

REPORT ON THE NEW STUDENT SURVEY 2023-2024

APRIL 2024

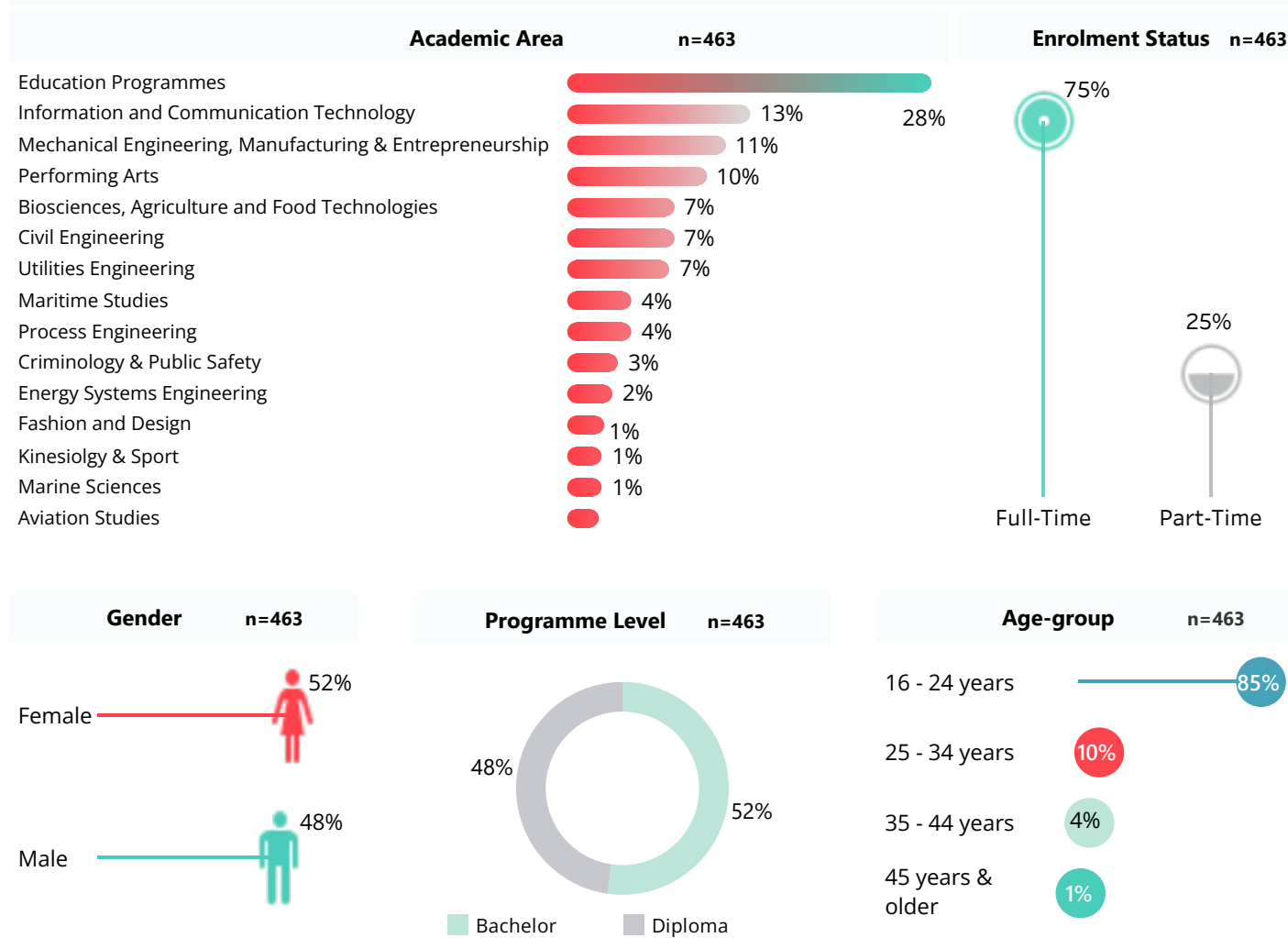


THE OFFICE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (QA&IE)

About the New Student Survey: 2023-24 Intake

The New Student Survey (NSS) was developed by the Office of Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness (QA&IE) and is administered annually to eligible first-time undergraduate students. The survey encourages feedback from these new students on their admission decision, programme funding, socio-economic background, support needs, skills and abilities, and university expectations.

The survey was administered between November 30th 2023 and March 18th 2024, to all freshers (students new to UTT), registered in the academic year 2023-2024 for the first time in bachelor and diploma programmes. At the time of the survey, 889 new students were eligible to be a part of the survey population. A total of 463 new students completed the survey, providing a response rate of 52%. Respondents were generally representative of the study population with respect to the demographic characteristics studied in this survey. The survey returns revealed that 28% of the respondents were students enrolled in Education programmes. Furthermore, 52% of the respondents were female, and an equal percentage were pursuing bachelor's degree programmes. Additionally, 75% of the respondents were registered as full-time students, and 85% fell within the age range of 16 to 24 years old. Respondents' demographic characteristics are illustrated below.

