TRACER STUDY
REPORT

By Skills for A Vibrant Economy
Project Team (University of Malawi)

JUNE 2025

TRACER STUDY REPORT

BY

SKILLS FOR A VIBRANT ECONOMY (SAVE) PROJECT TEAM

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

JUNE 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study aimed at taking stock of past UNIMA graduates, as to what they are doing in the job market, hear about their experiences, get their feedback about UNIMA and its programmes, identify key skills and general direction for curriculum change that UNIMA can take in line with its mandate and also as an output for the Skills for a Vibrant Economy (SAVE) project.

A study used an electronic questionnaire which was communicated to any reachable alumni that graduated from UNIMA from 2017 to 2019 using the alumni database at UNIMA and various electronic platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups for UNIMA alumni. The questionnaire could only be responded to after the alumnus had registered with some credentials to avoid non-target persons from filling the questionnaire. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic and content analysis.

The major findings were that most UNIMA alumni found the quality of UNIMA education to be satisfactory. Most of the alumni are working in the private sector, followed by the public sector and that a good number were not employed and very few ventured into entrepreneurship. The experiences of UNIMA graduates is that they found the following skills useful in the job market: critical thinking and problem-solving, research skills, qualitative thinking skills, quantitative thinking skills, verbal communication skills, written communication skills, ICT skills, creativity and innovation skills, interpersonal relationship skills, collaboration and partnership skills, management and leadership skills, professional ethics skills, and entrepreneurship skills. The majority of the alumni reported that the UNIMA training they underwent through was more theoretical than practical hands-on and that entrepreneurship skills were least taught in their programmes and that, outside the natural science, ICT skills were also the least taught.

The recommendation of the study is that UNIMA, while keeping with its mandate as stipulated in the act of parliament, of producing human capacity of critical thinkers and promoting intellectual discourse while being responsive to the developmental needs of Malawi and beyond and promoting entrepreneurship culture, UNIMA has to integrate the entrepreneurship itself into all its programmes and should review all programme curricula acknowledging the fact that we are information communication age where ICT skills is not a choice and production or mastery of programme tailor-made software is inevitable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HE:	Higher Education
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
ISOC:	International Standard Classification of Occupations
IT:	Information Technology
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEST:	Ministry of Education of Education, Science and Technology
SAVE:	Skills for a Vibrant Economy
UNIMA:	University of Malawi

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Mandate of the University of Malawi

University of Malawi (UNIMA) was established under an Act of Parliament with the core purpose of competitively imparting knowledge and skills through teaching, research and outreach engagements in response to local and international needs. The specific objectives of UNIMA are to:

(a) Offer demand-driven specialist education in liberal arts, education, science and technology;
(b) Nurture and promote critical thinking and informed intellectual discourse among students;
(c) Promote entrepreneurship culture among students and staff;
(d) Offer high quality education that is accountable to the society;
(e) Conduct multidisciplinary research responsive to the local and international demands;
(f) Contribute towards development through research and outreach engagements; and
(g) Offer expert knowledge that informs development, monitoring and evaluation of the national agenda, laws and policies.

Any quality education ought to support development through empowering individual persons, promoting economic growth and improving the general living standards of its society. As the world's needs keep changing, any relevant higher education (HE) ought to keep pace with these dynamic shifts by providing relevant academic services and generating capacities appropriate to the ever-changing demands.

1.2 Justification for the tracer study

As a public institution, UNIMA strives to offer quality education while being accountable to the society. Achieving delivery of high quality tertiary education services entails having monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems that feed back into the University to enable itself to assess areas that need improvement or changes for the furtherance of its mandated agenda as well as areas that have to be maintained to keep all education systems, internal or external, on track in the best interest of maintaining the education standards.

Just like in an engineering production industry, apart from having internal quality control checks during production, one key area in quality assurance consideration of its product, is to check whether the product that is released into the market, is a product that meets standards, performs what it was designed for and to find out whether there are any production-linked challenges the product is facing. Hence, for a HE institution, apart from the innovations, the research outputs and outreach activities, one major product a University produces is a graduate. Therefore, from the quality assurance point of view, a University must regularly audit its products by tracing where its graduates are, finding out what its various graduates are doing and faring; and assessing whether there are any training-related challenges its graduates are facing in the job market that the university can address.

This tracer study was conducted by UNIMA with the support from the World Bank through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) Skills for a Vibrant Economy (SAVE) project. One of the MoEST policy statements is to ensure that HE is of quality, relevant and responsive to the needs of Malawi (MoEST, 2013). The MoEST also observed that, among

other challenges, HE is faced with having a mismatch between HE outputs and the needs of the industry (MoEST, 2013). The SAVE project aims at empowering Malawians to secure sustainable employment and contribute meaningfully to the nation's growth. In the skills development part of SAVE project, one specific interest is to revolutionalise Malawi's workforce by creating incubation services for graduates, nurturing self-employment and entrepreneurship. The anticipated impact of the SAVE project is that it will enhance quality and relevance of academic programmes by ensuring that HE institutions produce graduates that are well-prepared for the job market.

1.3   Purpose of the tracer study

Apart from divulging what UNIMA graduates face in the job market and getting UNIMA re-orient its business of research, teaching and community service, this tracer study also aims at enlightening UNIMA on how it can produce graduates that are fit for the market. Thus, the major objective of this tracer study is that, through the project team, UNIMA will use the empirical data to decide how best to integrate, within its system, the findings from the tracer study so that UNIMA achieves its mandate of producing knowledgeable and skilled graduates, critical thinkers and promoting entrepreneurship among its students and staff, while achieving the long-term intended outcome of the SAVE project of having a nation with graduates that are well-prepared for the job market. Overall, the tracer study represents the effort by UNIMA to align its academic programmes with the skills needed by the industry and nation in pursuit of Malawi 2063.

2 METHODOLOGY

The general scope of the study was twofold, namely, geographical-reach and time consideration on how far back in time the study could go. Every UNIMA curriculum is supposed to get reviewed every 5 years. Though curriculum changes and policies may sometimes not change much, however, over a long period of time with regular reviews, the changes would gradually become significantly different from those of the distant past. Thus, the distant-past graduates were assumed to have attended a curriculum or to have experienced UNIMA conditions that were very different from the more current realities at UNIMA. The feedback on a good number of issues from such alumni may likely no longer be on issues that are in existence on the ground or could merely be hypothetical assumptions that would likewise likely be out of the current context.

2.1 Population

Being in the current information age and in the era of IT connectedness, the geographical strategy was to reach every relevant alumnus from every part of the globe, no matter where they were and what they were doing. Further, appreciating the fact that UNIMA started in 1964 and that what happens at the HE institutions evolves regularly over time, the targeted subjects were all those alumni that graduated from UNIMA between 2017 and 2019.

2.2 Data gathering

The UNIMA ICT opened a self-registering database which was shared through to various alumni networks as well as using existing contacts of recent alumni in existence in the UNIMA system. After an alumnus joined, he/she would automatically access and, if the alumnus voluntarily accepted, would respond to an online tracer study questionnaire.

2.3 Sample composition

As the automated study design did not pre-define the sample size, Table 1 below shows the sample size that emerged from the willing alumni according to the field of study they underwent at UNIMA.

Table 1: Sample composition by field of highest UNIMA qualification.

