



E-learning at UCL: a staff perspective

Report on staff survey

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March 2007

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Introduction

An academic-led working group was set up by the Executive Subcommittee on Innovations in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (ESCILTA) to investigate the existing and potential use of e-learning at UCL in order to inform a decision as to the most appropriate choice of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for UCL. The motivation behind this came from the anticipated upgrade to UCL's VLE due to a reduced level of support from WebCT for the current version (WebCT Campus Edition 4.1).

As part of the consultation process, the working group decided to survey staff and students about their current and future uses of e-learning as well as their views on the use of e-learning for their teaching and learning. This report reviews the results of the staff consultation.

Method

A survey containing 26 questions was developed to address the following areas:

- The number of staff using or not using e-learning and their reasons;
- Staff attitudes to e-learning;
- The technologies used to deliver e-learning;
- Staff views on the existing UCL Virtual Learning Environments
- Staff attitudes to the use of e-learning for distribution of content, collaboration, communication and assessment;
- Examples of best practice.

The survey was developed using Opinio (web-based survey software). An advantage of the software was the ability to use 'branching' to direct the path of the respondent through the survey based on the answers given. This kept the length of the survey to a minimum and ensured that respondents only saw questions that were relevant to them. In order to use the branching the questions were split into sections which were displayed on separate pages. A progress bar was displayed at the bottom of each page so respondents could see how far through the survey they were.

A copy of the survey is given in Appendix 1.

Distribution of the survey

The survey was sent out to all staff as an email from the Chair of the working group via the all-staff@ucl.ac.uk email list. (Appendix 2 contains the email that was sent out). In January 2007, the all-staff@ucl.ac.uk list contained email addresses for 9607 staff. The survey was distributed on Friday 2nd February and closed at 5pm on 14th February. It was re-opened for an additional day at the request of a member of staff who had missed the deadline but was keen to complete the survey.

In addition to the official email from the Chair, the survey was also advertised to the WebCT-Designers mailing list (about 750 members) and to the Teaching and Learning Network (about 130 members). Individual staff members also reported that they had forwarded the email to colleagues encouraging them to complete the survey.

Responses

Overall, 752 staff (8% of staff) accessed the survey and 449 staff reached the end of the survey (referred to as 'completed'). This meant that 303 staff failed to complete the survey. Due to the set-up of the survey, data was recorded each time a respondent clicked the button to move to the next page. This meant that even though some staff 'gave-up' part way through the survey their responses were still stored.

Of those who did not complete the survey, 27 staff did not answer any question and 129 staff only answered the first question, which asked whether they are using e-learning. 72% of the staff who only answered only the first question said they were not using e-learning. Based on comments entered by the respondents, it is believed that the main reason for staff stopping the survey after the first question is because they are not involved in teaching and learning.

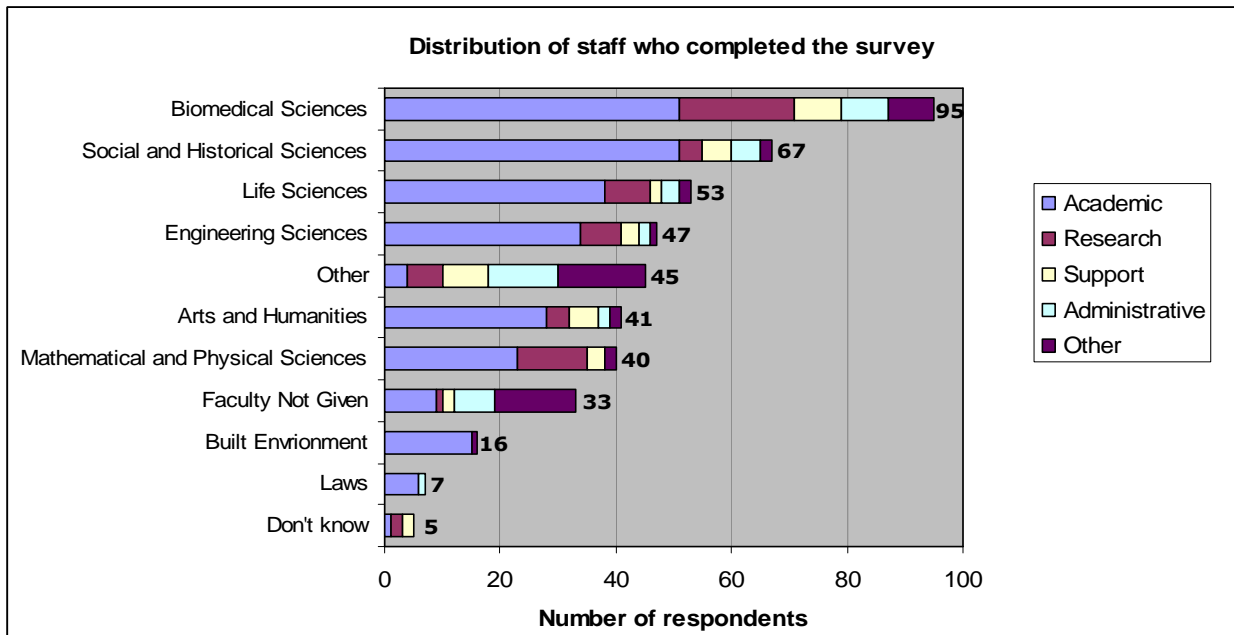


Figure 1 – Distribution of staff who completed the survey

Academic staff accounted for 58% of the respondents who completed the survey. Those categorized as “Other” included those who were not sure about their faculty and those not part of a Faculty (e.g. staff from central divisions such as Library Services, Staff Development, Information Systems and Safety Services).

Feedback on the survey

Generally the survey was well-received by staff:

“Its very useful to have these sorts of surveys and nice to see that developments are happening re: Moodle etc [...]”

Academic, Life Sciences

There were a couple of issues identified through responses given as part of the survey and comments to members of the working group. One issue related to sending the survey to all staff especially as the survey was only relevant to staff involved in teaching and learning. It was hoped that the email and the introductory text would indicate this clearly to staff, however a number of staff who are not involved in teaching and learning started (and in some cases completed) the survey.

“I am not an academic (teaching) member of staff, and so am not sure why you have sent me this survey to complete!”

Research staff, Faculty unknown

“I work in the administrative area so don't need to use e-learning.”

Project Manager, Faculty unknown

The main focus of the survey was to find out what staff are doing with e-learning, however it was reported that the survey appeared biased towards academic uses of e-learning and did not address the needs of staff involved in staff development and training. In some cases staff completed the survey as best they could, however this may have put off a number of staff who are using e-learning technologies, but are not involved in academic teaching activities.

It was also reported that a couple of staff had opened the survey and started it, but had not been able to complete it due to being distracted or called away from their desk. This may have accounted for some of the incomplete responses. The survey was set up to avoid multiple responses and used cookies stored on the respondent's computer to prevent this. If a respondent re-opened the survey, they would not be able to re-start it however they could complete it from another computer.

Staff views on e-learning

To understand how staff felt about e-learning the survey asked for three benefits and three drawbacks of e-learning using open-ended questions. Both current users and those interested in using e-learning answered the questions.

Benefits of e-learning

Of the benefits that staff identified, the two main benefits cited the most were:

- availability and accessibility of courses in terms of 'anytime, anywhere';
- ability to work at your own pace.

These benefits reduce the need for staff and students to travel to a specific location and remove the requirement for studying to take place during set hours. It was suggested that this could open up new markets for UCL and provide more courses for part-time and distance learners both within the UK and overseas. Current users of WebCT and Moodle cited the same reasons as the things they liked most about using the systems.

"[...] Web-based access improves accessibility to students, including access from home during vacations. This was more difficult using the old intranet, where password protection / access control was more difficult."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

"Self-paced work is of great benefit to many students. The ability to work where and when they want is one attribute that students seem to value highly. [...]"

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

"Would like to see more on-line teaching, this would benefit my course. Most of my competitors have 7-10 times the FTE's with e-learning courses with a number coming from overseas. It is something that any professionally based course needs to consider going forward. Professionals are too busy these days to have day release, which leads to taking only recent graduates."

Academic, Built Environment

In one case, the use of e-learning has helped to promote the department:

"[...] Student access through departmental website has increased the hits on our website such that Google now comes out with our course as top hit."

Life Sciences

For those providing staff training, an additional advantage of e-learning is the ability to reach large groups (e.g. for staff induction) without the need for everyone to attend a face-to-face training course.

"[...] Where there are a large number of users to be trained on material which is necessary but not particularly complex, e-learning is a very efficient use of training and development time."

Senior IT Training and Support Officer

"Transmission of information / training to a large group of staff - the whole UCL community! Providing prerequisite and follow-up materials to make conventional SDT [Staff Development] courses more effective. Enable staff to access learning materials when required rather than waiting for specific learning events to be arranged."

Staff Development and Training Officer

Drawbacks of e-learning

Staff identified three key drawbacks of e-learning:

- Technical issues;
- Lack of relevant skills;
- Pedagogical reservations.

Technical issues

Technical issues were cited as one of the main drawbacks of e-learning. The key issues were:

- unavailability of the system due to technical failure;
- network problems and low bandwidth issues for those accessing from home;
- power cuts and problems with electricity supplies (in particular for overseas students);
- security of systems (especially for assessment purposes);
- infrastructure not supporting widespread adoption of e-learning.

“Risk: technology is unreliable and cannot be guaranteed (it may fail, causing no learning, while a traditional classroom / lecture setting rarely fails). [...]”

Academic, Arts and Humanities

“[...] Infra structure not good enough to support some innovations - I do not like slow video projections or pixelated images. Contingencies for system failure if delivery/completion is a constraint?”

Safety officer, Biomedical Sciences

“Technologies at UCL may not be able to support its usage at larger volumes; i.e. big classes means simultaneous access is required [...]”

Administrative staff, Engineering Sciences

Lack of relevant skills

Computer use was also seen as a drawback as many staff did not want to spend too much time looking at a screen. There was also concern that not all students (and staff) would have the necessary IT skills and that reliance on computers would mean that those students without their own computer or internet access at home would be at a disadvantage.

“Computer literacy, surprisingly, is still sometimes an issue for some students and this puts them at a disadvantage Reading from the screen for long periods is more tiring and difficult than reading from paper. This affects concentration. [...]”

Research staff, Engineering Sciences

In terms of skills required for using e-learning systems, staff were concerned about the level of expertise required and the time they have available for training. In some faculties staff who had set up e-learning for their own courses found colleagues asking them for help or even to set up courses for them, which meant an addition to their workload.

Pedagogical reservations

There was a lot of concern about how students would use e-learning and the expectations that they would have of staff. It was felt that students would become lazy in their learning and would rely solely upon materials available online and on the internet and would not use ‘traditional’ resources such as the library and textbooks. There was concern that with more materials delivered online, students would be spoon-fed materials and this would lead to a greater demand for more materials to be available. Staff felt that they would also be expected to be available 24/7 to provide instant answers to questions.

“It provides a false sense of "learning". Students seem to think that time spent at the computer is time spent learning, when it really is only time spent "looking at something”.

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"1. Spoon feeding content to students and them not going and doing their own research in the library themselves. 2. Students not turning up for real teaching and knowing that they can get the teaching material online at a later date. [...]"

Support staff, Social and Historical Sciences

"[...] The more technologically literate sometimes develop rather a "computer game" mentality towards practicals etc., attempting to get through as quickly as possible, not reading properly and generally not benefiting much from the materials. On the whole this is probably not restricted to e-learning but I suspect it might be enhanced by the cavalier attitude many develop in response to the internet."

Research staff, Engineering Sciences

There were concerns that students would not learn the necessary information skills (such as using the library and searching the internet) and would have trouble identifying reliable sources on the internet.

"Wikis need to be carefully edited for factual errors. VLE use needs to be backed up with teaching on good internet research practices, as students often don't distinguish between the credibility and reliability of different internet sources (e.g. a University of Michigan Chaucer resource v. Wikipedia, which is user-edited)."

Academic, Faculty unknown

"[...] The students do clearly find it useful but I worry that it further erodes the development of transferable skills like searching for literature, note taking, learning to evaluate what is important etc."

Academic, Life Sciences

E-learning activities

The following sections look at the four main classes of activities addressed by the survey:

1. Distribution of content
2. Collaboration and group work
3. Communication
4. Assessment and feedback

Staff were asked to rate the activities within each section from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The aim of this set of questions was to identify which activities staff were most interested in using e-learning for, however some respondents commented that they chose their options based on what they are currently doing and not what they would like to do.

“At the moment the things I have put down as unimportant are unimportant in the way I currently use WebCT. This doesn't mean they would be unimportant if I knew how to use them!”

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

1. Distribution of content

Staff were asked to rate the following activities:

- Distributing learning materials (e.g. copies of lecture notes, reading lists, links to websites)
- Distributing administrative information (e.g. module handbook, assessment details)
- Interactive learning materials (e.g. animations, simulations)
- Delivering multimedia (e.g. audio, video)

1.1 Distribution of learning materials and administrative information

Of all the activities staff wish to use e-learning for, distribution of learning materials and administrative information were ranked as the most important, with 86% of staff rating distributing learning materials as important or very important and 74% of staff rating distributing administrative information as important or very important.

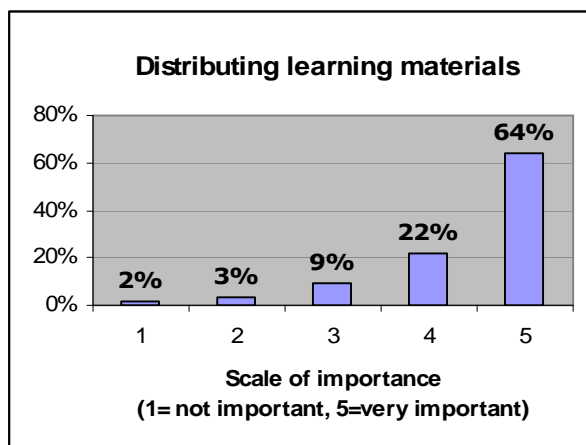


Figure 2 – Importance of distributing learning materials

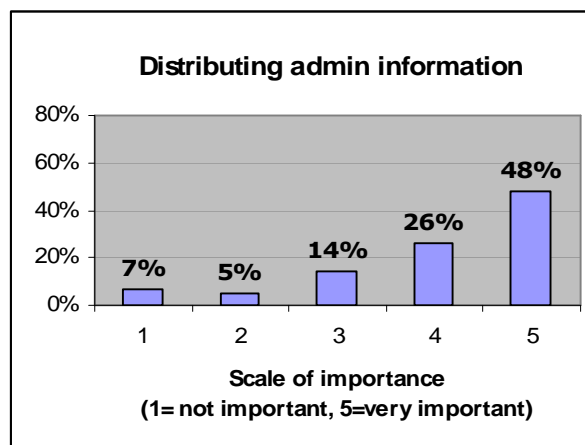


Figure 3 – Importance of distributing administrative information

One of the main reasons for using e-learning to distribute learning materials was that it meant that students could access the materials at any time from anywhere. Materials could be easily updated to ensure that students have access to the most current version and new materials could be added as they become available (e.g. an Academic in Laws suggested “[...] a judgment just handed down by a court”). Materials can also be re-used for subsequent years, or shared with others.

The time and effort involved in creating and maintaining the materials and in setting up an online environment was cited as a drawback. Some respondents felt that staff do not currently receive appropriate recognition or incentives for creating e-learning materials.

"[...] Takes lots of time to set up but there are no incentives to staff to doing this as it only detracts from research time which is the only thing of interest to management."

Academic, Engineering Sciences

Some respondents were concerned that making course materials available online would have an affect on student attendance at lectures; however others felt that this was not always a drawback as it might actually benefit the lecture time due to students being better prepared. It was also suggested that students might spend more time in the lecture listening to the lecturer, rather than note-taking as they would know that they could access the notes at a later stage.

"Students use WebCT as a substitute for lecture attendance rather than as a supplement to classes."

Academic, Engineering Sciences

"Students might think that the use of e-learning is a substitute for attending the lectures (this, in my view, is a major drawback) [...]"

Teaching Assistant, Life Sciences

"One commonly used [drawback] is the poor lack of student attendance at lectures which I disagree with since a good lecturer provides 'value added' in the form of additional material etc and enthusing students to learn through direct contact."

Unknown

"Delivering basic information (lecture notes) in a form that students can consult afterwards, also preparatory questions and thinking and further research for afterwards. This means we have more time in seminars for actual discussion, processing ideas and output, not merely input. Students seem to regard this as extra teaching time, which is good! [...]"

Arts and Humanities

"Has a tendency to reduce face to face contact. Might potentially encourage students not to come to formal classes - but I have certainly not noticed this in my own classes and it makes them much better prepared."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

A large number of people commented on saving paper and not having to make photocopies as reasons for using e-learning:

"[...] Reduces waste paper -- students need only print out what they want and need, and I don't need to spend hours slaving over the photocopier reproducing hand-outs."

Academic, Arts and Humanities

However not everyone was keen to pass the printing over to students:

"[...] I am concerned about the environmental and monetary cost of shifting printing handouts etc to individual students rather than photocopying, but have reduced my handouts significantly this year."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

It was felt that there would be gaps in provision of materials due to the cost of obtaining copyright permissions, in particular for multimedia (especially images and video).

"I would like to be able to base exercises around short sequences from films (i.e. commercially-produced films, not my own), but at the moment this seems too complex in terms of securing the clips, copyright issues, etc."

Academic, Arts and Humanities

"[...] The university has not had access to a good database for images (ARTSTOR) and so the most useful way to use WebCT, for posting images relating to the course, has been problematic for copyright reasons. We also cannot post film clips for the same reason."

Academic, Faculty unknown

1.2 Delivering multimedia and interactive learning materials

Compared with distributing learning materials and administrative information, staff generally rated multimedia and interactive learning materials as having less importance, however at least a third of respondents have rated them as important or very important.

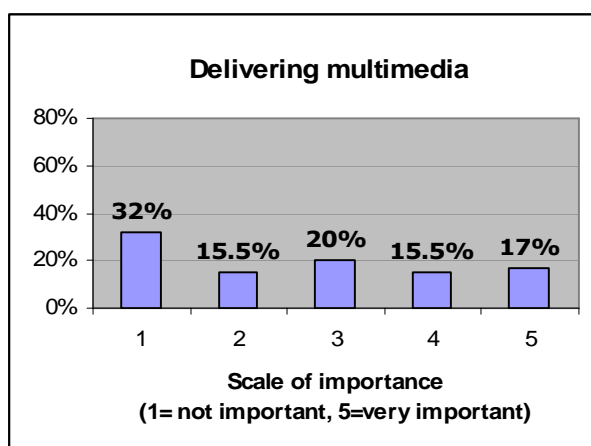


Figure 4 – Importance of delivering multimedia

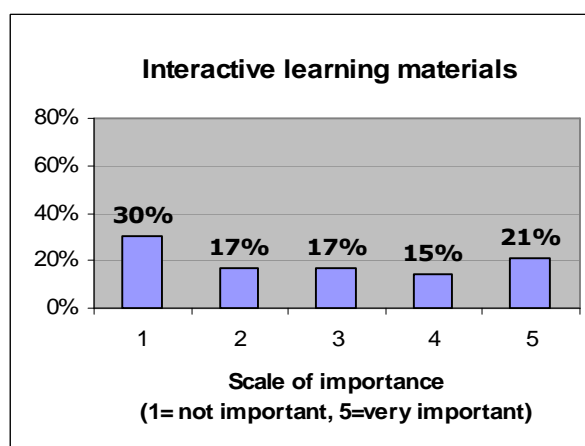


Figure 5 – Importance of interactive learning materials

These figures hide the wide difference between faculties, for example in Life Sciences 50% of staff ranked **interactive learning materials** as very important, compared with only 7% in the Built Environment and 9% in Arts and Humanities.

Delivery of multimedia was also rated as having low importance by respondents from the Built Environment – only 7% rated it as “very important”. Arts and Humanities (23%) and Life Sciences (29%) were the only faculties whose “very important” rating was above the overall rating (17%). A few respondents commented that they would like to be able to deliver video clips (Arts and Humanities, Biomedical Sciences, Life Sciences and Social and Historical Sciences).

When asked about the benefits of e-learning it was felt that multimedia, animations and simulations could be used to make learning more exciting and to help better explain concepts.

“Interactive applets on a web-page can help the students’ understanding and intuition. Especially in the field of computer graphics/geometry, this can help very much.”

Academic, Engineering Sciences

“[...] Simulation of experiments and interactive situations makes some things possible that are otherwise too expensive to use. [...]”

