

2010 EXIT SURVEY OF GRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETING DEGREES
FALL 2009, WINTER 2010, SPRING 2010, AND SUMMER 2010

Descriptive Statistics

Report 2010-04

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2010 EXIT SURVEY OF GRADUATE STUDENTS COMPLETING DEGREES FALL 2009, WINTER 2010, SPRING 2010, AND SUMMER 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2010 Exit Survey of Graduate Students Completing Degrees continues the Office of Survey Research's (OSR) survey of Graduate students first initiated in 2009. The current survey was administered at the end of each quarter to graduate students slated to graduate that quarter. This report summarizes responses from students who graduated in Fall 2009, Winter 2010, Spring 2010, and Summer 2010. With the help of the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, this survey was designed to elicit information on program satisfaction, the frequency and scope of academic interaction on and off campus, barriers to success, and plans for the future. OSR used a mixture of online and telephone survey methodologies and links survey results with Western's student records thus expanding their usefulness to researchers and university decision makers. Anonymous individual-level survey responses may be shared with interested campus parties.

This exit survey was administered to graduate students earning their masters degrees at the conclusion of their final enrolled quarter. Of the 329 recipients of this degree, (Fall 2009-Summer 2010) OSR received valid responses from 231 (a response rate of 70.2%). The survey was launched with an e-mail invitation to potential respondents about four weeks prior to the end of each quarter. Follow up e-mail reminders were sent approximately every four days for the subsequent two weeks. Phone call reminders were then placed to all non-respondents. The survey was then closed immediately after commencement exercises.

As with any survey, readers should be concerned with sample selection bias; that is bias which arises because survey respondents are not a random selection of the population of survey recipients. While sample selection bias for Western's graduate exit survey is mitigated through proper survey techniques and limited by a high response rate, its presence should continually be kept in mind when evaluating results. Section A of this document presents basic descriptive statistics that compares all graduates with those who responded to the survey. At the university level, these comparisons reveal the average respondent is nearly identical to the average graduate. For instance, 40% of respondents are male compared to 42% of all graduates. Nine percent of respondents are minorities as are 9% of all graduates. Similar results occur for average age (31.1 years for respondents, 31.5 years for graduates), the number of credit hours attempted (65.2 for respondents and 65.3 for graduates) and for the average graduate GPA (3.81 for respondents and 3.79 for graduates).

Section B of this report presents descriptions of questions geared to understanding students' background and their general satisfaction with their Western graduate experience. When asked their primary activity immediately prior to enrolling in a Western graduate program, students are almost evenly split between pursuing an undergraduate degree, working in a field related to their graduate program, and working in a field unrelated to their graduate program. Seventy-Two percent of students claimed that, if given the opportunity, they would "probably" or "definitely" select Western again for graduate study. Seventy-eight percent would "probably" or "definitely" recommend Western to someone considering graduate school. These satisfaction levels are almost identical with those reported on the 2009 exit survey (75% in that survey would select Western again and 78% would recommend it to someone).

Sections C and D present information regarding a student's academic program. For instance, 89% of students reported that the level of academic challenge was "very" or "extremely" important to them and 75% of students claimed they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the level of academic challenge they encountered. Ninety-six percent of students claimed the overall quality of their program was "very" or "extremely" important and 81% were satisfied with their program. Five percent of students have written a paper for publication based on their thesis and a further 23% plan to do so.

The following section (E) presents information on graduate teaching assistantships and barriers to academic success. The most commonly reported barrier to academic progress was family obligations followed by course scheduling/availability. Almost two-thirds of respondents claimed the availability (or lack thereof) of faculty had no impact on their progress towards their degree. The average graduate accumulates just over \$14,000

in debt from their graduate program but this average obscures the nearly one-third of students who leave Western without any additional academic debt from their program.

The final section of this report (F) details future plans. One-third of respondents had received an offer of post-graduate employment; 82% of respondents had an immediate post-graduate plan involving employment. Nine percent of respondents intend to continue graduate study and of these, over four-fifths have already been admitted to a program.

One benefit of the graduate exit survey is that the data is tracked by a unique student identifier which allows OSR to divide the data by school or program. OSR hopes to share this data with administrators and individuals who hope to improve their programs.

Clarifying Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, percentages given are of the number responding to a question divided by the number asked that question. This denominator may contain fewer students than the 231 responding to the survey due to question branching, random selection of respondents for certain questions, and survey attrition.
2. In many cases percentages do not sum to one hundred because of rounding.
3. A blank space indicates no respondent chose that response option. A report of 0% indicates that the percent of responses rounded down to, but is not equal with, zero.
4. Because of survey length, some questions were asked of a random sample of students. The notes associated with such questions indicate when this occurs.
5. This report presents responses from all students completing any question regardless of whether the respondent completed the survey or not.

