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Centre for Student Counselling & Development

Division of Student Affairs



Annual Report 2025













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Message from Dr Leslie Van Rooi

Acting Dean of Students



Reflection of Gratitude

As this year draws to a close, I find myself reflecting with deep appreciation on the remarkable colleagues with whom I have had the privilege of working at the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) at Stellenbosch University (SU). Our work is often complex, emotionally demanding, and always deeply meaningful, and it is the people within this Centre who make it not only possible but also profoundly fulfilling.

Throughout the year, and as will be reflected in this report, I have witnessed countless examples of compassion, dedication, and

excellence in all of our Units. Whether through direct student support, innovative developmental programmes, careful coordination, or the many, often unseen tasks that keep our Centre functioning with integrity, each of you has played a vital role in shaping the student experience positively at SU.

What continues to inspire me is the way that our team shows up not only for students but also for one another. We celebrate each other's achievements, offer support in moments of pressure, and share openly in our commitment to student wellbeing. This we do in collaboration with faculties and professional and administrative support services (PASS) environments, also within Student Affairs. This culture of collaboration is one of our greatest strengths, and it reflects the best of what the CSCD stands for. In a year marked by both change and growth, your ability to stay grounded, student centred, and solution driven has been remarkable.

This year reminded me once again that our impact stretches far beyond the consultations, workshops, assessments, and interventions that we deliver. It lies in the steady presence that we offer, the thoughtful

guidance that we provide, and the spaces of safety and empowerment that we create. It lies in the relationships that we build — with students and other stakeholders across the University.

As we look ahead to a new year, I remain grateful for this team and hopeful for what we will continue to achieve together. As is reflected in this report, plans for 2026 and beyond are clear and, as we embark on the journey of establishing the Responsibility Centre for the Dean of Students, I trust that

the expanding work and impact of the CSCD will be amplified.

I want to thank my colleagues for their generosity with which they share their knowledge, creativity, and time under the guidance of our Director, Deputy Director, and Heads of Units. Colleagues, thank you for making this year meaningful, memorable, and inspiring. It is an honour to walk this journey with you.

Leslie van Rooi

Message from Dr Charl Davids

Director: Centre for Student Counselling & Development



The year 2025 has been a defining one for the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD) — one marked by renewal, resilience, and reaffirmation of purpose. As Stellenbosch University (SU) advances toward its Vision 2040, the CSCD continues to play a vital role in shaping an environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and psychologically.

This year, our collective efforts reflected a strong alignment with the University's Student Success Strategy and institutional

commitment to holistic wellbeing. Through an integrated and data-informed approach, we strengthened collaboration across faculties and divisions, expanded access to psychosocial support, and deepened our preventative and developmental work.

A major milestone was the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) accreditation of both our Educational and Counselling Psychology Internship programmes — a recognition of the Centre's standing as a site of professional excellence and innovation in higher education. The Unit for Academic Counselling and Development (UACD) further advanced our systemic model of academic advising through new faculty-based registered counsellor posts, enhancing visibility and embedding care within the academic ecosystem.

The Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services (UPSS) continued to provide compassionate, evidence-based care to our student community while innovating through brief-term therapy models, group work, and creative interventions such as art therapy and trauma release exercises. The inclusion of occupational therapy, industrial psychology, and pastoral

counselling interns further strengthened our interdisciplinary reach and capacity.

The Disability Unit (DU) reaffirmed its leadership in inclusion through national recognition, sector partnerships, and the continued success of the Lead with Disability and Student Volunteer programmes. Their navigation of the new SUNStudent system demonstrated adaptability and persistence in a complex transition year.

The Unit for Graduand Career Services (UGCS) embodied our value of collaboration, building vibrant partnerships with faculties, employers, and external networks while innovating through initiatives such as the Career Corner Project and expanded workshop offerings.

We also celebrated the continued success of the Psychology CPD (Continuous Professional Development) Well Programme, which remains one of the CSCD's flagship professional development initiatives. Its robust enrolments and diverse topics demonstrate the Centre's contribution to advancing professional competence in psychology nationally.

Institutionally, 2025 marked the consolidation of the Student Success Initiative (SSI), with the CSCD serving as a key strategic partner in integrating academic, psychosocial, and career support across the student life cycle. Our joint efforts with the Division for Student Affairs (DSAf) and the Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE) continue to position SU as a leading voice in student success and wellbeing.

The year also reaffirmed the power of innovation in work culture. Continuing our landmark four-day work week — the first of its kind in higher education counselling — we have maintained sustained improvements in staff wellness, service efficiency, and overall organisational cohesion. These outcomes affirm our belief that caring for those who care for others is central to institutional excellence.

In 2025, SU welcomed its new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Deresh Ramjugernath, whose leadership and vision for an inclusive, globally engaged, and impact-driven university inspire our continued work. The CSCD looks forward to contributing meaningfully toward the realisation of his vision through our focus on holistic student development and wellbeing.

Equally significant, the DSAf became a Responsibility Centre in its own right on 1 November 2025, under the leadership of the Acting Dean of Students, Dr Leslie van Rooi. We are excited to play an active role in shaping and strengthening the work of this new Responsibility Centre, aligning our strategic goals with a shared commitment to student flourishing and institutional transformation.

Behind every milestone stands an exceptional team — colleagues who bring empathy, expertise, and commitment to the heart of our work. I express deep appreciation to the Management Committee and every staff member whose dedication continues to make the CSCD a space of hope, healing, and possibility. I also extend my gratitude to

our partners across faculties, divisions, and external organisations whose collaboration strengthens our shared impact.

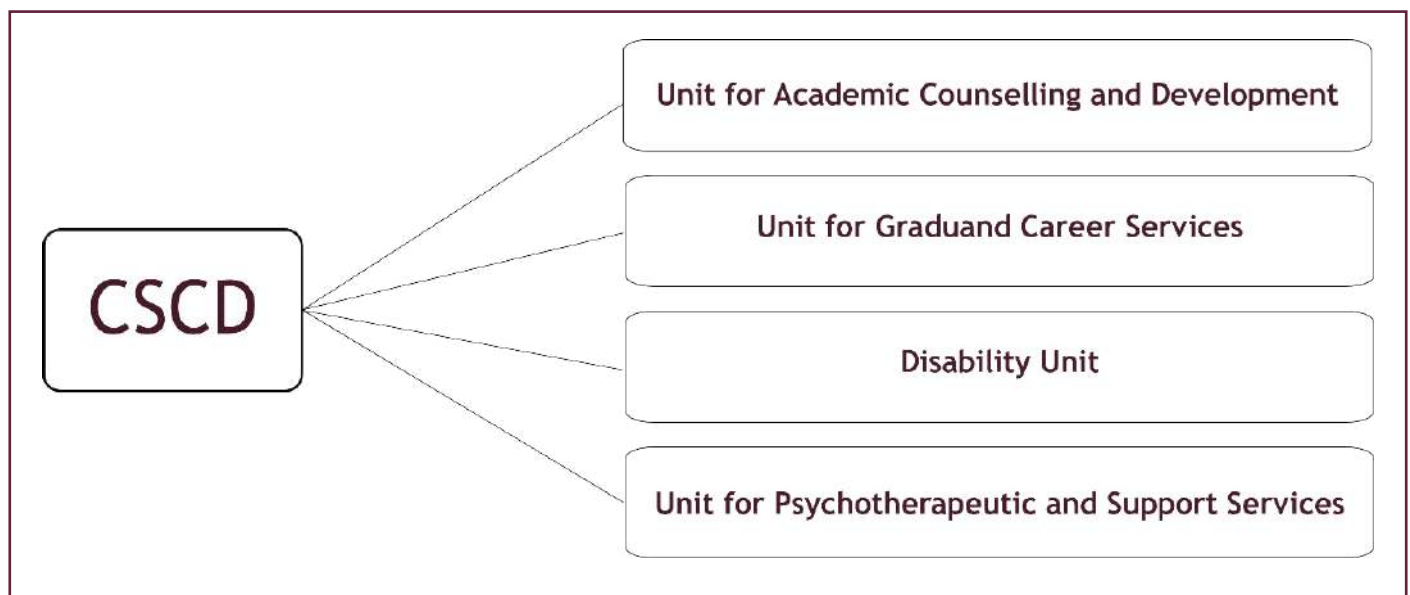
As we look toward 2026, our focus remains clear: to sustain a high-quality, inclusive, and student-centred support system that responds dynamically to a changing higher

education landscape. The CSCD will continue to innovate, integrate, and inspire — ensuring that every student who walks through our doors finds not only support but also belonging and possibility.

Charl Davids

Introduction

Composition of the Centre for Student Counselling and Development



The CSCD offers professional psychological support and development services to students of SU.

The CSCD, which is centrally situated in five buildings in Victoria Street, comprises the following units, each of which offers a specialised service to optimise student success:

- Unit for Academic Counselling and Development (UACD)
- Disability Unit (DU)
- Unit for Graduand Career Services (UGCS)
- Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services (UPSS)

Unit for Academic Counselling and Development

The UACD's service delivery rests on three pillars, namely a developmental perspective, systemic case management and integration, and comprehensive student-centred services. The overarching goal is to empower students to improve their wellbeing in order to experience success. The team, under leadership of Ms Christa Koch, comprises educational psychologists, a psychometrist, registered counsellors, and intern psychologists. Academic skills support as well as psycho-social and career development interventions are offered in the form of work sessions, lectures, psycho-educational self-help material, and individual consultations.

Unit for Graduatand Career Services

The UGCS is headed by Mr Marquard Timmey, a registered counselling psychologist, and the team consists of two ex-educators, one who manages the graduate development portfolio and one who manages the graduate recruitment portfolio, a financial officer, who takes care of the Unit's finances and administrative duties, and a counsellor, who also works on the graduate development portfolio, with a specific focus on the career journey of newcomers. The Unit supports registered SU students with the transition from education to employment.

This could include individual sessions about their career, work sessions on Curriculum Vitae writing and cover letters, interview skills, personal branding, optimising students' LinkedIn profile, and job-seeking skills. The annual career fairs are the biggest project. These are opportunities for SU students to network with graduate employers. All our counselling services are also offered online. The Unit refers employers who would like to post their job opportunities on an online portal to the Gradlinc team. Gradlinc is an online recruitment portal and allows students to easily search and apply for vacancies, internships, and part-time jobs. All SU students are strongly encouraged to register on the Gradlinc portal. Several graduate employers are also registered on the platform. Registered SU students can upload their Curricula Vitae on the Gradlinc portal and search for employers' information and job opportunities.

Disability Unit

The DU fosters disability inclusion campus-wide in support of inclusive education. It offers a range of services to students with disabilities, from advice on appropriate academic support solutions to accessible, tailored study and assessment academic materials. The Unit's activities are informed by the Disability Access Policy of SU. We advise prospective students with disabilities about the possible support available to them once they are enrolled at SU. We also discuss

appropriate academic support solutions and ensure that academic material is accessible for study, test, and examination purposes. The DU also offers students and staff various training opportunities. These include a Lead with Disability Programme for students and staff as well the facilitation of staff training through the Siyakhula training sessions. Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas leads this competent team.

Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services

The UPSS plays a critical role in supporting students who experience psychological and psychosocial challenges. In addition to its clinical function, the Unit actively engages

in advocacy by collaborating with a range of stakeholders invested in student wellbeing. To ensure that students are able to function optimally, the Unit is committed to promoting their holistic development. This is achieved through the consistent delivery of professional, student-centred services across both the Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campuses.

The Unit offers a comprehensive suite of services, including the following:

- Individual psychotherapy
- Group therapy
- Facilitated work sessions

Unit for Academic Counselling & Development

A reflection on the Unit's year



a) Achievements

At the start of 2025, the UACD welcomed three new full-time intern educational psychologists: Laura Swart, Deoné van der Merwe, and Gaylynn Ockhuis. They began their 12-month HPCSA-accredited internships following a structured orientation

that introduced them to the CSCD units, Neurolink's Brain Potential Profile, intake and note-taking procedures, psychometric and scholastic assessments, career counselling, neurodiversity, and psychotherapeutic interventions in higher education.



From left to right: Gaylynn Ockhuis, Laura Swart, and Deoné van der Merwe (educational psychology interns), with Henri Cilliers (counselling psychology intern).

A major milestone this year was the successful HPCSA site visit, which led to full accreditation of the UACD as an educational psychology internship site. This allows the Centre to host an annual, recognised internship without requiring repeated programme approval and strengthens collaboration between the UACD and UPSS, who now host accredited programmes for both educational and counselling psychology. Interns benefit from integrated expertise, a broad training platform, and exposure to clinical, developmental, and higher education contexts.

Since 2022, the UACD has been developing a systemic, holistic academic advising model as part of the Integrated Student Success Strategy launched in 2023. Working closely with the DLTE, the Unit planned data-informed advising structures across faculties for full rollout in 2025.

To support this model, the Unit appointed four registered counsellors: academic advisors in 2025. Their role strengthened faculty-based support and increased the visibility of CSCD services. They facilitated workshops, roadshows, and individual consultations while collaborating with faculty committees to build a more integrated wraparound support offering.

In May, UACD staff attended Academic Advising Professional Development training. The programme deepened theoretical and practical understanding of advising and strengthened collaboration with colleagues from SU and UCT. The training affirmed current practices while introducing new strategies for student success.

The UACD continued targeted support for Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) cohorts across faculties. Practitioners conducted approximately 495 individual consultations and 37 group sessions, totalling 532 engagements. Over 80% occurred face to face, with telephonic sessions complementing in-person work. Most students accessing services were from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, followed by Economic and Management Sciences and Engineering. The majority of engagements came from black African and coloured students.

Across faculties, 25 additional in-faculty sessions and mentoring initiatives reached 870 ECP students between February and October. Close collaborations with the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences,

Staff capacity continues to be absorbed by reactive work, limiting preventative initiatives. Attendance at scheduled sessions remains inconsistent, with high sign-ups but low participation.

and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strengthened ties with coordinators and academic advisors. Sessions focused on adjustment, self-advocacy, time planning, emotional regulation, resilience, and examination preparation. Mentor training delivered in partnership with the Pay it Forward Programme supported 49 mentors across faculties.

Surveys conducted early in 2025 provided important insight into first-year ECP needs. The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences survey collected 86 responses, and although the cross-faculty survey had a smaller sample, both informed curriculum design and planning.

Feedback and engagement trends shaped priorities for 2026, including improving attendance systems, strengthening digital tracking, and reducing sessions marked as 'did not attend'. Planned initiatives include piloting a Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) informed World Café model, enhancing mental health literacy and career readiness, expanding creative feedback methods, and strengthening mentoring pathways. These adjustments aim to build a more responsive, student-centred support ecosystem.

b) Challenges

The appointment of the registered counsellors: academic advisors marked an important step toward reducing silos and increasing psychological support

visibility. However, integrating services into faculty structures required significant role clarification to avoid duplication and confusion. Establishing referral pathways, securing consistent spaces within faculties, and balancing workloads remain key priorities for 2026.

Staff capacity continues to be absorbed by reactive work, limiting preventative initiatives. Attendance at scheduled sessions remains inconsistent, with high sign-ups but low participation. Adjusting timing and scheduling may support improved engagement. International practice suggests that shifting toward preventative work within a student success framework is gradual, requiring strong partnerships, consistent visibility, and robust data systems.

Data management challenges also shaped the year. SUNStudent, the online note-taking system, and a lack of mechanisms to capture targeted intervention data limited efficiency. Difficulties uploading notes increased practitioner workload and reduced capacity for innovation. Updated SUNStudent training improved navigation, but the need for a streamlined note-taking platform remains.

In 2026, the CSCD will explore more robust systems and leverage Microsoft Suite tools for better tracking and analysis.

Three UACD members also serve on the DU's Assessment Concessions Committee. The introduction of SUNStudent into the concessions process presented administrative challenges, and limiting applications to two periods created a high-volume workload for reviewers. Although the UACD values this partnership, managing enquiries and appeals is time intensive. Plans for 2026 include improved DU processes and involving educational psychology interns to support their learning while distributing workload more sustainably.

c) Partnerships and networking opportunities

- Partnership with the Western Cape Education Department enabled intern psychologists to offer services at AF Louw Primary School as part of their accredited programme.
- Collaboration with SU's Department of Industrial Psychology provided interns with counselling experience in a context where placements are limited.
- Ongoing partnership with the DLTE supported SSIs and academic advising development.
- Through the Integrated Student Success Strategy, the University continued working with the Siyaphumelela Network to strengthen the use of student data for decision making.
- Christa Koch attended the HPCSA stakeholder meeting on 28 May 2025, gaining insight into sector concerns and CPD requirements.
- All staff are members of ELETSA Academic Advising South Africa, strengthening alignment with national advising practices.
- All UACD staff remain active members of the Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education (SAACDHE) and participate in Western Cape regional meetings, deepening interinstitutional collaboration.
- The ECP support team partnered with faculty support staff to ensure wraparound services for ECP students across campuses.
- Close collaboration continued with bursary providers including Moshal, Allan Gray Orbis, ISFAP, Thuthuka, and Dell Young Leaders. UACD members also served on the Dell Selection Committee.
- The Unit strengthened its partnership with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Graduate School. Sessions facilitated by Ntombifuthi Maduna supported doctoral induction and postgraduate development.

d) Highlights

The UACD team strengthened and expanded its collaborative efforts with faculty staff across various departments to support the effective implementation of systemic interventions. Key highlights identified for 2025 included the following:

- Christa Koch delivered a self-management workshop for BSc Honours Applied Mathematics students, supporting their transition to postgraduate study.
- For Human Rights Month, Ntombifuthi Maduna appeared on Maties FM to discuss the right to education, inclusive teaching, and the contribution of educational psychology to student success.



The Paarl Youth Initiative Career Project

Dr Erna Geryts and the four intern psychologists, Henri Cilliers, Laura Swart, Gaylynne Ockhuis and Deoné van der Merwe, spent two days in Paarl with sixteen Grade 11 learners from four different schools in the town.

- The Paarl Career Counselling Project continued to grow. Since 2022, UACD interns and supervisors have provided career guidance to Grade 11 and 12 learners from farm communities. Interns used narrative and career construction approaches and produced individual reports for each learner. The project offers valuable community engagement and rich learning opportunities for interns.
- On 10 September 2025, Ntombifuthi facilitated a stress management workshop for the newly elected Students' Representative Council, focusing on sustainable leadership and wellbeing.
- A significant achievement was the outstanding contribution of the psychology interns, who delivered high-quality services while completing their dissertations, graduating, and passing board examinations in their internship year.
- Staff attended the Values in Action Workshop with Prof Arnold Smit, strengthening reflection on personal and organisational values.
- A Community of Practice was established, bringing together the CSCD, faculty advisors, and bursary coordinators to address student success themes such as food security and emerging challenges.
- Several new staff joined the CSCD in 2025, including registered counsellors:

academic advice, a transitional counsellor, and a CPD Well Programme administrator. A collective onboarding programme strengthened cohesion and created a supportive peer network.

- The registered counsellors: academic advice team made significant contributions to CSCD visibility. Their involvement in faculty structures, roadshows, and Open Days increased awareness of available services and

improved early help seeking. They offered high-engagement workshops on stress, examination readiness, and academic recovery and established relationships with new faculty partners, including the School of Public Leadership at Lynedoch. Their presence in faculty spaces strengthened day-to-day student access and laid the foundation for deeper collaboration in 2026.

Personalia

- Laura Swart successfully completed her MEdPsych degree at the University of Pretoria on 7 May 2025. She passed the HPCSA board examination and will be eligible to register as an educational psychologist upon completing her internship in December 2025.
- Deoné van der Merwe successfully completed her studies and will be awarded her MEdPsych degree by the University of Pretoria in March 2026. She passed the HPCSA board examination and will be eligible to register as an educational psychologist upon completing her internship in December 2025.
- Gaylynne Ockhuis successfully completed her MEdPsych degree at SU on 8 December 2025. She passed the HPCSA board examination and will be eligible to register as an educational psychologist upon completing her internship in December 2025.
- Ntombifuthi Maduna passed the HPCSA board examination and is now a registered educational psychologist.

Evaluation of services

- *I would like to inform you that I passed all of my A1s and I have seen improvements in some modules. I am extremely proud of myself but I would like to extend my gratitude to you for helping find a balance in my life. I feel more positive about the upcoming events and I hope that I will continue to improve.*

- *My experience with the CSCD has been overwhelmingly positive. I received guidance not only on how to manage my stress, but also on seeking a professional diagnosis. If it hadn't been for the CSCD, I wouldn't have known where to start in figuring out what my diagnosis could be, or who to approach for help. She also assisted me in navigating the shift from student leader to regular student, managing the anxiety of transitioning from being a student to being employed, and even helped me explore future therapeutic options for after I graduate. This is why, despite the rough start, I can say that the support I've received from the CSCD has been overwhelmingly positive, and deeply helpful.*
- *The Academic Tips Session went so well! The World Café format was a hit — students were engaged, chatting openly, and genuinely learning from each other. The pamphlets you shared were incredibly helpful. They sparked great conversations and gave students practical tools they could actually see themselves using. It felt less like a lecture and more like a community of students figuring things out together, which was exactly what we hoped for.*

Work sessions and groups

Throughout 2025, the UACD conducted a series of work sessions dedicated to enhancing particular skills aimed at fostering student success. The sessions were offered as a semester programme to clients of the CSCD. Sessions were also featured within module programmes as well as being presented upon invitation from various faculties. Session topics included the following:

- Academic skills for success
- Managing time as a student
- Healthy habits for student living
- Handling academic stress and anxiety for better results
- Skills to focus and concentrate better
- Building self-confidence academically
- Dealing with low marks and failure
- Motivation and discipline
- Examination writing skills
- From Panic to Power: A guide to stress management and self-regulation
- A total of 2 224 students attended the work sessions offered in 2025.

The following feedback was received to the questions posed about the work sessions specifically:

What did you most appreciate/enjoy/think was best about the session?

- *It was very relevant information and well presented. I feel so much at ease after attending the session. I learnt some good approaches to tackling my academic goals, also to be kind to myself and listen to my body.*
- *The fact that as heavy as the feeling of failure is, the session made me feel a lot better because I have been feeling like this and I didn't know how to tackle it.*
- *Hearing about other students' thoughts and struggles made us feel a sense of comfort that we could relate to one another.*
- *The session was practical — we shared timetables so we could see what our time is dedicated to.*
- *She is a very comforting presence. She is well-spoken and knowledgeable and engaged well with us.*

Would you recommend this session to other students?

- *This session felt like a safe space to be open and express what's on your mind. Not only that, you leave with more knowledge and confidence to face your life and academics.*
- *I've gone through countless YouTube and Studytok videos about time management when all I needed to hear was in the one-hour work session I just joined.*
- *Yes, because it reminds all students that the challenges we face are universal and we can help each other.*
- *Yes, because sometimes you just need to hear something from somebody else.*
- *Yes, because it helps students realize they are not alone, gives practical solutions, and motivates you to keep going.*
- A total of 2 224 students attended the work sessions offered in 2025.