Academic, Life Sciences

2. Collaboration and group work

Staff were asked to rate the following activities:

- Student collaboration or group activities
- Creation of collaborative documents (e.g. using wikis, shared filespace)
- Developing/supporting “learning communities”

There is a range of staff attitudes to collaborative and group activities, with the modal class rating these as ‘not important’.

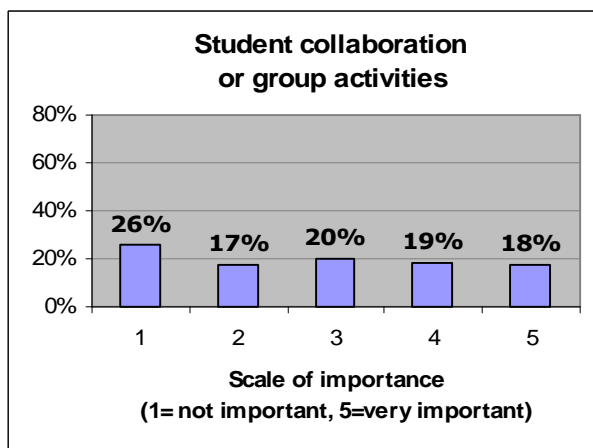


Figure 6 – Importance of student collaboration or group activities

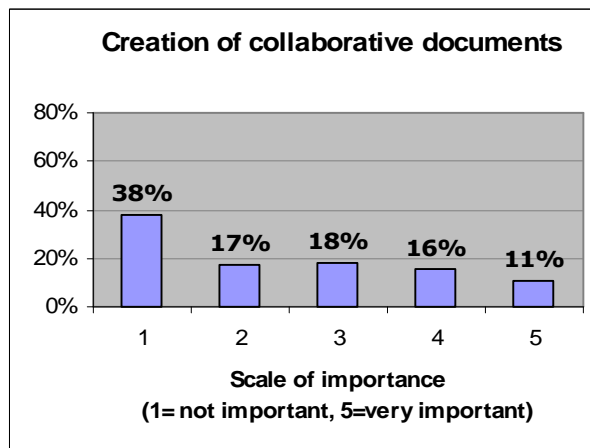


Figure 7 – Importance of the creation of collaborative documents

For creating collaborative documents, Wikis were mentioned by six WebCT users as missing from the current system and five Moodle users quoted wikis as one of the things they liked.

"I would like to be able to set up a wikipedia type page where students post and edit the material themselves."

Academic, Engineering Sciences.

Few people mentioned collaboration, although it was felt that in some cases e-learning would encourage collaboration and would be good for facilitating group work activities, but for others it might make group work and group discussions impossible.

"[...] Enables collaboration between students with supervisory moderation."

Academic, Built Environment

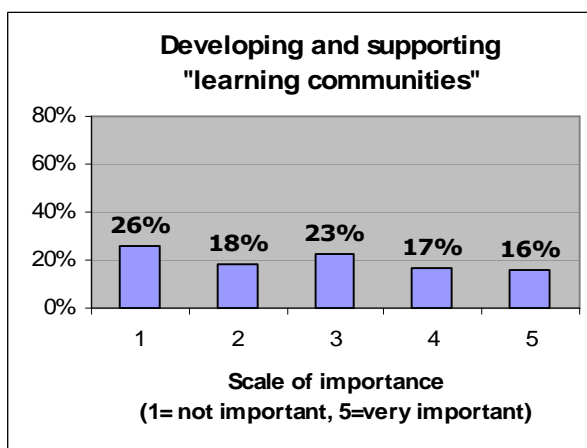


Figure 8 – Importance of developing and supporting "learning communities"

Staff were more or less evenly split over their attitude to 'learning communities' with 33% rating them as high importance (rating of 4 or 5) and 44% rating them as low importance (rating of 1 or 2). Six respondents mentioned that a benefit of e-learning is the ability to develop a community, which is especially important for part-time and distance students and can be facilitated through tools such as discussion forums and chat rooms.

3. Communication

Staff were asked about two types of communication for student-to-student and student-to-teacher communication:

- Asynchronous – using online discussion forums or email.
- Synchronous – real-time communication using instant messaging or chat

Out of all the activities, asynchronous (student-to-teacher) communication was ranked third, after distributing learning materials and distributing administrative information, with 52% of staff rating it as important or very important.

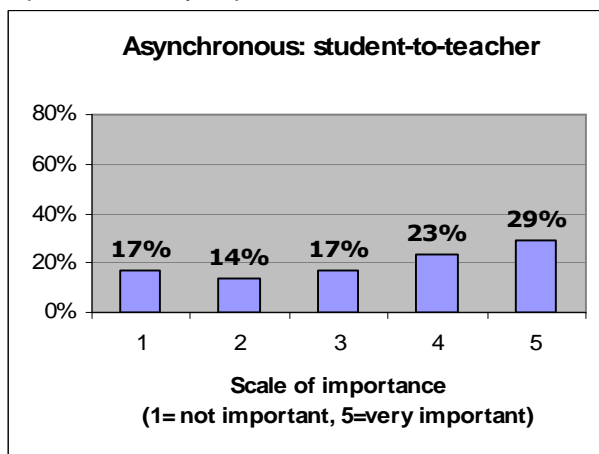


Figure 9 – Importance of asynchronous communication: student-to-teacher

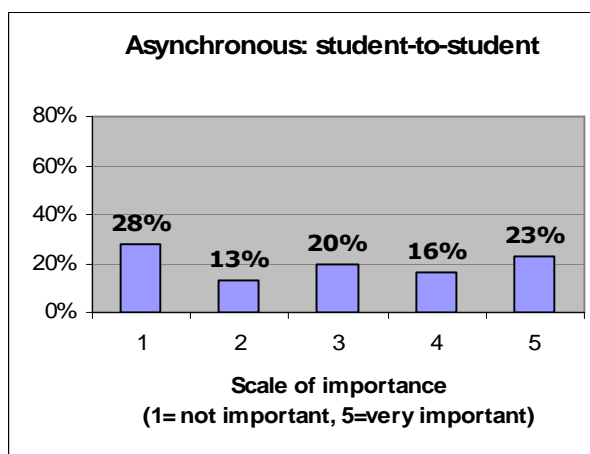


Figure 10 – Importance of asynchronous communication: student-to-student

Some respondents felt that discussion forums were very beneficial as they could be used to answer student questions, to continue discussions started in the classroom and to enhance student-teacher interaction.

"[...] Provision of a non-classroom space where communication between students and with teacher(s) can happen in an informal (and therefore often more fruitful) style. [...]"

Academic, Arts and Humanities

"[...] More powerful as discussions can be more well thought through and involve all members of a group. Written communication better for students with English as a second language"

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"[...] Can use discussion groups to give instant feedback between session, for example on queries over coursework, which is visible to all students."

Academic, Built Environment

"[...] Encourages student-tutor interaction electronically e.g. E-discussion groups which can go beyond what you cover in the class room - for example students who are not good face to face can get involved in discussions and have commented on the anonymity being a benefit."

Academic, Life Sciences

15% of WebCT users and 11% of Moodle users put discussion forums as one of the features of their VLE that they liked, but it was found that students did not always take advantage of using the forums and that using and monitoring discussions could increase staff workload.

"Discussion forum and chat functions are not generally useful. Students migrated quickly back to organising themselves by email or text messaging. [...]"

Academic, Engineering Sciences

"Effectiveness massively dependent on perceived staff input (i.e. if staff response is quick, then tools used; if staff don't reply to posts, system goes dead)."

Academic, Mathematical and Physical Sciences

[...] Discussion forums need extra monitoring for unsuitable usage
Academic, Life Sciences

"Increased interaction between academic and students without extra time in the working day for the academic to deal with these interactions. [...]"
Academic, Engineering Sciences

Synchronous communication was the lowest ranked activity. Only 4% of those who commented on WebCT mentioned that they liked the chat room facility, and only one Moodle user mentioned chat.

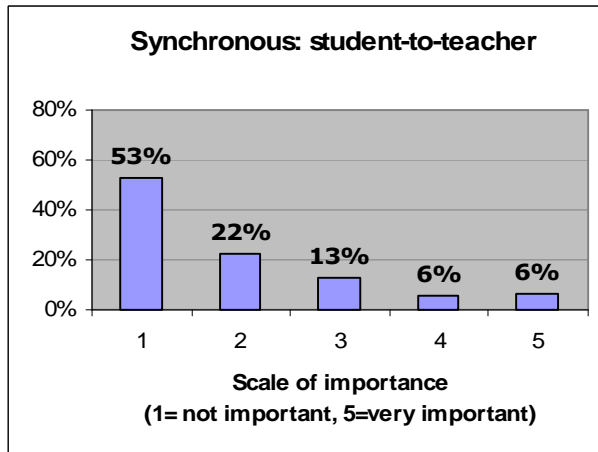


Figure 11 – Importance of synchronous communication: student-to-teacher

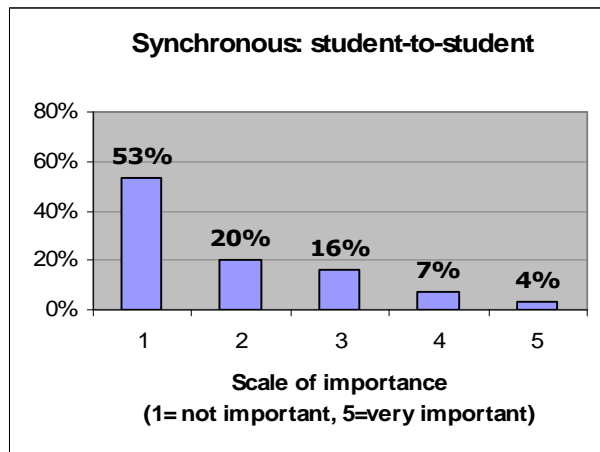


Figure 12 – Importance of synchronous communication: student-to-student

It would seem that whilst a handful of staff like synchronous communication, the majority do not feel that it would be beneficial:

"[...] Instant messaging is absolutely out of the question. We are overworked as it is and students already expect instant responses. [...]"
Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

"[...] Chat is not something I feel is important in anything other than social context for students, since it does not allow reflection time."
Academic, Biomedical Sciences

Although some of the comments about asynchronous communication were very positive, the loss of interaction and face to face contact between staff and students was also the most cited (45%) drawback of e-learning. It was felt that e-learning could be impersonal and lead to isolation and that it would be more difficult to identify whether students were struggling or when they hadn't understood. Students would also not be able to develop their social and communication skills via e-learning.

"Time consuming - seminars last for weeks instead of hours. Communication - takes time to clarify what a student (or tutor) means."
Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"Students often find it impersonal. When English is not the first language, and students do not immediately grasp the meaning of particular concepts/phrases, alternative explanations have to wait until the teacher is available. I miss direct and immediate student feed-back."
Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"Interaction such as question and answer sessions may lead to grasping complicated concepts better. This would be hard to implement on e-learning. Often human interaction and individuals showing passion for a subject enthuse students to explore a subject more, not easily done via a terminal."
Research staff, Engineering Sciences

"[...] Harder/slower to respond to than face-to-face communication. [...]"
Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

4. Assessment and feedback

Staff were asked to rate the following assessment activities:

- Providing revision exercises (not contributing towards final mark)
- Online exams (contributing towards final mark)
- Online submission of coursework
- Student review or assessment of each other's work (peer assessment)
- Providing students with results/progress

Overall staff rated both revision exercises and online submission of coursework as the most important assessment activities and this was reflected in the answers given by current users of WebCT where 15% put quizzes and assignments as features that they liked about WebCT.

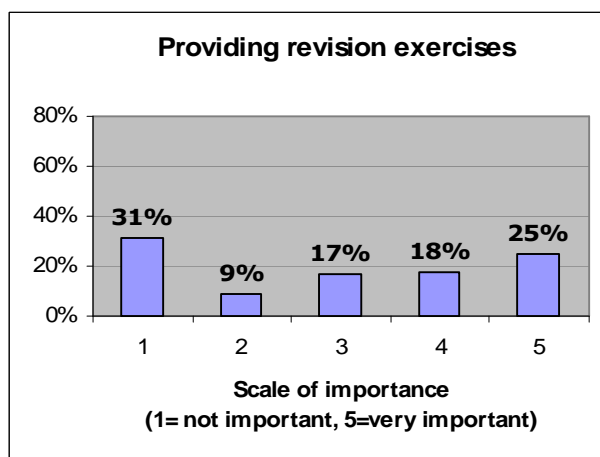


Figure 13 – Importance of providing revision exercises

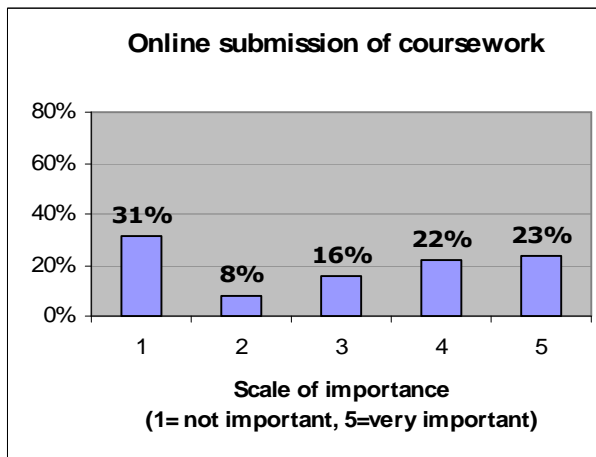


Figure 14 – Importance of online submission of coursework

In terms of assessment, staff felt that one of the key benefits of e-learning was the ability to provide self-assessment and instant feedback to students.

"[...] Computer-based assessments, even when the results are not collated, give students extensive feedback on their learning."

Academic, Life Sciences

"[...] Self-testing in mathematics is a major advantage, especially for weaker students"

Academic, Maths and Physical Sciences

"[...] Allows me to offer quick, computer-marked tests to check understanding. [...]"

Support staff, Arts and Humanities

Online submission of coursework was felt to make the submission process easier. Plagiarism was seen as a major drawback of e-learning as it was felt it would be easier to cheat and to impersonate someone. The ability to submit assignments through a plagiarism detector was therefore appreciated as a benefit. Another drawback was the marking of electronic submissions as this would mean either "on-screen" marking or staff printing out their own copies of the work.

"[...] Online course work submission can make the submission process less cumbersome and easier to track down."

Teaching Assistant, Life Sciences

"[...] Coursework submission is logged (takes burden away from our admin office)."

Academic, Engineering Sciences

"[...] Some staff like to print out handed in coursework to mark so actually transferring responsibility of printing them out from student to staff."

Academic, Built Environment

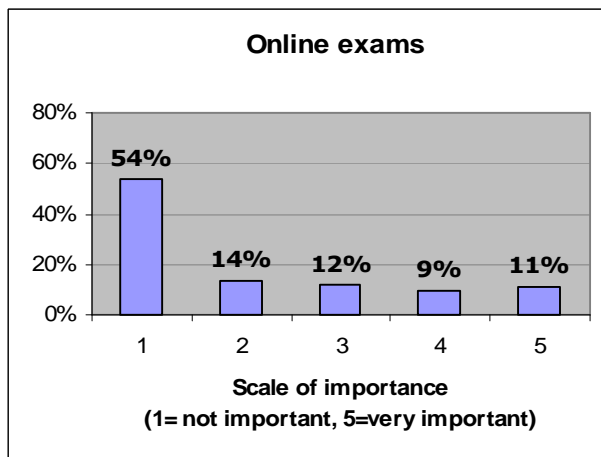


Figure 15 – Importance of online exams

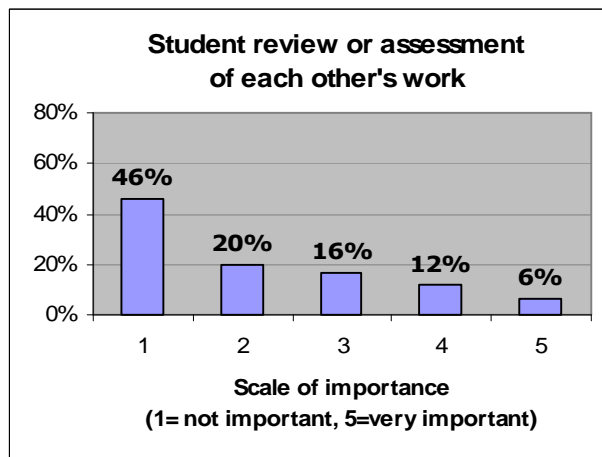


Figure 16 – Importance of student review or assessment of each other's work

Only 20% of staff rated online exams as being important or very important. This was typical of all the faculties with the exception of Life Sciences, where 47% of staff rated it as important or very important.

"Tremendous time saver for tests and distribution of marks [...]"
Academic, Life Sciences

Peer assessment was seen to be of low importance to all faculties, and in four faculties (Arts and Humanities, Built Environment, Laws and Maths and Physical Sciences) no one rated it as "very important". Only two WebCT users mentioned that a peer-assessment or peer-review feature was missing from the current system.

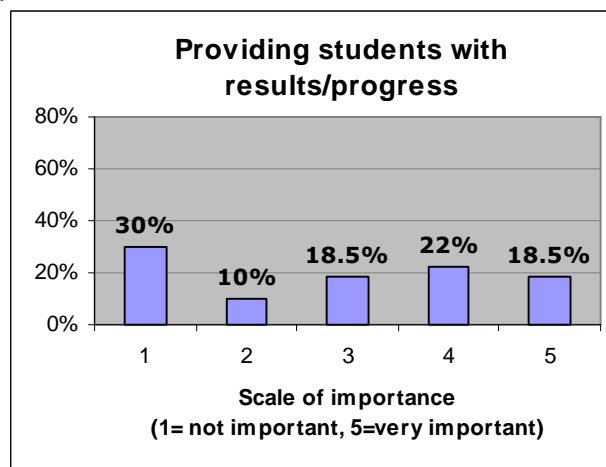


Figure 17 – Importance of providing students with results/progress

There were mixed views on the importance of providing students with results or progress, with equal numbers rating it as low importance (rating of 1 or 2) and high importance (rating of 4 or 5). Few staff commented on the ability to provide grades to students, however it was felt that e-learning would assist with ensuring privacy of marks. Staff using WebCT and Moodle were very keen on the monitoring (or "surveillance") features as they liked having the ability to check the level of student use of the materials, but there were concerns about how easy it would be to identify students who were struggling if there was no face-to-face element.

"[...] Enables monitoring of who is reading (downloading) material and time trail of activity on a document. [...]"
Academic, Built Environment

Use of e-learning

Staff were initially asked whether there is an 'e-learning component' for any of the modules that they teach on or provide support for. To clarify what was meant by e-learning, the following examples were given: online course materials, online submission of coursework, use of online communication (discussions, email), tools for collaboration (wikis, blogs).

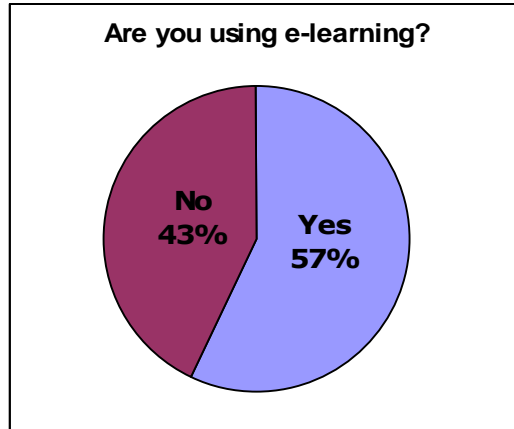


Figure 18 – Percentage of respondents using e-learning

Reasons for not using e-learning

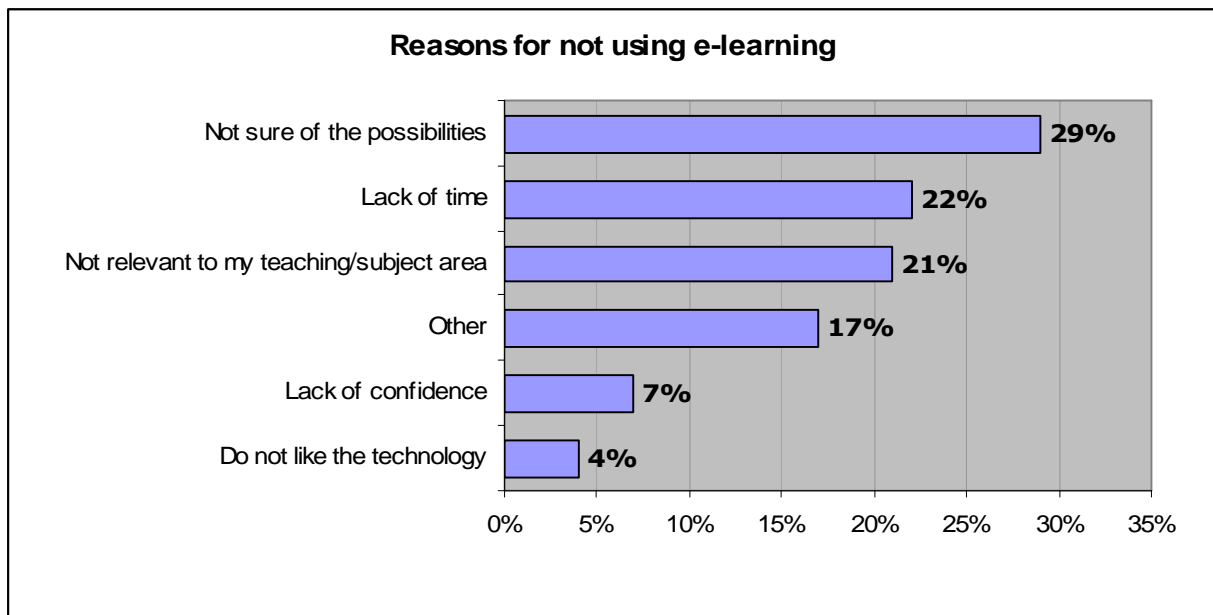


Figure 19 – Reasons given for not using e-learning

Where staff indicated that they were not currently using any form of e-learning, the main reason given was that they were not sure of the possibilities (29%) – which indicates that more promotion of the facilities and support available is required.

