Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

AN INTEGRATION OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING
AT A HOTEL SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN

by

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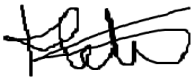
# DECLARATION

I, Kate Lategan, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation 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.

**28 October 2022**

**Signed**                                                          **Date**

# ABSTRACT

In South Africa and globally, higher educational institutions are responsible for the development of graduate attributes, which should be incorporated during academic teaching to produce employable graduates. Graduate attributes are high level skills and qualities that aid in the employment of students after graduation. A challenge at a university of technology's (UoT) hotel school in Cape Town is that there is not sufficient awareness of what these graduate attributes are and how lecturers and academic instructors can embed them into teaching and learning practices. The UoT's hotel school offers theoretical hospitality management subjects taught by lecturers and practical subjects through the training of restaurant and kitchen instructors. For the purpose of this study, all academic, restaurant and kitchen instructors shall be referred to as lecturers.

The aim of this study was to determine which teaching and learning practices would be most valuable for the effective integration of graduate attributes into core subjects to enhance student success during Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and employment in the hospitality industry. At the UoT's hotel school, within the hospitality management studies, subjects like restaurant operations and WIL provide the students with field specific attributes needed by the hospitality industry. The study was constructed using descriptive research design, which used a quantitative approach and a convenience sampling method. The population for this study was twofold: third- and fourth-year hospitality management students eligible for WIL placement and registered for the course in 2021, and lecturers that taught one or more subjects offered in the hospitality management curriculum. Questionnaires developed with were Google Forms used to collect data, circulated via email and the social media platform, WhatsApp. The respondents consisted of 67 students and 13 lecturers. Data collected were extrapolated using Google Forms and analysed using SPSS version 28. An additional data analysis software program, ATLAS.ti, was used to code and analyse text-based data and to convert the test-based data into quantitative data for further analysis. ATLAS.ti additionally created data analytics for the study, which aided the researcher to match themes and trends in the data.

The data revealed that the majority of students (76%) and some lecturers (39%) do not have a clear understanding of the term *graduate attributes* or their individual meanings. The researcher identified that most students (85%) felt communication was an important skill to learn during their studies and develop during WIL. A noteworthy discovery from the students' responses was their general belief that technology is not an essential graduate attribute. In addition, the students' understanding of integrity is misconstrued and therefore perceived as unimportant. Without consensus on the concept and individual meanings of graduate

attributes, the students will continue to struggle with the development of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school. Thirty eight percent of the lecturers agreed that to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning, more time is required with the students to test and observe the attributes in group activities such as class discussions or group assignments. Furthermore, the lecturers' responses revealed that there is no uniformity for embedding the UoT's graduate attributes into teaching and learning. Without formal pedagogic guidelines and training for the transference of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects, challenges of integration into teaching and learning will remain.

The study recommends the encouragement of student accessibility to information regarding graduate attributes, and planned webinars should be developed throughout the year at the UoT for all students at all levels of study. In addition, workshops or open discussions need to be established for lecturers to brainstorm collectively to create guidelines for the best pedagogic practices to embed graduate attributes at the hotel school.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# DEDICATION

In loving memory of my late father, Ockert Stephanus Lategan.

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# ACRONYMS

| Acronym | Full Word / Term |
|---------|------------------|
| CHE | Council on Higher Education |
| CHEC | Cape Higher Education Consortium |
| HEQF | Higher Education Qualifications Framework |
| HESA | Higher Education South Africa |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications |
| TEQSA | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency |
| PHIPD | Protea Hotels Institute for Professional Development |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| QEP | Quality Enhancement Plan |
| QLFS | Quarterly Labour Force Survey |
| WIL | Work Integrated Learning |
| UoT | University of Technology |

# DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

| Key Concept | Definition |
|---|---|
| **GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES** | Barrie (2012) explains that graduate attributes are "the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students would desirably develop during their time at the institution and consequently, shape the contribution they are able to make to their profession and as a citizen". Each South African institution of higher education has built its own exclusive list of desired graduate attributes (CHE, 2013). |
| **GRADUATENESS** | Graduateness is simply explained as the significance of the personal and academic advancement of graduates produced by tertiary institutions, and the magnitude of the skills and attributes they bring to the labour market (Coetzee, 2012). The graduate attributes outlined at the UoT approves that universal graduate attributes or graduateness are consequently those "qualities, skills and understandings that a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution" (Coetzee, 2012; Council on Higher Education, 2013). |
| **GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS** | The notion of graduate employability is made around a set of multifaceted and varied skills, qualities and personal attributes thought to make a person more attractive to potential employers and to be successful in the workforce (Kleynhans & Roeloffze, 2018). According to Kleynhans and Roeloffze (2018), business owners have put substantial focus on personal attributes that will contribute to graduates attaining an occupation in general. Personal attributes preserved in this context are "loyalty, commitment, honesty and integrity, enthusiasm, reliability, personal presentation, common sense, positive self-esteem, a sense of humour, a balanced attitude, an ability to deal with pressure, highly motivated and very flexible". |
| **WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)** | WIL can be defined as an activity or described as a programme that integrates the academic learning of a course with its submission in the working environment. These activities or programmes integrate the theory of a specific course with the practice (Kleynhans & Roeloffze, 2018). WIL is considered the key strategy for promoting key attribute absorption into students, which, in turn, aids in graduate employment in the hospitality industry (Zegwaard et al., 2017). |
| **THEORETICAL CONTENT** | Theoretical content forms the foundation of knowledge for subject matter in a curriculum and the initial stage of instilling and introducing graduate attributes into teaching and learning in higher education (Barrie, 2007). Several problems have been studied in the higher education literature concerning graduate attributes. These comprise methods of implementing, such attributes within, across and outside syllabi. Research shows that combined with resilient guidance from senior management and institutional empowering structures, the placement of required skills and good graduate attributes can allow for easy transference into theoretical outcomes and content (De la Harpe & David, 2012). |

| Key Concept | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| **ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES IN SUBJECTS** | Testing for graduate attributes repeatedly precedes the arrangement of activities such as formative and summative assessments directed within the confines of industry-specific courses or modules. Practices continue to be undisputed and unopposed because of their extensive association to specific disciplines (Barrie, 2007). Possibly the largest constraint of current practice is that graduate attributes are often evaluated for, rather than in a discussion format with the students. The top objectives of graduate attribute assessment plans can be unsuccessful if students are not informed of these goals and if they are not dynamically involved as partners in teaching and learning practices (Barrie, 2006). |
| **COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHE)** | The South Africa Council on Higher Education (CHE) recognises that graduate attributes are leaning in the direction of unalike disciplines and different types of industries, "but also encompass values, attitudes, critical thinking, ethical and professional behaviour, and the capacity of a graduate to take what has been learnt beyond the site of learning" (CHE, 2013). |
| **LECTURER** | A lecturer or academic instructor can be defined as a teacher who delivers lectures by profession at a college, UoT or other institutions of higher learning (CED, 2022). At the UoT's hotel school, a combination of hospitality management theoretical and practical subjects is taught by lecturers and academic/restaurant instructors in the hotel school's restaurant. For the purpose of this study, the term *lecturer* has been used to represent both academic instructor and lecturer to reduce misunderstanding. |

# CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1    Introduction

In South Africa and internationally, higher educational institutions are responsible for the development of graduate attributes, which should be incorporated during academic teaching to produce employable graduates. Graduate attributes are high-level skills and qualities that aid the employment of students after graduation (Bitzer & Withering, 2020). A challenge at a University of Technology (UoT) in Cape Town is that there is not sufficient awareness among lecturers of what graduate attributes are or how it can be embedded into teaching and learning practices. According to Mashiyi (2015) and Bitzer and Withering (2020), the lack of conceptual clarity among lecturers about the term *graduate attributes* is a not a new phenomenon; however, the challenge remains a concern for many universities. Oliver and Jorre (2018) reiterate this concern and explain that lecturers in South Africa and globally have mixed conceptions about the term *graduate attributes* and how to instil these in their curriculum. Bitzer and Withering (2020) explain that a misconception among lecturers of the concept of graduate attributes will negatively affect the integration of these attributes into teaching and learning.

There remains an unclear solution to a significant debate between hospitality industry professionals and academics in higher education with regard to which graduate attributes or qualities will lead to hospitality management students' success in the hospitality industry, and how they should be instilled during their time at a hotel school (Chau & Cheung, 2017). Hospitality employers believe that passion for the hospitality industry and a personality that fits into their culture and brand are key attributes sought after during recruitment of hospitality management graduates, both of which are intrinsic traits and could be developed through good teaching and exposure to the hospitality industry (Sonnenschein et al., 2018).

This study is based in Cape Town within the Western Cape Province, focusing on a hotel school that is affiliated with a UoT. During students' academic programme at the hotel school, they experience different forms of teaching, learning and pedagogical practises, such as outcome-based learning in academic classes, practical activities in their cooking classes in culinary studies, and practical classes in the hotel school's restaurant. Students complete two six-month practical in-service internships as part of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) subject. This is where the student trains as a trainee hospitality manager in the hospitality industry (Seager, 2018).

Teaching and learning can take many forms, such as theoretical, practical, and on-the-job training. According to Biggs (2014), the use of various pedagogical approaches and a constructive alignment approach allows "learning to take place through the active behaviour of the student: it is what he/she does that he/she learns, not what the lecturer does". Biggs' constructive alignment approach is a design for teaching whereby the lecturer recognises that "knowledge is constructed by the activities of the learner" (Biggs, 2014), which results in a well-rounded and successful student during their time at university and later as a graduate entering the hospitality industry (Chau & Cheung, 2017). The researcher conducted research at the UoT's hotel school to establish current teaching and learning methods used to instil graduate attributes into teaching and learning, and in addition, to determine which teaching and learning practises would be most effective for the embedding of graduate attributes into core subjects and enhance student success during WIL and employment in the hospitality industry.

WIL creates a link between higher education and the hospitality industry as lecturers and the hospitality industry mentors can teach and evaluate the necessary skills obtained from a practical perspective (Sonnenschein et al., 2018). Developing skills during WIL, such as communication, interpersonal and the development of emotional intelligence, allows the students to experience the day-to-day and real-life challenges of the hospitality industry (Seager, 2018).

Nell and Bosman (2017) found in their study that lecturers often understood what generic graduate attributes were but did not have a clear understanding of their university graduate attributes. They felt that research conducted through fieldwork questionnaires and workshops pertaining to lecturers' perception of graduate attributes would break down the general misunderstandings of these graduate attributes and create awareness on how to integrate them into academic classes. This would assist in developing teaching and learning techniques to integrate graduate attributes into academic classes, thereby leading to a better understanding of their university graduate attributes. Nell and Bosman (2017) admitted that they still do not know how to transfer the attributes into their theoretical and practical subjects. According to Moalosi et al. (2012), many universities in South Africa and in other African countries have restructured their curriculum to integrate graduate attributes into teaching and learning. This technique allows universities to develop new teaching and learning tactics, which promote the transference and practicality for specific graduate attributes required for employment in the workforce (Moalosi et al., 2012).

The central emphasis of this study was to review how a UoT's graduate attributes are currently being integrated into the core subjects at the hotel school, and how suitable

teaching and learning methods used consistently should ensure students' success during WIL and graduates' success in the hospitality industry. Although several studies have been conducted (Barrie, 2006; Hager & Holland, 2006; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017) in South Africa and globally regarding what graduate attributes are and how to implement them, many failed to identify why lecturers struggle to be consistent in pedagogical methods of graduate attributes (De la Harpe & David, 2012).

## 1.2    Problem statement

Research has shown (Barrie, 2005, 2006; Bester, 2014; Jackson, 2015) that UoTs and career-focused higher education institutions are concerned with graduate unemployment and the alleged discrepancy between graduates and the needs of the hospitality industry (CHE, 2013). According to the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the issue of graduate attributes has been a leading topic among institutions of higher education, with the challenge of consistently meeting the demands of the workforce in South Africa. This has placed enormous pressure on institutions of higher education to improve themselves and ensure that they achieve one of their main objectives, namely the effective graduation of students with excellent graduate attributes (CHE, 2013). Higher Education South Africa (HESA) and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) agreed that the certainty of a 21st century information-based world requires tertiary institutions to produce graduates who can be proactive and contribute to a growing  internationalised world and South Africa's economic system (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

During the academic calendar year, students are exposed to theoretical and practical subjects, namely the theory that will equip them to be hospitality managers in the nearby future and a practical element by exposing them to real life work scenarios, hence the addition of WIL (Bridgstock, 2009). WIL is a practical subject, which is part of the curriculum at a hotel school in Cape Town. The subject comprises six-month intensive periods of practical experiences where students are trained by hospitality professionals in the hospitality field. Students complete WIL at the beginning of their second year and then again in the final semester of their third year of the Hospitality Management diploma (Seager, 2018).

WIL has its merits and is vital in preparing hospitality management students for the hospitality industry; however, students frequently have challenges during their WIL placements as they often lack certain working readiness skills and attributes that are required for a successful placement (Sonnenschein et al., 2018). Graduate attributes and qualities needed for WIL are both generic, for example, teamwork and communication, and then discipline specific, for example, where a student is required to prepare and serve a beverage to hotel guests. Students in general struggle to handle situations such as guest complaints,

or conflict with a manager or colleague (Jackson, 2015). The hotel school's graduate attributes focus on students developing the technical abilities they will need in every aspect of the workforce and having the ability to work in a team with people of different cultures (CPUT, 2017). The hotel school's graduate is a lifelong learner who promotes diversity, valuable research and positive levels of communication necessary to solve difficult problems in society and in any work environment in a democratic and ethical manner (CPUT, 2017).

The hospitality industry looks for graduates from hotel schools and other institutions of higher education that offer hospitality industry academic programmes that promote the transference of specific qualities and attributes during teaching and learning modules (Weber et al., 2013). The qualities, skills and personal attributes required in the hospitality industry are "verbal communication, written communication, problem solving, conceptual and analytical thinking, information management, teamwork, leadership, social networking skills, adaptability, self-management, lifelong education and understanding of different hospitality operating software programs" (Kavanagh & Leong, 2013).

Although several studies have been conducted in this field of study (Barrie, 2006, 2012; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017), there remains a problem with the absorption of graduate attributes during contact time with university students in practical subjects such as WIL, and also in other core subjects (Moalosi et al., 2012). Lecturers do not understand how to define graduate attributes in terms of teaching and learning, thus creating a challenge with the consistency of integrating graduate attributes into all subjects. In response to this issue, the study aimed to evaluate current teaching and learning methods used to embed graduate attributes into all core subjects at a hotel school in Cape Town, thereby establishing whether they are successful or not (Barrie, 2007). Core subjects used in the hospitality industry programmes at a hotel school in Cape Town are Hospitality Management, Food and Beverage Management, Hospitality Information Systems, WIL, Restaurant Operations, Hospitality Law, Hospitality Financial Accounting, Hospitality Research, Culinary Theory and Practical (CPUT, n.d.).

## 1.3    Rationale of the research

There is a concern regarding the challenges of employability of university graduates locally and internationally, as the standard of recruitment selection is becoming more specific and competitive about the standards of employing graduates with specific industry skills (Botha, 2021). Mainga et al. (2022), in their study based at the College of Business, University of the Bahamas, found it evident while conducting the literature review that several employers globally had voiced dissatisfaction with undergraduate level graduates' skill sets in relation to industry needs. Mainga et al. (2022) reiterated the recruitment challenges expressed by the

workforce, noting that several studies were conducted in South Africa and across many countries around the globe:

> "The mismatch between the knowledge graduates acquire at university and skills required by the labour market has been found in studies in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Germany, Italy, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Portugal, Vietnam, India, China, Bangladesh, and others" Mainga et al. (2022).

Universities have the challenge of developing work-ready graduates by means of instilling knowledge during classes, assessments, and WIL (Jackson, 2015). University graduates entering the workforce require soft skills and several non-industry specific skills, which ensure that graduates can keep up with the ever-changing trends and issues in the hospitality and tourism industry (Weber et al., 2013).

Academic staff and WIL placement partners should support students' core discipline expertise and encourage students to cultivate their desire for knowledge and learning. Students should take the initiative to seek out ways to understand and improve their attitude towards knowledge and learning (University of Edinburgh, n.d.). Research has shown that although lecturers agree with the importance of graduate attributes, many find it challenging because of time constraints and lack of training, to integrate these skills into practise through the integration of the required skills into classes and assessments (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Bester (2014) explains:

> "The invisible and elusive character of curriculum creates difficulties for academics who wish to embrace the challenge of preparing students for a changing world by embedding graduate capabilities into their teaching practice. This is compounded by the fact that, based on several research projects over the past decade, it is evident that academics have different conceptions and orientations of curriculum."

The benefits of the study are:
- To identify best methods of practice for implementing graduate attributes into all core subjects at a hotel school, which should develop students into graduates with the desired qualities needed for the hospitality industry.
- The researcher anticipates that the hotel school's reputation shall be positively affected by ensuring hospitality management students are equipped with the necessary graduate attributes that should aid their employability after graduation.
- The researcher foresees that improved methods of integrating graduate attributes into teaching and learning should result in enhanced experiences for students during WIL. This in turn may result in future employability of students, which should positively impact on the student and the hospitality industry partner.

## 1.4    Objectives of the research

The following objectives guided the research study:

- To review a UoT's hotel school's current teaching and learning practises used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects.
- To evaluate the students' embedded graduate attributes in the hospitality industry, specifically attained during WIL.
- To review the academic staff at the hotel school's perception of the graduate attributes required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.
- To identify the hotel school's students' perception of which graduate attributes are required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.

WIL assists by developing the necessary qualities, skills, and knowledge required for the hospitality industry in real life working scenarios. The reinforcement of these qualities, skills, and knowledge during WIL aids with instilling the graduate attributes that the hotel school aims to embed during teaching and learning, hence the study's emphasis on WIL (Zegwaard et al., 2017).

## 1.5    Aim of the research

The aim of this study was to establish which teaching and learning practices aid with the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects and improve student success during WIL and future employment in the hospitality industry.

## 1.6    Research questions (RQs)

RQ1:    What teaching and learning practices are currently in use to instil graduate attributes and which teaching and learning methods will improve the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school?

RQ2:    Which graduate attributes do students gain in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL?

RQ3:    Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's lecturers perceive as paramount for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

RQ4:    Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's students perceive as vital for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

## 1.7 Hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school and students' performance in the hospitality industry and specifically during WIL.

## 1.8 Literature review

Embedding transferable graduate attributes and skills required for employment in teaching and learning is a process performed during several stages of student development. It must be executed in a particular form of corrective and pedagogical context and requires the mindfulness, willingness and capability of all participants involved (Pillay et al., 2019). Inclusion and development of graduate skills and attributes have received little attention in the South African context, and internationally, implementation has been inconsistent (Pillay et al., 2019).

Bowden et al. provide a comprehensive, yet valuable explanation of the term *graduate attributes*.

> "Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future" (Bowden et al., 2000, cited by Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

Bitzer and Withering (2020) explain that with this definition, it may be perceived that graduate attributes are those qualities a higher education institution would want their students to graduate with; however, it might not necessarily be embedded within the tertiary institution syllabus. These qualities or attributes can be unique for each student as no student learns in the same way; their personal experiences will be impacted by their different learning experiences encountered at different universities.

Barrie (2007) explicates that graduate attributes concentrate on producing students with analytical minds and a persistent interest in learning. These attributes are becoming more important for specialised and personal participation in the hospitality and tourism industry (Barrie, 2007). These skills and qualities include the industry specific know-how or practical knowledge that has by tradition influenced the fundamental part of most tertiary institutions' programmes. They are abilities that also assist in the preparation of transforming graduates into professionals with morally sound practices in this era of transformation and sustainability (Barrie, 2007).

The hospitality and tourism industry requires graduates who are adaptable and possess several qualities and skills essential for stressful hotel and restaurant environments. Exposing students to both theoretical and practical learning and assessments is vital as it not only covers different teaching and learning styles, but also allows students to have a transparent "real life" understanding of how difficult the hospitality and tourism industry can be (Seager, 2018). Unfortunately, although there is a cognizant agreement of the importance of integrating graduate attributes into theoretical subjects and WIL by lecturers at tertiary institutions, there are failings with the uniformity of practice into theoretical and practical subjects and a clear understanding of universities' graduate attributes (De la Harpe & David, 2012).

### 1.8.1    Graduate attributes

Graduate attributes have been defined in academic studies and literature at tertiary intuitions as the generic skills graduates should portray. Collectively, they comprise terms such as: graduate qualities, graduate attributes, competencies or employability or soft skills; outcomes; generic attributes; transferable and key capabilities (Barrie, 2006).

When matching descriptions of graduate attributes across several institutions of higher education and disciplines, they commonly include industry specific-based information, practice, and follow through (Bridgstock, 2009). Hospitality industry professionals and institutions of higher education hope that graduates have gained industry specific skills and industry specific knowledge during their time at university. This has remained a crucial area in institutions of higher education programme outcomes (Bridgstock, 2009).

### 1.8.2    Graduate attributes at a hotel school in Cape Town

CPUT's (2017) Teaching and Learning report states that a graduate should have an understanding of society and the enhancement of humanity rather than just safeguarding the welfare and improvement of themselves. The UoT graduate should be able to involve, identify, and acknowledge the concerns of others in their everyday working life (CPUT, 2017). The hotel school graduate attributes focus on strengthening the abilities necessary for technological capabilities, such as critical and rational standpoints in the use of technology and being able to recognise the difficulty of problem solving in society. At the hotel school, a combination of hospitality management subjects such as restaurant operations and WIL provide the students with specialised field-specific attributes. Students are taught specific qualities required by the hospitality industry (CPUT, 2017).

All tertiary graduates require a comprehensive range of attributes and skills to make a constructive difference in their local and international communities. These attributes are reinforced by a range of transferable skills employers look for when they recruit people and

which can be developed through assessments and practical experiences (Barrie, 2006). In the South African context, Griesel and Parker (2009) explain that in conjunction with a baseline study conducted by HESA and their own study, it was established that the need for graduate attributes in higher education would always play a significant role in developing work-ready graduates. The South African government and its workforce continue to demand employable graduates equipped with the necessary skills, values, and qualities to work in the labour market and boost the economy in South Africa (Griesel & Parker, 2009).

As a value and standard regulation process, the Australian Government has used its Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA, formerly AUQA) not simply as a viewed description of graduate attributes but also as a vital constituent of higher education programmes. They have also noticed an extremely important need to ensure that the graduates have attained these important core qualities and that by stressing graduate attributes, there is an enhancement of the graduate's performance in the workforce and teaching and learning (Barrie, 2012).

During their academic time, students at the hotel school are involved in different forms of pedagogical practices. These include traditional theoretical subject-based lectures, practical application by working in the hotel school's restaurant and kitchen where "real life" situations may be experienced, and during WIL placements. The integration of graduate attributes in tertiary education and WIL prepares the students for the working world (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Green et al. (2009) explain that it is reasonable to require that each industry specific programme at higher education institutions be accountable for "conceptualising, mapping, designing, implementing and assessing graduate attributes and that by now it should be clear that adopting a holistic, embedded model for the development of graduate attributes requires a whole-of-university approach to planning and implementation".

### 1.8.3   Challenges of embedding graduate attributes into curriculum

Embedding transferable graduate attributes and skills required for employment in syllabus learning and formative or summative assessment design is a process done during several stages of student development. It needs to be executed in a particular form of corrective and pedagogical context and requires the mindfulness, willingness and capability of all participants involved (Pillay et al., 2019).

Inclusion and development of graduate skills and attributes have received a small amount of attention in the South African context, and internationally, implementation has been inconsistent (Pillay et al., 2019). Guidelines for embedding these skills and attributes are often unclear and lack specifications. There is a need for frameworks to embed the skills and

attributes in curricula, and for learning and assessment design at the different HEQF levels (Coetzee, 2012).

## 1.9   Delimitation of study

- Hospitality third- and fourth-year hospitality management students studying at the UoT's hotel school who completed a WIL placement in 2021 participated in this study.
- Core subject lecturers, restaurant and kitchen lecturers at the UoT's hotel school participated in this study.

## 1.10   Research design

The nature of this research design was twofold. During stage one, the researcher explored the current teaching and learning methods in place at the hotel school and reviewed best practices to establish what impact it has on the success of students during practical learning in WIL and in the hospitality industry. During stage two, the concept of graduate attributes of both the students and the lecturers was explored.

The researcher built the general research plan and objectives by creating a research design that merged the different components of the study in a coherent and practical manner. The use of a data collection tool such as questionnaires allowed the researcher to gain insight into information from a significant number of the study's selected population. The use of questionnaires allowed for the in-depth analysis of a far larger number of variables in contrast to a qualitative tool such an interview or focus group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To test the validity of the questions used for the questionnaire for the students at the hotel school, a pilot study was conducted with a selection of hospitality management students at the hotel school to test the success of the questionnaire. This was done at the beginning of August 2021 to provide the researcher with a better understanding of what challenges may result from questions posed in the research questionnaire sent to the third- and fourth-year hospitality management students at the hotel school in 2021.

The researcher then approached the third years' in September 2021, students who had completed their first WIL and were in the process of preparing themselves for their second WIL placement at the end of their third year. In addition to the to the third-year students, the researcher asked the fourth-year students who completed two WIL placements to inquire if they would partake in the study. The researcher aimed to establish their understanding and experiences regarding graduate attributes and a successful WIL placement. Furthermore, researcher aimed to establish what they believed assisted them in completing a successful WIL programme and gaining future employment.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish opportunities to improve the integration of said attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school and to improve students' performance in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL placements. The questionnaire was given to lecturers at the hotel school to review teaching and learning practices used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused a destructive impact on the South African hospitality and tourism economy with major financial complications (South African Government, 2021). Arguably, the local effects of the pandemic were the hardest felt particularly in those parts of South Africa where tourism is a critical sector of the local economy (South African Government, 2021). In South Africa, the most vulnerable to the collapse of the hospitality and tourism industry was due to the thinning out of specific forms of tourism, such as in domestic and international travel, leisure and business travel, and the restrictions created during lockdown periods (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

The above challenges had a serious impact on the collection and review of quantitative data for this study as the number of hospitality management students accepted for WIL placements was limited because of the lack of placement opportunities caused by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 1.11 Population

The study population was threefold:
- Third-year registered students from the three hospitality management courses offered at the hotel school, namely, Accommodation Management, Food and Beverage Management, and Professional Cookery, who met the criteria of completing a WIL placement in 2021.
- Fourth-year Advanced Diploma students who completed two WIL placements in 2020 as third-year students, as required to enter their fourth year of study in 2021.
- Lecturers at the hotel school who taught one or more of the core subjects from all three courses of hospitality management offered at the hotel school in 2021.

