

**Insight into students, their experiences and expectations:  
Findings from the 2011/12 NUS/QAA student experience research**

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*Value for money?  
Personalised experience?  
More contact hours? What is  
it that students expect?*



NUS and QAA working in partnership

3 projects focusing on student involvement in  
quality and the student experience

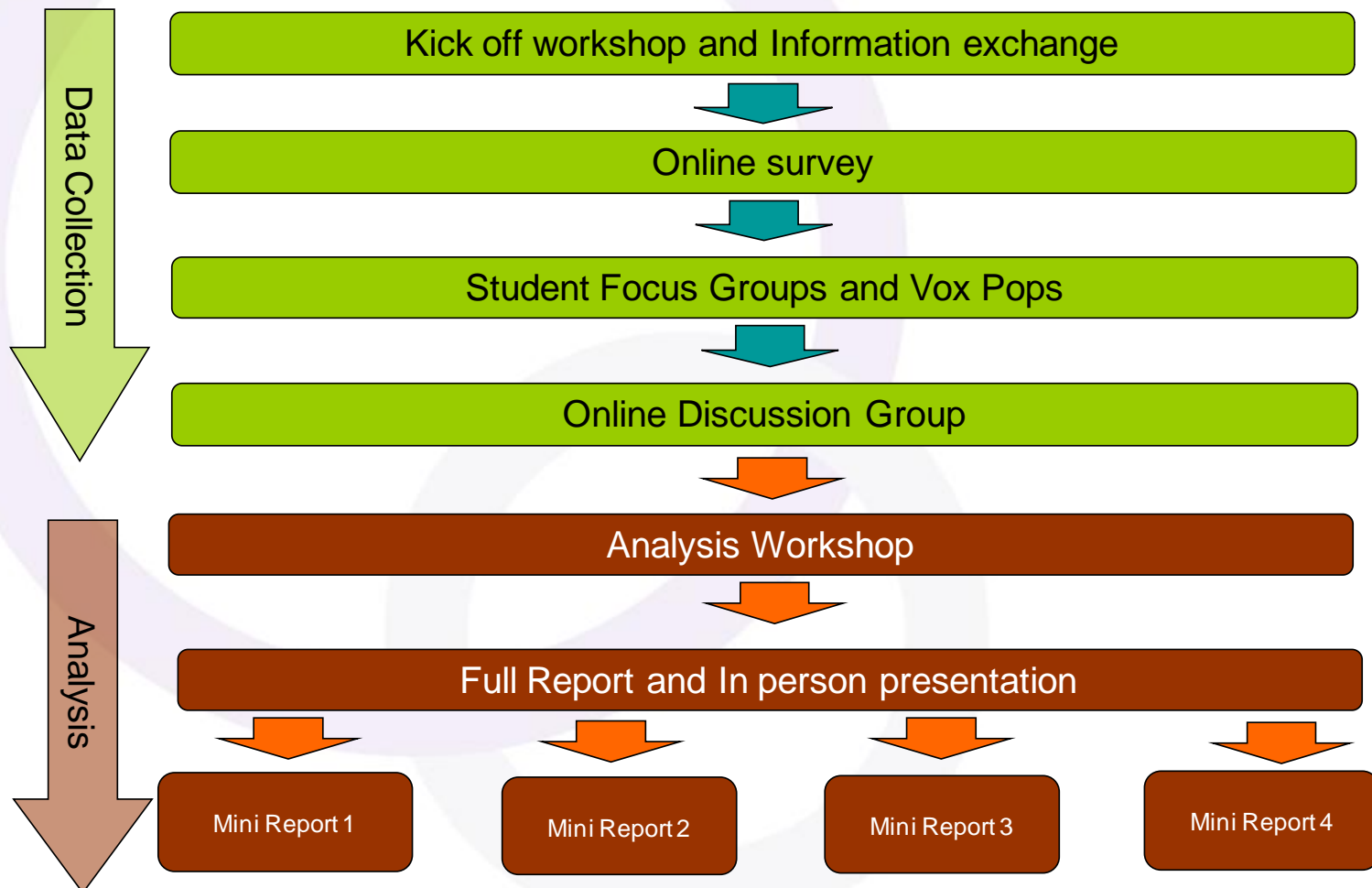
- o Strand one: Student Experience Research
- o Strand two: Student Centred Quality
- o Stand three: Developing Quality Engagement

# Student Experience Research



- Over 5,000 responses to the online survey
- 10 Regional Focus groups, involving 135 students
- Online discussion groups
- 4 Themed Reports :
  - o Teaching and Learning
  - o Contact Hours and Independent Learning
  - o Subject Differences
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student Experience

# Student Experience Research



## Dom



- 18 years old
- Studying English at a Russell Group University
- Living in University Halls
- Doesn't have a clear career route in mind
- Excited about going away from home and meeting new people
- Has a vague idea that university will be different from school and college



## Carol

- Mature student
- Studying Midwifery at a post-92 University
- Lives at home with her partner and 2 children
- Retraining to follow her passion after 15 years as a PA
- Excited about starting her course but very nervous about how she will cope with returning to studying and about meeting people on her course

