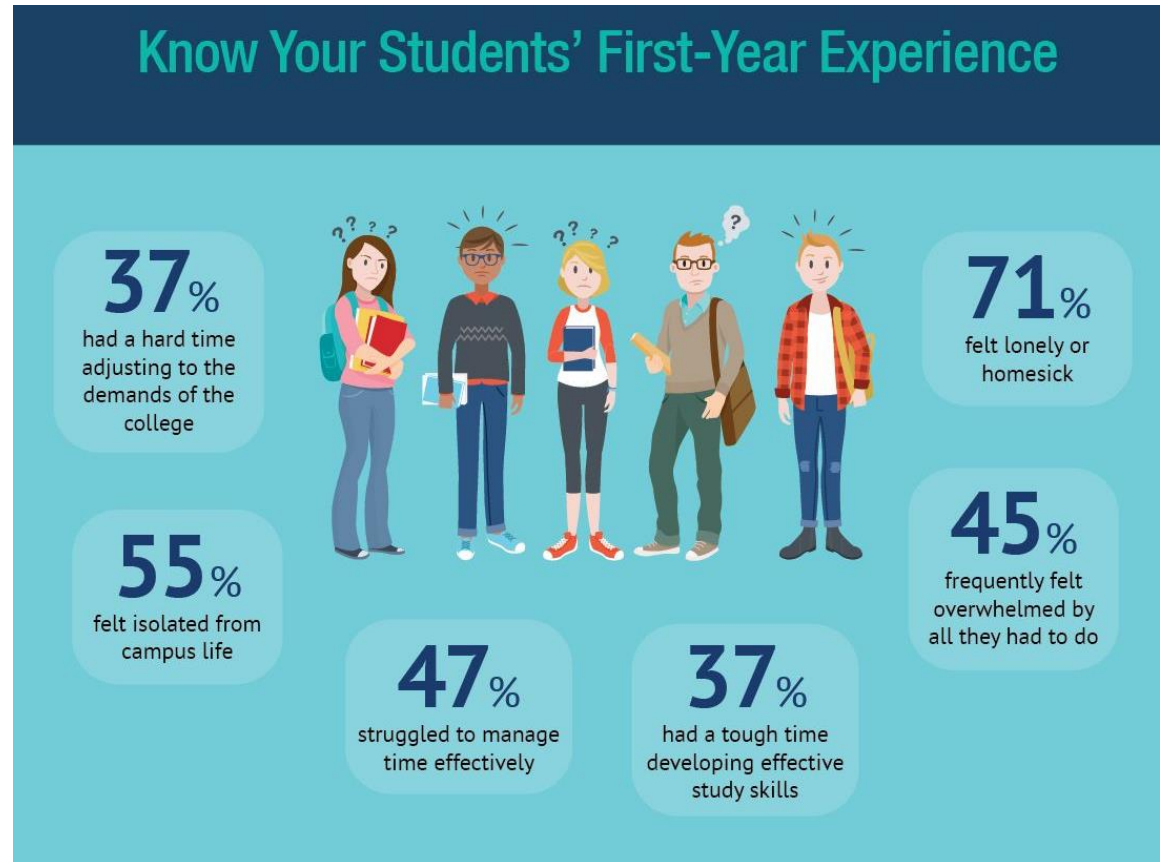


Conquering the pandemic-induced digital divide and inequalities in students transitioning to higher education

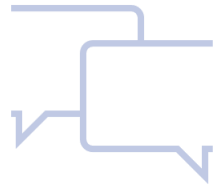


Laura Roberts
Joanne Berry
Ben Martin
Simon Bott

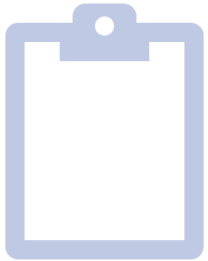
Assessment and Feedback Symposium: Putting the Student at the Heart of
Assessment and Feedback: Equality, Diversity and Partnership

Patricia Xavier
Sofya Lyakhova
Alison Braddock
Michael Draper

Workshop aims



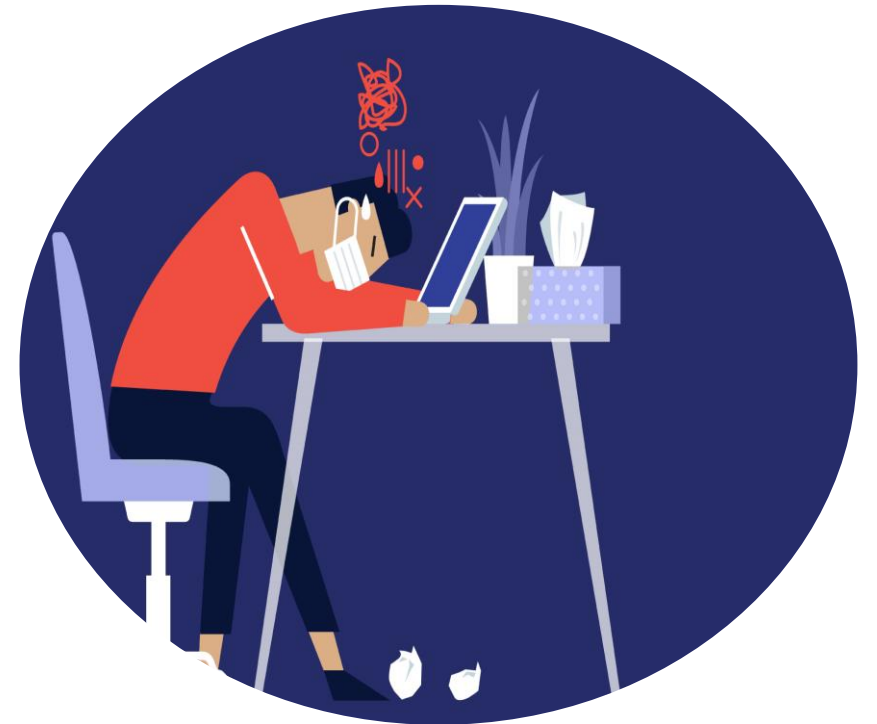
Discuss the impacts of mass school closures on learning equality in transitioning students



Assess cross-faculty case study on remodelling assessment to support student transition



1. Workshop discussion on the opportunities and challenges remodelling assessment



Background

- 1.6 billion students in 188 countries temporarily forced out of school¹
- Affected over 91% of the world's student population at all levels²

