



INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES

REPORT OF THE GRADUATE TRACER STUDY

SUBMITTED

TO THE

DIRECTOR

OF THE

INSTITUTE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT STUDIES

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The Institute of Local Government Studies extends its sincere appreciation to all alumni and employers who participated in this tracer study. Your time, insights, and reflections were invaluable in helping the Institute assess its impact and improve its academic and institutional offerings.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This tracer study was conducted by the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) to assess the employability, workplace effectiveness, and satisfaction levels of its postgraduate alumni. The study responds to growing national and international concerns about the alignment of higher education with labour market needs and aims to inform programme improvement, curriculum development, and institutional decision-making.

Using a mixed-methods design, the study targeted all ILGS graduates across Ghana's sixteen regions. Out of 531 alumni targeted, 178 responded to the survey, and 19 employers participated. Data collection involved self-administered online questionnaires and targeted interviews with senior alumni.

Findings revealed that 95.5% of ILGS alumni were employed, primarily in the public sector. A significant majority (87%) had selected ILGS as their first choice for postgraduate study, and over 58% indicated they would choose ILGS again. Most respondents attributed their job promotions and enhanced workplace effectiveness to their education at ILGS. Further, more than half affirmed that their current job roles were directly linked to their ILGS training.

Employers confirmed the technical competence and personal development of ILGS graduates, with over 90% expressing satisfaction. Alumni and employer evaluations highlighted the strength of ILGS programmes in analytical thinking, team collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. However, concerns were noted regarding internship opportunities, thesis supervision, feedback on assignments, and administrative responsiveness.

Alumni expressed overwhelming support (91%) for the Institute's transition to autonomous university status and provided several naming suggestions. Nonetheless, a small proportion cited limitations in infrastructure and human resources as reasons for opposing autonomy.

The study recommends urgent improvements in administrative processes, particularly transcript access and graduation timelines. Enhanced facilities, greater academic support, and updated curricula are also necessary to ensure ILGS meets the evolving expectations of students and employers.

INTRODUCTION

The background

Higher educational institutions globally are under pressure to improve the employability of their graduates as a measure of the quality and effectiveness of their study programmes. Kinash *et al.* (2016) and Shah *et al.* (2015) postulate that the effectiveness of study programmes at higher institutions is increasingly being measured by graduate success at the workplace. Thus, an effective study programme in a tertiary institution is considered as one designed and delivered in a way that is well-aligned with the learning needs of its targeted population, such that it produces relevant skills gain that lead to beneficial employment successes (Palameta *et al.*, 2011; World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Employment, 2014). Employability in the higher education context is considered as institutions having supported graduates to develop generic and disciplinary skills, knowledge and attributes, as well as the identity, thereby enabling them to thrive beyond graduation (Kinsh *et al.*, 2016; Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2011). It has been established that there is growing recognition of higher education curricula, resources and services not optimally suited to support employability and employment outcomes (Kinash *et al.*, 2016; Dickinson, 2000).

The increasing focus on employability to measure study programme effectiveness requires that higher education institutions collaborate with past graduates and employers in the review of their study programmes (Kinash *et al.*, 2016). Effective collaboration and engagement of these stakeholders help incorporate their inputs to improve graduate successes in the workplace. The British Council (2014), for instance, reported widespread employer concern about the work readiness of graduates from higher education institutions in Africa. According to the Council, while employers are generally satisfied with the disciplinary knowledge of students, they perceive

significant gaps in their information technology skills, personal qualities and transferable skills. Taabazuing (2010) in a tracer study of agricultural graduates noted that the general feedback from employers of agricultural is that graduates come to the job market with little or no practical exposure. It is in this regard that Taabazuing (2010) concluded that Ghanaian agricultural graduates involved in the study appeared ill-equipped with the necessary soft skills, such as communication, interpersonal relationships, critical thinking and problem-solving, thus making them less versatile in a diverse and rapidly changing demands of the 21st Century job market. Tran (2018) explained the root cause of this problem. Tran (2018) offered criticism against the non-inclusion of alumni and employer inputs in study programme design and review and described the university curriculum generally as too theory-focused, obsolete and irrelevant to labour market needs.

According to Schomburg (2003), graduate tracer study has been used interchangeably with other research terms such as ‘graduate survey’, ‘alumni research’ and ‘follow-up study’, in all cases, the aim is to assess the impact of the study programmes graduates have received from a given higher education Institution. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines a tracer study as an impact assessment tool where the impact of a target group is traced back to specific elements of a project or programme so that effective programme components may be identified (Pacatang, 2016). To achieve this, a graduate tracer study is normally conducted after some years of being engaged in the field of certification. Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) postulate that graduate tracer studies provide valuable information in evaluating the impacts of higher education and training institutions. This information may be used for minimising any possible deficits in a given educational programme’s content, delivery and relevance. Thus, graduate tracer studies have

become an integral component of higher education institutions' quality assurance mechanism, worldwide.

In Ghana, tracer studies constitute a key requirement of external quality assurance of higher education institutions. The Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) demands a graduate tracer study report as one of their requirement/conditions before re-accreditation is granted to a study programme in any higher education institution in Ghana. A programme is due for reaccreditation after every three or five years. Hence, a graduate tracer study is required at least every five years in a study programme's lifetime. The implication is that graduate tracer studies are regular operational activities of higher educational institutions. It is against this backdrop that the Institute of Local Government Studies conducted a tracer study to gather information on the professional successes of its graduate as well as the relevance of knowledge and skills gained at the institute to perform their current roles at their places of work.

Aims of the tracer studies

The tracer study aimed to track ILGS graduates' progress after graduation from the Institute. This was done to collect information to determine the employability of the graduates and assessed graduates' satisfaction, retrospectively, with the services and tuition offered by the Institute. Assessing graduates' satisfaction with the services and tuition offered by ILGS provided an opportunity to highlight areas where the institution was performing well as well as areas that need to be improved.

The specific objectives that directed the study were as follows:

- Identify the employment destination of the Institute of Local Government Studies graduates and build a database.

- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Institute's graduates at the workplace.
- Evaluate graduate satisfaction with the services and tuition offered by the Institute of Local Government Studies.