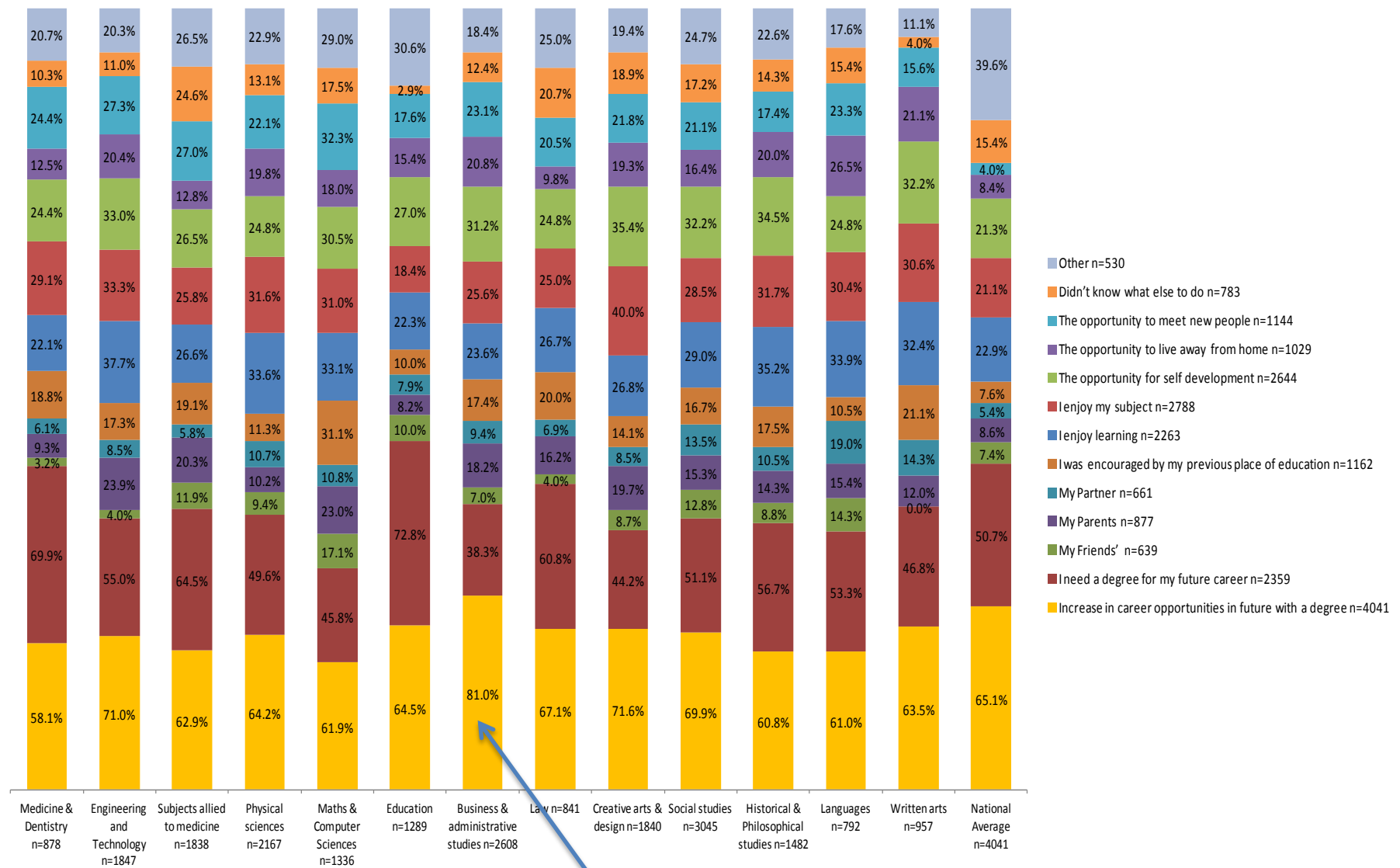




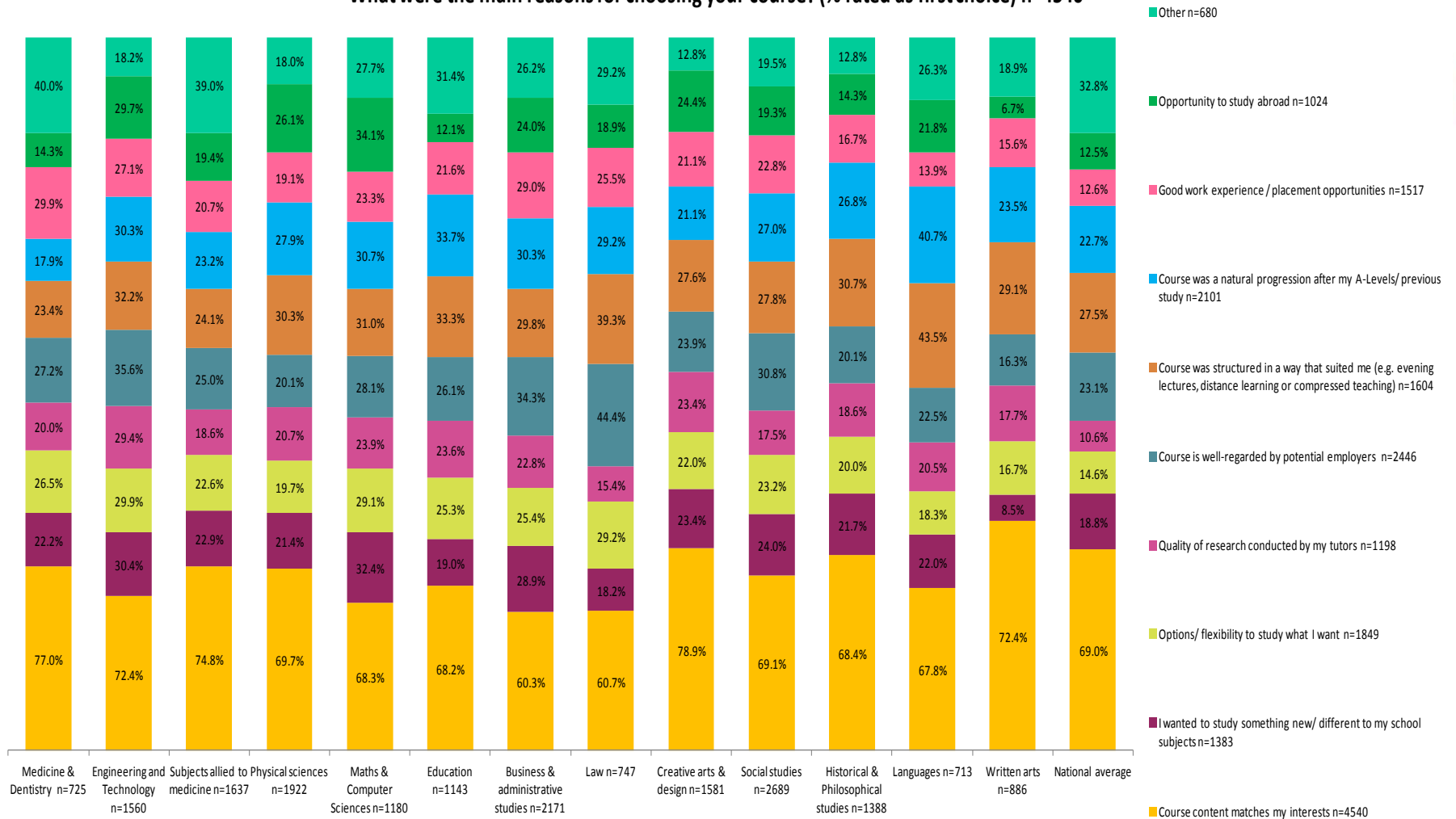
**Why do students go to University?**

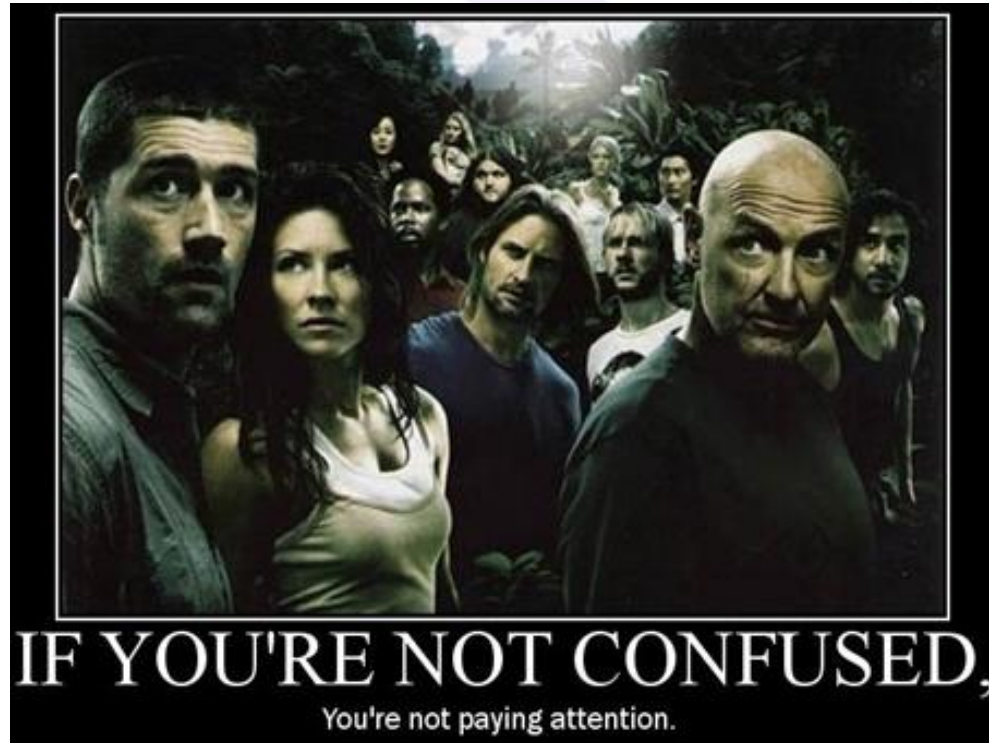


## What was the main reason for wanting to go to university? (% rated as their first choice) n=4041



## What were the main reasons for choosing your course? (% rated as first choice) n=4540





**Starting University life**

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Year Student Experience

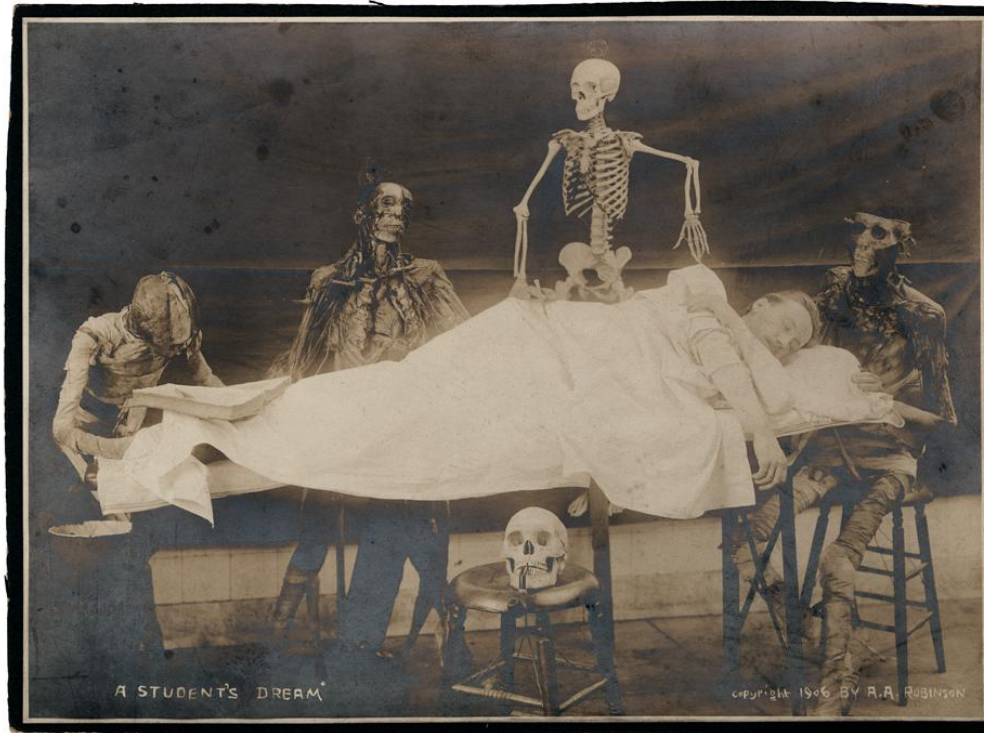


- Whilst induction packs were seen as useful;
  - 74% of first year students receive these before starting their course and 93% believe them to be at least 'somewhat useful',
- The inductions themselves are often confusing, badly organised and repetitive

*My induction was kind of messed up. Everything seemed random and no one seemed to know what they were doing. We didn't get the tour of the uni, we were told that we were going to get it from one of the students but we didn't... They gave us a leaflet, and it had information on the library and stuff like that, but we didn't even know where it was".*



*We had a lecture on using the library facilities, and although it covered all of the important information it was too late. I had been told to do a lot of reading earlier that week which required access to electronic journals and things like that... I had to figure all of that out on my own. It was time consuming... then to have the information in a lecture later that week was a bit of a slap in the face really".*



**Teaching, learning and assessment**



# Teaching and Learning



- Teaching skills were seen as the most important feature of a good quality learning and teaching experience
- First year students put their classmates and lecture staff as central to their support at university

## Motivators of learning

### Intrinsic

- Wanting to do the best they can (85.7%)
- Love of subject (73.8%)
- Need to pass degree (62.4%)

### External

- Inspirational lecturer (54.7%)
- Encouragement from the family to do well (45.7%)

