



ASSESSMENTS AFTER COVID-19 PRELIMINARY SURVEY RESULTS

Report written by Stefania Paredes Fuentes
as part of the Economics Network Virtual Symposium 2020
Theme 4: Assessments

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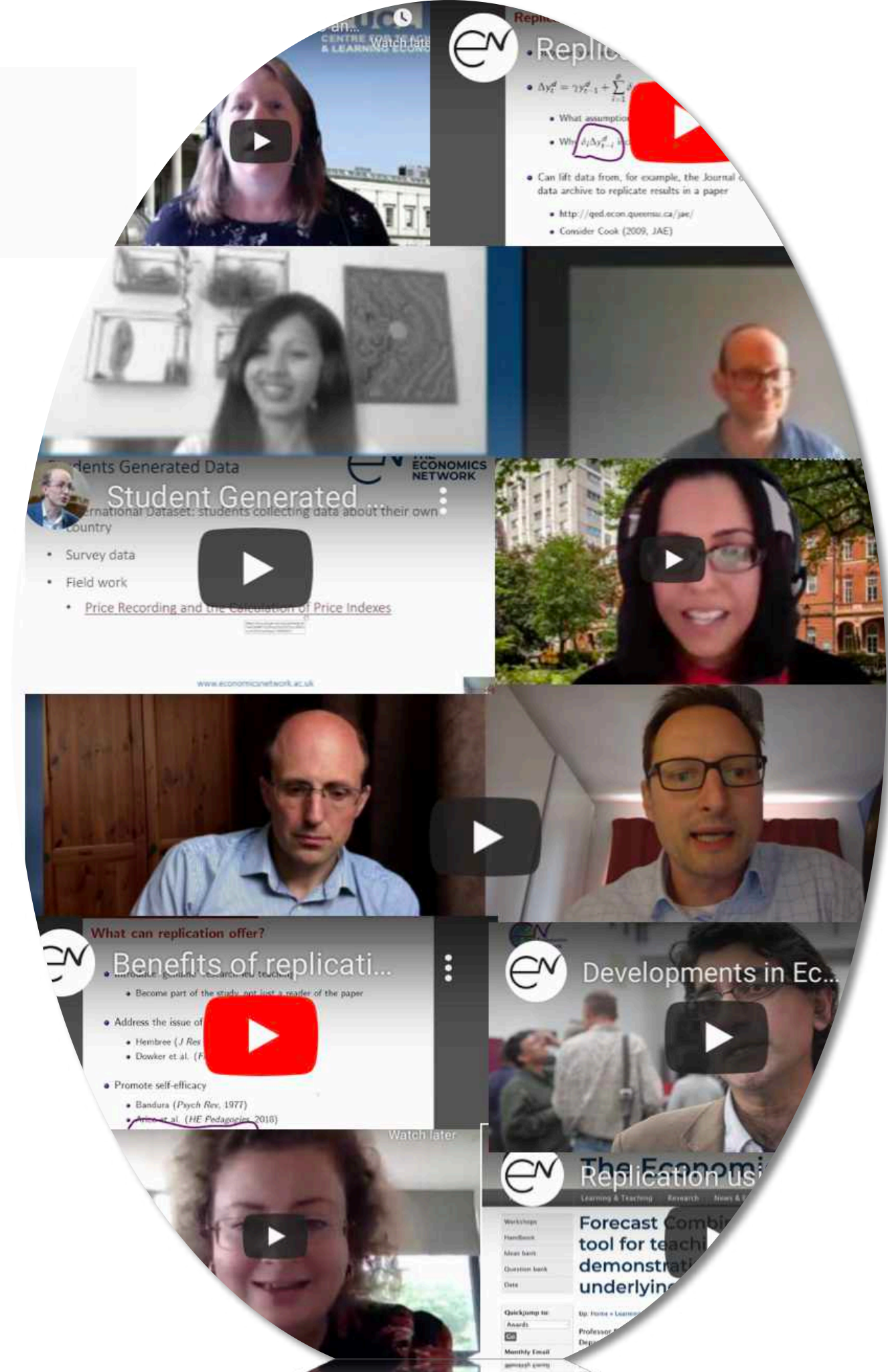
VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM 2020

THEME 4: ASSESSMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2020

During the summer 2020 and as part of the Economics Network Virtual Symposium, we run a survey on how lecturers changed exams/assessments during COVID-19 and their plans for the future.

This report shows the results of this survey.





WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY?

174 RESPONSES

Thank you to all our colleagues who filled the survey!

94% from UK universities
49% Russell Group
45% Non-Russell Group

70% from Departments of Economics
28% from Business Schools

What do they teach?

19% Mostly Macroeconomics
38% Mostly Microeconomics
18% Mostly Econometrics
25% Other

Who do they teach?

72% Mostly UG
23% Mostly PG

YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

63% ➡ 10+
23% ➡ 5 - 10
14% ➡ <5

Class sizes:

