



# **National Economics Students Survey 2012 Report**

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This report was prepared by Dr. Inna Pomorina and edited by Ashley Lait.

## **Executive summary**

In 2011-2012, the Economics Network carried out its sixth survey of Economics students, covering both undergraduates and postgraduates. This is the executive summary of the report.

### **Purpose of the study**

The survey was conducted online, as part of the Economics Network's ongoing research programme into teaching and learning in Economics. Questions from our previous surveys were used with an additional question on the induction process.

The survey aimed to provide valuable information on students' perceptions of studying economics, including identifying strengths and weaknesses in the learning and teaching of economics. Results from the previous surveys have been used in running departmental and national workshops and students' focus groups, as well as to inform curricula development in departments.

### **Profile of survey respondents**

A total of 1440 students from 56 departments took part in the survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Of the respondents:

- 54.2% were male and 45.8% were female;
- 80.1% started their courses under the age of 21;
- 63.4% stated that English is their first language;
- 71.7% have an A-level in Maths;
- 64.8% have an A-level in Economics;
- 81.0% stated that Economics was their first choice of degree subject.

The survey was intended as an observational study and not as a controlled experiment.

### **Methods of analysis**

Students' responses to the quantitative survey questions were examined using standard statistical methods. Differences in responses were examined by gender, age of entry, year/level of study, A-level Economics, A-level Mathematics, English as the first language and choice of course. Relationships that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level are discussed. Changes in the students' responses from 2006 to 2012 surveys were compared.

Responses to each of the qualitative questions were coded and aggregated for analysis using N-Vivo software. In the report, for illustrative purposes we include graphs, which are based on the codes and summarised in terms of their frequency and typical quotes from students' responses, as well as "word cloud" images.

### **Responses to individual questions**

In many ways, the results of the survey were similar to the 2010 findings, but there were various noticeable changes. Some of the trends from previous years, that saw students interest in certain types of teaching and assessment decreasing, change to increase in 2012. This included the number of students who found lectures and other reading useful. There continued to be a steady increase in the number of students who found working informally with other students useful; more students experience interactive

forms of seminars/tutorials/classes, such as games and simulations and more took part in group-work projects. In addition, teaching of Maths and Stats keeps improving.

### **Previous learning experience**

Before starting on their current course, 67.0% of respondents studied in the UK (which is less than in 2008 – 73.0% and 2010 – 70.0%). Those new to UK came mostly from China, Germany, France, Singapore, Romania and Malaysia (in descending order). Students mention the high quality of education in the UK, the good reputation of UK universities, the cost of studying, the country itself and the English language, as the strongest factors in their decision to come to the UK.

Comparing their current course with their previous learning experience, three-fifths of the respondents (less than in 2010) found teaching methods to be either different or very different; two thirds found contact with lecturers to be either different or very different and more than a two fifths found assessment to be different or very different. Less than half found student support and e-learning and the use of IT to be different or very different.

Similar to the results of 2008 and 2010, survey responses in 2012 about pre-university learning experiences differed between those who came from abroad and those who had studied in the UK. Starting a university course was a big change for all respondents, but particularly for international students who also have to adjust to another country.

More than five out of six respondents felt that they were adequately prepared for their degree course, which is more than in all previous surveys; and studying on it has met expectations for nearly three-quarters of students (which is lower than in previous surveys).

### **Maths and Stats**

The number of students, who find teaching of maths and stats “good”, has been constantly increasing during the period 2006-2012: 51.2%-52.4%-54.1% - 57.3%. At the same time, one in ten still regards it as not very good or poor. When asked about how the teaching of math and stats could be improved, students suggested that there is considerable variability in teaching standards, much of which could be improved, for example, with clearer explanations in maths (with several comments again about language proficiency), less presumption of prior knowledge, and more enthusiastic effort to make stats interesting. Many comments also referred to the need for more applied, practical examples to aid understanding, as well as more tests (including online), and more feedback and answers provided for problem sets.

The number of students, who found the content of their degree to be largely relevant to the real world, has been increasing from 2006 to 2010: 66.8%-69.3%-71.7%, but fell to 69.5% in 2012. The number of students, who found the workload about right, has been fluctuating in the period from 2006 to 2012: 66.1%-64.9%-67.8% - 64.1%.

### **Teaching and assessment**

When asked how their course differs from their expectations, students mentioned the course content, how challenging it is, its relevance to the real world, the quality of teaching and the amount of maths.

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they found different types of teaching in supporting their learning. Replying to the new question about induction, more than half of the respondents found induction useful.

The following trends can be identified during the years 2006–2012:

Number of students finding useful or very useful	Teaching/learning type
Increasing (2006–12)	small classes workshops office hours group work projects preparatory work online learning using the web online learning using the economics software online questions and tests materials posted on VLEs communication tools working informally with other students
Decreasing (2006–10); increasing significantly (2012)	lectures other reading essays preparation for exams
Decreasing (2006–12)	assigned reading
Fluctuating	feedback on submitted work

In seminars/tutorials/small classes, the vast majority go through pre-prepared problem sets, exercises or worksheets. Despite the popularity of classroom experiments, games, simulations and role-plays in seminars with those who experience them, 72.8% are rarely or never exposed to them (although this number has decreased in more recent years). More than half rarely or never have individual student presentations.

In 2010, nearly seven out of ten respondents felt that the assessment on their degree course accurately tested the level of their knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes, but in 2012 this number fell to 63.8%. As part of their assessed coursework, more than two out of five respondents were given essays to be completed in their own time, while those assessment types that respondent rarely or never experienced included essays done in class (82.0%), online assessment (61.9%) and group-work projects (43.3%). At the same time, use of these types of assessment has increased since 2006.

Nearly four out of every five respondents (79.2%) were on a course that makes use of a VLE (virtual learning environment); although this is lower than in 2010 – 80.1%. Almost all comments described VLEs positively, but the main complaint was that they are underused.

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their degree course and this number has been quite stable over the years we have run this survey.

### Students' comments to open-ended questions

- *Best aspects of the course:* the content, the quality of teaching, the value of small classes and tutorials, the variety of module choices and course structure, the resources available to support learning (especially IT-based), and future prospects enabled by study.

- *Most useful seminar activities:* an overwhelming proportion said they found going through pre-set questions or worksheets in class the most useful seminar activity, followed by small group work and whole group discussion.
- *Ways to improve seminar activities:* comments focused around issues to do with the form of seminars, particularly concerns about increasing interaction; the content of seminars; having more time in general for seminars (whether that meant having more of them or having longer sessions); smaller class sizes; and improving the quality of teaching.
- *Ways to improve assessment:* students felt that there were too few assessments, too little coursework, a general lack of feedback and sufficient preparation, while some suggested ways in which forms of assessment could be more varied.
- *Economics software and its usefulness:* 27% claimed to have used no economics software on their degree. Among those who use software - 25% had used STATA; 19% EViews; 7.5% MyEconLab; 3.8% WinEcon; 2.7% SPSS; and 2.5% Excel.
- *Effectiveness of VLEs:* the majority found VLEs very effective, with some saying that they were probably the most effective form of learning support used in the university. Suggestions referred to the need for more consistent usage amongst lecturers, and that more features could be utilised.
- *Future career plans:* the majority wanted to pursue a career in finance (48.6%), while others said they wished to enter business (12.8%), economics (11%), academia or teaching (10.7%), and government and politics (6.3%). There were many students who were either undecided (4.7%) or interested in careers un-related to the above areas (5.8%).
- *Skills they developed:* responses fell into four broad themes - academic skills, interpersonal skills (including communication, presentation and group work), personal skills and practical skills.
- *Aspects of the course that respondents didn't like:* the largest group of students (28.0%) liked everything about their course; others disliked the course content (22.6%), the course teaching (22.4%), the structure of the course (11.7%), the modes of assessment (8.6%), and the workload (3%).
- *Aspects that could be improved:* better teaching (in general); better maths teaching (in particular); better course structure (including calls for more small classes); better forms of assessment; better connection to the real world; and improved resources.
- *How the course has changed them:* the changes observed were to do with career goals, knowledge gained, personal changes, and changes to how students viewed or understood the world around them. A small number of students (9.3% of responses given) explicitly claimed to have experienced no change in themselves.
- *In five years' time:* answers reflected the responses to the career question - the largest group of respondents again referred to work in finance-related industries, or of a very general nature (just to have a job), some referred to further academic study or research.
- *Any other comment:* this included positive comments about the survey or the discipline and reiterated critical issues from earlier questions.

## Conclusions

As in previous surveys, we were impressed by the maturity of students' comments and by their awareness of teaching and learning issues in economics.



Although more than three quarters of respondents were satisfied with their degree course, many of them put forward valuable critical suggestions on how to make the course better.

Comparing results with previous years allows us to follow the changing picture of studying economics in UK HE and better target our support to lecturers. In some cases, students' suggestions for improvements in the way courses are run, such as smaller class sizes or more contact time, would require extra resources. In other cases, however, their suggestions could be achieved through relatively small changes in practice, such as ways of using VLEs, classroom activities or teaching styles. The Economics Network is very happy to support departments and lecturers in making these changes. Information from the survey will also be used to provide better support to new students through our websites *WhyStudyEconomics.ac.uk* for prospective students and *StudyingEconomics.ac.uk* for current students.

### **Purpose of the study**

Following the success of our previous surveys and as part of our research programme into teaching and learning in Economics, the Economics Network conducted its sixth national online Economics student survey between November 2011 and February 2012. The results of the student survey provide us with an inside view of what is really going on in teaching and learning of Economics in UK HE. This survey is part of a comprehensive research programme, which aims to better understand the needs of our different stakeholders, including students, lecturers, alumni and employers.

Survey reports for each participating department play an important role in departmental planning and curriculum development. The Economics Network has been asked by some departments to run student focus groups to clarify some issues from the NSS (National Student Survey) and EN surveys, followed by workshops in the areas of teaching that students have identified to be in need of improvement. We always see such action taken by departments as a very important part of their commitment to teaching and learning and would like to encourage them not only to discuss and reflect on their own confidential reports but also to identify areas for action.

Questions from our previous surveys were used for the 2012 survey, with an additional question on first year induction. More than 1400 students from 56 departments took part in the survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Some of the departments that have previously participated in the Economics Network student survey decided not to take part this year due to other commitments, while other departments restricted participation to first and second year students. There was a big discrepancy in the number of replies from different departments, ranging from 85 respondents to below 10.

The survey was run online, as in previous years, using Bristol Online Surveys (BOS) system (<http://www.survey.bristol.ac.uk/>).

As with all our previous students' surveys this one focuses on students' perceptions of studying Economics and not on any specific course or module. Respondents were asked to think back over the time they have spent at university and either to rate their agreement or disagreement with various statements regarding their learning experiences on a five or three-point scale or to answer open-ended questions. For some forms of activities, that were not available to big groups of students, we consider looking at the relative usefulness of this activity to them.

In order to ensure the validity of responses, students were asked to submit their e-mail addresses to participate in the prize draw and to allow exclusion of duplicate entries.

The survey, as with all our surveys, was intended as an observational study and not as a controlled experiment. The respondents did not constitute a random sample of all Economics students in the UK, but a self-selected group. As a result, their views may not fully reflect the opinions of the entire student population. Despite the self-selection, there is evidence that the expressed attitudes represent more widely-held student opinions. The survey covers a broad cross-section of both undergraduate and postgraduate Economics education.

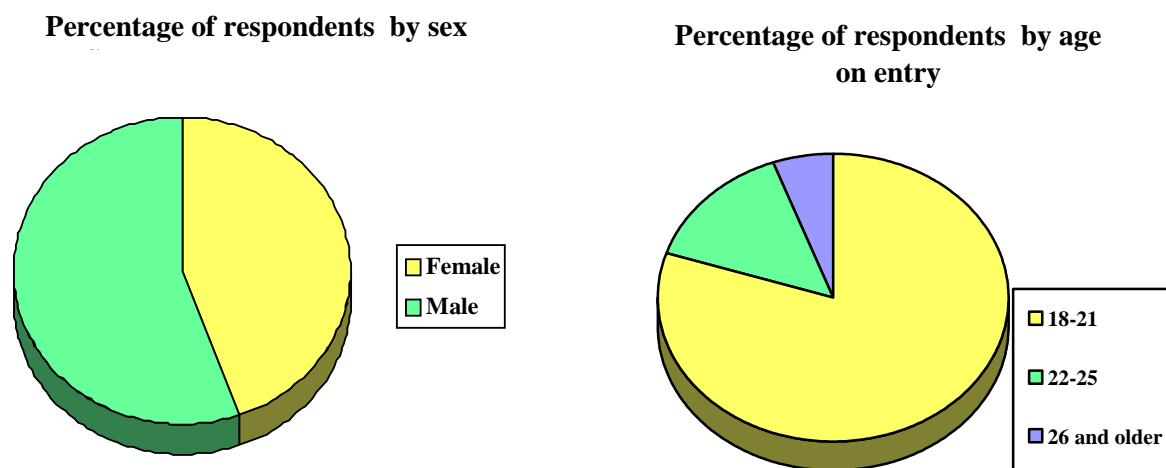
The main value of the survey lies in the long term, as the findings were compared to the results of the past surveys. Comparing results with those of previous years allows us to follow the changing picture of studying economics in UK HE and to better target our support for lecturers. No comparisons were made between different institutions, as there are too many variable factors to make such comparisons meaningful.

## Section 1: About you – profile of survey respondents

A total of 1440 economics students took part in the 2011/12 survey. These were full-time Economics students (1279 undergraduates and 161 postgraduates) studying at 56 UK universities. The demographics of the survey participants can be compared to those of the total Economics student population using data from the HESA publication, *Students in Higher Education Institutions in 2010/11* ([http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option,com\\_datatables/Itemid,121/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/component/option,com_datatables/Itemid,121/)), as well as to the respondents of previous surveys.

Of our survey respondents, 45.8% were female (Figure 1), which is similar to the previous surveys, while among Economics students in general this percentage is lower at 34.9%. The larger proportion of female respondents to our surveys than in the HESA data is consistent with our previous findings and the widely reported survey research findings that females are more likely than males to answer questionnaires.

**Figure 1:** Characteristics of respondents: sex and age on degree entry



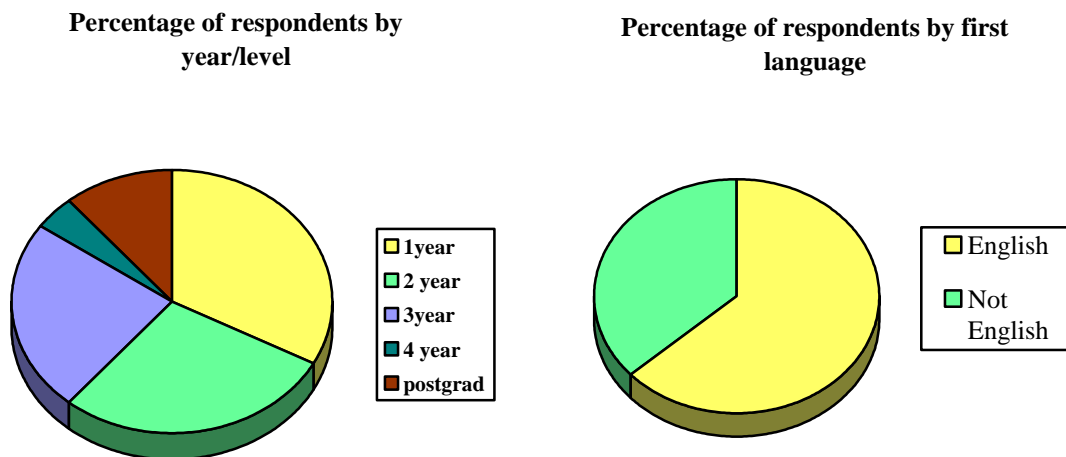
More than eighty per cent of survey participants were under the age of 21, similar to their proportion in the general population of Economics graduates (Figure 1). There were 14.4% in the 22–25 age group and 5.5% were older than 26, which is similar to previous surveys results. Age is a statistically significant factor in respondents' replies to many questions, and we will discuss this in order to explain some of the findings.

A question of year/level was included in the survey. Among the respondents, 32.9% stated that they were in their first year, 28.2% in the second, 23.5% in the third, 4.2% in the fourth and 11.2% were postgraduates. In the first two surveys (before the NSS) students were nearly equally divided between the years of undergraduate study. Since introduction of the NSS in 2005, some departments agree to distribute survey among their first and second year students only, hence the larger number of replies from these years.

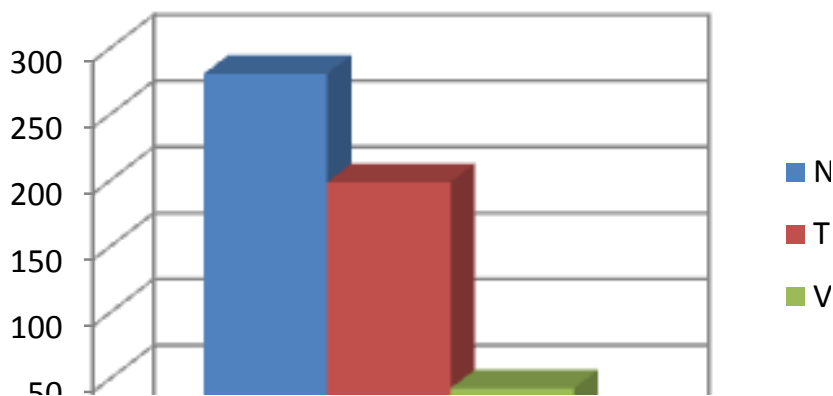
We included the question on English as first language in the survey, as it is an important variable that influences students' experiences of studying Economics. It may

not just be language knowledge itself, but also educational background that is a factor, as students for whose first language is not English may have school training that differs from that in the UK. English was the first language of 63.4% of respondents, which is lower than in previous surveys (see Figure 2). There are no national statistics regarding this question. The closest match is the domicile of students. According to HESA data ([http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com\\_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show\\_category&catdex=3#subject](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_datatables&Itemid=121&task=show_category&catdex=3#subject)), 63.1% of Economics students come from the UK and the majority have English as their first language.

**Figure 2:** Characteristics of respondents - year/level and first language



**Question 6.a. If no, has this affected your learning?**



Of the students who answered this question, most felt that having English as their second language did not impact greatly on their learning; while a slightly lower number of students felt it had some effect but not a significant one. Only a small minority of students felt that being non-native English speakers impacted greatly on their learning experiences. Additional comments included: *“English might not technically be my first language but for all intents and purposes it is my primary language”*; *“It did not affect my learning because we use English in learning in my country”*; *“Only in the beginning of the course until I get [sic] to grips with the terms”*; *“In year 1, the first semester was the*

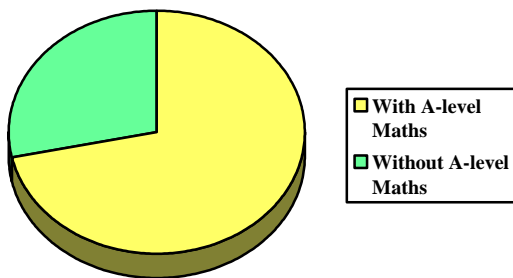
most difficult but I did not have any serious problems related to my language”; “cannot understand the lecturer who speaks with strong accent”.

Other factors that should be taken into consideration when talking about students’ experiences are whether they have taken A-levels in Mathematics and/or Economics at school and whether taking this degree course was their first choice (see Figure 3).

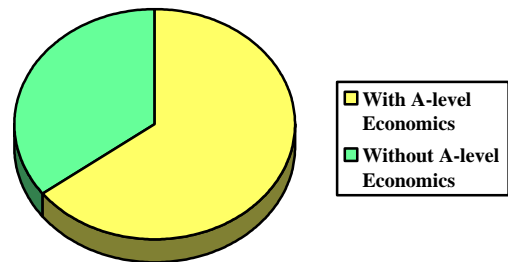
The results were as follows: among all the respondents, 71.7% had an A-level in Maths, while 64.8% had an A-level in Economics (similar to previous surveys). As for the choice of degree, 81% stated that Economics was their first choice (slightly higher than in previous surveys).

**Figure 3: Characteristics of respondents - qualifications and choice of course**

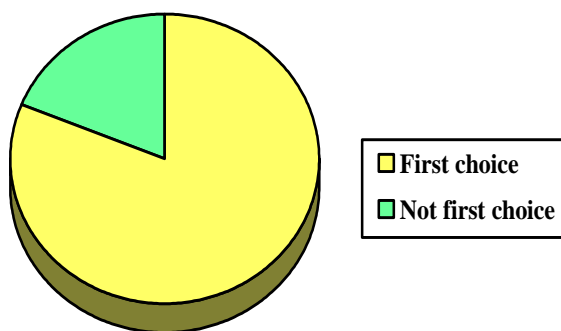
Percentage of respondents by A-level Maths



Percentage of respondents by A-level Economics



Percentage of respondents according to first choice of course



We appreciate that students' experiences vary according to the type of university they are attending. Universities have very different histories and resources to draw upon. This is an interesting theme in its own right and requires further investigation. It was not, however, considered as part of our survey work.

Neither have we included in the survey questions regarding the facilities provided by the universities. Although various facilities, especially library and computing services, are very important to students' perception of learning, they form a separate category and are usually surveyed centrally by the universities themselves.

Unless specifically mentioned, in this report the term "most useful" is used for both "very useful" and "useful" answers and the term "least useful" for "of some use" and "of little use" answers. Students' responses to the quantitative survey questions have been examined using standard statistical methods. Differences in responses have been considered with respect to gender, age on entry, year/level of study, A-level Economics, A-level Mathematics, English as a first language and choice of course. Relationships that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level are discussed. The report includes graphs of the percentage frequency of students' replies. Responses to each of the qualitative questions are coded and aggregated for analysis using N-Vivo software. (We are grateful to Dan Whillis for his work in coding students' answers and preparing a report on qualitative data.) In the report, for illustrative purposes, we included graphs, which are based on the codes, summarised in terms of their frequency, typical quotes from students' responses and "word clouds".

### **Economics Network support for students**

In the survey we asked students if they were aware of the websites run by the Economics Network for prospective and current students <http://whystudyeconomics.ac.uk> and <http://www.studyingeconomics.ac.uk>. Less than one in six respondents were aware of the sites, but they were very positive about the resources available on them. Among the comments: *"I like the clean and simple design. The website might benefit from a forum so students and interact or some social media plug-in such as Facebook"; "I think is [sic] very easy to use and navigate around. The sections that give tips on your degree work and what you can do after your degree are very useful and informative"; "I think that the website is quite informative, I would like the website to add more on careers after graduation and maybe more case studies on what careers past students have chosen"; "Why study economics gave me clear guidance on why to study economics at university so was very useful!"* Those who were not aware of the websites before were grateful that the survey had drawn their attention to them: *"Never knew about it before, but now looks like something which is valuable"; "Only had a quick look but it seems relevant, useful and interesting so have bookmarked to keep!"*

## **Section 2: About your previous learning experience**

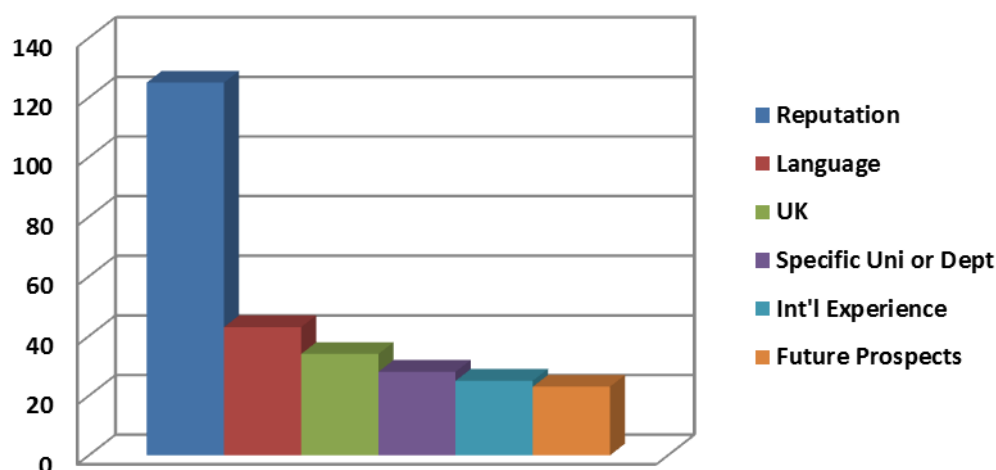
### **Q13. Before starting on this course did you study in the UK?**

Nearly 7 out of 10 respondents studied in the UK before starting their university course, which is less than in previous surveys.

### Q13.a. If no, where did you study?

There were 305 coded responses to this question. Of these, 42% had studied in Europe (35 different countries; Germany being the highest, followed by France, Romania, Bulgaria, Spain, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and Ireland). 39% previously studied in Asia, nearly half of which in China; the only other substantial numbers being from India and Singapore. North America accounted for a further 9% and Africa 7%. The three most represented countries overall were thus China (18.6 %), Germany and the USA (both 7%).

### 13.a.i. If no, what factors were the strongest in your decision to come to the UK?



There were 319 coded responses to this question. By far the most common theme was the reputation for good quality Higher Education in the UK. Some typical reasons given were: *"It is thought that British education is one of the best in the world"*; *"the fact that UK institutions have a worldwide reputation"*; *"High reputation of the education system"*; *"High quality of teaching standards"*; *"Better quality of education"*; and *"Quality of academic institutions"*.

A related theme (the fourth most common overall) emphasised the attraction of a specific university programme or department: *"The strength and quality of the Economics department"*; *"Quality of Economics programme"*; *"I heard a lot of good things about the University particularly in the area of research"*; *"The reputation of my University as a centre for learning"*; *"Loved the school when I visited"*; *"campus tours made me fall in love with the area, and the course structure works for my study methods."*

Many students claimed that it was the exposure to the English language and the opportunities for bettering their language skills that brought them to the UK. Some comments included: *"Wanting to improve my English by living in a country with native English-speakers"*; *"wanted to be in an English speaking environment"*; *"to improve my English skills"*; *"study in the English language"*; *"I have always wanted to study in the UK, improving my English skills. Nowadays English is too important in the workplace."*

In addition to the language, the wider draw of spending time in the UK is a significant factor for many. A number of sub-themes are apparent here, the most popular of which refers to family connections in or with the UK – *"I was born and raised in The Netherlands but both my parents are UK citizens. So, I decided to come to the UK because I wanted to study in my home country"*; *"Going back towards where family are from"* – and the appeal of British culture more generally – *"love for English literature"*;

*“multicultural environment”*; *“British culture”*; *“The history and culture”*; as well as the *“fact that Economics emerged from the UK”*. Further sub-themes (three instances each) included the fact that there are *“no tuition fees in Scotland”*; and being *“already here for work”*.

Opportunities for gaining more international/overseas – and broader life – experience were also important factors for many, with emphasis place on factors from *“meeting new people, seeing new places”*, and studying in an *“internationally diverse student body”*, to *“Living in the UK [to] allow me to travel around Europe during breaks”*.

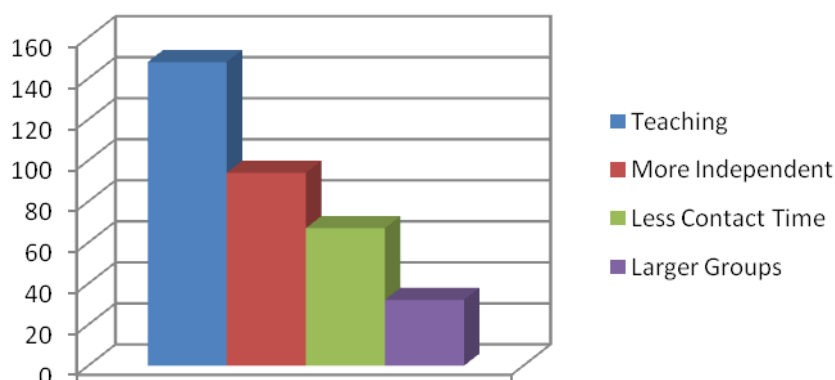
Finally, future prospects and career opportunities were cited as a major reason determining choices to study in the UK. Typical responses were: *“better graduate opportunities”*; *“great opportunity to gain knowledge here and create a wide range of networking [sic]”*; the *“chance to get foot in door of UK banking sector, e.g. the opportunities of internships at world class banks like Goldman Sachs.”*

#### **Q14. How does studying on your current course differ from your previous learning experience?**

This question consists of five sections: teaching method, assessment, contact with lecturers, e-learning and use of IT, and student support. Each section has two parts: quantitative and qualitative. For the quantitative part, respondents were asked to use a number key to assess the difference between their current course and their previous learning experience: 1 - very similar; 2 - similar; 3 - some similar, some different; 4 – different; 5 - very different. For the qualitative part they were asked to provide details to their answers (this was an optional part and not everyone answered it). Below is the analysis of the students’ answers by section.