Research questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

- What is the employment destination of a graduate of the Institute of Local Government Studies?
- How efficient and effective are ILGS graduates at the workplace?
- How satisfied are employers with the performance of ILGS graduates at the workplace?
- What is the satisfaction level of graduates with the service and tuition offered by the Institute of Local Government Studies?

Scope

The study assumed a national profile covering all sixteen regions in Ghana. All postgraduate alumni of the Institute were traced in various places of work, formal and non-formal, public and private organisations. The study covered all past alumni and their employers.

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology that was employed for the tracer studies. The section provides the research design, study population and data collection.

Research Approach/Design

The study employed mixed methods which involved investigation that combine both quantitative and qualitative in a single study. The study focused on alumni of the Institute and their employers.

Population and sample size

The population for the study consisted of all past students of the Accra and Tamale campuses of the Institute of Local Government Studies. In all five hundred and thirty-one (531) past students have successfully graduated from the four master's programmes run by the Institute. In addition, employers of these graduates were selected for the study. Thus, the target population was all graduates of the institutes and their employers.

Sampling and sample size

Using Yamane's formula for determining the sample size, 228 alumni were expected to complete the questionnaire, even though the questionnaire was sent to all alumni of the institute.

Data Collection

The Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS) conducted a tracer study with its Alumni between 19th August, 2022, and 8th October, 2022. This report is the analysis of data collected from the study. It covers the demographic information of respondents, employment information, and an appraisal of various aspects of their experience with the Institute. The institution as a whole, how they were impacted by the ILGS experience, the programme they studied, the facilities of the

institute, their recommendations for improvements, and views about the decision to seek autonomy as a university of its own.

The survey was conducted online. A simple self-administered questionnaire was developed and programmed in KoboCollect App. Given that identifiable information of respondents was being collected in the survey, they were allowed the option of not answering particular questions if they did not feel like it. This means the total number of respondents varied on certain questions, but the variation was minimal, with an average of not more than five (5). A link to the questionnaire was shared with respondents through their e-mails, social media platforms created for the alumni, and text messages to phone numbers of alumni retrieved from the database of past students with the institute. Virtual meetings were held with alumni to inform them of the survey and followed up with communication on social media platforms and phone calls. The data collection was closed at a point when respondent fatigue set in.

In all, 178 alumni completed the questionnaire (Table 1). In addition, 10 alumni who occupy high positions in both the public and private sectors (Municipal Chief Executives, Members of Parliament, and Chief Executive Officers) were purposely selected and interviewed on their perceptions of the services and tuition offered by the Institute. Furthermore, employers' questionnaires were administered to 70 employers of the alumni to ascertain their efficiency and effectiveness at the workplace. However, only 19 employers completed and submitted the online questionnaire.

Table 1 : Number of alumni who completed the questionnaire

Programme of study	Frequency	Percent
MSc. Environmental Science, Policy and Management	49	27.5
MSc. Local Economic Development	30	16.9
MSc. Public Financial Management	40	22.5
MA. Local Government Administration and Organisation	59	33.1
Total	178	100.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics refer to the social and demographic attributes of a group of people, such as their age, gender, education level, income, occupation, ethnicity, and geographic location. These characteristics are often used to categorise and analyse populations, as they can provide insight into patterns and trends within a particular group.

In this report, the socio-demographic characteristics considered include the alumni's sex, age, the relative position of ILGS with respect to other institutions of higher learning, the programme of study at ILGS, pursuance of further education after ILGS, and employment status.

Sex and Age

Table 2 shows that the respondents' distribution was dominated by males (82%) while females represented 18%. This represents 4.5 male respondents to a female respondent.

With regard to age, the study established that a majority 43.8% of the respondents were between 40 and 51 years of age. The age groups of 31 and 40, and 51 and 60 recorded responses

above 20% of the respondents. Two respondents representing 1.1% of the respondents did not respond to the question on age.

Table 2: Sex of the respondents

Response variable		Frequency	Percent
Sex	Female	32	18.0
	Male	146	82.0
Age (years)	21-30	1	0.6
	31-40	59	33.1
	41-50	78	43.8
	51-60	37	20.8
	61-70	1	0.6
	NR ¹	2	1.1

¹NR = No response

Relative Rank of ILGS as a Choice for postgraduate education

Out of 178 of the graduates interviewed, 87.1% indicated that ILGS was their first choice for the pursuit of postgraduate education, 10.7% indicated that ILGS was their second choice, 1.1% indicated that ILGS was their third choice whilst 0.6% indicated their fourth choice. About 1.1% of the respondents did not answer the question (Table 3). Some of the graduates corroborated this view and stated that:

“Yes, ILGS was my first choice because a colleague was among the 1st batch and his performance at work after the programme was excellent. ILGS was a fully accredited Institution” (JK).

“As a young officer in the army, I wanted to plan my career and upgrade myself in terms of education and a friend recommended ILGS to me to study ESPM” (GA).

Table 3: Choice of ILGS as a preferred institution for postgraduate education

Choice of ILGS	Frequency	Percent
1 st Choice	155	87.1
Second Choice	19	10.7
Third Choice	2	1.1
Fourth or lower choice	1	0.6
No Answer	1	0.6

Programmes of study pursued

Of the 178 graduates who completed the questionnaire, 33.1% pursued MA in Local Government Administration and Organisation (LGAO), 27.5% pursued MSc. in Environmental Science, Policy and Management, 22.5% pursued MSc. in Local Government Financial Management and 16.9% pursued MSc. in Local Economic Development (Table 4).

Table 4: Programme of study pursued at ILGS

The programme of study pursued	Frequency	Percent
MA Local Government Administration and Organisation	59	33.1
M.Sc. Environmental Science, Policy and Management	49	27.5
M.Sc. Local Government Financial Management	40	22.5
M.Sc. Local Economic Development	30	16.9

Reselection of ILGS as a choice of higher education

With regards to the decision of the graduate to reselect ILGS, more than half of the respondents (58.4%) would definitely or probably select ILGS if they were to select an institution of higher learning for their postgraduate education whilst 19.5% would never select ILGS (Table 5). About 23% of the respondents were uncertain to choose ILGS as their preferred choice for a postgraduate qualification. This is an indication that more than half of the alumni still prefer ILGS as the best place to pursue postgraduate education in Ghana. This is consistent with interview data

gathered from the graduates, which revealed they will definitely reselect ILGS if they were to choose an institution of higher learning. Some of their responses are captured below:

“Definitely yes because I have benefited a lot from the programme” (JK).