Participants could be of any age, gender and ethnicity. The students in this study were only hospitality management students from the UoT's hotel school, not all students enrolled in other courses within the UoT.

## 1.12 Research methodology

In this study, the research adopted a positivist paradigm, as it was the most suitable way for the researcher to frame and strengthen the study to allow for the identification and description of what the UoT's hotel school pedagogy was for integrating graduate attributes

into teaching and learning. According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), a positivist approach requires the researcher to remain objective and observe independently (Nickerson, 2022). Positivism has the viewpoint that reality exists independently of humans and that the ontological position of positivists is that of realism. A positivist researcher attempts to understand the social world as the natural world, for example, in nature there is a cause-effect relationship between phenomena, and once it is found, they can be predicted with confidence in the future (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The same applies to positivism in regard to the social world – because reality is context free, different researchers working in different places or times will come to the same conclusions about a given phenomenon (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The epistemological position of positivism is taking on the role of an objective observer to analyse phenomena that exist independently of them and do not affect what is being observed. Positivist researchers will use language and symbols to describe phenomena in their real form, as they exist, without any interference (Nickerson, 2022). By taking a positivist approach, research tools and actions such as using questionnaires and a hypothesis will allow the researcher to observe and describe the necessary outcomes needed to embed graduate attributes in core hospitality industry subjects from the perception of students and lecturers without manipulating the variables (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

A quantitative method was used in the study as the researcher aimed to achieve a thorough understanding of personal perceptions of both students and lecturers at the hotel school by reviewing their responses in the online questionnaires. The researcher anticipated that this would enable detailed measuring of participants' ideas through assessing the numerical value of responses and indicating whether the count is high or low. Although some aspects of this study could indicate characteristics of a qualitative or mixed-method approach, the questionnaires contained a very small selection of open-ended styled questions. This allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of both the students and the lecturers' perspective of graduate attributes and which graduate attributes they felt will contribute to a student's success during WIL.

The use of online questionnaires in this study made it easier to collect the data in the best way possible for the study and the hotel school by saving time and not disrupting academic activities or operational time from the restaurant and kitchen-based lecturers. Online questionnaires are the most general way of reviewing the understanding and attitudes from a large sample and are user friendly for both the researcher and participant (Mcleod, 2018).

### 1.12.1 Piloting of student questionnaire

A pilot study was directed by the researcher with a small selection of students at the hotel school who attended and completed a hospitality management short course over a five-week

period in August 2021. This enabled the researcher to establish the credibility and reliability of the questionnaire for all hospitality management students at the hotel school. The short course students were requested to complete the pilot questionnaire, which was conducted to establish the practicality and understandability of the questionnaire, and whether it was realistic (Mcleod, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the purpose of a pilot study is to review whether the results meet the study's objective.

### 1.12.2 Student questionnaire

The student questionnaire consisted of one open-ended question to establish the students understanding of graduate attributes and then leading them to detailed questioning, consisting of close-ended questions for the remainder of the questionnaire. The close-ended questions and Likert-type scaled questions had a rating scale developed to quantify attitudes. This was done by asking students and lecturers to respond to different types of statements to establish graduate attributes and to establish to what level the students agreed that they were developing graduate attributes during their studies and WIL. The Likert-type questions are valued on a five-point scale: From number one to five, scaling the students' level of agreement (Vanek, 2012). This type of scale was selected as it is used frequently with people in human science studies, due to the ease of use and how participants can indicate their like or dislike of a statement (Vanek, 2012). To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the information, participants had the right to remain unidentified when completing the student questionnaire by only filling out the questionnaire but not including their personal information.

### 1.12.3 Lecturer questionnaire

The lecturer questionnaire consisted predominately of open-ended questions to review current teaching and learning practises used by lecturers to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school. Close-ended questions and Likert-type scaled questions were used, with a rating scale developed to measure outlooks by asking lecturers to reply to an assortment of statements. The Likert-type items were weighted by a five-point scale of how the respondent likes or dislikes a statement (Vanek, 2012). This scale was selected as it is a commonly used scale where people can show how much they agree or disagree with a specific statement. This method of questioning was used to review current methods of best practise and to establish the impact on the performance of students during WIL (Mcleod, 2018). To ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the information, the lecturers had the right to remain unidentified when completing the questionnaire by only filling out the questionnaire but not including their private information.

### 1.12.4  Data collection

The third- and fourth-year hospitality management students and lecturers who agreed to participate in the study were briefed in the form of a statement at the beginning of the questionnaire on what to expect during the study, what the data collection processes involve, the purpose of the study, and how to complete the online form. The researcher was the only person to gather data from the students and lecturers. The collection of the data was conducted according to the hotel school's academic timetable to accommodate teaching and learning requirements at the hotel school and to provide sufficient time for the participants to complete the questionnaires. The questionnaires were estimated to take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete using the Web or mobile version of Google Forms. After the questionnaires had been downloaded, the data were analysed to retrieve information from students and lecturers at the hotel school.

### 1.12.5  Data coding analysis

Data collected using the online questionnaires were extrapolated using Google Forms and evaluated using the Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 28 (IBM Corp., 2017). The data from the questionnaires was retrieved by means of direct information breakdown where trends materialised (Griga, 2017). Descriptive statistics were used to interpret the quantitative information obtained from the questionnaires, visually depicted in the form of percentages and averages shown in statistics tables.

The qualitative data were coded for similarities in certain phrases, words, and themes. These were analysed and illustrated in visual representations such as word clouds and bar graphs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). An additional data analysis software program, ATLAS.ti, was used to code and analyse text-based data and to convert the test-based data into quantitative data for further evaluation. The use of ATLAS.ti allowed for the creation of data analytics for the study, which assisted the researcher with matching themes and trends in the data. It was necessary to use two data analysis software programs in the study, one for the quantitative data that did not require conversion, and the other for the text-based data which needed to be coded, themed, and then converted into quantitative data.

### 1.12.6  Quantitative sampling

The sampling method used for the quantitative research (student and lecturer questionnaires) was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling was suitable as the lecturers and students were easily accessible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Convenience sampling ensured that the data and knowledge obtained represent the selected population from which the sample was taken (Etikan et al., 2016).

## 1.13 Limitations to the research

- The researcher experienced a shortage of third- and fourth-year students due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and result of lockdowns as it restricted the timeframe and number of WIL placements. This affected the information gathered from the quantitative data.

- The initial research strategy planned for mixed-method approach, with the use of focus groups involving the UoT's lecturers and WIL placement partners from the hospitality industry. However, due to Covid-19 the research plan had to be adapted to ensure the data collection could move forward.

- Research questions addressed by convenience sampling were limited to the sample itself as the sample was very defined and specific to meet the requirements of the study (Mcleod, 2018).

- The data collected cannot be generalised due to the sampling method, because the knowledge gained is only representative of the population from which the sample was drawn (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

## 1.14 Ethical considerations

Ethical procedures are there to guard people and settings involved in the study against any form of pain, forced influence or misconduct (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher applied and received an endorsement from the UoT's Faculty of Business Research Ethics Committee and the UoT's Acting Assistant Dean from the Research and Innovation Unit to conduct the study at the hotel school. Letters of consent and a brief explanation of the purpose of study were included as an introduction in the questionnaires for all participants.

Subsequently, each student and lecturer was given the option to choose whether they wanted to partake in the study. All participants had the right to remove themselves from the study and from the research procedure at any time without cause or prejudgment. Respect for privacy and honesty as well as avoiding misrepresentation was one of the main ethical considerations during this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the information, participants had the right to remain unidentified for the pilot study and the actual research questionnaires by only filling out the questionnaire but not including their name or any personal information.

## 1.15 Overview of the study

- Chapter One is an outline that serves as an introduction to the study and gives the background to the problem that was investigated. It also offers a clear comprehension of the area of apprehension and the importance why this study was undertaken.

- Chapter Two is a review of the literature that explains relevant evidence of past and present-day research in this area of study. It also explains the importance of conducting such a study. Furthermore, it explains whether the problem is researchable. The study displays potential gaps in the literature that relates specifically to the research problem.

- Chapter Three is a detailed discussion of the research methods used in conducting this study. Details are provided on methods used for exploring the research problem. It indicates the population and the size of the sample within the population. The instruments used for data collection and the techniques used to analyse the collected data are discussed. The ethical implications of the research study are addressed.

- Chapter Four outlines the results and themes of the data collected. These are represented in tables, bar graphs and/or other formats. Further discussion indicates whether the research questions were answered and demonstrates the link between the research objectives and questions.

- In Chapter Five, the results and findings are reflected on in the form of a discussion. The discussion reflects whether the research objectives and aim were attained.

- Chapter Six encompasses the conclusion, recommendations, and reflections. This chapter provides a conclusion to the study, recommendations and reflections for further research similar/related to the topic, and/or future research in the same field of study that can be used.

## 1.16  Chapter summary

The researcher has observed, through discussions with students and academic colleagues, that there is confusion on what the graduate attributes of UoTs are and how they should be integrated into core theoretical and practical subjects. The researcher reviewed the hotel school's current pedagogical practises used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects and to evaluate the performance of the hotel school's embedded graduate attributes on students in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL. In the next chapter, the researcher reviews the literature needed to explain the relevant evidence of past and current research for this area of study.

A conceptual framework for the study (Figure 1.1) visually expresses the anticipated relationship between the dependant and independent variables in this research. The researcher established these variables whilst identifying a gap in literature and a rationale for the study and then during the completion of the initial literature review. The variables in this research consist of the third- and fourth-year hospitality management students based at the UoT's hotel school, and the lecturers that teach these students in theoretical and practical subjects in both traditional lectures and practically in the UoT's restaurant. The remaining

variables comprised graduate attributes, success in the hospitality industry, and the tool aiding the embedding of these attributes and encouraging success is a variety of pedagogy methods used for teaching and learning at the UoT's hotel school. As mentioned in section 1.7, the hypothesis of the study aimed to prove that there is a positive relationship between the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school and students' performance in the hospitality industry, and specifically during WIL.
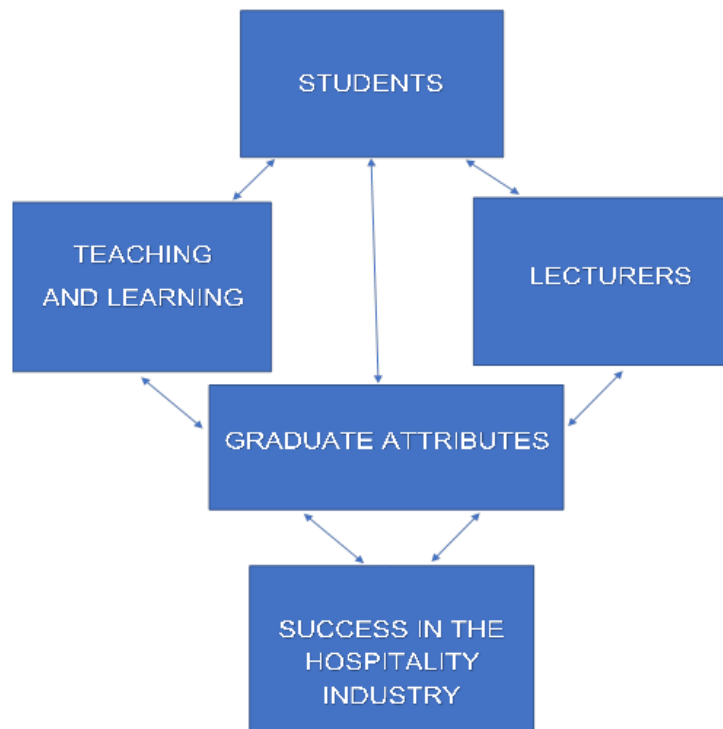


**Figure 1.1: Conceptual framework**

Listed above is a visual representation of the conceptual framework used for the research to illustrate the relationships between the dependant and independent variables mentioned in this study. The use of the conceptual framework enhanced the study as the variables shown allowed for a practical relationship to be created between causal and explanatory factors. For example, there is a working relationship that can be clarified by describing the process of intilling graduate attributes effectively through looking at the effect it causes by testing graduate attributes with assesments focused on strategy and problem solving at the hotel school. If the students perfom sucessfully, the critical thinking and application style pedagogy is seen to be effective for both student and lectuer. Involving both the student and lecturer in teaching and learning strengthens the selection of pedagogy and it's efficiency. Therefore, the teaching and learning would be the dependent variable and the

independent variable would be the use of the assessment, as it causes the desired effect for the integration of the graduate attributes in teaching and learning.

# CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

Graduate attributes focus on developing learners with enquiring minds and an incessant interest in learning. These graduate attributes are becoming more critical for successful participation in the hospitality industry. These attributes are more detailed than the industry specific expertise or practical knowledge that shaped, by tradition, the fundamental part of most higher education institution programmes. They are qualities that assist in the preparation of turning graduates into managers of a democratic, methodical, and morally sound practice in this era of transformation and sustainability (Barrie, 2007).

The hospitality industry requires graduates who have several qualities and skills needed for success for a very pro-active and stressful industry, such as the hotel and restaurant industry. Exposing students to theoretical and practical learning and assessments is vital as it not only covers different teaching and learning styles, but it also allows students to have a transparent "real life" comprehension of the difficulties faced within the hospitality industry (Seager, 2018).

This study refers to several studies based in Australia, as it was evident to the researcher while sourcing literature that Australia is the forerunner in terms of all aspects of graduate attribute development and integration in teaching and learning at higher educational institutions. Numerous academic researchers in South Africa and internationally have referred to several studies based at Australian universities (Bester, 2014; Bitzer & Withering, 2020; Chau & Cheung, 2017; Mashiyi, 2015; Nell & Bosman, 2017; University of Edinburgh. n.d.). Several studies (Barrie, 2005, 2006; De la Harpe & David, 2012; Jackson, 2015) have been conducted prominently in Australia to determine the most important influences on the execution and testing of embedding graduate attributes (Barrie, 2006). Unfortunately, although there is a conscious agreement by tertiary institutions and lecturers of the importance of integrating graduate attributes into theoretical subjects and WIL, there are shortcomings with the consistency of practice into theoretical and practical subjects and a clear understanding of what university graduate attributes are (Bitzer & Withering, 2020; De la Harpe & David, 2012). Although several well-funded research projects have been put into effect in the last two decades, institutions of higher education been struggling with this issue since the early nineties (Barrie, 2006).

The University of Edinburgh (n.d.) states that it takes both lecturers' support and students' initiative to develop graduate attributes. Every student and graduate is unique, in that they each have their own experience, style of learning and way of approaching life. Shaping

students' expectations, personalities, and academic subjects allow for the graduate attributes to develop over time (Weber et al., 2013).

## 2.2 Graduate attributes

Globally, tertiary institutions look at defining graduate attributes as the general or generic skills required by graduates. Universally, these graduate attributes are defined with terms such as graduate qualities, graduate attributes, competencies or employability or soft skills; outcomes; generic attributes; transferable, and principal capabilities (Barrie, 2006).

When comparing descriptions of graduate attributes across numerous institutions of higher education and disciplines, they frequently include industry specific-based information, practice, and follow through. Business owners and institutions of higher education expect graduates to have acquired industry specific information (Bridgstock, 2009). However, additional graduate attributes such as resilience, sustainability, career building and lifelong career management skills are becoming more significant to the general working public as methods of success in higher education and the working world (Bridgstock, 2009). At senior academic management level, the application of graduate attributes needs transformation of a universal form of graduate attributes into industry specific attributes before lecturers can instil them to students during teaching and learning. In addition to the guarantee that these attributes are effectively assessed, a standard procedure formulated consistently throughout higher education institutions is required (Weber et al., 2013).

For externally attributed courses (e.g., hospitality and tourism industry qualifications), the procedure is simple for the reason that they are recognised by external educational organisations, and accreditation counts on demonstrating that the graduate attributes are being transferred with the awareness and capability of the graduate (Weber et al., 2013).

Bester (2014), in her research findings, found a clear indication that academic staff members of a UoT's Applied Design department hold qualitatively different conceptions of graduate attributes, and that they do not always agree in their identifications of the growth of graduate attributes in their specific programmes. For some lecturers, graduate attributes are practical aptitudes that could be achieved in a classroom environment in theoretical subjects, whereas others found that students absorbed graduate attributes far better in real life and practical activities (Bester, 2014). The researcher agrees with this finding and seeks to explore the different methods of practice of embedding graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school.

## 2.3    Clarification of graduateness

*Graduateness* is simply explained as the value of the personal and academic advancement of graduates produced by tertiary institutions, and the significance of the skills and attributes they bring to the labour market (Coetzee, 2012). Bester (2014) conducted a study at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) and reported that CPUT agrees that universal graduate attributes or graduateness are consequently those "qualities, skills and understandings that a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution" (Bester, 2014). The University of Newcastle shares a similar understanding: "Graduateness is the qualities, skills and understanding you can gain through your university experience" (Coetzee, 2012). According to Oliver and Jorre (2018), graduateness refers to the amalgamation of graduate attributes at different levels of operational knowledge, which includes the embedded learning and knowledge a graduate may or may not have acquired through theoretical and practical subjects. Therefore, graduateness is a state of existence because of achieving an arrangement of graduate attributes. Chetty (2012) explains this as "the sum being more than the parts".

## 2.4    Graduate attributes at CPUT

For reviewing the literature, the researcher applied the CPUT graduate attributes as an example of graduate attributes used at UoTs. A graduate will have an understanding of the well-being and enhancement of society rather than just safeguarding the welfare and improvement of themselves (CPUT, 2017). Ideally, a CPUT graduate would be able to identify and acknowledge the concerns of others in their everyday working life by embodying the values of a democratic citizen. In professional fields, "integrity forms a cornerstone which ethical decisions are made in practice and as such characterises being professional" (CPUT, 2017). CPUT's graduate attributes look at strengthening abilities necessary for technological aptitudes such as critical and rational standpoints in the use of technology(with reference to CPUT charter's first graduate attribute, technological capability and foresight) as well as the ability to recognise the complexity of problem solving in society(CPUT charter's second resilience and problem-solving capability), and that graduates will be able to engage confidently in challenging situations (CPUT, 2017). The graduate will also be able to recognise that there are no easy answers to complications in humanity and they will know how to work with people from different cultures and comprehend their requirements, beliefs, and ideas (with reference to the CPUT charter's third graduate attribute, relational capability). A CPUT graduate will hold both interpersonal and inter-professional skills in a working environment, (with reference to CPUT charter's fourth graduate attribute, ethical capability) which aims to equip students for all different types of industries (CPUT, 2017). At the UoT's hotel school, a combination of hospitality management studies such as restaurant operations

and WIL provide the students with specialised field-specific attributes. Students are taught specific qualities required by the hospitality industry (CPUT, 2017).

From 2016 to 2019, a plan was actioned to roll out revised CPUT graduate attributes to ensure that the academic institution keeps up with demand by government and industry requirements. The project was created to mirror the Council on Higher Education's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) for curriculum renewal and transformation to resolve issues of decolonisation (CPUT, 2017). The project aimed to resolve additional issues identified by the UoT, industry and government by creating a plan to improve and adjust the existing attributes. Bester et al. (2015) explained that the revision of the CPUT graduate attributes was necessary to include a larger focus on science, technology, and society. The revised graduate attributes bring into line the CPUT mission statement, which aims the university to be a tertiary institution at "the heart of technology in Africa" (CPUT, 2017).

Researchers (Garraway et al. (2017, cited by CPUT, 2017) revised the previous CPUT graduate attribute charter during 2016 and 2017 as described below.

## "CPUT CHARTER OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

### Attributes and underpinning abilities October 2017

**1. Technological capability and foresight**
A CPUT graduate will recognise that society, technology, and science are intertwined, and so that technology and science have the capacity to effect changes in society. Furthermore, CPUT graduates will recognise that science and technology should be used for the overall benefit of society even though its effects may also sometimes be harmful. Graduates will also recognise that scientific knowledge and their related technologies will need to be transformed/adapted to complex and changing circumstances. CPUT graduates would thus need to take a critical and reflective stance on how technology is used and for what ends, including issues of environmental awareness and sustainability, and to act accordingly.

*Underpinning abilities for technological capability*
- Using practical knowledge which involves the ability to transform knowledge and technological capabilities to new contexts and platforms.
- Using practical knowledge which enables the graduate to act in an environmentally sustainable manner.

- The ability to optimally communicate and follow through technological and other solutions.
- Autonomous decision making based on the transfer and application of practical knowledge.
- The ability to access relevant knowledge.
- An awareness of social priorities, responsibilities and associated problems which may have technological solutions.
- Critical and reflective stances to the use of technology.

## 2. Resilience and problem-solving capability

A CPUT graduate will recognise the complexity of problem solving in society (including technologically) and will be able to engage confidently with such complexity. The graduate will recognise that there are no simple solutions to problems in society and that there are many twists and turns, dead ends and necessary restarts and they will need to act with resilience to succeed in these journeys. Such journeys will typically occur within entrepreneurial, innovation and investigative/research activities.

*Underpinning abilities for resilience capability*
- Reflect on and evaluate progress.
- Administrative, organisational and financial skills.
- Locate, evaluate, synthesise and apply information in context (information literacy).
- Face difficult and complex challenges.
- Recover from setbacks and try again.
- Self-healing.

## 3. Relational capability

A CPUT graduate will be able to 'stand in the shoes of others' in order to understand their needs, values and cultures so that what is being worked on can have optimal effects and/or the best chances of success. In so doing a CPUT graduates will be able to act with understanding of others different from themselves, at both the interpersonal and inter-professional level. Furthermore, CPUT graduates will understand, learn with and so be able to engage with others for the best possible solutions to work and societal problems. This capability is of advantage beyond the university and influences hoe graduates work with community groups or in local government and relates to caring as well as effectiveness. It can also apply to working inter-professionally where, for example, a roads engineer would also have to work with environmentalists, heritage experts and so on to get a job done for the benefit of all.

*Underpinning abilities for relational capability*

- Understanding and respect for other's knowledge.
- Embracing diversity.
- Recognise one's own shortcomings (including in technology/practical knowledge).
- Effective communication across differences.
- Group work in addressing and solving problems (including technological problems).
- Harnessing the collective practical wisdom of others.

## 4. Ethical capability

A CPUT graduate will have an orientation to the well-being and improvement of society rather than just ensuring the well-being and advancement of themselves. It would involve hearing and acknowledging the concerns of others. In the professional fields, furthermore, morality forms a cornerstone against which ethical decisions are made in practice and as such characterises being professional.

*Underpinning abilities for ethical capability*

- An orientation to the public good.
- Knowledge of field-specific professional ethics.
- Relational capability (as above).
- An ability to discern whether professional practices are within ethical boundaries.
- An ability to take ethical decisions.
- An ability to act on unethical practices."

Several institutions of higher learning in South Africa, and in particular CPUT, have created plans to ensure that their future students are equipped with the necessary technological skills required for the imminent digital world. According to CPUT's Strategic Plan 2021–2030: One Smart CPUT (CPUT 2021), to achieve this significant objective, CPUT will ensure their students acquire graduate attributes that will make them work-ready and attractive candidates for the future.

"CPUT's future students belong to the native digital generation who are well exposed to technologies and the knowledge economy, social platforms and the World Wide Web. This generation of students are far more creative, and politically active and astute than their previous counterparts. They are known to be more entrepreneurial, multi-tasking, being hyper-aware of the world they are living in and are technology minded. Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, they are also the first generation of

students who have had to function maximally in a new world of physical distancing and rules around health and safety. They will therefore require a deeper sense of connectedness and sharing, whilst being highly competent to work in a technology driven economy and world" (CPUT, 2021).

## 2.5 The need for graduate attributes in tertiary education

Graduates require a comprehensive range of attributes and skills to make a constructive difference in their local and international communities. These attributes are reinforced by a range of transferable skills that employers look for during the recruitment process, and that can be developed through assessments and practical experiences (Barrie, 2006).

According to Barrie (2012), the Australian Government used TEQSA as a value and standard regulation process for the development of graduate attributes into tertiary institutions. The agency reviewed the description of graduate attributes for university students and stated how vital they are for higher education programmes. It was also highlighted that there is an important need to ensure graduates have attained these core qualities and that by stressing graduate attributes, there is an increase in the graduate's performance in teaching and learning and the workforce (Barrie, 2012).

The nature of higher education institutions is to adapt its means to accommodate new demands and to reinterpret the higher education institution's purpose and place in the face of society's fluctuating objectives. Higher education institutions have tried to explain the way they function, so that what is being offered to their students is beneficial to the student during teaching and learning and in doing so, their graduates' potential role in humanity and the world is enhanced (Barrie, 2007).

Graduate attributes are the qualities, skills, and identifications an institution of higher education wants its learners to develop during university. These attributes include but are not limited to the corrective knowledge or technical information that formed, by tradition, the primary focus of most tertiary institutions' programmes. They are also qualities that can formulate graduates into people of humanitarian virtue in an unfamiliar time and future (Oliver & Jorre, 2018).

There is a need for graduate attributes in the teaching and learning of theoretical and practical subjects in higher education that students can learn, understand, and demonstrate when they enter the hospitality industry through practical assessments in WIL (Jackson, 2015). Graduate attributes enable students to cope better with the stress of academic life and equip them with the necessary skills and qualities needed for working and training in the very demanding and taxing hospitality industry (De la Harpe & David, 2012).

## 2.6    Integration of graduate attributes in tertiary education and WIL

It is reasonable to anticipate that each industry specific programme at higher education institutions is accountable for "conceptualising, mapping, designing, implementing and assessing graduate attributes and that by now it should be clear that adopting a holistic, embedded model for the development of graduate attributes requires a whole-of-university approach to planning and implementation" (Green et al., 2009). During their academic time, students at the UoT's hotel school are involved in different forms of pedagogical practices. These practices include traditional theoretical subject-based lectures, practical application by working in the restaurant and kitchen of the UoT's hotel school to teach "real life" situations, and during the two WIL placements.

The integration of graduate attributes in tertiary education and WIL prepares the students for the academic and working world (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Descriptive words such as "generic, core, key, enabling, transferable and professional are used in tandem with nouns such as attributes, skills, capabilities or competencies", to mention only a few in overview of the purpose of this study (Barrie, 2005). These descriptive words can be identified and contained by the preferred graduate outcomes on higher education institution websites, which list everything from practical skills, such as "communication technology skills" (Murdoch University n.d.), to top of the list attributes, such as the capability to participate in "research and enquiry" (University of Sydney n.d.; Barrie, 2007).

