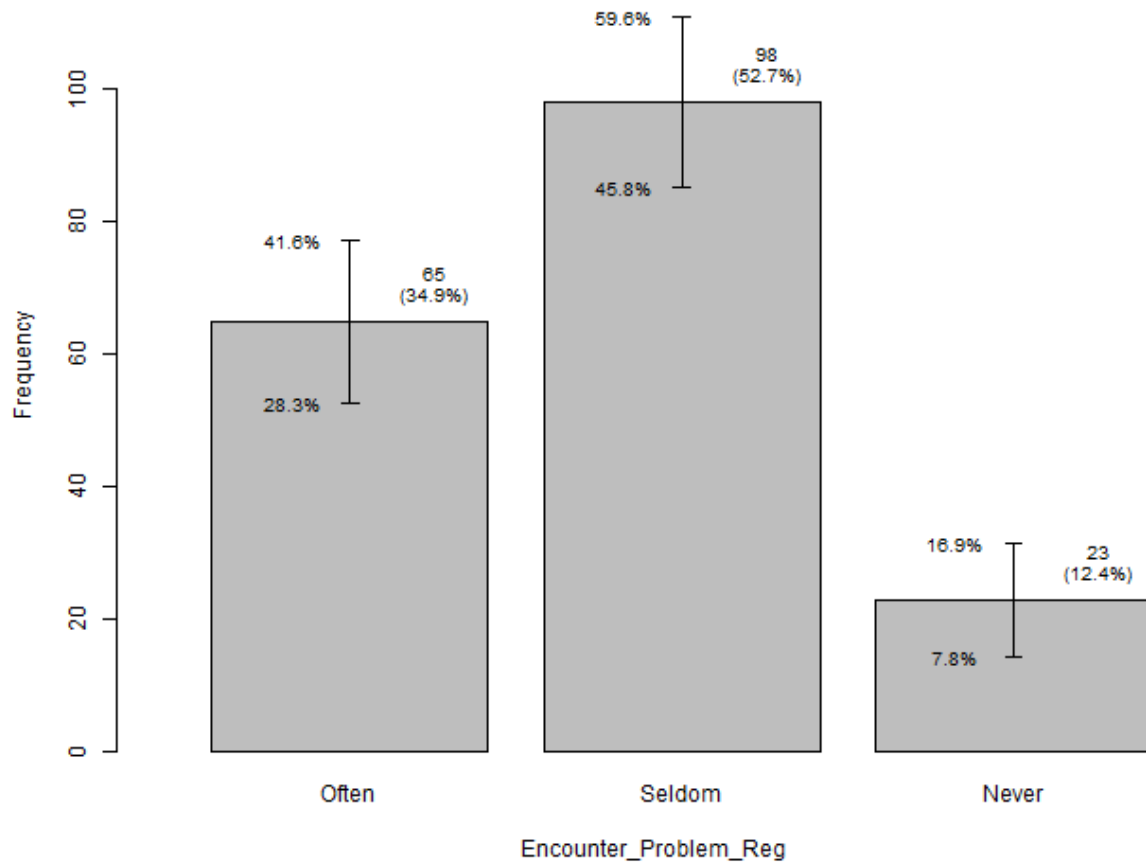
Figure 4.11: I encounter problems during registration

The majority of respondents indicated that they 'seldom' encountered problems during registration, while more than one-third indicated that they 'often' encountered such problems. Only a small minority of 12% indicated that they never encountered problems during registration.
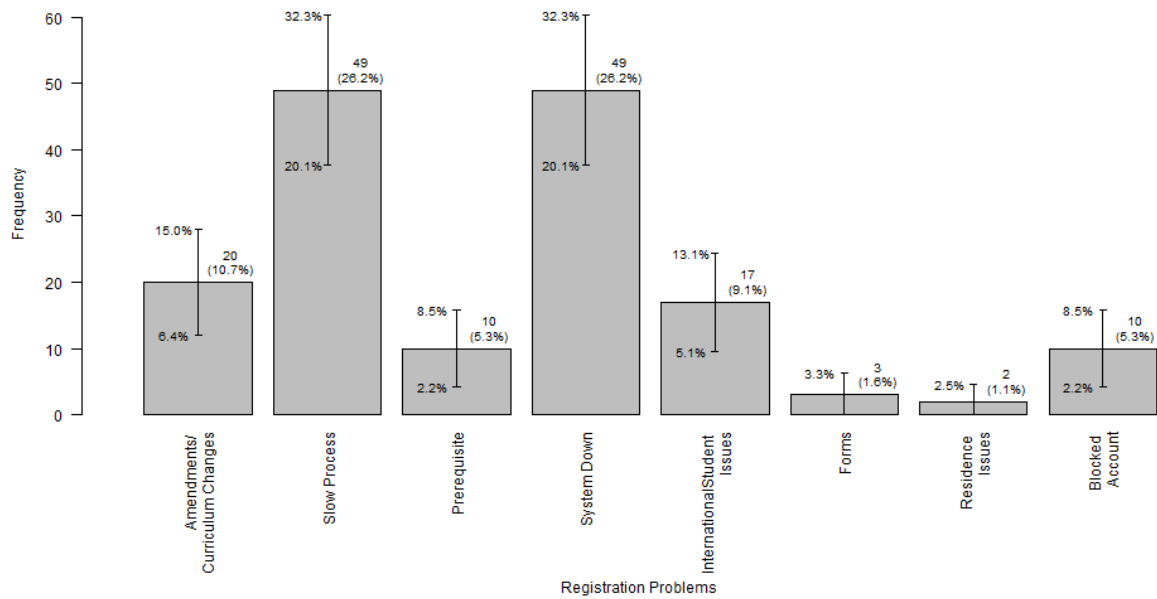
Figure 4.12: Problems I often encounter with registration

This was an open-ended question; response categories were created by the researcher based on responses received.

The most commonly reported registration problems reported by students were System Down and Slow Process, each of which was mentioned by 26% of respondents. The next most common problems were Amendments/Curriculum Changes (11%) and International Student Issues (9%). Less common registration problems included those involving prerequisites (5%), blocked account (5%), forms (2%) and residence issues (1%).
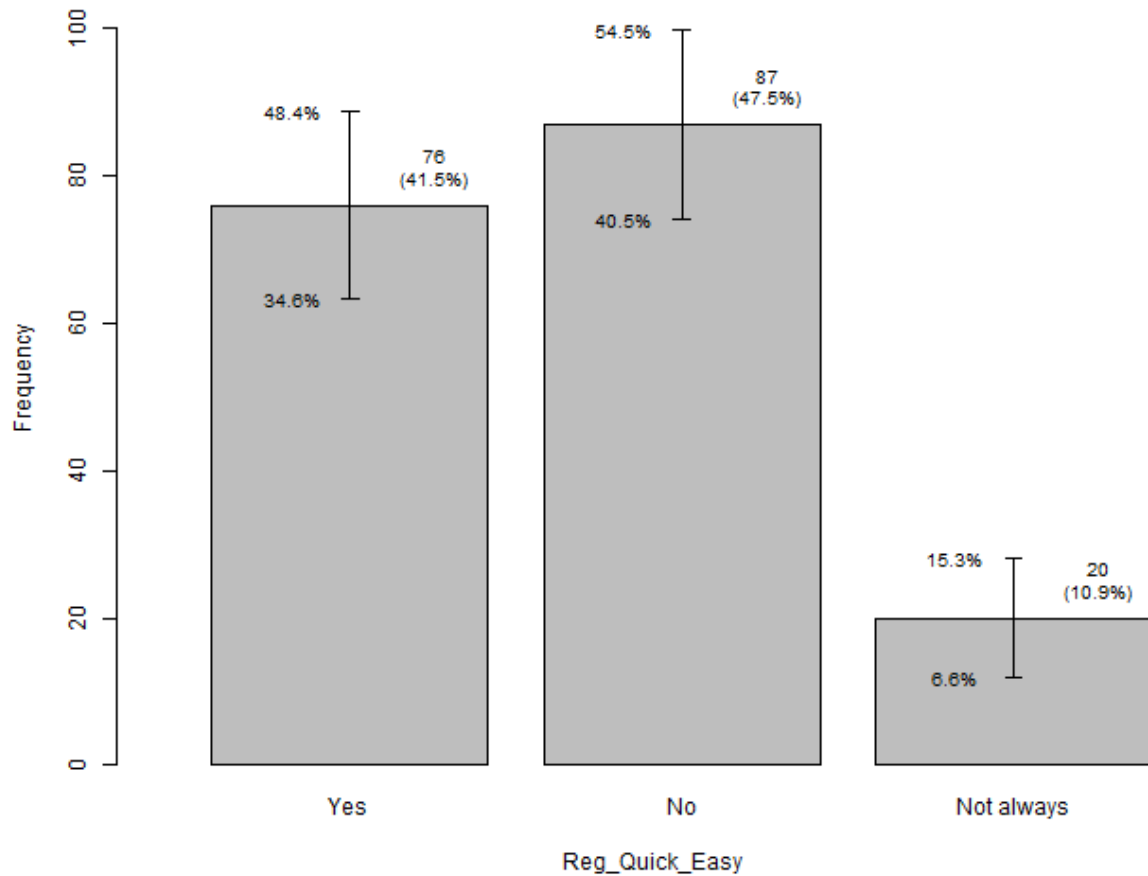
Figure 4.13: Registration process is quick and easy

This was an open-ended question; response categories were created by the researcher based on responses received.

Those who said the registration process was not quick and easy slightly outnumbered those who said it was quick and easy.
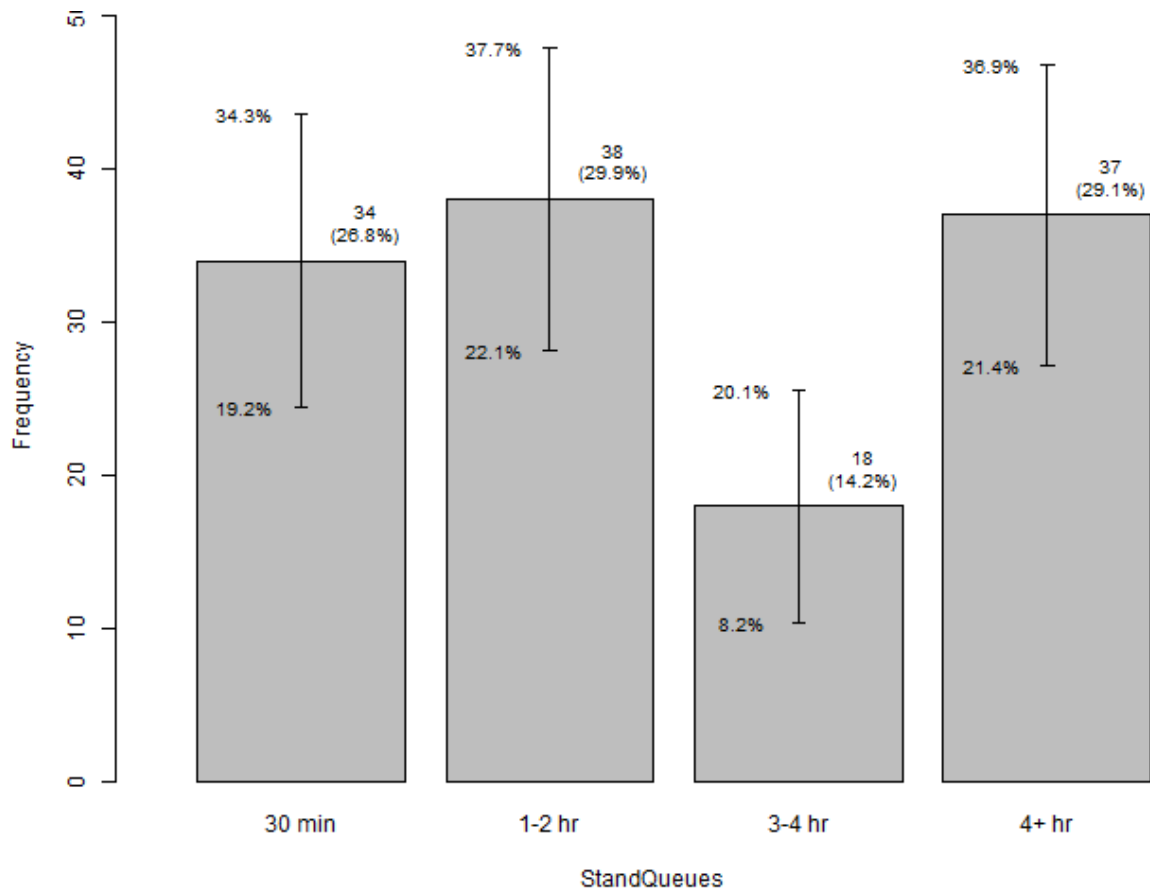
Figure 4.14: Time I spend standing in the queues during registration

This was an open-ended question; response categories were created by the researcher based on responses received. The largest group of respondents indicated '1–2 hours' (30%), but nearly as many (29%) indicated 4+ hours, while 27% indicated 30 minutes.
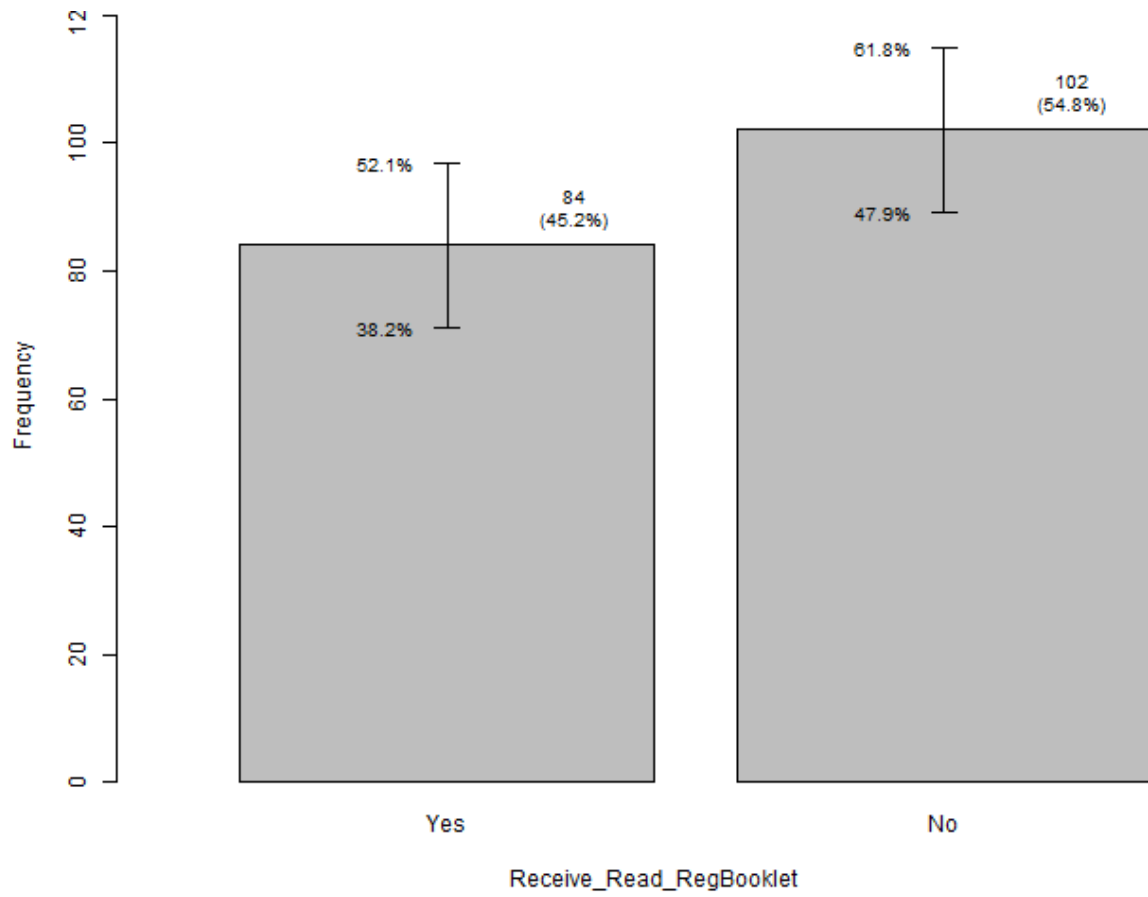
Figure 4.15: I receive and read the registration booklet