Major impacts

Loss of learning

Widened economic inequalities

Reduced learning quality and academic achievement

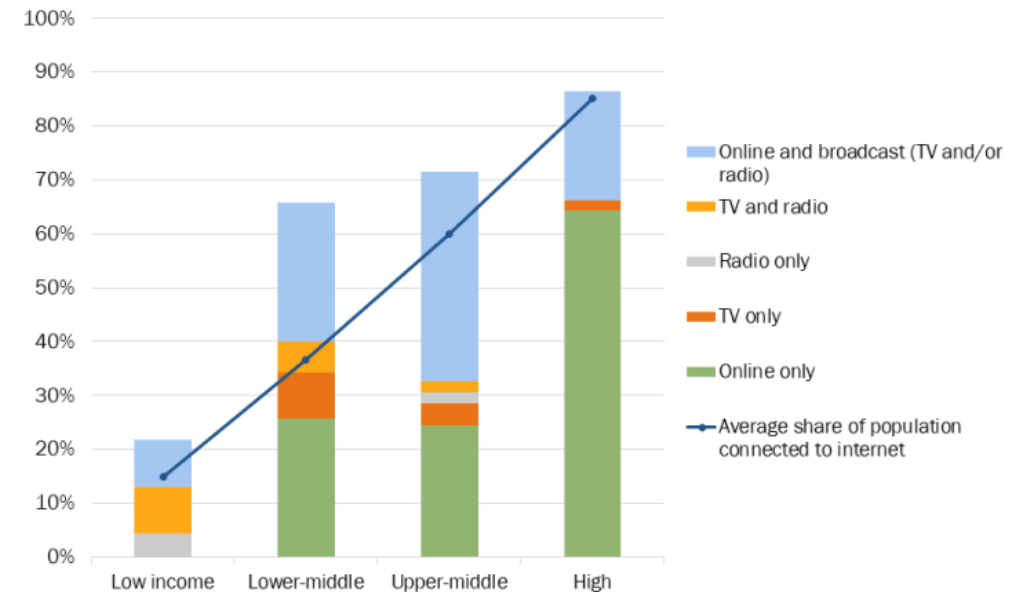
Suppress academic engagement, leading to demotivation³

Exacerbated challenges for learners with special needs⁴

Necessitates specific digital skills and accessibility to enable continued learning, thus creating new barriers⁵

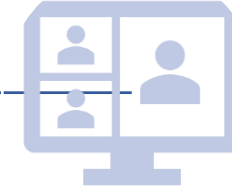
Increased the burden on parents to become educators while often navigating their own adversely affected employment conditions⁶

Figure 1. Share of countries responding to school closures with different forms of remote learning, by income group

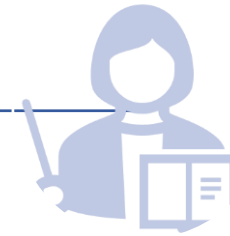


Source: Center for Global Development and the World Bank

Major multifaceted and non-mutually exclusive factors:



Network connection issues, limited digital skills and literacy, inaccessibility



Lack of a coordinated, systematic approach in schools and variation in home-schooling quality



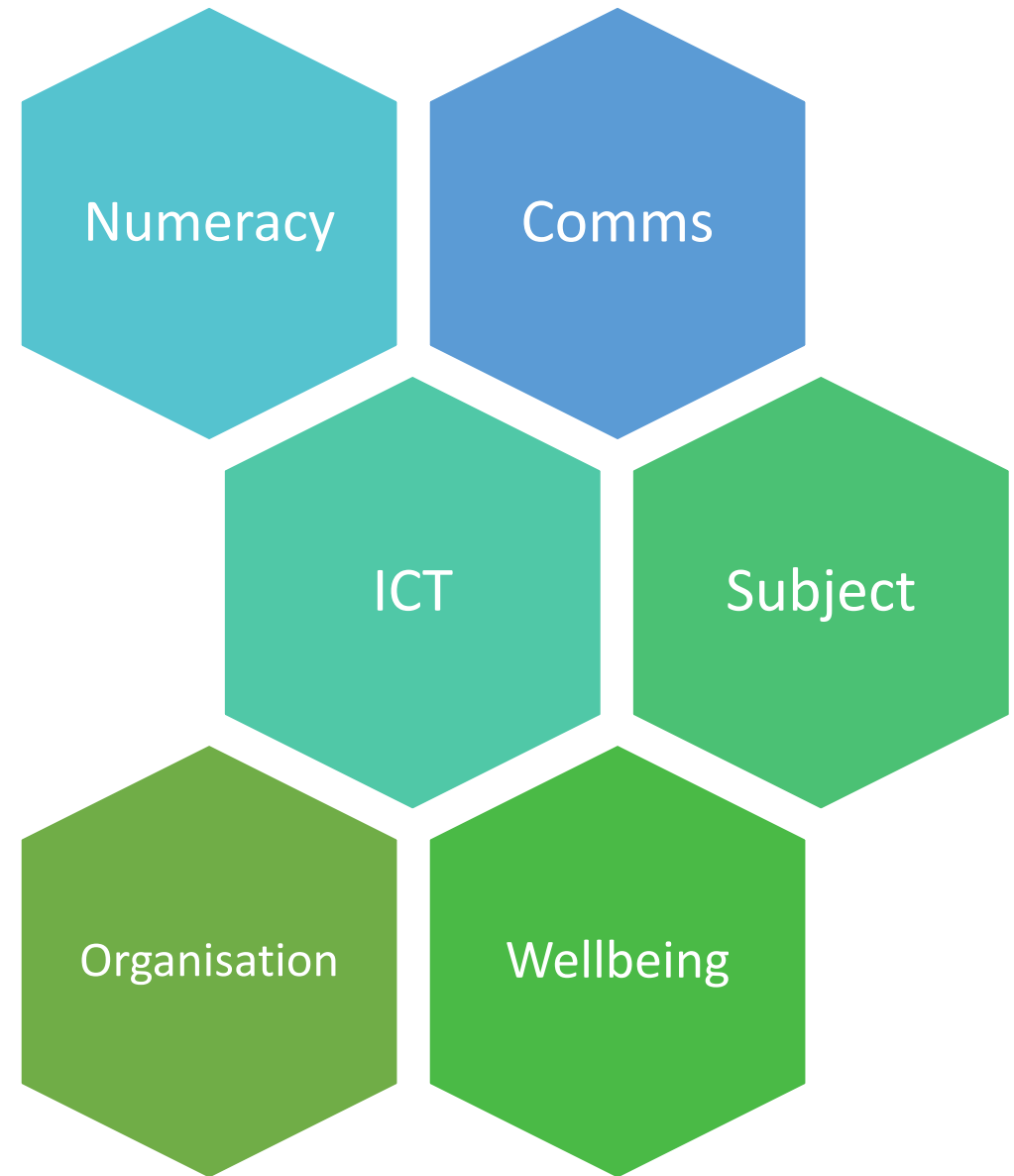
Positive and negative impacts of predicting grades/changes to assessment strategies



Estimated 50% learning loss/slide

Research methods

- SAILS Working Group, Feb 2021
- Remodelling Assessment and Skills Development
- Diagnostic questionnaire
- 30 questions
- Posted to Welsh 6th form and colleges April 2021