Graphic summary of work session feedback

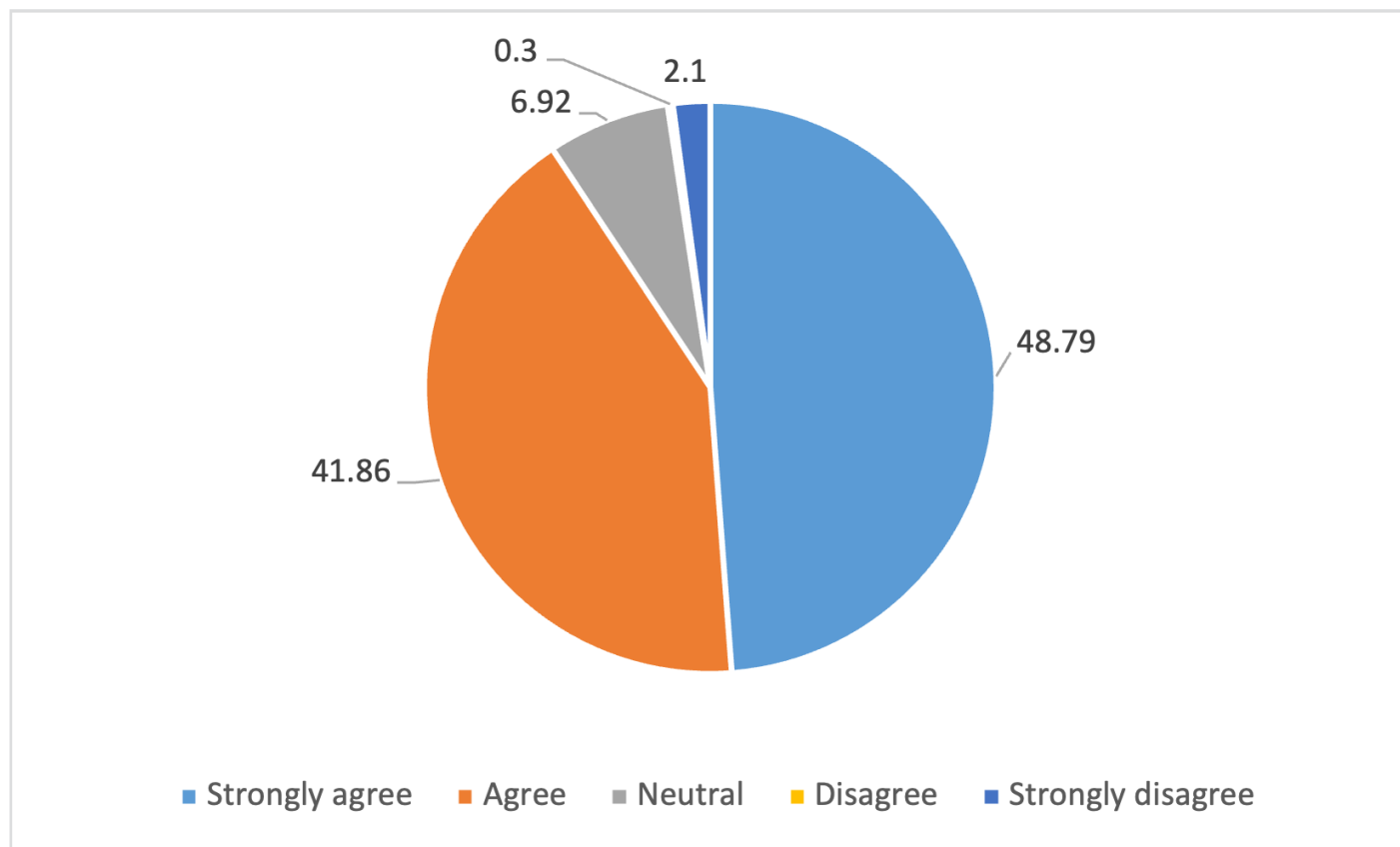


Figure 1: Knowledge and information gained from this session met my expectation

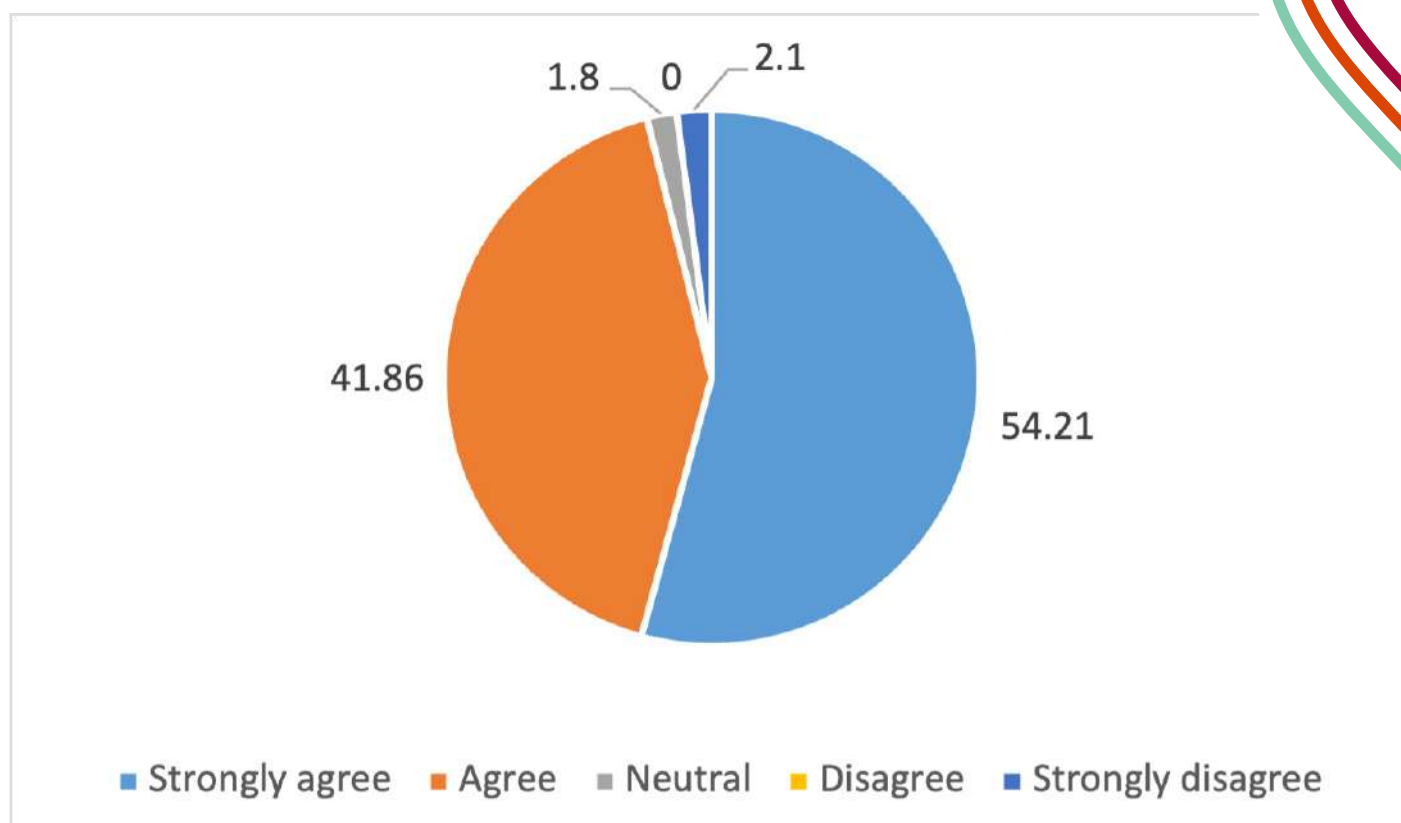


Figure 2: The content of the session will be useful/applicable in my studies/ personal development

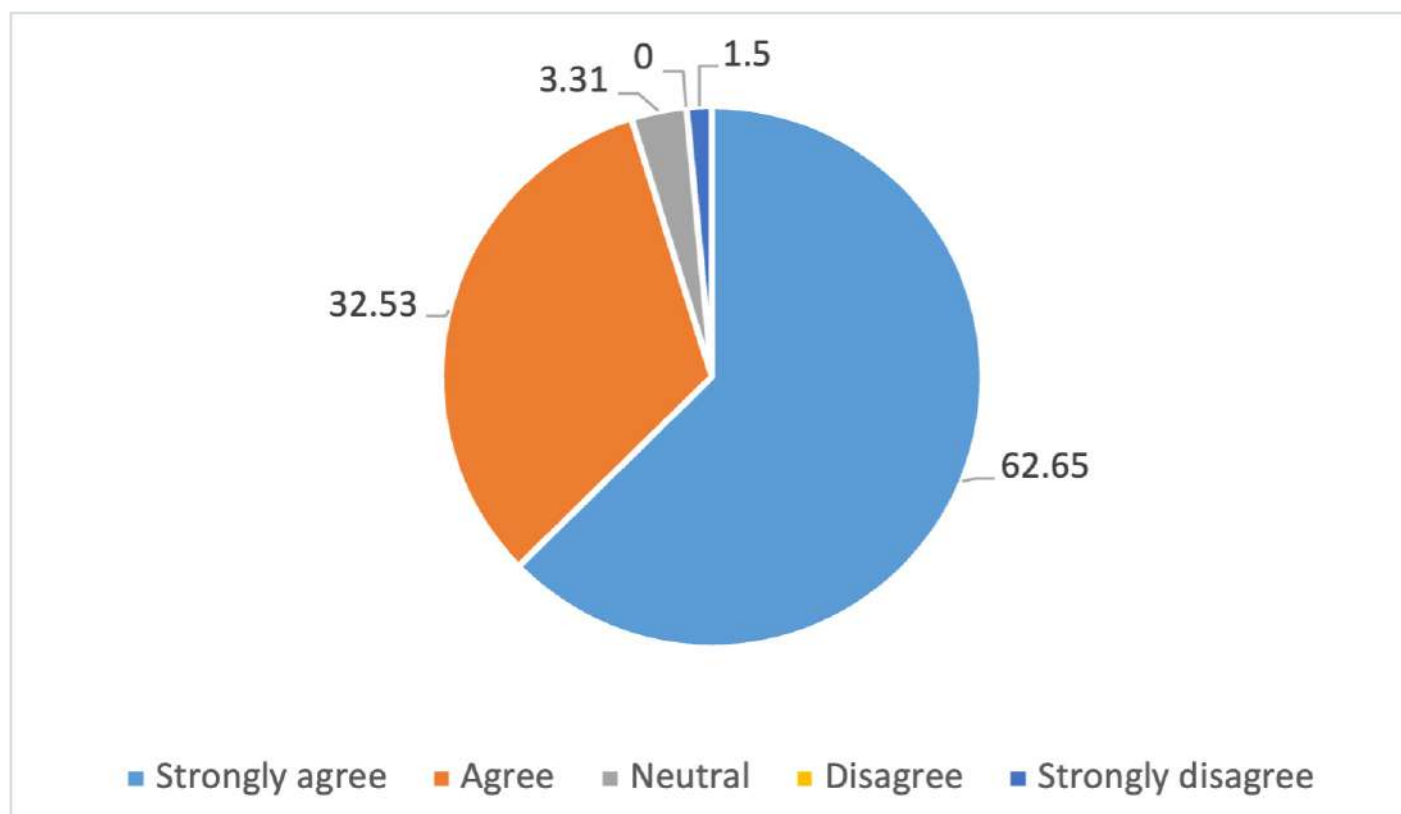


Figure 3: The facilitator was knowledgeable on the topic

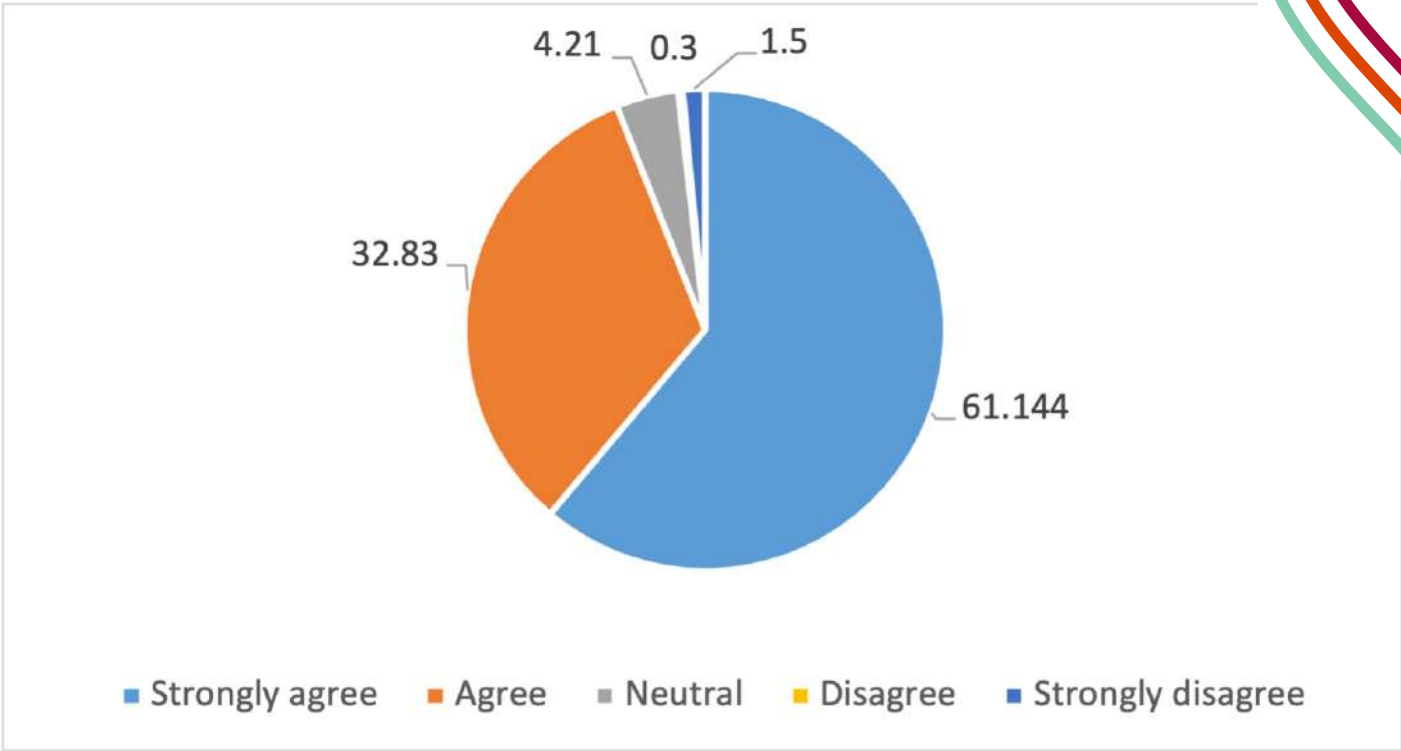


Figure 4: The facilitator presented at the correct level and presentation was well paced and organised

Table 1: Community school interventions, educational psychology interns: Deoné van der Merwe, Gaylynne Ockhuis, Laura Swart

AF LOUW PRIMARY				
Type of session	Description	Term	Participants	Intern
Assessment	Comprehensive Psycho-educational	Term 1/2	2	Deoné
Assessment	Comprehensive Psycho-educational	Term 3/4	2	Laura
Assessment	Comprehensive Psycho-educational	Term 3/4	1	Gaylynne
Total assessments:				
Type of session	Description	Term	Hours	Intern
Individual	Sessions with grade R-7 learners	Term 1	22	Deoné
Individual	Sessions with grade R-7 learners	Term 2	22	Deoné
			35	Laura

Individual	Sessions with grade R-7 learners	Term 3	18	Laura
			20	Gaylynne
Individual	Sessions with grade R-7 learners	Term 4	28	Gaylynne
Total hours: 145				
Type of session	Description	Term	Hours	Intern
Individual	Parental guidance	Term 1	3	Deoné
Individual	Parental guidance	Term 2	4	Deoné
Individual	Parental guidance	Term 3	4	Laura
Individual	Parental guidance	Term 4	(TBC)	Laura
			1	Gaylynne
Total hours: 12				
Type of session	Description	Number of hours	Month	Intern
Individual	Collaboration with teachers, the principal and social workers	Term 1	5	Deoné
Individual	Collaboration with teachers, the principal and social workers	Term 2	3	Deoné
			5	Laura
Individual	Collaboration with teachers, the principal and social workers	Term 3	4	Laura
			2	Gaylynne
Individual	Collaboration with teachers, the principal and social workers	Term 4	2	Gaylynne
Total hours: 21				
Type of session	Description	Term	Hours	Intern
Individual	Supervision with Ms. Amanda van der Vyver	Term 1	8	Deoné
Individual	Supervision with Ms. Amanda van der Vyver	Term 2	5	Deoné
			8	Laura

Individual	Supervision with Ms. Amanda van der Vyver	Term 3	5	Laura
			5	Gaylynne
Individual	Supervision with Ms. Amanda van der Vyver	Term 4	4	Gaylynne
Total hours: 35				

PAARL YOUTH INITIATIVE (GRADE 11 LEARNERS)				
Type of session	Description	Number of learners	Month	Intern
Group	Group career counselling and development	16	June	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Group	Thorough career assessment	16	June	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Individual	Report writing and individualized recommendations	16	June/ July	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Individual	Supervision with dr. Erna Gerryts (senior psychologist)	6 sessions	April- July	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Individual	Feedback on career assessment and personalized recommendations shared	16	October	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Individual	Report writing and individualized recommendations	16	July	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Individual	Feedback on career assessment and personalized recommendations shared	16	October	Deoné, Laura & Gaylynne
Total hours: 80				

Unit for Graduannd Career Services

A reflection on the Unit's year



The past year has been a true testament to the saying "Collaboration is the new competition". The UGCS was very intentional about collaboration 2025. The UGCS started 2025 with the following goals: to explore having more in-person sessions, to explore

the 'mobile office' concept in the existing Hubs, to continue with the bigger emphasis on effective career information, to transition to SU surveys for the Graduate Destination Survey, and to investigate how our Unit can contribute to the academic success project.

One of our major goals is to inspire and assist our first-year students to start their career journey much earlier.

a) Achievements

The career fairs were a big success despite all the challenges. We were fortunate to have our Vice-Chancellor, Acting Dean of Students, Chief Director: Maties Sport, Senior Director: Student Recruitment, Director: School of Data Science and Computational Thinking, Director: Centre for Student Life and Learning, Deputy-Director: Centre for Student Life and Learning, and Director: CSCD participating in a walk-through in the marquee tents, visiting some of the exhibitors. The morning started with an engagement session over coffee organised by the personal assistant of the Acting Dean of Students, Mrs Audrey Pool. The highlight was the employer dinner that was sponsored by our Acting Dean of Students. It was gratifying to meet with the different company representatives and strengthen the relationships. Another highlight was receiving our full order of the Ultimate Career Guide at the end of November 2025. This is a major career information resource that we can use as counsellors and make available to our students for career research. One of our major goals is to inspire and assist our first-year students to start their career journey much earlier. Neuwe Kibe was appointed as our first transitional counsellor: career advice

on a three-year fixed-term contract. This is a tremendous boost for our Unit and our services, especially when it comes to assisting our

newcomers with their career journey. Neuwe launched a very successful Career Corner Project at the Cluster Hubs to introduce herself and our services to the students. Our career workshop attendance numbers also picked up again in 2025 through persistent hard work and reconnecting with our student societies on both the Tygerberg and Stellenbosch campuses. Thobeka added a new workshop to guide students on how to optimally benefit from networking at the career fairs. Managing the finances of our Unit is always a challenge, since most of our services are funded from our third-stream income, but Annette did an excellent job to recover the money owed to us by various clients.

b) Interesting events

Marquard and Thobeka attended the Education Collaborative Career Strategy Workshop in Kigali, Rwanda. This was a marvellous opportunity to learn from and network with career experts from South Africa and other African countries. Marquard was invited by the Intercultural Education Corporation to visit China from 9 to 19 December. The visit is part of a biannual invitation to visit the schools in China where students from SU and other South African universities, who were recruited via career

services, teach English. We worked with the DU to make our career fairs more accessible for our students with disabilities. The first hour of the career fairs was exclusively reserved for students with disabilities. Thobeka and Neuwe attended the South African Graduate Employers Association Conference from 12 November till 14 November in Gauteng.

c) Partnerships and networking opportunities

We can report on the following partnerships:

- Department of Logistics
- South African Graduate Employers Association
- Gradlinc
- Dietetics 3
- Extended Degree Programme (EDP)
- OPTIMUS
- Faculty of Theology
- Sports Science
- Faculty of Engineering

d) Challenges

We faced a few daunting challenges with regard to our career fairs. This nearly led to a disastrous outcome with the quality of one of the marquee tents. We were very fortunate that our Acting Dean of Students and our Director collaborated on the matter as it demanded a high-level executive decision to rescue the situation. The weather also posed a challenge for Facilities Management as it had to work extra hard to secure a stable supply of electricity. Other challenges during 2025 included students who registered for workshops but either did not turn up or cancelled and then needed assistance soon after the workshops were over. Thobeka came up with a clever solution to enable these students to receive the much-needed assistance without having to organise another workshop, as this is not always possible. The Career Khulumas posed another challenge, namely panel members who committed to the sessions but unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute due to unforeseen circumstances.

Personalia

- Thobeka Msi completed her MSc Psychological Sciences studies at Brunel University, London.
- Wilna Naude retired at the end of 2025 after 33 years of dedicated and excellent service to the Career Services Unit and the CSCD.

