



An analysis of 13/14 module feedback:

Identify trends within excellent and improving modules

Background

This report builds upon the preliminary work undertaken by SALT to identify any patterns in module feedback associated with modules from the 2013/14 academic year that showed a positive trend over the previous 3 years as highlighted by ARQUE module analysis.

The preliminary work identified 234 modules from the 13/14 academic year but due to issues surrounding access to data and use of module feedback, SALT were only allowed to view data for 61 of the identified 234 modules.

The preliminary investigation did not provide concrete evidence as to the causes for the positive trends in the modules due to the limited amount of data. But what was evident is that students clearly identify characteristics of what makes a good teacher/module.

The positive nature of the results and how it could have an impact on teaching at Swansea University led to SALT being given access to the wider data set for further analysis.

Aim

Using the wider data set further investigate the students free text comments to highlight what they perceive as 'good teaching/a good teacher' at Swansea University.

Method

The preliminary study identified 29 modules from the academic year 2013/14 ARQUE data that showed a positive trend over the last 3 years in relation to:

- An increase in 1st class marks and/or
- A decrease in failure rates

29 modules were identified that showed a positive trend over last 3 years; of these

- 22 modules showed an increase in 1st class marks and a decrease in failure rate
- 5 modules showed a decrease in 1st class marks but a decrease in failure rate
- 2 modules showed an increase in 1st class marks and an increase in the failure rate

A second investigation of the ARQUE data was performed which identified where a module:

- had above the +4 range for modules whose average mark is above the overall mark for all modules in the selected level of study and department
- where the difference between each student's mark on a module and his/her average mark on all other modules had a difference above +5

This resulted in 234 modules identified. Of these 234 modules, 186 received feedback during the 13/14 academic year and therefore the free text responses from the students studying these modules could be analysed in this wider investigation.

Response Rates

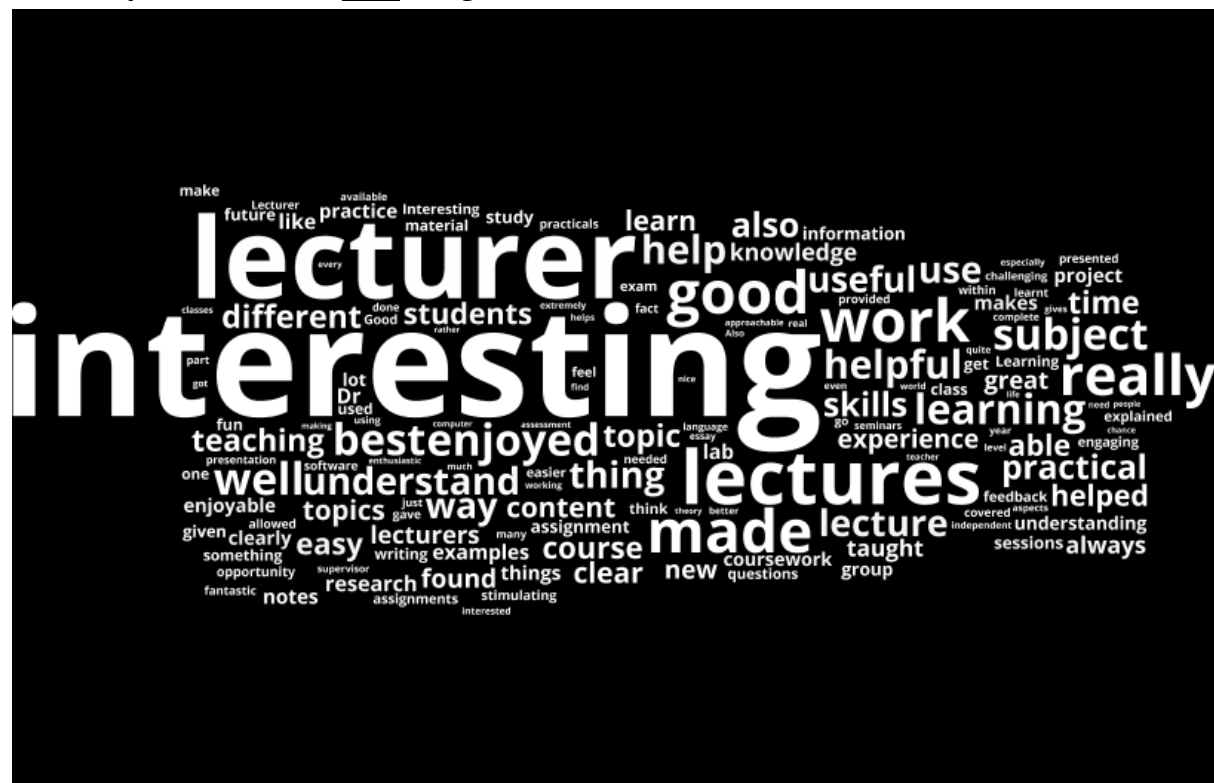
No. student enrolments for 186 modules	No. student free text responses analysed	Free text response rate	Average Free text response rate per module
13204	2001	15.15%	23.54%

