CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT BUID

The British University in Dubai (BUiD) is the middle-east region's first research based university offering postgraduate programmes. BUiD started with an offering of masters' programmes. The first doctoral programme in Education was launched in September 2009. The PhD in Project Management will commence in September 2012. Over the years, it has been noticed that programme completion is an issue in BUiD. Students enroll for programme with the intention of graduating with a master's degree within a reasonable time, for personal and professional advancement. However they sometimes do not graduate at all or they take a long time to complete the programme. Exit awards like Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma which were approved by the UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE&SR) in Academic Year (AY) 2011-12 would help students exit if they are unable to continue with their chosen programme. But students who enroll for the master's programme may not wish to graduate with a certificate or diploma award. BUiD's masters' programmes have two major components – taught modules and dissertation. To graduate successfully, a student has to complete both the components achieving a minimum score of 50 percent in both. The Master of Science – Project Management (MPM) programme which is part of the Faculty of Business has so far been one of the most successful programmes in terms of student

enrolment. The Master of Education (MEd) programme has meanwhile been successful in completion and to a certain extent, in enrolment too (as shown in tables 1.0 and 1.1).

Programme	2004-05		2005-06		2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10	
	E	G	E	G	E	G	E	G	E	G	E*	G
MPM	33	0	50	0	68	5	56	21	54	25	-	28
MEd	20	0	21	5	17	12	19	14	25	10	-	14

1.0. Enrolment (E) and Graduation (G) Data of BUiD MPM and MEd students

**Enrolment figures for AY 2009-10 are not included in the Table 1 as it would not be possible for part-time students of that cohort to graduate in 2011.*

Programme	Enrolments	Graduates	Graduates to Enrolment percent
MPM	261	79	30.26
MEd	102	55	53.92

1.1. Graduates to Enrolments in Percentages

Though the MPM programme has the highest student enrolment figures in the University, the number of graduates in the programme is not high with only 30 percent completing the programme from the inception of the programme. In terms of completion, the MPM programme was more successful in AY 2010-11 with a total of 34 graduates. 13 of these graduates enrolled for the programme in 2004-05, 2006-07 and 2007-8 which shows that they had taken a long time to complete the programme. It has also been noticed that students across all programmes normally progress through the taught modules within the prescribed time and some of them may take up to an extra term. Their progress slows down during the dissertation phase, and some students drop out of the programme. It appears that there are several reasons that affect the progress of

BUiD students like the high number of part-time students holding full-time jobs, age, gap between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, family and social responsibilities, English languages issues etc.

The current MPM programme has six taught modules and a dissertation. The structure has been in place from the third term of academic year 2010-11. Prior to that, MPM programme followed an eight modules and dissertation structure. The data used in this study contains records of students who graduated after completing old structure programme. Students are permitted to progress to the dissertation phase of their study on completion of the taught modules and approval by the University Board of Examiners (BoE).

As BUiD's offers both full and part-time study modes, it attracts a large number of students who hold full-time jobs and more than 75 percent of the current students have opted for part-time study as they are employed. In the study sample, 95 percent were part-time students. Most of them had work, family and social obligations. About 50 percent were expatriate student who had the additional responsibility of holding on to their jobs. In the UAE, losing a job had several implications on an individual including the termination of their residence visa and having to leave the country.

This study seeks to investigate whether performance in the taught modules can be used as a predictor for subsequent behaviour of MPM students in BUiD. It would seem that a

student who achieves a high overall grade in the taught modules which is the first part of the programme is more likely to graduate with a master's degree after completing the dissertation, which is the second part, within the prescribed time. Conversely it is more likely that a student with a low taught modules grade would drop out of the programme without completing the dissertation, and thus not graduating with a master's degree than a student with high or mid-level grades. And the student with mid-level grade in the taught modules would progress slowly through the dissertation, eventually complete it and graduate with a MPM degree. A student with a high taught modules grade is not expected to falter in the dissertation stage and is expected to complete the dissertation within the stipulated time.

The study is important to the University as progression is slow and completion rate is relatively low on this programme. It is acknowledged by the faculty that programme completion is hampered by slow rate of dissertation completion, though active efforts are been made by the faculty to remedy the situation. The dissertation coordinator, supervisors and the faculty administration track the progress of their supervisees. Details are logged in a MS Excel spreadsheet which is commonly available to the concerned individuals and they are able to monitor progress. The dissertation registration and follow up process has also helped as shown by healthy progress through this phase by students who registered after 2008 for various reasons like the lack of a proper process and guidelines and change in MPM staff. There was a backlog

of dissertation students between 2004 and 2008 which has been cleared considerably through the efforts of the new MPM staff led by their Dean and Dissertation Coordinator.

Some students take up to five years to complete the programme and a majority of them graduate three or four years from the time of their enrolment. There are several cases of students suspending study during the course of the programme, withdrawing from a module during term time or completely withdrawing from the programme and University. From the available data, it is also possible to investigate gender-wise and nationality-wise performance differences, and the time taken to complete the taught modules and the dissertation. It would be interesting to see the difference between Emiratis and non-Emiratis in terms of recruitment, completion and performance.

A review of extant literature in the following chapter shows the magnitude of work that has gone into investigating predictors of retention of students, completion, progression and academic achievement in higher education. However there do not seem to be systematic studies, generally in higher education and particularly in masters' programmes, on the link between students' performance in the first part of a programme and subsequent behaviour in terms of progression and completion. In addition, most of the studies cited are in the area of undergraduate study.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 UAE Higher Education Scene

Higher education has come a long way from the time Hirsch (1982) reported that several students were unsure about why they took up postgraduate study. Today students all over the world are pursuing postgraduate education for personal growth and professional gains. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeks to become an education hub with institutions catering to students, from kindergarten to doctorate levels. UAE education structure which was established in the seventies can be broken down into kindergarten, primary, preparatory and secondary education which caters to students up to the age of 17. Higher education's offerings are from diploma up to doctorate levels from federal and private institutions and universities. UAE is also home to branches of several foreign universities. There are accredited and non-accredited institutions in the UAE. Apart from these, there are the three federal universities catering mainly to UAE national students – United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), Zayed University (ZU) and Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). UAEU, based in Al Ain, also admits Asian, African and Arab students including those from GCC countries, Afghanistan, Mongolia and Somalia. ZU caters to UAE national women students with a campus each in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. HCT has 12 colleges for men and women in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Al Ain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah. There are 74 licensed institutions offering 597 accredited programmes in the UAE. The programmes offered are diploma, higher diploma, associate, license, bachelor, postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, master and doctorate degrees in varied subject areas like management,

engineering, languages, media sciences, humanities, aviation, hospitality, informatics, finance, architecture etc. There are 176 and 15 accredited masters and doctoral programmes offered in the UAE, and 15 postgraduate certificate and 24 diploma programmes apart from undergraduate diplomas and degrees.

In its bid to achieve its Vision 2020 Strategic Plan to be among the best countries by year 2020, the UAE government recognizes that it would need an educated workforce to help it reach its goal. Hence it is pursuing its mission of being 'united in knowledge' by striving to standardize its education sector including school and higher education. The government's aims for higher education include improving quality of public and private universities to meet global standards, and ensuring accessibility to education ***(source: www.caa.ae, www.uaeinteract.ae).*** The government's targeting is to achieve a 'competitive economy driven by knowledgeable and innovative Emiratis'. It acknowledges that skilled Emiratis are required to fuel its vision to 'ensure long-term prosperity for the UAE'.

1.2.2 BUiD's Contribution to UAE Higher Education

BUiD has played a major role in the UAE's higher education by establishing itself as a provider of world-class scholarship, education and research ***(source: www.buid.ac.ae)***. It has achieved its mission offering the best in British education over the last eight years with the support of research-active academic staff, committed administrators and student body. Established in 2004 with three masters' programmes, BUiD currently offers two doctorate, 10 masters, 10 postgraduate diploma, 1 professional graduate

diploma and three postgraduate certificate programmes. BUiD is in the process of receiving accreditation for undergraduate programmes. All of BUiD's programmes are research-based and offered in association with its UK partners like University of Manchester, University of Birmingham, University of Edinburgh, Cardiff University and King's College, London. More than 350 students have graduated with masters' degrees since its inception. The UAE Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE&SR) External Review Team (ERT) has, during its visits, lauded BUiD's efforts and contribution towards UAE higher education. The ERT has exhorted BUiD to document its practices and procedures, and share it with the wider committee as best practices.

1.3 RATIONALE

Researchers have studied various factors influencing higher education progression patterns, achievement and completion. There have been several studies on predictors of academic achievement, progression and completion. Higher education practitioners are able to use these findings to predict academic success of students. The researcher has delved into studies on predictors of achievement, and factors influencing progression of students and completion in a bid to gain an understanding of the subject matter. Though most of the extant literature indicates that studies were undertaken in the area of undergraduate education, the findings have contributed to the current study of masters' students. Research demonstrates that previous academic performance can be used predict success in higher education. In this area, there have been studies on

high school grades being predictors of success in university, high entry test scores having a positive effect on retention and achievement (Schofield and Dismore, 2010), and undergraduate performance influencing postgraduate achievement including a comparative study on performance of medical students in undergraduate study and residency period (Woloschuk et al, 2010). In the current study, the researcher is investigating the influence of performance in the first stage of the programme on the second and final stage of the same programme. To clarify further, the study aims at finding a link between performance in the taught modules of the programme (first stage) and the progress to dissertation which is the second and final stage of the MPM programme, and eventual completion or non-completion of the programme.

This study also investigates relationship between the taught modules grade of MPM students and the time taken to complete the dissertation. Studies show that factors like self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, time management skills and study approaches play a vital role in learning. Possession of these qualities would thus have a positive effect on student achievement and in the case of BUiD MPM students, would help them achieve a high taught modules grade. It would seem that such students would be able to progress through the dissertation with relative ease and complete it within the prescribed time. They would be able to transfer their learning in the taught modules effectively to the dissertation which requires more rigour and commitment. On the other hand, in comparison with the high-scoring students, students who achieve a mid-level taught modules grade would not be able to complete the dissertation within the

stipulated time. The researcher attempts to find out if taught modules grades can be used to predict subsequent behaviour of MPM students.

1.4 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Progression and completion are issues plaguing higher education, and has affected BUiD too. These issues would need to be dealt with by the policy makers to enable students who invest time, effort and money graduate successfully. In case of BUiD students specifically, as there is a large percentage of expatriate students whose residence status is affected by their work permits, it would help them to graduate quickly and move on. If they are unfortunate to lose their jobs, they would have to leave the country and their studies would be affected. BUiD wishes to see large numbers of students graduating within a reasonable timeframe rather than have students whose registration period expires or those who either slip off the radar at some point or take more than the prescribed time to complete their dissertation. BUiD registration is valid for three and five years for full and part-time students respectively which seems adequate time to complete a master's degree programme. When their registration expires, students are required to apply for readmission if they wish to continue their study, which entails additional administrative procedures. This study is undertaken to investigate whether there is a link between performance in the taught modules and subsequent progression of BUiD's MPM programme and eventual completion. It is evident that factors like the large percentage of part-time students with full-time jobs,

attendant work pressure, older students with social and familial obligations etc contribute to students' progression patterns. At the same time it has been noticed that students progress faster in taught modules than in the dissertation stage.

1.5 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to find a way to help MPM students to progress through their study and complete the programme within a reasonable time span. The objectives that are hoped to be realized are:

1. Ensure that maximum number of students follow the set study plan to ensure seamless progress throughout their study period, including the taught modules and dissertation
2. Minimize the number of suspend study periods, withdrawal from modules and mitigating circumstances cases
3. Ensure that students complete their dissertation within the time prescribed for full and part-time students, to avoid them using the option of suspending their study or applying for an extension of the submission deadline, thus causing delay in completion

It is hoped that the research findings will provide solutions to the problem of progression and programme completion of BUiD MPM students specifically, and students across all programmes generally.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does the overall grade in the taught module predict subsequent behaviour of BUiD MPM students?
    a) Does a high taught modules overall grade indicate that the student would complete the dissertation within the stipulated time?
    b) Does a low taught modules overall grade indicate that the student would not complete the dissertation and thus not graduate with an MPM degree?
    c) Does a mid-range taught modules overall grade indicate that the student would not be able to complete the dissertation within the stipulated time resulting in seeking an extension of the submission deadline?

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE HYPOTHESES

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the students who graduated and those who did not graduate with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ha1: There is a significant difference between the students who graduated and those who did not graduate with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the students who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and those who took more than the stipulated time with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ha2: There is a significant difference between the students who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and those who took more than the stipulated time with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study would perhaps help find a solution to the existing problem of slow progress through the MPM programme and subsequent delay in completing it, non-progress, and reduce withdrawals. The findings may offer a solution to other BUiD programmes which also face the same problem though on a lower scale as the number of students is low. It may be possible to make practical recommendations to the University's policy makers to tackle the existing problem. Students would be benefited as they enroll for the programme with the intention of graduating with a master's degree which would help them achieve progress in their personal and professional lives. Employers would benefit when their employees learn from the programme and apply it to their work. Based on the findings and recommendations, BUiD may be able to contribute to UAE higher education by advising MoHE&SR on progression and completion aspects of higher education.

1.9 ASSUMPTIONS

Based on BUiD experience and as assumed by theorists that factors like sound study habits, self-regulation, self- efficacy etc lead to higher achievement and quicker

completion, it is assumed that students who achieve a high grade in the taught modules may complete the dissertation within the prescribed time and graduate with a master's degree, and conversely people with a low taught modules grade would either discontinue or progress through the dissertation phase slowly and consequently take a longer time to graduate. As the sample is taken from the University where the researcher is employed and the data collected from student transcripts which has accurate information, it is assumed that the data is reliable and valid.

1.10 LIMITATIONS

The sample size is small for the group of students who completed the taught modules but did not graduate with an MPM degree. There are several students who withdrew from the programme after having completed less than the total eight taught modules. But the scope of the study does not permit the use of this data.

1.11 SCOPE OF WORK

The study examined records of only MPM graduates in detail as the researcher felt that the programmes were very different in nature and content, assessments etc, and that the results may not be valid. In addition, there were fewer enrolments and graduates in the other programmes, and all of them did not commence at the same time. As a result the results would have been skewed. However to analyze enrolment versus graduation numbers, and overall average programme grades, a comparative study of the

programmes was undertaken. The researcher examined transcripts of the graduates of other programmes to compute average overall grades, but this task was not done in detail as was done with the sample group as it did not fall within the scope of the study.

To ensure consistency, data was collected as follows:

Enrolment data: Academic Year (AY) 2004-05 to AY 2007-08

Graduation date: AY 2005-06 to AY 2010-11

1.12 DEFINITION OF TERMS

1.12.1 List of Abbreviations

ARMS – Academic Records Management System

ASU – Academic Success Unit

AY – Academic Year

BUiD – The British University in Dubai

HCT – Higher Colleges of Technology

MEd – Master of Education

MoHE&SR – Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

MPM – Master of Science in Project Management

PPPM – Portfolio Performance and Project Management

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UAEU – United Arab Emirates University

UWC – University of the Western Cape

ZU – Zayed University

1.13 ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to study including the background of the problem, rationale, research questions and hypotheses. It also attempts to cover the purpose and significance of the study, assumptions, scope of work and limitations. Chapter 2 includes a review of literature which tries to offer a glimpse into previous studies on the subject matter. Research methodology is discussed in Chapter 3 and provides information about the research design, population, sample, data, tools and definition of variables, and the rationale for using the specific methodology and tools. Chapter 4 includes data analysis and interpretation of results, both descriptive and inferential. Discussions, conclusions, implications, recommendations and suggestions for future study makes up Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 OVERVIEW

In the current study, the researcher seeks to investigate the possibility of the grades achieved by BUiD MPM students in the taught modules serving as predictors of their subsequent behaviour. The aim is to check if the taught modules have a bearing on achievement and completion in the second stage of their study which is the dissertation phase. There are several studies on various aspects of higher education like predictors of academic performance (Richardson 1995; Hoskins et al. 1997; Neumann & Rodwell 2009; Woloschuk et al. 2010), part-time study (Kember, 1999, Jamieson et al., 2009), self-regulated learning (Tang and Neber, 2008 and Pintrich et al., 2002), self-efficacy (Jamieson et al., 2009), non-traditional learners (Newbold et al., 2011), coursework assessment (Simonte, 2003) etc in the US and UK. But a review of existing literature does not reveal any study so far on the link between performance in taught modules and dissertation of a research-based programme or the effect of taught modules performance on successful completion of the programme. In addition, most of the available work covers undergraduate study.

There have been studies in the area of completion and graduation, attrition (Ishitani, 2006) and pathways to completion (Robinson, 2004). Again, most of these studies and

articles pertain to undergraduate study. Hence it is difficult to draw parallels from these studies for the following reasons:

- Students who enroll at a particular time progress through a set study plan through a four or five year period (Robinson, 2004)
- They progress from semester to semester or calendar year by year together unless they repeat a year or transfer to another institution or do not register in a particular year
- The students are full-time students

In the case of BUiD, majority of PM students are part-time students. There are two intakes of students every year. Based on their study mode, students may decide to study one, two or more modules every semester. They are permitted to withdraw from a module without penalty before they complete 30percent of scheduled classes (Appendix policy). In addition, they have the option of suspending study if they are unable to register for a term or two, and could resume study at a later point. Hence, students who enroll together may not progress at the same pace and in the same manner, and that makes it difficult to trace progression patterns.