	Number	**Percent**
Social Sciences	68	30.1
Arts and Humanities	56	24.8
Natural Sciences	44	19.5
Education Studies	43	19.0
Legal Studies	15	6.6
Total	226	100%
Missing values	16	

The sample consisted of 242 alumni that graduated between 2017 and 2019. 16 of these graduates did not indicate the area of their field of study when they were at UNIMA. Apart from these, the rest of the sample was 30% as Social Sciences graduates, 25% from Arts and

Humanities, 20% from Natural Sciences, 19% from Education and around 7% as Legal Studies alumni. Table 2 presents the sample of the tracer study depicting the academic certificate the alumnus obtained from UNIMA.

Table 2: Sample composition by graduate's highest UNIMA certificate

	The highest qualification obtained from UNIMA			Total
	Diploma	**Undergraduate degree**	**Postgraduate degree**	
Social Sciences	0	64	4	68
Arts and Humanities	0	55	1	56
Natural Sciences	2	39	3	44
Education Studies	0	42	1	43
Legal Studies	0	13	2	15
Total	2	213	11	226
	1%	94%	5%	100%

The majority of respondents were undergraduate degree (94%) alumni and the rest were almost entirely a group of postgraduate alumni as there were only two alumni with diplomas representing 1% of the sample size. Further disaggregation of the data is presented in table 3 whereby emphasis has been on gender.

Table 3: Sample composition by field against sex

	Sex of alumnus		Total
	Male	**Female**	
Social Sciences	46	22	68
Arts and Humanities	40	15	55
Natural Sciences	38	6	44
Education Studies	30	10	40
Legal Studies	13	2	15
Total	167	55	222
Excluding 4 more missing values	75%	25%	100%

From Table 3, except for the Natural Sciences and Legal Studies where the proportion of female respondents is low, in general, at least one-quarter of the sample in the other areas of study was female representation.

2.4   Nature of the captured data

The electronic questionnaire tackled three thematic areas relevant to the objectives of the tracer study. The first aspect was covering the graduate's general area of study while at UNIMA and about the highest qualification they obtained from UNIMA. The second aspect tackled their employability and their general experience in the job market. The last aspect was about the alumni' feedback on the UNIMA skills and conditions they experienced in reflection to their career paths since they left UNIMA. The questionnaire is attached in the Appendices part of this report.

2.5 Methods of data analysis used

The electronic tool had questions tackling the highest qualification an alumnus got from UNIMA, the sector they were first employed in, how long an alumnus took to get the first employment, the alumnus current occupation which were grouped adapting the ISOC-88 classification as is used by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the level of application of the various UNIMA skills on the job market, the usefulness of UNIMA education on the job market and alumni's general opinion on the way UNIMA conducts and should conduct its business.

The questionnaire had all questions as closed questions except one question where the alumnus had to give any relevant feedback to convey to the University. The closed questions were analysed using statistical summaries generated through SPSS to give general patterns of the responses and to show the degree of the existence of the patterns. The narrative from the general comments were analysed qualitatively using thematic and content analysis to isolate the main message in the narratives and pinpoint relevant areas of focus within the UNIMA system.

2.6 Limitations

It is likely that most unemployed graduates would not have adequate financial resources than the employed graduates. Hence, the electronic data gathering adopted in this tracer study where the respondents had to use the internet, which costs money, the approach could possibly have favoured those in employment as these would likely have more finances to access the Internet or access the Internet services at their workplaces. So, there is need to interpret with caution wherever the number of employed and non-employed are key in an analytical interpretation. Hence the results should better be regarded in the context of "from-those-that-responded".

3 TRACER STUDY FINDINGS

This section presents findings that emerged from the tracer study. The findings are key in terms of informing the University management, Schools, departments and other stakeholders about actions they need to ensure the programmes are aligned to the needs of the industry and nation as generally outlined in the Malawi 2063. The statistical summaries are cross-tabulated against fields of study so that they are relevant and specific to particular schools and departments. Likewise, the summaries from the thematic analysis are organized according to schools and departments, where necessary. The analysis is presented in the following key thematic areas: *Alumni Employability*, *Graduate Relevance*, *UNIMA Skills Assessment* and *General Feedback* to UNIMA.

3.1 Alumni Employability

One of the issues of interest in this tracer study was to identify and understand the sectors that UNIMA graduates landed their first job after their graduation. The sectors involved were three namely public, private and self-employment. Table 4 has the summary.

Table 4: Graduates' first employment sector

Academic Programme	The sector of first employment				Total
	Public sector	Private sector	Self-employed	Unemployed up to now	
Social Sciences	17	28	1	14	60
Arts and Humanities	13	21	1	14	49
Natural Sciences	9	13	2	13	37
Education Studies	13	14	2	0	29
Legal Studies	3	10	0	0	13
Total	55	86	6	41	188
	29%	46%	3%	22%	100%

The major employer of UNIMA graduates is the private sector (46%), followed by the public (29%) and a very minimal number involved in self-employment and entrepreneurship (3%). During the tracer study, it was established that a good number (22%) of the UNIMA graduates were still unemployed and there could be more, if internet access was not a problem. If there was a ready-market, one would expect most of the graduates to be employed within a very short period. For programming, this means academic programmes in UNIMA need to be aligned to the needs of the private sector. Table 5 captures the themes of the waiting period for UNIMA graduates to get their first job after graduating.

Table 5: Graduates' waiting time to first employment

	Time it took to get employed or self-employed				Total
	Less than 6 months	**Between 6 and 12 months**	**Over a year**	**Never got employed**	
Social Sciences	30	11	9	12	62
Arts and Humanities	21	9	13	11	54
Education Studies	24	7	7	3	41
Natural Sciences	19	4	5	11	39
Legal Studies	13	1	0	0	14
Total	107	32	34	37	210
	51%	15%	16%	18%	100%

Apart from the Legal Studies respondents who were all employed within a year, about half of the respondents (51%) got employed within the first 6 months of graduation. Thereafter, the employability seems to slow down considerably. The table also shows that about two-thirds (66%) got employed within a year and 18% of the respondents were still unemployed at the time of conducting the tracer study.

Table 6: First employment sector versus time to first employment.

	How long it took to get employed or self-employed				Total	%
	Less than 6 months	**Between 6 and 12 months**	**Over a year**	**Never got employed**		
Private sector	58	19	17	0	94	45%
Public sector	43	10	12	2	67	32%
Unemployed up to now	1	2	3	33	39	19%
Self-employed	4	1	1	1	7	3%
Total	106	32	33	36	207	100%
%	51%	15%	16%	17%	100%	

Table 6 above is an extension of table 5 that is showing that the trend observed in table 5, where most respondents were the ones that got recruited within the first 6 months and then thereafter, their employment slowed down, being the same pattern regardless of whether the employer is a private or a public entity. Perhaps when a year elapses after graduation, a new wave of graduates gets introduced into the job market and the competition toughens as employers have an enlarged pool to recruit from. For the graduates that get employed, it would be informative to know the type of occupations that finally absorb them. Thus, the next table, Table 7, gives the occupations that these respondents were in during the study.

Table 7: Current occupation of respondents.