The reasons 'Lack of time' (22%) and 'not relevant to my teaching/subject area' (21%) were also reflected in comments given for drawbacks of e-learning.

"[...] Enormous amount of time and effort required from teacher to set up e-learning programs."
Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"The amount of time I have to interact with it. I barely have enough time to prepare material, mark assessments etc within any allocating time budget."
Research staff, Maths and Physical Sciences

"[...] Online material cannot substitute real practicals, especially in the life sciences."
Teaching Assistant, Life Sciences

In the answers given to the 'Other' option, 14% indicated that their reason for not using e-learning was because they are not academic staff or do not currently have any teaching duties. Other reasons included:

- Lack of support or promotion from their department;
- Intending to use e-learning in near future (awaiting decision on new VLE);
- Preference for lectures and face to face teaching.

"It seems to me that putting lecture notes on-line is COUNTERPRODUCTIVE, as it gives students a disincentive to come to class and actually participate in a real-time learning environment. If my lectures consisted of nothing more than the lecture notes, then why bother giving them at all? Students could just read a textbook."

Academic, Mathematical and Physical Sciences

When asked if they would consider using e-learning in the future, 65% said they would, 9% said they would not consider it. Of those that said they would not consider using e-learning in the future, 66% said that nothing would encourage them to use e-learning. Of the remainder, half said that good examples of e-learning might encourage them to re-consider using e-learning.

Technology used to delivery e-learning

The survey aimed to identify the technologies that staff are using to deliver their e-learning and to find out how the current UCL-supported Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) are being used. WebCT is the main institutional VLE and has been in place since 1999, which explains why the majority of respondents are using WebCT. Moodle has been available as a pilot service to staff since August 2006, which explains the relatively low number of respondents using the system.

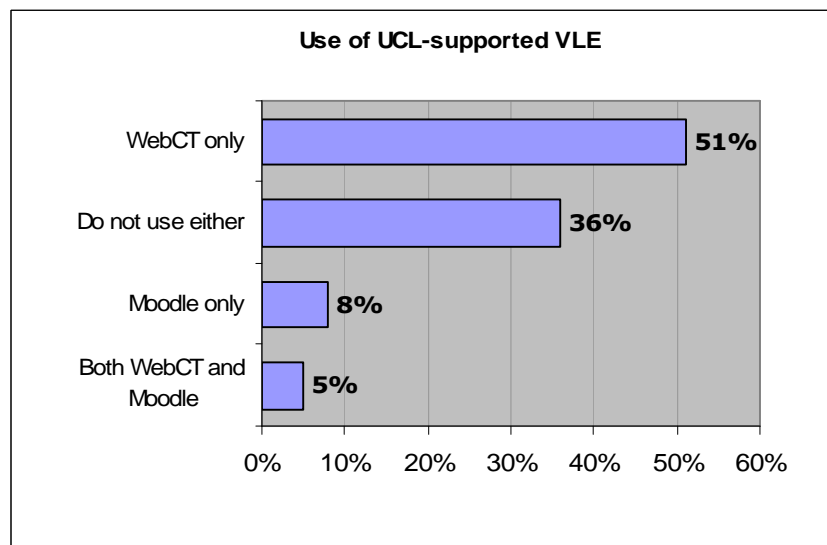


Figure 20 – Percentage of respondents using a UCL-supported VLE

Of those not using a UCL-supported VLE, the majority (65%) use a departmental website or intranet. Materials are also delivered via email, personal homepages, external websites, blogs, wikis and webcam. In some cases staff have developed their own tools:

"I have developed my own Java-based on-line coursework system which uses Apache Tomcat to dynamically produce questions for the students to answer and uses MySQL to maintain a database of the students and their marks."

Academic, Engineering Sciences

In some courses, students have also set up their own online areas:

"Students in one class have set up their own site via Facebook¹: it gives them control over the content and they run the site as they wish. In two other classes, we encourage students to participate in the larger community of bloggers on two existing film sites."

Academic, Faculty unknown

The main reason why staff were not using a UCL-supported VLE was because they did not realise there was one and were unsure about what it could offer. 12% staff reported that they were happy with their current method of delivery – in a couple of cases staff had started using e-learning before the introduction of a UCL-supported VLE so had developed their own systems.

"Unnecessary hassle - when all I need is to post documents on a website I can do that most easily through the web space available on the UCL socrates system."

Academic, Mathematical and Physical Sciences

"I've been writing my own web sites now for more than a decade, so I'm happy to do it myself. VLEs seem to make life unnecessarily complicated, and also to some extent circumscribe what you can do on the web. I prefer my courses to support my own and my students needs, not those imposed on me by the design of a VLE."

Academic, Arts and Humanities

A small number of staff had experimented with WebCT in the past but found that it did not suit their needs. Usability issues were cited as the main problem with using the system:

"I've had a go with WebCT, and it's much too fiddly, controlled, and closed. If I have to take courses to use a system, then there's something wrong with it. Look at the web-creation tools that Google makes freely available, for example. Totally intuitive. Friendly. One can make an impressive and useful website in half an hour, with no tuition. That's the model we should hold in mind when planning our e-teaching tools. Instead, we have these insanely complex and obsessively top-down systems that are - for me - not worth the investment of time."

Research staff, Life Sciences

Other reasons included unsuitability for their teaching (10%) and that they had no need to use a VLE (7%).

¹ Facebook is a social networking site used for setting up groups for sharing documents and sending messages (www.facebook.com)

UCL-supported Virtual Learning Environments

This section looks at the use of the two UCL-supported Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs): WebCT and Moodle. As mentioned previously WebCT is the main UCL-supported VLE and Moodle is currently provided on a pilot basis with a lower level of support. Respondents using the systems were asked to give three things that they liked and three things that they disliked about the current systems and to identify any features or functionality that they felt were missing.

Benefits of using a VLE

As identified as one of the main benefits of e-learning, 30% of WebCT users and 10% of Moodle users liked the ability to provide a variety of materials for students to access at any time, from anywhere and reduce the amount of paper handed out to students.

"[...] I am using it for a large course, and putting all the workshop materials up on the WebCT page has almost eliminated requests for paper copies of handouts for missed workshops."

Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Usability

Usability was by far the most mentioned topic for both VLEs, with comments on user-friendliness, appearance of the interface, navigation within the system and ease of setup. WebCT users had mixed views on the user-friendliness of WebCT; 32% of WebCT users liked the user-friendliness and interface and 9% commented on how easy it was to set up and maintain a course:

"Easy to use - intuitive functions. [...]"

Library staff, Biomedical Sciences

"I find it fairly easy to use - one (good) training session was enough."

Academic, Maths and Physical Sciences

"Clean uncluttered interface; quite easy to use from a designer's point of view; [...]"

Support staff

However 45% of WebCT users were unhappy with the current system and commented on the unattractiveness of the interface and the difficulty of performing tasks:

"[...] It takes too many clicks to do simple things. No command is ever where you expect it to be."

Support staff, Arts and Humanities

"For designers it is not at all intuitive. No drag and drop. Often can't see everything you need to see on single screen."

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"[...] Slow for repetitive tasks - not possible to perform multiple 'select and delete' for example. [...]"

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

"[Missing from WebCT] Fast routes for simple tasks such as loading up PowerPoint slides and reading lists."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

"Clunky, 1980's design - not user-friendly or visually attractive. [...]"

Academic - Arts and Humanities

"[...] It looks very old-fashioned - particularly the logo and typeface used. [...]"

Unknown

Moodle users happier with the usability of Moodle; 58% of Moodle users provided positive comments:

"It's intuitive, so quick to learn [...]"

Support staff, Arts and Humanities

“User friendly interface (similarities to a webpage make it more user friendly. [...])”

Academic, Faculty unknown

However some issues were reported with the front page and identifying where things were in Moodle:

“Difficult to find where student work is stored. Difficult to see exactly how to email students. Directions on Moodle aren't very clear.”

Support staff, Engineering Sciences

“The front page can get a bit long.”

Academic, Faculty unknown

“[...] 2. Tasks can get lost: it's not always clear where a task would be or where the student is in the VLE. 3. Limitations on the design of the front page.”

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

File management

Managing files was a key problem for 12% of WebCT users and 12% of Moodle users. For WebCT users, the main gripes were not being able to upload more than one file at a time and that making files available to students is a multi-stage process.

“Having to upload files one by one (or zip and unzip them). If you have 3 files, either way is tedious.”

Maths and Physical Sciences

For Moodle users, the file upload process was felt to be “clunky” and that it can be difficult to find where files are stored.

Other functionality

As mentioned previously, discussion forums and quizzes were the most popular tools for WebCT users. One of the biggest complaints about the discussions was the lack of email notification of new messages as staff and students would need to remember to log into the system to find out if there were any new items.

In terms of managing a WebCT course, staff liked to ability to track student usage of the course and the materials and to release materials based on date or to specific groups of students. One drawback of the current system is that not everything in the course can be ‘selectively released’ which meant that where WebCT is used to manage a degree programme, students would receive notification about assignments that they were not due to submit.

“[...] The functionality is good (e.g. features such as releasing quizzes/course materials on a certain date/to certain members, student usage reporting, user friendly video streaming, compatibility with student databases such as SITS in order to add large numbers of users easily) and it gives designers autonomy to create the module in a way that suits the subject matter (i.e. structure/design are not too fixed). [...])”

Social and Historical Sciences

For Moodle users, 14% mentioned wikis and 11% mentioned discussion forums as the tools they liked.

Appendix 3 details the specific functionality that staff would like to have in a new VLE.

Moodle vs. WebCT

Moodle users are concerned about the current pilot status of Moodle and they are keen to see this as the new VLE for UCL.

“Moodle seems like a superior, more progressive system than WebCT - I certainly far prefer it as do many others I have spoken to.”

Academic, Faculty unknown

"Having had experience with both WebCT and Moodle I have found the latter by far the best, and hope UCL will decide to develop it in the future."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

WebCT users are keen to see the system continue at UCL, and some users have expressed concern about the possibility of moving to a new system:

"I'm sure it could be improved as per all software systems but in general I would recommend an upgraded version of WebCT to be the most effective platform for UCL in terms of usability and staff/student training resources."

Administrative staff, Social and Historical Sciences

"I'm worried that the time invested in trying to learn WebCT last year is now going to be overtaken by introduction of yet another new system"

Support Staff, Mathematical and Physical Sciences

"I like WebCT and very much hope it will continue - or at least something which has a strong structure within which courses can be organised."

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

Some of the respondents are very keen for UCL to consider an open-source VLE and indicated that they would be keen to develop their own functionality and would like to have support from UCL to do this.

"Even though I am now very experienced in the use of WebCT, I would strongly support a UCL-wide switch to an open-source version of this software, provided that the open-source version provides similar facilities and also that there are software experts hired by UCL to support staff members in their use of the open-source version."

Academic, Life Sciences

"WebCT has been OK, but not entirely satisfactory. I'm a bit wary of having to port everything to a new system, but I do believe that we should go for Open Source where possible. [...]"

Academic, Social and Historical Sciences

Encouraging use of e-learning

The main things that staff feel would improve or encourage their use of e-learning are:

- more information about e-learning and the facilities available;
- more promotion of e-learning;
- good training and support;
- examples of how e-learning is being used at UCL and within their discipline;
- incentives and reward for using e-learning;
- more time to investigate and use e-learning.

However not everyone could identify something that could encourage or improve their use:

"I do not need any more encouragement! I think that e-learning is also at risk of being taken TOO far with the risk that traditional methods be lost. I agree 100% with e-learning and encourage it widely, yet I do not think it sensible to give students EVERYTHING electronically."

Support, Social and Historical Sciences

Information about e-learning

15% of staff who responded to this question said that they would like more information about what is possible with e-learning as they were unsure about how it could benefit them and their students. In particular, they sought information on first hand experiences from current users and feedback on what students want and evidence that it really is beneficial to students. They also wanted to know about what technology and support was available at UCL.

"Easily accessible information about what UCL offers. When I last enquired if my slide/lecture notes could be posted on a student website I was told there was no such thing yet (that was 3 or 4 years ago) but I lost interest after that."

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

Promotion of e-learning

Staff felt that e-learning should be promoted more widely across UCL and came up with the following suggestions for promotional activities:

"[...] Regular e-mails to all staff informing us of new programs and events/sessions taking place."

Support staff, Biomedical Sciences

"[...] Presentations or demonstrations by people who have used it successfully. [...]"

Research staff, Life Sciences

"[...] IT newsletter/internal UCL version of Ask Jack (<http://blogs.guardian.co.uk/askjack/>)"

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"[...] An e-learning champion competition, where departments bid to receive central funding in exchange for rolling out a particularly innovative/high end use of e-learning which can then be publicised across the university. Also perhaps an e-learning week where departments' uses of WebCT could be showcased and promoted via the website, emails, etc."

Administrative staff, Social and Historical Sciences

"Group for e-learning administrators could be started to encourage knowledge/idea sharing. The e-learning unit could also send out regular newsletters with tips and ideas to promote this kind of thing"

Administrative staff, Social and Historical Sciences

Training and support

A third of staff said that training and support would encourage or improve their use of e-learning:

"[...] It is also important to reduce the barriers that exist for e-learning use by providing support and training (such as that provided by the excellent LTSS)."

Support staff, Arts and Humanities

Training

In terms of training, staff would like to attend courses on using the specific technologies as well as pedagogical training on how e-learning can be used and the benefits of using e-learning.

"[...] A short training session from an experienced VLE user working in the humanities, who could share some advice about the most useful ways of deploying a VLE and using it as a teaching tool."

Academic, Faculty unknown

"More short training sessions. Maybe 1 hour at lunchtimes to introduce different kinds of software? I don't know how to do wikis, blogs, etc, but I'm open to suggestions! [...]"

Academic, Arts and Humanities

"[...] On-line tutorials for learning how to use the technology (so I can dip in to it 'as and when' [...])"

Academic, Life Sciences

"A simple single PDF manual for beginners would help us get started - the location needs to be easily found. A full manual for advanced users in PDF format will help as well. [...]"

Academic, Life Sciences

"Awareness and benefits of tools; perhaps a short 30 minute workshop on the fundamental applications with an update of how e-learning is being used by others and could be used in the future."

Academic-related, Engineering Sciences

Support with the technology

The level of support required ranged from discussion of needs with an e-learning expert, to support with using the technology, to someone to develop the courses and materials. It was suggested that Teaching Assistants could be employed to assist with course development and maintenance as well as activities such as moderating blogs and wikis.

"Help from computer literate person to actually write the material under my supervision. [...]"

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

"Getting more support or at least a teaching lesson to help us set it up and maintain it better with less effort and within a shorter space of time. [...]"

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

Staff also mentioned the provision of more support staff, in particular local support staff within departments or faculties as well as "sustaining the wonderful supportive service by the UCL techies" (Academic, Life Sciences).

"More support staff - academics are too busy to spend time developing stuff"

Academic, Life Sciences

"[...] If the university wants more "e-learning" it should hire people to help implement the excellent ideas I'm sure many of the teaching staff would have. [...]"

Academic, Faculty unknown

Support from UCL

In addition to support with using e-learning, staff wanted support and guidance from both UCL and their own departments on the adoption of e-learning and for more people within their department to use e-learning. Only a couple of people suggested that UCL should make the use of e-learning mandatory.

[...] UCL to articulate a clear educational philosophy and strategy on technology enhanced learning [...]

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

[...] Make it obligatory as part of a range of teaching-learning [...]

Research staff, Faculty unknown

"It would be a mistake to force people to use e-learning. It is more important, and effective, to encourage a culture of innovation (by, for example, allowing 'rough and ready' experimental implementations). [...]"

"[...] As an adjunct to traditional methods, and as a way of delivering course materials & information (and self assessment) - it is marvellous and should be standard practice across the College."

Support staff, Biomedical Sciences

It was also felt that UCL should look to modify existing policies in particular to cater for the use of e-assessment such as online exams or online submission of coursework:

"[...] I would like to see UCL change its rules on final exams to allow finals to be taken through such software too. The students like the online exams and they save teachers a huge amount of time."

Academic, Life Sciences

"[...] Still need hard copies of any material that constitutes examination submissions [...]"

Research staff, Biomedical Sciences

"[...] How will you get exam boards and visiting examiners to accept electronic essays etc?"

Academic, Built Environment

Examples of best practice

Staff wanted to find out more about what has been done with e-learning, both at UCL and within their own disciplines. It was felt this would encourage those not using e-learning as well as inspire those currently using it to do more.

"Nothing like some success stories, examples of good practice to motivate and encourage us [...]"

Academic, Biomedical Sciences

Staff were asked to suggest examples of best practice both at UCL and outside of UCL. It seemed that staff generally suggested their own courses or courses within their own departments with typically only one or two people suggesting a particular course. The two courses from UCL that received the most 'votes' were:

MSc/Diploma/Certificate in International Primary Care - Department of Primary Care and Population Sciences. This is a fully web-based distance learning course. The course team won the THES e-tutor of the year award in 2005 for their approach and focus on pedagogy.

To view a sample version of the course:

- Location: www.ucl.ac.uk/webct
- WebCT ID: uclguest
- Password: webct

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods - Department of Political Science (Dr. Jennifer Van Heerde)

The site can be accessed at: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/spp/rm>. This is password protected, however temporary access may be granted by contacting the web administrator (a.crompton@ucl.ac.uk) or Dr Jennifer van Heerde (j.heerde@ucl.ac.uk), quoting your 'UCL User ID'.

When asked about best practice outside of UCL the following institutions were most frequently mentioned:

- **UK:** London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, University of London External Programme, University of Hertfordshire and the Open University.
- **USA:** MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, esp. their use of Open Courseware) , Harvard and Stanford

Interestingly, some respondents pointed out that best practice sites “...were created by grants to grad students and full-time IT people, not by teaching/research staff member. ...don't expect already overextended staff at UCL to create sites like these.” (Academic, Faculty unknown)

Appendices 3 and 4 provide the full list of examples given by staff.

Incentives and rewards

About 10% of those who answered felt that there should be incentives provided to encourage busy staff to take the time to develop e-learning. They felt that there should also be recognition of the time and effort involved in developing and running courses that use e-learning and that this should be taken into consideration for staff workloads.

“[...] Incentives (extrinsic rewards) in the system to expand e-learning rather than depend on the intrinsic motivation/generosity of time of individuals.”

Academic, Life Sciences

“[...] Formal acknowledgment (by UCL) of this key component of teaching, rather than just having a "points per lecture, points per tutorial" based workload allocation.”

Academic, Life Sciences

“More time and reward for investing the effort into setting it up. Increased staff student interaction via e-learning needs recognition that this will take up staff time so needs increased resource.”

Academic, Engineering Sciences

Time

16% of respondents said that having more time would encourage or improve their use of e-learning. Staff would like “more days in the week” in order to plan what they want to do with e-learning, to learn the skills required, to develop e-learning materials (in particular interactive materials) and finally time to run and maintain their e-learning courses. Some respondents felt that recognition of e-learning as part of a teaching workload and more dedicated help and support with creating e-learning would help to provide more time.

