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An Investigation into the Efficiency of Work Integrated Learning for the Bachelor of Communication at the Namibia University of Science and Technology



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Overview

- ▶ Introduction and background
- ▶ Limitations
- ▶ Literature Review
- ▶ Overview of Investigation
- ▶ Organization of WIL
- ▶ Stakeholders
- ▶ Industry visits
- ▶ Analysis and discussion (quantitative, qualitative)
- ▶ Conclusion



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Keywords

- ▶ Work integrated learning
- ▶ Cooperative education
- ▶ Internship
- ▶ Applied learning (learning by doing)



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Introduction and background

- ▶ Bachelor of Communication was developed 17 years after independence from 2007 to 2008 and implemented in 2009 (Polytechnic of Namibia).
- ▶ Evaluation - sharing knowledge
- ▶ One-semester Work Integrated Learning course (final year)
- ▶ 2011 - Implementation
- ▶ 2011 - 2016: 258 enrollments for WIL
- ▶ Challenges (introductory sessions, finding placement, student commitment)
- ▶ The study intends to take toll and investigate the efficiency and success of this course.

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Limitations

- ▶ **Bachelor of Communication programme** at PoN, 2001 - 2016.
- ▶ Total research population: 258
- ▶ **Organisation of WIL for BACO students, Course documents,** provided by the institution, stakeholder roles and **workload** of the academic supervisor.
- ▶ Industry supervisor feedback
 - **enrolment numbers**
 - **pass/failure rates,**
 - **male/female ratio,**
 - **enrolment modes and**
- ▶ **age groups** of the enrolled students.
- ▶ **Exclusion of this study:**
 - Investigation into whether the students were employed at the same organisation at the time of the internship
 - Employment after completing WIL or the BACO programme.
- ▶ Reasons why students did not successfully complete the course.

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Investigation



WIL documents



Students and supervisors roles



Organization of the course (WIL Guide)



WIL schedule



Observation during visits



Quantitative data: enrolment, pass/failure rates, male/female ratio, etc.

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Literature review

- ▶ Work integrated learning, experiential learning, co-operative education
- ▶ Terminology: WIL – includes **increasing diversity in methodologies** and approaches to vocational education, used globally (Reeders, 2000)
- ▶ Literature review includes studies from South Africa, U.K., Australia, Canada, U. S., Germany
- ▶ Canadian study showed that WIL boosts students' confidence regarding problem-solving skills, positive views regarding future employment, specific skills, influence on self-esteem and self-efficacy, higher levels of confidence ; but lower levels of procrastination (Drysdale & McBeath, 2012).

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Literature review cont'd

- ▶ Undergraduate curricula, part of a holistic strategy in education in order to produce **graduate ready for the working world**.
- ▶ Importance of **involvement of all stakeholders** - educational institution, industry supervisor and student (Barkhuizen and Schutte, 2014; Edgar, 2012; Groenewald 2004)
- ▶ Workplace assessment not done in all countries; Germany and other central European countries - organizations take WIL up as their social responsibility (Nicolaides, 2014)
- ▶ **Southern African context** - educational institutions have the responsibility to prepare student for work readiness (Nicolaides, 2014)

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Literature review cont'd

- ▶ WIL/co-operative learning should be **structured educational strategy**; should **encourage scaffolding of learning** in an environment that fosters creative work experience in the field related to a student's career (Cates and Jones, 1999)
- ▶ **Concept of excellence** should be applied - student 'not to be regarded as cheap, free labour'; emphasis to be on **skills and knowledge relating to the industry**; integration of competence building to gain competitive advantage (Nicolaidis, 2014)
- ▶ Widely assumed to **boost employability skill outcomes** in undergraduate programmes (Wilton, 2012)
- ▶ **Skills** include: teamwork, communication, self-management, critical thinking and problem-solving (Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2013; Confederation of British Industry, 2011; Coll and Zedwaard, 2006); as well as time-management, multi-tasking, and working autonomously (Jackson, 2010)