25% ➡ <50
38% ➡ 50 - 150
29% ➡ 151 - 300
9% ➡ 300+

Career Pathways

59% ➡ Research & Teaching
36% ➡ Teaching-focused

TYPE OF CONTRACT

91% ➡ PERMANENT
7% ➡ TEMPORARY

1. ASSESSMENTS BEFORE COVID-19

1.1 GENERAL PICTURE

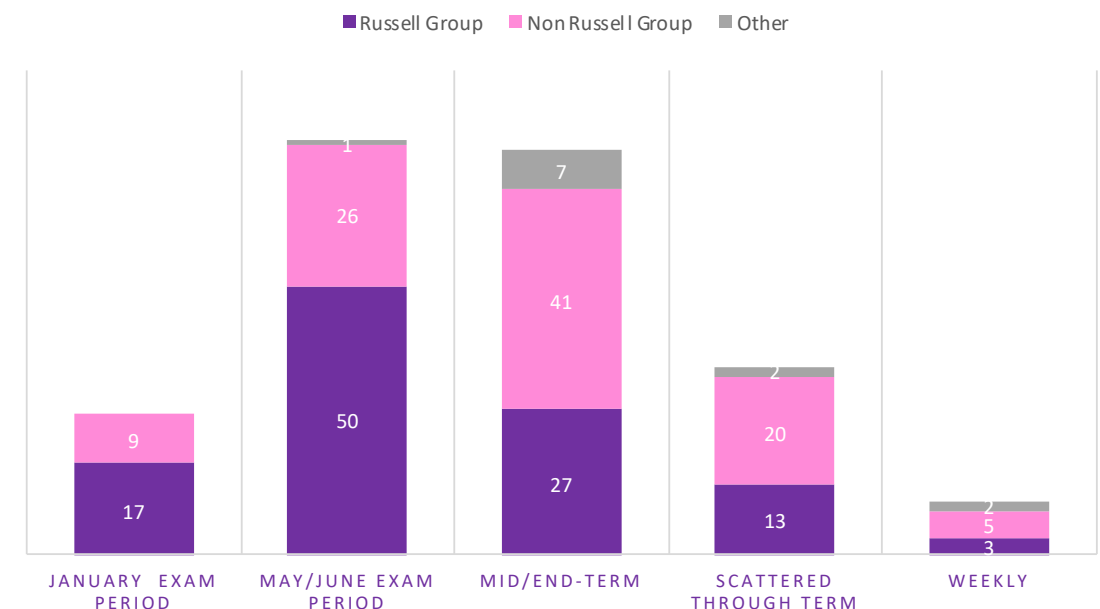
In many UK universities, May-July is assessment season. Due to COVID-19 lockdown measures, any in-person assessment had to be cancelled.

Figure 1(A) shows the responses to “*When do you tend to assess your students?*” (number of choices in vertical axis). The majority of assessments were scheduled to take place during the summer exam period or mid/end term (not all universities have a January exam session). This can give us an idea of the disruption in assessments in 2019/20. Russell group universities tend to assess more during the Summer exam season, while Non-Russell group tend to assess more mid/end term.

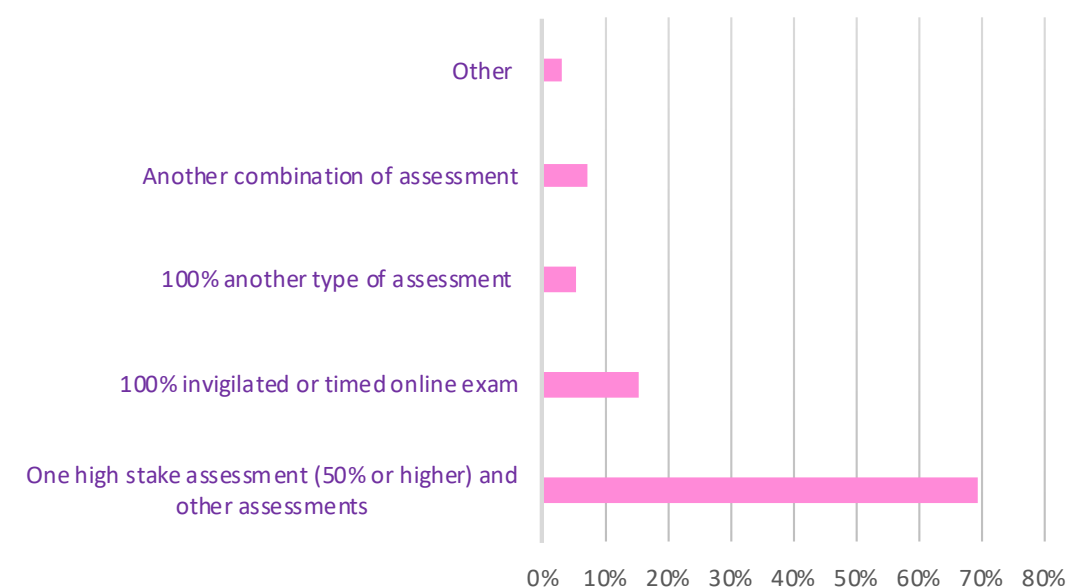
Before COVID19, most of the respondents had at least one high stake assessment (50% or more). Invigilated exams were by large the most used high stake assessment (Figure 2). There are no significant differences by class size, years of teaching experience or subject taught (Macroeconomics, Microeconomics, Econometrics).

FIGURE 1: ASSESSMENTS PRE-COVID19

(A) WHEN DO YOU ASSESS? (CHOOSE UP TO 3)



(B) ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE PRE-COVID



1.2 WHO MAKES ASSESSMENTS DECISIONS?

The use of exams as main assessment seem to be lecturers' decision. At the question "Prior to COVID19, did your Department or Institution have any restrictions or rules regarding module assessment (e.g. number of assessment components, type or timing of assessment)?", 52% of respondents said there were some restrictions, but most of these restrictions are on number of assessments, previous approval.

Figure 3 summarises the answers. There are restrictions related to student workload, when to assess (timing) and consistency across the programme. Only 4% said final exams were compulsory. 28% said there are no restrictions, and 15% didn't know.

This seems to be confirmed by answers to "In your module, who makes the assessment decisions?". 85% of respondents said they decide on assessments in their modules (either as module leaders or deciding with other lecturers).