“[...] More time to set up courses and develop a wide range of interactive material (such as video). It is an extremely time consuming business. [...]”

Academic, Life Sciences

“More TIME available for learning how best to use e-learning and for training on how to use the e-learning software and other supporting software. TIME to make use of the existing support system for VLE at UCL. Everybody to be given training to be e-learning literate (again, it takes TIME to learn)”

Unknown

“More time or a teaching assistant to deal with the extra work.”

Academic, Engineering Sciences

Conclusions

This survey has provided a valuable insight into the views of staff at UCL on e-learning. The low response rate indicates that there is still a lot of work to be done to promote the use and benefits of e-learning. However those that responded are generally keen to use e-learning.

In terms of activities, staff want to provide learning materials and administrative information online, but there is interest in other online activities such as provision of revision exercises, online submission of coursework and asynchronous discussion between students and teachers. Staff would therefore like advice and training in how to make the best use of e-learning to complement their teaching.

Staff feel that whilst there are a number of advantages of using e-learning (in particular availability of learning materials), there are still a number of drawbacks (such as the lack of interaction). In a lot of cases these could be overcome through additional support from UCL in the form of support and training, incentives for using e-learning and recognition of work so that e-learning development is taken into consideration when allocating staff workloads. Staff would like e-learning to be seen as complementary to their existing teaching methods and not as a replacement.

Those currently using a UCL-supported VLE are keen to see improvements made in functionality, and in some cases an open-source system is felt to be the answer as it allows UCL to develop the functionality required.

The results of the survey indicate that there are a number of key tasks for UCL to undertake in order to improve and encourage the use of e-learning in the future:

- Promotion of e-learning at UCL;
- Showcases of best practice at UCL (through face-to-face demonstrations and guest accounts);
- Provision of incentives and rewards for staff;
- Continuation and extension of support and training for e-learning;
- Revision of existing assessment policies to cater for e-assessment.

Appendix 1 – Staff survey questions

E-learning at UCL: Your Perspective

An academic-led working group has been set up by the Executive Subcommittee on Innovations in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (ESCILTA) to investigate the existing and potential use of e-learning at UCL in order to inform a decision as to the most appropriate choice of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for UCL. It is expected that in the next year or so, we will need to upgrade UCL's VLE due to a reduced level of support from WebCT for the current version (WebCT Campus Edition 4.1).

The results of this survey will provide valuable information to assist the working group. For more information about the working group please contact Andrea Townsend-Nicholson (Chair) at ccaavle@ucl.ac.uk.

The survey should take around 5-10 minutes to complete. You will be asked a maximum of 21 questions.

1. Is there an 'e-learning' component to any of the courses you teach on or provide support for?
E.g. online course materials, online submission of coursework, use of online communication (discussions, email), tools for collaboration (wikis, blogs)

- Yes **[branch to question 5]**
- No **[branch to question 2]**

2. What are your reasons for not using e-learning?

(please select all that apply)

- Lack of time
- Lack of confidence
- Not sure of the possibilities
- Not relevant to my teaching/subject area
- Do not like the technology
- Other (please specify)

3. Would you consider using e-learning in the future?

- Yes **[branch to section Your views on e-learning]**
- Don't know **[branch to section Your views on e-learning]**
- No **[branch to question 4]**

4. What might encourage you to use e-learning in the future?

(please select all that apply)

- Nothing – I have no intention of using e-learning in the future
- Information about how e-learning can help me
- Information about what technology is available at UCL
- Information about the support available at UCL
- Funding to assist with developing online materials and activities
- Examples of good practice with e-learning
- Other (please specify)

Using a Virtual Learning Environment

5. Do you use a UCL-supported Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to deliver your e-learning component? If so, which one(s)?

- I use WebCT only **[branch to question 8]**
- I use Moodle only **[branch to question 11]**
- I use both WebCT and Moodle **[branch to question 8]**
- I do not use a UCL supported VLE **[branch to question 6]**

6. How do you deliver your e-learning component?

(please select all that apply)

- Department-supported Virtual Learning Environment (please give the name of the VLE below)
- Departmental website or intranet
- Other (please specify)

7. Do you have any specific reasons for not using a UCL-supported Virtual Learning Environment?

(Open-ended)

[Branch to question 14]

Your use of WebCT

8. Please give three things that you LIKE about WebCT.

(Open-ended)

9. Please give three things that you DISLIKE about WebCT.

(Open-ended)

10. Are there any features missing from WebCT?

(Open-ended)

[If (a) at Question 5, branch to question 14]

Your use of Moodle

11. Please give three things that you LIKE about Moodle.

(Open-ended)

12. Please give three things that you DISLIKE about Moodle.

(Open-ended)

13. Are there any features missing from Moodle?

(Open-ended)

Importance of e-learning

For the following activities, please indicate the importance of the following e-learning or technology-enabled activities for your teaching on a scale of 1-5 (1=not important, 5=very important).

14. Distribution of content

- Distributing learning materials (e.g. copies of lecture notes, reading lists, links to websites)
- Distributing admin information (e.g. module handbook, assessment details)
- Interactive learning materials (e.g. animations, simulations)
- Delivering multimedia (e.g. audio, video)

15. Collaboration/Group work

- Student collaboration or group activities
- Developing/supporting "learning communities"
- Creation of collaborative documents (e.g. using wikis, shared filespace)

16. Communication

- Asynchronous: student-to-student (e.g. discussion forums, email)
- Asynchronous: student-to-teacher (e.g. discussion forums, email)
- Synchronous (in real time): student-to-student (e.g. instant messaging)
- Synchronous (in real time): student-to-teacher (e.g. instant messaging)

17. Assessment/Feedback

- Providing revision exercises (do not contribute towards final mark)
- Online exams (contribute towards final mark)
- Online submission of coursework

- Student review or assessment of each other's work (peer assessment)
- Providing students with results/progress

18. Please give details of any other e-learning or technology-enabled activities, not mentioned above, that are important or very important for your teaching.

Your views on e-learning

19. Please suggest three benefits of using e-learning.
(Open-ended)

20. Please suggest three drawbacks of using e-learning.
(Open-ended)

21. What three things could improve or encourage your use of e-learning?
(Open-ended)

E-learning 'best practice'

We are keen to identify examples of best practice in e-learning both at UCL and outside of UCL. Are there any courses or programmes with e-learning components that you would recommend?
Please provide as much information as possible.

22. At UCL:

23. Outside of UCL:

About you

To help us ensure we have responses from a good cross-section of staff from we would be grateful if you could provide the following information.

24. What faculty are you in?
#drop down list of faculties

25. Please indicate your job category:

- Academic (e.g. Lecturer/Senior Lecturer)
- Research (e.g. Research Assistant, Research Fellow)
- Support (e.g. Teaching Administrator, Computer Officer)
- Administrative (e.g. Departmental Administrator)
- Other (please specify)

26. Is there anything else you would like to add?
(Open-ended)

Many thanks for contributing to this important piece of research. The results will be reported to ESCILTA. If you would like a copy of the results, please contact ccaavle@ucl.ac.uk

For more information about the tools and support available for e-learning at UCL go to: www.ucl.ac.uk/learningtechnology

Appendix 2 – Email to all-staff

Dear Colleague,

We would like to ask you to complete a survey on E-learning and Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs). Your timely response will be of great assistance to us and we hope that you will be able to help.

The survey is being run by the VLE Evaluation Working Group, whose aims are to establish the e-learning requirements of staff and students at UCL. These requirements will inform a decision as to the most appropriate choice of VLE for UCL. It is expected that in the next year or so, we will need to upgrade UCL's VLE because the level of support from WebCT for the current version (WebCT 4.1) will be reduced.

The working group would very much appreciate your feedback. To complete the survey, please go to the following web address:

<http://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=448>

You will only be allowed to respond once. The survey will be open until 5pm on Wednesday 14th February.

Many thanks for your help.

Andrea Townsend-Nicholson
Chair of VLE Evaluation Working Group

For more information or comments, please contact ccaavle@ucl.ac.uk

Appendix 3 – VLE functionality

The following features were mentioned as important functionality to have. The majority of these features have been mentioned by only a few of the current VLE users. Those marked as high importance have been mentioned by a number of current users.

Access to VLE and courses

- Guest account so others can view the course materials
- 'Student view' for designers to check that things are working
- Access for UCL staff and students via UCL ID and password
- Access for non-UCL people – such as short course students, external lecturers, external examiners.
- Automatic registration of students (in particular from Portico lists)
- Ability to add more than one student at a time.

Content

- Ability to incorporate audio/video files, including streamed files.
- Ability to upload more than one file at a time (**high importance**)
- Minimal steps to add content materials.
- Sharing files between courses (for re-use)
- Area for students to upload files.
- Spell-checker.

Collaboration and group work

- Wikis
- Ability to split students up into groups.
- Group and tutorial sign-up sheets.

Communication

- Email notification of new discussions, assignment submissions, announcements. (**high importance**)
- Discussions
 - Ability to save when drafting discussion messages.
 - Ability to edit/remove messages.
 - Ability to sort threads by sender, chronological order, topic.
 - Moving messages between forums.
- Chat – notification of new comments in chat room.

Assessment and Evaluation

- Quizzes
 - Ability to incorporate images into quiz questions.
 - Ability to re-open a quiz to individual students.
 - Preventing students from opening other webpages whilst doing a quiz.
 - Automatic 0 for students who fail to take a quiz by deadline.
- Online submission
 - Releasing assignments to specific groups of students - not everyone enrolled in a course
 - Link to plagiarism detection system
- Survey
 - Automatic reminders sent to students who have not yet completed the survey

Course management

- Ability to track student usage.
- Selective release of materials, assignments, quizzes based on time or to a specific group of students or based on completion of a survey or assessment activity.

Other

- Events system – where details of events could be added.
- Pictures of students or student webpages.

Appendix 4 – Examples of best practice within UCL

The following are examples of e-learning best practice at UCL that were suggested by staff. In some cases staff have pointed to specific examples, in others only a department or staff member is mentioned.

Arts and Humanities:

- Dutch - Virtual Dutch and an introductory course on bibliography;
- Greek and Latin;
- Icelandic (using Mp3 files for speaking skills and motivation enhancement)
- Russian and Polish (the use of Smartboard)
- UCL SLAIS (all modules)

Biomedical Sciences:

- Cardiac Morphology: Interactive Virtual Archive (www.cardiacmorphology.com)
- Discourse tool (Royal Free) ; PG Cert Programme with BCCA nursing groups in conjunction with Coventry University (www.coventry.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-part-time-a-z/a/2228)
- Eastman Dental (Statistics course)
- Histology practicals given to medical students
- MSc/Diploma/Certificate in International Primary Care (WebCT) - run by Trish Greenhalgh;
- MSc in Travel Medicine (WebCT)
- MSc/Diploma in Medical Mycology (WebCT)
- MSc Neuroscience
- National Core Curriculum programme where lectures can be accessed for distance learning www.cardiacmorphology.com/corecurriculum05/corecurriculum05.htm)
- Paediatrics (WebCT)

Built Environment:

- Bartlett School of Architecture, Part 3 professional certificate (WebCT) (Susan Ware)
- MSc course in Sustainable Heritage (WebCT)

Engineering Sciences:

- Bloomsbury Centre for Bioinformatics courses (introduction to bioinformatics in particular);
- Computer Science
- Electronic and Electrical Engineering
 - BT MSc - www.ee.ucl.ac.uk/students/postgraduate/masters/btmsc/
- Geomatic Engineering (Moodle)
- Management Studies Centre
 - Business Studies ('just in time' organic approach to designing and running an e-learning enhanced course ; tutors Nina Seppala/Paul Griseri);
 - CourseCompass with Kotler, Principles of Marketing - 4th European Edition, directly from Pearson Education

Life Sciences:

- Anatomy & Developmental Biology
 - CD-ROM resource 'The Embryonic Disk'
- Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 - Biochemistry (Assessment and learning e-tutorials)
 - BIOC1001 - interactive tutorial programme, course quizzes (WebCT)
 - BIOC2001 - interactive virtual practicals and on-line practical exercises, course quizzes (WebCT)
- Biology - BIOL3003
- Human Communication Science
 - Toolkit for language data analysis - www.ucl.ac.uk/HCS/current-students/bscss/toolkit/
 - SPSC2002 (1.0 unit BSc course), uses WebCT for: posting of lecture notes, weekly/biweekly quizzes, progress tests, discussion of lecture material, and communication between students and teachers.
- Psychology - PhD in Educational Psychology (Psychological Testing in Education and Research Design and Statistics)

Maths and Physical Sciences:

- Chemistry
 - Chemistry for Biologists;
 - Using wikis to get students to work collaboratively (in groups of 4-5) to write 'model answers' to previous exam questions. (Andrea Sella)
- Earth Sciences
 - Geomaths I - www.es.ucl.ac.uk/undergrad/1st_Year_Courses/GEOL1009.htm

Social and Historical Sciences:

- Anthropology
 - Anthropology Research Methods
 - Anthropology 'Digital Curation' - students create their own virtual exhibitions using 3D objects and interpret them (Moodle) (Graeme Were)
 - Interactive International Teaching at Marie Curie programme (www.ucl.ac.uk/mariecuriesocanth)
- Archaeology
 - Museum studies - ucl.ac.uk/museumstudies and ucl.ac.uk/museumstudies/digit (includes a blog and collaborative tagging)
- Centre for the Advancement in Learning and Teaching
 - PG Cert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (CLTHE)
 - Internal 'Community of Practice' of Principal Investigators, sharing good practice and learning from each others' experiences (Richard Churcher)
- Geography - Julian Thompson's courses
- Political Science
 - Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods Course (Tutor: Dr.Jennifer Van Heerde)
 - "Theories of International Relations" UN simulation (Tutor: David Hudson)
- The Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science - student intranet is well-managed and easy to use

Central Divisions:

- Dissertation Writing Skills
- Health and Safety
- HR induction (On-line Equality and Diversity)
- Information Systems: ECDL; KAZ self-teaching typing tutor via IS e-learning zone
- Library Services: WISE (WebCT)
- Widening Participation: Transition Programme
- UCL Basic Skills programme.

And some others...

- Adastral Park broadcast lectures; lunchtime lectures
- Basic Statistics for Research
- Certainty-based marking, for formative & summative assessment. Comment-facilities within LAPT
- SIPS electronic appointment system (in-house).

Appendix 5 – Examples of best practice outside of UCL

Most respondents suggested e-learning projects where they themselves used to be tutors or learners, so they have first-hand experiences of the courses. The following are the courses and Universities that were recommended:

UK:

- Birkbeck College WebCT support for part time courses.
- The University of London External Programme: Masters in Citizenship and History Education; Certificate, Diploma and MSc in International Primary Health Care; CeFiMS/SOAS.
- Institute of Education: courses by Anita Pincas.
- King's College London: MA in War in the Modern World.
- London Metropolitan University: use of Yahoo Groups; PG taught business courses.
- London School of Economics: Government Department.
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: Distance Learning programmes.
- Open University: Lyceum (an asynchronous language learning environment).
- Oxford Brookes: staff development module for lecturers on online learning.
- Institute of Concrete Technology: Diploma in Advanced Concrete Technology.
- Teachers' TV: Earth Sciences: Introduction to metamorphic Rocks
<http://teachserv.earth.ox.ac.uk/courses/es2-metrock/quizzes.html>
- Translation Research Summer School (<http://www.researchschool.org>) - collaboration between University of Manchester, University of Edinburgh and UCL.
- UKHEP has developed some very good courses for nurses and other health care professionals.
- University of Coventry: Paediatric Cardiothoracic Care course
(www.coventry.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate-part-time-a-z/a/2228)
- University of East London: course in alternative learning technology; MSc in Environmental/Sustainable Architecture.
- University of Edinburgh: Medical Ethics and Law (www.law.ed.ac.uk/distancelearning)
- University of Hertfordshire: the School of Humanities using VLE called StudyNet; system based on Notes; Creative Writing (<http://perseus.herts.ac.uk/uhinfo/index.cfm?2542BD5C-D544-0C4F-D1AC-7848EFC16CB7>)
- University of Manchester: EMBER bioinformatic platform.
- University of Sheffield: Dept of Philosophy (an internet research project for first year students). CETL- CILAS.

Australia:

- Flinders University (Adelaide, Australia): PG course in Maritime Archaeology
(<http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/archaeology/courses/maritimegrad.php>)

Germany:

- Marburg University: linguistics online course (<http://linguistics.online.uni-marburg.de/>)

USA:

- Georgia State University: Hyper Physics: Video Demos in mechanics (<http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/hph.html>)
- Harvard: Medical Institute animations <http://multimedia.mcb.harvard.edu/media.html>
- Richmond University: Information Literacy courses
- Yale: Art History and Film Studies Sites
- University of California, Berkeley: Film Bibliography sites
- University of California: Institute for Pure and Applied Mathematics tutorials
(<http://www.ipam.ucla.edu/schedule.aspx?pc=matut>)
- Oregon Health Science University: Bill Hersh has an excellent online programme in Health Informatics.

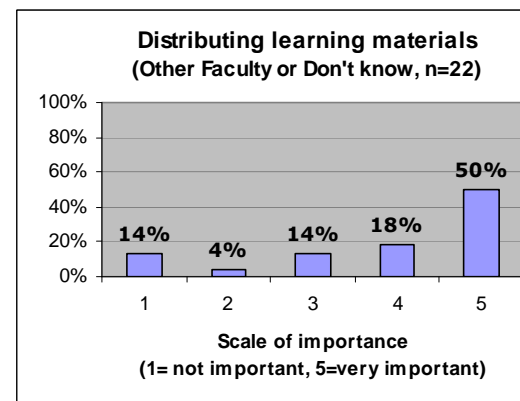
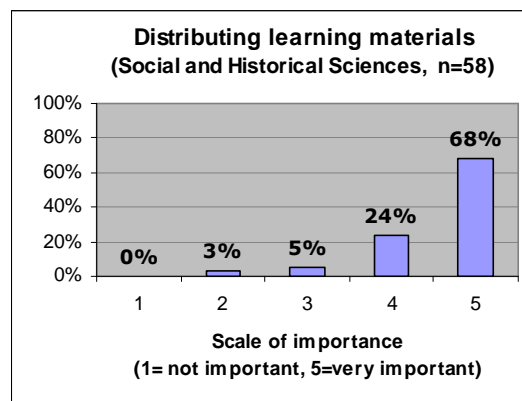
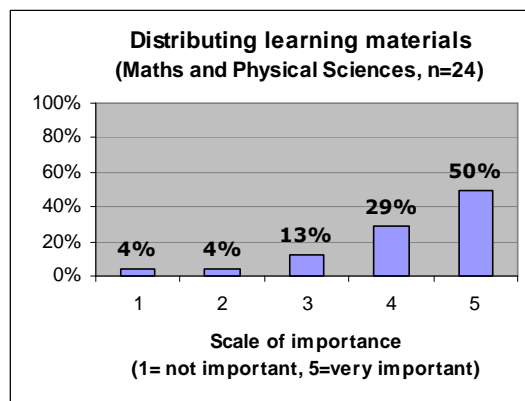
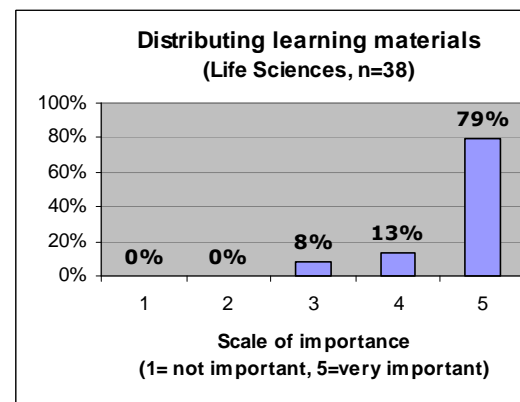
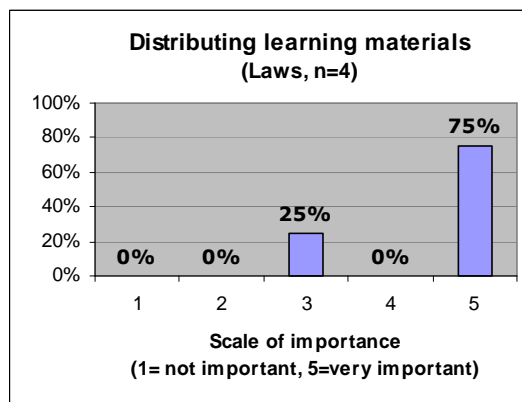
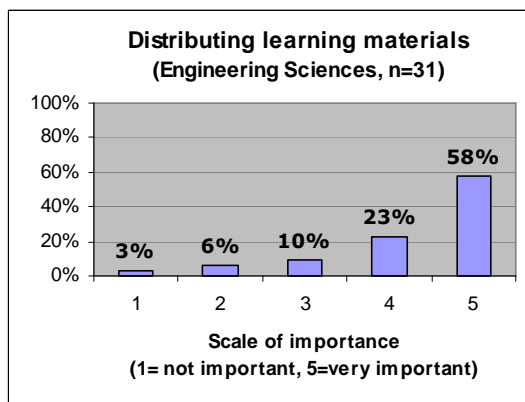
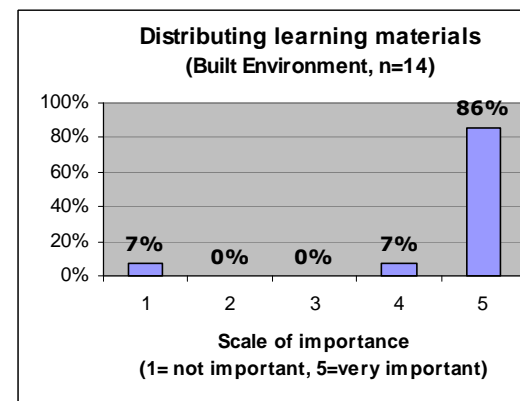
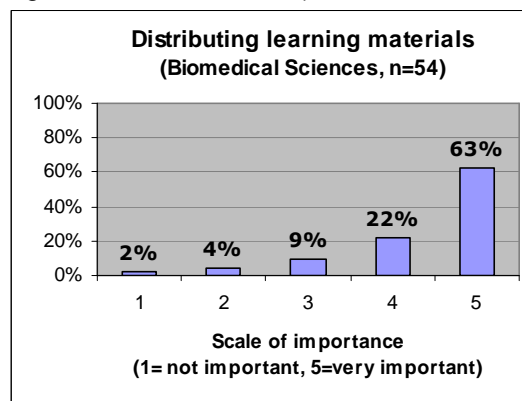
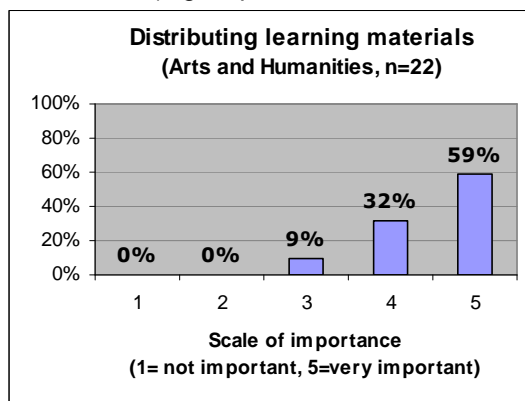
In addition to specific courses, the following lists of best e-learning practice projects were also suggested:

- University of London Centre for Distance Education - <http://www.cde.london.ac.uk/index.htm>
- National network for e-staff development containing a collection of case studies of good practice across the HE sector - <http://e-staffdev.lboro.ac.uk/index.php?section=23>

Appendix 6 – E-learning activities: tables by Faculty

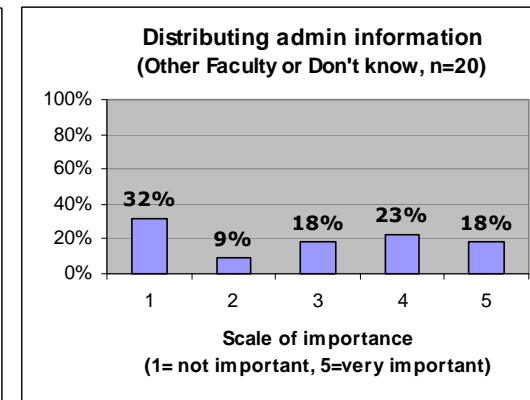
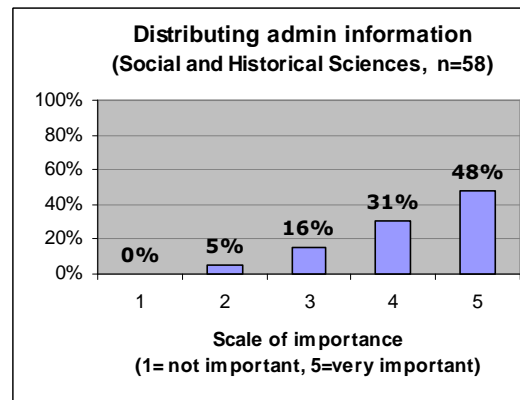
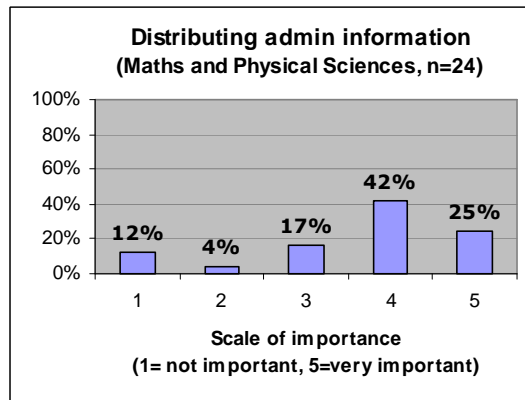
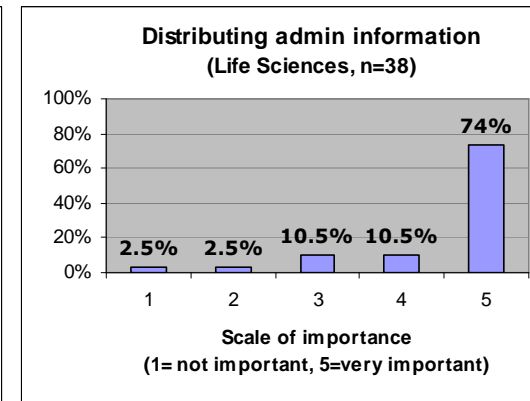
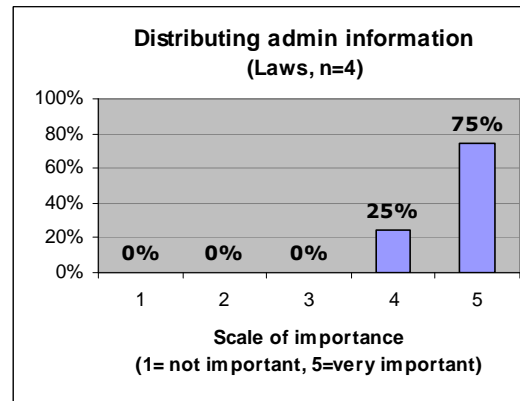
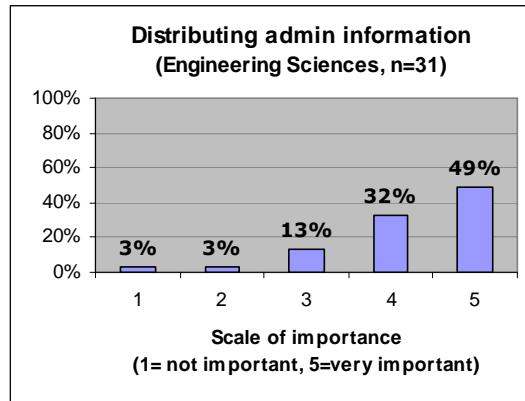
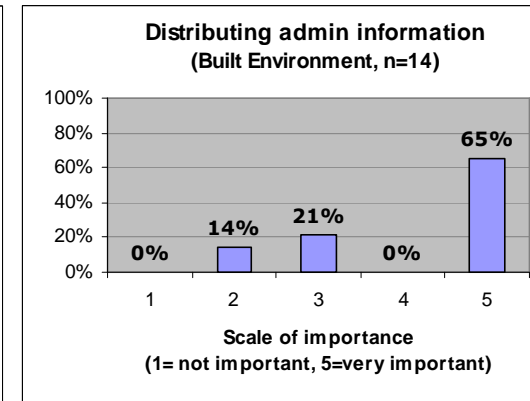
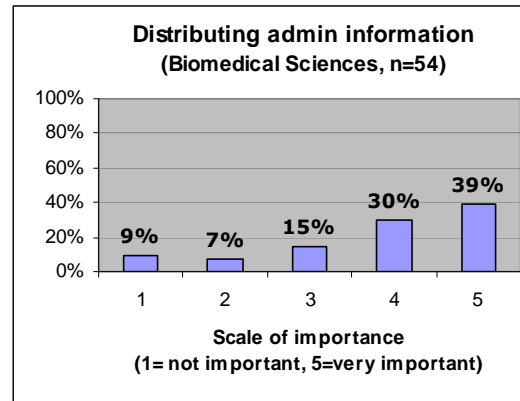
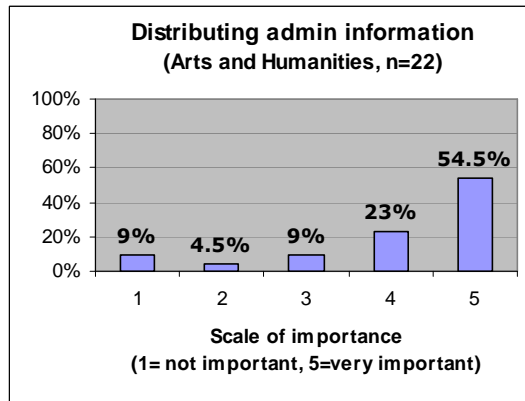
Appendix 6.1 Distributing learning materials

(e.g. copies of lecture notes, reading lists, links to websites)



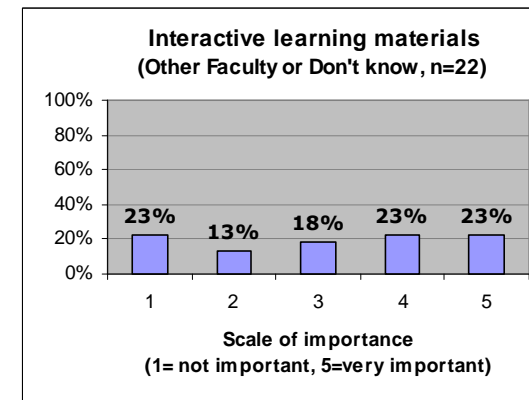
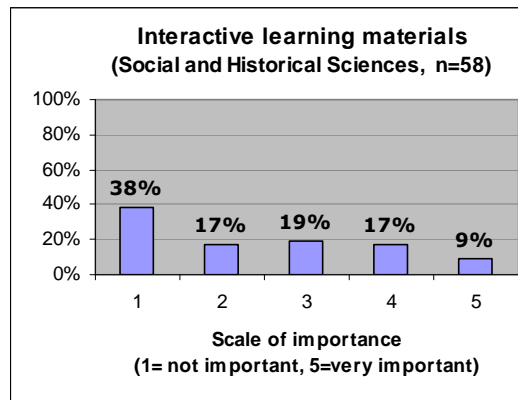
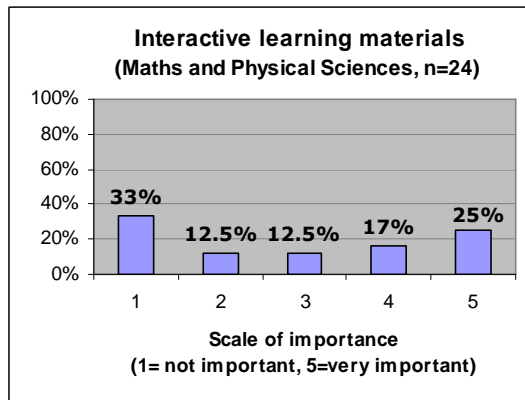
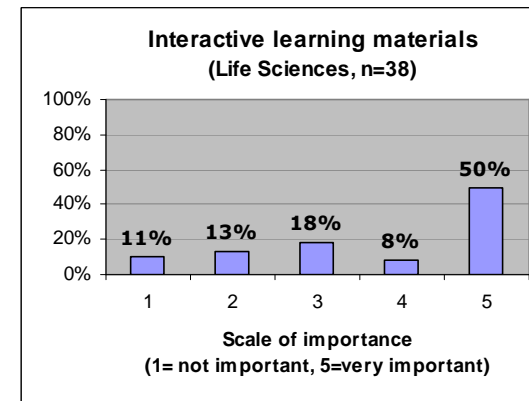
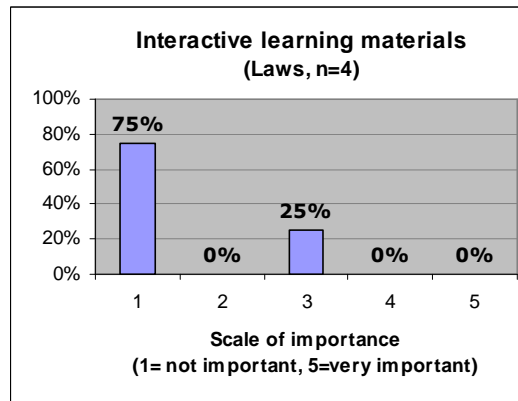
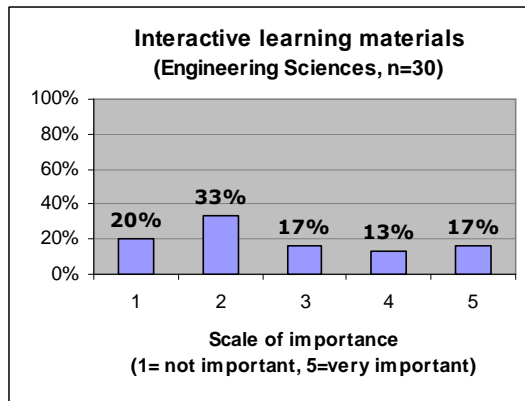
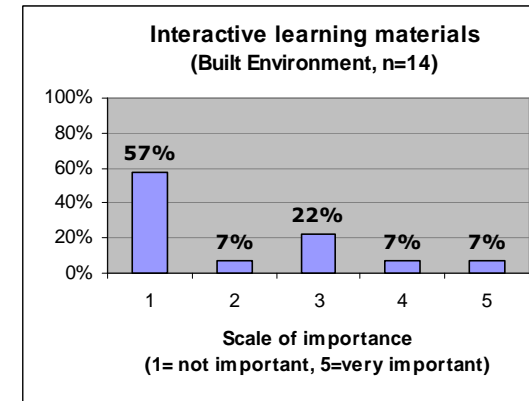
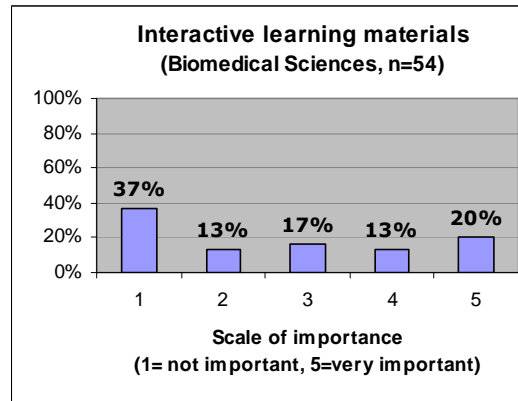
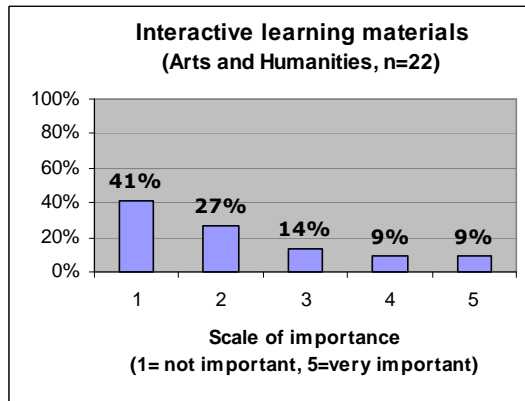
Appendix 6.2 *Distributing administrative information*

(e.g. module handbook, assessment details)



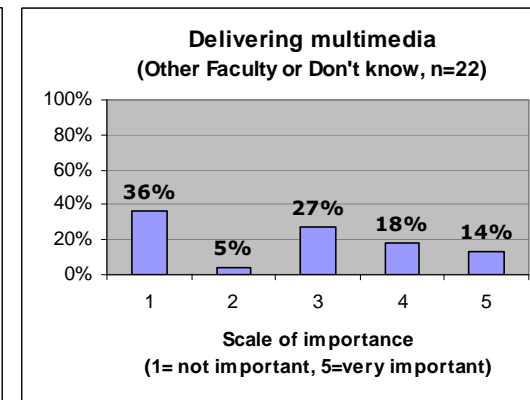
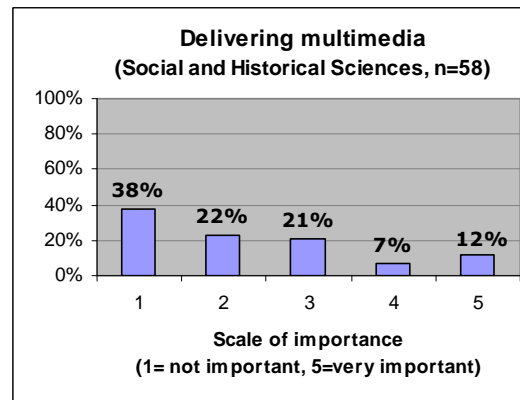
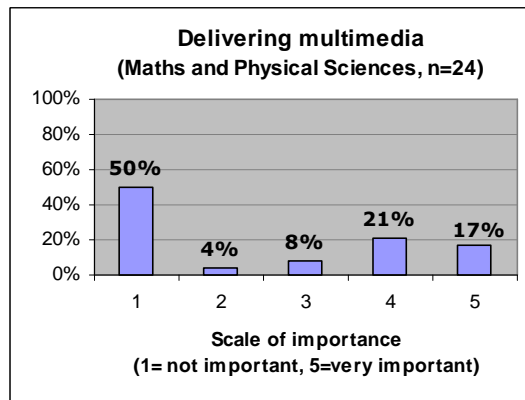
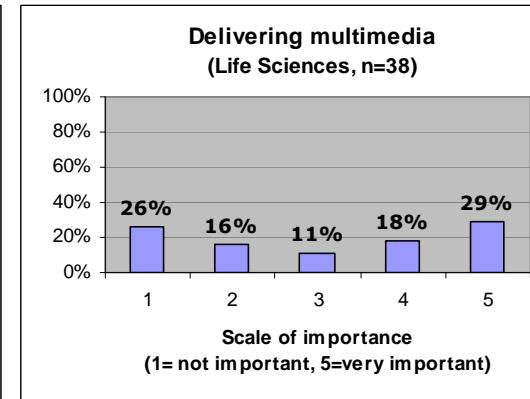
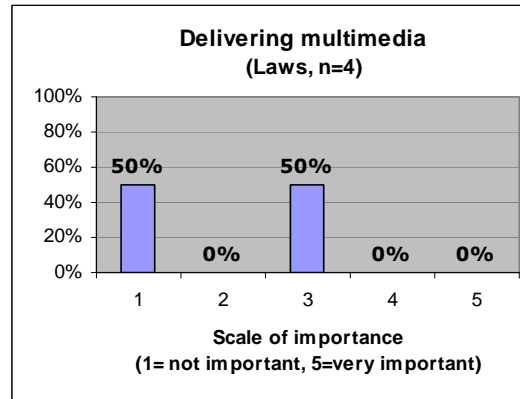
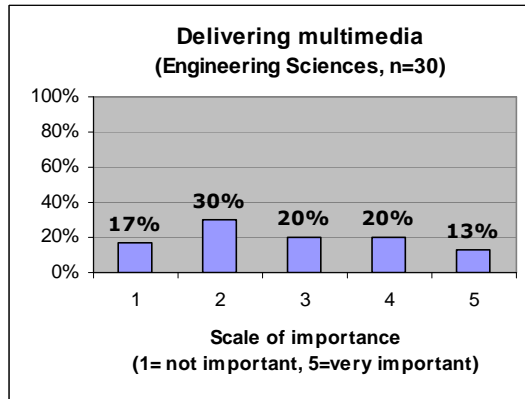
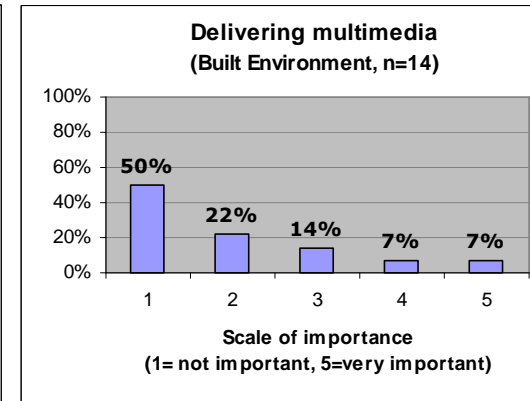
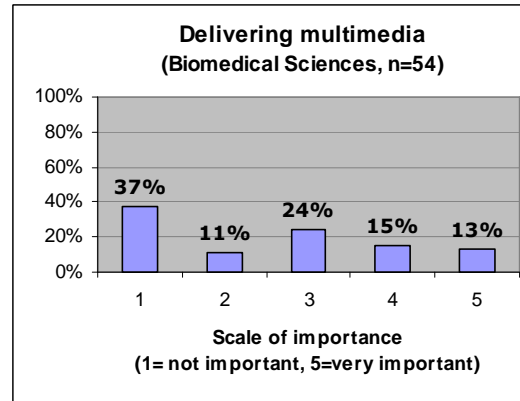
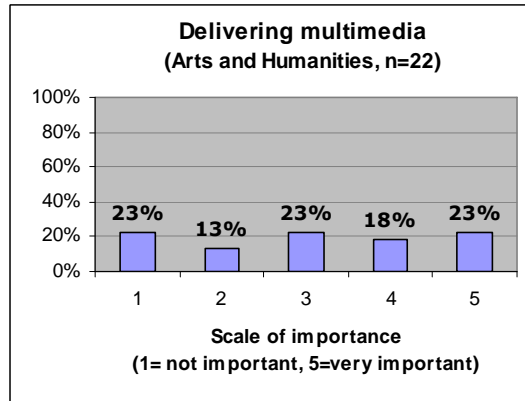
Appendix 6.3 Interactive learning materials