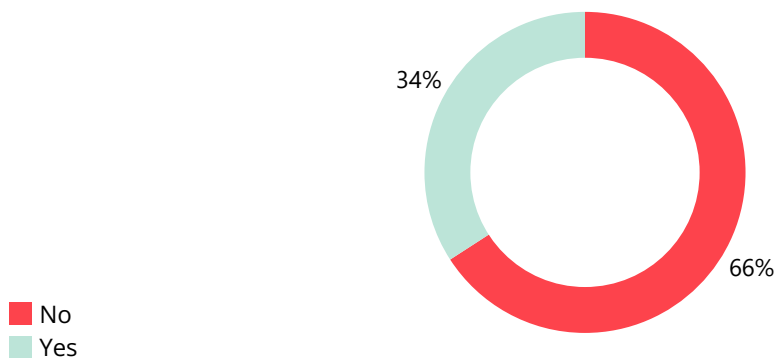


Student Recruitment

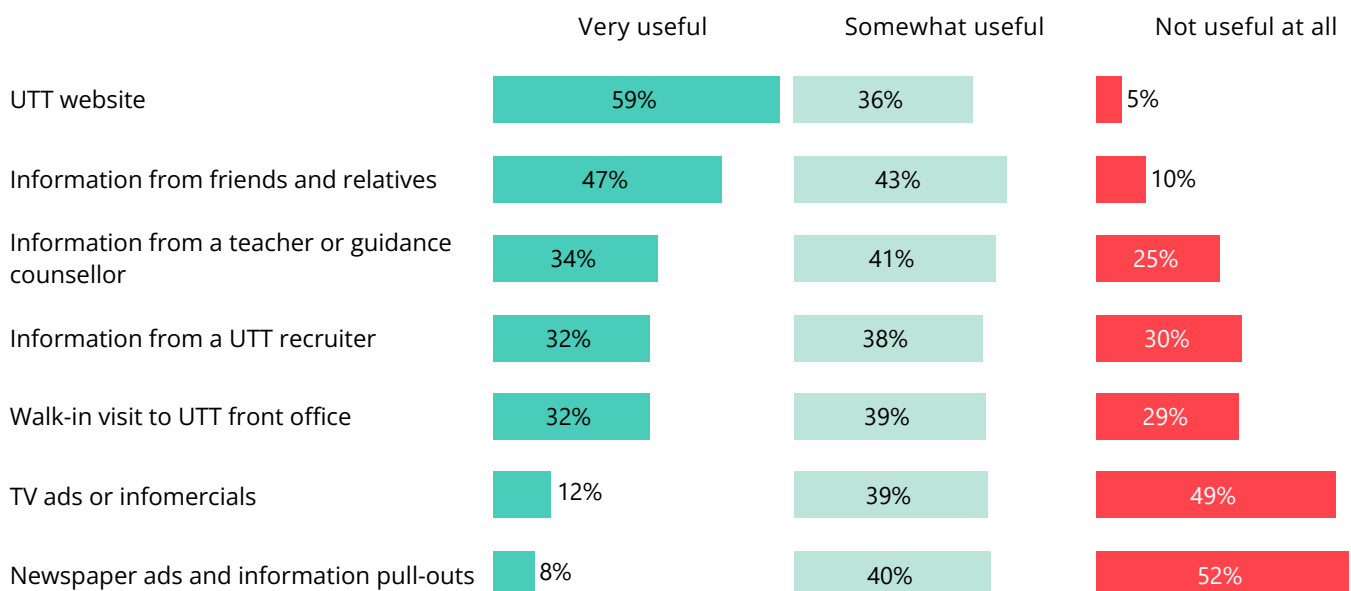
The survey asked new students how they learned about UTT's programmes and whether they had ever interacted with a UTT recruiter before enrolling at UTT. Survey findings indicate that approximately one in three new students (34%) had contact with a UTT recruiter before enrolling at the university.

When asked to rate the usefulness of various sources of information about UTT, students reported the UTT website (59%), information from friends and relatives (47%), and information from a teacher or guidance counsellor (34%) as the top three information sources that were very useful when deciding to apply to UTT. Students reported that TV infomercials and Newspaper ads were the least useful information sources.