Alumnus occupation	Field of highest UNIMA qualification					%
	Education Studies	Arts and Humanities	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences	Legal Studies	
Teaching professionals	78.1	24.4	18.2	4.7		27.9
Legal, social and cultural professionals		12.2		14.0	88.9	12.9
Administrative and commercial managers		7.3	4.5	7.0	11.1	5.4
Business and administration professionals			4.5	16.3		5.4
ICT professionals	6.2	4.9	18.2			5.4
Chief executives, senior officials or legislators		7.3		9.3		4.8
Health professionals	6.2	9.8	4.5			4.8
Legal, social, cultural and related assistant professionals		12.2		2.3		4.1
Business and administration assistant professionals				9.3		2.7
Customer services clerks			4.5	7.0		2.7
Personal service workers		2.4	4.5	4.7		2.7
Sales workers		4.9		4.7		2.7
Street and related sales and service workers	3.1	2.4		4.7		2.7
Non-commissioned armed forces officers		2.4		4.7		2.0
Science and engineering professionals			13.6			2.0
Armed forces occupations, other Ranks		2.4		2.3		1.4
Science and engineering			4.5	2.3		1.4

Alumnus occupation	Field of highest UNIMA qualification					%
	Education Studies	Arts and Humanities	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences	Legal Studies	
technicians and assistants						
ICT technicians		2.4	4.5			1.4
Numerical and material recording clerks			4.5	2.3		1.4
Protective services workers	3.1			2.3		1.4
Agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers	3.1			2.3		1.4
Commissioned armed forces officers		2.4				0.7
Hospitality, retail or other services managers		2.4				0.7
Subsistence farmers, fishers, hunters and gatherers			4.5			0.7
Cleaners and helpers			4.5			0.7
Labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport			4.5			0.7
Total %	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The education respondents have mostly remained in the Teaching Profession (78.1%). Those that have changed occupations mainly moved to become Health (6.2%) or ICT (6.2%) professionals. The teaching profession has remained a key employer of UNIMA graduates and absorbs graduates even those that have not done programmes related to education.

The Arts and Humanities respondents gave a picture that in the job market almost an equal proportion of its graduates enter Teaching Profession (24.4%) or end up in the Legal, Social and Cultural occupations (24.4%). Around 14.6 % are in the managerial occupations (i.e. *Administrative and commercial managers* 7.3% and *Chief executives, senior officials or legislators* 7.3%). They are also in the *Sales* and *Street related sales workers* (7.3%). Those that have changed into the natural sciences careers are targeting ICT occupations (7.3%). Otherwise, these graduates are scattered all over the other non-natural science occupations.

For those employed in the natural science professions, the tracer study established that they were over 40% in ICT professional, 18.2% in *Science and engineering profession,* 13.6% in

Health professional, and 4.5% in *Science engineering profession.* A good portion of 18.2% went into Teaching Profession, but the rest are scattered over many non-natural science related occupations.

For the Social Science respondents over 40% are professionals or assistant professionals in business, administration and social-science-related careers (i.e. *business and administration professionals* 16.3%, *legal, social and cultural professionals* 14%, *business and administration assistant professionals* 9.3% and *legal, social and cultural assistant professionals* 2.3%) and 16.5% are in managerial positions (i.e. *Chief executives, senior officials or legislators* 9.3% and *Administrative and commercial managers* 7%). The rest are mostly spread across non-natural science related occupations.

The Legal Studies respondents seem to be self-contained in a sense that no one (88.9%) is seen to have changed careers to go into other occupations, unless they have taken up managerial positions as *Administrative and commercial managers* (11.1%).

In general, the majority of Education graduates (78.1%), and Legal Studies graduates (88.9%) and Social Science graduates though spread in several sectors remain in occupations that are related to their UNIMA field of specialisation. It is interesting to note that, the Arts and Humanities and Natural Sciences graduates seem to change careers or they join other different occupations as support personnel while technically remaining in their UNIMA field of study. It is also worth noting that a good chunk of the Arts and Humanities graduates (27%) and the Natural Sciences graduates (20%) end up joining the Teaching Profession.

Observing these dynamics, it is perhaps proper to see whether the UNIMA alumni found UNIMA education useful as well as the knowledge and skills they obtained from their programmes.

3.2 Feedback on UNIMA training

Table 8: Usefulness of UNIMA education on job experience.

		Found training at UNIMA useful in all job experience(s) and career(s)		Percent
		Yes	**No**	
	Total			
Legal Studies	14	100	0	100%
Education Studies	38	97.4	2.6	100%
Arts and Humanities	52	90.4	9.6	100%
Natural Sciences	39	87.2	12.8	100%
Social Sciences	59	84.7	15.3	100%
Total percent	202	90.1%	9.9%	100%

The majority (90.1%) of the respondents found UNIMA education useful in their job experience. While 100% of the Legal Studies respondents found the training useful, though small, the proportions who did not find UNIMA education useful, increased as we moved along

Education (2.6%), Arts and Humanities (9.6%), Natural Sciences (12.8%) and the Social Science (15.3%). So there were some alumni that went into careers where the UNIMA training they received was deemed to be irrelevant for the career.

It is possible in some instances that one may not find exactly what one was trained on content-wise, but some intrinsic academic and non-academic skills could have been incorporated in the various programmes. The next series of tables, try to track if the various essential skills were present in the various programmes.

Table 9: Critical thinking and problem-solving skills

Academic programme	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Education Studies	2.6			79.5	17.9	100%
Arts and Humanities	2.2		4.3	87.0	6.5	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	3.3	3.3	80.0	10.0	100%
Social Sciences	4.3	4.3	6.4	83.0	2.1	100%
Legal Studies			9.1	81.8	9.1	100%
Total	2.9%	1.7	4.0	82.7	8.7	100%

Over 85% of the respondents agree (i.e. *totally agree* and *agree*) in every programme agreed that *critical thinking and problem-solving skills* as taught in their UNIMA programmes was useful after graduating. Respondents indicated that the knowledge was important in handling some complicated tasks at their workplaces.

Table 10: Research skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Education Studies	2.6		15.4	69.2	12.8	100%
Arts and Humanities	2.2	2.2	4.3	84.8	6.5	100%
Natural Sciences	6.7	3.3	13.3	66.7	10	100%
Social Sciences	2.1		4.3	91.5	2.1	100%
Legal Studies				90.9	9.1	100%
Total	2.9	1.2	8.1	80.3	7.5	100%

All the Legal Studies respondents found the *research skills* they learnt on their programme useful in their experiences and careers, while the Social Science respondents 93.6% agreed; the Arts Humanities 92.5% agreed, the Education 82% in agreement and least were the Natural Science with 76.7% in agreement. In general, on average, the majority (87.8%) agreed across all the programmes.

Table 11: Qualitative thinking skills

Academic Programme	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	2.6		7.7	74.4	15.4	100%
Arts and Humanities	4.3	2.2	2.2	84.8	6.5	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	3.3		83.3	10	100%
Social Sciences	2.1	2.1	8.5	85.1	2.1	100%
Legal Studies				90.9	9.1	100%
Total	2.9	1.7	4.6	82.7	8.1	100%

All the Legal Studies respondents found the *qualitative thinking skills* they learnt on their programme to be useful in their experiences and careers. At least 90% of the respondents across all the programmes found *qualitative skills* useful in their experiences.