Word Cloud Summary

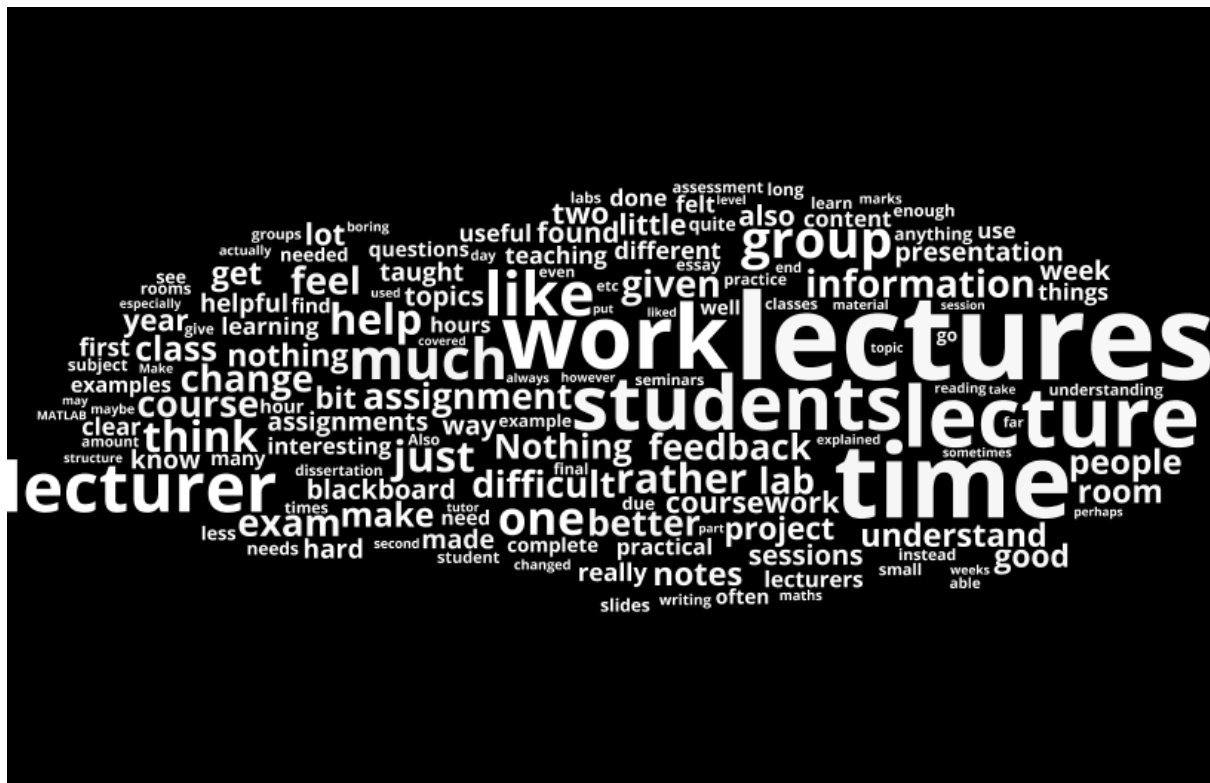
Word clouds provide an overview of the free text comments, frequently used words and a possible insight into the themes emerging within the student feedback.

Note: Common English words such as: I, and, the etc. have been removed along with the word module

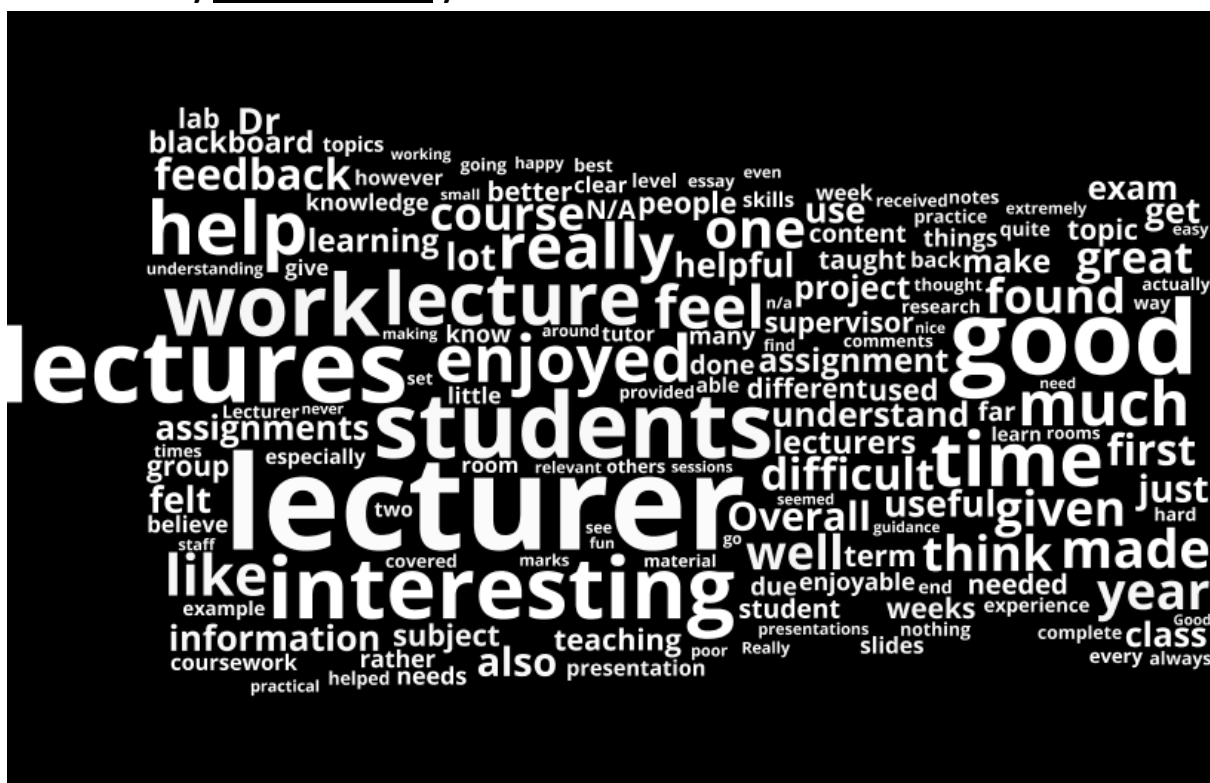
What in your view is the best thing about this module?



