

Learner Satisfaction, Academic Adjustment, and Challenges of First-Year BSIT Students: Basis for a Learner Support and Program Improvement Plan

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ABSTRACT

This descriptive mixed-method study examined the initial satisfaction, academic adjustment, and challenges of 66 first-year Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (BSIT) students from Sections 1A and 1B during the opening weeks of School Year 2026-2027. A researcher-developed online questionnaire gathered profile information, responses to 35 four-point Likert-scale indicators, multiple-response selections, adjustment and retention indicators, and open-ended comments. The study used frequencies, percentages, weighted means, ranking, thematic analysis, and Cronbach's alpha. The overall satisfaction mean was 3.24 out of 4.00, indicating a positive initial experience. The complete 35-item scale showed excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.986$), with domain coefficients ranging from 0.926 to 0.967. Faculty support and communication and computer laboratories and learning resources obtained the highest area means ($M = 3.29$), while enrollment, orientation, and program information obtained the lowest ($M = 3.14$). Most respondents had no or very limited programming experience (93.94%), and 43.94% had no computer or laptop outside school. Internet connectivity, class-schedule communication, programming difficulty, limited prior knowledge, and college adjustment emerged as major concerns. The findings support targeted interventions in schedule communication, digital access, beginner programming support, laboratory opportunities, advising, and early retention monitoring.

Keywords: Learner satisfaction, academic adjustment, first-year students, BSIT, programming readiness, digital access, retention

INTRODUCTION

The first year of college is a critical transition period in which students adapt to new academic expectations, social relationships, institutional processes, and personal responsibilities. Research on first-year transition emphasizes the importance of faculty engagement, peer support, advising, and institutional services in shaping student adjustment and persistence (Penn-Edwards & Donnison, 2011; Oyeniyi et al., 2021; Lubis et al., 2025).

For students entering information technology programs, adjustment may be more demanding because introductory courses require logical reasoning, sustained problem solving, access to computing devices, and repeated practice. Prior programming knowledge can influence participation and performance, while bridging activities and guided practice can help reduce readiness gaps among novice learners (Veerasingam et al., 2018; Uhanova et al., 2023). Digital access is equally important; UNESCO (2023, 2025) notes that educational participation depends not only on device availability but also on reliable connectivity, digital skills, and effective technology use.

Student satisfaction provides a practical indicator of educational quality because it reflects perceptions of instruction, administrative processes, facilities, learning resources, communication, and support services. Against this background, the BSIT Program of Aldersgate College, Inc. conducted an initial learner satisfaction and adjustment survey to generate baseline evidence for learner support and continuous program improvement.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed to determine the initial learner satisfaction, academic adjustment, and challenges of first-year BSIT students and use the findings as a basis for a learner support and program improvement plan. Specifically, it sought to:

1. describe respondents according to section, program-choice status, previous programming experience, and computer/laptop access;
2. determine satisfaction in enrollment and orientation, teaching and learning, laboratories and resources, faculty support and communication, and overall experience;
3. identify perceived strengths, priority improvement areas, and common learner challenges;
4. describe initial adjustment and early intention to remain in or shift from the program;
5. assess the internal consistency of the 35-item satisfaction scale using Cronbach's alpha; and
6. propose an evidence-based learner support and program improvement plan.

Conceptual Focus and Scope

The study viewed learner-entry characteristics (program choice, prior programming experience, and device access) and the educational environment (orientation, teaching, laboratories, resources, communication, and support) as factors associated with satisfaction, adjustment, and early retention intentions. It covered 66 usable responses from BSIT

1A and 1B submitted on July 30-31, 2026. The study describes the participating cohort's initial perceptions; it does not establish causal relationships, long-term retention, or academic achievement outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive mixed-method design. Quantitative data described respondent characteristics and satisfaction ratings, while qualitative comments identified recurring experiences, concerns, and requested forms of support. The respondents were 66 first-year BSIT students from Sections 1A and 1B. All usable submissions received during the data-gathering period were included; therefore, the sample represents available respondents rather than a verified census of all officially enrolled first-year BSIT students.

A researcher-developed online questionnaire contained profile questions, 35 four-point Likert-scale indicators, multiple-response items on areas of satisfaction, priorities for improvement, and challenges, questions on adjustment and consideration of shifting, and open-ended questions. The Likert indicators covered five domains: (1) enrollment, orientation, and program information; (2) initial teaching and learning experience; (3) computer laboratories and learning resources; (4) faculty support and communication; and (5) overall initial satisfaction.