Table 12: Quantitative thinking skills

Academic Programme	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	2.6	2.6	7.7	76.9	10.3	100%
Arts and Humanities	2.2	4.3	23.9	65.2	4.3	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	3.3	20	63.3	10	100%
Social Sciences		2.1	14.9	80.9	2.1	100%
Legal Studies			27.3	63.6	9.1	100%
Total	1.7	2.9	17.3	71.7	6.4	100%

The ones leading in agreeing were the Education respondents (86.9%) who found the *quantitative thinking skills* they learnt to be useful in their career experiences. For the rest of respondents, it was 83% agreeing for the Social Sciences, 73.3% for the Natural Science, 72.9% for the Legal Studies and finally 69.5% for the Arts and Humanities. Perhaps, the Natural Sciences are the ones we would expect to have a curriculum with advanced or more quantitative thinking skills than the rest of the programmes. The Natural Sciences not being at the top of agreeing could well be that these advanced skills or diversity of quantitative skills they learnt are rarely observed in daily experiences. This could possibly be due to the presence of various computer software and automated systems that, behind the scene, utilise quantitative methods, and that most of those skills are perhaps latent. Thus, perhaps a good number (not majority) of Natural Science respondents perceive or doubt the usefulness of quantitative skills on their programmes as they observe very little when in fact they cover a lot. That argument aside, it is observed that across all the respondents, most respondents (78.1%) find quantitative thinking skills covered in their programmes to be useful in their experiences.

Table 13: Verbal communication skills

Academic Programme	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	2.6		10.3	71.8	15.4	100%
Arts and Humanities	4.3		6.5	82.6	6.5	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	3.3	10	76.7	6.7	100%
Social Sciences	4.3	4.3	2.1	87.2	2.1	100%
Legal Studies	9.1		9.1	63.6	18.2	100%
Total	4	1.7	6.9	79.2	8.1	100%

On verbal communication skills, some UNIMA curricula are explicit while others are not. Some courses have things like student presentations which indirectly exposes students to verbal communication experience. Whether a programme covered verbal communication, directly or indirectly, a large majority of the alumni who participated in the study are agreeing (87.3%) that verbal communication skills they were exposed to at UNIMA have been useful in their experiences and careers.

Table 14: Written communication skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme				Total
	Totally disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Education Studies	2.6	7.7	71.8	17.9	100%
Arts and Humanities	6.5	6.5	78.3	8.7	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	6.7	76.7	13.3	100%
Social Sciences	2.1	4.3	91.5	2.1	100%
Legal Studies		9.1	72.7	18.2	100%
Total	3.5	6.4	79.8	10.4	100%

Most of the respondents (90%) across all the programmes, agree that the *written communication skill*s learnt at UNIMA have been found to be useful in the job market.

Table 15: ICT skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	7.7	7.7	17.9	59	7.7	100%
Arts and Humanities	6.5	13	32.6	45.7	2.2	100%
Natural Sciences	6.7	3.3	6.7	73.3	10	100%
Social Sciences	10.6	8.5	25.5	53.2	2.1	100%
Legal Studies	9.1	36.4	27.3	27.3		100%
Total	8.1	10.4	22.5	54.3	4.6	100%

On ICT skills, the Legal Studies graduates have only 27.3% agreeing and the Arts and Humanities have only 47.7% agreeing that the ICT skills they learnt through their programme has been useful in the job market. This could probably be that, except for daily ICT skills of searching information and writing reports and presentations. other ICT skills are not necessary to them or it could simply be that these skills have never been integrated into their curriculum, but the skills are necessary. In this information age, there are many innovations of tailor-made computer software for almost any human activity of interest. For instance, in the entertainment industry the film and music industries are big and these may need special ICT-related skills in film editing and simulations.

Though Education (66.7%) and Social Science (55.3%) are showing more than half agree, compared to the majority of the results on this skills assessment. Overall, the *ICT skills* rating is the lowest (58.9% agreeing) in comparison with the other skills observed so far.

Table 16: Creativity and innovation skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	5.1	2.6	5.1	74.4	12.8	100%
Arts and Humanities	2.2	6.5	13	76.1	2.2	100%
Natural Sciences		10	6.7	76.7	6.7	100%
Social Sciences	8.5	6.4	17	66.0	2.1	100%
Legal Studies		9.1	27.3	63.6		100%
Total	4%	6.4%	12.1%	72.3%	5.2%	100%

At the centre of UNIMA's mandate of contributing towards development through research are the skills of creativity and innovativeness. In Table 16, the Legal Studies (63.6%) and the Social Sciences (68.1%) are on the lower side that *creativity and innovation skills* they, directly or indirectly, were exposed to, were useful in the job market. The respondents in the other fields judged these to have been useful in the job market because of their exposure to these in their UNIMA programmes. Overall, most of the respondents (77.7%) were of the view that the

usefulness of UNIMA training on the job market was due to these skills being covered at UNIMA.

Table 17: Interpersonal relationship skills

| | The skill was useful as taught in the programme | | | | | Total |
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Education Studies	5.1		2.6	79.5	12.8	100%
Arts and Humanities	6.5	6.5	4.3	78.3	4.3	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	3.3	16.7	66.7	10	100%
Social Sciences	2.1		6.4	89.4	2.1	100%
Legal Studies			9.1	90.9		100%
Total	4	2.3	6.9	80.3	6.4	100%

The way a person interacts with other persons matters for successful co-existence and progress. When the respondents were asked about the skills of *interpersonal relationships*, most of the alumni (86.7%) agreed that they found that the interpersonal skills gained from their programme were useful in their life experiences after UNIMA.

Table 18: Collaboration and partnership skills

| | The skill was useful as taught in the programme | | | | | Total |
	Totally disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	
Education Studies	2.6	2.6	2.6	82.1	10.3	100%
Arts and Humanities	4.3	6.5	8.7	78.3	2.2	100%
Natural Sciences		6.7	6.7	76.7	10	100%
Social Sciences	4.3	2.1	10.6	80.9	2.1	100%
Legal Studies			18.2	72.7	9.1	100%
Total	2.9	4	8.1	79.2	5.8	100%

Apart from comfortably interrelating with other people, a person needs to be able to work well with other people to do some work to get some needed results. Just like interpersonal relationship skills, 85% of the respondents found that *collaboration and partnership skills* as learnt in their UNIMA training were useful for their experiences and careers after UNIMA.

Table 19: Management and leadership skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	2.6		12.8	66.7	17.9	100%
Arts and Humanities	2.2	6.5	13	76.1	2.2	100%
Natural Sciences	6.7	6.7	6.7	73.3	6.7	100%
Social Sciences	6.4		8.5	83	2.1	100%
Legal Studies			18.2	81.8		100%
Total	4	2.9	11	75.7	6.4	100%

As most graduates are less likely to be in the lowest classes of ILO occupations, the UNIMA graduates are likely to work with people under their supervision. Hence, a quality graduate is one who would demonstrate good management and leadership skills. Table 19 shows that these elements were (directly or indirectly) inculcated in their field of study and that the management and leadership skills they acquired were useful in their experiences after leaving UNIMA.

Table 20: Professional ethics skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	2.6		2.6	79.5	15.4	100%
Arts and Humanities	4.3	2.2	8.7	80.4	4.3	100%
Natural Sciences	3.3	6.7	13.3	70	6.7	100%
Social Sciences	6.4	2.1	10.6	78.7	2.1	100%
Legal Studies				90.9	9.1	100%
Total	4	2.3	8.1	78.6	6.9	100%

As part of UNIMA's agenda is to offer high quality education that is accountable to the society, this entails that students graduating from UNIMA have to conduct themselves with high moral obligation. It entails the need to produce a graduate who has a character that is highly accountable and transparent, high integrity and trustworthiness, high objectivity and one who is compliant with the rules and regulations. From the results in Table 20, around 86% of the respondents agree to the fact that their usefulness of UNIMA education in the job market is partly due to the *professional ethics* they learnt at UNIMA.