Such platforms also comprise morals in the middle of the list of necessary outcomes, for example, "to value and respect differing views" (University of Canberra, n.d.). Yet, some higher education academics (Chanock, 2004, cited by Barrie, 2005) disagree that 'skills' are not the equivalent of 'attributes', and 'generic' may not automatically be the same as 'transferable'. Such misperception in theory will probably have various practical issues for the teaching and learning of graduate attributes. Barrie (2012) and De la Harpe and David (2012) suggest that there is a useful link between educational notions about 'generic' attributes and their method to teaching and learning. Such an attitude may not deliver the results that institutions of higher education or the workforce are aiming for.

## 2.7    Challenges of embedding graduate attributes into the curriculum

Embedding transferable graduate attributes and skills required for employment in syllabus learning and formative or summative assessment design is a process done in several stages of student development. It needs to be executed in a particular form of corrective and pedagogical context and requires the mindfulness, willingness and capability of all participants involved (Coetzee, 2012).

The development of graduate skills and attributes has received a small amount of attention in the South African context and implementation has internationally been inconsistent (Pillay et al., 2019). As previously mentioned in section 1.7.3, the guidelines for embedding these skills and attributes are often unclear and lack specifications, therefore there is a need for frameworks as a guide to instil graduate skills and attributes into syllabi, as well as learning and assessment design at the different HEQF levels (Coetzee, 2012). Embedding graduate attributes within syllabi, however, is reliant on lecturers observing their position in nurturing such skills and characters positively and conveying learning activities that are effective in the conveyance of graduate attributes (Smith, 2015).

Barrie (2012) and Smith (2015) posit that lecturers do not always have a collective understanding of teaching and learning methods and how these methods link to the effective conveyance of graduate attributes and meeting the learning outcomes for assessed work in an aligned curriculum. Mashiyi (2015) confirm this in his study at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) by stating that there are many challenges when embedding graduate attributes into the curriculum and describing his experience as a lecturer and researcher as challenging but reiterating the need for graduate attributers and effective integration of graduate attributes into teaching and learning.

Furthermore, Mashiyi (2015) explains that whilst completing his review of literature, he established that a growing collection of authors from institutions of higher learning in South Africa and internationally allude to a varied understanding of the concept of graduate attributes among lecturers, in addition to different implementation techniques to embed these attributes into content. Mashiyi further notes that lecturers generally struggle to embed them into content as their teaching styles and interpretation of instilling graduate attributes may differ from other lecturers. Bitzer and Withering (2020) explain that other challenges causing the delay of embedding graduate attributes into syllabi is the paucity of research at an institutional level at several universities, which can be justified by numerous circumstances. These include lecturers and other academic staff that are under enormous levels of work pressure, an increased emphasis on getting students out of the system swiftly, and the under-resourcing of lecturers in the tertiary education system. These factors, in addition to others, have caused insufficient time to focus on the development of graduate attributes into curricula and in teaching and learning in general (Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

## 2.8 Impact of HEQF and NQF levels on best practice of implementing graduate attributes into teaching and learning

The CHE's Framework for Qualifications Standards in Higher Education explains that a framework was created to review the development standards for higher education in South

Africa (CHE, 2013). In the framework, the CHE established assessment standards of graduate attributes and outcomes required for qualifications in tertiary education. The CHE (2013) furthermore explained that to classify the uniqueness of a qualification is to compare the extent to which the blend of learning domains reflects the purpose of the qualification and to what extent the blend is reflected in the attributes of a graduate (CHE, 2013). Although graduate attributes and outcomes should not be construed as mutually exclusive, "graduate attributes speak to such outcomes, but also comprise of attitudes, values and the capacity of a graduate to take what has been learnt beyond the site of learning" (CHE, 2013). The implication of graduate attributes in relation to tested outcomes will differ in various areas of study and they will have specific sway towards qualifications that lead to a vocational or professional practice (CHE, 2013). Certain level descriptors will be more appropriate for some qualifications than for others. For example, a level descriptor relating to 'ethics and professional practice' would be relatively more significant for a professional qualification than for one in a general qualification. While all categories of descriptors would have some relevance at all National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels, their relative weighting would vary from one level to another (CHE, 2013). In essence, fields of studies may differ and require a specific combination of learning domains such as skills, knowledge and competence, depending on the need for the qualification and the combination of assessment requirements.

In addition to the categories of descriptors, the variance would be dependent on the needs and NQF level of the qualification and year of study (CHE, 2013). In terms of this current study, graduate attributes are seen as outcomes to be achieved and tested during assessments in core subjects assessing the student's development of the necessary skills, knowledge and competence required for the NQF levelled diploma qualifications in hospitality management.

UoT's have normally concentrated on trade-orientated qualification programmes with WIL as a mandatory component of diplomas, while mainstream universities have been branded for their undergraduate "foundational" degrees in the comprehensive departments of the humanities and sciences (Griesel & Parker, 2009). However, professional degrees have overlapped the gap between direct and indirect associations with forthcoming vocation courses. In accumulation, it is anticipated that the nature of "graduateness" is also in the practice of shifting in comparison to a progressively information-driven world (Griesel & Parker, 2009). Griesel and Parker (2009) explain that South Africa's Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) recognises qualifications containing WIL and accepts recognition of prior informal and non-formal learning, which signifies the significance of a better understanding of the workplace and WIL during a student's time at a trade-orientated

or vocational institution, such as a UoT's hotel school (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Basically, the notion of employability established through this study does not only look at concerning core curriculum, pedagogic and testing practices in higher education institutions, but also focuses on complementing learning practices in the working environment such as the hospitality industry and including WIL.

## 2.9    The relationship of graduate attribute development and WIL

The aim of WIL as part of a hospitality management course curriculum is to assist the learner in making the transition from visualising and listening to the theoretical components and performing the activities that have been taught during academic classes during students' time at university from a theoretical to practical format (Fleming et al., 2009).

Limited practical assessment of embedding graduate attributes has been completed even though graduate attributes have academic appeal (Bridgstock, 2009). Many studies have concluded that academic staff are in agreement with the notion that the teaching and assessment of graduate attributes cannot be done during theoretical assessments only; it also needs to be reinforced by industry professionals during a student's WIL (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Zegwaard et al. (2017) explain that the relationship between graduate attribute development and WIL is vital as it allows students to practice what they have learnt in theory in academic classes at university and then putting them into action during WIL. Students have the opportunity to experience the concept of graduate attributes in a visual and practical sense and gain a better understanding by repeating the use of these skills and qualities whilst training as a hospitality manager in a real-life working environment such as a hotel or restaurant in the hospitality industry (Kavanagh & Leong, 2013).

De la Harpe and David (2012) reiterate that the helpful association between graduate attributes, employability and lifelong independent learning is well investigated and approved as customary among business owners, industry groups, government, and students. Zegwaard et al. (2017) concur and restate that all shareholders involved emphasise the requirement for institutions of higher education to create graduates with the attributes required for the workforce.

The hospitality industry works in collaboration with hotel schools and assists by being involved with the students' WIL and therefore the integration of graduate attributes in the practical aspects of learning. Employers in the hospitality industry are keen to employ graduates with a well-balanced collection of skills, including soft skills, as well as graduates who can use their initiative and work independently (Kavanagh & Leong, 2013). The Protea Hotels Institute for Professional Development (PHIPD) is a leader in the development of

hospitality graduates in South Africa. They show a positive and dedicated approach in the development of professional and graduate skills. According to the PHIPD website,

> "Protea Hotel by Marriott has always believed that in order to achieve the levels of service excellence that they strive for, they need to hire people that are well suited for the hospitality industry and then equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to deliver quality service consistently" (PHIPD, n.d.).

Universities offering hospitality management qualifications must prepare their learners for a highly labour-intensive, consumer focused, service industry with very long working hours. Competencies such as service excellence, adaptability, concern for doing things correctly, teamwork and cooperation as well as self-control enable students to understand how to work efficiently and professionally in the challenging environment of the hospitality industry (Kavanagh & Leong, 2013).

Tertiary institutions and the hospitality industry should foster partnerships when the curriculum is designed so that all stakeholders benefit from the WIL experience (Jackson, 2015). The integration of graduate attributes needs to be evaluated by looking at best practices for the outcomes to be achieved in WIL, and lecturers need to be aware of the capabilities required when preparing students for the workplace and their employability after graduation from the hotel school (Zegwaard et al., 2017).

## 2.10 Hospitality courses offered at the hotel school

The UoT offers three different streams under the umbrella of hospitality management as the hospitality industry and its divisions require a variety of skills and expertise, which differ in the various sectors of the industry. The UoT's hotel school offers three hospitality management programmes, namely, Accommodation Management, Food and Beverage Management, and Professional Cookery Management. The hospitality industry is a large subsection within the service industry and compromises four main areas, namely, accommodation, food and beverage, tourism, and leisure. While all four main areas are interconnected and dependent on each other, many of these hospitality sectors are rapidly growing because of the advancing technological demands, trends and changing customer outlooks (EHL Insights, 2022). EHL Insights (2022) provides a brief background to the history of the hospitality industry and explains that the ancient Greeks used the word "xenia" to describe the act of being hospitable: "The generosity and courtesy shown to those who are far from home or associates of the person bestowing guest-friendship". EHL Insights (2022) then clarifies that the word *hospitality* originated from the Latin word "hospes", meaning host. A host can refer to someone who provides entertainment or accommodation for a visitor or a guest. In essence, hospitality businesses should provide the experience of a home away from home

for their customers. This level of service, organisation and management requires hospitality employees to have several skills, qualities and capabilities to provide excellent service (Seager, 2018). Therefore, it is imperative that the institutions of higher learning, such as the UoT's hotel school, provide qualifications that cater specifically for the different sectors of the hospitality industry and develop students with the necessary skills, qualities and graduate attributes required for successful training during WIL and in the future careers as hospitality managers (Chau & Cheung, 2017).

Hospitality management is a managerial position in an establishment that offers services such as accommodation, catering, cheffing, food and beverages services, and management (Seager, 2018). A hospitality manager is responsible for overseeing employees on different levels and ensuring that operations run effectively and efficiently. An essential part of their job is creating and developing positive relationships with both their guests and customers. This is a defining characteristic of a hospitality organisation, as they rely heavily on service excellence and customer satisfaction to generate sales (American Hospitality Academy, 2017).

Hospitality management is also known as hotel management, hotel and tourism management, or hotel administration. Many universities, colleges and hotel schools consider hospitality degree programmes as an extension of their business education faculty (IIAS Education group, 2019). Hospitality management courses include a broad and versatile arrangement of skills and generally include a bachelor's degree or advanced diploma; however, a student may study further and complete a master's degree or postgraduate diploma (American Hospitality Academy, 2017). The completion of a certificate or shorter programme is also an option. This is often associated with the partnership between a tertiary institution and a hotel group that sponsors the programme (PHIPD, n.d.).

## 2.11 The importance of embedding graduate attributes at an undergraduate level

It has become common practise for most tertiary institutions to focus on the integration of graduate attributes within their core curriculum in the second and third year of study. However, in the process of embedding graduate attributes, there appears to be more of an indirect experience where students are expected to gain only specific graduate attributes in the final year of their diploma or degree, and where vocation-specific practical knowledge is addressed in subjects such Work Integrated Learning or Culinary Practical (Pillay et al., 2019). In recent years, an emerging perspective has come into practise, namely that graduate attributes should be integrated as early as possible into curricula to become inherent to a student's academic and professional education and development (Pillay et al., 2019).

There is growing discontent within the hospitality industry regarding the level of preparedness of hospitality management graduates to perform at an appropriate standard in a vibrant and comprehensive work environment (Engelbrecht et al., 2020). It is therefore imperative for tertiary institutions to equip graduates with a variety of graduate attributes and industry specific skills beyond the traditional skills which are transferred into basic teaching and learning practices by direct lecturing and not using different types of pedagogical practises. It is thus important to explore different methods of teaching and instil these in the foundation phase of an undergraduate qualification so that students can master the required skills and graduate attributes by the time they graduate (Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

During the orientation and first year of a student's academic journey, graduate attributes need to be transferred from the academic instructor to the student to encourage a strong foundation for their academic studies, academic journey, and introduction to graduate attributes (Mashiyi, 2015). There also needs to be a level of rapport and agreement between both parties—student and lecturer—to form a positive and professional relationship (Moolman & Wilkinson, 2014). Students need to feel part of the teaching and learning process of graduate attributes and voice their opinion. This, in turn, will improve the transference and integration of vital skills needed for students' future employment, their relationship with industry, and the image portrayed of the tertiary institution or hotel school (Mashiyi, 2015). An ideal outcome would allow the students to function optimally during the three-year diploma programme and when they seek employment as graduates.

Pillay et al.'s (2019) research study found the existence of a significant gap between the graduate attributes that universities want to embed into the curriculum and the attributes that students actually develop. It is therefore imperative for institutions of higher learning to revisit the design of their curriculum to include pedagogical practises that will allow students the opportunities to develop and then practice the university's graduate attributes at an undergraduate level (Pillay et al., 2019). This will encourage a platform and foundation of knowledge for the embedding of graduate attributes into discipline specific subjects and if applied at the undergraduate stage of student's tertiary journey, it would support a more valuable understanding and internalised entrenchment of the graduate attributes. In addition, there will be more time for reinforcement of said attributes to equip the students before they enter the workforce or study further (Pillay et al., 2019).

## 2.12 Embedding employability into the curriculum

In 2004, Professor Mantz Yorke at the University of Edinburgh stated that "a set of achievements – skills, understandings, and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits

themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" (University of Edinburgh, 2021). This echoes Edinburgh University's sentiment that employability is not only about a graduate attaining a job offer, but also the ability to perform optimally in a role and be able to move between professions, thus remaining employable during the course of a university graduate's life (University of Edinburgh, 2021).

Employability is complex; therefore, no single area of focus is the solution, for example, only addressing the provision of placements. According to the Higher Education Academy (2016) in the United Kingdom, it is the combination of several areas of focus and the processes such as lecturing experience, teaching capabilities, mentorship skills, effective pedagogic methods used to embed graduate attributes that will strengthen the lecturers' approach. To be addressed effectively, employability should be embedded into all learning and teaching policies, processes, and practices, particularly in the curriculum, and considered throughout the student lifecycle, from the very start of a student programme through to the completion of their studies (Higher Education Academy, 2016).

Looking at the current state of unemployment rates for the youth in South Africa, according to Stats SA (2022),

> "The graduate unemployment rate remains relatively low in South Africa compared to those of other educational levels, unemployment among the youth continues to be a burden, irrespective of educational attainment. Year-on-year, the unemployment rate among young graduates (aged 15-24 years) declined from 40,3% to 32,6%, while it increased by 6,9 percentage points to 22,4% for those aged 25-34 years in Q1: 2022."

South Africa's economic status post Covid-19 is in a state of recovery whereby the hospitality industry needs hospitality management graduates to develop more diverse graduate attributes, which in turn could be the key to employability and employment success of university graduates. There has always been a challenge in South Africa with regard to unemployment. According to the Sunday Times (2021), the official employment rate currently reached an all-time high of 32.5%, which led to additional stress and concern for many university graduates. Because of the exceptionally high unemployment numbers, the need for South African graduates to ensure they are ready to not only meet the requirements but also exceed the competition, confirms the significant importance of employability and the key for obtaining and retaining their work positions. Graduates will not be able attain employment in the hospitality industry in South Africa without the ability to present or show evidence that they possess industry specific skills and graduate attributes – skills such as being able to work in a team, communicate well, and resolve difficult tasks or situations with challenging guests (Nel & Neale-Shutte, 2013).

EHL Insights (2022) explain that hospitality management graduates aiming to enter the hospitality industry currently in 2022 post Covid-19 and in the future will need to possess a combination of both hard and soft skills. In the hospitality industry, skills such as cultural awareness, digital skills, multitasking, customer service and communications are paramount to deliver outstanding customer service effectively. The increasing complexity of the hospitality sector and the evolution of its digital practises can be attributed to the following: i) the increasing use of technology and data; ii) the evolution of business models with the separation of management from operations; or iii) the ever-increasing trend of brands becoming producers, which leads to the creation of new job profiles with greater demand on digital and communication skills from graduates (EHL Insights, 2022). This is confirmed by Engelbrecht et al. (2020) stating that the consequences of Covid-19 formed a need to re-evaluate the standards for employability from a skills and personal qualities perspective with technology having a progressively larger role in in what the hospitality requires in the labour market.

The Higher Education Academy in the United Kingdom views embedding employability as,

> "Providing the opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, experiences, behaviours, attributes, achievements, and attitudes to enable graduates to make successful transitions and contributions, benefitting them, the economy, and their communities. Employability is relevant to all students, and at all levels of study so includes both undergraduate and postgraduate provision" (Higher Education Academy, 2016).

All stakeholders, including academic and support staff, students, career services, student unions and employers, have a role to play in embedding employability and should be involved in doing so. This union thus promotes the principles of inclusion and collaboration as essential to achieving a joined approach (Higher Education Academy, 2016). A positive relationship, mentorship, and interaction a lecturer has with a student, have been shown through literature as an important factor to a student's success and retention in their studies. This approach works well in the hospitality industry as it is a skills-based industry and often on-the-job training does occur (Higher Education Academy, 2016). Previous studies point to graduates often attributing their success largely to the consistent engagement with lecturers and the constructive feedback they receive from their lecturers regarding their academic performance. This assists them in developing their knowledge, skills and attributes that contribute to their employability (Nel & Neale-Shutte, 2013).

Researchers from the University of Pretoria in conjunction with the Erasmus Project funded by the European Commission conducted a benchmarking and gap analysis project in 2020 to attain two significant objectives in order to "assess the impact of university/industry collaboration activities on students' employability and work-readiness" and "to determine

whether the teaching environment in the selected universities is currently producing the competencies required by industry i.e. the extent to which universities are preparing students for a career by equipping them with the desired competencies and skills" (Engelbrecht et al., 2020). For the purpose of the current study, the researcher refers to this benchmarking and gap analysis project to gain the perspectives from the hospitality industry within South Africa and internationally regarding the need for embedding employability into the curriculum and instilling the necessary graduate skills, qualities and capabilities needed for employment. Furthermore, the project highlights the importance of partnerships between universities and lecturers to enhance the quality of university graduates in hospitality management in South Africa. Engelbrecht et al. (2020) used a questionnaire in their study, aimed at the tourism, hospitality and tourism-related, as well as business management students at the University of Pretoria. In addition to the questionnaires and interviews that were conducted with lecturers and industry members based in South Africa, the United Kingdom (UK) and Finland, Engelbrecht et al. (2020) emphasise that their key findings for the UK and Finland were included for benchmarking purposes but mentioned that the project's focus was on South Africa.

To summarise a selection of the main findings from Engelbrecht et al.'s (2020) benchmarking and gap analysis project, it was evident that collaboration among University of Pretoria lecturers, the hospitality industry and the students played a significant role in the students' employability. From industry's and lecturers' perspective, they were satisfied with the performance of the university in preparing students for the workforce but highlighted some areas that need to be addressed, "particularly in enhancing the practical exposure of students and increasing their understanding of the work environment. Entrepreneurial and technological skills were identified as particularly important in career preparation. Industry was inclined to employ students who have a good understanding of the workplace gained through practical exposure during their studies" (Engelbrecht et al., 2020). The students who were involved in collaborative projects or exercises benefitted in terms of work-readiness and had a better chance of employment. Furthermore, the lecturers and hospitality industry confirmed that together with the "relevant technical or job-specific skills, according to industry employable students are those that exhibit the right attitude towards the job which encompasses a willingness to learn, adaptability, confidence and reliability. Competencies such as good communication skills, technological capabilities and entrepreneurship are essential for the ever-changing workplace" (Engelbrecht et al., 2020).

The findings from the students' perspective in the tourism and business management qualifications in South Africa show that the students felt their level of career preparation was lower than those of hospitality students as they do not get the same exposed to real life work

experience as the hospitality students do in WIL (Engelbrecht et al., 2020). A number of challenges with regard to collaboration were highlighted; the most important appears to be the high student numbers that lecturers must manage and the lack of capacity for industry to accommodate them in collaboration programmes. This issue was amplified by Covid-19 as many hospitality businesses could not take in hospitality management students due financial constraints caused by reduced occupancy levels (Engelbrecht et al., 2020).

Engelbrecht et al., (2020) recommend the following notable solutions towards embedding enhanced employability into the curriculum:

- "Content in curricula should be aligned with industry expectations, across disciplines, and students should be constantly made aware of what skills and competencies industry desires.

- Students must be made aware of the relevance of what they are taught to the work environment, recognising which competencies and skills are needed in the 'real world of work'.

- All disciplines should consistently highlight competencies, skills and personality traits desired by industry and students should be motivated to exhibit: a willingness to learn, good communication and presentation skills, global awareness, the ability to work in a diverse team.

- In conjunction with subject specific skills and knowledge, curricula need to incorporate opportunities to develop skills that enhance applicants' potential for success in the recruitment process.

- Technology should form the basis for 'virtual' collaboration as a substitute to 'physical' WIL, this is particularly necessary to overcome the capacity challenges in South Africa" (Engelbrecht et al., 2020).

The above-mentioned findings and solutions offer constructive and valuable insights into ways of developing graduate employment in the hospitality and tourism industry in South Africa and highlight the significance of adding a collaborative practise towards instilling employability and the necessary graduate attributes required by the industry into the curriculum buy including lecturers, students, and the hospitality industry (WIL placement partners). The recommendations listed above from Engelbrecht et al. 2020 study have several simliaraties with recommendations provided by authors, Wakelin-Theron et al. (2019)'s comparative study. The study compared the employers evaluations and graduates' perception in the South African tourism industry in relation to the necessary graduate attributes required for employability in the tourism industry. According to Wakelin-Theron et al. (2019) it is vital for tertiary institutions to embed employablity skills which will aid in their graduates' future recruitment process and encouraging lecturers to embed career guidance

modules into theoretical and practical subjects, using technology in every aspect of teaching and learning, for example virtual classes, virtual collaboration and artificial intelligence. In addition to reinforce the importance of what skill and qualities are necessary for the work place and highlight the necessary skills required by the tourism industry (Wakelin-Theron et al., 2019).

## 2.13   Teaching and learning pedagogy for the integration of graduate attributes

Teaching and learning pedagogy refers to the way students can be taught a module or outcome theoretically or practically; it is a relationship between the methods and culture of teaching and learning. The main objective of pedagogy is to build on students' foundation of knowledge and to develop the students' existing skills and attitudes and instil new ones. Pedagogy provides an opportunity for students to gain understanding of a subject and then assists them by applying the new skills and knowledge outside of the lecture room (McPheat, 2020). McPheat (2020) simplifies the meaning of pedagogy by stating that it can be used "to define the various ways that teaching and learning is carried out, in an educational and business sense".

According to Jankowski and Marshall (2017), graduate attributes need to be developed into teaching and learning in an integrated way that is mutually supportive of both knowledge and skills development absorption. International best practice shows that leading tertiary institutions use an evidence-based approach and a combination of pedagogic methodologies, which include a dominant focus on application-based and problem-based learning. This approach allows these attributes to further improve the quality of undergraduate education offering and develop the student (Jankowski & Marshall, 2017).

Among hospitality education providers, learning-by-doing is the most popular teaching method for hospitality management students in Europe and Asia. Learning-by-doing provides an interaction opportunity between students and lecturers to resolve real life hospitality business challenges (Rong-Da Liang, 2021). For example, a lecturer shares a demonstration video on how to deal with a hotel guest complaint, and then shows the students how to complete the task by using another student to act as the angry customer. This encounter allows the student involved in the opportunity to experience a hands-on confrontation with an unhappy "hotel guest". The rest of the students learn by observation and by asking questions. Rong-Da Liang (2021) explains that this method of teaching is a form of experiential training that enables student participation and enhances learning outcomes using real life working scenarios, which then results in the student developing the necessary professional competencies, skills and qualities that are expected from the hospitality industry.

Therefore, students can develop the required graduate attributes by experiencing, feeling, and thus realising them in a more authentic context.

Chau and Cheung (2017) explain that active learning is particularly well suited for hospitality education, which involves a more hands-on approach and thus calls for the development of practical skills, theory recognition and soft skills. Lecturers must understand the procedure to enhance active learning, linking the information in a lecture to the real world (Rong-Da Liang, 2021). It is a continual challenge for many hospitality educators to design appropriate curricula and teaching methods that create benefits for students from different levels of competency and backgrounds. More attention should be given to different learning styles, and to what students are doing to contribute towards a student-centred learning environment (Hall et al., 2017). It is critical to determine how students can learn better in the classroom and adapt to the use of technology and face-to-face traditional lecturing. Chau and Cheung (2017) reiterate that, "active learning involves both the student-centred and constructivist approaches, students learn best when active learning is used" (Chau & Cheung, 2017).

There exists a continual pedagogical debate over the advantages of a skills-based educational approach as opposed to a knowledge-based education (Di Mario, 2021). Education imparts a broad base of general knowledge on traditional subjects (Chau & Cheung, 2017). Knowledge-based curricula are structured in a way that enables students to build on their prior knowledge when learning something new, in contrast to skills-based education, which focuses on skills development rather than knowledge attainment (Di Mario, 2021). This type of curriculum is structured to prioritise student-led learning and helps students to develop the type of transversal skills they can apply across subjects and use in every area of their lives. Ultimately, knowledge and skills are both essential foundations for embedding graduate attributes, with the ability to challenge students and encourage them to achieve academic success. Students cannot develop skills without being able to understand or relate to them (Rong-Da Liang, 2021). Knowledge gives students a foundation for their learning, and placing knowledge into practise allows them to develop skills. According to Di Mario (2021), students need the time and opportunity to practise the skills that will help them to use their knowledge effectively. "The best curriculums will balance knowledge and skills, to help students develop their understanding of both themselves and the world around them" (Di Mario, 2021).

Graduate attributes can be established through co-curricular activities such as WIL that simply develop *awareness* of particular skills and qualities. The attainment of graduate attributes within taught modules can be assessed (Zegwaard et al., 2017). According to Barrie (2012), the strongest evidence of the achievement of graduate attributes is their

"explicit embedding in assessment". There is an important role for co-curricular activities in supporting a more student-centred partnership technique (Green et al., 2009). In this way, "students develop graduate attributes because they are relevant to their sense of self, and they are subsequently aware of the skills they have gained during their studies and can articulate them explicitly to employers" (Hall et al., 2017).

According to Zou (2008), the best strategies to achieve relevant graduate attributes during university study include "independent individual learning and collaborative team learning, as well as practical sessions that provide opportunities to interact with industry and gain hands-on experience". Zou (2008) recommends the following teaching and learning methods for the integration of graduate attributes into university curricula based on the study conducted by the University of New South Wales, Australia: group assignments and work, presentations, role playing, graduate attribute development journal, class discussions, case studies, problem-solving based questions, and simulation activities.