THE OFFICE OF SURVEY RESEARCH

The Office of Survey Research provides high quality survey research and other applied social science research that supports the mission of Western Washington University. In particular, OSR surveys students, alumni, graduates, employers, and the campus community to provide valuable assessment data and analysis of reports which can be used for improvement of programs, instruction, faculty scholarship, and information services. OSR is responsible for developing and administering the Western Educational Longitudinal Study (WELS), Western's Alumni Surveys, and Western's exit surveys of graduating students.

<http://www.wvu.edu/socad/osr/>

A. Comparison of all Graduates and Respondents

A.1. Graduate Characteristics

| | WWU | CBE | Woodring | Fine Arts | CHSS | Huxley | CST |
|--------------------------|------|------|----------|-----------|------|--------|------|
| N | 329 | 67 | 108 | 5 | 83 | 25 | 41 |
| % Male | 42% | 67% | 28% | 80% | 35% | 28% | 59% |
| % Minority | 9% | 9% | 16% | 0% | 4% | 10% | 3% |
| Mean Age March 2009 | 30.1 | 28.7 | 33.1 | 27.3 | 28.9 | 29.6 | 26.9 |
| Median Age March 2009 | 27 | 26 | 30 | 27 | 26 | 27 | 25 |
| % Graduated Fall 2009 | 8% | 0% | 12% | 20% | 6% | 20% | 10% |
| % Graduated Winter 2010 | 11% | 0% | 8% | 20% | 11% | 40% | 17% |
| % Graduated Spring 2010 | 52% | 75% | 36% | 60% | 69% | 16% | 44% |
| % Graduated Summer 2010 | 27% | 25% | 44% | 0% | 13% | 20% | 24% |
| Graduate Hours Attempted | 65.3 | 61.2 | 71.5 | 63.2 | 68.4 | 53.9 | 56.9 |
| Graduate Hours Completed | 63.6 | 60.3 | 70.7 | 61 | 66.5 | 50.2 | 53.5 |
| Graduate GPA | 3.79 | 3.66 | 3.89 | 3.86 | 3.77 | 3.86 | 3.75 |

A.2. Sample Characteristics

| | WWU | CBE | Woodring | Fine Arts | CHSS | Huxley | CST |
|--------------------------|------|------|----------|-----------|------|--------|------|
| N | 231 | 49 | 77 | 4 | 61 | 16 | 24 |
| % Male | 40% | 63% | 31% | 75% | 34% | 25% | 42% |
| % Minority | 9% | 10% | 17% | 0% | 4% | 0% | 5% |
| Mean Age March 2009 | 30.5 | 28.4 | 33.7 | 32.5 | 29.5 | 29.3 | 27.9 |
| Median Age March 2009 | 27 | 26 | 31 | 27 | 27 | 27 | 25 |
| % Graduated Fall 2009 | 9% | 0% | 14% | 25% | 7% | 19% | 4% |
| % Graduated Winter 2010 | 12% | 0% | 9% | 25% | 11% | 44% | 21% |
| % Graduated Spring 2010 | 51% | 69% | 32% | 50% | 70% | 19% | 46% |
| % Graduated Summer 2010 | 29% | 31% | 44% | 0% | 11% | 19% | 29% |
| Graduate Hours Attempted | 65.2 | 61.7 | 69.5 | 61.5 | 67.6 | 53.1 | 61.3 |
| Graduate Hours Completed | 64 | 60.8 | 69.3 | 59.3 | 65.9 | 49.9 | 59 |
| Graduate GPA | 3.81 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.98 | 3.77 | 3.9 | 3.76 |

B. Attending Graduate School

B.1. What was your primary activity immediately prior to enrolling in your program at Western? (N = 233)

| | |
|---|-----|
| Undergraduate student | 33% |
| Employed in a field related to your program | 36% |
| Employed in a field unrelated to your program | 27% |
| Other | 4% |

B.1.a. What was your primary activity immediately prior to enrolling in your program at Western? (Asked of respondents who answered "other" in B.1.) (N = 9) Other included: YouthServe Americorps volunteer, stay at home mother, graduate student in education, retired corporate executive, unemployed, post baccalaureate studies at WWU, writing a book and working part-time construction. (Text responses available on request.)

