

## Teaching, learning and personal tutoring: A virtual mini-conference

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**Motivating student engagement in online learning:  
reflections on synchronous versus asynchronous  
delivery**

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# Defining engagement

Student engagement is the **energy and effort** that students employ within their learning community, observable via any number of behavioural, cognitive or affective indicators across a continuum. It is shaped by a range of structural and internal influences, including the **complex interplay of relationships, learning activities and the learning environment**. The more students **are engaged and empowered within their learning community**, the more likely they are to channel that energy back into their learning...(Bond et al., 2020)

# Student engagement

(Henrie, Halverston and Graham, 2015)



**Behavioural engagement:** observable behaviours such as attendance, participation or help-seeking



**Emotional engagement:** feelings about personal learning, such as excitement, frustration, or boredom, as well as the sense of belonging to a learning community



**Cognitive engagement:** the mental effort to develop knowledge and skills

Relative importance of dimensions  
(Bond et al., 2020; corpus: 243 studies)

**Behavioural  
engagement**

• 209 studies  
(86%)

**Affective  
engagement**

• 163 studies (67%)

**Cognitive  
engagement**

• 136 studies (56%)

**Table 2** Top ten student engagement indicators (Studies  $n = 243$ )

Rank	Student engagement indicators	Frequency
1	Participation/interaction/involvement	118 (49% studies)
2	Achievement	106 (44%)
3	Positive interaction with teachers and peers	100 (41%)
4	Enjoyment	55 (23%)
5	Learning from peers	54 (22%)
6	Deep learning	45 (19%)
7	Self-regulation	39 (16%)
8	Confidence	37 (15%)
8	Positive attitude about learning	37 (15%)
8	Interest	37 (15%)
9	Motivation	32 (13%)
10	Enthusiasm	27 (11%)

(Bond et al., 2020)

# Emotional engagement

Learning  
community

Peer-peer  
relationships

Student-tutor  
relationship

Learning  
environment

Writing and  
emotion

# Academic writing and emotion

Clughen and Connell note that writing support has much in common with counselling "with issues of self esteem, rejection and alienation being their everyday stuff "(p46).

Rai (2012) highlights "The content of academic writing is not emotionally neutral and any theory or knowledge can potentially connect with the student writer's own experience" (p281).



# Learning careers

- Learning is a social practice; it is 'tightly bound up with matters of identity or situation and cannot be extracted from them' (Bloomer and Hodkinson 2001, p595).
- Bloomer and Hodkinson's (2001) longitudinal qualitative research with young people in sixth form college
- 'Educational exclusion often internalised as a failure of the self rather than a failure of the system' (Reay 2018, p.531)



# Dyslexia and learning careers

- Students with dyslexia have often experienced a lack of recognition in school leading to low expectations(Alexander-Passe, 2015; Riddick, 2010)
- This is particularly true for BAME students
- Often not diagnosed until university (Mandriaga, 2007, Pollack, 2005).
- ‘the entire experience of being a higher education student , involves for someone who accepts the dyslexic label, continuous confrontation with experiences which challenge self- concept and self-esteem, not least academic writing” (Pollack, 2005, p28).

What do  
your  
students  
bring with  
them to  
university?



# Engagement and online learning

- **Pre-COVID**

- ✓ Digital technology has been linked to an increase in behavioural, affective and cognitive student engagement (Bond et al., 2020)
- ✓ Concerns about 'keeping students engaged in technology-mediated learning' were mainly raised in the context of distance or blended learning (Henrie, Halverston and Graham, 2015)

- **Post-COVID**

- ✓ Concerns about disengagement emerged in the transition from exclusive F2F to fully digital teaching and learning

# The Student Voice (DMU SU, 2020)

## Key challenges of online learning:

- Lack of social interaction
- Weak online learning community (average rating 2.9 out of 10)
- Access to technology