Prior to enrolling at UTT, did you have contact with a UTT recruiter? n=463



Usefulness of various UTT information sources n=463

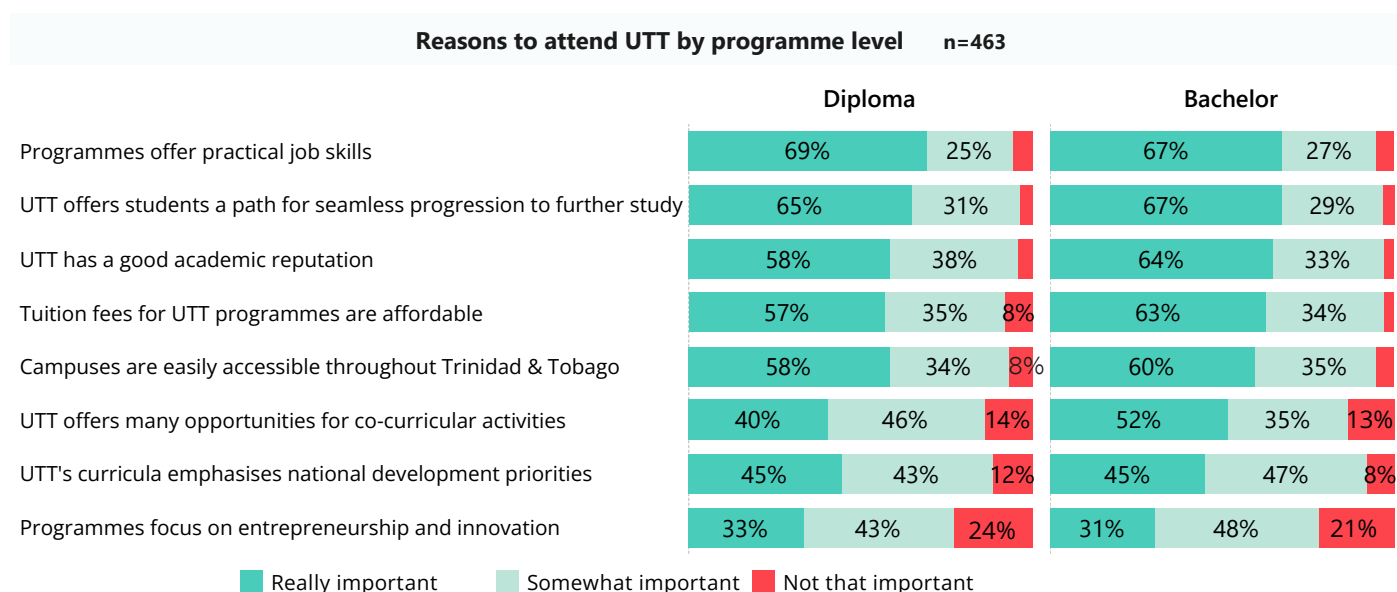
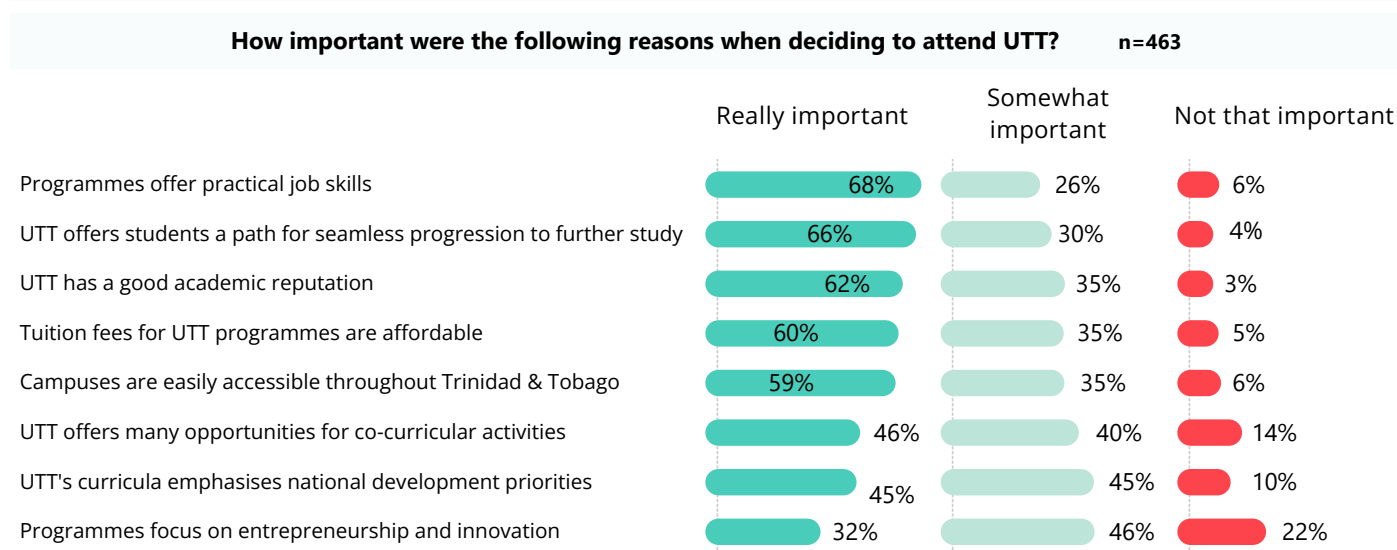


Student Admission Decisions

The survey provided insight into what makes UTT attractive to prospective students, by probing how important certain UTT attributes were to new students when making their decision to enrol at the university.

For new students in the academic year 2023-2024, attributes such as programmes with practical job skills (68%), a path for seamless progression to further study (66%), a good academic reputation (62%), and affordable tuition (60%), were ranked highest in importance as reasons for choosing UTT.

When disaggregated by programme level the major differences lie in the importance attached to the affordability of tuition fees and the emphasis on co-curricular activities, both of which appeared to be more important among those pursuing bachelor degrees.

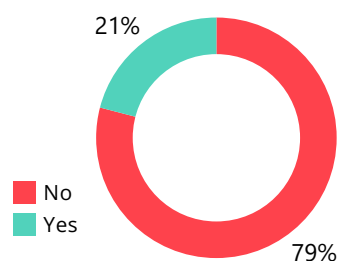


Student Admission Decisions

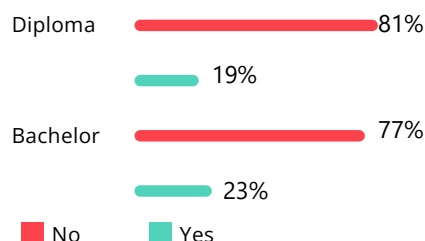
Respondents were asked whether they had also applied for admission to other tertiary education institutions. The survey results indicated that only 21% of respondents applied to other institutions in 2023-2024. Bachelor's degree students (23%) were more likely to have also applied to other institutions when compared to diploma students (19%). The findings suggested that UWI St. Augustine (45%) was the most popular alternative to UTT for new students. The College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago [COSTAATT] (10%), the UWI Open campus (8%), the University of the Southern Caribbean [USC] (6%), the MIC-IT (6%) and the NESC technical institute (6%) followed as popular alternatives to UTT.

UWI St Augustine and COSTAATT were among the top alternative options for bachelor's degree students. However, it is notable that technical institutes such as MIC and NESC were among the top alternatives for diploma students.

