National Economics Students Survey 2010 Report

Contents

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the departments that agreed to their students participating in the survey and which forwarded our email to them. We would like to thank all the students who took part in the survey and gave their time to complete the questionnaire.

We would also like to thank Brooke Storer, who helped us with the qualitative data analyses.

Dr. Inna Pomorina prepared this report with the support of the whole Economics Network team.

Executive summary

In 2009-10, the Economics Network of the Higher Education Academy carried out its fifth 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 2008 survey were used with an additional question on the ways students value and use resources from the websites developed by the Economics Network: http://www.whystudyeconomics.ac.uk and http://www.studyingeconomics.ac.uk

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 were used in running departmental and national workshops and students' focus groups as well as to inform curricula development in the departments.

Profile of survey respondents

More than 2,050 students from 67 departments took part in the survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Of the respondents:

- 55.7% were male and 44.3% were female;
- 80.7% started their courses under the age of 21;
- 66.3% stated that English is their first language;
- 72.1% have A-level Maths;
- 60.3% have A-level Economics;
- 82.5% stated that Economics was their first choice.

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 levels are discussed. Changes in the students' responses during 2006, 2008 and 2010 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, as well as "word clouds" images.

Responses to individual questions

In many ways results of the survey were similar to the 2008 findings but there were some noticeable changes: more then every 4 out of 5 respondents were making use of Virtual Learning Environment (VLEs); more students were experiencing interactive forms of seminars/tutorials/classes, such as games and simulations and

more were taking part in group-work projects; teaching of Maths and Stats was improving.

Previous learning experience

Before starting on their current course 70.0% of respondents studied in the UK (which is less than in the 2008 - 73.0%). Those new to the UK are mostly from China, Germany, Lithuania, France, Poland, Malaysia and the Singapore (in descending order). Students mention the good reputation of UK universities, the high quality of education, the country itself and the English language, as well as career opportunities linked to study in the UK, as the strongest factors in their decision to study in the UK.

Comparing their current course with their previous learning experience, two-thirds of the respondents (more than in 2008) found contact with lecturers to be either different or very different; more than half found teaching methods, student support, e-learning and the use of IT to be different or very different; and less than a third found assessment to be different or very different.

Similar to the 2008 survey results, responses about previous learning experiences differed between those who previously studied 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.

Two thirds of the respondents felt that they were adequately prepared for their degree course, which is more then in the 2008 survey; and studying on it has met expectations for three-quarters of students.

Maths and Stats

The number of students who found teaching of maths and stats *Good* has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 51.2%-52.4%-54.1%. At the same time still one in seven regard it as not very good or poor. The number of students, who found the content of the degree to be largely relevant to the real world, has been increasing during 2006-2008-2010: 66.8%-69.3%-71.7%. The number of students, who found the workload about right, has been fluctuating during 2006-2008-2010: 66.1%-64.9%-67.8%.

Teaching and assessment

When asked how their course differs from their expectations, students mentioned the course content and its relevance to the real world, the level of teaching and the pace of the course.

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they found different types of teaching in supporting their learning.

The following trends can be identified during 2006-2008-2010: the number of students who find the following as either useful or very useful:

- has been decreasing during those years for: lectures, assigned reading, other reading, essays;
- has been increasing during those years for: small classes and seminars, lecturers office hours, set preparatory work, online learning using the web, online learning using Economics software, online questions and sets, materials posted on VLEs, communication tools, preparing for exams;

- has been stable or fluctuating during those years: group work projects, feedback on submitted work, working informally with other students.

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, 75.2% rarely or never have them. Nearly half rarely or never have individual student presentations. In both cases, however, more students experienced these activities than in 2006 and 2008.

Nearly seven out of ten respondents found that the assessment on their degree accurately tests the level of their knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes. 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 respondents rarely or never experienced included: essays done in class (82.0%), online assessment (61.9%) and group-work projects (43.3%). It must be noted that use of these types of assessment has increased since 2006.

More than every four out of five respondents were on a course that makes use of a VLE - 80.1% compared to 73.7% in 2008. Almost all respondents' comments described VLEs positively, although some complained that they were underused.

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their degree course.

Students' comments to open-ended questions

- *Best aspects of the course:* the quality of teaching, career opportunities and future prospects, small classes and tutorials, the choices of modules and content of the course, and the resources available to support learning.
- *Most useful seminar activities:* group exercises, pre-prepared problem sets and worksheets, mini-lectures, presentations and discussions, and working in small groups.
- *Ways to improve seminar activities:* by making them more interactive, improving content and teaching quality, having more time in general for seminars.
- *Ways to improve teaching Maths and Stats:* by improving teaching, less presumption of prior knowledge, by increasing number of workshop-style classes and tutorials, slower pace of teaching.
- *Ways to improve assessment:* more frequent and continuous assessment, more coursework to help them evaluate their progress, more written and explicit feedback.
- *Economics software and its usefulness:* 22.3% said that they did not use any software, or were not aware of doing so. Software identified by respondents include: Stata, EViews, Microfit, SPSS, WinEcon and Minitab.
- *Effectiveness of VLEs:* majority found them very effective and in some cases vital to their learning experience, although some did suggest more consistency in usage.
- *Their future career:* the majority aspire towards a finance-related career, while others said they wish to enter business, economics, government or academia.

- *Skills they developed:* were mainly divided between academic, interpersonal and practical.
- *Aspects of the course that they don't like:* largest group of students liked everything about their course; some identified teaching quality or certain lecturers and/or tutors, the content and structure of the course, assessment processes, workload and the resources available.
- *Aspects that could be improved:* quality of teaching, particularly of Maths; assessments, seminars and classes; connection to the real world and resources.
- *How the course has changed them:* answers to this question were overwhelmingly positive covering knowledge gained, career goals, personal changes and changes to how to they viewed or understood the world around them.
- *In five years' time:* answers reflected the responses to the career question: working in the banking or financial sector, running their own companies or working in a business-related occupation, pursuing further study.
- *Any other comments*: very positive – most comments were about how they enjoyed the course or appreciated the opportunity to participate in the survey.

Conclusions

As in the previous surveys, we were impressed by the maturity of students' comments and by their awareness of teaching and learning issues in economics. Finding out about their previous learning experience has allowed us to provide better support to new students through our two websites *WhyStudyEconomics.ac.uk*, for prospective students of economics, and *StudyingEconomics.ac.uk*, for undergraduates, as well as develop new resources for lecturers teaching international students.

Comparing results with previous years' has allowed 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 changes.

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 has conducted its fifth national online Economics student's survey in November 2009 - February 2010. The results of the Students Survey provide us with an inside view of 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 students focus groups to clarify some issues

from NSS and Economics Network surveys, followed by workshops in the areas of teaching that students have identified as in need of improvement.

Questions from our previous 2008 survey were used with an extra one added on the students' awareness of the websites run by the Economics Network to prospective and current students *Why study economics?* and *Studying economics* .

More than 2,050 students from 67 departments took part in the survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Some of departments, due to other commitments, restricted participation to first and second year students. There is a big discrepancy in the number of replies from different departments, ranging from 123 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 spent at university and either to rate their agreement or disagreement on a five- or three-point scale with various statements regarding their learning experiences or to answer an 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 email addresses to participate in the prize draw and duplicate entries were excluded.

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.

One of the main values of the survey lies in the long term, as the findings were compared to the results of 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. 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

In the 2009/10 Survey 2,056 economics students took part. These were full-time Economics students (1,854 undergraduates and 202 postgraduates) studying at the 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 2008/09 (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, 44.3% were female (Figure 1), which is similar to 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 (8) that females are more likely than males to answer questionnaires.

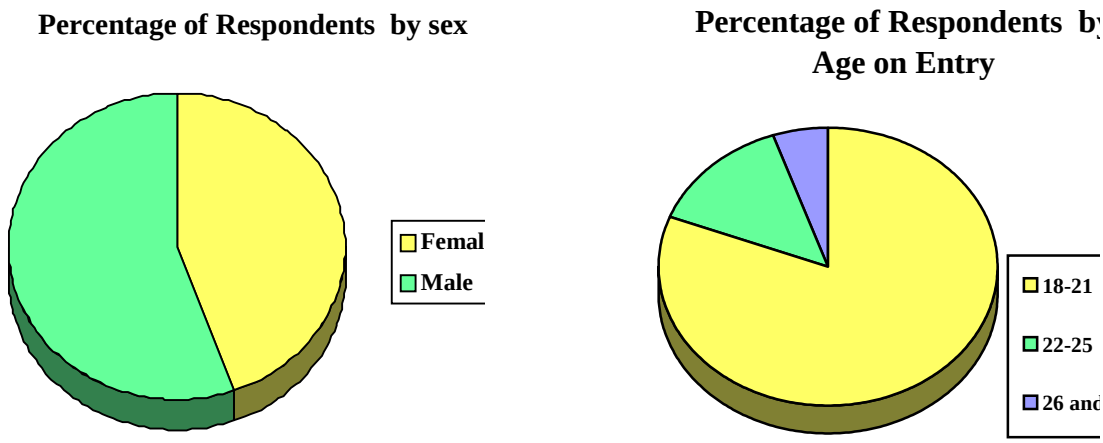


Figure 1 Characteristics of respondents: sex and age on degree entry

More then 80% of survey participants were under the age of 21, similar to the proportion in the general population of Economics graduates (Figure 1). There were 14% in the 22-25 age group and 5.3% were older than 26, which is similar to the 2006 and 2008 surveys results. Age is a statistically significant factor in respondents' replies to many questions, which is discussed later in the report.

A question of year/level was included in the survey. Among the respondents, 36.8% stated that they were in their first year, 28.7% in the second, 18.2% in the third, 6.4% in the fourth and 9.8% were postgraduates. In our first two surveys of 2002 and 2004 (before the NSS) students were nearly equally divided between the years of undergraduate study. Since introduction of the NSS in 2005, some departments agreed to distribute survey among their first and second year students only, hence the larger number of replies from those years.

We included the question of English as first language in the survey, as it was an important variable that influences students' experiences of studying Economics. We also included a question about educational background, as this is another potential

variable, which may differ from language itself. Among all the respondents English was a first language for 66.3%, which was 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), 63.1% of Economics students come from the UK and majority of them have English as their first language.

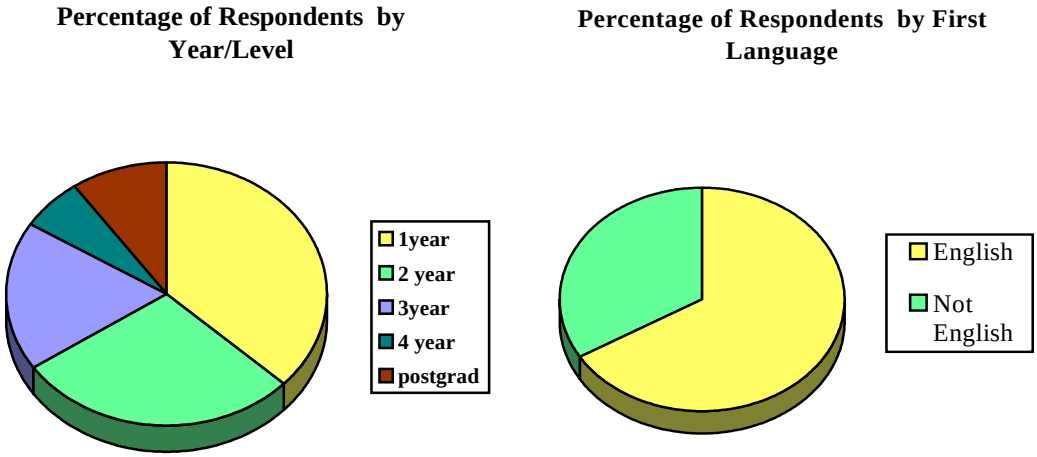
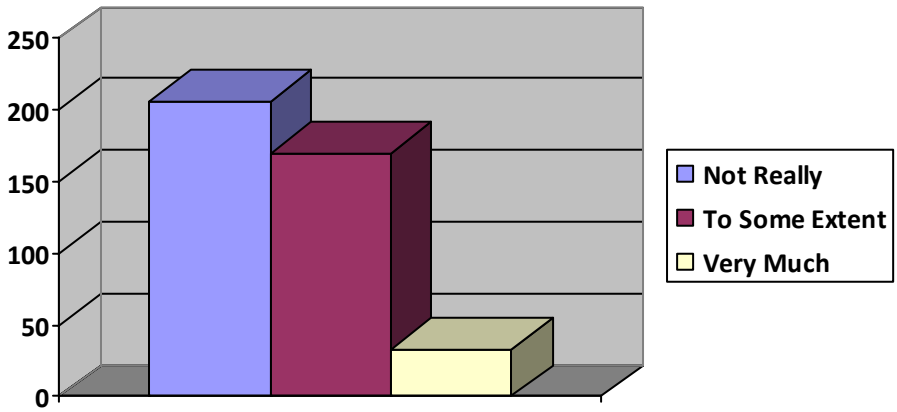


Figure 2 Characteristics of respondents: year/level and first language

This year we also asked students who were not native English speakers, how language affected their learning. Of the students who answered this question, the majority felt that English as their second language did not impact greatly on their learning; while a slightly lower amount 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.

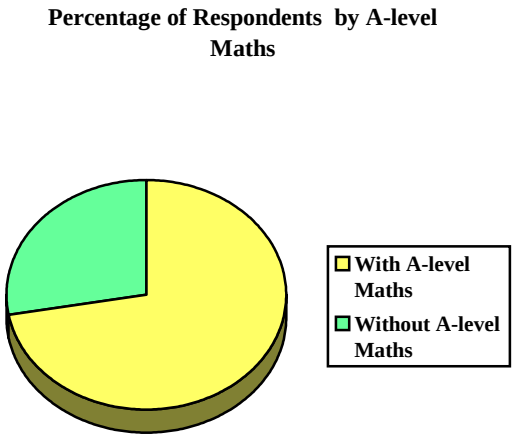
A majority of 54.3% said that it has not really affected them, while 5.3% said that they were very much affected and 40.4% said that it affected them in some way. The majority of the comments were by those who were either not affected or affected in some way:

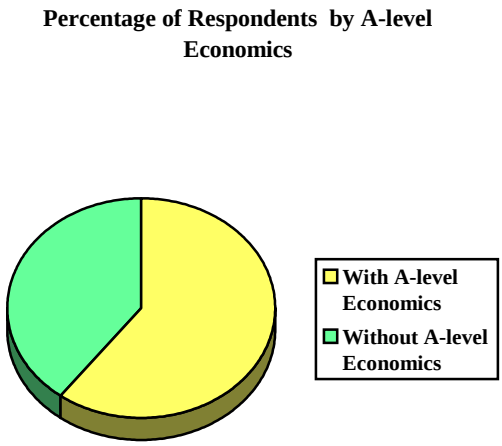
"It makes me hate reading and writing at most time as they are both my weakest aspects in learning so usually I will not choose some courses which are essay writing but no exams! So it does affect my studying to some extent."
"It has affected my learning style as I believe I research the meaning of things more as that would be what I wouldn't understand, but it hasn't affected me that much as not being able to learn."
"Sometimes you take longer to learn or read certain things as English is not your first language. However after the first year at uni it gets far better."
"In the first months I was struggling - at first only in the Maths module, since certain ways of writing differ between nations."
"Bilingual with French. Studying A-level economics in French meant I had to translate a lot of the vocabulary."

Some students commented on difficulty in writing essays - "*essay writing during the first year was a little difficult*" - that may be taken into consideration by departments when providing additional support for students who are not English native speakers.

Other factors that should be taken into consideration include whether students have taken A-levels at school in Mathematics and/or Economics and whether taking this course was their first choice (see Figure 3).

The results were as follows: among all the respondents, 72.1% had an A-level in Maths, while 60.3% had an A-level in Economics (similar to previous surveys). As for the choice of degree, 82.5% stated that Economics was their first choice (it was slightly lower in previous surveys).





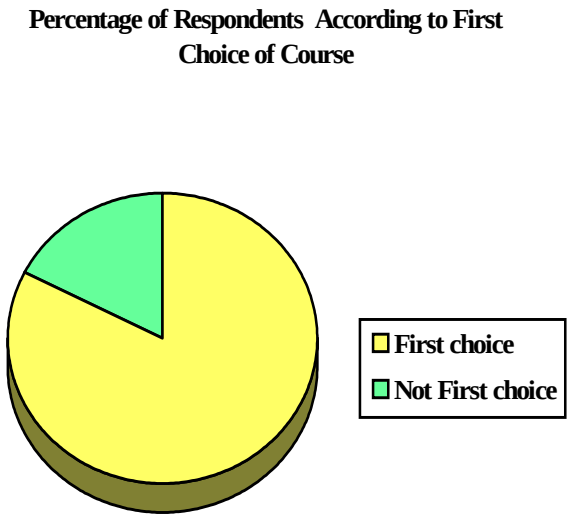


Figure 3 Characteristics of respondents: qualifications and choice of course

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

We have also not 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.

Economics Network support for students

In the survey we ask students if they were aware of the websites run by Economics Network for prospective and current students http://whystudyeconomics.ac.uk and http://www.studyingeconomics.ac.uk . Only one in six respondents was aware of the sites, but they were all very positive about the resources available from them. Among the comments:

"Well structured, clear and user friendly."

"Within a short time of surfing this site, I found myself thrilled with the wealth of information and resource available there and it's a must visit for every economics student. I'm in love with the good job."

"I thought the why study economics website was very useful and the students personal views inspired me to choose an economics undergraduate degree."

"Amazing!!! I should have found it!"

"Looks good, will be forwarding the link to my course mates."

"Thanks for making me aware of these sites."

Students' overall assessment

Our respondents were dominantly male, aged from 18 to 21, with A-levels in Maths and Economics, with English as their first language and Economics being their first choice of course. Every 7 out of 10 respondents have previously studied in the UK. Comparing their current course with previous learning experiences, respondents mention independent learning, larger groups, less interaction and less contact time. Two thirds of the respondents felt that they were adequately prepared for their degree

course, which is more than felt so in the 2008 survey. Studying this degree course has met expectations for more than three-quarters of respondents. When asked how the course differs from their expectations, students mentioned course content and its relevance to the real world, level of Maths, quality of teaching and contact time.

Respondents were asked to indicate how useful they found different types of teaching in supporting their learning. More than half rated as useful and very useful: lectures; small classes and seminars; assigned reading; materials posted by lecturers on the course's Virtual Learning Environment (VLEs); feedback on submitted work; working informally with other students; and preparing for exams and tests. The less-used learning activities, that more than a third of respondents had not encountered, included workshops or classes (of over 25 students), group work projects, online learning using economics software, online questions and tests (not assessed), and communication tools in the course VLE.

In seminars/tutorials/small classes, a vast majority go through pre-prepared problem sets or worksheets. At the same time about three-quarters rarely or never have games, simulations or role-play in seminars, and nearly half rarely or never have individual student presentations.

More than half of the respondents found the teaching of Maths and Stats on their course very good and mostly good, though about a third of them responded that some is good and some not so good.

The majority of respondents found the content of the degree largely relevant to the real world and the workload about right. Likewise, the majority found that the assessment on their degree accurately tests the level of their knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes. Respondents reported that they are frequently assessed by doing essays in their own time, while the following are rarely or never used: essays done in class (82.0%), online assessment (61.9%) and group work projects (43.3%).

More then 4 out of 5 of respondents (80.1%) study on a course that makes use of a VLE. Almost all their comments either described VLEs positively or complained that they are underused.

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their degree course.

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 the course. Relationships that are statistically significant at the 0.05 levels 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 analyses using N-Vivo software. (We are grateful to Brooke Storer for her help 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".

Section 2: About your previous learning experience

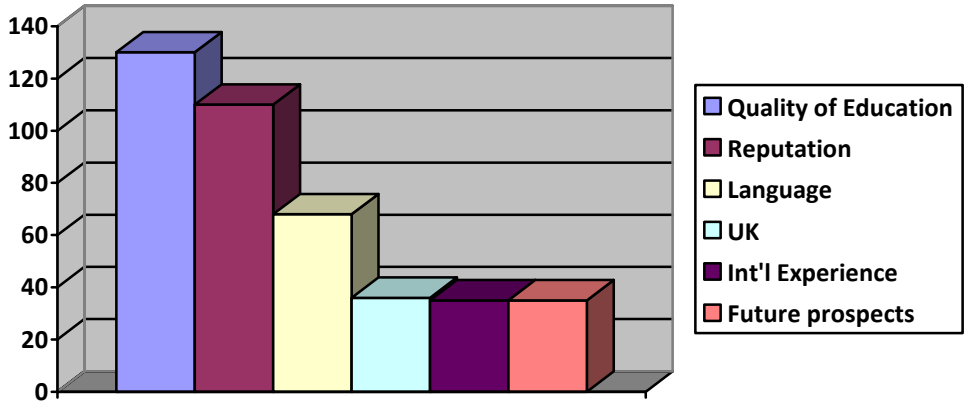
Q13. Before starting on this course did you study in the UK?

Every seven out of ten respondents before starting their university course studied in the UK, which is less then it was in the 2008 - 73.0%.

Q13.a) If No, Where did you study?

The majority of students who answered this question came from Europe (54%), with the highest numbers coming from Germany, Lithuania, Poland and France. Other European countries included Spain, Sweden, Romania, Norway, Italy, Greece, Ireland, the Czech Republic and Belgium. There were significant numbers of students from Asia (21%), primarily China and India, as well as Africa (7%) and North America (6%).

Q13.a) i) If No, what factors were the strongest in your decision to come to the UK?



There were 532 coded responses to this question. The main themes emerging from these responses were: the quality of education in the UK, the reputation of UK universities; exposure to the English language; a desire to be in the UK itself; opportunities for international experience and interactions; and career opportunities thought to be linked to study in the UK.

The quality of education was by far the most repeated interest in coming to the UK and was often intertwined with the reputations of its institutions. Some typical reasons given:

"UK has the stringent quality of teaching and strong academic background"
"Because UK is regarded as one of the best country in the world for education"
"Excellent academic quality of universities in the UK."

The reputation of the UK educational system and its specific universities also played a large role in determining students' choices: *"Reputation of the education system"; "Reputation of British universities"; "prestige of school"; "Quality of education, its recognition on international level"; "World class reputation and leading department of economics."*

Many students claimed that it was the exposure to the English language and the opportunities for improving their language skills that brought them to the UK:

"Learning the language."

"The opportunity to finally study all courses in English (even though my first language is not English I am better at English than I am in Dutch). On top of that the English teaching method works better for me."

"Because of the language, English is a world spoken language. Could arouse far more job opportunities."

"Better studying in English than French or German for a Economics degree I think."

There were also significant responses to interests in spending more time in the UK itself and to gaining more international experience. Reasons for the former: *"being half English"; "I had lived in the UK for two years prior to the start of my course "; "I chose England because I was so keen on British culture*." Students who cited the latter reason claimed that they *"wanted international exposure"*, wanted to *"experience a different education system and culture"* and one wrote that *"I wanted to know something new and want to be independent, so I came to the UK."*

Finally, future prospects and career opportunities were cited as a major reason determining choices to study in the UK. Typical responses were:

"UK is the home for Industrial Revolution and has a very mature financial market, which is good for my study and potential job career after graduation."

"High availability of jobs for graduates."

"because of higher prospects to get a job."

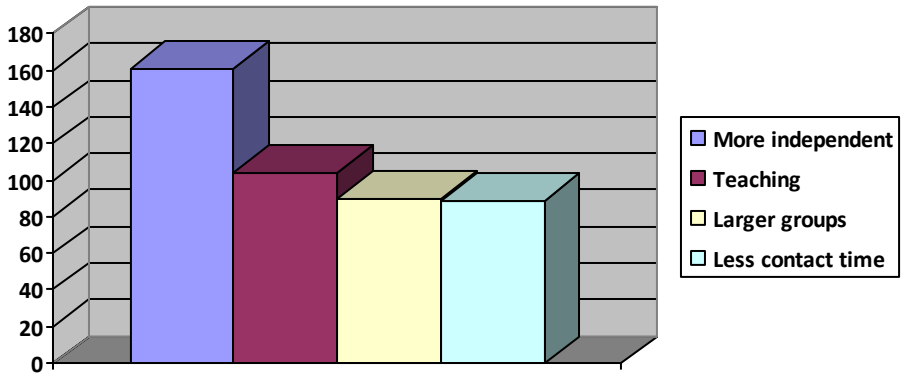
Q14. How does studying on your current course differ from your previous learning experience?