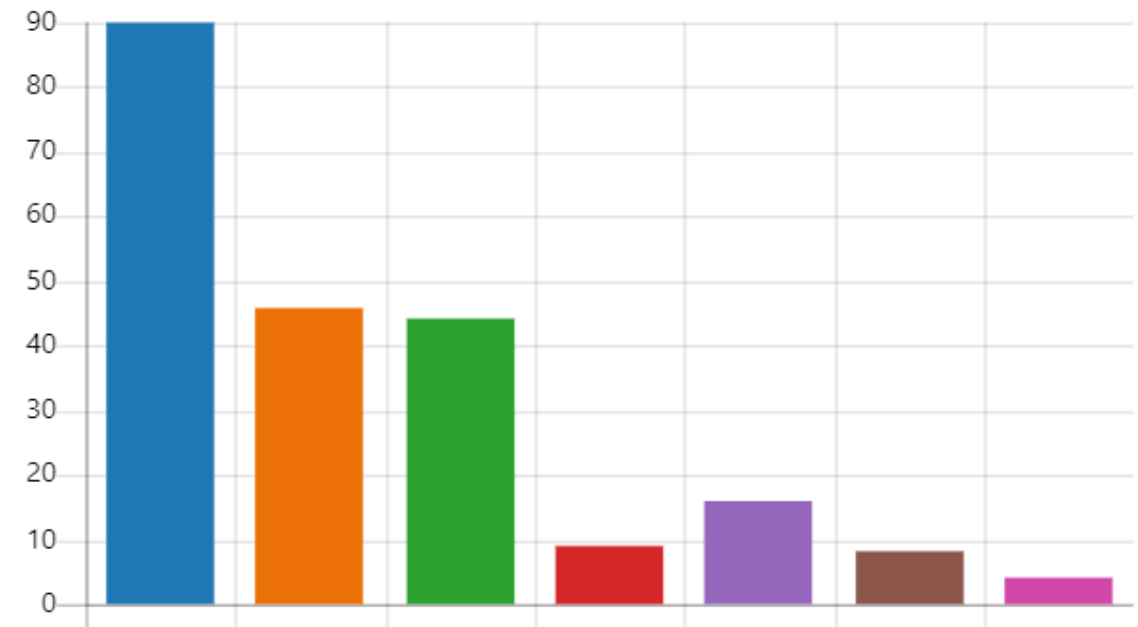


Results

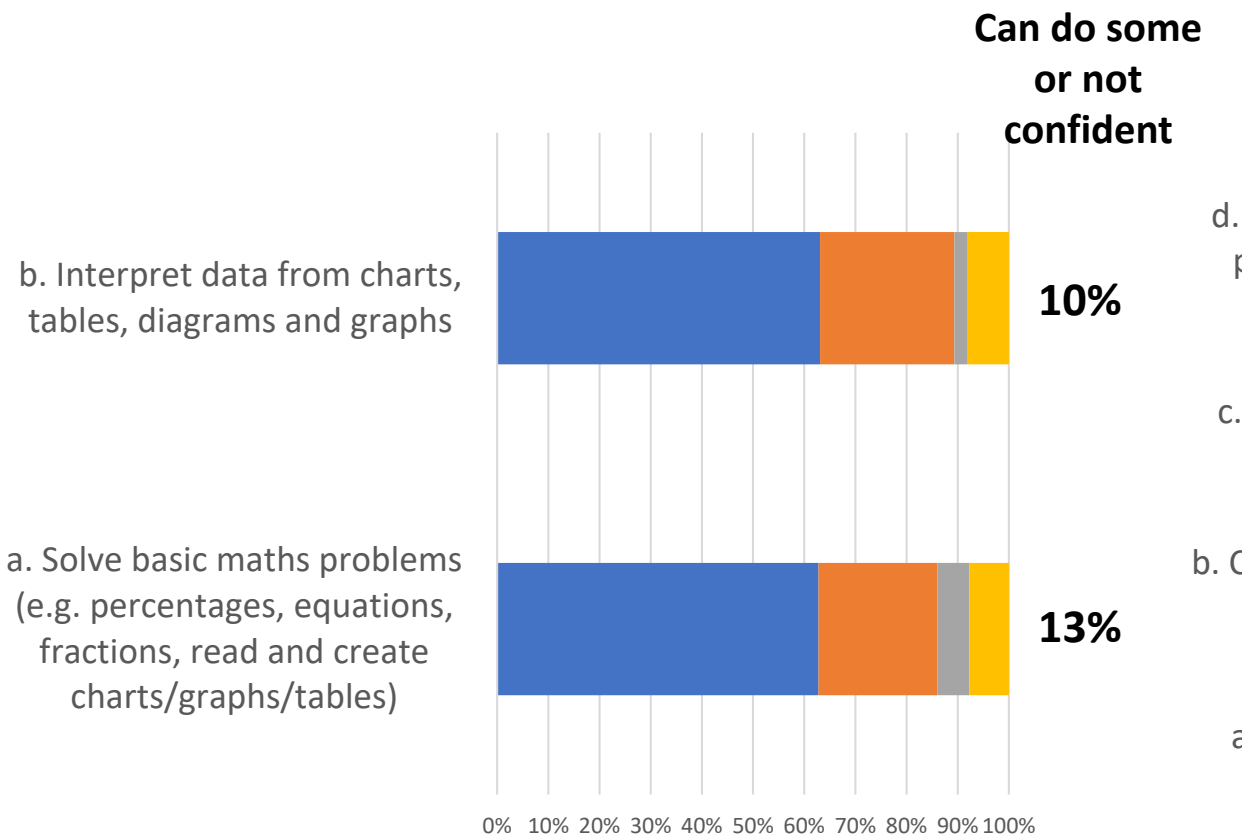
- 133 responses
- 52 schools

STEM (Maths, Physics, Biology...)	90
Humanities (English Literature,...)	46
Social Sciences (Sociology, Pol...)	44
Art (incl. Photography, Graphi...)	9
Languages	16
Medicine / Healthcare	8
Sport and Exercise	4