What one thing would you most like to change about this module?



Please add any other comments you have about this module:



[illegible]

The feedback for all 186 modules was coded using the same codes as used in the preliminary investigation. The same themes were evident when reading through all of the free text comments.

What in your view is the best thing about this module?

- Themes related to the lecturer, making content interesting, engaging with students, employing active learning when teaching

- Students highlighted issues with communication, assessment, organisation and physical environment

- Student comments echoed those already mentioned in the two previous questions. There was also an even split between positive (47.95%) and negative (47.19%) comments left by students to this question (number responses = 659)

Rationale for coding used

Each of the three questions were coded separately. Codes for “What in your view is the best thing about this module?” were created based on 2 main areas:

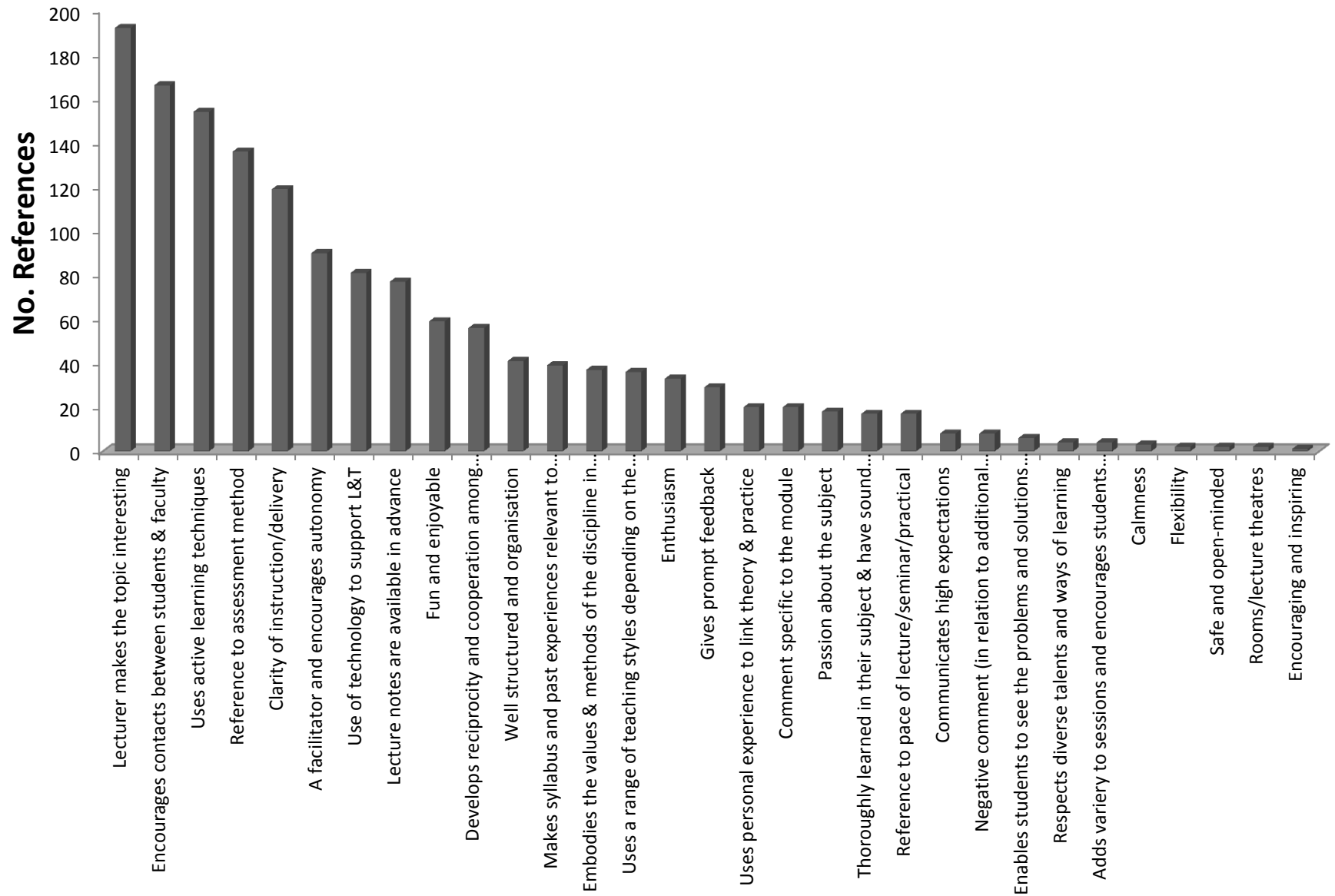
- Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles of good practice in undergraduate education, which is based on over 50 years research on college teaching and learning: <http://www.lonestar.edu/multimedia/SevenPrinciples.pdf>
- What makes a good lecturer? A student perspective. The Higher Education Academy ran an essay competition with this title in 2008, the document is the result of discussion amongst social work students: http://www.swap.ac.uk/docs/digests/swapdigest_4b.pdf

“What one thing would you most like to change about this module?” codes were devised using the most common themes within the student feedback.