Evaluation of services

We received the following qualitative feedback from employers' participation in the career fairs:

- *They (SU students) are not here for the goodie bags.*
- *Those who come to my stall know exactly why they choose to come.*
- *They are asking relevant questions.*
- *We would like to thank you and the university for a great career day yesterday. It was well organised, and not even the weather could dampen our mood.*
- *We will definitely be attending again next year.*

We received the following qualitative feedback from students who made use of our services:

- *I would like to first express my profound gratitude for your highly informative CV workshop.*

- *Thank you so much! I will do so, but you even answered the questions I did not know I had, so doubt that something will come up.*
- *I would like to sincerely thank you for taking the time yesterday to help me refine my CV and cover letter. Your feedback and guidance were incredibly helpful, and I truly appreciate the effort you put into reviewing my documents.*
- *Thank you very much for sending through the material [LinkedIn Optimisation skills and CV writing skills recorded work sessions]. I have reviewed it and found it extremely helpful. I truly appreciate the time and effort put into providing these resources.*
- *Thank you for being open to see me. I'm actually in the midst of being interviewed by two companies. The 2nd and 4th round respectively. If they fail, I'll be sure to email, if I get in or don't.*

Work sessions and groups

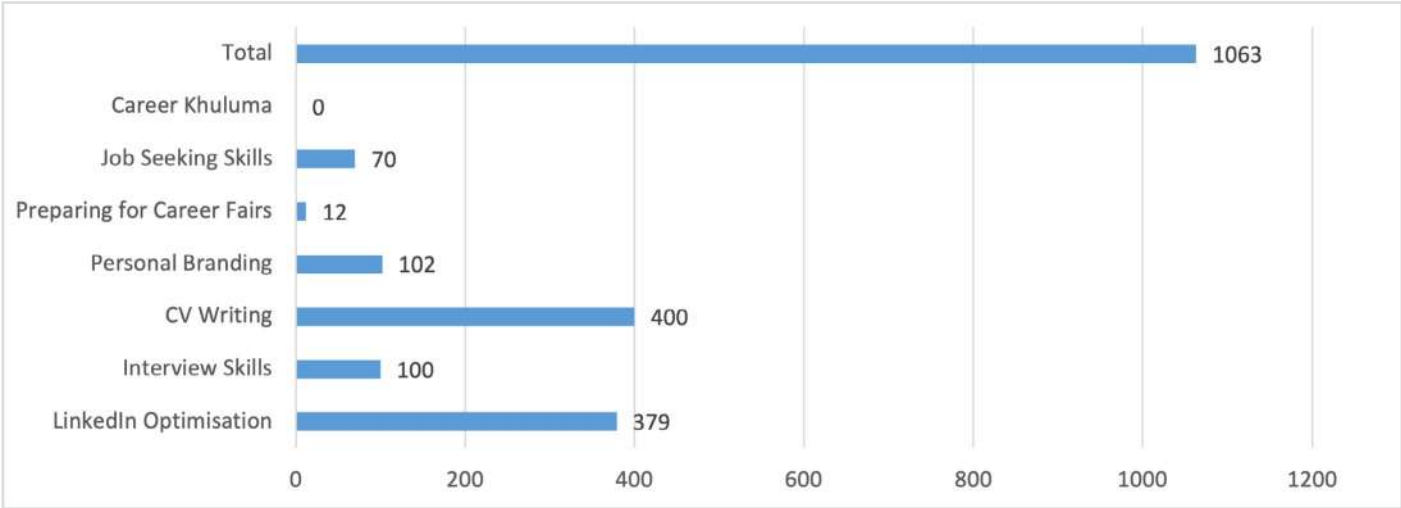


Figure 5: UGCS work sessions participants

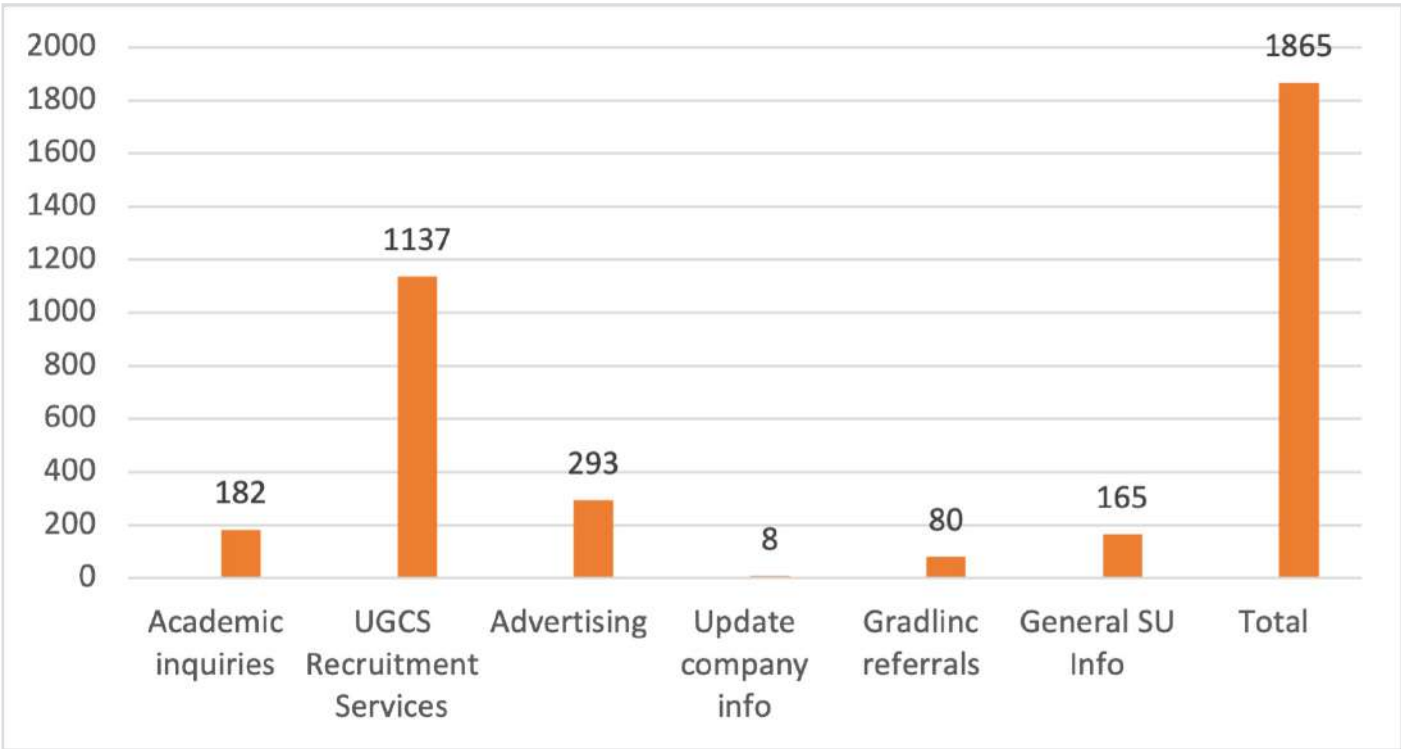


Figure 6: Student and employer enquiries via careerservices@sun.ac.za

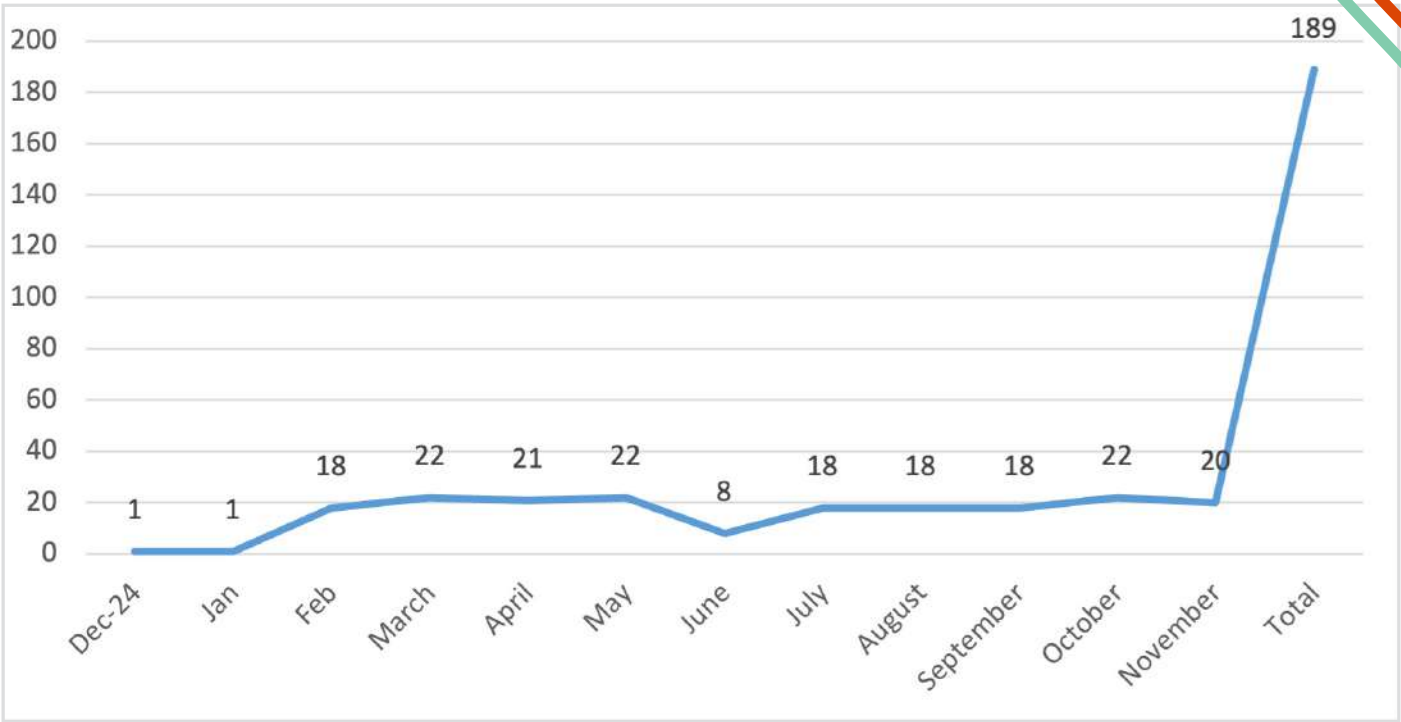


Figure 7: Number of jobs posted via Mailshots

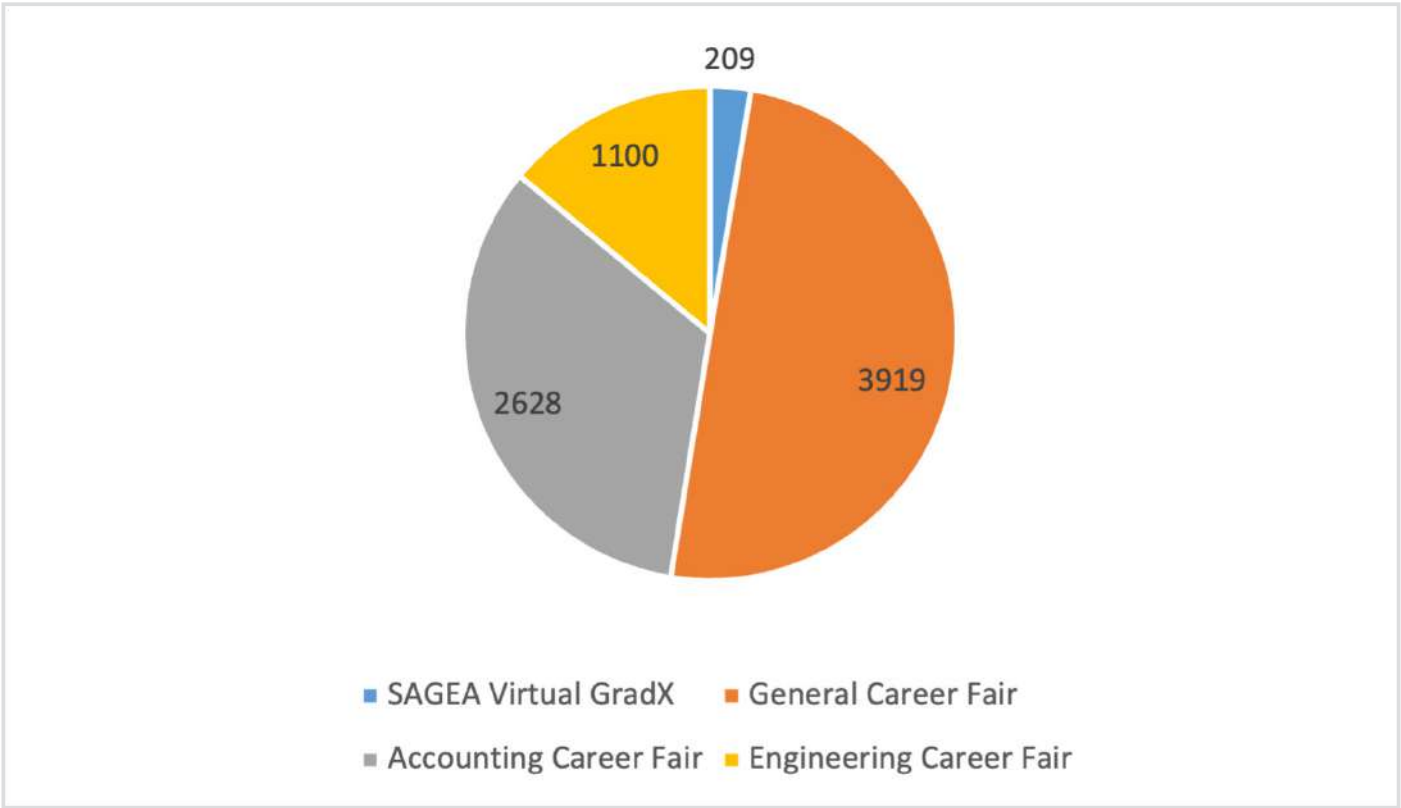


Figure 8: Career fairs registered SU students visits

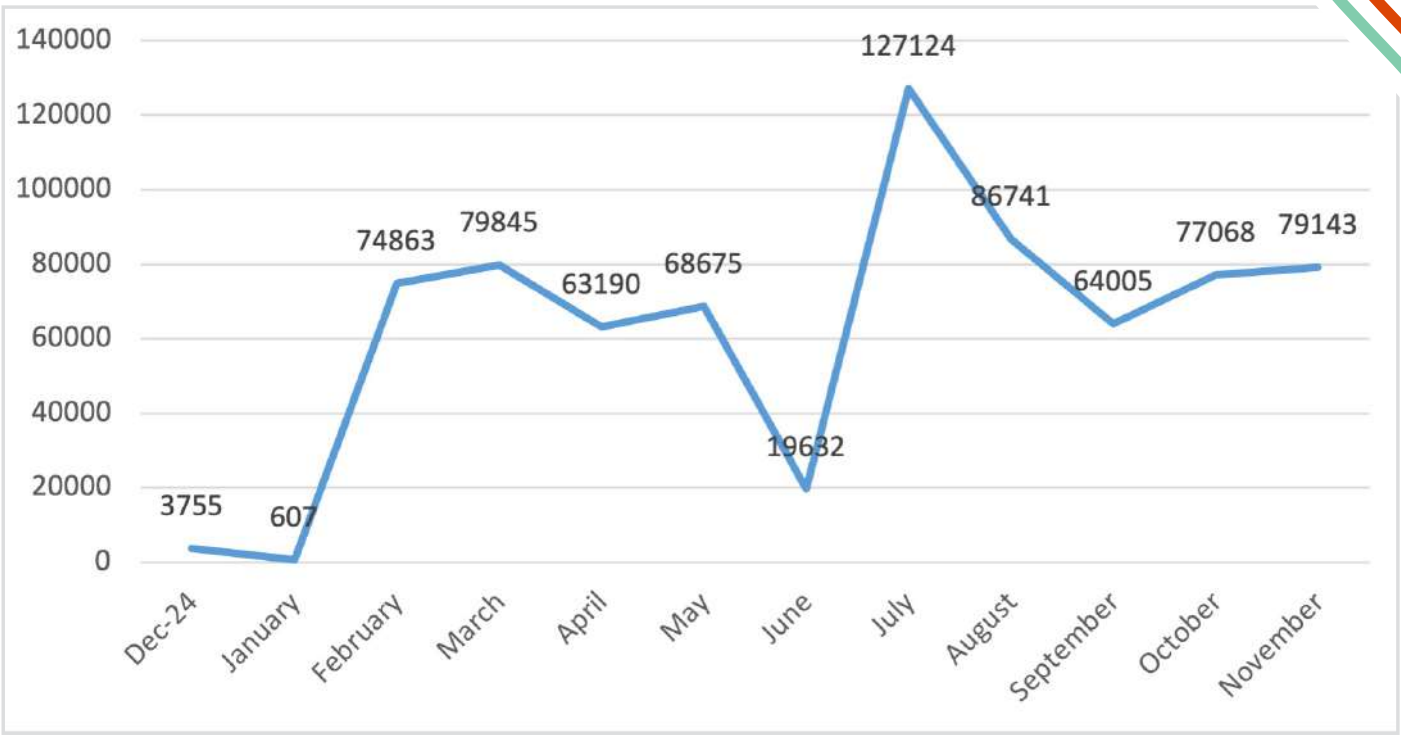


Figure 9: Students reached via Mailshots

Disability Unit (DU)

A reflection on the Unit's year



a) Achievements

Marcia Lyner-Cleophas was recognised for her disability inclusion work in higher education by the Higher Education Disability Services Association (HEDSA).

b) Interesting events

Seminar highlight: Inclusive practices in rural universities

We welcomed PhD student Bernard Matsoso, who presented his research on Inclusive Practices for Students with Disabilities in Rural South African Universities. The session brought together academics, students,

and advocates for disability inclusion, sparking rich dialogue around accessibility in underresourced and rural contexts. The principle of ubuntu underpinning disability inclusion was raised as a decolonised idea, going back to traditional notions of support to people with disabilities and being there for each other. Bernard Matsoso (second from left) with attendees at the presentation (image below).



Talk by South African Guide Dogs Association

The South African Guide Dogs Association inspired us with a heart-warming demonstration of their Guide, Mobility, and Autism Support Dogs. From their practical skills to the joy that they bring, these remarkable dogs empower individuals with independence, confidence, and companionship.

Four higher education disability services officers visit our Disability Unit services

During September, Sol Plaatje University, the University of Zululand, the Mangosothu University of Technology, and Rhodes University paid a benchmarking visit to our DU. They liked our integrated services and look forward to growing their disability support on their respective campuses.

c) General

Casual Day was interesting this year. Its theme, Beyond the Label, gave us a chance to see how inclusion works across the campus, focusing on universal access rather than specifically disability. Good practice examples were presented, from the Stellenbosch University Neurodiversity and Disability Society Committee to Campus Health and hearing about accessible learning technologies.

d) Lead with Disability @ Work and student programmes

The Lead with Disability @ Work sessions have been a great success so far this year. We have had the privilege of hosting a range of insightful speakers on key topics such as supporting students and staff with disabilities, navigating medical conditions in the workplace, disclosure, universal access, and the role of service dogs.

The conversations sparked during these sessions have deepened our understanding of the experiences and needs of individuals with disabilities on campus. The Student Programme was a great success as well. We had 96 students registered for the programme this year with 52 students who have successfully completed the programme.

e) Disability Unit Student Volunteer Programme

The Student Volunteer Programme was launched at the end of 2024 and continued into 2025. The programme comprises a dedicated group of students who are passionate about promoting disability inclusion and awareness on campus. Many of these volunteers have held leadership roles within student communities or aspire to become future leaders, while others have participated in the Lead with Disability Programme. Throughout the year, volunteers have played an essential role in the Unit's initiatives, from assisting with the Welcoming Programme, assisting with Casual Day, and engaging with parents during orientation. They have also provided hands-on support to students with disabilities, such as helping them to navigate busy campus roads and identifying accessible routes to classrooms.

Evaluation of services

- *Dear Ms Lenting, I would just like to thank you for all your efforts today. I truly appreciate the urgency and care that my issues have been dealt with.*
- *Dear Dr Saunderson. Thank you again for our session today. I really needed it, and it feels like we crossed paths just at the right time in my life. I am looking forward to chatting with you again.*
- *Dear Claudia. I just want to thank you again for your support and guidance. It played such a big part in my decisions and planning, as you helped me prioritize and realize I need to focus on and value my (many) strengths and not focus so much on my shortcomings.*
- *I cannot thank you enough Dr Saunderson*
- *Thank you for your time and all the effort in such an incredibly short time.*

Lead with Disability feedback

- *Thank you for the very informative and engaging series. It has been an incredibly enriching experience, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to learn from such a diverse group of speakers. The insights shared throughout the sessions have broadened my understanding and sparked meaningful reflection, both personally and professionally. I especially want to acknowledge the tremendous*

I leave this series with a greater appreciation for the issues explored, a deeper sense of connection to the broader community of practice, and renewed motivation to apply what I've learned.

amount of work that went into curating this series — the careful planning, coordination, and thoughtfulness were evident in every session. Each presentation contributed uniquely to the overall impact, and it was inspiring to see the depth of knowledge, passion, and commitment demonstrated by all involved. I leave this series with a greater appreciation for the issues explored, a deeper sense of connection to the broader community of practice, and renewed motivation to apply what I've learned.

- *One example of the impactful work of the Disability Unit is providing the Lead with Disability short course. It is an amazing opportunity, not only to receive education*

on disability awareness, it also teaches you important principles to take forward into any line of work such as the 7 Principles of Universal Design. It's a chance to develop your skill set in a 'non-academic' area which is very valuable to becoming a well-rounded person, student and job

applicant. Crucially, the programme is offered completely for free. For a student to gain such useful knowledge and get transcript recognition without any financial contribution is an immense privilege and makes great strides in making the course accessible to all students, including those who cannot afford to enrol in paid short courses. That is one of the features I admire most about the course and appreciate about the facilitators who give of their time with enthusiasm. I believe that this course is a great addition to the Stellenbosch University portfolio and I am proud to have completed it.

Work sessions and groups

- This year, the DU facilitated a range of disability inclusion and awareness-raising sessions, reaching 2260 students and 540 staff members. These sessions included engagements with students in faculties, residences, work sessions conducted at Den Bosch and online, and tailored training for staff across faculties and

support services. A significant milestone was introducing welcoming sessions into the faculty academic programme during welcoming. These activities have contributed to promoting a culture of inclusion on campus, and the Disability Unit looks forward to continuing and expanding these efforts in the coming year.

- Jacqueline Lenting conducted various scribe/reader/prompter training sessions during 2025 at both the Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campuses. Participants consisted of students, faculty student assistants, and internal and external SU staff members.
- Claudia Saunderson facilitated individual as well as peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring sessions for students with disabilities in her office. These individual and group sessions involved providing support and guiding students to navigate the social, academic, and emotional challenges of 'university life' while fostering resilience, agency, and personal wellbeing. These sessions furthermore focused on the following:
 - Adjustment challenges and a lack of a sense of belonging
 - Loneliness and social integration
 - Low motivation and lack of a sense of direction
- Luigia facilitated a number of workshops and training starting with the House Committee members for the Let's Talk sessions on universal access and disability awareness and then did the sessions with mentors. We then headed into Welcoming Week with faculty sessions for parents and students across eight faculties as well as our Welcoming orientation sessions that we facilitated as a Unit at Tygerberg Campus, the Arts and Social Sciences Building, and 43 Victoria Street. We wrapped up the year with training of our new student leaders through the MatiesLead Programme and the Senior Student Leadership Training.

Unit for Psychotherapeutic & Support Services

A reflection on the Unit's year



In 2025, the UPSS focused on enhancing student wellbeing through a strengthened brief-term therapy model, ensuring timely and effective psychological support. This approach improved accessibility and promoted resilience and academic success. Addition-

ally, staff wellness remained a priority with the continuation of the four-day work week, reinforcing the belief that a healthy team is vital for delivering quality care. Wellness days were actively used by staff for physical activities, reflected in notable achievements.

a) Achievements

In 2025, the UPSS continued to advance its mission of promoting mental health and well-being through strategic initiatives and collaborative engagement.

The Unit proudly welcomed Henri Cilliers as our second counselling psychology intern, alongside educational psychology interns and clinical pastoral counselling intern Debbie Abrokwaah. Additionally, eight fourth-year occupational therapy students completed rotations within the Unit, contributing meaningfully to mental wellness campaigns under the guidance of supervisor Beth Connolly. We also welcomed two industrial psychology interns this year. These programmes underscore our commitment

to fostering professional growth and preparing future practitioners for diverse student needs.

Visibility in student spaces remained a priority. Through workshops, presentations, and mental health campaigns, the UPSS actively partnered with residences, faculties, and student organisations. Between January and October 2025, these efforts directly reached more than 3 500 students, reinforcing our dedication to accessible, proactive mental health support.

These achievements reflect the UPSS's unwavering focus on resilience, growth, and holistic wellbeing across the University community. The table below summarises the Unit's student engagement and outreach activities.

Table 2: Student engagement and outreach activities

Type of Group or Support Activity	Total number of Students/ Participants or Sessions	Facilitators
Support & Skills groups	350	UPSS Therapists, Interns & Consultants
Big group presentations & workshops (min 10 & max 500 participants)	2276	UPSS Therapists
Crisis Support	300	Eric & Dean
After-hours Crisis support	619	ER24
OT & Pastoral Care	49 clients (totalling 258 sessions)	OT interns & 1 Theology Intern

An-Maree presented a reflection on the Group Art Therapy sessions that she facilitated during the first semester, and her presentation was selected as one of the best by attendees.

In June, we had the pleasure of meeting with two staff members from the Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique. They were on a benchmarking visit and are very impressed by the range of support services offered to students. We are looking forward to continued collaboration.