B.2. Please indicate your response to the following. (N = 233)

| | Definitely not | Probably not | Maybe | Probably | Definitely |
|--|----------------|--------------|-------|----------|------------|
| If you were to start your graduate career again, would you select WWU? | 3% | 8% | 18% | 36% | 36% |
| If you were to start your graduate career again, would you select the same field of study? | 0% | 2% | 12% | 21% | 65% |
| Would you recommend Western to someone considering your program? | 1% | 6% | 14% | 29% | 49% |

C. Academic Program

C.1. For each of the following, please rate both the importance of, as well as your satisfaction with that aspect of your program.

C.1.a. Importance

| | N | Not important | A little important | Somewhat important | Very important | Extremely important |
|---|-----|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Level of academic challenge | 227 | | 0% | 11% | 56% | 33% |
| Keeping pace with recent trends and developments in the field | 227 | 0% | 2% | 13% | 37% | 47% |
| Professional training opportunities | 224 | 1% | 3% | 16% | 33% | 46% |
| Research opportunities | 225 | 10% | 16% | 31% | 24% | 19% |
| Quality of research conducted | 223 | 5% | 15% | 27% | 30% | 22% |
| Quality of instruction | 226 | | | 3% | 22% | 75% |
| Quality of advising | 226 | 1% | 4% | 16% | 31% | 47% |
| Adequacy of space, facilities and/or equipment | 226 | 1% | 7% | 36% | 36% | 21% |
| Overall quality of the degree program | 226 | | | 4% | 28% | 68% |

C.1.b. Satisfaction

| | N | Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neutral | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|---|-----|-------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Level of academic challenge | 231 | | 9% | 15% | 56% | 19% |
| Keeping pace with recent trends and developments in the field | 230 | 1% | 7% | 17% | 48% | 27% |
| Professional training opportunities | 231 | 4% | 13% | 25% | 36% | 22% |
| Research opportunities | 231 | 2% | 9% | 35% | 40% | 15% |
| Quality of research conducted | 224 | 1% | 7% | 36% | 42% | 15% |
| Quality of instruction | 231 | 3% | 7% | 13% | 48% | 30% |
| Quality of advising | 231 | 4% | 14% | 19% | 33% | 29% |
| Adequacy of space, facilities and/or equipment | 230 | 2% | 11% | 18% | 49% | 20% |
| Overall quality of the degree program | 231 | 1% | 7% | 11% | 55% | 26% |

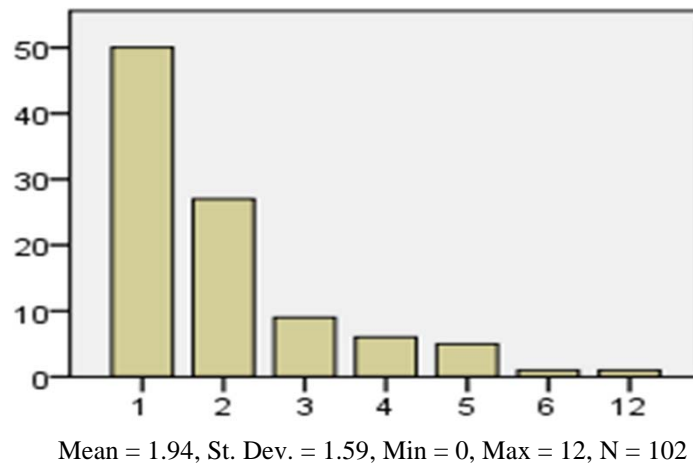
C.1.b.1. Why are you (dissatisfied) with the overall quality of your degree program? (Asked of respondents who answered "very dissatisfied" or "dissatisfied" in C.1.b.) (N = 18) (Responses included: poor quality of instruction and advising, academic standards were too low, unsatisfactory ethical behavior from some faculty members, classes were poorly structured, not offered a good value for the price paid, too many classes involved students teaching rather than faculty.) (Text responses available on request.)