“Yes, because ILGS is a reputable and accredited institution” (VA).

“Yes, ILGS had a faculty with great work ethics. The administrative staff were also supportive and responsive to students” (NNO).

Table 5: Decision to choose ILGS as the preferred choice of tertiary education in future

Choosing ILGS again	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Yes	55	30.9
Probably Yes	49	27.5
Definitely No	18	10.1
Probably No	15	8.4
Uncertain	41	23.0

Table 6 shows that a significant majority of the respondents (80%) would select the pursue the same programme of study they graduated from if they were ever to return to ILGS to pursue a postgraduate education whilst 13% will never or probability not select the same programme of study they graduated from. Nearly one in every 20 respondents was uncertain about choosing the same programme of study they graduated from.

Table 6: Respondents' response to choosing the same programme of study

Choosing the same programme of study	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Yes	115	64.6
Probably Yes	28	15.7
Definitely No	12	6.2
Probably No	13	7.3
Uncertain	10	5.6

Furthering education after ILGS

Furthering education, in this report, refers to the pursuit of education and training after graduating from ILGS. Furthering education enables graduates to acquire new knowledge, skills, and credentials throughout their lives, often to enhance their employability, advance their careers, or pursue personal interests

Table 7 shows that nearly three out of four respondents (74.2%) never pursued another qualification beyond ILGS whilst one out of four (25.8) furthered their education.

Table 7: Response to ever pursuing further education after ILGS

Further education after ILGS	Frequency	Percent
No	132	74.2
Yes	46	25.8

Of those who pursued an additional qualification after graduating from ILGS, 84.8% pursued an academic qualification and 15.2% pursued a professional qualification (including Chartered Accountant). Of those that pursued an academic qualification, 20.5% pursued a doctorate or PhD, 56.4% pursued a Master's degree, 7.7% pursued an undergraduate degree (LLB), and 15.4% pursued a diploma programme (Postgraduate Diploma, Advanced diploma or diploma) (Table 8).

With respect to the geographical distribution of the place where the additional qualifications were pursued, a greater proportion of the respondents (63%) pursued further qualification in institutions within Ghana whilst the rest constituting 37% furthered their education outside Ghana.

Of those who furthered their education abroad, 29.4 did so in universities in the USA, 17.6% in the UK, 11.8% apiece in India and Japan, and the rest (5.9% each) in China, Philippines,

and Eswatini (formerly Swaziland). About 12% of the respondents did not provide the names of the institutions where they pursued their further qualification.

This shows the acceptability of ILGS graduates and certificates in other institutions of higher learning and in other countries. These graduates could be of great value to ILGS if the institute's relationship with its alumni is given premium attention and support.

“Yes, I pursued a professional certificate course in forensic investigation programme in the US”(JK).

“I have pursued other courses in commensurate to my rank in the Arm Forces and currently pursuing a master of science in defence and international Politics”(GA).

Table 8: Programmes pursued by alumni after ILGS

Country	Qualification	Frequency	Percent
China	Master's	1	2.2
Eswatini (Swaziland)	Diploma	1	2.2
Ghana	Diploma	2	4.3
	Professional certificate	5	10.9
	LLB	3	6.5
	Master's	15	32.6
	PhD	4	8.7
India	Diploma	1	2.2
	Master's	1	2.2
Japan	Master's	2	4.3
Philippines	PhD	1	2.2
UK	Diploma	2	4.3
	Master's	1	2.2
USA	Master's	2	4.3
	PhD	3	6.5
NA	Professional certificate	2	4.3

Employed whilst a student at ILGS

Participants were asked about their employment status before enrolling in ILGS. Nine in ten students (96.1%) were in employment when they were admitted whilst 3.4% were unemployed (Table 9). Thus, a significant majority of ILGS students are employees. Some of the responses of the graduate interviewed are captured below

“I was working with the Local Government Service as an internal auditor before enrolling on ILGS master’s programmes” (JK).

“Yes, I was working as a young army officer when I enrolled on the programme” (GA).

“Yes, I was in employment before I enrolled on the programme”(NNO)

Table 6: Employed whilst a student at ILGS

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	171	96.1
No	6	3.4
No response	1	0.6

Type of organisation before enrolment at ILGS

Of those who reported being employed before enrolment at ILGS, almost three-quarters (73%) were in the public sector whilst 21% of the respondents are in the private sector, 1% in self-employment, and 1% in Public-Private organisations (Table 10). Thus, the majority of students for ILGS programmes are staff within the public service of Ghana.

Table 10: Type of organisation before enrolment at ILGS

Type of organisation	Frequency	Percent
Public	130	73.0
Private	38	21.3
Public-Private	1	0.6

Self-employed	2	1.1
No response	7	3.9

Current employment status of alumni

Current employment figures did not vary significantly from the figures before enrolling in ILGS. Almost 96% of alumni are presently employed whilst 4.5% are unemployed (Table 11).

Table 7: Current employment status of alumni

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	170	95.5
No	8	4.5

Type of Organisation ILGS alumni are employed

Table 12 presents the results on the types of organisations of respondents after ILGS. Seventy- four percent of those employed were in the public sector, 13% of them in the Private sector, 7% in the NGO/CSO sector and one person each with a parastatal institution and self-employment.

Again, no significant variation is witnessed in the type of organisation that employed respondents before and after an ILGS programme. Public sector employment stood at 78.8% similar to 73% before the ILGS programme. The private sector and NGO/CSO account for 21% of employment, similar to 22% for the private sector before the ILGS programme. One person, apiece, remains in self-employment and a para-statal accounting for the remaining 1% of respondents.

Table 8: Type of Organisation after ILGS

Response	Frequency	Percent
Public	134	78.8
Private	23	13.5
NGO/CSO	11	6.5
Parastatal	1	0.6
Self-employed	1	0.6

Reasons for alumni unemployment status

Of the 8 persons without employment, 25% of them were on retirement, did not find a job opportunity, or believed they did not have the right networks to link them to a job. One person reported redundancy due to COVID-19, and another reported that the starting pay for a job was too low (Table 13).