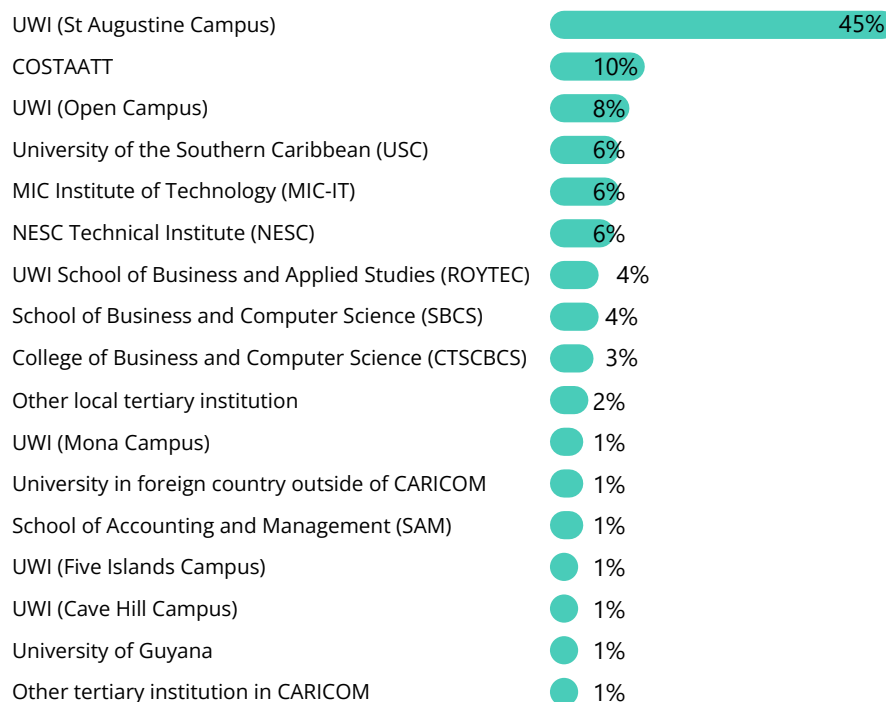
Did you apply for admission to other tertiary institutions? n=463



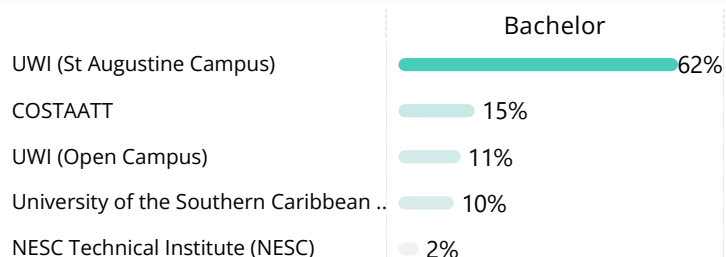
Application to other tertiary institutions by programme level? n=463



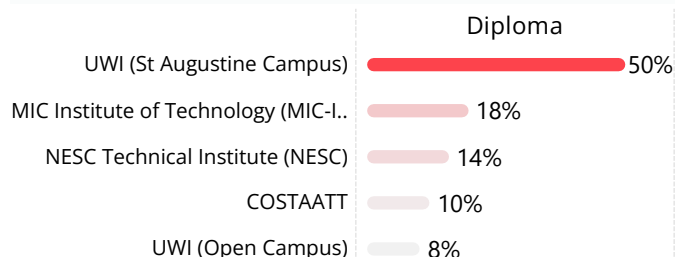
What other tertiary-level institutions did you apply to? n=97 [r =141]



Top 5 other tertiary institutions for bachelor students



Top 5 other tertiary institutions for diploma students

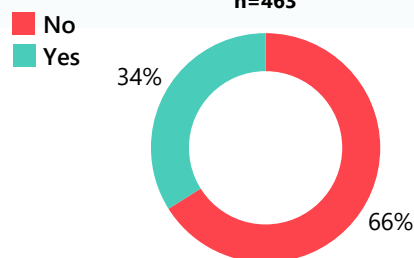


Students' Socio-Economic and Family Background

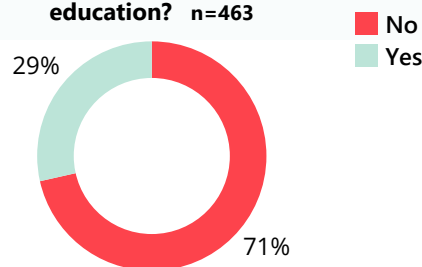
The survey aimed to provide some insight into new students' socio-economic and family backgrounds to better understand their support needs. The findings indicated that one-third (34%) of respondents entering UTT in 2023-2024 were previously enrolled in a tertiary education course or programme. Seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents reported that neither parent had completed an undergraduate degree or higher. When describing their family's financial status 30% of respondents described themselves as poor.

The majority (74%) of respondents reported that their estimated family income was less than ten thousand dollars (10,000 TTD) per month. On average, the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses (GATE) subsidy was the main source of funding for new students' basic study expenses (69%). This was followed by funds from their parents/family (27%) and their own funds (11%).