Less than half of respondents received and read the registration book.
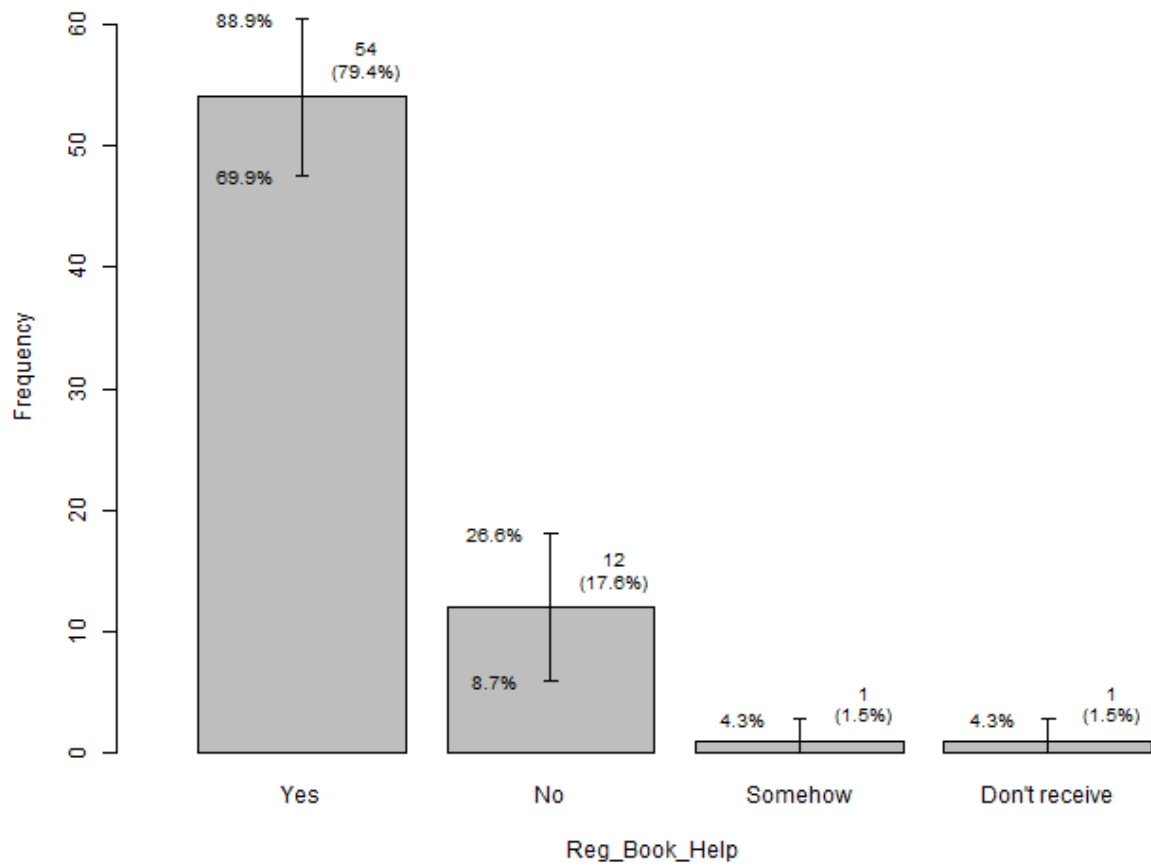
Figure 4.16: I read it and it helps me

Of those who indicated that they had received the registration book, nearly 80% confirmed that they found it helpful.
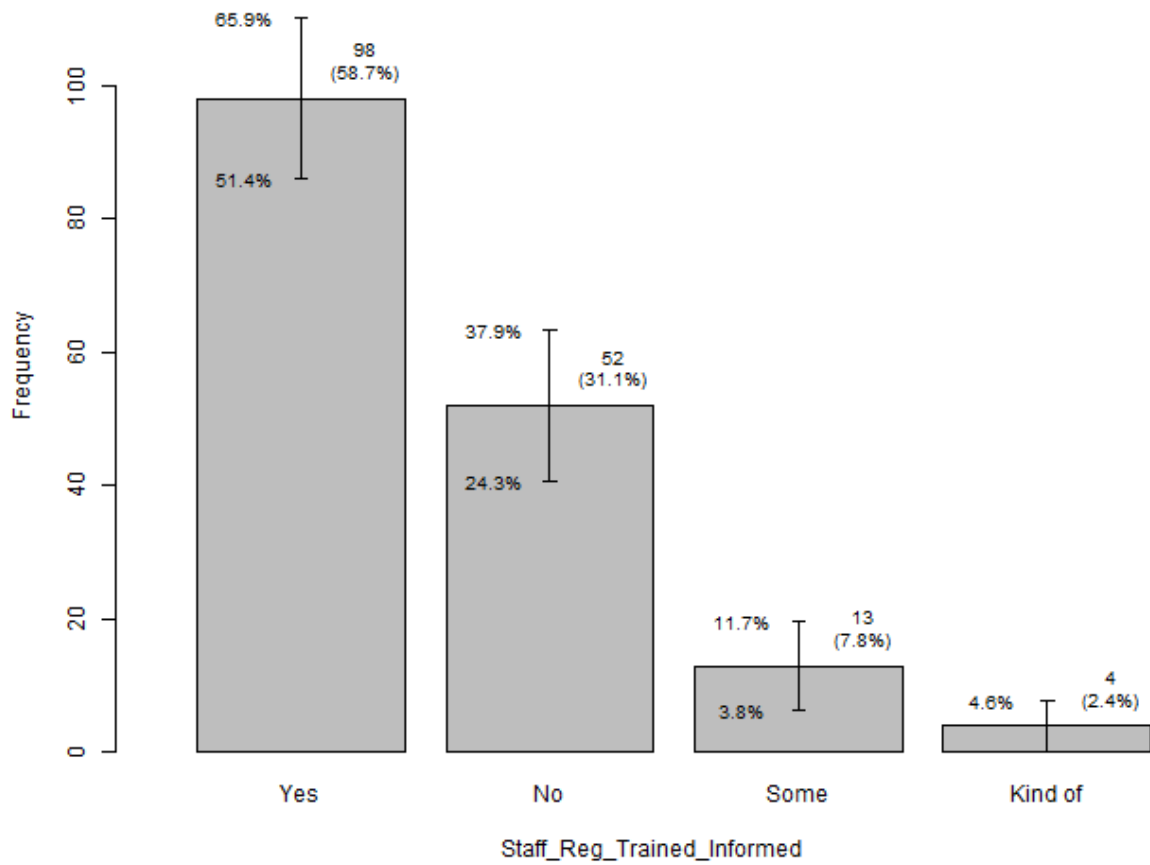
Figure 4.17: Staff at the registration points are well trained and informed

Almost 60% of respondents indicated that they considered staff at the registration points to be well-trained and informed. Of the rest, about 30% indicated that they did not consider staff at registration points to be well-trained and informed, while about 10% gave a qualified answer like 'Some' or 'Kind of'.
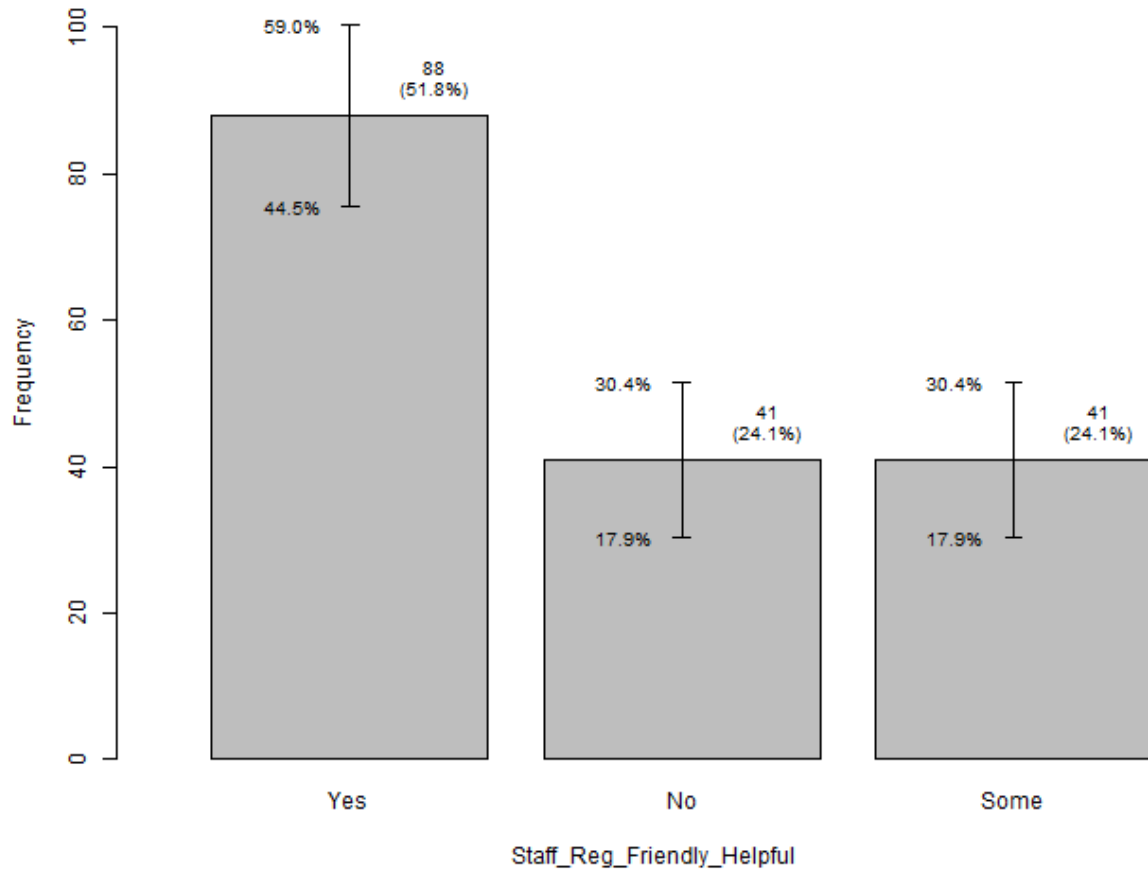
Figure 4.18: Staff at the registration points are friendly and helpful

A slight majority of students consider the staff at registration points to be friendly and helpful, but significant minorities qualified this as only 'some' of these staff, or simply indicated 'No'.
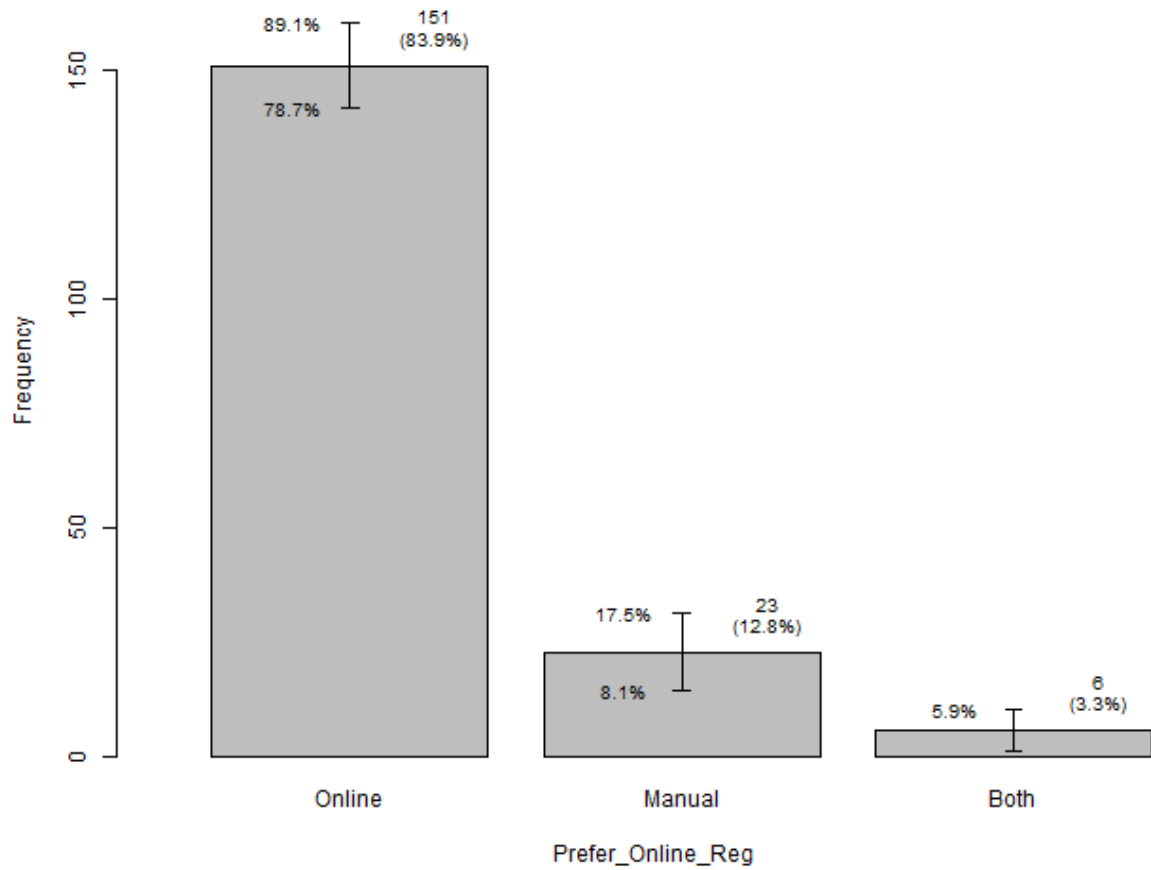
Figure 4.19: I prefer self-online registration to manual with faculty office support

A very large majority of students indicated that they preferred online registration to manual. A handful of students indicated a preference for having both options available, while just over 10% indicated a preference for manual registration.
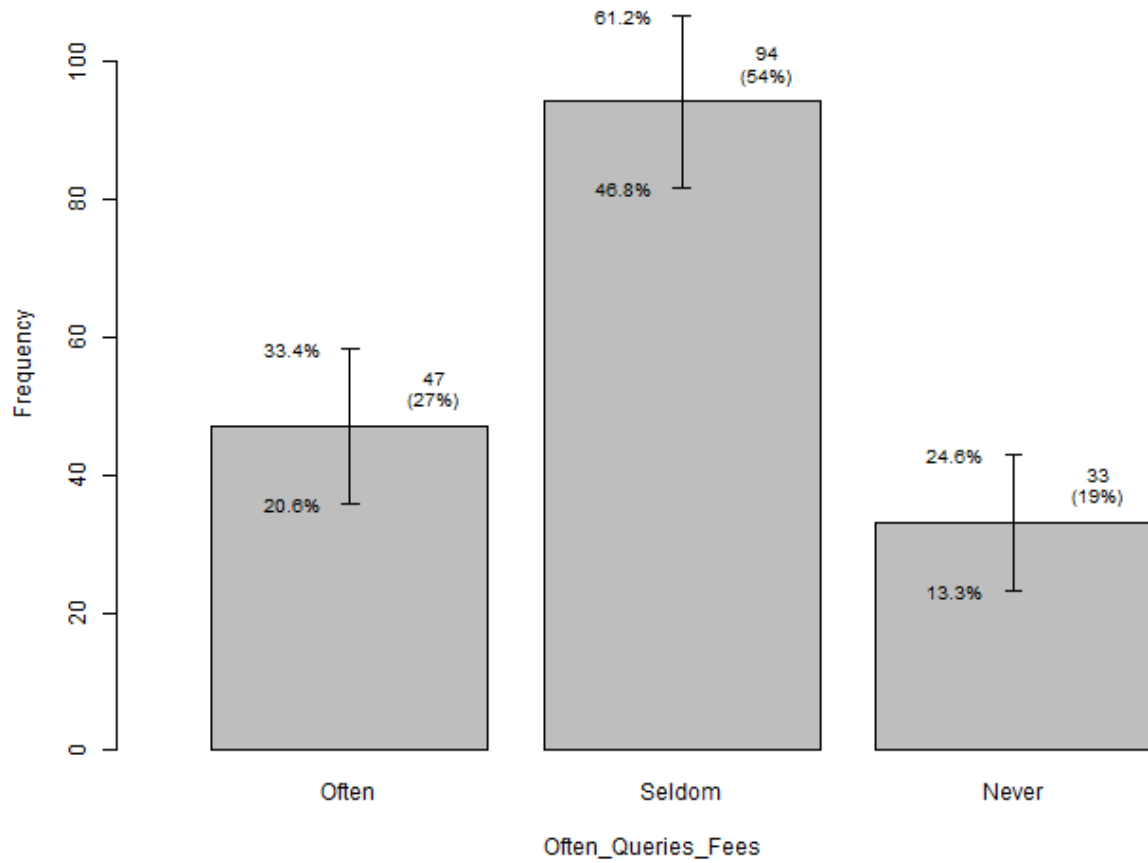
Figure 4.20: I often have queries regarding your account and fees