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 sections.

Q14.a) Teaching method

Quantitative results were similar to the previous 2008 survey results. For the majority of respondents (57.0%) teaching method was different and very different in the university, than the one they were used to before. Only one in seven saw it as a similar or very similar experience – with the rest (28.0%) saying that some aspects were similar, and some different.

We asked respondents to provide details to their answers.



There were 514 coded responses to this question. Answers were incredibly varied, covering a range of issues: pace, style and content of teaching; measuring the difficulty level against previous learning experiences; aspects of independence, interaction and creativity within the learning experience. There were, however, several themes which emerged consistently across the widest range of answers: that the learning style is more independent than previous experiences; that the teaching methods and approaches are different (sometimes better, sometimes worse); that the class sizes are much larger; and that students have less contact and interaction with their teachers at universities than they had previously.

Regarding the independent learning style, students commented:

"Compared to A Level, I find my learning is much more independent."

"It is a lot more independent and it is more like teaching yourself and attending lectures and then reading up further."

"In UK, lecturer always show the theories and leave the questions to us to solve by ourselves. But in China, students always solve the problems by following the teachers."

With regards to teaching, students' comments reflected feelings that teaching at university is less active and guided as previous experiences, as well as less personal: *"Not so much teaching now as lecturing!" "Lecturers seem to be more passive in their teaching approach at this level"; "Teaching is less personal, for example tutors and lecturers have no interest in familiarising themselves with students names or learning styles."* However, not all students saw this as a negative thing, with some writing: *"Learning is far more focused upon reading and self-teaching than previously, with supervisions and lectures providing a structure for the course"* and *"More studying on my own, I need to get involved in everything that I'm doing, which is good because that makes me realize what I want to do in the future."*

Students also discussed adjustments to lecture-style learning. Most comments addressed the change in class size dictated by lectures:

"Before just small classes, now very large groups."

"Always been in a classroom with an attentive teacher, going from that closed environment to lecture halls with 200+ students was a very different concept."

"At school we would learn in small classes, vastly different to large lectures or one to one tutorials with tutors."

A lack of personal touch or interaction was attributed to the lack of contact time with teachers by some:

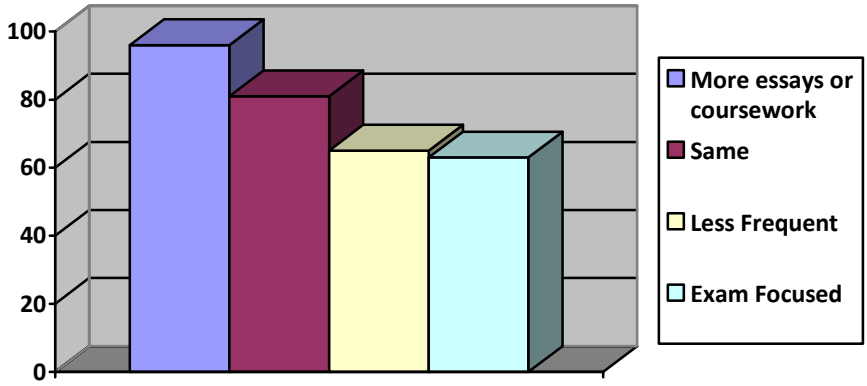
"As I came from school, I had direct contact daily with all my subject teachers, and so everything was much more personal, which also made things easier if I ever needed help."

Other representative comments included:

"A lot less interaction between staff and pupils."
"Less contact time and no real relationship to the teachers."
"Very impersonal at university, you have to seek help rather than help being given to you, but this is fair enough."

Q14.b) Assessment

As for the assessment, less than a third of respondents (32.6%) found it similar or very similar to their previous experience, which is just slightly less than in the 2008 survey. 38.3% of respondents found it different and very different, slightly more than in 2008. Respondents provided details to their answers.



There were 394 coded responses to this question. The major themes that emerged related to coursework, the less frequent nature of assessments and the focus on exams as a method of assessment. Notably, a large number of students felt that assessments were similar to previous experiences, either the same or just requiring more of the same.

With regards to coursework, student comments reflected an increase in emphasis on group work: *"All the same apart from group assessment"* and there is *"more focus on team based assignments."* Other students mentioned the increase in variety of assessment methods or the introduction of new types of assessment: *"At A level all assessments were by exam. At uni they're a mix of exam, presentations and essays"; "There appears to be a greater emphasis on multiple choice questionnaires than there was in high school"; "I was used to exam like assessments but online tests and projects I'd never done."*

Many students felt that assessments were too infrequent at university: *"I was graded on class participation, problem sets, essay and two exams (a mid-term and a final exam) in the US... all we have is an end of the year exam that determines our entire grade for a course"; "We only have 2 tests that make up our whole grade, whereas in high school, we had lots of little tests and assignments"; "There are fewer opportunities for continuous assessment."*

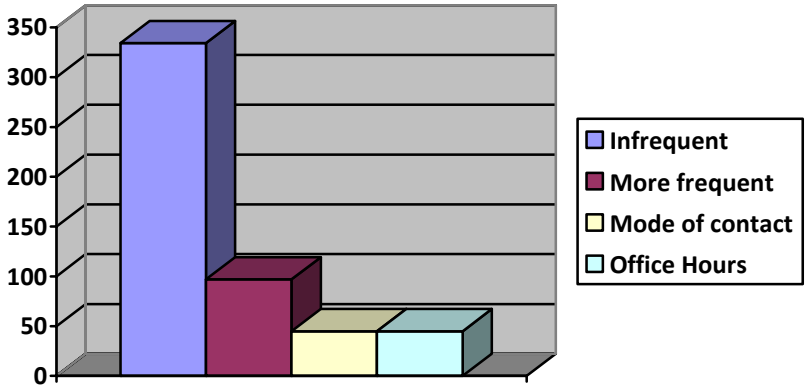
These comments overlapped somewhat with comments about the focus on final exams: *"Performance depends on examination only here while assessment like assignment are also counted in Hong Kong"* and *"Heavily based on exams, which personally only judge 1/3 of person's ability. Rare vocal/personal test (presentations) or coursework."*

There were also a significant number of students who felt that assessments

were the same or fairly similar to the assessment methods to which they were previously exposed: *"Coursework and Exams are similar"; "Similar – lots of essays, group work etc."; "I had to write essay coursework at A-level and take exams as I do at university";* and *"The assessment methods are relatively similar."*

Q14.c) Contact with lecturers

Contact with lecturers was very different and different for two-thirds (66.6%) of respondents, which is slightly more than in 2008 survey. Less than one in seven saw it as similar and very similar to their previous learning experience. Students provided details to their answers.



There were 569 coded responses to this question. The majority of students (59%) felt that contact time with lecturers was inadequate and that making contact can be very difficult. With regards to the lack of contact, students had these things to say: *"Completely different – no contact at all with lecturers"; "There is mostly no contact with our lecturer except the lecture time";* and *"Vanishingly small amount of contact hours."* Other students spoke more about the difficulty in gaining contact with lecturers or tutors: *"lecturers are hard to get in contact with, whereas during previous schooling, teachers were readily available"* and *"Teachers were more readily available than lecturers."*

Not all students felt like that, though. There were a good number of comments about the fact that contact with teachers was more frequent and much easier than previously experienced: *"I think that it is easier to get in contact with the lecturers than it was for me to see my teachers at school outside of class. If you need extra help the lecturers seem more keen to help than most of my A Level teachers"; "We can approach any professor we like by mailing them or meeting them at their office!"; "More one-on-one time available if needed."*

Other comments mentioned the mode used to contact teachers, which some felt was a positive as it allowed for greater flexibility: *"Email is my primary mode of contact for lecturers, in school it was not even an option"; "Approachable, by person or by email";* and *"I am able to email the lecturers at any point to ask questions, they get back to me as soon as possible."* Others found modes of contact to be fairly negative: *"not as easy to contact lecturer compared to when in college as based on an email basis and very few contact hours"* and *"A lot less contact, difficulty in getting hold of them, though e-mail is essential and this is the main form of personal contact."*

Another aspect of contact time mentioned was office hours. Some students

felt that office hours were too limited: *"have small office hours hence and usually once a week so usually long waiting times whereas as before we could see teachers any time everyday"* and *"Highly restrictive office hours reduce potential for contact."* But others found office hours to be a useful: *"Lecturers provide their office hours for extra help with learning which is the same back home"* and *"Much less interaction between lecturers and students on a one to one basis. Although office hours were useful."*

Q14.d) E-learning and use of IT

E-learning and use of IT in the current course was different and very different for half of the respondents (50.0%), which is slightly less then in 2008 survey. It was similar and very similar for less then a quarter of them (22.5%) and some similar, some different for the rest.

There were 461 coded responses to this question. The vast majority of all comments were positive and reflected a positive response to more heavy utilization of e-learning and computer facilities than they were used to*: "A lot more focus on IT, involving a lot of time on computers doing coursework and research"* and *"E-learning is more advanced here and it has given me an advantage over friends back at home."* In general, the comments were divided between those, which claimed the use of computers was more or similar to previous experiences (70% of total comments) and those that commented on the usage of computer resources (i.e. accessing material, communication and IT facilities or support).

Typical comments about using computers for accessing materials*: "A lot more resources available online"; "All of the work to do is placed online; i.e. no reading references given during lectures";* and *"All results, module material, class timings are posted online regularly which is a very very strong change and necessary!"*

Other comments mentioned the use of computers for communication: *"Uni provides forums and blogs for conversation with other students"; Increased use of e-mail as method of communication between tutor and student";* and *"Everything is web-based and email communication."*

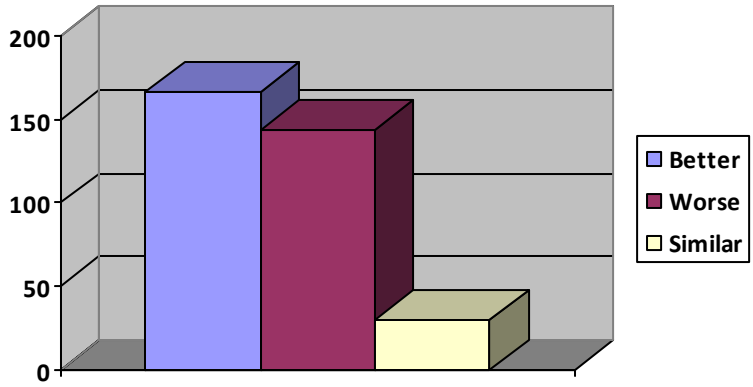
Some students talked about the IT facilities or support available and generally found it very good: *"Fantastic resources here"; "IT facilities are so much better here...";* and *"WebCT service is excellent and all information comes through the Economics coordinator which is very useful."*

Only a small minority claimed there was little or no IT use (9% of total*): "hardly any e-learning"; "Not much e-learning necessary"; "Very little. Extremely surprised."*

Q14.e) Student support

Slightly less than half of the respondents (47.1%) found student support in their current course different and very different from their previous experience, which is more than in 2008 survey. One in five saw it as very similar and similar, which is similar to 2008 results.

There were 350 coded responses to this question. The largest group of responses claimed that students found support to be better than their previous experiences (47%), yet many students who responded claimed it was worse (41%). A small number of students felt the support was similar to their past experiences (9%).



Comments regarding student support varied depending on students' previous learning experiences and environments. For instance, some compared it to previous overseas study: *"There is no student support in my previous learning. In UK, I think it's really very good to help our learning, especially for our international students. e.g. the math learning support, the English support."; "In Greece you are not assigned with a tutor, your progress is not monitored by anyone. There is no student support officers that I know of."; "I believe that students are given much more support here than in Portugal."*

Other students compared it to their previous experiences at school: *"The support for students is very good but very different from the school environment."* and *"Support is great and overwhelming at university as opposed to schooling where it does not really matter."*

Various comments mentioned the quality of the support: *"student support here is much more personal and productive."; "Personal tutor is extremely helpful, able to talk either face to face or via email if there is a problem.";* and *"Student support at university is fantastic."*

There were many comments, however, that claimed support was worse than previous experiences. The comments were split between those that simply stated there was less support and those that expressed the lack of personal involvement as an obstacle. Typical comments of the latter: *"There are student support systems but I myself would not be comfortable going to any of them as they are strangers whereas with my previous learning I would have known those involved with student support"* and *"Previously, you would build personal relationships with people who would support you, just from seeing them daily. Now the support comes from people who I don't actually know who they are."*

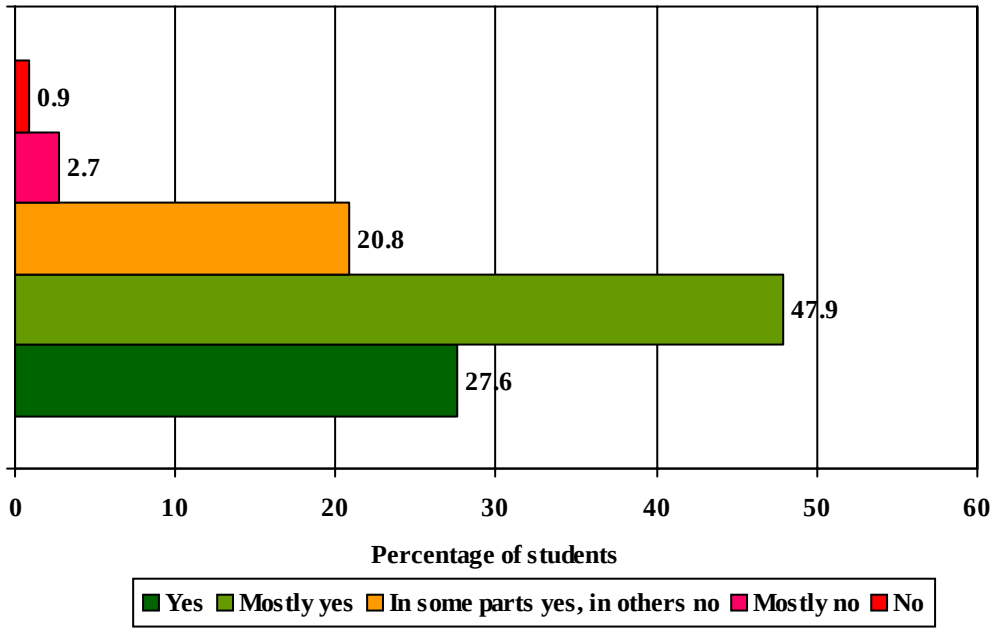
Q15. Do you think your previous learning experience prepared you for your current study

Two thirds of the respondents felt that they were adequately prepared for their degree course, which is more than in the 2008 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. Among the comments from the survey: *"Before University when it came to exams I was often "spoon fed" information, however now I am here it is very different and there is a lot more work on my part, which I am not use to."; "Economics in A-level is completely different from BSc Economics. I did have a slight advantage of having background information about the course, but learning wise, the specification is much different than before."; "Here the teaching methods are quite different, hence*

my previous education only prepared me for current studies to some extent. For example writing essays was something totally new for me and I had to learn step by step how to write them in order to get a good mark."; "I was working in non-academic posts for about 8 years; hence, I found it difficult to fit again."; "Not at all because prior to this point I had done nothing related to economics. The course was entirely new for me. All aspects of it. "

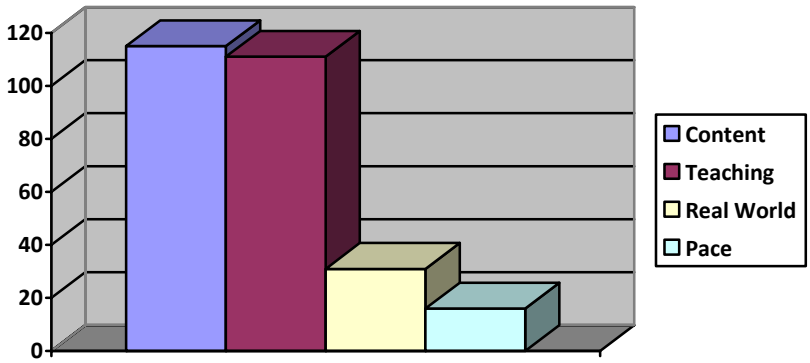
Section 3: About your degree course

Q16. Has studying this degree course met your expectations?



- More than three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The level of expectations being met is stable in all 3 surveys of 2006-2008-2010: 75.4% - 74.9% - 75.5%.

Q16.a) If you didn't answer yes, please explain in what ways it differs from your expectations



There were 273 coded responses to this question. Four themes emerged from those responses: content, teaching, real world relevance, and the pace of the course. The majority of responses revolved around the content and the teaching of the course. In terms of the content, most comments were related with the amount of maths. Many students claimed that it was much more maths-focused than they had anticipated: *"Wasn't expecting quite as large an emphasis on maths"* and *"I didn't think that maths would be such a vital part."* A few thought there would be more than there was: *"I am actually enjoying the course a lot more than what I had thought, however I did believe that there would be more maths involved in the course."*

There are also comments related to the overall difficulty of the content: "*more difficult than what I had imagined."; "Some modules are really hard, such as advanced microeconomics, and a lot of work must be done in order to keep up."* and *"It was harder than I expected."*

The second theme that emerged was the teaching of the course. Many of the comments had to do with the lack of personal interaction between students and teachers, the quality of lecturers and the lack of contact time with lecturers. Typical comments regarding the lack of interaction: *"Expected more interaction with lecturers"* and *"I thought it will be much more interaction between people, much more team working, much more extra guest lectures and things like that."*

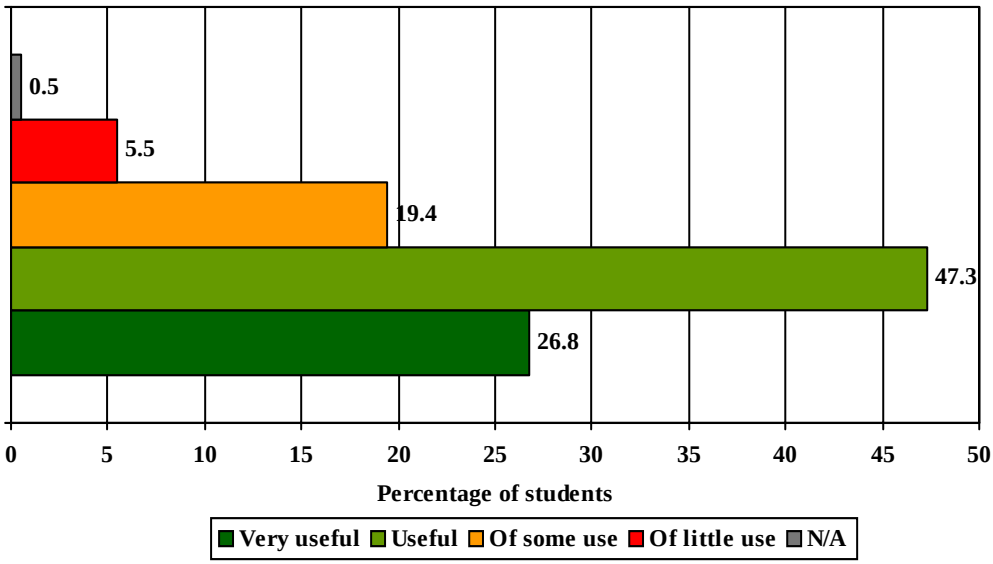
Typical comments regarding quality of lecturers: *"Also the contact between lecturers and students is terrible especially with economics lecturers, there seems to be very few who actually care about the students doing well for the students' sake rather than their own sake."* and *"The teaching has been of a low standard."*

Typical comments regarding the lack of contact time: *"I thought I would have more contact hours, but in fact there are more self study hours."* and *"I feel too much teaching is left to yourself!"*

The last two themes have to do with the relevance of the course to the real world and its pace. Some students felt there was too little engagement with real world examples: *"I was hoping I would be able to understand how the actual economy works and how actual decisions are made, like how does the central bank come to the decisions it does."* and *"I think that theory should concern more with real world, I think it would be better if there will be more examples from real economy to understand a content of material."* A small number felt the pace of the course was too fast: *"The professors go very quickly through the material. This leaves then very little time to 'develop the thought'. Students are left alone to cope with the high amount of material."* and *"Too much course material to get through in too little time means that crucial aspects of the course were condensed and rushed."*

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

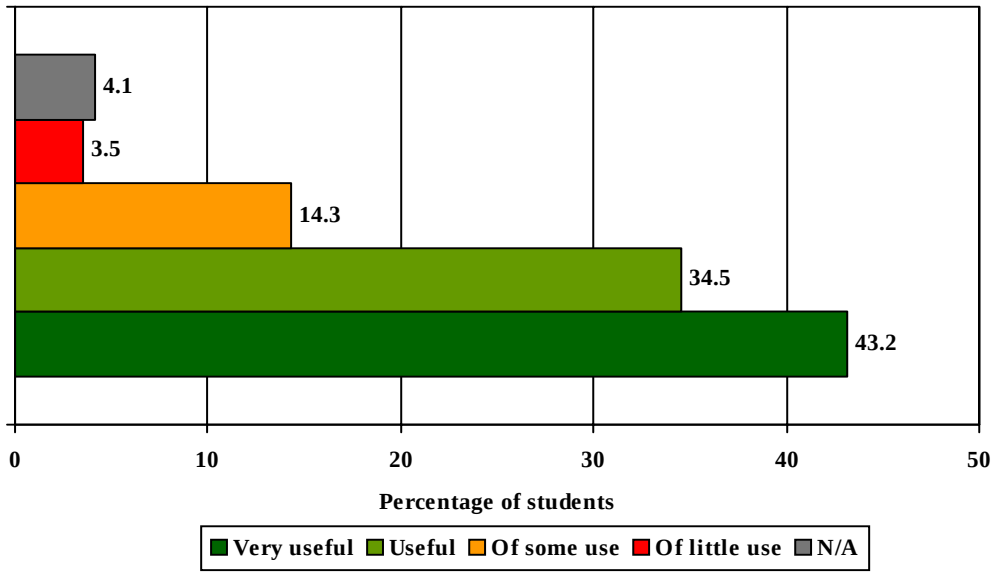
Q17.a) Lectures



- About three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found lectures useful had been declining during 2006-2008-2010: 75.3% - 74.7% - 74.1%;
- As in previous studies Age, Year of study and Gender were statistically significant factors (SSF), with the additional factor- A-level Economics;
- Age was a SSF for lectures: lectures' usefulness increases with the age of respondents from 73.1% for 18-21 year olds to76.4% for 22-25s and to 81.5% for those older than 25;
- Year of study is SSF for lectures: lectures' usefulness declines during the first 3 years of study from 76.0% to 72.2% to 68.5%, but then increases for year 4 - 80.9% and is 77.7% for postgrads;
- Gender is SSF for lectures: females (77.1%) find them more useful, then males (71.6%);
- A-level Economics is SSF for lectures: those who had them 73.3% found lectures less useful then those who hadn't done them 75.0%;
- Among students' comments: "*Huge variance in quality!" "Some lectures are fantastic, others not so much, I love asking questions but I/we are told not to."; "depending on the lecturers. Some lectures are extremely pointless to go as reading on your own would be much easy and FUN.*".