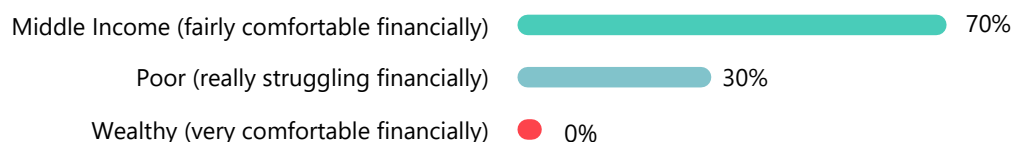
New student's previous enrolment in higher education? n=463



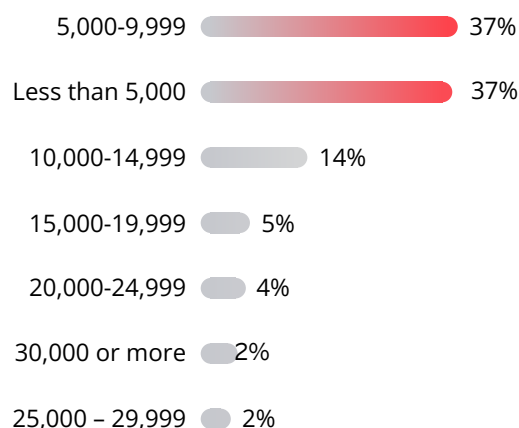
Has at least one of your parents attained higher education? n=463



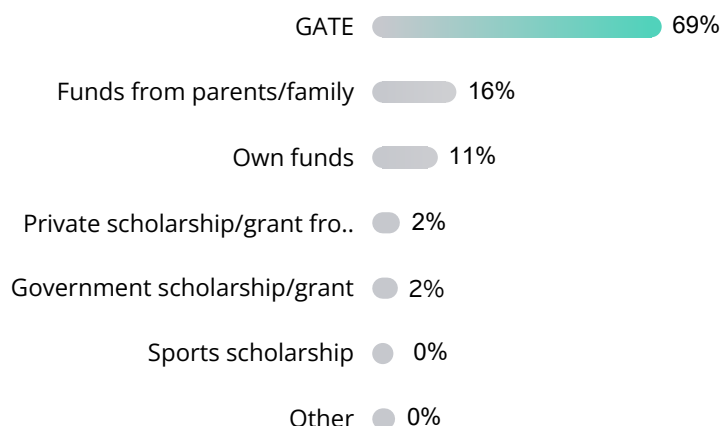
Family's current financial status? n=463



Estimated monthly household income n=463



Source of funding for UTT programme n= 463

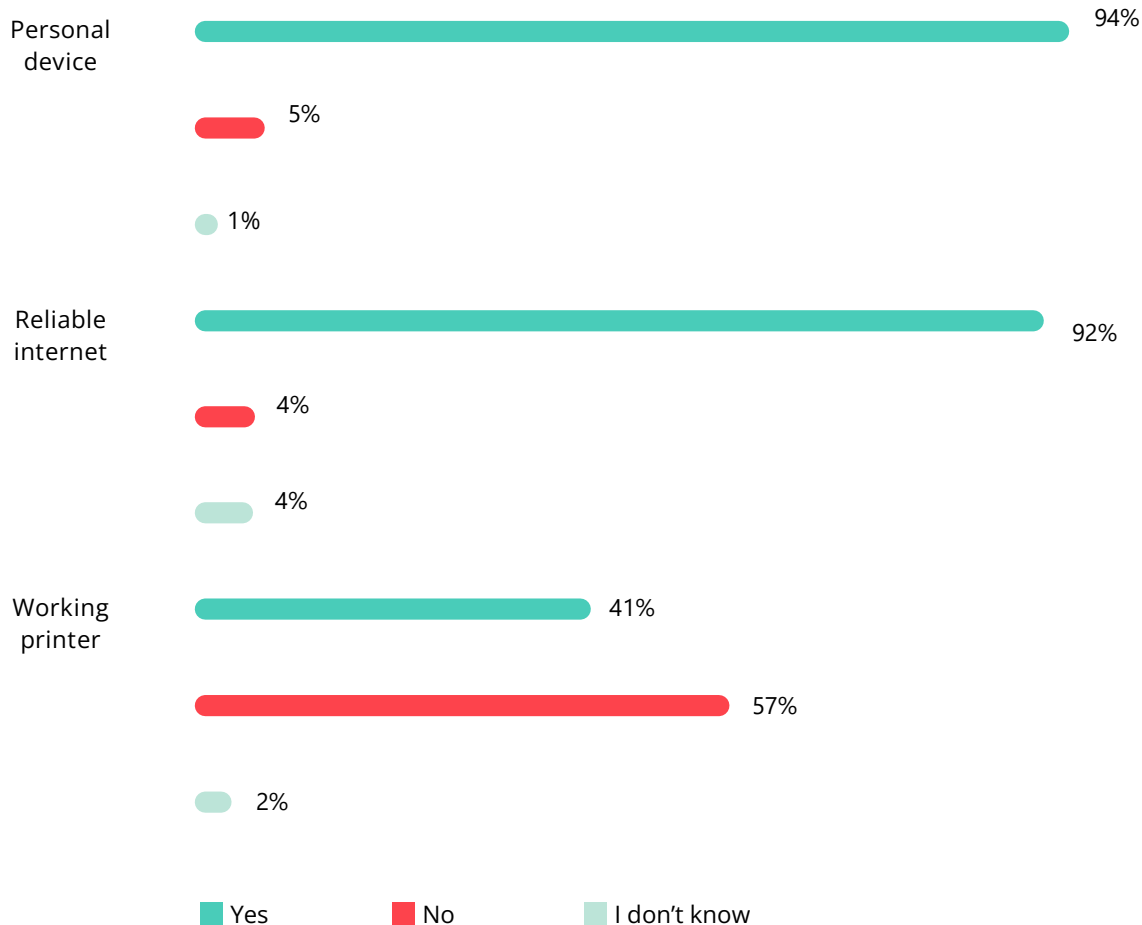


Access to Technology Resources

Students' access to reliable internet connectivity and digital devices have remained a critical issue given the pervasiveness of blended teaching and learning in the post-pandemic higher education landscape. The survey also probed the extent to which respondents had access to reliable digital devices and internet connectivity to facilitate their blended learning.