At the DSAf Research Morning, Dr Annadie Krygsman presented the findings from the first CSCD Student Satisfaction Survey. This was a significant milestone in the Centre, evaluating how students experienced our services across all units.

b) Interesting events

The Southern African Association for Counselling and Development in Higher Education Western Cape regional quarterly meetings exceeded expectations as each host institution presented attendees with impactful and experiential opportunities to learn. We learnt about big data analytics (and not to be scared), best practice and application of the Sexual Offences and Related Matters (SORMA) legislation, indigenous support, and empowering students through guidance on ancestral

calling and caring for the carer through wellbeing zones where we painted, beaded played board games, played the drums, and connected with each other.

All staff had the opportunity to attend very impactful

SU values in action workshops. These experiential workshops encouraged staff from different areas of the institution to work towards applying the core values in thoughtful and practical ways.

Several staff attended the University of the Western Cape Mental Health and Wellbeing Colloquium 2025 with the theme Building Resilient Campuses: Advancing Mental Well-Being Through Inclusivity, Innovation, and Collaboration. An-Maree presented a reflection on the Group Art Therapy sessions that she facilitated during the first semester, and her presentation was selected as one of the best by attendees.

c) Partnerships and networking opportunities

We continue to collaborate with and nurture our relationships with both internal and external partners. We will continue inviting and hosting interns from the Industrial Psychology Department, the Occupational Therapy Department, and Theology. This year, our Crisis Support team of Eric Horn and Dean Bailey facilitated Crisis Management training sessions with staff from the Library

Services and the Deputy Registrar: Academic Administrations staff that were very well received and continued refresher training has been requested. We continue to rely on the support of the team of doctors at Campus Health with pro bono referrals. We continue to work with our colleagues in the Dell Young Leaders Programme and look forward to participating in future selections activities. Our relationships with Stellenbosch Hospital and the Thuthuzela Centre continue to be positive and professional. This year, we acquired the services of a registered art therapist as a consultant. Gillian Lourenco facilitated two art therapy groups, and this offering will continue at the Stellenbosch Campus in 2026.

Personalia

Belinda Fredericks became a grandmother for the first time with the birth of her grandson in April 2025! She posts frequently and clearly adores him. We welcomed Sinesipho Jenkins to our team on 1 August 2025 as our second registered counsellor. She has already become a very valued member of the CSCD team!

Evaluation of services

Students provided feedback after participating in either a skills or support group processes. Students were asked to describe or identify what was useful or what they had learnt.

Feedback received from participants in the art therapy groups was as follows:

- *The platform to be, create, share burdens, grow and learn from different experiences. It was a safe space and such a therapeutic space to be in. The reflective space helped my busy, wandering mind.*
- *Learning that I am not alone and can relate to many other people. Truly listening to others and seeing that within the diversity we have many commonalities.*
- *It was an escape for me from the hecticness and the mundaneness of everyday. It was a gift to myself to show up.*
- *Art Therapy enabled playful self-exploration.*
- *I experienced myself as being accepted by the group.*
- *I think these group therapy sessions should be advertised more to the students as I believe not a lot know about them and they could benefit from these sessions.*

Examples of artworks created during the art therapy sessions are shown on the next page.



Feedback from the Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE) groups was as follows:

- *More relaxed feelings, increased calmness. Increased awareness of the body and reactions within the body, feeling a sense of relief and improved sleeping patterns.*
- *Initially group members felt “weird” experiencing the bodily reactions but later became used to it and focused more on the positive effects and not resisting how the body reacts.*
- *Some members also reported “pain relief”, which often accompanies anxiety, i.e., chest and muscle pains.*

Feedback from the anxiety and depression group was as follows:

- *Learning to reflect on my own feeling and gain greater insight into why I feel the way I do. Learn to play and let go. Definitely helped me with anxiety and stress.*
- *Feedback from the relationships group was as follows:*
- *Learning that I am not alone and can relate to many other people. Truly listening to others and seeing that within the diversity we have many commonalities.*

Groups

UPSS staff created a broad selection of skills and support group offerings throughout the year. Registration numbers for groups suggest a strong initial interest in the groups. While this shows promise, we have

to consider barriers to attendance and strategies to enhance engagement. More than 350 students participated in one of the groups offered. The table below provides a summary of the groups offered.

Table 3: Staff & intern facilitated student groups

Group Name & Facilitator	Summary
Anxiety and Depression Group (Vastrohiette Gilbert, Alene Smith and Lamees Allie)	Provides practical coping strategies in a safe space for managing anxiety and depression.
Breathing Space (Nordlind Fouché)	Mindfulness techniques to reduce stress and improve emotional regulation.
Building Relationships Group (Eugene Booysen)	Focuses on healthy communication, boundaries, and emotional connection.

Trauma Releasing Exercises (TRE) Group (Carmen Balie)	Offers body-based exercises to release stress and trauma through natural tremors.
Resilience and Wellness Group (Tracey Delpont-Williams)	Helps participants understand emotions and break free from unhelpful behaviours for lasting change.
Group Therapy with Art (An-Maree Nel)	Creative expression to process emotions and connect with others.
Art Therapy (Gillian Lourenco)	Use of art materials to manage stress, anxiety, and depression.
Emotion Regulation Group (Tracey Delpont-Williams)	Teach participants to identify, express, and manage emotions in healthier ways.
Co-existing with Loss Group (Sinazo Nyembezi & Nontozamo Tsetse)	Safe, nonjudgmental space for navigating personal loss.
Social Skills Training Group (Carmen Balie)	Build confidence and comfort in group settings through social skills.
Various Skills Training Groups (Occupational Therapy students)	Wellness through Occupational Balance, The Calm Collective, Regulate and Recharge & Balance & Beyond.

General CSCD Information



Staff at 37 Victoria Street

At the Centre, we believe in a consultative management approach. The Director manages the Centre, along with the Deputy Director and the Management Committee. The Committee consists of the heads of the four units, a senior psychologist from the

UPSS, as well as the SU SSI coordinator: student advice. The Management Committee assists the Director with strategic planning throughout the year as well as revising and realigning objectives, where necessary. Thank you for your input throughout the year!

Centre for Student Counselling and Development total statistics

Disability Unit Resource Office

During 2025, the DU Resource Office rendered services to 86 students (78 undergraduates and 8 postgraduates), as shown in Fig. 10 below. Six students are blind, 21 are partially sighted, and 57 received support for learning disabilities.

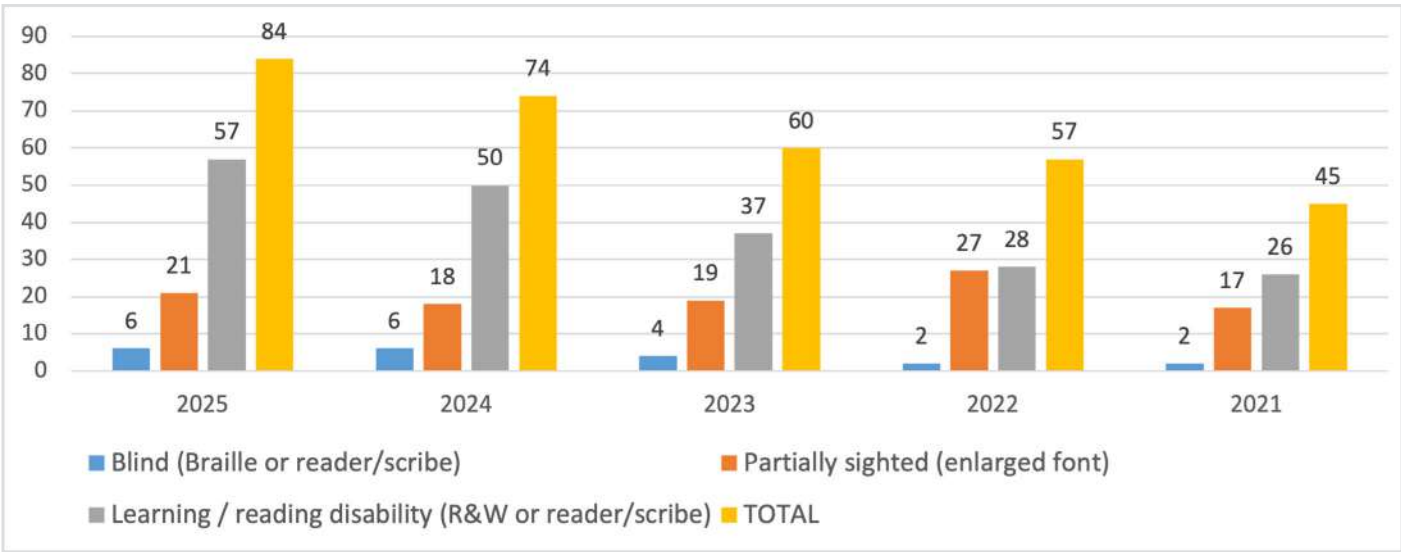


Figure 10: Distribution of disabilities for services rendered (2021-2025)

The undergraduate distribution per faculty is presented in Fig. 11 below. Arts and Social Sciences (35), Law (1), Economic and Management Sciences (14), Engineering (6), Education (7), Health Science (3), AgriScience (7) and Natural Sciences (5).

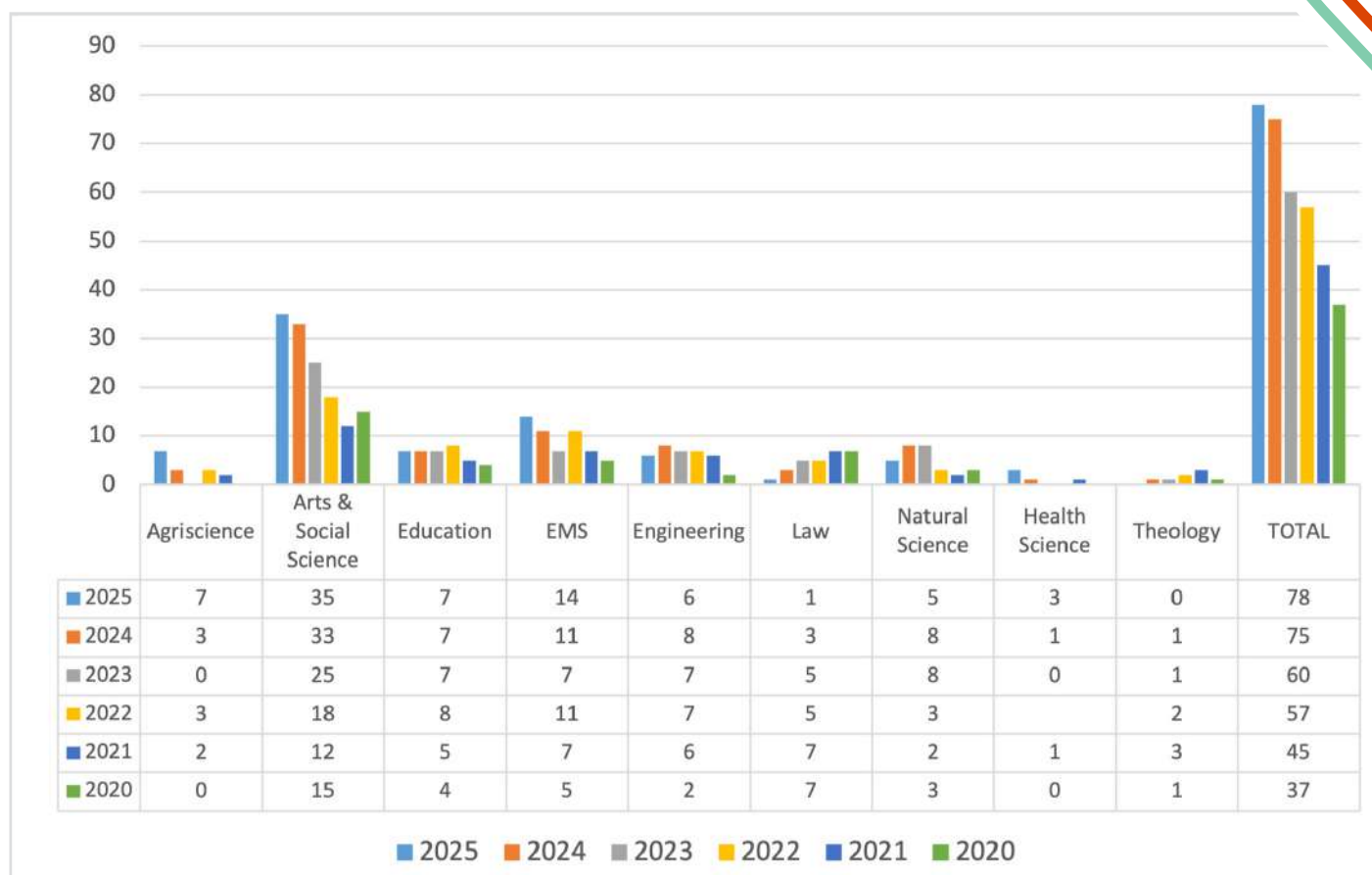


Figure 11: Number of undergraduate students per faculty (2020-2025)

The eight postgraduate candidates are registered for the following programs: PGCE (FET) Teacher Education (1), PGDip Accounting (1), BEd Hons (1), BA Hons Sociology (1), BA Hons History (1), BSc Hons High Performance Sport (1), MMus (1) and Spec Student Doctoral Prep EMS (1).

Table 4: Number of sessions per CSCD units

DU	752
UACD	3451
UGCS	82
UPSS	87 56
Grand Total	13 041

Table 5: Number of sessions per Gender

Female	3 314
Male	1 557
Other	38
Grand Total	4 909

Table 6: Number of sessions per Faculty

AgriSciences	559
Arts And Social Sciences	2 165
Economic and Management Sciences	1 701
Education	753
Engineering	978
Law	367
Medicine And Health Sciences	1 353
Science	1 415
Theology	383
Blank	377
Grand Total	10 051

Table 7: Number of sessions per population group

Asian	74
Black	5 974
Coloured	2 489
Indian	406
White	2 882

Withheld	396
Blank	335
Grand Total	12556

Table 8: Number of sessions per campus

Business School	86
Elsenburg	5
Stellenbosch Campus	2 265
Tygerberg Campus	298
Unknown	14
Blank	872
Grand Total	3 540

Research and personal development of staff

a) Training

- Perryn Richardson (June 2025). Presentation: Neurodiversity, common support needs, and handling guidelines.
- Dr Marcia Lyner-Cleophas: Critical Diversity Literacy Course (pilot) and facilitator.
- Dr Claudia Saunderson: Full Scholarship Award-Training Course — Building Racial Equity: This foundational course explains racial justice values and vision, defines key concepts of racial justice and racism, and emphasises opportunities to challenge and change institutional racial inequities.
- Lefu Kumeke: SUNStudent training. Learnt useful features such as SUNStudent navigation, and viewing students' information concession statistics.
- Luigia Nicholas: First Aid Level 1 training and intermediate Excel course.

b) Conferences attended

- **Lauren Schilder** attended the BrainWorking Recursive Therapy (BWRT) Level 1 practitioner training from 14 to 16 February. She shared that she had thoroughly enjoyed the experience,

particularly the opportunity to connect with and learn from other practitioners in the field. The training provided a safe and supportive environment for open discussions, while the expert-led sessions and client case studies offered a strong foundation for experiential learning.

- **Marcia Lyner-Cleophas** and **Jacqueline Lenting** attended the HEDSA rebranding summit and HEDSA biennial conference in KwaZulu-Natal in March.
- **Luigia Nicholas, Charl Davids, Hestia Kotzé, Elmien Sinclair, Christa Koch, Annadie Krygsman** attended the DSAf Transformation Indaba on 15 May.
- Colleagues from the CSCD representing various facets of the CSCD, namely the UACD (**Liezl Kloppe, Ntombifuthi Maduna**, and **Lauren Schilder**), the UPSS (**Eugene Booysen, Sinazo Nyembezi**, and **Nontozamo Tsetse**), CSCD Crisis Services (**Eric Horn**), and CSCD researcher coordinator **Annie Krygsman** all attended the Higher Education Mental Health Seminar: Neurodiversity and Disability on 18 July, hosted at the University of the Western Cape. This seminar, facilitated by the Human Resources departments across the University of the Western Cape, the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Northlink College, and SU, provided a collaborative platform to explore current practices and challenges in supporting neurodiverse staff and students in higher education. The content deepened understanding of inclusive frameworks and reasonable accommodation within academic environments, which directly informs the psychosocial support provided to our accommodations in academic environments, which in turn directly informs the psychosocial support that we provide to staff and students.
- **Luigia Nicholas** attended the Brand Implementers Workshop on 9 September.
- **Charl Davids** attended the SAACDHE conference from 15 to 17 September in Polokwane. The theme of his presentation was Through Their Eyes: Student Perceptions of Service Delivery at a Counselling and Development Centre.
- **Claudia Saunderson** attended the International Conference on Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (ICOEHSS-25) from 25 to 26 September in Brussels, Belgium.
- **Marcia Lyner-Cleophas, Lizelle Apollis, Luigia Nicholas**, and **Jacky Lenting** delivered a presentation at the SU Transformation Indaba on 9 October. The theme of their presentation was Universal Access at SU — A Transformative Enabler for Inclusive Practices. **Charl Davids, Melanie Willems, Elmien Sinclair** and **Hestia Kotzé** also attended the Indaba.

- **Erna Gerryts, Liezl Kloppe, Elmien Sinclair, Ntombifuthi Maduna, and Lauren Schilder** successfully completed the Academic Advising Professional Development training and are now accredited academic advisors, further strengthening the UACD's capacity to support student success across faculties.
- **All CSCD psychologist staff** successfully completed the Option C Psychology CPD Well programme, ensuring ongoing professional development and full compliance as registered healthcare professionals.
- Colleagues from the CSCD also attended the Centre for Student Life and Learning staff development workshop with the theme AI and Student Affairs, a half-day workshop exploring ways to incorporate artificial intelligence into our work. Attending the workshop were **Hestia Kotzé, Annadie Krygsman, An-Maree Nel, Vastrohiette Gilbert, Eugene Booysen, Sinazo Nyembezi, Nontozamo Tsetse, Ntombifuthi Maduna, and Lauren Schilder.**
- **Christa Koch** and **Charl Davids** attended the 2025 SoTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning) Conference with this year's theme focusing on Language and Academic Literacies in Teaching-Learning-Assessment: Concepts and Practices.
- **Eugene Booysen** and **Lizzie Witbooi** attended the BWRT Level 1 practitioner training in February and then attended

the BWRT Africa Congress 2025 in September. Both Eugene and Lizzie are avid users of these techniques, and their clients have experienced the benefits.

- **Charl Davids, Marcia Lyner-Cleophas, Jacky Lenting, and Elmien Sinclair** attended the Health and Wellbeing Strategic Workshop.

c) Publications

- Mji, G., Kahonde, C., **Lyner-Cleophas, M.**, Edusei, A., Munthali, A., & Lane, H. (2025). AfriNEAD conferences. In Mji, G. (Ed.). *Doing disability research in Africa. Reflections from the African Network for Evidence-to-Action in Disability* (pp. 75-120). Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-98549-2>
- Our annual publication, the Graduate Recruitment Booklet, compiled by **Wilna Naudé**, with inputs from **Marquard Timmey** and **Thobeka Msi**, was well received by students and staff. We limited the print run as more students prefer the digital version of the booklet. As per usual, we look forward to publishing the results of the December 2025 and March 2026 Graduate Destination Survey in partnership with the Centre for Business Intelligence.
- **Nicholas, L., Lyner-Cleophas, M., & Letlonkane, K.** (2025). *Lead with Disability: Disability inclusion is everyone's business at*

Stellenbosch University. NASPA (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) (in press).

- **Dauids, C., & Sinclair, E.** (2025). *Student success and mental health: What comes first? A South African university's perspective*. NASPA (in press).
- **Dauids, C.** (2025). *Staff wellness powers student success: A 4-day work week for*

university counselling centres. NASPA (in press).

- **Lyner-Cleophas, M., Apollis, L., & Apollis, Q.** (2025). Koinonia — How inclusive are South Africans in places of worship? In Amenyedzi, B. (Ed.). *Let the digital doors open!* (pp. 130–141). Generis Publishing. <https://limewire.com/d/RiLL3#BqEf7KRE7j>

Committee involvement (within Stellenbosch University and externally)

- Jacqueline Lenting is the HEDSA regional chairperson (Western Cape). Two regional meetings were held this year. In June 2025, the theme of the meeting was Neurodiversity and the guest speaker was educational psychologist Lauren Dace. Personal lived experiences were also shared by a parent of a student in higher education with autism spectrum disorder and bilateral hearing impairment. In October 2025, the meeting focused on A Calling Versus a Disability. Guest speakers were Dr Shaheeda Jansen, clinical psychologist and Deputy Director: Academic and Technology Support (UNISA Parow), and Simthandile Faku, therapist and spiritual advisor from the University of the Western Cape
- Institutional Transformation Committee — a committee reporting to the SU Executive (Marcia Lyner-Cleophas)
- Welcoming Committee, SU (Melanie Willems, Luigia Nicholas)
- Corporate Communication and Marketing Division (Luigia Nicholas)
- DSAf Transformation Forum (Luigia Nicholas)
- Wellbeing Workshop Subcommittee (Luigia Nicholas)
- Wellbeing ambassador (Luigia Nicholas)
- Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee (Luigia Nicholas)
- CSCD practitioners actively served on the Readmission Appeals Committees (RACs) of the respective faculties during the 2024/2025 readmission period, providing expert input on student support needs and contributing to fair and informed decision-making processes

- Assessment Concessions Committee (Christa Koch, Erna Gerryts, and Liezl Kloppe)
- Steering Committee for ECP initiatives, contributing their expertise to guide strategic planning and implementation of student support programmes (Liezl Kloppe, Lauren Schilder, and Elmien Sinclair)
- Institutional Student Success Steering Committee (Elmien Sinclair)
- Planning Committee for the Student Success Summit, scheduled to be hosted at SU on 20 February 2026, contributing to the design and coordination of the event (Elmien Sinclair and Christa Koch)
- Western Cape regional chair of the SAACDHE, providing leadership and fostering collaboration among higher education development professionals in the region (Elmien Sinclair)
- Western Cape regional administrative coordinator of the SAACDHE (Lizzie Witbooi)
- President of the National Executive Committee of the SAACDHE (Charl Davids)
- Training of Student Leaders (Thobeka Msi)
- Student Affairs Selection Committee (Thobeka Msi)
- DSAf Health and Safety Committee (Jan-Hendrik Meyer)
- Advisory Committee for Tygerberg Student Affairs (An-Maree Nel and Lynn April)
- Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Undergraduate Student Health Committee (An-Maree Nel)
- DSAf Transformation Forum (Sinazo Nyembezi and Charl Davids)
- Food security committee (Sinazo Nyembezi)
- SU Institutional Committee for Staff and Wellbeing (Charl Davids)
- SU Action Group for a Respectful, Safe and Inclusive Workplace (Charl Davids)

Internships and interdisciplinary training

d) Educational and Counselling Psychology Internship programmes

In 2025, the CSCD hosted both educational and counselling psychology interns, providing a rich and diverse training environment.

Educational Psychology Internship

Programme: Three interns were appointed: two from the University of Pretoria and one from SU. A significant milestone this year was the HPCSA site visit, which resulted in

accreditation of the Educational Psychology Internship Programme. This accreditation increases the internship's appeal, reduces administrative load, and attracts students from institutions across South Africa.

Counselling Psychology Internship Programme: The year 2025 marked the second year of the Counselling Psychology

Internship Programme. Although the CSCD had previously been evaluated for accreditation, formal HPCSA approval was only received at the start of the year. Henri Cilliers, a master's student from Rhodes University, successfully completed his internship with distinction.