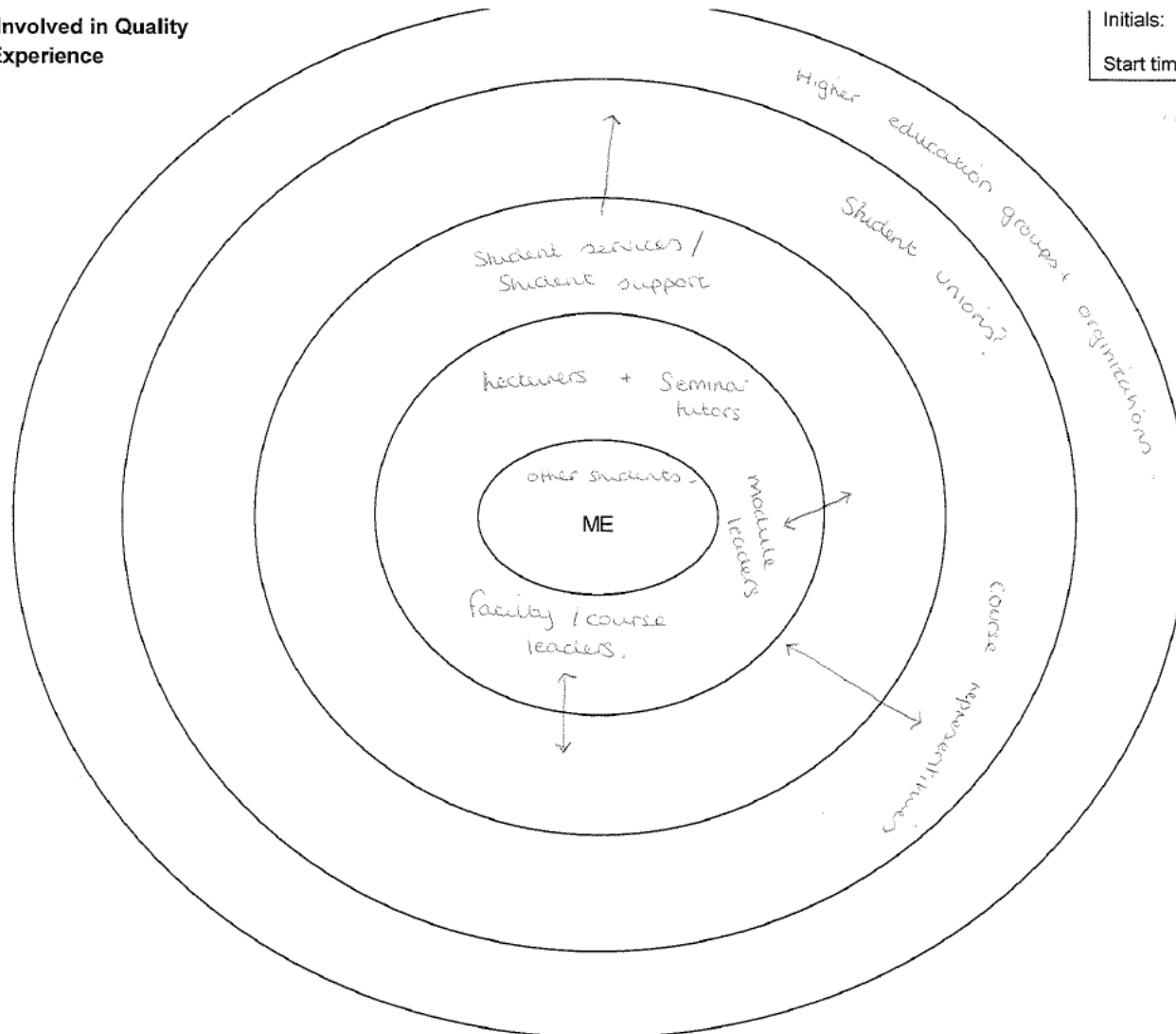
# The first year world



Map of Those Involved in Quality  
Uni Learning Experience

Initials: A-K

Start time of group: 5:00





*"The seminars are great for tying up loose ends and for preparing you for further lectures as well... I've found that seminars are great for getting to know people on your course. You get to talk to people that you wouldn't necessarily get to meet".*

*"One of my lecturers just stands there and reads word for word off the PowerPoint. He doesn't pay us much attention and then people chat in the background. They don't control people and sometimes you can't hear what they are saying. Other lecturers will keep you more interested; they'll involve you and throw in the odd joke every now and then. They are more creative and that keeps us interested".*

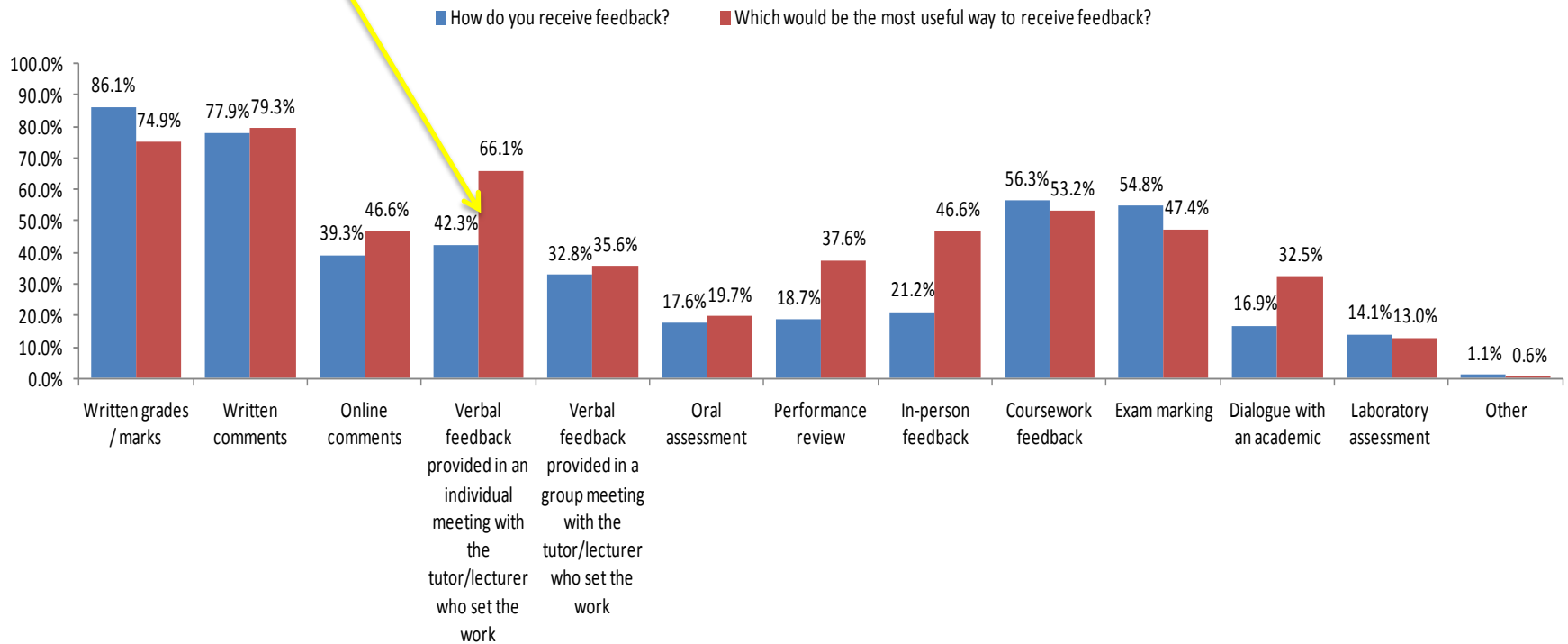


# How long, on average, does it take for you to receive feedback?



	< week		1-2 weeks		3-4 weeks		5-6 weeks		7 weeks +	
	10/11	11/12	10/11	11/12	10/11	11/12	10/11	11/12	10/11	11/12
<b>Russell Group</b>	13	12	27	39	24	38	13	7	6	4
<b>1994</b>	3	9	21	41	44	36	17	11	3	4
<b>Million+</b>	2	8	11	30	43	47	19	12	4	3
<b>University Alliance</b>	3	10	13	42	37	33	20	8	8	8
<b>Guild HE</b>	-	3	-	22	-	54	-	17	-	4
<b>Non-aligned</b>	-	8	-	34	-	40	-	16	-	3
<b>Average</b>	5.25	8.33	18	34.67	37	41.33	17.25	11.83	5.25	4.33

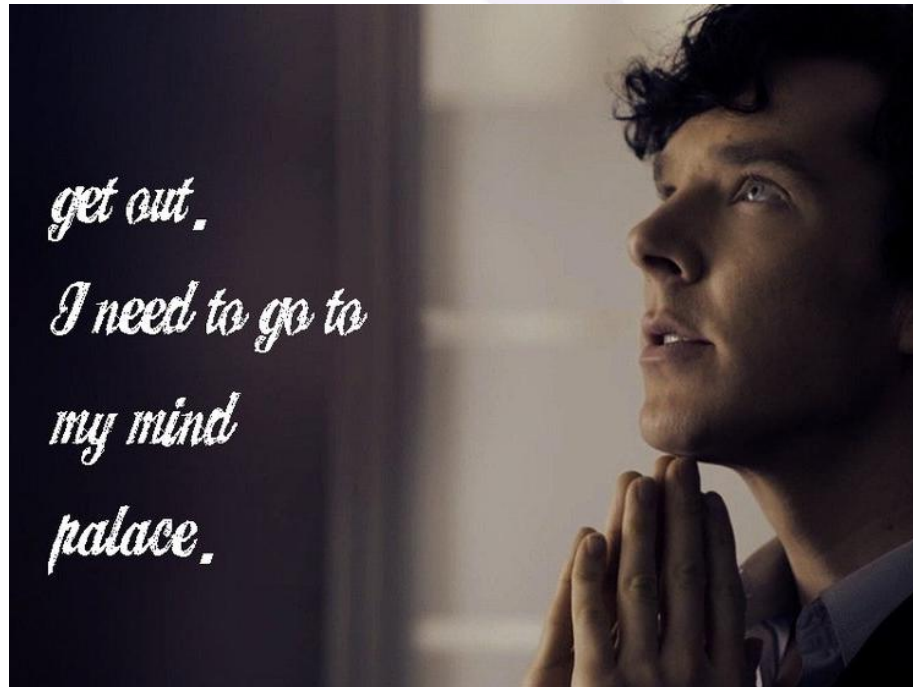
### Ways of receiving feedback n=4981





## Assessment

- Although the majority of students said that they had the opportunity to receive informal feedback, although 21.6% said that they never received any formative feedback
- 68.8% of students agreed to some extent that assessments should be staggered across the term, rather than loaded at the end
- In 2010/11 survey only 58% of students said their feedback makes it clear how to improve their performance
- Just over half (52%) also said it motivates them to study
- Only one quarter (23%) of students said that assessments help them to highlight areas they need to focus on