2.2 PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Researchers have studied factors serving as predictors of academic performance and completion in higher education at various levels – undergraduate and postgraduate (masters and doctoral) programmes though it must be noted there are more studies on

undergraduate education than the latter. Richardson (1995) conducted a study on undergraduate students to find out if age (mature versus traditional students) was a predictor of academic performance. Mature students were those of age 23+. He concluded that while several factors played a role in the 'academic attainment' of mature students, their age did not. There was no correlation between age and academic performance. Richardson's key conclusions about mature students were their desirable approaches to study, and their perseverance to complete the programme and their attainment being as high as younger students, which made such students an asset in higher education. These findings have augmented academics' views that mature students show better overall performance and bear a positive influence on the programme. Challenging Richardson's (1995) findings about age not being a predictor of academic achievement, Hoskins et al. (1997) argue that though their findings supported those of Richardson's about mature students performance not being better or worse than their younger counterparts, it indicated that mature students were superior in terms of performance. Schofield and Dismore's (2010) findings on age as a predictor of academic achievement also match those of Hoskins et al. (1995). The former's study revealed that students' age played a part in retention and achievement. They opined that mature students' success could be attributed to their real life experiences and 'transferable skills'. However as Hoskins et al's (1997) study did not seek to investigate the reasons for the better performance of older students, they conjectured that economic conditions of the time and availability of higher education may have led to admission of less able students. They added that achievement motivation could be an

influencing factor in older students, as does intrinsic motivation (Newstead et al., 1996 and Schofield and Dismore, 2010).

Harackiewicz et al. (2002) in their study on undergraduate Psychology students in USA, sought to investigate whether achievement goals along with achievement motivation, aptitude and academic performance in previous education could predict students' academic success throughout their college study. The results demonstrated that previous academic achievement and aptitude served as predictors of academic success. Harackiewicz et al.'s (2002) findings are supported by Schofield and Dismore (2010) who researched on retention and achievement factors in higher education in United Kingdom. The latter found that entry exam grades had a bearing on retention and achievement, and students who had higher entry level grades completed the first year and progressed to the next level. However students who failed or withdrew had similar entry level scores. On the other hand, Woloschuk et al.'s (2010) investigation into undergraduate performance of medical students being a precursor to postgraduate achievement, showed that there was no correlation between undergraduate performance and post-graduate achievement (Woloschuk et al., 2010). They measured undergraduate performance based on grade point averages (GPA), training evaluation reports and results of the part 1 exam of the 'Medical Council of Canada'. Harackiewicz et al. (2002) also found that interest was a predictor of students' choice of subject of future study, and a combination of interest and competence could guide them in their academic career choices. Young et al. (2011) investigated 'perceived social support' as

a predictor of academic motivation and achievement in undergraduate students coming from different cultural backgrounds. They found that perceived social support and socio-economic status served as predictors of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic in the case of African American students. But these factors did not play a role in motivating European or Hispanic Americans, demonstrating the difference across cultures in a society.

As can be seen in the examples above, most of the studies were in undergraduate areas. However Neumann and Rodwell (2009) based their study on part-time PhD students who they term as invisible research students. They clarify that Australian universities have long admitted part-time or external research students at undergraduate and masters' levels going against the assumption that such students are young and study full-time. Neumann and Rodwell (2009) found that in case of full-time and part-time students, the residence status of the student was a predictor of their successful completion or non-completion of the programme. There was a higher possibility of students who were Australian non-residents successfully completing the programme in a timely manner.

2.3 HIGHER EDUCATION COMPLETION FACTORS

2.3.1 Progressions Patterns

Robinson (2004) has used longitudinal analysis for identifying patterns of progression of students as her research was conducted in an undergraduate university programme. Data was selected from a five-year undergraduate programme and showed the progress of students from the time they enrolled in 1994 until 2000. It seems that the sample included only full-time students, though that fact is not specifically indicated anywhere in the study. However in the current study, the researcher is unable to use this analysis method as her research focuses on master's graduates and 95percent of the sample were part-time students. The blend of part and full-time students led to them not following a set study plan. Another factor to be considered here is that BUiD's MPM programme is offered in two centres, in Dubai which is the main campus and in Abu Dhabi because of the demand there. This makes it difficult to track and compare progress of the students by using this method.

In addition to investigating predictors of performance of BUiD MPM students, the researcher will try to establish the patterns of progression by examining the following in the current sample:

- Uninterrupted progress – time taken to complete the programme
- Time taken to complete dissertation
- Non-starters of dissertation

It has been noticed that students proceed through a degree programme in different pathways and while some progress in a straightforward manner without interruptions, it is slow progress for others for various reasons (Robinson, 2004). Students in BUiD are in a unique situation with a majority of them being part-time students. Of 238 students registered in the first term of academic year 2011-12, 74percent are part-time students. They have a range of responsibilities besides that of being a student. They are mostly mature working professionals who are married and have their own families. They try to juggle between full-time work commitments, family and social life, and part-time study. Newbold et al. (2010) refer to such students as non-traditional students though in undergraduate context. These are students who are 24 years and above, work full-time, study part-time and often financially support their families. It would seem that most postgraduate students would fit into the non-traditional group as can be seen with this sample which has 47 percent of graduates in the age range of 30 to 49 years. The remaining 53 percent is between the ages of 24 and 29, which at postgraduate level can be deemed as traditional group.

From this sample it is noticed that some of these BUiD graduates progressed through their taught modules in a relatively quick manner and took a longer time to complete their dissertation and graduate. In the current MPM programme, a part-time student should ideally take a maximum of 16 months to complete the taught modules and eight months to complete the dissertation. A full-time student should complete the taught modules and dissertation within 12 months and 4 months respectively. However under

the old structure where the students in the sample studied, a part-time student would take 30 months and a full-time student would have completed the programme in 18 months. 16 percent of the students completed their dissertation within the deadline of eight months. 56 percent of the students completed their taught modules within 22 months. This seems to be a general trend across programmes though exact figures are not available and the higher percentage of students completing their taught modules within the stipulated time could be attributed to being in regular touch with the University and their study, as 70 percent attendance is mandatory. After they complete their taught modules, some students progress through their dissertation and graduate. Others find it difficult to put in sustained study outside of the University environment and not having regular access to their supervisors, and are unable to complete their dissertation within the stipulated time. They apply for extension of deadlines or suspend study, leading to a delay in their graduation. Chabaya et al. (2009) in their study on 'students' failure to submit research projects on time' concluded the following:

- Availability of supervisor and student
- Accessibility to supervisor
- Communication between supervisor and student
- Frequency of meetings to assess progress
- Quality of management of supervision process
- Resources to support researchers
- Attitudes of supervisors and students
- Social and economic challenges

There are varied, interesting views and analysis on the dissertation component, process and supervision. Anderson et al. (2008) found that the dissertation process in masters programmes have not received adequate scholarly attention as it should, given that a large number of students commence masters programmes every year. King (2005, cited in Anderson et al. 2008) points that in the UK nearly 120,000 students enrolled on masters programmes in comparison to a smaller number of PhD students. Masters students complete the taught modules/coursework component with relative ease and then struggle to complete the dissertation (Sayed et al., 1998). Reasons cited for this phenomenon in University of the Western Cape (UWC) included students not having research experience, not having dissertation writing skills and being part-time students working in full-time jobs. Prior to December 2009, BUiD faced a similar challenge in preventing students from slipping of its radar after completion of taught modules. An alarmingly large number of students 'disappeared' after completing their taught modules and bringing them back to complete their dissertation, and thus enabling them to graduate successfully was a challenging task. As suggested by a Dean, it was decided to actively register students for dissertation rather than merely send out a letter stating that the Board of Examiners had deemed them eligible to commence dissertation. This led to the drafting and approval of the BUiD Dissertation Framework policy (Appendix 1) and in addition, the Learning Contract which led to a higher number of students registering for and completing their dissertation, and graduating with a master's degree. The dissertation framework laid down rules for registration, suspension of study during this stage, extension of submission deadlines, extension fees and re-registration fees

after a period of suspension, which motivated some students to go through this stage without too many issues. Although a majority of BUiD students still take longer than the specified duration, eight months for part-time and four months for full-time students, to complete their dissertations, the researcher does not intend to investigate the reasons for the delay as it is not within the scope of this study. But BUiD can perhaps take a cue from the findings of Sayed et al. (1998) as their study was conducted in UWC, a university following a similar format. The research sample consisted of 10 Master of Education students who were selected to pursue a 2-year programme consisting of five core modules and one elective. They were selected based on previous academic background, work experience, 'research training', race, gender etc and were further advised that the dissertation was a small research project designed to give them first-hand research experience. These students were required to complete these modules in ten months and devote the next 12 months to the 20,000 to 30,000 word dissertation. Three of the 10 students completed the programme on time while some of the others made limited progress and 30percent made very limited progress. In this study, Sayed et al. (1998) found three highly significant factors affecting students' progress: students' comprehension of UWC's 'Research Act' and their understanding of 'student-supervisor' relationship, and effect of external factors. It is interesting to note that one of the outcomes of Sayed et al.'s (1998) study was the offering of the Research Workshop. It was intended to be a weekly course offered in tandem with regular modules and covering a vast repertoire of dissertation related topics including research methods, techniques, writing a literature review, note-taking, writing etc. UWC, as advertised on

their website for postgraduate studies, currently offers workshops on referencing, creating bibliographies and information skills. BUiD Academic Success Unit offers such workshops too, and it is dealt in more detail in the next paragraph. UWC students also have access to guides on developing research proposals, supervision, survival, thesis etc which are similar to BUiD ASU's tip sheets that are available for registered students on its Blackboard.

One of the factors that led to students progressing through their study in BUiD is the workshops offered by its Academic Success Unit (ASU). The ASU was set up in 2010 as a part of BUiD's learner support initiative to make its students better readers, better writers and eventually better researchers. New students are required to take a 'Skills Audit' which is a 75-minute combined reading and writing test that would give students an opportunity at demonstrating their academic reading and writing skills, give faculty and tutors a glimpse of your reading and writing levels and sample of their original work. It would also be evidence of their entry-level academic literacy skills. There is also a self-audit component that allows them to assess their own skills. Based on their academic literacy skills, students are recommended mandatory and optional workshops. Part-time study has become common in higher education, both undergraduate and postgraduate study. Crewe (2005) reaffirms that part-time study is important for various reasons like providing learning opportunities for individuals who would never be able to afford university, for making lifelong learning accessible and to facilitate functioning of a rapidly changing modern economy by enabling the workforce to 'update its skills'.

However, as Crewe (2005) points out part-time students are neglected rather than encouraged by policy makers. Though adult part-time students form a major part of the higher education sector in UK universities (Jamieson et al., 2009), full-time students particularly at undergraduate level have flexible fee payment options from 2006 whereas part-time students are required to pay their fee up-front (Crewe 2005). Contrastingly, BUiD has plans to offer full and part-time study options to its students when undergraduate programmes commence in September 2012. Currently BUiD encourages both full-time and part-time students in its postgraduate programmes and 75 percent of the current student population comprises part-time students. The University has gone further by devising a sound tuition fee payment plan for its students (Appendix 2). In addition, BUiD has a robust scholarship scheme for all students irrespective of their nationality, gender or full/part-time status.

Goldrick-Rab (2006) investigated the 'social-class variation' in attendance patterns of students as students move in and out of institutions. Her study focused on the effects of social-class differences on progression patterns and the results showed that likelihood of interrupted movement through higher education is higher among students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Interrupted progress through education affected timely completion rates. Goldrick-Rab's (2006) study findings demonstrate the link between socio-economic class and interrupted study, suggesting that students who are financially stronger are in an advantageous position. BUiD has a mix of Emirati and

expatriate students with 50:50 ratio in the MPM programme and overall. MPM graduate numbers indicate that 67 percent are UAE national students.

	No. of Students
Emirati	76
Non-Emirati	37

2.0 Nationality – Emirati/Non-Emirati

Emiratis have the following advantages over expatriate students:

Higher paying jobs

Stability – if an expatriate student loses his job, he also loses his residence visa and would hence have to leave the country

With regard to the choice of study mode, Jamieson et al. (2009) conducted a study to investigate the 'reported benefits' of education for part-time adult students, and the patterns of these benefits in two major but different UK universities. Though the populations were radically different, they did have a common factor and that was diversity with regard to their age, employment, family and social circumstances (Jamieson et al., 2009). Interestingly the student population used in the current study is similar to Jamieson et al.'s (2009) study. Diversity is a given in a multicultural society like Dubai where people belonging to different cultures work/study together. This sample alone has students of 15 nationalities in an age range of 24 to 42, most of whom

hold full-time jobs. The employers of these graduates include public and private sector entities.

MPM Graduates by Nationality

Nationality	No. of Graduates
British	2
Canadian	2
Egyptian	3
Emirati	76
Indian	10
Iranian	2
Iraqi	1
Jordanian	5
Lebanese	1
Pakistani	3
Palestinian	2
Saudi	1
Sudanese	2
Syrian	2
Tanzanian	1

2.1. Nationality

MPM Graduates Age Range

Age Range	No. of Graduates
20 – 29	60
30 – 39	49
40 – 49	4

2.2 Age

2.3.2 Demands on Part-time Students

As Kember (1999) rightly commented, part-time students face conflicting problems when they try to balance study, work, family and social obligations. Time management

is a major issue with part-time, adult students especially so with BUiD MPM students as they have undertaken a research based programme which calls for a significant amount of self-study. They attend nine week of four hour classes (36 lecture hours) followed by a week of revision classes which is held if necessary. They are expected to hand in assignments in week 10 or 11, and to attend exams over the next two weeks. The assessment components in most of the modules are an assignment and a two hour written exam which are weighted equally. Some of the modules have two assignments carrying equal weightage. Kember (1999) added that students who were able to cope with such demands usually succeeded in their programmes and were able to graduate with honours. In contrast, part-time students who did not have similar punishing, conflicting schedules showed the tendency to withdraw from the programme and attributed it to lack of time. Kember (1999) investigated the processes used by adult part-time students in coping with their conflicting commitments, and the reasons for students with demanding schedules to perform well in their study while those with less demanding and conflicting commitments were seemingly not able to cope. Apart from study-mode, curriculum design is another factor that seems to affect completion rates, but Schmidt et al. (2009) do not deem this to be important for the reason that delays and low completion rates in higher education are prevalent worldwide. In BUiD MPM context, curriculum design seems to play a significant role in completion rates with students not progressively quickly enough through the programme. The longest time taken to complete the MPM programme is 69 months.

Time taken for completion	No. of Students
60+ months	4
50-59 months	9
40-49 months	26
30-39 months	54
20-29 months	13
15-19 months	7

2.3. Programme Completion Time

Ideally the maximum period that a part-time MPM student should have taken to complete the programme would be 36 months as there were eight taught modules followed by the dissertation. Till academic year 2009-10, BUiD followed a two-semester programme with a long summer break. Hence students took close to two years to complete the taught modules. They then had eight months to complete the dissertation. The current MPM programme follows a six taught modules plus dissertation structure, and there are three terms every year. Students studying two modules per semester can complete the taught modules in one year followed by the dissertation in eight months if they progressed without suspending study or failing a module.

Much has been written about taught courses and dissertation/thesis separately, and about assessments, formative and summative, and exams and coursework. But a survey of literature does not show existing studies on research-based postgraduate programmes with taught modules and dissertation, and the students' overall performance in these components and the link between them.

Anderson et al. (2008) have looked into the perspectives of masters degree students on the 'dissertation process'. In this study, 15 professional students who pursued part-time

studies recount their experiences of working on their dissertation – aspects of researching their topics and the writing–up phase, and further describe supervisory and support issues. King (2005 cited in Anderson et al., 2008) laments the fact the area of learning and teaching in masters programmes has long been neglected and Anderson et al. (2008) state that the dissertation process too has not been investigated in detail though it is a mandatory part of most taught programmes at masters level.

2.4 Higher Education Performance and Achievement Factors

Vermunt (2005) states that student learning is influenced by a number of factors including student, teaching and learning characteristics, students' previous knowledge, personality, attitudes, motivation, study skills etc. In Entwistle's (2000, cited in Vermunt 2005) model, he describes three different groups of factors that influence student learning.

Student characteristics	**Teaching characteristics**	**Departmental characteristics**
Prior knowledge	Level	Course design and objectives
Intellectual abilities	Pace	Learning materials
Learning styles	Structure	Assessment procedures
Personality	Clarity	Workload
Attitudes	Enthusiasm	Freedom of choice
Motivation	Empathy of teaching	Study skills support
	Explanation	

2.4 based on Entwistle's Student Learning Model (Vermunt, 2005)

(Source: Vermunt, 2005)

2.4.1 Personal Variables

Time Management Skills

Time management is an essential skill for part-time students (Trueman and Hartley, 1996) who are required to juggle various responsibilities and commitments. There are not many studies on time management skills alone, they are usually combined with other study skills like study organization.

Approaches to Studying

Vermunt (2005) argues that deep and surface approaches play an important role as also motivation and orientation in addition to student, teaching and departmental characteristics. In a study on learning patterns using an 'Inventory of Learning Styles', Vermunt (2005) concluded that there is a link between learning patterns, and student characteristics like age, gender and prior education as described in Entwistle's model. There is also a link between students' subject of study and age, and meaning directed learning. Jansen and Bruinsma (2005) found evidence of older students achieving high scores in 'deep information processing strategies'. However, in their study they did not find a link between such strategies and academic achievement. Jansen and Bruinsma (2005) attribute this factor to assessment techniques used adding that if assessments do not call for the use of deep information processing strategies, students were likely not to use such strategies. This view is supported by Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) who emphasize that the type of assessments also has a bearing on the studying approach used by students as open-ended assessments, perhaps course work and analytical

questions, lead to deep approach, and multiple choice questions (MCQ) tests would call for surface studying approach. They add that some of the factors related to surface approach studying are under-confidence, a 'fear of failure' and leaning heavily towards the prescribed curriculum.

Self-efficacy Belief

One of the other factors affecting academic performance and achievement is self-efficacy belief. Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) state that Bandura (1997) defined perceived self-efficacy as "the belief people have in their capabilities to perform a specific task" and they add that Bandura further emphasized on the effect of self-efficacy beliefs on various human aspects like 'cognitions, motivations' etc and finally their behaviour itself. Pintrich (1999 cited in Prat-Sala and Redford 2010) believes that individuals with self-efficacy beliefs are more competent. Hence people with lower levels of self-efficacy beliefs are not likely to perform well or be persistent when faced with obstacles. This tendency would extend to the field of education too, and Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) have referred to studies demonstrating the positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance (Bong, 2001; Richardson 2007), 'academic motivation' (Bong & Clark, 1999) and self-regulated learning (Pintrich and De Groot, 1990). They further refer to several studies (McCarthy et al. 1985, Zimmerman and Bandura 1994 etc) that show strong evidence of a relationship between 'self-efficacy in writing' and 'writing performance'. In contrast, there is evidence to a smaller degree about the relationship between self-efficacy in reading and 'writing performance'. However, as emphasized by Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) efficient reading skills is

necessary for writing. This is particularly applicable for BUiD students as all its programmes are research-based. In MPM, students are assessed in almost all modules by exams and course work, with equal weightage for both indicating that importance of reading and writing skills. Most BUiD students come from non-English background with only 3.5 percent of graduates in this study being native English speakers. Self-efficacy in reading and writing skills with added proficiency in the language would help BUiD students in performing well.