# Our context

Curriculum-  
embedded  
sessions

Self-selecting  
programme of  
workshops

Self-selecting  
one-to-one  
tutorials and  
drop-in

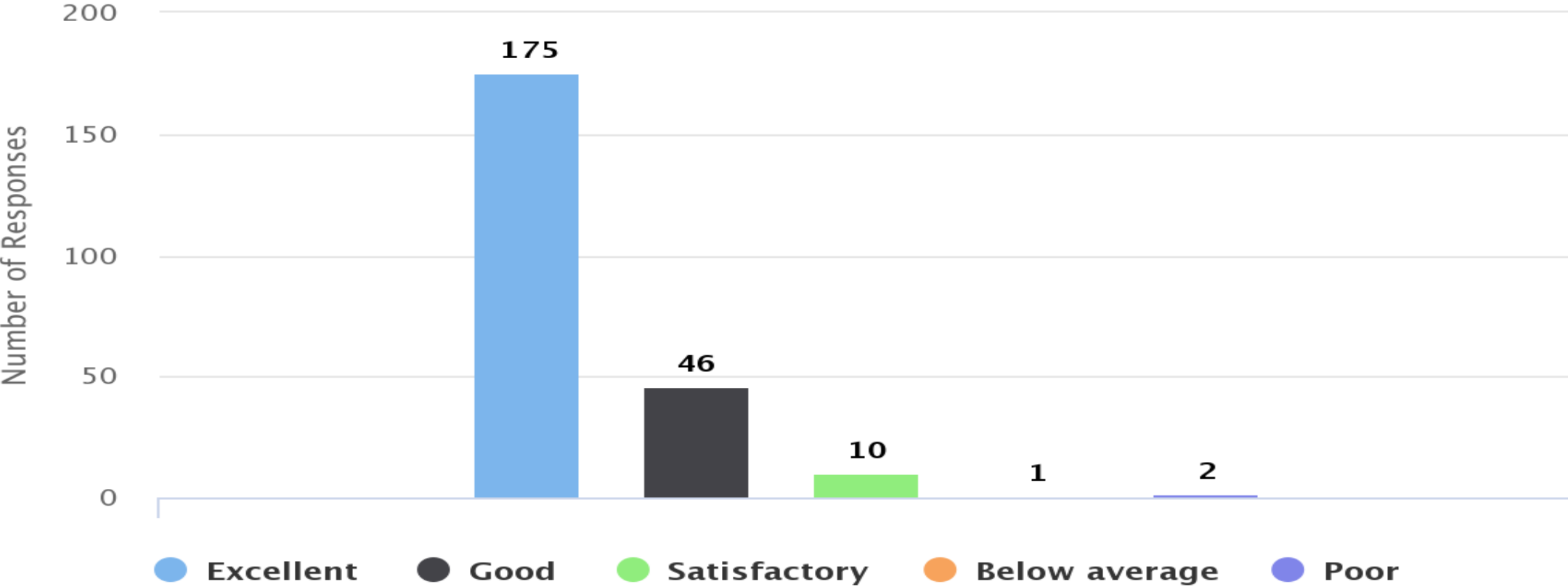
**Centre for Learning  
and Study Support  
(CLaSS) offer**

# CLaSS one-to-one tutorials

- CLaSS's self-selecting service available to all students (exclusively online from April 2020)
- ✓ Bookable 30-minute slots
- ✓ Students are offered two types of interaction:
  - Live online
  - Asynchronous (feedback provided via email)