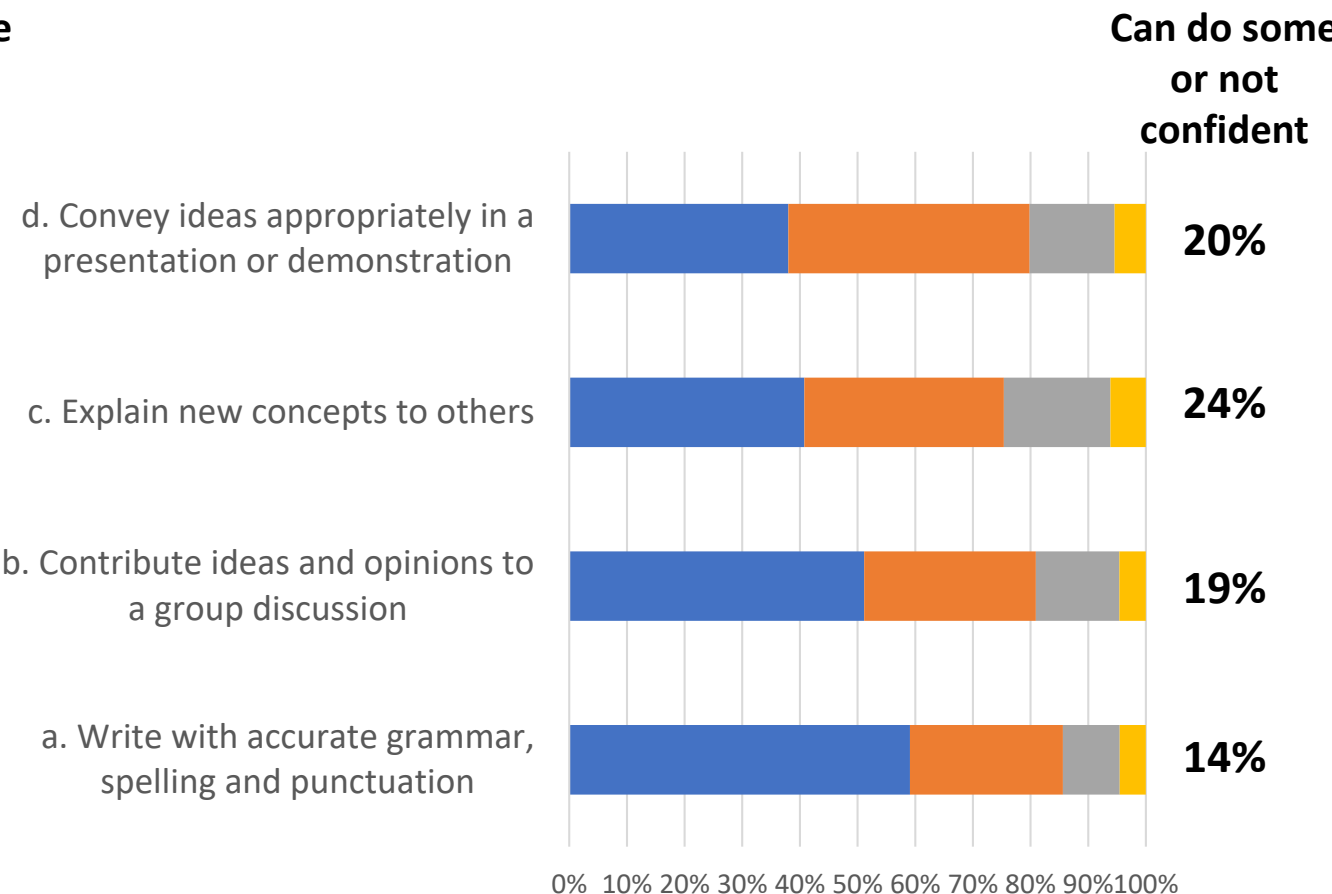
A-Level	122
BTEC	15
Access	4
Welsh Bacc	61
Other	3