**Independent learning and contact  
hours**

# Independent learning



ability able alone around away books contact course develop  
directed done extra finding given guidance help home hours  
independently individual information  
initiative knowledge learning  
lectures material motivated notes oneself others  
outside personal reading research  
resources responsibility self student  
study subject support taking taught teaching  
things topic tutor understanding university work

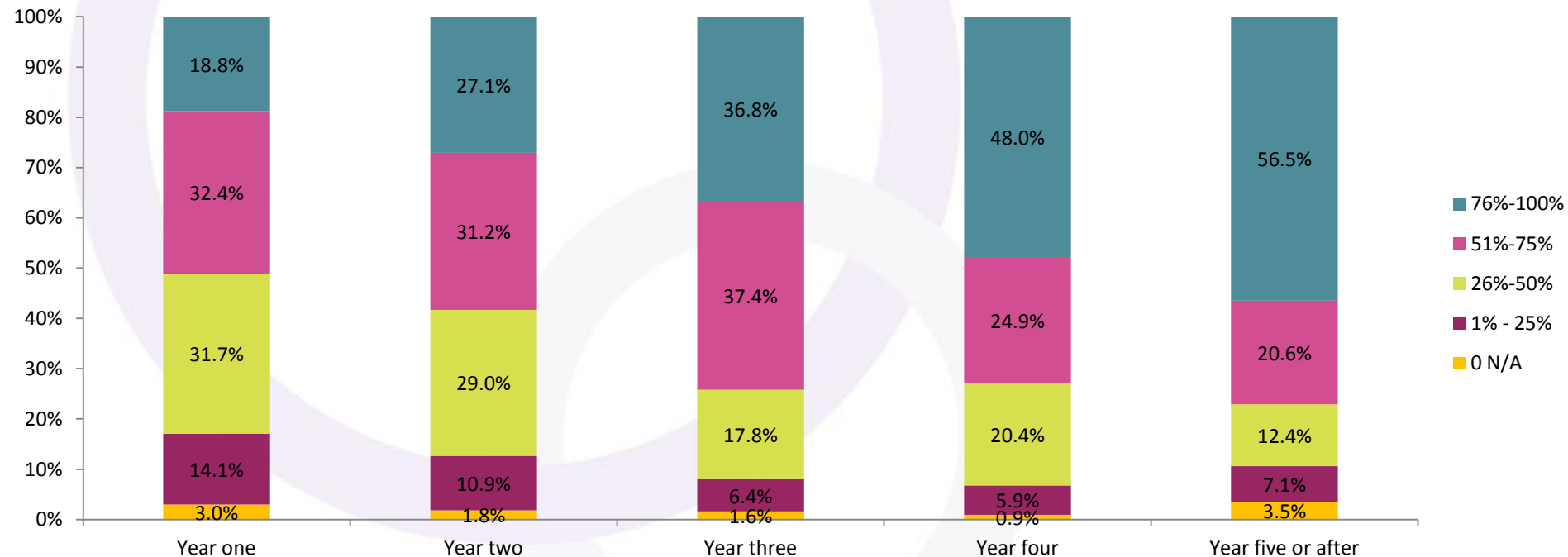
*"I know for one of the units, one lecturer said to do eight hours for every hour that you're at that lecture. It's a full week and barely any sleep... Sometimes they'll pressure you too much and you'll panic"*



# Independent learning



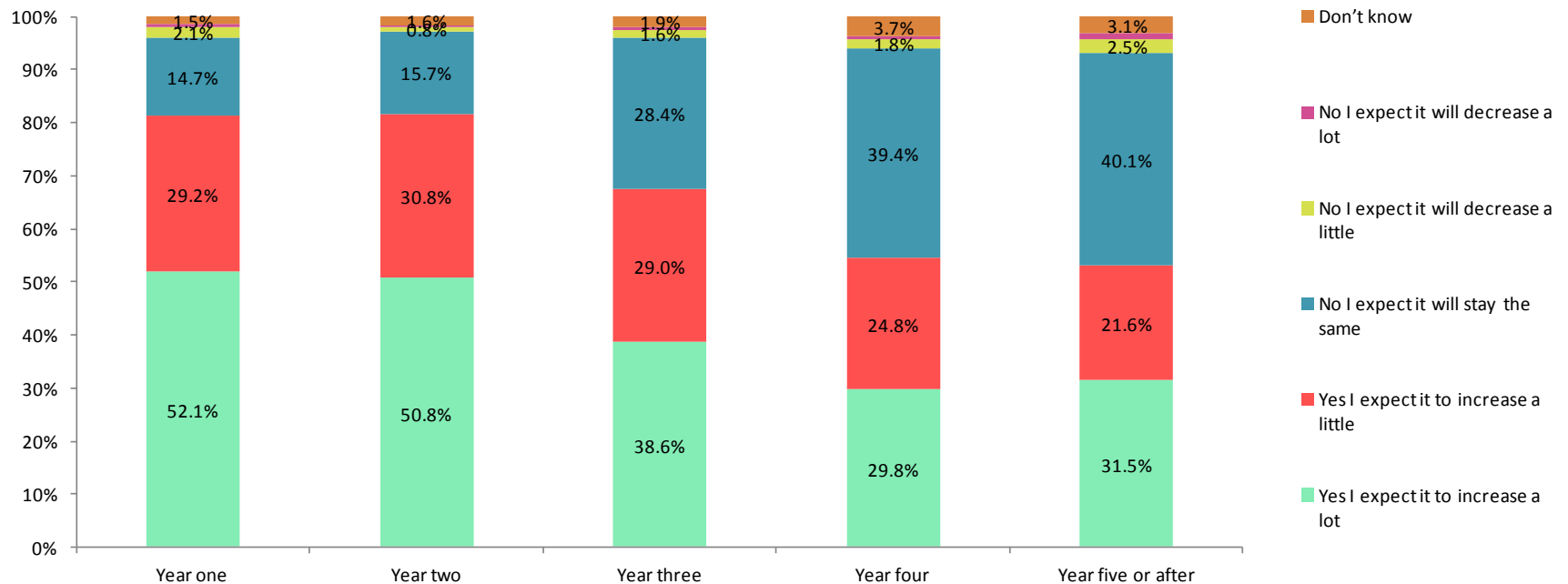
**At this stage of your course, roughly what percentage is independent learning? n=4973**



# Independent learning



To what extent, if at all, do you expect the amount of independent learning to increase throughout the rest of your course?  
n=4879