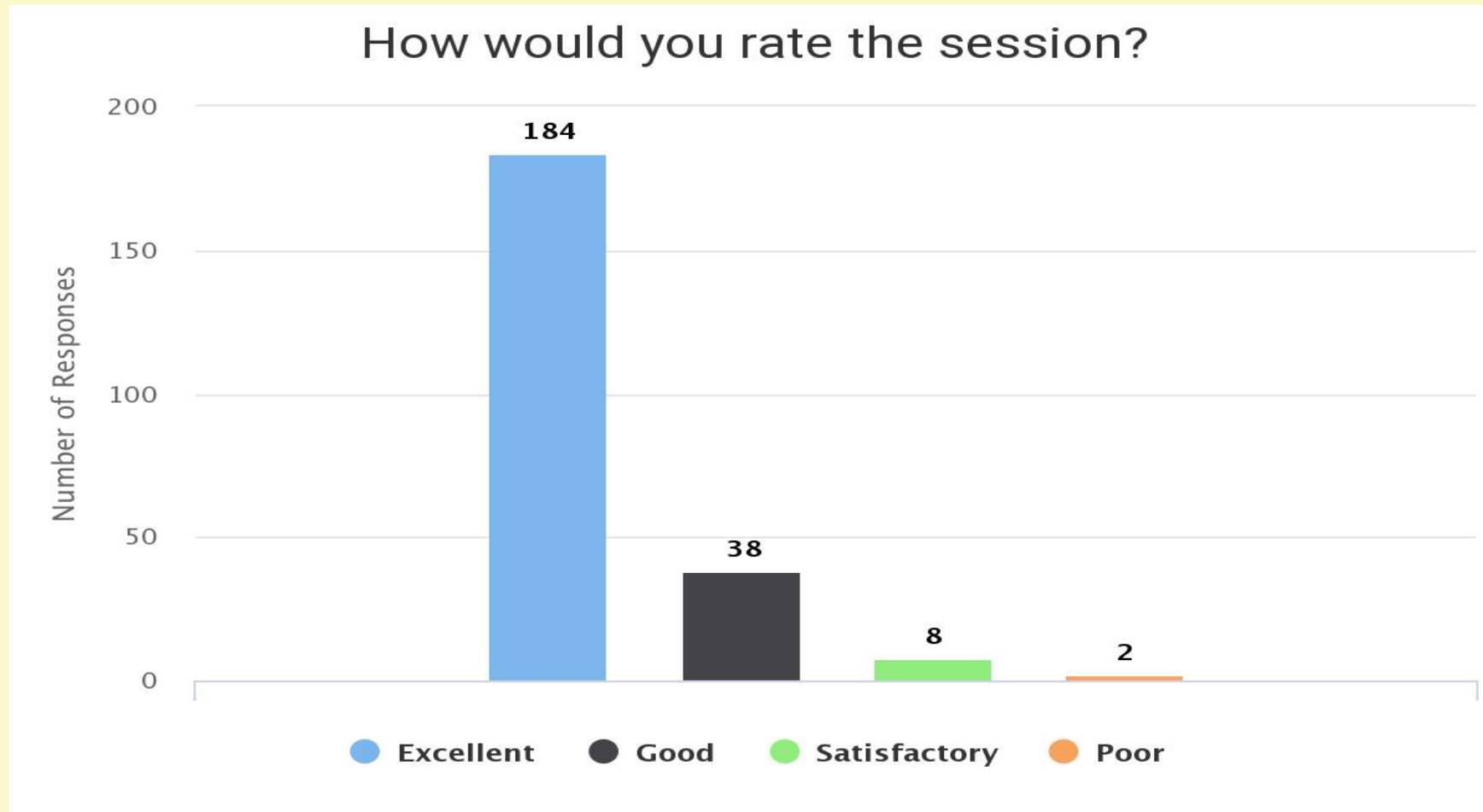
# Student feedback: transition to online delivery

In response to the Coronavirus, Learning Services has moved its support online. How would you rate the way in which we delivered your support?





# LLS session rating (May to September)



# Inclusion

- Students wanted help with motivation and felt they lost their sense of structure; especially students with specific learning differences:

*'as an autistic student [the schedule] is often very important to my ability to learn properly (DMU SU, 2020)*

- Struggled with access to less support than they would normally have.
- Attention span and concentrating in live sessions.
- Captioning project of recorded sessions

# Synchronous v asynchronous tutorials

## asynchronous

- We recorded personalised videos using Panopto of feedback for some students.
- Worked better for technical topics
- Some people find it easier to reflect on their comments when they have them written down
- Establish connection over time
- Share resources to develop their work