Table 9: Reasons for not being employed

Reasons	Frequency	Percent
Retirement	2	25.0
Redundancy	1	12.5
No job opportunity	2	25.0
No network/connections	2	25.0
Starting pay is too low	1	12.5

Changed Jobs after graduating from ILGS

Though respondents largely remained in the sector they worked in before enrolling in ILGS, there were some movements or changes in jobs or positions. Almost one in five alumni have changed jobs after graduating from ILGS (Table 14). However, the majority of alumni have not changed jobs since graduating from the Institute.

“I was promoted a year after graduation hence am currently at the regional office in the Eastern Region”(VA).

“I was promoted from Deputy Director to Director of the Internal Audit Unit after the programme”(JK).

“I have not changed jobs, my study at ILGS has enhanced my appreciation of Ghana’s local governance architecture and this has culminated in my ability to better engaged with local government functionaries”(NNO).

Table 10: Change jobs after graduating from ILGS

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	32	18.0
No	135	75.8
No response	11	6.2

Graduate current position linked to qualification from ILGS

In terms of the relevance of the programme of study, 52.2% of respondents confirmed that their education in ILGS is linked to the current position they occupy at work, whilst 41.6% disagreed that there was a link between their qualification from ILGS and the current position they occupy.

Table 11: Current position linked to your qualification in ILGS

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	93	52.2
No	74	41.6
No Response	11	6.2

Number of years working at the current position at work

The study tried to ascertain how long respondents had held their current positions in their organisations. Most of the respondents, thus 73% indicated they had held their positions for more than 3 years, with only 4% taking on their positions in the last 6 months (Table 16).

Table 12: Number of years working at the current job position

Response	Frequency	Percent
Over 3 years	130	73
1-3 years	21	11.8
6-12 months	10	5.6
Less than 6 months	7	3.9
No response	10	5.6

Do you want ILGS to contact your employer?

Table 17 shows that 63.5% of alumni permitted ILGS to contact their employers for further information on the tracer studies, whilst 27% did not permit ILGS.

Table 13: Proportion of alumni permitting ILGS to contact their employers

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	113	63.5
No	48	27.0
No response	17	9.5

Skills acquisition, quality and satisfaction

Skills acquisition refers to the process of learning and developing new skills or improving existing ones through education, training, and practice. Quality and satisfaction are two important factors that can determine the effectiveness and value of skills acquisition.

To ensure high quality and satisfaction in skills acquisition, students need to select training or educational programmes that are reputable and have a track record of success, set clear goals and objectives for the learning process, and provide adequate support and resources to learners. Additionally, it can be helpful to seek feedback and evaluate progress regularly to identify areas for improvement and to adjust as necessary.

How many respondents feel they have gained as a result of education at ILGS

A series of indicators were posed under this theme, and respondents provided a score based on their experience with ILGS. Generally, respondents gave more positive remarks about the value of their education with ILGS, but with room for improvement as most evaluations peaked at 'Much' and declined at the 'Very Much' mark.

The exceptions to this trend are on building teamwork values, enthusiasm for further education, and a quest to investigate new ideas. It would appear from these three indicators that received a desired positive rating that the courses at ILGS stimulate critical thinking and a quest for excellence.

Helped me to make an informed judgment

Table 18 shows the alumni response to skills acquisition, quality and satisfaction with education at the Institute. Participants rated the impact of their education with ILGS on their ability to make informed judgement very high. The majority of the respondents % rated their gains on this indicator as 'much' or 'very much'. Only 5% did not feel they had gained much in making informed judgement and 9% felt the impact was moderate. Ratings were provided on the impact of education at ILGS on graduates' ability to plan their work.

Again, responses were largely positive with only 6% reporting little impact. Sixteen percent reported moderate gains in the development of their ability to plan their work, and 78% reported high gains.

Respondents observed that studying at ILGS stimulated their desire for further learning, 10% reported little impact on this indicator. A further 13% reported moderate gains, and 78% reported high gains. Forty-three percent reported very high gains. This is a worthy gain as is expected of graduate school. It would appear the method of lecture delivery at ILGS spurs students on to read wide and appreciate how much more they could learn to be better. It is not surprising that seven students went on to enrol in PhD programmes with forty-two more reading other programmes after ILGS.

On motivation to do the best work, ratings were similarly high peaking at 43% for 'Much' and dropping marginally at 'Very Much' to 39%. 16% reported moderate impacts with only 5% perceiving little gains. On the development of confidence to investigate new ideas, only 8% reported little gains. Seventy-nine percent reported high gains, whilst 13% felt their gains on the indicator were moderate.

Respondents rated improvements in communication skills very positively, 76% reported high improvements in their written communication skills. A minority of the respondents 15% rated moderate gains and 9% low gains.

Teamwork skills are vital in work environments. This is an area that respondents reported many gains in, with 84% indicating much development in working as a member of a team. In addition, 9% indicated moderate gains in teamwork skills improvement, whilst the remaining 9% reported minimal gains in the development of the ability to work as a member of a team.

On understanding the broad context of the course of study, respondents felt they achieved a lot. A staggering 84% of the respondents rated their gains on this indicator highly. Additionally, 9% of respondents reported moderate gains, with only 7% of respondents submitting that they had gained little with regard to a broad understanding of their course/major.

Respondents also provided an evaluation of employer satisfaction with their level of knowledge after the ILGS programme. 77% of respondents believed their level of knowledge and skill improved a lot through the ILGS program to the satisfaction of their employers. Again, 15% reported moderate gains in level of knowledge and skill, whilst 9% of respondents believed improvements in levels of knowledge due to the ILGS programme were minimal.

Participants also rated their gains in developing problem-solving skills through their study at ILGS. The responses were positive with 79% of respondents reporting many gains; 15% of respondents reporting moderate gains in problem-solving skills whilst 6% of respondents indicating little or very little gains.

Respondents indicated a significant development of knowledge and skills applicable to their careers. Majority of participants (79%) reported high gains in the development of knowledge and skills applicable to their career (72 and 78 for 'much', and 'very much). Sixteen percent of respondents reported moderate development of knowledge and skills applicable to their career, and 6% submitted little to very little development of knowledge and skills related to their career.