##### **Q14.a. Teaching method**

Quantitative results were similar to the 2008 and 2010 survey results. For the majority of respondents (59.4%), teaching method was either different or very different at university, compared to their previous education. Only one in seven saw it as a similar or very similar experience – with the rest (26.8%) saying that some aspects were similar, and some were different.



There were 366 coded responses to this question. There were a number of prominent themes. The most common centred upon the lecture-based teaching methods used at university as opposed to the typical classroom-based form of previous learning. Many students commented along such lines as: *“Never experienced lectures before”*; *“Not used to being lectured at, used to full time interaction/contact”*; *“Far less explanation offered in university lectures that in college lessons”*; *“Teaching method*



somewhat more lax here, previously it was thoroughly explained, now it's more a case of generic answers and examples, with not much info on WHY something occurs." A few drew attention to the "Higher standard of teaching", while others mentioned variations in standards: "There is a lot of inconsistency in the quality of TA's we have. Whilst some are as good and interactive as my A-Level teachers were, some aren't great."

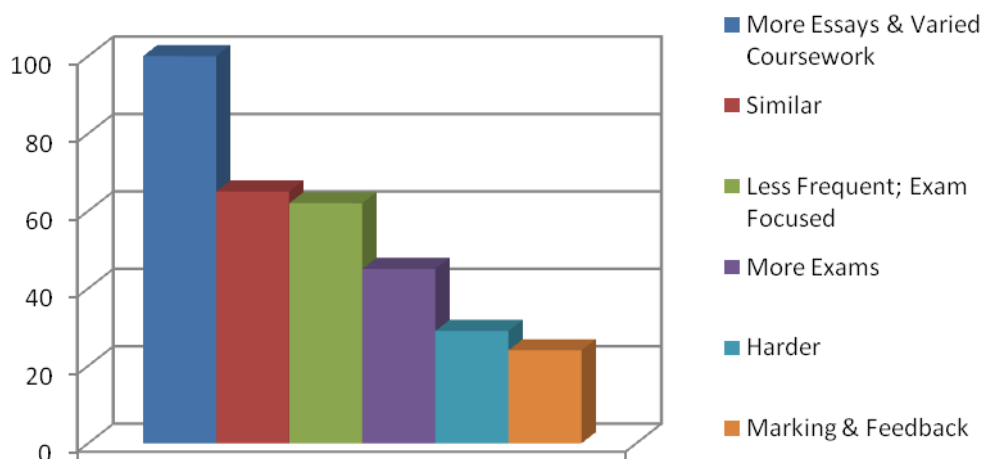
The second most significant theme concerned the far greater emphasis placed on independent learning at university, several people referring to school as "spoon feeding" by comparison. Similar comments included: "The Teaching Method was the area which required the greatest adjustment on starting this course, mainly due to the much greater level of personal autonomy over how you learn"; "Far more hands-off, so you have to be motivated enough to work yourself"; "We are required to do a lot of the work ourselves and lectures are mainly a brief overview of the topic"; "Still hands on approach in tutorials and with any help needed, but learning and putting the work in is up to you."

Many people also referred to the relative lack of contact time compared to previous learning experiences, and a concomitant reduction in regular interaction and feedback: "Significantly less contact time"; "Less help given, left to your own devices"; "More passive here rather than interactive at school"; "more of a hands on approach in college, we all got involved in the classes"; "At university, the style is more impersonal and less support is provided"; "Not very personalised, little feedback taken by teachers." A small number (10) did describe teaching at university as more interactive, however: "More participation of the student through tutorials than previously"; "We have more discussion now"; "More interactive, more in depth here than before."

Finally, some referred to the larger class and group sizes at university: "I was lucky enough to go to a private school in which class sizes were very small and there was a lot of focus on individual students. Teaching was far more interactive and encouraged debate within class"; "My lectures consist of bigger classes so there is less class engagement"; "Class sizes are much bigger. Less one to one contact."

### Q14.b.i. Assessment

As for the assessment, less than a third of respondents (29.1%) found it "similar" or "very similar" to their previous experience, which is just slightly less than in the 2008 and 2010 surveys. More than two out of five respondents found it "different" or "very different", slightly more than in 2008 and 2010. Respondents provided details to their answers.



There were 328 coded responses to this question. The most significant theme (with 100 comments) related to an increase in the amount and variety of coursework, including group work and presentations. Some typical examples include: *“End of year exams are the same, but we now have coursework in the form of homework and smaller tests”*; *“still have exams and essays but also have presentations and the essays are very different. we [sic] also have coursework tests which are like exams but you can use notes which I have never done before”*; *“previously we only had test, now we are marked on coursework and presentations and loads of other stuff”*; *“Pre-university standard was assessed based on term exams but university assess based on multiple continual assessments, projects, reports, presentations and final examinations”*; *“Based on the score distribution between assignments, coursework and class exams. The assessment in Iraq is just based on the mid-term exam and the final exam.”*

65 comments suggested that assessment methods at their current university were similar to previous experiences: *“Exams and assessments, similar to methods used in sixth form”*; *“Exams and occasional coursework much the same as college”*; *“Multiple choice, short answer questions, essay questions and essays are all things I encountered before university”*; *“More independent and less feedback, but generally similar in terms of format.”*

62 people said that assessments in general were less frequent and less varied than they were used to, and tended to be much more exam-focused: *“no longer undergo continuous assessment”*; *“In high school we had more tests and some kind of exams at the end of each semester. At the university I only have one exam in January and rest of them in May”*; *“Previously I would have exams more regularly and homework that counted towards the final grade”*; *“Only one assignment and one test, per year. Compared to weekly assignments and 4 tests per semester back in Mexico”*; *“Almost all exams in the summer, everything but the dissertation assessed by exams.”*

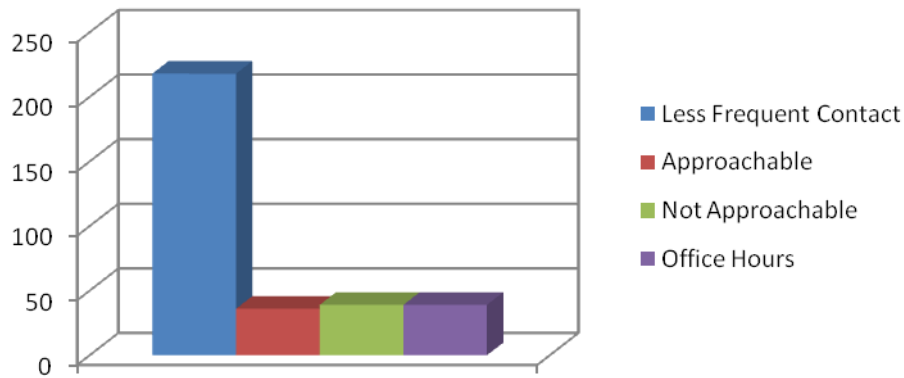
45 comments referred simply to there being more and longer exams, 15 of which noted greater use of multiple choice exams: *“Way more tests and examinations”*; *“Far greater emphasis on exams, very little coursework”*; *“the weight given on [sic] exams is higher in the UK”*; *“3 hour exam much longer than A Levels”*; *“Never done multiple choice test before”*; *“in my country we have oral exams and few written exams.”*

There were also 29 references to assessments being considerably more demanding at university: *“Much harder”*; *“More strict on the evaluation of the assessment, you have to get deeper in your research in order to get a good result”*; *“Coursework and exams are similar just more stringent and complex”*; *“essays have to be a lot more critical at university.”*

Finally, there were also 24 comments made specifically about differences in the standards of marking and feedback: *“Strict marking”*; *“I found the assessment criteria on my current course to be much harsher than I was used to”*; *“Basically the same, just feedback takes a tad longer (but is more thorough)”*; *“Less feedback than school”*.

#### **Q14.c.i. Contact with lecturers**

Contact with lecturers was “very different” or “different” for nearly two-thirds (65.1%) of respondents, which is slightly less than in the 2010 survey. More than one in six saw it as “similar” or “very similar” to their previous learning experience. Students provided details to their answers.



There were 385 coded responses to this question. In general, there was felt to be a lot less contact with lecturers than at school; 56% of comments referring to less frequent contact, often critically, although many recognised the inevitability of the situation: *“don't communicate with lecturers as much you would do a teacher”*; *“Less one on one time with teacher. It is harder to find help when I need it i.e. when I am doing a set of questions. Instead I have to wait for office hours or tutorials”*; *“With 200 students in a lecture, obviously contact time will be significantly shorter than in a school environment. Not necessarily a negative aspect – but definitely different”*; *“Much less hands-on, obviously because of more students”*; *“See our lecturers less, but they are still often available at the end if there are any problems.”*

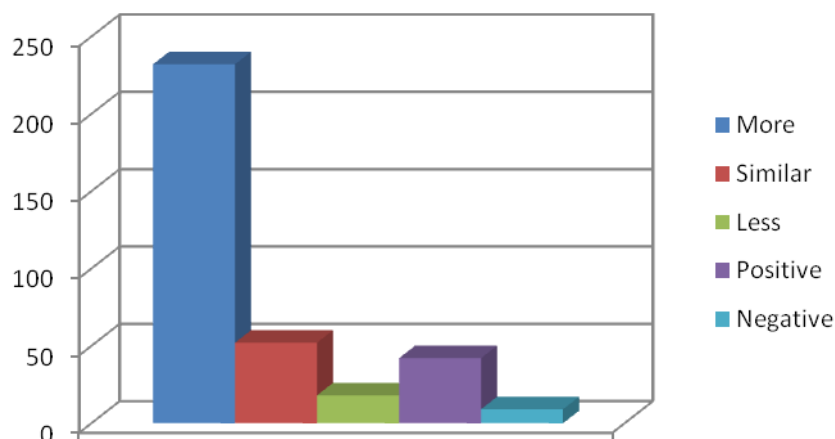
A small number (19) did however refer to there being more frequent contact, typically in comparison to previous experiences outside the UK: *“more access to lecturers in the UK”*; *“Many contact options are available here while in Iraq student [sic] can only contact lecturer in person if he will have time.”*

Approachability was a very common theme, split evenly between positive and negative appraisals. More positive comments include: *“Lecturers are much more helpful than I thought they would have been. It is easier to arrange one on one time with a lecturer than it was with some of my teachers at school”*; *“Here the lecturers are very approachable and friendly. We can go to their office if we don't understand something. In Romania it is not possible to do this”*; *“Professors here are very approachable and they are really concerned about their students, unlike in my previous university”*; *“Feel like I can contact lecturers more so than I could with my teachers and feels more of a personal level.”* In contrast, more negative views emphasised students' highly impersonal relationships with minimally engaged lecturers: *“There is much less contact and they feel less approachable”*; *“very impersonal, if confused not much opportunity to question”*; *“Lecturers don't seem interested in helping, we have to ask graduate teaching assistants”*; *“lecturer not always as open as school teachers would be.”*

Of the comments, 10% referred to office hours, with 23 people finding them to be of relatively limited use (e.g. *“Office hours are available but this is not the same as being able talk to them in class”*; *“Not much help when they were available... during the 1 hour time slot in an entire week”*; *“Very office hour fixated, no ‘just drop by’ mentality”*; *“Very little outside lecture, Office Hours are optional yes, but only useful if you're encountering problems. Thus it's very hard to maintain rapport”*), but 16 were more positive (e.g. *“The appointment system is a lot better”*; *“Easily available during their opening hours. Willing to listen to student feedback and provide them with additional study resources”*; *“good contact, easy to e-mail or book appointment with them”*).

#### Q14.d.i. E-learning and use of IT

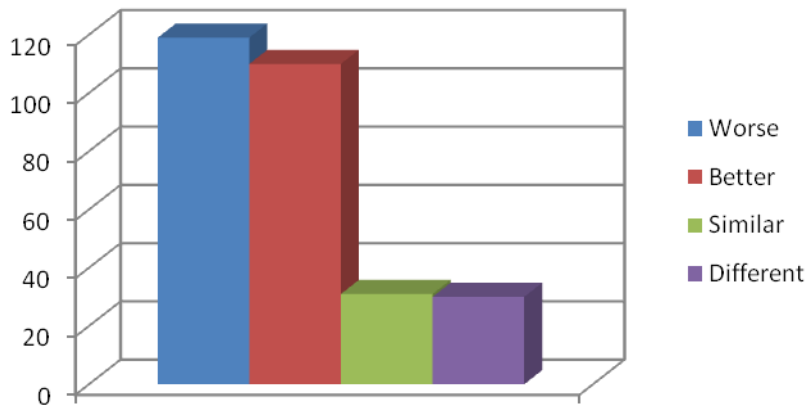
E-learning and use of IT on the current course was “different” or “very different” for nearly half of the respondents (48.8%), which is slightly less than in previous surveys. It was “similar” or “very similar” for more than a quarter of them (25.4%) and “some similar, some different” for the rest.



There were 353 coded responses to this question. The vast majority – almost two thirds – referred to there being greater use of E-Learning and IT at their current university than previously. Both online resources (VLEs, e-journals, e-mail) and new software (typically Maths-based packages) were cited. Just under 15% commented that computer use was “very similar” compared to their previous experiences, while only 5% claimed to use IT less than before. In addition, there were 42 comments that were explicitly positive about their university’s provision of these resources (e.g. “I’ve not used IT before in my course until I started my degree. It’s great”; “VISION is of the greatest benefit here. Having a centralised university portal makes it much easier to access lecture notes, sample exam papers and submit coursework”; “The E-learning here is considerably better than what I was previously used to, far more useful, easily accessible and provides information that we require”; “I’ve never had lectures recorded or been available for review before. It is very useful for revision purposes when notes are missing points”). This is compared to only 9 negative comments (e.g. “Wireless internet everywhere on campus. But there is no evidence of video capture/YouTube capture of lectures and seminars for revision”; “I applaud the school’s use of IT, with online portals and everything being sent via email. However, this has created many disadvantages as well. Email boxes are flooded with redundant mail that’s mass sent to entire school and department. Picking out what’s imp[or]tant [sic] has been a headache. Also, with everything online, there’s a lack of personal contact and [sic] with lecturers. This creates a huge gap between us and causes learning to be terribly formal and impersonal. Also issues are not addressed because things are done online as well”).

#### Q14.e.i. Student support

Slightly less than half of the respondents (48.7%) found student support in their current course “different” or “very different” from their previous experience, which is more than in the 2008 and 2010 surveys. More than one in five saw it as “very similar” or “similar”, which is in line with previous results.



There were 295 coded responses to this question. Critical comments about levels of student support at university narrowly outnumbered favourable comments (40% to 37%), while 10.5% said their current resources were basically similar to what was available to them previously. There were an additional 30 comments emphasising differences between previous and current forms and levels of support, without overtly judging one or other better.

Of those who felt their current situation was worse in this regard, the majority (79 in total) referred to there simply being less student support available, while a considerable number (38) also emphasised the impersonality of university systems: *“Feel less comfortable with speaking to someone about any issues I may have”*; *“It’s all quite impersonal”*; *“at school lots of personal support and guidance. University – could very easily get ‘lost’, not turn up, no backing/support really”*; *“It may be there but the student has to really seek it out. Not much active assistance”*; *“Although there is a large amount of student support, it’s not as obvious or as straight forward to take advantage of”*; *“Extra lectures and workshops are run, similar to at A level, to support learning and revision, but individual support is massively lacking at university.”*

More favourable comments included the following: *“There is student support for pretty much anything you could think of. It’s fantastic”*; *“tons of resources, and all made available”*; *“Well organized and efficient Careers Advice Office which offers hands-on advice on CV building, mock interviews and broader career advice”*; *“Probably slightly more intensive than my undergrad, with more emphasis on career based support than pastoral welfare”*; *“Feel far more supported as a PG student, and feel that opinion is valued”*; *“I think the support from lectures is fantastic. Some will go out of their way to help you even offering private contact number if you need to contact them”*. 12 people referred directly to university support being better than at school (*“this is a service that I have never seen or used before in other schools. It is extremely useful”*), and 11 to it being better than their experiences in other countries (*“in the UK there is an extra support of students”*; *“UK does much better than China, the university encourages students to use the support service”*). There were also a number of comments to the effect that student support is better when optional rather than compulsory (e.g. *“It is there, but optional. Before it seemed pressed upon you”*; *“Help is less thrown in your face at university”*).

Similarly, the most common theme among those who emphasised differences – without explicitly preferring current or previous forms of support – was need for individuals to actively seek support and guidance at university (*“Help is still offered but you may have to put in more effort to seek it. Teachers are still happy to help though”*; *“Support is there, but only if you go looking for it”*; *“You have to seek out support rather*

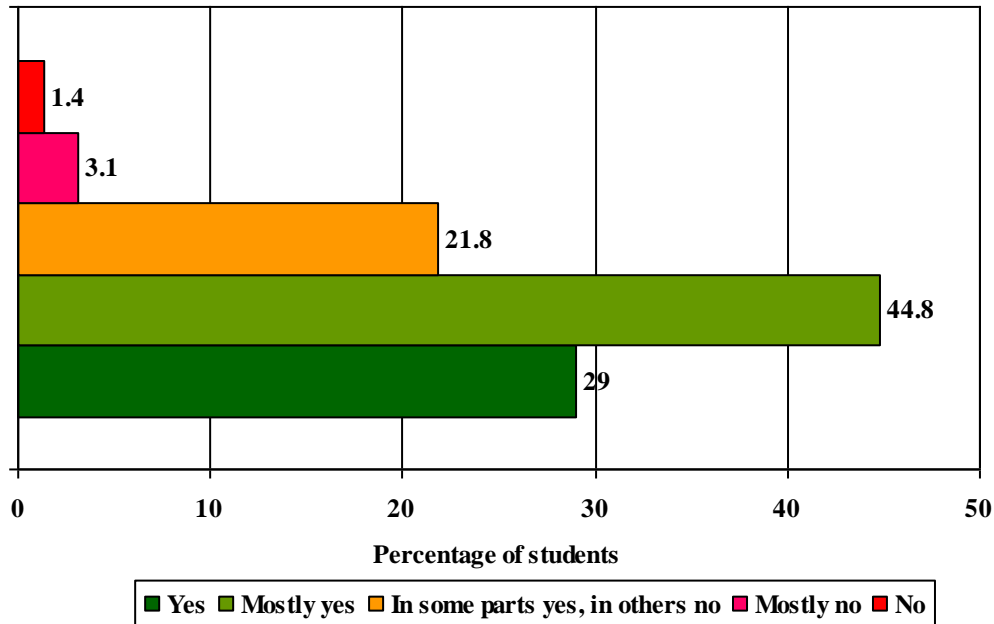
*than being offered it at a convenient time, which is more a part of growing up and not being spoon fed everything as before”; “It's completely different because students aren't spoon fed in university we have to use our own initiative more therefore the support is different because we're expected to develop on information we're given rather than rely on it for answers like at school”). Others emphasised the tutorial system in universities (“Very different way around offering students support: 1 personal tutor as opposed to contacts in each subject/module at sixth form”) and Student Union services (“We have student union that provide student support to students need [sic]”).*

**Q15. Do you think your previous learning experience prepared you for your current study?**

More than five out of six respondents felt that they were “adequately prepared” for their degree course, which is higher than in the 2010 survey. Less than a quarter of them felt that they were “very well prepared” and less than one in ten felt that they were “not at all prepared”. The following were among the comments given in the survey: *“A level economics helped provide a basis for studying economics at undergraduate level; however the majority of A level courses were covered in Year 1 term 1 anyway. I would have been able to grasp the course material without having studied A level economics”; “All well apart from the mathematics where I was/am very underprepared and must work very hard to be at even basic entry levels for the degree”; “Having previously studied at a sixth form I was not prepared for how independent learning is at university”; “I studies [sic] both the Scottish Higher and Advanced Higher and I think they should put a bit more mathematics in the course just so you are more practised. I also think that school should use the Greek alphabet more when I arrived i [sic] didn't know the names of most of the symbols and it was quite confusing when lectures used them”; “The content I learned before was very relevant and can be applied in most modules however it did not prepare me for the motivation and time needed for reading and self study.”*

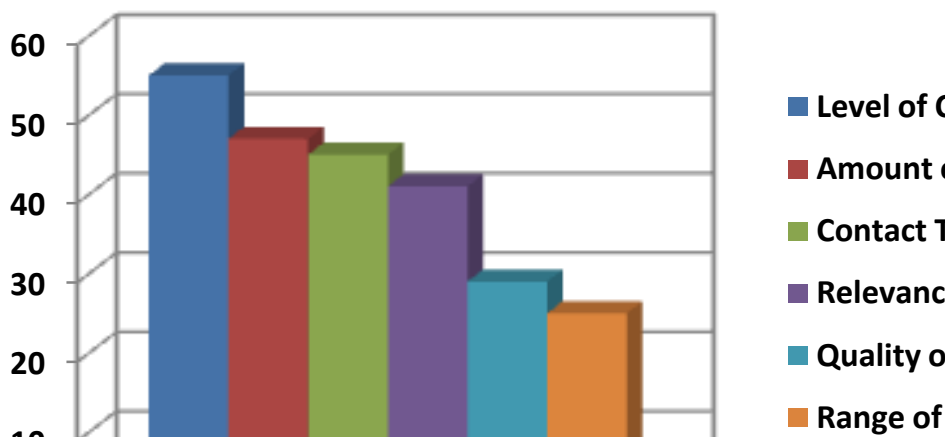
### Section 3: About your degree course

#### Q16. Has studying this degree course met your expectations?



- Nearly 3 out of 4 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The level of expectations being met was stable in the surveys of 2006-2010: 75.4% - 75.5%, but is lower in 2012 – 73.9%.

#### 16.a. If you didn't answer yes, please explain in what ways it differs from your expectations



There were 291 coded responses to this question. The vast majority of responses refer to content (160 responses in total) and teaching (91 responses). In terms of the former, the most notable themes to emerge concern how challenging the degree is, the amount of maths, relevance, and range of subjects offered. In terms of teaching, the most

notable themes concern contact time and guidance, as well as the quality of lecturers/tutors.

Of those responses relating to 'challenge', 71% felt that their courses were not as challenging as they had expected. Typical comments included: *"at the moment I am finding the course quite tame and dull. This is because I have covered most of the material before"*; *"I thought that I would learn a lot more, instead I find the course quite basic and not very challenging"*; *"First year: Waste of time, Second year: a bit better Third year: Finally we are getting somewhere!"* The remainder found their courses more difficult than expected, e.g. *"It feels like I've been throw in at the deep end. Very much different from college. Not as helpful as I had thought it would be"*; *"I did not expect such intense or demanding workloads."*

In terms of maths, 81% referred to there being much more maths involved than they expected, e.g. *"I did not anticipate the level of mathematics that took place during an economics degree. If I had known that there would be extensive use I would have chosen to do a maths A level."* Only 19% stated that there was less maths than expected, e.g. *"I expected more technical Maths in the first year."*

On the theme of relevance, replies were evenly split between references to courses being more abstract and theoretical than expected (not practical enough), and lacking contemporary topicality. Examples of the former: *"Expected more hands-on approach, less theory more practice"*; *"Like in engineering or medicine, economics NEEDS practical experience. There needs to be year in industry or a day a week dedicated to some sort of practical experience. This is what companies want: they expect us to have knowledge that we can't have unless universities help us achieve that."* The signal theme in relation to contemporary topicality referred to a lack of discussion of global financial crises, e.g. *"The focus was mostly from an academic, research-based standpoint. During the entire 4-year economics course, we didn't really focus on the Financial Crisis; which would seem to be one of the most important economic events in history!?! Much emphasis was placed on old, outdated theories that defy common sense"*; *"University doesn't seem to be about learning to advance knowledge but to learn for exams. I have been on my course 3 years and in the whole of that time I don't think the financial crisis has been mentioned once. How can several lecturers only provide even passing mentions of perhaps the biggest economic crisis the world has even seen. Too much theory and nowhere near enough application."*

In terms of the range of subjects offered, some had expected a greater balance between, for example, economics, business, marketing, and finance: *"I thought the course would be less economics based and more business based"*; *"I did not expect my current modules to be so finance-focused but thought there would be more economic theory involved. This is not a bad thing, just unexpected."* Others referred to there being fewer module options available than expected: *"Limited module choice so didn't fully get to choose what I wanted to study/was interested in"*; *"more mandatory (and un-enjoyable) units than expected."*

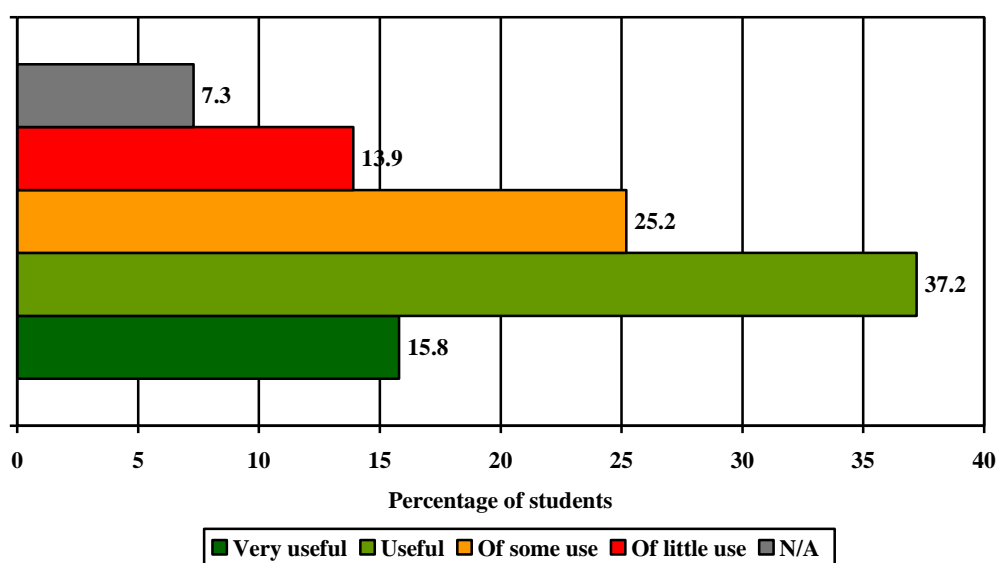
As for teaching, many expressed concern at the lack of contact time and the relative lack of help and guidance received from teachers. For instance: *"I expected more contact time and more opportunities to learn face to face rather than from textbooks or web articles"*; *"I expected more lectures and less individual learning"*; *"Extremely limited interaction with lecturers and almost no practical and problem answering classes - this is quite unexpected"*; *"A lot less support and guidance than I expected"*; *"Extremely little help, extremely little contact."*



The quality of teaching also failed to meet the expectations of a considerable number: *“I expected lecturers to be more passionate about their subject”; “course was presented in a poor manner and fails to encourage you to learn it”; “Lecturers & tutors have very poor English skills, very boring, theoretical course content.”*