Relationship between Self-efficacy and Approaches to Studying

One of the key findings in Prat-Sala and Redford's (2010) study on the relationship between self-efficacy and 'approaches to studying' is the positive correlation between self-efficacy belief in reading and writing skills, and deep approach to studying. In contrast they found a negative correlation between surface approach to studying and self-efficacy belief in both these skills. Their study sample included 163 first-year undergraduate students, 140 females and 23 males, from a UK university. They used the Revised Approaches to Studying Inventory (RASI) to investigate the approaches to studying, Work Preference Inventory (WPI) to identify the students' motivation orientations and two questionnaire instruments to study the perceived self-efficacy beliefs in academic reading and essay writing skills. The current study investigates the effect of achievement in taught modules on progression through the dissertation stage, and thus leading to completion or non-completion of the programme. Though the current study does not include examining the reasons behind the speed of progression,

achievement or completion/non-completion, Prat-Sala and Redford's findings are deemed important by the researcher because self-efficacy beliefs and approaches to study seem to be important for BUiD students who come from different cultures. Most of the students are not native English speakers and yet are required to exhibit their academic reading and writing skills. As BUiD offers only research-based programmes, students are required to commit time to self-study and research. In this case, surface approach would not suffice to lead them to completion and academic achievement. Their beliefs about their language skills and deep approach to studying would help them to progress quickly, achieve high scores and complete the programme.

Motivation Orientations

It is clear that motivation is important for achievement in any aspect of life. Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) refer to motivation orientations, that is, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as determinants of students' academic performance. They further emphasize that there are several views about extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, and one of them refers to these orientations as being perceived as contrasting in a 'bipolar continuum' (Deci et al., 2001 cited in Prat-Sala and Redford, 2010). When an individual works on a task in order to achieve a reward which could be monetary or in the form of grades, praise etc, he is said to work for extrinsic reasons. In contrast, a person may engage in a task because he finds it appealing and gains satisfaction, which means he is intrinsically motivated (Prat-Sala and Redford, 2010). Ryan and Deci (2000) differentiate between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation by referring to the former as undertaking of a

task or an activity to achieve a separable result. On the other hand, intrinsic motivation refers to working on a task for inner satisfaction rather than rewards. However Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) refer to other writers like Pintrich (1999) and Harter (1988) who proposed that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation are not mutually exclusive and Ryan and Deci (2000:73) emphasize that ”as people individuals internalize regulations and assimilate them to the self, they experience greater autonomy in action”. This demonstrates that it is possible to move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation with Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) describing it as a possible ‘multi-stage process’ showing progress from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) cite studies of Lepper et al., 2005 and Amabile, 1994 that demonstrate extrinsic and intrinsic motivation can occur together in children and adults. There are varying opinions about whether motivation orientations are task dependent (Pintrich, 1999), whether higher education students employed strategies based on the quality of the material they had to study (Wolter, 1998) or if these orientations are ‘stable personality’ traits (Amabile et al., 1994).

Relationship between Motivation Orientations and Approaches to Studying

Prat-Sala and Redford (2010) made some interesting discoveries in their study on the relationship between motivation orientations and approaches to studying. Extrinsic orientations included outward (heavy dependence on prescribed curriculum) and compensation (grades), and enjoyment and challenge subscales made up intrinsic orientations. They found a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation orientation,

which includes enjoyment and challenge, and deeper approach to studying. In addition they found evidence of a relationship between compensation which is an extrinsic orientation subscale and strategic approach to studying thus emphasizing their initial proposal that students' achievement need is linked to their enjoyment of studying a subject of their interest, and using a strategic approach to studying.

Ramburuth and Mladenovic (2004) investigated two factors when students entered university - their 'orientation to learning' and the structure of their learning outcomes measured on entry - and the effect of these two factors on students' academic performance subsequently. Students' 'orientation to learning' was assessed by using a modified form of the 'Study Process Questionnaire' (SPQ), while 'Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome' (SOLO) based task was used to measure the structure of their learning outcomes. Ramburuth and Mladenovic (2004) found a positive relationship between the students' SOLO scores and their subsequent academic grades and a negative relationship between the SPQ scores and their academic performance. Ramburuth and Mladenovic's (2004) study demonstrated that students with higher SOLO scores are more likely to succeed in higher education.

Ability

Jansen and Bruinsma (2005) in their study discovered that ability strongly affected achievement, and they further cite the example of De Jong et al.'s (1997) finding of a mild influence of ability on the possibility of student's dropping out of university. Jansen

and Bruinsma (2005) also found out gender differences in academic achievement with female students performing better than their male counterparts augmenting findings of researchers like Van Der Hulst and Jansen (2002) and Simonite (2003) among others. On the other hand, Slotte et al. (2001) found gender differences in learning strategies rather than outcomes, and that men were not as effective in time management a women. In addition, Jansen and Bruinsma (2005) found mature students performed better in the use of 'deep information processing strategy' compared with their younger counterparts thus proving that this strategy and maturation go hand in hand, and 'life experience' of older students has a positive effect on their studies. Age also had a bearing on work discipline and contribution, with mature students demonstrating better performance, involvement and work discipline.

2.5 SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEWED

As demonstrated in the sections above, varied factors affect achievement and completion in higher education whether in undergraduate or postgraduate studies. Age, motivation, aptitude, interest, previous academic achievement and study habits are some of the predictors of academic achievement in higher education. There are interesting views on postgraduate education especially on the scarce attention bestowed on the dissertation which is an important component in most programmes. The lack of attention shown in the area of master's education and the fact that there have been no studies on the effect of the performance in first stage of study, taught modules in this case, on the overall academic performance and completion of the programme prompted the current study.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 OVERVIEW

The research design and methodology used in the study is discussed in this chapter. There is a section on the research methods used in some of the studies cited in the literature review. The population, sampling methods and sample are discussed and an insight is provided into data – forms, types, collection and preparation, tools used and data analysis methods. Variables have been defined and the researcher has describes the manner in which ethical issues were handled.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study seeks to investigate whether performance in the taught modules can predict overall academic achievement and completion of the programme in a timely manner in the case of MPM students in BUiD. Quantitative research methods have been used to analyse the data collected from a sample of MPM students who did not graduate and those who successfully graduated. Descriptive and inferential analyses are used to interpret the data. An independent *t*-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient tests were used to test the hypotheses which were two-tailed (Greene and D'Oliveira, 2006).

3.3 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS USED IN CITED STUDIES

In this section, the researcher reviews the methodology used in some of the cited studies. In their study on undergraduate performance being a predictor of postgraduate achievement, Woloschuk et al. (2010) used a five-point scale measuring seven domains and an overall rating on medical students. They used Cronbach's alpha to assess reliability and Pearson's correlations to study the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate performance. Harackiewicz et al. (2002) studied the role of achievement goals, ability and previous academic performance in predicting success in college careers of psychology students. A longitudinal study was conducted over a period of seven years using several methods of data collection like entry tests like SAT and ACT, high school GPA and questionnaire, and used multiple regression analyses. In their study on mature students' perception about the advantages of higher education, Jamieson et al. (2009) used questionnaire survey to collect data on social and economic benefits of 'part-time study' and received 1539 and 1530 responses respectively from Birkbeck and the Open University, and used regression analyses to test the data. Like Harackiewicz, they conducted a longitudinal study, but over a period of 4 years. Hoskins & Newstead (1997) accessed records from University of Plymouth to collect data for their study on age, gender, prior qualifications and subject areas serving as predictors of performance. They categorized the data based on the variables, and further classified them into traditional and mature students for age; access programmes, no formal qualification and Higher National Diploma (HND) for prior qualifications and other such classifications. They used Analysis of Variance to examine

differences between means and ‘for interactions’. They were aware of the limitations as the study covered several factors. In their study on predictors of higher education retention and achievement, Schofield and Dismore (2010) extracted entry data from the applications of 457 students of a UK university, the outcome data from their results at the end of the first stage and details of withdrawal from those forms. They used various tests for different variables like Univariate ANOVA for analyzing entry qualification and age differences, chi-square for gender differences and discriminant analysis for outcomes.

3.4 POPULATION

Defining the population from which the sample is drawn is important. Sapsford and Jupp (1996) refer to population as the complete ‘collection of elements’ that are available from which the sample to be studied is taken and Kendall (1952, cited in Sapsford and Jupp,) affirmed that statisticians use words like ‘group’ and ‘aggregate’ to describe population. In this study, the population comprises of all masters’ degree graduates of BUiD from AY 2005-06 to 2010-11 from the following programmes: Project Management, Education, Sustainable Design of the Built Environment (previously called Environmental Design of Buildings), Informatics, IT Management, Finance and Banking, and Human Resource Management. The population was used to compare the enrolment versus graduation percentages for all the programmes. For Hypothesis 1, the sample of MPM students who completed all the taught modules but did not graduate as they did not complete the dissertation was drawn from the MPM student population.

3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Cohen and Holliday (1996, cited in Cohen et al. 2003) assert that there are two major sampling methods – probability and non-probability sampling. Cohen (2003) recommend the use of probability sampling if the intention is to make generalizations as the sample is drawn from a 'wider population' and is thus representative of a 'wider population'. However if the aim is to represent a particular group or section of the 'wider population', then non-probability method is the best choice (Cohen et al. 2003), as in this study where non-probability sample is used with the researcher choosing only MPM graduates instead of selecting randomly from among MPM, MEd and other Master of Science programmes. The positive point to note here is that the sample is a representative of several aspects like age, gender, nationality etc despite being a non-probability sample. This is a unique factor about BUiD students specifically and other students outside BUiD because of the multicultural population of United Arab Emirates.

Cohen et al. (2003) have listed the types of non-probability sampling as 'convenience sampling', 'quota sampling', 'purposive sampling', 'dimensional sampling' and 'snowball sampling'. Convenience sampling and purposive sampling are used in this study with the researcher choosing a handpicked sample based on accessibility and for a specific purpose. As the study does not seek to make generalizations about the 'wider population', as averred by Cohen et al. (2003) the sample would not affect the research. This sample was used in the study as the number of graduates is highest in the MPM programme with a total of 113 graduates, of which 71 are male and 42 are female graduates. The sample to population ratio is approximately 1:2.5. Thus the sample

covers 40 percent of the total population which would be effective for the study. The University administration has a list of all graduates in MS Excel format from which the MPM graduates data was filtered. This worksheet also has other details like the months taken to complete the taught modules, dissertation and the programme, the final result, nationality, gender etc. In addition, all the data including student and graduate transcripts, is stored in BUiD's Academic Records Management System (ARMS). The researcher completed a detailed study of the final transcript of marks of each of these graduates. In order to compare the results of the MPM graduates and non-graduates, a list of students who completed all the taught modules but did not complete the dissertation was compiled after viewing the transcripts of students who had withdrawn from the programme or whose University registration had lapsed. After compiling this list, a detailed study of their transcripts was made.

3.6 SAMPLE

In this study, the researcher has examined the data of MPM graduates drawn from total masters' graduate population of BUiD. These graduates are from the September 2004 to September 2009 cohorts. They completed the programme in the periods between 2006-07 and 2010-11.

Programme	**No. of Graduates**
Project Management	113
Education	70
Sustainable Design of the Built Environment	26

Informatics	27
IT Management	16
Finance and Banking	18
Human Resource Management	5

3.0. No. of Graduates by Programme

To overcome problems resulting from factors like time, accessibility and cost, researchers would have to make judgments very early in the research, on issues like the sample size, representativeness, access and sampling strategy (Cohen et al., 2003). There are several opinions about sample size with Cohen et al. (2003) supporting the drawing of a larger sample from a large population if 'equal heterogeneity' is a determining factor. They add that the research style also determines the sample size with a survey requiring a large sample while a small sample is adequate for an ethnographic or qualitative research. Borg and Gall (1979, cited in Cohen et al. 2003) suggest that at least 30 cases should be used for 'correlational research' while 15 cases would be sufficient for experimental methodology. However, there should be at least 100 cases in a survey research in each main subgroup and between 20 and 50 cases in each smaller subgroup (Borg and Gall 1979 cited in Cohen et al. 2003). They (Cohen et al. 2003: 94) add that large sample sizes should be used under the following conditions:

- there are many variables;
- only small differences or small relationships are expected or predicted;
- the sample will be broken down into subgroups
- the sample is heterogeneous in terms of the variables under study

- reliable measures of the dependent variable are available

The sample size in this study is 113 and it seems appropriate in this case as it is representative of the population in terms of age, gender, nationality, undergraduate subject and grade. Correlational research is used in this study to determine the link between the overall grade achieved in the taught modules and the dissertation grade.

An important factor is accessibility to the sample. Cohen et al. (2003) recommend that there should be practicable access to the sample as sensitive data may be associated with legal and administrative issues. Further, they add, this may even lead to problems with release with a researcher being restricted from releasing sensitive data leading to issues of delay and suppression. In this study, the sample was drawn from the researcher's employer after obtaining requisite permission and signing a research ethics agreement. Hence accessibility of records was not an issue here.

3.7 DATA - TYPES, FORMS AND COLLECTION

3.7.1 Types of Data

Blaikie (2004) lists the three different types of data are primary, secondary and tertiary. He refers to primary data as that generated as a result of direct contact between the researcher and his source, and is collected by the researcher who is responsible for the whole study including design, data collection, data analysis and reporting. The

researcher has used primary data in this study. The researcher has used student data available in BUiD, and they have been collated in a manner suited for this study as there is control over 'production and analysis' as recommended by Blaikie (2004).

Blaikie (2004) defines secondary data as "the raw data already collected by someone else, either for general information purpose, such as a government census or another official purpose, or for a specific research project". He states that secondary data is often referred to as secondary analysis, and though it has its disadvantages usage of such data is common as it saves on time and cost. In the case of tertiary data, raw data may not be available and the results of the data that has been analysed by the researcher or a secondary data analyst are used.

3.7.2 Forms of Data

The two main forms of data are quantitative and qualitative, the former dealing with numbers and the latter with words (Blaikie, 2004). In this study, quantitative data is used as the researcher mainly worked on grades of graduates.

3.7.3 Data Collection

Data was collected for three different groups and they are the MPM graduates, MPM students who completed the taught modules but did not graduate as they were unable to complete their dissertation and graduates from the other BUiD programmes. Grades, marks and overall results of the students and graduates were collected from their transcripts which were downloaded from BUiD's records system called Academic

Record Management System (ARMS). After the programme Board of Examiners meet and assessment marks are confirmed, the Examinations Officer enters the marks in ARMS. Transcripts are automatically generated from ARMS and these transcripts were used to collect the raw data. General data about enrolment and graduation numbers, gender, nationality and study mode was gathered from the University Fact Book – 2010-11. Specific data for MPM graduates including nationality, gender, country, university and subject of undergraduate study was collected from ARMS. Data used in this study is accurate and authentic to the best knowledge of the researcher who carefully perused the transcripts of all the graduates and students as described above.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The different types of data analysis are univariate descriptive, bivariate descriptive, explanatory and inferential data analysis. This study uses descriptive and inferential data analysis.

3.8.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis is used to provide a 'simple summary' of the population and sample (Trochim, 2006). Univariate descriptive analysis is used in this study to examine one variable at a time like gender and nationality in the case of MPM graduates and provides details about mean and standard deviation. Bivariate descriptive analysis is used to examine the differences between two aspects of the same variable (Jones & Barlett, 1999) as in the case of the results of male and female students. They may have

graduated with or without distinction. Similarly the researcher has described enrolment and graduation numbers of MPM students by gender.

3.8.2 Inferential Analysis

Blaikie (2004) emphasizes that inferential analysis is to be used when results that are obtained from a random sample are generalized and fed back into the population that the sample was taken from. He adds that inferential analysis should be used only when appropriate because the tendency is to use it inappropriately as it is thought to be the most important data analysis method. Simple random sampling and systematic sample are the main methods of selection of probability samples. Independent *t*-tests are used to analyse the significance of the difference between the means of two samples (Lowry, 1999). To test both the hypotheses, independent *t*-test was used as it is normally used to examine if there is a statistical significant difference in mean between two groups. In the first instance, the two groups comprised of students who graduated and those who did not graduate, and in the second case, the two groups comprised of graduates who either completed their dissertation within the stipulated time or took more than that time.

In addition to the independent *t*-test, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between the overall taught modules weighted average grade and subsequent behaviour, that is, slow or rapid progress through the next stage and eventual completion.

Correlations have been described differently by different writers. Brace et al. (2009) state that as researchers usually attempt to measure relationships between variables, that could be the degree, strength or direction of a relationships, tests of correlation are used. They are used to describe the 'degrees of the relationship between two variables' (Trochim, 2006). According to Cohen et al. (2003) 'correlational techniques' are usually used to elicit an 'answer to three questions about 'two variables'. They agree with Brace et al. (2009) when they list the questions as to whether there is a relationship between the two variables. And if there is a relationship between the two variables, then what is the direction of the relationship. And what is its magnitude? However Blaikie (2004) describes correlations as 'measures of association', and further clarifies that correlations stop at the relationship between the two variables, and they do not investigate the influence of one variable on the other.