A slight majority of respondents indicated that they did have queries concerning fees, but only 'Seldom'. Over one-quarter of respondents indicated that they 'Often' had such queries and about one-fifth of students indicated 'Never'.
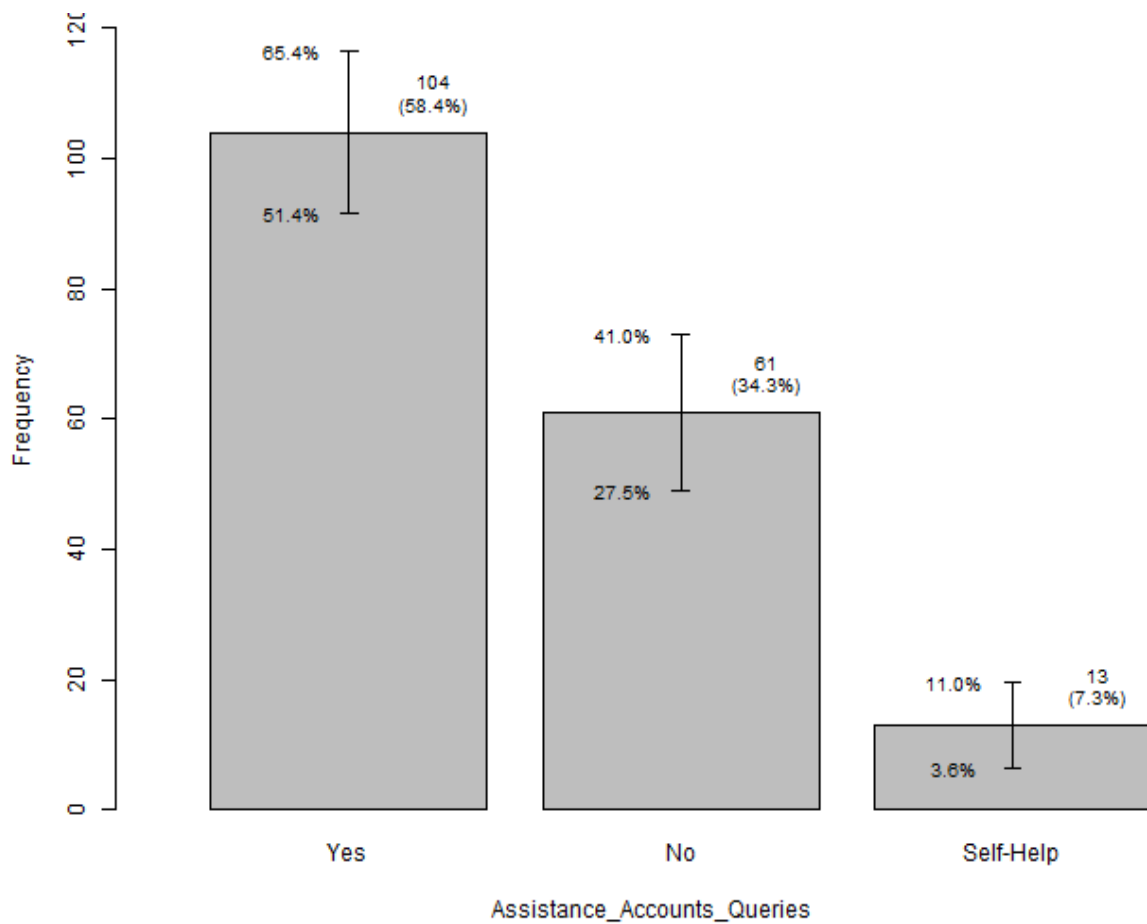
Figure 4.21: I get assistance with my account and fees queries

A majority of respondents indicated that they did get assistance with their accounts and fees queries. A small minority indicated that they used self-help, but over one-third of respondents indicated that they did not get assistance.
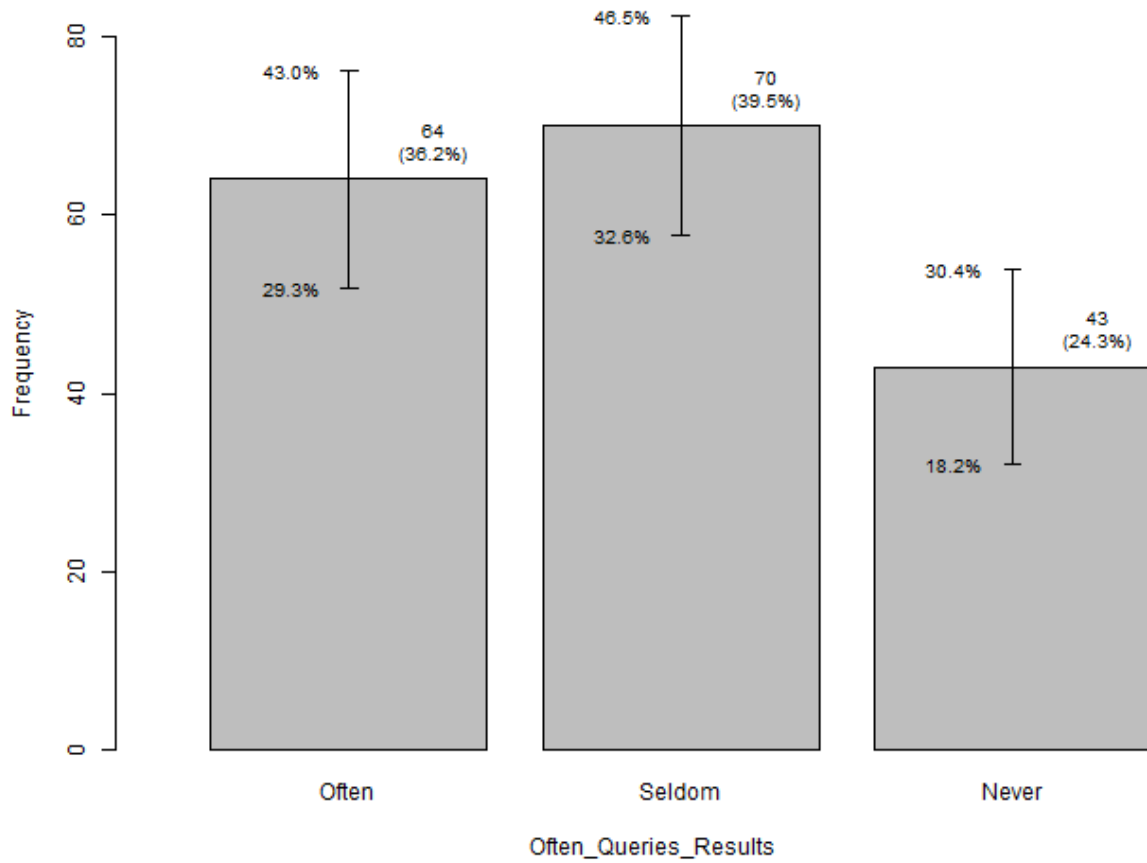
Figure 4.22: I often have queries regarding my results

The frequencies for results queries are fairly similar to those for fees and accounts queries, except that there is a higher proportion for both 'Often' and 'Never'. About three-quarters of respondents did have queries at least occasionally.
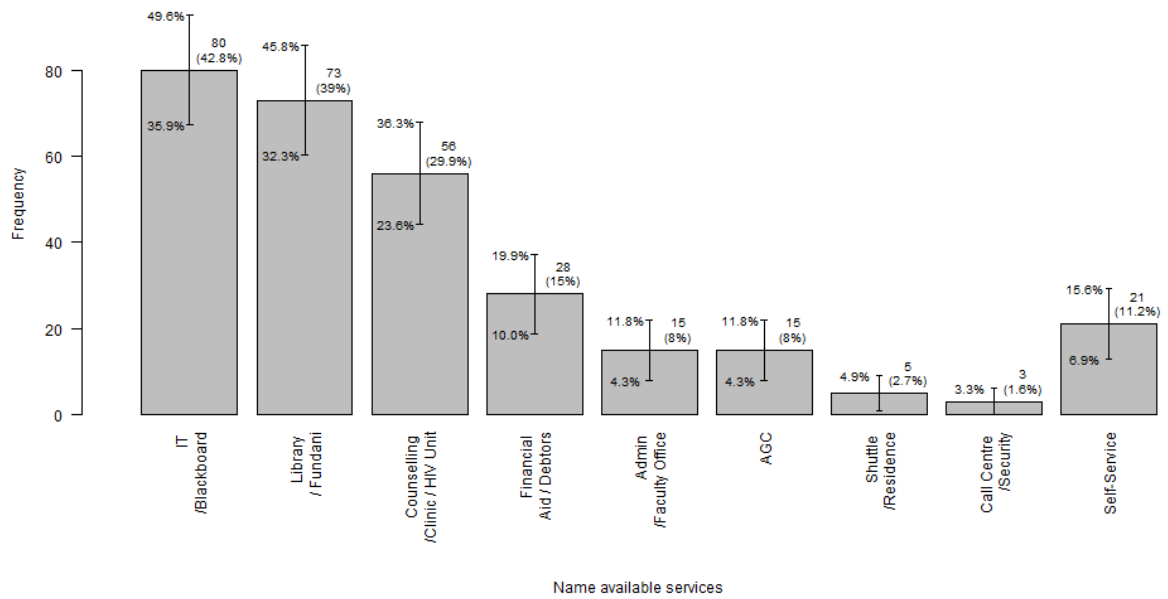
Figure 4.23: Name services available to you that you know

The services named by students most often were IT/Blackboard (43%) and Library/Fundani (39%), followed by Counselling/Clinic/HIV Unit services (30%), Financial Aid/Debtors (15%) and Self-service (11%). Administrative and Faculty Office services were mentioned by only 8% of respondents, so these services do not seem to be very well known among students.
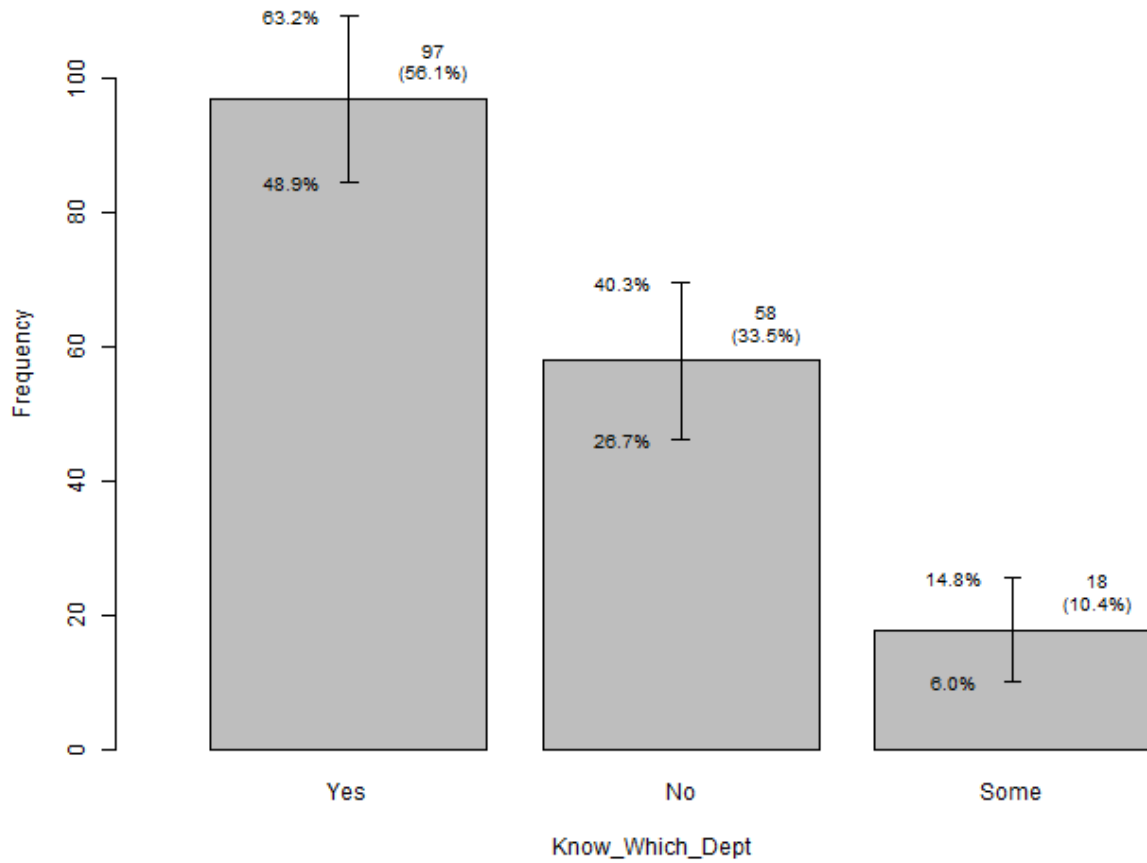
Figure 4.24: I know which department or section to go to with a specific query

Over half of respondents indicated that they knew where to go for help with a specific query, while about one-third of respondents indicated that they did not know. The remaining 10% indicated that they knew where to go for help with only some queries.
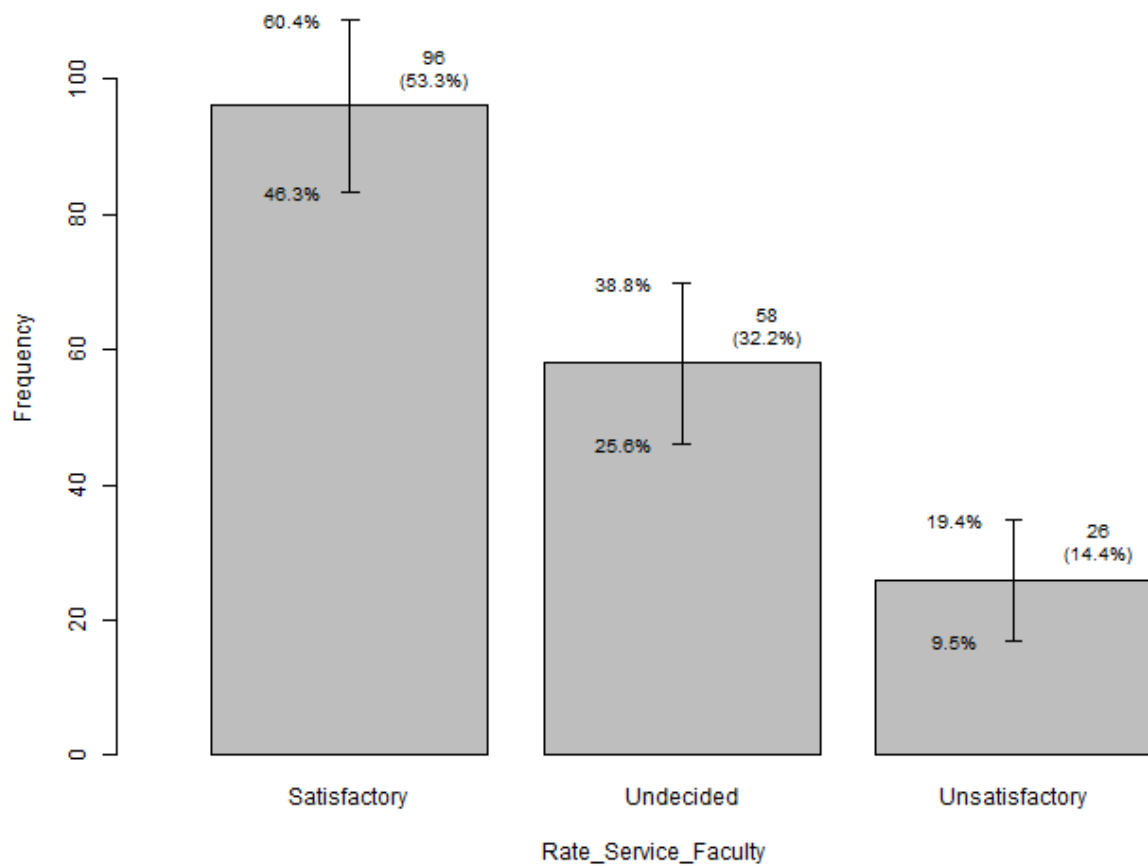
Figure 4.25: Rate the quality of service you receive in the following departments Faculty