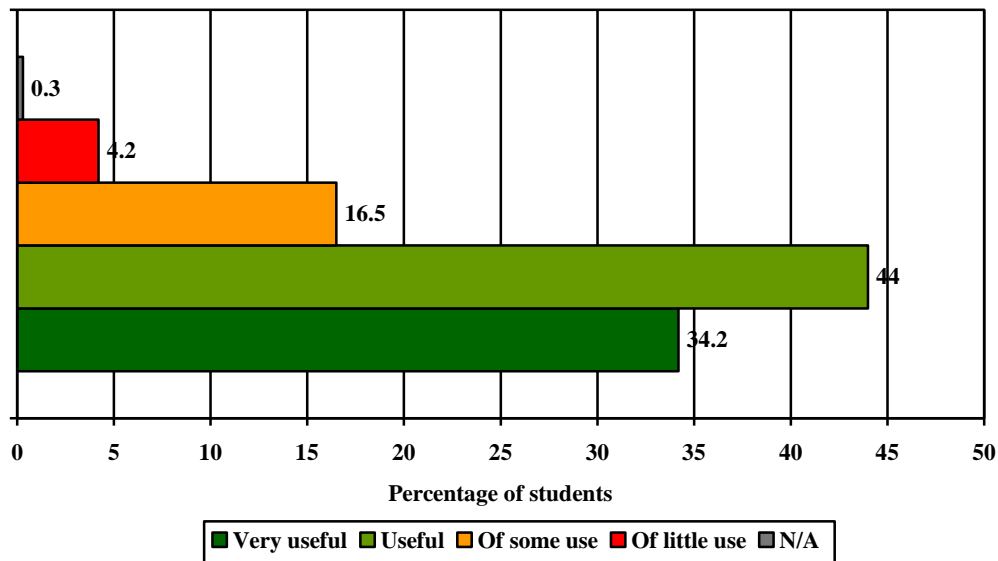
**Q17. Please indicate how useful you have found each of these in supporting your learning**

**Q17.a. Course induction in the first year**



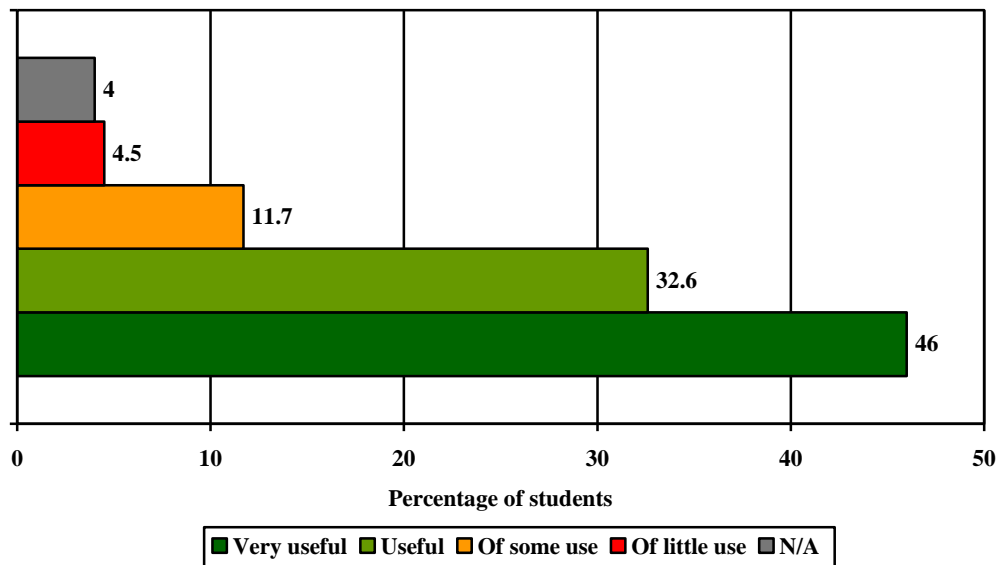
- More than half of the respondents were positive about the course induction they received in the first year, while a quarter found it “of some use”;
- This is a new question, used for the first time in our students’ survey;
- Age, first language, year of study and A-level Economics are statistically significant factors (SSF);
- Age is a SSF for induction: its usefulness increases with the age of respondents from 15.2% for 18-21 year olds, who found it “very useful”, to 17.4% among 22-25 year olds and to 21.5% for those 26 and above;
- First language is also a SSF for induction: non-English speakers found it more useful than English speakers – 56.5% versus 51.0%;
- Year of study is a SSF for induction too: its usefulness declines for each year of study, from 56.8% finding it “very useful” or “useful” in the first year, to 54.4% in the second year, to 51.5% (3<sup>rd</sup> year) to 45.9% (4<sup>th</sup> year) and to 44.1% for postgraduate students;
- A-level Economics is a SSF for induction: those who had an A-level in Economics found induction less useful than those who hadn’t – 50.7% versus 57.2%;
- Students’ comments on induction included: *“Having already studied economics before, it can appear somewhat tedious”; “Very basic”.*

### Q17.b. Lectures



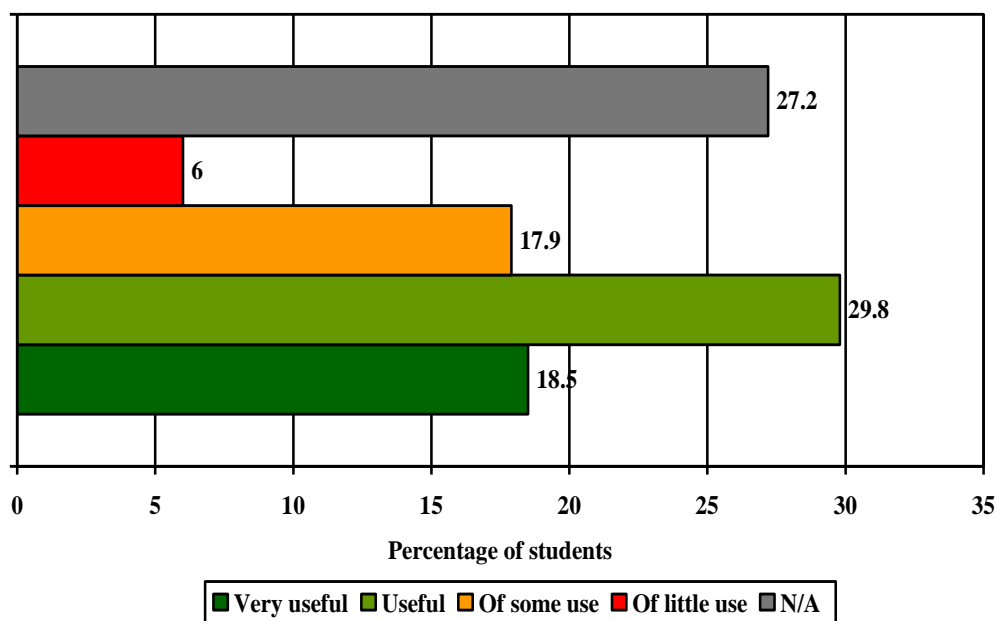
- More than 3 out of 4 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- Although the number of students who found lectures useful had been declining during 2006-2008-2010: 75.3% - 74.7% -74.1%, it increased in 2012 to 78.2%;
- As in the previous studies, age was a statistically significant factor (SSF): the usefulness of lectures increased with the age of respondents from 77.7% for 18-21 year olds, to 80.7% among 22-25s but decreased to 77.2% for those over 26;
- The following were among the students' comments: *"Lectures with competent teachers are very useful. Others not so much..."; "Of use but it entirely depends on the lecturers. Some lecturers have absolutely no ability to engage their audience. A shockingly more common occurrence than should really be the case"; "Some lecturers seem very intent on helping and seem enthusiastic on the actual subject. Some lecturers don't really do a very good job at doing this however, and seem to [sic] very keen on not teaching the maths content provided. For this university it is especially interesting because A level maths was not required, which made a lot of my friends have a lot of problems with some of the content. I had at least AS maths which definitely helped, but if the university doesn't put it down as a requirement, lecturers should be more prepared to help students with this aspect."*

### Q17.c. Small classes or seminars (up to 20 students)



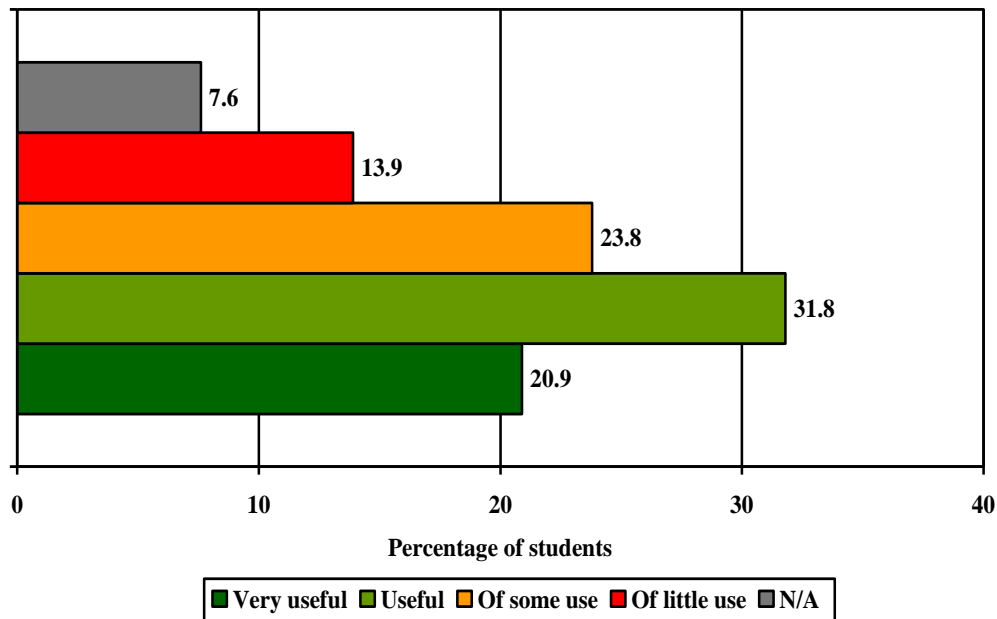
- More than 3 out of 4 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found small classes useful has increased during 2006-2012: 75.8% - 78.6% - 77.7% - 78.6%;
- As in previous studies age and year of study were SSF, but in 2012 so too was gender ;
- Age was a SSF for small classes: the usefulness of this form of class decreases with the age of respondents from 79.7% for 18-21 year olds, to 77.8% among 22-25s, and to 65.8% for those over 26;
- Year of study is a SSF for small classes: their usefulness increases during each year of undergraduate study from 76.6% (1<sup>st</sup> year), to 81.8% (2<sup>nd</sup> year), to 82.9% (3<sup>rd</sup> year), but then decreases for postgraduates to 69.6%;
- Gender was a SSF for small classes this year: male respondents found them more useful than female respondents – 79.2% versus 78.3%;
- Students' comments included: *"By far the most useful form of learning. Minor exams are particularly helpful"; "Some tutorials and seminars have been useful, whereas others I've found the tutor just writing answers on the board to maths questions and not explaining them"; "in-depth explanations of the lecture is [sic] very useful to aiding understanding"; "They should make our weekly tutorials (smaller classes as opposed to lectures) assessed, it would give students incentive to actually show up prepared."*

**Q17.d. Workshops or classes (over 25 students)**



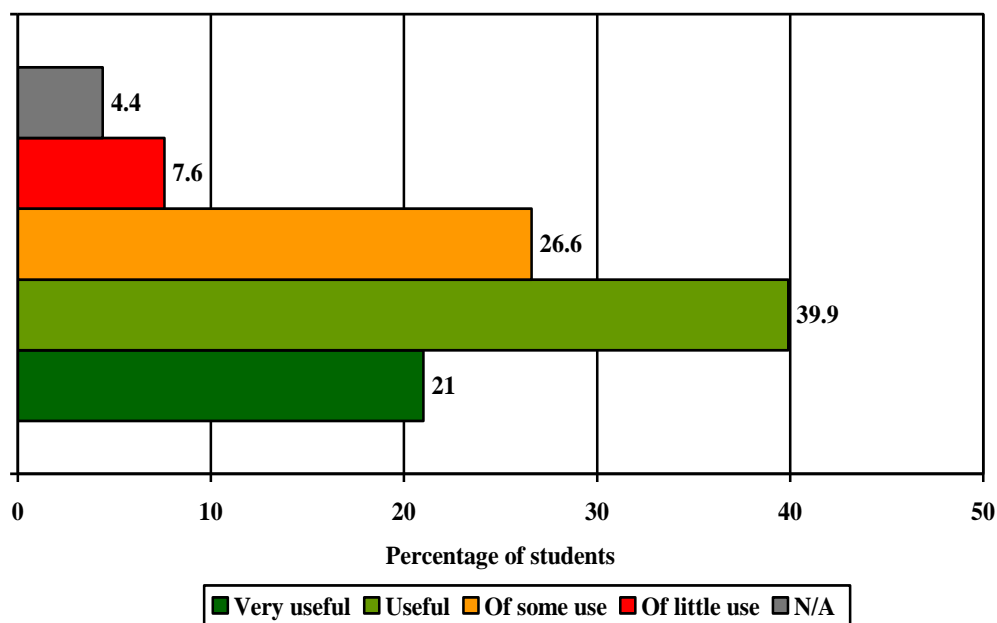
- Nearly half of the respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found workshops useful has been steadily increasing during 2006-2012: 33.4% - 40.9% -43.7% - 48.3%;
- As in previous studies language, A-level Maths and year of study were SSF, in addition to age and A-level Economics;
- Language was a SSF for workshops: students with English as their first language found workshops less useful than non-English speakers: 45.2% versus 53.7%;
- Year of study is a SSF for workshops: they were seen as most useful in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years and during postgraduate studies: 52.0%, 54.1% and 52.1%, but less useful in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years – 42.2 and 49.7%;
- Age was a SSF for workshops: they were perceived as most useful by the 22-25s – 59.4%, but less useful by other age groups – 46.6% for 18-21 year olds and 45.6% for those over 26;
- A-level Economics was a SSF for workshops: those who had this qualification found workshops less useful than those who hadn't – 46.2% versus 52.3%;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for workshops: those who had A-level Maths found workshops less useful than those who hadn't – 46.1% versus 53.9%;
- Among students' comments were the following: *“Students often talk throughout, tutors are mostly foreign with very bad English skills”*; *“don't think we have workshops or classes in my university, at least not in the economics department for first years”*; *“have very few workshops.”*

### Q17.e. Lecturers' office hours or clinics or one-to-one tutorials



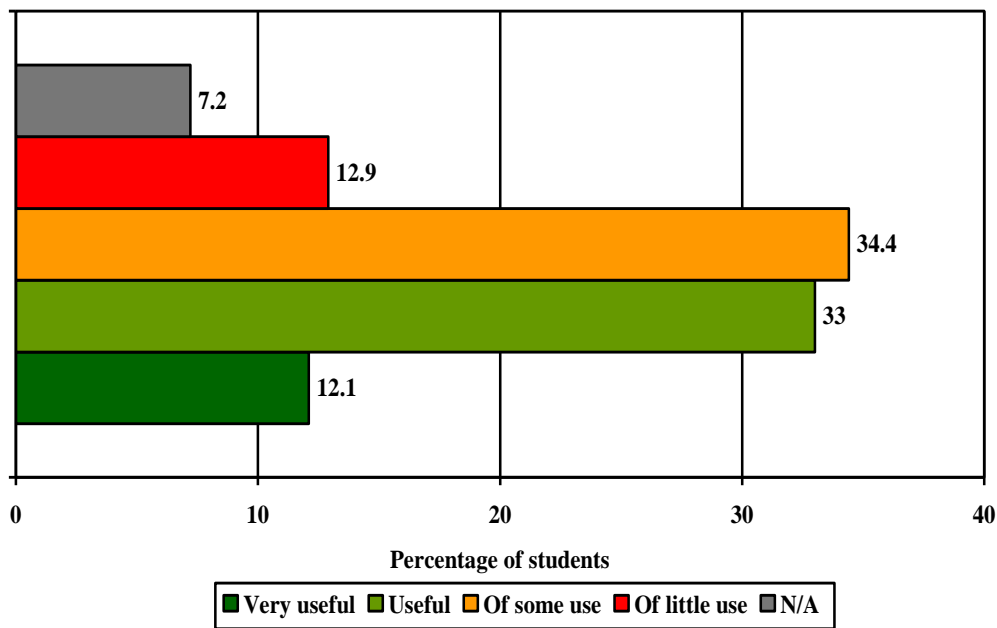
- More than half of respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found office hours useful has been increasing between 2006 and 2012: 43.7% - 48.0% - 48.5% - 52.7%;
- As in previous studies language, age and year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for office hours: students with English as their first language found office hours less useful than non-English speakers: 49.7% versus 57.8%;
- Year of study is a SSF for office hours: their usefulness increases during the undergraduate years from 42.6% (1<sup>st</sup> year) to 55.7% (2<sup>nd</sup> year), to 57.4% (3<sup>rd</sup> year), to 68.8% (4<sup>th</sup> year) and stays high at 59.0% for postgraduates;
- Age was also a SSF for office hours: their usefulness is lowest for 18-21 year olds – 50.8%, then increases to 58.0% for 22-25s and to 67.1% for over 26s;
- The following were among students' comments: *“Very useful when available, but often not readily available”*; *“Some lecturers have very limited office hours”*; *“for some lecturers their office hours are very useful but other lecturers make it clear that visits are an inconvenience”*; *“Times are not always suitable and can be intimidating going to lecturers.”*

### Q17.f. Assigned reading



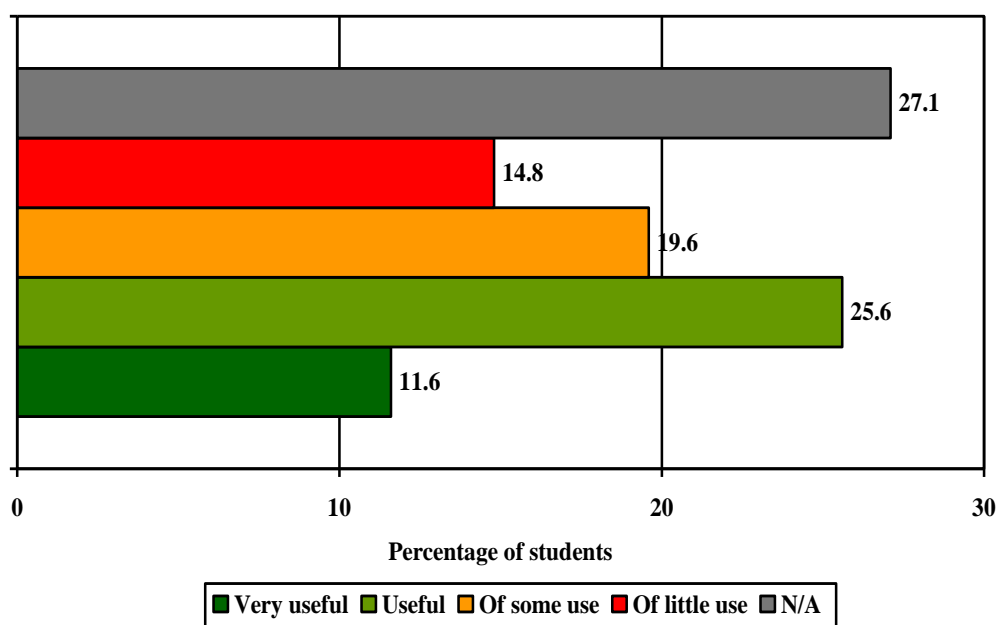
- More than 3 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found assigned reading useful has been decreasing in the years 2006-2012: 69.2% - 65.0% - 62.1% - 60.9%;
- As in previous studies language, age and year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for assigned reading: students with English as their first language found assigned reading less useful than non-English speakers: 60.1% versus 62.4%;
- Year of study is a SSF for assigned reading: its usefulness increases during the undergraduate years from 53.2% (1<sup>st</sup>) to 62.0% (2<sup>nd</sup>), to 65.4% (3<sup>rd</sup>), to 70.5% (4<sup>th</sup>) and stays at 67.7% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for assigned reading too: its perceived usefulness is lowest among 18-21 year olds – 59.3%, then increases to 66.2% among 22-25s and to 70.9% for over 26s;
- Students' comments included: *"Could be better if we actually used it in class"; "I don't understand a lot of the set book, so have purchased 'Economics for Dummies' and have started again from scratch"; "Could be better if we actually used it in class"; "Seminars and reading from books and the Internet quest where I learn the most."*

### Q17.g. Other reading



- More than 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found other reading useful decreased in 2006, 2008 and 2010: 45.9% - 41.8% - 42.6%;
- As in previous studies language, age and year of study were SSF, but this year, so too were gender and A-level Maths;
- Language was a SSF for other reading: students with English as their first language found other reading less useful than non-English speakers: 42.6% versus 49.3%;
- Year of study is a SSF for other reading: it is most useful for 4<sup>th</sup> year students and postgraduates – 55.7% and 52.2% respectively, and its usefulness increases during the 3 undergraduate years from 43.5% (1<sup>st</sup>), to 43.6% (2<sup>nd</sup>), to 43.8% (3<sup>rd</sup>);
- Age was also a SSF for other reading: its usefulness was lowest among 18-21 year olds – 42.6%, then increased to 53.7% for 22-25s and to 59.5% for over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for other reading: females are more positive about it than males – 47.0% versus 42.8%;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for other reading too: those who didn't have A-level Maths found it more useful than those who did – 50.5% and 42.9%;
- Among students' comments were the following: *“For people with no economics background, I really think an easy introductory book should be made known to students prior to starting the course, to be read before induction. I really would have benefitted from this”*; *“Could be better if they bothered to highlight some useful papers”*; *“Extra reading was always given, with few references to the core reading.”*

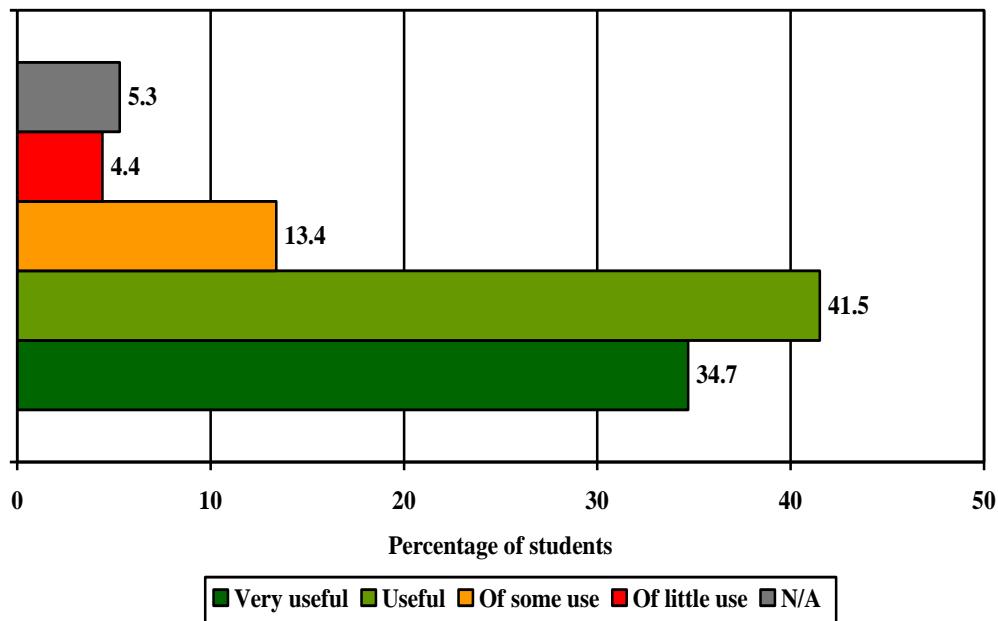
### Q17.h. Group work projects



- More than 1 out of 3 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found group work projects useful has increased during 2006-2012: 34.6% - 34.2% - 35.5% - 37.2%;
- As in previous studies language, A-level Maths and year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for group work projects: students with English as their first language found group work projects less useful than non-English speakers: 34.5% versus 41.7%;
- Year of study is a SSF for group work projects: their perceived usefulness steadily increases through undergraduate years from 33.8% in year 1, to 36.8% in year 2, to 39.3% in year 3 and to 50.8% in year 4, but then decreases to 39.8% for postgraduates;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for group work projects: students who haven't done A-level Maths found group work projects more useful compared to those who have – 41.9% and 35.3% respectively;
- Students' comments included: *“Extremely useful, preparation to active life”*; *“The effectiveness depends greatly on the composition of your group. Pros: Being with others can make you do your work quicker and to a higher standard. Cons: Others may free-ride and receive little to no punishment. Often hard to distribute work fairly”*; *“Depends on the group and type of work to be completed”*; *“I personally do not enjoy doing group work. I have done so on three projects this term and every time there has been someone who does not pull their weight.”*

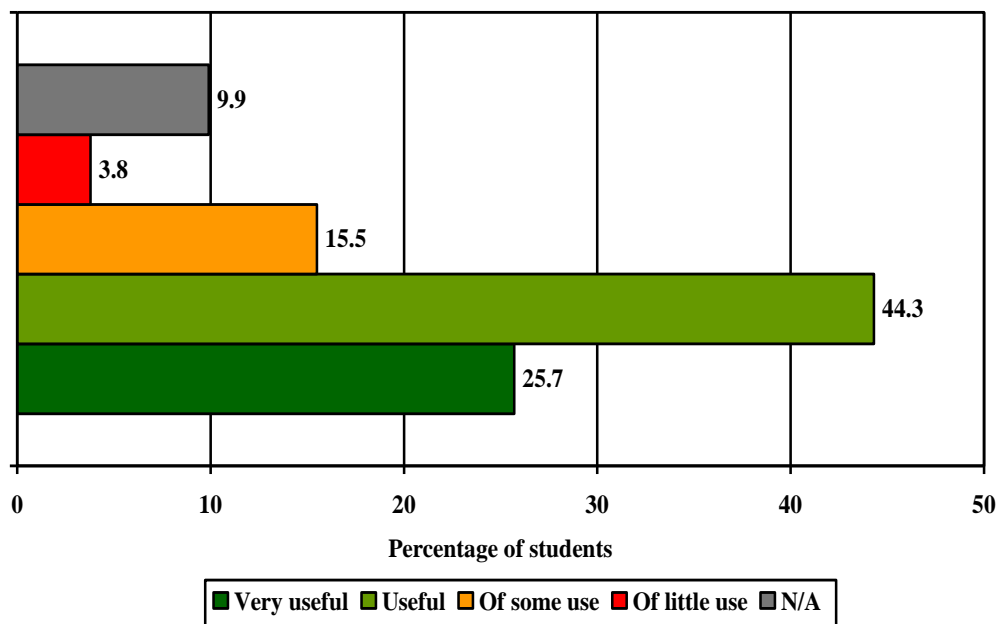


**Q17.i. Set preparatory work for seminars (e.g. problem sets)**



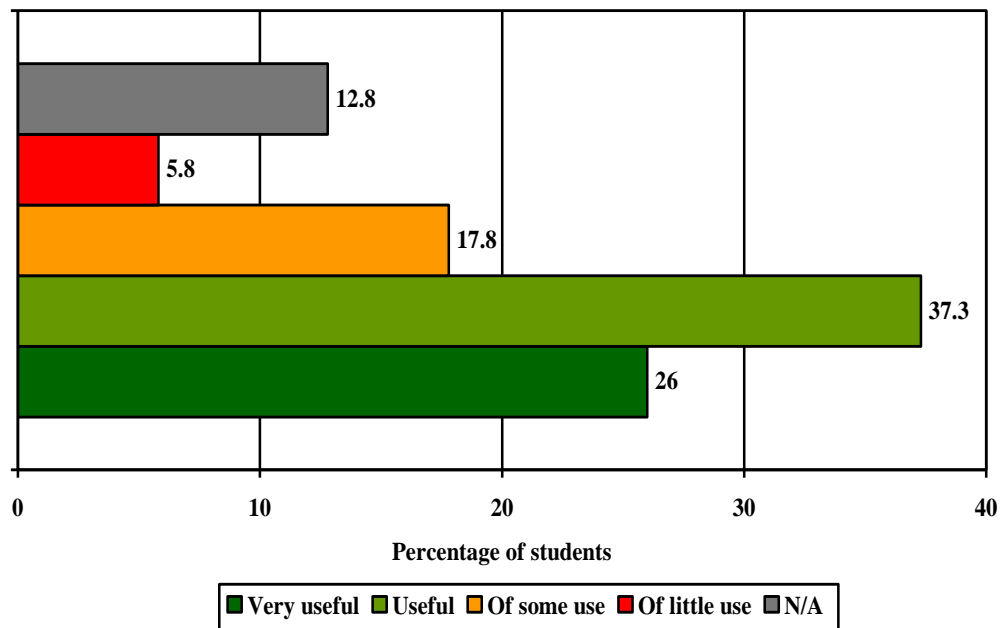
- More than 3 out of 4 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found set preparatory work useful increased during 2006-2012: 70.8% - 71.7% - 74.3% - 76.2%;
- As in previous studies age and year of study were SSF, but also A-level Maths;
- Year of study is a SSF for set preparatory work: it is found increasingly useful in the first 3 undergraduate years – 72.3% - 78.6% - 83.4% but then decreases to 72.1% in year 4 and to 68.3% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for set preparatory work: its perceived usefulness is highest among 18-21 year olds – 77.7%, then decreases to 70.6% for 22-25s and 69.6% for over 26s;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for set preparatory work: those who have A-level Maths find set preparatory work more useful than those without – 78.4% versus 70.9%;
- Among students' comments were the following: *“Very useful if the tutor actually goes through the problem set but if they don't as with one of my modules, students just reinforce the wrong methods”*; *“just as useful as seminars”*; *“The problem sets I was set to do for economics for one of my modules were not to do with the lectures and the tutor just gave out the answers without explanations of what they were doing.”*