Exams have been the default option for assessing Economics students, and for this reason the lockdown was very disruptive for all. Academics had to move to remote assessments, and students had to familiarise themselves with new methods.

**FIGURE 2: HIGH STAKE ASSESSMENTS
(CHOOSE UP TO 3)**

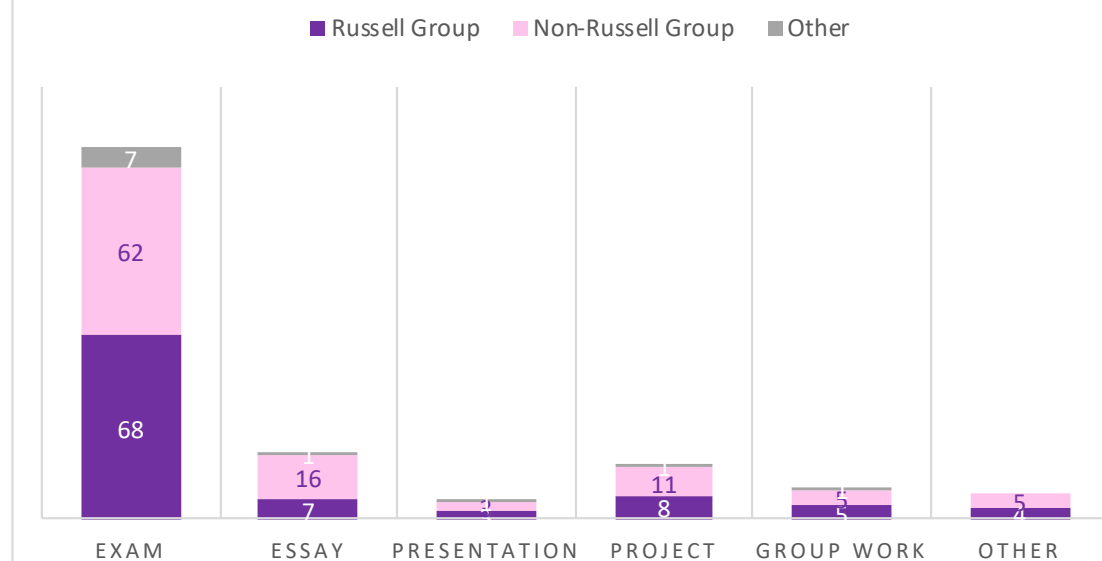
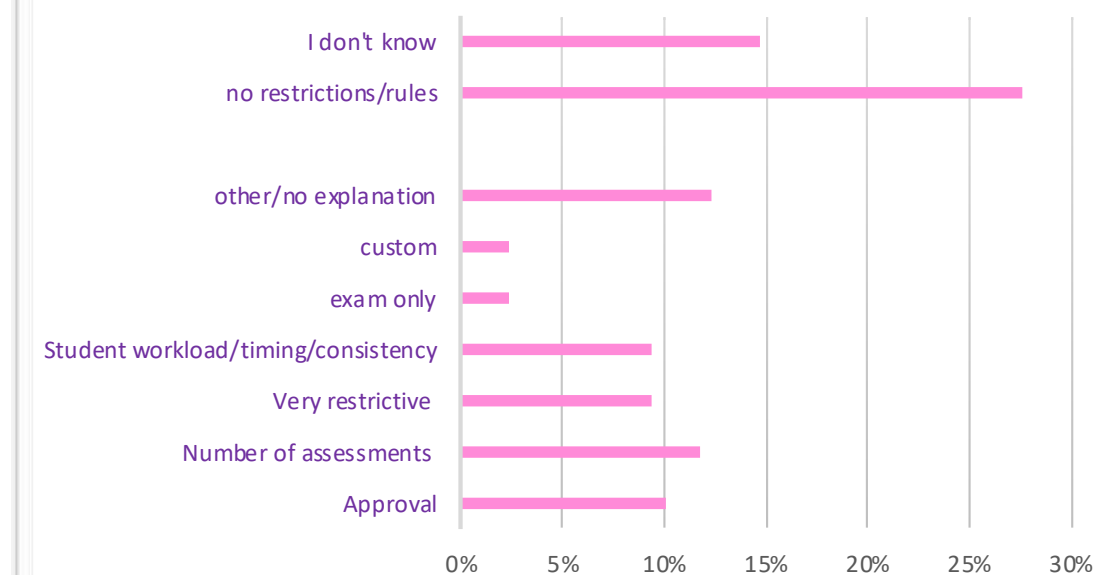


FIGURE 3: RESTRICTIONS ON ASSESSMENTS



2. ASSESSMENTS DURING COVID-19

2.1 FROM INVIGILATED TO REMOTE ASSESSMENTS

Given the dominance of assessing by exam during the Summer term, it is not a surprise that 78% of respondents had to adapt assessments to be taken remotely (16% had all their assessments taken before lockdown, 5% were on leave and 4% had their assessment cancelled).

Figure 4 shows what invigilated exams were changed to during the 2020 lockdown. Most exams were moved to 24 hours online exams, or 1-3h exams to be written over a 24h period.

Figure 5 shows the changes respondents made to exams to adapt to the new forms of assessments. 60% or respondents did make changes to previously written exams, in order to adapt these to the new scenario. Many of respondents who did not make changes explained this was due to university explicitly asking not to.