The continuous and rapid development of technology has led to significant changes in society, and this creates a challenge for tertiary institutions in terms of predicting the future requirements of employment (Di Mario, 2021). Tertiary institutions have realised the importance of incorporating the use of technology into their pedagogy in the transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning (Chau & Cheung, 2017).

CPUT is an example that was looked at earlier. CPUT planned for the integration and development of the use of technology in teaching and learning methodology mentioned in the Strategic Plan 2021–2030: One Smart CPUT, using the term *smart pedagogy*. According to CPUT (2021), smart pedagogy is focused on,

> "various innovative technology-based student-centred learning and teaching approaches such as (1) learning-by-doing (including active use of virtual labs), (2) collaborative learning, (3) adaptive teaching, (4) serious games- and gamification-based learning, (5) flipped classrooms, (6) learning analytics and academic analytics, (7) context-based learning, (8) e-books, (9) personal enquiry-based learning, (10) crossover learning, and other innovative strategies" (CPUT, 2021).

## 2.14 Teaching and learning pedagogy challenges in the integration of graduate attributes in tertiary education

Traditional lecturing, such as the imparting of knowledge from the lecturer to the students in terms of curriculum within a classroom setting, is an effective pedagogical method in tertiary education; however, it cannot independently integrate graduate attributes into teaching and learning (Barrie, 2007). The disparity in lecturers' understanding of graduate attributes helps in part to explain the reasons for the limited implementation of graduate attributes within

tertiary institutions' theoretical and practical subjects. For example, if lecturers do not comprehend that their institution's adopted graduate attributes are there to represent relevant, important university learning outcomes and skills to aid in a student's employability, they are unlikely to incorporate them into their courses or teaching (Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

Another challenge is the lack of theoretical clarity, which seems to be a common issue with teaching and learning practices, while implementation points to the lack of time spent with students. Academic researcher and graduate attribute specialist, Simon Barrie (2006), debates that the problem lies with the constant changing of graduate attribute names and descriptions across tertiary institutions causing confusion among lecturers at institutions of higher learning. Barrie (2005) also posits that *skills* are not the same as *attributes*, and *generic* may not necessarily equal *transferable*. Such theoretical confusion will almost certainly have practical implications for the teaching and learning of graduate attributes (Green et al., 2009).

There is a common practice among lecturers to express a vague understanding of their university's graduate attributes, with the idea that the simple transference of the academic instructor's subject knowledge will suffice in the integration of graduate attributes and transform a student's understanding and knowledge from a foundation stage to a graduate level of a specific course (Barrie, 2007). The fact that lecturers display such a vast difference in understanding graduate attributes and their connection to other disciplinary specific knowledge should be a concern, since any institutional transformation necessitates some degree of agreement and is required for uniformity and the overall embedding of graduate attributes into teaching and learning across all academic institutions (Green et al., 2009). Barrie's (2004, 2005) research at the University of Western Sydney, Australia, indicates a large discrepancy in academics' comprehension of graduate attributes, from the simplest view that attributes are a separate forerunner to learning and should be dealt with by an extra remedial curriculum, to attributes that "sit at the very heart of discipline knowledge and learning" (Green et al., 2009).

## 2.15  The impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality industry in South Africa

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Most people infected with the Covid-19 virus experience a mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring exclusive treatment (World Health Organisation, n.d.). Elderly people and those with comorbidities such as cardiovascular disease, obesity, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease and cancer are more likely to develop a serious ailment (South African Government, 2021). Covid-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health

Organisation on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. The pandemic affected all countries worldwide. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2020, the President of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, announced a national action plan to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in South Africa (Republic of South Africa Health Department, 2020). The South African President said, "More needs to be done to avoid an enormous catastrophe among the population". In principle, this meant that people residing in South Africa were not allowed to leave their residences; they could only leave to seek medical assistance or purchase food. The lockdown followed strict regulations created by the South African government that limited public gatherings, funerals, weddings, religious gatherings, travel from high-risk countries, and the sale of alcohol and cigarettes. The wearing of facemasks, using sanitiser, washing hands, and maintaining social distancing are some of the health and safety protocols put into place to prevent further spread of the Covid-19 virus (Channing et al., 2020). In addition, borders were closed to lower the amount of infection from those travelling from other countries into South Africa; this had a severe effect on the trade and services of the tourism and hospitality industry (Republic of South Africa Health Department, 2020).

South Africa, like several countries worldwide, has been negatively affected by the pandemic and lockdown restrictions; it has affected people mentally, emotionally, and financially. Several businesses had to shut down permanently, health care professionals were on the firing line, and worked extremely hard to reduce the number of human deaths (Channing et al., 2020). According to Business Insider South Africa (2020), experts projected that Covid-19 would force about 1,6 million job losses in South Africa in 2020, which would equate to double that of the global financial recession. A significant number of these establishments were in the hospitality industry, which, prior to Covid-19, employed more than 330,000 people. The reason for Covid-19 affecting the industry so negatively was attributed to lockdown restrictions, customers opting to dine at home, social distancing, health protocols, an alcohol ban, and restrictions on service times (Dube, 2021). The impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry has been devastating. Several businesses within the hospitality industry experienced staff retrenchments or permanent closure of the business itself (Dube, 2021). Ongoing research and studies continue to be conducted, not only on the impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry, but also on the rate at which the industry could recover.

The hospitality industry in South Africa faced another obstacle as it relies heavily on business overflow from the tourism industry. In 2019, more than 10 million people visited the country (Dube, 2021). They stayed in at least one of the 63,000 available hotels, for which together they paid 27 billion Rand and dined at many available restaurants (Business Insider South Africa, 2020). In January 2019 alone, the sale of food at restaurants, food-trucks, coffee shops and fast-food outlets contributed 4,7 billion Rand to the South African economy, which

has impacted positively on the food and beverage industry, and, in turn, the tourism industry (Business Insider South Africa, 2020). In 2021, South Africa had to continue limiting occupancy levels and service times at hospitality establishments due to lockdown restrictions. This was incredibly difficult and placed major financial stress on owners and their staff. The opportunity to make a profit under these conditions was incredibly difficult, and therefore the hospitality industry had to be extremely creative and innovative to ensure not only survival but also sustainable operations (Businesstech, 2021).

## 2.16   The impact of Covid-19 on tertiary education in South Africa

Covid-19 had disastrous effects on the tertiary education sector in South Africa. Students and staff members of tertiary institutions across the globe and in South Africa have been affected negatively by the pandemic. The pandemic affected not only on teaching and learning, but also on mental health, physical health, and well-being (Hedding et al., 2020). Students facing financial and social challenges as well as vulnerable tertiary institutions were unduly harmed by the influences of South African Covid-19 national lockdowns, according to a group of academics across the country who participated in a discussion component of the academic webinar, titled "Impact of a Pandemic: Global perspectives" (Paterson, 2021).

In the face of universities' efforts to ensure accessible learning, financially challenged students in South Africa have been disadvantaged by the shift to online teaching in 2020. Many students from disadvantaged backgrounds could not afford a smart cell phone, data, or laptop, and struggled with the shift to online tuition. During the first lockdowns in 2020, these students were forced to return to homes, which may not have been conducive to learning or the completion of their academic assessments (Hedding et al., 2020). As a solution to the shortage issue of electronic devises and Internet access, tertiary institutions consulted with several cellular networks to make data available to students. In addition, South African tertiary institution websites and a limited number of educational websites were made zero-rated for students to access (Hedding et al., 2020).

Unfortunately, Covid-19 intensified the pre-existing issues experienced at some universities in South Africa, which were negatively affected by student strikes at the start of 2020. An encouraging aspect of this exercise was the shift to online teaching that forced lecturers to truly question and re-evaluate their teaching style, their technical abilities, subjects, and curriculum. It encouraged a move away from routine-styled learning, with repetition to focus more on problem solving, critical thinking and application of knowledge with an integrated and multimodal approach, because traditional pedagogical techniques were no longer feasible (Paterson, 2021). Further challenges occurred in 2020 as students living in remote areas where electricity supply was unreliable and network coverage was poor, struggled to

attend online classes and keep up with assignments, tutorials, class exercises and assessments (Paterson, 2021). In addition, not all university staff owned a laptop or a desktop computer, not all had access to Wi-Fi or other internet alternatives (Hedding et al., 2020).

Universities that focused on face-to-face contact teaching developed innovative and flexible ways to offer both theory and practical components to students and find alternative forms of assessing content. However, lecturers at contact universities typically had hardly, if any, experience or training in the pedagogy or delivery of online learning. Consequently, lecturers had to upskill and familiarise themselves quickly with online learning platforms and all that it entails, including increased academic administration, marking and processing (Hedding et al., 2020). In addition, many disciplines required compulsory WIL training to complete professional courses or retain accreditation with international bodies (Hedding et al., 2020). These activities remained a challenge as the hospitality industry was lacking sustainable occupancy levels and could not offer sit-down or alcoholic services as these were prohibited under lockdown regulations (Businesstech, 2021). This resulted in students not having an opportunity to complete WIL, and thus did not receive the required exposure to practise graduate attributes.

## 2.17  Chapter summary

The literature review validates that many students who graduate from tertiary institutions hope to seek employment with ease and not encounter challenges. However, having a qualification is not always sufficient and prospective employees in hospitality establishments require individuals with industry specific skills and additional skills such as emotional intelligence and interpersonal, analytical, team player and social skills.

The researcher explored current and past literature to gain a better understanding of tertiary institutions' need to integrate graduate attributes into subject content and insight into pedagogical methods best suited for the transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning. In addition, the researcher aimed to establish whether the embedding of graduate attributes would be imperative for overall success in employment of hospitality management graduates and for the improvement of their work performance during WIL.

If the above-mentioned relationship proved to be positive, this in turn could encourage more prospective students to apply and register at tertiary institutions that instil graduate attributes in their core subjects. In the next chapter, the researcher highlights the research methodology required to conduct the study by discussing and explaining the research problem, aims and objectives, and background to the research design, as well as the population, sampling, area of study, pilot study, questionnaires, and ethics of the study.

# CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the focus and aim of the study, research methodology, research techniques, objectives, sampling, population, ethical considerations, and data analysis process.

The aim of this study was to establish which teaching and learning practices aid with the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects and improve student success during WIL and future employment in the hospitality industry.

Although several studies have been conducted in this field (Barrie, 2006, 2012; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017), there remains a challenge with university students' absorption of graduate attributes during contact time in practical subjects such as WIL and in other core subjects (Moalosi et al., 2012). Previous studies found that lecturers do not understand how to define graduate attributes into teaching and learning, which then creates the challenge of the consistency of integration (Barrie, 2006, 2012; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017). The researcher established these issues and patterns by conducting a descriptive investigation. This was supported by creating a sound literature review from secondary sources and similar completed research studies, which enabled the researcher to determine a foundation and direction for the study. The researcher gained a better understanding of the importance of graduate attributes and the challenges of transferring graduate attributes into teaching and learning and into core subjects at tertiary institutions.

Two online questionnaires were administered, which enabled the researcher to gather and analyse data to address the research problem, aim and questions.

The study's population comprised a selection of two groups, namely, students and lecturers from the UoT's hotel school. The population was identified as people who could offer insight into the pedagogy used to instil graduate attributes in teaching and learning at the hotel school, and provide information on which methods of pedagogy are most effective for the embedding of graduate attributes during the students' time at the university and during WIL. In addition, the two groups were selected to ascertain which graduate attributes the hotel school students developed during WIL, and to obtain the students' and lecturers' perspective of which graduate attributes are required for a student's success in the hospitality industry.

The student population included third-year registered students for all three streams of the National Diploma in Hospitality Management and fourth-year registered students for the Advanced Diploma in Hospitality Management in 2021. The eligible third-year students had

to meet the academic requirements of completing their WIL placement by June 2021, and the eligible fourth-year students had to complete two WIL placements in 2020 in order to complete their third year and enter their fourth year of study in 2021.

The academic population consisted of restaurant and kitchen lecturers from the UoT's hotel school restaurant and lecturers at the hotel school who taught theoretical subjects to the third- and fourth-year hotel school students.

## 3.2    Background to the study

The researcher developed the study by following the methodology of quantitative research design. This enabled the researcher to achieve the study's objectives and ensure the validity of the study (Zangirolami-Raimundo et al., 2018). By following this approach, the researcher ensured that the results were accurate and ethical considerations were maintained. This assisted the researcher with evaluating and simplifying the data, which allowed for accurately answering the research questions.

A quantitative approach was selected for this study as the researcher aimed to test current teaching and learning theories used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects. The chosen data collection instrument, questionnaires, allowed the researcher to measure the sample's attitude, perception, and ideas effectively. Creswell and Creswell (2018) support the idea that researchers are able to judge performance and then present the findings in an accurate way in quantitative studies, as this strengthens the data collection of the study. Selecting the quantitative research approach allowed the opportunity to understand the relationship between an independent variable such as teaching and learning methods used for the integration of graduate attributes, and a dependent variable such as students' performance during WIL in the study's population. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that the main idea of using a quantitative approach is different from using a qualitative method. The purpose of quantitative research is to achieve a greater understanding of the social world and establish how an event or experience can affect participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is used to capture meaningful information that has not been expressed in quantitative data regarding beliefs, feelings, or motivations that affect behaviour. Descriptive quantitative research focuses on describing current circumstances and establishing associations between variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researcher aimed to identify whether there is a positive relationship between the successful integration of graduate attributes into core subjects and students' skills (graduate attributes) development during WIL.

## 3.3 Research questions

The four research questions listed below were included in this study to provide a clear direction and focus to the research and objectives.

RQ1: What teaching and learning practices are currently in use to instil graduate attributes and which teaching and learning methods will improve the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school?

RQ2: Which graduate attributes do students gain in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL?

RQ3: Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's academic staff perceive as paramount for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

RQ4: Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's students perceive as vital for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

## 3.4 Research objectives

The following objectives aided in steering the research study and the collection and analysis of data:

- To review a UoT's hotel school's current teaching and learning practises used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects.
- To evaluate the students' embedded graduate attributes in the hospitality industry, specifically attained during WIL.
- To review the academic staff at the hotel school's perception of the graduate attributes required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.
- To evaluate the hotel school's students' perception of which graduate attributes are required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.

## 3.5 Research design

According to Abutabenjeh and Jaradat (2018), research design aids a research study by creating a blueprint to guide the research process through laying out the direction and establishing the path to attain the research objectives and answer the research questions. The researcher aimed to structure the overall research strategy by establishing a research design that combines the different elements of the study in a consistent and rational way. The use of a research collection tool such as questionnaires allowed the researcher the ability to gain insight into information from the study's selected population. This enabled a clear representation of why quantitative design was the most suitable for the research. Questionnaires are a useful tool for exploring a far greater number of variables in comparison

to a qualitative tool such a focus group or interview (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By asking third- and fourth-year students to complete a questionnaire, the researcher endeavoured to shed light on opportunities to improve the integration of graduate attributes into all core subjects at the hotel school, which will develop students' performance on WIL placements. A second questionnaire was given to core subject lecturers as well as restaurant and kitchen lecturers at the hotel school to review teaching and learning practices used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects.

Descriptive was used in this study to aid the researcher's study objectives and data collection. A similar study was used as a base for referencing the research methodology. This particular Dutch study made use of descriptive research design and descriptive statistics to interpret data. The area of research included graduate attributes as well as teaching and learning within a university context (Brouwer & Jansen, 2019). The study held similarities that the researcher could make use of for research design selection and interpretation. Both studies' research focus was directed towards graduate attributes as well as teaching and learning, and both studies described their research through a detailed literature review and findings derived during the data analysis. Furthermore, neither of the studies manipulated the variables or ran several tests to achieve their objectives or to answer the study's research questions, which is a rule in descriptive research.

The current study completed by the researcher aimed to describe the findings from the data collected and asked *what*, *where*, *when* and *how* research questions in both the study and questionnaires, which are requirements of a descriptive design (Formplus, 2022). Descriptive research was deemed an appropriate choice for this study as the researcher aimed to: i) identify characteristics, frequencies and trends in the findings; ii) point out the most suitable pedagogy for instilling graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the UoT's hotel school; iii) determine the students and lecturers' general perception of graduate attributes; and iv) explore the impact graduate attributes have on students' success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL (Formplus, 2022). According to Formplus (2022), description plays a significant role in identifying both requirements and solutions in short- and long-term efforts to improve teaching and learning, because understanding "what is" is a first step towards effective practice, and educators and researchers should be able to recognise good descriptive analysis.

Dynarski et al. (2017) explain that, "good description is clear about what it is trying to describe, its justification of methods and measures and how data is transformed into a description of the phenomenon of interest. In addition, it provides detail that captures a phenomenon without it being unnecessarily complex with respect to concepts, data or

methods". Furthermore, it reflects key concepts, incorporates a variety of perspectives, does not interfere with findings, and is accepted by many educators and researchers across the globe because it reflects observation of the real world (Formplus, 2022). Dynarski et al. (2017) further clarifies that descriptive analysis describes the world or a phenomenon: "It identifies patterns in data to answer *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, and *to what extent* questions. Good descriptive analysis depicts what we know about capabilities, needs, methods, practices, populations and settings in a manner that is relevant to a specific research question" (Dynarski et al., 2017).

Descriptive research design assisted the researcher with identifying and describing the current teaching and learning methods in place at the hotel school, and reviewing best practices to establish what affect it has on the success of students during WIL and in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, this type of research design aided the researcher with gaining an understanding of the general consensus of students and lecturers in terms of the concept of graduate attributes and the effect their understanding has on the students' success in assessments and in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL, by describing and observing the study's data.

As part of the research design, the researcher planned to collect and review data from a very specific, defined, and large number of students and lecturers at the hotel school. However, the Covid-19 pandemic impacted negatively on the South African hospitality and tourism industry and had a major financial effect on these industries. The impact of the pandemic was felt the worst in those parts of South Africa where tourism is a critical sector of the local economy (South African Government, 2021). Many hospitality and tourism businesses suspended operations due to industry shutdown and student placements were limited or non-existent, which in turn affected the number of students who could complete a WIL placement and thereby reduced the potential population numbers for the study (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020).

Due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, the researcher adapted her original focus group data collection for lecturers and developed an online questionnaire with open-ended questions. These five open-ended questions were used to establish the perceptions of the hotel school's lecturers about the best pedagogical practices they believe will aid in the integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning. The questions were also set to review which graduate attributes will improve the student's performance during WIL and support their future employment in the hospitality industry. Conducting open-ended questions assisted the researcher with discovering direct perspectives from the lecturers' answers about the foundation of a range of opinions or views on the topic of interest. Open-ended questions

allowed the researcher to collect an extensive variety of local relationships, texts, and keywords from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### 3.5.1  Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs that consider the nature of the existence being studied. It looks at the type of research techniques applied in an area of a research study (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). This is dependent on the type of information being investigated. The researcher explored and then selected a pragmatic inquiry for the study as its characteristics suited the study's objectives. This form of inquiry recognises that individuals within social settings (including organisations) can experience action and change differently, which encouraged the researcher to be flexible in the research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A positivist inquiry supports the use of the exploratory and descriptive techniques and assists in achieving the research objectives (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). Furthermore, Creswell and Creswell (2018) explain that rather than inquiring what the validity and inherent value of certain methodologies and methods are, positivism encourages researchers to observe and describe their findings based on the significance of these methodologies and methods in terms of leading us from the world of practice to the world of theory, and vice versa (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This paired well with the objectives of the study to evaluate teaching and learning methods of best practice for the development of students' hospitality industry working knowledge, and to establish the lecturers' perception of graduate attributes that will boost a students' success during WIL. This in turn highlights the importance of developing best methods for embedding graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school.

### 3.6  Hypothesis

There is a positive relationship between the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school and students' performance in the hospitality industry, particularly during WIL.

### 3.7  Research paradigm

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the positivist philosophy, associated with the French philosopher Auguste Comte (1789–1857), reflects the assumptions that logic, measurement, and the use of deductive reasoning are to prove that absolute truths can be applied to the study of phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). According to Rehman and Alharthi (2016), empiricism, being the main characteristic of positivism, argues that what is observable by the human senses is a factual indication of the existence of an objective universal reality which is the subject of natural laws and mechanisms. Positivism promotes applying natural science methods to study and understand social reality; this paired well with

this study as it allowed the researcher to report and discuss the findings as they were answered by the students and lecturers, and not to change but to describe the knowledge provided (Nickerson, 2022).

Artino et al. (2020) explain that positivism relies on the hypothetico-deductive method to verify a hypothesis that is stated quantitatively and can be proved via testing or literature. This quantitative study made use of the positivist paradigm as it aimed to prove a hypothesis where a functional relationship can be derived between a causal and explanatory factor such as an independent variable, and an outcome such as a dependent variable (Artino et al., 2020). This suited the study as the variables illustrated in the study's conceptual framework mentioned in section 1.16 allowed for a functional relationship to be derived between causal and explanatory factors. For example, there is a functional relationship that can be measured or explained by describing the integration of graduate attributes' effectiveness through looking at the cause or effect created by the use of testing graduate attributes in case studies in summative assessments at the hotel school. If students perform well in the assessment, the application style pedagogy is deemed beneficial. Including both the lecturer and the student in teaching and learning strengthens the choice of pedagogy. The independent variable would therefore be the use of the case study as it causes an effect on the integration of the graduate attributes in teaching and learning. Therefore, the teaching and learning would be the dependent variable.

In this study, the hypothesis posited a positive relationship between the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school and students' performance in the hospitality industry, and particularly during WIL. Therefore, the independent variable in this study was the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning as it proposed a positive relationship in the students' success during WIL. The dependant variable was thus the students' performance in WIL.

A positivist approach to analysing data is deductive. First, a hypothesis is proposed; then, it is either confirmed or rejected depending on the results of the statistical analysis (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). The quantitative data that positivist researchers use to answer research questions and formulate theories can be collected through standardised tests and questionnaires using close-ended questionnaires. This was beneficial for the aim of the study as it mirrored the research study's strategy and overall plan to complete the study and collect the data (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). According to Nickerson (2022), numerical data generated through these methods are subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. If the researcher proves that the independent variable (and not other variables) affects the dependent variable, the study is considered to have internal validity. Using descriptive

statistics in the current research allowed for a rich understanding of the academics' experience in teaching and learning. The use of pragmatism offered ways to find an objective basis for the assessment of the UoT's hotel school's teaching and learning practices in regard to graduate attributes being effectively embedded into core hospitality subjects (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).

The adoption of a positivism paradigm for this study helped to discover, in a logical and practical sense, what students and lecturers expect and understand from each other in terms of the transference of graduate attributes during university learning. It also highlighted the best practises used for embedding graduate attributes into theoretical subjects, and it determined whether this leads to students' success during WIL. Furthermore, by taking a positivist stance and using questionnaires for data collection, the researcher was able to review the necessary outcomes needed to embed graduate attributes into core hospitality industry subjects by describing the perceptions of lecturers and students and establishing the development of students' performance during WIL.

## 3.8 Quantitative research

Quantitative research focuses on the research objective measurements and the statistical or numerical analysis of data (According to Le Tourneau University, 2022). The data are collected through questionnaires or surveys, designed for statistical data and computational techniques. Quantitative research is concerned with gathering numerical data and simplifying it across groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon (Le Tourneau University, 2022). The reason for conducting quantitative research in this study was to determine the relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable within a population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For example, in this study an independent variable would be a pedagogical assessment method such as case study testing graduate attributes, and an example of a dependant variable would be a student's competence in the application of knowledge. The researcher selected a quantitative descriptive approach to determine the associations between variables as this aided in achieving or attaining the study objectives and answering the research questions (Mcleod, 2018).

By using a quantitative method, the researcher was able to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the personal perceptions of students and lecturers by reviewing their responses to the online questionnaires (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This aided the researcher with measuring the depth of the participants' ideas or perceptions by evaluating the numerical value of responses and determining whether it was a high or low percentage. Although some aspects of this study pointed to qualities of a quantitative or mixed-method approach, the questionnaire contained only a small selection of open-ended styled

questions, which assisted the researcher with gaining the students and lecturers' perception of graduate attributes and which graduate attributes they felt that students needed for successful WIL placement. In addition to perceptions, the researcher gained insight into the lecturer's recommendations, solutions, and possible challenges during the transference of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at the hotel school. The majority of the questions addressed to the students and lecturers were close-ended, which enabled the collection of a numerical data, looking at relationships between the different variables in the study and then breaking down the relationships among the group of students and lecturer to a percentage value (Sheard, 2018). The researcher made use of a Likert scale in the student questionnaire by asking the participants to select the level to which they agree or disagree that the qualities of technology and foresight, resilience and problem solving, relational capability, and the quality of ethical capability are important to them during their studies and WIL (Mcleod, 2018).

The researcher aimed to evaluate both the development and outcomes of the implementation of graduate attributes into core subjects and then explore whether a student would be more successful during WIL or not. The researcher was able to measure both outcomes and identify best practice methods of teaching and learning for embedding graduate attributes during theoretical and practical assessments and classes. The questionnaires were sent to students while they were completing their WIL placements, using email and the social media platform, WhatsApp for the questionnaire distribution. Online questionnaires and communication via WhatsApp were also preferable for lecturers given the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and remote teaching requirements when no physical face-to-face contact classes were happening at the time. Questionnaires were used for the study as the most general way of reviewing the understanding, perceptions, and attitudes for groups of respondents in quantitative studies (Mcleod, 2018).

### 3.9   Population

A population in a research study involves entities or events of a certain type of which researchers pursue understanding or gain certain information. A population can be broad in scope (e.g., adult males living in South Africa) or narrow (e.g., first year female hospitality management students from a university in Cape Town) (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Even when a population consists of a small selection of objects or incidents, it is often impossible to collect data about each representative of the population. As an alternative, a researcher may select a subgroup of the population, which is known as a sample. This allows for a practicable range for examination and is easier to manage (Mcleod, 2018).

The study population included third-year registered students for the National Diploma in Hospitality Management, Accommodation Management, Food and Beverage Management, and Professional Cookery, respectively, who met the criteria to be placed for WIL in June 2021, as well as fourth-year Advanced Diploma students studying at the hotel school. The lecturers included the kitchen and restaurant lecturers and core subject lecturers at the hotel school. The lecturers had to have taught one or more of the subjects offered at the hotel school in 2021.