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Literature review cont'd

► Recurring themes in the literature:

- Skills and competencies, realistic experiences
- Drivers of WIL, **structured approach**
- Stakeholder involvement and communication

(Nicolaidis, 2014; Barkhuisen and Schutte, 2014; Purdie et al., 2013)

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Analysis and Discussion Overview

Organization of Work-integrated learning

- ▶ Course documents
- ▶ Stakeholders and industry visits
- ▶ Engagement of academic supervisor
- ▶ Enrolment and pass rates
- ▶ Enrolment male/female ratio
- ▶ Enrolment according to study mode
- ▶ Pass rates according to study mode
- ▶ Age groups and enrollment
- ▶ Age groups and pass rates



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How is WIL For Bachelor of Communication organized?



1ST FEBRUARY OF EACH YEAR(FLEXIBLE STARTING TIME)



600 HOURS (40-HOUR WEEK, TOTAL NUMBER OF 15 WEEKS,



80% ATTENDANCE RULE APPLIES



ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVITY RECORD



WEEKLY REFLECTIONS



2 REFLECTION ESSAYS



COLLECT WORK DOCUMENTS



PORTFOLIO





Challenges

- ▶ Finding placements
- ▶ Understanding the need for communication practitioners
- ▶ Lack of Communication/PR departments/sections in certain organizations
- ▶ Transition classroom to workplace
- ▶ Administration
- ▶ Geographical distances
- ▶ Availability of transport for visits

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Course documents

▶ WIL Guide

- guidelines for student and industry supervisor,
- templates of attendance sheet
- activity sheet,
- supervisor's reports,
- marking scheme

▶ WIL Schedule

list of requirements and due dates for the semester

▶ Contract

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WIL Guide

- ▶ Description
 - ▶ Syllabus and learning outcomes
 - ▶ Internship placement
 - ▶ The role of NUST
 - ▶ The role of the host organization
 - ▶ The role of the ac. Supervisor
- ▶ Assessment
 - Attendance sheets, Activity and Reflection sheets (10%)
 - 2 reflective essays (10%)
 - 2 supervisor's reports (30%)
 - Portfolio (50%)
 - ▶ Forms



WIL Schedule and Contract

➤ WIL Schedule

- Preparation and approval dates (year before)
- Orientation session (November)
- Due dates and Visits during the semester
- Submissions/visits are signed by academic supervisor for record purposes