## synchronous

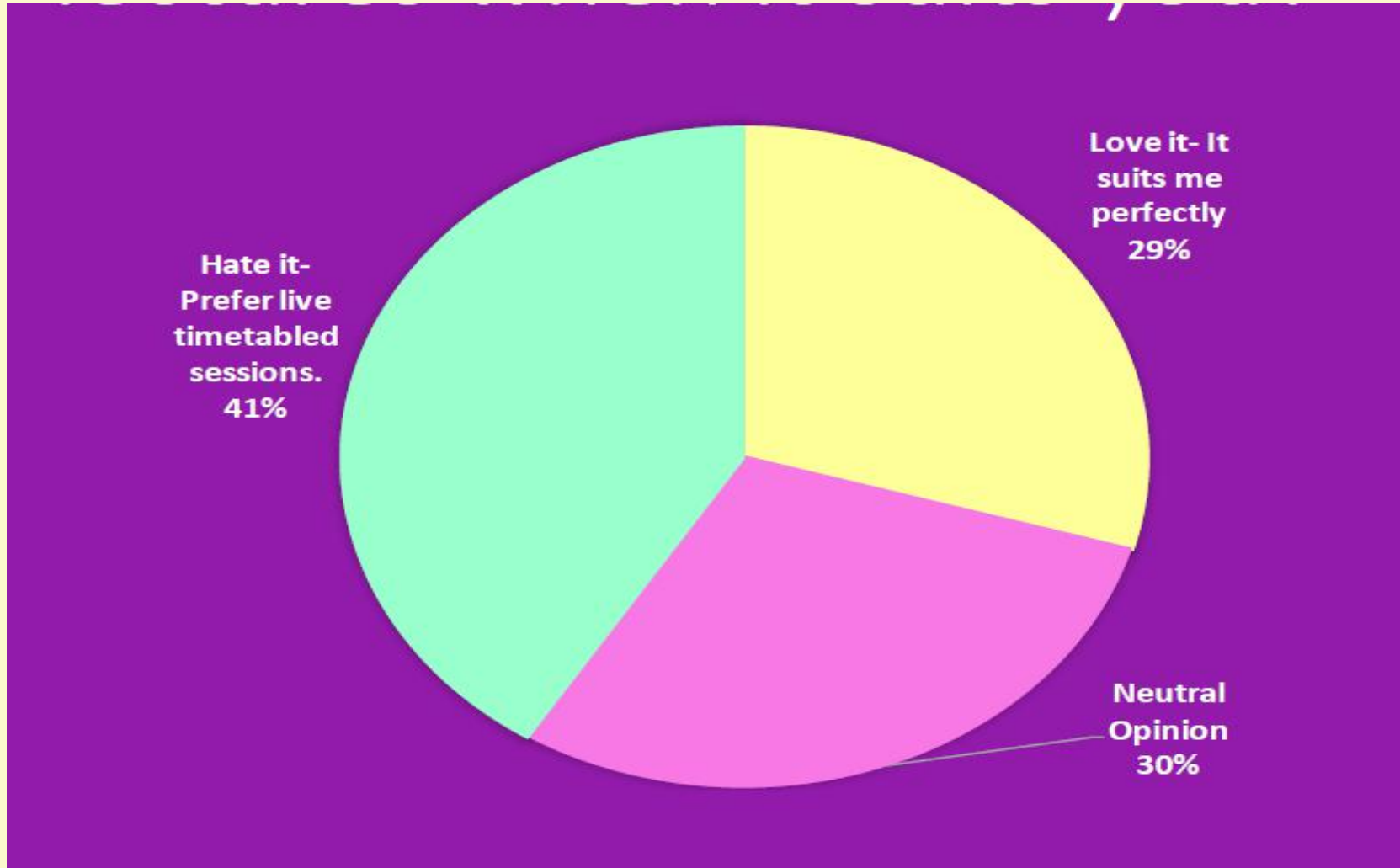
- More in demand than asynchronous
- Can be recorded
- Valued the chance to talk
- Some tutorial topics needed to be done live (confidence building etc).
- Students in an early stage preferred synchronous approach
- Some technical connection issues