## Q17.j. Essays



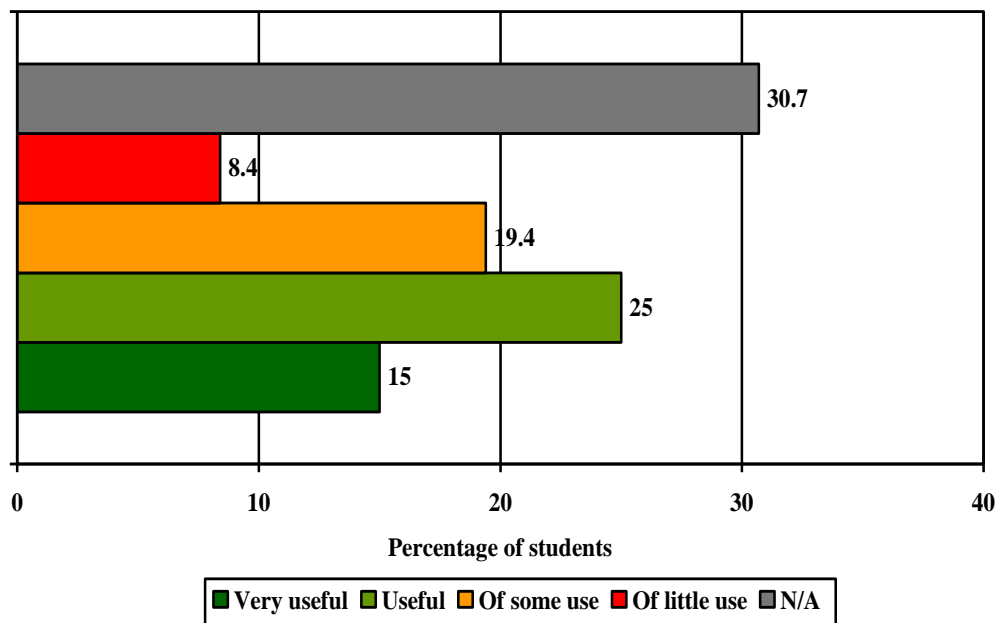
- More than 2 out of 3 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found essays useful decreased in 2006, 2008 and 2010: 75.1% - 72.7% - 67.6%, but increased this year to 70.0%;
- As in previous studies, age and year of study were SSF, with the addition of gender this year;
- Year of study is a SSF for essays: their usefulness increases for undergraduates from 64.4% in year 1, to 71.9% in year 2, to 76.0% in year 3 and 83.6% in year 4, but decreases to 64.0% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for essays: their perceived usefulness is highest among 18-21 year olds – 70.5%, but this decreases to 67.1% for 22-25s and rises again to 69.6% for over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for essays: females find essays more useful than males, 70.4% versus 69.5%;
- Students' comments included: *"If we there was not so much emphasis on exams and more on essays, I would learn more and probably do better (not so good at doing exams)"; "Of great use when given feedback. On my course there is a lack of feedback on the kind of essays set for exams"; "They would be useful however I don't feel like we have been taught how to best write essays ie/ [sic] essay structure as I am worried it is different to essay writing at A level. For this reason more thought has gone into how to write the essay rather than the content of the essay"; "Word counts ruin your essays. I am often more worried about how many words I have left than what I could be saying."*

### Q17.k. Online learning using the Web



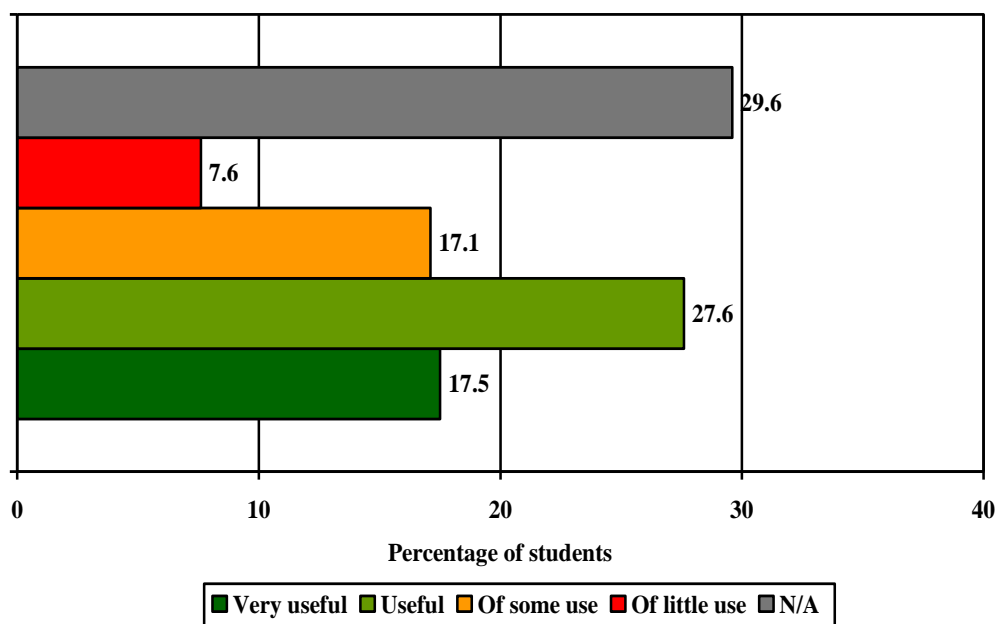
- More than 3 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found online learning using the web useful increased during 2006-2012: 50.0% - 56.0% - 60.7% - 63.3%;
- None of the factors were statistically significant (SSF);
- The following were among students' comments: *"Although online facilities such as forums are available - these were disregarded by the department and were definitely [sic] a missed opportunity for improving the level of education. Communication from the class administrator regarding class changes etc was good however"; "Very useful supplement to traditional textbook reading - providing you know where to look."*

### Q17.I. Online learning using Economics software



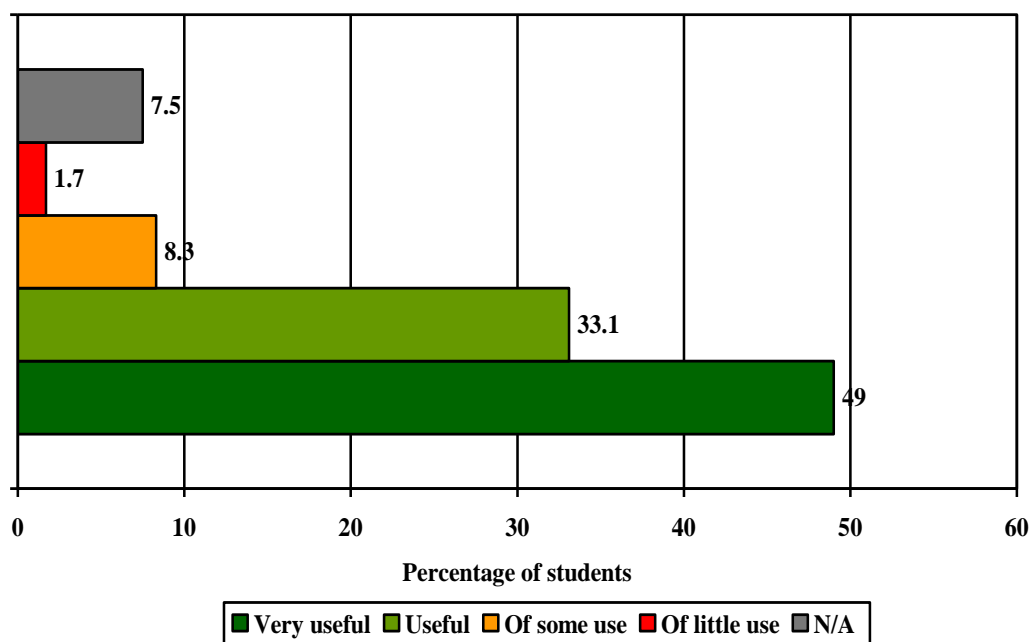
- 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question, but nearly 1 in 3 said it was unavailable;
- The number of students who found online learning using economics software useful increased during 2006-2012: 27.9% - 34.9% - 38.3% - 40.0%;
- As in previous studies age, language and year of study were SSF, but this year, so too was A-level Maths;
- Year of study is a SSF for online learning using economics software: the percentage of respondents who found it useful increased from 36.9% in year 1, to 39.6% in year 2, to 40.3% in year 3, to 41.0% in year 4 and then to 49.8% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for online learning using economics software: its usefulness was lowest among 18-21s– 38.0%, this increased to 48.8% for 22-25s but decrease to 46.8% for over 26s. At the same time, respondents who stated that this software was not available decreases with age from 32.7% for 18-21s, to 20.3% for 22-25s but increases to 29.1% for over 26s;
- Language was a SSF for online learning using the economics software: non-English speakers found it more useful than English speakers – 45.4% versus 36.9%;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for online learning using economics software: those who have A-level Maths found it less useful than those who didn't have it: 38.7% versus 43.4%;
- Among students' comments were the following: *“Software (i.e. eViews, some function of MS Excel) is very useful but it had not been introduced to us so we had to find our own way through it. Had it been introduced, it would have been even more efficient”*; *“Have not yet used any economic software in my degree.”*

### Q17.m. Online questions and tests (not assessed)



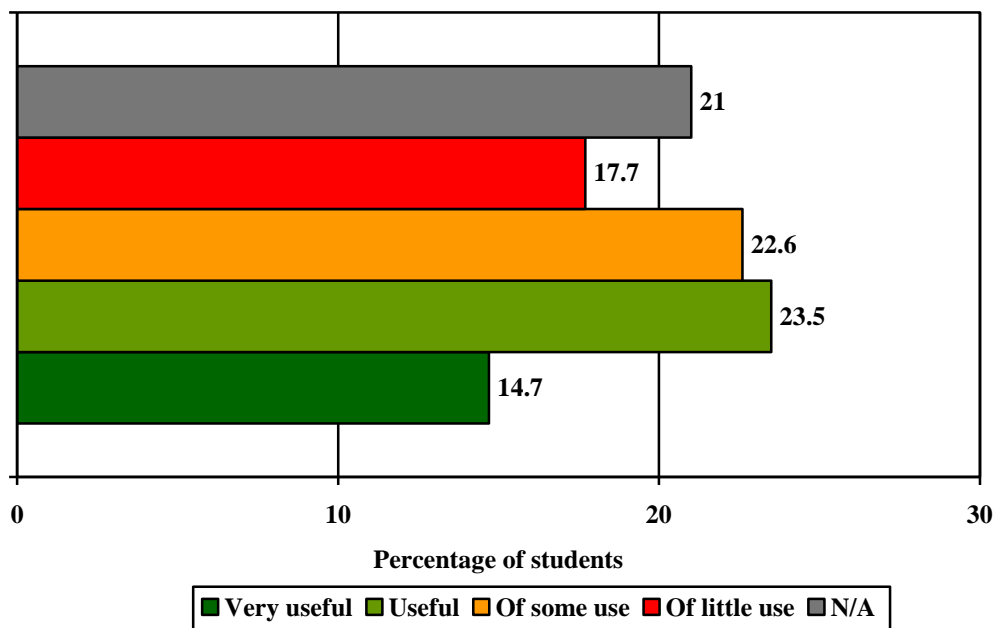
- More than 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question, but nearly 3 in 10 stated that online questions and tests were not available, which is an improvement compared to 41.3% in 2006, 38.0% in 2008 and 31.2% in 2010;
- The number of students who found online questions and tests useful increased during 2006-2012: 31.7% - 36.1% - 42.9% - 45.1%;
- As in previous studies gender and year of study were SSF, but so too were A-level Maths and language;
- Year of study is a SSF for online questions and tests: their usefulness decreasing from 53.0% in year 1 finding them useful, to 49.0% in year 2, to 37.6% in year 3, to 37.7% in year 4 and 31.0% for postgraduates; though they were unavailable to 41.0% of them ;
- Gender was a SSF for online questions and tests: female respondents found them less useful than male: 44.8% versus 45.5%;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for online questions and tests: respondents who had taken Maths at A-level found online questions and tests less useful compared to those who hadn't: 43.7% versus 48.8%;
- Language was a SSF for online questions and tests: non-English speakers found them more useful than English speakers: 47.6% versus 43.7%;
- Among students' comments were the following: *"For the maths modules it was very useful"*; *"We only had assessed and that was useful."*

**Q17.n. Materials posted by lecturer on course VLEs (such as Blackboard, WebCT or Moodle) or website**



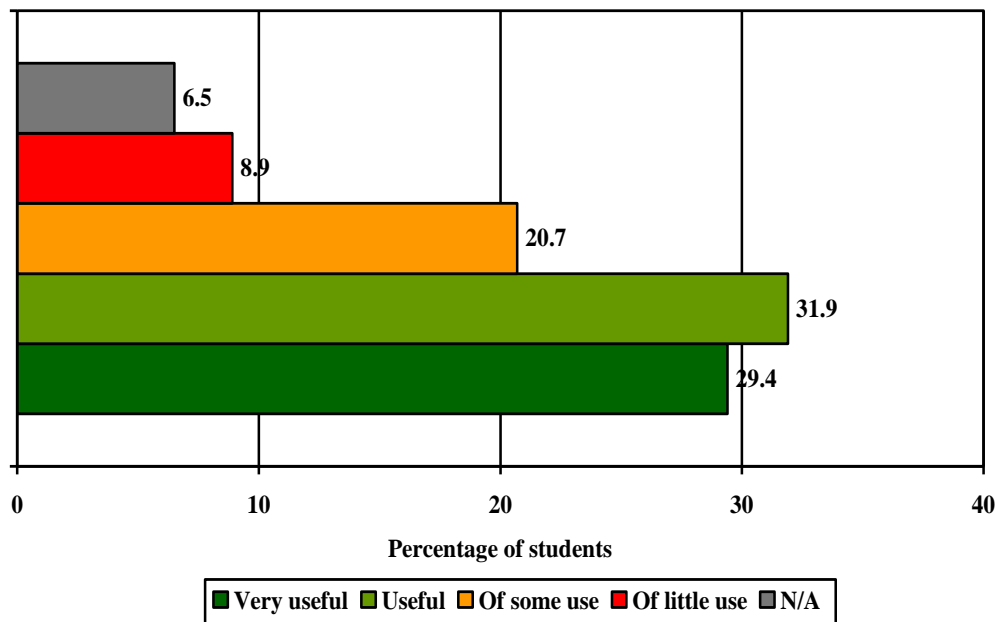
- More than 4 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found online questions and tests useful increased from 2006 to 2012: 77.2% - 76.8% - 79.8% - 82.1%;
- As in previous studies A-level Maths was a SSF, as was year of study in this year's survey;
- Year of study was a SSF for materials posted on VLE: their perceived usefulness was highest among 4<sup>th</sup> year students – 90.1% and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students – 86.2%, and lowest among the postgraduates -70.4%;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for materials posted on VLE: those who didn't have this qualification found the materials more useful than those who had it: 82.6% versus 82.0% ;
- Students' comments included: *"Blackboard is a godsend"*; *"Lecture notes are posted incomplete to encourage people to attend, however this means that if a lecturer moves on too quickly from a slide I will miss vital information"*; *"Lectures should be recorded so they can be watched again"*; *"Especially for maths."*

### Q17.o. Communication tools (e.g. discussion board) in course VLE



- More than 1 out of 3 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who find communication tools useful has increased between 2006 and 2012: 27.5% - 29.0% - 33.0% - 38.2% and the number of respondents who found them to be unavailable has decreased: 32.7% - 27.8% - 21.5% - 21.0%;
- As in previous studies, year of study was a SSF: the usefulness of communication tools decreased from 42.9% of year 1 students finding them useful, to 38.9% of year 2 students, to 30.7% of year 3 students, but increased to 41.0% in year 4 and 36.6% among postgraduates;
- Among students' comments were the following: *"Who actually uses course forums? No one on my course"*; *"Only useful in situations where all students actively use the tool. Sometimes it helps, sometimes not."*

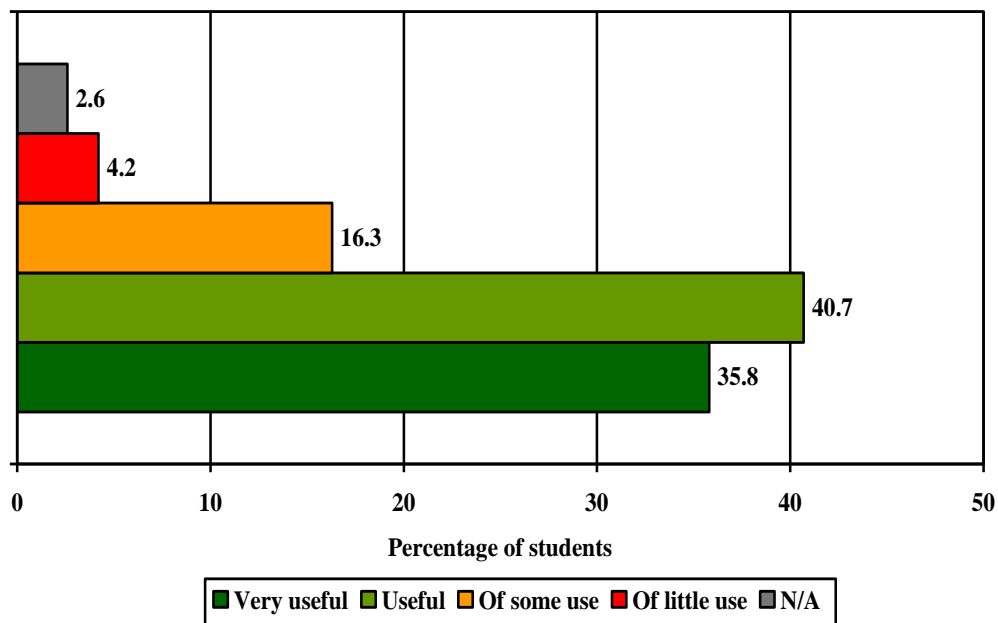
### Q17.p. Feedback on submitted work



- More than 3 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found feedback on submitted work useful has been fluctuating during 2006-2012: 60.9% - 62.1% - 61.4% - 61.3%;
- As in previous studies year of study was a SSF: the perceived usefulness of feedback was 57.8% among year 1 students, it increased to 63.5% among year 2 students, then decreased to 62.1% in year 3, but increase to 67.2% in year 4 and was 62.8% among postgraduates;
- Among students' comments were the following: *"Feedback on work are not very detailed"*; *"It is very useful but a one-to-one feedback service would be more beneficial, personally, as the student can find out exactly where he/she is going wrong and fully understand their weaknesses"*; *"Lack of proper feedback"*; *"On some pieces of work, I was given hardly any feedback, merely one word statements, which made being able to realise how to correct and better my coursework for next time very difficult"*; *"This is the most useful tool used when revising or understanding a topic"*; *"would have been helpful if the feedback seemed to have had some effort put into it, it seems like some lecturers just wrote anything to say they had given feedback."*

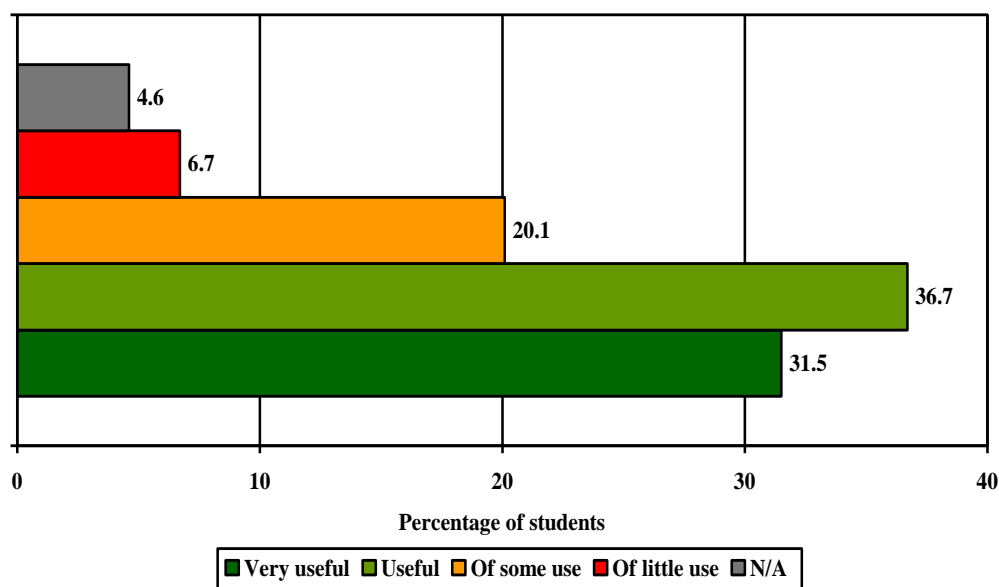


### Q17.q. Preparing for exams and/or tests



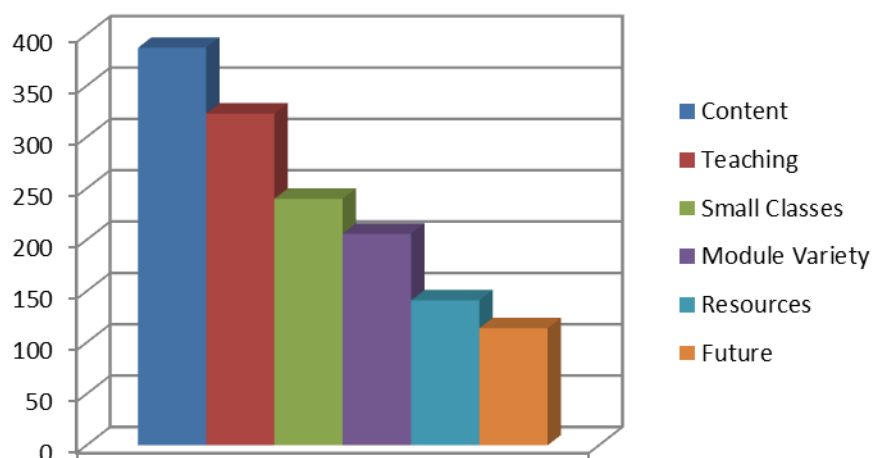
- More than 3 out of 4 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found preparation for exams useful decreased during 2006-2010: 79.5% - 77.8% - 74.8%, but slightly increased in 2012 to 76.5%;
- As in previous studies age and year of study were SSF;
- Year of study is a SSF for preparation for exams: its usefulness increases through undergraduate years from 68.7% in year 1, to 78.3% in year 2, 81.7% in year 3, and to 85.2% in year 4, but goes down to 80.1% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for preparation for exams: its usefulness is highest for 22-25s – 81.2%, but is lower at 75.6% for the 18-21 age group and at 75.9% for over 26s;
- Among students' comments were: *"Remembering stuff by heart has little to do with understanding a topic"*; *"This was particularly poor. No reasoning or justification was given in online solutions for e.g. past tests - this made learning the methods tenfold harder and I see no possible reason for this."*

### Q17.r. Working informally with other students



- More than 2 out of 3 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found working informally with other students useful has seen small increases during 2006 - 2012: 66.3% - 67.9% - 67.8% - 68.2%;
- As in previous studies gender, language and year of study were SSF;
- Year of study is a SSF for working informally with other students: its usefulness is lowest in the first year (62.2%), when students were less acquainted, but this increases to 71.5% in year 2, but is down to 68.3% in year 3 and up again to 78.7% in year 4 and 72.7% among postgraduates;
- Language was a SSF for working informally with other students: it is deemed more useful among English speakers – 70.4%, than among those whose first language is not English – 64.9%;
- Gender was a SSF for working informally with other students: it benefits females more than males: 69.3% versus 66.3%;
- The following were among students' comments: *“EXTREMELY USEFUL in all aspects (learning specific to the subject + learning how to communicate)”*; *“Due to the lack of support from the department a facebook page was made to discuss problems - this was completely separate from the university and consisted of over 70 students helping each other as a direct response to the lack of support, direction and resources offered by the department”*; *“This is the most important part of my learning process.”*

**Q18. Please identify the best one or two aspects of your degree course and say why**



There were 1,682 coded responses to this question. The most frequently mentioned 'best aspects' were the content of the course, the quality of teaching, the value of small classes and tutorials, the variety of module choice and course structure, the resources available to support learning (especially IT-based), and future prospects enabled by study. Other minor themes include interactions with other students, the benefits of independent study, and of regular assessments.

23% of responses made reference to the content of courses as among the most positive aspects of their degree. Of these, approaching half made particular reference to the practical relevance of what they study, e.g. *"Modules are up to date and focus on current economic content and examples rather than history/theory"*; *"The subject was introduced as something that concerns all of us, not as some purely theoretical problem"*; *"I like how the modules reflect the real world economic problems we are facing."* Many also referred to specific aspects of course content, for instance: *"I'm enjoying financial accounting, I haven't studied this before which is interesting to me"*; *"The best aspects of my course that I have enjoyed are the maths based modules such as methods of economic research (econometrics) and strategic thinking (game theory)."* Others simply referred in general terms to the value of course content.

Students' comments regarding teaching had to do with the value of lectures, the quality of lecturing, and the general supportiveness of both lecturers and tutors. Some typical comments include: *"The quality of lecturers and lectures are superb"*; *"The incredible quality and variety of the lecturers"*; *"The knowledge, enthusiasm and willingness of the lecturers"*; *"Quality of teaching, with the ability to discuss problems one-on-one with some of the best economists of our time"*; *"Approachability of academic staff which has made the whole experience much more engaging"*; *"The level of help available from lecturers and tutors"*; *"The lecturers are all approachable and you know they want you to succeed."*

Many also commented on the positive value of small class learning, especially in tutorials and seminars, as well as the wider value of interactive workshops and group work: *"Seminars as they give students a chance to clear up any areas of difficulty"*; *"Tutorials - excellent support firms up knowledge from lectures"*; *"Individual attention is the best way to learn quickly and thoroughly"*; *"The supervision system is by far the best aspect of my course because it forces you to really think about the topics being studied; you can't hide when there are only three students and one teacher!"* Two related sub-

themes – with a further 64 and 58 references respectively – noted the benefits of regular assessment (*“Frequent assessments because this keeps me motivated”*) and independent learning (*“it forces you to work independently and take control of your own success”*).