➤ Contract

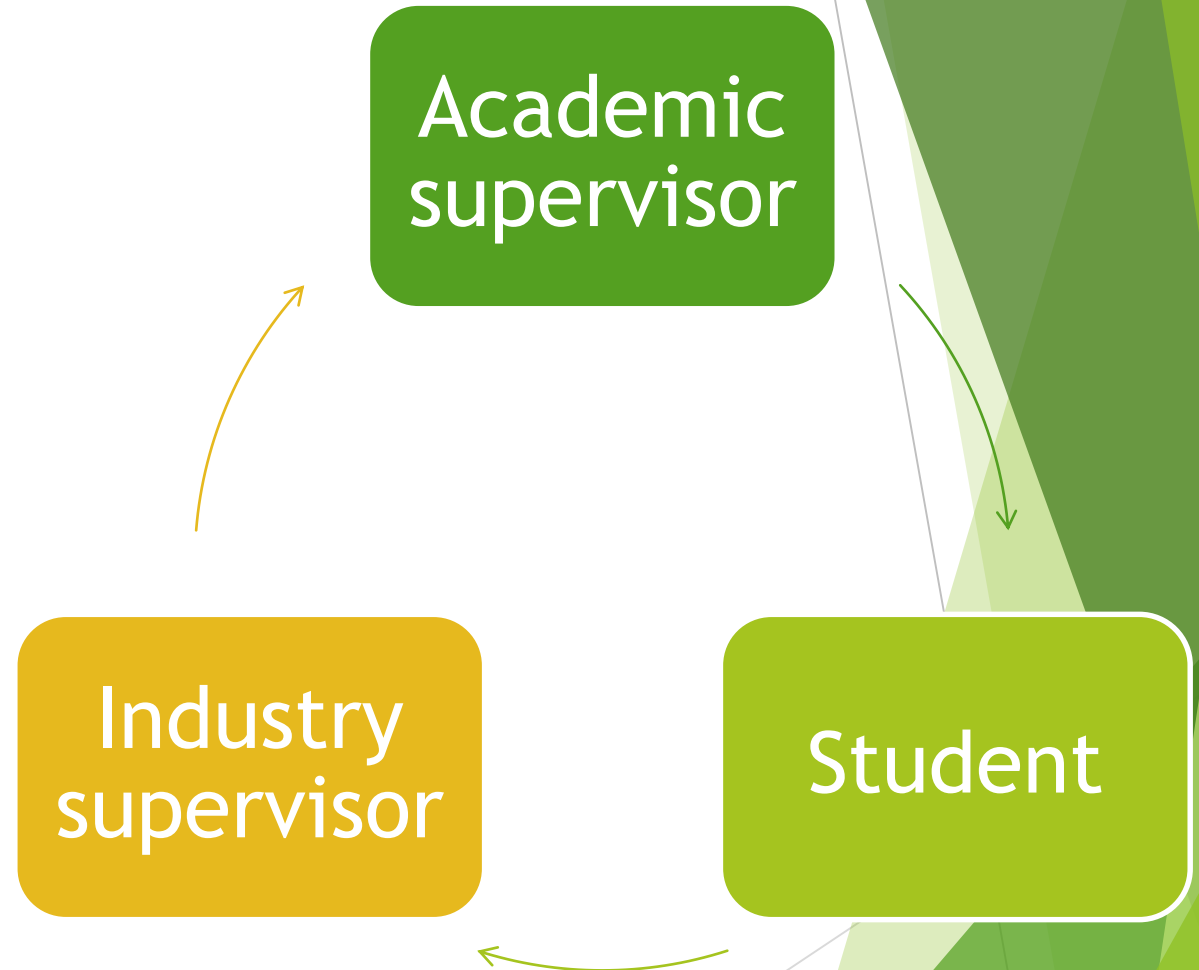
- between organization and NUST

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Stakeholder roles and communication



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Engagement of academic supervisor - ALL YEAR ROUND



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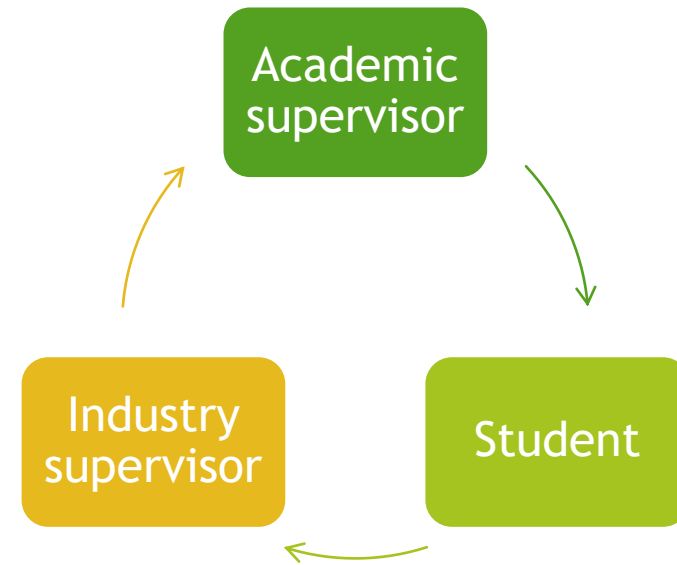
Industry visits

Purpose

- ▶ encourage successful completion,
- ▶ deal with challenges,
- ▶ Intervention

Nature

- ▶ industry supervisor, student and academic supervisor
- ▶ monitor the **progress** of the student
- ▶ student to present work done - **evidence**
- ▶ **opportunity** for questions, clarifications and concerns
- ▶ Should challenges and difficulties arise they can be dealt with during such visits to ensure smooth and **successful continuation** of the internship, or, if inevitable/unavoidable, a new internship place be recommended.