FIGURE 4: ASSESSMENTS DURING COVID

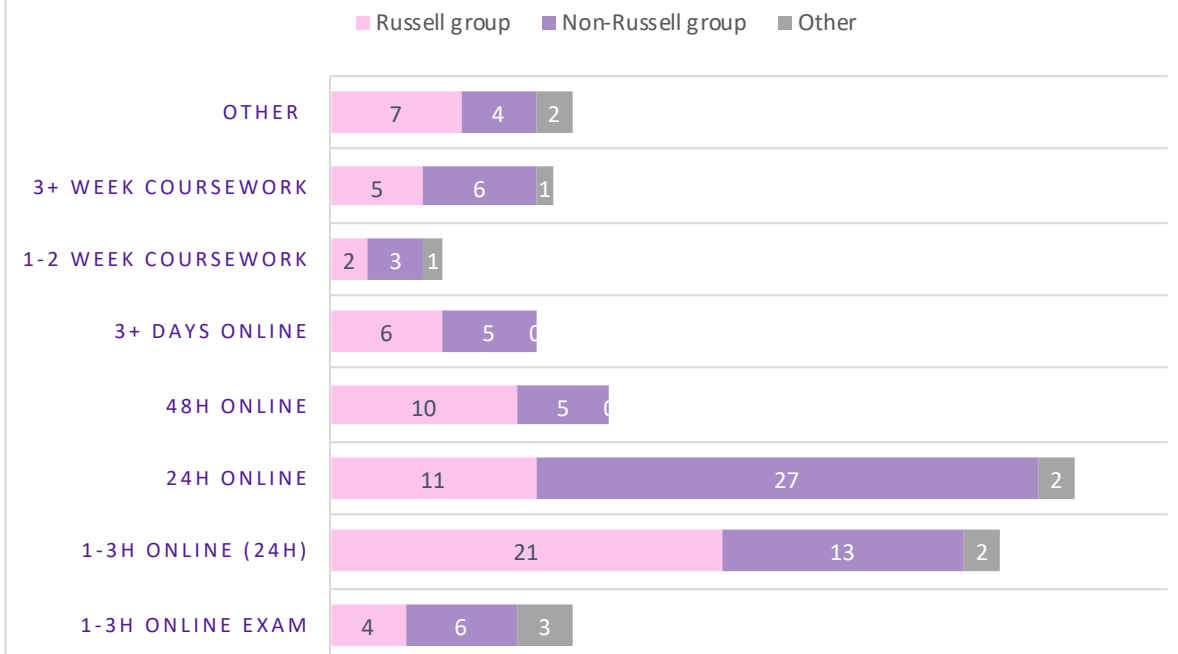
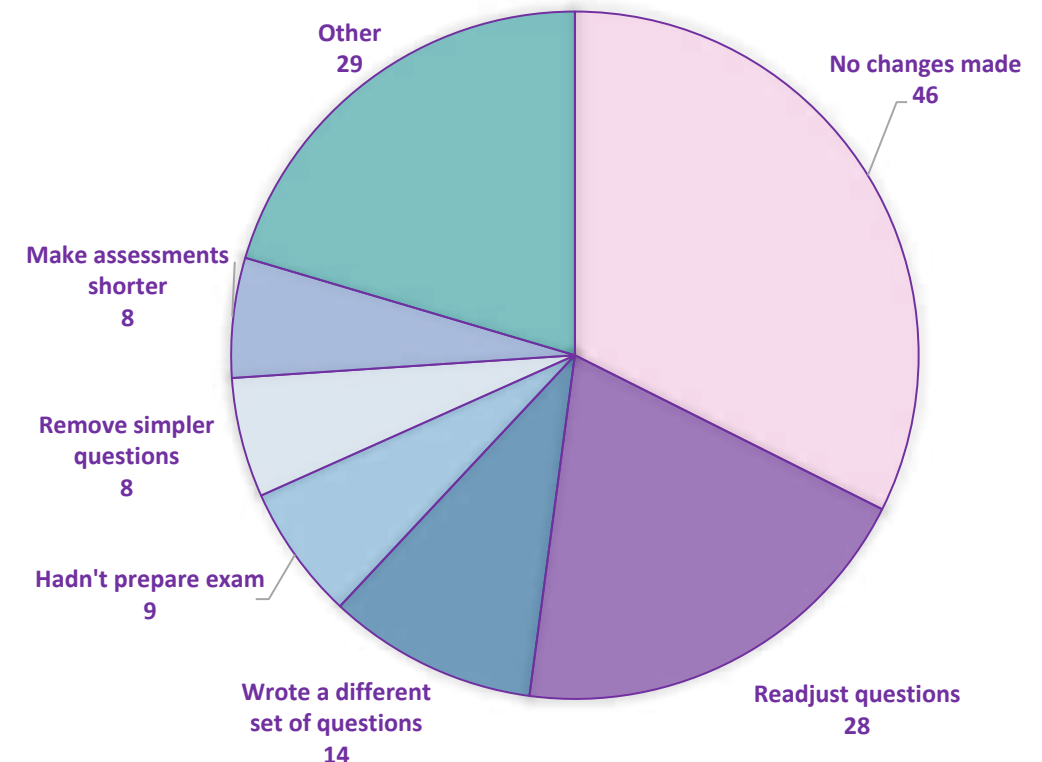


FIGURE 5: CHANGES TO EXAMS



The survey also had a question on proctoring (invigilating students while taking the exam e.g. via a webcam). 75% said their institution did not use proctoring, 19% did not know whether this was used. Only 2% said to have used it in their own assessment, and 4% said proctoring has been used in their university, but not in their own assessments.

2.2 STUDENT SUPPORT

Figure 6 shows the support offered to students to adapt to the new form of assessments. The Virtual Learning Environments (e.g. Moodle. Blackboard) were widely used to communicate the changes. In addition, many provided extra time to respond student queries through live sessions, discussion forum, additional office hours and answering emails (as commented under “other”). Mock assessments were also offered, and few offered the possibility to test the IT system to be used to submit exams (as commented under “other”).