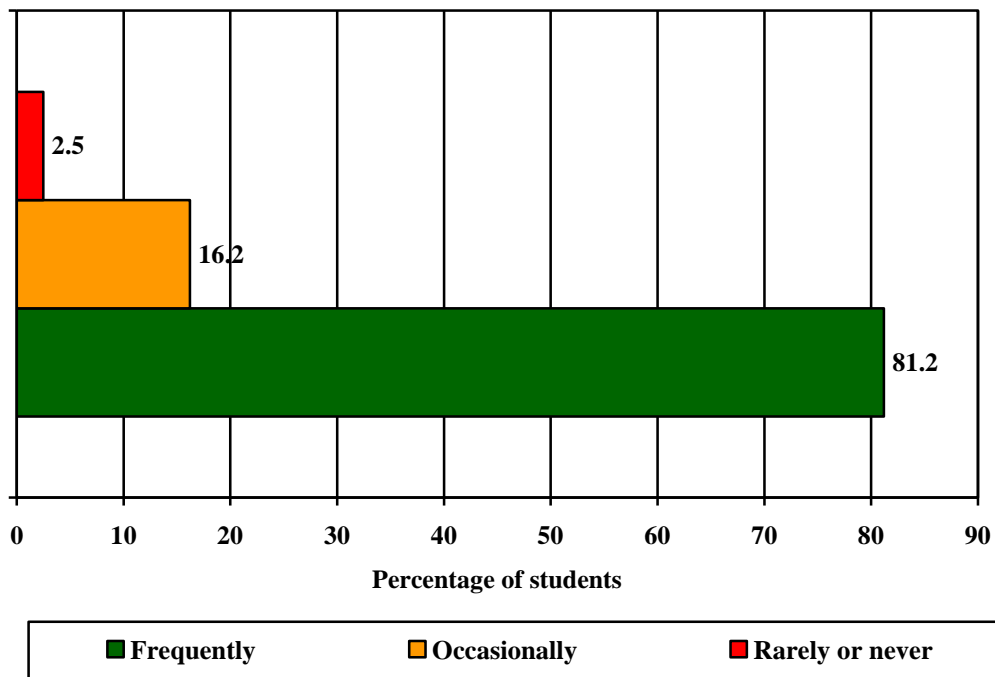
The fourth most popular aspect – covering 12% of responses – was the degree of variety and flexibility in course structure. Many students referred to the considerable choice of modules available to them at various stages of their programmes, as summed up here: *“I love that fact I could choose open units and decide for myself what I want to learn.”* Some also appreciated interdisciplinary possibilities: *“The flexibility to choose modules that of [sic] interest outside of economics.”*

Significant numbers also referred to the wide-range of resources available, with by far the most commonly referred to being online resources (*“Online lectures help plan time - I can watch them at my own pace in my own time, so I never fall behind”*; *“the seminars and lectures are recorded and posted on the internet so it is useful to catch that 10 minutes you were unfocussed the second time round”*; *“VLE is very convenient especially for going over what was taught in a lecture and testing your knowledge with quizzes and tests”*). Several respondents also mentioned *“printed lecture handouts”*, *“good textbooks”*, and library resources (*“Easy access to reading materials”*).

Finally, some students felt that the connection between the course and their future career prospects was the best aspect, some referred specifically to future job opportunities (*“the employment potential!”*; *“allows me to pursue a career in finance”*), while others emphasised in more general terms to the transferable skills gained (*“The course prepares you to be employed and teaches you skills outside your degree at times, rather than just turning you into a walking textbook on economics”*; *“My course has given me many of the skills needed by my potential future employers e.g. analytical, problem solving and communication”*).

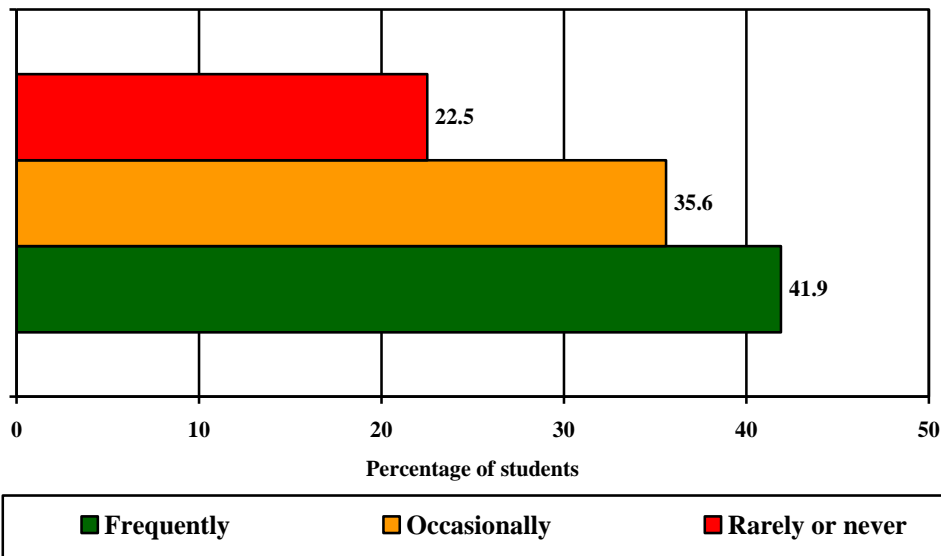
**Q19. Which of the following activities are used in seminars/tutorials/small classes?**

**Q19.a. Going through pre-prepared problem sets of worksheets**



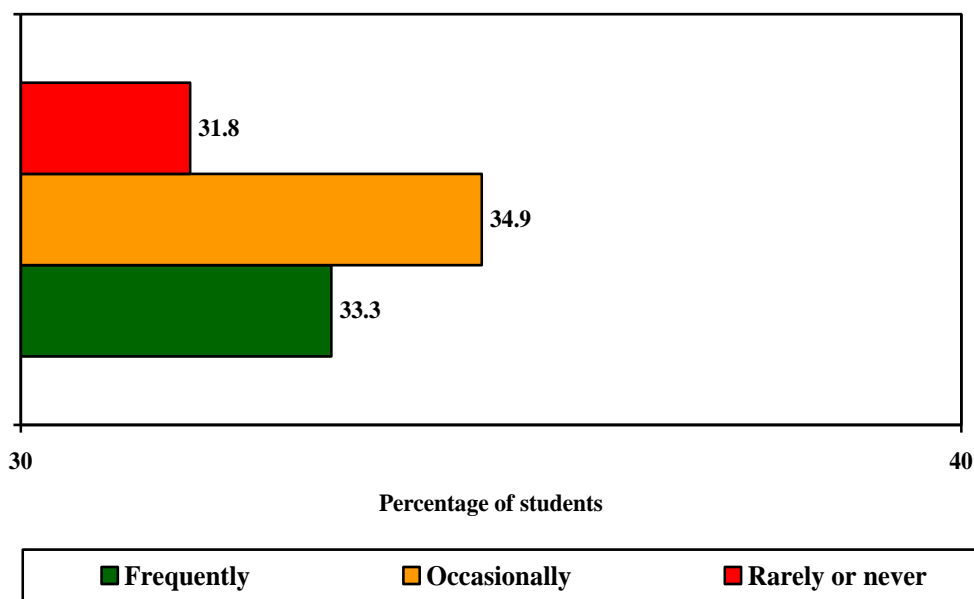
- More than 4 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who frequently go through pre-prepared problem sets increased during 2006-2012: 75.0% - 77.3% - 78.8% - 81.2%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: ranging from 81.6% in year one to 87.6% in year 2, 80.1% in year 3, and 62.3% in year 4, and 73.9% for postgraduates.

### Q19.b. Working through questions given out in seminars as a whole group



- More than 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who frequently work through questions given out in seminars as a whole group increased during 2006-2010: 38.9% - 41.9% - 44.0%, but fell in 2012 to 41.9%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: ranging from 43.2% in year one to 41.8% in year 2, and 42.8% in year 3 and to 40.9% in year 4 and 36.6% for postgraduates.

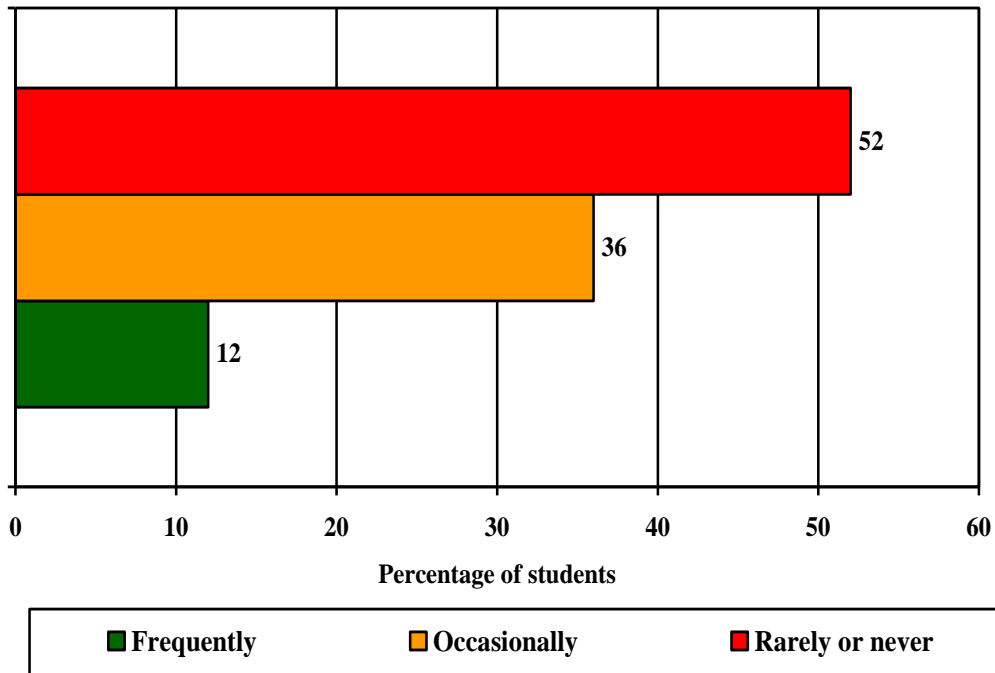
### Q19.c. Working through questions given out in seminars in small groups



- Just about 1 out of 3 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;

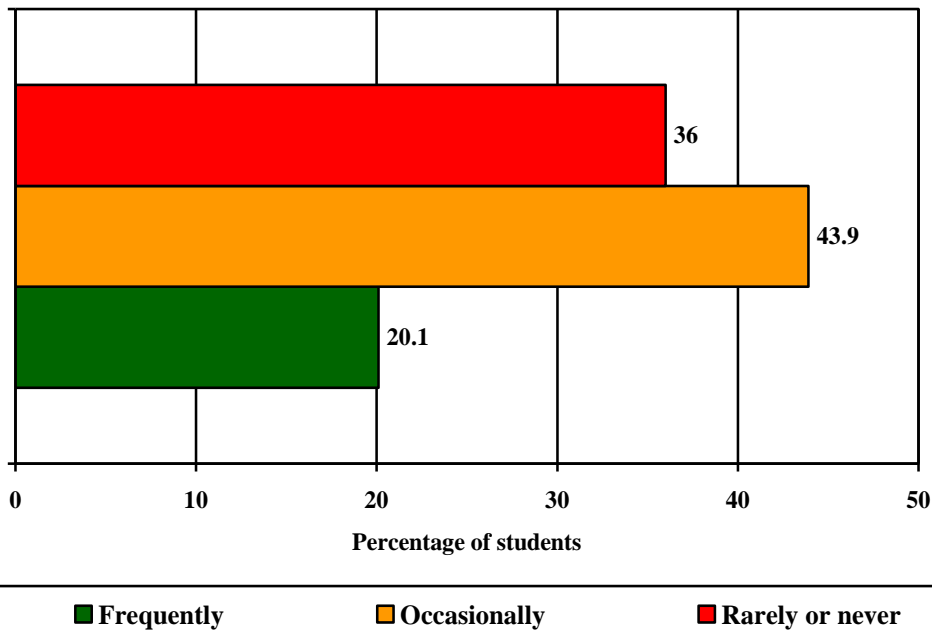
- The number of students who frequently work through questions given out in seminars in small groups has seen small changes during 2006-2012: 28.6% - 32.0% - 31.9% - 33.3%;
- Its use varies in different years of study, ranging from 35.4% in year one to 32.2% in year 2, and 30.7% in year 3, and 27.8% in year 4 and 29.8% for postgraduates.

**Q19.d. Individual presentations of papers**



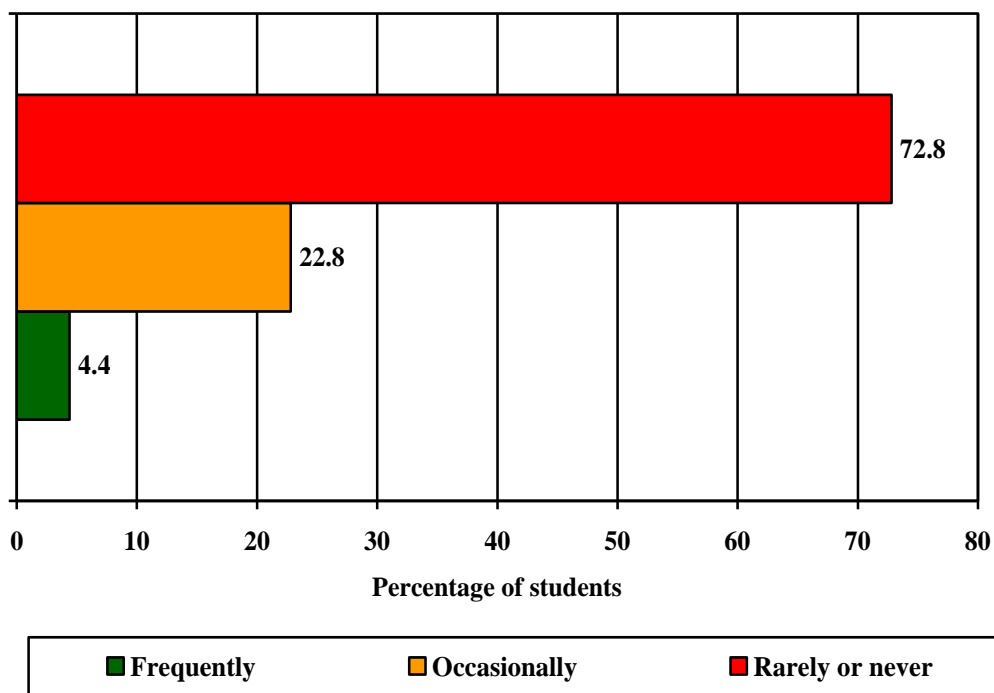
- Less than 1 in 8 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who frequently had individual presentations of papers has decreased between 2006 and 2012: 15.8% - 14.1% - 13.4% - 12.0%;
- Its use varies in different years of study, ranging from 12.9% in year one, to 10.3% in year 2, 15.5% in year 3, and 18.3% in year 4 and 13.4% for postgraduates.

### Q19.e. Mini-lecture by tutor



- About 1 out of 5 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who frequently had mini-lectures by a tutor increased during 2006-2012: 19.2% - 19.7% - 20.1% - 20.1%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: ranging from 19.8% in year one, to 18.7% in year 2, 20.4% in year 3, and 21.3% in year 4 and 22.9% for postgraduates.

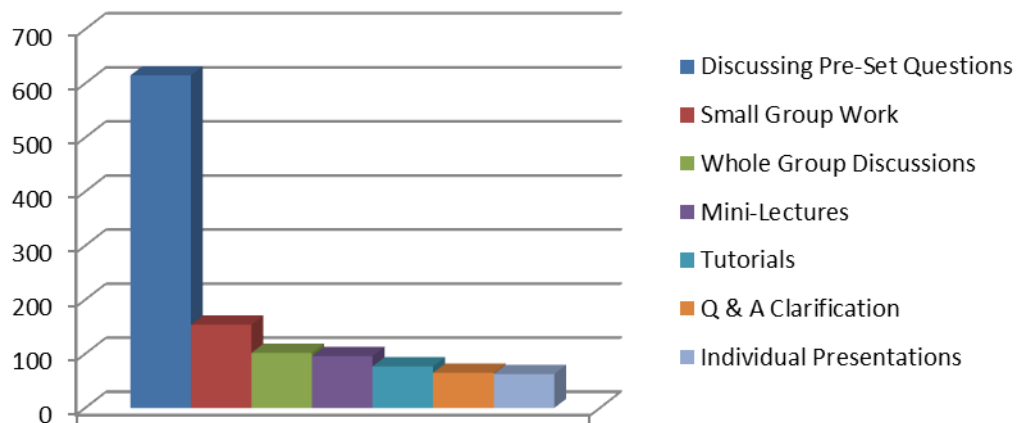
### Q19.f. Games, experiments, role-play





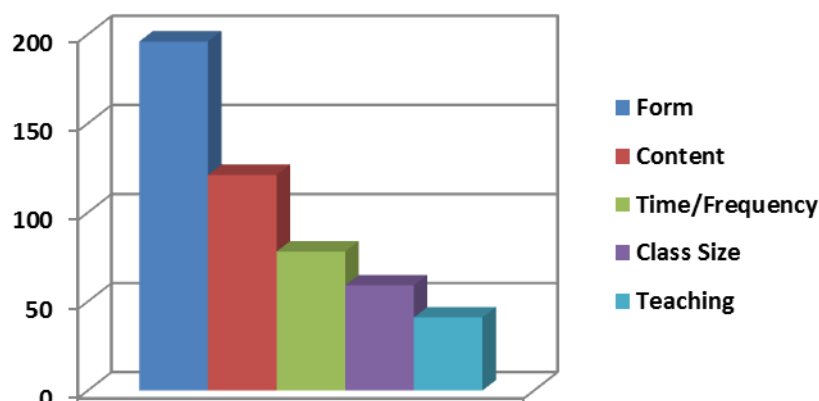
- Just under 3 out of 4 respondents had rarely or never experienced the use of games in the classroom;
- The number of students who have rarely or never had games used in the classroom decreased during 2006-2012: 81.9% - 75.7% - 75.2% - 72.8%;
- Its frequent use varies in different years of study, ranging from 4.6% in year one, to 3.7% in year 2, 4.7% in year 3, and 3.2% in year 4, and 5.6% for postgraduates.

**Q20. What types of seminar activities have you found to be most useful?**



There were 1,282 coded responses to this question. An overwhelming proportion said they found going through pre-set questions or worksheets in class the most useful seminar activity: *“working through pre-prepared problem sets, as this gives the chance to come to class, already knowing in which aspect one might need some further explanations.”* Small group work was the second most popular activity: *“Where students are divided into groups and each group has to answer one of the previously given questions. Engages everyone and forces you to prepare.”* Others referred to the benefits of whole group discussion (*“working through questions as a group and having the answers written up on a board”*), and some to the value of mini-lectures by seminar tutors (*“Having mini lectures as it reinforced information already taught, however you are then able to ask your own questions that cannot be asked in a formal lecture”*). A similar theme to emerge was the usefulness of Q&A sessions in which tutors clarified lecture material (5% of responses), while some (6%) simply referred to “tutorials” (a small number specifying one-on-one tutoring). 5% also said presentations were the most useful activity.

### Q20.a. Name one or two ways in which seminars could be improved



There were 869 coded responses to this question. Suggestions for improvement focused around issues to do with the form of seminars, particularly concerns about increasing interaction; the content of seminars; having more time in general for seminars (whether that meant having more of them or having longer sessions); smaller class sizes; and improving the quality of teaching.

With regards to the form of seminars, many students simply stated their desire for a greater emphasis on interactive debate, with less by way of mini-lectures and didactic teaching (e.g. *“A seminar should not be the tutor just repeating the lecturer and talking AT students. There should be more discussion: the tutor should set questions that can be debated in class, and presentations should promote discussion. The tutor should not repeat the lecturer or the presentation”*). Related sub-themes included having more varied activities (games, experiments, role-playing, etc.: *“more games and quizzes that make this informal learning environment more fun”*), more group work, and more dedicated attempts to get all students involved in interactive discussion (*“Make everybody talk! Sometimes, the seminar will be dominated by the opinions of a vocal few - whilst the rest fail to contribute”*; *“More direct questions, forcing students to participate”*).

As for content, many students wanted more thorough, in-depth explanation of difficult topics (*“tutors tend to over explain easy questions that everyone knows anyway and skip the harder ones that we all have trouble with. If they just explained 1 harder question we would be learn it [sic] better”*; *“More effort on explaining (with examples) concepts discussed in lectures”*). The use of more real life examples was another popular theme (*“use real world current examples more frequently alongside the theory”*), as well as more regular marking and feedback on homework (*“more frequent, individual feedback”*). A considerable number also expressed a desire for more exam-focused learning (*“Questions tailored towards specific learning objectives transferable in exams”*).

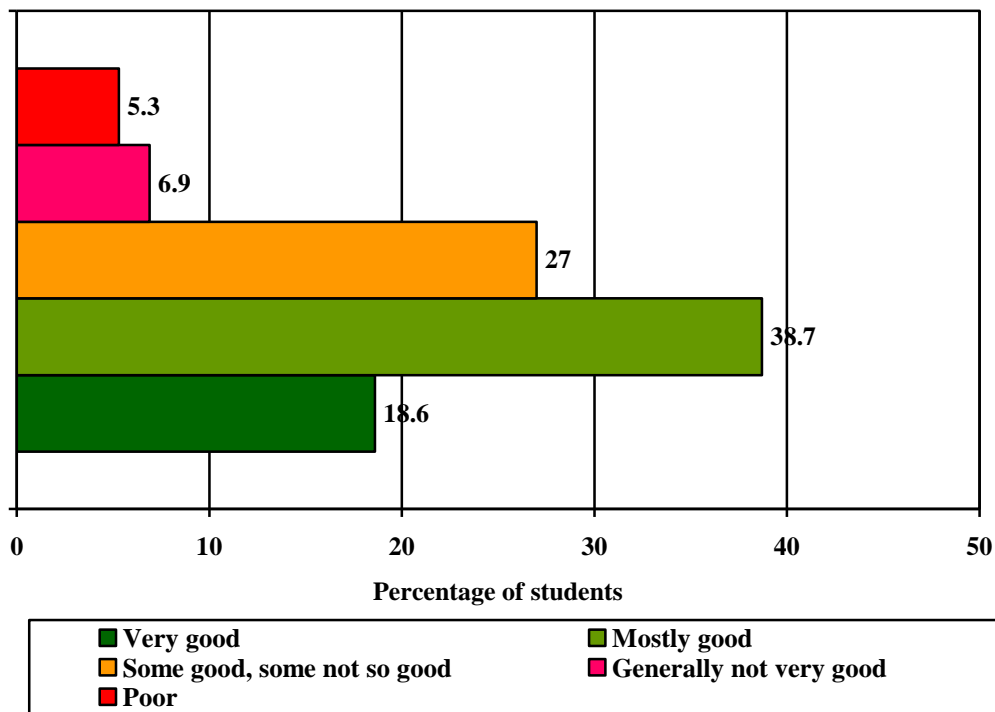
For some, the best way to improve seminars was to have more of them or make them longer, in order to deal with complex issues more thoroughly: *“Longer, giving us more time to practise questions and fully understand. Also this would give time to go through things slower; sometimes they move too fast”*; *“They should be longer, or more frequent, one seminar we had was every other week for an hour which wasn’t enough time to cover all the work set”*; *“they could have more seminars as lectures often don’t get the point across when there are so many people”*; *“It should be longer in duration. There is not enough time in one hour to cover all of the material”*; *“More frequent*

tutorials or seminars for different lectures”; “We can have more of them, especially using econometric software”.

Another common and related suggestion was to have smaller seminar groups: “smaller more intimate environment which helps students feel more inclined to ask questions and be involved”; “Smaller class size. Would enable the seminar tutor to focus more on each student and enable more interactive lessons”; “Seminars should be in a lot smaller groups. When over ~7 people are in one group, it becomes more of a lecture when everyone just sits quietly. With smaller groups students are a lot more active”.

The final theme of note referred to the quality of teaching. English language proficiency was a particular concern (“All of the tutors are very well qualified and have a very deep understanding of the topic. The trouble is that some of them have such poor English that it is very difficult for the vast majority of students to understand them”), as well as the use of relatively inexperienced postgraduate teachers: “Have more knowledgeable tutors taking the class. Instead of 'research' lecturers should be taking seminars, not getting a post grad who can't teach fluently and doesn't have a good knowledge on the module to teach it”; “Higher End Staff who know exactly the content of the lecture notes so it is correlated with the lectures and less PHD students teaching”; “We need tutors who want to teach us and know what they are talking about (I've had tutors who don't understand the stuff they are teaching”; “not having them taught by postgraduate students as they are unable to help us as well as lecturers can especially when the postgraduate student is foreign and you can barely understand them”.

**Q21. How effective have you found the teaching of Maths and Stats on your course?**

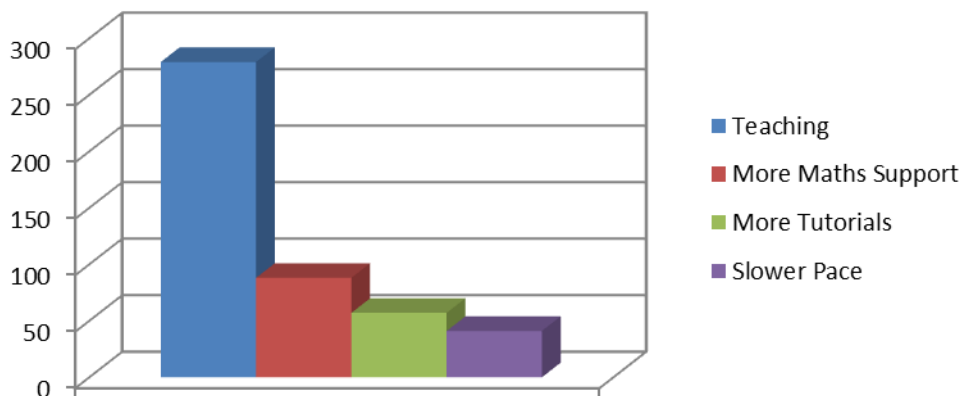


- More than half of the respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found teaching of maths and stats good had been increasing during 2006-2012: 51.2% - 52.4% -54.1% - 57.3%;

- As in previous studies A-level Maths and age were SSF, but also A-level Economics;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for teaching of maths and stats: students with A-level Maths were more positive than those without: 60.1% versus 50.2%, and this difference has increased compared to 2010;
- A-level Economics is SSF for opinions on teaching of maths and stats: students with A-level Economics were less positive than those without: 57.1% versus 57.6%;
- Age was a SSF for teaching of maths and stats, and follows the same pattern as in previous surveys: opinions on the quality of teaching of maths and stats was lowest among the 18-21 age group – 56.2%, then increased to 62.8% for 22-25s and is 59.5% for over 26s;

Among students' comments were the following: *"Having come [sic] from studying a maths degree, I found the maths rather easy and not challenging"; "In the Maths part of my degree, the teaching is very good"; "Maths is "Very good", Stats (Metrics) is "some good, some not so good"; "Standard of maths (quantitative economics) teaching is good. Stats: Very poor; more emphasis based on memorising equations than understanding their meaning and use in analysing econometric problems"; "students from different background, hard to balance the level of quantitative aspect to suit all. Only [sic] 5 2-hour lectures, for students with little background, its less than adequate"; "Very good when the lecturers managed to communicate well. Had some problems with lecturers who couldn't transmit what they meant well to the majority of students."*

**Q21. a. How could the teaching of maths and stats be improved?**



There were 487 coded responses to this question. 56% of respondents referred in one way or another to improving the standard of teaching, while other topics to emerge included requests for greater support for maths in particular, more by way of small classes and tutorials, and a generally slower pace of teaching.

With regards to improving the teaching itself, comments suggested that there is considerable variability in teaching standards, much of which could be improved, including clearer explanation in maths (with several comments again about language proficiency), less presumption of prior knowledge, and more enthusiastic effort to make stats interesting. Many comments also referred to the need for more applied, practical examples, to aid understanding, as well as more tests (including online), and more feedback and answers provided for problem sets.