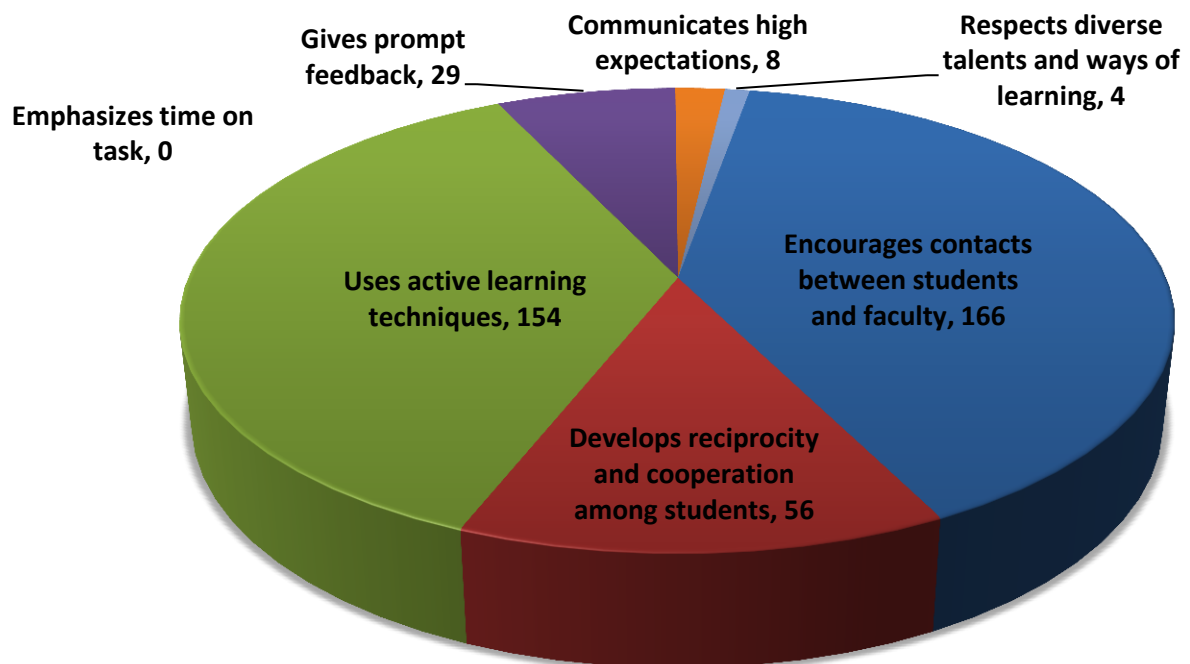
“Please add any other comments you have about this module:” questions were first coded to reflect the tone of the comment; being positive, negative or ambivalent. They were then coded in relation to the common themes reflected in the comments.

The Appendix contains the list of codes for each question and a record of the number of times each was referenced.

Question: What in your view is the best thing about this module?

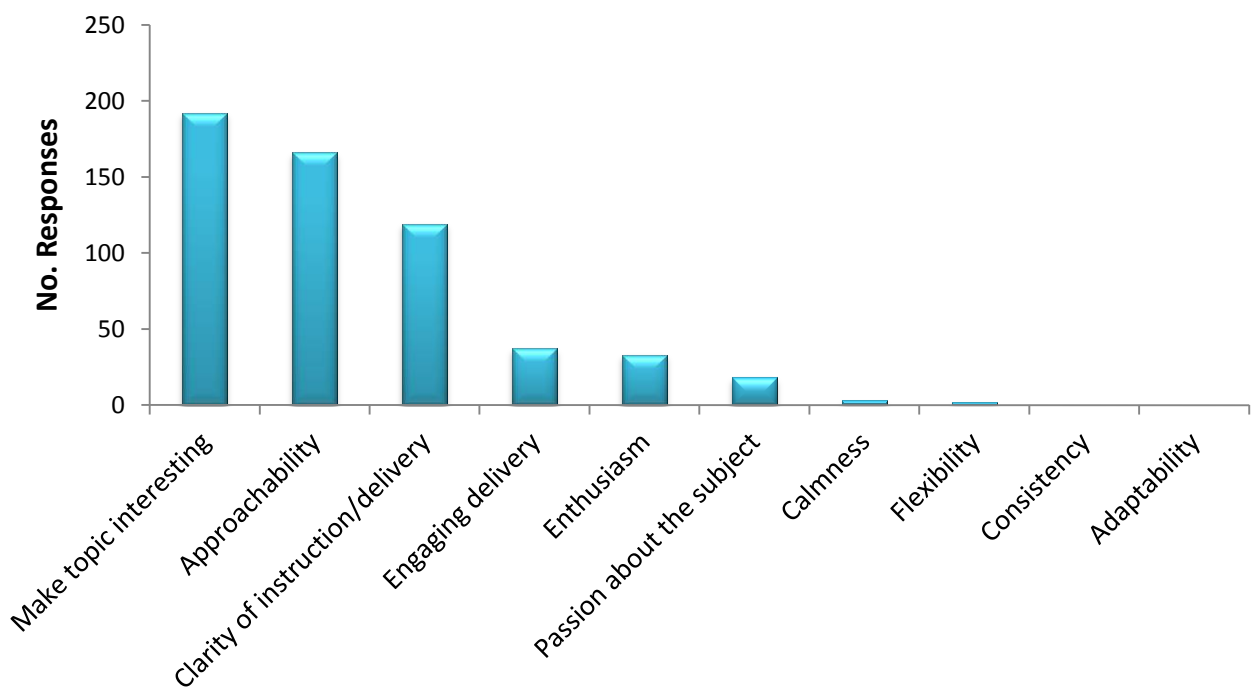


Results in relation to Chickering and Gamson's 7 principles for good practice in undergraduate education