Table 21: Entrepreneurship skills

	The skill was useful as taught in the programme					Total
	Totally disagree	**Disagree**	**Not sure**	**Agree**	**Totally agree**	
Education Studies	10.3	10.3	35.9	33.3	10.3	100%
Arts and Humanities	8.7	13.0	26.1	47.8	4.3	100%
Natural Sciences	10.0	3.3	30.0	53.3	3.3	100%
Social Sciences	10.6	6.4	21.3	61.7		100%
Legal Studies		54.5	18.2	27.3		100%
Total	9.2	11.6	27.2	48.0	4.0	100%

One of the UNIMA's agenda is to promote entrepreneurship among the academia. This is also key for the SAVE project as it aims at producing graduates who are well-prepared for the job market. From Table 21, comparing the ratings in the table, with the ratings of all the other skills seen, the *entrepreneurship skill* stands out to be the skill that the alumni across the all programmes rated the least. The Legal Studies respondents had only 27.3% agreeing on *entrepreneurship skills* just as they did with the *ICT skills* (27.3%). The Education had 43.6% agreeing and their next least rating was *ICT skills* (66.7%). The Arts and Humanities had 52.1% agreeing to *entrepreneurship skills* which was the second least ranked after *ICT skills* (47.9%). Natural Science had 56.6% agreeing on *entrepreneurship skills* and their next least rating was *quantitative thinking skills* (73.3%). Finally, the Social Science respondents had 61.7% agreeing on *entrepreneurship skills* which was the second least ranked after *ICT skills* (55.3%).

From all the alumni, 52% agree that the usefulness of *entrepreneurship skills* on the job market is due to the skills being learnt at. This pinpoints to the fact that it is generally non-existent or is learnt indirectly across the UNIMA programmes.

Having the alumni rating the skills presence in the various curricula and feedback on whether UNIMA training was useful in the job market, it may be worth finding out whether they were satisfied with the general conditions (academic and non-academic) around their programmes. Table 22 depicts this discussion.

Table 22: Satisfaction with UNIMA programme conditions

	Extent of satisfaction with programme conditions				Total
	Wholly dissatisfied	**Mostly dissatisfied**	**Mostly satisfied**	**Fully satisfied**	
Social Sciences	2.4	2.4	54.8	40.5	100%
Arts and Humanities		3.6	69.6	26.8	100%
Natural Sciences	7.0	9.3	39.5	44.2	100%
Education Studies	4.8	6.3	52.4	36.5	100%
Legal Studies	6.7		46.7	46.7	100%
Total (219 *responses*)	3.7%	5.0	54.3	37.0	100%

Around 91% (*fully satisfied* and *mostly satisfied*) of the respondents were satisfied with the conditions on their UNIMA programmes.

Finally, after the summary of the feedback on the assessment of alumni on the presence of various skills in UNIMA programmes and their satisfaction, it is perhaps proper to see if the graduates had been trying to academically self-develop themselves to enhance their skills on the job market. The next table, Table 23 has the results.

Table 23: UNIMA graduates seeking further studies

	Tried to look for further studies after obtaining the UNIMA qualification		Total
	Yes	No	
Natural Sciences	82.6	17.4	100%
Education Studies	70.6	29.4	100%
Social Sciences	59.1	40.9	100%
Legal Studies	55.6	44.4	100%
Arts and Humanities	51.2	48.8	100%
Total (151 *responses*)	62.9	37.1	100%
Missing values 91			

At the beginning of this report, it was seen from Table 2 that the sample of the respondents consisted of only 5% as postgraduates and almost everyone else was an undergraduate. Since in Table 23 we have 62.9% of the respondents reporting that they tried to get further qualification, it alludes to the fact that most of our graduates are looking for further academic self-development at postgraduate level. This wish is across all the field of studies as the majority (over 50%) of the respondents from across all the programmes are attesting to this. Top on this wish list are the Natural Sciences (82.6%) and Education Studies (70.6%) respondents.

3.3   Education Studies alumni comments

On the adequacy of Education programmes, some Education Studies respondents made the following observations:

"*UNIMA is a great place to seek knowledge.*" 1st alumnus.
"*It's a good programme. I wish I could have done more to benefit from it*" 2nd alumnus.

"*The Education degree I did was intellectually challenging. I liked how it was multifaceted as we had to learn courses from pretty much all disciplines.*" 3rd alumnus.

"*I gain a lot of skills that help to solve problems that affect people in their daily life*", 4th alumnus.

In summary, the UNIMA's interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature of the Education programmes is a powerful packaging that has a great potential of making its alumni general-fitters in the job market. This positive side needs to be nurtured further.

Some feedback the Education Studies respondents hinged on changing the curriculum change. Some respondents had the following to say:

"*The program I did …. has a vast content that needs a lot of time.*", 5th alumnus.

"*Make the program to be an honours*" 6th alumnus.

"*I pray that students in Education do ICT as a must.*" 7th alumnus.

"*I did bachelor of Education science, but I feel that it lacked the element of final year project.*", 8th alumnus.

"*I took from the Fine and Performing Arts (FPA) Department, there is need …. to have a strong orchestra where students could be translating theory into practice.*" 9th alumnus.
"*The content given to students should be more applicable to the society as it is now*" 10th alumnus.

In short, firstly, there is some observation among the Education alumni that there is too much content in the Education programme for a four-year programme. Secondly, the feeling of some alumni is that there is a need for the Education curriculum to improve by teaching more applications besides the theoretical stuff that is learnt in class. Thirdly, the Education curriculum should be up-to-date with what is happening in the society and that one vital skill that has to be taught to every education student is the *ICT skills*. Finally, is the wish from some alumni to expose Education students in their final year to the skills of conducting *research projects*.

The fourth set of comments from the Education Studies were related to the general way how UNIMA manages some of its business. Three Education alumni commented as follows:

"*Stick to academic calendar*" 11th alumnus

"*I would have loved if they allowed me to continue studying human ecology I ... was denied majoring it ...*" 12th alumnus

"*This* [tracer study] *is a very good development and I have never seen. Let's participate fully and help one another as we know that to find a job out here now, it's tough. Let's share all vacancies so that we can all benefit. Thank you for acknowledging me to be part of this.*", 13th alumnus.

The thematic issues emanating from these comments are the following. Firstly, there is an indirect reference to efficiency. A quality service ought to have, among other dimensions, the aspect of efficiency. If two products of equal qualities and performance are such that one takes longer to produce than the other, then one production system will be deemed to be less efficient. Thus, the comment by 10th alumnus, that UNIMA has a problem of sticking to a calendar, indirectly sends a message of the need for UNIMA to improve on its efficiency on production of graduates. Secondly, the comment by the 13th alumnus tackles the need for UNIMA to keep

networking with its alumni, as there are some alumni that value connecting back with their alma mater. The comment also alludes to the fact that perhaps the way UNIMA offers its training is that it has engraved a mindset that when the graduates leave UNIMA, they should just be waiting for job vacancies, as they get released with no entrepreneurial mindset. Finally, the comment by 12th alumnus, laments about the lack of flexibility with the Education programme to permit its students to move to other programmes. The alumnus who commented is working in the private sector but is still in the teaching profession. Could it be that, before, when it was automatic that every student pursuing an Education programme was employed by the government, it made more sense not to lose any student-teacher and now there is a need to open up so that the Education graduates have many employment-ready options?