The researchers administered the questionnaire online from July 30 to July 31, 2026. The researchers consolidated responses and screened them for completeness and obvious inconsistencies. Frequencies and percentages summarized the profile, adjustment, retention, strengths, improvement priorities, and challenges. We computed weighted means for Likert-scale items and domains. Mean scores were interpreted as follows: 3.25-4.00, Very Positive/Highly Satisfactory; 2.50-3.24, Positive/Satisfactory; 1.75-2.49, Needs Improvement; and 1.00-1.74, Priority Concern. Cronbach's alpha assessed the internal consistency of the complete scale and its five domains. We coded open-ended responses, grouped them into recurring themes, and integrated them with quantitative findings.

Participation was voluntary, and we reported results in aggregate form. We excluded personally identifying information from analysis and presentation. Sensitive comments involving disability, bullying, financial hardship, or personal adjustment were summarized without identifying respondents. Because the instrument originated as an internal program-evaluation tool, broader publication should undergo the institution's required ethics and administrative review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reliability and Respondent Readiness

Scale/Domain	Items	Alpha	Interpretation
Enrollment, Orientation & Program Information	6	0.926	Excellent
Teaching & Learning	9	0.961	Excellent
Laboratories & Learning Resources	8	0.952	Excellent
Faculty Support & Communication	7	0.967	Excellent
Overall Initial Satisfaction	5	0.954	Excellent
Entire scale	35	0.986	Excellent

The 35-item satisfaction scale demonstrated excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.986$), and all five domains likewise showed excellent reliability (0.926-0.967). The results support the scale's consistency for this cohort, although the very high overall coefficient may also reflect overlap among closely related satisfaction items. Reliability should therefore not be treated as a substitute for content or construct validation.

Profile Indicator	f	%
BSIT 1A	32	48.48%
BSIT 1B	34	51.52%
BSIT first choice	49	74.24%
Undecided at enrollment	9	13.64%
BSIT not first choice	8	12.12%
No programming experience	48	72.73%
Very limited experience	14	21.21%
Previous programming experience	4	6.06%
Own computer/laptop	18	27.27%
Shared device	19	28.79%
No device outside school	29	43.94%

The cohort was almost evenly divided between Sections 1A and 1B. Although 74.24% reported BSIT as their first-choice program, 93.94% had no or only very limited programming experience and 43.94% had no computer or laptop outside school. These readiness gaps are educationally important because introductory programming depends heavily on repeated practice, guided problem solving, and access to computing resources (Veerasamy et al., 2018; Uhanova et al., 2023).

Level of Learner Satisfaction

Survey Area	Mean	Positive Responses	Interpretation
Enrollment, Orientation & Program Information	3.14	83.84%	Positive
Teaching & Learning	3.24	90.07%	Positive
Laboratories & Learning Resources	3.29	90.53%	Very Positive
Faculty Support & Communication	3.29	91.13%	Very Positive
Overall Initial Satisfaction	3.21	88.48%	Positive
Overall	3.24	-	Positive

The overall mean of 3.24 indicates a positive initial evaluation of the BSIT Program. Faculty support and communication and laboratories and learning resources obtained the highest domain means ($M = 3.29$), while enrollment, orientation, and program information obtained the lowest ($M = 3.14$). At the item level, clear instructions for activities and assignments ($M = 3.42$), usefulness of learning materials ($M = 3.41$), availability of functional computers ($M = 3.36$), and adviser availability ($M = 3.36$) were among the strongest ratings. These findings are consistent with literature emphasizing the value of faculty-student interaction, academic support, and learning resources in first-year adjustment and satisfaction (Larkin et al., 2016; Cong & Glass, 2019).

The weakest item was clear communication of class schedules ($M = 2.89$), followed by prompt communication of schedule and room changes ($M = 2.94$) and adequacy of internet connectivity for classroom activities ($M = 2.95$). These lower ratings were reinforced by open-ended comments requesting a final schedule, clearer room assignments, earlier announcements, and more stable internet access. Thus, the principal weaknesses were operational communication and connectivity rather than broad dissatisfaction with the program.