Numeracy

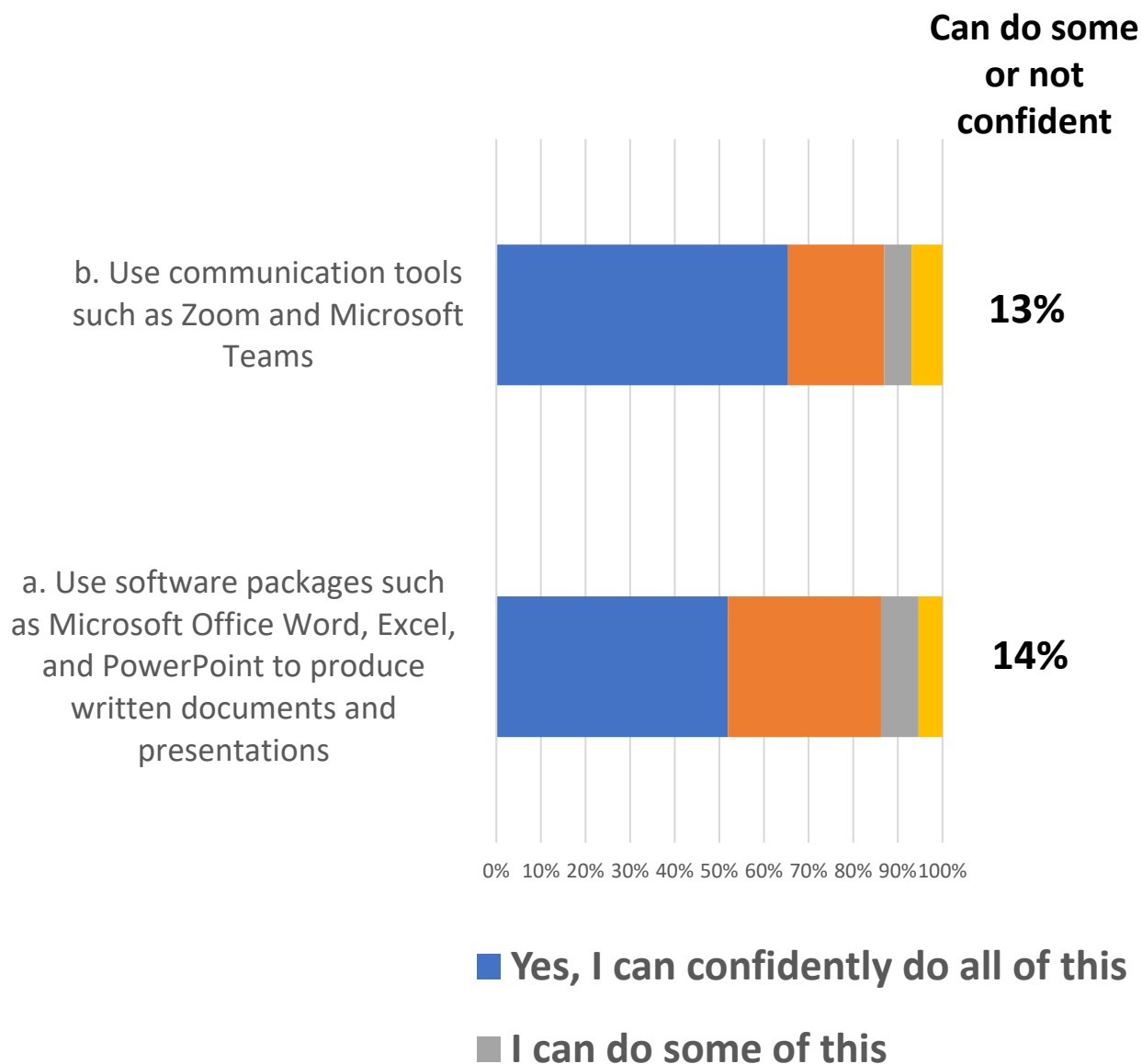


Oral and written communication

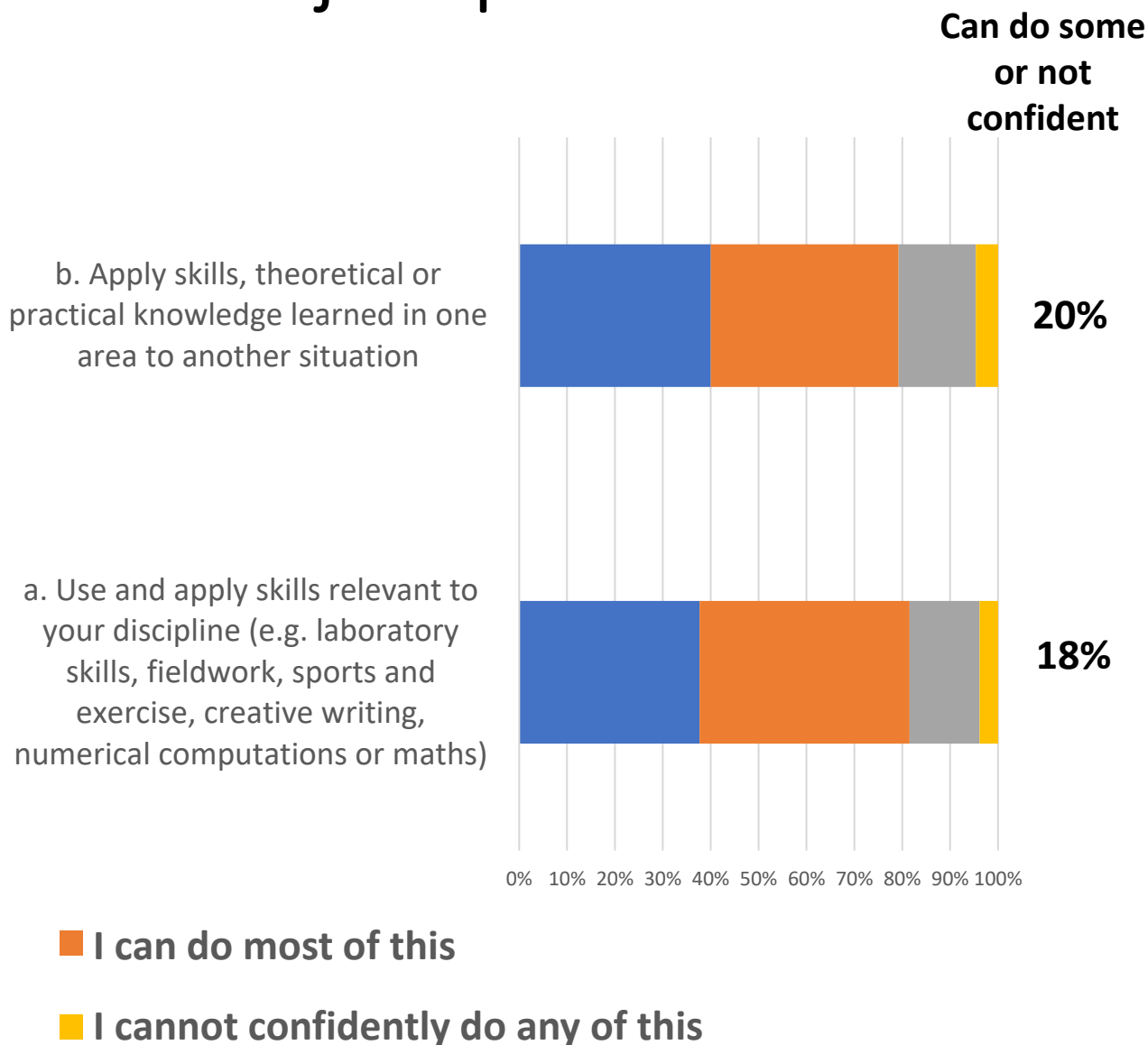


- Yes, I can confidently do all of this
- I can do most of this
- I can do some of this
- I cannot confidently do any of this