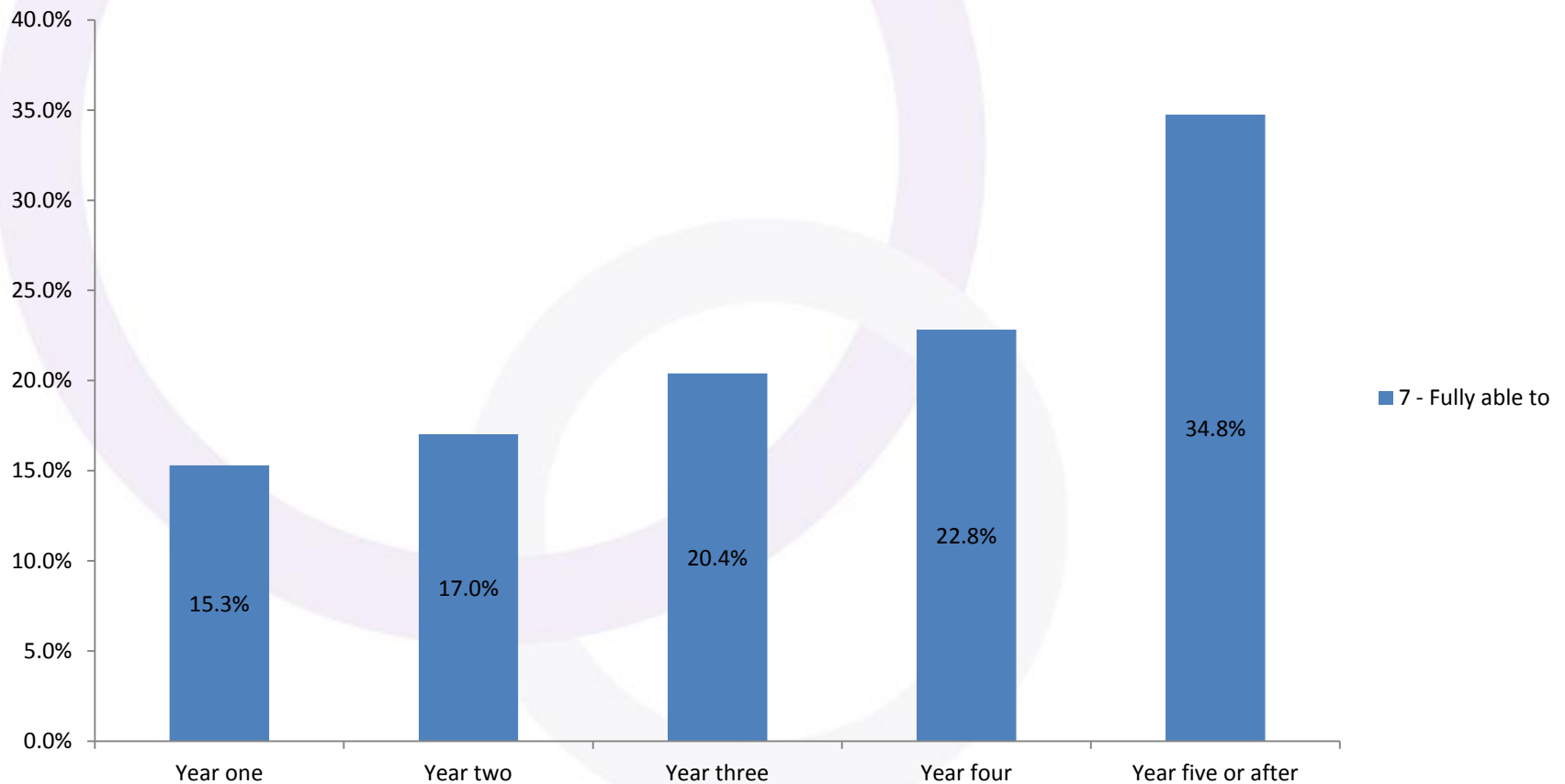


## Independent learning



- Only 15.3% believe they are fully able to learn through this method, and 28% believe it to be more than expected
- Students need guidance on how to make this time effective
- First year students report an hour less of independent study per week than other year groups

**% of students fully able to learn independently by year group**  
**n=4864**



## Contact Hours



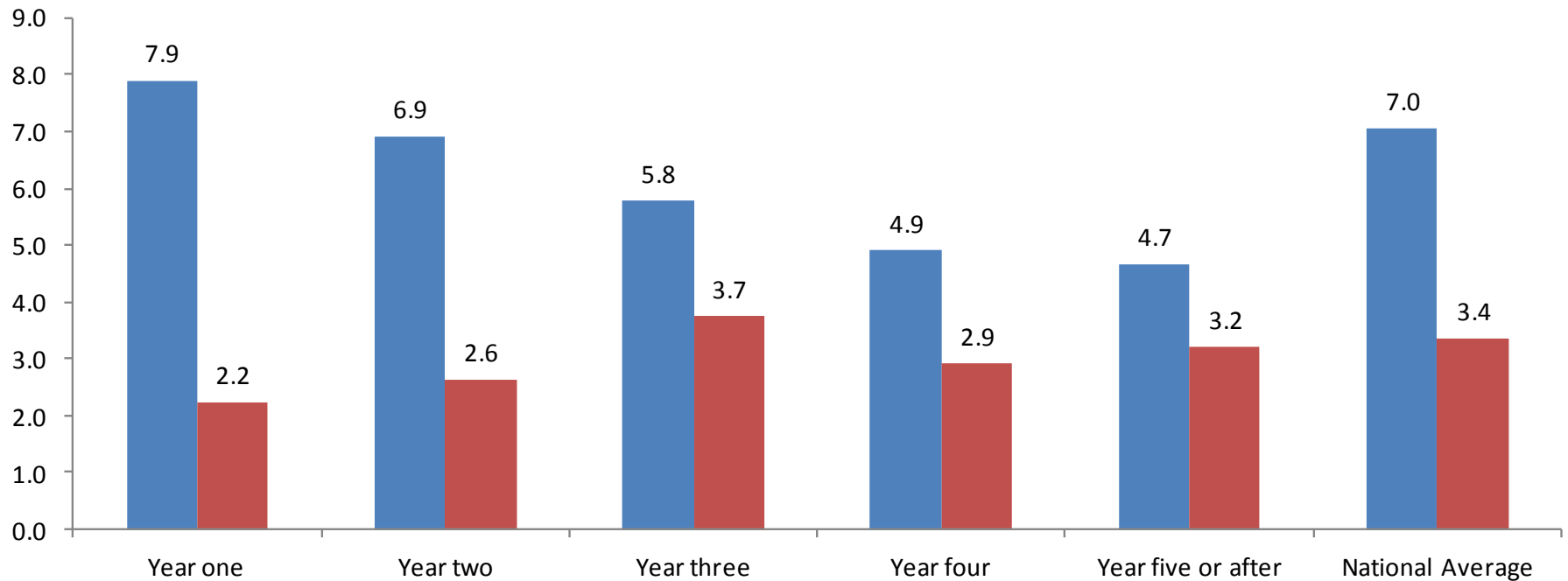
- Contact hours are robustly assessed by students
  - 84% believe they are directly linked to the quality of their experience
  - but only 39% are made aware of these before they begin university (47% state they would have found this information useful)
- Whilst they report the greatest number of lecture contact hours, first years receive less group teaching sessions / tutorials
- First years are most likely to believe this number of contact hours is appropriate