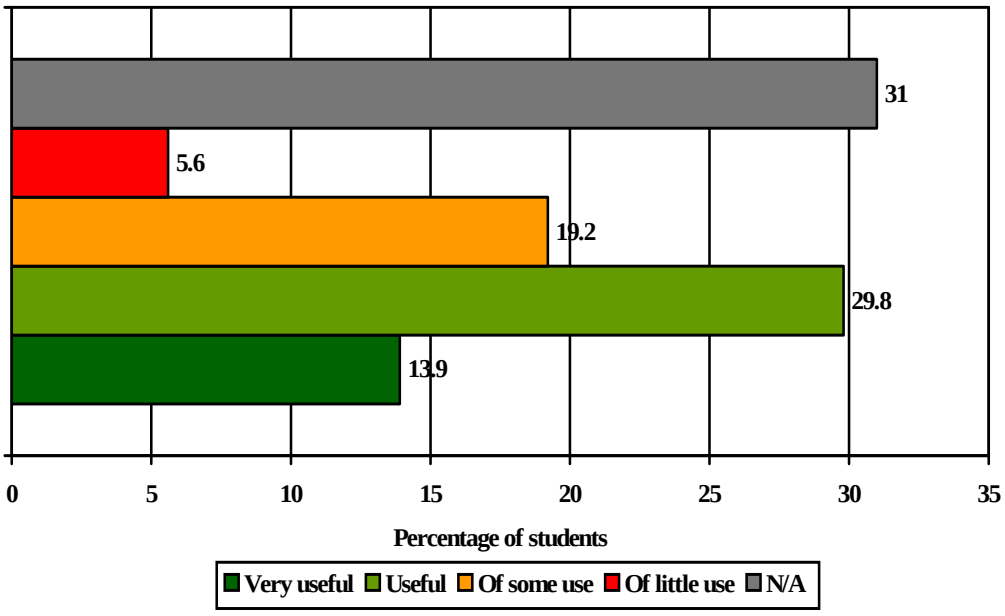
Q17.b) Small classes or seminars (up to 20 students)

- About three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found small classes useful had been increasing during 2006-2008-2010: 75.8% - 78.6% - 77.7%;



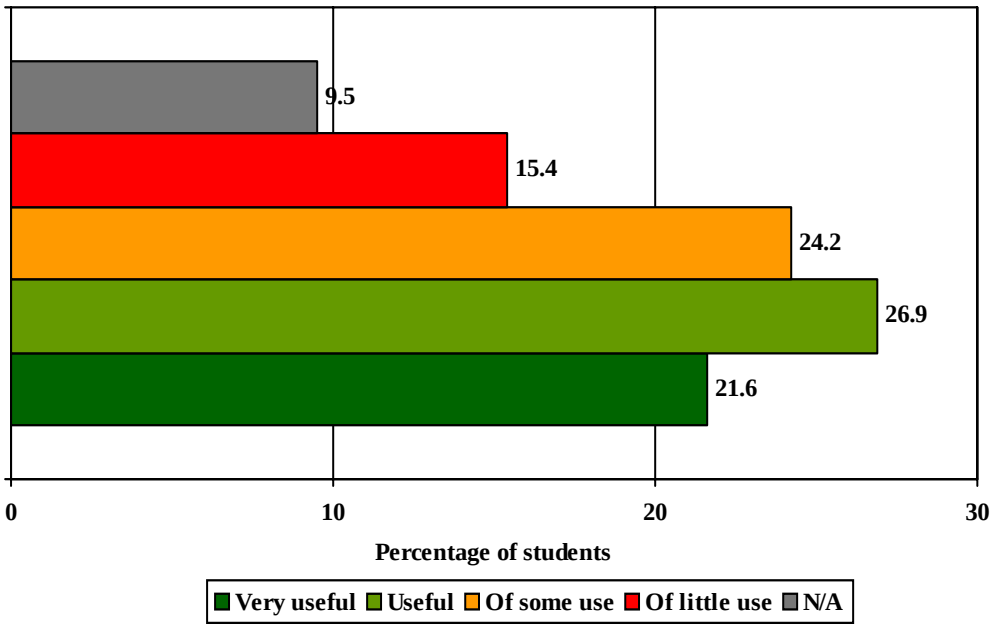
- As in previous studies Age and Year of study were SSF, with the additional factor: A-level Economics;
- Age was a SSF for small classes: its perceived usefulness decreases with the age of respondents from 79.1% for 18-21 year olds to72.6 to 22-25s and to 68.5% for those older than 25;
- Year of studies is SSF for small classes: its perceived usefulness increases during undergraduates years from 76.7% to 80.2% to 80.5% to 80.2%, but then decrease for postgraduates to 66.8%;
- Among students' comments: *"the best study opportunity.";"Again, huge variance in quality!"; "Would be useful if our tutor wasn't incompetent."*

Q17.c) Workshops or classes (over 25 students)



- More than two out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found workshops useful had been increasing during 2006-2008-2010: 33.4% - 40.9% - 43.7%;
- As in previous studies Language, A-level Maths and Year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for workshops: students with English as their first language found workshops less useful than non-English speakers - 39.8% versus 51.4%;
- Year of study is SSF for workshops: it's perceived usefulness increases during the years from 40.4% (first) to 41.8% (second) to 47.2% (third) to 48.1% (fourth) and to 51.5% (postgraduate);
- Among students' comments: "*Some are good while some are just non-sense;" "Depends a lot on the teacher. Some are just a waste of time.";"develop transferable skills."*

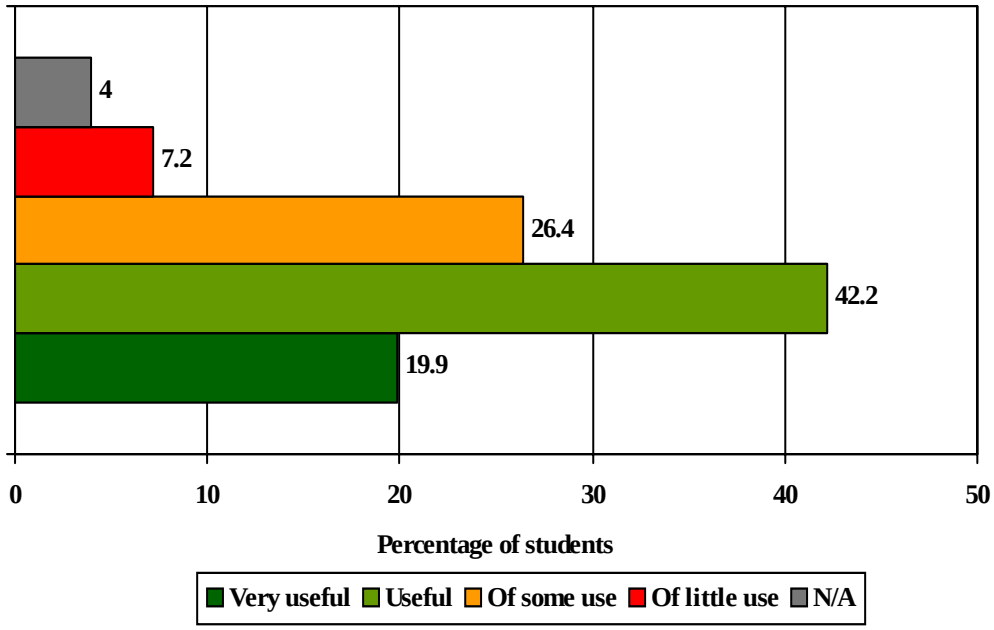
Q17.d) Lecturers' office hours, clinics or one-to-one tutorials



- Nearly half of respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found office hours useful had been increasing during 2006-2008-2010: 43.7% - 48.0% - 48.5%;
- 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 - 46.8% versus 51.7%;
- Year of study is SSF for office hours: its usefulness increases during the years from 44.3% (first) to 48.1% (second) to 48.1% (third) to 58.8% (fourth) and to 58.4% (postgraduates);
- Age was a SSF for office hours: it is lowest for the 18-21 group - 47.6%, then increases to 53.1% for the 22-25 group and is 49.1% for over 26s;

- Among students' comments: *"didn't really use any of those.";"Office hours have been of little use. I expect that one-to-one tutorials would be of great use.";"I haven't made use of office hours, they could be very useful ."*

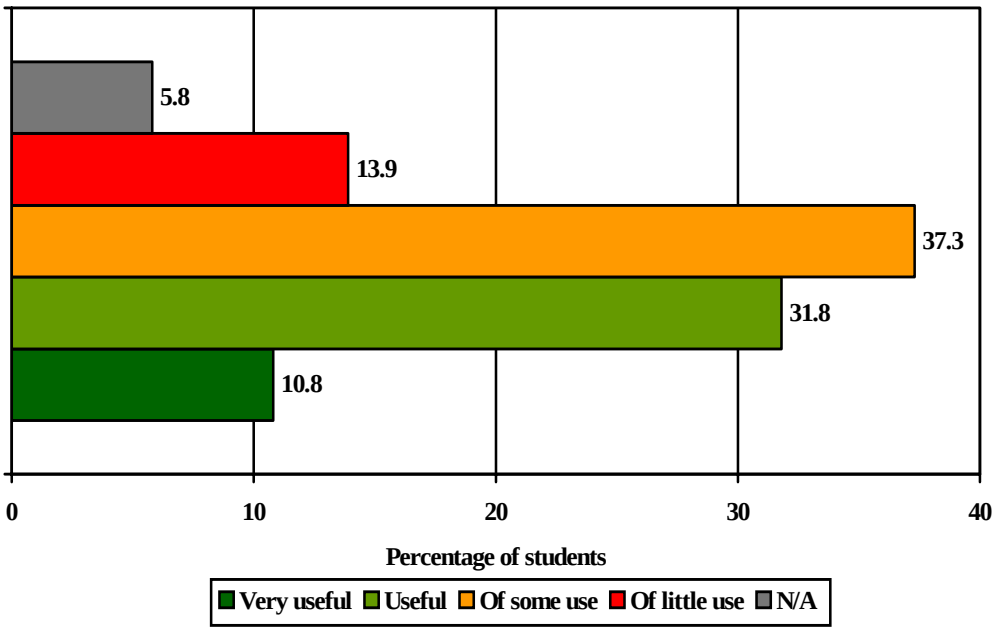
Q17.e) Assigned reading



- More than three out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found assigned reading useful has been decreasing during 2006-2008-2010: 69.2% - 65.0% - 62.1%;
- As in previous studies Language, Age and Year of study were SSF, but also this year gender and A-level Economics;
- Language was a SSF for assigned reading: students with English as their first language found assigned reading less useful than non-English speakers - 59.3% versus 67.4%;
- Year of study is SSF for assigned reading: it's perceived usefulness increases during the years from 60.2% (first) to 61.7% (second) to 62.4% (third) to 68.7% (fourth) and to 65.4% (postgraduates);
- Age was a SSF for assigned reading: it is lowest for 18-21 years group - 60.0% then increases to 69.8% for the 22-25 group and to 73.2% for over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for assigned reading: females are more positive about it then males - 63.6 versus 60.9%;
- A-level Economics was a SSF for assigned reading: those who didn't have them found it more useful, then those who have them - 66.3% and 59.3%;
- Among students' comments: *"Some of it is VERY useful, but in some courses the lists are very long, and it is hard to determine what will actually be helpful. So I feel a lot of time is wasted as a result.";"No assigned reading has*

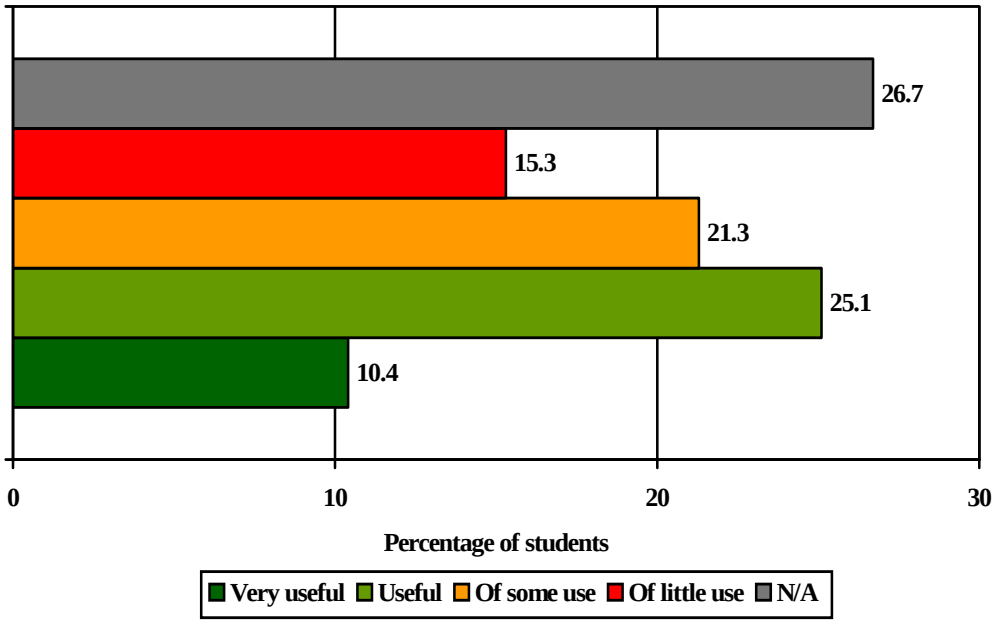
been set, maybe it should be. Could be a useful guideline.";"Textbooks aren't as helpful as lecture notes especially when it comes to exam revision."

Q17.f) Other reading



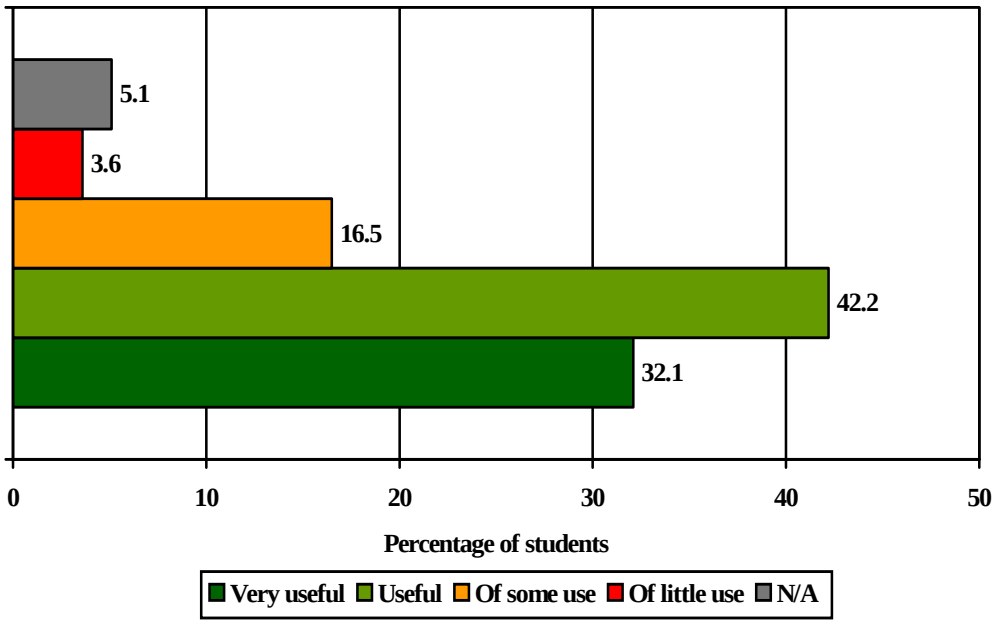
- More than two out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found other reading useful had been decreasing during 2006-2008-2010: 45.9% - 41.8% - 42.6%;
- As in previous studies Language, Age and Year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for other reading: students with English as their first language found other reading less useful than non-English speakers - 40.6% versus 46.7%;
- Year of studies is SSF for other reading: its perceived usefulness decreases during the first three undergraduate years from 42.4% to 42.2% to 39.4%, but increases to 42.8% for year 4 and to 50.5% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for other reading: it is lowest for the 18-21 group - 40.6%, then increases to 45.1% for the 22–25 group and to 65.7% for over 26s;
- Among students' comments: *"Lecturers sometimes are very willing to follow just one or several books in their teaching mechanisms. So usually the readings been given out by them would be very useful for my understanding."; "mostly left to own unguided research; no training on research methods, particularly web based."; "exploring".*

Q17.g) Group work projects



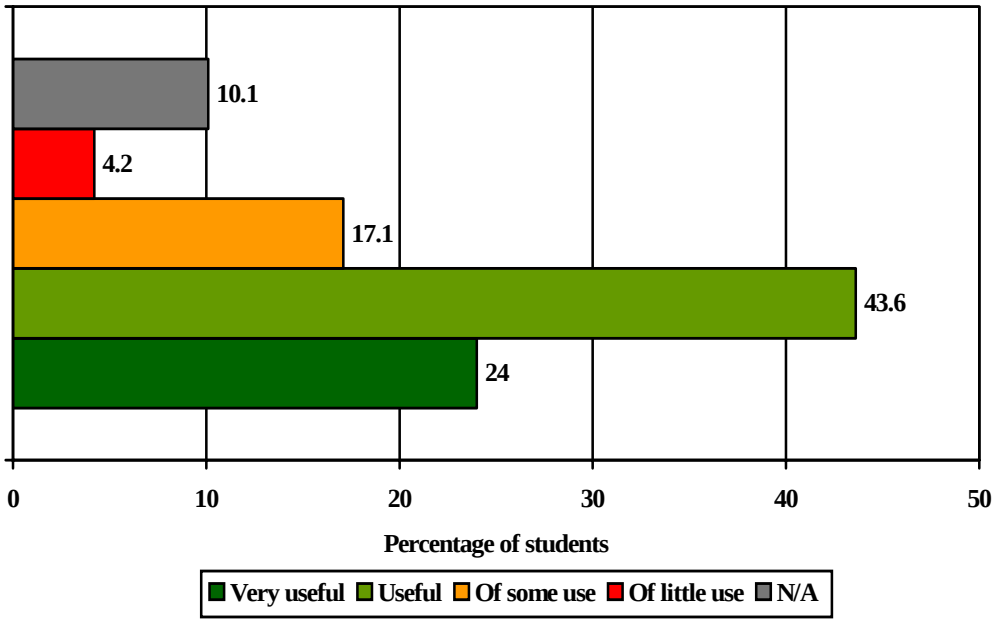
- More than one out of three respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found group work projects useful hasn't altered very much during 2006-2008-2010: 34.6% - 34.2% - 35.5%;
- As in previous studies Language, Age, A-level Maths and Year of study were SSF, but this year also gender and choice were SSF for group work projects;
- 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 - 33.4% versus 39.5%;
- Year of study is a SSF for group work projects: 35.9% perceived it as useful in year 1, then its usefulness decreases to 30.0% for year 2 and then increases in years 3 and 4 to 40.2% and 40.5%. It decreases to 37.7% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for group work projects: it is lowest for the 18-21 group - 34.6%, then increases to 39.2% for the 22–25 group and to 38.9% for over 26s;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for group work projects: students who haven't done them perceived group work projects as more useful than those who have - 39.1% and 34.1% respectively;
- Gender was a SSF for group work projects: females finds them less useful than males – 32.8% versus 37.6%;
- Choice of degree was a SSF for group work projects: those with Economics as first choice were more positive, then others - 35.7% and 34.2%;
- Among students' comments: *"I used to do group projects in undergraduate but not many for economics course as I am doing a math related degree rather than Art of economics. But I think it helps in my understanding and it helps on training people's interactive ability with others. And it somehow makes me more patient in listening to others' opinions.";"No use at all, as a hard worker it brings my marks down because of free riders.";"Useful to external skills but not specifically Economics based skills."*

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



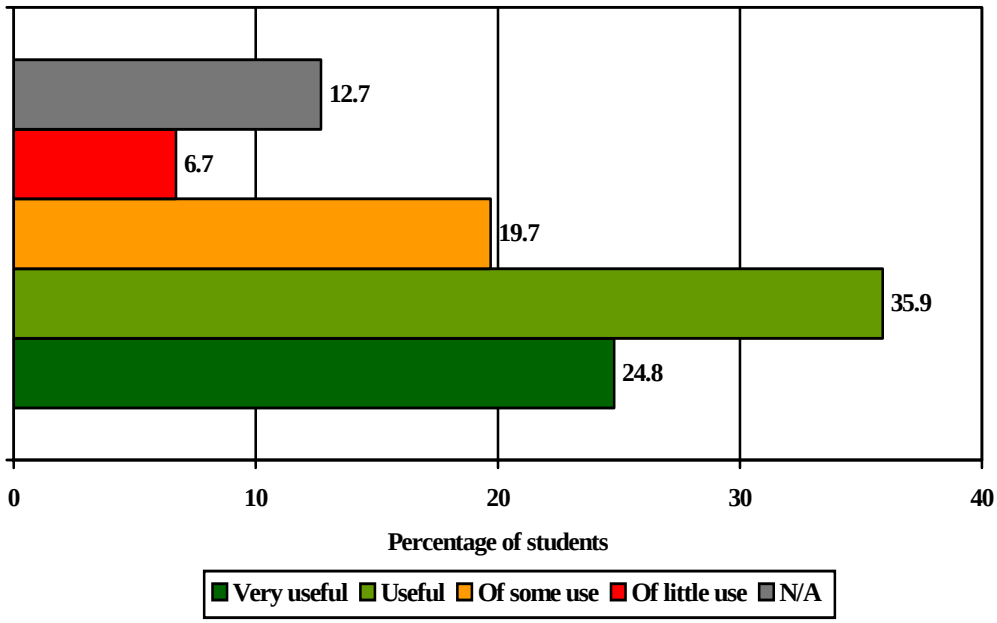
- Nearly three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found set preparatory work useful has increase during 2006-2008-2010: 70.8% - 71.7% - 74.3%;
- As in previous studies Language, Age, A-level Economics and Year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for set preparatory work: students with English as their first language found set preparatory work more useful than non-English speakers - 75.3% versus 72.4%;
- Year of study is a SSF for set preparatory work: it was different for each year with 73.6% finding it useful in year 1, 77.8% in year 2, then 74.7% in year 3 and 74.9% in year 4, and 65.8% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for set preparatory work: it was highest for the 18-21 group - 75.6%, then decreases to 69.8% for the 22-25 group and to 65.8% for over 26s;
- A-level Economics was a SSF for set preparatory work: those who have A-level Economics find such set work more useful than others - 76.0% versus 71.6%;
- Among students' comments: "*It usually gives me a general review on what's on last lecture and I can fix out which part I need a second review as well.*"; "*Some of them are much more complicated than the theory explained.*";"*it gives question time, and prepares for the actual exam as usually its similar*."