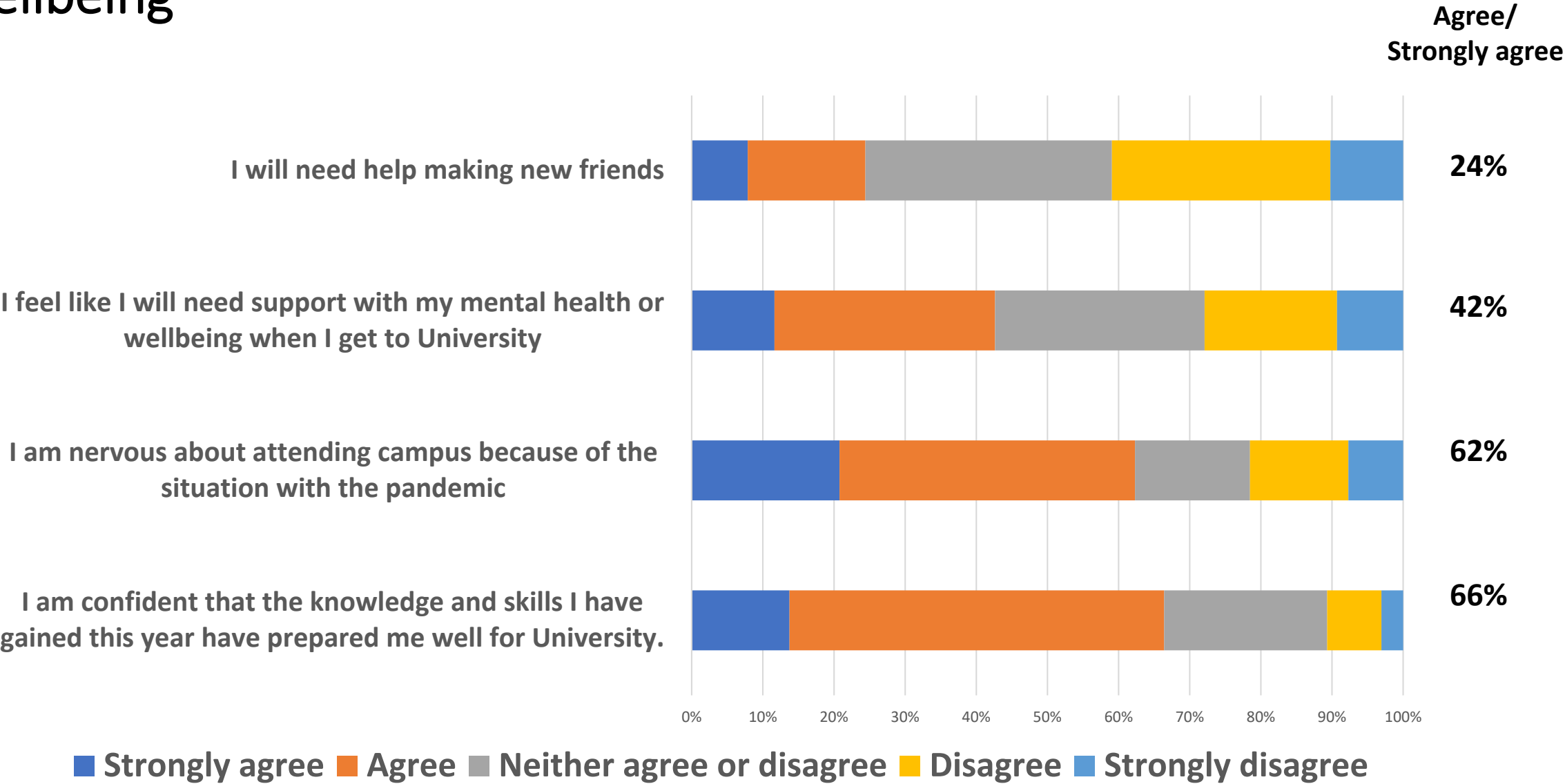
ICT



Subject specific skills



Wellbeing



If you are not confident in starting University, what skills do you feel you are missing?

Interpersonal	Uni life	Foundational skills	Study skills	Technical skills	Intellectual skills	Overall learning
Time management 5	Finance 3	Communication 8	Format papers/rep 1	Practical skills 3	Application of knowledge 4	Memorising mark sheets 3
Social skills 3	Independent living 1	Math 1	Finding references 1	ICT 2	Critical thinking 1	Learning for assessments 3
Low confidence 2	Accommodation 1		Essays 1			Lack of learning 1
Motivation 2			Dissertations 1			Missing topics 1
Home life 1			Condensing notes 1			Lacking basic knowledge 1
Loss of focus 1			Interpret data 1			Haven learnt anything 1
Leadership 1						Did not catch up from last year 1
Life skills 1						Understanding 1
						Loss of knowledge 1

Is there anything about coming to University that is worrying you?

Pandemic		Leaving home		University Environment		Learning		Social		Health	
Covid Lockdown in halls	5	Homesickness	5	Getting lost	2	Workload	10	Making friends/ not knowing anyone	13	Mental health	3
	1	Self-care	3	New systems	1	Blended learning	6	Fitting in	6	Loneliness	3
		Leaving home	2	New environment	1	Meeting the grades	4		1	Imposter syndrome	2
		Living independently	2	Freshers being cancelled	1	Big jump from A level	2		1	Coping	2
		Living alone	2			Effective research and revising	2		1	Lack of support	1
		Finance	2			Underprepared by A level due to pandemic	1		1	Not knowing who can help	1
		Adjusting	1			Not understanding	1		1	Anxiety	1
		Adulthood	1			New course not	1				
		Cleaning and hygiene	1								
		What to do when not in lectures	1								
		General travel	1								

Key findings

1

- Least confident with communication

2

- Subject specific skill are also a concern

3

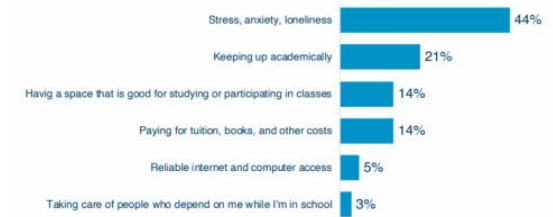
- Over 40% will need support with mental health

4

- Over 60% concerned with the pandemic

Emotional well-being is students' biggest challenge this fall

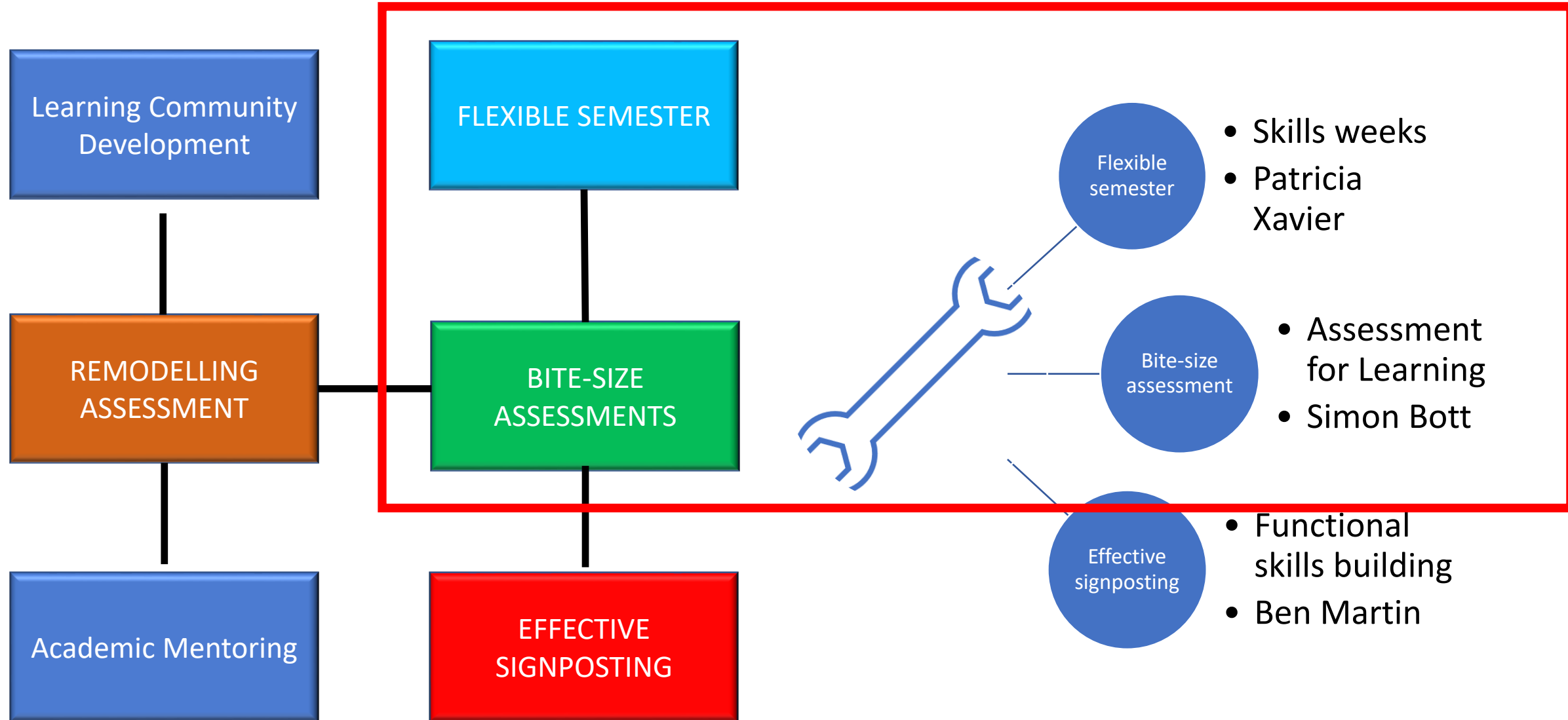
Which of the following has been the **biggest** challenge or struggle for you this fall?