D. Professional Development

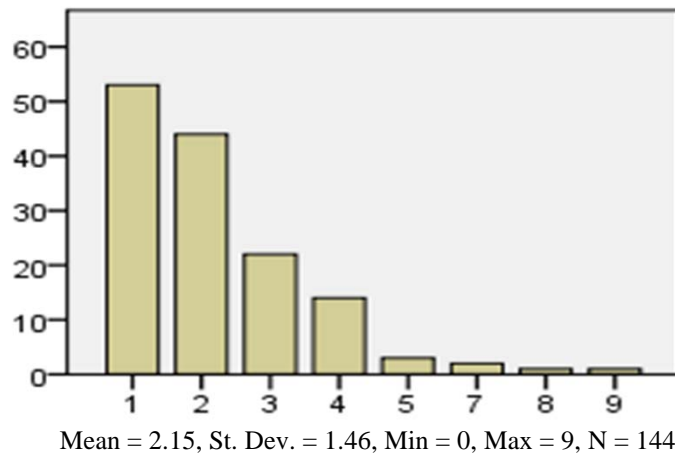
D.1. Have you done any of the following during your graduate study at Western?

| | N | Yes | No |
|--|-----|-----|-----|
| Attended a national or regional meeting associated with your discipline? | 233 | 45% | 55% |
| Attended an academic or professional conference? | 233 | 63% | 37% |
| Presented research at a seminar or conference? | 232 | 32% | 68% |
| Co-authored an article in a refereed journal with a program faculty? | 232 | 7% | 93% |
| Published as the sole or first author in a refereed journal? | 230 | 4% | 96% |

D.1.a. How many national or regional meetings associated with your discipline have you attended? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in D.1., "attended a national or regional meeting.")

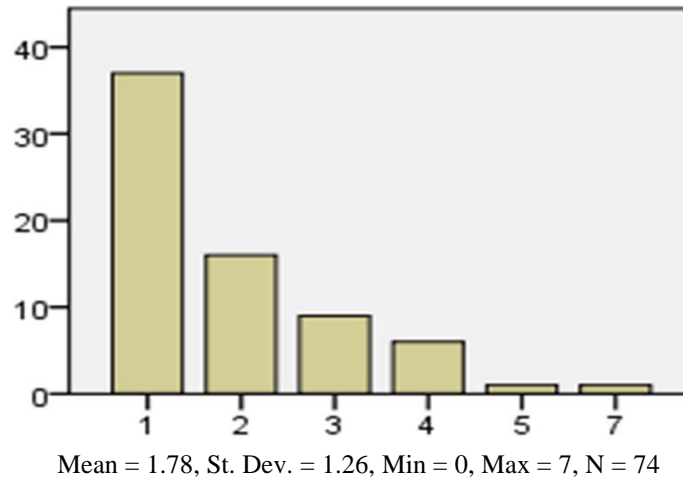


D.1.b. How many academic or professional conferences have you attended? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in D.1., "attended an academic or professional conference.")

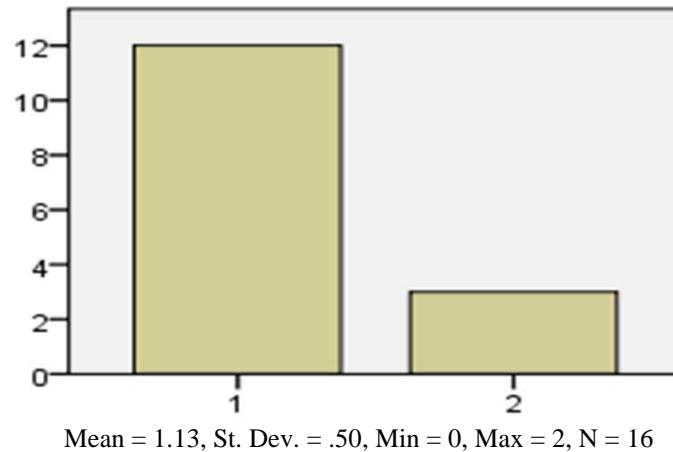


D. Professional Development (cont.)

D.1.c. At how many seminars or conferences have you presented research? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in D.1., "presented research at a seminar or conference.")



D.1.d. How many articles have you published in refereed journals as a co-author? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in D.1., "co-authored an article in a refereed journal.")



D.1.e. How many articles have you published in refereed journals as the sole or first author? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in D.1., "published as the sole or first author in a refereed journal.") Eight respondents reported that they published one article in a refereed journal as the sole or first author.

D. Professional Development (cont.)

D.2. Have you written, or do you plan to write a paper for publication based on your thesis?

| | |
|--|-----|
| N | 233 |
| Yes, I have written a paper for publication | 5% |
| Yes, I plan to write a paper for publication | 23% |
| No | 18% |
| I did not write a thesis | 54% |

E. Graduate Study at Western

E.1. While at Western, did you hold a Graduate Teaching Assistantship position?