Majority of respondents believed the ILGS programme sharpened their analytical skills. Eighty percent of respondents said they had gained much, 15% of them reported moderate gains, whilst 6% reported little or very little gains.

Table 14: Skill acquisition, quality, and satisfaction of education at ILGS

Statement	5 (%)	4 (%)	3 (%)	2 (%)	1 (%)
Developed knowledge and skills applicable to my career	41	38	16	3	2
Developed my ability to work as a team member	46	36	15	2	1
Motivated me to do my best work	39	41	16	2	2
Provided me with a broad overview of my course	43	40	10	4	3
Sharpened my analytical skills	42	38	15	3	2
Developed my confidence to investigate new ideas	39	40	13	5	3
Developed my problem-solving skills	36	43	15	3	3
Stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning	43	35	13	4	5
Improved my skills in written communication	35	41	15	6	3
Helped to develop my ability to plan my work	32	46	16	3	3
Helped me to make an informed judgment	40	41	14	2	3
Employer/former employer is/was satisfied with my level of knowledge and skill	42	35	15	4	4

[5 = Very much; 4 = Much; 3= Moderately; 2 = Little; 1 = Very Little]

Evaluation of the Programme of Study at ILGS

Respondents were allowed to evaluate their programme of study at ILGS as well. Responses were fairly positive with room for improvement, similar to their assessment of gains they made from studying at ILGS. Indicators relating to teaching, and programme content, received better evaluations than those that relate to non-teaching relations which are equally important for efficient and conducive academic work.

Contents of the programme of the study received a generally high rating as shown in Table 19, seventy-six percent of the respondents rated them as very good to excellent, 17% rated programme content as good and 7% rated them as poor or fair.

Student-staff relationships had a less impressive rating, though good. Less than 60% (36% and 17%) rated student-non-teaching staff relationships as very good or excellent. Thirty percent of respondents rated the relationship as good, and a significant 17% rated it as poor or fair.

Participants rated the quality of academic staff highly. Twenty-two percent rated them as excellent, (47% rated them as very good and 23%) rated them as good. Three percent and 5% of respondents rated them as poor and fair.

Appraisal of the school administration's response to student enquiries was modest relative to other indicators. Eight percent of respondents rated Administration's response as excellent, 24% of respondents rated them as very good, and 36% rated them as good. A combined 32% rated them as poor or fair (10%) and (22%), respectively.

Twenty-three percent and 46% of the respondents rated their ability to link theory with practice as excellent and 'very good' respectively. Twenty-two percent of respondents rated this ability as good, and 3% and 6% rated it as 'poor' and 'fair' respectively. Given that most of the courses at ILGS are targeted at practitioners, the positive rating is a good sign that the courses are well-targeted.

Problem-solving abilities also received positive scoring. Most respondents believed their ability to solve problems improved significantly. Twenty-two percent of respondents rated their improvement in problem-solving skills as 'excellent', further 46% rated it as 'very good', and 25% rated it as good. Almost 3% and 6% rated it as poor and fair, respectively.

Respondents also gave ratings of fee payment processes. Mode of payment of fees and other academic-user fees were generally favoured by respondents, though there is good room for improvement. Six percent rated the processes as 'poor', 8% rated them as 'fair', 30% rated the processes as good, and 41% and 15% rated them as 'very good' and 'excellent', respectively.

The content and quality of elective courses were put up for evaluation in the study. An impressive 19% and 52% of respondents graded content and quality of elective courses as ‘excellent’ and ‘very good’ respectively, with an additional 22% rating it as ‘good’. Only 7 persons each rated it as poor and fair making up a combined 8% of the respondents.

The evaluation narrowed to the direct Teacher-Student relationship. Again, a positive relationship emerged from the data. Twenty-nine percent of the respondents rated the relationship as ‘excellent’. Another 40% rated it as ‘very good’, and an additional 22% rated it as good. Nine and ten respondents gave a negative rating of ‘poor’ and ‘fair’ respectively accounting for a cumulative 10% of the total respondents.

Respondents also evaluated feedback on assignments from lecturers in terms of how regular and clear such feedback is. Though positive, the negative ratings for this indicator were higher than 10% unlike many others considered. Three percent and 9% rated feedback on assignments as ‘poor’ or ‘fair’. Thirty-five rated it as good, and 36% and 17% rated it as ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’, respectively.

The ratings for work placement, attachment or internship were not impressive. Forty-five percent of respondents (21% and 24% respectively) rated work placement as ‘poor’ or ‘fair’ below the ‘good’ mark. Twenty-nine percent, 21%, and 6% evaluated it as ‘good’ ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’ respectively. Given that most respondents indicated that they were working at the time of enrolling in ILGS, it is not clear what sort of attachments or work placement they desired from the programme.

Access to relevant reading material did not receive a positive evaluation. Evelyn percent and 13% rated access to relevant material as ‘poor’ or ‘fair’. Forty percent 40% rated it as good, 25% and 10% evaluated it as ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’ respectively. Twenty-four percent of

respondents reported that reading materials in the library are not relevant and requested a re-stocking of libraries with updated content.

Twenty-three respondents evaluated it as 'excellent', 50% evaluated it as 'very good' and 22% evaluated it as 'good'. Only six percent of respondents gave a negative evaluation of 'poor' (4%) and 'fair' (2%). The content and quality of mandatory courses had one of the least negative evaluation percentages of 4%.

The learning environment was captured as one of the indicators of the course of study. The learning environment contributes to the effectiveness of teaching and learning in significant ways. It is, however, noteworthy that some of the alumni completed their programmes in, the institute, before recent infrastructural improvements. Twenty percent of the respondents evaluated the learning environment as 'excellent'. Thirty-nine percent of respondents evaluated it as 'very good', and 28% evaluated it as 'good'. Eleven percent of respondents evaluated it as 'fair' and 2% evaluated it as 'poor'.

The quality of teaching received impressively positive evaluations. Twenty-two percent graded the quality of teaching as 'excellent', 59% graded it as 'very good', and a further 22% graded it as 'good'.