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Feedback from industry supervisors

► Positive comments

- positive attitude of students
- willingness to learn
- preparedness
- Organization
- Punctuality

► Areas of improvement

- Language skills
- Taking initiative

► Suggestions

- Communication and management of websites and social media

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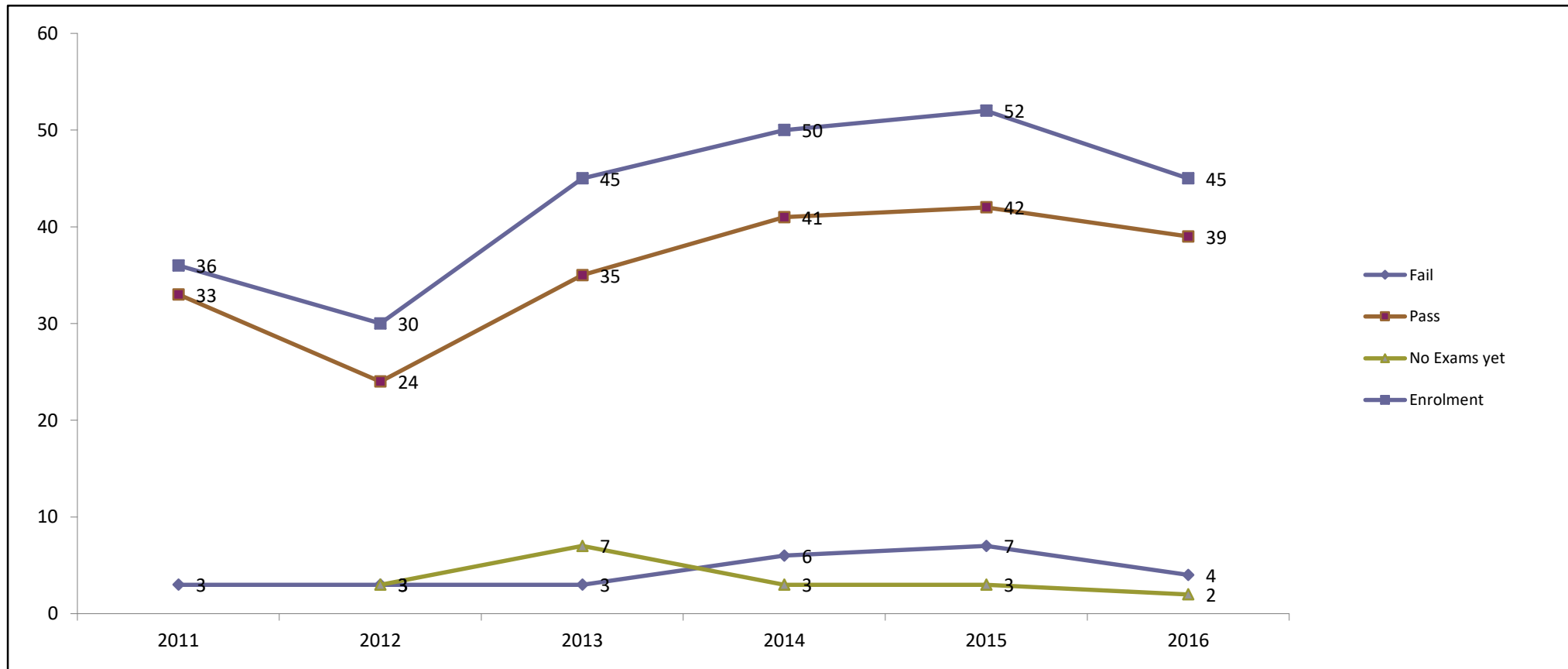