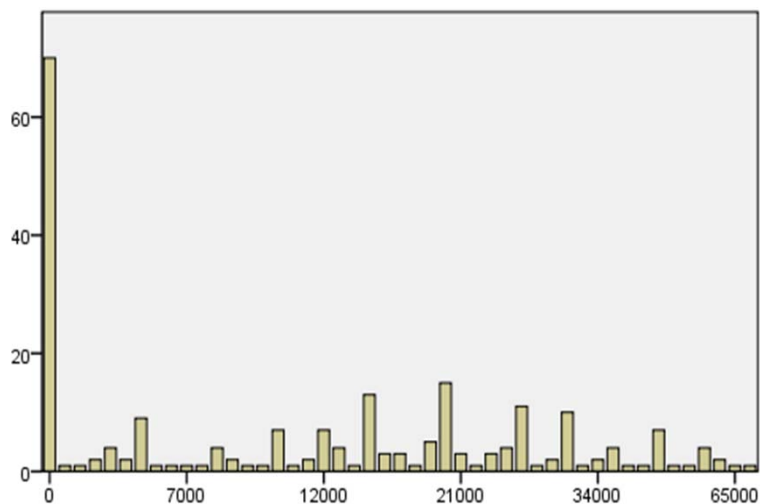
| N | Yes | No |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 233 | 37% | 63% |

E.2. Rate the extent to which the following factors were an obstacle to your academic progress and/or time to degree.

| | N | N/A | No impact | Minor impact | Major impact |
|--------------------------------|-----|-----|-----------|--------------|--------------|
| Family obligations | 232 | 6% | 42% | 34% | 18% |
| Availability of faculty | 233 | 3% | 64% | 27% | 5% |
| Course scheduling/availability | 232 | 3% | 52% | 34% | 11% |
| Thesis research | 231 | 44% | 32% | 15% | 9% |
| Other (please specify below) | 122 | 68% | 10% | 6% | 16% |

E.2.a. Other obstacles (Asked of respondents who answered "other" in E.3.) (N = 29) Other included: practicum scheduling, time commitment of workload, working to pay for school, cost/financial aid availability, only night classes offered, working full time and attending graduate school part-time, full-time teaching, lack of advisory participation on thesis, funding for thesis research travel, availability of laboratory facilities, personal illness. (Text responses available on request.)

E.3. Approximately how much debt did you incur to finance your graduate education at Western?



All respondents: Mean = \$14,150, St. Dev. = \$14,860, Min = \$0, Max = \$80,000, N = 224

Respondents who incurred debt: Mean = \$20,581, St. Dev. = \$13,733, Min = \$25, Max = \$80,000, N = 154

F. Plans for the Future

F.1. For each of the following activities, please rate both the likelihood you will engage in the activity, as well as your satisfaction with the level of preparation offered in your program.

F.1.a. Likelihood

| | N | Very unlikely | Somewhat unlikely | Neutral | Somewhat likely | Very likely |
|--|-----|---------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------|-------------|
| Teaching at a higher-ed institution | 232 | 22% | 15% | 9% | 32% | 22% |
| Teaching at the K-12 level | 230 | 46% | 10% | 10% | 11% | 24% |
| Conducting independent research | 229 | 15% | 17% | 17% | 29% | 21% |
| Formulating a research topic | 231 | 16% | 15% | 19% | 31% | 19% |
| Collaborating on research with faculty members | 231 | 18% | 18% | 22% | 26% | 16% |
| Writing a grant proposal | 229 | 15% | 9% | 24% | 26% | 26% |

F.1.b. Satisfaction

| | N | Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neutral | Satisfied | Very satisfied |
|--|-----|-------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|----------------|
| Teaching at a higher-ed institution | 222 | 1% | 5% | 48% | 33% | 12% |
| Teaching at the K-12 level | 219 | 2% | 5% | 49% | 32% | 12% |
| Conducting independent research | 224 | | 5% | 34% | 44% | 17% |
| Formulating a research topic | 224 | | 5% | 36% | 41% | 18% |
| Collaborating on research with faculty members | 224 | 1% | 7% | 43% | 36% | 13% |
| Writing a grant proposal | 223 | 9% | 21% | 47% | 18% | 4% |

F. Plans for the Future (cont.)

F.2. What are your immediate post-graduate plans?

| | |
|---|-----|
| N | 233 |
| Further graduate study | 9% |
| Employment in a school or community college | 39% |
| Employment in a business or industry | 24% |
| Employment in a non-profit organization | 10% |
| Employment with a government or government agency | 9% |
| Self-employment | 2% |
| Volunteer service | 1% |
| Other | 6% |

F.2.a. What are your immediate post-graduate plans? (Asked of respondents who answered "other" in F.2.) (N = 11) Other included: Hershman Marine Policy Fellowship through U.W., complete two-year requirement in my previous position, stay at current job and seek employment in a setting where I can use my degree, retirement with part-time employment, work as a collegiate strength and conditioning coach, work in a non-related field and get married, internship in the fall, stay at home mother for a year then employment in a school, travel. (Text responses available on request.)