Finally, most universities offered safety nets. These were policies aimed to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by unfamiliar and new type of assessments or any other personal circumstances arising due to the pandemic. 89% of respondents said that there was a safety net in place in their universities (8% did not know).

Figure 7 shows that poor academic practice was one of the main concerns for lecturers when redesigning assessments. Setting the right level of questions and adapting to the new technological issues was also worrying.

FIGURE 6: ASSESSMENT SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

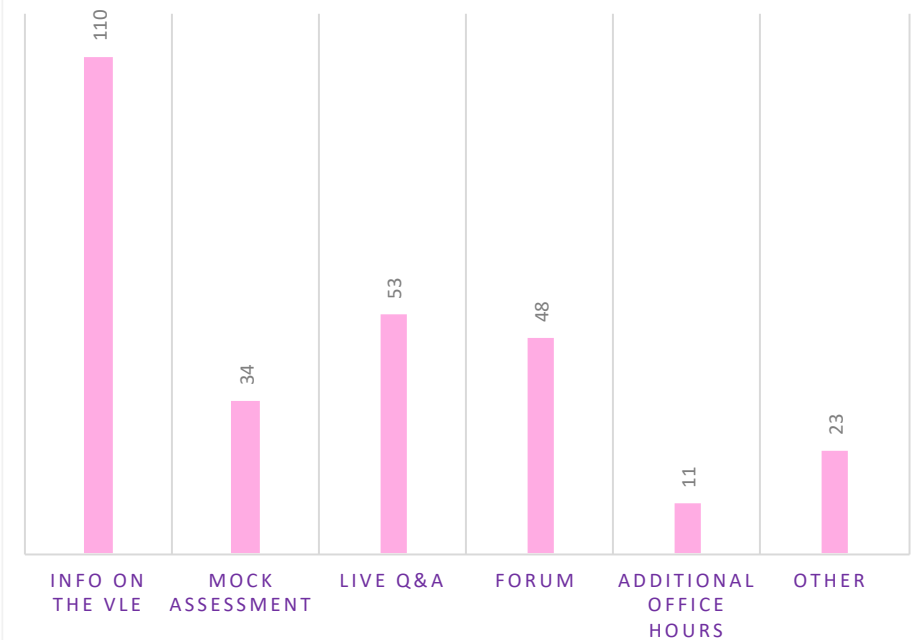
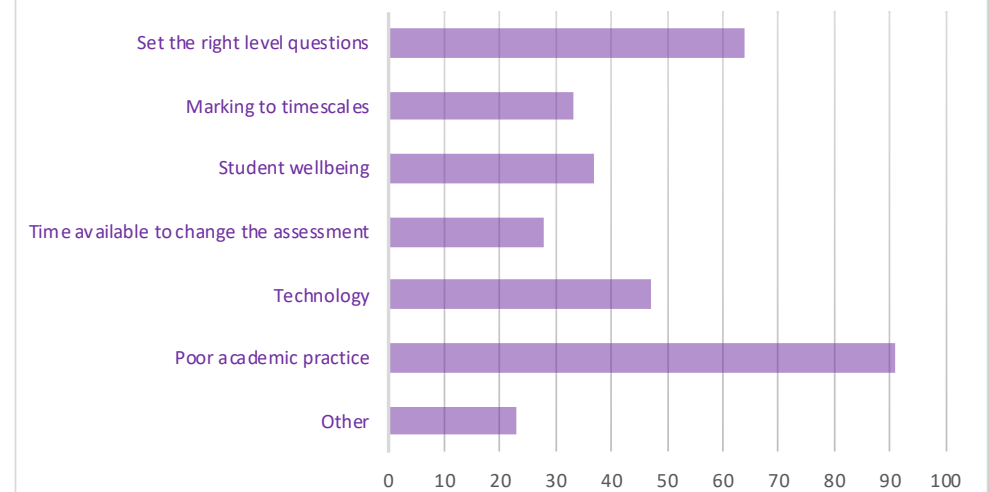