3.9 TOOLS

Data for this study was collected from transcripts of marks, student and graduate records, and the University Fact Book – 2010-11. The data collected from the transcripts were collated in MS Excel spreadsheets. Separate sheets were been maintained for different categories of data. The collated data was tested using SPSS. The independent *t*-test and Pearson's Correlation Coefficient methods were used to test the hypotheses.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher completed and signed the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Form (Appendix) which stated, among other conditions, that the data would be stored carefully and confidentiality would be maintained at all times. In addition, before embarking on the study, the researcher who is an employee of BUiD obtained approval from the authorized person for using student/graduate data. A request to use the data was emailed to the concerned person on 23 September 2011 and approval was received via email on 25 September 2011.

3.11 DATA PREPARATION

3.11.1 Hypothesis 1

A list of MPM students who withdrew from the programme or whose registration had lapsed was compiled from ARMS. The researcher examined the transcripts of all such students to ascertain that they had completed all the taught modules. The weighted average of the eight modules was computed. To test Ho1 and Ha1, codes 1 and 2 were assigned to MPM students who did not graduate and those who did graduate.

3.11.2 Hypothesis 2

The data that was collated after examining transcripts and records of graduates of all the programmes and the University Fact Book 2010-11, was entered into an MS Excel spreadsheet. This spreadsheet has graduates' details like nationality, gender, results, months taken to complete the taught modules and dissertation respectively, and other

relevant information. The weighted average marks of the taught modules were computed for these graduates. This data was filtered to separate graduates who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time from those who took more than the stipulated time. In normal circumstances, full and part-time students are required to complete the dissertation within four and eight months respectively. Majority of the graduates in the sample started their dissertation work before the Dissertation Framework was introduced in December 2009, after approval by the University Academic Board and Senate in November 2009. This document provides useful guidelines for dissertations, including registration procedures and penalties for non-progress that spurs students to make an effort to complete this phase on time. As these students were disadvantaged for lack of such guidelines, for the purpose of this study, an extra two months was factored into the duration of the dissertation stage, and six and 10 months were considered to be the dissertation completion time frame for full and part-time students. Before submitting the data into SPSS, the group that completed the dissertation within the prescribed time and the group that took more than the stipulated time were assigned codes 1 and 2 respectively.

3.12 DEFINITION OF VARIABLES

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Statistical Test
1	Master's degree performance	• Taught modules weighted average score, measured in percentage	• Independent *t*-test
2	Master's degree performance	• Taught modules weighted average score, measured in percentage. • Months taken to complete the dissertation	• Independent *t*-test • Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

3.1. Definition of Variables

For testing Hypothesis 1 data computed from the two groups, that is the students who had completed all the taught modules but did not graduate as they did not complete the dissertation and students who graduated with MPM degree. The scores, after assigning codes of 1 and 2 for the first and second group respectively were submitted to an independent *t*-test using SPSS. An independent *t*-test is used when the performance of participants in two different groups has to be compared (Brace et al., 2009). As it was being ascertained if there was a significant statistical difference in means of overall weighted average marks of the two groups, this test was chosen for Hypothesis 1.

For testing Hypotheses 2, it was decided to use an independent *t*-test to examine if there was a significant statistical difference in means of overall weighted average marks of graduates who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and those who took more than the stipulated time. Further Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to investigate the relationship between the taught modules average marks of graduates and the time (in months) taken to complete their dissertation. The group of graduates was divided into two sub-groups, one of them constituted graduates who completed the dissertation within the stipulated time while the second group had graduates who had taken more than the stipulated time. The two sub-groups were assigned codes 1 and 2 respectively, and independent *t*-test and Pearson's Correlation test was run on the data using SPSS.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

In this study, SPSS is used to carry out statistical procedures. Descriptive and inferential statistics were produced and analysed.

4.1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF DATA

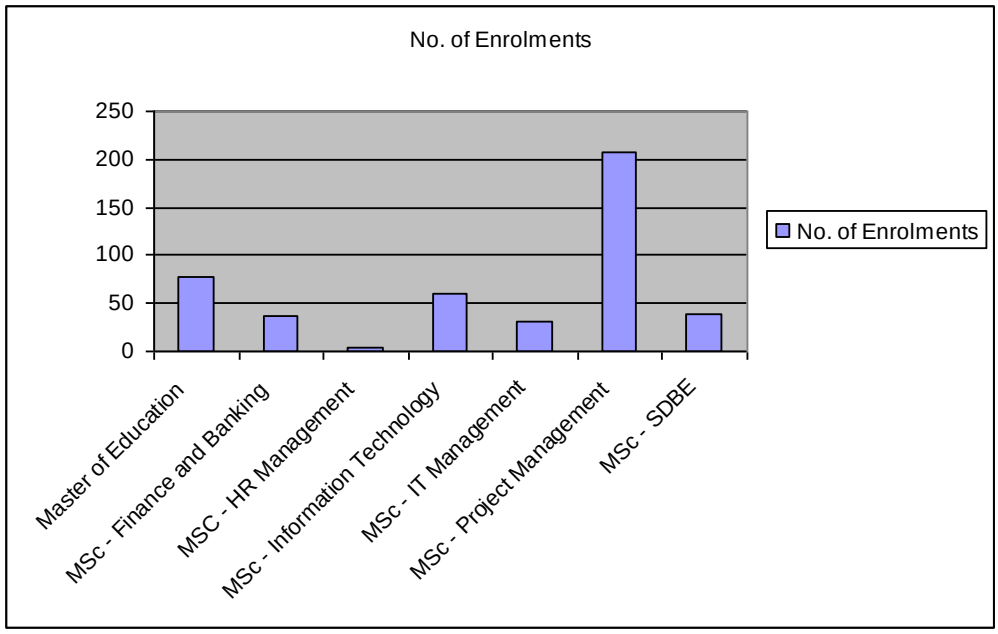
4.1.1 Data for all Programmes in The British University in Dubai

Figures 4.0 and 4.01 below indicate the total number of enrolled students in all BUiD programmes from Academic Year (AY) 2004-05 to AY 2007-08. The MPM programme had the highest enrolment rate of 46 percent followed by 17 percent in Education. MSc in HR Management has the lowest enrolment numbers with 1percent.

N=453

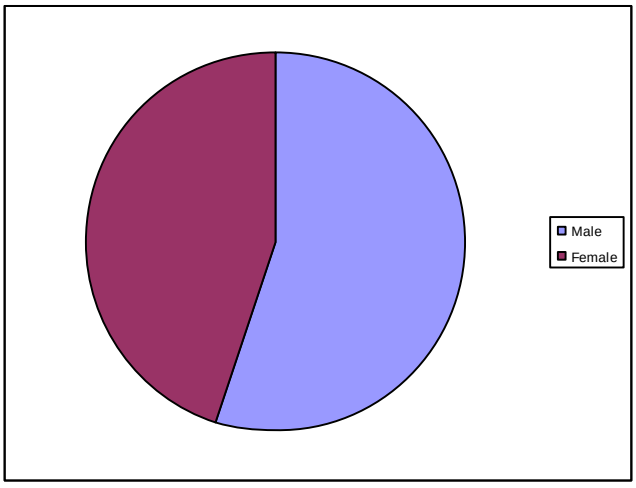
Programme	No. of Enrolments	Percentage of Population
Master of Education	77	17percent
MSc - Finance and Banking	36	8percent
MSc – HR Management	4	1percent
MSc - Information Technology	60	13percent
MSc - IT Management	31	7percent
MSc - Project Management	207	46percent
MSc – Sustainable Design of the Built Environment	38	8percent

4.0 Student Enrolment by Programme



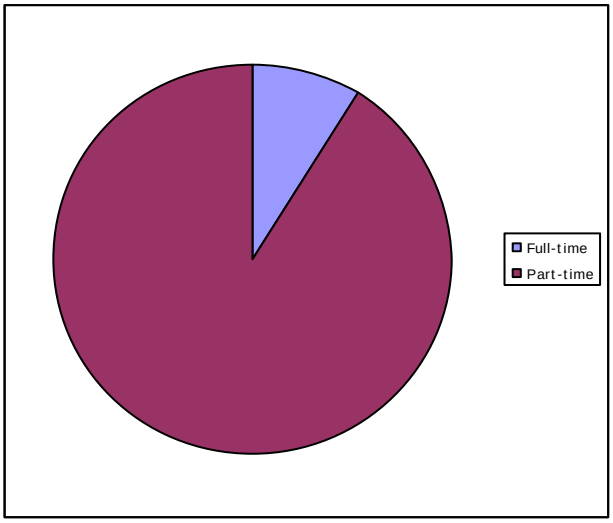
4.0.1 Student Enrolment by Programme

As indicated in fig. 4.1, 55 percent of the 453 students in BUiD were males and the remaining comprised female students.



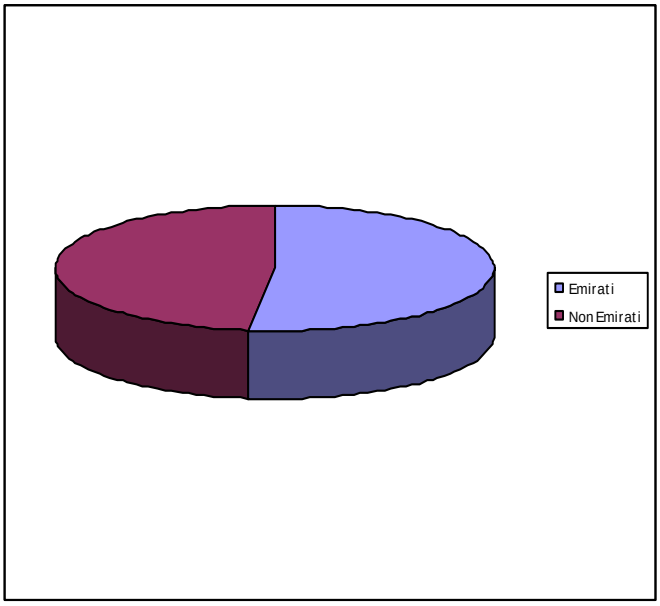
4.1 Students Enrolment from AY 2004-05 to 2007-08 by Gender:

Of the 453 students, 91 percent were enrolled as part-time students.



4.2 Student Enrolment by Study Mode

BUiD student population comprises more than 25 nationalities, and they come from various cultures like Arab, Asian, European and American. Figure 4.4 shows details of Emirati and non-Emirati (expatriate) students. 55percent of the 453 students were Emiratis.

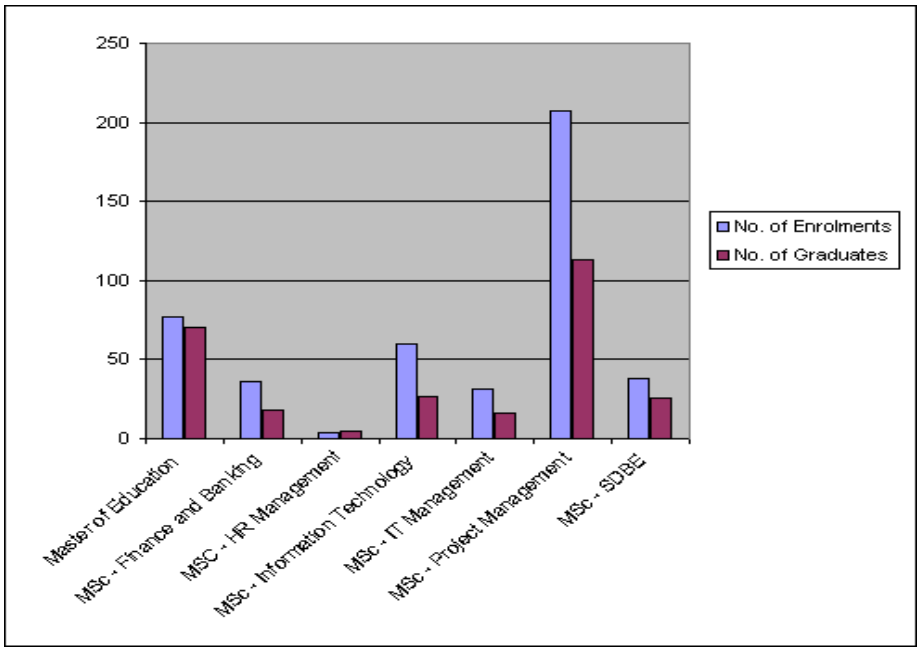


4.3 Student Enrolment by Nationality, specifically Emirati and non-Emirati students:

Figures 4.4 and 4.4.1 showing enrolment and graduation data of all BUiD programmes up to AY 2007-08. In the MEd programme, 91 percent of the students completed the programme. 68 percent of the MSc – Sustainable Design of the Built Environment programme graduated with a master's degree. The other five programmes had graduation rates between 45 percent and 55 percent.

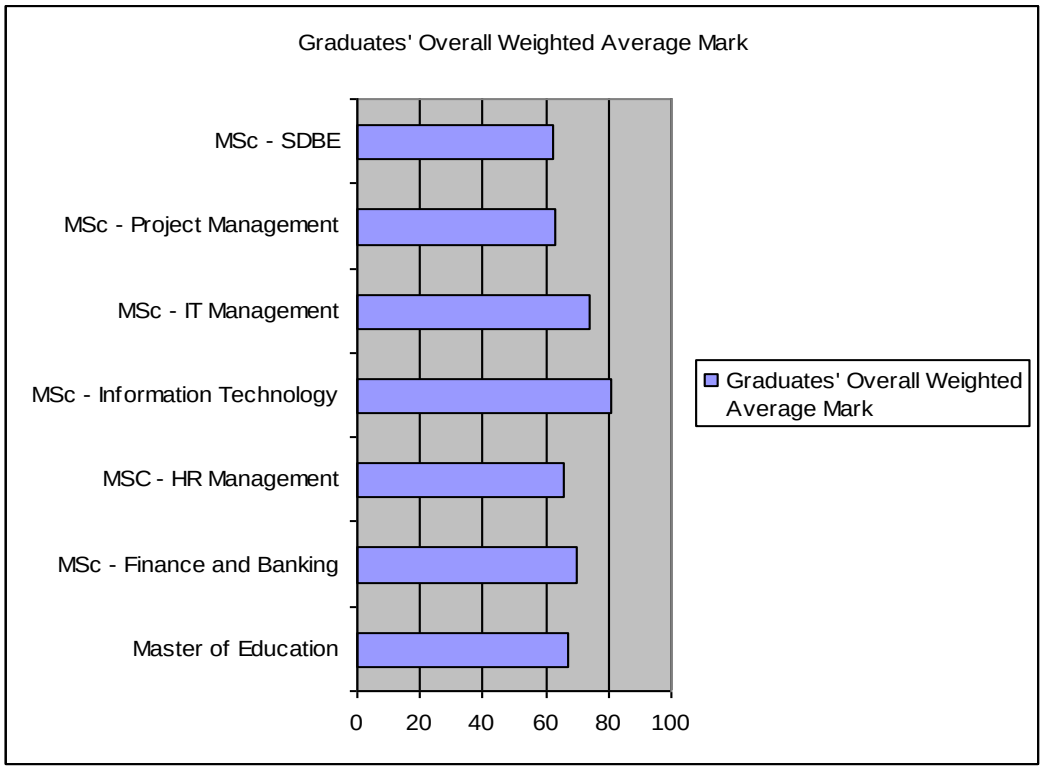
Programme	**Enrolments**	**No. of Graduates**	**Graduates to Enrolment percent**	**Overall Weighted Avg Mark**
Master of Education	77	70	91percent	67
MSc - Finance and Banking	36	18	50percent	70
MSC - HR Management	4	5		66
MSc – Information Technology	60	27	45percent	81
MSc – IT Management	31	16	52percent	74
MSc - Project Management	207	113	55percent	63
MSc – Sustainable Design of the Built Environment	38	26	68percent	62

4.4 Enrolment-Graduation by Programmes



4.4.1 Enrolment-Graduation by Programme

MSc in Information Technology has the highest overall weighted average mark among the seven programmes with 81 percent followed by MSc – IT Management with 74 percent. The other programmes' overall weighted average marks ranged from 62 percent to 70 percent



4.5 Graduates Weighted Average Mark by Programme

4.1.2 Data for MSc in Project Management (MPM) Programme

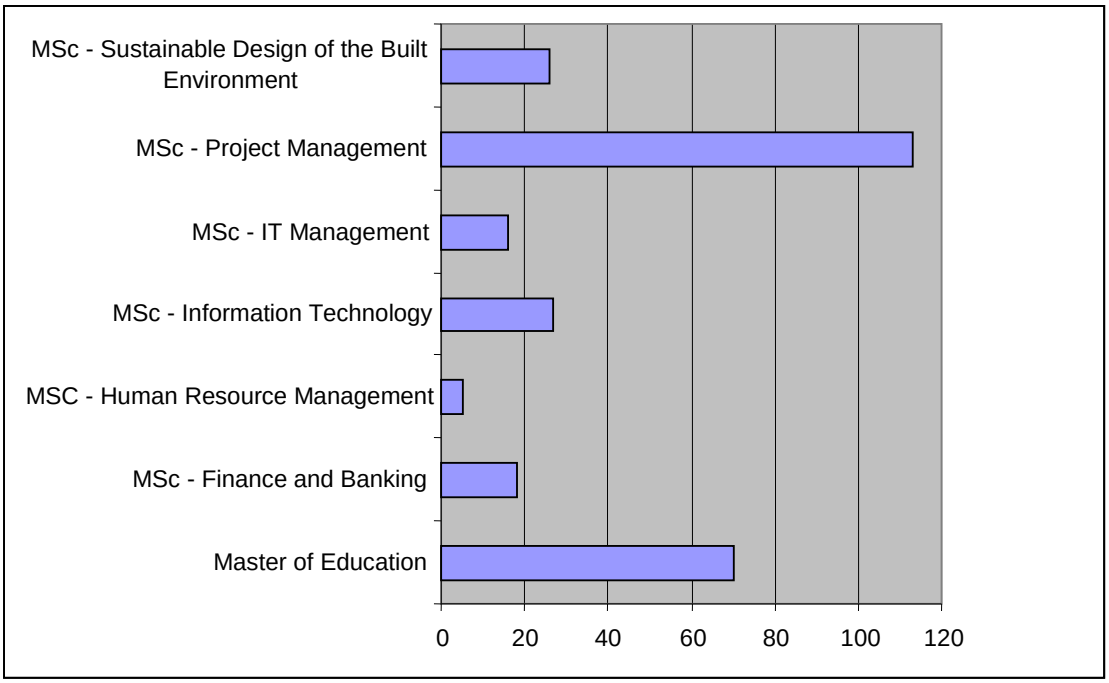
The sample taken in this study is 113 Masters in Project Management graduates out of a total population of 275 masters' graduates including those from the following programmes: Sustainable Design of the Built Environment, Education, Information Technology, IT Management, Human Resource Management and Finance & Banking.