3.4 Arts and Humanities alumni comments

The set of positive comments from Arts Humanities alumni were as follows:

> "*A good programme.*", 14th alumnus.

> "*The programme brought me so much joy and satisfaction.*", 15th alumnus.

> "*The program helped me in my personal development*", 16th alumnus.

> "*I did the best programme and was satisfied with it. The skills I obtained in Humanities are shaping my everyday tasks at my work sphere*", 17th alumnus.

> "*I am grateful for the enriching experience provided by the UNIMA Bachelor of Arts Humanities program that has helped me to develop critical thinking and analytical skills, explore fundamental questions about existence, ethics and knowledge and cultivating logical reasoning and argumentation.*", 18th alumnus.

> "*The Communication and Cultural Studies program profoundly enhanced my critical thinking skills, particularly in analyzing how meaning is derived from texts and how to effectively interpret and convey messages. This has been instrumental in crafting impactful communications and delivering them to relevant stakeholders to drive meaningful change in society. For me, it has been a true game-changer.*", 19th alumnus.

The above comments tell a good story that the Arts and Humanities programmes, as assessed by some of its alumni have, to a large degree, offered quality education that has supported the empowering of individual graduates in as far as enhancing their critical thinking skills, analytical skills and communication skills as well as impacting positively some parts of a society.

On curriculum change, the Arts and Communication respondents had the following comments:

> "*Programme should include practical tasks in its assignments*", 20th alumnus.

> "*It should focus more on practical than theory*", 21st alumnus.

"*As a communication specialist, I would urge that students should get onto the actual ground with practicals from second year whilst at the same time they are being fed on theory e.g news reporting and graphic designing with for example adobe soft wares*", 22nd alumnus.

"*There is a need to revise some courses to reflect technological development in the world.*", 14th alumnus (*same person quoted in previous comments*).

"*More ICT and Entrepreneurship courses should be added to the program. Practical lessons should also be a mandate.*", 23rd alumnus.

"*UNIMA needs to include entrepreneurship programmes*", 24th alumnus.

Three major areas that the alumni are proposing to change are, firstly, for the future graduates to have *more practical experience than theory*, secondly, the curriculum to incorporate more related *ICT skills* and the inclusion of *entrepreneurship* courses in the Arts and Humanities programmes.

The Arts and Humanities respondents also raised the following issues:

"*Consider intelligent students for scholarships*", 24th alumnus (same person in previous comment).

"*I want it's master's degree programme as in general*", 25th alumnus.

"*I need to come back and pursue legal studies*", 26th alumnus

"*Currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Laws program at UNIMA*", 27th alumnus.

"*A lot can be done in improving the employability and innovation of Media for Development students. Embracing career advising as a way of nurturing students towards their desired path. Digital Library can also be adopted to improve access to online resources*", 28th alumnus.

"*It should improve and invest much in contemporary innovations to be the pioneer of developmental projects*", 29th alumnus.

The issues that have emerged from the comments may be summarized as *UNIMA offering financial student support* to high performing students, some Arts and Humanities *alumni need postgraduate training*, the wish of some alumni to *change careers to Legal Studies*, and the need for *creativity and innovations for employability and having developmental projects*. In earlier analysis, it was observed that the Arts and Humanities programme was one of the programmes whose graduates were changing careers. The suggestion for innovations for employability fits well as it would imply some graduates would not just spend many years of their lives undergoing different programme training. For instance, one cannot start Legal

Studies at master's level from a scratch. Those alumni wishing to change careers would have to start with coverage of foundations courses of legal studies first.

3.5 Natural Sciences alumni comments

For some Natural Sciences respondents, they said the following comments when they wanted to affirm the adequacy of their programmes:

"*UNIMA is good*", 30th alumnus.

"*UNIMA was great*", 31st alumnus.

"*Keep up the good work*", 32nd alumnus.

"*UNIMA has been my second home for the past 5 years. That said, it will remain the place where I have been nursed to this civilised citizen that I am, for now I know better.*", 33rd alumnus.

"*UNIMA is a best university here in Malawi since it has good programmes*", 34th alumnus.

"*It was a wonderful experience during my time at UNIMA. A great university in which God loves most indeed.*", 35th alumnus.

The comments carry the message that UNIMA *offers quality education* that nurtures and *produces responsible educated citizens* for the society. The Natural Sciences respondents had given feedback on the need to re-orient the curriculum and the comment are as follows:

"*I did statistics and I wish it was more practical than reading notes*", 36th alumnus.

"*Bachelor of Science degree in statistics has to place interest in practical data analysis skills and use of statistical packages. Student's skills in use of packages should be assessed.*", 37th alumnus.

"*UNIMA programmes should move out from natural sciences to applied sciences*", 38th alumnus

"*Do less of theory, mostly for sciences like computer science and statistics, focus more on the practical aspect, a lot of graduates fail to meet job demands because they were trained to be trainers not actual implementers, it's like most of the programs are for educators and not innovators.*", 39th alumnus.

"*Most of the programs offered at UNIMA are largely theoretical in nature. While this approach equips students with critical thinking skills and a solid foundation in their respective fields, it lacks practical exposure, hands-on training, and industry-oriented experience. As a result, new graduates face challenges in transitioning directly into the job market where employers seek practical skills and applied competencies.*", 40th alumnus.

"*I would like to suggest that attachment (practicum) should be mandatory to most programs. This would help students to appreciate how to transform theoretical knowledge into practice. Additionally, students would easily observe the knowledge*

gaps and come up with research assignments that would address those gaps in the context of Malawi.", 41st alumnus

"*Practical, emphasis on the industry*", 42nd alumnus.

"*I majored* [in] *Mathematics. Students should be encouraged to seek voluntary internships during holidays. It gives* [one a] *much clear picture of what the programme is all about and* [one] *finds it easy to see area of specialisation either* [in] *research etc*", 43rd alumnus.

"*Better be securing some internship programme like other universities do for their not-yet-employed graduates.*", 44th alumnus.

"*Family and Consumer Science* [FCS]*: Firstly, the program must have specific statistics for FCS not a general one that caters for mathematics and statistics majors ... Secondly, ... essential industry courses for nutritionists* [are made optional] *that results in nutritionists who* [are] *half-baked, as they* [do] *not undergo nutritional courses like nutrition assessment. Thirdly,* [likewise] *textile-related courses should also have marketing and saving components in it*", 45th alumnus.

"*Update the curriculum to match the needs of the industry.*", 46th alumnus.

The first issue that emerges from the Natural Sciences alumni is that they observe that most courses are taught in a more theoretical manner and that there is also a need to *have a more practical approach* to the delivery. The second issue related to this is that the curriculum delivery approach should also focus on producing *innovators* rather than merely theory-acquainted graduates. Then there is a call for the Natural Science programmes to integrate *student internships* into their curricula. Fourthly, there is a call to always ensure that the programmes *have up-to-date curricula* meeting the needs of the job market. Finally, it was a call that any specialized programme should endeavour to *have a curriculum that covers all key knowledge aspects* of that specialized field.

Further comments made by some Natural Sciences' respondents are:

"*Keep on improving all aspects of the institution i.e. accommodation*", 33rd alumnus (*commenting again*).
"*I wish students who obtained UNIMA diplomas must just proceed to do their degree after being fully assessed, than going through the application process again*", 47th alumnus.