(e.g. animations, simulations)

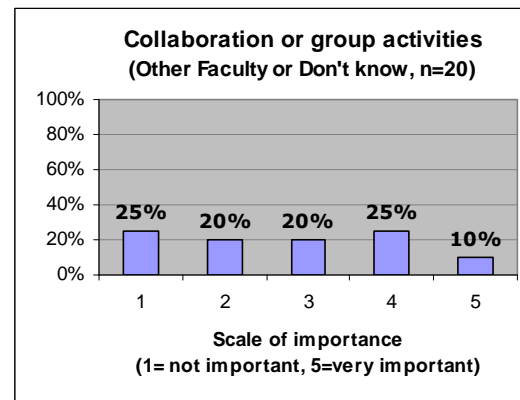
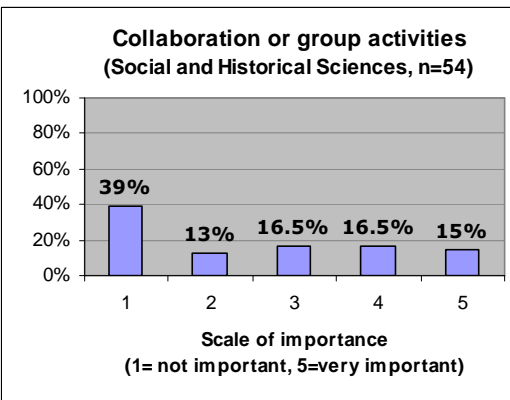
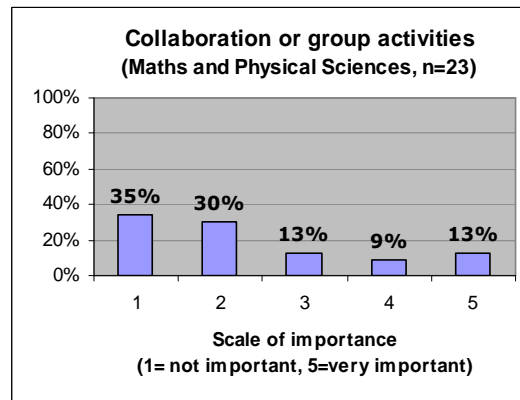
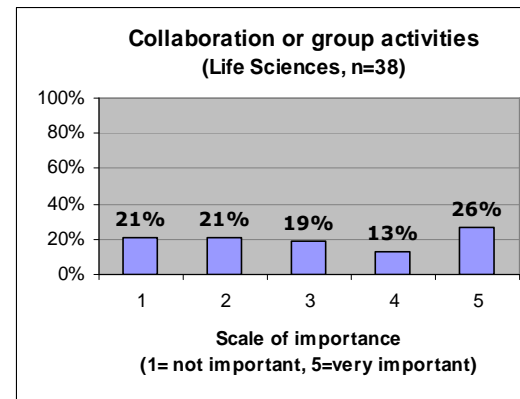
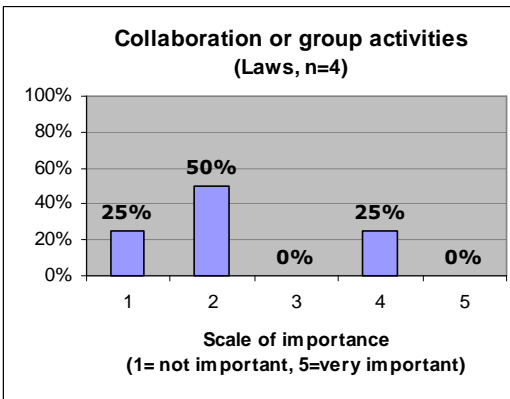
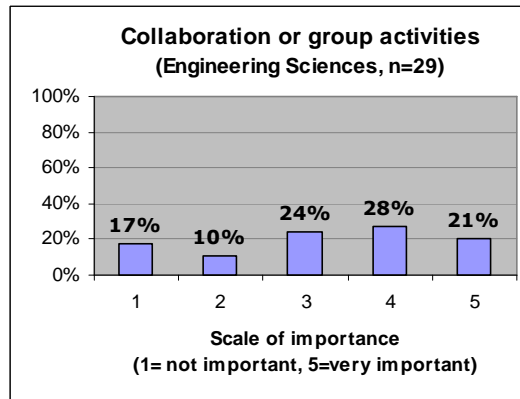
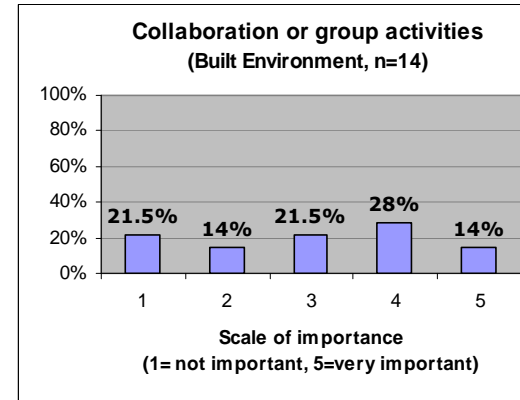
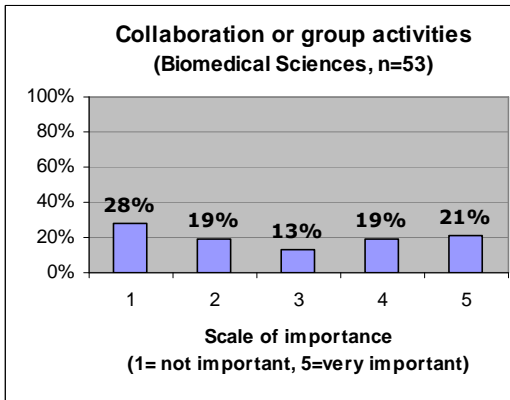
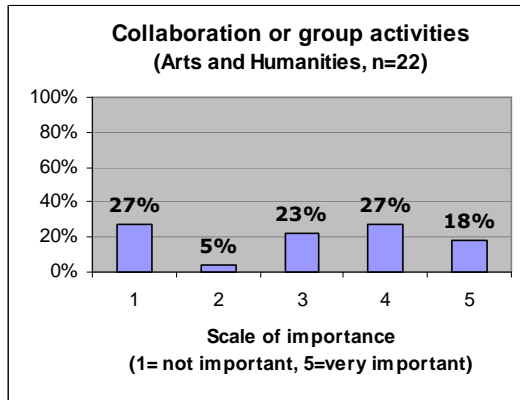


Appendix 6.4 Delivering multimedia

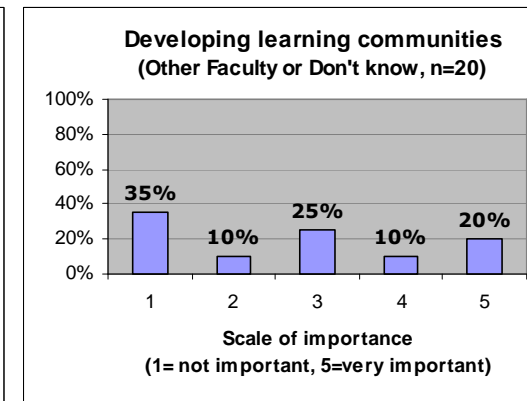
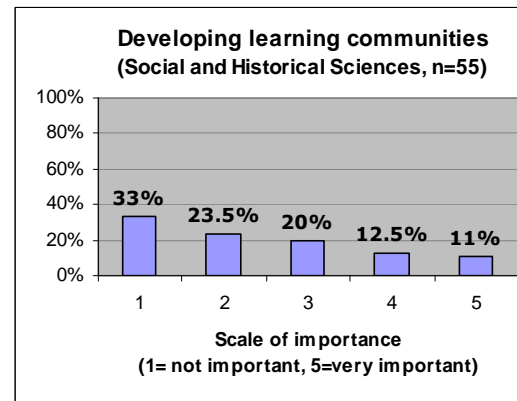
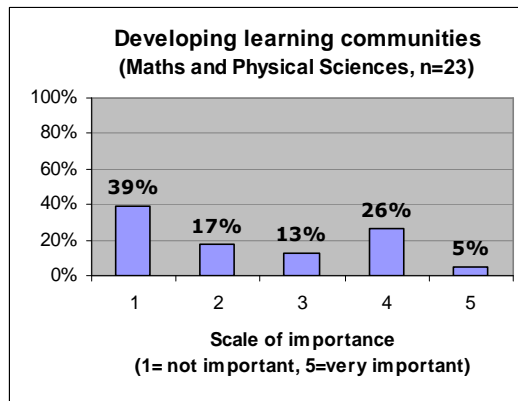
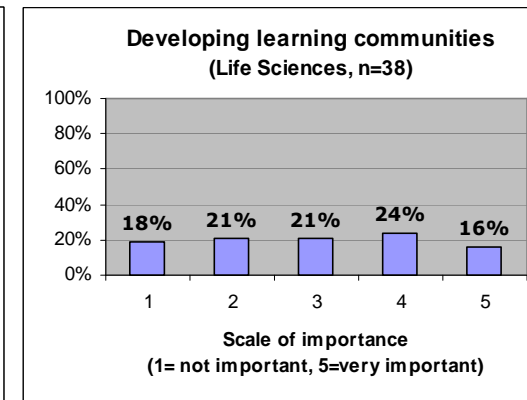
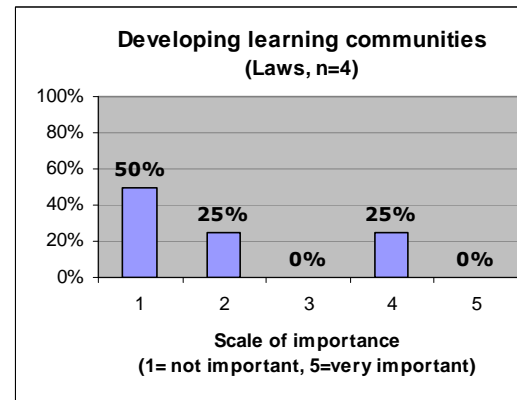
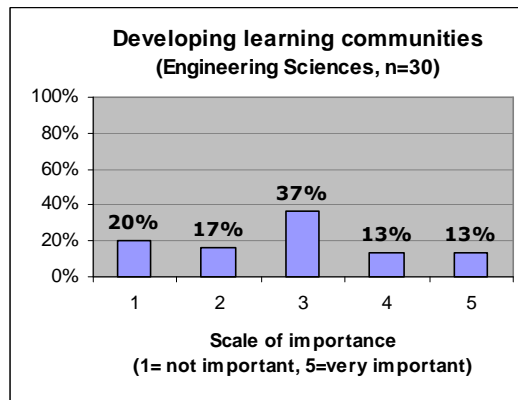
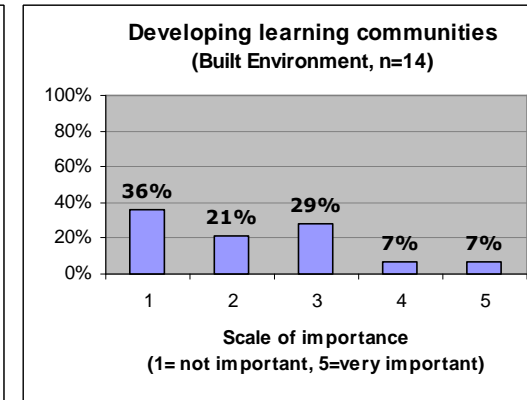
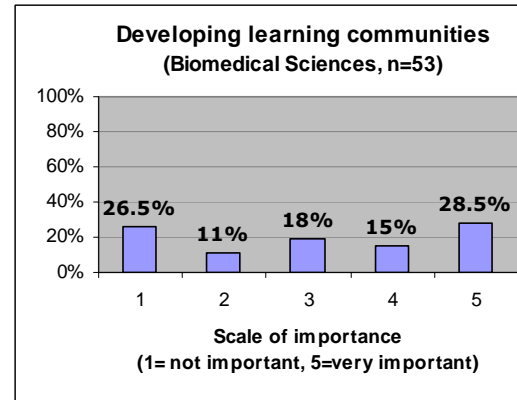
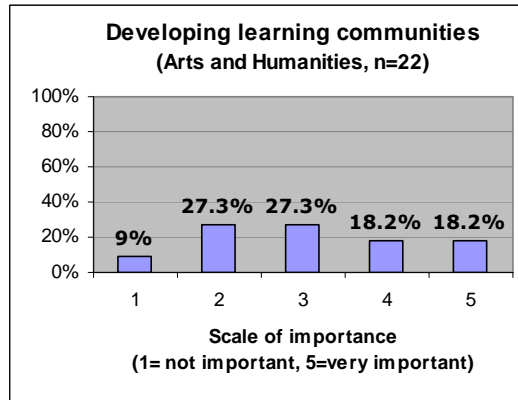
(e.g. audio, video)



Appendix 6.5 Student collaboration or group activities

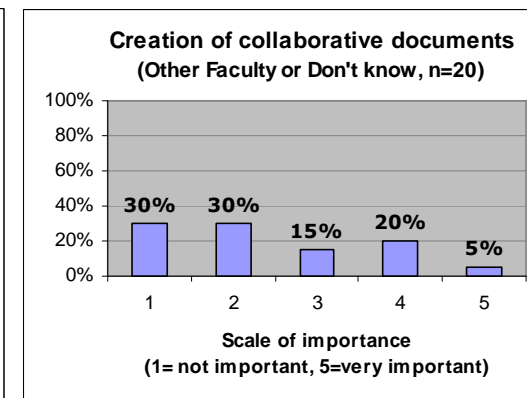
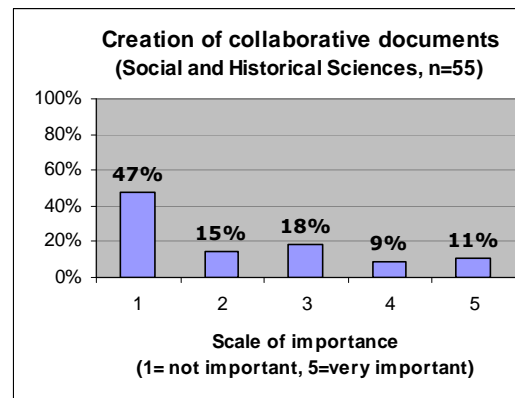
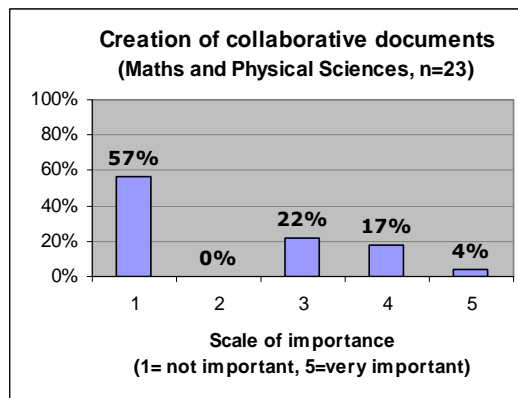
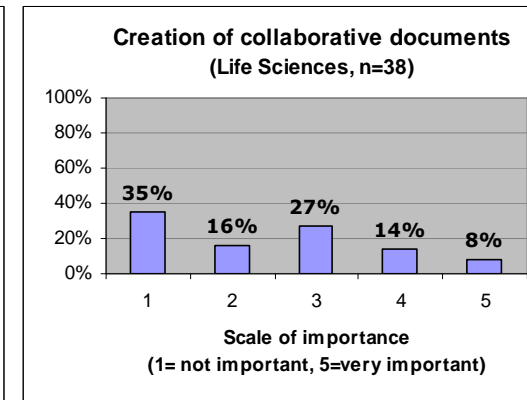
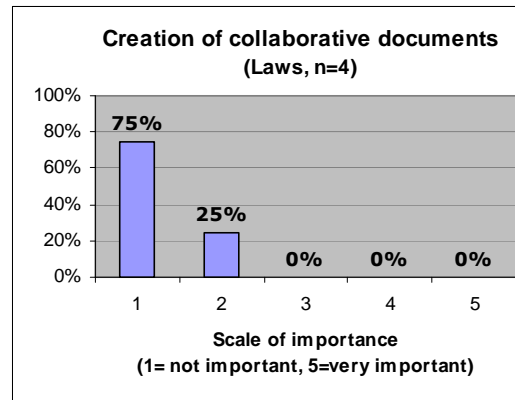
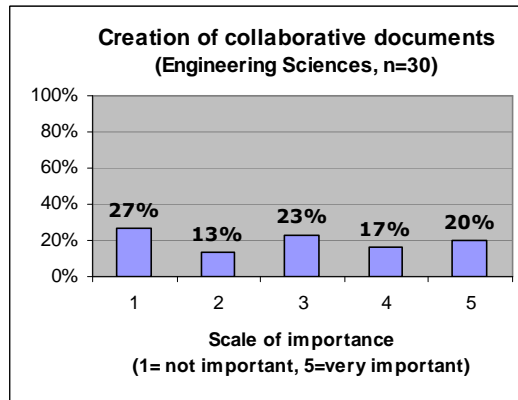
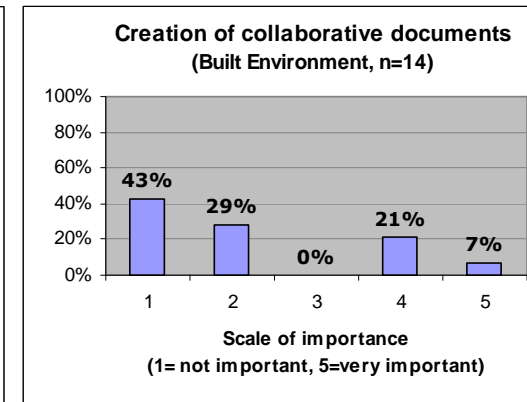
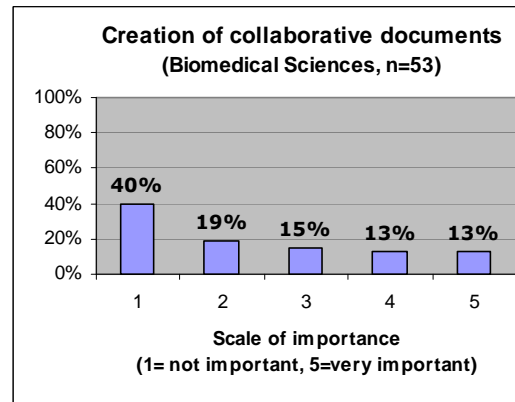
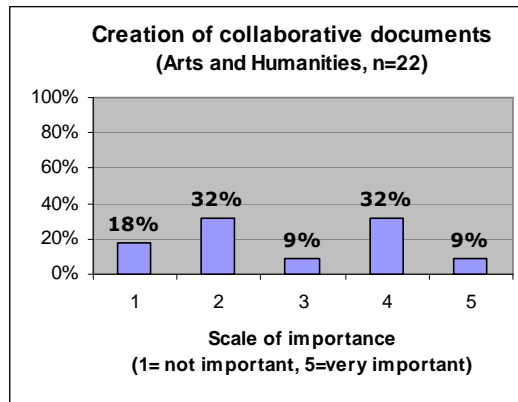