A slight majority of students are satisfied with the quality of service they receive in the faculty, but about one-third of students are undecided and about 1 in 7 consider the quality of service to be unsatisfactory.
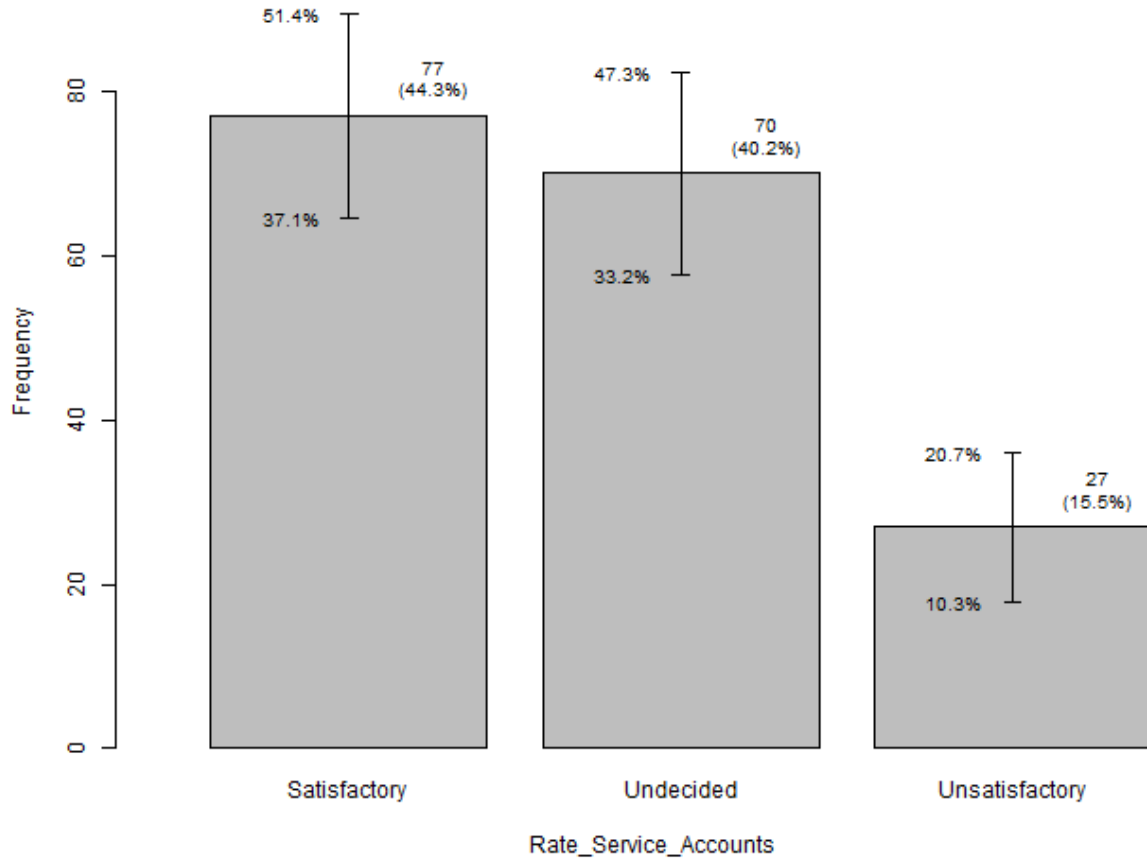
Figure 4.26: Rate the quality of service you receive in the following departments Accounts

The proportion of students who indicated an 'unsatisfactory' quality of service from Accounts was marginally higher than the proportion who indicated an 'unsatisfactory' quality of service from Faculty Office (though the difference is well within the margin of error). There is some evidence that a higher proportion of students are satisfied with the service of Accounts compared with the Faculty Office.
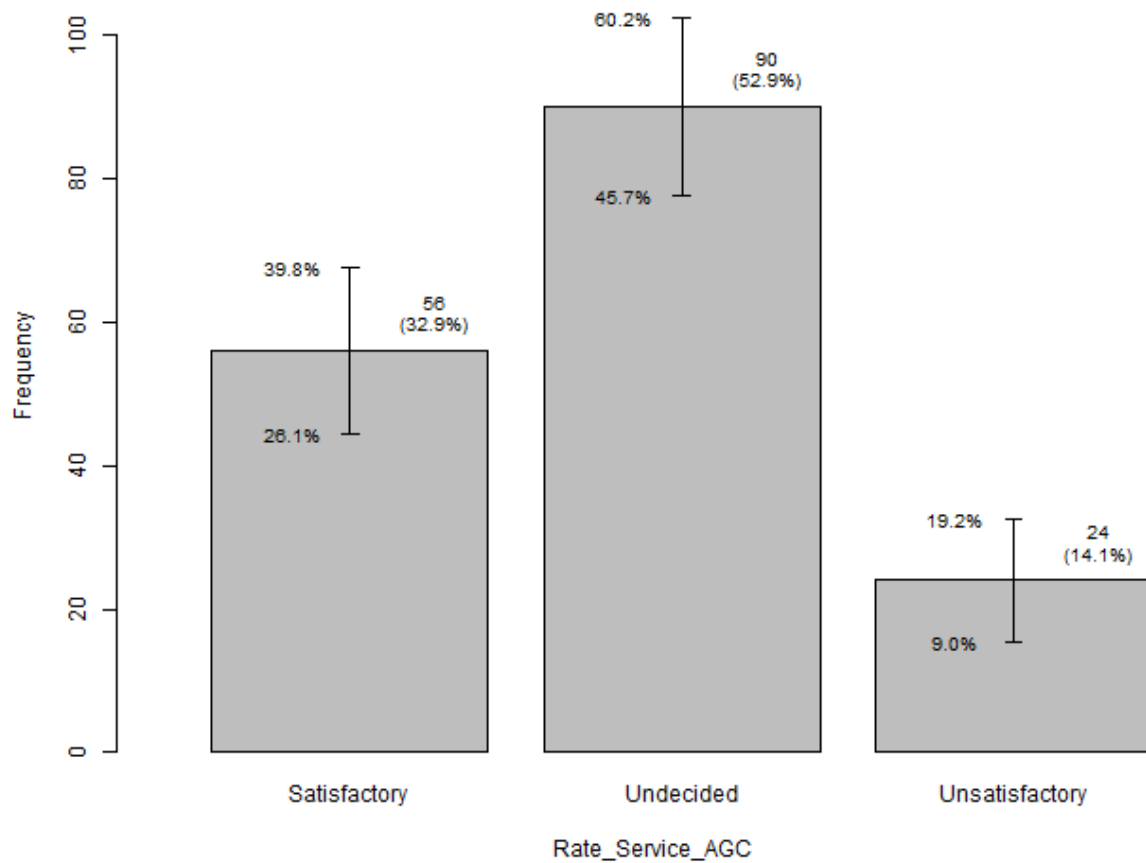
Figure 4.27: Rate the quality of service you receive in the following departments Assessment and Graduation Centre

The proportion of students dissatisfied with the quality of service of the AGC was again similar, but the majority of students were 'undecided'; perhaps they are not familiar with the services offered by the AGC.
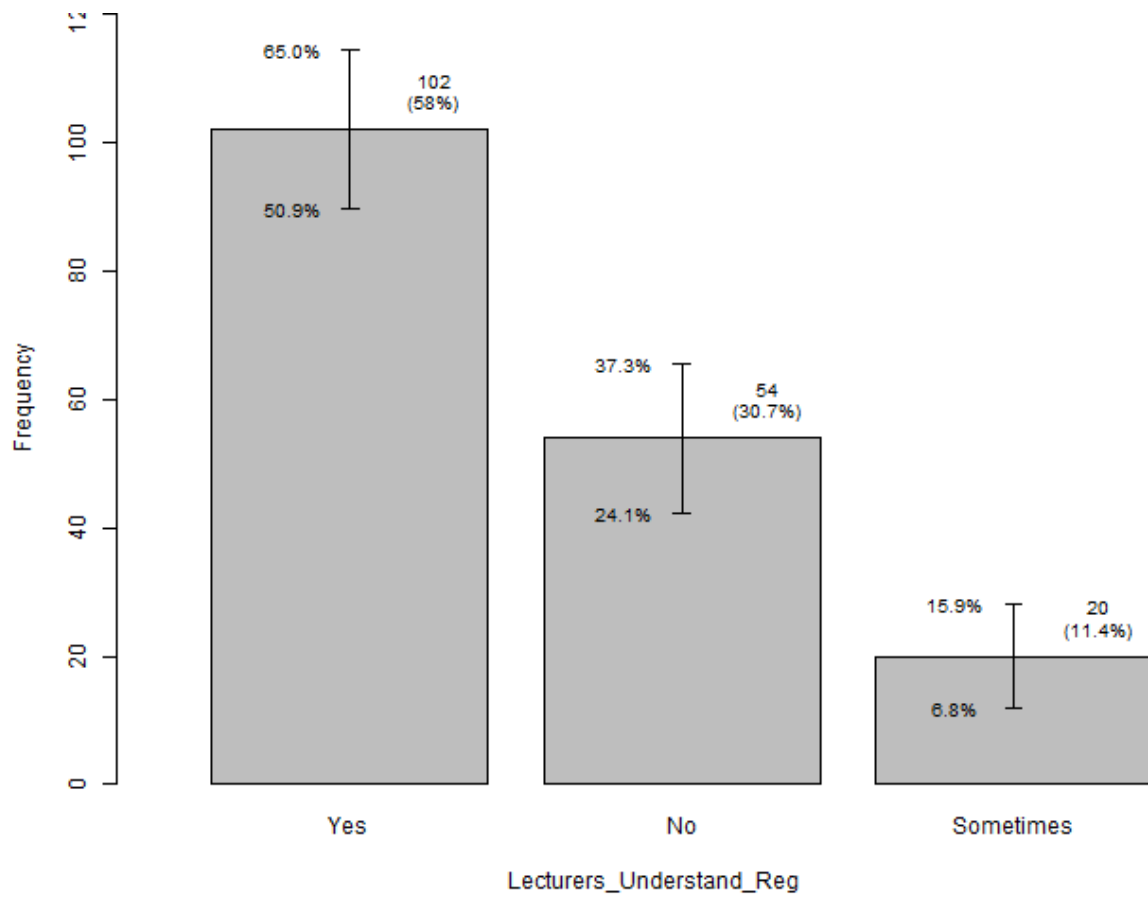
Figure 4.28: I think my lecturers understand the registration problems I face

Almost 60% of respondents indicated that they believed their lecturers understood the registration problems they faced. About 3 in 10 respondents indicated that they did not think their lecturers understood, while the remaining respondents indicated that their lecturers sometimes did understand.
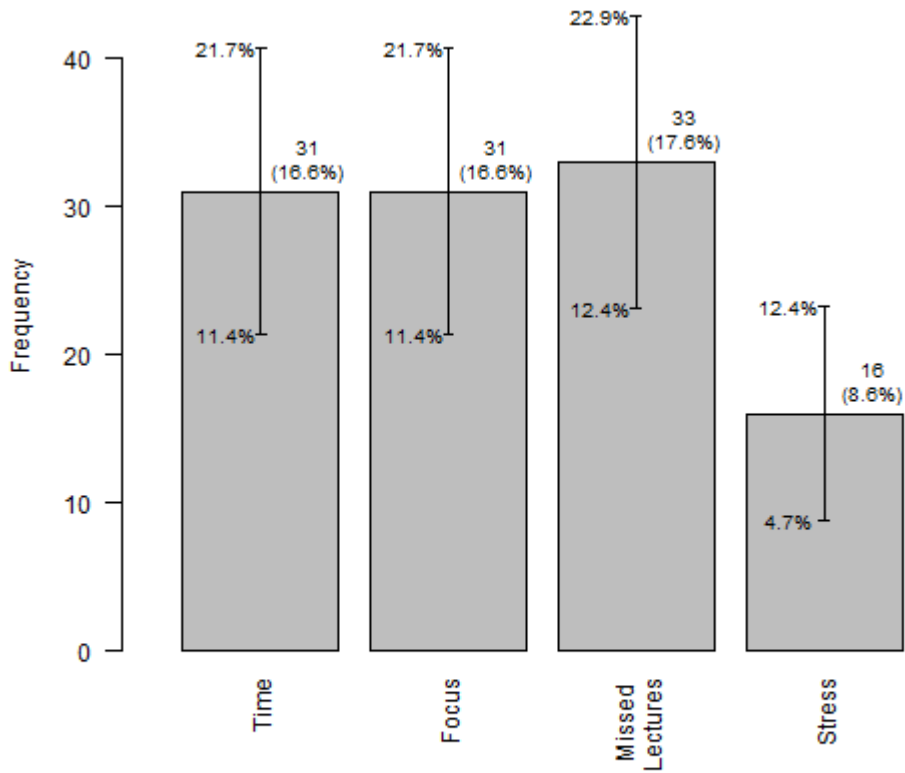
How Registration Problems affect studies

Figure 4.29: The problems I face affect my studies

The most common ways that registration problems affect students' studies, according to the respondents, were missed lectures (18%), time (17%), focus (17%), and stress (9%).
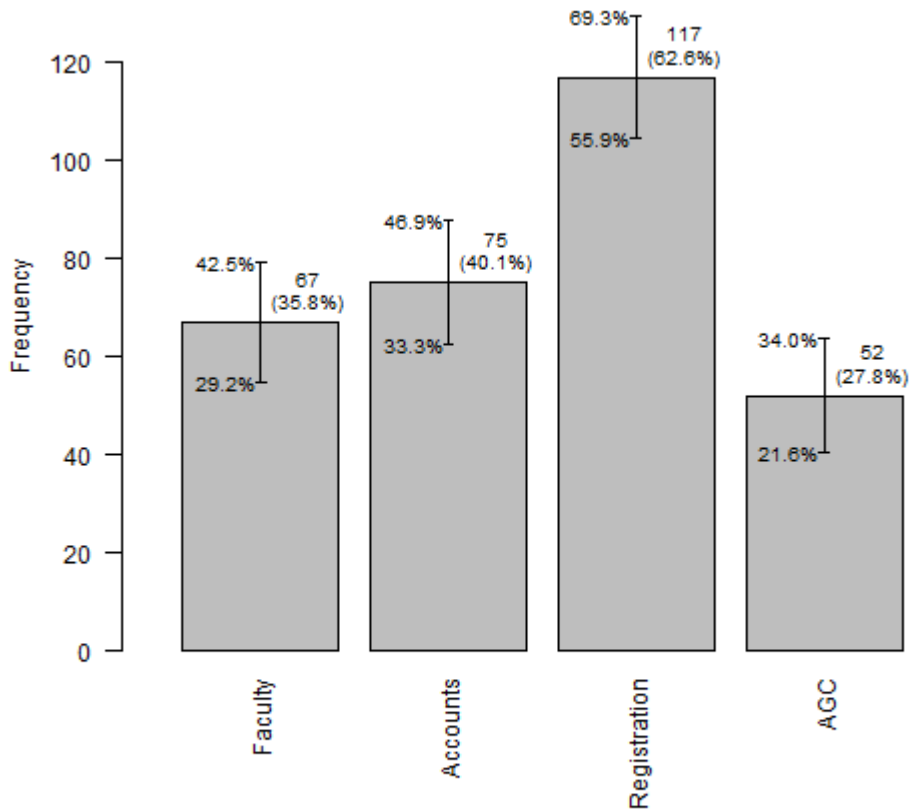
Figure 4.30: Areas I think needs to improve for me to have a better experience

The service area most in need of improvement, in the opinion of respondents, was Registration, followed by Accounts, then Faculty Office, and then AGC. Since the satisfaction rate was relatively high for the Faculty Office (higher than for AGC, for instance), students may see the Faculty Office as a greater priority for improvement than AGC because they believe the services offered by the Faculty Office are more important to them.

4.2.1   Validity Testing

The Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences currently has $N=2808$ enrolled students as appearing on the MIS. The sample size used was $n=187$; the sample size was determined using random sampling.

The standard error for any proportion estimate can be calculated using the formula below. One can use $p=0.5$ in this formula to obtain a 'worst case scenario' standard error estimate, since a proportion that is in fact equal to 50% is the most difficult to estimate using a sample.

$$\sqrt{\left(\frac{N-n}{N-1}\right)\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} = \sqrt{\left(\frac{2808-187}{2808-1}\right)\frac{0.5(1-0.5)}{187}} = 0.03533$$

Using a normal approximation, one can multiply this by the 97.5% quantile of the standard normal distribution (1.96) to obtain the margin of error of an individual estimate, which is the half-width of a 95% confidence interval:

$$e = z_{a/2}\sqrt{\left(\frac{N-n}{N-1}\right)\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} = 1.96\sqrt{\left(\frac{2808-187}{2808-1}\right)\frac{0.5(1-0.5)}{187}} = 1.96(0.03533) = 0.06925$$

Thus, in general, the proportion or relative frequency estimates in the graphs below can be assumed to be correct within ±0.06925, that is, within ±6.925%, with 95% confidence (19 times out of 20).