There was no discrimination about the selection of students and lecturers as they could be of any age, gender, or ethnicity. The sample was restricted to Hospitality Management diploma students from all streams and lecturers at the hotel school as the study focused on the hospitality industry as part of completing the study within the Tourism and Hospitality field. It was a requirement for the study that the students had to have completed their restaurant and kitchen practical at the hotel school's restaurant and at least one WIL placement. This allowed the students to have real-life working experience and the opportunity to develop graduate attributes and necessary skills for future employment, which in turn allowed for better data findings as the students had some of the required knowledge to answer the questionnaire. All participants were offered the choice not to take part in the study and their personal information was not shared with any external sources.

## 3.10  Sampling

The sampling method used for the quantitative research (student and lecturer questionnaires) was convenience sampling. According to Frey (2018), convenience sampling refers to a method where the selection of participants is based on their ready availability. This availability is usually in terms of geographical proximity e.g., students in the researcher's own university or place of employment. Convenience sampling was a suitable choice for the study as the sixty seven students and the thirteen lecturers at the hotel school were easily accessible and willing to take part in the study. Convenience sampling ensures that the data and knowledge obtained represent the selected population from which the sample was taken (Etikan et al., 2016). The sample selected was very specific and clearly defined as the third- and four-year students had to have qualified for WIL and completed one WIL placement.

An additional reason for the selection of this sampling technique was that it suited the needs of the study by being broadly used when researchers aim to complete a pilot study or research that is descriptive. It can be used when researchers have restricted time to complete their research, or they may have economic constraints during quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where samples are selected from the population only because they are opportunely available

to the researcher. These samples were chosen for the study because they met the criteria of who could answer the questionnaires. Furthermore, the participants were easily accessible even with Covid-19 restrictions as the researcher could access the participants online, which was deemed as cost and time effective. The researcher did not have to deliberate on using a sample that signifies the whole population.

## 3.11 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study with a small selection of students at the hotel school who were completing a hospitality management certificate short course over a five-week period in August 2021. This enabled the researcher to establish the credibility and reliability of the questionnaire for all hospitality management students at the hotel school. The short course students were involved as they were registered third-year students working in the hospitality industry. They had basic knowledge of skills and experience needed for the hospitality industry. The pilot study followed the process planned for the data collection, and the link to an online questionnaire was sent out via the social media platform WhatsApp as well as via email. Once the pilot study was completed, it provided the researcher with the necessary feedback to establish if the questionnaires were practical, realistic and whether the students understood what was being asked. From the feedback, the researcher was able to review whether the results met the study's objectives or not. Changes were made to improve the layout and quality of questions asked, and questions deemed unnecessary were removed. This ensured that the researcher collected suitable data that met the requirements of the study.

## 3.12 Questionnaire

The researcher developed two questionnaires, one aimed at third- and fourth-year students and the other at lecturers at the hotel school. For the purpose of this study, the graduate attributes listed in the questionnaires were adapted from the UoT's official graduate attributes as the study was based at the UoT's hotel school. The student questionnaire consisted of a combination of close-ended questions, where students either had to select from a list of options or rate their like or dislike of each statement by means of a Likert scale. Students were also asked one open-ended question to establish their understanding of graduate attributes. The lecturer questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The close-ended questions were answered through a selection of listed choices. The open-ended questions were asked to establish the lecturer's perceptions and understanding of graduate attributes, and their recommendations on how to embed graduate attributes into core subjects, how to assess these attributes in formative and summative assessments, and how to establish the impact of graduate attributes on students' development during WIL.

### 3.12.1 Student questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of Likert-type questions, which were valued on a five-point scale from the number one (1) to five (2), scaling the participants' level of agreement (Vanek, 2012). This type of scale was selected as it is used frequently with people in human science studies due to the ease of use and how participants can show their like or dislike of a statement (Mcleod, 2018). The statements used were in reference to the different pillars of graduate attributes used at the hotel school, and how important the students felt these attributes were to them during their studies and WIL. The main benefit of Likert scale questions is that they use a universal method of collecting data, which means the questions are extremely user-friendly and do not need explaining (Vanek, 2012). This was necessary as it reduced any confusion the students might have had whilst completing the questionnaire online.

One open-ended question was asked to establish the students understanding of graduate attributes and lead them to the detailed questioning in the rest of the questionnaire. The close-ended questions and Likert-type scaled questions were developed to quantify attitudes by asking participants to respond to different types of statements to establish graduate attributes that have been transferred into core subjects at the hotel school and if there was an impact on their performance during WIL. The researcher aimed to establish what their understanding and experiences were regarding graduate attributes and successful WIL placement, and what they believed would assist them in successfully completing WIL and with future employment (Appendix A: Student Questionnaire).

### 3.12.2 Lecturer questionnaire

The questionnaire was constructed using a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions. The first two (open-ended) questions were posed to establish the lecturers' understanding of graduate attributes, and which graduate attributes they felt would aid in a student's success during WIL. Three close-ended questions were then asked to review current teaching and learning practises used by lecturers at the hotel school and determine which graduate attributes they felt the students had developed after their first WIL placement. The respondents needed to select one or more choices from a list of options. The options were based on different assessment practices as well as teaching and learning methods. This layout created a user-friendly experience and allowed for the researcher to collect the necessary data for the study (Mcleod, 2018). Another set of close-ended questions were asked to establish the lecturers' best practise for the integration of graduate attributes into all core subjects at the hotel school.

The remainder of the questionnaire comprised three open-ended questions, which reviewed how lecturers dealt with challenges in the assessment of the attributes within their theory and practical subjects. The recommended methods of embedding graduate attributes in teaching and learning were also investigated. The layout and style of questions were purposefully selected for the study to compliment the needs of a quantitative study, which enabled the researcher to attain the objectives and answer the research questions effectively (Appendix F: Lecturer Questionnaire).

### 3.13  Limitations of the research

- The Covid-19 pandemic had a destructive impact on the South African hospitality and tourism economy with major financial complications worldwide. Arguably, the local impact of the pandemic was hardest felt particularly in those parts of South Africa where tourism is a critical sector of the local economy (South African Government, 2021). Due to national state of disaster and lockdown restrictions only essential businesses were allowed to trade; this meant initial closure of all hospitality and tourism operations. Due to the hospitality industry shutdown, WIL placements were lost and students were removed from placements in March 2020 for the unforeseeable future (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). The researcher experienced a severe shortage of third-year students who completed two WIL placements due to these Covid-19 challenges. It must also be noted that the third-year students who completed the questionnaires were only half-way through their WIL placement.

- The sampling method did not represent the entire population as efficiently as the researcher hoped for, given the lack of response from the student and lecturer sample group. Research fatigue and a poor questionnaire response rate is a common occurrence in surveys completed in tertiary institutions due to the nature of education and the constant demand for research and studies being conducted by academic staff and researchers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This challenge was even more prevalent during the Covid-19 pandemic as several studies were conducted on the impact of the pandemic (Patel et al., 2020). Patel et al. (2020) explain that when severe disasters occur, lecturers and students receive multiple requests for study participation by separate internal and external researchers and academic teams who most likely do not discuss their work. If participants are not informed of the research process or outcomes, it could lead to low levels of engagement or motivation. Overloading people with too many research requests and failing to provide the study findings may cause individuals to experience research fatigue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- Research questions addressed by convenience sampling were limited to the sample itself as the sample was very defined and specific in order to meet the requirements of the study (Mcleod, 2018).

- Results could be biased given the intentions of why some people choose to take part and some do not (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- The data collected may not be a generalisation because of the sampling method, as the knowledge gained is only representative of the population from which the sample is drawn (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

- As previously mentioned, the data process during the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the response rate. Due to the latter, Inferential statistics would not have been viable due to the limited response numbers. Hence the hypothesis could not be scientifically proven or refuted. Descriptive data collected however does support the hypothesis and shows the connection between students, teaching and learning, lecturers, integration of graduate attributes and students success in industry.

## 3.14 Ethical considerations

Ethical procedures are there to guard people and settings involved in the study against any form of emotional pain, forced influence or misconduct (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The researcher received endorsement from the Faculty of Business Research Ethics Committee (FREC) in the form of an Ethics certificate (No: FOBREC733, 19 November 2019) and then by obtaining permission from the Acting Assistant Dean from the Research and Innovation Unit (Appendix A: Ethics certificate; Appendix B: Permission letter from Acting Assistant Dean of Research and Innovation Unit).

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the information, hotel school students and lecturers had the right to remain unidentified when completing the questionnaires by completing the questionnaire but not including their name or any personal information. To ensure consent, both students and lecturers were asked for their consent to participate in the study (Appendix C: Consent Letter: Student; Appendix E: Consent Letter: Lecturer). The researcher selected the function on Google Forms to ensure the students and lecturers completed the questionnaire only once. Subsequently, each student and lecturer was given an option to provide their consent by selecting yes or no. The introduction of the questionnaire clearly indicated the focus of the study and confirmed that they may choose whether they want to partake in the study or not. Both students and lecturers had the right to remove themselves from the study and from the research procedure at any time without cause or prejudgment. Respect for privacy and honesty as well as avoiding misrepresentation was one of the main ethical considerations during this study.

### 3.15   Data collection

The researcher approached the lecturers, third- and fourth-year students in September 2021 by sending a Google Forms link via email and WhatsApp. The delivery method selected was chosen for its efficiency, accuracy, and because face to-face contact was not an option during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. The third-year students completed their first WIL placement and were in the process of preparing themselves for their second WIL placement at the end of their third year. The fourth-year students had to complete two WIL placements in their third year in 2020 to gain acceptance into their fourth year in 2021. At the time, the lecturers were in the process of setting and marking summative assessments for first- and second-year hospitality management students, thus they did not have classes with the students. The researcher hoped that selecting this time for data collection would be less disruptive to the lecturers' work schedule.

To test the validity of questions used for the questionnaires, a pilot study was conducted with a small selection of hospitality management students at the hotel school to assess the success of the questionnaire. This was done first, at the beginning of August 2021, to provide the researcher with a better understanding of what challenges may result from questions asked in the formal questionnaires in September 2021 to third- and fourth-year hospitality management students and lecturers at the hotel school (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It was important for the researcher to remain objective during the quantitative study and to remove bias so that true and honest findings could surface and that the research could be valid and ethical (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The researcher was the only person to gather data from the students and lecturers. The collection of the students' and lectures' questionnaires took place over a twelve-week period via Google Forms. The questionnaires were constructed to be concise and direct for respondents to answer with ease and within fifteen minutes.

After all the questionnaires were downloaded, the data were analysed.. The identification of themes and trends in the data was done after all questionnaires were completed and analysed.

### 3.16   Data analysis

Data collected was extrapolated using Google Forms and then transferred into a Microsoft Excel master file for evaluation using the Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 28. The material from the questionnaires was retrieved by means of direct information breakdown where subjects materialised (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This method of data collection was chosen as it is most suited for the social science field of study and for its speed, efficiency, and ease of use, and because face-to-face contact was not

allowed during the Covid-19 lockdown regulations in 2021. An additional data analysis software program, ATLAS.ti, was used to code and analyse text-based data and convert the test-based data into quantitative data for further analysis. ATLAS.ti additionally created data analytics for the study, which aided the researcher with matching themes and trends in the data. It assisted the researcher with developing descriptive statistics and establishing relationships among the dependent and independent variables. It was necessary to use two data analysis software programs in the study, one for the quantitative data that did not require conversion and the other for the text-based data that needed to be coded, themed, and then converted into quantitative data.

Using WhatsApp and email for data collection enabled instant communication via mobile devices, which was relatable to the population as WhatsApp is popular among young people, including students and junior lecturers. The majority of the population are millennials, whom in general are considered tech-savvy (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2017). It is a cost-effective option for all ages as long as the individual has access to Wi-Fi or mobile data (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020). Kaufmann and Peil (2020) explain that most researchers prefer to use social media platforms for data collection as studies have shown that respondents are quicker to respond and more likely to participate due to ease of use and the ability to respond instantly. Participating in data collection using social platforms such as WhatsApp is also deemed to be more casual and less intimidating among younger respondents as they are very familiar with social media and use on a daily basis (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020). Email or WhatsApp communication via a laptop or smart mobile device was also suitable for the lecturers as both platforms are used on a regular basis for work requirements and equally so in their personal capacity.

In Chapter Four, the researcher visually demonstrates the analysed data in the form of numbers, percentages and averages displayed in statistical tables. The qualitative data collected were less voluminous. According to Sheard (2018), for quantitative data with minor components of qualitative data, it is advisable to break down certain phrases and establish similarities and trends and then review the level frequency or number of similar words used (Sheard, 2018). This study was therefore coded for certain phrases and words whereby similarities were recognised and themes were noted and illustrated in visual representations such as tables, word clouds and bar charts.

### 3.17  Research reliability and validity

The researcher endeavoured to ensure the reliability and validity of this study to certify the quality and integrity of both questionnaires used. According to Mohajan (2017), reliability in research suggests a measurement that supplies consistent findings with equal values. It

measures stability, accuracy, and honesty. It shows the extent to which it is without bias and therefore ensures reliable measurements across time and the various items in the data collection instruments. In quantitative research, reliability refers to the stability and consistency of results. A research study can be considered reliable if consistent results have been obtained in identical situations but different circumstances (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Since a large number of research studies are unreliable, it is vital to be able to differentiate which studies are in fact conclusive and trustworthy. Reliable studies use appropriate sample sizes, avoid biases, and are performed by researchers who are not inspired by funding or the need to pursue particular data (Mohajan, 2017). Being a lecturer herself, the researcher understood the importance of reliability in research and specifically with this study. The significance of honourable research in this study was paramount to strengthen teaching and learning practices, the integration of graduate attributes in core subjects, and students' overall success in the hospitality industry and WIL.

To ensure validity, the researcher did not use an inappropriate sample or manipulate the data for desired results. Research validity in a quantitative study is defined as the degree to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure and the level to which the results are truthful. It requires a research instrument (questionnaire) to measure the concepts under the study accurately (Mohajan, 2017). It establishes whether the results obtained meet all the requirements of the quantitative research method. Validity of research is the extent to which the requirements of a research method have been followed during the process of generating research findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To ensure the validity of research, according to the following points are measurable (Mohajan, 2017):
- Appropriate time scale for the study has to be selected
- Appropriate methodology has to be chosen
- Consider the characteristics of the study
- The most suitable sample method for the study has to be selected
- The respondents must not be pressured in any way to select specific choices among the answer sets

The researcher guaranteed validity by creating questions that were logical, in a rational order, and were asked to ascertain results that aided in answering the research questions and achieving the research objectives. Respondents were given five months to respond and were not pressured to participate.

### 3.18 Chapter summary

This chapter examined the research methodology and research instruments, and discussed research plan. It evaluated the understanding of the teaching and learning knowledge of the hotel school's lecturers with regard to graduate attributes and third- and fourth-year students' development during WIL. A quantitative research method was deemed most suited for the study. It ensured the relevance, reliability and accuracy of the data. A convenience sample of third- and fourth-year students and lecturers was used. Data were collected through online questionnaires, sent out via email and WhatsApp. A literature review was conducted to obtain secondary sources, which were then used to create questionnaires and perform a pilot study to test their validity. The primary data were attained from the outcomes of the questionnaires completed by the study participants, captured using Statistics Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 28, and then analysed by using tables, word clouds and bar graphs. An additional program, ATLAS.ti, was used for data analytics and matching themes.

The interpretation and analysis of the data will be discussed in Chapter Four.

# CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYIS

## 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explained the research methodology and reviewed the selection of a quantitative method for the study. This chapter presents and analyses the data collected from the student and lecturer questionnaires. The data for each question will be presented as follows: the question, rationale for the question, followed by a table or figure. Listed below, a breakdown of the data is provided to indicate the findings of the data. Both student and lecturer questionnaires can be found listed at the end of the study under Appendices D and E.

It was important to select questions that would allow for the answering of the research questions and meet the research objectives effectively. The data captured assisted with establishing whether the improvement of teaching and learning of graduate attributes impact positively on a student's skills development during their academic activities, WIL, and future employability in the hospitality industry. In addition, relevant data were captured and necessary information was gained to aid the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the UoT's hotel school.

## 4.2 Student questionnaire

### 4.2.1 Question 1

*What is your understanding of graduate attributes?*

***Rationale:***

This question was asked to verify the students' perception of the term *graduate attributes,* and to determine if the students could explain the difference between technical skills, qualities, and soft skills. This allowed the researcher the ability to establish whether a foundation is required for the absorption of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school. The open-ended format question enabled students to provide their own true understanding without being influenced by any descriptive words. It is essential that students comprehend the term *graduate attribute* before they can truly master and perfect the attribute or skill during teaching and learning.

Figure 4.1 is a visual representation of words, known as a word cloud or tag cloud. Word clouds are used to highlight popular words and phrases based on frequency and relevance (CED, 2022*).* The words in larger font showed higher frequency levels, but because numerical values can be attached, this is shown in Table 4.1.

**Figure 4.1: Word cloud students' perception of graduate attributes**

**Table 4.1: Students' perception of graduate attributes**

*Commonly used descriptors*

| | Frequency N= 67 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Skills | 32 | 48% |
| Student | 21 | 31% |
| Qualities | 20 | 30% |
| University | 15 | 22% |
| Understanding | 14 | 21% |
| Gain | 13 | 19% |
| Graduate | 13 | 19% |
| High | 13 | 19% |
| Study / studies | 13 | 19% |
| Attributes | 12 | 18% |
| Knowledge | 12 | 18% |
| Learning | 12 | 18% |
| Level | 11 | 16% |
| Students | 9 | 13% |
| Experiences | 8 | 12% |
| Gained | 8 | 12% |
| Result | 8 | 12% |
| Experience | 6 | 9% |
| Course | 5 | 7% |
| Engage | 5 | 7% |
| Characteristics | 4 | 6% |
| Graduated | 4 | 6% |

*Findings:*

From the 67 responses, it is clear that the students do not have an understanding of the term *graduate attributes* and they do not know what it entails. The majority of participants provided the incorrect definition, description or meaning of the term. This open-ended question gave students the opportunity to provide their own true understanding without being influenced by any descriptive words. Most students (76%) responded by saying they have no or very little understanding of the term. The remaining respondents (24%) said it simply means working hard at university. Students conveyed their idea of graduate attributes as information or feedback given by graduates, or knowing what their studies are about. Some students said they never heard the term before, while in some cases, students left the answer blank. It is evident that a large number of respondents know the term has something to do with skills (48%) or qualities (30%), while 18% said it is knowledge they should gain at university. The respondents furthermore indicated that these are necessary qualities to attain at university, but they could not explain what the actual skills are or mean. The majority of respondents (48%) indicated that the skills they gain during teaching and learning at the hotel school are qualities. Thirty per cent (30%) said it is necessary to attain skills and qualities for their future in the hospitality industry. The question posed is open-ended, thus the frequency of words used could be measured as indicated by the students' responses. The following words appeared most in their answers: graduate skills, qualities, life experiences, industry knowledge, practical skills, characteristics, problem solving, high-level skills, working in a team, industry skills, learning at university, time management, and communication.

### 4.2.2 Question 2

*As a University of Technology (UoT) student, what qualities (graduate attributes) do you think are important to develop whilst studying? You may select more than one.*

*Rationale:*

This question was asked to determine which graduate attributes students feel are important to develop during their time at the hotel school. The researcher endeavoured to establish insight into the students' general knowledge on specific soft and technical skills required for the hospitality industry, and specifically WIL. This was necessary to gain information on the development of teaching and learning practices for the transference or embedding of graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school. Furthermore, the data collected and analysed benefit the study by providing insight into the graduate attributes considered important and/or less important from the students' perspective. Developing graduate attributes during teaching and learning at university equips a student with the necessary qualities and skills to increase their emotional intelligence. This in turn equips the student with the ability to deal with diversity, technology, foresight, sustainability, and adaptability.

**Table 4.2: Graduate attributes that students think they should develop whilst studying**

| | Number of responses N=67 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Team player | 48 | 72% |
| Communication skills | 56 | 84% |
| Problem solving ability | 52 | 78% |
| Willingness to learn | 50 | 75% |
| Integrity | 45 | 67% |
| Self-motivated | 54 | 81% |
| Stress management | 53 | 79% |
| Technological skills | 42 | 63% |

*Findings*:

The majority (84%) of respondents indicated that communication skills are an important graduate attribute to develop at university, compared to 63% who stated that technological skills are less vital. A large number of students (81%) said self-motivation is crucial, while 79% stated that stress management is an essential skill to learn during their time at the hotel school. Other qualities that stood out as important skills from the responses received are the willingness to learn (75%), being a team player (72%), and integrity (67%).

### 4.2.3    Question 3

*As a hotel school student, what qualities do you think are important to have before entering a WIL placement? You may select more than one.*

*Rationale:*

Question 3 gave students the opportunity to present their opinion of the qualities (graduate attributes) they believe are needed before becoming a hospitality management trainee in the hospitality industry, and specifically WIL. This gave the researcher an idea of which graduate attributes the students need to development during teaching and learning. In addition, the research was able to establish which pedagogical practices will aid in the integration of the selected graduate attributes into class activities, formative and summative assessments. Developing graduate attributes at university before entering WIL and the hospitality industry provides a student with vital skills and qualities needed to enhance and grow their emotional intelligence and relational capabilities. It equips students with the necessary tools to engage with different types of people, handling challenges with technology, keeping up with

hospitality industry trends, having the ability to plan, an appreciation and understanding of sustainable practices, and the quality of resilience.

**Table 4.3: Important qualities a student should possess before entering WIL**

| | Number of responses<br>N=67 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Team player | 48 | 72% |
| Communication skills | 57 | 85% |
| Time management | 55 | 82% |
| Integrity | 38 | 57% |
| Self-motivated | 47 | 70% |
| Solution-oriented | 50 | 75% |
| Confidence | 60 | 90% |
| Willingness to learn | 57 | 85% |
| Technological skills | 36 | 54% |

***Findings:***

Most students (90%) stated that confidence is an important quality to have before entering WIL. The most common qualities indicated are communication skills (85%), willingness to learn (85%), time management (82%), and being solution-oriented (75%). These are all essential skills for the hospitality industry. Two qualities that seem to be slightly less important to the respondents are integrity (57%) and technological skills (54%).

### 4.2.4 Question 4

*While completing your WIL placement, what graduate qualities are you learning? You may select more than one.*

***Rationale:***

The reasoning behind this question was to establish which graduate attributes students believe they gain during WIL placement. The data collected and analysed offered the researcher insight into the attributes required for a student's success in future WIL placements. This knowledge enables students to develop into well-balanced and equipped graduates for the hospitality industry. In addition, the students' responses provided the study with a review on whether practical, application-based, or on-the-job training methods are good practices to incorporate into teaching and learning at the hotel school. Having this knowledge offers the academic instructor the opportunity to improve and update the curriculum.

**Table 4.4: Graduate attributes developed during WIL**

|  | Number of responses N=67 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Integrity | 29 | 45% |
| Communication skills | 47 | 73% |
| Analytical skills | 42 | 65% |
| Problem solving ability | 54 | 83% |
| Time management | 50 | 77% |
| Team player | 50 | 77% |
| Self-motivated | 32 | 49% |
| Technological skills | 38 | 59% |

*Findings:*

There is a clear indication that students feel they acquire several graduate attributes whilst completing their WIL placement. The majority of respondents (83%) agreed that they learn skills such as being a problem-solving team player (77%), time management (77%), communication (72%), and analytical skills (65%) during WIL. Technological skills (59%), self-motivation (49%) and integrity (45%) are also believed to be developed, but to a lesser degree.

### 4.2.5 Question 5

*What qualities do you believe are necessary to get a job in the hospitality industry? You may select more than one.*

*Rationale:*

The reason for posing this question was to determine which graduate attributes students believe are necessary for employment in the hospitality industry. The researcher gained valuable insight into the students' perception of the qualities or skills that are considered important for working in the hospitality industry, and the graduate attributes that need to be developed during teaching and learning at the hotel school. To improve the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects, lecturers need to use suitable pedagogy for specific skills and qualities. This can only be done if the lecturer knows which graduated attributes the students require for training or for working in the hospitality industry.

**Table 4.5: Qualities needed for employment in the hospitality industry**

| | | Number of responses N=67 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Team player | 55 | 82% |
| | Time management | 55 | 82% |
| | Stress management | 45 | 67% |
| | Self-motivated | 35 | 52% |
| | Accountability | 55 | 82% |
| | Integrity | 42 | 63% |
| | Loyalty | 45 | 67% |
| | Problem-solving skills | 57 | 85% |
| | Analytical skills | 40 | 60% |
| | Technological skills | 38 | 57% |

*Findings:*

The majority of participants said that problem solving (85%), being a team player (82%), time management (82%), accountability (82%), loyalty (67%), stress management (67%), integrity (63%) and analytical skills (60%) are the most important qualities or skills required for employment in the hospitality industry. Fifty-eight per cent (58%) indicated that possessing technological skills and being self-motivated (35%) are needed, but that these are not the most critical attributes for employment in the hospitality industry.