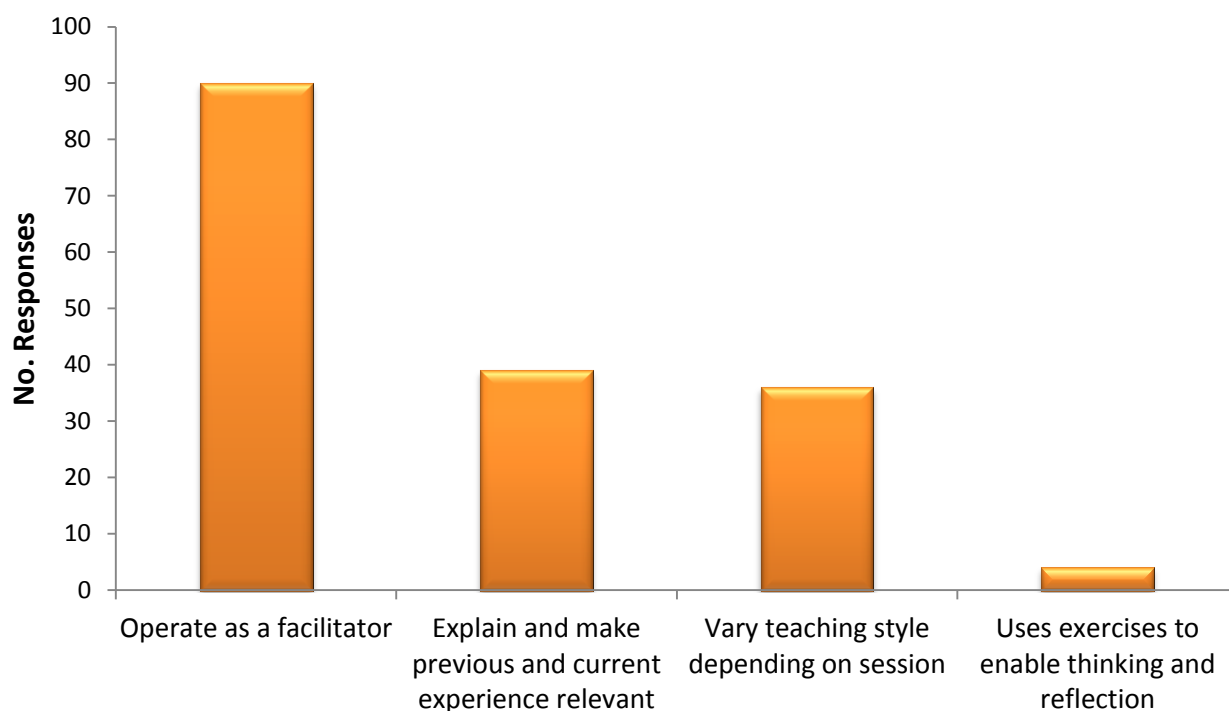
Results in response to HEA What makes a good lecturer?

Qualities:



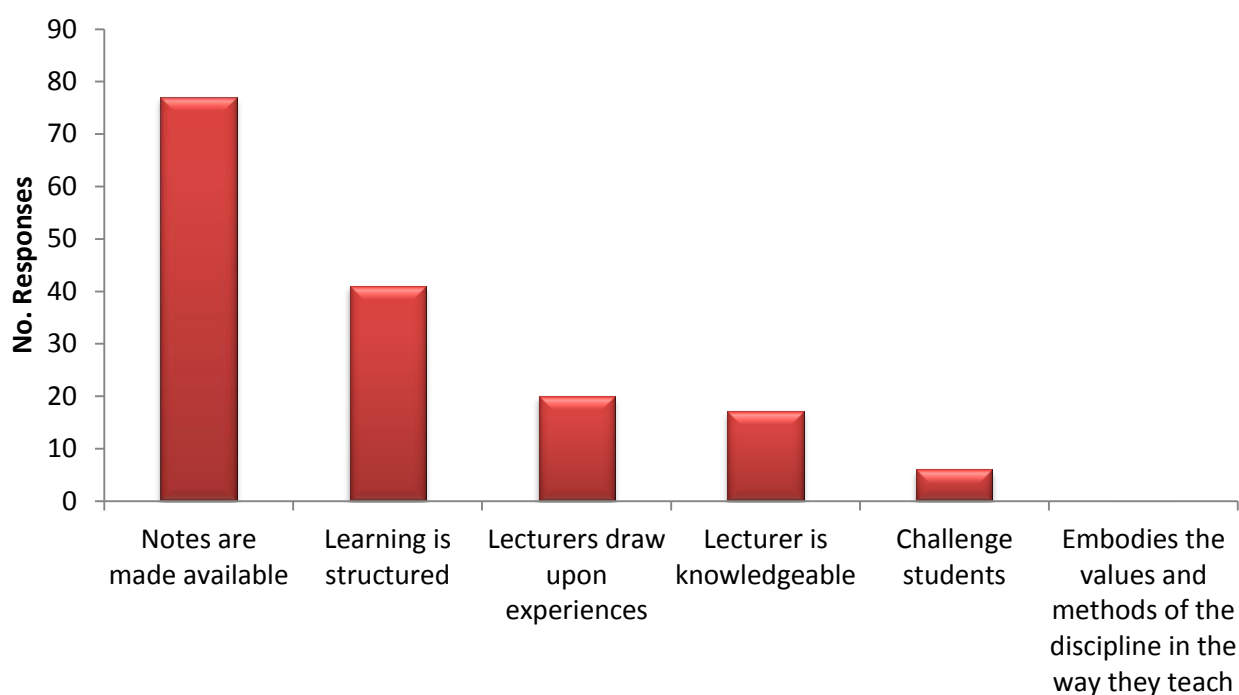
Results in response to HEA What makes a good lecturer?