F.2.b. Which of the following degrees do you plan to pursue? (Asked of respondents who answered "further graduate study" in F.2.)

| N | Masters | Ph.D. | Professional (J.D., M.D., etc.) |
|----|---------|-------|------------------------------------|
| 22 | 18% | 77% | 5% |

F.2.b.1. Have you already been admitted for further graduate study? (Asked of respondents who answered "further graduate study" in F.2.)

| N | Yes | No |
|----|-----|-----|
| 22 | 82% | 18% |

F. Plans for the Future (cont.)

F.2.b.1.a. To which schools have you been accepted? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.2.b.1.) (N = 15) (Text responses available on request.)

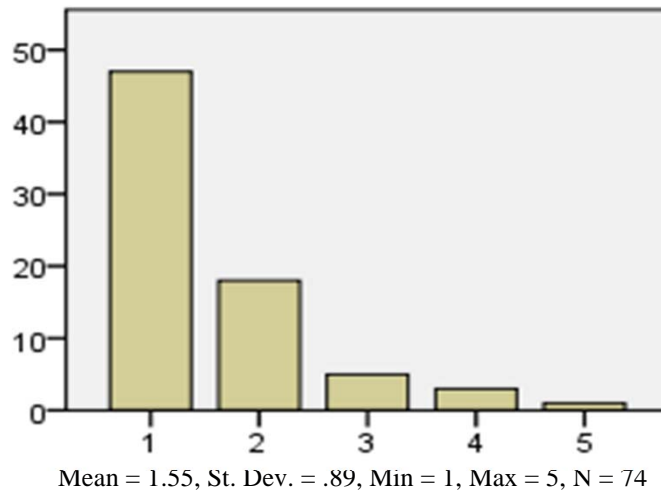
F.2.b.1.b. Which school will you attend? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.2.b.1.) (N = 15) (Text responses available on request.)

F.2.b.1.c. What is your program of study? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.2.b.1.) (N = 15) (Text responses available on request.)

F.3. Have you received any offers of post-graduation employment?

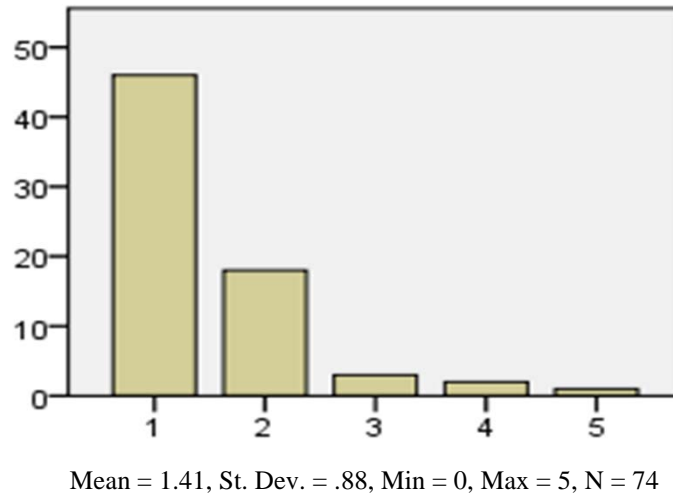
| N | Yes | No |
|-----|-----|-----|
| 233 | 33% | 67% |

F.3.a. How many job offers have you received? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.3.)



F. Plans for the Future (cont.)

F.3.b. Of those offers, how many are related to your field of study? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.3.)



F.4. Have you accepted a job offer? (Asked of respondents who answered "employment" in F.2.)

| N | Yes | No |
|----|-----|-----|
| 71 | 77% | 23% |

F.4.a. What is the name of the employer you plan to work for after graduation? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.4.) (N = 46) (Text responses available on request.)

F.4.b. In what city will you work? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.4.) (N = 46) (Text responses available on request.)

F.4.c. What type of position have you accepted? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.4.) (N = 46) (Text responses available on request.)

F.4.d. Is the position you accepted related to your field of study? (Asked of respondents who answered "yes" in F.4.)

| N | Yes | No |
|----|-----|----|
| 50 | 98% | 2% |