**4.2.6   Question 6**

*Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the qualities of technology and foresight (such as planning) are important to you during your studies and WIL.*

*Rationale:*

The reason for this question was to determine the students' agreement level of the importance of technology and foresight as important qualities for their studies and WIL placement. This provided insight into how crucial it is for students (in their own opinion) to possess practical knowledge of technology, being able to communicate with technology and sourcing relevant information intuitively, and having critical thinking skills will assist them during their academic time in the classroom and during WIL. Acquiring technological skills is vital for studying at a university, training during WIL, employment in the hospitality industry, communication, and everyday life activities. The information gained from this data will enable the development of suitable pedagogical practise recommendations to embed general educational and hospitality industry software knowledge and skills into teaching and learning at the hotel school.
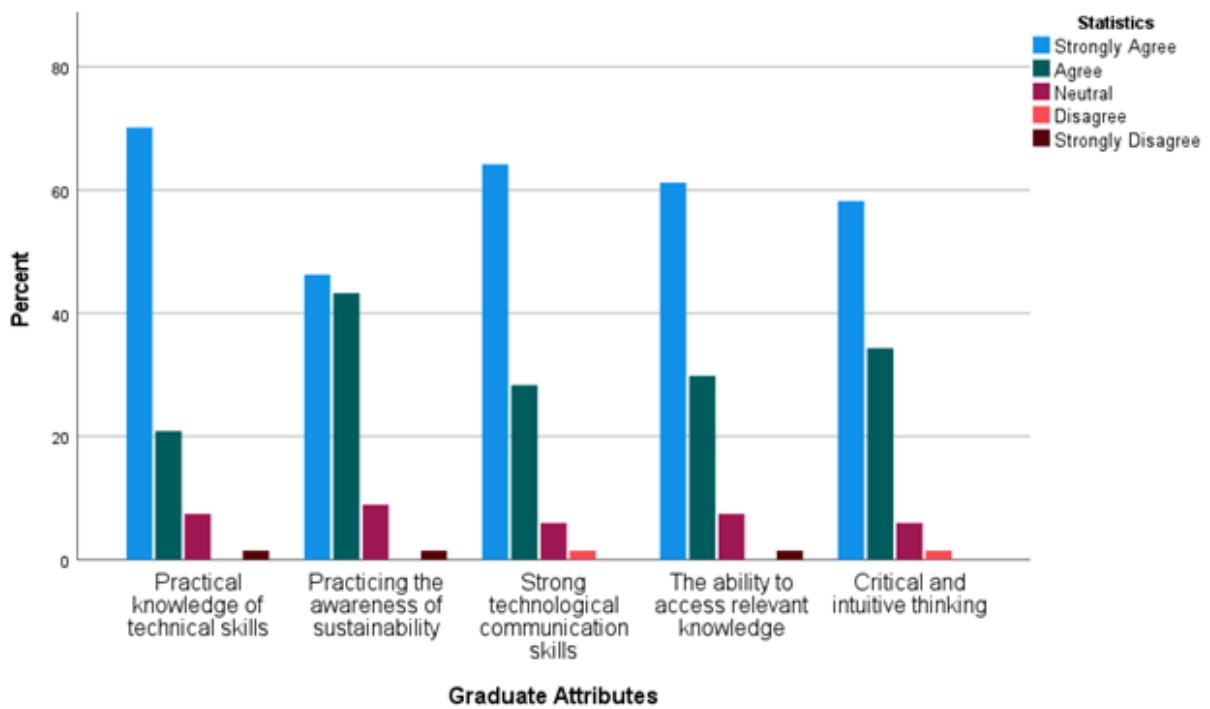
**Figure 4.2: Level of agreement that the qualities of technology and foresight are important to a student during their studies and WIL**

*Findings:*

The majority of students (70%) strongly agreed that qualities such as practical knowledge of technical skills are important to them during their studies and WIL. Sixty-five per cent (65%) of the respondents strongly agreed that strong technological communication skills are crucial. Sixty-one per cent (61%) of the participants said the ability to access relevant knowledge is an extremely important skill to assist them in teaching and learning at university and during WIL. Fifty-eight per cent (58%) of the students strongly agreed that critical thinking and intuitive thinking are important qualities, whereas the minority (45%) indicated that practising awareness of sustainability is a necessity.

### 4.2.7   Question 7

*Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the qualities of resilience (flexibility) and problem solving are important to you during your studies and WIL.*

*Rationale:*

This question was asked to determine whether students agreed or disagreed that the qualities of resilience, organisational skills, facing difficult challenges, the ability to reflect, and problem solving are necessary whilst studying and during WIL. It is vital for a student to possess these graduate attributes during their studies and in the hospitality industry, as both environments are fast-paced and change constantly. A student needs the ability to be flexible in complex situations and be able to solve challenges during their time at university and while

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working in the hospitality industry. Facing challenges with difficult guests or issues while maintaining a work-life balance are both necessary tools for a student's survival. The findings derived from the students' responses gave the researcher an understanding of whether more attention needs to be spent on embedding the above-mentioned qualities (graduate attributes) into teaching and learning during academic activities and which specific teaching methods are the most appropriate at the hotel school during WIL placement.

**Table 4.6: Level of agreement that the qualities of resilience and problem solving are important to a student during their studies and WIL**

| N=67 | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organisational skills | 69% | 25% | 6% | 0% | 0% |
| Adaptability | 66% | 30% | 5% | 0% | 0% |
| Facing challenges with guests | 67% | 28% | 3% | 2% | 0% |
| Facing challenges with home and work balance | 52% | 34% | 12% | 2% | 0% |
| Facing challenges with team activities | 54% | 34% | 8% | 5% | 0% |
| The ability to reflect | 63% | 30% | 8% | 0% | 0% |

*Findings:*

As a collective, the majority of participants strongly agreed that the following skills are important for their studies and WIL: organisational skills (68%), adaptability (66%), facing challenges with guests (67%), dealing with home and work balance (52%), facing challenges with team activities (54%), and the ability to reflect (63%). A small percentage of students remained  neutral about the importance of facing challenges with home and work balance (12%), facing challenges with team activities (8%), and the ability to reflect (8%). In contrast, only 2% of students disagreed that facing challenges with home and work balance or facing challenges with guests are important. Forty-five per cent (45%) of respondents said being able to face challenges with team activities is not needed for academic activities or WIL.

### 4.2.8   Question 8

*Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the quality of relational capability (dealing with others) is important to you during your studies and WIL.*

*Rationale:*

This reason for posing this question was to ascertain whether students believe that relational capability qualities such as understanding and respecting other's knowledge and experience, recognising one's own weaknesses, and effective communication are crucial for their studies and WIL. Possessing emotional intelligence qualities, such as knowing how to deal with

others, are vital skills required for every student to function in society. Equipping the student with the ability to respect boundaries, reading the room, communicating, and identifying one's own limitations are essential for students' success during their time at the hotel school, WIL and for future employment in the hospitality industry.

From the data gained, the researcher was able determine how much time and attention is required to integrate these graduate attributes into teaching and learning and what pedagogic practises would be best suited for this task.
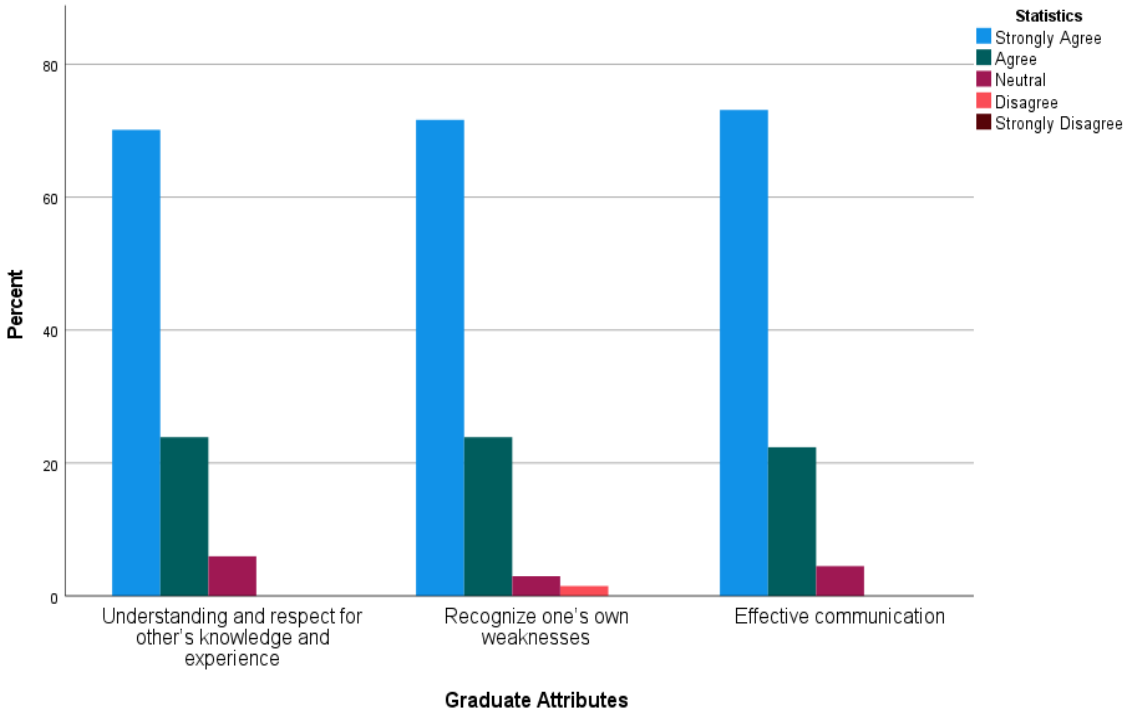


**Figure 4.3: Level of agreement that the quality of relational capability is important to a student during their studies and WIL**

*Findings:*

Most of the participants (75%) agreed that relational capability is an important quality to have during their studies at the hotel school and WIL placement in the hospitality industry. A large percentage (74%) of students agreed that effective communication is paramount. Furthermore, 71% of the respondents felt that knowing one's weakness is equally vital and 70% indicated that respecting other's knowledge and experience is significant. A few students (4%) disagreed with the concept that knowing one's weakness will be helpful in their academia and during their WIL placement.

### 4.2.9 Question 9

*Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the quality of ethical capability (knowing right from wrong) is important to you during your studies and WIL.*

***Rationale:***

This question was posed to determine the students' perception of the importance of the ethical capability quality (graduate attribute) whilst completing their studies and during WIL placement. According to Husni et al. (2019), ethical capability is not only knowing whether something is right or wrong but also understanding the greater effect of one's ethical standing. It corresponds with a person's belief system and who they are as a person. Gaining this data provided insight into the students' ability to know right from wrong, their belief system, and whether they actively strive to be morally sound managers in the hospitality industry. This perspective gave the researcher an idea of which course of action to recommend for improving or embedding this quality into teaching and learning at the hotel school.



**Figure 4.4: Level of agreement that the quality of ethical capability is important to a student during their studies and WIL**
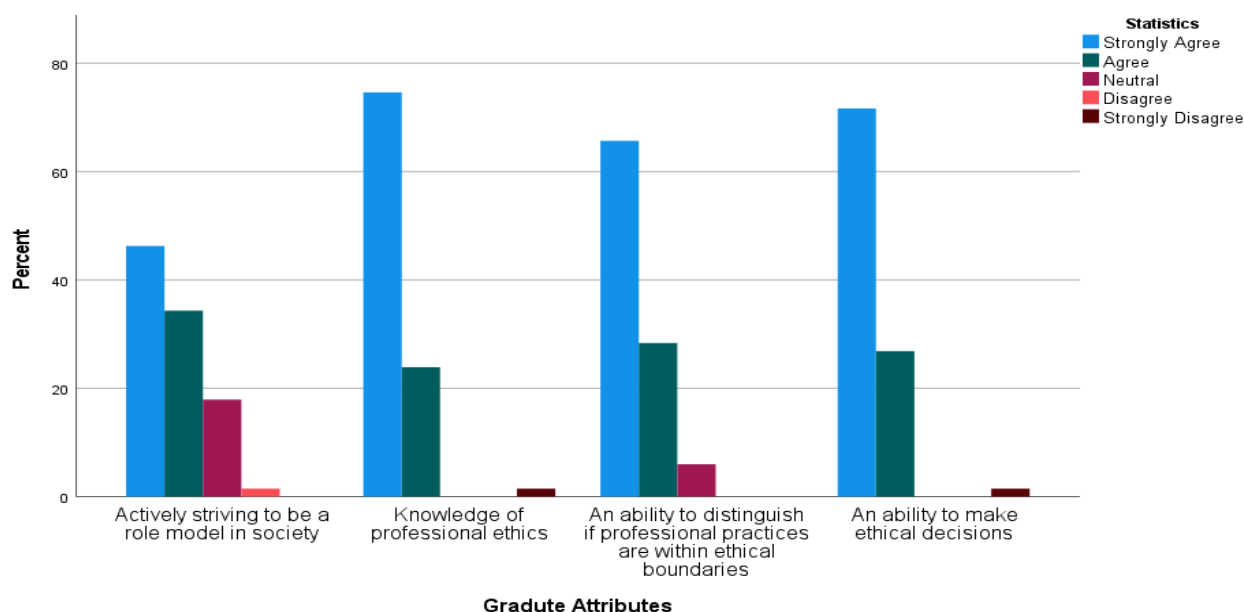
***Findings:***

Most students (76%) agreed that having knowledge about professional ethics is vital for their studies and WIL. Seventy per cent (70%) of the participants agreed that the ability to make ethical decisions is necessary, and 64% of the students said the ability to distinguish whether professional practices within ethical boundaries is important. Forty-four per cent (44%) of the students agreed that actively striving to be a role model in society is essential for their academic activities at the hotel school and for their WIL placement. A minority of students

(3%) strongly disagreed with the notion that knowledge about professional ethics or the ability to make ethical decisions is important.

In summary, as collective the students indicated low levels of comprehension in terms of their understanding of the concept and individual meanings of graduate attributes. The researcher established that the majority of students perceive communication as an important skill to learn during their studies and WIL placement. An interesting discovery from the students' responses is their general belief that technology is not an essential graduate attribute. In addition, the participants' understanding of integrity is misconstrued and therefore perceived as unimportant. Without consensus on the concept or individual meanings of graduate attributes, the students will continue to struggle with developing graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school.

## 4.3    Lecturer questionnaire

The lecturer questionnaire differed from the student questionnaire in terms of the number of open-ended questions. More open-ended questions were posed in the lecturer questionnaire than in the student questionnaire to gain as much information possible from the participants' responses, not limiting or influencing them in any way. Offering the lecturers the opportunity to provide detail to clarify their responses enabled the bearing of valuable information. Furthermore, providing this level of freedom encouraged creative responses and new perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Close-ended questions would not have delivered suitable responses.

### 4.3.1    Question 1

*What is your understanding of the concept, graduate attributes?*

***Rationale:***

This question was posed to the lecturers to establish their interpretation of the concept *graduate attributes.* If lecturers do not understand this concept, it will be challenging for them to transfer graduate attributes into teaching and learning. Additionally, if there is no knowledge or an incorrect perception of graduate attributes, the hotel school students will not develop the necessary skills and qualities required for their studies, WIL, and the hospitality industry. The data collected gave the researcher insight into the level or degree of consensus among the lecturers about the concept of graduate attributes. It is imperative that lecturers have the correct understanding of graduate attributes to develop content and activities that enable them to embed the necessary skills and qualities into core subjects at the hotel school.

**Figure 4.5: Lecturers' perception of graduate attributes**

In Figure 4.5, the words in larger font reveal greater frequency levels. However, because no numerical values can be added to a word cloud, Table 4.7 presents the numerical frequency values of commonly used descriptors as reflected in the lecturers' questionnaire.

**Table 4.7: Lecturers' perception of graduate attributes**

*Commonly used descriptors*

|  | Frequency N=13 |
| --- | --- |
| Skills | 62% |
| Abilities | 15% |
| Learning | 15% |
| Life | 15% |
| Personal | 15% |
| Understanding | 15% |

***Findings:***

The majority of lecturers (62%) indicated that their perception of the concept *graduate attributes* is that it points to the skills a student should gain or develop during their time at university. Other notable descriptions of their viewpoint on graduate attributes include words such as abilities (15%), learning (15%), life (15%), personal (15%), and understanding (15%). Thirty-eight per cent (38%) of the participants unfortunately proved to have a limited understanding of the concept *graduate attributes.*

### 4.3.2 Question 2

*What graduate attributes do you think a student needs to excel in the hospitality industry?*

**Rationale:**

The rationale for this question was to ascertain which graduate attributes the lecturers considered essential for a student's success in the hospitality industry. The data obtained from this question are significant as it aids in the attainment of the study's research objectives and answering one of the main research questions, namely, "Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's academic staff perceive as paramount for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?" In addition, acquiring this information assisted the researcher with establish which pedagogical practices are needed, and which graduate attributes will promote a student's success in the hospitality industry. A hotel school's main objective is developing employable and well-equipped graduates for the hospitality industry. Students require specific graduate attributes to succeed in the hospitality industry. The hospitality industry requires employees who can deal with a stressful working environments, long hours, challenges of staff management, developing effective work-life balance, and challenging guest requests and guest complaints (Seager, 2018).



**Figure 4.6: Graduate attributes needed for a student to excel in the hospitality industry**

Figure 4.6 is a visual depiction of words. The words that are bigger in size and make use of a bold font showing elevated frequency levels, but as no numerical value can be attached these values are shown in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8: Graduate attributes needed for a student to excel in the hospitality industry**

*Commonly used descriptors*

| | Frequency N= 13 |
|---|---|
| Communication skills | 54% |
| Soft skills | 23% |
| Technical skills | 23% |
| Critical thinking | 23% |
| Emotional intelligence | 30% |
| Interpersonal skills | 15% |
| Problem solving | 30% |
| Teamwork | 15% |
| Conceptualisation | 8% |

*Findings:*

The majority (54%) of lecturers indicated that communication skills are the most important for students' success in WIL. The stated that qualities such as emotional intelligence (30%), problem solving (30%), soft skills (23%), technical skills (23%), and critical thinking (23%) play a significant role in a student's triumph in the hospitality industry, whereas teamwork (15%), interpersonal skills (15%), and conceptualisation (8%) are considered less valuable for a student's success in the hospitality industry.

### 4.3.3 Question 3

*From the graduate attributes listed below, select the top three graduate attributes most improved after the student's first WIL placement.*

*Rationale:*

The reason for asking this question was to establish which graduate attributes the students improved on after their first WIL placement. This question was also asked as students have developed and a clearer understanding of the hospitality industry and why they are actually studying. They have a basis of industry examples to refer to, which means graduate attributes can be better applied and embedded, as there are real life scenarios they can refer to. Receiving insight into the graduate attributes that students developed after the first WIL placement revealed that at a more practical approach towards pedagogical practices is an effective pedagogical practise. In addition, the teaching and learning methods of observation, real life working scenarios and application would therefore be deemed as successful pedagogical methods for the integration of graduate attributes.

**Table 4.9: Top three graduate attributes most improved after a student's first WIL placement**

| | | Number of responses | |
| | | N=13 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Technological capabilities | 6 | 46% |
| | Communication skills | 7 | 54% |
| | Ethical capabilities | 2 | 15% |
| | Resilience | 10 | 77% |
| | Relational capabilities | 8 | 62% |
| | Research interest | 5 | 39% |

*Findings:*

The majority (77%) of lecturers felt that the students' resilience improved the most, while 62% of the lecturers indicated relational capabilities and 54% communication skills. Of the remaining attributes, 46% of lecturers said the students' technological capabilities improved, 39% indicated interest in research, and 15% indicated ethical capabilities of the students.

### 4.3.4    Question 4

*From the graduate attributes listed below, select the top three graduate attributes least improved upon after the student's first WIL placement.*

*Rationale:*

This question was posed to ascertain which graduate attributes students did not improve on after their first WIL placement. This provided insight into the qualities or skills that were not embedded by on-the-job training or practical activities, and highlighted the activities that are not actioned in the hospitality industry. This informed the researcher that a different approach or pedagogical practices should be followed for better transference or at least further improvement in the below mentioned graduate attributes (Table 4.10). Furthermore, this knowledge will enable lecturers to include the potentially lacking graduate attributes into teaching and learning.

**Table 4.10: Top three least improved graduate attributes after a student's first WIL placement**

| | | Number of responses | |
| | | N=13 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Technological capabilities | 9 | 69% |
| | Communication skills | 5 | 39% |
| | Ethical capabilities | 8 | 62% |
| | Resilience | 5 | 39% |
| | Relational capabilities | 2 | 15% |
| | Research interest | 10 | 77% |

### Findings:

The top three least improved graduate attributes after a student's first WIL placement were identified as research interest (77%), technological skills (69%), and ethical capabilities (62%). Of the remaining attributes, lecturers felt that resilience (39%) and communication skills (39%) diminished. To conclude, only 15% of the participants felt that the students' relational abilities worsened after their first WIL placement.

### 4.3.5   Question 5

*Please select which of the following teaching methods you use to transfer graduate attributes into your theoretical or practical subjects.*

### Rationale:

This question was asked to establish which pedagogical methods the lecturer used to transfer graduate attributes into their theoretical or practical subjects. This information was necessary to ascertain why these methods were chosen and if they were suitable for the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school. Using incorrect pedagogic practises would hamper the transference of graduate attributes, resulting in ill-equipped graduates for the hospitality industry and a poor reflection on the quality of teaching and learning at the hotel school. In addition, it is often a challenge for lecturers to embed graduate attribute into content in such a way that it assists with sharing knowledge on how best to integrate graduate attributes.

**Table 4.11: Teaching methods used to transfer graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects**

| | Number of responses N=13 | Percentage of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Case study | 10 | 77% |
| Class discussion | 8 | 62% |
| Class debate | 4 | 31% |
| Discussion group | 5 | 31% |
| Student portfolio | 5 | 39% |
| Observation | 5 | 39% |
| Class participation | 5 | 39% |
| Reading assignment | 2 | 15% |
| Journal writing | 2 | 15% |
| Group exercises | 7 | 54% |
| Role playing | 5 | 39% |

***Findings:***

The lecturers agreed that they predominately use case studies (77%), class discussions (62%), and group exercises (54%) as teaching methods to transfer graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects. Using pedagogic methods such as discussion groups (39%), student portfolios (39%), and observation were mentioned as beneficial for transferring graduate attributes into teaching and learning. Thirty-nine per cent (39%) of the participants agreed that encouraging class participation, including role-playing activities (39%), and having class debates (31%) are techniques regularly used to embed the attributes into curriculum. Lastly, only 15% of the lecturers mentioned the inclusion of reading assignments journal writing into their theoretical and practical classes.

### 4.3.6   Question 6

*In your opinion, which teaching methods would be most suitable to aid in the integration of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects?*

***Rationale:***

This question was posed to provide the study with vital data to attain the research objectives and answer the main research questions. The research objectives were: i) to review a UoT's hotel school's current teaching and learning practises used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects; ii) to evaluate the students' embedded graduate attributes in the hospitality industry, specifically attained during WIL, and iii) to review the academic staff at the hotel school's perception of the graduate attributes required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.

The following research questions were asked:

RQ1:   What teaching and learning practices are currently in use to instil graduate attributes and which teaching and learning methods will improve the integration of graduate attributes into core subjects at the hotel school?

RQ2:   Which graduate attributes do students gain in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL?

RQ3:   Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's academic staff perceive as paramount for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

RQ4:   Which graduate attributes do the hotel school's students perceive as vital for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL?

Establishing the lecturers' opinion on the teaching methods that are most suitable to aid in the integration of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects, assisted the researcher with obtaining the perspective of experienced academic professionals who deal with students and pedagogical practices on a daily basis. Their viewpoint is crucial to the development of teaching and learning practices to transfer or embed the necessary qualities and skills required by students for WIL placements and for their employment in the hospitality industry.



**Figure 4.7: Most suitable teaching methods to aid with integration of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects**

Figure 4.7 is a graphic depiction of words. The words in a larger font show higher frequency levels, but as no numerical value can be assigned, the numerical values are shown in Table 4.12.

**Table 4.12: Most suitable teaching methods to aid with integration of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects**

*Commonly used descriptors*

|  | Frequency N=13 |
| --- | --- |
| Group work | 31% |
| Lecture | 23% |
| Exercises | 23% |
| Studies | 23% |
| Classroom | 15% |
| Experience | 15% |
| Participation | 15% |
| Role playing | 15% |
| Practical | 15% |
| Research | 15% |
| Simulation | 15% |

*Findings:*

Most lecturers (31%) felt that group work is the most suitable teaching method to integrate graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects, while 23% agreed that lecturing, various theoretical and practical exercises, and studying activities aid in the transference of graduate attributes. Lecturers provided an overall average response of 15% for classroom activities and participation, real life experiences, role playing and practical activities, and research and simulation to assist in the embedding of graduate attributes into all theoretical and practical based subjects at the hotel school.

### 4.3.7   Question 7

*What challenges do you experience in testing graduate attributes in formative and summative assessments?*

*Rationale:*

The rationale for this question was to identify the challenges experienced by the participants whilst assessing graduate attributes in formative and summative assessments. The responses provided by the lecturers allowed the researcher the opportunity to create solutions to the problems the in transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning. Finding challenges leads to developmental growth of ideas for pedagogical practices and establishing which assessments methods work and which do not. This will benefit the lecture in terms of saving them time with planning and researching.

**Table 4.13: Challenges experienced whilst testing graduate attributes in formative and summative assessments**

*Commonly used descriptors*

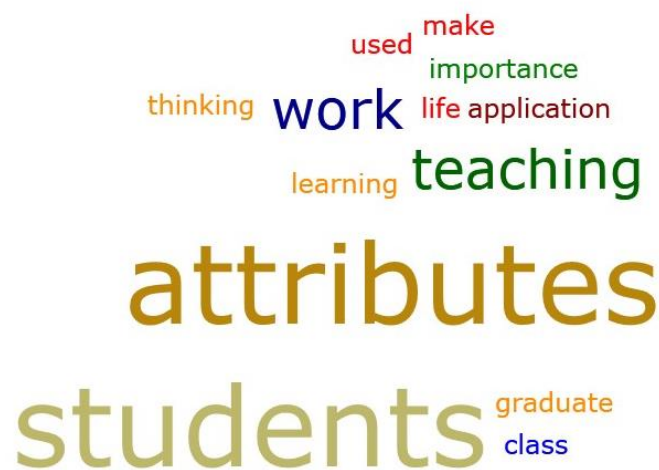|  | Frequency N=13 |
| --- | --- |
| Assessments | 30% |
| Learning | 23% |
| Practical | 23% |
| Teaching | 23% |
| Application | 15% |
| Content | 15% |
| Knowledge | 15% |
| Language | 15% |
| Time | 15% |

*Findings:*

The main challenge experienced by the lecturers (30%) during the testing of graduate attributes in assessments is the difficulty with the planning and administration process of both formative and summative assessments. The participants indicated general issues with the teaching of graduate attributes (23%) and the challenge of trying to test practical subjects theoretically (23%). Fifteen per cent (15%) of the lecturers said the entire process of assessments is very time consuming, matching graduate attributes to content is complicated, testing the knowledge of graduate attributes is complex, and many of the students experience several language issues. Student application is very low (15%), and in general, the lecturers (15%) do not have enough time to test for graduate attributes.

### 4.3.8   Question 8

*What solutions would you recommend to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning?*

*Rationale:*

This question was put forward to provide solutions for improving the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning from the perspective of the lecturer. Gaining a viewpoint from experienced lecturers aided the study by providing tested remedies to for imbedding graduate attributes into teaching and learning. It also indicated whether the lecturers are using suitable pedagogic practises and whether these practises should be kept, adjusted, or removed from teaching and learning at the hotel school.