# Contact Hours



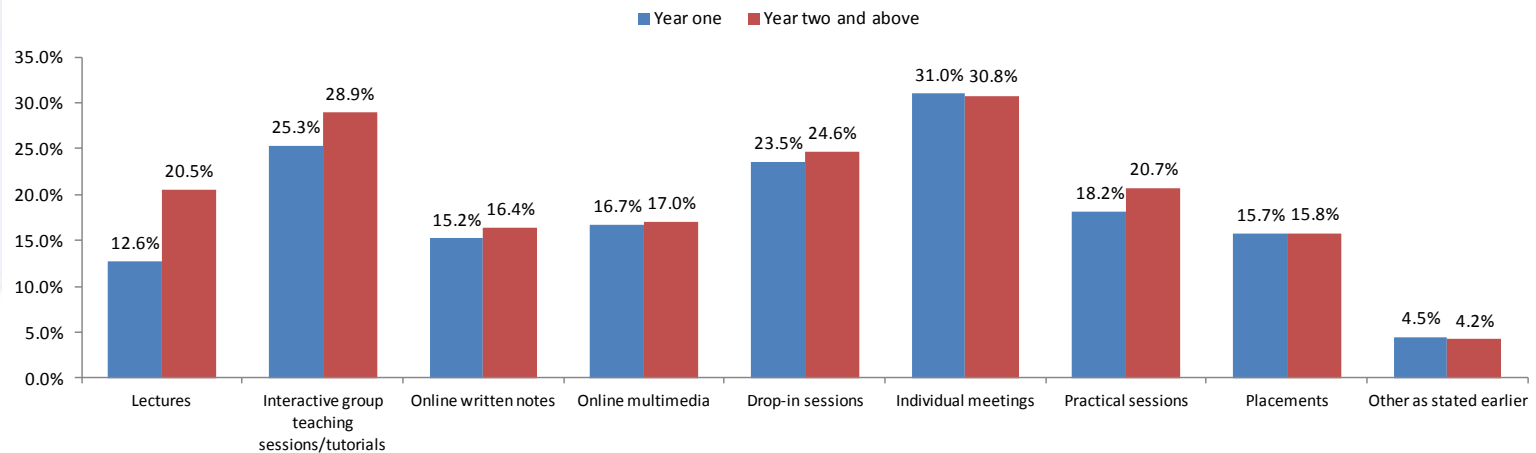
## Average number of hours per week by year group n=4613

■ Average number of Lecture contact hours ■ Average number of Interactive group teaching sessions/tutorials contact hours



- **Figure 8 Q27 – For each of the following, please rate how appropriate, if at all, your amount of contact hours are? (n=4885)**

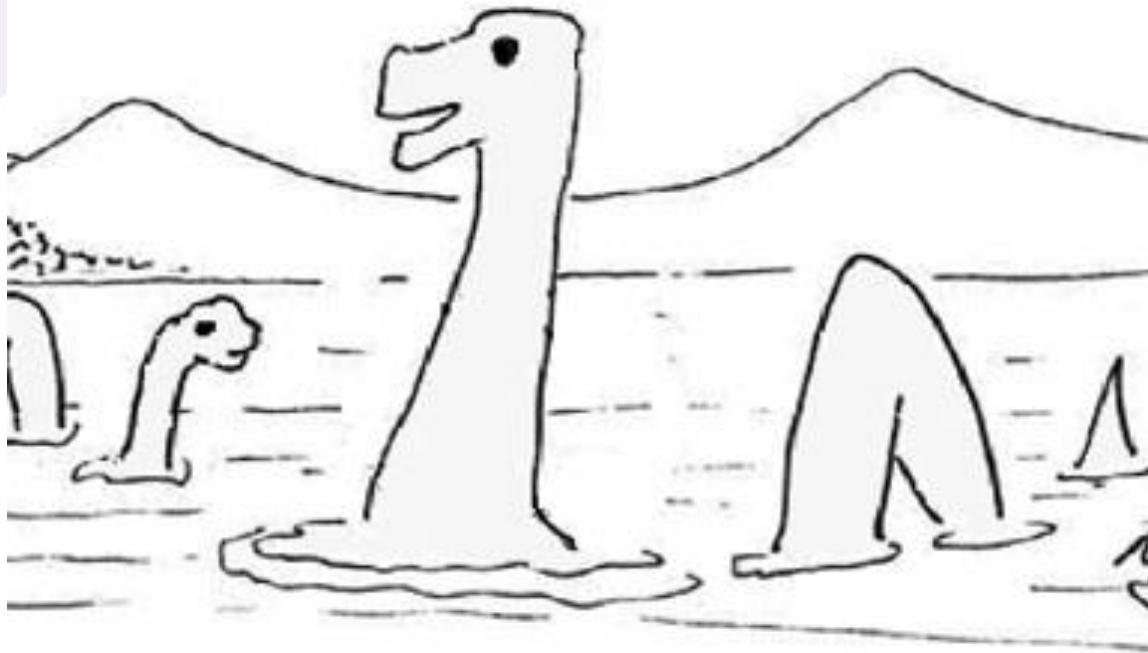
**How appropriate is the amount of contact hours: Too few (n=4885)**



*"I think contact hours represent value for money. If I am only in for three hours a week, why should I pay so much money? You want to be at uni and interacting with lecturers"*







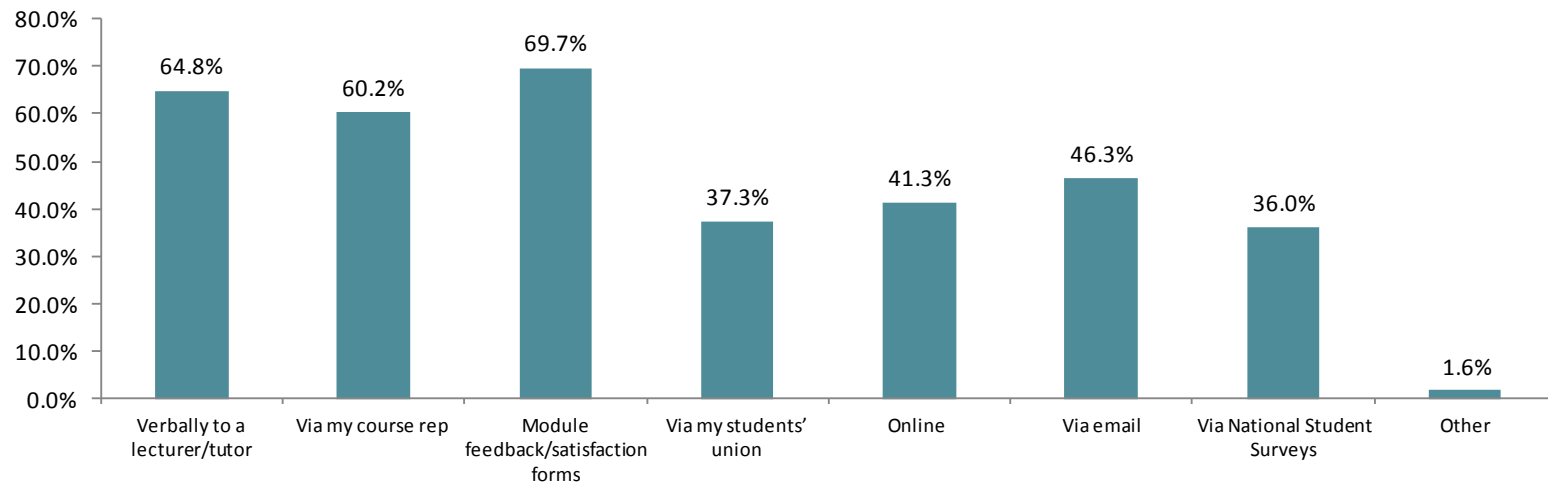
"I don't care what you thought you saw,  
there are no such things as people."