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Enrolment and pass rates

| Year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total | Total % |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|---------|
| Enrolment numbers | 36 | 30 | 45 | 50 | 52 | 45 | 258 | 100% |
| Pass | 33 | 24 | 35 | 41 | 42 | 39 | 214 | 83% |
| Fail | 3 | 3 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 26 | 10% |
| No exam yet | - | 3 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 18 | 7% |

Enrollment and pass rates

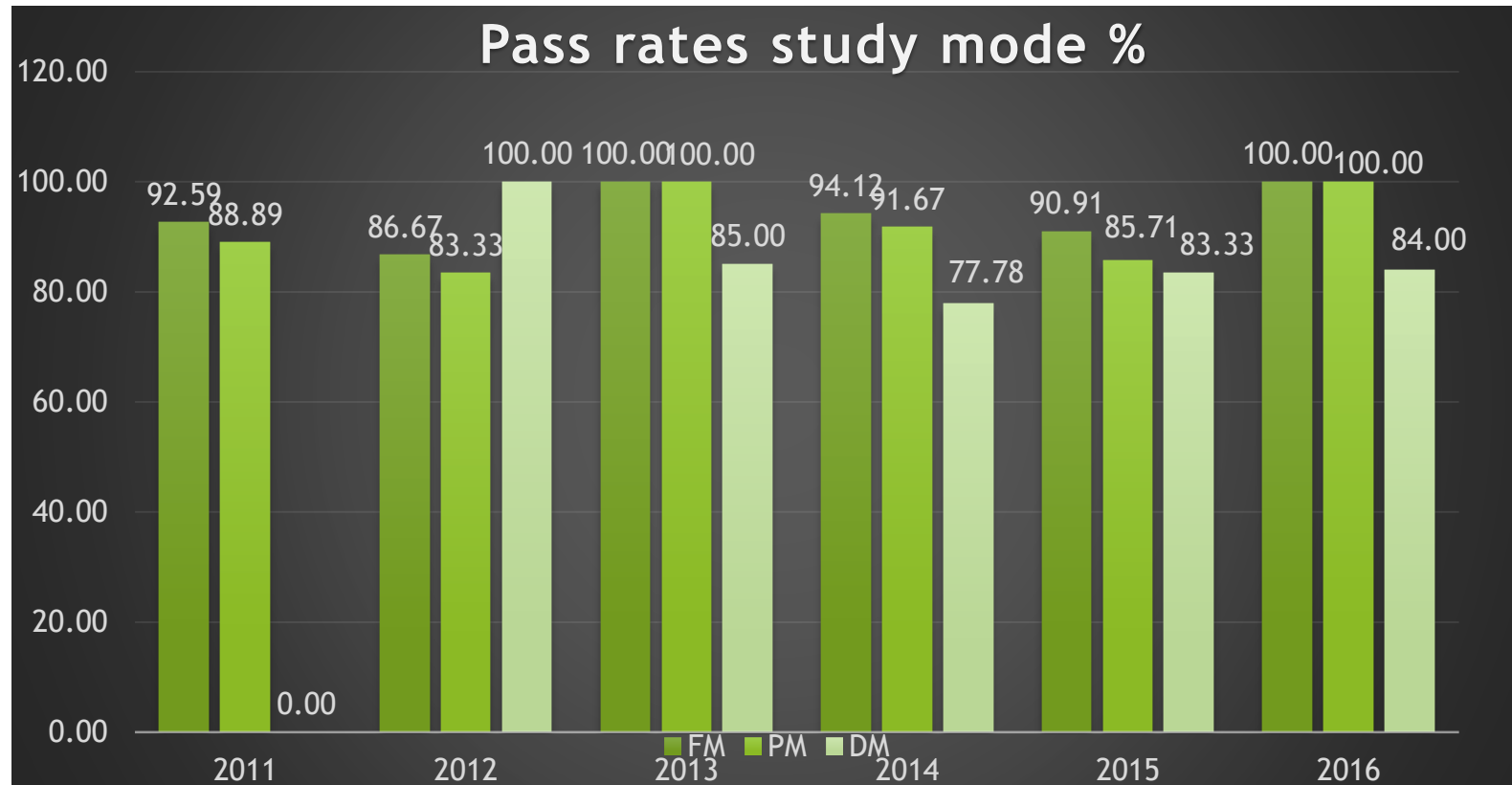


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Enrolment male/female ratio

| Year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | Total | Total % | |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--------|---------|------|
| Male/female ratio | 12:24 | 12:18 | 17:28 | 17:33 | 16:36 | 16:29 | 90:168 | 35%:65% | 100% |
| Pass | 12:21 | 10:14 | 9:26 | 13:28 | 11:31 | 14:25 | 69:145 | 83% | |
| Fail/no exam | 0:3 | - | 8:2 | 4:5 | 5:5 | 2:4 | 19:16 | 17% | |

Study mode and pass rates



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Age groups and pass rates

| Age groups | 2011 P:F | 2012 P:F | 2013 P:F | 2014 P:F | 2015 P:F | 2016 P:F | Total per age group | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------------|--|--|
| 18 - 20 | - | - | 3:2 | 4:0 | 10:3 | - | 17:5 | | |
| 21 - 25 | 16:1 | 8:2 | 17:2 | 16:5 | 12:1 | 22:0 | 91:11 | | |
| 26 - 30 | 8:0 | 4:2 | 9:2 | 6:1 | 8:3 | 6:2 | 41:10 | | |
| 31 - 35 | 4:0 | 7:0 | 3:1 | 8:3 | 7:0 | 6:2 | 35:6 | | |
| 36 - 40 | 3:0 | 3:2 | 2:1 | 6:0 | 3:3 | 2:1 | 19:7 | | |
| 41 - 45 | 0:1 | 1:0 | 1:1 | - | 1:0 | 2:1 | 5:3 | | |
| 46 + | 2:1 | 1:0 | - | 1:0 | 1:0 | 1:0 | 6:1 | | |