Some typical comments include: *“Detailed explanation should be given. Assumptions that some of the students already know it shouldn't be paramount”; “explaining more the maths behind formula's rather than just stating what they are and where to use them”; “Simplify, explain in depth the basics. Otherwise you lose 80% of the class”; “More practice exercises, greater detail and I wish some lecturers didn't presume that everyone has done A-level maths before as I haven't”; “Really does require a charismatic teacher, because subjects like econometrics can be very dull and repetitive”; “Good lecturers are vital! Confusing/boring lectures make it extremely difficult”; “English language test, so there are no people who lack the ability to explain the material”; “Make it more interesting, show how it can be used in the work place”; “relate it to the real world and familiarize students with the language”; “The stats teaching seems so abstract to most students. As much as is possible teachers should relate all the theory to real life situations and explain the relevance of the theory”; “More maths problem sheets that can be handed in regularly and marked regularly, i.e. regular practice is needed rather than just one assessed exam at the end”.*

A sizeable number of students also pointed to the need for more specifically maths-related support, including the option of extra classes for those in particular need, as well as greater consistency in the competency-levels expected between years: *“They should spend more time on teaching maths on the course”; “Maths should be practiced on a regular basis and extra math lessons should be available for those who want to improve”; “For people with no maths A-level it's really difficult and I was totally lost because they went through too quickly. I think it would be improved by offering extra sessions for those who didn't take maths A-level”; “Have an extra credit module in first year to teach A level maths”; “The level was very basic in the first year, but in the second year econometrics is much more complex, so there is quite a gap between the material”.*

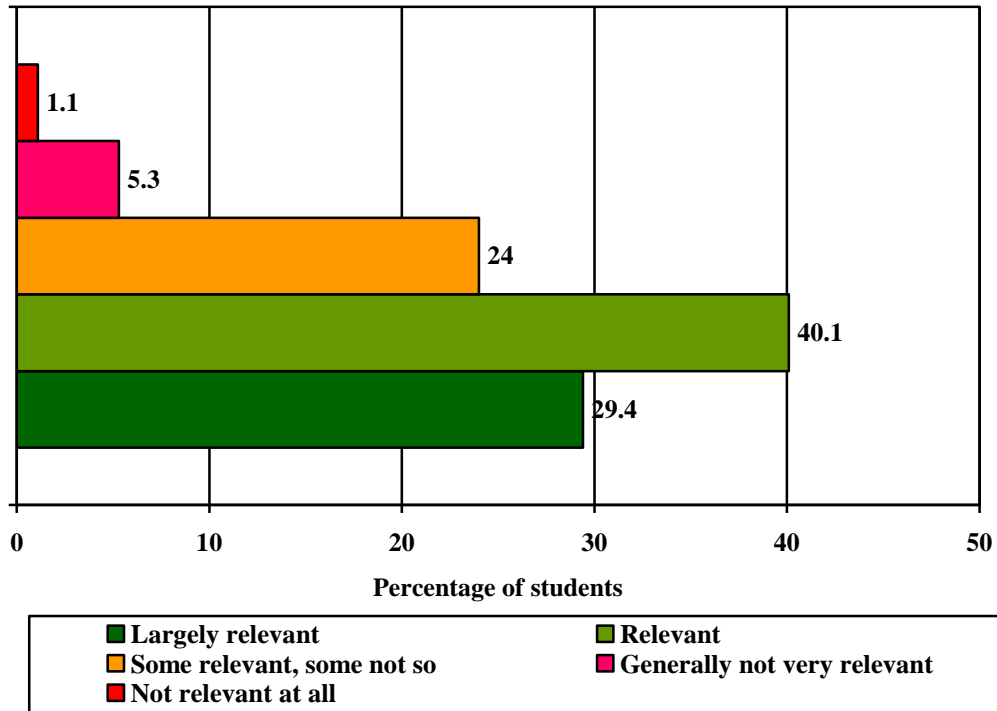
A small number of people (10) expressed frustration at the variation in student's knowledge, finding the maths teaching too basic (e.g. *“The math was too easy for me. The main reason is that the variance of level before the course among students was too large”*), with some suggesting higher entry-requirements (*“it should be made compulsory at A-level as a lot of people are not on the same level when they start”*) and others streaming of maths classes (*“In economics it would be helpful if you were taught in groups relating to ability”; “Teach those who haven't studied A-level maths separately”; “Have separate classes for people with below average/average Math skills alongside the regular classes during the week the module is taught in”*).

Many responses suggested additional smaller classes and tutorials as a way to supplement the maths and stats material: *“Occasionally, it feels like an A-level in maths is expected. Maybe extra maths classes for those who struggle to grasp certain concepts?”; “More seminars, even if it means less lectures”; “More seminars than lectures”; “Talking maths and statistics at people in monotone with a PowerPoint is a guaranteed way to put students to sleep. Maths should be something you can try and work through yourself in order to understand it properly”; “should provide maths workshop clinics as go very fast and assume we know everything”.*

Related to both the teaching and the tutorials is the pace of teaching. Some students felt that a slower pace would improve the teaching, especially of more difficult material: *“The lecturer is going through lectures too fast and the explanations are not so clear. He should spend more time on explaining or we should have more than one lecture and one seminar a week”; “it's too thick and fast. We are asked to learn a whole A-level in one year and I feel like the material is just being thrown at us and they are hoping we*

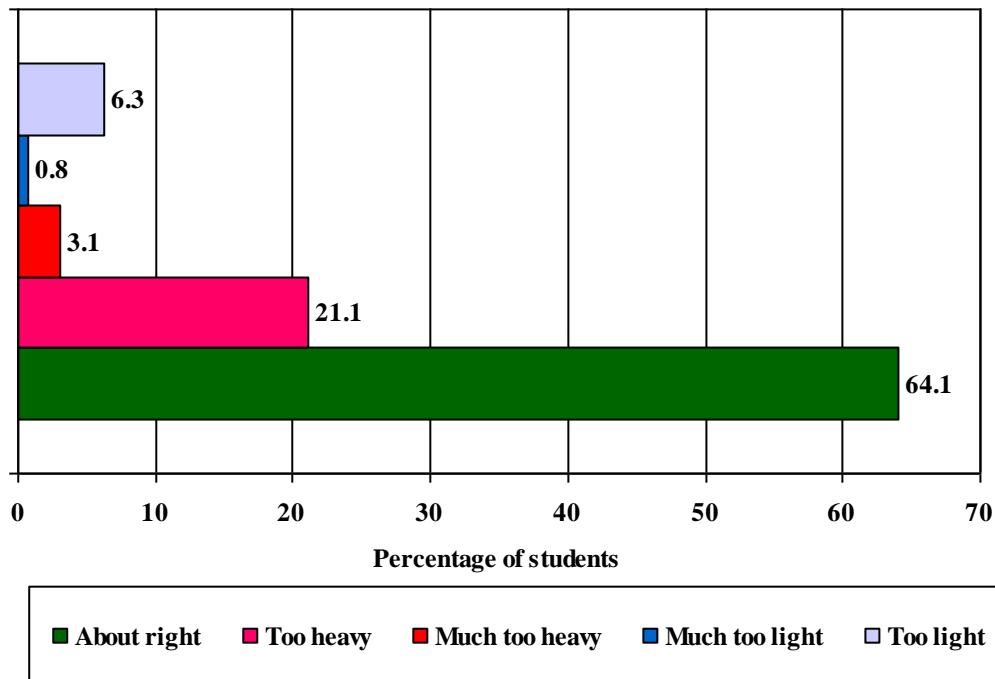
catch it. To improve it I think more maths lectures need to be held and also on a smaller scale”; “Spend more time on it”.

**Q22. How relevant to the real world do you find the content of the degree?**



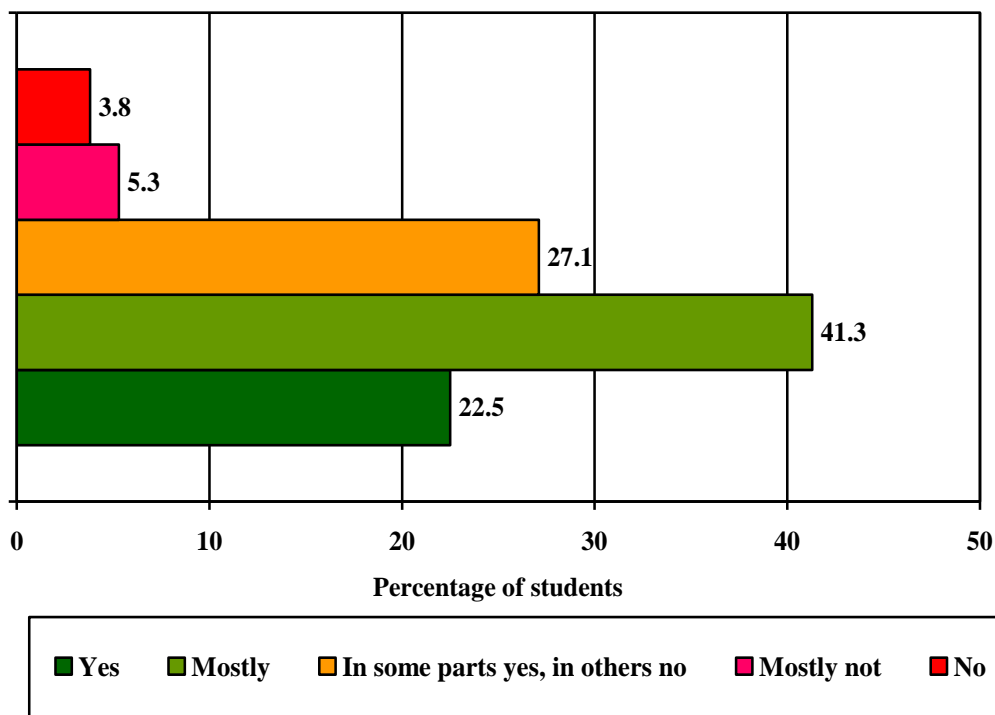
- Nearly 7 out of 10 respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found the content of their degree relevant to the real world increased during 2006-2010: 66.8% - 69.3% -71.7%, but went down to 69.5% in 2012;
- As in previous studies, year of study was a SSF for students’ perceptions of relevance of their degree content to the real world: its relatedness decreased during the undergraduate years from 78.0% in year one, to 70.9% in year two, 60.0% in year three and to 54.1% in year 4, and increased to 69.5% for postgraduates. This is the same pattern as in the 2010 survey.

### Q23. How do you find the workload on this degree?



- Less than two thirds of respondents found workload on their degree about right;
- The number of students who found workload on their degree about right has fluctuated during 2006-2012: 66.1% - 64.9% - 67.8% - 64.1%;
- As in previous studies age, language, gender and year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for workload on their degree: native English speakers were more positive than international students: 21.5% of them find their workload heavy, compared to 28.9%;
- Gender was a SSF for workload on their degree: males found it harder than females - 26.4% versus 22.4%;
- Year of studies is SSF for workload on their degree: it was about right for 65.8% in year one, 66.5% in year two, 63.9% in year three and 62.3% in year 4 and only 54.0% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for workload on their degree: the workload was about right for 66.2% of 18-21 year olds, but fell to 56.0% for 22-25s and 54.4% for over 26s;
- Students' comments included: *"Workload itself is fine, but all lecturers seem to think their module is more important than all the others and so expect more of your time to be spent on their module"*; *"Workload has been very uneven, with some weeks having little work whereas on other weeks the workload has been very heavy"*; *"The workload is fine, but 3 or 4 deadlines within a few days of each other can get difficult to deal with"*; *"It was a bit heavy due to my study is on [sic] foreign language for me"*; *"I'd like more assignments and less of these exams that are just the be-all and end-all"*; *"Heavy and manageable but towards deadlines and end of term it does get stressful, also no reading week for our degree where other [sic] do have."*

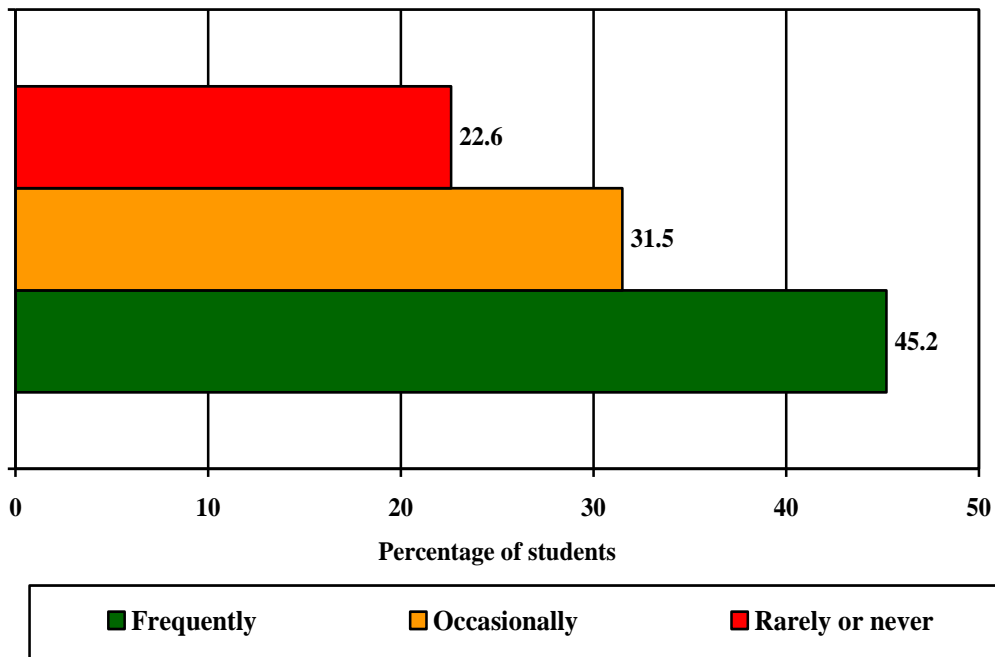
**Q24. Do you find the assessment on your degree accurately tests the level of your knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes?**



- More than 6 out of 10 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who found that the assessment on their degree accurately tests the level of their knowledge and understanding increased during 2006-2010: 64.3% - 64.5% - 69.3%, but fell to 63.8% in 2012;
- Among students' comments were the following: *"Certainly not! Most are just copy, memorize, and reproduce. No testing of knowledge/application at all!"*; *"I don't think it is right to judge knowledge on a few exams at the end of the year based on what one has taken in"*; *"I feel as though multiple choice is a lot more harsh than essays - you have got know every minor details of the course, and each question counts for too much (4%)"*; *"It's ridiculous! I spent weeks learning all the topics for my exam and yet questions only focused on two or three lectures. All that knowledge I accumulated was never signalled. Quite depressing!"*

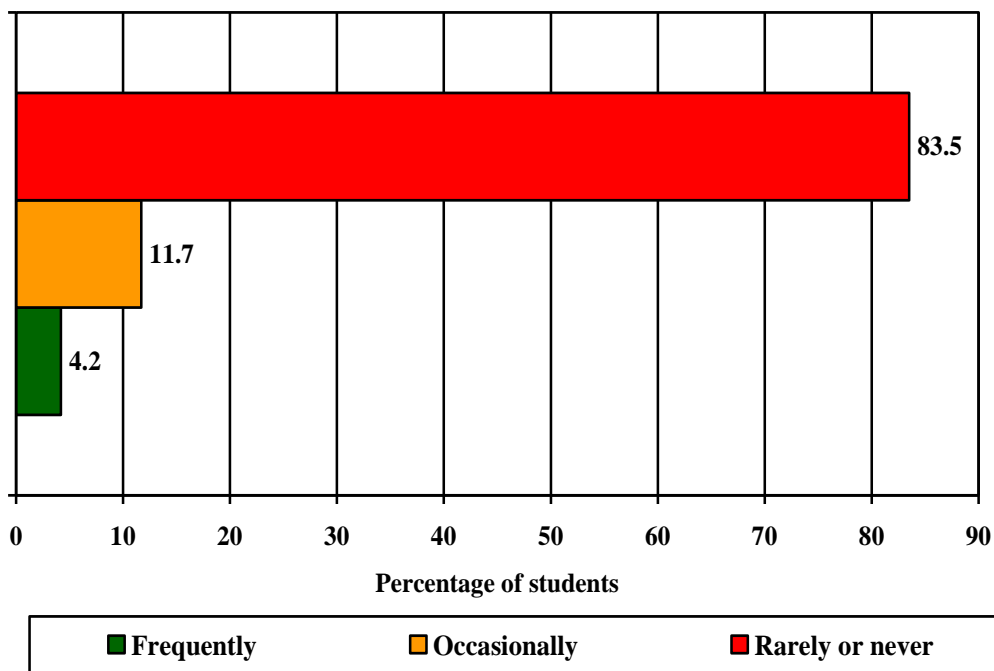


#### Q24.a.i. Essays in your own time



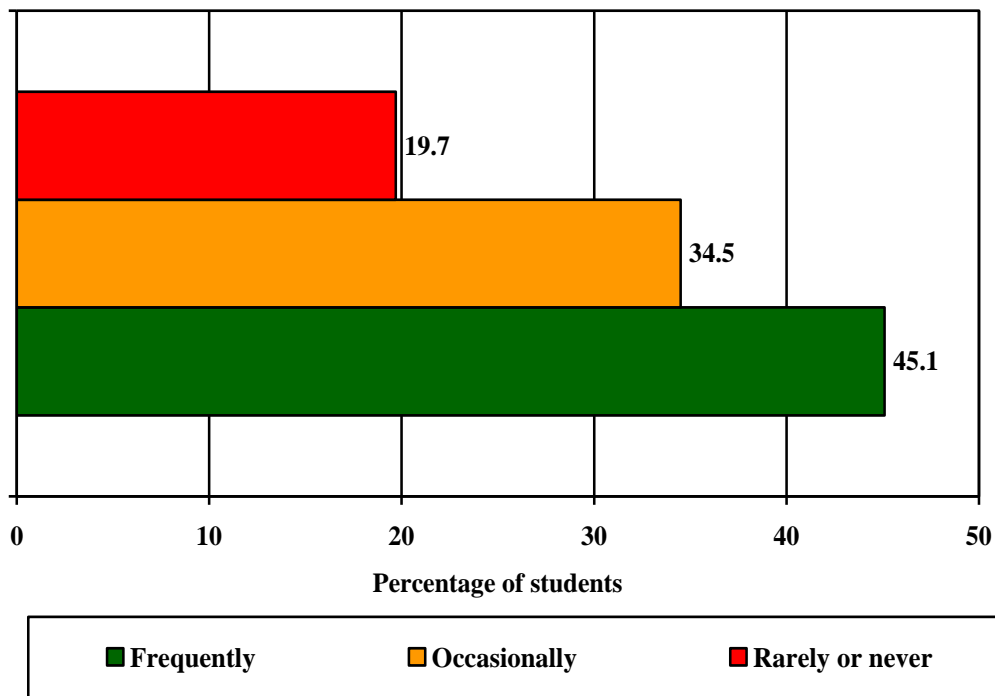
- More than 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had essays in their own time decreased during 2006-2012: 52.1% - 49.5% - 44.0% - 45.2%;
- There were differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in the different years of study: it was most frequently used in the 4<sup>th</sup> (70.2%) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (51.5%) years, and less frequently in the 1<sup>st</sup> (39.6%), 2<sup>nd</sup> (40.1%) and in postgraduate (41.1%) years;
- The following were among students' comments: "They do, but I would like to see more"; "Class tests and exam"; "one per semester for micro and macro"; "Only in this last year."

### Q24.a.ii. Essays done in class



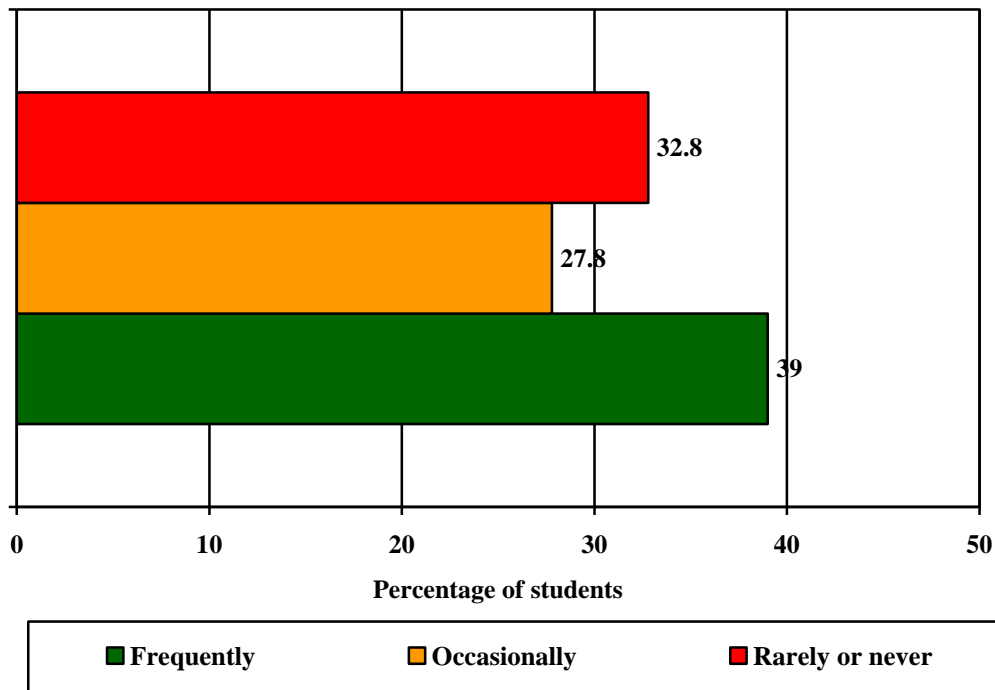
- More than 1 out of 25 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who have done essays in class increased during 2006-2012: 2.0% - 2.7% - 4.2% - 4.2%;
- There are differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in the different years of study: it was most rarely or never used in the 4<sup>th</sup> (84.7%) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (85.9%) years, and less rarely or never in the 1<sup>st</sup> (79.8%), 2<sup>nd</sup> (82.0%) and postgraduate (81.7%) years;
- Among students' comments were the following: "Essays are done for Finals, and are all that counts"; "had one 24Hour essay was the worst assessment ever!!"

**Q24.a.iii. Tests (as opposed to end of year/semester exam)**



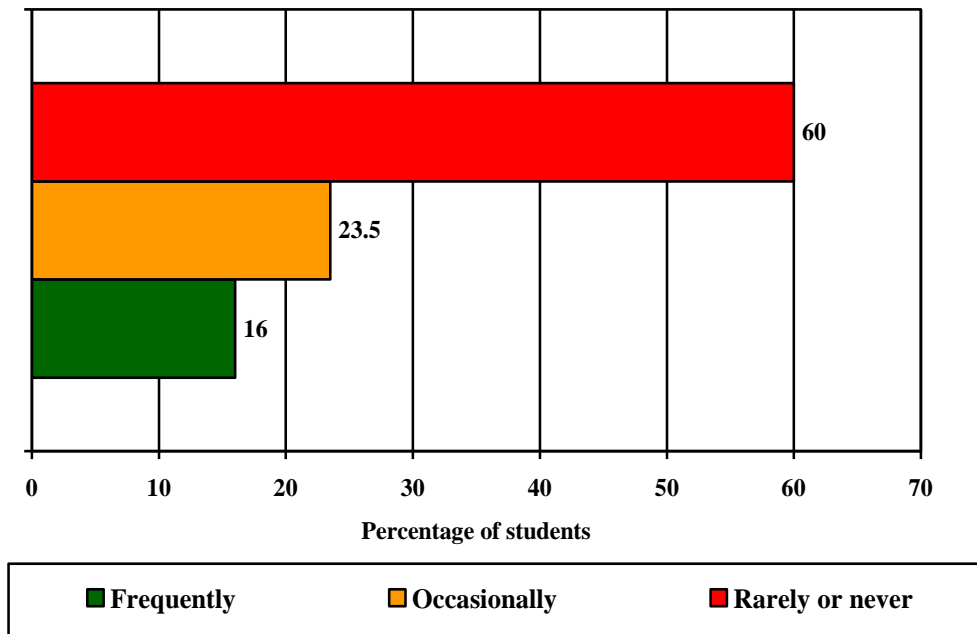
- More than 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had tests increased during 2006-2012: 30.9% - 35.4% - 38.9% - 45.1%;
- There are differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in different years of study: it was most frequently used in the 1<sup>st</sup> (43.6%) and 2<sup>nd</sup> (41.5%) years, and less frequently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> (30.4%), 4<sup>th</sup> (30.5%) and postgraduate (35.1%) years;
- Among students' comments were: *"they don't count towards the module grade"*; *"we have mid-term tests, as well as end of year exams"*; *"Only in this last year."*

#### Q24.a.iv. Problem sets



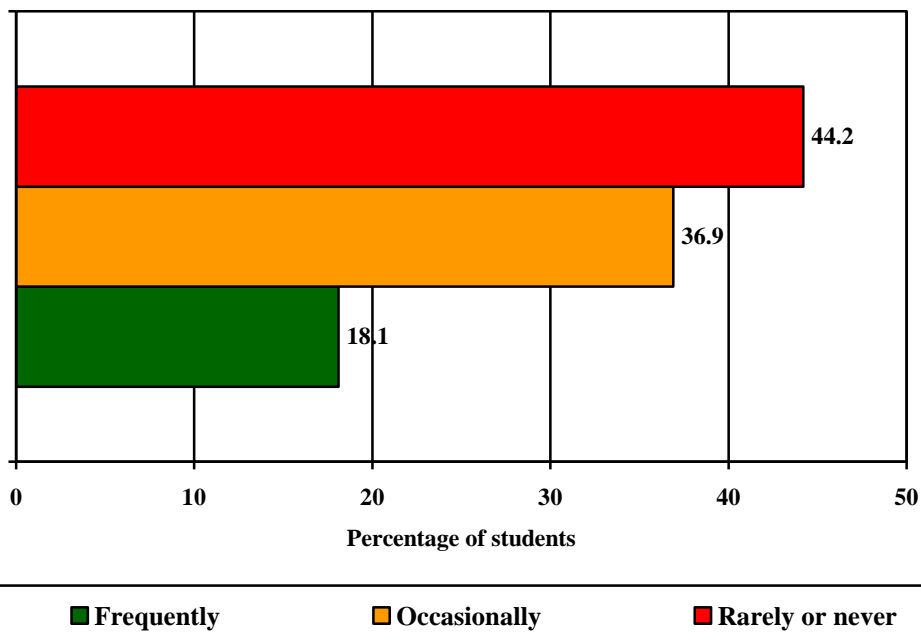
- Nearly 2 out of 5 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had problem sets has been mostly increasing since 2006(to 2012): 29.0% - 31.1% - 40.0% - 39.0%;
- There were differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in different years of study: it was most frequently used in the 4<sup>th</sup> (42.0%) and in postgraduate (46.5%) years, and less frequently in the 1<sup>st</sup> (41.5%), 2<sup>nd</sup> (39.2%) and 3<sup>rd</sup> (34.1%) years;
- Students' comments included: *"they don't count towards the module grade"*; *"only in accounting and maths"*; *"Only in this last year."*

### Q24.a.v. Online assessment



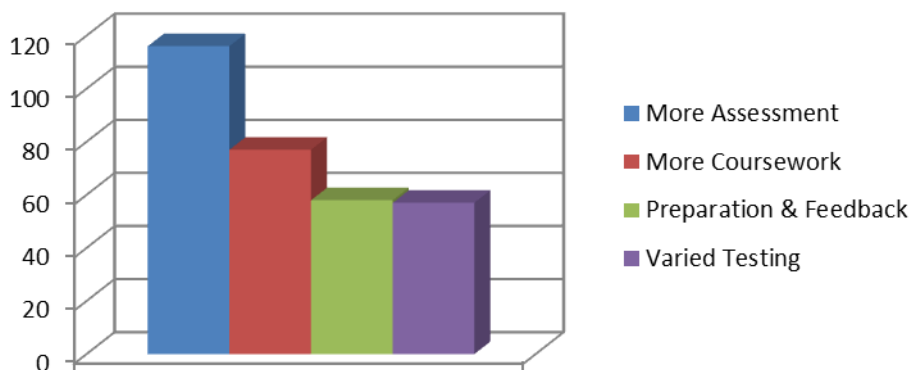
- More than 1 out of 6 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had online assessment has increased between 2006 and 2012: 6.7% - 9.3% - 12.8% - 16.0%;
- There were differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in different years of study: it was most frequently used in the 1<sup>st</sup> (22.7%) year and less so in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (8.5%), 3<sup>rd</sup> (7.2%), 4<sup>th</sup> (3.1%) and postgraduate (5.4%) years;
- Comments were left by students who haven't encountered online assessment.