The highest number of graduates is from MPM and the lowest is five graduates from MSc in HR Management.

N=275

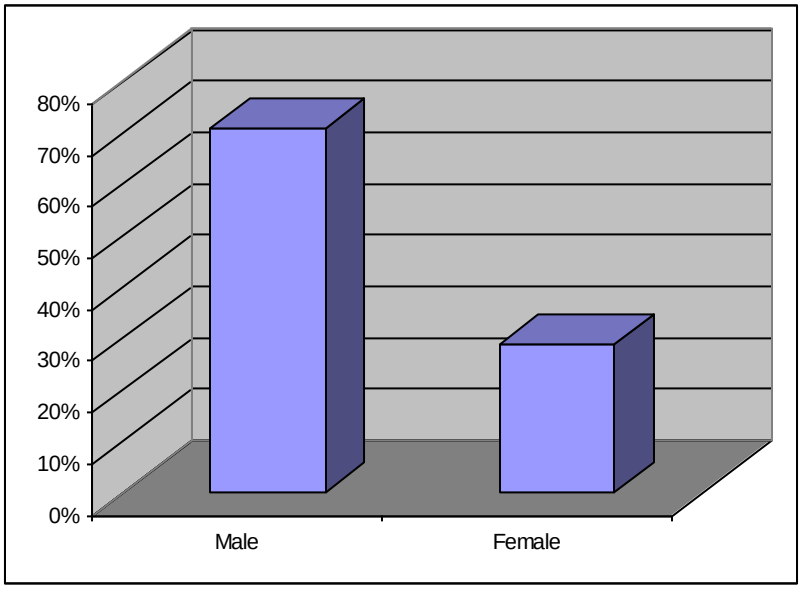
Programme	No. of Graduates
Master of Education	70
MSc - Finance and Banking	18
MSc - Human Resource Management	5
MSc - Information Technology	27
MSc - IT Management	16
MSc - Project Management	113
MSc - Sustainable Design of the Built Environment	26

4.6 MPM Graduates (Sample) from BUiD Graduates (Population)



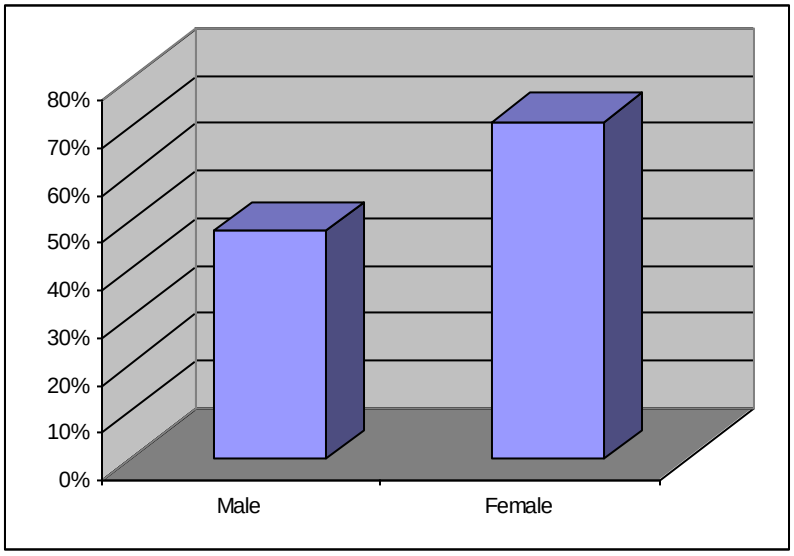
4.6.1 MPM Graduates (Sample) from BUiD Graduates (Population)

Of the total 207 students who were enrolled from Academic Year 2004-05 to 2007-08, 71 percent were male and 29 percent were female students as shown in 4.7.



4.7 MPM Enrolment by Gender

As indicated in the figure below, 48 percent of the enrolled male students have graduated successfully whereas among their female counterparts 71 percent have graduated.

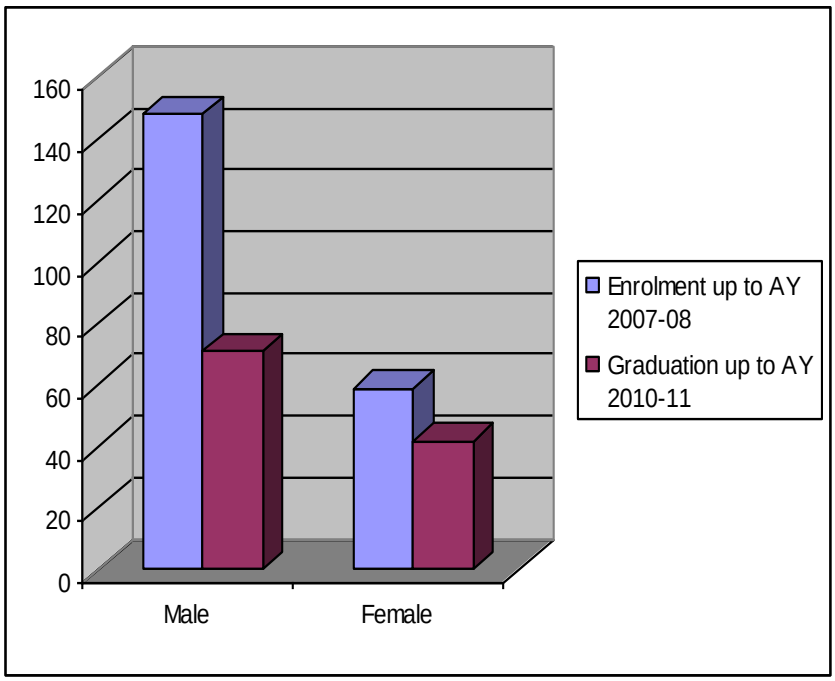


4.8 Graduation Comparison by Gender

Figures 4.9 and 4.9.1 compare enrolment and graduation numbers of male and female MPM students. 48 percent of 148 male students completed the programme, while among 59 enrolled female students, 71 percent have graduated.

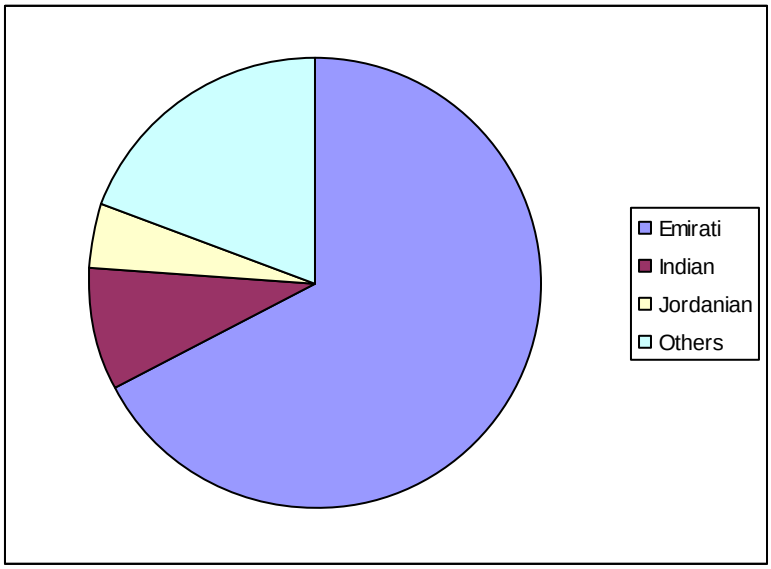
MPM Students	Male	Female	Total
Enrolment up to AY 2007-08	148	59	207
Graduation up to AY 2010-11	71	42	113

4.9 Enrolment-Graduation Comparison



4.9.1 Enrolment-Graduation Comparison

This sample has graduates of 15 nationalities including UAE nationals, other Arabs, Asians, Africans, Americans and Europeans. Emiratis form 67 percent of graduates with the other single large group being Indians (8.8 percent).



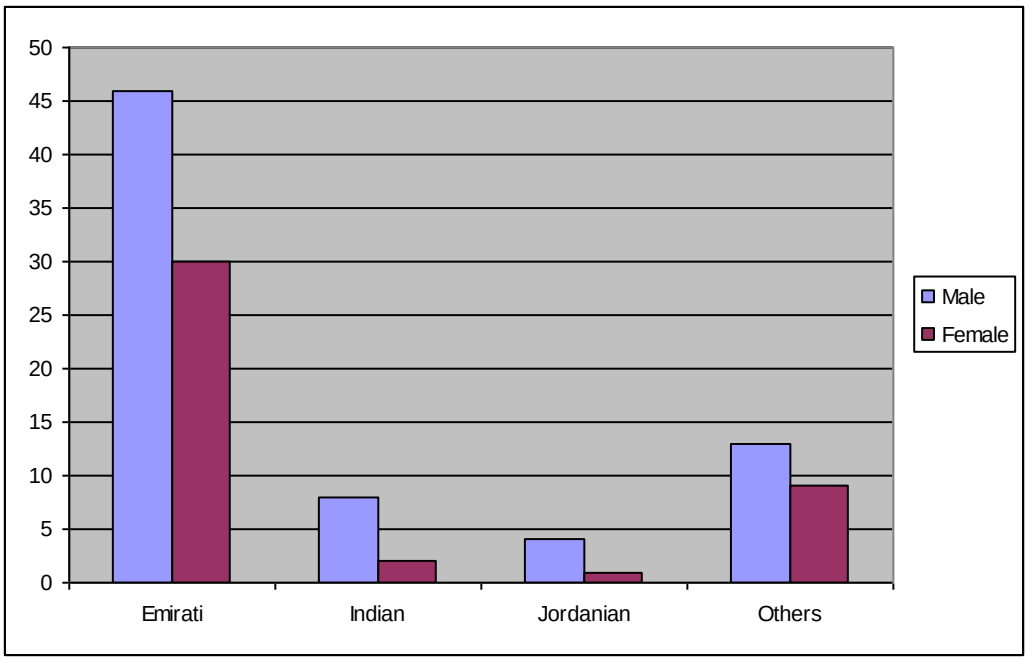
4.10 Graduation Comparison by Nationality

As indicated in the figures 4.11 and 4.11.1, this sample has 71 male and 42 female graduates of 15 nationalities including UAE nationals, other Arabs, Asians, Africans, Americans and Europeans. Emiratis form 67 percent of the sample with the other large group being Indians (8.8 percent).

N=113

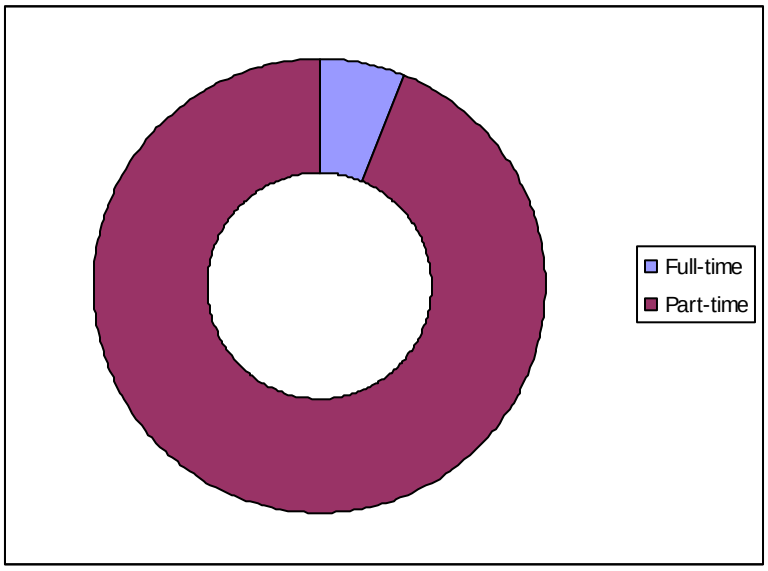
Nationality	**Male**	**Female**
Emirati	46	30
Indian	8	2
Jordanian	4	1
Others	13	9

4.11 Graduates Comparison by Gender and Nationality



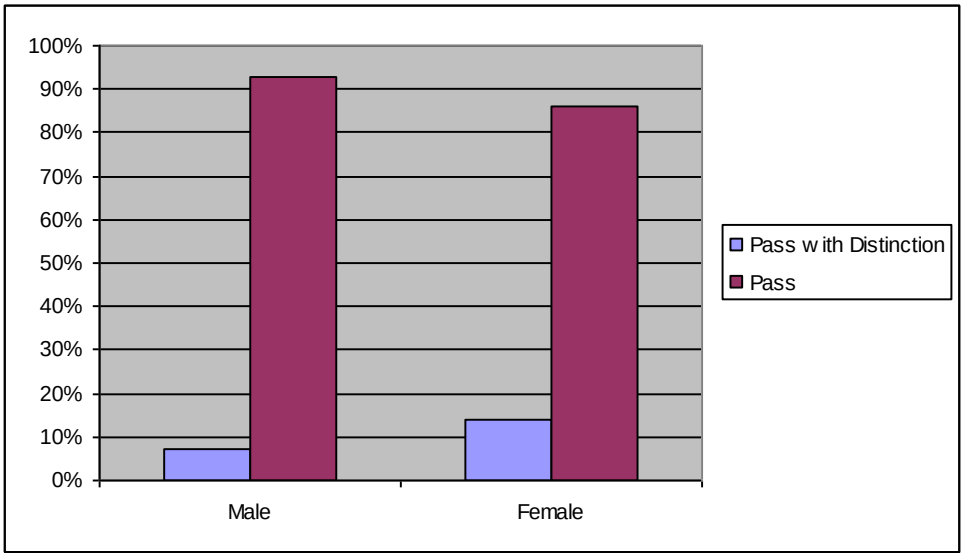
4.11.1 Graduation Comparison by Gender and Nationality

Seven of the 113 graduates studied on full-time basis and 106 were part-timers as seen in the chart below



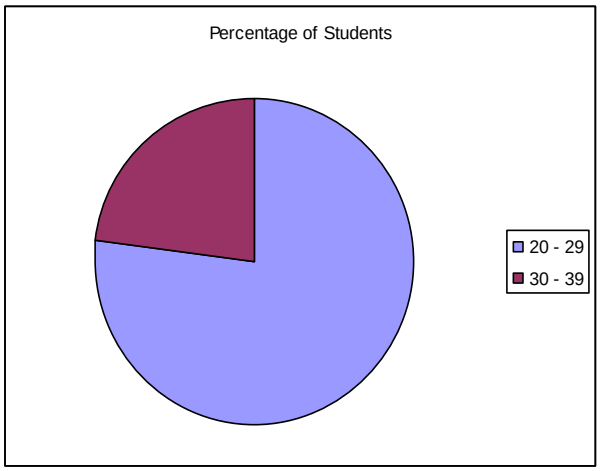
4.12 Graduates' Study Mode

10 percent of the students graduated with distinction and the remaining 90 percent had an overall 'pass' degree. Almost 17 percent of female students graduated with a distinction while 7.5 percent of their male counterparts were awarded the same honour.



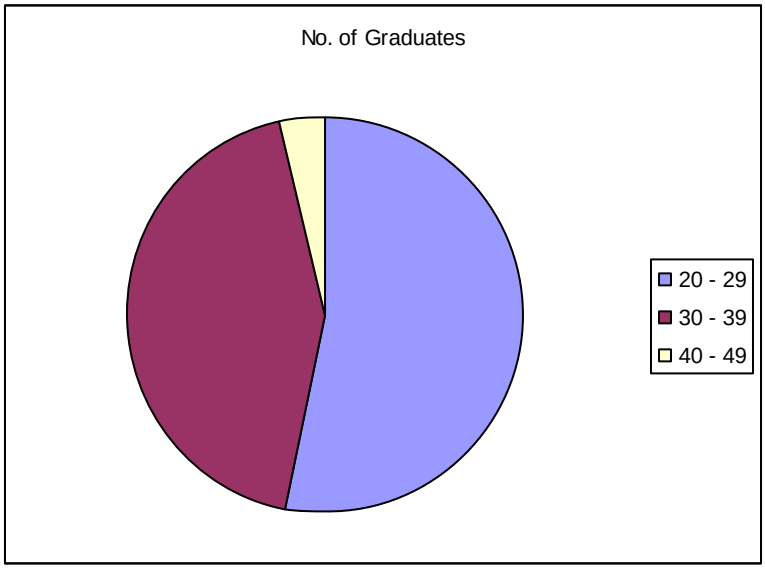
4.13 Results by Gender – Pass/Pass with Distinction

At the time of enrolment, of the 113 graduates 77percent were in the age range of 20-29 years, while the remaining were between 30-39 years of age.



4.14 Age at Time of Enrolment

Students' age at the time of graduation ranged from 24 to 42 years with the largest number of students, that is, 16 percent of them being 28 years old. 53 percent of the graduates were below 30 years and 47 percent were above 30. There were no graduates below 24 years of age.