FIGURE 7: CONCERNS WHEN SHIFTING TO REMOTE ASSESSMENTS



2.3 ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

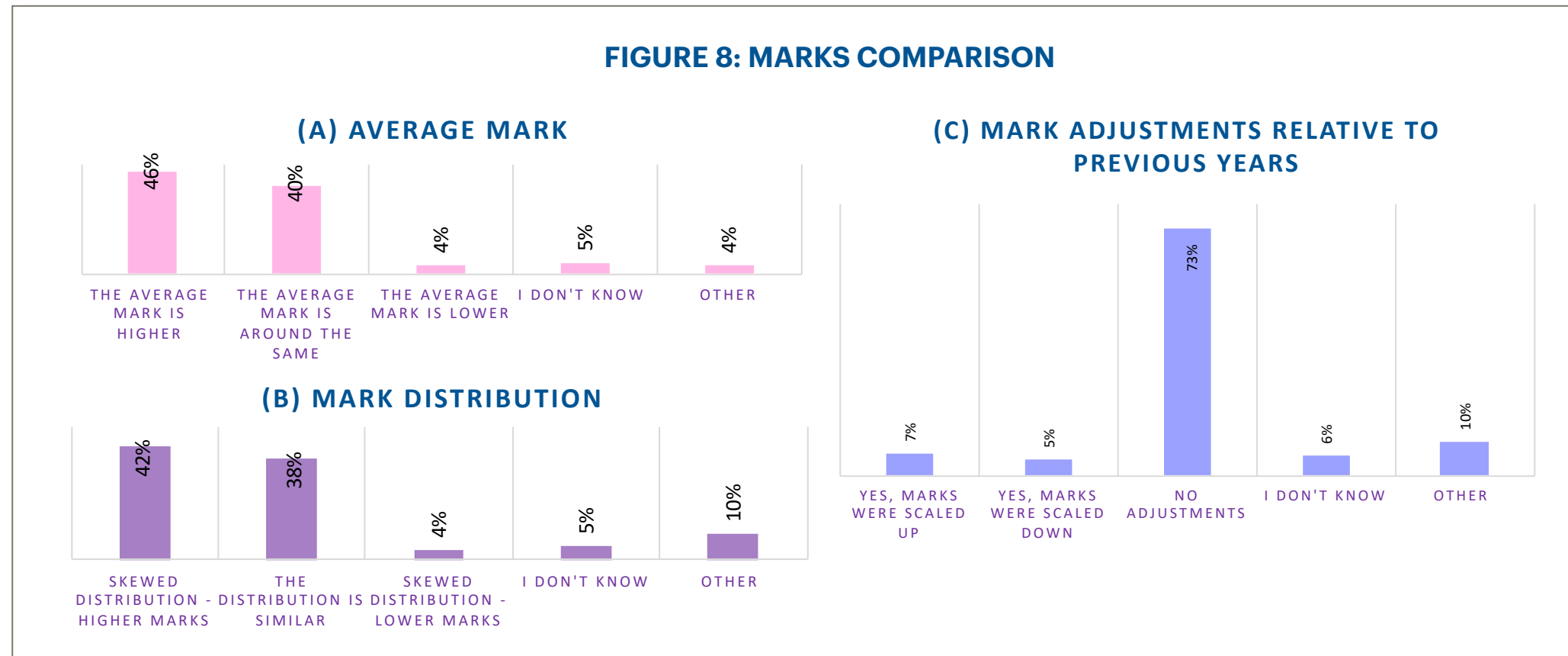


Figure 8 summarises the results of the questions related to how students performed in the remote assessments. 46% of respondents said the average mark seem to be higher compared to previous years, and 42% consider the distribution to be skewed towards higher marks. 40% said that the marks were around the same and 38% said there is a similar distribution. 4% said the average mark was lower. 73% said that no extra adjustments were made to the marks (beside those normally made during moderation).

3. WHAT NEXT?

3.1 ASSESSMENTS IN 2020/21

Before this academic year, the exam structure Next academic year will also be affected by the pandemic and potential lockdown measures. Many universities have already announced online assessments. 53.5% of respondents said at least some assessments will be online, with 34% said they will have only online assessments in 2020/21 (Figure 9).

Lecturers are now rethinking the assessment structure for next academic year. Figure 10 shows that only 40% of the respondents will try to replicate the same assessment structure in place before the COVID19 disruption. 42% will change assessments: 14% will introduce new assessments for students to take during the term, 10% will use this year's experience and replicate the assessments used. 15% will reduce the weight of the high stake assessment.