Response on thesis supervision also suggests a strong need for improvement with 20% of respondents falling to the left of the graph. Ten percent 10% evaluated it as 'poor', and 10% evaluated it as 'fair'. Twenty-two percent of respondents evaluated it as 'good', 30% evaluated it as 'very good', and 28% evaluated it as 'excellent'.

Responses relating to student and non-teaching staff relationships were not very inspiring either. Five percent rated it as 'poor', and 12% rated it as 'fair'. Thirty percent 30% rated it as

‘good’, 36% rated it as ‘very good’, and 17% rated student-non-teaching staff relationships as ‘excellent’.

Table 15: Evaluation of the Programme of Study at ILGS

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
	%	%	%	%	%
Contents and quality of mandatory courses	23	50	22	2	3
Contents and quality of elective courses	19	52	22	4	3
Contents of the programme of study fulfilled your expectations	31	45	17	3	4
Quality of teaching	23	50	22	2	3
Quality of academic staff	22	47	23	5	3
Ability to link theory with practice	23	46	22	6	3
Regular and clear feedback on assignments	17	36	35	9	3
Schedule of exam periods and other forms of assessment	19	48	24	7	2
Accessibility of transcripts	9	23	26	19	23
Thesis supervision	28	30	22	10	10
Problem-solving ability	22	46	25	4	3
Work placement / attachment / internship	6	21	29	24	20
Teaching / Learning environment	20	39	28	11	2
Teacher-Student relationship	29	40	22	5	4
Student-non-teaching staff relationship	17	36	30	12	5
Administration response to students’ inquiries	8	24	36	22	10
Mode of payment of fees and other academic-user charges	15	41	30	8	6
Access to relevant reading materials at the library	11	25	40	13	11

Key [5 = Excellent; 4 = Very Good; 3 = Good; 2 = Fair; 1 = Poor]

One of the areas that performed badly in the assessment was the accessibility of transcripts. The responses from the participants on accessing their transcripts are not good: 23% rating as poor and 19% rating as ‘fair’ high at 41% of respondents. Twenty-six percent evaluated the accessibility of transcripts as ‘good’, another 23% evaluated it as ‘very good’, and a further 9% said the accessibility of transcripts was ‘excellent’. The technical processes relating to the accessibility of

transcripts should be given greater attention. Timely access to transcripts is important as this is a service that students or alumni normally request under urgent circumstances to fulfil a formal demand on them.

ASSESSMENT OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES OF THE ILGS

The study also allowed the alumni to assess the facilities available at ILGS during their time on the campuses. Evaluation of facilities generally indicated a deficit in quality or availability. For the five-point evaluation criteria, the numbers that fell on the left were significant suggesting that most respondents did not have a good impression about the availability and quality of facilities at ILGS.

As presented in Table 20, the evaluation of sports facilities was very negative, peaking at ‘poor’, with 62% of respondents, and taking a steep dive to ‘fair’, with 20%. Every positive evaluation had fewer respondents: 14% evaluated sports facilities as ‘good’, 4% evaluated them as ‘very good’, and 1% indicated it is ‘excellent’. This points to a complete absence or lack of quality like sports facilities available in the institute. Sports and physical training is an important component of health for students and should be given good consideration as the Institute moves to seek autonomy as a full-fledged university.

Cafeteria services, equally, did not receive impressive evaluations though better than sports facilities. Twenty-one percent of respondents evaluated canteen services as ‘poor’, and 18% evaluated canteen services as ‘fair’. Thirty-six percent indicated canteen services were ‘good’, 19% rated it as ‘very good’, and only 5% scored canteen services as ‘excellent’.

Evaluation of hostel facilities was tilted towards negative as well. Eleven percent of respondents rated hostel facilities as ‘poor’, and 27% rated them as ‘fair’. Forty-five percent of respondents rated hostel facilities as ‘good’, and 11% and 5% of respondents rated hostel facilities

as ‘very good’ and ‘excellent’ respectively. The recent additions to hostel facilities on both campuses are a major response to the situation described in this tracer study.

Assessment of library facilities received a split decision with about 30% responses. Eight percent evaluated library facilities as ‘poor’, and 21% evaluated them as ‘fair’. Forty-four percent of respondents evaluated it as ‘good’, another 20% as ‘very good’, and a further 7% as ‘excellent’. This leaves a lot of room for improvement in library facilities. Given that both campuses have existing libraries, the area of improvement might be in the quality and relevance of resource materials in these libraries.

Respondents gave a positive assessment of lecture room facilities at the ILGS. Three percent rated lecture rooms as ‘poor’, and 7% rated them as ‘fair’. Twenty-two percent 22% evaluated lecture rooms as ‘good’, 42% evaluated them as ‘very good’, and another 28% evaluated lecture room facilities as ‘excellent’.

Respondent's assessment of washroom facilities was positive with room for improvement. Six percent evaluated washroom facilities as ‘poor’, and 10% evaluated washroom facilities as ‘fair’. Thirty-six percent of respondents scored washroom facilities as ‘good’, another 33% scored it as ‘very good’, and a further 14% indicated that washroom facilities were excellent.

Internet accessibility is one of the areas that respondents indicated a great need for improvement. Fifteen percent of respondents thought internet access on campus was ‘poor’, and another 26% thought it was ‘fair’. Thirty-one of respondents graded internet access as ‘good’, 17% thought it is ‘very good’, and 10% graded it as ‘excellent’. With about 31% of all respondents suggesting internet access is less than good, there is a need to work on improving internet access on the campuses.

Teaching and learning environments receive quite positive evaluations. Four percent evaluated the teaching and learning environment as ‘poor’, and 8% evaluated it as ‘fair’. Twenty-five percent evaluated it as good, 38% evaluated it as ‘very good’, and 25% evaluated it as ‘excellent’. It is striking to note that respondents scored it similar to an earlier assessment of the learning environment with about 88% percent suggesting that the teaching and learning environment or learning environment was good or better.

Most respondents did not have a problem with the schedule of exam periods. Ninety percent of respondents scored the scheduling of exams as good or better, and only 10% of respondents had poor evaluations of the exam schedule.

Like all indicators on the quality of course material and program content, respondents indicated high fulfilment of expectations from the content of programmes of study. Only seven percent of respondents scored their fulfilment of expectations as less than good. Eighty-nine percent scored the fulfilment of their expectations as ‘good’, ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’. This evaluation suggests that ILGS is very good with the quality of material and tuition.