# Discussion



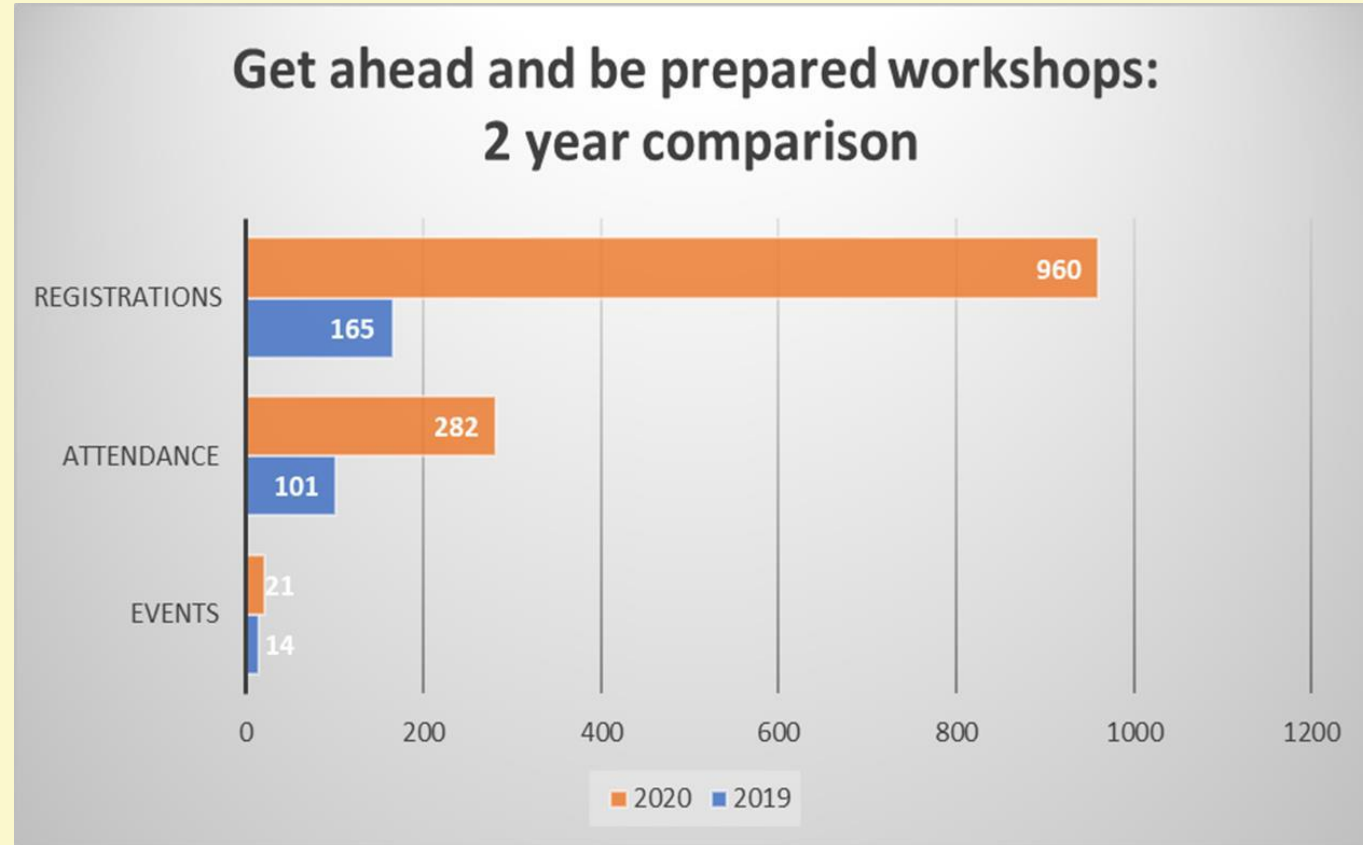
What things do students most want to talk to a person about?

# Asynchronous (group) teaching (DMU SU, 2020)



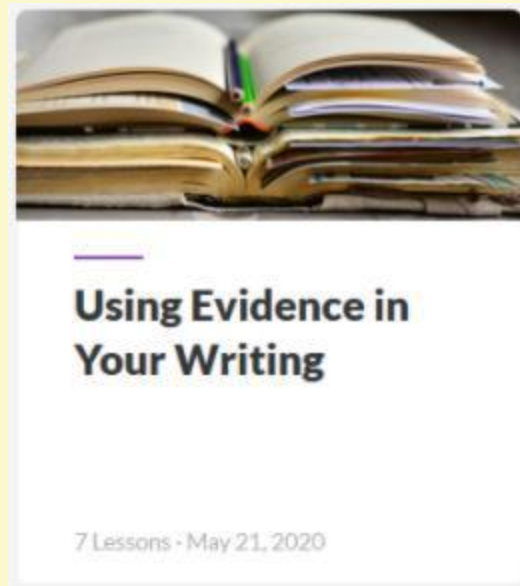
# Engagement with CLaSS online sessions

- More engagement with this year's sessions as compared to previous years
- While workshops were offered live online, a large number of students engaged with workshop materials asynchronously