Appendix 6.6 Developing/supporting "learning communities"



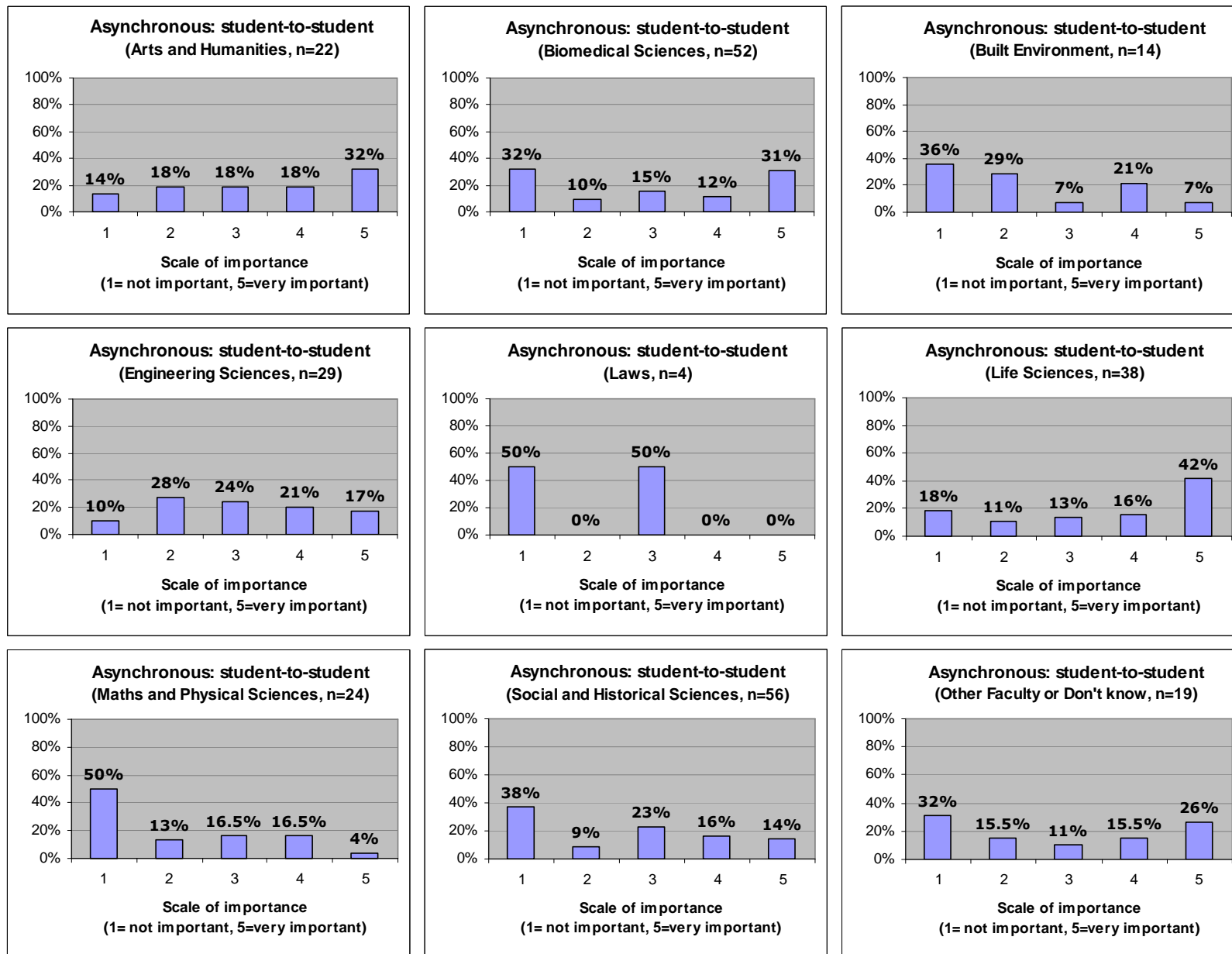
Appendix 6.7 Creation of collaborative documents

(e.g. using wikis, shared filespace)



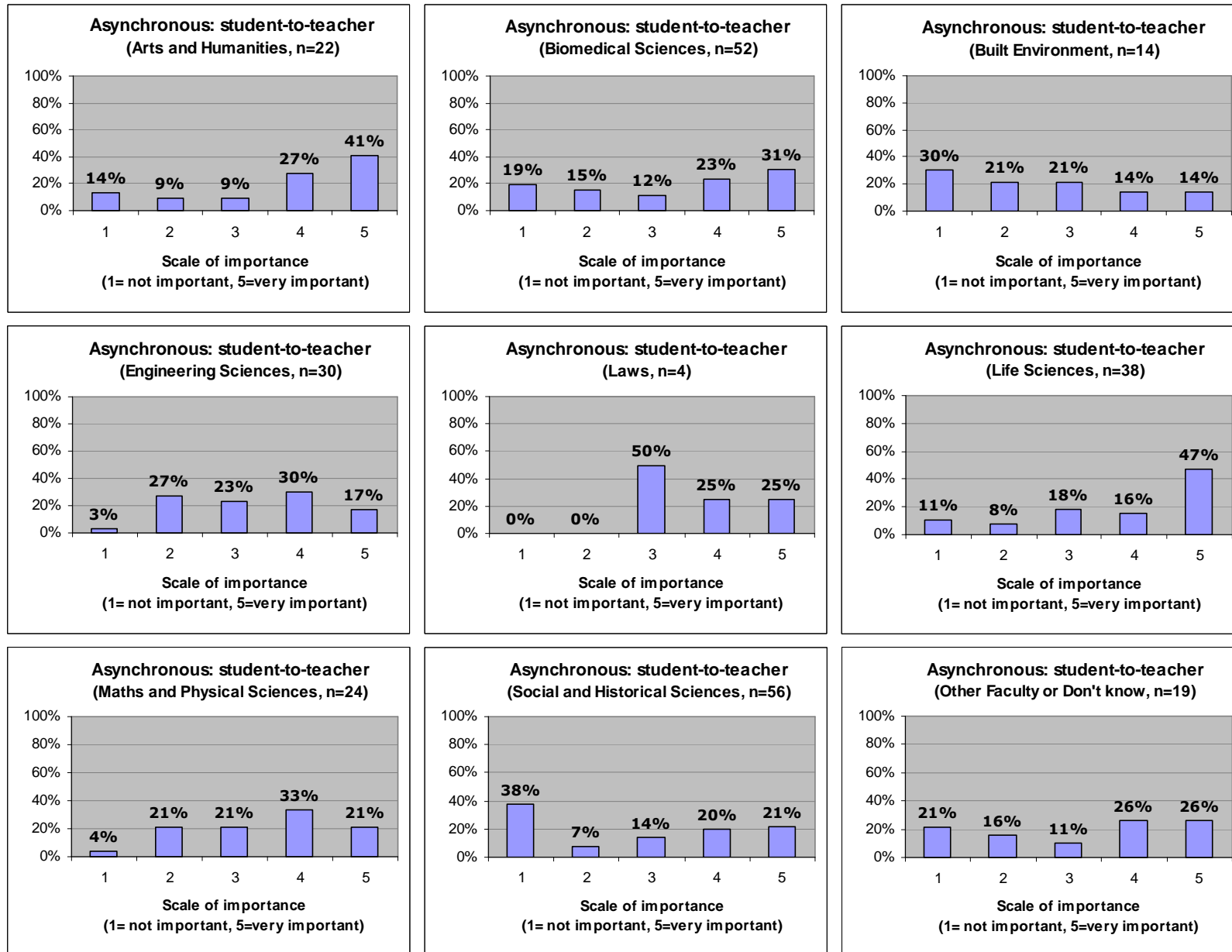
Appendix 6.8 Asynchronous communication: student-to-student

(e.g. discussion forums, email)



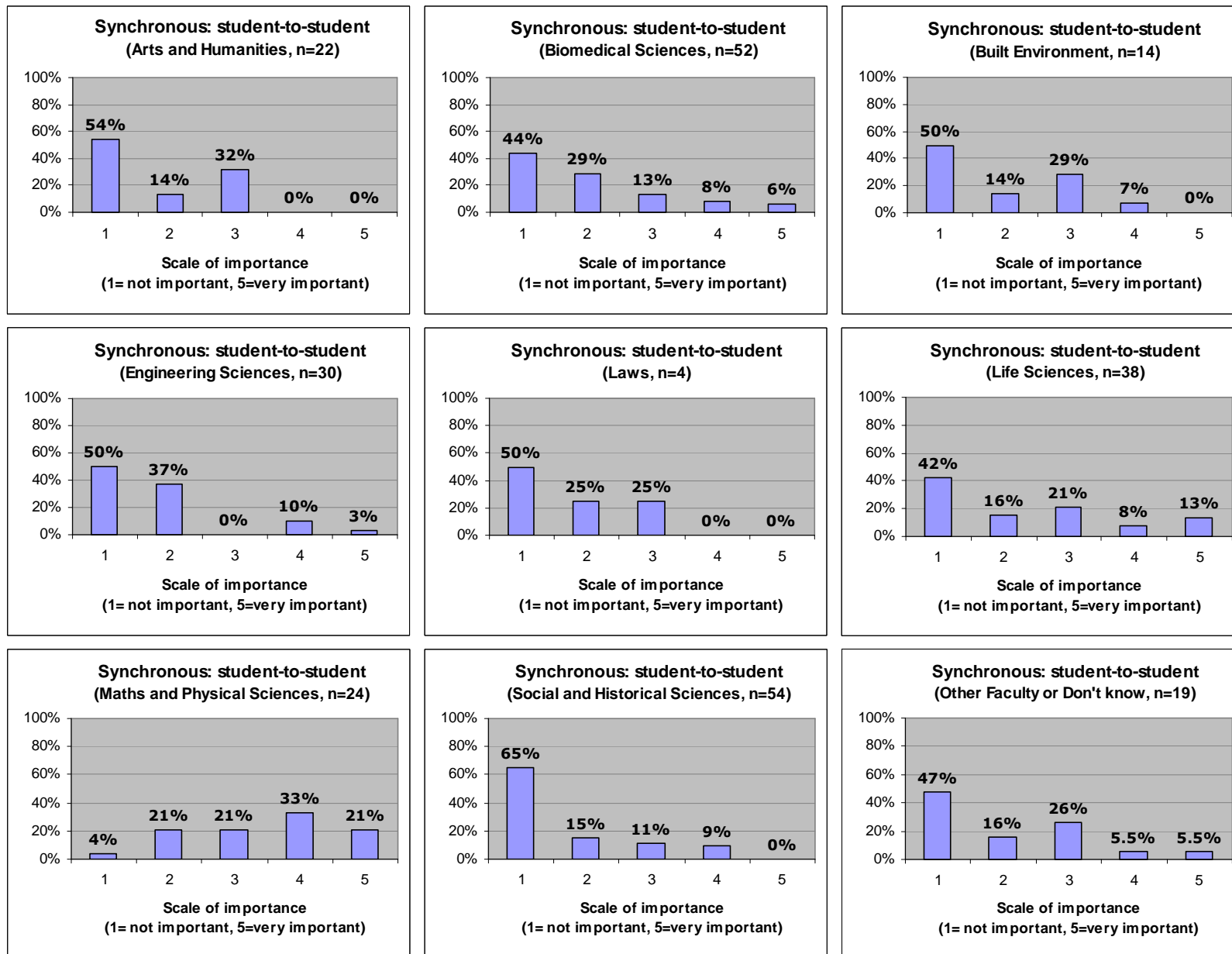
Appendix 6.9 Asynchronous communication: student-to-teacher

(e.g. discussion forums, email)

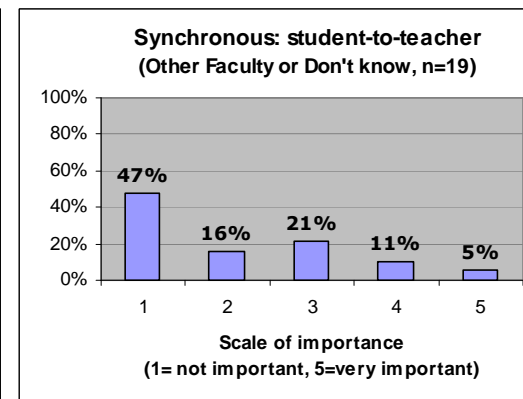
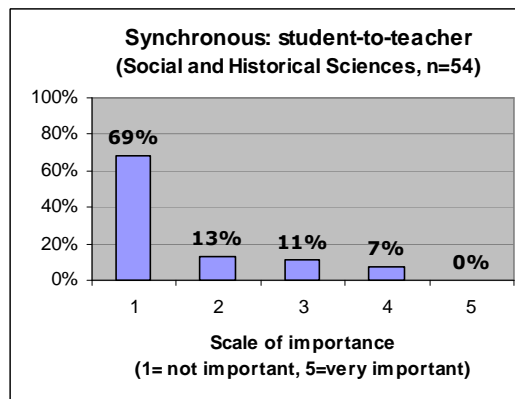
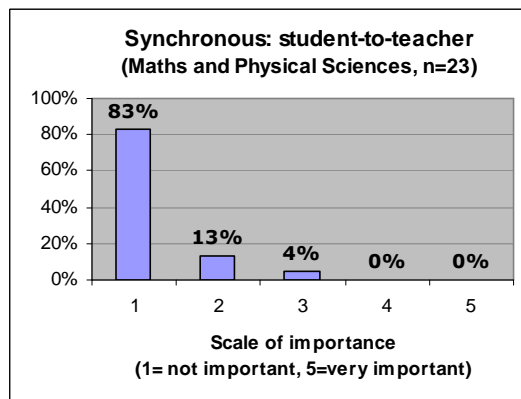
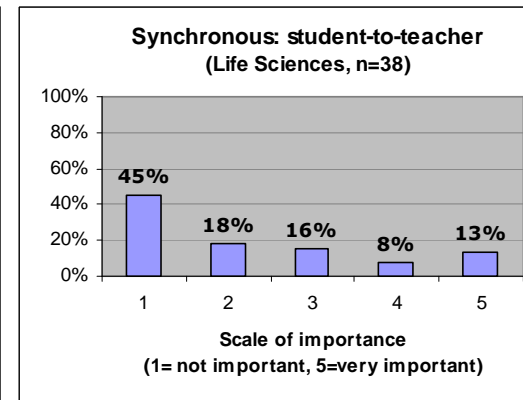
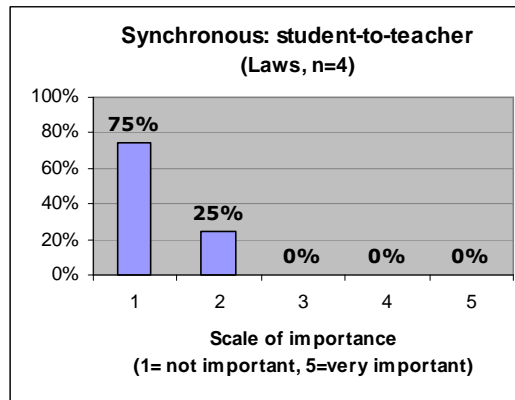
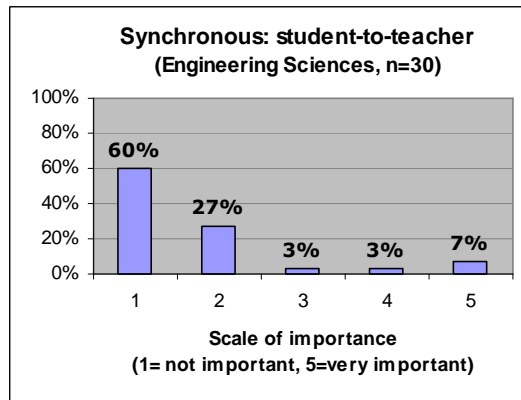
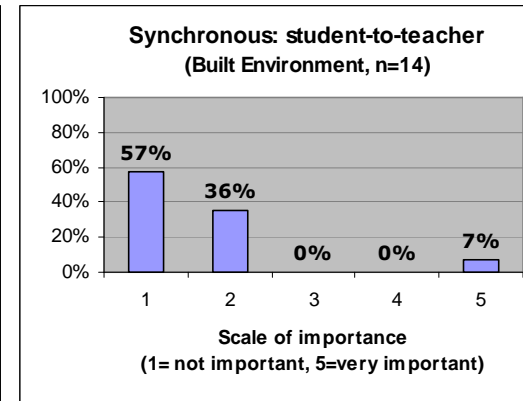
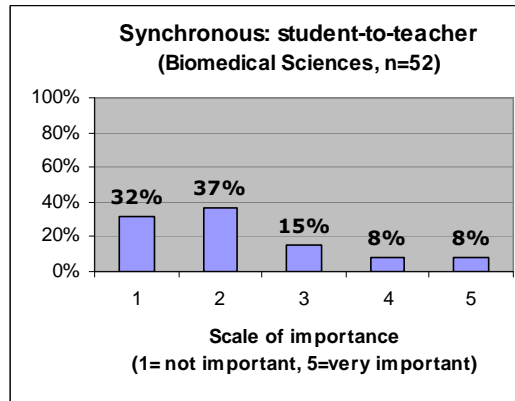
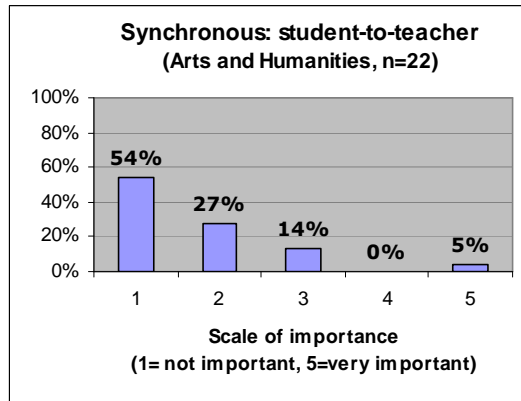


Appendix 6.10 Synchronous (real-time) communication: student-to-student

(e.g. instant messaging)