Table 16: Assessment of physical facilities of the ILGS

Statement	5	4	3	2	1
	%	%	%	%	%
Lecture rooms	28	42	22	7	2
Learning environment	25	38	25	8	4
Internet accessibility	11	17	31	26	15
Library facility	7	20	44	21	8
Sports Facility	1	4	14	20	61
Canteen (or eatery)	6	19	36	18	21
Hostel facility	6	11	45	27	11
Washrooms	14	33	36	10	7

Keys [5 = Excellent; 4 = Very Good; 3 = Good; 2 = Fair; 1 = Poor]

Alumni recommendation of ILGS programmes to others

An overwhelming 81% were positive towards recommending ILGS programmes to someone. Only two percent were definite that they would not recommend ILGS to other people, and another 1.5% were likely not to recommend ILGS programmes. Thirteen percent of the respondents were indifferent to this question as shown in Table 21. The four respondents who were definite about not recommending ILGS attributed their decisions to administrative difficulties and not course content or tuition. They mentioned student welfare and difficulties encountered in thesis supervision as their reasons for not recommending ILGS to prospective students. One of them said he did not like the fact that ‘local’ is attached to the name of programmes.

Table 17: Recommending programmes of study at ILGS to others

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Yes	101	56.7
Probably Yes	42	23.6
Uncertain	24	13.5
Probably No	3	1.7
Definitely No	4	2.2
No Response	4	2.2

On the question of ILGS becoming an autonomous university, ninety-one percent of respondents supported the idea, and 5% did not support it as displayed in Table 22. The main issues raised by those who did not support autonomy were the financial viability of the new organisation and infrastructural deficit, and lecturers as they observe.

Table 18: Supporting ILGS to become an autonomous university

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	163	91.6
No	9	5.1
No Response	6	3.4

Recommendations for the name of autonomous university

Of the 163 alumni who support the plan of making ILGS an autonomous institution with a Presidential Charter, 124 alumni, constituting 76% suggested new names for the institute. About 44% suggested that the new name of the autonomous ILGS should be ‘University of Local Government Studies. The other names suggested include the University of Governance and Development (12.1%), the University of Local Governance and Decentralisation (9.7%), and Governance and Leadership University (7.3%). However, 6.5% of alumni suggested that the institute’s name should be retained and not changed.

Table 19: Suggested name for an autonomous ILGS

Suggested Names	Frequency	Percent
University of Local Government Studies	55	44.4
University of Governance and Development	15	12.1
University of Local Governance and Decentralisation	12	9.7
Governance and Leadership University	9	7.3
Institute of Local Government Studies	8	6.5
University for Governance and Public Sector Studies/Administration	6	4.8
University of Governance and Leadership	4	3.2
University of Governance and Public Policy	2	1.6
Rawlings Institute of Decentralisation	1	0.8
Kwamina Ahwoi University of Local Governance Studies	1	0.8

University of Decentralisation and Public Administration	1	0.8
University for Governance and Sub-National Development	1	0.8
University of Management and Local Government Studies	1	0.8
Century University Ghana	1	0.8
University for Sustainable Governance and Empowerment.	1	0.8
University of Public Finance and Environmental Management (UPFEM)	1	0.8
University for African Professionals and Rural Development	1	0.8
University of Local and International Government Studies	1	0.8
University for Professional Standards	1	0.8
Training and Higher Research Institute	1	0.8
Indigenous University College	1	0.8

Not in support of the autonomy

The 15 alumni who are not in support of the quest for autonomy provide various reasons. The following are the reasons for not supporting autonomy.

ILGS will lose the government's financial and material support should the institute become autonomous (a male alumnus).

Another male alumnus wrote:

ILGS is not ready in terms of human resources, space and other logistics. The institute should get these in place before requesting autonomy.

A female alumnus indicated that:

At the time I was at the school, I can confidently say leadership and student interaction were poor. For that matter, I don't think they can manage themselves independently.

A male alumnus indicated that:

ILGS lacks facilities and lecturers. The institute should focus on getting these in place first before autonomy.

A female alumnus wrote:

ILGS still need a little bit of grooming from the mentoring university

A male alumnus wrote:

The school still will need to remain under supervision from other universities for now until its glory is fully achieved.

A male alumnus wrote to indicate that:

Very highly qualified lecturers are needed at ILGS first

Another male alumnus was of the view that not having a certificate from KNUST was his reason against autonomy:

Let's keep the KNUST certification for awhile

Another male alumnus wrote:

You haven't proven enough to be capable

Recommendations for ILGS to improve

1. ILGS needs to let non-teaching staff know that students are relevant stakeholders and must be accorded due respect. Moreover, thesis supervisors must be told to respect and support students in their projects. The delays on the side of supervisors are too much.
2. The school should sit up because its programmes have been copied by IPS, GIMPA, etc.

3. The school should recognise that its student base was not just students but well-refined human resources that should be treated like any ordinary students because most of the students at our time were in a managerial role and they must be treated with respect.
4. Management should try and upgrade the level of teaching and student relationships
5. The Institute should introduce PhD programmes. When management runs the school better, we shall return to further our education there.

EMPLOYER ASSESSMENT OF GRADUATES

Technical competences

Employers were asked to provide their assessment of the technical development of their employees as a result of the master's degree education/training at the Institute. Employers were given a scale: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree, and asked to choose the option that best described their experience with the ILGS graduates in the workplace since the completion of their education. The summary of the responses received for each statement are provided below in Table 24. For every statement on 'Technical Competency' over 89.5% of employers strongly agreed or agreed that ILGS training had a positive impact on the technical competency of their employees.

