

Empowering students through one-to-one learning development support

Dr. Arina Cirstea, Senior Lecturer, Centre for Learning and Study Support



This poster outlines selected findings from a small-scale research project in the area of co-curricular learning support (cf. Cirstea, 2022). Facilitated via a CAI Sabbatical Fellowship (2021), this project explored students' self-reported **motivations for engagement** in one-to-one **tutorials** provided by the Centre for Learning and Study Support (CLaSS). During the project timeframe (October 2020-April 2021), tutorials were delivered exclusively online.

Methods

- The study used a mixed methods, predominantly **qualitative** approach, including an online survey (No.=43) and online interview (No.=5). The generalisability of findings was limited by the low response rate as well as sample demographics, which included a higher proportion of mature (over 24) and research students as compared to the CLaSS self-selecting population.
- Data analysis software:** NVivo 11/12
- Thematic analysis** to identify key reasons that determine students to seek one-to-one learning development support as well as their experience of online delivery

Key findings (1): Reasons for support seeking

Most respondents reported that they booked a tutorial to improve their **writing** and/or their **grades**. The most common areas for support seeking were: **structure** (34 references), **criticality** (27 references), **style** (25 references) and **grammar** (20 references).

Key findings (2): Delivery preferences

- The study sample had a generally **positive** attitude towards **online delivery**, with 42% of survey respondents identifying online delivery as their preferred tutorial method, and further 21% opting for no delivery preference.
- Key **benefits** of online delivery included removing access barriers for students with complex commitments, travel and health issues.

Recommendations for practice

- Despite the small sample and potential age bias, the study shows that Learning Development provision that is inclusive, flexible and structured in response to learner needs can empower students to achieve their best potential.

How can this benefit you and your students?

- Signpost your students to the DMU Library website (<https://library.dmu.ac.uk/DMU>) for access to **self-study resources**, **workshops** and **one-to-one learning development support**.
- Contact author for more information: arina.cirstea@dmu.ac.uk

Key findings (3): Perceived impact

All interview participants, and 38 out of 43 survey respondents, explicitly referred to the **positive impact** of tutorials, using words such as 'helpful/helped' (22 references), 'useful' (4 references), 'efficient' (3 references), 'excellent' (3 references), or even 'perfect' (2 references).

Confidence boosting

A number of respondents reported that tutorials supported their confidence building:

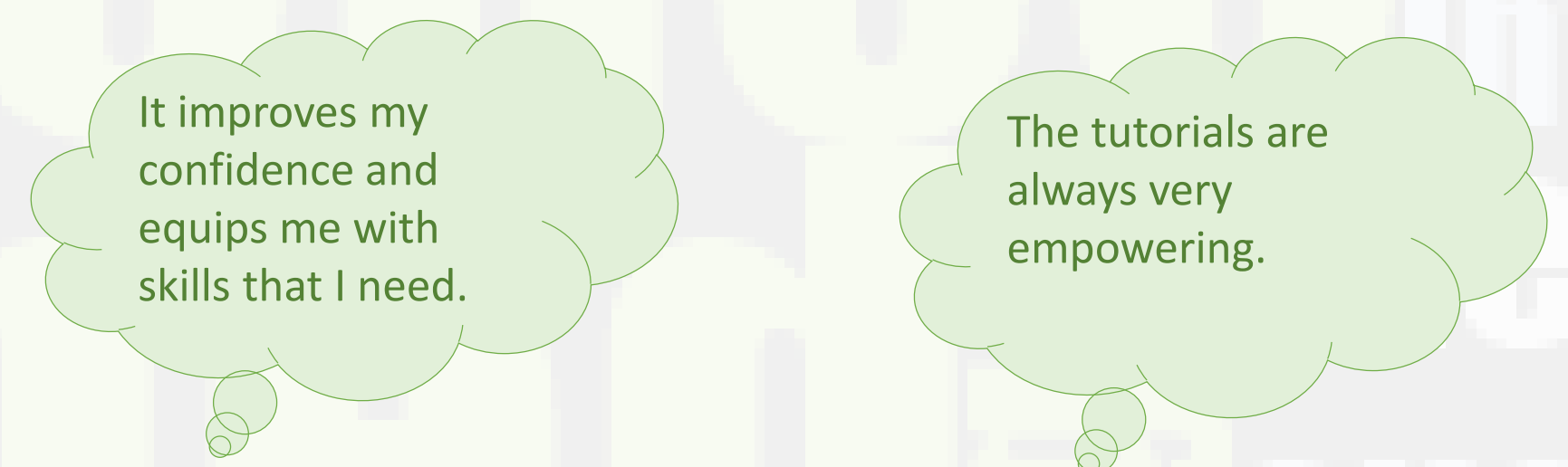


Fig. 1 Data extracts reporting improved confidence

Attainment

Attainment was an important theme, with over 65% of survey respondents selecting it as one of the main reasons for booking a tutorial. Implementing tutorial feedback was linked to an improvement in grades:

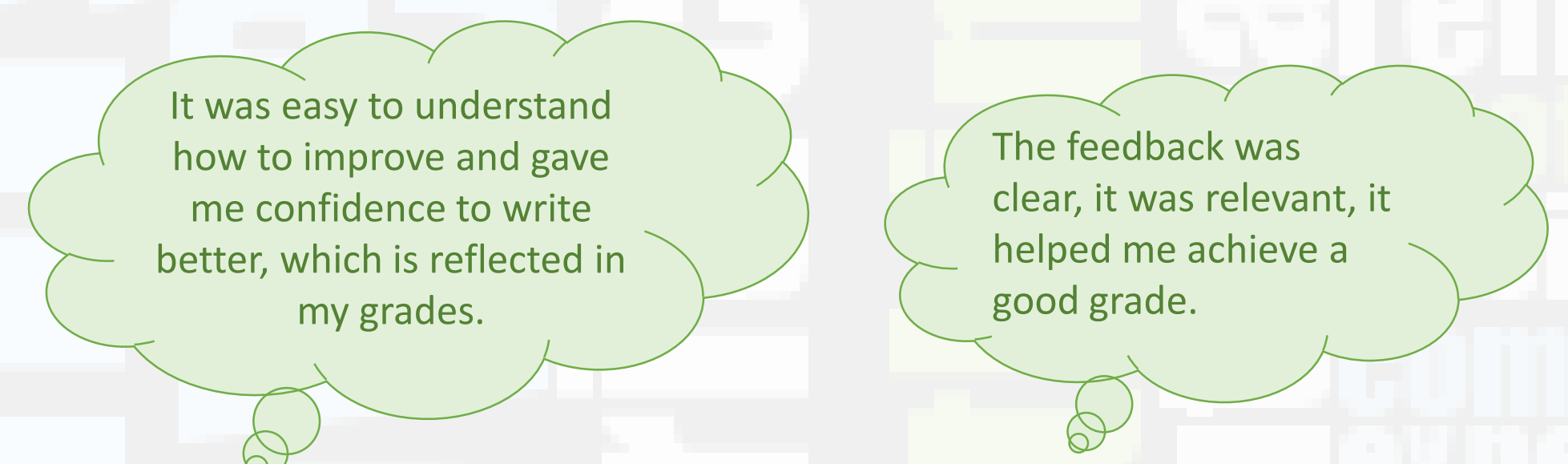


Fig. 2 Data extracts reporting improved attainment

Improved understanding

Participants reported tutorials led to enhanced understanding and application of knowledge to a range of areas, including critical writing, structuring dissertations and reflections.