Q17.i) Essays



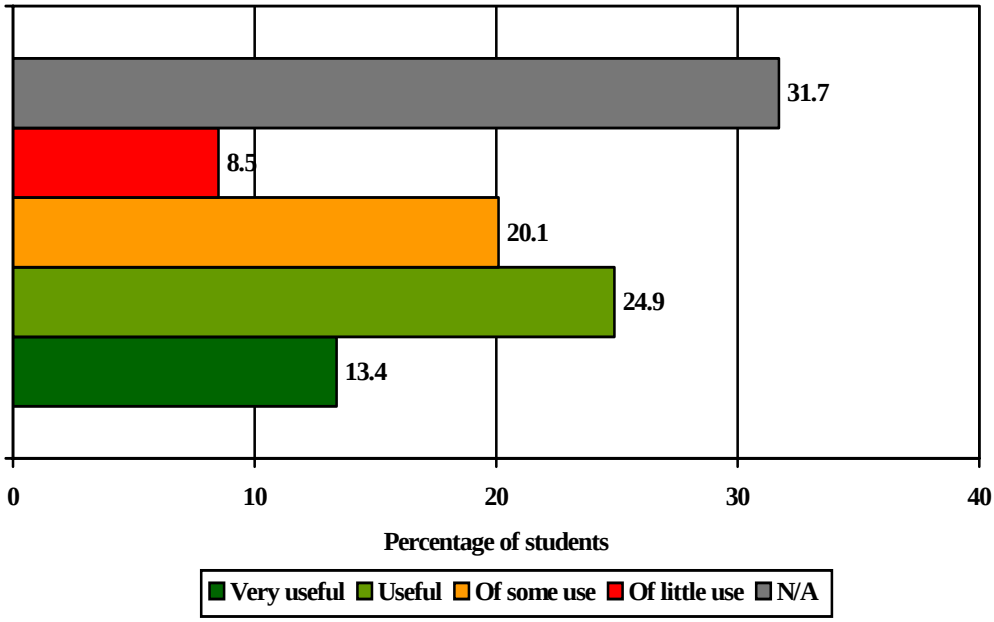
- More than two out of three respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found essays useful has decreased during 2006-2008-2010: 75.1% - 72.7% - 67.6%;
- As in previous studies Age and Year of study were a SSF;
- Year of study is a SSF for essays: it's perceived usefulness increases across the years from 62.9% in year 1, to 68.6% in year 2, to 75.2% in year 3 and 80.2% in year 4 and then decreasing to 59.9% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for essays: it was highest for the 18-21 group - 68.3%, then decreased to 66.6% for the 22-25 group and to 59.3% for over 26s;
- Among students' comments: *"Writing an essay is really a torture to me but I cannot make myself to say it is useless as I need to do a lot of reading and researches for it and it will somehow widen my learning in the course"; "Although sometimes when returned, I wished I had more feedback"; "There does not seem to be anything which helps you write an essay expected from a 3rd year student. Essays have been so infrequent during the term, but then only in the final exams!"*

Q17.j) Online learning



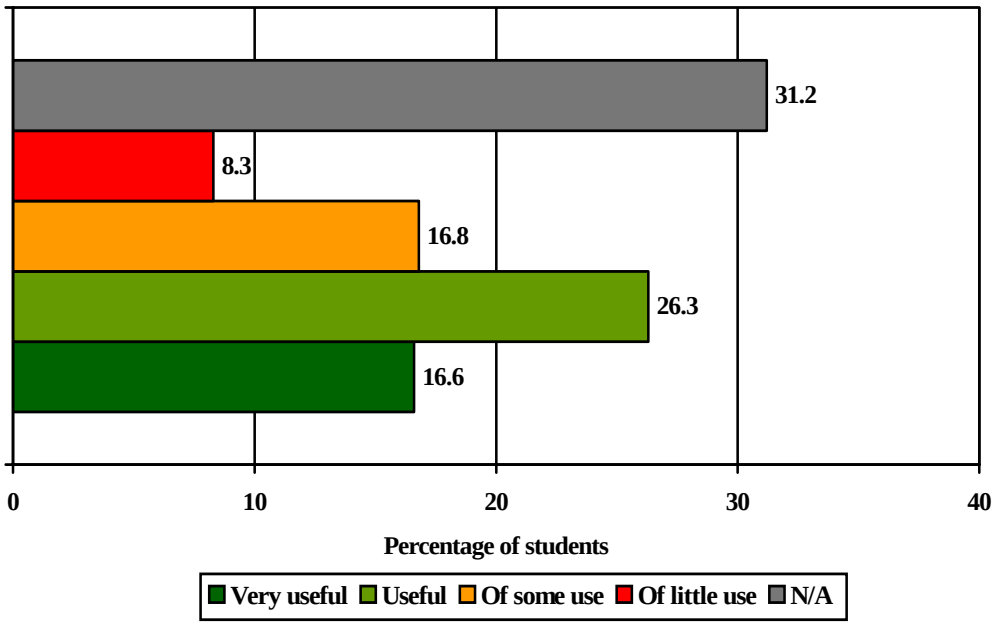
- More than three out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found online learning useful has increase during 2006-2008-2010: 50.0% - 56.0% - 60.7%;
- As in previous studies Age and Year of study were a SSF;
- Year of study is a SSF for online learning: it's perceived usefulness decreases from 64.0% in year 1, to 58.0% in year 2, to 55.8% in year 3, but then 61.0% in year 4 and 56.4% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for online learning: its perceived usefulness was highest for the 18-21 group - 61.4%, than decreased to 58.0% for the 22–25 group and to 55.4% for over 26s. At the same time the percentage of respondents reporting no online learning increases across the age groups from 11.5% for the 18-21 group to 14.9% for the 22–25 group and to 24.9% for over 26s;
- Among students' comments: *"This is my own choice not instructed by lecturers"; "would be if I knew about it."; "no training on research methods, particularly web based."*

Q17.k) Online learning using Economics software



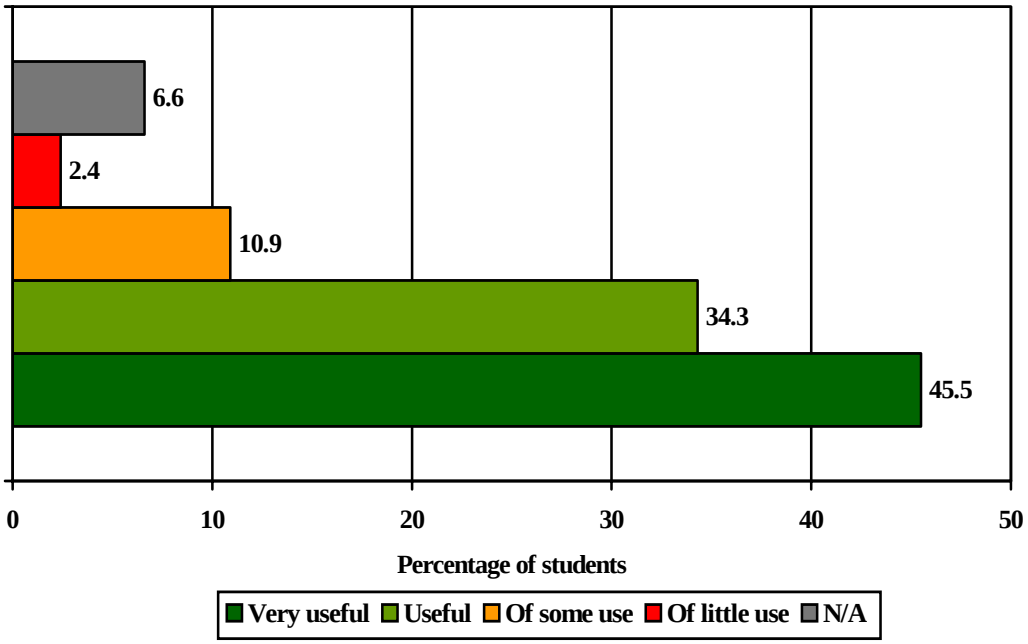
- Less than two out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question, but nearly one in three reported online learning using economics software as unavailable;
- The number of students, who found online learning using economics software useful has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 27.9% - 34.9% - 38.3%;
- As in previous studies Age, Language and Year of study were SSF, as well as Gender;
- Year of study is a SSF for online learning using economics software: it's perceived usefulness decreased from 41.4% in year 1, to 32.7% in year 2, to 33.1% in year 3, then increases to 41.2% in year 4 and to 51.0% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for online learning using economics software: it was lowest for the 18-21 group - 36.4%, than increases to 48.7% for the 22-25 group then decreases to 39.9% for over 26s. At the same time, respondents reporting online learning with economics software as not available fluctuates across the age groups: 32.4% for the 18-21 group; 25.3% for the 22–25 group and 38.9% for the over 26s;
- Language was a SSF for online learning using economics software: non-English speakers found it more useful than English speakers - 46.6% versus 34.1%;
- Gender was a SSF for online learning using economics software. Female respondents found it more useful than male: 40.1% versus 36.9%;
- Among students' comments: *"I wish there was more..."; "we will do this later but have not used this method yet.";"economics software doesn't cater for mac computers."*

Q17.l) Online questions and tests (not assessed)



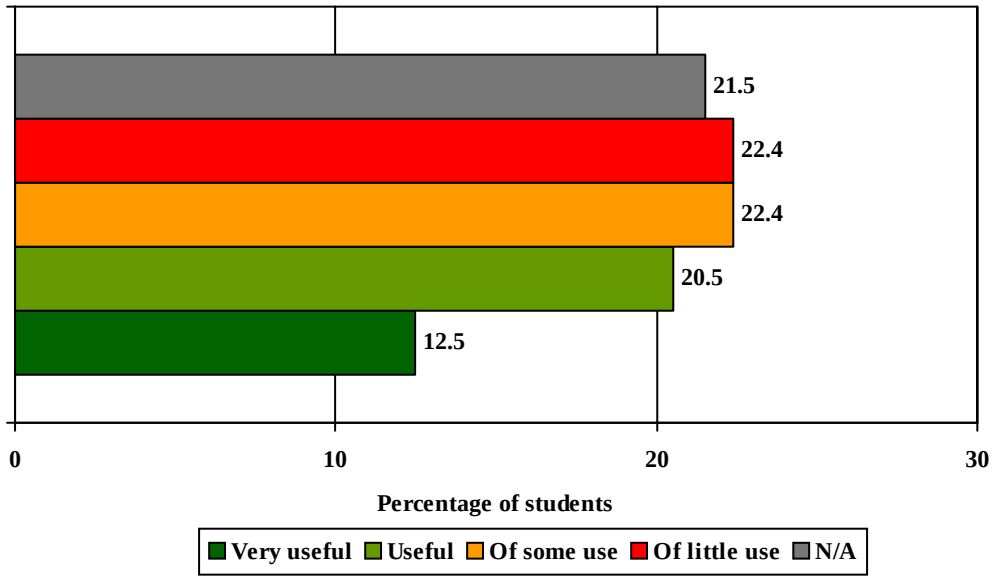
- More than two out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question, but nearly one in three found it unavailable, an increase compared to 41.3% in 2006 and 38.0% in 2008;
- The number of students who found online questions and tests useful has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 31.7% - 36.1% - 42.9%;
- As in previous studies Age, Choice and Year of study were SSF, but also Gender;
- Year of studies is a SSF for online questions and tests: 55.5% in year 1 found them useful; 40.5% in year 2; 32.0% in year 3; 45.1% in year 4 and 28.2% for postgraduates (though it was not available to 51.0% of them);
- Age was a SSF for online questions and tests: they were perceived as most useful by the 18-21 group - 45.3%, then 34.7% of the 22–25 group found them useful, compared to 27.8% for the over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for online questions and tests. Female respondents found them more useful than male: 44.7% versus 41.5%;
- Choice was a SSF for online questions and tests. Respondents who took Economics as a first choice found online questions and tests more useful: 43.8% versus 38.4%;
- Among students' comments: *"Very rare but were very useful;" "They don't have these at …, but I'd like them to have them." ; "Very useful, assessed and marked."*

Q17.m) Materials posted by lecturer on course VLEs (such as Blackboard or WebCT) or website



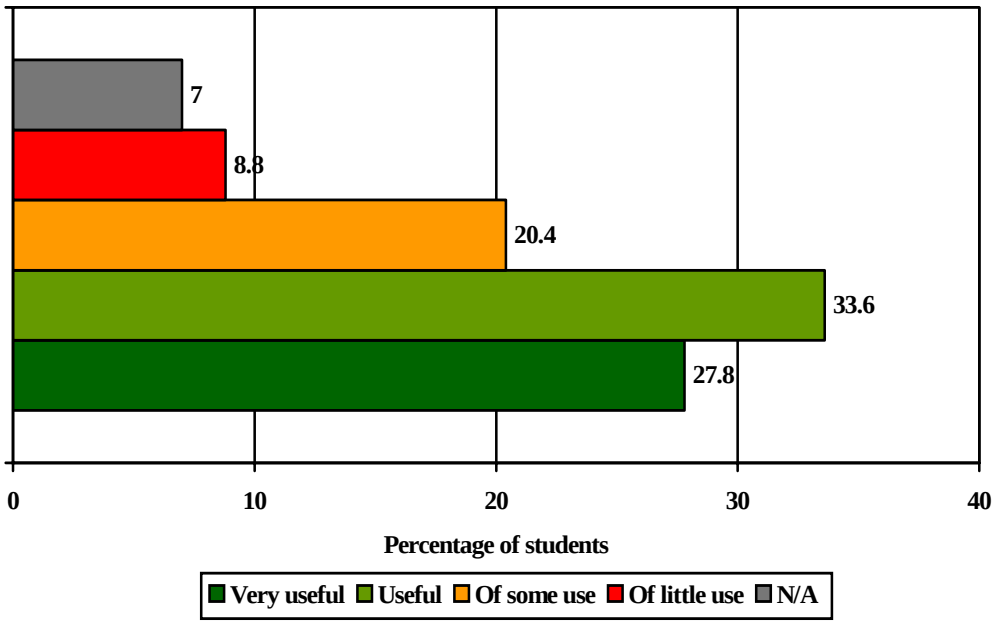
- Nearly four out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found online materials useful has increased during 2006-200-2010: 77.2% - 76.8% - 79.8%;
- As in previous studies Age and A-level Maths were SSF;
- Age was a SSF for online materials: 81.5% of the over 26s found them useful compared to 79.2% for the 18-21 group and the 22–25 group;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for online materials: those who didn't have access to them perceived them as more useful than those who did: 81.9% versus 79.0% ;
- Among students' comments: *"it would usually be the next days' lecture contents. So very useful." ; "For the one lecturer who can be bothered to post on Web CT, but others were Very Good.", "great – love it."*

Q17.n) Communication tools (e.g. discussion boards) in course VLE



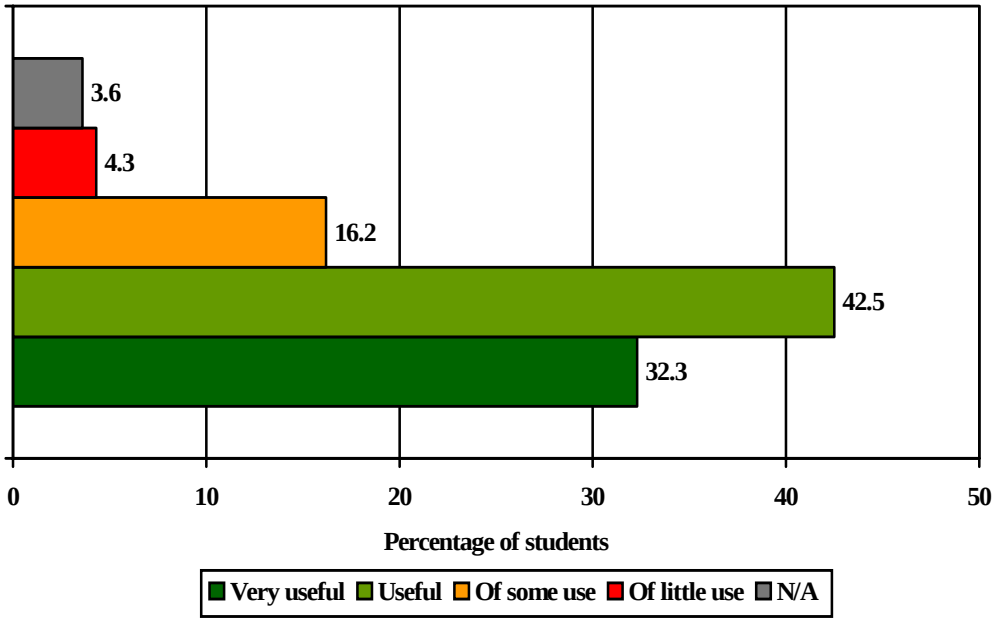
- Nearly one out of three respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found communication tools useful has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 27.5% - 29.0% - 33.0%, and the number of respondents who did not have access to them has decreased: 32.7% - 27.8% - 21.5%;
- As in previous studies Age, Language and Year of study were SSF, but also Gender;
- Year of study is a SSF for communication tools: 37.3% in year 1 perceived them as useful, decreasing to 31.5% in year 2, and to 25.6% in year 3, then increasing to 28.2% in year 4 and 38.4% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for communication tools: the lowest percent of students perceived them as useful in the 18-21 group – 32.3%, which increases to 33.0% for the 22–25 group and 45.4% for the over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for communication tools: female respondents found it more useful than male: 34.9% versus 31.6%;
- Language was a SSF for communication tools: respondents with English as first language found them less useful than non-English speakers: 30.7% versus 37.7%;
- Among students' comments: *"Unfortunately not used by most lecturers. Very useful when used.";"I don't have used it since I've been here but if it has come up then should be very useful."; "Not used yet but is available."*

Q17.o) Feedback on submitted work



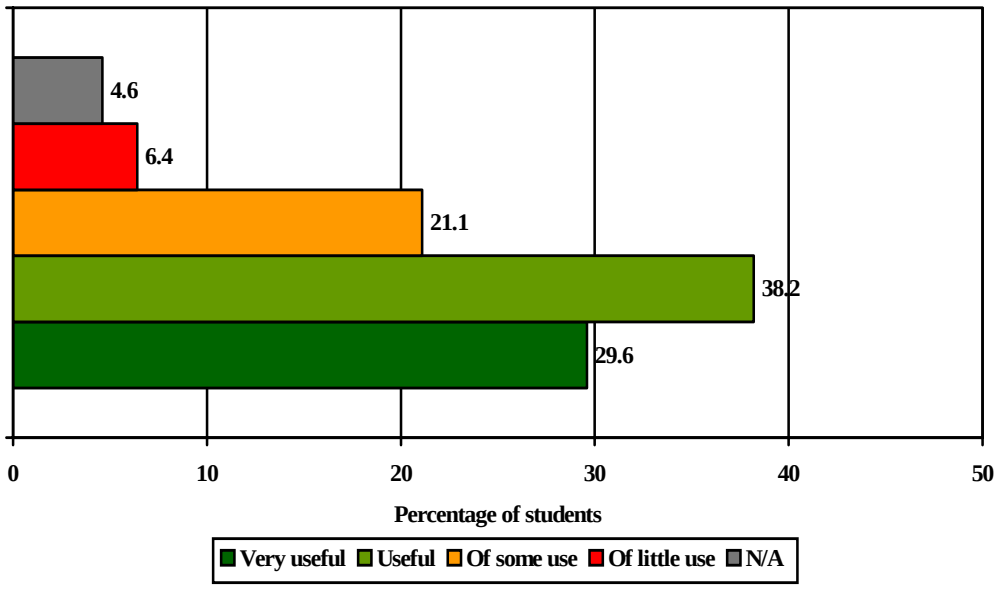
- More than three out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found feedback on submitted work useful has seen a small increase and then decrease during 2006-2008-2010: 60.9% - 62.1% - 61.4%;
- As in previous studies Age and Year of study were SSF, but also Gender;
- Year of study is a SSF for feedback on submitted work: 62.7% perceived it as useful in year 1, 63.1% in year 2, 57.6% in year 3, 68.7% in year 4 and then 55.5% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for feedback on submitted work: it was perceived as most useful by the 18-21 group- 61.9%, then 59.0% for the 22–25 group and 59.2% for the over 26s;
- Gender was a SSF for feedback on submitted work: female respondents found it more useful than male: 61.4% versus 61.3%;
- Among students' comments: *"very little or no feedback given.";"Would appreciate more as it is very useful.";"Was supposedly part of each essay, but never involved more than one or two words, such as "good essay."; "Would have been very useful if more were given."; "Supervisors don't always give a lot of feedback. When it is given it is very helpful."*

Q17.p) Preparing for exams and/or tests



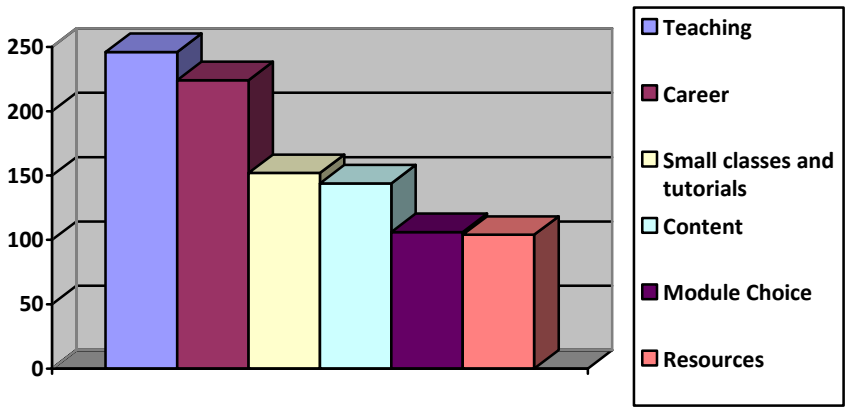
- Nearly three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found preparation for exams useful has decreased during 2006-2008-2010: 79.5% - 77.8% - 74.8%;
- As in previous studies Age and Year of study were SSF, but also Choice;
- Year of study is a SSF for preparation for exams: 69.6% perceived it as useful in year 1, 78.4% in year 2, 78.8% in year 3, 87.1% in year 4 and 67.9% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for preparation for exams: the 18-21 group perceived it as most useful - 75.9%, then 71.8% for the 22–25 group and 66.7% for the over 26s;
- Choice was a SSF for preparation for exams: with respondents who took economics as first choice finding it more useful than for others: 74.9% versus 74.2%;
- Among students' comments: *"I feel there is not enough guidance for the type format of the exam.";"Previous exams are the only useful tool!"; "What my experience told me that usually it is very useful."*

Q17.q) Working informally with other students



- More than two out of three respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found working informally with other students useful has seen small changes during 2006-2008-2010: 66.3% - 67.9% - 67.8%;
- As in previous studies Language and Year of study were SSF, but also Gender;
- Year of study is a SSF for working informally with other students: its perceived usefulness increases through the years at university from 65.4% in year 1, to 66.4% in year 2, 69.1% in year 3, 71.8% in year 4 and 75.7% for postgraduates;
- Language was a SSF for working informally with other students: it was higher for native English speakers - 68.4% than for others – 66.4%;
- Gender was a SSF for working informally with other students: it benefits more males than females: 68.7% versus 67.1%;
- Among students' comments: "*My classmates usually have different backgrounds and working together with them or have a talk with them can give me inspirations most times and I would like to work with them for a discussion or just a talk!";"Don't really have this, but discussions during seminars are interesting.*"

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



There were 1,075 coded responses to this question. The most frequently mentioned 'best aspect' included: the teaching; career opportunities and future prospects; small classes and tutorials; the content of the course; the choice of modules; and the resources available to support learning (VLE/IT/Web-based). Other minor themes included interactions with other students and skills learned throughout the course.

Students' comments regarding teaching related to the quality of teachers: *"Teaching standard is undoubtedly strong with great professors!"; "Most of the lecturers are very good and give you a passion for the subject."* and *"Teachers are also very engaged, and that motivates everyone."* Comments also related to the general supportiveness of both lecturers and tutors: *"teachers are helpful"* and *"Lecturers always willing to help."*

Other students felt that the connection between the course and their future careers or 'the real world' was the best part of the course: *"I like studying the course due to its relevance in everyday life and the economy in which we live."* and *"Dealing with real-life issue as in economics I think is really useful as it prepares us in exactly the right way for our future career."*

For other students, the small size of seminar classes and the more interactive environment of those classes were most important: *"Tutorials, as they provide an environment in which you can ask questions and receive feedback."; "Many seminars which allows more interaction."; and "Classes are reasonably small so that each can participate actively."*

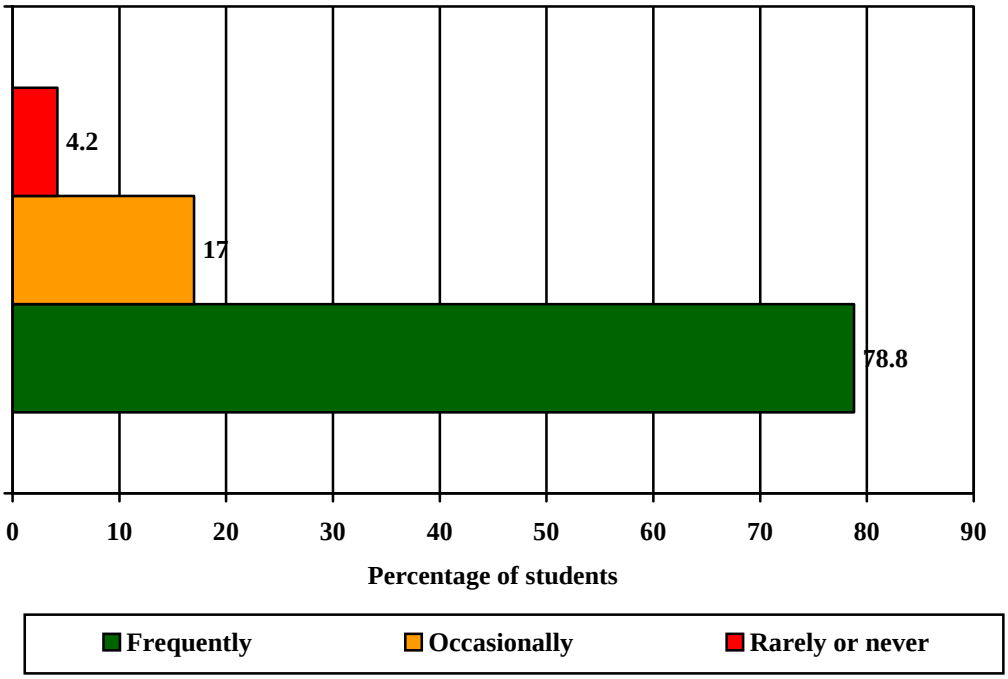
The course content was seen as the 'best aspect' by about 13% of respondents and varied between the practical focus of the course and specific aspects of the content. Typical comments for the former: *"Interesting, and uses contemporary, up to date examples and case studies" and "Problem solving and application of mathematical models to reality."* Comments for the latter: *"The focus on maths and statistics because these are my two strongest areas."; "Macroeconomics-although challenging in places very interesting, and real!!" and "The mathematical and computer components of this degree are the best as they allow practical applications of the theory studied."*

Still for other students, the flexibility in choosing modules and the resources available to them stood out as positives. One student reported that *"The best aspect is the large choice available in module options"* while another felt the choice allowed for a better education: *"freedom to choose modules that are not economics based (e.g. language) which allows for greater variety in education."* Other students found the web-based resources to be particularly helpful: *"The University Intranet ... – Has all*

the information you require and is regularly updated" and *"VLE (Moodle) support – very good for revising and catching up contact with lecturers – very approachable."*