**Figure 4.8: Recommended solutions to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning**

In figure 4.8, the words in larger font show higher frequency levels, but as no statistical value can be assigned, the numerical values are displayed in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.14: Recommended solutions to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning**

*Commonly used descriptors*

|  | Frequency N=13 |
|---|---|
| Student involvement | 38% |
| Teaching | 23% |
| Application | 15% |
| Thinking | 15% |
| Absorb | 8% |
| Acquired | 8% |

*Findings:*

Most of the participants (38%) agreed that to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning, more time is required for group activities with the students. A significant number of the lecturers (23%) indicated that the approach to teaching and methods should be reviewed for graduate attributes. Application-based questions and encouraging students to do more thinking before answering is another solution proposed for graduate attribute transference as indicated by 15% of the lecturers. In the responses made by 8% of the participants, the words *absorbing* and *acquired* were mentioned to describe resolutions to refining the overall embedding of the university's graduate attributes into teaching and learning practises at the hotel school. Lecturers recommended solutions in their responses by providing statements such as "having real communication. Instead of getting through course work perhaps a more personal approach could be used in some instances. There is such a vast variety of students and their lifestyles and upbringing", "Lecturers must also portray the same characteristics and include it in class discussions. It should be a lifestyle not something taught. We should be able to talk about these attributes and their importance freely"; "Students need to be aware of what graduate attributes are and the importance of the attributes for life beyond that of a student"; "Students should come to university already at a certain level (Language and skills in chosen career) this will make the teaching methods easier to understand and absorb"; "If the content is presented in an interesting format that engage different learning types, I think it would help" .

**4.4 Chapter summary**

This chapter explained the rationale and background of each question selected for both student and lecturer questionnaires. It provided visual representations in the form of word clouds, tables, and bar graphs to illustrate the responses from the participants and highlight the frequency of the occurrence of their answers using descriptive statistics.

In Chapter Five, the findings from both questionnaires are reviewed for the identification of trends and themes, and then discussed.

# CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

## 5.1    Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the data collected from both questionnaires by illustrating the results using tables and figures and listing the findings. This chapter deliberates the results attained from the data analysis of both questionnaires to establish themes and common trends. Examining and discussing the study results ascertained whether the study's objectives have been met, the hypothesis proved, and research questions answered.

Furthermore, the research conducted by means of a literature review in Chapter Two and the establishment of trends during the data analysis in Chapter Four provided the researcher with credible knowledge to review the findings in the form of a discussion. This chapter therefore aids the development of recommendations required for the next chapter, which in turn will benefit the integration of graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school and boost graduate quality and employability.

## 5.2    Student questionnaire

The responses received from the participants indicate that the majority of students (76%) had no understanding of the concept graduate attributes, nor did they know the meaning or definition of specific graduate attributes. Students made statements such as, "I do not have much understanding on graduate attributes", "It's my first-time hearing about it, I don't know anything about it", and "Knowing what your studies is about". A minority of students (24%) understood the concept of graduate attributes but lacked the perception of what each graduate attribute actually means. These findings are significant as it points to a challenge in the transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school and a lack of general understanding of the concept of graduate attributes. As a result, lecturers have found it a challenge to explain or integrate graduate attributes into content. If the students do not understand what graduate attributes are, they will not be able to develop or master the necessary skills and qualities required for student success during their studies, WIL, or future employment in the hospitality industry. A common occurrence in the students' responses was the repetition of words such "high skills", "qualities required" and "success". These words are linked to graduate attributes, which shows the students' belief that graduate attributes are important and crucial for them to excel in their studies; this is positive as it indicates that the base for the student's knowledge growth is there. Establishing the student's knowledge of graduate attributes provides the lecturer with an idea of where pedagogic development is required to expand the student's education (Di Mario, 2021). This is in addition to what content needs reinforcement and what content needs to be introduced.

Knowledge-based learning is structured assist students in building upon their prior knowledge when learning a new lesson or skill. Di Mario (2021) clarifies:

> "This approach is very content-focused. An example of a knowledge-based lesson plan would be:
> - Introduction: recap of previous knowledge
> - Presentation: the new knowledge that the students need to acquire
> - Practice: activities which help the students to use this new knowledge,
> - and combine it with their previous knowledge
>
> Proponents of knowledge-based education believe that the more you know, the more you are able to learn. The impact of a content-rich curriculum can reduce the attainment gap between students of different socio-economic backgrounds. In this model, learning and research is teacher-led, and students build on their prior knowledge to develop a deeper understanding and mastery of various subjects".

Di Mario (2021) explains that skills-based education is focused on skills growth rather than knowledge acquisition. This type of curricula is designed to highlight student-led learning and support students in building technical and soft skills they can apply across practical and theoretical subjects and in future working environments. Skills-based teaching and learning methods equip students with the necessary tools to adapt and thrive in rapidly changing business industries, such as hospitality (Rong-Da Liang, 2021). The researcher agrees with Di Mario that developing the students' base of graduate attributes comprehension by combining both knowledge-based learning and skills-based education will aid lecturers in their task to embed graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school. Students cannot grow skills in a vacuum. Knowledge gives them a  foundation for their learning; however, at the same time, students need the time and opportunity to practise the skills on a regular basis to apply their knowledge competently. This is potentially possible as the content of hospitality curricula encourages case studies, simulation exercises, and role playing (Chau & Cheung, 2017).

Looking at skills that the students felt they learnt at the hotel school and during their WIL placement(s), most of the students (84%) felt that communication is a skill to improve on during their time at the hotel school, and 85% agreed that it is equally important to possess communication as a skill before begin placed for WIL. This indicates that students believe the ability to converse professionally aids with their success in both their studies and the workplace. Oliver and Jorre (2018) indicate that communication is deemed one of the most important and most used skills in the hospitality industry. Hospitality managers spend most of their time in some form of professional verbal or written communication with their colleagues, subordinates, guests, and suppliers (Oliver & Jorre, 2018). Other employees in a hospitability

establishment communicate among themselves, their managers, outside parties, and customers to provide and gain the information they need to perform their duties (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that students at the hotel school develop communication skills during their studies and WIL to aid their future employment in the hospitality industry (Seager, 2018). Furthermore, both students and lecturers need to communicate for the teaching and learning of any graduate attribute to occur or be effective.

Reviewing some of the other qualities and skills that students selected, confidence was chosen by 90% and self-motivation by 79%. Students perceive these qualities as vital for their studies and for WIL. In comparison, 63% of the students indicated that technological skills are less important during their studies and 54% said it is less of a need for their time during WIL. Tertiary education and working in the hospitality industry can be challenging for students (Seager, 2018). Students are exposed to different types of people from different backgrounds, ages, and beliefs. Many students in South Africa come from a disadvantaged background where soft skills such as communication, emotional intelligence and integrity are not high on the development list, but rather, survival skills and ensuring day-to-day living are achieved (Chetty et al., 2015). For example, students are required to deal with difficult customer complaints whilst completing their WIL placements or the anxiety of having to answer a question during a lecture at the hotel school. This can be very stressful for a student who has not been exposed to a hotel environment or has to speak in front of a large number of people. Having the ability to be confident and stand one's ground can come naturally to some, but in general, it is a quality that develops with life and work experience. Students can be motivated to succeed in order to impress their parents or loved ones or to gain a high standard of academic excellence, but it is crucial for lecturers to encourage a student to be motivated for them to excel academically (Oliver & Jorre, 2018).

According to Kleynhans and Roeloffze (2018), the demand for hospitality management graduates who are critical thinkers and driven serves as a directive for hotel schools to deliver more learning opportunities, thereby compelling the industry to encourage these graduate attributes. WIL is influential in aiding learners to become employable in the hospitality industry (Seager, 2018). Not only does this build students' confidence in the workplace, but it also provides students with a better understanding of the nature of required transversal skills as well as allowing them to develop realistic expectations about their future (Zegwaard et al., 2017). It is important to note that both students and the lecturers considered confidence and self-motivation as vital qualities. These qualities are in line with the proficiencies that hospitality management research has shown to be expected from graduates. Both confidence and the ability to motivate oneself will aid a student during their studies and their WIL placement (Seager, 2018).

A concerning discovery was that students do not feel strongly about attaining integrity during their studies or before entering their WIL placement. This highlights a possible lack of understanding of the meaning of integrity, or students may in general feel that it is unimportant. If a student has clear understanding of the term *integrity*, it is doubtful that they will feel it is unnecessary for their studies or WIL. A student's ability to be truthful and ethical says a lot about their ethical standing or moral compass. A student's truthfulness will be tested in the hospitality industry when dealing with company finances, challenging customer requests, or respecting privacy needs of celebrities (Zegwaard et al., 2017).

As previously mentioned, the majority of students in South Africa are from disadvantaged backgrounds and lack basic resources. Therefore, they have not been exposed to necessary development of social skills and ethical abilities such as integrity, which are required for higher education (Chetty et al., 2015). Although the students possess integrity, their awareness of ethical abilities does not receive sufficient attention as their focus is on everyday survival (Chetty et al., 2015). It is therefore important that lecturers explain the significance of integrity and the risk of non-compliance in the workplace and during the student's time at the hotel school. Husni et al. (2019) explain that integrity is a key element when building successful relationships within working environments, particularly in the hospitality industry where it incorporates a consistent and coordinated approach to guests in all aspects of service delivery. A hospitality establishment's apparent integrity affects perceptions of how well they can deliver on their guests' expectations. Furthermore, Husni et al. (2019) suggest the importance of showing integrity, which the authors define as a crucial factor in building dependability. "Examples of integrity can be seen in fair and transparent pricing policies, not cancelling reservations at the last minute, and treating guests with respect" (Husni et al., 2019).

Another area of concern is that students show a lack of interest or understanding in developing integrity. Integrity is a graduate attribute; it has to do with the student's ethical and moral conduct at university and in the workplace (Husni et al., 2019). In the student's academic environment, integrity can be tested, for example, due to time constraints the student makes the decision to use a previous student's assignment as their own and submits it without considering the risk of their poor decision. During WIL, the student's integrity is further tested, for example, if a guest asks for assistance from a WIL trainee at a hotel reception desk and on more than one occasion their request is consistently ignored (Husni et al., 2019). The guest will not trust the student or the hotel, which may result in the establishment losing a returning customer.

Graduate attributes that were indicated as necessary traits include the willingness to learn, being a team player, being solution-oriented, and time management; these traits are deemed valuable to the students, but perceived as insignificant for their academic development. This confirms again that students do not fully grasp the meaning or significance of each individual graduate attribute. All graduate attributes provided in the questionnaire have been well researched and tailored by the UoT to develop well-equipped graduates for employment (CPUT, 2017). It is imperative that lecturers develop pedagogical practices to integrate graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school, as it is crucial for graduate attributes to be integrated into content before students enter the hospitality industry and specifically WIL (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Students need to understand what the UoT's graduate attributes are and how to apply them in their studies and workplace (Sonnenschein et al., 2018). This will afford students the opportunity to manage their studies effectively with the competence of well-balanced graduates with industry specific knowledge, skills and qualities needed to boost and nurture their emotional intelligence (Smith, 2015).

A notable result is reflected from question 4 of the student's questionnaire, which asked the students to identify qualities they were learning while completing WIL placement. From the responses it is clear that students felt they were developing several graduate attributes during WIL which they attained previously at the hotel school. This established that the combination of knowledge-based learning, application-based training and skills-based education is effective for students of the hotel school in the transference and development of graduate attributes (Di Mario, 2021). Students gain the basis and foundation of theory, with practical components in the core subjects offered at the hotel school. When students are placed for WIL, they learn through on-the-job training, skills-based education, and application of their gained knowledge from teaching and learning provided by the lecturers at the hotel school (Seager, 2018). The majority of respondents (83%) agreed that problem solving skills, being a team player (77%), time management (72%), and analytical skills (65%) are qualities they learnt during WIL. Once again, students indicated that skills and qualities such as technological competence (59%) and integrity (45%) were developed, but to a lesser degree. Both are crucial for a graduate's overall success at university and future employability in the hospitality industry (Oliver & Jorre, 2018).

The analysis of the above-mentioned data revealed the trend that the students at the hotel school are not concerned about the importance of developing technological skills, which is interesting as the students form part of the millennial generation – a generation known for their use of technology and their advanced technological capabilities. The third- and fourth-year students are approximately between the ages of 20 and 25 years old. According to CFI (2021), the term *Millennials* refers to the generation of people born between the early 1980s

and 2000s. Millennials are regarded as the most connected generation and are very comfortable with the use of technology on a daily basis as "they grew up during the internet age where people communicate through emails and social media" (CFI, 2021). Millennials are incredibly computer-savvy and are very aware of the latest trends in technology, they use their smartphones, tablets or laptops for every day domestic and work-related activities (CFI, 2021).

Researchers Au-Yong-Oliveira et al. (2017) explain that the Millennial generation relates to technology like no other generation before them and this is affects the way they would like to learn at university and how they expect to be led in the workplace when they graduate. A study conducted by Au-Yong- Oliveira et al. (2017) revealed that students said they want to be educated with technology, however, some of the millennial students indicated the opposite – they want to be prepared for the workplace but do not want spend time on it or go into too much detail regarding work requirements. The third- and fourth-year students in this current study agreed that they want to use technology. Yet, they do not feel that it is important during their studies or WIL. This result raises the following question for the researcher: "Are the students only concerned or interested in the use of technology in a social setting, for example, using social media for instant communication on platforms such as Instagram or WhatsApp?" Current and future operations for 21$^{st}$ century skills in both tertiary education and in the hospitality industry are rapidly increasing; technological skills and the use of hospitality operating software are advancing (Griesel & Parker, 2009). For example, the use of online mobile booking applications has become standard practise for many hospitality establishments worldwide (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2017). In tertiary institutions, the use of technology was shown to be extremely valuable during the Covid-19 pandemic where classes were taught online because of social distancing requirements (Paterson, 2021). Therefore, it is imperative, for lecturers to engage with students by linking examples of social media used in the hospitality industry. The use of social media examples in teaching and learning will encourage student interest and engagement (Au-Yong-Oliveira et al., 2017).

In the remaining Likert scale questions, the students were asked at which level they agree or disagreed that the UoT's graduate attributes are important to them during their studies and during WIL. The following trend was discovered: as a collective, the students' felt that graduate attributes are necessary and helpful. This provides a starting point for lecturers to base the foundation and direction of how to instil graduate attributes into the subject content through using knowledge-based learning (Di Mario, 2021). There remains confusion about the meaning of graduate attributes and their individual meanings, for example, students believe that being ethical is important, but they do not believe integrity is crucial. Several

tertiary institutions in South Africa and around the world have equally experienced the same challenge among both students and academic instructors (Barrie, 2006, 2007; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017). This challenge is ongoing, which negatively contributes to the confusion of what the concept of graduate attributes is and how to correctly integrate these attributes into teaching and learning so that students can absorb or even master requires skills and qualities (Barrie, 2012).

## 5.3    Lecturer questionnaire

In review of the lecturer's perception of graduate attributes, their responses revealed a mixed view on their interpretation of the concept. The majority of lecturers (62%) understand the concept of graduate attributes to be skills that a student should gain or develop during their time at the institution. Other notable descriptions of their opinions on graduate attributes include words such as abilities, learning, life, personal, and understanding. Regrettably, 39% of participants proved not to grasp the concept of graduate attributes and made comments such as, "Fair understanding", "Qualified Student"; "A skill set that enhances and builds the embedded knowledge and abilities already present"; "It's the skills that the graduate brings to the place they are employed at". These results are supported by previous studies from a variety of academic institutions where lecturers indicated a difference in opinion or a lack of understanding of the concept *graduate attributes* (Barrie, 2006, 2007; Chau & Cheung, 2017; Hall et al., 2017). Bitzer and Withering (2020) confirm that without a collective agreement among the participants of which pedagogical practises are best suited for the integration of graduate attributes into teaching and learning, confusion among the students and the lecturers will continue.

If a lecturer does not comprehend the concept or individual graduate attributes or the correct teaching method, they will not be able to embed the necessary skills and qualities into their subjects, nor will they be able to explain them. Barrie (2012) confirms that this is a regular occurrence in tertiary institutions. Many lecturers do not always have a shared understanding of a university's graduate attributes, or the do not agree on pedagogic methods and how they link to the effective transference of graduate attributes (Smith, 2015). Nell and Bosman (2017) explain that in their study, lecturers did not clearly grasp what their university graduate attributes are or they did not agree on the general concept of graduate attributes. Lecturers felt that research  in the form of questionnaires and workshops pertaining to the view of the lecturers' perception of graduate attributes will break down the general misinterpretations of these graduate attributes, and knowing how to integrate them into teaching and learning will heighten awareness. This will affect the general transference of graduate attributes into content and the student's ability to have a uniform understanding. It is therefore essential to get the lecturers to have a similar if not the same understanding of graduate attributes. This

current study's results represent the latter as lecturers do not necessarily share a single teaching and learning method or know what method to use for best practice to integrate graduate attributes. This result is a concern for the researcher, as it directly affects the integration of graduate attributes at the hotel school. Lecturers across all tertiary institutions need to lead by example by personifying graduate attributes and using effective pedagogical practises for a fruitful transference of graduate attributes. Bitzer and Withering (2020) explain:

> "The inconsistency amongst staff around graduate attributes at universities in general is not a new phenomenon. This is despite a push to the contrary from governments, employers, and institutions – a factor also highlighted by Barrie (2012) and Bester (2014). Often the reason for graduate attributes not being promoted is that lecturing staff would have fundamentally different views of such attributes. The interest of staff in the development of student attributes and skills is also often an indication of whether attributes would be given any additional time or emphasis within the curriculum."

Furthermore, the results from both the students and lecturers' questionnaires mirror the above the statement made by authors Barrie (2012) and Bester (2014) that there is inconsistency surrounding the concept of graduate attributes amongst staff and students. The results proved that both parties disagree on the concept of graduate attributes, and that they do not fully grasp the individual meaning of each graduate attribute. Without conceptualisation or interest by both parties, the integration of graduate attributes into teaching and learning will fail (Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

Looking at the lecturers' perception of the required graduate attributes for a student's success in the hospitality industry, the majority (54%) of lecturers felt that communication skills and emotional intelligence are the most crucial. Other skills and qualities mentioned several times in the lectures' responses are problem solving (31%), soft skills (23%), technical skills (23%), and critical thinking (23%), while teamwork (15%), interpersonal skills (15%), and conceptualisation (7.6%) are regarded as less important for a student's achievement in the hospitality industry. It is evident from the lecturers' perspective that there are several skills or qualities required for the hospitality industry. This statement correlates with a study done by Moolman and Wilkinson (2014), who found that the top skills and qualities needed for a hospitality management graduate to be employed in the hospitality industry, include: "interpersonal, problem-solving, self-management skills, a professional attitude, honesty, communication, self-management, critical thinking, communication, teamwork, prioritising the needs of others over needs of self and the use of technology" (Moolman & Wilkinson, 2014).

There is often a debate among hotel schools and employers in the hospitality industry in terms of which graduate attributes and knowledge need to be instilled in a student. The hospitality industry argues that universities spend too much time focusing on pass rates instead of on employment, whereas the tertiary institutions state that it is not their responsibility to create a work-ready individual (Moolman & Wilkinson, 2014), but rather to develop a well-rounded individual that has a basic understanding of their future workplace. This is very relevant, particularly in a South African environment where the,

> "Youth in South Africa continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5%. Although the graduate unemployment rate remains relatively low in South Africa compared to those of other educational levels, unemployment among the youth continues to be a burden, irrespective of educational attainment. Year-on-year, the unemployment rate among young graduates (aged 15-24 years) declined from 40,3% to 32,6%, while it increased by 6,9 percentage points to 22,4% for those aged 25-34 years in Q1: 2022" (Stats SA, 2022).

These differences in opinion among hotel schools and employers in the hospitality industry contribute to a situation where graduates are not able "to make a smooth transition from the classroom to the world of work" (Moolman & Wilkinson, 2014). The reluctance of tertiary institutions to provide employable graduates fundamentally implies that university graduates have not developed the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that make them more likely to gain employment and be successful (Barrie, 2012).

The lecturers' questionnaire used open-ended questions, which enabled the gathering of statements reflecting the lecturers' perspective of which graduate attributes students need for the hospitality industry. These statements are of great value as the lecturers have direct contact experience with the students and are therefore able to inform the study of which graduate attributes aid the students' success during WIL and at the hotel school. The lecturers provided notable statements about what graduate attributes they deem aid in a student's success in the hospitality industry. Some of the statements are: "Self-motivation/driven, hardworking, determination, sound understanding of all areas of hospitality (food, beverage, customer relations, management of departments, etc.), good communication skills, research (to learn more and more about the industry and how it changes daily)"; "Emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, decision making skills, conceptualisation"; "I feel interpersonal soft skills are grossly overlooked. With any profession to be truly successful is being able to be adaptable, not necessarily to mould to conform, but rather to acknowledge their environment and find ways to improve it"; "Soft skills, technical

skills, emotional intelligence, communication skills which include report writing and oral communication skills". These statements are extremely valuable as they shed light on the lecturers' actual understanding of graduate attributes. It is evident that qualities and skills such as emotional intelligence, communication and resilience are key graduate attributes crucial for students' success in the hospitality industry (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Both students and lecturers agreed that communication skills are essential for success in the hospitality industry and during WIL, and that it is the most important graduate attribute to attain.

Most of the lecturers agreed that the graduate attributes the students most improved on after their first WIL placement are resilience (77%), relational capabilities (62%), and communication skills (54%). In comparison, graduate attributes such as research interest (77%), technological capabilities (69%), and ethical capabilities (62%) were indicated as attributes that students improved the least on during their WIL placement. The analysed data show that WIL has a positive impact on the student's absorption and development of graduate attributes. Hall et al. (2017) explicate that when a student is completing a WIL placement, "learning takes place due to the interaction between the learner and their surrounding hospitality environment, students have the opportunity to apply their technical and soft skills learnt at university in an employment setting, network with hospitality professionals and develop an understanding for the power of internal reward".

From the results attained in Chapter Four, the following pedagogic methods are being used at the hotel school to embed graduate attributes into core subjects: case studies, observation, class discussions, group exercises, discussion groups, student portfolios, class participation, role playing, and class debates. These methods are supported by previous studies (Barrie, 2006, 2007; Chau & Cheung, 2017; Di Mario, 2021; Hall et al., 2017). Most of the lecturers (31%) felt that group work is the most suitable teaching method to transfer graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects, whereas 23% agreed that traditional lecturing, class exercises, and studying additionally promote transference. Fifteen per cent (15%) of the participants recognised that classroom activities, real life experiences, class participation, role playing, practical, research and simulation assist in the integration of graduate attributes into all subjects at the hotel school. This highlights that although the lecturers have the knowledge to transfer graduate attributes into their subjects, there is no consensus on which teaching and learning methods are best suited for integration into the content or assessments at the hotel school or which method is required for specific graduate attributes. These results work in conjunction with previous results showing limited agreement on what graduate attributes are. If there is no standard practise, there is room for error and confusion as not all lecturers have the same level of expertise or experience (Barrie, 2012).

Challenges that lecturers experience are predominately centred on the planning and administration process of formative and summative assessments and the excessive amount of time it takes to prepare an assessment. Lecturers indicated that it is a challenge to understand the individual meaning of each graduate attribute and how best to integrate them into subject content. Other issues to take note of are that lecturers felt matching graduate attributes to content is not simple and often confusing. In addition, testing knowledge of graduate attributes, language barriers, and the lack of student engagement or application are all challenges mentioned frequently. The challenges experienced by the lecturers have been echoed in several previous studies, for example: participants do not feel supported when they ask for additional time; the language of instruction may not be the student's home language; there is often a mismatch of understanding graduate attributes; or there is no standard procedure for the transference of graduate attributes into their universities' curricula (Barrie, 2006, 2007; Bitzer & Withering, 2020; Chau & Cheung, 2017; Hall et al., 2017).

As a lecturer, the researcher agrees that the gap in understanding graduate attributes and how to teach them will decrease a lecturer's interest or confidence in teaching graduate attributes. Bester (2014) highlights that despite graduate attributes receiving a large amount of interest across the world and in South Africa, graduate attributes are still relatively hidden within most universities' curricula. This is a result of low levels of engagement with such attributes. "This lack of engagement often delineates the development of graduate attributes to support services. When not embedded within the academic curriculum, there is a limit to the importance given to the development of these skills" (Withering, 2019).

Graduate attributes can be established via co-curricular activities such as WIL that simply develop "awareness" of a specific set of qualities and skills (Zegwaard et al., 2017). The development of graduate attributes within taught modules can be evaluated (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Simon Barrie stated that the strongest indication of the achievement of graduate attributes is their "explicit embedding in assessment" (Barrie, 2012). There is an important role for co-curricular activities in supporting a more student-focused partnership method (Green et al., 2009). In this way, "students develop graduate attributes because they are pertinent to their sense of self, and they are then consequently aware of the skills and qualities they have gained during their studies and can express them explicitly to employers" (Hall et al., 2017).

Most of the participants agreed that to improve the overall transference of graduate attributes into teaching and learning, more time is required with the students to test and observe the attributes in group activities such as class discussions, group assignments or group class exercises. These activities are very well suited for the hospitality environment as practical

examples can be used, students have gone on previous WIL placements so real-life experience can be drawn upon. It enables students to learn in different ways, not only through theoretical means, but also from a practical, simulated working environment. For example, a lecturer could split a class of hospitality management students into small groups to complete a role-play assignment. For the purpose of this example, the role-play could demonstrate either a disciplinary hearing or an interview for recruitment purposes. Both exercises would allow the groups of students to demonstrate several graduate attributes and the class could learn by watching the groups present and then by providing feedback on their performance. This would allow the students to take an active role in the learning process and enjoy the process of embedding graduate attributes such as communication and interpersonal skills (Chau & Cheung, 2017). Chau and Cheung (2017) explain that active learning is particularly well-suited for hospitality education, which requires a more hands-on approach and thus calls for the development of practical skills, theory recognition and soft skills. It is a continual challenge for many hospitality educators to design appropriate curricula and teaching methods that create benefits for students from different levels of competency and backgrounds. More attention should be given to different learning styles and what students are doing so that a student-centred learning environment can be created (Hall et al., 2017). Chau and Cheung (2017) reiterate that active learning requires both the constructivist and student-centred approaches, as students learn at their optimum level when active learning is utilised.

The lecturers indicated that a review of teaching and learning methods for graduate attributes is required at the hotel school. The researcher agrees that the lecturers should involve the students into the learning process to increase engagement. Application-based questions such as case studies and encouraging students to think more critically before answering, is an additional solution provided by the lecturers. In the findings, the participants made statements such as:

- "Students should come to university already at a certain level (language and certain course related skills linked to future career) this will make the teaching methods easier to understand and absorb".
- "More application of knowledge so they get used to thinking outside the box", "More interaction with students out of class time".
- "Students need to be aware of what graduate attributes are and the importance of the attributes for life beyond that of a student".
- "Self-reflection for students, creating an awareness, mindfulness".
- "Students need to be aware of what graduate attributes are and the importance of the attributes for life beyond that of a student".