Internship duties (for both programmes):

- Providing individual therapy and academic counselling to registered students.
- Facilitating work sessions.
- Completing a psychometry block.
- Participating in career counselling
- community outreach and volunteering for WOW (Worlds of Work) projects.
- Providing services at AF Louw Primary School (educational psychology interns: two days per week; counselling psychology intern: one day per week).

The interns made a meaningful contribution to CSCD services, supporting both individual student needs and broader community initiatives. Their work strengthened the Centre's capacity and enhanced the quality and scope of the services offered.

Internship reflection

My internship at the CSCD has been a highly enriching and formative experience in my journey to becoming an educational psychologist. During the year, I engaged in a variety of activities, including conducting career assessments, facilitating CSCD and ECP work sessions, and seeing students for individual sessions. I also spent time at AF Louw Primary, which allowed me to work directly with learners in a school setting and gain insight into their learning and emotional needs. A significant moment during my internship was participating in the Paarl Career Project, where we worked with Grade 11 learners on career counselling. This experience allowed me to apply

my skills in career assessment and guidance in a meaningful way, supporting learners to explore their strengths and potential pathways. It was both rewarding and motivating to see the learners engage actively and reflect on their futures. Another highlight was serving as a WOW-fees presenter, where I presented in front of 360 Grade 11 learners from various schools. This opportunity helped me develop my public speaking skills and confidence in engaging in large groups. The support and supervision I received throughout my internship were invaluable. My supervisors and clinical mentor provided consistent guidance, constructive feedback, and encouragement, which helped me grow in confidence and develop my professional skills. Additionally, the welcoming and supportive environment at the CSCD greatly enhanced my experience. The staff were approachable, kind, and always willing to assist, making it easier to learn, ask questions, and develop as a professional. Overall, my internship at the CSCD provided a supportive and engaging learning environment where I could refine my assessment and intervention skills, grow in confidence, and become a more reflective and compassionate educational psychology intern.

– Gaylynn Ockhuis

I reflect on my experience this year with deep gratitude. The staff at the CSCD have modelled a genuine culture of care, both for the student body they serve and for one another as colleagues. Their professionalism, compassion, and collaboration have shaped my understanding of what it means to work in an environment that truly promotes wellbeing. The team's diverse areas of specialisation and extensive experience have provided a rich foundation for learning. I have deeply appreciated their generosity in sharing their knowledge, their guidance in refining my professional skills, and their encouragement in fostering my development as a reflective practitioner. Through their mentorship, I have gained confidence in working with individuals from diverse backgrounds and in integrating and applying theory to practice as an educational psychologist.

– Laura Swart

My internship at the CSCD provided a truly conducive environment for both personal and professional growth. At the start of the year, I stepped in with many expectations — all of which were surpassed. The CSCD fosters a balance between independence and support, allowing interns to develop their own professional identity while receiving kind and consistent guidance.

We gained a wide range of experience, stretching from channelling our inner child while supporting Grade R learners to being challenged in guiding young adults on their journey of becoming. All the while, the CSCD offered a healthy balance that allowed me to manage my responsibilities and even plan my upcoming wedding in December 2025. From the leadership and supervisors to the administrative staff, everyone welcomed us with genuine warmth and encouragement. I am deeply grateful for the invaluable experience and opportunities that the CSCD provided in shaping me into an educational psychologist.

– Deoné van der Merwe

The counselling psychology internship programme at the CSCD provided a wide range of experiences that have stretched my exposure and competencies across many domains of psychological practice. Through ample supervision, I have been guided in providing a service that meets the standards of best practice, while being encouraged to develop and trust my own identity as a practitioner. I have been afforded the space to reach out to a multidisciplinary team who have been greatly supportive of my progress and invaluable in helping me maintain ethical standards. The year has presented many challenges to overcome, and there have always been spaces with colleagues and supervisors where I have been met with encouragement, support, and a strong advocacy for self-care.

– Henri Cilliers

e) Interdisciplinary training

In 2023, the CSCD established partnerships with three academic departments whereby we offer their students an opportunity to gain practical experience by doing an internship or clinical rotation at the CSCD. Since then, these collaborations have added value to the services of the CSCD — strengthening our capacity while also extending our scope of services.

Since 2023, the CSCD has hosted a total of 24 final-year Occupational Therapy (OT) students (two each term) for their mental health rotation. In 2025, we once again

enjoyed highly successful placements. Thank you to the supervision provided by Ms Beth Conolly, their external OT supervisor. The OT students brought valuable skills, creativity, and enthusiasm to their work at the Centre. During the year, they conducted 78 sessions with 14 clients, facilitated four engaging mental health campaigns, developed infographics on a variety of relevant topics, managed the CSCD Instagram account, and compiled weekly newsletters to keep staff informed of their activities.

In 2025, Deborah Abrokwaah completed 200 hours at the Centre as clinical pastoral counsellor intern. She formed an integral part of our service and provided support to 35 students through 180 counselling sessions.

Two industrial psychology interns were placed at the Centre to gain experience working with students from a therapeutic framework — they were supervised by Eugene Booysen during 2025. The interns, Nick Beere and Chrisley Marshall, participated in biweekly group supervision sessions during which cases were discussed within the scope of their practice. This collaborative effort enhanced the interns' professional development and enriched the therapeutic environment for the students.

By integrating diverse perspectives from the field of industrial psychology, the CSCD aimed to provide more comprehensive support tailored to the unique needs of each person. As a registered clinical psychologist and supervisor, Mr Booysen observed that this unique experience of supervision at the CSCD not only deepened the interns' understanding of various psychological challenges but also enhanced their ability to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. Furthermore, it prepared them to address future challenges in the mental health field within professional environments. This increased confidence was evident in their interactions with clients and colleagues alike.

The following extracts are feedback from the interns:

During my case exposure, I encountered a diverse range of cases involving adjustment, career, and academic issues, as well as anxiety, stress, suspected psychopathy, and various personality traits. The supervision provided by the CSCD was essential to my learning and professional development, which appeared to grant us an advantage over other interns in my cohort.

– Nick Beere

During counselling sessions at the CSCD, I gained valuable experience engaging with clients facing diverse emotional, academic, and personal challenges. Through regular supervision, I deepened my understanding and insight into professional boundaries, transference and countertransference, as well as the importance of practitioner self-care. As an IOP intern, I would not have experienced the therapeutic processes as practically as I did without the CSCD. I would highly recommend that other interns gain similar exposure to ensure they are equipped to manage distressed, disengaged, or demotivated individuals effectively.

– Chrisley Marshall

A reflection on the Centre for Student Counselling and Development's involvement in the readmission process

The CSCD plays a pivotal role in supporting students through the readmission process. This process is designed not to be punitive but to serve each student's best interests and foster academic success. It encourages critical reflection on academic challenges and motivates students to engage with available support services.

In the 2025 academic year, SU received a total of 1 330 readmission applications across nine faculties (excluding Military Science), reflecting a 4.07% increase from 2024.

The RACs referred 37 students to the CSCD, categorised as follows:

- **Deferred decisions (21 students):** Referred to obtain further information before a final decision. These cases primarily required updates on students' current mental health status or whether challenges had been addressed.
- **Successful readmission — urgent support (3 students):** Referred by the faculties of Economic and Management Sciences and Education for urgent intervention and support.
- **Denied readmission — emotional support (14 students):** Mostly from the faculties of Economic and Management Sciences and Science. The CSCD provided emotional support and, in some cases, conveyed the RAC decision to students at risk of mental health crises.

Beyond formal referrals, the CSCD provided support to students who approached the Centre independently, including issuing practitioner reports, advising on readmission processes, and assisting students whose readmission had been denied.

Challenges in the 2024/2025 cycle

CSCD representatives noted several obstacles, largely arising from systemic inefficiencies and limited collaboration:

- **Lack of stakeholder consultation:** The Registrar's Division implemented changes to the online system and readmission codes without consulting the CSCD or RAC members, causing misalignment and tracking issues.
- **Support service disruption:** Stakeholders were informed only on 23 December 2024 that students had received exclusion letters directing them to the CSCD. Staff were on 'soft leave' until 2 January 2025, and the ER24 24-hour crisis helpline was not included.
- **Technical challenges:** Glitches in the online readmission system led to incomplete applications, submission failures, and navigation difficulties, which delayed processing and disadvantaged vulnerable students.
- **Lack of transparency:** Many faculties do not disclose reasons for nonreadmission, placing an unfair burden on the CSCD to guide students without clear information.
- **Ineffectiveness of the C1-Code:** The C1 condition, requiring students to access support services, is largely ineffective as engagement cannot be enforced and consequences for noncompliance are unclear.

Recommendations to the Registrar

To enhance the student-centred nature of the readmission process, the CSCD recommends the following:

- **Mandatory stakeholder consultation:** Include faculties, academic advisors, and student support services in system changes.
- **Improved system functionality:** Resolve technical issues and ensure a user-friendly interface.
- **Clearer communication and feedback:** Require faculties to provide at least general reasons for nonreadmission to support student reflection and planning.
- **Financial aid integration:** Establish clear pathways for students experiencing financial hardship to access support before readmission challenges arise.
- **Post-readmission debriefing:** Implement structured meetings for committees to review and improve the process after each cycle.

Conclusion

SU's readmission process has the potential to support student success, but recent changes have introduced significant obstacles. The lack of consultation, system inefficiencies, and limited transparency have weakened its effectiveness. A more collaborative and

structured approach — through improved communication, functional systems, and integrated support mechanisms — will better uphold the University's commitment to student success and wellbeing.

A reflection on test and examination concessions

f) A reflection of assessment concessions 2025 — SUNStudent portal

In the beginning of 2025, students had the option as soon as they registered to apply for assessment concessions on the SUNStudent portal. As the assessment concessions capability moved fully to the SUNStudent portal, the DU was very busy with enquiries from students and parents on how to apply for concessions on SUNStudent. Systems challenges were still being experienced on the eve of our having to complete the assessment concessions applications. Students were already starting class tests, and the Assessment Team had to work closely with the faculty contact persons to support students while simultaneously dealing with the SUNStudent Team to resolve challenges. All students were referred to the Assessment section on the SU website where they could find the relevant practitioner's form and manual on how to raise a request for assessment concessions.

For 2025, students had two opportunities to apply for assessment concessions. For the first semester, the SUNStudent portal opened on 13 January 2025 and closed on 21 February 2025. For the second semester, the SUNStudent portal opened on 21 July 2025 and closed on 1 August 2025. The DU received a new email address for concessions enquiries, which is concessions@sun.ac.za.

The DU faced a few challenges during the year regarding assessment concessions. While we were busy managing the email enquiries from concessions@sun.ac.za, the following enquiries were received: first-year students enquired about how to apply for concessions, and technical issues around submitting/raising a service request for concessions were noted. If they forgot to submit their practitioner's report or medical documentation, they could not go back in the service request to make changes. Senior students enquired about the need to apply again. In the new system, an end date now denotes the time when your concessions end. No annual updated concession letters are

When a student transfer to a new programme the concessions on SUNStudent do not transfer to the new programme.

emailed to students after registration as their assessment concession letters remain on their SUNStudent portal while they are a student.

Other technical issues that we discovered is that if a student's circumstances changed and they needed to apply again for a change in their concessions, or they transferred from one programme to another programme, the previous concession had to be closed manually in order for a new request to be raised. Currently, the new system does not allow two or more service requests for concessions to be simultaneously open. Another challenge was the changing of academic programmes. When a student transfer to a new programme the concessions on SUNStudent do not transfer to the new programme. This results in students' concessions not showing on the Exam Concessions Report (ECR) — this report is viewed by the various subject departments and the Assessment Office. The previous service request must be closed, a new request must be raised, and concession types must be allocated before the new concessions could be approved for the correct letter with updated faculty or programme to display correctly. This workaround the system remains laborious and a problem for students and their

departments when concessions do not show up on the ECR.

During this time, we also had to test previous issues on SUNStudent, with the SUNStudent Team to determine whether all the issues had been resolved. Weekly testing sessions were done and logging of tickets (issues) and follow-ups daily until issues were resolved. While working on a new SUNStudent system, we had to receive access to different functionalities on SUNStudent to be able to work properly. Ongoing training and determining how the system worked took place.

After the Assessment Concessions Committee had deliberated about each application, the approved concessions were captured on the SUNStudent system. After approval of the concessions, an assessment concession letter was generated on the SUNStudent portal. Simultaneously, the approved concessions reflected on the active ECR under Analytics on SUNStudent.

The DU worked with partners such as SUNStudent Support Centre (SSSC), Serosoft, and Information Technology to be able to load the concession types and to be able to approve the concessions on the SUNStudent portal as some of the programmes/modules were not mapped on SUNStudent. Numerous tickets were logged with the issues and meetings were held to resolve this issue as students were waiting for the approved assessment concession letters on SUNStudent, as they started with A1 assessments.

Another challenge was that not all concessions migrated to SUNStudent. Many students with disabilities emailed skryftyd@sun.ac.za and concessions@sun.ac.za as they did not find their assessment concession letters for 2025 on SUNStudent. These issues had to be logged to the Information Technology service desk and tickets were created for SSSC to resolve.

During the May/June 2025 A1 as well as the October/November 2025 A2 assessment period, some students with approved concessions could not see their examination timetable with the correct assessment venues. The DU had to confirm students' assessment concessions for the Assessment Office to allocate these affected students to the correct venues. The students' approved assessment concessions were not reflecting on the active ECR under Analytics on SUNStudent. Tickets with these issues were logged, and twice-a-week stand-up meetings for assessment concessions and assessment management were implemented to resolve these issues.

g) What worked well this past year

After the relevant access had been provided on SUNStudent, we had access to all the concession information of students. This made it easier to answer all the concession enquiries and provide the students with their concession letters.

During the year, the DU hosted a few scribe, reader, and prompter training sessions for different faculties. These trained scribes, readers, and prompters were placed on a

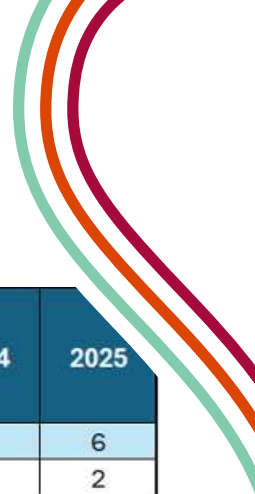
database, which worked well during the semester when new students required scribes, readers, and prompters. Emergency concessions were identified for which scribes were needed too. The Assessment Office and the various departments could work from this database of trained scribes. The Assessment Concessions Team received a dedicated SSSC staff member to assist with the technical difficulties on SUNStudent, which was a convenient support to navigate the challenges during the year.

h) How does this look going forward for the next year?

As from next year when a student applies for concessions, they will receive a notification email that we received the application and on SUNStudent they will see that it is under review until they can see the final outcome of the request. The notification email after approval still needs to be approved by the Solutions Committee for enhancement. We also updated the Student User Guide for concessions for students to navigate successfully on the SUNStudent portal.

i) Students with disabilities and concession statistics

Figure 12 below shows the number of students who disclosed a disability when applying to SU from 2017 to 2025 (the past nine years). For 2025, the total number of students who disclosed a disability was 559.



DISABILITY	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
BLINDNESS	5	10	9	6	13	11	7	5	6
CEREBRAL PALSY			2		1	2	2	3	2
CHRONIC HEALTH	48	49	34	34	42	44	40	29	40
DEAFNESS	17	23	23	18	21	14	17	17	15
DIAGNOSED MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER	29	53	73	78	121	141	156	121	120
DIAGNOSED READING DISORDER	45	46	27	34	30	29	36	36	53
DIAGNOSED WRITING DISORDER	17	17	20		11	13	17	27	25
MOBILITY OR ORTHOPAEDIC DISABILITY	30	25	42	36	41	38	51	36	32
NEUROLOGICAL DISABILITY	17	16	23	26	53	58	84	75	64
OTHER DISABILITY OR CONDITION	57	36	28	47	34	37	55	59	82
OTHER HEARING DISABILITY	40	47	72	87	142	113	112	74	67
OTHER VISUAL DISABILITY	46	42	61	74	85	65	68	49	40
SPEECH DISORDER	5	4	9	8	13	8	17	13	13
TOTAL	356	368	423	462	607	573	662	544	559

Figure 12: Students with disclosed disabilities

New approved concessions for assessments from 13 January 2025 to December 2025 totalled 529 students, as indicated in Figure 13 below. The primary concession was extra writing time (391 concessions). Additional concessions (138) could entail enlarged font size, computer use, assistive technology use, or the use of a scribe or reader.

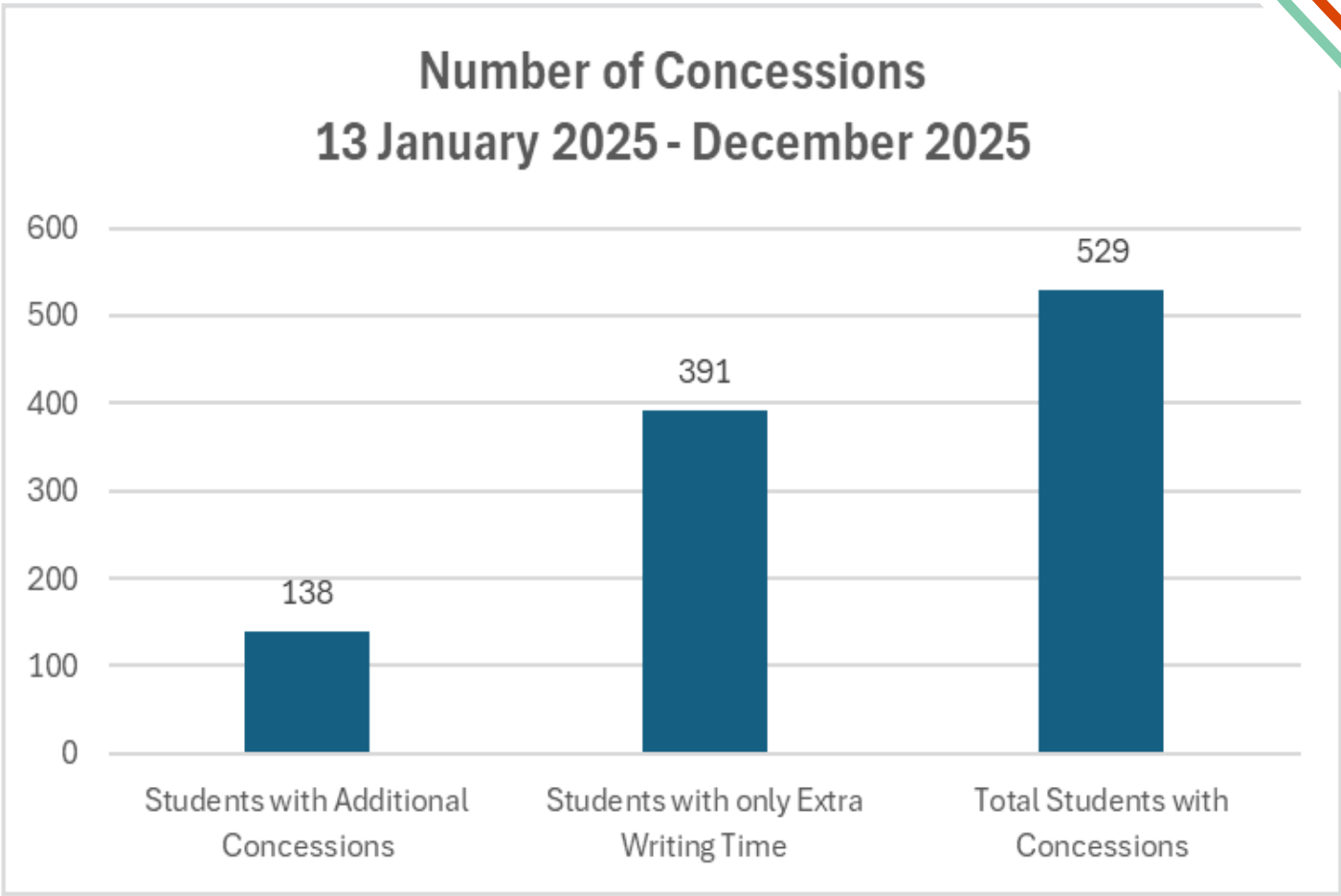


Figure 13: Number of concessions in all faculties and years (13 Jan 2025 to December 2025) — new concession applications in 2025

Applications for concessions are done via service requests. Requests are also closed via the SUNStudent portal. When students change their programmes or concessions, the previous concession must be closed. In Figure 14 below, the closed and approved services requests are shown.

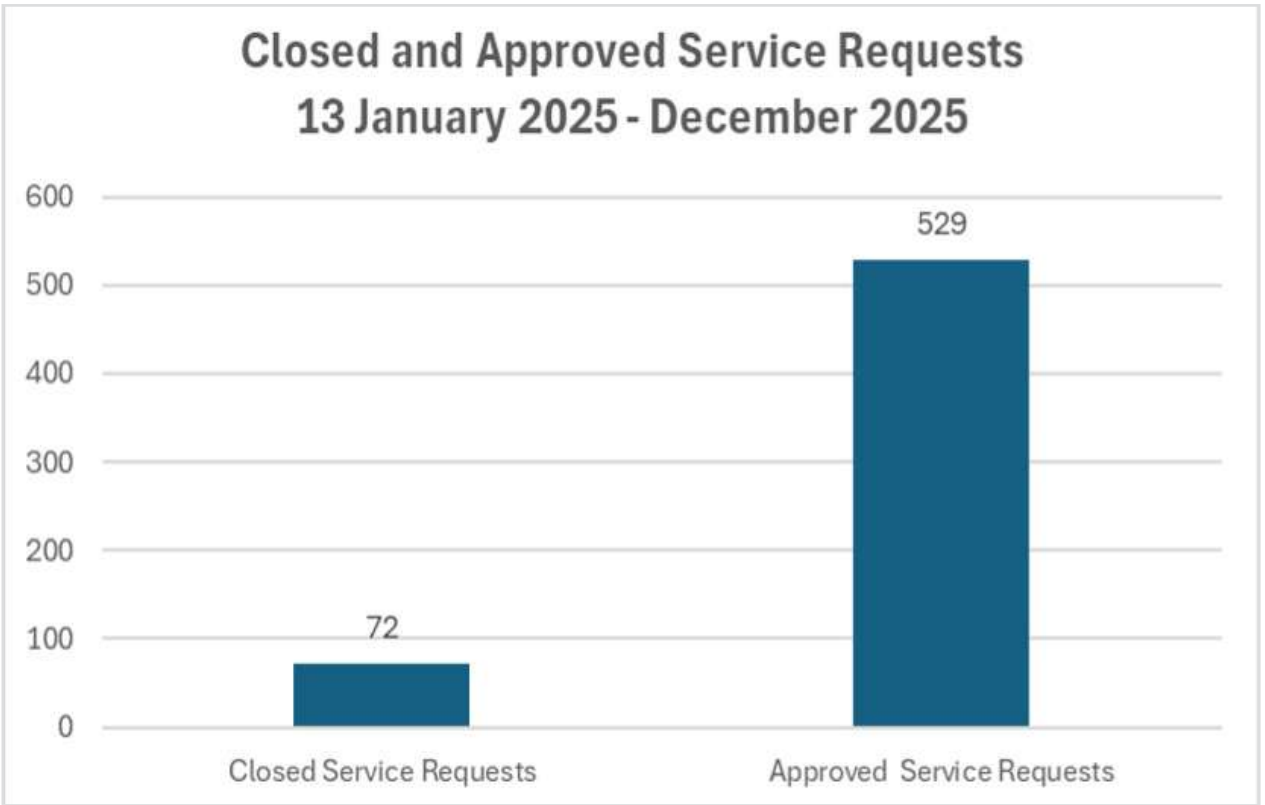


Figure 14: Concessions (72) that had to be closed this year due to multiple reasons

Figure 15 below shows all the approved service requests in all years of study (1 341) in relation to the 2025 approved service requests (529).