A more specific confidence band can be obtained for an individual estimate by substituting the estimate itself instead of 0.5. This is how the error bars were calculated in the graphs below. Each set of error bars thus represents a 95% confidence interval for that proportion estimate.

4.2.2 Two-way frequency analysis

Various two-way frequency analysis were run to look for relationships between certain demographic variables with other study variables. Graphical methods (two-way bar graphs) were combined with a statistical hypothesis test called Fisher's Exact Test. Like Pearson's chi-squared test for independence, Fisher's Exact Test is designed for use on two-way frequency tables (also known as contingency tables or cross-tabulation tables). Unlike Pearson's chi-squared test, which relies on an approximation, Fisher's Exact Test is exact. It can be very computationally intensive to calculate the p-values of this test, but in this case the table dimensions and frequencies were generally small and so exact p-values were calculated. Graphs are only shown for comparisons that yielded a statistically significant relationship at 0.1 significance level.
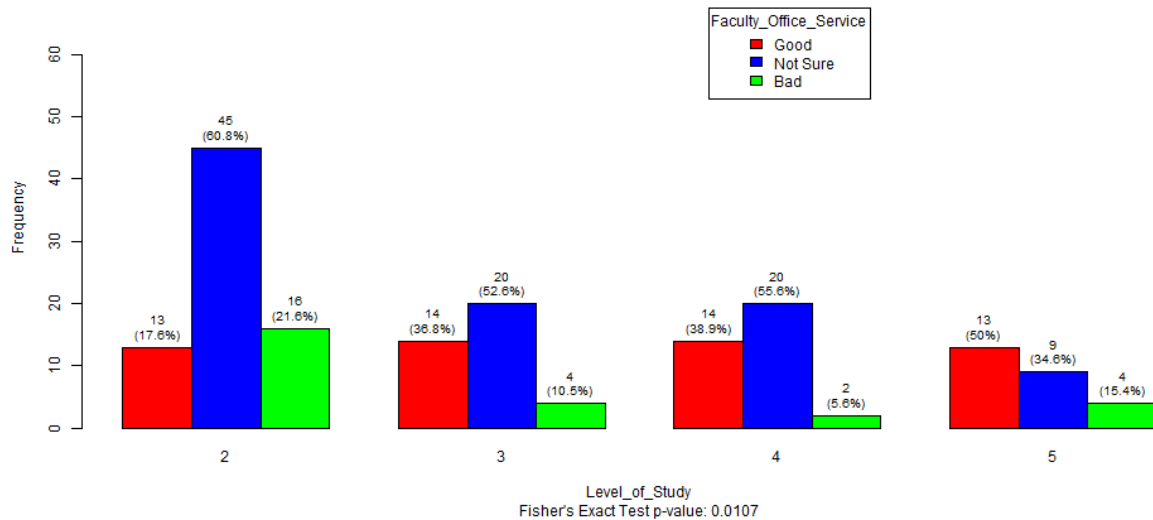
Figure 4.31: Faculty office service and level of study

This comparison is between a student's Level of Study and how students rate the service in the Faculty Office. It appears that students at higher levels tend to rate the service of the Faculty Office higher than Level 2 students, most of whom are 'Not Sure' about this service.
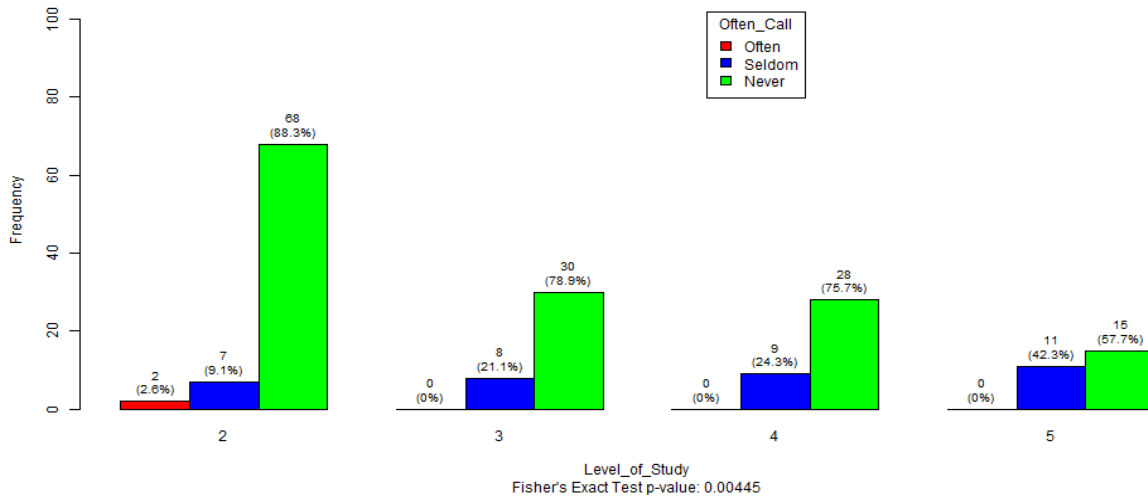
Figure 4.32: Often call and level of study

It is apparent from this comparison that the frequency of calling for assistance increases with level of study: Level 2 students are most likely to say that they never call (88%) while the Level 5 students are least likely to say so (58%).
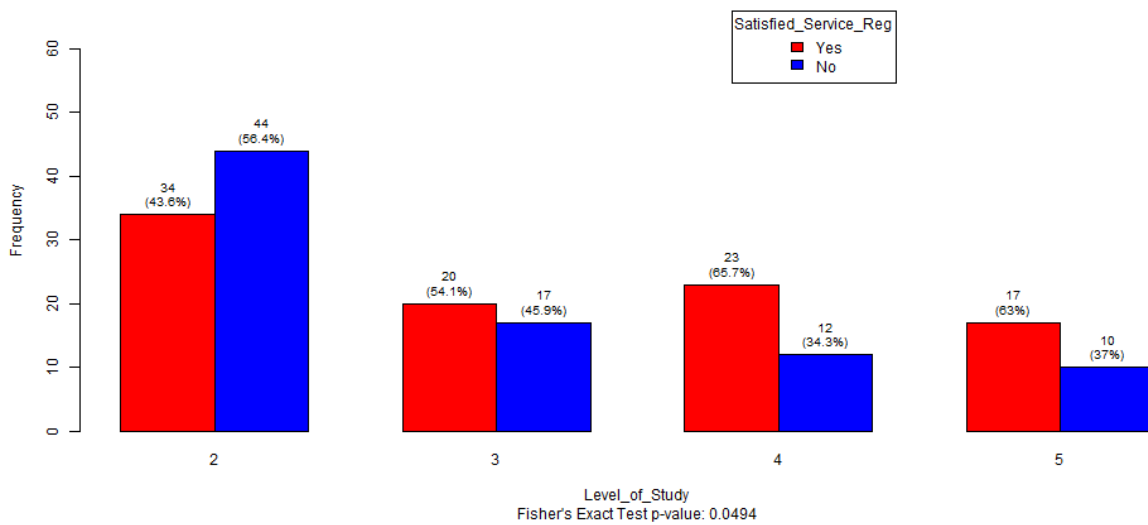
Figure 4.33: Satisfied with service during registration and level of study

This comparison is between a student's Level of Study and whether they are satisfied with the registration service. Again, there seems to be an increasing trend in satisfaction with level of study: Level 2 students are the least satisfied.
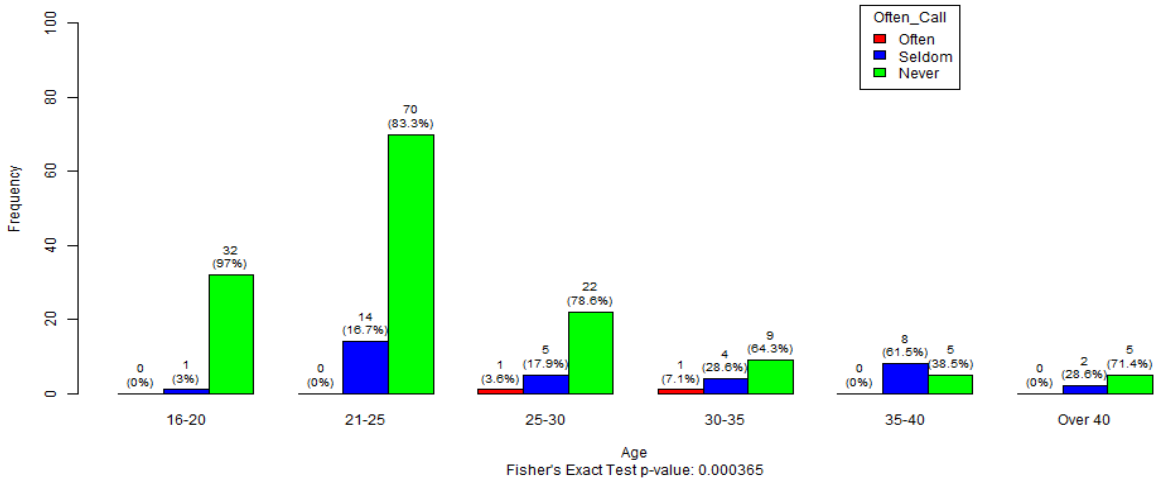
Figure 4.34: Often call and age

In this comparison we see that the tendency to call the faculty office generally declines with age: 97% of those in the 16–20 age group 'Never' call, which declines to 83% in the 21–25 age group, 79% in the 26–30 age group, 64% in the 31–35 age group and 39% in the 36–40 age group. Perhaps this is because the younger generation prefers other ways of getting in contact besides a landline telephone? (However, the rate of those who 'Never' call increases again in the 40% age group.)
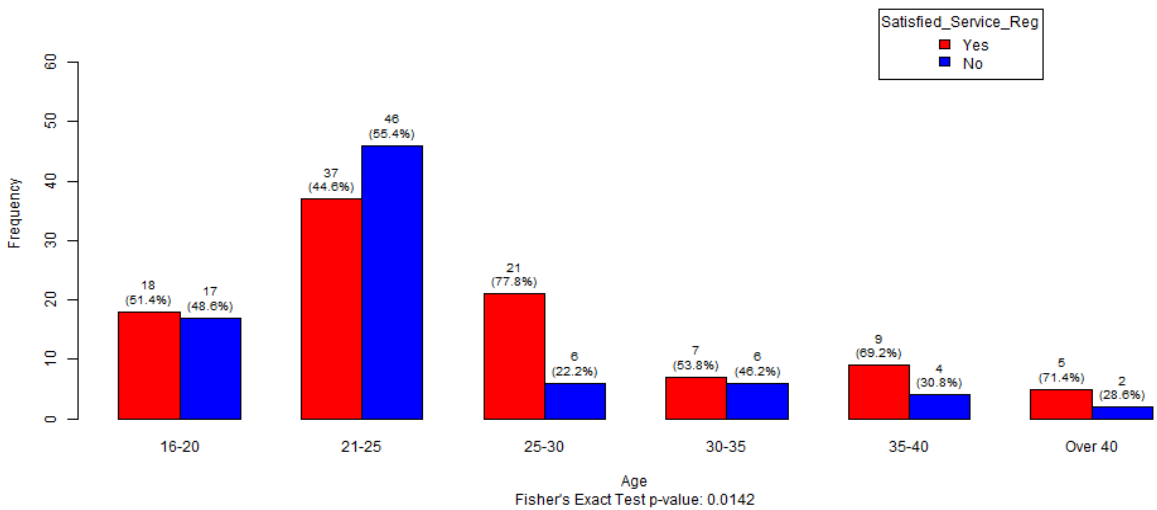
Figure 4.35: Satisfied with service during registration and age

The level of satisfaction with registration services varies somewhat with age. The 16–20 and 21–25 age groups are least likely to answer 'Yes' they are satisfied, while the 26–30 age group is most likely to say 'Yes'.

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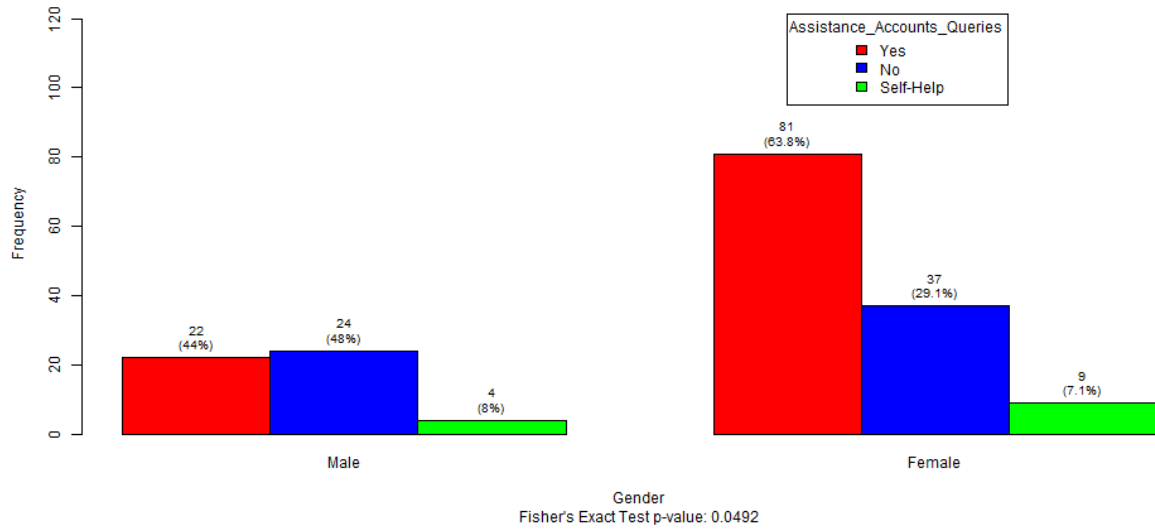
Figure 4.36: Assistance with account queries and gender

Females are more likely than males to report that they get assistance with their accounts queries.
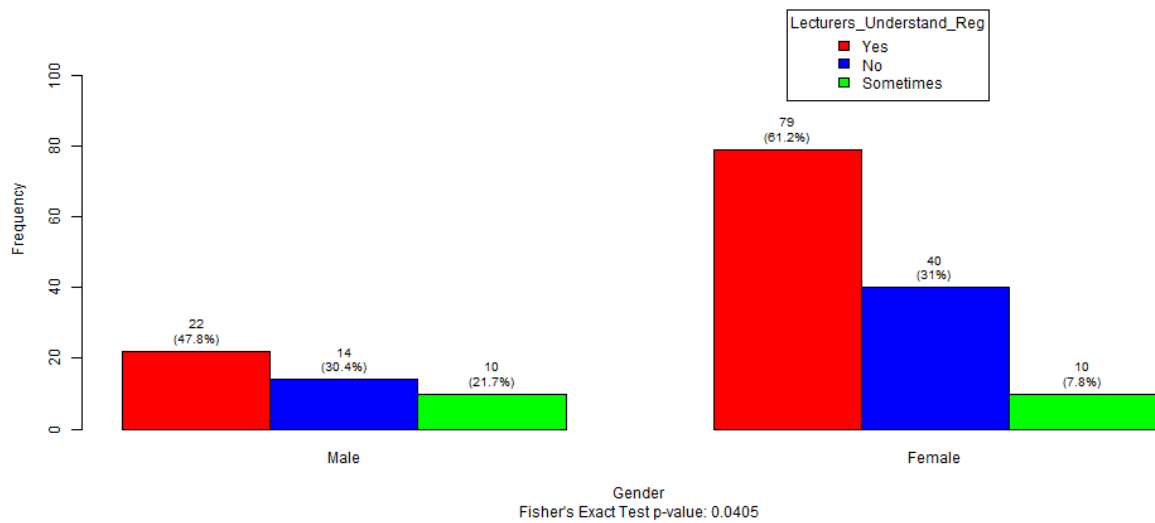
Figure 4.37: Lecturers understand registration issues and gender