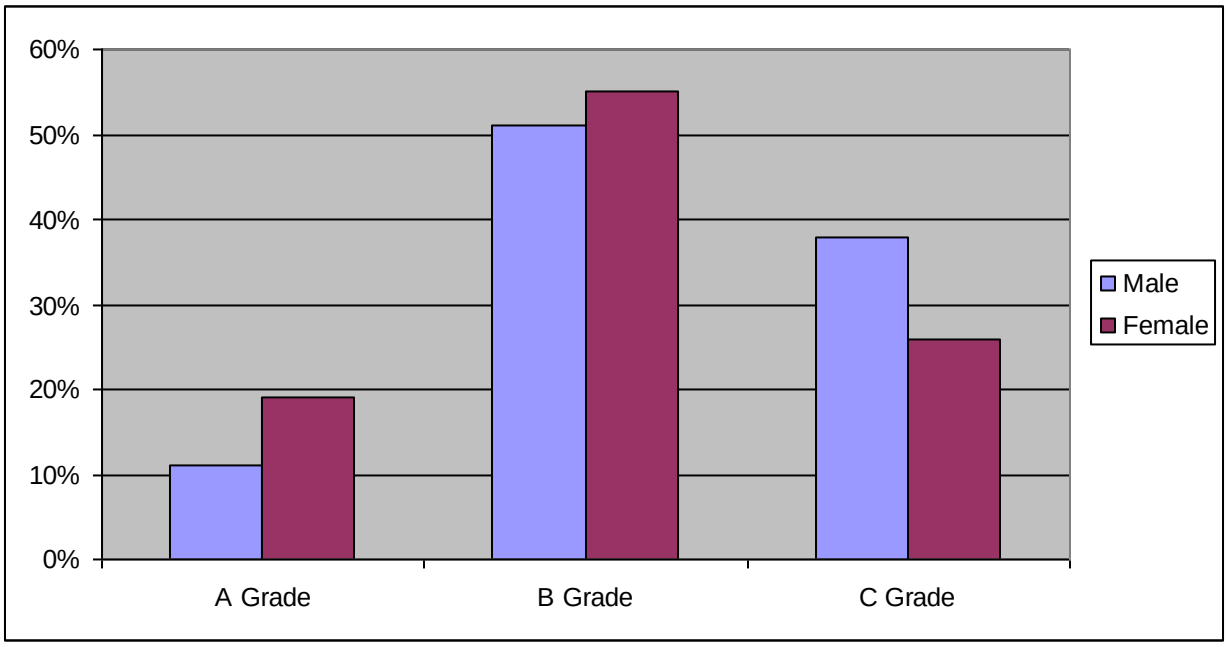
4.15 Age at time of graduation

In the taught modules, one student each secured the highest weighted average of 78.12 percent and the lowest weighted average of 52 percent. Similarly one student had the highest mark of 82 percent in the dissertation while 13 students secured the lowest mark of 50 percent. In the taught modules, the highest number of students (13) scored 59 and in the dissertation, the highest number of students (16) scored 60 and 70. The overall weighted average marks, which includes the taught modules and dissertation marks, are spread across 50.6 percent and 81.2 percent with 1-3 graduates scoring at various levels. The largest number of students (5) secured 51.8 percent.

N=113

Gender	Male	Female
A Grade	8	8
B Grade	36	23
C Grade	27	11

4.16 Overall Grade Comparison by Gender



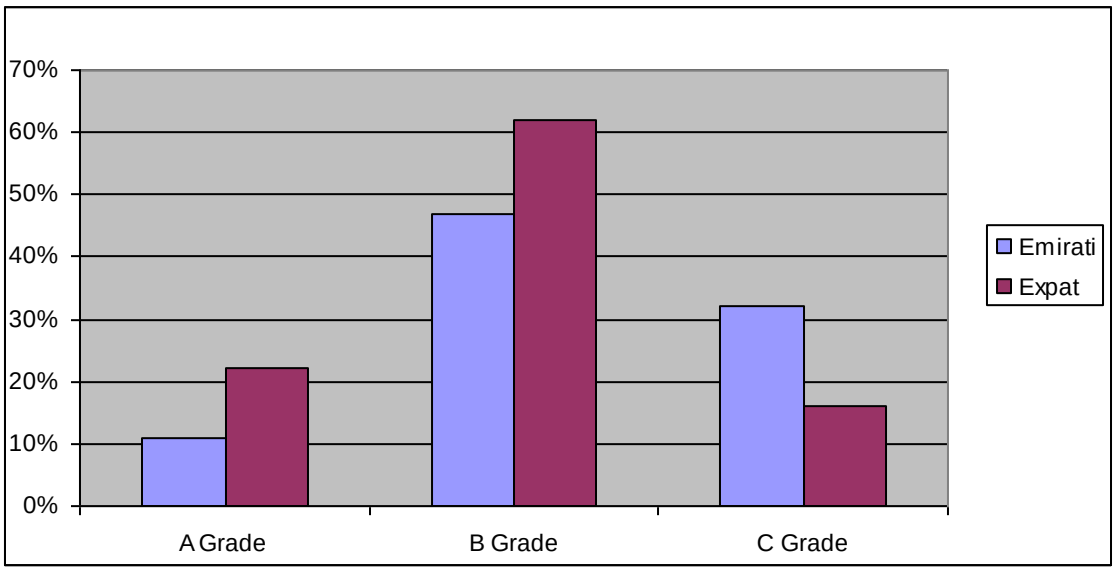
4.16.1 Overall Grade Comparison by Gender

As shown in figure 4.17.1, 11 percent of the Emiratis and 22 percent of non-Emiratis achieved overall ‘A’ grades. ‘B’ grades were achieved by 47 percent of the former and 62 percent of the latter groups. The other students graduated with a ‘C’ grade.

N=113

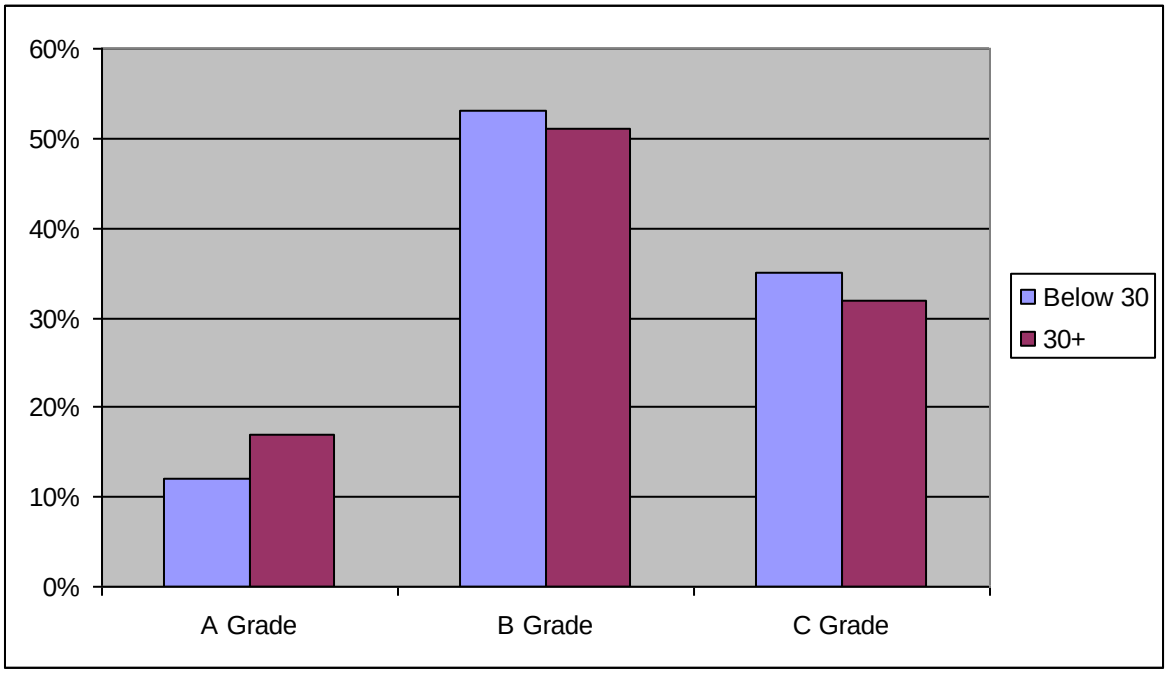
Nationality	Emirati	Non- Emirati
A Grade	8	8
B Grade	36	23
C Grade	32	6

4.17 Overall Grade Comparison by Nationality



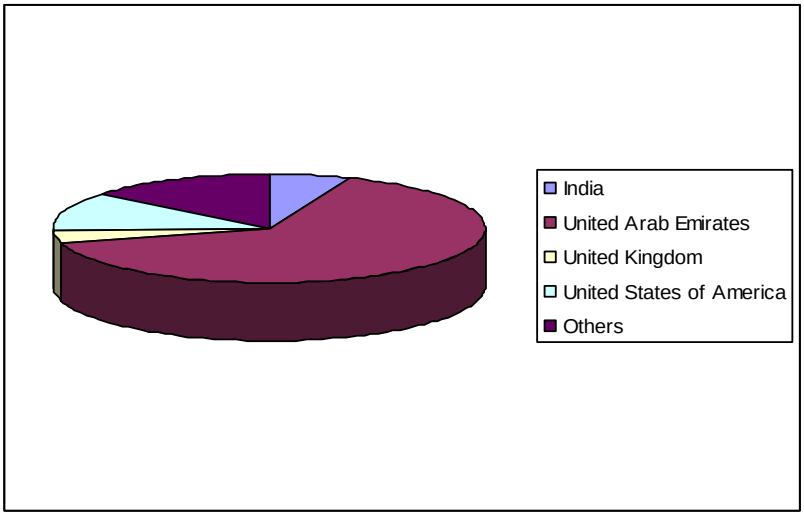
4.17.1 Overall Grade Comparison by Nationality

As indicated in 4.18, 17 percent of graduates over age 30 achieved an ‘A’ grade while those under 30 formed 12 percent of the group. Grade ‘B’ was achieved by 53 percent and 51 percent of below 30 and over 30 age groups respectively.



4.18 Overall Grade Comparison by Age

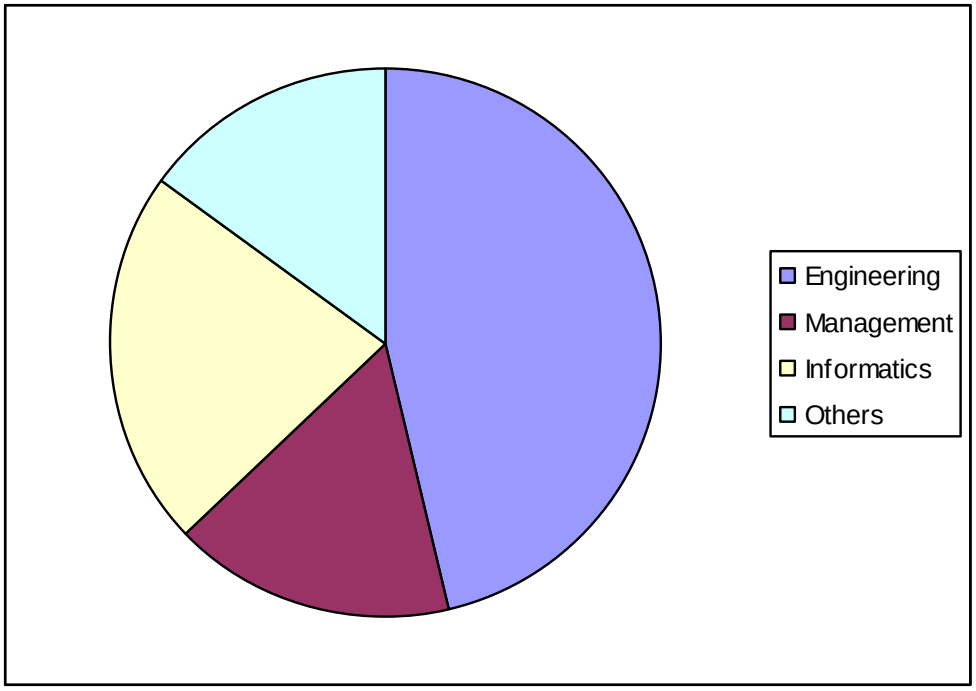
The students from this sample completed their undergraduate study in 14 countries, with the highest number (73) graduating from UAE universities, 13 from USA and 7 from India. All the students who graduated from USA are male and 12 of them are Emiratis.



4.19 Graduates' Country of Study in Undergraduate Education

The largest number of these graduates (33) completed their undergraduate study in the Higher Colleges of Technology, which is a federal university having separate colleges for men and women in most of the emirates. Nine graduated from UAE University and six from Zayed University, both of which are also UAE federal institutions, and six graduated from American University of Sharjah.

Undergraduate subjects of study ranged included architecture, engineering, computer science, business administration, psychology, pharmacy, English language and literature etc. 52 of the graduates were from an engineering background, 25 from the are the area of informatics, 19 from management, and 17 from science, arts, media studies, pharmacy and finance.



4.20 Undergraduate Subject Area

4.2 INFERENTIAL DATA ANALYSIS

Emirati Gender Age at Graduation Results

(N=76, M=29.86, SD=3.614)

A comparison between Emirati male and female graduates, and their age at the time of graduation shows a variance with the male2 being older than the female graduates.

Age at graduation	M	N	SD
Emirati Female	28.77	30	2.861
Emirati Male	30.57	46	3.897

4.21 Emirati Gender and Age

Nationality-Age at Graduation Results

British graduates are the youngest in the group. A comparison between the two largest groups shows that Emirati graduates are younger than their Indian counterparts.

Nationality	M	N	SD
British	25.2	2	2.21
Canadian	33	2	7.071
Egyptian	39	3	0
Emirati	29.86	76	3.614
Indian	31.8	10	5.116
Iranian	30.5	2	2.121
Iraqi	29	1	
Jordanian	31.6	5	6.189
Lebanese	38	1	
Pakistani	31.33	3	9.238
Palestinian	28	2	1.414
Saudi	28	1	
Sudanese	30.5	2	3.536

Syrian	28	2	0
Tanzanian	29	1	

4.22 All Nationalities Age

Nationality-Overall Weighted Average Marks

Canadian and British graduates have the highest overall weighted average marks. A comparison between the two largest groups show that the Indian graduates overall marks are higher than their Emiratis colleagues.

Nationality	**M**	**N**	**SD**
British	72.61	2	12.17
Canadian	73.1	2	3.53
Egyptian	61.86	3	9.84
Emirati	61.34	76	7.02
Indian	63.08	10	7.81
Iranian	61	2	8.76
Iraqi	61.4	1	
Jordanian	64.8	5	4.1
Lebanese	70.2	1	
Pakistani	64.2	3	11.44
Palestinian	59.3	2	1.27
Saudi	68.2	1	
Sudanese	66.4	2	8.2
Syrian	69	2	0.56
Tanzanian	67.8	1	

4.23 All Nationalities Overall Weighted Average Marks

Overall Weighted Average Marks by Gender

Female MPM with 64.29 percent students have a higher overall weighted average when compared with their male colleagues who scored 61 percent.

Gender	M	N	SD
Female	64.29	42	7.72
Male	61	71	6.81

4.24 Overall Weighted Average Marks by Gender

4.1.2 Testing the Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Analysis reveals that there exists a difference in weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules between the group who graduated from the programme (mean = 62.8, SD = 5.5, n = 113) and the group who completed the taught modules but did not graduate (mean = 60.5, SD = 5.3, n=24). To understand if this difference is statistically significant or not, an independent *t*-Test was carried out. The results show that there is no statistical significant difference in mean when comparing the overall average of the two groups (t = -1.89, df = 135, p = 0.06) with p=0.06. This study found that there is no significant statistical difference in weighted average means scores achieved in the taught modules between the group of students that graduated and those that did not graduate. Hence the Ho1 is accepted and Ha1 is rejected.

Hypotheses 2

Analysis reveals that there exists a difference in the weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules between the group of students who completed the

dissertation within the stipulated time (mean = 62.30, SD = 5.584, n = 30) and the group that took more than the stipulated time (mean = 63.02, SD = 5.487, n = 83).

	Code	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Taught Modules Weighted Avg	1	30	62.30	5.584	1.020
	2	83	63.02	5.487	.602
Months to complete dissertation	1	30	6.93	2.612	.477
	2	83	15.87	6.724	.738

4.25 Group Statistics

To examine if this difference is statistically significant or not, an independent samples *t*-test was carried out. The independent samples *t*-test shows that there is no statistical significant difference in mean when comparing the overall average of the two groups for taught modules (t = -0.611, df = 111, p = 0.542, 2-tailed) with p=.542. This indicates that that there is no statistical significant difference in the weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules between the group that completed the dissertation within the stipulated time and the group that took more than the stipulated time. Thus Ho2 is accepted and Ha2 is rejected. The independent samples *t*-test results show that there is a statistical significant difference in the months taken to complete the dissertation for the two groups of students (t = -10.167, df = 110.367, p < 0.001, 2-tailed).

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95percent Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Taught Modules Weighted Avg	Equal variances assumed	.021	.884	-.611	111	.542	-.718	1.174	-3.045	1.609
	Equal variances not assumed			-.606	50.591	.547	-.718	1.184	-3.096	1.660
Months to complete dissertation	Equal variances assumed	15.117	.000	-7.070	111	.000	-8.934	1.264	-11.438	-6.430
	Equal variances not assumed			-10.167	110.367	.000	-8.934	.879	-10.676	-7.193

4.26 Independent Samples Test

Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

To examine whether there was a relationship between the weighted average scores in the taught modules and the number of months taken to complete the dissertation, Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was carried out. Analysis reveals that there exists a weak negative relationship between the taught modules weighted average and the number of months to complete the dissertation (r = -0.08, n = 113, p = 0.43). This indicates that students with higher taught modules weighted average scores completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and students who had lower taught modules weighted average scores took more than the stipulated time to complete their dissertation.