- "I would have to say real communication". Instead of getting through course work perhaps a more personal approach could be used in some instances. There is such a vast variety of students and their life and lifestyles/upbringing...not every lid fits this 'pot' description".
- "Lecturers must also portray the same characteristics and include it in class discussions. It should be a lifestyle not something taught. We should be able to talk about these attributes and the importance freely".
- "Practical application assessment. Simulation to observe if attributes acquired. WIL feedback and work on areas where gaps have been identified".

From the findings, the researcher has identified that the lecturers in general agree that application-based learning, improving communication skills, and general awareness of graduate attributes is critical. Furthermore, there is strong appeal that students show an increased level of engagement and interest with regard to subject content, but lecturers also realise the need to adapt their pedagogy to accommodate the students' different learning needs.

The lecturers provided several appropriate solutions to enhance the overall integration of the UoT's graduate attributes into pedagogical practises at the hotel school. This is positive, as it opens the way for a starting point where the development of a standard practise to embed graduate attributes can begin. The researcher agrees with the feedback from the lecturers that simulation sessions could be included. The use of simulation is effective, active learning is involved, and it involves the students in the learning process (De la Harpe & David, 2012). For example, the students performing demonstrations of reservation bookings using a hotel operating system or food production in the culinary labs or an event assignment or the planning and execution of an event such a food and wine pairing evening would teach the students several new qualities and skills and enhance their existing attributes and knowledge (Chau & Cheung, 2017).

The data analysis and discussion has proven the study's hypothesis, namely, that there is a positive relationship between the integration of graduate attributes during teaching and learning at the hotel school and students' performance in the hospitality industry, specifically during WIL, as the students said they gained qualities and skills during their time at the hotel school and during WIL. The lecturers agreed and indicated that students' graduate attributes improved after their first WIL placement in the hospitality industry (Pillay et al., 2019). It is paramount that this relationship is maintained consistently for the benefit of graduate attribute transference, the development of the student, and meeting the hotel school's objectives. This in turn will provide the hospitality industry with well-rounded and suitable

candidates for employment (Zegwaard et al., 2017). However, the challenge that remains is the confusion among students and lecturers about the conceptualisation of graduate attributes in general and the meaning of the UoT's individual graduate attributes. If there is no consensus, the lecturers will not be able to instil graduate attributes nor will the student be able to learn or master these attributes (Bitzer & Withering, 2020). The lecturers indicated that there is no standard practise for the transference of graduate attributes at the hotel school. According to Barrie (2006), without involvement of the student in the learning process or standardise on a practise, frustration and non-delivery will continue at the hotel school.

## 5.4    Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the findings and data analysis attained from both the student and lecturer questionnaires. By providing a comparison of similarities and differences in participants' perception, knowledge and experiences, themes and trends could be identified.

In the next chapter, the researcher draws a conclusion to the study, provides recommendations for improving or integrating graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school, and offers future research suggestions. To conclude the study, the researcher provides insight into the research journey by reflecting on what was achieved, established, and experienced.

# CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

## 6.1 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine which teaching and learning practices would support the successful integration of graduate attributes into the hotel school's core subjects and enhance student performance during WIL. More specifically, this dissertation had the following objectives:

- To review a UoT's hotel school's current teaching and learning practises used to integrate graduate attributes into core subjects.

- To evaluate the students' embedded graduate attributes in the hospitality industry, specifically attained during WIL.

- To review the academic staff at the hotel school's perception of the graduate attributes required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.

- To evaluate the hotel school's students' perception of which graduate attributes are required for a student's success in the hospitality industry, specifically WIL.

Previous studies have mirrored the outcome of the study's findings, where a challenge exists among the both lecturers and students' mixed understanding of the conceptualisation of graduate attributes and their individual attribute meaning (Barrie, 2006, 2012; Bitzer & Withering, 2020; Weber et al., 2013; Nell & Bosman, 2017). It was established in this study that during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, lecturers felt they did not have sufficient time with the students to transfer graduate attributes into group activities and assessments. This challenge occurred because of the limited class time per subject offered at the hotel school. It was evident at the time of administering the questionnaires, due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, that the challenge of time was compounded as teaching and learning procedures at the hotel school were adapted to an online capacity rather than face-to-face contact classes with the students (Paterson, 2021). The lecturers' responses indicated that not all lecturers have interest in, or a clear understanding of the UoT's graduate attributes, nor do they know the correct pedagogic method to embed into their teaching. In addition, the lecturers' responses revealed that there is no uniformity or standard practise for embedding the UoT's graduate attributes into teaching and learning.

To conclude, the data revealed that the students at the hotel school have a minimal understanding of the concept of graduate attributes and their individual meanings. This mirrors the findings of lecturers' perception of graduate attributes to a certain degree. In general, the students felt that communication is an essential skill for both their studies and

WIL. The researcher was intrigued by the students' general opinion that technology is not deemed as an important graduate attribute even though they are part of the millennial generation. The meaning of integrity is misunderstood by the students and therefore perceived as unimportant. Without formal guidelines for the transference of graduate attributes into core subjects or consensus on the meanings of graduate attributes, the challenges of integration into core subjects and assessments shall remain.

## 6.2    Recommendations from the research

The study's findings have generated several recommendations for the growth, development, and establishment of a best pedagogic practise for the effective integration of graduate attributes in core subjects and assessments at the hotel school.

The researcher would like to recommend the following:

**Teaching and learning**

To encourage student accessibility to information about graduate attributes, planned webinars should be developed throughout the year at the UoT for all students at all levels of study. Graduate attributes are not just for orientation but for all students attending. The webinars will encourage inner-student learning because they can learn from each other's experiences, as some students would have already completed WIL. The graduate attribute webinars should be highly encouraged and developed in an exciting manner to keep the students engaged in the content. The webinars should focus on graduate attributes, emotional intelligence, and maintaining good mental health. Maintaining and ongoing engagement with the content of graduate attributes will result in graduate attributes becoming a less foreign concept and hopefully result in students having a better understanding of these attributes' importance and value to both them and their workplace.

Theoretical and practical subjects taught at the hotel school provide students with hospitality management knowledge, technical skills and soft skills for both WIL and the hospitality industry. WIL assists by developing these qualities, skills, and knowledge in real life working scenarios (Zegwaard et al., 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that partnerships between the hotel school and their WIL placement partners continue with clear communication and consistency. It is equally important to gain the input and insight of the hospitality industry on which graduate attributes they believe aid a student's success in the hospitality industry and to gain employment (Pillay et al., 2019). The UoT and hotel school's graduate attributes should be included in WIL portfolio assignment instructions and reinforced by discussion and debate during WIL preparation classes to show how graduate attributes fit into the

hospitability industry. Students need to understand how to apply the graduate attributes during classes and during WIL (Kleynhans & Roeloffze, 2018).

Lecturers must explain the importance of graduate attributes, emotional intelligence, ethics, morals, accountability and relational capabilities in regular class discussions and provide relatable industry specific examples to aid their explanations (Barrie, 2006). Bester (2014) explains that the "shortcomings in terms of important skills such as communication, decision-making, problem-solving, leadership, emotional intelligence and social ethics as well as cultural sensitivity" are the skills and qualities students lack in terms of employers' perceptions. Lecturers must plan to clarify one of the above-mentioned intangible qualities, skills, or graduate attributes on a weekly basis by allowing for a brief five-minute discussion (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Lecturers should also add a slide to their PowerPoint lessons as a discussion starter of what graduate attribute are, explain to the student why they are important, and then motivate explanations by providing hospitality examples that the students can relate to or visualise.

Graduate attributes should be tested in formatives and summative assessments to establish understanding by including case studies, application-based questions, and reflection-based questions (Barrie, 2006), for example, asking a student what they learnt from the assignment and what skills or qualities they developed. An additional question could be posed to the students, "how will these new skills and qualities aid your success during your studies?"

**Faciltitated discussions**

Workshops or open discussions need to be established for lecturers to brainstorm collectively to create guidelines for the best pedagogic practices to embed graduate attributes at the hotel school. These practices need to be adapted to both theory and practical subjects (De la Harpe & David, 2012). Lecturers need to have a collective understanding of graduate attributes to ensure that a uniform explanation is given to the students (Barrie, 2006). Senior lecturers and management at the hotel school must allocate more time for the planning and implementation of graduate attributes into teaching and learning by creating academic workshops. The development of graduate attribute workshops will need to assist the lecturer by explaining which pedagogic practises to use to embed graduate attributes, and providing instructions on how to include graduate attributes into subject guides, classes, and assessments (De la Harpe & David, 2012).

The researcher recommends that the hotel school management invite WIL placement partners to have open discussions with the lecturers and the students at the hotel school. This should be conducted after the completion of the initial workshop or open discussion for

lecturers. In addition, a panel discussion conference should be held as part of engagement between all parties, lecturers, students and WIL placement partners; this in turn should encourage an open platform for communication.The hotel school should work in collaboration with the WIL placement partners to design specific graduate attributes for the hotel school. Gaining the assistance and support of the WIL placement partners will provide clarity regarding the needs of the current employment requirements required by industry (Pillay et al., 2019). This will provide the hotel school with valuable knowledge and direction to embed the necessary skills and qualities for the student's success in the hospitality industry.

Graduate attributes should be introduced during orientation presentations for all students in their first year, as this will allow the students to learn and potentially master the UoT's graduate attributes by the time they graduate (Bitzer & Withering, 2020). Furthermore, it should be reiterated as part of the extended orientation (if the UoT indeed offers this orientation), that first year is a key development year. If the students are able to grasp the understanding and reasoning behind graduate attributes, it will enhance and encourage development in their second and third year. During the second and third year, as part of engagement, graduate attributes need to be consistently reinforced into the teaching and learning. It will encourage consistent exposure and deeper understanding of graduate attributes in second and third year for students and lecturers (Withering, 2019).

Highly recommended are emotional intelligence workshops for lecturers to gain insight into which soft skills and qualities lecturers need to develop whilst working at the hotel school. A lecturer should embody the UoT graduate attributes and lead by using a growth mindset rather than a fixed mindset. Students will follow and learn more from a lecturer whom they respect and admire (Kroeper et al., 2022). Once the lecturers' soft skills and qualities have been identified, senior academic and hotel school management need to establish a project to include the development of mindset growth and grit for teaching and learning. Duckworth and Quinn (2009) describe grit as the "perseverance and passion for long-term goals" and explain that it requires "working strenuously towards challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress". Kannangara et al. (2018) explain that grit has a significant influential construct linked to the improvement of academic success, productivity, perseverance, and engagement. However, lecturers need to be mindful that if overused, grit can encourage anxiety or burn-out of a student (Kannangara et al., 2018). Therefore, the researcher recommends that lecturers collectively develop a technique to incorporate the development of mindset growth and mental wellbeing in combination of grit into teaching and learning at the hotel school. This, in turn, could assist students' absorption of graduate attributes by having a positive outlook and attitude towards skill and quality development (Kroeper et al., 2022).

**Student involvement**

Students should be involved in the establishment of best practise of graduate attribute transference into teaching and learning by conducting focus groups with a selection of third- and fourth-year hospitality management students from the hotel school to gain their perspective and experiences on the learning of graduate attributes. Lecturers need to nominate an academic lead to manage the focus group, provide direction, and keep participants on topic. The academic lead will need to explain what a focus group is and what is required of the students, to ensure the students understand what is expected of them and that the focus group is effective. Creating a link between the student and the lecturer will encourage trust and develop student maturity and empowerment. In addition, it will provide insight into the student's perception of which methods aid their learning (Bitzer & Withering, 2020).

Withering (2019) explains that for graduate attributes to have any meaning to students, their work, and their studies, they need to believe that the attributes will benefit their future career. Withering (2019) motivates this by stating that,

> "Student learning is driven by students' perceptions of what is important, an understanding of student perceptions of the importance of graduate attributes may inform the development of effective, inclusive learning opportunities that meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. In order for such skills or qualities to be meaningful, an academic instructor needs to understand how students view and build them."

The researcher agrees with Withering and reiterates that if lecturers have a better understanding of the term *graduate attributes* and increased insight into making the attributes appear more meaningful to the student's future, it may lead to enhanced transference of the graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the hotel school (Bitzer & Withering, 2020). The researcher recommends that lecturers invite successful industry professionals to present guest lectures and explain the necessary skills and qualities they require to execute their job effectively in the hospitality industry. After each guest lecture, the lecturers should complete a brief reflection session, highlighting the graduate attributes mentioned and asking the students to identify which graduate attributes were mentioned. The lecture could then provide feedback to the students and reinforce the graduate attributes they did not mention.

## 6.3    Implications for further research

The present study has highlighted that further research is required to develop a pedagogic procedure manual for the integration of graduate attributes into teaching and learning at the UoT's hotel school. Further research is proposed to encourage a uniform understanding of

the concept of graduate attributes among lecturers, and to determine which teaching and learning methods are best suited for student absorption of graduate attributes (Barrie, 2012).

Additional research can be conducted to explore which skills or qualities the hospitality industry perceives hospitality management students are not developing during their studies at the hotel school. Once completed, a collaborative study with the hotel school's WIL partners and lecturers is required to develop hospitality specific graduate attributes to integrate into teaching and learning during the student's studies and to nurture during WIL in the hospitality industry (Chau & Cheung, 2017). Bester (2014) explains that although there might be agreement in South Africa and globally on the importance of skills development and the role of education and training in developing these skills and competencies, there is confusion on the types of skills and competencies needed in a modern society, as well as how these graduate attributes should be developed. Research on the outcomes achieved by students in many countries suggests that university graduates are not necessarily developing the types of skills required by industry (Barrie, 2012).

According to Formplus (2022), the results of descriptive research can be further investigated and used in other research methods as it has the ability to inform the next line of research, including the research methods that could be used. This is because it provides basic information about the research problem, which may allow for the creation of other questions; for example, why a particular subject is the way it is (Formplus, 2022). The results from this study may be used in future journal articles using a correlational research approach. Correlational research design is a technique that includes examining two variables to detect a statistically comparable relationship between a dependent variable and an independent variable (Griga, 2017). For example, a comparable relationship measuring the integration of graduate attributes' effectiveness can be used to determine the change or cause created by using case studies in assessments at the hotel school. If students perform well in the assessment, the application style pedagogy is deemed beneficial. Including both the lecturers and students in teaching and learning strengthens the choice of pedagogy. The independent variable in this example would be the use of the case study as it has an effect on the integration of the graduate attributes in teaching and learning. Therefore, the teaching and learning would be the dependent variable. Descriptive design allows the researcher to establish the strength and direction of the relationship in a quantitative study by looking at the numerical value, which can then be measured by means of a statistical technique referred to as regression (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For future studies, the objective of this type of research tool may be used to find variables that have some sort of relationship or connection to the extent that a difference in one creates a shift in the other (Griga, 2017).

## 6.4    Reflection on the research journey

The researcher conducted this study to determine the best practices for the transference and integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at the hotel school. The research aim included investigating whether there was a positive relationship between embedding graduate attributes and student success during WIL placements. To establish the above, the researcher aimed to achieve the research objectives and aim as this would allow for answering the research questions. In summary, the researcher outlines the entire process of the research journey in the next paragraphs.

The researcher established an introduction to the study in Chapter One to provide a background of the challenges of graduate integration into teaching and learning. During the introduction, the researcher explained the direction of the study, the methods that were required to explore and provide an understanding of the area of concern, and the reason why this research was needed.

In Chapter Two, the researcher sourced and reviewed the literature required to explain the pertinent evidence of previous and current studies completed in the area of study. This led to the researcher shedding light on the significance of performing such a study and whether the problem was researchable or not. The initial research revealed potential gaps in the literature that related exclusively to the research problem.

Chapter Three provided details of required the research methodology to explore and investigate the research problem. The population and size of the sample within the population were stated. SPSS version 28 and ATLAS.ti were identified as the instruments needed for data collection and analysis. Ethical implications of the research were discussed.

In Chapter Four, the results, trends, and themes discovered were outlined by presenting them in tables, bar-graphs, and word clouds. It enabled answering the research questions and revealed the link between the research questions and objectives.

In Chapter Five, the outcome of the results and findings were echoed and reviewed in the form of a discussion and deliberation. The discussion confirmed that the researcher was able to achieve the dissertation's aim and objectives.

Reflecting on personal experiences and her journey during the study, the researcher came to several realisations. The battle of writing a dissertation whilst working full-time as well as other limitations brought on due to the Covid-19 pandemic is not for the faint hearted as it pushes one's boundaries and highlights insecurities. Through hard work, motivation and the occasional tear, the researcher overcame many challenges and gained many new qualities

and skills. This study highlighted the importance of qualities and skills required for students' success during WIL and their studies. An important and personal outcome of the researcher's journey over the past four years is the development of her own personal growth, understanding the power of consistency, perseverance, resilience, a positive mindset, and academic writing skills. Initially, the researcher perceived criticism and feedback as negative, but she overcame this challenge and learnt the valuable lesson of how constructive criticism allows for personal growth and development. The researcher learnt how to improve the credibility of her teaching and learning material and how to strengthen a student's comprehension of new concepts, skills, and qualities by making use of application-based formatives and class discussions. The researcher's learning was assisted by developing her understanding of graduate attributes, her ability to source material via UoT's online library, and by attending postgraduate webinars offered by the UoT. This resulted in the improvement of her teaching capabilities and overall confidence as a lecturer and researcher. After completing the study, the researcher gained insight into the knowledge that if she shows her students that they can expand their intelligence, the students become more determined to persevere through academic challenges and begin to see failure as an opportunity to learn (Kroeper et al., 2022).

*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever".*
*Mahatma Gandhi*

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# APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER FROM UOT ACTING ASSISTANT DEAN FROM THE RESEARCH AND INNOVATION UNIT

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2 December 2019

## PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH FROM STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE HOTEL SCHOOL
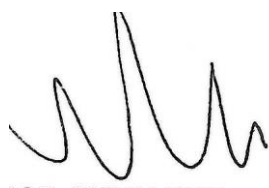
I grant Ms. Kate Lategan, Student No. 204105501, permission to collect data from staff and students at the Hotel School. The project is titled, "Integrating graduate attributes into theoretical subjects at a Hotel school in Cape Town". The supervisor is Ms. Nina Septoe.

**This consent no way commits any individual staff member to participate in the research, and it is expected that the student will get explicit consent from any participants. I reserve the right to withdraw this permission at some future time.**

**In addition, the company's name may or may not be used as indicated below. (Tick as appropriate):**

|      | Thesis | Conference paper | Journal article | Research poster |
|------|--------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Yes** |        |                  |                 |                 |
| **No**  | ✕      | )L               | X               | -X-             |

**Yours sincerely**

**PROFESSOR CHUX IWU**

**Acting Assistant Dean, Research and Innovation Unit**

# APPENDIX B: CPUT ETHICS COMMITTEE CERTIFICATE



Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

| | |
|---|---|
| **Office of the Chairperson**<br>**Research Ethics Committee** | **Faculty:** **BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES** |

The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on **19 November 2019**, ethics **Approval** was granted to **Kate Lategan (204105501)** for a research activity for **M Tech: Tourism and Hospitality Management** at Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title of dissertation/thesis/project:** | **AN INTEGRATION OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A HOTEL SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN**<br><br>Lead Supervisor (s): Ms. N Septoe/ Mrs. B Seager |

**Comments:**

**Decision: Approved**

| | |
|---|---|
| | **5 December 2019** |
| **Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee** | **Date** |

Clearance Certificate No | 2019FOBREC733

# APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT: STUDENT

Dear student,

My name is Kate Lategan, a registered Masters (MTech) student in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), in Cape Town.

I am conducting a study titled "An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town". The purpose of the study is to identify best practices to integrate graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects and whether there will be a positive impact on your success in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

# APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENT

## An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town

Dear student,

My name is Kate Lategan, a registered Masters (MTech) student in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), in Cape Town.

I am conducting a study titled "An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town". The purpose of the study is to identify best practices to integrate graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects and whether there will be a positive impact on your success in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

---

\* Required

1.  I would like to request your consent to be part of this study. Taking part in this study is voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous.

    *Check all that apply.*

    ☐ Yes, I consent to being part of this study.

    ☐ No, I do not consent to be part of this study.

2.  What is your understanding of graduate attributes? \*

    _____

    _____

    _____

3.  As a University of Technology (UoT) student what qualities (graduate attributes) do you think are important to develop whilst studying? You may select more than one.                    \*

    *Check all that apply.*

    ☐ Team player

    ☐ Communication skills

    ☐ Problem solving ability

    ☐ Willingness to learn Integrity

    ☐ Self-motivated

    ☐ Stress management

    ☐ Technological skills

4.  As a hotel school student, what qualities do you think are important to have * before entering a WIL Placement? You may select more than one.

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Team player
- ☐ Communication skills
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Integrity
- ☐ Self-motivated
- ☐ Solution orientated
- ☐ Confidence
- ☐ Willingness to learn
- ☐ Technological skills

5.  While completing your WIL placement, what graduate qualities are you learning? You may select more than one.

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Integrity
- ☐ Communication skills
- ☐ Analytical skills
- ☐ Problem solving abilities
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Team player
- ☐ Self-motivated
- ☐ Technological skills

6.  What qualities do you believe are necessary to get a job in the hospitality * industry? You may select more than one.

*Check all that apply.*

- ☐ Team player
- ☐ Time management
- ☐ Stress management
- ☐ Self-motivated
- ☐ Accountability
- ☐ Integrity
- ☐ Loyalty
- ☐ Problem solving skills
- ☐ Analytical skills
- ☐ Technological skills

7. Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the qualities of * technology and foresight (such as planning) are important to you during your studies and WIL.

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Practical knowledge off technical skills e.g., Processing a credit card payment. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Practicing the awareness off sustainability and environmental practices in hospitality outlets. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Strong technological communication skills when dealing with a guest or with a colleague. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The ability to access relevant knowledge e.g., knowing what resources are available to assist with challenges on the job. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Critical and intuitive thinking with regard to finding the best solutions to technological issues. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

8. Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the qualities of * resilience (flexibility) and problem solving are important to you during your studies and WIL.

Mark only one oval per row.

| | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organisational skills | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Adaptability | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Facing challenges with guests. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Facing challenges with home and work balance. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Facing challenges with team activities at with colleagues at work. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| The ability to reflect on and evaluate personal progress. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

9. Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the quality of relational * capability (dealing with others) is important to you during your studies and WIL.

Mark only one oval per row.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Understanding and respect for other's knowledge and experience. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Recognise one's own weaknesses (including technical or practical knowledge). | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Effective communication across differences off opinions, genders, or different cultural groups. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

10. Select the level to which you agree or disagree that the quality of ethical * capability (knowing right from wrong) is important to you during your studies and WIL.

Mark only one oval per row.

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Actively striving to be a role model in society. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| Knowledge off professional ethics in the hospitality industry. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An ability to distinguish whether professional practices are within ethical boundaries or not. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |
| An ability to make ethical decisions in difficult situations. | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ | ◯ |

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

# APPENDIX E: LETTER OF CONSENT: LECTURER

Dear Lecturer/Instructor,

My name is Kate Lategan, a registered Masters (MTech) student in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), in Cape Town.

I am conducting a study titled "An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town". The purpose of the study is to identify best practices to integrate graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects and whether there will be a positive impact to student's success in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

# APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE: LECTURER

An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town

Dear Lecturer/Instructor,

My name is Kate Lategan, a registered Masters (MTech) student in Tourism and Hospitality Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT), in Cape Town.

I am conducting a study titled "An integration of graduate attributes in teaching and learning at a hotel school in Cape Town". The purpose of the study is to identify best practices to integrate graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects and whether there will be a positive impact to student's success in Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

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* Required

1. I would like to request your consent to be part of this study. Taking part in this study is voluntary and your identity will remain anonymous.

   *Check all that apply.*

   ☐ Yes, I consent to being part of this study.

   ☐ No, I do not consent to be part of this study.

2. What is your understanding of the concept, graduate attributes? *

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What graduate attributes do you think a student needs to excel in the * hospitality industry?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4.   From the graduate attributes listed below, select the top three graduate* attributes most improved after the student's first WIL placement.

*Check all that apply.*

- [ ] Technological capabilities and foresight, digital literacy and planning.
- [ ] Written, oral and media communication skills.
- [ ] Ethical capabilities and an interest in in sustainability and the environment.
- [ ] Resilience and problem-solving capabilities.
- [ ] Relational capabilities and respectful of diversity.
- [ ] An interest in research and enquiring mind, responsible and self-motivated.

5.   From the graduate attributes listed below, select the top three graduate * attributes least improved upon after the student's first WIL placement.

*Check all that apply.*

- [ ] Technological capabilities and foresight, digital literacy and planning.
- [ ] Written, oral and media communication skills.
- [ ] Ethical capabilities and an interest in in sustainability and the environment.
- [ ] Resilience and problem-solving capabilities.
- [ ] Relational capabilities and respectful of diversity.
- [ ] An interest in research and enquiring mind, responsible and self-motivated.

6.   Please select which of the following teaching methods you use to transfer graduate attributes into your theoretical or practical subjects. You may select more than one. *

*Check all that apply.*

- [ ] Case Study
- [ ] Class discussion
- [ ] Class Debate
- [ ] Discussion Groups
- [ ] Recitation
- [ ] Student report or portfolio
- [ ] Observation
- [ ] Class participation
- [ ] Reading assignment
- [ ] Journal writing
- [ ] Group exercises or projects
- [ ] Role-playing

7.  In your opinion, which teaching methods would be most suitable to aid in the *
    integration of graduate attributes into theoretical and practical subjects.

    _____

    _____

    _____

8.  What challenges do you experience in testing graduate attributes in formative * and
    summative assessments?

    _____

    _____

    _____

9.  What solutions would you recommend improving the overall transference of graduate
    attributes into teaching and learning? *

    _____

    _____

    _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questionnaire

# APPENDIX G: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

27 October 2022

**KATE LATEGAN**
Faculty of Business and Management Sciences
Cape Peninsula University of Technology
District Six, Cape Town

**CERTIFICATE - EDITING OF MASTER'S DISSERTATION**

I, the undersigned, herewith confirm that the editing of the Master's dissertation of Kate Lategan, *"AN INTEGRATION OF GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A HOTEL SCHOOL IN CAPE TOWN",* has been conducted and concluded.

The finalised thesis was submitted to Kate Lategan on 27 October 2022.

**Sincerely**

*Professor Annelie Jordaan*
*DTech: Information Technology*
*Ph: 065 990 3713*

**Member: SATI 1003347**

South African Translators' Institute (SATI)