The results indicated that the vast majority of new students in 2023-2024 had access to digital devices (94%), and reliable internet (92%). However, less than half of respondents (41%) reported having access to a reliable printer at their homes.

Access to devices in a blended learning context (n=463)

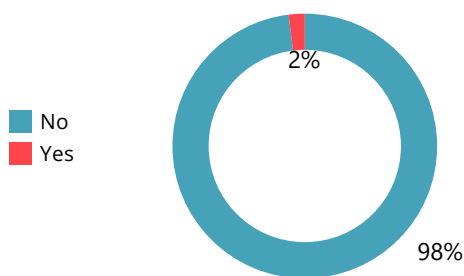


Student Support Needs

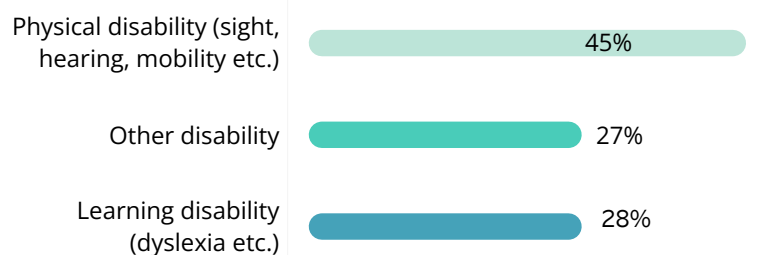
The survey also explored students' likely support requirements related to disabilities, health issues, and academic remediation. Among the respondents, only 2% reported a disability that necessitated special provisions from UTT. Of those identifying as having a disability, 45% reported a physical disability, 28% a learning disability, and 27% an unspecified or other type of disability. Five percent of respondents disclosed a chronic illness that may require special provisions from UTT. Among the new students reporting a chronic illness, 23% each reported having asthma and allergies. Among the new students reporting a chronic illness, 23% each reported having asthma and allergies.

Approximately one in five respondents (19%) believed they needed remedial support to manage the academic demands of their programme. Mathematics (40%), Physics (19%), English Grammar (13%), and Chemistry (13%) were the subjects where most students indicated a need for special tutoring or remedial support.

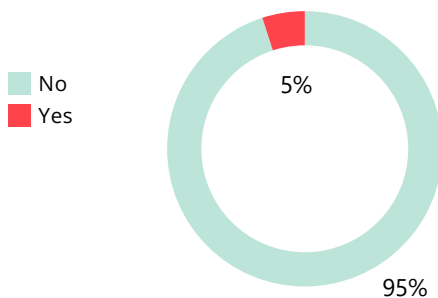
Student's with disabilities n=463



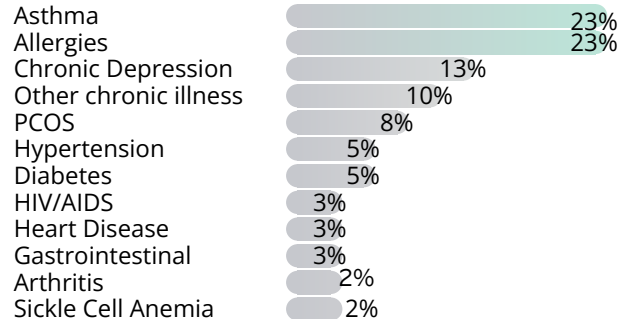
Types of disabilities n= 9 [r=11]



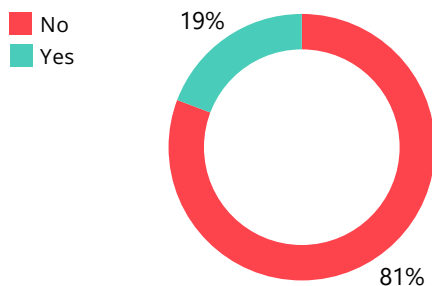
Student's with chronic illnesses n=463



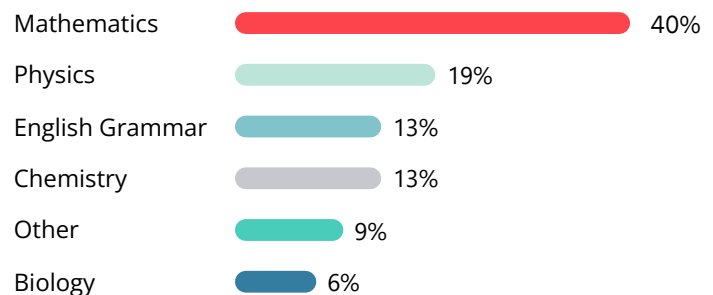
Types of chronic illnesses n=23 [r=39]



Students with remedial needs n=463



Remedial subject areas most needed by students n=89 [r=175]

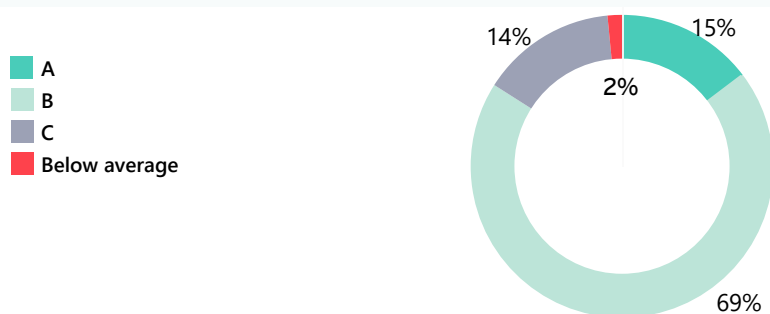


Students' Academic Self-Concept

The survey assessed new students' self-perception of their academic abilities. Academic self-concept is a key predictor of potential university performance and can be improved with appropriate support. When asked to grade themselves, 69% of respondents gave themselves a grade B. Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents believed that their academic abilities merited a grade A, 14% rated themselves a grade C and 2% felt that their academic abilities were below average.