Females are also more likely than males to report that their lecturers understand their registration problems.
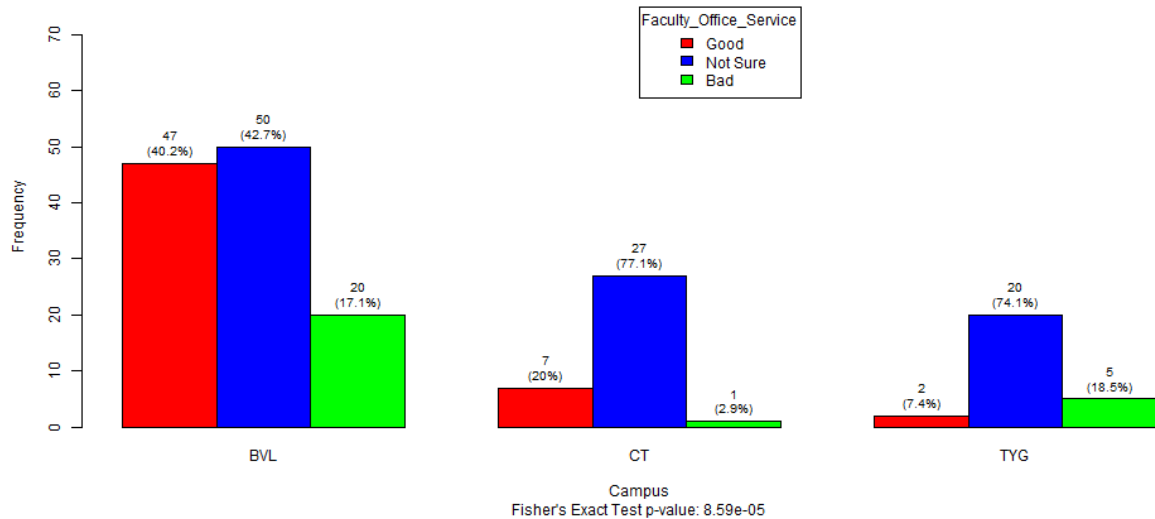
Figure 4.38: Faculty office service and campus

This comparison is between campuses and how students rate the quality of service at the Faculty Office. The vast majority of students on the Cape Town Campus and Tygerberg Campus indicated that they were not sure about the quality of service, while those in Bellville were more evenly distributed across 'Good', 'Not Sure', and 'Bad'. Tygerberg-based students were more frequent in describing the Faculty Office service as 'Bad' (19%). Could this be because the Faculty Office is located in Bellville and so students based on other campuses would have more difficulty accessing its services?
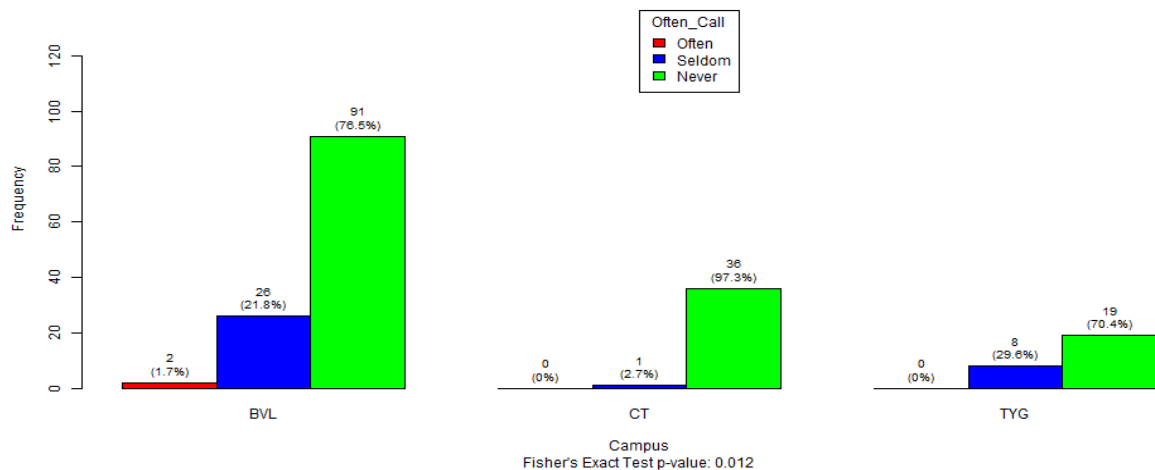
Figure 4.39: Often call and campus

We see that nearly all of the students on the Cape Town campus indicate that they never call the faculty office; in Bellville and Tygerberg a significant minority at least 'Seldom' calls.
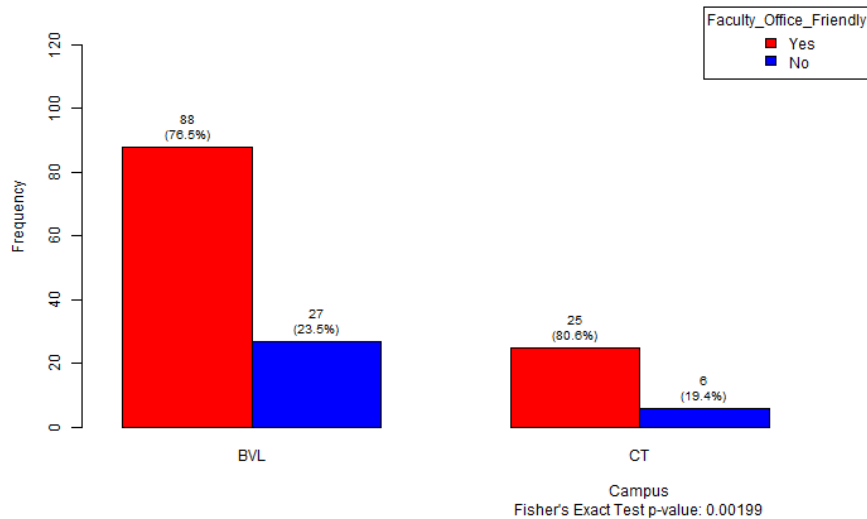
Figure 4.40: Faculty office friendly and campus

Students at Bellville and Cape Town campuses overwhelmingly agree that the faculty office staff are friendly, but students at Tygerberg campus are more likely to answer 'No' than 'Yes'.
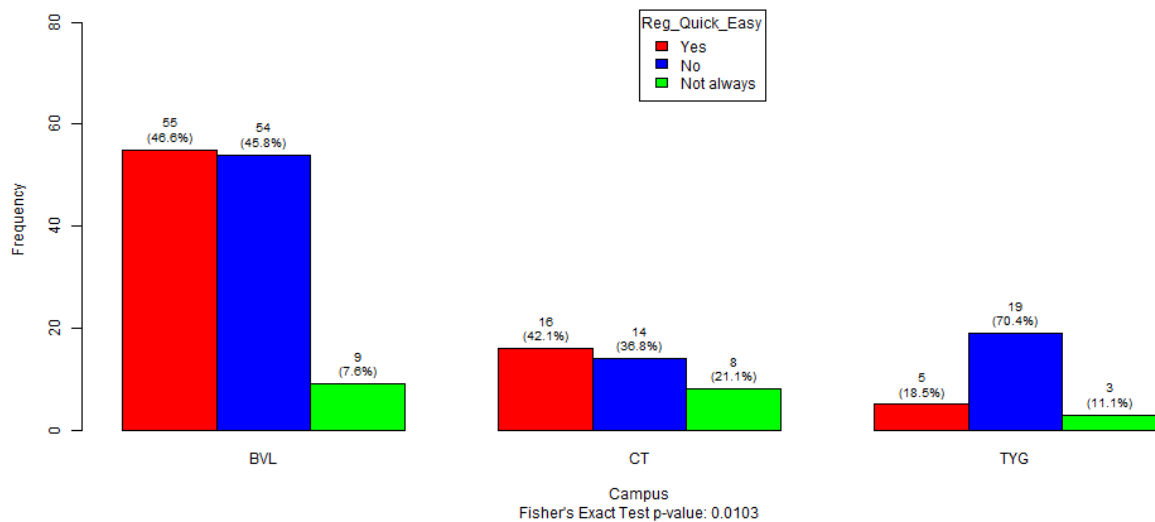
Figure 4.41: Registration quick and easy and campus

Students on Bellville and Cape Town Campuses are roughly equally divided between those who say 'Yes' and those who say 'No' about registration being quick and easy. By contrast, students on the Tygerberg campus overwhelmingly (70%) answer 'No'.
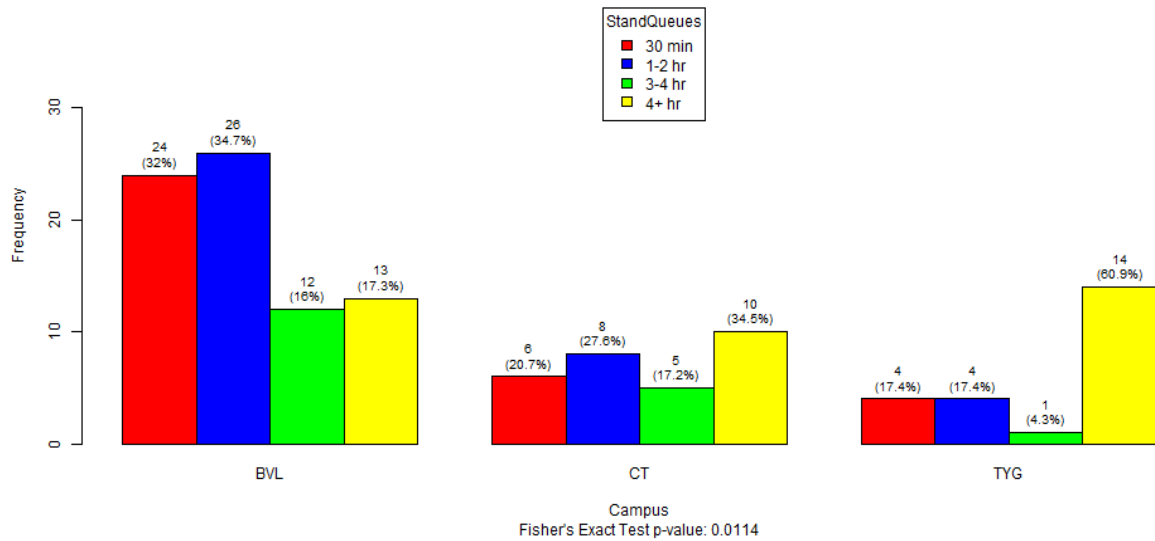
Figure 4.42: Standing in queues and campus

The majority of students based in Tygerberg indicated that they must wait in queues for more than four hours to register. About one-third of students based in Cape Town campus indicated that they must wait in queues for more than four hours. In Bellville the situation seems to be better, with about two-thirds of students indicating either '30 min' or '1–2 hours'.
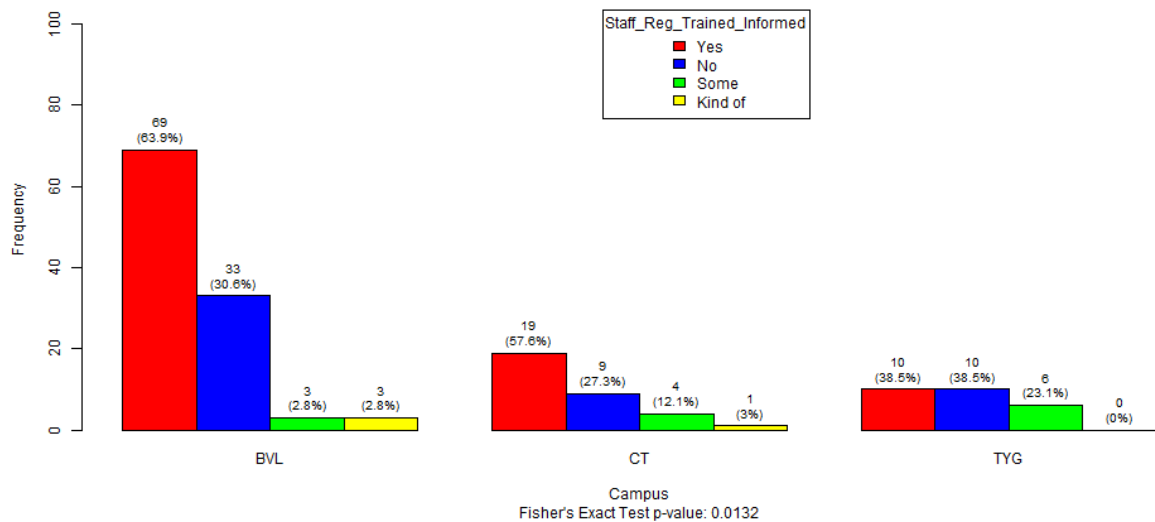
Figure 4.43: Staff in registration trained and informed and campus

The majority of students in Bellville and Cape Town agree that registration staff are well trained and informed. However, in Tygerberg, the students are equally divided between those who say 'Yes' and those who say 'No'.
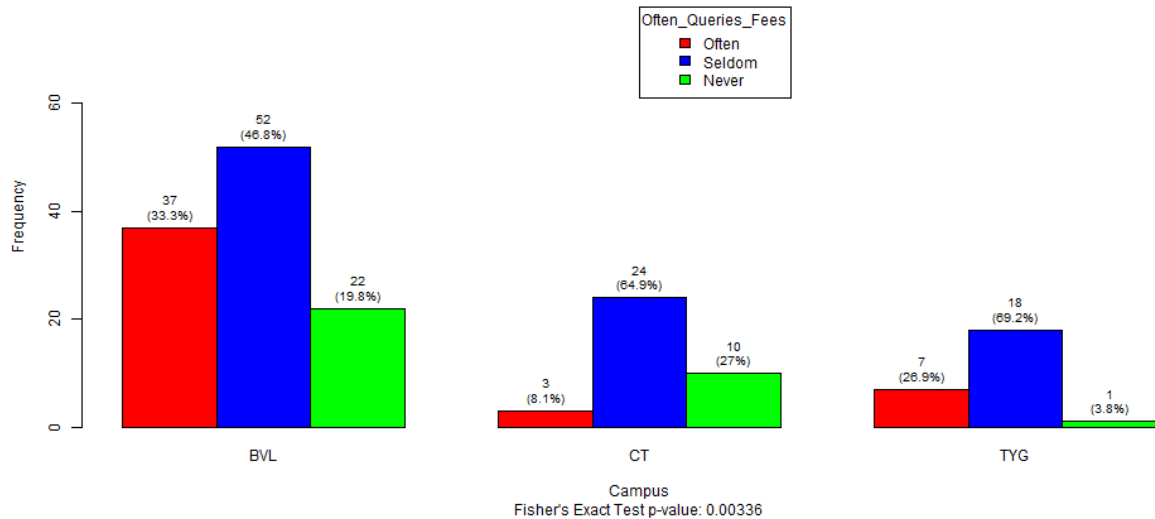
Figure 4.44: Often queries with fees and campus

This comparison is between campuses and how often students have queries about fees. Students in Bellville were more likely to answer 'Often', whereas students in Cape Town and Tygerberg were more likely to answer 'Seldom'.
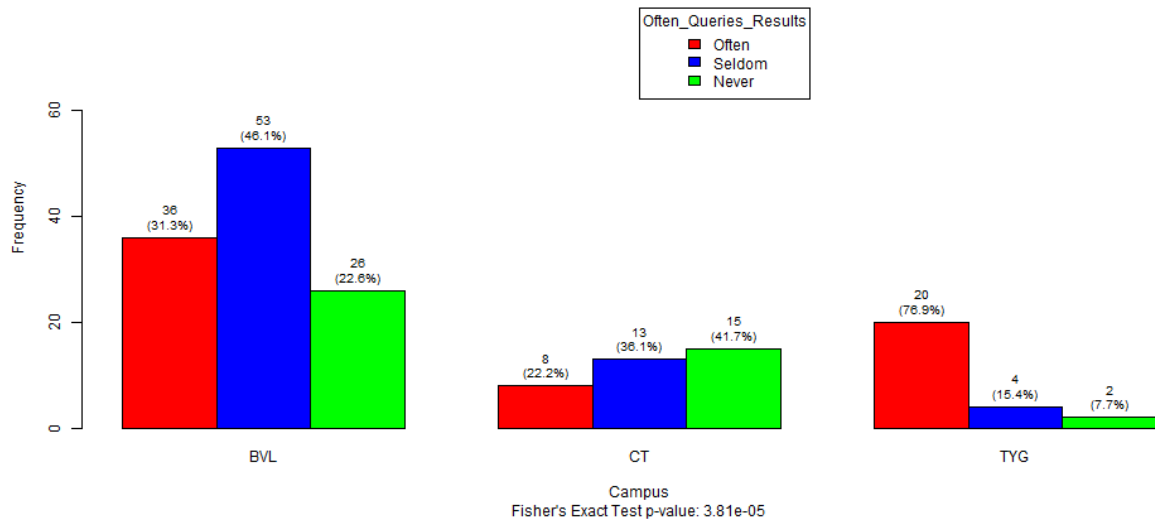
Figure 4.45: Often queries with results and campus