FIGURE 9: ASSESSMENTS NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR

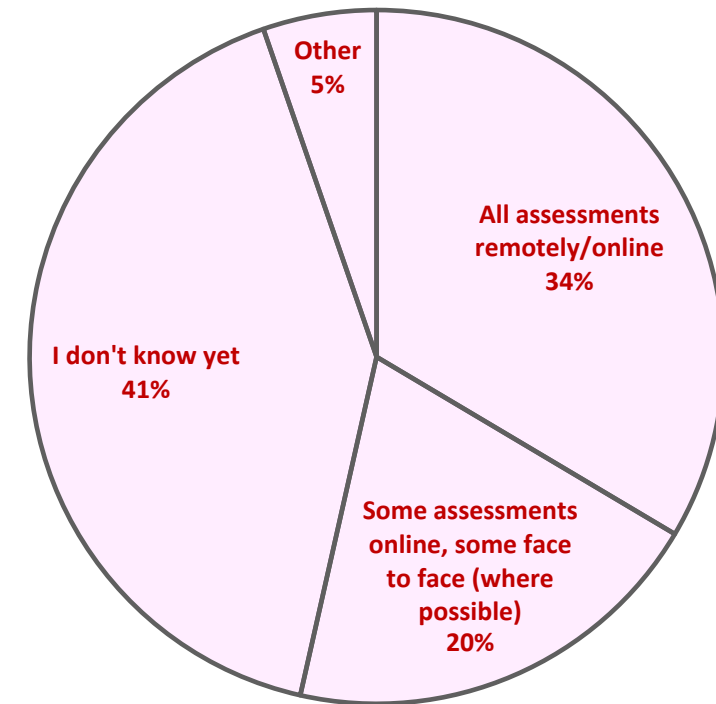


FIGURE 10: ASSESSMENT STRUCTURE AFTER COVID19

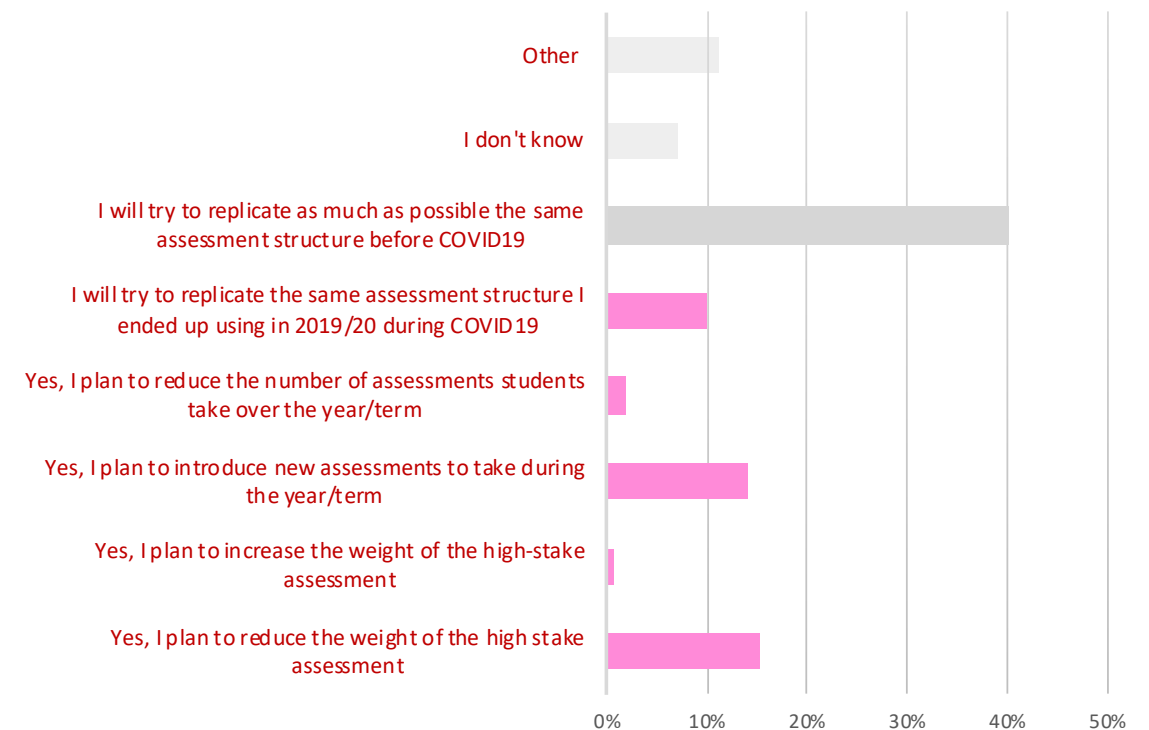
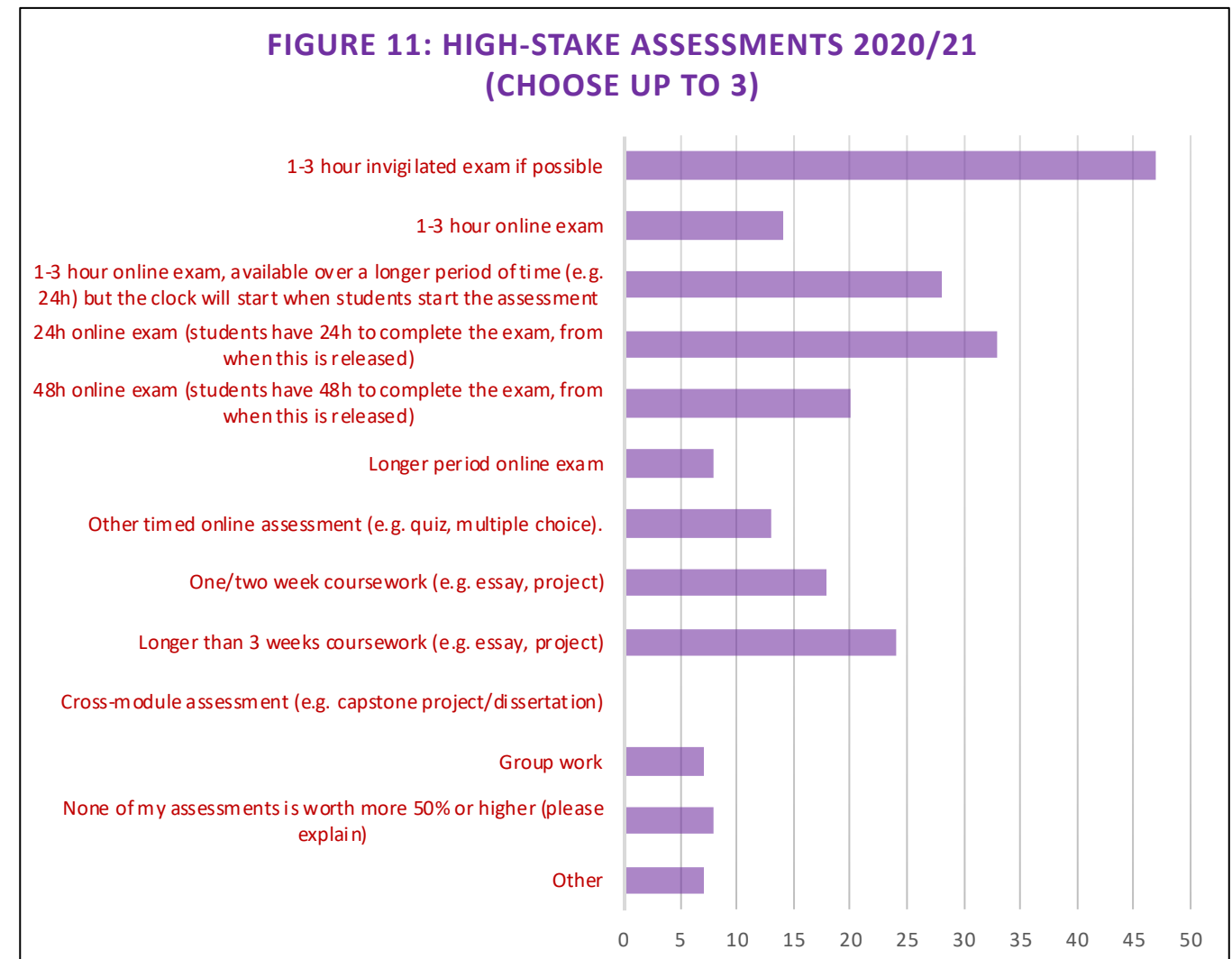


Figure 11 shows the choices for high-stake assessments next academic year. Exams are still very popular choices: 47 chose 1-3h invigilated exams (if possible), 42 selected 1-3h online exams fixed or available over 24 hours. Other remote exams were also popular with 74 respondents choosing 24/48h exams or longer period online exams and other timed-assessments. Essay/projects and longer period courseworks were less popular with 42 respondents selecting these as high-stake assessments for next academic year.