Final comments from the Natural Sciences' alumni, firstly, calls on UNIMA to keep improving all academic and non-academic facilities and services that touch on the general *student welfare* such as UNIMA's student accommodation facilities. Secondly, there is a suggestion that, for someone who graduated from UNIMA and wants to upgrade in their same field of specialisation, UNIMA, could consider a waiver on some admission requirements as the candidate was already checked when he/she was recently enrolled into the UNIMA.

3.6 Social Sciences alumni comments

The following were the positive narratives that the Social Sciences alumni had to say:

"*Life was amazing at UNIMA*", 48th alumnus.

"*Thank you for the experience*", 49th alumnus.

"*Nice programs*", 50th alumnus.

"The programmes have just been good … ", 51st alumnus

"*It is a best program aimed to promote equality*", 52nd alumnus.

"*The* [*history*] *programme I did was amazing ...*", 53rd alumnus

"*The newly-introduced Law Enforcement Management and Leadership program is very useful and tailor-made to the law enforcement profession in Malawi, especially in producing professional law enforcement officials who are to lead law enforcement institutions.*", 54th alumnus.

"*It made me a gendered sensitive person since we are living in a world where gender is everywhere and in all spheres be it political, religious.*", 55th alumnus.

"*I am happy I chose Public Administration. It moulded me into one of excellent HR and Administration professionals*", 56th alumnus.

"*I did Bachelor of Arts in Economics. It helped* [*me*] *to be equipped with important concepts and I have grown to love what is studied. UNIMA gave me a chance to make friends who will always be part of my life like a family*", 57th alumnus.

"*UNIMA is the best. I am planning to enroll for my postgraduate course there*", 58th alumnus.

"*The whole program is structured very well especially on the student's internship that directly exposes the students to the real and corporate world*", 59th alumnus.

The first message that can be extracted from these comments is that the Social Science alumni are indicating that UNIMA *offered them quality education* (48th to 54th alumni). From this realization other alumni are planning to get further training from UNIMA. The second message is that UNIMA education transformed some of them by inculcating *management and leadership skills* (56th alumnus) and gender-related *ethical skills* (55th alumnus) that is useful to the alumni. The third point is that there are some Social Science programmes (BA in Public Administration, BA in Political Science, BA in Human Resource Management and BSoc (Social Work) that have *student internships* and this *is valued* by the alumni. The fourth message is that UNIMA education has helped some to form a lifelong *networking* (57th alumnus) with some alumni.

On curriculum-related the following comments came up:

> "*Be practical in your knowledge delivery rather than just focusing on theories*", 60th alumnus.

> "*Students should be more engaged in the practical world to avoid creating half-baked economists*", 61st alumnus.

> "*...... it would have done better with better financial resources, human resources, library and museum building and trips since it is a History Department. We needed more than just soft copy and books to understand history better*", 53rd alumnus (commenting again).

> "*More attention to thinking [skills] needed. The structure favoured people who could memorize things over understanding.*", 62nd alumnus.

> "*.... work more on personal development, problem solving and entrepreneurship ideas [and] also on practical data-based permutations. Enough with too many theories. Update your syllabus ....*", 64th alumnus.

> "*I was in two programs. First, Bachelor of Social Science and last, Master of Arts in Economics. I found the [master's] coursework relatively easier but research always seems stressful. Not because it was hard, but because it feels like you are starting out of nowhere. I'd have loved to see research a lot more integrated in the coursework to prepare the students' minds for their actual personal papers. Perhaps in a form of unexaminable seminars.*", 65th alumnus

> "*Please introduce more technical fields in areas such as Science and Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Programmes in Arts and other soft skills need not be offered every year. You can offer them once in every four years to clear and create space for students in those important fields.*", 66th alumnus

> "*The syllabus should be revised. There are other things that could be learnt in one semester (casework 1 & 2) but instead it takes 2 semesters to cover this work.*", 67th alumnus

> "*..... but the industry environment is just not favoring me*", 51st alumnus (commenting again).

The two issues that emerge first are the need to *have more practical orientation or hands-on experience when delivering* the curriculum and the need to *expose the students to the real-world industry* rather than concentrating on delivering a lot of theory. The internships help students to blend theory with practice and gain the valuable practical knowledge that they will need for application when they are back in school. Beyond work related issues, internships also help students to gain interpersonal relations skills needed at work before they graduate. The other issues hinging on the same curriculum delivery are firstly to reduce rote learning in those courses that were designed that way and the new curricula should promote the following five skills: *critical thinking skills*, *problem-solving skills*, *research skills, innovation skills and entrepreneurship skills.* Next is the issue of the need to review some courses, each of which has content inadequate for a semester-long course. Then there is the suggestion that the soft

skills courses from Arts and Humanities could be reduced and then introduce more *ICT skills* instead.

One general other issues one alumnus had this to say:

> "… *On infrastructure you are doing a great task lately … update your library book catalogues. …. Fire lazy lectures who are lacking the spirit of research and who are intolerant to changes. Modernise the administration and let the students or alumni be helped in the quickest way possible. Remove excessive powers to senior lecturers. Let them know that they are working with mind sets and not robots. Some lectures teach only 2 weeks per semester, the rest of the days are devoted to their side hustles. Trace them and punish them henceforth. Afterall, why are they there?*", 64th alumnus (commenting again).

The alumnus is firstly pointing out that he is pleased with the ongoing *infrastructure development* at UNIMA campus.

The comment passes on the message that in the Social Sciences programmes there are some *teaching staff who do not abide by some professional ethics* (ie.g. not satisfying their teaching obligations). Related to this is the point that there is a need to have a (*performance*) *tracking system* that can help catch and discipline such staff. Thirdly, there is the issue of *some teaching staff abusing their authority* as they have no empathy towards students. Finally, there is a need to have a *system or alumni office* where the student or alumni-related issues can be efficiently handled.

3.7   Legal Studies alumni comments

On the Legal Studies, only one respondent made a comment that said:

> "*It* [UNIMA] *should integrate entrepreneurship in each programme*", 68th alumnus.

This echoes well a point that has emerged across all the other areas of study which also happens to be the key goal of SAVE project, to produce graduates that are ready for the job market, self-employment (entrepreneurship) is essential.

4 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The tracer study targeted all alumni who attended UNIMA who graduated from UNIMA from 2017 to 2019 who could be reached electronically wherever they are. As the geographical scope was wide, the expectation was that there was going to be a lot of alumni responding. We managed to get around 242 respondents. This was so as it was not possible to know where every alumnus is and the announcement we tried could likely not reach each and every alumnus. We also face a challenge of missing values as some would stop mid-way due connectivity issues or some other reasons   not known. The effective sample ranged from 150 responses to around 220. Regardless of these, the results do capture the large picture.