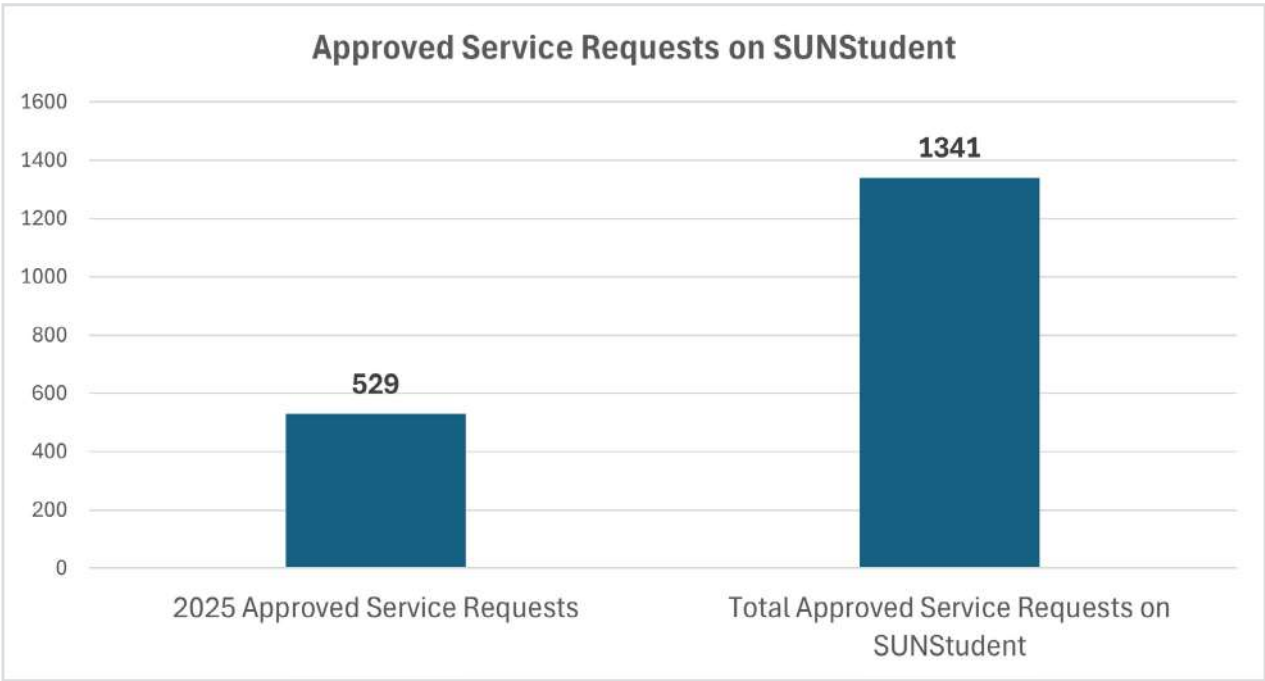


Figure 15: 2025 requests in relation to the total concessions in the system

Figure 16 below shows the emergency concessions (74) in the runup and during the May/June 2025 and October/November 2025 assessments. These were as a result of injuries, and mainly concessions such as extra time or scribes were requested.

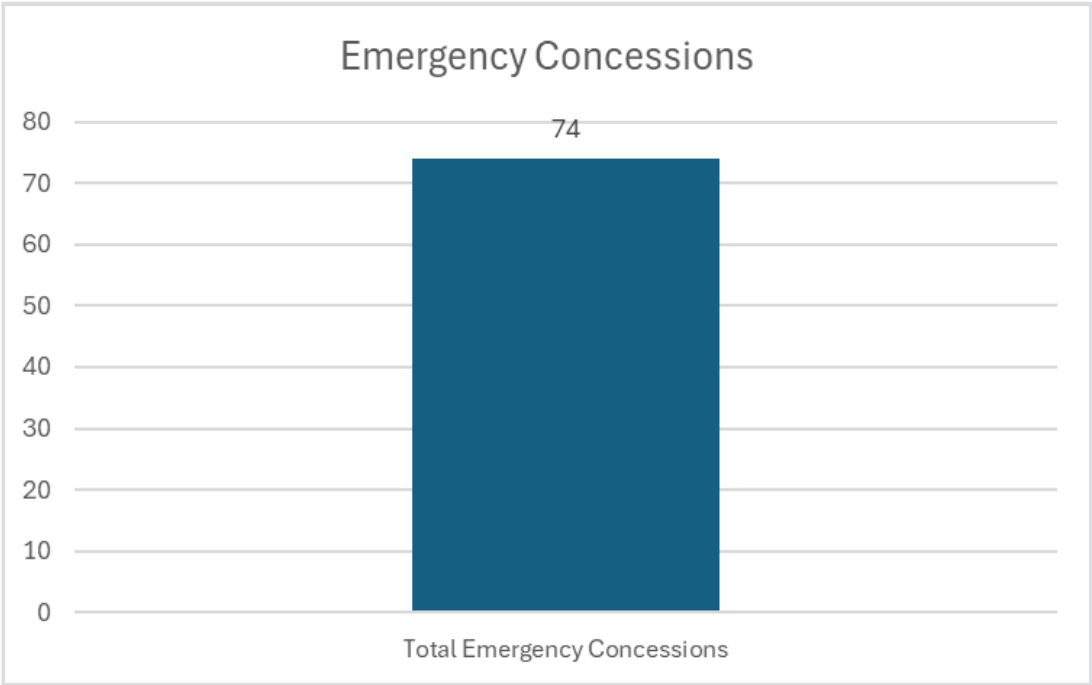


Figure 16: Emergency concessions

The concession categories from 13 January to December 2025 are shown in Figure 17 below.

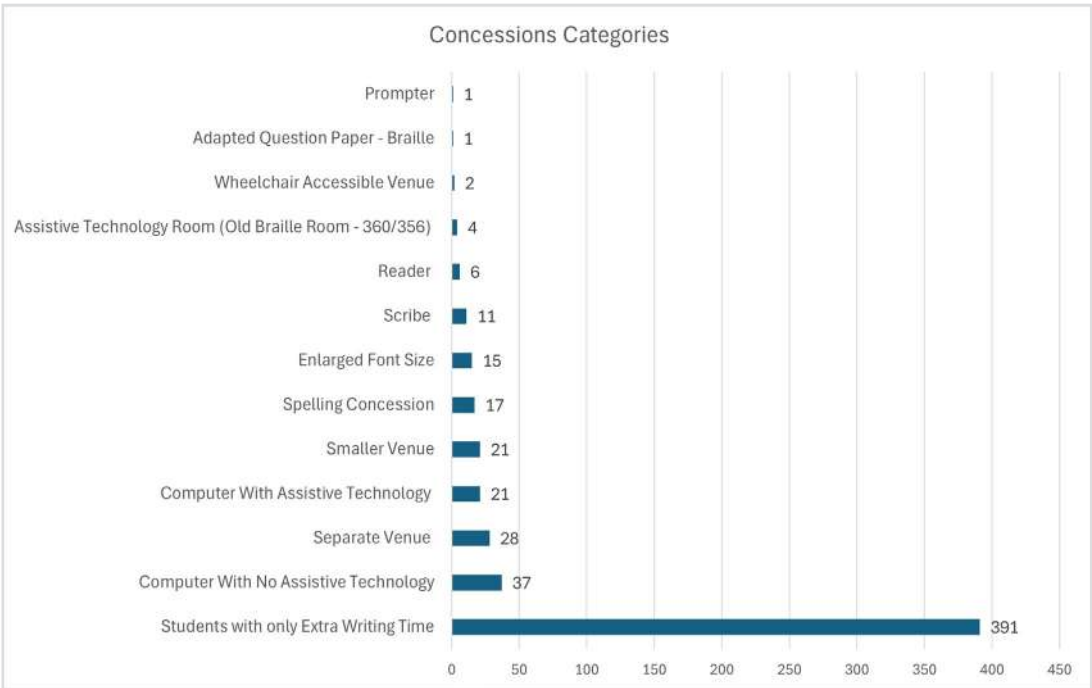


Figure 17: Types of concessions for students

Fifteen applications were deferred. Students had a chance to apply again in the second semester with the required documentation.

Figure 18 below shows the total number of concessions for 2025.

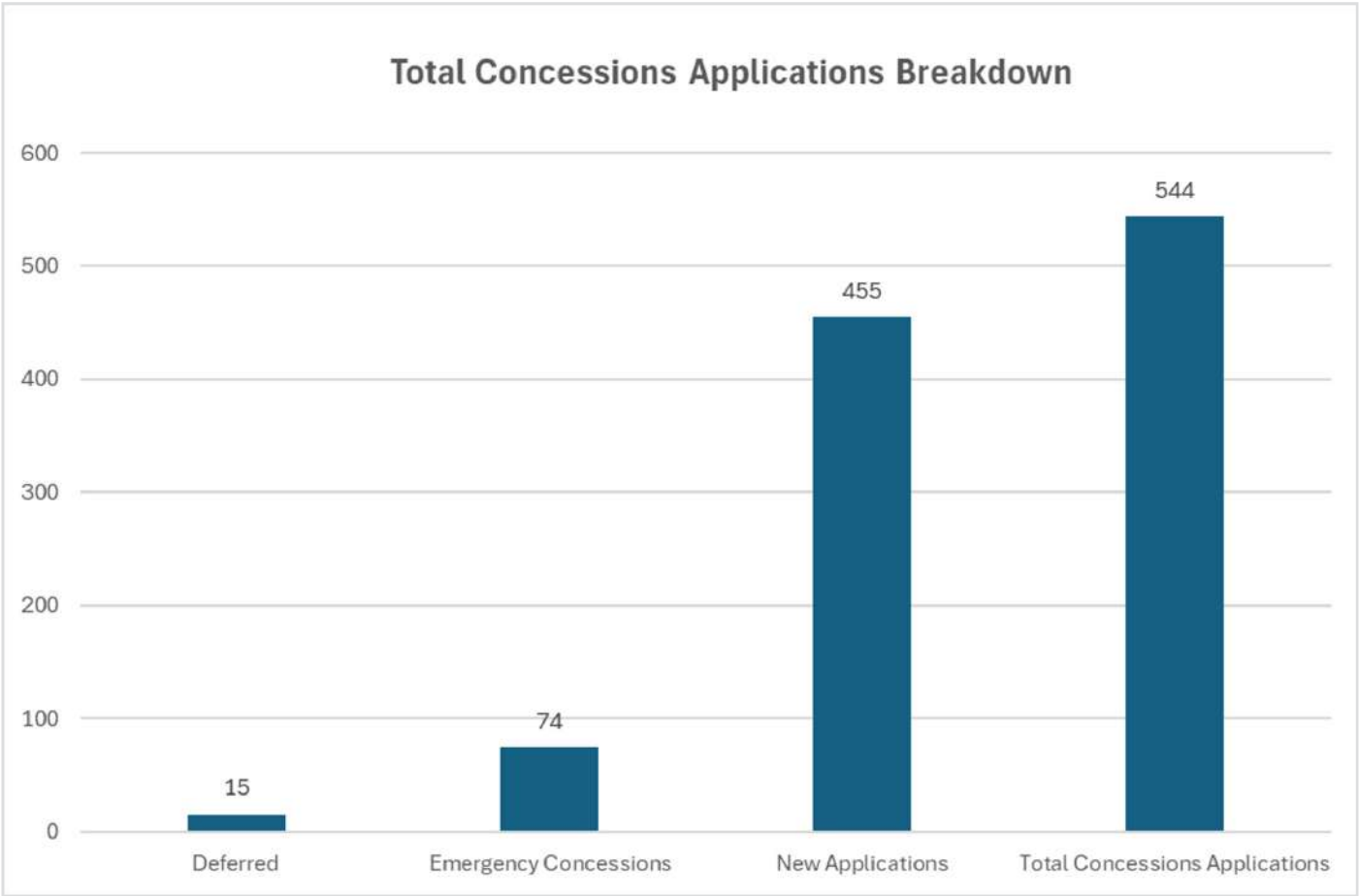


Figure 18: Total concessions summary

This section shows the concessions breakdown of each faculty. The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences had the most concession requests (187) during 2025. The Faculty of Theology had the least (7) concession requests.

The total concessions per faculty are shown in Figure 19 below (13 January 2025 to December 2025) (all years of study).