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

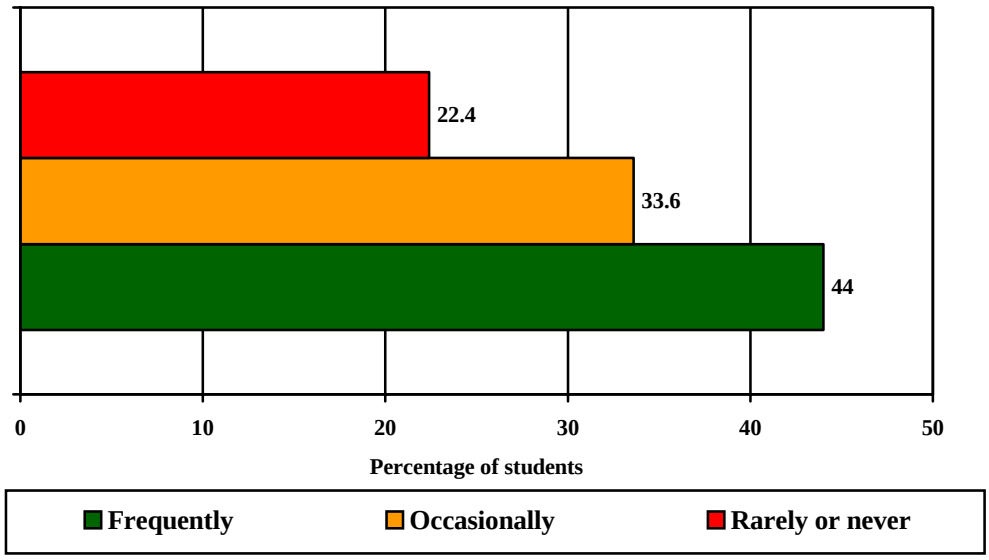
Q19.a) Going through pre-prepared problem sets or worksheets



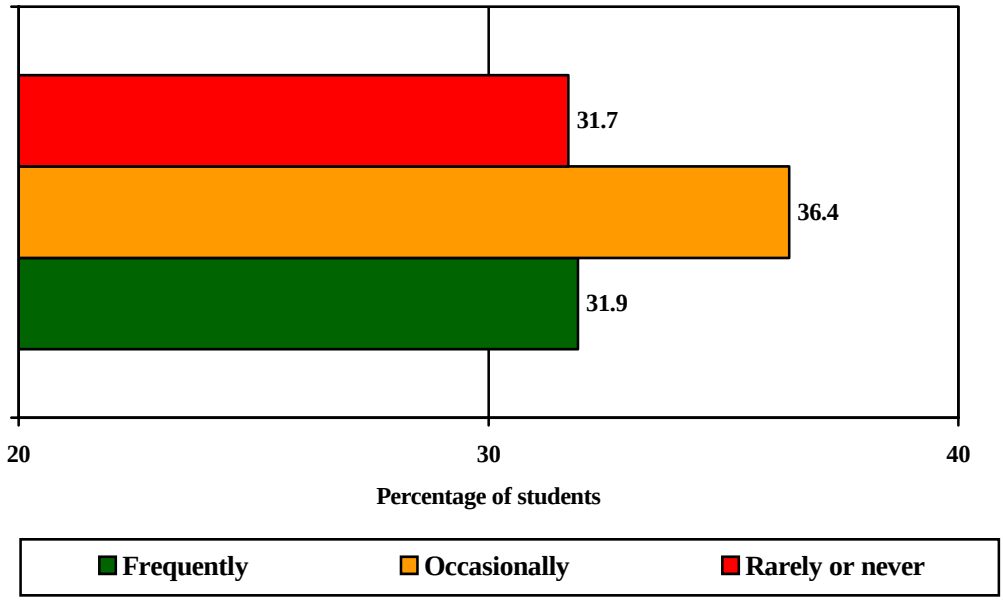
- More than three out of four respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who frequently go through pre-prepared problem sets has increase during 2006-2008-2010: 75.0% - 77.3% - 78.8%;
- The use of pre-prepared problem sets varies in different years of study: ranging from 80.1% in year one, 83.2% in year 2, 78.4% in year 3, 74.0% in year 4 and 64.9% for postgraduates.

Q19.b) Working through questions given out in seminar as a whole group

- More than three out of seven respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who frequently work through questions given out in seminar as a whole group has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 38.9% - 41.9% - 44.0%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: ranging from 47.8% in year one, 43.6% in year 2, 38.9% in year 3, 45.0% in year 4 and 39.6% for postgraduates.

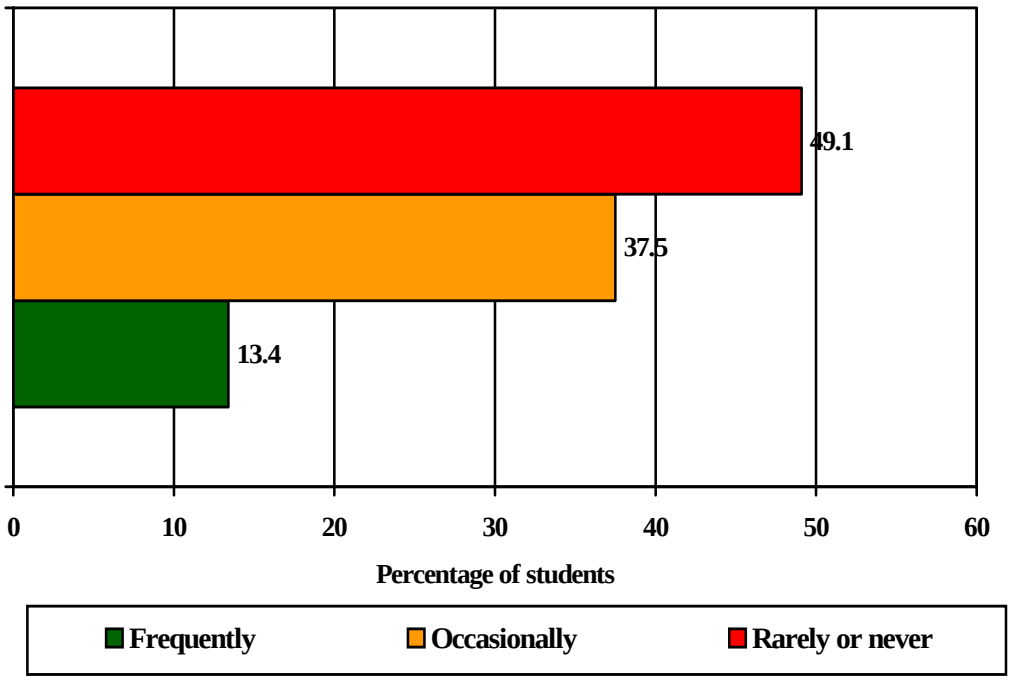


Q19.c) Working through questions given out in seminars in small groups



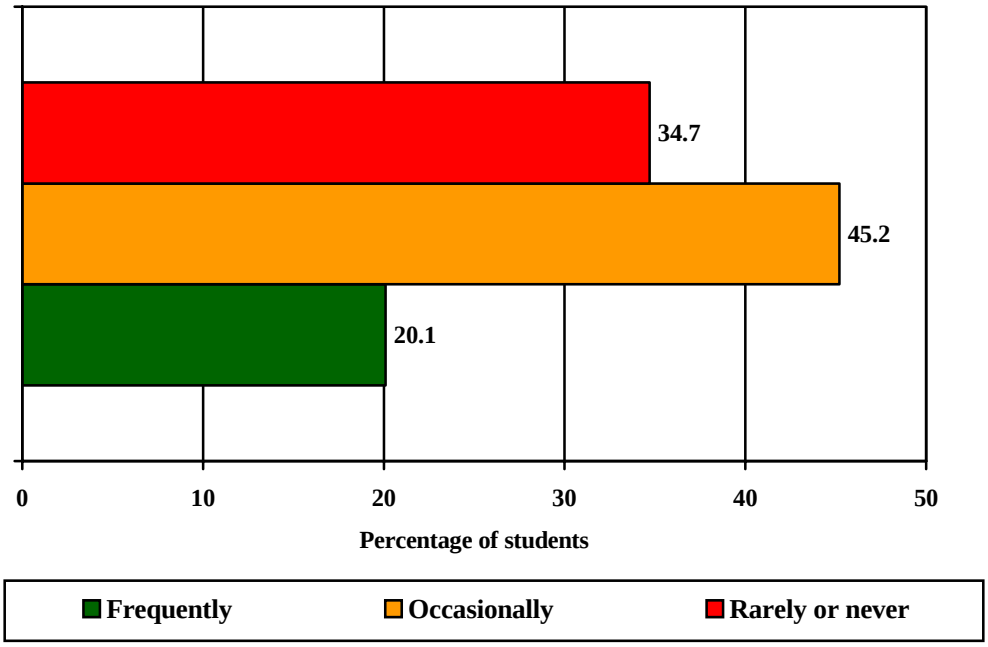
- Less than one out of three respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who frequently work through questions given out in seminar in small groups has seen small changes during 2006-2008-2010: 28.6% - 32.0% - 31.9%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: ranging from 38.3% in year 1, 28.3% in year 2, 26.1% in year 3, 38.9% in year 4 and 24.3% for postgraduates.

Q19.d) Individual presentations of papers



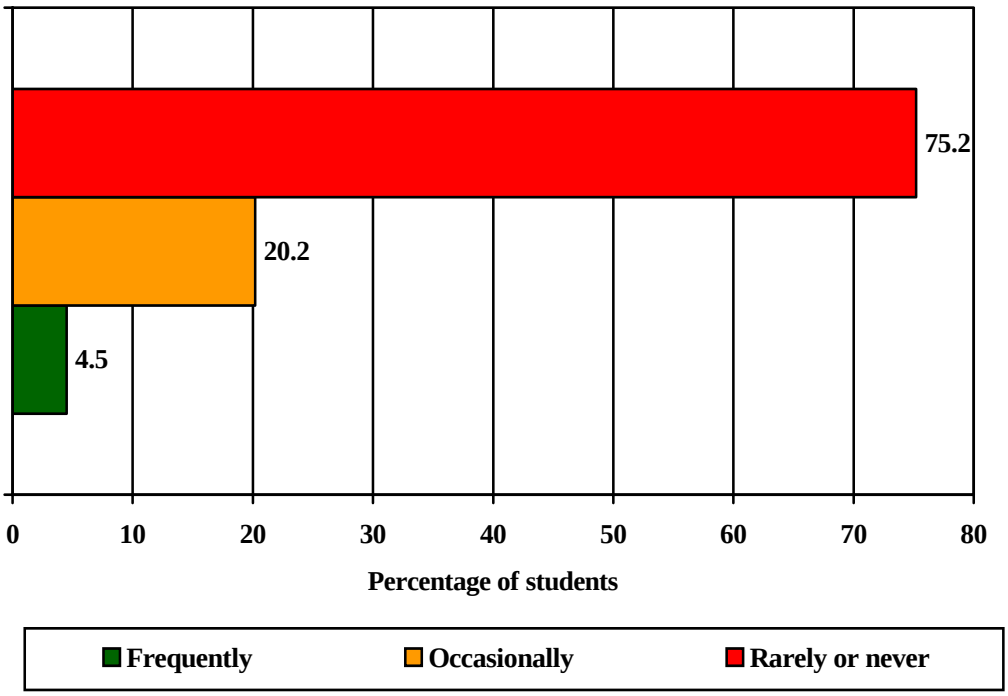
- Less than one out of seven respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who frequently had individual presentations of papers has decreased during 2006-2008-2010: 15.8% - 14.1% - 13.4%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: 12.9% in year 1, 10.3% in year 2, 15.5% in year 3, 18.3% in year 4 and 13.4% for postgraduates.

Q19.e) Mini-lecture by tutor



- About one out of five respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who frequently had mini-lectures by tutors has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 19.2% - 19.7% - 20.1%;
- Its use varies in different years of study: 18.9% in year 1, 20.2% in year 2, 21.1% in year 3, 23.7% in year 4 and 20.3% for postgraduates.

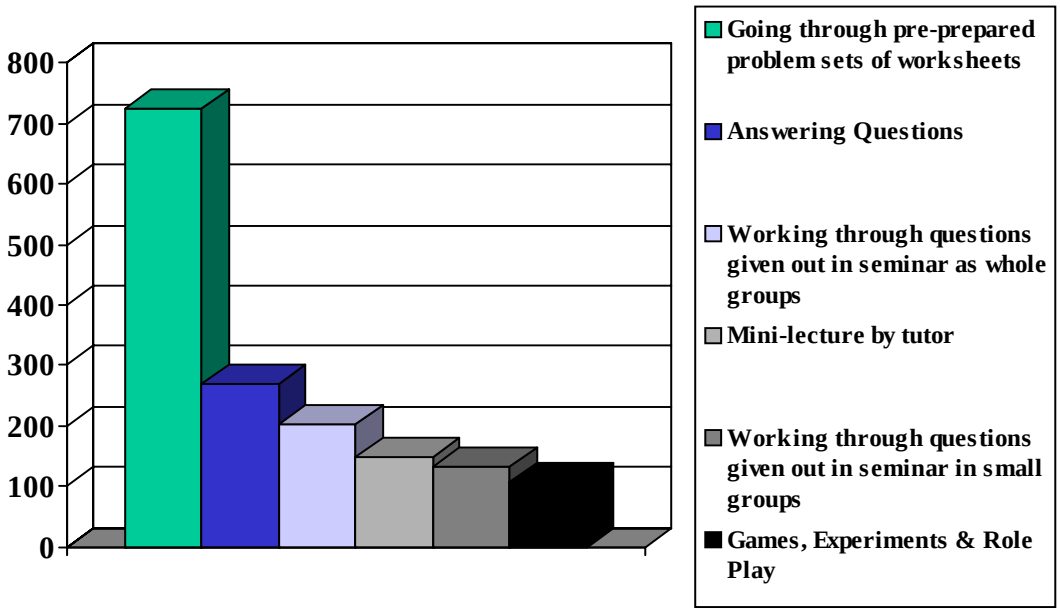
Q19.f) Games, experiments, role-play



- More than three out of four respondents had rarely or never experienced games in their learning: this has decreased during 2006-2008-2010: 81.9% - 75.7% - 75.2%;
- Frequent use of games etc varies in different years of study: 5.9% in year 1, 2.7% in year 2, 3.5% in year 3, 6.9% in year 4 and 5.0% for postgraduates.

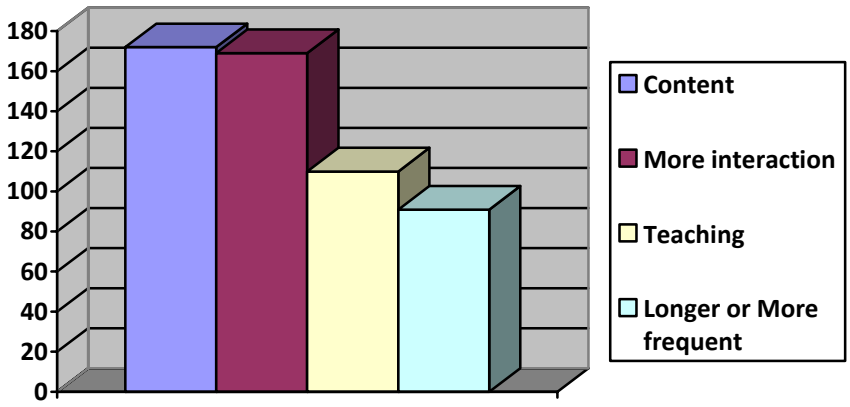
Q20. What types of seminar activities have you found to be most useful?

All respondents answered this question. Similar to the 2008 results students find interactive and practical activities in the seminars most useful. Most frequently mentioned were pre-prepared problem sets, answering questions, working through questions as a whole group and in small groups, games, experiments and role-play.



Students commented on the usefulness of these activities: *"In maths we work together in small groups of students, I think this is good as we can explain to each other when we don't understand.";"At a PhD level the simple attendance to scientific seminars is crucial for developing a good understanding of the main topics."; "Mostly I find the questions we need to tackle very interesting because usually they involve some research and work that takes me beyond just revising my lecture notes. It encourages thinking";"Where we have to prepare the work in a group with everyone in the group seriously wanting to participate and everyone brings something to the table. Filling in the gaps in each other's understanding and knowledge."; "Our seminars in stats is somewhat useful to understand the workings of Excel, but all the while, I believe these seminars should be focused on more practical problem solving in groups, and eventually illustrating these through the use of software."; "Discussion of prepared problem sets, because this way I can try on my own first and get concrete feedback during the seminar in order to improve my work."*

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



There were 707 coded responses to this question. Suggestions for improvement focused on the nature of seminars, specifically increasing the time spent on problems and student questions, having more interaction, improving the teaching quality and having more time in general for seminars (whether that meant having more of them or having longer sessions).

With regards seminar style, many students wanted more time spent on examples and working through individual problems and problem sheets to improve their understanding. Typical comments: *"working through problems step by step so that method is completely clear to students rather than expecting everyone to know certain aspects.";"More real life examples to make subject content relevant."; "Seminars could be improved by going through full solutions and them being posted on VLE site afterwards for further guidance. This doesn't happen just now and I would benefit greatly from this."; "More questions, some seminars tutors do not test our knowledge enough in seminars."; "More real life examples as it is sometimes hard to grasp theories without an example."*

Some comments suggested that seminars ought to be more interactive*: "More pupil talk time, less like another mini lecture."; "More interaction with students such as games and experiments.";"Could be more interesting with more group participation and interaction.";"More involvement, seminar leader should ask students to contribute more.";"more interactive and give students much more chances to express their own ideas.";"It would be better if there was greater communication between lecturers and students. I often turn up to seminars where nobody speaks and the tutor just reads out answers. Economics should be a lively interactive subject where students contribute to class debate."*

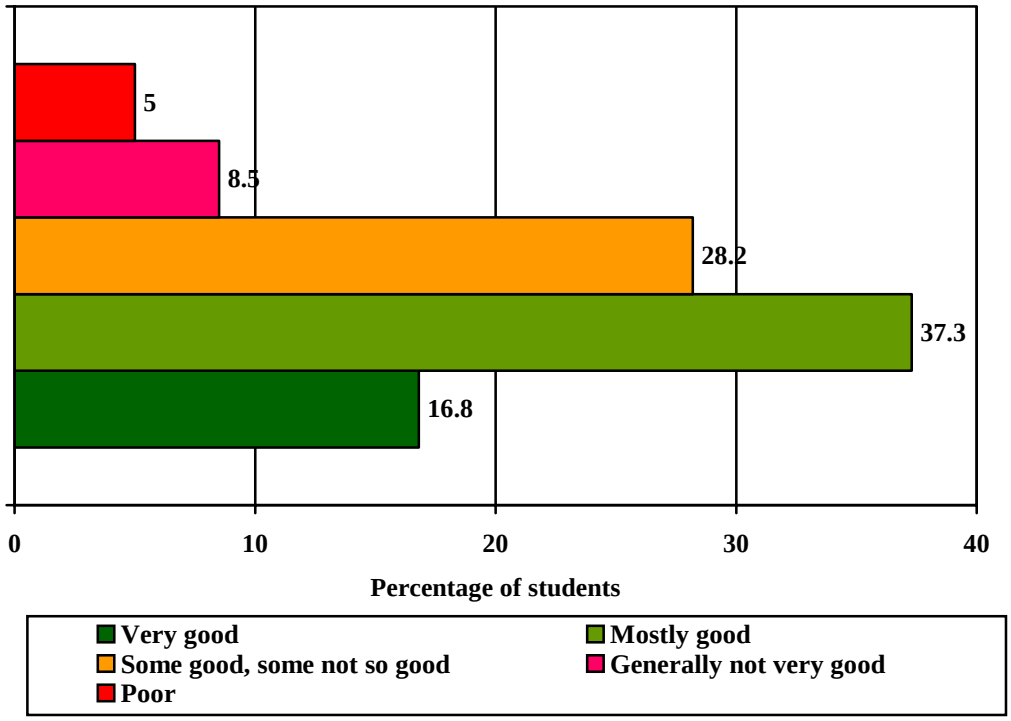
Others felt that the quality of teaching needed to improve. Here, both lack of experience and the English language proficiency of tutors came under particular criticism. Typical comments included: *"The post-grads 'teaching' could use some more training in how to teach. Obviously this is not their job, but as you are expected to go to them first for help, some guidance on how to better explain key topics would be useful."; "Tutors often don't talk English well enough to answer simple questions from students."; "have tutors who have experience and have a high level of the English language."; "To have teachers who speak clearly so they are more easily understood and more experienced people who can control a class well."; "Having a tutor who has more confidence and a better grasp of English."; "Getting seminar*

teachers that perhaps speak better English and therefore may be slightly more confident and interesting."

For some, the best way to improve seminars was to have more of them*: "there could me more of them."; "Longer seminars. One hour a week is not enough to cover the breadth of the material."; "I personally prefer more seminars to be allocated in my timetable. To me they are more helpful than most lectures are."; "Possibly a little more hours for seminars so the student will have the chance to look through the solutions thoroughly and reflectively."; "Seminars contain lots of crucial information about subjects. They are even doubling the effect of the lectures. In contrast they are being given in a little amount of time. That's basically not enough, particularly for international students."; "They should be longer for one as most of the time is taken during solving the problems we are given and so little time is left for discussions and questions / answers."*

A small minority of students (11%) also suggested that having smaller seminar groups would be helpful: *"Smaller groups for some subjects – one seminar group I have has 30+ students in it."; "fewer students so that everyone get a fair bit of attention."; "smaller classes are much better than larger classes – you learn much more."*

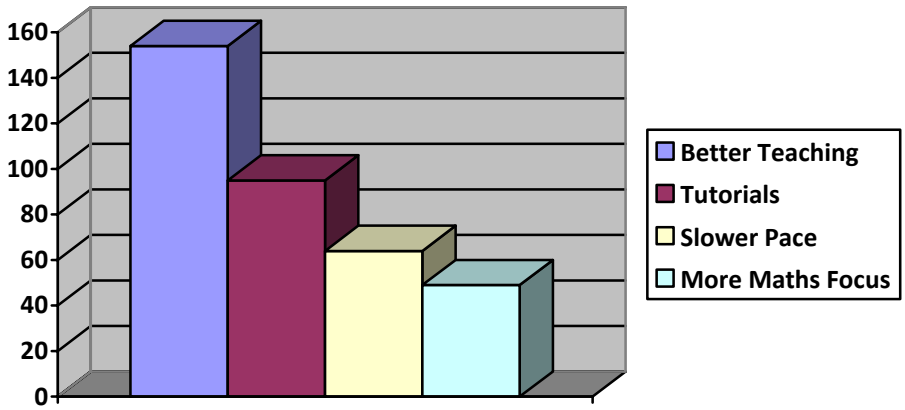
Q21. How effective have you found the teaching of Maths and Stats on your course?



- More than half of respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students, who found teaching of maths and stats good has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 51.2% - 52.4% - 54.1%;
- As in previous studies A-level Maths was SSF, but also Age and Year of study;

- A-level Maths was a SSF for teaching of maths and stats: students with A-level Maths were more positive than those without it: 55.2% versus 51.2%;
- Year of study is SSF for teaching of maths and stats: its perceived effectiveness fluctuates during the years from 53.2% in year 1, 51.2% in year 2, 54.9% in year 3, 43.5% in year 4 and 64.9% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for teaching of maths and stats: it was perceived as least effective by the 18-21 group - 51.9%, then increases to 64.6% for the 22–25 group and is 59.4% for the over 26s;
- Among students' comments: *"I find it hard but in the first year we had a very good lecturer for quants but this year we have somebody who assumes that we know everything and doesn't want to explain things."; "I think it is good in some aspects however I can not actually say what kind of usage it will have in my real life or whether I could find some relevant job opportunity to make them useful in future. But I think it should be very useful if I can put them into a right root in working status."; "some of us didn't have much background in further maths before this course, so we find it a bit difficult catching up and the teaching of it is done as if to brush up on already memory had memory and it is not taught as if for the first time, so the tutorial maths and stats class is not really helpful to those who have never come across topics like that."*

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



There were 414 coded responses to this question. In evaluating comments about how to improve the teaching of maths and stats, the majority of them related to improving the teaching itself, while other emergent themes related to tutorials, slowing the pace of teaching and increasing the focus on maths.