Teaching Style:



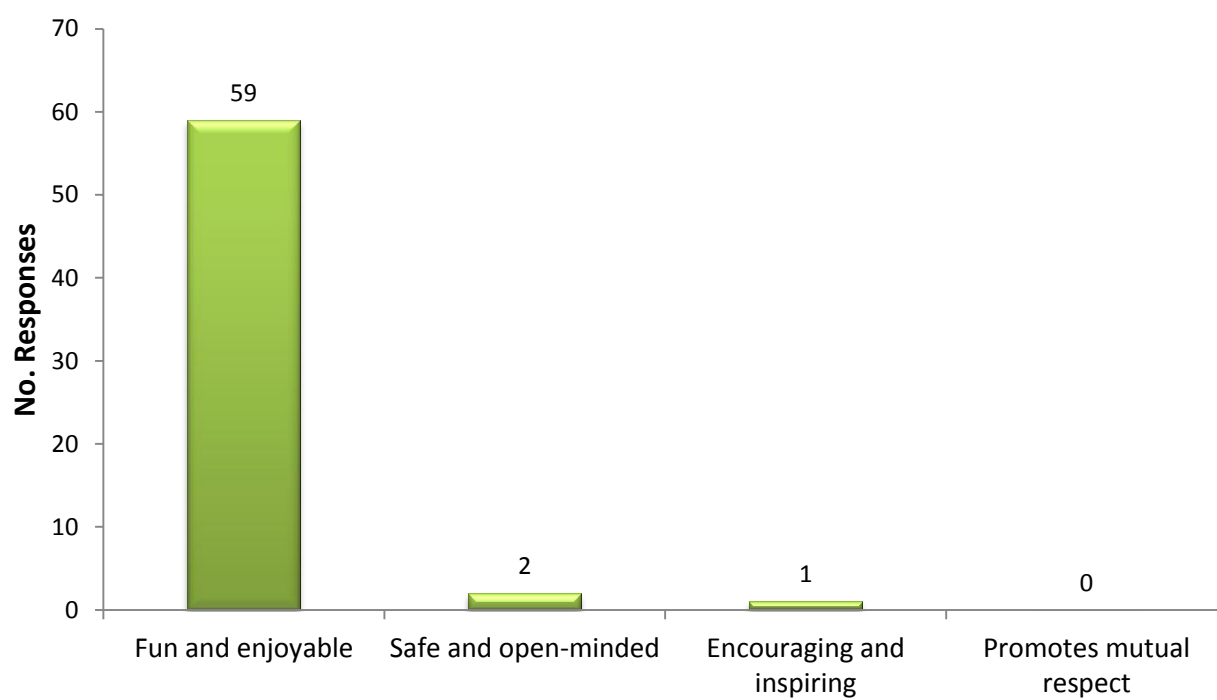
Results in response to HEA What makes a good lecturer?

Content & Presentation:

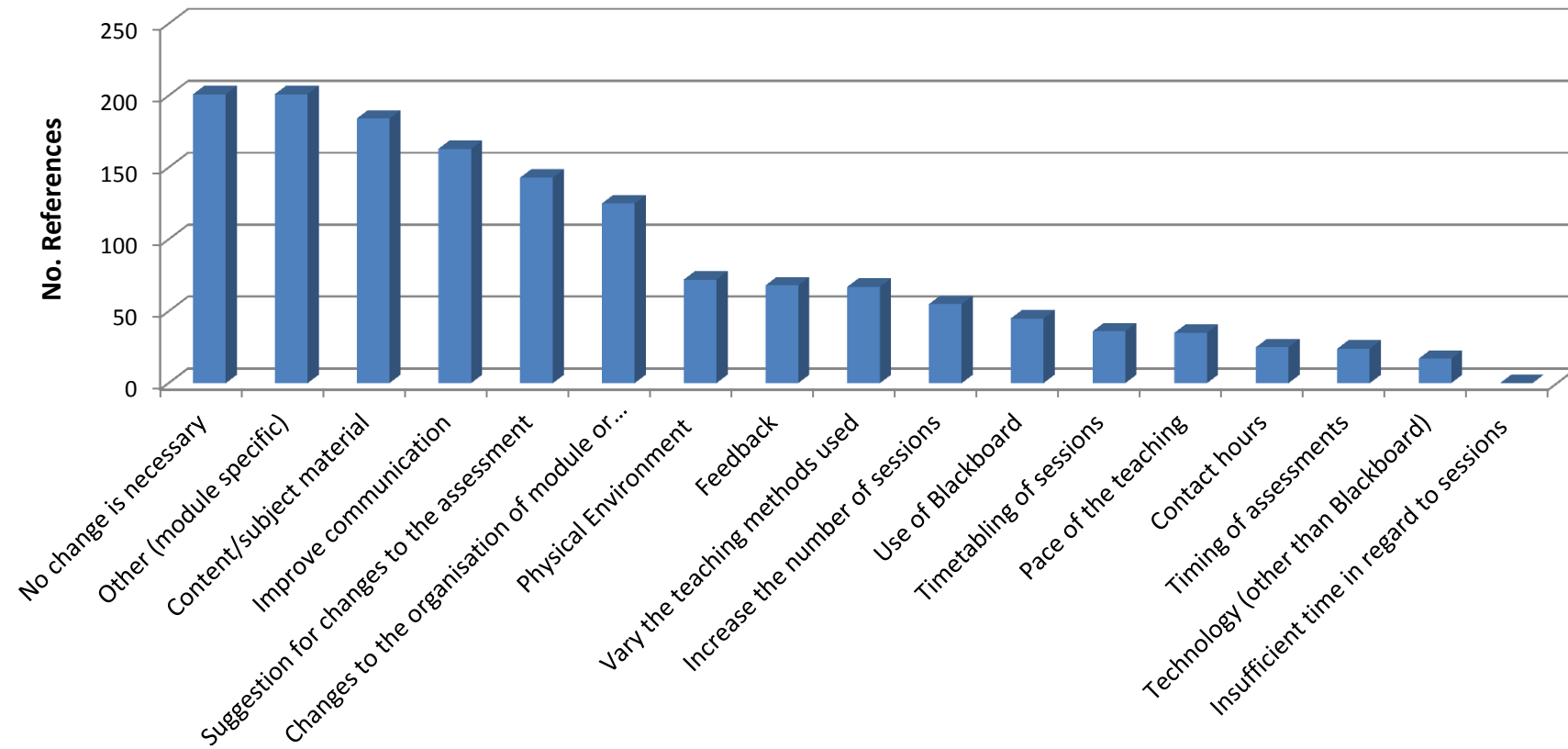


Results in response to HEA What makes a good lecturer?