The survey further explored students' academic self-concept by asking them to assess themselves on various characteristics. Among respondents, 50% or more considered themselves above average on traits such as cooperativeness (59%), open-mindedness (52%), and creativity (50%). However, 34% or fewer rated themselves as above average with respect to academic self confidence (34%), social self confidence (28%), and mathematical skills (26%).

Students' self-reported grade based on perceived academic ability (n=463)



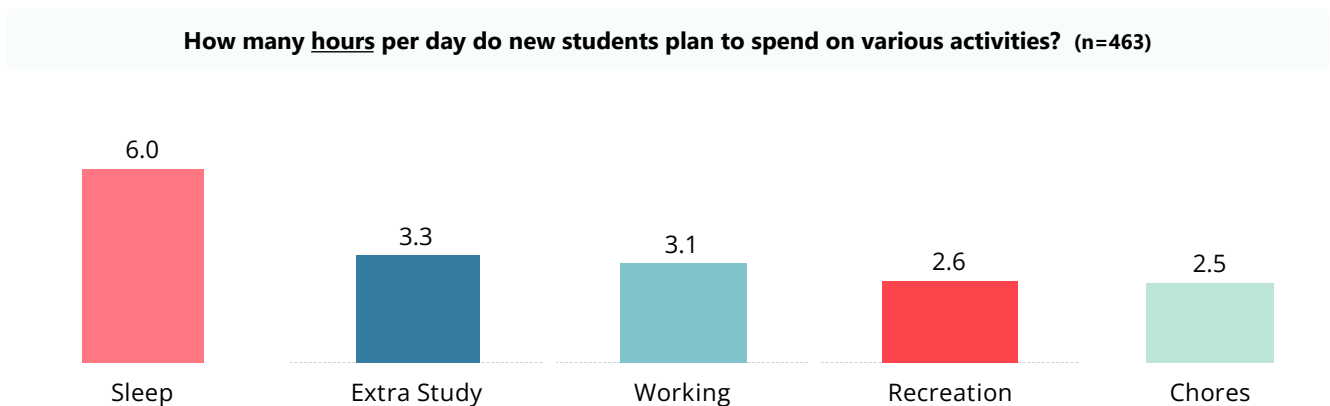
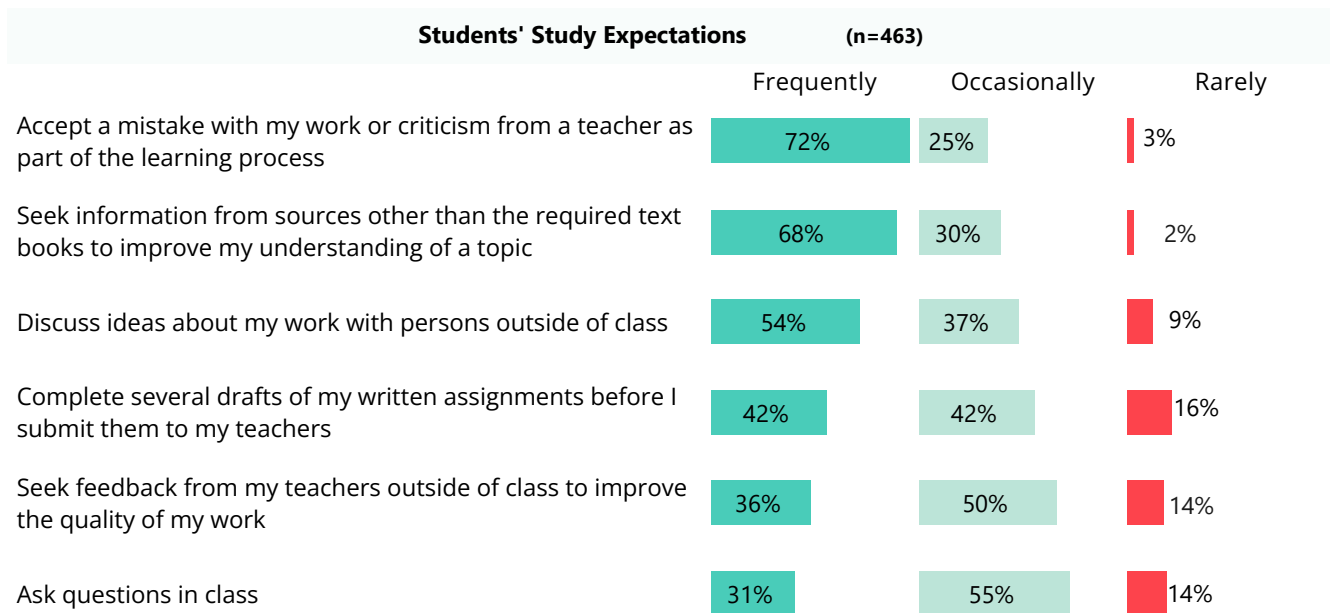
Students' Academic Self-Concept Rating (n=463)

	Above average	Average	Below average
Cooperativeness	59%	38%	3%
Open-mindedness	52%	46%	2%
Creativity	50%	43%	7%
Driven to succeed (financially)	45%	49%	6%
Empathy	43%	51%	6%
Persistence	43%	51%	6%
Intelligence	42%	57%	1%
Methodicalness (step by step)	40%	54%	6%
Risk-taking	36%	50%	14%
Writing Skills	36%	60%	4%
Academic self-confidence	34%	53%	13%
Social self-confidence	28%	53%	19%
Mathematical Skills	26%	64%	10%

Students' Personal Study Expectations

The survey further examined the learning habits of new students, as these habits are closely linked to academic success. Approximately 7 in 10 respondents reported that during their programme they were likely to regularly accept work-related criticism from their instructors as a part of their learning process (72%), and to seek information from sources beyond their main textbooks to enhance their understanding of a topic (68%). More than half (54%) of the respondents expressed a willingness to frequently discuss school-related work outside of class, while 42% indicated they were willing to frequently complete multiple drafts of assignments before final submission.