Strengths, Improvement Priorities, and Challenges

Most Satisfied With	f	Priority Improvement	f	Reported Challenge	f
Approachability of instructors	37	Internet connection	36	Programming difficulty	25
Classmates/learning environment	36	Class schedule	31	Limited prior knowledge	21
Computer laboratory facilities	34	Classroom management	17	Confusing schedule	20
Programming activities	28	Communication/announcements	15	College adjustment	18
Quality of instruction	28	Learning materials	10	Internet problems	17
Communication/announcements	25	Orientation	9	Financial concerns	13
Class schedule	24	Enrollment process	8	Limited computer access	10
Academic advising	21	Lab facilities	8	Heavy workload	9

Approachability of instructors ($f = 37$), classmates and the learning environment ($f = 36$), and computer laboratory facilities ($f = 34$) were the most frequently identified strengths. In contrast, internet connection ($f = 36$) and class schedule ($f = 31$) were the leading improvement priorities. Programming difficulty ($f = 25$), limited prior knowledge ($f = 21$), confusing schedules ($f = 20$), college adjustment ($f = 18$), and internet problems ($f = 17$) were the most common challenges. The overlap of some categories as both strengths and weaknesses reflect variation in individual experience: students may value the general laboratory environment while still reporting connectivity or access limitations.

Academic Adjustment, Retention, and Qualitative Themes

Adjustment

Response	f	%
Adjusting well	36	54.55%
Adjusting very well	17	25.76%
Experiencing some difficulty	13	19.70%

Consideration of Shifting

Response	f	%
No	47	71.21%
Still undecided	10	15.15%
Yes, briefly	7	10.61%
Seriously considering it	1	1.52%
Conflicting multiple selection	1	1.52%

A total of 80.30% described their adjustment as well or very well, while 19.70% reported some difficulty. Most respondents had not considered shifting, but 18 were undecided, had briefly considered shifting, or seriously considered it, including one inconsistent multiple selection. These responses are better treated as early-warning indicators than as evidence of actual attrition. They justify timely advising and support before adjustment difficulties develop into disengagement.

Open-ended responses converged around six themes: (1) supportive faculty and peers; (2) need for beginner-friendly, slower, step-by-step instruction; (3) demand for more hands-on programming and laboratory practice; (4) schedule and announcement concerns; (5) digital, financial, and transportation constraints; and (6) personal adjustment and learner-protection concerns. One respondent raised a bullying concern related to a speech disability, which requires confidential handling under institutional safeguarding and inclusion procedures.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study shows that first-year BSIT students had a generally positive initial experience and benefited from strong faculty support, useful learning materials, approachable advisers, and a supportive peer environment. At the same time, the cohort entered the program with substantial readiness and access gaps: almost all respondents had little or no programming experience, and nearly half had no computer or laptop outside school. Class-schedule communication, internet connectivity, programming difficulty, and college adjustment emerged as the most urgent concerns. The excellent reliability coefficients indicate that the satisfaction scale produced highly consistent responses for this cohort, although expert content review and broader validation remain appropriate before using the instrument as a standardized measure beyond the current setting.

Priority Area	Recommended Action	Responsible Unit	Timeline
Class schedules and rooms	Publish one verified master schedule and use one official channel for changes.	Program Chair / Dean / Registrar	Immediate
Internet connectivity	Conduct a documented technical assessment and implement corrective actions.	MIS/IT Office / Administration	Within 30 days
Programming readiness	Use diagnostics, bridging sessions, tutorials, and guided practice for beginners.	Programming Faculty / Program Chair	Start within 2 weeks
Laboratory/device access	Provide supervised open-lab periods and maximize access for learners without devices.	Program Chair / Lab Custodian	Within semester
Instructional support	Use step-by-step demonstrations, appropriate pacing, formative exercises, and downloadable materials.	BSIT Faculty	Ongoing
At-risk learner monitoring	Conduct confidential advising for students reporting difficulty or shifting intentions.	Class Advisers / Guidance	Immediate and ongoing
Welfare and inclusion	Refer financial/transportation concerns and address bullying or disability-related issues confidentially.	Student Affairs / Guidance / Dean	As needed
Monitoring	Repeat the survey after midterm and compare	Program Chair / QA Office	After midterm

	results with baseline findings.		
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A follow-up administration after the midterm or at the end of the semester is recommended to determine whether identified interventions improved satisfaction, adjustment, and access. Future studies may also examine differences by programming experience, device access, program-choice status, or section and may link baseline perceptions with later academic performance and retention outcomes.

AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI-supported tools helped with grammar and structure in creating this article. No AI tools were used to collect, analyze, or interpret data; all authors are credited for their academic contributions.

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