4.1 Main findings

Here are the key findings

(a) The majority of UNIMA alumni find UNIMA education useful.
(b) Most UNIMA alumni rate highly the quality of training that takes place at UNIMA.
(c) Unstable UNIMA calendar disrupts timely programme completion.
(d) Most UNIMA graduates who are employed get absorbed by the private sector, seconded by public sector and a negligible number go into entrepreneurship while a good number stay employed for a longer period.
(e) Except for Education Studies and Legal Studies, a good number of UNIMA graduates change their career occupations over time.
(f) A good number of the Arts and Humanities alumni as well as a good number of Natural Sciences alumni change their careers to teaching profession.
(g) Most UNIMA alumni find the following useful in their careers: critical thinking and problem-solving, research skills, qualitative thinking skills, quantitative thinking skills, verbal communication skills, written communication skills, ICT skills, creativity and innovation skills, interpersonal relationship skills, collaboration and partnership skills, management and leadership skills, professional ethics skills, and entrepreneurship skills.
(h) Of all the skills that are taught at UNIMA, the skills that are least taught across all programmes are entrepreneurship skills.
(i) Outside the Natural Sciences, the other skill that is least taught by most programmes is the ICT skills.
(j) Most programmes at UNIMA are taught with an emphasis on theory.
(k) All alumni would have preferred that the delivery of the courses at UNIMA were also more practical hands-on.
(l) Most alumni would have preferred their programmes had real-world exposure or an industrial attachment aspect.
(m) UNIMA does not have a well functioning system in place that regularly assesses performance of all its sections.
(n) UNIMA has some needy students who need financial support.

4.2   Recommendations

From the above summary of the main findings, and focusing of the SAVE project, the following recommendations are made:

1. UNIMA should integrate entrepreneurship and related ICT skills for all its programmes.

2. UNIMA should review its curriculum to address the short-fall so that every programme has a more hands-on practical approach than before.

3. UNIMA programmes should explore the suggestion of having student internships or ways of having their students experience real-world experience.

4. UNIMA should keep teaching all the skills they were teaching before that the alumni have seen to be useful.

5. UNIMA should play a major role in preparing students for the search for employment by organizing job fairs, career guidance or sessions on job search strategies. Such platforms will prepare students to navigate life after university and work places with ease. In other words, UNIMA may think about preparing students for the labour market from the perspective of gaining skills that enhance the graduates' entrepreneurial skills, work ethics, and independent learning, and other generic and soft skills. Organising these aforementioned sessions should be a collaborative task between UNIMA and the industry.

6. UNIMA should step up effort to align the programmes in a way that they are skill oriented other than knowledge acquisition oriented. This is against the background that students are satisfied with the education experience, particularly the extent to which they are capable to self-assess their knowledge, skills and competences, have gained command of their field of study and are capable to organise and plan.

7. UNIMA should strengthen the alumni fora/associations so that there is a clientele that is ready with feedback. The alumni associations will also be convenient for mobilizing resources, finding attachments/placements/internships and organizing activities.

5 REFERENCES

1. Görgens, M. and Jody Zall Kusek, J. Z. (2009). *Making Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Work,* The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank, Washington.
2. International Labour Organisation. (2023). *The International Standard Classification of Occupations* (*ISCO*-08) *Companion*, ILO Publishing Unit, Geneva
3. Malawi Government. (2019). *University of Malawi Act, 2019*.
4. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). (2013). *National Education Policy* (*NEP*), MoEST, Lilongwe
5. SAVE Project. Skills for a Vibrant Economy (SAVE) Project https://saveproject.mw/, (Retrieved on 31 May 2025).

6 APPENDICES

6.1 UNIMA tracer study questionnaire

Q1. Sex: 1. *Female*   2. *Male*

Q2: What is the highest qualification you obtained from UNIMA?

1. *Certificate* (*e.g. UCE*)

2. *Diploma*

3. *Undergraduate degree*

4. *Postgraduate degree*

Q3: What field was this highest qualification in?

1. *Education Studies*

2. *Arts and Humanities*

3. *Natural Sciences*

4. *Social Sciences*

5. *Legal Studies*

Q4. Did you try to seek for further studies after obtaining the UNIMA qualification?
1. *Yes*   2. *No*

Q5: To what extent were the conditions in this UNIMA programme satisfactory?

1. *Wholly dissatisfied*

2. *Mostly dissatisfied*

3. *Mostly satisfied*

4. *Fully satisfied*

Q6: After graduating from this UNIMA programme, in which area were you first employed?

1. *Public sector*

2. *Private sector*

3. *Self-employed*

4. *Unemployed up to now*

Q7: After graduation from this UNIMA programme, how long did it take you to get employed or self-employed?

1. *Less than 6 months*

2. *Between 6 and 12 months*

3. *Over a year*

4. *Never got employed*

Q8: In all your job experiences and career do you find what you learnt at UNIMA useful?

1. *Yes*   2. *No*

Q9. If your answer to question (3) is YES, to what extent do you agree that it is due to the following skills acquired from the programme:

(1. *Totally disagree* 2. *Disagree* 3. *Not sure* 4. *Agree* 5. *Totally agree*)

1. *Critical thinking and problem-solving skills*	1	2	3	4	5
2. *Research skills*	1	2	3	4	5
3. *Qualitative thinking skills*	1	2	3	4	5
4. *Quantitative thinking skills*	1	2	3	4	5
5. *Verbal communication skills*	1	2	3	4	5
6. *Written communication skills*	1	2	3	4	5
7. *ICT skills*	1	2	3	4	5
8. *Creativity and innovation skills*	1	2	3	4	5
9. *Interpersonal relationship skills*	1	2	3	4	5
10. *Collaboration and partnership skills*	1	2	3	4	5
11. *Management and leadership skills*	1	2	3	4	5
12. *Professional ethics skills*	1	2	3	4	5
13. *Entrepreneurship skills*	1	2	3	4	5

Q10. Looking back, to what extent are you satisfied with the knowledge and skills you got from the UNIMA programme?

1. *Wholly dissatisfied*
2. *Mostly dissatisfied*
3. *Mostly satisfied*
4. *Fully satisfied*

Q11. Which occupation are your current employment/career activities in?

0. *Armed Forces Occupations*	1. *Commissioned Armed Forces Officers*
	2. *Non-commissioned Armed Forces Officers*
	3. *Armed Forces Occupations, Other Ranks*
1. *Managers*	4. *Chief Executives, Senior Officials, Legislators*
	5. *Administrative and Commercial Managers*
	6. *Production and Specialized Services Managers*
	7. *Hospitality, Retail & Other Services Managers*
2. *Professionals*	8. *Science and Engineering Professionals*
	9. *Health Professionals*
	10. *Teaching Professionals*
	11. *Business and Administration Professionals*
	12. *ICT Professionals*
	13. *Legal, Social and Cultural Professionals*
3. *Technicians and Associate Professionals*	14. *Science and Engineering Associate Professionals*
	15. *Health Associate Professionals*
	16. *Business and Administration Associate Professionals*
	17. *Information and Communications Technicians*

	18. *Legal, Social, Cultural and Related Associate Professionals*
4. *Clerical Support Workers*	19. *Customer services clerks*
	20. *Numerical and material recording clerks*
5. *Services and Sales Workers*	21. *Personal service workers*
	22. *Sales workers*
	23. *Protective services workers*
6. *Skilled Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Workers*	24. *Subsistence farmers, fishers, hunters and gatherers*
7. *Craft and Related Trades Workers*	25. *Cleaners and helpers*
	26. *Agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers*
	27. *Labourers in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport*
	28. *Street and related sales and service workers*
8. *Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers*	29. *Machine operators* (M*obile/Stationary e.g. drivers*)
	30. *Assemblers* (*Production e.g. Agriculture, Factories*)

Q12. If you have any comment regarding UNIMA or the UNIMA programme you did, please write it down.

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………

……………………………………………………………………………………