Strata-College Pulse survey, Sept. 10-25. Base: current college students enrolled at four-year institutions, n=3,389.



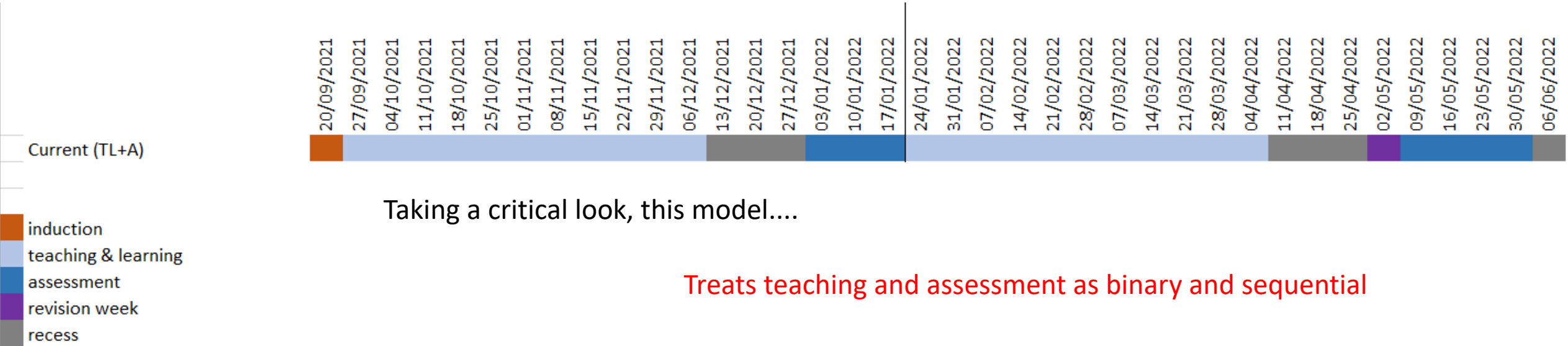
Mitigation strategies: Supporting transition



Rethinking the Academic Year Structure

Status Quo

The majority of our programmes utilise an 11 week semester + revision week + 3-4 week exam period



Taking a critical look, this model....

Treats teaching and assessment as binary and sequential

Nudges exams to be a default mode of assessment

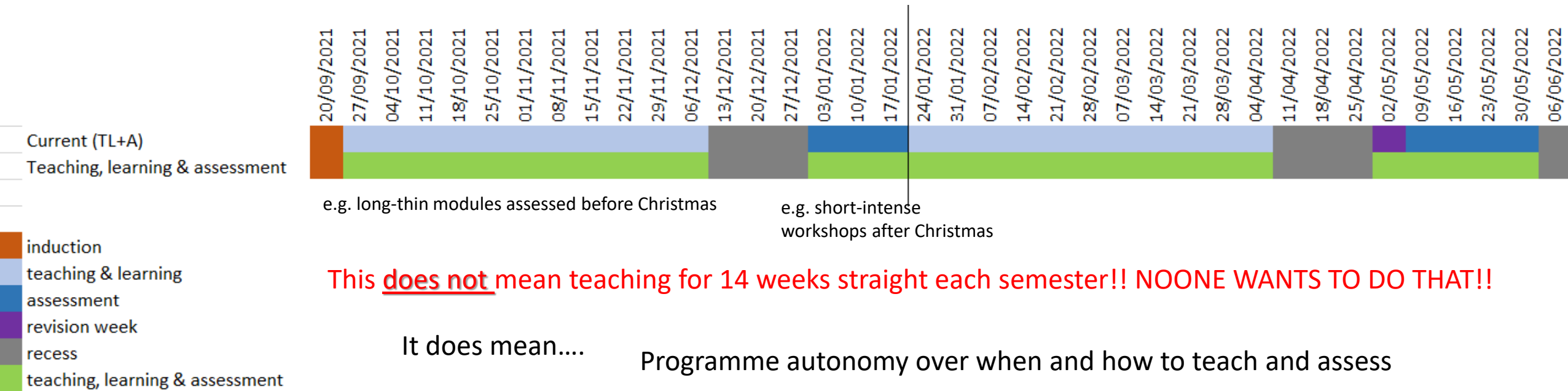
Builds in fatigue for staff and students

Encourages cramming

Consistent with supporting surface rather than deep learning

.... It is worth asking if this is still fit-for-purpose,
particularly for our next intake

How about.....?



This does not mean teaching for 14 weeks straight each semester!! NOONE WANTS TO DO THAT!!

It does mean....

Programme autonomy over when and how to teach and assess

More opportunities for intensive TLA for the modules that would suit immersive learning

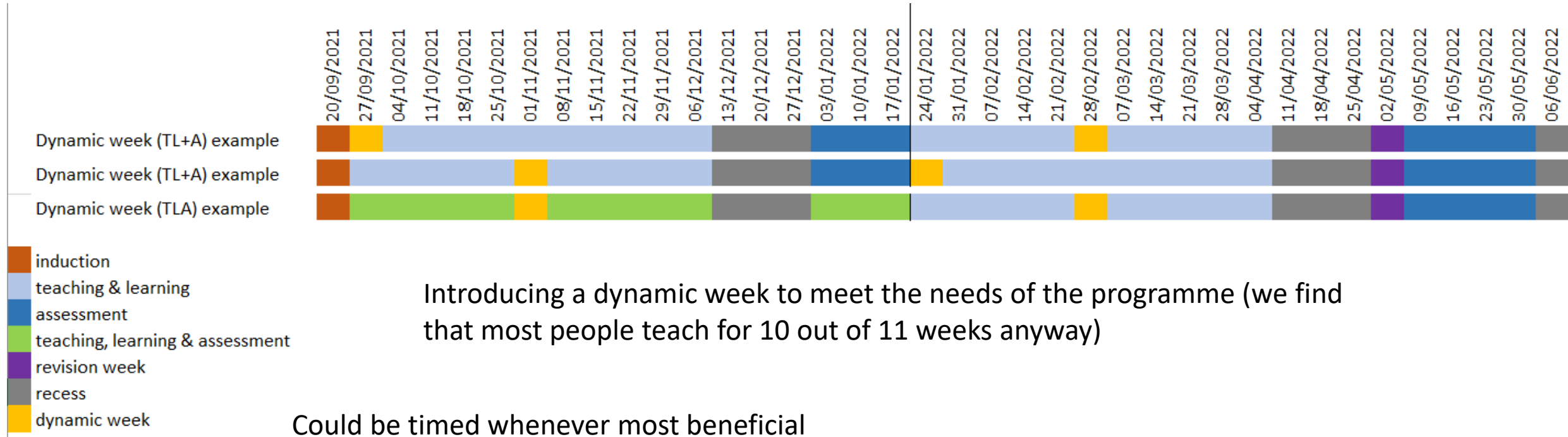
Exam assessment remains possible, but.....