With regards to improving the teaching itself, comments suggested more examples and problem sets, less presumption of prior knowledge by teachers, and better quality of the teachers themselves. Similar to the earlier question regarding improving seminars, these comments often focused on the language of the teacher and his/her level of competency.

Typical comments were: *"More time spent on complex problem solving in lectures."; "More examples of how to solve the actual problems."; "Econometrics, though very useful, should have been taught better. By this I mean, both mathematically and theoretically."; "I think lecturers should assume that what they're teaching is new to us (!!!). My econometrics module lecturer for example usually goes through the material so quickly, almost as if it is some kind of revision*

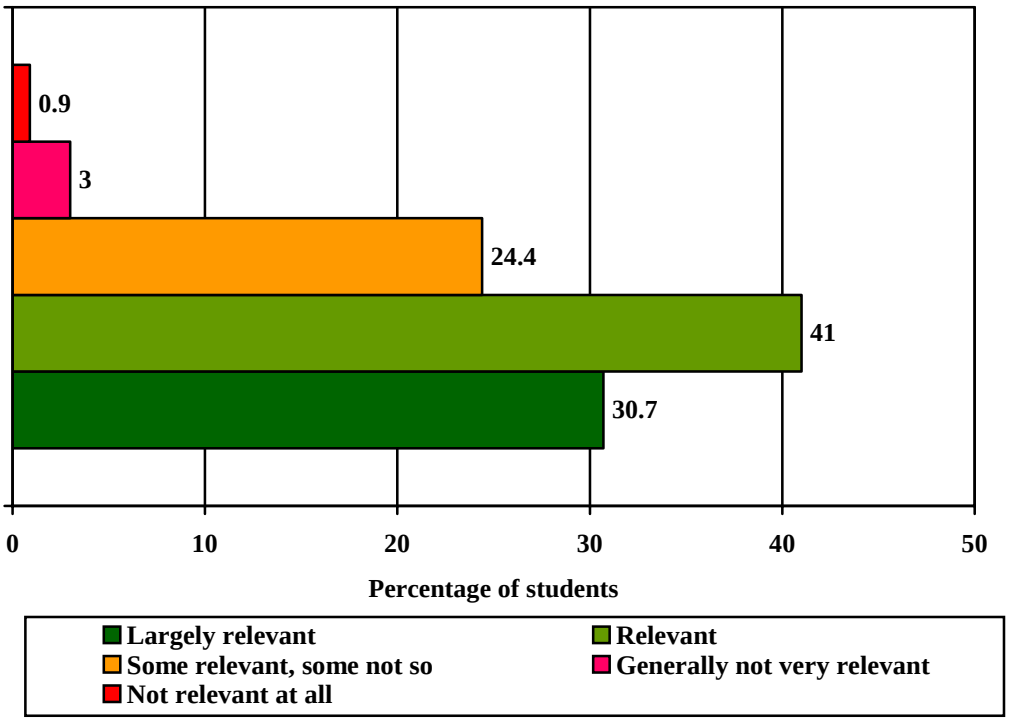
session."; "Ensure that people in the class know what the symbols mean before the class starts. Most people have little contact with Greek symbols and their names before university starts. This meant that the first couple of lectures were a waste of time- it seemed to be running before we could walk."; "Stats needs a teacher who can make the class worth coming to. At the moment the tutor is quite slow and boring and that is a main factor for the constant reduction in the attendance level.";"Some lecturers do not understand the mathematical theory themselves, meaning if you question the material you can't always get a useful answer.";"using tutors with a better level of communication as international PhD students sometimes find it hard to explain the more difficult aspects of maths."

Many responses suggested additional smaller classes and tutorials as a way to supplement the maths and stats material: *"To have another small class to help and explain the maths. In which you could be shown more examples and the techniques explained."; "as Maths is not a requirement in the course more time should be spent on people who do struggle etc.. or need more time. More private time, notes that break the a problem up into simpler steps etc..."; "More workshops and problem classes."; "as it is such a big class it is easy to get left behind especially as I'm not very good at maths. More tutorials would help."*

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 during more difficult material: *"Lectures have tended to go through everything very fast – they seem rushed."; "Slightly slower on harder sections."; "Lecturer seems to go fast through the hard stuff."; "A slower, more detailed explanation of the question and answer, allowing all students to have a fair attempt when trying to answer the question."; "The lecturers commonly spend too long going over the basic definitions etc. and then speed up and skim over the harder stuff, leaving a lot of people clueless!"*

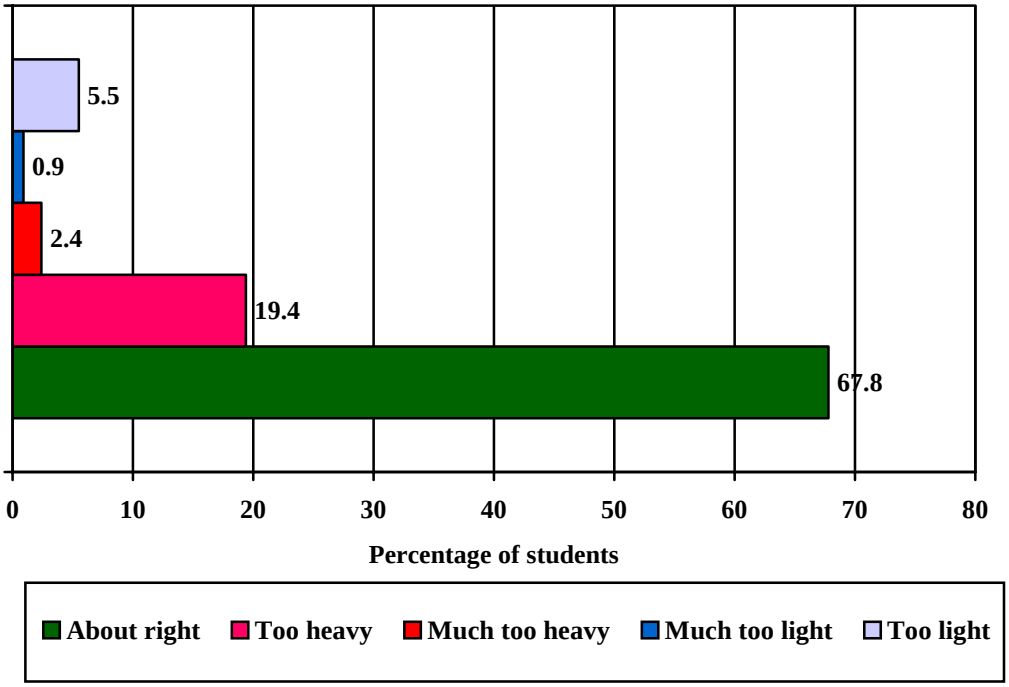
Many students cited the maths as being particularly difficult and felt that more recognition by teachers that students are at varying degrees of competence and more focus on maths from the beginning of the course could greatly help them: *"Maths and stats should be taught right from the beginning at an equivalent level, and not how it is now that the first two years you have adding and subtraction, and third year starts off with differentiation..."; "provide more regular help to those without A-level maths in order to help them not to fall behind."; "There is little consideration for those who haven't studied A-level maths/stats. Even those who have studied A-level maths, find the stats lectures to be too fast moving.";"Go through the maths and stats before applying it to economics, even if you've done maths and stats before there's bound to be things you've forgotten.";"Ensure in first year that everyone understands what maths is needed and that they understand it."*

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



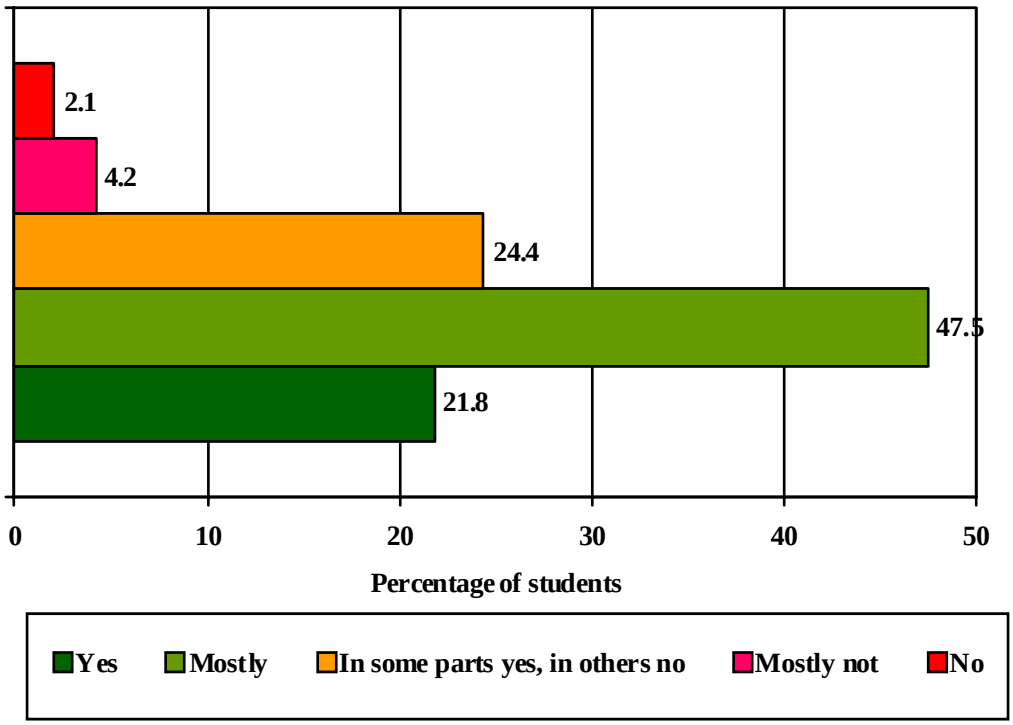
- More than seven out of ten respondents were positive in their replies to this question;
- The number of students who found the content of their degree relevant to the real world has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 66.8% - 69.3% - 71.7%;
- As in previous studies A-level Economics and Year of study were SSF, but also Age, Language, Gender and A-level Maths;
- A-level Maths was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: students with A-level Maths were less positive than those without it: 70.8% versus 74.1%;
- A-level Economics was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: students with A-level Economics were less positive than those without it: 69.8% versus 74.5%;
- Language was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: native English speakers were more positive than others: 71.7% versus 71.5%;
- Gender was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: males were more positive than females - 72.3% versus 70.9%;
- Year of study was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: its perceived relevance decreases during the undergraduate years from 77.8% in year 1, to 68.3% in year 2, to 67.0% in year 3 and to 65.6% in year 4 and then increases to 71.3% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for content of the degree relevant to the real world: its perceived relevance is lowest for the 18-21 group - 70.9%, then increases to 71.6% for the 22–25 group and is 83.3% for the over 26s;

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



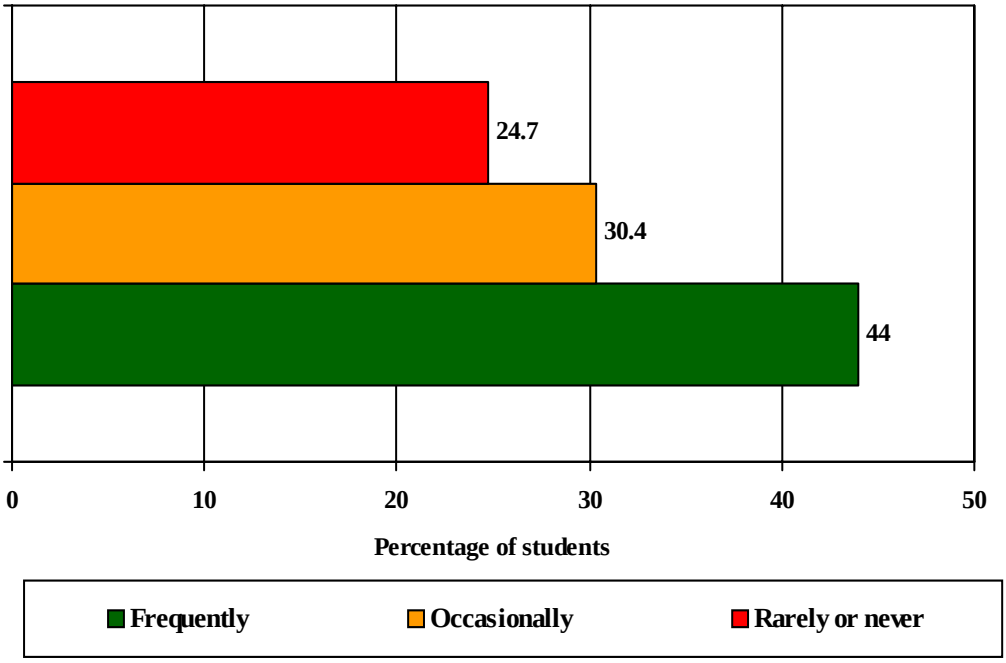
- More than two thirds of respondents found workload on their degree about right;
- The number of students, who found workload on their degree about right has fluctuated slightly during 2006-2008-2010: 66.1% - 64.9% - 67.8%;
- As in previous studies Age, Language, Gender and Year of study were SSF;
- Language was a SSF for workload on their degree: native English speakers were more positive than international students: 19.9% found workload heavy, compared to 25.8% of non-native English speakers;
- Gender was a SSF for degree workload: males found workload lighter than females – 19.0% versus 25.4%;
- Year of study is SSF for degree workload: it's heaviness fluctuates during the years from 19.6% in year 1, 23.9% in year 2, 16.0% in year 3, 19.8% in year 4 and to 36.7% for postgraduates;
- Age was a SSF for degree workload: it's heaviness is lowest for the 18-21 group - 19.9%, then increases to 30.6% for the 22–25 group and is 27.7% for over the 26s;
- Among students' comments: *"All exam based so not much work through the year followed by a ridiculous volume of work at exam time.";"A lot of assignments come at once, and then a few weeks of no work. Should be more spaced out between the modules so you can time manage better.";"I have found it is relative to the modules which you choose. It is possible to scrape by with 'easy modules'. It does concern me about the disparity of workloads of different modules.";"Sometimes the workload is too light and other times too heavy. e.g. I wrote 2000 words in my first term of final year and will now write 16,000 words in the second term, with lectures and seminars remaining equally balanced."*

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



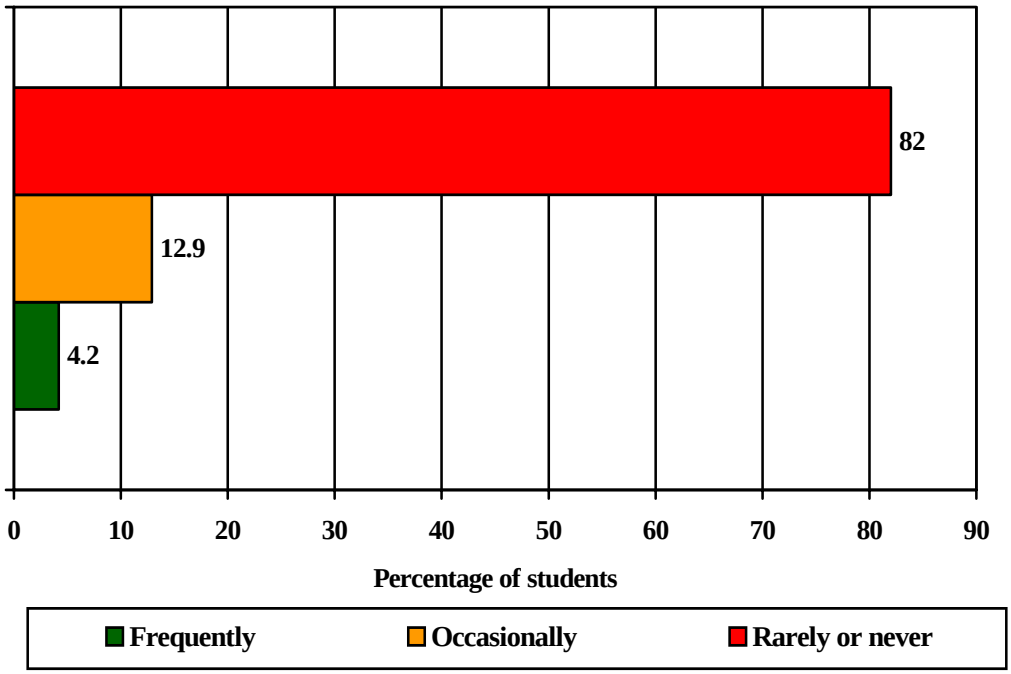
- Nearly seven out of ten respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students, who found assessment on their degree accurately tests the level of their knowledge and understanding has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 64.3% - 64.5% - 69.3%;
- Among students' comments: *"I disagree with multiple choice tests, I do not think they are an accurate assessment of a student's ability.";"I feel that a great deal of assessment is 'learning the book' not necessarily an exploration of the topic.";"Not demanding enough, does not require real creative or problem solving thinking.";"The exam questions are very good... but we have no insight to how they are graded."*

Q24.a) i) Essays in your own time



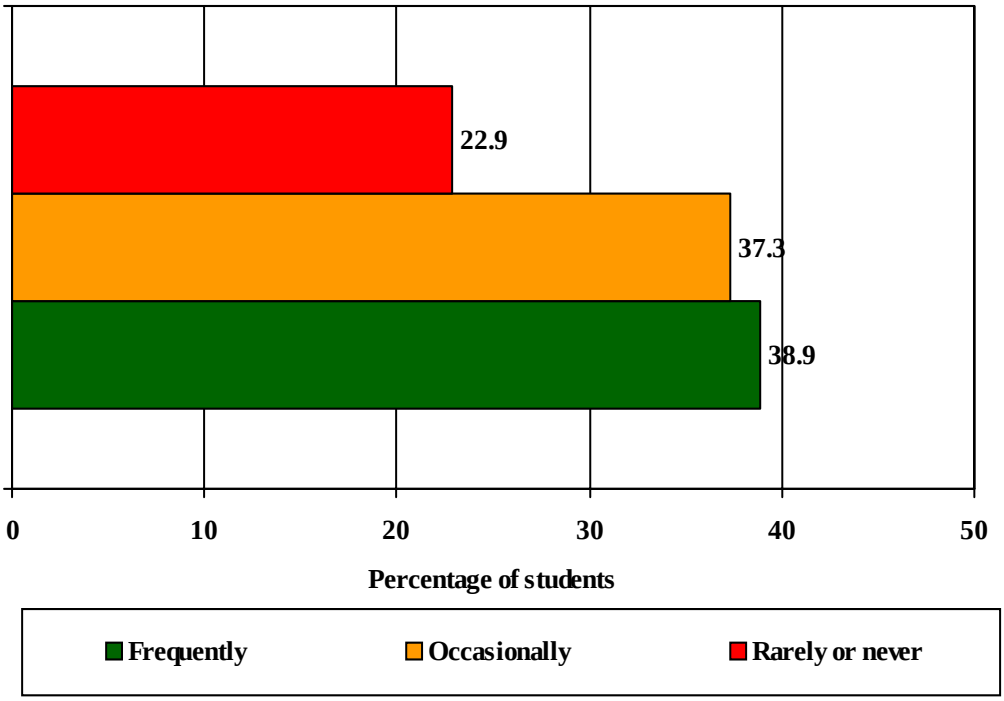
- More than two out of five respondents had written essays in their own time;
- The number of students, who had essays in their own time, has decreased during 2006-2008-2010: 52.1% - 49.5% - 44.0%;
- Essays were used differently across the year groups: it was most frequently used in year 4 (70.2%) and year 3 (51.5%), and less frequently in year 1 (39.6%), year 2 (40.1%) and postgraduate years (41.1%);
- Among students' comments: *"Often long answers will be prepared for seminars & developed within them";"The overall mark depends only on end of year exams."; "It doesn't apply now – PhD research.";"20% of grade in selected modules."*

Q24.a) ii) Essays done in class



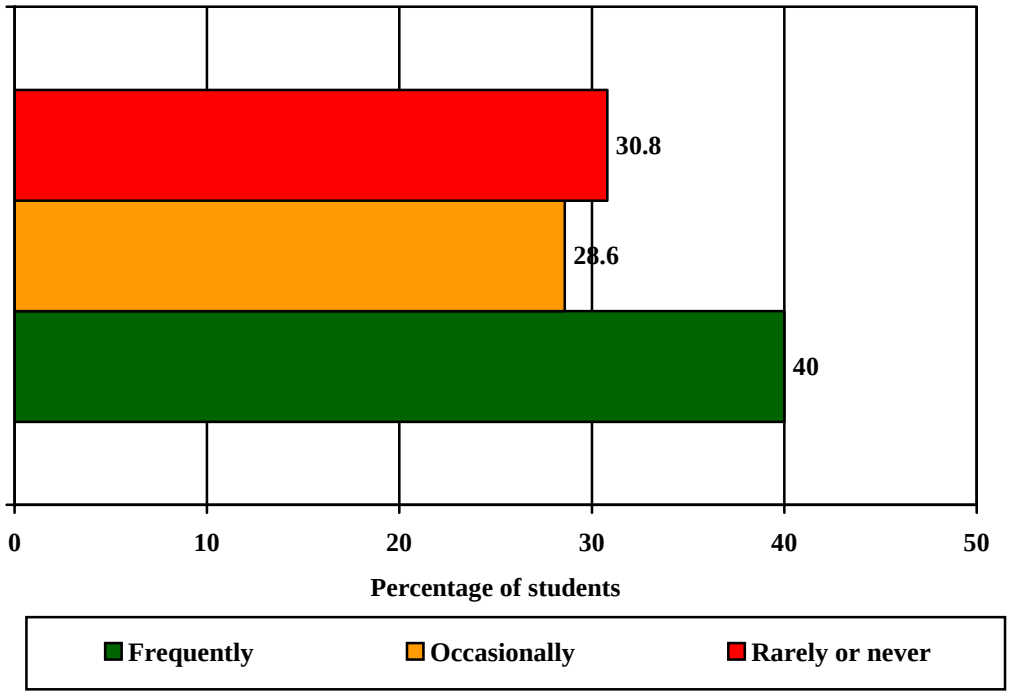
- More than four out of hundred respondents had written essays in class;
- The number of students who had written essays class has increased slightly during 2006-2008-2010: 2.0% - 2.7% - 4.2%;
- Essays in class were rarely or never used by 79.8% in year 1, 82.0% in year 2, 85.9% in year 3, 84.7% in year 4 and 81.7% for postgraduates;
- Among students' comments: *"done once.";"The overall mark depends only on end of year exams."; "don't count."*

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



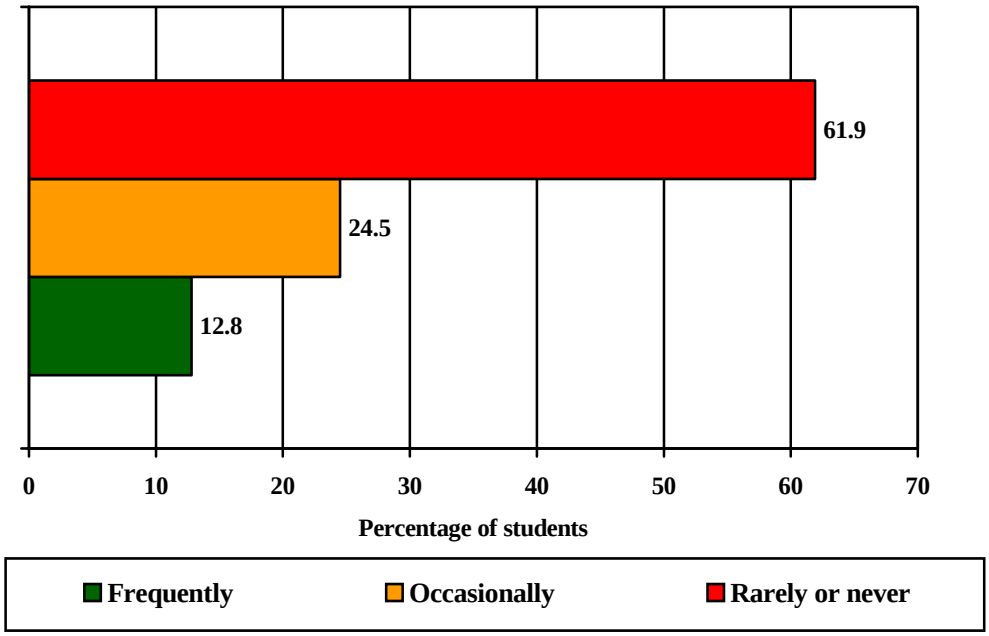
- Nearly two out of five respondents had experienced tests;
- The number of students who have tests has been increased during 2006-2008-2010: 30.9% - 35.4% - 38.9%;
- Tests were experienced by more in earlier years of study: 43.6% in year 1, 41.5% in year 2, 30.4% in year 3, 30.5% in year 4 and 35.1% for postgraduates;
- Among students' comments: *"'mid-term' tests account for 25% of final mark.";"Small coursework tests are used in conjunction with end of semester tests."; "20% of grade in selected modules.";"would like progress tests."*