### Q24.a.vi. Group work projects



- More than 1 out of 5 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had group work projects has fluctuated during 2006-2012: 13.3% - 13.0% - 14.9% - 18.1%;
- There were differences in the way this type of assessment is practised in different years of study: it was most frequently used in the 4<sup>th</sup> (19.1%) and 1<sup>st</sup> (17.8%) years, and less frequently in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (12.9%), 3<sup>rd</sup> (11.7%) and postgraduate (12.9%) years;
- The following were among students' comments: *"We need to pass the groupworks [sic] in one subject in order to sit the exam"; "only done once, but this was in my third year which i [sic] think is a disgraceful time for them to make us do our first groupwork"; "Too often in 1st year. None in 2nd (so far)."*

### Q24.b. How could the nature of assessment be improved so as to (i) provide a better test of your learning; (ii) to help you in your learning



There were 364 coded responses to this question. Nearly all students felt that there were too few assessments, too little coursework, a general lack of feedback or sufficient

preparation, while some suggested ways in which forms of assessment could be more varied.

Many comments regarding more assessment suggested that an increase in frequency of assessments – both formal (summative) and informal (formative) – may help alleviate the pressure of having only one final exam, as well as encourage students to engage more actively with material: *“Smaller & more often, to test a wider area of the course. More regular testing would also encourage students to keep on top of the workload”*; *“Continuous assessment of minor work throughout the year”*; *“I think weekly tests are great way of constantly learning material. It incentivises you to study constantly which is greatly needed”*; *“Greater use of class tests as this takes some of the pressure off in the end of semester exams and also makes sure that you are revising and preparing continuously, not just in short bursts near the exam”*; *“more frequent assessments that count less towards your summative grade”*; *“issue the tests relevant to what we have just learnt soon after we have studied the topic”*.

Many students also specified that more regular coursework would improve assessment in general: *“I would prefer more coursework that required some more in-depth study in a specific area”*; *“more coursework to get us learning throughout the year”*; *“Essays on a given topic but with scope to develop own ideas. Not just class tests in exam conditions. Not everybody performs well under pressure in 1 hour”*; *“More essays, less exams”*.

Other students felt that the means to improving assessment lay in receiving more feedback on their performance, as well as providing more preparation for assessments (namely exams): *“Assessment that has more feedback would really help”*; *“more work with feedback”*; *“to be given better feedback on essays and to have 'model' answers given so we know what the lecturers were looking for”*; *“more problem sets to be given with answers provided later”*; *“More information provided about the nature of the exam. Practice papers!”*; *“By indicating the areas that the test will focus on more clearly, and focus my learning in manageable blocks”*.

Almost the same number suggested that more varied assessment practices could help (e.g. *“Providing more open-ended questions, and a wider choice of questions”*; *“Oral examinations”*), with considerable numbers critical of over-reliance on multiple choice exams (*“the tests seem to be all multiple choice. I don't think this is the best way of testing knowledge as it just tests memory”*; *“Written exams (not multiple-choice questions)”*; *“Less multiple choice exams as these can easily be crammed for”*). Others emphasised the possible benefits of more online testing, (*“More online assessments that we could do regularly to maintain our knowledge”*; *“Online tests which do not count to overall mark but to judge performance levels”*), while 12 people suggested assessment based on more topical issues would be useful (*“Let students submit work on current issues. Lecturers do not do that because they find it complicated to assess”*; *“Try to involve more real world examples”*).

Finally, 50 people also commented on group assessments. 27 of these were in favour of group assessment (e.g. *“I found group assessment a great way to both interact with other students and learn team-building skills”*), while 23 were critical of this form of assessing students: *“Get rid of group work as a part of the course. I am a student achieving 1st or 2:1 on all my modules and in group work I scored 2:2 along with the group, mainly due to the incompetence of others who obviously do not wish to do well and do not pull their own weight”*; *“Group-work minutes should be taken to incentivise people to contribute”*).

**Q25. What economics software (for example: WinEcon, STATA, eViews, etc.) is used on your degree?**

**Q25. a. Please comment on how useful you have found the use of software**

There were 1120 coded responses to these questions. Of these, 308 (27%) claimed to have used no economics software on their degree. 25% had used STATA; 19% EViews; 7.5% MyEconLab; 3.8% WinEcon; 2.7% SPSS; and 2.5% Excel. The only other packages to receive more than at least 15 mentions were Gretl, Time Series Modelling, and MatLab.

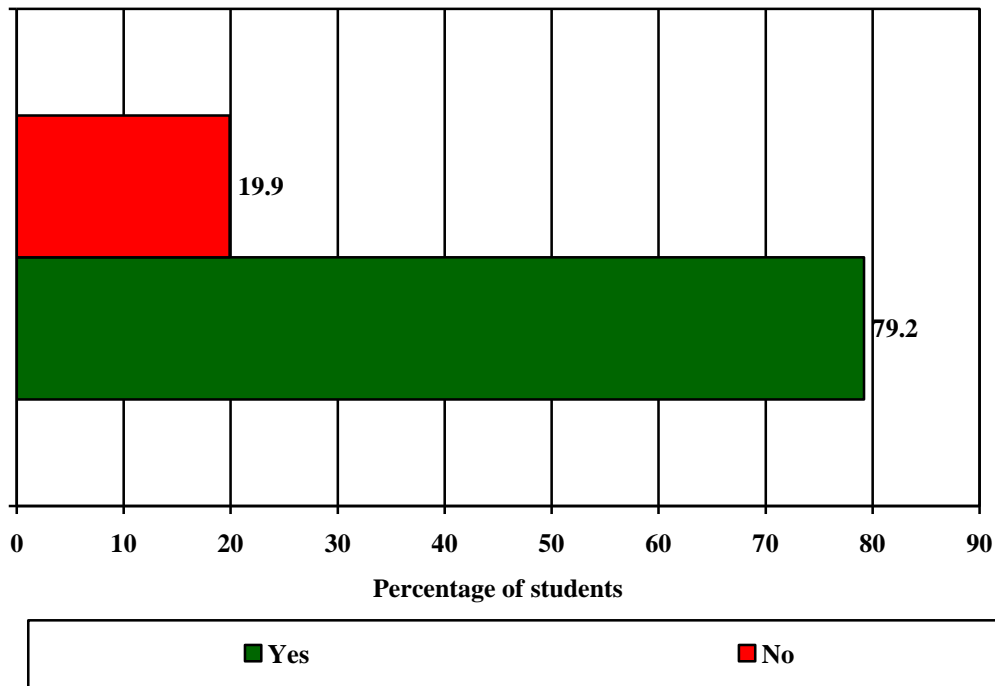
Positive comments about STATA included: *“Really interesting and fun to use”*; *“it helped me very much on my econometrics coursework, since it served as this giant calculator that could do all the calculations for me and I only had to learn to interpret data”*; *“I think this is great modern application that builds up a CV for future jobs. Very pleased it's used”*; *“very useful for internship work and final year dissertation”*; *“Very useful to learn how theory can be applied to real data”*.

The following are examples of positive comments on EViews: *“Very useful, learned more about econometrics when learning how to use the software than all the lecture. Without the use of this software, econometrics has no relevance”*; *“Very useful given the amount of econometric content within the course”*; *“Very useful, invaluable for exam prep [sic]”*; *“Very useful and user friendly”*; *“The software was extremely useful in running regressions and obtaining statistical results and information. It was also quite good at constructing useful graphs”*. Other such comments included: *“Fairly useful. Good for basic multiple choice question revision”* and *“very useful because we have a weekly test which help[sic] us make a review every week”* (both refer to MyEconLab), and *“So far I have only used MyEconlab for Macro and Micro and SPSS for Stats – They are useful as we can find a lot of information especially on MyEconlab where we can also test our knowledge. On SPSS we can calculate faster and it helps us understand the questions in a better way.”*

There were, however, a number of more negative appraisals, including (re. STATA): *“Not very at all, was not showed how to use it properly, teaching was worse than abysmal”*; *“the software itself was quite useful but it would have been good to get some more help on how to use it”*; *“Useless; very frustrating to use!”*; *“Partially useful. Using software is an interesting idea, but nothing is better than a good old course-book and communication with the lecturer (though, it is just my opinion)”*. Similar negative comments were received concerning EViews: *“Not useful at all. It does not test me as an economist in the slightest and does not provide me with any extra knowledge that I did not have before. In my opinion, these programs are there and encourage laziness as the workshops are so boring and it feels as if we are inputting commands like robots”*; and MyEconLab: *“It's useful but when we do the obligatory tests we cannot go back at the end and see our answers and what we did wrong.”*

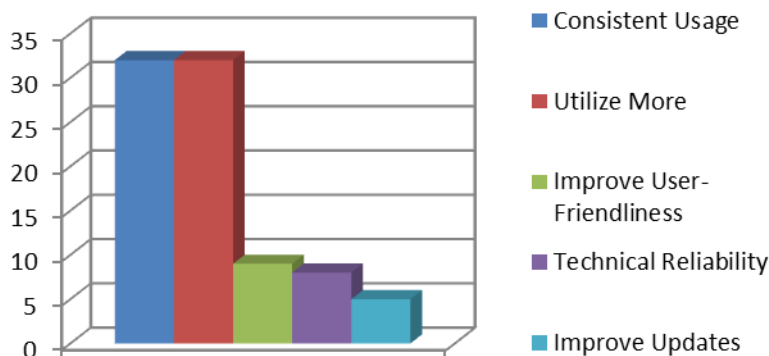


**Q26. Do the modules/units on your degree course make use of a 'Virtual learning environment' (VLE), such as WebCT or Blackboard?**



- More than 4 out of 5 respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students who had VLEs used in modules/units has mostly increased during 2006-2012: 67.0% - 73.7% - 80.1% - 79.2%;
- VLEs were used differently in different years of study: it was most often used in the 4<sup>th</sup> (90.1%) and 1<sup>st</sup> (82.4%) years, and slightly less in the 2<sup>nd</sup> (80.3%), 3<sup>rd</sup> (76.5%) and postgraduate (71.3%) years;
- Among students' comments were the following: *"All do to an extent but not always in depth"*; *"Once in a while"*; *"Most use blackboard, some refuse to do so"*; *"Easy access to learning materials."*

**Q26.a. If your course uses a VLE, comment on how effective you have found it in supporting your learning and how the effectiveness could be improved.**



Of over 1400 responses, nearly 81% said their courses made use of VLEs. Of these, there were a further 429 coded responses about their effectiveness and possible improvements that could be made.

328 people explicitly commented on the usefulness of VLEs, most being very positive indeed. Some typical comments about their effectiveness include: *"It is probably the most effective form of learning support used in the university"*; *"It is the MOST effective learning resource"*; *"I would not have passed first year without Blackboard"*; *"Brilliant. Essential to my studies and progress"*; *"Wow, it's been a blessing. Makes learning and communication from the lecturers to the student faster"*; *"Very useful for review material. I find module leaders who are keen to explore VLE's potential certainly broaden the learning opportunities for students"*; *"Blackboard is great. Allows tutors to post their lecture notes before or make available after for bits you didn't fully understand, so you are not missing essential parts from your notes"*.

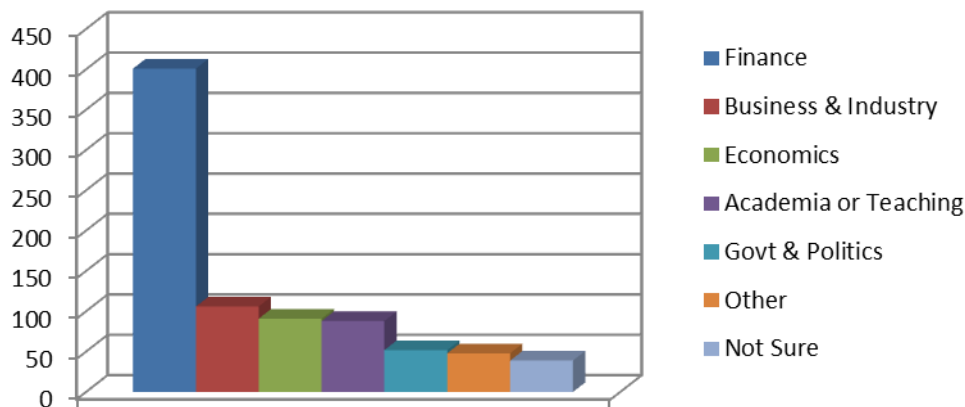
Very few had anything negative to say about VLEs (only 15 respondents, e.g. *"Very rarely anything useful on there"*; *"Tends to be a very passive experience"*), while one or two were notably ambivalent (*"I find it useful as a reference to compliment the lectures and seminars but many students I find see it as a substitute which irks the lecturers who find half the class don't turn up to seminars and lectures in some cases. I'm not sure of the best way to alleviate this, as staggering when you upload content to the VLE would limit its effectiveness but having all content easily available would increase the likelihood of non-attendance in my opinion"*; *"Good for organisation which aids study but of zero importance for study in itself"*).

As for suggested improvements to VLEs, 86 comments were coded, falling into several categories. By far the most common among these referred to the need for more consistent usage amongst lecturers, and that more features could be utilised. Examples of the former include: *"Its effectiveness seems to depend in the IT literacy of the lecturer"*; *"Depends on effective use by lecturers"*; *"Some modules upload all lecture information and extra which is very useful, others don't upload anything which can prove problematic"*; *"Some lecturers use it, but some do not use it at all which discourages students to ever use the platform"*; *"Only as effective as the input of the lecturers - i.e. variable! It is a valuable tool when used properly"*; *"Very useful but would help if tutors could be relied upon to post things on time"*; *"A big thing that has helped with certain lecturers is podcasts and videos which should be introduced more widely"*. Students also felt that more features should be enabled: *"Not used to its full potential at all. Only used for announcements and lecture notes"*; *"Slightly effective. It could be improved by providing podcasts of lectures, links to relevant articles, websites and essays, online informal exercises, and information on conferences and talks"*; *"It is excellent. Would be hugely, hugely helpful if recordings of lectures were posted"*; *"The discussion board could be used more"*; *"It could be more effective by having more interactions between students and lecturers"*; *"providing answers for work on VLE would be more effective"*; *"I wish the blackboard application for phones would come back"*.

Some students also suggested the need to improve user-friendliness (*"It's a bit awkward to navigate and important things like online reading lists should be more accessible and standardised"*; *"Very effective, although it could be made more effective by arranging content better"*; *"Improvement can be made on the presentation and layout of the interface"*; *"It is really bad. Students are used to sites such as facebook where everything is a lot more modern and understandable, blackboard is outdated and vision needs to change"*; *"the current VLE system appears to be quite functional however quite out-of-date, so investment in new VLE could improve the student experience and*

enhance the effectiveness of VLE”). A small number also commented on problems with the technical reliability of certain VLEs, (“Blackboard is good but it could help more if it would not crash very often, even when you’re reading an e-mail”; “very effective, only fault is if moodle goes down then you are left in the dark which it does frequently”). A few pointed to the need for more regularly updated material, (“Blackboard is used very well. However, the ‘view grades’ tool is woefully underused. This needs to be updated by professors so we can keep track of how well we are doing with the continuous assessment”; “It is good, but lecturers could upload material faster”; “Very Effective when updated properly. This is rarely done though”).

**Q27. What career do you hope to follow?**



There were 825 coded responses to this question. The largest number of students said they wished to pursue a career in finance (48.6%), while others said they wished to enter business (12.8%), economics (11%), academia or teaching (10.7%), and government and politics (6.3%). There were many students who were either undecided (4.7%) or interested in careers un-related to the above areas (5.8%).

Those who were interested in finance cited investment banking, trading and brokering, actuary, accountancy or general finance-sector employment as their intended jobs.

Students interested in business and industry mentioned advertising, marketing, human resources, entrepreneurship, management, and the energy industry.

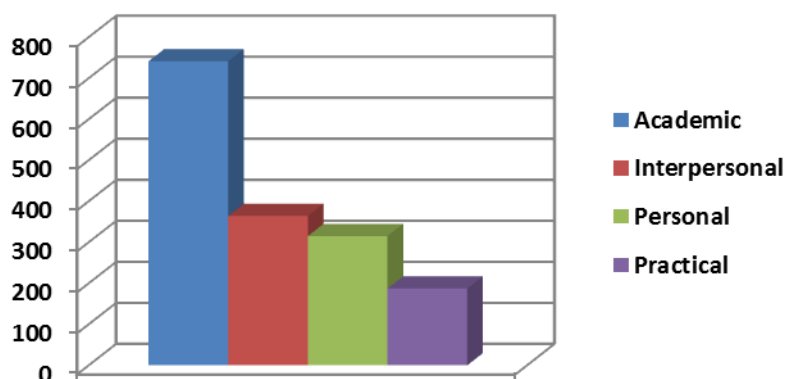
Those interested in economics cited intentions to work as Development Economists, econometricians, economic consultants, economic researchers or analysts, Public Sector Economists, and Environmental Economists.

A significant number also expressed interest in further academic pursuits, in research, and in teaching generally, including both primary and secondary.

Some mentioned wanting to go into the world of politics, working for national government, the EU, the UN, the diplomatic service, or civil service.

Included among the various other careers mentioned less frequently were law, journalism, public sector work, international development, NGO work, military, and hospitality. 39 people expressly stated their uncertainty about future careers (e.g. “Ranges from airline pilot to investment banker to aid worker. I’m 20 and I don’t have a clue”).

**Q28. What skills have you developed by studying for your degree that you feel will be useful to you in your career after you have graduated?**



There were 1607 coded responses to this question. The responses fell into four broad themes: academic skills, interpersonal skills (including communication, presentation and group work), personal skills and practical ones.

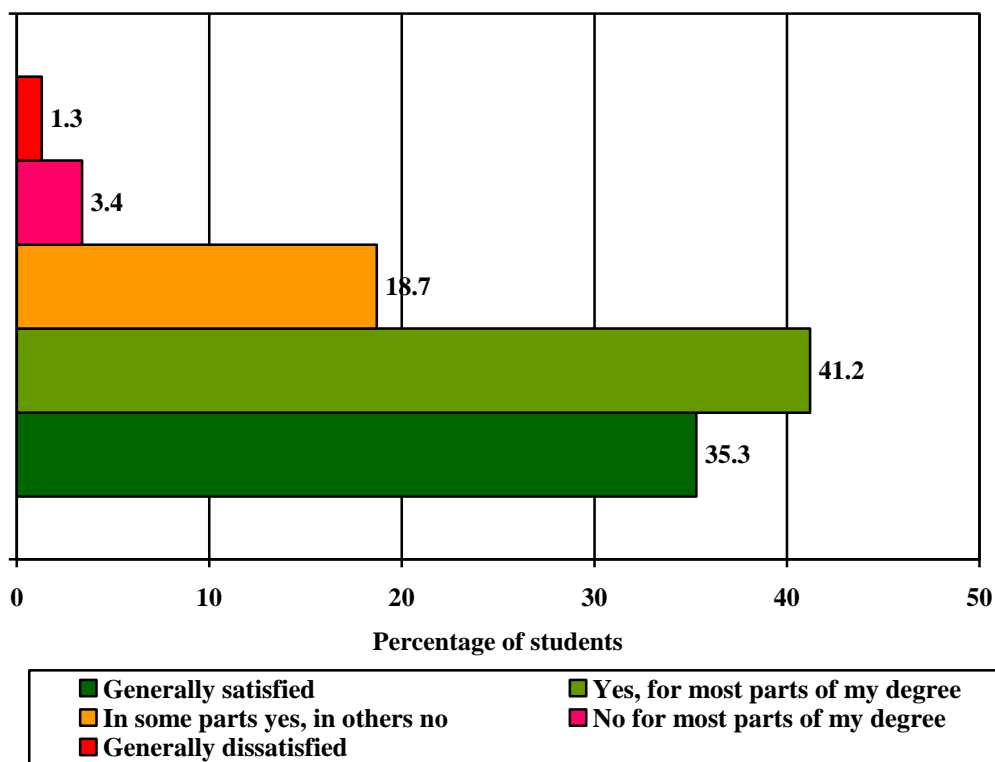
Academic skills encompass general research skills, economic-specific knowledge, mathematical and numerical skills, as well as broader analytic, critical thinking, and logical skills. Typical comments were: *“research skills, analytical skills”*; *“Mathematical skills, analytical skills, quantitative analysis (econometrics)”*; *“Maths and statistical tools such as differentiation and statistical sampling. Supply and demand analysis. Macroeconomics”*; *“Knowledge of economics and modelling. Also depth of understanding of alternative macroeconomic concepts”*; *“I am able to think critically and realise that there isn't always just one straight forward answer to everything”*; *“Ability to critically analyse. High level of numeracy. Statistical analysis”*; *“Analytical skills. Mathematical skills.”*

The interpersonal skills developed included improved ease in both written and verbal communication, greater ability to work with others and greater ease in giving presentations. Student comments included: *“I have developed presentation skills, how to present myself as a person and how to present my work”*; *“More confident about talking to new people and presenting ideas in front of a group. Better at articulating my ideas and expressing information”*; *“Teamwork, organisation, essay writing, confidence in presenting”*; *“Public speaking”*; *“Communication and team work”*; *“People skills. I often partake in study groups, so explaining a concept to several people in different ways has been a help”*; *“Teamwork, improved my writing abilities, manual dexterity, presentational skills.”*

In addition, many students felt that they had developed a number of important personal skills. The most common themes to emerge here related to independent learning and time management skills. There were also a number of references to developing confidence, commitment, and leadership abilities. Some examples include: *“Independent work ethics”*; *“Time management. Self-motivation”*; *“Time management, group work, individual perseverance”*; *“Ability to work very independently and to balance a large workload and expectations”*; *“Time management, group work, working under stress, working independently”*; *“qualities of leadership”*; *“my confidence in voicing my own opinions has grown”*; *“I am more confident, I am learning to work hard under pressure and commitment”*; *“I hope to be a more confident person who can think for himself rather than just believing what is put in front of him”*.

Finally, some students also emphasised the practical knowledge and skills they have gained, which are directly applicable to the working world, from IT skills, knowledge of finance and accounting, to wider understanding of real-world economics: *“My degree programme includes aspects of accounting and finance, which I feel will help me when I try to go into finance”*; *“being able to apply my maths knowledge to economic situations”*; *“Understanding aspects of financial markets and other aspects of banking. The ability to do the calculations required for risk management”*; *“Understanding of the current economic situations”*; *“I feel for the career I wish to enter economics has provided me with very beneficial knowledge that can be applied such as learning how the markets work, what will effect a business’s profit etc.”*; *“Managerial skills”*.

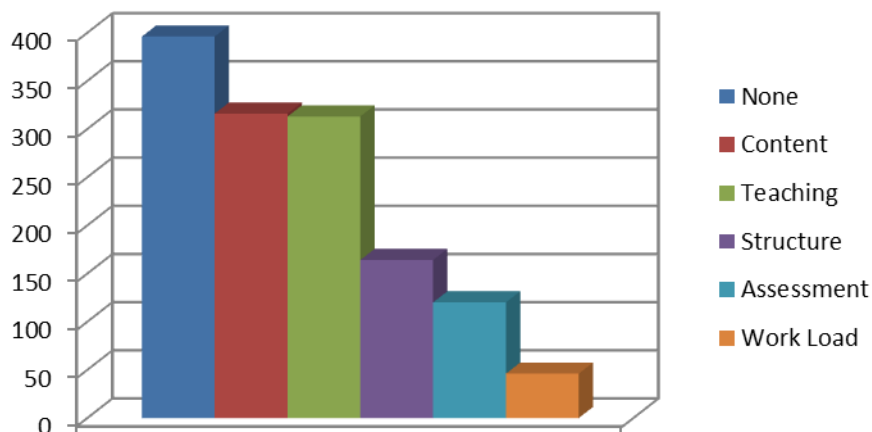
**Q29. Overall, are you satisfied with the quality of this degree course?**



- More than 3 out of 4 respondents were satisfied with their degree course;
- The number of students who were satisfied with their degree course has fluctuated during 2006-2012: 74.1% - 76.9% - 75.6% - 76.5% - 76.5%;
- As in previous studies, age was a SSF for satisfaction with their degree course: younger students of 18-21 were more satisfied than other age groups – 77.1%, compared to 73.4% for mature students and 73.0% for 22-25s;
- The following were among students’ comments: *“I haven’t enjoyed the lectures or found them particularly interesting. Topics covered are A level topics and so I am getting very bored. There is little mention of the current economic environment”*; *“Extremely satisfied”*; *“it need to be little work load [sic] and more to do with a career in economy and what we would expect in this field of work rather than just solely theory, the work is not very accurate to the real world, but it has make my*

*understand the journey [sic] and articles i read for the most part [sic]”; “Very much satisfied - it’s brilliant”; “some to the extent that i [sic] have a good degree, however dont feel how i [sic] will know how to apply it as all we do is theory work”; “would like more hours and maybe 1 or 2 different modules.”*

**Q30. Are there any aspects of your course that you do not like?**



There were 1396 coded responses to this question. The largest group of students (28%) expressed no dissatisfaction with their course. Others disliked the course content (22.6%), the course teaching (22.4%), the structure of the course (11.7%), the modes of assessment (8.6%), and the workload (3%).

Over 300 people commented critically about the content of their courses. These were generally spread across issues of maths and statistics, the theoretical nature of some classes versus a desire to have more real-world analysis, and comments directed at specific units as either boring or uninteresting. There were also comments made about how challenging the content often is: some finding it far too difficult (notably in relation to maths), others too easy. Some examples include: *“Too strong a focus on maths and stats. Subjects are more academic than practical”*; *“think statistics is pretty boring”*; *“Far too heavy emphasis on mathematics with no applied/relevant angle to it”*; *“Majority of the modules place disproportionate emphasis on one’s ability to interpret unfamiliar and impractical theoretical models without any reference to its real-world applications to help the reader digest the topic in more depth”*; *“Very little application to the real world”*; *“Dry content”*; *“First year; waste of time to someone who has studied economics (higher level) in high school”*; *“It is very easy and therefore too much time is spent learning it”*; *“Economics - too much, too fast and too incomprehensible for someone with no prior knowledge”*; *“Maths is not challenging enough for post A-level maths students but very challenging for non A-level maths students”*.

Almost the same number of students commented on weaknesses in teaching, pointing to a lack of enthusiasm among lecturers, a lack of support from them, generally poor – or at least mixed – quality of lecturers and tutors, problems with their English language proficiency, the pace of teaching, as well as with certain forms of teaching. Typical comments include: *“the lecturers are very boring and provide very little support or guidance”*; *“Some teaching is not of [sic], the best, very boring, not engaging”*; *“Some of the lectures don’t speak well enough, whether because English is not their first language or because they are not energised and inspirational on the subject matter”*; *“Incompetent lecturers boasting about their consulting activity”*; *“Lack of support with*

*essays/assignments*"; "Not getting enough help"; "lack of variety of teaching methods in lectures"; "I do not like the fact that we do not get visiting lecturers who have actually worked in the civil service, banks, etc." As for the form of teaching, a few students expressed dislike of group work, presentations, repetitive problem sets ("*group projects can provide people with the opportunity to free-ride*"; "*Group work for the sake of group work*"); others noted an insufficient emphasis on just these same forms ("*There is no chance to give presentations nor do projects*"; "*Very little work in small groups*").