This comparison is between campuses and how often students have queries about academic results. Students in Tygerberg were more likely to indicate that they 'Often' have such queries, while for students in Cape Town Campus, 'Never' was the most common response.
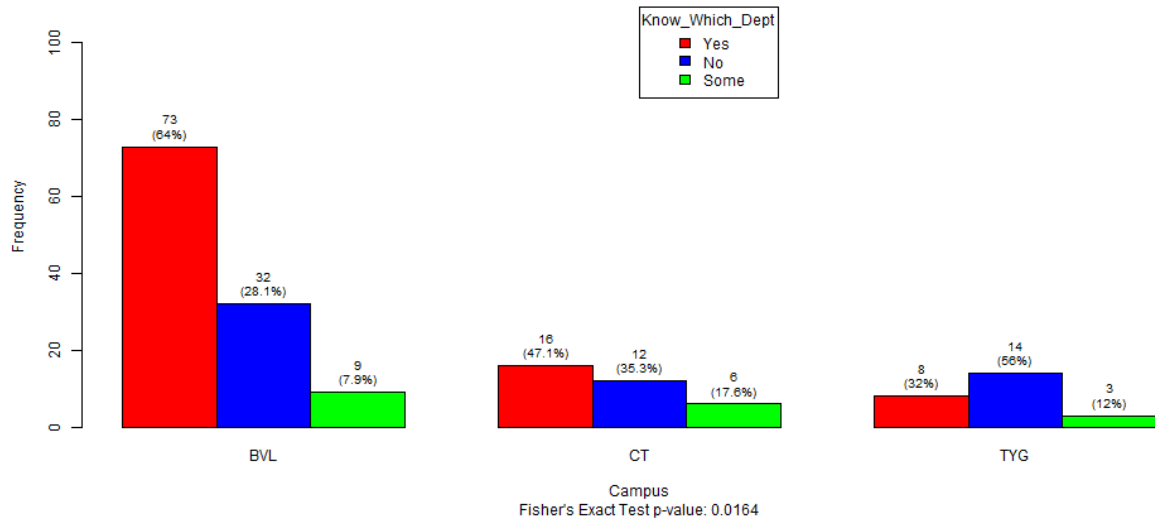
Figure 4.46: Know which department and campus

This comparison is between campuses and whether a student knows which department to go to with a specific query. The results indicate that about two-thirds of students in Bellville indicate 'Yes', they do know which department to go to, whereas in Cape Town less than half of the students said 'Yes', and in Tygerberg only about one-third of the students said 'Yes'.
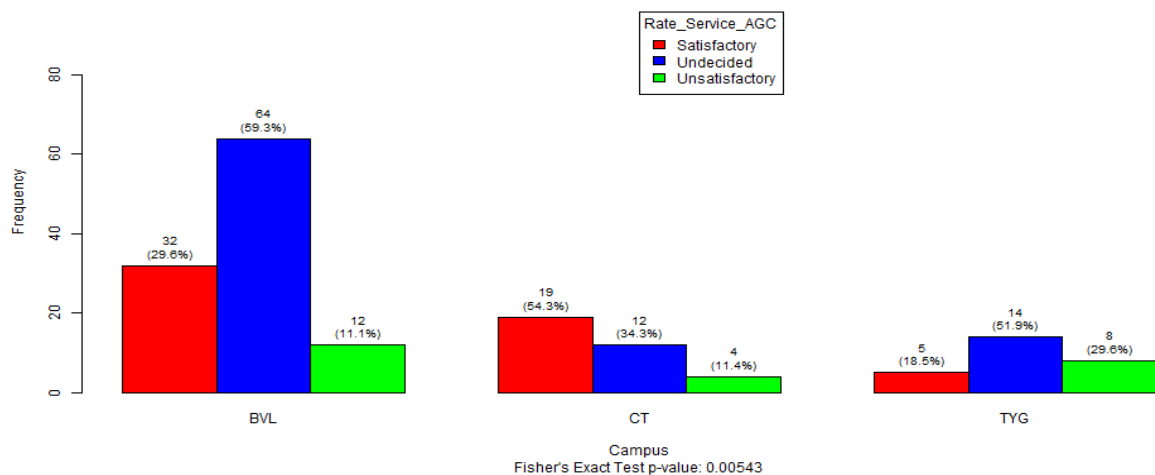
Figure 4.47: Rate service: AGC and campus

The final comparison is between campuses and satisfaction with the AGC's services. In Bellville and Tygerberg, the majority of students were undecided about whether the AGC's services were satisfactory, while in Cape Town the majority of students indicated that the AGC's services were satisfactory.

4.3   Analysis of Staff Interviews and Focus-Group Data

Students indicated their perspectives on the quality of services offered in the questionnaire as discussed in the previous section. How then do staff perceive the quality of services they offer? As administrative staff interacting with students on a daily basis, they also are able to give their impressions of the processes of student administration. To aid analysis
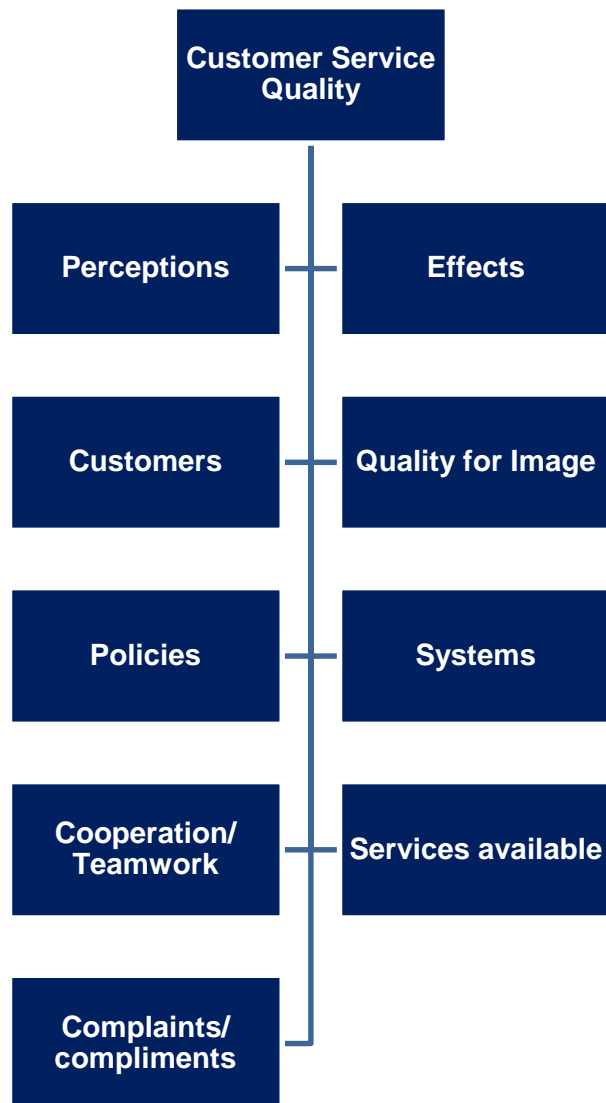
Figure 4.48: Open and axial coding of staff interviews and focus groups

4.3.1 Customers

Literature has highlighted that students are some of the main customers of the university, and staff members' responses are in agreement with this statement, that they serve students as their primary customers.

Responses:

Students and the outside public are primary customers; academics are secondary customers.

Key external customers are applicants; primary internal customers are registered students; and secondary internal customers are service units and faculties whom we serve, such as colleagues and academic staff.

Mostly students, parents, companies that are sponsoring students and external stakeholders as well.

Students, prospective students, parents of the applicants.

We provide support to the academics – administrative duties whereby we deal with them when the students request progress reports, change courses; the departments and academics are working together with the faculty so we can say they are our customers as well.

4.3.2 Perceptions of quality service

Perceptions and expectations of quality service offered at a university are explored in the statements extracted from interviews and the focus group below. Staff members understand that it is important to offer high-quality service to customers they serve; however, they themselves do not believe it is of acceptable standard.

Responses:

Our quality is basically very below standard. It has deteriorated over the years and it is purely based on the work ethic of the new generation.

I think we can improve on it but I must say that especially during registration we are not at our offices and our phones – that has got a big impact because most of our complaints come at that time – they are not available, they don't answer the phones. During the year I would say we do offer good service but I always think we can improve in some ways but generally we can improve in other sections as well but that is a work in progress – obviously it is going to take time.

In terms of service quality, we are lacking when it comes to customer service, we are not responding on time, our turnaround times are very bad, our handling of telephone queries are not of the best. We do need tools or rather systems to assist us in that regard.

No, I wouldn't say we provide good-quality service, because we get a lot of complaints. You receive a call, someone calls switchboard and they are referred to the wrong faculty. I think that

is the face of the university, the call centre, so once people call that call centre number they expect to be directed to the right section. It starts there and also [the] admissions department directs people somewhere else. I would say it needs a lot improvement.

4.3.3 Services available

There are a number of services that are in place to assist students and all stakeholders in a university; however, it is important for stakeholders to be aware of the available services to make use of them. It is expected that stakeholders get the opportunity to be informed of the services in an attempt to aid them in university life.

Some of the staff members who offer the services do not believe that stakeholders are aware of what is available to them.

Responses:

Not always, especially students; we find that during orientation available services are not fully explained, where to go for what; they sometimes are really clueless.

Yes, the information is on the website, but external customers may not know because they are not familiar with the website.

We do receive queries that are not supposed to be attended to by us, particularly if they were not correctly attended to by the call centre.

I don't think so because what we struggle with as the student debtors' department is that students don't know about settlement discounts and stuff like that, services that could benefit them, for example, so what we did this year was we were part of the open day. We have never been part of the open day before just encouraging students to know what is happening on the fees side so that they can make arrangements if they don't have a payment, settlement discounts, sibling discount and the staff waivers just to inform them about what we also do.

Sometimes they don't know the difference between the departments and the faculty; they send people to the faculty office whereas that person is supposed to go to the department.

4.3.4 Image

It is suggested that a person or department that is not customer oriented can weaken the image of the organisation, therefore the quality of services offered plays a significant role in protecting the image of the university. Staff, in their responses, believe that if they offer quality that is of the lower standard, the image of the university may be at risk.

Responses:

I'm not going [the] extra mile; it's not my baby, I deal with A to M, the person who deals with that is not in but the query is the same what happens between N and X is the same as what happens from A to M. It does, anything like that it's a negative, it doesn't affect that it'll really do much damage but it's only that one person out there that may meet a lot of people and what happened it's a simple thing, they couldn't get an answer for a simple question and then they portray [the] institution on what service they got.

Definitely, the reputation of the university is at risk. This you often get when you have an opportunity to interact with [the] marketing and communications department which has got permission to interact with [the] outside world. When they give you a written report about what people are saying, you get a feeling of how you're being rated outside. It does have a reputational damage. It is something that needs to be driven from the top.

I definitely think so because what we would experience is that students or even external customers would write to the highest person (VC, or executive director) about the query that was not attended to. In some cases the email was sent to the wrong person and that person ignored it, because it's not their department so they are not going to worry. Then they go higher up and it will come to the HOD again then we have to attend to them.

It is important because it is playing a big role; if the image is negative it will give [a] bad reflection to the stakeholders, parents and other people, not just to one person but because people want to study at the end of the year, it goes back to the problem, we are saying that we want to go paperless but we're still using a lot of paper, we are still printing out things, we are a university of technology by name, it's not working. Secondly people go up and down, from the entrance to the admin there's supposed to be clear signs where is this where is that, but it's not there, people ask and sometimes are stressful.

4.3.5 Effects on policies

Organisations have policies in place to guide stakeholders on each and every function and process. These policies should also support certain decisions related to a specific function, therefore stakeholders are required to adhere to them at all times. Do these policies have an effect on the quality of service offered? Staff members do not believe that the policies have an effect on the quality of service.

Responses:

Policies are quite clear, in actual fact we are not complying with what the policies say. The policy speaks of fairness and transparency, fairness in the sense that if you applied first you ought to be granted final selection first than the one who applied after you, and that is not the case unfortunately. So the policy is guiding us but compliance with that policy is non-existent.

We have policies but it's about managing the policies; you can have the policy, this country has the best constitution but it's not managed properly; we have everything on paper but if it's not managed properly it means nothing; we have things in place, interdepartmentally, we are not just talking externally, we're talking internally.

I do, the thing we struggle with is if our policies are tight and there's no loopholes then we can actually stick to what they are saying.

We try to follow the policies but sometimes there are inconsistencies, you sometimes have to go with what your senior says irrespective of what the policy is saying or even sometimes the policy would say you don't qualify for something but then if you write to the highest person then that person would approve and then you have to go with that. With the next person we go back to the policy but if the person does not write then he is disadvantaged, so that is something we need to improve on because it really does affect the service and people complain about that but what can we do because at the end of the day you need to do what you are told by seniors.

The policies are in order, but it's a question of following them and implementation because if you are talking about policies, [the] department of higher education will say we must accept people who meet the minimum requirements but at the end of the day you will get people that have been accepted, who do not meet the requirements for the qualification.

The policies are clear, but it's about adhering to the policies because the system also does not adhere to the policies which [makes it] easy to manipulate the system.

4.3.6 Effects on systems

Systems are meant to be the heart of operations for many organisations in their efforts to gain competitive advantage in the business world. In higher education, student-centred systems that allow processes continuously to improve and cater for the needs of stakeholders are crucial. Staff members are in agreement that systems may have an impact on the quality of services offered, therefore they need to improve.

Responses:

Absence of what they call CRM, [a] customer relationship management solution that can gather all the queries that we are getting, where must it go, who handles it: that is something that could really help us that we can monitor the type of calls per day per section, what was resolved and what was not resolved. With the absence of such, there's no recording of what is happening, therefore there's non-monitoring and non-attendance to the queries.

I think we can improve on systems. Like with ITS, we did a handover now to our debt collectors of students who are no longer registered that did not settle their debts but what we still find is that there are students that we missed when we did the handover.

The systems are worse than people, because it is the people who manipulate the systems which is human error that can happen anytime because we need to capture, we need to press the button for everything, the system doesn't work on its own here like at other universities. If a student wants to accept the offer of study they must print the form, they cannot just click to say 'yes', I would like to accept the offer. Most of [the] applicants do not get messages or emails that you are accepted – when can you come and register? The department or the faculty needs to follow up with those candidates that have been accepted to come and register and give out the days [on] which the university is supposed to at least have some information to send out to applicants.

4.3.7 Departmental cooperation and teamwork

Cooperation and effective teamwork are mandatory for centralised and interlinked functions in any organisation. All members of the team have a significant role to play in providing high-quality service to customers. Based on some of the participants' statements, this seems to be lacking in the university and has a great impact on service delivery.

Responses:

> Everything in academic support affects the other because it's interlinked and if somewhere along the line something is not done properly then it affects the end product and usually it starts at the beginning – registration at the faculty – they don't inform the students properly, they just want to get done and move on. Also informing that student, giving them more in-depth understanding of the service and process to follow for doing certain things and that is what the students don't know and that is what makes it frustrating and then you get the parents who phone and they don't know the full story and that is even more frustrating. It's about communicating to the student.

> It is very much important because particularly our work involves other stakeholders – you cannot do applications in one unit, it has to cut across divisions; for example. the person who is supposed to do the final selection is taking long, and that affects the end product.

> Transparency in terms of discussing core periods, when are you expected to respond or submit what is required is also vital, and adherence to that would really improve our turnaround time.

> Unfortunately, we have to send students to different sections and sometimes students don't understand; they almost think if they come to us then we must do everything for them. Therefore, we need to explain to them that this is our function – we can only do this part – for the next step you need to go to that; the other thing is that we don't know everyone in the faculties. I would always advise students that start with the secretary and she should refer you to the right person.

> It would be nice to have perhaps a workshop just to let other departments know, so that we can know other departments' functions.

> Teamwork needs improvement; ever since I started working here I have never heard anything about teambuilding workshops, I think we need that, how can we work as [a] team if there's no team building?

> In terms of work and processes, does it show that there's no teamwork? Because we go to the meetings [and] the departments will give you the numbers that do not correspond with the applications we have.