Q24.a) iv) Problem sets



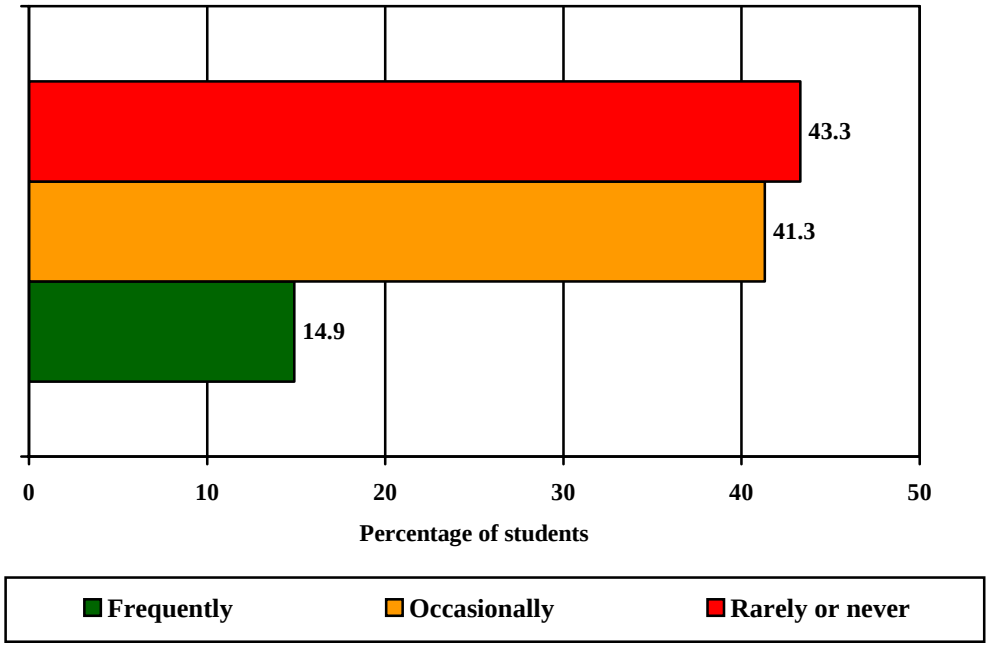
- Every two out of five respondents had experienced problem sets;
- The number of students who had experienced problem sets has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 29.0% - 31.1% - 40.0%;
- Problem sets were experienced differently over the year groups: 41.5% in year 1, 39.2% in year 2, 34.1% in year 3, 42.0% in year 4 and 46.5% for postgraduates;
- Among students' comments: *"used, but not assessed (never have to hand them in.";"if it is more essay related then the answer should be the same as the first one. If it is not, then the answer would be the same as the third one!"*

Q24.a) v) Online assessment



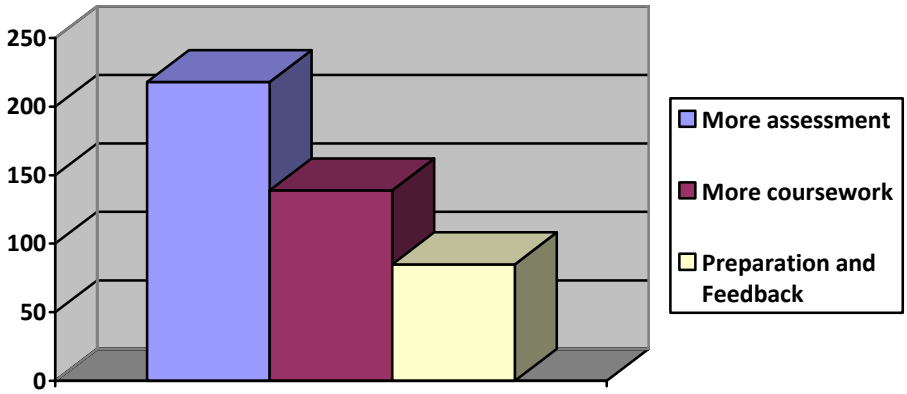
- More than one out of eight respondents had experienced online assessment;
- The number of students, who had online assessment, had been increasing during 2006–2008–2010: 6.7% - 9.3% - 12.8%;
- Online assessment was experienced most frequently by those in year 1: 22.7% has experienced online assessment in year 1, 8.5% in year 2, 7.2% in year 3, 3.1% in year 4 and 5.4% for postgraduates;
- Among students' comments: *"A sample of our problem sets are put online so we can attempt them and find out how many we got correct before answering all of the problem set.";"online multiple choice set weekly but not assessed. Same questions as tutorial work.";"could be the place for progress tests."*

Q24.a) vi) Group work projects



- More than one out of seven respondents had participated in group work projects;
- The number of students who had participated in group work projects has fluctuated slightly 2006-2008-2010: 13.3% - 13.0% - 14.9%;
- Group work was experienced more frequently in some years than others: 17.8% in year 1, 12.9% in year 2, 11.7% in year3, 19.1% in year 4 and 12.9% for postgraduates.

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



There were 520 coded responses to this question. Nearly all students felt that there were too few assessments, that there was a general lack of feedback and that more coursework was necessary to both help them evaluate their own comprehension and understand how well they were doing.

Many comments regarding more assessment suggested that an increase of

frequency of assessments may help alleviate the pressure of having only one final exam as well as encourage students to more actively engage with material: *"Increased continuous assessment, less pressure on a final exam."; "Should include performance over the year, not just exams."; "Give tests in January that carry some weighting so that less pressure in final exams."; "Small tests throughout the year force students to learn everything they have been taught so far. I think it is a good idea to set tests every 3 to 4 weeks covering just the subject material from the previous or 4 weeks."; "More assessments with less weight should be given. At least 2 per course. The idea of a course with your mark 100% based on one exam or essay is ridiculous."; "For one semester courses, an exam at the end of the semester rather than the end of the year, would mean students would be assessed when the material is still fresh to them, and reduce the stress of too many exams at the end of the year."; "Greater spread of assessment throughout semesters, rather than little for the majority of term then an abundance at the end. More frequent assessment to encourage students to keep on top of studies."*

While nearly all students suggested more assessment in general, many specified that additional coursework would be a means to achieving it: *"More essay type coursework throughout the year – about 70% of the our year marks are based on summer exams which is a lot compared to other subjects."; "Put less weight on final exams and have more written coursework and group projects."; "Personally, I would prefer a more 'coursework' based assessment. In other words, more individual essays done outside of class in my own time for a certain deadline as I do not perform well in tests."; "I'd like personally more essays, because then you research the topic, and in that way you learn a lot. Learn it by doing it!"; "Less emphasis on exams and more emphasis on personal coursework. Or using an 'exam' similar to that of some Asian schools whereby students are assigned a question on a Monday and given until Friday to hand in the response: this is more akin to real world work problems."*

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): *"More feedback would always be useful."; "Written and explicit individual Feedback on EVERYTHING. Going over essays or exams with a marker would help."; "Feedback on tests should definitely be given and questions should be able to be attempted again. There could be a reference given after completing the tests to match the questions with information from text books."; "More online assessments available with good informative feedback."; "More frequent assessment and feedback to ensure you are meeting learning objectives, and providing an indication of final exam performance."*

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

Students' comments on the usefulness of Economics software should be considered in conjunction to their answers on what software is used in their degree. There were 1036 coded responses to this question. Nearly a quarter (22.3%) of students said that they did not use software or weren't aware of any being used. Of those who did use software used eViews (22.4%), STATA (21.5%), WinEcon (10.6%), Microsoft Excel (4.53%), SPSS (2.9%), Gretl (2.2%) and PCGive (2.02%). Other software mentioned by a handful of students include EcoWin, GiveWin, Maple, and Microfit.

Students' comments on eViews: *"It is very useful. It saves a lot of my time on doing calculations and it help me check some of my works as well."; "Useful as it is quite easy to use for basic regressions."; "Very, it helps that most workplaces use this*

software."; "It has helped us have the practical bit of economics, it leads to more understanding of the models."; "Very useful for my dissertation."; "It is very useful to our coursework."; "Eviews is the most user friendly software I have ever used. It's as easy to use as playing pac-man, just get used to it and start rolling."

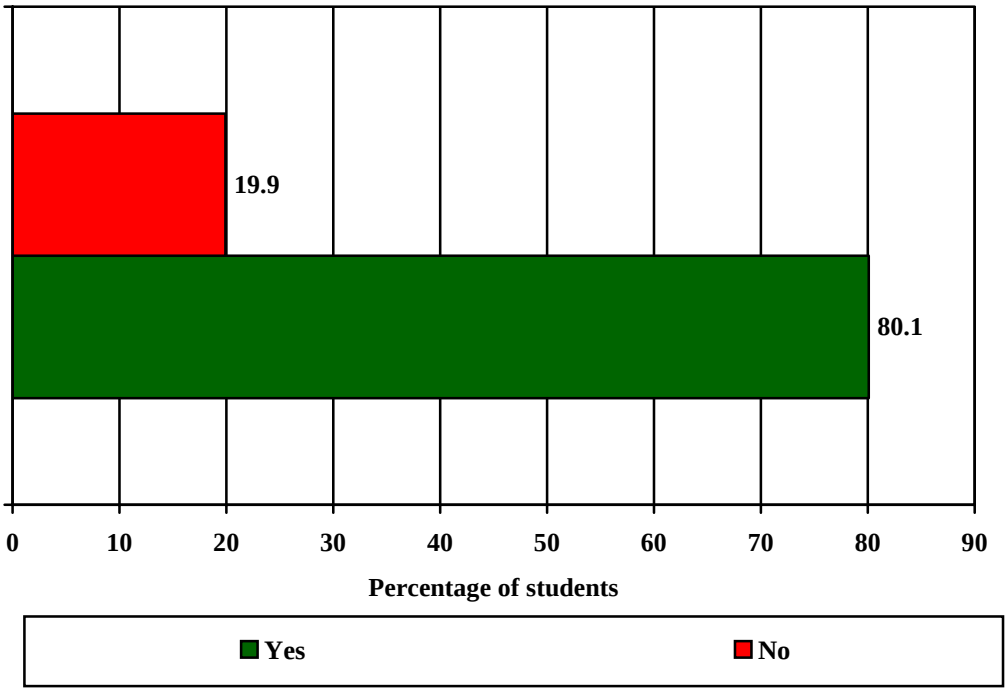
Students' comments on STATA: *"I have found it very useful for stats projects."; "Very good for econometrics only."; "Very useful – familiarisation and utilisation of one of the most used estimation packages will provide students with a lot of help."; "Very useful. It is a skill needed for industry that gives us a head start on other graduates."*

Students' comments on WinEcon: *"Basic knowledge of this has been useful for basic econometrics."; "Helpful in reinforcing information in text books."; "I found this software very useful for revision and such, it has all the contents which are in the book."; "Very useful and clear. helped a lot with some key topics."*

Students' comments on Excel: *"That is quite useful."; "Have only used MS Excel for running regressions. It is a very good thing to know how to use the software. Very easy to learn as well."; "Excel- very useful."; "Very – I didn't realise how much statistical analysis you can do with it."*

Students' comments on SPSS: *"Very useful and relatively easy to use. Will become extremely relevant in future jobs."; Iis really good for data."; "Very useful for stats analysis."; "SPSS provided some useful tools for data analysis."*

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



- More than four out of five respondents were positive in their reply to this question;
- The number of students, who had VLEs used in modules/units has increased during 2006-2008-2010: 67.0% - 73.7% - 80.1%;

- VLEs were used more frequently in different years of study: it was most often used in year 4 (90.1%) and in year 1 (82.4%), and slightly less in year 2 (80.3%), year 3 (76.5%) and for postgraduates (71.3%);
- Among students' comments: *"Blackboard is the best way in my opinion."; "Lecture material is available online, which is handy."; "Some lecturers prefer not to use WebCT as it reduces lecture attendance."; "The usefulness of Blackboard depends on the willingness of the module leader\lecturer to update it.";"Mainly, but not always, usually related to the age of the teacher."*

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

There were 524 coded responses to this question. The vast majority of students felt that their VLE is highly useful, very effective and, in some cases, vital to their learning experience: *"Blackboard is very useful, and helps a great deal towards my degree. I download exercises to do at home on it, lecture notes, find out test and coursework results and get set assignments. So overall it is very effective in helping me learn."* Very few students felt that VLEs weren't useful.

Suggestions for improvement included a higher degree of consistent usage, utilising more features, improving user-friendliness and improving updates.

Comments regarding the need for more consistency in usage: *"Some modules seem to use it a lot, others not so much. It'd be easier if they chose a level and stuck to it."; "More lecturers could use it, especially maths and stats lecturers."; "It is very useful as you can print off the notes for the class before the lecture and then annotate then in class which saves a lot of time for writing. Not all teachers use this to the same extent."; "Not all lecturers use it – note gaps exist."; "It is effective when the lecturer knows how to use it and how to get the best out of it. Some lecturers cannot be bothered."*

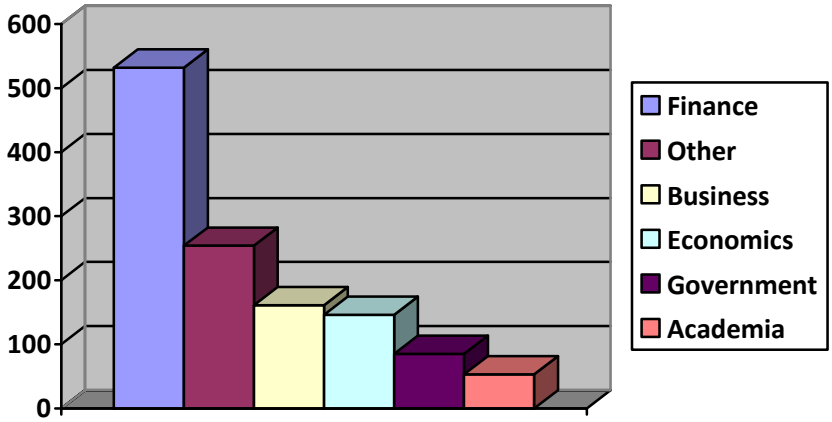
Students also felt that more features should be enabled: *"Starting this year, all my modules use VLE. I don't feel they're all making good use of it because they mostly provide only a link to a digital copy of lecture handouts and reading lists. Other features like the discussion board, online assessments and etc are rarely used. At least for the moment."; "Discussion board should be effectively used"; "The VLE is effective as an informational source, but not used to its full potential as a teaching mechanism. If there were further optional questions for revision purposes, this would be helpful."*

Others made suggestions to improve the user-friendliness of VLEs: *"Sometimes problems with uploading material, difficult to find different things. Could have a search button."; "Would be hugely useful if the system wasn't constantly 'down for maintenance' or overloaded, and if sessions didn't time out after 20 minutes idle time."; "It could be linked to my uni email account. Things such as room changes, new articles being posted by lecturers etc, because I check my email more often than my VLE."; "It needs to be easier to use and download content, possibly have an automatic-sync option to save time having to download each item."*

There were also complaints about the VLEs not being regularly updated and suggestions for doing so: *"Regular updates. For example answers to question sheets don't appear on the Web-CT which makes the question sheets pointless as you don't have the answers to check if you are doing them correctly."; "Some lecture notes or*

module handouts are not even there, either that or not updated regularly."; "It would be helpful to encourage lecturers to update their material more frequently."; "Very effective, although some links are left blank and are not updated frequently enough."

Q27. What career do you hope to follow?



There were 1,231 coded responses to this question. The largest number of students said they wished to pursue a career in finance (43.2%), while others said they wished to enter business (13.1%), economics (11.8%), government (6.9%) and academia (4.3%). There were many students who were either undecided or interested in careers unrelated to the above areas (20.6%).

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

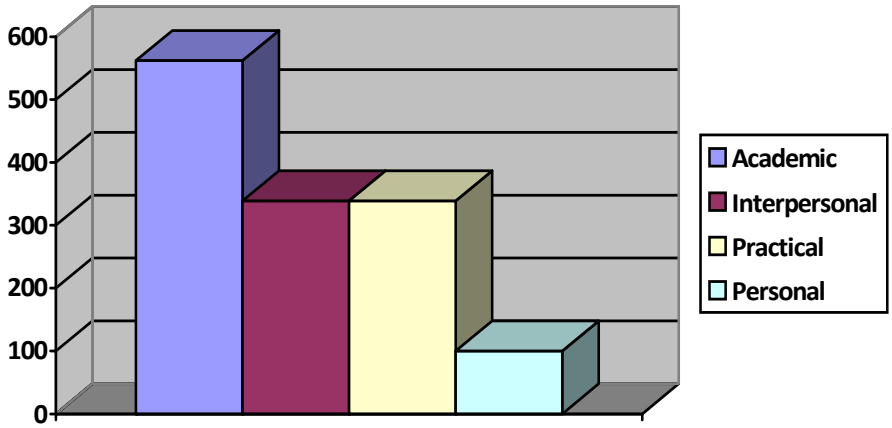
Students interested in business mentioned advertising, marketing, human resources and management.

Those interested in economics cited intentions to work as econometricians, economic consultants, economic researchers or analysts, and within economic development teams.

Some mentioned wanting to go into military or civil service as either an officer, diplomat or general civil servant, while others said their intention was to work as a university lecturer or academic researcher.

There were a good number of students, though, who didn't know yet what they wanted to pursue as a career and those who wanted to do other things, such as open their own business, work as a secondary school teacher, become an actor or a psychologist.

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 1361 coded responses to this question. The responses fell into four broad themes: academic skills, interpersonal skills (including communication, presentation and group work), practical skills and personal ones.

Academic skills encompass economic-specific knowledge as well as analytic and critical thinking skills. Typical comments were*: "An understanding of economic concepts which enables me to analyse different scenarios in both a quantifiable and scientific manner"; "A vast knowledge of both economic theory and principles, and also the ability to apply such theory to real world examples and see how the interaction of economic models and theory apply on a day to day basis"; "Critical thinking and analytical logic"; "Technical/Analytical/Reasoning Skills (that helps me in analysing real world situations as well)";"Analytical/quantitative research skills."*

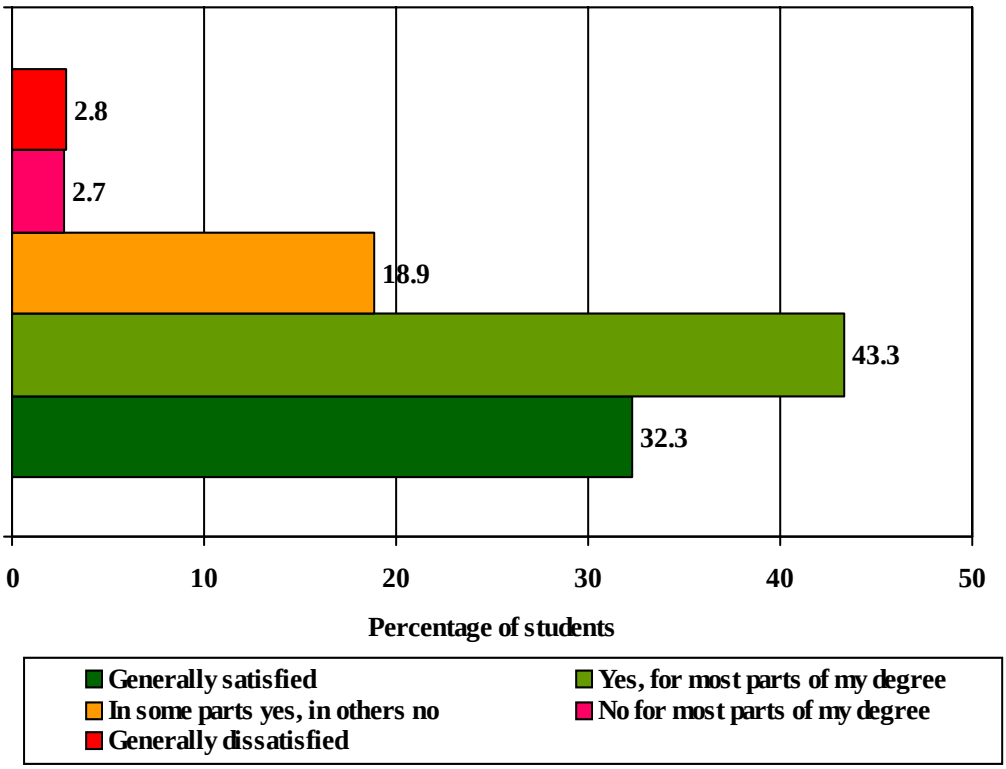
Interpersonal skills developed included improved written and verbal communication, greater ability to work with others and greater ease in giving presentations. Student comments: *"The ability to work as a team. The confidence to do a presentation in front of an audience."; "I have better writing and presenting skills"; "Presentation and debating skills have also been greatly improved."; "Working in a group."; "My language, communication and teamwork skills have also improved."; "Being able to work under pressure also working as part of a group."; "I've also gained more confidence in team working environments and presentations."*

Many students felt that what was most useful was the practical knowledge and skills they'd gained which are directly applicable to the working world: *"Independent working."; "Time management and problem solving."; "I feel I have already gained a lot through my degree, such as computer skills which will by very useful as IT is becoming more and more important. Also the skill of being able to apply economic theory to current economic situations and adapting solutions."; "A vast knowledge of both economic theory and principles, and also the ability to apply such theory to real world examples and see how the interaction of economic models and theory apply on a day to day basis."; "The ability to analyse economic trends and behaviour will most definitely prove essential in a career in marketing."*

And some students felt that they'd gained many personal skills which would be useful to them. Some of those skills or traits were listed as: *"Coping with stress, working by myself."; "Confidence."; "Self-motivation and discipline."; "Leadership."; "Self organisation, more balanced decision making and stronger listening skills."; More willingness to put in the effort."; "I've learned to be more resourceful, by going to find things out for myself, instead of being given all my*

learning material."

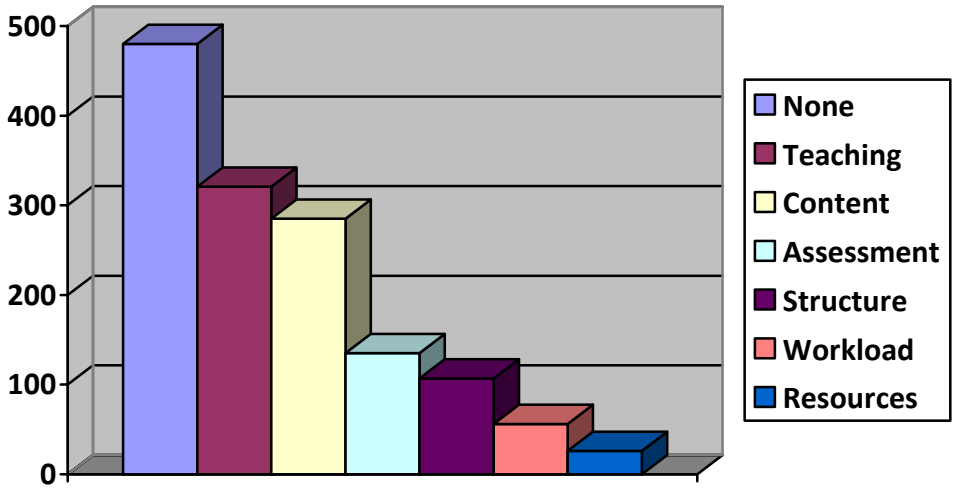
Q29. Overall, are you satisfied with the quality of this degree course?