Students get a proper Christmas break with less stress

Assessment nudged away from terminal exams as default

Considerations: requires a collaborative approach across the department

Or what about.....?



Introducing a dynamic week to meet the needs of the programme (we find that most people teach for 10 out of 11 weeks anyway)

Could be timed whenever most beneficial

Options could be:

- A reading week (e.g. Law)
- A programme-specific activity (e.g. Chemistry schools lab outreach)
- CAS, Academi Hywel Teifi, Library courses

Considerations: requires coordination when programmes runs between departments

Bite-sized assessments

Small assessments

Online quizzes

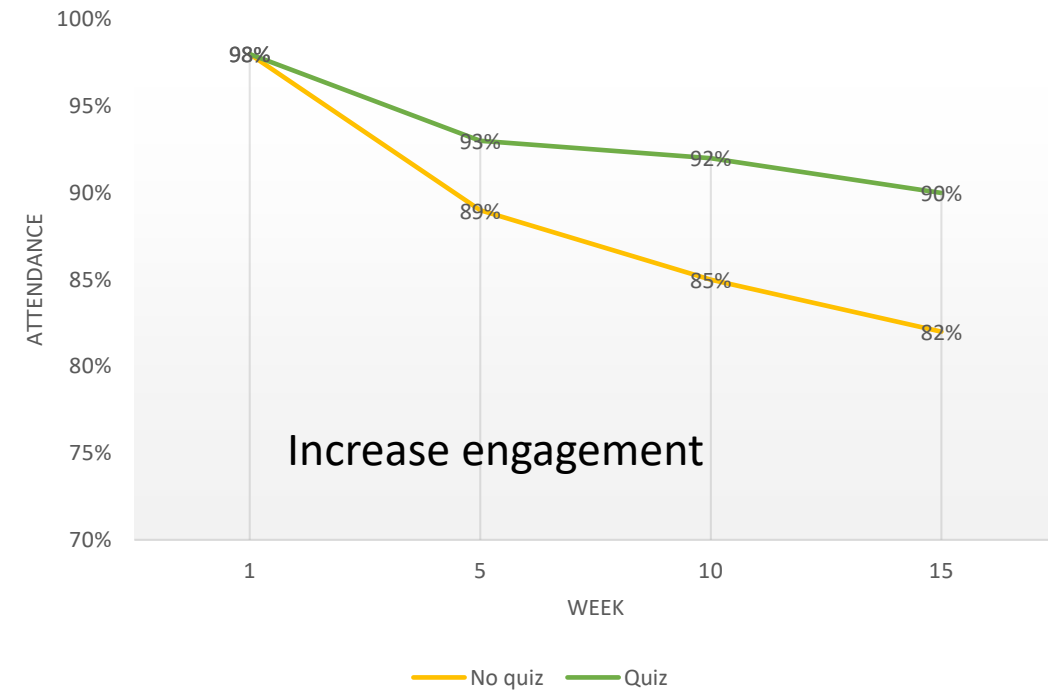
In-class worksheets

Short writing assignments

Mini-presentations

etc

Early and on-going real-time analysis of learning and engagement for individual students and the cohort at large allowing adaptation as needed.



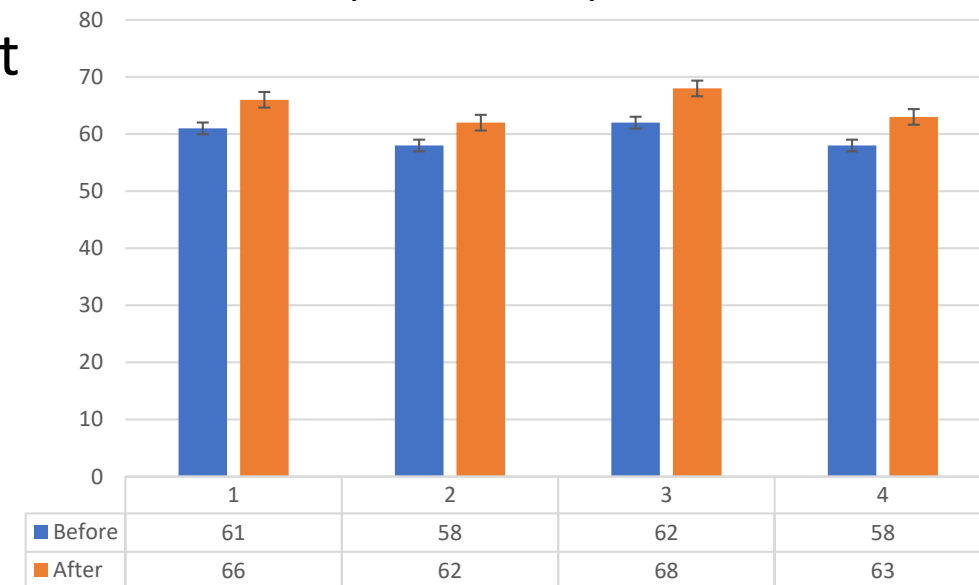
Self-contained



Components of larger assessment



Improve exam performance





THE OBSTACLES

Student Assessment Overload

Staff Overload

Increase absences/MC

Increase stress from these

Students taking them too lightly

Students taking them too seriously

SOME SOLUTIONS

Plan at programmatic level

Coordinate assessment timetable

Allow students to determine which assessments?

Online quizzes with automatic marking/feedback

Provide answers to whole, feedback/mark to part

Robust alternative assessment strategy

Variants allow adjustable deadline

“Assessment Literacy”

Engagement monitoring

<https://padlet.com/jtberry/b0sf2wxqtdl90jud>

Thanks for listening!!

References

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2. UNESCOa (2021) Global Monitoring of School Closure. Accessed on 1st April, 2021. <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse#durationschoolclosures>
3. Cucco *et al.*, (2020) How to Fight Against Drop Out and Demotivation in Crisis Context: Some Insights and Examples from Italy. Chapter. First Online: 22 December 2020 Part of the [Lecture Notes in Educational Technology](#)
4. [Brumme](#), Q (2014) The effect of school closings on student achievement. [Journal of Public Economics](#). [Volume 119](#), Pages 108-124
5. Reimers and Schleicher (2020) A framework to guide an education response to the COVID-19 Pandemic of 2020. OECD. Accessed 28th April 2021
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7. Horsley (2020) A staggering toll: 30 million have filed for unemployment. Washington, DC: National Public Radio.
8. Onyema *et al.*, (2020) Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol.11, No.13, 108 - 121