4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The number of students enrolled from AY 2004-05 to AY 2007-08 was 453, of which the largest group, that is., 46 percent were MPM students and the smallest group comprised MSc in HR Management students with 1 percent. Of these 453 students, 55 percent were male and 45 percent were female students, and 91 percent followed part-time study mode. Emiratis comprised 55 percent of the student population and the remaining 45 percent had students of Arab, Asian, European and American background. 91 percent of the 77 MEd students and 55 percent of the 207 MPM students graduated successfully. MSc in Information Technology had the highest overall weighted average mark among the seven programmes with 81 percent followed by MSc – IT Management with 74 percent. The overall weighted average marks of MPM and

MEd were 63 percent and 67 percent respectively. There were 207 MPM students of which 71 percent were males. Of these male students, 48 percent graduated successfully with a MPM degree. On the other hand 71 percent of the 59 female students completed the programme and graduated successfully. There were 113 MPM graduates of 15 different nationalities and 67 percent of them were Emiratis. Indians formed 9 percent of the group and the remaining graduates came from other Arab, Asian, African, American and European countries. Of the 113 graduates, 106 were part-time students. 10 percent of the students graduated with distinction and the remaining 90 percent had an overall 'pass' degree. Almost 17 percent of female students graduated with distinction while 7.5 percent of their male counterparts were awarded the same honour. At the time of enrolment, of the 113 graduates, 77 percent were in the age range of 20-29 years, while the remaining were between 30-39 years of age. Students' age at the time of graduation ranged from 24 to 42 years with the largest number of students, that is, 16 percent of them being 28 years old. 53 percent of the graduates were below 30 years and 47 percent were above 30. There were no graduates below 24 years of age. In the taught modules, one student each secured the highest weighted average of 78.12 percent and the lowest weighted average of 52 percent. Similarly one student had the highest mark of 82percent in the dissertation while 13 students secured the lowest mark of 50 percent. In the taught modules, the highest number of students (13) scored 59 and in the dissertation, the highest number of students (16) scored 60 and 70 marks. The overall weighted average, which includes the taught modules and dissertation marks, are spread across 50.6 percent and 81.2

percent with 1-3 graduates scoring at various levels. The largest number of students (5) secured 51.8 percent. Of the 113 MPM graduates, 11 percent of the Emiratis and 22 percent of non-Emiratis achieved overall ‘A’ grades. ‘B’ grades were achieved by 47 percent of the former and 62 percent of the latter groups. The other students graduated with a ‘C’ grade. 17 percent of graduates over age 30 achieved an ‘A’ grade while those under 30 formed 12 percent of the group. Grade ‘B’ was achieved by 53 percent and 51 percent of below 30 and over 30 age groups respectively. The students from this sample of 113 graduates completed their undergraduate study in 14 countries, with the highest number (73) graduating from UAE universities, 13 from USA and 7 from India. All the students who graduated from USA are male and 12 of them are Emiratis.

The largest number of these graduates (33) completed their undergraduate study in the Higher Colleges of Technology, which is a UAE federal university having separate colleges for men and women in most of the emirates. Nine graduated from UAE University and six from Zayed University, both of which are also UAE federal institutions, and six graduated from American University of Sharjah. Undergraduate subjects of study ranged included architecture, engineering, computer science, business administration, psychology, pharmacy, English language and literature. 52 of the graduates were from an engineering background, 25 from the area of informatics, 19 from management, and 17 from science, arts, media studies, pharmacy and finance. An age comparison between Emirati male and female graduates shows that males were older than their female counterparts. When considering the whole group, British

graduates were the youngest. A comparison between the two largest groups shows that Emirati graduates were younger than their Indian counterparts. Canadian and British graduates have the highest overall weighted average marks. A comparison between the two largest groups shows that Indian graduates overall marks are higher than their Emiratis colleagues'. Female MPM graduates with 64.29 percent marks have a higher overall weighted average when compared with their male colleagues who scored 61percent.

Independent *t*-test results reveals that there is no significant statistical difference in the weighted average means scores achieved in the taught modules between the group of students that graduated and those that did not graduate. Hence the Ho1 is accepted and Ha1 is rejected. Similarly independent *t*-test results reveals that there is no significant statistical difference in the weighted average means scores achieved in the taught modules between the group of students who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and the group which took more than the stipulated time to complete their dissertation. Hence the Ho1 is accepted and Ha1 is rejected.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 DISCUSSION

Some of the points to bear in mind are that:

- There are two intakes in every academic year, September and January.
- Project Management, Education and Information Technology programmes commenced in September 2004 (AY 2004-05)
- Sustainable Design of the Built Environment (SDBE) programme commenced in September 2005 (AY 2005-06)
- Finance and Banking and IT Management programmes commenced in September 2006 (AY 2006-07)
- HR Management programme commenced in February 2008 (AY 2007-08)

5.1.1 Enrolment-Graduation Comparison in BUiD Programmes

BUiD enrolment data shows that 453 students were enrolled across seven programmes from AY 2004-05 to AY 2007-08. The highest number of students enrolled was in the MPM programme which is 46 percent followed by Education with 17 percent. The HRM programme commenced in January 2008 and this explains its low enrolment figure of four students. The enrolment to graduation figures throws up some interesting figures. Out of 77 Education students, 91 percent have graduated whereas in MPM 55 percent of the 207 enrolled students have graduated during the same period. In SDBE

programme, 68 percent students graduated while Information Technology, IT Management and Finance & Banking record between 45 percent and 50 percent graduation rates. It is possible that one of reasons for high graduation numbers in the Education programme is the Emirati-non-Emirati ratio of 15:62, where 81 percent of the 77 enrolled students were non Emiratis. These non-Emirati students who were mostly working in the field of education as teacher or administrators were eager to complete the programme for better career prospects like change in job, promotion etc. Hence they are likely to be more motivated than their Emirati counterparts who have the security of a job, as revealed by Abdulla and Ridge (2011), with 86 percent of them being employed in the government sector. Non-Emirati employees are aware of the fact that they stand to lose their residence visa if they are out of their jobs and work hard to keep their jobs. They are also motivated to obtain higher qualifications which will improve their career prospects. Many of them come from nations that are troubled by internal strife and they seek to rebuild their lives in a new environment. They seem to be extrinsically motivated that is leading to their strategic method (Prat-Sala and Redford, 2010) of achieving their goal of completing the programme. In contrast 70 percent of enrolled MPM students were Emiratis with the majority of them likely to be secure in their jobs. Such students would have to be intrinsically motivated to progress in their study in a timely fashion and graduate with the MPM degree. They would need to find their subject of study appealing and feel that they gain inner satisfaction from it (Prat-Sala and Redford, 2010).

5.1.2 Gender Differences in MPM Programme

It is an interesting fact that 55 percent of the enrolled students are male and 45 percent are female students (fig 4.1). Though investigating gender gap is not one of the aims of this study, it is worthwhile making a note of the differences from the available data. As shown in table 4.0., 46 percent (207) of the total students were enrolled on the MPM programme of which 29 percent were female MPM students (fig 4.7.). Though 71 percent of these students were male students, only 48 percent of them completed the programme and graduated whereas 71 percent of the enrolled female students graduated during the same time (fig 4.8.). Gender differences in education whether participation, completion or achievement, have long been topics of discussion and research. Buchmann and DiPrete (2006) investigated role reversal and the reasons for higher rates of completion of female students. From the 1960s when 65 percent of graduates were men to 58 percent of women graduating with a bachelor degree in 2004 in USA (Buchmann and DiPrete, 2006), women have come a long way. In the UAE, according to the National Admissions and Placements Office (NAPO), 27 percent of male Emiratis are enrolled for higher education, presumably undergraduate education (Ridge, 2009). However BUiD data indicates that a higher percentage (61percent) of male Emiratis is pursuing higher education (postgraduate study) contrary to research and available NAPO data. A different picture emerges when it comes to completion figures with 48 percent of enrolled male students graduating with a MPM degree in comparison to 71 percent of their female counterparts (fig 4.8). Abdulla and Ridge (2011) claim that though traditionally education was a privilege conferred on men rather

than on women in the Middle East region, currently 70 percent of higher education students are women. They list economic factors like availability of government jobs for nationals (86 percent of Emiratis hold government jobs) and 'rent-seeking behaviour' as reasons for lower participation of men in higher education and sociological factors like poor achievement in secondary education, high drop-outs, and socio-economic status of Emirati citizens in poorer Emirates and its effects on their prior education, and language of instruction used in schools in wealthier/poorer Emirates which affects preparedness for higher education participation and achievement. On the other hand, education represents emancipation for Emirati women, and they are actively encouraged by their families, especially by their mothers, to pursue higher education (Abdulla and Ridge, 2011). Though men have privileges like opportunities to study abroad in countries like USA and UK as indicated by BUiD MPM data (fig 4.19) in this study, women seem to make better use of their limited opportunities. Figure 4.19 shows that 12 of the 46 Emirati male graduates had completed their undergraduate studies in USA or UK, while all of their 29 female counterparts studied in the UAE. Buchanan and DiPrete (2006) attribute the higher completion rates among females in USA to various factors like 'gender-specific trends', declining discrimination against women, their value for financial independence, rising divorce rates, reduction in male rate of completion owing to lower educated or absent fathers etc, while Abdulla and Ridge (2011) attribute female literacy to female emancipation and maternal encouragement.

5.1.3 Study Mode Trends in MPM Programme

94 percent of these graduates were part-time students. As BUiD was initially set up to cater to part-time students, it is not surprising to note the difference between the number of part and full-time students. More than 90 percent of BUiD students are engaged in full-time employment. They prefer to study on part-time basis and take a relatively smaller load while studying the taught modules. Another reason for the high number of part-time students is BUiD's policy of employed students enrolling as part-time students compulsorily. This policy was written when the University noticed that the performance of such students who enrolled as full-time students suffered and a large number of them did not progress satisfactorily. A full-time employed student is permitted to register for full-time study only on approval of the Dean of that faculty. In such cases, the application is thoroughly reviewed to ensure that the student is capable of managing full-time study along with a full-time job and other personal and social commitments. Though part-time study, as Crewe (2005) pointed out plays an important role in case of students who would not otherwise find higher education affordable and gives them an opportunity to work to pay for their studies, it puts pressure on them as they are required to achieve work-life-study balance (Kember, 1999). In addition, they would have to strive to complete their studies within a reasonable time and perform well too. It is heartening to note that 71% of the full-time students in the sample completed the programme within the specified time-frame. However, in the case of part-time students, only 19% completed the programme within specified time-frame. Four students took more than 60 months to complete the programme and graduate. Contrary to the notion

that students take more time to complete the dissertation, three of these four students spent more time on the taught modules. About 10% of part-time students took more than four years to complete the programme, and almost 38% spent between three and four years on the programme.

5.1.4 Overall Results in MPM Programme

BUiD students can graduate with a 'Pass' or 'Pass with Distinction' award. Figure 4.13 indicates that 10 percent of MPM students graduated with a 'Pass with Distinction' award. The Grading Scheme used at BUiD is given below:

Score	Grade	Interpretation
>70	A	Excellent
60-69	B	Very good
50-59	C	Good
40-49	D	Marginal fail
<40	E	Clear fail

5.0. BUiD Grading Scheme

(Source: BUiD Student Handbook)

To be awarded a Masters degree with Distinction a student must meet the following criteria:

- Pass all modules (minimum 180 credits) taken as part of the programme on a first-sit basis;

- Achieve a weighted mean mark of at least 70 percent in all taught modules. If 70 percent marks are not achieved in more than two modules, a recommendation for distinction must be approved by the Board of Examiners. No module mark may be less than 50 percent;
- Achieve a weighted mean mark of at least 70 percent in the dissertation components taken as part of the programme;
- No more than 20 percent of the credits may be transferred from another institution.

Students who repeat, who substitute a module or who are re-assessed as a result of an initial failure are not eligible for the award of distinction.

(Source: BUiD Student Handbook)

Data indicates that 30 percent of the total sample achieved 70 percent marks in the dissertation but only 10 percent of the students scored 70 percent marks both in the taught modules and the dissertation, and qualified for an overall distinction. People usually arrive in the country seeking employment, unlike those moving to countries like USA and UK for the sole purpose of higher education. Expatriates in the UAE are mostly opting for higher education to improve their employment profile rather than for academic reasons. Hence graduating with distinction would not be their priority. Data shows that though 77 percent of the graduates were between the ages of 21 to 29 years at the time of enrolment, 47% of them were in the age range of 30+. With BUiD catering to postgraduate students with a high percentage of them being expatriates who are in

the UAE mainly for employment, it is not surprising to note that a large number of them enroll when they are in their late 20s and graduate at 30+. They arrive in the country seeking employment, unlike expatriate youth who go to countries like USA and UK for the sole purpose of higher education. Expatriate students in the UAE are mostly opting for higher education to improve their employment profile rather than for academic reasons. Hence graduating with distinction would not be their priority.

Though MPM students' undergraduate countries of study and subject areas are not within the scope of this study, it is worth noting that 46 percent of the sample is from an engineering background. As it has always been emphasized that BUiD MPM programme does not cater to Engineering graduates alone, this anomaly is a matter of concern and should be addressed by the management.

The hypotheses tested in the current study are listed below:

Ho1: There is no significant difference between the students who graduated and those who did not graduate with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ha1: There is a significant difference between the students who graduated and those who did not graduate with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ho2: There is no significant difference between the students who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and those who took more than the stipulated time with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

Ha2: There is a significant difference between the students who completed their dissertation within the stipulated time and those who took more than the stipulated time with regard to their weighted average mean scores achieved in the taught modules

5.1.5 Hypothesis 1

Data analysis reveals the existence of a difference in means of the weighted average in taught modules, of the group of students who graduated with an MPM degree and the group that did not graduate. The difference in means is minor as the taught modules mean of the group that graduated which included 113 graduates, was 62.8 and the group that did not graduate, with 24 students was 60.5, and the standard deviations were 5.5 and 5.3 respectively. An independent *t*-test was carried out to check if the difference was statistically significant or not. Findings show that there is no statistical significant difference in means when comparing the overall average of the two groups ($t = -1.89$, $df = 135$, $p = 0.06$) with $p = 0.06$. Researchers converge to agree that prior knowledge has a positive effect on learning (Entwistle, 2000), and that entry test grades lead to retention and achievement in college students (Schofied & Dismore, 2010). In effect, previously achieved high scores of a student should lead to achievement and completion in the next stage of study. However the findings of the current study

indicates that achieving a low score in the taught modules does not mean that the student will not complete the dissertation and thus will not graduate with an MPM degree. Conversely achieving a high taught modules weighted average does not guarantee completion of the programme. In fact, a student who has a weighted average of 72 percent in the taught modules, after having struggled a while with her dissertation, has conveyed her intention of exiting with a PG Diploma award. This is in line with the views of the MPM Dissertation Coordinator that with constant follow-ups some students get back on track while others drift away altogether, and finally to opt to graduate with a diploma rather than the master's degree they enrolled for. But that would be expected from students who do not perform well in the taught modules. As reasons for non-completion of the programme are not within the scope of this study, the researcher is not able to analyse the reasons for 24 students not being able to complete the programme though it is a matter of concern. They had invested a considerable amount of money, time and effort to complete eight taught modules with a reasonable overall average grade. They attended 70 percent of classroom sessions in the course of completing the taught modules, and yet they were unable to complete second part which did not necessitate their weekly travel to the University, and could have been completed with less pressure but more focus. Delving into the reasons for non-completion would make an interesting study and would perhaps aid BUiD policy makers in making critical decisions for the MPM programme.

The Dean of Faculty of Business (MPM is part of this faculty) opines that the poor rate of dissertation completion is the reason for high non-completion rates in the programmes. He agrees that failure rates are usually high in part-time master's programmes in comparison with that of full-time programmes, but non-completion rate in MPM is unusually high with about 40 percent of students from past intakes not graduating at all. Table 5.1 showing the number of students who enrolled on the programme but did not complete it lends credence to the Dean's point on MPM completion rates.

Modules Completed	Inactive	Lapsed Registration	Withdrawals
Completed 0 modules	8	3	6
Completed 1 module	2	2	2
Completed 2 modules	2	2	3
Completed 3 modules	1	1	1
Completed 4 modules	0	0	0
Completed 5 modules	0	1	0
Completed 6 modules	0	2	0

5.1. Non-completion of MPM programme

Most of the students (fig. 5.1) who do not have completed modules to their credit had failed the first semester. Of the eight students in the 'inactive' list, four of them failed the modules they were registered for in the first semester. The remaining four were 'no-shows', they registered but did not attend classes. All the three students who registration lapsed without them having completed any module and two of the five withdrawals had failed the first semester. It is a matter of concern when students enroll for the programme but are unable to get through the first semester/term. A high percentage of MPM students are enrolled on probation as they do not meet the

minimum entry requirements and they are required to meet set conditions to continue on the programme. This puts additional pressure on students who are already studying on part-time mode, holding full-time jobs and have other family and social obligations (Kember, 1999). To get best results such students would need appropriate counseling before they are enrolled on the programme.

5.1.6 Hypothesis 2

Data analysis reveals the existence of a difference in means of the weighted average in taught modules, of the group of students who graduated with an MPM degree and the group that did not graduate. The difference in means is minor as the taught modules mean of the group that graduated which included 113 graduates was 62.8 and the group that did not graduate with 24 students was 60.5, and the standard deviations were 5.5 and 5.3 respectively. An independent *t*-test was carried out to check if the difference was statistically significant or not. Findings show that there is no statistical significant difference in means when comparing the overall average of the two groups ($t = -1.89$, $df = 135$, $p = 0.06$) with $p = 0.06$. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine whether there was a relationship between the overall taught modules weighted average scores and the time taken to complete the dissertation. Full and part-time students have four and eight months respectively to complete the dissertation. In this study, six and 10 months were allocated as there were no uniform guidelines for dissertation and students were not clear about expectations, requirements, fees and penalties. An extra buffer was given for the sole purpose of the

study. The ‘Dissertation Framework’ which was approved and came into use in December 2009 lays down regulations and expectations, and students are better informed now than those in the study sample. Pearson’s correlation test reveals that there is a weak negative relationship between performance in taught modules and the time taken to complete the dissertation (r = -0.08, n = 113, p = 0.43). This result indicates that students who had high taught modules weighted average scores took less time than students whose scores were lower in the taught modules. But the relationship between the two variables is negligible with r = -0.08. So taught modules weighted average grades of students cannot be used to predict their subsequent behaviour. This conclusion matches the findings of Woloschuk et al. (2010) that previous performance is a weak predictor of achievement in higher education. It is disappointing to note that performance in taught modules does not have a bearing on subsequent behaviour of MPM students as it is assumed that students use their learning during the first stage of their study when they progress to the second and more difficult phase. During the taught modules stage, emphasis is placed on active learning strategies (Schmidt et al, 2010) like discussions, presentations, group assignments and end of semester tutorial sessions in the MPM programme which should ideally prepare students to complete the taught modules and at the same time arm them to tackle the dissertation competently. The dissertation phase makes various demands on students including high level of academic reading and writing and research skills, apart from personal variables like time and commitment.