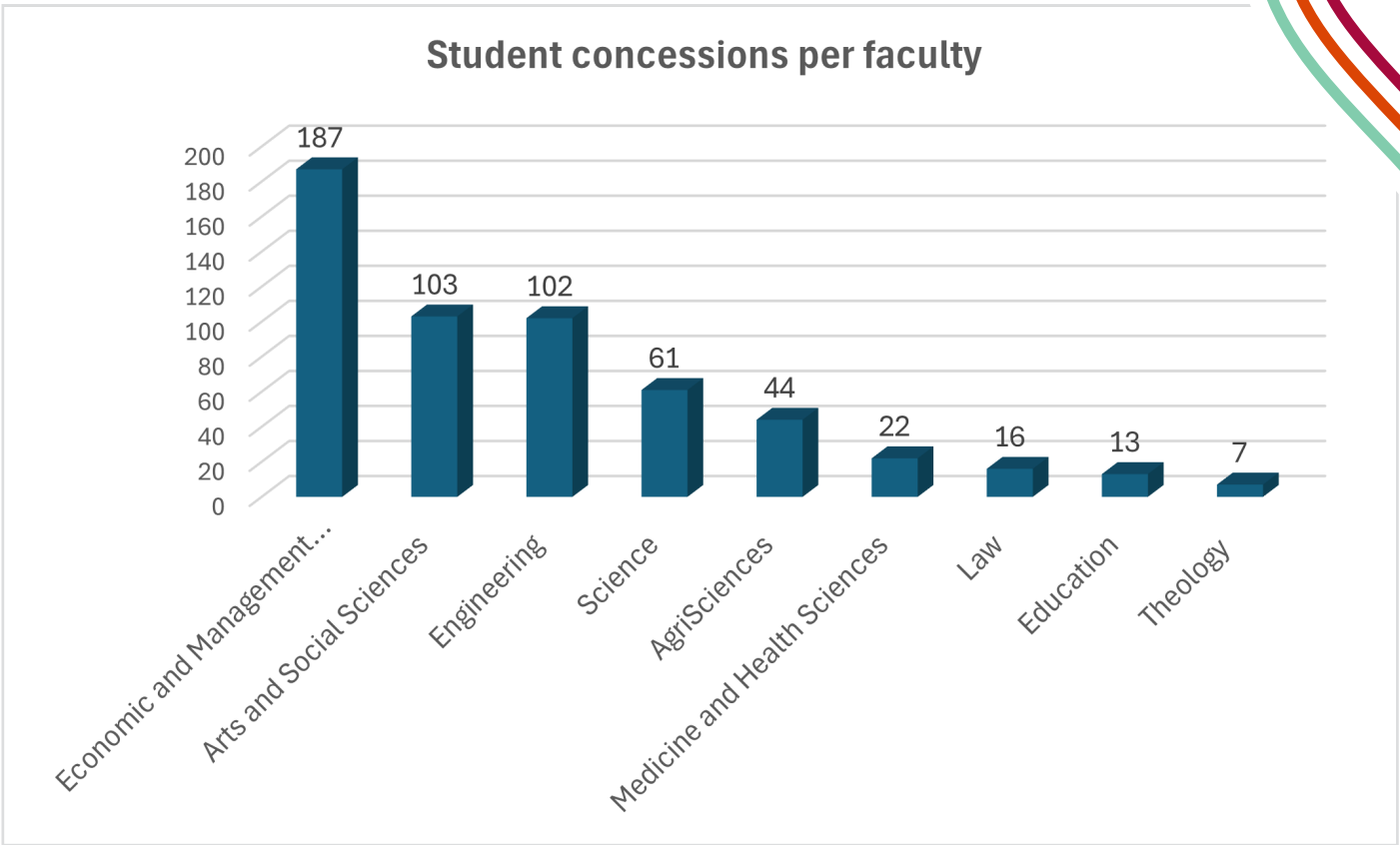


Figure 19: Total number of concessions per faculty

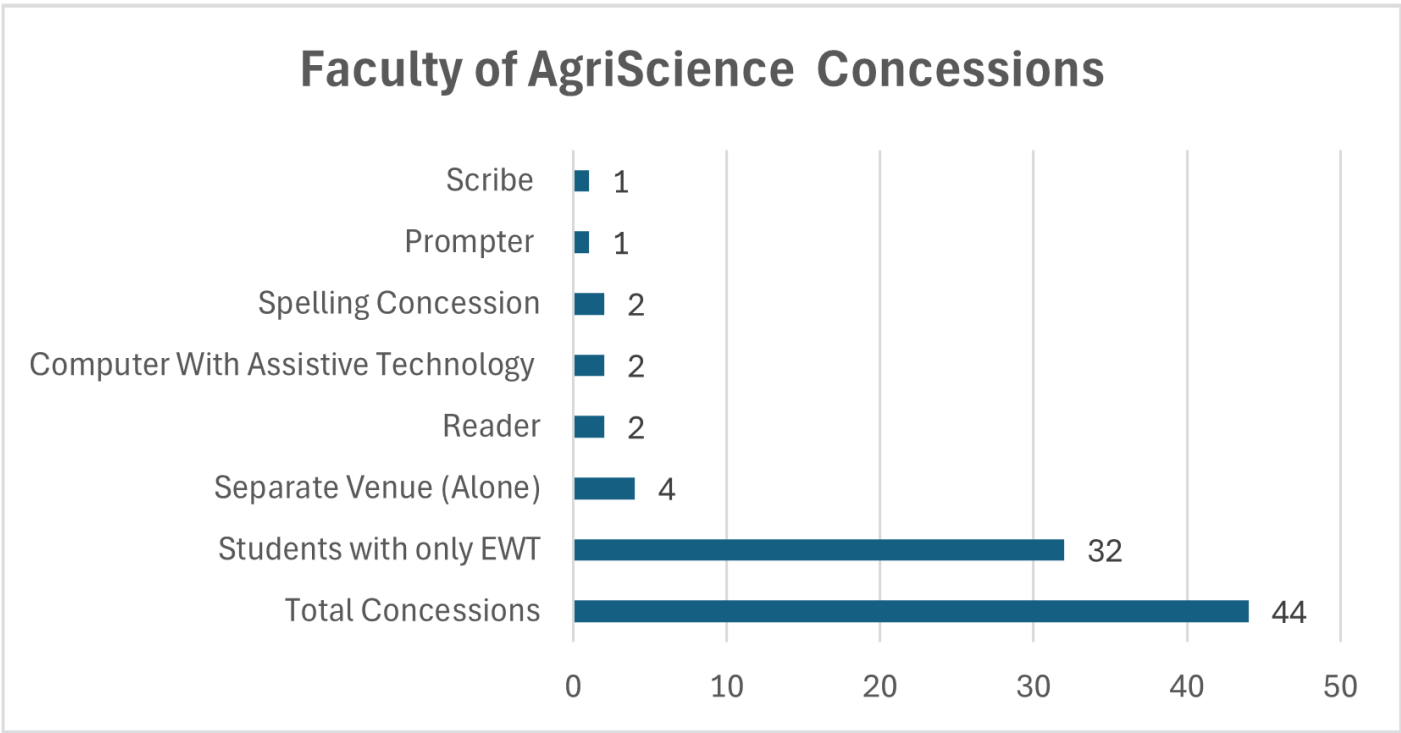


Figure 20: Faculty of AgriScience

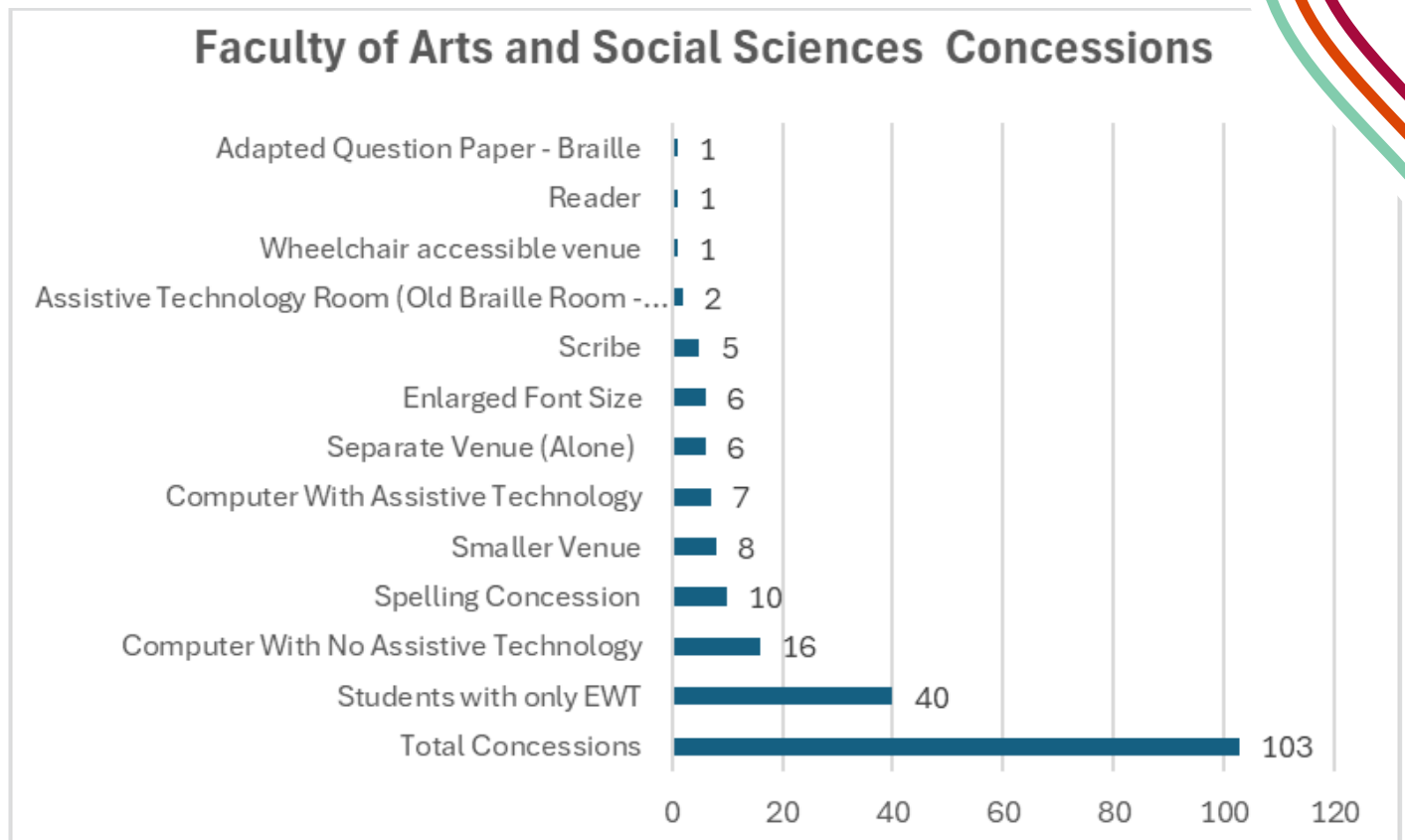


Figure 21: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

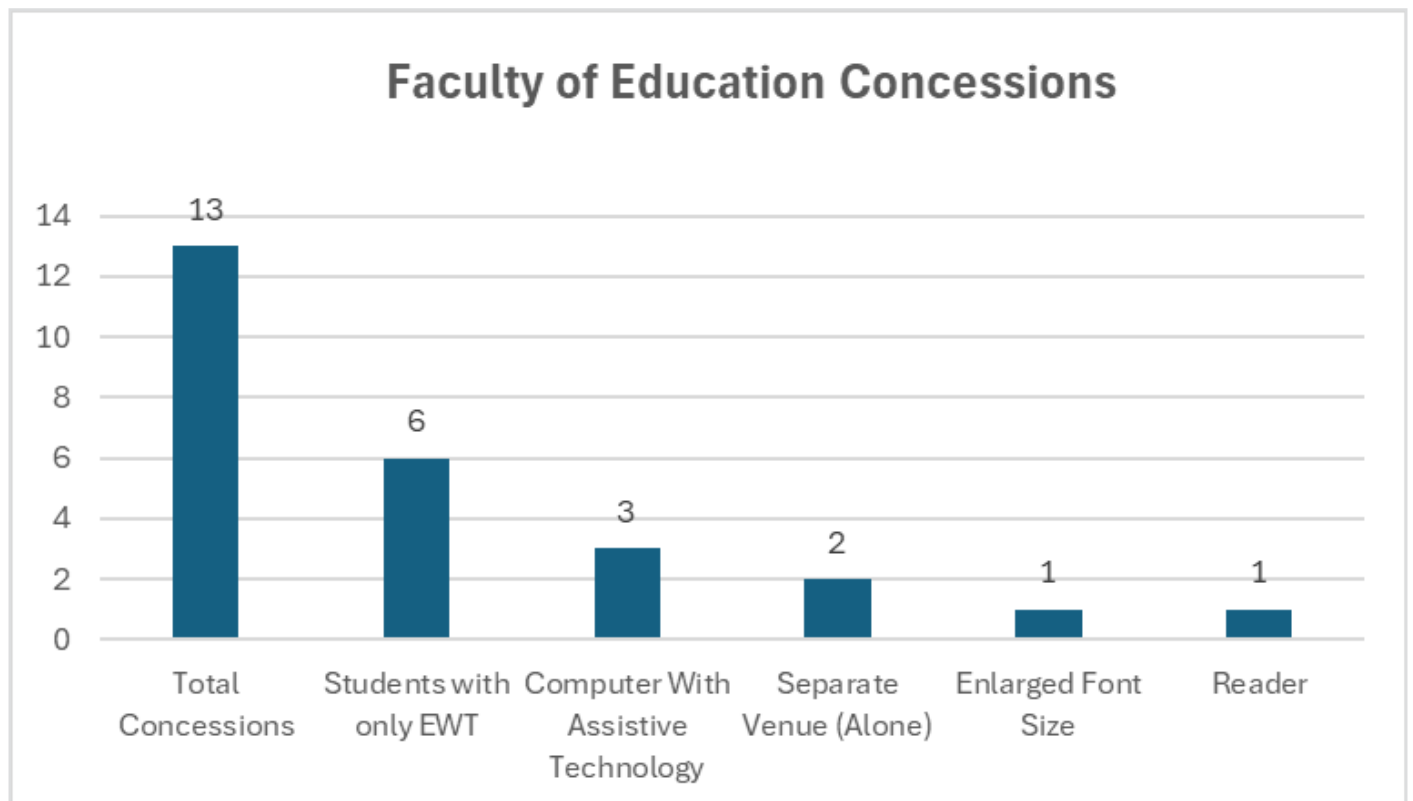


Figure 22: Faculty of Education

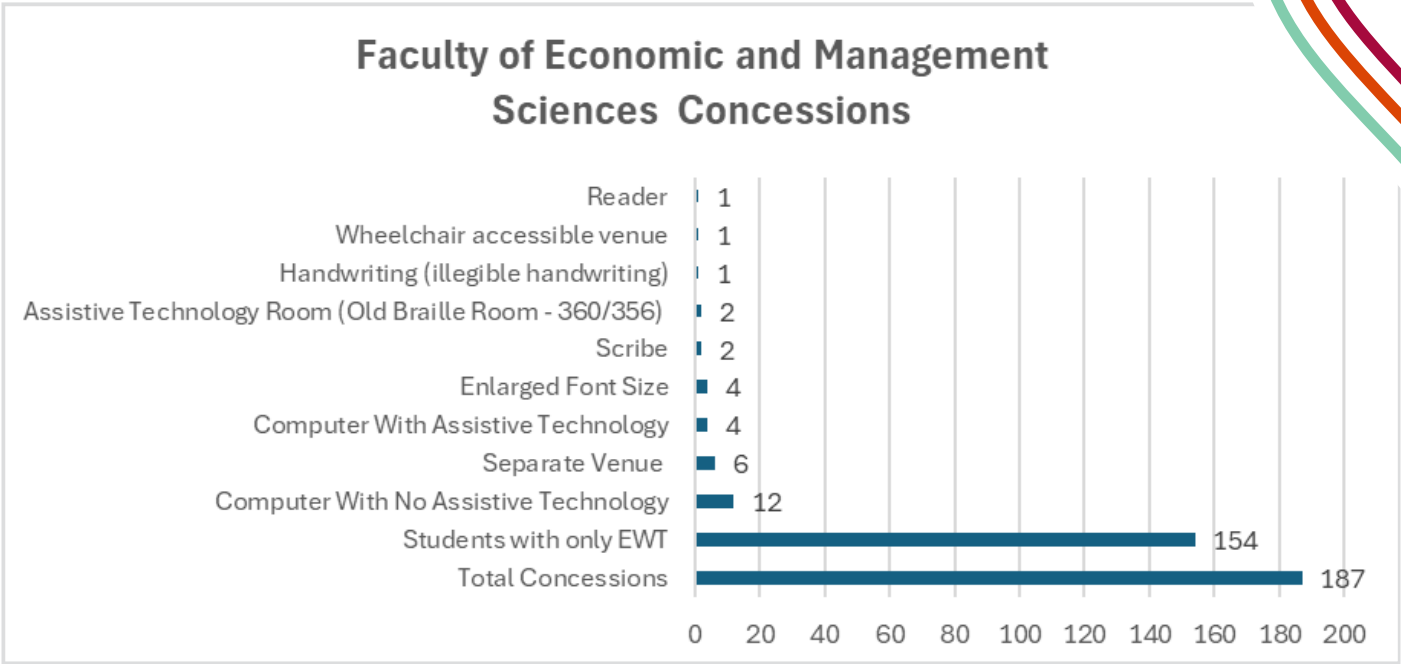


Figure 23: Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

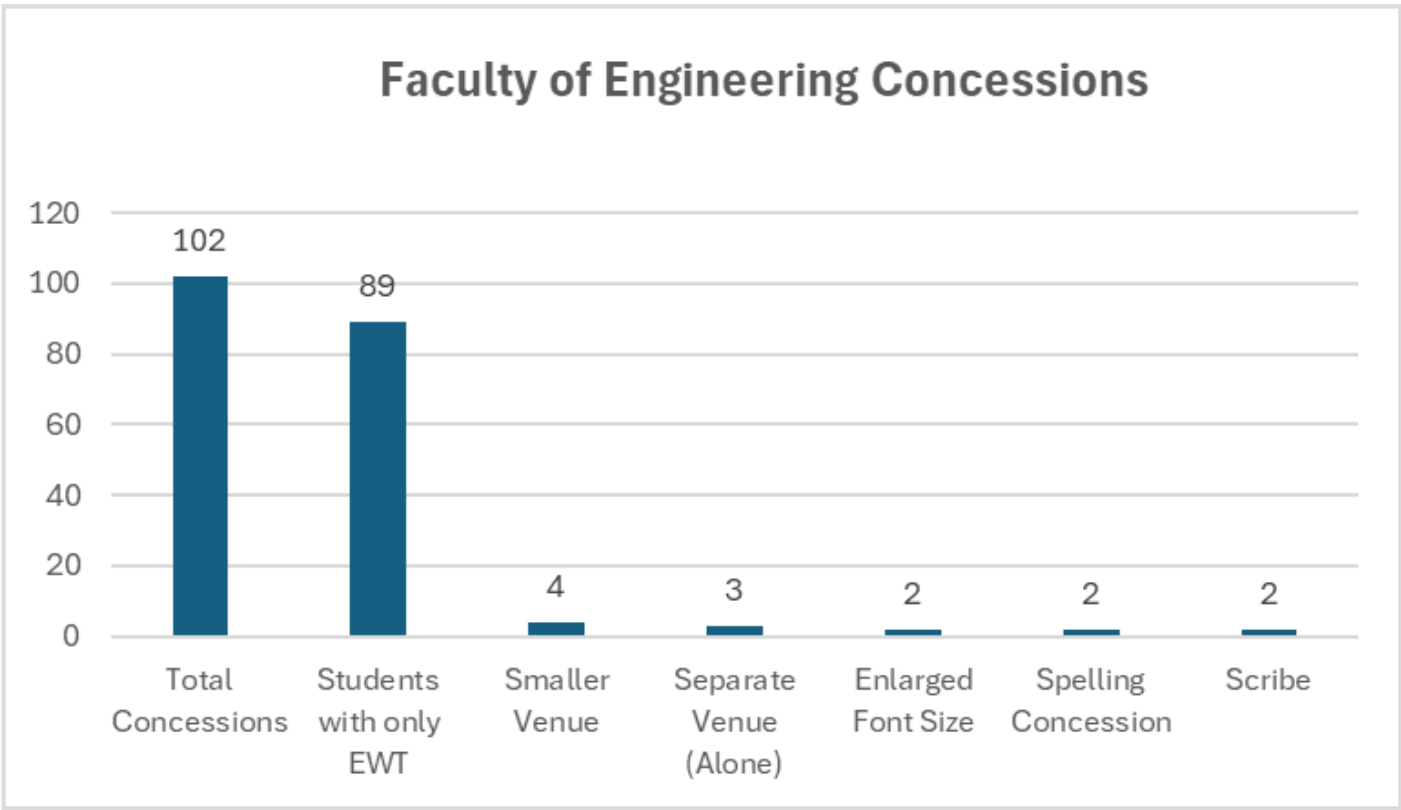


Figure 24: Faculty of Engineering

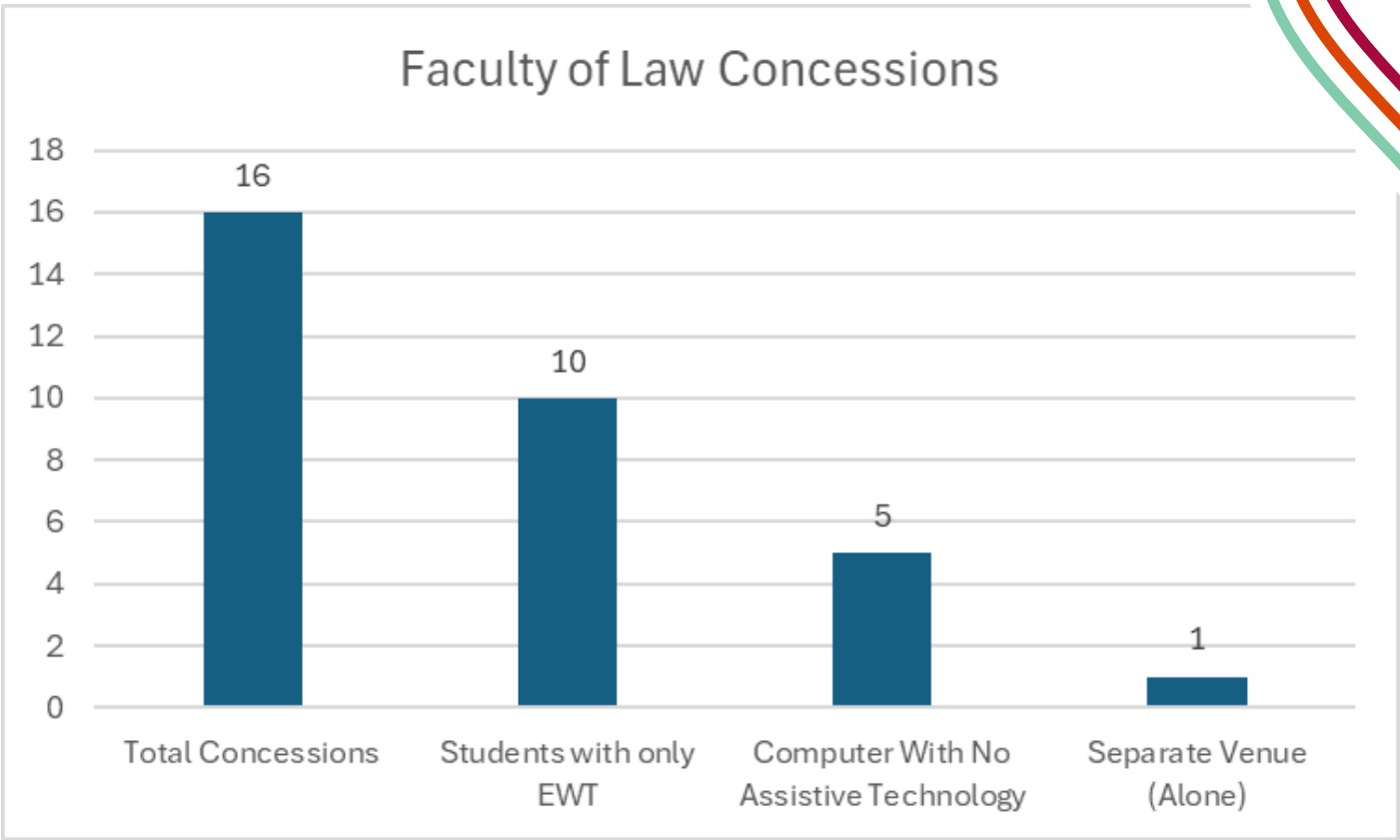


Figure 25: Faculty of Law

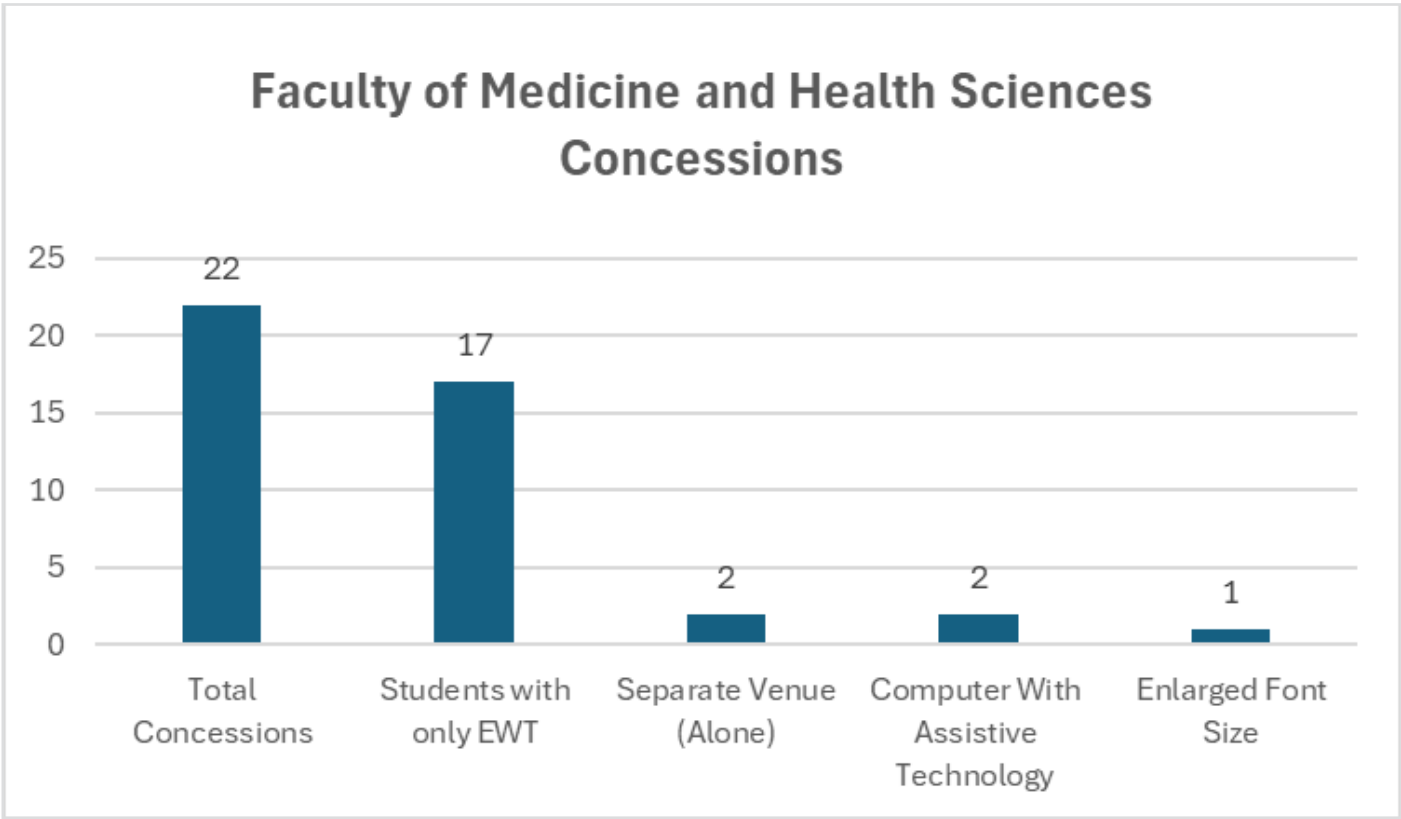


Figure 26: Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

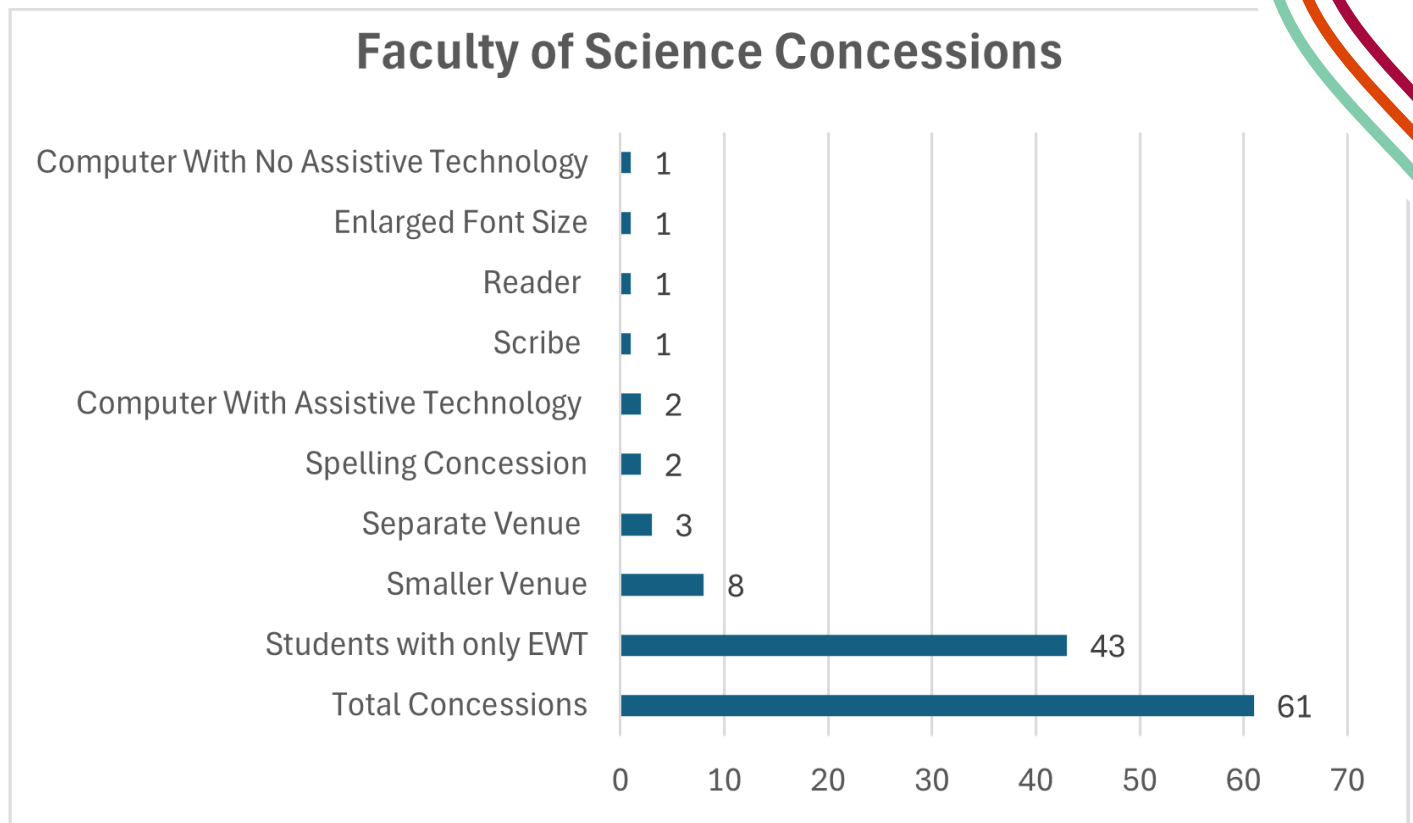


Figure 27: Faculty of Science

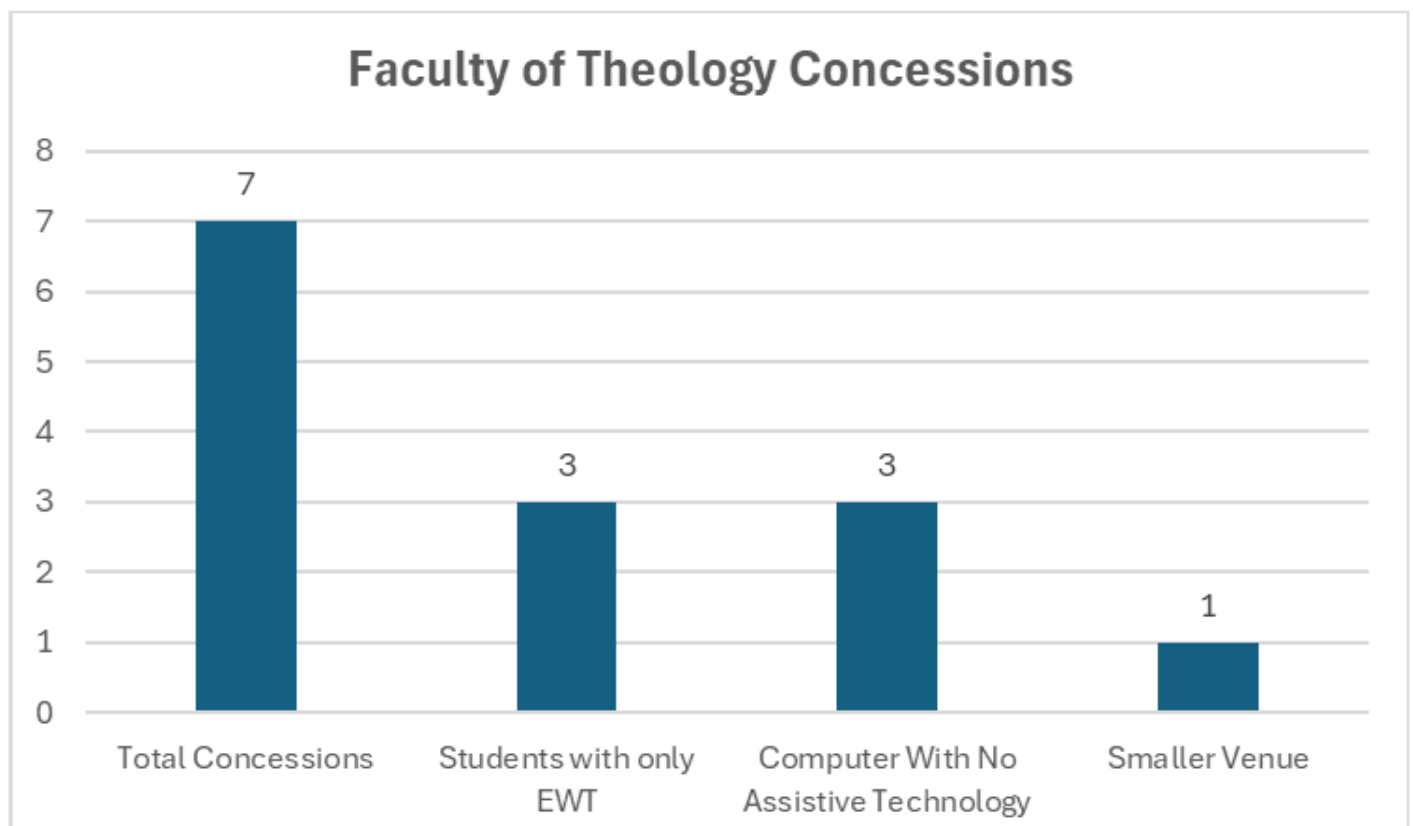


Figure 28: Faculty of Theology

j) Conclusion

The year 2025 was very challenging with regard to test and examination concessions. In summary, navigating concessions fully on SUNstudent for the first time, informing students and faculties on how to raise a request on SUNStudent, and resolving all the technical issues that the new system brought along placed extra demands on the DU. Students' challenging us about the new system and how decisions were made increased the complexity that we faced. Faculties made requests of us for concession lists, which are now in the Active Exams Concessions Report under Analytics on SUNStudent. For the A1s, many enquiries were received from departments as well. It is rather problematic if the concessions

information on SUNStudent on the Active Exams Concessions report is not reflected correctly as it causes students with approved concessions not receiving the correct concessions and not being allocated to the correct venues during assessments. It also impacts faculties and the Assessment Office. Another issue raised by some students is that their faculty was not providing the necessary assessment support, as approved by the Assessments Committee.