Group work is not a popular choice for high-stake assessment, and none of the respondents opted for assessing more than one module (via capstone projects or dissertations).

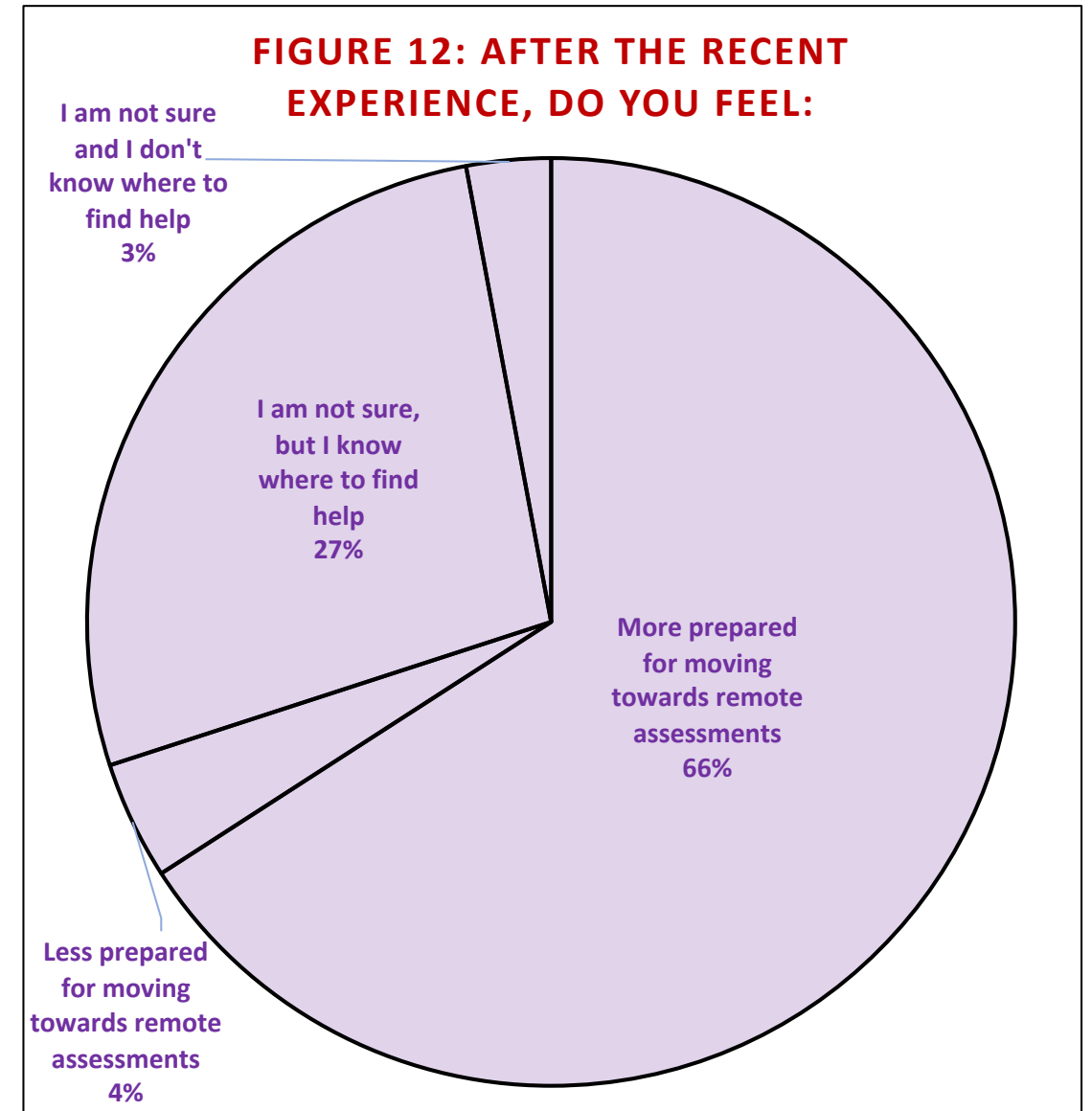
Overall, COVID has disrupted the way we design assessments in Economics, but the methods of assessments are still very similar to what they were before.



3.2 ARE WE PREPARED FOR NEXT YEAR?

We had to act fast in 2019/20 and this experience seems to have prepared lecturers for the coming year. 66% of respondents said they feel more prepared for moving towards remote assessments, 27% are not sure but know where to find help. Only 7% feel less prepared or do not know where to find help.

74% said that there are things they will carry forward even after we go back to full face to face teaching, and a similar proportion had attended teaching seminars either organised by their own institutions or external institutions (e.g. the Economics Network).



Anything you will carry forward/keep doing even after we go back to full face-to-face teaching?

YES - 74%

NO - 26%

Have you attended any teaching seminars/etc after March 2020?

YES - 70%

NO - 30%