The researcher surmised that a student who completed the dissertation within the prescribed time would have been a high achiever in the first stage of his study, the taught modules. High taught module grades were expected to be predictors of timely completion of the subsequent phase of study and thus graduation. To complete the dissertation within the specified time would require students' time and a high level of commitment, apart from self-regulated study without the advantage of classroom sessions and constant supervision. Being focused at this stage should help students to complete the dissertation on time and with a higher grade. Self-regulated learning, time management skills, self-efficacy beliefs, motivation and approaches to studying are believed to have a positive effect on achievement as cited by Prat-Salla and Redford (2010). They also cite studies that show a positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic performance (Bong & Clark, 1999) and 'self-efficacy in writing' and 'writing performance'. In the case of MPM students, it is possible that their beliefs about their writing skills have a bearing on their writing performance which in turn could an impact their dissertation completion. The MPM dissertation is an extensive piece of researched work which can go up to a maximum of 40,000 words, and would require a demonstration of writing ability as much as research skills.

The contribution of the Academic Success Unit (ASU) in imparting study skills to BUiD students has been acknowledged by all the University stakeholders. Generic workshops are offered in the areas of critical thinking, academic reading and giving effective presentations. There is a mandatory workshop on referencing, acknowledging sources

and plagiarism which is offered in two parts. Other workshops include dissertation workshop, literature review workshop etc. Students are also provided individual support and tip sheets on academic writing, literature review writing, using Turnitin plagiarism software etc. ASU aims to enable students to hone their reading and writing skills, and thus make them deal with their assignments with confidence, and become successful in completing modules and progress towards programme completion. As most of the students are non-native English speakers, they tend to feel apprehensive about their reading and writing skills. ASU workshops would help them raise their self-efficacy beliefs in these areas. According to the Learning and Teaching Advisor, teaching students to produce academic writing that is analytical while retaining original expression has been a challenge at BUiD as many of the students come from mainly Arabic educational backgrounds. This could not only mean that their education may not have been in English but more importantly that they may also have been entrenched in different learning and teaching styles than those adopted at BUiD. These students do not only struggle with using English but also with the concept of critical thinking and original expression. She adds that students with language limitations tend to produce a string of quotes with a few sentences of their own in between. Those who have language fluency also tend to struggle with the critical element as in they are able to read and summarise well, but may not able to synthesize ideas or critically position readings within the context of their own work. Unfortunately in the former situation, students end up being accused of academic dishonesty and in the latter, marks are lost for lack of analytical evidence. The Tutor laments that the general assumption is that

students from an Arabic educational background are not capable of critical thought and this assumption has excluded Arab students from being able to engage in critical writing strategies. However, recent political events clearly demonstrate that this assumption is not true and that Arab students are more than capable of critical thought and action. She emphasizes that the act of channeling those skills into academic writing has been the problem. She points out that academic writing is a highly specialized skill that has to be learnt and assimilated. Previously encouraged to rely on restating exactly what they have read has inhibited their ability to express critical thought through their writing and hence these students have to be taught how to channel their thinking into the context of academic writing. She contends that development of critical reading skills that translate into critical thinking skills will help students take a different approach to reading. Students should be taught how to organize salient information about a particular source, evaluate it based on this information, apply critical reading skills and select content for their notes. She maintains that they will then learn how to read their own notes, decide on significance of this information and how to incorporate this as evidence into their writing. It is by thinking about reading and evaluating their own understanding of the readings that students can take the next step of paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas. She concludes that at BUiD, critical reading is applied as a threshold concept towards developing critical writing skills, generating original expression and avoiding plagiarism. On the subject of ASU, the Dean of Faculty of Business while acknowledging its contribution, strongly feels that BUiD has missed a number of opportunities for more innovative forms of support to dissertation students, and points out the lack of use of

intensive English language tuition when it is evident that 60% of the students enroll on probation on account of their low English language scores. He emphasizes that the standard approach of providing a diet of routine workshops and peer group self-help sessions may not be sufficient in the case of BUiD's students.

The researcher agrees with the Dean's views on productive supervisors playing a key role in dissertation completion. At every stage of the dissertation, students feel the need for reassurance that they are progressing in the right direction. This reassurance comes mainly from the supervisor who is usually a subject expert. Availability of the supervisor at critical stages would give the student the much-needed confidence to progress through this challenging study phase. Apart from this, fluency in English language plays a major role not only during the dissertation but from the time of enrolment and progression through the taught modules. According to the BUiD's MPM admission policy, a student who eventually has to provide an English language score of IELTS overall 6.5 equivalent, can be admitted with an overall 5.5 band. The minimum writing and reading scores are not specified. This has several implications which are not altogether positive. Students joining with IELTS 5.5 are required to achieve IELTS 6.0 by the end of the second term or face dismissal from the University, and IELTS 6.5 before they register for the dissertation. Such students are placed on probation and are required to achieve an overall 50% mark in the first three modules studied. Having to achieve the English language score and maintain their module grades places a heavy burden on these students. Failure to achieve an overall 50% mark in the first three

modules will also lead to dismissal from the University. Such students can be readmitted to the programme, but a dismissal may have an adverse effect on their 'academic motivation'. This has impacted the MPM programme enrolment-graduation ratio.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

As findings indicate that taught modules are not contributing to student learning to help them through the dissertation phase, the University's policy makers would have to come up with ways of linking the these two study phases on the MPM programme. This may in turn help other programmes like Information Technology and IT Management which are also facing a similar problem. In addition, though faculty members emphasize that low graduation numbers are linked to non-completion of dissertation, there is evidence to prove that enrolment-graduation ratio is also affected by student attrition – a number of students leave the programme before they complete all the taught modules which is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed by the University management.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

1. Performance in the first stage of master's study, that is in the taught modules, in BUiD is not a predictor of subsequent behaviour of MPM students in terms of programme completion. A high weighted average in taught modules does not guarantee

that the student will complete the programme. Similarly a lower weighted average in taught modules does not indicate non-completion of the programme.

2. Performance in taught modules is not a predictor of the time taken to complete the second and final stage, that is, progression through the dissertation. A high or lower weighted average in taught modules cannot predict whether students will complete their dissertations within the stipulated time.

There is a weak negative relationship between the taught modules performance and the time taken to complete the dissertation. The findings of this study indicate that taught modules do not add value to MPM students' learning and for preparing them for the next phase of study which is the dissertation.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Link between Taught Modules and Dissertation

As indicated by the findings in this study, the taught modules are not adding value to the MPM students' preparation for the more challenging part of the programme, the dissertation. It is recommended that the programme Board of Studies (BoS) reviews the structure of the MPM programme and examines ways to link the two components. This problem may have been dealt with by the introduction of Project Programme and Portfolio Management (PPPM) module in 2010, the objective of which is to enable students to frame and explore a research topic on a PPPM subject in reasonable depth.

Students are encouraged to use the PPPM topic for their dissertation. But it may be worthwhile to study if PPPM is helping students' preparation for the dissertation phase.

2. MPM Dissertation Level of Difficulty

Students have voiced their concern at the level of difficulty of the MPM dissertation. They think that it may be placed at the level of M.Phil study. As this may be contributing to non-completion of dissertation and thus affecting graduation numbers, the MPM team could investigate the matter.

3. English Language Requirement

BUiD records indicate that English language proficiency is one of the factors affecting MPM completion and attrition rates. It is commonly accepted that English language proficiency is a thorny issue in BUiD. But it is more evident in the case of MPM programme as the programme requirement is IELTS 6.5 equivalent, and the minimum entry requirement is IELTS 5.5. Students who are admitted on the programme with the minimum score are required to achieve the next band by the end of the second term and the final score of IELTS 6.5 by the time they complete their taught modules failing which their passage to the dissertation stage is not approved. These conditions along with that of having to achieve an overall 50% in the first three modules could prove burdensome for students most of whom are employed and as mature students have other obligations. In addition it can be a de-motivating factor. Hence it is recommended that the programme team investigate the implications of reducing the English language

from IELTS 6.5 to 6.0 as it was done in the case of other programmes like Human Resource Management and IT Management. In addition a minimum writing score could be specified because there is evidence that students are achieving the required overall score even when they have a writing score as they are able to achieve high scores in the speaking and listening components. Such students struggle to keep up with expected standard of writing.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

1. It is recommended to examine whether the PPPM module is helping students' preparation for the dissertation phase, and appropriate action could be taken based on the findings.

2. Further research is recommended in the area of MPM students' previous education background. It may be worth looking into the reasons for almost 50% of MPM students having an engineering background when the programme is advertised as catering to individuals from all fields of study and employment, with a basic knowledge and understanding of Project Management principles. Students who do not have the requisite skills are offered an opportunity to gain them before joining the programme through the newly introduced Pre-Master's programme.

3. It may worth examining the reasons behind non-completion of the programme, which includes withdrawing from the programme, becoming inactive or letting their registration

validity expire. Some students' withdraw from the programme voluntarily at different stages of study. Some of them neither withdraw nor continue study – they simply disappear, and do not respond to any correspondence from the University. Some of them are unable to complete the programme within the registration period which is three years for full-time and five years for part-time students. It is interesting to note that about 75% of the students in these categories are Emiratis who, it may be presumed, have several incentives to complete the programme including scholarships of higher amounts in comparison with expatriate students.

4. The effect of the new programme structure on completion and achievement could be studied when there is a reasonable number of graduating students. There are six modules in the current MPM programme while there were eight modules till second term of AY 2011-12. Though the number of modules is reduced, it is acknowledged that the content is heavier as the credits have gone up from 15 to 20. Some of the old modules were merged while creating the new ones. It would be interesting to examine the effect of the new structure on student performance.

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APPENDIX 1

DISSERTATION FRAMEWORK

Policy Number/Version	3.10/V01
Section	The Educational Programme
Date of last revision	
Date of approval of current revision	October 2009
Post/Section with responsibility for the review, implementation and monitoring	Student Administration
Approved by	Academic Board
Review Date	October 2012
Cross Reference/Related Documents:	1.0 Policies and Procedures Manual 5.0 Student Handbook Programme Handbooks

1.0 RATIONALE

The purpose of this framework is to facilitate the student learning experience on the Dissertation Stage of the Masters programme and to promote greater numbers graduating from our Masters programmes. The key elements of the proposed framework include:
Registration process
Learning contract
Induction/Compulsory workshops
Tracking of progress and notification

2.0 REGISTRATION

2.1 On completion of the taught component Student Administration will issue to all eligible students a **Notification Letter** together with a **'Dissertation Registration Pack'** inviting them to either:

i. formally register for the dissertation, or
ii. suspend their studies.

(Whereas completion of registration marks the formal commencement of the dissertation stage, the assumption remains that students should be encouraged from very early on in their studies to start thinking about and preparing for their dissertation.)
For students progressing to dissertation at the end of Term 1, the **deadline for submission** of the appropriate registration forms will be on/before the Sunday closest to **1 March** for Term 2, on/before the Sunday closest to **15 June** and for Term 3, on/before the Sunday closest to **1 September**. The Notification Letter will clearly state that in the absence of receipt of any documents from a student by the deadline, the default position will be that the student is deemed to have suspended their studies and that all University services/privileges will be suspended until the student formally re-registers. The re-registration of such students after a period of suspension will attract a fee of AED 1500.

The Notification Letter will clearly state that commencement of the dissertation stage is not automatic and that, just as with the programme modules, a formal registration process must be completed. It will also state who the Dissertation Coordinator for their programme will be and it will outline the nature and purpose of the three forms contained in the registration pack:

i. Dissertation Registration;
ii. Dissertation Intention;
iii. Suspension of Studies

The '**Dissertation Registration Form'** will follow our usual module registration format and must be completed and submitted by the student **together with the appropriate fees**. If the fees do not accompany submission of this form, Student Administration will notify the student, supervisor and Dissertation Coordinator that registration is incomplete. University services will be suspended until the fees are paid and registration is formally completed.

The completed **'Dissertation Intention Form'** must also accompany the completed Dissertation Registration Form. In this form the student will briefly state the proposed topic and nominate their preferred supervisor. The Dissertation Coordinator will allocate the Dissertation Supervisor. The Dissertation coordinator will try to accommodate the student's choice of supervisor but only in exceptional circumstances in consultation with the Head of programme and approved by Dean, the Dissertation Coordinator may allocate any other supervisor which will be recorded on the intention form. The allocated supervisor must also sign this form to show his consent. Once the intention form is signed by all parties and submitted to Student Administration, the registration process is complete (subject to confirmation of the fees being paid).

The Formal Commencement Date for Dissertations University-wide will hereinafter be 15 March, 1 July and 15 September.

The student should complete the **'Suspension of Studies Form'** and submit this to the Head of Student Administration where the student is not in a position to commence active work on their dissertation immediately following completion of the taught component. Suspension of Studies has the effect of stopping the clock on the 4m/8m submission deadline. This form will contain information about how the student goes about reactivating their registration, the consequences of suspending studies in terms of the suspension of University services (including dissertation supervision) and will highlight the fact that the 3yr/5yr study limit continues to run during any/all periods of suspension. Re-registration following a period of suspension will have to follow the normal registration cycle as per the commencement dates above. For the students who suspend their studies after starting the dissertation, the re-registration after a period of suspension will attract a fee of AED 1500.

2.2 Once a student successfully registers for the Dissertation, the Student Administration will acknowledge registration by issuing students with a Learning Contract which the student must also complete and submit within two weeks time. (see 3.0 below)

2.3 In order to keep track of the dissertation completions and extensions, Student Administration will issue a 'Renewal of Registration' notice to students one month before the dissertation deadline Students who do not think that they will be able to meet their deadline will be invited to complete enclosed forms to either:

a. apply for a further period of study of **up to 1 additional term**; or
b. suspend their studies.

NB. Currently, as with extensions granted for any assessment on the taught components of the programme, extensions of the dissertation deadline can only be granted upon demonstration and acceptance of 'acceptable' grounds. To ensure consistency, the Regulations require that the Dean (or his express nominee) should handle all applications for extension of all assessments (including dissertations). The proposed Renewal of Registration form would therefore need to embrace this requirement unless the Regulations are changed with regard to dissertations.

Council has approved a fee of AED1500 payable on application for Renewal of Registration. No fee is payable for applying for Suspension of Studies however a student who suspends the study during dissertation wishes to reactivate their studies and re-register after a period of suspension will also be required to pay the AED1500 fee.

The Registrar, upon advice of the Dean of the relevant Faculty may approve at his sole discretion, an extension of the first deadline of up to 1 calendar month without requiring the student to apply for Renewal of Registration and without payment of the AED 1500 Renewal fee.

2.4 One month before the expiry of the new dissertation deadline, Student Administration will send a further letter to students (as above in 1.3.). However the fee payable for any further extension of registration will be AED 4500.

The Registrar, upon advice of the Dean of the relevant Faculty may approve, at his sole discretion a reduction or a full fee waiver of the payment of this further extension fee payable upon application for a further extension of registration.

3.0 LEARNING CONTRACT

The Dissertation Learning Contract is formative in nature and will be signed by the student and countersigned by the Dissertation Supervisor at their first meeting and then countersigned by the Dissertation Coordinator. Copies will be retained by all parties and also Student Administration. The Learning Contract sets out the respective obligations, responsibilities, expectations and requirements with regard to the conduct of work on the Dissertation stage. This will expressly set out such details as the research topic, supervisor's contact and availability details, the anticipated schedule of meetings, research 'milestones', deadlines, dates of progress reports and other relevant factors. It has a similar function to that of a Module outline in that it provides students with a practical blueprint for their programme of study/research on the Dissertation. It will include, as attachment, the University's Dissertation Style Guide. This documents the commitment of both student and supervisor to the dissertation assessment process.

4.0 INDUCTION/WORKSHOPS

There is scope at both the Faculty and University levels to hold Dissertation Workshops and/or a formal Induction session. An Induction could be general in nature, could introduce students to the Dissertation Style Guidelines and could also showcase successful past examples from different Faculties. Faculty-based workshops could be held at the point deemed feasible by the faculty in the Dissertation stage and may even include an assessable component for students requiring them to make a presentation of their research progress to date.

5.0 TRACKING AND NOTIFICATION

Where these have not already been appointed, Faculties formally designate a Dissertation Coordinator whose primary role is to maintain **active records** on every student who has progressed to dissertation stage. The Dissertation coordinator will work with Student Administration to ensure that Progress Reports are accurately updated and the lines of communication with students are maintained so that no Dissertation student falls off the University's radar. Aside from the steps already enumerated above the Dissertation Coordinator will be required to sign off on formal Progress Reports for each student throughout the duration of their dissertation. For full time students these (brief) reports must be completed on a monthly basis (the first to be completed 1 month after the student commences their dissertation). For part time students this will be a two-monthly cycle. These reports will be copied to the student, the supervisor and the Head of Student Administration.

APPENDIX 2

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The fees set by the University for its programmes are comparable to those of other internationally recognized programmes of study within leading higher education institutions.

The tuition fees for full-time and part-time study on the MEd programme is AED 80,000.00 and AED 84,000.00 for the Project Management, Information Technology Management, Human Resource Management, Finance & Banking, Information Technology, Systems Engineering, Construction Law & Dispute Resolution and the Sustainable Design of the Built Environment Programmes.

The payment mode is indicated below.

Full-time study

First payment	10,000.00	
Semester 1	35,000.00 (Education-MEd)	37,000.00 (other programmes)
Semester 2	35,000.00 (Education-MEd)	37,000.00 (other programmes)

The first payment is to be made during registration and the semester fees are to be made in the first week of each semester.

Part-time study

First payment	10,000.00	
Semester 1	17,500.00 (Education-MEd)	18,500.00 (other programmes)
Semester 2	17,500.00 (Education-MEd)	18,500.00 (other programmes)
Semester 3	17,500.00 (Education-MEd)	18,500.00 (other programmes)
Semester 4	17,500.00 (Education-MEd)	18,500.00 (other programmes)