New students were also asked how they expected to distribute their time across various study and non-programme-related activities during a typical 24-hour period. On average, respondents anticipated spending 6 hours sleeping, 3.3 hours on additional study, 3.1 hours working to earn income, 2.6 hours on recreational activities, and 2.5 hours on household chores.



Students' Programme and University Expectations

The survey explored a range of likely student expectations about their programme and learning experience to help better address their needs. Among respondents, skills such as problem-solving (83%), opportunities for practical work attachments (81%), and communication skills (79%) were highly valued as expected outcomes from their programme of study. Additionally, 7 in 10 respondents rated skills related to community enrichment (72%), knowledge of key concepts and developments in science and technology (70%), and ability to use computer technology in a modern business office (70%), as really important. However, fewer than 4 in 10 respondents believed that becoming involved in volunteerism (39%), and participating in religious activities (35%), were really important.

Students' expectations of their UTT programme of study (n=463)			
	Really important	Somewhat important	Not that important
I will learn how to better analyse and solve complex problems	83%	17%	0%
I will have opportunities for work attachments and internships	81%	17%	2%
I will learn how to communicate more effectively, orally and in writing	79%	21%	0%
I will develop skills which will help me to make a difference in my community and country	72%	24%	4%
I will develop a better understanding of key concepts and developments in science and technology	70%	26%	4%
I will learn how to better use computers and work with common software used in a modern business office	70%	27%	3%
I will learn how to conduct experiments or do research	66%	31%	3%
I will be able to use technology to collaborate and interact with teachers and students in a virtual online environment	66%	30%	4%
I will have opportunities to collaborate and learn with other students and teachers as part of a close community	62%	33%	5%
I will improve my ability to work with numbers and statistics	61%	35%	4%
I will be able to have a mix of face-to-face and online classes in my programme	58%	33%	9%
I will understand major global issues and their implications for Trinidad & Tobago	55%	38%	7%
I will learn about entrepreneurship and starting a business	54%	33%	13%
I will better understand the ethnic and cultural diversity in Trinidad & Tobago	50%	39%	11%
I will have opportunities to participate in recreational sport and social activities	44%	41%	15%
I will learn about art and artistic expression in Trinidad & Tobago	42%	33%	25%
I will have the opportunity to become involved in a university-based volunteer or community service programme	39%	45%	16%
I will have the opportunity to participate in religious events in which I have an active interest	35%	40%	24%

Summary and Conclusion

The 2022-23 NSS findings revealed key insights in three main areas:

Recruitment and Admissions

Approximately one-third of new students interacted with a UTT recruiter before enrolling, yet the UTT website emerged as the most valued information source for prospective students, with 59% rating it as very useful. Students reported that TV infomercials and Newspaper Ads were the least useful information sources. UTT's top strengths as perceived by students included programmes with practical job skills (68%), seamless progression to further study (66%), a good academic reputation (62%), and affordable tuition (60%). Among new students in AY 2023-2024, 79% applied exclusively to UTT, while UWI St Augustine (45%), COSTAATT (10%), and UWI Open Campus (8%) were popular alternatives. These findings underscore the importance of leveraging recruitment efforts and enhancing the UTT website and digital marketing strategies.

Support Needs

Approximately two-thirds of new students do not have a parent with a tertiary degree, while 30% report financial struggles, with 74% having a household income below \$10k per month. GATE funding covers a significant portion (69%) of basic study expenses. Additionally, 2% of new students have declared disabilities, and 5% declared chronic illnesses requiring accommodations from UTT to help them persist to graduation. Students generally perceive themselves as cooperative (59%), open-minded (52%), and creative (50%) but lack social self-confidence (34%) and academic self confidence (28%). Most new students (69%) assessed their academic capabilities to be equivalent to a grade B level. However, 1 in 5 anticipate needing academic remediation, notably in mathematics (40%). Fewer than half expect to engage frequently in some activities which promote academic success, such as completing multiple drafts of an assignment before final submission (42%), seeking feedback from instructors outside of class (36%), and asking questions in class (31%). These findings highlight the need for comprehensive support services and initiatives to foster academic success habits among new students.

Desired Learning Outcomes and Expectations

New students prioritise improving problem-solving (83%), work attachments/internships (81%), communication skills (79%), civic advocacy (72%), understanding key science and technology concepts (70%), and digital proficiency in the work environment (70%). Additionally, they emphasise the importance of honing research skills (66%), virtual collaboration (66%), a community-oriented learning environment (62%), and enhancing numeracy skills (61%). These insights should inform curriculum enhancements to meet evolving learner needs and expectations.

The NSS 2023/24 findings highlight key actions that can be utilised to better align with student expectations and support their journey to graduation. These include:

- Improve recruitment strategies, emphasising website development and targeted digital marketing.
- Expand support services for vulnerable students who may be economically disadvantaged or possess a disability/health issue.
- Promote academic success habits through orientation and support programmes.
- Enhance the curriculum to align with desired learning outcomes and expectations.

Implementing these recommendations will better support new students at UTT, ensuring a positive academic experience.