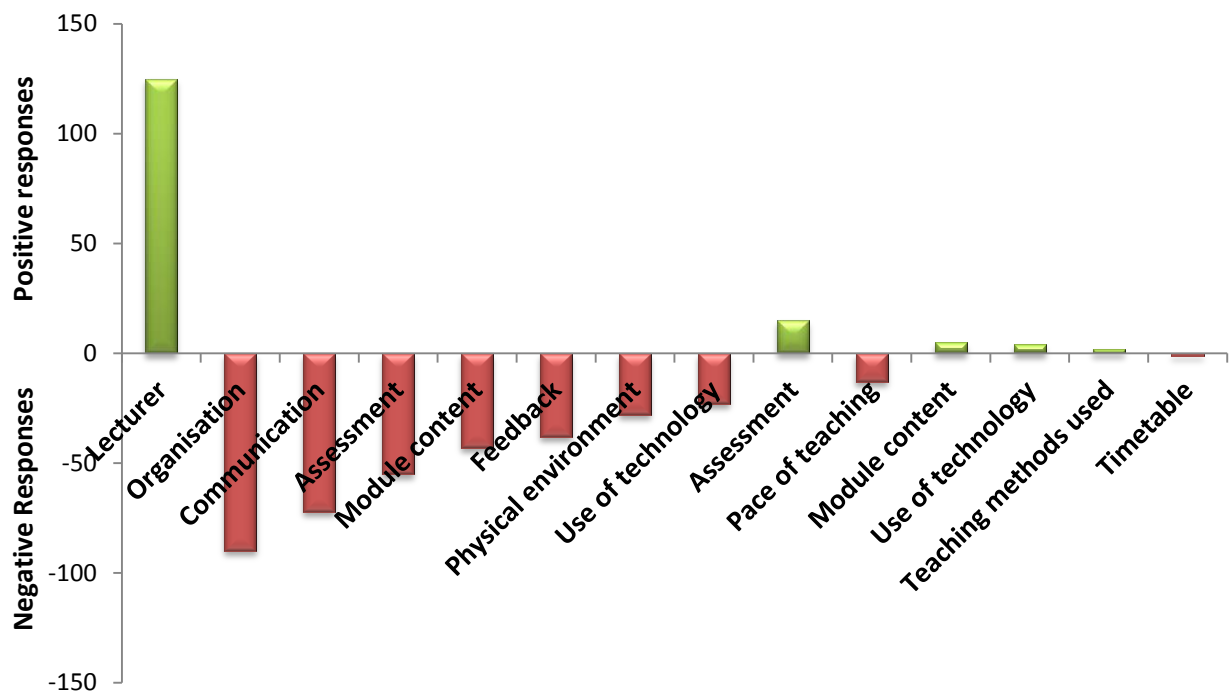
Learning Culture:



Question: What one thing would you most like to change about this module?



Question: Please add any other comments you have about this module:



Discussion

As indicated in the preliminary study the results of this investigation do not give clear conclusive evidence as to why the identified modules were above average within the department and/or above average for a students compared to their other modules during the 2013/14 Academic Year. The analysis of the wider data does allow us to identify key aspects about the teaching of the modules that students favour, and as the modules were identified as being excellent or improving then it is possible that these aspects are contributing to the high attainment or improved attainment for the modules.

Even though the students were not specifically asked what makes a good teacher the data suggests that there are common themes running throughout these modules that students ascertain as being the 'best thing about the module' for which staff at Swansea University can identify and incorporate into their teaching. As per the preliminary study, the prominence of many themes and findings identified are ever more common in the larger data set. Several, if not all, of the major themes identified should not come as a surprise to teachers, for many the key findings are common sense. What the investigation offers is an understanding of what our students feel contributes to a good Swansea teacher, as well as key areas that can be improved within modules.

Looking at the question "what is the best thing about this module?" it is clearly evident that it is how the lecturer interacts with the student cohort and the teaching methods and tools they employ. The data shows that students strongly like lecturing staff who:

- Make the topic interesting
- Encourages contact between students and themselves
- Uses active learning techniques

- Varies assessment methods
- Are clear in their delivery and organisation of the module
- Facilitates learning and encourages reflection
- Uses technology appropriately to support learning and teaching
- Notes and materials are easily made available
- The learning environment is fun and enjoyable

When looking at the major themes emerging from the question “what one thing would you most like to change about this module?” the non-module/subject specific responses relate to:

- Improving communication; both inside and outside of the classroom
- Changes to assessment; both assessment methods and timing of assessments
- Organisation of the module or course; timing of module/topics, frequency and length of sessions etc.
- Physical environment; outdated rooms and equipment
- Feedback; specifically slow return of feedback
- Vary teaching methods; students prefer variety in teaching methods

When asked for further comments about the module the responses further add to the comments already made in relation to the previous 2 questions, and therefore further add to what they perceive to be a good teacher and common changes that could be made to improve the teaching or module.