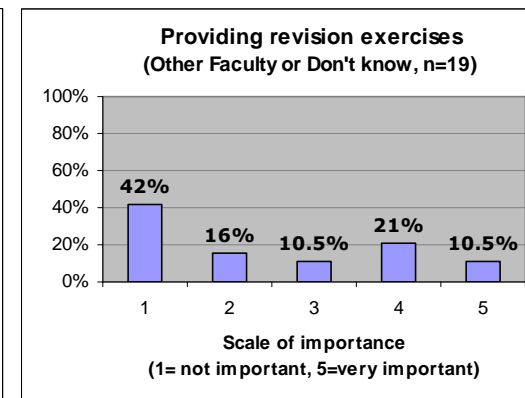
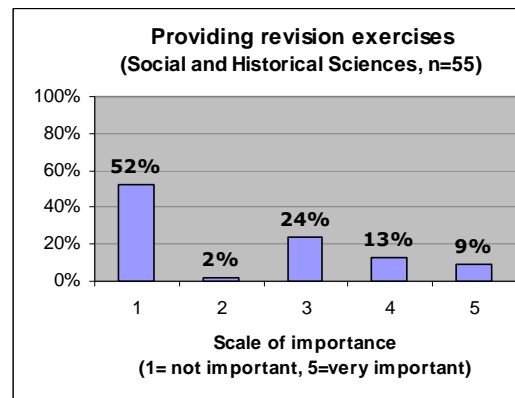
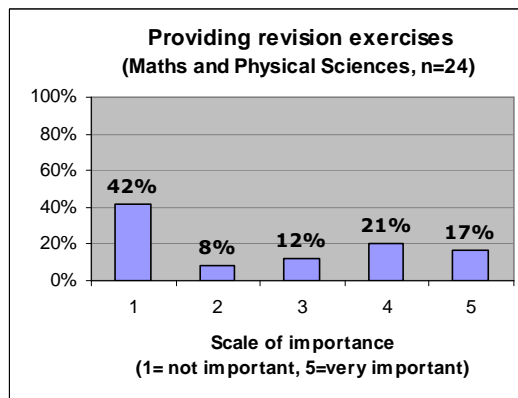
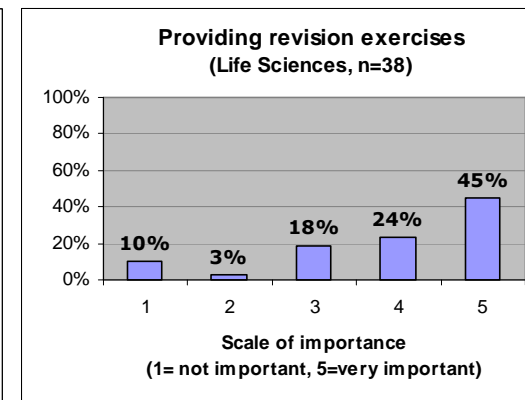
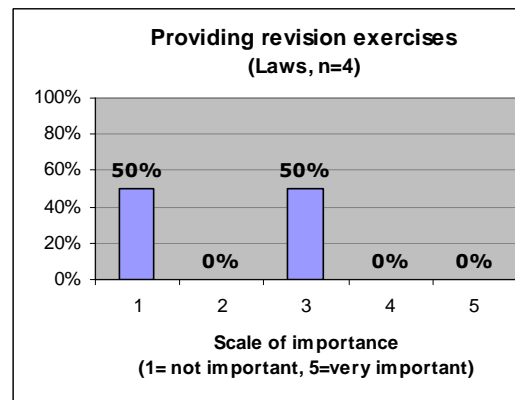
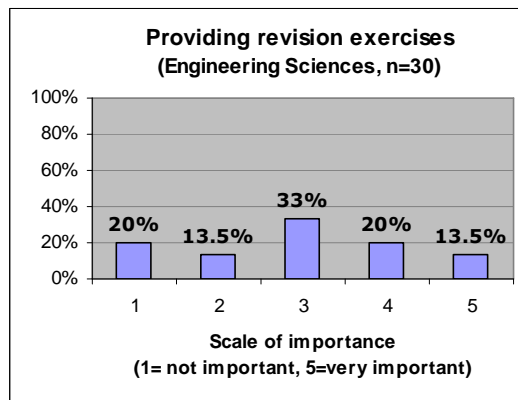
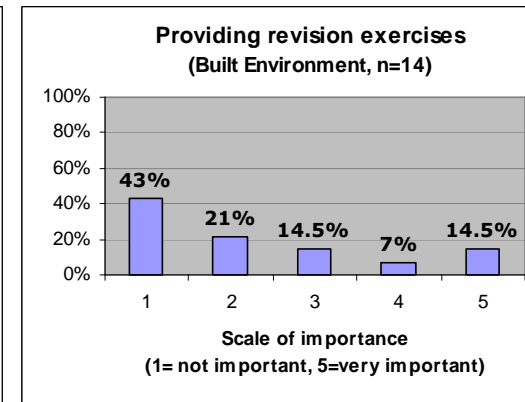
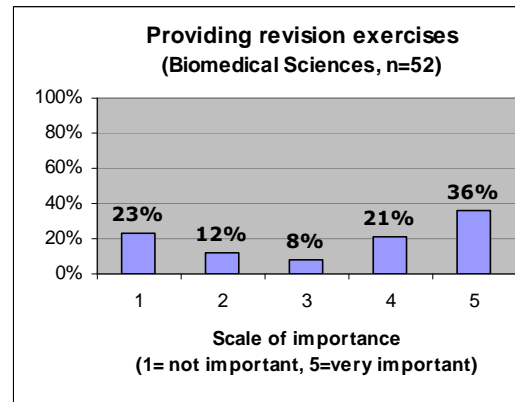
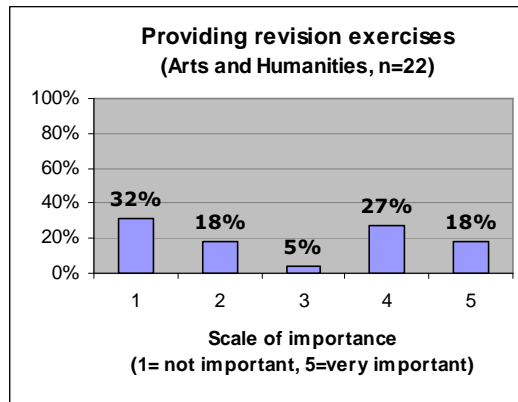


Appendix 6.11 Synchronous (real-time) communication: student-to-teacher
(e.g. instant messaging)



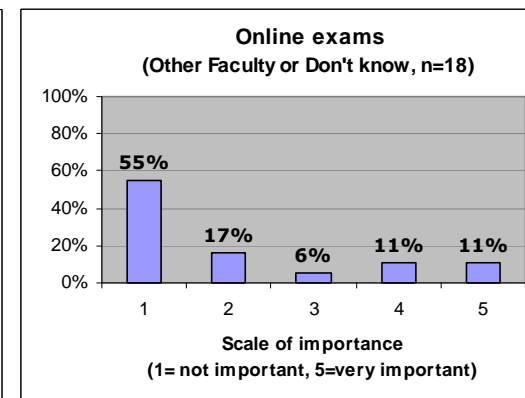
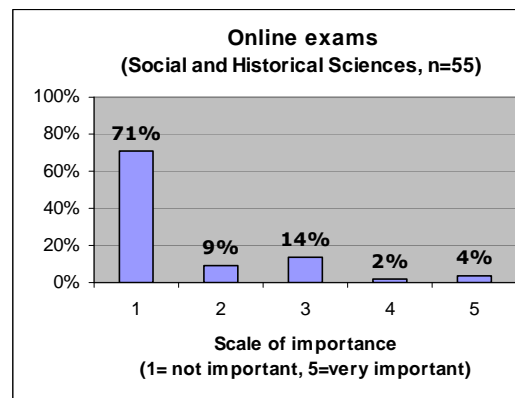
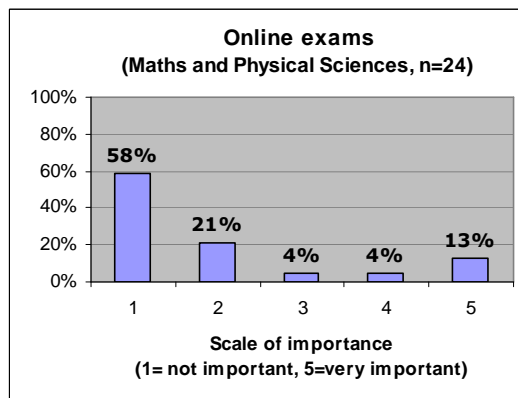
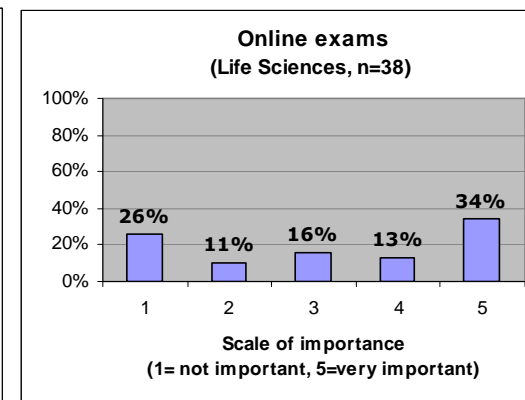
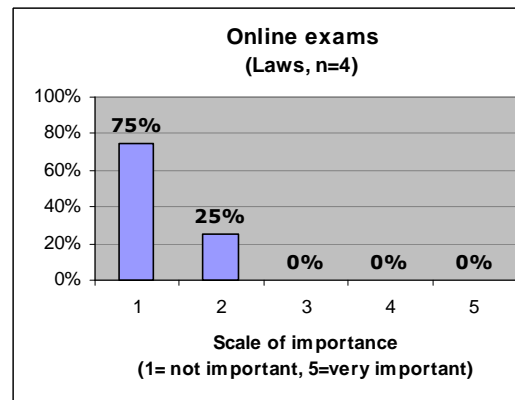
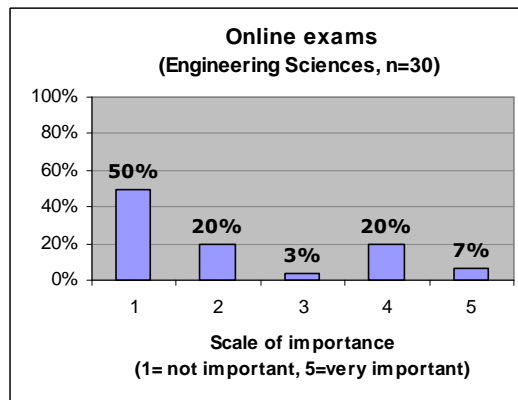
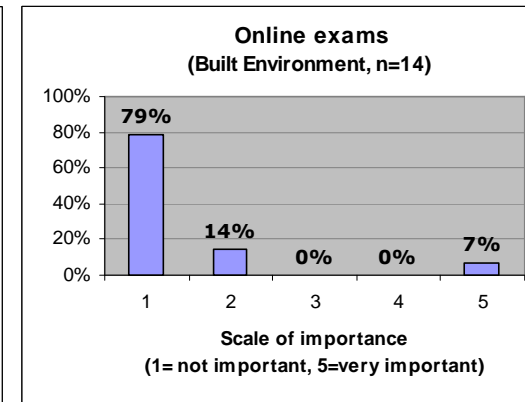
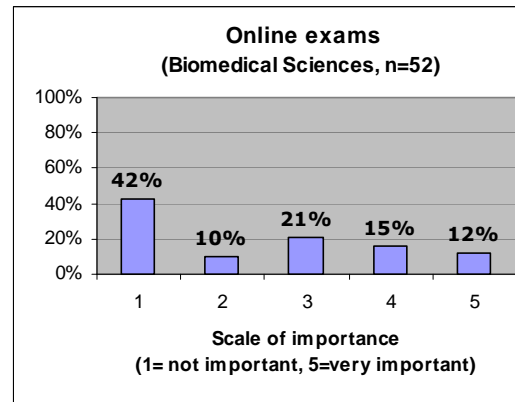
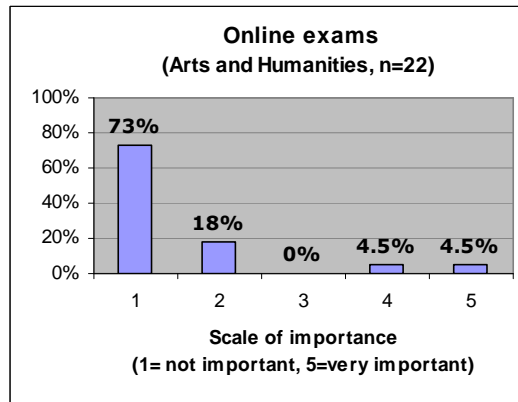
Appendix 6.12 Providing revision exercises

(do not contribute towards final mark)

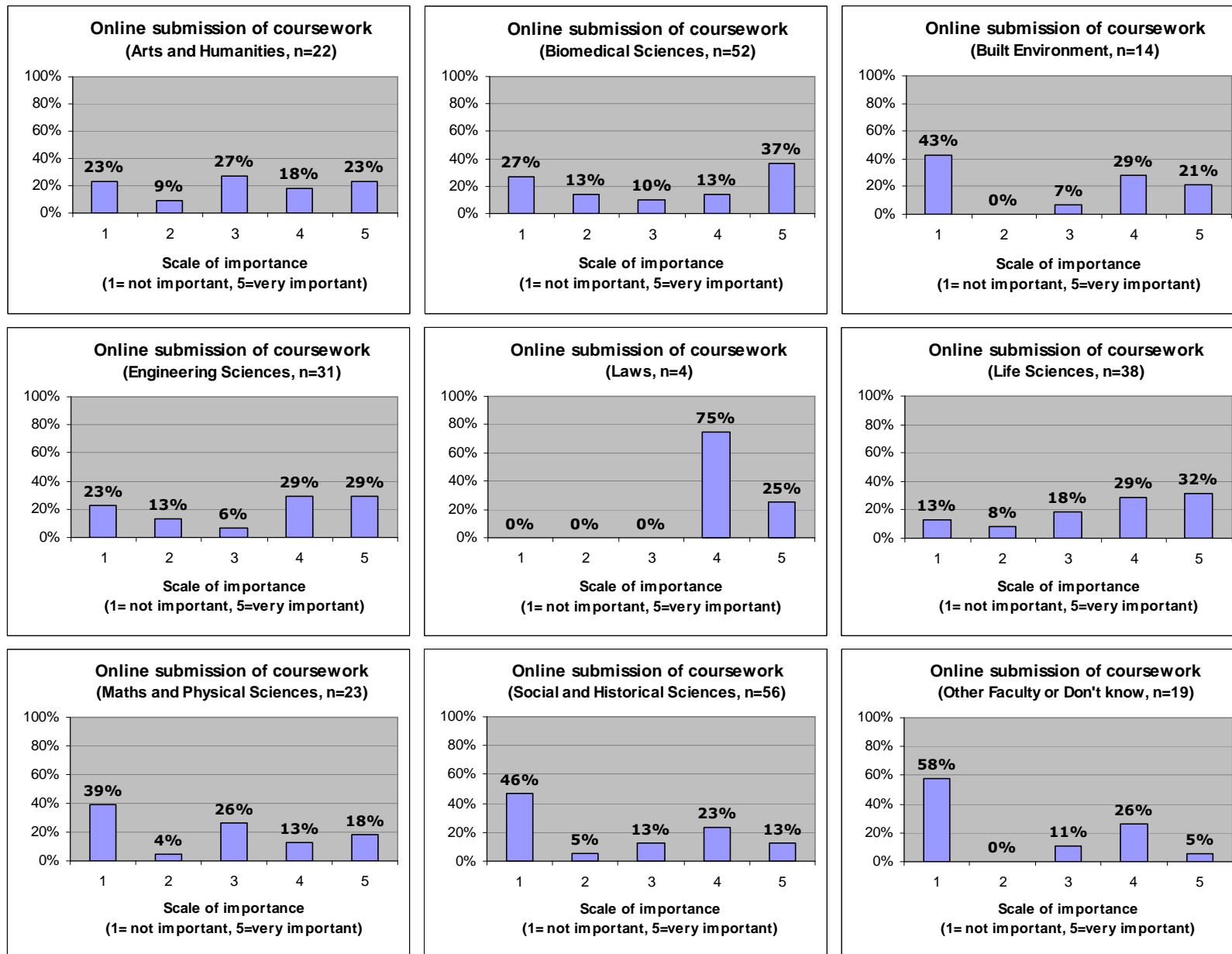


Appendix 6.13 Online exams

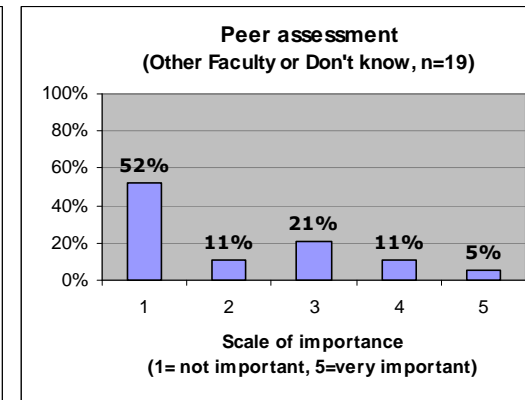
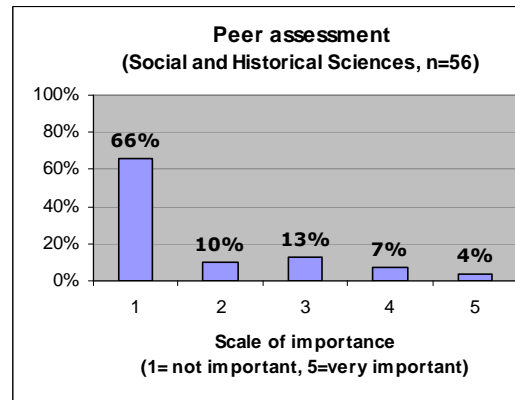
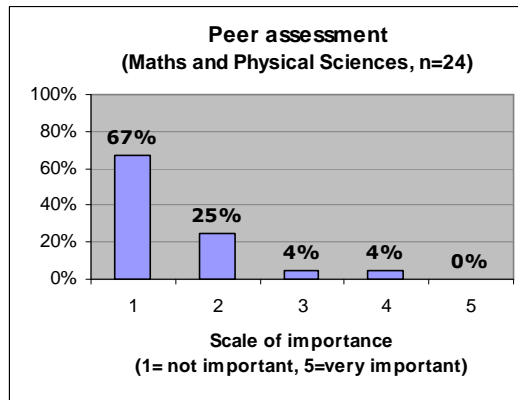
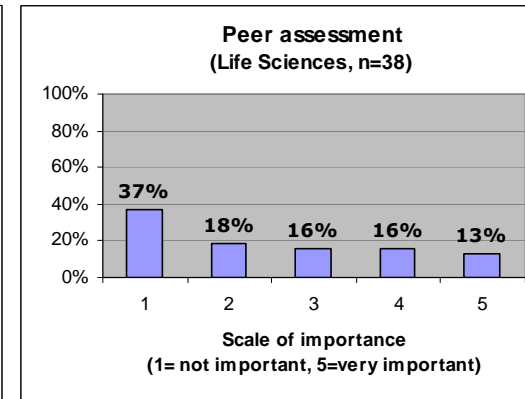
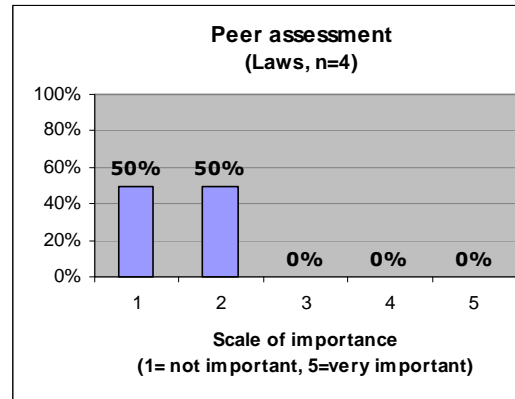
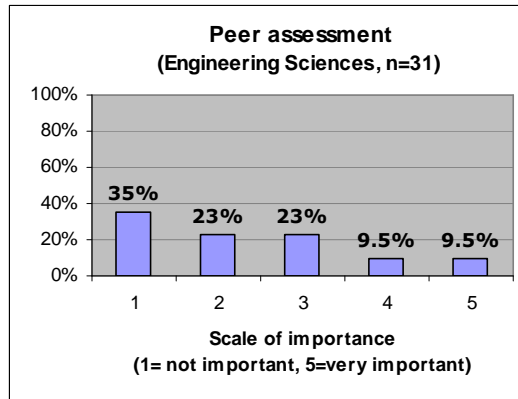
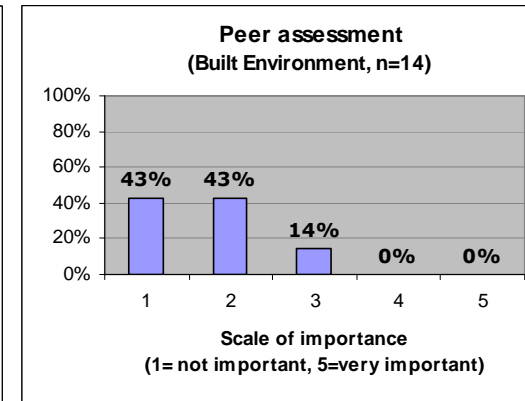
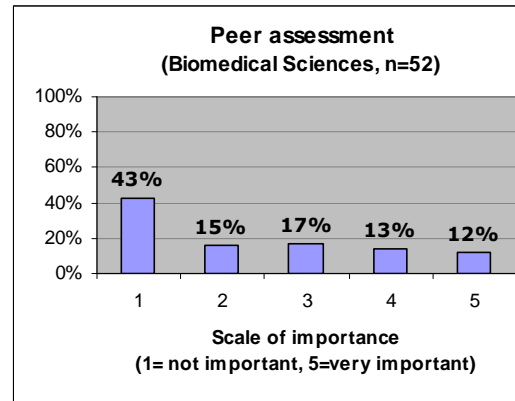
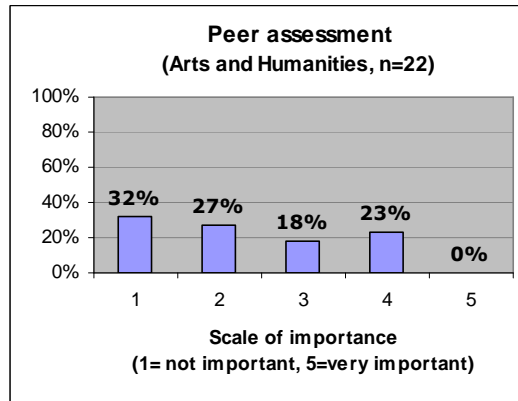
(contribute towards final mark)



Appendix 6.14 Online submission of coursework



Appendix 6.15 Student review or assessment of each other's work (peer assessment)



Appendix 6.16 Providing students with results/progress