Table 20: Employers' assessment of the technical competencies of alumni

Statement	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)
The graduate demonstrates the ability to perform to the expectations of the job	57.90	42.10	0.00
The graduate can use relevant skills and technology to perform tasks.	26.30	68.40	5.30
The graduate demonstrates a working knowledge of the industry.	31.60	63.20	5.30

The graduate is fluent in relevant technical vocabulary.	47.40	42.10	10.50
The graduate works effectively with minimal supervision.	52.60	47.40	0.00
The graduate can take on increased responsibility.	52.60	42.10	5.30
The graduate can solve common work-related problems.	47.40	52.60	0.00
The graduate communicates effectively with their supervisor, co-workers and clients/customers.	68.40	26.30	5.30
Overall rating of your satisfaction with ILGS graduate employee	36.80	52.60	10.50

Personal and Professional Development

Employers were requested to provide their assessments on the personal and professional development of their employees as a result of undergoing training at the Institute. They were asked to choose from a given Scale; Significantly Improved, Improved, Same and Declined, for the option that best described the change in their employee's attitude and work ethic since graduating from the Institute. The summary of the results for each statement is provided below in Table 25. For every statement on 'Personal and Professional Development 94. 7% of employers agreed that ILGS training had a positive impact on the personal and professional development of their employees.

Table 21: Employers' assessment of the personal and professional development of alumni

Statement	Significantly improved (%)	Improved (%)	Neutral (%)
Developed knowledge and skills applicable to the work	47.4	52.6	0.0
Demonstrable abilities to work as a team member	42.1	57.9	0.0
Level of motivation and sense of initiative	52.6	47.4	0.0
Demonstrable analytical skills	36.8	57.9	5.3
Developed confidence to investigate new ideas	42.1	52.6	5.3

Developed problem-solving skills	42.1	52.6	5.3
Improved skills in written communication	47.4	47.4	5.3
Ability to plan his/her work	57.9	42.1	0.0
Ability to make an informed judgment	36.8	57.9	5.3
Level of satisfaction with his/her level of knowledge and skill	31.6	68.4	0.0

Suggestions/recommendations for improving the programmes at ILGS

The study requested employers to provide suggestions/recommendations for improving the programmes at ILGS. Their responses were

- Decentralise the institute to the regions for easy accessibility.
- Ensure courses provide practical solutions to organisational problems of key clients.
- Expand on job-related programmes
- More practical case studies, demonstrations and study tours/field trips
- Review curriculum to reflect current trends
- Advertise programmes to attract more students to avoid low patronage
- Conduct needs assessments of key institutions and design programmes to meet their needs.
- Graduates should have practical skills in self-initiative and project development
- The institution needs to work promptly on students' graduation processes

11. What contribution(s) employers can provide to the institution for it to improve its programmes?

Employers were asked to state contributions they can provide to the Institute to improve its programmes. The responses are presented below:

Responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current programmes should be maintained and probably accounting courses could be added. • Curriculum designing • Part-time lecturer for any environment-related courses • I can suggest programs to include in the course outline

-
- Provide accurate data the institute that needs for research and planning
 - Provide opportunities for job training.
 - Find alternative sponsorship to attract qualified students
 - Technical support
 - They should do more practical than theoretical
 - There should be more programmes that will help sharpen the skills and attitudes of local government staff.
 - Help in propagating the good work of the school
-

Employers' proposed courses for ILGS to consider

Employers were required to propose courses ILGS should mount to improve the skills and capacity of graduates. The list is summarised below

- Forensic audit
- Oil and gas
- Human Resource
- ICT
- Conflict Resolution & Management
- Report & speech writing
- Stress Management.
- Agricultural innovations and technology,
- Climate change and its effect on Agriculture in developing countries
- Chieftaincy administration
- Conflict and Peace studies
- Consultancy skills
- Environment and Ecotourism
- Environmental & Social Standards
- Master's degree in social administration
- Refresher course on occupational health and safety
- Scientific Laboratory projects
- Spreadsheet and data analysis and management

Skills required by employers for consideration by ILGS

- Competence in the use of analytical tools such as SPSS, R analytics, and Genstat.
- Use of data collection tools like Survey CTO,

- A course in auditing and procurement
- Basic data analysis skills
- Communication and leadership skills
- Information technology
- Innovation skills
- Leadership/management
- Publication of scientific research capability
- Real estate-related skill set
- Financial management at local levels (distance or sandwich)

Would you recommend the programmes of study offered at ILGS to friends /family/co-workers?

Employers were asked whether they would recommend ILGS programmes to friends /family/co-workers. The majority (63.2%) of the respondents indicated definitely yes, while 31.6% probably yes.

Table 22: Employers' Willingness to Recommend ILGS as a preferred choice for higher education

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Definitely Yes	12	63.2
Probably Yes	6	31.6
Uncertain	1	5.3

Employers' reasons for their willingness to recommend ILGS to others

The supervisors indicated they will recommend the Institute's programmes to friends, family and co-workers because

- The curriculum is comprehensive and very useful in our current administrative activities
- Improve and build capacity for performance delivery
- Improvement of the educational ladder
- It has generally shown improvement in the skills of graduates
- The programme provides some level of enhanced knowledge skills useful for increased output at the organisation
- Two staff from this organisation undertook courses at ILGS and returned with improved skills and attitudes towards work

- It has generally shown improvement in the skills of graduates and their attitude towards work
- The product is performing extremely well
- The programme provides some level of enhanced knowledge skills useful for increased output at the organisation
- The courses help in improving the local economy and its management

Recommendations from Employers

The following are recommendations from employers of ILGS alumni

- Continue to enhance the infrastructure
- Establish green space
- Enhance the library
- Exchange programme with other international universities
- The institute should lobby the government to entrust Basic schools into the hands of Assemblies for easy monitoring and assessment
- Off-campus training should be organised across the Assemblies in the 5 Northern Regions.
- Students' graduation is a huge challenge. Kindly look at it.

CONCLUSION

The ILGS tracer study demonstrates that the Institute plays a significant role in advancing the careers and competencies of its graduates, especially within Ghana's public sector. The findings affirm that ILGS programmes are generally relevant, effective, and well-regarded by both alumni and employers. However, the study also exposes structural and procedural gaps that could undermine the Institute's long-term academic reputation and credibility.

To maintain and strengthen its position, ILGS must invest in upgrading physical facilities, improving administrative responsiveness, and expanding its curriculum to meet emerging governance and development needs. The transition to full university status presents a timely opportunity for the Institute to reform and rebrand itself as a national leader in local governance, public finance, and environmental policy education. Engaging alumni and employers, as continuous stakeholders, will be crucial in this transformation process.

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