Conclusion

It is recognised that due to the low response rates, selective range of data and that the students were not specifically asked “what is a good teacher?” it is not possible to identify precisely what makes a good Swansea teacher from this data. But the results of this investigation read in conjunction with Chickering and Gamson's Seven principles are excellent starting points to provide both an overview of good practice as well as an insight into the opinions of Swansea students as to what they perceive to be good teachers and will highlight practices that could result “in a powerful and enduring undergraduate education” (Sorcinelli, 1991, p. 13) at Swansea University.

Bibliography

1. Chickering, A.W., & Gamson, Z.F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin*, 39(7): 3-7.
2. Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre. (2008) SWAP digest 4b. What makes a good lecturer? The student perspective. Social Policy and Social Work Subject Centre, Higher Education Academy.
3. Sorcinelli, M.D. (1991). Research findings on the seven principles. In A.W. Chickering & Z.F. Gamson (Eds.) *Applying the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education* (pp. 13-25). *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, No. 47. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Appendix

Code	Explanation	References
Question1: What in your view is the best thing about this module?		
Chickering and Gamson's 7 principles for good practice in undergraduate education		
CG1/GLQ5	Encourages contacts between students and faculty (including any reference to being helping) / Approachability (included any reference to being helpful)	166
CG2	Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students.	56
CG3	Uses active learning techniques	154
CG4	Gives prompt feedback	29
CG5	Emphasizes time on task	0
CG6	Communicates high expectations	8
CG7	Respects diverse talents and ways of learning	4
What makes a good lecturer		
Qualities		
GLQ1	Calmness	3
GLQ2	Consistency	0
GLQ3	Flexibility	2
GLQ4	Adaptability	0
GLQ6	Enthusiasm	33
GLQ7	Passion about the subject	18
GLQ8	Make topic interesting	192
GLQ9	Clarity of instruction/delivery	119
GLQ10	Engaging delivery	37
Teaching Style		
GLTS1	A good lecturer will have a tool box of styles that he or she will employ depending on the session.	36
GLTS2	A good lecturer will operate at the level of facilitator and encourage autonomy by teaching students how to work for themselves.	90
GLTS3	Good lecturers insert exercises to break up the monotony of one person's voice and to encourage students to think and reflect on what is being taught.	4
GLTS4	We can learn better when lecturers make previous experiences we have had relevant and when they impart why what they are teaching is relevant to the degree.	39
Presentation		
GLP1	I favour the more structured, PowerPoint centred sessions where everything is well organised. (any comment regarding structure: lecture/module/notes)	41
GLP2	A good lecturer ensures lecture notes are available in advance. (any reference to notes/handouts either physical or online)	77
Learning Culture		
GLLC1	Fun and enjoyable	59
GLLC2	Encouraging and inspiring	1
GLLC3	Promotes mutual respect	0
GLLC4	Safe and open-minded	2
Content		
GLC1	Good lecturers must be thoroughly learned in their subject area and	17

	have sound knowledge of current practice.	
GLC2	A good lecturer enables students to see the problems and solutions through different eyes, not only politically, but ethnically, globally and professionally; and challenges students' perceptions.	6
GLC3	My favourite lecturer embodies the values and methods of social (replaced by subject) work in the way they teach.	0
GLC4	When lecturers talk about their own, personal experiences it can help students make the link between theory and practice.	20
Additional		
TECH	Mention technology	81
ENVIRON	Rooms/lecture theatres	2
TIMETABLE	Timetabling issues	0
ASSESS	Reference to assessment method	136
PACE	Reference to pace of lecture/seminar/practical	17
SPECIFIC	Comment specific to the module	20
POS	Positive comment (in relation to additional comments)	0
NEG	Negative comment (in relation to additional comments)	8
N/A	Comment not code able	565

Question: What one thing would you most like to change about this module?		
NO CHANGE	No change is necessary	201
CONTENT	Content/subject material	184
VARY TEACHING	Vary the teaching methods used within the teaching	67
FEEDBACK	Feedback	68
SESSIONS	Increase the number of sessions	55
ASSESS METHOD	Suggestion for changes to the assessment	143
CONTACT HRS	Contact hours	25
COMMUNICATION	Improve communication	163
ASSESS TIMING	Timing of assessments	24
ORGANISATION	Changes to the organisation of module or course	125
TECH	Technology (other than Blackboard)	17
TIMETABLING	Timetabling of sessions	36
TIME	Insufficient time in regard to sessions	0
ENVIRON	Physical Environment	72
BLACKBOARD	Use of Blackboard	45
OTHER	Other	201
PACE	Pace of the teaching	35
N/A	Comment not code able	35

Question: Please add any other comments you have about this module:		
NEG	Negative comment (in relation to additional comments)	316
POS	Positive comment (in relation to additional comments)	311
AMB	Ambivalent	32
N-COMMS	Negative comment in regard to communication	72
N-ORGANISATION	Negative comment in regard to organisation of the module/course	90
N-TIMETABLE	Negative comment in relation to the timetable	1

N-ASSESSMENT	Comment to suggest changes to the assessment	55
N-TECH	Negative comment in relation to the use of technology	23
N-ENVIRONMENT	Negative comment in relation to the physical environment	28
N-CONTENT	Negative comment in relation to the module content	43
N-FEEDBACK	Negative comment in relation to feedback	38
N-PACE	Negative comment in relation to the pace of teaching	13
P-LECTURER	Positive comment in relation to the lecturer	125
P-ASSESSMENT	Positive comment in relation to assessment	15
P-CONTENT	Positive comment in regard to module content	5
P-TECH	Positive comment in relation to use of technology	4
P-DELIVERY	Positive comment in relation to the teaching methods used	2
OTHER	Other comment	31
N/A	Comment not code able	28