- More than three out of four respondents were satisfied with their degree course;
- The number of students, who were satisfied with their degree course has fluctuated slightly during 2006-2008-2010: 74.1% - 76.9% - 75.6%;
- As in previous studies Age and Choice were SSF;
- Choice was a SSF for satisfaction with their degree course: those with a first choice in Economics were more positive than others: 76.5% of them were satisfied, compared to 68.9% of others;
- Age was a SSF for satisfaction with degree course: mature students over 26 were more satisfied than other age groups - 79.6%, compared to 75.2% for the 18-21 year group and 73.6% for the 22-25s group;
- Among students' comments: *"I believe the core content of my degree is excellent and there are some brilliant lecturers."; "I think introductory sessions on how to study economics especially for year 1s – coping with lectures and seminars and etc. New students seem baffled by the workload and how everything runs in uni."; "Some subjects seem to be too broad and so are not very appealing. This would de-motivate the student."; "The spoken English of some overseas lecturers needs improving"; "More tutorial discussion time needed partly to allow discussion of topical issues in order to make course work more relevant to the real world. Without this it is almost impossible."; "Tutors are vital, make sure they are competent and answer*

questions. Even if this is a senior professor tutoring doesn't mean he's helpful."; "I am very satisfied! "

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



There were 1411 coded responses to this question. The largest group of students (34%) felt that they liked everything about their course and that there was nothing they disliked. Others disliked the course teaching (22.7%), the course content (20.2%), the assessments (9.6%), the structure of the course (7.6%), the workload (3.9%) and the resources available (1.8%).

Regarding the teaching, students commented on the lack of enthusiasm among lecturers, the poor quality of lecturers and tutors, and the pace of teaching. Typical comments: *"Some lectures just read from PowerPoint."; "Tutorial teachers need to speak and understand English a little better."; "The quality of tutors is a little volatile as some tutors are great whereas others have difficulty teaching efficiently."; "Most lecturers are brilliant, but a few refuse to admit they are not as good at transferring knowledge to people."; "I also think the teaching methods reflect a lack of enthusiasm among lecturers."; "The lecturers just read off the slides, which we have-which we can read our self, yet they will spend 2 hours reading through it for us rather than explaining the topic in detail."*

Just over a fifth of students responded to this question by claiming that they didn't like some element of the course content. These comments 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. Some comments: "*Health economics does not interest me in the slightest."; "Overlap with A-level maths and economics means some lectures can feel boring or patronising."; "Unrealistic modelling and maths."; "Perhaps there is too much emphasis on the typical firm-consumer relationship. i.e. if the economics we study can be applied to areas more diverse and perhaps stimulating than studies of market interaction and structure etc; for example, welfare, climate change."* These comments were generally spread over 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.

Assessment was another aspect which students disliked. Comments generally referred to the lack of continuous assessment and the pressure applied by having just

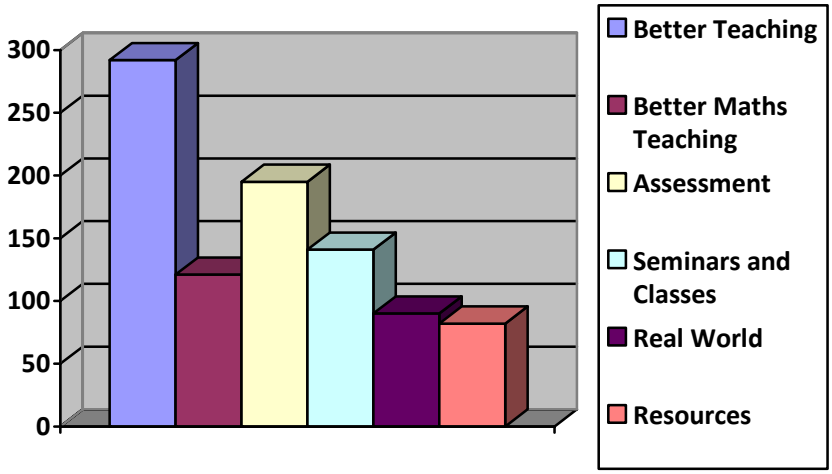
one final exam and, sometimes, exams far removed from the time in which material is learned. Typical comments were: *"Lack of in-term assessments and the excess waiting on single exams."; "Too much based on one exam at the end of the year."; "That the main examinations all take place in May/June and not right after the module was taught."; "That there is not enough assessment. It puts a lot of pressure on the exams and makes the overall coursework worse."*

Students also took issue with the course structure. Comments mostly referred to timetabling, compulsory courses, or lack of tutorials and courses. Typical comments: *"Getting 2 hours lectures- sometimes your attention span can't take 2 hours on one subject so splitting them up would help."; "There is no reading week at my university for my course and this makes keeping on top of the reading quite difficult."; "In the first two years, only around 25% of the degree actually focuses on economics. I did not like the fact that I was forced to do other things like management and accounting and wait until third year to really get cracking with economics."; "The lack of module choices and the exclusion of subjects such Economic History. I also felt that we lost a great opportunity to become better all rounder by having to spend two years taking 75% of subjects that did not relate to Economics."*

A small number of students disliked the amount of work entailed in the course. Students wrote: *"The workload in unavoidable, though ... perhaps too much." and "Work load is too much and there is too great a focus on essays."*

Others complained that resources were inadequate, focusing mainly on library resources and teaching support: *"The library also never has enough copies of the books we need so one has to wait in queue forever (unless short-loans are attempted). This is frustrating especially because the number of books we need are usually considerable, so are their prices so I cannot really afford to buy one."; "Library is too old and may not have enough books as far as I could see."; "Many of the lecturers do not make copies of lectures available to download online."*

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



There were 1135 coded responses to this question and responses varied greatly. There were however more frequent responses under the following themes: better teaching (25.7%), better maths teaching (comments which directly discussed the teaching of maths versus general teaching methods -10.7%), assessments (17.2%), seminars and classes (12.4%), a connection to the real world (7.9%) and resources (7.2%).

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: *"Lectures can be more interactive and engaging."; "Standard of teaching slack at times, and often, things aren't made clear enough, and also due to the standard of English of some lecturers, and their accents."; "Again, the teaching. PHD students need to be able to teach. Lecturers need to be enthusiastic and clear. We have some very clever professors who are experts on their subject, but they do not have the charisma to teach!"*

Some felt there was a specific need for better maths teaching, including more support for those with weaker maths skills: *"Maths, just better explained. Better match between maths content in lectures and supervision questions. Lectures are almost always far too easy or far too hard, never just right."; "More help with maths to those without a level maths."; "Better teaching of maths to less experienced students. Additional modules for mature students who have come from a non-economics background."*

Other comments had to do with improving assessments. Again, student sentiments echoed previous responses in emphasizing the need for more continuous assessment, through either coursework or more frequent testing, and less focus on one final examination. Typical comments: *"More continuous assessment."; "Have more coursework as it gives a better representation of understanding than exams."; "Assessment more equally spaced out and seminar performance is part of assessment."; "More frequent assessment – i.e. Tests throughout the year, helps to focus revision and if it contributes to the final grade reduces pressure on final exams."*

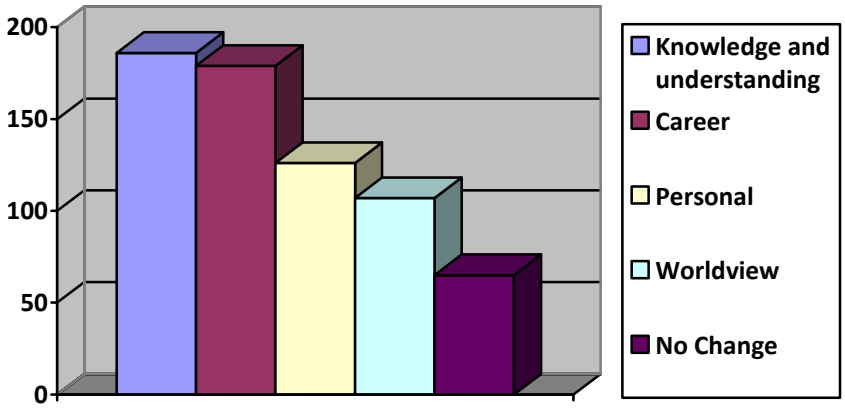
A good portion of students said that an increase in seminars, tutorials or small classes would help improve the course*: "Just the idea of having another seminar or a smaller class to show more examples of how to complete the question."; "Maybe even smaller classes (up to 10) – so the seminar leader can spend more time with every student and help individually."; "Reduce the size of tutorial classes and make them more frequent."*

Other students were more concerned with the way the course connected to the real world and suggested improvement through the incorporation of real-world examples and explanation of current economic events (like the recent 'credit crunch' and banking crisis). Typical comments: *"There could be a module that's purpose is to cover current economic situations e.g. in classes we currently touch on what is happening in the world of economics but not in detail. If a module was based solely on what is currently taking place this would better prepare graduates with knowledge and skills for an economic career."; "Make it relevant to the real world."; "More knowledge with the real world will both motivate student and enable them to perform better in future career."; "I would like to have some more talks/lectures in which professional people who are actually doing their jobs in companies, rather than lecturers, teach/talk with us about the current business."*

Finally, a small portion of student suggested improvements in resources, which generally had to do with providing more lecture notes online or additional problem sets or preparatory materials for exams. Typical requests: *"Answers to problems put online so can check to see if correct and if not work out why."; "Solutions for past exams and problem sets. These are not generally provided."; "All notes on the internet."; "The use of one VLE environment instead of five (or so).*

More up to date and organised information on the web."

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



There were 663 coded responses to this question. 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. A minority of students (9.8%) experienced no change to themselves.

Nearly all the responses were positive, with many students commenting on how the course had expanded their knowledge or broadened their views in some way: *"Made me think radically differently in terms of economics."; "I understand much more in terms of economics and finance."; "I have a better understanding of how the business world works."; "It's made me realise how economic theories actually apply to the real world."; "Improved my knowledge of important issues in the world, and shown me why things happen."; "It has changed my ideas about financial market. How the boom and burst occurs and also about why the developing countries are poor."*

Nearly just as many comments attested to how the course has helped confirm the career choices available to them: *"It helped me to understand that this is exactly what I want to do in my life."; "I have more of an idea of what I'd like to do now."; "It has made me get more focused and know exactly what career in need to follow."; "I don't believe I have been changed my the course, it has only further instilled my passion to work in the financial services industry."; "I now know that there are so many job opportunities as well as sectors that I could work in and this has widened my career choices and made me feel more at ease at what I could do."*

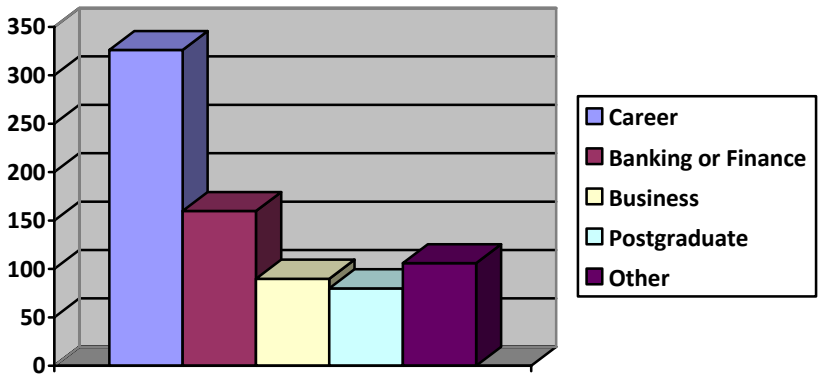
Although the knowledge gained also made some students less sure of their career choices: *"I had a firm idea what I wanted to be but my world has just opened up to a lot of knew things so I'm not so sure any more."; "Career choice has definitely been affected as I know I can't pursue a purely economic career anymore!"; "The course has definitely given me a greater insight as to how the financial world works; especially modules such as Corporate Financial Management, Economics of Corporate and Finance and Advanced Finance. Although I find the subjects interesting, I've realised that working in the city is not for me and so has helped me find a different career path."*

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. Typical comments: *"The course has made me a more independent person, through independent study and learning I have become more independent and have a stronger belief in what I am capable of and what I hope to achieve. I now have the determination to follow a career in economics."; "I have learnt how to be more self sufficient as teaching here depends more on one's self."; "It's also increased my confidence a lot."; "Has made me more independent and makes me strive to be the best I can."; "I have become more determined."*

Others felt that the most significant change was in how they understood the world around them: *"I am more aware about the impacts that changes in markets can affect me. I also have looked at problems around the world and now have an opinion on if I think that the solution will help."; "The world is far more complex than I thought."; "It has provided a broader view of the world, the current financial crisis the way I view economic policies."*

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



There were 762 coded responses to this question and answers reflected the responses to the previous career question. The largest group of responses were very general, with students seeing themselves *"Hopefully in employment relating to my degree."*, *"Working in some multinational company"* or *"In a successful career."* *Some specified that their work and/or career would be finance-related, with students "working for the HM Treasury.", "Working in a revenue house"* or *"Working for an international bank/company, probably investment banking."* 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. Nearly the same amount saw themselves pursuing postgraduate study, either in the form of a Master's degree or PhD. There were also students who didn't know where they'd be or who were choosing different career paths, like teaching, politics or hospitality.

Q34. Any other comments

There were 98 coded responses for this question. Most of the responses were very positive and related to students' courses: *"Economics is great!"; "Really enjoying my course as its informing of so many new aspects of which I did not even know existed."; "I generally enjoy my course and like all the students and staff on it."; "Overall I have really enjoyed my course, I have found it challenging and fun. I am*

glad that I chose to do Economics at my university."

A good number of responses were positive about the survey itself, with students giving thanks for providing them the time and space to think through a number of important issues: *"I have enjoyed this survey thank you."; "This survey helped me to identify many things related to my study. Thanks."; "I am using you website with great benefits, and would like to say thank you! (especially for audio/video section of educational material)."; "Thanks for providing me such a good platform, not only estimate my degree and course, but also let me know more about my level and what I need to do."*

There were also a few comments, which reiterated the need for improvements already previously covered in other sections.

Conclusions

As in the previous surveys, we were impressed by the maturity of students' comments and by their awareness of teaching and learning issues in economics. Finding out about their previous learning experiences allowed us to provide better support to new students through our two websites *WhyStudyEconomics.ac.*uk, for prospective students, and *StudyingEconomics.ac.uk*, for current undergraduates, as well as develop new resources for lecturers teaching international students.

Respondents

More than 2000 students from 67 departments took part in the online survey, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

This year we also asked students who were not native English speakers how that affected their learning. Of the students who answered this question, the majority felt that English as their second language did not impact greatly on their learning; while a slightly lower amount of students felt it had some affect but not a significant one.

In the survey we also 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 . Only one in six respondents was aware of the sites, but students were very positive about the resources available from them. Among the comments: *"Well structured, clear and user friendly." ; "Within a short time of surfing this site, I found myself thrilled with the wealth of information and resource available there and it's a must visit for every economics student. I'm in love with the good job."*

7 out of 10 respondents studied in the UK before starting their university course, which is less then it was in the 2008 survey (73.0%). The majority of students who came to study in the UK came from Europe (54%), with the highest numbers coming from Germany, Lithuania, Poland and France. There were significant numbers of students from Asia (21%), primarily from China and India, as well as Africa (7%) and North America (6%).

The quality of education was by far the most repeated interest in coming to the UK and was often intertwined with the reputations of its institutions. Future prospects and career opportunities were cited as another major reason determining choices to study here.

Teaching and assessment

Comparing their current course with their previous learning experience, the majority of respondents (57.0%) found teaching methods were different and very different. Among the mentioned differences were learning styles being more independent than in previous experiences; teaching methods and approaches being different (sometimes better, sometimes worse); class sizes being much larger and students having less contact and interaction with their teachers.

As for the assessment, less than a third of respondents (32.6%) found it similar or very similar to their previous experience, which is just slightly less than in the 2008 survey. The major themes that emerged related to coursework, the less frequent nature of assessments and the focus on exams as a method of assessment.

Nearly seven out of ten respondents found that the assessment on their degree accurately tests the level of their knowledge and understanding of the learning outcomes and their number had been increasing in the last four years.

The following trends in the assessment methods can be identified during 2006-2008-2010 years:

- The number of students who had essays in their own time has been **decreasing**;
- The number of students who had essays within class, tests, group work projects, problem sets and online assessment has been **increasing**.

Contact with lecturers

Contact with lecturers was very different and different for two-thirds (66.6%) of respondents, which is slightly more than in the 2008 survey. The majority of students (59%) felt that contact time with lecturers was inadequate and that making contact can be very difficult. With regards to the lack of contact, students had these things to say: *"Completely different – no contact at all with lecturers."; "There is mostly no contact with our lecturer except at the lecture time."* and *"Vanishingly small amount of contact hours."* Another aspect of contact time mentioned was office hours. Some students felt that office hours were too limited: *"Have small office hours hence and usually once a week so usually long waiting times whereas as before we could see teachers any time every day."* and *"Highly restrictive office hours reduce potential for contact."*

E-learning

E-learning and use of IT in the current course was different and very different for half of the respondents (50.0%), which is slightly less than in the 2008 survey.

The vast majority of all comments were positive and reflected a positive response to more heavy utilization of E-learning and computer facilities than they were used to: *"A lot more focus on IT, involving a lot of time on computers doing coursework and research"* and *"E-learning is more advanced here and it has given me an advantage over friends back at home."*

When ask about software used in the course nearly a quarter of students said that they did not use software or weren't aware of any being used. Of those who did use software, this included eViews (22.4%), STATA (21.5%), WinEcon (10.6%), Microsoft Excel (4.53%), SPSS (2.9%), Gretl (2.2%) and PCGive (2.02%).

The number of students,who had VLEs used in modules/units has been steadily **increasing** during 2006-2008-2010: 67.0% - 73.7% - 80.1%;

The vast majority of students felt that their VLE is highly useful, very effective and, in some cases, vital to their learning experience: *"Blackboard is very useful, and helps a great deal towards my degree. I download exercises to do at home on it, lecture notes, find out test and coursework results and get set assignments. So overall it is very effective in helping me learn."* Very few students felt that VLEs weren't useful.

Suggestions for improvement include higher degree of consistent usage, utilization of more features, improving user-friendliness and improving updates.

Student support

Slightly less than half of the respondents (47.1%) found student support in their current course different and very different from their previous experience, which is more than in 2008 survey. Comparing their previous experiences students were divided about the quality of the support: the largest group of respondents found support in the university to be better (47%), although many claimed it was worse (41%) than previous experiences.

Prior expectations

Two thirds of the respondents felt that they were adequately prepared for their degree course, which is more than in the 2008 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 level of expectations being met was **stable** in all 3 surveys of 2006-2008-2010: 75.4% - 74.9% - 75.5%.

When asked to explain in what ways their experiences differed from their expectations respondents mentioned content, level of teaching, real world relevance, and the pace of the course. In terms of the content, most comments related to the amount of maths. Many students claimed that courses were much more maths-focused than they had anticipated. Many of the comments related to the lack of personal interaction between students and teachers, the quality of lecturers and the lack of contact time with lecturers.

Learning activities

The main part of the survey asked students to reflect on their experiences in their economics degree course. The students were provided with a list of activities, from formal lectures to informal work with other students, and asked which they found useful in supporting their learning. Most of the activities were rated "useful or very useful" by the majority of respondents. We also compared the students' replies with those from the 2006 and 2008 surveys. For a breakdown of these responses, see the full report. The following trends can be identified during 2006-2008-2010 years:

- The number of students who found the following activities useful has been **decreasing**:
  - Lectures
  - Assigned reading
  - Other reading
  - Essays
  - Preparation for exams
- The number of students who found the following activities useful has been **increasing**:
  - Small classes
  - Workshops
  - Office hours
  - Preparatory work
  - Online learning using the web
  - Online learning using the economics software
  - Online questions and tests
  - Communication tools
- The number of students who found the following activities useful has been **stable**:
  - Group work projects
  - Feedback on submitted work
  - Working informally with other students

In seminars/tutorials/small classes the vast majority of respondents go through pre-prepared problem sets, exercises or worksheets. The following trends in seminar activities in 2006-2008-2010 can be identified:

- The number of students, who frequently go through the following activities has been **increasing**:
  - Pre-prepared problem sets
  - Questions given out in seminar as a whole group
  - Mini-lecture by tutor
  - Games
- The number of students, who frequently work through questions given out in seminar in small groups has been **stable**
- The number of students, who frequently had individual presentations of a seen paper has been **decreasing**

Best aspects

The most frequently mentioned 'best aspects' of the course were good teaching, career opportunities and future prospects, the small classes and tutorials, the content of the course, the choice of modules, and the resources available to support learning (VLE/IT/Web-based). Other minor themes included interactions with other students and skills learned throughout the course.

Suggestions for improvement

Suggestions for improvement focused on the content of seminars and an increase in the time spent on problems and student questions, more interaction, improvement in the teaching quality and an increase in the number of hours for seminars (whether that meant having more of them or having longer sessions).

The number of students, who found teaching of maths and stats Good had been **increasing** during 2006-2008-2010: 51.2% - 52.4% - 54.1%. Possible suggestions on how it could be further improved include the need for better teaching, slower pace of teaching and relevance to the real world.

With regards to improving the teaching generally, comments suggested more examples and problem sets, less presumption of students' prior knowledge by teachers, and better quality of the lecturers and tutors themselves. Similarly to the earlier question regarding improving seminars, these comments generally focused on the language of the teacher and his/her level of competency.

When asked about the relevance of the content of the degree to the real world more than seven out of ten were positive and their numbers were **increasing** during 2006-2008-2010. At the same time the number of students, who found workload on their degree about right had been fluctuating during 2006-2008-2010: 66.1% - 64.9% - 67.8%.

Nearly all students felt that there were too few assessments, that there was a general lack of feedback and that more coursework was necessary to both help them evaluate their own comprehension and understand how well they were doing.

Careers and skills

When respondents were asked about their future career, the largest number of students said that they wished to pursue a career in finance (43.2%), while others said they wished to enter business (13.1%), economics (11.8%), government (6.9%) and academia (4.3%). There were many students who were either undecided or interested in careers unrelated to the above areas (20.6%).

All the students felt that they had developed various skills, including academic skills, interpersonal skills (including communication, presentation and group work), practical skills and personal ones. Many students felt that what was most useful was the practical knowledge and skills they'd gained which are directly applicable to the working world*: "Independent working."; "Time management and problem solving."; "I feel I have already gained a lot through my degree, such as computer skills which will by very useful as IT is becoming more and more important. Also the skill of being able to apply economic theory to current economic situations and adapting solutions.*"

Overall satisfaction

Overall, more than three-quarters of respondents were satisfied with the quality of their degree course and this number has been **stable** during 2006-2008-2010: 74.1% - 76.9% - 75.6%.

When asked about aspects of the course that they didn't like, the largest group of students (34%) felt that they liked everything about their course, that there was nothing they disliked. Others mention different aspects of the course that they dislike: the course teaching (22.7%), the course content (20.2%), the assessments (9.6%), the structure of the course (7.6%), the workload (3.9%) and the resources available (1.8%).

When asked about aspects of the degree that could be improved, respondents pointed to better teaching (25.7%), including better maths teaching (10.7%); assessments (17.2%); seminars and classes (12.4%); connections to the real world (7.9%); and resources (7.2%).

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. A minority of students (9.8%) experienced no change to themselves. Nearly all the responses were positive, with many students commenting on how the course has expanded their knowledge or broadened their views in some way: *"Made me think radically different in terms of economics."; "I understand much more in terms of economics and finance."; "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.

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: *"Economics is great!"; "Really enjoying my course as its informing of so many new aspects of which i did not even know existed."; "I generally enjoy my course and like all the students and staff on it."; Overall I have really enjoyed my course, I have found it challenging and fun. I am glad that I chose to do Economics at my university."*

A good number of responses were positive about the survey itself, with students thanking for giving them time and space to think through a number of important issues: *"I have enjoyed this survey thank you."; "This survey helped me to identify many things related to my study. Thanks."; "I am using you website with great benefits, and would like to say thank you! (especially for audio/video section of educational material)."; "Thanks for providing me such a good platform, not only*

estimate my degree and course, but also let me know more about my level and what I need to do."

Final comments

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 any changes.

References

1. Fielding, Alan, Dunleavy, Peter J. and Langan, A. Mark(2010) 'Interpreting context to the UK's National Student (Satisfaction) Survey data for science subjects', Journal of Further and Higher Education, 34: 3, 347–368
2. National Student Survey, Findings and trends 2006 to 2009 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10_18/
3. National surveys of economics students: 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008 reports http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/projects/surveys
4. Prosser, M. (2005). Why we shouldn't use student surveys of teaching as satisfaction ratings. http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/research/Interpretingstudentsurveys.doc