| Total P:F | 33:3 | 24:6 | 35:9 | 41:9 | 42:10 | 39:6 | 214:43 | | |
| Total | 36 | 30 | 44 | 50 | 52 | 45 | 257 | | |

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Learning outcomes

- ▶ Planning and organizing
- ▶ Sharpen speaking and writing skills
- ▶ Gaining confidence in spoken and written communication in the working environment
- ▶ Time management, punctuality
- ▶ Meeting deadlines
- ▶ Taking improvement comments
- ▶ Reflecting on one's own learning
- ▶ Monitoring one's learning progress
- ▶ Exposure to a variety of workplace scenarios



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Conclusion and recommendation

It can be concluded that WIL for Bachelor of Communication is successful as it ensures the following:

- ▶ **WIL preparation** (orientation session, industry partner list, documents).
- ▶ Guidance in writing (for the student and industry supervisor).
- ▶ **Guidance and advice** are provided throughout the semester by the university (academic supervisor).
- ▶ **Activities** pertaining to the Communication Degree in the organization as well as the academic programme.
- ▶ **High pass rates**
- ▶ Students obtain **adequate exposure to the work place environment**.
- ▶ Students feel they have the **optimum learning experience** possible (sometimes beyond their expectations).
- ▶ **Industry supervisors appreciation** of the Bachelor of Communication programme and prefer to provide internships to NUST students.
- ▶ It can further be stated that the minimal failure rate can be attributed to **the continuous improvement** of the WIL course and **excellent relationships with the industry partners**.

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