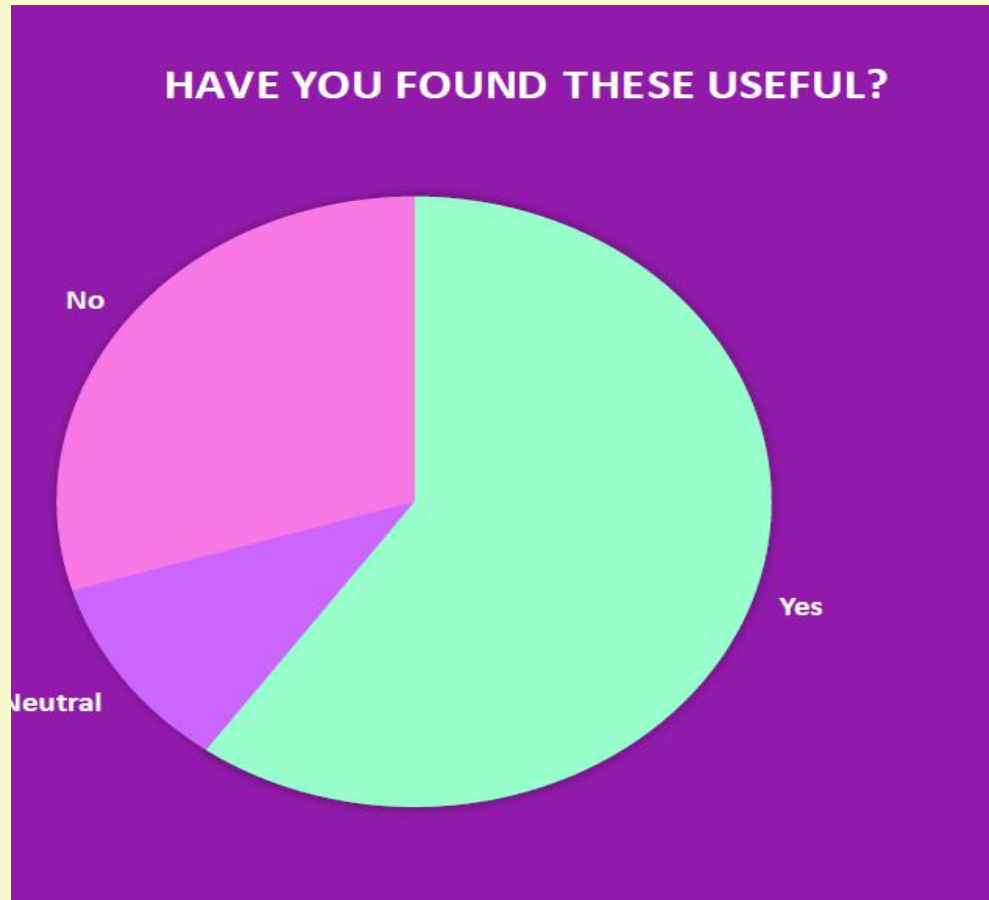
# Engagement in asynchronous workshops

- Shorter pre-recorded videos
- Provide activities
- Opportunity for questions
- Online resources





# Student views: live online lectures (DMU SU, 2020)



What do you miss about face-to-face lectures?

- The classroom atmosphere
- Bouncing ideas off peers first
- Group tasks
- Structure

# Engagement in synchronous group sessions

## Things that worked for us

- Students less keen to chat with the camera on.
- Icebreaker activities- that also teach the technology
- Break-out rooms
- Make sure they can see you
- Students accessing on different platforms including their phones



# Feedback on live workshops (LLS Survey, 2020)

- *I would say it is more intimate and allows you to voice your questions more*
- *The support was very informative as if it was a face to face workshop, we were emailed the PowerPoint used which allows us to access the information anytime and were given the chance to ask any questions*
- *I prefer the live webcam because you can interact and ask any questions that you are confused about then and there and you can get further clarity if needed*

# Conclusions

- Personal connection is important
- Less focus on procedural aspects.
- Online teaching offers specific strategies that can be adapted to individual students and learning aims



Questions and comments

# References

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