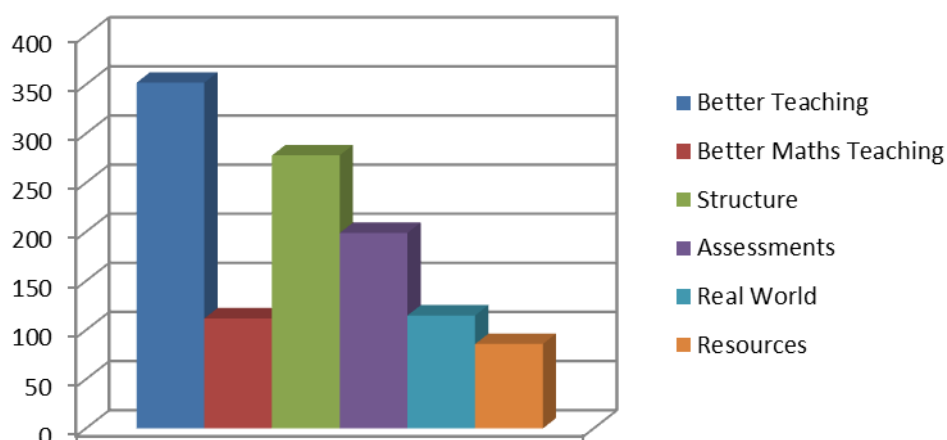
Students also took issue with the course structure. Comments mostly referred to timetabling, compulsory courses, class sizes, or lack of contact hours, tutorials and courses. Typical comments were: "*Module clashes. Many modules that complement each other are put at similar times so you can't take them together*"; "*poor timetabling and the lack of communication between the different module organisers*"; "*Two hour lectures - really hard to stay focused for that amount of time especially when the material is difficult*"; "*Too much time between the module and exams*"; "*No Reading Week*"; "*Some modules which are compulsory I find won't be useful in later life*"; "*I would prefer to have more optional modules and a wider range of choices*"; "*Lecture and seminar numbers were sometimes too large, meaning that open discussion was difficult to obtain*"; "*Too little contact with professors*"; "*Lack of contact with tutors, sometimes feel like studying on a course alienated from the tutors or any real supervision*"; "*Not enough tutorials*".

The typical modes of assessment were another aspect which students disliked. Many comments referred to the lack of continuous assessment and the pressure applied by having just one final exam and, sometimes, exams far removed from the time in which material is learned. For example: "*The method by which my degree is assessed. I feel that a much better method would be for students to get tested throughout*"; "*Lack of continuous assessment*"; "*Learning that only assesses you at the exam, which makes students prepare only for the exam and then forget the material. While this is designed to develop the ability to learn independently, this doesn't always work*"; "*The fact that the end of year exam counts 100 % towards your overall mark*"; "*too much workload at the end of each semester to focus on exams solely*"; "*stress load of all exams together*". A further theme concerned forms of group assessment which some found particularly problematic: "*Group assessments can be very difficult because of relying on other people who maybe are not as capable as you are*"; "*Group work does not give an accurate overview of an individual's potential, as individuals vary significantly in strengths. Group work in final year is a bad idea!*"

In relation to assessment, some also commented on the lack, poor quality, or significant delay in receiving feedback on both examined work and work set during term-time: "*No exam feedback*"; "*lack of answers for problem sets*"; "*Lack of feedback and marks for coursework not being available until a long period of time afterwards*"; "*Lack of quality feedback*".

A small number of students were critical of the amount of work entailed in the course. Students wrote: "*The workload is too heavy. It is highly difficult to go deep into any topic presented, which is very unsatisfying*"; "*Sometimes it feels like there is too much to do for the time available*"; "*intense pressure and much reading to do in little time*"; "*Heavy pressure and workload. Assignments that are designed to challenge you, but are in fact harder than the exam and cause a lot of stress to students during term time*"; "*Irregular workload, massive workload before exams*".

**Q31. Please identify one or two aspects of your degree course that could be improved and say why**



There were 1238 coded responses to this question and responses varied greatly. There were however more frequent responses under the following themes: better teaching (in general); better maths teaching (in particular); better course structure (including calls for more small classes); better forms of assessment; better connection to the real world; and improved resources.

Students who felt there was a need for better teaching expressed ideas similar to previous responses (regarding improving of seminars and teaching of maths/stats). They want more charismatic, enthusiastic teachers with a high command of the English language and an increased ability to explain complex problems. Typical comments include: *“Recruit more lecturers who care about educating more”*; *“more monitoring of lecturers internally to ensure they are up to scratch”*; *“Teaching - lecturers do not make a concerted effort to educate. Should look at theories of education and how people learn well”*; *“The lecturers should be more focused on teaching. I got the feeling that ‘Yeah, we’re here to build our career and work on research. You lot are a necessary evil for being here’”*; *“The speed at which ground is covered: often things move too fast in lectures and seminars leaving many students behind having to catch up in their own time”*; *“I feel that PhD students should not be used as seminar tutors as they do not have enough knowledge”*.

A significant number of students (6% overall) also felt that their experience would benefit from more interactive activities: *“A little more interaction would be useful in cementing the theory learnt in lectures”*; *“more interaction - many lectures just involve a projector and this can prove quite dull!”*; *“More interactivity would better engage students”*; *“More interactive, it’s boring and tedious doing the same old thing every day”*; *“More interaction in seminars, perhaps with the tutor ensuring everyone takes part”*. A further 3% specifically requested more approachable lecturers willing and able to offer guidance and support if and when required: *“More interaction with lecturers/ academics to work through examples and problems outside of lectures”*; *“Lecturers should make themselves available to see in person more often”*; *“More student interaction and checking up on work, not being left to flounder”*; *“More help given to people who are struggling”*.

In addition to the above, (which all told accounted for 28% of all responses), there were a further 112 responses (9% overall) specifically relating to the teaching of



numerical aspects, especially maths, but also stats and quants. More support for those with weaker maths skills and the possibility of streaming people with different levels of mathematical training were both popular suggestions: *“Greater assistance for those without A level maths”*; *“Spilt maths into two different modules for A level and non A level maths and teach separately”*; *“Less intensive maths teaching - economics as an entire discipline needs to re-discover the 'arts' aspect to it and stop suffering from mathematician-envy”*.

A large proportion of responses also fell into the broad category of structure (22.5% in total), some voicing concern about poor modular integration (either too much repetition between modules or too little continuity: *“better communication between modules”*), some about lack of continuity between lectures and tutorials of the same course (*“Better coordination of tutorials and lecture programmes”*), some poor timetabling (*“Spread work out evenly. Near the end of term the majority of work is in for [sic]. The first few weeks are moderately paced”*), and others wishing for greater variety of choice in modules available (*“Breadth. More choices. Less orthodox and obvious modules”*). Most comments under this category, however, requested more small class teaching (11% overall) and more contact hours (6% overall): *“more seminars because they are a better way to test your understanding of the content”*; *“Have more tutorials instead of lectures”*; *“I believe teaching should be done in smaller groups”*; *“A greater amount of contact time, lecturers having longer office hours in which to approach them with issues”*; *“more teaching time”*; *“More contact hours, especially lectures that go through problems or essays”*.

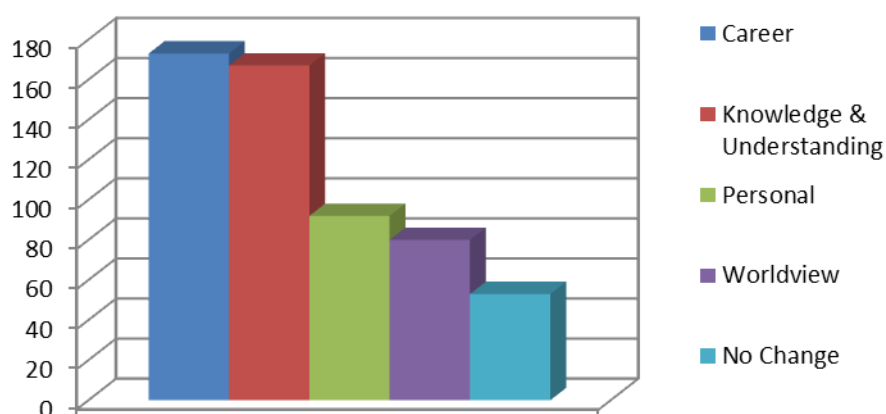
Other comments had to do with improving assessments (16% in total). Again, student sentiments echoed previous responses in emphasising the need for more continuous assessment, through either coursework or more frequent testing, and less focus on one final examination. There were also calls for much improved feedback on submitted work (4% overall), and more thorough preparation for exams (3%). Typical comments include: *“More coursework and less exams”*; *“more coursework to even out the workload and pressure”*; *“More essays, because I feel it would improve my research skills”*; *“feedback should be given - I'm in third year, and have never received anything other than a mark for any economics work”*; *“Feedback on progress offered more regularly”*; *“The class teachers could do the marking of problem sets more thoroughly and give more feedback”*; *“better information of what is expected from us on essays or exams”*; *“better guidance for the assignments and working through past exam papers”*; *“more revision lectures”*.

Other students were more concerned with the way the course connected to the real world (9.3% overall) and suggested improvement through the incorporation of real-world examples, explanation of current economic events, and the possibility of having guest speakers from various sectors. Typical comments include: *“More tasks related to what it really means to work on [sic] a firm nowadays”*; *“more relevance to the real world and career guidance within the course”*; *“I would like to learn more about the recent economic disorder as these examples help us on further understanding in economic theories”*; *“Could have speakers from real world organisations once in a while, telling us about how the economic issues apply to their organisations in the real world”*; *“Need more lecturers with real working experience, more visit speaker [sic] and more connections with the related industries”*.

Finally, a small portion of students (7%) suggested improvements in resources, which generally had to do with providing more and better lecture notes and handouts, more suggested readings, closer integration of teaching with key textbooks, and more

online materials and resources, for instance: *“Pod-casting lectures would be extremely useful for revision”*; *“more online quizzes - continually testing yourself”*; *“More access to specialist software/hardware such a Bloomberg terminals could be very useful to improve learning and employability”*; *“Lecturers could make more use of VLE”*.

**Q32. How has the course changed you? For example, ideas, career choice, perceptions of the world**



There were 568 coded responses to this question. General changes observed had to do with career goals, knowledge gained, personal changes, and changes to how students viewed or understood the world around them. A small number of students (9.3% of responses given) explicitly claimed to have experienced no change in themselves.

The highest number of responses referred to the impact of studying economics on their thoughts about possible careers. For many the course has helped confirm the career choices available to them: *“It has helped to understand what kind of career I would like to pursue in the future”*; *“it has opened me up to new career choices I didn't know existed”*; *“It has given me the skills, that I feel I needed, to make me more employable”*; *“it has changed my views on my career choice because I previously wasn't aware of the versatile nature of a course in Economics”*; *“It has introduced me to consultancy which I didn't know much about beforehand”*; *“I came to the LSE, being pretty certain that I want to work in the city. After a year of studying Economics I realized how fascinating the subject really is and after having had some exposure economic research, I am pretty certain that I would like to pursue a career in academia.”*

For others, however, studying has changed their focus, sometimes away from economics-related careers (including academia): *“Career choice completely changed from working in the private sector to the public/NGO sector”*; *“It has changed my career choice to more public service focused roles”*; *“I know that I will never be an investment banker or accountant”*; *“Has made me question my career ambitions. Am more reluctant to venture into economics”*; *“Has deterred me from the finance sector”*; *“I know I definitely do not want to do further study”*.

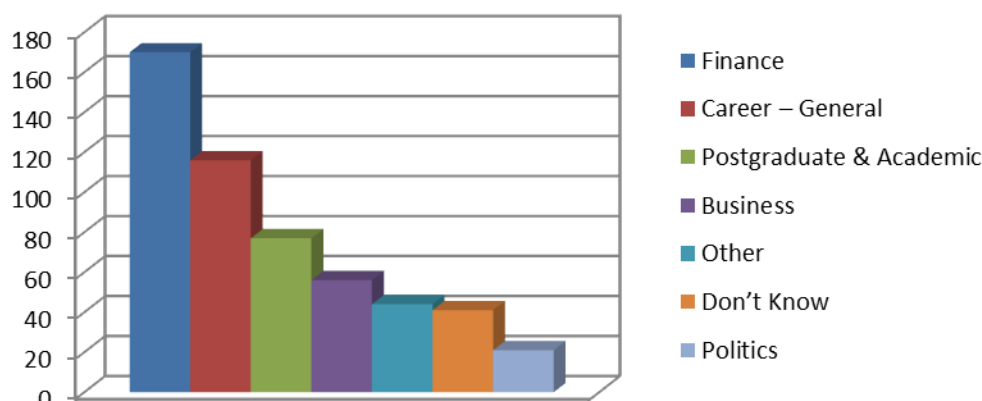
Nearly the same number of comments attested to the knowledge gained from studying, including an improved understanding of many economic-related issues. For instance: *“This course changed a lot my perception about business world. I have a better understanding now of how things are working in financial world [sic]”*; *“Deeper understanding of Macroeconomics has led to a better understanding of economic policy*

*and politics”; “broadened my knowledge of current affairs and issues that affect the economy”; “My degree has made me much more aware of current economic and political issues”; “Has enhanced my understanding of both economics and international politics”; “More clear understanding of the world from an economic and social point of view”; “Understanding human behaviour and importance of economy in a society at multiple levels”; “I became interested in economic development of less developed countries”.*

Many students felt that the course had changed them personally. These comments typically had to do with increasing independence, confidence, motivation, leadership abilities, critical capacities, or other similar traits: *“Decision to pursue an Economics degree has been a single most valuable investment I made to date. It sharpened my ability to critically assess information, deliver disciplined and well-structured arguments and become a more confident team player. It acted an important reality check to remind me of the very competitive market for the top-tier jobs and drastically improved my time management skills”; “It’s made me more outgoing and highlighted some of weaknesses and strength a little more to narrow down the career choices I have in mind”; “made me more independent”; “It has made me more mature and confident about my abilities”; “Made me more practical and broad minded”; “Made me into a better thinker. I can tackle problems far more easily, and I make better decisions”; “It made me more ambitious”.*

Others felt that the most significant change was in how they understood the world around them, notably in terms of its complexity, and their own socio-political perspectives. Typical comments included: *“Perceptions of the world, most definitely. Everything is not as black and white as it seems in school”; “It has changed the way I analyse real world problems and I now see them from a more logically, emotionally detached viewpoint”; “the world isn’t as ‘perfect’ as I thought whilst I was young”; “It has changed my perception of the world and my political views”; “perhaps the course encouraged me to gain a more conservative bias”; “Yes, through my greater knowledge and external reading I have changed from being more Keynesian to ‘Hayekian’”; “Changed my perception of the world and how it works and the greed/materialism of the West”; “I question dominant ideologies such as capitalism a lot more. I do not accept anything without questioning it first. I believe in the plurality of ideas. I also want to pursue a career in development since investment banking kills one’s soul”; “It has changed the way I fundamentally view the world, now I see facets of information that I otherwise overlooked which caused huge flaws in my understanding of how the world worked, mostly thanks to the media’s blinkering of the general public”.*

**Q33. Where do you think you will be in five years after finishing your economics course?**



There were 525 coded responses to this question and answers reflected the responses to the earlier career question (Q.27). The largest group of responses again referred to work in finance-related industries (e.g. *“Hopefully working in the financial sector in London”*; *“In a permanent job in the private financial sector having completed a masters degree in finance”*). The second most common form of responses were of a very general nature, referring to, for instance, *“Working my way up a ladder in a large firm with great opportunities ahead”*; *“Taking a variety of skills and information that I've learnt from my degree to the next level in the form of a job”*; *“job with good promotion prospects”*; *“Hopefully in a high earning job”*; *“Hopefully with a job where I work up to success, and one where I am completely happy rather than there for the money”*; *“Hopefully in a stable job that I enjoy.”*

77 people referred to further academic study or research, typically at postgraduate level, while others envisioned working in business, many of whom saw themselves running their own companies or working in a managerial capacity for a large company or corporation (*“Preferably working in a successful business at a decision-making level”*). Similar numbers referred to a range of other possibilities (including teaching, law, NGO-work, travelling, simply returning to home countries) and to being as yet quite unsure of the future. A small number referred to politics-related positions (in some cases on returning to their home countries), and several demonstrated an amusing degree of deflationary realism (e.g. *“Working some dull job that has little to do with my course thinking of what it would've been like if I had decided to torture myself and do a PhD”*) or surrealism (*“Fighting in a hopeless struggle against the robots!”*)

**Q34. Any other comments**

There were 44 coded responses to this question. 13 positive comments about the survey included: *“Good questionnaire, allowed me to evaluate my learning and my degree”*; *“Questions asked in this survey were very useful and information grabbing, well done”*; *“one of the better surveys that I have ever done. very [sic] complete”*; *“Keep doing survey so can improve the learning environment [sic]”*; *“I look forward to learn [sic] about the outcomes that the results of this survey will bring at the Economics Department at .... On behalf of other students at ..., many thanks for putting together this questionnaire.”*

A further 13 comments reiterated critical issues from earlier questions: *“Since fees are going up, I feel economics at our uni at least will need to provide a better*

*service, since it is currently incomparable to that provided by the humanities department”; “Very disappointed with the course and university; had much higher expectations of a university with such prestige.”*

There were 9 general, positive comments about economics: *“Studying Economics was one of my best decisions that I have ever made”; “Honestly could not have chosen a better course or university to study at. Thoroughly enjoying the subject material and how it is taught”; “Everyone should study economics”; “It’s a brilliant subject but it’s sad that so many students simply study it for financial gain. That’s probably only going to worsen given the increase in tuition fees.”* And finally two comments referred to the prize for taking part: *“please give me the kindle, thank you”*.

## **Conclusions**

This is our sixth biennial Economics students survey which forms part of a comprehensive research programme, looking for better understanding of the needs of our different stakeholders, including students, lecturers, alumni and employers.

## **Respondents**

This year 1440 students from 56 departments took part in the online survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The majority of respondents were male (54.2%), started their course under the age of 21, stated English as their first language, had A-levels in Maths and Economics and Economics was their first choice of degree subject. The survey, as with all our surveys, was intended as an observational study and not as a controlled experiment.

The respondents did not constitute a random sample of all Economics students in the UK, but a self-selected group. As a result, their views may not fully reflect the opinions of the entire student population. Despite the self-selection, there is evidence that the expressed attitudes represent more widely-held student opinions. The survey covers a broad cross-section of both undergraduate and postgraduate Economics education. The main value of the survey lies in the long term, as the findings were compared to the results of the past surveys. Comparing results with the previous years allows us to follow the changing picture of studying economics in UK HE and better target our support to lecturers.

As in previous years, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their degree course. They pointed to the ‘Best aspects of the course’ being the content of the course, the quality of teaching, the value of small classes and tutorials, the variety of module choice and course structure, the resources available to support learning (especially IT-based), and future prospects enabled by study.

## **Suggestions for improvement**

Students’ comments regarding teaching had to do with the value of lectures, the quality of lecturing, and the general supportiveness of both lecturers and tutors. Some typical comments include: *“The quality of lecturers and lectures are superb”; “The incredible quality and variety of the lecturers”; “The knowledge, enthusiasm and willingness of the lecturers”*. At the same time some of those best aspects appear also to be mentioned in

a critical way in the other survey responses. While replying to open-ended questions, respondents raise a number of issues and make various suggestions:

- *Ways to improve seminar activities:* suggestions focused around issues to do with the form of seminars, particularly concerns about increasing interaction; the content of seminars; having more time in general for seminars (whether that meant having more of them or having longer sessions); smaller class sizes; and improving the quality of teaching.
- *Ways to improve assessment:* students felt that there were too few assessments, too little coursework, a general lack of feedback and insufficient preparation, while some suggested ways in which forms of assessment could be more varied.
- *Aspects of the course that they don't like:* the largest group of students (28.0%) liked everything about their course; others disliked the course content (22.6%), the course teaching (22.4%), the structure of the course (11.7%), the modes of assessment (8.6%), and the workload (3%).
- *Aspects that could be improved:* better teaching (in general); better maths teaching (in particular); better course structure (including calls for more small classes); better forms of assessment; better connection to the real world; and improved resources.

Students referred to the quality of teaching and the content of the course on various occasions. While talking about seminars and workshops, English language proficiency was a particular concern (*"All of the tutors are very well qualified and have a very deep understanding of the topic. The trouble is that some of them have such poor English that it is very difficult for the vast majority of students to understand them"*), as well as the use of relatively inexperienced postgraduate teachers (*"Have more knowledgeable tutors taking the class. Instead of 'research' lecturers should be taking seminars, not getting a post grad who can't teach fluently and doesn't have a good knowledge on the module to teach it"*; *"Higher End Staff who know exactly the content of the lecture notes so it is correlated with the lectures and less PHD students teaching"*; *"We need tutors who want to teach us and know what they are talking about (I've had tutors who don't understand the stuff they are teaching"*; *"not having them taught by postgraduate students as they are unable to help us as well as lecturers can especially when the postgraduate student is foreign and you can barely understand them"*).

With regards to improving the teaching of Maths, comments suggested that there is considerable variability in teaching standards, much of which could be improved, including clearer explanation (with several comments again about language proficiency), less presumption of prior knowledge, and more enthusiastic effort to make statistics interesting. Many comments also referred to the need for more applied, practical examples, to aid understanding, as well as more tests (including online), and more feedback and answers provided for problem sets. Some typical comments on this include: *"Detailed explanation should be given. Assumptions that some of the students already know it shouldn't be paramount"*; *"explaining more the maths behind formula's rather than just stating what they are and where to use them"*; *"Simplify, explain in depth the basics. Otherwise you lose 80% of the class"*; *"Make it more interesting, show how it can be used in the work place"*; *"relate it to the real world and familiarize students with the language"*; *"The stats teaching seems so abstract to most students. As much as is possible teachers should relate all the theory to real life situations and explain the relevance of the theory"*; *"More maths problem sheets that can be handed in regularly"*

*and marked regularly, i.e. regular practice is needed rather than just one assessed exam at the end”.*

Students commented on general weaknesses in teaching, pointing to a lack of enthusiasm among lecturers, a lack of support from them, sometimes poor – or at least mixed – quality of lecturers and tutors, problems with their English language proficiency, the pace of teaching, as well as with certain forms of teaching. Typical comments include: *“the lecturers are very boring and provide very little support or guidance”*; *“Some teaching is not of the best, very boring, not engaging”*; *“Some of the lectures don't speak well enough, whether because English is not their first language or because they are not energised and inspirational on the subject matter”*; *“Incompetent lecturers boasting about their consulting activity”*; *“Lack of support with essays/assignments”*; *“Not getting enough help”*; *“lack of variety of teaching methods in lectures”*; *“I do not like the fact that we do not get visiting lecturers who have actually worked in the civil service, banks, etc.”*

While talking about the need for improvement in teaching, a significant number of students also felt that their experience would benefit from more interactive activities: *“A little more interaction would be useful in cementing the theory learnt in lectures”*; *“more interaction - many lectures just involve a projector and this can prove quite dull!”*; *“More interactivity would better engage students”*; *“More interactive, it's boring and tedious doing the same old thing every day”*; *“More interaction in seminars, perhaps with the tutor ensuring everyone takes part”*.

Students' comments about assessment included suggestions that an increase in frequency of assessments – both formal (summative) and informal (formative) – may help alleviate the pressure of having only one final exam as well as encourage students to engage more actively with material: *“Smaller & more often, to test a wider area of the course. More regular testing would also encourage students to keep on top of the workload”*; *“Continuous assessment of minor work throughout the year”*. Other students felt that the means to improving assessment lay in receiving more feedback on their performance as well as providing more preparation for assessments (namely exams): *“Assessment that has more feedback would really help”*; *“more work with feedback.”*

## **Content of the course**

Students on many occasions in the survey left critical comments about the content of their courses. Among the issues raised was the theoretical nature of some classes versus a desire to have more real-world analysis: *“The course is very theoretical and contains a lot of maths. I think that the three micro-macro levels could have been compressed into two and offered a more hands-on approach, discussing current events too. It is difficult to practically apply the knowledge”*; *“The focus was mostly from an academic, research-based standpoint. During the entire 4-year economics course, we didn't really focus on the Financial Crisis; which would seem to be one of the most important economic events in history!?”* *Much emphasis was placed on old, outdated theories that defy common sense”*; *“I thought there would be more emphasis on the current economic climate and discussions and stuff, my course tends to get bogged down in the maths and formulas I was expecting a more practical approach to economics, with the emphasis on developing economic thinking and intuition”*; *“There should be much more emphasis placed on real-world examples. I would have liked to have learned more about the financial crisis through an economic lens. They should really think why people are taking the subject. I for one am not taking econ [sic] to be an academic. I would like to have a fairly*

*comprehensive idea of how an economy works and is influenced by political and other factors. That would have benefited my life."*

Students also left suggestions on how this situation could be improved through the incorporation of real-world examples, explanation of current economic events, and the possibility of having guest speakers from various sectors. Typical comments include: *"More tasks related to what it really means to work on [sic] a firm nowadays"; "more relevance to the real world and career guidance within the course"; "I would like to learn more about the recent economic disorder as these examples help us on further understanding in economic theories"; "Could have speakers from real world organisations once in a while, telling us about how the economic issues apply to their organisations in the real world"; "Need more lecturers with real working experience, more visit speaker [sic] and more connections with the related industries."*

### **How the course changed them**

When respondents were asked how the course has changed them, the answers were overwhelmingly positive. General changes observed had to do with knowledge gained, career goals, personal changes, and changes to how students viewed or understood the world around them. Many students commented on how the course has expanded their knowledge or broadened their views in some way: *"It has given me the skills, that I feel I needed, to make me more employable"; "it has changed my views on my career choice because I previously wasn't aware of the versatile nature of a course in Economics"; "I have a better understanding of the world."* Many students felt that the course had changed them personally. These comments had to do with increasing independence, confidence, motivation, leadership or other similar traits: *"Decision to pursue an Economics degree has been a single most valuable investment I made to date. It sharpened my ability to critically assess information, deliver disciplined and well-structured arguments and become a more confident team player. It acted an important reality check to remind me of the very competitive market for the top-tier jobs and drastically improved my time management skills"; "It's made me more outgoing and highlighted some of weaknesses and strength [sic] a little more to narrow down the career choices I have in mind"; "Perceptions of the world, most definitely. Everything is not as black and white as it seems in school".*

At the end of the survey in the 'Any other comments' section students left generally positive replies about how they enjoyed the course overall and/or giving thanks for the opportunity to participate in the survey and reflect on their learning. Among them were the following: *"Good questionnaire, allowed me to evaluate my learning and my degree"; "Questions asked in this survey were very useful and information grabbing, well done"; "one of the better surveys that I have ever done. Very complete"; "Keep doing survey so can improve the learning environment [sic]"; "I look forward to learn [sic] about the outcomes that the results of this survey will bring at the Economics Department at ... many thanks for putting together this questionnaire"; "Studying Economics was one of my best decisions that I have ever made"; "Honestly could not have chosen a better course or university to study at. Thoroughly enjoying the subject material and how it is taught"; "Everyone should study economics"; "It's a brilliant subject but it's sad that so many students simply study it for financial gain. That's probably only going to worsen given the increase in tuition fees."*



Both positive and critical comments provide lecturers and departments with vital feedback on their teaching, and how and where it could be improved. Survey reports for each participating department play an important role in departmental planning and curriculum development. The Economics Network has been asked by some departments to run students focus groups to clarify some issues from NSS and EN surveys, followed by workshops in the areas of teaching that students have identified to be in need of improvement. We always see such action taken by departments as a very important part of their commitment to teaching and learning and would like to encourage them not only to discuss and reflect on their own confidential reports but also to identify areas for action.

### ***Final comment***

In some cases, students' suggestions for improvements in the way courses are run, such as smaller class sizes or more contact time, would require extra resources. In other cases, however, their suggestions could be achieved through relatively small changes in practice, such as ways of using VLEs, classroom activities or teaching styles. The Economics Network is very happy to support departments and lecturers in making those changes. Information from the survey will be also used to provide better support to new students through our websites *WhyStudyEconomics.ac.uk* for prospective students and *StudyingEconomics.ac.uk* for current students. Please contact us at the EN (contact details on page 1, if you are interested in discussing your departmental report or running a student focus group).

### **References**

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2. National Student Survey Findings and trends 2006 to 2009 [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10\\_18/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_18/)