Going forward, working closely with SSSC to resolve the ongoing technical issues on SUNStudent is greatly appreciated as the quick response time to issues really assisted us in navigating the challenges.

Psychology CPD Well Programme

The Psychology CPD Well Programme has been a vital initiative of the CSCD since 2003 and is accredited by the HPCSA as a CPD Programme. This programme offers psychologists, registered counsellors, and psychometrists a variety of enrolment options to earn CPD points, facilitating their ongoing professional growth and adherence to industry standards.

Since 2022, the programme has been led by Charl Davids, alongside a dedicated team comprising Charl Davids, Elmien Sinclair, Sanet van Zyl, Christa Koch, and Christabel Naidoo. Under their leadership, the HPCSA

accreditation process for courses in 2025 was executed smoothly, ensuring that the offerings align with the rigorous standards set by the council. The team's commitment to quality has enhanced the programme's reputation, allowing participants to benefit from high-calibre training that is both relevant and impactful in the field of psychology. This ongoing effort underscores the importance of continuous learning and professional development within the psychology community, equipping practitioners with the skills necessary to adapt to the evolving landscape of mental health care.

The following options — in a variety of combinations — were on offer during 2025:

- Option B (four online presentations covering the following topics):
 - Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: Creating behaviour change through therapy
 - A South African Perspective on Family Murder
 - Exploring the integration of Solution-Focused Brief Therapy and Mediated Learning Experience to enhance psychotherapeutic practices
 - Navigating Legal and Ethical Responsibilities: Reporting obligations under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2021 The Victim
- Option C General (10 topical articles and multiple-choice questionnaires)
- Option C Industrial Psychology (10 topical articles and multiple-choice questionnaires)
- Option C General Psychometry (10 topical articles and multiple-choice questionnaires)

As the economy becomes more constrained, it has become essential to cater to clients across the economic spectrum. Additionally, we provided a group discount for practitioners in corporate or private practice. In today's digital landscape, we face increased competition to remain relevant and keep our clients engaged with our offerings.

Final participant numbers for the different options in 2025 were as follows:

- Option B Plus C General Psychology/Industrial Psychology/General Psychometry: 38
- Option C General Psychology: 157
- Option C General Psychometry: 141
- Option C Industrial Psychology: 25
- Total: 361

Collaboration with ER24

Our relationships with ER24 continues to maintain high standards of professionalism. Opportunities to both give and receive constructive feedback have been created this year and will continue to enable our collaboration to thrive.

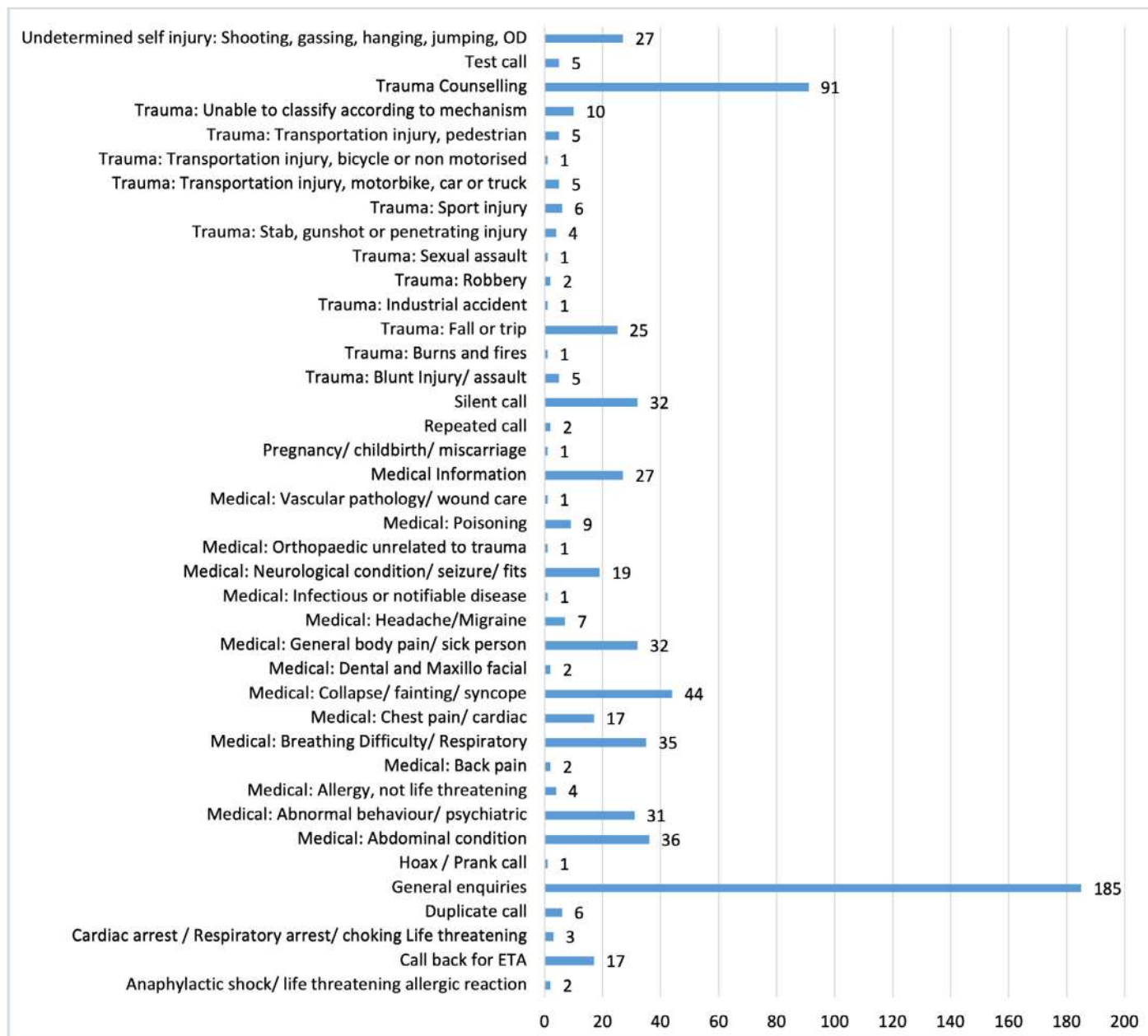


Figure 29: Total ER24 reports, 1 January to 31 December 2025

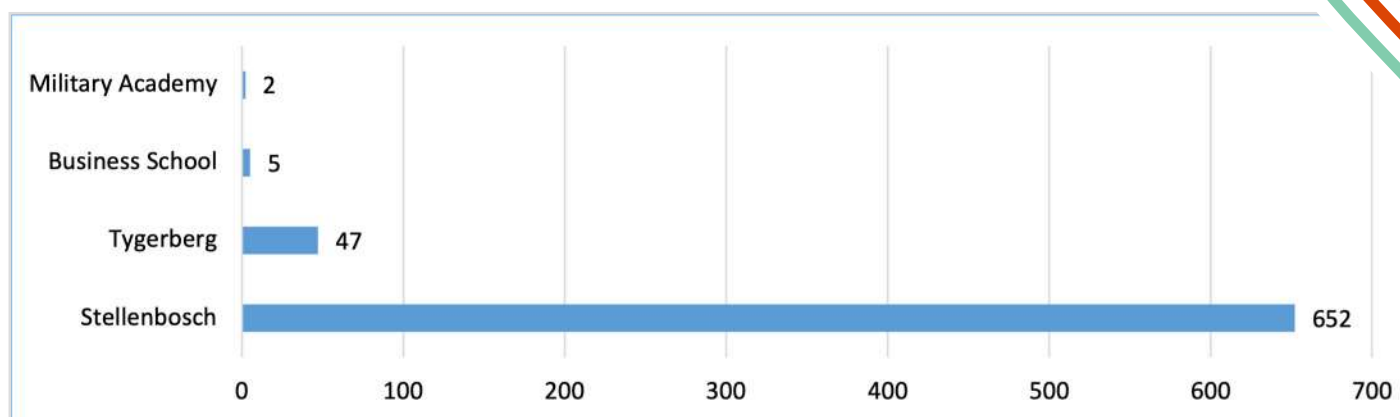


Figure 30: Total ER24 calls per campus, 1 January to 31 December 2025

A reflection on social work services at the Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services



Mr James Albanie (left) and Mr Peter Buchanan (right) present donated sanitary towels to CSCD staff

Our social workers, Lizzie Witbooi and Sinazo Niyembezi, played a pivotal role in promoting student wellbeing through education, support, and empowerment. Highlights for this year include facilitating the following: (i) Financial Literacy Workshop, a two-day event in collaboration with the Financial

Sector Conduct Authority, attended by over 300 students. Topics included budgeting, saving, debt management, investing, and understanding psychological factors influencing financial decisions; (ii) Funding 101 sessions, cohosted with the Bursaries and Loans Office on the Stellenbosch and Tygerberg campuses. The sessions provided practical guidance on bursary systems and responsible allowance management. Attendance was low, indicating a need for improved engagement strategies; (iii) Food Security Support Programme, which explained eligibility and operational details to students. Generous donations were received from Mr Omar Henry and his wife, Conita, from SU's Corporate Communication Division, who have teamed up with the Dignity Project to support students in need. They engaged Mr James Albanie, a cricket player and Youth Manager at the Department

of Social Development Sport, and Mr Peter Buchanan from South African Distribution Incontinence Products, who donated sanitary towels. This initiative aims to provide essential sanitary pads to ensure dignity and wellbeing

Four-day work week

The year also reaffirmed the power of innovation in work culture. Continuing our landmark four-day work week for the second year — the first of its kind in higher education counselling — we have maintained sustained improvements in staff wellness, service efficiency, and overall organisational cohesion.

Student feedback survey

Students attending the CSCD services from 1 February to 30 April 2024 were invited to complete a short anonymous and voluntary Student Service Feedback survey for the

This survey aimed to explore students' perceptions of services rendered by the CSCD in order to identify potential strategies to improve the student experience at the Centre.

following services at the CSCD: academic related; career development/job seeking; personal/emotional/social; and disability/accessible text/residence assistance/academic accessibility. This survey aimed

for all students; and (iv) The South African Union of Jewish Students has donated 100 study packs to students for the end-of-year examination period. These study packs were well received.

These outcomes affirm our belief that caring for those who care for others is central to institutional excellence. The findings were presented at the NASPA international webinar. This presentation led to a request by the NASPA to write an article for its publication for the beginning of 2026.

to explore students' perceptions of services rendered by the CSCD in order to identify potential strategies to improve the student experience at the Centre. Dedicated and

intentional preventative initiatives, developmental opportunities, and support to overcome obstacles could also contribute to academic success. Unfortunately, students often experience barriers to accessing these services, including ineffective appointment processes, inadequate accessibility and availability of services, and insufficient support received, which could deter help seeking.

Student service feedback is therefore instrumental in amplifying the student voice. A mixed-methods approach was

followed leading to closed-loop feedback for cocreation of service enhancements aimed at fostering a responsive and supportive environment at the CSCD. This could allow trust to be built when students see that their voices lead to actual improvements, making them more likely to engage with resources. The survey was conducted among 1 636 students, with a complete response rate of 17%. Demographical data indicated that 50% of respondents identified as first-generation students, 47% were in their first and second year of study, 67% were female and 12% identified as disabled. Positive experiences were expressed by approximately 70% of students (Likert score

4-5 out of 5), but 30% scored 1-3 out of 5, prompting qualitative investigation of lived experience in comments. Key comments identified challenges, including scheduling, lack of follow-up, limited sessions, lack of urgency, diverse needs awareness, and inclusivity of invisible disabilities. These will enable the CSCD to implement strategies to address these concerns. The study thus concluded that the CSCD provides effective services, experienced positively by the majority of students, with areas of improvement identified for analysis and future implementation. The next survey dates are 15 September to 24 October 2025 and 1 February to 30 April 2026.

Student Success Initiative

The SSI, under leadership of Melanie Petersen, focuses on four key areas:

- Conceptualising and measuring student success at SU.
- Identifying high-impact modules and designing targeted faculty interventions.
- Coordinating and optimising student support for undergraduate success.
- Driving advocacy and cultural change management.

Elmien Sinclair was seconded to the SSI from 1 December 2024 to lead institutional

coordination of student advising. Initially a one-year secondment, this has been extended to 31 August 2026.

The initiative seeks to strengthen SU's capacity to holistically support students through an integrated, University-wide model that connects academic advising, psychosocial support, and student development (see Figure 31). Guided by data-informed, evidence-based practices, the SSI fosters collaboration among faculties, support divisions, and leadership structures to enhance engagement and retention.

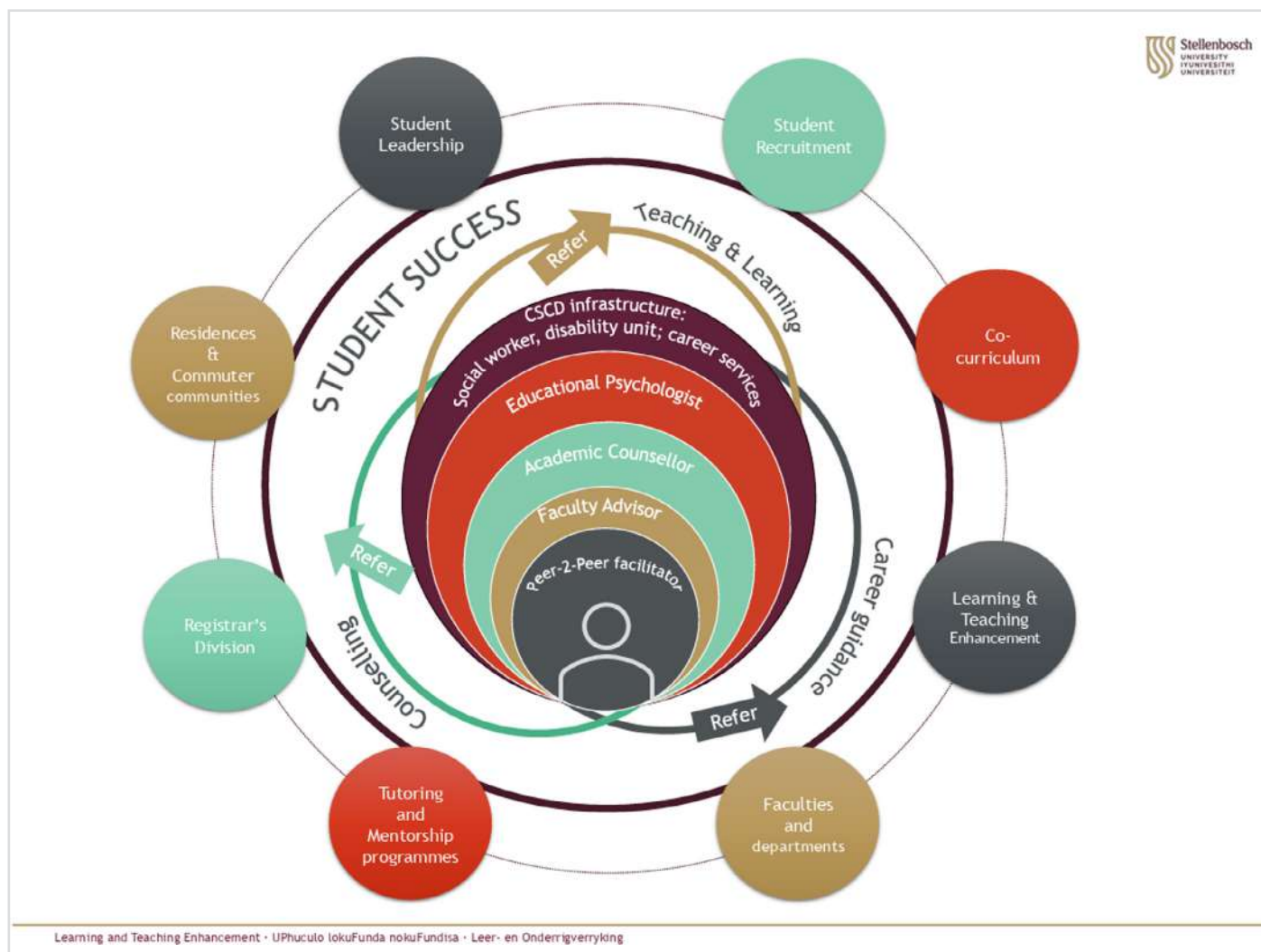


Figure 31: Integrated student advice model at Stellenbosch University

In 2025, the SSI prioritised mapping the student journey, identifying institutional pain points, and embedding proactive support strategies across the student life cycle. Through training, stakeholder engagement, and strategic partnerships, it continues to advance systemic change that positions student success as a shared institutional responsibility.

The CSCD remains a key partner in this work. In 2025, four registered counsellors joined the UACD to strengthen faculty-based advising, while a transitional counsellor in the UGCS supported students in preparing for the world of work.

Looking ahead, the SSI aims to deepen collaboration and expand student-centred practices across the SU ecosystem in 2026.

Staff of the Centre

Please also refer to the attached organogram (Addendum A)

Director	Dr CI Davids
Personal Assistant: Director: Centre for Student Counselling and Development	Ms HZ Kotzé
Financial Administrative Officer	Ms S van Zyl
CPD Well Administrative Officer (<i>from 1 August</i>)	Ms C Naidoo
Researcher	Dr A Krygsman

Unit for Academic Counselling and Development

Acting Head: Unit for Academic Counselling and Development	Ms Christa Koch
Educational Psychologist	Dr Erna Gerryts
Educational Psychologist	Ms Liezl Kloppe
Registered Counsellor	Ms Lauren Schilder
Registered Counsellor : Academic Advice (<i>from 1 August</i>)	Ms Gabriella Jordan
Registered Counsellor : Academic Advice (<i>from 1 August</i>)	Ms Amy McPherson
Registered Counsellor : Academic Advice (<i>from 1 October</i>)	Ms Christine Kada-Williams
Academic Support Officer	Ms Ntombifuthi Maduna
Intern Educational Psychologist	Ms Gaylynne Ockhuis
Intern Educational Psychologist	Ms Laura Swart
Intern Educational Psychologist	Ms Deoné van der Merwe

Unit for Graduand Career Services

Head	Mr MA Timmey
Project Co-ordinator: Graduate Recruitment	Ms Wilna Naudé
5/8 Part-time Administrative Officer	Ms Annette Joubert
Co-ordinator: Virtual Career Information	Ms Thobeka Msi
Transitional Counsellor: Career Advice (<i>from 1 August</i>)	Ms Neuwe Kibe

Disability Unit

Head	Dr MM Lyner-Cleophas
Co-ordinator: Disability Support	Ms ME Willems
Resource Officer	Ms PH Louw
Resource Officer	Ms MM Minnaar
Resource Officer	Ms EMS Erasmus
Inclusion and Student Success Coordinator	Dr CP Saunderson
Coordinator: Marketing and Training	Ms Luigia Nicholas
Coordinator: Disability Inclusion	Ms Jacqueline Lenting
Administrator	Mr Lefu Kumeke
Guide dog of Ms Luigia Nicholas	Haiku retired and Milly took his place

Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services

Deputy Director and Head Unit for Psychotherapeutic and Support Services	Ms Lynn April
Senior Counselling Psychologist	Ms Elmarie Kruger
Senior Clinical Psychologist (Tygerberg Campus)	Ms An-Maree Nel
Registered Counsellor	Ms Vastrohiette Gilbert
Registered Counsellor (<i>from 1 August</i>)	Ms Sinesipho Jenkins
Counselling Psychologist (Tygerberg Campus)	Ms Nontozamo Tsetse
Clinical Psychologist	Mr Jan-Hendrik Meyer
Counselling Psychologist	Ms Nordlind Fouche
Clinical Psychologist	Mr Eugene Booyesen
Clinical Psychologist	Mr Munro Strydom
5/8 Counselling Psychologist	Ms Carmen Balie
Social Worker	Ms Lizzie Witbooi
Social Worker (Tygerberg Campus)	Ms Sinazo Nyembezi
Dell Young Leaders Psychologist	Ms Tracey Delport-Williams
Counselling Psychologist Intern	Mr Henri Cilliers

Administrative Officer	Ms Celeste Youle
Administrative Officer	Ms Ilse Pool-Le Roux
Administrative Officer (Tygerberg Campus)	Ms Belinda Fredericks
Crisis Consultant	Mr Dean Bailey
Crisis Consultant	Dr Eric Horn

Budget

The Director ensures that budget expenditure remains aligned with the strategic objectives of the Centre. The operational budget is supplemented by third-stream income generated through the Psychology CPD Well Programme. Recent marketing initiatives have contributed to an increase in the number of psychologists enrolling in the programme, while, for the first time, a group of social workers from the private sector has also joined. An additional source of supplementary income is the Insights Discovery Training, which has experienced growing demand from faculties, departments, and the private sector.

Conclusion

Thank you for the opportunity to share the highlights of the past year in the journey of the CSCD. We remain committed to our vision of providing an accessible, inclusive, and client-centred service. This year brought its share of challenges, but true to its character, the CSCD faced them with resilience and dedication. My heartfelt thanks to every staff member and to all our partners, both within and beyond the University, for helping make this year a memorable one.

ORGANOGRAM: CENTRE FOR STUDENT COUNSELLING AND DEVELOPMENT (CSCD)

OCTOBER 2025