**Student engagement**

## Student engagement

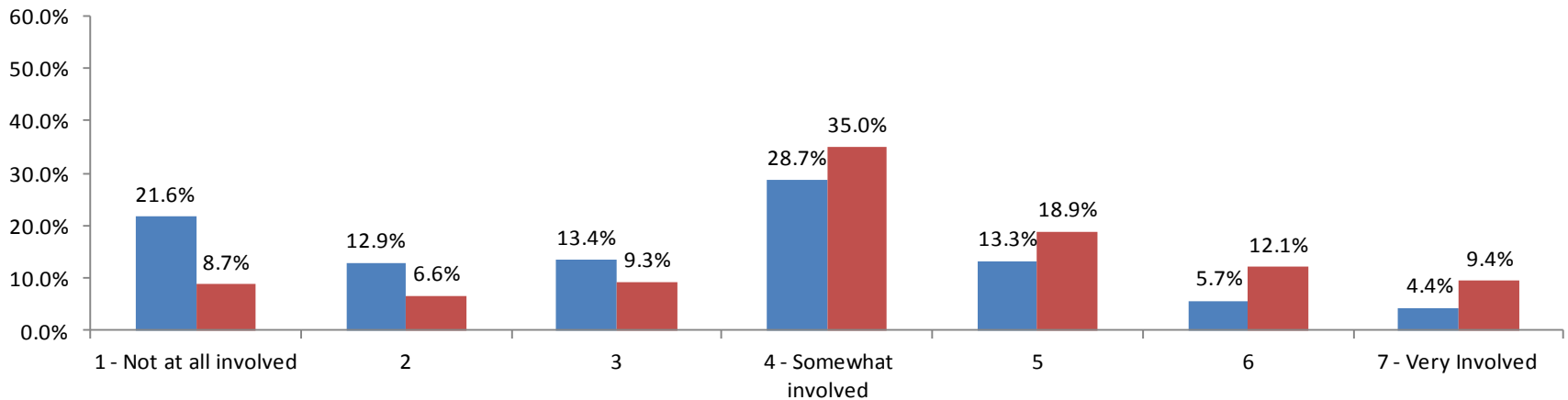
- 86.6% of students have the opportunity to provide feedback to their university/faculty/department about their course
- 58.2% of students believe that the feedback they provide is acted upon
- Students in the focus groups more often than not defined “student involvement” in terms of the various means of feedback they had come across
- Issues around student understanding of quality assurance and enhancement processes, anonymity of feedback, timing of feedback and lack of any demonstratable change

**How, if at all, are you able to provide feedback to your  
University/faculty/department about your course? (tick all that  
apply) n=4376**



**How involved, if at all, do you want to be in shaping the content of your course?**  
**n=5038**

■ How involved are you in shaping the content of your course?  
■ How involved would you like to be?



*"I don't think you really think about it before you start. It's not on your mind really. It only comes to mind when you feedback to the lecturers. When you go to university you think about all of the initial fears than you do about the intricacies about that... It's good to know that the system is there".*



*I don't think we're involved with it. We've experienced that if we make a complaint nothing changes. It's more of a procedure than anything else... The worst thing that we heard was that whatever you tell us will help us design the course or next year. It was not going to change things this year."*



QUALITY  
MATTERS



**Employability**

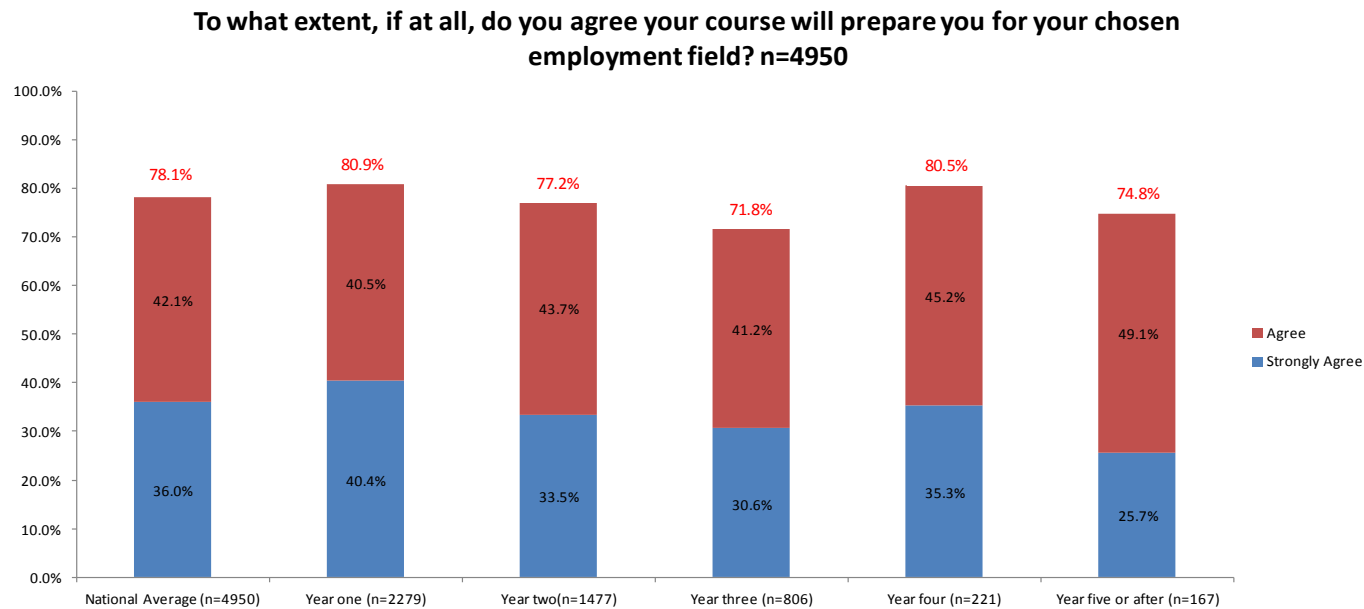
## Employability



- 1<sup>st</sup> year students felt that their course would prepare them for future employment (80.9%), and were aware that careers services were available
  - Although these did not form part of their priorities in their first year



**Figure 9 Q71 – To what extent, if at all, do you agree your course will prepare you for your chosen employment field? (n=4950)**



*"I'm doing this degree because I enjoy it and it is a degree so it gets me to the next stage. I've not looked into particular employability for my course"*





**So what do students actually want?**

A background graphic featuring two overlapping circles. The left circle is light purple and the right circle is light grey. They overlap in the center, creating a Venn diagram effect.

Personalised contact

Induction is key

Smaller, more interactive classes

Staff that are passionate about their subject

Feedback that helps students learn

Making student engagement relevant



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