> One department, two people are doing selection, one diploma and one BTech. They are in the same office but diploma applications are signed and BTech is not signed, just written at the top. There is no teamwork at all, how can we be effective without teamwork? And that affects productivity because you have to contact the person again and sometimes people get offended when they are told they are wrong.

4.3.8   Complaints and compliments

Customers are likely to complain when services are not provided as promised or expected. In a highly competitive market, service delivery requires continuous improvement, whether it is the introduction of new structures or upgrading the current ones in an attempt to address customer expectations.

Compliments, on the other hand, may encourage staff to perform better; performance can then improve service delivery. Participant statements confirm that the university is no exception to this.

Responses:

> We get a combination of both compliments and complaints and we keep them; we have a record of genuine complaints. for example, someone who applied in May but still has not received [a] response, to me that is a genuine complaint. We also show them to management; we do not only show them what is good. we also show them the complaints and this what we have done.

> I think the compliments are more than complaints because people are happy that they are studying but not necessarily about service. There are people who really show their gratitude but they are not thinking about what they went through, they are happy that they are here.

> We get complaints more than compliments. Whenever I get a complaint and it is relating to another person, I wouldn't entertain the complaint but I will try to help the person where I can but sometimes it's difficult.

> Yes, we do and then we must try and soften it. As I say we are always the last line of defence, and then take the abuse.

> It is one of those rare moments, but the biggest compliment that I would say is that day at graduation when a student comes up to you and says 'Mom, Dad, this is Mr so and so', and you did one little thing for that student and they say 'Thank you' and then you say 'OK, this is what it's all about.' Those are the moments where you say 'OK, I think I can carry on.'

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1   Introduction

The results from the data collection were analysed and interpreted as presented in the previous chapter. In this chapter the focus is on discussion of key findings of the study. During the interpretation, the patterns below were created from the research questions that were part of data collection across the sample population groups.

The key findings from student questionnaires, interviews with administrative staff and the focus group with faculty office staff indicate interesting results.

5.2   Quality and Level of Service

The results show that a slight majority of students are satisfied with the quality of services offered during registration in the different sections dealing with registration; however, the results also show a high number of students who are not sure of the service as well as those who are not satisfied. They generally believe all sections involved with registration need improvement. Watjatrakul (2014:677) posits that service providers should ensure that service recipients experience good service encounters as they will share unpleasant experiences with others. Staff members' responses seem to support the above statement. They indicated that the quality of services offered is not of a good standard and requires a great deal of improvement.

5.3   Awareness of Services Available

The university has a number of services available to aid students throughout university life; however, the results show that they are unaware of the majority of these services. In this case, staff believe that the university should do more to create awareness of the services according to the specific functions. Pitman (2000:166) believes that how the customer of the service is defined is crucial, confirming the view the HEI takes of customers and consequently the service provided to them.

5.4   Impact of Policies and Systems

If customer care is central to growing a successful business, it is crucial to assess service problems and work to rectify or eradicate them to prevent customers defecting to a competitor (Helms & Mayo, 2008:612). Results have shown a considerable level of dissatisfaction with a system that is always down and with the slow process of registration that has resulted in students spending long times in queues. However, students still prefer online registration as opposed to manual registration, although some students would like assistance with certain aspects of registration. Staff share similar views as students: they believe systems could be better for the benefit of customers.

Nevertheless, staff believe the management, implementation and inconsistency in administering policies and not necessarily the policies themselves may cause customer dissatisfaction.

5.5   Impact on Studies

Inconsistency in service, as stated by Deming, is a primary cause of poor quality. When customers become irritated and disgruntled by variances in service delivery, this can taint the reputation of organisations (Redmond et al., 2008:433). Although a majority of respondents believe that lecturers somehow understand the challenges of registration, some students feel that this is not always the case. These challenges may have an unfavourable impact on their studies, when they miss classes and lose valuable study time.

5.6   Complaints and Compliments

Staff have indicated that from time to time they get complaints from dissatisfied stakeholders; however, there is no documented process on how to address them. Helms and Mayo (2008:610) are of the opinion that managers should have ability to forecast and perceive bad service delivery and consider complaints as suggestions to better manage and improve service. They further note that even though proper handling of complaints may have proved to improve customer service, studies are yet to analyse the benefit of proactively determining and preventing critical issues.

The overall results show that administrative services offered at the university have an impact on quality. Redmond et al. (2008:436) believe that organisations that are focused on continuous enhancement of their services are those who fully anticipate and respond to customer needs and potentially have competitive advantage over others.

5.7   Findings in Relation to the Objectives of the Study

5.7.1   Objective 1

To determine the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders of the quality of service.

The findings have shown that stakeholders perceive the quality of service to be at a low level and unsatisfactory, especially with regard to student administration and support. They based their opinions on their experiences during the admissions and registration period.

5.7.2   Objective 2

To identify and recommend areas that could be improved with regard to quality of service.

For level of quality service to improve, areas in student administration and support such as the admissions and registration centre, faculty office, student accounts, and assessment and graduation centre were identified and recommended for improvement.

5.7.3   Objective 3

To study the effect of quality on administrative services offered.

The study findings determined that administrative services offered have a number of undesirable effects in relation to quality, including systems in place and policy administration.

5.7.4   Objective 4

To determine the effect of departmental cooperation on administration procedures.

The findings have shown that lack of departmental cooperation on administration procedures affects the quality of services offered and that may in turn have a damaging impact on the image of the university.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1   Introduction

The aim of the study was to establish how administrative services offered to stakeholders within the faculty affect service delivery at a university of technology in the Western Cape, South Africa. The objective was to investigate the effects of administrative services offered to stakeholders by the faculty and all departments involved with admissions and registration.

The literature review provided insight into previous studies related to quality of administrative services, specifically stakeholders of higher education, perceptions of stakeholders, customer service quality, teamwork, and systems in higher education.

6.2   Recommendations

Literature and results are consistent in indicating that providing customer service quality requires a great deal of commitment from all stakeholders involved. The challenge is to change the views of students who believe the service is unsatisfactory, as well as the perceptions of those who are unsure, by improving the level of service. Staff members suggested a number of recommendations during the interviews and in the focus group to improve the quality of administrative services.

Monitoring and control

Monitoring of performance and control functions from line managers would encourage staff to improve the service offered to stakeholders, while this in turn might improve quality. This includes ensuring that policies are strictly administered and followed consistently. George (2003:36-37) contends that management in higher education must play a role in providing an empowering workplace that allows employees to perform their jobs efficiently and provide the necessary training, education and support.

Involvement of end users

It is recommended that administrators who work directly with students should be involved in discussion and feedback forums. This may give management perspective on challenges they come across during their interaction with customers. Administrative departments should be

involved in orientation to create awareness of services available and to encourage students to make use of the services at their disposal. Deming, in one his principles on quality, suggests that management should be open to ultimate change if it is to sustain itself in today's marketplace. Quality must become the primary focus. Poor quality service, delays, and errors are no longer acceptable. Employees who do not perform at their best and are too afraid to enquire reflect incompetent and inefficient supervision (Redmond et al., 2008:434).

Evaluation

As indicated above, that monitoring and control should be applied, it is also recommended that evaluation should follow. This would encourage staff to take more responsibility in providing good customer service. Customer service training has been provided; however, it has not been followed by monitoring and evaluation. Often process challenges and plans are not discussed with end users; instead they are discussed with managers who do not deal with issues first hand. Sometimes managers tend to be interested in staff performance only when complaints arise.

6.3   Conclusion

There is no doubt that administration is one of the major functions in higher education, therefore administrative staff should understand that the service they offer is a major part of university operations. The research findings suggest that overall, the slight majority of students based at main campuses in the faculty are satisfied with the quality of services offered at the university; however, students at the Tygerberg Campus seem to have different perceptions and experiences of the quality of services offered. These results may be because administrative service departments are based on main campuses; however, this also suggests that there is a great deal the institution should do to improve. Students across the three campuses included in the study clearly believe that they are main customers of the university.

On the other hand, staff are of the view that services they offer are below standard. This seems to be influenced by non-monitoring of performance and customer satisfaction, non-adherence to and management of policies, a significant level of uncertainty with regard to roles and responsibilities, as well as systems that are easily manipulated. Staff also indicate that they do their best to offer a high quality of service; however, lack of cooperation among departments and sections does not make it easy. The study also suggests that compliments and acknowledgement of good work may go a long way to increasing productivity and improving service and may also encourage employees to 'go the extra mile'.

6.4   Implications of Findings

The study sought to understand the impact of administrative services offered at a university of technology in South Africa. Having considered the participants' views, the call is to consider educating staff not only on customer service quality, but also on policies in place in an effort to implement them in their daily functions.

6.5   Limitations of the study

Literature on quality of administrative services in higher education particularly in South Africa is limited. Another limitation of the study was that it was conducted in one faculty, therefore conclusions from the entire institution could not be drawn.

6.6   Recommendations for Future Research

Future research extended to first-year students, other faculties and campuses is needed to explore the impact of administrative services across the university community. More research on quality of administrative services in higher education is needed.
Involving another higher education institution may aid in comparing administrative processes in the interest of benchmarking.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Questionnaire

<u>**INTRODUCTION TO QUESTIONNAIRE**</u>

Dear Student,

I, Nandipa Mfecane am doing research titled: "**Impact of the administrative services offered at a university of technology in South Africa".** I would like to learn about your experiences and perceptions on quality of service delivery in administrative processes specifically in registration, accounts, assessment and graduation centre. This exercise is in fulfillment of a dissertation for the Master of Technology in Office Management and Technology.

The purpose of this study is to determine:

- The perceptions and experiences of stakeholders on the quality of service they have received.
- Areas that could be improved so as to improve the quality of services delivered to customers.
- Effects of administration procedures on academic processes.
- Effect of departmental cooperation on administration procedures.

You are invited to participate in the study by completing the questionnaire relating to your experiences and perceptions on quality of service delivery in administrative processes. This should take about 15 minutes of your time, your responses will be anonymous and all the information will be kept confidential. Participation is voluntary, withdrawal from the study is acceptable at any time without consequences.

DATE: ....

LEVEL OF STUDY	1	2	3	4	5

AGE	16-20	21-25	25-30	30-35	35-40

GENDER	M	F

DEPARTMENT	EMS	NURSING	RADIO GRAPHY	BIOMED	DENTAL	SOMA TOLOGY	OPTHAL MIC

CAMPUS	BVL	CT	TYG

1. Who do you think the customer of the university is?

   _____

   _____

2. In your experience how would you rate the service you receive in the faculty office (Science building)?

GOOD	NOT SURE	BAD

3. What is the contact number of the faculty office (Science building)?

   _____

4. How often do you call this number?

OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER

5. Is the staff in the faculty office helpful and friendly?

YES	NO

6. Are you satisfied with the quality of service offered during registration?

YES	NO

7. How often do you encounter problem during registration

OFTEN	SELDOM	NEVER

8. What problems do you often encounter with registration?

   _____

   _____

9. Would you say the registration process is quick and easy?

   _____

10. In your experience how much time do you spend standing in the queues during registration?

_____

11. Do you receive and read the registration booklet?

| YES | NO |

If you read it, how does it help you?

_____

_____

12. Would you say staff in the registration points are well trained and informed?

_____

13. Would you say staff in the registration points are friendly and helpful?

_____

14. Do you prefer self-online registration to manual with faculty office support? If so, WHY?

_____

_____

15. How often do you have queries regarding your account and fees?

_____

_____

16. Do you get assistance with your account and fees queries?

_____

_____

17. How often do you have queries regarding your results?

_____

_____

18. Do you get assistance with your results queries?

_____

_____

19. Name services available to you that you know

(a) _____

(b) _____

(c) _____

(d) _____

20. Do you know which department or section to go to with a specific query?

_____

_____

21. How would you rate the quality of service you receive in the following departments?

	SATISFACTORY	UNDECIDED	UNSATISFACTORY
Faculty			
Accounts			
Assessment and graduation Centre			

22. Do you think your lecturers understand the registration problems you face?

_____

_____

23. How do the problems you face affect your studies?

_____

_____

24. Which area do you think need to improve for you to have a better experience?

Faculty		Assessment and graduation Centre	
Accounts			
Registration			

THANK YOU

Appendix B: Letter seeking approval

26 August 2015

Dr Chris Nhlapo
Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Technology, Innovation and Partnerships
Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Dear Dr Nhlapo

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Nandipa Mfecane, a student registered for MTech in Office Management and Technology, Department of Office Management and Technology under the supervision of Professor Chux Gervase Iwu.
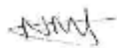
I am writing this letter as a formal request for permission to conduct research in a form of focus groups, interviews and questionnaire amongst Head of Departments, administrative staff members and students in the faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences.

The intended research project aims to answer the question "How do administrative services offered to stakeholders within the faculty affect the service delivery at a university of technology in the Western Cape South Africa?". The title of my research is "**Impact of the administrative services offered at a university of technology in South Africa**".

In higher education, administrative support functions are performed by various departments. Students are often unaware of the administration processes in place and the problems they might be faced with for the rest of their student life. They become aware of these processes once the difficulties arise. The focus of this study is on delivery of administrative services to students by the different service units in a university namely the registrar's office, finance and student services. I believe that the findings may play a role and contribute to the knowledge body and enhance the student life in a university. Recommendations will be made of areas that may be improved based on the findings.

Participation is voluntary and the students and staff will not be forced into participating in this study. The researcher will approach the participants to explain the aims, purpose and potential benefits of the study. Confidentiality of the research participants will be ensured by not identifying any participants by name, number or any other means that may be traceable to the participant. Data collected will be kept in a password protected computer in a locked office, and only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to this information.

Yours faithfully

_I am truly in support of this project.
I am her supervisor._

Appendix C: Ethics approval

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

P.O. Box 1906 • Bellville 7535 South Africa •Tel: +27 21 6801680 • Email: saliefa@cput.ac.za
Symphony Road Bellville 7535

| Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee | Faculty: | **BUSINESS** |

At a meeting of the Research Ethics Committee on 16 September 2015, Ethics Approval

was granted to MFECANE, NANDIPA (200606700) for research activities

Related to the **MTech/DTech**: MTech: OFFICE MANAGEMENT & TECHNOLOGY

at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

| Title of dissertation/thesis: | Impact of the administrative services offered at a University of Technology in South Africa

Supervisor: Ms F Mohsam |

Comments:

Decision: APPROVED

(signature)	16 September 2015
Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	Date
(signature)	01/10/2015
Signed: Chairperson: Faculty Research Committee	Date

Clearance Certificate No | 3) SFBR5C266

Appendix D: Consent form

<u>CONSENT FORM</u>

TITLE OF THE STUDY: Impact of the administrative services offered at a university of technology in South Africa

---

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY:

The quality of service can determine the type of experience of the stakeholder about the university. The experiences may be recurring and they may leave a lasting imprint of the university that could have a negative impact on it and its reputation. To make a student's experience pleasant, it is important for the staff to understand the significance of cooperation, service quality and consistency in order to deliver high quality service to stakeholders.

The aspects mentioned above may all be achieved with cooperation between the department and units involved and there may be a lot more aspects to consider including clear roles amongst the faculties and departments, interaction and ongoing wide communication for the workplace to function more effectively.

Your role in this study:

You are requested to participate by completing a questionnaire a mutually agreeable time. If you require clarity on any question, please feel free to ask. If any question/s make you feel uncomfortable you are welcome not to answer the question and move on to the next question.

All information will be treated as highly confidential; in the research paper you will not be referred to by name, or student number or any details that may identify you. By signing this consent form you agree to participate in this research study. You also acknowledge that you were not forced or coerced into participation, and that you may withdraw from the study at any time with no consequences.

If you have any questions you are welcome to contact myself or my research supervisors whose details appear below:

Nandipa Mfecane (MfecaneN@cput.ac.za) Professor Chux Iwu (IwuC@cput.ac.za)

INITIALS AND SURNAME: _____   SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Appendix E: Data-collection approval

Cape
Peninsula
University
of Technology

30 October 2018

Ms Nandipa Mfecane
Faculty of Business & Management Sciences
CPUT
Bellville
7535

Email: MfecaneN@cput.ac.za

Dear Ms Mfecane

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT CPUT

The Institutional Ethics Committee received your application entitled: "Impact of the administrative services offered at a University of Technology in South Africa" together with the dossier of supporting documents.

Permission is herewith granted for you to do research at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Wishing you the best in your study.

Sincerely

5/11/2018

APPROVED
Chair Senate Ethics Committee

3 0 OCT 2018

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology